



### Call for Papers

A special edition of the JOURNAL in July 2003 will mark the centenary of the first performance of *The Apostles*, and authors are cordially invited to submit proposals for contributions on this theme by 1 March 2003 (final copy will be required by 1 June 2003). Articles of any length up to approximately 5,000 words are welcome; please contact the editor to discuss details (contact information on back cover).

*Front cover: 'Land of Hope and Glory'—to mark its centenary, the title page of a pre-1920 issue, and a photograph of Clara Butt who gave its première (as an arrangement separate from the Coronation Ode) in London, June 1902. Also in this edition: David Bury defends A. C. Benson, author of the words (p.243); and Christopher Fifield reviews a performance by Kathleen Ferrier accompanied by John Barbirolli and the Hallé Orchestra on a new BBC Legends release (p.274).*

*(Photograph: Lewis Foreman collection)*

## ELGAR-PAYNE: WHOSE SYMPHONY?

Stephen Johnson

*This article is a transcript of the annual A. T. Shaw Lecture given at University College, Worcester on 16 June 2002 as part of this year's Birthday Weekend gathering. In discussing Anthony Payne's elaboration of Elgar's Third Symphony sketches, the broadcaster and scholar Stephen Johnson highlights the ambiguities presented by a work which on the surface appears to be the product of two creative minds, but reveals unifying subtleties in its musical structure which point to the extraordinary nature of Payne's achievement.*

There is no getting around it: Anthony Payne's elaboration of the sketches for Elgar's Third Symphony is one of the outstanding musical successes of our time. How many new orchestral works have had three commercial recordings in the first four years of their existence? According to the score's publisher, Boosey & Hawkes, by the time of this lecture it will have had one hundred and thirty-six performances. The first public performance in the Royal Festival Hall in February 1998 was like no other première I can remember. Nearly seven hundred people turned up for the pre-concert talk. Afterwards there was a standing ovation for Payne from a capacity audience which included both the Home Secretary and the Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition. Afterwards, the queuing for signed copies of the recording went on for a least an hour. It is difficult to think of an entirely new British work in recent years which has aroused and sustained such passionate interest. The only credible rival I can think of is James MacMillan's percussion concerto *Veni, Veni, Emmanuel*, and perhaps at a stretch one might add John Tavener's *The Protecting Veil*, though I'll leave that for debate.

To inject a more personal note (and after listening to the Elgar-Payne symphony more times than I can count—in live performances and in recordings—and having looked as it were over Tony Payne's shoulder during rehearsals, recording sessions, and during talks together before performances), I can honestly say that this symphony, which seemed impressive enough on first acquaintance, has got better with time. I'm still haunted by a remark made by a well-known young British composer after the private première in the BBC's Maida Vale studios in 1997. All right, he said, how many first performances have you come out of recently humming tunes?

Nearly five years later, the power of the symphony's melodies to lodge themselves in the memory, demanding to be hummed, sung, whistled, or—as my wife might say—groaned and howled, still astonishes me. It is also faintly disturbing. Is it acceptable that so few wholly contemporary works should have had a comparable effect? Have we gained so much through the musical-stylistic advances of the late twentieth century that we can afford to do without the kind of melodic lines that actually make one want to join in and sing?

Whether you look at the Elgar-Payne symphony as a reconstruction, an act of homage, an original composition in its own right, or a combination of the three, it is a remarkable achievement. The slow movement in particular could come to be seen as one of the great things in the British orchestral repertoire, on a par with the slow movements of Elgar's fully-authentic First and Second Symphonies.

But that word 'authentic' gives me pause. The notion of authenticity in art is connected with vision, with a notion of trueness to oneself, with the implication that there is one 'self' behind it all. The typical programme note or CD booklet sets the musical work in question in the context of its creator's personal life, with the obvious implication that this, above all, will help us understand what the composer intended, and therefore what the music is truly about.

The idea that there is one sole creator tends to be seen as a *sine qua non* in music, even when the music isn't exclusively identified with one creative mind. So when we listen to Stravinsky's reworking of tunes by Pergolesi in his ballet suite *Pulcinella*, commentators seem generally agreed that it is Stravinsky we are listening to. But in the case of the Elgar-Payne symphony, where so much of the material is by Elgar, and at the same time so much of it is not, it is easy to become confused.

There have certainly been times when I have found myself, at least in the early stages of getting to know this symphony, asking, who then is the composer here? When Anthony Payne writes of the 'visionary world' of the slow movement, whose vision is he describing? Perhaps it is a disadvantage for me that I know in such detail what in this music is pure Elgar, what part Elgar-Payne, and what part pure Payne. With the release of the companion disc to the NMC world-première recording of the symphony, that information is now available to anyone who is interested, whether they have any formal musical education or not.

This confusion is reflected in what now appears to be the most frequently used short version of the work's title, Elgar-Payne Symphony No. 3, as though there were a composer called Elgar Payne who had written three symphonies. But there is no such single creative personality. So the question lingers, when we listen to Elgar-Payne, whose symphony are we listening to?

One thing we can say with certainty is that it is not Edward Elgar's Third Symphony. Had Elgar completed it, it would have been different. We have the testimony of Wulstan Atkins, the only surviving individual who can remember Elgar playing through or improvising around the sketches for the work. As Payne conscientiously records in his book *Elgar's Third Symphony: The Story of the Reconstruction* (London, 1998), Atkins was sure that the symphony as Elgar played it was shorter. I agree with Anthony Payne in finding this rather surprising, because the symphony as Payne completed it never seems too long for its material. It is particularly hard to see how the slow movement could have been shorter, unless Elgar was planning a ternary *ABA* structure, rather than Payne's sonata-like *ABAB* solution. Then we would miss some of the wonderfully telling deviations of the Elgar-Payne recapitulation.

This brings us to perhaps the most significant problem created by the success of Anthony Payne's completion. We cannot now look at Elgar's sketches innocently, without understanding them, that is, in terms of the context created for them by Payne. Anthony Payne has left an invisible but indelible mark on Elgar's ideas. Their meaning for us is inescapably influenced by the greater meaning he has given them. Of course, if it hadn't been for Anthony Payne's single-minded, dare one say, visionary belief in Elgar's ideas, it is doubtful whether many of us would be taking much interest in them at all. Still, those ideas are now, in a sense, Payne's as well as Elgar's. The emotional character of the slow movement's glorious lyrical second subject is inescapably coloured by our awareness of what follows it in the Elgar-Payne symphony. Elgar's friend W. H. Reed, who played through some of the sketches with the composer, thought that this was actually the slow movement's first theme. If it had been, its emotional significance would have been completely different, as indeed would that of the whole movement, and thus of the whole symphony. For those of us who may know the theme via Elgar-Payne, it is simply impossible to imagine what it might have been like under such circumstances.

When Anthony Payne asked Wulstan Atkins what he thought of the symphony, Atkins replied that he couldn't really think of it as Elgar's Third Symphony. It seemed to him, Payne tells us, to be a symphony by me on Elgar's material, and an act of homage. I agreed with him, Payne says. But I have to say, with all due respect to so valuable a commentator as Wulstan Atkins, that answer doesn't quite satisfy me listening to the symphony today, long after Elgar's death. For one thing, in terms of musical argument, the Elgar-Payne seems to me in no way divided. There is no impression that it suffers from a split personality. Nor, despite what I know, do I find it easy to disentangle Payne's alleged homage from original Elgar, as one can very clearly distinguish original Schubert from Luciano Berio's post-modernist musical elaboration in his *Rendering*, which is based on the sketches for Schubert's Tenth Symphony. As

I've got to know Elgar-Payne, I've been increasingly impressed by its apparent unity of purpose, a unity that reveals itself, as in many a great work by a single composer, on progressively deeper and deeper levels.

True, the way this unity of purpose manifests itself is very different from what emerges in Elgar's First and Second Symphonies, but then they're very different from each other. In the First Symphony we have the subtle long-term transformations of the motto theme combined with a highly original tonal drama in which the opposed keys of A flat and D seem to stand for something close to Schumann's two musical personae Florestan and Eusebius, or perhaps for Elgar's own public and private faces. In the Second Symphony there are the telling returns of the 'spirit of delight' and 'malign influence' themes, which we could also regard as twin poles in Elgar's complex personality. This was a composer, after all, who was subject to devastating swings of mood, or even of belief.

So what about the Third Symphony's argument? I'd like to show you now how I think the musical argument of this symphony works. The interpretations I place on its various stages are, of course, my own. And when attempting to find larger meanings in a musical argument, one should always try to keep in mind the words of the philosopher Ernest Bloch, that when we listen to music, what we're really hearing is ourselves. On the other hand, I'm also comforted by a remark by Hans Keller, that all meaningful analysis is self-analysis. All I can hope is that it will prove meaningful for you too, in some way.

The musical seeds of the Elgar-Payne symphony can be found in its very opening bars. In this respect it is rather different from Elgar's First and Second Symphonies. The First gives the confident motto theme in a solid A flat major, but it is only later, at the beginning of the *Allegro*, that we encounter the destabilising challenge from D minor that sets the argument properly in motion. In the Second Symphony, challenges to the initially secure E flat major 'spirit of delight' music arrive more gradually; the spirit of delight's true opposite pole, the 'malign influence' theme, doesn't appear until the middle of the movement in the remote key of E major. May I just point out in passing how interesting it is that the malign influence's final appearance in the Second Symphony should be in the symphony's tonic key of E flat, as though Elgar were telling us that this too was an aspect of the home tonality, that it is just as fundamental, psychologically speaking, as the spirit of delight.

But the beginning of the Elgar-Payne symphony is tonally unstable. The challenge to the security of the home key, C minor, is present right from the start. The music shifts sequentially from key to key, as though it is casting about, looking for solid ground (see first movement, bars 1–14). One thing that happens in the first section that is very interesting is that the music seems to arrive confidently in C major, underlined by those splendid, assertive, confident march rhythms. But immediately that confidence is undermined by a harmony foreign to the home key, which turns out to be the chord of B flat minor (at bar 8). That challenge to C from B flat minor is to have far-reaching consequences. Anthony Payne was clearly very sensitive to the implications of that when he decided to elaborate and enrich Elgar's fragmentary ideas for a section in B flat minor later on in the first movement. An elaborator with less courage than Payne might have decided to leave out the implied B flat minor section altogether, simply because Elgar's ideas at this point were so, well, sketchy.

But there is another element in the symphony's opening bars which proves to be even more fertile. The top line at the beginning of the symphony moves in parallel fourths, and the phrase itself spans the interval of a perfect fourth, so it is a completely fourth-dominated idea, you might say. The fourth is also the basis of the horn's idea in C minor a little later (at bar 11). The contrasting second subject is the one Elgar identified with his muse in his late years, the young violinist Vera Hockman. It is tonally much more stable, but if you reduce it to its skeleton by playing only the notes that fall on the minim beats, you hear again how important the interval of a fourth is. So by drawing the restless, questioning, unstable fourths of the opening into a more stable tonal framework, we could say that Vera's theme provides an emotionally stable complement to the character of the opening music.

Interestingly, Anthony Payne has said on several occasions that he finds the impassioned, searching, march-inflected first section masculine, so here we have a vivid working-out of the traditional masculine and feminine elements in sonata form, set against one another in a particularly effective contrast. Perhaps that explains why Elgar wanted this section to be repeated, as in the exposition of a classical sonata-form movement. That masculine-feminine contrast is something that Elgar wants us to keep in mind, along with its themes.

There are more fourths in the oscillating chords of the first development theme (at bar 76), and significantly Elgar recalls those oscillating fourths in the symphony's second movement, the Scherzo. The superb, forward-striding horn theme from a little later in the development also outlines a fourth (at bar 100). Interestingly, Anthony Payne has this theme move up sequentially by a major third, which is exactly what happens to the first phrase of the opening theme (see first movement, bars 99–112). When we arrive at the B flat minor march episode (at bar 133), the striding bass line traces both the major third and the perfect fourth. The falling fourth is vividly recalled in the chiming figures of the finale's first big climax (see fourth movement, bar 35–41). The striding bass line in the first movement's march episode was entirely Anthony Payne's idea, but how naturally it grows from Elgar's simple one-line sketch for a march theme, and how effectively *that* ties to the music of the finale's martial episodes. Payne has realised what appear to be the implications of the sketches so effectively that it is hard to say for certain whether the idea is purely his, or perhaps half Elgar's. It is one of those many places in the symphony where the dividing line between the two minds is hard to draw.

Here are a couple more examples of significant fourths from the second movement. The interval of a fourth is strongly present in the first theme (at bar 3); and multiple pile-up fourths help create the characteristically Elgarian languishing sevenths in the second theme (at bar 18). And the symphony's opening fourths are the basic ingredient of the movement's mysterious ending—this is just after the first theme has also contracted to the interval of a fourth, which is an idea which Elgar marked 'good' in his sketches (see second movement, bars 202–end). Of course, 'interval-spotting' like this can soon become a good deal more boring and less productive than train-spotting, and isn't the fourth one of the basics of tonal music anyway? Well, yes it is, but I hope that I've been able to show that the fourth does tend to stand out in the first two movements.

And when we arrive at the third movement, the Adagio, we may begin to see why. We don't have to look any further than the opening bars. A figure on violins and woodwind ascends by a seventh, and then tries to fall to the tonic C. If it succeeded, it would spell out an interval of a falling fourth. But it doesn't quite resolve; instead, the fall to the fourth, C, is frustrated. The accompanying bass line makes very telling use of what you might call distorted fourths, tritones. I'm sure some of you know the augmented fourth—the tritone—is the interval the medieval theorists wouldn't allow composers to use, because it was supposed to be too subversive in its implications for harmony; it was called 'the devil in music', the *Diabolus in Musica*. A few bars later the falling pattern is allowed to complete itself, spelling out a fourth, but stability is undermined by more of these tritones, these 'devils in music', in the bass (at bar 11).

This world of instability, anguish, even violence, eventually finds a glorious contrast in Elgar's, or let's be precise and say Elgar-Payne's second subject (see third movement, bars 45–54). Could this be another feminine compliment, perhaps to a world of masculine dread, pain and ambiguity opened up in the first section of the movement? I find it tempting to think so, especially when the falling fourth figure from early on is drawn into the violin's melodic line (see bar 51, oboe and first violins). Finally, at the end of the movement, there is that astonishing open end, almost unbearably poignant with that original D left hanging in the air, unresolved. This is the music Elgar handed to Reed on his death-bed, with the words, 'Billy, this is the end' (see third movement, bars 155–end).

How do you follow that? Well, Elgar clearly thought you could (see fourth movement, bars 1–6). The finale responds to that desperately moving, incomplete cadence with a resolute brass fanfare. The musical continuity is striking—I

should point out it only struck me when I came to write this talk, and yet it's so clear it should have struck me immediately: the fanfare culminates in a four-note descent, spanning the interval of a fourth, but it still ends on the same suspended D that concluded the Adagio. It is raising the same question. The finale begins its very different course by acknowledging what went before. We've already heard how the chiming descending fourths at the first big climax of this finale recall the B flat minor march episode in the first movement (see fourth movement, bars 25–52).

If that climax sounds confident, assertive—'swaggering' was how I once described it—that confidence is questioned anxiously in the theme that follows, the second subject. You can hear the nervous questioning of the chiming figure, as its stepwise descending fourth is turned upside-down (at bar 54 in oboe and clarinets). This theme may have originated in a completely different source, in the music Elgar intended originally for Laurence Binyon's play *Arthur*, but it slots so smoothly into Elgar's new symphonic scheme that it's as though it had been made specially for it. Those rising fourths are also the starting point for the new theme that appears in the development section (at bar 145). The fact that this theme and the finale's second subject both make significant use of a rising fourth pattern is one of the reasons for the success of Anthony Payne's miraculous dove-tailing of the two themes near the end of the symphony (see fourth movement, bars 269–288).

For me that's a crucial moment in the argument of the Elgar-Payne symphony. It is a kind of emotional turning-point beginning, interestingly enough, in B flat minor, the key of the first movement's important march episode, but preparing the way magnificently for the unequivocal C minor (the home key) of Payne's coda. It is as potent in its very different way as Elgar's transformation of the terse Scherzo theme of his First Symphony into the long, rapt melody that opens the slow movement. Here in Elgar-Payne, that emotional turning-point is followed by a moment of lovely, tender disintegration, poised first on B flat but turning to C at the end, as though the step were absolutely inevitable (see fourth movement, bars 289–295).

The end of the symphony is purely Anthony Payne's invention, and yet how appropriately it brings the process I've been describing to a conclusion. The parallel fourths from the opening of the first movement and the close of the second rise quietly on violins, while the F-E flat-D figure, left hanging in the air at the end of the Adagio and in the finale's first brass fanfare, finally falls to a C deep down on bassoon, contrabassoon and basses, the percussion rhythms in the background marching on into nothingness. Could this be the end, as Elgar portrayed it so poignantly in the closing bars of the slow movement, now faced with courage, or at least with stoicism? (See fourth movement, bars 324–end.)

