

The Elgar Society JOURNAL



SEPTEMBER

1983

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This is the first issue of 'The Elgar Society Journal' to be computer-typeset and we will welcome your comments on layout, legibility and format.

The computer programs were written by a committee member, Michael Rostron, and the processing was carried out on Hutton + Rostron's PDP8e computer.

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The Elgar Society Journal

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EDITORIAL September 1983

Vol. 3, No. 3

As the pages of this issue show, there is a lot happening in the world of music to interest the Elgarian. We hope it will also be interesting to those who do not give themselves such a label, for part of our aim is to see that Elgar has his proper place in the history of music, and is recognised as one of the giants of the late Romantic Movement. With so much to be planned, and so many things in the development stage, it was with something of a feeling of guilt that I travelled to Canada in late May. Music, and Elgar, however, was never very far away.

Shortly after my arrival I discovered in a magnificent record store (there is no other description that would do justice to the stock), a recording of Elgar's *Violin Sonata*, made in California, of which we were previously unaware. We hope to carry a review of it in the next issue. Through the good offices of Richard Warren, archivist of the Toronto Symphony, I was given a private tour, and look behind the scenes, of one of the world's newest and most impressive concert halls - the Roy Thomson Hall in Toronto. It is a most inspiring building, already attracting large audiences for Toronto Symphony concerts under Andrew Davis, whom I briefly met, as well as being the centre for many recitals and choral events. In the Autumn the orchestra and Toronto Mendelssohn Choir will be performing *The Kingdom* and also in the city Dr. Melville Cook will be conducting a performance of *Dream of Gerontius*. I had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Cook, who will be remembered for his work as organist in Leeds and Hereford, before he left these shores and settled in Canada as organist at the United Metropolitan Church in Toronto. He is engaged in a great deal of music making, and Elgar *does* get a 'look in'! As a boy chorister he sang under Elgar at the Three Choirs, so his view of Elgar's music takes on an added interest. I also met the music-director of the music radio station CJRT. He is Paul Robinson, also well-known in Toronto for conducting orchestral concerts. One concert this year will be an all-Elgar occasion. Through Mr. Robinson I was able to record a short broadcast, telling Canadians of the Society. The point of all these personal reminiscences is to show that Elgar is not neglected, but is appreciated wherever people do their listening and music-making.

In the next issue of the Journal we shall be giving more information on the many 1984 concerts and events. All that we ask is that you support the activities as much as possible.

Ronald Taylor. *Editor*

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND NEWS ITEMS

ELGAR SOCIETY SPONSORED CONCERT. With the London-based insurance brokers, The Credit Insurance Association Ltd, the Society is to sponsor a concert which is part of the season of the Richmond Concert Society in South West London on the 27th March, 1984. The Medici Quartet, with John Bingham, will perform the chamber works, the Quartet's leader joining John Bingham for the *Violin Sonata*. It is hoped that as many members as possible will attend the concert and full details regarding the purchase of tickets will be given in the January JOURNAL.

IN ADDITION TO the activities arranged by branches in 1984, the Society is sponsoring the above concert and publishing a revised edition of John Knowles' "Elgar Discography".

Serious consideration is also being given to the production of our third gramophone record, this time with original recordings.

COMMEMORATIVE DINNER, Great Malvern, 1984

The Society is arranging a special Dinner at the Foley Arms Hotel, Great Malvern, Worcs. on June 2nd, 1984. Full details in the January issue, but members may like to note the date now. We hope that this function will be a great success and one of the high-spots of the year.

The **FESTIVAL HALL CONCERT** on February 23rd will also include the *Wand of Youth Suite no. 2*. Special terms will apply to members of the Elgar Society, but these terms will only apply until January 6th, obviously too late to be offered in the January issue. The special application form for tickets is not yet ready, but it can be sent to you in October if you write to the Hon. Secretary NOW at 17 Earlsfield Road, Wandsworth Common, London SW18 3DB. Please enclose a stamped addressed envelope. This form will entitle members to a 15% discount on normal prices. We hope for a really large turn-out of members for this concert and urge early application for tickets.

THE LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, conducted by Andre Previn is to give a special Elgar concert at the Barbican on 9th June, 1984. We are in touch with the orchestra management and hope to hear full details soon. The concert will also mark the 80th Birthday of the orchestra.

THE BANTOCK SOCIETY. An illustrated talk by Michael Pope entitled "Granville Bantock - A Distinctive Voice in British Music", will be given at the National Sound Archive, 29 Exhibition Road, London, S.W.7. on Saturday, October 15th, 1983, at 2.30 p.m. Admission free - all welcome! Further details of the Society from Ron Bleach, 54 Clarendon Road, Redland, Bristol, BS6 7ET.

IN JULY AT ST. MARY MAGDALENE, WESTBOURNE GREEN, Paddington, an architectural tour of discovery was held under the title "A Victorian Fantasy". The music was all taken from some of the lesser known works of Elgar. Nicholas Kaye was the conductor. Alas, information reached us far too late for the May JOURNAL, and the invitation also arrived too late for us to attend. We hope the evening was a great success.

Chester Orchestral Society Concert

Performances of Elgar's *2nd Symphony* are nowadays quite frequent and have been given by all the great orchestras of this country under eminent conductors. It is rare, however, for a non-professional orchestra to attempt the work which, from its very length, demands extraordinary powers of concentration from all the players. The Chester Orchestral Society, conducted by Roger Fisher, gave a magnificent performance of the *Symphony* on Saturday, 23rd. April, 1983 in Chester Cathedral.

So many of Elgar's works were intended for performance in the resonant cathedral buildings of Gloucester, Worcester and Hereford that it comes as no surprise that the *Symphony* also benefits from the warmth of the acoustic at Chester, where the amount of resonance is ideal.

Those of us who were brought up on the 78 recordings of the *Symphony* conducted by the composer will have memorised his tempi (and probably also all the breaks at the end of each disc) and, in the main, these were the ones closely adhered to by Roger Fisher (Organist and Master of the Choristers, Chester Cathedral, and a member of the North-West Branch of the Elgar Society). The result was a spectacular triumph and, if one must single out a particular movement for special praise, it must surely have been the elegaic *largetto*, so sensitively played that it brought tears to the eyes, an emotion which, for me, even the world's greatest orchestras do not always achieve.

Elgar's own comment that the *Symphony* was "a frank expression of music bubbling from the spring within me," accords with my own personal observation that whenever times are troublous, this is the one piece of music guaranteed to restore one's spirits.

Elgar frequently made use of the organ in his orchestral scores where needed to reinforce the bass of the orchestra at the climax of a work, so it came as no surprise that Roger Fisher should have included an organ part for the climax of the last movement of the *Symphony*. Having been present at rehearsal where the balance was determined, I can testify that this additional nine bars of organ enhanced the finale.

The concert opened with the Prelude to *Die Maistersinger* by Wagner, taken at a cracking good pace. Reducing the temperature a little, solo cellist Jeremy Fletcher joined the orchestra in a clear and sensitive performance of *Kol Nidrei* by Max Bruch who, like Elgar, had Liverpool connections. Bruch was conductor of the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra from 1880 to 1883 and it is fitting, therefore, that the cello soloist is a member of this orchestra. The late Dr. Caleb E. Jarvis, City Organist and first Chairman of the North West Branch, arranged this Hebrew melody for organ and performed it at St. George's Hall on many occasions.

Mr. Fisher is a committed Elgarian with a rare understanding of, and the ability to play convincingly, both of Elgar's *Organ Sonatas* (a recording of which has been presented to the Elgar Society Archive) and he has undoubtedly derived great benefit from a study of his father's comprehensive, but as yet unpublished, analysis of both *Symphonies*.

D.R.C.

ELGAR FESTIVAL IN UTRECHT

The following report comes to us from Wout Hoogendijk of the Dutch Elgar Society

The first-ever Festival in Holland devoted entirely to Elgar has proved a great success. All Elgar Society members who attended from England agreed that it was an experience never to be forgotten. Mr. Wulstan Atkins went so far as to say that the performance of *Gerontius* was one of the most moving he had ever heard. Mr. Bill Nicol said how odd it was he had to come all the way to Holland to hear a complete performance of *Caractacus*! And there was so much more - in the way of Chamber Music, the Piano Quintet, Violin Sonata, Wind Music - Orchestral Music, Cockaigne, In the South, Wand of Youth - Vocal Recitals, etc.

It was a fine opportunity also for members of the Dutch Elgar Society to meet fellow Elgarians from abroad. We met at rehearsals, during intervals, and after concerts, and proved that Elgar's music is truly universal. AVRO Radio may provide the tapes so that the Festival can be heard in the U.K. at a later date.

Thank you Elgar Society members for being with us, and for increasing the friendship between music-lovers from our two nations.

