



ARIADNE 5015-2

# ELGAR from America

## Volume III

EDWARD ELGAR (1857-1934)

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC-SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Sir John Barbirolli • The Westminster Choir/Warren Martin  
 Richard Lewis *Gerontius*, *The Soul* • Maureen Forrester *The Angel*  
 Morley Meredith *The Priest*, *The Angel of the Agony*  
 Mormon Tabernacle Choir/J Spencer Cornwall  
 John Corigliano, Leopold Rybb *violin*, William Lincer *viola*  
 Laszlo Varga *cello*, Alexander Schreiner *organ*

## CD1

- 1 Introduction and Allegro for String Quartet  
and String Orchestra, Op.47 (1905)<sup>a</sup> 14:25

## Scenes from the Saga of King Olaf, Op.30 (1896)\*

- 2 Chorus: The Challenge of Thor<sup>b</sup> 4:45  
 3 Chorus: As Torrents in Summer<sup>c</sup> 2:12

The Dream of Gerontius, Op.38 (1900) Part I<sup>d</sup>

- 4 Prelude 10:47  
 5 *Gerontius*: Jesu Maria, I am near to death 5:51  
 6 *Gerontius*: Rouse thee, my fainting soul 4:05  
 7 *Gerontius*: Sanctus fortis, Sanctus Deus 5:18  
 8 *Gerontius*: I can no more 5:55  
 9 *The Priest*: Proficiscere, anima Christiana 6:27

Total duration: 59:50

## CD2

The Dream of Gerontius: Part II<sup>d</sup>

- 1 Introduction 1:55  
 2 *The Soul*: I went to sleep 3:57  
 3 *The Angel*: My work is done 8:44  
 4 Chorus: Low-born clods of brute earth 4:51  
 5 *The Soul*: I see not those false spirits 3:22  
 6 *Chorus of Angelicals*: Praise to the Holiest 5:32  
 7 *The Angel*: And now the threshold 8:20  
 8 *The Angel*: Thy judgment now is near 7:22  
 9 *Semi-Chorus*: Be merciful 6:53  
 10 *The Angel*: Softly and gently 7:03

Total duration: 58:03

\*First appearance on CD

Recorded live at: Carnegie Hall, New York, January 3, 1959<sup>a</sup>; Recorded c.1953  
 (from Columbia ML-5203)<sup>b</sup>; Recorded April 1, 1956 (from Columbia ML-5048)<sup>c</sup>  
 in Mormon Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Utah; Recorded live at Carnegie Hall, New  
 York, January 25, 1959<sup>d</sup>

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ARIADNE

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COMPACT  
DIGITAL AUDIO

# ELGAR from America

## Volume III

## THE DREAM OF GERONTIUS

### INTRODUCTION and ALLEGRO for Strings

### SCENES FROM THE SAGA OF KING OLAF (Excerpts)

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC-  
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA  
Sir John Barbirolli

The Westminster Choir  
Mormon Tabernacle Choir

Richard Lewis  
Maureen Forrester  
Morley Meredith



# ELGAR from America

## Volume III

### CD 1 ① Introduction and Allegro for String Quartet and String Orchestra, Op.47 (1905)

John Corigliano and Leopold Rybb *violins*

William Lincer *viola*, Laszlo Varga *cello*

New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra, Sir John Barbirolli *conductor*

Recorded live in Carnegie Hall, New York on 3 January, 1959

14:25

### Scenes from the Saga of King Olaf, Op.30 (1896)

#### ② Chorus: The Challenge of Thor

4:45

#### ③ Chorus: As Torrents in Summer

2:12

Mormon Tabernacle Choir, J. Spencer Cornwall *conductor*

Alexander Schreiner *organ*

Recorded in the Mormon Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Utah on 1 April, 1956

(From Columbia ML-5048)

TEXTS FOR SUNG WORKS ARE AVAILABLE ONLINE AT:

