

# The Elgar Society

# JOURNAL



**MAY**

**1986**

# Contents

	<i>Page</i>
Editorial	3
News Items and Announcements	4
Malvern and Three Choirs Festivals	6
<i>Articles</i>	
Elgar at Ostend	9
My First Year with Elgar	11
The Music that Elgar did not Write	13
International News	14
Concert Diary	16
Book Reviews	17
Record Reviews	20
Branch Reports	27
Letters	29
Subscriptions	32

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ELGAR SOCIETY JOURNAL

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# The Elgar Society Journal

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## EDITORIAL

Vol. 4, no. 5  
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I have often made co-operation between various musical bodies a theme of these editorials, and particularly those bodies, and persons, concerned with Elgar. It is therefore a great pleasure to learn of the generosity of the Elgar Foundation in making a substantial contribution to the "King Olaf" Fund. The response from our members - referred to on another page - was most encouraging, but the additional help by the Foundation has made up the figure to one of which we may all be proud.

The Elgar Foundation is of course a charity, bound by the rules of a charitable trust, which means that it has to work to different rules from those which apply to our own Society, which is owned by and responsible only to the members. However, wherever possible, and I hope *whenever*, we will co-operate. Undoubtedly we share many members and subscribers in common, and certainly we have very similar aims. It is to be hoped that we can work more closely in the future, and some discussions has already taken place. The Journal can be a meeting ground for such co-operation, and a forum of opinion and scholarship. We are always conscious of finance being a limitation on our activities, but there are many ways in which a united approach could expand and greatly improve this publication. Now, some readers may decide that they like the Journal as it is, and members of the Foundation, with their Newsletter, may well feel the same. However, we have to go *somewhere*, and we must decide what it is the Journal is trying to do. We have tried to be interesting always, though that is not easy at times! And we are quite proud of some of the research which has appeared in our pages. Perhaps this is the way in which we can best serve our aims: a wider appreciation of Elgar's works. Let me know your feelings, meanwhile we shall continue to explore ways to make this Journal a more valuable publication for *all* Elgarians.

Ronald Taylor  
Editor

## NEWS ITEMS

Professor Ian Parrott is to tour the United States in the Autumn giving his talk *Elgar's Enigma Solved*. The tour commences at Yale University on October 27th.

DR. PERCY YOUNG will give a lecture on Elgar's unfinished opera *The Spanish Lady* at 6.15 p.m. at St. John's, Smith Square, London, SW1 on May 15th. This will be followed at 8 p.m. by a performance from the students of the Guildhall School of Music of Percy Young's arrangement of *Five Scenes from an Unfinished Opera* by Edward Elgar. Conductor is Cem Mansur. Much of this material is being heard for the first time, and it is hoped that a large audience will be attracted.

ANDREW DAVIS, who is to tour Europe with the Toronto Symphony during August and September, will conduct at the Edinburgh Festival, and he and the Orchestra will give one Prom concert on September 1st. It is announced that Andrew Davis will resign from his position as Conductor and Music Director of the Orchestra in June 1988. Will he return to a European base? Andrew Davis has conducted many memorable Elgar concerts, and Canada's loss may well be our gain.

AS USUAL THE MALVERN FESTIVAL will be supported by an exhibition of Malvern and district artists, once again organised by Vivian Cooke. Various Malvern locations will show different aspects of the exhibition. Full details in the Festival brochure.

THE REV. GORDON RICHMOND and his wife Lorna are now happily settled at the Vicarage, Ryhall, Stamford, Lincs. The founding of the East Midlands branch was largely due to their efforts, and although parish duties prevent Gordon from playing an active part in Elgar Society affairs nowadays, both Gordon and Lorna would much appreciate hearing from old friends, either by letter, or when they are passing near Ryhall.

THE DISCOVERY of a hitherto unknown Elgar manuscript song made headlines in a number of national newspapers in February. As readers will have noted it is a drinking song, written for Cambridge University May Week 1924, and dedicated to Lord Frederick Hamilton. The ms. is to be exhibited in the Birthplace Museum, and doubtless the Elgar Foundation will be giving a full account of the discovery in due course. We congratulate the Birthplace on their latest valuable acquisition.

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## A Hereford Festival

Apart from at last being signposted as part of the "Elgar Trail", Hereford is having an Elgar Festival on Saturday July 5th, with Lady Hull as Patron. G.R.S.'s current successor as Cathedral Organist, Roy Massey, will play Elgar works, there will be tea in the grounds of Plas Gwyn with a talk by Jacob O'Callaghan, author of "Elgar: A Herefordshire Guide", and a chance to visit the study where so many of the greatest works were composed, and the day is rounded off with a concert featuring the *Serenade for Strings* and *Sospiri* in the Shire Hall. Also on show will be G.R.S.'s Visitors Book containing the famous "Moods of Dan", Elgar's sketches of themes he used later in *Gerontius*.

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## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**of The Elgar Society will be held on**

**Saturday, May 31st 1986**

**at 2.30 p.m.**

**Venue: Malvern Girls School, Great Malvern, Worcs  
(opposite Great Malvern Station)**

**All members are invited to attend the Annual General Meeting, 1986. Reports of the Society's activities will be given, and discussions will take place on various aspects of the Society's work. Officers of the Society must stand for election in accordance with the constitution. We do urge members to attend - it is YOUR Society and we need your support and criticism.**

**Refreshments will be available, and members will note from the report on another page that the final concert of the Malvern Festival during the evening of May 31st will include the *Symphony no.1*, performed by the Halle Orchestra, conducted by James Loughran.**

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**A Guided Tour to Elgar's Birthplace and Museum will be held on Tuesday, 3rd June. Organised by the University of Bristol Extra-Mural Studies Dept, the coach will leave lower Woodland Road, Bristol, returning to Bristol in the early evening. Cost £6.00. Booking in advance is essential, and details are available from the Staff Tutor in Music, at the Extra-Mural Studies Dept, University of Bristol, Wills Memorial Building, Queens Road, Bristol. Quote ref. B85 BO15 SE.**

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## **JOURNAL BACK ISSUES**

**The Editor has some back numbers of the Journal for sale, as well as issues of its predecessor, the Elgar Society Newsletter. The following are available and will be sent, post free, for the prices stated. Please note that issues not listed are out of print.**

**1977. Jan. (\*very few available) £1.25p. May & September. 75p. each**

**1978. Jan. May & September. 75p. each.**

**1979. Jan. £1.15p. September. 85p. each.**

**1980. Jan. May & September 95p. each.**

**1981. Jan. May & September 95p each.**

**1982. Jan. May & September 95p. each.**

**1983. Jan. May & September £1 each.**

**1984. Jan. May & September £1.25p. each.**

## OUR THIRTY-FIFTH BIRTHDAY.....

A pleasant evening was spent at the Savile Club, on the 29th January hosted by our Chairman, Michael Pope. This was the exact anniversary of the founding of the Society in 1951. Regrettably, Frank Greatwich, a founder-member in those first days, was unable to be present owing to indisposition. We sent our good wishes to Frank, and to other members unable to be present.

A particular pleasure for us all was in the presentation of a CD player to our ex-Secretary Andrew Neill. Mr. Neill's thanks are recorded on another page, but we were somewhat taken aback when we found that he and his family are to be in Australia for the next three years. However, much as we shall miss them, we wish them well, and who knows, in his few leisure moments he might well establish an Australian branch. Stranger things have happened! At the January party the Chairman paid tribute to Andrew Neill's splendid work, and mentioned his particular efforts over the recording of *King Olaf*. Without Andrew's very strong advocacy and hard work it is possible that the recording would not have been made. In his reply Mr. Neill thanked the members for their support, good wishes, and friendship. He also thanked the 'team' of officers who had done much to expand the Society in the last few years.

It is also worth recording here the excellent response on the part of individual members to the King Olaf Recording Fund. Many members contributed, and every donation has been noted carefully. Without these donations we could not have kept our part of the bargain with EMI and made the projected recording a reality. The Officers of the Society thank you all.

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## THE MALVERN FESTIVAL 18th to 31st May 1986

This year's Malvern Festival is mainly devoted to the work of Benjamin Britten. Various artists and orchestras will perform a variety of works by the composer, though as in other years there will be works by a number of great masters in the series of concerts.

Elgar is only represented twice in the official programme this year, but the two contributions are distinguished. First, on 26th May at 7.30 p.m. the Jones and Crossland Brass Band will perform the *Severn Suite*. (Also in the programme will be works by Ireland, Tippett, and Vaughan Williams). The conductor is Stephen Roberts. The second Elgar piece is a performance of the *Symphony no 1* on 31st May, at 7.0 p.m. The Halle Orchestra will be conducted by James Loughran, and the programme also includes Britten's *Simple Symphony* and Schubert's '*Unfinished*'. This concert takes place on the same day as the Society's AGM and should make a splendid end to the day.

This notice will appear rather late for booking but the Box Office may be contacted at 06845 3377, and written applications for full details should be sent to Box Office, Malvern Festival Theatre, Grange Road, Malvern, Worcs. There will also be the usual number of Fringe Activities associated with the main Festival.

