

The Elgar Society JOURNAL



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1979

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The editor does not necessarily agree with the views expressed by contributors, nor does the Elgar Society accept responsibility for such views	

<u>Novissima Verba</u> RECORD DELETIONS... Serenade for Strings(Hamburg SO, Springer; Turnabout TV344045); Symphony no. 2(LPO, Barenboim; CBS 73094); Orchestral Works(cond. Barenboim; CBS79002); Orchestral Works (4 disc box)(cond. Barbirolli; EMI SLS5030).	

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The Elgar Society Journal

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EDITORIAL

Vol. 1, no. 2

This issue will be published too late for us to extend birthday greetings to Sir Adrian Boult, our distinguished President. However, the Society has noted the occasion, as reported on other pages, and we can take a moment in this issue to thank Sir Adrian for his outstanding contribution to British musical life. Without his work and enthusiasm over many years our lives would be that much poorer. As lovers of Elgar's music we owe Sir Adrian a special debt, and in this, his 90th year, we send our sincere thanks and good wishes.

We have previously stated that the greatly increased popularity of Elgar's music today, welcome as it is to us all, means that we must set our thoughts further afield. A number of our members are actively studying the state of British music abroad, particularly, of course, the music of Elgar. We have members in a number of countries - United States, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, etc., and now is the moment when we need their views. We would like to hear from these overseas members, and especially we would like replies to these questions. Is Elgar's music played in your country? If so, by whom, and are the concerts live or broadcast by radio? Are they popular, or is Elgar's music unfamiliar to most people in your country? If the music is not popular can you suggest why this is? Are gramophone records of his music easily available? Have you any suggestions as to how the Elgar Society can assist in spreading interest in Elgar's music? Practical answers to this last question would be welcomed.

To our overseas readers I would again say, do please write to us! You are far more aware of local conditions and tastes than we are, and we would be glad to have your comments. In the next issue, in September, we can then consider the matter further.

Thank you.

RONALD TAYLOR
Editor

News Items

EDWARD HARPER'S NEW SYMPHONY, commissioned by the Scottish National Orchestra, had its premiere at an Edinburgh concert on March 9th. The composer has stated that, in the work, he pays tribute to the two greatest English symphonists, Elgar and Tippett. There are extensive references to Elgar's First Symphony in the work.

THE WORCESTER GLEE CLUB, well-known in Elgar's days in that city, met in a room in the Crown Hotel, Broad Street. This room is now being renovated, and the hotel is again open after being closed for some years.

LONDON FESTIVAL BALLET is to tour the Far East, and performances of The Sanguine Fan will be given in Peking and Shanghai.

HUMPHREY BURTON, Head of Music and Arts, BBC Television, gave a lecture on Elgar and the BBC at the Royal Society of Arts last December.

SIR ROBERT MAYER, famed for his children's concerts, is a remarkable 100-years-old in June. Sir Robert attended the first German performance of Gerontius in Dusseldorf in 1901!

ELGAR COUNTRY, Barry Collett's recent book, has had some distribution problems, but copies are easily obtainable from the author, c/o Uppingham Community College, London Road, Uppingham, Rutland, price £1.50, plus postage.

CHRISTOPHER KENT asks us to make a small correction to the note of his talk to the North West branch, reported in our last issue. The mention of Elgar's development should have referred to the use of the figured bass.

AN APPEAL IS TO BE LAUNCHED SHORTLY FOR FUNDS TO ERECT AN ELGAR STATUE. A site in Worcester is now under consideration, and the sculptor is Ken Potts, of the Royal Worcester Porcelain Company. The statue will be cast in bronze, and will depict Elgar wearing his Doctor of Music robes, which he wore when conducting at the Three Choirs Festivals. A small clay model of the statue was exhibited by Mr. Potts at the Society's Annual Meeting on March 31st. Contributions to the Appeal, which is to be set at £25,000, are welcome now, and should be sent to the Elgar Statue Appeal, Barclay's Bank, High Street, Worcester. No receipts will be sent, but a list of donors will be on permanent exhibition at a later date.

WE APOLOGISE for a production error which transposed two pages in the Branch Reports section of the last issue. We must try harder...

THE DEATH OF W. R. ANDERSON occurred during the winter. He was a well-known writer on music and produced the first post-war study of Elgar's music in his little monograph published in 1949. It remains an excellent introduction to the composer's works.

OBITUARY

Douglas Pudney

The untimely death of Douglas Pudney as a relatively young man has deprived his many friends of an engaging and delightful companion. Always a friendly and amiable man, his wide knowledge of music, and especially of English music, was invariably at the disposal of those seeking his advice. In particular, his abiding love of Elgar was continually demonstrated both within the confines of EMI and during his frequent visits to European countries on behalf of his company. It may not be known generally that some of the outstanding Elgar recordings we can now enjoy were due largely to his persistence.

We in the Elgar Society have much cause to be thankful for Douglas Pudney. When it was decided in 1971 to form a London branch, Douglas immediately volunteered to join the steering committee. Those of us present at the first meeting of the committee well remember his insistence on setting our sights as high as possible when considering speakers for branch meetings, a precept we have endeavoured to follow ever since. He was wholly responsible for arranging the programme during our first season, at a time when the branch had very little money. A glance at the list of speakers shows how well he succeeded - Vernon Handley, Sir Charles Groves, Christopher Bishop, Hugh Bean, Dr. Percy Young, Alan Webb and others. All these distinguished Elgarians came without fee or reward, ostensibly for love of Elgar, though in reality we knew they came primarily because of their high regard for Douglas.

When his work took him increasingly abroad, Douglas felt obliged to resign from the London committee, though his great interest in the branch continued unabated. In the succeeding years he gave most generous financial support, culminating in a last splendid gesture when he telephoned me from his hospital bed shortly before he died to say that he had asked his wife to send a cheque in fulfilment of his self-imposed obligation to the Society and particularly to the London branch. We have lost a gay spirit whose boundless admiration and enthusiasm for Elgar was infectious.

On behalf of all members the Secretary wrote to Mrs. Pudney expressing our deep sympathy. He also represented both the Society and London branch at the funeral. As a small tribute to the memory of her husband, we have invited Wendy Pudney to accept honorary membership of the Society and London branch which we are pleased she has been happy to acknowledge in an appreciative letter.

E. W. A. J.



ELIZABETH PARROTT
1879

ELGAR SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING

The 29th Annual General Meeting was held in The Commandery, Worcester, on 31st March, 1979. The venue was arranged by Alan Boon, of the West Midlands branch, and the substantial number of members who came and stayed for tea were most grateful to him and his wife for the obvious trouble they had taken.

The Chairman, Michael Pope, opened the proceedings, and during the course of his statement announced that a presentation had been made to our President, Sir Adrian Boulton, to recognize his 90th birthday on 8th April. A painting of Plas Gwyn had been commissioned by the Society from Elizabeth Parrott, and presented to Sir Adrian. He had kindly allowed it to be released for inspection by members. The painting's excellence was demonstrated by the warmth of the vote of thanks given by members to Mrs. Parrott. A photograph of the painting was, in turn, presented to E. Wulstan Atkins for display at the Birthplace. [A print of the painting can be seen on the opposite page.]

The Secretary, E. W. A. Jackson, announced the formation of two new branches, in the South-West and Yorkshire, which demonstrated, with the increase in membership to 913, the continuing vigour of the Society. Although difficulties exist with the East Midlands Branch, it is hoped that these can be resolved during the year. The Secretary announced completion of necessary repairs to Elgar's grave, and members showed appreciation of Miss Soper's continued attention to the graves by the regular replacement of flowers. The Secretary stated that a major review of the constitution would be undertaken, the committee to report to the next Annual Meeting. The Secretary also announced his own decision not to stand for re-election, and the Chairman echoed the views of all present when he expressed the Society's gratitude to him for his remarkable service over the years. His proposal that Mr. Jackson be made an Honorary Member of the Society was carried unanimously.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

President: Sir Adrian Boulton, C. H.

