

The AMHERST COLLEGE Department of Music presents the

AMHERST SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

MARK LANE SWANSON, Music Director & Conductor

ANNIEROSE KLINGBEIL, Assistant Director

HOMECOMING 2021 CONCERT “*ENIGMA VARIATIONS*”

SATURDAY, November 13, 2021 at 8:30 p.m.

BUCKLEY RECITAL HALL, AMHERST COLLEGE

& live-streamed at amherst.edu/go/musicstream

PROGRAM

Overture to the operetta *The Pirates of Penzance* (1879) Sir Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900)

“Walk to the Paradise Garden” from the opera *A Village Romeo & Juliet* (1910) Frederick Delius (1862-1934)

Variations on an Original Theme (“Enigma”), op. 36 (1899) Sir Edward Elgar (1857-1934)

(Note: tonight’s concert will be performed without intermission, and will last approximately one hour.)

For the ASO’s September 19, 2021 “Welcome, Class of 2025!” & October 23, 2021 “From Across the Pond” concerts please see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h7hq1ljpmRk&t=347s>)

FIRST VIOLINS

MARIE LEOU, concertmaster
TARA ALAHAKOON
ANNIKA BAJAJ
CASSIE JIN
JASON KANG
EMILY KIM
ISABELLE KIM
JAKE KIM
SUNNIE NOH
GRACE LEE
DAVID XU
ZHIHAN XU

SECOND VIOLINS

DANIEL MARTIN*
ALEXANDRA OLSON*
FRANCISCA ABDO ARIAS
NII-AYI ARYEETAY
NORA DOCKTER
JARED GRACIA-DAVID
MEENAKSHI JANI
CHLOE METZ
BIANCA SASS
DESMOND SHEA
OLIVIA STOCKARD