ELGAR PILGRIMAGE WEEKEND in Worcester ... 23rd to 25th February 1984

To mark the historic event of the 50th anniversary of Sir Edward Elgar's death on February 23rd, 1934, a special weekend has been arranged from Thursday, February 23rd to Saturday the 25th, or Sunday the 26th. This will coincide with the performance of *Dream of Gerontius* in the Cathedral on the 23rd. Accommodation is at the Giffard Hotel, Worcester, and the first event will be a special supper after the concert. On Friday, 24th February, a Pilgrimage has been arranged and researched by Mrs. Jane Moyle, the Principal of Heart of England Tours. This will include a special tour of Worcester, Malvern and the Birthplace. On Friday evening a reception, a lecture by Dr. Jerrold Northrop Moore, and a dinner. Saturday may either be taken as a day for exploring the surrounding countryside, or for those who may have missed the special tour, a repeat of the Pilgrimage. Dinner on Saturday night, with dancing to a band. Tariff: £75 for two nights, or £97.50 for three nights. Children are very welcome, and particular arrangements have been made for their care.

For reservations and enquiries please contact the Giffard Hotel, Worcester.
Telephone: 0905 27155.

"GERONTIUS" IN MOSCOW - London Symphony Chorus April 1983

The 25 year-old dream of Russian conductor Yevgeny Svetlanov to conduct *The Dream of Gerontius* in Russia was achieved on Thursday, 21 April, 1983 in Moscow. The London Symphony Chorus, with soloists Felicity Palmer, Arthur Davies and Norman Bailey, were joined by the USSR State Symphony Orchestra and conducted by Svetlanov in the first of two performances.

The trip by the chorus was initiated following a performance conducted by Svetlanov in London in Autumn '81. He was so thrilled that he immediately announced that he wanted the chorus to premiere this work in Russia. So it took about 18 months of planning after the initial invitation, to the date they arrived. Communications were not as difficult as might be imagined due to Svetlanov's interpreter in London, and the use of telex. The chorus realised how fortunate they were to have the help of this interpreter to sort out the multiplicity of problems, and smooth the diplomatic path.

Sadly for some members, numbers had to be limited to 116 as they could not take the whole 200 or so. Once this had been sorted out (by such methods as 'those who find they cannot take part in so-and-so concert of a modern work, cannot come to Moscow!') plans were made to transport the party. This involved chartering a plane from Aeroflot which the Chorus then had to fill up with relatives, friends and other extra travellers (E.T's as they became known) to make the cost of the trip viable! Moscow would only pay for 120 (116 chorus, 3 soloists and Richard Hickox). Members were issued with general information lists, including such delights as 'Don't forget bath plug (they may disappear if left lying around!)' or 'Public loos. You are strongly advised against using them - don't ask why!'

The party flew from Gatwick on Sunday 17 April arriving in Moscow at 6pm where they were transferred by coach to Hotel Rossiya (a typically huge Moscow extravaganza a couple of minutes from Red Square sleeping 6000 - a band in silver lamé used to play at dinner in the restaurant!). Unexpectedly mild weather for April - temps in 60's. We were expecting a spring thaw!

In addition to *Gerontius* on Thursday & Friday, 21/22 April, Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast* plus Bruckner's *E minor Mass* was scheduled to be conducted by the chorus master Richard Hickox on Saturday, 23 April.

The rehearsals began at 10am on Monday 18th. It was observed that the orchestra discipline at these rehearsals was amazing - not a peep out of them, nor a paper or book in sight! The orchestra had the music from about January, and apparently coped marvellously with all of it; a beautiful string sound at the beginning of *Gerontius*, and wonderful rhythmic, energetic playing in the Walton were just two of their strong points. There were 4 morning rehearsals from 10-1 between Monday and Thursday, and 3 afternoon ones from 4-6 between Monday and Wednesday. The concerts were given in the Conservatoire before capacity audiences. The Elgar, given with an interval after part I (very necessary as there was no choir seating - they had to stand during the whole performance) was received with warmth and enthusiasm by the Russian audiences. There was a 12 minute ovation, and by all accounts, Svetlanov was quite overcome by the effect of the performance. The work was repeated the following day to similar acclaim. (The first concert was televised - Richard Hickox was interviewed too!)

On Saturday, it was the turn of Richard Hickox to conduct the Bruckner and Walton. *Belshazzar* (another first performance in the Soviet Union), with Norman Bailey as soloist, was a knockout. They had to repeat almost half of it as an encore - imagine that after having given your all first time round!

Needless to say, the whole atmosphere was electric. After the last concert, the orchestra provided a champagne and cake reception, and handed out little presents here and there. There was tremendous warmth and friendship despite the obvious language barrier. The chorus were on a 'high' - most of them went out for a celebratory meal following this final concert, not getting back until about 3am. With departure from the hotel at 7am, it was not surprising that few bothered to go to bed that night!

I should add that trips were arranged to the State Circus - pretty spectacular and packed out - and the Bolshoi (for a performance of Boris Godunov - the title role being taken by Nesterenko who has appeared at Covent Garden). A reception was given for us at the British Embassy on the Monday night. A lovely building exactly opposite the Kremlin (no wonder the Russians want the place back!). Sir Harold Wilson was also present at this reception.

JOHN BROUGHTON

ELGAR PLAY SCORES A SUCCESS

In April, Wulstan Atkins, Laurie Lister the theatre impresario, Rachel Kempson (wife of Sir Michael Redgrave) and Tony Hart of BBC TV were in the audience for the premiere of John Hunt's new play *Rose Imperial*, based on the life of Elgar, and presented by arrangement with the National Trust in the Marble Hall of Clandon Park in Surrey. Performances at Clandon were sold out, and the play then transferred to Hatchlands, another National Trust property. From these performances, the net profit was a shade under £2,000, of which approximately half will go to the Elgar Birthplace, and the remainder to the National Trust. Press comments were enthusiastic. "A triumph." "Hard to imagine a warmer tribute" and "John Carter...perfect as Elgar" were among the tributes.

At the end of May, the production went to Malvern, as part of the Festival Fringe. The delightful Victorian Cecilia Hall, where the play was staged, had a particular link with Elgar, for it was there that he had a studio to give piano and violin lessons, and where he is said to have first met his future wife.

The "Malvern Gazette" splashed news of the play with bold headlines: "Elgar plans to climb the Beacon!" And indeed "Elgar", played by John Carter, did climb the Worcestershire Beacon at 7.15 a.m. on a Sunday morning, and was on the summit before 8 a.m., accompanied by "Nimrod" and "Dorabella" and the author.

Alas, once again Malvern failed to honour its distinguished composer and the box office was only 56% of capacity, compared with the packed houses in the South East, resulting in a loss which will be borne by The Masque Players who staged the production. This is a sad reflection on Worcestershire indifference. Despite this, and with financial backing, there may be other performances in 1984 to mark the 50th anniversary of Elgar's death. Society members should telephone the author, John Hunt on Guildford 893688 for news.



JUNE 2nd 1983 AT THE BIRTHPLACE. Jack and Vivienne McKenzie say Farewell, and hand over to Jim and Rhona Bennett. At a ceremony at the Birthplace a presentation was made to Jack McKenzie in appreciation of his splendid work as Curator for over ten years. Mr. & Mrs. Bennett (on the left in the photograph) have now taken over, and look forward to a busy time welcoming visitors. We hope for a report from the new Curator in the January issue, and wish them well. Jack and Vivienne McKenzie have been made Honorary Members of the Elgar Society, and are now living at Cradley, Malvern.

(Photograph by Dennis Clark)

ELGAR SOCIETY

1983 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

and the first A.T. Shaw Lecture

The thirty-third Annual General Meeting was held on the afternoon of the 4th June 1983 at the National Sound Archive, Exhibition Road, London. Tributes were paid to our late President, Sir Adrian Boult, and Vice-President, Sir William Walton, as well as the other distinguished Elgarian who had also died in the last year, Herbert Howells.

The Chairman advised that the Committee's nomination for President was Yehudi Menuhin, K.B.E. whom he commended to the Society. Dr. Percy Young, a most distinguished musicologist and biographer of Elgar and Lady Elgar, was also confirmed as an additional Vice-President. Both nominations were accepted by members present.

The Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer, were re-elected and a new Committee, following two retirements by rotation and one resignation was also approved. The Officers and members of the Committee (in addition to Branch Chairmen) are:

Chairman - Michael Pope
Vice-Chairman - Trevor Fenemore-Jones
Secretary - Andrew Neill
Treasurer - John Knowles
Journal Editor - Ronald Taylor

Committee: David Mooney, Sylvia Strange, Margaret Benselin, Michael Rostron, Michael Shiner, Raymond Monk

It was pointed out to members at the meeting that it had been the desire of many for some time, and indeed that of the Committee, to improve the image of the Journal as well as undertake activities which would improve the reputation of the Society. Computer type-setting for the Journal would be an immediate benefit from an increase in the subscription, and members approved an increase to £4 from the 1st January, 1984. It was also hoped that members would see future benefits in publications and recordings.

