SCOTTISH SINFONIA CONCERT Sunday 4 March 1990 7.45pm 40p
Queen's Hall, Edinburgh

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS **FANTASIA ON A THEME OF THOMAS TALLIS**
(1872-1958)

Vaughan Williams encountered Tallis' Theme in 1906 when he was editing the music for the English Hymnal. Tallis composed it in 1567 as the third of nine settings for Archbishop Parker's Psalter. Vaughan Williams shared with his friend Gustav Holst a strong interest in the musical renaissance which had taken place in sixteenth century England and fashioned Tallis' beautiful theme into the Fantasia, which received its first performance in September 1910 at the Gloucester Festival. The work made little impact, probably because interest was centred on the main work of the evening, Elgar's Dream of Gerontius, which was to be conducted by the composer. Although some people (notably the young composer Herbert Howells) recognised the work to be a profound utterance, it was also criticised for being too long for its musical content. Vaughan Williams must have seen the force of this argument because he twice revised it (in 1913 and 1919), shortening it by some four minutes from its original twenty. It has since become one of his most popular works, being performed all over the world.

In the Fantasia time seems to stand still, and the three centuries between these two great English composers are spanned and united. This timeless quality makes the work quite unique. Apart from the main body of the strings, the work is scored for a nonette, which the composer asks to be placed distantly if possible, and a string quartet.

EDWARD ELGAR **VARIATIONS ON AN ORIGINAL THEME 'ENIGMA'**
(1857-1934) **Opus 36**

It was with this work that Elgar finally attained true international recognition. He was over forty years old and had had an uphill struggle to gain public appreciation. The fact that he had not come up by the accepted academic route, being the son of a humble piano tuner, tended to be held against him, and the fact that he was a Catholic probably closed certain doors to him. He remained bitter about these early struggles to the end of his days, despite having honours heaped upon him. Ironically, it took the championship of a distinguished German conductor, Hans Richter, to make the English really wake up to the master-composer in their midst.

Elgar himself described in later years how the idea of the Variations came to him. He had had a long and arduous day of teaching and was sitting after dinner strumming idly at the piano. His wife asked him what he was playing and his words were, 'Nothing much, but something might be made of it.' He went on to transfigure the theme to represent the characteristics of various friends. The idea grew and he ended up portraying twelve of their friends, flanked by his wife and himself.

Elgar, who dearly loved practical jokes and creating mysteries, told his friends that the main theme, heard at the outset (which of course follows the speech rhythm 'Edward Elgar') was merely a counterpoint to another very famous tune, which is unheard. Elgar loved to tease his friends by giving them various clues, but died without exposing the secret. Over the years many people have tried to solve the mystery. The most popular suggestion has always been Auld Lang Syne, but Elgar used to deny it.

Elgar sent the manuscript score to Hans Richter at the beginning of 1899, and he was sufficiently impressed to include it in one of his London concerts the following June.

The composer wrote the following notes in 1929 for the Aeolian Company.

I. C.A.E. (Caroline Alice Elgar) There is no break between the theme and this movement. 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.

II. H.D.S.-P. Hew David Stuart-Powell was a well-known amateur pianist and a great player of chamber music. He was associated with B.G.N. (cello) and the composer (violin) for many years in this playing. His characteristic diatonic run over the keys is here humorously travestied in the semiquaver passages; these should suggest a toccata but chromatic beyond H.D.S.-P.'s liking.

III. R.B.T. Richard Baxter Townshend, whose Tenderfoot books are now so well known and appreciated. The variation has a reference to R.B.T.'s presentation of an old man in some amateur theatricals - the low voice flying off occasionally into soprano timbre. The oboe gives a somewhat pert version of the theme and the growing grumpiness of the bassoons is important.

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. In bars 15-24 are some suggestions of the teasing attitude of the guests.

