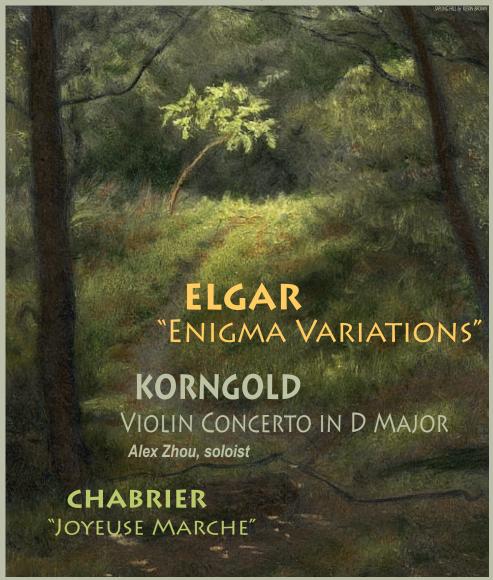
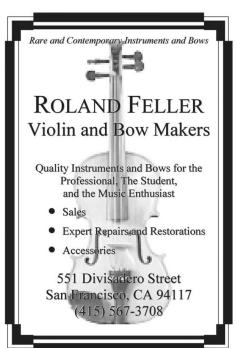
# Symphony Parnassus stephen paulson, music director



3 P.M. SUNDAY, APRIL 7, 2019
TAUBE ATRIUM THEATER, SAN FRANCISCO
2018-19 SEASON, PROGRAM 3







"The best of the Bay Area's community musicians" —Michael Tilson Thomas

Longtime San Francisco residents may remember Symphony Parnassus's ancestor, the Doctors' Symphony, which began in 1965 when a few doctors' chamber groups coalesced for the first time into an orchestra. Lyn Giovanniello, a recent member of our string bass section, was drafted by the Doctors' Symphony to be their first conductor. The group met regularly and presented concerts at what was then UC Hospital through the 1970s. Almost a decade after that organization folded, biophysics graduate student and amateur cellist Jonathan Davis re-established it as the more community-oriented UCSF Orchestra. He obtained funding from UCSF and started giving concerts in the UCSF Gym in 1989. Davis was able to tap an enthusiastic, supportive pool of both amateur and professional musicians from the faculty, staff and student body of UCSF as well as the local community. The UCSF Orchestra quickly grew, attracted large audiences, and earned a reputation for outstanding performances.

After six years at the orchestra's helm, Jonathan Davis moved to Boston to pursue his career, and Jeremy Swerling was named music director. Two years later, the orchestra elected Stephen Paulson as its third music director. After being cut from UCSF's budget in 1999, the orchestra was reorganized as a nonprofit entity with the name Symphony Parnassus, to honor its roots in San Francisco's Parnassus Heights neighborhood. Symphony Parnassus continues to attract top musical talent from the local community. In addition to members of the UCSF community, the orchestra now includes corporate executives, IT specialists, engineers, scientists and educators, as well as music students and professionals.

Over the years, Symphony Parnassus has collaborated with world-class musicians such as pianist Robin Sutherland, violist Geraldine Walther, oboist William Bennett and sopranos Lisa Vroman and Hope Briggs. Ballet legend Rudolph Nureyev made his West Coast conducting debut with our orchestra. Famed jazz saxophonist and composer John Handy premiered his *Concerto for Jazz Soloist and Orchestra* with us. With its focus on local soloists, composers and visual artists, Symphony Parnassus continues to play a unique and vital role in the Bay Area's arts community.

For further information or questions, please contact us at:

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Facebook: www.facebook.com/symphonyparnassus

3 p.m. Sunday, April 7, 2019

Taube Atrium Theater 40 I Van Ness Ave., San Francisco, CA 94102

Stephen Paulson, conductor

#### EMMANUEL CHABRIER (1841–1894)

Joyeuse Marche (1888)

4 minutes

#### ERICH WOLFGANG KORNGOLD (1897–1957)

Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 35 (1945)

- I. Moderato nobile
- II. Romanze
- III. Allegro assai vivace

#### Alex Zhou, soloist

25 minutes

-- Intermission --

20 minutes

#### **EDWARD ELGAR (1857–1934)**

#### Variations on an Original Theme ('Enigma'), Op. 36 (1899)

Theme (Enigma) - Andante

Variation I - L'istesso tempo (C.A.E.)

