

The Elgar Society JOURNAL



January

1987

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The Elgar Society Journal

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EDITORIAL

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During 1984 we had, as expected, many concerts concentrating on Elgar's works, books on British music, especially on Elgar's period, and recordings of his music. During 1985 and 1986 further recordings came our way, including several which have become firm favourites. Elgar concerts are still fairly frequent, and in the field of books Jerrold Northrop Moore's "Elgar, a Creative Life", far from ending further investigation into that life, has stimulated much comment and research, filling in various minor gaps in our knowledge. Some of this research has found, and will continue to find, its way on to our pages.

It might be thought that the issue of new recordings would now diminish, but advance news shows that this is not the case. In 1987 we can look forward to *King Olaf*, *The Banner of St. George*, the *Te Deum* and *Benedictus*, (with the orchestral accompaniments), two recordings of *The Dream of Gerontius*, one of which has already appeared in North America, and it is understood that Sinopoli wishes to record both the Symphonies in due course. Will there be new recordings of *The Kingdom*, or even *The Apostles*? And will the rumoured new recording of *The Spirit of England* come soon? Two Festivals this year will feature Elgar in one way or another - one at Rye, the other at Portsmouth, Readers may know of other events of which we have not yet had word. These are remarkable times for a composer who was once 'neglected'!

On a personal note may I say that this issue marks my ten years as editor. The time seems to have passed very quickly, but I hope that the Journal has improved over the years and grown in usefulness. May I thank all those members who have helped with many of the issues, and particularly those who have given much time and effort to supply us with news and articles. Without your co-operation there would not have been a Journal.

RONALD TAYLOR
Editor



Fritz Volbach on Elgar

Part One

(Translated by P.J. Titcombe)

The article on Elgar which follows appeared in the German cultural journal *Hochland*, published by the Kempten and Munich bookseller Josef Kösel, for October 1907 to March 1908.

Fritz Volbach, its author, was born on 17 December 1861 in the small and staunchly Catholic Rhineland town of Wipperfurth. He studied music at the Cologne Conservatory and philosophy at Heidelberg and Bonn. In 1885 he went to the Imperial Institute of Church Music in Berlin and became a member of the staff there in 1887. In 1892 he became Generalmusikdirektor at Mainz. During his 15 years there Volbach conducted several choral societies, including the Liedertafel and the Damengesangverein. He also came to the fore briefly as a composer and befriended Elgar when his works were taken up in Germany. In 1901 Sir Henry Wood conducted Volbach's symphonic poems *Es waren zwei Königskinder* and *Easter* (for organ and orchestra), op. 16, at the Promenade Concerts. Volbach himself was soloist in a performance of the latter work at the Sheffield Festival in 1902. In that year Elgar conducted Volbach's cantata *Reigen* at a Worcestershire Philharmonic Society concert, with English words by Alice Elgar. In 1904 Wood conducted the symphonic poem *Alt Hiedelberg*, op. 29, also at the Proms, and in December of that year Volbach himself conducted his 3 *Stimmungsbilder* for chorus and orchestra at the Royal College of Music.

Volbach first met Elgar at the Lower Rhine Festival in Dusseldorf in 1901, when *The Dream of Gerontius* received its German première under Julius Büths. It is evident from the following article that Volbach came to know Elgar quite well at this period and gained some insight into his artistic make-up. As we have seen, Elgar went to some trouble to perform one of his works in Worcester and in return, Volbach conducted *The Apostles* in Mainz within a year of its first performance in 1903. In addition, Volbach's Handel Concerts in Mainz, the first festival dedicated to this composer to be established in Germany, included Elgar in the list of patrons.

In 1907 Volbach moved to a new appointment as Director of Music at Tübingen University. His comic opera, *Die Kunst zu lieben*, op. 34, was performed at Dusseldorf in 1910, and he continued to compose choral works based on a variety of subjects. During the 1914-18 war he conducted symphony concerts at rest camps. In 1918 he became Professor of Music at Münster University and conducted the municipal orchestra there. He devoted himself to editorial work and writings on various musical subjects, such as orchestration, choral music and Beethoven's piano sonatas. In 1930 he retired to Wiesbaden and completed his last major (choral) work, *Grenzen der Menschheit*, the following year. He died there during World War II on 30 November 1940.

Grove lists a considerable number of choral works, mostly with orchestra; Symphony in B Minor, op. 33 (1909), a Wind Quintet in D Minor, op. 24 (1902), and a String Quintet in E Major, op. 36 (1912). It appears that all of these pieces have been consigned to the dust heap of musical history, unless they can be resurrected by some amateur of late German romanticism! Volbach's main publications were biographies of Handel (1898) and Beethoven (1905), as well as a two-volume *Handbuch der Musikwissenschaft* (1926-30). There is a monograph by Georg Schwake on *Fritz Volbachs Werke*, published in Münster in 1921. Volbach's own autobiography, *Erlebtes und Erstrebtes*, appeared posthumously in 1956.

Volbach is destined to remain a minor figure in German musical history, a man who combined creativity with fastidious scholarship. Even if he is now only an obscure name in the most comprehensive of dictionaries, he is still honoured by his home town, which named the road serving one of its most pleasant modern residential areas after him.

EDWARD ELGAR

by Fritz Volbach

For more than two centuries, since the time of Purcell, England has been longing for a great composer of its own, a longing until now unfulfilled. Many foreign masters, such as our genius Handel, were received as guests there and even took up residence, but they were all foreigners and foreigners they remained. Since Shakespeare there has been a glorious sequence of great poets right up to our own times, the most recent of these being Robert Browning,¹ that genius of atmospheric word-painting. There have been first-class painters such as Gainsborough, Reynolds, Constable and, greatest of all, Turner, that master of a glowing, fantastic luminosity struggling to emerge from mysterious depths. However, the muse of music remained silent. Certainly, England has possessed a number of competent native musicians, but has been denied a master sufficiently gifted to honour his country with works of genius.

But then, almost unnoticed, the Saviour of England's music appeared in the person of Edward Elgar. It is only a few years since his name first became known to the general public, but the higher his star rose in the firmament, the brighter it began to shine, and now Elgar is one of the great men of our age, equal to the best. He is the uncontested master of oratorio, outshining all his contemporaries, and the pride of England. Elgar has rediscovered the great secret of the art of oratorio which Handel possessed but which has since been vouchsafed to only one man, Franz Liszt, in his oratorio *Christus*. It was not through contemplation or by chance that Elgar made this discovery; it was his own nature that led him to grow into it and it revealed itself to him. His art is the natural consequence and the fruit of his experience, his sensitivity and his thinking. Fearlessly and determinedly he is pursuing a path with only one end in view, and that is to fulfil the important mission thrust upon him. He cannot stray from this path since truth is leading him along it. His art is as faithful and true as his soul and it springs from the depths of his innermost being. What it reveals is his own life, his experiences and his own self.

Elgar has climbed a thorny and difficult path to his present position of eminence, but the strength of his genius has overcome his human weaknesses and made him a celebrity. He was born in 1857 at Broadheath² near Worcester, where he spent his youth and gained his first musical impressions. His father, who died only two years ago,³ was the organist at the local Roman Catholic church and also a competent violinist. His life was permeated by a deep and committed piety and strong religious sensitivity and these are the characteristics which have remained dominant throughout the life of his great son. From him Edward learned at an early age the works of the great Classical masters, especially Mozart and Beethoven. Even as a boy he was able to deputise for his father at the organ. He attended school until his fifteenth year and then began to learn German, secretly hoping to be able to go to Leipzig to learn his art properly. However, this wish was never to be fulfilled. Although Elgar's father was a competent musician, he was a poor businessman and Edward's ambitions were frustrated by lack of funds. So the young musician was dependent on his own resources and has always remained so. Apart from a brief violin course with Pollitzer in London in the autumn of 1877, Elgar has never had regular tuition; as a composer, he is self-taught. Perhaps it would be better to say that his teachers were and still are the works of our great German masters. He has learned from them, formed himself from them and through them he has become a master of his art, a man of the highest ability and rare originality. Elgar's

originality was first revealed to us in his oratorio *The Dream of Gerontius*. At the end of the 1890s⁴ he came to know this peculiar mystical poem by Cardinal Newman. It made a deep impression on him and moved him irresistibly to set to music. Suddenly he felt all his innermost musical impulses responding. All the magic of deepest mysticism, as expressed here, the blessedness and deep consciousness of being which we experience at their best in the transfigured representations of visionary experience by writers such as Suso⁵ are manifest in this poem. It is a sensation borne up by ardent divine love from earthly realms and floating amidst the blessed spheres. The important thing is not to believe, but to love God: for according to Caesarius of Heisterbach⁶ of old, "Credere in Deum est per dilectionem ire in Deum".⁷ This world-forsaking transfiguring divine love is the source from which Elgar's art has sprung out of the mysterious depths of mysticism. In *Gerontius* Elgar for the first time found words for the ineffable. This mysterious quality, enthroned far beyond the image itself, as if in unattainable infinity, accords, in Turner's paintings, with a profoundly pantheistic view of nature, but in Elgar's case derives from his deep religious convictions. His God is a personal one and he strives for innermost communion with Him through his art; he seeks to attain the highest Good by means of the Beautiful. The pious and naive master Anton Bruckner was moved to dedicate his best work "to dear God" ("dem lieben Gott"); all of Elgar's creative work bears this dedication and the outward manifestation of this is his custom of setting the letters A.M.D.G. (ad maiorem Dei gloriam - to the greater Glory of God) at the head of each of his works. Despite the different outlook of the two masters, Elgar and Turner have similar objectives in their art and the way they express themselves. This is an obvious similarity and is reinforced by the great enthusiasm which Elgar has for the works of the great painter. A third name suggests itself to us, that of the poet Robert Browning, also a favourite of Elgar and a kindred spirit in terms of style and sensitivity.

