

The Society

Organ

JOURNAL



April 2013 Vol.18, No. 1



President
Julian Lloyd Webber FRCM

Vice-Presidents
Sir David Willcocks, CBE, MC
Diana McVeagh
Michael Kennedy, CBE
Michael Pope
Sir Colin Davis, CH, CBE
Dame Janet Baker, CH, DBE
Leonard Slatkin
Sir Andrew Davis, CBE
Donald Hunt, OBE
Christopher Robinson, CVO, CBE
Andrew Neill
Sir Mark Elder, CBE

Chairman
Steven Halls

Vice-Chairman
Stuart Freed

Treasurer
Clive Weeks

Secretary
Helen Petchey

The Elgar Society Journal

18 Holtsmere Close, Watford, Herts., WD25 9NG
Email: journal@elgar.org

April 2013 Vol. 18, No. 1

Editorial	3
Julia Worthington - The Elgars' American friend <i>Richard Smith</i>	4
Redeeming the Second Symphony <i>Tom Kelly</i>	16
Variations on a Canonical Theme – Elgar and the Enigmatic Tradition <i>Martin Gough</i>	21
Music reviews <i>Martin Bird</i>	35
Book reviews <i>Frank Beck, Lewis Foreman, Arthur Reynolds, Richard Wiley</i>	36
D reviews <i>Martin Bird, Barry Collett, Richard Spenceley</i>	44
Letters <i>Geoffrey Hodgkins, Jerrold Northrop Moore, Arthur Reynolds, Philip Scowcroft, Ronald Taylor, Richard Turbet</i>	53
100 Years Ago	57

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

Front Cover: Julia Worthington (courtesy Elgar Birthplace Museum)

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

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

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

Presentation of written text:

Subheadings: longer articles benefit from judicious use of these.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Editorial

For the past few weeks I've been listening to Otto Klemperer's recordings of Mozart's symphonies, serenades and operas. Now Klemperer's is probably not the first name to spring to mind when choosing a conductor for Mozart, any more than the Philharmonia Orchestra in all its '50s and '60s magnificence would be the chosen instrument to perform them, yet for me these recordings reveal Mozart's music in all its glory. Which is not to say that it's the only, or even the best, way to perform Mozart, but Klemperer's conducting genius gives us performances that have shape and breadth within a firm overall structure, a perfect internal sound balance that enables us to hear every contrapuntal strand, and alertness and articulation in the playing that gives us exhilarating *allegro* movements that never sound rushed.

Metronome marks (a post-Mozartean invention) indicate the speed at which music should go. Those in the first movement of Elgar's Second Symphony suggest that it should take 14½ minutes, which is indeed what Elgar himself takes in his 1927 recording. Boult, in contrast, took around 16½ minutes in the 1940s and '50s, and Barbirolli 17 minutes in 1954 and 19½ ten years later. Speed of performance, though, counts for little, whereas the musical results achieved within a chosen speed count for everything. For me, Barbirolli in 1954 gave us a performance of tremendous vitality, but why, at 2½ minutes slower than Elgar, does it not sound unbearably sluggish? In truth, Elgar's does sound a bit of a scramble at times, but this is more to do with the quality of playing and the clarity of the recording than the speeds he takes. And what are we to make of Elgar in 1924, where he takes a mere 13½ minutes?

It is fascinating to see how differently people can react to a particular performance, be it live or recorded. It is equally fascinating how a performance that is an overwhelming experience to those present can seem run-of-the-mill when heard on CD or on the radio. Mark Elder's performance of *The Apostles* is a case in point. Andrew Neill's article in the August 2012 edition of the *News* spoke of the Manchester performance in glowing terms, whereas my reactions to hearing it on CD were, as I pointed out in the December *Journal*, very different. That review has prompted several members to write to me. Geoffrey Hodgkins took part in Elder's performance last August at the Proms and, in a letter published in this issue, describes that occasion as an evening he will treasure for the rest of his days. Others took an opposite view, one finding 'some of the speeds ... so restless that all the shape and breadth of the music was ruined': a comment that could be applied, with some justification, to either of the Elgar performances of the first movement of the Second Symphony!

The art of conducting requires an ability to see sound on the printed page, and the skill to translate what the eye sees into a balanced, well paced performance. Only then do the ears come into play, checking that what one hears matches what is seen in the mind's eye. The passive listener to a recorded or broadcast performance has the opportunity to judge a performance only by what he hears. The active listener, by which I mean those present at a performance, whether as performer or hearer, has all his senses working overtime, and can thus react very differently. The answer: keep supporting live music – it will do both you and the musicians we depend on the power of good!

Martin Bird

Julia Worthington - The Elgars' American friend

Richard Smith

8 June 2013 will see the one hundredth anniversary of the death of Julia Worthington, a great friend of the Elgars. In this article I will attempt to give a picture of this lady and her life. Sadly, few letters from her survive but what does emerge from this study is that she was a most delightful and caring person who was loved by both Edward and Alice Elgar.

Julia Apgar Hedden Worthington was born on 21 May 1857 in New York City, the oldest daughter of Edward L. Hedden and Elizabeth C. Apgar. The earliest record of the Hedden family in America can be traced back to the seventeenth century when her ancestor, Edward, married Jane Jones in Newark, New Jersey. They had at least four children, the oldest of which was John, born c. 1698. One of his children was Zadock, born 1754, who served in the American Revolutionary Army as a wagon master and was later imprisoned by the British. One of his sons was Josiah Hedden, born on 23 February 1781 in Newark. Josiah served as an Alderman in New York City in 1811, 1812, 1819, 1824-5 and was appointed a Special Judge in that city in 1832. He was also associated with DeWitt Clinton, who was narrowly defeated by James Madison for US President in 1812 but served as Governor of New York between 1817 and 1822. Josiah married Elizabeth June on 16 November 1803 at John Street Methodist Church in New York City and one of their ten children was Edward Long Hedden, Julia's father.

Edward was born on 24 December 1828 at Howard Street in New York City. For some time he was connected with the Wetmore Cryder mercantile shipping company until it was dissolved in 1884. Its founder, William Wetmore, retired from the business in 1847, a millionaire, and bought 15 acres of land in Newport, Rhode Island, where he built Chateau-sur-Mer, the first of the grand Bellevue Avenue Mansions of the 'Gilded Age'. Meanwhile, Edward Hedden served as an employee of several insurance companies before being appointed Collector of the Port of New York by President Grover Cleveland on 27 June 1885. His role was to collect the taxes from goods arriving at the port.

Sadly though, he only lasted about a year in the job, being forced to resign because of 'weakness and unsuitableness'. As the *New York Times* was to report: 'He was a quiet unobtrusive man, whose industrious habits and honourable methods won him many friends'¹ but 'it soon became evident that he was lacking in executive ability, and was entirely without force of character.'²

His period of office was marked by a number of court cases, undoubtedly the most interesting being Hedden v Nix which eventually went to the US Supreme Court. The Nix family had imported tomatoes from the West Indies in the spring of 1886, and Hedden had imposed the duty on them

1 *New York Times* obituary, 7 September 1893.

2 *New York Times*, 7 August 1886.

payable for all imports of vegetables. John Nix claimed that tomatoes were fruit, and therefore not subject to duty. In a judgement, disputed to this day, the Supreme Court ruled that tomatoes were in fact vegetables and the Nix family lost their case.³

Meanwhile, on 17 January 1855, Edward had married Elizabeth Caroline Apgar and the couple had five children, Julia Apgar, Maria Louisa, Edward Long Jr., Elizabeth Caroline and Duncan Cryder. Little information seems to survive about Julia's childhood but, on 16 April 1879, she married Charles Campbell Worthington.



Julia's father, Edward Long Hedden.



Julia's father in law, Henry Rossiter Worthington.

The Worthington family

The Worthington family can trace their ancestry back even further than the Heddens. Nicholas Worthington, born around 1630⁴, was a member of a large landowning family in Lancashire. He emigrated to Saybrook in Connecticut in 1649 or 1650 after having his estates confiscated during the Cromwellian Wars. He married around 1668 and died on 6 September 1683 in Hadley, Massachusetts. Several generations followed, culminating, on 17 December 1817, in the birth of Henry Rossiter Worthington in New York City. On 29 October 1839 Henry married Sara Jane Newton, the daughter of Commodore John Thomas Newton of Alexandria, Virginia. Newton was

3 US Supreme Court 'Nix v Hedden' 149 U.S.304 10 May 1893.

4 One source gives his birth year as 1640, but this date seems too late.

to command USS *Missouri* which made the first powered crossing of the Atlantic by an American steam warship in August 1843. Henry and Sara had seven children, of which the youngest boy was Charles Campbell who was born on 6 January 1854 in Brooklyn, New York.

Henry R. Worthington became a hydraulic engineer while still a very young man. As early as 1840 he designed an experimental steam canal boat which was fairly successful except that when it was stopped it became necessary to resort to a hand pump to keep the steam boiler supplied with water. To overcome this, he invented an independent automatic feeding pump which was controlled by the water level in the steam boiler. During the next few years, Henry produced a series of inventions and, in 1859, established a pump-manufacturing plant in New York which eventually employed over two hundred men. Many of his inventions remain in use today and apart from amassing a fortune, Henry was also a founder of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, acting as the Society's first vice-president. His success enabled him to buy an estate at Irvington on the Hudson River, some twenty miles north of New York City.

The only one of his sons to show an interest in the pump business was Charles Campbell who had graduated from the School of Mines at Columbia University. He then joined his father and, following the latter's death on 17 December 1880, took over the company. During his tenure there, he contributed hundreds of important improvements and development in pumps, compressors, and other machines. The business thrived, plants were opened in many European cities, and several honours were bestowed at several expositions. He also administered the affairs of the Holley Steam Pump Company of Buffalo, New York, which he owned and controlled. He was a director of banks and corporations and a patron of the Metropolitan Opera and Philharmonic Societies.



Julia's husband, Charles Campbell Worthington.

Charles and Julia had five children: Julia Hedden, Henry Rossiter, Charles Campbell Jr., Edward Hedden and Reginald Stuart.⁵ Julia became an 'indefatigable hostess' entertaining members of various embassies, the brother of the Archduke of Austria, a nephew of the Tsar of Russia as well as many artists and composers. One American newspaper described her as: 'Holding out the hand of friendship and assistance to young artists, musicians, authors and poets of promise.' She hosted many musical events in Irvington and at her apartment on Fifth Avenue. She had also

⁵ The repeated use of the same names in the Worthington family causes some difficulty to the biographer. In particular, Julia Hedden Sawtelle (née Worthington) should not be confused with her mother, Julia Apgar Worthington, (née Hedden), the subject of this article.

modelled for the Angel in the famous Milmore Memorial,⁶ *The Angel of Death Staying the Hand of the Sculptor*, by the American artist Daniel Chester French. This work was first exhibited in Paris on 1 May 1892. A tribute, both to French's work and to the character of Julia Worthington, was paid by his daughter, in her biography of her father:

She walks with a majestic tread. She wears draperies that fall in heavy folds about her superb figure. She has great curving wings that sweep down on either side. She has a severe dignity and yet a kind of sublime warmth... There could be no fear in contemplating such a presence, for she is both sublime and touchingly tender and she comes as a mother might come, to offer refreshment and hope.⁷

For some years Charles and Julia's marriage seems to have survived, but in 1898 they separated. Next year Charles sold his interests in Worthington Pumps but remained president of the International Steam Pump Company until his 'retirement' a year later at the age of 46. Then, on 10 June 1900, their son, Charles Campbell Jr. died aged only 16. Eventually the separation ended in divorce in 1905.

Charles now took up summer residence at Shawnee-on-Delaware in New Jersey, where he created Buckwood Park. A great sportsman, Worthington brought deer to his 5,000 acre estate and other wild life were protected there. He designed and built the Buckwood Inn, a summer resort. Surrounding the Inn he created the Shawnee Country Club with its still famous golf course. Worthington was an avid golfer having played in Scotland when the old feather ball was used. He had built a six-hole course on his estate at Irvington. One of the offshoots of his golfing hobby was



Julia's house 'Rossiter' in Irvington. The house was demolished in the 1950s to enable the main road into the village to be widened. (Photo: Irvington Public Library).

⁶ The Milmore Memorial was commissioned by the family of the Boston sculptor, Martin Milmore (1844-1883) to honour his memory and that of his brother Joseph (1841-1886). The original bronze statue, cast in Paris in 1892, was erected the following year in Forest Hills Cemetery, Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts. When the plaster model of the statue was exhibited at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, it received widespread acclaim.

⁷ Cresson, Margaret French: *Journey into Fame* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1947), 168.

the formation of the US PGA in 1912.

Meanwhile Julia remained at their house called 'Rossiter' at Irvington, where she paid for the installation of a large multi-face clock in the new town hall which was opened in 1902. She had many interests including being a manager of the 'Robin's Nest', a charity caring for the health of deserving children on the city's streets. She loved music and was a member of the National Arts Club and the St. Cecilia Society. She was also a Daughter of the American Revolution, a non-profit organisation for women who are directly descended from a person involved in gaining United States' independence.⁸

Julia and the Elgars

On 7 June Edward and Alice Elgar left Dover for New York aboard the liner *Deutschland*. This was at the instigation of Samuel Simons Sanford, Professor of Music at Yale, who became a great friend of the composer and had arranged for him to receive an honorary Doctorate at the University. Despite her luxury, the *Deutschland* was plagued with vibration from her high-speed engines as well as excessive rattling and noise that disturbed her passengers. Alice Elgar wrote in her diary that: 'After Cherbourg they let us have a Cabin de luxe. Changed all our things. E. rather badsley, headache &c - Dreadful vibration & noise. E. very mis.'⁹

By 10 June Elgar was so unwell that Alice had to dine alone where she was invited to the Captain's table. Next day Edward was much better and the couple began to make interesting acquaintances with other passengers. One of the most popular gathering places on the ship for the first class passengers was the café with its bar and elegant glass roof. Alice Elgar's diary infers that it was on 12 June that they first met Julia Worthington.

After their arrival in New York, Julia wrote to Alice from 'Rossiter' on 24 June:

I learn that our Yale is to confer a degree on Sir Edward. My congratulations to him and to you. Write me a little letter when you have time, and tell me of your good times. I am hoping for you here, when ever you tell me.¹⁰

The degree ceremony was duly completed on 28 June and, following this, the Elgars spent a few pleasant days visiting Boston and the villages surrounding Sanford's house at New Haven. The main problem for Edward,

The first class café aboard the *Deutschland* where Julia and the Elgars may have met.



8 *New York Times* obituary, 9 June 1913.

9 Alice Elgar diary, 9 June 1905.

10 Elgar Birthplace Museum (hereafter EBM) letter 5847, 24 June 1905.

however, was the 'fearful' heat and high humidity of an American summer then unrelieved by air conditioning. The promise of some respite came on 6 July when Alice received another letter from Julia Worthington:

Dear Lady Elgar,

I was so glad to hear from you and to know all that you are doing. Have thought of you often. Do write me soon and tell me when you will come to me. I was wishing for Sir Edward on Sunday, to help me mother these little swallows just out of the shell. They fell down my big hall chimney. I made a little nest for them & kept them warm & they lived. In the morning I gave them milk & they seemed grateful for the new food & then had the gardener climb to the top of the chimney and put them in the nest. I do hope the real mother will find them; but they did wish for Sir Edward when I told them how he mothered his little birds at home.

I am planning for Worcester – and shall await your instruction for dates, Hotel &c. Hoping to have you here soon – anytime. You will find me.

Very truly yours,
Julia A. H. Worthington.

Be sure to tell me your sailing date when you come here.¹¹

On 8 July, Julia came to New York where she joined Alice for Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral. Just after midday on 9 July, she and the Elgars and left from New York to travel by ferry up the Hudson to 'Rossiter' in the beautifully peaceful village of Irvington. Here they had a delightful time and were much impressed by the large house. Its gardens bordered the estate once owned by

11 EBM letter 5820, 6 July 1905.

Elgar photographed on board the *Kaiser Wilhelm II* during his voyage from his first visit to the USA in 1905.



The Elgar party outside Castle House at the 1905 Three Choirs Festival in Worcester. From left to right are Canon Charles Gorton, Carice, Annie Gandy, Alice Elgar and Julia Worthington. (Photo: Geoffrey Hodgkins collection)



the author Washington Irving after which the village of Irvington was renamed in 1852. To Edward, though, perhaps the house's greatest asset was having electric fans which helped to overcome the humidity. At the conclusion of their visit, Julia drove them back to Dobbs Ferry where they caught the boat back to Manhattan, leaving for Liverpool on 11 July aboard the *Kaiser Wilhelm II*.

