

London Philharmonic Orchestra



**ELGAR:
THE LEGACY
VOL. 4 (1954–55)**

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LPO–D930

01 13:22 COCKAIGNE OVERTURE (IN LONDON TOWN)

Sir Adrian Boult conductor

Ralph Downes organ

Recorded at London's Royal Festival Hall on 24 March 1954, as part of a broadcast of a concert inaugurating the Royal Festival Hall organ
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02–04 45:38 VIOLIN CONCERTO IN B MINOR, OP. 61

Sir Adrian Boult conductor

Alfredo Campoli violin

Recorded at Kingsway Hall, London, on 28–29 October 1954
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Producer James Walker **Engineer** Kenneth Wilkinson

- i) 16:42 Allegro*
- ii) 11:11 Andante*
- iii) 17:45 Allegro molto*

05–07 11:56 THREE BAVARIAN DANCES FOR ORCHESTRA, OP. 27

Sir Adrian Boult conductor

Recorded at Kingsway Hall, London, on 21 October 1954
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- i) 03:48 Sonnenbichl (The Dance): Allegretto giocoso*
- ii) 03:20 In Hammersbach (Lullaby): Moderato*
- iii) 04:48 Bei Murnau (The Marksmen): Allegro vivace*

08 03:22 CHANSON DE NUIT, OP. 15 NO. 1

Sir Adrian Boult conductor

Recorded at Kingsway Hall, London, on 19 February 1954
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09 04:08 CHANSON DE MATIN, OP. 15 NO. 2

Sir Adrian Boult conductor

Recorded at Kingsway Hall, London, on 19 February 1954
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10 18:48 IN THE SOUTH (ALASSIO), CONCERT OVERTURE FOR ORCHESTRA, OP. 50

Sir Adrian Boult conductor

Recorded as part of a concert at London's Royal Festival Hall on 21 November 1955
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Post-production

James Waterhouse, K&A Productions (Track 10); Andrew Walton, K&A Productions (Tracks 1, 5–9), Andrew Lang (Tracks 2–4)
Analogue Transfers Karl Jenkins, British Library (Tracks 1 & 10); Mike Clements (Tracks 2–9)

ELGAR: THE LEGACY VOL. 4 (1954–55) BY ANDREW NEILL

Of all the Principal Conductors appointed by the London Philharmonic Orchestra (LPO) in its 90-year history, Sir Adrian Boult (1889–1983) has a claim to be the most versatile. His grounding in the Austro-German classics, alongside his knowledge of British, French and Russian music, gave him a range that few of his contemporaries could match. His brilliance as a conductor of ballet – and the music of Tchaikovsky in particular – was renowned, and as a consummate conductor of opera, it is all the more disappointing that he was not invited to conduct at the Royal Opera House after the Second World War. Boult's pioneering performances of Berg's *Wozzeck* before and following the war attested to his sense of drama and his ability with a complex contemporary score. Paradoxically, his first professional engagement was at Covent Garden during the 1913 season, and his last was when he conducted Elgar's ballet *The Sanguine Fan* at the Coliseum on 24 June 1978.

For the last years of his long professional life, Boult did not travel overseas, which, with his loathing of self-promotion, meant that following his tenure as Principal Conductor of the LPO (1950–57), he did not re-establish the international reputation he had enjoyed outside Britain before the war, in contrast to contemporaries such as Otto Klemperer, Herbert von Karajan and even Sir John Barbirolli. Boult's conducting technique was secure but undemonstrative, his use of an unfashionably long baton enabling him to achieve what he wanted, including some thrilling and unforgettable performances such as the symphonies of Brahms and Beethoven, and the music of Wagner. His virtues are

displayed in the recordings contained in this issue: vigour and a 'tight leash' for *Cockaigne* and *In the South*; a lightness of touch in Elgar's smaller-scale compositions; and a subtly controlled Violin Concerto in which Boult is united in obvious sympathy with his soloist, Alfredo Campoli.

Sir Adrian Boult



1 COCKAIGNE OVERTURE (IN LONDON TOWN) RALPH DOWNES ORGAN

By 1954, the lean war years in the past, the London Philharmonic Orchestra (LPO) had re-established itself as a leading European ensemble and taken centre stage as one of the major orchestras performing in London's newest concert venue, the Royal Festival Hall on the South Bank of the Thames. Although opened in 1951 (see Vol. 3), the Hall's organ was not completed until 1954, when on 27 March Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother attended a concert celebrating the inauguration of the new instrument. Boult conducted the concert, in which the LPO was joined by organists Ralph Downes (1904–93) and André Marchal (1894–1980).