V. R.P.A. Richard P.Arnold, son of Matthew Arnold. 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. The theme is given by the basses with solemnity, and in the ensuing major portion there is much lighthearted badinage among the wind instruments. (Dorabella - see later - relates that the chattering woodwind figure characterises Arnold's laugh: 'HA-ha-ha, ha-ha-HA-ha-ha'. NM)

VI. Ysobel (Isabel Fitton) A Malvern lady, an amateur viola player. It may be noticed that the opening bar, a phrase made use of throughout the variation, is an 'exercise' for crossing the strings - a difficulty for beginners; on this is built a pensive and for a moment romantic movement. (A friend recalled: she was very tall and graceful, and seemed to float rather than walk - was nearly always late for orchestra and then sat amidst various scarves and belongings which she had discarded and strewn about her ... She was full of fun. She stopped her viola lessons with him at one stage, and when he asked her to reconsider her decision we were told she said: 'No, dear Edward, I value our friendship much too much!' NM)

VII. Troyte (Troyte Griffith) A well-known architect in Malvern. The boisterous mood is mere banter. 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 (Elgar) to make something like order out of the chaos, and the final despairing 'slam' records that the effort proved to be in vain.

VIII. W.N. (Winifred Norbury) Really suggested by an eighteenth century house. The gracious personalities of the ladies are sedately shown. W.N. was more connected with music than the others of the family and her initials head the movement; to justify this position, a little suggestion of a characteristic laugh is given.

IX. Nimrod (Alfred Jaeger) The variations are not all 'portraits'; some represent only a mood, while others recall an incident known only to two persons. This variation is the record of a long summer evening talk, when my friend discoursed eloquently on the slow movements of Beethoven. It will be noticed that the opening bars are made to suggest the slow movement of the Pathétique Sonata.

X. Dorabella (Dora Penny) Intermezzo. The pseudonym is adopted from Mozart's Cosi fan Tutte. The movement suggests a dance-like lightness. The inner sustained phrases on viola and later flute should be noted.

XI. G.R.S. (George Robertson Sinclair, Mus.D., late organist of Hereford Cathedral. The variation however has nothing to do with organs or cathedrals, or, except remotely, with G.R.S. The first few bars were suggested by his great bulldog Dan falling down the steep bank into the River Wye; his paddling upstream to find a landing-place, and his rejoicing bark on landing. G.R.S. said, 'Set that to music'. I did; here it is.

XII. B.G.N. Basil G.Nevinson, an amateur cello-player of distinction and a serious and devoted friend. The variation is a tribute to a very dear friend whose scientific and artistic attainments and the whole-hearted way they were put at the disposal of his friends, particularly endeared him to the writer.

XIII. *** The asterisks take the place of the name of a lady who was, at the time of composition, on a sea voyage. The drums suggest the distant throb of the engines of a liner, over which the clarinet quotes a phrase from Mendelssohn's 'Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage'. (The lady concerned was said to be Lady Mary Lygon, but recent research has thrown doubt upon this, and it is now believed that this was one of Elgar's elaborate smoke-screens to disguise the identity of someone far more closely involved with the composer. Certainly its positioning next to Elgar's own variation is highly significant. NM)

XIV. E.D.U. Finale: bold and vigorous in general style. Written at a time when friends were dubious and generally discouraging as to the composer's musical future, this variation is merely to show what E.D.U. (a paraphrase of a fond name) intended to do. References are made to variation I and IX, two great influences on the life and art of the composer.

INTERVAL OF TWENTY MINUTES

RICHARD STRAUSS **HORN CONCERTO NO.1 in Eb Opus 11**
(1863-1949)

Allegro - Andante - Allegro

soloist HUGH SEENAN

'An insufferable fellow, but when he plays it is impossible to be angry with him.' Thus wrote Richard Wagner of Franz Strauss, father of Richard and one of the most distinguished horn-players of his time, playing first horn in the first performances of several Wagner operas under the direction of the composer. It is therefore hardly surprising that the eighteen-year-old Richard should want to write a concerto for his father to play. It seems however that Strauss père considered the work too risky (difficult) to perform in public. So it was that Gustav Leinhos gave the first performance in March 1884. The following year Oscar Franz, whose study books are still used by horn-players today, performed the work in Dresden and received the dedication. Although the concerto is not perhaps great music, it is an enjoyable piece, and the writing for woodwind would do credit to Mendelssohn.