Elgar probably felt that he could not do justice to his feelings if he expressed them in the way which had until then been customary. For many decades the true spirit of oratorio had been perverted; it has become a hybrid - half opera and half oratorio. Even Handel, having turned away from opera, was faced with the problem of finding the right way forward and an inner voice showed it to him. If Elgar wanted to create the work which was forming in his mind, then he had to break with what he had come to love and strike out on a new path. Opera, indeed Drama generally, depends essentially for its development on the character of the hero who creates his own destiny through his own quick and decisive action. His destiny and his justification depend on his humanity; the more humanly he feels and acts, the more he arouses our sympathies. Although Handel does not seek to deprive the heroes of his oratorios of their reason, these heroes are made of different stuff from those of conventional drama. It is not they who determine their destiny. Over them stands a higher power, Jehovah, the Almighty; He is the real master of their destinies. He controls them invisibly, but we sense His nearness and feel it in the rushing mighty sounds of the choruses which are the real centre-pieces of the works and grow outwards to influence them as a whole. In place of rapid dramatic development we have epic breadth and an expansion into vast areas; the whole work is borne aloft into the sphere of the sublime. Working on these principles, Handel chose the material for his vast heavenly structures. But the architect failed to pass on his skills. None of his successors - least of all Mendelssohn - succeeded in embracing the greatness and sublimity of his vision. It was left to Franz Liszt to rediscover the true path and his most important work, *Christus* (1856-66) is the best evidence of this. In *St. Elizabeth* (1858-62) the distinction between opera and oratorio is somewhat indeterminate; in fact the work is still performed as an opera. *Christus*, however, is conceivable only as an oratorio. There is no development of a plot such as one would

find in a drama; the ambitious, large-scale pictures which stand out against the noble golden background of mighty choruses hang in a row, one beside the other, but they are connected by one great and noble idea. As in Handel, we feel the nearness of God in the choruses and perceive the figure of Christ the Lord; in one scene He is great and noble and severely earnest as He looks down upon us from the apse of Pisa Cathedral, and in another He is loving and merciful, extending His hands towards us in the manner that Fra Angelico paints Him. The Breath of God emerges from Liszt's work and we are enveloped by holy spirituality.

Elgar followed on from this work and his works can be conceived only in terms of oratorio. They too are composed of individual scenes, broadly-conceived pictures without any continuous action held together by the idea of the Invisible, the Divine and the Spiritual. In *Gerontius* the Soul, freed from its mortal encasement and fought over by Angels and Demons, is the protagonist. We hear the strange, dream-like sensations which affect the Soul as it floats between the World and Eternity, anxiously waiting to stand before its Judge. Who before Elgar would have dared to depict such apparently imperceptible moods? It was he who discovered the language to express the ineffable. This language is in every respect peculiar - as peculiar as the material which has inspired him. The solid and straightforward Diatonic was incapable of expressing the Visionary and the Formless, as was any attempt to write in a fixed tonality and remain rooted in it. Just as the indefinite qualities of sentiment free the rhythm from its strait-jacket, so the indefinite, floating qualities of the *idée fixe* tend to have the effect of veiling tonality and harmony, thus achieving the impression of the mystical and the fantastic. Even Richard Wagner recognized that the unexpected transformation from one tonality into another could be a means of expressing visionary moods. Elgar is conscious of this and quotes as an example "the theme given by the composer of *Lohengrin* to Elsa, lost in happy reverie, in the final phrase of her first arioso, a theme consisting almost solely of a web of distant shifting harmonies". So Elgar's harmonic system is based on elements of chromaticism, thereby dissolving the definable qualities of tonality. As a result his music takes on a floating quality; it is freed from gravity, as though in a state of ecstasy, and floats in holy rapture above the earth. Elgar's tone-colouring is as peculiar to him as his harmonic system. He does not deliberately add colour; colour is simply his most effective means of expression. But he is capable of more than simply creating hitherto unheard moods through his harmonies and tone-colouring; he is one of the greatest masters of melodic invention. Even his melodies are unusual. In spirit they are born of the original music of Christianity, the Gregorian Chant. Repeatedly the listener feels that he can hear these old tunes in the background and occasionally they emerge suddenly from the harmonic web. Especially in *The Apostles*, he has drawn upon a number of old melodies, remodelling and arranging them to serve his own purpose.

Using these methods in the most masterly fashion, Elgar, in his *Gerontius*, leads us into the world of dreams, but in the Dream itself he reveals to us a world which we sense from afar. The Dream becomes a Vision through the music and takes on a reality of its own; from the real world he leads us into one of ideal reality.

To be continued

- ¹ Volbach erroneously called him "George Browning".
- ² Volbach refers to Elgar's birthplace as "Broadbeatte".
- ³ William Henry Elgar, died 1 May 1906.
- ⁴ Elgar was given a copy of the poem in 1889 by Father Knight of St. George's Roman Catholic Church, Worcester, as a wedding present, but his acquaintance with it went back much further. I am indebted to Mr. Michael Kennedy for informing me that he gave Alice a copy in 1887 when her mother died. Mr. Kennedy feels that Elgar may well have read the poem (published in 1865) while he was a boy or youth, in view of his very literate upbringing and Catholicism.
- ⁵ Blessed Heinrich Suso, German mystic, c. 1300-66.
- ⁶ German preacher and ascetic, c. 1170-c. 1240.
- ⁷ "To believe in God is to pass through delight to God."

THE SAGA OF THE RECORDING OF KING OLAF

by Andrew Neill

The idea of recording *King Olaf* has, of course, been long in the minds of Elgarians and members of the Society. Like *Caractacus* the work has suffered from criticism of its libretto and construction. It became overshadowed by subsequent works and the received opinion that Elgar composed nothing of merit before the *Enigma Variations*. We now know better, and can see how the pre-*Enigma* works are but the natural stepping-stones in the development of a great artist. Of these early works, there is perhaps none which has words and music more closely linked. However, even now critical opinion is divided as to the real worth of *King Olaf* and other choral works of the time.

I have always had little doubt that the work contains much great music, is better constructed than *Caractacus*, and should not languish in the same corner to which other Victorian longuets are dismissed. An amateur performance in November 1973 was probably the first opportunity many of us living in London had of hearing *King Olaf*, and I did not hear it again until it was performed in Liverpool in 1978.

It was the recording of *The Apostles* which convinced Elgarians that anything was possible. How wrong some of us were nearly proved to be! Indeed, with the plethora of Elgar records issued in the 1970s, including Jerrold Northrop Moore's magnificent anthologies of the electrical recordings, the attention of most of the world's great violinists to the *Violin Concerto*, and the recording of *Caractacus* in 1977, most of us felt that recordings of *The Black Knight* and *King Olaf* would follow. Of course, it was not to be. It was not until early 1985 that *The Black Knight* was issued following the initiative of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society. As we know, the Elgar Society helped fund the recording, and even then support was essential from the Finzi Trust and the Reader's Digest Association. In comparison *King Olaf* looked like the North Face of the Elgar to *The Black Knight's* Ben Nevis!

The story of the recording really started with that Liverpool performance in 1978, when Vernon Handley conducted the RLPO and choir, with Teresa Cahill, Kenneth Woolam and Peter Glossop the soloists. EMI had signalled that a recording of the performance would be made ... but we waited in vain. Handley had shown himself to be in complete sympathy with the work and those of us who were privileged to be there will also remember the radiant singing of Teresa Cahill.

