



SIR EDWARD
ELGAR

Wand of Youth Suites
Nursery Suite
Dream Children

Ulster Orchestra
Bryden Thomson

Bournemouth Sinfonietta
Norman Del Mar



CHAN 10422 X





Cadenza Archive

Sir Edward Elgar

Sir Edward Elgar (1857–1934)

Wand of Youth Suite No. 1, Op. 1a 21:06

1	Overture	1:42
2	Serenade	1:59
3	Minuet	2:06
4	Sun Dance	3:04
5	Fairy Pipers	3:50
6	Slumber Scene	4:27
7	Fairies and Giants	3:31

Wand of Youth Suite No. 2, Op. 1b 18:06

8	March	4:58
9	The Little Bells	2:45
10	Moths and Butterflies	1:59
11	Fountain Dance	2:49
12	The Tame Bear	2:46
13	Wild Bears	2:25



Nursery Suite

14	Aubade	25:41
15	The Serious Doll	6:06
16	Busy-ness	3:08
17	The Sad Doll	2:27
18	The Wagon (Passes)	1:49
19	The Merry Doll	1:45
20	Dreaming – Envoy (coda)	1:49
		8:09

Dream Children, Op. 43*

(Enfants d'un rêve)

21	Andante –	7:51
22	Allegro	3:30
		4:21

TT 73:17

Ulster Orchestra Bryden Thomson

Bournemouth Sinfonietta* Norman Del Mar*

Elgar: Wand of Youth Suites etc

A love of children and their intimate world was something Elgar never lost. His *œuvre* includes a variety of works happily associated with that subject: *The Starlight Express*, the song 'A Child Asleep', and the three Suites recorded here. In March 1907 Elgar had visited the United States, where in the course of a six-week tour he conducted various works to considerable critical acclaim. Following his return he plunged into composition with renewed vigour, writing among other pieces the *Fourth Pomp and Circumstance March*, but he spent the later summer months looking through his 'Shed' or jotting books. There were six of these, the earliest containing sketches dating back to 1871. They were to prove of much assistance in the production of the orchestral scores of the two **Wand of Youth Suites**. The origins of this music dated back over thirty years to when the teenage Elgar children had written a play in which there was a perfect, untainted world from which ill-tempered adults were barred. The only outsiders in this dream-world were butterflies, fairies, giants and moths; but should an adult recognise the error of his ways, due consideration might be given to his request for admission. The

young Edward devised some suitable music, later copying it into his 'Shed' books, and it was from this material that the two suites were drawn.

The First Suite opens appropriately with an Overture which had existed in sketches from 1879, when Elgar was bandmaster of a hospital band, although he reworked much of the material. The mood here is exuberant and fast-moving: the composer marks it *Allegro molto* in 4/4 in the key of B flat. 'Serenade' is a gentle, lilting piece with a delicate melody first heard from the clarinet but then taken over by the violins, later joined by the woodwind; the melody is tossed between the two. The Minuet (subtitled 'Old Style') is a charming seventeenth-century pastiche which had existed since 1881 but only in short score. Marked *Andante* in 3/4, the opening bars carry the following inscription: 'The two old people enter' (referring originally to Elgar's parents!). 'Sun Dance', cast in 3/4 and marked *Presto*, is the most strongly developed piece in the First Suite: its origins date from 1879 when it was devised as a waltz (of which there are two glimpses here: first at the change of key from C to A flat, and later when the tune is repeated a third



higher). This movement is basically a dialogue between the higher wind who permit the light and busy strings to take over the glittering arabesques. The use of horns and brass is judiciously reserved for the final climax. (Incidentally, this movement was also used in the later *Starlight Express* incidental music.) Next comes the contrasting 'Fairy Pipers', set in a rocking 6/8 rhythm and marked *Allegretto*. The clarinets give out a soothing melody over a rippling string accompaniment, only for the strings to have their tune before the clarinets return. The score here remarks: 'Two fairy pipers pass by in a boat, and charm them to sleep'. The following 'Slumber Scene' is for muted strings with two bassoons and a single horn. Marked *Moderato* in 4/4, the nocturnal mood is exquisitely caught. A point of interest here is that the bass part uses just the open strings (the original child player in 1879 was only able to manage this). Concluding the First Suite is 'Fairies and Giants': the delightful contrast of higher wind and lower strings creates a marvellous effect of two extremes. The origins of this section date back to 1867 but the brilliance of the 1907 orchestration shows Elgar at his richest. The brass and percussion are given suitably ponderous music to suggest the size and slowness of pace of the larger creatures. The scoring employed here is the largest in the Suite. Dedicated to Charles

Lee Williams (1853–1935), organist at Gloucester Cathedral from 1882 until 1898, the first performance of the Suite took place in the Queen's Hall on 4 December 1907, conducted by Sir Henry Wood.

