

The Elgar Society JOURNAL



MAY

1988

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The editor does not necessarily agree with the views expressed by contributors, nor does the Elgar Society accept responsibility for such views

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ELGAR SOCIETY JOURNAL

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The Elgar Society Journal

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EDITORIAL

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For some time the Society has been exploring the possibility of our being registered as a Charity. We are pleased to announce that this has now been achieved, and we are a registered charity. This will have a number of advantages financially, and an insert in this copy will have details from the Treasurer as to how members can best aid the Society by covenanting their subscriptions. The additional funds will be very necessary if the Society is to fulfill its aims and finance new projects.

Members probably know that our only income to date has been from individual subscriptions, though we have occasionally benefited from bequests or the generosity of a few donors. The most ambitious project that we undertook, in 1986, was to partly finance the long-awaited recording of 'KING OLAF'. In this we were encouraged by every member with whom we came in contact, and on the basis of this encouragement we committed ourselves to considerable expenditure (for our limited resources) spread over three years. You may recall that when I wrote about the Olaf recording two years ago I said that £10 from *each* member would pay for the recording, and we would have no further worries on that score! This remains true, but ...

When we launched the King Olaf Fund Appeal a number of members were generous, and others, not able to reach the £10, sent what they could. However, the blunt fact is that only a *minority* of members contributed, and our appeal has fallen short of its target. This has presented the Society with a problem. We are contracted to pay our proportion, both morally and legally, but if we do most of our other activities are put at risk, and indeed the Journal itself may not escape unscathed. The Fund is still open (like the Windmill Theatre, "We never closed"), and I do urge all those who did not contribute to send their donation to the Treasurer now. A further point is that we benefit from every copy sold. Have *you* bought the King Olaf recording, whether LP, cassette or CD? If not *please* buy it as soon as possible. If we do not support our own projects, no one else will!

Finally, the Treasurer's address, needed for both donations and annual subscriptions (due from Jan. 1st) changed in 1987. Some people are still sending to his old address, with the risk that letters and cheques may go astray. His permanent address is: David Morris, 2 Marriotts Close, Haddenham, Aylesbury, Bucks, HP17 8BT.

RONALD TAYLOR
Editor

SIR AUGUST MANNS

W. H. Reed wrote that "In London he took the opportunity of going to every possible concert; and he always spoke almost reverentially of those which August Manns conducted at the Crystal Palace. I think it was the attendance at those concerts ... that fired his ambition and turned the scales on the side of serious composition." (Elgar as I Knew Him). Manns came into the Elgar story after the young composer had been introduced by Pollitzer, Elgar's violin teacher, and through this Manns' orchestra played *Sevillana*. Elgar obtained a pass to attend rehearsals at the Crystal Palace concerts whenever he could make the journey to London. Today August Manns is little more than a name to most people, but in the last century, and indeed just into this, his influence can be fairly compared to that exercised by Sir Henry Wood and his Promenade Concerts during the first years of this century.

The following article, which has been slightly shortened, appeared in *The Musical Herald* for April 1907, the month following Manns' death. I felt that it painted an excellent portrait of a man who influenced the young Elgar, and therefore was worthy to be reprinted in our pages, EDITOR.

.....

When Manns received a national testimonial in London in 1895, there was such a gathering of musicians as there has never been before or since. It is the fate of most musical workers that they belong to a set. In London there is the R.A.M. set, the R.C.M. set, the I.S.M. set, the Musicians' Company set, and so on: and no one is able to get out of his set. Manns belonged to no set. He did not compose, and thus was never comparing himself with others. With singleness of purpose, with enthusiasm for his work but with no desire for applause or fame, he kept closely to his Sydenham duties. He rarely went to London. He did his work quietly, thoroughly, and without talk. The musical public knew his back better than his face. Yet this Pomeranian bandmaster who died at Sydenham on the 2nd March, at the age of 82, was the best friend that English music ever had.

This point is brought out by Mr. Frederick Corder. "Every English composer," he says, "from Arthur Sullivan in 1862 to Joseph Holbrooke in 1901 - everyone, with the solitary exception, I believe, of Edward Elgar - has owed his introduction to the public to August Manns. Sullivan, Mackenzie, Stanford, Parry, Prout, G. Bennett, German - I cannot give the full list but all owe to him a heavy debt of gratitude," and, adds Mr. Corder, "no one of them more than I do." "What should we, what could we have done without him? Think of the pains he devoted to our works - the laborious blue-pencilling of expression marks in the parts, to get the best possible performance - the rehearsals, the sage advice. His very first words to me over my first work ring in my head still. 'Aha! you write your horn parts as if they were bassoons; you learnt that from Raff. Hear me play his new symphony to-morrow, and I think your will not do it again.' His advice, the advice of a practical conductor of huge experience, could be relied on implicitly. His judgment of a score was infallible. He had no prejudices. He would play any work by any composer with an intuitive comprehension of its meaning, and would get everything out of it that there was in it. Sometimes more; there are composers who score badly, but you never realized the fact when their works were performed at the Crystal Palace. What, I again ask, could we have done without August Manns in a country where native art as such is given the cold shoulder? All the other conductors we have ever had - Germans too, most of them - have not done a tithe of what he did without fuss or *reclame*, out of simple duty to the country that sheltered him - that country whose very Philharmonic Society fawns at the foot of the foreigner. When I gave up the weary

contest I needed only to ask my old friend to extend his helping hand to some of the boys of the new generation - Bantock, Bell, McEwen, Drysdale, Holbrooke - all had as much cause to bless his unwearying kindness as myself".

"To get a work performed," adds Mr. Corder, "is a lesson, but to get it done by Mr. August Manns, to have his help, advice, and criticism, was the best part of an education. The end of the Crystal Palace Concerts, scarcely noticed or regretted by the critics (who naturally disliked the journey they involved), was a calamity for English art; the death of their presiding genius is like the loss of a parent to English musicians."

Mr. Arthur Hervey, the musical critic and composer, carries on the strain, "For forty-five years," he says, "British-born writers had in August Manns and his orchestra, as well as in the directors, who wisely gave him a free hand, a medium through which they could obtain a hearing. Nothing of any worth was refused by him, and even if the composer were young and inexperienced and his touch uncertain, Manns' extraordinary intuition, supported by his wide knowledge successfully gauged the abilities of the untried hand. There is scarcely one British musician prominent before the public today who does not owe his first hearing to August Manns, and in him they will mourn one whose like seems scarcely to exist in the present time. In this debt of gratitude the vocalist and instrumentalist will join, and with them the student who, like the present writer, learned by practical example, eagerly anticipated and absorbed week after week, year after year, at the Crystal Palace the lesson which good music intellectually interpreted has to teach. It is to be regretted that the concerts came to an end. But it was the result of the work of cultivating a love of classical music which these concerts had promoted that a public was found ready to attend undertakings on similar lines given nearer the centre of London. In the leaning towards that which is best in music, and in the degree of good taste shown by the general public of today, the hand of August Manns can be definitely traced. It constitutes his best and most permanent memorial."

Sir A. C. Mackenzie's testimony is no less warm. His recollection of Manns goes back to 1853 or 1854, when he came to Edinburgh with the German opera under Anschutz, and took turns with Sir A. C. Mackenzie's father as principal violin. This was before his Crystal Palace work began. "I can still see," says the Principal of the R.A.M., "in my mind's eye the shock head of coal-black hair and the swaying gestures with which in later life I was to become so familiar. His old and warm friendship for my father was happily transferred to myself, and in 1879 he urged me to make use of my knowledge of the characteristics of Scottish music in a Rhapsody, which he played in 1880 in Glasgow for the first time. Any success I may have had since", continues Sir Alexander, "as a composer, I, along with nearly all my colleagues, old and young, owe to the kindly encouragement and the good will of the departed musician. It was by a foreigner of widest sympathy and of great heart that our native music was lifted from a Slough of Despond into repute and something like appreciation in its own land. At any rate, the Crystal Palace was undoubtedly its cradle, and August Manns its benevolent nurse. May England and English musicians never forget it".