# The Three Choirs Festival 1986

16th - 23rd August

This year Gloucester plays host to the Annual Three Choirs Festival, and although there are no large choral works by Elgar in the programme, it is on the whole an interesting selection of music, and more experimental than in some recent years.

First, the Elgar items - on 20th August a concert by the London Mozart Players which includes the *Serenade for Strings*. This takes place in Tewkesbury Abbey. On the 21st a concert in Gloucester Cathedral by the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Sir Charles Groves. The concert includes Finzi's seldom-heard *Cello Concerto*, and Elgar's *Second Symphony*. On the last day, the 23rd, a morning concert by the famous Desford Colliery Dowty Band includes *The Severn Suite*.

As usual there are various fringe activities including a screening of the Central TV film '*Hope and Glory*', which will be shown at Wheatstone Hall, Gloucester. Unfortunately it clashes exactly with the Desford Colliery Band Concert - a bad piece of planning as far as we are concerned! Maybe there will be a last minute change of arrangements. Such changes have been known...

Brochures with full details and booking form are obtainable from the *Festival Booking Office, College Green, Gloucester. (Tel: 0452 505555.)*

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## ELGAR SOCIETY TEA at the Three Choirs Festival.

Once again the Elgar Society will host a tea at the beginning of the Festival, this time organised by the South West branch. It will take place on 17 August 1986 at 4.00 p.m. As before the Gloucester venue will be the Raikes Room (upstairs) in St. Mary's Schoolroom, attached to St. Mary-de-Crypt, Southgate Street. This is a few minutes walk from the Cathedral.

These social gatherings are always pleasant occasions, and we hope to see a number of members and friends on this occasion. It is not necessary to pay the small admission cost in advance, but in order to plan for the numbers attending we would appreciate a note to say that you intend to be present. Please advise Ron Bleach, 54 Clarendon Road, Redland, Bristol, as soon as you can, and if possible not later than the beginning of August.

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GROUP OF COMPOSERS AND OTHERS, PHOTOGRAPHED AT THE KURSAAL, OSTEND, ON THE OCCASION OF THE ELGAR FESTIVAL.

*(Reproduced by special permission of M. Chasseraux, Le Stéréo-Mondain, Ostend-Kursaal.)*

The names, reading from left to right, are, *back row*: M. Paul Gilson, Professor of the Royal Conservatoire, Brussels; M. Sylvain Dupuis, Chef d'orchestre of the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie, Brussels; M. Léon Lescauwat, Secretary of the Music Department, Kursaal, Ostend; M. Léon Rinskopf, Musical Director, Kursaal, Ostend; M. Guillaume Guidé, Director of the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie, Brussels; M. Gustave Huberti, Director of l'École de Musique, Schaarbeek; M. Jan Blockx, Director of the Royal Conservatoire, Antwerp; M. Edmond Picard, Member of the Sénat de Belgique. *Front row*: M. Emile Mathieu, Director of the Royal Conservatoire, Ghent; M. Vincent d'Indy; Sir Edward Elgar; M. Edgar Tincl, Director of l'École de Musique Religieuse, Malines.



# AN ELGAR CONCERT AT OSTEND

(by our special correspondent)

Ostend, August 14.

A great honour was accorded to Sir Edward Elgar, and through him to English music, when M Léon Rinskopf invited him to conduct a concert consisting entirely of his own compositions. This took place at the Kursaal to-night, and it was a very great pleasure to me to be present at the first musical 'Festival' - as the programme designated the concert - in Belgium, if not on the Continent, devoted exclusively to the works of one of our most distinguished composers and conducted by himself.

The programme is subjoined, literally as printed:

VENDREDI, 14 AOUT 1908  
à 8 1/2 heures du soir

## FESTIVAL

consacré aux oeuvres du compositeur anglais  
Sir EDWARD ELGAR,  
sous la direction du Maître  
avec le concours de Mlle. TILLY KOENEN, cantatrice.

### PREMIÈRE PARTIE

Dans le Midi, ouverture.  
Marines, mélodies, avec accompagnement d'orchestre.  
a. Berceuse; b. Au Port; c. Dimanche matin,  
en mer.  
Mlle. TILLY KOENEN.  
La Baguette magique de la Jeunesse,  
suite d'orchestre.  
a. Ouverture; b. Sérénade; c. Menuet; d. Danse  
du Soleil; e. Joueurs de pipeaux féériques;  
f. Berceuse; g. Fées et géants.

### DEUXIÈME PARTIE.

Variations pour orchestre.  
Marines, mélodies, avec accompagnement d'orchestre.  
d. Vers les îlots du corail; e. Le nageur.  
Mlle. TILLY KOENEN.  
Marche triomphale de Caractacus.

The words of the songs were printed in English and with a French translation, and each orchestral piece had a short descriptive note, of which the following, treating of the 'Variations on an original theme,' will serve as a specimen:

Ces variations, sur un thème original, portant la dédicace: "A ceux de mes amis qui y sont dépeints"; il est entendu qu'elles dépeignent plus au moins la personnalité de ces amis. Les caractères et idiosyncrasies évoqués offrent des contrastes très marqués, les mouvements allant du *largo* au *presto*.

Le thème *andante en sol* mineur est intitulé *Enigme*, l'auteur ayant voulu suggérer que la solution ou la portée de l'idée qu'il contient varie selon les portraits des amis auxquels l'auteur a songé dans ses *Variations*.

When Sir Edward Elgar appeared on the orchestra, the band rose and greeted him with a brilliant fanfare, thus paying him a tribute of high and rare distinction. The orchestral playing can be summed up in one word - 'superb'; and in regard to M Rinskopf, the able conductor of the orchestra, and the director of the Kursaal, nothing could have been more cordial than their attitude of profound admiration and appreciation towards the hero of the day; indeed, all concerned spared no pains in contributing to the success of this most interesting event.

I have no hesitation in saying that Sir Edward has achieved a very great success, both as a composer and conductor, by this performance, which is nothing less than a triumph for British music. The applause throughout was remarkable for its genuine expression of feeling. After the concert 'God save the King' was spontaneously played by the band with wonderful effect, whereupon the entire audience, numbering some 7,000 people, rose and remained standing until our National Hymn was finished; and then the enthusiasm for the composer-conductor was so overwhelming that he had to appear again and again in response to the calls of the delighted hearers of his music.

By a fortunate circumstance, some of the most eminent French and Belgian composers happened to be in the town to adjudicate upon an opera competition, and they were all present at the rehearsal of the Elgar concert. It was an act of gracious hospitality on the part of M. Rinskopf to invite these distinguished gentlemen and others to meet Sir Edward Elgar at lunch, and a happy thought to have them photographed in a group. This interesting picture I was fortunate enough to be able to procure for reproduction in THE MUSICAL TIMES.

The following are some translated extracts from the press notices of the festival:

Our readers will find a special notice of the Elgar festival. . . . It was a manifestation of the highest importance, not only artistic but international. There is, indeed, no doubt that the exceptionally warm reception reserved for the British composer will increase the appreciation of Ostend among our neighbours on the other side of the channel. . . .

Unknown yesterday, celebrated to-morrow, perhaps. This may be said of Edward Elgar, the British composer, who came on Friday to reveal to us that it is possible to be English and to be a musician, a combination which we had been fond of thinking impossible. . . . Let us proceed to say that the abundance of happy harmonic discoveries, richness of invention, intensity of expression, power in sweetness - a rare charm - form in Edward Elgar a combination of the most precious gifts with which an artist-nature can be endowed. . . . Edward Elgar seems to be very easily impressed by the agitations of nature. . . his music

dashes onwards, rushes, bounds, then softens again, melts to return to sympathetic harmony. Listen to 'In the South' and to the 'Wand of Youth', and it (the music) is beautiful. . . because it is beautiful. Elgar, without being a revolutionist, has forged a *personal* harmonic language, very beautiful and very living, and that is a sufficient claim to glory. . . . The fashionable and discerning audience of the Kursaal made this plain to Edward Elgar in the triumph they accorded to him. - *L'Echo d'Ostende*, August 17, 1908.

On Friday there was a remarkable, sensational soirée. Sir Edward Elgar, the great English composer, conducted a concert consisting only of his own works, full of colour, originality, and full of surprises. . . . Mlle. Tilly Koenen interpreted the cycle Sea-pictures, in which the composer has had recourse to all the colours of his palette, from the most tender to the most sombre. He painted Sea-slumber, in Haven, Sabbath morning at sea, marvellously, with extremely rich effects of harmony. With the exception of the 'Variations,' which Rinskopf has sometimes given us, all these pieces were new to the orchestra. Sir Edward was astonished at the first rehearsal, and if he had not been assured that it was the case, he would never have believed that the orchestra was reading his works for the first time, so superior was their rendering of them. And yet Elgar is difficult, very difficult, and likes to stop the orchestra for a scarcely perceptible 'nuance'. This renders the compliment to Rinskopf infinitely greater, more flattering, and the gentlemen of the orchestra were deeply touched by the felicitations of the English master. The audience was enormous, and composed of all nationalities. - *Le Carrillon*, Ostend, August 18, 1908

The Elgar festival marks what the English call 'a red-letter day' in the history of the Kursaal concerts. Sir Edward Elgar, who occupies at the present day a remarkable position among our greatest composers, exercises an especial charm by his limpid melodiousness, by the clearness of his polyphony, and the beauty of his orchestral 'timbre'. Above all, his music is always written in a noble style, and is always of irreproachable purity. There is not a single page in the long programme which the illustrious English composer submitted to us, which might not serve as a model. It is sane music, it is Art, in the full acceptance of the word. - *Journal D'Anvers*, August 22, 1908.