Vice-Presidents: Douglas Guest, C. V. O., Lady Hull, Yehudi Menuhin, Hon. K. B. E., Professor Ian Parrott, A. T. Shaw, Dr. Herbert Sumsion, C. B. E., Alan Webb, Sir David Willcocks, C. B. E., M. C.

Chairman: Michael Pope. Vice-Chairman: Trevor Fenemore-Jones.

Hon. Secretary: Andrew Neill. Hon. Treasurer: John Knowles.

A committee was also elected to serve for the coming year.

Before the meeting closed members passed a proposal to send fraternal greetings to Edgar Day, who, for many years, was assistant organist at Worcester Cathedral. Now in his 90th year, his memories of Elgar and Worcester are unique. His current incapacity means that he has limited opportunities to move around, and the unanimous support for the proposed message will, we hope, give Mr. Day pleasure.

A. N.

A BIRTHDAY PRESENTATION

How many music-lovers, asked to name the work of Elgar which meant most to them, would choose the Second Symphony? For many Elgarians it contains the matured essence of the composer's genius; and indeed T. E. Lawrence went further, writing to Elgar in 1932: "It moves me more than anything else - of music - that I have heard." It is salutary to recall, then, that it had to wait nearly nine years after its first performance before it came into its own. The date, 16 March, 1920, was notable for two reasons: first, the few performances the symphony had so far received meant that it was almost like a revival of a neglected work; secondly, it marked the final and unmistakable arrival of Adrian Boult, both as a conductor and as an Elgarian.

In considering a gift to present to Sir Adrian for his 90th birthday, it seemed appropriate to try and link it both with the E flat Symphony and with the date of his first performance; but what could we give our President which we could be sure he did not already have? We owe to Andrew Neill the suggestion of a painting, and to Bill Jackson the suggestion of Elizabeth Parrott as the artist. It seemed to me appropriate, then, for the Society to commission Elizabeth Parrott to paint a picture of Plas Gwyn, the house in which the Second Symphony was completed.

So it was that on March 16th, fifty-nine years after that historic performance of the symphony, it was my privilege to present Elizabeth Parrott's beautiful painting of Plas Gwyn to Sir Adrian, in the presence of Lady Boult, the artist, and her husband, our Vice-President Professor Ian Parrott. I took the opportunity of saying that no words could express the gratitude which all Elgarians felt to him for his invaluable services to Elgar's music, but that the painting was a token of this, and of our admiration and affection. In expressing his thanks, Sir Adrian later wrote that the painting would always remind him of the great music composed at Plas Gwyn. We may recall Elgar's own words to him after that performance in March, 1920: "I feel that my reputation in the future is safe in your hands"; and we can only re-iterate our heartfelt thanks that Elgar's words have been so splendidly fulfilled

Michael Pope

.....
AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE ELGAR SOCIETY Michael Pope said that he hoped that as time went on there would be as much co-operation and goodwill, between the Society and the Elgar Foundation, as was consistent with their differing constitutions. The public were sometimes confused by two organisations bearing Elgar's name, and it was up to us all to aid each other as far as possible. Mr. Pope quoted a line from The Apostles by way of an appropriate text!

THE "ENIGMA" -- A HIDDEN "DARK SAYING"

by Ben Kingdon.

[**The author of this article is a student teacher at Culham College of Education, Abingdon, Oxon.]

It is now just 80 years since Elgar sat down at the piano at "Forli" and played to his wife the haunting little tune which we know as the theme of the Enigma Variations. From that moment the puzzle of what lay behind the theme has intrigued not only the "friends pictured within" but also countless musicians and music-lovers. To this day the enigma does not appear to have been solved to everyone's satisfaction, and it is probable that we shall never be sure now whether we know the true answer, unless new factual evidence comes to light, and that is hardly likely.

Elgar himself left very few clues for us, and even the wording of his original programme-note seems ambiguous: "The enigma I will not explain - its 'dark saying' must be left unguessed, and I warn you that the apparent connexion between the Variations and the Theme is often of the slightest texture; further, through and over the whole set another and larger theme 'goes', but is not played. . . " The word 'further' could imply that even if we discover the 'larger theme', which is obviously connected with the enigma, this does not necessarily mean that the problem is fully solved; there may be associations between the two of which only the composer was aware.

The word 'theme'* is also ambiguous: does it indicate a tune or a non-musical idea? Both Dorabella and Elgar's daughter Carice were adamant that there was a tune¹, and it has also been said that "he was interested in the shape of a tune." R. J. Buckley seems to have been the first to assert that the hidden theme was a well-known melody which formed a counterpoint to the Theme itself², and Elgar later apparently confirmed this³. Readers will be aware of the many solutions offered on this basis over the years - Auld Lang Syne being among the most popular. However, I personally prefer Home, Sweet Home; if this is played in the key of B flat (the relative major of the Theme's key, G minor) while the latter remains in the original key, one finds that they fit together very well for four bars.

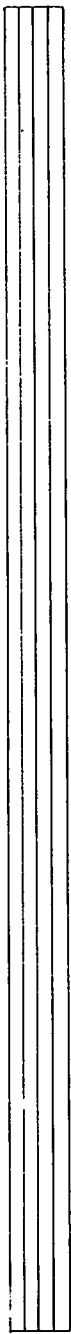
Other non-musical or quasi-musical interpretations have also been offered: the theme is Friendship, or Bach, or the loneliness of the creative artist (depicting Elgar himself), or the curve of the Malvern Hills, etc. Latterly, an ingenious and exhaustive treatment by Theodore van Houten⁴, previewed in the January, 1976, NEWSLETTER, has suggested Rule, Britannia! as the

*For the rest of this article I shall follow Elgar in using a capital T to distinguish the Theme of the Variations, while the lower case t indicates the hidden 'larger theme.'

Ex.1 (a)

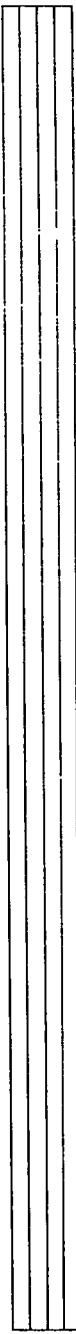
(b)

(c)



Ex.2

x * x * x * x * x * x * x * x *



Ex.3

x x x x x x x x x x x x



theme, relating this to the individual Variations and to The Music Makers, and making many references to the poetry of Alexander Pope. Musically this is based on a four-note motif and not on counterpoint.

As far as I am aware, however (and readers' advice will be welcomed on this), no whole tune has yet been stipulated as being found hidden in the Theme, although some have seen it as being based on the minor scale or even the chromatic scale. Elements of both of these do appear in the bass (bars 1-6), but the tune above has a slightly modal flavour which contributes to its elusive character. The falling phrase of bar 6 (see ex. 2) also reminds one of plain-song, and we remember not only that plainsong is fundamentally concerned with "the shape of a tune", but also that Elgar had been organist of St. George's Roman Catholic Church, Worcester, in succession to his father. Could there be a connection here? If we look at the Theme with fresh eyes we may see that there is another tune embedded in it; moreover it is one which Elgar is bound to have known and sung, or accompanied many times at the organ. It is the ancient Latin plainchant hymn, found in the Roman Catholic Requiem Mass, the "Dies Irae."