The activities of Dutch members have, for long, been a source of great interest to the Society. The International Sub-Committee had recommended to the Committee that the Dutch group be recognised as the "Dutch Elgar Society" and become an affiliated body to the main Society. This necessitated an amendment to the Constitution. Both this amendment and the proposals regarding affiliation were approved.

Following the meeting Professor Brian Trowell gave the first A.T. Shaw Lecture, a stimulating and memorable address. It is intended to reproduce the text for purchase by members of the Society in the future.

Members requiring a copy of the minutes of the 32nd Annual Meeting (1982), the financial statement and the amendment to the Constitution should send a s.a.e. to the Secretary.

A.H.A. Neill
Secretary



DAN JONES.
Solo Tenor.



DAVID BRAZELL.
Solo Bass Baritone.

THE CAST.

PART ONE.

GERONTIUS TENOR (Dan Jones).
THE PRIEST BASS-BARITONE (David Brazell).
CHOIR (Annie Rees, Sophie Rowlands,
Minna Deacon, Marjorie Durward,
Gerald Adams, Horace Soutar, Tom
Kinniburgh and Leonard Salisbury).

ASSISTANTS

PART TWO.

SOUL OF GERONTIUS .. TENOR (Dan Jones).
ANGEL MEZZO-SOPRANO (Edith Furredge).
ANGEL OF THE AGONY .. BASS-BARITONE (David Brazell).
CHOIR (Annie Rees, Minna Deacon,
Marjorie Durward, Gerald Adams,
Horace Soutar, Tom Kinniburgh and
Leonard Salisbury).

DEMONS, ANGELICALS
AND SOULS

Accompanied by the

ROYAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA.

Conductor: Mr. JOSEPH BATTEN.



EDITH FURREDGE.
Solo Mezzo-Soprano.



JOSEPH BATTEN.
Conductor.

COMPLETE WORK
ISSUED ON EIGHT
DOUBLE-SIDED
EDISON BELL
VELVET FACE
RECORDS.



THE DREAM OF GERONTIUS.

- 12-inch.....Green Label.
- | | | |
|--|--|------------------------------|
| 591 | Prelude, Part 1 | Record No. 1 |
| | Prelude, Part 2 | Record No. 2 |
| ROYAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA. Conductor: Mr. Joseph Batten. | | |
| 592 | "Jesu Maria" "Holy Mary" and "Be Merciful" | Record No. 3 Record No. 4 |
| DAN JONES AND CHOIR. | | |
| | "Sanctus Fortis" | Record No. 5 |
| 593 | DAN JONES. Finale, Part 1 ("Go forth upon thy journey") DAVID BRAZELL AND CHOIR. | Record No. 6 |
| | "I went to Sleep" | Record No. 7 |
| 594 | DAN JONES. "Oh, what a heart-subduing Melody" DAN JONES AND EDITH FURREDGE. | Record No. 8 |
| | "What lets me now from going to my Lord?" DAN JONES AND EDITH FURREDGE. | Record No. 9 |
| 595 | Chorus of Demons ("Low-born Clods of Brute Earth") THE CHOIR. | Record No. 16 |
| | "I see not those false Spirits" DAN JONES AND EDITH FURREDGE. | Record No. 11 |
| 596 | "O Loving Wisdom of our God" THE CHOIR. | Record No. 12 |
| | "Jesu, by that Shuddering Dread" DAVID BRAZELL. | Record No. 13 |
| 597 | "Praise to His Name" and "Take me away" EDITH FURREDGE AND DAN JONES. | Record No. 14 |
| | "Lord, Thou hast been our Refuge" | Record No. 15 |
| 598 | Finale, Part 2 ("Farewell") EDITH FURREDGE AND CHOIR. | Record No. 16 |

The Complete Set of the "Dream of Gerontius" is issued in a handsome, strongly bound Album, each envelope of which contains the printed words of the record. Inclusive price £3 5s. The records can also be obtained separately at 5/6 each, double-sided.

Perfect Musical Reflection



The Archive Answers Back. Part II

by David Michell

It was not until the advent of Long Playing records that any of the large-scale choral works were recorded in their entirety. Until then the public had to content itself with excerpts; thus of *The Music Makers* only Elgar's 1927 Three Choirs' Festival fragments were available - but only until 1930! There was a Columbia record of 'By the Wayside' from *The Apostles* in 1927, which fared somewhat better by surviving until 1936. This gives a fascinating snatch of Robert Easton's sonorous voice as Judas. Nothing could be heard from *The Kingdom* (the Prelude apart, and that is one of Elgar's rarest 78s), until the issue of Isobel Baillie singing 'The Sun Goeth Down' (Columbia DX 1443) in 1943, but this was to survive for only four years leaving 22 years until the complete LP recording. *King Olaf* was represented by the Tudor Davies record of 'And King Olaf heard the Cry' issued by HMV in 1923 (D 723) but gone after only three years. Much abbreviated it was restored to modern circulation on the Society's ELG 1. The only other excerpt of interest, Elgar's arrangement of 'A Little Bird in the Air', recorded in 1921, was deleted at the same time. (Now on Pearl LP GEM 114.) A record of the unaccompanied chorus 'As Torrents in Summer' was issued by HMV in 1925 (B 2049) sung by the American Apollo Choir. *The Banner of St. George* was represented by the chorus 'It Comes from the Misty Ages' with which the work concludes. Understandably the best version is Elgar's own, though this was never commercially available as a 78. It was transferred to the boxed set 'Elgar on Record' (HMV RLS 713) but is not available otherwise. The same choir, under Charles Kennedy Scott, recorded it in 1931 on HMV D 1875 and this stayed until 1940. From *Caractacus* Peter Dawson recorded 'Leap, Leap to Light' and 'O My Warriors', each occupying one side respectively of C 1988 and C 1579. The latter was backed by Moussorgsky's *Song of the Flea*, the popularity of which no doubt accounted for its being in the catalogue from 1929 to 1956. The former, on the other hand, being partnered by Glinka's *The Midnight Review*, only stayed from 1930 to 1937. If HMV had partnered the two extracts together their chances of survival might have been drastically reduced! Dawson's singing is, as always, a delight and his performance of the first item is in every way to be preferred to Andrew Black's "creator's" version on ELG 1, notwithstanding the latter's historic significance. There are no known vintage recordings from *The Spirit of England* or *The Black Knight*, while only Elgar's recordings of the Meditation from *The Light of Life* represent that work. This piece appeared as a fill-up, first to the short-lived acoustic recording of the *Second Symphony*, now on LP GEM 116, and was re-recorded electrically the year after (1926) on the last side of the *Enigma Variations* (reissued in 'Elgar on Record').

The Dream of Gerontius was considerably more fortunate than the other choral works in its representation on records. Without doubt the most ambitious of all the early Elgar recordings - HMV not excepted - was the issue on eight records of extensive excerpts, conducted by Joseph Batten for Edison Bell. The story of this remarkable achievement of 1924 is recalled in Batten's autobiography 'Joe Batten's Book: The Story of Sound Recording' (1956). Notwithstanding an orchestra of twenty-four, choir of eight, and three soloists "in a satisfactory, if crowded, position around three small recording horns, greatly cramped for space in a recording studio whose dimensions

were thirty feet by eight" results were obtained which impressed Elgar. The singing of Dan Jones as Gerontius, Edith Furmedge and David Brazell is most commendable, while the efforts of no more than seven voices in the Demons' Chorus has to be heard to be believed. Yet, in a remarkable way, a sense of drive that one can only admire pervades this 'chamber' performance of the work. This issue was antedated by four sides of extracts from Columbia which featured Clara Butt and Maurice D'Oisly, but nothing of the Priest or Angel of the Agony. D'Oisly was the husband of the soprano Rosina Buckman and had sung with the Beecham Opera Company but, admirable though his performance is, one can only grieve that Columbia did not engage Gervase Elwes, one of their exclusive artistes, to sing the role in which he was renowned. The recording appeared in 1916, and in May of that year *Gerontius* was performed for six nights in a single week at the Queens Hall, with Butt, Elwes, Charles Mott as the Priest, and Herbert Brown as the Angel of the Agony. Elwes was to recall that "Clara Butt sang beautifully, and I think her experiment of singing from a place behind us amongst the Angelicals was a decided success, and certainly added to the dramatic effect." There are places in the recording when one imagines one can hear Dame Clara's distinctive tones actually joining in the semi-chorus! The records were in the catalogue until 1930. Originally issued as four single-sided discs (75005-08) they were later doubled on 7308 and 7309, the last side ('Softly and Gently') being on an LP transfer (HLM 7025).

Of other excerpts Sir Adrian Boult's recording of the Prelude (HMV DB 2194) is very fine, dating from June 1934 and presumably a commemorative issue. The Sheffield Choir under Sir Henry Coward recorded the Kyrie on HMV C977. This has as its coupling The Dance from *The Bavarian Highlands* (also transferred to ELG 1). 1945 saw the first complete recording by Gladys Ripley, Heddle Nash and Norman Walker, with the Huddersfield Choral Society and Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, under Sir Malcolm Sargent on HMV C 3435-36 (currently available on LP). Its appearance was the signal for HMV to withdraw the two records of extracts from the live Royal Albert Hall performance of February 1927, conducted by Elgar (D 1242-43), which latterly have been reunited with hitherto unpublished sides on LP. The Sargent set was deleted in 1955, the year in which his LP recording was issued by Columbia.

