

# The Elgar Society JOURNAL



January  
1988

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ELGAR SOCIETY JOURNAL

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# The Elgar Society Journal

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## EDITORIAL

Vol. 5, no. 4  
January 1988

This will not need to be a long editorial, but it is an important one. This Society has grown considerably in the past decade, not just in the number of members, but in prestige and influence. There was a time - not so long distant - when many people did not know that there was an Elgar Society, but now, in Britain at least, all that has changed. Our position is assured, provided always that we maintain our role as the premier composer Society in the country, and continue our efforts to make Elgar's music more widely known abroad.

Much of our success has come from the ordinary enthusiast in our ranks (though it is perhaps unkind to refer to any Elgarian as 'ordinary'), but it is also due to hard work, lobbying, and continuing enthusiasm from the officers of the Society generally, and the Branch Officials from all round the country. We have been fortunate that in the last decade we have had the benefit of Michael Pope's leadership, not least for his many valuable contacts in the world of music, both professional and amateur. Now that he has decided to relinquish the post of Chairman we face the vital task of electing his successor - a person who must continue to build on the firm foundations laid. The election of officers will take place at the Annual General Meeting in June, but nominations take time to be considered and approved, and I therefore ask for such nominations now. We hope that whoever is elected will be Chairman for some time, and it is most important to have someone who is knowledgeable, who is, preferably, someone with contacts in the music world, and who is a good administrator and negotiator. Members who have such a person in mind, who they think would fit the bill, are invited to send nominations to the Secretary, but please remember it is necessary to get the consent of a nominee before you put their name forward!

The good news that our East Anglia branch is now active again is doubly welcome for the fact that Alan Childs, a founder member of the branch, has once again taken up the reins as Branch Chairman. We wish him well.

RONALD TAYLOR

EDITOR

## NEWS ITEMS

*Thames Publishing* have published two volumes of Elgar Songs, at £5.25 per volume. Some of the songs are receiving their first modern publication, and are part of a series of English Songs to be issued by the same publisher. Each song is newly edited and annotated. The two Elgar volumes have an introduction by Barry Collett. Distribution is by Novello's, and we hope to notice them in more detail in a future issue.

*Members are also reminded* that the latest edition of Barry Collett's *ELGAR COUNTRY*, with new illustrations, is also available at £4.95. Available from the Birthplace, from Thames Publishing (14 Barlby Road, London, W10 6AR) or from any bookshop.

*Sir David Willcocks*, one of our distinguished Vice-Presidents, conducted two performances of *THE DREAM OF GERONTIUS* in Rhode Island, USA last May. He has kindly supplied us with details of further performances which he will conduct in 1988. On 8th May, at the Mayfield Festival, East Sussex; on the 6th and 7th August, at the Green Lake Festival, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA; on the 8th September, at Brisbane, Australia; on the 17th at Melbourne, and on the 24th at Sydney, the latter with the Sydney Philharmonic Society. He will also conduct *THE KINGDOM*, with the Bach Choir and the Philharmonia, at the Royal Festival Hall, on 9th May. Sir David is keeping very busy! We appreciate all that he does for Elgar's music and for British music in general.

THE ELGAR FOUNDATION is to establish an Elgar Centre for study purposes in premises next door to the Birthplace. This will be a great boon to scholars and researchers, and we congratulate the Foundation on bringing about this very desirable development. No doubt a full public announcement will be made in due course, and we await those details with keen anticipation.

*Harrison Oxley* has drawn our attention to the fact that postcard reproductions of the well-known Burne-Jones portrait of Elgar are available from the Birthplace. Details from the Curator.

*A Swedish member*, Mr. Akesson, advises us that there is to be a performance of *THE DREAM OF GERONTIUS* in the south of Sweden in March. There are not many performances in Scandinavia, though Charles Farncombe had done sterling work. We hope that Mr. Akesson will let us have further details, and possibly a copy of the programme?

*Heart of England Country Tours* will be running their successful "Elgar Pilgrimage" again in July and October. However, Jane Moyle, who organises this very well-planned pilgrimage, tells us that she would be willing to organise special weekends for groups of members at any time of the year. Further details may be obtained from her at Yew Tree House, Ombersley, Worcs WR9 OJX. Branch secretaries please note!

*The Australian String Quartet* begin their British tour on 16th January at Clandon Park, with three London concerts following on 22nd, 25th and 26th January. At the concerts on the 16th and the 25th the Elgar *Piano Quintet* will be featured. The Quartet will be joined by the young pianist Marie-Noelle Kendall for the *Quintet*. The concert on the 25th will take place at St. John's Smith Square.

Two distinguished members of the Society, Lady Hull and Mrs. Lydia Shaw, both celebrated their 90th birthday during 1987. To both we extend hearty congratulations, and our good wishes for their continued health and longevity.

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### MICHAEL POPE PRESENTATION

It may come as a surprise to some members that after ten years in office Michael Pope has decided to relinquish the Chairmanship of the Society. He has proved an outstanding chairman; as a distinguished musician and scholar he has brought to the Society expertise and dedication and with the help of successive committees, has placed it in the forefront of composer societies. His care for detail and his enthusiasm for English musical heritage have helped the Society forward during a period which has seen an increase in membership and a growing awareness of Elgar's music. Members who would like to express their appreciation of his leadership are invited to send donations to the Treasurer indicating that it is for the Michael Pope presentation. The Treasurer is David Morris, 2 Marriott's Close, Haddenham, Aylesbury, Bucks, HP17 8BT.

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### THE Malvern Festival . . . May 22 to June 5, 1988 . . . . .