Variation II - Allegro (H.D.S.-P.)

Variation III - Allegretto (R.B.T.)

Variation IV - Allegro di molto (W.M.B.)

Variation V - Moderato (R.P.A.)

Variation VI - Andantino (Ysobel)

Variation VII - Presto (Troyte)

Variation VIII - Allegretto (W.N.) Variation IX - Moderato (Nimrod) Variation X - Intermezzo (Dorabella)

Variation XI - Allegro di molto (G.R.S.) Variation XII - Andante (B.G.N.)

Variation XIII - Moderato (\*\*\*Romanza)

Variation XIV - Finale: Allegro (E.D.U.)

35 minutes

#### Violin I

Vivian Ling,

Concertmaster

Annie Li,

Associate Concertmaster

Associate Concerta Katie Belleville Andrea Booth Jessica Greer Helene Grotans Courtney Onodera

Gianluca Pane Mitchell Perilla

Sevan Suni

#### Violin II

Krisha Montmorency, *Principal* Julia Lurie, *Associate Principal* 

Dan Ahn
Nina Bai
Rachel Cloues

Jonathan Eldridge Jan Rhoades

#### Viola

Hélène Wickett,
Principal
Tom Bodenheimer,
Associate Principal
Nick Blanchard
Donna Lim
Claire Morrow
Joan Murray
Merle Rabine

#### Cello

Jennifer Mathers,
Principal
Naoko Maruko,
Associate Principal
Margaret Moores
Leo Baluk
Chris Brann
Brian Colfer
Jozo Dujmovic
Nathan Leber
Maggie Nelson
Katherine Robertson

#### Bass

Justin Jimenez,
Principal
Joseph Taylor,
Associate Principal
Richard Frazier

#### **Flute**

Darcy Mironov, *Principal* Jenna Mauro

#### Oboe

Meave Cox, *Principal* Steve Kim

#### English Horn

Meave Cox

#### Clarinet

Kyle Beard, *Principal* Bert Baylin

#### Bass Clarinet

Michael Beale

#### Bassoon

Dan Zimardi, *Principal* Sarah Smith

#### Contrabassoon

Oleksandr Kashlyuk

#### Horn

Dan Meier, Principal Robin Varga Peter Jilka Alex Armstead

#### **Trumpet**

Chris Wilhite Franklin Davis Chrix Finne Jonathan Weber

#### Trombone

Ravi Sahae Bryan Alvarez

#### **Bass Trombone**

Forrest Jones

#### Tuba

Carolyn Tillstrom

#### Timpani

Christian F. Howes

#### **Percussion**

Jay Bordeleau Mike Kiely

#### Celesta

Peter Hwang

#### Harp

Michael Steadman

Please silence all cell phones and electronic devices prior to the performance.



**Stephen Paulson** has been the music director of Symphony Parnassus since 1998. Devoted to creating the best possible experience for both players and audience, he has led the ensemble through a wide variety of repertoire, drawing on the classical canon as well as new compositions. A student of George Cleve, Paulson has appeared as a guest conductor with members of the San Francisco Symphony, the Phoenix Symphony and the New World Symphony.

Paulson joined the San Francisco Symphony as principal bassoonist in 1977. Since his 1978 solo debut, he has been a frequent soloist with the symphony,

performing with conductors such as Kurt Masur, Wolfgang Sawallisch, Christopher Hogwood and Helmuth Rilling. In 1995, he was one of four SFS musicians invited by Sir Georg Solti to perform with the World Orchestra for Peace, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland. In 2009, he was invited to be a mentor and participant in the world's first YouTube Symphony Orchestra Summit at Carnegie Hall in New York. He is also featured in the documentary series *Keeping Score*, created by Michael Tilson Thomas with the San Francisco Symphony.

In 2011, Symphony Parnassus performed Paulson's own *Bassoon Concerto* with soloist Steven Dibner, SFS associate principal bassoonist.

Paulson has been a faculty member of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music since 1978 and has given master classes at schools around the world, including the Manhattan School of Music, the New England Conservatory, the Eastman School of Music, the Shanghai Conservatory, and the Juilliard School. He has taught and performed at many summer festivals, including Aspen, the Symphony Orchestra Academy of the Pacific, the Grand Teton Music Festival, Music at Kirkwood and Music in the Vineyards.