Ex. 1 shows the opening phrases of the "Dies Irae" as they appear in The English Gradual (Part 1, People's Edition)⁶, but transposed up a tone. The key signature there is three flats, the first note being A flat. In form the hymn is a liturgical sequence, written in Mode I (the Dorian). This Gradual uses English words, those of the "Dies Irae" in this edition being taken from the English Hymnal. The text sung to Ex. 1 runs as follows:

"Day of wrath and doom impending,
David's word with Sibyl's blending!
Heav'n and earth in ashes ending! (Music repeats)

O, what fear man's bosom rendeth,
When from heav'n the Judge descendeth,
On whose sentence all dependeth! "

The words continue in supplication to Jesu, that through His suffering and sacrifice the sinner may be spared. The three musical phrases, (a), (b), and (c), recur frequently during the chant, particularly (a). Other phrases intervene, but those quoted are the best-known, being extensively used by various Romantic orchestral composers, including Liszt Todtentanz, Berlioz Symphonie Fantastique, Saint-Saens Danse Macabre, and Rachmaninov Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini. How can we find them in Elgar's Theme?

Ex. 2 shows the 'minor' section of the Theme (bars 1-6). Let us simplify this by ignoring the crotchet rests and the off-beat quavers, and lower the high G and F by an octave. The string of seven notes in the middle, each marked with a cross, is identical to the opening phrase (a) of the "Dies Irae", if we may neglect the repeat of the G at the end of the latter.

Again, if we neglect the repeat of the first note, B flat, the notes of phrase (b) of the chant may be found distributed in their correct order through the 'minor' Theme (see the asterisks in Ex. 2). The decoration of a melody by intervening notes is a common device dating from at least the mid-15th Century, when it was applied to cantus firmi. Repeated notes in the original were frequently omitted in the new melody, and individual note values were changed in the interests of rhythmical freedom. The same procedure may be found in the work of a composer of contemporary with Elgar, Karg-Elert (see the score of his organ piece Nun danket alle Gott, where the notes of the chorale are also marked with crosses). It is intriguing to note that the opening bars of Nimrod (Var. IX) can be viewed as derived in this way from the start of the slow movement of Beethoven's Pathétique Sonata.⁸ The two are interestingly compared by Prof. Ian Parrott in his book Elgar.

The 'major' section of the Theme (bars 7-10), shown in Ex.3, is a stumbling-block in many theories of the Enigma, since it is difficult to see how it can be incorporated, and it only seems to be tenuously based on the 'minor' section. However, if we transpose phrase (c) of the "Dies Irae" (Ex. 1) into the same key signature, one sharp, again neglecting repeated notes, we find that it can overlie the Enigma tune exactly, as shown by the crosses in Ex.3.

If the reader agrees that the main phrases of the "Dies Irae" are hidden in the Enigma Theme, then there are only three possible ways in which this could have happened. By coincidence, by an unconscious, or a conscious action on the part of the composer. If it be the latter, then there are many fascinating avenues to be explored, and I hope to attempt this in a later paper. We know, for instance, that The Dream of Gerontius was well under way, at least in Elgar's mind, when the Variations were composed, and the very first theme in the Prelude to The Dream is labelled 'Judgement' by A. J. Jaeger in his analysis of the work.⁹ He calls it "the most important theme in the cantata", and immediately continues: "This solemn subject appears whenever the thoughts of Gerontius or of his Guardian Angel dwell on the dread enigma of the judgement meted out to mortals by Almighty God." (Jaeger, it is commonly supposed, was the only person apart from Elgar's wife to know the true secret of the Enigma.) There are possible links too with Prof. Parrott's comments on the significance of the passage from Corinthians I, xiii: "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then, face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as I am known."¹⁰

The "Dies Irae" is truly a dark saying, but the figure of Elgar remains as enigmatical as ever.

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1. Powell, Edward Elgar, Memories of a Variation. 3rd edn. 1949. p.120.
 2. op.cit. p.120-1.
 3. Kennedy. Portrait of Elgar. 1968. p.158.
 4. The Music Review, vol. 37, no.2, 1976. p.130-142. (See also Corresp.

Continued on page 13

DOUGLAS GUEST, C.V.O.

It was with considerable regret that members heard Douglas Guest announce his decision to relinquish the Chairmanship of the Society during the Annual General Meeting [1978]. Although he agreed to carry on until a suitable successor could be found, he informed the meeting that he wished to be relieved of his duties as soon as possible, as he realised that increasing commitments prevented him from attending to the Society's affairs as members had a right to expect and, indeed, as he would wish.

When Bertie Shaw, founder of the Society and its chairman for 25 years, retired in 1976, the Society had already become a national organisation and was developing rapidly. Thus it was important that his successor should be not only a well-known figure in the music world, but also a person whose knowledge and experience could further the ideals for which the Society stands. Douglas Guest was the obvious choice, though he required considerable persuasion before agreeing to accept nomination for the chairmanship. Organist and Master of the Choristers at Westminster Abbey, he was already well-known to many members living in the Three Choirs area of Worcester, Hereford and Gloucester, having previously held a similar appointment at Worcester Cathedral.

Although it was known from the beginning that his multifarious duties and engagements would necessitate both committee and other meetings being held in London, Douglas Guest has always had the welfare of the Society at heart and devoted much time to its administration, especially behind the scenes. An admirable chairman of our meetings, and usually faced with a long agenda, he did not allow the proceedings to drag on, although giving members full rein to express their views. His summary of the various discussions was perceptive and always to the point - a tremendous advantage before important decisions were taken. His unflinching courtesy and readiness to give counsel and advice to those responsible for the day-to-day running of the Society's affairs was an invaluable asset during his relatively short tenure of office. We are most grateful to him for giving up some of his rare moments of leisure in a busy life for our benefit and to Mr. and Mrs. Guest for their hospitality at all meetings of the committee. Happily for us, he continues as Chairman of the London branch.

E. W. A. J.

[Continued from p.12]

- in vol. 37, no. 4, 1976, p. 317-9.)
5. Powell. op. cit. p. 120.
6. 2nd edn. Novello, 1920. p. 63. (First Edn. pub. 1871).
7. Op. 65, no. 59.
8. Master Musicians Series, 1971. p. 42.
9. Novello, 1900. p. 4
10. Ian Parrott, op. cit. p. 46-8.

AN ELGAR EXHIBITION AT SETTLE by Dennis Clark

Edward Elgar visited the Yorkshire market town of Settle many times in the 1880's and 90's. He did so as the guest of his friend, Dr. C. W. Buck.

On December 2nd, 1978, Elgar's godson, Mr. E. Wulstan Atkins, visited Settle as the guest of people who had Dr. Buck very much in mind. The Museum of North Craven Life is maintained by the North Craven Heritage Trust, a body devoted to the preservation of the rural character of the Craven district. They undertake building preservation, protection of wild flora, watch over footpaths, and also research and record local history.

If Charles William Buck, who died in 1932, had been merely a Settle doctor he would by now have been forgotten. But Charles Buck, life-long friend of Edward Elgar, is a part of Settle's history. In April 1978 the Heritage Trust heard a lecture on Elgar and the Malverns, and mention was made of Buck. This prompted the Museum Committee to do a little research. Buck's daughter, Mrs. Monica Greenwood, was still alive - although in her eighties - and visits to her Lake District home produced many letters and photographs, which were carefully copied and, together with other local material, which provided a worthwhile display. Who better to open this exhibition than the Chairman of the Elgar Foundation. Mr. Atkins was the weekend guest of Mr. and Mrs. Peter Read, Anne Read being Chairman of the Museum Committee.