(From The Musical Times, Sept 1908.) Reprinted by kind permission.

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## MY FIRST YEAR WITH ELGAR

by

Alexander Kiselov

A few months ago I listened to RECORDING OF THE WEEK on the BBC's World Service which is a weekly fixture with me. Julian Lloyd Webber talked about his recent album TRAVELS WITH MY CELLO and he told about his tour of Germany. I forgot the name of the town where he played the Elgar Cello Concerto with the local forces. After the concert there was a reception at which Mr Lloyd Webber was present. An old lady came up to him and said, 'You come from England, don't you, and where does this chap Elgar come from?' Wallowing in my superior knowledge I was positively beside myself with mirth. However, I properly admonished myself afterwards because, for all my love and knowledge of music, England and English Literature, my discovery of Elgar happened relatively recently.

Oddly enough, I first came across Sir Edward's name back in my student days when I was reading English. The name cropped up in one of the texts I was working on, it didn't ring even a most distant bell so I had to look up the notes after the text. Obviously they didn't reveal a wealth of information but merely stated the fact that Elgar, Sir Edward, was an English composer and then followed the inevitable two dates in parentheses.

Years later the London Symphony Orchestra came to Moscow and I met and became friends with Francis Saunders, an LSO cellist. After his return to England Francis sent me a batch of records amongst which was my very first Elgar album, the *Enigma Variations* played by the LSO under Sir Adrian Boult. I enjoyed the music tremendously, wondered why it was never performed in this country, and that was that.

Being a member of the LSO club I got to know Brian and Margaret Dolan, we started corresponding, and a true, deep friendship very soon developed. And it's all thanks to Brian and Margaret's enthusiasm and generosity that I became an ardent admirer of Elgar's music and a member of the Elgar Society. Now I am the proud possessor of what is probably the best Elgar music collection in the USSR. And it is most certainly unique in Yaroslavl!

My proper acquaintance with Elgar's music began with Symphony No. 1 (LPO/Handley) and I got caught up in the music from the moment I heard that noble, serene opening, and the first thing that struck me (and the impression was later on reiterated when I listened to Elgar's other works) was Elgar's originality of musical thinking; it was virtually impossible to anticipate the development of his musical phrases. I had had exactly the same kind of experience when I plunged into Brahms' music. Elgar's symphonic vision is superb. Despite the thematic riches of his Second Symphony, the work is easily heard as a coherent whole.

I continued to discover other works by Elgar and my amazement grew. Why on earth is Elgar's music all but unknown in this country despite Evgeny Svetlanov's laudable pioneering efforts? By the same token I cannot begin to fathom why conductors fail to see *Falstaff* in terms of as great an orchestral boon as any Strauss tone poem. It is a tremendous work and, as far as I am concerned, is greater than the symphonies.

By now I have read some material about Elgar. There may be that quality of Englishness in his music which, as a non-English person I am not in a position to question (although I do take it with a tiny pinch of salt! But I will claim that Elgar has a great deal to say to non-English ears. He is easily one of the greatest romantic composers. I decided to test my impressions and played several Elgar works to my friend who listened to them enraptured and as a result I chalked up my first Elgar convert!

My musical experiences have become eminently richer thanks to Elgar's music, and thanks to him also I have found new very dear friends on both sides of the the Atlantic and I am proud and happy to do what little I can for Sir Edward's music so far away from his homeland. I do hope his music will be heard in the local concert hall. I will certainly send in a review of that historic concert!

Mr Kiselov is the first Elgar Society member from the USSR. We are grateful for his comments, and hope that we shall enrol other Elgar enthusiasts in the USSR in time. *Editor*

## THE MUSIC ELGAR DID NOT WRITE

"Prologue in the hand of Elgar" and "for which it was intended that Elgar should write the music": so the British Library Handlist had it. Irresistible. Unique: an Elgar Prologue in words not music. I sent for a photo-copy, and in the Diaries, looked up Streatfield, the librettist of "Bunyan" for which Elgar had written the Prologue. He appears first on April 15th, 1915 when he came to induce Elgar to join the Volunteers, a crazy involvement which Elgar terminated in June. He engineered the publication of Alice's sonnet in *The Bookman* which delighted both Edward and his lady, who, however, recorded no gratitude for the gentleman's efforts. Never, in all his eleven mentions (last in July 1916), is he anything but formal Mr Streatfield, a fringe person, a useful filler of an empty place at the tea-table or at Queen's Hall during the Elgar week. Alice appreciated him as "nice, kind Mr Streatfield a true champion of E": but, nowhere, does she, who was meticulous in reporting any of Elgar's musical activities, even thoughts, write the expected, "Nice, kind Mr Streatfield wants Elgar to write the moosik for his Bunyan". Yet that work existed. Seven months before Streatfield's first visit to Severn House, he had received it back from a Norman Wilkinson with a tempting note.

Funny that Elgar should write a Prologue about which Alice knew nothing. But when the photocopy came, of course it was *not* in Elgar's difficult, sometimes illegible hand, but could be easily read from start to finish. The formation of certain letters was quite different and the idiom was certainly not his. With confirmatory backing by Michael Kennedy, I informed the British Library of the discrepancy. O yes, that was known now, but the manuscript had not been put in order until the 1982 catalogue: mine was of the previous year!

Elgar *had* considered setting the libretto to music, judging from associated correspondence found among his papers. There is also a note in his own hand, on the envelope containing the papers: "lent to me in case I should carry out the plan of R. Streatfield that I should write music to it. 10 June 1920." Perhaps it arrived with condolences for the death of Alice his inspiration who could have fired "music to it" and made a memorable creation; for Streatfield's Prologue has great possibilities. But it was lent too late, and lost to author and posterity.

*Louie Eickhoff*

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ROGER MARSH of 6 Fairfield Drive, Ossett, West Yorks, WF5 OEA, is a keen collector of Elgar-related postcards, prior to 1934. Correspondence direct to Mr. Marsh please.

RAYMOND MONK wishes to know if any reader has tapes of Jerrold Northrop Moore's broadcasts on 'Elgar as Conductor'. He believes there were three such talks, given some time in the 1970s. Anyone owning these tapes is asked to contact Raymond Monk, 19 Severn Street, Leicester LE2 ONN

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

**Vienna** The British Council are celebrating the 40th anniversary of relations with Austria with 'Britain in Vienna', a presentation between March and May 1986 including many musical events in addition to performance by the National Theatre, fashion shows, design and art exhibitions and a fringe festival. The musical celebrations are focussed round a gala concert on 15 April by the Philharmonia Orchestra under Giuseppe Sinopoli which will include the *Enigma Variations* and Schumann's *Second Symphony*. It is hoped that the Prince & Princess of Wales will be in the audience. On 2 May another great Elgar work, *The Dream of Gerontius*, will receive what is probably its first performance in Austria under Sir Charles Mackerras, with Anne Howells, Robert Tear, Thomas Hampson, the Vienna State Opera Chorus and the Austrian Radio Symphony Orchestra. Christopher Wentworth-Stanley also reports a performance of the *Cello Concerto* by Heinrich Schiff and no less than four recent performance of the *Serenade for Strings*. Meanwhile at the Vienna Conservatoire the *Violin Concerto* has been chosen as the subject of a seminar.

**Sweden** A performance of *The Kingdom* in the Autumn of 1985 which was conducted by Charles Farncombe, and in which the soprano soloist was Teresa Cahill, was very well received indeed by the audience.

**The Dutch Elgar Society** Wout Hoogendijk reported on 8 February that he had been instrumental in arranging a musical evening with the Netherlands-England Society in the presence of the British Ambassador, Mr Margetson. The chamber orchestra Musica Montana, of which Mr Hoogendijk is a member, included in their programme the *Elegy for Strings*. He has also recently taken part in a public performance of the *Piano Quintet*. He reports that the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra included the *Violin Concerto* and the *Cello Concerto* (twice) in 1985; the *Variations* were performed early in 1986 and the two symphonies one scheduled for the Spring, the Second under the baton of our Vice-President, Vernon Handley. All the main orchestras in Holland have Elgar in their repertoire and his music is played frequently on the radio. Recently there has been a performance of *The Music Makers*. It is good to know that Holland has not forgotten Elgar since the magnificent Festival in 1983.

The first Vancouver performance of *Dream of Gerontius* for 28 years took place in November. The Bach Choir, the Vancouver Chamber Choir, the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, were conducted by Bruce Pullan. Soloists were Stuart Burrows, and Canadians Janet Stubbs and Gary Relyea. Reviews were excellent, but to most of the audience it was unfamiliar music. A sobering thought is that it cost \$60,000 to put on the performance. This very heavy expenditure is one reason why many large choral works, familiar to us, are not performed abroad. We salute the Vancouver performers for risking such a large sum and are glad that the outcome was an artistic and critical success.

