

# The Elgar Society JOURNAL



**SEPTEMBER**  
**1989**

# The Elgar Society Journal

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**SEPTEMBER 1989**

**Vol. 6, No. 3**

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## A CORRECTION . . .

The gremlin which attacks all magazines and periodicals struck at our last issue and specifically at the Neville Cardus article which commenced on page 4 of the May issue. A number of words disappeared between proof stage and publication, and the missing words are now given.

Three lines from the bottom of the page, after the word 'nobility' it should read: "At a state funeral it is sometimes hard to find even the corpse, let alone the chief mourner. No [need for reticence, etc.]

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## ELGAR RESIDENTIAL WEEKEND

**Barry and Pauline Collett** are the lecturers at a residential weekend school on Elgar, to be held at Knuston Hall Residential College, Knuston Hall, Irchester, Wellingborough, Northants NN9 7EV, on 27 - 29th October. The fee for the weekend is £51.00.

Full details and application form may be obtained from The PRINCIPAL, KNUSTON HALL, at the address above.

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## NEWS ITEMS

Richard Warren, Archivist of the Toronto Symphony, advises us of what may well be the 'farthest North' performances of Elgar. The Toronto Symphony Youth Orchestra was on tour in the North of Canada in May, and two performances of the *Introduction and Allegro for Strings* were given in remote areas. One was in Whitehorse in the Yukon, and the other in Inuvik in the North West Territories. A glance at your atlas will show just how Northerly these places are! Can any of Elgar's music have been performed farther north than this?

In Brighton, in May, at St. Bartholomew's Church, as part of the Brighton Festival, there was an all-Elgar concert. *Cockaigne, the Cello Concerto*, and *The Music Makers* were performed by the Brabant Orchestra from the Netherlands, conducted by Norman Del Mar. We know we failed to mention this concert in previous issues, but nobody thought to tell us . . .

The COTSWOLD LINE Promotion Group is devoted to increasing the use and facilities of the railway lines which run from Oxford to Worcester, Malvern and Hereford. Elgar Country, in fact. They have also pushed the restoration of the Great Malvern Station and its attractive tea-rooms. Other developments depend on public support and membership of the group. They issue a most attractive Newsletter, and we wish that we had drawn attention to the group earlier than this. Full details of membership and activities can be obtained from J. E. Stanley, 4 Sandford Rise, Charlbury, Oxford, OX7 3SZ.

## LADY BOULT

Members will learn with deep regret of the death of Ann, Lady Boulton, on May 29th, aged 91. At the wish of the family the death was not reported to the press until the end of June, and we were therefore unable to report on the sad news at our Annual Meeting.

After Sir Adrian's death, Lady Boulton always took a keen and kindly interest in the society, and during Sir Adrian's lifetime she was a constant source of help and encouragement to her husband in all his activities. She will be greatly missed by all who knew her.

## JOHN OGDON

The death, in early August, of the pianist John Ogdon was a grievous loss to music, and to British music in particular. He was, perhaps, our most gifted piano player, whose career had been fraught with many difficulties and health problems. It was ironic that just as he seemed to be ascending again to the head of his profession his life should be cut short. Elgarians will remember with gratitude the discovery of the 'lost' *Concert Allegro* (1901), and the work which Ogdon and Diana McVeagh put into its editing. Ogdon's television performance, and later recording, of this work in 1969, remain firmly etched in the memory.

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

by

Trevor Fenemore-Jones

**MEMBERSHIP** This year we have 70 overseas members, plus nine libraries, as compared with 72 members and nine libraries last year.

**JAPAN** Earlier in the year copies of a publication called 'Newsletter for Deliusians' were received. This is published in both English and Japanese. Its editor reports various performance of English music, including her first hearing of the *Introduction and Allegro* and the *Variations* in July 1988, conducted by Vernon Handley "with all his might", as she rather quaintly puts it. Sir Alexander Gibson conducted two performances each of *Cockaigne* and the *Variations* in January last. An all-Japanese performances of the *First Symphony* took place in the north of Japan in March, and the *Cello Concerto* was done by the Tokyo Philharmonic in September last year, with Alison Eldridge as soloist. The editor writes: "Elgar, Britten, Holst and Vaughan Williams, are already well-enough known in our country, although it does not mean that we can hear their music as often as we hope. At least they are more popular than Delius and you can research on them in many universities and music libraries."

**BULGARIA** News has come in of a good performance of the *Cello Concerto* in Plovdiv in March. Plovdiv may be a name known to some from Bulgarian wine-labels - it is actually the second city after Sofia, the capital.

**UKRAINE** Another Eastern Europe performance was of the *Introduction and Allegro* by the Kharkov Philharmonic Orchestra, under the Welsh conductor Grant Llewellyn. The Society contributed to the cost of hiring the parts to make this possible. Afterwards Mr. Llewellyn referred to the fine string playing of the orchestra, and picked out the solo violinist for special praise.

**U.K. ORCHESTRAS ABROAD** As in previous years we are grateful to the BBC for including Elgar items in their overseas tours. The BBC Philharmonic performed the *Second Symphony* in July 1988 at the Istanbul Festival in Turkey, under Albert Rosen, and again in October 1988 in Stuttgart under Edward Downes. The BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra performed *The Music Makers* in October 1988 in Toronto, with chorus under the direction of Elmer Iseler. All these performances were subsequently broadcast on Radio 3. The Halle tour of Switzerland in February commenced with a concert in Zurich, which included the *Cello Concerto* with soloist Heinrich Schiff.

**Information from Abroad** Generally, although there is plenty of evidence that Elgar's music is continuing to receive frequent performances abroad, there has been a falling off in the volume of information sent in to the Society about such performances, perhaps because they are being taken for granted. Reports of Elgar performances, even if brief, are of great value to the International Sub-Committee, as they provide the main source of information about what is being performed, the artists and orchestras who are promoting Elgar and the nature of the public's response. It would assist greatly, if brief reports, with press-cuttings if possible, could be sent in to the Secretary of the International Sub-Committee, Margaret Benselin, 5 Oakdene Road, Brockham, Betchworth, Surrey, RH3 7JX.

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## REPORT OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

### Worcester June 1989

The Chairman, Christopher Robinson, welcomed 38 members to the meeting, and 24 members sent apologies for absence. The chairman read a letter from the President, Sir Yehudi Menuhin, sending his greetings. In his address Mr. Robinson paid tribute to A. T. ("Bertie") Shaw and founder members of the Society, but said there was much to do in the recruitment of new members, especially among the younger generation. He said that we must do all we can to bring Elgar to the fore, to make sure that neglected works are not left on one side by concert promoters, and to encourage the performance of his works abroad.

The Secretary reported that a steering committee had been set up to ascertain potential support for a South of England Branch. She reported on the Tenth Anniversary celebrations of the Yorkshire Branch, and the unveiling of a plaque on Dr. Buck's house in Settle. She also reported on the event organised by North West when Elgar material kept in the archives of the Royal Northern College of Music was on display and members heard a performance of the *Violin Sonata* by two students of the College. The Secretary concluded by expressing the General Committee's pleasure in working with the new Chairman.

The Treasurer reported on the continuing debt to EMI over the *King Olaf* recording. Royalties were to be calculated on the retail, and not wholesale, price, and a back payment of some £750 expected. The response to his appeal for subscriptions to be covenanted has been poor, but an increase in subscriptions was not thought necessary for this year.

The Editor of the Journal reported on a good year, with changes in the physical appearance of the Journal, some interesting reprints of early material, coverage of as many recordings and books as we could manage, and said that the September issue would include several items to mark the centenary of Sir Adrian Boult's birth. He also drew attention to the fact that the Journal now accepted advertising, and hoped that as this became more widely known organisations and individuals would make use of the Journal's pages, and that this would assist production costs.

The Membership Secretary reported a satisfactory year, the number of resignations being easily balanced by new members joining.

The Chairman of the International Sub-Committee reported on generally encouraging news, but hoped for more information from some countries, especially U.S.A., West Germany and Holland. He reported on the gift of the records of *King Olaf* to H.M. King Olav of Norway, and the King's interest. The Chairman then gave details of some overseas performances of Elgar's music, and stated that the proposed Elgar International Medal was in abeyance until such time as adequate funds were available.