*The Challenge of Thor*: <https://sites.pitt.edu/~dash/longfellow.html#challenge>

*As Torrents in Summer*: <http://www.elgar.org/3parts1.htm>

*The Dream of Gerontius*: <http://www.elgar.org/3gerontl.htm>

### The Dream of Gerontius, Op.38 (1900)

New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra, Sir John Barbirolli *conductor*

The Westminster Choir, Warren Martin *director*

Richard Lewis – *Gerontius, The Soul*

Maureen Forrester – *The Angel*

Morely Meredith – *The Priest and The Angel of the Agony*

Recorded live in Carnegie Hall, New York on 25 January, 1959

### The Dream of Gerontius: Part I

④ Prelude 10:47

⑤ *Gerontius: Jesu Maria, I am near to death* 5:51

⑥ *Gerontius: Rouse thee, my fainting soul* 4:05

⑦ *Gerontius: Sanctus fortis, Sanctus Deus* 5:18

⑧ *Gerontius: I can no more* 5:55

⑨ *The Priest: Proficiscere, anima Christiana* 6:27

Total duration: 59:50

### CD 2 The Dream of Gerontius: Part II

① Introduction 1:55

② *The Soul: I went to sleep* 3:57

③ *The Angel: My work is done* 8:44

④ *Chorus: Low-born clods of brute earth* 4:51

⑤ *The Soul: I see not those false spirits* 3:22

⑥ *Chorus of Angelicals: Praise to the Holiest* 5:32

⑦ *The Angel: And now the threshold* 8:20

⑧ *The Angel: Thy judgment now is near* 7:22

⑨ *Semi-Chorus: Be merciful* 6:53

⑩ *The Angel: Softly and gently* 7:03

Total duration: 58:03

"It sounded crazy." These words were uttered by Sir John Barbirolli in later years reflecting on the offer extended to him in 1936 to guest-conduct the famed New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra for an astonishingly generous period: the first 10 weeks of the season. Arturo Toscanini had informed the orchestra's board of directors that he did not plan on returning for the 1936-37 season, given that the board had not deigned to consult him on the choice of a replacement conductor (Sir Thomas Beecham, of whom Toscanini had a low opinion) for concerts that Toscanini himself had backed out of the previous season. And so the process of finding a successor to the legendary conductor began.

Leopold Stokowski – conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra and a frequent guest conductor in New York – was initially considered, as was Fritz Busch, then with both the Danish State Radio Orchestra and Glyndebourne Festival Opera in England. Neither accepted the post, and eventually a formal offer was made to Wilhelm Furtwängler, one of the few international conductors who might have been expected to fill the shoes of the "Master of all Masters of Music". Furtwängler was no stranger to the Philharmonic, having first guest-conducted the orchestra in 1925, and had been co-conductor with Willem Mengelberg from that year until 1927. When it was announced in February 1936 that he had been appointed, a public uproar predictably ensued given his perceived association with the Nazi Party. After several weeks of intense protest, Furtwängler cabled the Philharmonic saying "I propose postpone my season in the interests of Philharmonic Society and of music until the public realizes that politics and music are apart".

If mature and established was not going to work, then what of young and promising? Arthur Judson, manager of the Philharmonic since 1922, knew exactly whom he wanted – John Barbirolli. Unknown in the US and considered a second-tier conductor at home ("No, we prefer the Knight class", had been the BBC's response to a recommendation for a guest spot), this seemed an odd choice, and the musical world was perplexed.

Born Giovanni Battista into a musical family (his violinist father had been friends with Toscanini in Italy) he initially studied the violin, but was quickly introduced to the cello by his grandfather in order to stop him wandering around the house as he played. He subsequently won a scholarship to Trinity College of Music, where he studied with Edmund Woolhouse, and later privately with Herbert Walenn, cellist of the Kruse Quartet and a professor at the Royal Academy of Music – to which 'Tita', as he was then known, would win a scholarship in 1912. He left the Academy in 1916 and immediately joined London's freelance pool of players becoming the youngest member of the Queen's Hall Orchestra under Sir Henry Wood. He also played as a deputy in the London Symphony Orchestra for the première of Elgar's Cello Concerto, and at a Three Choirs Festival performance of *The Dream of Gerontius*, both of which Elgar himself conducted. These experiences would have a profound effect on Barbirolli in later years, as he pursued his ultimate calling – that of conductor.

