

CBSO

City of
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Symphony
Orchestra

Elgar & Beethoven: Part 2
Symphony Hall
Thursday 22 February, 2024
7:30pm

CBSO.CO.UK



KAZUKI GONDUGTS
ELGAR &
BEETHOVEN

Concert programme £4

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INTRODUCTION

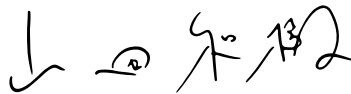
From the profound and challenging realm of Beethoven's compositions, to the enigmatic power of Elgar's Enigma Variations - enjoy an unforgettable experience brimming with passion and intrigue.

There's a unique excitement that comes with each performance. This week we have two concerts featuring different soloists. Part 1 features pianist Alice Sara Ott and Part 2 features violinist Maria Dueñas. Beethoven's music is regarded as the most profound and challenging for any soloist or musician, as it requires a philosophical approach to making music. Both soloists are fantastic performers, and I'm excited to play with them for the very first time.

I used to believe that Beethoven should be very serious music somehow. But then I had an increased sentiment, why not to play the funny things? I'm sure Beethoven put his humour in his music. If we look, we can find those moments. They exist and can really be enjoyed.

The Enigma Variations is also a very English piece of music composed by Elgar. It is a mysterious piece, and the meaning behind the variation names is unclear. Each variation is named after a person, sometimes only with initials and is a representation of that person. It is a very mysterious piece of music, and each person can interpret it in a unique way. Playing the Enigma Variations is like telling a story with many chapters, and it's a joy to perform it again.

I hope you enjoy your evening.



Beethoven, Violin Concerto, 42mins

- I. Allegro ma non troppo, 23mins
- II. Larghetto, 10mins
- III. Rondo: Allegro, 9mins

Interval

Elgar, Enigma Variations, 33mins

Theme "Enigma" (Andante)

- I. (L'istesso tempo) "C.A.E."
- II. (Allegro) "H.D.S-P"
- III. (Allegretto) "R.B.T"
- IV. (Allegro di molto) "W.M.B."
- V. (Moderato) "R.P.A."
- VI. (Andantino) "Ysobel"
- VII. (Presto) "Troyte"
- VIII. (Allegretto) "W.N."
- IX. (Adagio) "Nimrod"
- X. (Intermezzo: Allegretto) "Dorabella"
- XI. (Allegro di molto) "G.R.S."
- XII. (Andante) "B.G.N."
- XIII. (Romanza: Moderato) " * * * "
- XIV. (Finale: Allegro) "E.D.U."

FREE PRE-CONCERT EVENT

Join us for a pre-concert performance from the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire Ensemble. The performance will take place on the Symphony Hall Main Stage from 6:15pm.

Kazuki Yamada, Conductor
Charlotte Corderoy, Assistant Conductor
Maria Dueñas, Violin

We are very happy for you to take photographs and short video clips at our concerts, but please refrain from recording the whole performance. We'd love you to share them with us @TheCBSO.

We do ask that you are mindful of disturbing other audience members and therefore ask that you dim the brightness on your phone, take pictures during applause breaks and do not use your flash.

We also regularly take photographs for promotional use, so you may see a professional photographer at our concerts. Please ask a member of the front of house team if you have any questions about this.

To ensure that everyone is able to enjoy the performance, please make sure your mobile phone is set to silent.

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KAZUKI CONDUCTS ELGAR & BEETHOVEN: PART 2

Dan the bulldog, Dorabella with her infectious giggle, and the noble, eloquent Nimrod – Elgar's Enigma Variations are an unforgettable musical portrait of the friends who made him the man he was, right here in the Midlands 125 years ago. But it's much more than that, and tonight Kazuki Yamada joins violinist Maria Dueñas to pair it with a masterpiece that Elgar loved throughout his life: Beethoven's radiant Violin Concerto.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

VIOLIN CONCERTO IN D, OP.61

- I. Allegro ma non troppo
- II. Larghetto
- III. Rondo: Allegro

Beethoven's Violin Concerto was premiered in Vienna on 23rd December 1806, and it left the audience baffled. "Commonplace", "tiring", a "concerto for timpani" – those were just some of the reactions. It wasn't what they expected from any sort of concerto, let alone from Beethoven. He'd written the concerto in a hurry, having heard that the Viennese violinist Franz Clement was planning a benefit concert. Beethoven raced to complete it, and handed over the score, headed with a typically awful pun ("*Concerto par Clemenza pour Clement*")

– "Concerto in mercy [clemency] for Clement") so late that Clement had to sight-read it on the night.

Clement went one step further, scattering the concerto's movements throughout the concert, and inserting between them a masterpiece of his own - a trick solo performed on one string of an upside-down violin. Knowing what to expect, it's a miracle that Beethoven kept his temper, let alone completed the Concerto. But in 1806 Beethoven – working hard at his 5th and 6th symphonies, and revising his only opera *Fidelio* – was thinking on another level. The violin is the supreme singer amongst instruments, so Beethoven gave it space to sing as never before. There's no showing-off for its own sake – in fact, except for just two notes near the very end, he doesn't even use any *pizzicato* (plucking).