#### *Election of Officers*

The President, Vice-Presidents, Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Editor, and Membership Secretary were proposed, seconded and elected unanimously. Four remaining members of the Committee were re-elected en bloc. Voting took place for the two new members of the committee. Raymond Monk and Simon Holt were duly elected.

The meeting approved the proposed design for the Society tie and badge, and production will be put in hand at once. Orders for tie or badge should be addressed to the Secretary. Prices: Ties £5. Badge £3.

In closing the Chairman asked that future items for discussion under Any Other Business should be submitted to the Secretary in advance of the meeting.



On the occasion of the A.T. Shaw Lecture, June 4, Mrs. Lydia Shaw, (then 91, but reaching 92 on June 17), Mrs. Young and Dr. Percy Young. *Photo: Ian Parrott*

A number of members enjoyed a Birthday Celebration Concert given by the Donald Hunt Singers in the Chapter House, Worcester, on the Saturday evening. On Sunday, by kind permission of the Reverend and Mrs. Michael Vockins, coffee was served at Birchwood. Later, members heard a fascinating and scholarly talk, the latest A. T. Shaw Memorial Lecture, by Dr. Percy Young, "Newman, Elgar and The Dream of Gerontius". This was held at the Huntingdon Hall, followed by lunch. At 4 p.m. Evensong at the Cathedral, and the customary laying of the wreath at the Elgar Window. Finally, the weekend concluded with sherry and birthday cake at the Birthplace.



On the occasion of the A.T. Shaw Lecture, June 4, Mrs. Lydia Shaw, (then 91, but reaching 92 on June 17), Mrs. Young and Dr. Percy.

*Photo: Ian Parrott*

## ELGAR PLAQUE UNVEILED

A perfect Dales day, bright sunshine and a invigorating wind, provided the ideal background for an important event in the life of the Elgar Society. As a result of a co-operative venture between London and Yorkshire Branches a plaque, commemorating Elgar's friendship with Dr. Buck was unveiled on the latter's house and surgery, now the National Westminster Bank premises in the Market Place, Settle, Yorkshire, on 13th May. Some 200 people, members, participants, invitees



The Settle Plaque (Photograph by K. D Mitchell)

and passers-by, were present at the open-air ceremony. They heard Keith McGavin, Regional Executive Director of National Westminster, welcome us and introduce Maxwell Hutchinson, London Branch chairman, as Master of Ceremonies. On less exalted occasions Mr. Hutchinson is President of the Royal Institute of British Architects and he performed his role with practised aplomb. He introduced Jane Bushaway and James Northern, pupils of Giggleswick School, who, with aplomb no whit less than his, read extracts from the Elgar-Buck letters; the Settle Orchestra, conductor Arthur Butterworth, who played three appropriate works - gallantly against the wind; Jack Bras-sington, Vice - Chairman North Craven Heritage, who unveiled the plaque with brevity and efficiency, and Claire Brooks, Chairman Craven District Council and BBC personality, who gently twitted him on environmen-

tal issues and brought the formal proceedings to a satisfying and perfectly-timed close.

In true Yorkshire fashion the platform party and guests then disappeared into the Royal Oak for a gargantuan buffet, kindly provided by the Bank. During the buffet the organising working party (Carl Newton, John Kelly, David Bury, of London Branch, and Dennis Clark of Yorkshire Branch) were thanked for their efforts. In equally characteristic fashion, after physical refreshment intellectual stimulation followed, in the form of an excellent presentation by Dennis Clark on Elgar and the Dales. The whole event was fully videoed, filmed, recorded, and press-reported and in consequence much interest in the Society has been aroused in the area.

As a member of the working party I know how much effort, agonising decision-making and heated discussion (with four Northerners involved discussion was bound to be heated) went into making all this possible. Yet as I left Settle I had a strong feeling that it had all been eminently worthwhile. The Dales landscape glowed in the sun, white clouds soaring over the fells, the brown moors flecked with green and brilliant with yellow gorse. It must have been on just such a day that Edward and Charles set out together for the top of Pen-y-ghent. Now their friendship, and Elgar's affection for the fells, are visibly marked in a form which is likely to last as long as it will be relevant in these timeless places.

**Carl Newton**



# SIR ADRIAN

## An affectionate personal remembrance

by

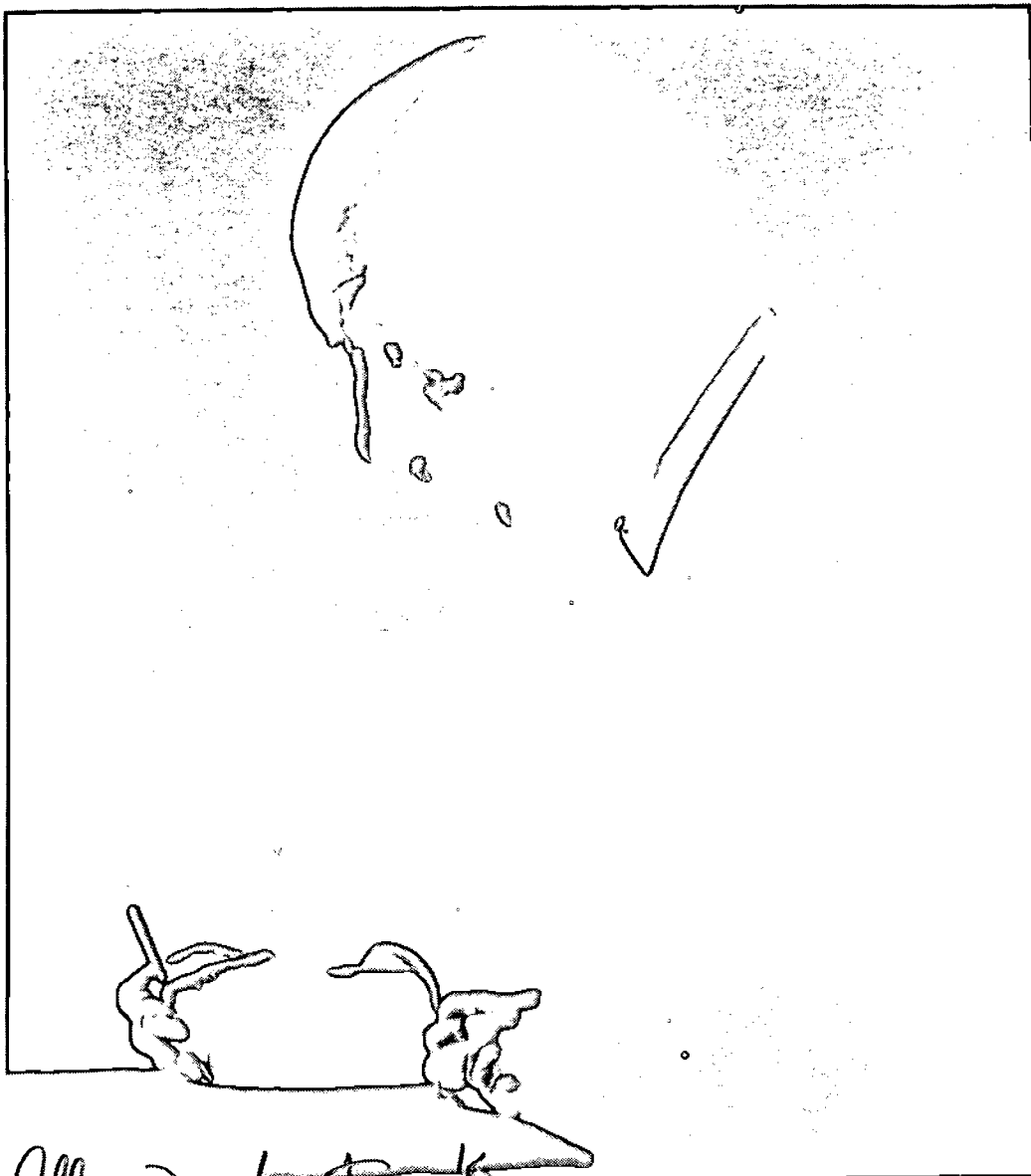
**Bernard Hall-Mancey**

In the sixth form at school it was clear to me that music was to be my life. I became fascinated with conducting, and particularly the Boult 'school' – economy of technique and minimum necessary gestures, sense of musical architecture, eschewal of showmanship and, above all, faithfulness to the composer and to the score, without any kind of personal intervention or distraction on the part of the conductor. It seemed to me that so many other conductors rarely came into this category. My opinion was not, however, a popular one. At a time when more glittering and sparkling maestros held the popular forefront and limelight for my contemporaries, Boult did not rate among the front rank of conductors. I regarded Boult in those days as the finest exponent of the music of Elgar and Vaughan Williams. These composers were then much out of fashion and it seemed that with them Boult's art too was suffering the same fate.

