

## ELGAR from America Volume II

EDWARD ELGAR (1857-1934)

NBC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA  
Malcolm Sargent <sup>a</sup>c / Arturo Toscanini <sup>b</sup>Yehudi Menuhin *violin* <sup>c</sup>Mischa Mischakoff, Edwin Bachmann *violins* <sup>b</sup>  
Carlton Cooley *viola* <sup>b</sup>, Frank Miller *cello* <sup>b</sup>

- |   |   |                |
|---|---|----------------|
| 1 | Cockaigne (In London Town) Concert-Overture, Op.40 <sup>a</sup> | 14:09          |
| 2 | Introduction and Allegro for Strings, Op.47 <sup>b</sup>        | 14:22          |
|   | <b>Violin Concerto in B minor, Op.61 <sup>c</sup></b>           | <b>(40:55)</b> |
| 3 | Allegro   | 16:58          |
| 4 | Andante   | 10:12          |
| 5 | Allegro molto   | 13:44          |

**Total duration: 69:27**

ALL FIRST COMMERCIAL RELEASES

**Recorded live at:** <sup>a</sup> Radio City Studio 8H, New York on February 18, 1945;  
<sup>b</sup> Radio City Studio 8H, New York on April 20, 1940;  
<sup>c</sup> Radio City Studio 8H, New York on February 25, 1945

**Producing and Audio Restoration:** Lani Spahr**Cover:** Elgar in 1912, James Bacon & Sons, Collection of Arthur S Reynolds**Design:** Andrew Giles**Booklet Editor:** Michael Quinn© & © 2020 SOMM RECORDINGS · THAMES DITTON · SURREY · ENGLAND  
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## ELGAR from America

Volume II

## VIOLIN CONCERTO

INTRODUCTION  
and ALLEGRO  
for STRINGSCOCKAIGNE  
OVERTURENBC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA  
Malcolm Sargent  
Arturo ToscaniniYehudi Menuhin *violin*

For the 1899 Three Choirs Festival in Worcester Cathedral, Horatio Parker, Professor of Music at Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, had been invited to conduct the first performance outside America of his oratorio, *Hora Novissima*. At the same festival, Elgar was also to conduct his own oratorio, *The Light of Life* and his *Enigma Variations* – the first performance with the extended final variation (“E.D.U.”) and coda. Parker’s visit was the first for a group of prominent American musicians who would regularly attend the Three Choirs Festivals and become friends of Elgar.

Among them was Samuel Simons Sanford, Professor of Applied Music at Yale University. Sanford, financially independent and a pianist by training, was a student of Anton Rubinstein. Too retiring to pursue a concert career, he directed his energies to teaching and to the Institute of Musical Art and the New York Symphony Orchestra, of which he became President. Elgar certainly had known Sanford by August 1901 when he wrote to August Jaeger (Nimrod of the *Enigma Variations*) saying, “I saw Prof. Sanford last year [1900] but it’s never any good: these Johnnies only talk-alk-alk-alk- with a blasted twang. Anyhow I’ll be amiable and nice (fancy me!)”.

Eventually his negative attitude toward Americans, at least as far as Sanford was concerned, had softened, as it was Sanford’s efforts that led to Elgar making his first tour of America in 1905 during which he was to receive the degree of Doctor of Music from Yale University. In addition, several offers were being put forward for Elgar to conduct in America for very high fees, and a visit, wrote Sanford, “might be the way to crystallise the various schemes for your conducting”. Elgar accepted

this invitation and asked his publisher Novello to negotiate his fees saying, “I will not go for less than Weingartner who has £2500 (not dollars) for sixteen concerts: they can either take me or leave me”. This figure in today’s money is nearly £306,000 or \$390,000.