Barbirolli first got the conducting 'bug' as a boy when his father and grandfather would take him to rehearsals at the Empire Theatre, Leicester Square, where they were violinists in the orchestra. His first public conducting experience came

during the Great War while serving as a Private in the 1st (Reserve) Garrison Battalion of the Suffolk Regiment. A volunteer orchestra had been formed by the regiment's violin-playing Colonel, and while the regular conductor was on leave, Tita deputized for him and made a rather good impression on the players. It seems that he surprised even himself "at some of the effects I got without much trouble".

After his demobilization he resumed his playing career. Though convinced he could make a living with the cello, he abandoned the instrument when the first opportunity to become a conductor presented itself. To that end, in 1924 he formed a string chamber orchestra, paid for with his own money. Eight days after a private event on 30 October 1924, the orchestra made its first public appearance. At a later performance, Eric Blom of *The Manchester Guardian* noted that Barbirolli "seems to be endowed with all the special gifts that go to the making of a highly competent conductor".

Subsequent successes led to the addition of winds to the orchestra, and eventually to a concert at Wigmore Hall that was attended by Frederic Austin of the British National Opera Company. This organization employed young English singers and gave a majority of its performances outside London, with a short season in the capital. Impressed by what he saw, Austin offered, and Barbirolli gladly accepted, the opportunity to conduct some productions. In his first week, beginning on 22 September 1926, "some productions" included Gounod's *Romeo and Juliet*, Puccini's *Madam Butterfly* and Verdi's *Aida* – all on a total of 3½ hours rehearsal. For the next six months, all across the country, including in London, reviews

noted with increasing frequency the quality of his conducting. In Birmingham, the reviewer noted: "What is certain is that the soul of music is in him... he can make an orchestra sing". Barbirolli was gaining a reputation as one of the finest conductors of opera, and Italian opera in particular, in the UK.

There then occurred one of those once-in-a-lifetime events that can catapult a toiling provincial conductor to national attention. Sir Thomas Beecham was scheduled to conduct the London Symphony Orchestra on 12 December 1927, but four days before the concert he had an accident and cancelled his engagement. As none of the typical replacements were available, Barbirolli was invited to take his place. As he pondered the invitation, made all the more imposing by the presence on the programme of Elgar's Second Symphony (a work he knew but had never studied), his father, Lorenzo, insisted that he *had* to take this great opportunity, even if it meant learning the Elgar in a mere 48 hours.

Word of Barbirolli's success got back to Elgar himself through the orchestra's leader, W.H. Reed. On 14 December, Elgar wrote to Barbirolli: "I hear splendid accounts of your conducting of the symphony concert on Monday last; for your kind care with my work I send you very sincere thanks". This was not the only time that his conducting impressed Elgar. Earlier that same year Barbirolli had recorded Elgar's *Introduction and Allegro*, and upon hearing the recording the composer remarked that he had no idea it was such a big work. Later, Elgar was to say that Barbirolli was "a rising hope of music in England for whom I have admiration and in whose work I have confidence".

Among those who attended Barbirolli's London Symphony Orchestra concert was someone who would be of great importance on his road to the New York Philharmonic. As he left the stage, a small man grabbed him and said: "Don't sign any gramophone contracts. See you tomorrow at 10. I'm Gaisberg, HMV".

Fred Gaisberg, American-born pioneer of early recording, was in need of a house conductor/accompanist and he recognized that Barbirolli was exactly the man he needed. For HMV this young conductor would record with many of the great soloists of the day, such as Heifetz, Rubinstein, Chaliapin, Gigli, Schorr and Melchior, thus providing the outside world with its first glimpse of his talents.