Imagine my delight therefore when, as a second year student at the R.C.M. in the 1960s, Sir Keith Falkner, the College's Director, announced that Boult was to rejoin the staff to take charge of the First Orchestra and Conducting Class. I found myself as a member of the chorus singing under his direction in Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* – the work he chose for his first concert upon his return. I was fascinated! It was not long before I was asking him for conducting lessons, and thereby embarking upon a long relationship which continued right until his death.

"What's **that**?! Grrr...! A terrible 'Grecian Urn'! Remember Richard Strauss, and keep that left hand in the waistcoat pocket!" So barked Sir Adrian as he watched me conduct for the first time. As a petrified 'new boy' I'd temporarily forgotten one of his cardinal rules that the left hand should be used sparingly. His eagle-eye never missed a trick. On another occasion a fellow student was taking very great, and lengthy, pains to explain to the players the ins and outs of a particular section of a piece. Suddenly in the midst of it all the tall upright figure, presiding over the scene from the raised choir seats behind the orchestra, roared in a voice that could be heard down Prince Consort Road: "Oh, for **Heaven's Sake!! Do get a MOVE ON..!!**" (The student orchestra were all highly amused.) Another cardinal sin had been committed: ..the bug-bear of the orchestral player is the conductor who talks too much...let the stick do the talking...keep the players busy and alert and don't bore them... A conductor of very few words in rehearsal, he always practised what he preached, as I and many others were to witness.

Herbert Howells was one day listening to Boult taking the College orchestra through one of his own pieces. Being an over-anxious composer he interrupted frequently from the body of the hall: "Adrian, do you think that at letter C you could...?"... "That's a trifle fast just there..."... "can the semi-quavers be a little clearer..." etc., etc. We could sense the maestro becoming gradually more and more ruffled. Suddenly, after the umpteenth interjection, the moustache quivered: "Well, **we're** all ENJOYING it even if YOU'RE not!!" (Much *col legno*-type sound effects from the string section.)



All good wishes to a keen lover of music  
from another - *Adrian C. Boulton 1975*

A fine studio portrait of Sir Adrian Boult.

Photograph kindly lent by Raymond Monk.

Other distinguished conductors were occasionally invited "to give the players a change." Rudolf Schwarz was directing and Sir Adrian was again seated behind the orchestra in the terrace choir seats. Rehearsal time was running out. Schwarz wanted to do more with a movement of the Mahler symphony:

"We must stop I think . . . zee clock . . . zee minutes have gone . . ."

"No! No! You're all right! . . . Carry on!"

"But . . . What about zee Musicians' Union? . . ."

"Oh, no, no! We don't worry about the Musicians' Union at the Royal College of Music!"

The Students' Association were putting on their own choral and orchestral concert in aid of the New Building Appeal. A blanket invitation was issued to Collegians – both staff and students – to join the special chorus. As we arrived for rehearsal many distinguished professors were taking their places behind the orchestra, Sir Adrian amongst the basses. One of my professors told me after the concert that he thought he had coped rather better than Sir Adrian who only seemed to manage to sing one note in every four!

For this same Appeal, Leopold Stokowski had been invited back by his old College to direct a performance of Holst's *The Planets*, at a Gala Concert in the Albert Hall. Right up there in the dimly-lit 'gods', the girl students of the wordless female chorus were peering down intently during rehearsal: "Can't remember what this one's called" whispered one girl to her neighbour. From behind, a deep voice sotto voce, hissed: "Saturn, dear girl, Saturn!" She nearly fell out of the gallery in amazement to find that Sir Adrian had crept up to observe proceedings!

Regular passes used to come for many rehearsals, especially the Proms. These were always interesting and illuminating occasions. In later years he would direct only part of a concert, sharing programmes with a junior colleague. On one such occasion I was quite amazed to find the back-chat going on amongst the players, whilst a now well-established English conductor was taking the BBC Symphony Orchestra. "If that's the way you really want it, I suppose that's the way we'll have to play it!" said one well-known orchestral player, amidst orchestral grins and laughter. The players assembled after the break and Sir Adrian slowly emerged supported by his two walking-sticks, and sat down on the high conductors' stool. "Good morning gentlemen. Brahms Fourth please . . . the fourth movement . . . Letter G . . ." and from that moment onwards there was complete and utter concentration. "Really gentlemen? Do you **mean** that?! I have only one 'f' in **my** score! You were all distinctly playing double-forte!! What, pray, are you going to do when we reach the 'ff' at letter P . . . ?" (Much laughter). The rehearsal ended with applause from the players. He had finished 10 minutes before time . . .

At a Prom concert Sir Adrian had partnered Yehudi Menuhin in a Bartok concerto before the interval. To start the second half, and before the Vaughan Williams *Fourth Symphony*, Menuhin came on to an empty platform to delight the audience with some unaccompanied Bach, which had been fully advertised in the programme. Our eyes caught sight of Sir Adrian at the back of the platform squatting on the floor amongst all the percussion instruments, simply listening along with the rest of us. For him there was never any "standing on ceremony" or formality . . . the music itself was the thing that mattered. He stayed to listen whilst all his orchestral players were presumably still propping up the bar.

Many of us regard his account and interpretation of the Schubert "Great" C major Symphony as perhaps one of the finest of that work there has ever been, and similarly his readings of the Brahms Symphonies. The great sense of musical architecture and pacing that he possessed, produced deeply satisfying accounts of these works hardly rivalled by more streamlined maestros on the world's musical stage. That superb sense of structure pervaded his performances of Vaughan Williams, and Elgar too, and yet the emotional grasp was there in abundance as well. Since his day, as we all know, there have been many more interpreters of Elgar on the scene, but great and marvellous as many of them are, I still admit to returning to the Boult recordings, and finding them perhaps the most deeply satisfying and convincing of all. He was a "musician's conductor."

long day's teaching followed by an evening rehearsal at school, in order to prepare myself for a train journey from Birmingham to London for another 'talk' with Sir Adrian. Snow had started to fall, and I was rather apprehensive, hoping that the journey would be trouble-free. Certainly I didn't want to cancel the appointment or put the great man out in any way. I'd barely been indoors half-an-hour when the 'phone rang: "Hello there, Boult here . . . I say, it's foul weather this end . . . Can't have you trekking all that way in these conditions. How 'bout next Wednesday instead . . . ? Any good to you?" Consideration itself and ever courteous.

I remember a most fascinating time going through the Brahms *Requiem*, and still treasure to this day a sheet of paper on which he scribbled down for me the authentic and original metronome markings, as they had existed in the Peters' Edition of the vocal score – no longer available. (No metronome markings at all appear in modern editions of the vocal or orchestral score to my knowledge). When I went to discuss Kodaly's *Psalmus Hungaricus* I quite expected that he might not know much about this particular piece, but I was to be proved quite wrong! As I walked in, there on his desk was an old, heavily-marked, miniature score dating from the old BBC days!

