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## ELGAR AND WARLOCK (PHILIP HESELTINE)

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On the surface the coupling of the names Elgar and Peter Warlock (Philip Heseltine) would seem rather far-fetched. Just as there is little of the modal, 'pastoral' or 'folk-song' elements in Elgar's music, so are there few traces of nineteenth century German Romanticism in the music of Warlock. Yet, if one delves deeper into their characters and their music, there was much in common between these two composers. Both were self-taught, both felt at times alienated from society, both suffered from bouts of depression, and both have a completely original, uniquely personal quality displayed in their compositions. Besides the innate yet really indefinable 'Englishness' of their music, a work by Elgar (despite the obvious influences of the German Romantic school) has a stamp all of its own just as a piece by Peter Warlock (in spite of his early obsession with the music of Delius and later van Dieren and Bartók) has a musical language that is absolutely his and his alone. Often their music is tinged with more than a hint of melancholy, of an almost bitter-sweet nostalgia, a looking-back to something unattainable. With Elgar it was the values of a fast-fading, ebbing away of the Empire and all it stood for; with Warlock it was a looking-back to the Renaissance through the dreamy harmonic eyes of Delius.

The first references to Elgar in the Heseltine correspondence occur in schoolboy letters to his mother written from Eton in November and December 1908. Describing the visit of King Edward VII to the school to open the new Memorial Hall he mentions that "while the school are coming in the orchestra, of about 50 or 60, hired from London, will play Elgar's 'Imperial March' ",<sup>1</sup> and again he relates that at a school concert held in December 1908 "the Eton orchestra was augmented by several good players from London and played splendidly",<sup>2</sup> including in the programme Elgar's *Chanson de Matin*. Soon Elgar's music was beginning to interest him more :

I hope we shall be able to go to Queens' Hall on Good Friday afternoon as there is such a good concert there;<sup>3</sup> Henry Wood's orchestra are playing Elgar's new symphony and parts of Wagner's 'Parsifal'.<sup>4</sup>

Elgar's music evidently made something of an impact on the young boy, for the next year we find him enthusiastically telling his mother that he had obtained "Elgar's autograph from the innkeeper . . . I have got a very good autograph, and a good specimen at that."<sup>5</sup> There was also an opportunity to hear some

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<sup>1</sup> Heseltine to his mother, Edith Buckley Jones, 15 November 1908, BL Add MS 57959

<sup>2</sup> Heseltine to his mother, 20 December 1908, BL Add MS 57959

<sup>3</sup> Henry Wood conducted the Queen's Hall Orchestra in this concert in Queen's Hall on 9 April

more of Elgar's orchestral music :

I went to tea with [Mr Silver] after the Albert Hall concert . . . We had a very good concert, Elgar's Suite, 'The Wand of Youth' (no 1) was perfectly charming. It is an arrangement for orchestra of little pieces he wrote when aged 12 for a children's play. The combination of the little dainty pieces of youth with his musical knowledge of today is delightful. I love Elgar's music, more and more that I hear of it. If I were to chose [sic] my favourite all-round musicians, I should certainly say Beethoven, Mozart, Chopin, Wagner, Elgar and Puccini. I put them in chronological order as I cannot give one the first place they are all so lovely.<sup>6</sup>

At the end of the following year, he was himself taking part in school concerts at Eton, albeit in a modest way :

I shall be playing the cymbals (!) in the orchestra on Saturday; there is not much to do, except a rather nasty clash on a half-beat at the end of 'Peer Gynt', where it has worked up very fast. I am also playing the Big Drum in the orchestra at the School Concert; the concert on Saturday is conducted by Mr Thomas F. Dunhill,<sup>7</sup> and the school concert by Dr Lloyd;<sup>8</sup> at the latter I shall have the honour of playing (though it is only the big drum) in a band conducted by a man who is not only an exceedingly good musician all round and conductor, but also a man under whose baton the greatest English musician there has ever been, once played as a humble viola! For Colin Taylor<sup>9</sup> told me only last night that Sir Edward Elgar, before he was at all known, played in an orchestra under Dr Lloyd. I expect it was when Dr Lloyd was at Gloucester cathedral as organist, for Sir Edward Elgar lived at Worcester.<sup>10</sup>

A few days later, enthusiastically looking forward to the Christmas holidays and the musical opportunities afforded in London, he wrote in his weekly letter to his mother :

If we are in London (as we certainly shall be at any rate for the 1st few days of January) I hope we can go to the Queen's Hall concert on New Years day afternoon at Queen's Hall . . . There is an excellent concert the following Sunday afternoon in the same place,<sup>11</sup> when the programme includes . . . some Elgar & Sibelius, those are the best concerts of the holidays, and if we do these two only we shall be very well off for hearing music.<sup>12</sup>

He also informed his mother that Elgar's *Apostles* was on "at Alexandra Palace, 7.30. to-morrow evening [29 January 1910]".<sup>13</sup>

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1909.

<sup>4</sup> Heseltine to his mother, 4 April 1909, BL Add MS 57959

<sup>5</sup> Heseltine to his mother, 17 October 1909, BL Add MS 57959

<sup>6</sup> Heseltine to his mother, 31 October 1909, BL Add MS 57959

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Dunhill (1877-1946), British composer and teacher; for a time he was assistant music-master at Eton.

<sup>8</sup> Charles Harford Lloyd (1849-1919), Precentor (Director of Music) at Eton College.

<sup>9</sup> Colin Taylor (1881-1973), English pianist, composer, and teacher. He was assistant music-master at Eton from 1904 to 1914, and from 1921 to 1941 was on the staff of the South African College of Music in Cape Town.

<sup>10</sup> Heseltine to his mother, 8 December 1909, BL Add MS 57959

<sup>11</sup> This Queen's Hall concert on 9 January was conducted by Mackenzie and included Elgar's *Cockaigne* Overture.

<sup>12</sup> Heseltine to his mother, 12 December 1909, BL Add MS 57959



*Philip Heseltine alias Peter Warlock, photographed in 1926, aged 31*

But now another musical figure was appearing on the scene, a composer who was for many years to eclipse all other composers in Heseltine's musical life and to become of an almost obsessive nature : Frederick Delius. After attending an all-Delius concert during the interval of which he met the composer himself, the event had an almost devastatingly profound effect on his life. Now completely under the music's spell, he wrote an ecstatic letter to Delius and an equally ecstatic letter to his mother :

I have not yet got over Friday night - the recollections of that music and the impressions they made haunt me . . . standing absolutely apart from any other music in their loveliness. . . . I have never heard any music to touch it, and truly, words fail me to describe it at all . . . Friday evening was the most perfectly happy evening I have ever spent, and I shall never forget it.<sup>14</sup>

But his enthusiasm for Elgar's music had evidently not waned entirely for in February 1911 he wrote to his mother :

I see Elgar has composed a new symphony - his second; I have great hopes that we may be able to hear it shortly, as it is to be produced in London in May,<sup>15</sup> and as the Three Choirs Festival is this year at Worcester, which is Elgar's native town, I think he is pretty sure to come and conduct it there.<sup>16</sup> Worcester is the most accessible of the three towns from [Cefn] Bryntalch, & not at all too far to motor.<sup>17</sup>

Again a few months later he excitedly told his mother that :

There is a most wonderful concert in London to-night, at which Elgar's second symphony is being performed for the first time by the Queen's Hall Orchestra under Elgar's own direction. I have read a long account of the work, by Ernest Newman, one of the best critics living, and it seems to be an exceptionally fine work. The musical quotations of the principal themes are particularly lovely. It is dedicated to the memory of King Edward VII, though it is purely abstract music, i.e. not, thank goodness, a symphony descriptive of particular incidents in his life, but purely the product of Elgar's heart and soul. The motto is the first line of a very beautiful poem of Shelley, 'Rarely, rarely comest thou, Spirit of delight'. . . . I shall make a special point of hearing it at Worcester festival this year: it is being performed at a morning concert, and the programme is one of great interest . . . As I shall soon be getting tickets, I should like to know if you will come too in the car, as I will get you a ticket too. I am sure you would enjoy it. I think I love Elgar almost more than anyone else, his only rivals, in my poor judgment being Delius, Strauss, Wagner, Tchaikovsky, though they are all so different you cannot compare them.<sup>18</sup>

A short while later in July he thanked her for the gift of a cheque she had sent him, saying :

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<sup>13</sup> Heseltine to his mother, 28 January 1910, BL Add MS 57959

<sup>14</sup> Heseltine to his mother, 18 January 1911, BL Add MS 57960

<sup>15</sup> Elgar's Second Symphony was given its first performance in Queen's Hall, London on 24 May 1911.

<sup>16</sup> Elgar's Second Symphony was indeed performed at the Worcester Three Choirs Festival in 1911.

<sup>17</sup> Heseltine to his mother, 23 February 1911, BL Add MS 57960

<sup>18</sup> Heseltine to his mother, 24 May 1911, BL Add MS 57960

<sup>19</sup> Heseltine to his mother, 24 July 1911, BL Add MS 57960

<sup>20</sup> Heseltine to Taylor, 6 December 1911, BL Add MS 54197

. . . it is really far more than I shall want, but I will return you the balance. You are so kind, you are always over-generous: I am getting . . . the two Elgar full scores, bound in cloth: the two (scores & plays) will come to just £2 altogether).<sup>19</sup>

It would seem that he was also trying to press Elgar's cause with Delius himself and wrote to his former Eton piano teacher, Colin Taylor, suggesting with almost a touch of surprise that Delius was not particularly interested in other English composers and their music :

I do not think Delius interests himself very much in the English composers, although he makes such sweeping statements about them, for he told me he did not know either Elgar's Second Symphony, or Clutsam's opera 'A Summer Night' or Bax's Celtic Song-Cycle, which I suggested as the best examples of English music I could think of.<sup>20</sup>

By 1912 Delius had become the all-important father-figure in Heseltine's life and from their copious correspondence it is clear the young man was becoming more and more influenced by the older man's pronouncements on music, religion and life in general. Heseltine was now beginning to make snide remarks about English music :

I tried to persuade a very keen German critic to come to England for the Balfour Gardiner Concerts, to hear a little real English music. They had an English concert in Cologne, and Steinbach<sup>21</sup> gave them Parry and Stanford and Elgar's 'Sea-Pictures'! Naturally the modern, Delius-loving critic was very discontented!<sup>22</sup>

Heseltine's letter to Taylor written whilst attending the 1912 Birmingham Festival surely shows some of Delius's influence. Heseltine had read about the forthcoming performance of Elgar's *The Music Makers* at the Festival, telling Delius that "Elgar seems to have taken a leaf out of Strauss' book by quoting copiously from his own works in 'We are the music-makers', which is described in this month's 'Musical Times'." <sup>23</sup> His comments on the work after the performance were far from complimentary :

Last night's concert was a most extraordinary hotch-potch. First came an overture by Beethoven called 'Coriolan' which bored me to distraction: then a quite delightful Brandenburg Concerto [No. 3 in G] by Bach: then some monkey-tricks by Moriz Rosenthal, after which the 'piece de resistance' of the evening - Elgar's new choral work. I did not like it at all: it seemed to me to be 'sound and fury Signifying Nothing'.<sup>24</sup> The enormous number of quotations from his own works, and the obscure references to persons and things which do not in the least matter struck me as being quite absurd.<sup>25</sup>

It is perhaps not without significance that Delius had written the same day in similar terms to his wife,

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<sup>21</sup> Fritz Steinbach (1855-1916), German conductor and composer. He was a frequent visitor to England in his later years when he conducted the London Symphony Orchestra; appointed director of the Conservatoire in Cologne in 1902.

<sup>22</sup> Heseltine to Taylor, 6 March 1912, BL Add MS 54197

<sup>23</sup> Heseltine to Delius, 6 September 1912. The article (by Ernest Newman) was "The Music Makers", by Edward Elgar, *Musical Times* 1912, pp 566-70.

<sup>24</sup> Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, V, 5, 27.

<sup>25</sup> Heseltine to Taylor, 2 October 1912, BL Add MS 54197

Jelka, describing Elgar's *Music Makers* as "not very interesting - & very noisy - The chorus treated in the old way & very heavily orchestrated - It did not interest me -".<sup>26</sup> Heseltine had, however, made a perceptive comment on Elgar himself :

Elgar himself looked ill and care-worn, and conducted in a very listless manner, though at times a sort of nervous energy seemed to come over him for a minute or two. I can't imagine how people can follow his beat. Scriabine's 'Prometheus' had to be abandoned, because Elgar wanted so many rehearsals for this wretched work!<sup>27</sup>

It is interesting to note that six days later Elgar himself wrote to Alice Stuart-Wortley : "I was really ill all last week & you must forgive much to a sick man".<sup>28</sup>

There are no more references about Elgar until three years later when there is a rather dismissive reference in a letter to Delius :

I sent off to you on Monday, by insured post, the score of the Double Concerto, and copies of Goossens' first String Quartet<sup>29</sup> and a song by an entirely unknown man, George Whitaker.<sup>30</sup> I know nothing better in young English music than these two works, and I shall await your verdict on them with very great interest. Goossens appears to me, more and more, a man of astounding genius. It is a tragedy that he is compelled by want of a few paltry pounds a year to remain in this country, where all is apathy and stagnation, as far as music is concerned - where, save among personal friends who would applaud anything, there is not even a semblance of enthusiasm - no discrimination and no selective appreciation. Delius is complacently coupled with Elgar (though, of course, it is 'Elgar - and Delius')!<sup>31</sup>

His reviews in the *Daily Mail* often make reference to Elgar and his music :

The second concert of the Festival of British Music, which took place at the Queen's Hall last night, was memorable not only for the profusion and interest of the native works in the programme but also as the occasion of the most astounding exhibition of violin playing that has been heard in London from any artist for many a long day. This is a big statement, but it was fully justified by Mr Albert Sammons' superb performance in Sir Edward Elgar's Violin Concerto, under the composer's direction. The mingled strength and tenderness of his tone, coupled with brilliance of execution and flawless intonation, made of his performance a miracle of beauty.<sup>32</sup>

But already he could be critical of works that did not appeal to him :

The Philharmonic Society's all-British concert, held in Queen's Hall last night, contained more

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<sup>26</sup> Delius to his wife, Jelka, 2 October 1912, Grainger Museum, Melbourne.

<sup>27</sup> Heseltine to Taylor, 2 October 1912, BL Add MS 54197

<sup>28</sup> Elgar to Alice Stuart-Wortley, 7 October 1912, Hereford & Worcester County Record Office, 705:445:7109

<sup>29</sup> String Quartet no 1 in C (1916).

<sup>30</sup> Practically nothing is known about Whitaker. Heseltine wrote the following: "Quilter and George Whitaker are two unpretentious but gifted song-writers. The latter's setting of Yeats' 'Innisfree' is a remarkable example of the true re-creation of a poem in terms of music" (Heseltine, 'The Condition of Music in England', *The New Age*, June 1917, no 1292, v 21, no 7, p 156.) Heseltine also printed a song of his, *Thou wilt not goe and leave me heir*, in the August 1920 *Sackbut*.

interest for the student of musical evolution in this country than for the music-lover pure and simple. For Sir Edward Elgar was not able to leaven more than a part of the programme with real musical interest, and his 'Carillon' is far from representing him at his highest level, as does the second Symphony with which the concert ended.

The programme was noteworthy in that it emphasised the marked cleavage between the older and the younger generation of living British composers (roughly, those born before and after 1863), by including the work of three members of the elder group (Parry, Stanford, and Elgar), together with an overture by one who has oscillated between the two schools without allying himself to either or achieving a distinct style of his own (Vaughan Williams). A concert which represents Elgar side by side with composers born a decade earlier demonstrates forcibly the way in which he has epitomised the musical aspirations of more than one generation.<sup>33</sup>

But by 1916, despite enthusiastic schemes for what he called "the regeneration of music in England" which he outlined to Colin Taylor, he seemed now prepared to relegate Elgar to the composers of yesterday :

I am preparing a book on Modern British Composers, which is going well . . . Eleven composers (of to-day, not yesterday : i.e. Elgar, Bantock, Smyth and Co. are left over for a supplementary volume, which someone else can write, on the transition or bridge period between the Parry-Mackenzie horde and the generation led by Delius) - receive a chapter each, with complete list of works, bibliography etc, and a concluding chapter is reserved for song-writers, folk-songs, ballads, rag-time, etc. etc. So it will be fairly comprehensive.<sup>34</sup>

It should be added that no such book actually appeared.