## 'ENIGMA' IN YAROSLAVL

Now Yaroslavl has been put on the Elgarian map, as it were. It is an old town in central Russia, some 200 miles north-east of Moscow, situated on the Volga banks.

Thanks to the enthusiasm for Elgar's music of the local orchestra's principal conductor, Mr. Vladimir Ponkin, I hope Elgar's works will be heard regularly here.

The historic concert took place on 15th February 1986, when *Variations on an Original Theme ('Enigma')* was heard in Yaroslavl for the first time. It was the last piece of the programme and I must admit it was with a certain amount of apprehension that I awaited its turn. We do not enjoy the good fortune of having provincial orchestras of the RLPO or Bournemouth Sinfonietta stature, and I am used to hearing my two 'Enigmas' on LP played by the LSO under Boult and LPO conducted by Barenboim.

When the music began, however, and I followed it into the second variation my tension abated and I relaxed and let the music engulf me. I am extremely happy to report it was a very good performance. It was a pleasure to see the conductor's enthusiasm communicating to the musicians who responded alertly and it was clear they were sharing the conductor's enjoyment of the music-making. Mr. Ponkin's greatest merit was that he managed to give a reading of the work not as a series of variations but as a cogent whole. Full marks to him.

Yes, I could have scooped a handful of faults out to carp at but it would be churlish under the circumstances. What matters is that it was a good, dedicated performance and that the audience received it warmly. No prizes for guessing who was the most proud and happy person in the auditorium. After the concert I went backstage to shake Mr. Ponkin's hand and thank him on behalf of the Elgar Society and myself. And roll on FALSTAFF, my favourite!

A. Kiselov, Yaroslavl.

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## THE ELGARS OF WORCESTER

by

*K.E.L. and Marion Simmons*

This Elgar Society publication is a remarkable piece of original research which tells for the first time the story of the Elgar family in their early days in Worcester, gives details of their musical contemporaries in the city, together with details, and a photograph, of an Elgar house which had been previously overlooked. A fascinating study of interest to all Elgarians.

Price to members: £1.50 *post free*

Cheques should be made payable to the Elgar Society and orders sent to the Editor of the JOURNAL, 104 Crescent Road, New Barnet, Herts, EN4 9RJ.

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Readers are advised to check details nearer the dates of concerts.

15 May	The Spanish Lady. Five scenes from an unfinished opera, arr. Percy M. Young. (First Performance) <i>Soloists and Orchestra of City University &amp; Guildhall School of Music/Cem Mansur</i>	St. John's, Smith Square, London SW1. 8.00 p.m.
7 June	The Music Makers <i>Halesowen Choral Society</i>	St. Margaret's Church, Hasbury, Halesowen. Details from D. Wellings, 147 Barrs Road, Cradley Heath, W. Midlands
8 June	Enigma Variations <i>RPO/Donald Cashmore</i>	Royal Festival Hall
8 June	Sea Pictures <i>Lilian Carson/Concordia String Quartet</i>	Purcell Room, South Bank
14 June	Serenade for Strings <i>Haydn Chamber Orchestra/Peter Williams</i>	Queen Elizabeth Hall, South Bank
15 June	String Quartet <i>Gabrieli String Quartet</i>	Queen Elizabeth Hall, South Bank
23 June	La Capricieuse <i>Mischa Lefkowitz (violin)</i>	Purcell Room, South Bank
30 July	Violin Concerto <i>BBC SO/Ida Haendel/Pritchard</i>	Royal Albert Hall Promenade Concert
9 August	In the South <i>BBC Welsh SO/Loughran</i>	Royal Albert Hall Promenade Concert
20 August	Introduction and Allegro <i>BBC SO/Atherton</i>	Royal Albert Hall Promenade Concert
28 August	Enigma Variations <i>LPO/Haitink</i>	Royal Albert Hall Promenade Concert
20 Sept.	Introduction and Allegro <i>Rutland Sinfonia/Collett (solo quartet led by Isabelle Flory)</i>	Uppingham School Hall, Rutland. 7.30 p.m.
1 Nov.	Fringes of the Fleet <i>4 baritones, Rutland Sinfonia/Collett</i>	Uppingham School Hall, Rutland. 7.30 p.m.



## BOOK REVIEWS

Grundy, Michael. *Elgar's Beloved Country*. Second Edition.

*Worcester City and Malvern Hills District Councils*, 1985 £1.75

O'Callaghan, Jacob. *Elgar: A Hereford Guide*.

*Unipress*, 1985 £1.35

In 1984, the year of the fiftieth anniversary of Elgar's death, the District Councils of Worcester City and the Malvern Hills issued a leaflet (price 25p) entitled 'The Elgar Trail'. This gives a list of 27 places for motorists to visit in Worcestershire, together with a general map and town map of Worcester itself, and is intended to be used in connection with the 63 directional road signs bearing the now familiar violin logo and the words 'Elgar Route', a scheme financed at great cost by the Hereford and Worcester County Council to encourage tourism in the area. Among the places mentioned are a number of 'Elgar houses' (including, alas, the spurious 2 College Yard in Worcester) as well as other buildings and localities. Later, the original list was supplemented in a leaflet by a further 21 places of interest, including (as a STOP PRESS item) 84 High Street, a building connected with Helen Weaver - though it was not her home when she was engaged to Elgar (as is, perhaps, implied) nor had it been, it seems, since early childhood; there is also the now obligatory mention of 'Enigma No. 13' even though, under Madresfield Court higher in the list, the identity of the person pictured within that variation was given as Lady Mary Lygon - which many Elgarians still consider a more likely solution. In 1984 also, the same District Councils published - as 'a companion and memento for those exploring the Elgar Route' - an attractive booklet (price then £1.50) by the local Worcester journalist Michael Grundy. Rushed out in time for the Worcester meeting of The Three Choirs Festival, with its special Elgar significance, this contained a number of unfortunate inaccuracies - including the misidentification of two houses in Worcester (Tower House and 2 College Yard) as Elgar houses.

The original edition being exhausted, 'Elgar's Beloved Country' has been revised and re-issued in a new edition (with a price increase but still excellent value) and can now be recommended to serious Elgarians as well as general readers, especially for its numerous historical and modern photographs including many of places or objects which have not appeared in books on Elgar before, such as the chair said to have been used by him at the Worcester Glee Club and the skull motif in Worcester Cathedral that awed him as a boy. The chance has been taken, within the same plan as before and occupying the same number of pages (79), to improve the whole appearance of the publication internally, though a few rough edges remain: the text has been reset, the layout tidied, and the number of photographs increased (to over 80) - but it is regrettable that the one of South Bank Nursing Home (demolished in 1984) has been replaced by a drawing. Among the additional photographs, and obviously inserted at the last minute, is one said to be of Helen Weaver; this also appeared in *The Sunday Times* though, as far as I know, it has still not been authenticated and could perhaps just as well be of her older sister Ada Clara, if of a Weaver girl at all (surely, Helen had fair hair not the dark hair shown here?). The text remains much as it was but has been

brought up to date and most of the errors corrected, taking advantage of the latest research. Although a short reading list is given in the acknowledgements, the book is largely undocumented, the footnote references of the first edition having been removed and no additional sources indicated. Particularly regrettable is the absence of any mention of Young's biography or his collections of Elgar letters, even though the importance of the letters is stressed in the text; stranger still is the lack of any reference on a page headed 'Elgar Lived Here' to the book of that name.

A first chapter deals briefly with the 'beloved country' itself, Elgar's own name for south Worcestershire, seen as 'the inspirational backcloth for so much of the music of, arguably, Britain's greatest composer'; a summary of Elgar's life follows, then chapters on 'Love of Worcester', 'Masterpieces from Malvern', 'Love of Worcester Cathedral', 'Elgar and the Three Choirs', and 'Elgar - the Man'; and the book closes with chapters on The Birthplace Museum and some of the novelties to be seen there. Apart from some quotations from local newspapers, Mr Grundy adds little to what was known before but, allowing for the inevitable journalistic style (which will worry some more than others), he has done his job of compilation well though some infelicities remain - for example, that C. Alice Roberts (then in her late thirties) was 'sent by her family ... to take lessons from Elgar' (p.37) and that 'Starlight Express' (*sic*) is 'a refreshingly light and touching series of orchestrated songs ... drawn from youthful sketches' (p.20).

Hereford is mentioned in Mr Grundy's book but only marginally, while the Elgar Trail tourist route has still to extend into the heart of Herefordshire where Elgar connections are strong. The reasons for this are complex, and need not concern us here, but the situation has led to some unfortunate, and unnecessary, resentment. One positive reaction, however, has been the writing of Jacob O'Callaghan's booklet which provides its own guide (based on the route proposed by the County Council Surveyor as an extension of the Elgar Trail) to 19 places of interest in the county and in Hereford itself, taking up the trail at Little Malvern in the south and at Storrige in the north. This unpretentious little work of some 20 pages has a number of photographs and maps together with brief notes on the places mentioned.