Such was Elgar's enthusiasm that he wrote a second *Wand of Youth Suite* which he himself conducted in Worcester on 9 September, 1908. The music was dedicated to Hubert Leicester, a friend since boyhood days. This Suite has only six movements, beginning with a March (the opening sketched in 1897) which is in sombre mood in the key of E flat in 4/4 with much use of triplet rhythms. There is an attractive change to G major when the strings have a jaunty semiquaver pattern. The ensuing 'Little Bells' (subtitled 'Scherzino'), also containing sketches dating back to 1879, is an *Allegro molto* in 2/4. The mood is gossamer-like in the delicacy of the woodwind writing. The wistful middle section, using a falling five-note phrase, is set in the melodic minor; Elgar imparts a warm, autumnal glow when the horn melody enters. However, the opening mood quickly returns, albeit with a brief repeat of the middle section tune now up a third. 'Moths and Butterflies', another piece using sketches from 1879, is an *Allegretto* in 2/4 in which the prevailing mood is quiet, fairy-like and soft. 'Fountain Dance' gracefully conveys the idea of rising and falling jets of water, the lower strings and timpani forming

a drone bass. The fifth movement (an *Allegro moderato* in 2/2) is called 'The Tame Bear'. Here Elgar graphically captures the sad picture of a chained and clumsy performing animal being exhibited in the streets. Note the subtle use of the oboe part to suggest the pitiless animal and the tambourine and cymbals to convey his pathetic shuffling. 'Wild Bears' (one of the pieces written in 1879) was originally a quadrille and the pace and excitement of the dancing whirl is exuberantly caught. It is a fittingly vivid and exhilarating finale which includes evocative animal-like growls in the bass and percussion parts.

The death of his wife, Alice, in April 1920 was a poleaxe blow to Elgar. He was stunned and never really recovered from the loss. Her inspiration, encouragement and assistance were greatly missed, and with the marked change in the musical climate and prevailing tastes in post-war Britain the composer virtually ceased writing music, certainly any completed large-scale score. He sensed his era was over. The brash, vulgar, garish mood of the 1920s was not for a sensitive man approaching his retirement years.

Elgar had been the unofficial Master of the King's Music for two decades before his official appointment in 1924 following the death of Sir Walter Parratt. The duties were scarcely onerous but the sixty-seven-year-old incumbent devoted time and effort to

re-organising the King's Music Library housed in the British Museum. His basic role was more of an adviser to King George V, but there were occasions when suitable ceremonial music was called for, and Elgar's compositions included *Good Morrow* ('a simple carol for His Majesty's happy recovery'), a four-part setting to words by George Gascoigne dating from 1929, and the *Nursery Suite*, written to mark the birth of two children to the Duchess of York in 1926 and 1930.

Elgar began work on this Suite following the success of the *Severn Suite* which was written for the National Brass Band Championship in 1930. That, like much of the music written in this last decade of Elgar's life, had its origins in the 'Shed' books. The first movement, 'Aubade' (subtitled 'Awake'), opens with a single, long-held G major chord. The ensuing passage, marked *Allegretto*, has a rocking 12/8 quaver/crochet rhythm. The change of key to E flat minor with the time signature 4/4 includes part of an F major hymn tune which Elgar had written in 1878 to the words 'Hear Thy Children' (entitled *Drake's Broughton*, No. 151 in the Westminster Hymnal). The opening mood soon returns until the *fortissimo* climax where the hymn tune is repeated. 'The Serious Doll' (marked *Andantino*) opens with a gentle and decorative solo flute over rocking, muted strings. The middle section is introduced by oboe and clarinet