In September 1905, Julia joined the Elgar party at Castle House on College Green for the Three Choirs Festival in Worcester. During her stay she signed Carice's autograph book and visited the Atkins family who 'were greatly taken by her vivacious charm'. They too became life-long friends.¹² On 14 September Elgar conducted *The Apostles* and Canon Gorton who was in the audience remembered: 'I sat in the millionaire's seat next to a delightful American lady, Mrs. Worthington.'¹³

On 21 December, Julia wrote to Edward from a flat on West 40th Street in New York City which she just taken:

Dear Sir Edward,

This is for you, and I will write next to Lady Elgar. I am almost settled here now, and wish you could call in ... I said it was unique & unlike anything in N.Y. It is very comfortable and all sun & light & green & piano — all these I must have. I tried to write you on our Thanksgiving Day here — but thought instead and at the lovely service gave many thanks for the Elgars. After my return there was Elgar everywhere. I met Mr. Sanford at Delmonico's the night I came from the steamer; on Saturday last to hear your rehearsal; and on Sunday played at the Damrosch Concert, & went again Tuesday. But I wonder if Damrosch has heard you conduct the Allegro. I didn't like him & wanted to take the baton myself. I heard you at the theatre too, recently, and have all my treasures here; so I am not that far away. Santa Claus had a stocking to go to Hereford. I hope there is snow and his reindeer are out!

All blessings to you for 1906.

Ever yours,

Julia A.H. Worthington.¹⁴

At the same time she sent a Christmas greeting card to Elgar's daughter, 'Master Peter' and 'Miss Mopsie', the pet rabbits belonging to Carice.¹⁵

On 15 April 1906 Edward and Alice arrived in New York on his way to Cincinnati where he was to conduct at their prestigious biennial festival. In the evening they met Julia Worthington and the conductors Frank and Walter Damrosch. The Elgars stayed at the Country Club in Cincinnati, and were later joined by Julia, who arrived in time to attend some of the rehearsals. At the performance of *The Apostles* on 2 May, Alice Elgar shared a box with Julia who was reported as wearing 'a beautiful ecru lace gown, relieved by a touch of rose. Her hair was worn low and suited to perfection the classic outline of her face and head.'¹⁶ Julia was also with Alice for *The Dream of Gerontius* on 5 May, and looked 'most artistic in a pale grey gown and grey hat with clustering grey plumes.' After returning to New York Alice and Julia often went shopping together in New York and enjoyed a series of social functions, before the Elgars left for England on 18 May.

12 E. Wulstan Atkins, *The Elgar-Atkins Friendship* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1984) 140.

13 Letter from Canon Gorton to his wife, Ella, dated 14 September 1905, included in Geoffrey Hodgkins, *Somewhere Further North* (Poneke Press: Rickmansworth, 2004) 139.

14 EBM letter 5817, 21 December 1905.

15 EBM BA.1977.1384.4.

16 *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 3 May 1906.

Less than two months were to pass before Julia arrived at Plâs Gwyn; her first visit specifically to see the Elgars. Edward met her at the station on 7 July and they spent the next two days showing her around the county, including a visit to Hereford Cathedral before she returned to London on the 10th. Full rehearsals for the premiere of *The Kingdom* began at Birmingham Town Hall on 29 September, Julia Worthington returning from London for both these and the first performance on 3 October.

Elgar's last two American visits

During his previous visit to America, Elgar had been persuaded by Andrew Carnegie to return to conduct at the opening of the new Carnegie Institute building at Pittsburgh on 11 April 1907. He arrived in New York on 11 March, this time without Alice. There he went to stay with Julia at her at her recently acquired palatial flat, the 'Wyoming' at 853 Seventh Avenue. An impression of the interior at the time of Elgar's visit was later given by Irene Worthington, the wife of one of Julia's three surviving sons:

Wallpaper of satin and two concert grand pianos side by side. It was rumoured that during her many visits to England and her villa in Italy, that she actually took a piano with her. Both Julia and her daughter, Julia Hedden Sawtelle, were accomplished amateur pianists.¹⁷

While in New York, Elgar conducted performances of both *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*, the latter the American premiere. On 30 March Alice received a 'rejoiceful card from Mrs. Worthington ... Was getting mis for hunger of news'.¹⁸ Elgar's visit to smoky Pittsburgh was an unhappy one, made more unpleasant by Carnegie's stinginess. As he wrote to Clare Stuart-Wortley: 'My love to you all from an unlovely place.'¹⁹

At last, on 14 April, he returned to 'The Wyoming' in New York, writing to Canon Gorton:

After our sweet & delightful time in Capri it is a hideous change to be in Western America: here, in New York, I have that dear & wonderful woman, Mrs. Worthington, to speak to; she sends her love.²⁰

Edward spent six days in New York before returning to England. It would appear that Julia had now acquired a house on Highland Road, Bromley, in Kent, which she unsurprisingly named 'Rossiter'. From here she wrote to Mrs. Nicholas Kilburn about Edward's stay:

We had some beautiful music & often thought & spoke of you. *The Kingdom* will always be associated with Mr Kilburn.²¹

Soon afterwards Julia paid the Elgars another visit at Plâs Gwyn. It may have been at this time

17 From a speech given by Julia Worthington's grandson, Chester Munroe Sawtelle, at the one hundredth anniversary of the Worthington Memorial Chapel of St. Joseph of Arimathea located at Elmsford, New York State, on 30 April 1983.

18 Alice Elgar diary, 30 March 1907.

19 EBM postcard file for 1907.

20 Robert Anderson, *Elgar* (London: Dent, 1993) 78.

21 Durham University Add.MSS.816/77 (Postmarked 9 May 1907).

that she was given the nickname 'Pippa' from Browning's *Pippa Passes*. Browning's character was a young, blameless silk-winding girl who wandered innocently through the town, her mind attributing kindness and virtue to the people she passed. She sang as she went, her song influencing others to act for good. This nickname, possibly coined by Canon Gorton, somewhat of a Browning expert, perfectly described Julia's character.

Pippa attended the first performance of *Pomp and Circumstance March No.4* at the Queen's Hall on the evening of 24 August 1907. Towards the end of the year, Edward completed his four part-songs, *Op. 53*, the second of which, *Deep in my Soul*, he dedicated to Julia Worthington. The words, by Lord Byron, may indicate his feelings for 'Pippa':

Deep in my soul that tender secret dwells,
Lonely and lost to light for evermore,
Save when to thine my heart responsive swells,
Then trembles into silence as before.

In September 1908, Julia returned to Worcester for the Three Choirs Festival. The programme included the premiere of *The Wand of Youth Suite No.2*, again conducted by Elgar. The day after this performance, on 10 September, Pippa wrote on the back of a picture postcard of Elgar to Sanford: 'All going well - weather fine - met Canon Gorton. Greetings from all. Wish you were here too.'²²

On 6 April 1909, Pippa cabled the Elgars to tell them that she had taken Villa Silli at Careggi near Florence and invited them to join her for a prolonged stay.²³ At this time Edward was very depressed, 'not caring for music' as Alice recorded in her diary²⁴, and they accepted her offer with alacrity. After their arrival, Alice Elgar wrote to Alice Stuart-Wortley:

I have been wanting to send you a few lines from this lovely place, & to tell you Edward is looking so well & rested ... E. had a pleasant time in Paris which he enjoyed much, I & Carice joined him for two very pleasant days, & then with our dear & kind hostess, arrived from U.S.A., we proceeded here, & till Sunday have had glorious weather, the world bathed in sunshine, the air scented with flowers & resounding with nightingales -. It is a very nice spacious Villa, the hall in Roman days was the Atrium & in later ages, it was one of the Medici Villas.²⁵

The Elgars remained at Careggi until 28 May 1909. During this time they saw a great deal of Florence and made various excursions, but Elgar managed to spend many hours on his sketches. Pippa's keen interest had enabled him to make some progress on the Violin Concerto.

By the end of July, Julia had joined the Elgars at Plâs Gwyn, later accompanying them to Harley House in Hereford for the Three Choirs Festival. There they were joined by Frank Schuster, the Kilburns and Sanford Terry. It was at this Festival that Edward produced a spoof programme for a 'Concert & Firework Jerkation' which would include a magnificent set piece, 'Mrs Worthington discovering the North Pole'. Pippa finally returned to America in October 1909, only to return Plâs Gwyn in August 1910.

22 Yale University Microfilm, HM 27, Samuel Sanford - frames 81-82.

23 The Villa may have been owned, at this time, by the American impressionist painter, William Merritt Chase (1849 -1916).

24 Alice Elgar diary, 29 January 1907.

25 EBM, transcript by Clare Stuart-Wortley.



The Villa Silli at Careggi near Florence (Photo: Elgar Birthplace Museum).

Julia Worthington in the garden of the Villa Silli. (Photo: Elgar Birthplace Museum).



26 Jerrold Northrop Moore, Edward Elgar - The Windflower letters (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 32-33.

Towards the end of 1910, Elgar wrote several letters to Alice Stuart-Wortley making oblique and perhaps slightly teasing references to Pippa. In one he asked 'How far is it from York to New York: do you know?'; in another: '... but I doubt if the subscriber will accept orders (save from New York!)'; and in a third: 'How wide the Atlantic seems some days'.²⁶

On 10 November Fritz Kreisler gave the first performance of the Elgar Violin Concerto. The work contained the dedication in Spanish 'Aquí está encerrada el alma de'. (Herein is enshrined the soul of). The identity of the five dots has long puzzled Elgarians. Alice Elgar maintained that the five points represented Julia Worthington, or Pippa, in whose Careggi home some of the sketches of the Concerto and of the Second Symphony were written. Others have asserted that they referred to Alice Stuart-Wortley, while still more think it may have been Helen Weaver.

On 25 March 1911, Elgar left England for his last visit to America to tour with the Sheffield Chorus. He arrived in New York on 1 April where he was ‘looked after well & motherly by our dear friend [Mrs. Worthington]’ as he wrote to Frances Colvin.²⁷ On the same day he wrote to Carice: ‘I hate it all except New York friends and Pippa is a dear thing ...’.²⁸ Elgar then went to Toronto to conduct *The Dream of Gerontius*, but shortly afterwards returned to New York and Pippa. As he wrote to Alice Stuart-Wortley: ‘I rushed from Buffalo to N.Y. where Pippa & nice Mr. Gray took care of me.’²⁹ This was only a brief stay before he rejoined the touring party for Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Chicago, Milwaukee and St Paul. After a miserable time in these cities, Elgar finally returned to New York on 1 May where he said a sad farewell to Pippa two days later.

On 19 June 1911 Elgar was awarded the Order of Merit and Pippa left a brief note at Plâs Gwyn in his absence. ‘Hail to thee O.M. all are happy for you’ and, on the reverse:

Alice dear – are you not happy for Edward? We all are – in the world! I read the honour in the paper this a.m. – I hurried over as you requested. I am going out to luncheon. So sorry not to be here. I was away all Sunday until 8 – with engagements lunching at ... Marguerite’s & so today a thousand things kept me until too late & I had to be home early for some people who wrote they are coming again. I must go now – so then all love for you all,

Ever yours, Pippa³⁰

The last letter so far discovered from Pippa was to Alice Kilburn following her visit to the Elgars new house in Hampstead:

I am so happy to know the Elgar new home in every corner. I know his [Edward’s] digestion is the root of all evil.³¹

But in February 1913, before leaving for Rome, the Elgars heard that Julia was gravely ill. Alice wrote to Troyte Griffiths:

I know you will be sorry to hear that just as we were leaving Rome – we had a grievous shock, hearing that our darling Pippa was hopelessly ill, that awful disease Cancer – & even that she might not be here much longer – We were so shocked & our sorrow is deep – They say she has no idea of the malady & nothing must be said to disturb her or awake her suspicions in any way, so we write as if we had heard nothing – think of that radiant Pippa, & such a friend to us – & at Rome she had been almost with us in memory.³²

27 EBM letter 3426 (dated 3 April 1911).

28 EBM letter 148 (dated 3 April 1911).

29 Moore *op.cit.* 83 (dated 18 April 1911). Herbert Willard Gray (1868-1950) was Novello’s representative in New York.

30 EBM letter 4981 (undated). ‘Marguerite’ may refer to Marguerite Merington who was born in Stoke Newington in 1857, but emigrated to America with her family while still a child. She wrote many plays, and also edited the letters of General Custer. A friend of Julia Worthington, she came to lunch at Severn House in 1914 when she and Alice had ‘Much talk of dear dear Pippa’. Marguerite died in 1951.

31 Durham University Add.MSS. 816/82 (dated 26 May [1912?]).

32 EBM letter 7244 (dated 25 February 1913).

As the weeks drew on Alice recorded in her diary how she was ‘thinking of Pippa’³³ and then, on 9 June 1913 they had ‘a cable to say our beloved Pippa had passed away’. On 17 June she wrote to Troyte: ‘Sunday week our dear Pippa left this world’.³⁴

On 4 August 1914, Julia’s will was published. The net value was \$209,631 (approximately £3,250,000 in today’s values) plus her two homes in Irvington, ‘Rossiter’ (worth \$38,050) and ‘The Shrubberies’ (\$28,520). Her estate was divided between her daughter, Julia, and three surviving sons, Reginald, Henry Rossiter junior and Edward. The latter appears to have had a problem with alcohol and because of this and his unfaithfulness, was successfully sued for divorce by his wife, Janet, in 1915.

But what of Julia’s ex-husband, Charles? In 1906 he was married again, to Maud Clement Rice, and the couple had two daughters, Sarah and Alice. As previously described, Charles was a keen golfer initiating the negotiations which resulted in the formation of US PGA in 1916. He supervised the design and construction of a 9-hole course for the Calendo Golf Club and also set up a similarly sized course at his own estate at Shawnee. He then encountered the problem keeping the courses mowed. Initially he imported a herd of sheep from Scotland complete with a shepherd and his dogs. This did not prove very successful, and to overcome the problem, he designed the world’s first commercially successful gang mower. This led him to found the Shawnee Mower Company, later to become the Worthington Mower Company. His designs were so successful that they continued to be used during the Second World War for mowing airfields. After Charles’ death on 21 October 1944, the Buckwood Inn was sold to Fred Waring of Fred Waring and his Pennsylvanians.³⁵

*Richard Smith is a retired telecommunications engineer who, initially as a hobby, and latterly as a part time business, has written over 25 books on historical aviation. His retirement allowed him the time needed to research into his other consuming passion, the life and music of Elgar. He became an active member of the Elgar Society in 1999 and published his first article, ‘Why Americans graduate to Elgar’ on the Society’s website. This was followed by a piece for the Society’s Journal on the American reaction to Elgar’s oratorio *The Apostles* and a book, ‘Elgar in America’ published by Elgar Editions in 2005. He is a currently Secretary of the West Midlands Branch Committee and lives in Gloucestershire with his American wife, Joan, and several cats, one of whom is named ‘Marco’.*

33 Alice Elgar diary 11 May 1913.

34 EBM letter 7228 (dated 17 June 1913).

35 Worthington, H R, *The Genealogy of Charles Campbell Worthington and Some History of Worthington State Park, New Jersey*, published on the internet, 25 December 2002.

Redeeming the Second Symphony

Tom Kelly

The programme note for a concert performance or introduction for a radio broadcast of Elgar Second Symphony will invariably mention the cool reception of the work on its first appearances in 1911. The musical complexities, and variety of moods,¹ all too easily perplex an audience new to this music. But were things quite as sad in 1911 as many commentators have come to believe?

One of the most repeated stories of the reception of the work in 1911 is that of W.H. (Billy) Reed many years later in 1939: 'The audience seemed unmoved and not a little puzzled. ... That the composer noticed the coolness of its reception at this first performance was very clear. He was called to the platform several times, but missed that unmistakable note perceived when the audience, even an English audience, is thoroughly roused and worked up, as it was after the violin Concerto or the first Symphony. He said pathetically to the author: "What is the matter with them, Billy? They sit there like a lot of stuffed pigs".'²

There is no reason to suppose that Elgar did not say what is reported. But Reed is most unlikely to have been in the orchestra at the very first performance.³ Billy Reed was a violinist with the London Symphony Orchestra and the first performance was given by the Queens Hall Orchestra for which Henry Wood had stipulated there were to be 'no deputies'.

I have always found the Second Symphony to be one of those works where a delay in applause after it ends is natural and at one with its concluding mood. Despite listening to the work many, many times, I am still with the 'stuffed pigs' in inwardly digesting for at least half a minute and sometimes longer rather than wanting to clap or shout acclaim. Moreover would you want to hear this music in the first half of a concert starting as late as 8.30pm? Many first time hearers at the premiere would surely have had half a mind for the interval and the thought of more unfamiliar works to follow.