These composers speak of Manns' spirit and intention. What of him as a workman? Mr. W. W. Hedgcock, who has been organist of the Crystal Palace since 1894, and is now the musical director, says that vitality and work were the key-note of his character. Thoroughness was his note; nothing was ever left to chance. "Directly I was appointed I could see what a tremendous amount of work he got through." He was never happy

unless he was hard at it. At Handel Festival times he worked night and day.

"You can see something of his thoroughness", says Mr. Hedgcock, "by looking through one or two of his scores, and seeing how they are marked. Here is a Schumann symphony; see, every page is marked again and again - sometimes red pencil, sometimes blue, sometimes an ordinary expression mark, sometimes a word or two. Thus in one place 'double basses rather marked, and a little prominent,' and a favourite word was 'tranquilizing.' Another part of his work that occupied much of his attention was reading over compositions sent to him from all parts. often he suggested alterations, which were always improvements. Evidently many of the writers never cared to see their compositions again, or never took the trouble to apply for them, for there is quite a heap of them about."

"Another feature," says Mr. Hedgcock, "which was so endearing in his character, was his lightheartedness. He was a man of exuberant spirits. This was apparent in the almost childlike delight he showed after an excellent performance by his band. Then he would come into the artistes' room and literally dance round with pleasure. People used sometimes to think that his velvet jacket was a little piece of vanity, but he has often told me that he wore it because it was the lightest thing he could get, and you know beating time for a couple of hours is tiring work. So much was he taken up with beating time that he often signed himself 'Your old time-beater.' As a conductor, Sir August was sometimes rather difficult to follow, but when once you got at what he wanted he was one whom you could always follow with the greatest confidence. In all the years that he lived here he never quite mastered the English language, and people used to find some difficulty in understanding his verbal directions, especially as he had not a very powerful voice. He was a great stickler for duty, and objected to his players sending deputies to the daily orchestra without leave. He was, however, a generous and kind-hearted man, and was greatly sought after by members of the profession."

How did Manns treat his orchestra? This question is answered by Mr. Alexander Wright, who played in it for seventeen years. "Sir August was a man full of sympathy and loyal to the members of his orchestra, many began as mere boys to play under his baton, and ended only with the end of the orchestra itself, or when death claimed them. He kept the same players round him, learnt their capabilities, and took care to understand them thoroughly, and how to make the best of them. He also took care to see that they understood him thoroughly, and as a result we had good, often ideal performances, with as little unnecessary work or worry as possible. He was careful in his selection of players, and abided by the choice when made. A change was so rare a thing that many men who played under his direction at his first concert were also present at his last."

Mr. Wright remembers that when a composition by an eminent theorist was being rehearsed by Manns the composer suggested a change of speed. This was tried, but Manns turned to the composer and said, "No, no, it is right in my way." "And so," says Mr. Wright, "it was." Manns was always fearful of artists who played from memory. A noted pianist once omitted a repeat in a Chopin concerto, and but for the alertness of the conductor and the ready response of the orchestra, there must have been a catastrophe. After the concert Manns said, "Monsieur, you do never play with my orchestra again without your music." Mr. Wright feels that Manns never felt quite at home with Wagner. Once the band was rehearsing a Wagner selection, and there came an awful row. Of course they were pulled up, and as Mr. Manns was looking at the score, Mr. Wright ventured to say, "It is either we violas or the bassoons that are

wrong." Manns took the wood-wind through the passage, then all the band together, and the passage straightened out all right. Manns then said, "Ah, now it seems quite right; but when I hear anything of Wagner sound quite right I always imagine there is something wrong." Manns' beat was sometimes hard to follow. A player who had been used to the square 1,2,3,4 of Costa entered the Crystal Palace band and sat by Mr. Wright. "I can get on all right as long as he beats time," he said, "but when he holds his stick before him and begins to wag his back hair, I'm done!"

(After various appointments in his youth Manns' became bandmaster in a crack cavalry regiment, stationed in Cologne. There in 1854 he met Herr Schallen, recently appointed director of music at the Crystal Palace, shortly to be opened at Sydenham. He was engaged at £3 per week, to play the E flat clarinet, act as sub-conductor and copyist. He came to London and played in the first concert at the opening by Queen Victoria on June 10th 1854.)

In October of the same year a fete was held in aid of the sick and wounded in the Crimean War. Schallen gave Manns a book of British, French, and Turkish airs, and asked him to arrange a set of quadrilles to be played by the combined bands, which included the Guides Band from Paris. Manns worked hard, and when Schallen put his own name to the quadrilles on the announcement, Manns was indignant. Schallen coolly said that his name would sell them better than Manns', and offered him £1. Manns scorned the offer and was dismissed. However, Schallen got on so badly with the directors that they at last dismissed him, and in October, 1855, Manns was called back as musical director, a post he held for fifty years. He at once introduced stringed instruments and enlarged the repertoire. Then came a struggle for good music.

Grove, secretary of the Palace, stood manfully by Manns. Before he retired, the musical director had conducted forty-five series of Saturday concerts, including 1,600 compositions by 300 composers, of whom more than 100 were English. Oratorios, masses, and cantatas to the number of 200 had been produced, and commemorations had been held of Mozart, Haydn, Spohr, Mendelssohn, and Handel.

Here is a somewhat depreciatory view of Manns given us by a leading London musician. "Manns", he said, "was an excellent workman, but only an ordinary musician. All that he did was inspired by Grove. He was an automaton actuated by Grove's brain. Believe me, when Grove died, the vim went out of Manns. He was very slow of apprehension; up to the last it took him a long time to grasp a musical composition." "What were his convictions and likings in music?" we asked. "He had none," was the reply; "he was good-natured, and just did the work that came before him." "Well," we replied, "he must have had great powers of selection and interpretation, and if he allowed the spirit of the age to stream through him and was free from prejudice and friendly to all, he must have been just the man for his post." "That he certainly was," was the reply.

Sir August was a ceaseless worker. He had no hobbies or recreations. In *Who's Who* he gives as his recreation "reading the scores of classical composers," and this was of course his work! He relinquished duty with reluctance. A year ago he said he would dearly like to conduct a few more concerts, but that this would mean sleepless nights. Besides, he said, his hearing was not quite perfect. Musical sounds seemed veiled, and sometimes they sounded sharp. Sir August's third marriage, ten years ago, brought him great happiness, and material comfort. Last July he and Lady Manns moved into a beautiful house, half way between Norwood and Streatham, on the southern edge of the ridge ... here Sir August was supremely happy.

The end came peacefully on the 2nd March, and on the 6th the funeral took place at Norwood Cemetary. Before the arrival of the body at All Saint's Church Mr. A. J. Eyre played Beethoven's funeral march, Mr. Gordon Cleather, a former manager of the Palace and an excellent amateur drummer adding the tympani. The choir of the Royal Normal School for the Blind was present out fo respect to its honorary musical examiner. On every side was evidence of the affection in which Sir August was held.

* * A. J. Eyre, in a letter published in the following issue of *The Musical Herald* angrily refuted the view that Manns was merely inspired by Grove, and wrote from fourteen years experience of working with him.



TO MY FRIEND SIR EDWARD ELGAR

The world hath watched for one to rise and wake
Our English harp - to strike its rusty strings
From their long sleep - one strong enough to break
The spell that bound its lost imaginings;
And thou hast risen as a lark that flings
The Earth's dust from its plumes - that Heav'n-stirred, flies
Higher and higher until, full-toned, it sings
In the domed temple pillared by the skies.

We tremble with thy Dream's last death-drawn notes,
Or with lost Judas join in wild appeal,
Yet fathom not the passion that we feel.
It is enough our fancy with thee floats.
It is enough to follow thy rapt soul
Through those dim realms where sounds immortal roll.

Charles F. Grindrod

These lines first appeared in Grindrod's book "Studies in Rhyme and Rhythm", published by Elkin Mathews in 1905. They were reprinted in 'British Musician' for August 1935, but otherwise we do not believe that they have been reissued. Grindrod was a friend of the composer, and took the famous photograph which, perhaps, of all those taken of the composer reaches nearest to the real man.