I've only scratched the surface of the motivic-harmonic argument of the Elgar-Payne symphony in this short conducted tour. There's so much more I could have said, but I'd rather not stretch your patience much further. I hope that this has been enough to show that there is one argument, one process at work, whether it is by Elgar or Payne, or whether it is both who have been responsible for the various links I've unpicked along the way.

Before I wrote this lecture, I talked through some of the strands I had identified with Payne himself. I'm glad to say he agreed with my conclusions and, as I expected, he threw a lot of new light on them. But there is one thing on which he insisted. Most of this teasing-out and elaborating of Elgar's musical processes was not the result of conscious calculation. Payne himself was often surprised by the direction things took, by the way ideas and their developments seemed to suggest themselves. It was only much later that Payne was able to see the logic in the decisions he had made. It came as confirmation of what had already been achieved by the imagination. For Payne it wasn't a question of sitting down with Elgar's sketches and working out analytically, as I have just done, what might come from them. It was, he said to me, more a matter of trying to work within the aura of Elgar's ideas. The unconscious, intuitive mind did the important work; the rational conscious appraised the results once they were down on paper. It reminds me strongly of a remark made by Benjamin Britten, when Hans Keller presented him an analysis of his opera *The Turn of the Screw*. I've come to the conclusion, said Britten, that I must have a very clever

subconscious.

In the interview before the public premier of the Elgar-Payne symphony, Payne shared the stage with the composer Mark-Anthony Turnage. What Payne described, Turnage said, sounded like the work of a real composer, not of a scientific reconstructor or academic elaborator. I remember pressing Payne rather further about this. How could a composer with a distinctive voice of his own approach the ideas of another composer and develop them as though they were his, given to him by his own imagination? Payne came up with a wonderful image (I'm paraphrasing him): It is, he said, like taking a packet of seeds that has perhaps been in storage for a very long time. You plant them in soil, water them and they grow. Their DNA imprint, latent for all those years, tells the plant how to put out roots, shoots, leaves, just as it would have done if the seed had fallen into the ground the moment it was born. Payne was very struck by the way Elgar's ideas seemed so fertile, that they too seemed to have a kind of musical DNA imprint. When those seeds were transferred to his own creative imagination, that latent energy and sense of purpose was so powerful that Payne often felt the ideas were often directing him, telling him where they wanted to go. Of course, the growth of seeds is influenced by the character of the soil in which they are planted, but it is the seeds that direct the action; it is still an organic process.

So is that then the answer? Is the Elgar-Payne symphony the product of two minds with but a single thought, or a single set of seeds, if you prefer to continue the metaphor. I'm fascinated by a possibility uncovered during my researches on the composer Anton Bruckner. In the familiar revised version of Bruckner's Eighth Symphony in C minor, the first movement ends *pianissimo*, it dies away to nothing, a passage Bruckner compared to the ticking of a clock in the room of a dying man. This is an exception to Bruckner's normal rule. All his other symphonic first movements end *fortissimo*. In its original version, the first movement of the Eighth also ended *fortissimo* with an eruption of full-orchestral C major splendour. The revised version is subtler and devastatingly effective, and yet it feels more logical, both intellectually and emotionally as a fulfilment of the potential revealed in the symphony's darkly mysterious opening bars. The conductor Sir Georg Solti compared this to the famous line from the funeral service, 'Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return'.

But it seems that this magnificent revised ending might not have been Bruckner's idea. There were rumours in Bruckner's own time that it was one of his students, one of the Schalk brothers, who suggested lopping off the original *fortissimo* coda and allowing the movement to ebb away to nothing. The Schalks have had a very bad press for their meddling with Bruckner's music, but what if this inspired revision was the result of just such a piece of meddling? Bruckner was a composer who worked within self-imposed rules. Apparently he battled long and hard against the impulse to put harps in the slow movement of his Eighth Symphony because of his belief that harps didn't belong in a symphony. Could it be that in the case of the revised quiet ending of the first movement of the Eighth Symphony, Bruckner's pupil understood the demands of the musical ideas— their DNA if you like—better than the composer himself?

Don't get me wrong, I'm not suggesting Anthony Payne has understood Elgar's ideas better than Elgar might have done. We've no idea what Elgar would ultimately have made of the material he left, how much he might have re-written or discarded, or how many of the elements may have found themselves being moved around from section to section, or from movement to movement, like the tiles of a jigsaw. It is quite possible that if by some sinister cloning process we were to manufacture another Edward Elgar and set him to work on the sketches, he would have made an even more impressive symphony from them than Anthony Payne has. But for me, no matter how many minds were involved in the creation of the Elgar-Payne symphony, the end-result is one consistent, integrated, magnificently compelling work. The process may have begun in one mind, but it has been continued organically by another.

This is, to my mind, unique, certainly in music. Franz Xaver Süssmayr may have done a creditable job on the whole in completing Mozart's Requiem, but he either didn't know about, or deliberately ignored, the sketches Mozart left for the *Lacrymosa's* concluding 'Amen' fugue. And his continuation has come in for criticism for occasional un-

Mozartian technical clumsiness. On the other hand, however much one may admire Deryck Cooke's performing version of the sketches for Mahler's Tenth Symphony (and I admire it a lot), his modesty in declining to complete the work as a composer has resulted in a score that does sometimes sound a little tentative. I'm sure that's the last word I'd be using if Mahler himself had finished the job.

So Payne's achievement in completing Elgar's Third Symphony is remarkable both for its humility and its audacity. The humility is apparent in every phrase, every touch of counterpoint and orchestral colour that to our ears sounds unmistakably Elgarian, but which on minute inspection turns out not to be Elgar at all. To allow another artist's musical personality to occupy, one might even say possess, one's own to such an extent requires a lack of egoism rare in any kind of creative artist. To call this understanding or sensitivity barely seems adequate. Perhaps the word empathy, both in its ancient aesthetic and modern psychological senses, comes closer. But with that goes the audacity, the sheer effrontery of anyone's believing that he or she could do Elgar's work for him. That meant, amongst other challenges, being prepared to storm in where Elgar himself hesitated, and compose the all-important ending without so much as a scrap of evidence to point the way. And what about that magical passage that appears halfway through the slow movement, and again towards the end, a passage that seems to be pure Elgarian woodland magic to the core of its being, and which turns out to be absolutely pure Anthony Payne? This is clearly a work of the highest degree of creative imagination, sustained by faith, but given its special value by love. Posterity may well rule that it is a work of genius—in which case, whose genius? I'd say the honours were evenly divided.

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## WAS ARTHUR BENSON A JINGOIST?

David Bury

*It seems each time 'Land of Hope and Glory' is performed in public the issue of its supposed jingoism is raised. Whilst Elgar has been convincingly cleared of this charge, the author of the words Arthur C. Benson (1862–1925) remains in the dock. Marking the centenary of the Coronation Ode, this topical article explores Benson's character, and argues that his case, too, demands a reassessment.*

The starting point of Professor Bernard Porter's fascinating recent essay 'Elgar and Empire' is that:

Elgar's 'imperialism' has dogged him for years. It still does. Among many non-musical Britons, and most foreigners, he has the reputation of being little more than a jingoistic tub-thumper...<sup>1</sup>

Elgarians would surely agree with Professor Porter that such a view is a considerable oversimplification, and his essay is concerned to put Elgar's imperialism and jingoism in proportion and in context. One suspects most will agree with Philip Scowcroft's review of Professor Porter's essay<sup>2</sup>, certainly his view that it is thought-provoking, and that the author's conclusions are such as will find agreement—and I would add gratitude—among Elgarians.

Of course, any consideration of Elgar and jingoism soon involves the question of 'Land of Hope and Glory'. We witnessed last year this national hymn deemed inappropriate to the Last Night of the Proms in the aftermath of the September 11th terrorist outrage in New York, notwithstanding that the words 'Mother of the Free' closely mirror the sentiments of the American national anthem. Such prohibition, indeed, presumably had the support of the conductor, Leonard Slatkin, a Vice-President of the Elgar Society. Professor Porter examines the question of the relationship of 'Land of Hope and Glory' to Elgar's perceived imperialism and jingoism, both in 1902 and at the time of the proposed 1914 revision. However, it is not long before such consideration must involve the author of the words, Arthur Christopher Benson. Professor Porter's essay deals fully with Elgar but, so far as Benson goes, more perhaps should be said.

Certainly Professor Porter addresses the absurd notion that Elgar disliked the words, and that therefore responsibility for the perceived jingoism of the piece must lie with Benson. Such a suggestion, he writes, 'is almost certainly false. There is no evidence that Elgar disapproved of Benson's words, at least initially.'<sup>3</sup> Indeed there is no evidence I know of that Elgar disapproved at all. Any revision of the *Coronation Ode* (in 1911, for instance) was occasioned at Elgar's initiative, but only to meet the needs of the occasion. It was Elgar, not Benson, who desired fresh words in 1914. Neither was it Benson, but rather a combination of Elgar and Boosey, who initiated the amendment in 1902 whereby 'Truth and right and freedom' gave place to 'Wider still and wider' in the detached version popularised by Clara Butt. It is clear from the not inconsiderable correspondence between Elgar and Benson that Elgar (quite properly as composer) was the driving force, and that Benson admirably filled the role of compliant collaborator, ready to fall in with every suggestion and meet every new demand. 'Please make any criticism (regarding the words of the Ode): I am as meek as Moses', Benson urged in a letter dated 22 December 1901.

The genesis of the *Coronation Ode* lies in verses Benson penned for the coronation of Edward VII, not at this stage containing 'Land of Hope and Glory'; Elgar was then approached via Sir Walter Parratt to set them. It may be noted there was plenty in these verses and in the finished *Ode* about peace, music, wisdom, and, as we have seen, truth



*A portrait of A. C. Benson as Master of Magdalene College by R. E. F. Maitland*

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the Masters and Fellows of Magdalene College, Cambridge)*

and freedom. Not that it should be assumed simply on this evidence that Benson was a man of absolute 'political correctness'; in fact he was not a man of much political opinion at all. Given his proximity to Windsor, his housemastership at Eton and consequent acquaintance with royalty (Victoria's grandson Charles Edward was in his house), and his friendship with Parratt (Master of the King's Musick and organist at St George's Chapel) and Sir Henry Ponsonby (erstwhile Secretary to the late Queen), it is hardly surprising that this son of Archbishop E. W. Benson of Canterbury should have felt inclined to write verses for the next royal occasion. He had, after all, written much else of the sort. Arthur was an inveterate, incurable writer whose output was prodigious. Given the inadequacies of Alfred Austin (1835–1913), the Poet Laureate, it is little wonder he was asked to churn out verses for royal christenings, weddings, and sundry celebrations; he composed two such for the confirmation of Prince Louis of Battenburg while on the train from London to the Sussex family home at Horsted Keynes.<sup>4</sup>

None of this meant that Benson was a man of strong political views. Anyone who has spent time looking at his amazing diaries—getting on for five million words contained in one hundred and eighty volumes covering the period 1897–1925 kept at Magdalene College, Cambridge—will be struck by how much writing there is (for example about boys, masters, and trivia concerning Eton College), but how little about the outside world. Sadly, given all that passed between Benson and Elgar in 1902, he did not deem the matter of the *Coronation Ode* sufficiently important for much mention in the diaries.

However, we can certainly detect that Arthur was no royal sycophant. He was scathing about the atmosphere of 'false deference and elaborate ceremony' at the Duchess of Albany's home, Claremont (which he visited on several occasions), observing: 'I can't really breathe there—it isn't my *monde* at all'. Nor did he think much of Edward VII; 'bourgeois, ungraceful, small-minded, gross' was one assessment.<sup>5</sup>

However, he is on record regarding certain views about the Boer War, a conflict going on in parallel with the writing of the *Coronation Ode* and influencing such stanzas as 'Britain, Ask Of Thyself' and 'Peace, Gentle Peace'. It is, perhaps, typical that one observation was inspired by, for Arthur, the more important issue of the Eton ethos. He was outraged by the passion within the school for athletics and sporting success. The boys had become 'prostrate in mind before athletics', and this must be harmful to both school and nation, contributing among the upper classes to 'deplorable barbarism' and an 'absence of the development of intelligence, of which disastrous results are now apparent in South Africa'. Arthur was not a philistine, and it sounds as if for him all sorts of things were likely to be lost on the playing fields of Eton. Certainly he deplored the war, and especially such outbursts as the demonstrations at the relief of Mafeking:

I don't really enjoy this sort of thing—I suppose we all have different ideas of what hell is like, but mine is a torchlight procession—crowds made not good-humoured by excitement but offensive—to be tapped on the hat with a whistle or bladder by a female of doubtful character, or a red-faced owlish man—with the taste of hot paraffin smoke in the air.

Given this attitude, it is surprising Professor Porter takes the view: 'By this time [1914]... Benson's own imperial and militaristic enthusiasm had waned considerably.'<sup>6</sup> There seems, in fact, little evidence that Arthur ever evinced 'militaristic enthusiasm'.

Arthur's reaction to the events of the Great War must, of course, be central to any consideration of jingoism. One is not surprised to find that initially he was totally taken aback. Judging from his diary, he had anticipated no such thing. He drew no pessimistic conclusion from the assassination at Sarajevo, and it was not until 30 July 1914 that he was persuaded by his friend Percy Lubbock, freshly back from the Continent, that the situation was serious. The next day he confided to the diary:

...it seems as if we might be plunged in war for simply nothing at all, and when no direct interests are involved.

There's an awful fatality about it, and none of our statesmen seem able to do anything.

On 1 August he refused to join a proposed Neutrality Committee, but on the following day he signed a peace protest which begged the Government not to be 'egged' into war. When, on the same day, Germany declared war on Russia and France, Arthur's diary verdict was 'a sort of madness'. Thereafter Arthur tended to blame Germany, or rather the Kaiser, but coupled his condemnation of Wilhelm II with equally harsh words about J. L. Garvin of the Observer:

I would hang the Emperor if I could; and I would hang Garvin the inflammatory writer in the Observer... Garvin speaks as though we must arm and ride off as if to a crusade.

These were intemperate words by Arthur's standards, but Garvin's not Benson's was the voice of jingoism.

The story of the Elgar-Benson collaboration to re-write 'Land of Hope and Glory' to render it more suited to the events of 1914 is well-known.<sup>7</sup> However, it seems to me whatever reluctance is to be found in the project stems from Benson rather than Elgar. The suggestion came from Elgar, undoubtedly under pressure to rise to the occasion in a manner befitting the nation's greatest composer. Certainly he felt that 'Wider still and wider' was an inappropriate sentiment in 1914: '...it is liable to be misunderstood now', he wrote.<sup>8</sup> I am not convinced, however, that Elgar's intention was, as Professor Porter suggests, to alter the verses 'to make them seem less aggressive'. In the same letter, Elgar wonders about the possible references to 'a scrap of paper', and encloses for Benson's opinion a copy of John Hay's *God's Vengeance*, which, however one looks at it and as the title implies, is much concerned with vengeance.<sup>9</sup> This precipitated Benson's rejoinder in a letter of 25 August 1914:

I'm not strong in the vengeance line, and indeed I don't see what there is to revenge as yet... we have hemmed in Germany tight all round for years... and the cork has flown out... What I do feel with all my heart [is] that bullying must be stopped—but bullying mustn't be met by bullying.<sup>10</sup>

For once, the obliging Arthur, most helpful of collaborators, had been moved to protest; indeed, Elgar had even made him feel some sympathy for the German position! He could accept the need to fight when there was no alternative, but the war was not a crusade, and certainly not to be inspired by vengeance. 'Bullying must be stopped'; thus spoke the schoolmaster!

At all events, Arthur's stance soon had Elgar back-tracking and agreeing that 'vengeance isn't the issue' in a letter apologising for 'my stupidity in not making clear what I wanted to suggest from Hay's poem viz.—if it's God's work it is our place to do it'.<sup>11</sup> At about this time, too, Arthur was recording in his diary:

Wrote two more stanzas for Elgar for Land of Hope and Glory—I don't know if I ought to. Very evil Dreams of the deaths of friends.<sup>12</sup>

However, the collaboration continued to an apparently satisfactory conclusion, though with continuing lack of enthusiasm on Benson's part. 'I wish I felt more like singing—I don't mean that I'm in any serious doubt about the end of it all [the War], but it's a Pilgrim's Progress at best!' he wrote to Elgar on 18 September 1914. No one else felt like singing the new verses either, and at about this time Elgar accepted the inevitable because Clara Butt was touring the land singing the original words to great enthusiasm and acclaim. That the amended 'Land of Hope and Glory' never appeared for popular rendition was a source of relief to Arthur.