During 1928, in addition to a growing list of orchestras vying for Barbirolli's services, attention came from abroad. Arthur Judson, whom he had met that year in London, wrote from New York to say: "I have been interested in watching your career. I have been especially pleased to note your conducting in the concert field... Conditions in America are very difficult at the present time and it is not possible to prophesy what the situation will be [in] another year concerning conductors. Nevertheless, I think it would be highly advisable for you to keep me fully posted".

In addition to his continuing work with the British National Opera Company, Barbirolli was now conducting opera at Covent Garden, and concert programmes with the Royal Philharmonic Society, the London Symphony Orchestra, Hallé Orchestra and Scottish Orchestra, which in 1933 offered him an appointment as its chief conductor. Not wanting to be labelled exclusively an opera conductor, and

tiring of the intrigues on the London opera scene (particularly those of Beecham, who privately referred to Barbirolli as "that young upstart"), Barbirolli left for Glasgow. Here he had the opportunity to learn more of the orchestral repertoire and to work with internationally known stars, who, it will be seen, were to have a great influence on his future career.

Barbirolli's first foreign engagements came in 1935, with concerts in Helsinki, Hilversum, and Leningrad. On 3 April 1936 he learned from his agent, Harold Holt, that Judson had cabled saying: "Philharmonic-Symphony New York definitely offers Barbirolli 10 weeks November second January tenth inclusive. Suggest someone go to Glasgow to obtain his release. Immediate action important. Release in Glasgow for entire season seems wise". Word had got back to New York from soloists such as Elman, Rachmaninoff, Kreisler, Heifetz and Horowitz, testifying to the quality of Barbirolli's conducting, and the opportunity to conduct one of the world's great orchestras was being offered to a man who as recently as 1932 had only conducted one of Brahms's symphonies, and none at all of Beethoven's – "crazy" indeed.

**"By the time I got on to the platform I was the calmest person in Carnegie Hall."**

From the start, Barbirolli had won the Philharmonic over by the force of his musicianship and warmly expressive style, and for all the negative criticism he was to receive during his seven years in New York he never lost the orchestra's affection. When the first rehearsal had ended, several players were overheard saying to management: "We have found a conductor. Don't lose him!" They didn't. Before

his scheduled 10 weeks were completed he was given a contract as permanent conductor for the next three years. Principal horn Bruno Jaenicke summed up the orchestra's feelings when he noted that they had made music in various ways: because they were paid, because they were afraid, but now for the joy of it.

Reviews for the first concert were favourable, with the best and most prescient coming from Lawrence Gilman of the *New York Herald-Tribune*. Until his death in September 1939 he remained Barbirolli's staunchest supporter, indeed his only supporter in a city stricken with Toscanini worship. Olin Downes of *The New York Times* – doyen of New York critics and high priest at the altar of Toscanini – also reported favourably, initially at least. As time went on, however, he became more and more critical. The most vitriolic criticism came from Virgil Thomson, successor to Gilman at the *Herald-Tribune*. Not only did Barbirolli have to contend with such criticism and with the ghost of Toscanini, he also had to deal with the flesh-and-blood Toscanini, for whom the National Broadcasting Company had formed a hand-picked orchestra, whose concerts they planned to broadcast nationwide with a non-paying audience in attendance.

In addition, Beecham, who was living in the US, had formed the New York City Symphony with funds from President Roosevelt's New Deal initiative. One of the usual, still persisting, criticisms levelled against Barbirolli was that under him the orchestra had lost its discipline and performance standards had declined. However, Toscanini himself contradicted this when he returned to conduct during the Philharmonic's centennial season in 1942, by saying that the orchestra was playing just as well as when he left it. This is significant, coming as it did, unsolicited,

from one who was never known for complimenting his colleagues.

