

# The Elgar Society

# JOURNAL



JANUARY

1983

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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.*

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RADIO TIMES

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ELGAR SOCIETY JOURNAL

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# The Elgar Society Journal

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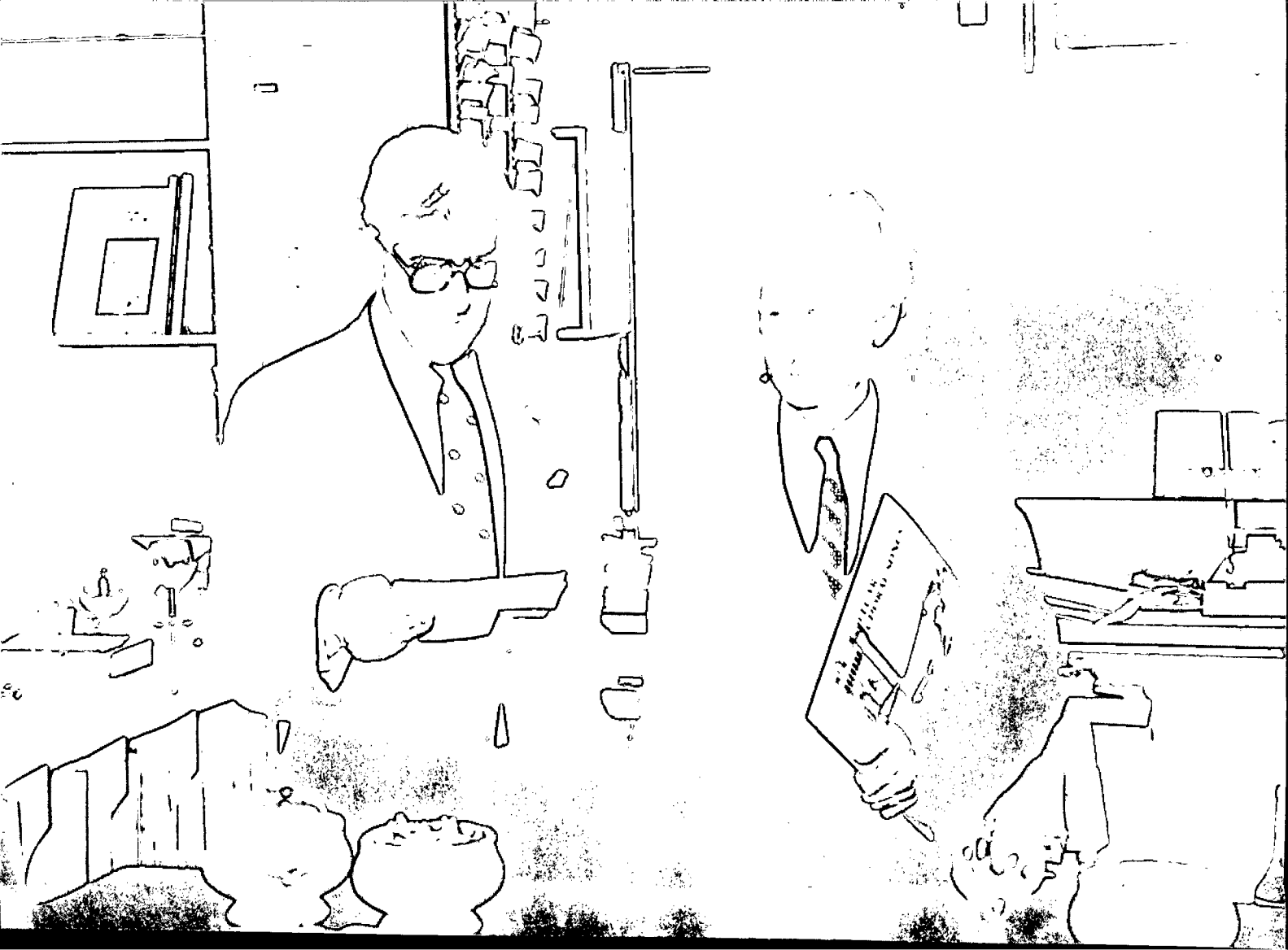
EDITORIAL

JANUARY 1983  
Vol. 3, No.1

For many years the date 1984 has had an Orwellian significance. One not to be thought of lightly, and indeed a date to be avoided, if that were possible. However, time changes things, and today 1984 is just another year on the calendar, now only twelve months away. To musicians and music lovers though the year has considerable significance. Fifty years ago, in 1934, the deaths occurred of three of our greatest composers - Elgar, Delius and Holst. Fifty years on we shall mark the anniversary by a consideration of their achievements, and the Elgar Society, and no doubt other organisations too, will be arranging a number of events to mark the year. Both public and private organisations will have an added incentive to study afresh the work and influence of these great composers, and it is hoped that the musical year will be the richer as a result. The Elgar Society is already planning ahead, and local branches will doubtless be arranging activities in their areas. National and provincial orchestras will probably be arranging special programmes, and we are most anxious that there shall be co-ordination and collaboration where possible. To assist this we should be glad of members' cooperation - if you know of events such as though mentioned above let us know of them. The Society's Secretary, Andrew Neill, is keeping a register of plans, and any information should be passed to him. Do not assume that in some mysterious way, we know already! Local knowledge is extremely valuable, and should be passed on quickly.

1934 saw the demise of other figures in the world of music... Sir George Henschel, that great singer from a past age, and Stewart Gardner, a popular English singer, at the early age of 48. Teacher, critic, and early enthusiast for Elgar, Herman Klein, died that year, as did Fanny Davies, the pianist and last link with Clara Schumann. That delightful composer Norman O'Neill, who contributed so much to theatre music, was killed in an accident, and to link us again with the 19th century one of Sir Charles Halle's sons, Gustave, died at the age of 83. The violin-teacher Ottaker Sevcik died. One of his pupils was Marie Hall, an early performer of Elgar's *Violin Concerto*, who made the first recording with the composer conducting.

RONALD TAYLOR  
Editor



# Elgar Festival - Utrecht, Holland

June 18th 1983

Our fellow members in the Netherlands have extended an invitation to United Kingdom members to join them in Utrecht on Saturday, June 18th, 1983, for a one-day, all-Elgar Festival at Vredenburg Muziekcentrum.

Interested members will receive personal invitations from Avro-Radio, the sponsors. The programme will include performances of *Caractacus*, *The Music Makers*, and *Pomp & Circumstance Marches* as well as some lighter Elgar.

Those who are thinking of attending this important event should contact Ian Lace, 20 Quarry Hill, Haywards Heath, Sussex RH16 1NQ(044 450570) in the first instance. Detailed itinerary and accomodation will be advised when the strength of demand is known, but it should be anticipated that the outward journey would have to be on Friday, June 17th, and the return on Sunday, June 19th.

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INTERNATIONAL NEWS: Because of the increase in Overseas membership, and the growing interest in Elgar's music abroad generally, the International sub-committee has been re-organised and expanded. It now comprises: Trevor Fenemore-Jones(Chairman), Ian Lace(Hon.Secretary), Andrew Neill, and Ron Bleach. FRANCE: Tim Brown, Arts Officer, The British Council, Paris, and a member of the Society, reports that Daniel Barenboim will be including the *Introduction & Allegro for strings* in an April 1983 concert to be given by the Orchestre de Paris. A significant article about Elgar has appeared in the orchestra's current-year concert programme. Mr.Brown also reports that British music of the early 20th century is gradually becoming better known in France. Vic Carnall and colleagues from the Cheltenham area forming a choir and string orchestra, gave four performances of the *Serenade for Strings* in France this August. It was well received, particularly at the Eglise de Naves, an old Baroque church 6000 ft. up in the French Alps! U.S.A: Pastor Jerry F.Moe presented an all-Elgar programme on his local radio in November. The programme broadcast from Watseka, Illinois, included *Cockaigne*, *Serenade for Strings*, and *Wand of Youth no.1*.

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PHOTOGRAPH OPPOSITE: Shows Society Chairman, Michael Pope, presenting a copy of the Society's latest record *Elgar's Choral Songs* to Peter Gellhorn, who trained the BBC Singers at the time of the recording. The launching of our record took place at Discurio, Shepherd Street, London, W.1. and we are greatly indehted to them for their hospitality and assistance.



THE  
**Royal Philharmonic Society**

(INSTITUTED 1813—INCORPORATED 1922.)