The 'Complete Elgarian' (see the Journal for May 1985, p. 7) will find all three of these publications useful additions to his library.

K.E.L.S.

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Knowles, John. Elgar's Interpreters on Record: A Discography

*Second Edition, revised & enlarged.*

*Thames Publishing, 1985 £8.50*

Collectors of Elgar records will welcome this new edition of John Knowles' *Elgar's Interpreters on Record*, which first appeared eight years ago and has now been entirely recast and enlarged. The work has been prefaced with a commentary - liberally illustrated with photographs of artistes and reproductions of contemporary advertisements - in which attention is drawn to landmarks in the course of the 84 years of recording under review. The period has been divided into decades after summarising

the pioneering issues prior to the 1920s. This is a convenient demarcation, which can be readily aligned with parallel developments in the recording industry: the advent of electrical recording in the mid-twenties, long playing records from the early fifties, and so on.

Titles are set out in alphabetical order in six sections according to *genre*, plus arrangements and 'miscellaneous' - the last-named being principally a listing of recorded talks - and there is a useful index of works at the end. Performances are listed under titles in chronological order of recording, and the respective maker's catalogue numbers and dating particulars are spread over three columns. In these are entered details of 78s, long-playing records and compact discs, and tape issues respectively. This is convenient for tracing re-recordings from one column to the next, but the space occupied, without adopting a reduced type-face, has entailed resorting to an oblong format which may not be universally popular. On the other hand, it will be found easier to make manuscript additions to the existing entries in larger type, and the spacing between titles suggests that this may have been in the compiler's mind, although he has given no instructions on the matter. The absence of a declared 'cut-off' date however may imply that additions will be taken care of in supplements, as before. We shall see.

In his preface to the first edition (which is reproduced) Mr. Knowles warned that record numbers of UK issues were listed, except where recordings have only been released abroad, and this qualification still applies. Matrix and 'take' particulars are really only of benefit in a performer discography\*, and their absence from this work does not detract from its purpose. Ideally - and one realises how seldom that word can be applied in discography - dates of both issue and withdrawal of the various records would have been enormously valuable as bases for determining their commercial lives, but, clearly, the research required for this purpose would have been prohibitive, and we must congratulate Mr. Knowles instead that he has been able to approximate so many of the issue dates, and, almost as good, provide references to reviews in *The Gramophone* where the dates have eluded him. Two lesser omissions, however, may be mentioned: there is no means of distinguishing records made by the acoustic (pre-electric) process, and it would have been helpful to quote the voices of the various singers: s, c, t and b. (One has to search elsewhere to learn, for instance, that Bantock Pierpoint was a baritone.)

The commentary preceding the discography proper "Landmarks in the recording of Elgar's music" is a succinct and very readable summary of principal issues. Only rarely does Mr. Knowles lapse from objectivity, as for example in his observation that, in comparing the two recordings of *The Coronation Ode*, "It was Alexander Gibson with RCA who showed the greater sensitivity and his more musical account is generally to be preferred." (*The Gramophone* reviewer, for once, held the contrary view.) But it is churlish to dwell on such details amid so much that is genuinely informative. Surprisingly, the only omissions of consequence from the landmarks appear to be the Britten and Gibson recordings of *Gerontius*, which were both issued in the seventies. *The Gramophone* considered Peter Pears (who else?) in the former to be the best *Gerontius* on record since Heddle Nash, and John Steane\*\* saw Britten as "part of the inspiration, conducting with the freshening qualities that also mark his piano accompaniments."

It is the commentary and the most interesting illustrations which elevate the work above the likeness to a telephone directory, to which it might otherwise, inevitably, be held. A little more detail in the photograph captions would have been welcome, however. (Does anybody know the identity of all those solemn people in attendance on Elgar and German at 'a gramophone party' in October, 1919?) Reference to the sources of the material would also have been of interest. One or two small inaccuracies in the text will be self-evident to the reader and need not be detailed here. But such strictures should in no way detract from the very great debt of appreciation owed to John Knowles for tracking down and bringing together data from so many and diverse sources - many of some antiquity - and holding them together so interestingly. Let us hope that in the years to come there will be many more Elgar interpreters on record, and that a future discographer may look back to this volume, acknowledging the foundation to have been well and truly laid.

D.M.

\*For a detailed discography and narrative of Elgar in this role the reader will find full particulars in J.N. Moore's *Elgar on Record* (EMI & Oxford U.P. 1974)

\*\**The Grand Tradition* (Duckworth 1974)

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## RECORD REVIEWS

Sonata for Violin and Piano, opus 82; 6 very easy pieces in the first position; Salut d'Amour; Mot d'Amour; Canto Populare; Sospiri, Chanson de Nuit; Chanson de Matin.

*Nigel Kennedy (violin) and Peter Pettinger (piano)*  
*Chandos ABRD 1099*

Sonata for Violin and Piano, opus 82  
Walton: Sonata for Violin and Piano

*Lorraine McAslan (violin) and John Blakely (piano)*  
*ASV DCA548*

Kennedy and Pettinger give us an unusually large-scale, powerful and passionate interpretation of the violin sonata. There is hardly a trace of the 'autumnal melancholy' traditionally associated with the music of this period in Elgar's career. There are few moments of repose, even in the lovely slow movement, which here acquires a new dimension of restlessness. The link with late Brahms has never been more strongly conveyed. Indeed the scale of the performance almost suggests that these players are thinking of the work as a late romantic concerto which Elgar never got round to orchestrating!

The recording engineers seem to share this view. Kennedy and Pettinger are given a rather close microphone balance, and although they are placed in quite a resonant acoustic (a Bloomsbury church) there is little sense of space, and the piano acquires a slightly hard edge in louder passages. The violin tone, however, is beautifully captured, and Kennedy's complete technical assurance is most impressive.

The Kennedy-Pettinger performance is a revelatory new view of the sonata, and would be a clear first choice recommendation over the only early version still in the catalogues - that made in 1970 by Hugh Bean and David Parkhouse (in any case available only as part of a two-disc set containing all the chamber music). However the rival new version from Lorraine McAslen and John Blakely has come as a complete surprise. A contemporary of Nigel Kennedy, Miss McAslen has an equally infallible technique. There is plenty of character and individuality in her tone production, and she is able to scale down her tone to produce a lovely 'mezza voce' effect from time to time. It may, of course, be that her recording engineers have captured a wider range of tone colour than their Chandos rivals - and indeed I found the sound quality in this disc more appealing generally: there is rather better separation between the instruments, with more sense of space, without in any way undermining the essential intimacy of the players' approach.

There are many similarities between these two interpretations of the violin sonata, but after several hearings I find myself responding more to McAslen and Blakely's slightly more flexible approach and the generally more appealing sound quality. As far as the couplings are concerned, Kennedy gives us a selection of generally early, lightweight Elgar violin compositions, which are enjoyable, but which I suspect even the most devoted Elgar fans will not want to play very often. The only curiosity (other than the early violin exercises, dedicated to his niece, May Grafton) is the version of 'Salut d'Amour', which is an arrangement from 1899 with additional cello *ad lib.*, played here by Stephen Isserlis. On the other hand Lorraine McAslen and John Blakely give us a fine performance of Walton's 1949 sonata, which is long overdue for a new recording

G.H.L.

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'Severn Suite' coupled with 'Severn Suite, coupled with IRELAND: 'Comedy Overture', BLISS: 'Kenilworth', and HOLST: 'A Moorland Suite'

*Grimethorpe Colliery Band/Howarth  
Decca 414/646-1DW*

First released in 1977, this was one of several versions of the 'Severn Suite' in its original band scoring, recorded around that time. None of the rival versions has survived in the catalogues and until recently the only alternative was the Groves recording of the orchestral version, on tape only, in the HMV 'Portrait of the Artist' series ('Groves Conducts Elgar', TCC2-POR 1545909).

The reissue from Decca therefore deserves a warm welcome. It is outstandingly well played and the recorded sound is exceptionally vivid. Quite apart from the 'Severn Suite', this disc presents a well-chosen programme, bringing back into circulation a few of the many riches in the British brass band repertoire, so often overlooked. Highly recommended

G.H.L.

'Introduction and Allegro for Strings', opus 47 (recorded 1937) coupled with HOLST: 'The Planets' (recorded 1945)

*BBC Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Sir Adrian Boult*  
HMV ED 29 0725 -1 (disc)  
HMV ED 29 0725 -4 (tape cassette)

There will be many readers who, like myself, first fell in love with *Introduction and Allegro* through this 1937 Boult recording. I still have the original 78s, but have not played them for many years. Quite frankly, listening to it again in these new transfers has confirmed my feeling that it is the best version ever recorded. I doubt whether any British Orchestra has ever had such a superb string section as the BBC Symphony Orchestra of the 1930s, and here they are at their very best. Boult recorded the work twice more, in 1961 and 1972. In 1937, however, he adopted brisker tempi, and the whole interpretation has a bracing 'open air' quality, with a rhythmic drive and flair which eludes all his rivals. The sound quality, once one has adjusted to the slightly limited upper frequencies and the rather opaque inner detail, is more than acceptable, with the rich, strong bass line characteristic of 78 rpm recording of this period.