The year 1905 also saw the composition of the ***Introduction and Allegro for Strings***, which was given its première at an all-Elgar concert by the newly formed London Symphony Orchestra. This work owes its genesis to August Jaeger who hoped Elgar would write “a brilliant quick String Scherzo, or something for those fine strings only? a real bring down the house torrent of a thing... You might even write a modern Fugue for Strings”. In the end Elgar did all of the above, replying to Jaeger six months later: “I’m doing that string thing in time for the Sym:orch; concert. Intro: & Allegro – no working-out part [development] but a devil of a fugue instead. G major & the s[ai]d. divvel in G minor... 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 the “Welsh tune”, possibly for a projected “Welsh Overture”. The theme is found among sketches for *The Apostles* and has “Cor Ang[lais]” attached to it. Four years



Elgar c.1905, the year of the Introduction and Allegro

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”.

Sanford, who by now had become “Gaffer”, shared a warm friendship with the Elgars and in 1904 presented Elgar with an upright Steinway piano for his



Collection of Arthur S. Reynolds

Sanford and Elgar in front of the Green Dragon Hotel, Broad Street, Hereford, July 1906

Hereford study. In the accompanying photo taken in Hereford in July 1906, you can see both Elgar and Sanford with cigarettes in their hands. Both were keen smokers and Elgar looked forward with anticipation to shipments of tobacco from America. In a letter to Ivor Atkins who was on his way to New York, Elgar wrote, “Will you tell Prof Sanford that I sat down in front of that Bag of Tobacco & smoked solemnly for three days & am completely captured”. Through Sanford, Elgar was also introduced to Mrs. Julia Worthington (later “Pippa” and dedicatee of the part song *Deep in my Soul*) who became a close friend of the family and with whom the Elgars stayed on many occasions while in New York and Italy.

On February 13, 1905 Alice Elgar posted the manuscript full score of the *Introduction and Allegro* to Novello – it contained the dedication “To professor S.S. Sanford, Yale University, U.S.A.”, a touching tribute to what now had become a close friendship. The première took place on March 8, 1905 at the Queen’s Hall, London with Elgar conducting the London Symphony Orchestra. The first American performance was on November 26, 1905 in Carnegie Hall with the New York Symphony conducted by Walter Damrosch.

Toscanini performed and toured *Introduction and Allegro* and the *Enigma Variations* throughout the years and in 1911 rehearsed a Turin orchestra for Elgar’s appearance there. The present performance took place on April 20, 1940 and was the only time Toscanini conducted it with the NBC Symphony Orchestra. It was first on a program that included Mozart’s Symphony No.41 (*Jupiter*), Dvořák’s *Scherzo capriccioso* and the Mussorgsky/Ravel *Pictures at an Exhibition*.

In the depressing weeks following the woefully under-rehearsed première of *The Dream of Gerontius* in October 1900, Elgar, ever the cynic, wrote to Jaeger complaining, "Don't go and tell anyone but I must earn money somehow – I will not go back to teaching & I think I must try some trade – coal agency or houses...". Coal indeed. But then suddenly a week later out of this despondency came another letter to Jaeger saying, "Don't say anything about the prospective overture yet – I call it 'Cockayne' & it's cheerful and Londony – 'stout and steaky'". After the score was finished on March 24, 1901, Elgar wrote to Hans Richter, the German conductor who premièred the *Enigma Variations*, to sound him out about his interest in conducting the new overture: "The work is not tragic at all – but extremely cheerful like a miserable unsuccessful man ought to write". Perpetually the pessimist.

The première of the ***Cockaigne Overture*** on June 20, 1901, with Elgar conducting the Philharmonic Society Orchestra in the Queen's Hall, London, was, as Alice Elgar noted in her diary, a "Great glorious success". The critics agreed; one writing of its "powerful expression of healthy & exuberant life. It is music that does one good to hear – invigorating, humanising, uplifting". The first American performances were on November 29 and 30, 1901 with Theodore Thomas conducting the Chicago Orchestra in The Auditorium, Chicago, Illinois, followed on December 1, 1901 by the Boston Symphony Orchestra in Symphony Hall, Boston, Massachusetts, conducted by Walter Gericke.