Following the National Anthem, the programme began with the exuberant *Sinfonia* from J S Bach's Cantata No. 29: 'Wir danken dir, Gott, wir danken dir' (BWV29), a transcription of the Violin Sonata in E minor in which organ and orchestra combined to give the new instrument a thrilling beginning. The concert continued with Downes performing Bach's Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor (BWV582) before joining the Orchestra once more for Poulenc's Concerto for Organ, Strings and Timpani and Sir Arthur Bliss's *Processional for Orchestra and Organ*, written for the entrance of The Queen Mother at the previous year's Coronation. In the second half, the great French organist André Marchal performed Handel's Organ Concerto No. 10 in D minor, and then improvised on a theme given to him by Sir George Dyson. Downes re-joined the concert for the concluding item, Elgar's Concert Overture *Cockaigne*, in which the organ plays a significant part during the final bars.

Boult recorded *Cockaigne* twice commercially. The first was for the Nixa/Westminster label in 1956 and the second for EMI in 1970, both with the LPO. It is obvious that Boult relished the live performance, balancing *Cockaigne's* wide contrasts and bringing it to a compelling conclusion, even if, in this broadcast recording, the new organ is felt more than heard! Nevertheless, as the musicologist Nigel Simeone has pointed out, six bars before the end, the minims written for the organ are played as crotchets tied to quavers (with quaver rests), as in the rest of the orchestra. Furthermore, it seems that this may have been one of the earliest occasions in which the BBC recorded a concert on reel to reel tape.

The witty programme notes for the concert, by Felix Aprahamian, referred to Elgar's handwritten note on the title page of the score: 'Meteless and moneless on Malverne hilles' – a quotation from William Langland's *Piers Plowman*, and a sidelong glance at the composer's own pecuniary position. Aprahamian also referred to 'a cutting from a Central American paper' in which the writer commented on Elgar's Overture, '*Cocaina*, in which he describes the ravages of this terrible vice in the suburbs of London!' This is a wonderful example of missing the point, for Elgar paints a musical portrait of 'Cockayne': a mythical land of plenty which somehow had become attached to the London of the Cockney that Elgar translated to Edwardian London. Aprahamian's brilliant description of the music is reproduced as follows:

'The opening *Allegro scherzando* sets a sunny mood in C major, with a pair of nonchalant themes which are developed a little before the typical burgess is introduced *nobilmente*. After the opening subject has been heard again, the music introduces in the gentler key of E flat, and *piu tranquillo*, the second subject of the Overture, a singing phrase which may be taken to represent a pair of young lovers. Their tender and passionate colloquy is interrupted by the whistling of a young urchin, identifiable as a Londoner, for his theme is a transformation of the more serious *nobilmente* tune which earlier described a more sedate denizen of the city. The themes already heard are now developed. The clarinet interrupts the lovers' reverie with a tune that anticipates that of the next episode, a military band which passes in all its brassy glory, in B flat major. The urchin is there expressing his delight. Woodwind arabesques lead into the next episode: a short encounter with the more modest resources of a small Salvation Army Band. When they too, turn the corner, the lovers stroll into a city church. Here the conjunct meandering of strings and woodwind suggest the organist is improvising. Burt he is no match for the urchin's whistle, and as the lovers gain the street once more, so the musical recapitulation begins. After the various themes have passed under review, the military band makes its second appearance, now in C major. Its fanfares encourage the organ to add its weight to the Londoner's *nobilmente* response, now in E flat major. In an *Allargando* the music lurches back into C major for a flashing glance at the opening theme and a noisy ending.'

In addition to the use of tape recording (as above) and the arrival of the long-playing record, other technical changes were taking place, notably stereophonic recording. Boult would make his first stereo recording, of music by Tchaikovsky, in June 1955 for the Decca label; not with the LPO, but in Paris, which, as Boult wrote: [was] 'an amazing experiment by the Decca Company, who curiously decided to send an elderly Englishman to Paris to conduct Russian music with a French orchestra'. A five-year contract with Decca (including commission on sales of recordings) had been secured for the LPO, this great benefit enhanced further by Boult's generosity in giving his recording fees to the Orchestra.

It was Decca and the American Westminster/Nixa label that brought Boult and the Orchestra together in the Kingsway Hall in 1954. For Decca, the central London location was ideal. Although remembered by many for its dustiness, its generous but clear acoustic meant it was ideally suited to the music of Elgar, and it would continue to be used by Decca into the digital age, until the local authority assigned the building for redevelopment. It was also becoming increasingly difficult to disguise the rumble of trains passing beneath!