We have received preliminary information on the Festival, and it looks to be a good one once again. This year there is rather more Elgar including a performance of *THE APOSTLES*. Full details is in the Festival brochure published from the Festival Box Office, Grange Road, Gt. Malvern, Worcs, to whom application should be made. Meanwhile here are some of the concerts of interest to members:

May 25th. Elgar's *Violin Sonata*, together with music by Sarasate, Szymanowski, and Debussy. Lorraine McAslan (violin) & Nigel Clayton (piano)

May 26th. *Sospiri*, and works by Butterworth, Vaughan Williams, and Richard Strauss. English String Orchestra, cond. William Boughton

June 2nd. *Piano Quintet*, and works by Schubert and Bridge. Coull Quartet, and Alan Schiller (piano)

June 3rd. Elgar and Ravel *String Quartets*, Duke Quartet

June 4th. *The Apostles*, NCOS Symphony Orchestra, cond. Brian Wright, Malvern Festival Chorus, Bronwen Mills, Howard Milner, Gordon Jones, Catherine Wyn-Rogers, Michael Pearce, Michael George

June 5th. *Sea Pictures*, together with Holst's *The Planets*, and Janacek's *Taras Bulba*, NCOS SO, cond. William Boughton, with Fiona Kimm and Ladies Chorus

*Members are reminded that the 1988 Annual Meeting of the Elgar Society will be held in Malvern on the afternoon of June 4th, coinciding with the performance of THE APOSTLES in the evening of that day. The Society is also hoping to plan other events of interest during that weekend, so it should be an unusually enjoyable time for all Elgarians. Further details will be published in our May issue.*

## DR. ELGAR AS A CONDUCTOR OF AMATEURS

This short article first appeared in "The Musical Standard" Nov. 29, 1902. It was signed Florence G. Fidler, a name almost too apt! Does anyone know if Miss Fidler existed, and where? Or is it some other lady performer of the day, hiding under a pseudonym? EDITOR.

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That Dr. Elgar is a conductor who will shortly have to be reckoned with is evident to anyone who has played under his direction at all. Primarily he is a man of moods, but this is what must be said of every great artist. In the actual technique of conducting, in so far as it is required for an average amateur band, he is somewhat inexperienced. He economizes neither his own time nor the players'. For instance, in rehearsing Parry's *Lotus Eaters* he unwisely used a vocal score until the final rehearsal with the full band. Anyone who has grappled with Sir Hubert's hieroglyphics knows how utterly incomprehensible his scores are at first sight. Dr. Elgar did not know the score, and the performance suffered in consequence. As a conductor of amateurs, he is somewhat hopeless with regard to inexperienced back-desks. If players have to be taught the elements of orchestral playing, they should go elsewhere.

"You told me last time I'd spoilt your tea", he cried to the second violins, in a moment of exasperation, "and I'll do it again." That is exactly the point. He spoils their tea, but does not teach them. With players of experience, he is the conductor as distinguished from the teacher. If the band knows enough to allow itself to be played on, he will play on to some purpose - when he is in the mood. His interpretation of Mozart's *Idomeneo* overture, which he knows and loves, was a revelation. Every detail of the tragedy was brought out, and as the technicalities of the piece were within grasp of his orchestra he got what he wanted. This one item alone showed what he can do provided he has the means at hand. With a band of skilled professional players who can feel instinctively every idea of their conductor, Dr. Elgar comes very near that high standard which we have set for our English conductors.

With regard to his direction of his own works, the present writer's experience was confined to *Pomp and Circumstance*. ("those wretched marches", as the maker described them) and a little piece which the composer-conductor struck out of the programme at the last minute for no given reason whatever. By this act he won the admiration of at least one of his band. For the little piece in question one has no special condemnation, but it is utterly unworthy of its writer's pen. It is a joy and delight to play *Pomp and Circumstance* to Dr. Elgar's beat. One feels that he loves those marches, and so one loves them, too, and plays one's best.

As to his methods, his beat is clear and comprehensible, but as he is at the mercy of his moods and rarely does a thing twice alike, one has to be ever alert and ready. At primary practices with an incomplete band, he stands by a piano and plays missing wind parts with his left hand while he conducts with his right. Like most highly-strung natures he can bear much provocation with great patience and little provocation with no patience at all. If the chorus turns its leaves noisily or a wretched viola-player drops her mute there is a rumpus in the land. On the other hand, he will go over and over again through a passage of detail until he gets the exact finish required.

FLORENCE G. FIDLER

## 20 CHURCH STREET, HEREFORD

by Jacob O'Callaghan

"Poor dear Old Dan died an hour ago. He was my best friend... he has a quiet little grave under the big apple tree." Thus George Robertson Sinclair - "G.R.S." - announced to his friend Edward Elgar the premature demise in July 1903 of the bull-terrier Elgar had immortalized in *Enigma Variation No. XI*, whose opening bars simultaneously recalled Dan's enforced dog-paddling in the Wye and his master's furious pedalling on the organ in nearby Hereford Cathedral.

The miniature gravestone that Sinclair erected may still be seen in the garden of 20 Church Street, in the shadow of the Cathedral. In Sinclair's time the house was the Cathedral Organist's official residence, and Elgar had been a frequent visitor from the early nineties. Sinclair was ex-officio conductor of the Three Choirs Festival and the Choral Society: Elgar was in the orchestra. Playful musical sketches, in short score, began to appear as "entries" in the Visitor's book, which Elgar dubbed *The Moods of Dan*, ILLUSTRATED - further testaments to the stimulating influence of Sinclair, Hereford and Dan, these themes turn up in exalted places - amongst them the opening bars of *In the South*, and the "Prayer" motive in *Gerontius*.

Elgarians may recently have seen some somewhat garbled reports in the Press about the proposed "development" of 20 Church Street, now owned by the city's Conservative Club, and its gardens. One account must have caused apoplexy to our Worcester neighbours; Hereford was "the city of Elgar's birth"! We Herefordians would not go so far as to claim the composer was born here, even if most of his best-known work was!

The facts are that since Dr P.C. Hull, Sinclair's successor, and Lady Hull were forced to leave the house in the late 20's because of the damp, the house, part of which dates back to 1400, and is of considerable architectural interest, has deteriorated so much that the present owners can no longer get insurance. One proposal was for the expensive repairs to be financed by allowing developers to build shops along Church Street which would, unfortunately, destroy most of the garden, and with it Dan's resting place.

However, the house is a listed building, and it and the gardens are in Hereford's conservation area. There would be much local opposition, official and otherwise, to any disturbance of what is an essential part of a quiet oasis of greenery surrounding the Cathedral in the midst of the city, unchanged since Elgar's time. In this respect Hereford has been more fortunate than Worcester.

It does seem that the importance and interest of the house's links with Elgar had not been fully appreciated during the discussions, another casualty of the "Elgar is Worcester" syndrome. Yet few, if any, sites in the whole country can claim to have more significant links with the composer. It was a congenial environment during the crucial nineties, and later, as P.C. Hull recalled, Elgar was given his own composing room by G.R.S. where much of *The Apostles* was written: Hull recalled the notice on the door "Incubator is now warming up, hatching is on - please don't disturb the hen!" From that time on his visits and stays here, up to the end of his life, were countless.