Mr. Atkins gave us a most eloquent account of Buck's first meeting with Elgar and of the friendship which ensued. Thanking Mr. Atkins, Mr. Bill Mitchell, editor of The Dalesman and a member of the Trust, said it was, in a way, sad that their task in mounting the exhibition was over. They had enjoyed their work immensely and now nothing remained to be done. Mr. Atkins replied, amid laughter, that if Mr. Mitchell felt himself out of a job he might go looking for the missing 'Lakes' overture! An enjoyable diversion at this juncture was a taped performance of Clapham Town End, a local folk-song for which Elgar made an arrangement for voice and piano. Sung by David Fox, a master at Giggleswick School, this was only one of the contributions made by this famous Yorkshire public school to the success of the occasion, as another master, Mr. W. Brocklebank, had been responsible for the copying and presentation of the photographic material on display. (Later in the day Mr. Atkins was given a personal organ recital by Peter Read, the school's Director of Music, in the School Chapel.

The afternoon's business over, it was time for tea, which was taken at Cravendale, a 300-year old cottage which was Dr. Buck's home from 1906, when he gave up his practice. The present owners of the cottage kindly allowed their home to be used for the occasion, and tea and home-made fare was partaken of in a most convivial atmosphere. Mr. Atkins clearly enjoyed himself immensely, conversing with older Settle residents who had known Dr. Buck, and inspecting old photograph albums.

[Continued on page 19]

Book Reviews

ELGAR ON THE JOURNEY TO HANLEY. A Novel. by Keith Alldritt.

Andre Deutsch, £4.95

A novel in which Elgar and the Worcester/Malvern Elgar circle are the principal characters is such an unusual event that it deserves notice, even if it is more concerned with events that might have been, rather than those which actually occurred. Keith Alldritt has written two previous novels dealing with Midlands society, and he has obviously researched carefully into the background of his characters. Therein lies the trouble - the time is right, the atmosphere is right, but the main characters do not ring true. Perhaps it is because the author is making them do things, and express thoughts, which would not come naturally to them. In seeking to tell us of an imaginary love affair between Dora Penny and Elgar, which blossoms in the 1890's and drifts away after the Enigma Variations, Mr. Alldritt has to ignore most of what is known (and in some cases well-known) about the people involved. Particularly he has had to distort the character of Alice Elgar, the 'old lady' as he refers to her. In the book she takes the role of a kind of aging procuress, finding young and attractive women from whom her husband draws a spiritual, if not a physical, satisfaction. He implies throughout that she was older than the circle of friends, and was therefore at a disadvantage - hardly true in any particular. On the contrary, Alice Elgar had a strong personality, and was greatly admired and liked by most of the people who made up their wide circle of acquaintances. Mr. Alldritt has had some success with the character of Dora however, and his is a sympathetic and perceptive portrait of a young provincial girl. She would be even more believable if she were merely a character of fiction, and not the future Mrs. Richard Powell. Alldritt does not for a moment let us believe that she is a fictional character, as throughout there are references to real people and events, some of which are outside the time of the novel. In other cases he uses exact conversations taken from Mrs. Powell's book Memories of a Variation. The author is on safer ground when he describes the Midland scene of the 1890's - the Worcestershire Philharmonic Concert with its many lady musicians, and best of all a brilliant pen picture of a Wolverhampton football match.

It is, of course, legitimate to use real characters in a novel, but the picture must be convincing. The real failure of this novel is that Keith Alldritt does not present us with an Elgar who was a musician. Irascible, conservative, moody, prankish, he may have been, but principally he was consumed by music and the desire to compose. It is this latter which is just not present, and the result is that the character fails to come alive.

R. P. T.

MUSIC AND FRIENDS. Letters to Adrian Boult, edited by Jerrold Northrop Moore. Hamish Hamilton, £6.95

It was a particularly happy idea to publish a volume of letters to (and occasionally from) Adrian Boult, from musicians and others of the twentieth century. Happy because it enables us to enter a world of comradeship among professionals, and happy because publication has been timed to coincide with Sir Adrian's 90th birthday.

The letters - which have been skilfully edited and linked by Dr. Moore - were not used for Sir Adrian Boult's autobiography My Own Trumpet (1973). One can almost see why, for they most certainly make a book on their own - sometimes comments from composers, Elgar, Vaughan Williams, Holst, Bantock, Bax, Bliss, Walton... Letters from soloists, Menuhin, Myra Hess, Tortelier, Bernard Shore, among them. And letters from other conductors, especially Bruno Walter, for whom Boult had the greatest respect and affection.

Almost every aspect of Sir Adrian's career is touched on, and particularly interesting is the printing of the 20-year-old Adrian C. Boult's lecture to the Oriana Society at Oxford, in November 1909. Called 'Some Notes on Performance' it is a remarkably perceptive and skilful survey of the problems of instrumental and vocal performance. Boult's first conducting engagement with a professional orchestra was at West Kirby on February 27th, 1914 - the programme cover is reproduced. The soloists were the soprano Agnes Nicholls, and the pianist W. B. Brierley. The programme was made up of works by Bach, Mozart, Wagner, Wolf, and George Butterworth's Banks of Green Willow. So began Adrian Boult's advocacy of British music, although his readiness to play music from any country, if he thought it good, is evident throughout. After the Queen's Hall performance of Wozzeck, in March 1934, the composer Alban Berg wrote to the conductor: "...I can also measure - as no one else could - what an immense preparation must have preceded this concert. It equalled the finest stage-performances with the work in the regular repertory."

For Elgarians the letters to and from Elgar will be of special interest, and there is much to digest. Elgar's interest in performance and rehearsal is well-known, and his letter of November 22nd, 1932, in which he makes detailed suggestions for a performance is typical: "...In the first Symphony there are some passages which I have never got to my liking. In the passage beginning four bars before 30 (and occurring twice more) I want an echo effect..." and there is more in the same vein.

A book which is fascinating to read, very well produced, and (for these times) reasonably priced.

R. P. T.

Record Reviews

SONATA FOR VIOLIN & PIANO, Op. 82

[and] Dohnanyi - Sonata for Violin & Piano, Op. 21.

Oliver Colbentson(Violin) and Erich Appel(Piano)

Italian EMI PDU AC 60084

I have taken the opportunity afforded by these pages before to express delight when artists, foreign to Britain, interest themselves in Elgar's music. I have always hoped that this interest would expand as his music takes its rightful place in the perspective of European musical development. Therefore, when an Italian record company produces a performance of Elgar's Violin Sonata with American and German artists, it is a cause for celebration.

Unfortunately, in this case, the end result is not all that it might be, with the listener being immediately confused by the reversal of the record labels! The sound also lacks clarity, particularly of the piano which appears to have been recorded in a different acoustic to the violin. The balance of the Dohnanyi is more satisfactory, with the sound being better focussed. The latter's music is always worth hearing, and this attractive work makes an appropriate coupling.

Oliver Colbentson was born in Chicago, and was for some time the Concert-Master of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, before emigrating to Europe. As would be expected, he has a fine technique, with a lovely tone, which only shows itself on rare occasions. The difference in sound with the piano does not assist the listener in appreciating the interpretation, or whether Colbentson has any great sympathy with the music. The piano part is one of Elgar's least rewarding, and the pianist has to have an intimate understanding of Elgar and his music to project himself clearly. I have been unable to discover much of Erich Appel, but he seems more at home with Dohnanyi, which may lie more directly with his own sympathies.

The sequential aspect of Elgar's writing suffers most in the first movement, the music being dismissed with little understanding of its structure. The second movement begins disingenuously with both artists feeling their way forward until they settle down to register a surprising warmth. The finale begins curiously, and I was reminded more of Vaughan Williams by the freshness of the sound than Elgar. Nevertheless, matters do improve and both artists produce an individual but warm conclusion.

This record is something of a 'curate's egg' therefore, not to be dismissed out of hand, but for consideration only by those who wish to supplement their existing recordings, and who are interested in the coupling with a work which is otherwise unavailable in the United Kingdom.

