

The Elgar Society JOURNAL



September

1984

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The Elgar Society Journal

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EDITORIAL September 1984

Vol.3.no.6

By the time these words appear the year 1984 will be three parts gone, and most of the musical events which took so long to plan will be pleasant memories. In the Autumn months there are still concerts and lectures to attend, but it must be admitted there is a sense of 'winding down'.

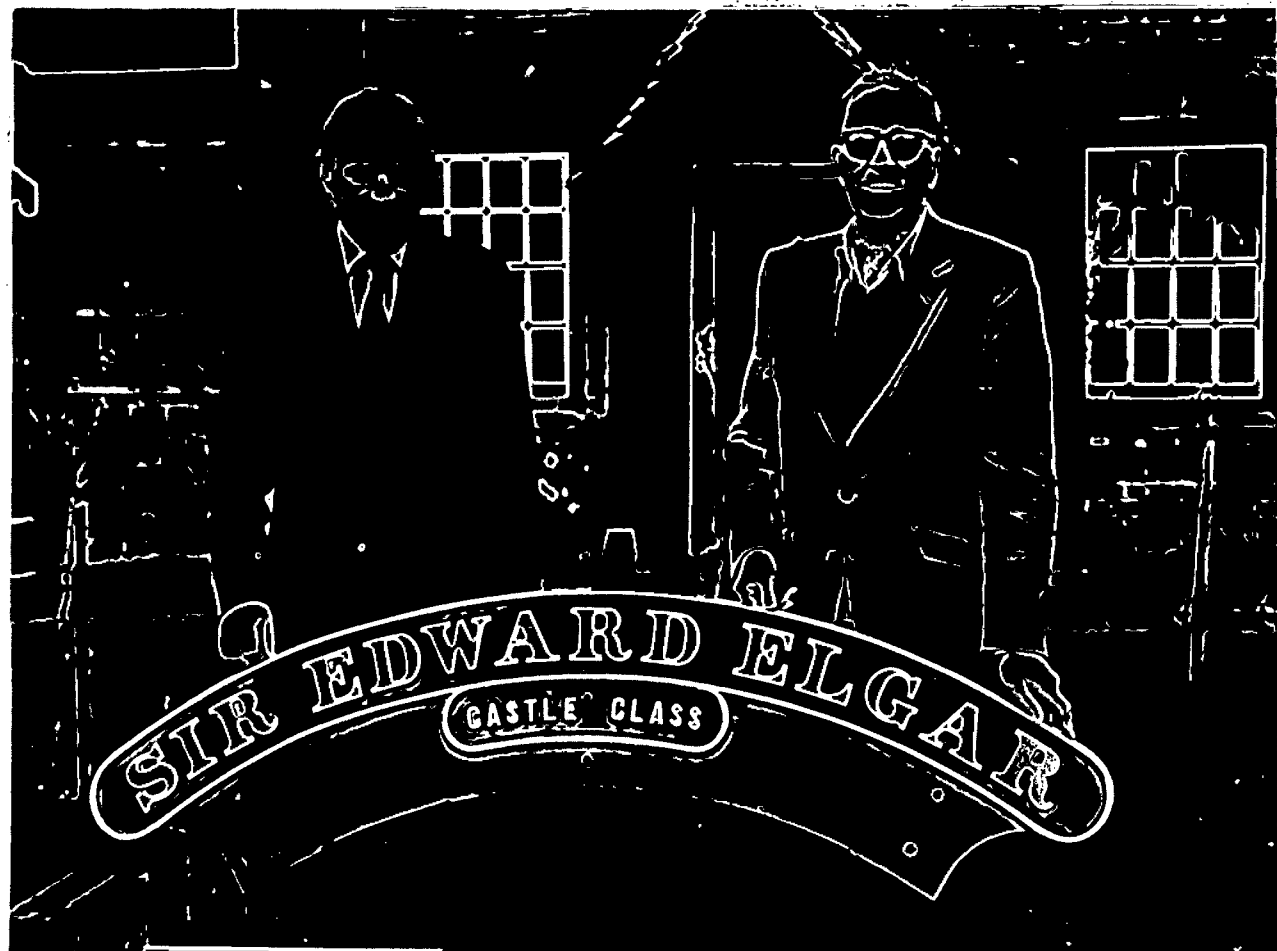
However, the joint meeting with the Delius Society in October is something to be welcomed, and we hope it may be the beginning of an association with other musical societies. In this respect we should perhaps bear in mind that there are no less than three organisations which, in different ways, cater for an interest in Elgar. Firstly, ourselves - now the largest composer society in the country; secondly, the Elgar Foundation, a charitable organisation dedicated to raising funds and maintaining the Birthplace and Museum. Then there is the Elgar Birthplace Trust, set up many years ago to organise and run the Museum. It must be said that co-operation between ourselves and the other two organisations has often gone by default, perhaps to the confusion of the public. (The Society often gets letters commenting on the Birthplace, as does the Journal.) After the great success of this year we should all try to see that the maximum possible co-operation occurs in the future, to the benefit of Elgar's memory and the constant advocacy of his genius.

By now I hope that most members will have seen the splendid film on Elgar made by Central Television, produced by Jim Berrow. We have long admired the Ken Russell film, and now we have another film, also made for television but in colour, which we can honourably set beside it. Those of us with some knowledge of the making of the new film know that without the strong advocacy of Raymond Monk there was a chance that the year would have gone by without a suitable television memorial. To Mr. Monk we extend our gratitude, and to Jim Berrow, our congratulations on a fine achievement. We are grateful that Central Television had the confidence and foresight to make the film.

Now, let us not lose the impetus we have gained this year, and let us not get complacent either! Branches need support to develop, and in one or two cases need some active assistance to maintain their activities. All our work is voluntary, but a few more volunteers are needed to build on the present position.

Ronald Taylor

Editor



Past & present Birthplace Curators pose by the Elgar locomotive name-plate.
(Photo: Dennis Clark)

DELIUS AND ELGAR

A JOINT MEETING OF THE DELIUS SOCIETY AND THE ELGAR SOCIETY to mark the 50th Anniversary of the deaths of Frederick Delius & Sir Edward Elgar.

October 14th 1984

at the Royal College of Music, Prince Consort Road, South Kensington, London, SW7 in the Concert Hall at 3.30 pm. YEHUDI MENUHIN and ERIC FENBY have kindly agreed to be present to play, and, we hope, to reminisce. This is a unique opportunity for the two societies to meet and together pay tribute to the great composers they honour. Refreshments will be served later in the afternoon, and we look forward to an informal, relaxed, and pleasant time listening to, and talking about, music. Because of catering problems, we must request that members purchase tickets in advance for this very special meeting. An order slip is enclosed with this issue.

THE SHAW SOCIETY extends an invitation to members of the Elgar Society to join them in a meeting on Friday, 26th October at the Library, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1. at 6.30 pm. for 7 pm.

Ronald Taylor

(Editor, Elgar Society Journal)

will speak on ELGAR and SHAW

'Extremes meet Sometimes'

This is the first occasion that the two societies have met, and we hope for an excellent attendance. Coffee will be served from 6.30 pm. N.B. The London Branch members' letter wrongly states time of commencement. Please note: 7 p.m. is correct.

ELGAR FESTIVAL, 26 MAY - 2 JUNE

Philomusica's Worcestershire Elgar Festival had two notable aspects. It afforded us the opportunity to hear in Worcester many Elgar works that are rarely performed, such as *The Banner of St George*, *The Light of Life and King Olaf*, and it quietly made history with the first performance of *The Dream of Gerontius* in Elgar's own church, St George's, Sansome Place. Guest musicians played their part as usual: the Richey Quartet, prize-winning violinist George Ewart and the Malvern Male Voice Choir gave fine accounts of the chamber works and part-songs. The festival was only half of what Philomusica is offering us this anniversary year and we look forward to their Elgar Festival in Gloucester in September.

M.W.T.

Published by the Elgar Society

An outstanding piece of Elgar research which for the first time tells the accurate story of the Elgar family and its early days in Worcester. It adds to all the published biographies.

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by

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Just published, by the Elgar Society (London Branch)
and Thames Publishing

ELGAR AND THE TWO MEZZOS

by

David Bury

The first London performance of *The Dream of Gerontius* in 1903 provides the focus for an incident in Elgar's life in which the two mezzo-sopranos Marie Brema and Muriel Foster vie for the composer's favour. Dame Janet Baker has provided a Foreword.

£2 *post free*

Remittances to the London branch Treasurer, Aylesham Lodge, Barham Downs, Barham, Canterbury, Kent, CT4 6EY. Cheques should be made out to The Elgar Society.

* * * * *

FURTHER NOTES ON SEVERN HOUSE

by Dr. L. Eickhoff

We must commend Ralph Wade of Netherhall Gardens, a true lover of Hampstead, who, in the light of recent researches, has acknowledged his fault was in erecting a memorial plaque to Sir Edward Elgar on a site which, in the composer's day, was in Maresfield not Netherhall Gardens. The vulnerable china plaque has now been replaced by one of metal that will survive a lower placement and has been re-mounted on a wall most nearly approximating to the site of Severn House, the demolition of which in 1937 continues to be lamented. Had it been left standing for subsequent conversion, at least the "hallowed ground" could have been incontrovertibly defined.

One error remains: the date of taking possession of Kelston, as it then was, is left as 1911, "Elgar's fault", insists Mr. Wade; "for paying rates in that year, "according to Mr. Wade's researches. Of course, Sir Edward's name appears in the 1911 Rate Books for Rate Books run from April 1st to March 31st of the following year, the Rates year being the earlier date. The actual entries are as follows:-

1911 Michaelmas: House - Blank Stables & Rooms adjoining - J. Williams (late) Mr. Waring

[Mr. Waring's name substituted for the crossed out J. Williams who apparently had died]

1912 Lady Day: House Sir Edward Elgar Stables & Rooms adjoining

In any case rates would not have been accepted from Sir Edward before Lady Day (March 25) 1912, for he did not become the legal owner of 42 Netherhall Gardens until after December 18th, 1911, probably on December 19th; but his rate paying would naturally be included in the 1911 Rate Book.