Barry Collett rehearsing with Richard Pasco and Teresa Cahill



It is those associations, together with the unique architectural and archaeological importance of the site, and its situation, which hopefully will enable 20 Church Street to be conserved in as far as possible its original state, not least for the ever-growing number of Elgarians who make the pilgrimage to Hereford.

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## PREMIERE ELGAR RECORDINGS

Writing in the March 1987 issue of *The Gramophone*, Diana McVeagh ended her article on the new recording of Elgar's *King Olaf* with the words "Now what about Elgar's wartime pieces? *The Fringes of the Fleet*, and the Cammaerts recitations with orchestra . . . ?"

That plea has now been fulfilled. Last September the Rutland Sinfonia, an 85-strong orchestra based in the East Midlands, presented an Elgar concert which included the *Imperial* and *Empire* Marches, the Prelude and aria 'The Sun Goeth Down' from *The Kingdom*, but more importantly featured the First World War works *Carillon*, *Le Drapeau Belge*, *Polonia*, *Une Voix dans le Desert*, and *Fringes of the Fleet*. The conductor was Barry Collett and the soloists were Richard Pasco (narrator) and Teresa Cahill (soprano). *Fringes of the Fleet* was done in its original form for four baritones, and 'Inside the Bar' was also included. Soloists in this work were Paul Kenyon, Stephen Godward, Simon Theobald and Russell Watson, all experienced singers, especially in the operatic field.

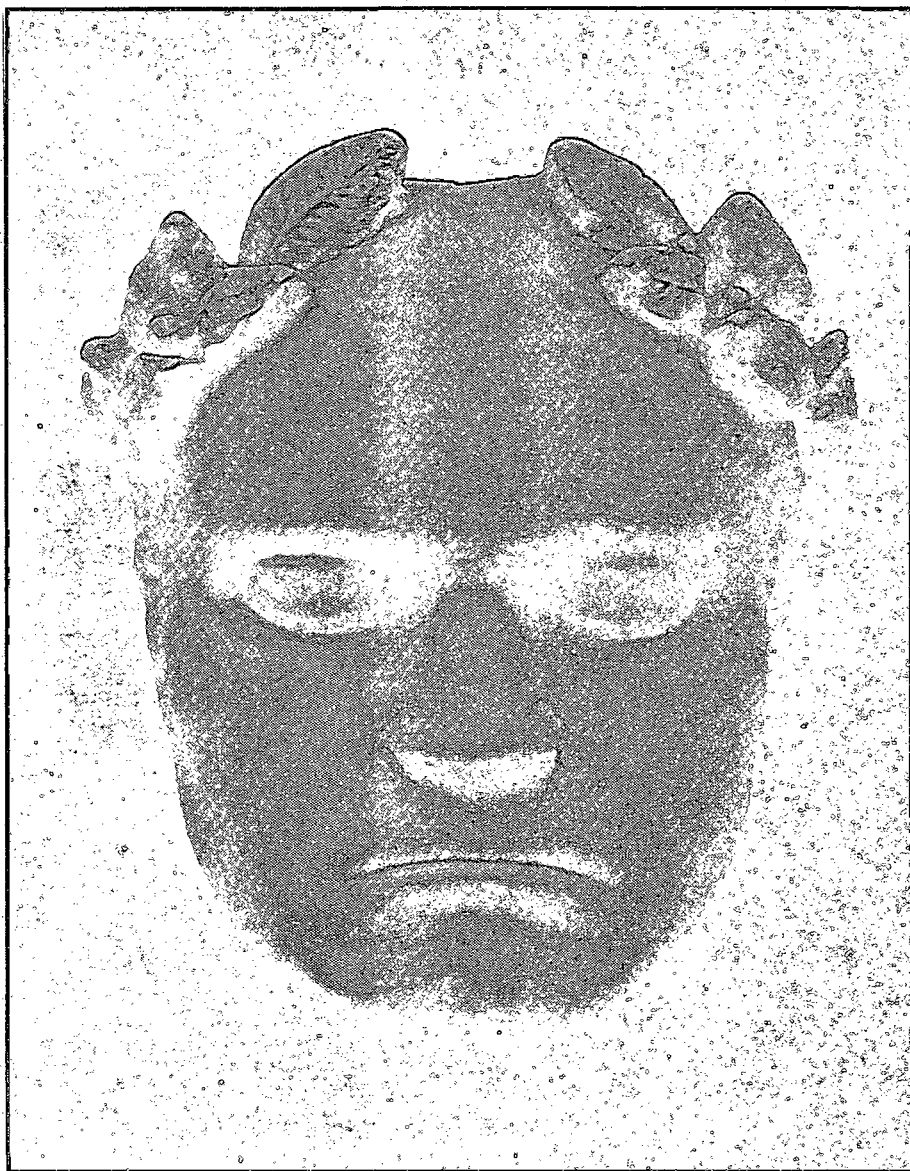
The problems involved in mounting the concert were immense. The printed orchestral parts of *Carillon* and *Le Drapeau Belge* were full of mistakes that had to be corrected, and the scores of *Une Voix dans le Dersert* and *Fringes of the Fleet* had disappeared altogether. Much painstaking detective work by Barry Collett finally led to a new edition of *Un Voix* . . . being prepared by Novellos, while *Fringes of the Fleet* was performed from manuscript copies of the original 1917 parts, littered with Elgar's own markings and comments! A large and enthusiastic audience greeted the concert, held in Corby's magnificent new Festival Hall, and many were obviously amazed at the power and emotion contained in the music, and genuinely baffled at the continuing neglect of these wonderful scores. Two days later the works were recorded and will appear on the Pearl label, thus filling the last obvious gap in the Elgar canon.

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*The Kingdom* has been recorded for RCA. conducted by the American Leonard Slatkin. The recording is scheduled for release some time in 1988; members may recall a broadcast, some years ago on Radio 3, of an open-air performance of the oratorio in Chicago, conducted by Slatkin. We await this new recording with great interest.

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Mr. G. MEAD of Church Cottage, Tidenham, Nr. Chepstow, Gwent, NP6 7JQ, is most anxious to obtain a copy of the complete LP set of CARACTACUS. This has now been deleted, but if any member has a set to spare would they please contact Mr. Mead.



