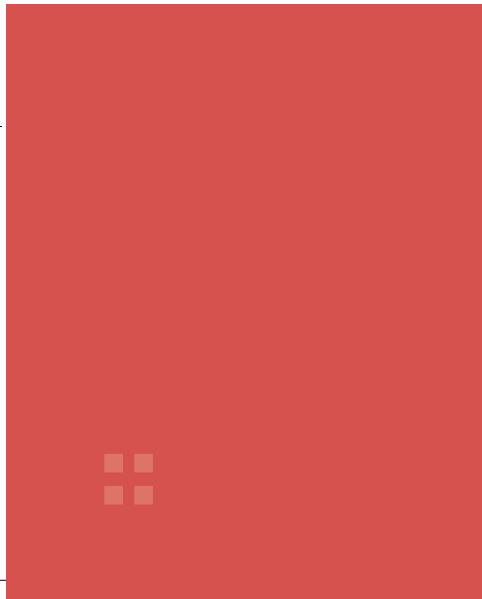


CHANDOS :: intro

CHAN 2021

an introduction to Edward Elgar





Classical music is inaccessible and difficult. It's surprising how many people still believe the above statement to be true, so this new series from Chandos is not only welcome, it's also very necessary.

I was lucky enough to stumble upon the wonderful world of the classics when I was a child, and I've often contemplated how much poorer my life would have been had I not done so. As you have taken the first step by buying this CD, I guarantee that you will share the delights of this epic journey of discovery. Each CD in the series features the orchestral music of a specific composer, with a selection of his 'greatest hits' played by top quality performers. It will give you a good flavour of the composer's style, but you won't find any nasty surprises – all the music is instantly accessible and appealing. The discs are beautifully presented, and very good value for money, too.

I sincerely hope this CD marks the start of your own lifelong passion for classical music.

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Classic FM presenter



Sir Edward Elgar (1857–1934)

- | | | |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | Pomp and Circumstance March in D major, Op. 39 No. 1* | 6:12 |
| | Cello Concerto in E minor, Op. 85*† | 33:01 |
| 2 | I Adagio – Moderato | 9:00 |
| 3 | II Allegro molto | 4:59 |
| 4 | III Adagio | 5:49 |
| 5 | IV Allegro – Moderato – Allegro ma non troppo | 13:11 |
| 6 | Chanson de matin, Op. 15 No. 2‡ | 2:59 |
| | Variations on an Original Theme 'Enigma', Op. 36* | 29:29 |
| 7 | Theme. Andante | 1:31 |
| 8 | I L'istesso tempo (C.A.E.) – | 1:40 |
| 9 | II Allegro (H.D.S.-P.) – | 0:47 |
| 10 | III Allegretto (R.B.T.) – | 1:31 |
| 11 | IV Allegro di molto (W.M.B.) – | 0:31 |
| 12 | V Moderato (R.P.A.) – | 1:50 |
| 13 | VI Andantino (Ysobel) – | 1:14 |
| 14 | VII Presto (Troyte) – | 1:02 |
| 15 | VIII Allegretto (W.N.) – | 1:52 |



16	IX Adagio (Nimrod) –	3:23
17	X Allegretto (Dorabella) –	2:43
18	XI Allegro di molto (G.R.S.) –	1:01
19	XII Andante (B.G.N.) –	2:26
20	XIII Romanza. Moderato (***) –	2:40
21	XIV Finale. Allegro (E.D.U.)	5:10

Total time 71:41

Ralph Kirshbaum cello[†]
 Scottish National Orchestra*
 Sir Alexander Gibson*
 Bournemouth Sinfonietta‡
 Ronald Thomas leader
 Norman Del Mar‡

pomp and circumstance march no. 1

In September 1930 Elgar recorded his newest work, *Pomp and Circumstance* March No. 5. The March was so new that it had not yet had its public premiere. But the history of the *Pomp and Circumstance* series went back to the days of the overture *Cockaigne* at the turn of the century. When work on *Cockaigne* had been interrupted by a symphonic idea, that idea had taken the form of a great melody. As the symphony did not follow, Elgar may well have used the melody for the famous trio of *Pomp and Circumstance* No. 1 which followed immediately after the composition of *Cockaigne*. He himself seemed to suggest it when he said of the *Pomp and Circumstance* trio: 'A tune like that comes once in a lifetime'.

The title for the Marches had emerged from his reading of Shakespeare's *Othello*, in which the hero says:

Farewell the neighing steed and the shrill trump,
 The spirit-stirring drum, th' ear-piercing fife,
 The royal banner, and all quality,
 Pride, pomp and circumstance, of glorious war!