So much for the 'principal' repertoire, and one is conscious of many omissions in compiling a list of works for review - the string *Serenade*, *Introduction & Allegro*, and *Scenes from the Bavarian Highlands* to name a few, as well as the many songs and the singers who recorded them. Sufficient emerges from a study of the early catalogues, however, to discern the reluctance of the record companies to depart, with some remarkable exceptions, from the well-established popular repertoire, and how rewarding it can be to run one of the exceptions to earth. Typical of such is the Percy Pitt recording of the *Empire March*, for which original copies are still diligently sought, notwithstanding its reissue on the Society's LP. Apparent also are the many years that often separated deletion and re-recording of some quite important works, and the tendency to cream off popular excerpts. These considerations apart, however, one has to recognise that it is only with the advent of long-playing recording that any consistent attempt has been made to scour the Elgar repertoire for serious listening in the home. It is now 21 years since the last 78 rpm records were deleted, and so completely have LP's supplanted them that there are now very few record

players manufactured that will play at the old speed, and styls shaped to tract the coarse grooves are not generally stocked by dealers. That such facilities should still be available at all, however, is surely tribute enough to the medium that had its birth in Elgar's lifetime, and which he so eminently enriched, not only with his imprimatur but with the inspiration that persuaded many other performers to take his music to the recording studio. And who knows what further examples may yet be waiting to be unearthed from obscurity to 'speak for themselves'?

A South African Broadcast

by Alan Williams

In 1958, during the time when I was a lecturer in Music at the Natal College of Education in South Africa, I was asked by the South African Broadcasting Corporation to contribute to a broadcast of Music from Oratorio at their Johannesburg studios.

I had sung quite a number of recitals from the Durban studios, and performed at concerts of the Durban Orchestra, in Natal, but this Johannesburg broadcast was rather special. It was to include the first *live* broadcast in S. Africa of excerpts from *The Dream of Gerontius*. The S.A.B.C. had my name on their files as one of the few tenors working in the Country at that time who had any acquaintance with the Elgar work and had, moreover, studied it with Frank Mullings. The other soloist, who was to sing the Angel in the Part II Duet, and the 'Farewell' was the *mezzo* Ilyona de Jong. South Africa was producing a number of fine sopranos at that time, among whom was Mimi Coortse, already well-known in Europe. Ilyona was a singer whose voice ideally suited the Angel's music.

I was not so sure about my own contribution, which was to include the *Sanctus* and the *Ingemisco* from the Verdi *Requiem*. But I thanked Heaven for Mullings' never to be forgotten teaching!

On reaching the studio for rehearsal on the morning of January 24th I found what we should call, today, an "Industrial dispute" going on. January in S. Africa is the hottest month; and the air-conditioning in the studios had broken down. Perspiring fingers were slipping on strings; wind instrument tuning was going haywire; and within minutes of beginning the rehearsal the studio was like a sauna-bath. Various articles of clothing were discarded by most of the fifty members of the orchestra; but eventually they all stumped out into the corridors of Broadcasting House, where it was a little cooler, and refused to play until the air-conditioning could be persuaded to work. All that seemed to be possible at this stage was to bring in a couple of portable electric-fans (with 12 inch blades) one at each side of this orchestra. This did little to sweeten the rebellious atmosphere. One even heard surreptitious whispers of "Musicians Union" bandied about through the heat.

When, at last, rehearsal began (more than an hour late) everyone was in a predictably bad temper or (especially we singers) in a highly nervous state. Jeremy Schulman, the conductor, was displaying a very uncharacteristic

fractiousness and indulging in sarcasm. When one of the wood-wind section miscounted his entry twice on the run Schulman suggested he give up playing the instrument for good and take up the study of arithmetic! The heat made my throat dry. It was only because of the general turmoil that no one seemed to hear a top-note crack at the end of the Verdi. And the orchestra, many unfamiliar with the Elgar idiom even as late as 1958, "did not like" or "could not understand" the music.

Our "Angel", thank goodness, sang *like* an Angel, and did more to bring a calm and serenity to the scene, I'm sure, than any plea for *Sanctus fortis!* entrusted to me as the tenor. At the end of the rehearsal the conductor produced a reluctant smile. But by the time of the performance a calm was restored (as was the air-conditioning) and all went well.

Thus was the first-time live broadcast of any part of *Gerontius* achieved in 1958 in South Africa. It is, perhaps, significant that it was a further four years, I believe, before a complete performance of the oratorio was given in the Republic. I always feel that the Catholicism of Newman and Elgar did not mix well with the political and religious atmosphere of the new Republic. But by then my wife and I were happily back in England among audiences and musicians who understood and welcomed Elgar's music.

AN EDGAR DAY MEMORIAL FUND has been launched in Worcester. His remarkable tenure of office at Worcester Cathedral, where he served first as articled pupil to Sir Ivor Atkins, and then as assistant organist from 1912 until 1962, must surely be without parallel. During his time as Assistant Organist he was solely responsible for the work of the Voluntary Choir and it was his diligence and enthusiasm which was responsible for the high standard and reputation still enjoyed by this Choir. How many young musicians in many generations have Edgar Day to thank for their appreciation and love of music! He was one of our last links with Elgar of whom he often spoke with deep affection. To keep his memory green the Memorial Fund has been launched to provide annual awards to choristers, both in the Cathedral and Voluntary Choirs, either in the form of bursaries, to further their musical education, or as awards for outstanding services. A number of distinguished organists and friends have formed a committee or have offered to assist. Contributors are asked to remember a fine musician and devoted Elgarian and send their gifts to: THE EDGAR DAY MEMORIAL FUND, THE CATHEDRAL BRANCH, NATIONAL WESTMINSTER BANK, WORCESTER.

THE ELGAR SOCIETY TEA was held on Sunday 21st August, to coincide with the opening of the Three Choirs Festival at Gloucester. We were pleased to welcome old and new friends, but wish that more members and guests had attended. Mr. & Mrs. Michael Pope attended, and the editor of the Journal was also present. Our thanks to the South-West Branch for making the arrangements, and to the ladies who provided such excellent refreshments.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

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| Sept 21 | Serenade for strings, Sospiri, Elegy, & music by Delius, Warlock, Grainger & Holst <i>Stephen Hope Orch</i> | Fairfield Hall, Croydon. 8 p.m. |
| Sept 24 | Polonia <i>Rutland Sinfonia (Barry Collett)</i> | Uppingham School Hall Rutland. 7.30 p.m. |
| Sept 24 | Music Makers, From the Bavarian Highlands, Sea Pictures, Serenade for Strings <i>Wembley Philharmonic Society</i> (G. Barnes) | Brent Town Hall, London, N.W. |
| Oct 17 | In the South, Cello Concerto, Symphony no.1 <i>A.Schulman (cello), Young Musicians</i> <i>SO (J.Blair)</i> | Barbican Centre London |
| Nov 3 | Cello Concerto <i>Robert Cohen (cello), LSO</i> | Royal Festival Hall, London |
| Nov 4 | Caractacus <i>Southampton Choral Society,</i> <i>Bournemouth SO</i> (John Barber) & soloists | Southampton Guildhall, 7.30 p.m. Details from 0703 767144 (Mrs. Vaughan) |
| Nov 8 | Violin Concerto <i>Nigel Kennedy(violin) & Philharmonia</i> <i>Orch</i> | Royal Festival Hall London |
| Nov 12 | Violin concerto <i>Isabelle Flory(violin), Rutland Sinfonia</i> (Barry Collett) | Uppingham School Hall Rutland. 7.30 p.m. |
| Nov 13 | Serenade for Strings <i>Yehudi Menuhin School Orch</i> | Royal Festival Hall London |
| Nov 19 | The Apostles <i>Hutton and Shenfield Choral Society.</i> Soloists to be announced. | St.Helen's Cathedral, Ingrave Road,Brentwood, Essex. 7.45 p.m. Tickets £2.50 (OAP £1.80) from 17 Willowdene Court Warley, nr. Brentwood, Essex |
| Nov 26 | Dream of Gerontius <i>Ashford Choral Society</i> | Ashford, Kent, Parish Church. 7.30 p.m. |

