

SEASON 2008
TEA & SYMPHONY
PRESENTED BY KAMBLY

ELGAR FESTIVAL
ELGAR'S ENIGMAS

Friday 14 November | 11am
Sydney Opera House Concert Hall

Vladimir Ashkenazy conductor

EDWARD ELGAR (1857–1934)

In the South (Alassio) – Overture, Op.50

Pomp and Circumstance – Military Marches, Op.29

No.1 in D major

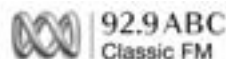
No.2 in A minor

Variations on an original theme, Op.36 (Enigma)

Theme

I	(C.A.E.)	Caroline Alice Elgar
II	(H.D.S.-P)	Hew David Steuart-Powell
III	(R.B.T.)	Richard Baxter Townshend
IV	(W.M.B.)	William Meath Baker
V	(R.P.A.)	Richard Penrose Arnold
VI	(Ysobel)	Isabel Fitton
VII	(Troyte)	Arthur Troyte Griffith
VIII	(W.N.)	Winifred Norbury
IX	(Nimrod)	August Johannes Jaeger
X	(Dorabella)	<i>Intermezzo</i> . Dora Penny
XI	(G.R.S.)	Dr G.R. Sinclair
XII	(B.G.N.)	Basil G. Nevison
XIII	(***)	<i>Romanza</i> . Lady Mary Lygon
XIV	(E.D.U.)	<i>Finale</i> . Elgar himself

FESTIVAL PARTNER



Music from today's program
has been recorded for
broadcast across Australia
on ABC Classic FM 92.9.

Estimated timings:
20 minutes, 8 minutes,
30 minutes

The concert will conclude at
approximately 12.10pm.

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It is my great pleasure to welcome you to this final concert in the 2008 Tea & Symphony series.

As part of Vladimir Ashkenazy's Elgar Festival, this Sydney Symphony concert gives us a chance to be immersed in the music of England's best-loved composer. Elgar has acquired the mantle of tradition and some of his works, such as the *Pomp and Circumstance* marches, have become tried and true favourites. The touching *Enigma Variations* is another favourite, not just of audiences but of Ashkenazy himself – he loves this music, he says, and that love emerges in his interpretation.

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Kambly is a way of life, dedicated to all those who appreciate the difference between the best and the merely good. In this way it is fitting that we partner with the internationally acclaimed Sydney Symphony, whose vision is to ignite and deepen people's love of live symphonic music.

We hope you enjoy this morning's program, and look forward to welcoming you once more to the Tea & Symphony series in 2009.



Oscar A. Kambly
Chairman
Kambly of Switzerland

ABOUT THE MUSIC

ELGAR *In the South* (Alassio)

Elgar called this a concert overture, suggesting affinities with the overtures of Mendelssohn, Brahms and Dvořák. But *In the South* is closer to being a symphonic poem of the Richard Strauss kind, if not in story-telling then in musical language and treatment. This shows why Elgar in his early years was more appreciated in Germany, where Strauss called him ‘the first English progressivist composer’, than in England. The misleading title alone hardly explains why this fine piece is not more often played. Written in 1903–04, when Elgar was travelling in Italy and settled for a while at Alassio on the Riviera, *In the South* absorbed the music which the composer found in the air in Italy – ‘you have only to take as much of it as you need,’ he observed.

The brilliant opening, and the languorous second episode, carry inscriptions in the manuscript, one from Byron’s *Childe Harold*:

...a land
Which was the mightiest in its old command
And is the loveliest...
Wherein were cast...
...the men of Rome!
Thou art the garden of the world.

The other inscription is from Tennyson’s *The Daisy*, summing up Elgar’s impressions of the Vale of Andora:

What hours were thine and mine
In lands of palm and southern pine
In lands of palm, of orange-blossom,
Of olive, aloe, and maize and vine.

An extraordinary variety of mood is firmly held together in this work by an expanded sonata structure. The middle episode is grandiose, prompted by the sight of an ancient Roman viaduct. In bold harmonies, Elgar tells us, he ‘endeavoured to paint the relentless and domineering onward force of the ancient day, and to give a sound picture of the strife and wars, the “drums and tramlings” of a later time.’