With just pride and triumph, and undoubted relief, Lady Elgar begins the 1912 diary with 'JANUARY 1st: Entered E's own house. May it be happy and beautiful for him. ... Rather chaotic of course. Very happy to be at Severn House at last.'

What a time they had had! In 1910, they decided to move from Plas Gwyn Herefordshire to a place more convenient for Elgar's London commitments, within easier reach of main line termini to facilitate his journeyings to other engagements; and where friendships could be kept in lively "repair" (as Dr Johnson would have said). In August, Lady Elgar looked at flats. She found one in Mount Street "like a cage for booful eagle bird" (creatures do better with plenty of space to move about in); and by the end of the month 'like no flats'. Househunting began again in October 1910: on the 15th, 17th and 19th, Alice saw places in Westminster and Haslemere. On November 11th, she was again in London fruitlessly. January 2nd 1911, 17th, 19th and 21st, she and Carice traipsed round Byfleet, Farnham, Weybridge, Petersfield

and Church Row, Hampstead. On January 23rd, Elgar thanks Alice Stuart Wortley for sending information about "the Hampstead house" (Kelston) but thought it better to return home than as they knew nothing about its rent and rooms. Note that the Elgars were still intent on what they had always had, rented accommodation, like many others of that time.

On January 31st, Lady Elgar was again preparing to go house-hunting and, taking Sarah, her old maid, with her this time, from February 1st to the 4th (inclusive) looked over houses in Kingston-on-Thames, Golders Green, Farnham, Mortlake, Walton-on-Lea, Oxted and Hampstead (Kelston) together with unspecified 'others', some feat without "a motor" at her disposal. 42 Netherhall Gardens must have been out of the question: it proved to be for sale and the Elgars had no money. So Alice continued searching but on March 30th, after writing off Troyte's friend's house (for letting), she found herself drawn back to "very nice" Kelston. The seeds of some plan must have been sown for on April 4th, almost impulsively, rashly, she went to London and took Heal's man into Kelston to see about carpets, for a house she could not afford to buy (in the end carpets came from Hamptons)! April 18th saw Alice still house-hunting until April 25th: but she must also have been hammering away at her scheme for breaking the Trust into which all her inheritance and the money from the sale of Hazeldine furniture (January 20th 1892) and from the sale of her old home, Hazeldine itself (conveyance signed March 16th 1892), had gone to provide a secure if small income; for by May 17th Elgar was getting worried over the difficulties and on 19th Alice went to see cousin Willie about the legal affairs. Alice and Carice went again to push the matter on June 13th but no conclusion was reached and Elgar was depressed about the financial side. It is probable that he, coming from the "lesser breeds", would have felt some shame attached to a mortgage, and it would seem that the whole idea was dropped for about a fortnight. A look at the outside of Kelston on a drive to Hampstead on July 2nd was enough to revive the idea for both Alice and Edward: and then began a fantastic period of preparing to move to their dream house as if it were all settled although Counsel's opinion was "adverse to ending Trust" still on September 23rd.

Alice was not a general's daughter for nothing. From July 11th 1911 when she took a surveyor to see what needed doing (two hours of daunting criticism) she went ahead ordering carpets from Hamptons, curtains from Heals, electric lights, crystal fittings for the dining room and other illegible items for that room. Elgar also had a say in electric fittings and began clearing his papers, while in August, Alice was clearing and polishing furniture ready for the move.

On September 27th the business was "dragging on"; on 28th Alice was worried about the Surveyor's report (and well she might be!); the 29th saw her "Very upset" over the "weary business and delays": but Elgar went on choosing light fittings and showing the house to friends (Muriel Goetz, for instance). On November 7th, after seeing the barrister Arnould, Alice was again upset although hopes were held out for the house to be theirs in ten days. So she continued paying bills, settling accounts and generally preparing to leave Plas Gwyn which now seemed "cold and dreary".

Cousin Willie had an interview on November 27th with the Vendors (Edwin Long's surviving son and daughter, joint inheritors of Kelston) after which he promptly

dispatched the report to arrive at Plas Gwyn next day (November 28th), postal services being more efficient in those days. Alice, amongst her now labelled effects, was dismayed by the Vendors' "impossible conditions" and gave up diary-keeping for that year. One wonders if the impossible conditions concerned the inhabitant of the "stables and rooms adjoining" who probably had acted as caretaker for empty Kelston and expected security of tenure.

Elgar's letters to 'A.S.W.' carry on the saga. He writes "December 13th 1911 ... there's a meeting of rogues and thieves at 12 o.c. today and we shall see ... I am in despair about the house." If nothing were to be settled that day he would have to think of alternate plans for Christmas perhaps in a Cornish village known to A.S.W. certainly away from packed up, polished and labelled, low in stores, dreary Plas Gwyn.

On December 18th he pours out "I cannot tell you of the confusion about the house ... I fear there is little chance of our completing this week. I am harrassed to death about it. Bear up."

But it was settled, probably on the morrow mentioned in this last letter: and they moved in on 1st January 1912, legal owners, due for rates come the following Lady Day. The matter, however, dragged on. May 2nd, 1912 found Lady Elgar worried over "Arnaulds and their heavy bill and discrepancies". On July 14th she received "documents about Trustee change". It would appear that she was no longer, as her mother had appointed, Trustee of the Trust. That had now been converted into bricks, mortar, and land equivalent that was to keep a portion of the Severn House property in Lady Elgar's name in the Rate Books even after her death.

It was not until August 3rd 1912 that Arnaulds sent their final bill, which Alice paid by cheque on August 5th adding "Hope now, all that business concluded". It was.

ELGAR and "THE TORONTO SYMPHONY".

by Richard S. Warren (Archivist, The Toronto Symphony).

We have a habit here in North America of omitting the word "orchestra" in the official name of our orchestras. Consequently I wish to clarify with the reader that the title of this article does not mean that we have discovered or unearthed a further composition by Sir Edward.

It is no secret that Elgar had a dislike for the North American continent, geographically and atmospherically speaking. He apparently adored and loved the people, but the weather and long distances between cities made him somewhat "homesick". However, his visits to Canada and the United States left a lasting impression upon the music fraternity of both nations. Consequently his compositions are performed with a constant, if sometimes capricious, inclusion in most orchestra's programming

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Around the turn of the century Toronto was recognised as the choral capital of North America: there were no less than five large choral groups all with two hundred plus voices. Remembering that the population of the city at that time was 200,000 - a remarkable achievement. One choir in particular, the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir, since its formation in 1894, has given a number of concerts which include Elgar compositions - at first with visiting orchestras and later with the Toronto orchestras when they were formed. In 1909 there was a performance of *Caractacus* with the Theodore Thomas Orchestra conducted by Frederick Stock, whilst in 1902 - 1904 the Pittsburgh Orchestra, conducted by Victor Herbert, accompanied the choir in concerts that included some Elgar.

The present Toronto Symphony is the second of two organisations - the first orchestra was founded in 1908, with Frank Welsman conductor. The orchestra, an offshoot from the Toronto Conservatory, rapidly became recognised as the leading ensemble in Canada, and was soon engaging top artists to participate in concerts, including Kreisler and Rachmaninov. In March, 1911 the orchestra was engaged to perform in the three-day *Musical Festival of the Empire*. This festival was planned to take place in Montreal, Toronto, and London (Ontario), combined with the visit to Canada of the Sheffield Choir under Dr. Henry Coward. The major contribution to the festival was to be the first performances in the country of *The Dream of Gerontius*, with Sir Edward Elgar conducting in Montreal and Toronto. However, it did not quite work out that way as apparently Elgar was feeling unwell in Montreal, and Dr. Henry Coward conducted the first Canadian performance. When the Choir and orchestra moved to the Massey Hall in Toronto for a repeat of the festival on April 4th, 1911, Sir Edward, feeling much better, conducted. Next morning Toronto papers were full of praise for performers and the conductor-composer. The festival then moved on to London (Ont.) for its third engagement. Meanwhile Sir Edward made his way back to New York for his eventual sailing on the *Mauretania* on May 3rd, bound for Liverpool. Undoubtedly he was anxious to be back in England, since he was to conduct the first performance of his *Symphony no. 2* in London on May 11th.

The first Toronto Symphony Orchestra was disbanded in the Spring of 1918. The present orchestra was formed in 1922 under Luigi von Kunits, and at first was known as the "New Symphony Orchestra". Early in its life the orchestra was giving performances of Elgar's music. On May 25th 1924 they gave the first Canadian performance of the *Cello Concerto*, with Leo Smith as soloist. Dr. von Kunits programmed Elgar consistently including the *Bavarian Dances*, *Cockaigne Overture*, *In the South Overture*, and on Jan. 14th, 1930 a performance of the *Sea Pictures*, with Muriel Brunskill. *Pomp and Circumstance No. 1* naturally received numerous playings.

Sir Ernest MacMillan took over the conductorship of the orchestra in 1931. By this time it had changed the name to Toronto Symphony, and under his baton for the next 25 years Sir Ernest's fondness for Elgar was reflected in his programmes. They gave their first performance of *Symphony no. 2* on Feb. 6th, 1934, *Enigma Variations* on Mar 7th, 1933, *Falstaff* on Apr. 6th 1937, and *Symphony no. 1* on Nov. 12th, 1940. On January 16th, 1950, the orchestra gave their first performance of the *Violin Concerto*, with Yehudi Menuhin. Throughout Sir Ernest's tenure the Toronto Symphony repertoire was developed considerably by the addition of compositions by Elgar and other British composers.