A. H. A. N.

SEA PICTURES, Op. 37

Lauris Elms, Sydney Symphony Orchestra, conducted by John Hopkins.

RCA GL40749

(Cassette GK 40749)

Whilst in recent years a number of Elgar records have featured foreign artists, these recordings have all, I think, originated from within the United Kingdom. It is good then to be able to welcome a completely foreign product, for this recording of the Sea Pictures by Australian artists was made by the Australian Broadcasting Commission, in Sydney Town Hall, in March 1976, and is the first Elgar recording to be made in Australia since the Sydney Civic Symphony Orchestra's record of the Introduction and Allegro, which was issued in 1953. Lauris Elms was born in Melbourne, and her world tours have included a number of major roles at Covent Garden. Her records have largely been operatic, and these include a memorable Mrs. Sedley in Britten's own recording of Peter Grimes. Her voice is powerful and well-able to ride thrillingly over the largest orchestral climaxes, whilst the intensity of tone which she produces on low notes at times rivals even Clara Butt.

Her interpretation of the Sea Pictures is a serious-minded one, and somehow the whole cycle emerges as a dramatic unity. The Sea Slumber Song sets the scene powerfully, whilst the Sabbath Morning at Sea builds up to a fine climax at 'He shall assist me to look high', the sonority of the orchestral tone benefitting from the inclusion of the optional organ part. The performance of The Swimmer makes a fine conclusion. The tempo is faster than that set by Barbirolli in Janet Baker's record (HMV ASD 655) and yet not so frenetic as Elgar's for Leila Megane (Pearl GEM 115), the orchestral writing emerging as a vivid tone picture of a rough sea.

There have been comparatively few recordings of the Sea Pictures, and I suppose that for most collectors it is Janet Baker's 1965 performance remains the touchstone. Whilst not effacing that record, this new performance does shed new light, and there were many details, particularly in the orchestral writing, that I had not noticed before. How good it is that there are now a number of performances of the major Elgar works on record, and this one - on a mid-price label - may well be bought all over the world by people who might not otherwise think of buying a record of Elgar's music. The coupling is another 'sea work', the Poeme de l'Amour et de la Mer, of Ernest Chausson who, as Jerrold Northrop Moore points out in his fascinating sleeve-note, is a contemporary of Elgar. The texts of both works are included as an insert.

J. G. K.

BIRTHPLACE NEWS

The Curator, Jack McKenzie, writes: Firstly, the numbers for last year: the grand total of visitors to the Birthplace for 1978 amounted to 7,077, and, from the sale of records and tapes, we collected £2,123 towards Birthplace funds. This is very heartening, and we hope to do even better in 1979. So far in January and February (despite the coldest winter for some years), we have already had 205 visitors, which is more than we had for the similar period of 1978, and the March total stands at 138 to date; no doubt Easter will send the figures soaring in April.

Among our visitors, we have had the first who saw the TV-programme put out in Japan, which was made here last year by Japanese Television. Our visitor was an Englishman with a Japanese wife, so perhaps could have been expected to know something of Elgar's music already; now it remains to be seen whether the indiginous Japanese, who are already making up a large proportion of the tourists to Britain these days, will have been stimulated enough to come and seek us out, to discover more about Elgar for themselves. We have also been glad to welcome Mrs. Jean Stone, who is a great-niece of Elgar's friend Frank Schuster, and Miss Betty Wadely, the daughter of Dr. Wadely (the late organist of Carlisle Cathedral) who had had Elgar's Cambridge Mus.Doc. robes on loan until 1970, when they were returned to us here.

Our gifts for the Birthplace recently include two 78's from Norman Wand: the song version of Salut d'Amour, and the orchestral version of the same piece, plus Carissima, both conducted by Elgar. Mr. & Mrs. Johnstone of Croydon have given us a photo of the rehearsal of The Apostles which took place at the North End Hall, Croydon in 1933, and Bruce Burley has donated a copy of the programme for the performance of Caractacus which took place in Truro Cathedral in 1911. Lastly, Elgar's great-niece, Margaret, has given us a pair of the composer's gold-rimmed spectacles. All these gifts we were delighted to receive.

One last point: we recently picked up, in the Oxfam shop, copies of Ernest Newman's biography of Elgar, and Bacharach's The Musical Companion, neither of which were on our shelves here. This prompts me to ask whether Elgarians may have spare copies of some of the Elgar literature which they might be willing to pass on to us in order to fill gaps in our archive. If this should be the case, please let me know and I could let you know what we need.

ELGAR EXHIBITION ... [continued]

A very crowded, but enjoyable day then closed with the visit to Giggleswick School and Chapel. There is no doubt that many people will remember a day spent, as Elgar himself spent many days, enjoying Yorkshire hospitality - and, who knows, with interest continuing in the 'Settle connection', we may yet discover that long-lost 'Lakes' overture.

Malvern Festival

21 May - 10 June 1979

This year's Malvern Festival — the third since its revival in 1977 — is again centred on the works of George Bernard Shaw, many of whose plays were first performed in Malvern, Sir Edward Elgar, who was born and died in the vicinity, and their contemporaries. It also celebrates the fiftieth anniversary of the first Festival and the centenary of the birth of Sir Barry Jackson, who, with Bernard Shaw, was closely involved in the pre-war Festivals.

May 26. Dream of Gerontius (RPO, conducted by Yehudi Menuhin, and Helen Watts, Benjamin Luxon, Anthony Rolfe-Johnson). May 27. Symphony no. 2 (RPO, conducted by Menuhin). June 3. Concert by Aldwyn Consort of Voices, including The Snow, and A Christmas Greeting. June 8. Sonata in E minor, op. 82, and Etudes Caracteristiques, op. 24 (Pinchas Zuckerman and Marc Neikrug). June 9. Violin Concerto (Zuckerman, Royal Liverpool PO, conducted by Simon Rattle). June 10. Sea Pictures (Janet Baker, with RLPO, conducted by Walter Weller).


Full programme details are available from the Box Office, Malvern Festival Theatre, Malvern, Worcs.

As well as the usual group of plays and exhibitions, the Festival contains a number of Elgar items, spread over five concerts from 26 May to June 10th.

This year's Three Choirs Festival contains less Elgar than usual, and one wishes that the organisers could be a little bolder when choosing works by the established masters. Must it always be Gerontius? The Apostles is performed infrequently, and why not a really splendid performance of Light of Life?

Full details of the programme this year can be obtained from the Festival Office, 25 Castle Street, Hereford. The Elgar items are The Dream of Gerontius on August 19th, Symphony no. 1 on August 22nd, and the Introduction

and Allegro on August 23rd. An Elgar Society tea has been arranged by the Festival Ladies' Committee on 19th August at 4.30 p.m. If you wish to attend please ring Alan Boon at Wichensford 419, and he will supply full details