Meanwhile, although he observed, 'I must keep out of all this. I have no taste for martyrdom', Arthur found there was no easy escape. Though not a pacifist—quite—he was listed as such in *The Times*, protesting in his diary: 'I'm not a Pacifist any more—at least I think our intervention more a police intervention, to preserve an unprovoking nation against gross bullying.' His non-pacifism notwithstanding, there is however a suggestion he assisted young conscientious objectors in the preparation of their case.<sup>13</sup> Some slight martyrdom, moreover, was to ensue when he was emboldened to submit an article to the *Church Family Newspaper* counselling readers to scepticism about stories

of German atrocities. He was denounced in the *Daily Express* and an apology demanded, while the local *Cambridge Daily News* warned him of public demonstration against him unless he quickly recanted. 'I represent rather an unpopular figure', observed Arthur sorrowfully.

Elgar, of course, famously did his bit for the war effort by enrolling in the Hampstead Volunteer Reserve, and seems to have been prepared to do more. On 12 September 1914 he completed a Householder's Return for a Parliamentary Recruiting Committee to the effect there was no member of the household qualified to enlist, but 'I will do so if permitted'.<sup>14</sup> He was fifty-seven years old. Benson, the younger by five years, afforded no such evidence of involvement. He continued life in Cambridge as normally as conditions permitted, and his main outside involvement was to serve on a committee meeting regularly at Church House in London for the purpose of revising the *Prayer Book Psalter*, which brought together various Anglican divines. The nearest he seems to have got to the war effort was to attend a government-sponsored gathering of eminent writers at Wellington House, Buckingham Gate, the aim of which was to unite British authors in counteracting German propaganda. Arthur made no contribution to the discussion whatsoever, but left his usual sardonic account in the diary: H. G. Wells, we are told, was 'fat, brown and perky'; Thomas Hardy—'very old and faded'; G. M. Trevelyan—'very dark and gloomy'; J. M. Barrie—'small and insignificant'; G. K. Chesterton—'enormous, streaming with sweat'; and Arnold Bennett—'looking every inch a cad'.

The nearest Arthur Benson came to action was an incident which ironically (albeit perhaps inevitably) saw him cast on the wrong side. In 1915 he was joined on an Easter vacation walking holiday in Gloucestershire by a long-standing friend, Oliffe Richmond, a Cambridge classicist and professor at Cardiff. Unfortunately, their busy consultation of maps and questioning of locals led to the suspicion they were escaped German officers who had absconded from a prison camp in distant Denbighshire. Arthur and Richmond were not exactly arrested, but found themselves surrounded at one point by a suspicious crowd, and subsequently interviewed at their hotel by a sceptical inspector.

It might be thought a man as sensitive as Arthur, one for whom a chief occupation in life—second only to writing—seems to have been forming romantic albeit platonic relationships with handsome and intelligent undergraduates, would have been totally distraught at the carnage in which so many of his younger acquaintances were involved. In fact, he refused to sentimentalise openly about such things, and left sorrowful eulogies to others. One could say, perhaps, he remained remarkably balanced and 'sane' at this time, though it was not long (albeit for other reasons) before that was to change.

It was the behaviour of survivors and non-combatants which continued so frequently to exasperate and infuriate Arthur. The war not only killed so many people but also coarsened so many too. We come across his incomprehension at Owen Morshead, Librarian at Windsor Castle, back from the front with a Military Cross and advocating the shooting of 'cowards'. Arthur found such sentiments 'vile'. A poem in *Punch* urging that young Oxbridge dons who had 'shirked' the War be ducked once more caused Arthur to express his hatred of bullying. *Punch*, unsurprisingly, was not the only periodical to offend him. 'If there is such a thing as Hell, I feel that Northcliffe is safe of a place there' was his judgement on the press baron. A letter to *The Times* from Michael Furse, Bishop of Pretoria and later Bishop of St Alban's, describing Germany as 'the Devil Incarnate' might, felt Arthur, have been understandable from a tradesman, but certainly not a churchman. Such letters were 'on the side of Caiaphas—not Christ'. Nor did Arthur readily forgive those for whom the war was an opportunity for self-important interference, such as the Cambridge philosopher J. E. McTaggart who became a special constable and in military cap prowled round the town checking lights. He was dismissed as 'a fat sneak'. Just as well, perhaps, that Elgar's beat was as far away as North London.

There were two events which circumscribed Arthur's ongoing role with regard to the war. In October 1914 came the



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SONG

THE WORDS BY

Arthur C. Benson

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The title page of a pre-1920 issue of 'Land of Hope and Glory' as 'sung by Madame Clara Butt'.

death—nothing to do with the war—of his much-loved youngest brother Hugh, a convert to the Catholic church and priesthood. This, certainly, was a death which Arthur felt keenly, and its aftermath kept him extremely busy. As well as the hundreds of letters of condolence which had to be dealt with—Monsignor Hugh Benson was a celebrity in his own right—Arthur busied himself with writing a memoir,<sup>15</sup> as well as identifying and treating with an official biographer.<sup>16</sup>

The second matter was more conclusive. Between 1907 and 1909 Arthur had been incapacitated by a debilitating depressive illness, a kind of mental breakdown which made normal activity impossible and life awful. Now, in 1917, there was a recurrence. He began to sleep poorly and to suffer nightmares. For five years 'he lived shut off from life, enclosed in impenetrable melancholy'.<sup>17</sup> Much of these years he spent in a nursing home in Ascot for the mentally sick. Even his diary remained virtually blank. Arthur emerged from this condition almost as suddenly and inexplicably as he had fallen into it, and enjoyed an Indian summer of writing and friendship until his death in 1925. But from the middle of 1917 the war was, for Arthur, not an issue. He had, of course, made his position clear before then, and who would disagree with his judgement made in 1914: 'I was made to be of use in peace, I am useless in war'? He also put on record: 'I am against war in any guise, I think it an anachronism in civilised nations.'

Doubtless there can be differing views about Arthur Christopher Benson. Was he one of life's great winners? Son of an Archbishop of Canterbury; educated at Eton and King's College, Cambridge; an Oxbridge don and Master of Magdalene; a vastly successful, fashionable and prolific writer, attracting a mass readership—often female—for his works of homespun philosophising seasoned with a touch of erudition. A besotted American benefactress, one Madame de Nottbeck, whom he never so much as met, insisted on gifting him colossal sums of money to spend as he liked. In 1915 he received from her two-hundred thousand dollars (forty thousand pounds), followed by another gift of twenty thousand pounds in 1925. Little wonder that this in turn enabled Arthur to become the greatest benefactor Magdalene had ever known. He inspired David Newsome's lengthy and brilliant biography, as well as *inter alia* a memoir by friends.<sup>18</sup> Excerpts from his diaries have also been published.<sup>19</sup>

Alternatively, he may be seen as a member of a spectacularly dysfunctional family. None of the Archbishop's children married, nor even so much as had a relationship with a member of the opposite sex. Arthur was passed over for perhaps the one job he really wanted—the headmastership of Eton. A manic-depressive, he spent long years in mental institutions. Today his books are virtually forgotten and unread. The one thing for which he is remembered, the words of 'Land of Hope and Glory', tends to make for infamy rather than fame.

There is truth in both views, though doubtless the real truth lies between. Arthur Benson was something of an enigma, but there are at least some things of which we can be pretty sure. Unlike Edward Elgar, he was not a genius, and he realised it. Just before his death he wrote:

I for instance am a good case of an essentially second-rate person who had every opportunity to be first rate, except the power to do so...

But the first rate, let alone the genius, is rare. Arthur was a man of real talent and achievement. He was an accomplished writer and a born teacher. More than that, he was a man of great courtesy, kindness, generosity, and tolerance. He hated bombast and cruelty. Certainly he wrote the poem 'Land of Hope and Glory'—three different versions! Is he to be condemned—least of all by lovers of Elgar's music—for that? I prefer to dwell on the concluding line of the original poem:

Strong in faith and freedom, we have crowned our King!

Or have 'faith' and 'freedom' become politically incorrect words, too?

1. Bernard Porter, 'Elgar and Empire: Music, Nationalism and the War', in *Oh, My Horses! Elgar and the Great*

- War, edited by Lewis Foreman (Rickmansworth, 2001), 133–173 (p. 133).
2. *Elgar Society Journal*, 12, no. 4 (March 2002), 167–69 (p. 168).
  3. Porter, 'Elgar and Empire', p. 134.
  4. David Newsome, *On the Edge of Paradise, A. C. Benson: The Diarist* (London, 1980), p. 86. Ensuing references and quotations from the diaries have been drawn from this source unless stated otherwise.
  5. A. C. Benson diaries, 14, pp. 18–19.
  6. Porter, 'Elgar and Empire', p. 167.
  7. See David Bury, 'Elgar, A. C. Benson and 1914', *ESJ*, 4, no. 1 (January 1985), 9–13; also *Edward Elgar: Letters of a Lifetime*, edited by Jerrold Northrop Moore (Oxford, 1990), pp. 277–83.
  8. *Letters of a Lifetime*, p. 278.
  9. See Bury, 'Elgar, A. C. Benson and 1914', p. 11 which quotes Hay's poem.
  10. *Letters of a Lifetime*, p. 279.
  11. *Letters of a Lifetime*, p. 280.
  12. Benson diaries, 147, p. 39.
  13. Michael De-la-Noy, *Elgar: The Man* (London, 1983), p. 111.
  14. *Letters of a Lifetime*, p. 283.
  15. Arthur C. Benson, *Hugh, Memoir of a Brother* (1915).
  16. C. C. Martindale, *Life of Monsignor Robert Hugh Benson* (London, 1916).
  17. David Williams, *Genesis and Exodus. A Portrait of the Benson Family* (London, 1979), p. 193.
  18. *Arthur Christopher Benson, as seen by some friends*, edited by E. H. Ryle (London, 1925).
  19. *The Diary of Arthur Christopher Benson*, edited by Percy Lubbock (London, 1927) and *Edwardian Excursions, from the Diaries of A. C. Benson 1898–1904*, edited by David Newsome (London, 1981).

DAVID BURY joined the *Elgar Society* in 1979 and was Secretary of the London Branch from 1984 to 1995. He has previously contributed a number of articles to the *JOURNAL*. His book *Elgar and the Two Mezzos* was published by Thames Publishing (London, 1984), and he contributed the essay 'Ludwig Wüllner and the Westminster Gerontius' to *Elgar Editions'* anthology *The Best of Me — A Gerontius Centenary Companion* (Rickmansworth, 1999). He is currently working on a presentation 'Elgar, A. C. Benson and the Coronation Ode', which may in due course also be published.

Quotations from the diaries of Arthur Benson are made by kind permission of the Master and Fellows of Magdalene College, Cambridge. The author is also personally grateful to Mrs A. Fitzsimons, Assistant Librarian of the Pepys Library, Magdalene College for much kindness and help.





*Charles Sanford Terry: a photograph which originally appeared in the Musical Times, 1 June 1913.  
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## CHARLES SANFORD TERRY AND THE ELGAR VIOLIN CONCERTO

Alison I. Shiel

*In her second article on the friendship between Elgar and Charles Sanford Terry (eminent Bach scholar and Professor of History at Aberdeen University), the author presents Terry's illuminating documentary record of Elgar's Violin Concerto contained in a volume now in the British Library (Add. 62000). This first-proof copy of the full score, given to Terry by Elgar, has bound with it a number of other significant items relating to the Concerto, including unpublished letters from Elgar, and Terry's own type-written observations on the work. These 'personal' documents reveal first-hand the Concerto's progress, from its inception through the early performances, conveying a clear sense of the pride Terry took in his connection with the work and the value he placed on his relationship with the composer. (Unless otherwise stated, all quotations are taken from the British Library volume.)*

Since its first performance in 1910, much scholarly energy has been expended on the enigmatic (that word again) nature of certain aspects of Elgar's Violin Concerto. The significance of the Spanish dedication—'Aquí está encerrada el alma de.....' ('Herein is enshrined the soul of.....')—and of Elgar's particular attention to its grammatical correctness, have occupied many pages of learned discussion and conjecture. Likewise, the music itself has been subject to detailed analysis, much of it in terms of the gender of its various themes, the implication being that they represent some romantic entanglement of Elgar's, past or present. (It was Ernest Newman, in an article in the *Musical Times*<sup>1</sup>, who first referred to 'feminine' and 'masculine' themes in the Concerto, and Elgar did not object). The rhapsodic nature of much of the writing certainly suggests a very personal outpouring is being expressed by the composer, but it seems there are still many unanswered questions regarding the true nature of the work.

A volume now lodged in the British Library (Add. 62000) sheds some new light on the Concerto and its history. This first-proof copy of the full score, given by Elgar to his friend Charles Sanford Terry, has been bound along with letters from Sir Edward and Lady Elgar to Professor Terry, as well as various notes and observations of Terry's own. Together, all these provide a fresh approach to our understanding of the work.

Writing to Alice Stuart-Wortley on 11 October 1910, a few days after spending a weekend at Plas Gwyn, the Elgars' Hereford home, where he had helped with the proof-reading of the Concerto, Terry enthused:

*The Concerto grows more and more Dunteresque!<sup>2</sup> It is bound to create an enormous sensation on Nov. 10, and thereafter to be acclaimed the compeer of those of Beethoven and Bach. It is a glorious work, and what a glorious man he is! When I leave Plas Gwyn I always feel like a schoolboy facing the awful blackness of a return to school.<sup>3</sup>*

Lady Elgar describes that weekend in her diary:

Fri Oct 7 1910

Large parcel of proofs. E. very busy. Prof Terry arrived. A. met him after some shopping. Connelly taxi. Prof. so pleased to be here.

Sat Oct 8 1910

Stuffy day. Prof. helping E. with proofs etc... Heavy air and damp.

Sun Oct 9 1910

E, A, C & Prof to [church at] Belmont [Abbey]. Connelly car. Lovely drive afterwards... E. & Prof. comparing parts in score. Much good work.

As a token of thanks for his help, Elgar had presented the proof score to Terry ('of his goodness and to my vast pride and pleasure') on 8 October, and eventually posted it to him in Aberdeen with an amusing little note:

My dear CST,

No time to write.

Here's a sweet-looking page for you and come the besmirched pages of the whilk were despatched yesterday to N[orth] B[ritain].

Love,

Edward E

Just off home [from Queen Anne's Mansions in London to Hereford].

### **Kreisler, Reed and the Concerto**

Elgar had composed the Violin Concerto with Fritz Kreisler, the famous Austrian violinist, in mind. Kreisler had more or less issued an open invitation to Elgar in the *Hereford Times* on 7 October 1905:

If you want to know whom I consider to be the greatest living composer, I say without hesitation, Elgar... I place him on an equal footing with my idols, Beethoven and Brahms. He is of the same aristocratic family. His invention, his orchestration, his harmony, his grandeur, it is wonderful. And it is all pure, unaffected music. I wish Elgar would write something for the violin. He could do so, and it would certainly be something effective.<sup>4</sup>

Elgar started on some sketches for the Concerto almost immediately, but it was to be a few more years before he started to work on it seriously. By August 1909 Lady Elgar was writing in her diary that her husband was 'possessed with his music for the Violin Concerto' and in January 1910 that he was 'v. busy with Concerto'. Billy Reed (who had been a founder member of the London Symphony Orchestra and was to become its leader in 1912) was much involved in the work's progress, being called upon by Elgar to try out various violin passages, and commenting that Elgar 'was untiring in his efforts to explore all the possibilities in his music, and bubbling over with enthusiasm when the quest was ended and he had found what he had been seeking.'<sup>5</sup>

Professor Terry had been aware of the Concerto's existence since Elgar had played him the opening theme of the work at Frank Schuster's house on 7 January 1909. On 5 August 1910, Elgar had written to Terry from Plas Gwyn in triumphant mood:

My dear Terry,

It was good of you to send that cheery wire; we, deleerious deevils, were hard at it and we wanted you. This moment I have put the last note to the last movement in the full score & have lit a pipe! Would you were here to join in. We shall play through the Concerto at Gloucester and we hope to have an uproarious time: the concerto is (aiblins!) a Dunter. I think you will like it and I only hope something will bring you to London for the 10<sup>th</sup> Nov<sup>r</sup>. Couldn't you be turned on to represent the University at the Lord Mayor's Show the day before—or something of that sort? Shall I write to the Senate to suggest this [?]

Terry's other encounters with the work's history—being shown the completed version for violin and piano which

Elgar brought to the York Festival in July 1910; turning pages for Elgar when he and Fritz Kreisler played it in the boardroom of Novello on 2 September 1910; and attending the private performances given by both Billy Reed and Kreisler during the Three Choirs Festival at Gloucester that year—are all well documented elsewhere.

## Terry's View of the Dedication

In the course of four typewritten sheets dated 12 November 1910 and bound into the proof score, Terry sets out 'for the benefit of posterity... the facts and details known to me in relation to the Concerto.' These include his version of events regarding the dedication:

There are matters too sacred and intimate for even the biggest friendship to pry into, and though I was with Elgar when he was correcting the proof of the dedicatory page bound in the volume I did not attempt to obtain any solution of the mystery of the Spanish motto. At the same time I have not the slightest doubt that it is his own soul which the Concerto enshrines. In the first place it will be noticed that he originally wrote "del" before the blank, an indication that the name to follow was a masculine one. True, while I was looking over his shoulder, he wrote "de la" in red ink under "del", but thereafter he took the trouble to consult a Spanish friend, M. de Novaro [sic], as to whether the word "del" would leave the sex of the soul's possessor undetermined. Receiving an assurance that it did he retained it and deleted the "de la".

