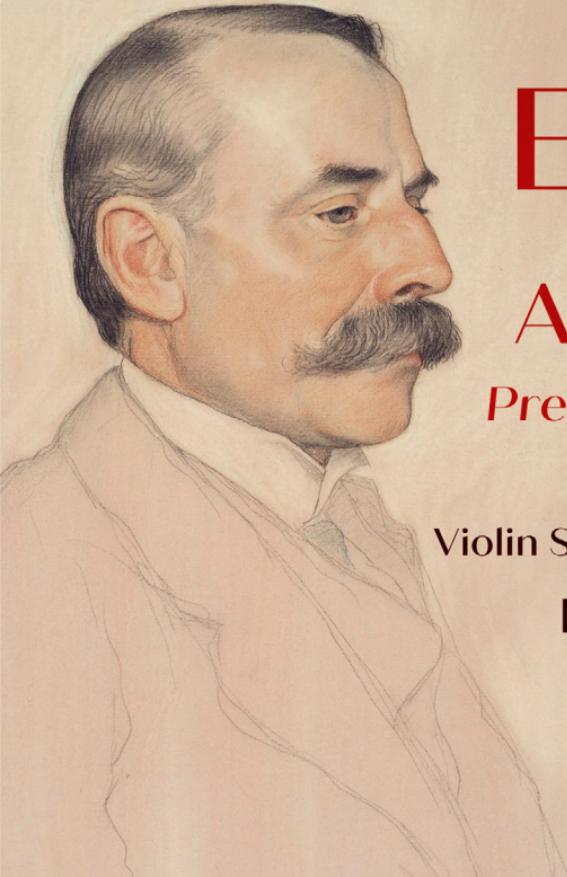


**SOMM**  
RECORDINGS



# ELGAR from the Archives vol.1

*Premiere Recordings  
Remastered*

Violin Sonata · String Quartet

Enigma Variations

conducted by

Sir EDWARD ELGAR

Sir HENRY WOOD

**Variations on an Original Theme “Enigma”, Op.36**

[26:35]

1	Theme	1:25
2	I. (C.A.E.)	1:53
3	II. (H.D.S-P.)	0:41
4	III. (R.B.T.)	1:18
5	IV. (W.M.B.)	0:32
6	V. (R.P.A.)	2:01
7	VI. (Ysobel)	1:24
8	VII. (Troyte)	0:59
9	VIII. (W.N.)	1:34
10	IX. (Nimrod) (abridged)	1:52
11	X. (Dorabella) Intermezzo	2:20
12	XI. (G.R.S.)	0:50
13	XII. (B.G.N.)	2:38
14	XIII. (* * *) Romanza	2:21
15	XIV. (E.D.U.) Finale	4:41

**Violin Sonata in E Minor, Op.82**

[16:16]

16	I. Allegro (abridged)	4:06
17	II. Romance (abridged)	4:11
18	III. Allegro, non troppo (complete)	7:58

<b>String Quartet in E Minor, Op.83</b> (abridged)	[11:01]
19 I. Allegro moderato	4:28
20 II. Piacevole (poco andante)	3:16
21 III. Allegro molto	3:15
 <b>Variations on an Original Theme “Enigma”, Op.36</b>	[24:36]
22 Theme	1:01
23 I. (C.A.E.)	1:17
24 II. (H.D.S-P.)	0:41
25 III. (R.B.T.)	0:45
26 IV. (W.M.B.)	0:28
27 V. (R.P.A.)	1:44
28 VI. (Ysobel)	1:10
29 VII. (Troyte)	0:59
30 VIII. (W.N.)	1:25
31 IX. (Nimrod)	2:29
32 X. (Dorabella) Intermezzo	2:24
33 XI. (G.R.S.)	0:55
34 XII. (B.G.N.)	2:20
35 XIII. (* * *) Romanza	2:15
36 XIV. (E.D.U.) Finale	4:35

Total duration: **78:45**



The photograph opposite, from 20 January 1914, shows Elgar standing on a plinth in the cramped surroundings of HMV's studio in City Road, West London. Before him sit a collection of orchestral musicians, appearing (there is no music in evidence) to play what we might assume is the composer's latest composition, *Carissima*.