August 19th - 24th
1979

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

May 4	<u>Symphony no. 2</u> Hallé, Loughran	Royal Festival Hall
May 5	<u>The Kingdom</u> Bath Choral & Orch. Soc., Harker.	Bath Abbey
May 5	<u>Violin Sonata; Sea Pictures</u> Carol Holt, Jane Page & Barbara Yates	Abbey School, Malvern Wells Tickets from West Mid. Br. Secretary, £1.50 (children 50p) incl. wine & cheese
May 12	<u>Spirit of England; Coronation Ode</u> Capriol Orch., Stamford Choral Soc.	Stamford School Hall, Stamford, Lincs. 8p. m.
May 12	<u>Wand of Youth no. 2</u> Bournemouth SO, Hughes	Colston Hall, Bristol
May 19	<u>Enigma Variations</u> Brighton Youth O., Gray	The Dome, Brighton. 11a. m.
May 20	<u>The Kingdom</u> Croydon Philharmonic Soc., Gaddarn	Fairfield Hall, Croydon 7.45 p. m.
May 23	<u>Organ Sonata no. 1</u> Christopher Robinson	Grainger's Lane Methodist Ch, Cradley Heath, West Midlands. 8p. m.
May 31	<u>Dream of Gerontius</u> Bromley Phil. Choir & Orch., Langford	Fairfield Hall, Croydon
June 3	Annual Wreath-Laying Ceremony at the Worcester Cathedral, at 4 p. m evensong.	Memorial Window, Please join us.
June 9	<u>Wand of Youth no. 2</u> Rutland Sinfonia, Collett	Uppingham School, Rutland 7.30 p. m.
June 21	Concert of English Music, incl. Elgar Doncaster Cathedral Guild, Hainsworth	Doncaster Museum & Art Gallery. 7.15 p. m.
June 24	<u>Serenade for Strings</u> John Bate Orchestra	Purcell Room
July 1	<u>String Quartet</u> Arioso String Quartet	Mason Croft, Stratford upon Avon: Tickets £1.50
July 5	<u>Introduction & Allegro</u> Bournemouth SO, Hurst	Winchester Cathedral Details phone 0962 69463
July 7	<u>Harmony Music, Six Promenades, etc</u> Various local school artists	Worcester Square, King- fisher Shopping Centre Redditch, Worcs

A YORKSHIRE BRANCH MEETING IN LEEDS

A successful exploratory meeting was held at the Griffin Hotel, Leeds, on 24th February. All members within range of the city were contacted and there had been considerable local effort and publicity. In the event 22 persons were present, and a number of absentees expressed support. Bill Jackson, Andrew Neill, and Ronald Taylor represented the Society. A small display of photographs and material relating to Dr. Buck and Settle had been arranged, and copies of the Elgar Discography were available. We were pleased that several members of the independent Sheffield Elgar Society were present. After a lively discussion it was felt that enthusiasm was such that a steering committee should be formed at once so that a Yorkshire branch could be established. A committee of five, all volunteers, was formed consisting of Miss Page, Mrs. Rawnsley, and Messrs. Clark, Seager and Wood. Mr. Dennis Clark, who had done much to bring about this meeting, is acting secretary of the branch until such time as an election can be held and a full committee elected. The Society wishes the branch well, and hopes that as many members as possible from the Yorkshire area will join.

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SOUTH WEST INAUGURAL MEETING AT BRISTOL

About 45 people braved the elements on 17th February to attend this meeting, travelling from as far as Cheltenham, Tewkesbury and Taunton, despite the appalling weather conditions. We were honoured by the presence of Michael Pope and John Knowles, whom we would sincerely thank for their encouragement and devotion in travelling from London on such a day.

The meeting was heralded by the Civic Fanfare, after which Mr. Pope commenced the proceedings with a few well-chosen words. Clifford Harker, who is Bristol Cathedral's organist, and conductor of three major local choral societies, was then elected Chairman of the new branch. Mr. Pope immediately invited him to take the chair for the remainder of the meeting. It is a privilege for the branch to have Mr. Harker associated with us, owing to his many performances of Elgar's works in this area. A committee of six volunteers was elected, as well as Mr. Ian Cartwright as the first Secretary/Treasurer. Both he and Mr. Harker spoke of their aspirations for the new branch. A free-ranging discussion followed, when ideas for meetings, outings, and co-operation with other branches were considered, and our thanks are due to all those who contributed to the success of this Inaugural Meeting, and for the many expressions of support that allow us to confirm our arrival on the Bristol scene.

A number of recordings of Elgar's music were played during the meeting, introduced by Ron Bleach.

BRANCH REPORTS

NORTH WEST

Secretary: Malcolm Key,
10 Eversleigh Road,
Oxton, Birkenhead.

The November meeting was addressed by Mr. Charles A. Myers, organist of Clitheroe Parish Church, educated in Worcester, and who, together with Mrs. F. Gwen Myers and Mr. S. Lambert, founded the Elgar Society in Worcester. As a chorister in Worcester Cathedral he had sung under Elgar's baton, and as an articulated pupil of Dr. Sumsion had a close connection with the musical events of the Three Choirs Festivals. Charles Myers gave a splendid talk on "The Piano Music of Elgar", illustrated by recorded excerpts and - of greater interest - by personal performances of high quality of a wide variety of piano pieces. The music was interspersed by reminiscences and anecdotes which brought his audience into closer contact with Elgar, and Mr. Myers was warmly thanked by Dr. Caleb Jarvis.

The Annual Meeting fixed for January had to be cancelled owing to deep snow, and was postponed to March, which again provided two inches of snow in the morning, fortunately clearing later. Mr. D. G. Ryder showed his colour sound film about the Elgar country-side, the Birthplace, the Cathedrals, and the houses in which Elgar lived and worked, and his film demonstrated that the professionals have no monopoly of superb film-making. Dr. Caleb Jarvis was given the unanimous support of the Branch, and Mr. Malcolm Key was appointed Clerk to the Committee.

[**We should not let this report pass without expressing our thanks to Douglas Carrington, the retiring Secretary of the Branch, who has held that post since the inauguration of the Branch in Liverpool. Editor.]

EAST MIDLANDS.

Enquiries to the Secretary of the
Elgar Society.

Nov. 25th. 1978 We were very pleased to welcome once again Mr. and Mrs. Rodney Baldwyn from Pershore. Mr. Baldwyn gave us an excellent, musically illustrated, talk "Ceremonial Elgar", in which we were introduced to an Elgar with his finger on the pulse of the British people, an Elgar, living in an English country town full of clerics and retired colonels. Perhaps he wished he could be like them, having met them first of all through the medium of his father's shop. They were people with formal manners, living a graceful, elegant life. Through his marriage connections he was introduced into a strata of society very different from that into which he was born. He also brushed shoulders with those in authority, and so had a foot in both camps. Which to choose?

His first ceremonial music came from his Catholic Church connections, and thus we were led through fifteen of the most varied and splendid examples of the composer's processional and ceremonial music, music which presents pictures of sheer richness of orchestral colour to those which tell of sad, heroic nobility. These ranged from the Ecce Sacerdos, through the Civic Fanfare, and Froissart, ending with Pomp & Circumstance no. 5, and the National Anthem. Splendid sounds for splendid occasions were instinctive with Elgar, but to say Elgar was Imperialistic, we were told, is foolish. One might as well say that Bach was a religious fanatic because he wrote three Passions. Elgar chronicled the life of the people of England through his music. We express our grateful thanks to Mr. & Mrs. Baldwyn for paying us a return visit.

Our January and February meetings took the form of two business meetings in an attempt to resolve the problem of electing a new set of Branch officers due to the resignation of the Chairman (who also acted as Secretary/Treasurer). The Chairman's resignation was due to forthcoming commitments after his ordination. We have, regretfully, to inform members that these discussions were concluded without result at the March meeting, and therefore the Branch was put into suspension, no officers or committee having been elected. We also inform members that the April and May meetings will not now take place. We take this opportunity of expressing our thanks to all those who have supported the Branch since its inauguration on June 28th, 1975, and to those who have travelled from London, Worcester, and wherever else to provide us with such excellent programmes. Gordon and Lorna Richmond also wish to assure their friends of continued support of the Society, and the West Midlands Branch. We are extremely grateful for the way in which membership of the Society has widened our outlook on life and the way in which it has introduced us to the nicest people. Our warmest loyal and affectionate greetings to you all.