(Eagle-eyed Elgarians will have observed from the above that the dedication in the first proof reads 'del', and not 'de' as in the final version; the much-discussed five dots appear in both versions).

Terry, being a man of integrity and discretion, makes no reference whatever to any private history which the dedication or indeed the thematic material of the Concerto may have had, only remarking:

I have never heard Elgar speak of the personal note in his music except in regard to the Concerto, and of it I heard him say more than once when he was playing it over before it was produced, "I love it." Again there is a fact for which Ivor Atkins of Worcester is my authority. Speaking of the Concerto Elgar said to him one day that he would like the *Nobilmente* theme in the *Andante* inscribed on his tomb. I remember how moved he was by that passage and the violin passage which heralds it 2 bars after figure 53 [bar 50, see example 1] when Kreisler first played it to him, and how with his own left hand held as though it were supporting his own fiddle he reproduced the emotion and vibrato which Kreisler brought to the interpretation of that passage. Nor did I ever hear the Concerto played without his doing the same thing.

Ex. 1:



Regarding the 'personal' nature of the Concerto, Terry only goes so far as to say that 'there is evidence of a particular intimate relation between the Concerto and its creator', adding:

One of the most extraordinary and fascinating traits in Elgar's great and beautiful character is a curious attitude of detachment from his work, an utter absence of even the faintest trace of "side" or affectation in regard to it. To the genius, I suppose, even works of the most stupendous grandeur seem the inevitable result of forces within him. On the rare occasions when he spoke spontaneously of his work it was their construction on which he allowed himself to dwell.

Continuing on this theme, Terry goes on to record Elgar's comments on two of his other compositions:

Thus of *The Apostles* he once remarked in answer to some attempt on my part to express its message to me, "Yes, it is a large canvas, isn't it." At York in July 1910 when he conducted *King Olaf* and heard it, so he told me, for the first time performed on the scale and with the accessories he required, he amused the orchestra vastly by saying out loud to himself, "By Jove, there's good stuff in this." Afterwards he told us that the constructional skill of one of the numbers had struck him and he pointed it out to us, adding curiously, "I could write in those days!"

## The First Performance

For a number of years, Terry and the Elgars had met on a regular basis at the Leeds and Birmingham Festivals as well as at the Three Choirs. The Elgars did not make their customary visit to the Leeds Festival in 1910, but Terry was there and had written to them, no doubt regretting their absence. Elgar sent him a postcard from the Athenaeum on 16 October, obviously keen to report on the Concerto's progress:

So many thanks for your note from Leeds. Kreisler was here and plays the thing superbly now & last night I had a very pleasant 2 hours with Saffery [Terry's brother-in-law] & Legge [music critic of the *Daily Telegraph*] at the Savile [of which Terry was a member]—we wanted you.

Another letter from Elgar to Terry, dated 6 November 1910, four days before the first performance, announces that 'the concerto goes well also but much tribulation over mistakes alas!' Nevertheless, Elgar is in buoyant mood, reporting in a footnote to the same letter that he has 'made a new friend in the parish—a man who traps weasels: he knows little of concertos I find but the parish is backward'.

Freed from his academic duties at Aberdeen for a few days, Professor Terry was able to be present at the first orchestral rehearsal of the Violin Concerto, on 9 November 1910:

A few privileged people were present [Terry's own entry ticket, endorsed by Elgar—'Admit Professor Terry, Phil. rehearsal'—is among the memorabilia bound into the proof score, along with Terry's and Carice's tickets for the concert], among whom I saw Ysaÿe, old Hollmann the Cellist, Landon Ronald and others. Before rehearsing the Overture (*The Naiades*) [by Sterndale Bennett] Elgar turned at once to the Cadenza *Accompagnata*, evidently anxious to have the first opportunity of testing the effect of the novel tremolando which he has introduced there for the strings. He had originally used the word "drummed" at Figure 101 in his direction as to how the tremolando was to be secured. I ventured however to point out to him that the word "Thrummed" had a more obvious meaning and expressed exactly the idea he wished to convey. He therefore made the change. At first the orchestra, unaccustomed to such a form of accompaniment, quite failed to obtain the soft shimmer of sound which Elgar required. The tone was hard and "nailly" and observing one or two of the Double Basses actually "drumming" the strings I wondered after all whether Elgar had not been right in his choice of word. But after telling the men to put down their bows the tone became lighter and eventually at the performance the effect of the accompaniment of the Cadenza was quite extraordinary.

(A footnote in the published full score gives this instruction: 'The pizz. tremolando should be "thrummed" with the soft part of three or four fingers across the strings.')

Terry records that this first rehearsal 'roused extraordinary enthusiasm among the orchestra, who rose and cheered Elgar and Kreisler at the end of it.' After the morning rehearsal on 10 November, during which Elgar 'did Landon Ronald the honour to ask him to conduct the first movement so that he might hear the effect from the auditorium',

Terry lunched with Elgar at Frank Schuster's, 'and we strolled after that through the old streets round Westminster. In so far as he touched on the Concerto at all, Elgar's talk was about the fine theme at Figure 87 [bar 147, see example 2]. He described it as "ritterlich" [knightly, chivalrous], and was pleased to have secured from the orchestra the atmosphere he wanted there.'

Ex. 2:



The first performance of the Violin Concerto, which made up part of the first Philharmonic Society concert of the season, took place in the Queen's Hall on the evening of 10 November. Terry records that 'it was said that most of the musical celebrities of the country were present. For that I cannot vouch. But I can vouch for the fact, and it is I think remarkable, that in the audience were five of our Cathedral organists, namely Ivor Atkins of Worcester Cathedral, G. R. Sinclair of Hereford, Herbert Brewer of Gloucester, Dr Bennett of Lincoln, and Tertius Noble of York.' Terry reports that the Concerto was received with 'such enthusiasm as I have never before witnessed. There was a long and persistent roar of applause which was continuous for about five minutes and never lessened in volume even when Elgar and Kreisler had escaped from their journeys to the centre of the platform.' On going to the artists' room after the performance, Terry found Elgar besieged by enthusiastic friends. On similar occasions, Terry had been called upon (perhaps by Lady Elgar) to use his diplomacy and charm to fend off unwanted visitors, and this time Elgar said to him: 'You have saved me from this before, can't you do it again?'

### Kreisler's Influence on the Concerto

A week later, perhaps disturbed by a press report that 'the solo violin owes its inspiration to Kreisler', Terry sets out to show 'that such an inference is entirely erroneous.' He takes it upon himself to set out the facts on three typewritten pages, dated 17 November 1910, listing two separate kinds of alterations which were made to the original score, and giving a detailed list in each category, so that the reader is left in no doubt as to the identity of the changes made at Kreisler's suggestion. Terry explains that 'the first, most frequent, and least important, are alterations of the bowing of numerous passages', and that 'the second, least frequent, and most important, are actual alterations of the notes originally written by Elgar.' His observations show that Elgar's continuing quest for musical effectiveness was behind many of the changes; the suggestion that Kreisler encouraged Elgar to elaborate his original version of the solo violin part for the sake of virtuosic display appears largely unfounded.

Terry was unable to attend the second performance of the Concerto, which took place on 30 November 1910. However, his presence was missed, not least in the artists' room afterwards! Elgar wrote to him from London on 4 December:

My dear Terry,

We wanted you badly last Wednesday to complete our joy. "It" went well & we had the de Navarros & the Legges & Schuster to supper at Queen Anne's after—I borrowed a welkin & we made it ring till after 12. Since then—nothing—the weather has been awful. Saffery introduced a beaming smile, most welcome, into the artists' room & then we had a gathering of all sorts—& you not there to defend me: perhaps it was as well for you might have prevented an impulsive lady from kissing me(!) SHE DID &—well—I didn't mind so perhaps it's as well Scotland had ye in grip.

I have been better since that foggy evening [Lady Elgar had written in her diary that it 'poured in torrents' on the

evening of the first performance] & shall never forget the delight I had in having you there. I hope all goes well in Aberdeen & that your journey home was not too trying.

Again there is a whimsical afterthought, squeezed sideways onto the front page of the letter:

I have no news of the parish [the Elgars lived in Tupsley parish in Hereford]... though I believe I am discussed in the Bunch of Carrots & in less measure at the Whalebone, but no letters.

Lady Elgar, always appreciative of Terry's support of her husband, had already written to him in some agitation from the Ladies' Imperial Club, two days before Elgar:

Dear Prof. Terry,

I feel we have been remiss in letting you hear, what curious English, I mean in not letting you hear, oh! it is all tied up in a knot. I have only time to tell you the 2<sup>nd</sup> performance was more wonderful even than the 1<sup>st</sup>. More authority and more easy mastery, it seemed over too soon like a beautiful dream—many lovely sounds in the Orch. came out, we heard before—Tremendous enthusiasm.

The 1<sup>st</sup> movement was so splendid. Much finer performance. Excuse such a blot. E. is looking rested & well again but this weather is so depressing, rain ceases not, & so dark. Impossible to go househunting.

### A Surprising Gift

It may surprise, even astonish, readers to learn that Professor Terry gave away his 'prize possession'—the proof



*Edward Elgar photographed at Queen's Hall after the final rehearsal for the first performance of the Violin Concerto. Terry reports that 'Elgar asked the photographer to take Kreisler with him. But the Graphic man refused with a vigour that amused them both'.*

*(Reproduced by kind permission of the Elgar Birthplace Museum.)*

score and the precious memorabilia attached to it—to a friend in June 1919, introducing it as ‘a volume which has been among my treasures and for that very reason I want to count among yours henceforth...’ The recipient of Terry’s gift was Sir John Marnoch, a keen amateur musician, Professor of Surgery at Aberdeen University, and, as such, a colleague of Terry’s. One can only speculate that Terry was at this time deeply indebted to Professor Marnoch in some way, possibly in relation to his own health. The volume is bound in white leather with ‘JM from CST June 4 1919’ embossed in gold on the cover, and is presented ‘with the deep and heartfelt gratitude’ of Terry and his wife.

This was no casual give-away, and the fact that he parted with such a precious and valuable possession remains somewhat curious. What might Elgar have thought, had he known? Whatever the circumstances, Terry’s association with the Violin Concerto was to continue until virtually the end of his life. As late as January 1935, a year after Elgar’s death and less than two years before his own, Terry responded to an article in *The Times*<sup>6</sup> entitled ‘Talking of Elgar: More Knowledge Wanted’. The subject of the article is the New Year number of *Music and Letters*<sup>7</sup>, which ‘memorialises Elgar with essays by half-a-dozen musicians and critics.’ Singled out for praise is Billy Reed’s contribution, describing the help he gave to Elgar in the writing of the solo violin part of the Violin Concerto. The writer of the article in *The Times* refers to the changes which Kreisler may have made to the original score in the course of rehearsals, suggesting that such information should be stored ‘in some repository of recollection which may be drawn on when the time comes to formulate a more balanced estimate of the artist than the present generation can hope to achieve.’

Professor Terry wrote immediately to *The Times*:

...Elgar gave me the proofs of the full score of the concerto. It is heavily annotated with corrections in ink and pencil. A few months ago I had the opportunity to show the score to Kreisler, who at once identified the alterations made at his suggestion. As the writer of your article urges that information of this character should be put on record “in some repository of recollection” I venture to obey this injunction.<sup>8</sup>

The date on which the now elderly Professor Terry was able to show the score to Kreisler is revealed in a rather touching piece of evidence. As part of a Scottish tour, Kreisler gave a concert in Aberdeen in March 1934, and on the same day he inscribed the volume ‘In kind remembrance of Fritz Kreisler, March 22, 1934’ under a photo of himself which Terry had pasted into the book along with other items after the first performance in 1910. One can only imagine the shared memories which this reunion brought back for them. It was probably their last meeting.

Further research may reveal the circumstances under which the score was again in Terry’s possession. Sir John Marnoch had died in 1932, and it is likely that Lady Marnoch, recognising the volume’s importance, returned it to Professor Terry at that stage. Its whereabouts until it was purchased for the British Library in 1981 are unknown.

Professor Terry’s reaction to the article in *The Times* suggests that, to the very end of his life, he identified very much with the Violin Concerto and retained truly fond memories of the work and its composer. His foresight in having Elgar’s gift of the proof score bound along with memorabilia and correspondence is typical of the man, meticulous as he was in ordering his own research material and records. In the years since the Violin Concerto was composed, Terry had gone on to become the leading British Bach scholar of his day, with a large number of important publications. A paragraph in Terry’s prefatory letter to Sir John Marnoch reveals his own thoughts on the importance of the material on which this article is based:

As it stands the volume is a real historical document: the information it contains has never been published and is unknown outside a narrow circle, many of whom have already forgotten much of it, no doubt! Some day it will have to be recorded.

Professor Terry's hope has now been fulfilled, and a little more added to the story of Elgar's Violin Concerto.

1. *Musical Times*, 1 October 1910, pp. 631–34.
2. Elgar himself described the Concerto as a 'Dunter' (referring perhaps to the impact he expected the work to make) in a letter to Terry dated 5 August 1910. See p. 255.
3. HWRO 705:445 parcel 22 (i) 7916.
4. Quoted in Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 468–69.
5. W. H. Reed, *Elgar As I Knew Him* (London, 1936, repr. 1973), p. 29.
6. *The Times*, 5 January 1935, p. 8.
7. *Music and Letters*, 16, (1935).
8. *The Times*, 9 January 1935, p. 11.

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## BOOK REVIEWS



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### **The English Musical Renaissance and the Press 1850-1914: Watchmen of Music** by Meirion Hughes

This is an important and pioneering study, breaking substantially new ground, but it is not without its idiosyncrasies, and I can well imagine the Elgar chapter may cause some readers a little agitation. In his introduction, the author notes that, in the context of the nineteenth century, music criticism has 'been an area of scholarly neglect'. Apart from the writings of George Bernard Shaw, in itself a special case, he draws our attention to the vast quantity of musical journalism from this time, 'much of it displaying a richness and diversity of critical perspective'. He continues, 'the revival of English music in the second half of the nineteenth century could not have taken place without the support of journalists' and argues 'that it was no accident that the "renaissance" in national music occurred at the same time when the press experienced unprecedented expansion'. He goes on to analyse the process by which the majority of music writers and critics supported and projected the cause of English music.

In his previous book, *The English Musical Renaissance 1840-1940* (written jointly with historian Robert Stradling), Hughes uses the literary shorthand of a descriptive phrase to refer to the object of the study. In that book the phrase 'the goodly house' is adopted 'not simply as a synonym for the Musical Renaissance but as a matrix metaphorical tool of our argument'. Here Hughes does it again, this time taking 'watchmen of music' from a review by Fuller-Maitland. He goes on, 'although he [Fuller-Maitland] did not expand the idea into a full-fledged metaphor, in this study I have extended it to provide a powerful trope for the crucial role that music journalists played in creating an "English Musical Renaissance".' My reservations about this methodology revolve about the added meaning that the repeated use of such a phrase tends to engender in the reader, once the explanation of the stratagem has been forgotten, if indeed ever read. Am I imagining things, or do you feel with me the negative overtones in using such a construct? One tends to hear a snide tone of voice, whether the author intended it or not.

One only has to see any scrapbook of musical reviews from the period 1880 to 1914 to appreciate the remarkable scale of such reviewing. Hughes draws our attention to the Elgar press cuttings books at Broadheath, noting that the 'range of the material is breathtaking' and rather giving us the impression this was something special, something perhaps engineered by Elgar. While it may be possible to regard the Elgar cuttings books as, in Hughes's words, 'a balance-sheet of the successes and failures of the composer's career', such coverage was the norm at the time, indicative of the richness of the musicological seam Hughes is mining. As a parallel we might take the example of Delius's now celebrated St James's Hall concert in 1899—a whole evening's concert by a totally unknown composer—we find on that occasion there were twenty-five reviews. So Elgar's coverage was in no way unusual. Furthermore, we need to remember how wide a spread of provincial papers reviewed events in London, while the London papers did the reverse. So coverage was nation-wide. This was the propitious critical and cultural soil into which Elgar was able to launch himself.

The book falls into two parts, first some one hundred pages on four leading reviewing outlets, *The Times*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Athenaeum*, and *Musical Times*, together with their principal music critics, eighteen names in all. The second discusses just three composers, Sullivan, Parry, and Elgar, who Hughes tells us suggested themselves from his wide reading of reviews. In a thirty-four-page appendix he lists first performances by twenty-eight composers, citing their principal reviews, though many are not extensively discussed in the text. This is disappointing; it would have been most instructive to have Hughes's analysis of a wider constituency.