Malcolm Sargent, who was not to become 'Sir Malcolm' until 1947, made his first professional appearance in America in early February 1945. Although the war

was not yet over (the Yalta Conference had just ended on February 11, Alsace had been liberated, Dresden fire bombed and Iwo Jima invaded) it was sufficiently safe to travel to America as Sargent did in an official flight to New York. He came to conduct four programs with Toscanini's NBC Symphony Orchestra in Radio City Studio 8H. His first concert on February 18 was the present performance of *Cockaigne* followed by Dvořák's Symphony in D minor. Olin Downes in *The New York Times* wrote: "A properly lusty and rhythmical performance was accorded the overture. Mr. Sargent had unmistakable orchestral control. He made no attempt at a new reading, which in any case would have been inappropriate with such a well known work and such an English classic as Elgar the composer already has become. It may have been the tension of a first appearance before a new public which caused the performance to be rougher in



Malcolm Sargent in 1947

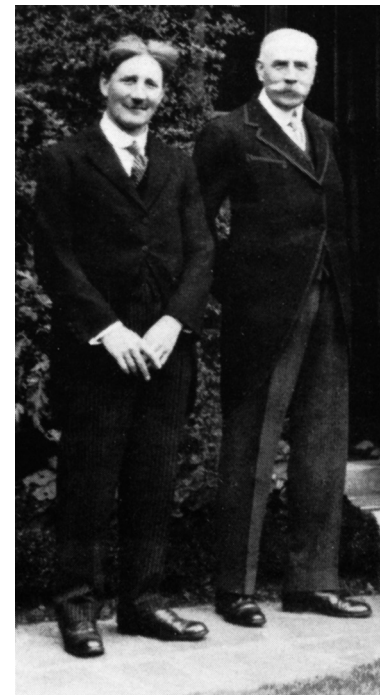
tone quality and more episodic than sustained in its line. But the conductor's sincerity, knowledge, zest in his task were communicated". I leave it to the listener to decide if Mr. Downes' observations ring true. (The NBC Symphony Orchestra first played *Cockaigne* on May 2, 1943, conducted by Walter Damrosch.)

A week later, on February 25, 1945, Sargent conducted an all-English program of Handel (arr. Harty) *Water Music Suite* and Elgar's **Violin Concerto** with Yehudi Menuhin as soloist.

In a 1905 interview for *The Hereford Times*, the great Austrian violinist, Fritz Kreisler, remarked, "If you want to know whom I consider to be the greatest living composer, I say without hesitation, Elgar. Russia, Scandinavia, my own Fatherland, or any other nation can produce nothing like him. I say this to please no one; it is my own conviction. Elgar will overshadow everybody. He is on a different level. I place him on an equal footing with my idols, Beethoven and Brahms. He is of the same aristocratic family. His invention, his orchestration, his harmony, his grandeur, it is wonderful. And it is all pure, unaffected music. I wish Elgar would write something for the violin. He could do so, and it would be certainly something effective". Yes, it certainly is.

One of the great violin concertos of the 20th century, it had its gestation with Kreisler's comments. Elgar had been toying with a violin concerto for many years but here was the impetus he needed to start serious work. But progress was slow and it was not taken up in earnest until 1909, and was finished for Kreisler (to whom it was dedicated) in 1910. During the final stages of composition, W.H.

'Billy' Reed, leader of the LSO and close friend of Elgar, assisted him in going through the concerto in various stages, playing from sketches pinned up on chairs, mantels and music stands to give Elgar a chance to hear it in various sequences and "jape them up" into a coherent flow. He also assisted with the actual solo part, giving his opinion as to how the music fit under the fingers and by playing the multiple variations of certain passages until Elgar was sure he had found exactly the effect he was seeking. For his invaluable help Elgar gave 'Billy' the honour of giving the first performance, albeit a private one with Elgar at the piano, for invited guests at the house Elgar had taken for the Gloucester Three Choirs Festival. This took place on Sunday September 4, 1910 with Kreisler giving his own private performance on the following Thursday.