NEWS ITEMS

A programme on Radio Wyvern, "Elgar Remembered", caused something of a stir at the New Year. Many papers picked up the contribution made to the programme by the nurse present during Elgar's last illness. Her comments, after 54 years, were heard with great interest. Now the head of Radio Wyvern's news department, Nigel Edwards, has an award for the programme. The award was the BP Arts Journalism first prize, and Mr. Edwards shared first place with BBC Radio 4's *Kaleidoscope*. Our congratulations to Nigel Edwards, a familiar name to Elgarians in the West Midlands, on winning and our commendation for producing such an interesting programme on local radio.

David Pizarro, organist of the Emanuel Lutheran Church, Pleasantville, New York, is one of our keenest American members. In an impressive Sacred Concert held at the church in February Mr. Pizarro gave the first performance in the area of *Sursum Corda*, and the choir sang Elgar's setting of the *Ave Verum*.

Several distinguished musicians have died since our last issue went to press, among them the pianist Solomon, the violinists Henryk Szering and Manoug Parikian. The latter had frequently performed the Elgar *Violin Concerto*, and indeed was scheduled to give another performance in late Spring.

Mike Cresswell, publicity director for Malvern and its Festival, is arranging an Elgar Weekend in September. Details in due course from the Malvern Information Bureau, and, we hope further details in our September issue, though that may appear too near the time for some people to make arrangements. We suggest that you contact the Malvern Information Bureau direct.

A NEW ARRANGEMENT of the *Romance for Bassoon and orchestra* has just appeared. This time it is for euphonium and piano, arranged by Eric Wilson, and published by Rosehill Music, 64 London End, Beaconsfield, Bucks.

HEREFORD ORCHESTRAL SOCIETY are putting on a concert at the Cathedral on May 7th at 8 p.m. in aid of the Cathedral Appeal Fund. Two Elgar items will be played in a concert including works by Butterworth, Schubert and Mendelssohn. The two items are the orchestral version of *The Severn Suite* and the *Romance for Bassoon and Orchestra*. Soloist Katherine Soulsby. The *Romance* was originally premiered by the Society. We understand from Mr. Robert Kay that the *Severn Suite* has had to be re-edited owing to mistakes in the copyist's score originally compiled for Keith Prowse. 1988 marks the 100 years of the Hereford Orchestral Society.

ON MARCH 8TH a reception was held at the Royal Institution to mark the 175th Anniversary of the Royal Philharmonic Society, of which the Queen is patron. At the reception Mr. & Mrs. Michael Pope were presented to Her Majesty, as was Raymond Monk, Birthplace Trustee and former Chairman of East Midlands Branch. Mr. John Denison, Chairman of the Royal Philharmonic Society, presented Mr. Monk to Her Majesty who recalled with pleasure that Elgar had dedicated his *Nursery Suite* to her (and to Princess Margaret) when she was 'very young'. Mr. Monk responded by saying that Elgar is now considered to be 'the Shakespeare of our music' and he was delighted to learn that Her Majesty had retained such a happy memory of our great English composer.

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Elgar Society Annual General Meeting will take place at 2.30 p.m. on Saturday, 4th June, 1988 in the Hall, Lawnside School, Albert Road South, Malvern, Worcs. Tea will be provided at £1.00.

The weekend arrangements will include a performance of *The Apostles*, with Brian Wright conducting the NCOS Symphony Orchestra, with the Malvern Festival Chorus. Soloists: Bronwen Mills, Catherine Wyn-Rogers, Howard Milner, Gordon Jones, Michael Pearce, Michael George. This will take place at 7.00 p.m. in the Winter Gardens. A number of tickets, price £6.50, have been reserved for the Society. Please apply to The Secretary, Mrs. Carol Holt, 20 Geraldine Road, Malvern, WR14 3PA enclosing a S.A.E. Following the concert there will be a reception for members of the Society in the Restaurant and Pump Room. Tickets for a buffet supper and coffee are £5, drinks can be obtained from the bar. It is not necessary to have attended the concert in order to apply for tickets for the Reception and Supper. This is a new venture, so please support it, and be sure to apply to the Secretary, address above, by 25th May.

On Sunday, coffee will be available at Birchwood Lodge, Storrridge, at the kind invitation of Mr. & Mrs. Michael Vockins. At noon there will be an Elgar 'Forum' in Lawnside Hall, followed by a Ploughman's Lunch, with cider, at £1.50. There is the customary Elgar Evensong and wreath-laying ceremony in Worcester Cathedral at 4.00 p.m. and sherry and birthday cake at the Birthplace, Lower Broadheath, at 5.30 p.m.

The last concert of the Malvern Festival will take place at 7.00 p.m. in the Winter Gardens when Fiona Kimm will sing *Sea Pictures*. The other works in the programme are Janacek's *Taras Bulba*, and Holst's *The Planets*. Please apply for tickets for this concert to Box Office, Malvern Festival Theatre, Grange Road, Malvern. Early application is advised.

THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE ELGAR SOCIETY

The Officers and General Committee of the Society have been giving much thought to the matter of the new Chairman who will succeed Michael Pope when he retires at the Annual Meeting in June. At their most recent meeting the General Committee passed a resolution recommending to the members CHRISTOPHER ROBINSON, L.V.O. as the next Chairman, and therefore will nominate him at the Annual General Meeting.

We are delighted that Mr. Robinson has agreed to be proposed, and we feel that the Society is fortunate that such a distinguished musician is willing to take over from Michael Pope.

Christopher Robinson was born in Malvern, and early appointments included Assistant Organist at Christ Church, Oxford, and Music Master at Oundle. He was Assistant Organist to Douglas Guest when the latter was Organist of Worcester Cathedral, and succeeded him in 1963, holding the post until 1974. During that time he became conductor of the City of Birmingham Choir, and has also been conductor of the Oxford

Bach Choir since 1977. In 1974 he was appointed Organist and Master of the Choristers at St. George's Chapel, Windsor, a post he continues to hold. He was President of the Royal College of Organists, 1982-1984.

He has always displayed a great interest and sympathy for the works of Elgar, and has conducted a number of memorable performances. On record too he has shown his interest, and made premiere recordings of several of Elgar's early church works, as well as the *Te Deum* and *Benedictus*, and *Give Unto the Lord*, as far back as 1969. In 1976 he recorded both the *Organ Sonatas*, and the only recording of *Cantique, Op.3, no. 1*.

The officers and committee look forward to continued progress under Mr. Robinson's Chairmanship.

HEREFORD THREE CHOIRS FESTIVAL

20th - 26th August 1988

This year it is Hereford's turn to host this festival of fine music, and a full programme and booking form may be obtained from the Festival Secretary, Hereford Three Choirs Festival, 33 Bridge Street, Hereford HR4 9DQ.