Hughes is good on the critics, and has clearly laboured mightily in the newspaper library. He quotes extensively, and it is clear an anthology of some of these criticisms would be well worthwhile. Some of the critics are nicely characterised. Take Prout, the *Athenaeum* critic, best remembered as a pedantic pedagogue, though a composer himself. Prout 'had little enthusiasm for the music of Cowen, and still less for that of Parry and Stanford' (p. 78), and, as Hughes remarks, 'a definite note of professional envy can be heard in these reviews... his notes on new English music frequently gave the impression he was marking the efforts of his students'. Hughes is particularly good on Henry Frost, long forgotten, but for twenty years a critic on the *Daily Telegraph*, at first under Prout, later on his own account. It is interesting to see Frost's sympathetic views on the emerging British music of the time, supporting Stanford and Parry, Cowen, and most of all, Elgar. Indeed, he was clearly one of Elgar's notable early champions.

However, in discussing Frost's reception of less well-remembered scores, I sometimes wish Hughes had made his own assessment of the music to set the commentary in context. Thus, he writes (as if surprised): 'when [Frederick] Cliffe, a Professor of Piano at the RCM, had his *Symphony No. 1* premiered, Frost declared that it had a "depth of expression and a command of orchestral colour rarely to be met with save in the works of the greatest masters"'—one assumes Hughes is demonstrating Frost's propensity to over-estimate the objects of his championship. Yet the revival of this symphony by Christopher Fifield a couple of years ago was a case of a significant work of its time at last being recognised, making for a much more interesting discussion as to why the interloper Cliffe, although widely recognised by the press at the time, was not acknowledged by any of his colleagues at the RCM.

The Elgar chapter presents us with a portrait of a very knowing subject ruthlessly and expertly manipulating the press to present a favourable image of himself. Hughes makes no bones about it, writing 'Elgar was ahead of his time in using the press to market his "persona" and to construct an image of himself which was both flattering and profitable... No other musician of the day took such an interest in the reception of his music nor went to the same lengths to influence the way journalists reported his life and music.' In support of this view Hughes cites 'the fifteen volumes of press clippings held at the Elgar birthplace'. Hmm... I wonder if this apparently twentieth-century manipulation of the press was instigated by Elgar, or by those about him—or, indeed, whether it was quite as coldly planned as it seems. Try as I might, I can't find any letters where Elgar actually seems to be planning such promotional activity. If manipulation, who was the source of it? Could it have been Lady Elgar, or Jaeger and his colleagues at Novello? Yet, as a longstanding collector, I can report that it is certainly true there are far more postcard portraits of Elgar from the Edwardian period than of almost any other musician of the time—the only two others to come near are Clara Butt and Nikisch.

Hughes is generous in his assessment of Novello. Writing about the *Musical Times*, their house journal, he notes: 'Novello's core business was music publishing and what was good for music was good for the firm. Yet the publishers promoted new English music without any realistic hope of a profitable return—for at least many years; as Michael Hurd has pointed out, even Elgar's music did not show a clear profit until the 1960s. In this respect, the Novello company can be seen as one of the greater patrons of English Musical Renaissance...'. A study of Novello's print runs, now possible from the Novello business archives in the British Library, might suggest a less generous reading, of a company looking for big sales but not always picking a winner. Like the publisher of novels who once invited management consultants to his business, only to be told: 'you published fifty novels last year, of which only three were best sellers; we recommend you should only publish the three best sellers'. First pick your best sellers.

Clearly Novello were looking for a killing when they paid a fortune for the rights in Gounod's *Mors et Vita* in 1885, with an opening print run of ten thousand copies, a work that does not seem to have been extensively reprinted. But they certainly had best sellers in Stanford's *Revenge*, Parry's *Blest Pair of Sirens*, and Coleridge-Taylor's *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*, the latter two selling over fifty thousand and one hundred and forty-six thousand vocal scores respectively by the outbreak of the First World War. And even from an earlier period of British music there were works that remained favourites during the nineteenth century, a good example being J. F. Barnett's *The Ancient Mariner*, which appeared in 1867 and had forty-three thousand copies of the vocal score in print by the end of the century, but Hughes does not discuss it. It seems probable that Novello's sudden decision in the late 1890s to engrave full scores and parts of works as varied as Frederick Cliffe's First Symphony and Stanford's Third and Fourth, was driven by two impulses—they felt British music was suddenly an established line that could be exploited, and multiple copies were need for performances. It was their bad luck that between 1900 and 1914 there was the development of an unprecedented new generation, which after the scarcely imagined annihilation of the Great War meant that most British nineteenth-century music was dead for the foreseeable future. What was not foreseen was that its day would come again.

My disappointment with the approach adopted in this study is that the author only rarely sets his discussions in the context of the actual music and how we should assess it today. With recordings now available of many of the works discussed, including such things as Stanford's *Requiem* and Parry's *Job*, as well as the whole of Elgar, to discuss their reception solely in the assessments of their time is an unnecessary limitation. Possibly the prime example where this would have resulted in a much better-balanced account is Sullivan's *The Golden Legend*. The revival of this long unheard high point of the late Victorian musical scene came with the centenary performance conducted with considerable brilliance by Sir Charles Mackerras at Leeds in 1986. It was a revelation—at last one could understand why it was so well received at Leeds in 1886. But Hughes uses it as a stick to beat Sullivan, on the grounds of its critical failure in Germany in 1887: 'a disaster for Sullivan but... also a catastrophe for English music'. Yet if one studies the Novello ledgers, it is clear it was one of their best sellers for the next twenty years, and must have been one of the most performed new extended English works, both in England and the Empire.

As in the earlier book, one has to compliment Hughes on the range of his reading (this was originally a PhD thesis). The detailed sources he has uncovered, not so far treated by

other commentators, are an object lesson, and doubtless an example for future students of Victorian music. He is also an avid BBC listener, and various broadcast sources are cited, which makes it all the more strange that he does not try to embrace his own assessment of the music as a measure of this history of the reception and critical commentary of the time. This is clearly a study which is going to be extensively cited in the years to come.

Lewis Foreman

### **Offertoire (Andante Religioso)**

by Edward Elgar

The *Offertoire* for violin and piano was written in 1893 when, following his failure to establish himself in London, Elgar had reluctantly resumed his violin teaching practice in Worcestershire. During the preceding decade or so he had composed a considerable number of short pieces for violin and piano, and beginning with his opus 1, the Romance in E minor, had managed to get some half a dozen of them published, including the phenomenally successful *Salut d'amour* in 1889. Why he held back the *Offertoire*, or failed to find a publisher at that time is unclear. Elgar seems to have told Troyte Griffith that it was written in an attempt to encourage his brother Frank to strive for recognition as a composer. The reason for the publication of the *Offertoire* under a pseudonym in 1903 is equally mysterious. Perhaps Elgar, now with the reputation of England's leading composer, felt the piece was too slight to publish under his own name. But only two years earlier he had allowed the *May Song*, which is no more substantial, to be published; and in later years he was to publish other small pieces of no greater pretensions. The explanation may lie hidden in the title page of the piece. In view of Elgar's delight in ciphers, anagrams and other varieties of word play, it seems possible that the name and residence of the improbable dedicatee Serge Derval of Anvers (Antwerp) and the name of the supposed composer Gustav Francke conceal some sort of message (other than the obvious reference to his brother Frank).

The *Offertoire* is a straightforward piece of moderate difficulty with, as Robert Anderson aptly remarks (*Elgar*, p. 392), 'a climax almost too passionate for its context but not untypical of Elgar in religious mood.' As with most of Elgar's published violin music the performance instructions and bowing are meticulous, though in this case he provided fewer fingerings than usual.

Clive Brown

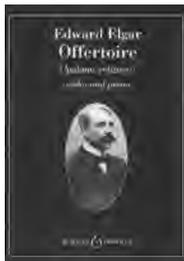
## **CD REVIEWS**

### **Sacred and Profane — Part-songs**

*Go, Song of Mine*, op 57; *There is Sweet Music*, op. 53, no. 1; *Love's Tempest*, op. 73, no. 1. With music by Britten, Vaughan Williams, Delius and Stanford.

RIAS-Kammerchor conducted by Marcus Creed

It's good to have some encouragement in these days of doom and gloom for classical music on record. Last year I reviewed a recording of the *Greek Anthology* songs sung by a Danish Choir (JOURNAL, November 2001), and now here is one of the top German choirs singing three of Elgar's greatest part-songs in an all-English programme. The thirty-



Boosey & Hawkes  
(1903, repr. 2002).  
ISMN: M060114168.  
£6.99

eight-strong RIAS Chamber Choir produces a wonderful, full-bodied sound, with a fine top line (may be a little too piercing on occasions) and good quality voices throughout. The tenor repeat of the opening line in *Go, Song of Mine* is often cruelly revealing of singers' limitations, but here it is firm and pure. However, this is the least successful of their Elgar songs. It is slower than all other recorded versions apart from Donald Hunt on Hyperion, and the assertive nature of the words demands closer attention to Elgar's metronome markings. The other two are better; *Love's Tempest* has a truly stormy ending, and the German singers really capture the languid feel of Tennyson's *Lotos Eaters* in *There is Sweet Music*, without being too slow, strangely enough (they are faster than Boult and the BBC Singers, for example).

Britten provides the two most substantial works on the disc—the setting of eight medieval lyrics, *Sacred and Profane*, from the end of his life, and the *Hymn to St Cecilia* written during the war years. Both works show his sureness of touch in unaccompanied writing, and the choir sings them with great assurance, even coping with the double difficulty of medieval English in *Sacred and Profane*. The only slight criticism of the singers' English is the pronunciation of 'the' in which the 'e' is sung as in 'bed', rather than as the neutral English vowel; but this is a very minor flaw. Vaughan Williams' *Three Shakespeare Songs*, Delius's two unaccompanied part-songs, and Stanford's *The Bluebird* complete an outstanding disc. With recent performances of *King Olaf* and *The Kingdom* in Germany, can Elgar's star finally be rising there?

Geoffrey Hodgkins

### Elgar/Payne Symphony No. 3

London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sir Colin Davis

After my disappointment with Sir Colin's account of the Second Symphony (LSO 0018, reviewed in the July JOURNAL) I was somewhat apprehensive about listening to this new disc, which completes his 'set' of recordings of the symphonies. I respect the opinions of those who balk at that last remark, but they must concede that for a work to receive three recordings within four years of its première is something quite remarkable. It is unlikely that world-renowned conductors would continue to take up Anthony Payne's 'realisation', let alone record it, if it was musically second-rate.

Each of the three recordings is first-class, and I would not be without any of them. Andrew Davis laid down the 'marker' in 1998, and Paul Daniel's Naxos version followed two years later. But worthy as those two are, they are now eclipsed by Colin Davis's version. I found it totally compelling from first note to last: Davis seems to have brought out a valedictory element in the piece, particularly in the last movement, that I found intensely moving. The dying away of the final gong-stroke leaves a highly-charged atmosphere, and I was grateful that the applause was not recorded (it was after the First Symphony, but the nature of its ending makes it virtually impossible for the audience not to begin to applaud immediately).

The difference between this recording and its predecessor is evident from the first few bars. Whereas the Second Symphony never really took off, here Sir Colin rips into the opening C minor chords with an intensity which is almost barbaric. There is no room for



Harmonia Mundi  
HMC 901734

sentiment; the *cantabile* second subject at bar 27 (Vera Hockman's theme) is not allowed to linger, and Sir Colin actually *accelerates* into the *Largamente* at bar 48. It is not surprising that this movement is faster than the other two recorded versions, yet there is no feeling of rush, just passion and turbulence. The Scherzo is perhaps the weakest of the four movements, the opening quaver figure for violins is not quite impish or incisive enough. But this is only relative—there is so much to admire, especially some lovely *pianissimo* string playing in the central section.

The Adagio Solenne third movement is slightly longer than Andrew Davis or Daniel, but it matters not; Sir Colin wrings out even more feeling than his predecessors. The anguish communicated in passages such as those following bars 45 and 76 is beautifully realised and quite heart-rending. In reviewing Davis's First Symphony I mentioned the similarity to Barbirolli at his best—no mean compliment—and once again, in this movement in particular, the Barbirollian mood is inescapable. (I would be interested to hear from Barbirolli experts whether they agree with me about this.) When I first heard Payne's realisation I found this movement a little too long, but played like this, I would not be without a single bar. Incidentally, has anyone noticed the similarity between the chromatic passages for four muted horns at bars 32 and 90, for instance, and parts of the 'Golgotha' section of *The Apostles*?

For a recording from a live performance, the disc is outstanding; no audience participation to speak of, and a clear, full-bodied orchestral sound, beautifully balanced (the important percussion parts crystal clear). Do not think twice about buying this; it is worth every penny of its ridiculously low price.

Geoffrey Hodgkins



LSO Live  
LSO 0019

## Elgar and the English Choral Tradition

Elgar, *With Proud Thanksgiving*; Frank Bridge, *A Prayer*;  
Herbert Howells, *Sine Nomine*; Sir George Dyson, *The Blacksmiths*; Havergal Brian,  
*Psalm 23*; Henry Purcell arr. Elgar, Motet, *Jehova, quam multi sunt hostes mei*.  
Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Choir and Orchestra  
conducted by Douglas Bostock

To boast an Elgar world première recording is becoming increasingly difficult, but here are two! *With Proud Thanksgiving*—fashioned from *For The Fallen*, the third movement of *The Spirit of England*—was to be performed at the unveiling of Lutyens' Cenotaph in Whitehall on 11 November 1920. The vocal score was published in May 1920, so presumably Elgar worked on it earlier in the year, before his wife's death in April.

There are radical changes from the piece we know. It opens with a drum roll and brass chords—Elgar was no doubt mindful of the intended open-air performance here—and the orchestral introduction is curtailed. The chorus commences loud rather than *piano*, there is no soloist, and the quick march to the words 'They went with songs to battle' is omitted; thus after the first two verses, which are subtly altered, the music quickly reaches 'They shall grow not old'. Elgar's new music here is simpler than the earlier setting, for the change of key—from E minor to major—provides solace and is less grief-stricken. Perhaps the peroration is slightly less resplendent than that in *For the Fallen*, but this is a moving recension of Elgar's finest wartime choral work.

The première, with military band, did not take place at the Cenotaph. Elgar scored the work for full orchestra—again using the opportunity to alter the texture and colouring from the original—and it was this version which was first heard on 7 May 1921. It is given a fine, strong performance here, with a prominent organ part, and though a short occasional work—when was it last performed?—every Elgarian will wish to acquire this CD.

Frank Bridge's *A Prayer*, being a setting of Thomas à Kempis's meditation on inner peace, is beautifully played and sung. Howells' effective *Sine Nomine* was first heard at the Gloucester Three Choirs Festival in 1922, and according to the composer the patient audience had to endure it while waiting 'for the brilliant certainties of *Elijah*.' Bliss's *Colour Symphony* was another festival novelty; after its performance the trumpeter J. J. Solomon commented to Howells: 'Well, young man, after the Symphony this morning, even *Sine Nomine* seems tolerable.' This is a striking work which is reminiscent of Nielsen's Third Symphony in its use of wordless soprano and tenor soloists, and RVW's *Pastoral Symphony*. It is a splendid piece and the conviction of this performance is one of the highlights of this disc.

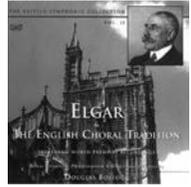
George Dyson's *The Blacksmiths* has appeared on disc before, but in a two piano version. A vocal score and the composer's manuscript full score were used here to reconstruct the full orchestral parts. It is a grand, exciting piece, well worth reviving. Havergal Brian's 1901 setting of Psalm 23 is another fine discovery. It is a big piece, full of youthful enthusiasm, and again receives a spirited performance from Bostock and his players.

Finally, Elgar's orchestration of the Purcell motet, written for the 1929 Worcester Festival, will be new to most Elgarians. Donald Hunt prepared the performing edition recorded here and, as usual, whenever Elgar weaves his orchestral web around other composers' music, he succeeds in transforming the original piece, imbuing it with his own peculiar

melancholy and grandeur. So he does here, and the joining of hands of these two great English composers produces something precious, haunting and unique.

This is a most enterprising, innovative, and original disc. Only the Bridge and the Dyson works have been recorded before, and this survey of little known early twentieth-century choral music should do much to rehabilitate these fine pieces. For Elgarians its appeal is obvious, but the riches in the other works also make this a highly recommended recording.

Kevin Mitchell



Classico  
CLASSCD456

### **Great Violinists — Sammons: Elgar and Delius Concertos**

Albert Sammons (violin)

Elgar, Violin Concerto in B minor, op. 61 (recorded 1929)

New Queen's Hall Orchestra conducted by Sir Henry Wood

Delius, Violin Concerto (recorded 1944)

Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Malcolm Sargent

This performance of Elgar's Violin Concerto is notable for having been the first complete version issued on records, appearing from the Columbia company three years before the celebrated recording by Yehudi Menuhin and the composer on HMV. (Sammons and Wood had in fact combined to produce a greatly abridged recording for Columbia in 1916—before the advent of electrical recording—confined to four twelve-inch 78rpm disc sides; a transfer of these records may be included in a future edition of *Elgar's Interpreters on Record*.) It had been the ambition of HMV to record the work under the composer's direction with Fritz Kreisler—its dedicatee and first performer—as soloist, but prevarication on Kreisler's part (notwithstanding his declared admiration for the work) led to the substitution of the young Menuhin, then in his teens and attracting widespread acclaim (not least from Elgar himself).