Even as the critics became increasingly negative, people were coming to the Philharmonic in record numbers. Attendance was at 80% or more (higher than even Toscanini had enjoyed), revenues were up, Sunday afternoon broadcasts were lucrative, and deficits were shrinking. But while the board of directors and the paying public were happy, Barbirolli was suffering from strain and had become increasingly homesick. The outbreak of war in 1939 made matters worse. However, he did sign another contract – one that would expire in 1942.

Finally, the end came with a decree from the Musicians Union that all foreign musicians, conductors included, must become US citizens after working in the country for six years. Changing citizenship in the midst of a war was something Barbirolli was not about to do, but little did he know that plans were already being formed that would facilitate his departure from New York. In February 1943 a cable arrived from Manchester, England, saying: "Would you be interested permanent conductorship Hallé? Important developments pending". "This is it", he said.



Barbirolli in New York, 1940

After Barbirolli's last concert in Carnegie Hall he described the scene to Harold Holt: "After a good 10 minutes' applause with the audience and orchestra just sitting and cheering, I made a brief speech during which I said 'Now as I come to the end of my seven-year period in New York' and this was greeted by shouts of 'No!' Even after the speech nobody moved and finally the orchestra and audience stood and sang *Auld Lang Syne*. It was really a moving and unforgettable occasion, and people here tell me quite unprecedented".

Throughout his post-war Hallé years, Barbirolli was receiving offers from Judson (who by 1956 was an influential independent impresario) to come back to America, and while his hope was to return there with the Hallé, he eventually accepted a three-month tour of 11 cities in Canada and the US where he was to conduct three of the best orchestras in the land: those of Philadelphia, Boston, and – for four weeks beginning in January 1959 – the one that mattered to him most, the New York Philharmonic. By the time Barbirolli (since 1949, Sir John) arrived in New York, another brilliant conductor, Dimitri Mitropoulos, had been similarly undermined by the critics, and the young Leonard Bernstein was Music Director of the Philharmonic. Thirty-three of Sir John's former players were still in the orchestra, but now many of the foreign players had been supplanted by American-grown and -schooled players. Sir John was very touched at the first rehearsal, when those who had retired from the orchestra, and the widows or children of players who had passed away, came to greet him.

He brought with him a strongly English repertoire, and New York would hear Vaughan Williams's Symphony No.8, Walton's Violin Concerto, Barbirolli's own

*Elizabethan Suite*, Malcolm Arnold's *Tam O'Shanter* Overture, Holst's *The Planets*, Elgar's *Introduction and Allegro* and *The Dream of Gerontius* alongside the European standards of Brahms's Violin Concerto and Piano Concerto No.2, Haydn's Symphony No.88, Dvořák's Symphony No.8, Weber's *Der Freischütz* Overture and Mahler's Symphony No.1.

Barbirolli's first concert, on 1 January 1959, was a 'Preview', one of a series of informal Thursday-night concerts initiated the previous year by Bernstein, at which the conductor was free to talk to the audience about the music. *The New York Times* notice on 2 January (no formal reviews were given to 'Previews') said that Sir John "refrained from making any comments on the selections", but addressed the audience with these words: "My dear friends, you can imagine that it is not without emotion that I return to this great concert hall of yours, and to this great orchestra of yours – and mine. They were mine for seven years. I'm so happy to see some of my old comrades, and to meet the new comrades. I was deeply honoured when I was first asked to conduct the orchestra and I'm deeply honoured again to be asked back. I thank you [and here he turned to the orchestra] for your magnificent playing, and I thank you [turning back to the audience] for the warmth that you have shown me tonight. You have made me a happy man indeed".