In 1920 he wrote an article for the recently-launched journal *Music and Letters* criticising the programming for the forthcoming season of Promenade Concerts. Here he laments the fact that Elgar's symphonies were not more frequently featured in programmes :

In mid-August came the opening of the twenty-fifth season of Promenade Concerts at Queen's Hall. . . . too many undistinguished novelties, and too little of certain great masters - Haydn, Mozart, Berlioz, Liszt and Brahms for instance. . . . There is no merit in giving a novelty merely for novelty's sake; and the cause of British music is better served by repeating masterpieces like Elgar's Symphonies (still too rarely to be heard) than by producing works of doubtful genius for the first (and often the last) time.<sup>35</sup>

In *The Sackbut*, the musical journal that Heseltine founded and edited from 1920 to 1921, there are numerous references to Elgar and his music. We find him complaining about the dearth of Elgar's music in the forthcoming season of Promenade concerts :

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<sup>31</sup> Heseltine to Delius, 15 December 1915, BL Add MS 71167

<sup>32</sup> *Daily Mail*, 14 May 1915, p 3, col 5

<sup>33</sup> *Daily Mail*, 19 March 1915, p 6, col 3

<sup>34</sup> Heseltine to Taylor, 5 June 1916, BL Add MS 54197

<sup>35</sup> *Music and Letters*, January 1920, VI(1), pp 71-2

<sup>36</sup> *The Sackbut*, Vol I, no 4, August 1920, pp 153-6

<sup>37</sup> *The Sackbut*, Vol I, no 9, March 1921, pp 418-26

<sup>38</sup> *The Sackbut*, Vol I, no 1, May 1920, pp 27-31

<sup>39</sup> Heseltine to Taylor, 19 January 1929, BL Add MS 54197

Are we in time to draw the attention of the management to another glaring anomaly: two performances of the Pathétique Symphony and none of Elgar's Symphonies? Sir Henry Wood should remember that the night on which he performed Elgar's 1st Symphony last season was one of the worst of the whole summer, and that not even a Tchaikovsky programme would have drawn on such an evening. He should also be reminded that the New Queen's Hall Orchestra has never played better than on that occasion. But in any case, apart from the unfairness to Elgar, a system that allots four Wednesday evenings out of ten to Tchaikovsky symphonies can hardly please anyone.<sup>36</sup>

In a scathing attack on Holst's *The Planets*, a work that Heseltine particularly abhorred, he makes reference to Elgar by way of contrast :

The cause of British music is not assisted by acclaiming second-hand second-rate stuff as the work of genius - which is equivalent to suggesting that this is the best England can produce and that she is quite satisfied with it as such. It is no good having one standard of criticism for British music and another for that of the rest of the world. Granted, we are progressing, that the average level of musical composition in England is higher than it was a century ago, that Holst is decidedly more interesting than Cowen, Corder or Coleridge Taylor. But to assign Holst a place alongside of Delius, Elgar (the Elgar of the symphonies and the variations) or even Vaughan Williams is simply to give foreign students of our music the impression that we have but little discrimination between first and second class work. Mediocrity is the eternal enemy of genius, and the higher the general level of mediocrity rises the more difficult it will become for genius to be recognised by the public at large as belonging to another plane of existence altogether.<sup>37</sup> Yet he was still not afraid to speak out if he disliked a work :

The concerts of the first congress of the British Music Society brought us no novelties, but Vaughan Williams' 'London Symphony' . . . Elgar's Overture, 'In the South', which preceded Vaughan Williams' work, is a consummate example of 'musicianship' in the worst sense of the word and quite unworthy of a composer who by his Variations and two Symphonies has firmly established his claim to the title of a great symphonic writer.<sup>38</sup>

The life of Heseltine is a tortured one and it is sad that by 1927 he and Delius had slowly drifted apart. It seems that both Delius and Jelka remained extremely fond of Heseltine but that he gradually began keeping them at a distance. There is almost a tone of angry resentment in Heseltine's letter to Taylor written in 1929:

Delius, I think, wears very badly. His utter lack of any sense of construction, coupled with the consistent thickness of texture and unrelieved sweetness of harmony (even at moments where sweetness is the most inappropriate thing in the world) get on one's nerves, and make one long for the clean lines, harmonic purity and formal balance of the Elizabethans and of Mozart - or else for the stimulating harshness and dissonance of Bartók, and the Stravinsky of *Le Sacre du Printemps*.<sup>39</sup>

His later rejection of Delius and his music was coupled with an enthusiasm for composers such as Bartók and even Stravinsky on whose music he had in earlier years poured scorn. Symbolically freed of the earlier burden of Delius-worship he could now write with a new enthusiasm about composers such as

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<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Heseltine is here referring to a Promenade concert in Queen's Hall on 25 September 1930. Included in the programme was Bridge's Rhapsody for Orchestra (*Enter Spring*) and Walton's Sinfonia Concertante (for piano and orchestra) with Harriet Cohen as soloist.

<sup>42</sup> This same Promenade concert included Bax's Third Symphony (1929).

Vaughan Williams and Elgar :

The best new work for chorus and small orchestra that I know is Vaughan Williams's *Flos Campi*; the score and parts are now published (O.U.P.). On the whole, I would bracket V. W's Pastoral Symphony with Elgar's Introduction and Allegro for strings as the best English orchestral music of this century.<sup>40</sup>

By 1930, the last year of his tragic life, he was praising William Walton and Constant Lambert yet pouring scorn on Frank Bridge and Arnold Bax. At the same time he dismissed Elgar's *Severn Suite* completely; rather strange, as he was to write at length about the work in *The Daily Telegraph* on 27 September 1930.

I carefully avoided hearing Bridge's composition.<sup>41</sup> Walton's work improves at every hearing. He is the best musician this country has produced for a long while. Lambert is perhaps more talented, but I do not feel that music is his ultimate mode of expression. His keen observation, sensibility, wit, and critical intellect seem rather to point to literature as his medium, whereas Walton is specifically musical or nothing. Bax, as usual, drove me out of the hall after ten minutes.<sup>42</sup> Ireland's concerto<sup>43</sup> is very interesting but by no means a great or particularly original work. My greatest musical experience has been Elgar's second symphony, of which the old gentleman gave a most moving performance.<sup>44</sup>

The 'Severn Suite' is all balls, of course.<sup>45</sup>

One of Heseltine's notable characteristics was his constant championing of other composers' music - Delius, van Dieren, Bartók, and numerous others. One of his last acts was on behalf of Elgar whom he felt had been sorely insulted. Edward Dent (1876-1957), the professor of music at Cambridge, had written an article on Elgar for a German *Handbuch der Musikgeschichte* and in this article Dent had included the following appallingly dismissive remarks :

Wie Mackenzie, war er Violinist von Beruf und studierte Liszts Werke, welche den konservativen akademischen Musiken ein Greuel waren. Er war überdies Katholik und mehr oder weniger Autodidakt, der wenig von der literarischen Bildung Parrys und Stanfords hatte. . . . Für englische Ohren ist Elgars Musik allzu gefühlvoll und nicht ganz frei von Vulgarität. Seine Orchesterwerke, Variationen, 2 Symphonien, Konzerte für Violine und Violoncell und verschiedene Ouvertüren sind lebhaft in der Farbe, doch pomphaft im Stile und mit einer gesuchten Ritterlichkeit des Ausdrucks. . . . Seine Kammermusik . . . ist trocken und akademisch.<sup>46</sup>

When it was discovered what Dent had written, there was an angry outcry at the insult to England's greatest living composer. Although Heseltine had been on fairly good terms with Dent for a number of years and had printed two of his songs in *The Sackbut*, he was incensed by the article and immediately organized a letter of protest which he persuaded a number of distinguished personalities to sign. Among these were Hamilton Harty, John Ireland, Augustus John, E J Moeran, Landon Ronald, Richard Terry,

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<sup>43</sup> Piano Concerto in E flat (1930)

<sup>44</sup> Heseltine is here referring to a Promenade concert in Queen's Hall on 2 October 1930. Included in the programme was Ireland's Piano Concerto and Elgar's Symphony no 2 (conducted by the composer)

<sup>45</sup> Heseltine to E J Moeran, 6 October 1930, BL Add MS 57794

<sup>46</sup> G Adler (ed.), *Handbuch der Musikgeschichte* (Berlin, 1930) p

William Walton, and Bernard Shaw. The letter, however, only appeared in print after Heseltine's death :

**SIR EDWARD ELGAR**  
**MUSICIANS' PROTEST AGAINST PROF DENT'S ALLEGED INJUSTICE**

SIR, - We the undersigned, wish to record an emphatic protest against the unjust and inadequate treatment of Sir Edward Elgar by Prof Dent in his article on 'Modern English Music' in Adler's monumental 'Handbuch der Musikgeschichte' (second enlarged edition 1930) - a work that will be indispensable to all students of musical history for many years to come.

The fact that the learned professor devotes sixty-six lines to Parry, forty-one to Stanford, and only sixteen to Elgar is perhaps hardly a matter for criticism, but the statement that 'for English ears Elgar's music is much too emotional and not free from vulgarity', the summary dismissal of all his orchestral works as 'lively in colour, but pompous in style and of a too deliberate nobility of expression', and of his chamber music as 'dry and academic', cannot be unchallenged.

At the present time the works of Elgar, so far from being distasteful to English ears, are held in the highest honour by the majority of English musicians and the musical public in general.

Prof Dent's failure to appreciate Elgar's music is, no doubt, temperamental; but it does not justify him in grossly misrepresenting the position which Sir Edward Elgar and his music enjoy in the esteem of his fellow-countrymen.

(Signed)

EMILE CAMMAERTS, JOHN GOSS, HARVEY GRACE, LESLIE HEWARD, BEATRICE HARRISON, HAMILTON HARTY, JOHN IRELAND, AUGUSTUS JOHN, ROBERT LORENZ, E. J. MOERAN, ANDRE MANGEOT, PHILIP PAGE, LONDON RONALD, ALBERT SAMMONS, G. BERNARD SHAW, RICHARD TERRY, WILLIAM WALTON, PETER WARLOCK.<sup>47</sup>

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1047 "Like [Sir Alexander] Mackenzie, he [Elgar] was a violin player by profession, and studied the works of Liszt, which were loathsome to conservative academic musicians. He was, moreover, a Catholic, and more or less self-taught, possessing little of the literary culture of Parry and Stanford . . . For English ears Elgar's music is too emotional and not entirely free from vulgarity. His orchestral works, variations, 2 symphonies, concertos for violin and violoncello and various overtures are lively in colour, but pompous in style and with an attempted nobility of expression. . . His chamber music . . . is dry and academic."

<sup>47</sup> *Musical Times*, 1931, p 326

In conclusion here are the full texts of Heseltine's published writings on Elgar :

## **ELGAR AND THE SYMPHONY**

**By PHILIP HESELTINE**

In the bad old days - and they are not very far behind us - when theory was spelt with a capital T and even musical degrees were taken seriously, form - and especially sonata (or symphonic) form - was a fetish worshipped for its own sake as blindly and as muddle-headedly as timbre and tone-colour have been, in certain quarters, in our own day. The edifying spectacle of the great Brahms, with fifty or sixty works to his credit and an European reputation into the bargain, yet hesitating to apply himself to so august and sacrosanct a task as the writing of a symphony, was held up as a solemn warning to young composers suspected of undue precipitancy. But when the work which the caption-loving critics hailed as Beethoven's tenth symphony at last appeared, its laborious formality and colouristic monotony, though regarded as positive virtues by the composer's partisans, did little to convince his opponents of the heaven-sent quality of his genius for musical construction.

For the younger generation of to-day the old antagonism between 'classical' and 'modern' music, between the so-called strict form of the symphony and the supposedly revolutionary free form of the symphonic poem, is almost unintelligible. It is now generally realised that form is as much the product of the creative imagination as the musical material itself. The whole question was admirably summed up ten years ago by Frederic Austin on the occasion of the first performance of his Symphony in E major (a remarkable work which has been most undeservedly neglected in the meanwhile), when he stated that "the analogy drawn from architecture that has imposed form in its deadly restrictions upon the composer is a false one, music being fluid and not static - as Bach well knew - and depending upon the perception of the ear and not the eye"; and "form stands merely for definition and relevancy; its ways are manifold, and it proceeds from the inner necessities of the material and cannot be imposed satisfactorily from without". We read now of the Brahms, Schumann and Wagner-Liszt controversy on the problems of musical form with a vague smile of incredulity, knowing that music cannot be thus dichotomised on a purely theoretical basis, and that the particular controversy in question was fomented by Joseph Joachim, who, despite his ~~numerous published compositions, was never~~ a creative artist of the first, second, or third rank.

### **Brahms and Borodin**

It is an interesting fact which, I think, has never been pointed out by any writer on music that the first symphony of Brahms (which, even to its admirers, contains much that is "thick, even muddy" in orchestral sound) is almost exactly contemporaneous with the second symphony of Borodin, having been composed in or about the year 1875. The comparison is remarkable in that it shows up in a most glaring light the false premises upon which the musical pedantry of the nineteenth century was based. I have on many occasions repeated the opinion which was first voiced 300 years ago by the English song-writer, Robert Jones, that there is no greater enemy to music than the musical profession - by which I designate those who regard music, not as every other man's birthright, but as an esoteric mystery into which one

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can only be initiated by a long course of special study and an even longer bill of fees. It is not so much Brahms's fault as the fault of his times and of his partisans that he has become, for the younger generation of English musicians, the stock figure of the professional musician, in the worst sense of the word, a figure of fun, an Aunt Sally set up to be pelted with any missile that happens to be handy. But when one examines the matter more carefully, one finds that it is not so much Brahms as "the Brahms tendency" against which our young musicians have risen (rightly enough) in revolt.

Now to revert to Borodin and his second symphony. If there is a more perfect example of felicitous construction in music on traditional lines, allied with a consummate sense of orchestral colour-combinations and a power of thematic invention which is nothing short of what the Germans call genial in the whole range of modern music, I have yet to make its acquaintance. Yet Borodin was a busy professor of chemistry who wrote music only in his spare time. Moreover, the sympathies of Borodin, the musician, were entirely with that group of musicians who were considered revolutionaries, despisers of tradition and contemptuous of musical form.

What the general opinion of Borodin is at the present day I do not know. Probably there is no general opinion as yet, since his works are so rarely performed. However, I have no shame or hesitation in stating for the benefit of anyone whom it may interest that, so far as traditional symphonic form is concerned, the master craftsman of the last quarter of the nineteenth century was not Brahms but Borodin - no professional, but, like our own Elgar, a self-taught musician. In England during that period - it is no good mincing matters - we were pedant-ridden, as indeed we had been for a very long while before that period. There is no need to mention their names : everyone knows who they were. And despite the polite attempts that have been made during the last few years, to regard them as the precursors and prophets of the present musical renaissance in this country, the fact remains (and it can be proved from their printed utterances) that if the creative impulse of the younger generation had not been strong enough to withstand their pernicious influence, that renaissance would have been either prevented or very considerably retarded.

### Elgar and Delius

There are two pioneers of modern British music and two only - if by pioneers one designates not propagandists who go about seeking for any works that may be said to embody the idea they wish to disseminate, but men of genius who, by the force and nobility of their example, inspire their younger countrymen to follow their footsteps towards a common ideal. These two men are Elgar and Delius.

It is customary, as Cecil Gray has wittily pointed out, that composers should enter musical history in pairs as the animals entered the ark, but with this difference, that there is seldom any reason for their pairing but that of a coeval reputation. Bach and Handel, Haydn and Mozart, Strauss and Debussy provide sufficiently ill-assorted examples of this historical coupling. And between Elgar and Delius there would seem, at first sight, to be an obvious disparity, both of style and of temperament. In their musical methods they differ essentially, but, as Blake says, "all genius is equal", and in spirit we find them very closely akin in the profoundly religious (in the fundamental, not sectarian sense of the word) qualities revealed in the best work of both.

It was in the summer of 1899 that Richter produced the *Enigma Variations* of Elgar, only a few weeks after the concert which had revealed Frederick Delius to his astonished compatriots. This date marks the turning point in the history of modern British music. The advent of Delius revealed the existence of unexplored regions beyond the last horizon of Wagner, while Elgar showed, in his superb variations, and still more in the A flat Symphony which followed, nine years later, that tradition is only dry bones to those

who cannot enshrine it in the forms of living imagination.

### **The public taste**

Next Wednesday, thanks to the initiative of Mr Robert Lorenz and the co-operation of *The Daily Telegraph*, this superb symphony will be rescued from two years' oblivion. It is up to the serious music-lovers of London to see that it passes into the permanent repertory of the Queen's Hall Orchestra. There is no dearth of symphony concerts in the metropolis, but there seems to be a great dearth of symphonies, to judge from the programmes one sees. Beethoven naturally occupies pride of place in any such scheme, and few sensible musicians would question his right to do so.

But what many of us do question is the right of Tchaikovsky to prevent us from becoming familiar with the best symphonies of the last hundred years - that is to say, the *Symphonie Fantastique* of Berlioz, the *Faust Symphony* of Liszt, the B minor symphony of Borodin, and the fine symphonies of our own countrymen, Elgar, Vaughan Williams, and Bax.

It is often said that our musical public must be given what it demands. But what creates its demands and how is their continuance ascertained from time to time? Granted that the 'Pathetic' Symphony (thanks to the fictions associated with its making rather than to any purely musical consideration) can always be relied upon as a draw, it is by no means certain that any first-rate modern symphony could not quickly be made to serve as useful a purpose, from the box-office point of view, if the public, which learns slowly, were only given a sufficient number of opportunities to make themselves acquainted with it. It is unwise to assume that popular taste is always necessarily bad. If all responsible critics who realise that the 'Pathetic' Symphony is nothing but the maudlin slobber of a perverted sentimentalist would say so whenever they are called upon to chronicle its performance, instead of smiling indulgently and passing it over with a mildly ironic comment, there would be more chance for such masterpieces as the Elgar symphonies to establish themselves as essential constituents in the musical life of this country. If England could not produce first-rate work in this line there would be some excuse for going to Russia for fourth-rate substitutes.