Although Fred Gaisberg of HMV was enthusiastic in his advocacy of Menuhin as soloist, it is well worth recalling his observation in his book *Music on Record* (London, 1948) that there already existed 'a magnificent recording by Albert Sammons whose authority and interpretation of this greatest English work for the violin will never be bettered...'

Contractual loyalties ruled out the employment of Sammons and Elgar together on record, although they had joined forces for the work in concert many times, and Elgar was known to admire the artistry of Sammons, who had taken part in the premières of all his chamber works. The obvious choice of conductor for Columbia was Sir Henry Wood, who had also conducted the Concerto with Sammons on numerous occasions and likewise held him in high esteem.

With regard to the performance nothing need be added to Gaisberg's comments from the 'opposite corner', notwithstanding many fine recordings that have been added to the catalogues in subsequent years. The cachet will doubtless always remain with the Menuhin performance because of the composer's direction as well as the remarkable application of the youthful soloist. Here, on the other hand, is a wonderfully assured reading from performers who knew the composer as well as the work: Sammons playing with effortless virtuosity, and Wood directing with great panache and authority, as befitted a foremost conductor of the day.

This reissue is the fourth to appear on CD and is the most satisfactory transfer of the original discs to that medium to have appeared so far. It is issued, furthermore, in the Naxos Historical series, so is available at 'super-budget' price. The coupling, Sammons' recording of the Delius Concerto, is also superior technically to the transfer on offer from Testament, although Delians may be enticed by other items available on that disc (notably the Moiseiwitsch recording of the Piano Concerto).

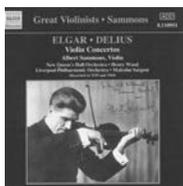
Pearl transferred the Elgar Concerto with Sammons twice. Their first (GEMM 9496) coupled it with the Sammons/Murdoch performance of the Violin Sonata, but this has been deleted and a reissue has coupled the Violin Concerto with Squire's recording of the Cello Concerto together with Harty's performance of *Dream Children*. I have not heard either of these transfers, but by all accounts the second issue is inferior to the first in many respects and cannot be recommended. (The review in *Gramophone* for September 1999 goes into gruesome detail.) This replacement is a pity because it has deprived us of a worthy performance of the Violin Sonata. However, in these days of reissues *ad nauseam* it is hardly likely to remain in limbo for long!

Somewhere between the extremes of Pearl and Naxos may be placed the Avid Records issue I reviewed in the JOURNAL in November 1998. Its coupling with the Casals recording of the Cello Concerto with Boult may be a deciding factor for some. This disc sells at budget price, so is slightly more expensive than the Naxos.

The notes accompanying the Naxos issue include some illuminating remarks by Mark Obert-Thorn who produced it, and an excellent résumé of Sammons' artistic life from Tully Potter. He concludes by saying, 'Few recordings of a late romantic violin concerto have come near this one and none has surpassed it.' I am confident few will disagree.

It is understood other transfers of both concertos have been made by Dutton Laboratories and are expected to be released, similarly coupled, in time for Christmas.

David Michell



Naxos 8.110951

### Great Violinists — Menuhin: Schumann and Dvořák Concertos

Yehudi Menuhin (violin)

Robert Schumann, Violin Concerto in D minor

Philharmonic Symphony of New York conducted by John Barbirolli

Antonín Dvořák, Violin Concerto in A minor, op. 53

Orchestra of the Paris Conservatoire conducted by George Enescu

For those of us who love the artistry of our former President this disc is a winner. Not only are these two works given fine performances, but to be able to hear Menuhin playing them with his unique blend of commitment, spontaneity, and insight is a great bonus because he did not subsequently re-record either work. The Schumann recording has even more historical importance as it followed live performances in the USA by Menuhin using the original MS score; previous performances and recordings in Europe had been based on cut and edited versions.

The history of this concerto is fascinating. In October 1853 Schumann was already experiencing symptoms of what was to be his fatal illness; but, even so, inspired by the

fine playing of his friend Joseph Joachim, he completed the work in less than a fortnight and sent it for comments. Joachim, never easy to please, was clearly not over-impressed. He suggested some amendments which the composer noted, but still felt that to publish the work as it stood would damage Schumann's reputation as a composer. He held the MS back until Schumann died in 1856, and it was eventually decided, with Clara Schumann's agreement, to postpone any question of publication for at least a further one hundred years. Not until the 1930s did a new factor emerge when a great-niece of Joachim, Jelly d'Arányi, the young violinist familiar to us for her brush with Elgar in the early 1920s, claimed to have received spirit messages from Schumann to the effect that she was to find and play the concerto. After years of difficulty, the MS was eventually located and permission for public performance was finally granted. The question of who should give the first performance, to be broadcast world-wide from Berlin, then became a political hot potato, with the Nazi authorities insisting that the Jewish players d'Arányi and Menuhin should be excluded in favour of the German-born Georg Kulenkampf, who had assisted with what was regarded as necessary editing. So it was, at last, that the work was heard in public, in the presence of Hitler, on 26 November 1937, albeit in a cut and edited version.

Critical opinion of the Schumann concerto has often been adverse, with Adolf Busch, the leading German violinist at the time, opposing its resurrection, though Sir Donald Tovey thought well enough of it to champion its première. As soon as Menuhin saw a copy of the MS he recognised the potential of the work, and in this vital recording made in New York on 9 February 1938 he elegantly brought out the drama and variety of mood in what amounts to Schumann's concerto swan-song. By 1938 John Barbirolli was very experienced in accompanying major recording soloists, and the contribution of the Philharmonic Symphony under his direction is exhilarating, giving Menuhin superb support. The exemplary transfers by the celebrated blind audio-producer Ward Marston do full justice both to the soloist's performance and the overall sound.

Second on the disc comes the Dvořák Concerto, and for this 1936 Paris recording the conductor was George Enescu, who just three years earlier had enthusiastically prepared the orchestra for the first French performance of Elgar's Violin Concerto, with Menuhin as soloist and the composer conducting. In assessing the performance of the Dvořák, it seems strange that Tully Potter, the writer of the otherwise excellent notes for this CD, while acknowledging the soloist's 'lovely sound', claims neither Menuhin nor his teacher Enescu bring anything special to the music. This judgment seems a little harsh. Maybe Enescu, who was never happy in the recording studio and admired more for his consummate musicianship than as a showman on the podium, was on the day more intent on providing a good accompaniment than in stamping his considerable authority on the performance. Certainly the recording of the orchestra does at times sound backward and dull. Yet, notwithstanding these points, the twenty-year-old Menuhin's characterful playing, well caught by the engineers, is totally committed throughout, and though this may not rank as one of his very finest concerto performances, it is still well worth hearing and very enjoyable. At its modest price I can heartily recommend this Naxos issue.

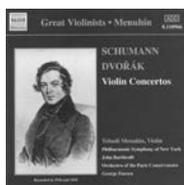
Trevor Fenemore-Jones

## **BBC Legends: Barbirolli**

The British National Anthem; Alan Rawsthorne, *Street Corner Overture*; Ralph Vaughan Williams, *Symphony No. 8 in D minor*; Arnold Bax, *Oboe Quintet* (arr. Barbirolli); Frederick Delius, *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring*; William Walton, *Crown Imperial*; Edward Elgar, 'Land of Hope and Glory'.

Kathleen Ferrier (contralto), Evelyn Rothwell (oboe), Hallé Choir and Orchestra conducted by Sir John Barbirolli

You may wonder why this CD appears here, when only four of the seventy-three minutes of the total playing time are devoted to the *raison d'être* of this Society. But let's savour the moment and, like any child, save the best morsel on the plate to last. Barbirolli is by now deserving of the epithet 'legend'. As a student in Manchester in the second half of the 60s, I attended as many of his rehearsals and concerts as I could. It was accepted without question that each concert began with the National Anthem. After the swiftly confident, straight-as-an-arrow stride through the strings of leader Martin Milner, there would appear the diminutive figure of Barbirolli, weaving rather unsteadily, as if no path lay before him, arms and hands at shoulder height, baton held tenuously. Having achieved the goal of the podium, he would point it threateningly at the timpanist who fired back with a loud *fortepiano* roll. Barbirolli then faced the audience, conducting like Napoleon, with one arm stuck into his right side under his tailcoat. Only as the horns entered halfway through with their rising fanfare would he abandon the audience, as if disgusted that yet again no-one had joined in the singing, and turn to conduct his beloved Hallé Orchestra. Well, you can relive all that here, for that is exactly how the disc starts, and sing along in your living rooms without fear of retribution (he did have an intimidating stare).



Naxos 8.110966

Of the remaining works, recorded at various venues between 1967 and 1969, I would single out the jolly Rawsthorne overture, VW's lesser-known but highly enjoyable and imaginative Eighth Symphony (dedicated to 'Glorious John' himself) with its atmospheric introduction featuring vibraphone and solo trumpet, and Barbirolli's own masterly arrangement (approved by Bax) of the Oboe Quintet made for his wife, who plays it here. But now to those final four minutes, which represent a unique discovery, thanks to the Barbirolli Society. On Friday 16 November 1951, the Free Trade Hall was reopened a full six years after the end of the Second World War, and a short celebratory concert was given to mark the occasion. Kathleen Ferrier noted in her diary, 'Opening of Free Trade Hall. Sang *Land of Hope and Glory*. The Queen there. Marvellous day'. Despite the problems evidently encountered in re-mastering from this rare shellac disc, the result is indeed 'marvellous'. Norman Shrapnel, writing at the time in the *Manchester Guardian*, said 'it was fine and it was right, but lovers of the tune will fear that never again can they hope to hear it in such glory. There were few dry eyes, as notices of such events used to say'. Had the audience and performers known what Ferrier (and Barbirolli, who was a close confidant) knew, that six months before she had been diagnosed with the cancer which would kill her two years later, the tears would have flowed more copiously still. It's the way she moves effortlessly and radiantly with creamy tone from the introductory lines into the word 'Land' which should make your eyes smart. The quality of the letter L is in itself a lesson to singers in vocalisation and enunciation. Ferrier never 'degenerated into that queer and almost bovine monstrosity so beloved of our grandfathers and grandmothers, the Oratorio Contralto', to quote Barbirolli himself. This is a track which in itself is worth its weight in gold.

Christopher Fifield

## **Violin Concerto in B minor, Op. 61**

Kennedy (violin), London Philharmonic Orchestra  
conducted by Vernon Handley

During October this year, Nigel Kennedy as 'Kennedy' was on tour with the Polish Chamber Orchestra playing his 'greatest hits', which also happens to be the title of his latest CD from the once great maker of recordings, EMI. Publicity in a recent newspaper shows our hero, face painted like an Apache Indian, biting into the body of his violin above news that his 'hits' include music from Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*, Bach, and 'Monti Czardas'. So amidst the predictable we see a new composer has emerged! Has our Monty written a concerto as large and inspired as the Elgar, or has he written a short piece as profound as Bach? We will have to wait and see.

So what do we have? Is this the end game of a young genius now sunk into reprising pieces he no longer has to rehearse? Is he simply concerned with self-publicity? Or is this an interlude which will lead to a renaissance where he will discover fresh insights into the great concertos? I have no idea, but the omens are not encouraging.

It is therefore a relief to turn once again to this remarkable recording made nearly twenty years ago. Kennedy's later recording with Sir Simon Rattle seems to be the preferred version amongst most reviewers. I do not share their enthusiasm, as I showed when I reviewed the later record when it first appeared. With this CFP reissue we have the ideal combination of a great Elgar conductor (who also happens to be a great accompanist) providing the foundation and discipline for Kennedy's joyous performance. It has nothing of the knowing self-consciousness of the later recording (though this may be slightly better recorded) and the added benefit of the LPO in its prime as the Elgar orchestra of the time. I give but one example of why I prefer this performance, and why it remains a great Elgar recording. The beginning of the third movement is lighter, less portentous than the later performance. It is also fractionally slower, which allows the music more space and the listener to hear every note—something Elgar of all composers surely intended. After the emotion of the slow movement the music seems to flow on naturally, rather than appearing with a sudden gear change.

This is one of the glories of the CFP collection of Handley's Elgar recordings, and should any member not have what was a onetime *Gramophone* recording of the year, they should not hesitate a moment before investing in one of the great bargains around at present. Oh, and it was made before we ever had to worry about 'Monti Czardas' and his music!

Andrew Neill

## **Orchestral Suites — Boult and Groves**

*The Wand of Youth* Suites nos. 1 and 2, op. 1a and 1b; *Three Bavarian Dances*, op. 27; *Polonia*, op. 76; 'Triumphal March' from *Caractacus*, op. 35; 'Meditation' from *The Light of Life*, op. 29.



BBC Legends BBCL  
4100-2

London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Adrian Boult

*Nursery Suite*; 'Funeral March' from *Grania and Diarmid*, op. 42; *Severn Suite*, op. 87; 'Meditation' from *The Light of Life*, op. 29; 'Woodland Interlude' from *Caractacus*, op. 35; Suite from *The Crown of India*, op. 66.

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra  
conducted by Sir Charles Groves

Both of these excellent mid-price CDs originally appeared on LP in the early 1970s, and now reappear in splendid sound in their new format. Boult's *Wand of Youth* suites are utterly delightful, with *tempi* judged to perfection and all their affectionate charm brought out to the full. Elgar's wonderful percussion writing is superbly caught; soft, mysterious and distant as in the March from the second suite, or brilliantly virtuosic in the *Wild Bears* movement from the same suite, taken at a cracking pace incidentally. I have always had a soft spot for *Polonia*—scored by Elgar for one of the largest orchestras he ever used and clothing those heartfelt Polish themes with rich and opulent sonorities. Boult conducts it with splendid panache, as he does the 'Triumphal March' from *Caractacus*, although I must confess I would sooner hear this piece in its original context within the cantata.

The only piece which overlaps these two discs is the 'Meditation' from *The Light of Life*. Boult takes it at a coolly flowing tempo, but I found myself preferring the Groves version. It is nearly a minute-and-a-half longer but, like Yondani Butt and the RPO on the ASV label, Groves turns it into a sombre and deeply emotional piece, wringing every drop of juice out of it, as he does the magnificent Funeral March from *Grania and Diarmid*. The three suites are all excellent; Groves' *tempi* are spacious on the whole, but the RLPO plays its heart out for him and the sound engineers have captured vivid, exciting sound. I like the orchestral version of the *Severn Suite* and I am surprised that it is not played more often. And surely nobody now thinks of the *Crown of India* suite as a 'pot-boiler'. Listen to the rapt intensity of the music of the Intermezzo, or the outrageously exuberant scoring of the *Warriors' Dance*, and revel in the sheer brazen splendour of the last movement—the orchestra's excellent brass and percussion sections vividly caught in full cry. Great fun and thoroughly recommended.

Barry Collett

### **Serenade for String Orchestra — Stuttgart RSO/Norrington**

Holst, *The Planets*, Suite for Large Orchestra, op. 32; Elgar, Serenade for String Orchestra, op. 20.

Stuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestra conducted by Roger Norrington

By my reckoning this is the seventy-seventh recording of the String Serenade from which it might be concluded that it has always been a cornerstone of the Elgar discography. In fact it did not receive its gramophone première until 1933, a result of the composer's last visit to the recording studio, and it was to be another sixteen years before a rival appeared, from Barbirolli and the Hallé, now available on EMI (CMS 566543-2). Interestingly, the next two versions came from outside Great Britain—the Aarhus Municipal Orchestra on Tono and the Heidelberg Chamber Orchestra on Da Camera Magna. Perhaps this foreign interest is not so surprising for, as the booklet of this new

issue reminds us, the first public performance of the work took place not on British soil but in Antwerp in July 1896.

After a spell during which there was great interest in Elgar interpretations from foreign conductors (albeit more often than not with British orchestras), the attention now seems to be on foreign ensembles (albeit with British conductors!). A few months ago it was the Vienna Philharmonic under Sir John Eliot Gardiner, and now the Stuttgart RSO under Sir Roger Norrington. I don't know how much Elgar the Stuttgart orchestra has played over the years—this is certainly their first Elgar recording—but then Elgar is not a composer one would immediately associate with Norrington. Apart from a *Pomp and Circumstance* No. 1 a few years ago, there has only been a First Symphony (again from Hänssler, and again with a German orchestra) which had a rather lukewarm welcome when it appeared last year, with comments about emotional reserve and lean string tone.

