

OCTOBER 2015
VOLUME 5
ISSUE 2

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Edward Elgar—the Dreamy Child

No one is ever just one thing—just a teacher or just a physician or just a banker—and Edward Elgar was not just a composer. He was a man of many interests. Biographer Jerrold Northrop Moore wrote of Elgar “...he looked to composing and hobbies for the same thing—escape from the world of dull routine and into realms of the imagination.” And what a imagination he had.

Raised in a lower-middle class family by 19th-century English standards, Elgar’s provincial beginnings would initially limit his prospects as a musician. As a child, he was provided with piano and violin lessons, and he performed for clients of his piano-tuning father. When his family couldn’t afford to send him to the conservatory, he immersed himself in music theory books and became a self-taught composer.

In social settings outside of his comfortable circle of friends, he was often awkward and ill at ease. But Elgar would find his footing, and he would express his curiosity and spirited enthusiasm in his surroundings through a wide range of hobbies.

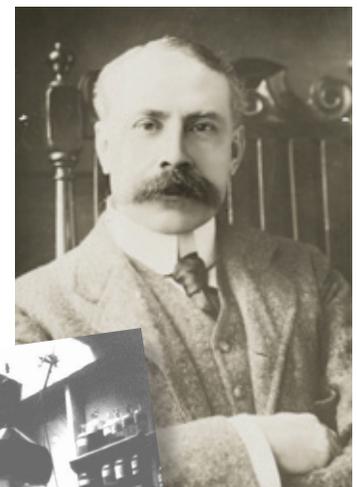
Here is just a short list of those pursuits—golfing, cycling, kite flying, woodworking, and cartooning. He was an avid football (soccer) fan and composed an anthem for his favorite team. He had an interest in horse racing and would leave rehearsals early in order to attend the races. He was a tinkerer. On his manuscript for *Falstaff*, he annotated the point at which he stopped composing to take apart his watch, clean it and reassemble it before returning to the score.

Most notably, he was an amateur chemist, setting up a laboratory in his home which he called The Ark. A bit of a prankster, Elgar played with a phosphoric concoction that would spontaneously combust when dried. A friend wrote, “The amusement was to smear

it on a piece of blotting paper and then wait breathlessly for the catastrophe.” He would take his interest in chemistry more seriously at times, though, and patented the Elgar Sulphuretted Hydrogen Apparatus, a device for synthesizing hydrogen sulfide.

Elgar also made soap and once wrote, “I am resuming chemistry & made soap yesterday between fits of scoring (not scouring!) the symphony. I have been vainly trying to persuade Carice to wash with it—strange how little encouragement I get!”

Elgar’s wife, Alice, was his most diligent supporter, saying in her diary, “The care of a genius is enough of a life work for any woman.” When she died, Elgar was bereft and found comfort in his many pursuits apart from music. Despite his melancholy, a dark mood that shadowed him throughout his adult life, he was able to confess to a friend, “I am still at heart the dreamy child who used to be found in the reeds by Severn side with a sheet of paper trying to fix the sounds and longing for something very great.”



OPENING NIGHT! MUST-HEAR MASTERPIECES

October 24, 2015 • 7:30 PM • Kent State Tuscarawas Performing Arts Center

BEETHOVEN'S SYMPHONY NO. 5

AND ELGAR'S CELLO CONCERTO WITH SAWYER THOMSON

WHAT SAWYER THOMSON DID ON HIS SUMMER VACATION

Last summer, after graduating from Cleveland Institute of Music, Sawyer interned at John & Arthur Beare in London and traveled parts of Europe with his mother, Kim Thomson. Here, Sawyer tells us about his experiences.

Below—Sawyer with the Stradivari violin “The Messiah”; Sawyer and Kim in Venice

• How did you make the connection with J&A Beare?

I had been studying instruments as often as possible, and I was excited to see J&A Beare had a weekly instrument identification quiz on their Facebook page. I won this competition quite a few times, and I decided it would be worth sending the company’s director an email to see if I could spend a summer studying there, offering to do anything just to get my foot in the door. To my delight, they welcomed me with open arms.

• What were your duties while working there?

My time spent there was mainly a hands-on educational experience that allowed me to study some of the world’s finest violins. My days would generally consist of selecting a maker, reading about his historical background, then studying several of his instruments in person. One of the most incredible memories was spending a day examining sixteen Stradivari violins. There is simply no other place in the world that could have given me a greater experience.