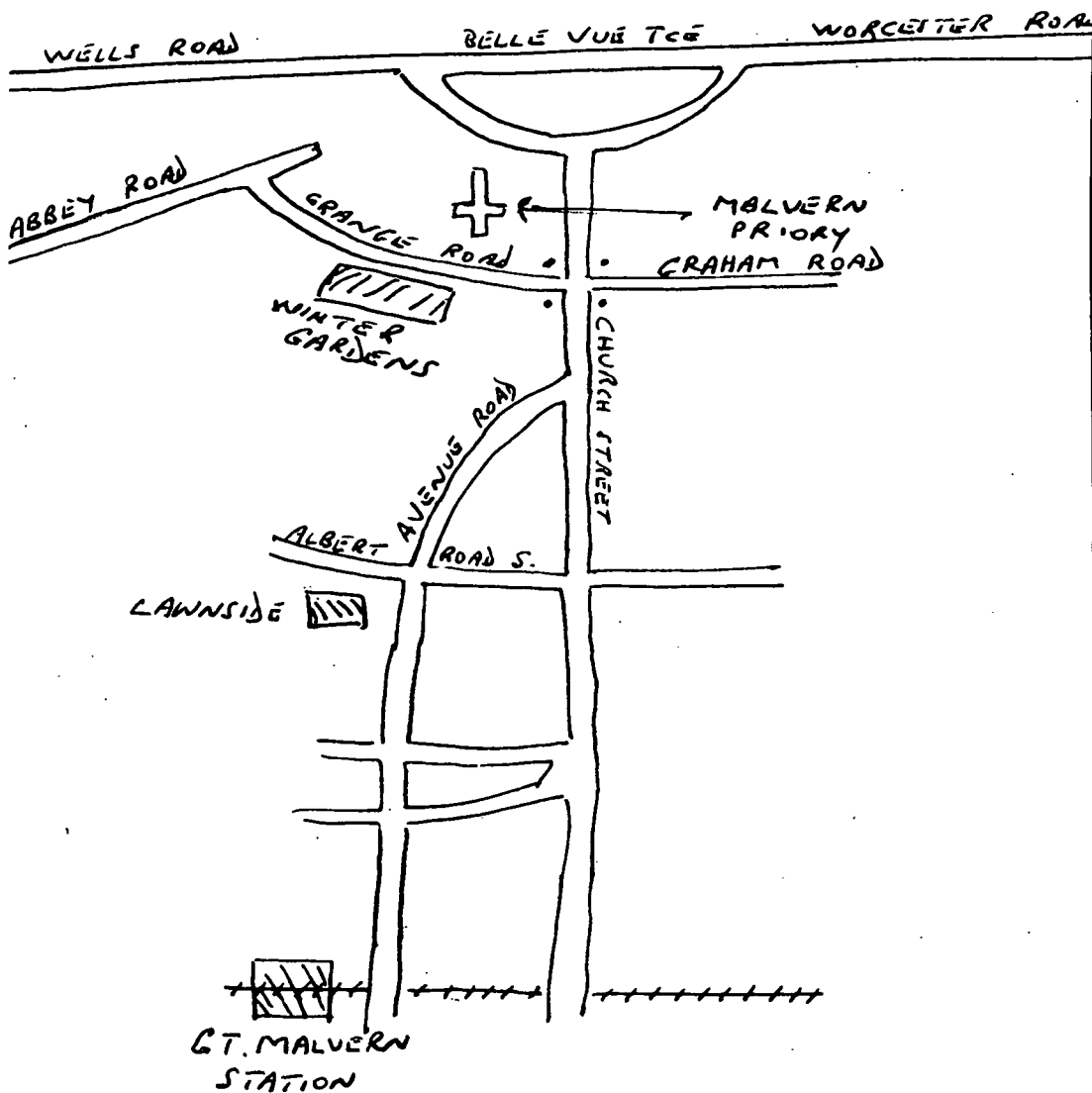
For Elgarians there are only three works this year: on 23rd August, the *Violin Concerto* in a concert with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, soloist will be Lorraine McAslan. On 24th August, the *Cello Concerto* in a concert by the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. The soloist will be Ulrich Heinen, and the conductor Christopher Seaman. On 25th August the concert includes *The Music Makers*. The orchestra will be the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, with the Festival Chorus.

Previously a performance of Elgar's *The Starlight Express* had been announced as an extra item in the Festival, but unfortunately this will not now take place. A great disappointment to many people.

Those requiring accomodation should contact the Hereford Tourist Information Centre (0432 268430).

THREE CHOIRS ELGAR SOCIETY TEA

Members can meet, as usual, for this annual event, at the Festival Club, Shire Hall, Hereford on the opening Sunday, 21st August, after the afternoon event, around 4.30 to 5 p.m. There is room for about 50 persons, so please let Alan Boon (Old School House, Martley, Worcester, WR6 6QA. Tel: 08866 527) know in advance if you are coming. This is always an enjoyable affair and we look forward to meeting old acquaintances and making new friends.



Map of Malvern for visitors to the Annual Meeting

THE ELGAR CHORAL FESTIVAL

A festival of music, bearing Elgar's name, is to be held in October under the auspices of the Elgar Foundation. The festival director is Dr. Donald Hunt. The festival will be held in Worcester, and will utilise the facilities of the Cathedral, College Hall, the Chapter House, and the Countess of Huntingdon Hall.

The organisers have been ambitious in their planning, and it is hoped that this will be the first of a series of annual festivals in the city. The first Choral Festival will be held on 21st and 22nd October, 1988, and is reserved exclusively for amateur choirs and singers. The amateur status does not apply to conductors or any instrumentalists needed. The choral competition consists of six categories:

1. Mixed Choirs - over 30 voices
2. Mixed Choirs - under 30 voices
3. Women's Choirs
4. Men's Choirs
5. Children's Choirs
6. Church Choirs.

In addition there will be competitions for Solo singers of all voices, and a Vocal Ensemble of up to eight voices (one voice per part). In each category there are Elgar songs or choral works, and in addition there will be a special winners' concert. There is also a competition for a new choral work, unaccompanied, duration of not more than five minutes, the winning piece to be performed by the Donald Hunt Singers at the final concert.

A brochure giving full details and an application form may be obtained from the Elgar Choral Festival Secretary, Charlton House, Lulsley, Worcester, Tel: 0886-21220. The closing date for entry is 31st July.

Tickets will be available to all participants, and the public may buy tickets for all events, prices to be announced. The outstanding choir of the Festival will receive a special prize of £300 and an "Elgar Plaque". There are money prizes in all of the competition categories.

We are delighted at the news of the Festival and wish it every success. Further information when available will be published in our September issue, and a list of the prizewinners will appear in our January issue.

APOLOGIES

The editor regrets that late issue of the January Journal. A succession of frustrating delays, plus the hiatus of Christmas and the New Year, was the cause. In future it would be best if we assumed publication of the JANUARY issue as Mid-month, rather than at the beginning.

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

1 May	Cello Concerto <i>LPO/Majsky, & Franz Welsen-Most</i>	Royal Festival Hall
1 May	String Quartet <i>Lindsay Quartet</i>	Queen Elizabeth Hall
9 May	The Kingdom <i>Bach Choir & Philharmonia Orch/Willcocks, with Sheila Armstrong, Catherine Wyn-Rogers, Maldwyn Davies, Stephen Roberts</i>	Royal Festival Hall
13 May	Serenade for Strings	*St. Michael & All Angels Ch. Lambourne, Berks at 8 p.m.
14 May	Enigma Variations (with works by Strauss and Sibelius)	*St. Nicholas Ch. Newbury, Berks at 7.30 p.m. *Both concerts part of Newbury Festival. For details ring 0635 49919
8 June	Illustrated talk on 'Elgar's Harmonic Language' by Prof. Ian Parrott	British Music Information Centre, 10 Stratford Place, London W1 at 7.30 p.m.
11 June	The Music Makers; Sea Pictures (and works by Holst, Lambert and Parry) <i>St. Edmundsbury Bach Choir & Orch/Harrison Oxley, with Diana Walkley</i>	The Cathedral, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk at 7.30 p.m.
11 June	Sea Pictures <i>Maureen Sidney/Rutland Sinfonia/Collett</i>	Peterborough Cathedral at 7.30 p.m.
12 June	Violin Sonata <i>Peter Cropper (v) and Peter Frankl (p)</i> Piano Quintet <i>Lindsay Quartet/Peter Frankl</i>	Queen Elizabeth Hall

6 July	Cockaigne Overture; Enigma Variations; Cello Concerto <i>Bournemouth SO/Thompson/Julian Lloyd Webber</i>	Stewards Enclosure, Henley-on-Thames (part of Henley Festival) at 8.30 p.m.
9 July	Cello Concerto <i>CBSO/Seaman/Heinen</i>	Town Hall, Birmingham at 7 p.m.
4 Sept	Enigma Variations <i>Philharmonia Orchestra</i>	Royal Festival Hall
1 Oct.	Powick Asylum Music <i>Rutland Sinfonia/Collett</i>	Oakham Church, Rutland at 7.30 p.m.