Evidence of Elgar's personal disappointment was confirmed by Henry Wood, who certainly was present at the premiere, but note the not often quoted but upbeat conclusion to his recollection: 'Elgar was very much upset and disappointed because the public did not receive his second Symphony with more warmth. He received three or four recalls, but I shall never forget his face when I opened the curtains at the side of the platform. "Henry," he said disconsolately, "they don't like it. They don't like it!" Nevertheless, I cheered him up for I knew what the public was slow to

1 Described very convincingly and knowledgeably in the articles by Andrew Neill and Julian Rushton in *ESJ* August 2011 Vol.17, No.2, 7-23 and 24-29 respectively.

2 W.H.Reed *Elgar* (London: Dent, 1939 reprinted 1949), 105

3 Conceivably Reed could have been in the wings or the Green Room after the performance though one wonders how welcome he would have been at an event promoted by Robert Newman and Henry Wood even so long after the breakaway to form the LSO.

understand, that it was a great Symphony. I patted him on the shoulder and persuaded him to go on to take his call; but he left the hall later, sad and disappointed. I felt very sorry for him, but he only needed to bide time, and now as we know No.2 has taken its rightful place.'⁴

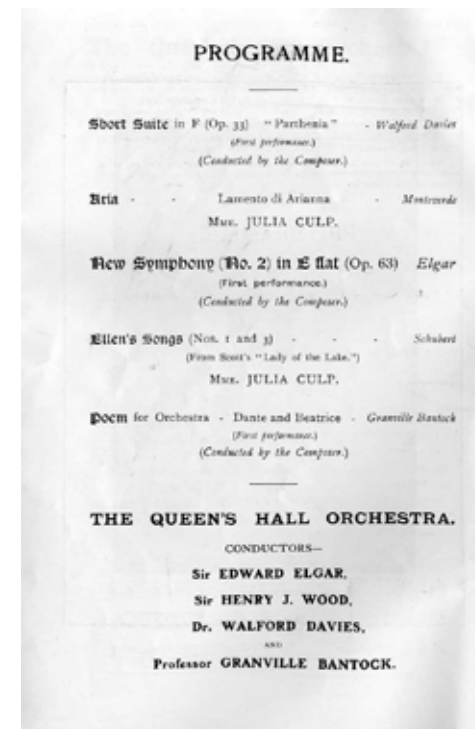
In the following three weeks there were further performances of the Second Symphony all conducted by Elgar and played by the London Symphony Orchestra. The incident reported by Reed might well have occurred at any one of these performances. But the fact that two of these performances were special concerts on 8 and 15 June 1911 put on specifically to encourage the listening public to become more familiar with the Second Symphony hardly suggests a lack of promoter confidence in the work following the premiere on 24 May.

Another recurrent refrain has been that of audiences staying away. At none of the first four performances was there a full house. There are good reasons for this which had nothing to do with appreciation for the music of the Second Symphony, namely concert congestion and ticket prices. The date and circumstances of the premiere inevitably meant that the sensational success of the First Symphony and Violin Concerto would not be repeated.

The programme for the London Musical Festival⁵ gives part of the reason. The premiere of the Second Symphony was given in the first half of a concert on a Wednesday night devoted to new works by English composers. It was the third concert in a series of six on consecutive days and was preceded by performances of *The Dream of Gerontius* on the Monday night and a performance by Fritz Kreisler of the Elgar Violin Concerto on the Tuesday afternoon (in a concert of concertos conducted by Henry Wood and shared with Pablo Casals!).

The ticket prices for the London Musical Festival were unusually high; nearly double those for the usual orchestral concerts at Queens Hall. For the individual concerts the price of the most expensive reserved seat was 15 shillings and the cheapest unreserved seat was five shillings (compared with usual prices of 10s. 6d. for the most expensive reserved seats and as little as one shilling in the unreserved Balcony). It was the sparse audience in the Balcony on 24 May which was most commented upon at the time; the more expensive seats appeared to have been reasonably well filled.

It is easy to imagine that even enthusiasts for Elgar's music might have chosen to go to hear the outstanding soloists on the Tuesday afternoon, and to miss the Wednesday evening concert. A repeat performance of the Violin Concerto by Kreisler must have been a very competitive attraction for the paying public



4 Sir Henry Wood *My Life of Music* (London: Gollancz, 1938), 326-7.

5 Courtesy of Elgar Birthplace Museum.

unable to afford the price or the time for more of the London Musical Festival concerts.

The 24 May concert, as Andrew Neill has already noted, included first performances of works composed and conducted by Walford Davies and Granville Bantock. There were also arias and songs performed by Julia Culp (who had sung the part of the Angel in *The Dream of Gerontius* given two nights previously) with Henry Wood. After Elgar's earlier strictures in his University of Birmingham lectures about giving more opportunities for playing the works of English composers, there is no reason to think that he would regard this as the wrong sort of programme. Indeed this pattern of English music was repeated in the concert for the International Musical Congress on 1 June at which Elgar's second performance of the work (and first with the LSO) was given. In the same programme were works by Alexander Mackenzie, Frederic Cowen, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, William Wallace, William Bell, and Ethel Smyth to impress the gathering of music's 'great and good'.

In the spring of 1911 there was an abundance of concerts of music by English, or should I say British, composers. For example the closing concert of the season of the New Symphony Orchestra on 2 May, conducted by Landon Ronald, consisted of works by Henry Gibson, York Bowen, Balfour Gardiner, William Wallace and the *Somerset Rhapsody* by Gustav Holst. At Queen's Hall on 16 June, the day after the last of the three performances of the Second Symphony by Elgar with the LSO, Thomas Beecham gave an all-Delius concert with his own Beecham Symphony Orchestra and the Edward Mason Choir.

Perhaps Elgar should have followed the example of Walford Davies whose 'new Symphony' in G Major was announced in April for a concert on 15 May by the LSO and Nikisch but then postponed. This work had its premiere, conducted by Walford Davies himself, on 4 November and was praised in a review in *The Times* as 'one of the most virile contributions to abstract symphonic form which have appeared in recent years'.⁶ By bringing out his work in the autumn of 1911, Walford Davies seems to have caught the right moment for a positive reception.

Given the impending breach with Novello, there might be a temptation to suspect that Elgar's publishers for the Second Symphony had not given as much to its promotion as they had to the First Symphony or Violin Concerto. This does not appear to be the case, at least on the evidence of the Novello house magazine *The Musical Times*.

A lengthy analysis of the work by Ernest Newman was published⁷ in May in good time before the premiere. (Mind you, anyone hearing the work for the first time would surely have been perplexed by Newman's concluding claim that 'no two words could better describe the main qualities of this Second Symphony of Elgar's than "jocundity and sweetness"!') Also, a copy of the miniature score had reached Elgar, and was presumably on sale, by mid-May, allowing sight-reading critics and enthusiasts to sample the music at home or to dissect the work for themselves before hearing it.

In July *The Musical Times* reported that Nikisch had expressed 'unbounded admiration' for the new Symphony and had arranged to conduct performances of it in Berlin and Hamburg. Continental performances had also been settled to take place at Vienna and Munich; and performances in the United States were 'in course of negotiation'.⁸ The first provincial performance took place at Harrogate on 9 August 'under the direction of Mr Julian Clifford' but otherwise business in Britain outside London was sparse, at least by comparison with the First Symphony.

6 *The Times*, 6 November 1911, 7.

7 Ernest Newman, 'Elgar's Second Symphony' *The Musical Times* (May 1911) 295-300.

8 *The Musical Times* (July 1911) 454.

Looming over, and perhaps explaining in part, the plethora of British orchestral music in 1911 was the Coronation of King George V which took place on 22 June. A work dedicated to the previous King, and with a sad elegy (even if not a funeral march) as its second movement, was hardly in keeping with the euphoric, patriotic upsurge in mid 1911.

It seems reasonable to conclude that the Second Symphony failed to catch on because of circumstances which have little to do with the quality of the music. We can speculate as to whether it might have succeeded better if it had been launched in the autumn of 1910 and the Violin Concerto had come later in 1911 or even 1912? But we should surely not be as disappointed with its reception as was Elgar himself.

Elgar bore his disappointments very heavily if only briefly. His relapses after strenuous activity and first performances were frequent enough to show a pattern in his nature and life. How could he not have been worn out in mid 1911 having composed the Second Symphony with such intensity and speed in the winter and then taken ill before embarking, later than planned, on an arduous visit and tour in North America? On his return Elgar threw himself straight into a hugely demanding schedule of conducting and composition. Is it any wonder that he opted out of going to Henry Wood performance of *The Dream of Gerontius* on 22 May and the Coronation on 22 June, and succumbed too easily and too far to disappointment on 24 May?

The Second Symphony is a demanding and complex work which as several perceptive critics noted in 1911 needs repeated listening to fully grasp. Elgar's description of the whole work as a 'passionate pilgrimage of the soul'⁹ says more for his skill at turning out easily quoted and grand-sounding tag lines than it helps prepare listeners for what they are to hear. Elgar's 'rough notes' to assist Rosa Newmarch in writing the note for the premiere concert programme seem more natural and helpful in describing the detail and mood of short passages.¹⁰

Quite rightly, Elgar himself emphasised energy, particularly in the first movement,¹¹ but that is only one of the wide range of moods it explores. The swinging, life affirming passages such as the first theme of the second group in the first movement, and the wonderful opening theme of the finale, and moments of stillness and wistfulness as well as shattering and bleak episodes are all integral parts of the work and the listener experience. The subdued ending is not unusual for Elgar, three of the movements of the First Symphony end quietly. But it is certainly not a call to arms or acclaim.

The First Symphony and Violin Concerto were exceptional successes which hit all the right buttons at just the right time, though whether they were fully understood is another matter. There was no guarantee that such feats could be repeated in the congested and fast moving world of concerts in 1911. But that does not mean that the Second Symphony failed.

Even in the 1920s when Elgar's music was supposed to be well out of fashion, the first broadcast of the Second Symphony to be given by the BBC on 7 March 1924, conducted by Landon

9 Robert Anderson, *Elgar* (London: Dent, 1993), 332, referring back to a conversation with recalled by Canon W. H. Temple Gairdner in Margaret Dundas Gairdner, *W.H.T.G. to his Friends* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1930), 157

10 Elgar's letter of 13 April 1911 to Alfred Littleton at Novello in Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Elgar and his Publishers* (Oxford University Press, 1987), 741-2.

11 Elgar's letter of 29 January 1911 to Alice Stuart-Wortley said of the first movement, which he had just finished, that 'the thing is tremendous in energy' - Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar-the Windflower Letters* (Oxford University Press, 1989), 75

Ronald, was expressly said to be ‘by special request of a large number of broadcasting listeners’.¹² Elgar also recorded the work twice before any recording of the First Symphony. Henry Wood was only one of a long line of British conductors who have performed the work enthusiastically and frequently.¹³

True, the Second Symphony has not attracted overseas performances as much as it deserves. Even if much of Europe and North America still overlook the work, the current generation of Russian conductors such as Ashkenazy and Sinaisky seem to be second to none in their enthusiasm for performing it.

Perhaps it is time to drop or at least tone down the story of neglect and incomprehension of this work. Is Elgar’s Second Symphony any more neglected or misunderstood than Sibelius’ gloomy Fourth Symphony of the same year? Infrequency of performance in the early years may have had more to do with the vexed issue of performance fee, that is, cost, than any lack of audience interest to hear it.

The most receptive listeners and performers in 1911 knew the quality of Elgar’s great new work just as they should do today. So let us give the last word to one of the delegates to the International Musical Congress of 1911, Dr H. Leichentritt of Berlin, who commented that he ‘infinitely’ preferred the Second Symphony to the First.¹⁴

Tom Kelly is retired and lives in Edinburgh where he and his wife Maureen are active members of the Scottish Branch of the Elgar Society.

12 *The Radio Times* (Vol.2 No.23, 29 February 1924), 377.

13 Though one should not ignore the failure of Beecham’s performance in Birmingham in November 1911 – Andrew Neill in *ESJ* (August 2011 Vol.17, No.2), 8. Elgar’s performance at the Worcester Three Choirs Festival in September 1911 drew a big audience. *The Times* (Thursday 14 September 1911, 7).

14 *The Musical Times* (August 1911), 517.

Variations on a Canonical Theme – Elgar and the Enigmatic Tradition

Martin Gough

In November 1899, just five months after the premiere of his *Variations* Op. 36,¹ Elgar expressed surprise that his friend Dora Penny had not yet managed to guess what was, for him, the obvious solution to the challenge he had posed by placing the word ‘Enigma’ above the work’s opening bars.² Over the ensuing years the answer to the riddle has remained notoriously elusive, but one arguably obvious line of enquiry appears to have been overlooked. In this article I shall explore the possibility that the Enigma is an example of an extremely well known type of musical puzzle which has provided a source of amusement and inspiration to a distinguished succession of composers over a period spanning seven centuries. Interpreted in this light the puzzle opens up to reveal music which seems to fit the clues Elgar provided in statements about the Enigma and other first-hand evidence.

‘The “Enigma” I will not explain’

A primary source indispensable to any discussion of this topic is Elgar’s contribution to the programme note for the first performance of the *Variations* on June 19, 1899, in which he stated:

The “Enigma” I will not explain – its ‘dark saying’ must be left unguessed, and I warn you that the apparent connexion between the Variations and the Theme is often of the slightest texture; further, through and over the whole set another and larger theme “goes”, but is not played ...³

Elgar’s language here is teasingly obscure, but his use of the word ‘further’ makes one thing clear: the Enigma and the ‘larger theme’, while possibly related, are separate aspects of the puzzle. From other evidence we know that the Enigma is specifically associated with the theme heard in the first six bars of the work (Example 2), and which on this basis can safely be labelled the ‘Enigma theme’.⁴ This prompts us to ask what enigmatic quality, independent of any role a ‘larger theme’

1 Elgar’s preferred title for the work. Other titles used in published editions are *Variations for Orchestra*, *Variations on an Original Theme* and *Enigma Variations*.

2 Mrs Richard Powell (née Penny – ‘Dorabella’ of variation X), *Memories of a Variation*, (3rd Ed., London: Methuen, 1949), 23 & 119.

3 Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Elgar – a Creative Life* (Oxford University Press, 1984), 270.

4 At Elgar’s request “Enigma” was placed above the theme in the autograph score, and in a letter to August Jaeger dated 30th June 1899 Elgar deletes ‘1st theme’ and substitutes ‘principal motive (Enigma)’. Percy Young, *Letters to Nimrod* (London: Dobson, 1965), 54.

might play, could conceivably be contained within this theme.

The answer, I would like to suggest, is that it is a puzzle canon.

This idea is signposted by three clues. First, in variation IV ('W.M.B.') Elgar set a variant of the theme, modified only by the removal of its crotchet rests, as a canon between oboes and clarinets (Example 1). This canon – hereafter the 'W.M.B. canon' – is stricter than a cursory inspection would suggest, Elgar's addition of passing notes to the clarinet part disguising its otherwise perfect imitation over all but one crotchet beat of the theme's six bar length. It thus seems to offer an obvious pointer to a solution in which canon plays a part, consistent with Elgar's reported assurance that 'elucidation was there, amusingly patent to ear and eye'.⁵ Some accounts of the Enigma theme's origin suggest that it arose entirely from improvisation, and almost subconsciously.⁶ But canons do not happen by chance, and we must therefore conclude that at some stage in the theme's gestation a more active and disciplined process of thought went into this 'austerely simple, internally complex and exquisitely balanced' melody.⁷

Ex. 1. Canon in variation IV ('W.M.B. canon')
(small notes indicate departures from strict imitation)



Second, in setting his canon as a puzzle and labelling it 'Enigma', Elgar would have been following a venerable tradition. This mode of presentation, in which just the leading voice is notated, leaving the reader to realise the other part or parts, was popular in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and attracted many later composers including Bach (who raised the genre to unsurpassed heights), Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Brahms. A canon written in this cryptic form is usually called a puzzle or riddle canon, but other names for it are *canon aenigmaticus*, enigmatic canon and enigma canon.

Third, on his sketch of the Enigma theme (Example 2) Elgar made some curious annotations which have so far defied satisfactory explanation.⁸ At the top of the page, above some pizzicato and arco markings which make little sense in relation to the music on the stove, he pencilled the words 'for fuga'. This term can usually be understood to mean fugue in the modern sense, but between the

5 Elgar's remark to Dora Penny quoted in Marshall Portnoy, 'The Answer to Elgar's Enigma', *Musical Quarterly*, (1985), 205-210.

