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Contents

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SIR EDWARD ELGAR AND CARDINAL JOHN HENRY NEWMAN

'The Dream of Gerontius'

Intimacy without Contact

by

Dr. Ian G. Moores

Dedicated to Richard Falle

Elgar never met Cardinal Newman. Newman was born in 1801 and Elgar fifty-six years later; but Newman lived into his ninetieth year. In his latter years at the Birmingham Oratory where he spent much of his forty-five as a Roman Catholic, Newman was forced into seclusion making rare public appearances. Life at the end became something of a burden to Newman. At this time he wrote:

> 'I am dim-sighted, deaf, lame and have difficulty in talking and writing, and my memory is very bad. I am suffering from living too long.'

It seems almost too much of a coincidence that at Elgar's wedding at the Brompton Oratory, London, in 1889, he was given as a present a copy of the Cardinal's *Dream of Gerontius,* while in Birmingham the Cardinal was dying. The poem describes the deathbed of Gerontius surrounded by Priest and friends, his painful death and the journey of his soul through space accompanied by its Guardian Angel to its judgement — a momentary vision of God. The journey of the Soul is assailed by evil Spirits and assisted by the help and intercession of Angelicals. After the Beatific vision comes the period of purification. Gerontius's final song of exalted resignation is the most beautiful lyric that Newman ever wrote:

> 'Take me away, and in the lowest deep
> There let me be
> And there in hope the long night-watches keep,
> Told out for me.
> There, motionless and happy in my pain,
> Lone, not forlorn, –
> There will I sing my sad perpetual strain
> Until the morn,
> There will I sing, and soothe my stricken breast,
> Which ne'er can cease
> To throb, and pine, and languish, till possest
> Of its sole peace,
> There will I sing my absent Lord and Love: –
> Take me away,
> That sooner I may rise, and go above,
> And see him in the truth of everlasting day.'

In 1900 after Elgar had set Newman's poem to music he told an interviewer:

> 'The poem has been soaking in my mind for at least eight years. All the time I have been gradually assimilating the thoughts of the author into my own musical promptings.'

Gerontius is certainly Elgar's greatest work. After finishing the score which he knew to be a masterpiece he wrote:

> This is the best of me; for the rest, I ate, and drank, and slept, loved and hated like another: my life was as the vapour and is not, but this I saw and knew, this, of anything of mine is worth your memory.'

On the same day Alice (Elgar's wife) wrote to a friend:

> 'Edward has today finished his orchestration. He has written his Dream of Gerontius from his very soul.'

What makes the *Dream of Gerontius* so great? Poetical genius was met with musical genius that can't be doubted; but there is more to it than that – much more! Elgar felt Newman's work so deeply because they stirred in him his own deepest feelings, beliefs and philosophy. Not only did Elgar bring Newman's poem to life and give expression to his religious beliefs, he expressed unforgettably the darker side of his own nature. Elgar created Gerontius from his own deepest experiences as had Newman some thirty years before: the pains, the joys and sadnesses of his own life. Elgar like Newman could identify with Gerontius, Elgar knew exactly what was meant by Newman's words:

> 'The sight of the most fair will gladden thee,
> But it will pierce thee too.'

The climax of the work is the Soul's judgement and vision of God. I want to concentrate on this part initially.

First, the Soul and its Guardian Angel pass into the House of Judgement which is surrounded by Angelicals praising God. Newman creates a mysterious atmosphere in the use of analogies. The Soul of Gerontius which is blind at this point paints the picture:

> 'The sound is like the rushing of the wind,
> the Summer wind among the lofty pines.' And:–
>
> 'But hark! a grand mysterious harmony: it floods
> me like the deep and solemn sound of many waters.'

Having lived in the heart of Worcestershire for much of his life, close to the Malvern Hills, Elgar could identify with Newman here. A friend in Elgar's later life wrote:

> 'Elgar told me that as a boy he used to gaze from the school window in rapt wonder at the great trees swaying in the wind; he pointed out to me a passage in Gerontius in which he had recorded in music his subconscious memories of them.'

The passage is of course that which I have just quoted. In the original poem however Newman elaborates:

> 'The sound is like the rushing of the wind,
> The Summer wind among the lofty pines;
> Swelling and dying, echoing round about,
> Now here, now distant, wild and beautiful;
> While, scattered from the branches it has stirred,
> Descend ecstatic odours.'

Even as a boy of twelve, Elgar had begun his private response which, some thirty years later, he was driven to find means of turning them to creative purpose. Something stirred Elgar in those enormous pine trees in Spetchley Park – something magical and mysterious – something he couldn't explain. He had, in fact, encountered his Creator.

Secondly, the Soul comes face to face with God. Elgar expresses this momentary vision brilliantly with a cataclysmic chord which resolves into the Soul's final song – 'Take me away . . . ' which I quoted earlier. In the original poem, the Beatific vision is described by the Guardian Angel:

> 'When then – if such thy lot – thou seest thy Judge'
> The sight of Him will kindle in thy heart,
> All tender, gracious, reverential thoughts.
> Thou wilt be sick with love, and yearn for Him,
> And feel as though thou could'st but pity Him,
> That one so sweet should e'er have placed Himself

At disadvantage such, as to be used
So vilely by a being so vile as thee,
There is a pleading in His pensive eyes
Will pierce thee to the quick, and trouble thee,
And thou will hate and loathe thyself; for, though
Now sinless thou wilt feel that thou hast sinned,
As never thou didst feel; and wilt desire
To slink away, and hide thee from His sight
And yet will have a longing aye to dwell
Within the beauty of His countenance,
And these two pains, so counter and so keen, –
The longing for Him, when thou seest Him not;
The shame of self at thought of seeing Him, –
Will be thy veriest, sharpest purgatory.'

Elgar chooses not to use this, probably because he was already afraid of a possible hostile reception to the Catholic teaching running through the poem. But, Elgar would have seen the significance of these words. Newman's vision had evolved out of all his own experiences – and how both Newman and Elgar knew that the pains and joys of life were all too often closely linked.

The Beatific vision is the climax of the work. The tension of the moment is emphasised by a skilful build-up, including the sounds of earthly friends still singing around Gerontius's deathbed. At this moment of sublime tension, Newman chooses to support the Soul with sounds of friends on earth. This isn't surprising when one considers the enormous importance special friendships meant to Newman during his largely unhappy life. Elgar too had a great capacity for friendship; throughout his life of trials and tribulations he depended on a very small group of close friends.

Some of Elgar's music has a distinctive open air English flavour about it; he was particularly responsive to landscape and the countryside in all its moods – as in *Introduction and Allegro for Strings*. It conjurs up in the imagination the very essence of the Malvern Hills which he loved – a magical yet real atmosphere which stirred his very soul.

As with those possessed of greater sensitivity than most, Elgar suffered from depression. The first performance of *Gerontius* was a disaster. Elgar wrote to Jaeger, his greatest friend who supported him throughout his scoring of *Gerontius:*

> 'I really wish I were dead over and over again but I dare not, for the sake of my relatives, do the job myself. I've not read the papers yet re: Gerontius and never shall now. I'm sorry you've been bothered over it – just like my influence on everything and everybody – always evil.'

Elgar was genuinely haunted by the 'sense of ruin' which he had expressed so vividly in his masterpiece. Beneath the extrovert and proud exterior lay a sense of ruin and inferiority which made him secretly a very unhappy man. To Jaeger he revealed the true nature of himself. He wrote:

> 'I do want to see you or somebody who knows suffering – I am bored to death with commonplace ass-music down here – the bucolics are all right when they don't attempt more than eat, drink and sleep, but beyond this they fail.'

Augustus Jaeger or *Nimrod* as Elgar nicknamed him was both critic and faithful friend. The *Nimrod* variation of the *Enigma Variations* (a musical portrait of Elgar's friends, himself and his wife) is the most moving and majestic of all fourteen variations on the 'Enigma' theme. Some recent criticsm has been made of *Nimrod* being used at funerals and requiems, but in appropriate cases, what could be better than an intimate record of a real and true friendship. The final variation is a self-portrait – bold and vigorous in style. In this he chooses to superimpose two other

variations: the one of his much-loved wife Caroline Alice and, not surprisingly the ninth variation – *Nimrod.*

Elgar was the musician, Newman the theologian, poet, philosopher and psychologist before his time. Having written *The Dream of Gerontius* in 1865 – a poetic expression of his vision of the unseen world, Newman was compelled to give a reasoned explanation of his faith by writing *Grammar of Assent.* I want to say just a little about this, but before I do, I must summarise the attitudes and philosophies which dominated the major part of Newman's life. Newman was privileged to live during the period of massive development and change of the nineteenth century. The age of reason and pure mathematical sciences gave way to Romanticism and the natural sciences. He saw the philosophy of Locke rejected by the birth of Romantic imagination – the mind being unlocked from the restraints imposed by the preceding classical period. Newman believed, like William Blake and Wordsworth, that the mind is not a lazy onlooker or inert recipient of external impressions. In *A Vision of the Last Judgement,* Blake writes:

> 'When the Sun rises do you not see a round "disc of fire somewhat like a Guinea?" Oh no, no, I see an innumerable company of the Heavenly host crying 'Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty.'