Readers are advised to check details in
advance of booking



AN ELGAR FIRST PERFORMANCE

In his article entitled 'Transcriptions of Elgar's music', which appeared in the May 1982 issue of the Elgar Society Journal, Philip Scowcroft says: "Arrangements and transcriptions are legion in the world of music and purists usually frown on them. However, they undoubtedly have their value, as they bring the compositions so treated to a wider range of performers and listeners; further, a good arrangement can often add something to the original and even assume a life of its own ... Sigfrid Karg-Elert (1877-1933) is well-known to organists as the prolific composer of rather attractive, well-written, often impressionistic, music for organ ... He arranged both Elgar's symphonies for piano for Novello in 1909 and 1912 respectively. One wonders who ever played these - unless they were cut in transcription, each would be as long and as strenuous as the Hammerklavier sonata!"

Well, on Thursday 3rd March in the Wigmore Hall, London, before a very enthusiastic audience, David Owen Norris not only played the whole of the First Symphony uncut, but, in the first half of his recital, played the French film composer Thiriet's entertaining jazz-ballet *The hard boiled egg*, Ravel's *Mother Goose suite*, and Liszt's fiendish transcription of Rossini's *William Tell* overture on a magnificent Bosendorfer piano. The programme stated that the Elgar Symphony was receiving its first performance at a public concert. This proved to be understandable as the transcription is highly complex with, as far as I could tell, nothing left out. I, personally, enjoyed David Norris's performance of it immensely, although it could never take the place of the original. I do hope that he can be persuaded to give us the E flat Symphony in the not too distant future.

Robert Tucker

BOOK REVIEWS

Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Elgar and his Publishers: Letters of a Creative Life*; 2 vols.,
OUP, 1987 £55.00

I notice in a recent issue of a literary journal a comment regarding the proliferation of 'supporters' clubs' of which the beneficiaries (in a manner of speaking) are deceased English authors. In the world of music - of English music at any rate - there is one such body (or, rather, a group of associated bodies) that commands attention. The unique situation of Elgar in this respect (at one time I would have included Handel too) is in itself a subject waiting for sociomusicological research. In *Elgar and his Publishers* there is a magnificent offering to the faithful (even more magnificent for the unconverted). So far as the dedicated Jerrold Northrop Moore is concerned this is a *maximum opus*, constructed out of a selfless intention to honour creative genius, and out of scholarly tenacity of purpose.

We shall not see many such books again, and we should be grateful that for Elgar the telephone was a status symbol rather than an instrument of serious communication. One many go so far as to suggest that had Elgar's business arrangements been transacted by telephone many of his ambitions would never been fulfilled.

As prelude to consideration of the present work it seems appropriate to recall a note from Beethoven to Breitkopf and Hartel (later, Elgar's early publisher) in the summer of 1810, at a time when the Austrian florin had been severely devalued:

My final aim is not, as you think, to become a musical miser, composing only in order to grow rich ... But I like to be independent ... You, being more humane and cultivated than any other music publishers, should also make it your aim not merely to pay the artist a pittance, but to put him in a position where he can develop, in tranquillity, what he has in him and what other people expect of him ...

The calm exposition of Elgar's letters from, to, and about publishers indicates just how problematic the composer's and author's life was in the days before such protective and supportive organisations as the PRS and PLR came into being. Elgar played his part in the movement that led eventually to improvements in the composer's lot, and one is bound to note that the more some things seem to change the more they remain the same. In 1904, for instance, William Boosey reminded Elgar of 'the indifference of the attitude of the House of Commons towards the big art and industry of music.'

In 1909 Elgar conducted the *First Symphony* in Queen's Hall and was displeased to discover that no performing fee had been arranged by Novello. Henry Clayton, Novellos' Company Secretary, wrote this unhelpful advice:

'... had you consulted us in the matter I am quite sure both Littleton and I would have advised you not to demand a performing fee in addition to your own conducting fee (25 guineas). It is better to ask too little than to frighten people by asking too much & although we are not likely to undervalue your services as conductor we are anxious not to make your work too dear.'

The relationship between Elgar and Jaeger was probably the most significant factor in Elgar's creative life, and their exchange of letters indicates the extent to which Elgar was indebted to him as advocate, counsellor, and friend. Without Jaeger Elgar would have found it harder even than it was to fight his battles. It was in 1914, after Jaeger's death, that Augustus Littleton wrote to Henry Clayton, concerning the five recently composed part songs:

'... the higher price won't stop the Partsongs going if they catch on, if people grumble we must quietly let them know that the higher rate is owing to the composers (sic) greed. Competition gets keener every day, and composers getting scarce & some of those slipping through our fingers. I don't want any more Elgar symphonies or concertos, but am ready to take as many partsongs as he can produce even at extortionate rates.'

The nature of contractual agreements is at the heart of music, whether the dispensing party is a Renaissance Pope or a latter day publisher: no contract, no music. Thus in the dullness of the account book one traces the expectations that may lead to the peace of mind for which creative artists hope (but do not always find). In 1905 Elgar was offered a large sum of money to go during the next year to Cincinnati - '& all expenses for myself wife and servant'. In that lies an insight into the nature of Edwardian - indeed of Elgarian - society.

Elgar noted, not always charitably, the benefits that others received, and (a favourite theme) how the great British public would put its money where its heart was. Poor Albani as in dire distress, virtually penniless, at the end of a long, distinguished career has to advertise for pupils:

'Now look at a battered old w---e like Melba & Co:-!!! My beloved countrymen and women wd & will subscribed anything to keep her if necessary - it makes one's blood boil - where is providence? NOTHING.'

Letters are ever hostages to fortune, for in the act of composition the correspondent cannot avoid revelations of which the significance only appears long afterwards. In 1908 Jaeger wrote to Lady Elgar condemning the music of Delius's *Appalachia* out of hand:

'Colour, Colour, colour, awful harmonies, a vulgar nigger tune varied in impertinently long sections, no melodic ideas ... I met some friends afterwards & ventured the opinion that the first great *melodist* coming along will sweep the Whole colour-school into the Sea of forgotten failures'

One does not have to guess at the identity of the 'great melodist.'

If the gentle reader wishes to know where to start with this *plenum* of commentary, criticism, controversy, and musico-commercial history he/she is advised to look first at the Index. Splendidly supplied by Frederick Smyth, this is a model of its kind. Acting on the lucky dip principle one comes up with all kinds of surprises.

It is to be regretted that Elgar's drawings, which are such a vital part of his expression, are badly reproduced, and that a number of his musical insertions are haphazardly substituted by not always comfortable engraved quotations. Elgar was proud of his draughtmanship.

It remains to be said that there are still many letters of Elgar waiting to be published, ranging from those to Lady Mary Lygon to those to Somerville Tattersall. Few great composers registered such wide-ranging interests.

Percy M. Young

'Elgar in the Yorkshire Dales' by W. R. Mitchell

Castleberg Publications, £2.40

W. R. (Bill) Mitchell is well known in the North for his forty years association with *The Dalesman*, from which he retired as editor a few months ago. His own articles were often featured in this excellent magazine and he also wrote or contributed to some of the 'Dalesman Paperbacks' dealing with aspects of Yorkshire life or history. Mr Mitchell became aware of Elgar during National Service days, over forty years ago, while encamped near Malvern. Knowledge of any connection with his home town of Settle did not come until many years later when, in conversation with an older resident, he learned that the composer had often stayed with Charles Buck, the local doctor. Research at the time led, in May 1972, to an article in *The Dalesman* on this Yorkshire friendship. Interest revived in 1978, for a number of reasons, and the December issue of that year carried a further article. Copies of both these issues still surface occasionally in second-hand book shops.

A more comprehensive work on Elgar and Buck has had to wait until now and proves to be an attractively presented book of 48 pages, on quality paper providing excellent reproduction for the many photographs and with a well-designed, glossy, semi-stiff cover. The story of this fifty year friendship is presented against the background of life in a then quiet Pennine market town and this should ensure its sales in the north, with the name of W. R. Mitchell on the cover doing its chances no harm at all. The Settle-Carlisle Railway - almost new in the days of Elgar's early visits - gets due mention, as does the Settle Amateur Operatic Society, around which the musical life of the district centred. The Elgar/Buck story is nicely interwoven with local history, interviews with the few surviving residents who remember Dr Buck and quotes from Elgar's many letters.