A graduate of the Eastman School of Music, Paulson studied bassoon with K. David Van Hoesen and Mordechai Rechtman and composition with Samuel Adler. From 1970 to 1977, he served as co-principal bassoonist of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. Prior to that, he was principal bassoonist with the Rochester Philharmonic from 1968 to 1970.

Violinist **Alex Zhou** is an "old friend" to Symphony Parnassus, having performed with the orchestra as a winner of the 2015 Parnassus – San Francisco Conservatory of Music Concerto Competition.

That time, he performed the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto, and at this concert, he will play the lesser-known Korngold Violin Concerto, a mid-20th century masterpiece that has found a big advocate in Alex, who just became acquainted with the piece this year.

"I've fallen in love with it," he said. "It's very unlike other staples of the concerto repertoire, more film-like. It's a mix between classical tonality and 20th century, not quite modernist. It's a lot of fun to play."



Over the years, he has won many prizes. In addition to winning the 2018 Parnassus – SFCM Concerto Competition, his recent honors include:

- honorable mention at the U.S. National YoungArts Competition
- semifinalist at the 2018 International Shanghai Isaac Stern Violin Competition
- quarterfinalist at the 2018 International Schoenfeld String Competition
- 1st place, 2018 International Irving M. Klein String Competition.
- 1st place, 2016 Master Sinfonia Chamber Orchestra Competition
- Fourth prize and Composer's Prize, 2014 International Menuhin Violin Competition

Alex lives with his parents James Zhou and June Hu in San Jose and attends The King's Academy school in Sunnyvale.

He started piano lessons at age 5 and began playing the violin a year later after seeing a home video of his older sister performing in her elementary school orchestra. Intrigued, he found her old violin and tried to play it. "I just really wanted to learn how to play," he said. He was instantly hooked and began taking violin lessons, too.

Now 17 and set to graduate from high school in a couple of months, he spent the earlier part of this year playing the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto at college auditions and is still waiting to hear which conservatory he might attend.

Alex says it is "very exciting" to be performing with Symphony Parnassus again. "It feels very different. I feel like I've matured a lot musically and grown as a musician and performer."

#### PROGRAM NOTES



## EMMANUEL CHABRIER Joyeuse Marche (1888)

French pianist and composer Emmanuel Chabrier (1841-94) was born in the town of Ambert, in the Auvergne region of central France, the only son of a lawyer, Jean Chabrier, who provided the boy with tutoring in music from the age of six. Though Emmanuel displayed great musical talent, Jean directed his son's education toward

a career in law, which Chabrier did pursue, attending law school in Paris and working as a civil servant for almost twenty years, while studying, playing and composing music in his spare time. Lacking formal academic training in music, Chabrier brought his own fresh musical language and innovations into French Romantic period music, influencing and gaining the admiration of composers such as Debussy, Ravel, Satie, Poulenc and Stravinsky. Chabrier socialized with the leading writers and painters of his time; he was close friends with Edouard Manet, and his personal collection of Impressionist paintings has found homes in the world's leading art museums. Chabrier composed piano music, songs and operas, but his best-known compositions are the orchestral works *España*, *Joyeuse Marche* and *Fête Polonaise*. He also left behind a rich body of correspondence: his letters give an honest, witty and well-rounded view of every aspect of his life.

Describing Chabrier's piano playing, his friend and fellow composer Vincent d'Indy wrote, "Though his arms were too short, his fingers too thick and his whole manner somewhat clumsy, he managed to achieve a degree of finesse and a command of expression that very few pianists—with the exception of Liszt and Rubinstein—have surpassed." Composer and critic Alfred Bruneau said of Chabrier, "He played the piano as no one has ever played it before, or ever will." The wife of the painter Renoir, a friend of the composer, relates this episode: "One day Chabrier came, and he played his *España* for me. It sounded as if a hurricane had been let loose. He pounded and pounded the keyboard. [The street] was full of people, and they were listening, fascinated. When Chabrier reached the last crashing chords, I swore to myself I would never touch the piano again. Besides, Chabrier had broken several strings and put the piano out of action."