The Romantics had great insight: in the known they were able to see into the unknown. They believe that visible things are the instruments through which truths are reached. Blake writes:

> 'To see a World in a Grain of Sand
> And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
> Hold infinity in the palm of your hand
> and eternity in an hour.'

Newman proposed that, in matters of faith, the mind is capable of reaching a state of 'certitude' in the reasoning process, having digested the experiences and visions available to it over a period of time; he realised that logical reasoning alone is deficient in the assent of religious truth. Newman does not use the word sub-conscious in his *Grammar of Assent* but he does use the term 'Illative sense.' It is the 'Illative sense' which Newman proposed to explain how conviction ensues days, weeks or even years after a series of events or experiences. In matters of faith Newman regarded words and intellect to be inferior to feelings and intuition.

Newman was an enigma in many ways. Unlike most men of egocentric temperament he was sharply aware of external things. His self-absorbtion never blinded him to his surroundings. His keen senses made the sensible world very real to him – intensely real. This joy of sense, particularly in his youth had a full measure of the feeling given in Wordsworth's *Ode* to which he was so drawn:

> 'There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream
> The earth, and every common sight'
> To me did seem
> Apparelled in Celestial Light
> The glory and freshness of a dream.'

As a boy Newman lived at Ham in Middlesex which drew his affections as did Malvern for Elgar; when as a boy he dreamed of Heaven it took the form of Ham. It was as if these early memories stirred his imagination and unlocked the riddle of existence to his own satisfaction. Ham always had or him a more peculiar magic, even more than Oxford where Newman spent some of his happiest days.

Newman became increasingly aware that the beauty and attractiveness of the world was simply a veil of appearances which hid the deeper reality – a reality which included the wonder and pain of the religious journey. *The Dream of Gerontius* shows how real to him was the world beyond the veil. He saw through the known into the unknown.

But I believe that the greater part of Newman's insight and enduring certainty in the heart of God came out of his human relationships. Throughout his long life he had many friends, but three in particular come to mind spanning almost his entire life: Bowden, Froude and Ambrose St. John. From 1843 to 1875 – a period of thirty-two years Newman and Ambrose St. John were almost inseparable. St. John offered himself unselfishly and humbly with single and entire devotion; Newman could not regard this as anything else but a gift from God. 'From the first', said Newman, 'he loved me with an intensity of love, which was unaccountable.' It was to St. John that Newman dedicated his *Apologia,* and when his friend came to an untimely death, Newman stayed with the body all night in a passion of overwhelming grief. Such Platonic friendships, with an almost desperate intensity and heightened emotionalism were not so uncommon, in the period I am discussing. Particularly in the Victorian era, the sense of a Godlike excellence in the Greek ideal of love between friends entered into close union with the ideal of the sanctification of earthly loves by the love of God.

John Henry Newman found an intimacy with God out of his relationships with his closest friends and in his response to nature in much the same way as Edward Elgar did. Without knowing each other they lived in the same world. Both men were fundamentally romantics with extraordinary powers of sensibility and insight. Today we live in a world where, generally speaking, material values are held in a more prominent position over Spiritual values. Much of the sensitivity and insight with which both Newman and Elgar were blessed is slowly being eroded away, or simply covered over and buried in the depths of man's psyche. Too many of us are like Wordsworth's *Peter Bell:*

> 'A Primrose by a river's brim
> A yellow Primrose 'twas to him:
> And it was nothing more.'

The Dream of Gerontius marked the end of an era. Both Newman and Elgar saw and knew the truth, and their masterpiece is a testament to that.

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(The above article originally took the form of a lecture, with music illustrations, at Wellington College, Berks. The Music consisted of "We have now passed the gate . . ." and "Thy judgement now is near . . ." from *Gerontius; Introduction and Allegro for Strings;* and 'Nimrod' from the *Enigma Variations. The lecture is reprinted here, with slight alteratiuon, by kind permission of the author. EDITOR)*

BYRD, BIRMINGHAM AND ELGAR

by Richard Turbet

The most famous Elgar premiere took place in Birmingham when *The Dream of Gerontius* was performed, disastrously, at the festival there on Wednesday, 3 October, 1900. Thanks entirely to *Gerontius,* the most famous Byrd performance occurred at the same festival two days later when a quintet of singers performed sections of Byrd's *Mass for five voices.* (The kyrie and gloria were omitted). In a rambling and whimsical article on "William Byrde's D minor Mass" in *The Dome* of the year (Vol.6, pp. 157–162), John F. Runciman describes with relish the reasons for its truncation. "The Lord Mayor of that City is reported to have said that the whole would have been given, but that, as the music of so early a period naturally was without an accompaniment, and a great deal of music without accompaniment would doubtless prove tedious, the Committee had decided only to give samples. Was it the Lord Mayor of Birmingham who proposed, instead of buying a dozen gondolas for the local lake, to buy a couple and let them breed?"

The performers, singing from the edition of Squire and Terry, were Evangeline Florence, Ada Crossley, Ben Davies, William Green and David Bispham. Malcolm Jones has pointed out to me, in a letter of 1 August, 1986, that "it is a salutary thought that the performers (one-to-a-part – 'authenticity in 1900!') were the "second team". If they had used the "first team" it would have included Dame Clara Butt." Also singing in that year's festival were Emma Albani, Marie Brema, Edward Lloyd, Andrew Black and Punket Greene.

After a first half that consisted of Brahms' *A German Requiem,* the Mass opened part 2, which continued with 'Vorspiel' from Wagner's *Parsifal* and concluded with Beethoven's *Seventh Symphony*. Programme notes for the mass were written by Joseph Bennett.

Of the performers of the mass, Florence and Davies were soloists in, respectively, the Brahms and in a performance in the evening of Handel's *Messiah*. Particularly interesting, in view of the circumstances of this Byrd Performance, are the Elgarian credentials of the other three singers. Crossley sang two of the *Sea Pictures* before Queen Victoria, a fortnight after their premiere by Butt at Norwich in 1899. Green sang *Gerontius* in the work's second performance in England, at the Worcester Philharmonic Society on 9 May, 1901, and in the same city at the first performance at the Three Choirs Festival in 1902. Bispham was wanted by Elgar for the premiere of *The Apostles* at the Birmingham Festival of 1903. (See the third edition of Michael Kennedy's *Portrait of Elgar,* London: OUP, 1987, pp.102, 125, 132 and 191).

It is fascinating to speculate on the nature of the performance, with all its implications concerning contemporary performance practice, attitudes to early music, and audience reaction. The inclusion of Byrd's mass in the festival programme can now be seen to have formed part of the emergence of what in *The Music Student* of 1921 (vol.13, p.429) Sir Richard Terry called "The resurrection of William Byrd", and it is pleasing to discover the fates of two of England's greatest composers intertwined at crucial stages in the progressive acceptance of their music.

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(Note: This is a slightly revised version of a contribution to the British Music Society Newsletter, 1986)

"A SORT OF ANGLICAN EISTEDDFOD"

Elgar and the Madresfield Music Competition

by

Geoffrey Hodgkins

The last fifteen years of the nineteenth century saw the development of the competitive festival movement, a significant element in the renaissance of English music. The leading figure in this was undoubtedly Mary Wakefield, who began the Westmoreland Festival in 1885. Two years earlier John Spencer Curwen, son of the founder of Tonic Sol-fa, had inaugurated a festival at Stratford in East London. The civilising and educative effect of music was uppermost in the movement's philosophy from the outset — one of Miss Wakefield's favourite aphorisms was a quote from Ruskin: "Music fulfils its most attractive and beneficial mission when the masses of the people enjoy it as a recreation and a solace".

Many of these festivals were founded by members of the privileged classes who had a philanthropic interest in the "masses". Mary Egerton in York, Canon Gorton in Morecambe, and Gervase Elwes in Brigg. In 1896 the success of competitions in other parts of the country prompted a member of the Worcestershire aristocracy to start one in her locality. She was Lady Mary Lygon of Madresfield Court near Malvern, and the competition was named after her home; however it was actually held in the Malvern Assembly Rooms. Entries were restricted to

people living in the south-west of the county, defined by the river Teme to the north, the river Severn to the east, and the county boundary to south and west.