"What about *Olaf*?" many of us would ask of EMI and other record companies during the next few years. Vague retorts relating to the cost, and "those dreadful words" was the basis of most replies. However, some of us did not lose hope, and after the memorable commemorative concert in the Royal Festival Hall in February, 1984 there seemed a real chance of moving the idea forward again. In speeches at the Society Dinner that summer, both Michael Pope and I mentioned the idea of recording the work with Vernon Handley and the LPO. Stephen Crabtree, then Managing Director of the LPO, was also a guest that evening, and he confirmed that the Orchestra would respond enthusiastically to such a project. Tod Handley made his feelings quite clear also. Little did we realise that the years of frustration were just about at an end, giving way to months of financial strain and, at times, despair! However, we had our conductor and orchestra. All we then needed were soloists and a record company. Enter Simon Foster, the newly appointed head of the Classical Division of EMI Records. Simon was immediately an ardent supporter. When we first met he had just moved from Classics for Pleasure, where he had been responsible for making Nigel Kennedy and Tod Handley's recording of the *Violin Concerto*. I cannot speak highly enough of Simon's enthusiasm and imagination which proved so valuable during the months ahead. Unheard and unknown to him, he supported the project to record *King Olaf* from that moment.

Yes, it should be done. Yes, it should be done with LPO and Vernon Handley. Yes, it should be done with Tessa Cahill, but what other soloists would share her sympathy? Between performance of *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom* at the 1984 Three Choirs Festival I has discussed the possibility of recording *Olaf* with Bryan Rayner Cook. He again was most interested and he already knew the work. There was, though, still much to be done, even though I had discussed the idea with Tessa Cahill during rehearsals for the Commemorative Concert in Westminster Abbey on 23rd February 1984. As it turned out no one was more sympathetic to the project than Tessa, no one more helpful in suggesting possible sources of financial support, and no one more concerned for the success of the recording and in maintaining the highest artistic standards when the records were eventually made. At the end of 1984 though King Olaf's "Bane" threatened to kill the project before it got any further. Generous though EMI's terms were, substantial funding was still essential and their lack of funds seemed to be an insurmountable hurdle as Christmas loomed.

It is important for members of the Society to appreciate how crucial their own contributions were to the 'King Olaf Fund'. It was these generous donations which kept negotiations with EMI at anything like a serious level. In addition, several hundred letters were sent to commercial organisations, seeking sponsorship. At first optimism ran high, but eventually he had to admit virtual defeat as we failed to unlock the door which would remove the problem once and for all.

At last the LPO continued with the performance for 3rd November, 1985, with Anthony Rolfe-Johnson as tenor soloist. The Festival Hall would be the proving ground for the recording which would take place over five days during the week before Christmas. The Committee of the Society had to acknowledge that only 15% of the amount necessary to support EMI had been raised, but in good faith No.1 Studio, Abbey Road, was booked. After the success of the performance hopes were high as we looked forward to five days' hard work. Nothing could go wrong now, surely?

A week before recording was due to commence Anthony Rolfe-Johnson had to withdraw because of ill-health. However, at four days notice Philip Langridge stepped in as an inspired substitute. Not only did he know the work, but he loved it as well! The sessions were a great success, and I have no doubt that Langridge will prove to be a memorable *Olaf*. His understanding of the part proved to be the final vital piece of the jig-saw which had taken nearly eight years to put together. Memories of those sessions are varied. A lack-lustre chorus began the sessions, with a reluctance entirely understandable during the weeks before Christmas. A half-remembered work, sung six weeks before, seemed very distant indeed. Those of us who have heard Tod Handley discourse on *King Olaf*, the history of the period and language, and the effectiveness of Longfellow's verse will guess that it took little time to coax from the chorus an obvious change. Under the inspired direction of their chorus-master Richard Cooke, they soon performed wonders. I shall also remember the enthusiasm of the orchestra, members relishing their parts as if a newly-found toy. David Groves, the producer, and Stuart Eltham, the Sound Engineer, were always models of courtesy even though an endless stream of guests seemed to appear throughout the week. Above all though there was a feeling that something special was being created. When it was all over champagne overflowed in the control room, proving to be the ideal coda to a hard week's work. We will all remember, as we relaxed and the studio darkened, how our conversation ranged widely over many stimulating subjects as we tried to keep up with our distinguished Vice-President and Conductor of the project! So many contributed to *King Olaf* - from Society members, through small companies, and the Elgar Foundation, to Simon Foster and EMI; to the LPO Chorus and the soloists - but I know that none of these would deny that without Tod Handley's leadership the recording would never have been possible. I am sure that when we can all listen to the records we will recognise that *Olaf* is one of his finest recordings, even by his high standards. Flying the flag of British Music may have cost him dear in the past, but it is now clear that such a sacrifice has at last achieved the best of legacies.

The final scene was a Committee Meeting, early in 1986. The imaginative work of our Treasurer, and the inspiration of Simon Foster, enabled the final arrangements to be settled with EMI. Although involving the Society in this project for some years to come, the agreement ensured that commercial reality had not, in the end, triumphed over artistic aspiration.

THE BRISTOL CHORAL SOCIETY, conducted by Clifford Harker, FRCO, gave a superb rendition of Elgar's *Te Deum & Benedictus* on the 15th November, 1986. The music was originally composed for the Hereford Festival of 1897, dedicated to G.R. Sinclair the organist, who conducted the first performance. The music of these great canticles is fine and spacious, free from the narrow and often insipid influences of Anglican church music of the time. There are soaring melodies and powerful climaxes giving glimpses of the 'nobilmente' Elgar to come. Yet there are moments of thoughtful calm and gracious melodic charm too, for the enchanting and lighter Elgar is never too far away. The work makes a satisfying whole, as music from the *Te Deum* appears again in the *Gloria and Benedictus*. This is a purely choral work scored for large orchestra and organ, played on this occasion by John Marsh (organ), with the orchestra led by Anthony Pooley, conducted by Clifford Harker

R.B.



NEWS ITEMS

A five-week course on Elgar is being presented by Mr. P. Mizen at the Havant (Hants) Adult Education Centre commencing 25th February. Details from the Centre.

Loughborough University of Technology celebrates 21 years in 1987, and a Gala Concert is being planned. One item of interest is that the University is sponsoring a short work based on Elgar's *Memorial Chimes*, written originally for the Loughborough Carillon

In September the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and Chorus recorded for EMI *The Dream of Gerontius*. the conductor was Simon Rattle, and the soloists were Dame Janet Baker, John Mitchinson, and John Shirley-Quirk. The venue for the recording was the Great Hall of the University of Birmingham. An interesting coincidence for Elgarians, for it was at Birmingham that Elgar delivered the Peyton Lectures when he was Professor of Music there in the 1900s. The recording is to be issued early in 1987.

The Dutch Handel Association (Nederlandse Haendelervereniging) is to perform *The Kingdom* on 7th March 1987. The performance will be given in the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam at 2.15 p.m. Not only is this to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the Association, but it will also mark the retirement of the choir's conductor and founder, Jack P. Loorij. We are delighted that this well-know Handel Choir should choose an Elgar work for their anniversary, and wish them and Mr. Loorij a great success with the concert.

The September issue of the journal THE CITY UNIVERSITY, published by that University in London, is much concerned with music to mark the 10th anniversary of the Music Department. Percy Young has contributed an article on the writing of his version of Elgar's *The Spanish Lady*, there are quotations from critics on the concert performance in May 1986, and there is an article on the rise and development of the Elgar Society by Ronald Taylor. Members interested in obtaining a copy (it is normally only available on subcription) should write to Mrs. Karen Milner, 2 Grange Grove, Canonbury, London, N1 2NP for details.

The 1987 Portsmouth Festival will include a day-school Elgar Symposium on May 30th. This will be followed on May 31st with a concert by the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra at the Portsmouth Guildhall. The concert will consist of Elgar's *Symphony no. 1*, Delius's *Sea Drift*, and Holst's *Beni Mora*. Further details will be available at a later date from the Festival Office at the Guildhall, Portsmouth.

A volume of ELGAR STUDIES, edited by Raymond Monk, is in active preparation. This will contain a number of articles, most by leading scholars, each dealing with a specific aspect of Elgar's life or work, and all of the articles will be appearing for the first time. The volume will be published for the benefit of the Society, and under its auspices. This is a project which all members should support, and we look forward to further information in due course. Publication is scheduled for late 1987.

LADY HULL, a Vice-President of the Society, has drawn our attention to the fact that there is no portrait of Elgar in the Musician's Room at the National Portrait Gallery in London. This does seem a remarkable omission, and we hope that the Gallery officials will take steps to remedy the situation. It may be that the Gallery does not possess a suitably impressive portrait of the composer, both in size and quality, but does any member know of the whereabouts of an appropriate portrait which should be in the Gallery? It is, after all, the nation's major collection of portraits, and should be fully representative of all aspects of our life and culture.

In 1986 the Kent County Youth Orchestra toured Brazil, and Elgar's *Symphony no. 1* was in their programme. The conductor was Alan Vincent, and two cassettes have been made of the music played on the tour at £5.95 (plus 35p postage). Apart from the Symphony, the first cassette contains Villa-Lobos's *Bachianas Brasileiras no 7*. The conductor for this item was Juan Serrano. The second cassette contains music by Rossini, Stravinsky, Mozart, Beethoven, Vaughan Williams and Prokofiev. The cassettes may be obtained from G.W. Services, 10 Highfield Avenue, Orpington, Kent, BR6 6LF.