The 1945 *Planets* will also have special nostalgic associations for many readers. It, too, is an outstanding performance, well able to hold its own alongside spectacular modern rival versions. Indeed the sound quality is quite remarkable for the time, with amazing clarity of detail. Once again the performance has a special dimension of excitement and spontaneity which none of Boult's four later recordings of the work seem to recapture.

G.H.L.

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The Severn Suite; and Vaughan Williams: *Henry the Fifth*; Holst: *A Moorside Suite*; Ireland: *A Comedy Overture*.

*London Collegiate Brass/James Stobart*  
CRD 1134, CRD C4134

Three of these outstanding works for brass were written for the National Brass Band Championships in the early 1930s. The Vaughan Williams piece is a recently (1981) discovered composition for brass written in 1933/4 but unpublished until edited by Roy Douglas from the composer's ms.

Four such pieces on one disc must be welcome, and the digital recording, made in the Unitarian Chapel in Hampstead, is superb. The acoustic gives the right touch to some brilliant playing, and the slight echo is in keeping with those halls where such music would normally be heard. Indeed it is generally felt that composers with experience of brass ensembles assumed a limited echo when the music was performed, and allowed for this in their writing. Whether this was true of Elgar we do not know, but I have always preferred the brass version of *The Severn Suite* to his arrangement for orchestra. It has more bite and flourish, rich though the orchestral texture is.

I must admit to being disappointed with this performance of *The Severn Suite*. James Stobart seems to interpret *pomposo* too literally, and the *Introduction* is too measured

and, at times, just a little tedious. The London Collegiate Brass is unorthodox in its composition, no cornets at all - they are replaced by trumpets, and instead of saxhorns the Band uses French horns. The resulting sound has a smoothness often missing from a conventional brass band, but it produces a blandness which I found distracting in the Elgar work, despite superb playing. To a lesser extent I found this also marred the performance of the Holst work - one of his finest compositions for bandsmen, and a considerable work in its own right. The John Ireland piece, seldom heard in this form (it was re-written in 1936 for orchestra as *A London Overture*), is the most successful performance. Perhaps because Ireland adopted a deliberate *orchestral* effect in the *Comedy Overture*. Here the smooth sound seems ideally suited to the music, and the delicacy of the writing shows clearly in the excellent recording. The Vaughan Williams piece is a splendid little work, just under 9 minutes, vigorous and sombre by turns, and it is interesting to compare with Walton's music for the film on the same subject. An excellent performance again.

It should be noted that *The Severn Suite* follows the version by Geoffrey Brand based on Geehl's original ms. score rediscovered in 1980. This is pitched a tone higher than the published version used in earlier recordings.

NEMO

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Chanson de Nuit; Chanson de Matin; Elegy; Salut d'Amour; Romance for Bassoon and Orchestra; Rosemary; Carissima; Sospiri; Serenade for Strings

*English Chamber Orchestra, with Martin Gatt, bassoon, in the 'Romance'*

Enigma Variations: Pomp and Circumstance Marches, 1-5

*London Philharmonic Orchestra; all conducted by Daniel Barenboim*

CBS 'Diamond Cut' DC40146

I am not the only reviewer in these pages to have expressed surprise that the Barenboim series of Elgar recordings for CBS was not more enthusiastically received when first released in the 1970s. As far as I am concerned, Barenboim, more than any other non-British conductor seems to possess an uncanny understanding of Elgar's special world.

I suspect that one reason why these performances were not appreciated fully on their original release was the disappointing sound quality of some of the earlier issues. Later recordings, including those chosen for this special refurbishment were much better - but I suspect that the series as a whole has never quite thrown off its suspect early image.

For this special reissue in CBS's 'Diamond Cut' series, the original master tapes have been digitally reprocessed, and top quality Dutch pressings obtained. It is a pity that, for the most part, lighter and more popular Elgar works were chosen for inclusion; the records being designed for the international market, it would have been beneficial to the composer's still uncertain image overseas if at least one other substantial work, such as 'Falstaff' or 'In the South' has been chosen to balance the Variations. Barenboim's recordings of both those works are amongst the best available, and, on their last reissue stood up well from the point of view of sound quality.

However, most of the performances here are very good indeed. Barenboim is not afraid of Elgar's idiosyncracies, including the occasional touches of sentimentality. On the other hand he sees Elgar's artistic personality as an integrated whole. The slighter works on the first disc, with the ECO on fine form, are characterised by a refreshing directness of approach, some of the tempi being faster than we usually hear. Nothing, however, ever seems rushed.

The recording of the Variations originally made up the reverse side of Jaqueline du Pré's second recording of the Cello Concerto (with the Philadelphia Orchestra under Barenboim). Geoffrey Hodgkins enthusiastically reviewed it in the September 1977 issue of the Journal. I can only say that I fully share his enthusiasm. It is undoubtedly one of the finest versions ever recorded; warm and affectionate, meticulous in its phrasing and attention to detail and more strongly characterised than many of the rival versions. On the other hand I share John Knowles' disappointment at the interpretations of the P&C marches, expressed in his review of the mid price reissue five years ago ('Journal', September 1980). Some very fast speeds are chosen, but too often in Barenboim's hands tempi which sound refreshingly exhilarating in the performance conducted by, say, Del Mar or Handley, are merely a frenetic scramble, lacking rhythmic control. Once again one bitterly regrets that a more substantial work, more representative of the best of Barenboim's Elgar conducting was not chosen for this side.

As I have already said, the recordings selected for this reissue were technically amongst the best of the Barenboim Elgar series. This new transfer from the original tapes shows a substantial degree of improvement in detailed clarity and frequency range over the original issues - the difference in the impact of the percussion instruments in the Marches being a remarkable demonstration of what can be achieved by the sensitive application of modern digital technology in the refurbishment of older recordings.

G.H.L.

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Organ Sonata No 1 in G major, opus 28  
REUBKE: Sonata, 94th Psalm

*Nicholas Kynaston, (at Ingolstadt Cathedral, West Germany)  
Mitra OSM 16157*

Organ Sonata No 1  
Schumann: Four Sketches, opus 58

*Jennifer Bate (at Royal Albert Hall)  
ASV ALH 958*

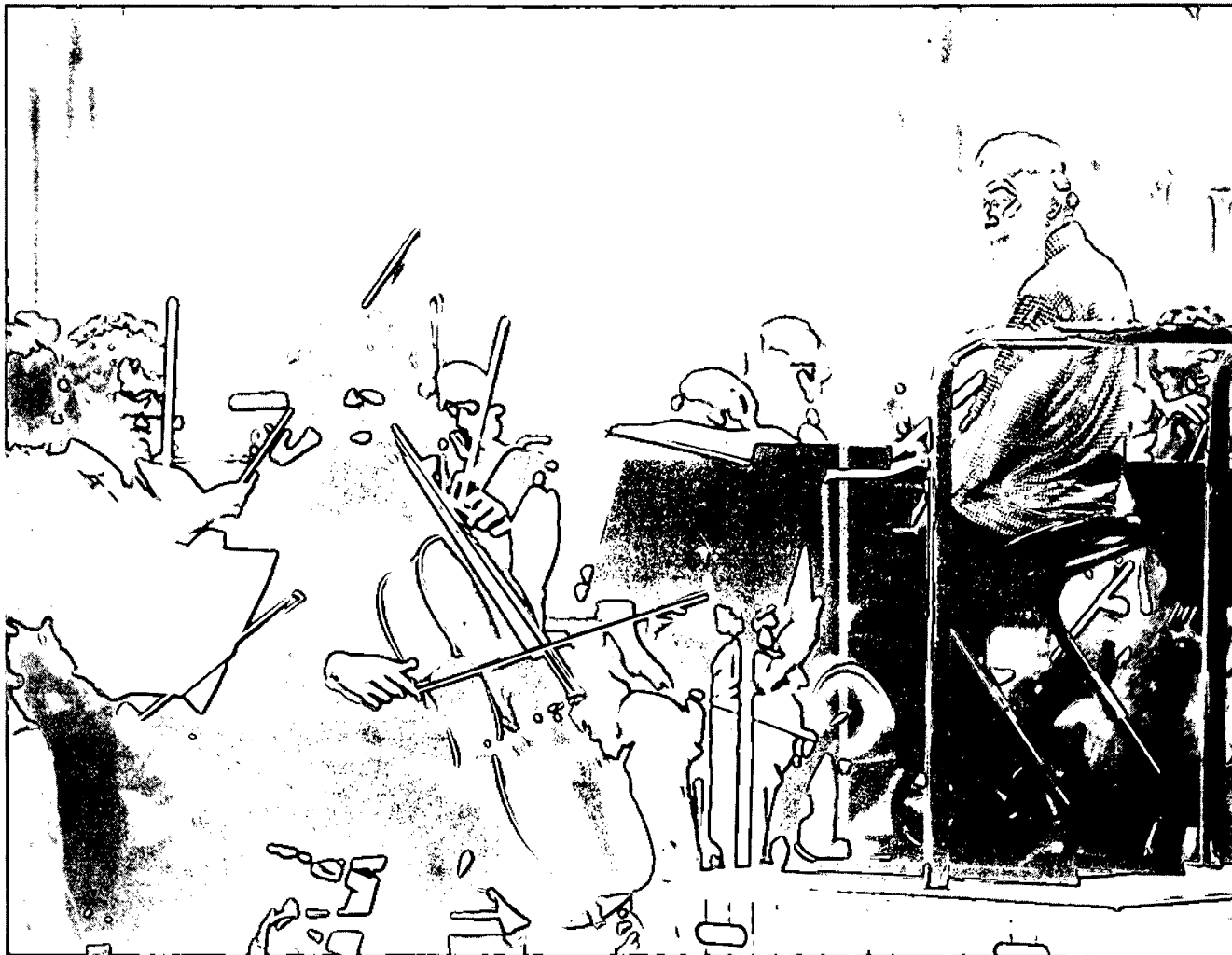
Organ Sonata No 1  
HOWELLS: Rhapsodies Nos 1, 2 & 3