The programme on 1, 2, and 3 January comprised Elgar's *Introduction and Allegro* for String Quartet and String Orchestra, Brahms's Piano Concerto No.2 with Gina Bachauer, and Vaughan Williams's Symphony No.8 in D minor. In the next day's *Times*, Howard Taubman had this to say: "It is pleasant to have him back, not on sentimental but on musical grounds. His conducting has become purposeful and

sure-handed. One may say that it has grown a spine. He always had a sensitive ear for string tone, and it was to be noted in the opening Elgar piece for strings that the gift had become refined". The *Introduction and Allegro*, a work Barbirolli performed throughout his life, was apparently unfamiliar at the Philharmonic. Note that the audience begins applauding before the final tutti pizzicato.

At his final concerts, on 22-25 January, Sir John performed a work that had not been heard in New York since 1932, and one that was central to his life as a musician and conductor – Elgar's masterpiece, *The Dream of Gerontius*. He described this work as having been written "in a constant white heat of inspiration". Performing with him were English tenor Richard Lewis (making his New York debut, he would become arguably the finest Gerontius of



Barbirolli and John Corigliano, NYPO, 1959

his generation), and Canadians Maureen Forrester, contralto, and Morley Meredith, bass-baritone. The chorus was the famous Westminster Choir, Warren Martin director, from Princeton, New Jersey, which had made its Philharmonic debut with Barbirolli in 1939.

Sir John wrote home to say: "For each performance beloved Carnegie Hall, which holds three thousand, was absolutely full. It's a great tribute to the New York audience –

and it was a great thing for me – that they should come to *The Dream* [as he always called it] like that: twelve thousand of them in four days. You see, once people hear this music they cannot withstand the fascination and beauty of it". But the critics could and did. Taubman said: "one does not go away moved by the entire oratorio,

# New York Philharmonic

Leonard Bernstein, MUSIC DIRECTOR

1958 - 1959  
Carnegie Hall

5908th, 5909th, 5910th, 5911th Concerts

Thursday Evening, January 22, 1959, at 8:30 ("Preview")

Friday Afternoon, January 23, 1959, at 2:30

Saturday Evening, January 24, 1959, at 8:30

Sunday Afternoon, January 25, 1959, at 3:00

## SIR JOHN BARBIROLI, Conductor

MAUREEN FORRESTER, Contralto

RICHARD LEWIS, Tenor

MORLEY MEREDITH, Baritone

THE WESTMINSTER CHOIR (Symphonic), Warren Martin, Director,  
of the Westminster Choir College, Princeton, N. J.

## ELGAR "The Dream of Gerontius"

Part I

Gerontius  
Priest  
Assistants

RICHARD LEWIS  
MORLEY MEREDITH  
THE WESTMINSTER CHOIR

Part II

Soul of Gerontius  
Angel  
Angel of Agony  
Demons, Angelicals, Souls

RICHARD LEWIS  
MAUREEN FORRESTER  
MORLEY MEREDITH  
THE WESTMINSTER CHOIR

There will be no regular intermission at the performances of  
"The Dream of Gerontius." The audience is requested to remain  
seated during the short interval between Part I and Part II.



Barbirolli with Maureen Forrester, 1959

as do English listeners". But he did concede that "it is not often that one encounters so comprehending an interpretation of a large scaled work", and that "in his month as guest conductor with the Philharmonic [Barbirolli] has not evoked such fine-fibred playing [as this] from the orchestra". *The Dream of Gerontius* was not heard at the Philharmonic again until 2001.

This was a work that Barbirolli held in the highest esteem, and he conducted it many times all over the world, including at Castel Gandolfo for Pope Pius XII a few days before the Pontiff's death. He recorded it for EMI in December 1964. It was a recording of which he was very proud, and to a friend he remarked: "How I wish our great and beloved E.E. could have heard it, for I like to think in my old age that I have brought more and more people to a realisation of his stature". After Sir John's death on 29 July 1970, his own Hallé Orchestra gave a performance of the work in his memory in Manchester, England.