Wound in tape, to attenuate the “tinny” sound and reduce vibration, the recording horn juts from the wall in front of the players. On the other side of the wall is a diaphragm, which transmits the vibrations captured by the horn to a stylus positioned via a gimbal mechanism over the wax disc to be cut. This wax master is then copied to produce the eventual commercial recording. The image, taken during Elgar's first session in a studio, demonstrates the challenge of recording a group of players in the “acoustic” age, huddled together as they are to enable their instruments to be heard on the ensuing disc. The arrival of the microphone in 1926 would revolutionise the technicalities of recording by expanding the dynamic range and frequency response, thereby giving freedom to engineers in the placement of microphones. The opportunities so created were quietly seized upon by the major recording companies, Elgar making his first “electrical” recording in April 1926 in the substantial space (with organ) afforded by the stage of London's Queen's Hall. With a new confidence, HMV took its microphones to Hereford Cathedral the following year to record Elgar conducting during that year's Three Choirs Festival.

The fewer the number of players involved in the acoustic recording process, the lesser the challenges of recording, and Elgar's music was served well by the fledgling industry during the acoustic years. The sound of brass and military bands, without the “impediment” of strings, was captured particularly successfully by the acoustic horn. A solo violin, played close to the horn, worked well, as the performance by Marjorie Hayward of Elgar's Sonata makes clear, and in 1901 *Salut d'amour* was the first of Elgar's compositions to be recorded – by the violinist “Mr. G. Jacobs” (full professional name Jacques Jacobs, Leopold Jacobs by birth) – on a single-sided ten-inch Gramophone and Typewriter Ltd (“G&T”) disc.

Sir Henry J. Wood (1869–1944), knighted in 1911, became the leading British conductor of his time and, after signing with the Columbia label, made two significant acoustic recordings of Elgar's music in addition to the *Enigma Variations* included in this release: excerpts of *The Dream of Gerontius*, and a cut version of the Violin Concerto with Albert Sammons (SOMMCD 0167). The recordings on this compact disc demonstrate the skill of those forgotten engineers in recording both smaller forces and the larger body of musicians required by Elgar's *Variations*. It also shows how they learnt by experience for, as Lani Spahr points out, "the two orchestras sound to be about the same size but the balances are different and more forward in the Wood. Recording techniques had improved greatly in the four years between the Elgar sessions and when Wood recorded his Elgar set." This was taken to its ultimate, when the HMV engineers managed the 51 players for Elgar's recording of his Second Symphony in sessions that began in 1924 and were completed the following year. It was still necessary to replace or augment the bass instruments with brass, such as tubas, as can be heard through the clarity obtained in Lani Spahr's transcriptions.

The recording industry responded to the arrival of the microphone with a degree of caution, as the did buying public who said the new medium sounded "unnatural". It was faced with a technical revolution and an entirely different way of managing recordings as the record companies were offered new freedoms combined with unprecedented challenges such as re-training engineers to work within the new system. In addition, they needed to protect their existing catalogue from instant redundancy. However, it is the acoustic era which this release celebrates, and through the ears of Lani Spahr we can hear what those forgotten engineers achieved, but barely heard, a century or more ago.

There are other differences in these *Enigmas* besides the orchestral balance. Wood avoids a side break between Variations VIII ("W.N.") and IX ("Nimrod"), so that the violins can be held-over and link the two. The side break for Elgar's recording comes before "Nimrod",

so that it runs on into the next variation, "Dorabella". "Nimrod" therefore starts without the held-over violins and, to fit this all on one side, a substantial cut between Cues 36 and 37 is made, thereby lessening the dramatic effect of the variation. A century later it seems extraordinary that Elgar should have agreed a cut in "Nimrod", of all variations. The solution for the Wood recording makes more musical sense and in sustaining the link between Variations VIII and IX emphasises the subtlety of Elgar's transition with its reference to Beethoven. Wood economises by ignoring the repeat in the "R.B.T." Variation.