• What did you learn from the internship?

I have a natural gift for identifying violins. But, like anything else, hard work and countless hours of study are absolutely necessary in order to have a mastery of it. Malcolm Gladwell has written extensively about the benefits of 10,000 hours of deliberate, mindful practice. The key word here is “deliberate.” I know a personal struggle for me, whether with cello or studying instruments, is to always be mentally engaged at the highest level. For example, practicing with great mental intensity for just thirty minutes can oftentimes have better and longer lasting results than a mindless four hours of practice.

I have been going back and forth between these two passions of mine, and I’m really not able to predict where life will lead me.

• Elaborate on your passion for instruments.

Each instrument has its own voice. I really can’t think of another example of something that was perfected centuries ago and has never been replicated.

With today’s technology, modern makers could design a violin to Stradivari’s exact designs using a CT scan, but it still would not sound the same. The sound is the magic, and the “secrets” of a Stradivari’s sound are riddled with folklore, with some going as far as suggesting he used human blood in his varnish!

In many ways, musicians and collectors are not owners of instruments but instead are caretakers. To think about how many people have cared for these fine instruments, allowing them to survive for centuries, is nothing short of awe-inspiring. Many makers believe that one of the key reasons these instruments sound better than modern ones is due to the amount they have been played, which allows the wood to resonate more.

To many people, violins all look alike, which is true to an extent. However, it’s fascinating to see how makers infuse their own expressive ideas into their designs while loosely staying true to the original form of the violin, which Andrea Amati invented in the early 16th century. It’s this artistic individual expression which I find so fascinating.

And don’t even get me started on bows....

• Tell us about the cello you are currently playing and will use to perform Elgar’s Cello Concerto.

I’m currently playing on a very rare Italian cello made by Giovanni Grancino in Milan, c. 1690. It is on generous loan to me from a former teacher. My own cello is a contemporary instrument made in 2008 by Lawrence Wilke. The richness of tone and depth of sound of old Italian instruments are unmatched by others. It’s difficult to put into words, but there is a distinct difference between the volume of an instrument and its depth. For example, many modern instruments may sound louder than old instruments under a player’s ear, but they lack the quality of sound that carries to the last row of a hall, or perhaps may lack complexity in the sound. The Grancino has an incredibly refined sound, with a booming, powerful bass. I feel I am able to create endless colors with the instrument which are not possible on my own cello. While in Milan, we went into many beautiful churches, and I couldn’t help but wonder if this cello had been played there 325 years before. I’m inclined to believe it was.



FREE!

MUSICAL HALLOWEEN PARTY

A KID-SIZED CONCERT

October 31, 2015
Doors open at 1:30

The Tuscarawas Philharmonic
and Maestro Benjamin will perform

“Peter and the Wolf”

Plus—a costume parade, treats, a musical
petting zoo and kid-sized drum circle!

Children must be accompanied by an adult.



JOIN THE CHILDREN'S CHORUS

REHEARSALS BEGIN

OCTOBER 31

Open to ages 7 through 14 (no auditions required),
the Tuscarawas Philharmonic Children's Chorus
will begin rehearsing for the
December 12 Christmas concert



We'll meet in the rehearsal room at the Performing Arts
Center Saturday mornings from 10:00 to 11:00.
Come a little early on the 31st to sign up.

December 12

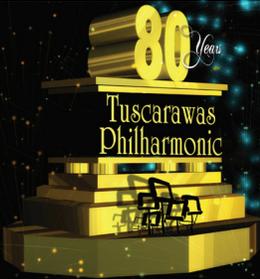
Christmas Down the Years

Our annual Yuletide Celebration!

Featuring the Philharmonic Children's Chorus, the Women's Honors Chorus, and special guest Ronald Barkett, *baritone*, in our traditional warm-hearted and joyous celebration of the season.



The Philharmonic is as old as... notable events in 1935



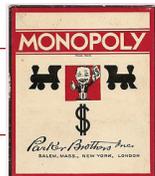
Amelia Earhart flew solo from California to Hawaii

The first canned beer was sold in Virginia

The great Dust Bowl storm hit the western states



Parker Brothers introduced Monopoly



The first nighttime baseball game was played

Alcoholics Anonymous was founded

Social Security was signed into law

Frank Lloyd Wright completed Fallingwater

Porgy and Bess opened on Broadway

Persia was renamed Iran

The first television broadcast went out from Berlin

The New Deal was enacted

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