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## THE BEETHOVEN MASK

In 1812 the pianoforte manufacturer Andreas Streicher commissioned the noted Austrian sculptor Franz Klein to execute a life-mask of Beethoven, and it is generally accepted that this mask provides the most important documentary evidence of Beethoven's features at this time for it preserves with complete accuracy the proportions of his face, even to the rather ugly pock-marks and scars. Later Klein made a copy of his original gypsum mask, and it was this copy which was presented to Elgar by Julius Butths and Richard Strauss after the 1902 Dusseldorf performance of *The Dream of Gerontius*. Not surprisingly, Elgar greatly treasured this gift, and he made sure that it always occupied a prominent position in his various homes. The mask can clearly be seen in photographs of the Severn House music-room, and Wulstan Atkins vividly recalls seeing it during his visits to Marl Bank.

The Beethoven life-mask - an awesome thing to live with - is at present in my care. Next summer it can be seen by visitors to the Birthplace and it will, in due course, find a permanent home in the new Elgar Centre. Recently, Dennis Clark (what a superb photographer he is!) took some photographs of the mask and one of them is reproduced here. But do visit Broadheath later in the year and see the original - you will not be disappointed.

Raymond Monk

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## BURGLARY!

by

Dr. Louie Eickhoff

Severn House asked to be burgled. We children passing on sunny days thought it uninhabited. So did collators of Kelly's Hampstead Directories in 1915, '16 & '17: there is no Sir Edward Elgar in Netherhall Gardens, in contrast to the annual recording of John McCormack whose residence opposite had more to tempt burglars than had no. 42. But the monied singer afforded staff permanently resident. Not so Elgar, whose wealth was in commodities not recognised by the Stock Exchange - his music and his wife. He left his house "in charge of an old servant who lived out and informed the Police"\*, as did others in the area whose houses were also plundered by the caretaking officers of the law using jemmy, pick-lock and two bits. Two skeleton and 150 other keys were found in their possession when apprehended.

Billy Reed's memory played him false ('Elgar', by W. H. Reed) on all aspects of the case except the year, 1918. From May 2nd it had been delightful at Brinkwells, even if bedding and coal had not arrived for over a week, and the sound of distant gunfire kept them mindful of the war. Elgar caught and recorded fish, dug out a wasp's nest, made a doorstep for Alice's bedroom, rejoiced at the arrival of a piano for the garden-room, smoked his pipe, caught more fish, and composed. On both sides of the hearth was contentment - until October 11th.

Reed was right in reporting the visit to London in that month, but wrong in making it for Elgar alone. It was for both, meant as a short stay while Alice was operated on for something which proved "much worse than expected and than she knows even now". From the description of the scar and unmentionable nature of the complaint, I can only surmise that this was a hysterectomy, a serious operation in those days usually accorded 4-6 weeks in hospital and 6 weeks to three months convalescence, often accompanied by a bad post-operative depression. Alice's condition caused 'confusion' in the engagement calendar and was, wrote Elgar, "a tragedy for my music."

Discharged on November 11th, Alice was trailed to Severn House to "run up the flag" before catching the 1.36 back to Brinkwells, its flag to be hoisted likewise, Elgar secretly regretting having to miss the Great Day in London. "Poor dear Alice" immediately caught cold and was recorded "not well" for another ten days. Elgar, however, was quickly "picking up the threads" of his music, and soon the ménage was back to its Elgar norm of ups and downs in health, minor domestic calamities ("paraffin smuts all over the place"), an atmosphere of warm affection with delight in the simple things of nature, and "E's moosic". Only from Elgar's letters to A.S.W. do we learn of Alice's lack of real enjoyment (due to post-operative depression). Nowhere does she herself take note of it, or of the operation itself; even as before she had kept silence about her taxi accident, just after Christmas 1915, that laid her up for more than a week.

Serenely they sailed on and prospered. Elgar even had a whole good day composing on December 15th. But next day brought a telegram telling of burglary at Severn House three days before. That did it! Elgar promptly developed a "disastrous chill" with very painful ears, that confined him "in a feeble state" to his room, leaving Alice, still not fully recovered from her operation, to take the pony cart before daybreak (of the 17th) to the darkened station (and later write an almost lyrical account of her drive) to get to Severn House. She noted obvious missing items, putting first what would ultimately have the most upsetting effect, "E's cloes" (one of their private words = clothes), saw the police, arranged for someone to remain in the house, and accompanied by Carice to the station, returned to Brinkwells making up her mind as she went. Elgar wrote hastily to A.S.W. of the "sudden changes". He was to go to Ridgehurst for the weekend, Alice and the servants, who found it too cold at Brinkwells, to Hampstead (where there was central heating) on Tuesday or Wednesday, "to be at home indefinitely". (N.B. "Home" - the term reserved for Severn House).

Outwardly the burglary seemed to have had little effect. Even with inadequate domestic help, Alice soon had the house in order, finding, however, "more and more things stolen, tea pot, toast rack, dessert knives and so many of E's "trucks" (clothes) "shirts, suits, trousers, even braces - and shoes." Superficially, normality was restored, new staff came, Adrian Boult visited, and even, there was a party (with a Harrods waiter) "for the Quartet... like captured sunshine" on January 7th. Signs of strain were there. Erstwhile indomitable and self-effacing, she wrote that she "was always expected to achieve the impossible" (only to be told that she always did!) the only complaint on her own behalf in all her diaries.

Elgar, consciously, almost enjoyed the situation in abstract, writing of burglars "ravaging" Severn House as if it was a lark; and of Carice having "an exciting time at the Police Court identifying our stolen things." Underneath, however, an adverse reaction developed showing itself in outbursts such as the one about London where interruptions and lack of peace contrasted unfavourably with Brinkwells and made composing (*Quintet*) difficult (although he had not complained before). His lovely Hampstead, where he and Alice had enjoyed walking round the block, along Froggnal Lane, where he and Carice could escape out at dawn to catch fish in a pond on the Heath, a Heath he showed off to his friends as 'twere a well-loved part of his own estate, this Hampstead became "Nothing but houses." Worse still, he went round his domain muttering "This is no home for me", his own only-owned home, where previously he had been so at home, even on his own, after an air raid. This was a heart-wound for Alice who had found this a perfect home for her "Eagle bird", had sacrificed security to obtain it for him, and now was striving beyond her current resources to maintain it for him.