*The Daily Telegraph*, 27 September 1930, p 15, col. 3-5. (reprinted in *The Musical Progress and Mail*, November 1930)

### **MUSIC OF THE DAY**

#### **ARTISTIC VALUE OF THE BRASS BAND**

#### **ELGAR'S NEW SUITE : By PETER WARLOCK**

The few hundred musicians and dilettanti who make up the audiences at West-end concerts and recitals are probably unaware that to-day, a few miles south of Queen's Hall, many thousands of their fellow-countrymen are celebrating the greatest event of their musical year. They have travelled from Scotland, from Wales, from Cornwall, and all parts of England, in order to be present at the twenty-fifth National Brass Band Contest at the Crystal Palace.

Music-lovers to whom mention of a brass band suggests either street players or one of those all-too-familiar rural organisations such as Evelyn Waugh has so amusingly described in 'Decline and Fall', will probably be surprised to learn that the composer of this year's test-piece for the championship is no less a person than the Master of the King's Musick, and that this piece is no mere rehash of Sir Edward's previous works, but an original composition, dignified by a separate opus-number - 87 (only two numbers removed from the 'cello concerto of ten years ago), and a dedication, 'To my friend G.

Bernard Shaw'.

'The Severn Suite', as it is called, consists of four linked movements : An introduction, marked pomposo, a brilliant toccata, in which the hand that wrote *Cockaigne* is apparent, a short fugue, followed by a minuet and trio, with a return to the theme of the introduction by way of a coda. The score (published by R. Smith and Co.) gives ample evidence of the mastery of instrumentation one would expect from a composer whose handling of the orchestral brass has always been so bold and original. Like Holst, who composed the test-piece for last year's championship, Elgar was a skilled performer on the trombone in his young days.

The toccata, with its running quavers for every instrument, including the basses, at the terrific speed of  $\text{minim} = 116$ , and the fugue, which demands the most delicately shaded nuances of quiet legato playing, and a perfectly-adjusted balance of tone between one group of instruments and another would indeed astonish ears that have only heard brass bands at the street corner. It is high time that the brass band was recognised, by composers and public alike, as a musical combination of real artistic importance. In many an industrial town it is the only medium through which music enters the lives of the people. The growth of its popularity may be estimated from the fact that whereas only twenty-nine bands competed at the first Crystal Palace contest, to-day's entries number upwards of 200. Yet the latest (1927) edition of Grove's Dictionary of Music wholly ignores this great national movement and its prime mover, Mr Henry Iles, merely characterising the brass band as "the small variety of military band employed by a cavalry regiment when on mounted duty, on account of the greater ease with which brass instruments can be played on horseback".

It is not in cavalry regiments that our finest brass players are to be found to-day, but in the mine and factory. The movement is essentially democratic and is destined to play a significant part in the musical life of the country. Our composers were not slow to avail themselves of the fine technique called into being by the choral competition festival : they should now turn their attention to the brass band, where they will find awaiting them a standard of technical accomplishment at least as high as that which prevails in our best choirs.

English choral music has vastly improved during the last thirty years, but the quality of the average brass band programme still leaves much to be desired. No musical combination is so badly in need of a repertoire of original compositions and of artistically scored arrangements of other good music. At present there is a predominant lack of enterprise on the part of our publishers; operatic potpourris and showy Victorian cornet solos still predominate in their brass band catalogues and several prominent firms, as I know from personal experience, will not consider brass band publications at all, being apparently as unaware as Grove's Dictionary of the growing appetite for such music.

The movement deserves the active support of all who have at heart the improvement of this country's musical taste. There are plenty of British composers who should be writing fine works for the brass band - not merely test-pieces for competitions, but music for everyday use. And as for arrangements, an immense field of music is open to the skilful transcriber, from the Elizabethans to Mozart, from the racket of *Portsmouth Point* to the grave and subtle beauty of the *First Cuckoo in Spring*.

Anyone who wants to start an amateur musical society in his neighbourhood should realise that no combination yields so quick a return of musical proficiency for a few months' study as the brass band. A brass player can become fully competent while the beginner on a string or reed instrument is still struggling with his elementary scales and exercises, and a small number of brass players can become an aesthetically pleasurable musical entity in less than one-tenth of the time it would take to teach a village choir to sing the simplest madrigal correctly. There is no more suitable musical organisation for boys'

schools and, as the initial cost, £50 would purchase a good set of second-hand instruments.

(Part of this article was reprinted in *The Musical Progress and Mail*, November 1930, p 65.)

### PROGRAMME NOTES

First Popular Concert  
City of Birmingham Orchestra, Town Hall  
18 October 1930.

OVERTURE, *Cockaigne (In London Town)* (Op. 40) Elgar (1857 - )

Sir Edward Elgar's orchestral impression of the City of Cockneys (or rather of its citizens) dates from 1900. It is dedicated "To my many friends, the Members of British Orchestras", and portrays what Mr Ernest Newman has described as "the happy-go-lucky London of Phil May, if we could imagine Phil May with a touch of romance in him." Though it is not programme-music in the sense of being a running accompaniment to a definite story, the work contains many realistic touches. A dignified theme heard near the beginning of the overture represents the typical hardworking London citizen; later on, a diminished version of this same theme is used to depict the ubiquitous street-arab, in much the same way as Wagner portrays the apprentices in *The Mastersingers* by an attenuated and perky version of the theme associated with the Masters themselves. Much of the music is concerned with the wanderings of a pair of lovers, whose tender colloquy is interrupted, first by the approach of a military band, and then by discordant strains of another kind of band, whose identity is hinted at by the tambourine. But all these themes are subservient to the purely musical structure of the overture, and their relation and interplay are not primarily conditioned by any extraneous episodes. The printed score contains no details of any programme associated with the music.

Second Symphony Concert  
City of Birmingham Orchestra, Town Hall  
30 October 1930

SYMPHONY No. 2, in E flat (Op. 63) Elgar (1857 - )

Allegro vivace e nobilmente  
Larghetto  
Rondo. Presto  
Moderato e maestoso

Sir Edward Elgar had passed his fiftieth year before the first of his two symphonies was completed. Up to that time all his instrumental works - with the exception of the early string Serenade (Op 20) and the superb Introduction and Allegro (Op 47) - had had an avowed underlying programme or poetic basis, which the music was designed to illustrate. The extremely illuminating commentary on the *Enigma Variations*, which Sir Edward has recently published, shows that the portraits of his friends were limned in greater detail than we had supposed, and that incidents of daily life, apparently trivial in themselves, had played no small part in suggesting the musical background chosen to set off the figure. Although no clues to the psychological sources of the symphonies have been given, one cannot but feel, when one hears them, that each unfolds a tremendous drama of the soul, in which, no doubt, external events are clearly mirrored as outward and audible symbols. The distinction between abstract and programme music is an arbitrary one. It is ultimately a question of whether the form of a work is dictated by the same line of thought which creates the matter,

or whether it is imposed on the matter from without, shaping it like a mould. In many a classical symphony, form is no more than a formula; and one is all too aware of the mechanism by which the material is fashioned to its pre-arranged proportions. On the other hand, uncontrolled pictorialism, in music as in painting, can only result in an invertebrate and unco-ordinated structure. The Elgar of the symphonies is a great story-teller; he has a tale to unfold, and although - as in the case of Conrad and many another ancient mariner - its telling is of necessity discursive, the argument never falters, and the plot unfolds itself in its own inevitable manner, and holds us until the conclusion is reached.

The second symphony is dedicated "to the memory of His late Majesty King Edward the Seventh". The composer has added a footnote, dated March 16th, 1911:-

This symphony, designed, early in 1910, to be a loyal tribute, bears its present dedication with the gracious approval of His Majesty the King

From a note at the end of the score we learn that the work was begun in Venice in 1910, and finished at Tintagel in the following year. Facing the first page are two lines of Shelley:-

Rarely, rarely, comest thou,  
Spirit of Delight!

The first performance of the symphony took place at the London Musical Festival on May 24th, 1911, under the composer's direction, and it was repeated a week later at the International Musical Congress. As is the case of *Tristan und Isolde*, the score was engraved and published before the work was played. The composer's assurance in both instances is most remarkable, for both scores are full of bold and original effects of orchestration. Elgar's scoring is as complex and subtly detailed on paper as it is clear and straightforward to the ear. His treatment of the orchestra is directly opposed to that of Glinka or Sibelius, for while they rely largely on unmixed colours and definitely contrasted outlines of tone, Elgar continually blends his colours and shades off one line into another, producing the effect of a kaleidoscopic interplay of changing lights and shadows.

The significance of the motto prefixed to the score is not wholly clear, but it seems likely that the poem as a whole should be regarded as having an affinity with the prevailing mood of the symphony. It is the fourth stanza of the poem, rather than the opening lines, that seem to convey something of the spirit of the first movement of the symphony:-

I love all that thou lovest,  
Spirit of Delight!  
The fresh earth in new leaves drest,  
And the starry night;  
Autumn evening, and the morn,  
When the golden mists are born.

Without the aid of musical examples, detailed analysis of the movement is impossible. It is a complex structure, built up of a number of thematic fragments that evolve one from another so naturally that it is hardly possible to regard them as separate themes. Thus the principal subject consists of six phrases, of one, two, or four bars' length; but although these form part of a continuous texture, they are not stated consecutively, and are developed quite independently of one another in various portions of the movement. The first two of these fragments - heard consecutively in the second and third bars of the work - should be noted, as they recur in the second and fourth movements.

The larghetto is a spacious, march-like threnody on the death of King Edward. For breadth and grandeur it may fitly be compared to the corresponding movement in the *Eroica* symphony. Its construction is extremely simple, and needs no description. The last two pages are peculiarly poignant. The falling motif

(first heard in the third bar of the opening movement) recurs as though with a message of consolation, and trails off into silence. Then the tramp of the march is resumed, and the elegy concludes on a funereal note. To-day the movement rings in our ears like the death-knell of pre-war England.

In the scherzo Elgar's orchestral virtuosity reaches its high-water mark. In the first movement the strings bear the greater part of the burden, but here the wood-wind are handled with a technical mastery and a fantastic imagination which recall Berlioz at his most bizarre.

Let me set my mournful ditty  
To a merry measure,

he seems to say, and the vivacious rondo theme is obviously related to the sinister motif which casts a brief shadow over the happy course of the first movement. If it is not too fanciful to pursue the analogy with Shelley's poem still further, we may hear in this capricious and wayward tune, and in the strong, bounding melody which succeeds it, an echo of the ". . . waves, and winds, and storms -

Everything almost  
Which is Nature's, and may be  
Untainted by man's misery."

But something of man's misery certainly taints the interlude, taking the place of the customary trio, in which the sinister motif returns in its original form with a thunder of drums to hammer it upon the mind with all the force of an obsession.

The finale has three clear-cut subjects, which are stated successively : the first (A), 'with dignity', at the opening by 'cellos, horns, bassoons and bass clarinet : the second (B), an impetuous, leaping theme in A flat by the strings four pages later; the third (C), in B flat, *nobilmente*, by the whole orchestra. Nature and the elements are here forgotten in "tranquil solitude, and such society as is quiet, wise and good." The development section begins (*poco animato*) with a sudden change of key, and is characterized by a descending triplet figure first heard on the horns. A and B are discussed at some length, but C is only referred to in a remote derivative which, in alliance with the rhythm of A, leads to the recapitulation of all three themes in the key of E flat.

Towards the end, the descending phrase from the first movement, which brought momentary solace to the grief of the elegy, returns with a benediction - and the end is peace.

In a monumental history of music recently published in Germany, Elgar's music is dismissed in sixteen lines as being "too emotional for English ears, not free from vulgarity ..... lively in colour, but pompous in style, and too consciously chivalrous in expression." Those who listen to-night to this noble symphony will decide for themselves with what degree of justice the English professor who delivered this judgment may claim to represent the opinion of his fellow-countrymen.





## ANOTHER RARE ELGAR PHOTOGRAPH

Actually, most people will be familiar with the picture taken at Abbey Road Studio 1 on 14 July 1932 at the occasion of the recording of the Violin Concerto by the 16-year-old Yehudi Menuhin. The particular version seen on the following page, as can be seen, graced the cover of the supplement of the French edition of HMV's house magazine for May 1933. The release of the set of discs in France was to coincide with the performance by Menuhin and Elgar in Paris on 31 May. One of the inside pages is also shown here (page 23), which reproduces Elgar's inscription for the Menuhin family (at the request of Gaisberg - see J N Moore, *Elgar on Record*, p 187).

What is particularly interesting, and makes it a 'rare' item, is that it shows much more detail than usual. More members of the orchestra are visible, and the foreground shows what seems to be a special amplifier, used presumably for playback if something went wrong, or for the engineers to contact the conductor from the cutting room. Modern engineers would no doubt be horrified at the mess of wiring showing at the back of the instrument! Thanks are due to Ronald Taylor for making the photo available.

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Several members, especially Michael Trott, have ventured information regarding the two photographs shown in the previous issue. The group containing Ronald and Cowen probably dates from August 1922. In *The Windflower Letters* we read "In August he went to Crowborough again to visit Landon Ronald on holiday with friends" (p 274), and there is a letter from Elgar to Ivor Atkins from The Beacon Hotel, Crowborough postmarked 17 August 1922 (see *The Elgar-Atkins Friendship*, p 347). It has also been pointed out that Ronald's story regarding the local photographer may be questionable, a similar tale having been told on occasions, with slight variations, about a number of famous people. The "Mummersetshire" accent attributed to the Sussex "peasant" certainly puts a strain on credulity.

The building in the background of the Brewer funeral photograph is the Gloucester Chapter Office, not the Chapter House, which is on the other side of the Cathedral.

ENREGISTREMENT DU CONCERTO  
D'ELGAR PAR YEHUDI MENUHIN, SOUS  
LA DIRECTION DE SIR EDWARD ELGAR

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COMPAGNIE FRANÇAISE  
DU GRAMOPHONE  
**LA VOIX DE SON MAITRE**

9, BOULEVARD HAUSSMANN, PARIS



VOIX A L'INTERIEUR - CARUSO - SINGHER - SUITE WAGNERIENNE  
KATINKA - DIA NEUF ANS - SANCHE MONTE - DOVA MACOU  
PALAIS - STIEVEL - SE FILM - CON S'ICKOTTIS - PAR DALLAPIN.

# INSTRUMENTS

## Violon et Orchestre Symphonique

Yehudi MENUHIN

et le London Symphony Orchestra, sous la Direction de Sir Edward ELGAR

Concerto en Si mineur, Op. 61 (Elgar) :

1 <sup>er</sup> Mouvement, Allegro (1 <sup>re</sup> et 2 <sup>e</sup> parties).....	DB 1751
1 <sup>er</sup> Mouvement, Allegro (3 <sup>e</sup> partie) (fin) .....	DB 1752
2 <sup>o</sup> Mouvement, Andante (1 <sup>re</sup> et 2 <sup>e</sup> parties).....	DB 1753
2 <sup>o</sup> Mouvement, Andante (fin) .....	DB 1754
3 <sup>e</sup> Mouvement, Allegro molto (1 <sup>re</sup> partie) .....	DB 1755
3 <sup>e</sup> Mouvement, Allegro molto, Cadence (2 <sup>e</sup> partie) .....	DB 1755
3 <sup>e</sup> Mouvement, Allegro molto, Cadence (3 <sup>e</sup> partie) .....	DB 1755
3 <sup>e</sup> Mouvement, Allegro molto, Cadence (4 <sup>e</sup> partie) (suite).....	DB 1756
3 <sup>e</sup> Mouvement, Adagio, Allegro molto (fin), Cadence (fin).....	DB 1756

Le Concerto de Sir Edward Elgar est dédié à Fritz Kreisler qui le fit connaître le 10 novembre 1910 et il a été joué depuis, avec le plus grand succès, dans le monde entier.

L'enregistrement de ce Concerto a été effectué sous la direction du compositeur lui-même, par l'un des plus grands violonistes de notre temps, Yehudi Menuhin, qui l'interprétera le 31 mai, salle Pleyel, à Paris, sous la direction de Sir Edward Elgar.

To my dear Yehudi in memory of the  
delightful time we had recording the  
Concerto last May. Edward Elgar.