I recall with particular gratitude being able to go through some Elgar scores – *The Music Makers*, *The Kingdom*, and the *Serenade for Strings*. Likewise several scores by Holst, Vaughan Williams, Parry and John Ireland were discussed. After one of the performances I gave of *The Music Makers*, as was the custom I sent him a copy of the newspaper review, and a postcard came back by return, saying simply: "Bravo! What a splendid notice – all congratulations. Adrian C. Boult". It was when discussing Holst's *Hymn of Jesus* that I happened casually to ask him if he was likely to be making a new recording of the work. (At that time his old Decca recording was the only available version in the catalogue.) "Oh no", came the slow reply, "I've now put of the shutters . . . for good . . .". It was the first I knew of his "retirement" and it suddenly hit me with sadness that his career was now over.

Many of us regard his account and interpretation of the Schubert "Great" C major Symphony as perhaps one of the finest of that work there has ever been, and similarly his readings of the Brahms Symphonies. The great sense of musical architecture and pacing that he possessed, produced deeply satisfying accounts of these works hardly rivalled by more streamlined maestros on the world's musical stage. That superb sense of structure pervaded his performances of Vaughan Williams, and Elgar too, and yet the emotional grasp was there in abundance as well. Since his day, as we all know, there have been many more interpreters of Elgar on the scene, but great and marvellous as many of them are, I still admit to returning to the Boult recordings, and finding them perhaps the most deeply satisfying and convincing of all. He was a "musician's conductor."

# ' PRISONERS OF HOPE '

## Sir Adrian Boult's recording of 'The Apostles'

by

Geoffrey Hodgkins

My wider interest in Elgar really began in 1969 when the recording of 'The Kingdom' appeared. Up to that time my knowledge of the composer was limited to a handful of works, but 'The Kingdom' had a profound effect on me. In the first place its subject matter had a considerable appeal to me, as a committed Christian; and when I acquired a copy of the record set I was staggered by the music's beauty and the freshness of the inspiration. About the same time I joined the London Philharmonic Choir as a tenor. The choir was re-forming under John Alldis, who had taken over as choirmaster on the retirement of Frederic Jackson.

I now looked forward to hearing 'The Apostles', but had to wait until 1972 when Vernon Handley performed it at Guildford; and then a few months later Sir Charles Groves conducted it in Liverpool Cathedral, a performance which was broadcast. Wulstan Atkins' pre-programme talk lamented the lack of a recording. "In what country other than England could such a situation exist?" he asked. "Surely this is a disgrace which it is up to Elgar lovers to rectify by creating the necessary demand". Apparently sales of the records of 'The Kingdom' had been disappointing, but persuasive Elgarians at EMI (especially the late Douglas Pudney) persevered, and early in 1973 it was announced that Sir Adrian Boult would record 'The Apostles' later that year.

Choral rehearsals began at the beginning of September, after the summer break: the first session had been booked for the end of October. 'The Apostles' was new to the vast majority of the choir, and disappointment was expressed at the lack of a live performance at the Festival Hall. (Sir Adrian had ceased to conduct choral concerts by this time, and the London Philharmonic Orchestra considered that a performance under anyone else would be bad box-office. The orchestra's manager, Eric Bravington, came under strong criticism from some choir members because of this decision). One major problem for the singers was the fact that much of the choral writing consists of short, episodic phrases, and there are few opportunities for a choir to have a really good 'sing'. The recording schedule comprised seven sessions over ten weeks, ending on 31 December, and paid no attention to the chronology of the work, presumably to accommodate the availability of the principals. Thus the first session began with the storm scene (figs. 94-111), and the beginning of Part II. Choir rehearsals obviously were determined by the recording schedule, and this did not help the singers at all. By the time of the first session on 23 October large parts of the work had not even been looked at.

I approached the first session therefore with a number of misgivings. Some of the choir were new to recording, or to Sir Adrian, or both. There was more than a hint of anxiety about the occasion, as if people were aware of the significance of the first recording of such a work. Sir Adrian in particular seemed edgy, as he made his way to the rostrum. Fortunately EMI had obtained the services of Vernon Handley to undertake the preparation of the choir, leaving Sir Adrian to conserve his energy for the 'takes'. Handley soon established a wonderful rapport with the choir (and orchestra too, incidentally), and his part in the ultimate success of the project must never be overlooked.

A typical session would begin with Handley rehearsing the particular part to be recorded, and Sir Adrian would listen in the control room before coming to the rostrum. He would then deal briefly with any remaining problems before recording.

I took a small portable tape-recorder to several of the sessions and so what follows is an accurate account of what happened and what was actually spoken. It was not always possible to make sense out of the recorded conversations due to extraneous noises and other factors.

The first choral entry for tenors and basses – “It is a spirit!” – was ragged and hardly an auspicious start. Worse was to come. At the beginning of Part II the chorus, *pianissimo*, accompany the tenor recitative in a slow 4/4 (fig. 146). By this time many of the singers had lost confidence and found it almost impossible to follow Sir Adrian’s slow beat. The initial effort was a shambles, and the situation was only saved by John Alldis standing sideways on in front of the choir, and ‘interpreting’ Boult’s tempo. In the next section, where the disciples promise to stand by Jesus, Sir Adrian complained about the choir’s diction: vowels were especially unclear. Then at fig. 148 the entry of the tenors and basses is delayed until after the chord is played. It is always a difficult matter to reach an acceptable standard of ensemble there, and this occasion was no exception. Somehow we struggled through to the end of the Arrest (just after fig. 159).

The following Monday’s session was to go from fig. 111 to the end of Part I. Sir Adrian began by addressing the choir. “We didn’t have much of a sing last week”, he said, “so I was thinking it over, and if we let Mr. Alldis go on with those gymnastic exercises that he so industriously and very helpfully took last week, he’ll be dead before the fifth session”. The choir laughed, and relaxed a little. “So I want to try and see just what happens when you look here”, he continued, pointing to the end of his baton, “instead of having him nice and close”. (More laughter). “I have some experience of singing in the back row of the basses and you *can* see that if you take your mind to it”.

Sir Adrian then turned to the passage, ‘In Caesarea Philippi’ and took the choir through the great chorus ‘Proclaim unto them . . .’ He stressed the importance of the attack on the first word, and made the singers begin two or three times until he was satisfied. “That’s more like it!” he said at last. “Now perhaps we can have a much stronger *diminuendo*, a much bigger *diminuendo*, and we’ll have what feels like *pianissimo* on the word ‘them’.” Sir Adrian then asked the orchestra to pay through the accompaniment for the benefit of the choir. “Just one thing I want to say, orchestra. Can we, for this one occasion really first time play quietly for a change? Can we start with *pianissimo* not *piano* and can we keep that, without a *crescendo*, much later than is marked? And when we get to forte and four bars before 117, can we play only *mezzo-forte*; and when we get one-and-a-half before 117 (which is rather misleadingly marked with three f’s), can we keep that considerably less? A good shock, of course, but considerably less of a shock than what we have at 117, which is about the highest thing we get in the whole oratorio. And we play that whole bar, 117, and then we start our *diminuendo*, very, very long *diminuendo*. Now”, he said, turning to the choir, “that’s what the orchestra are going to do, and you will listen to it after you’ve sung this second or third bar”.

The choir were impressed by the conductor’s consideration, and the atmosphere warmed noticeably. Sir Adrian now dealt with one or two points concerning the soloists.

“Was that all right, Mr Carol Case, at 113?”

“Sorry?”

“Your ‘Blessed art thou?’”

“I wasn’t quite sure really. I wasn’t quite sure”.

“Well, I was waiting for you”.

“Oh, I’m sorry, I was waiting for you”.

“Well, never wait for me. You must be old enough to know *that!*”

Sheila Armstrong then asked about the pause on her first note at fig. 120. "I think you can just go on when you like", replied Sir Adrian, "and Mr. Friend will come in and follow you".

The next choral section, at figure 123, was for sopranos and altos only. They sing the words of Simon the Pharisee, 'This man, if he were a prophet'. "You sound like awfully nice members of a choral society", commented Sir Adrian. "Can you sound like very unpleasant-minded ladies?"