APOLOGIES. Two apologies for errors in the September 1986 issue. In our report of the Annual Meeting we stated that Charles Adams had been elected to the Committee. The should have read CHARLES MYERS, and we offer our regrets to Mr. Myers for an unaccountable mistake.

Secondly, we managed to change the sex of Elgar's brother, Frank, in the family tree which went with Dr. Eickhoff's article on the Elgar ancestors. This means that you should change Frances to FRANCIS on the Apperley family tree.

A CAUSE FOR REGRET is that no mention was made of the concert in Worcester on 22 November. This was the Elgar Foundation Jubilee Concert when a performance of "The Apostles", with a distinguished cast, was conducted by Donald Hunt. Nothing would have delighted us more than to publicise this concert, marking as it does the 50 years of the Birthplace Trust, but no-one thought to tell the Journal or the Society that it was to take place. As it was we only found out about it, by accident, in October - long after the Journal had appeared. We do try to advise members and associates of all significant Elgar 'occasions' and this was a particularly frustrating omission for us. Will those responsible for advising press and public PLEASE let us know of such concerts in the future.



ELGAR & THE MALVERN HILLS

It seems remarkable that there is nothing tangible on the Hills to mark Elgar's great love of them, but for a small group of unmarked trees on the West side planted by the Society over ten years ago.

After several years of trying, the Conservators have finally given permission for the Society to place a seat, and plant a horse-chestnut tree, on what was once Malvern

Golf Course, where Elgar himself used to play; a part of the Hills not very far from Craig Lea. The engraving on the seat will refer to Sir Edward and the Society. However, the seat the Conservators recommend will cost £300. It is hoped that every member will feel able to contribute towards this. Who knows, if enough is contributed, we may be able to place two seats on the Hills!

Perhaps Branch Treasurers would kindly accept contributions from their members, and then send the total on to Jim Holt, (20 Geraldine Road, Malvern, Worcs), Branch Treasurer-West Midlands, by March 1st, 1987. Would non-branch members please send cheques, however small, made payable to 'Elgar Society Seat Fund' directly to Jim Holt, by the same date. It will save a great deal of work, and money, if a receipt is not requested, but if you wish for one then one will be sent on request.

We will let you know in the next issue of the Journal in May just how successful this appeal has been - but, in advance, many thanks!



*"I never play the pianoforte ...
... I scramble through things
orchestraly ... never play really"*

But Elgar *did* play the piano and the Five Piano Transcriptions which he recorded on the 7th November 1929 offer an endlessly fascinating insight into his idiosyncratic style at the keyboard. Not only this but as an example of his composition processes at work their importance cannot be over-estimated.

Elgar regretted that his Improvisations were not released at the time, and even a limited LP edition has been out of print for some years. Now, by arrangement with EMI, the original 78 rpm sides will be issued on three vinyl discs by Symposium Records. This will be the first issue of the recordings as originally made. The quality of piano sound belies the passing of the years; it is hard to believe that they were recorded in 1929.

Orders for the set, 1022-1024 (not available separately), will be accepted at any time up to June 30th, 1987, at the pre-publication price of £15 which includes delivery anywhere by the cheapest method. (Air Mail: £5 extra). Please note that orders from individuals can only be accepted if accompanied by payment in Sterling. National archives and Broadcasting organisations may pay on receipt, if preferred. Payment in Sterling is requested as bank charges are prohibitive. Records will be pressed and issued during July and August.

* Post-publication price £20 (Air Mail £25). Again, Sterling only. * Also to be issued: 1025: Elgar conducting his own arrangement of Bach's Fantasia and Fugue in C minor, the *electric recording* of 1926, almost unknown in its original form, 1026: Two never-before-issued performances by the cellist Beatrice Harrison. On one side she plays the slow movement of the *Cello Concerto* with Princess Victoria at the piano, and on the reverse they are joined by Margaret Harrison in *Salut d'Amour*. These two records are £6 each and delivery will be effected free if ordered with the Improvisations. From: Symposium Records, 110 Derwent Avenue, East Barnet, Herts, EN4 8LZ. (If, for any reason, an order cannot be filled then any subscription will be returned promptly.)

PLEASE REMEMBER THESE ARE ALL 78 rpm RECORDINGS TO PLAY AT THAT SPEED.

ELGAR'S NOTES ON 'IN THE SOUTH'

by

Geoffrey Hodgkins

Elgar's antipathy to London musical society was based partly on his failure to make a name for himself when he and Alice moved to the capital after their marriage in 1889: and partly because he saw London as musically reactionary and indiscriminating, and dominated by men of lesser genius than himself. However, as his success grew, particularly with the *Variations* in 1899, Elgar began to realise the need to cultivate those elements in musical London which were favourable to him. Several of the younger men were sympathetic, and Elgar formed close friendships with two of them: Percy Pitt (1870-1932), a young composer and conductor who since 1896 had been organist at the Queen's Hall, and Alfred Kalisch (1863-1933), a Jew of German descent, who was music critic for *The World*, and a champion of Richard Strauss's music. Like another critic, Ernest Newman, Kalisch became a member of the 'Skip the Pavement' society which Elgar had formed with Bantock, Rodewald, and others. When Elgar was writing *The Apostles* in 1902, he sought Kalisch's help in looking for a Jewish melody for his setting of Psalm 92.

Elgar gave both Pitt and Kalisch nicknames, Pitt was 'the Cosmopolitan' (he had been educated in France and Germany), or 'the Bottomless Pit'; Kalisch's name was corrupted to 'the Carlist', and although there was no link between Kalisch and Spain, Elgar continued the idea to come up with the punning title 'the Andelusion.'

In 1902 Pitt was appointed musical adviser to the Covent Garden Opera, and when in October 1903 a three-day Elgar Festival was announced for the following March at Covent Garden, Pitt and Kalisch were allotted the task of writing the programme notes. The first evening was to be *The Dream of Gerontius*; the second *The Apostles*; and the third a miscellany of orchestral works and choral extracts. It was hoped that Elgar would produce a new work for this final concert, and whilst holidaying in Italy during the winter he composed an overture *In the South*. The work was already partly orchestrated when the Elgars returned to England at the beginning of February 1904, and it was completed on 21st February. Four days later Pitt wrote to Elgar:

"For the analysis of the 'Down South' overture, I rely upon you to send some details either to 'The Carlist' or to your humble servant ... By the way it would be quite nice if you'd solve the Enigma for this Covent Garden orgy so please be decent & let me know the COUNTER SUBJECT which has caused the spilling of so much ink."¹

The next day, 26th February, Elgar replied in a letter headed "My dear pitiless Pitt":

"Do make the Carlist serious: I am sending you rubbish concerning Froissart & 'In the South'- as to the Vars: I'm not going to unbuzzum now about that unknown theme".²

The 'rubbish' on *In the South* comprised four pages of manuscript, and a three-page description of the work³ (the notes on Froissart have apparently not survived). Elgar wrote in short score eleven of the themes used in the overture. He gave them the

Continuation *h the South.*

2

31

Stellenbosch

hoshi o!

5

El. 1. family names (the is not bad)

capen

6

marmaramo

Requiem

7

2nd Struck

① strike

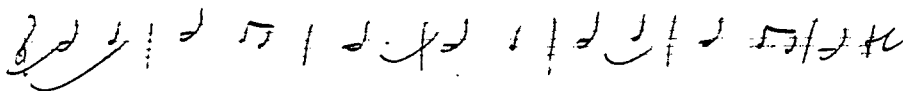
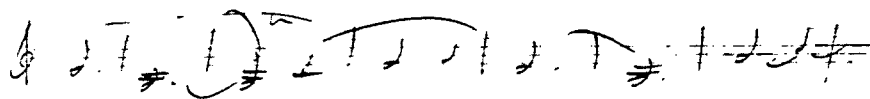
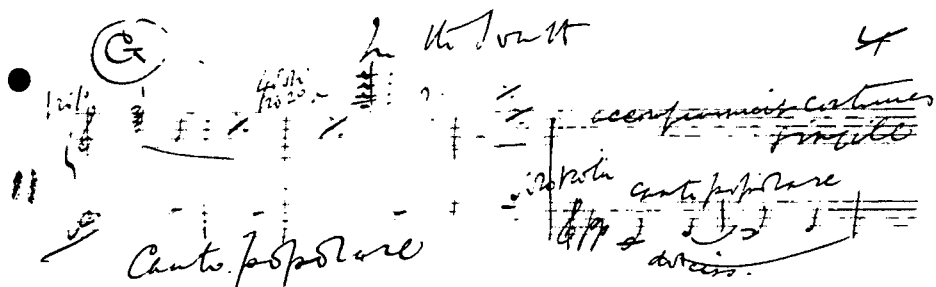
8

⑤ Roman

9

⑦

10



I don't know she was 2 this time I have
not found it in exactly as heard -

letters A to G, with sub-divisions for A, B & C, then decided to give each theme a separate number, and added this in blue pencil. However, these numbers do not correspond to the numbered cues in the published score, and these are given in brackets.