2-4 VIOLIN CONCERTO IN B MINOR, OP. 61

ALFREDO CAMPOLI VIOLIN

- i) *Allegro*
- ii) *Andante*
- iii) *Allegro molto*

Alfredo Campoli (1908–91) was born in Rome but grew up a Londoner, making his debut as a soloist at the age of eleven. Initially making his name in performances of light music, he later became a distinguished soloist in the concerto repertoire, notably the Elgar. Campoli had a secure technique and tone that reminded many listeners of his great predecessor and the dedicatee of Elgar's Concerto, Fritz Kreisler. In complete sympathy with Boult and his control of the music, Campoli gets to the heart of the Concerto in a recording worthy to stand beside those of Albert Sammons and the young Yehudi Menuhin.

Elgar's Concerto begins with a long opening *tutti*, during which we encounter the primary themes of the first movement. Eventually the soloist enters, playing part of the opening theme, which soloist and orchestra examine before the memorable second subject appears. The development is a complex duel between soloist and orchestra before the recapitulation clarifies the material and the movement concludes.

Elgar described the end of his *Andante* as 'where two souls merge and melt into one another'. He creates an equality between the soloist and the orchestra and, as in the first movement, the soloist again waits for the orchestra to

introduce the material but later brings a new theme to a movement that ends quietly, as implied above. Leaping away in rising passages, the violin begins the finale before the orchestra states the main theme. An *Allegro* passage, labelled 'nobilmente', marks a change to the atmosphere, the music recalling a theme from the *Andante*. Elgar then embarks on the most original part of the Concerto, the accompanied cadenza and its *pizzicato tremolando*. He asks for the stringed instruments 'to be thrummed' with the soft part of three or four fingers across the strings. Material from the previous movements is considered by the soloist and orchestra before a substantial coda leads to the Concerto's affirmative conclusion.

At the head of the score, Elgar quotes in Spanish from the novel *Gil Blas* by the 17th-century French novelist Alain-René Lesage: 'Aqui está encerrada el alma de' ['Herein is enshrined the soul of']. The five dots, as Elgar made clear, stood for a woman's name; one he never revealed.

5-7 THREE BAVARIAN DANCES FOR ORCHESTRA, OP. 27

- i) *Sonnenbichl (The Dance): Allegretto giocoso*
- ii) *In Hammersbach (Lullaby): Moderato*
- iii) *Bei Murnau (The Marksmen): Allegro vivace*

Two years before his *Enigma Variations* promoted him to centre stage in British musical life, Elgar, at the age of 40, was at last being noticed. His skill as an orchestrator and tunesmith manifests itself in his 'light' music, an area in which he was a master. A number of these compositions were, in effect, 'stepping stones', as Elgar learnt his trade. In its 24 October 1897 issue, *The Observer* commented on a concert that had taken place the previous day as part of a series given in the Crystal Palace in south London:

'An interesting feature of the concert was the first performance of three dances by Mr. Edward Elgar. These are orchestral arrangements of the first, third and sixth numbers of a choral suite entitled *From the Bavarian Highlands*. However attractive they may be in their original form, they are most fascinating orchestral pieces, instinct with grace, light-hearted gaiety, and the incomparable exuberance of youth. The melodious themes are developed with great skill and all the artful art of a master of instrumentation, the latter remark being especially applicable to the final number. The composer conducted and should have been satisfied with the manifest appreciation his music received.'

In the early 1890s Elgar and his wife Alice had spent three summers in Bavaria, staying in Garmisch at the Villa Bader, which was owned by a British couple. In celebration of these happy times, Alice wrote six poems which Elgar set for chorus with either piano accompaniment or for orchestra. Based on local dances, notably the *Schuhplattler* ('shoe-slapper') dancing he witnessed, Elgar took three of his 'dances' (1, 3 and 6) and produced versions for orchestra alone. The first, 'The Dance', suggests the excitement the inhabitants of the village of Sonnenbichl as they hasten to their dance. Hammersbach, a small village beneath the Höllenthal, is the setting for 'Lullaby': a suggestion of a zither assisting a mother sending her child to sleep. Murnau on the Staffelsee is the scene for 'The Marksmen', and the local shooting competition.

08 CHANSON DE NUIT, OP. 15 NO. 1

09 CHANSON DE MATIN, OP. 15 NO. 2

Elgar's two *Chansons* date, in their orchestral versions, from 1901, when they were premiered by Sir Henry Wood in a Promenade Concert on 14 September, a season that also included the London premieres of the first and second 'Pomp and Circumstance' Marches. Originally composed for violin and piano in 1897 and 1899 respectively, both *Chansons* are examples of Elgar's natural melodic ability and skill in raising relatively slight compositions above the commonplace. The seriousness of *Chanson de Nuit*, with its slightly lighter central passage, contrasts with the brighter *Chanson de Matin*, which begins with a typical 'Elgarian' melody, followed by a strong central section. Boult's management of these lighter pieces is controlled, disciplined even, but with some charming *rubato* which allows the music to breathe and shine, just as it did 13 years later when, again with the LPO, Boult recorded these pieces for a second time.