Chabrier arranged *Joyeuse Marche* as the second of a pair of orchestral pieces, the first being *Prélude Pastoral;* both works began life in 1885 as piano pieces. He conducted their premiere on Novemer 4th, 1888, along with the premiere of *España*, in Angers at a festival devoted to his music. The *Marche* is dedicated to Vincent d'Indy. Chabrier is reported to have said, "My music rings with the stamp of my Auvergnat clogs." These fast stamping rhythms occur in *Joyeuse Marche*, as well as in *Fête Polonaise*, *Bourrée fantasque*, and several of the

*Pièces pittoresques* for piano. *Joyeuse Marche*, in particular, is more of a comic march-fantasy than a traditional march, with its frequent starts-and-stops, clever syncopations and extreme contrasts in orchestral texture and color. For the orchestra, this music is often tricky and virtuosic; for the listener, it is great fun.

Joyeuse Marche is scored for piccolo, pairs of flutes, oboes and clarinets, four bassoons, four horns, two cornets, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, side drum, cymbals, triangle, harp and strings. A performance lasts almost four minutes.

Program notes by Franklin Davis



#### ERICH WOLFGANG KORNGOLD Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 35 (1945)

Erich Wolfgang Korngold (1897-1957) was one of the first great film score composers. He is ranked alongside Max Steiner (*Gone with the Wind*) and Alfred Newman (*Wuthering Heights; How the West Was Won*) and he garnered two Academy Awards for best original motion picture score, in 1936 for *Anthony Adverse* and in 1938 for *The Adventures of Robin Hood*. An exponent of the Late Romantic style, Korngold taught,

conducted and composed in various idioms: song, symphony, concerto, ballet, chamber music, and most notably opera, for which he was famous throughout Europe.

Korngold was born into a musical family in Brünn (now Brno in the Czech Republic). His mother Josefine was an amateur pianist and singer, and his father Julius was a pianist, tenor, and music critic. Named after Mozart, Erich Wolfgang Korngold lived up to his name by becoming one of the great child prodigies in music history. And, like Mozart, his father had a lot to do with it. Julius Korngold's work as a music critic got him noticed, and when Erich was four, the family moved to Vienna so that Julius could take a job at the Neue Freie Presse, succeeding Eduard Hanslick, the famously conservative critic who loved Schumann and Brahms, and loathed Liszt and Wagner. Julius enrolled Erich at the Vienna Conservatory, where the boy began taking lessons from Robert Fuchs. He was also mentored by no less than Gustav Mahler, who proclaimed young Erich a genius and encouraged him to study with Arnold Schoenberg's composition teacher, Alexander Zemlinsky, which he did, from 1907 until 1911.

Continued on page 8

6

#### PROGRAM NOTES

Erich wrote his first piano pieces at the age of eight and his first major work, a ballet called *Der Schneeman (The Snowman)* at eleven. Composed for piano four hands, *Der Schneeman* was orchestrated by Zemlinsky and presented by imperial decree at the Vienna Hofoper in October 1910, when Erich was only thirteen. He wrote his first orchestral piece at age 14, and the Vienna Philharmonic performed his 45-minute-long Sinfonietta when he was fifteen. In 1916 he premiered two short operas, *Der Ring des Polykrates* and *Violanta*, which guaranteed him a place as one of the great Germanic opera composers of the day, even before he was out of his teens.

Always eager to promote his *wunderkind*, Julius Korngold sent the score of *Die Schneeman* to several musical luminaries. A series of prestigious performances followed. Erich's first piano trio was debuted by the renowned pianist and conductor Bruno Walter, with Arnold Rosé and Friedrich Buxbaum (the Vienna Philharmonic's concertmaster and principal cellist). Artur Schnabel premiered, championed, and toured with Korngold's second piano sonata.

Not even World War I could interrupt Erich Korngold's meteoric career. When he was drafted in 1916, a doctor recognized him and exempted him from service at the front. Instead, he supported the war effort by giving concerts and leading the regimental band.

Korngold's first post-war triumph was the 1919 opera *Die tote Stadt*, written when he was 22. He and Julius secretly collaborated on the libretto and it was years before the fact of its authorship got out. The opera was auspiciously premiered in both Hamburg and Cologne on December 4, 1920; it was a huge success in Vienna as well. *Die tote Stadt* even had the honor of being the first German language opera performed at New York's Metropolitan Opera after the war.