The first meeting was held on 28th May 1896. The judges were Arthur Somervell and Mary Wakefield, and there were nine classes; three for schools, three for church choirs, and three for choral societies. In the evening a concert was given at which the winners performed their test pieces. There were also some solo items by Miss Wakefield, and the combined choirs gave Macfarren's cantata 'May Day'. Over 800 people took part in the competition or the concert.

There is no record of Elgar having been invited to take part in the event in any way. At the time he was extremely busy working on the orchestration of his oratorio 'The Light of Life', which was to be given at the Three Choirs in September; and he had yet to score the cantata 'King Olaf' for its premiere in October. However, Rosa Burley noted:

> By some stupid oversight on the part of the promoters, Edward, who as the leading musician of the district should have been consulted, was completely ignored. It was long before he forgave this slight".

In 1897 therefore, there were no Elgar works at the Madresfield meeting, described by the 'Malvern Advertiser' as "a sort of Anglican Eisteddfod". The junior competitions consisted of rounds, action songs, and sight-reading for the choirs; while the adult classes included Anglican chant in four parts, and Gregorian chant in unison. At the evening concert Lady Mary conducted a choir of 160 in Mendelssohn's setting of Psalm 42, and other choral items. In the class for piano accompaniment Rosa Burley came third and Winifred Norbury (one of the secretaries of the competition) was runner-up. The judges were Arthur Somervell; the Hon. Spencer Lyttleton; and Lionel Benson, celebrated conductor of the famous Magpie Madrigal Society. Miss Fitton's choir won the madrigal section, and over 700 competitors took part from some 40 parishes.

By the following year whatever rift that had existed between Elgar and the competition organisers had been healed, principally by the formation of the Worcestershire Philharmonic Society as a vehicle for Elgar. He agreed to participate in the 1898 Madresfield competition, held in Malvern on 27th and 28th April. The concert on the second day began with selections from Handel's "Samson", conducted by Lady Mary; and in the second half lgar conducted the ladies' chorus in two of his part-songs, 'The Snow' and 'Fly, Singing Bird'. "Warm applause was accorded", noted the 'Malvern Advertiser'. Kennerley Rumford sang two songs by Parry with the composer at the piano. At about 700 the number of competitors was similar to the previous year, but as there was a larger number of classes Mary Wakefield and the Rev. Lewis Gilbertson were added to the three judges retained from 1897.

On 17th October 1898 Lady Mary wrote to Elgar asking him if he would compose a work for the next competition. Nothing came of it, although Elgar expressed his gratitude by dedicating to Lady Mary his 'Three Characteristic Pieces' (Op.10). "She is a most angelic person and I should like to please her", he wrote to Jaeger on 24th March 1899.

Elgar did not attend the Madresfield meeting that year which was held on Saturday 8th and Monday 10th April. He was in London on the latter date for a rehearsal of 'Caractacus', but on the Sunday afternoon he and Alice were hosts to Dr. W.G. McNaught, who was adjudicating at the competition. Thus began a long and rewarding friendship. At the Monday afternoon concert the chorus 'It comes from the misty ages' from Elgar's 'The Banner of St. George' was given by the combined choirs. At the close of the meeting the audience was addressed by Lord Beauchamp, Lady Mary's brother, who was soon to leave for Australia where he had been appointed Governor of New South Wales. He said how sorry they were for the absence of Mr. Elgar. They were all so proud of having in their midst an English composer of so much merit, and Lady Mary had special reasons for being grateful to him for the help he had given her.

In 1900 Elgar, hard at work on 'The Dream of Gerontius', was too busy to take an active part in the Madresfield festival, held on 16th and 17th May, but he and Alice did find time to attend on both days. Alice noted in her diary on the first day that they were "very amused", but did not give the cause. The event had been moved from Malvern to Worcester, but this resulted in a drop in the number of entries and a decline in interest. in 1901 therefore the festival reverted to its original venue, and Elgar agreed to take part. He sponsored a new class in the Saturday programme; a part-song for village choirs. The first prize was £1 plus a certificate; second prize was 15 shillings and the third, ten. In the event there was only one entry. (The test piece was Hatton's setting of Longfellow's 'Stars of the Summer Night', which Elgar himself had set to music some nine years before). Elgar's own part-song, 'As Torrents in Summer' from 'King Olaf' was the test in the open choir class on the Monday.

Elgar had also agreed to conduct the final evening concert, at which one of the works was Bach's 'Blessing, Glory and Wisdom'. This raised certain problems of performance, which Elgar shared with Jaeger in a letter of 3rd February:

> "I suppose it's intended to be unaccompanied? We did it with organ last year and this year are doing it again but in Malvern, where they have no organ and the simple villager is no good with one rehearsal unless he has a fair buzz going on. Can you tell me if any orchestral arrangement has ever been done — London is the hot-bed of such atrocities — in the country we are much too artistic unless for a special object like the present, when we want the proletariat to have a good, healthy, honest and (at the same time — very seldom they all go together — (sarkazzum)) Xtian Shout! Do tell me. Otherwise I must suggest the thing being arranged — not by E.E. — for strings".

Jaeger's reply enclosed a copy, and he asked who it was for. Elgar's answer on 6th February, indicated one of the main problems of the competitive festival movement — lack of finances; "The Bach is for the Madresfield folk who have no money to spend at all — poor things!".

The evening concert on 29th April was, said the 'Malvern News', "highly successful . . . though no perhaps as crowded in attendance as in previous years". The programme began with the 'Egmont' overture, but Dvorak's Slavonic Dance in E minor was "quite the most popular of the orchestral items". The two main works were both choral. Parry's 'Blest Pair of Sirens', and the Bach piece. The 'News' commented: "Dr. Elgar conducted with stimulating effect on both chorus and orchestra, and got all the work possible out of the chorus." Alice's diary merely notes: "very nice".

In 1902 Elgar's 'Chanson de Matin' was the test in the orchestral class. The composer was busy, scoring the final chorus of the 'Coronation Ode', but had agreed to conduct his two 'Pomp and Circumstance' marches at the final evening concert. The result was almost a riot, as the 'Malvern News' reported:

> "In these compositions, the orchestra . . . worked splendidly, and deservedly elicited a perfect hurricane of acclamation, which was renewed again and again as Dr. Elgar bowed his acknowledgements. Seldom, if ever, has such great enthusiasm been locally evoked, and for several minutes the furore was maintained. The composer was reluctantly compelled to accede to the redemand and, after consulting Earl Beauchamp and Lady Mary Lygon, repeated the marches which had gained for their composer so remarkable an ovation".

Alice's diary recorded: Malvern perfectly mad over Pomp & Circumstance' No.1".

But as Elgar's fame grew (not least through the popularity of the marches) he became increasingly tired and frustrated with local musical life. He resigned his conductorship of the Worcestershire Philharmonic Society in November 1902 and the previous month he had written

to Winifred Norbury, concerned by a report that McNaught was to be absent from the judge's seat at Madresfield in 1903:

> "Miss I. Fitton was here yesterday and we talked over the classes in which I took an interest. I gather from your letter that the usual judge is not coming. Now I want to know at once please who is to be judge. If this is settled kindly tell me; if it is in abeyance please tell me also but I want to know at once . . . I won't swallow your tempting bait (lunch) . . . before I know about the judge — because I feel it is probable that any such connection with the M.M.C. is an act of severance".

Miss Burley knew of Elgar's impatience with judges he considered incompetent:

> "There was more than one occasion on which the adjudicator chosen by the Committee exasperated him. 'S.... is a clotted idiot', he said of one distinguished visitor".

The missing name could well have been Arthur Somervell, who had been present at the first three Madresfield competitions. He had studied with Stanford and Parry, and was professor at the Royal College of Music — qualifications which were not likely to endear him to Elgar, who spoke disparagingly about Somervell in a letter to Jaeger of 20th April 1898.

The judges finally chosen for the 1903 Madresfield competition were Elgar's old friend, Granville Bantock; and Herbert Brewer, organist of Gloucester Cathedral. The final day of the festival was postponed until the Wednesday, 6th May, so that Elgar could return from the Morecambe Festival and conduct his 'Coronation Ode'. (Because of Elgar's absence in the north the final rehearsal had taken place a week before on 29th April). The work was well received, and in his closing speech Earl Beauchamp thanked Elgar for attending: "When a great many other things about the Coronation have been forgotten, this Coronation Ode will still be remembered".

Elgar had been present earlier in the day during the competitions, and after the choral society class in which the Malvern Link Musical Society beat the only other entry, Harlebury, Elgar was asked by the judges for his comments. "My sympathies are entirely with the smaller choir", he said. "One is a choir of about 45 voices, drawn from a very large district, and the other a small choir collected from a country district. They deserve every possible encouragement". The audience duly applauded, and Elgar went on: "I have just come from a district where they have some wonderful choral singing, and more heed is paid to artistic than to commercial results. A great many small choirs come forward there, and I would like to see the same thing done in this county. I trust it might be found possible, by some re-arrangement of the syllabus, to attract more small choirs, and not leave them to be frightened at the prospect of having to meet choirs from large districts. As to the singing of the two societies this afternoon", he concluded, "the rendering as a whole was good, but a little lacking in depth. I think the standard at these competitions is very much higher than it used to be, and that you are making progress".