Time began its healing. But just as they were rising above misfortune, their wounds were reopened. On July 13th, 1919, Grace, the maid, hearing whistles about 6 a.m., looked out and saw two men being taken by police. "She thought that they could not be burglars for they looked so well set up, dressed one in brown and one in grey (E's suits!)." The men, policemen turned burglars, were drunk when apprehended with "swag" and tools still about them. Carice went, on July 17th, to identify property at the Station and found china, silver, and clothing; quite exciting in abstract, but sordid and distressing in reality when, on July 28th, Edward and Alice (back from Brinkwells) went to Hampstead Police Station to claim ownership of items including "E's clothes all soiled - dirty having been worn - sad." Next day they had to spend all morning in Marylebone Court, hearing many seamy cases before Mr. d'Eyncourt heard theirs and accepted their repeated and *public* claim to ownership of those soiled clothes and other items, all that was found in the possession of Police Sergeant Thomas Maxwell (35) and Constable Alfred Shaw (31) present on charges of multiple burglaries, and of taking from Severn House "a silver clock, eight bottles of whisky, three bottles of claret, a Chinese incense burner and other property to the value of £100", only half of which was recovered. Much was too shocking to mention in Diaries or correspondence. Even as victims, connection with the Police can seem disgraceful to gentle-folk.

Alice and Edward resumed their stay at Brinkwells, returning on August 29th to Severn House where "Shock no. 2" awaited them - trees felled, digging, desolation in preparation for a garage under the music room window. "A, most depressed." It was the last straw in this lamentable year. On September 2nd, after procrastinating all afternoon, indomitable Alice gave in, and told Hamptons to put Severn House on the market. Ten days later, in the Central Criminal Court, Maxwell and Shaw were sentenced to five years penal servitude. The Elgars did not register it. What happened to the perpetrators was of no interest to them: the damage had been done. It had turned Elgar against "his own house", faced Alice with heart-break, and the reality of keeping up an expensive mansion. She, the General's daughter, her E's dynamo, lost heart, and although maintaining an extraordinarily fine facade, she began to fade from that September, dying eventually, seven months later, of kidney and lung failure arising

from heart failure, taking with her all E's ability to make "his booful moosic."

*The sun goeth down, Thou makest darkness*

. . .

\*The Times. Other quotations are from the diaries of Alice and Edward Elgar, and the letters written by the latter to Alice Stuart Wortley.

FOOTNOTE: Dr. Jerrold Northrop Moore accepted the notion, propounded by Carice's friends, that Lady Elgar had died of cancer, the disease she had always dreaded. Carice, herself, probably believed this, for Dr. Rose who attended Alice in her terminal state, had operated upon her earlier, presumably to remove "a growth", which seems to have been non-malignant. Certainly, the symptoms, as picked up from diaries and letters, show no evidence of a cancer even as a complication to her chronic heart failure; and the death certificate says plainly that her heart condition had resulted in lung and, subsequently, kidney damage causing her demise, a classic case.

I have sent the certified copy of the death certificate to be with the Elgar Papers in St. Helen's (Worcester Archives) where it may be examined.

L.E.

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

|        |   |                                |
|--------|---|--------------------------------|
| 20 Jan | Symphony no. 1<br><i>Halle O/Loughran</i>                                       | Free Trade Hall,<br>Manchester |
| 22 Jan | Serenade for Strings<br><i>Halle O/Loughran</i>                                 | Middlesborough Town<br>Hall    |
| 23 Jan | Enigma Variations<br><i>LPO/Wordsworth</i>                                      | Fairfield Hall, Croydon        |
| 24 Jan | Symphony no. 1<br><i>Halle O/Loughran</i>                                       | Sheffield City Hall            |
| 24 Jan | Sea Pictures; Pomp & Circumstance no.<br>4<br><i>LSO/Davis/Dame Janet Baker</i> | Barbican Concert Hall          |
| 24 Jan | Symphony no. 2<br><i>LSO/Jeffrey Tate</i>                                       | Barbican Concert Hall          |
| 30 Jan | Symphony no. 1<br><i>Halle O/Loughran</i>                                       | St George's Hall,<br>Bradford  |
| 31 Jan | Cockaigne Overture<br><i>BBC PO/Thomson</i>                                     | Leeds Town Hall                |

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| 3 Feb  | Symphony no. 1<br><i>Halle O/Loughran</i>  | Huddersfield Town Hall           |
| 13 Feb | The Dream of Gerontius<br><i>LSO &amp; Chorus/Hickox; Felicity Palmer;<br/>Philip Langridge; Gwynne Howell</i> | Barbican Concert Hall            |
| 19 Feb | Pomp & Circumstance no. 1<br><i>London Concert Orchestra/Reed</i>  | Royal Festival Hall              |
| 20 Feb | Enigma Variations<br><i>BBC SO/Loughran</i>  | Barbican Concert Hall            |
| 23 Feb | Enigma Variations<br><i>RPO/Handley</i>  | Royal Festival Hall              |
| 28 Feb | Symphony no. 1<br><i>RPO/Handley</i>   | Royal Festival Hall              |
| 29 Feb | Cello Concerto<br><i>LPO/Baudó/Julian Lloyd Webber</i>   | Royal Festival Hall              |
| 3 Mar  | Enigma Variations<br><i>RLPO/Groves</i>  | Hull City Hall                   |
| 4 Mar  | Cello Concerto<br><i>RLPO/Hughes/Lloyd Webber</i>  | Halifax Civic Theatre            |
| 8 Mar  | Fantasia & Fugue in C minor<br>(Bach/Elgar)<br><i>BBC SO/Rozhdestvensky</i>                                    | Royal Festival Hall              |
| 14 Mar | Cello Concerto<br><i>RLPO/Hughes/Lloyd Webber</i>  | Halifax Civic Theatre            |
| 19 Mar | Bavarian Dances<br><i>Schola Cantorum of Oxford/Moody</i>  | Queen Elizabeth Hall             |
| 25 Mar | Serenade for Strings<br><i>Philomusica of London</i>   | St George's Hall,<br>Bradford    |
| 27 Mar | Cello Concerto<br><i>Hatfield PO/Burrell/Alexander Baillie</i>   | Queen Elizabeth Hall             |
| 28 Mar | Froissart Overture<br><i>BBC PO/Downes</i>   | Leeds Town Hall                  |
| 10 Apr | Violin Concerto<br><i>Guildford PO/Handley/Nigel Kennedy</i>   | Guildford Civic Hall             |
| 15 Apr | Introduction & Allegro<br><i>RLPO/Weller</i>   | Deansgate Centre,<br>Northampton |