A champion of the Romantic tradition, Korngold, in the early 1930s, worked with the celebrated impresario Max Reinhardt in reviving and conducting the operettas of Johann Strauss, Jr. When Reinhardt traveled to Hollywood in 1934 to produce a film version of Shakespeare's comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, he brought Korngold along to adapt Mendelssohn's incidental music for the film. The film was groundbreaking for its time, with the greatest film stars of the day, including Olivia de Havilland, Dick Powell, and a very young Mickey Rooney as Puck. Impressed by Korngold's work, Warner Brothers engaged him to compose original film scores. Korngold treated each film as a spoken opera, giving each character his own leitmotif. His scores are very romantic and have rich, memorable melodies. He wrote the music for sixteen films in all, seven of them starring the action hero legend Errol Flynn, and he won two Oscars along the way.

Until 1938, Korngold shuttled back and forth between Europe and America, composing operas and concert scores in Austria and movie music in Hollywood. At the onset of World War II, he and his family settled in California. After the war, he returned to writing concert music; however, tastes had changed so much in the interim that his works were criticized as old-fashioned. Since the release on vinyl of some of his film scores in the early 1970s, Korngold's brand of lush,

emotional music has regained much of its early popularity. John Williams has credited Korngold as the main inspiration for his music for the *Star Wars* films.

Korngold's first serious work after World War II was the Violin Concerto, composed in 1945 and dedicated to Alma Mahler, the widow of Gustav Mahler, who had done so much to encourage him as a child prodigy. After Bronislaw Huberman, to whom Korngold offered the premiere, declined the honor, Korngold persuaded the renowned virtuoso Jascha Heifetz to perform it. Heifetz insisted that Korngold increase the finale's technical difficulty; as Heifetz requested, the joyful finale fairly bristles with virtuoso fireworks.

Korngold's Violin Concerto was premiered in February 1947, with Vladimir Golschmann conducting the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra and Jascha Heifetz as soloist. Korngold himself said about Heifetz's performance: "In spite of the demand for virtuosity..., the work with its many melodic and lyric episodes was contemplated more for a Caruso than for a Paganini. It is needless to say how delighted I am to have my concerto performed by Caruso and Paganini in one person: Jascha Heifetz."

Concertos usually begin with the orchestra. But this one starts with solo violin, playing an opening melody that arcs up two octaves in just five notes. This *Moderato nobile* theme comes from the Evening Scene in *Another Dawn*, a film from 1937. The second theme, more expansive and lyrical, also introduced by solo violin, comes from the 1939 film *Juarez*. It is from these two themes that Korngold fashions his first movement.

The second movement, *Romanze*, is a beautiful example of the lush, romantic side of Korngold. The music begins with gossamer string chords that set a romantically ethereal mood. Over this, the solo violin plays the love theme from the 1936 movie *Anthony Adverse*, and takes it into quite rhapsodic territory. After a freshly composed, passionately mercurial middle section, the principal theme returns, and at the end, it finally evaporates into the violin's extreme high register.

The finale, *Allegro assai vivace*, starts with a musical gunshot, introducing a quick, staccato jig that is itself a variant of the long-boned second theme, taken from *The Prince and the Pauper* (1937). The jig theme is constantly transformed into episodes reminiscent of other dance forms, including a heavy polka (played by the full orchestra), a sprightly reel, a cocky schottische, some light traveling music, and a hearty brass fanfare. Towards the end, the demands on the soloist keep increasing, with double stops, extreme range, and breathtaking velocity, building up to a huge, virtuoso climax.

In addition to solo violin, the concerto calls for 2 flutes (2nd doubling piccolo), 2 oboes (2nd doubling English horn), 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons (2nd doubling contrabassoon), 4 horns, 2 trumpets, trombone, harp, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, gong, tubular bell, glockenspiel, vibraphone, xylophone, celesta, and strings. A typical performance lasts about 25 minutes.