Six months later, in a letter to Ivor Atkins, who had taken on the job of choosing test pieces for Madresfield, Elgar wrote: "I retire from this scene to my earth". (He always wrote to Atkins in the guise of Reynart the fox). He was not present at the 1904 meeting, held on 3rd and 4th May, when the test pieces included, 'Weary Wind of the West', 'It's Oh! To Be a Wild Wind', and 'Feasting I Watch'. The meeting was not a great success, there being as many in the orchestra as in the audience at the final concert. So Lady Mary called a meeting for those concerned, only to find that Elgar was attending a conference of choral conductors at Morecambe. She wrote to him on 10th July:

> "It is very sad that we should again clash with Morecambe. I was much hoping that you would be able to come on the 25th and consent to take the chair".

But by this time the Elgars had moved to Hereford, and from now on the composer's local music-making was confined to the Three Choirs Festival.

ELGAR – THE ASTROLOGICAL CONNECTION

by

David Colbeck ©

My fellow members of the Elgar Society might be forgiven if their immediate reaction to my rather provocative title is – what has astrology got to do with Elgar? Well, that is what this article attempts to prove. By using the science of astrology as a tool for exploring Elgar's outer character traits and, more importantly, inner motivations, I hope to throw more light on the enigma of this outstanding musical genius.

I have been a keen student of classical music since learning to play the violin as a boy, joining a local recording society, reading, singing in local choirs – a familiar story, no doubt. I qualified, however, as a teacher of English and Religious Knowledge, but became increasingly fascinated by astrology over the ensuing years. Spurred on by a friendship with a very competent practising astrologer I decided to study with one of the astrological faculties and have recently qualified.

My interest in Elgar both as a man and a composer began relatively recently (1983) when I began to succumb to his magic. I became so fascinated by his personality that I read avidly every available biography (see bibliography references). There remained, however, several unanswered questions which continued to elude me and so I naturally sought the aid of astrology.

Now I must make it clear that I am not a musicologist, nor an 'expert' on Elgar. I am motivated by certain deeply held convictions that some of the truth surrounding Elgar's relationships in particular has eluded even such eminent practitioners as Jerrold Northrop Moore and Michael Kennedy. What I do know about is how to analyse a birth chart – astro-analysis as it is called in the trade! Therefore I prepared the ground by ascertaining as accurately as I could the time of birth, which is essential to identify key constitutents of any chart.

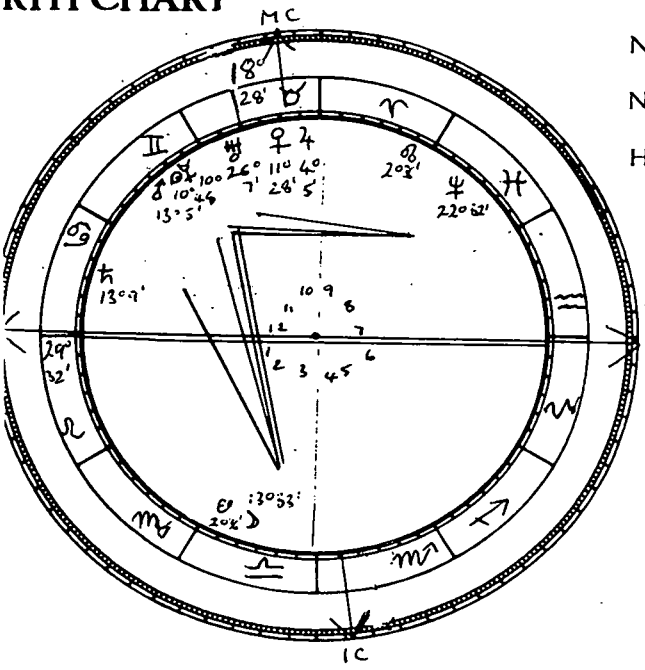
Two main areas particularly fascinate and intrigue me; one is Elgar's relationships with women in general and with his wife in particular. The second is the strange remark that he made to his friend Sir Sidney Colvin on 13 December, 1921, and quoted in the Prelude to Kennedy's *Portrait of Elgar:* "I am still at heart the dreamy child who used to be found in the reeds by Severn side with a sheet of paper trying to fix the sounds and longing for something very great. I am still looking for this . . . but as a child and as a young man and as a mature man *no single person was ever kind to me,"* (my italics). My plan is to present firstly my own interpretation of Elgar's chart and then to relate this to the areas of his life outlined above, with passing reference to the more obvious significance to the music.

When I first drew up the chart (see illustration) I was immediately struck as I hope you will be, by its sheer symmetry. Beautifully balanced, 'open', harmonious, it could only belong to a highly gifted artist. An 'average' birth chart, if such exists, is normally quite a jumble of intersecting lines. Elgar's sun sign was Gemini (2 June) but of course there is much more to one's astrological make up than that. Astrologers consider a myriad of factors, which influence the personality, too many to list in detail here. (My detailed astro-analysis is available for inspection on application through the Editor.)

Geminis express their innermost motivations through constant variations (!) in life-style and in the pursuit of intellectual stimulation and growth. They have a wonderful gift of communication, are able to link people and ideas together. They are optimistic, lively, and versatile, read avidly, enjoy walking, dancing and games of skill.

Even at this basic level I am sure that you can relate what you know of Elgar to most, or all, of

RTH CHART



NAME Edward Elgar

NUMBER

HOUSE SYSTEM Equal

	D.	M.	Y.
Birth date	2	6	1857
Birth place	NR	W	WORCESTER
Latitude	52°	15'	N
Longitude	2°	15'	W
TIME	H.	M.	S.
Birth time as given	10	30	*a.m. p.m.
Zone standard *E–W+	—	—	—
Summer (or double) time *	—	—	—
G.M.T	10	30	*a.m. p.m.
G.M.T. date			

	H.	M.	S.
Sid. time noon G.M.T. *a.m. p.m.	4	43	26
Interval *TO/FROM noon a.m. p.m.	1	30	—
Result	5	13	26
Acceleration on interval *a.m. p.m.			15
Sid. time at Greenwich at birth	5	13	21
Longitude equivalent E+W–		9	00
LOCAL SID. TIME AT BIRTH	3	04	21
Subtract 24 hrs. if necessary –			

* *Delete whichever is not required*

SOUTHERN LATITUDES:
ADD 12 HOURS AND
REVERSE SIGNS

Ruling Planet ♄ Positive 5

Ruler's House 11a Negative 4

Rising Planet ♄ Angular

Mutual Reception

Triplicities:
Fire ASC
Earth 3
Air 4
Water 2

Quadruplicities:
Cardinal 2
Fixed 3
Mutable 4

Sallet to Sun in House 10 | ♉
Sallet to Moon in House 11 | ♊

Disseminating Moon type
Splay type shaping

PLANET	DEC.	ASPECTS ☉	☽	☿	♀	♂	♃	♄	♅	♆	♇
SUN		☉		△	☌	⚻	☌	∠	∠	·	□	·
MOON		☽			△	⚺	△	·	□	·	·	·
MERCURY		☿				⚻	☌	·	·	·	□	·
VENUS		♀					∠	☌	∠	·	·	·
MARS		♂						·	⚻	·	·	·
JUPITER		♃							·	·	∠	·
SATURN		♄								∠	·	·
URANUS		♅									*	·
NEPTUNE		♆										·
PLUTO		♇										
Asc.		Asc.	″	☍	·	·	·	□	∠	*	△	·
M.C.		M.C.	·	·	·	☌	·	·	·	☌	*	