*Patrons: THEIR MAJESTIES THE KING AND QUEEN.*

**SECOND CONCERT.**

**Thursday, November 19th, 1925,**

**At 8 p.m.**

**QUEEN'S HALL.**

(SOLE LESSEES: MESSRS. CHAPPELL & CO., LTD.)

*Programme*

FANTASIA AND FUGUE ..... BACH  
 (transcribed by ELGAR)  
 "ENIGMA" VARIATIONS ..... ELGAR  
 CONCERTO FOR VIOLONCELLO AND ORCHESTRA .. ELGAR  
**BEATRICE HARRISON**

**INTERVAL.**

SYMPHONIC POEM "Falstaff" ..... ELGAR  
 OVERTURE—"In the South" ..... ELGAR

**Conductor - Sir EDWARD ELGAR, O.M.**

*On this occasion the Society's Gold Medal  
 will be presented to Sir Edward Elgar, O.M.,  
 by Sir Henry J. Wood, on behalf of the Society.*

IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL:—

(1) The public may leave at the end of the performance or exhibition by all exit doors, and such doors must at that time be open.

(2) All gangways, passages, and staircases must be kept entirely free from chairs or any other obstruction.

(3) Persons will not be permitted to stand or sit in any of the gangways intersecting the seating or to sit in any of the other gangways, if standing be permitted in the gangways at the sides and rear of the seating. Sufficient space must be left for persons to pass easily to and fro, and to have free passage to exits.

SUBSCRIPTIONS Please note that 1983 subscriptions are due now. Each year the Society and branches have to use precious funds sending out reminders. Please save the Society money by paying promptly. Addresses for subscriptions are on the back cover of this Journal.

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Record Offer

ELGAR CONDUCTS *THE DREAM OF GERONTIUS*, Royal Albert Hall  
Orchestra, Margaret Balfour, Steuart Wilson, Herbert Heyner  
Royal Choral Society

*OPAL 810*

This record has not only the sections included in the HMV box *ELGAR ON RECORD* but also the recently discovered test pressings of the whole of the Prelude. See review on record review pages.

Recommended retail price: £8.95

SPECIAL PRICE TO MEMBERS: £7.50 (incl. post & packing)

Orders to The Treasurer, 80 Langley Way, Watford, Herts, by the end of January.

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*HAVE YOU BOUGHT A COPY OF THE NEW SOCIETY RECORD?*

ELGAR: Choral Songs. BBC Singers, conducted by Sir Adrian Boult. and  
two broadcast talks.

*"Wonderfully flowing, idiomatic rendering of Elgar's nine partsongs"*  
*SUNDAY TIMES*

Recommended retail price: £5.50

Special price to members: £4.75 (incl. post & packing inland)

ORDERS TO THE TREASURER, at address above.

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Illustration opposite is taken from the concert programme at the Queen's Hall, 1925, when Elgar received the Gold Medal of the Royal Philharmonic Society

PROPOSED WELSH BRANCH OF THE ELGAR SOCIETY

Following a meeting in September at which Kenneth Loveland gave a talk "The Elgar Story" there was enthusiasm for a branch of the Elgar Society to be formed in South Wales. At a talk given in October by Prof. Ian Parrott further discussions were held, and after various contacts with Society and Branch officers it was agreed to hold a preliminary meeting in January 1983.

This meeting has now been arranged for:

SATURDAY, 15th JANUARY, at 2.30 p.m. at the CENTRAL HOTEL  
St. Mary's Street, CARDIFF.

We hope that all members living within the South Wales area will attend the meeting. If you are unable to attend, but would like to support the new branch, please write to Mr.Terry Jenkins, 38 Tan Y Bryn, Burry Port, Dyfed SA16 OHP. Officers of the Society will be attending, and it is hoped that a new and thriving branch of the Society will be formed.

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UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL / SOUTH WEST BRANCH ELGAR SOCIETY

Announce a One-Day School to be addressed by Dr. Percy Young

"ELGAR AND TRADITION"

- (i) Elgar and English Literature
- (ii) Elgar and the Catholic Tradition
- (iii) Elgar and the German Tradition

The school commences at 10.15 a.m. and closes at approx. 5.15 p.m. and will be held on Saturday, Feb.26th, 1983 at the University Reception Room, Wills Memorial Building, Queens Road, Bristol. The fee: £ 4.50

Full details and application form available from J.A. Farnill, 32 Tyndalls Park Road, Bristol BS8 1HR. Please note that completed applications and payment must arrive by February 22nd. Please cite reference: Course no. B82 C06 SE.

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Late information: Two concerts to be given in Wales may interest readers, the first on the day of the Welsh meeting mentioned above.

Jan. 15	Enigma Variations.	BBC Welsh SO	Brangwyn Hall,	Swansea,	7.30p.m
Mar. 2	Falstaff.	BBC Welsh SO	"	"	"



ELGAR'S QUEEN ALEXANDRA MEMORIAL ODE

by Christopher Kent

On June 8, 1932 an open-air service of dedication was held at Marlborough House to mark the unveiling of a memorial to Queen Alexandra. The bronze memorial, designed by Gilbert Parker, depicts 'faith, hope, charity' with the inscription: 'Queen Alexandra 1844-1925. A tribute of the Empire's Love'. A report in *THE TIMES* on the following day described the event: '...Beforehand the band of the Welsh Guards and the choirs of the Chapels Royal and Westminster Abbey gave Mackenzie's *Benedictus*, Handel's *Largo*, and a choral hymn by Walmisley *From all that dwell below the skies*.... The dedication service [conducted by the Archbishop of Canterbury] began with an ode written for the occasion by the Poet Laureate [John Masefield] and set to music by Sir Edward Elgar, Master of the King's Musick, who, wearing the robes of his office, conducted the choir.'

Elgar had received the text of Masefield's poem from Sir Clive Wigram on May 14(1), and completed his setting ten days later. Before the performance Elgar wrote to The Gramophone Company suggesting that it might be recorded, (bearing in mind that its four and a half minutes duration made it suitable for one side of a 78r.p.m. disc), but the idea was not considered to be commercially viable.(2)

The initial pencil sketches are in B.L. Add.MS. 47908, and the vocal score, dated May 1932, is among the Royal Archives at Windsor Castle following a request by King George V after the performance:

*Dear Sir Edward Elgar,*

*The King, as you know, greatly admired your musical setting of Mr.Masefield's Ode in Memory of Queen Alexandra.*

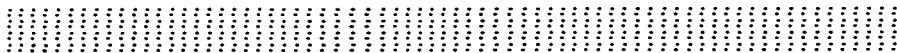
*His Majesty would greatly appreciate receiving from you the original score of the music, signed by yourself, so that the work by the Master of the King's Musick may be preserved in the records at Windsor Castle together with the original Ode by the Poet Laureate... (3)*

Elgar had some difficulty in complying with this request immediately since his reply(4) refers to the MS being in the hands of a copyist. This presumably alludes to the preparation of the parts for the military band and choristers. Despite extensive enquiries, the full score of the work has not yet been located, only the vocal score with a keyboard version of the band parts has survived.

The setting is in strophic form with a short introduction which also provides material for the intervening *ritornelli*. Although the lucid and mainly diatonic harmonies of the homophonic vocal stanzas are in F flat major, the curiously wistful prelude and coda begin and end in its dominant.

In conclusion, I am pleased to acknowledge the gracious permission of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II for the use of material from the Royal Archives at Windsor Castle in this article. I also extend my thanks to Sir Robin Mackworth-Young, Librarian and Assistant Keeper of the Queen's Archives for his kind assistance.

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- (1) R.A. GV PS 54079 May 14, 1932
  - (2) Jerrold Northrop Moore, Elgar on Record(O.U.P.1974), 168
  - (3) R.A. GV PS 54079 June 10,1932
  - (4) *ibid.* June 15, 1932



#### GLUCESTERSHIRE PHILOMUSICA ELGAR FESTIVAL, 18 - 26 September 1982

Financially speaking, it must be an act of faith putting on most music festivals, but when the composer is Elgar and the forces largely amateur, tremendous enthusiasm and hard work are vital to bring it off. These qualities were found in abundance during Philomusica's Elgar Festival held mainly in Gloucester last September. James Cowley is clearly a conductor to be reckoned with as far as Elgar is concerned. He has conducted all the major choral works and many of the orchestral, and demonstrates in his direction a deep understanding of the composer. There were particularly good performances of *The Dream of Gerontius*, *The Apostles*, and *Sea Pictures*, with exceptional singing from Diana Walkley (contralto), Jillian Whitehead (soprano) and guest professional tenor, John Mitchinson. It was gratifying to see such lesser-known works as *The Light of Life*, *The Coronation Ode* and *The Spirit of England* performed. All credit to Festival Director James Walkley for including them and to his splendid chorus for accomplishing so much within a week. The Birmingham Philharmonic, surely one of the best amateur orchestras around, gave a stupendous performance of the *First Symphony*. Their brass section was thrilling in its assured power and precision. Another highlight was to hear Hugh Bean and David Parkhouse play the *Violin Sonata*, a scoop if ever there was one. An extra Festival attraction was Dr. Louie Eickhoff's *Elgar & Hampstead* exhibition. All students of Elgar should be aware of the fascinating new material Dr. Eickhoff has unearthed. Attendance at the Festival was good and £700 was raised for the restoration funds of Gloucester Cathedral, Tewkesbury Abbey and two local churches. A 1984 Elgar Festival is now being planned.