A new kind of concerto needed a new approach to the orchestra. So the themes of the first movement glide in on the woodwinds; the horns open up huge vistas and the bassoon echoes the high-flying violin, like the shadow thrown as a bird soars over a sunlit landscape. And it all begins with five quiet taps of the drum: no-one had ever done that before.

So if the *Larghetto* feels particularly personal, that's no coincidence. Halfway through, the violin enters with a melody so touching that it's hard not to wonder if it has a special meaning. In fact, it's uncannily similar to a moment in *Fidelio* – the melody with which the political prisoner Florestan blesses his jailer for offering him refreshment. Without ever being explicit, Beethoven makes himself perfectly clear. And if the dancing final *Rondo* is rather more lively than the first movement, nor does it resort to fireworks and gimmicks (Clement provided plenty of those elsewhere). Joyful without being frivolous, it closes the concerto with a happiness that's been truly earned.

Edward Elgar (1857-1934)

VARIATIONS ON AN ORIGINAL THEME (ENIGMA), OP.36

Theme "Enigma" (Andante)

- I. (L'istesso tempo) "C.A.E."
- II. (Allegro) "H.D.S-P"
- III. (Allegretto) "R.B.T"
- IV. (Allegro di molto) "W.M.B."
- V. (Moderato) "R.P.A."
- VI. (Andantino) "Ysobel"
- VII. (Presto) "Troyte"
- VIII. (Allegretto) "W.N."
- IX. (Adagio) "Nimrod"
- X. (Intermezzo: Allegretto) "Dorabella"
- XI. (Allegro di molto) "G.R.S."
- XII. (Andante) "B.G.N."

XIII. (Romanza: Moderato) " * * * * "

XIV. (Finale: Allegro) "E.D.U."

In October 1898, after a long day of violin teaching at The Mount School in Malvern, Edward Elgar lit a cigar and sat down at his piano. "I began to play, and suddenly my wife interrupted by saying 'Edward, that's a good tune...play it again, I like that tune'". He tried it differently, asking "Whom does that remind you of?" "That's Billy Baker going out of the room" she replied. From that parlour-game grew the greatest orchestral work yet written by a British composer: a series of miniature musical portraits of his nearest and dearest. First performed in London on 19th June 1899, the *Enigma Variations* marked a turning point not just in Elgar's career, but in the history of British music.

Why? Well, there was the sheer skill. Elgar never went to music college, but while his academically-trained peers had been learning from textbooks, he'd been playing his violin in amateur operas, local orchestral societies and the Three Choirs Festival. He knew, from within, exactly how an orchestra worked. This practical know-how was coupled to a stroke of technical genius. The work is a set of variations – one of the clearest musical forms to follow. Elgar went a step further, and structured the *Enigma Variations* as a miniature symphony, with a first movement (I-VII), a slow movement (VIII-XIII) broken by a delicate intermezzo (*Dorabella*), and a grand finale (XIV).

Yet just as much, they're a set of 15 perfect, self-contained orchestral cameos. Tone-painting came easily to a seasoned miniaturist like the composer of *Salut d'Amour* and *Chanson de Matin*, and you don't have to be a musicologist to enjoy the pictures of distant liners (***) and bulldogs (G.R.S.) – or to respond to the profound emotion of *Nimrod*: inspired (so Elgar said) by a conversation about Beethoven with his German-born publisher Augustus Jaeger.

Inspiration like this can't be faked, and in writing about his friends and family, Elgar didn't have to fake anything. The people – and places – he chose to portray in the *Variations* were those that had encouraged him through his troubled early years. The whole piece glows with a sense of genuine love – for friends, for family, for home. And the “Enigma”? Elgar was a wizard at cryptic crosswords and what he called “japes”. Is it the counterpoint to another famous tune – perhaps *Auld Lang Syne*, or the National Anthem? Or an abstract concept, like Friendship? Elgar's only response to every suggestion was “No – nothing like it.” We're left with the music, and Elgar's understated, endlessly evocative dedication: “To my friends pictured within.”

Enigma. The composer himself, hesitant and melancholy, then quietly hopeful.

I. (C.A.E.) Caroline Alice, the composer's wife – here, as always, by his side. Where the theme is hesitant, the variation is measured, tender and serene.

II. (H.D.S-P) Hew Steuart-Powell, an amateur pianist – and the way he'd run his fingers over the keys while warming up to play.

III. (R.B.T.) Richard Townsend, a family friend, had an unusually high voice – but would make it exaggeratedly low for comic effect. Listen for the bassoons.

IV. (W.M.B.) Local squire William Baker barking the day's plans at his bemused house-guests before slamming the door on the way out.

V. (R.P.A.) Richard Arnold was loved by Elgar for his serious and thoughtful conversation (strings) – which he'd break up with unexpected witticisms (woodwinds).

VI. (*Ysobel*.) Isabel Fitton, a viola pupil of Elgar's. This variation is both a delicate portrait of a young Worcestershire lady, and a handy string-crossing exercise for the viola section!