passages, only for the opening melody to return in a more rhapsodic manner. There is a delicacy and simplicity in the orchestral writing here which has an endearing warmth. 'Busy-ness' is in essence a miniature scherzo in 4/4 marked *Allegro molto*, in which hustle and bustle are evocatively caught with rising and falling passages for wind and strings. The whole of this brief movement is enhanced by the judicious use of brass. 'The Sad Doll' (marked *Andantino*) is in the form of a slow waltz in which the strings are muted and divided with harp and woodwind. The skill with which Elgar conveys a mood of gentle wistfulness for the children's toys and the nursery is beautifully captured. 'The Wagon (Passes)', an *Allegretto* in 4/4, depicts a lumbering, heavily laden horse-drawn vehicle, initially heard in the distance ponderously making its journey. Slowly the cart rumbles into the foreground only to disappear again out of sight. Elgar skilfully suggests its size and lugubrious pace by the use of percussion and lower brass in a rhythmic *ostinato*. The contrasting tune whistled by the driver is introduced by a solo clarinet accompanied by violas. 'The Merry Doll' forms an effective contrast, being a second scherzo in 2/4 which Elgar marks *Allegro molto*. The overall mood is cheerful and entertaining with much use of timpani and percussion (notably glockenspiel) to enhance the whole effect.

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Everything hurries about and the movement concludes in a boisterous and rumbustious manner. 'Dreaming' opens with muted strings alone in a tender, reflective mood with various Elgarian fingerprints, and concludes with two violins playing in octaves. There follows a solo violin cadenza marked 'Envoy (coda)'. The succeeding pages offer a recapitulation of some of the music already heard, and a final return to the opening of the 'Aubade'.

The first performance took place in the Kingsway Hall on 4 June 1931 with the composer conducting the work for recording purposes. The occasion was attended by Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of York who were anxious to hear the music. They greatly liked 'The Wagon (Passes)' and immediately requested an encore before hearing the rest of the Suite. The score is 'dedicated by permission to their Royal Highnesses, the Duchess of York [subsequently Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother] and the Princesses Elizabeth [Queen Elizabeth II] and Margaret Rose [Princess Margaret]'.

Although Elgar grumbled on occasion at the need to earn money with short pieces instead of giving the time to larger works, as a good craftsman he would never waste anything left over from other compositions if he could make something else of them. His Opus 43, **Dream Children**, appeared in idyllic contrast to the celebratory music of King

Edward VII's Coronation in 1902. The title is from Charles Lamb, and a long quotation from him at the head of the score ends with the poignant words, 'We are only what might have been'. It finds an echo in the yearning sadness that suffuses No. 1, with its musing oboe and clarinet, and which also intervenes in the lighter No. 2.

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Formed in 1966 and based in Belfast, Northern Ireland, the **Ulster Orchestra** is now one of the major orchestras in the United Kingdom and Ireland, with a main concert season in the Ulster and Waterfront Halls, and additional performances across Northern Ireland. Orchestra in Residence for the Belfast Festival at Queen's University, it also accompanies opera and ballet productions at Belfast's Grand Opera House, while its outstanding education and outreach work has been recognised by an award from the Royal Philharmonic Society. As Principal Conductor and Artistic Adviser, Thierry Fischer numbers Bryden Thomson, Vernon Handley, Dmitry Sitkovetsky and Yan Pascal Tortelier among his distinguished predecessors, with Kenneth Montgomery being the Orchestra's new Principal Guest Conductor. The Ulster Orchestra has made more than sixty recordings and is an

exclusive broadcast partner of the BBC, with many relays on BBC Radio 3, Radio Ulster and BBC TV. Tours of Europe, Asia and the United States have added to the Orchestra's reputation.

Born in Scotland, **Bryden Thomson** studied at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama and in Europe with Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt and Igor Markevitch. He worked with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra as assistant to Ian Whyte after whose death he undertook some 250 engagements in two years. He was Principal Conductor of the BBC Northern Symphony Orchestra from 1968 to 1973, Principal Conductor and Music Director of the Ulster Orchestra from 1977 to 1985, and undertook guest conducting engagements with orchestras such as the Philharmonia Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic, London Philharmonic, Scottish National and Scottish Chamber orchestras. His work in the operatic field included posts with Norwegian Opera and Scottish Opera. Bryden Thomson died in 1991.