What really came as a shock was the tempo for the final chorus of Part I, 'Turn you to the stronghold'. It is marked *allegretto tranquillo* ♩ = 88, and was an afterthought: Elgar had originally intended to end quietly with Jesus' words 'Go in peace'. This chorus is by no means admired by all Elgarians – Diana McVeagh found it "pedestrian", Dr. Young "utilitarian". The slower speed, barely two-thirds of the metronome marking, chosen by Sir Adrian puzzled many of the choir, myself included. It was only later when the recording appeared, and 'Turn you' could be heard in its context, that the rightness of Sir Adrian's choice of tempo became apparent. Section III is the largest and emotionally most complex part of 'The Apostles', containing as it does the conversion of Mary Magdalene (including a fantasy based on her past life), the storm at sea, Peter's confession, and the anointing of Jesus by Mary. The scene switches from the Sea of Galilee to the Tower of Magdala, to Caesarea Philippi and Capernaum. After all this turmoil 'Turn you', at a slower pace, acts as a soothing benediction, bringing to the listener's attention the goodness and mercy of God, and the forgiveness and complete restoration of the repentant sinner. I expect some purists may disagree, but I believe that Sir Adrian's musical instinct had served him right.

When the red light came on, there was a much greater commitment to the enterprise, and the 'take' was a great success. The whole session had done much to restore the recording on to an even keel.

The third session on 30 October, the following day, included a much higher proportion of choral music – the great chorus 'The Lord hath chosen them' from Section I; and then the whole of Section II, 'By the Wayside'. When Sir Adrian arrived at the rostrum he first addressed the tenor soloist.

"Mr. Tear you sang 'And when it was *day* as if it was the most important thing in the world. Why?"

"I thought it was a summer's day", he replied.

"Yes, it is", agreed Sir Adrian, but proceeded to remind the soloist (very tactfully) that there was less need on a recording to project the voice as powerfully as in the concert hall. "There are a great many things that are marked here *piano* sung *fortissimo*", he concluded.

One of Sir Adrian's chief concerns in this section was to ensure that the orchestra did not call attention to itself unnecessarily, or overwhelm the voices. Elgar's rich scoring so delighted the players that some of them were more than a little exuberant in their playing. Sir Adrian called for more *legato* at fig. 46, and more attention to the slight changes of dynamics at that point. "Now, careful brass once or twice where it's marked *staccato* – the fourth bar of 49 and similar places like that. Oh, yes, the *staccato* bar two before 55: woodwind and strings, that seemed to be much too jumpy and jerky. Make it a long *staccato* – not cut short". He called for less orchestra at the restatement of the opening at fig. 49.

A 'take' was cut short as Sir Adrian was obviously unhappy with some of the singing. The opening phrase (fig. 39) was still unsatisfactory and he asked the choir to sing their entry unaccompanied. He stopped them almost immediately.

"Not interesting", he said. "'Chosun them': can we have 'chosen them', please?"

The choir now put too great an emphasis on the first syllable.

"I didn't say MURsen them: I said 'chosen them'"

"Do you – when you're talking to your baby – say 'you have choSEN THEM'? Come on!!"  
Finally he got the expression he wanted.

The choir began again, and this time strayed too far in the other direction. Sir Adrian began to be visibly irritated.

"Now isn't that the way you talk at home?"

Sir Adrian then asked the trumpets to come off earlier at fig. 40 so as not to mask the soprano entry on the words 'He hath chosen the weak'. The choir was rebuked for being too loud on their *pianissimo* entry at the words 'The meek will He guide' (four bars after 42). And the three solo apostles were asked for less *staccato* two bars before fig. 55. "We should have everything smooth in that passage before Jesus comes in", said Sir Adrian. There followed a final run-through to correct these points. Sir Adrian stopped conducting shortly after fig. 55. "That is magnificent", he said "except where the altos and tenors have 'men shall call': that's suddenly gone louder and wrecked the whole thing".

A successful 'take' then followed, but it was now well into the second part of the session, and all of 'By the Wayside' was yet to be done. The choir were getting tired and the choral singing, consisting of little interjectory comments of three or four bars, needs a high degree of care and concentration if it is to sound totally effective. Sir Adrian now excelled in providing just the right amount of encouragement. "This is not the greatest work that Elgar ever wrote", he said, "but it's got some very beautiful things like this particular Beatitude, especially very lovely".

At the fourth session on the following Monday, 5 November, the schedule comprised Mary Magdalene's Fantasy (figs. 85–96); and from the death of Judas to Jesus' final aria (figs. 189–215). This session was attended for the first time by the ladies' semi-chorus – the girls of Downe House School. They sat in the balcony, beyond the basses, and to the extreme right of the conductor. Sir Adrian rehearsed them first of all in their opening 'Alleluia' three bars after fig. 201. Their entry was a little tentative, and Sir Adrian stopped them.

"Yes: now, can we react a little quicker, but just as *pianissimo*?"

A little more assured, but then the sound petered out.

"Oh, why stop? Come on!"

Someone now pointed out that Sir Adrian, thinking that the lowest choral line had a bass clef, had given the second altos not Eb, but F#. The lack of confidence was then attributable to having to sing a tone and a half too high! From now on the girls sang with much more assurance, but ignored the dynamics on the second 'alleluia'.

"That's very good", said Sir Adrian, "the second 'lu', *diminuendo* a little more".

A problem passage was found after fig. 207 where the full ladies' chorus join the semi-chorus in the second of the three 'alleluias'. The full chorus was too intrusive at this point, and the timing of the pause at the end of the fourth bar was uncertain. The men were not exempt from criticism either. Sir Adrian pulled up the tenors and basses at 'We trusted that it had been He' at fig. 208. "A little more attention to consonants", he said. "You've got to sound terribly disappointed".



John Carol Case's singing of the final aria (figs. 209–215) was inspirational, and brought forth a spontaneous burst of applause from the chorus.

Sir Adrian finally practised the beginning of 'Golgotha' where the chorus sing 'Truly this was the Son of God'. "Oh, if only that 'God' could have been a little quieter", he said. John Alldis caused some amusement when he whispered to the choir, "You must sing 'God', not 'Gawd'".

The 'takes' of this and the Fantasy were successfully completed, and there was a much more positive attitude among the singers than after the first session two weeks earlier. Now followed a break of six weeks before the next session, and in the interim political events took a hand in the drama. The miners' strike caused the government to bring in a three-day working week to conserve energy supplies. Thus at the beginning of the fifth session on 20 December it was announced that the sixth session (two days later) would have to be cancelled, and an extra session had been arranged for 2 January. But this complicated matters, as Clifford Grant was flying home to Australia for Christmas and was unavailable for the later date. This meant that the great Judas music in Section IV had to be brought forward to the current session, and the scheduled music deferred to a later date.

The chorus responded well to the drama of this part of the work and the session went well. The uncertainty caused by the re-arranged schedule possibly gave an edge to the singers' approach, and the splendid music was attacked with gusto. Not everyone was enthusiastic about the singing of Clifford Grant, but there was no doubt that his 'cavernous voice' (to use Jerrold Moore's expression) was ideally suited for the part.

The session ended by recording the Prologue. It was hard to adjust to the more reflective and mysterious music of the opening pages of the work after the emotion and high drama of what had gone before, but we managed it.

The most substantial part of 'The Apostles' yet to be recorded was the great choral finale, and this was tackled on New Year's Eve. The holiday period meant a few absentees from the choir, and some

professionals had been brought in to stiffen the altos and tenors. As in the chorus 'Proclaim unto them . . .' Sir Adrian was very concerned about balance in the *tutti*s, and first of all addressed the singers. "We are not, I'm sorry to say, issuing photographs of the chorus." He paused in order to make his point. "You know what's coming. Therefore it doesn't matter how ugly you look, and how much you mouth your consonants, provided we *hear* the meaning of the words". Sir Adrian rehearsed the girls of the semi-chorus in the 'mystic chorus' passage after fig. 223. He realised that the singers would tend to come away on the second word in 'I have done Thy commandment', whereas Elgar asks for a *crescendo* through the weak beat on to the third word. Sir Adrian made the girls whisper the words, paying particular attention to the word 'have'. The main chorus was much amused by the slightly eerie effect of this choral whispering. "Don't forget – hold that 'have!'" ordered the conductor, and then, when they did so, "Good!"