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|--------|---|---|
| Nov 30 | Piano Quintet <i>Bockmann Quartet, & Clara Taylor</i> | Purcell Room, South Bank |
| Dec 9 | Enigma Variations <i>BBC SO</i> | Royal Festival Hall, London |
| Dec 12 | Serenade for Strings <i>RPO</i> | Royal Festival Hall |
| Dec 15 | Serenade for Strings, Sea Pictures <i>Janet Baker, Halle Orch (A.Davis)</i> | Free Trade Hall, Manchester |
| 1984 | | |
| Jan 24 | Cello Concerto <i>LSO (Soloist to be announced)</i> | Royal Festival Hall |
| Feb 2 | Dream of Gerontius <i>CBSO (Simon Rattle), Janet Baker</i> | Birmingham Town Hall |
| Feb 22 | Violin Concerto (and Britten's American Overture in same programme) <i>Ida Haendel (violin), CBSO (Simon Rattle)</i> | Royal Festival Hall |
| Feb 23 | Elgar Society/Hogg Robinson Group sponsored concert: Grania & Diarmid music, Sea Pictures, Symphony No. 1 in A flat <i>Janet Baker, LPO (Vernon Handley)</i> | Royal Festival Hall |
| Feb 23 | Dream of Gerontius <i>Worcester Festival Choral Society, Royal Liverpool PO (Donald Hunt), Mary King, Kenneth Bowen, Brian Rayner Cook</i> | Worcester Cathedral |
| Feb 23 | Elgar Concert. No details available <i>Cond. Richard Hickox</i> | Barbican Hall, London |
| Mar 10 | Organ Sonata no.2 Go Song of Mine <i>Stephen Cleobury (organ), St.Edmundsbury Bach Choir (Harrison Oxley)</i> | Bury St.Edmunds Cathedral, 7.30 p.m. |
| Mar 27 | Elgar Society/Credit Insurance Association Ltd sponsored concert: The Chamber Works <i>Medici Quartet, and John Bingham</i> | Richmond Concert Society Richmond, Surrey |

Elgar and America

by Vincent Waite

On September 12, 1905, a civic procession made its way along the High Street in Worcester while one of its most famous sons, Elgar, was being made a Freeman of the City. As Elgar passed close by there must have been some murmurs of astonishment at the garish, outlandish-looking academic robes which he was wearing. Indeed some of the onlooking university *cognoscenti* may even have been puzzled that he was not dressed in the Cambridge gown and hood which kind friends had presented to him when he was given an honorary Doctorate at the University a few years previously. But obviously Elgar was intent on showing his fellow citizens that his fame was now no longer local and national but had crossed the Atlantic. His music had been performed and acclaimed in American cities, and he was therefore wearing the robes of an Honorary Mus.D. of Yale University, a distinction which had recently been conferred on him largely owing to the influence of Professor S. S. Sanford of that University.

Sir Henry Wood described Sanford as "one of the most delightful American I ever had the pleasure of meeting." He was a wealthy academic and a brilliant pianist who had studied under Rubinstein but according to Wood "unfortunately nervousness (and probably a natural diffidence together with the possession of a large fortune) prevented him from becoming what Rubinstein was of opinion he would become - one of the greatest artists of the century." He was a patron of England's Three Choirs Festivals and became a devoted admirer of Elgar's music, so that Jaeger wrote to the composer to say that Professor Sanford and a Mr. Knight had just called to tell him that "the greatest treat of the Festival (sic) was their first acquaintance with bits of *Gerontius* as sung by Lloyd. They raved, and I smiled and said unto them, 'There, what did I tell you'."

Elgar was not impressed, however, when he first met Sanford, saying "It's no good; these Johnnies only talk - alk - alk - alk - alk with a blessed twang." Three years later Jaeger was writing to tell him that "Dear old Sanford is in town as nice as ever," and added the news that "He has a wonderful upright Steinway piano for you", and he begged Elgar "Don't rub him up the wrong way. He is a good fellow at heart and means you well. Would do *anything* for you in fact." Elgar was touched at the idea of Sanford's splendid present and also slightly embarrassed. "I have heard from Professor Sanford," he wrote to Jaeger, "a delightful letter about tobacco and *the* piano. I hope I may see him and have telegraphed this a.m. I am terrified at accepting the piano." Elgar later grew very fond of Sanford and their friendship led to several visits to the United States beginning in 1905 when he was given his Honorary Doctorate of Music at Yale University. The visit was not a wholly happy time for Elgar: he was ill for much of the time and longed to be home. The truth is that, however much he liked some individual Americans, he hated the United States and the American way of life. Sanford of course he was particularly fond of and in 1907 called him "an angel to many as usual"; and in the same letter he said he "had a mixed time in America - mostly very pleasant but the unpleasant times were jokable, so all passed well."

To other correspondents he was less reticent. His visits to America were made because of his friendship with Sanford and "because my pocket gapes". In 1911 Sanford was dead and Elgar thought the New World more unpleasant than usual when he went over to conduct the Sheffield Choir during their tour of U.S.A. and Canada. "I loathe and detest every minute of my life herel I long to be back and forget this worse than nightmare. All I can do is to count the days...It is so raw and silly out here." To Sidney Colvin he wrote that he was continually "shattered by some angularity, vulgarity and general horror." He added "I know I ought to be glad that perhaps I shall earn some money, but I would rather starve... Truly parts of the world are beastly!" Obviously Elgar was sadly homesick and doubtless missed the cossetting soothing presence of his wife whom he had left behind. Most of all he must have missed the happy personality of Professor Sanford whose welcome presence had once made other American visits something to look forward to.

Elgar had once been pleased and yet half-overcome by Sanford's generous present of a Steinway piano. As a gift in return he gave the magnificent *Introduction and Allegro for Strings, Opus 47* which bears the simple dedication

Professor S. S. Sanford
Yale University, U.S.A.

PHOTOCOPIES of Elgar's music for the Loughborough Carillon are obtainable, price 50p., from J. Morrison, 28 Westwood Road, Barnes, London, SW 13 0LA.

THE SOLUTION to the musical quiz in the last issue:
(a) Bach Gigue (from Partita no. 6 in E minor), second half (bar-lines altered). (b) Elgar. Falstaff.

BOOKS WANTED

The following books are required. Offers to the editor please!

Alan Frank. Modern British Composers. 1953.
L.G. Langwill. Church & Chamber Barrel-Organs. SECOND EDN.
Jack Levine. Understanding Musical Instruments. 1971
Franz Niemtschek. Life of Mozart. trans. Mautner. 1956
Robert Simpson. The Symphony. vol. 2. HARD-COVER EDN.
ONLY. pub. David & Charles, 1972
Ian Spink. Historical Approach to Musical Form. 1967

Record Reviews

The Music Makers

Chanson de Nuit and Chanson de Matin

Wand of Youth, suites 1 and 2

Three Bavarian Dances

Janet Baker, (mezzo soprano)

London Philharmonic Choir

London Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Sir Adrian Boult

EMI 'Portrait of the Artist', TCC2-POR 54291 (cassette only)

Once again the EMI programme planners show their ability to use the tape cassette medium flexibly - not just as an alternative to the disc. The new 'Portrait of the Artist' series, with playing times of around 45 minutes a side is being used to present long works complete on one side - thus this splendid Boult issue of Elgar recordings made in 1967 and 68 brings us *The Music Makers* without a side break for the first time. All the performances are excellent, of course, and the recorded sound is invariably first class - indeed so good is EMI's tape duplication these days that all these items sound at least as good as the original disc releases.

All the recordings were made at Abbey Road studios which results in bright, clear orchestral sound, but the acoustic lends itself less well to obtaining the best clarity of choral textures. Nor was the London Philharmonic Choir at that time as polished a body as it was to become a few years later. Nevertheless, there is no doubt about the infectious enthusiasm and commitment of the singing. I have always had slight reservations about Janet Baker's singing of the solo sections in *The Music Makers*: at that stage in her career she was inclined to adopt a rather scoopy style of delivery when emphasis was needed, presumably to compensate for some lack of weight in her young voice.

My only slight quarrel with the programme planners concerns the placing of *Chanson de Nuit* and *Chanson de Matin* at the end of side one, after *The Music Makers*. These charming but slight pieces, which would make a lovely curtain raiser, sound a trifle anti-climactic placed after the major work.

G.H.L.

Sir Charles Groves conducts Elgar

'Crown of India' suite; Coronation March (1911); Imperial March; Meditation from 'The Light of Life'; Triumphal March from 'Caractacus'; Nursery Suite; Funeral March from 'Grania and Diarmid'; Severn Suite

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Sir Charles Groves

EMI 'Portrait of the Artist' TCC2-POR 1545909 (cassette only)

This is yet another of EMI's excellent 'Portrait of the Artist' cassettes devoted entirely to music by Elgar - and excellent value it is too, as it brings

back into circulation the entire contents of two LP discs issued in 1970 and 71. Together they make up a highly enjoyable programme of shorter Elgar works, mixing well-known with less familiar pieces. The playing of the Liverpool orchestra may not match the polish of their London colleagues, but this is more than compensated for by the obvious enthusiasm and enjoyment with which they respond to Groves' spirited direction.