### RAPPEL DE DISQUES ENREGISTRÉS PAR

#### YEHUDI MENUHIN

Allegro (Flocco) : La Capricciosa (Ries) .....	DA 1003
Chant d'Espagne (avec piano) (Samazeuilh) :	
a) La Canción del Olvido (avec piano) (Serrano, arr. Persinger) .....	DB 1301
b) Rondo (avec piano) (Spohr, arr. Persinger) .....	
Concerto N° 7 en ré majeur (violon et orchestre) (Mozart) .....	DB 1735
Andante de la Sonate N° 2 en fa majeur (violon solo) (Bach) .....	à DB 1738
Concerto en sol majeur : Adagio (avec piano) (Mozart) :	
Sarabande et tambourin (avec piano) (Leclair-Samaate) .....	DB 1295
La Folia (Corelli) .....	DB 1501
Perpetuum mobile : Mouvement perpétuel (avec piano) (Ottakar Novacek) :	
Rigatidon (avec piano) (Monsigny, arr. Franck) .....	DA 1196
Romanesca (La) : Mélodie du XVI <sup>e</sup> siècle (harmonisée par R. Ashron) :	
Sierra Morena : Sérénade andalouse (J. de Monasterio) .....	DB 1267
Te Deum : Prière (avec piano) (Haendel, arr. Flesch) :	
Scottish pastorale, Op. 739, N° 2 (avec piano) (Saenger) .....	DB 1284
Tzigane (Ravel) avec piano par A. Balsan .....	DB 1785
Concerto en ré mineur pour deux violons (J.-S. Bach) avec orchestre	DB 1713
sous la Direction de Pierre Monteux et Georges Enescu .....	et DB 1710
Ce disque vient d'obtenir le "Grand Prix du Disque" (Fondation Candide)	

# ELGAR'S 'BRASS BAND THING'

## The Severn Suite - Postscript

Philip Maund

The recent acquisition of Elgar's autograph brass band score of *The Severn Suite* by the Elgar Birthplace Museum has finally brought into the public arena the most important source of evidence in the debate surrounding the piece. And based on an exciting discovery in the manuscript, the most contentious issue - the key in which Elgar intended it to be published - can now be resolved. The significance of this revelation is that wide-ranging issues to do with the performance of *The Severn Suite* can now be debated on a solid premise.

For some time it has been argued that the first printed edition presented the piece a tone lower than the key the composer originally had in mind. This theory appeared in the early 1980s with the discovery of a contemporary hand-written copy of the *Severn Suite* transposed for brass band a tone higher than the 1930 printed edition. The manuscript, some suggested, was the score Henry Geehl famously claimed he produced from Elgar's sketches; the publisher had then dropped the piece a whole tone for publication as a concession to the alleged technical limitations of the players of the day.

When Elgar's autograph was first offered at a Sotheby's auction of Continental Manuscripts and Music in May 1995, it immediately scotched Geehl's claim. But at the same time it appeared to reinforce the "higher key" theory by seeming to be written at concert pitch in C major (which means that parts transposed for the B flat instruments would be written in D major). Following this development, and claiming the authority of the autograph (which had once again retreated from public gaze, having failed to reach its reserve), Novello published a new edition of the piece in the higher key. This was chosen as the test-piece for the 1996 British Open Brass Band Championship. The new edition received further tacit endorsements from various quarters with recordings and broadcasts in the higher key.

The unexpected appearance of the autograph in 1995 also prompted me to research *The Severn Suite* in some depth. At the time, I was understandably unable to gain access to the manuscript. But on the basis of other sources, I developed a hypothesis which suggested that it was *not* notated at concert pitch, the 'Geehl' score had been mistakenly copied in the wrong key, and the 1930 edition retained its authority. A matter of weeks after the auction, I began airing these views, and eventually drew the existing threads together in a paper published in the Elgar Society JOURNAL in July 1997.

Faced by publicity surrounding the new "higher key" edition, but nevertheless encouraged by the support of a number of colleagues who kindly offered forums at which to present my ideas, I let matters rest. I was satisfied I had both done my best to interpret the material available and that some time in the future, evidence would emerge to turn the argument one way or the other.

Then, on 14 December 2000, Geoffrey Hodgkins, Editor of the Elgar Society JOURNAL, contacted me with a press release sent by the Elgar Foundation. It publicised their purchase of the autograph with a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund and additional financial support from the Elgar family. The following day I spoke with Melanie Weatherley, curator of the Elgar Birthplace Museum. She kindly invited me to Broadheath to take a look at the manuscript, prior to placing it on public display when the museum re-opened to visitors early in 2001.

A week later, Melanie, myself and Chris Bennett (whose attentive assistance had made previous *Severn*

*Suite* trips to Broadheath so pleasurable and productive) placed the autograph under the spotlight for the first time since it had become the Foundation's property. Melanie had mentioned some extremely faded writing on the reverse of the final folio. As we strained to decipher it, the faint blue-pencilled letters in Elgar's hand slowly came into focus : "Brass Band / Suite / 1. Original score / EE / 2. Score transposed / in D / (discarded / wrong key)".

The first documented reference to the title '*The Severn Suite*' appears in a letter Elgar wrote to his daughter Carice the day he posted the final section of the manuscript full score to its commissioning editor, Herbert Whiteley of the publishers R. Smith & Co. Whiteley later quoted an extract from a letter he received from Elgar : "I am coming up to London next week and wish to see you... We might settle the title". So it was not until *The Severn Suite* was complete that its title was fixed. In the meantime Elgar memorably referred to it as his "brass band thing"; the description "brass band suite" written on the autograph suggests it too was inscribed before the title was finally agreed. With this in mind, the new evidence points to the following scenario :

Once Whiteley had taken delivery of the entire manuscript, he commissioned an edited fair copy from which to engrave the printer's plates. Henry Geehl undertook this task, according to his account. The fair copy complete, it was sent to Elgar to be checked, along with the autograph score (now marked up with editorial comments).

Some days later, Whiteley would have been surprised to receive back from the composer a package containing *both* scores, expecting Elgar to have kept his own manuscript and returned only the corrected copy. A greater surprise would have been Elgar's list of the package's contents, which the composer had noted on the back of one of the scores : item one, the "original score" authenticated with Elgar's distinctive EE monogram; and item two, the "score transposed in D", discarded because it was in the wrong key!

So if, according to Elgar, the "score transposed in D" (that is, the copy previously identified as the 'Geehl' score) is in the wrong key, the "original score" *cannot* be at concert pitch (ie. the same *sounding* pitch as the transposed score), as both the copyist of the transposed score and the new Novello edition assumed. Seen in this context, the key of Elgar's autograph *must* represent a transitional stage between his sketches at concert pitch and a full score correctly transposed for brass band, in which all but one of the instruments are pitched in either B flat or E flat.

Now other pieces of the jigsaw fit into place. Having first mapped out the work at sounding pitch, Elgar produced a complete short score transposed up a tone (some sketches and the transposed short score are preserved in the British Library). The short score enabled him to transcribe the lines as written directly into full score. By this simple expedient he elegantly side-stepped the tricky task of transposing and scoring simultaneously. As even the basses in brass band notation are written in treble clef, practically all that remained after he had created the score was simple transpositions of octaves or fifths for the lower voices. Most of the treble instruments would need no further attention. This final stage was left to the publisher, with the unfortunate consequence that it was misread and copied in the wrong key. Evidence that a second fair copy was then made is found in a deleted extra page in the Geehl score in the "correct" key.

After this initial exciting confirmation of the "published key" hypothesis, closer scrutiny of the score itself began to bring the act of producing it to life. It seems that after a cautious start, Elgar quickly gained confidence in his brass band scoring methods. At the bottom of each page of the first movement he carefully copied his short score on to a two-stave "conductor's part", allowing him to then lift each line on to the brass band staves above. This short score ends abruptly as the second movement commences; thereafter only the occasional line is sketched on to the conductor's part. As inspiration gathered pace,

the dark ink becomes greyer and the script more untidy, as if the composer barely had time to dip his pen before the next idea demanded to be written down.

The documentary record also testifies to the speed at which Elgar worked. A preliminary sketch of the *grandioso* theme from the second movement, marked on this occasion with Elgar's characteristic *nobilmente*, and now preserved in the British Library, is dated 3 April 1930. Less than a week later, on 9 April, Elgar posted the first fifty-five pages of full score to Whiteley. He signed and dated the final page of the score on 15 April. Momentarily ignoring the clinching evidence of the close similarity between Elgar's manuscript and the 1930 published edition, it is impossible to imagine, in view of this impressive work-rate, Geehl having *time* to intervene in arranging the piece!

However, the autograph does point to an experienced hand having made *some* useful subsequent contributions. For instance, quaver runs below the stave in the *Toccata* are noted as "too low for rapid articulation". Where these runs extend beyond a few bars, a suggestion for sharing the line between two parts is sketched in. One or two notes beyond an instrument's range are circled in red pencil. However, these alterations only amount to copy-editing rather than large-scale re-scoring. So the question arises again, what was Geehl at when he claimed *he* was responsible for arranging the brass band version of *The Severn Suite*?

My attitude to Geehl has mellowed as time has passed. When it became obvious how inflated his claims were, my first reaction was to label him a villain who slandered the long-dead to puff up his own ego. It later occurred to me that his often-quoted 1960 tirade recalled events which happened thirty years earlier. When he stumbled upon gaps in his own narrative, he did what every human being is inclined to do : he padded!

In many ways Geehl had good grounds for complaint. The task of copy-editing demands long periods of concentration, meticulous attention to detail, experience and expertise, yet when it is done well its results are invisible to the public. During the 1950s, a number of original test-pieces published for the National Brass Band Championship credited Frank Wright as arranger, including Edmund Rubbra's *Variations on The Shining River* in 1959. Whatever the extent of Wright's contribution, Geehl possibly felt his involvement with pieces published in the 1920s and '30s merited similar acknowledgement. The fact that he aimed his barbs at their unfortunate late composers, rather than his erstwhile employers or the brass band movement at large, speaks more perhaps for his discretion than the depth of his bitterness.

My 1997 Elgar Society JOURNAL article ended with the irony that though Geehl had publicly lauded *The Severn Suite* in 1930, his subsequent comments about its composer and claims about his own involvement had barred it from a proper and wider appreciation. Now that the autograph is out in the open, we are in a position to redress the imbalance. Three cheers for everyone concerned in securing this precious manuscript for posterity, and for offering those of us curious enough to puzzle out its conundrums the immense privilege of attempting to do so!

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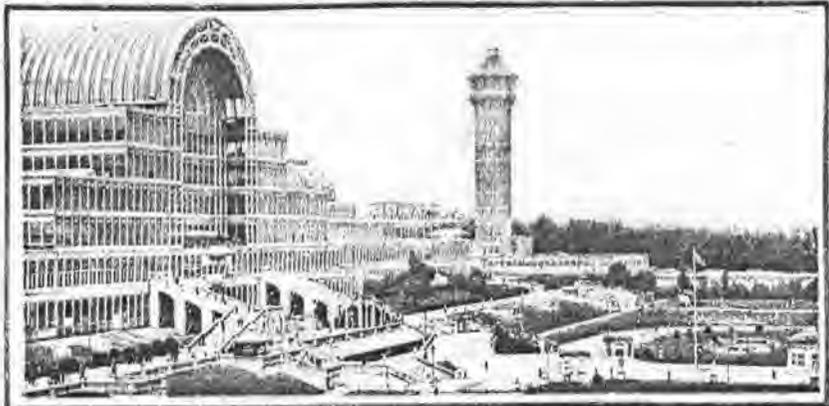
## PLAYING WITH ELGAR

John Denison

[John Denison was educated at the Royal College of Music, and played the horn in several orchestras,



# The 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Band Contest



being the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the  
GREAT NATIONAL BAND FESTIVAL

*Programme & Souvenir  
of the  
Crystal Palace*



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## BIGGEST ENTRY ON RECORD

Cover of the programme for the 1930 Brass Band Competition,  
the event for which Elgar was commissioned to write the Severn Suite,



including the BBC Symphony and London Philharmonic. After war service, he became the first Music Director of the newly-formed Arts Council in 1948; and, from 1965 to 1976, was Director of the South Bank Concert Halls (Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, and the Purcell Room). Among many other positions he was Hon Treasurer of the Royal Philharmonic Society 1977-89.]

Elgar died in 1934 - so that personal reminiscences can only come from a dwindling band of elderly people whose memories, though not infallible, still remain vivid and unforgettable.

Studying law at the behest of my parents in the early 1930s, I was leading a double life. Most of my free time was spent as an ambitious, largely self-taught and inexperienced horn player. Living in Sussex there were various opportunities to play with amateur groups, local G & S and light opera societies. The theatre in Brighton sometimes accommodated touring companies such as D'Oyly Carte and musical shows. These needed orchestras in the pit and players were recruited locally on a weekly basis. On these occasions I played in the pit as a professional and was a member of the local branch of the Musicians Union.

Thus, I was engaged on one occasion as an extra player with the resident "sea-side" orchestra at Eastbourne which, for the annual music festival, was augmented to full symphonic strength of 70 or so. It was a star event at which Sir Edward Elgar was invited to conduct an all-Elgar programme: *Froissart* overture, the Violin Concerto with Albert Sammons, and the *Enigma Variations*.

The concert took place in the afternoon - a popular time with so many elderly residents and patrons - while the single rehearsal - quite normal in those days - began at 10 am the same morning. Sir Edward was on the rostrum and ready to start promptly. "The overture please, gentlemen"; and off we went into *Froissart*. After four or five minutes he stopped us to pick up "points to be watched" - and then on again with further stops, here and there, to adjust a crescendo / diminuendo, accelerando / rallentando, or the curve of a phrase. Exhortations, while we were playing, such as "Move it forward", and "Take that phrase in a broad sweep", helped to establish how he wished the work to sound at performance that afternoon.

*Froissart* took perhaps 30 minutes or so of the total three hours rehearsal, and we moved on to the *Enigma Variations*. Again, he chose to pick out particular places in the score where we would need to know exactly how this or that "effect" was to be achieved. For example, the 'Troyte' variation requires precise timing and control of the famous tympani passages and its whizz-bang finish; and, in the 'Dorabella' variation, to balance discreetly the orchestra against the delicate and sensuous viola solo. He took great care also in preparing the finale with its gradual build-up and climax to a maximum impact.

After the 'coffee break' the rest of the rehearsal was devoted to the all-important preparation of the Violin Concerto. Sammons, the soloist, knew the work intimately and had played it often with Elgar. Time was needed however for the orchestral accompaniment to be integrated and balanced exactly with the soloist throughout the whole work.

So far as I recall, we did not actually play any of the three works right through at rehearsal! Elgar, like Sir Henry Wood, developed great expertise in "not wasting time" by just playing through the programme. Every minute was used to maximum advantage in explanation, setting and testing the right effect at key passages, tricky moments of pitfalls, and adjusting the impact of a climax to his satisfaction.

Even experienced players under such restricted rehearsal time sometimes found themselves having to "sit on the edge of the chair" at performance. There were, inevitably, loose ends, rough edges, and moments of faulty balance, etc. Using a broad brush technique - and his stick technique can only be described as "his own" - Elgar invariably brought off an inspiring, cogent, and, above all, spontaneous re-creation of his musical imagination as set out in the score.

Playing under Elgar, or listening to him bringing his own music to life, is a treasured memory for all who participated in that unique and magical experience.

# A DISCOGRAPHY OF BARBIROLI'S ELGAR RECORDINGS

K D Mitchell

In preparing this discography I have been given much valuable assistance by the information contained in John Knowles' *Elgar's Interpreters on Record* and in Malcolm Walker's indispensable discography compiled for Michael Kennedy's *Barbirolli, Conductor Laureate*. I have shown original record numbers and the latest CD numbers only. For detailed information on intermediate issues please consult the discographies referred to above.

## October 1927 : Introduction and Allegro for Strings, op 47

*National Gramophonic Society Chamber Orchestra*

NGS 94-5

Writing in *The Gramophone* for October 1936 Barbirolli referred to the chamber orchestra, which he founded in 1925, stating that it "was small but of fine quality, and it soon made some reputation for itself. It was with this orchestra that I made my first recordings for the National Gramophonic Society".<sup>1</sup>

The recordings were subscription issues. However fine the orchestra was, this work needs a fuller complement of strings to be fully effective. Barbirolli finds poetry in the quieter passages for string quartet but the performance sounds underpowered, which is partly due to the poor recording quality, which lacks resonance. The judgement that this "recording is really terrible"<sup>2</sup> is too harsh but this is Barbirolli's least effective recording of this work although it does show his interpretation in embryo. It has not been issued on CD.

## 24 September 1928 :

### Caractacus op 35 : 'Leap, leap to the light'; 'O my Warriors!'

*Peter Dawson*

*HMV C1988 C1579; Elgar Society Dutton CDAX 8019*

These are fine outstanding recordings. Dawson's conviction and vigour admirably suit 'Leap, leap to the Light', and he brings true pathos to Caractacus' lament. With his superb diction and fine support from Barbirolli - listen to the string *portamento* - these excerpts could not be better. Michael Dutton's remastering is exemplary.

## 28 January 1929 : Introduction and Allegro for Strings, op 47

*The John Barbirolli Chamber Orchestra*

*HMV C 1694-5; CD Barbirolli Society SJB 1899*

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<sup>1</sup> Barbirolli, John : "A Few Reminiscences", *Gramophone*, October 1936 pp 187-8.

<sup>2</sup> Anderson, Kinloch : "Sir John Barbirolli - personal reminiscences of a great musician", *Recorded Sound* July 1973 (a lecture given on 19 April 1972). Reprinted in *The Barbirolli Society Journal* Issue no 57, July 1999, pp 6-9

<sup>3</sup> I am grateful to David Lloyd Jones for this information.

<sup>4</sup> *Gramophone*, July 1947, p 20

This recording reveals how much his interpretation had matured in the space of two years, with greater *rubato* and more delicate phrasing. HMV's sound is fuller than that of the NGS disc but there is insufficient contrast between the string quartet and the remainder of the orchestra, due again to the small number of players. However this is a brisk performance and points the way to his future recordings.