The opening theme which, as every Elgarian knows, first saw life in 1899 in Sinclair's visitors' book as 'Dan triumphant (after a fight)', now becomes associated in Elgar's mind with happy feelings experienced in the Italian countryside.

It is interesting to note that Elgar does not write 'Moglio' two bars after 10 where Billy Reed said it came¹, but one bar after 11, where he has the shepherd "singing". Elgar wrote the words 'Fanny Moglio' in this same place in the full score². The falling three-note dotted figure now has a fourth rather than a semitone as the interval between the first two notes. There are also one or two differences between the themes as Elgar sent them to Pitt, and as they appear in the full score. For instance at the beginning the horns, as well as the three instruments Elgar names, play the opening theme. Then again at 16, Elgar has *tranquillo* instead of *murmurando*. The 'canto popolare' is marked *molto tranquillo*; and *con molto espressivo* in the solo part, not *dolcissimo*. At the same point the four solo second violins begin in the same bar as the soloist, not two bars before.

The words "Oh! Pitt!" and the exclamation marks in the margin would appear to refer to the mess Elgar made of his final paragraph, which has numerous crossings out.

¹ BL Egerton 3303 fol.IIIv.

² BL Egerton 3303 fo.4.

³ BL Egerton 3303 fos. 80-86.

⁴ Elgar as I Knew Him, p.35.

⁵ See J.N. Moore 'Edward Elgar: a creative life', p.427.

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In the South

I do not wish it to be thought that, presuming on a three months' acquaintance - or rather, friendship, - I have attempted to depict or epitomise in one movement a musical picture of Italy.

I wove this music in the valley of Andora during a long & lovely day *alfresco* (9 January) & it does not pretend to go beyond the impressions then received.

(1)(A) Maybe the exhilarating out-of-doors feeling arising from the gloriously beautiful surrounds - streams, flowers, hills; the distant snow mountains in one direction & the blue Mediterranean in the other.

(4)(B) A shepherd with his flock straying about the ruins of the old church - he piping softly & reedily & occasionally singing (B2)(5)

The second theme proper (C)(6) may be my own personal feelings - romance if you like - amongst congenial surroundings & in congenial company. It dies softly away.

(&)(C2) Across the valley goes the old Rome stone track; the massive bridge still used:- here a vision came of the old days the grand, *relentless* force which made its way through & endured (E)(9)

Leading to (E)(9) & also used in carrying on the working out section in (D)(8)

The strife (D)(8) dies away (F)(10) & we are again in the present - the Shepherd singing softly his Canto-popolare (G)(11) & the peace & the sunshine once more take the chief place in the picture recapitulation follows (.) the coda being chiefly built upon the themes (A)(1) augmented, (B2)(5), & (A3)(3) also augmented.

The work follows generally the ordinary overture form: new matter (the Roman section & the Shepherd's Song) being introduced in the working out section.

!!!!
Oh! Pitt!

BOOK REVIEWS

Twentieth-Century English Masters. The *New Grove* Edition.

Macmillan, pbk. £8.95
hdbk, £13.95

The publishers of Grove's Dictionary had a happy idea when they decided to publish a series of composite volumes, each containing several biographies of eminent musicians taken from the large dictionary. However, it would plainly have been unsuitable to merely reprint the articles which had been written with a dictionary form in mind. To present them in acceptable book form required some revision, and, of course, there was always the possibility that the authors concerned would wish to revise or correct statements made earlier. In the case of the latest volume the articles are corrected, and, equally valuable, the bibliographical lists have been greatly expanded and brought up-to-date since 1980. Diana McVeagh's essay on Elgar is an excellent and perceptive view of the composer, and sets him firmly in his musical *niche*: 'He was not an innovator; he had no composition pupils; his work remains a great English summation of the European tradition.' Several portraits and music facsimiles illustrate the volume, and the following essays (Elgar leads the field) are Delius, by Anthony Payne; Vaughan Williams, by Hugh Ottaway; Holst, by Imogen Holst; Walton, by Hugh Ottaway; Tippett, by Ian Kemp; and Britten by Peter Evans. A packed volume of first-class scholarship in eminently readable form, and again I draw attention to the invaluable bibliographies. They are not complete, but they are in advance of much else that is available to the reader and researcher. The list of published compositions for each composer is also of the high standard one would expect from Grove. Recommended for the shelves of any student of English music

R.P.T.

RECORD REVIEWS

Choral Songs by Elgar and Brahms

The Ionian Singers/Timothy Salter
LIBRA, LRS 142 (Cassette only)
Available from: Gemini Sound,
Church Path, Hook, Hants.

Elgar's small-scale choral music has had some fine advocates on record; one thinks not only to the BBC Chorus of ELGS 002, but also of the efforts of the Philharmonic Chamber Choir on the Meridian disc and of the Louis Halsey Singers for Argo. On the strength of this recording the Ionian Singers can certainly be reckoned among their number. The instrumental timbres of Elgar's mature choral songs, often remarked on, need for their fullest expression first rate discipline, blend, and balance from a choir. The Ionian, under Timothy Salter, known as a composer and pianist as well as a conductor, have these qualities in full measure. Furthermore, their diction, enhanced by an outstandingly clear recording (made in St. Paul's School, Brook Green, Hammersmith, once associated with Gustav Holst) could scarcely be bettered. Such clarity of expression makes *Go Song of Mine* an intense experience, even if this interpretation does not quite have the depth of Boult's on ELGS 002. I was delighted, too, with the late (1925) *The Prince of Sleep*, better recorded than ever before, *Weary Wind of the West* and the bitonal *There is Sweet Music*. These singers capture most excitingly the Elgarian sweep and exuberance of *The Fountain* and *O Wild West Wind*. All these songs have been recorded previously but not, as far as I know, the composer's attractive SATB version of *Feasting I Watch*, which opens side 1, wholly devoted to Elgar. Side 2, both sides are well-filled, has ten unaccompanied Brahms songs from Op.42, 62, 93a, and 104, equally well sung - a good contrast to Elgar, yet at the same time representing part of the heritage on which he drew. All Elgarians and lovers of choral singing should investigate this. The words (including Brahms translations) appear on the insert, but in the case of Elgar this is hardly necessary.

P.L.S.

Organ Sonata in G, Op.28; Organ Sonata no.2, Op.87a.

*June Nixon at the organ of St. Paul's Cathedral,
Melbourne, Australia*

*Move MS 3059
(Not available at
present in the U.K.)*

Until ten years or so ago, recordings of the two Elgar organ sonatas were comparatively rare. Now, however, there are many fine versions of both works. I have to say at once that this is not one of them. Neither soloist nor instrument can compare with the best of their British counterparts. June Nixon, the organist at the cathedral, is not wanting in technique, but she lacks a sense of flow and structure, so vital to a successful

rendering of the first sonata. The brightness of the *Severn Suite* transcription is lost in the leisurely and somewhat subdued approach, especially in the Toccata (marked *allegro molto*). The timing of this version is almost two minutes slower than Herbert Dawson's 1933 recording - a substantial difference in such a relatively short work.

The recording, made by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, leaves much to be desired. Considerable treble compensation is needed before one can hear the melody in the right hand, particularly when the pedals are used. In the *fortissimo* passages the sound is frankly messy. And it is not necessary to be an expert to hear the difference between the St. Paul's instrument, fine as it is, and those at Cambridge, Gloucester and Worcester.

It would have been nice to have welcomed this disc more enthusiastically. Certainly we can rejoice that Elgar recordings are being made outside of this country, but this record does nothing to challenge domestic pre-eminence in the field of Elgar's organ music

Sir Adrian Boult conducts A Concert of English Music

G.H.

Various orchestras, recorded 1934-1951

EMI ED29 1092 1
Cassette ED29 1092 4

The HMV Treasury Series has already produced some fine performances from the archives, and this record of Boult conducting British music is to be welcomed. Side 1 begins with the performance of Vaughan Williams' *Serenade to Music* recorded at the opening of the Royal Festival Hall in 1951. It is followed by two pieces by Ethel Smyth, a *Minuet* and *Two Interlinked French Folk Melodies*. These were issued just before the war but had a brief life in the catalogues. They are charming pieces, and finely performed by an anonymous orchestra. Butterworth's *A Shropshire Lad* completes the side, played by the Hallé Orchestra, and recorded in 1942. Even though decimated by the call-up of many of their musicians, the Hallé still maintained that fine string sound so essential to this very British piece of music.