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|--------|---|-----------------------------|
| 15 Apr | Enigma Variations; Sea Pictures; The Music Makers<br><i>SNO &amp; Chorus/Jarvi/Dame Janet Baker</i> | Usher Hall, Edinburgh       |
| 16 Apr | Enigma Variations; Sea Pictures; The Music Makers<br><i>SNO &amp; Chorus/Jarvi/Dame Janet Baker</i> | City Hall, Glasgow          |
| 24 Apr | Serenade for Strings<br><i>Halle O/Loughran</i>   | Huddersfield Town Hall      |
| 25 Apr | The Dream of Gerontius<br><i>No details available</i>   | Royal Festival Hall         |
| 25 Apr | Cello Concerto<br><i>English Northern PO/Del Mar/Cohen</i>  | Leeds Town Hall             |
| 26 Apr | Enigma Variations<br><i>RPO</i>   | Royal Festival Hall         |
| 27 Apr | Cello Concerto<br><i>RPO/Jolly/Caroline Dale</i>  | Fairfield Hall, Croydon     |
| 29 Apr | Enigma Variations<br><i>SNO/Jarvi</i>   | St George's Hall, Bradford  |
| 1 May  | Cello Concerto<br><i>LPO/Welsa-Most/Mischa Maisky</i>   | Royal Festival Hall         |
| 4 May  | Symphony no. 1<br><i>RPO/Mackerras</i>  | Barbican Concert Hall       |
| 6 May  | Cockaigne Overture<br><i>Sofia PO/Dafov</i>   | De Montfort Hall, Leicester |
| 9 May  | The Kingdom<br><i>Bach Choir/Philharmonia/Willcocks</i>   | Royal Festival Hall         |
| 15 May | Violin Concerto<br><i>Philharmonia/Del Mar/Manoug Parikian</i>                                      | Fairfield Hall, Croydon     |





## RECORD REVIEW

### The complete Choral Songs

Worcester Cathedral Choir: *The Donald Hunt Singers*, conducted by Donald Hunt. Hyperion A66271/2 (2-disc set)

*Spanish Serenade*, op.23: *Evening Scene: The Rapid Stream: When Swallows Fly: The Woodland Stream: Four partsongs*, op.53: *The Snow*, op.6, no.1: *Fly, Singing Bird* op.26, no.2: *How calmly the evening: The Prince of Sleep: Weary Wind of the West: A Christmas Greeting*, op.52: *Good Morrow*. Worcester Cathedral Choir.

*O Happy Eyes*, op.18, no.1: *The Shower*, op.71, no.1: *Love*, op.18, no.2: *My love dwelt in a Northern Land: Five partsongs from the Greek Anthology*, op.45: *The Fountain*, op.71, no.2: *Death on the Hills*, op.72: *The Herald: Love's Tempest*, op.73, no.1: *Serenade*, op.73, no.2: *Zut! Zut! Zut!: The Wanderer: The Reveille*, op.54: *They are at rest: Go, song of mine*, op.57 *The Donald Hunt Singers* (the two choirs combine for 'Go, song of mine').

A worthy and ambitious project this, from Hyperion in association with The Elgar Foundation, and one which demands careful appraisal. However, I have to say at once that I can raise no more than two cheers for it. There are several major drawbacks which prevent this two-record set from becoming the definitive collection that it might have been.

Donald Hunt and his choir have recorded some of this material before, in 1980 for Abbey (ABY821). Criticism then centred on the unsuitability of the Worcester Chapter House for the recording of choral music. Suffice it to say that this obstacle remains: the diction is unclear at times, and is even muddier on those songs with instrumental accompaniment. Are there no friendlier acoustics in the West Midlands?

Another complaint regards 'completeness'. There are six songs missing - *To her beneath whose steadfast star: Marching Song: The Birthright: The Merry-go-round: The Brook: The Windlass Song*. Some of them are very slight, but the same can said of the three late pieces for the Worcester schoolboys. And why '*They are at rest*' (which Novello issued in its anthem series), but not '*The Angelus*' (a 'part-song' to Novello)?

Then again problems are caused by dividing the repertoire roughly equally between the mixed-voice choir and the cathedral choir (they come together only for the final item). This works well in some cases: the cathedral choir give lovely performances of those songs with a 'religious' flavour - *Good Morrow, How calmly the evening, A Christmas Greeting* - and obviously the three pieces from 1932 mentioned above. But surely it was a mistake to give the same choir the two Morecambe songs, the Opus 53 set, and the two Opus 26 songs for female voices? To imagine that a choir of this size can do equal justice to '*How calmly the evening*' and '*There is sweet music*' is to seriously underestimate the latter. By 1908 the largest mixed choirs at Morecambe were in the region of sixty voices, and Elgar composed with these larger forces in mind. It is very disappointing that the two choirs could not have been combined for more than just one song. The difference in timbre between trebles and sopranos is quite clear, and gives the more complex songs a kind of emaciated quality; while the shrillness in some of the boys' top notes is disconcerting. I should emphasize that these comments are personal opinion, and I readily accept that others may disagree with me.

The male altos also obtrude on occasions - listen to "vain its ray as it had never been" in 'Deep in my soul' - while in 'The Snow' they are almost obliterated by the accompaniment at the words "O soul, be thou as white". This is a pity, as this song and its companion piece 'Fly Singing Bird' are among the most successful from an interpretative point of view, but are defeated ultimately by a combination of poor vocal/instrumental balance, and the Chapter House sound.

Perhaps my most serious objection is the general speed chosen for the songs. Once again, this is a very subjective area, and each listener must in the end form his own opinion. As a guide, I undertook a test of timings, based on Elgar's metronome markings. (The time for any song can only be approximate because of pauses and changes in tempo, and I am certainly not suggesting that there is an 'ideal': nevertheless it enables comparisons to be made). A piece which should last for four minutes and is performed in five would be given a figure of 25%, ie. the extent to which it exceeds the 'ideal'. On this basis, the average figures for recordings of Elgar's part-songs are as follows: Boult (ELGS 002) 8%, Halsey (ZRG 607) 9%, Temple (E 77040) 4%, Hunt (A 66271/2) 33%.