All things considered, Sir John's return to the Philharmonic was a great success and deeply satisfying to him, personally and musically. He had dinners with old friends and with First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, visits with Fritz Kreisler (by now blind and quite deaf), Danny Kaye (whom he knew from his time in Los Angeles in the 1930s), the president of the Philharmonic, and the British Consul General; plus a recorded interview on New York City radio station WQXR. On the whole the critics were full of praise for Sir John, and his return to the rostrum of the Philharmonic was a triumph. Irving Kolodin summed it up when he noted "changes, refinements, mellowings... Where the old (that is to say the young) Barbirolli endeavoured to accomplish his intentions by sheer force and an over-production of effort, the new

(which is to say the older) Barbirolli does it with full confidence in the sense and validity of his musical ideas, plus a mature technique in the art of persuasion". Of all the accolades he received, the one that delighted him the most came from a perceptive critic who mentioned the presence of "a golden lustre absent from the Philharmonic string section for fully fifteen years."

## GERONTIUS IN AMERICA

Much has been written about the woefully under-rehearsed première of *Gerontius* at the 1900 Birmingham Festival – chorus parts arriving too late for sufficient rehearsal, full score arriving too late for conductor Hans Richter to properly gain the measure of the work, an unsympathetic chorus master, only one full day of rehearsal in Birmingham, and, simply, chorus fatigue from the sheer volume of works to be presented during the four-day festival: Handel's *Messiah*, *Israel in Egypt* extended selections, Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Brahms's *Requiem*, Byrd's *Mass* selections, Parry's *De Profundis*, Dvořák's *The Spectre's Bride*, Cornelius's *Die Vätergruft* and Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's *Song of Hiawatha*, complete. Not surprisingly, *Gerontius* was not alone in suffering. Parry's work also got scant rehearsal, with the composer noting that the performance was "terrible".

Luckily, Professor Julius Buths from the Lower Rhine Festival was in attendance and he, along with many of the critics, recognized a masterpiece and immediately secured rights for a 1901 performance in Düsseldorf, with another in 1902. News of *Gerontius* reached America via Samuel Simons Sanford, Professor of Applied Music at Yale University, who had heard excerpts sung by Edward Lloyd, the first *Gerontius*. But it was Harrison Wild and the Apollo Musical Club and Chicago

Orchestra who gave the American première on 23 March, 1903 to an audience of over 4,000. On 24 and 26 March it was given in New York, conducted by Franck Damrosch. London, however, was late to the game. At least 19 performances of *Gerontius* were given around the world before its first complete performance there (a truncated version without orchestra was given on 8 May, 1902).

Critical praise from America followed quickly, with Richard Aldrich of *The New York Times* saying the work "does indeed show a vital power, a soaring imagination... a dramatic impulse, a command of the resources of choral and orchestral writing that put it far above any other piece of music brought forth in England for generations".

Other *Gerontius* performances took place in Boston, Massachusetts and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Baltimore, Maryland. During Elgar's four American tours it was performed in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (1904), Cincinnati, Ohio (1904, 1906 and 1911), Chicago, Illinois (1907 and 1911), St Paul, Minnesota and Indianapolis, Indiana (1911).

## INTRODUCTION AND ALLEGRO FOR STRINGS, Op.47

The *Introduction and Allegro for Strings* was given its première at an all-Elgar concert on 8 March 1905 by the newly formed London Symphony Orchestra in the Queen's Hall, London. This work owes its genesis to August Jaeger, of Elgar's publisher Novello, who hoped Elgar would write "a brilliant quick String Scherzo".

Replying to Jaeger six months later, Elgar said: "I'm doing that string thing in time for the Sym:orch; concert. Intro: & Allegro... with all sorts of japes & counterpoint". In his notes for the première, Elgar said the principal theme occurred to him during

a trip to Llangrannog in Wales in 1901 and was put down in his notebook as "Welsh tune" possibly for a projected "Welsh Overture". Four years later when Elgar finally settled on the "string thing", he was again reminded of this sketch on another trip to Wales when he said it "was brought to my mind by hearing, far down our own Valley of the Wye, a song similar to those so pleasantly heard on Ynys Lochtyn".