10 IN THE SOUTH (ALASSIO), CONCERT

OVERTURE FOR ORCHESTRA, OP. 50

Elgar's mastery of the orchestra is evident in all the music presented in this volume. That he was a self-taught orchestrator seems the more extraordinary as we listen to *In the South* from a live broadcast given on St Cecilia's Day 1955 at London's Royal Festival Hall. Comprised largely of British music, the concert ended with this substantial Concert Overture which is, in effect, a 19-minute tone-poem. *In the South* was a substitute for a symphony Elgar had originally planned for a 1904 festival of his music at Covent Garden, but this task eluded him for a further four years.

During the winter of 1903-04, Elgar was staying in northern Italy near Allassio. He wanted to reflect 'the thoughts and sensations of one beautiful afternoon in the Vale of Andorra' and was particularly taken by the nearby village of Moglio, its name offering onomatopoeic possibilities. 'I love it: it's alive!' said Elgar of *In the South*. With its striking Straussian opening, the listener can only but agree. Elgar had noted the theme in his notebook five years earlier as a description of bulldog Dan 'triumphant after a fight'. Dan, that immortal dog from Variation XI of the *Enigma Variations*, was portrayed in this moment of victory at the same time as Strauss was working on his tone-poem *Ein Heldenleben*, and therein slaying his own (musical) enemies. The texture of this headlong, exuberant music softens perceptively after 67 bars as, *nobilmente*, the music begins to relax, and a pastoral section takes centre stage. Elgar recalls Tennyson's words from 'The Daisy': 'In lands of palm, of orange-blossom, of olive, aloe, and maize and vine', as woodwind represent a shepherd piping, with 'moglio, moglio' in counterpoint.

This bucolic atmosphere is but temporary, and a change is gradually suggested as Elgar moves into one of the most original passages he composed. *Grandioso*, we are led into the world of Roman legions: ‘a sound-picture of the strife and wars, the “drums and trappings” of a later time’. This world, with its bold harmonies, is eventually supplanted by a peaceful vision given to the solo viola and horn singing a *canto popolare* which, later, Elgar used as the music for a song. He also extracted the episode and re-orchestrated it as a concert piece. As the viola solo returns, hints of a change are heard in the orchestra, heralding a recapitulation. Elgar builds excitement and tension as earlier themes are recalled before he heads towards the conclusion, played by full orchestra with the addition of a glockenspiel, finally bringing down the curtain on one of his most colourful and exciting compositions.

Andrew Neill was Chairman of the Elgar Society from 1992–2008. He has contributed programme and booklet notes on the music of Elgar, Strauss, Vaughan Williams and their contemporaries for the LPO and other orchestras, and has broadcast and written extensively about these composers for a wide range of journals and publications.

The LPO wishes to thank the writer and broadcaster Nigel Simeone for his advice regarding performances of Elgar’s music by Sir Adrian Boult; Jonathan Summers, Curator of Classical Music at the British Library; and the David Michell collection.

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LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

The London Philharmonic Orchestra is one of the world’s finest orchestras, balancing a long and distinguished history with its present-day position as one of the most dynamic and forward-looking ensembles in the UK. This reputation has been secured by the Orchestra’s performances in the concert hall and opera house, its many award-winning recordings, trailblazing international tours and wide-ranging educational work.

Founded by Sir Thomas Beecham in 1932, the Orchestra has since been headed by many of the world’s greatest conductors, including Sir Adrian Boult, Bernard Haitink, Sir Georg Solti, Klaus Tennstedt and Kurt Masur. In September 2021 Edward Gardner became the Orchestra’s Principal Conductor, succeeding Vladimir Jurowski, who became Conductor Emeritus in recognition of his transformative impact on the Orchestra as Principal Conductor from 2007–21.

The Orchestra is based at the Southbank Centre’s Royal Festival Hall in London, where it has been Resident Orchestra since 1992. Each summer it takes up its annual residency at Glyndebourne Festival Opera where it has been Resident Symphony Orchestra for over 60 years. The Orchestra performs at venues around the UK and has made numerous international tours, performing to sell-out audiences in America, Europe, Asia and Australasia.

The London Philharmonic Orchestra made its first recordings on 10 October 1932, just three days after its first public performance. It has recorded and broadcast regularly ever since, and in 2005 established its own record label. These recordings are taken mainly from live concerts given by conductors including those with LPO Principal Conductors from Beecham and Boult, through Haitink, Solti, Tennstedt and Masur, to Jurowski and Gardner.

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