The second side opens with the one disappointment on the disc, a 1937 performance of Walton's *Portsmouth Point Overture*. It was never a good recording, displaying a very 'boxy' sound, in marked contrast to some fine recordings which came from the Abbey Road Studios in the late 1930s. The interpretation is lively enough, but the sound is far below HMV's best of the period. The briefest of breaks leads into a somewhat inappropriate contrast - Boult's famous performance of the Prelude from *The Dream of Gerontius*. Here the young BBC Symphony Orchestra gave a fine performance, still moving and compelling today. Two more Elgar pieces follow: *Imperial March*, and *Sospiri*. These two are Boult at his best, firm and incisive, but letting the music really flow, and showing his complete sympathy with the composer's intention. The recording too is excellent, the HMV engineers using their considerable skills to get the very best from the studio acoustic. Finally, Walton's Coronation March written for 1937, *Crown Imperial*. This was recorded in the Kingsway Hall by the BBC Symphony Orchestra, with Berkeley Mason at the organ. A spirited ending to a most interesting and valuable compilation, which restores to us many favourite recordings of the past. With the one exception mentioned above all the transfers are excellent.

NEMO

A Treasury of English Song

Peter Dawson, John McCormack, Gervase Elwes,
Kirsten Flagstad, Richard Tauber, Derek Oldham, Carmen
Hill, Olga Haley, Tudor Davies, Norman Allin, etc. etc.

HMV Treasury series EMI EX 29 0911 3
EX 29 0911 5 Cassette

A treasure indeed! Two records of no less than 42 British songs, sung by some of the finest native singers, together with several distinguished singers from overseas. The leading British song-writers of this century are represented, with the somewhat strange absence of Eric Coates. But EMI have dug deep into their archives, though they might have called this an HMV/Columbia Treasury for a third are Columbia recordings. They have come up with some rare recordings, particularly so in the case of the first Elgar song on the record, for it is of an almost forgotten baritone, Eric Marshall, singing *Speak, Music*. This lasted barely a year on the 1926 lists, and was an early electric recording. The other opus 41 song, *In the Dawn* is here sung by John Coates in the earliest recording represented, made in 1915. This version was also on the Elgar Society record ELG 001. But not all the recordings are of this vintage, there are many from the late 30s, and the latest was made in 1948. And what surprises there are: Tauber singing Frank Bridge, Leila Megane singing Delius, Peter Dawson singing Holst, Bax, and Vaughan Williams, Kirsten Flagstad singing Bridge, and John McCormack in songs by Granville Bantock. The transfers have been direct metal remastered, and come over with an amazing freshness. It is a delight to hear again voices from the past - Anne Thursfield in a charming Armstrong Gibbs song, Carmen Hill singing Roger Quilter's *The Fuschia Tree*, and David Lloyd singing Elgar's *Is She Not Passing Fair?* These are recordings to treasure and to learn from, for there is a vocal technique in many of the performances which is almost lost today. There are brief, but informative, notes on the singers, by Lyndon Jenkins, and full details of the recordings, date of performance, place of recording where known, and best of all a note of all the accompanists where this information was available. They have managed to misspell Maurice Jacobson's name (a keen Elgarian), but otherwise the notes are excellent. To all lovers of singing, and particularly of British song, I say "Spend your money, or record tokens, on this double album." You will not be disappointed!

NEMO

ELGAR ON COMPACT DISC

It is now over three years since compact discs first appeared in the record shops. Unfortunately we have had to wait a long time for a representative selection of the best of Elgar to become available in the new medium, in first class performances. During the past year, however, the situation for the Elgar enthusiast with a CD player has improved considerably - sufficiently, in fact, for a critical look to be cast over what is available. Inevitably by the time this review appears in print some of my comments will be out of date, as new releases appear. However I will attempt in this issue of the Journal to cover most of the currently available CDs of major Elgar works, and in the next issue I will turn my attention to the several discs available containing selections of Elgar's shorter and lighter compositions.

Until recently the only available CD of Elgar's most popular major orchestral work, the 'Enigma' Variations, was the unacceptably self-indulgent recording conducted by Leonard Bernstein, with the BBC Symphony Orchestra (DG 413 49002). Despite outstandingly clear recorded sound and magnificent orchestral playing (and lively fill-ups, in the form of the first two 'P&C' Marches and the March of the Mogul Emperors) the performance of the Variations, misconceived from start to finish, is too much of a danger to the blood pressure of any true Elgarian, to be recommended even as a curiosity. Happily, within the past two or three months, three alternatives have become available. Boult's 1971 performance with the LSO has always struck me as being somewhat undercharacterised. It has now been reissued on EMI CDC 747206-2, with all five 'P&C' marches as fill-up. The other two versions are new recordings, both reviewed in their LP form by the editor in the last issue of the Journal. Mackerras, with the LPO (CDC 7-47416-2) gives a vivid, strongly characterised performance, no doubt reflecting his great experience as an operatic conductor. Menuhin's performance on Philips (with the RPO, number 416-354-2) is warm and affectionate, with the conductor's deep understanding of the composer shining through every bar. Mackerras, seems much brisker and more dynamic - yet studying the track timings (an advantage with CDs) shows only marginal tempo differences between these two fine performance, the different impressions being due entirely to subtle contrasts in phrasing and rhythm. Mackerras would be my first recommendation - strengthened by the superb coupling, one of the finest ever interpretations of 'Falstaff'.

The only rival 'Falstaff' on CD is found on a Chandos CD, featuring the Scottish National Orchestra under Gibson. (CHAN 8309). The orchestral playing may lack the last touch of polish, but the performance of all the works (the others are 'In The South', 'Froisart', 'Cockaigne' and the Handel/Elgar 'Overture in D') is generally first class and the recorded sound highly atmospheric.

The Menuhin 'Variations' has the Cello Concerto played by Julian Lloyd Webber as coupling. I have not been able to warm to this performance. I find Lloyd Webber's approach somewhat over-strenuous and unrelenting. Perhaps the rather close microphone placing given to the soloist has exaggerated this impression, and somewhat reduced his dynamic range - but one has only to compare his rather effortful scherzo with his two main rivals on CD to feel slightly disappointed with this performance, although the rich tone and warm serenity of the Adagio compensates to some extent. In neither of these inner movements has anyone yet rivalled the legendary recording by Jacqueline du Pré and Barbirolli. This comes up well in its CD transfer (EMI CDC7-47329-2), coupled with Janet Baker's equally celebrated recording of 'Sea Pctures', also conducted by Barbirolli. The only other currently available CD of the Cello Concerto features Yo Yo Ma and the LSO, conducted by Previn, and coupled with the Walton concerto (CBS MK 39541). I gave this performance a warm welcome when the LP disc was issued, and can only repeat what I said then - that it is an excellent performance, the technical brilliance and delicacy of the Scherzo rivalling Du Pré, although the soloist's drier tone and emotional restraint may not appeal to everyone.

There are two versions of the violin concerto available on CD. Nigel Kennedy's recording for EMI with the LPO under Vernon Handley has deservedly been outstandingly successful and needs no further recommendation from me - although it is worth pointing out that although the CD is being sold at top price, the LP disc and cassette are on the cheaper 'EMI Eminence' label. The number is CDC 7-47210-2. When Perlman's recording of the concerto with Barenboim and the Chicago SO was first

released it was highly praised. I was less enthusiastic, finding it technically unrivalled, but somewhat superficial interpretatively, once the wonderment at the soloist's amazing skill has receded. It is now available on a DG CD, number 413 312-2.

In the last issue of the Journal I reviewed two new versions of the 1st symphony, RPO/Previn (now on a Philips CD 416 612-2), and LPO/Bryden Thomson, from Chandos (CD number CHAN 8451). As a performance I found the Previn one a revelation, showing exceptional understanding, helped by slightly dry, crystal clear recording, and the highly individual lean-toned sound of the RPO, permitting more internal detail to be audible than is sometimes the case. The Thomson version could not be more different. His deep and sincere affection for every note of the music is abundantly evident, and his is backed by rich, warm-toned sound quality and outstanding orchestral playing even by the usual high LPO level of commitment. The whole does not quite hold together as an interpretation, however, tempi tending to be on the slow side, resulting in a somewhat 'episodic' effect, especially in the first movement. Nevertheless it is worth hearing, for its great warmth and sense of involvement.

The situation as far as CDs of the Elgar 1st symphony is concerned has, however, dramatically changed in the past couple of months with the release of Boult's wonderful 1975 version, also with the LPO. The brisk, passionate first movement still thrusts all rival versions aside. Perhaps the scherzo does not have the swagger of Previn and Thomson's adagio has more warmth. Nevertheless as an overall interpretation of the symphony on CD, it is Boult I would recommend. The digital transfer has not resulted in the loss of any of the exceptional richness of the original analogue recording. What makes the Boult even more of a recommendation is the fact that so far it is the only CD Elgar 1st to include a fill-up, in the form of Boult's 1973 Serenade for Strings, and his 1968 Chanson de Nuit and Chanson de Matin. The number is CDC 7-47204-2.