As a book for the Elgarian to add to his already sagging shelves, it will be found to repeat all the information on this friendship given in the later of the major biographies. However, in Jerrold N. Moore's *Elgar - A Creative Life*, to quote an example, the references to Buck are scattered throughout the length of an 800-page volume. The advantage of Mr Mitchell's book lies in its concise presentation of what was Elgar's earliest significant friendship, viewed from the Yorkshire end and interestingly combined with stories of the Settle of that time.

Mr Mitchell has been better served by his printer than have the authors of many of the smaller books on Elgar. His book has a quality look and feel, and although some of the few errors may be typographical, Mr Mitchell himself may be responsible for wrongly ascribing the Elgars' first visit to Italy to the winter of 1907/8. It was, of course, 1903/4 and led to composition of the overture *In the South*.

While on his Yorkshire visits, Elgar became friendly with one or two of Dr Buck's musical acquaintances, to the point of having separate correspondence with some.

Notable were Arthur Crone, who went to Leipzig to study the 'cello, and also Jack Baguley, who provided piano accompaniment to Elgar's and Buck's string playing. I was surprised to read yet again the statement - first seen in Dr Young's edited *Letters of Edward Elgar* and subsequently in Pauline Collett's *Elgar Travelogue* - that it was Baguley's death which occasioned the composition of Elgar's song *Thro' the Long Days*. Kennedy, Young and Moore are unanimous in assigning this song to August 1885, yet Elgar's letters have Baguley very much alive at the time. The dog biscuit incident involving Baguley, mentioned by Mr Mitchell on page 15, can be precisely dated at September 15th of that year, while in the October, Elgar acknowledged having received a letter from Baguley. None of this matters, since the sentiments of this song and particularly the use of the feminine gender makes it abundantly clear who was in Elgar's mind. He didn't write the words, but he must have found them distressingly apt in view of the breach of his engagement to Helen Weaver and her impending departure from England.

Consideration of this book prompts a few general thoughts about Elgar and Dr Buck. It may seem odd that this friendship, with its associated correspondence providing such insights into Elgar's early adult life in Worcester, should have escaped the notice of the earlier biographers. Buckley (1904) and Newman (1906), admittedly, would hardly have been interested in Buck, even if they had known of him. Dunhill (1938) uses only ten pages to see Elgar from birth to marriage, with no mention of Buck on the way. However, Basil Maine's *Elgar: His Life and Works* (1933) was surely an attempt at a comprehensive biography (it was described by Dunhill as 'exhaustive, if perhaps a little exhausting'!) yet Buck is absent. Although Maine, in his preface, thanks Elgar for 'his wonderful patience with one who was for ever asking questions', Elgar himself, in letters to Adela Schuster, professed little enthusiasm for the proposed biography and if it was left to Maine to ask questions, it is not surprising that Dr Buck received no mention.

After Buck's death in 1932, his Elgar letters were kept by his daughter Monica, who permitted their publication in Young's *Letters of Edward Elgar*. They have since been quoted by almost every writer on Elgar. The letters were sufficiently frequent in the 1880s to provide much information about Elgar's early career, even if there are points where the lack of intervening letters from Buck calls for intelligent deduction by the reader. Mistakes can be made and Michael De-la-Noy, for one, drew wrong conclusions about Elgar's journeys to Leipzig and to Scotland in 1883 and '84. Much exercise for the mind lies in just how and when Buck first met Elgar and outside the basic facts of the BMA Annual Meeting in Worcester in August 1882 and the musical soiree which followed it, the story can vary. In J.N. Moore's major work, Buck is described as 'a complete stranger' who, after Elgar had conducted the orchestra in his *Air de Ballet*, was 'sufficiently impressed to seek him out and introduce himself'. This ignores the fact that Buck had played in the orchestra, which he would hardly do without prior arrangement. There is no reason to doubt the explanation given in E. Wulstan Atkins' Foréword to Mr Michell's book, that Elgar invited Buck to play. He would not otherwise bring his viola, still less his 'cello, to a BMA Conference. Certainly, the two men had a mutual friend in John Beare, a London music dealer. Buck was courting Beare's sister Emma, while Elgar would stay overnight at Beare's when visiting London. Two months after the BMA meeting, as noted by Mr De-la-Noy, Elgar was writing to Buck 'in terms of shared domestic knowledge' that made it seem likely that they had known each other for more than just two months.

A viola of Dr Buck's which may not be that played in 1882 is now in the possession of

Mr W. Graham, of Settle. Just visible inside and quite inaccessible is a label 'Antonius Stradivarius Cremonensis 1720'. Charles Beare, of the same firm which Elgar knew, says it is not genuine if the '17' part of the date is printed (as it is, with the rest handwritten) as Stradivarius only printed the '1' and wrote the rest by hand. I expect Mr Beare is right, though it seems odd to merely print the '1', suggesting that Strad expected his stock of labels to last until the next century!

Those familiar with the Elgar Trail in Worcestershire will find in Mr Mitchell's book its Yorkshire equivalent, nicely detailed and complete with a map. It is a beautiful district, combining wooded valleys with impressive moors and well worth a visit. In an Epilogue, Mr Mitchell tells us that the decision to write this book was made while present at the concert in Giggleswick School Chapel attended also by Elgar Society members in June last year. Northern members will find the book at the usual bookshops; others should send £2.70, which includes postage to:

W. R. Michell, 18 Yealand Avenue, Giggleswick, Settle, Yorkshire, BD24 0AY

D.C.

RECORD REVIEWS

The Dream of Gerontius

Janet Baker (mezzo)/John Mitchinson (tenor)/John Shirley-Quirk (bar.)
CBSO Chorus, City of Birmingham SO/Simon Rattle

HMV EX 7 49549-1(LP)
7 49549-4(cassette) &
CDS 7 49549-2(CD)

The teaming of three veteran soloists, each with many years of close association with *Gerontius*, and a young conductor approaching Elgar's masterpiece afresh, could have been a recipe for disaster. In the event, the result is fascinating. Rattle's interpretation is spontaneous and dramatic, closer in character to that of Gibson on CRD, amongst currently available rival recordings, and quite the antithesis of Boult's overview, where carefully linked tempi give the work as a whole an almost symphonic cohesion.

The Dream of Gerontius is drama, however, and there is no doubt that this is a highly charged, exciting reading. The choral singing may lack the polish and meticulous ensemble of the London Philharmonic and London Symphony choirs (for Boult and Britten respectively) but they sing with rare fervour. Of the three soloists, Baker and Shirley-Quirk have both recorded the work before. The latter sings the Priest and the Angel of the Agony with even greater authority than on the Britten recording, the voice now darker in texture but no less even (Elgar's writing really requires the weight of a bass but the range of a baritone). Janet Baker's voice, too, shows little sign of the passing years. As a young singer she sang the Angel on Barbirolli's 1964 recording of *Gerontius*. It attracted almost universal approval, but here, I think, she has surpassed her earlier interpretation. She now sings with greater directness, has lost some of the over-emphatic mannerisms, which for me were a distraction on some of her early

recordings, the interpretative subtleties now coming straight from within the music rather than being extraneously superimposed.

I have left John Mitchinson until the last. There is no doubt that, of the three soloists, it is his voice which shows most evidence of the passage of time (although perhaps the recording exaggerates the 'beat' in the voice, which is much less evident in the concert hall.) He is not able to float his pianissimo lines as steadily as of old - but against this the voice has the weight of tone, and the operatic experience, to respond to Rattle's dramatic approach to the score. It is also an interpretation of wonderful subtlety and insight. One has only to listen to Gerontius's first solo sixty bars, immediately following the Prelude; the way in which Mitchinson indicates, by minor changes in tempo, variations in rhythm and vocal colour, the rapidly changing moods of Gerontius, through fear, resolve, and tranquil resignation, to recognise that this interpretation is the culmination of many years of experience. For me, only Richard Lewis (for Barbirolli) and Heddle Nash (with whom, apparently, Mitchinson studied the score at the start of his career) show anything like the same understanding and artistic maturity in the part.