Walter Susskind followed Sir Ernest as Music Director in 1956, and he maintained a reasonable representation of Elgar. On the occasion of Elgar's centenary in 1957 he conducted a performance of *Falstaff*, and in November 1959 Pierre Fournier was soloist in the *Cello Concerto*. Seiji Ozawa was the next conductor to become Music Director, and it was with Ozawa that Jacqueline du Pre gave a superb performance of the *Cello Concerto* that is still talked about to this day. The Karel Ancerl years that followed were leaner ones for Elgar compositions, although Yehudi Menuhin was back in 1973 for a performance of the Violin Concerto.

Andrew Davis became Music Director in the fall of 1975 and his fascination and interest in Elgar was already known. In 1974 as a guest conductor the *Second Symphony* had been included in the programme and received very encouraging reviews. December 1975 saw the first performance by this orchestra of the *Dream of Gerontius* with the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir, although the orchestra had taken part in a TMC presentation of the work in 1935 conducted by Dr H.A. Fricker.

Having one of the Vice-Presidents of the Elgar Foundation "on your door-step" so to speak, it is obvious that interest in the music of Elgar automatically intensifies, and naturally the interpretations of an "Elgarian" are studied and played with keen anticipation. Consequently there has been frequency of performances that have been extremely interesting in interpretation and rendition. Maestro Davis's performance of the *First Symphony* in 1977 was well received here, and when it was repeated in New York a few days later it was acclaimed by the critics there as an outstanding performance.

In September of 1982 The Toronto Symphony moved from Massey Hall, their home for over sixty years, to the new and luxurious Roy Thomson Hall. To date we have had only one major Elgar work performed in the new hall, the *Violin Concerto* with Pinchas Zukerman. This year, an important one in the Elgar cycle of events, will see two prominent performances. On February 16 Gary Hoffman will perform the Cello Concerto, with the orchestra conducted by Andrew Davis, to be followed in May by the Canadian premiere of *The Kingdom* with Margaret Marshall, Alfreda Hodgson, Vinson Cole, John Cheek and the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir, again Andrew Davis conducting. After two performances here in Toronto the assemblage moves to New York for a repeat performance in Carnegie Hall.

Sir Malcolm Sargent, Dr Boyd Neel and Andre Previn are names that come to mind among those who included Elgar in their programmes when they were guest conductors with the orchestra.

In contrast to a decline, or a spasmodic interest that has been experienced in some areas of North America during the seventies, The Toronto Symphony has maintained a continuing interest in the music of Elgar, with well balanced programming. As for the future - is it wishful thinking that one day this orchestra will participate, with Andrew Davis, in an Elgar Festival? Maybe, but with the deeper musical understanding of audiences today, such a composer-festival would enhance the "heart" of any season.

ELGAR AND HARDY: THE PROJECTED OPERA

by
K.D. Mitchell

An opera was the one major musical form which Elgar was unable to complete. Yet he often thought of writing one; ideas for an opera were in his mind during his visit to Italy in 1909 and of course he worked fitfully on *The Spanish Lady* project in his last years.

Further, in 1913 at the summit of his career, suggestions were made to spur him on to write an opera in collaboration with one of the leading writers of the time, Thomas Hardy. Unhappily these efforts did not succeed.

It appears that the initial impetus came from Sidney Colvin¹ - a mutual friend - who whilst staying at Hardy's home, Max Gate, Dorchester, wrote to Elgar on 20 July 1913 to say that my embassy is successful in so far as I find the old man not only willing but keen to co-operate in an opera with you'. Hardy suggested three alternatives to Colvin who continued:

- 1) Something founded on *The Trumpet-Major* which has obviously pleasant and picturesque materials for an opera, and has already been cast very successfully into a play for the local company here: this would be rather in the nature of a comic or at least light and whimsical peasant opera, without any very deep or tragic elements.
- 2) Something founded on *The Return of the Native*: this would be a strong country tragedy, also with very striking and picturesque scenic and dramatic elements.
- 3) A section, or something founded on a section of *The Dynasts*, preferably the 100 Days section: this would have to be a new kind of work altogether, bringing on big cosmic forces (choruses, perhaps invisible, of the Pities and the Years) as well as historic personages and events.

If you feel that you would find anything inspiring in any of these themes T.H. would much like you to think over them severally and, a little later, to have the chance of talking them over with you. He is delighted at the idea, and convinced, as we all are, that the combination, if it could come off, would have a huge effect.¹²

At this time Elgar was thinking over two other matters, a work for Chaliapin based on *King Lear* and, as he replied to Colvin on 22 July, 'an allegorical affair on a huge scale - these two things may hold me musically for some time but I shall keep in mind the Hardy ideas and if ... the other two things are not wanted ... I will at once plunge into the Hardy work if it can be arranged. Also on that day he wrote to Hardy:

'My friend, Sidney Colvin, has written to me giving me the very pleasant news that you would be inclined to consider our working together; I send this note to say how much I value the privilege of the chance of making music to your ideas. Unfortunately, two large works may possibly be required from me - a result of half promises to do some work: these, however, may not come into being; I shall therefore keep in view

the suggestion Sidney Colvin has made and in a *short time* I hope to be able to write to propose something.¹³

On 28 July, Hardy replied:

'It will be a pleasure if we can do something together. I daresay Colvin told you that the first consideration which occurred to me was whether it should be a production in the grand style based on 'The Dynasts', or a romantic or tragic Wessex opera based on one of my best known stories. Since Colvin left I have thought 'A pair of Blue Eyes' would be good for music ... You may like to read it before I see you, but as it is so very accessible I do not send it, though I will do so if you have any difficulty in getting it, or are in an out of the way place. I shall now wait till I hear from you.'¹⁴

Elgar received this letter on 31 July and immediately sent a postcard to Hardy to state that he was 'Just off to Wales ... I will read anew the books with an eye to music. I saw Colvin yesterday and had a long talk over many possibilities.'¹⁵

There the matter rested. Elgar went to Wales to complete his Symphonic Study *Falstaff* and the project was never revived thereafter. It is possible that Hardy's publishers, Macmillans, heard of the intended collaboration for, in the autumn of 1913, during a visit to Malvern the Elgars met Sir Frederick Macmillan at Madresfield Court, who gave a copy of one of Hardy's novels to Alice Elgar.

It must be concluded that Elgar's response to Hardy's proposals was guarded and that he did not appear to be enthusiastic over the idea. His mood at the time, following the move to Severn House in Hampstead the previous year, being one of nostalgia and introspection was more suited to the completion of long cherished works - *The Music Makers* and *Falstaff* - rather than to the commencement of new large scale compositions. To write an opera would have been a vast undertaking and Elgar knew of the awesome responsibility he would have to bear if he were to write a 'grand opera'. Just as his symphonic music pointed the way to the younger British composers, so his opera would have been expected to herald a British operatic tradition. The writing of such a work would have entailed a vast musical canvas and, with the onset of the Great War, Elgar was less inclined to embark on such a large scheme.

Which of Hardy's suggestions might have suited him best? Possibly *The Return of the Native*, the novel which grew from Hardy's love for the tract of heathland to be found behind the isolated cottage near Dorchester where he was born and where he roamed as a child.

Both men were countrymen and shared a deep love of landscape and the natural world; these essential elements are to be found in the novel to a marked degree. For Elgar who found inspiration in the wastes of Longdon Marsh south-east of Malvern, an evocation of Hardy's *Egdon Heath* with its 'lonely face' suggesting 'tragical possibilities', would have been possible. The action of the book, confined to the heath itself, set within the timespan of one year and taking note of the seasons, is another aspect which would have appealed to Elgar. The central relationship of mother and son - Mrs Yeobright and Clym, the native - is one which Elgar had tentatively explored in his early choral works and could have been expanded in the opera.

Eustacia Vye with her restlessness, her longing to escape from the confines of the Heath, her dreams, her contemplation of suicide and her tragic death might have produced fine music from Elgar. What might have been his portrayal of her husband Clym, the dreamer who rejects the world 'groaning and travailing in pain' to return to the Heath, who views life 'as a thing to put up with' and is ultimately left bereft of those whom he loved most?

In later life Elgar complained that he had never been offered satisfactory libretti only 'blood and lust', but it is hard to see how this could be applied to Hardy's Cornish romance *A Pair of Blue Eyes* or to the lightweight historical novel *The Trumpet-Major*. In some ways *The Return of the Native* might be described thus, but this would hardly be justified for such a great tragic novel.

No doubt if Elgar had been keen on the project Hardy would have prepared the libretto. A few years before Baron Frederic d'Erlanger had written an opera based on *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* with Hardy's approval and it is reasonable to assume that he would have fully co-operated with Elgar - the most eminent composer of the time - in adapting his work for the stage. That we have no complete Elgarian opera is indeed a great loss.

Notes on Elgar and Hardy: The Projected Opera

1 Colvin, who was on the British Museum staff, was a friend of many artists and writers especially R.L. Stevenson and was an authority on Keats. He had known Hardy since the 1880's and Elgar since about 1904. His suggestion that Elgar set Binyon's 'For The Fallen' met with more success than his operatic proposals.

2 Hereford and Worcester Record Office: 705:445:3445.

3 Dorset County Museum, Thomas Hardy Memorial Collection.

4 The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy, ed. R.L. Purdy and M. Millgate. Vol.VI Oxford 1984 p.291

I should like to thank Jerrold Northrop Moore, Michael Kennedy, Robert Gittings, Michael Millgate and R. N. R. Peers for their assistance in preparing this article, and the Trustees of the Elgar Will and the Hardy Memorial Collection for permission to quote from the Elgar/Hardy correspondence. (The holders of Sir Sidney Colvin's copyright could not be traced.)