It sounded the note of recession that was to resonate so deeply through Elgar's music to come. After he finished the first two *Pomp and Circumstance* Marches in the summer of 1901, he explained his thinking thus:

...I did not see why the ordinary quick march should not be treated on a large scale in the way that the waltz, the old-fashioned slow march, and even the polka have been treated by the great composers; yet all marches on the symphonic scale are so slow that people can't march to them.

...I like to look on the composer's vocation as the old troubadours or bards did. In those days it was no disgrace to a man to be turned on to step in front of an army and inspire the people with a song. For my own part, I know that there are a lot of people who like to



celebrate events with music. To these people I have given tunes. Is that wrong? Why should I write a fugue or something which won't appeal to anyone, when the people yearn for things which can stir them?

Not only the people but the new King Edward VII had *Pomp and Circumstance* No. 1 played repeatedly. Partly because of the King's enthusiasm, Elgar was invited to write a *Coronation Ode* in 1902, and he incorporated the great trio tune in the final number as 'Land of hope and glory'. The publishers suggested making a solo song of it, and it became a second national anthem overnight.

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cello concerto

Elgar's Cello Concerto was written for Felix Salmond, and was first performed under Elgar's direction at the Queen's Hall, London on 26 October 1919. Elgar did not conduct the whole programme; the rest was under the baton of Albert Coates, the Anglo-Russian conductor. Unfortunately, Coates overran his rehearsal time by more than an hour, with the result that Salmond and Elgar had little time to prepare the concerto. The performance was poor, and the work ill-received. Quite apart from the troubles of the performance itself, the character of the work must have disturbed those expecting something along the lines of the Violin Concerto, for Elgar's Cello Concerto, as it happened his last important creation, revealed his innermost thoughts more fully than almost any other single composition, and his thoughts were those of a great creative artist entering his final period. Like Turner, and Milton before him, this meant far greater economy of material (although the orchestra is as large as that for the Violin Concerto) distilled into the briefest and deftest of gestures.

In spite of the failure of the work at the premiere, it was quickly saved; within three months, His Master's Voice recorded the work under Elgar with Beatrice Harrison as soloist. In the Queen's Hall Orchestra for the premiere was the young John Barbirolli in the cello section: his later championship (and his later recordings) of the work proved a vital link with its first years. The concerto quickly entered the repertoires of the world's great cellists, many of whom recorded memorable interpretations. At a time when his music was not as frequently heard as it is today, this work, perhaps more than any other, kept the reputation of Elgar alive.

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chanson de matin

That Elgar became a popular composer in the best sense of the term is reflected in the variety of shorter pieces he composed. Some are from his early career when he was still making his name; others continued to be written when he was well established. He grumbled on occasion at the need to earn money with them instead of giving the time to larger works, but from his earliest days he kept sketch books of ideas and, as a good craftsman, he would never waste any that were left over from other compositions if he could make something else of them.

Elgar was still a struggling provincial musician at the time he wrote the *Chanson de matin* in 1897. Originally for violin and piano, like a number of pieces intended for himself to play at local concerts, this and its companion the *Chanson de nuit* were first heard in his own orchestration three years later in London, after the success of the *Enigma Variations*.

© Noël Goodwin



variations on an original theme 'enigma'

The *Enigma* Variations (1898–99) begin with a question, an 'Enigma': it consists of two figures, one in G minor, the other in G major, and together they make the work's theme. Each of the variations 'looks at' the Enigmatic theme from the viewpoint of one of the 'friends pictured within' – actual friends of the composer, each of whom had some attribute to suggest a particular treatment of the 'Enigma'. Each combines the original pair of figures in a new way. And the sequence of them all leads towards a solution combining the two figures in one grand melody: this Finale takes the form of an ideal self-portrait, as Elgar said, 'merely to show what E.D.U. (a paraphrase of a fond name) intended to do'. ('Edu' was his wife's short form of the German 'Eduard'.)

The Variations began quite suddenly one evening in 1898. Elgar, returning home after a long day's teaching, sat down at the piano and began to extemporise without any object. Suddenly his wife interrupted him by exclaiming, 'That's a good tune!' He awoke from the dream: 'Eh? Tune? What tune?' Then slowly he reconstructed the succession of notes and chords he had played, and she asked, 'What is that?' 'Nothing,' he answered, 'but something might be made of it.' But instead of saying, 'I would make *this*', he thought of a friend who played the piano (Elgar's chosen instrument was the violin) and said, 'Steuart-Powell would do this'. Other friendly reminiscences produced other variations, until his wife said, 'You are doing something which I think has never been done before'. It was not quite true. Several earlier composers, including Chopin, had extemporised musical caricatures of their friends. But Elgar's friendly extemporising, 'begun in a spirit of humour' (as he said), was 'continued in deep seriousness'. And that was new indeed.

