

# KNOW YOUR CLASSICS

THIS series of articles, written for "The Listener" by BESSIE POLLARD, is designed to help the student and the interested listener towards a more complete appreciation of good music. Each article deals in outline with one accepted masterpiece and illustrates its main themes.

## (8) Enigma variations, Op. 36 (Elgar)

ELGAR explained the "Enigma" title of his orchestral Variations as typifying a "hidden theme which, although never played in the work, accompanies each variation." The theme on which the composition is based is rather melancholy—it has two contrasted phrases, one minor ("A" below) and one major ("B" below)—



Each variation is prefaced in the score by a set of initials indicating one of the "friends pictured within" of the dedication. The expressive and poetic variation 1 (C.A.E.) represents Elgar's wife; Variation 2 (H.D.S.P.) H. D. Stuart-Powell, a pianist who frequently played trios with Elgar and Basil Nevinston. Variation 3 (R.B.T.), R. B. Townshend, has a conspicuous bassoon part, which parodies this friend's rather reedy voice. Variation 4 (W.N.B.) reflects in its music the very downright and energetic traits of W. Neath Baker. Variation 5 (R.P.A.) is for R. P. Arnold (son of Matthew Arnold, who was an ardent devotee of chamber music; Variation 6 (Ysobel) for Isabel Fitton, one of Elgar's violin pupils, who later transferred to viola ("A" below); Variation 7 (Troyte) portrays Arthur Troyte Griffith, an architect with a flair for doing and saying the unexpected, ingeniously portrayed by Elgar with cross rhythm and accent ("B" below)—



Variation 8 (W.N.)—Winifred Norbury—is fragile and appealing. Variation 9 (Nimrod)—A. J. Jaeger—is perhaps the most sublime passage of the whole work. ("Jaeger" being German for "hunter" explains the Nimrod title)—



Variation 10 (Dorabella)—Dora Penny—is delicately attractive with fascinating alternations between strings and wood-wind—



Variation 11 (G.R.S.) is for G. R. Sinclair, the organist at Hereford Cathedral, whose bulldog Dan was his constant shadow. Both are portrayed in the music. Variation 12 (B.G.N.) represents Basil Nevinston, the cellist, and Variation 13 (Romanza) is dedicated to Lady Mary Trefusis, who had departed on a long sea voyage, a fact which explains the quotation from Mendelssohn's *Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage*. Variation 14 (E.D.U.)—Elgar himself—depicts his struggle for recognition, the brilliant conclusion foreshadowing his ultimate success.

Elgar's "Enigma Variations" will be heard from Station 4YZ on Tuesday, August 31, at 9.37 p.m.

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