The sound quality on this tape transfer sounds better than on the original disc issues, and is really outstandingly good. A trace of hardness which sometimes put a slightly harsh edge on the brass sound has disappeared, without loss of the high frequencies, and the whole effect is more spacious and less 'boxy'. Once again in this excellent series EMI has chosen to use chrome dioxide tape - an act of faith in the artistic value of what are, after all, bargain reissues of oldish recordings, which deserves our gratitude. On the other hand I was disappointed once again to note that the insert card contains no notes on the music.

G.H.L.

Overtures: Froissart, Cockaigne, In the South and Overture in D Minor (Handel/Elgar)

Scottish National Orchestra, conducted by Sir Alexander Gibson

Chandos ABRD1077

'Wand of Youth', suites 1 & 2, Nursery Suite

Ulster Orchestra, conducted by Bryden Thomson

Chandos ABRD 1079

The principal attraction of these two excellent Chandos records is their outstanding sound quality. The engineers have chosen simple microphone placings, a little more distant from the orchestras than we get from the major companies, and as a result the natural acoustic of the two halls used is attractively caught, yet the digital recording process still allows for excellent clarity of detail. There is none of the over-bright hardness of tone which has earned digital recordings a bad name with some critics. Chandos have carried their careful production standards right through: the disc mastering and pressing has been done by Teldec in Germany, and the double-fold sleeves are most attractively designed and contain first class notes on the music.

The Gibson disc exactly duplicates the programme of the LPO/Boult disc issued on HMV ASD 2822 in 1972. For various reasons this was not one of the most successful of Boult's late Elgar recordings. In the Elgar/Handel overture, however, Gibson cannot match Boult's exhilarating swagger and

rhythmic precision - perhaps conductors of Gibson's generation cannot avoid a slight feeling of embarrassment at performing such unfashionable arrangements. Elsewhere, however, Gibson and his orchestra give outstandingly good performances and the record can be highly recommended. *Froissart*, at a slightly brisk tempo, rarely holds the attention so well, and I was most impressed with Gibson's skilful handling of the sudden jumps from high passion to sentimentality in *In the South*.

The Ulster Orchestra is not, perhaps, quite such a polished ensemble as the present-day SNO, but apart from an occasional lapse in wind intonation they play extremely well on ABDR 1079. The Ulster hall, Belfast is more resonant than the Henry Wood Hall, Glasgow, yet, if anything, detail comes across even more clearly on this record. Perhaps the small body of strings is responsible for the chamber orchestra-like way in which the wind and brass come through the orchestral texture without spotlighting by the engineers. Bryden Thomson gives us sensitive, delicate interpretations, although I sometimes feel that in attempting to avoid the pitfalls of sentimentality, he is a trifle inflexible. Nevertheless this is a most attractive record - and it should be noted that the first side contains both 'Wand of Youth' suites complete, a total of over 38 minutes. Excellent value, particularly for 'audiophile' sound quality.

G.H.L.

Dream of Gerontius

Edith Furmedge (contralto); Dan Jones (tenor); David Brazell (baritone); chorus, and the Royal Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Joseph Batten (Prelude conducted by Elgar).

Adlonni AH8 (cassette only, three sides)

available from John Davies, 'Glyddyn Mawr', Y Ffor, Pwllheli, Gwynedd, Wales

Joe Batten was a recording impresario and self-taught musician whose name deserves to be as well remembered as his contemporary Fred Gaisberg. Batten wished to be the first to record the work complete, and the resulting album of discs almost achieves this aim: a total of over an hour's music was recorded, and only two relatively minor cuts had to be made. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of the set: for the first time a large-scale Elgar work could be enjoyed at home by people without easy access to live music. John Davies of Adlonni therefore deserves our grateful thanks for making the performance available again. The original records are now extremely rare (they were available for only two or three years before

electrical recording made all earlier issues obsolete) and the set made available to John Davies included one disc too badly damaged to be suitable for transfer. That disc was the first, containing the Prelude. Happily there is a contemporary acoustic recording of Elgar himself conducting it, and it is this which we hear on the reissue. It is a mixed blessing, however, as Elgar made substantial cuts in order to accommodate it on one side of a 78rpm disc - Batten's version, I understand, is complete.

The recorded sound is, in fact, exceptionally good for the period. The solo voices are, of course, as well caught as they usually are on acoustic recordings. What surprised me, however was the full, rich orchestral sound, even though the orchestra is given a somewhat backward balance. Recording a chorus, however, was beyond the resources of the time, and, as on the Butt/d'Oisly extracts, an octet was used. Well known professional singers made up the group, so the result is more than adequate, even if the close-up recording makes all too clear the lack of unanimity over such matters of note lengths in the otherwise spirited 'Demons Chorus'. Neither Edith Furse nor Dan Jones are remembered as particularly outstanding interpreters of the parts of the Angel and Gerontius. The former is more than satisfactory even if a trifle uninspired. Dan Jones, however, rises well to the occasion: his is a rather light lyric tenor voice which would probably not be a suitable vehicle for making a good impression in the work in a concert hall. On record, however, he is able, after a slightly tentative start, to give an outstandingly passionate performance of 'Sanctus Fortis', and his calm serenity at the start of part two is extremely beautiful.

The quality of the transfers from the original discs is very high indeed. The 'Velvet Face' discs of the period had reasonably good surfaces and those used for transfer seem to have been in good condition - it is the Adlonni policy to use the minimum of filtering so as to retain the full brightness of the voices on the recordings. In any case when surface noise is reasonably consistent even the ear not used to early recordings quickly adapts. The work is issued on three sides so that part one is complete on the first side. This means that there is a blank side which might perhaps have been used to make available again some other early Elgar recordings - or perhaps some other recordings by the principal singers.

G.H.L.

Book Review

ELGAR: THE MAN

by Michael De-la-Noy

Allen Lane, £12.95

I suppose any biography is bound to be subjective to a greater or lesser extent. Even the most detached and scrupulous writer cannot avoid filtering the facts of his subject's life through his own experiences and view of the world. Mr De-la-Noy, by calling his book *Elgar the Man*, is making it clear that it is his intention to use the available facts to build up a very personal portrait of Elgar's character, and therefore it is bound to be highly subjective. I say this first as the picture of Elgar which emerges from the pages of Mr De-la-Noy's book differs considerably from the man we thought we knew pretty well from the writings of Diana McVeagh, Percy Young and Michael Kennedy - not to mention W.H. Reed and Basil Maine, both of whom were personally acquainted with Elgar.

The first thing that intrigued me was Mr De-la-Noy's credentials for writing yet another book on a composer whose life has already been well documented. The scant information on the dust jacket informs us that Mr De-la-Noy is a journalist and a poet. Turning to the preface, we find the author admitting that he is no musician, but that he was attracted to writing about Elgar through his admiration for the 'artistic achievements of a man so racked by emotional problems'. He also reminds us that 'practically everything that has been written about Elgar in the past has been written by musicians, professional or amateur'. Leaving aside the fact that Michael Kennedy, is, in fact, a professional writer, albeit an 'amateur' musician, one is still left wondering what special qualifications Mr De-la-Noy feels that he has. I can only assume that he thinks his store of Jungian lore and the view point of the amateur psychologist might cast a new light on Elgar's personality.

The Elgar we meet in these pages is a rather dour, humourless character, wearing his well-known chip far more prominently on his shoulder, desperately anxious for recognition and honours. We all know that these characteristics were indeed present in this complex personality. We are all also agreed, I think, that there is ample evidence for the origin of Elgar's insecurity in the social environment of rural England in the days of his youth. This is not, however, enough for Mr De-la-Noy. He reminds us that Elgar's elder brother Harry died when Edward was seven, and that shortly afterwards his younger brother Joe, his inseparable companion also died. Mr De-la-Noy argues that it is likely that Elgar's father was unable to accept Edward as a substitute eldest son and rejected him. He maintains that Edward never got over this rejection nor ever came to terms with his grief over the loss of his brothers. For these and other reasons, we are told, Elgar had a deeply unhappy childhood. Psychological generalisations are all very well, so long as one does not try to apply them to a specific case without any confirmatory evidence. And the truth is that there are no facts to back up Mr De-la-Noy's surmises. On the contrary: there is every reason to believe that the Elgar household was close-knit and supportive, although like most Victorian families, always living under the constant threat of tragedy. The more subjective a biography, I feel, the more one learns about its author. The

aspects of Elgar's personality which the author responds to suggest him to be a rather earnest man. Elgar's whimsical sense of humour seems to have been over his head - I was taken aback to see that although aware that *Craeg Lea* was an anagram, he has understood it so imperfectly that he misspells the name throughout the book. Nor does he seem aware that in his letters and private conversations, Elgar often hid his true feelings, and deflected enquiries into his creative thinking, by adopting a robust extrovert style, which Mr De-la-Noy far too often takes at face value. I suppose it is not necessary for a biographer to be totally in sympathy with his subject, but as this book progresses one becomes aware of a growing undercurrent of hostility towards Elgar, which makes me wonder how thoroughly Mr De-la-Noy had thought out his viewpoint before putting pen to paper