Has any reader a cassette of, or be willing to make a cassette of, Boult's *first* recording of the Second Symphony, with the BBC Symphony Orchestra? Mr. Jerauld Vaughan of the U.S.A. is anxious to obtain such a tape, and would be willing to reimburse any member for expenses including postage. Offers via the Editor please.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Compiled by Trevor Fenemore-Jones

Proposed New York meeting

It is good to hear from our member Frank Beck that he is arranging a get-together of U.S. members, probably drinks and dinner at a New York restaurant, sometime in September. If the response is satisfactory, he hopes, at the very least, to make an annual or semi-annual dinner for local Elgarians a regular event. He is anxious not to exclude anyone who is interested, including any U.K. members who might be in the vicinity at the time. The address to contact is 520 West 110th Street *8A, New York, N.Y. 10025, U.S.A.

Frank Beck also reports that The Kingdom was performed in New York in May, when it had 'quite a success'. The revival of interest in Elgar which started in the 1960s and gained momentum in the 70s, aided by the fact that so many of today's finest performers and conductors have been attracted to Elgar's work, still continues. Now the Concertos and the Variations are an established part of the American repertory, and the Symphonies, particularly the First Symphony, are heard more often.

Overseas Membership

I am sorry that, owing to a misunderstanding of the correct position, I reported a slightly overstated total figure for the overseas membership at the June 1984 A.G.M. The actual figures at March 1984 have now been analysed and these are as follows:-

U.S.A.	33 members (including 7 libraries)
Canada	12 members (including 2 libraries)
Australia	5
New Zealand	3
Channel Islands	2
Eire	1
South Africa	1
Holland	13
Austria	7
W. Germany	3
Sweden	2
France	1
Belgium	1
Denmark	1
Cyprus	1

TOTAL 86 members (including 9 libraries)

Members will note with regret that, following the death of our Vice-President Sir William Walton, we now have no member in Italy which, considering Elgar's love for and links with that country, is a sad fact. The growth of membership in Austria is, on the other hand, a welcome development. As this is centred on Vienna we hope in due course to hear some news of Elgar activities there.

Finland

It is gratifying to learn that the first performance in Finland of the Second Symphony took place earlier this year in Helsinki with Vernon Handley conducting.

The Dutch Elgar Society

A meeting took place to commemorate 23 February 1984 including a performance to the Piano Quintet, but attendance was disappointing, many members having prior professional engagements. We hope to hear better news in due course of our Affiliated Society's activities, bearing in mind the considerable interest in Elgar in that locality, focussed so well in the recent Dutch Elgar Festival. Perhaps the March 1984 complete studio performance of the Starlight Express, thought to be a continental premiere, will further stimulate local interest in Elgar's life and music.

International Sub-committee

As at the date of the 1984 A.G.M. Ian Lace, who had acted as Secretary of this subcommittee for 6 years and has worked tirelessly in making and developing contacts abroad, stood down owing to the pressure of other commitments, though he has agreed to remain on the Sub-committee. Our grateful thanks go to him for all the work he has done. The new Sub-committee Secretary is Margaret Benselin. We thank her for undertaking this task.

Information Please!

As always, we depend on news and information supplied from abroad by those overseas members who are prepared to devote their time to do this. May I take this opportunity to thank all those who have helped the Society in this way over the years and, at the same time, stress how much we welcome news and views from abroad and, in particular, news on Elgar broadcasts and live performances. Please keep the flow in information coming in by writing to:-

Miss Margaret Benselin, Elgar Society, 41 Malden Green Avenue, WORCESTER PARK, Surrey, KT4 7SG.

THE TIMES, no less, printed the following, after the memorial service for the Poet-Laureate: 'An ensemble of musicians, together with the London Saxophone Quartet, performed music dear to Sir John's heart, such as Elgar's *In a Monastery Garden* and the *Enigma Variations*.'

ELGAR SOCIETY 1984 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND COMMEMORATIVE DINNER

The thirty fourth Annual General Meeting was held at St. Andrew's Methodist Hall, Pump Street, Worcester on Saturday 2nd June 1984 at 2.30 pm. Sixty Four members were in attendance. The Chairman warmly welcomed members to Worcester on Elgar's birthday, and conveyed the best wishes of the President who also sent his apologies to the meeting. The Secretary advised of substantial growth in the membership of the Society which now stood at 1130 members.

The President and existing Vice Presidents were re-elected, and Diana McVeagh, Vernon Handley, Michael Kennedy and Dr. Jerrold Northrop Moore were also elected as new Vice Presidents following the committee's recommendation on their behalf.

The following officers and committee were elected, David Mooney and Sylvia Strange retiring by rotation:

Chairman: Michael Pope
Vice Chairman: Trevor Fenemore-Jones
Secretary: Andrew Neill
Treasurer: David Morris
Journal Editor: Ronald Taylor

Committee: Margaret Benselin, Michael Rostron, Raymond Monk, David Michell, Garry Humphreys and Bill Kemp.

Tributes were paid to John Knowles who was not seeking re-election as Treasurer. A substantial sum had been collected from members to enable a handsome gift to be presented to him as a token of the Society's appreciation for his work as Treasurer over eight years. With E. Wulstan Atkins, currently Chairman of the Elgar Foundation, one-time Secretary, Treasurer, and Editor of the Elgar Society Newsletter, he was elected as an honorary member of the Society.

Some 130 members crowded into the Foley Arms, Malvern that evening for the Society's Commemorative Dinner. After an enjoyable meal and the Loyal Toast, proposed by the Chairman, members were entertained by Vernon Handley who proposed the toast 'to the memory of Sir Edward Elgar'. The Chairman replied and proposed the toast 'To The Elgar Society'.

Replying to the toast to the guests proposed by the Secretary, Stephen Crabtree, Managing Director of the London Philharmonic Orchestra, reflected on Elgar, his orchestration and his significance. His amusing memories of Sir John Barbirolli will be forgotten by few present at this memorable dinner.

Members requiring a copy of The Minutes of the Thirty Third Annual General Meeting and income and expenditure account for the year ended the 31st December 1983, should send a stamped addressed envelope to the Secretary.

A.H.A. Neill *Secretary*

Two early interpreters of Elgar's Concerto



3880 A

MISS MARIE HALL.

ROTARY PHOTO E C

ELGAR IN RUTLAND

Rutland is a peaceful, secluded corner of the East Midlands, nestling between Leicestershire and Lincolnshire. Its only drawback for Elgarians, is that there are no Elgarian associations whatsoever! However, Elgar's musical spirit is kept burning very brightly there, thanks to the dynamic and idiomatic performances of Elgar's music by Barry Collett and The Rutland Sinfonia. Barry is now Director of Music at the Rutland Sixth Form College, and he founded the Sinfonia, a full symphony orchestra of 85 players, in 1977. Since then Elgar has featured prominently in the programmes - the very first included *Sea Pictures* and the *Imperial March*. Many of the 'standard' orchestral works have been played - *Enigma Variations*, *Cello Concerto*, *Froissart* and *In The South Overtures*, *Wand of Youth Suite No 2*, the two *Chansons* and *Pomp and Circumstance Marches 1, 2 and 5*; but particularly noteworthy are the less well known works that have been such a feature of Sinfonia programmes - *The Nursery Suite*, *Incidental Music and Funeral March from Grania and Diarmid*, *Sursum Corda* for strings, brass and organ, *Polonia*, *The Crown of India Suite* and the very unfamiliar *Crown of India March*, *Meditation from The Light of Life*, *Coronation March of 1911*, *Prelude and Angel's Farewell from Gerontius*, Elgar's orchestration of the Handel *D Minor Overture*, and the *Civic Fanfare*. The orchestra also gave the first modern concert performance of *Sevillana* (Op.7) and the first public performance of the complete incidental music to *The Starlight Express* - a particular favourite of the conductor. In the last season - the eighth - highly acclaimed performances of the *Violin Concerto* (with the young French soloist Isabelle Flory) and the *First Symphony* were given. In next season's programmes *The Sanguine Fan* and *Fringes of The Fleet*, are to be performed. Elgarians in this area are indeed fortunate to be able to hear such superbly played performances of this music.

As well as conducting all the above works, Barry Collett continues to serve Elgar's cause in an amazingly versatile way. He has appeared as pianist in several performances of the *Violin Sonata*, *Piano Quintet*, and some of the smaller violin and piano pieces, and has also accompanied professional singers in many of the songs, including such rarities as *The Language of Flowers*, *Chariots of The Lord*, and *The Rapid Stream*. In 1977 he made a gramophone recording (Wealden WS 152) on which he conducted The Uppingham Community College Choir in anthems and part-songs, some of them appearing on record for the first time. He also accompanied half a dozen solo songs, and played the piano pieces *In Smyrna* and *Skizze*. In 1981 Thames Publishing brought out his book 'Elgar Country' and, in addition, he is a frequent guest lecturer at Elgar Society meetings in all parts of the country. Elgarians have every reason to be grateful for Barry Collett's many sided talents being brought to bear for Elgar's cause and, as he is still a young man, we can be optimistic that this will continue for many years to come!

J.S.

A VICE-PRESIDENT'S TRIBUTE TO ELGAR

A concert of the music of Professor Ian Parrott, one of the Society's Vice-Presidents, was given at St George's, Hanover Square, London, on 17th May.