Sir Adrian then took the orchestra from fig. 232 through the build-up to the great climax. He drew the players' attention to the accent one-and-a-half bars before 234. "At 234 we mustn't be too much", he said. "And at one-and-a-half *after* 234 it is the loudest thing that you can do". When the orchestra played that passage, there was a lack of ensemble at the *largamente* before the "loudest thing". It was most noticeable in the brass. "No!" shouted Sir Adrian. "You left a bad gap, didn't you, while we were all getting ready for the POM".

There was a tremendous atmosphere as the 'take' began. Everyone gave their all, and the noise at the climax was deafening. Then as it subsided, the peace of those blissful 'Alleluias' descended, and the four soloists, unison, gave the final blessing: 'In His love and pity He redeemed them'.

Had the schedule gone according to plan, that should have brought the recording to a close. As it was, there were several short passages to tidy up: the beginning of Section VI 'At the Sepulchre' as far as the semi-chorus's 'Alleluias': and from Peter's denial to the beginning of the psalm in the temple (figs. 159-168). The middle portion (164-166) for ladies' double chorus was put back to the Wednesday as it did not involve the contralto soloist, Helen Watts. Strangest of all, the chorus had to repeat figs. 170-173, the passage where Judas returns the thirty pieces of silver. Clifford Grant was no longer available, and we had the unusual experience of Sir Adrian saying the words of Judas to lead the men's chorus into the *fortissimo* outburst "Selah!"

There was a distinct sense of anti-climax on the Wednesday, which began with the Morning Psalm and the orchestral description of the sunrise (figs. 25-36). There were few problems: Sir Adrian spent some time getting the tempo exactly right in the *molto allargando* bar one before 30. At the interval all that remained to do was the ladies' chorus, postponed from Monday, and so the men were allowed to go. Christopher Bishop, the recording producer, now came to the rostrum and made a short speech. "We have come to the end of sessions which have been going on since 23 October last year", he said. "Many members of the chorus have got married in the meantime". We all laughed, but that was true—a bass had married an alto just before Christmas. "I would like to thank you all very much: we are most grateful to the chorus who have had a tremendous amount of hard work to do, and above all to Sir Adrian who guided us all through it".

The applause for the 84-year-old conductor was loud and long, and thoroughly deserved. It had not been an easy project from the outset, and there had been further problems along the way. Yet the results were tremendous, and the recording appeared towards the end of 1974 to great critical acclaim. Who better to sum up Sir Adrian's achievement than Jerrold Northrop Moore writing in 'The Gramophone':

"He has somehow welded these eight sessions into the performance of a lifetime – of ours certainly, but also I suspect of his own. I have no words to express my admiration for his achievement, which has included the virtual re-learning of an immense score which he previously conducted only a few times and years ago. He was aided by the adroit prior rehearsing of Vernon Handley, but the shaping of the performance remains that of Sir Adrian himself. What emerges is a single concentrated curve of expression moving steadily forward in its pattern from first note to last."

But we in the chorus could not know this as the sessions ended. We were truly "prisoners of hope". At the end of the penultimate session on 31 December, as the choir filed out and the orchestral players packed up their instruments, Gareth Lewis and I made our way to the rostrum, where Sir Adrian was still sitting. He signed our copies of the vocal score, and I mumbled something about being privileged to have taken part in such a monumental venture. Picking up my past tense, Sir Adrian exclaimed, "But we've not finished yet! I'd better sign this for January 2nd". The title-page of my score now contains the message: "Jany 2nd when we HOPE... Adrian C. Boult. All good wishes". Several months later that hope had come to a glorious realization, one part of Sir Adrian's priceless legacy to us.



# SIR EDWARD ELGAR'S NEW PART SONGS

with some remarks on his vocal writing in general

by

A. J. JAEGER

[Editor's note: In the *Musical Times* for July 1908 an article appeared under the heading "Elgar's New Choral Works", signed with the initials A.J.J. This was a much cut, and edited, version and Jaeger's anger at his treatment by the editor of the *Musical Times* is covered by Dr. Jerrold Northrop Moore in his recent book on Elgar and his Publishers. Jaeger had sent his full manuscript to the Elgars, and Alice Elgar replied on 12 June 1908: "... how immensely I appreciate your beautiful & valuable article on Edward's pt. Songs. You have shown such true insight into their depth of meaning... Everything that you have said is so absolutely true & it is a record of the capability and mind of the Composer - any curtailing would be a very great disappointment."

Alas, the article was severely curtailed by the editor, F. G. Edwards, but the Elgars were able to retain a copy of the original which had been made for them by May Grafton. That copy now resides in the Birthplace, but through the kindness of Raymond Monk we have a transcript, and we are now able to reprint the whole of the original. As far as we are aware this complete version has never been printed before, but we believe that it represents an important assessment of parts of Elgar's output by one of those closest to the composer as a creative artist. We have mostly retained the punctuation and layout just as Jaeger wrote it, or perhaps we should say, as it was copied from the original manuscript.]

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Since the *Dream of Gerontius* started on its triumphant career, any new work of Sir E. E. has been eagerly awaited and widely discussed. The production of 'The Kingdom' 2 years ago made his admirers keener than ever as to what the future might bring forth, and some disappointment has been felt because no work of magnitude & first rate importance has lately come from his pen. However since his admirers have not got what they desire, they will in the meantime rest content with that which he does vouchsafe them. They will not at any rate be disappointed with some new Part Songs just published for they are Elgar at his very best. He has done nothing of a similar kind equal to them in beauty of idea, individuality of expression & workmanship, swiftness & certainty of touch, in masterly knowledge of effect. Those who have the good fortune to hear perfect performances of these pieces will come under the influence of a magician's spell: they will be enthralled or stirred by a power inexplicable except by the hypothesis that they are in the presence of a genius. The part songs are not easy, especially as regards interpretation. To find the correct "reading", one that will leave nothing to the listeners' imagination to supplement, nor for the composer to exact, will be no everyday task. But we feel assured that no conductor or chorus having once tasted of the magic potion prepared for them by the Wizard of the West but will wish to drain the proffered cup. They will not hesitate to work, & work hard at them but be filled with an ardent ambition to do complete justice to compositions so original & beautiful so strangely haunting and deeply affecting.

At the first glance the pieces seem to provoke criticism. 'Part Songs?' we ask of our fault finding faculty "they have few of the characteristics of the typical part song about them." To be sure, the conventions of part writing as taught by the schools are here thrown over, as they were in the first important Part Song the composer wrote. We mean the fascinating "My love dwelt in a Northern Land". Elgar has long been a law unto himself & followed the advice given by Hans Sachs to Walther when the young knight is about to sing his *Dream Song*: "Make your own rule and follow it." Our composer's choral writing has been much discussed & criticised & the charge of not knowing how to write for the voice is even now levelled at him by those who do not, & others who should, know better. Elgar is a consummate master of effect, but not only of orchestral effect. As a writer for instruments he is unsurpassed in the pellucid clearness of his scoring & absolute certainty with which he calculates effects of the rarest delicacy or the utmost force & sonority. Is he less sure of himself and of his effects when he is writing for the voice? Surely not. The printed page may occasionally look as if this or that passage would not "come off" to use the handy

colloquialism and we have heard performances which by no means realized his intentions. But in such cases the conductor has either not carried out directions given with exceptional minuteness by the composer, or he has hopelessly failed to unlock the secret of how to read and interpret the music so as to produce the exact effect gauged – & correctly gauged by him. Who that recalls perfect performances of Elgar's oratorios can honestly aver that the Choral writing suggested ignorance of the possibilities of Choral effect? Because he is not content with the stereotyped treatment of the voices but wishes to widen the range of their employment: because he is known to have committed the grave crime of writing *ff* against a note belonging to the upper register of a voice: because he rarely "sets" the words as others do, but prefers beauty of phrase to snappy declamation, so as to let the melody come by its own (a matter in which he has a master like Brahms for a companion in wickedness): because of these similar things done in cold blood with perfect knowledge of how they will sound in performance, England's foremost master of musical effects is accused of not knowing what he is about. True to aim at "effect" is not everything but which composer does not try to make his work as "effective" as ever his knowledge can make them? and how many fail utterly in this much valued desideratum who know or think they know, all about "writing for the voice."