#### Program notes by Franklin Davis



#### **EDWARD ELGAR**

## Variations on an Original Theme ('Enigma'), Op. 36 (1899)

Edward William Elgar (1857-1934) was born in the village of Lower Broadheath in Worchestershire, England, the fourth of seven children of William Henry Elgar, a professional violinist, piano tuner and music store proprietor. At age 8, Edward was taking piano and violin lessons; he was composing music by the age of 10, and by age 16, he had

decided to pursue a career in music. His father couldn't afford to fulfill Edward's dream of attending the Leipzig Conservatory in Germany, so Elgar got on-the-job training by taking all kinds of gigs in the local area, including playing bassoon in a wind quintet, and giving violin and piano lessons. He was the organist at St. George's Church, director of the Worchester Instrumental Society, conductor of the Worchester Philharmonic, accompanist and director of the Worchester Glee Club, and he also made a weekly trek to Powick to conduct the staff orchestra at the county lunatic asylum. And all the while, young Elgar composed and arranged, and read voraciously in musical texts (particularly Sir Hubert Parry's articles in *Grove's Dictionary of Music*) to educate himself. Besides making brief visits to London in 1877 and 1878, Elgar immersed himself in the musical culture of the Continent with trips to Paris in 1880 and Leipzig in 1882; of his second sojourn, he wrote: "I got pretty well dosed with Schumann (my ideal!), Brahms, Rubinstein and Wagner, so had no cause to complain."

In 1886 Elgar took on a new pupil, Caroline Alice Roberts, whom he married three years later. Until her death in 1920, Elgar's wife Alice, eight years his senior and a published poet and fiction writer, acted as his business manager, social secretary, and personal music critic. In her diary she wrote, "The care of a genius is enough of a life's work for any woman." They had one child, Carice Irene, whose name was a combination of her mother's first and middle names.

Through the 1890s Elgar devoted more of his time to composing, building his reputation with large works for choral festivals as well as orchestral pieces and songs. But it was with his *Variations on an Original Theme ("Enigma")* in 1899 that Elgar, at the age of 42, suddenly gained fame. That work, along with his cantata *The Dream of Gerontius* (1900) and his *Pomp and Circumstance March No.1* (1901), made Elgar not only the pre-eminent English composer of his generation, but the first truly great English composer since Henry Purcell, who had died in 1695. Elgar, who was knighted in 1904, followed these with more major works: his oratorios *The Apostles* in 1903 and *The Kingdom* in 1906, the *Violin Concerto* in 1910, and two Symphonies, in 1907 and 1911.

The symphonic study *Falstaff* (1913) and the *Cello Concerto* (1918) were the last two large-scale works that he completed. Elgar received many honorary awards and degrees, and in 1924 was appointed Master of the King's Musick.

Elgar later reflected that he had begun his variations "in a spirit of humour, and continued in deep seriousness." One October evening in 1898, after a long, grueling day of teaching, Elgar returned home, sat down at the piano and began improvising. A certain melody struck his wife's fancy, so she asked what it was. "Nothing," he replied, "but something might be made of it. Powell would have done this, or Nevinson would have looked at it like this." He played more, then asked her, "Who is that like?" "I cannot say," Alice, replied, "but it is exactly the way Billy Baker goes out of the room." She added, "Surely, you're doing something that's never been done before." Thus encouraged to expand on it, he improvised more variations of his theme, each one a musical description of another friend or colleague, including Alice herself. He sent the finished set of variations to his publisher August Jaeger (who was the inspiration for one of the variations) with this note: "I have sketched a set of Variations on an original theme: the Variations have amused me because I've labeled 'em with the nicknames of my particular friends—you are Nimrod. That is to say I've written the variations each one to represent the mood of the 'party'—I've liked to imagine the 'party' writing the var. him (or her) self, if they were asses enough to compose."

The *Enigma Variations* consist of a theme, 14 variations, and a finale. The work presents us with at least two enigmas, or mysteries. One is the designation of each variation with the initials or nickname of the person it depicts (but the reference is, in almost all cases, easily deduced). The other is a true mystery, as Elgar stated that his initial melody is but counterpoint to a theme that is never heard in the piece, and that shall remain unnamed. In the composer's words, "So the principal theme never appears, even as in some late dramas the chief character is never on the stage." Though many have tried to solve this mystery, it remains an enigma still.

Another, more subtle musical riddle appears in the first four-note motif of Elgar's theme: two pairs of notes, each pair outlining a falling minor third interval, seem to "sigh" the composer's name, "Edward Elgar." The entire theme consists of six short 4-note motifs in G minor, but the last motif adds a fifth note, a B, which brings the theme to a G major ending. These six motifs come in pairs, making a simple ternary (A-B-A) form. Elgar dedicated the work "to my friends pictured within." Here are the variations:

#### Variation I - L'istesso tempo (C.A.E.)

This portrays Alice Elgar, the composer's wife. Elgar wrote, "The variation is really a prolongation of the theme with what I wished to be romantic and delicate additions; those who knew C.A.E. will understand this reference to one whose life was a romantic and delicate inspiration." One such delicate touch is a high, four-note tune that Edward would whistle as a salutation when arriving home: listen for those four high notes (D-Bb-D-C) sounding over the theme when the variation begins.