'Billy' Reed with Edward Elgar

The public première was given by Fritz Kreisler on November 10, 1910 in the Queen's Hall, London, with Elgar conducting the Philharmonic Society Orchestra. The first American performance was given by the 23-year-old American violinist Albert Spalding on December 8, 1911 with Frederick Stock conducting the Theodore Thomas Orchestra in Thomas Orchestra Hall, Chicago, Illinois.

Elgar's Violin Concerto and the American-born Yehudi Menuhin have shared a storied past ever since his landmark recording of the work with Elgar conducting in 1932 when Menuhin was only 16-years-old. Thirteen years later, when he was 29, Menuhin performed the work in New York during the waning days of World War II. During the war, he was constantly on the move – giving hundreds of concerts for troops (who he said were “the most cultivated and extraordinary audience I have ever had... they were responsive to everything”) all across America and in Alaska, the Aleutian Islands, Hawaii, concerts in Mexico, Costa Rica, Panama, Australia, South America, North America, United Kingdom, playing for the wounded in hospitals, surviving a plane crash into a sugar plantation in Puerto Rico and finally at the end of the war, in the liberated cities of Antwerp, Brussels, Paris and with Benjamin Britten at the recently liberated Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.

It has been said that Menuhin's playing was negatively affected by his constant wartime travel and its resulting lack of practice, but I think based on this recording we can hear that his command is still every bit as good as it was before the war.



Yehudi Menuhin 1945

As with *Falstaff* in *Elgar from America, Vol.I*, this performance of the Violin Concerto is cut. The first movement is intact, but the second and third



movements have cuts – the third movement suffering the greatest with approximately six minutes being excised. Again, constraints in broadcast time would seem to be the reason. In a typical one-hour broadcast slot for the NBC Symphony Orchestra, a single work of approximately 50 minutes, which is an average time for the Elgar concerto, would leave little time for anything else when one considers announcements and advertisements; certainly there would be no time for the opening number, the Handel/Harty *Water Music Suite*.

The cuts in the Violin Concerto,  
referenced to the Novello score rehearsal numbers (#):

Movement 1: uncut

Movement 2: 1m after #52 to 1m after #54 – 14mm total

Movement 3: #78 to #92 – 92mm total

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## ELGAR from America

Volume I

**ARIADNE 5005**

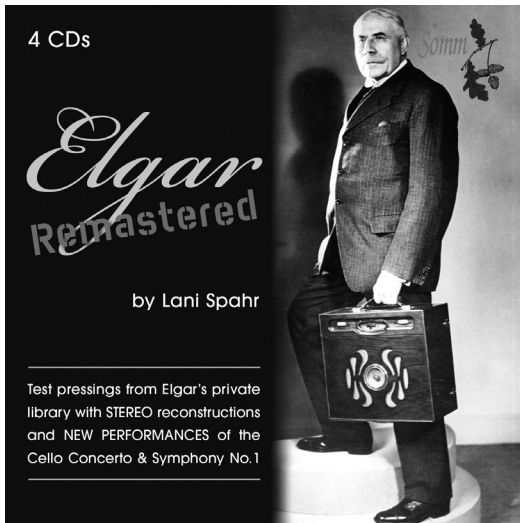
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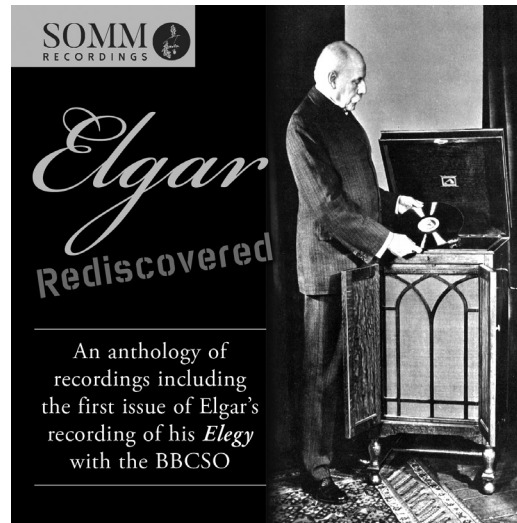
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