The *Enigma Variations* was the most substantial piece Elgar had recorded in his ten years of making recordings. Other major orchestral compositions such as the two concertos had been heavily cut, but here was a complete recording of his first orchestral masterpiece. After a somewhat hesitant start and a careful handling of the "C.A.E." and "H.D.S-P." Variations, Elgar sustains fast tempi throughout, the acoustic process challenged notably in the "G.R.S." Variation and in picking up the throb of the ship's engines in Variation XIII. Elgar recognised these limitations when he wrote to Troyte Griffith (Variation VII): "Some of the varns. come off very well but your drums are not possible".

Recorded in three sessions (February and November 1920 and May 1921), the absence of the technical advances that would soon arrive becomes obvious, when it is compared to the Wood recording made four years later. Wood's performance is marginally quicker overall, but it does not seem rushed and has superior playing and transparency than in the Elgar. The limitations of acoustic recording may expose the paucity of strings, but the augmented bass (tubas) is more audible and ensures that there is greater body of sound where it matters in variations such as "G.R.S." and the "Romanza". Long ignored and inevitably overshadowed by the composer's recording, this is a testament to Wood's skill and the refusal of the Columbia label to be intimidated by Elgar's recording which, in any case, would be superseded by his own electrical recording a few years later.

The London String Quartet was formed in 1908 by the cellist Charles Warwick-Evans, with Albert Sammons as its leader, Thomas Petre as second violinist and Harry Waldo Warner as violist. By 1921 Sammons had been replaced by James Levey. Thomas Petre, after a break for war service, was back as second violin at the end of hostilities. By 1917 the Quartet had made a number of recordings, including Vaughan Williams's *On Wenlock Edge* with tenor Gervase Elwes and pianist Frederick B. Kidd for the Columbia label, which might have been the natural choice to record Elgar's Quartet. However, it was the rival Aeolian-Vocalion label which seized the moment and – duly abridged to fit four disc sides – recorded this much-cut version. The performance is interesting in that the players use little or no vibrato but seem to inhabit the music with a clear understanding based on their knowledge of the piece: despite the cuts, they give a solid performance.

Marjorie Hayward (1885–1953) surely deserves more recognition bearing in mind her contribution to British music during the first 40 or more years of the last century. London-born, her prodigious talent as a violinist led to lessons with Émile Sauret in London and Otakar Ševćík in Prague. Later she was the dedicatee of works by Thomas Dunhill, John Ireland and Sauret. A brilliant virtuoso, as can be heard in this recording, Hayward was made a fellow of the Royal Academy of Music and appointed professor of her instrument there in 1924.

Even less well known is the Australian pianist Una Mabel Bourne (1882–1974) who accompanied Dame Nellie Melba on tour as the latter's "associate artist". After travelling to Europe and studying with Theodor Leschetizky, she moved to Britain before returning to Australia in the 1930s where she lived with the soprano Mona McCaughey. She made many solo recordings for HMV and accompanied Marjorie Hayward in cut versions of sonatas by Beethoven and César Franck, the Elgar and others. Today she is recognised through the Mona McCaughey Scholarship – Una Bourne at the University of Melbourne.

Again there is little vibrato in Hayward's committed performance, with minimal, musically intelligent cuts that manage to leave the final movement intact.

Elgar and Richard Strauss were the first major composers to take the recording of their music seriously, and the support of HMV for Elgar and his music remains one of the finest examples of commercial altruism. Although the superior quality of sound available through the electrical process enables us to hear Elgar's interpretations at their finest, these acoustic recordings, now available in the best possible sound, open our ears to the music-making of over a century ago and the techniques of such fine artists as Marjorie Hayward. Lani Spahr, ever the perfectionist, has also revisited Elgar's acoustic *Variations* and applied his skill to that recording alongside the one made by Henry Wood (for the first time, digitally), enabling us to hear instrumental sounds that Elgar could only have imagined – including those drums in Variation VII.

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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.

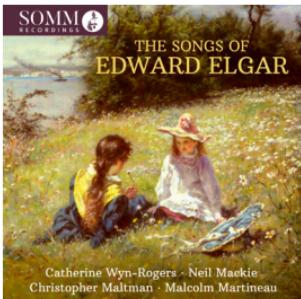
In 2016, BBC Radio 3 presented an hour-long documentary about his stereo reconstructions for *Elgar Remastered* (SOMMCD 261-4). In addition to his close collaboration with SOMM, which has produced several critically acclaimed recordings, his work can be heard on Music & Arts, West Hill Radio Archive, 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 and 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, and 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, MusicMasters, L'Oiseau-Lyre, and Musica Omnia.