In a varied programme, which also included songs and chamber music, the organ, superbly played by Jennifer Bate, was featured in no less than four items. The concert ended with the 1977 *Suite for Organ*, the third and final movement of which is a version of the composition entitled *Homage to Two Masters*, originally written for orchestra in 1971. In this piece, tribute is paid to J. S. Bach and Elgar by the introduction of a reference to an unfinished pedal *Exercitium* by Bach, the similarity of which to the music of Variation XI (G.R.S.) of Elgar's Variations being then demonstrated. Later we hear the Enigma Theme and an allusion to the unfinished *Third Symphony*. The work ends in grand style with a concluding reference to Bach's First *Brandenburg Concerto*. Miss Bate's virtuoso performance formed a brilliant and effective conclusion to a most interesting evening.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE 1984 ELGAR FESTIVAL

SEPTEMBER 8th – 16th

**GLOUCESTER CATHEDRAL
ST. CATHERINE'S PARISH CHURCH
Gloucester**

**ST. MARY de LODGE, Gloucester
TEWKESBURY ABBEY**

PHILOMUSICA OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE

**ELGAR FESTIVAL CHORUS
AND ORCHESTRA**

Conductor: JAMES COWLEY.

Orchestra Leader: ARTHUR BANCROFT.

Organist: NEIL FORTIN.

PHILOMUSICA OF WORCESTERSHIRE

Conductor: NIGEL EDWARDS.

GLOUCESTER CATHEDRAL CHOIR

Organist and Conductor:

JOHN SANDERS, M.A., B.Mus., F.R.C.O.

Assistant Organist: MARK BLATCHLY.

**GLOUCESTER YOUNG PEOPLE'S
STRING ENSEMBLE**

COLN MUSIC GROUP

MALVERN MALE VOICE CHOIR

Conductor: NIGEL EDWARDS.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Sept. 11	Violin Sonata; Severn Suite <i>Jan Sinclair (violin) Barry Collett (piano); Leicester Band</i>	Leicester Cathedral, 7.30 p.m.
Sept. 15	Enigma Variations <i>Oxford Pro Musica/Seaman</i>	Nell Gwynne Theatre, Hereford
Sept. 15	Prelude: The Apostles; Parry's Ode Eton; Bantock's Time Spirit <i>Broadheath Singers/Windsor Sinfonia/Tucker</i>	Eton School Hall, Berks. (Tickets: M. Pearse, 3 Love Lane, Iver, Bucks)
Sept. 16	Violin Sonata; Severn Suite <i>Jan Sinclair (violin) Barry Collett (piano); Leicester Band</i>	Leicester Cathedral, 7.30 p.m.
Sept. 17	Wand of Youth Suite No. 2 <i>ILEA London Sch. SO/Davies</i>	Royal Festival Hall, 7.30 p.m.
Sept. 18	Violin Concerto <i>Oscar Shumsky (violin) LSO/Hickox</i>	Barbican Concert Hall, London
Sept. 22	Introduction and Allegro <i>Academy of St. Thomas</i>	Norwich Cathedral
Sept. 22	Elgar/Holst/Delius Concert, including Serenade for Strings <i>Priory Concertante of London</i>	Purcell Room, South Bank
Sept. 23	Wood Magic. Presentation <i>Medici Quartet, John Bingham (piano)</i>	Wigmore Hall, London, 7.30 p.m.
Sept. 26	Violin Sonata <i>Keith Ramsell (violin), Gordon Kirkwood (piano)</i>	Purcell Room, South Bank
Sept. 26	Violin Sonata <i>Nigel Kennedy (violin), Peter Pettinger (piano)</i>	St. Asaph Cathedral, Clwyd
Sept. 27	Symphony No. 2 <i>BBC Welsh SO/Kasprzyk</i>	St. Asaph Cathedral, Clwyd
Sept. 29	Cello Concerto <i>Paul Tortelier (cello), LSO/Tortelier</i>	City Hall, Glasgow, 7.30 p.m.
Oct. 2	Introduction and Allegro <i>Scottish Baroque Ensemble</i>	Signet Library, Edinburgh

Oct. 5	Introduction and Allegro <i>Scottish Baroque Ensemble</i>	Mitchell Hall, Aberdeen
Oct. 10	Introduction and Allegro <i>Vienna SO/Sawallisch</i>	Royal Festival Hall
Oct. 12	Violin Sonata; Chansons de Matin/Nuit; Capricieuse; Romance, Op. 1 <i>Isabelle Flory (violin), Barry Collett (piano)</i>	Oakham School, Rutland, 8.00 p.m.
Oct. 14	Serenade for Strings <i>New Westminster PO/Pilbery</i>	Purcell Room, 7 p.m.
Oct. 14	Dream of Gerontius <i>Baker/Tear/Shirley-Quirk, Hereford Cathedral Choir, Midlands Festival Chorus, RPO/Goldring</i>	University of Warwick Arts Centre
Oct. 18	Triumphal March: Caractacus <i>Philharmonia O/Sinopoli</i>	Royal Festival Hall
Oct. 20	Light of Life; Songs from Bavarian Highlands; Parry's Blest Pair of Sirens <i>Simpson/Purnell/Peacock/Hankinson, various local choirs, West Lakeland Orch/Austin Thorburn and Gerald Gillett</i>	St. James's Church, Whitehaven, Cumbria, 7.30 p.m.
Oct. 24	Introduction and Allegro <i>Scottish Baroque Ensemble</i>	Henry Wood Hall, Glasgow
Oct. 25	Wood Magic. Presentation <i>Medici Quartet, John Bingham (piano)</i>	Swansea Festival
Oct. 29	Wood Magic. Presentation <i>Medici Quartet, John Bingham (piano)</i>	Edinburgh New Town Concerts
Nov. 3	Symphony No. 2 <i>Norwich PO/Webb</i>	St. Andrew's Hall, Norwich
Nov. 3	Pomp and Circumstance Nos. 1, 2 and 5 <i>Rutland Sinfonia/Collett</i>	Uppingham School Hall, Rutland, 7.30 p.m.
Nov. 4	Dream Children; Give unto the Lord <i>London Cantata Choir and Orchestra</i>	Queen Elizabeth Hall, London
Nov. 10	Dream of Gerontius <i>Bath Bach Choir/Tilford Bach Festival Orch/Darlow</i>	Bath Abbey, 7.30 p.m.

Nov. 10	The Music Makers <i>Bristol Choral Soc/Harker, with Anne Collins</i>	Colston Hall, Bristol, 7.30 p.m.
Nov. 10	Day School on Finzi, by Diana McVeagh	Wills Building, Bristol University, 2.30 p.m.
Nov. 14	Symphony No. 1 <i>LPO/Berglund</i>	Royal Festival Hall
Nov. 17	Sea Pictures <i>Margaret Cable, Philharmonia/Davies</i>	Royal Festival Hall
Nov. 17	Elgar Country - Screen presentation	Little Theatre, Sheringham, Norfolk
Nov. 18	Wood Magic. Presentation <i>Medici Quartet, John Bingham (piano)</i>	Belfast Festival
Nov. 19	Enigma Variations <i>RPO/Temirkanov</i>	Royal Festival Hall
Nov. 20	Violin Concerto <i>Itzhak Perlman (violin), LPO/Haitink</i>	Royal Festival Hall

BOOK REVIEWS

THE ELGARS OF WORCESTER by K.E.L. and Marion Simmons - (*Published by the Elgar Society £2: members only £1.50*)

Reverence for a great man takes different forms. For some, his creative achievements are a sufficient memorial. Others will not rest until a statue or plaque is put up wherever he laid his head. My own interest in Elgar's houses chiefly concerns those in which he *chose* to live, and where he produced his great music, rather than where his family lived when he was a child. I therefore approached this little publication with less enthusiasm than for books on the mature Elgar, as it mainly deals with the various homes of William and Ann Elgar from their marriage in 1848 until they settled over the music shop at 10, High Street in 186...? Well, when was it? Dr. and Mrs. Simmons begin their book with quotes from the Elgar literature to show the confusion and wide divergence in the geography and chronology of those early years. By much patient and painstaking research, involving archive material from the Birthplace and from the Hereford and Worcester Record Office, as well as old maps, deeds, directories, census returns, etc., the authors have finally pieced together the complete jigsaw and presented a definitive account of where the Elgar family actually lived. I don't intend to reveal their findings: you'll have to buy the book! The plethora of street names early on in the book is a little daunting, but don't give up: I suggest that you read it straight through twice (it's quite short) and then all will become clear.

These revelations alone would be recommendation enough: but as the title indicates, *'The Elgars of Worcester'* goes much further and paints a fascinating picture of what family life was like for the Elgars in those early years: of how the piano tuning side of the business grew (at 3/6 per piano tuned) until it involved visits to Stratford, 50 miles away: of how Joseph Elgar's birth in 1859 was never registered: of how the youngest Elgar child was registered and baptised Ellen (and not Helen, as everyone else has it). These and many other snippets not only make this an essential part of an Elgarian's library, but also open a window on musical life in an English provincial town in the mid-nineteenth century.

G.H.

EDWARD ELGAR: A CREATIVE LIFE, by Jerrold Northrop Moore. OUP, £35

By any standards this is a remarkable achievement, that could only have been accomplished by one person: the present author. One could be tempted to say that Jerrold Northrop Moore has left no stone unturned - but that would be no compliment. So far as biography is concerned - barring the discovery of any further significant documentation - by sheer weight of information we are brought to a terminal point. But one question remains. Why, in the words of the blurb, is Elgar only 'among the greatest of English composers' (at this moment more certainly than, say, thirty years ago), while in the world ratings he is not even among the seeded composers?

Moore finely lays before us the abiding paradox. Musically, Elgar was in no way typically English, his self-education, his Catholic upbringing, his inclination towards old-fashioned German Romantic method, effectively prevented his qualifying as a true-blue 'national' composer. Fifty years ago the phenomenon of Elgar (as Constant Lambert pointed out in *Music Ho!*) was surprising: not of that age, he was a noble survivor. For those of us who were there, the new world of native music was opened up by Vaughan Williams and Holst, whose contrasting principles deserve further consideration. Holst - who felt that the *'Enigma'* opened a new era - does not appear even in Moore's index.