Elgar’s identification with Byron’s Italian traveller merges, in the lyrical *canto popolare* given to the solo viola, with a tribute to Berlioz’s Byronic *Harold in Italy*. This tender episode was later detached as a separate piece called *In Moonlight*. In context it is far more effective – just giving the signal for the recapitulation. This includes a new treatment of a slow, gentle melody from the introduction, *nobilmente*, combined with the other themes to reach a thrilling climax.



EDWARD ELGAR
English composer (1857–1934)

ELGAR *Pomp and Circumstance* Marches

For most people there is only one *Pomp and Circumstance* March – No.1 in D major, with the stirringly patriotic melody of the trio section, to which was later set the poem ‘Land of Hope and Glory’.

The first march was composed in May 1901 – part of a pair. ‘I’ve got a tune that will knock ‘em – knock ‘em flat,’ Elgar declared, and he was right. At its first London performance, conductor Henry Wood had to play it three times before the audience would let him get on with the concert! (It was the first time such a thing had happened in the history of the Proms.)

Elgar was immune to the lines drawn by the critics between serious music and ‘popular’ appeal, regarding ‘the composer’s vocation as the old troubadours and 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 people with song...’ His military marches embraced ceremony and pageantry, and he ‘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 have some of the soldier instinct in me and so I have written two marches of which, so far from being ashamed, I am proud.’

The second of the original pair of marches was No.2 in A minor, gracious and lyrical but with what Diana McVeagh calls ‘uneasy undertones’. Where the first march gives us that ‘once in a lifetime’ tune, the second highlights Elgar’s instinct for orchestral sound and imaginative colours.

The title for the set is drawn from Shakespeare, the scene where a distraught Othello bids farewell to ‘...the spirit-stirring drum, the ear-piercing fife, The Royal banner and all quality, Pride, Pomp and Circumstance of glorious war!’

SYMPHONY AUSTRALIA / SYDNEY SYMPHONY ©2008

Visit YouTube to watch rare footage of Elgar introducing then conducting the trio from March No.1 in 1931. He says to the orchestra: ‘Morning, gentlemen. Glad to see you all. Very light program this morning. Please play this tune as though you’ve never heard it before.’ <http://tinyurl.com/5mu8ke>

Land of Hope and Glory,
Mother of the Free,
How shall we extol thee,
Who are born of thee?
Wider still and wider
Shall thy bounds be set;
God, who made thee mighty,
Make thee mightier yet.

ARTHUR C. BENSON

The appearance of the familiar ‘Land of Hope and Glory’ tune marks the trio section of the first Pomp and Circumstance march.

ELGAR Enigma Variations

'Dedicated to my friends pictured within,' and dated from Malvern, 1899, this work brought Elgar international fame. It consists of an 'Enigma' and fourteen variations. 'The Enigma I will not explain,' said the composer; 'its dark saying must be left unguessed.' Many guesses have been made but no one so far has been able to explain the enigma. Each variation is headed by initials or by a nickname belonging to a friend or to Elgar's wife or himself.

Theme

- I (C.A.E.) Caroline Alice Elgar, the composer's wife
- II (H.D.S.-P) Hew David Steuart-Powell, pianist in Elgar's trio
- III (R.B.T.) Richard Baxter Townshend, author
- IV (W.M.B.) William Meath Baker, nicknamed 'the Squire'
- V (R.P.A.) Richard Penrose Arnold, son of Matthew Arnold
- VI (Ysobel) Isabel Fitton, viola player
- VII (Troyte) Arthur Troyte Griffith, architect
- VIII (W.N.) Winifred Norbury
- IX (Nimrod) August Johannes Jaeger, reader for the publisher Novello & Co.
- X (Dorabella) *Intermezzo*. Dora Penny, later Mrs Richard Powell
- XI (G.R.S.) Dr G.R. Sinclair, organist of Hereford Cathedral
- XII (B.G.N.) Basil G. Nevison, cellist in Elgar's trio
- XIII (***) *Romanza*. Lady Mary Lygon, later Trefusis
- XIV (E.D.U.) *Finale*. Elgar himself ('Edu' being his nickname)