In addition to the present archival release, SOMM Recordings offers a reissue (digital download only) and a new album this month, in celebration of the Elgar Society's 75th anniversary

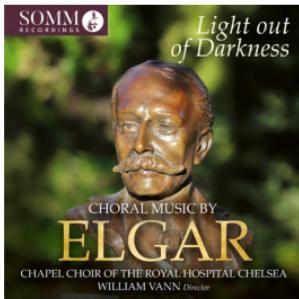


SOMMCD 0715 *The Songs of Edward Elgar*

Catherine Wyn-Rogers · Neil Mackie

Christopher Maltman · Malcolm Martineau

*The 1999 recording with a new liner note by Julian Rushton*



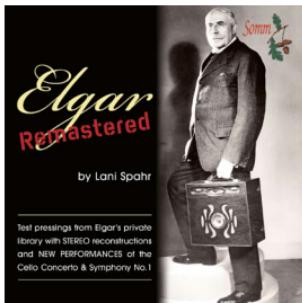
SOMMCD 0714 *Light out of Darkness*

Choral Music by Elgar

Chapel Choir of the Royal Hospital Chelsea

William Vann

Also available is the seminal four-disc release



SOMMCD 261-4 *Elgar Remastered* by Lani Spahr: Test pressings from Elgar's private library with STEREO reconstructions and NEW PERFORMANCES of the Cello Concerto and Symphony No.1

# EDWARD ELGAR 1857–1934

## from the Archives vol.1

### Premiere Recordings Remastered

**b** Marjorie Hayward *violin*, Una Bourne *piano*

**c** The London String Quartet

James Levey & Thomas Petre *violins*, H. Waldo Warner *viola*, C. Warwick-Evans *cello*

**a** Royal Albert Hall Orchestra, Sir EDWARD ELGAR *conductor*

**d** New Queen's Hall Orchestra, Sir HENRY WOOD *conductor*

<b>1</b> – <b>15</b>	<b>Variations on an Original Theme “Enigma”, Op.36 *</b>	<b>a</b>	26:35
<b>16</b> – <b>18</b>	<b>Violin Sonata in E Minor, Op.82 *</b> (abridged)	<b>b</b>	16:16
<b>19</b> – <b>21</b>	<b>String Quartet in E Minor, Op.83 *</b> (abridged)	<b>c</b>	11:01
<b>22</b> – <b>36</b>	<b>Variations on an Original Theme “Enigma”, Op.36</b>	<b>d</b>	24:36
Total duration:			<b>78:45</b>

\* premiere recording

**b** Acoustic Recording: HMV Studio, Hayes, London, 19 November 1919, on HMV C957 [HO4118af · HO4115af], HMV C980 [HO4116af · HO4117af]

**a** Acoustic Recording: HMV Studio, Hayes, London 24 February 1920, on HMV D582 [HO4275af] (¶–¶)  
16 November 1920, on HMV D578 [HO4609af<sup>II</sup>] (¶–¶), D582 [HO4620af] (¶–¶)  
11 May 1921, on HMV D578 [Cc140<sup>I</sup>] (¶–¶), D602 [Cc141<sup>III</sup> · Cc142<sup>II</sup>] (¶–¶) & D596 [Cc143<sup>II</sup>] (¶–¶)

**c** Acoustic Recording: London, 1921, on Vocalion D-02026 [01803] (¶), D-02027 [02340 · 01807] (¶–¶)

**d** Acoustic Recording: 9 July 1924, on Columbia L-1629 [AX505] (¶–¶)  
10 July 1924, on Columbia L-1629 [AX511], L-1630 [AX512 · AX513], L-1631 [AX514 · AX515], L-1632 [AX516] (¶–¶)  
14 July 1924, on Columbia L-1632 [AX522] (¶<sup>II</sup>)

Executive Producer: **Siva Oke** · Producer, Sound Restoration and Remastering: **Lani Spahr**

Front Cover: Sir Edward Elgar (July 1914) by William Strang (1859–1921)

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