ROBERT SCHUMANN **SYMPHONY NO.2 in C MAJOR Opus 61**
(1810-1856)

Sostenuto assai - Allegro non troppo; Scherzo; Adagio espressivo;
Allegro molto vivace

Schumann began work on this, his third symphony, in 1845, the year which saw the first manifestation of his mental illness. He later wrote: 'I composed the symphony in December 1845 while I was still half sick. It seems to me that one must hear this in the music; indeed I may call it the struggle of my mind which influenced this and by which I sought to beat off my disease. The first movement is full of this struggle, and very peevish and perverse in character. In the Finale I first began to feel myself, yet, as I have said, it recalls to me a dark period in my life.'

The first performance was given by the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, conducted by Mendelssohn, in November 1846. Some commentators have tended to regard it as the weakest of Schumann's four completed symphonies. This view is, to me at least, incomprehensible.

The opening soft brass motif should be noted, as it occurs throughout the work in various guises. Schumann told a friend that it came to him one night in the midst of a feverish dream. In the ensuing Allegro part of the movement we see an early manifestation of the composer's later obsession with repeated dotted rhythms. Despite Schumann's mental state, there are few signs of turmoil in the brilliant second movement, where the extremely difficult violin writing reminds us that, even in writing for the orchestra, Schumann tended to think pianistically. The Adagio is one of the most poignantly beautiful slow movements ever written. The fugato in the central section shows clearly the influence of his recent study of Bach. Despite the confident opening of the Finale, the struggle has not yet been won: there is a turbulent central section before the calm of recovery (and a quotation from Beethoven's song cycle An die Ferne Geliebte) leads the symphony to a triumphant conclusion.

NM

HUGH SEENAN was born in Glasgow in 1956 and began playing the horn at the age of thirteen. As a junior exhibitioner he studied at the RSAMD in Glasgow before entering the Guildhall School of Music in London, where he studied with Anthony Halstead. At the age of twenty he joined the RPO and three years later was appointed Principal Horn with the SNO. During his five years with the orchestra he appeared as soloist many times. In 1984 he joined the LSO as Principal Horn and has appeared as soloist several times with them.

SCOTTISH SINFONIA **leader Michael Rigg associate leader Alison Rushworth**
conductor NEIL MANTLE

Violins I
Michael Rigg
Elizabeth Clement
Annaliese Dagg
Elizabeth Alexander
Daya Rasaratnam
Richard Heathwood
Anne Giles
Peter Dayan
Graham Ritchie
Sonia Baxter
Carolyn Dyson
Norman Gillies
John Seaton
Una Doherty
Katherine Arnott
Judith Henderson

Violins II
Alison Rushworth
Fiona Morison
Judith Dean
Irene Horne
Tom Watson
Helen Busbridge
Jackie Adams
Lucy Watson
Suzanne Senior
Kay Barton
Alice MacAndrew
Angela Bell
Kim Ellis

Violas
Julian Marshall
Anne Parker
Ingrid Hooton
Alison Lucas
Shirley Neilson
Bridget Blackmore
Elizabeth Mathison
Morvyth Davis
Kevin Haggart
Joanna Galbraith

Cellos
Sam Coe
Suzanne Paterson
John Busbridge
Rupert Waddington
Garry Walker
Moira McCaig
Harriet Davidson
Noele Brebner
Dorothy Macmillan

Double Basses
Walter Carlton
James Robb
James Sloggie
Jenny Sharp
Eric Jeffrey
Elspeth Matthewson

Flutes
Barbara Richerby
Fiona Black

Oboes
Margot Cruft
Morven Bell

Clarinets
John Peacock
Mark Casson

Bassoons
Julian Munro
Susan Lester-Cribb

Contra-Bassoon
Rainer Thönnes

Horns
David Rimer
John Chapman
Marian Kirton
Louise Maclean

Trumpets
Brian Connor
Jeremy Brown
Andrew Kinnear

Trombones
Bill Giles
Barry Kempton
John Fishwick

Tuba
Andrew Wood

Timpani
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