Our orchestral players are equal to any difficulty in finesse of execution or "interpretation" that a composer of Elgar's powers can place before them. The majority of our choral singers, though they are improving year by year in technique (largely *as a result* of the new difficulties offered them by Elgar to conquer) have not yet reached a corresponding degree of excellence. Their technique is capable of further development, for the average human singing voice is equal to much higher demands than the choirmaster or choral singer of the old type ever realized. In the same way their intelligence i.e. interpretative powers, can be trained to a point of perfection little dreamt of in the philosophy of past generations, as choir masters of the quality of Dr. Coward & the late Mr. Howson of Morcambe fame have amply demonstrated to astounded & delighted audiences. It is especially in the interpretation of what the Germans call "Stimmings bilder" that our crack choirs have developed so wonderfully. Of these "Stimmings bilder" ('mood picture' is but an unsatisfactory translation) Elgar has already given us sundry beautiful specimens: little masterpieces of delicate outline, refined colouring, deep feeling & pronounced individuality. But he never has been so happily inspired as in the case of the first number of the opus 53 now under review & composed during the past winter in Rome. Surely this is one of the loveliest and most remarkable things that modern art can show: a perfect setting of one of the great poets most perfect utterances. Our readers will recognise the words

'There is sweet music here that softer falls'  
'Than petals from blown roses on the grass.'

as the first stanza of the Choric Song in Tennyson's "Lotus Eaters." The composer seems to have assimilated the poet's ideas and become so fully imbued with the spirit pervading them, that his strains impress us a direct reflex thereof & as a faithful & poetic translation into the language of music. Though laid out for eight voices, there is very little genuine eight-part writing to be found in the piece. The two sections of male and female of the chorus are at first used in antiphonal style the one answering the other as the first six lines of the poem are unfolded. Soon the music becomes more complicated, more "art" full, though the composer's art is so hidden in the spontaneousness of conception, that his means to an end may easily be overlooked while effects both rich and rare follow one another. Of these not the least striking are due to a circumstance which will attract some attention & may at first sight startle the majority of choral singers, viz: two key signatures. A flat for the female, & G for the male voices are used simultaneously throughout the piece. That this odd looking device is adopted for the sake of convenience & not with the set purpose of "doing something out of the way" or throwing extra difficulties in the singer's path, need scarcely be insisted upon. The same may be said of the occasional use of 5/4 & for one long bar only of 10/4 time signatures. Elgar is no faddist but a musician of a most practical turn of mind. The juxtaposi-

tion of the two keys is a fruitful source of delightful surprises. For instance when after the first eight bar phrase sung by tenors and basses in the key of G, the sopranos and altos float in almost imperceptibly upon our senses (*ppp*) legato ed *expressivo* with gently ascending A flat chords to repeat the men's beautiful opening strain in a slightly varied form, while the Tenors and Basses softly sustain a low G in octaves, the effect is one of surpassing loveliness and nothing short of magical. This device is repeated near the end and leads into the final cadence consisting of the two key chords sung to the word "sleep" by the two sections of the chorus alternately. The male voices have the last word, a mere whisper *pppp*, the piece thus ending in the key G major, in which it began. The work short as it is deserves the closest minutest study for it shows the hand of the master everywhere, fashioning a piece of perfect workmanship, exquisite in design & every smaller detail. It is not for analysis, & to dissect & dismember it would be what M. Claude Debussy calls *un crime de lese-mystere*: for it is as finely spun as a spider's web which our rude hands cannot touch without dispelling the wonder & mystery of its being. The composer seems to have borne in mind Tennyson's lines describing how "mild-eyed melancholy Lotus eaters" gave flower or fruit to the mariners & how after tasting thereof, "if his fellows spake His voice was then as voices from the grave". Hence the music is kept subdued throughout (*p. pp.* down to *ppp mf*), being the loudest dynamic sign to be found in it unless we may take a solitary *fpp* to suggest a transient awakening as in a flash of consciousness from the narcotic languor which pervades the piece. That in the general prevalence of "whispered speech" to quote Tennyson, there are degrees of force, though never widely apart, goes without saying and it is worth any student's while to observe with what painstaking profusion the composer has employed words and marks of expression so as to obtain variety within apparent sameness of expression. Degrees of animation however there are none the tempo remaining the same "weary" Andante throughout with the exception of a rare short *poco rit.* In fact nothing is left undone to reproduce the spirit of the poem, and wonderful as is the poet's art in suggesting languor the musician's art in reflecting the mood is not less wonderful. This is indeed

"Music that gentlier on the spirit lies  
 than tired eyelids upon tired eyes  
 Music that brings sweet sleep down from blissful skies"

The lovely melodies as they are whispered by Sopranos and Tenors in the upper register of their voices seem to suggest the shapely cirrus clouds floating serene in the blue vastness of the summer sky. We repeat this is no ordinary Partsong but a piece of magic "mystic wonderful". Another proof if more were needed that masterpieces can be produced within the form of a short unaccompanied Choral Song – provided the composer applies to it the particular kind of "capacity for taking infinite pains" that Carlyle had in his mind when he coined his famous half truth definition of "genius".

A tragic note is struck in the second number of the Opus, "Deep in my Soul". The gloom of despair hanging over Byron's poem has strongly appealed to the composer, and a deeply affecting musical setting is the result. The piece set in E flat is partly of the nature of a solo for the Basses, accompanied by short detached phrases for the other voices *ppp* or *pp*. To the basses is given a broad melancholy but dignified *cantabile* melody that suggests the moaning of an anguished mind. After rising to a short climax in seven parts, at the words "Save when to thine my heart responsive swells" the first section in E flat ends with the basses' *cantabile* strain again, though differently accompanied. The second verse or contrasted section (in E flat) opens Solemne with a monotone unison passage for Sopranos and Basses above which the Contraltos give forth *pp* short quaver triplet phrases, the cold dismal effect being heightened by the resultant harmony. A short passage in canonic imitation, sad in expression, but of affecting melodic beauty concludes the section, but not before the contraltos have once more uttered *pp* their weird vague quaver phrase referred to above. For the sake of form as well as greater effect the composer repeats the poet's first verse with its setting. Yet the repetition is more than just that. The expression is greatly intensified

by partly assigning the solo melody to the Basses in octaves (thus reaching the low B natural – ad lib – below the staff) by raising the 7 pt. climax in pitch and increasing the melodic and harmonic interest. A powerful emotional appeal is thus made by this broad, though short culmination, while the Basses sustain the low D sharp (enharmonic E flat in octaves), the other voices with short phrases *pp* and *estinto*, bring to its conclusion a piece remarkable for unconventionality of laying out and nobility of pathos.

Of a vastly different type is the third number. For his text Elgar has gone to the last stanza of Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" except that he has used the opening lines of the poem "A Wild West Wind" for an introductory invocation. The piece like its predecessor in the key of E flat answers more nearly to the definition of a part song, as generally understood, than any other of the set. Harmony and counterpoint play parts of equal importance and are productive of many fine effects. The broad invocation, *Nobilmente*, is in 7 and 8 parts and leads on to a long sustained discord of rugged grandeur. The expression marks appertaining to it may be quoted as a sample of what the composer extracts from his singers throughout the piece. Here they are: *sf > p < f*. This sort of thing is not learned perfectly in a minute. We doubt whether a piece of similar size and scope exists which is so abundantly – we are tempted to say superabundantly – provided with words and marks of expression. No doubt a conductor may take a liberal view of the composer's directions and look upon them as a approximate indication of the emotional style to be adopted and of the general spirit to be infused into an interpretation of the music. The tempo is fast "With the greatest animation but without hurry" and the thing should go with tremendous swing. It palpitates with life and freedom, it rises to heights suggesting a paean to nature re-awakening after her winter sleep. The breathless energy of its onward-rushing melodies is largely due to a copious use of triplets, very frequently combined with even notes "three against two." The first broad climax occurs at the words "Be thou spirit fierce, my spirit", where the voices, *molto allargando* rise to *fff*, after which the music presses forward *sempre con ardore* with exhilarating impetuosity until with degrees of animation and expression of course, we reach a tender lyrical passage of comparative simplicity and insinuating melodic warmth at the words "O Wind, if Winter comes can Spring be far Behind?" This is a fine outburst of deep feeling and a beautiful piece of writing, in which the Basses are divided, the music continuing henceforth in five parts. An unexpected transition to D major near the end and abrupt return to E flat for the cadence passage and we reach the close with a few weighty, stirring chords in 7 and 8 parts.