M.W.T.

HENRY COWARD

1849-1944

by

Gareth H. Lewis

PART TWO

From the earliest days of the Sheffield Tonic Sol-fa Association, Henry Coward had been gradually evolving his own views on choral training and the type of sound he wanted. The vocal accomplishments of his individual singers was of less importance than their sight-reading ability and their natural musicianship. In these respects he was completely at odds with the generally accepted traditions of British choral societies. Even more curious to modern ears is the fact that his emphasis on clarity of detail, tonal refinement, and wide expressive range was equally regarded as revolutionary. The choir entered many competitions and won many awards, although they sometimes came up against adjudicators whose views differed markedly from those of Coward. Thus at the Welsh National Eisteddfod, held at Caernarfon sometime in the 1880's, the choir was unplaced, Coward being accused by the adjudicator of 'painting the lily and gilding refined gold' (they had just sung 'He that shall endure to the end' from *Elijah*), and the prize was awarded to a choir which sang with unremitting power throughout, and had become so flat by half way through their test piece that the pianist was obliged to stop playing.

By 1892 the Tonic Sol-fa Association had increased its membership sufficiently to be able to put on more ambitious concerts. The name had been changed a year or two previously to the Sheffield Musical Union, and the requirement for its members to hold a certificate of proficiency in reading tonic sol-fa was dropped. The first concert by the newly-constituted body was a performance of Parry's *Judith*, written for the 1888 Birmingham Festival. Parry himself conducted - thus starting Coward's life-long association with contemporary music, and his friendship with most of the leading composers of his day. Coward longed for an opportunity to impose his ideas on a large choir, and the chance came in 1895, with the plans for the establishment of a triennial Sheffield Festival. The initiative came from a local choir called the St. Cecilia Choral Society, who wished to test public reaction to musical performances mounted to the highest possible standards. They proposed a trial single performance of *Elijah*. A local orchestra was recruited, and Henry Coward was invited to select and train a choir, and conduct the performance. Membership of the choir was drawn from several local music societies, although inevitably the Musical Union formed a nucleus.

Such was the success of *Elijah* that plans were immediately put in hand for a two day festival the following year. The astonishing amount of music performed during that time-span leaves one in awe of the stamina of audience and choir alike. August Manns was the principal conductor: *Elijah* was given again, Sullivan's *Golden Legend* and Berlioz' *Damnation of Faust*, and Parry returned to Sheffield to conduct his oratorio *Job*.

As a mark of the respect in which the chorus master was held, he was invited to conduct a work of his own, and chose a motet 'The Word of the Lord', extracted from his cantata *The King's Error*, written in 1894 as his exercise for the Oxford Doctorate in Music. Only one London critic turned up in Sheffield for the 1896 festival - the veteran Joseph Bennett of the *Daily Telegraph*. His enthusiasm for the quality of the choral singing, however, can be regarded as the first step in the extension of Henry Coward's reputation beyond the confines of Yorkshire and the neighbouring counties.

The next Sheffield festival in 1899 was extended to a three-day event, and Manns again was engaged to conduct. The works performed included Mendelssohn's *Hymn of Praise*, Saint-Saens' *Samson and Delilah* and the Beethoven *Choral Symphony*. Parry once again conducted one of his major works - the oratorio *King Saul*, but perhaps the most important event was the arrival of Elgar to conduct *King Olaf* - the first meeting between composer and chorus-master, which was to develop into a close friendship, and a working relationship to last until Elgar's death. Elgar was at that time working on *Gerontius*, and it seems likely that he discussed some aspects of the choral writing with Coward. Elgar stayed at Coward's house during this visit, and years later, in his little book *Reminiscences*, the Sheffield conductor wrote:

'I indulge the notion that he wrote some of *Gerontius* at my house. In the summer of 1899 he stayed overnight with me, and just before retiring he hinted that he would like a candle. This was supplied at once, although we thought it strange, seeing he had only to switch on the light. In the morning only a small portion of the candle was left, and as I knew he was busy with his masterpiece, I have always thought that some sudden inspiration was written down at Western Bank, Sheffield.'

If, indeed, Coward had been of assistance to Elgar in the preparation of *Gerontius*, it would explain the composer's invitation to Coward to attend a choral rehearsal. Again Coward's own account is of interest:

'Just before the first performance, I, at Elgar's request, attended a chorus rehearsal conducted by himself, and at the close slipped away rather than meet him and give a depressing verdict. The singing reminded me of an automaton - shape and movement, but lifeless. I was present at the historic final rehearsal, when the composer, in the presence of thousands, gave that flaming outburst against the performers because of their lack of insight into the spirit (demoniacal or spiritual) and import of the music. But despite the interpretative shortcomings, I had detected the rich vein of gold which runs through all the work.'

Coward was determined to do justice to Elgar's work, and he persuaded the Sheffield Festival Committee to schedule it for performance at the next festival, in 1902. Again it is through Coward's own description that we can get the full flavour of his approach to choral

singing - and, perhaps, some insight into the music world of the period:

'It was no light task to achieve success where other fine musicians had failed, but it gave me a chance of showing what could be done in developing a new kind of singing - 'characterisation' I have named it - and I knew my singers would in the end follow my lead. We have now grown familiar with this epoch-making short oratorio - its strange atmospheric tints, its novel idiom, and its exacting demands upon the chorus - so that present day conductors can surmount its difficulties...but in 1902 the subtle something in the new style of writing was an elusive element, difficult to fix, and when grasped one realised that a new and higher choral technique had to be evolved to meet its demands. It was the non-possession of these essentials which, quite excusably, accounted for the initial fiasco. I set myself in the atmosphere and idiom of the work.

When I first patterned the sardonic tone and derisive laugh of hate, (in the Demon Chorus) some of the singers scoffed, others said "his is off his trolley", while all were startled. I persevered, however, and by and by the chorus were able to portray the demons' snarling laughter at the first attempt.'

Elgar's delight at the quality of the choral singing, when he attended a rehearsal, can be readily imagined. August Manns had been too ill to continue as musical director of the Sheffield Festival, and Henry Wood was to conduct in 1902. There is no doubt that Coward was disappointed that he had not been asked to take over the Festival conductorship himself, although in retrospect it is clear that at this stage his reputation was still that of a regional choral trainer, rather than a conductor of national repute. There was a consolation, however in that he had been commissioned to compose a new work for the 1902 festival, which, of course, he conducted himself. The cantata was called *Gareth and Lynet* and was well received. Elgar himself conducted *Gerontius*: there is no doubt that this performance played an important part in establishing the work in the repertoire of our major choral societies. The critics continued to heap praise on Sheffield choral singing - and Wood himself, in his memoirs, recalls his first experience of conducting at Sheffield:

'Owing to the genius of Henry Coward as chorus master, the choir sang with a snap and a verve with which no other choirs could hope to compete. Consequently, with a fine orchestra to accompany, I fancied I saw another of my dreams on the point of being realised: there seemed every chance of first-rate performances with real perfection of ensemble between soloists, chorus and orchestra.'

The performance of *Gerontius* was historic for another reason: two of the solo singers, who were appearing for the first time in the work, were to become especially associated with it for many years, and were perhaps to become Elgar's favourite interpreters of the parts. *Gerontius* was sung by John Coates, and the Angel was Muriel Foster - who was stand-

ing in at the last moment for the indisposed Marie Brema.

*Gerontius* was not, in fact, the only Elgar work performed at the 1902 Sheffield Festival. On the same evening the audience was given an unexpected bonus: *Gerontius* was given in the first half of the programme, Ysaye played the Beethoven violin concerto after the interval, and the concert ended with the first performance of Elgar's *Coronation Ode*, originally intended for performance on 26th June, three and a half months earlier, at a Covent Garden celebration on the eve of Edward VII's coronation - postponed by the King's illness.