*Christopher Bowers-Broadbent (at Coventry Cathedral)  
Priory PR151*

Organ Sonata No 1  
Organ Sonata No 2 in B flat major, opus 87A, arranged Atkins  
Vesper Voluntaries, opus 14

*Donald Hunt (at Worcester Cathedral)  
Abbey 'Alpha' ACA 540*





Julian Lloyd Webber, Yehudi Menuhin, and the RPO at a rehearsal of the Elgar Cello Concerto, Barbican Concert Hall, July 1985.  
The same artistes recorded the work for Philips shortly afterwards.

(Photo: Richard Holt)

## Organ Sonata No 1

Works for organ by Leighton, Bridge, Howells, Tippett and Britten

Simon Preston (at Colston Hall, Bristol)  
Argo 'Great Classics' series 414 647-1

The *Organ Sonata No 1* clearly remains a great favourite with British organists - understandably so: repeated listening to these five different recordings has only increased by admiration for this extraordinary achievement from Elgar's early maturity as a composer. Three of these new releases are, in fact, reissues, although only one, the Nicholas Kynaston recording, has been reviewed previously in the Journal. Recorded in 1977, it has been unavailable in this country for some time, but distribution of the Mitra catalogue has now been taken over by Priory. Writing about it in May 1980, I described it as a 'dashing, spirited performance', and I think it still stands alone for sheer technical virtuosity.

Listening to these widely different interpretation has highlighted for me the problems facing organists in choosing appropriate tempi in this work. Elgar gives no metronome markings. Kynaston starts off the first movement at a cracking pace - nearly twice as fast as Donald Hunt's dignified 64 crotchets to the minute. Bate, Bowers-Broadbent and Preston all choose roughly similar speeds of around 88 to the minute.

When we get to the second movement, further wide differences of opinion are evident. Kynaston shows off his astonishing technique (aided, no doubt by the light action of his instrument) by playing the opening demisemiquaver passage at an astonishing 96 quavers to the minute. No one else can match that - and here it is Jennifer Bate who is substantially slower than the others. The problem with this movement, however, is the fact that the central section is indicated to be played at half-speed, ie. a crotchet equalling a quaver of the earlier speed. If the first *allegretto* section is taken too fast, then a substantial slowing is going to be necessary if the essential contrasting lyrical quality of this section is to be successfully conveyed. Kynaston has to slow significantly here, losing some of the continuity of rhythmic pulse which Elgar clearly wanted. Jennifer Bate, however, starts so slowly that she has to increase the pace at this point. Bowers-Broadbent and Preston get it just about right, with Hunt, a trifle slower, also understanding the musical requirements here.

By now some idea of the differences between these versions of the *Organ Sonata No 1* will be becoming clear. Jennifer Bate's version, originally released in 1979 on the Enigma label, disappointed me somewhat. The recorded sound is rather close-miked, sadly capturing little of the special ambience of the Royal Albert Hall, and it also reveals some unevenness in the action of the instrument at that time, which might have dictated some of the slow tempi in the faster passagework. It is also the only recording not to get the sonata complete on to one side of the disc. The interesting fill-up (four Schumann *Sketches*, originally written for pedal piano, and arranged for organ by E. Power Biggs), does not compensate for the limitations of this version.

Nicholas Kynaston's performance, exhilarating though it is, now raises some doubts on purely musical grounds - and in any case, the recorded sound, with rather distant microphone placings in a very, very resonant cathedral, lacks clarity and definition.

For anyone wanting a disc devoted entirely to Elgar organ music, and coupling the *Sonata No 1* with the dubious *Sonata No 2*, plus the delightful early *Vesper Voluntaries*, the Donald Hunt recording is a safe if rather unexciting recommendation. The recorded

sound is highly evocative of the authentic cathedral atmosphere - moments of aural confusion, lots of hiss and rumble and other extraneous noises. I should point out, however, that I have not heard the Stephen Cleobury disc which John Knowles reviewed so enthusiastically in the May 1985 Journal.

Choice between the broadly similar Bowers-Broadbent and Preston recordings is difficult. Both have interesting couplings and are very well recorded.

Priory have given Bowers-Broadbent an outstandingly clear, well balanced if slightly light-weight sound - presumably the acoustic effects of Coventry Cathedral are more predictable than those of some of our more traditional ecclesiastical establishments. To my surprise, however, it is the Simon Preston version, first released as long ago as 1967, which has impressed me most. As I have indicated it is highly satisfying musically, the player's fine technique always being at the service of the music. What astonished me, however, was the impressive sound quality. It is wonderfully weighty with a wide dynamic range, yielding nothing to more modern technology in clarity of detail. Both Preston and Bowers-Broadbent have chosen sensible couplings, broadening our knowledge of the best of modern British organ music.

G.H.L.

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## NEWS FROM THE BRANCHES . . .

LONDON Branch reports on its meetings since November. In that month Vernon Handley's visit to speak on *King Olaf* was a highlight which will be long remembered by the large audience. The Handley blend of wit, enthusiasm and total mastery of the subject enthralled the meeting, and was the perfect appetiser for the keenly awaited recording of the work. We were glad also to have with us another vital member of the *King Olaf* recording team: Teresa Cahill, a Branch member.

Vernon Handley is not an easy act to follow, but in December we learned much from art-scholar Joseph Acheson about the artistic background of Elgarian England, and in January we had Ronald Taylor's virtuoso performance "Music in the Air All around Us." For whatever reason we have waited too long in London Branch for this talk and some other branches have had the advantage of us. If your Branch has not invited the Editor, then please do so! His researches into Elgar's involvement in broadcasting have revealed a mine of information, fascinating and often hilarious, which is not available in any of the books. The London Branch Secretary also gives notice that the Branch AGM will be held at Southwark Cathedral on Monday, 2nd June at 7.30 p.m. (i.e. immediately following the "Elgar Evensong" arranged by the branch as its June meeting). Agendas and minutes will be available on the night. Nominations for officers and committee, in writing, signed by two members and countersigned by the nominee, should be sent to the London Branch Secretary (address on back cover) to arrive not later than May 30th.

There is news from the NORTH WEST Branch that a new committee and officers were elected at the AGM at the Royal Northern College of Music in January. Geoffrey Thomason has been elected Secretary, and Dorothy Lawson Treasurer and Membership Secretary. It is not always easy for Branches to find new officers when existing officials retire, and we are glad that the North West has been able to carry on without a break.

At the February meeting Mr. Thomason spoke on the the subject of Elgar's friendship with the famous violinist Adolph Brodsky, who was once the principal of the Royal Manchester College of Music. Using Elgar's letters to Brodsky, the originals of which are now at the Royal Northern College, and copies of Brodsky's letters to Elgar (held at Worcester Record Office) Mr. Thomason was able to reconstruct the correspondence of the two men so far as it has survived.

EAST ANGLIAN Branch opened the New Year with a well-attended AGM, which produced two new committee members to cover resignations, but no other significant changes. Despite the weather, the February winter party was an outstanding success, providing a record profit. Later that month Michael Nicholas delighted members with more highlights from Elgar's choral and church music, (even including a little audience participation). In March Michael Oliver's talk on "Elgar's Legacy" was enthusiastically received by a gratifyingly 'packed house'. Treats in the pipeline are: F. Harrison Oxley's talk on "The Inspiration of Elgar" in April, a video presentation by Central TV of their film "Hope and Glory" in May, a return visit by the A Cappella Singers (from the Southwold area) in June, and finally July, the traditional last social event of the season, known (hopefully) as the Summer Party.

From WEST MIDLANDS comes news of a weekend devoted to Elgar arranged by the Worcester Tourist Office. Jim Bennett, curator of the Birthplace, has arranged an evening of music such as the young Elgar might himself have arranged. This is open to all, and is at 7.30 p.m. in the Guildhall, Saturday, May 10th. On Sunday, June 1st, the branch once again invites members from far and wide to the annual wreath-laying ceremony in Worcester Cathedral at the 4 p.m. Evensong. There is always some special Elgar music sung by the choir at the Memorial Window. Afterwards, birthday celebrations at the Birthplace at around 5.30 p.m. Three large cakes and sherry have been ordered.