In conclusion, our grateful thanks to Michael Trott, who came from Tewkesbury on March 10th to give us a talk, illustrated with slides, on "Elgar Country" and its bearing on Elgar's music. We saw slides of many familiar scenes in Malvern, Worcester and Hereford, and many other associated places. We thank Mr. Trott for bringing us a large breath of the air of Elgar Country.

LONDON

Secretary: E. W. A. Jackson, 'Killiegray'
7 Batchworth Lane, Northwood, Middx
HA6 3AU. Telephone: Northwood 22010

Dec. 4th. JOSEPH PILBERY - Elgar and Sullivan.

It is always of interest to compare both the lives and music of contemporary composers, so we have endeavoured to follow this practice whenever possible by inviting speakers well qualified to help us. Thus we looked forward to this meeting, as Mr. Pilbery is not only a knowledgeable Elgarian, but has also made a close study of Sullivan. In fact he was largely responsible for forming the

Sullivan Society and frequently gives concerts of his music, in addition to performing all the Gilbert and Sullivan operas from time to time.

It appears that both Elgar and Sullivan habitually used sketch-books to jot down anything which appealed to them and which might be later used in composition. Equally, both had a profound admiration for Mozart's G minor Symphony (no. 40). References were made to the symphonic poems Macbeth and Don Juan by Richard Strauss and we heard an early recording by Florence Austral singing part of Sullivan's cantata The Golden Legend, which work may well have impressed Elgar. The latter would certainly have heard Sullivan's music to The Tempest, to supplement his considerable knowledge of Shakespeare.

If not immediately obvious, Mr. Pilbery persuaded us that Sullivan's music and style was akin to that of the earlier Elgar and had had at least an indirect effect on the music of the latter. We are most grateful to him for his interesting talk, and to Mrs. Pilbery for her considerable help in the important and difficult task of playing excerpts from recordings at exactly the right moment.

Feb. 5th. MAXWELL HUTCHINSON - Arthur Troyte Griffith--Friend and Architect
Those of us whose knowledge of Troyte Griffith extended little beyond knowing that he practised as an architect in Malvern, is immortalised by Elgar in the VIIth Variation of the Enigma, and was one of his closest friends, heard an enthralling talk. Tracing his early life both at Harrow and Oriel College, Oxford, Mr. Hutchinson described in some detail the advent of 'Troyte' to the architects' partnership in Malvern, and illustrated this part of his talk with some excellent slides of the many houses and other buildings in the area designed by him. It was a fascinating story, much enhanced by Elgar's music appropriate to the period. We were shown innumerable pictures of virtually all the houses occupied by Elgar at one time or another - Forli, Craeg Lea, Plas Gwyn, Severn House, Brinkwells appeared in rapid succession; also houses and flats rented by Elgar after Lady Elgar's death, culminating in the purchase of Marl Bank overlooking the city of Worcester, now sadly demolished to make way for 'Elgar Court', a modern block of flats (of which 'Troyte' would surely not approve!)

This admirable programme was a model of co-ordination - Mrs. Hutchinson projected the, seemingly, dozens of slides (all made from photographs taken by her husband and herself), a friend looked after the music illustrations, and the whole presentation was bound together by Maxwell Hutchinson's illuminating commentary. It was an evening to remember, and we are extremely grateful both to Mr. Hutchinson and his colleagues, and to Diana Mc Veagh for her recommendation in committee.

March 5th. EXULTATE SINGERS - Concert of Songs by Elgar & other English Composers. The return visit of this excellent choir had been eagerly awaited, so it was rather surprising to find the attendance somewhat less than expected. The absentees certainly missed a treat.

The programme was skilfully arranged by the choir's director, Garrett O'Brien, the

first part combining two groups of Elgar songs with a number by other composers. Elgar's How Calmly the Evening, Doubt not Thy Father's Care, and I Sing the Birth were prefaced by Wesley's Cast Me Not Away. After Parry's Never Weather-Beaten Sail and Pearsall's Take Heed, ye Shepherd Swains, Elgar returned with As Torrents in Summer and Go, Song of Mine. To complete the first half we heard Love is a Sickness (Vaughan Williams), The Blue-bird (Stanford) and Full Fathom Five (Charles Wood). After the interval we heard the whole of Elgar's From the Bavarian Highlands, which Garrett O'Brien accompanied and directed from the piano. This was divided into two parts - after numbers 1-3, we heard three pieces from Rutland Boughton's Child of Earth - The Storm, The Return, and The Cage. Nos. 4-6 of the Elgar work completed the programme.

This was a most enjoyable and interesting concert, in which the Exultate Singers again impressed us by their meticulous regard for phrasing and clarity of diction. Their obvious enjoyment fully communicated itself to the audience which demonstrated its considerable pleasure. The chairman of the Society, Michael Pope, admirably expressed our thanks for a splendid and rewarding meeting.

WEST MIDLANDS

Secretary: Alan Boon, Old School House
Martley, Worcester.
Telephone: Wichenford 419

Feb. 3rd. JOINT MEETING with Worcester Recorded Music Society, at the Old Palace. A slightly smaller audience than usual welcomed Michael Trott, Vice-Chairman of the Branch, on a bitterly cold evening. He introduced the programme opening with the heartening, warm music of In the South, written when Elgar was wintering at a villa in Italy. The recording used was of Silvestri conducting the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, an amazingly successful record since it was reported that Silvestri was at odds with the orchestra at the time. Once again the heat-haze shimmered over the Vale of Andora as the Canto Popolare made its entrance, removing us temporarily from our long hard winter. Incidentally, the current occupants of the villa have been presented with this record. Next we heard Vaughan Williams' Serenade to Music, written for 16 soloists and orchestra on the occasion of Sir Henry Wood's Jubilee on Oct. 5th, 1938. This is arguably the loveliest of all Shakespeare settings. It is intensely lyrical and again a reminder of summer nights ahead. The evening ended with Pinchas Zuckerman and the LPO, conducted by Barenboim, playing the Violin Concerto. This is Elgar writing for his own instrument, at his most characteristic and romantic. This was a brilliant performance, but of all recordings of Elgar's music, the Violin Concerto is, perhaps, the one work over which devotees most disagree, each having a favourite version to which they remain faithful, no matter what other interpretations are offered. I know one man who plays the 78s of the young Menuhin over and over again.

March 24th. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, held at Martley.

A new Branch constitution was introduced to a good attendance, and a lively discussion followed. Reports by officers included a highly satisfactory financial statement. Michael Trott was elected Chairman, John Savage, Vice-Chairman, and Alan Boon, Secretary/Treasurer. There were no changes in the committee. Members voted for one extra meeting each season. Four members, all of whom had been on the committee since the inception of the Society in 1951, were given the newly-created title of Honorary Life Branch Member. They were, of course, A. T. (Bertie) Shaw and his wife, Lydia; Frank Greatwich, and Spencer Noble. Refreshments were followed by 'New Records' presented by Jack McKenzie, and slides recalling some happy occasions at the Birthplace by Vivienne McKenzie. All was very informal - the last member left for home at 11.30 p. m. We were grateful to Mr. Ken Potts who brought along his preliminary clay model of a proposed statue of Elgar for all to see.

EAST ANGLIA

Secretary: Barry Marsh, 'Homelea'
Whitwell Road, Reepham, Norfolk
Telephone: Reepham 613

We began our 1979 programme with a talk by Barry Collett entitled 'The Lesser-Known Elgar'. Since we had previously explored the world of the early cantatas it was refreshing to be introduced to the part-songs, particularly those with accompaniment for two violins, as well as the short but highly intriguing Duett for Trombone and Double Bass. Mr. Collett dealt with his subject enthusiastically, and with a good deal of authority. We were also delighted to welcome his wife to the meeting.