Alice Elgar, although hovering as a ghostly presence throughout the account of the years between 1889 and 1920 hardly emerges as a personality at all. Mr De-la-Noy seems to endorse Dora Penny's view of her as a meek, weak and slightly pathetic figure with no particular individual characteristics. Only after her death does he attempt to look back over their relationship in order to pick out a few traits which might indicate that she and Edward really did enjoy a close and loving relationship. Elgar managed more than many people in the public eye to keep his private life private. Any new 'revelation' is going to be guesswork, and has no place in an honest biography. I have heard it suggested that this book throws new light on Elgar's relationships with women. In fact we are told nothing new, although perhaps excessive emphasis is placed on such matters as Alice's encouragement to Dora Penny to sit up late with Edward after she had gone to bed. Alice, like most women, knew her man very well, and, as Mr De-la-Noy makes perfectly clear, there is not the slightest suggestion that Elgar was ever unfaithful to Alice - although the author has missed one trick, namely Leopold Stokowski's account of his first encounter with Elgar in the late 1890s, and his suggestion as to the true dedicatee of the thirteenth variation

Mr De-la-Noy writes exceptionally well, and errors of fact that I spotted are few and of little importance. Nevertheless it is hard to see that this book is likely to prove a really valuable addition to the Elgar literature. Nothing particularly new is to be found in its pages, and the author's new view of Elgar's personality seems to me to be merely a distortion, achieved by underemphasising his kindness, generosity and warmth. Above all we are brought no nearer to understanding Elgar the creative artist. Nor do we come closer to understanding the tremendous inner strength and resilience, generally well hidden even from his friends, which enabled him only days after the crushing defeat of the failure of *Gerontius* at Birmingham, to embark on the composition of *Cockaigne*, one of his liveliest and most optimistic works

G.H.L.

NEWS FROM THE BRANCHES

The LONDON Branch held their Annual General Meeting on June 18th, and the following Officers and Committee were elected for 1983-4:

Chairman: Diana McVeagh; Vice-Chairman: J. Maxwell Hutchinson; Secretary: Garry Humphreys; Treasurer: John Grieg; Auditor: Michael Sanderson; Committee: David Bury, Martin Passande, Mike Richards, Ruth Hellen, Simon Holder, Robert Tucker.

Due acknowledgement was made of the excellent work done by the resigning officers and retiring committee members, viz. Michael Sanderson (Treasurer) and John Giles (Auditor), Ian Jarvis, Ian Lace, and David Mooney. *Note should be made of the new Treasurer's address, and the Secretary's new address.* Both on the back page of this Journal. The 1983-84 season's programme is the first part of a symposium called 'Aspects of Elgar', which aims to provide a recapitulation and a consolidation of the Branch's previous work, in the context of the 1984 Elgar anniversary celebrations.

Part One will comprise the following meetings: Oct. 10: 'The Early Years' (Jerrold Northrop Moore); Nov. 7: 'Elgar & the 19th Century Environment' (Stephen Banfield); Dec. 5: 'Foundations of Elgar's Choral Style' (Percy Young); Jan. 9, 1984: 'The Enigma' (Brian Trowell); Feb. 6: 'Elgar the Victorian' (Lord Briggs); March 5: 'Elgar's Orchestration' (Andrew Keener); May 14: 'Elgar's Expressive Power in the Major Orchestral Works' (Bernard Keefe); June 4: 'Elgar's Songs' (Lecture-recital by Brian Rayner Cook, with Patricia Williams, *piano*).

The symposium continues in the 1984-5 season with contributions by Michael Kennedy, Brian Trowell, Wulstan Atkins, Ivor Keys, Christopher Kent, Jerrold Northrop Moore, Michael Oliver and Diana McVeagh. Full details are in special brochure which all Branch members will receive as part of the annual programme mailing, but which will also be distributed widely outside the Society. Because of this outside interest the customary programme card will be issued to members only as evidence of membership, and must be shown at meetings. Members will be glad to know that refreshments (coffee and sandwiches) will again be available, during the intervals only, outside the Reed Theatre. Finally the Secretary apologises for delays due to his moving house!

LONDON are to be congratulated on a most impressive programme for the coming year. In the WEST MIDLANDS 1984 will be very busy year too, with the Three Choirs Festival scheduled for Worcester that year. Details of the special Elgar weekend to coincide with the performance of *Dream of Gerontius* in Worcester Cathedral will be found on another page. In September and October 1983, the following meetings will take place: Sept. 10, at 7.30 p.m. at St. George's Catholic Church, Worcester, Rodney Baldwyn introducing and playing the *Organ Sonata* and *Vesper Voluntaries*. On Oct. 8 at 2.30 p.m. in the Commandery, Worcester, Ian Lace gives his talk on 'Elgar's London'.

WEST MIDLANDS Branch Secretary Alan Boon also writes on the graves of Elgar's parents: "They are very hard to find, & not clearly marked. This branch will try to clean them up and provide clearer markings. Cemetery

officials have to look up dusty tomes and take you personally, so I am giving details how to find them. The graves of William Henry and Ann (no 'e' on the grave) Elgar, and Edward's brothers Henry John (aged 14) and Frederick Joseph (aged 7) can be found in adjoining plots nos. 9099 and 9114 at Astwood Cemetery, Worcester.

The cemetery is on the North side of Worcester. Up Rainbow Hill, past the Elgar Court flats on the site of Marl Bank, and continue, without turning, along Astwood Road to the cemetery on the left. The office adjoins the entrance gate (opposite the New Chequers Inn). Walk straight up into the grounds and take the second turning right between two golden privets. Fifty paces along this path brings you to a very tall conifer on the left. The grave lies four rows back behind this conifer, half-way between it and a high Catholic cross."

We are grateful to Alan Boon for this information, and to the branch for proposing to clean the graves and the surroundings.

EAST MIDLANDS have changed their officers as follows: Chairman: S.J.Crane, Secretary: Derek Mear, Treasurer: Leslie Mustoe. Addresses on the back page. Our grateful thanks go to Raymond Monk & Malcolm Smitham, for all their efforts and success in re-establishing the Branch in Leicester. Following the AGM when the following changes were made members enjoyed Ian Lacey's presentation 'Elgar's London'.

Future meetings in 1983 are as follows: Sept. 20: Pauline Collett gives 'An Elgar Travelogue' about her new book. Oct. 25: Claude Powell on 'Dorabella and Elgar'. Nov. 29: Lewis Foreman talks on 'Bax: a composer and his times'. In the 1984 Spring season speakers will include Prof. Robert Meikle of Leicester University, and we hope to arrange a live concert with Barry Collett with soprano and piano. Our meetings have moved to the County Rooms in Leicester, "which should be more comfortable and Edwardian!" Please also note that from January 1st the subscription for *Branch* membership is increased to £3.

EAST ANGLIA had Prof. Ian Parrott's long-awaited solution to the "Enigma" theme revealed to them in May, providing a most interesting evening and much food for thought. Before the meeting he was also interviewed on the subject by BBC Radio Norfolk. As with Diana McVeagh's talk on Finzi, this meeting was better attended than usual, and we hope that this was the result of better advance publicity. In June Reg Dorow gave an excellent programme on "The Severn Suite", exploring in depth this comparatively unfamiliar work, against the background of the National Brass Band Contest of 1930. The season ended successfully with the annual summer garden party/fund raiser.

Next season will be a busy one, as befits the occasion, opening with programmes by two well-known personalities in the work of music: Steve Race on "Discovering Elgar" (Sept. 14), and Lady Barbirolli on "Barbirolli, Missionary for Elgar" (Oct. 14). For the next two meetings the branch will welcome two eminent local speakers, Ray Howlings on "Elgar and the Symphonic Tradition" (Oct. 28) and William Elkin on "Elgar, a music publisher's viewpoint" (Nov. 25). The Annual Christmas Dinner will be on December 9.

The YORKSHIRE Branch attendance continues to reach 75-80% of the book membership, giving approx. 20 at meetings. (22 have already booked to go to Malvern in October.) At the AGM in June, there was a request to increase the number of meetings, which we shall do by holding two meetings (instead of one) in the months of Oct, Nov, March, April and May. The additional meetings will be informal and any presentations will be by our own members. The 1983/84 programme is still being prepared, but definite arrangements have been made for the following: Sept. 19: Lance Tufnell on British Piano Music (including Elgar). Partly live, and partly recorded music. Oct. 10, Tony Rawnsley: "Elgar, Barbirolli and the Second Symphony". (Announced last year, but had to be cancelled on the night.) Oct. 14-16, our Annual Weekend in Elgar Country. After last year's diversion in Hereford & district, we are back in Malvern for 1983. Annual Dinner on Sat, Oct. 15, at the Sherington Hotel, Gt. Malvern. Nov. 7, Brian Horsfall (Bradford music critic): "Brass Band Music" including the Severn Suite. Dec. 12, Social Evening.