The sound quality of this new issue is first rate. There is a remarkable clarity, with a very clear yet focussed bass line. Every line is clearly delineated, with the violas firmly projected when they should be the focus of attention. In a way the sound is typical of the performances. One senses that everything is very tightly controlled and well manicured, but in the ultimate a touch ponderous. One is most aware of this in the Larghetto which sounds far too slow. Norrington makes a real meal of it, and yet the music-making is ultimately cold and dry-eyed. For comparison, I turned first to Christopher Warren-Green and the London Chamber Orchestra on Virgin Classics. The 1988 sound is nowhere near as clear, even though the orchestra is much smaller, and there certainly is not the rich bass sounds that Norrington and the Hänssler engineers offer us. What there is however is an inner quality that really lets the music speak. The dynamics are much more varied, and Warren-Green treats the music like a precious jewel in whose details he delights. His timing for this movement is nearly one-and-a-half minutes less than Norrington's, a remarkable difference in a movement of just over five minutes. I then turned to Barbirolli's 1949 recording. His timing for this movement is within seconds of Warren-Green's. The sound quality is obviously no match for the newcomer, but in a way that doesn't seem to matter. There is a real ebb and flow in the performance, and the orchestra really sings.



Classics for Pleasure  
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For the JOURNAL, Holst's much-recorded *Planets* Suite is merely the coupling, but of course it forms the vast majority of the disc! It has received a good number of very distinguished 'foreign' recordings over the years. As with the Elgar, every note is in place, all sort of little details emerge with striking clarity, but for me it never really catches fire. *Mars* is taken at a very steady pace, which can be very effective, but here leaves the music singularly underwhelming. (In passing, I began to wonder if a Klemperer performance of *The Planets* might not have sounded a bit like this, but perhaps that's unfair to Klemperer!) My comparison this time was Dutoit and the Montreal Orchestra. He sets a slightly faster pace, but it is much more spooky and the sound picture is really good, especially when the organ shines through the texture, something that seems to be missing from Norrington's account. The quieter movements fare much better with some very interesting touches.

I am sure these performances were enjoyable enough on the day—they are taken from concerts—but I'm not sure that they merited translation to a more permanent medium. For all that, it is good to see a German record company taking interest in British music, even if I'm not quite sure about *faszinationmusik*, the title given to the series.

### **Vivaldi Concertante Perform the Classics**

Joseph Haydn, Symphony no. 1 in D; Edward Elgar, *Sospiri*, op. 70; Edvard Grieg, *Holberg Suite*, op. 40; W. A. Mozart, Symphony no. 1 (KV 16) and *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*; Antonio Vivaldi, Prelude: *Olympiad* (Olympic Games).

Vivaldi Concertante conducted by Joseph Pilbery

This is a nice little CD, including the first symphonies of both Haydn and Mozart amongst its rarities. These are offset by two evergreens—*Eine kleine Nachtmusik* and the *Holberg Suite*—and topped with Vivaldi's prelude to the opera *The Olympic Games* and Elgar's intimate and soulful *Sospiri*, a favourite of mine.

The Haydn sets off in sprightly fashion, horns to the fore, in a big and resonant acoustic (the Henry Wood Hall, London), not too dissimilar, I am sure, to the one in which the work was first heard. It is a strongly wrought piece, just under ten minutes long, well worth repeated hearings, even if the last movement is a bit peremptory in all of its one minute forty seconds (including repeat!). *Sospiri* is a rarity, not the piece, but the instrumentation, here substituting piano for harp, with the authority of Elgar himself. I was looking forward to hearing this performance but am afraid I found it disappointing: the string orchestra recorded too prominently, and the piano chords dropped, it seems, not like delicate pearls but a little too heavily, all rather disjointed compared with the other recording I have on Nimbus (Boughton, ESO and harp). Still, I am told philatelists acquire some stamps purely for the flaw that may constitute their rarity value; in which case, and in the current climate of stock market uncertainty, this performance may be worth buying as an investment for its unique instrumentation.



EMI Classics  
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EMI Classics  
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I once listened to all of Mozart's symphonies on disc one weekend and, whilst of course enjoying the experience overall, I must say I found most of the first dozen rather uninteresting. So here was his first again. Actually, I rather enjoyed it: somewhat obvious in places, but not bad for a lad of eight or so! For the rest, the disc includes attractive performances of the *Holberg Suite* (how Elgarian are those lovely falling-seventh melodic sequences in the first movement), *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*, and a sprightly, athletic performance of a piece by the orchestra's eponymous hero.

All in all, an attractive CD, with much to commend it, not least the driving force of the Society's own member, Joseph Pilbery, who conducts. Downsides, for me, frankly, are the performance of the Elgar and the doggy picture on the CD insert (apparently 'Paganini, our No. 1 fan' and a not entirely unintentional reminiscence, I am sure, of His Master's Voice). Unfortunately, at the age of two I lost a brief but violent encounter with an Alsatian, leading to life-time caninophobia. I have tried not to let this influence my judgments, but would have preferred a fluffy kitten! Upsides are the Haydn and the generally attractive playing on the rest of the disc.

Paul Adrian Rooke

### **Victorian Concert Overtures**

George Macfarren, *Chevy Chace*; Hugo Pierson, *Romeo and Juliet*, op. 86 ; Arthur Sullivan, *Macbeth*; Frederick Corder, *Prospero*; Edward Elgar, *Froissart*, op. 19; Hubert Parry, *Overture to an Unwritten Tragedy*; Alexander Mackenzie, *Britannia—A Nautical Overture*, op. 52.

English Northern Philharmonia conducted by David Lloyd-Jones

Victorian certainly, but influenced by Germany; and in some cases markedly so, as the composers had actually studied there. But most of these pieces don't wear their years well, however popular they were in their day. Exceptionally, the *Overture to an Unwritten Tragedy* (1893), and *Froissart* (1890) stand out. So does *Macbeth* (1888), from a composer who never achieved his aim of being rated a 'serious' musician. But Percy M. Young thought that some passages in this work had 'an austerity unusual in Sullivan, while the manner in which the musical argument is conducted in the development of thematic material has a tragic sense not otherwise found in his works'.

Lloyd-Jones doesn't find the 'tragic sense' comfortable. He is by no means inexpressive; nor is he unaware of the fateful disquiet depicted. But despite a sympathetic approach, he under-characterises content and the various episodes simply pass by. Lloyd-Jones is relatively strait-laced. Mackerras (BBC Music Magazine, MM203) is not; he draws more attention to the significance of themes, and his elastic shaping of phrases generates greater intensity.

Violins, as recorded by Hyperion, are insubstantial. The consequent lack of range militates against attack and tonal colour that are particularly noticeable in *Froissart*. Lloyd-Jones has the measure of the music but shies away from graphic ardour, of the sort that Barbirolli revelled in. And his is a performance (EMI, CDM5 66323 2) that commands the stage, as does that of Boult (Lyrita, SRCD 220) in Parry's overture. Nevertheless, Lloyd-Jones isn't far behind here because he offers a degree of emotional commitment not heard elsewhere.

In sum, listeners curious about curios will want this disc. Others will find that there are finer options for the finest pieces.

Nalen Anthoni

### **Vesper Voluntaries, Op. 14**

J. S. Bach, Prelude and Fugue in D major, BWV 532; Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Sonata, op. 65 no. 6; Jehan Alain, First Fantasy; William T. Best, Two Postludes; Leoš Janáček, Postlude; Edward Elgar, *Vesper Voluntaries*, op. 14; César Franck, Prelude, Fugue and Variations, op. 18; Raffaele Manari, Concert Etude on 'Salve Regina'.  
David Schrader (organ)

It is common knowledge that Elgar was apprentice and then successor to his father as organist at St George's Church, Worcester. How nice, therefore, to have here the *Vesper Voluntaries* which, though not composed during that time, must give an indication of the kind of piece Elgar—great improviser—would have played at the church. How nice also to know that their inclusion on this CD, the live recording of the dedication concert of the Jaeckel Organ at St Mary's Episcopal Church, Park Ridge, Illinois, owes much to the good offices of Bostonian Society member Lani Spahr, who introduced the voluntaries to the



Hänssler Classics  
CD 93.043

organist, David Schrader.

Not being an organ buff myself, though I have spent many a happy hour at the console, most of these pieces were new to me, though, curiously, not the Elgar voluntaries. The recital begins with a sprightly performance of the Bach Prelude and Fugue in D, BWV 532. Mr Schrader is certainly an accomplished organist and seems to have no problem with any of the work's intricacies. There is then a finely-wrought and well-registered performance of Mendelssohn's Sixth Sonata, Jehan Alain's First Fantasy, the Postludes of Best, and particularly the Janáček form an exciting centre of the recital.

Now the Elgar. These are perfectly manageable little pieces, certainly not on the same level of technical difficulty as some of the other pieces on the disc. Each is fairly short, the longest lasting only a few brief minutes. They were written while Elgar was domiciled at Oaklands in Upper Norwood near the Crystal Palace, where he had a small organ and dwelt for a short time after his marriage to Alice. They were sold to the publishers Orsborn and Tuckwood in 1891 for five pounds, and are inscribed to Mrs W. A. Raikes. She too had an organ on which they might be played and, indeed, they were arranged on two staves for performance on harmonium, but with a possible pedal part sketched in. Thus, as ever, Elgar the pragmatist. They have a primitive cyclic structure—the Introduction, Intermezzo and Coda sharing themes—and a certain charm. I am fond of them as the lesser parings from the true Elgarian fruit since they show no pretensions and are well worth hearing. David Schrader plays them with complete conviction, appropriate registration, apt *tempi*, and suitable *rubati* and phrasing. Most enjoyable. From the applause that follows the performance, I take it the American audience received them well, too.

The Franck is well-voiced, demonstrating the organ's solo stops in the Prelude. The Fugue is clearly articulated, phrased and timed. There is an excellent sense of structure here, and the Variations are convincingly played. All is transparent, clean, well balanced, nicely performed. Not a barn-stormer of a piece, but a suitable foil to the Manari that follows and ends the recital. This is fun: an imposing statement of the theme followed by some very intricate variations leading to the obligatory and celebratory grand finale with much *furioso fortissimo* pedal work, and then enthusiastic and warm applause. A fine performance.

Highly recommended. Thank you, David and Lani.

Paul Adrian Rooke

### **Heritage — Organ Sonata op. 28 arranged for Brass Band**

Elgar, Sonata in G major for organ, op. 28 (arr. Childs); Havergal Brian, Symphonic Poem: *The Battle Song* (arr. Pickard); Paul Gilson, *Fantasia (dans la forme classique)* (arr. Vertommen); Joseph Parry, *Tydfil Overture* (arr. Wright); Oskar Bohme, *Symphony for Brass*, op. 30 (arr. Roberts).

Buy As You View Cory Band conducted by Robert Childs

Elgar's works have offered rich pickings for brass band arrangers, including three volumes issued on LP in the mid-1980s, shortly after his music dropped out of copyright for the first time. Robert Childs' recent arrangement of the First Organ Sonata is only surpassed in terms of scale and ambition by Eric Ball's earlier transcription of the 'Enigma' Variations.

But where the latter offers a blurred if creditable facsimile of the original, the Organ Sonata re-emerges in vivid and impressive splendour.

Its brass transformation brings details of Elgar's organ score into sharper focus, imparting purpose and direction to lines which may fail to register when heard in a cavernous cathedral acoustic on a less responsive instrument. Following the lead offered by Gordon Jacob's 1945 orchestral arrangement, subtle changes of colour clarify the musical structure, resulting in a coherence which can only result in the Sonata's wider appreciation. In particular, I find the exhilarating *Presto* finale so convincing in this clothing, it would be surprising if an innocent ear did not believe it was originally intended for brass band.

Great praise is due to this marvellous premier recording, for its sensitive direction and immaculate playing. There are wonderful solos in the quieter passages, and shuddering bass-tuba pedal notes underpinning the climaxes. I admire especially the beautifully shaped ebb-and-flow of the slow movement, its skein of golden melody unwinding so smoothly and effortlessly it is easy to forget it is carried on breath from human lungs rather than artificial bellows. It is a performance of great generosity and understanding, which I heartily commend, particularly to those who have little or no experience of hearing a really first-rate brass band.

An intriguing tale of musical detection, of more than a passing interest to Elgarians, lies behind Havergal Brian's *The Battle Song*. An autograph short score of this previously unknown work, bought at auction in 1996, reveals convincing internal and contextual evidence that Brian conceived it in the early 1930s as a potential brass band contest piece, in the wake of—and perhaps even prompted by—Elgar's *Severn Suite*. Probably rejected at the time on the grounds that its idiom would not have found favour with a conservative brass band audience, the piece has finally been brought to life in an arrangement by Dr John Pickard (the styling 'transcribed by' scarcely seems to do justice to the insight and imagination needed for such a task). All credit to everyone involved in bringing this absorbing, idiosyncratic and thrilling work before us for the first time.

The remaining pieces on the disc re-engage modern audiences with forgotten gems of the European brass tradition (including a modern transcription of one of the very first original works for brass band, Joseph Parry's *Tydfil Overture*, thought to date from the 1870s), making this not only a great 'listen', but also a document of significant historical interest.

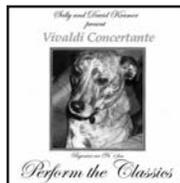
Phil Maund

### Music for Violin and Piano

Romance, op. 1; *La capricieuse*, op. 17; *Salut d'amour*, op. 12; *Chanson de nuit*, op. 15 no. 1; *Chanson de matin*, op. 15 no. 2; *Gavotte*; Mazurka from *Three Characteristic Pieces*, op. 10; *Serenade*; *Adieu*; *Etudes caractéristiques*, op. 24.

Isabelle Flory, Chris Nichols (violins), Barry Collett (piano)

This disc (a reissue of an earlier recording) is like the proverbial curate's egg. Sadly, it does not start too well. The piano introduction to the Romance reveals an instrument in need of tuning and a recording that makes it sound like an upright placed against a wall. Isabelle Flory, who plays the first six items, is a decent enough violinist, but the playing is all very careful; the effect is of two performers enjoying themselves at home in the music



This CD can be ordered directly from the Vivaldi Concertante on 01707 650735 at a Society member's price of £9.00.

room (which after all is presumably the setting Elgar had in mind when he wrote the music), but there is more in the music than these performances reveal. Thinking perhaps I was being unfair, I dug out an old Pearl LP of the same pieces played by John Georgiadis and John Parry, and was immediately involved in the music-making—such style and poise from both players.

Things take a turn for the better with the arrival of Chris Nichols, and a change of venue (plus an in-tune piano) gives a far more open sound-picture. Mr Nichols' performance has confidence, spaciousness, and imagination, and he displays a real feeling for the turn of an Elgarian phrase. Barry Collett, too, seems stimulated, and gives truly supportive accompaniment.



Hyperion Helios  
CDH55088  
(recorded 1991)

The *Etudes caractéristiques* are for violin alone. Dedicated to his teacher Adolphe Pollitzer, Elgar wrote them to improve his own violin technique at a time when a solo career seemed a possibility. They show what a superb player he must have been; it is hard to imagine that he couldn't play them, even if they stretched him, and I am grateful for this insight into his technique. Whether they stand being listened to as pieces of music in their own right is debatable, for that was not their primary purpose. With this performance comes the feeling of having stumbled upon a player doing his practice in an empty hall—somehow you're not sure you should be listening. Chris Nichols has a formidable technique, nevertheless these pieces sound incredibly difficult, which is not necessarily the impression one wants to have when listening to a CD.

Barry Collett contributes short but informative notes, which contain one of the most delicious misprints I have seen for some time. Discussing the *Etudes*, he remarks that their difficulty makes 'much of even Paganini seem tame in comparison'. For the lack on an 'an' a virtuoso of the violin is transformed into the much-lamented restaurant in Great Portland Street frequented by all the great musicians of the day, and a favourite eating place of the Elgars.

Martin Bird

### English Music for Brass

John Ireland, *A Downland Suite*, *The Holy Boy* (arr. Cameron), *Comedy Overture*; Ralph Vaughan Williams, *Prelude on Three Welsh Hymn Tunes*; Edward Elgar, *Severn Suite*, op. 87.

London Brass Virtuosi conducted by David Honeyball

For virtually the whole of the twentieth century and up to the present, two great institutions have stoked the fires of original brass band composition—the nation-wide band competitions and the Salvation Army. Few brass band works of an original nature existed prior to the First World War, but during the 1930s a 'golden age' saw the likes of Elgar, Ireland, Bantock, and Bliss writing pieces to grace the arena of the National Brass Band Festival at the Crystal Palace. Elgar's is the earliest of those present on this disc, written for the twenty-fifth National Festival in 1930; *Comedy Overture* (subsequently elaborated to become the *London Overture* for orchestra) and *A Downland Suite* followed in 1932 and 1934 respectively. Two decades later, Vaughan Williams was present at a performance by the Salvation Army's International Staff Band at Dorking, Surrey. The event proved

inspirational, and resulted in the Prelude on Three Welsh Hymn Tunes, published in the Salvation Army Brass Band Journal's Festival Series; shortly afterwards he too provided a piece for the National competition, his Variations for Brass Band of 1957.