**15 April 1929 : Sea Pictures, Op 37 : 'Where Corals Lie'**

Maartje Offers (*contralto*)

HMV DB 1761

Barbirolli takes a brisk tempo and the orchestra sometimes overwhelms the rich contralto tones of Maartje Offers. She was a Dutch contralto and some of the words caused her difficulties - the line "To rolling worlds of wave and shell" defeats her. She copes well enough but does not seem to be totally at ease with the song. Herman Klein writing in *The Gramophone* in March 1928 had this to say of her : "She is not without faults but, reckoned as a whole, her balance is decidedly on the credit side. Were her method of breathing correct, her superb organ and chaste artistic style would place her among the leading contraltos of the present time... she varies more than she ought". There is no CD version. They also recorded on this date 'Sabbath Morning at Sea' which was never issued.<sup>3</sup>

**4 January 1947 : Elegy for Strings, op 58**

Hallé Orchestra

HMV B9567; CD Barbirolli Society CDSJB 1017 Dutton

Barbirolli recorded no Elgar with the Scottish Orchestra or when he was in America. This was his first Elgar recording with the Hallé. The grave beauty of the work is well caught. The reviewer in *The Gramophone* noted the Hallé had "a particularly suave string tone now".<sup>4</sup> It was issued with the 'Nocturne' from Fauré's *Shylock Suite*.

**29 May 1947 : Introduction and Allegro for Strings, op 47**

Hallé Orchestra

HMV C 3669-70; CD Barbirolli Society CDSJB 1017

This is a grand performance, spacious and lyrical with a fuller sound than the 1929 recording, and the larger complement of strings brings out the virtuoso qualities of Elgar's score. The reprise of the 'Welsh theme' at the close of the exposition with the second violin and cello playing *ponticello* - 4 bars after figure 15 - is beautifully done as is the *fugato* middle section - a real "devil of a fugue". The quartet, L Turner, P Hecht, G Alexander and S Knussen are well integrated. The *nobilmente* passage at figure 27 and the return of the 'Welsh theme' at figure 30 - a real *fortissimo* - bring this excellent, elastic performance to a triumphant conclusion. In 1947 the reviewer rightly noted that there was "a richly resonant, clean-cut sonority in the recording, which seems to be a noble effort by all concerned".<sup>5</sup> The Barbirolli Society is to be congratulated for restoring this fine version to the catalogue.

**30 May 1947 : Bavarian Dance No 2 'Lullaby'**

Hallé Orchestra

HMV C3965; CD Barbirolli Society CDSJB 1017 Dutton

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<sup>5</sup> *Gramophone*, December 1947, p 96

<sup>6</sup> *Gramophone*, February 1948, pp 133-4

Barbirolli took just as much care over smaller works as he did over the larger ones. This is apparent here particularly in the woodwind passages, which reveal the mastery of Elgar's orchestration. The *Gramophone* reviewer thought this "a charming bit of light salon music ...This is a shade tightly held for once, with insistence on inner parts".<sup>6</sup>

### **23 October 1947 : Enigma Variations, op 36**

*Hallé Orchestra*

*HMV C7702-5; CD Barbirolli Society CDSJB 1017 Dutton*

Michael Kennedy's notes to the CD issue reveal that the work had been recorded on 12 May but none of the "takes" were issued. At the time this was described as "A clean, powerful recording, deeply cut in feeling, strongly etched by the engineers, and by the Hallé played with athletic vim. Their strings used to be our best. Some...now claim that the orchestra as a whole is".<sup>7</sup> R.P.A. was described as "splendid", Troyte as "stunning", W.N. was "a bit fast", but Nimrod was "a glorious bit of playing and recording." Dorabella was deemed to be "too fast", as was G.R.S. The orchestra does seem to struggle here. B.G.N. was admired for showing the "band's best tone and style" - this variation for a cellist always inspired Barbirolli to produce a fervent reading. The Finale E.D.U. again shows Barbirolli and the orchestra at their best to produce a splendid, rousing conclusion - "Barbirolli lets loose the Southern in him. Some of our other men might benefit by a little voyage among the less tight-lipped temperaments".<sup>8</sup> Whilst the tempi for a few of the variations are fast this does not seriously detract from the merits of the performance overall which are great.

### **30 April 1949 : Serenade in E minor, op 20**

*Hallé Orchestra*

*HMV B9778-9; CD CMS 5 66543 2*

The *Gramophone* reviewer, on comparing this with Elgar's own recording, found that "Barbirolli's tempi scarcely differ by a hair's breadth; but the Hallé, though its playing is of course of a high standard, does not appear to give of its best until the Largetto, where the sentimental, nostalgic phrases are moulded with exquisite care..."<sup>9</sup> This is an early example of recording on tape. The first movement in particular has some problems with balance and sounds uneasy.

### **15 December 1949 and 2 February 1950 : Cockaigne, Overture op 40**

*Hallé Orchestra.*

*HMV DB 9633-4; CD CMS 5 66543 2*

No such problems affect this lively performance which was partly recorded in Kingsway Hall in 1949 and Abbey Road in 1950. The mono sound is exceptionally vivid, almost startlingly so as it captures Elgar's glittering orchestration to the full. The *Gramophone* reviewer compared this recording with a recent one conducted by van Beinum with the LPO : "The playing (at the moment of recording) of the Hallé orchestra seems to be far better than that of the LPO... Barbirolli's London is much more English, therefore much more Elgar's, than van Beinum's. Barbirolli is very swift in the first uptake - he drives off without delay

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<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Gramophone*, July 1949, p 22

<sup>10</sup> *Gramophone*, August 1951, pp 53-4

...For most of the time, the orchestral texture is exceptionally clear (good conducting and rehearsing as well as good recording!) and one is conscious not only of the inner parts but also of Elgar's characteristic internal touches of colour ...I liked the way Barbirolli lets Elgar's moodiness - at times waywardness - follow its own path; the orchestra seem to enjoy dogging the explorer's footsteps into back alleys and early memories." In contrast van Beinum's reading was less imaginative and warm hearted than Barbirolli's and did not have "the pressing vitality which fills all Barbirolli's work". It was "prose versus poetry".<sup>10</sup> Everything is right about this reading of the work. The woodwind playing stands out - listen to the perky clarinet theme at figure 7 - and the downward flourish of the brass just before figure 18 is a moment to cherish. The string tone is warm and vivid and the divided string passages are excellently played. This is an outstanding interpretation and recording!

## **2 February 1950 : Dream Children No 1, op 43**

*Hallé Orchestra*

*HMV DB 21594; CD CDM 5 66399 2*

Barbirolli captures the gentle grace of this work. When it was issued in 1953 the reviewer noted the "considerable beauty of tone and style".<sup>11</sup> It is curious that the companion piece was not recorded, for this was issued with 'Secret' from Grieg's *Lyric Pieces* in an arrangement by Barbirolli. What sounds like a cough is audible in the middle of the piece!

## **1 September 1953 : Introduction and Allegro for Strings, op 47**

*Hallé Orchestra*

*HMV BLP 1049; CD CMS 5 66543 2*

Strangely this third recording of the work by Barbirolli fails to make its proper impact. Whilst there is fine playing - particularly the *staccato* second subject (figure 10) - it does not make up a satisfactory whole. The central *fugato* section (13 bars after figure 15) is too cautious and does not have the dash and vigour here which is evident on the 1947 recording. When the recording was issued in 1957 the reviewer noted this, writing that "Barbirolli takes an unusually reticent view of the important fugato section of the work, holding his players on a leash that does to some extent minimise the excitement normally to be derived, by player and listeners alike, from Elgar's superlative string writing". The sound was "adequate, though lacking the final degree of presence".<sup>12</sup> Anthony Collins' Decca recording was the preferred version at that time.

## **4 January 1954 : Cockaigne Overture, op 40**

*Hallé Orchestra*

*BLP 1065; CD CDM 5 66399 2*

This work always seemed to draw the best from Barbirolli. Trevor Harvey, when reviewing the recording in 1955, thought this was a "very good performance... brisk and extremely vivid. Barbirolli keeps the movement pressing on and makes little of the many markings that tend to lure conductors into a great deal of over-done rubato". He considered it to be beautifully and brilliantly played with some delightfully frisky trumpets. It was issued with Barbirolli's own *An Elizabethan Suite* which was "an attractive

<sup>11</sup> *Gramophone*, October 1953, p 134

<sup>12</sup> *Gramophone*, June 1957, pp 9-10

<sup>13</sup> *Gramophone*, April 1955, p 481

contrast".<sup>13</sup> Whilst this remains a fine recording the sound is not as warm and spacious as the 1949/50 recording which catches the string playing magnificently, and the earlier interpretation just has the edge over this one, fine though this is.

### **8-9 June 1954 : Symphony No 2 in E flat, op 63**

*Hallé Orchestra*

*HMV ALP 1242; CD CDM 5 663992 2*

It has already been shown how important this work was to Barbirolli, who must therefore have relished the opportunity to preserve his own interpretation on record. Having been recorded in 1954 it was not issued until Elgar's centenary year, 1957. On being reviewed in *The Gramophone* it was compared with Boult's Nixa recording of the work (NCL 16018). The reviewer - who noted that Boult's interpretation had been maturing for a quarter of a century and who incorrectly thought that Barbirolli had only "come to this work in the present decade" - preferred JB's reading as "his immense care and sympathy are apparent in every bar. He brings more drive and impetus to the music than Boult, and at such points as fig.6 in the first movement, and the fugal development in the finale (fig.145) the music remains exciting ... Of the two orchestras the Hallé perhaps has a little more attack and precision".<sup>14</sup> Inevitably this recording has been compared to JB's later stereo one made in 1964, but even taking into account the improved sound of the second recording, the earlier version is generally preferred, as it is a truer reflection of Barbirolli's concert hall performances. The interpretation has a greater sense of propulsion than the later one, particularly in the first movement, and throughout the work is played with fervour and élan. In 1978 it was re-issued by the Barbirolli Society, but the 1997 Compact Disc revealed the glory, perhaps for the first time, of an interpretation renowned for its thrilling vitality, poetry and passion. It ranks as one of the classic Elgar recordings.

### **21 and 23 June 1956 : Enigma Variations, op 36**

*Hallé Orchestra*

*CCL 30101; CD CDM 7 63955 2*

JB's second recording of the *Variations* was made in the Free Trade Hall with the Mercury team of Wilma Cozart and Harold Lawrence - they did a splendid job in capturing what many now regard to be Barbirolli's finest account of the work on record. The original reviewer, who drew attention to the tremendous moment at the heart-felt climax of C.A.E., noted that Barbirolli was "indeed searching for dramatic touches all through" and that he drove "the music forward with unusual energy. Much of it sounds magnificent, but sometimes tempi are too fast; for instance he breaks all records in W.N... and worst of all Dorabella, which he takes at 106 crotchets a minute ... the composer asks for 80. The end of Nimrod does not quite come off but the finale is most exciting ... and the cello variation, after a shaky start, builds up most beautifully".<sup>15</sup> Nowadays W.N. does not seem too fast and the tempo for Dorabella, even though only a little slower than the 1947 recording, does not seem out of place in this recording. The conclusion of Nimrod is not lacking in fervour.

In 1957 it was noted that in the loud climaxes the sound tended to be muddy. No such problems are evident in the 1991 CD, which is extraordinarily vivid, and shows the Hallé to be on top form. The entry of the organ in E.D.U. is magnificent and produces a resplendent conclusion to another masterly Barbirolli interpretation, which no Elgarian should miss.

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<sup>14</sup> *Gramophone*, July 1957, pp 53-4

<sup>15</sup> *Gramophone*, July 1957, p 54

**11 December 1956 : Elegy for Strings, op 58**

Hallé Orchestra Pye CEC 32023 CD CDSJB 1017

Once again Barbirolli reveals the beauty and gravity of this intimate work with his inimitable understanding of string writing.<sup>16</sup>

**12 December 1956 : Introduction and Allegro for Strings, op 47**

Hallé Orchestra

Pye GSGC 14137; CD CDSJB 1017

That understanding is given full rein in JB's fifth recording of this work and is yet another example, if one were needed, of his prowess as an Elgarian. Fine as his 1947 (mono) version is, this (stereo) recording is even better and shows his full, instinctive understanding of Elgar's idiomatic string writing. The opening is all that it should be, assertive and striking, the fugato middle section is beautifully paced and the nobilmente finale gloriously exultant. Whilst keeping in view his last recording of the work in 1962, it can be said that this recording is the finest of the six which Barbirolli set down. The Hallé were at the height of their powers - the soloists were drawn from the principals of the Hallé strings, namely Laurance Turner (violin), Sydney Partington (violin), Sydney Errington (viola) and Oliver Vella (cello) - and produce that special Barbirolli sound learnt of long acquaintance with the score and Barbirolli's affectionate and painstaking conducting of this music. It is a grand performance "with its nostalgia and Elgarian nobilmente held in perfect balance".<sup>17</sup>

Amazingly this recording was not issued in JB's lifetime. The issue of the poorer 1953 HMV recording, also made in the Free Trade Hall, was delayed until 1957 and maybe there was a reluctance to issue a competitive recording at that time. Be that as it may, this version was not issued until after Barbirolli's death when it appeared on a Pye LP 'Requiem - Sir John Barbirolli'. Reviewing it in the October 1970 issue of *The Gramophone*, Trevor Harvey noted the record contained "...some good things...notably Elgar's Introduction and Allegro, a work very dear to his heart ... this version is newly issued. It is a most distinguished performance by any standards, broadly conceived in great sweeping phrases and also with quiet, intimate music most tenderly expressed. One notices at the start that Pye did not give the Hallé strings the tone they had from HMV - at least not when the violins are playing high and loudly, for the soft tone is beautiful enough. However, the ear adjusts, of course ..." Happily this problem is not apparent on the re-mastered CD issues and was probably due to the LP pressings which did not truly reflect the high quality of the original recording. This is therefore another quintessential recording for Elgarians.

**12 December 1956 : Symphony No 1 in A flat, op 55**

Hallé Orchestra

Pye CCL 30102-3; CD CDSJB 1017

Following on from the above, as the orchestra were on fine form at this time, they produced a remarkable performance of the symphony. Trevor Harvey commented on the care that Barbirolli took of the opening statement and that he "...makes the utmost of every passage, whether it be a softly melting section or a

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<sup>16</sup> There is a short review in *The Gramophone*, November 1958, p 265

<sup>17</sup> Jenkins, Lyndon : "A Devil of an Interpretation", *International Classical Record Collector*, Winter 1999, p 16

tempestuous one... What you will get in this Barbirolli performance are the most exciting climaxes ... He goes ahead as if possessed by a demon and the result is rare on records..." Harvey was "seduced by the splendour of Barbirolli's recording. It is magnificent, conveying the colour and richness of Elgar's scoring with both clarity and depth".<sup>18</sup> It was issued on three sides together with Navarra's account of the Cello Concerto, but was worth the extra money as it was the first issue to place the middle movements on one side so that the listener could "enjoy the full pleasure of Elgar's link between movements, the long-held F sharp leading to the comforting D major of the start of the slow movement".<sup>19</sup> Once again the recording is slightly more vigorous than his 1962 recording, but there is little difference in the timing of each movement.

### **21-22 May 1957 : Cello Concerto in E minor, op 85**

*Hallé Orchestra; André Navarra (cello)*

*CCL 30103; CD CDM 7 63955 2*

This was issued complete on the final side of the LPs devoted to the symphony. "Navarra gives a very fine performance indeed," wrote Trevor Harvey, "in my view the best available... Navarra's own great qualities as a cellist, combined with a first-class recording give him the advantage over his rivals. He is accompanied with the sympathy of a conductor who is also a cellist, and I enjoyed this deeply".<sup>20</sup>

This is a strong, firm interpretation with a moving account of the concerto's final pages. Barbirolli's later recording with du Pré has perhaps unfairly eclipsed it.

### **20 November 1957 : The Dream of Gerontius, op 38**

*Jon Vickers, Constance Shacklock, Marian Nowakowski, Orchestra Sinfonia e coro di Roma della RAI (Live recording)*

*CD Arkadia 2 CDHP 584*

Writing of the later EMI recording of *Gerontius*, in 1990 Michael Kennedy observed that "a recording of a 'live' performance would have been even more memorable and truer to this conductor's genius".<sup>21</sup> In 1991 this recording was issued and though not without its problems, one sees what Kennedy meant, for this is a unique and important document. Jon Vickers gives a committed, powerful, intelligent performance and is fully alert to the emotional alterations in the dying Gerontius. Constance Shacklock sings the role of the Angel with warmth. She never forgot what she described as this "outstanding performance ... One was so uplifted ...it was like a spiritual experience. The critics felt this too, and praised it very highly".<sup>22</sup> Nowakowski is striking and produces a rich bass tone. The problems arise with the recording quality, which is rather unfocused and does not perhaps do justice to the orchestra, which manages well enough with an unfamiliar work. The chorus are not caught well and it is hard to agree with JB's verdict that they were "absolutely incredible", but again the recording may not do them justice. Their diction is on the whole satisfactory. Barbirolli's groans are also occasionally heard. This live recording does not supersede his later one, but it can be placed alongside it as another example of his power as an interpreter of Elgar. There are fine things here, especially the singing of Vickers, which all Elgarians should hear.<sup>23</sup>

### **15 November 1957 : Enigma Variations, op 36**

*Orchestra Sinfonica di Torino della Rai (Live Turin)*

*CD Arkadia 2 CDHP 584*

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<sup>18</sup> *Gramophone*, September 1957, p 136

This is not a poor performance of the *Variations* but it is not in the same league as his studio recordings.

