

Sir John Barbirolli, CH (2 December 1899 – 29 July 1970), né Giovanni Battista Barbirolli, was a British conductor and cellist. He is remembered above all as conductor of the Hallé Orchestra in Manchester, which he helped save from dissolution in 1943 and conducted for the rest of his life. Earlier in his career he was Arturo Toscanini's successor as music director of the New York Philharmonic, serving from 1936 to 1943. He was also chief conductor of the Houston Symphony from 1961 to 1967, and was a guest conductor of many other orchestras, including the BBC Symphony Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, the Philharmonia, the Berlin Philharmonic and the Vienna Philharmonic, with all of which he made recordings.



Born in London of Italian and French parentage, Barbirolli grew up in a family of professional musicians. After starting out as a cellist, he was given the chance to conduct, from 1926 with the British National Opera Company, and then with Covent Garden's touring company. On taking up the conductorship of the Hallé he had less opportunity to work in the opera house, but in the 1950s he conducted productions of works by Verdi, Wagner, Gluck, and Puccini at Covent Garden with such success that he was invited to become the company's permanent musical director, an invitation he declined. Late in his career he made several recordings of operas, of which his 1967 set of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* for EMI is probably the best known.

Both in the concert hall and on record, Barbirolli was particularly associated with the music of English composers such as Elgar, Delius and Vaughan Williams. His interpretations of other late romantic composers, such as Mahler and Sibelius, as well as of earlier classical composers, including Schubert, are also still admired.

MASTERING EQUIPMENT

*Digital: Antelope Audio Eclipse 384
Antelope Audio Isochrone 10M Rubidium atomic reference generator*

Korg MR2000 DSD recorder

Weiss Saracon Sample Rate Conversion Software

Weiss POW-r Dithering Software

*Analogue: Studer 810 Reel to Reel with
Custom by JRF Magnetics & Siltech wiring
Nagra 4S custom by JRF Magnetics*

*Aria tape head pre-amp by ATR Services
Retro Instruments 2A3 Dual-channel tube program equalizer
Sontec MEP-250EX Parametric EQs*

*VPI Classic Turntable w/ Benz Wood Cartridge
Rogue Audio Phone Pre-amp*

*Power Sources: PS Audio P10 Power Plant
and Power Plant 300*

*Power Cords: Purist Audio Design, Essential Sound Products,
Speltz Anti-Cables*

*Vibration Control: Symposium Acoustics Rollerblocks,
Ultra platforms, Svelte shelves*

*Sonic Studio CD.1 Professional CD Burner
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SIR JOHN

Barbirolli

The Hallé Orchestra



Edward Elgar

Enigma Variations

Enigma Variations, byname of Variations on an Original Theme ("Enigma"), Op. 36, series of 14 short musical portraits by Edward Elgar that premiered in London on June 19, 1899. The subjects of these portraits were several of the composer's friends and family.

The work's origins were described by Elgar in a letter to his friend August Jaeger at the music publishing firm Novello & Company. "I have sketched a set of Variations (orkestry) on an original theme," the composer wrote.

The Variations have amused me because I've labelled 'em with the nicknames of my particular friends—you [Jaeger] are Nimrod. That is to say I've written the variations each one to represent the mood of the 'party'... it's a quaint idee & the result is amusing to those behind the scenes & won't affect the hearer who 'nose nuffin.'

Indeed, unfamiliarity with the originals sketched by Elgar does not detract from the hearer's enjoyment of Elgar's music, though deeper knowledge of the composer's intentions adds a measure of humour that the casual listener might miss. The lovely first variation, for example, is an appreciation of the composer's wife, Alice. The penultimate variation, devoted to a female friend whom Elgar believed was at the time on route to Australia, quotes Felix Mendelssohn's overture *Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage*. Variation No. 11, though named for the organist George Sinclair, is really a portrait of Sinclair's boisterous bulldog, Dan.

The best known of the variations is the serene Variation No. 9, identified by the composer as "Nimrod." The name is a play on words, as the biblical Nimrod was a great hunter, and the German word meaning "hunter" is Jaeger. This lyrical movement portrays a warm conversation between the composer and his friend Jaeger, who by Elgar's account, offered valuable artistic guidance throughout a long partnership. The final variation portrays the composer himself, though it includes music from the first variation as well as the theme from "Nimrod" to indicate the significance of his two strongest influences.

The structure of the Enigma Variations is as follows:

C.A.E. (Elgar's wife, Caroline Alice Elgar)

H.D.S.-P. (Hew David Steuart-Powell, a pianist and fellow chamber musician)

R.B.T. (Richard Baxter Townshend)

W.M.B. (William Meath Baker)

R.P.A. (Richard Penrose Arnold, son of English poet Matthew Arnold)

Ysobel (Isabel Fitton, an amateur viola player)

Troyte (A. Troyte Griffith, an architect and would-be pianist)

W.N. (Winifred Norbury, a matron of the arts with a distinctive laugh)

Nimrod (A.J. Jaeger [see above])

Dorabella (Dora Penny, daughter of the rector of Wolverhampton)

G.R.S. (George Robertson Sinclair, organist at Hereford Cathedral, and his dog)

B.G.N. (Basil G. Nevinson, amateur cellist and fellow chamber musician)

*** (a female friend thought to be traveling)

E.D.U. (Elgar's wife's nickname for him)

Because the original score indicates the persons portrayed only by initials, one might surmise that their identities are the enigma of the title. Yet Elgar freely named each person and indicated what he had hoped to portray about them. According to Elgar, the true mystery was the piece's theme. He noted that "through and over the whole set another and larger theme 'goes' but is not played." This theme has been variously guessed to be "Rule Britannia," "God Save the Queen," the "Dies Irae," "Auld Lang Syne," or even "Pop Goes the Weasel." But Elgar died without identifying his theme, and the enigma remains.

Edward Elgar

Enigma Variations

SIR JOHN

Barbirolli

The Hallé Orchestra

Date of Recording: 1956

Recorded by Mercury Records for Pye Records

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| 01 | Theme: Andante - |
| 02 | Variation 1: C. A. E. (The Composer's Wife) - |
| 03 | Variation 2: H. D. S-P. (Hew David Steuart-Powell) - |
| 04 | Variation 3: R. B. T. (Richard Baxter Townshend) - |
| 05 | Variation 4: W. M. B. (William Meath Baker) - |
| 06 | Variation 5: R. P. A. (Richard Penrose Arnold) - |
| 07 | Variation 6: Ysobel (Isabel Fitton) - |
| 08 | Variation 7: Troyte (Troyte Griffith) - |
| 09 | Variation 8: W. N. (Winifred Norbury) - |
| 10 | Variation 9: Nimrod (A. J. Jaeger) - |
| 11 | Variation 10: Intermezzo: Dorabella (Dora Penny) - |
| 12 | Variation 11: G. R. S. (George Robertson Sinclair) - |
| 13 | Variation 12: B. G. N. (Basil G. Nevinson) - |
| 14 | Variation 13: Romanza: **** (Lady Mary Lygon) - |
| 15 | Variation 14: Finale: E. D. U. (The Composer) |

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