It would not be possible to list all the associations between Henry Coward and the music of Elgar. One or two high points, however, stand out. There were several important performances of *Gerontius*, including one at Queen's Hall, London, in 1904 when the Sheffield choir was conducted by Weingartner (who was to succeed Wood as chief conductor of the 1905 Sheffield Festival), there were performances conducted by Coward in Germany and during the famous Sheffield Choir world tour of 1911 - about which more later. A particularly interesting performance of *Gerontius* took place in 1910 at Arundel Castle - an event which directly arose from the success of the 1902 Sheffield Festival performance. While staying at Sheffield, the Elgars were entertained by their old friends, Charles and Alice Stuart-Wortley - the former being Member of Parliament for the Hallam division of Sheffield. Through them the Elgars met the Duke of Norfolk, who was a keen amateur musician. The Duchess seems there and then to have determined to present Elgar's masterpiece at Arundel, preferably as performed by the Sheffield choristers. (The Duke had been a patron of the Sheffield Musical Union for many years.) Not only was the choir transported to Arundel at the Norfolk's expense, but the Queen's Hall Orchestra and Henry Wood were also engaged. All were well looked after: a garden party followed the performance, at which the choir was induced to sing a selection of choruses in the open air, and, on the journey back the party was surprised to discover that an eight course banquet had been laid on at the St. Pancras Hotel, again at the Duke's expense. On the other hand the packed audience for the performance of *Gerontius* had paid a guinea each for their seats, and there was considerable profit made for the Duchess's favourite charities.

Other major Elgar choral works benefitted from Coward's expertise - not only with the Sheffield choirs, but with others with which he was associated over the years. One which Coward mentions especially proudly in his memoirs (published in 1919) took place in June 1914. The work was *The Apostles*, the conductor was Elgar, and the location Canterbury Cathedral.

It will be obvious by now that Coward was a man of phenomenal energy. Indeed, an attempt to disentangle his activities in the years between 1890 and the first world war leave one in confusion. After achieving his Mus.Bac. degree in 1889, he decided to try to make a living out of private teaching - it will be recalled that his career as a schoolmaster had come to a premature end two years before. Accordingly a shiny new brass plate was fixed to his door bearing the inscription 'Henry Coward, Mus.Bac.'

Oxon. Professor of Music'. Pupils were not slow in arriving, and for seventeen years private tuition formed the basis of his not inconsiderable income. Around the time when he obtained his degree, Coward was offered an appointment as lecturer at Firth College, which in due course evolved as University College, and then in 1905 into Sheffield University. At that point a separate teachers' training college was established, to which Coward's appointment was transferred. Within a few years the University itself set up a Faculty of Education, and Coward was appointed lecturer and examiner in the teaching of music. For many years he was also singing master at King Edward VII School and the Girls' High School, Sheffield, was deeply involved in the activities of the Tonic Sol-fa College and the Froebel Society, and also found time to edit two hymnbooks for the Primitive Methodist sect. He composed several large-scale choral works of his own, and was also a prolific music journalist

Meanwhile Henry Coward was acquiring a large family. In 1875 he had married a Sheffield girl, May Eliza Best. In 1892 she died suddenly, leaving him with eight children (four boys and four girls), the youngest of whom was only three years old. Mrs. Coward's elder sister, Louisa Hannah, came to the rescue, and moved in to look after the children - and two years later became the second Mrs. Coward. She too died suddenly - in 1907, following an operation. Three years later, in 1911, Coward married for a third time, the lady concerned having the delightful name of Semima Alice Dewsnap.

Coward was one of the best known and best loved characters in Sheffield. He had conducted a choir of 60,000 on the occasion of Queen Victoria's visit to Sheffield in 1897, and it was no doubt this, and other similar spectacular occasions that moved a grateful City Corporation to present him with a set of doctoral robes in 1894, following his success at Oxford. Although best remembered for his Sheffield choral activities, he had many other regular commitments. In 1901 he took on the Huddersfield Choral Society, in 1905 the Leeds Choral Union, in 1906 the Newcastle and Gateshead Choral Society, and in 1908 the Glasgow Choral Union. At various times, usually for specific festivals, he ran choirs at Derby, Southport, Preston, Barnsley and Aberdeen.

Not all these appointments overlapped, of course, but for many years the only night of the week Coward spent at home on a regular basis was that of a Sheffield rehearsal. Other nights were spent in hotels. Nor were his conducting activities restricted to choirs: recognising his limitations in knowledge of the orchestral repertoire he formed a group in the 1870s called the Sheffield Amateur Instrumental Society. He continued to direct this body for many years. Concerts were put on regularly, for which local professional players were incorporated into the orchestra. Eventually in 1899 the Sheffield Professional Orchestra was formed, with Coward as conductor. Ambitious programmes were planned, but after three seasons regular concerts ceased, although the organisation continued for several years, and provided the orchestra for Musical Union concerts. In addition to all this Coward had become, by the

turn of the century, one of the most sought-after adjudicators at competitive festivals - which enabled him to get his own back on the National Eisteddfod of Wales, for which he was one of the choral adjudicating panel for many years. As he spent less and less time in Sheffield, so the time for private pupils decreased, and around 1902 he decided to withdraw from individual tuition - although he continued to hold his lectureships for many more years.

Weingartner, conductor of the 1905 festival was delighted at the spirited and accurate choral singing in Berlioz' *Damnation of Faust* - Coward's 'Characterisation' at its best, no doubt. There is some evidence however, that for all his encouragement of modern music, Coward was by nature something of a conservative, and not entirely in sympathy with newer trends. Wood, who returned for the 1908 festival (Coward's last), noted in his memoirs that all was not well with a performance of the Delius *Sea Drift* - its first in Britain. The work was put on at Wood's insistence, and against the wishes of the committee. Wood noted that: 'the chorus did not take kindly to it. They thought it an impossible work and although Dr. Coward himself was not really in sympathy with it, he managed to bring it off.'

It is hardly surprising that there was jealousy amongst the festival organisation at the success of the Musical Union, which was earning an international reputation at least partly through Coward's festival successes which were usually covered by continental music writers. Some committee members were incensed when it became known that the Musical Union was to be billed for an overseas trip as 'The Sheffield Choir' - a title which, they felt, should rightly belong only to the festival chorus. There is still some confusion as to the specific identity of the choir bearing that name. Briefly, Coward's main body of singers throughout his career was the Musical Union, formerly the Tonic Sol-fa Association. The Sheffield Festival Chorus was recruited afresh for each triennial event, each member being individually auditioned. Inevitably, however, it was built around a nucleus of Musical Union singers, although many other choirs from the city and surrounding district were represented. The Sheffield Choir, when touring overseas, was again based on a nucleus of Musical Union singers, but included members of Coward's other choirs in the North of England and Scotland, and, on some occasions, included volunteers from elsewhere who had not previously worked with Coward. Again selection was based upon rigorous auditions.

The overseas tours by the 'Sheffield Choir' were undoubtedly the crowning achievement of Coward's career as a choral conductor, but they really require an article to themselves (and a long one at that) to do them justice. The first overseas visit was to Germany in 1906. The success of this tour ensured a further and much longer visit in the summer of 1910. In the meantime Coward and his choristers had made an even more adventurous excursion. In 1907 Coward met the London-born, but Canadian-domiciled, organist and conductor Dr. Charles Harriss. The occasion was a festival organised by Harriss at the Queen's Hall, London. Harriss's aim was three-fold: to introduce himself as conductor, composer and en-



trepreneur to the discerning London musical public, to assess the standards of performance and the quality of new music available in Britain, and to sound out the performers as to their willingness to visit Canada to stimulate interest in musical performance and to encourage higher standards. Coward naturally leapt at the idea when the possibility of the Sheffield Choir visiting Canada was mooted. The trip was planned to start at the end of October 1908, two weeks after the end of the Sheffield Festival, and was the cause of considerable disgruntlement. As the Festival ended Coward tendered his resignation as festival chorus master. His reasons were not just the 1908 festival difficulties, but the fact that he was already planning a longer and more ambitious overseas trip for 1911, which would keep him away from the next triennial event. To complete the story of the Sheffield Festivals - the training of the chorus for 1911 was left to Henry Wood. A festival was planned for 1914, but the commencement of the war led to its cancellation - that really was the end, it has never been revived in its original form, but its influence on other events was out of all proportion to its short life and Henry Coward's choral training was the key to its distinction.