Boult's 2nd symphony is not yet available on CD, only the Haitink/Philharmonia version having so far been released in the new medium (CDC 7-47299-2). I have never warmed to this recording, and would advise CD collectors to wait for the time being. Finally on to Elgar's greatest choral work 'The Dream of Gerontius'. We had to wait a long time for the first LP and stereo recordings - yet we already have two CD versions. Both in fact, are reissues of performances recorded in 1975. The conductors are Boult (EMI CDS 7-47208-8) and Gibson (CRD 33267), and both issues are well-packaged 2-disc boxes with excellent notes. An immediate advantage of the Boult version is that, as with the 1st symphony, EMI have given good value by including Boult's 1967 'Music Makers' at the start of the first side. This means that the EMI first disc is a well filled 68 minutes, although Part One of 'Gerontius' cannot be quite accommodated, the last 7 minutes or so spilling over on to disc two. The CRD accommodates the whole of Part One on to the first disc, but this does mean that it only contains 35 minutes music - not good value for a CD.

Making a clear recommendation between these two performances is impossible as they are so different. Boult's tempi tend to be slower, emphasising the more contemplative aspects of the work, and EMI's rich, resonant sound quality tends to emphasise this magisterial effect. Gibson gives a more overtly dramatic if rather episodic interpretation. His chorus lacks the polish and accuracy of Boult's London Philharmonic Choir, but the Scottish demons sound much more malevolent, and Gibson's brisk, ecstatic treatment of 'Praise to the Holiest' makes a greater impact at the climax of the work. The CRD sound quality is exceptionally clear, the chorus, although given a slightly recessed balance, being captured with outstanding clarity of detail and impact.

As far as the principal singers are concerned, I have never been as happy as some reviewers with Boult's Nicolai Gedda, who does not seem to me to get really under the skin of the role and was not in consistently good voice at the sessions. Gibson's Robert Tear sounds effortful at times, but has this music in his blood. There is little to choose between the two mezzos, Alfreda Hodgson and Helen Watts. Not having heard the Gibson recording for some years, I was surprised to find myself coming more and more to favour it over Boult's - yet the latter's recording has many unrivalled moments of extreme beauty. In particular, the slow, gentle pacing of the Angel's Farewell, sung with great serenity and rock-like steadiness by Helen Watts - surely one of the loveliest Elgar recordings ever.

Gareth H. Lewis



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY



24 Jan.	King Olaf <i>Horsley Choral Society</i>	St. John's Chapel, Leatherhead, Surrey at 7.30 p.m.
29 Jan.	Introduction and Allegro <i>Academy of St Martins/Iona Brown</i>	Queen Elizabeth Hall
7 Feb.	The Dream of Gerontius <i>Cathryn Wyn-Rogers, David Johnston, Peter Rose/Norwich PO and Chorus/M. Nicholas</i>	St Andrew's Hall, Norwich
10 Feb.	Cello Concerto <i>Ulrich Heinen (c), CBSO/Rattle</i>	Cheltenham Town Hall
11 Feb.	Symphony No. 1 <i>LPO/Thomson</i>	Royal Festival Hall
12 Feb.	Cello Concerto <i>Ulrich Heinen (c), CBSO/Rattle</i>	Birmingham Town Hall
3 Mar.	Violin Concerto <i>I. Perlman and Philharmonia</i>	Royal Festival Hall
7 Mar.	Sursum Corda (with Verdi's Requiem) <i>Bristol Choral Society</i>	Colston Hall, Bristol
7 Mar.	Caractacus <i>Gloucester Choral Soc/Gloucester SO/Sanders/Mitchinson/George/ Fugella/Roberts</i>	Gloucester Cathedral at 7.30 p.m.

14 Mar.	Serenade for Strings <i>Guildford PO/Simon Halsey</i>	Guildford Civic Hall
17 Mar.	Symphony No. 2 <i>Philharmonia/Sinopoli</i>	Royal Festival Hall
29 Mar.	Symphony No. 2 <i>Guildford PO/Handley</i>	Guildford Civic Hall
5 Apr.	Coronation Ode <i>Harlow Chorus, Alberni Orchestra/Wendy Eathorne/Susan Mason/Adrian Thompson/Henry Herford/Cond. M Kibblewhite</i>	Harlow Sportcentre, Essex at 8 p.m. Details from R Ball, tel: Harlow 416050
9 Apr.	Cello Concerto <i>Susanna Wilson (c), North Staffs SO/M. Trowski</i>	Victoria Hall, Hanley, Staffs
11 Apr.	The Light of Life (with Parry's Prometheus Unbound) <i>Colchester Choral Society/Ian Ray</i>	Colchester Town Hall, 7.30 p.m.
11 Apr.	The Kingdom <i>Paula Bott, Kate McCarney, Barry Banks, Robert Hayward/Liverpool Welsh Choral Union/RLPO/A Ridley</i>	Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool at 7.30 p.m.
14 Apr.	Cockaigne Overture <i>RPO/Berglund</i>	Royal Festival Hall
29 Apr.	Symphony no. 2 <i>Bournemouth SO/Groves</i>	Poole Arts Centre at 7.30 p.m.
2 May	Coronation Ode/Violin Concerto/Sospiri/Prelude to The Kingdom <i>No details available</i>	Queen Elizabeth Hall
9 May	Dream of Gerontius <i>CBSO and Chorus/Rattle, with Penelope Walker, Maldwyn Davies, Matthew Best</i>	Birmingham Town Hall
28 May	Cello Concerto <i>RPO/Batiz/Julian LLoyd Webber</i>	Royal Festival Hall
6 Jun.	The Kingdom <i>Teresa Cahill, Diana Walkley, David Johnston, John Noble/St Edmundsbury Bach Choir and Orchestra/F Harrison Oxley</i>	The Cathedral, Bury St Edmunds

NEWS FROM THE BRANCHES

EAST ANGLIAN Branch affairs continue to go swimmingly, with heads nicely above water, and membership stable at about the 50 mark. A good turn-out of members welcomed the return of Ronald Taylor on Sept. 19th, this time with his entertaining account of Elgar's involvement with the BBC. In October we were delighted to have Dorabella's son, Claud Powell, give his illustrated talk on his mother's friendship with the Elgars and also his own memories of another of the Variations, RBT. Branch Chairman Brent Palmer took the November slot with a carefully chosen programme entitled "Elgar and other composers of his time", reminding us of the fine music also coming from Elgar's contemporaries, at home and abroad, during the highly creative Victorian and Edwardian eras. This enabled one to reflect also on the reasons for Elgar's own rise to eminence because, musically speaking, he is quite simply seen to have done it "rather better" than most.

After the Christmas Dinner, 1987 brings a local performance of *The Dream*, which will be preceded by a talk by the conductor Michael Nicholas. In February the branch AGM (and, we hope, a new Secretary) and a presentation of *Falstaff*, time permitting. A week later the traditional Winter Party. Barry Collett makes a welcome return in March to speak on "Elgar's Orchestral Style", with special reference to *In the South* and *Froissart* overtures. In the following month David Barker, former Chairman of Norwich Gramophone Society, presents a programme "Elgar's Earlier Victorian Predecessors".

The first meeting of the recently reconstituted EAST MIDLANDS Branch was held on May 19th, when Robert Mandell spoke on *Falstaff*. This meeting was held in conjunction with the Leicester Recorded Music Society as part of their programme, and was well received by those present. The new branch activities have followed a meeting earlier in the year when Sir Yehudi Menuhin was presented with a copy of the new edition of the Elgar Discography. The presentation was made by the Society Chairman, Michael Pope. In December Branch members will hear a talk by Dr Donald Hunt on "Elgar and the Three Choirs Festival". This will also be in collaboration with the L.R.M.S. We wish our colleagues well, and hope that members within travelling distance of Leicester will support the Branch.

SOUTH WALES. Following a talk by the Society's Chairman, Michael Pope, on 1st November, in Swansea, a meeting was held at which it was hoped that a new Secretary would come forward from the Branch members present and that a committee would be elected. Nobody present was prepared to undertake the duties of Secretary. If any member would like to be considered please notify the Society Secretary, Mrs Carol Holt, 20 Geraldine Road, Malvern, Worcs. We urgently need support for this Branch, and, subject to that support, it is hoped to arrange a Day School in the Spring.

LONDON Branch has been struggling manfully against obstacles set in our way by Imperial College! The new season opened with us moved from our usual venue, because of centennial celebrations and "goings on" at the College, to an unlikely home deep in the Mechanical Engineering Dept. However, our brilliant young soloists, Mary Wu and Robert Whysall Gibbs of the Royal College, triumphed over the odds in a magnificent and exhilarating performance of the *Violin Sonata* which, judging from the Festival Hall reviews, was better value than Sinopoli conducting the *First Symphony* that night. An enjoyable social get-together followed. In November the Secretary's portable cassette player came to the rescue when all the Science and Technology of Imperial College could not persuade their equipment to work. Neither was a slide projector on its best behaviour. But this time it was Ian Lace who carried off the evening with aplomb. His "In

the South" presentation was a vastly enjoyable programme which threw light on a range of composers - Bax, Ireland, Coates, as well as Elgar. Particularly noteworthy was Ian's collection of unique and, because of the death of some participants, irreplaceable taped interviews with a number of eminent musicians and first-hand witnesses.