#### PROGRAM NOTES

#### Variation II - Allegro (H.D.S.-P.)

Hew David Steuart-Powell was the pianist with whom Elgar, on violin, played chamber music. (Their usual cellist, Basil Nevinson, appears in Variation IX.) In the opening measures, Elgar parrots the peculiar way in which Powell warmed up his fingers on the piano.

#### Variation III - Allegretto (R.B.T.)

This is Richard Baxter Townshend, a professor at Oxford and the popular author of *A Tenderfoot in Colorado*. The music makes "reference to his presentation of an old man in some amateur theatricals—the low voice flying off occasionally into 'soprano' timbre." Also, the woodwinds and plucked strings mimic his loose bicycle bell, as he would ride through Oxford with it constantly ringing.

#### Variation IV - Allegro di molto (W.M.B.)

This music describes William Meath "Billy" Baker, a country squire with a gruff disposition and a propensity for making hasty exits, often slamming the door when doing so. "In the days of horses and carriages it was more difficult than in these days of petrol to arrange the carriages for the day to suit a large number of guests. This Variation was written after the host had, with a slip of paper in his hand, forcibly read out the arrangements for the day and hurriedly left the music-room with an inadvertent bang of the door."

#### Variation V - Moderato (R.P.A.)

Richard Penrose Arnold, son of the literary critic and poet Matthew Arnold, was "a great lover of music which he played (on the pianoforte) in a self-taught manner, evading difficulties but suggesting in a mysterious way the real feeling. His serious conversation was continually broken up by whimsical and witty remarks." One of Elgar's most expansive and inspired melodies illustrates Arnold's noble thinking and his unorthodox way of making music; there is a whimsically lighthearted section as well.

#### Variation VI - Andantino (Ysobel)

This was for Isabel Fitton, a violinist friend of Elgar who tried to learn the viola under the composer's tutelage. It seems she was not a very adept student; she would end her lessons stating, "I value our friendship much too much." In this variation the viola is featured; its part contains many string crossings, a tribute to Isabel's struggle with this aspect of her playing. And her "grave, statuesque beauty" (to quote critic Michael Kennedy) comes across in music of gravity and formality, yet with more than a hint of romantic allure.

#### **Variation VII - Presto (Troyte)**

This is architect Arthur Troyte Griffith, another of Elgar's amateur students, but also an intimate friend. The variation depicts Troyte's "maladroit essays to play the pianoforte; later the strong rhythm suggests the attempts of the instructor (E.E.) to make something like order out of chaos, and the final despairing 'slam' records that the effort proved to be in vain."

#### Variation VIII - Allegretto (W.N.)

This variation, named for Winifred Norbury, is not so much a portrait of Miss Norbury as of Sherridge, the charming eighteenth-century house where she lived with her sister Florence. "The gracious personalities of the ladies are sedately shown." As this movement draws to a close, Elgar creates a most beautiful harmonic transition to the next variation. As the final G major chord dies away, the first violins hold onto their G, and the lower strings quietly slip the chord of E-flat major under it. The G becomes the first note of a most tender and heartfelt melody, and a new, magical world begins . . .

#### Variation IX - Moderato (Nimrod)

This noble, profound music was written for August Jaeger, Elgar's publisher and close friend. "Jaeger" is German for "hunter," and Nimrod is the "mighty hunter" mentioned in Genesis 10. Jaeger was a German-born musician who worked for the London music publisher Novello and who, more than anyone save Alice Elgar, sustained the composer through his frequent and severe periods of depression. This variation is about a long summer evening's conversation that the two men had. Elgar was very frustrated and considered giving up composing. Jaeger compared Elgar's struggles to those of Beethoven. He asked the composer how he thought Beethoven must have felt, having to compose while going deaf. Jaeger reminded Elgar that as Beethoven's hearing got worse, his music became more beautiful, and encouraged Elgar to take that lesson to heart. Jaeger then sang the Adagio of Beethoven's "Pathetique" Sonata for his friend. Elgar told Dora Penny that the opening of "Nimrod" suggests the "Pathetique." He said, "Can't you hear it at the beginning? Only a hint, not a quotation."