The choir for the Canadian trip was drawn from the cream of the Sheffield, Leeds, Huddersfield, Newcastle and Southport Choirs. The choir was away from England for four weeks, and spent eighteen days in Canada, singing major concerts at Montreal, Quebec, Toronto and Ottawa, performing in addition at several smaller towns. *Elijah* and *Gerontius* formed the nucleus of the repertoire, although several works by Canadian composers were performed (usually with the composer conducting), and there was a strong selection of part songs and choruses available for towns where no orchestra was available.

Harriss was again the inspiration behind Coward's final overseas trip (the 1911 tour). One of such megalomaniac proportions that it would seem an outrageous undertaking even in these days of speedier and more efficient international travel. Coward decided to take his choir on a world tour, lasting six months, so that as wide an audience as possible would be able to appreciate his achievement. The problems presented by this project were, of course, enormous. Selection of the choir depended not just on who were the most suitable people, but who could prevail upon their employers, spouses, etc to release them from other responsibilities for such a long period. The result was that Coward had to cast his net wider than usual to find 200 voices, and the critics were not unanimous in their praise of the choral singing - particularly in America. As is well known, Elgar himself travelled with the party throughout the first two months, which took them through Canada and the U.S.A. He conducted *Gerontius* at Toronto, Indianapolis, Chicago and St. Paul, and also a performance of *The Kingdom* at Cincinnati, where the following evening the choir took part in a performance of the Beethoven *Ninth Symphony* conducted by the Cincinnati Orchestra's chief conductor, Leopold Stokowski. Other works in the choir's repertoire were Parry's *Blest Pair of Sirens*, *Elijah*, *Messiah*, Sullivan's *Golden Legend* and a variety of part songs, including Elgar's *Bavarian Highlands* songs. After two months in the new world, the choir left for the Antipodes, giving

concerts at Honolulu and Suva on the way. Two months were spent in Australia and New Zealand and almost as long in South Africa. In all a staggering 152 concerts were given - a quick calculation will show that, allowing for lengthy sea trips between countries, on some days more than one performance was given. It is hardly surprising that at times fatigue undermined the standards of performance. *Gerontius* was given under Coward's direction at Sydney, Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin, Melbourne, Adelaide and Durban, some of these being a shortened version, stopping after 'Praise to the Holiest.'

After the first world war, Coward, by then nearing 70, gradually reduced his activities. Throughout his life his energy had been astonishing; he was always a man who could do with little sleep, thrived on hard work and functioned best under a degree of pressure that would have driven a lesser man to an early grave. He was a small, wiry, slim man, who was a life-long non-smoker and tee-totaller, and was blessed with extraordinarily robust health. He hardly had a day's illness throughout his professional life, and used to claim never to have had a headache in his life! Henry Coward retired as conductor of the Sheffield Musical Union in 1933, having been knighted in 1926. He remained, however, a much-loved and respected figure for a further decade, dying on 10th June, 1944, at the age of 94. His influence as an innovative chorus trainer remains, in the fact that British choral singing, as I have frequently been told by distinguished overseas musicians, is still the finest in the world. His book 'Choral Technique and Interpretation', published by Novello in 1914 became the most valued handbook for a whole generation of choral conductors - yet reading it today one is struck to what an extent Coward's rethinking of choral technique has been totally assimilated into the working methods of all our major choirs.



## Transcriptions of Elgar's Music: A Postscript

by P.L. Scowcroft

My earlier article (Journal, May 1982) generated considerable interest, and some fresh information from others to go with that I have myself garnered after writing it. At least one of our members, for example, possesses the Ketelbey piano version of *The Starlight Express* music, while I am indebted to one-time Birthplace Curator Alan Webb for telling me W.H.Reed arranged, for Keith Prowse, for violin and piano, *Dreaming* (from the *Nursery Suite*), as well as *The Sad Doll*; it was sensitive of Keith Prowse to engage Reed for this in view of his closeness to Elgar in his last years. Michael Pope, our Chairman, reminds me that that superb orchestrator and composer Gordon Jacob made a version for orchestra of the *Organ Sonata no.1*; Mr.Pope himself has arranged the Opus 22 pieces for viola.

It seems many Elgar instrumental tunes have had words put to them,

not just *Salut d'Amour*. Novello cashed in on the thirst for vocal salon pieces by producing *Haste Ye Feathered Songsters* for medium voice (*Chanson de Matin* for the uninitiated) and *In Moonlight* (from *In the South*), for medium or high voice, arrangers not specified. Instrumental pieces were fair game for the choral arranger, too: *Sursum Corda* was set for SATB by one Johnson (published Fischer); *Hail Glorious Day*, arranged for SATB and band by William Arkwell Schaefer, Professor of Music at the University of Southern California, and a prolific writer and arranger of band music, and *I'll Always Remember*, arranged by Harold Cofield for SATB or SSA, may also have instrumental provenance. These are American publications and, browsing through the recent American catalogues Music in Print I was surprised to see so many Elgar arrangements available in the choral field. As *Torrents*, for example; various transatlantic firms offer this for SSA (arranged Shepherd), TTBB (arr. Gibb) and SAB (arr. Wilson & Ehret). Walter Ehret (b. 1918) has arranged or composed much choral music for amateurs, including Elgar's *The Snow* for SSA, unaccompanied. The American firm Agape produced a "simplified" *Go Song of Mine* (SATB, as against the SSAATB original). Incidentally, it is surprising how late were the choral arrangements of the *Seven Lieder* I mentioned; Montague Phillips' date from 1935, Woodgate's from 1937 or later. Elgar himself, however, arranged the *Greek Anthology* songs for SATB.

It is a moot point which is Elgar's most arranged work. Apart from the versions noted before, many by the composer, *Salut d'Amour* has appeared in - mostly American - transcriptions for flute and piano (arr. Saenger), clarinet or flute and piano (arr. Trinkhaus), wind quintet and oboe and piano. But *Pomp and Circumstance no. 1* and its 'big tune' has at least as many settings, some of them curious. The oddly-named Mr. Trinkhaus crops up again with an arrangement of the big tune, for clarinet and piano; there are versions for horn/piano and trumpet/piano by a Mr. Akers and one for the organ by Richard Hall. Vocally *Land of Hope and Glory* itself has variants for SATB, SSA and TTBB (all accompanied), all by Arthur Fagge (1863-1943), a fine choirmaster, and for SAB by one Slater. Perhaps the most bizarre is *Nederland en Oranje*, for mixed or men's chorus, from the Dutch firm, Heer, arranged by Mynheer de Wolff, in which our Dutch friends, recognising a good patriotic tune, have put their own words to it! Fagge, incidentally, formed the London Choral Society in 1903 to give the second London performance of *Gerontius*, passing on to other new music like Bantock's *Omar Khayyam*, Walford Davies' *Everyman*, Parry's *Pied Piper* and all the big Elgar choral works

Keyboard transcriptions of the orchestral works are numerous and of some interest. Elgar appears to have arranged for piano his own *Carissima*, *Carillon*, and *Echo's Dance* (from *The Sanguine Fan*) for Elkin, but Novello had Harold Brooke so arrange the *Coronation March* in 1912, while both of the better known concert overtures were similarly treated, *Cockaigne* for Boosey by Otto Singer (who also arranged Liszt songs for piano) and *In the South* Novello by Adolph Schmid, mentioned previously. *In the South* in particular, unless substantially simplified and cut, would be a major hurdle for most domestic pianists.

Brooke was long a Novello director who took over the Novello Choir 1913-1924, reforming this as the Harold Brooke Choir (36 voices), enterprising in its advocacy of Handel, Bach, Holst, Bliss, Grieg and Elgar between 1925 and 1930. Brooke was a fine practical musician and a musical editor of distinction. (1) The J(ohn) Pointer mentioned in my earlier article was another Novello man, a modest but capable one, who helped bring out Elgar's major works from *Gerontius* onwards. He was a skilled editor, notably of Bach cantatas, and good orchestrator; his compositions included songs, part-songs and a cantata. (2) H.A. Chambers, also mentioned previously and also a Novello man, was not just a choral arranger as suggested before - he is credited with having transcribed, for organ, the accompaniment to *Light out of Darkness* from *Light of Life* when this was issued as an anthem in 1936. Most interesting of the piano transcriptions, though, is of *Nimrod* by Percy Grainger, made as late as 1953 but not published (3) - Grainger, not a figure one immediately recognises as Elgarian, was of course a wide-ranging composer, a tireless folksong collector and one of the finest piano virtuosos of his time.