**10 May 1962 : Serenade in E minor, op 20**

*Sinfonia of London*

ASD 521; CD CDM 567240-2

In 1962 Barbirolli returned to HMV (or EMI as it was then known) and signed a contract to record with other orchestras in addition to the Hallé. This was his second recording since rejoining the company and the disc, which included the Introduction and Allegro, Vaughan Williams' *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* and the *Fantasia on Greensleeves*, has long been a stalwart of the catalogue, rightly deserving its recent accolade in being added to EMI's 'Great Recordings of the Century' series. In 1963 Trevor Harvey wrote : "The Serenade is given an affectionate and spacious performance - and what a charmer it is".<sup>24</sup> It may be too deliberate, in parts, for some tastes but there is no denying the affection for the piece.<sup>25</sup>

**11 May 1962 : Introduction and Allegro for Strings, op 47**

*Sinfonia of London*

*Allegri String Quartet* ASD 521; CD CDM 567241-2

"Here is an incomparable work by Elgar ...(indeed, an incomparable work for string orchestra by any composer) in a performance that can only be called splendiferous," wrote Trevor Harvey. "Sir John is an old hand at all the music on this disc... It is all magnificently played ... the sound is gorgeous ... if one wanted to be tiresome ...there are one or two entries that might be improved in precision; but that would be to demand absolute perfection... This is a superb performance. For my own liking, I thought the fugal section rather lacking in excitement (Elgar said "I've written the devil of a fugue"), but since Barbirolli observes the tempo direction faithfully, perhaps Elgar didn't mean it should go at the devil of a speed".<sup>26</sup> There is a sumptuous elegance about this recording, and very fine though it is, the fugal section is taken more slowly than JB's 1956 recording. But even if this version lacks the vigorous brilliance of its predecessor it is still an outstanding achievement - a summation - reflecting Barbirolli's lifelong love for this splendid masterpiece.<sup>27</sup>

**27-28 August 1962 : Enigma Variations, op 36**

*Philharmonia Orchestra*

ASD 548; CD CDM 5 66322 2

For Trevor Harvey this was not just another recording, it was "an absolutely outstanding performance captured by the recording people as near to perfection as possible...Performances are, as one expects from Sir John, right from the heart, yet they are always guided by the head... The *Enigma Variations*, in particular, come from a conductor who has obviously had them inside himself all his life yet in this

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<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> "Some Elgar Interpreters", in *Elgar Studies*, edited by Raymond Monk (Scolar, 1990) p 232

<sup>22</sup> Letter March 1999 printed in the *Barbirolli Society Journal Supplement*, December 1999, no 58a

<sup>23</sup> See the review by Andrew Neill in *Elgar Society Journal*, January 1992, p 37; and "A Personal View on the Recorded Legacy", by Walter Essex in *The Best of Me - a Gerontius Centenary Companion*, edited by Geoffrey Hodgkins (Elgar Editions, 1999) pp 277-97

performance seems to love them more than ever..."<sup>28</sup> Some tempi are slower than his earlier versions yet this is a wonderfully wrought performance.

**27 August 1962 : Cockaigne Overture, op 40**

*Philharmonia Orchestra*

ASD 548; CD CDM 5 66323 2

All Barbirolli's love for the London of his youth went into this recording, yet it is not weighed down by nostalgia, for his interpretation is as urgent and brilliant as it was in 1949/50, and with a superb recording his performance of this work remains supreme. The warm string tone is just one of the many felicities of this recording, and when it was re-issued in 1982 Trevor Harvey noted that "Barbirolli's affectionate feeling for Elgar's music is always evident, yet he never over-indulges it".<sup>29</sup>

**28-29 August 1962 : Symphony No 1 in A flat, op 55**

*Philharmonia Orchestra*

ASD 548 CD CDM 7 64511 2

This is another magnificent performance. Trevor Harvey in a glowing review found that it moved him to the core : "We cannot want better than this".<sup>30</sup> For Michael Kennedy this recording, together with that of the Second Symphony made in 1954, has "the remembered magnetism of the 'live' events... Here one feels the ebb and flow and hears the kaleidoscopic shadings of tone that were his distinguishing marks; and here there is the nervous energy with which he intuitively came nearer to Elgar himself ..."<sup>31</sup> This is a benchmark recording which no Elgarian should miss.

**29 August 1962 : Pomp and Circumstance Marches. Op 39 No. 1 in D; No. 4 in G**

*Philharmonia Orchestra*

ASD 2292; CD CDM 5 66323 2

These recordings are considered on page 46.

**20-21 April 1964 : Symphony No 2 in E flat, op 63**

*Hallé Orchestra*

ASD 610 -1; CD CDM 7 64724 2

When reviewing this in 1964 Trevor Harvey had reservations about the tempi of the first movement and the argument persists until today, yet he concluded "That is how Barbirolli feels the music and that's good enough for me...For the rest, all is more than well and the other movements, in interpretation, playing and sound are sheer joy." The slow movement was "noble", the *rondo* "delicate" and the finale "superb".<sup>32</sup> In considering the tempi of the first movement, Michael Kennedy, in countering the argument that Barbirolli may have endangered the structure of the work, put forward the opinion that "...those in sympathy with him have no such qualms and are swept along on the floodtide of this most impassioned performance, which is certainly 'elastic', and reached its most overwhelming moment at the climax of the Larghetto,

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<sup>24</sup> *Gramophone*, May 1963, pp 516-7

<sup>25</sup> See review by Geoffrey Hodgkins, *Elgar Society Journal*, March 2000, p 241

<sup>26</sup> *Gramophone*, May 1963, pp 516-7

<sup>27</sup> Barbirolli used an established string quartet for this recording rather than leaders of the string sections.

<sup>28</sup> *Gramophone*, November 1963, p 221



*Barbirolli with (above) wife Evelyn in August 1959 and (below) Lionel Tertis, the viola player better known to many Elgarians as the transcriber of the Elgar 'Cello Concerto*



when Elgar's request for vibrato and glissandi is met by conductor and players with the artistry that comes from deep understanding of the music".<sup>33</sup>

For Malcolm Walker too, who attended the recording sessions in Kingsway Hall, the string playing of the slow movement stood out, writing "it had a glow, a warmth, an intensity and a passion which were almost overwhelming. Here I could observe white-heat Elgar interpretation in the melting pot... Such string sound you do not hear now".<sup>34</sup> Andrew Achenbach has commented that if "...forced to choose between his two accounts of the Second Symphony, there are many (myself included) who would hold the lovely expansive 1964 recording... in the higher esteem..."<sup>35</sup> After making this recording Barbirolli agreed to give an impromptu interview to the producer R Kinloch Anderson where he discussed the recording just completed. The interview can be heard on 'Glorious John' issued by the Barbirolli Society to mark his centenary - CDSJB 1999.

### **1 June 1964 : Falstaff, op 68**

*Hallé Orchestra*

*ASD 610-1; CD CDM 5 66322 2*

Barbirolli had long championed this work. His only recording was greeted with rapture. Trevor Harvey was bowled over by the music and by the fantastic wealth and vitality of Elgar's invention. He could not "...praise too highly Barbirolli's conducting of this piece nor, indeed, the Hallé Orchestra's playing, all good and some of it sheerly dazzling. But it is the pointed characterisation of every episode that makes this such a memorable performance... most of all the very end of the work, Falstaff's death, which I have never heard more movingly expressed".<sup>36</sup> Anthony Payne considered his recording to be "absolutely ideal, wonderfully controlled by Barbirolli and so heart warming and splendidly played - a real virtuoso performance".<sup>37</sup> In 1992 this recording was Jerrold Northrop Moore's choice of modern versions in the 'Building a Library' series on Radio 3. It is one of the classic Elgar recordings and deserves to be in every Elgarian's collection.

### **14 September 1964: Symphony No 2 in E flat, op 63**

*Boston Symphony Orchestra (Live)*

*Music and Arts CD 251(2) and INCD 7471*

In the 1960s with his appointment as principal conductor at Houston, together with international engagements in Berlin, Italy, Scandinavia and elsewhere, Barbirolli had the chance to conduct many other orchestras in addition to his beloved Hallé. Naturally he played British music to audiences around the world, including Elgar.

To have a recording of his 'live' interpretation of this score is to be welcomed but his two studio recordings are to be preferred. Here the first movement does have some wayward tempi - the passage representing the "malign influence wandering thro' the summer night in the garden" is taken at an expansive tempo - and elsewhere the music can sound flustered. This movement is indeed slower than the Hallé recording

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<sup>29</sup> *Gramophone*, September 1982, p 330

<sup>30</sup> *Gramophone*, October 1963, p 182

<sup>31</sup> "Some Elgar Interpreters", *Elgar Studies*, p 232

<sup>32</sup> *Gramophone*, December 1964, p 282

<sup>33</sup> "Some Elgar Interpreters", p 232

<sup>34</sup> Walker, Malcolm : "Sound Control", *ICRC*, Winter 1999, p 32

made in April - 19.58 compared to 19.24.

Such problems are less evident in the remaining movements. Barbirolli could not help but give a passionate rendition of the Larghetto even though the brass do sound coarse at the climactic moments.

The Rondo is successful - a few of the audience are caught out at the end, thinking that it marked the end of the work, for there is some sporadic applause. The dignified final movement proceeds well, and as is to be expected Barbirolli lavishes affection on the tranquillo final pages; but the mood at the very end is marred by the overenthusiastic brass. Devotees of the conductor will want to hear this interpretation but it is not as well played or recorded as the two EMI versions. The Music and Arts issue is on a double CD with works by Delius, and Vaughan Williams - Symphony No. 6 in E minor - and Barbirolli's arrangement of some of Purcell's theatre music.

### **27-30 December 1964 : The Dream of Gerontius, op 38**

*Hallé Orchestra; Hallé Choir; Sheffield Philharmonic Chorus; Ambrosian Singers*

*ASD 648-9; CD 7243 5 73580 2*

A similar accolade must also be applied to this recording of which much has been written over the years. In a long review Alec Robertson found Richard Lewis in "splendid voice" and that "...he lives intensely through the great drama, and none of the many sublime moments of the part find him wanting." He admired Kim Borg's singing but it remained "that of a foreigner..." Of Janet Baker he wrote : "No praise can be too high... She simply is the Angel, with an other-worldly aura about her singing from the first note to the last. The tenderness of her farewell to Gerontius, that most lovely melody, moved me to tears. This is truly a great performance".<sup>38</sup> Dame Janet Baker recalled that Barbirolli "was the most wonderful singers' accompanist because he was a performer himself... he knew what performing involved at the performers' level. It's very exciting when you find yourself on a musical wavelength with somebody and I suppose this is what he was really looking for. Somebody he felt could respond to him and to whom he could respond at a musical and personal level. You know when this is so... when somebody sits down at the piano and your phrasing is going in the same direction and [there are] disagreements, of course, but I was fortunate to be influenced by a human being who trusted me so much with such responsibility because I felt he understood the kind of musician I was and that the kind of musician I was, was his kind of musician".<sup>39</sup> Malcolm Walker, who attended the recording sessions in Manchester, remembered : "Barbirolli went through the gamut of his emotional range to get the performers to give of their best." At the end he diffidently asked JB if he would write a personal note for inclusion in the booklet. "He responded most positively and, better still, produced his copy before time".<sup>40</sup>

The work was recorded in seven three-hour sessions over four days : the first four with the choir, two with the solo voices and orchestra and the final session with the orchestra alone for the preludes to Parts 1 and 2. It is a recording that Elgarians should not be without.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Achenbach, Andrew : "Reputations - Sir John Barbirolli", *Gramophone*; reproduced in the *Barbirolli Society Journal*, April 1998, Issue no 52, p 10

<sup>36</sup> *Gramophone*, December 1964, p 282

<sup>37</sup> "Sir John Barbirolli : A Centenary Celebration", broadcast on BBC Radio 3, 2 December 1999.

<sup>38</sup> *Gramophone*, October 1965, pp 206-7

<sup>39</sup> Dame Janet Baker in conversation with Andrew Green in "Glorious John" Part 4 : Barbirolli and English Music, broadcast on BBC Radio 3, 25 April 1999.

### 19 August 1965 : Cello Concerto in E minor, op 85

Jacqueline du Pré; London Symphony Orchestra ASD 655; CD CDC 5 56806 2

Following du Pré's successful orchestral debut with this concerto in the Royal Festival Hall on 21 March 1962 and her Prom concert on 14 August 1962 under Sargent, EMI compared her performance with the young Menuhin's of the Elgar Violin Concerto in 1932. J K R Whittle, the Marketing Manager of Classical Repertoire at EMI produced an inter-departmental memorandum : "We did it in 1934 (*sic*) - the boy Menuhin playing an inspired violin concerto. Now the girl Jacqueline du Pré doing the Cello Concerto. Her press notices read like Yehudi's all those years ago ...If she does on record what she did in the Festival Hall, we have about 7,000 sales on our hands".<sup>42</sup> However she was not rushed into making the recording and her interpretation was allowed to mature. After JB's performance with du Pré and the Hallé in April 1965 they went on to record the work in August, and once more the testimony of Malcolm Walker is valuable. He wrote that the sessions were "...on a par with the Elgar oratorio [*Gerontius*] ...To have been present at so memorable event in Kingsway Hall... was a thrill that has remained with me...The chemistry between soloist and conductor was astonishing and the tension and atmosphere exuded during the whole recording, especially the slow movement, was almost unbearable; you can never recreate such occasions".<sup>43</sup> Trevor Harvey reviewed it in *The Gramophone* : "Not only is every phrase eloquent - so is every single note. It is a totally committed performance, to a degree that one all too rarely encounters : and though every phrase is perfection, the interpretation is strong in its overall conception of each movement... she never for a moment overdoes indulgence and each movement has its own strength and coherence. Since the cellist who conducts the orchestra does so with the greatest perception, I need say no more than this is on no account to be missed. And isn't it also Elgar's greatest work?... the very perfection of a cello concerto with not a note in it one would want otherwise".<sup>44</sup> It was issued with Janet Baker's performance of *Sea Pictures* and Harvey concluded that it represented "...another superb acquisition in the campaign to get new and fine Elgar records - and HMV be thanked for all they have done", and the concerto was given an "interpretation that is not likely to be surpassed for many a day".<sup>45</sup> The recording set a new standard in the understanding of the piece and played a part in the critical re-establishment of Elgar that took place in the 1960s. Never out of the catalogue, it has sold a quarter of a million copies! It has been rightly noted of du Pré and Barbirolli that "their performance together ranks among the supreme achievements in Elgar's name".<sup>46</sup>

### 30 August 1965 : Sea Pictures, op 37

Janet Baker

ASD655; CD CDC 5 566323 2

This was another work which Barbirolli, unfashionably, loved and he had to persuade Janet Baker to record the cycle, which she was reluctant to do. Years later she recalled : "When we got to the recording sessions and he began, I was absolutely swept up in his enthusiasm for the piece and his love for the piece and his tenderness - the way he makes a very difficult song cycle possible for the voice - suddenly made me see it in a different light. I did grow to love it, with reservations about the last song, which I find is horrendously difficult and very unsatisfying, from the poetry point of view, putting the words over. The others are marvellous word paintings and you really can perform them and colour them".<sup>47</sup> Trevor Harvey praised her performance and noted that she made lovely sounds and expressed every word with clarity and intelligence.<sup>48</sup> This famous recording did much to rehabilitate this neglected work.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> ICRC, Winter 1999, p 34

<sup>41</sup> See Walter Essex's article in *The Best of Me* for a comparative review; and Malcolm Walker's "Gerontius on Tape", and Michael Kennedy's review in the *Hallé Magazine* 1965, both of which

**14 July 1966 : Pomp and Circumstance Marches, op 39 :**

no 2 in A minor; no 3 in C minor; no 5 in C

**15 -16 July 1966 :**

**Froissart Overture, op 19; Elegy for Strings, op 58; Sospiri, op 70**

*New Philharmonia Orchestra*

ASD 2292; CD CDM 5 66323 2

Re-issue of Froissart, Elegy and Sospiri :

CD CDM 5 67240 2

After making this recording Barbirolli wrote : "Last week I recorded with the New Phil.... Pomp & Circ. Marches, Froissart (lovely piece, almost first manifestation of the great Elgar), and the string Elegy and Sospiri. The orchestra arrived all in rather facetious mood, saying they had brought Union Jacks : but after the 1st march, I think it was No. 3, there was a unanimous 'Must admit it's a bloody good tune' and they ended captivated by Froissart and the smaller pieces".<sup>50</sup> Trevor Harvey wrote : "All this music is played with Barbirolli's usual panache, with the New Philharmonia making gorgeous sounds and in a recording that inevitably outclasses by a long way earlier records of the marches and of Froissart".<sup>51</sup>

**20 May 1970 : In the South (Alassio) op.50**

*Hallé Orchestra (Live Recording - Royal Festival Hall)*

CD BBCL 4013-2

This is taken from Barbirolli's last London concert which concluded with a performance of Bruckner's Symphony No 8 (BBC Radio Classics 15656 91922). The release of the recording was long awaited and when it appeared on BBC Legends label it was shown to "...preserve Sir John's flexible, yet outstandingly cogent interpretation, brimful of inimitable temperament and towering humanity distilled through a lifetime's experience. Throughout, the Hallé responds to its beloved chief with such wholehearted application that one readily forgives any minor imprecision along the way".<sup>52</sup> Even though Barbirolli had only just over two months to live there is no evidence here of any failing powers.