In 1998/99 the **Bournemouth Sinfonietta** celebrated thirty years of providing music of an international standard to the South and West of England. Performing in venues ranging from concert halls to community centres, the Bournemouth Sinfonietta maintained a

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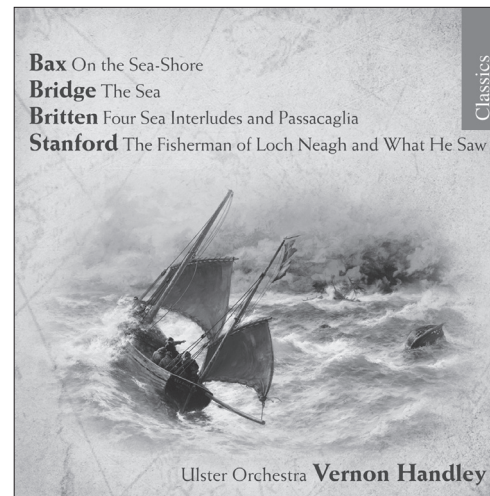


commitment to the people of the region with a touring programme from Lands End to High Wycombe. The Sinfonietta was Resident Orchestra at the Hall for Cornwall in Truro following a successful concert series, and also gave concerts in Brazil. Under the baton of Principal Conductor Alexander Polianichko, who was appointed in 1997, the Sinfonietta toured both Normandy and Polianichko's home town of St Petersburg.

Born in 1919, **Norman Del Mar** was educated at Marlborough and the Royal College of Music. From his early successes

as Sir Thomas Beecham's assistant, he became a notable conductor of Mozart, Janáček, Strauss and Schoenberg, amongst others. He worked with a range of British orchestras including the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, as well as with orchestras in Europe, Russia, the Middle and Far East, and South America. He was also a keen opera-lover and was invited, as guest conductor, to perform at The Royal Opera, Covent Garden, Sadler's Wells, the Royal Stockholm Opera and Scottish Opera. He died in February 1994.

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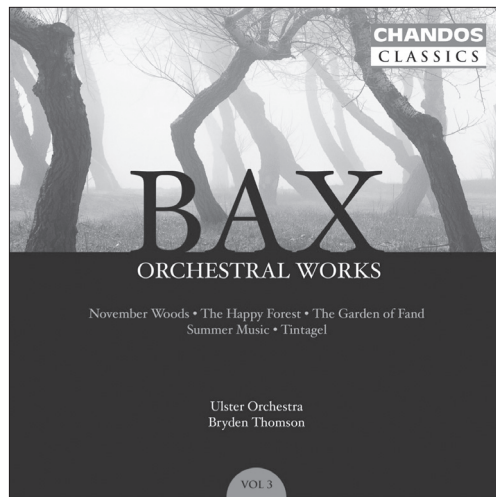


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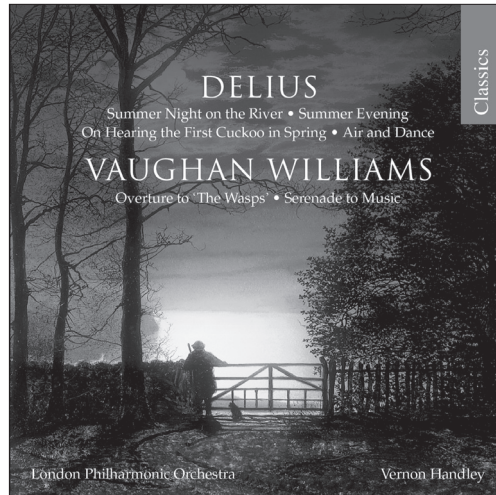


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Front cover *An' you KNOW what men are* (The Tatler, 1920) by Mabel Lucie Atwell (1879–1964)

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SIR EDWARD ELGAR

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| 14 | - | 20 | Nursery Suite | 25:41 |
| 21 | - | 22 | Dream Children, Op. 43* | 7:51 |
| | | | | TT 73:17 |

Ulster Orchestra
Bryden Thomson

Bournemouth Sinfonietta*
Norman Del Mar*

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