VIOLAS

GRACE GEEGANAGE
HARRY PANNER*
ANNIEROSE KLINGBEIL
ASHLEY LOH
YOSEN WANG*

* principal

CELLOS

TAZ KIM*
JACK DUNHAM
YEJU KANG
VANESA FAROOQ
MICHAEL LIU
CLAIRE MACERO
YAFFA SEGAL
OREN TIRSCHWELL
THOMAS YE

STRING BASSES

ZAC BRENNAN
JACK CORCORAN*

FLUTES

REID DODSON*
CECE HONG*
LORENA BERGSTROM
ANNIE CHEN
SAM SPRATFORD
(also piccolo)
IRIS XIE

OBOES

DIANA DANIELS
(also English horn)
VIVIANA LABARCA*
THOMAS MEYER*

CLARINETS

HANNAH GOLDBERG*
JINAE HONG
STEPHEN CHEN
DANNY JEONG*
KENNY KIM*
ABIGAIL ROBBINS
MAJD ROUHANA

BASSOONS

DAVIS RENELLA
NATHANIEL ROTH

HORNS

CLAIRE TAYLOR*
CECE AMORY
JASON DEGRAAFF
RACHEL WILLOCK

TRUMPETS

SHUZO KATAYAMA*
GABRIEL PROIA*
CAMERON CHANDLER

TROMBONES

CONNOR BARNES*
MASAHIRO NISHIKAWA*
DEVLIN DANNER

TUBA

ZEV BARDEN

TIMPANI

KAI GLASHAUSSER
CLARA HOEY
MIN WINTON

PERCUSSION

KAI GLASHAUSSER
CLARA HOEY
CHARLOTTE WANG
MIN WINTON
SAM YOUNG

KEYBOARD

ROWAN BELT
CHRISTIAN PATTAVINA

The operettas of W.S. Gilbert and **SIR ARTHUR SULLIVAN (1842-1900)** were the Broadway shows of their day; opening nights came with a similar degree of chaos. Consequently, Sullivan's **OVERTURE to THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE (1879)**—which we now accept as familiar concert repertoire—was actually rather hastily composed with its orchestration left to Sullivan's Music Director Albert Cellier, as well as his orchestrators and copyists due to last-minute production changes. "*Pirates*" was the only "G&S" operetta to be premiered outside of London—in New York City to be exact! This was done to defeat the absence of international copyright laws between the countries which had resulted in Gilbert & Sullivan's previous shows being pilfered by American theatrical companies without royalty payments of any kind. The composers got around this by copyrighting their work in the United States first and opening the show in New York, and then taking it back to London's West End! And what is the plot of "*Pirates*"? Frederic was a "little lad" when his family's hard-of-hearing "Maid of All Work," Ruth, mistakenly indentured him until he reached the age of 21 to a band of *pirates*--rather than to a *pilot* per her orders. Ruth, 47, is enamored of Frederic, soon-to-be 21, and alarmed at losing him, reveals that because Frederic is technically and actually only 5 years old, because he was born on February 29 in a leap year. Frederic, a "slave of duty," who has earlier chastised his pirate family as too "tender-hearted," resolves to fill out his indentiture until his mid-80's. Because he has been aboard since childhood and has never seen another woman, he agrees to marry Ruth, who assures him that she is "beautiful." Forlorn, Frederic wanders along the coast of Cornwall when--lo!--appears a bevy of young maidens ("and Ruth told me *she* was beautiful!"). He asks if any of them would consider a marriage proposal from him, and Mabel, the daughter of a "Modern Major General" steps forward, eager to accept. Suddenly Frederic's pirate colleagues appear and also demand to be married to the Major General's remaining daughters, but the Major General also appears and pleads with the pirates not to deprive him of the comforts of old age tended to by his daughters. When a bumbling police force arrives to arrest the pirates, the pirates swear allegiance to Queen Victoria, release Frederic from his indentiture, are granted permission by the Major General to marry his daughters, and all ends happily. The overture opens with "With cat-like tread" (what the police sing when "sneaking up" on their pirate prey), continues with the pirate chorus "Come friends, who plough the seas," then with Frederic's plea to the beautiful maidens "Leave me not to pine alone"; it closes with "How beautifully blue the sky" (the maidens cheerily celebrating their day on the beach) and "A paradox" (sung when it's revealed that Frederic was born on February 29 and despite his 21 years on earth he is "still a little boy of five"). Fun fact: "Come friends, who plough the sea" at one time was well known in American culture as the popular song "Hail, Hail the Gang's All Here."

We think of **FREDERICK DELIUS (1862-1934)** as an English composer, but the connection is a bit slim. Born in England to German parents (his birthname was Fritz Delius), the young man learned to play the piano and violin as a boy. His father wanted him to go into business, but at age 22 Delius talked his father into setting him up as the manager of orange groves in Florida. In Florida Delius had very little to do with oranges but did take music lessons and soaked up African-American folksongs and tales of magic and voodoo. After brief stints in Virginia and New York, Delius moved to Leipzig for formal training with Reinecke; in these years he became good friends with Edvard Grieg and lived briefly in Norway. In 1888 the 26-year-old Delius moved to the village of Grez-sur-Loing, about forty miles south of Paris, where he would spend the rest of his life. The rest of his life was not happy. Delius suffered from disease so debilitating that he eventually lost the use of his legs and became blind. He was assisted in his final years by Eric Fenby, an amanuensis to whom Delius dictated his music. Delius wished to be buried in the garden of his house in Grez-sur-Loing, but French law would not allow this, and after a year his body was disinterred and buried in England. Delius' music is generally unfamiliar to American audiences, but it has had passionate advocates, mostly prominently Sir Thomas Beecham. Delius composed six operas as well as orchestra and chamber music and a number of choral settings. One of his most famous works is *Appalachia*, a set of variations for orchestra based on a slave song he heard in America, but today Delius is best remembered for his short orchestral pieces, beautifully shaded and evocative of particular moments or places.

In 1907 Delius' opera *A VILLAGE ROMEO & JULIET* was premiered in Berlin. An updated retelling of Shakespeare's play, it tells of the lovers Sali and Vrenchen, the children of rival farmers locked in a bitter dispute over the ownership of land. The dispute becomes violent, the lovers try to flee to peace, but when they discover that they cannot, they unmoor a hay barge, float out into the river, scuttle it and drown together. Rather than being in acts, *A Village Romeo & Juliet* is in six scenes, and the work we hear tonight, "**A WALK TO THE PARADISE GARDEN**" (1907) is performed as an orchestral interlude between the final two scenes. "Paradise Garden" is the name of an inn where the couple has been told they can be alone and dance all night, but once there, they discover this to be a false promise – the inn is full of sketchy types as well as "The Dark Fiddler," a mysterious spirit who hovers over the entire opera. But the walk itself is a moment of pure peace and love, and Delius captures this beautifully. Sali and Vrenchen walk through the warm evening, bound together in what will be (though they do not know it) the last moments of their lives. (The influence of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* is clear.) Delius drew themes from the previous five scenes of the opera and wove them together to create this gentle music. In the opera, Delius called for a huge orchestra (quadruple woodwind and six horns), but today "The Walk to the Paradise Garden" is always heard in an arrangement for smaller orchestra by Sir Thomas Beecham.