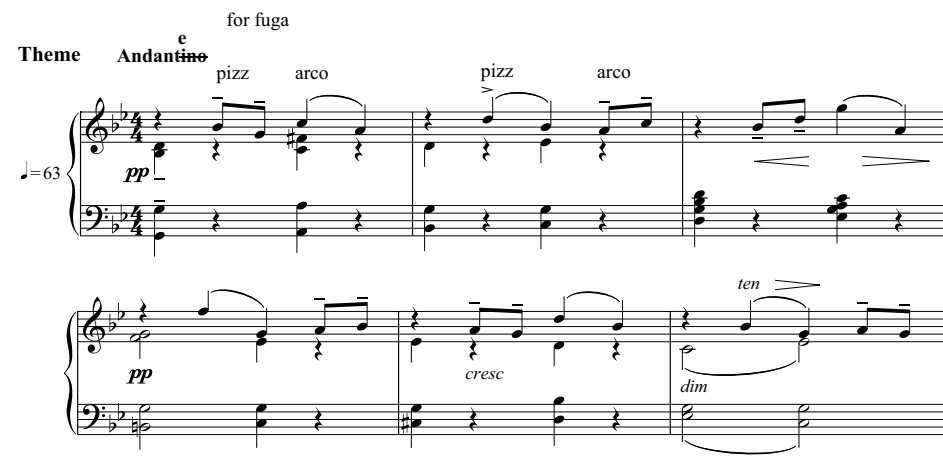
6 Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Elgar – a Creative Life* (Oxford University Press, 1984), 247.

7 Julian Rushton, *Elgar 'Enigma' Variations* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 86. Professor Rushton (p. 11) supports the notion that the tune Elgar played to his wife on 21 October 1898 may have been in his head for some time.

8 British Library, Add. MS 58003, f.2v (© British Library Board, reproduced with permission). A facsimile of the manuscript appears in Percy Young, *Elgar O.M.* (London: Collins, 1955), 113. Jack Westrup, in 'Elgar's Enigma', *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* (1959-60), 79-97, commented on the annotations without reaching a firm conclusion.

Middle Ages and the early 17th century (a period which encompasses the heyday of puzzle canons) it denoted a musical form involving strict imitation⁹ – what today we would call canon.

Ex. 2. Elgar's sketch of the Enigma theme



These clues are strongly suggestive, but the hypothesis finds firm support in the fact that it is possible to construct two musically satisfying canons on the Enigma theme. The first, a three part canon having a close affinity with the theme's familiar orchestral arrangement, lends itself to a setting in which an accompanying part in free counterpoint follows the pizzicato/arco template Elgar outlined in his sketch. The second, a two part canon of an entirely different character, can be played in counterpoint to a well-known tune – a tune which can on that basis be considered a strong candidate for the 'larger theme' alluded to in Elgar's programme note. Significantly, this countermelody is itself a canon subject, and it possesses in consequence a special property which enables it, in a certain sense that I shall explain, to 'go' with each of the variations.

In choosing names for the canons I have tried to imagine the associations that might have been sparked by the words 'enigma' and 'canon' in the mind of a renowned lover of wordplay. One meaning of enigma (usually spelt in this context *aenigma*) is allegory, and this idea fits well with the contrasting character of the two proposed solutions to the puzzle – the one slow, halting and austere, the other brisk, fluent and joyful. A religious allegory, in keeping with the ecclesiastical associations of the 'larger theme', might be built on the dichotomy between the Old and New Testaments, which in certain theological contexts can be referred to as the 'Old Canon' and the 'New Canon', respectively.¹⁰ On the basis of this speculative but not wholly implausible imaginative leap (which is lent a little credibility by the evidence of allegorical significance in some

9 "Fuga." *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*, 2nd ed. rev. Ed. Michael Kennedy. Oxford Music Online. 13 Mar. 2011 <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t237/e4035>>.

10 See for example Adolf Harnack, *The Origin of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1914).

of Bach's canons¹¹) I have adopted these names for the two puzzle canon solutions.

If canon occupies a place in the Enigma solution, a role for Bach (for which others have claimed independent support¹²) would seem a likely corollary, but I shall not explore this avenue further here beyond noting that the discovery of hidden canons in the *Variations* arguably reinforces the striking formal parallels that can be drawn between this work and *The Art of Fugue*.

The Old Canon

The *Old Canon* (Example 3) is an attempted reconstruction of the *fuga* referred to in the cryptic notes Elgar appended to his sketch. Though it is the more complex of the two proposed puzzle canon solutions, and may represent an elaboration of an idea first realised in the *New Canon*, a compelling logic places it first in the sequence. Melodically and harmonically it is very close to the music which opens the *Variations*, and like the Enigma theme in its familiar orchestral rendition it seems to portray the private, introspective side of the composer – an idea consistent with the observation that Elgar seems to have kept his *fuga* a secret. The *New Canon*, by contrast, has an optimistic, outgoing character not unlike that of the Finale of the *Variations*, and it accords well with the public statements Elgar made about the Enigma.

The *Old Canon* is an accompanied canon in three parts, which I have assigned to two violins and a viola. Structurally it bears a close similarity to the W.M.B. canon. As in that canon, the second part (here Violin 2) follows the leader after a crotchet at the lower fifth, but the crotchet rests in the subject are now restored, with the effect that certain pairs of notes which sound together in variation IV are now separated. A third part (Viola 1) follows Violin 2 in the same relationship. Another difference is that the following parts now play in key rather than matching the leader's intervals strictly (the note F being sharpened or naturalised according to context) making this a diatonic canon. In the approach to the final resolution a small adjustment, permissible in the context of a coda, is made to the third canon part, and to ensure correct voice leading in bar 5 (where the W.M.B. canon departs from strict imitation for one crotchet beat) a linking grace note – a device much used by Elgar – has been inserted in the theme and propagated through the following voices.

I have arranged the *Old Canon* with two accompanying parts. The details of the realisation are inevitably speculative. It is one possible solution of many, and could in all likelihood be improved. It will, however, serve as a vehicle for my argument.

In attempting this reconstruction I have read the pizzicato and arco directions in Elgar's sketch as an adjunct to his note 'for fuga', and interpreted them as applying to the accompaniment. Accordingly, in the second beat of every bar and the third beat of alternate bars, pizzicato has been specified in the second viola part (the cello assisting in bar 5). An exception to this rule is made in bar 6, where in a reference to the 'Ysobel' variant of the theme, lifted bow strokes on open strings are substituted. In apparent corroboration of this interpretation, what appear to be pencilled staccato marks, reproduced in Example 2, can be seen in the sketch under the second and third crotchets of this bar. The use of pizzicato, which has been extended to the cello part where musically appropriate, seems well suited to the music, lightening the texture and allowing the

11 Eric Chafe, 'Allegorical Music: The "Symbolism" of Tonal Language in the Bach Canons', *The Journal of Musicology*, 3(4) (Autumn 1984), 340-362.

12 Enigma theories referencing Bach, and in particular the B A C H cryptogram and *The Art of Fugue*, have been advanced by Marshall Portnoy in 'The Answer to Elgar's Enigma' and Ian Parrott in *Elgar* (London: Dent, 1971), 48, and extended in more recent unpublished material.

canonic voices to project clearly.

The role of the accompanying parts is to supply a bass line, complete the harmony and add contrapuntal interest, and they must of course conform to a semblance of Elgar's style. In arranging the *Old Canon* I have further extended this remit in pursuit of a subsidiary idea. In a note for a performance of the *Variations* in 1911 Elgar wrote:

This work, commenced in a spirit of humour and continued in deep seriousness, contains sketches of the composer's friends. It may be understood that these personages comment or reflect on the original theme and each one attempts a solution of the Enigma, for so the theme is called.¹³

I have interpreted this as a clue that the *Old Canon* anticipates elements of each of the thirteen variations portraying the composer's friends. In this conceit W.M.B. (variation IV) comes closest to solving the Enigma by constructing a version of the canon itself, while each of the other friends is imagined to guess a musical idea which features in the accompaniment. With this idea in mind I have arranged the *Old Canon* in such a way that variations I, XII and XIII are prefigured in bar 1; VIII, IX, X and XI in bars 2 and 3; II in bar 4; III and V in bar 5; and VI and VII in bar 6. If this hunch is correct it would suggest that some of the variations have a common origin with the Enigma theme itself, which might explain how a group of them took shape so quickly after Elgar announced his project.¹⁴

Example 3 is headed with a verse from Psalm 49 which (as John Ling has pointed out)¹⁵ has a particular resonance with the Enigma. When Elgar used the phrase 'dark saying' in his programme note he was clearly aware of its long established usage as a synonym for enigma,¹⁶ and he was probably familiar with the parallel appearance of these terms in the text of Psalm 49 as rendered by the translators of the King James Bible and the Vulgate:¹⁷

I will open my dark saying upon the harp –
Inclino ad parabolam aurem meam aperiam in cithara enigma meum

By a happy coincidence (or just possibly design) this verse, in addition to supporting the tentative allegorical link with the Old Testament, finds apt musical expression in the *Old Canon's* pizzicato opening.

13 Note for a performance of the *Variations* in Turin, 1911. Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Elgar – a Creative Life* (Oxford University Press, 1984), 260.

14 A letter to Jaeger dated 24th October 1898, just three days after Elgar first played the Enigma theme to his wife, implies that several variations had by then already been mapped out. Percy Young, *Letters to Nimrod* (London: Dobson, 1965), 27.

15 John Ling, 'The Prehistory of Elgar's 'Enigma'', *The Elgar Society Journal* Vol.15 No.5 (July 2008), 6-10.

16 Geoffrey Hodgkins, in the *The Elgar Society Journal* (Sept 1979), 30, pointed out that the definition of 'enigma' in Webster's dictionary begins 'A dark saying ...' and ends '... to be guessed'.

17 Ian Parrott *Elgar* (London: Dent, 1971, 46) cites a letter to Jaeger in evidence that Elgar knew his Vulgate.

Ex. 3. Old Canon

'I will open my dark saying upon the harp'

Andante lento

Violin 1
Violin 2
Viola 1
Viola 2
Violoncello

Viol. 1
Viol. 2
Vla. 1
Vla. 2
Vc.

Copyright © Martin Gough 2013

The New Canon

A realisation of the *New Canon* is shown in Example 4. This is a two part canon accompanying a *cantus firmus* hymn tune – a form used by Bach in his celebrated organ chorale *Canonic Variations on 'Vom Himmel hoch da komm ich her'*, BWV 769, with which Elgar (an organist and the son of an organist) is likely to have been familiar. A puzzle canon by Mendelssohn printed in the *Musical Times* in February and April 1896 is also of interest as a possible model (not least because Elgar quotes Mendelssohn in variation XIII). The puzzle can be solved to reveal a three part accompanied canon with entry intervals identical to those of the *Old Canon* (amongst other similarities). And it has been plausibly argued that this is merely one component of a more elaborate solution involving a famous chorale tune.¹⁸

When the *New Canon* is played unaccompanied the beginnings of a curious and remarkable transformation can be sensed. The F naturals in the second part (which now follows the leader in strict intervallic imitation, as in the W.M.B. canon) steer the tonality away from G minor and towards B flat major, and in this guise the music takes on an entirely new character. There is also a suggestion of a repeating harmonic pattern (VI-II-V-I or I-II-V-I) of a kind found in simple rounds. From this observation it is a short step to identify the hymn tune Tallis's Canon as a possible counterpoint, and the tune is found to fit perfectly if an adjustment is made to its rhythm in the penultimate bar – an accommodation in keeping with the *cantus firmus* tradition as interpreted by Bach, and akin to that which enabled Elgar to fit *God Save the Queen* in counterpoint to the 5/4 melody from Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony.¹⁹ In the course of this radical makeover the bar lines of the Enigma theme are moved by a minim. A trumpet is the natural choice for the *cantus firmus*, and two accompanying string parts complete the arrangement.

That the tune which runs in counterpoint to the *New Canon* should itself be a canon subject is a remarkable coincidence if viewed as the product of chance, but makes perfect sense in the context of a deliberate design. And it is striking that the tune appears here in a setting very similar to that in which it was originally published. Tallis's Canon first appeared, with the title 'Eighth Tune', in Archbishop Parker's Psalter of 1567, as an accompanied two part canon in the key of B flat.²⁰

Tallis, an English composer of the first rank who, like Elgar, faced difficulties on account of his Catholic faith, makes a fitting subject for this conjectured musical tribute. Moreover, the reference to sixteenth century music supplies a context for Elgar's use of the word *fuga*, in place of canon, in his sketch. This historical setting (coupled, perhaps, with an ear for assonance) may also have prompted him to choose Torquato Tasso, a contemporary of Thomas Tallis, to supply the epigraph with which he signed off the *Variations*.²¹

Other factors hinting at a possible Elgarian attribution for the *New Canon* are the satisfying completeness of the musical form (both themes being heard in their entirety), the way the canon preserves impeccable musical logic despite the change of key, and the felicitous phrases which

18 Günter Hartmann, 'Ein Albumblatt für Eliza Wesley: Fragen zu Mendelssohns Englandaufenthalt 1837 – und eine spekulative Antwort', *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, 150/a (1989), 10-14.

19 Elgar's letter to *The Musical Times* suggesting this counterpoint was published in November 1897 and it was reproduced in the October 1900 issue to accompany an article on the composer.

20 The 'Third Tune' from the same set inspired Vaughan Williams's 1910 *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*.

21 *Bramo assai, poco spero, nulla chieggio* – in Elgar's translation, 'I essay much, I hope little, I ask nothing'.

Ex. 4. New Canon

'The trumpet shall sound ... and we shall be changed'

Andante festivo

Copyright © Martin Gough 2013

seem to fall naturally into place in the accompanying parts. The final cadence is characteristic (compare variation IX one bar before figure 35, and bar 60 of the *Nursery Suite* 'Aubade' in the reprise of Elgar's 1878 hymn tune *Drake's Broughton*), and the closing bars recall a phrase from *The Dream of Gerontius* (the third bar of 'The Angel's Farewell'). A notable feature of both canons is the way certain phrases are cut short and completed by other voices, in a manner reminiscent of the type of melody sharing pioneered by Tchaikovsky in the finale of his sixth symphony. Elgar

employed this technique in the *Variations* (at 3:5-6, 55 and 63:2-7) and its spiritual companion *The Music Makers* (at 39:3 – 'A breath of our inspiration'). Its playful use in the canons may be what August Jaeger, who knew at least part of the secret, had in mind when he reportedly described the Enigma as 'a bit of Elgar's humour'.²²

In the spirit of the imagined religious allegory I have headed Example 4 with a suitable quotation from the New Testament (1 Corinthians XV:51-52). The allegorical possibilities can best be summed up by describing the transformative change evident in the music of both the *Variations* and the canons as a journey from darkness to light – a metaphor which resonates with Elgar's use of the phrases 'dark saying' and 'elucidation', with bible passages expressing key tenets of the Christian faith,²³ and with the words of the hymn which has been inseparable from Tallis's Canon since the eighteenth century. Beginning 'Glory to Thee, my God, this night / For all the blessings of the light', Thomas Ken's 1674 text matches a litany of dark sayings with spiritual antidotes, before concluding triumphantly with the doxology 'Praise God, from whom all blessings flow'.

In the much-quoted conversation referenced at the head of this article, Elgar reportedly singled out Dora Penny as uniquely equipped to solve the Enigma, telling her 'I thought that you of all people would guess it'. In accounting for this remark there is no necessity to look further than Dora's intense curiosity about the puzzle, her musical talent and her familiarity with Elgar's habits of thought, but as the daughter of a clergyman she would certainly have had an edge in guessing a solution involving a hymn tune, and it is quite possible that Elgar had shown her his sketch of the theme with its hint 'for fuga'.

The Enigma theme has been described as 'unpromising' and 'very odd'.²⁴ We can now begin to make sense of its unusual characteristics in terms of the demands placed on the subject of a close two or three part canon. The exacting contrapuntal requirements of this form are certainly eased by inserting a rest in each bar, by following a repeating rhythmic pattern and by limiting the theme to six, rather than the more customary eight, bars. Nonetheless, severe constraints are placed on the shape of the melody by the close entry of the voices, as a consequence of which each note of the theme must harmonise with the fifth below the note or notes sounded on the previous crotchet beat. Amongst the melodic intervals favoured in this scheme are rising seconds, fourths and sixths and falling thirds and sevenths, all of which can be found in the theme – the last two being amongst its most distinctive features.

The 'larger theme' and its counterpoints

'Through and over the whole set', Elgar wrote in his programme note, 'another and larger theme "goes", but is not played'. I shall now set out the case that this 'larger theme' is Tallis's Canon. The argument will be built around five tests which any candidate for the 'larger theme' must pass.

The first concerns the appropriateness of the adjective 'larger'. Tallis's Canon passes the test in a trivially straightforward way: it is two bars longer than the Enigma theme.

The second test is passed equally easily: Tallis's Canon is not played in the *Variations* – although it is possible that Elgar deliberately left traces of it in the music. The tune's opening

22 Michael Kennedy, *Portrait of Elgar* (3rd Ed., Oxford University Press, 1984), 86, quoting W. H. Reed.

23 One such passage inspired Elgar's 1896 oratorio *The Light of Life (Lux Christi)*, in which the darkness-to-light metaphor is vividly enacted.