One evening in October 1898 Elgar, exhausted by a day of teaching, sat down at the piano as he often did and began to fashion the tune later known as 'Enigma'. It is an oddly hesitant theme; in its first and last parts each bar begins with a rest, and the melody is typically angular and full of melancholy which is only partly dispelled by the warm feeling of the middle four bars. It is indeed an enigma that such a gloomy theme should give rise to a succession of such brilliant and for the most part cheerful portraits – Elgar's portrait of himself being the most festive and magnificent of all! The *Enigma* theme seems to represent the composer in a mood of the deepest depression which his friends, coming in one after another, do their utmost to dispel – and succeed in doing so.



Elgar's wife, Alice



August Jaeger, Elgar's great friend and publisher-editor

Having worked out his theme, Elgar then began to imagine what various acquaintances of his might have done with it 'if they were asses enough to compose' (a typical piece of self-deprecation). Jotting down the names, a set of variations took shape, each in some way revealing the personality of a friend. This was a congenial task, and less than four months later the score was completed; the first performance took place in London under Hans Richter on 19 June 1899.

Listening Guide

The **first variation** leads straight out of the theme, and reveals the gracious personality of the future Lady Elgar.

No.2 attempts the almost impossible – an orchestral rendering of a light scampering piano scherzo. **No.3** is a caricature of an amiable eccentric, cycling around Oxford on his tricycle. **No.4** is noisy and assertive. **No.5** is a person of two different moods – introspective and distinctly gloomy (string melody), but also given to somewhat inconsequential chattering and laughter (woodwind phrases). **'Ysobel'** is as elegant and refined as **'Troyte'** is brusque and argumentative.

'W.N.' (**No.8**) lived in a fine half-timbered house, standing in its own spacious garden at the foot of the Malvern Hills. We get a feeling of the glorious expanse of the countryside. Elgar also preserves for us W.N.'s 'little trilly laugh', which is heard on the oboe. **'Nimrod'** is a play on the name of Jaeger (German for 'hunter'); it is a wise composer who so honours his publisher, and the music is a noble tribute to the man who more than any other was responsible for Elgar's success.

The **Intermezzo**, 'Dorabella', alias Dora Penny, was a very close friend of Elgar, and so she has the central place among the Variations. It was perhaps rather cruel of Elgar to include in this dainty, fluttering and decidedly sentimental portrait Dora's slight stammer, which is somewhat more noticeable than the soulful viola solo. As Mrs Richard Powell, 'Dorabella' wrote charmingly and informatively of the 'friends within' in her *Edward Elgar: Memories of a variation* (1937).

No. 11 (G.R.S.) shows Elgar rather more interested in Dr Sinclair's bulldog than in his organ-playing. Elgar had a great affection for dogs, and on one occasion at least was heard to address his dog at the conclusion of a broadcast talk: 'Good night, everyone...good night, Marco!' **No.12** is self-explanatory. **No.13, Romanza**, has a quotation from

'The Enigma I will not explain – its "dark saying" must be left unguessed, and I warn you that the connexion between the Variations and the Theme is often of the slightest texture; further, through and over the whole set another and larger theme "goes", but is not played...'

ELGAR IN HIS PROGRAM
NOTE FOR THE PREMIERE

Of all the many ingenious 'explanations' of Elgar's 'Enigma theme', one of the most plausible is that by Michael Kennedy, suggesting that the theme is based on the musical equivalent in rhythm and phrasing of the composer's own name, Ed-ward Ehhh'l'gaaar.



Seated from left:
George Sinclair, Dan the bulldog,
and Elgar

Mendelssohn's *Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage*, heard twice on the clarinet and once on the trumpets and trombones – alluding to a voyage taken by the lady referred to as Lady Mary Lygon, later Trefusis.

Lastly, the **Finale** – one could guess the composer was a violinist and a conductor, and also an organist. The *Enigma* theme now rises to its full stature; Elgar does not hesitate to give the music a strong flavour of *Pomp and Circumstance*. A mysterious quiet episode in the middle shows another side of his character, and the rich, sonorous peroration makes a truly Elgarian conclusion.