SIR EDWARD ELGAR (1857-1934) was born in the village of Lower Broadheath in Worcestershire, 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 Worcester Instrumental Society, conductor of the Worcester Philharmonic, accompanist and director of the Worcester 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") (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...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. It 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, "sigh" the composer's name, "Edward Elgar."

Variation I (C.A.E.)—This is Alice Elgar. "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."

Variation II (H.D.S.P.)—Hew David Steuart-Powell was a pianist with whom Elgar, a violinist, played chamber music. Their usual cellist was Basil Nevinson (Variation XII).

Variation III (R.B.T.)—"Has reference to [Richard Baxter Townshend's] presentation of an old man in some amateur theatricals—the low voice flying off occasionally into 'soprano' timbre." Townshend was a classicist at Oxford and rode through that town on his bicycle, the bell constantly ringing. The violins' plucked strings and their woodwind doublings represent the bicycle bell.

Variation IV (W.M.B.)—William Meath Baker, "a country squire, gentleman and scholar. 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 (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." Strings, in one of Elgar's most expansive and inspired melodies, represent Arnold's nobility of mind and his deeply truthful way of playing music.

Variation VI (Ysobel)—This is Isabel Fitton, a woman, in critic Michael Kennedy's words, of "grave, statuesque beauty." She was an amateur violinist who, to make up for a shortage of violists in the neighborhood and to be obliging, switched to the deeper instrument. The music conjoins formality and gravity with discreet romantic allure.

Variation VII (Troyte)—Arthur Troyte Griffith, an architect, was one of Elgar’s most intimate friends. “The uncouth rhythm of the drums and lower strings was really suggested by some 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 (W.N.)—This variation, named for Winifred Norbury, is less a portrait of Miss Norbury than of Sherridge, the eighteenth-century house where she lived with her sister Florence. “The gracious personalities of the ladies are sedately shown.” As the variation draws to a close, Elgar offers the most beautiful harmonic stroke in the *Enigma* Variations. As the final G major chord dies away, only the first violins hold their note—G—until ...

Variation IX (Nimrod), the most loved of the variations—“Jaeger” is the German for “hunter,” and Nimrod is the “mighty hunter” mentioned in Genesis 10. August Jaeger was a German-born musician of frail health and great soul who worked for the London music publishing house of Novello and who, more than anyone except Alice Elgar, sustained the composer through his frequent and severe periods of depression. “The Variation . . . is the record of a long summer evening talk, when my friend discoursed eloquently on the slow movements of Beethoven, and said that no one could approach Beethoven at his best in this field, a view with which I cordially concurred.”

Variation X (Dorabella—Intermezzo)—Dora Penny, stepniece of Variation IV (Billy Baker), cheerful and music-loving, was a woman to whom Elgar was very close. We hear a suggestion of the stammer with which she spoke in her youth. We also sense potent though repressed sexuality, to say nothing of Elgar’s powerful response to it.

Variation XI (G.R.S.)—The initials belong to George Robertson Sinclair, organist of Hereford Cathedral, but the music belongs to Dr. Sinclair’s dog. In Elgar’s words, “The first few bars were suggested by [the] great bulldog Dan (a well-known character) falling down the 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 (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.”

Variation XIII (*)Romanza)**—The asterisks in place of initials suggest further mystery, and the additional title of “Romanza” heightens the effect, as does part of the music itself. The variation starts harmlessly enough, and sweetly, but after only a few bars its course is interrupted by a strange rocking figure in the violas, which, with a soft drumroll, forms the background for a clarinet playing a phrase from Mendelssohn’s *Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage* Overture. Elgar explains that the asterisks take the place of the name of a lady who was, at the time of composition, on a sea voyage. The lady was Lady Mary Lygon of the Worcestershire nobility, in the spring of 1899 on her way to Australia with her brother, who was to be installed as Governor of New South Wales. The music conveys a poignant sense of longing for someone far away.

Variation XIV (Finale: E.D.U.)—These are no one’s initials, but run them together and they give you Alice’s nickname for Edward. This variation/finale shows the composer’s boldly assertive, confident side—less than half of him, in other words. Alice returns, as does Nimrod. In this boisterous and brash finale, Elgar seems to announce that he has triumphed over his own deep insecurities and made himself the hero of his own story.