24 Ian Parrott *Elgar* (London: Dent, 1971), 37, quoting Robert Buckley, *Sir Edward Elgar* (London: Bodley Head) and Powell, *Memories of a Variation*, 12.

Ex. 5. 'Larger theme' counterpoints

Ex. 5. 'Larger theme' counterpoints (contd.)

I. (C.A.E.) **Andante**

Musical notation for I. (C.A.E.) Andante. Treble clef, 4/4 time signature, key signature of one flat. The melody begins with a half rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The dynamics are marked *pp*.

II. (H.D.S-P.) **Allegro**

Musical notation for II. (H.D.S-P.) Allegro. Treble clef, 3/8 time signature, key signature of one flat. The melody consists of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. The dynamics are marked *p*.

III. (R.B.T.) **Allegretto**

Musical notation for III. (R.B.T.) Allegretto. Bass clef, 3/8 time signature, key signature of one flat. The melody consists of eighth notes: G3, A3, B3, C4, B3, A3, G3. The dynamics are marked *p*.

IV. (W.M.B.) **Allegro di molto**

Musical notation for IV. (W.M.B.) Allegro di molto. Treble clef, 3/4 time signature, key signature of one flat. The melody consists of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. The dynamics are marked *ff*.

V. (R.P.A.) **Moderato**

Musical notation for V. (R.P.A.) Moderato. Treble clef, 12/8 time signature, key signature of one flat. The melody consists of eighth notes with a '2' above them, indicating a pair of eighth notes. The dynamics are marked *mf*.

VI. (Ysobel) **Andantino**

Musical notation for VI. (Ysobel) Andantino. Treble and bass clefs, 3/2 time signature, key signature of one flat. The melody consists of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. The dynamics are marked *pp* and *p*.

VII. (Troyte) **Presto**

Musical notation for VII. (Troyte) Presto. Treble clef, 4/4 time signature, key signature of one flat. The melody consists of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. The dynamics are marked *ff*.

VIII. (W.N.) **Andante**

Musical notation for VIII. (W.N.) Andante. Treble clef, 3/8 time signature, key signature of one flat. The melody consists of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. The dynamics are marked *p*.

IX. (Nimrod) **Adagio**

Musical notation for IX. (Nimrod) Adagio. Treble clef, 3/4 time signature, key signature of one flat. The melody consists of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. The dynamics are marked *ppp*.

X. (Dorabella) **Allegretto**

Musical notation for X. (Dorabella) Allegretto. Treble clef, 3/4 time signature, key signature of one flat. The melody consists of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. The dynamics are marked *pp*.

XI. (G.R.S.) **Allegro di molto**

Musical notation for XI. (G.R.S.) Allegro di molto. Treble clef, 2/2 time signature, key signature of one flat. The melody consists of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. The dynamics are marked *ff*.

XII. (B.G.N.) **Andante**

Musical notation for XII. (B.G.N.) Andante. Treble clef, 4/4 time signature, key signature of one flat. The melody consists of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. The dynamics are marked *pp*.

XIII. (***) **Moderato**

Musical notation for XIII. (***) Moderato. Treble clef, 3/4 time signature, key signature of one flat. The melody consists of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. The dynamics are marked *p* and *mf*.

XIV. (E.D.U.) **Grandioso**

Musical notation for XIV. (E.D.U.) Grandioso. Treble clef, 4/4 time signature, key signature of one flat. The melody consists of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. The dynamics are marked *ff*.

Copyright © Martin Gough 2013

phrase can be clearly heard at climactic moments in the finale (62:1-2, 71:1-2 and coda) and the pattern of its threefold repetition of a four-note descending motif is echoed faithfully in the oboe interjections of variation X.

Third, the larger theme must 'go' with the Enigma theme. On the evidence of the *New Canon*, Tallis's Canon may be said to pass this test twice over, since this piece sets the tune in simultaneous counterpoint with two renditions of the Enigma theme.

The fourth test presents what at first sight looks like an insurmountable challenge: the larger theme must in some way also 'go' with all the variations – 'through and over the whole set'. If that seems a contrapuntal impossibility it is a reflection of the ingenuity of Elgar's puzzle, the solution to which has, if I am right, an elegant simplicity. It exploits the fact that when Tallis's Canon is performed as an eight part round its harmony follows the same pattern in each bar, producing a repeating chord progression which can thus be said to encapsulate the entire tune in four crotchet beats. It is this compact harmonic cell, rendered in either the major or minor mode, which can be fitted precisely with a thematically important phrase (and in all but a few cases the opening phrase) of each of the variations.

The resulting counterpoints complete a musical solution with a pleasing symmetry. The Enigma theme played as a canon (the *New Canon*) can accompany the 'larger theme'. The 'larger theme' played as a canon (Tallis's Canon in eight parts) can accompany fourteen variations on the Enigma theme. And both themes played in canon can accompany each other, the minor version of the Tallis progression fitting with the opening of the *Old Canon*.

These counterpoints are set out in Example 5, with the exception of the last mentioned, which follows the pattern of Example 5 I. Seven of the progressions are in the original major mode and seven are in the minor. One, to which I shall return in a moment, has mixed modality. All follow the regular pulse of Tallis's original, though the pulse often cuts across the bar in a manner consistent with Elgar's fondness for cross-rhythms.

A clue to understanding the major/minor modality of the counterpoint to variation VII ('Troyte') may be contained in the description Elgar gave in his notes to the 1929 pianola roll edition of the *Variations*.²⁵

The uncouth rhythm of the drums and lower strings was really suggested by some maladroit essays to play the pianoforte; later the strong rhythm suggests the attempts of the instructor (E.E.) to make something like order out of chaos, and the final despairing 'slam' records that the effort proved to be vain.

We can imagine Troyte Griffith picking out the type of tune (popular with untutored pianists to this day) which is playable with alternating forefingers, and the inspiration Elgar drew from his friend's inept efforts may have led him to a secondary idea. The counterpoint to Troyte's variation (Ex 5 VII), which accompanies the passage in 'strong rhythm' referred to in Elgar's note, is consistent with a maladroit performance of Tallis's Canon in C major, in which a mistake is made in the eighth note (E flat replacing E). The diminished seventh chord formed with this wrong note coincides with a heavy *sforzando* accent (at 29:4), at which point the variation is abruptly cut short by Elgar's 'final despairing 'slam''.

This appears to connect with a 'jape' Elgar played on Troyte at Craeg Lea, the Malvern address to which he moved in March 1899 soon after completing the *Variations*. After sticking

25 Elgar's notes for the Aeolian Company's 1929 'Duo-Art' pianola roll edition of the *Variations*, republished by Novello's in 1946 as *My Friends Pictured Within*.

numbered stamp edges to certain keys of his piano, he invited Troyte to memorise the sequence, then 'hit the notes in order with one finger hard and fast'. Troyte gamely obliged, and was led to believe he had played the elusive Enigma countermelody, though he was unable to identify it.²⁶ It is tempting to suppose that what Troyte played was Tallis's Canon (or more probably its first four bars), transposed to C major to facilitate a one-fingered performance, and spiked with a wrong note to play out a scene Elgar had imagined during the variation's composition. Tallis's Canon is ideally suited to this treatment, since it possesses a rare property which is essential for accurate rendition by the method Elgar prescribed (and the basis for a fifth test by which 'larger theme' candidates can be judged): its rhythm is perfectly regular.

This anecdote prompts one final question. If Troyte was set up to play a well-known tune, how could Elgar have been sure he wouldn't recognise it? Wulstan Atkins, who recounts the same events as told to him by Elgar himself, seems content with the explanation 'Troyte Griffith ... was no musician'.²⁷ However, the evidence is against Troyte being tone deaf,²⁸ and we might therefore surmise that Elgar was prepared for him to recognise the tune (Troyte was a very close and loyal friend) but when he failed to do so was equally content to let him remain in the dark. Alternatively, Elgar may have disguised the melody, perhaps by putting it in retrograde or contrary motion, thus preventing easy recognition while preserving enough melodic character to explain Troyte's remark 'I believe it's a tune'.

*'I do not see that the tune you suggest fits in the least'*²⁹

Is canon the key that unlocks the Enigma? Elgar's recorded remarks indicate that multiple ideas are bound up in the *Variations* and its attendant puzzle, but a persuasive case can be assembled from musical and documentary evidence to support the idea that canon has a role in the synthesis. The tight structure of the W.M.B. canon proves beyond reasonable doubt that a degree of organized thought went into the construction of the Enigma theme. It seems to imply that counterpoint, and canon in particular, was in Elgar's mind from the earliest stages of the project that became the *Variations*, and casts doubt on the rival claim that the theme was entirely the product of improvisation.

This insight makes it entirely plausible that Elgar might have consciously incorporated other contrapuntal ideas in his theme, and specifically that 'the theme is a counterpoint on some well-known melody which is never heard'.³⁰

The fact that two canons can be constructed on the theme – one making sense of some perplexing notes that Elgar pencilled on his sketch, the other fitting in counterpoint to the hymn tune Tallis's Canon (a tune which can also be shown to 'go', in a certain sense, with all the variations) – gives substance to this idea, and supports the proposition that the theme Elgar labelled 'Enigma' is a puzzle canon or *canon aenigmaticus*.

26 Patrick Turner, *Elgar's 'Enigma' Variations – a centenary celebration* (2nd Ed., London: Thames Publishing, 2007), 50, quoting Percy Young's *Friends Pictured Within*.

27 Wulstan Atkins, *The Elgar-Atkins Friendship* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1984), 428.

28 Instances of Troyte's appreciation of music are cited in Michael Kennedy, *Portrait of Elgar*, including a remark in which he compares Elgar's music with Beethoven's (page 731).

29 The quotation is from Elgar's standard reply to would-be Enigma solvers. Patrick Turner, *Elgar's 'Enigma' Variations*, 146.

30 This statement appears in Robert Buckley's biography of Elgar, which was written with the composer's cooperation. Robert Buckley, *Sir Edward Elgar* (London: Bodley Head, 1905), 54-55.

This hypothesis will stand or fall on an authoritative appraisal of the musical quality of the canons. Success hinges on whether these diminutive pieces can be cast into forms that meet the high standard expected of their imputed composer. My tentative realisations are offered as a stimulus to further efforts at unearthing what there is evidence to suggest might be a pair of hitherto unheard Elgar miniatures.

If this idea is granted a degree of credibility a number of subsidiary questions remain. In what sequence might the canons and the many variants of the theme have taken shape in Elgar's mind? Did he conceive the Enigma as a private amusement which he only belatedly decided to share with the public?³¹ And having taken that step, how much of the solution did he expect his audience to discover, bearing in mind that important clues to one aspect of it appear to have existed only in an unpublished sketch? Finally, did this expert enigmatist³² weave into the fabric of his most high-profile conundrum additional strands of meaning – amongst them perhaps a biblical allegory or a tribute to Bach – to add depth and complexity to a puzzle that he evidently did not expect to remain unguessed for long?

Martin Gough, a physicist working in the field of sustainable energy, is a member of the Elgar Society and a keen amateur musician. He is indebted to Harry Johnstone and Sam Laughton for valuable advice provided during the researching of this article.

31 Dora Powell ('Dorabella') wrote that the Enigma was discussed with friends 'when the work was being written' (*Memories of a Variation*, 119) but the word 'Enigma' was added to the score apparently as an afterthought, weeks after the work was completed (Patrick Turner, *Elgar's 'Enigma' Variations*, 26-29).

32 Elgar's enthusiasm for and skill at crosswords, ciphers and all manner of brainteasers (as both setter and solver) is well documented, for example in Percy Young, *Elgar O.M.*, 252 and Powell, *Memories of a Variation*, App A.

MUSIC REVIEWS

Elgar, Solo Songs with Orchestra

Elgar Complete Edition Vol. 14, edited by Julian Rushton (Rickmansworth: Elgar Society Edition Ltd., 2012)

This is no more than an interim report acknowledging the appearance of a further volume in the Elgar Complete Edition, this time of the songs with orchestral accompaniment, which J.P.E. Harper-Scott will be reviewing in greater depth in the August issue.

'Oh, that will be *Sea Pictures* and a few other bits and pieces', thought I, 'nothing to get too excited about'. *Sea Pictures* and a few other bits and pieces it may be, but it is *very* exciting! Incredibly enough, only *Sea Pictures* and the spoof *Smoking Cantata* have been published before (in the sense of being readily available in full score for study by Elgar enthusiasts at large). Apart from those this volume contains the three completed Gilbert Parker settings, Op.59, *The Torch* and *The River* (both Op.60), *The Pipes of Pan*, *Follow the Colours*, *The Wind at Dawn* and *The King's Way*. I hadn't even realised that *The King's Way* existed in an Elgar orchestration, knowing it only from the version with piano accompaniment so tellingly performed on its centenary by the massed voices of London Branch.

For me, enjoyment and appreciation of music is greatly improved by being able to follow it in score: the eye helps the ear to listen. I would even recommend a volume such as this to an Elgar-lover who didn't think they could follow a score: the words are there to hang on to and one can't help but notice some of the explosions of orchestral colour that accompany them on the printed page.

And of course the Elgar Complete Edition is very much a 'performing edition aimed at the wider musical public' and not just something to gather dust on library shelves or my piano. The roots of this volume lie in the scores and orchestral material provided by Elgar Works for the Dutton recordings of some of these songs. In similar fashion the recent proliferation of performances of the *Coronation Ode* has been facilitated by the origination of score and parts by Elgar Works which will provide the basis for a future volume in the Complete Edition.

In *Sea Pictures* a few things caught my eye. At [F] in 'Sabbath morning at sea' the score suggests that the leader should stop playing during rather than at the end of a note to prepare himself for his solo a bar later (the Boosey score is non-committal at this point), and a few editorial phrase markings are questionable (like the slur over the organ pedal triplet in bar 73 of the same song, where none is added at a similar point two bars earlier). Many of these little inconsistencies, it must be said, are down to Elgar, but I wonder if, as part of the proof-reading process, anyone listens to the music while reading the proof: an instance where the ear can help the eye.

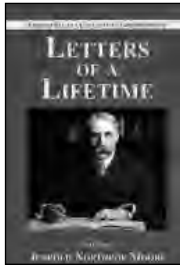
But thank God for the ECE team. Thanks to them more and more of the music of Elgar is readily available to all.

Martin Bird



ISBN
978-1-904856-14-6

260 pp + xix.



584 pp + xxiv

ISBN

978-1-904-85651-1

BOOK REVIEWS

Jerrold Northrop Moore (editor): *Edward Elgar: Letters of a Lifetime*

Edward Elgar: Collected Correspondence, Series I, Volume 1

Rickmansworth: Elgar Works, 2012

In the summer of 1876, Brahms' friend George Henschel (then a noted baritone, later a leading conductor) showed him the recently published letters of Moritz Hauptmann. Hauptmann had held the position at a Leipzig church once held by Bach and had attracted many talented students, including Joseph Joachim and Arthur Sullivan.

After reading a few of Hauptmann's letters, Brahms remarked, 'How discreet one ought to be in writing letters. Who knows—some day they'll be printed.' He went on to say, 'It is an agreeable gift to be able to write clever letters, but only letters of purely scientific import are, in my opinion, of real value to any but those they were written to.'¹ Such vows of discretion are difficult to keep, and those who receive a letter from a creative artist tend to preserve them: the most recent edition of Brahms' own correspondence in English runs to more than 550 letters.

Just four summers later, the 23-year-old Edward Elgar wrote the first letter that appears in this book. It meets Brahms' criterion as it is essentially a medical report from Paris, where Edward had gone on holiday with Charles Pipe, the fiancé of his sister Lucy. Edward wrote a few lines back to her in Worcester:

We are here all right & just going to settle down for a few days. Poor Charlie was awfully ill, *I was not!*

This comprehensive selection of Elgar's letters was chosen by Jerrold Northrop Moore, author of *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life* (1989). Originally published by Oxford University Press in 1990, it appeared only after he had edited four earlier collections: *Elgar on Record* (1974), the composer's correspondence with The Gramophone Company; the two-volume *Elgar and his Publishers* (1987); and *The Windflower Letters* (1989), his correspondence with Alice Stuart Wortley and her family.

I have treasured the current book since it first appeared, and it is a pleasure to welcome its return now, as the initial volume in Elgar's Collected Correspondence. This ambitious endeavour will include all five of Moore's collections, as well as the numerous letters that have to come to light since, in a handsomely produced uniform edition. It will also contain the diaries of Edward, Alice and Carice Elgar, which extend as far as 1939. Volumes will be published at six- to eight-month intervals and are expected to number

1 George Henschel, *Personal Recollection of Johannes Brahms* (Boston: Gorham Press, 1907), 29-30.

more than two dozen by the time the project is completed. The edition is produced by Elgar Works, publisher of the Elgar Complete Edition. Together, the Complete Edition and the Collected Correspondence will be the essential primary source for musicians, scholars and students of Elgar for generations to come.