ROGRESSED DATA

☽ _____ P ♀ _____ P ♄ _____

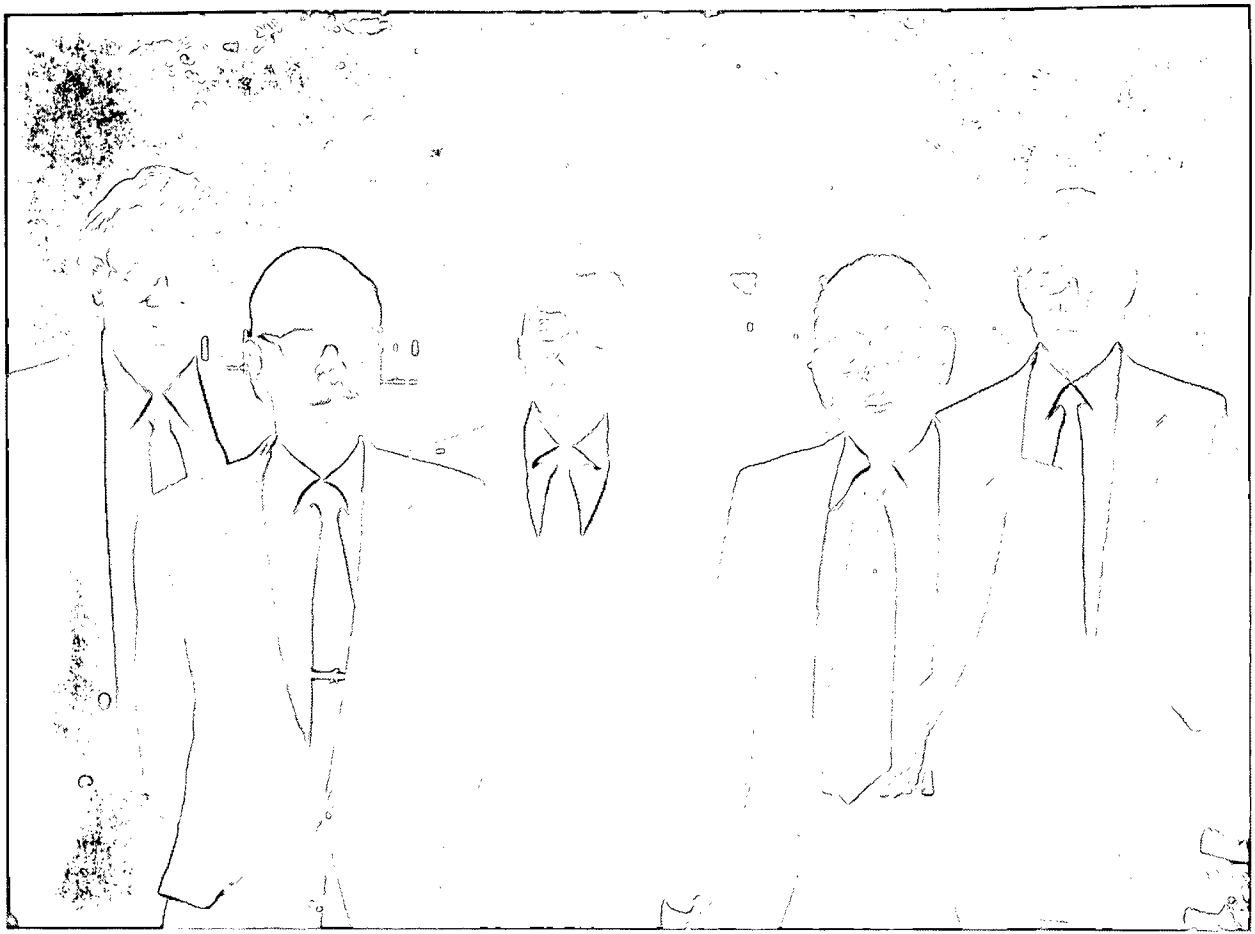
☽ _____ P ♂ _____ P Asc. _____

☿ _____ P ♃ _____ P M.C. _____

D. M. Y.

NOON POSITIONS _____ Prog.

CORRESPOND TO _____ Noon Date



The Chairman, and some of the Society's Vice-Presidents, Malvern, June, 1988. L to R: Dr. Jerrold Northrop Moore, Prof. Ian Parrott, Christopher Robinson, Dr. Percy Young, Michael Pope

(Photograph courtesy of Berrows Newspapers.)

The above designs for a Society tie and badge have been approved by the Committee. Production of these will depend on the response from members, and the Secretary needs to know now if you will be ordering either or both in due course. Please write to the Secretary as soon as possible, as a decision depends on your response.

these characteristics. He certainly enjoyed intellectual stimulation of all kinds and his hobbies ranged from golf to horse riding to cycling, and even chemical experimentation. And what are the 'Variations' if they do not link people and ideas together, albeit musical ideas?

Another common characteristic of Geminis is that continuous mental effort tends to strain the nervous system and they need both periods of rest and stimulating physical activity, linked to frequent changes of environment, in order to recuperate and renew their creative enrgies. It is well documented that Elgar was completely mentally exhausted after finishing most of his great works (referrd to by Northrop Moore, Kennedy and others). What did he do very often in these circumstances? He went on long cycle rides through the beautiful Herefordshire or Worcestershire countryside, preferably with 'suitable' female companions, or, later in his life with more disposable income, he went with Alice Elgar to Germany or Italy.

In his chart there is also a good relationship between the creative drive and the creative mind, which allows him, in the right conditions, to be constructively creative. This emphasis is admirably illustrated in the sub-title and theme of Jerrold Northrop Moore's book – "A Creative Life." This person uses the position of friends and associates to fulfil personal goals. Well, Elgar attracted some wonderful friends, some of whom were most instrumental in helping to further his musical career. Jaeger, musically and inspirationally, and Alfred Rodewald, materially, immediately spring to mind. Now I am not suggesting for one moment that Elgar ever made callous use of his freinds' positions to further his own ends. His was a personality which naturally attracted such loyal and deeply felt friendship (this is also strongly indicated in his chart). This nobility of character, which so often shines through the music – 'Nimrod' is the prime example but there are many others – ensured that Elgar never, even in his more sombre later years, ever lacked true, consistent friendship, whatever he may have said or written in his more depressive moments. However, he was very astute, fast-thinking, and could use valuable connections to his advantage. Who can blame him for that?

TO BE CONCLUDED IN THE NEXT ISSUE

ELGAR'S CATHEDRAL

'I like to think of the Worcester days . . . and my cathedral and the music'. Memories spanning nearly sixty years comforted the lonely composer when he wrote this to a friend in 1920.

As a young boy Elgar had 'romped among the tombs' when he lived within the shadow of the Cathedral, and, as a youth, had on occasion attended its services to listen to the wide repetoire of music sung by the Cathedral Choir.

The installation of the four-manual Hill organ in 1874 was a memorable event for the 17 year old Elgar, and he listened attentively to the many recitals given by visiting organists. No doubt he paid similar attention to the concerts given in the Cathedral by the Worcester Festival Choral Society, and by 1878 he was taking part as a second violinist in the Three Choirs Festival. Three years later he was amongst the first violins, and in 1884 – the Cathedral's 800th anniversary year – Elgar played under the baton of Dvorak in the Festival that included the great composer's *Stabat Mater* and *Symphony in D major.* Elgar was bowled over by the symphony's tunefulness and, above all, but its wonderful orchestration. As Michael Kennedy has remarked in his *Portrait of Elgar*, 'few moments can have had a greater effect on Elgar's future development'.

The 1890 Worcester Festival commission for an overture gave Elgar the opportunity to show what he had learnt from these practical experiences and from studying the music of Dvorak and other 19th century composers. The overture *Froissart*, full of characteristic Elgarian themes and brilliantly scored, was generally well received. It was, however, the *Organ Sonata*, written five years later for the Cathedral's organist, Hugh Blair, which pointed most clearly towards

Elgar the symphonist. The following year, 1896, the oratorio, *Lux Christi*, was performed at the Worcester Festival. It was another work which owes its existence to the Elgar-Blair friendship, and one which confirmed Elgar's mastery of choral writing as well as that of orchestration.

The composition of *The Dream of Gerontius* was now only four years ahead, but not until 1902, two years after its unfortunate premiere, did England hear a wholly successful performance. This was in Worcester Cathedral when Elgar himself conducted the Festival Chorus prepared by his life-long friend, Ivor Atkins, Blair's successor as Cathedral Organist.

The *Dream's* orchestration is again masterly, and the massed choruses are both thrilling to sing and to hear, but, as Michael Kennedy has observed, 'the first entry of the unaccompanied semi-chorus with 'Kyrie eleison' could only have been written by a man who thoroughly understood choral singing and who had lived among choirs and cathedrals as Elgar had'. 'The building will do it'. said Elgar, confident of the choral effect; performances at Worcester invariably prove his point.

It is no longer Elgar but his statue that stands within the shadow of the Cathedral from which he gained and to which he gave so much. 'It is a sweet old place', he once wrote, 'the best place in which to hear my music'. The fabric of **his** Cathedral now needs most urgent and costly attention, as the accompanying literature shows. Surely no Elgarian can stand beside the statue facing the Cathedral, nor listen to his music within, without wishing to save this magnificent historic building. Do, please, help **now** and give as generously as you can. You, too, may then mark your performance, 'Nobilmente'!

John C. Phillips

Elgar's Music for Powick Asylum

On 1st October, and in the best Elgarian tradition, I left London for "somewhere further north" seeking the best in amateur music-making. My destination was Oakham, and I was not disappointed. The Rutland Sinfonia, under the indefatigable Barry Collett, have always been powerful and persistent advocates of Elgar in the East Midlands, but this particular occasion was something of an event, providing as it did a rare opportunity to hear some of the music Elgar composed for the staff band at the Worcester City and County Lunatic Asylum during his time there as Band Instructor from 1879 to 1884.