**24 July 1970 : Symphony No 1 in A flat, op 55**

*Hallé Orchestra (Live Recording - King's Lynn Festival)*

Intaglio INCD 701 -1

Barbirolli first conducted at the King's Lynn festival in 1952, returning in 1955, '56 and '57 and then conducted there every year until the end of his life. He planned his summer schedule around it. His final festival appearances were on 24 and 25 July 1970, and this performance of the symphony concluded an Elgar concert given in St. Nicholas' Chapel. He had collapsed while entering the Chapel for the afternoon rehearsal, but recovered sufficiently to conduct the evening concert which opened with the Introduction and Allegro followed by *Sea Pictures*.

This is a very fine performance of the symphony. The Andante long broad opening melody is played with

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are reproduced in the *Barbirolli Society Journal* September 1996 Issue no 45, pp 6-7

<sup>42</sup> Wilson, Elizabeth : *Jacqueline du Pré* (Faber & Faber, 1998) p 167

<sup>43</sup> Walker, Malcolm, *ICRC* Winter 1999, p 34

<sup>44</sup> *Gramophone*, December 1965, p 294

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Kennedy, "Some Elgar Interpreters", p 236

<sup>47</sup> Dame Janet Baker in conversation with Brian Kay in "Vintage Years : Janet Baker: 2 - The Concert Hall", broadcast on BBC Radio 3, 12 April 1997

both simplicity and grandeur, to be followed by a thrilling Allegro - the tumultuous and agitated passages are played with typical Barbirolli splendour and the poetic, quieter moments are treated with tenderness and warmth. The movement lasts a little longer than that set down in JB's 1962 recording and some may find it too mellow in places but this does not detract from the overall fervour of his interpretation. The second movement with its dash and vigour and quicksilver interplay of themes is finely done - listen to the brass interjections at 57 and 58. The brass are well recorded in the spacious - but not reverberant - acoustic of the Chapel. The slow movement, as expected, shows JB at his most affectionate. Here his understanding of Elgar's string writing is paramount. The *molto espressivo* theme at 104 - where Jaeger thought we were brought near heaven - is most moving, as are the final pages and the movement is rounded off with a beautiful, delicate clarinet note.

The finale is magnificent. Compared to Barbirolli's 1962 recording the opening *lento* is slower - the pizzicato cellos and snarling brass (at 110) show this. But this is a necessary prelude to the swift *allegro*. Barbirolli achieves splendid momentum here and with his sure sense of the movement's structure he propels the music forward to the *Grandioso* climax - and what a peroration it is! If Barbirolli knew this was to be his last performance of the symphony, indeed his last Elgar, then in this movement he calls upon all his reserves to give, literally, the performance of a lifetime.

While this does not displace Barbirolli's 1962 recording, it deserves to be placed alongside it for it captures the frisson of a majestic live performance and we are fortunate that this interpretation was recorded just five days before Barbirolli's death.

The symphony was issued on CD in 1991 by Intaglio, but was only available for a short period. As the entire concert was recorded by the BBC - it has been subsequently broadcast - and given the outstanding success of other live Barbirolli recordings on the BBC Legends label, this performance must be a strong contender for inclusion in the series. It is a performance which all Elgarians should hear and cherish.

#### **24 July 1970 : Sea Pictures, op 37**

Kirsten Meyer, Hallé Orchestra (Live Recording)

Intaglio INCD 701-1

This performance is not on a par with the symphony. Barbirolli admired Kirsten Meyer as an artist and she often performed with him, but here both singer and conductor do not get the best out of each other. Meyer sings with a rich, dark alto voice and her diction and understanding of the text are often poor. Tempos are slow throughout and though Barbirolli does his best, he and his orchestra sound uncomfortable, especially at the very slow speeds taken by Meyer, which are wearisome and fetter the music. This is a sober and ultimately melancholy interpretation. Maybe Barbirolli's failing health was partly responsible, for we know from his recording with Janet Baker that he was a magnificent exponent of this score. For a detailed analysis see Roger Hecht's article in the *Elgar Society JOURNAL* for November 1999.

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<sup>48</sup> *Gramophone*, December 1965, p 294

<sup>49</sup> See Roger Hecht : "Elgar's Sea Pictures", *Elgar Society JOURNAL*, November 1999, p 162

<sup>50</sup> Letter to Michael Kennedy, in *Barbirolli - Conductor Laureate*, p 235

<sup>51</sup> *Gramophone*, December 1966, pp 315-6

<sup>52</sup> *Gramophone*, July 1999, p 54

That so many of Barbirolli's recordings are still regarded with such high esteem is a mark of his stature as an Elgarian. He unstintingly furthered Elgar's cause for over fifty years. His recorded legacy continues to advance that cause "for almost everything he did in the recording studio is rewarding musically and always alive".<sup>53</sup>

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Regrettably it has not been possible to listen to a live Prom recording of the Cello Concerto on 9 August 1968 with Vladimir Orloff and the Hallé Orchestra in the Royal Albert Hall. This was issued as part of a 3-CD set in 1998 by Doremi (DHR 7711-13).

In preparing this article and discography I must thank David Michell who kindly gave me access to his splendid collection of 78s and provided valuable information about the early recordings. I must also thank David Lloyd Jones of the Barbirolli Society who kindly allowed me to draw on his own researches in this field and to Robert Tucker and the staff at the Barbican Music Library. Finally I must also thank Stephen Harrow for his suggestions and encouragement.

#### COMPARATIVE TIMINGS

##### Introduction and Allegro

Year :	1927	1929	1947	1953	1956	1962
Time :	13.28	12.54	12.57	13.22	13.36	13.55

##### Variations on an Original Theme (Enigma)

Year :	1947	1956	1962
Theme	1.42	1.24	1.29
CAE	1.42	1.38	1.47
HDS-P	0.41	0.42	0.49
RBT	1.17	1.18	1.28
WMB	0.28	0.29	0.30

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<sup>53</sup> *Gramophone*, February 1984, p 1012

RPA		1.57		1.57		2.16
Ysobel		1.06		1.14		1.16
Troyte		0.53		0.57		1.03
WN		1.24		1.38		1.47
Nimrod		2.56		3.22		3.35
Dorabella	2.04		2.08		2.25	
GRS		0.49		0.51		0.59
BGN		2.15		2.40		2.53
***		2.12		2.36		2.46
EDU		4.24		4.54		5.28

**Cockaigne (In London Town)**

Year :	1949/50		1954		1962
Time :	14.15		13.38		14.35

**Symphony no 1 in A flat**

Year		1st		2nd		3rd		4th
1956	20.10	7.06		12.18		13.03		
1963	21.39	7.03		12.15		12.46		

**Symphony no 2 in E flat**

Year		1st		2nd		3rd		4th
1954	16.55	13.27		7.48		13.12		
1964	19.24	13.50		8.20		14.18		





## RECORD REVIEWS

Nursery Suite. Dream Children, Op 43. In Moonlight. Romance for Bassoon and Orchestra, Op 62. Sospiri, Op 70. Serenade for strings, Op 20. Elegy, Op 58.

Julie Price (bassoon), Stephanie Gonley (violin), William Bennett (flute), Osian Ellis (harp), English Chamber Orchestra conducted by Paul Goodwin  
Harmonia Mundi HMU 907258

Attractively packaged, though it proved a life and death struggle to shoehorn the disc out of its saddle (a problem incurred rather too frequently these days, and in one recent incident split a review CD from side to side), this selection of works written between 1892 and 1930 is described as “a lyrical programme of Elgar rarities” but to call either the *Nursery Suite* or the String Serenade “rarities” is both over-egging the pudding and stretching the definition of the word beyond credibility. Nevertheless it is good to see the fine ECO back on this disc, which was recorded at Henry Wood Hall, London in March 2000. It is an orchestra too often driven to foreign parts to get work (Japan seems to realise their worth more than we do) but it has survived more than half a century, thanks largely to the tireless efforts of that self-confessed maverick, the co-principal violist Quintin Ballardie. It’s also good to see the juxtaposition of young soloists such as Julie Price and Stephanie Gonley (the orchestra’s leader) with familiar “old timers” such as Osian Ellis and William Bennett, all of them members of the orchestra, though obviously only Price is the “genuine” soloist here, the others having “merely” prominent moments in the music.

Goodwin’s approach is freshly un sentimental, his orchestral solos allowed unreined freedom especially in ‘The Serious Doll’ where we reap the benefits of Bennett’s beautifully judged phrasing. The ECO’s tightly-knit ensemble produces commendable pizzicato clarity in the lower strings in ‘Busy-ness’, while ‘The Sad Doll’ and ‘Dreaming’ add a bloom to the upper string sound all too often missing in other orchestras’ sound. The lightly loaded-sounding ‘Wagon’ passes at a fairly brisk pace which suggests its brakes might have failed; but ‘The Merry Doll’, with its Housewife’s Choice mood, produces more sparkling playing from the players. Gonley’s cadenza is thoughtfully paced, at turns reflective, elsewhere virtuosic, always stylish.

The two-movement *Dream Children* (1902) follows on as they might have done in the proposed coupling with the *Nursery Suite* by the Gramophone Company in the early 1930s. This is a pair of mood pictures, the first of which evokes the mist (of time) into which the pair of children receded in Lamb’s essay (the inspiration for the work), and the playing is appropriately dreamy.

*In Moonlight* is another version of the viola solo, the ‘canto popolare’ (but Elgar’s own invention) from *In the South*, far less subtle and without the translucent scoring of its original Allassio setting, but stylishly done here with tastefully judged portamento connecting the strings’ linear phrases, which also becomes a strong feature of the heartfelt playing of the mournful *Sospiri* for strings, harp and harmonium.

Julie Price’s bassoon playing in the all-too-short *Romance* is revelatory; she has a creamily mellow sound from top to bottom (where too often tone hardens into grotesquely comical parody) and is gifted with an admirably agile facility. The familiar Serenade for Strings rather overdoes the portamento, but then Elgar would have been used to much more than even Goodwin demands. While the slow movement achieves a burning intensity by strongly focusing on the inner textures and fast vibrato of violas and cellos, it is somehow rather too calculated and doesn’t quite match the natural outpouring of a Barbirolli. For all that, the phrasing is stylish and every nuance shaped and moulded to the very last chord of E major. The concluding Elegy is suitably “quiet, sad and soothing”, to quote the composer himself.

Coming in at 59' 31" it might have had another 15 minutes with, for example, the Introduction and Allegro for Strings, but despite this reservation and the fact that they may all be mainly familiar works available on other discs, this one is worth hearing for the sheer musicality of the playing by all the members of the worthy English Chamber Orchestra.

Christopher Fifield

Elgar's Interpreters on Record. Volume 3.

*Various singers, instrumentalists, choirs, bands, and orchestras.  
Dutton Laboratories for The Elgar Society CDLX 7042*

Like the previous two CDs sponsored by the Society, this has delved into the archives to present us with a variety of interpretations of Elgar's music, fourteen out of the twenty tracks from his lifetime. There are no great significant interpretations here, but two have a definite historical interest. The first is of G. Jacob, a violinist who made a number of very early records for the Gramophone Company, in what we believe to be the first recording of Elgar's music - *Salut d'Amour* from 1901. Strangely, in view of its general popularity, it must have failed to sell, for it speedily disappeared from the catalogue, though others by the artist stayed in the catalogue for several years. The other is *Land of Hope and Glory* sung by Edna Thornton, who sang it in the first performance of the *Coronation Ode*.

Other singers include Kirkby Lunn, Tudor Davies (an impassioned account of *The River*), Robert Radford, Jussi Björling, Heddle Nash (a previously unpublished *Shepherd's Song*), and Isobel Baillie. This latter, 'The Sun Goeth Down' from *The Kingdom*, has long been a favourite 78, and the orchestra has acquired a richness it did not have in the original, but something has happened to Miss Baillie's voice in the process. As one who saw and heard her on a number of occasions the outstanding quality of her voice was the soft "bloom" that covered every note. This has been replaced with an edge which was never there before - we have gained an orchestra, but lost a beauty in the voice somewhere. The Kirkby Lunn also has something of an edge, but I suspect that this is due to a less-than-perfect copy of the original. Charles Kennedy Scott's Philharmonic Choir have been restored to a remarkable vigour in Dutton's transfer of the excerpt from *The Banner of St George*. It is good to have the original 1930 National Brass Band Champions - Foden's Motor Works Band - in the abridgement of the *Severn Suite*, that year's contest piece. But why didn't Columbia record it complete? Other contest pieces of the late '20s and early '30s were recorded in their entirety, why not the Elgar? There is an *Imperial March* played by the LPO under Julius Harrison, which has never previously been available in this country. Recorded in 1946, it only appeared in America on Decca's 'London' label. The only foreign recording here is of Jussi Björling singing, in Swedish, a vocal version of *Salut d'Amour*, recorded in Stockholm in 1930. There are other items which will give pleasure. As with previous CDs in the series, this is a minor feast to dip into as and when the mood dictates.

Ronald Taylor

Elgar's Interpreters on Record. Volume 4. The Dream of Gerontius, Op 38.

*The Edison Bell 'Velvet Face' recording of 1924; plus an extract from a live performance at the Queen's Hall in 1938, conducted by Sir Henry Wood  
Dutton Laboratories for The Elgar Society CDLX 7044*

Let me make two admissions. First, I have a set of the original 78s in its album, with the text notes. Second, I was unenthusiastic about transferring this set to CD. It had many good qualities, and historically

it was important, but it had obvious flaws, and I was dubious about whether modern ears would forgive such drawbacks. Let me say at once that I am completely converted! The results achieved by Michael Dutton are quite remarkable. In this he has been greatly assisted by David Michell's careful re-pitching of the sides - acoustic recording was never an exact science and strange anomalies were often to be found.

There were, of course, cuts in the text and music - inevitable if it were to be economically feasible in 1924. It appeared on eight double-sided 12" records, each side playing for approximately four-and-a-half minutes. The conductor, Joseph (usually known as Joe) Batten, was not only the conductor, but Edison Bell's music director at this time. Batten was a largely self-taught musician - that should have appealed to Elgar - but he shows here a remarkable sympathy and understanding of the score. Of course his orchestra was small, as was usual in those days, and his "choir" consisted of only eight voices, plus the principals joining in in the ensembles. The fact that it still convinces is a tribute to all concerned at the time, and a tribute also to the skills of modern technology in producing the very best from the sound locked into the grooves of the records. This latter was something beyond the capabilities of the gramophones of the period.

The opening Prelude is sensitively done, and has a real Elgarian feel about it. Dan Jones, an experienced Welsh tenor whose career stretched from the period of World War I to the early '30s, makes a believable Gerontius, and his 'Sanctus Fortis' could stand in any company. Indeed, at times I was reminded very much of Heddle Nash's interpretation - did Nash know the Jones version, I wonder? Their careers overlapped. David Brazell, as the Priest and Angel of the Agony was, again, a very experienced singer on the concert and oratorio circuit, and sings his roles with conviction. Edith Furmedge as the Angel was at the beginning of her career, which later took her to the operatic stage. The quality of her voice, even though she was only in her mid-twenties, is unquestionably good, but I have always detected a slight uneasiness in her approach to the role. Although she made a number of records for the company, I think she was happier in the world of opera rather than oratorio. Once or twice in her duets with Jones she comes in too rapidly, obscuring his final notes. The one place where I was originally most uneasy was in the Demons' Chorus - you need more demons than we have here - but somehow Dutton has smoothed over any vocal shortcomings and has achieved a suitably unpleasant disharmony!

There are excellent notes by Lewis Foreman and David Michell, and a reproduction of part of the original leaflet, with photos of the principals. If you want a grand cathedral version of *Gerontius* - and you probably already have one - then you may wonder why a small, more intimate version would appeal. Let me assure you, there are good things here and much to appreciate - not least the courage and enterprise of the production which had already frightened off both HMV and Columbia, the two trade giants of the period. Buy it, and judge for yourself. Elgar had a set and often played it to his friends.

The disc is completed by a short extract from a Queen's Hall performance conducted by Sir Henry Wood dating from Easter 1938, and leaves one wishing we could have heard more of this.

Ronald Taylor

'Heritage & Legacy'. Enigma Variations, Op 36. With works by Vaughan Williams, Austin, Mackenzie, and Stanford.

*Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Douglas Bostock  
RLPO LIVE RLCD 301*

In these straitened economic times - certainly so far as the arts are concerned - it is heartening when people are seen to take the initiative. The Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra have begun to bring

out their own CDs (to cut out the middle man). This disc brings together two of the most popular works in the English repertoire with three world premiPre recordings. The orchestra is conducted by Douglas Bostock, whose reputation has been largely won on the Continent but who is becoming more widely known here. (He has recently featured on 'The British Symphonic Collection' series for Classico, the Elgar disc of which was reviewed in the July JOURNAL (CLASSCD 334)).

Bostock's *Enigma* is very acceptable - no idiosyncrasies, and some lovely playing by the Liverpool band (as, indeed, they do throughout the disc). 'H.D.S-P' is a little slower than usual, but that does enable the listener to hear rather more of the detail than usual. In contrast, 'R.B.T' starts a little too fast, but slows up in time for its second part. 'Nimrod' is finely done, as is 'Dorabella' which dances along nicely. Throughout Bostock brings out some of the details in the score which are not always heard : the 'Romanza' is very effective, with a real **ppp** on the solo clarinet. And in 'E.D.U' after fig 72 the famous "whistle" really *does* go from **f** to **pp**, so that the effect of the distant response is clearly made. However, I suspect you are not likely to buy this enterprising disc for the *Variations*, nor I guess for the *Tallis Fantasia* (which is passable if a little plodding). But the other three works are of considerable interest, and worth your investigation.

First, and the most enjoyable (to me) is the concert overture *The Sea Venturers* of 1934 by Frederic Austin, best remembered perhaps as a singer before the First World War, and for his arrangement of *The Beggar's Opera*. He was born in London, but brought up in Liverpool. This overture is a sort of cross between Richard Strauss and *A Sea Symphony*, and if that sounds disparaging, it is meant as a compliment! Only ever played a handful of times, it deserves to be more widely known. The other two works are introductions to operas. Mackenzie's *Columba* was first performed at Covent Garden by the Carl Rosa Company in 1883. Those members who are familiar with the Hyperion disc of Mackenzie's orchestral music (CDA 66764) will be equally impressed with this Prelude. Like Elgar, Mackenzie was a fine orchestrator and made effective use of sequences, as here. The third "new" work is the overture to Stanford's opera *Shamus O'Brien*, which dates from 1896. The opera was something of a success, and was later performed in New York and in Breslau, but fell into obscurity after the First World War. The overture is quite light in mood and makes use of the well-known folk-song, 'Father O'Flynn'.

Once again we have to thank Lewis Foreman for resurrecting these works, and for his exhaustive and informative booklet notes. Everything about this disc is top-class, and I look forward to further productions of this kind from the RLPO.

The Editor

Violin Sonata, Op 82. With Dvořák : Violin Concerto.

*Maxim Vengerov (violin), Revital Chachamov (piano),  
New York Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Kurt Masur  
Teldec 4509-96300-2*

Vengerov's live performance of this Joachim-inspired concerto from the Avery Fisher Hall, New York in January 1997 is both idiomatically stylish and robust, with Masur and his New Yorkers an attentive accompanist. Though not an obvious filler, the pairing of the Dvořák concerto with Elgar's sonata is not without relevance or significance. In 1884 at the Gloucester Three Choirs Festival Dvořák came to conduct his Symphony No 6 in D major (dedicated to Richter who was yet to play his vital part in Elgar's life), and at the third desk of the first violins was none other than Elgar. He wrote to Charles Buck : "I wish you could hear Dvořák's music. It is simply ravishing, so tuneful and clever, and the orchestration is wonderful."

The Violin Sonata, completed at Brinkwells in the late summer of 1918 as the horrors of the First World War were drawing to a close, sees Elgar emerging from sabbatical seclusion. Its debt to German (Brahmsian) Romanticism and mood of retrospection may be obvious but it remains a quintessentially English work joining both nations in *Weltschmerz* and nobility respectively. As he wrote on 6 February 1918 to Marie Joshua (its proposed dedicatee who turned it down and never had the chance to explain why, before her sudden death intervened in September that year) : "I have been writing music lately and have nearly finished a Sonata for Violin & Pianoforte, so nearly finished that I can almost consider it out of my hands but, as you know, the last stage is the critical time & it may require much trimming - I hope (& think) not! I fear it does not carry us any further but it is full of golden sounds & I like it, but you must not expect anything violent, chromatic or cubist".

Vengerov has Menuhin's passion in his playing but does not hang around in the Romance, faster than all the most recent issues at a little under eight minutes where Menuhin (EMI) clocks almost ten and Kennedy (Chandos) is not far behind. Only Alan Loveday and Hugh Bean are faster. Technically Vengerov is as superbly confident as Midori (Sony), his tone much warmer than Mordkovich (Chandos), his vibrato not as intense as Tasmin Little (GMN). Chachamov proves a sympathetically discreet accompanist.

Christopher Fifield

Violin Sonata, Op 82. With works by Finzi and Walton.

*Daniel Hope (violin), Simon Mulligan (piano)*  
*Nimbus NI 5666*

Violin Sonata. Op 82 (arr. for cello Blake). With works by Bridge.

*Lowri Blake (cello), Iwan Llewelyn-Jones (piano)*  
*LOWRI 2000*

If the 26-year-old British violinist Daniel Hope is hardly a household word - even in musical households - he certainly comes with an impressive list of credentials. He was voted 'Young Artist of the Year 1999' by two of Germany's leading music magazines, and he had a long association with Lord Menuhin : they performed over sixty concerts together, including Menuhin's final concert in Düsseldorf in March 1999. His previous two CDs have shown his commitment to contemporary music; this is his first recording of 'standard' repertoire.

Hope certainly adopts a 'no nonsense' approach to the work. He is happy with markings such as *risolto* and *con forza*, less so with *molto allargando* and *molto largamente*, which are usually ignored. He eschews a Kennedyesque lingering introspection in the quieter passages; yet at the same time he is extremely impressive in these more intimate episodes - for instance, the central B<sup>b</sup> tune in the Romance, where he retains a subdued dynamic until the *crescendo* at the sixth bar of 29. Perhaps the most memorable aspect of his interpretation is a strong sense of rhythm and forward movement. A good example of this is the close of the first movement, where following the final *fff con fuoco* at fig 21 many violinists start to slow down long before the end. Yet there is only a *più lento* four bars from the end, and this is what we get. Having said all this, I was surprised to note that at nearly 26½ minutes this is by no means a fast time. Perhaps the Romance is the most successful movement: it is certainly the part where many violinists have come unstuck interpretively. Hope seems to get it just right.

The Sonata has received some wonderful recordings over the years, starting with Sammons, and more recently from Crayford, Midori, Little, Kennedy, Vengerov and others. Hope may not be my number one choice, but his version is worthy to stand in the exalted company of the others. He is helped throughout

by some sensitive and intelligent piano accompaniment from Simon Mulligan. The other works on this outstanding disc are Finzi's *Elegy* of 1940, and Walton's *Sonata*.

Full marks for initiative to the young Welsh cellist, Lowri (pronounced as in 'low', not like the artist) Blake. Having made something of a name for herself in a very competitive field, and having already made recordings of music by Fauré, Saint-Saëns, and Busoni, she is now branching out with her own label. The first three titles consist of the disc under review; a record of music for cello and harp, including Villa-Lobos, Ravel, Martin, and Falla; and a disc of cello sonatas composed in 1948 (by Myaskovsky, Carter, and Poulenc).

As already stated, there are now quite a number of very good recordings of Elgar's Violin Sonata. and transcriptions of Elgar's music do not always work very well. I remember being very disappointed with the Viola Concerto when I first heard it, with its many changes of register; and even in the men's *Greek Anthology* songs re-scored for mixed choir (by Elgar himself) there is a lack of authenticity. I think it is because Elgar's ear for the timbre of voices and instruments was so precise that we are immediately aware that something is wrong. Or maybe we're just too used to the original!

However, for a transcription this works very well for the most part. For one thing, Lowri Blake just plays the violin part down an octave, so there are few unnatural changes. In her notes Lowri Blake writes: "The dark, noble and highly evocative Violin Sonata might easily have been written for the cello". Certainly there are passages when the elegiac tone of the cello seems totally right, and these are usually where the notes are above the staff. The down side is that *below* the staff it doesn't really work at all, the worst section probably being toward the end of the Romance (figs 34 and 35) where the cello sounds a bit like a buzz-saw. Another awkward passage is the alternating *arco* and *pizzicato* quaver figure first heard at the fourth bar of fig 22. In the first movement, the cello is not able to produce the lightness of touch required in the series of arpeggios (after fig 5). It is heavy-going, rather like eating porridge with a teaspoon.

But as I said, for the most part it works very well. Lowri Blake plays with commendable expression and feeling, and with a fine command of technique. She is not always helped by her accompanist, who is a little heavy-handed at times, and this is accentuated by the balance which seems to favour the piano. I guess that most members will view this disc primarily as a curiosity, but it is certainly worth a hearing if you can afford it. You may be swayed by the inclusion of Bridge's Cello Sonata of 1913-17 and the *Morning Song* of 1918, both written for the cello, and both given excellent recordings. Full marks for Lowri Blake for her ability and enterprise: maybe she will record the Concerto some day.

The Editor

Introduction and Allegro, Op 47. Serenade for Strings, Op 20. Chanson de Matin & de Nuit, Op 15. Mot d'Amour, Op 13, no 1. Salut d'Amour, Op 12. Minuet, Op 21. Elegy, Op 58. Suite from 'The Spanish Lady'.

*David Le Page (violin), London Festival Orchestra conducted by Ross Pople  
Arte Nova 74321 46494-2*

Arte Nova is a budget label of the recording giant BMG, and this disc retails at around £6. At that price it appealed to me, especially as some of the works were unusual, and Ross Pople and the LFO are highly respected (I treasure their recording of the Mendelssohn string symphonies). Sadly, my expectations were not fully realised; the performances are adequate without being exceptional. Most disappointing of all is the Introduction & Allegro, which never catches fire. It is frankly dull - even the "devil of a fugue" doesn't stir any emotion. The Serenade which follows is totally different, the highlight of the record. The strings

dig into the opening Allegro piacevole with such gusto and passion it is hard to believe you are listening to the same band. Pople's speeds are generally slow, but he just about gets away with it in the two *Chansons* and *Salut d'Amour*. The rarely-recorded *Minuet* is pleasant enough, and both the *Elegy* and the *Spanish Lady* Suite pass muster. The real oddity is the early violin piece *Mot d'Amour*, receiving only its fourth recording (after Georgiadis, Kennedy, and Bouton) played by David Le Page (and an uncredited pianist, probably Pople himself).

Perhaps it is churlish to complain about such a competitively-priced disc, but leaving aside the incongruous cover illustration (surely a candidate for 'Worst Record Cover of the Year') the booklet notes - by the auspiciously-named Daniel Brandenburg - leave a lot to be desired. Many of the biographical details can be challenged; and specific reference is made to only two of the works - the *Spanish Lady* music and the Serenade. Most odd.

The Editor

Several important re-issues have been announced, including André Navarra's 1957 recording of the Cello Concerto with the Hallé conducted by Barbirolli, coupled with his 1955 recording of the Dvořák concerto (Testament SBT 1204); Heifetz's 1949 recording of the Violin Concerto (with his 1941 recording of the Walton concerto) on Naxos Historical 8.110939; and from the Unesco set of recordings of the EMI back catalogue, Tortelier's 1973 recording of the Cello Concerto with the LPO under Boult, coupled with Groves' recordings of the *Enigma Variations* and Britten's *Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra* (DCL 707152). But review copies have not arrived in time and will have to await the July issue.

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## **LETTERS**

*From : David Bury*

*The JOURNAL (November 2000) rightly made reference to the 100th anniversary of the receipt by Elgar of the honorary Doctorate of Music from Cambridge University. A short (unsigned) article included the text of the Public Oration, while the '100 Years Ago' feature referred to Elgar's imagined inability to afford the robes and the intervention of a motley group of friends who "in the end... paid for his robes".*

The story is familiar, but Elgarians - and in some cases authors of works on the composer - should note that "in the end" turned out to be over a year after the Cambridge ceremony. When Rodewald turned up in Malvern on 8 November 1901 to appraise Elgar of this plan, it came as a "great surprise" (letter to Jaeger 9.xi.01), while on 12 November Edward was bemoaning to Jaeger (further letter 12.xi.01) that "the robes have not yet come", and going on to say "I want 'em now to appear at Court". Percy Young tells us that they finally arrived on 3 December (Elgar OM, p 95).

What did Elgar mean by this reference to Court? Michael Kennedy has taken it that "probably it was at that meeting with his sovereign that an historic suggestion was made to Elgar" - viz, that the Trio of the Pomp & Circumstance March no 1 be set as a song (Portrait of Elgar, 2nd edn, p 169). But, what meeting? Is there any evidence that Elgar was received at Court, let alone met Edward VII, at this time? Dr Moore (A Creative Life, p 364) tells us that he can find no evidence of the King's even hearing the March before 5 February 1902. By this time, of course, Benson's words had been with Elgar for almost two months.

To return to the Cambridge ceremony. Although Alice, typically, thought Edward "looked so perfectly beautiful - really it is the only word, in his robes with a strong light on his face" (letter to Ann Elgar 24.xi.00), Frederic Cowen, Edward's fellow graduand, observed that Elgar's gown "did not reach much below his knees, and mine trailed upon the ground" (My Art and Friends, p282). They had, in fact, both borrowed the necessary robes.

Why it was that Edward purported to be unable to afford either an immediate or belated purchase remains another Elgarian mystery.

From : Wendy Hillary

May I add some more comments about the Centenary Gerontius (see Ernie and Margaret Kay's review in the November NEWS)?

From where I was sitting in the Circle the hall was not entirely full - there were some free, single seats. What was very apparent was that the audience consisted, not of real music lovers, but many "men in suits" and their wives. (There was a conspicuously noisy drinks reception before the performance and a party afterwards clearly signposted!) This is what normally occurs at a sponsored performance.

Will we ever find out why no English singer could be engaged for the role of Gerontius? We have many fine tenors - were none of them asked? Surely it would have been deemed an honour to sing at such a performance. Were any asked and refused? I hope not.

Finally, how much did the event raise for the Organ Fund? I would have felt better if the money had been going to a musical charity.

## 100 YEARS AGO...

At the beginning of January 1901 Elgar had sketched two 'Quick Marches', the first in A minor, the second in D. The melody of the Trio seemed something special, as he later described it, "A tune that comes once in a lifetime". He was still toying with the idea of writing a symphony - Jaeger wrote to Dora Penny on 20th: "I think E. is also finishing that Symphony at last"; while on the same day Alice wrote to Jaeger: "I long for [the symphony] to be finished & have to exist on scraps". But nothing materialised. At the beginning of February he was working again at the overture he had sketched during the autumn : Alice's diary for 6 February reads, "Busy with 'Cockaigne'".

There were encouragements for him, despite bad weather, and the death of Queen Victoria on 22 January. The Worcestershire Philharmonic began to practise *Gerontius*; and Elgar's arrangement of the 'Prelude and Angel's Farewell' was given twice within five days. On 16 February Elgar conducted it in Bradford with Muriel Foster as soloist (she also sang four of the *Sea Pictures*); and on 20th (Ash Wednesday) Henry Wood gave it in the Queen's Hall, sung by Kirkby Lunn. Jaeger reported to Dora Penny : "Wood conducted it with loving care, spent 1½ hours on it & the result was a performance which completely put Richter's into the shade". Another fillip was the successful Düsseldorf performance of the *Enigma Variations* on 7 February, conducted by Julius Butts.

On their return from London, the Elgars went down with influenza, but Edward "redeemed the time" and on 2 March completed a short piece, *May Song*, for piano (and for violin and piano); and on 24 March *Cockaigne*. With the warmer weather, Elgar began cycling, accompanied by Archi Nevinson and Rosa Burley among others. On 31 March they entertained a German wine merchant to lunch - Henry Ettling, a friend of Richter's. He was an amateur musician, a tympanist, and the Elgars found him "delightful". He "did wonders [ie. conjuring tricks] : called him Klingsor". (Rosa Burley, in vitriolic mood, described Ettling as "stout, very ugly and short-sighted with strong magnifying spectacles... always jangling sovereigns in his trouser pockets". She implied that the Elgars found him socially embarrassing, but cultivated him as he was able to introduce them to a "large number of influential musical people").

In early March, Elgar sent Jaeger a letter with a sketch of the arms of the Norbury family, which Jaeger took to mean that Elgar was designing his own. Elgar replied: "They're not my own. They're 'W.N.'s' as a matter of fact... Don't you know I'm quite a small authority on Heraldry?" This was another new hobby.

On 1 April, following Ettling's visit, Elgar wrote to Richter asking him to include *Cockaigne* in next season's programme. The new overture was to be offered to Boosey, as Elgar was annoyed at Novello's reluctance to publish extracts from *Gerontius*. Boosey also took two songs, *Come, Gentle Night* and *Always and Everywhere*. On 16 April Elgar signed a contract with W H Broome of The Old Bourne Press to publish the recently-completed *May Song*; and Schott brought out the short orchestral piece *Sursum Corda* of 1894.

# The Elgar Society Journal

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Front Cover : Elgar raises a glass in a Croydon garden on the occasion of his 76th birthday, 2 June 1933.

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