The recorded sound is spacious, the choral and orchestral balance being slightly recessed and widely spread within the resonant acoustic of the Great Hall of Birmingham University. The result is some softening of impact at climaxes, which sometimes slightly takes the edge off more dramatic moments - the central section of the Prelude, and the moment when the Soul of Gerontius sees God, for example, where the percussion is less well focussed than on the twelve-year-old Boult recording. The soloists are well balanced, but sound a trifle 'boxy' and detached from the choir and orchestra.

Nevertheless, this is an outstanding performance, which, although it may not entirely displace the best of the rivals, now becomes, I think, the 'best buy' amongst *Gerontius* recordings, for modern sound quality, an exciting interpretation, and, on balance, the most satisfying trio of solo singers.

G.H.L.

Enigma Variations; Pomp and Circumstance Marches 1 - 5.

Royal Philharmonic Orch./Andre Previn

Philips 416 813-1(LP) 416 813-2(CD)

Enigma Variations; DVORAK: Symphony no. 7

London Symphony Orch./Eduardo Mata

Vox Prima MWCD 7153 (CD only)

Previn's earlier recording of the *Variations* disappointed me (with the LSO for EMI). In the past three or four years he has shown a growing identification with Elgar's world, and I had looked forward to this new recording. Although more enjoyable than the earlier version, however I was still left feeling that it falls a long way short of the best of the rival versions on record.

To start with I was not entirely happy about the recorded sound. The acoustic is rather dry, with resulting excellent clarity of detail - the RPO wind-playing is particularly fine. The percussion lacks impact, however, so that the more dramatic movements fall rather flat. *Troyte* in particular suffers, the tympani lacking clarity. In fact, the whole interpretation strikes me as being under-characterised - too often the movements jogging along without any particular shape or sense of direction. Indeed, my initial impression was that some of the variations were taken too slowly. Yet a check on the score revealed that Previn generally sticks very closely to Elgar's tempo directions. Curiously, Menuhin's recording (oddly, recorded with the same orchestra for the same company in the same month, July 1985!) often sounds quicker, yet the timings of his tracks prove the reverse! Probably Menuhin's flexibility in varying the phrasing and tempo is the explanation.

The *P & C Marches* are a different story. They are splendidly done, in a more resonant hall, and have just the right swagger without ever falling into vulgarity, but I don't think this is enough to make this a recommendable record, especially as Handley's equally fine marches are now available on CD.

Mata's recording of the *Variations* with the LSO is a revelation. It is lively, beautifully played, very well recorded, and for the most part deserves to stand alongside the best versions available. If it is ultimately disappointing, it is because the Mexican conductor slips slightly into the trap of over-sentimentalisation, which can be fatal in Elgar. All is well up to *Nimrod*, but Mata allows this movement to overstretch itself, losing shape and momentum, and the balance of the interpretation as a whole is lost. Nevertheless, this is a most interesting performance and excellent value at its bargain price, especially with the unusual coupling, also very well done. The cover implies that the recording is digitally remastered analogue sound, but the disc itself (and the clarity of the sound) confirm it to be a genuine original digital tape. My only grumble about the Mata recording is that the *Variations* is not separately indexed on the compact disc, but I can think of few occasions (apart from reviewing!) when I would want to pick out an individual movement. Incidentally, I am not sure whether either conductor uses an organ in the *EDU* variation: there is a slight thickening of the bass on both discs which suggests that an electronic instrument *might* be present, but if so, the true impact of the 'real thing' is distinctly lacking.

G.H.L.

War Music: Carillon; Le Drapeau Belge; Une Voix dans le Desert; Fringes of the Fleet; Polonia

Teresa Cahill, Richard Pasco, Paul Kenyon, Stephen Godward, Simon Theobald, Russell Watson/Rutland Sinfonia/Barry Collett

Pearl CD SHECD 9602 (also available on cassette)

This is without doubt an important and essential issue for Elgar record collectors. It usefully brings together the works specifically prompted by the Great War, allowing a re-evaluation of the music whose strong, and to modern ears perhaps alien, period character can cause it to be dismissed out of hand. This issue is historic in another

sense too for now it can firmly be claimed that, excepting a few songs, all of Elgar's music has appeared on record. *Le Drapeau Belge* and *Une voix dans le desert* are premiere recordings. *Carillon* in its original form with narrator was last recorded in 1915 and the complete *Fringes of the Fleet* cycle in 1917, although some of the songs did appear on various records in the 78 era. The days when the statement "World Premiere Recording" could appear on the sleeve of a new Elgar record are over!

An historic release is of course no use if it's no good. Notwithstanding some hesitation that I am about to express, there is much to enjoy and applaud and this brave enterprise must be enthusiastically welcomed. The recorded sound is rich and warm and yet has plenty of impact. The resonance of the hall is well caught with a firm bass line. The digital process is of course very revealing and there is rather more studio noise - moving chairs, turned pages - than we have grown to expect. The booklet is excellent with full texts and useful, informative notes by Barry Collett.

Those of us who have got to know the three recitation pieces through a pirate recording of a London concert with Alvar Liddell will certainly be knocked sideways by the sheer weight and brilliance of the orchestral sound. The playing is rhythmic, has a grand sweep and plenty of panache. The orchestra need make few apologies. It is really only in some very exposed passages, that the violins remind us we are not listening to a more illustrious ensemble. To secure the services of Richard Pasco was a major coup. Here I have no hesitation - he is tremendous. Clear and dramatic but never over the top, the way he colours the word "Berlin" at the climax of *Carillon*, looking forward to the anticipated triumphant entry, sends shivers down the spine. I have always thought *Le Drapeau Belge*, the shortest of the trio, to be also much the least interesting but I have to admit that it sounds more convincing here than I had expected. *Une voix dans le desert* is certainly the best, the orchestral commentary vividly and imaginatively etching in the sense of the words. It also incorporates a lovely song for soprano solo, here tellingly realised by Teresa Cahill.

I wish all the singing were of that quality. Who sings what in *Fringes of the Fleet* is not made clear but really I wasn't entirely happy with any of the four baritones. Too often their tone is gravelly and slightly strained. There is none of the ease and exuberance of Dale Smith and Keith Falkner on the old 78s. Perhaps it's because I find the tempi here all a bit too slow. Compared with the excitement of *Carillon* this is all rather four-square and cautious. The four singers act as the chorus and although I can appreciate that to bring in extra singers just for these few bars is expecting too much, it is a pity, especially in *The Sweepers*, where the orchestra in full voice drowns them out. Elgar added a fifth song *Inside the Bar* as an encore to be sung unaccompanied by the four singers. I've not thought much of it before but paradoxically it goes well here with the singing much more confident, more imaginative and more mellifluous.

Unlike the rest of the items, there is a rival modern recording of *Polonia*. It is perhaps unfortunate that Sir Adrian Boult's 1973 recording has just appeared on CD (EMI CDM 7 69207-2) for with all the best will in the world Barry Collett's players cannot match the LPO in such demanding writing. Collett takes a full 2 minutes longer than Boult and this is significant. Although there are some splendid sounds it is difficult to sustain the momentum at this pace. I presume that the Festival Hall in Corby has no organ and although the final peroration is suitably imposing, it is a pity that an organ could not be dubbed in as it was for Boult.

"The whole performance is uplifting in its strength, its sincerity, its majestic sweep. We have indeed achieved an artistic triumph that will serve to carry the noble voice of outraged Belgium to every corner of the globe". This is how in 1915 'His Master's Voice' heralded the only previous recording of *Carillon*. Perhaps that comment from the nursery days of the gramophone can justly be applied too to its successor, indeed to the whole disc, which in spite of a few warts, is a fine tribute in modern technology to music of a past age that had nearly been forgotten and is undoubtedly a milestone in Elgariana.

J.G.K.

NEWS FROM THE BRANCHES ...

SOUTH WALES. Friendship House, Swansea, was the venue for the November meeting of the Branch, when Alan Farrow spoke on "Mainly the rarer Elgar". His talk was essentially a recital of recordings of music that is not frequently heard in live performance today. Some of the works offered were not, perhaps, really off the track beaten by the seasoned Elgarian, but comparative newcomers to the composer no doubt had their experience broadened by the opportunity of hearing, inter alia, the *Severn Suite*, *Froissart*, the third and fifth of the *Pomp and Circumstance Marches*, and excerpts from *The Starlight Express* and *The Light of Life*. Mr. Farrow brought with him his own equipment which ensured an exceptionable standard of reproduction.