In his programme note, Barry Collett rightly links this music with the Wind Quintets of the same period. Like them it is not great music as such, but very tuneful, cleverly written, and enjoyable to listen to. The band consisted of piccolo, flute, clarinet, cornets, euphonium, a handful of violins, viola, cello, bass and piano. Composing music for the motley assortment was a valuable lesson in orchestration for the young Elgar, as F.G. Edwards commented in 'Musical Times' in October 1900:

> "He thereby got to know intimately the tone colour, the ins and outs of these and many other instruments. Thus when he conceives a certain phrase he instinctively feels double association of the melody and the instrument that is to play it".

In several of the pieces the melody is doubled, usually by violins and brass, but occasionally by other combinations of instruments, trumpet and piccolo together are very effective. The noise created by the patients' dancing no doubt made it imperative for the tune to be clearly heard.

Two sets of quadrilles were heard, 'La Brunette', Elgar's first work for the band; and 'Paris', composed after his visit there in 1880. I was disappointed not to hear the 'L'assommoir' quadrilles, with their anticipation of 'The Wand of Youth' and the fifth ' Pomp and Circumstance' march. But there were lots of good things still to come. The four polkas are

much longer and more ambitious than the quadrilles, with extended trio sections. The evolution of 'Sevillana' is not difficult to discern in 'Nelly' of 1881. Another Elgarian fingerprint occurs at the end of 'Helcia' (1883) where the final chords are identical to those which open the song 'Sabbath morning at Sea' from 'Sea Pictures'. The final polka, 'Blumine' (Elgar's last composition for Powick) is the most forward-looking and shows clearly that Elgar was ready to move on to full-scale orchestral music, although due to lack of opportunity it was to be another six years before he gave the world the 'Froissart' Overture.

Sandwiched between the Powick music were two other Elgar rarities, the Duett for trombone and double bass; and the Fugue in D minor for oboe and violin. Barry Collett conducted with admirable spirit and enthusiasm, and it is good to know that the complete Powick music will be recorded by these forces in the near future.

G.H.

BOOK REVIEW

'The Identity of English Music: The Reception of Elgar 1898—1935', by Jeremy Crump in *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880—1920,* edited by Robert Colls and Philip Dodd.

Croom Helm, 1986. £10.95

This singularly important contribution to Elgar studies seems, hitherto, to have been overlooked, probably as a result of appearing in a work not devoted to music. This fact in itself is important. It is difficult to review since the context in which it appears has to be explained. The theme of the whole book is that 'Englishness', as perceived since about 1880, is the result of a series of cultural initiatives designed to bolster the English against their growing sense of relative national decline, and concern over external threats. The consequence was, on the one hand, a drive to establish centres of cultural authority and canons of artistic acceptability, on the other a dominant conviction that English culture lay in the past, a past which was supposed, like certain 'acceptable' parts of the English countryside, to be both a well-spring, and an accreditation of current artistic activity. Attention is drawn to Cecil Sharp, the Elizabethan Revival (though not to the 'English Musical Renascence'), as well as to DNB, OED, and the early proposals for a National Theatre.

The chapter on Elgar must be seen against this background. It points out that up to now most of the writing on the composer has been purely musical or biographical (from the inside), not seeking to look at Elgar as a significant historical figure in the context of his own time (from the outside). Mr Crump discusses the changes in the response to music as symptoms of change in the social and cultural climate itself. He is often interesting, sometimes provocative, occasionally wrong in fact (his sources are Moore, Kennedy, McVeagh, and De la Noy, and he tends to copy their errors), and periodically infuriating. (Actually the book could be described in the same terms). He is inclined to be obsessed with *Land of Hope and Glory,* and to fall into some common errors about it. Nevertheless, he has some major theses worthy of debate. Thus, he denies that Elgar has any special link with the West Midlands countryside, that he was in any way 'turned off' or 'in decline' after 1914, and that there was any real neglect of his music. He is also interesting on Elgar's 'modernity'. He was, he concludes, a modern composer, but in a peculiarly 'English way; experiment was tempered by genuine . . . feeling.' He sees the public before 1914 falling on Elgar as a symbol of embattled national pride, and after 1918 seeking solace in a pastoral reminder of lost splendours, which, he implies, may be the way we still see him.

I checked on some of the general historical works written recently, and note that they are making more substantial reference to Elgar. Does all this mean that the poor man is at last to be released from being either a totem pole of West Midlands provincialism, or the English desire to force creative artists into a preconceived canon of acceptability?

Well worth reading the whole book; but not if you are over 60, of a conservative outlook, and have high blood pressure.

Carl Newton.

RECORD REVIEWS

ELGAR: 'In The South'
Coronation March
Meditation from 'The Light of Life'
'Froissart'

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Yonandi Butt — *ASV 619 (CD)*

ELGAR: 'In the South'
'Enigma' Variations
Serenade for Strings

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Andrew Litton.
Virgin Classics VC 790727-2 (CD)

Two fascinating new Elgar recordings by non-British conductors. Butt is apparently of Macao-Chinese origin, but American educated and now Canadian domiciled, who combines his musical career with that of a research chemist. Litton is a New Yorker, whose European career has blossomed since his success in the 1982 BBC Rupert Foundation conducting competition, culminating in his recent appointment as Principal Conductor of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra.

Both performances of *In The South* are briskly dramatic, Butt taking only about half a minute longer than Litton's 21¼ minutes. Yet Litton seems to achieve a general sense of cohesion in his performance which Butt never quite manages. There are several reasons for this. Butt often lets the tempo, in more lyrical passages, slacken just a fraction too much, and is slow to respond when it is necessary to recapture the pace and forward movement. There is a typical example near the end of the work, between figures 46 and 52 in the score, both conductors are guilty of making rather too little of Elgar's instruction to vary the pace every few bars. After bar 52, however, Elgar asks for an accelerando over 18 bars, to reach 'tempo primo'. It is important to reach the required tempo in time for it to make its point before the tempo broadens again 27 bars later, at the start of the final 'Grandioso' section of the work. Litton needs to accelerate sharply, but without undue hurry, to reach the required speed. Butt, however, is much more sluggish in his response, fails to quite reach the appropriate speed, and, as a result his broadened tempo for the last 100 bars, or so, becomes rather heavy and ponderous.

There is also no doubt that the RPO responds more enthusiastically to Litton's direction than that of Butt. In the latter's hands there are moments of uncertain ensemble and tempo changes take a few bars to settle down. There is also a slight air of brashness about Butt's performance — but the recorded sound might have something to do with this. Butt and the RPO were recorded at the Henry Wood Hall (by Brian Culverhouse, who has given us some fine Elgar recordings in the past). This is a rather dry location for such an opulently scored work, and although the string sound is warm and spacious, with strong, firm bass, the brass, when playing forte, sounds close and overpowering, and the percussion is a trifle 'closed in' and lacking

impact. By contrast the Litton recording, made at Abbey Road, sounds much more spacious, with more natural perspectives.

I have concentrated on *In The South* as it allows direct comparison between these two recordings. Looking at the rest of the programme it has to be said that Butt has undoubtedly been more imaginative in his choice of works. His *Froissart* is straightforward and energetic, if a trifle coarse-grained (again the recording may be partly to blame) and it is good to have a modern recording of the surprisingly neglected 1911 *Coronation March,* in which Butt's slowish tempo and slightly pompous manner is not inappropriate. On the other hand Butt's *Meditation* can only be described as a travesty. This gentle introduction to a short, simple oratorio, is dragged out to a total of nearly nine minutes (three minutes longer than Boult's by no means hurried version) and is played densely and ponderously, with far too much heavily recorded organ pedal.

Litton's *Serenade,* although using full orchestral strings, is played lightly and without exaggeration, which, if less superficially appealing than, say, Barbirolli's famous version with the massed strings of the Sinfonia of London, shows a nice understanding of the simple origins of this gentle piece. As far as the *Variations* is concerned, there is little to fault. There are more strongly characterised recordings available, but all the tempi are well judged and nicely contrasted, and the detailed phrasing and balance has clearly been very carefully thought out. All in all, the Litton record is a most attractive addition to the Elgar discography and can be strongly recommended to anyone wanting good modern versions of the relevant works. Butt, on the hand, despite an imaginative programme, cannot be recommended. His *In The South,* although lively and exciting does not hold together as well as Litton's version, and often sounds rather coarse. His *Froissart* and *Coronation March* are decent enough - but I cannot forgive his dreadfully misconceived *Meditation.*

G.H.L.