Altogether, the *Enigma* Variations are remarkably successful as portraits, and they are equally good as pure music. Elgar's gift for melody-writing of all sorts, his command of the orchestra, and his resourcefulness in devising variations make this a memorable work quite apart from considerations of portraiture.

© DONALD PEART

Donald Peart (1909–1981) was an English music administrator and from 1947 to 1974 held the Chair of Music at Sydney University.

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ABOUT THE ARTIST

Vladimir Ashkenazy conductor

In the years since Vladimir Ashkenazy first came to prominence on the world stage in the 1955 Chopin Competition in Warsaw, he has built an extraordinary career not only as one of the most renowned and revered pianists of our times, but as an inspiring artist whose creative life encompasses a vast range of activities.

Conducting has formed the largest part of his music-making for the past 20 years. He was Chief Conductor of the Czech Philharmonic from 1998 to 2003, and he was Music Director of the NHK Symphony Orchestra in Tokyo from 2004 to 2007. He will take up the position of Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor of the Sydney Symphony in 2009.

Alongside these roles, Vladimir Ashkenazy is also Conductor Laureate of the Philharmonia Orchestra, with whom he has developed landmark projects such as *Prokofiev and Shostakovich Under Stalin* (a project which he toured and later developed into a TV documentary) and *Rachmaninoff Revisited* at the Lincoln Center, New York.

He also holds the positions of Music Director of the European Union Youth Orchestra and Conductor Laureate of the Iceland Symphony Orchestra. He maintains strong links with a number of other major orchestras, including the Cleveland Orchestra (where he was formerly Principal Guest Conductor), San Francisco Symphony, and Deutsches Symphonie Orchester Berlin (Chief Conductor and Music Director 1988–96), and last year returned to conduct the Berlin Philharmonic.

He continues to devote himself to the piano, building his comprehensive recording catalogue with releases such as the 1999 Grammy award-winning Shostakovich Preludes and Fugues, Rautavaara's Piano Concerto No.3 (which he commissioned), and Rachmaninov transcriptions. His latest releases are recordings of Bach's *Wohltemperierte Klavier* and Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations*.

A regular visitor to Sydney over many years, he has conducted subscription concerts and composer festivals for the Sydney Symphony, with his five-program Rachmaninov Festival forming a highlight of the 75th Anniversary Season in 2007. Vladimir Ashkenazy's future artistic role with the Orchestra will include collaborations on composer festivals, major recording projects and international touring activities.



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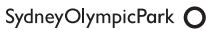
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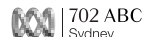
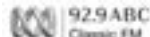
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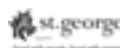
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Founded in 1932, the Sydney Symphony has evolved into one of the world's finest orchestras as Sydney has become one of the world's great cities. Resident at the Sydney Opera House, the Orchestra also performs throughout Sydney and regional New South Wales, and has toured internationally. Critical to the Orchestra's success has been the leadership given by its former Chief Conductors, including Sir Eugene Goossens, Willem van Otterloo, Louis Frémaux, Sir Charles Mackerras, Stuart Challender and Edo de Waart, as well as collaborations with legendary figures such as George Szell, Sir Thomas Beecham, Otto Klemperer and Igor Stravinsky. This year Maestro Gianluigi Gelmetti completed his fifth year as Chief Conductor and Artistic Director, a position he held in tandem with that of Music Director at Rome Opera.

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Marnie Sebire

Saul Lewis*

Alexander Love*

TRUMPETS

Daniel Mendelow

Paul Goodchild

John Foster

Anthony Heinrichs

TROMBONES

Ronald Prussing

Scott Kinmont

BASS TROMBONE

Christopher Harris

TUBA

Steve Rossé

TIMPANI

Brian Nixon#

PERCUSSION

Rebecca Lagos

Colin Piper

John Douglas*

Alison Pratt*

Philip South*

HARP

Louise Johnson

Owen Torr*

ORGAN

David Drury*

Bold = Principal

Italics = Assoc Principal

* = Guest Musician

= Contract Musician

† = Sydney Symphony

Fellow

PATRON

Her Excellency Professor

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