- NOTES.
- (1) Information from Percy Scholes' 'The Mirror of Music' and from *The Musical Times*.
  - (2) *Musical Times*. I am indebted to Novello for these references. See also Michael Hurd, 'Vincent Novello & Company' (Granada, 1982), especially Chapters 11 & 12.
  - (3) Listed in *The Grainger Journal*, Vol. 3, no. 2 (March, 1981), p. 30.

ADDENDA TO "A POSTSCRIPT".....

Mr. Akers. it transpires, has arranged the trio of *Pomp & Circumstance no. 1* for bassoon; clarinet; French Horn; horn in E flat; trumpet; cello; viola; and violin (all with piano, all for Fischer). Belwin Mills also advertises a version for double bass and piano (arranger unspecified)! *Salut d'Amour* still, however, keeps ahead of all rivals. The indefatigable Mr. Trinkhaus - I have traced references to original wind music by him - has set this, again for Fischer, for bassoon and piano; oboe, saxophone and piano; clarinet, alto saxophone and piano; violin and piano; violin, cello and piano; cello and piano; flute and piano; clarinet and piano; oboe and piano; clarinet, violin and piano; clarinet, trumpet and piano; clarinet, bassoon and piano; three flutes & alto flute; ~~three~~ flutes & alto clarinet. Phew! Schott do versions for flute and piano, and (arranged by Staber) for alto sax and piano. Century Publishing have had it set for alto sax, tenor sax and piano, and Rubark for 4 saxophones and piano (this latter by a Mr. Holmes).

*Dream Children* was transcribed for cello & piano by a Mr. Withers (for Schott); *La Capricieuse* exists in an arrangement of a Mr. Langenus for Fischer, yet again, for clarinet & piano, and (arranger unspecified) for double bass and piano - I would love to hear Gary Karr do this!

Many of the above sound bizarre in the extreme; but should we not as an Elgar Society rejoice that E.E.'s music seems to be so popular?

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Jan.	5	Serenade for Strings	Free Trade Hall
	6	<i>Halle O/Orwain Arwel Hughes</i>	Manchester
	7		
Jan.	15	Violin Sonata	Wigmore Hall, London
		<i>Hugh Bean &amp; David Parkhouse</i>	
Jan.	16	Cockaigne Overture	Free Trade Hall
		<i>Halle O/James Loughran</i>	Manchester
Jan.	18	Dream of Gerontius	Royal Festival Hall
		<i>LPO Choir &amp; O/Haitink, with Richard Lewis, Alfreda Hodgson, John Shirley-Quirk</i>	
Jan.	19	String Quartet	Wigmore Hall, London
		<i>Lindsay String Quartet</i>	
Jan.	30	Serenade for Strings	City Hall, Glasgow
		<i>Netherlands Chamber O/Ros-Marba</i>	
		Enigma Variations	Free Trade Hall
		<i>Halle O/James Loughran</i>	Manchester
Feb.	1	Queen Alexandra Ode **	Palmer Building, Univ. of Reading, Whiteknights Park, Reading. 1.10 p.m. in Lecture Theatre G10.
		<i>**See article in this issue by Dr.Christopher Kent</i>	
Feb.	3	Serenade for Strings	Queen Elizabeth Hall
		<i>Netherlands Chamber O/Ros-Marba</i>	South Bank
Feb.	19	Pomp & Circumstance no.1	Royal Festival Hall
		<i>Vienna International Youth Music Prizewinners Concert</i>	
Mar.	5	Symphony no.2	Civic Hall, Guildford
		<i>Guildford PO/Vernon Handley</i>	
Mar.	7	Cello Concerto	Queen Elizabeth Hall.
		<i>T.Hugh, &amp; Univ. of London O/Reid</i>	South Bank
		Serenade for Strings	Mitchell Hall, Aberdeen
		<i>Scottish Baroque Ensemble/Friedman</i>	
Mar.	8	the same...	Bonar Hall, Dundee
Mar.	9	the same...	Henry Wood Hall, Glasgow
		Pomp & Circumstance no.4	Queen Elizabeth Hall,
		<i>Beal High School Orch</i>	South Bank
		Concert incl:Elgar songs	Wigmore Hall,London
		<i>D.Wilson-Johnson,D.O.Norris,Coull Str.Quartet</i>	

Mar.	10	Serenade for Strings <i>Scottish Baroque Ensemble/Friedman</i>	Signet Library, Edinburgh
Mar.	17	Enigma Variations <i>RPO/Groves</i>	Royal Festival Hall
Mar.	18	Pomp & Circumstance no.1 <i>RPO/Freccia</i>	" " "
Mar.	22	Introduction & Allegro <i>SNO/Gibson</i>	Music Hall, Aberdeen
Mar.	23	the same...	Caird Hall, Dundee
Mar.	25	the same...	Usher Hall, Edinburgh.
Mar.	26	the same...	City Hall, Glasgow
Mar.	27	Concert Allegro <i>Ian Hobson(piano)</i>	Wigmore Hall, London
Apr.	11	Dream of Gerontius <i>LSO &amp; Chorus, soloists to be announced</i>	Royal Festival Hall
Apr.	13	Pomp & Circumstance no.5; Cello Concerto; Symphony no.1 <i>Zara Nelsova(cello), ? orch.</i>	" " "
		Violin Concerto <i>Nigel Kennedy, Roy.Liverpool PO/ Handford</i>	Philharmonic Hall Liverpool
Apr.	15	Introduction & Allegro <i>BBC Scottish SO</i>	Henry Wood Hall, Glasgow
Apr.	28	Serenade for Strings <i>New Mozart O/Fairbairn</i>	Queen Elizabeth Hall South Bank
May	4	Violin Sonata <i>Robin Alleson(violin)Neville Schafer</i>	Purcell Room, South Bank
May	8	Symphony no.1 <i>Orch/Neil Mantle</i>	Queen's Hall, Edinburgh
May	14	Introduction & Allegro <i>Roy.Liverpool PO/Handley</i>	Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool
		Prelude & Angel's Farewell - Gerontius In the South <i>Rutland Sinfonia/Collett</i>	Uppingham School Hall, Rutland
May	20	Introduction & Allegro <i>ECO</i>	Queen Elizabeth Hall South Bank
May	27	Violin Concerto <i>SNO</i>	Royal Festival Hall

## Record Reviews

CHORAL SONGS. Four Part Songs(Op.53);Two Choral Songs(Op.71);Death on the Hills(Op.72);Two Choral Songs(Op.73);Go,Song of Mine (Op.57); Memories of Sir Edward Elgar - talk by Carice Elgar Blake & Sir Adrian Boult;As I Knew Him(Sir Edward Elgar) - a personal portrait by Sir Adrian Boult.

BBC Chorus conducted by Sir Adrian Boult.

*Elgar Society* ELGS 002

All members of the Elgar Society can feel justly proud of this, the Society's second record. With commendable enterprise, John Knowles has persuaded the BBC to part with a tape of a stereo broadcast of some Elgar part songs conducted by the Society's President, Sir Adrian Boult, in 1967. Let me say immediately that the stereo sound is incredibly good, and has been very successfully transferred to disc. One would hope that every Elgarian would buy a record of Elgar's music conducted by Sir Adrian, but there are special reasons for buying this(apart from supporting the Society!)

First, Sir Adrian has retired from conducting, so such an issue as this is a real bonus. Second, this is the only record of Sir Adrian conducting unaccompanied choral music, and thus his only record without an orchestra. Third, this is the only record to feature all of Elgar's greatest part songs. As the title "Choral Songs" suggests, these are really important works from the composer's most prolific period, and I agree with Michael Pope's note in which he writes that they "may...be... amongst the finest ever written for unaccompanied voices". Of the songs featured, only *The Shower* (three times) and *Go, Song of Mine* (twice) have ever received more than one previous recording. This is regrettable, but as John Knowles' excellent sleeve note points out, it reflects the decline in the number of amateur choral societies since the time that these songs were written.

Eight of the ten songs have been recorded by the Louis Halsey Singers (Argo ZK 23 - now deleted), and the other two by the Philharmonic Chamber Choir on Meridian E77040. Judged by the very highest standards, the Halsey Singers are clearly ahead of the BBC Singers in their ensemble, purity of tone and general musical excellence. Yet there is a certain blandness about their performances when the two records are compared. Boult brings out a much greater dynamic range from the BBC Singers, and the subtle variations in tempo and expression are beautifully judged. To take just one instance, listen to the creascendo at the words 'save when to thine' in *Deep in my Soul*. But there are many similar moments to savour - the hollow, despairing 'nothing' at the end of *Owls*, the beautiful pianissimo at the beginning of *Love's Tempest* (slightly spoiled by a noisy first alto), the funereal basses in *Death on the Hills* (much more menacing than on the Meridian record), and many more. Perhaps the finest of all is a superb account of *Go, Song of Mine*; one truly feels that, like the *Second Symphony*, this is the "passionate pilgrimage of a soul."