On May 14th Prof. Ian Parrot will speak to the branch on "Elgar's Musical Language."

At last news of our SOUTH WEST Branch. Unfortunately both the Chairman and Secretary have had to retire due to ill-health, and it is perhaps the moment to thank both Conrad Addey and Ron Bleach for all their hard work and dedication to the Branch and to the Society generally. We hope they will both benefit from their 'rest' and soon be restored to good health.

A new Branch committee has been formed, with Alice Jones as Chairman, and Robert Dark as Treasurer. Carol Holt has kindly offered to be our Secretary for a year. In February, at short notice, Mary Whittle gave a talk entitled "Odds and Ends", with illustrations from the music of Elgar, Walton and Bliss. In April at a joint meeting with the Delius Society members will hear a tape specially recorded by Dr. Eric Fenby.

YORKSHIRE Branch report that the evening of live music on Jan. 11th proved to be a remarkable event. Members James Brown and David Fligg, both music teachers, had prepared four-handed piano versions of the Triumphal March from *Caractacus*, and the *Bavarian Dances*, which they played with great bravura. In between these pianistic triumphs, soprano Barbara Parry, accompanied by James Brown, sang a group of Elgar songs. The three performers were rewarded at the end by enthusiastic and well-deserved applause. On February 8th, Mr. Bob Edwards, archivist of the Huddersfield Choral Society, one of the oldest and finest such societies in the world, gave a talk on the Society's history, augmented by slides and musical illustrations. Mr. Edwards' book *And the Glory*, commemorating the Society's 150th anniversary, is a splendid account of its history.

On March 7th, we had a visit from Dr. Percy Young, who spoke on Elgar's interest in literature and drama and its effect on his music. Dr. Young spoke as eloquently as we had expected he would, injected a little humour and enjoyed the attention of a sizeable audience. After the AGM on April 25th, our two remaining meetings of the season are, on May 9th, Roger Marsh's *Elgar, a view from the Bandstand* and, on June 6th, visit from Margaret Glover, LRAM, ARCM, always an entertaining and instructive speaker and sure to attract a good audience. Our 1988/9 season starts on Sept. 26th with Claud Powell speaking on 'Dorabella', but we also look forward to celebrating our 10th anniversary next year. We have not finalised what we plan to do, but members can be sure the occasion will be properly marked.

London Branch has continued to enjoy a remarkable season. In December we had "An Evening with Julian Lloyd Webber" at which our versatile Chairman, Maxwell Hutchinson, contrived via an interview format to get a splendidly entertaining response from our eminent guest. There followed mince-pies and punch and we were particularly glad to welcome Alexander Kiselov, erstwhile Russian member of the Society but now London-based, to the Branch. In January Geoffrey Hodgkins spoke about "Canon Gorton and the Morecambe Festival", a subject on which he has become a great authority and out of which we hope a book will be forthcoming. This time it was Garry Humphreys who played the supporting role - the voice of Elgar in a number of readings, which, together with the well-selected musical illustrations, gave much pleasure. In February Teresa Cahill scored a huge hit with a large audience in a fluent, witty and wise talk which touched upon so many aspects of her illustrious career. In addition she treated us to a couple of examples of her marvellous soprano technique (live!) with Barry Collett as welcome visitor and sympathetic accompanist. The evening ended with a preview of the *Une Voix dans Le Desert* track of the splendid Collett/Cahill/Pasco recording of Elgar's War Music. In March we had a return visit from Dr Christopher Kent, indefatigable Elgarian and pre-eminent scholar. With a meticulously-researched talk, aided by piano, slides and recordings, he showed us that music might well be in the air all around us but that what Elgar did with it is remarkable;- "Tinker at the Forth Bridge"?, Indeed not!

The London Branch secretary gives notice that the Branch AGM will be held at the Royal College of Organists, Kensington Gore, on Monday 6th June. Agendas and Minutes will be available at the meeting. Nominations for officers and committee in writing, signed by two members and countersigned by the nominee, should be sent to the Branch secretary (address on back cover) to arrive by 4th June. The AGM will be preceded at 7-30 p.m. by a performance of the *Organ Sonata no. 1* by Stephen Cleobury.

The EAST ANGLIAN Branch started the year with an enthusiastic 'in house' gathering in February to hear, amongst other records, *The Music Makers* on CD. In March the Branch holds its AGM, and as this year is our 10th anniversary we are having a celebration party, and Alan Childs is repeating the first talk he gave when the Branch was formed in 1978. During April members have been invited to Sir George Burton's home for a musical afternoon. In May a number of us are going to Cambridge to hear *The Dream of Gerontius*, and are being entertained for lunch/tea by Peggy Dorow. Also in May our Chairman is giving a talk on 'Elgar's Houses'.

After the earlier hiccup in Branch activities culminating in the election of new officials, we are now meeting on a regular basis and speakers are being approached to allow us to embark on a series of lectures for next year.

News from our WEST MIDLANDS Branch. On May 7th at 2.30 p.m. in the Old Palace, Deansway, Worcester, Dr. Donald Hunt speaks on 'The Development of Elgar's Church Music traced through his part-songs.' Attendance by members from other branches always welcomed. Details of the events on Saturday and Sunday, June 4th - 5th are on another page, but readers might like to be reminded that Mrs. Vockins will be serving coffee at Birchwood on *both days* from 10.30 a.m. to noon. This is always a very pleasant chance to visit an Elgar home.

According to the local Worcester paper the Birthplace Trustees are trying to raise about £900,000, apparently to buy and develop the next-door property with its range of out-buildings and land which could be used as a carpark. However, this story cannot yet be confirmed. There were about 9,000 visitors last year, with the main development being the opening of a new, secure, temperature-controlled manuscript room for the display of more original scores, some of them lent by E. Wulstan Atkins.

Finally, members were promised, in our Sept. '87 issue, that the finished recut inscription on Canon Gorton's grave would be revealed. Here it is:



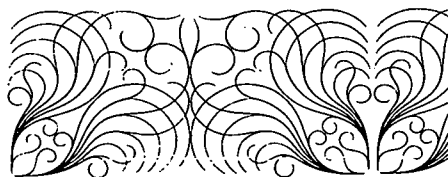
THE APOSTLES
Elgar

LETTER

From Michael Trott

A recent trip to Guildford allowed me to discover Lockner Farm at Chilworth, where Elgar's daughter, Carice, went to live after her marriage to farmer Samuel Blake in 1922. The farmhouse is situated below the North Downs in the valley of the Tillingbourne, just off the main road, opposite the narrow lane to Lockner Holt.

Mr. Eddie May of Chilworth told me that, as a boy, he used to do odd jobs for Mr. Blake's housekeeper, and carried Carice's easel and stool for her landscape painting. Elgar visited Lockner several times around 1923, about the time he was writing the "Arthur" music. Eddie remembered cleaning his shoes. Later the Blakes had to leave when Albury Estate sold off the farm. I have a suspicion that their move to Lord Leconfield's estate at Petworth was due to Elgar, who had known the Leconfield's during the war years at Brinkwells. Elgar's son-in-law remains a somewhat shadowy figure, who died, I believe, in 1939.



BACK ISSUES OF THE JOURNAL

The editor has some back numbers of the Journal for sale, as well as issues of its predecessor, the Elgar Society Newsletter. The following are available and will be sent, post free, for the prices stated. Only these issues are available.

- 1977 Jan. (very few available) £1.25. May & Sept. 75p each
 - 1978 Jan. May & Sept. 75p each
 - 1979 Jan. £1.25. Sept. 85p
 - 1980 Jan. May & Sept. 95p each
 - 1981 Jan. May & Sept. 95p each
 - 1982 Jan. May & Sept. 95p each
 - 1983 Jan. May & Sept. £1 each
 - 1984 Jan. May & Sept. £1.25 each
 - 1985 Jan. May & Sept. £1.50 each
 - 1986 Jan. May & Sept. £1.50 each
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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, Derringstone 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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