SOUTH WEST having had a very successful season at the Octagon, Frenchay, Bristol, are looking forward to the new season, and hope that more members will support the events. A few committee changes: new vice-chairman is Conrad Addey, and one new committee-member Tony Woodman. Both keen members. We start the new season on September 24, with Wulstan Atkins giving us his illustrated talk "Personal Reminiscences of Elgar". Oct. 29, Ron Bleach presents "Elgar and the Theatre". Nov. 26, Branch Chairman Derek Johnstone plays the *Organ Sonatas* at Trinity Church, Cranbrook Road, Bristol. No December meeting, but in 1984 we have Clifford Harker talking about The Kingdom, prior to a Colston Hall presentation; Kenneth Loveland on "Elgar, Delius and Holst"; Prof. Ian Parrott with "The Enigma Solved"; Arthur Hicks with "Root and Branch"; an Elgar Day School at Bristol University, when we have Dr. Jerrold Northrop Moore. Full details later from the Branch Secretary, Ron Bleach.

SOUTH WALES has got off to an encouraging start, and has had talks by Prof. Parrott and Kenneth Loveland. In June a group of members went to Worcester for the annual wreath-laying service and tea at the Birthplace. En route, they took in many Elgar scenes, Craeg Lea, Forli, St. George's Church, etc. We spent two hours in glorious sunshine at Broadheath, and met many other members and officials. Some of the party were making their first visit to the Birthplace.

The new season begins on Sept. when Ronald Taylor gives his talk "Music in the Air All Around Us" (Elgar's music and the BBC). In October, the 22nd, Claude Powell will talk about 'Dorabella', and on Nov. 26 David Neville will talk on "Elgar's Choral Music". Fuller details will be available in a Branch 'Newsletter' to be issued in September.

NORTH WEST bring us up-to-date with news of their meetings since January. February saw a production of *Gerontius* at Liverpool, conducted by Sir David Willcocks, and in March Michael Kennedy, at very short notice, gave a talk on the *Violin Concerto*. In May, Lance Tufnell, spoke on "Elgar and Germany", dealing with many aspects of this link. He played *Griffinesque* to illustrate the Schumann influence, and dealt with Elgar's relationships with Richter, Jaeger, Manns, Butts, Strauss, etc. In June Joan McGowan gave a very lively talk on "Elgar for the Singer". She accompanied herself at the piano. and illustrated her talk with *Like to the Damask Rose*, *Queen Mary's*

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Letters

From MICHAEL KENNEDY

As Mr. David Bury points out (May 83, p.29), I carelessly let Marie Brema get back into the Worcester 1902 "Gerontius" when I knew perfectly well Muriel Foster sang! The error will be corrected if my book is reprinted.

May I also correct an error perpetrated in my first edition of *PORTRAIT OF ELGAR* (but corrected in the second edition), which is gaining currency elsewhere, for instance in David Michell's interesting "The Archive Answers Back" (May '83 issue)? This is that Henry Wood conducted the first rehearsal of the "Enigma Variations" in 1899. Richter conducted the first and all subsequent rehearsals before the first performance

From Dr. CHRISTOPHER KENT, University of Reading

I was most interested to read James Lawson's article on Elgar and the Carillon, but I should like to correct the assertion that the "Memorial Chimes" were 'never arranged for organ'. Elgar's organ transcription of the piece, almost entirely complete, is among the MSS. in the British Library (Add.MS. 58062). It will be included in the organ music volume of the Complete Edition.

From DAVID BURY

I can take your article *Edward Elgar and the Carillon* one step further. Your contributor quotes Elgar's letter of June 26th, 1923 (it is to be found in Percy Young, p.281): "It is very kind of you to suggest my going to Loughborough. I cannot say...if I can get away for the 22nd..."

In fact Elgar did not manage to be there. I possess his letter of August 9th 1923 to Starmer: "Dear Dr. Starmer, I am very much obliged to you for your letter and was glad to hear the Loughborough celebrations passed off so well: I greatly regret I could not be there. I motored under your windows on Thursday! but our time wd not allow me to get out of the car. Kind regards Yours sincerely, Edward Elgar."

Of course, the Loughborough piece was not "Elgar's only carillon composition" (see my article on the "Land of Hope and Glory" obligato!) **

** Editor's note: The article to which Mr.Bury refers will be published, together with other articles, in a special JOURNAL to be issued next year.

From JIM ROWLANDS

Re the planned 23rd Feb. concert, surely this will include a little Woodland music?

From RAYMOND MONK

This is an ungenerous age, and it was perhaps inevitable that, sooner or later, something like Mr. Michael De-La-Noy's controversial book ELGAR: THE MAN would appear. But, it is sadly misconceived and the combination of pure supposition and innuendo can be no substitute for original research and the sensitive appraisal of the doubts and uncertainties which this may yield.

Particularly offensive to this writer is the inference that Carice Elgar Blake somehow thought ill of her cousins. She was, in fact, very fond of them. Clearly, when drawing up her own will Carice simply took into account those "substantial royalties" (to quote Mr. De-La-Noy) which would automatically go to those same relatives under the terms of the original Elgar will. And, Mr De-La-Noy should know that the £70,000 which he claims that Carice had "accumulated" included, amongst other things, an 'on paper' valuation of the original score of the Second Symphony which is now at the Birthplace. These are details which any responsible writer could have easily uncovered for himself by the time-honoured method of simply asking questions!

From HOWARD S. WOOLF

I must point out that the letter from Dr. Eickhoff in the May issue is incorrect. This was not Sir Adrian's last public performance. I saw him at the Royal Festival Hall at the end of October 1977, conducting Vaughan Williams' "Sinfonia Antarctica" in the first half, and Meredith Davies conducted the "Sea Symphony" in Part 2. I hope this sets the record straight.

From MICHAEL PLANT

Thank you for publishing David Michell's interesting survey of Elgar on record. I began collecting some fifteen years ago, and prospective collectors should be warned that that is just about how long it took me to find all Elgar's own 78s issued in Britain. As I consider what was available on 78s and subsequently issued on LP, my feeling is one of gratitude for the enlightened, adventurous and even altruistic policy of HMV. Elgar was given the chance to record his own works systematically. HMV surely lost money on him, and yet continued to engage him. Sets of "Froissart" and the "Severn Suite" are so rare today, they can scarcely have covered their costs when new. The investment in a 12-side Second Symphony was written off almost at once in order to remake the set electrically.

Collectors will always argue whether Kreisler couldn't, or wouldn't, record the Violin Concerto; why "Contrasts" was used as a 'fill-up' twice (for the "Severn Suite" and Serenade) instead of the unrecorded Imperial March say; if it worth scouring France, Italy or Japan in order to find the two foreign releases of "Mazurka" and the Bach Fantasia and Fugue, or what happened to the "Introduction & Allegro" (not recorded by Elgar).

I personally feel grateful to Fred Gaisberg, without whose enthusiasm and honeyed words to the directors of HMV I am sure Elgar's recorded legacy as a performer would scarcely exceed that of Vaughan Williams, and to his successors who were ready to invest in "The Kingdom", "The Apostles" and "Caractacus". I hope their enterprise has been rewarded.

P.S. The collector should not necessarily follow David Michell's advice to ignore the quaint or unusual. As I write, a friend of mine is preparing a keenly-awaited transcription of "La Capricieuse" for bassoon.

From DAVID STYBR, Illinois, U.S.A.

Another micro-meeting of The Elgar Society took place in the U.S.A. Pastor Jerry Moe and Dave Stybr met in Coal City, Illinois, for another afternoon discussing Elgar and music in general. Records were on the agenda, featuring many of Elgar's own recordings, including the recent issue of the Prelude from "The Dream of Gerontius". These two keen members have corresponded for some time and would enjoy hearing from other members wherever they may be.

May I take this opportunity to add a few personal notes. The JOURNAL is a very welcome publication for those of us members who are scattered far and wide, and the correspondence circle helps to bring us a little closer. I am happy and proud to be a member of The Elgar Society.

*** Editor's note: I will be pleased to pass on to Mr. Stybr or Pastor Moe any letters from members wishing to enter into correspondence.*

Continued from page 28:

*Song, Shepherd's Song, Pleading, Inside the Bar. She also used a number of recordings including Margaret Marshall in *Light of Life*, and Janet Baker in *The Music Makers*. The Summer Meeting in July took us to Ribbleton Road Methodist Church, Preston, where the organist Everson Whittle, keeps a number of player-pianos and a vast collection of piano rolls. On an Ampico he demonstrated a number of rolls including some by Rachmaninov and Hoffman. As a brief diversion Linda Carrington repaired to the organ and played us some Elgar, *Salut d'Amour* and two *Vesper Voluntaries*, finishing with Walton's *Crown Imperial*. On the player-piano Mr. Whittle demonstrated on a *Steck Pomp & Circumstance* no. 1. (Sadly, he has only six Elgar rolls in his collection), the gavotte from Thomas's *Mignon*, various other pieces and *Pomp & Circumstance* no. 4. A fascinating evening with a difference!*

THE ELGAR SOCIETY

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