CD Roundup

Without doubt the most important Elgar CD reissue in recent months has been the appearance of Boult's 1973 recording of *The Apostles.* The original sound quality was outstandingly good and the performance, while, perhaps, a bit less dynamic than *The Kingdom,* recorded five years before, was still excellent, with the LPO, the London Philharmonic Choir, and the distinguished team of soloists all on top form. Opinion will continue to be divided about these two great Elgar oratorios — indeed my own feelings about them are far from clear or consistent. *The Apostles* is, I think, too long. Nevertheless I am convinced that in his handling of some of the more dramatic moments, Elgar took English oratorio forward into a new dimension by creating a new form of highly concentrated music drama. The sequence describing the betrayal and capture of Jesus never ceases to astonish and grip me. In 1973 I felt Clifford Grant's Judas lacked the firmness of tone and intonation familiar from his outstanding stage creations at the Coliseum. Listening to him again in the new transfer, I find that perhaps I underestimated the subtlety and insight in his interpretation — and his big, dark bass voice is certainly of astonishing quality. *The Apostles* almost fills two CDs. the second disc is rounded off with Boult's *Meditation* from *Light of Life,* recorded a couple of months after the completion of *The Apostles.* It is a pity that it was not placed first, this gentle simple Elgarian 'chip' is something of an anticlimax after the high drama of the last section of *The Apostles,* whereas it would have made an excellent 'curtainraiser' at the start of disc one. The number of the set is CDS 749742-2.

Not everyone warmed to Vernon Handley's recording of the Elgar *First Symphony* when it was originally released on CFP in 1979 — although I have always enjoyed it as a tough alternative to more introspective versions. Handley's 1st, reissued on CD a few months ago, and noted in the last issue of the 'Journal', is now joined by the 2nd. There is no doubt in my mind that this is the finest recording of the work of modern times, rivalled only by the classic Boult version of 1944, with which it has much in common. Like Handley's 1st, it has a restless quality, with a tightly argued first movement, a larghetto which moves steadily forward, with no undue lingering, towards an impressive climax, a scherzo where the sudden harshness of the trio has never sounded more disturbing, and a fourth movement which, again like Boult's 1944 interpretation (although Handley is no mere imitator of his mentor), carries no sense of autumnal resignation, but is a passionate and optimistic summing up of the conflicts of the symphony. Handley is aided here by gloriously rich sound quality (much better than the 1st) and superb playing from the LPO. The introduction of the organ pedal at the climax of the last movement (which caused great interest when the recording was originally released in 1980) makes its mark even more effectively in the CD transfer — and, indeed can now be better appreciated in the current cassette and LP versions, remastered from the digital transfer. The CD number is CFP 4544.

Finally two EMI 'Studio' mid-price CDs, bringing back into circulation Barbirolli Elgar recordings from the 1960s. The *Variations,* recorded with the Philharmonia in 1962 was always slightly disappointing, lacking the fire and strong characterisation of the famous Halle version of six years earlier (and currently available on a PRT CD). Nevertheless the playing has all the expected polish of this great orchestra at its incomparable peak. I was surprised, however, to see that the recording was made at Kingsway Hall, although clear in detail, it lacks any feel of the spacious, warm acoustic of that famous venue. On the other hand I was interested to see that the second work on the disc, the famous Halle *Falstaff,* made two years later, was also recorded at Kingsway Hall, and not in Manchester. Here the recording is indeed spacious — and the performance, dramatic and vividly characterised, has become a gramophone classic. The *Falstaff* should be in the library of every collector of Elgar recordings, and should be snapped up at its modest price even by Elgar fans who do not really want another *Variations.* The number is CDM 7 69185-2.

The second Barbirolli CD brings together vividly played and recorded versions *Froissart, Cockaigne* and the five *P&C Marches. Cockaigne* and Marches 1 & 4 were recorded in 1962 with the Philharmonia Orchestra, the other items two years later — by which time the orchestra had become the New Philharmonia. Exhilarating stuff (I have always loved Barbirolli's *Cockaigne* and highly recommend it.) The number is CDM 7 69563 2.

G.H.L.

BRANCH REPORTS

LONDON'S programme began in October with a visit from Lady Barbirolli who spoke entertainingly about her own and Sir John's concern for Elgar. We heard some of the great recordings and it was good to learn that increasingly they are re-appearing on Compact Disc. Lady Barbirolli joined us for a social "get-together" after her talk at which we chatted with one another about our Elgarian doings in the summer. (Three Choirs, etc.), welcomed Andrew Neill back from Australia and were pursued by David Morris in his excellent campaign to get the Deeds of Covenant in! A welcome visitor was Bridget Duckenfield, spying out the Imperial College scene before her November talk about her great-uncle Sir Landon Ronald. In the event

she survived a confused lift into London from our Secretary and the usual threat of equipment malfunction (again triumphantly overcome!) to give an entertaining and knowledgeable insight into the work of an important, albeit too often shadowy, figure. Her recorded illustrations were superb and included many great rarities. Our own collector extraordinaire, David Michell, had in fact collaborated in the making of a remarkable tape. We look forward to the appearance of Miss Duckenfield's projected biography of Ronald.

Somewhat tortuous negotiations are in hand, in conjunction with Yorkshire branch and the National Westminster Bank, to bring about the placing of a commemorative plaque on Dr. Buck's former surgery in Settle. More than that it is not possible at the moment to say — and if it happens in Spring it will not be any good to say "watch this space"!

NO OTHER BRANCH REPORTS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED AT TIME OF GOING TO PRESS

We believe that our Branches are well and thriving, but would like to hear from them. Are you out there somewhere?

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PRESENTATION OF "KING OLAF" RECORDINGS TO H.M. KING OLAV V OF NORWAY

The Treasurer, David Morris, recently contacted the Norwegian Embassy to ascertain if it would be possible for copies of the EMI recording sponsored by the Society to be made available to the present King of Norway.

The Officers were delighted to hear in reply that His Majesty would be graciously pleased to accept the recordings at an audience for two of the Society's officers at 10.15 a.m. on 10th November 1988, at the personal residence of the Norwegian Ambassador in Palace Green, Kensington.

On the day Trevor Fenemore-Jones and David Morris were welcomed by the Ambassador, His Excellency Mr. Rolf Busch. The audience with H.M. King Olav V followed. A set of CDs, tape cassettes, and LPs of the cantata were formally presented. His Majesty indicated that he had always liked the music of Elgar and was very interested to hear about the work itself, its background, the development of Elgar's career, and the history of the recording. At the close His Majesty thanked the officers warmly for the gift.

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UNUSUAL ORCHESTRAL PARTS. When the Hereford Orchestral Society successfully revived the very rarely performed orchestral version of *The Severn Suite* (on 7th May, 1988), credit was largely due to Robert and Esther Kay, two professional music copyists, who prepared and corrected the score. One happy result of their work was the discovery of parts for Elgar's *Empire March,* now earmarked for possible performance. Anyone else interested in performing this unusual score is invited to contact Robert Kay for details. (Hambrook Cottage, Hambrook, Ledbury, Herefordshire HR8 2PX. Tel: Trumpet 634).

PERFORMANCES OF "The Dream of Gerontius" are surely not common in the German Democratic Republic. However, in June there are to be two; First in Leipzig at the Gerwandhaus, on 11th June. The Leipzig Grosses Rundfunk Orchester under Horst Neumann, will be joined by Jean Rigby, Anthony Rolfe-Johnson and the Philharmonia Chorus. Two days later in East Berlin, at the Schauspielhaus, the same forces will present a second performance.

ELGAR CHORAL FESTIVAL

The Elgar Society presented a special award of £50, on 22nd October at the conclusion of the first Elgar Choral Festival in Westminster Cathedral, arranged by the Elgar Foundation. The adjudicators decided that the most promising choir, and therfore the winners of the award, was the Imperial Chorus. The presentation was made by the Society's Chairman, Christopher Robinson, at the end of the Cathedral Concert.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

13 January	Symphony no. 1 SNO/Seaman	Usher Hall, Edinburgh 7.30 pm
14 January	the same	City Hall, Glasgow 7.30 pm
19 January	In the South BBC PO/Hopkins	Civic Hall, Wolverhampton 7.30 pm
20 January	the same	City Hall, Sheffield 7.30 pm
20 January	Enigma Variations Nouvel Orch. Phil/Judd	Theatre des Champs- Elysées, Paris, 8.30 pm
21 January	Cello Concerto LPO/ Bychkov/Natalia Gutman	Leeds Town Hall 7.30pm
22 January	the same	Royal Festival Hall 3.15 pm
31 January	Introduction and Allegro; Falstaff LPO/Kasprzyk	Royal Festival Hall 7.30 pm
11 February	Violin Concerto Eng. Northern Philharmonia/ Lloyd/Jones/Nigel Kennedy	Leeds Town Hall
7 February	Enigma Variation Philharmonia/Inglis	Royal Festival Hall 7.30 pm
11 February	Minuet; May Song; Chansons de Nuit de Matin; Salut d'Amour; Serenade Lyrique; Mina Rutland Sinfonia/Collett	& Queen Elizabeth Theatre Oakham, Rutland, 7.30 pm