As if all this were not enough, there are two broadcast talks by Sir Adrian: one with Carice, from 1940, largely about the *Enigma Variations*; and a longer, personal memoir from 1951 containing some very interesting reminiscences. One can even forgive him for getting Jaeger's christian name wrong! But the music is the thing, and despite working in, for him, a relatively unfamiliar medium, Sir Adrian gives the kind of definitive performances one has come to expect from him, and we are the richer for having them.

G.H.

IN THE SOUTH; COCKAIGNE; FROISSART; Triumphal March from CARACTACUS;  
DREAM CHILDREN; CARILLON.

London Philharmonic Orch/Sir Adrian Boult

HMV 'Greensleeve' ESD 7167

(Cassette TC-ESD 7167)

This re-issue is something of a mixed bag. It is extracted from two separate recordings, ASD2822 and 3050, issued in 1972 and 1975. *Cockaigne*, *Froissart* and *In the South* are extracted from the earlier recording, the first sessions for which, held in Sept. 1971, were EMI's first experimental recordings at All Saint's Church, Tooting, the resonant acoustic of which caused initial problems of ensemble, and I recall members of the orchestra expressing disappointment when some of the 'takes' from that occasion were used for the finished disc. There are indeed some lapses which should have been re-recorded: Boult launches into *In the South* with such a swagger that for a few bars there is complete confusion. All settles down, however, and in general it is a pleasing account, although Boult's view of the music is a bit detached from the Italian romanticism which it needs.

The resonant acoustic which smudges some detail in *In the South* seems to enhance the sound quality for *Cockaigne* and *Froissart*, which again seem to have caught Boult on particularly lively form, although again there is an occasional irritating lapse in ensemble. The other items were recorded at Abbey Road in February 1974, and present no problems either of performance or recorded sound. A record then, which can be recommended only with some reservations. The sound quality, allowing for the problems presented by the Tooting location, is impressively bright, and the disc and cassette versions are virtually indistinguishable.

G.H.L.

ENIGMA VARIATIONS; INTRODUCTION & ALLEGRO: COCKAIGNE

Philharmonia Orch. Sinfonia of London, with the  
Allegrì String Quartet (item 3)/Sir John Barbirolli

HMV 'Greensleeve' ESD 7169

Barbirolli's strongly characterised interpretation of *Enigma Variations* has always been to my taste. The slightly brisker earlier ver-



sion, with the Halle Orchestra on Pye is in some ways more vivid as a performance, although this newly reissued version benefits from the suave sound of the Philharmonia Orchestra in its prime. Originally the performance was split between two sides, but has now been recut and is complete on side one. To achieve this, however, a comparatively low level volume has been chosen, and the sound is a little less bright than on the original issue. Nevertheless it is quite acceptable. Detail is clearer, however, on the otherwise rather boxy-sounding Pye recording.

*Cockaigne* is given a bright, cheeky performance which is a great favourite of mine. The sound quality is quite different here: unusually for an EMI recording of the period it seems forward and rather close-miked, with a hint of stridency on the brass and upper string tone. *Introduction & Allegro* is something really special, however. Perhaps it is Barbirolli's supreme achievement on record as an Elgar conductor. It is beautifully shaped, and the quality of the ad hoc string orchestra is outstanding. The nicely recessed recorded sound is most attractive, catching well the different perspectives of the various textures. It was a stroke of genius to engage a well-known chamber music group rather than using orchestra principals for the string quartet. Allegri players perform in their accustomed intimate style and the contrasts in dynamics and tone colour have never sounded more breathtaking. Full marks to EMI for bringing these performances back to the catalogue.

G.H.L.

#### MUSIC FOR BASSOON AND PIANO

Laurence Perkins (*bassoon*), Michael Hancock  
*Hyperion A 66054*

This recently issued disc is of interest to us because it includes the first recording of Elgar's little-heard *Romance, Op. 62* in its bassoon/piano version (the composer's own, by the way, for those who have been following my notes on Elgar transcriptions). A good one, too, with beautifully firm, even tone from Laurence Perkins, and well-judged support from the pianist. As one would expect there is a loss of colour and expansiveness compared with the orchestral version but there are compensating gains in clarity and intimacy, and the recording is admirably clear. The disc also includes fine performances of the Sonatas by Saint-Saens and William Hurlstone (nineteen years Elgar's junior, yet he had a major work premiered in London three years before Elgar's *Enigma Variations*, (another premiere recording, and a work well worth getting to know), and shorter pieces by Gordon Jacob, Gounod, Pierne, Ibert and Senaille.

P.L.S.

ELGAR CONDUCTS "THE DREAM OF GERONTIUS". The 1927 Albert Hall Recording, including the unpublished Prelude. *Opal 810*

It has become fashionable in some circles to minimise the importance of Elgar's own recordings by asserting that the interpretations were significantly moulded by the constraints of the four minute recording limit of the 12" 78 side. No such stricture can be applied to this recording however, as it gives us the opportunity to hear over half of *Gerontius* as Elgar had conducted it in the concert hall. The development of the electrical process opened up for the first time the possibility of recording large choral and orchestral forces outside the cramped studios, and the engineers were quick to experiment. A forthcoming performance of *Gerontius*, conducted by the composer, seemed too good an opportunity to miss, and so on the evening of 26th February, 1927, multiple recording machines cut 13 12" sides. The enterprise was not, however, a total success, and only four of the sides were issued at the time and the remaining shells were destroyed.

The discovery of five of Elgar's test pressings meant that nine sides could be included in the 1974 HMV set 'Elgar on Record' (RLS 713). Since then however, Jerrold Northrop Moore has discovered three more of the sides and what a find they are! They cover the Prelude from the opening to just after the first entry of Gerontius. It is a marvellous performance - the great climax at fig.9, so aptly described by Jaeger as "like the whole church's agonised supplication" has rarely sounded so frighteningly strong and forthright. The sonority of the orchestra is amazing for its time, aided by the excellent transfer made by Anthony Griffith who came out of retirement especially to do it.

This is clearly an important issue, and I just hope that prospective purchasers will not be daunted by the high price. (£8.95 -- but see the special offer on page ) Jerrold Moore provides an informative sleeve note and the whole issue is a worthy tribute to his enthusiasm and scholarship. I doubt if even he could have imagined the production of this record when his first survey of Elgar's recordings was first published just 20 years ago this month. [An Elgar Discography: BIRS]. J.G.K.

SONGS OF THE BRITISH ISLES, sung by Gervase Elwes and John Coates. *Opal 806*

Although only one item is by Elgar, I imagine this record will be of interest to many Elgarians as both singers were notable exponents of Gerontius and each, in their own way, was much admired by the composer. W.H. Reed writes that the op.41 songs were premiered by Coates in 1915, but this may refer only to the later versions with orchestra. The rare 1915 HMV *In the Dawn* was included on the first Elgar Society record (ELG 001). The appearance on this new Opal issue of the 1925 Vocalion record of *Speak Music*, with accompaniment by Berkeley Mason, completes the set. They are Coates' only Elgar recordings.

## NEWS

from the

## BRANCHES

From NORTH WEST comes news of their 1983 programme. A performance of *Gerontius* takes place on Feb.26th, with the Welsh Choral Union in the Liverpool Philharmonic Hall. On March 18th, Diana McVeagh speaks on 'Elgar's Violin Concerto'. April is yet to be arranged, but on May 7th, Lance Tufnell (of the Yorkshire branch) is giving a talk on 'Elgar and Germany'. Joan McGowan, a local University Extension music lecturer, is giving an, as yet, untitled talk, and a Summer outing is planned for July 16th.

EAST MIDLANDS start the year with Wulstan Atkins' 'Personal Reminiscences of Elgar' on Jan.25th, followed by Michael Kennedy on 'Benjamin Britten' on Feb.22nd. On March 29th, Ian Lacey will give his talk on 'Elgar's London'. The latter is an audio-visual presentation.

