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## Sargent conducts Elgar

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Elgar's *Cello Concerto* was the composer's last substantial piece. Written in 1919, in the aftermath of the first world war, the piece is often regarded by critics as contemplative and reflective of Britain emerging from a period of terrible sacrifice. Unlike many of Elgar's previous compositions the cello concerto was not an immediate success, and while it did not languish in complete obscurity (several recordings were made, including two by Elgar), it failed to become part of the mainstream concert repertoire. The person most responsible for changing that was Jacqueline du Pré. A musical prodigy, she made her recital debut in 1961 aged just 16, and chose the Elgar *Cello Concerto* for her full orchestral debut at the Royal Festival Hall in March 1962.

The critical reception of her concert debut was universally positive and she performed the same work with Adrian Boult at the Chester Festival in June, before making her proms debut under Malcolm Sargent in August. Clearly du Pré's reputation had preceded her as the concert was a sell-out, something the Times thought was remarkable since a programme consisting entirely of modern English music was usually regarded 'as an invitation to bankruptcy.' Accepting that Du Pré was evidently a 'remarkable interpreter' what really struck the critics was that despite being only 17 'her attitude to Elgar's concerto was that of a thinking adult and not of an intuitively musical child.' In particular her fresh approach meant that the more self-reflective sections were 'free from all the unappetizing self-indulgence that can be the failing of the piece.'

It is no exaggeration to say that du Pré is largely responsible for restoring Elgar's *Cello Concerto* to the mainstream concert programme. Her recording with John Barbirolli for EMI in 1965 remains one of the definitive interpretations after more than 50 years, and she continued to perform the piece regularly, including returning to the proms in 1963, 1964 and 1965.

Malcolm Sargent was one of the best-known English conductors in the twentieth century. Although he led the BBC Symphony Orchestra in the early 1950s, his principal fame comes from his stewardship of the proms between 1948 and his death in 1967. Despite not reaching the critical acclaim that was afforded to Thomas Beecham or Adrian Boult, Sargent's ability to connect with the public was evident. He performed and recorded numerous operettas by Gilbert and Sullivan, and he was a particular champion of Elgar's choral works, especially *The Dream of Gerontius* which he performed regularly.

[This is an edited version of the notes which appear on our website]



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**cello concerto**  
jacqueline du pré cello  
bbc symphony orchestra  
her 1962 proms debut

**the dream of gerontius**  
marjorie thomas contralto  
richard lewis tenor  
john cameron baritone  
huddersfield choral society  
royal liverpool philharmonic orchestra  
live broadcast from huddersfield, 1961

sir malcolm sargent conductor

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ELGAR CELLO CONCERTO - THE DREAM OF GERONTIUS  
DU PRÉ, BBC SO, LEWIS, THOMAS, CAMERON, RLPO, HUDDERSFIELD CS, SARGENT

CD One **ELGAR Cello Concerto in E minor, Op. 85**

- 1 1st Mvt. - Adagio (7:08)
- 2 2nd Mvt. - Allegro molto (4:30)
- 3 3rd Mvt. - Adagio (4:38)
- 4 4th Mvt. - Allegro (11:07)

Jacqueline du Pré *cello*  
BBC Symphony Orchestra

**ELGAR The Dream of Gerontius, Op. 38**

- 5 **Part 1** - Prelude (9:02)
- 6 Jesu, Maria - I am near to death (5:40)
- 7 Rouse thee, my fainting soul (3:30)
- 8 Sanctus fortis, Sanctus Deus (9:50)
- 9 Proficiscere, anima Christiana (6:42)

- CD Two
- 1 **Part 2** - I went to sleep (8:51)
  - 2 It is a member of that family (5:24)
  - 3 But hark! upon my sense comes a fierce hubbub (5:09)
  - 4 I see not those false spirits (7:36)
  - 5 But hark! a grand mysterious harmony (8:31)
  - 6 Thy judgement now is near (6:53)
  - 7 I go before my Judge (6:10)
  - 8 Softly and gently, dearly-ransomed soul (7:54)

Richard Lewis *tenor*  
Marjorie Thomas *mezzo*  
John Cameron *baritone*  
Huddersfield Choral Society *Herbert Bardgett*  
Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra

Sir Malcolm Sargent *conductor*

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photograph of Sir Malcolm Sargent

Elgar Cello Concerto  
Live BBC Proms broadcast  
Royal Albert Hall, London  
14 August, 1962

Elgar The Dream of Gerontius  
A BBC Transcription Service recording  
of a live broadcast from  
Huddersfield Town Hall  
24 November, 1961

Total duration: 1hr 58:32

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