Most branches almost run out of funds from time to time! For our February Members' Evening it was decided to organise a fund-raising party at the home of one of our committee members. Some 25 people attended and came away well fed and well satisfied. Our Treasurer won the music quiz - excerpts from anything ranging from Elgar to 'Star Wars' - with full marks! A profit of £43.50 was made.

Christopher Kent visited us in March; there being no other way of illustrating the excerpts from the fragmentary 3rd Symphony, we managed to secure a piano and change our venue to the music room of Keswick Hall. Mr. Kent's talk was fascinating, and left no doubt that Elgar was borrowing from discarded material right up to the end. There were some present who questioned the speaker's conclusion that the symphony might have lacked cohesion, for in defending the composer, could not the same have been said of a work like 'The Music Makers' if that had been left unfinished? There was no doubt, however, that Mr. Kent provided us with much to think about, and what might have been.

As I write these notes we prepare for our own AGM, and the visit of Geoffrey Hodgkins, who will enliven proceedings by talking about the Introduction and Allegro. Plans for our big June concert continue to move forward; we have just heard that the composer William Alwyn has agreed to conduct his own Concerto Grosso no.2, and perhaps other items in the programme. I recommend this concert of English music to all other Society members; more details can be obtained from me, and we would be delighted to see you. Elgar items include Dances from The Spanish Lady, and, we hope, the Oboe Soliloquy.

We have had an excellent first season, with good attendances, and more enquiries flow in. Now we look forward in June to Elaine Padmore's talk, and original tape, of the English Renaissance. A visit from the head of BBC opera will be keenly anticipated.

YORKSHIRE

Acting Secretary:Dennis Clark, 227
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The inaugural meeting of the new Yorkshire branch was held on March 26th at the Willows Community Centre, in Horsforth, nr. Leeds. Of the 22 who attended the exploratory meeting on February 24th (reported elsewhere in this issue) exactly half came to the inaugural meeting which could therefore have been a disaster, but for the fact that further publicity mounted by the Steering Committee had resulted in an almost exactly similar number of replacements! The meeting at the Willows was a great success. The inaugural business was very quickly disposed of, the members officially approving the title of Yorkshire Branch, and a branch subscription of £2 per year. The members were then taken on a musical and pictorial tour of the Elgar haunts around the Malverns, including the Birthplace, Birchwood, the Elgar Grave and, of course, the Malvern Hills. Music used was from the Variations, and the Wand of Youth suites. We had the pleasure of the company of the NW Branch secretary, Douglas Carrington, and Mrs. Carrington. The evening concluded with friendly conversation over some excellent home-made refreshments provided by lady members.

Despite the success of this first meeting, we are concerned that this is a branch consisting almost entirely of brand new, or very recent recruits to the Society. While this will undoubtedly send a happy Society Treasurer laughing all the way to the bank, it leaves the longer-standing Yorkshire members almost unrepresented. To them we can only say "we want you to join. but we don't know who you are." We have no access to Society membership records at present and to modify an old theatrical saying, can only ask "Please ring us we cannot ring you."

Our next meeting will be on Monday, April 23rd, at the Willows, when David Wood, B. Mus., will give an illustrated talk on King Olaf. A further meeting

will follow on May 21st - business yet to be fixed - and the first general meeting in June. We shall have the customary summer recess, and will be back in business in the autumn with a fully prepared programme for the complete 1979/80 season.

SOUTH WEST

Secretary: Ian Cartwright, Herschel House, 61 North Street, Nailsea, Bristol BS19 2BS. Tel:02755 - 2621

After just over a month's existence the branch membership has reached the 30 mark, and we are looking forward to many of the expressions of support we have received being converted into memberships. An initial programme of events was planned in hopeful anticipation of the success of the Inaugural Meeting, and this programme is now being implemented with four meetings before the summer break. These are on the 23rd of each month up to and including June.

Mar. 23rd. This was our first meeting proper, for which attendance was about 30. It was entitled 'An Elgar Double Bill,' as two of our branch founder-members, Ron Coker and Vincent Waite, entertained and instructed us with two completely contrasted talks, separated by an interval. Mr. Coker spoke on 'Elgar - a Personal Passion' and he put into cogent and comprehensible words - tempered with the occasional controversial comment, what we all feel about the great man whom our Society exists to honour. Mr. Waite spoke most eruditely on 'Elgar and Parry' and showed most convincingly how under-rated most of Parry's music is, as well as the influences each had on the other's life and music. Both speakers illustrated their talks with music, Mr. Coker using well-known Elgar masterpieces to make his points, and Mr. Waite less well-known pieces by Parry, gleaned by devoted effort from many sources. We are most grateful to both speakers.

Future Meetings: April 23rd. The Kingdom - a talk by Derek Johnstone, a member and University of Bristol lecturer. May 23rd. A Visit to Elgar - Alan Webb has agreed to give us an evening based on his radio broadcasts, when he spoke of his meeting with Elgar. June 23rd. An Elgar Soirée - this is planned to be an informal evening of live music, with food and drink. A charge of about £1 per person will be made.

All above meetings will be held in the Bristol Music Club hall, 76 St. Paul's Road, Clifton, at 7.30 p.m. Refreshments are available, and there are ample parking facilities near the premises. Our future programme is in active preparation, and it is planned to include concert visits and an outing to the Birthplace. University of Bristol Dept. of Extra-Mural Studies are arranging a Day School in association with us to be held on a Saturday next winter. Other meetings will normally be held on the fourth Saturday of the month. The full programme will be announced in the September JOURNAL.



Letters

From GEOFFREY BRIGGS

I was particularly interested in RPT's review of last year's performance of The Starlight Express at Woking. There can be little doubt that the EMI recording of the music, although very welcome of course, was, of its nature, unsatisfactory. The music, when removed from its dramatic context, becomes a mere collection of disjointed and sometimes fragmentary numbers, for there is little more than a fairly obvious degree of thematic unity to hold it together. In other words, it is like a film soundtrack recording - pleasant enough to listen to in small doses, but otherwise rather meaningless. All of which underlines the desirability of experiencing The Starlight Express complete in some form or other. The Woking performance, though apparently not entirely successful, is to be welcomed; perhaps it may be possible to mount a full-scale professional production of Mrs. Kitchin's version before a wider public.**

In conclusion, I would like to point out that this was not, in fact, the first production since the first one. Some radio listening members may recall that the BBC presented a radio version of the original play, together with all the music, albeit with some items performed after the play itself, in 1965, in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the original production. The orchestral parts had only just been re-discovered. The recorded programme was repeated at Christmas 1967. The music was conducted by Lionel Salter, and the cast included Patrick Barr as Henry Rogers, Noel Howlett as the children's father, and Dennis Dowling as the organ-grinder. Perhaps the BBC could be persuaded to put this on again, possibly at Christmas.

From J. S. H.

Percy Young perpetuates the image of the self-sacrificing little woman in his book on Lady Elgar. So says Bernard Keefe in a recent broadcast of the series "Music Now." However, Bernard Keefe has peeped behind the scenes and talked to people still living who remember how violently irritated Elgar sometimes was with his wife, referring to her as "the pill" to his friends. I found that this explained to me a certain phrase that occurs at times in Elgar's music, most noticeably in In the South, which seems to be saying "Why don't they go away?" Bernard Keefe pictures Alice rather as the stern disciplinarian, and the driving force resembling Elgar's mother in this respect. That Elgar was overcome with remorse and guilt when his wife died was not the only reason he was unable to compose for some time - that driving force had gone.

** ON THE OPPOSITE PAGE IS A SCENE FROM THE SECOND PRODUCTION OF THERESE KITCHIN'S VERSION OF THE STARLIGHT EXPRESS, AT THE COLLEGIATE THEATRE.

THE ELGAR SOCIETY
[President: Sir Adrian Boulton, C.H.]

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