Such a gathering of illustrious British composers is rare amongst the great number of brass band discs produced annually, so the re-issue of this 1987 recording should be welcomed in that respect. Unfortunately, though the menu is appetising, the meal itself is disappointing. The performances fail to ignite and suffer from a world-weariness which in part results from their being consistently paced below tempo. The only movement for which this languishing mood is appropriate is the Elegy of *A Downland Suite*, for me the most successful track.

The *Severn Suite* in particular is paid few compliments. Of its two finest movements on paper, the Toccata is laboured rather than nimble and fluent, whilst the Fugue (its exposition marred by a careless baritone entry at odds with the rest of the band) plods towards its climax, then wilts prematurely. The Minuet is especially tricky to perform convincingly, and here George Bernard Shaw's warning, 'Remember that a minuet is a dance and not a bloody hymn', goes unheeded. That said, satisfactory modern recordings of the *Severn Suite* are hard to come by, and one finds oneself returning to the 1930 performance by the Fodens Motor Works band, the result of weeks of intensive preparation, to catch a glimpse of how the piece might sound at its best. Sadly, only a six-minute selection was recorded shortly after the band achieved a first place in the National competition; the Introduction and Coda appear complete, framing an eviscerated Toccata—a delicious sandwich, albeit with hardly any filling.

Nevertheless, I still value this new disc, if only for the presence of the Vaughan Williams piece (not to be confused with the similarly-named but better-known Three Preludes on Welsh Hymn Tunes for organ, though they have in common two of the three). In spite of a statement suggesting the contrary in the accompanying notes, it is a piece many will never have heard. As recently as the 1990s the Salvation Army held to an embargo on musical commerce with non-Salvationist bands, meaning their extensive repertoire was not available for general public performance. Quite how the parts for this recording were 'smuggled out' may in itself be an interesting tale.

Phil Maund

## FILM REVIEWS

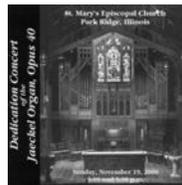
### Ken Russell's *Elgar and Delius: Song of Summer*

#### *Elgar*

Peter Brett (Mr Elgar); Rowena Gregory (Mrs Elgar); George McGrath (Sir Edward Elgar); Ken Russell (Himself); commentary written and spoken by Huw Wheldon.  
Directed by Ken Russell

#### *Delius: Song of Summer*

Max Adrian (Frederick Delius); Maureen Pryor (Jelka Delius); Christopher Gable (Eric Fenby); David Collings (Percy Grainger).



This CD can be ordered from:

Lani Spahr,  
140 School St,  
Concord,  
NH 03301,  
USA

Price \$15  
plus \$3 p&p

Those wishing to pay in sterling and/or by credit card can do so using the enclosed Elgar Editions form, but please note that the CD will be dispatched from the USA.

Directed by Ken Russell

Ken Russell's 'biopics' of composers are as justifiably legendary as they were controversial when they first appeared, starting with Elgar in 1962 and continuing with Bartók (1964), Debussy (1965), Delius (1968), and Richard Strauss (1970). The latter's iconoclastic focus on the composer's relationship with the Nazis was so scandalous it has lain in the BBC vaults ever since, and soon led to an irreparable rift with the Corporation. 'An appalling talent,' observed film critic Dilys Powell, while Russell himself admitted, 'I want to shock people into awareness'. He later achieved this with *The Music Lovers* (about Tchaikovsky), after which he went on to make films about Mahler, Liszt, and Vaughan Williams. Amazing to think the Elgar film was also groundbreaking; for the first time the BBC relaxed its refusal to allow actors in factual films, although Russell was only permitted to use them in long shot with no spoken dialogue (Huw Wheldon supplied the commentary). Now aged seventy-five, Russell struggles to keep working: 'I think people are afraid to employ me'. Seeing this film again makes one wonder what all the fuss was about.



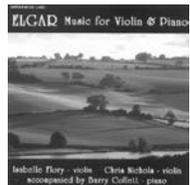
Doyen  
DOY CD142

The British Film Institute finally issued *Elgar* in July this year, to follow up last year's release of the equally memorable film about Delius. If the latter concentrates on the last years of the blind, crippled, but established composer, Russell's focus on Elgar results in a sensitive portrait of the struggling rise of a young musician from a relatively poor background to international fame. Factual accuracy is by no means the name of the game, for Russell ignores the launch pad of the 'Enigma' Variations in 1899 and passes on to *Gerontius*, as if the Germans were responsible for his success. Butts in Düsseldorf was certainly responsible for giving the oratorio the successful performance it was denied at Birmingham, but Richter had already secured Elgar's name at St James's Hall a year earlier. That said, Russell's love of Elgar's music at a time when it was not all that fashionable is compelling, and produced a pioneering if flawed study. Perhaps he was ill-advised, for it is easy to forget that not much of what we take for granted today was available when the film was first screened on 11 November 1962, the hundredth in the BBC's *Monitor* series of arts programmes. While it is true that Newman, Porte, Reed, McVeagh, Maine, Young, W. R. Anderson, and 'Dorabella' had already published, the more extensive work of Northrop Moore, Kennedy, Hurd, and Parrott was yet to come. Russell's film is an invaluable work which did its best to dispel Elgar's reputation as a Colonel Blimp character, an irrelevant figure from the age of Empire. Images from the film have endured, such as the boy Elgar riding the Malvern Hills on a white horse, or the young man bicycling along the Worcester lanes. The music may be somewhat restricted to the oft-repeated Allegro section from the Introduction and Allegro (the soundtrack for journeys between his native Worcester and London) and the even more frequently played 'Land of Hope and Glory'; but *Salut d'amour* moves wonderfully and erotically from piano to lush strings-and-harp versions as it accompanies the scenes of courtship between Alice and Edward. There are also brief extracts from the early wind quintets and the quadrilles written for the Powick asylum band, the first time for ninety years this music had been heard. Forty years on, the film has lost none of its power to enthral, and sustains its classic status, though in many ways it has dated. Wheldon's stilted narrative palls after a while, and the absence of a natural soundtrack gives the impression of a silent movie without the jerky movement. (There is some interwoven documentary footage of historical events such as the funerals of Queen Victoria and Edward VII, as well as shots of

Edwardian London and the First World War trenches.) The silhouettes of Mr and Mrs Elgar tugging unwilling donkeys up hillsides or standing against the skyline atop stormy Malvern Hills remind one of the conclusion of Ingmar Bergman's film *The Seventh Seal* as the Devil leads a procession of plague victims off to Hell. Both the video and the DVD editions include an extra fifteen minutes of footage taken by Harold Brooke of the composer and others such as George Bernard Shaw and Billy Reed at the Three Choirs Festivals of 1929, 1930, and 1932 (a marvellous, lengthy close-up of Elgar appears in the third of these). Michael Kennedy provides the narration, and also introduces the live 1931 recording with the London Symphony Orchestra of 'Land of Hope and Glory' which celebrated the opening of the Abbey Road Studios in London; in short this is archival viewing at its best. 'Gentlemen, please play this tune as if you've never heard it before,' the composer begs forlornly, before taking up the baton.

Six years later, in 1968, Russell produced what is arguably the finest of his composer portraits, *Song of Summer*. It covers the last six years of Delius's life through the eyes of his twenty-two-year-old amanuensis Eric Fenby, and dramatises the tortured, syphilitic composer's struggle to continue work by dictating his compositions. Max Adrian's pain-racked portrayal is magnificent—mostly impatient and cantankerous (particularly with his long-suffering wife Jelka, upon whom he commits emotional violence), yet so full of pathos and laced with such tender, rhapsodic music that the viewer can only sympathise with the poor man's predicament. Christopher Gable (in his first screen-acting role) teeters dangerously towards an Alan Bennett characterisation with his flat Yorkshire vowels and striped short-sleeved jumpers. Maureen Pryor's dotty, selfless Jelka, David Colling's madcap Percy Grainger (the only light relief in this gloomy tale), and Roger Worrod's sinister Jaws-like manservant Bruder make up the rest of the excellent cast.

With Fenby on the production team one must assume factual accuracy, though how he took musical dictation for a work as complex as the *Songs of Farewell* is very hard to imagine when a monotonous 'ter ter-terr, terr te-terr' was the only clue to the composer's intentions. Having the chance to view this alongside the Elgar, one sees shots threatening to become a feature of every film (like Terence Cuneo's mouse in all his railway paintings); the trudging walks up windswept hillsides are a case in point, while a pointer to the future *The Boyfriend* (also starring Max Adrian) is the scene where Fenby, temporarily returned to Yorkshire, is given a party by his sister at which the latest 1930s popular music is played and danced to. There are unforgettable images, particularly Adrian's craggy profile and the frontal shots of his sightless eyes; but in both films it is the music which, quite rightly, leaves the most enduring impression.



British Music Label  
BML 048

### ...and Elgar—*Fantasy on A Composer on a Bicycle*

On 22 September ITV's *The South Bank Show* celebrated twenty-five years with a commissioned revisit by Ken Russell to his *Elgar*, forty years on from its first showing. As Lord Bragg (he of the Jonathan Miller 'What on earth shall I do with my hands as I speak to camera?' technique) told us in his introduction, the original was 'the finest arts film ever made for British TV'. We had an inkling of what to expect as Bragg's background was a colour still of the Malvern Hills, and the film which followed was also in full colour. It took us swiftly through Elgar's life and loves in twenty short scenes, and Russell's choice of music

was generally apt. Comparing new with old, two elements remained: there was no natural sound, just plenty of music along with Russell's own linking narrative; and the actors (including James Johnston as Elgar and Elize Russell as Alice) were unknown, at least to this reviewer. Shots of the Malvern Hills were plentiful, but there was also Worcester City and Cathedral, the Elgar Birthplace Museum, Godshill Model Village, and beachside shots on the Isle of Wight.

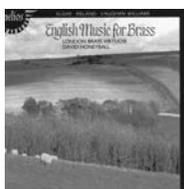
Frankly, it was a mixed pleasure, and if I had to make a choice I would have no hesitation in taking Russell's earlier version to the proverbial desert island. This one had its *longeurs*, particularly Alice and Edward trapped indoors by a rainstorm to 'In Haven' from *Sea Pictures*, which is already slow enough at Barbirolli's tempo. On the other hand, the sightless Elgar's fear of the impending catastrophe of the First World War to the relevant passage in the Second Symphony was chillingly effective, particularly so because Russell drained virtually all colour from the scene, thus bringing it closer in style to its predecessor. This, along with the film's final moments in which Russell is seen shaking hands with Elgar's statue as his ghost cycles past in the street, was the director at his inspired best. The String Quartet played by three walking wounded and a nurse took its cue from the late Joan Littlewood's *Oh! What a Lovely War*, but was none the worse for that; elsewhere the dogs Mina and Dan had their day.

As far as the music is concerned, there were some jarring moments. The children's band (giants in the model village—a nice touch) made no more than a valiant attempt at playing the music, while the awful, if seamless, transition from *Gerontius* to *Nimrod*, as all the women were recapitulated near the end, was frankly ill-advised. Russell never does things by halves, so whether Alice witnessed the 'goings on' between her husband and Dorabella in the summer house is a matter for speculation. Helen Weaver's scene was excessively watery, from the music in a bottle to her Ophelia-like float-past, but it underlined the point of the 'Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage' quotation and the purring ship's engine of Variation XIII. Russell has a subtle wit which you have to look out for: there was a steam roller instead of a wagon passing, and the gentle pun on Elgar 'pedalling his wares' in Worcester as he cycled past.

Another difference: in 1962 there would have been no advertisement breaks, especially not one with the incongruous and gruesome image of Saddam Hussein promoting the *Daily Mail*, made the more distasteful by our having just experienced the 'great love of Elgar's life' in the Windflower scene. It would be good to have it all on video—without Saddam.

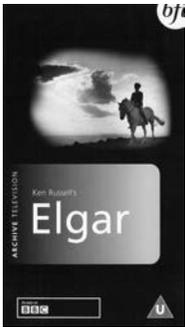
Christopher Fifield

(A further review of the Ken Russell film appears in the Review section of the News.)

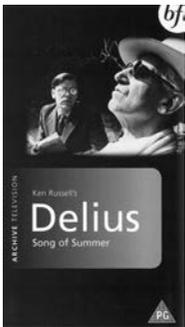


Helios  
CDH55070





BFI Video Publishing  
VHS BFIV107; DVD  
BFIVD524  
(56 minutes, b/w)



BFI Video Publishing  
VHS BFIV101; DVD  
BFIVD518  
(72 minutes, b/w)







## LETTERS

From: Arthur D. Walker

*Further to Jerrold Northrop Moore's review of Elgar Society Edition, Vol. 25 (JOURNAL, July 2002), there is a serious problem with Dream Children as printed. The second movement, if played separately, has a short ending (one page); when the complete work is performed, a longer ending is used (two pages).*

*The first edition, published by Joseph Williams (plate number 50779), has at the foot of page 28, final bar: '(To page 30)'; the following page, 29 has: 'If this movement is played separately it may end thus'. Pages 30 and 31 constitute the longer ending.*

*In 1912 the copyright was transferred to Schott. The only reference to this edition is the footnote on page 1 which gives the copyright information. The full score was re-engraved, and piano and organ arrangements were published. The foreword gives no information on the Schott edition. In the Schott edition (plate number 29701), at the end of the second movement, the final bar on page 26 has a sign directing the reader to page 28, and on page 27: 'If this movement is played separatly [sic] it may end thus'. Pages 28 and 29 are the longer ending.*

*In ESE 25, the last bar on page 24 has: '(to page 27)'; on turning to page 27, the conductor will see at the top of the page: 'If this movement is played separately it may end thus'. He will then turn back to page 25 for the longer ending. This will cause problems in rehearsal; the original sequence of pages in the Joseph Williams and Schott editions should have been retained. There are also textual variants between the two editions.*

## 100 YEARS AGO...

The composition of Elgar's new oratorio, *The Apostles*, was constantly interrupted by other events during the autumn of 1902. There was an all-Elgar concert he conducted on 14 September at New Brighton, including *Cockaigne*, the Variations, and the *Grania and Diarmid* music. On 30th the Elgars went to Sheffield for the Festival, which saw a performance of *Gerontius* and the delayed première of the *Coronation Ode*. They both took place on 2 October, the former in the morning, and the *Ode* in the afternoon, and both were received with enthusiasm. Edward was fêted throughout his stay there, and was introduced to many influential people, including the Roman Catholic Duke of Norfolk, who suggested a performance of *Gerontius* in Westminster Cathedral. They were back in Malvern for only one day, and then went to Bristol, where Edward conducted the *Ode* again on the 9th. The following day *Cockaigne* and *The Pipes of Pan* featured in the second part of a concert in which Berlioz's Requiem comprised the first part!

The Birmingham Festival chairman G. H. Johnstone—with the *Gerontius* experience of 1900 no doubt firmly in mind—was pressing Elgar about *The Apostles*. The composer had worked on it during mid-October; he told Jaeger on the 18th that he was 'working hard & "it" looms big', and Alice commented that he was 'very busy writing' on the 24th. But other engagements then intervened again: the successful London première of the *Coronation Ode* on 26th; a Promenade concert on the 31st; the *Ode* again in Leeds and London, in which cities Elgar also conducted some concerts standing in for the indisposed Henry Wood. He had also written some part-songs for men's voices to translations from the Greek Anthology, and a test piece for the next Morecambe Festival. An indication that he was hard at work on *The Apostles* was the acquisition of a typewriter; Elgar was compiling his own libretto, and he needed several copies of his drafts—obtained by using carbons—as he was constantly revising his text. He was taking help and advice from Edward Capel Cure, his librettist for *The Light of Life* of 1896, and now a parish priest in Dorset. On 5 November Elgar wrote asking for some words for a scene where Jesus walks through the cornfields. Capel Cure replied on the 11th with a 'sketch' which became the 'By the Wayside' section. On 17th the Elgars went to London for a week for a series of concerts by the Meiningen Orchestra, staying with their friend Frank Schuster at his house in Westminster: Steinbach conducted the Variations on the 20th. At the beginning of December they went to Liverpool and in Rodewald's house Elgar came across some Gregorian chants which were to become important themes in *The Apostles*. On 6 December they were in London for the British première of Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben*, and dined with Strauss. Back home in Malvern, work on the text of *The Apostles* continued, aided by Elgar's friend Jebb Scott's Christmas gift of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Alfred Rodewald came to stay for Christmas, and Elgar was in very high spirits, writing to Jaeger on 21st what he described as 'a regular Yule-loggy pudding, Brandy-saucious letter'. The year had seen the Düsseldorf triumph, the success of the *Coronation Ode*, and the prospect of another large work for Birmingham. Alice wrote on New Year's Eve: 'Much good this year Deo gratias'.

Geoffrey Hodgkins

# The Elgar Society Journal

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