Settle-Morecambe Visit. At the time of writing London Branch hopes that the proposed visit to Settle and Morecambe over the weekend of June 26-27 will go ahead. A provisional hotel booking has been made and this must soon be confirmed. It is hoped that a suitable Elgarian concert at Giggleswick School, a presentation "Elgar and Yorkshire", and a coach trip encompassing Elgarian places and Dales beauty spots, will be included in the programme.

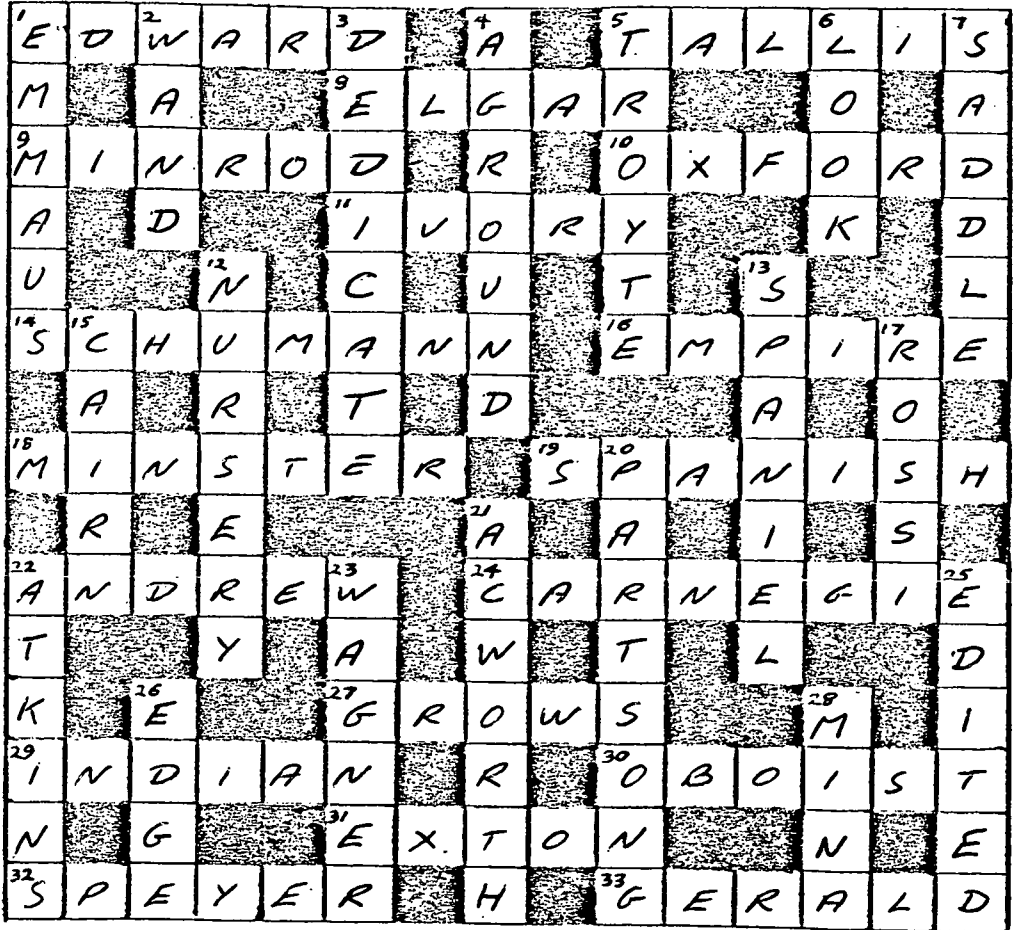
Which brings us neatly to YORKSHIRE Branch: With the first four meetings now behind us, all well-attended, we feel we have made a good start to our 1986-7 season. Attendance for the first meeting, Ian Lace's "Elgar's Sussex" was reassuring, considering we were barely out of the holiday season, but support for subsequent meetings has been even better. Chairman Michael Pope felt his visit in October, to talk on *Caractacus*, was well worth his long journey, while another good audience on October 20th listened to Anne Read's choice of Elgar records, and a very interesting accompanying talk on several aspects and periods of Elgar's life. But the best attendance - our largest ever - was for our own member, Millicent Albrow, who gave her personal reminiscences of John Barbirolli, illustrating her talk with extracts from his recordings. Television writer John Finch, also a Branch member, is our next speaker (December 1st) and will discuss incidental music, with special reference to Elgar and Vaughan Williams.

We are very pleased at the way things are going in the Branch, and with consistently high attendance figures and keen interest we have never had doubts about our survival. Now, with some new members, and with recent publicity likely to attract more, we remain confident. About half the branch attended *The Kingdom* at Leeds Town Hall in November, when the pre-concert talk, given by our member David Fligg, included much publicity for both Society and Branch.

SOUTH WEST BRANCH report that due to illness the visit from Dr Eric Fenby could not take place. However, Stephen Lloyd of the Delius Society, and also a member of the Elgar Society, stepped in so that the September meeting was still a combined Elgar/Delius Societies event. In October Garry Humphreys presented his talk "Edward Elgar - Illuminated". The season was rounded off successfully by a concert from the Avon Brass Ensemble in a concert of British Music, including works specially commissioned by them, and we were able to record them. The new season starts on Jan 17th with the AGM followed by a Branch Social. Meetings have been arranged for the coming year, and details can be obtained from the Branch Secretary, Ron Bleach (Address on back cover).

WEST MIDLANDS AGM will be held at The Stables, 37 Albany Terrace, Worcester, on March 7th at 2.30 p.m. There will be some surprise entertainment beforehand. On March 21st, at 7.30 p.m. there will be a joint meeting with the Worcester Recorded Music Society in The Old Palace, Deansway, Worcester, when John Warren, Branch Chairman, will play, live, a selection of Elgar's piano music, and then introduce the recording of *The Black Knight*. On April 25th, again at The Old Palace, at 2.30 p.m. Rodney Baldwin will speak on his family connections with Elgar. Members may not know that Rodney has a great deal of correspondence from both sides, and it should be a most rewarding and enlightening afternoon.

SOLUTION TO CROSSWORD in the September issue.



MALVERN FESTIVAL 1987

Early mention of the Malvern Festival has been sent to us by Vivian Cooke, and we find that this year Elgar is back to his usual prominent place in the Festival programmes. The festival will take place from the 17th to the 30th May, and as always there will be Drama and fringe activities in addition to the music. Concerts that include Elgar compositions are:

17th May Violin Concerto (soloist Nigel Kennedy, Philharmonia Orch/William Boughton)

20th May Introduction and Allegro (Polish Chamber Orch/Jan Stanienda)

23rd May Enigma Variations (NCOS SO/Christoper Seaman)

28th May Serenade for Strings (English String Orch/William Boughton)

30th May Cello Concerto (soloist Robert Cohen, Bournemouth SO/Rudolf Barshai)

Full details are available from the Festival Box Office, Grange Road, Malvern, Worcs.

LETTERS

From Michael Wilcox

I was interested to read K. Kemsey-Bourne's article about the DIES IRAE being the 'larger theme' of the Enigma Variations. (Sept. JOURNAL). Has anyone pointed out that the Dies Irae is the basis of the Piano Quintet also?

From Prof. Ian Parrott.

In 1977, Michael Kennedy did me the honour of describing me as Britain's current "Enigma Solver-in-Chief." How he can now support the idea of the Dies Irae as the 'hidden tune' put forward by Mr. Kemsey-Bourne defeats me. The notes do not fit Elgar's harmony.

Apart from my tracing the 'dark saying' to St. Paul (see "An Elgar Companion", ed. Redwood, 1982), I have put forward the suggestion that B.A.C.H. 'goes'. The first note of Elgar's theme is B and the last note is, strikingly, H (German style). And, if you look in the middle, you will see two high notes, A & C, both marked 'tenuto' (held). All four notes 'go' - not in counterpoint, but as I am sure Elgar meant it.

***This letter was also sent to the "Daily Telegraph"**

THE ELGAR SOCIETY

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

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION; £6. Family membership is available if only one Journal is received per family: 2 members per family £7: 3 members £8: 4 members £9. Branch members pay their branch subscription in addition to the basic amount. Applications for membership should be sent to the Hon. Membership Secretary, J. R. Greig, Orchard Barn, Derrington Street, Barham, Canterbury, Kent, CT4 6QB. Renewal of subscriptions, due January 1st, should be made to the Hon. Treasurer, David Morris, 125 Cleveland Road, Ealing, London W13 0EN. The Hon. Secretary is Carol Holt, 20 Geraldine Road, Malvern, Worcs, WR14 3PA.

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