VII. (*Troyte*.) The Malvern architect Arthur Troyte Griffith – Elgar tried to teach him the piano, and we hear him madly pounding the keys.

VIII. (W.N.) Winifred Norbury's elegant Georgian house, Sherridge Court near Great Malvern. The oboes imitate her distinctive, gentle laugh.

IX. (*Nimrod*.) “Nimrod”, was the “mighty hunter” of the Bible; Augustus Jaeger (German for “hunter”), was Elgar's German-born editor, and his most devoted and understanding musical supporter.

X *Intermezzo (Dorabella)*. A complete contrast – a deliciously-scored interlude portraying Dora Penny, a 24-year old Elgar fan from Wolverhampton. The woodwinds imitate her slight stammer.

XI (G.R.S.) George Sinclair, organist at Hereford Cathedral and his bulldog Dan – tumbling down the banks of the River Wye, then doggy-paddling furiously upstream.

XII (B.G.N.) Basil Nevinson was a cellist, so this variation is an expressive and poignant elegy for the cellos, leading directly into –

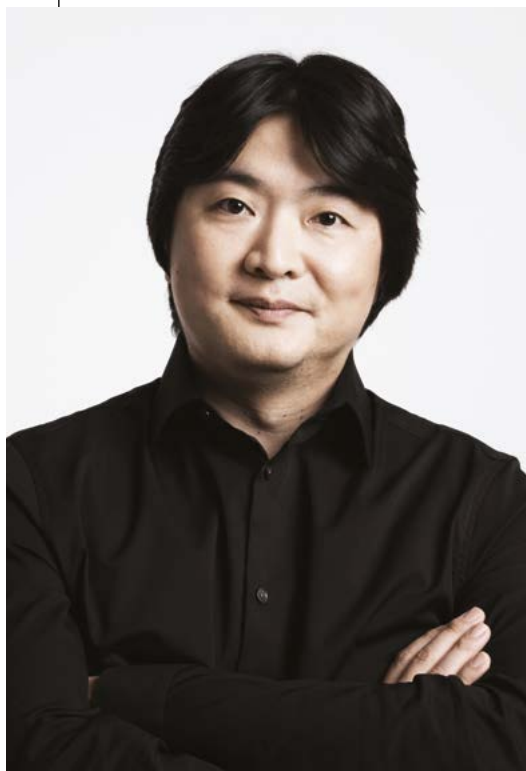
XIII *Romanza* (* * *) Officially, the asterisks represented Lady Mary Lygon, then on a sea voyage, but the desolate clarinet solo over a quiet drum roll (representing the liner's engines) hints at a more tragic story. Elgar never explained...

XIV *Finale (E.D.U.)* Elgar reappears, completely transformed (“Edu” was Alice Elgar's pet name for her husband). A stirring build-up leads to a triumphant finale, which pauses to recall C.A.E. and Nimrod before ending, transformed, in the confident splendour of the full orchestra.

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Conductor

KAZUKI YAMADA



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Kazuki Yamada is Chief Conductor and Artistic Advisor of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO), a role he commenced in Spring 2023. Alongside his commitments in Birmingham, Yamada is also Artistic and Music Director of Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte-Carlo (OPMC). Yamada has forged a link between Monaco and Birmingham having conducted collaborative performances with CBSO Chorus of Mendelssohn's *Elijah* in both cities in 2019 and Orff's *Carmina Burana* in 2023. Time spent under the close supervision of Seiji Ozawa served to underline the importance of what Kazuki Yamada calls his "Japanese feeling" for classical music. Born in 1979 in Kanagawa, Japan, he continues to work and perform in Japan every season with NHK Symphony Orchestra and in his position as Principal Guest Conductor with Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra. Shortly after assuming his position in Birmingham, Yamada gave a series of concerts on tour around Japan with the CBSO in summer 2023 and will take OPMC on tour to Japan in 2024.

MARIA DUEÑAS

Violinist María Dueñas made her Philadelphia Orchestra debut in May 2023 at the Mann Music Center. She studies with the world-renowned violin teacher Boris Kuschmir at the University of Music and Performing Arts in her adopted home of Vienna. Born in Granada in 2002, she was accepted at the conservatory in her hometown at age seven. In 2014 a scholarship took her to Dresden, where she caught the attention of conductor Marek Janowski, at whose invitation she later made her debut as soloist with the San Francisco Symphony. She is now in demand worldwide, performing with major orchestras and enjoying a regular collaboration with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Gustavo Dudamel. An exclusive artist of Deutsche Grammophon, she released her first album, *Beethoven and Beyond*, in May 2023 with Manfred Honeck and the Vienna Symphony. Highlights of the current season also include a tour with the Kammerphilharmonie Bremen under Paavo Järvi; and debuts with the Swedish Radio Symphony and the Munich Philharmonic. She plays the Nicolò Gagliano violin of 1714, on loan by the Deutsche Stiftung Musikleben, and the Stradivari "Camposelice" of 1710, loaned to her by the Nippon Music Foundation.



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