As important as it will be to have all of Elgar's letters available, many readers are likely to turn to this first volume again and again, because Moore's selection creates a unified view of Elgar's life personal and professional life, as only someone who had spent many years studying the composer's scores, editing his letters and interviewing people who had known him, could do. His expert annotations are informative but never intrusive.

In the course of hundreds of letters covering more than half a century, we learn much that is surprising: Elgar was reading Thomas Traherne in 1903, long before Gerald Finzi discovered him ('I have had time to dip into Traherne during the week and am ravished', p. 149); Alice Elgar was 'horrified' at the musical depiction of Shakespeare's 'gentlewomen' in her husband's *Falstaff* (p. 297); one of the composer's most ardent admirers during the last years of his life was T.E. Lawrence (p. 512-13).

Interwoven throughout the book are voices other than Elgar's own: we hear from friends like August Jaeger, Ivor Atkins and Ernest Newman; from fellow musicians Hans Richter, Frederick Delius and Ralph Vaughan Williams; and from many other colleagues and acquaintances. There is an 1899 letter from Elgar's mother that gives us a glimpse of her lively personality. All of these enlarge our view of Elgar himself. In November 1909 Elgar set out to write a letter of condolence to his friend Frank Schuster. Soon Elgar is complaining about his health and of being bored, but he then repents: 'Forgive me my selfishness: kiss your sisters hand for me & write.' Knowing his friend well, Schuster wrote back:

I thank you for your dear kind lines. They are a comfort to me—and a far greater comfort still is *your music* ... as long as I have it I can bear my losses, although I thought when I went in to the hall today that I *couldn't* ... Then came your Symphony—and in a moment I knew I was wrong. It is *all love*—and love makes life possible. I wonder if you realize—when you feel despondent & embittered—what your music is to me—and therefore to countless others. (p. 243)

Those 'countless others' include those of us today who are still enthralled, inspired and consoled by Elgar's music. Moore's selection of his letters gives us an illuminating understanding of the man who wrote it.

Frank Beck



Jane Ridley: *Bertie: A Life of Edward VII*

London: Chatto & Windus, 2012

Professor Ridley's account of the life of the dedicatee of, arguably, the greatest symphony ever written by a subject of the British Crown is a better book than its publisher may have intended or its reviewers would have the reader believe.

Throughout Ridley's text one senses a tension between a requirement to pander to her publishers' commercial purpose -- to present her subject as 'the playboy prince who saved the monarchy' -- and a historian's desire to give the reader a true, profound revelation of the character of the man, whose reign roughly corresponds to the years when Elgar became Britain's composer laureate. The title, together with chapter headings like 'The Aylesford Scandal', 'Prince Hal' and 'Prince of Pleasure' demonstrate an intention to extend the book's appeal to readers with a taste for supermarket check-out accounts of the wastrel lives of celebrities.

Having been treated to the lowest features of Bertie's life, the reviewers have been quick to identify them as characteristic, 'Mistresses, racing, overindulgence of food and huge cigars characterized Bertie's life ...' proclaims Sarah Bradford in her *Literary Review* commentary. A careful reading of Ridley's biography, however, shows that what the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII, was achieving *between* mealtimes and bedtime was far more significant than his feasting and philandering. Like his troubadour Edward Elgar, the Prince was learning his trade on his own in defiance of his parents and his detractors. Only then would he succeed in becoming the 'wise, reforming King' his subjects came to revere.

Britain's intelligentsia jeered Edward VII's accession in 1901. 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'. Rudyard Kipling dismissed his new Sovereign as a corpulent voluptuary. Arthur Benson scorned Edward's succession as 'like having Hamlet acted by a clown'.

How did the newly-anointed King respond to such abuse? By doing more than any predecessor to elevate the standing in Britain of those intellectual arbiters who 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*, recipients of which included Felix Mendelssohn, Franz Liszt, Johannes Brahms and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. The first musician to receive the O.M. was Sir Edward Elgar.

Unfortunately, Professor Ridley's biography falls lamentably short in its presentation of her subject's responses to music. She views him as essentially an actor who favoured the opera for its diva-displayed dramatic qualities. In her single reference to Elgar, Professor Ridley suggests that the line from

Land of Hope and Glory, 'Wider still and wider shall thy bounds be set' amounts to 'unconscious mockery of the fat king'.

Yet both as Prince of Wales and as King, Edward actively supported the Royal Amateur Orchestral Society and functioned as chief fund raiser and first president of the Royal College of Music. These words from his speech at the opening of the Royal College on May 7, 1883 present his view of the power of music as a binding social force, a view considered radical at the time that to my mind indicates an intellect not customarily ascribed to His Royal Highness:

'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 ...'

Sarah Bradford tells us that 'Ridley has done a huge amount of archival research into all aspects of Bertie's life'; yet the above-cited passage is not included in Ridley's book; nor have I found it in any other published source apart from the June 1910 edition of *The Musical Times*, where it lies buried in an obituary

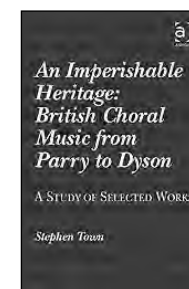
Nonetheless, Jane Ridley's book is well worth wading through the fluff of the Prince Hal image to savour and contemplate.

Arthur S. Reynolds

Stephen Town: *An Imperishable Heritage: British Choral Music from Parry to Dyson. A Study of Selected Works*

Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2012

This is a splendid and informative discussion of many of my favourite choral works by British composers. But it is emphatically focused on specific works even if they provide an entrée to wider issues. Arranged in twelve chapters, the massively well-researched Stephen Town covers 14 works by six composers: Parry, Stanford, Vaughan Williams, Finzi, Rubbra and Dyson, but no Elgar. Indeed, most of these composers have a Royal College of Music orientation -- it would have been of interest to have included one or two from the Royal Academy of Music -- say, Mackenzie and Bantock. Would they have exhibited a contrasting aesthetic? Many of the scores discussed are familiar on disc or



327 pp + xxv

ISBN
978-0-7546-0536-2

in concerts, but three of the works covered I have been longing to hear for half a century – Parry's *The Vision of Life* and Stanford's *Three Holy Children* and *Elegiac Ode*, so let us hope this brings them to wider appreciation.

Professor Town brings to bear on his subject years of research and a forensic knowledge of both the manuscript and printed sources and of the literature about them. In the Preface to his book he waxes lyrical about the pleasures of working in various libraries – indeed I cannot resist quoting the most purple passage:

Before long, I was returning every year (almost) to London and Oxford, where, in the felicitous solitude of the requisite library, I pursued my work, happily surrounded by artifacts, books, manuscripts, and other accoutrements of the scholar, only to cease momentarily when I surfaced to appreciate the lovely view across the Manuscript Reading Room, created by the clerestory and lantern lights housed in the pitched roofs, of the (new) British Library; the muffled singing or playing, competent and enjoyable, of a conservatory student, resonating softly in the venerable Royal College of Music Library; or the rain against the windows, by turns gentle and hard, in the ... Bodleian Library.

Town's format juxtaposes history and background with detailed discussion of the music, but does not allow for continuous reading – his detailed descriptions of manuscripts and texts set of are almost too precise for the casual reader. However, there are some beautifully set pages of music and facsimiles of manuscripts.

In his Preface the author justifies his choice of composers by saying it 'reflects their significance in the renaissance of British music for, to paraphrase Frank Howes, Parry and Stanford are recognised as having begun its rehabilitation ... the choice of choral works is based on their historical importance; their significance in the *oeuvre* of a particular composer; their pertinence after a thorough examination ...'. Particularly interesting are the discussions of how the manuscripts throw light on the finished works – this is an account of someone who has been writing with the manuscripts in front of him.

In the first two chapters the discussion of Parry's choral music fixes on two works that have not been recorded, and one only circulated on a privately-issued LP with organ. We have certainly had performances of two of them – *Voces Clamantium* and *Beyond These Voices There is Peace*. I must say I do feel that if the author had heard or sung in these he would have told us about the glorious settings of 'O man Look Upward When the Skies are Clear' in the former, and 'To Everything There is a Season' in the latter which are not highlighted in his account. They are part of my singing in the bath musical stock – and it suggests to me that all those earlier champions of the music who promoted them felt the same.

The discussion of the two Stanford works is fascinating indeed – the fact that the *Elegiac Ode*, probably the first major choral setting of Whitman by a British composer, has not been revived can only be attributed to ignorance on the part of choral conductors. It is so obviously a suitable filler for all manner

of longer works from *Gerontius* to Vaughan Williams's *A Sea Symphony*. And do you remember that logistical cock-up, maybe thirty years ago now, when, after Stanford's *Three Holy Children* had been announced for the Queen Elizabeth Hall, it proved impossible to perform as between the choirs' booking and their request for supply of the vocal scores it was found that most of the stock had been destroyed. Town reminds us that Elgar played in the Birmingham performance on 7 October 1885. 'Stanford produced a work that exhibited novel features; for example, an innovative use of the orchestra, far surpassing the contemporary English oratorio.' Yes, we certainly need to hear it again.

Unexpectedly Town has included among his choral works Vaughan Williams's *Flos Campi* – and reviews the various commentators who have tried to categorise its use of vocalising choir and texts from the 'Song of Songs' which are not actually performed. A facsimile of a page of Vaughan Williams's copy of The Bible marked up for *Flos Campi* is indicative of the thoroughness of the discussion.

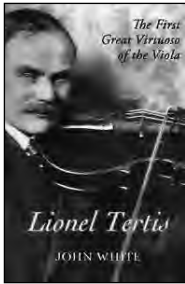
There is also *An Oxford Elegy* – Town demonstrates that Vaughan Williams's early orchestral score *Harnham Down* is the source of much of the material in VW's *An Oxford Elegy*. I can't wait for the much anticipated recording of the earlier work which has been scheduled by the Vaughan Williams Society. The facsimiles of pages of manuscript of *Harnham Down* are fascinating. Equally interesting are the discussions of Gerald Finzi (*Requiem da Camera* and *Intimations of Immortality*) and Edmund Rubbra (Ninth Symphony and *The Morning Watch*).

Although quoting the occasional booklet note, Town, unfortunately, does not discuss recordings of the music he explores and for me (and I suspect many of his readers) this is an unnecessary limitation. Having been present at many of the recording sessions and public performances where these works were first revived I can say that the revelation of finally hearing scores one had only previously known from printed vocal scores was remarkable.

His last two chapters are on Sir George Dyson. The discussion of Dyson's choral music (*Quo Vadis* and *Nebuchadnezzar*) is interesting for the light recordings have thrown on the music. For me the greatest revelation came with the recording (at the Brangwyn Hall, Swansea) of *Quo Vadis* – a work which both members of the Sir George Dyson Trust and the conductor Richard Hickox had expressed doubts about when working from the rather chaotic manuscript full score. However, Richard took it on and the recording was a triumph, and being present at the sessions was a remarkable experience as, movement by movement, one revelation followed another. The soloists, too, in the control room listening to their playbacks, were amazed at the cumulative quality of the music they were revealing.

This is a valuable study which I recommend wholeheartedly. I shall turn to it when any of the music discussed is up for performance. It is elegantly and clearly printed – and the proof-reading has been very thoroughly carried out giving it remarkable accuracy. However, on page 286 footnote 38 the first word should surely be Walford Davies not Dyson.

Lewis Foreman



408 pp + xvi
ISBN
978-1-84383-790-9

John White: *Lionel Tertis, The First Great Virtuoso of the Viola*
Woodbridge: Boydell Press (2012)

This updated version of John White's comprehensive biography of Lionel Tertis, first published in 2006 and now available in paperback, somehow escaped the attention of the *Journal* on its initial release. It is required reading for anyone interested in orchestral playing of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the full story of the Tertis transcription of the Elgar Cello Concerto, the design and development of string instruments and, not least, the life of one of the most single-minded men that one could ever come across.

Despite the title of the book, there must have been viola virtuosi before Tertis: I can't imagine that Testore would have made the magnificent instrument on which Tertis played for most of his career, or that Mozart would have written the Sinfonia Concertante, had there not been players around who could do them justice. What is certainly true, however, is that viola playing was in a sorry state in this country when Tertis came on to the scene: just listen to the emaciated sound produced by the anonymous player in *Dorabella* in Elgar's acoustic recording of the Variations, and that was recorded as late as 1919. Hans Richter is quoted as saying that 'viola players are horn players who have lost their teeth' and the story may not be as apocryphal as it sounds: I can remember being astonished in the 1960s to see the trumpet player in a concert conducted by Alfred Deller doubling on viola.

Reading this extremely well researched and written book I was left in no doubt of the debt that all lovers of string playing owe to Tertis, and of his relentless pursuit of perfection, both in playing technique and instrumental design. But by the time I reached the chapter on the Elgar concerto, nearly 100 pages into the book, I was wondering if there was a human being behind this focussed exterior. There was, and the occasional tale of orchestral japes, especially when touring with Beecham, provides welcome relief in a story that might have been merely a tale of endless concerts.

John White recounts the story of Elgar's enthusiastic championing of the Tertis transcription of the Cello Concerto in impressive detail, including the correspondence between Bubbles (Tertis's dog) and Marco. The love and respect of each man for the other comes over in abundance.

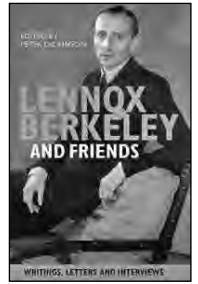
I didn't expect to be as interested in the chapter on the development of the Tertis model viola, and again there is a tremendous amount of detail here, including several constructional drawings of the instruments. Much to my surprise I found it completely fascinating. I once knew a violist who played on a Tertis model and can still remember the remarkable strength and warmth of the sound it produced. I was saddened to read that these lovely instruments have gone out of fashion with players today.

A first-rate discography is included as an appendix, and readers who have the Naxos transfer of Albert Sammons's recording of the Elgar Violin Sonata may like to revisit that disc and listen to the Mozart Sinfonia Concertante, over-the-top schmaltzy cadenza and all. I hope you'll be persuaded both to investigate Tertis's recordings further, and to buy this splendid biography.

Richard Wiley

Peter Dickinson (editor): *Lennox Berkeley and Friends: Writings, Letters and Interviews*

Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2012.



320 pp + xii
ISBN
978-1-84383-785-5

Inevitably following the death of any significant composer, after the various books have appeared, there will be left a miscellaneous collection of valuable and interesting documentation that deserves collection and publication. In the case of Lennox Berkeley, Peter Dickinson has edited such a collection into an elegant and thoroughly readable volume – and in doing so he establishes a fine model for similar compilations about other celebrated names.

'Writings, letters and interviews' is the subtitle of this book and it has to be said these are important sources for anyone studying the period of Berkeley's life, especially the 1930s. First come his reports of the musical scene from Paris between June 1929 and June 1934 originally published in *The Monthly Musical Record*. Then his letters to Nadia Boulanger written between 1941 and 1982, followed by a selection of his writings and talks written between 1943 and 1982. Extracts from Berkeley's Diaries between 1966 and 1982 and a variety of interviews, catalogues and bibliography complete a satisfying whole.

For Elgarians there are just nine index entries for EE, but the whole is interesting for reflecting the interests and concerns of the generation after Elgar and before today's much more positive reassessment had taken place. In his diary for January 1973 Berkeley writes: 'Elgar's First Symphony is a fine work – expert and effective scoring, but the sound is very thick and over-elaborate. One can't think of any other English composer of the time who could have achieved anything nearly as good.' And in June 1971 he wrote: '[Tippett] conducted the whole concert, and obtained a very good performance of Elgar's *Introduction and Allegro* for strings, which I so much admire'.

This is a fascinating and always interesting read – splendid for bedtime dipping and, thanks to the index, for research. Strongly recommended.

Lewis Foreman



Berlin Classics
0300429BC

CD REVIEWS

Elgar: Cello Concerto
Carter: Cello Concerto
Bruch: *Kol Nidrei*

Alisa Weilerstein, Staatskapelle Berlin, conducted by Daniel Barenboim

Alisa Weilerstein is a young American cellist who toured with the Elgar Concerto and the Berlin Philharmonic under Barenboim recently, and obviously has a great love and deep feeling for the work. She has claimed Jacqueline du Pré as a major early influence, and I wondered, before I heard it, if her interpretation would be similarly overwrought (my own preferences tend to the emotionally cooler Tortelier, Fournier or the recent Sol Gabetta recordings). I needn't have worried. Weilerstein plays with controlled passion and immense authority, and her golden, burnished tone is beautifully captured by the sound engineers. As usual with recordings the solo cello is spotlighted to a degree that is not possible in the concert hall, but there is no lack of orchestral detail (lovely orchestral playing here) and the sound quality is splendid throughout.