EAST ANGLIA report that following their Annual Christmas Dinner (splendid idea), the first meeting of the new year will be the one non-musical event of the season, the AGM, afterwards they will be introduced to the *Piano Quintet*, by David Bunkell. The Winter Party takes place on Feb.11th with the added attraction of a musical quiz, raffle, bring and buy, etc. and on March 4th, another feast of recorded British Choral Music, from Michael Nicholas, Organist and Master of the Choristers at the Cathedral, covering the earlier period 1880-1910. Following, 'live' music comes on March 25th, when the A Capella Singers, from the area round Southwold, give a programme of unaccompanied part songs by Elgar and his contemporaries.

YORKSHIRE meetings arranged commence on Jan.10th with 'Landscape into Music' by Margaret Glover, of the Leeds College of Music. Feb.7th, Tony Rawnsley on 'Elgar, Barbirolli and the Second Symphony' which will use the 1954 recording as its prime example. On March 7th, Chris Balaam will speak on Elgar's Interpreters. April 11th, Robert Seager on music in England before the first Great War 'A time there was...when all went well'. On May 9th Brenda Hawer, music critic of the Yorkshire Evening Post will speak on 'Music in the Air all around Us'.

LONDON has a full programme of meetings, and of particular interest are those on Feb.7th: 'The Writing of The Apostles' a talk by Wulstan Atkins, and on March 7th: 'Barbirolli and Elgar' by Malcolm Walker. Details of the Brinkwells visit and the 1983 AGM and Dinner, not fully finalised in time for this issue of the Journal, will be mailed together to Branch members, with application forms, in February or March. The published dates remain unchanged (and must remain unchanged) in spite of the unfortunate clash of our AGM/Dinner (18th June), settled long ago, with the concerts in Holland mentioned elsewhere in this Journal. Members will like to know that the guest speaker at the Annual Dinner is to be Christopher Bishop.

No news from the SOUTH WEST at time of writing, but the big event here is the one-day school addressed by Percy Young . Full details on another page. The WEST MIDLANDS tell us that their first meeting of 1983 is a joint meeting with the Worcester Recorded Music Society at The Old Palace in Worcester, on Feb.12th. Andrew Millington will introduce the *Second Symphony*. The AGM is on March 12th, at 37 Albany Terrace, Worcester, preceded by music from the Salon Arts Club. On May 7th the branch hopes to join with the SOUTH WEST for a joint Music, Wine and Cheese evening, at a venue in Cheltenham. Members and friends who would like to attend please contact either branch secretary near the date.

LOOKING BACK... LONDON tells us:"Members who journeyed to Guildford in September to hear Vernon Handley speak on 'Elgar - from a conductor's point of view' were richly rewarded with a marvellously stimulating, exhausting, memorable day(how inadequate words can sometimes be!) It must be recorded that, though advertised as a joint venture between the Branch and Guildford Philharmonic Society, virtually the entire responsibility of organisation was taken by Alan Forrow(who, on the day, also supplied the musical illustrations), and we wish publicly to thank him, as well as Mr.Handley, for a remarkable achievement. With some sadness we were obliged to accept the resignation from the committee, on doctor's orders, of Malcolm Walker, a tower of strength and fount of wisdom who, fortunately for us, hopes still to fulfil his engagement to speak to us later this season about Sir John Barbirolli and Elgar. In his place we have co-opted, until the next elections, Mike Richards, who narrowly missed election to the committee at the last AGM."

YORKSHIRE had a very successful weekend in Hereford and district in September. 18 members went, and were joined by two 'exiles' from Solihull. They visited Plas Gwyn(noting with regret the returning external dilapidation), Hereford Cathedral, city centre, etc. It was dull and misty when we went to Mordiford(E.E. would have called it good fishing weather!). "We walked on the hills(Malvern), of course and called in at the Birthplace on the way home on Sunday. Our members kept Jack busy 'in the shop' for a long time, but they had enough money left to buy loads of fruit as we passed through Evesham district." In November Ronald Taylor, editor of the Journal came up to talk on 'Elgar and the BBC'. He had an appreciative audience.

EAST ANGLIA: "Reverting to our former venue at the Norwich Assembly House(except for those occasions requiring a piano) seems to have been a popular move, judging by the attendance at our first two meetings. Roger Rowe opened with an illuminating account of that crucial period, between the late 'eighties and the early 'nineties, when Elgar was striving(with only gradual success) for the achievement of due recognition. The programme highlighted the merits of the early cantatas and church music, leading finally to the amazing maturity of *Froissart* and *The Light of Life*. In October a repeat of our earlier programme "Elgar and Jaeger" went extremely well at a joint Meeting with Norwich Gramophone Society, whose members seemed gratifyingly impressed.

Catching up with news from the NORTH WEST: In April Peter White, local guitarist, entertained us. Unfortunately he hadn't enough time to transcribe any Elgar. On May 8th we heard a very good performance of *The Kingdom* from the Liverpool Welsh Choral Union. The Chairman and Secretary were privileged to be invited to the Green Room during the interval, and were introduced to the President of the LWCU, and spent a few minutes with an exhausted but happy Owain Arwel Hughes, who revealed a great love for Elgar and was 'delighted to meet us'. Andrew Burn spoke to us in June and gave a fascinating history of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society. The joint meeting with the Yorkshire Branch has already been noted. Dennis Clark's audio-visual show was up to his usual marvellous standard, and an exceptionally fine day enabled us to have an enjoyable tour of the city. Ian Lace gave his talk on 'Elgar's London' in October - a splendid evening. The climax of our season took place in November when the Braga Quartet performed the *Piano Quintet* for us, with John Peace (piano). We made this an open concert, and forty people attended, not bad considering that there were half a dozen other musical events on at the same time in the city. In three years this Branch has heard the Sonata, the Quartet, and the Quintet played live in front of them. Can any other branch match that?

WEST MIDLANDS has had an active Autumn even if attendance at meetings was on the low side. One wonders if Saturday evenings are best, as an experimental afternoon meeting resulted in a 100% increase. This was for Douglas Slater, author of 'The Last Recording', who, being a writer concentrated on the words Elgar chose to set to music, and how the music he wrote was influenced by them. Branches interested in contacting Mr. Slater should write to the Branch Secretary. We have recently been joined by Miss Utya Piagorskaya, who, with a Norwegian violinist, gave the first (and maybe only!) Norwegian performance of the Violin Sonata in Oslo in 1949.

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Gilbert Jones, FRCO, (CHM), LRAM, ABSM

The death occurred at Stratford-upon-Avon on 19th October of the distinguished organist and pianist, Gilbert Jones, who was a member of the West Midlands Branch of the Elgar Society.

He became blind in childhood, but he overcame his disability to pursue a highly successful career which took him abroad on several occasions. He was an organ pupil of Dr. G. D. Cunningham, while for piano (his preferred instrument), he studied under Harold Craxton, Colin Horsley and Sidney Harrison. He broadcast on many occasions. He was chosen by the BBC to give a recital of Debussy's music on the centenary day of his birth.

He had a catholic taste and a prodigious memory - he played all the Bach two and three-part inventions - but this was a small part of his repertoire. Music was his life-blood and the Royal College of Organists awarded him the Limpus prize for improvisation and playing for that particular examination. We mourn the passing of a true artist and a true friend. He leaves a widow and a daughter.

M. J. Dawson

# Letters

From MICHAEL ROSTRON

Do any of your readers have any information on the 'Elgar Fugue Competition'? It was, apparently, sponsored by The Music Student, and Arthur Bliss entered a Fugue for String Quartet, which has since been lost. He said of it, "I intended to write a phantasy in three movements, but time has only allowed me to complete the first and give an inkling of the second"

Bliss was on active service at the time, so the date must be before 1919, before Lady Elgar's death, and before the last, great works.

Had the competition Elgar's support and, if so, why would he give his name to so academic an exercise? Who else of note entered apart from Bliss? What has happened to the entries? And who won the competition?

I don't suppose the answers to any of these questions are very important, but they are intriguing.

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From C.G. WILLIAMS

The editorial of the September 1982 issue commented on the lack of support for the second gramophone record. In my case the reason I did not purchase the record was due to my only using a tape-deck and not a record player. The same reason may apply to other members of the Elgar Society.

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From Professor IAN PARROTT

Here is a quiz for members. Perhaps those who are so easily persuaded that certain ideas must have influenced Elgar can identify the enclosed. I can give the answer in the next issue.

Yet I will, I

will, yet I will, I will be - lieve ye,  
Yet I will, I will, I will be - lieve ye, *P*



THE ELGAR SOCIETY

(PRESIDENT: Sir Adrian Boulton, C.H.)

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We regret that all other issues are now out of print.