It is very difficult not to separate life and works, if only because there is a plausible case for considering art of whatever sort to have its own independent life. The classic case is that of Mozart, for whom life was often hell and his music at the same time heaven. Moore's exposition of Elgar's thoughts, moods, and behaviour through musical shapes and structures is challenging and brilliantly done. It is also disturbing, with questions before us that have no answer. Elgar himself landed here, and into somewhat unseemly and unnecessary disputations as to the 'meaning' of music.

I am fascinated by Moore's account of the young Elgar's practice in figured bass realisation - which was, I suspect, somewhat more free than the baroque masters would have thought proper. About his early organ playing, I have my doubts. The instrument at St. George's was not one that easily accommodated *ad hoc* transcriptions of Berlioz's *March to the Gallows* (or, p.114, an 'extemporised' version). I also wonder about Elgar's extemporisations at the piano, which were poetically but imprecisely described by Dorabella. Judging by his sketches, Elgar needed time, and much use of pencil, to bring his ideas (which may very well have been, in one sense,

plucked out of the air) into focus. In this connection it is interesting to note the first written evidences of the *Enigma*, which seem to be the point from which one might proceed at the keyboard, rather than that reached through the fingers. Moore emphasises throughout an abiding immaturity - or sense of dependence - in Elgar's personality. It is interesting to notice how, even to the end of his days, he depended on the aids and disciplines of youth in composition practice. The inversions of the triple counterpoint of the *Introduction and Allegro* were carefully plotted (as students used to do in preparation for their Mus.B. examinations). (Incidentally, Elgar hardly ever finished a fugue, despite the dramatic virtue of his well-known expositions, thus suggesting impatience with the disciplines of episode and stretto.) On the other side, Elgar was never loth to figure his basses in the manner laid out in the basic harmony books of his (and, indeed, my) youth.

Occasionally I found myself adrift of Moore's text when in the technical zone. A sequence is a sequence, and I am unsure as to whether any sequence can 'resemble and suggest the patterns of nature... round Broadheath'; nor do I feel that 'plagal darkenings' can give 'music a quality of reflection'. Considering the more than generous supply of music examples there could, perhaps, have been some sacrifice of verbal descriptions.

I am grateful that Willie Reed's views and memories are so effectively and fully given. I never knew a man (and I knew him from schooldays to the end of his life) who could so wonderfully convey the meaning of music through his artistry (he was a superb player in the musical sense), his ability to engage his friends within his own understanding, his sparkling humour, and his immense kindness. Willie Reed was no mere extra in the Elgar script. He and Jaeger - the professionals - were the people who, having the skill to supply real criticism within a conviction of their friend's genius, really mattered to Elgar the composer.

That brings us to the extensive cast of other friends. Again, Moore is encyclopaedic, and no spirits now moving in another world who feel their immortality assured by their former relationship with Elgar need feel that their records have been ignored. Some few, of course, registered their claims in writing. Moore quotes from Dorabella, who was inclined to tell the same affecting story to suit one circumstance in one place and another in another. At the end of Rosa Burley Moore puts a question mark. The horror story is that Elgar was, on the one hand, in large measure dependent on the patronage of some, at least, who were rich, often not notably occupied in earning a living, and secure in their sense of superiority, while on the other he was the victim of publishers skilled in the art of designing contracts weighted in their own favour. On the surface Elgar tried to live up to the standards of refinement validated by the class system of his environment; beneath there murmured a feeling for change. Elgar promoted the idea that music should be made widely available through the infusion of public funds.

Some part of the record needs to be straightened. That there was some kind of anti-Elgar conspiracy at Cambridge is mistaken. Edward Dent - whose services to music, internationally and in respect of a genuine national opera in England, were incalculable - did not like Elgar's music. Exercising the right of free speech, he said so. In fact, he said so more than once. His own view was that people should be independent in judgment, and that is what he taught, and that is why in due course I wrote a book about Elgar - a fact which pleased him. To Cyril Rootham, whose

origins were not much less modest than Elgar's, I was indebted for teaching me to play the *Organ Sonata*. Since Rootham's *For the Fallen* has its place in the Elgar story, it should, in fairness, be examined as a work in its own right. English music benefited from having two settings of the same poem. (By the same token it is instructive to place Kodaly's *Music Makers* beside Elgar's.)

Those who knew Stanford, knew him as an impulsive, sensitive, highly gifted, Anglo-Irishman, with an uncertain temper but imbued with great generosity, and a very good composer. His pupils knew how to cope with his moods. It was C.S. Lang, one of his favourite pupils and a dedicated Stanfordite, who first brought me into the world of Elgar's music with his own infectious enthusiasm.

It is sobering now to recall views expressed on Elgar fifty years ago. In his *Progress of Music* George Dyson dismissed Elgar in two sentences. F.H. Shera, in his *Elgar: Instrumental Works*, described how the then 'lack of admiration for Elgar' was due to his being out of tune with the time. Forty years ago Scott Goddard wrote a critically balancing tribute in *British Music of Our Time*, suggesting that 'the significance of Elgar in the new movement is that of an aloof figure whose example could not be ignored'. Across the years Elgar's music has not changed; the English people have.

In this sense, Jerrold Northrop Moore's book is not an end but a new beginning, with an unending stream of challenges to its readers, among whom I count myself privileged to be one.

Percy Young

THE ELGAR-ATKINS FRIENDSHIP, by E Wulstan Atkins

David & Charles, £15.00

Ivor Atkins, for fifty three years the organist at Worcester Cathedral, was an intimate friend of Elgar for over forty years. Atkins and Elgar first met in 1890, while the former was serving as assistant to George Sinclair, organist at Hereford. The occasion was the first performance of 'Froissart', conducted by Elgar at the Public Hall, Worcester. Atkins, not yet quite twenty one, and twelve years Elgar's junior, was bowled over by the music, and said later: 'I knew that Elgar was the man for me. I knew that I completely understood his music, and that my heart and soul went with it'. Atkins went round to the artists' room to shake Elgar by the hand. No words were spoken - the young organist was too overcome by shyness - but both knew that a real friendship had begun.

That friendship was to last until Elgar's death. Over the years, a considerable volume of correspondence passed between the two men, and it is these letters which Ivor Atkins' son has used as a starting point for his account of this fascinating relationship. In addition to carefully editing and annotating the letters, Wulstan Atkins has fleshed out the bare bones of the story and skilfully bridged the gaps in the correspondence (often at important periods, when the two friends were meeting regularly rather than writing to each other) by drawing on his father's diaries, other written reminiscences and his own personal recollections. The result is a smooth and

consecutive narrative, taking on the air of a personal, intimate memoir of the two musicians.

A particularly attractive feature of the book is the way in which Atkins, not so well remembered today as he deserves, emerges as a delightful, modest man, always perhaps slightly in awe of the great composer, for whom his deep affection never for a moment faltered. Elgar, on the other hand, clearly obtained great benefit from Atkins' honest opinions and his support and encouragement when the going was hard. Above all, Elgar was able to share his personal feelings with Atkins without ever feeling threatened. Although Atkins was a composer, his ambitions were modest, and there was never the faintest suggestion of rivalry.

Atkins and Elgar shared a love of the byways of literature. Atkins had, in fact, been reading the *Chronicles of Froissart* shortly before their first meeting, and they both delighted in a Victorian reprint of Caxton's 1481 version of the story of Raynard the Fox. Subsequently, in their letters, each took on the role (and sometimes the language and spelling!) of a character from the story. Elgar, of course, became 'Reynart ye Foxe', and Atkins, after some experimentation, became 'Firaheel the Leopard'. It is fascinating to note, however, that despite the use of these intimate nicknames, Atkins' deeply entrenched Victorian propriety meant that as late as 1920 he was still addressing Alice as 'My dear Lady Elgar'.

There are few major revelations in the book, although there is no doubt that a great deal of careful research has been done. There are three appendices devoted mainly to the Worcester Three Choirs festivals, and, in particular, Atkins' and the Elgar family's associations with the festivals. Much publicity has been given in the press to Wulstan Atkins' disclosure, in one of these appendices, of the identity of the Worcester girl, Helen Weaver, to whom Elgar was engaged in the early 1880s. I doubt, however, if this new information, important though it is, will in any way substantially alter our understanding of Elgar's creative forces.

The book has been superbly produced by the publishers. Nearly seventy photographs, many unfamiliar, are reproduced to an exceptionally high standard, and there are many drawings etc. illustrating the text. There is an excellent index, and ten pages of biographical notes. I feel quite sure that this outstandingly interesting and readable book will remain one of the most important of the subsidiary volumes to the mainstream of Elgar biographical writing.

Gareth H. Lewis

ELGAR AND THE TWO MEZZOS by David Bury

Thames Publishing for Elgar Society London Branch, £2

Composers do not always get the soloists (or the conductors) that they want when their works are first performed. The politics and economics of music do not allow for such idiosyncracies. It can be argued of course that composers are not necessarily the best judges, and they are as prejudiced as the rest of us. In this reworking of a talk given to the London branch in 1983 David Bury compares the original 'angel' in *Gerontius* (Marie Brema) with Elgar's admitted favourite in later days, Muriel Foster.

Unfortunately neither singer left any recordings for us to make a judgment (or at least none have ever been discovered), and we must rely on the reputations of the two ladies, and the correspondence which took place between Elgar and others involved in the early years of the great oratorio. David Bury has put together his short account with skill, and though he shows his partiality for Foster, as did Elgar, he recognises the considerable talents of the redoubtable Madame Brema. There is too a third mezzo lurking in the wings from those early days, Madame Kirkby Lunn. The artists who performed the 'new music' are not always given the credit they deserve for all their efforts to promote Elgar, and David Bury's pamphlet is to be welcomed. It adds yet another chapter to the lengthening literature on the composer, and we welcome the enterprise of London branch and Thames Publishing in making the talk available. The booklet is graced with a short Foreword by Dame Janet Baker.