The first movement, after that arresting opening, settles to a good tempo, relaxed enough to capture the melancholy heartache in the music, but never too slow to drag or become lifeless, as can happen easily here. Barenboim has long championed Elgar (surely he is due for Society recognition?) although one sometimes has to tolerate idiosyncratic touches – for example, the bar before Fig.16, where the cello rushes up to its highest reaches, is actually marked *in tempo*; here we get an enormous *rallentando*. That is OK in the similar bar before Fig.5, where it is so marked, but not here, where it impedes the rhythmic momentum.

The second movement is very speedy, showing off the soloist's superb technique, but then I felt the second subject (Fig.22) was too slow in the context of the overall tempo. The slow movement is truly heartfelt and played with glowing tone and rapt concentration. The finale again shows plenty of virtuosity and telling orchestral detail, and the final moving epilogue is beautifully judged and as emotionally charged as it should be. One small, unnecessary retouching occurs at Fig.45 in this movement, when, instead of holding a high B into the orchestral tutti, the solo cello glissandos up to join the violins' E. It might be exciting, but it isn't what Elgar wrote. Nevertheless, despite these niggling criticisms it is certainly a version that I could warmly recommend.

The coupling, the Cello Concerto by the American Elliott Carter, who died last year, composing to the end, at the age of 104, is a strange bedfellow for the Elgar. Carter's music is tough and uncompromising, and this work is no exception. The bonus of Max Bruch's well-loved *Kol Nidrei* comes as balm to the ears after it, but this enterprising CD could well attract listeners who want more adventurous fare coupled with their Elgar.

Barry Collett

Elgar: Violin Concerto in B minor, *Salut d'Amour*, *Offertoire*
Catherine Manoukian, Staatskapelle, conducted by Weimar Stefan Solyom



Decca
478 2735

Fritz Kreisler, the work's dedicatee, described the Elgar Violin Concerto as the greatest since Beethoven's. Bacharach's *Musical Companion* rates it with the Beethoven and Brahms as the three greatest violin concertos. I see no reason to disagree (although personally I usually find the Beethoven a bit of a bore), but for a long time the Violin Concerto's popularity ranked a long way behind that of the Cello Concerto, especially internationally. How things have changed! Trawling through my CD collection of the concerto's recordings, which is by no means exhaustive, I find recordings by the Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Dresden Staatskapelle, the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Orquestra Sinfonica de Murcia (Spain), and the Arnhem Philharmonic Orchestra, let alone various English orchestras. Now comes this new Berlin Classics CD with a Canadian violinist domiciled in Germany, a Swedish conductor, and Germany's oldest orchestra.

A distinguished Elgarian friend has told me that this has gone straight to the top of his list of favourite recordings of the work. It hasn't to mine, for reasons I shall detail below, but it is an extremely fine performance, recorded live before an exemplary quiet audience, apart from the enthusiastic applause at the end.

Positive things first: this is stunning violin playing, totally secure even during the most extreme demands on the player, always with warm, lovely, full throated tone in what is one of the most technically and emotionally demanding of all concertos. Still in her twenties, she obviously feels passionately about the work and probes its inner feelings and enigmatic musings with total assurance. The slow movement is lovely, calm and serene but still vividly intense where it needs to be. The Finale sets a cracking tempo, but she has technique and enough to spare – the coda is quite breathtakingly despatched. Perhaps she can be a little too aggressive in the Cadenza – I have heard more rapt and dreamy musing over past themes here, but the three muted horns and *pizzicato tremolando* accompaniment offer sympathetic support.

The orchestra is splendid, and Solyom and the recording team see to it that Elgar's beautifully judged scoring comes over well, particularly those inner voices of violas, cellos and bassoons. Even though it is a live performance the violin soloist is spotlighted in a way that we have become used to in recordings, if not in the concert hall, but that is not a worry with the orchestra so well balanced.

What gives me greatest concern, particularly in the first movement, is the lack of a unified rhythmic impulse. Elgar marks his scores as carefully as any composer (more than most), yet conductors will try to heighten the expressive tension by slowing up, drawing out, nudging our attention to points which are already there in the music for all to hear. I suppose one man's expressive *rubato* is another's rhythmic slackness, and I must declare myself in the

Toscanini/Boult/Solti camp for lack of lingering, rather than the Furtwangler/Bryden Thomson one. Elgar's opening orchestral tutti in this work, and the large central one at Fig.23 (marked *con passione*) should crackle with nervous energy and suppressed excitement. Solyom sets off here at a grand *Maestoso* tempo, and ironically the opening note in the booklet, written by soloist and conductor, claims that they prefer a live recording because it captures the 'flow' and 'a need for a continual push for momentum'. That, in fact, is just what I miss here – the playing is glorious but it lacks the dramatic restlessness that Elgar so often needs.

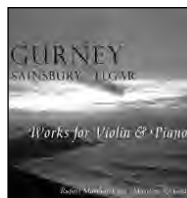
Also rhythm sags disastrously at times when this momentum is lost. The 'Windflower' theme, first appearing on solo clarinet between Figs.4 and 5 is so slow as to be almost static, and so is its reprise at Fig.16, although both are marked *a tempo*. And surely the two bars slowing down and the next rapidly speeded up (after Figs.13 and 31) are too extreme in the context of the overall tempo at this point?

Two welcome encores are played after the concerto; *Salut d'Amour* and the much less well-known *Offertoire*. Both are beautifully played, with well judged tempi and absolutely the right feeling for the ebb and flow of Elgarian rhythm. Astonishingly the pianist is not named! I thought the bad old days, when some star had an accompaniment 'with piano' by some un-named pianist sounding as though he was in the next room, had gone. Whoever this pianist is he offers splendid support to Ms Manoukian

The booklet notes, by one Tara Vongpaisal, offer a few oddities. She (?) talks about the Windflower themes without saying who or what Windflower is, or was. And it is claimed that *Offertoire* was published under the name Gustav Francke because 'in the early days of his career, Elgar adopted a number of pseudonyms fashioned after continental European names. A common practice at the time, this was a means to gain broader appeal for his work ...'. Well, that's news to me. He certainly used this name a couple of times, so the story goes, in an effort to get his brother Frank to compose, presumably, and predictably, without much success.

Despite my strictures, I warmly welcome this recording, and if it wouldn't be my first choice I would certainly return to it as an exhilarating alternative.

Barry Collett



EM Records
EMR CD011

Gurney: Sonata for Violin and Piano in E-flat major
Lionel Sainsbury: Soliloquy for Solo Violin
Elgar: Sonata for Violin and Piano in E minor
 Rupert Marshall-Luck (violin), Matthew Rickard (piano)

The main interest here is in the world première recording of Ivor Gurney's Sonata for Violin and Piano. As many readers will know, Gurney was a highly talented musician and poet whose life was tragically overwhelmed by insanity. He was invalided out of the army during the First World War

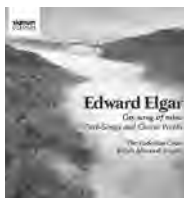
after he was gassed during the Passchendaele campaign. He had always been prone to depression and his war experiences and a failed love affair led to a mental breakdown and eventually to treatment at Napsbury War Hospital in St. Albans. It was here, in 1918, that he started work on the E flat major Violin Sonata. By the time he had completed the it in September 1919 he had returned to the Royal College of Music, where he studied composition with Vaughan Williams. Although he did not stay long at the RCM, he continued to compose and write poetry and was successful with performances and publications. But his mental condition deteriorated and he was declared insane in 1922. He died of tuberculosis in 1937 while still a patient in the City of London Mental Hospital.

Some aspects of the recording and performance troubled me. I found the piano sound rather lacking in focus and presence, with reverberation casting a veil over Matthew Rickard's fine playing. The violin sound was generally pleasant and warm but I found the E string tone rather thin and edgy. In general, Rupert Marshall-Luck plays neatly and accurately (the occasional off-centre note comes as a shock) and some of his quiet playing is very touching. But his vibrato is rather narrow and unvaried and, though he varies his tone through dynamics, he uses a very limited range of tonal colours. I felt the Gurney sonata deserved much more expressive phrasing.

I was not at all familiar with Lionel Sainsbury's *Soliloquy* but it is a most attractive work with its title taking us into the world of Shakespeare and its multiple stopping taking us into the world of Bach. I thought this was very well played with excellent chordal work and a more uninhibited and open style. The Elgar Sonata is more familiar territory. Here there is much competition for Marshall-Luck and Rickard with recordings from many fine performers. For comparison, I listened in particular to Albert Sammons and William Murdoch on a Naxos transfer and Marcia Crayford and Ian Brown on an excellent Nash Ensemble recording for Hyperion which also includes the Piano Quintet. The comparisons were instructive. The Hyperion recording of Ian Brown's piano had much greater presence than the rather reverberant recording for Matthew Rickard. I liked some features of the Marshall-Luck's playing very much. There were some really clear string-crossing figurations in the first movement and it was refreshing to hear such clear pizzicato chords in the *Romance*. But though the playing was accurate and clear, I felt the comparisons highlighted what was missing. The tone did not have the beauty and range of colour of the rival performances. The phrasing tended to be matter-of-fact and the expression rather limited and the tone on the E string was edgy.

Still, the Gurney is the main piece here and this was a moving and subtle work that repaid a number of hearings.

Richard Spenceley



Signum
CLASSICS
SIGCD315

Go, Song of Mine, As Torrents in Summer, My Love Dwelt in a Northern Land, O salutaris hostia, Ave verum corpus, Ave Maria, Ave maris stella, Give unto the Lord, I sing the birth, Love, The Prince of Sleep, O hearken Thou, Part Songs, op. 53, Choral Songs, op. 71-73

The Rodolphus Choir, Ralph Allwood (director)

This disc contains that great sequence of part-songs from Elgar, his op.53, 71-73 and *Go, Song of Mine*, together with a representative selection of his other music for unaccompanied chorus and for church use. They are sung by the Rodolphus Choir, 'made up of young singers who have been chosen from those who have been on Eton Choral Courses', conducted by Ralph Allwood, Director of Music at Eton College for more than a quarter of a century. Much is made in the booklet of the 'unusually high degree of vocal ability and musicianship' of each singer, and the fact that many of them are choral scholars and hope to make a career in music. All I can say is that this recording seems to have caught them on an off day, when they had things on their minds other than the need to do full justice to the music of Elgar.

Don't get me wrong: these are extremely capable young singers (though they sound younger than they look), and they have been well-trained up to a point. That point is, perhaps, the ability to make a smooth, controlled, *diminuendo* through a phrase to match the far easier task of making a smooth, controlled, *crescendo*. But there is more to choral singing than technique. A choir, and its director, has to have a feeling for the ebb and flow of a piece, its pacing, and its overall phrasing. Too often here I felt the choir was doing no more than singing the notes, with little understanding of *what* they were singing about. Phrases are sung with little swells up and down on each note, with no sense of where the music is leading. Some pieces are rattled through and sound of no consequence as a result. As ever, it is a matter of pacing, not speed, for comparisons reveal other performances which last no longer, yet seem to have so much more time and space in which to breathe.

The accompanying booklet is something of a letdown, too. On the credit side, full texts are included. On the debit side, four pages are devoted to the performers, but nowhere can I find mention, on disc, box or booklet, of the organist who performs such a vital and splendid role in the church music - not least in *Give unto the Lord*. The writer of the notes is not in total sympathy with the music: an unusual and avoidable state of affairs! *The Prince of Sleep* 'clearly suggests the stuffing had gone out of [Elgar]' by 1925; and were it not for the last four lines of *The Fountain*, 'one might have felt tempted to ignore Op.71!'. We are also told of an undated essay from around 1930, entitled 'HMV', which was 'discovered unpublished amongst his papers after his death'. Readers of Jerrold Northrop Moore's *Elgar on Record* over the last 39

years will recognise this, not as an essay, but as notes for a speech delivered by Elgar on 16 November 1927 at a reception given by HMV to launch their new Electrical Reproducer.

Where does all this leave us? Well, it leaves me, for one, grateful that for much the same price as the Rodolphus disc one can buy the two Naxos discs of Elgar's part-songs and church music which contain the majority of the pieces here and far more besides, including *From the Bavarian Highlands*. Here we find performances which are first-rate in every way from Christopher Robinson, the Cambridge University Chamber Choir, and the Choir of St. John's College, Cambridge.

Martin Bird

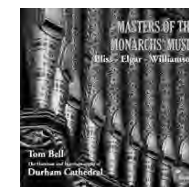
Masters of the Monarchs' Music

Elgar: Vesper Voluntaries Nos.3 III, V & VI, *The Tame Bear*

Williamson: Symphony for Organ

Bliss: Overture - *Caesar and Cleopatra*, 'March' & 'Ballet for Children' from *Things to Come*, 'Intermezzo' from *Miracle in the Gorbals*, *Fanfare for the Lord Mayor of London*, 'Bridal Ceremony' from *Adam Zero*, *Seven Waves Away*, *The Rout Trot* (all arr. Robert Gower)

Tom Bell (organ)



Regent
REGCD409

Here we have a recital by Tom Bell, the Organist and Choirmaster of St. Michael's, Chester Square, London, played on the Harrison and Harrison organ of Durham Cathedral, which 'features works by three twentieth-century Masters of the King's or Queen's Music'. That, on the face of it, sounds a delightful idea, until you realise that Bliss never wrote anything for solo organ and the one work by Elgar written for an instrument of the scale of the Durham organ, the Organ Sonata, is nowhere to be seen.

It occurred to me that, had the scope of the recital been extended to Masters of the Music who had lived during the life of the organ (it was built originally by Henry Willis in 1876 and went through a major rebuild by Harrison and Harrison in 1905), an excellent programme of 'real' organ music could have been compiled. After all, Elgar's predecessor was Walter Parratt and his successor Walford Davies, both organists of St. George's Chapel, Windsor. Much to my surprise I found but a solitary composition for organ by Parratt and another by Davies listed in their biographies.

And so Tom Bell has, perforce, taken the route of the organ transcription. There was a time when such transcriptions performed a real service in introducing the public to music which they could not otherwise expect to hear. Nineteenth-century cathedral organists gave regular recitals which included overtures and the latest chunk of Wagner, for example, and most towns and cities employed an organist. In Worcester in the 1880s Alfred Caldicott, Hon. Organist to the Corporation, gave recitals on the organ in the Public Hall, and Hugh Blair, when he left Worcester, became Municipal Organist for

the London Borough of Battersea. But, since the invention of recording and broadcasting, the traditional role of the transcription has long since vanished, and I suspect that they are now enjoyed, in the main, by organists and organ buffs.

The three Vesper Voluntaries are delightfully played. They were completed in 1889 within a month of the Elgars having a small chamber organ erected in their borrowed house, Oaklands, in Norwood. They are dedicated to Alice's cousin, Vera Raikes, whose home it was. I only wish Tom Bell had included all eleven: certainly 'The Tame Bear' could have made way for some more. Its main attraction is that the arrangement is by Bernard Stinton Walker, the son of Henry Walker, friend of Elgar and Manager of the Old Bank in Worcester. Our Henry had been widowed in 1896 at the age of 70 and, in a move perhaps untypical of the Mr. Mainwarings of this world, seems to have shackled up with one Dora David, a Cradley girl more than 50 years his junior. There is no trace of a marriage, although Dora was calling herself Mrs. Walker in the 1901 census. A few years and two young sons later Henry died in Weston-super-Mare, whereupon Dora married a lad of her own age, Thomas Henry Hopkins, who had been brought up in the Worcester Union Workhouse. The happy couple departed for Newcastle, where they lived in some state on the £2,774 5s. 4d. left to his young widow by the equally departed Henry.

Malcolm Williamson's Symphony was commissioned in 1960 by Allan Wicks, the organist of Canterbury Cathedral, who I knew slightly when I was at the University of Kent in the 1960s. I will admit that it doesn't appeal to me in the slightest, but I recognise that there will be many to whom it does, and it certainly comes over with dramatic effect in this recital. It is by a considerable distance the most heavyweight of the works on this CD: incomprehensible to me, then, that it is followed by Bliss's piano trifle *The Rout Trot*, sounding in this arrangement like the cheesiest of fairground organ pieces. It is meant to serve 'as an ebullient encore': to me it serves as an unwelcome intrusion after the concentrated listening which the Williamson Symphony demands.

All the Bliss pieces are readily available elsewhere in their original garb. If they attract you then you will want to hear them as Bliss intended, whatever the quality of the transcription or the performance: far better, surely, to have had the Elgar Sonata instead, played on a cathedral organ of the correct period, which the Durham instrument is.

The recorded sound is fine, if a little distant in the more dramatic moments. It is as if one is seated in the choir for the Vesper Voluntaries, but way down the nave for Bliss's (or rather Robert Gower's) louder moments.

