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E L G A R

The Sanguine Fan

Enigma Variations

Froissart Overture

Incidental Music from

'Grania and Diarmid'



**The London
Philharmonic**

Bryden Thomson

Edward Elgar (1857–1934)

	The Sanguine Fan, Op. 81	19:26
1	Moderato, Maestoso –	4:44
2	Andantino –	3:32
3	Più moderato –	2:07
4	Allegro molto –	0:39
5	Grandioso –	1:29
6	Allegretto moderato –	3:02
7	Allegro –	1:10
8	Allegro –	0:58
9	Moderato	1:45
	Incidental Music from ‘Grania & Diarmid’, Op. 42	13:06
	(George Moore & W.B. Yeats)	
10	Incidental Music	3:05
11	Funeral March	7:38
12	There are seven that pull the thread (Song, Act I)	2:17
13	Froissart Overture, Op. 19	14:27

**Variations on an Original Theme (‘Enigma’)
for orchestra, Op. 36** 31:25

14	Introduction –	
	I (C.A.E.) –	3:24
15	II (H.D.S-P) –	0:48
16	III (R.B.T.) –	1:22
17	IV (W.M.B.) –	0:30
18	V (R.P.A.) –	2:15
19	VI (Ysobel) –	1:20
20	VII (Troyte) –	1:00
21	VIII (W.N.) –	2:04
22	IX (Nimrod.) –	3:43
23	X (Dorabella) Intermezzo –	2:35
24	XI (G.R.S.) –	1:01
25	XII (B.G.N.) –	2:40
26	XIII (***) Romanza –	2:50
27	XIV (E.D.U.) Finale	5:53
	TT 78:49	

Jenny Miller soprano
London Philharmonic Orchestra
David Nolan leader
Bryden Thomson

Edward Elgar: The Sanguine Fan etc.

The Sanguine Fan is a ballet-music composed in 1917 for inclusion in a war charity matinée. The author of the scenario, Ina Lowther, based it on a sylvan fan design in sanguine by the artist Charles Conder, which showed Pan and Echo with eighteenth-century couples in Louis XV dress. The slight plot drew from Elgar a score in his lightest nostalgic vein, the Elgar of *Chanson de matin* and *The Wand of Youth*. He recorded some extracts from it, after which it was unplayed until Sir Adrian Boult resurrected it in 1973.

The music Elgar wrote for the play **Grania and Diarmid**, by George Moore and W.B. Yeats and produced in Dublin in 1901, still sounds fresh and original. Moore described the plot as 'based on the great heroic legend of Ireland' and particularly wanted music for the death of Diarmid. Elgar supplied one of his noblest marches, appropriate to an Irish Siegfried. He also wrote an atmospheric horn-call and a haunting song 'There are seven that pull the thread' for the druidess Laban, who sits spinning while the tragedy unfolds. Elgar contemplated an opera on the subject, but the incidental music is all that remains – Yeats called it 'wonderful in its heroic melancholy'.

The idea for the **Froissart Overture** was suggested by a line from Keats which epitomises the tales of Froissart the chronicler and historian, which Elgar placed at the top of the score: 'When Chivalry/Lifted up her lance on high'. As the valiant opening suggests, the image was of a kind which stirred Elgar's imagination (cf. the flashing splendour of the violin line beneath the words 'Bring me my arrows of desire' in his orchestration of Parry's *Jerusalem*), and though, within the decade, he was to produce several works of sounder structure, the grandeur of the writing throughout *Froissart* is entirely characteristic. The dismissal by some of the lyrical middle section as 'salon' in style would have distressed and puzzled a composer who cared little for such distinctions. There is, in any case, more than a glimpse of the mature, private Elgar in this brief, *poco meno mosso* of *Froissart*, with its quiet, aspiring melody introduced by solo clarinet (already by 1896, the characteristic shape re-appears, its effect deepened by context and harmony, in the *Meditation* from *The Light of Life*). The rest, however, is heady, fertile invention, as technically challenging as any orchestral Elgar, but music, indeed, to 'carry the orchestra away with it'.

With his **Variations on an Original Theme** for orchestra, composed in 1898–99, Elgar achieved international recognition at the age of forty-two. The first performance was conducted in London in June 1899 by Hans Richter, whose concerts had been a feature of the capital's musical life since 1877. He had conducted the first Bayreuth Festival in 1876 and for many years both the Vienna Opera and Philharmonic. Such a great musician's faith in the composer, continued at the Birmingham Festival and during his twelve years as a conductor of the Hallé Orchestra in Manchester, was a turning-point in Elgar's career. Within a few years, most of the celebrated European conductors were including Elgar in their programmes – Weingartner, Nikisch, Steinbach, Toscanini, Strauss and Mahler among them.

The theme is marked 'Enigma', and it is generally accepted now that it represents Elgar himself and 'the loneliness of the creative artist'. Its contrasted strains of major and minor reflect the extrovert and introvert sides of his personality. But the puzzle that has intrigued listeners ever since the first performance arose from Elgar's statement about 'another and larger theme' which 'goes' right through and over the whole set but is not played. He is said to have later implied that it was a well-known melody, and guesses have ranged from 'Rule, Britannia!'

and the 'Dies Irae' to 'Pop goes the weasel' and 'Auld Lang Syne'. No one knows the answer and now never will. Or is the hidden theme an abstraction, like friendship? This would be appropriate, since each of the variations is a portrait of a friend (except the last, which is a self-portrait) and the whole work is dedicated 'to my friends pictured within'.

These friends' identities are disguised in the score by initials or nicknames, but have long since been revealed: 1. C.A.E., the composer's wife Alice, 'romantic and delicate'. 2. H.D. Steuart-Powell, who played the piano, with Elgar as violinist, in a trio. 3. R.B. Townshend, a donnish figure. 4. W.M. Baker, a country squire near Malvern, depicted announcing the day's plans to his house guests and slamming the door behind him. 5. Richard Arnold, son of the poet – woodwind imitate his nervous laugh. 6. Isabel Fitton, an amateur violinist and a beauty. 7. A. Troyte Griffith, architect and clumsy pianist. 8. Winifred Norbury, who lived in the elegant eighteenth-century house which inspired this variation. 9. Nimrod – A.J. Jaeger of Novello's, who shared Elgar's love of Beethoven (the *Pathétique* sonata is quoted in this famous hymn to friendship). 10. Dora Penny, nicknamed Dorabella, a young admirer of the composer. 11. G.R. Sinclair, Hereford

Cathedral organist. He owned a bulldog, Dan, who fell into the river, scrambled out and barked. Elgar set it to music. 12. Basil Nevinson was the cellist in the piano trio mentioned in (2). 13. *** Ostensibly Lady Mary Lygon on a voyage to Australia, hence the imitation of a liner's engine and the *Calm*

Sea and Prosperous Voyage quotation from Mendelssohn, but possibly an earlier parting was in Elgar's romantic mind.

14. E.D.U., Elgar himself, assertive and defiant, with C.A.E. and Nimrod recalled as if to emphasize their importance as his most steadfast champions.

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