The object of these friendly variations was to teach him something. What they would teach him, in fact, was how to write

a big orchestral work – a thing he had never managed up to that time, despite several attempts. He had written big choral works: but music set to words has its main lines already laid down by the story or situation. Music without any programme seeks its structure in the abstract – a much more difficult problem. The problem can be helped by variations, which divide the task in two: first make the individual variations, and then afterwards arrange their order. So the composer of variations can devote his whole attention first to making each of his pieces, and then to putting those pieces together.

When Elgar's Variations were put together well, they made an evolution, a process. But a process must have a beginning and an end. What was the beginning of this process? The 'nothing-but-something-might-be-made-of-it' theme. It was an Enigma, a question undefined – one of those black holes out of which creative things come. Elgar said of it later:

The Enigma I will not explain – its 'dark saying' must be left unguessed...
Further, through and over the whole set another and larger theme 'goes', but is not played...

Of course, that did not prevent people from assuming that 'theme' meant 'tune' – some unplayed counter-melody to the Enigma music – and trying to guess it. The youngest of the 'friends pictured within' the Variations, Dora Penny, thought so. She was so struck with the 'friends' part in it that she decided the answer must be 'Auld Lang Syne'; it would be such a nice compliment to the friends if it were so. But she did not know of the Variations' beginning that night when the thoughts of the composer had been so far from his own music that his wife had to identify a theme before he himself realised there was an entity at all: it was not consistent with any concealment by polyphony or counterpoint. The real answer, as Elgar suggested to Dora Penny when she begged him to tell her, stood before her.

For what has an Enigmatic beginning may still have a definite end. In the Coda of the final 'E.D.U.' the original G minor and



G major themes found their unity, and the Enigma found its solution in purely musical terms. And with it, Edward Elgar himself found the music to take his fame through the civilised world. The Enigma remained a black hole still; but the process of consulting one friendly personality after another over it until it yielded him a mirror of the creative self was an orchestral enactment of the creative process itself. As such it remains a unique work of music.

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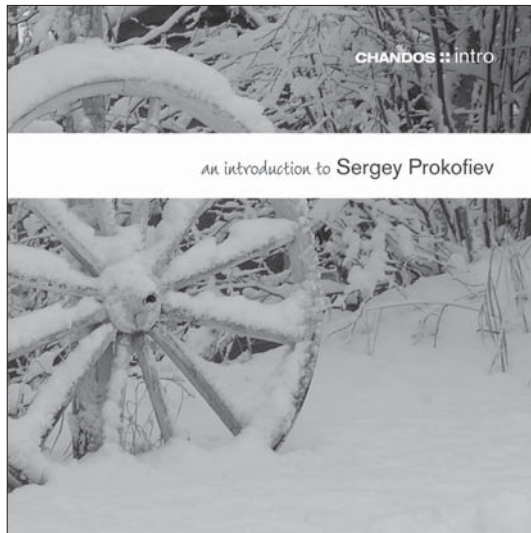


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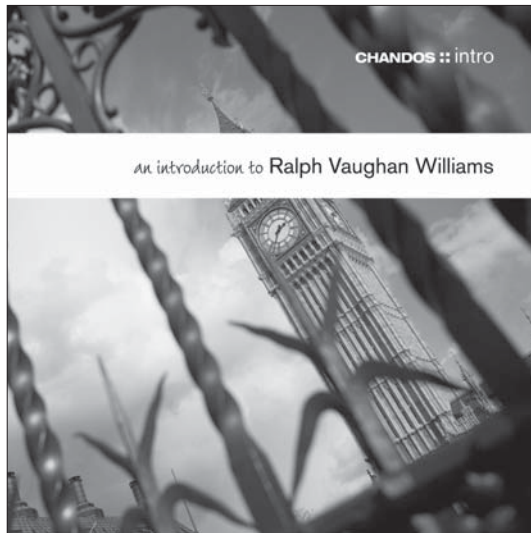
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Sir Edward Elgar (1857–1934)

In a career that straddled the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Sir Edward Elgar, one of the most famous of all British composers, produced some of the best-loved works in the English repertoire. Deeply inspired by England's countryside and culture, he wrote dazzling choral and orchestral works full of bold tunes and striking orchestrations, such as the colourful 'Enigma' Variations and the lyrical yet passionate Cello Concerto.

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