But oh that we could have had the Williamson, the Elgar Sonata, and the two little pieces by Parratt and Walford Davies: that would have been so much more rewarding in a recital with the title 'Masters of the Monarchs' Music'.

Martin Bird

Parry: *I was glad, Te Deum* (1911), *Blest pair of Sirens, Jerusalem* (orch. Elgar)

Stanford: *Magnificat and Nunc dimittis* in A, *Magnificat and Nunc dimittis* in G, *Magnificat and Nunc dimittis* in Bb, *Magnificat and Nunc dimittis* in C

Carolyn Sampson (soprano), David Wilson-Johnson (bass), Choir of The King's Consort, The King's Consort, conducted by Robert King



VIVAT
VIVAT101

Robert King, a musician with an unsurpassed reputation for combining careful research into period instruments and performing practice with performances that are brimming with vitality, has chosen to widen his sphere of interest to encompass the music of Elgar's lifetime. That is something to be welcomed unreservedly, for we now have the opportunity, in recorded sound that is not, of course, a century old, to hear the sounds, textures and balances that the composers of the day expected to hear.

Well, not quite, for with fully professional forces the question of economics inevitably rears its head, and the size of the forces employed here is, for the Parry pieces at least, much smaller than would have been available and expected a century ago. But I would far rather listen to the magnificent and cultured choral sound produced by the 36 singers of the Choir of the King's Consort than to the ill-disciplined muddle that emerges from the 360 singers of the Hereford Festival Chorus on Elgar's 1927 recording of *The Music Makers*.

Many people, I'm sure, will long have known Stanford's settings of the *Magnificat* and *Nunc dimittis*. Few will have known of the existence of these orchestral versions - I certainly didn't. It is an absolute joy to hear these familiar settings in orchestral garb, especially as Stanford (rather like Elgar in his orchestration of *Jerusalem*), has added a whole range of counter-melodies and effects. In Stanford we have one of the most imaginative and subtle orchestrators ever (listen to and marvel at those soft timpani rolls in the *Magnificat* in G) and here one can luxuriate in the results to one's heart's content. Carolyn Sampson and David Wilson-Johnson sing superbly, and I defy anyone to hear the former sing the solo in the *Magnificat* in G (featured in VIVAT's promotional online video) without placing an order for the disc immediately.

Parry's 1911 *Te Deum* is like the proverbial No. 11 bus - you wait for what seems like 100 years and then two turn up at once. Frederick Bridge, who was responsible for the Coronation music, was especially enthusiastic about the trumpets he planned to have, writing to Elgar in March 1911: 'I shall have a good force of Brass 12 Trumpets for Fanfares! playing in 4 parts if wanted.' Sadly, practicalities intervened, and in June he wrote: 'Alas! I cd not find room for the 12 extras - & have 6 first rate men in the orchestra (Trumpets) & I feel sure all will be much as you wish.' Turn to the impressive booklet and you will find six splendid trumpet players listed, headed by Crispian Steele-Perkins, along with comprehensive details of their instruments. As Robert

King told me: ‘That was an absolute must for me, as I think such details are so interesting and important. When you have your own label you can include those extra four pages and not have someone worrying about the extra 2p per booklet cost. Artistic freedom comes in varied ways!’

The performance of the *Te Deum* is nearly 3 minutes quicker than that by Järvi reviewed in the last issue, yet it doesn’t sound in the least bit rushed (neither does Järvi’s come across as sluggish). One of the miracles of music-making is that two totally different performances can sound equally right, and here is a case in point. Pace and speed in performance are entirely separate things, and King’s well-paced performance and the thrilling sound produced by his trumpets in the closing pages is a joy to hear. And, while on the subject, Boult’s performance of *Blest pair of Sirens* is two minutes longer than King’s, yet is totally sluggish by comparison. I have been shouting at the loudspeakers for the past 35 years (yes, really) in an effort to encourage Sir Adrian through his more leisurely moments, but to no avail. Now, at last, I can enjoy a beautifully sung, played *and* paced performance. *I was glad* is recorded in the slightly revised form used in 1911, and the CD ends with the Elgar orchestration of *Jerusalem*, written for the 1922 Leeds Festival. Sir Hugh Allen later wrote to Carice:

Yes, your Father scored “Jerusalem” at my request for the Parry memorial Concert at the Leeds Festival ... I have the score your Father made & which he gave me: on it there is a happy quasi dedication of this scoring to Hubert’s memory.¹

This is a truly memorable disc, and, I hope, will be the precursor of many more from The King’s Concert of British music of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Martin Bird

All the purely Elgar CDs are available now from the Elgar Birthplace Museum. Remember that buying from the Birthplace is a way of contributing directly towards its finances at this difficult economic time. You may shop online at:

www.elgarfoundation.org/index.php/the-elgar-shop/cds

1 Letter from Hugh Allen to Carice Elgar-Blake, 5 October 1938. Elgar Birthplace Museum letter 8976.

LETTERS

From Jerrold Northrop Moore

Approaches to the part of Gerontius

Further to Malcolm Walker’s letter about singers in *Gerontius* recordings: Malcolm expresses surprise that Jon Vickers never repeated his interpretation of the title role so fortunately preserved in the Barbirolli broadcast.

The failure was not from want of trying. I happened to be in Sir Adrian Boult’s office above the Wigmore Hall when a telephone call came from the producer Christopher Bishop. Whom should he engage for their upcoming recording? Sir Adrian: ‘Wait a minute: Jerry Moore is here, I’ll ask him.’

As firmly as I knew how, I said ‘Jon Vickers: I’ve never heard it so well sung.’

Sir Adrian: ‘Jerry says Vickers.’ Sounds of an answering voice, punctuated by Sir Adrian’s ‘Oh.’ ‘I see.’

The conversation ended, Sir Adrian rang off and turned to me: ‘He says Vickers is too expensive.’

Alas. I can only hope that Malcolm’s suggestion of Gedda proved a lesser drain on the EMI coffers.

From Philip Scowcroft

Carillon

The Editor’s review, in the December 2012 *Journal*, of the recent Somm CD of Elgar’s wartime music, and particularly in relation to the various recordings of *Carillon*, reminded me that there is a later (1940s) recitation to that piece, by Laurence Binyon, which bemoaned the fact that during the earlier part of the Second World War the ringing of church bells was forbidden except to warn of a German invasion, and looked forward to their being rung again in the usual way. I have dim recollections of hearing this version of *Carillon* on the wireless during the 1950s and much clearer ones of performing that recitation in 1989 with the (Doncaster) Beechfield Youth Orchestra. As a lifelong Elgarian this was a proud moment for me, but while Cammaerts’ original is not up to much, whether in its original French or its English translation, Binyon’s words are immeasurably worse; at the 1989 performance I asked if I could preface them by reciting a ‘real’ war poem, Rupert Brooke’s ‘The Soldier’, introduced by a soft snare drum roll to suggest the idea of death - which we did.

In the present day when virtually everything by Elgar is recorded, I once wondered whether there should be a recording of *Carillon* with the Binyon recitation. Mature thought convinces me this would not be a good idea.

From Arthur Reynolds

King Olaf

The Elgar Society’s exertions on behalf of its objective of ‘increasing knowledge and understanding

of Elgar's works' have been so extensive and so successful in recent years that it is incomprehensible to me that the Society would make no effort to address the recording studios' neglect of *Scenes from the Saga of King Olaf*.

During a 1993 encounter with Richard Hickox, then basking in the accolades being showered upon him for his Chandos recording of *Caractacus*, I asked what plans had he to record *King Olaf*, a work thought by many Elgarians to present a higher level of inspiration compared to *Caractacus*. Alas, replied Hickox, the arbiters of commerce at Chandos had decided there was room in the marketplace for only one published version of the work, that being Vernon Handley's 1984 recording for EMI.

Today the Handley recording is out of print. Anyone wanting to hear *King Olaf* on record must resort to iTunes or purchase EMI's 50-CD compilation of Elgar's repertoire.

Recently one of today's most illustrious interpreters of Elgar's music was heard to say he had no interest in conducting, let alone recording, *King Olaf* because of its obscure libretto.

Am I the only Elgarian to find this response strange and disappointing? The past neglect of other Elgar works derived from the cloying sanctimony of anti-Empire political correctness. There's none of that in Elgar's setting of portions of Longfellow's poem drawn from the 'Heimskringla', the series of sagas set down in the 12th century by the Icelander Snorre Sturleson. Olaf Trygvesson takes his place with Gerontius and the Apostle Peter in Elgar's settings of the saint-versus-sinner drama that lies at the heart of what it is to be human. How can this be thought unattractively obscure?

In March I had the privilege of giving the pre-concert talk at a performance of the work by the Longfellow Chorus in Portland, Maine. The audience was composed of people whose acquaintance with Elgar's music consisted chiefly of *Pomp and Circumstance No 1* heard in high school or university graduation ceremonies. The look of wonder on their faces when the performance ended induced me to write. Is there nothing the Society can do to entice the record studios to widen the audience response of wonder at the sonorities of this great work?

From Geoffrey Hodgkins

The Apostles

I was disappointed that the Editor was less than enthusiastic about the Hallé *Apostles* in his review of the recording. I was not able to be present at the Manchester concert, but sang in the Prom in August, and found it one of the most memorable evenings of my time in the London Philharmonic Choir, which stretches back over forty years (though with a sizeable gap in the middle!).

I had not sung for Sir Mark before, and was very impressed by his whole approach to the work, and by his manner with the choir. At the piano rehearsal he spent some time talking about the work and what he wanted from us. (It's well-known that orchestral players don't like conductors who spend time talking to them: they want to get on with the rehearsal and then go home, and I guess most singers feel the same!) Sir Mark spent a good deal of time on section 4, 'The Betrayal'. This is a difficult part of the work for the choir; most of the singing is in short phrases, often no more than a bar or two in length. They are also called upon to represent different players in the drama – apostles; the people in Gethsemane; the High Priest's servants; the singers within the temple; the priests; and the crowd at the trial – as well as acting as narrator on occasions. Sir Mark explained that it was important that the eight bars after 175 ('Blessed is the man ...') should be

sung *pp* as marked, as by now Judas has moved away from the Temple and the voices come to him from a distance. (This reminded me of Michael Kennedy's remark made many years ago, when he dismissed the idea of *The Apostles* being staged, but suggested that it would be very effective on film.) We are very fortunate to have such a gifted and committed musician as Sir Mark to promote Elgar in the way he does.

I was disappointed, too, that Martin was less than impressed by Jacques Imbrailo as Jesus: for me his portrayal managed the difficult task of balancing the majestic power of the part with the warmth of his love for people. This same balance of authority and tenderness made him such a successful Billy Budd at Glyndebourne a couple of years back. Most of the chorus I spoke too were similarly impressed.

So far as pronunciation was concerned, Sir Mark gave us a list of several words and how he required them to be sung. As well as 'torch-is' (to which Martin objected!) we were required to sing 'forgiveness'; 'blessid'; 'afflictid'; 'wickid'; 'broken-heartid'; and 'gospel'. This is because to emphasise the 'e' is to make it sound mannered: we do not speak like that in normal speech, as it is the weaker syllable. However, the '-ed' was retained in words normally spoken as one syllable but which Elgar has set to two notes, such as 'dig-ged', 'cri-ed' and 'mock-ed'.

I had the good fortune to take part in the first recording of the work in 1973-4 under Sir Adrian Boult. That was a never-to-be forgotten experience; but I will also treasure the evening of 10 August 2012 in the Royal Albert Hall for the rest of my days.

From Richard Turbet

British composers

I have a sinking feeling that I am going to regret becoming involved in this discussion as, whenever it crops up, it tends to degenerate into the printed equivalent of shouting and sandbagging. However, I am sure the Elgar Society is more genteel ('genteel? Look, I've *been* to Malvern', to misquote Harry Enfield) and any further correspondence will be conducted with decorum. In a discussion such as this, there is sometimes a tendency for folk not to differentiate between a favourite composer and a great composer. For instance, I fractionally prefer the music of Arthur Bliss to that of Elgar, but with the most profound respect to Bliss, I would not put him forward as the greater composer qualitatively.

Also, when focussing on composers of the classical and romantic periods and then looking back, there tends to be a blockage beyond the Baroque, so in discussions about the status of Elgar, the debate tends to stop at the indisputably and fabulously gifted Purcell. This disenfranchises a huge swathe of formidably gifted British composers from the mediaeval and Renaissance periods. It happens to be my belief that Britain's greatest composer is William Byrd, whose 500+ surviving pieces reveal, amongst other things, an outstanding technique, consistently profound responses to whatever text he was setting in English or Latin, and pioneering work as the father of modern keyboard writing; his music is also rewarding and it is simply enjoyable to listen to it. A case could also be made for his teacher Thomas Tallis. Further back still in the mediaeval world, the writings of foreign theorists proclaim John Dunstable as the most influential, respected, admired and indeed liked composer of his day. Probably the best outcome of a discussion such as this is for each reader challenged by the opinions of others to investigate composers from outside their comfort zone.

Falstaff

Michael Kennedy says that Strauss is the greatest composer of the twentieth century. I am happy with that. But I also agree with Shaw that '[*Falstaff*] ought to be played three times to [*Don Quixote*]' once', and yet in practice the opposite happens.

I blame Sir Edward. Trying to out-don the dons in his article in *The Musical Times*, he allowed the music to take second place. No one could follow his explanations in the concert-hall, but writers of programme-notes, literal-minded when they should be listening, follow his example.

There is no problem with *Falstaff* if one remembers that it is music not a translation, in effect a four movement symphony with two interludes, played straight through. The most an audience needs is rough timing and simple words.

1. (3 minutes) Falstaff and Prince Hal.
2. (11 minutes) Falstaff's capers and the gentlewomen. A sort of scherzo. Falstaff falls asleep.
3. INTERLUDE: (3 minutes) Dreams of youth (solo violin).
4. (5 minutes) Falstaff takes his 'scarecrow' army to the battle of Shrewsbury, then drifts home to rest in Shallow's orchard.
5. INTERLUDE (3 minutes) Tranquillity (pipe and tabor).
6. Conclusion (10 minutes) Hal becomes Henry V. Falstaff hurries to be at his right hand. Coronation. The King rejects Falstaff. ("How ill white hairs become a fool.") Falstaff broken. His last days.

But funnily enough Elgar got it right in a letter. 'Falstaff is the name but Shakespeare, the whole of human life, is the theme.' That, really, is plenty.

100 YEARS AGO ...

At the beginning of January 1913 Carice went to stay in Malvern with the Acworths, who had been their neighbours at Craig Lea. Mrs. Acworth took her to the Worcestershire Hunt Ball, Carice dressed in 'white, with narrow gold bands round her head'. She returned on the 15th, to find Alice 'in bed ... with bad cold'. An inventory of their possessions was being made for insurance purposes, and it was noted that the downstairs lavatory contained a toilet roll and a viola with a combined value of £5 1s.

After spending a long weekend with the Speyers at Ridgehurst, Elgar and Carice bought a dog, 'a new Aberdeen - Dreadful tragedy he was only here about 2 hrs & was lost, dear thing. John ran after him in the snow & darkness as far as Kilburn - never heard of him -'. Despite frequent visits to Battersea Dog's Home over the next few days the animal was never found.

By the end of January Elgar was 'Not well & planning to go abroad'. A single passage was booked to San Remo, which left 'A. most mis to think of his going alone'. The plan was quickly abandoned in favour of a joint visit to Naples, at which 'E. brightened from terrible depression' and they set out next day, though not before Elgar had told Windflower 'The exile begins tomorrow & will end - ?' They arrived on 8 February with Alice in full holiday mood: 'General discomfort & disturbance ... Frightful crowd ... drive to Parker's Hotel. Only a dull room left for us ... Damp & grey & no view ... Naples streets very uninteresting'. Elgar spent the holiday 'dreadfully depressed'. They moved on to Rome, where Elgar wrote to Carice, saying: 'It is lovely to be here again - but I am not happy [and] of course there's all the old difficulty - [Alice] can't walk & loathes it & wants to do everything & - nothing &c. &c.'

They returned to Severn House on the 23rd, Alice telling Troyte Griffith that 'Edward did not feel well & the weather was most inauspicious so he wished to return'. He continued to feel unwell, and on 4 March set out for Llandrindod Wells. Next day Alice had a 'Most happy telegram from E. liking it & feeling better', but he returned after a week, having 'Found it was not doing good - Very disappointing.' He mouldered in Hampstead for a while, dabbling with *Falstaff* and going for drives with Windflower and Muriel Foster, before being despatched to Pollie's at Stoke Prior for a fortnight at the beginning of April. He returned on the 16th, looking 'better & nice out of door colour' before travelling to Mountain Ash to conduct *King Olaf* at the South Wales Musical Festival and *Gerontius* in Newport.

ISSN 0143-1269

*Printed by
John Price Printers
Brook Street, Bilston
West Midlands, WV14 0NW*