It can be seen from this that Hunt's tempi err on the side of the leisurely, and there is nothing wrong with that necessarily - Elgar liked his music performed "elastically". Yet one of its most notable characteristics is its energy and sense of forward movement, even when the tempo is slow. This is often lost on this disc, due to the exaggeration given to such markings as *largamente*, *ritenuto*, *rallentando*, and *allargando*. Even an innocent *poco rit* becomes a major slowing down: sometimes *rit* is observed where none is marked (eg. at the end of 'Love'). The effect is a loss of interest and some of the songs sound overblown. The *lento* at the end of 'Weary Wind of the West' is such that the choir cuts short the last note by more than two bars. In 'Love's Tempest' there is an ugly and unnecessary break between the last two words. 'Owls' sounds little more than a series of disconnected phrases, and the air of funereal mystery is lost. It is almost twice as long (3'54") as Boult's version (2'10").

Not surprisingly, the most successful songs are those where the tempo is closest to Elgar's markings: the Opus 26 songs already mentioned: 'The Shower': 'Serenade' (beautifully performed): 'A Christmas Greeting': and the Greek Anthology set (though whatever happened to *non legato* in 'After many a dusty mile?'). The Donald Hunt Singers are an incredibly accomplished group and perform wonders: the strain shows just in one or two places, probably reflecting the hectic recording schedule (four consecutive days last March).

A final gripe concerns the mistakes on the sleeve: wrong dates for 'O happy eyes', 'A Christmas Greeting', and the three late unison songs: "the" creeps into the title of 'Yea, cast me from heights of the mountain': 'Goodmorrow' is two words: 'Go, song of mine' is six-part, not eight-part: 'My love dwelt' acquires a spurious opus number: a poet is misspelt next to his text: there are others.

I realise that I shall have made few friends in the Worcester area, but as members will have detected, I care passionately about these songs. In fact I did get a great deal of pleasure from listening to them, and it is good to have new versions of 'The Herald', 'Zut! Zut! Zut!', and others. But I am afraid that Elgar's complete choral songs still await their true realisation on disc.

G.H.

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## NEWS FROM THE BRANCHES

WEST MIDLANDS report their next meeting will be in March, on the 5th at 2.30 p.m. when the Branch AGM will be preceded by four short contributions from members. This will be at The Stables, Worcester. On the 9th April at the Old Palace, a joint meeting with Worcester RMS, Miss Ann Roadknight presents 'Falstaff and the Cello Concerto.' At the same venue on May 7th Dr. Donald Hunt will talk on 'The Development of Elgar's Church Music traced through his Part-Songs.' The Branch congratulates Rodney Baldwyn, its vice-chairman. For his services to music and his thesis on Elgar's Organ Music and C.P.E. Bach's Organ Music he is now Dr. Rodney Baldwyn.

YORKSHIRE was given a good start to the season in September by our Chairman Jim Anderson, with his illustrated talk 'Getting to know Elgar', which featured some of the Elgar music which he recalled with particular pleasure. On Oct. 10th we should have been sitting down to our Annual Dinner. We say 'should have been' since, in what was perhaps the first real disappointment we have suffered in our nine years of existence, we had to cancel the event, as our numbers did not reach the minimum required by our choice of venue. Disappointment was forgotten by Oct. 26th, when we welcomed Margaret Elgar, with her 'Recollections of Great Uncle Edward.' A delightful evening, spent in the company of a most charming lady. Our most recent meeting has been the reconvening - on Nov. 23rd - of the evening cancelled earlier when James Brown suffered an untimely fractured shoulder. A Branch member and retired Senior Lecturer in Music at Leeds University, James spoke on 'Elgar and the World of Childhood', giving most of his illustrations from the keyboard. We heard plenty of Elgar, but also Schumann and Faure, delightfully played.

On Jan. 11th we have an evening of live music when, amongst other items, James Brown will accompany soprano Barbara Parry. On Feb. 8th, Robert Edwards, archivist of the Huddersfield Choral Society, will speak on its history and connections with Elgar and his music. On March 7th all members are looking forward to the visit of Dr. Percy Young, a Society Vice-President and eminent Elgar Scholar. The branch is in very good shape and has been picking up the occasional new member. Speakers are not proving difficult to engage - despite the distances often involved in reaching our northern base - and are being supported by rewardingly high attendances.

EAST ANGLIA. The last few months have been difficult ones for the East Anglian Branch, culminating in the resignation of all three main officers, all of whom, it must be said, had continued in office much longer than they originally intended. Finding replacements is always difficult but at last, with degrees of arm-twisting, we have a full complement and a good supporting committee. We have planned a limited programme of 'internal' meetings in private houses until our finances build up. We have already had expressions of support and offers of live Elgar music from kind friends. On 20th November twenty-six people were present at a Branch 'pre-Christmas' party. The future begins to look brighter again and we look forward to 1988 with renewed optimism. Members in East Anglia are cordially invited to write in to the new Branch Secretary (address on back cover) asking for details of meetings. New members are very welcome.

LONDON Branch report that the new season is well and truly launched. In October Dr. Donald Hunt gave a masterly and vastly entertaining talk "Elgar and the Three Choirs", which not only traced Elgar's long, not always harmonious but ultimately crucial, association with the festivals, but also contained Dr. Hunt's thoughts on all sorts of other things - recent Festivals, Elgar at Leeds Parish Church, recording of Elgar's choral music, Elgar in Italy and so on. Our speaker had also taken enormous care over his musical illustrations which were copious and enjoyable. In November Peter Pettinger went one better so far as illustrations were concerned by pronouncing the Imperial College grand up to the mark and giving us some unforgettable playing as accompaniment to his talk on "Elgar's Piano Music". There is, of course, not so much of this that it cannot be fully presented in an evening, and there is no-one better qualified than Mr. Pettinger to do it! An auspicious start indeed.