EAST MIDLANDS. We are glad to announce the 'revival' of the branch, following the meeting attended by Sir Yehudi Menuhin on April 17th, and the De Montfort Hall Concert on the same day. The first meeting will be held on May 19th at 7.30 p.m. at St. Clement's Hall, Holy Cross Centre, Wellington Street, Leicester (in association with Leicester Recorded Music Society). Robert Mandell will speak on "Elgar's Falstaff - a difficult work?" Other meeting are under consideration but no details are available as we go to press.

SOUTH WEST began the 1986 season with a Member's Own Choice evening. Mainly British music, with a strong leaning to Elgar and his contemporaries. Each member spoke about his selected piece - a very interesting evening with a good turnout. In February our speaker was to have been Andrew Neill, with his talk 'Elgar and the First World War'. Due to the change in his occupation he reluctantly had to cancel, and the South West Secretary gave a talk with the same title in his stead, illustrated with recordings of music composed at the time. In March our Chairman Conrad Addey gave an illustrated talk on *The Starlight Express*. For April we have a joint meeting with the Delius Society, when Stephen Lloyd will talk about the Elgar-Delius association and other contemporary composers. As a result of this joint venture it is hoped the Delius Society might have a branch in the South West like ourselves. Forthcoming meetings will be May 17th "Dedicated to the Ladies" - an illustrated talk about Elgar works, as title, followed by, on June 21st, the South West Branch Annual General Meeting. Following the business our usual Social, with a Buffet - food and wine. All members are

welcome at our meetings, at the Octagon, Bristol Polytechnic College, Frenchay, Bristol, just off the M4 and M32. Usually the third Saturday, at 7.30 p.m.

YORKSHIRE Branch reports that despite the very bad winter, we have been lucky enough not to have to cancel any meetings and attendances have been generally good and at times very good. Amongst some worthwhile meetings, the outstanding one was the visit of Barry Sterndale Bennett on March 10th. We heard an illuminating talk on our visitor's illustrious forbear, William Sterndale Bennett, with recorded illustrations, and were also rewarded with a live performance of some of WSB's songs, for which Lance Tufnell provided a very competent accompaniment. We can strongly recommend this lecture to other branches.

Probably our first meeting following the issue of this Journal will be the Elgar Birthday Social on June 2nd. Yorkshire Branch meetings have always been characterised by great sociability and few special preparations are needed to ensure the success of a social evening. There will be some music, plenty of food and drink and the members themselves will provide all else that is needed.

On June 30th, we expect to be joined by some of our friends in the North West Branch to hear Diana McVeagh's talk about the *Introduction & Allegro for Strings*, 'how it came to be written, and its style and place in Elgar's output'. This will be our last meeting of the season and we shall re-start on September 22nd with an illustrated talk by Ian Lacey on 'Elgar's Sussex'.

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## LETTERS

From RICHARD E. DARTNALL

*Members will, I am sure, be interested to hear of some quite astonishing discoveries which have been made recently about Elgar's own 78 electrical recordings. It would appear that some of them at least were made quite accidentally in a form of 'stereo' recording - not artificial stereo but a true form of twin channel sound.*

*The discovery was made by an American, Brad Kay of California, a dealer in 78 records who is also a great recording enthusiast. The story is told in an article by Barry Fox in the January issue of a British magazine "Hi-Fi News and Record Review". I am unable to go into all the technical details but very briefly it would seem recording engineers in the late 20s and 30s would often adopt a 'fail-safe' system by using two separate cutting machines linked separately to two spaced microphones. This would ensure that if one failed the other would produce a satisfactory disc. The first matrix would then be given a number and the second matrix the same number but with a letter A added (to indicate the alternative recording). Brad Kay realised that if these two recordings could be put together they would create the left and right hand channels, and after much experiment he succeeded in doing this with excellent results. Now it is known that many of Elgar's recordings were made with 'alternative matrices', and some have already been put together to produce 'stereo recordings'. (The photograph of the recording of the 'Nursery Suite' clearly shows two microphones).*

*At first, I must confess, I was inclined to be a little dubious about the whole story until I read a footnote to a letter written to "Hi-Fi News" in the March issue. The note, written by the editor John Atkinson, reads: "Two recordings made with two spaced microphones will give the illusion of space ... I have heard some of the stereo Elgar recordings and was impressed, despite my initial scepticism."*

*I telephoned Mr Atkinson to inquire which recordings he had heard and he told me 'Cockaigne Overture' and 'Pomp & Circumstance no. 1'. (I suspect it is the later 'Cockaigne' recording which he heard).*

*It is further reported that EMI are considering issuing a 'stereo' record this year which will probably be Elgar. We must hope that it does materialize for this is surely of considerable historical and musical importance. Who knows? It may be that one day we shall hear our President's 1932 recording of the 'Violin Concerto' in 'stereo'.*

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**From ANDREW NEILL**

*Please could I use your pages to pass on my deep appreciation to the members of the Society for contributing so very generously towards the remarkable gift presented to me on January 29th at the Savile Club.*

*It was a great honour to represent the Society, as Secretary, for six and a half years, and although the time was not without its frustrations and disappointments it was, on the whole, a rewarding experience. What we achieved during the time was due though, to the spirit of the Society, the effectiveness of our committee and the friendships and mutual respect of the officers.*

*As many members know I will have taken up a new position in Australia by the time this letter is published. I will miss The Elgar Society greatly during my three years away, but look forward to taking up the threads again on my return in 1989.*

*Again, please convey my thanks to the members for their generosity.*

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**From IAN LACE**

*I would like to draw your readers' attention to an error in my article 'Elgar and Eric Coates', published in the January Journal.*

*I wrote that Eric Coates' 'Dam Busters' March was the composer's only film score. I had quite forgotten the march 'High Flight', which was composed in 1957, shortly before Coates' death, for the Warwick Film of the same name.*

*The following story from Austin Coates, the composer's son, might interest your readers:*

*'His last appearance was conducting a performance of another film march, 'High Flight' - not a film of much worth - at the Royal Festival Hall in November 1957. 'High Flight', his last work, has a very strange ending, almost premonitory, though of this he would have been quite unconscious. He played it over to me on the piano in the autumn of*

1956, but only roughed out the ending. I did not hear the orchestral ending till after his death, and was then struck by those last peculiarly constricting chords, as if the heart was going to burst. Then comes the final note, which is not a chord, but a staccato octave from top to bottom of the orchestra. It's so quick as to be impossible to analyse, but if you examine it on paper, you will see that only one composer in the world could have written it adjusted that way. As Stanford Robinson once said, you had only to see a chord of C major written for orchestra, and you could tell at a glance it was Eric Coates'.

Incidentally, I understand that another march by Eric Coates - 'The Eighth Army' march (composed in 1942) was used in an Ealing film 'Nine Men' (1943), but it was not composed specifically for that film. In fact, for many years Eric Coates was not interested in composing for films. He had been influenced against the medium after hearing that much of Sir Arthur Bliss' score (185 pages) for 'Things to Come' had not been used. It took much persuasion to make him compose music for the 'The Dam Busters'. He finally relented to this extent: he said, 'I'll give you a five minute concert march and leave you a free hand to use it as you like in the film', which Leighton Lucas admirably did.

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From ANDREW YOUDELL

Perhaps I might be allowed to place on record my thanks to all those London orchestras and choruses who contributed to some really enjoyable Elgar concert going during last Autumn. At the Festival Hall, it has been possible to hear performances of "King Olaf", "The Kingdom", and "The Apostles", with the added bonus of the rarely heard "Spirit of England", all within the space of a few weeks.

Although the Society is to be congratulated on its involvement in the promotion of "King Olaf", both as a concert and as a subsequent recording - and what wonderful pages are contained therein! - I would like to give due credit to the incredibly moving concert based around the exhibition "Heroes of the Somme". Here, in one evening, we heard not only music by Butterworth, but also magnificent accounts of "Spirit of England" and Bliss's "Morning Heroes". What a wonderful contrast these two works make! To those who know only Alexander Gibson's account on record, this magisterial performance by Michael Kibblewhite, the Harlow and Hatfield Choruses with the Nemano Orchestra of London, came as something of a revelation. Not for a long time have I heard such brilliant attack in choral singing, such enthusiasm and respect for the music, communicated so vividly to the audience. I was more moved that evening by Elgar's masterpiece - for it is no less - than I have been in many months of concert going at the Festival Hall this season. This performance revealed Elgar's work to be in the very front rank of his music - the repetition of progressions and sequences, and the frequent climaxes, only serve to tighten the structure of the whole work. It proved that this piece of late Elgar can match the Bliss in its effectiveness - but in its own way.

Add to these musical experiences an excellent hearing of "Gerontius" in the pleasant setting of Tewkesbury Abbey, and you will appreciate that last Autumn has been a full one for a lover of the choral Elgar, such as myself. I await eagerly Andrew Davis' short Britten/Elgar cycle in February and March with the Philharmonia Orchestra, which will bring us, happily, another "Apostles".

# THE ELGAR SOCIETY

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

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