It is dedicated "To professor S.S. Sanford, Yale University, U.S.A.". Elgar had met Sanford around 1901 and by 1905 they had become close friends. The American première was on 26 November 1905 in Carnegie Hall with the New York Symphony conducted by Walter Damrosch.

### THE MORMON TABERNACLE CHOIR

The Mormon Tabernacle Choir (recently renamed the Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square) of Salt Lake City, Utah, was formed in 1847. It made its first recording in 1910 and since then has formed an international reputation based on its recordings and, starting in 1929, weekly radio broadcasts which are now one of the world's longest continuing network broadcast. They have also made recordings of large-scale choral works with such conductors as Eugene Ormandy, Leonard Bernstein and Thierry Fischer.

The two choral works included here were recorded c.1953 ('As Torrents in Summer') and 1956 ('The Challenge of Thor') and are popular excerpts from Elgar's *Scenes from the Saga of King Olaf* of 1896. The American première took place on 29 April, 1904 in Carnegie Hall, New York by the Oratorio Society of Brooklyn conducted by Walter Henry Hall.

Lani Spahr © 2022

**LANI SPAHR** – audio restoration engineer, producer and annotator – has garnered critical praise from *Gramophone* ("There are historic releases that make the grade because they are just that – 'historic' – and there are releases that make history because they are musically overwhelming. This set is both."), BBC Radio 3, *BBC Music Magazine*, *Fanfare*, *The Sunday Times*, *MusicWeb International*, *Diapason*, *Classical Source*, *International Record Review* and many others.



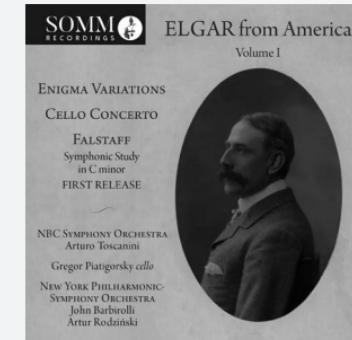
In 2016, BBC Radio 3 presented an hour-long documentary about his stereo reconstructions for *Elgar Remastered* (SOMMCD 261-4). His work can be heard on SOMM Recordings, Music & Arts, West Hill Radio Archives, Naxos, Boston Records and Oboe Classics, and he has worked for Sony/France on historic restorations of

the recordings of George Szell. In 2020, he was awarded an Honorary Membership of the Elgar Society for his work on the recorded legacy of Sir Edward Elgar.

Formerly a leading performer on period oboes in the US, he was a member of Boston Baroque and the Handel & Haydn Society Orchestra of Boston. In addition, he has appeared with many of North America's leading period instrument orchestras, including Tafelmusik, Philharmonia Baroque, Tempesta di Mare, Apollo's Fire, Washington Bach Consort, the American Classical Orchestra, Boston Early Music Festival Orchestra, Mercury Baroque and many others.

Also a modern oboist, he was the principal oboist of the Colorado Springs Symphony Orchestra, the Colorado Opera Festival, the American Chamber Winds, the Maine Chamber Ensemble and made his European solo debut in 1999 playing John McCabe's Oboe Concerto with the Hitchin Symphony Orchestra in England.

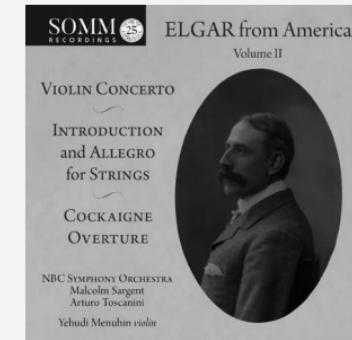
He has served on the faculties of Colorado College, Phillips Exeter Academy (New Hampshire) and the University of New Hampshire Chamber Music Institute. He has toured throughout North America, Europe and the Far East on period and modern oboes and has recorded for Telarc, Linn, Koch, Naxos, Vox, Music Masters, L'Oiseau Lyre and Musica Omnia.



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*Rob Cowan, Gramophone*