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## LETTERS

*From Garry Humphreys*

*I was suprised that the reviewer of the KING OLAF recording (another GH, not me!) in the September issue, had initially been concerned at the last-minute substitution of Anthony Rolfe Johnson as tenor soloist by Philip Langridge. I must stress that I admire the work of both these singers enormously, but it was clear at the public performance preceding the recording that Mr. Johnson was not happy in the role. There is no professional shame in this; it was a clear case of miscasting an excellent singer in the wrong sort of part. At least Mr. Johnson had the courage and professional integrity to admit that he was a better judge than the person who chose him.*

*Anyone who has heard Mr. Langridge with any frequency will know that, whilst capable of the eloquent lyricism for which Mr. Johnson is renowned (both are superb Mozart opera singers), he has a definite edge so far as the more dramatic roles are concerned (and a wider operatic experience) and, whilst hardly a Heldentenor, has something of the heroic vocal quality and ardour King Olaf requires.*

*But once again a chance has been missed to engage a singer disgracefully neglected by both opera and recording companies in this country, namely, David Johnston, who has done sterling service for British music (especially Elgar) both here and abroad, whom I would rank along with Kenneth Bowen (also underrated) as one of our finest present-day Gerontiuses. The fact that David Johnston is also an outstanding Florestan (and recognised as such abroad) with a fine stage presence which is apparent vocally, even through the medium of records and broadcasts, should commend him to initiators of recordings who are not concerned only with big names (whose over-promotion by the publicity machine seems to have rendered us insensible to many definitely questionable performances).*

We are getting rather good at rediscovering neglected, but excellent British composers and giving them their due; perhaps it is now time to do the same for performers. How about Vernon Handley (still not properly acknowledged outside the realms of British music, and disgracefully taken for granted, if not actually patronised by the Musical Establishment), David Johnston, Christopher Keyte, George Hurst, for starters. . .

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From Raymond Monk

On October 21st 1987 thieves forced their way into the Wolverhampton home of Dr. and Mrs. Percy Young and several precious - irreplaceable - things were stolen. Sadly, one of these items was Elgar's gold cigarette case given to Dr. Young by Carice Elgar Blake some thirty years ago. This cigarette case measures no more than 4in x 3in and has a spring catch so that it flips open when released. When opened there can be read an engraved inscription which records the fact that the cigarette case was presented to Sir Edward Elgar by the London Symphony Orchestra on the occasion of its 21st Anniversary.

Dr. & Mrs. Young are deeply distressed that this particular item should have been stolen and they would, needless to say, be eternally grateful for any information which might lead to its recovery. The Police say that a predictable route for such an identifiable and collectable item could be to the South and into a sale room. But, it could surface anywhere and when it does I am confident that our rather special Elgarian scent will lead one of us directly to it. Meanwhile, I know that the regrets and sympathy of Society members will readily be extended to Dr. and Mrs. Young who may be contacted at 72 Clark Road, Wolverhampton should any useful information emerge.

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From Tom Evans

Recently lunching in Hereford, my wife and I were delighted to find a new restaurant - Elgar's Restaurant.

It was a joy to see the memorabilia, photographs, etc, all pertaining to Sir Edward. This was further enhanced by various items from Elgar's works, discreetly played - what a pleasure these days! The main room is "The Symphony Room", and it is intended that the room upstairs shall be called "The Dorabella Room". Incidentally, the food is excellent. I have no interest, business-wise, in this place, but was so delighted to find somewhere with taste.

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*From John Knighton*

*The photograph shown below was taken in St. John de Luz in S.W. France in August; the name of Elgar on the front of the building is unfortunately nothing to do with Sir Edward. In this case, "Elgar" is a Basque word meaning roughly 'all together' (Les uns avec les autres) and the building is a medical partnership and laboratory . . . I felt it had a very definite curiosity value!*



From Andrew Youdell

The excellent Knowles Elgar Discography lists only one Soviet recording of Elgar's music, that of Svetlanov's *SECOND SYMPHONY*, with the USSR Symphony. This was issued in Britain on the HMV Concert Classics label. Other recent Elgar records are available in the USSR, and I have tracked down two of them.

In 1984, Igor Oistrakh recorded the Violin Concerto with the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra, under Valentin Zhuk, (Melodiya A10 00123 002). The performance is a little lacking in imagination, and is rather 'straight' by our English standards, but is full-blooded, and never dull.

Moreover, when the London Symphony Chorus travelled to Moscow to sing *THE DREAM OF GERONTIUS* (21 April 1983) this live performance was recorded and now appears in a two-disc Melodiya album (C10 23075 004). The artists are Felicity Palmer, Arthur Davies, Norman Bailey, and the USSR Symphony under Svetlanov. The recording is over-reverberent, the audience annoyingly noisy, and the performance, to my ears, sluggish and lacking any forward drive whatsoever. Maybe others will hold a different opinion. Do any other Elgar Society members know of further USSR Elgar records, or indeed performances from Eastern European countries which have not so far materialised in Britain?

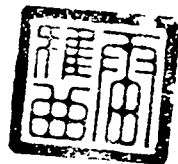
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From Brian Rayner Cook

I thought that your readers might perhaps be interested to know that earlier this month Hong Kong mounted what was apparently its first performance of *THE KINGDOM*.

I was invited to take part in some concerts there last year, but unfortunately the dates offered were impossible for me. So the Hong Kong Oratorio Society invited me to join them this season, as part of an extended visit, and asked me for suggestions as to what I might like to sing with them. I sent a short list of ideas, prominent amongst which was *THE KINGDOM* - and, happily, this is what they chose. The chorus sang splendidly (they make a truly rich sound; and rarely can the divisi men have sounded more impressive!), and the orchestra was drawn mainly from the HK Philharmonic. The other soloists were Chinese; and the performance was directed by Dr. Wong Wing-Hee - who proved himself to be not only a fine musician, but also a true Elgarian. It was altogether a memorable occasion.

After the performance, the Society presented me with several gifts, one of which was a stamp of my name (Rayner Cook) in Chinese characters (following the Cantonese pronunciation). Apparently it means "to sing an elegant song with a thunderous voice" - which seems a very happy coincidence! I cannot resist appending it below.



# THE ELGAR SOCIETY

[President: Sir YEHUDI MENUHIN, O.M., 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, 2 Marriotts Close, Haddenham, Aylesbury, Bucks. HP17 8BT. The Hon. Secretary is Carol Holt, 20 Geraldine Road, Malvern, Worcs, WR14 3PA.

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- |                 |  |
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