"Nimrod" is the most famous of the variations and is often performed by itself. It is most notably used in England for funerals and memorial services, and is always played on Remembrance Sunday, a ceremony paying tribute to British servicemen and women of both World Wars and subsequent conflicts. This music has also underscored many memorable movie scenes; one of the more recent is the homecoming scene from *Australia* (2012).

Continued on page 14

#### Program Notes

#### Variation X - Intermezzo (Dorabella)

This is Dora Penny. Miss Penny was a young, vivacious and music-loving friend of the Elgars who in her youth spoke with a stutter that is imitated here by the woodwinds. Dora was Richard Baxter Townshend's (Var. III) sister-in-law, and Billy Baker's (Var. IV) stepniece. In this music we sense a potent though repressed sexuality, to say nothing of Elgar's powerful and repressed response.

#### Variation XI - Allegro di molto (G.R.S.)

The initials belong to Dr. George Robertson Sinclair, organist of Hereford Cathedral, but the music belongs to his dog. Elgar: "The first few bars were suggested by his great bulldog Dan (a well-known character) falling down a steep bank into the River Wye (bar 1); his paddling up stream to find a landing place (bars 2 and 3); and his rejoicing bark on landing (second half of bar 5). G.R.S. said 'set that to music.' I did; here it is."

#### Variation XII - Andante (B.G.N.)

"The Variation is a tribute to a very dear friend [Basil Nevinson] whose scientific and artistic attainments, and the wholehearted way they were put at the disposal of his friends, particularly endeared him to the writer." Nevinson was the cellist in Elgar's trio; ergo, the cellos are featured in honor of his "serious and devoted friend."

#### Variation XIII - Moderato (\*\*\*Romanza)

Ostensibly, this is a musical portrait of Lady Mary Lygon. Elgar could not secure permission to use the initials "L.M.L" for this variation, so he instead used three asterisks in their place. His good friend Lady Lygon was in the midst of a sea voyage to Australia when the variations were being prepared for publication, hence unavailable to give her permission. To evoke the mood of her journey, Elgar quotes Mendelssohn's *Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage* on the clarinet, and gives us the thrum of the ship's engines in a soft timpani roll with hard sticks.

It has been theorized that this variation is actually about Helen Weaver, to whom Elgar was engaged for more than a year. She left him, also by sea, in 1885. This theory does not explain the use of three asterisks to represent the dedicatee's initials, although it is plausible that the music does depict Helen Weaver, but is disguised by reference to the voyage of Lady Mary Lygon.

#### Variation XIV - Finale: Allegro (E.D.U.)

This stands for Edu, Alice Elgar's nickname for her husband. This variation is a portrait of Elgar himself, in which he brings together themes from Variations I and IX (Alice Elgar and August Jaeger, his two greatest supporters). He writes, "Written at a time when friends were dubious and generally discouraging as to the composer's musical future, this variation is merely intended to show what E.D.U. intended to do. References are made to two great influences upon the life of the composer: C.A.E. and Nimrod. The whole work is summed up in the triumphant broad presentation of the theme in the major." The finale was originally conceived as a shorter, more concise movement. Hans Richter, to whom Elgar sent his newly published score, advised him to make his finale bigger, and tie together his themes more completely, to make his final movement more of a counterweight to all the preceding ones. Elgar took the great conductor's advice to heart, and expanded his finale by 100 bars.

Edward Elgar did such a masterful job of hiding the "enigma" part of his variations that it is still to this day unknown. Theories abound, but no one has been able to definitively state what the "enigma" is. In the early years after its composition, Elgar seemed to enjoy the endless speculation on his "enigma." However, he began to grow weary of this and in his later years would merely refer to the work as "my Variations."

The *Enigma Variations* was premiered on June 19, 1899 at St. James's Hall in London with the esteemed Hans Richter conducting. The work is scored for 2 flutes (2nd doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, triangle, bass drum, cymbals, organ ad libitum, and strings. A performance lasts about 30-35 minutes.

Program notes by Franklin Davis

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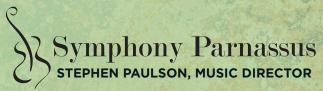
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16





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