R.P.T.

RECORD REVIEWS

Coronation Ode, Op.44; The Spirit of England, Op.80

Teresa Cahill, (soprano) Anne Collins, (mezzo) Anthony Rolfe Johnson, (tenor) Gwynne Howell, (bass) Scottish National Orchestra and Chorus, conducted by Sir Alexander Gibson. Chandos CBR 1013

Two recordings of the *Coronation Ode* appeared almost simultaneously in 1977. One, on HMV ASD 3345 remains in the EMI catalogue. It features King's College, Cambridge forces and, in addition to the *Ode*, includes Elgar's National Anthem arrangement and Parry's *I Was Glad*. The other recording, conducted by Gibson, was issued by RCA as one disc of a two-disc folder, the other work being the wonderful *Spirit of England*, a major three-movement choral work, setting poems by Lawrence Binyon, written during the First World War. It was Elgar's last major choral work.

The original recording had, in fact, been made by the Chandos team, who have happily repossessed the original tapes, the RCA issue having been available for only a short time. Chandos have gone to great trouble to prepare their reissue, making new digital master tapes from original, and having had the processing and disc pressing done by Teldec in Germany, by their revolutionary 'Direct Metal Mastering' technique. The result is superb - and they have now managed to get the contents of both discs on to one! Despite the special qualities of the King's College sound, the EMI issue was never the clearer in detail. The Chandos recording, made in Paisley Abbey is just as atmospheric, but the choral diction is very much clearer. Indeed the lusty singing of the choristers is most attractive, if occasionally lacking polish. As JGK wrote in the May 1977 *Journal*, Gibson's handling of the *Ode* is more flexible than Ledger on EMI, and we could not hope for a better or more moving version of *Spirit of England* - just as well, as we are unlikely to get an alternative, and one must be grateful to Chandos not only for bringing this performance back into circulation, but for taking so much trouble over a bargain reissue.

G.H.L.

Violin Concerto in B minor

*Yehudi Menuhin, with the New Philharmonia Orchestra Sir Adrian Boult
HMV 'Concert Classics' SXLP 2900001*

When Yehudi Menuhin recorded Elgar's violin concerto for the second time (in 1966, in honour of his fiftieth birthday), his technique was no longer quite what it had been a few years earlier. As a result there was some feeling of disappointment. Listening to it again after a gap of several years, I can only wonder how we could have been so dismissive. In the meantime we have had several technically brilliant but interpretively suspect recordings by young virtuosi, and it has been a revelation to turn back to Menuhin, and to marvel again at the loving care and subtlety of his phrasing, and the general feeling of maturity - that this great artist has lived with this music for most of his lifetime, and has an instinctive understanding of the significance of every nuance. Surely this will come to be regarded as one of the great Elgar interpretations of modern times, irrespective of the slight technical shortcomings, even if it will never displace the unique 1932 recording conducted by Elgar.

Menuhin is perfectly partnered by Boult, who sets a brisk pace for the first movement, and rarely conducted with such passionate sweep in his later years. The recorded sound was always well balanced, but perhaps rather less spacious than EMI usually achieve in Kingsway Hall. The newly remastered 'Concert Classics' issue is a trifle brighter and clearer in detail than the original release, although this is at the expense of revealing a slight thinness of the orchestral violin tone.

N.B. It should be noted that the tape cassette issue, which I have not heard, just contains the concerto. The original top price release differed, in that the cassette also included Boult's recording of the Prelude to 'The Kingdom', extracted from the complete recording with the London Philharmonic Orchestra.

G.H.L.

NEWS FROM THE BRANCHES

EAST ANGLIA reports a successful season closed, with a members' 'bring and play' session (an increasingly popular meeting that looks like becoming a regular), followed finally by the already traditional Strawberry and Wine Social. It is good to report another small increase in total membership; also that our financial position remains healthy, enabling the purchase of much-needed new equipment.

Concerts of Elgar's choral works have featured largely in our region this Spring and Summer, and we have been fortunate indeed. Block bookings enabled a nucleus of members to hear *The Dream* in St. Edmundsbury Cathedral. If for nothing else, however, 1984 will surely go down in our annals as the year of *The Apostles*, for we also had the opportunity to enjoy no less than three very fine performances of this all too-rarely heard work, firstly in Norwich, then at the Elgar Festival in Harlow where mighty forces were mustered (followed a week later by an equally impressive *The*

Kingdom) and, finally, in the marvellous setting of King's College Chapel, Cambridge. All praise, and our gratitude, to all concerned in providing such a musical feast throughout our region!

And so we look forward to the new season, opening in September with Sir F. Vivian Dunn's personal reminiscences of Elgar; then, in October, with a choice of favourite Elgar music by Allan Charlwood, teacher and organist of Haverhill, Suffolk. In November our own Reg Williamson brings us up-to-date with latest developments on C.Ds. as far as works by Elgar and his contemporaries are concerned, and the year closes with the Branch Annual Christmas Dinner.

The LONDON BRANCH season ended with Bernard Keefe's splendidly presented and illustrated talk on 'Elgar's Expressive Power in the Major Orchestral Works' in May, followed by Brian Rayner Cook's eagerly-awaited lecture recital, in which songs from his well-known recording were blended with a generous helping of live examples to provide a fascinating insight into an aspect of Elgar so often underestimated. The latter meeting was preceded by the AGM at which Peter Prior was elected to the committee and Garry Humphreys relinquished the post of Branch secretary after four years' outstandingly efficient work. The meeting expressed its warm, though insufficient, thanks to Garry, and elected David Bury to the unenviable position of his replacement. The second part of the Branch's 'Aspects of Elgar' symposium commences on 8th October when Michael Kennedy's subject will be 'Elgar the Edwardian.'

The SOUTH WALES Branch season ended on a high note, the Summer Social, organised by Branch member Derek Butler, being a great success. Over 50 attended, including members from the West Midlands Branch. The Isca Cantores Choir, about 30 strong, gave two short recitals which included music by Elgar. A list of twenty questions on Elgar was handed out to those present, and after marking it was announced that Michael Trott was the winner with 18 correct. A three-way quiz - West Midlands, South Wales, and the Choir - resulted in a win for West Midlands.

The Elgar Day-School, organised by the Extra-Mural Dept. of Swansea University on 5th May was a huge success. The talks by Dr. Percy Young and E. Wulstan Atkins were attended by over 80 persons, and the evening recital by the Swansea Bach Choir (conductor John Hugh Thomas) attracted an audience of over 200. The standard was extremely high - a first-class concert. Unfortunately, the talk by Diana McVeagh on Elgar and Finzi, at the Welsh College of Music and Drama, was not well attended. 'Nevertheless,' writes the Branch Secretary, 'the talk was very interesting, I enjoyed it, and it confirms my own feelings that there is quite a bit of Elgar in Finzi's music.' Forthcoming events: On 15th September a talk and recital by Rodney Baldwyn; October (date to be confirmed) a talk by Terry Jenkins on 'The Lesser Known Elgar.' Then on 15th November a talk by Michael Pope on *Caractacus*, at the Welsh College of Music in Cardiff. Fuller details will be notified to members in the Branch Newsletter.

WEST MIDLANDS Branch was delighted that so many Society members were able to attend the preview on June 3rd in Malvern of the new Elgar documentary produced by Central TV, thanks to the kindness of the company in changing the time of showing to the morning. This meant a good attendance the same afternoon at Evensong in Worcester Cathedral, at which Michael Pope laid a wreath on behalf of

the Society at the Elgar window. The annual Birthplace Party with birthday cake and sherry followed. The Society was well-advertised at the Malvern Festival on a display board mounted by the branch, and forming part of the special Art Exhibition in the Library. By the time this report is read the Three Choirs Festival will be over, but members might like to know that all 100 tickets for the buffet supper were sold out one month before the event. Be warned another time - book well in advance!

The Autumn programme begins with Nigel Edwards speaking on 'Elgar in Malvern' at the Beacon Room, Malvern Hills College, 8th September at 2.30 p.m. On 13th October, in the Commandery, Worcester, Michael Pope will speak on 'Elgar and Italy', whilst on 10th November, in the Smoking Room of The Old Palace, Deansway, Worcester, there will be a Members' Afternoon, at which each person will have up to 15 minutes to contribute an item. Finally, members may be interested to know that the Branch secretary has received two separate communications addressed just 'Elgar Society, Worcester'. Shades of Elgar's own wish!

EAST MIDLANDS have had three most rewarding meetings in March and May, rewarding, that is, to the members who attended - others missed three excellent talks. Christopher Redwood spoke eloquently on Delius and Elgar; Stephen Lloyd's knowledge, funded by painstaking research, on Elgar as a Conductor fired the enthusiasm of members to listen again to Elgar's recordings. Robert Meikle, Professor of Music at Leicester University, followed this with an extremely wide-ranging consideration of Elgar as a Symphonist, placing him in a European rather than an exclusively English context.

The Branch urgently needs new members, and the Committee wish to hear without delay from those members who are willing to devote a little time to ensuring the continuance of the Branch.

The SOUTH WEST Branch are pleased to report that our last season's meetings were entirely successful, though it must be admitted that attendances were disappointingly low - bearing in mind the efforts of our programme presenters. However, the new season should ensure a continued growth in Branch membership and enrich our knowledge of Elgar, and its undoubted place in the history of British music.