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY *(Continued)*

14 February	Violin Concerto CBSO/Rattle/ Oscar Shumsky	Town Hall, Birmingham 7.45 pm
18 February	Enigma Variations Ulster Orch./Handley	Town Hall, Belfast 7.45 pm
19 February	Severn Suite (arr. Brand) Black Dyke Mills Bd/Brand	Royal Festival Hall
20 February	Introduction & Allegro Polish Chamber Orch/Staienda/	Univ. of Warwick Arts Centre 8.00 pm
23 February	Cello Concerto Halle Orch/Skrowaczewski/ Heinrich Schiff	Free Trade Hall, Manchester 7.30 pm
25 February	The Dream of Gerontius Bach Choir/English Chamber Orch/ Willcocks/Baker/Tear & Howell	Royal Festival Hall 7.30 pm
11 March	Enigma Variations Havant SO	Ferneham Hall, Fareham, Hants
3 March	Introduction & Allegro LPO	Royal Festival Hall
6 March	Symphony no. 2 LPO	Royal Festival Hall
9 March	Falstaff RPO (in 'Shakespeare' ser.)	Royal Festival Hall
15 March	The Dream of Gerontius Bournemouth SO/ Hughes/Baker, Dale, Kennedy	Wessex Hall, Poole Arts Centre 7.30 pm
28 March	Violin Conerto Philharmonia/Davis/Ida Haendel	Royal Festival Hall 7.30 pm
30 March	Symphony no. 1 RPO	Royal Festival Hall
9 April	*Adrian Boult Centenary Concert* The Dream of Gerontius Philharmonia Chorus & Orch/Davis Hodgson, Keith Lewis, Howell	Royal Festival Hall 7.30 pm

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY *(Continued)*

22 April	The Dream of Gerontius SNO Chorus & Orch/Groves/ Jones, Treleavan/Hayward	Usher Hall, Edinburgh 7.30 pm
23 April	the same	City Hall, Glasgow 7.30 pm
29 April	Cockaigne; Cello Concerto RPO/Handley/Heinrich Schiff	Fairfield Hall, Croydon 8.00 pm
30 April	the same	Royal Festival Hall 7.30 pm
6 May	Enigma Variations RPO/Temirkanov	De Montfort Hall, Leicester 7.30 pm
20 May	Symphony no. 2 Rutland Sinfonia/Collett	Corby Festival Hall, Northants 7.30 pm

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LETTERS

From: KENNETH LOVELAND

Mr. Raymond Monk wonders whether other Elgarians can follow up his letter with other examples of adversely critical comments about Elgar's work. Well, how about this?

> *There was a time when Elgar was held to be 'a great composer.' Time, the Old Man with a Scythe, has a disconcerting way of handling it. The music, with a few exceptions seems at the best respectable in a middle-class manner, the sort of music that gives the composer the degree of Mus.Doc. from an English university. In Elgar's case, his music won him a knighthood and to this day there are Elgar festivals in England. Was Cecil Gray too severe when he wrote of Elgar "He never gets entirely away from the atmosphere of pale, cultured idealism and unconsciously hypocritical, self-righteous Pharisaical gentlemanliness which is so characteristic of British Art in the last century"?*

Philip Hale was, in fairness, a most distinguished critic, with a beautiful literary style which I think a few of us older ones would confess to have been an influence. He wrote for the Boston Journal and the Boston Herald and provided the notes for the Boston Symphony Orchestra programmes for 40 years. He died in 1934. I cannot trace when and where the above appeared, but I would imagine it was somewhere between 1926 and 1930.

LETTERS (Continued)

From: FRANK W. HOLMES

I had not previously realised that a set of Enigma Variations had been published 74 years before Elgar's masterpiece.

(Philip) Cipriani Potter (1792–1871) was an English pianist, conductor and composer, whose published works extended to Opus 29. He ranked high as a performer, and had the honour of introducing three of Beethoven's concertos to the English public at the Philharmonic. Though many of his works were in demand in his lifetime, they are now forgotten. His set of variations entitled "The Enigma" (1825) is remarkable for anticipating Elgar's Enigma Variations by containing "variations in the style of five eminent artists". The artists were guessed to have included Rossini and Beethoven.

It is most probable that Elgar never knew that his Enigma Variations had a predecessor.

From: PROFESSOR BRIAN TROWELL

Dr. A.J. Dewar is to be congratulated on finding the reference to Elgar in E.F. Benson's posthumously published Final Edition. I have discussed this in a forthcoming article on 'Elgar's Use of Literature', which is to appear next Spring in of Elgar Studies, edited by Raymond Monk (London: Scolar Press). What led me to it was a note preserved in the Elgar Birthplace library among the Stuart-Wortley papers, in which Alice's daughter Clare was evidently seeking an explanation for a reference in one of Elgar's letters to her mother: 'Queries. 1919/Air for Coliseum/What?/24 April, 1919.' Carice Elgar Blake, to whom the enquiry was addressed, added this: 'Proposed Songs for the Air Force, words by E.F. Benson. As far as I know they were destroyed as Lady E. did not like the words – they certainly were never published.' W.H. Reed refers to them without mentioning Benson, under the year 1919 on p. 127 of his Elgar (London, 1919; reprint of 1943), but they have never been listed in published catalogues of his works.

I have no knowledge of any sketches for the 'Air Songs', and we may presume that Lady Elgar's wishes ere carried out. According to a note by Troyte Griffith she also put paid to 'Rabelais', no doubt because it contained elements that she found indelicate (typescript in Birthplace library). One wonders whether the words, at least, of the Air Songs may be found among Benson's papers.

Dr. Dewar is over-protective in omitting to say what it was that Elgar had enlisted Benson's aid in hunting through the cemetery at Winchelsea: 'Some forebear, his great-grandfather, I think, had been hanged there for sheep-stealing and Elgar's piety prompted him to search the churchyard to see if he could find his grave, thus establishing that he had received Christian burial: two searchers would make quite short job of it'. (This was probably before 1916, since Benson speaks of visiting Henry James in Rye, who died that year.)

This is certainly an unexpected element in the composer's ancestry, though not in his character, and calls for further research. To have climbed in four generations for *the ignominy of public execution to the honour of an O.M., a baronetcy and international fame was no common feat for a humble family such as the Elgars.*

LETTERS (Continued)

From DAVID McBRIEN

It isn't difficult to find highly critical comments about Elgar made in the USA at around the same time as that quoted by Raymond Monk. Harold C. Schonberg says in 'Lives of the Great Composers' (UK paperback edn. Futura, 1975): "During the modernism of the 1920—1940 period, the great days of Stravinsky, Bartok, Prokoviev and Milhaud, most musicians would have ridiculed the very idea of Elgar being an important composer. He was considered an inflated provincial, popular in his day only because England was so desperately anxious to claim an important composer for her own". Happily, Schonberg, after more in this vein, goes on to indicate that views have changed. This sort of opinion is encapsulated in the brief note from the 'Gramophone Shop Encyclopaedia of Recorded Music' published in New York in 1942:

> *Elgar, Sir Edward, (1857—1934)*
>
> *The official composer to Edwardian and Georgian England, Elgar was a past master of every musical technique cogent to his purposes,. English critics persist in ranking him among the great, but outlanders are likely to regard him as an earnest and estimable musician who only occasionally — as in the "Enigma" Variations — rose above capable mediocrity, while at the same time he far too often — as in the Pomp and Circumstance Marches — sank to something it is unpleasant to describe.'*

Schonberg's brief biography, incidentally, contains some surprising information — for example that Elgar conducted the first performance of the Pomp & Circumstance March no. 1 and described the event in his autobiography!

From Professor IAN PARROTT

From Carl Newton's appreciative letter in Sept. '88 Journal, it may look as if my talk on Elgar at the British Music Information Centre, London, in June was an expensive affair. Well, yes in a way, but I had already established a friendly relationship with that excellent and informative centre over a period. For the month of March, 1986, for example, they had done me the honour of putting on a special display of my compositions and writings, so in the long term there are no complaints.

THE AUTUMN ISSUE OF "This England" magazine contained three articles, finely illustrated in colour and black & white, on Elgar and the Elgar countryside. The articles are short but informative, and were written by David Willmott, Michael Kennedy and Stuart Millson. They even mention the Elgar Society, though slightly under-stating our membership! Copies may be obtained from the publishers 'This England', P.O. Box 52, Cheltenham, Glos GL50 1YQ. Cover price is £2.25p, postage extra.

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