At our Branch AGM, several changes have taken place. We have a new Chairman, Conrad Addey, with Olive Martel taking over as Branch Treasurer. Ron Bleach continues as Secretary, with the continued support of the other committee members, who have arranged the following meetings for the 1984-5 season: Saturday 22nd September 'Elgar in Yorkshire' an audio-visual presentation by Dennis Clark, who will also speak on Monday, 24th September at the City of Bristol Gramophone Society with his illustrated talk 'Elgar and the Malverns.' Visitors welcome! 20th October 'Elgar's Singers', with Dr. Gareth Lewis. 24th November 'A Very Parfit, Gentle Knight (Parry), by Keith Baber. After the Christmas recess the season will continue with programmes to include Havergal Brian, Elgar & their Friends; In the South or Elgar's Sussex; and a welcome return by Wulstan Atkins, who will present *The Apostles*. Our meetings are held in The Octagon, a delightful venue, which is part of the Bristol Polytechnic at Frenchay. Fuller details from Ron Bleach at the address on the back cover. Why not come along - you might even like us!

At the AGM of the NORTH WEST Branch in February, the 'base' was moved to Manchester. A programme has now been arranged, and all meetings will be held in the Royal Northern College of Music, 124 Oxford Road, Manchester. Meetings will commence at 4.30 pm. unless otherwise stated. 29th September Michael Kennedy on 'Elgar in the Edwardian Age'. 9th November, Performance of *The Kingdom* by the Salford Choral Society. (Members wishing to attend should obtain their own tickets). Introductory talk by David Greensmith, 6.30 pm. 15th December, Christmas Social. 7.30 to 9.30 pm. 1985. Annual Meeting on 19th January. It is hoped to arrange a short talk or some live music for this occasion.

Meetings of the YORKSHIRE Branch since the Spring have been well- attended, considering our relatively small membership. On 9th April Charles Myers, ARCM, ARCO, gave a live recital of Elgar's piano music. On 16th April and 14th May we had well-chosen record recitals by some of our own members. An evening given by another member, Kay Gibbons, was too good to go down as a mere recital, although records were used. A teacher, Kay had researched her presentation well and proved - if it were necessary - that one needn't look all the time to national Elgar figures when building up a season's programme.

We had the AGM in June, when Jim Anderson, Dennis Clark, and Robert Seager were elected Chairman, Secretary & Treasurer respectively. 16th July saw our annual end of term 'rave-up' at the Secretary's home. Members provided food and drink for a gathering several times the size. Some home video- films featuring Elgar country were shown, including material shot at the Birthplace on 2nd June.

We recommence on 17th September with our 'Chairman's Evening'. 29th September the Annual Dinner at the Falcon Manor in Settle, when we also have a talk by Bill Mitchell, Editor of *The Dalesman*. On 8th October, Philip Scowcroft gives us an illustrated talk on Elgar Transcriptions, and on 12th November Pauline Collett comes to talk on her researches for her book 'An Elgar Travelogue'.

LETTERS

From JERAULD VAUGHAN, of Washington, DC, U.S.A.

I thought readers might be interested to know that Parkway Communications, a fine-arts radio syndicate serving stations throughout the United States, recently commemorated the 50th anniversary of Elgar's death on their 'Matinee' programme. Since Parkway is the distributing agency for various BBC programmes, this broadcast included that excellent BBC offering, 'Elgar - a Soliloquy.' The host of 'Matinee', Mr. John Stevenson, also offered us the P & C March no. 1, the Cello Concerto, and a couple of part-songs. 'Encore', a programme immediately following 'Matinee' on various stations, brought us two more P & C Marches, and the Violin Concerto was offered as a bonus on the following day's 'Matinee'. By the time of this writing, a tribute to Holst has also been offered, and one for Delius is supposed to be offered in the near future. A Washington area non-commercial station also devoted time, principally on Sundays, to these three composers over a two-month period.

From GARRY HUMPHREYS

From the reproduction of the spoof Elgar poster on p.196 of THE ELGAR-ATKINS FRIENDSHIP the solution to the Leyrisch-Turasp puzzle leaps out quite unbidden. For is not 'Leyrisch-Turasp' nothing more than a loose anagram of 'Tupsley Parish', made to appear continental?

I hesitate to decry the ingenious solutions previously offered, both in your esteemed Journal and elsewhere - and I know that Tupsley has been a previous, half-hearted, suggestion - but the visual impact of the words 'Tupsley Parish' on the poster is so great as to dispel all doubt, surely.

To satisfy those to whom this solution will seem to naive, it will be noted that the Harleyford Musical Festival took place in 1909, the year of the composition of 'The River'. But really, sometimes I think we try just too hard!

From ANDREW MORRIS, Director of Music Bedford School

I thought perhaps fellow members might like to know that, along with a good number of other schools I am sure, Bedford School marked the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Edward Elgar in great style. The climax of this was a performance by the School of THE DREAM OF GERONTIUS on 15th March, but on the 23rd February the Readings in Assembly in all parts of the School were on Elgar's life and on the background to GERONTIUS. The Great Hall Assembly then concluded with a performance of the first movement of the G major Organ Sonata which was applauded by a goodly number of boys; I hasten to add that it was the piece they were applauding and not necessarily the performance!

From MICHAEL PLANT

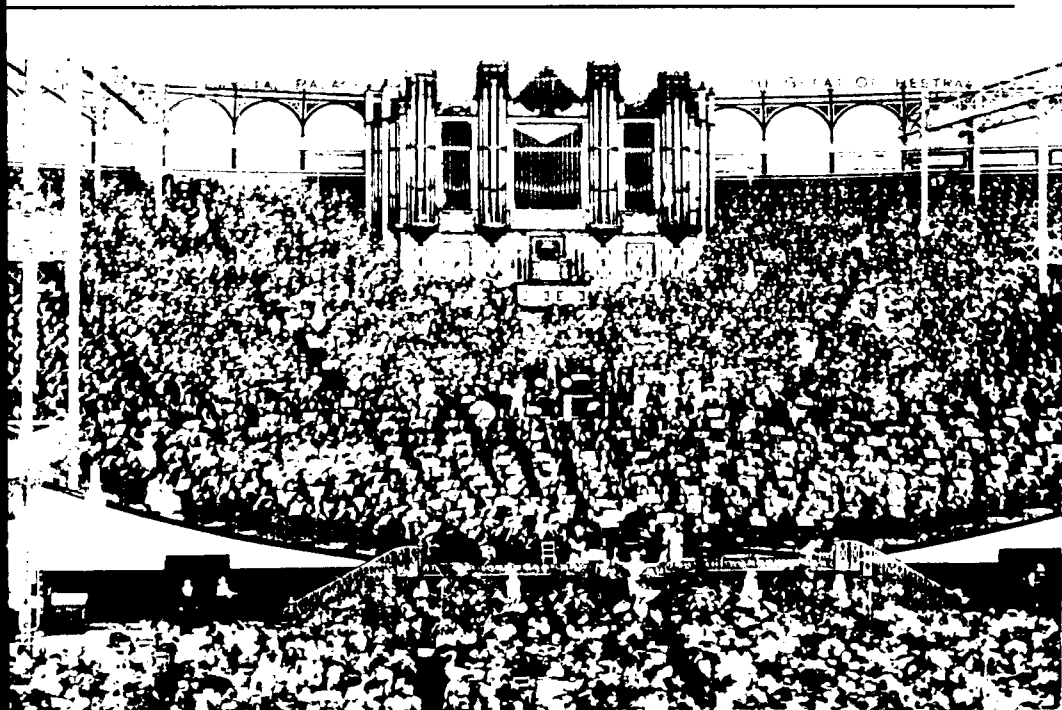
The tribute paid to Elgar by British Railways in bestowing his name upon a diesel railway locomotive is welcome indeed, and the more so because no other composer, so far as I am aware, has been similarly honoured in this country: this, despite the weakness many musicians and music-lovers have for trains and railways.

For the record, 50 007 is actually the third locomotive to bear the name, and each one gave up its existing name for the purpose. The 'Railway Magazine' for May, 1984 gives the details. Firstly, the Great Western Railway celebrated Elgar's 75th birthday by renaming 'A.H.Mills' in August, 1932. 'A.H.Mills' bore the number 3414, and was a 'Bulldog' Class 4-4-0. This mixed-traffic steam engine was already old in 1932 (it had been built in 1906), and it was withdrawn from service in October, 1938.

By August, 1957, the Great Western Railway had become British Railways (Western Region), which selected 'Lamphey Castle' to mark the centenary of Elgar's birth by carrying his name. No.7005 was a 'Castle' Class express 4-6-0 steam engine, only a few years old in 1957, but withdrawn nevertheless in the early Sixties when diesel power replaced steam generally on the railways.

50 007 is not new - its class was introduced in 1967 - and it gave up the name 'Hercules' to become 'Sir Edward Elgar'. The rest of the class bears names with naval associations. It is likely to remain in service for some years on secondary express routes to Hereford and elsewhere in the Western Region, and I hope that it (and the present writer) may even survive to grace the 150th anniversary of Elgar's birth. It remains to be seen how long it will retain its distinctive and non-standard livery of Brunswick green, applied, I believe, in connection with British Railways' own celebrations of the 150th anniversary of the forming of the G.W.R

The impressive brass nameplate recently acquired by the Birthplace (on loan from the National Railway Museum) appears to be one of the two once carried by the 'Castle' Class locomotive.



A 'Grand Concert' at Crystal Palace at the beginning of this century, as Elgar would have known it.

THE ELGAR SOCIETY

[President: YEHUDI MENUHIN, K.B.E.]

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BRANCHES:

- London *David Bury, SECRETARY, Flat 6, Ringstead Road, Sutton, Surrey SM1 4SE. Tel: 661-2120. John Greig, TREASURER, Aylesham Lodge, Barham Downs, Barham, Canterbury, Kent CT4 6EY. Tel: 0227-831337, to whom combined subscription should be sent.*
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