What will our choirs make of the piece? Its strength and breadth, the abundance of contrast and variety of expression provided, the energetic life pulse in every bar, the glowing colouring, the rhythmic swing and finally the note of pathos struck by a powerful personality should endear the splendid music to all. Closest application and abundant enthusiasm will surmount all difficulties. Yes, enthusiasm will be required for as Schumann wrote "Without enthusiasm nothing genuine is accomplished in art," or let us quote Dr. Hans Richter who at a rehearsal of Beethoven's Choral Symphony called out to the chorus valiantly struggling with the great master's all but impossible strains: "Ladies and Gentlemen, this music cannot be sung with the voice, it must be done by enthusiasm!" That was in the early days of the London Richter Concerts. Since then singers from "Somewhere farther North" have demonstrated to us that even Beethoven at his most difficult can be sung "with the voice."

The last piece in the set "Owls, an Epitaph" is of a kind which baffles analysis. We know nothing like it. The words (anonymous) are as strange and vague as the music. Why *Owls* we ask and why 'An Epitaph'. There is no reference to Minerva's sacred birds anywhere in the poem. But the scene is evidently laid in a forest at night. The poet muses on the vanity of things mundane: They are "Nothing". He hears the dead leaves fall, a wounded "Wild Thing" mourning in the night and how it "Cries in its dread, till it lies dead, At the foot of the tree." Finally, a bier spread with a pall is now at the foot of the tree. And as an answer to his reiterated "What is that?" comes ever the 'owlish' cry of "nothing." The piece is a Fantasy grimly weird in its vagueness and the

suggestion of utter hopelessness. It is frankly nihilistic, an epitaph for all things perishable that are and were and ever shall be. And the music deepens the gloom. It is but a short piece but as full of genius as anything Elgar has done. It has the power of haunting the memory in quite an uncanny way. Look at the printed pages and at the first glance you may want to quote the poet's own "it is nothing." Study them, and the musician's art, his command of key colour and harmonic subtleties, his unflinching certainty of touch in finding what seems the only possible way of setting the lines, will both delight and impress you.

What the effect in performance will be it is not easy to foresee, but we anticipate that this powerful little masterpiece will send an audience away as deeply moved as by the finest sermon on the old, old text "All is vanity." There is little to be said in the way of analysis. Each of the three verses opens with the question "What is that?" assigned to Tenors and Basses. The answer "Nothing is given by Sopranos and Contraltos, a pause on the first syllable of the word making the music sound like a prolonged sigh. There follow a few solemn bars in funeral march rhythm, with a strange chromatically descending and weirdly harmonized passage for the upper voices in close harmony above a sustained note for the Basses which may suggest half stifled sobs or even soft sardonic laughter. A two bar phrase in unison for the four voices appears to the same words "All that can be is said" in each of the three verses. In fact the music is virtually identical in them, except for a subtle change of the key from E flat to E sharp for the second verse, the substitution of a long wailing "Ah" for "Nothing", and the broadening out of the Funeral March phrase and intensifying its effect by means of longer notes, more *rallentandos*, etc., in the last verse. The piece ends with Tenors and Basses asking "Is it - what?" *pp* and Sopranos and Contraltos insisting for the last time on the inexorable, terrible answer. "Nothing" uttered *pppp*, a merest breath on the air, a simple tragic nothing vanishing into space and eternity.

"The Reveille", a lengthy piece for male voices, is issued like many of Elgar's smaller compositions without any Opus no. It is a rugged virile setting of Bret Harte's poem dealing with the call to arms of the American North in the cause of Anti-Slavery. To suggest the "tramps of thousands" and "of armed men the hum" as well as "the quick alarming drum" the composer makes great use of a rhythmical staccato quaver figure, occasionally for the Basses alone in monotonous bare fourths, while the Tenors *ff* is given the reiterated "Come Come". That the music does more than suggest the tap of the drum and the tramp of men goes without saying. In setting the appeal "Come, Freemen, come ere your heritage be wasted," the composer in a melodious strain boldly harmonized works up to the first broad climax. In a martial piece of this description dissonances, to suggest strife and death, were to be expected. Accordingly we meet with such surprises as at the words "Better there in death united than in life a recreant" where against the *ff* quaver "drum tapping" of the Basses on A flat D flat A flat, the Tenors with their utmost force and in sustained notes ejaculate "come" on a chord written for the singer's convenience as A major! The music is full of light and shade, of dramatic intensity and emotional fervour and the interest waxes to excitement as in the final lines we hear how

"A trumpet voice, proclaiming said "My Chosen people come!

Then the drum, Lo! was dumb, For the great heart of the nation  
Throbbing answered, "Lord We Come!"

These lines are treated with great breadth. The first "come" is assigned to the upper F and D flat of the voices, the simple major third vociferated *fff* ringing out like a veritable trumpet call. A climax of rare dignity is reached at the words "For the great heart of the nation", etc. The passage forcefully harmonized is to be sung *con tutta forza, Sento molto express e sostenuto*. The first Tenors having to attack *fff* their high B natural while the second Basses *ad lib* descend to the B flat below the stave. The syncopation of the inner parts beating against the second Basses regular downward steps will prove a notable point in an outburst of real grandeur. The final words "Lord we come" are treated with the requisite devotional calm, the piece ending *pianissimo*, impressive to the last.

## TELEVISION REVIEW

ACB: a portrait of one of the century's greatest musicians.

BBC2, 8 April 1989, 21.00–22.00 hrs.

No doubt many members of the Elgar Society were disappointed at the absence of commemorative programmes on the radio and television at the time of Sir Adrian Boult's death in 1983. However, the recent centenary of his birth (on 8 April 1989) was the occasion for an hour-long television documentary, produced by Ron Isted, which went some way to making amends but, in the end, left the feeling that there was so much more to be said and discussed. Nevertheless, it was a salutary, if belated, reminder that Sir Adrian was a far greater conductor than he is generally given credit for, an ideal radio conductor (as was emphasised – not in the programme – by the disastrous results of the appointment of Sir Malcolm Sargent as his successor at the BBC), and had the ability to produce fine performances of an astonishingly catholic range of scores, not least of contemporary and avant-garde composers. He was, unfortunately, taken for granted as a typically Edwardian gentleman, good with comfortably nostalgic romantic scores and British pastoral potboilers.

As has so often been said before, the military appearance and quiet stance fuelled this erroneous notion. First, he couldn't help what he looked like; second, the *orchestra's*, not the audience's, view was what was important, and many players are witness to the extraordinary power of the eyes, as well as other facial signals. Colin Davis's recollection of Sir Adrian's advice to 'throw the juice' over the orchestra with his stick is a graphic phraseological indication of the real passion beneath the surface.

The documentary was presented by Vernon Handley, rather unfortunately photographed from a low angle and somewhat transfixed (by an autocue?), which gave little clue to the uninitiated of the humour and enthusiasm that pervades his work, and endears him to orchestral players as much as his own mastery of complex scores and effective conducting technique. Indeed, Handley has shown that 'real' conducting, and the Nikisch technique, is not the prerogative of one man and one period of time; it is, in Sir Adrian's own words, 'available to anyone' and can successfully be adapted to a variety of personalities and temperaments. Nicolai Malko, Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt, Leslie Heward, Rudolph Kempe and, in our own day, Elgar Howarth and Bryan Fairfax, as well as Handley himself, are just a few names of those who, whether or not directly acknowledging Nikisch, regard the technique of conducting as of equal importance to the technique of the virtuoso instrumentalist. And why not? Lack of technique is hardly imaginable in a Casals, a Kreisler, a Tuckwell or, indeed, any professional performer; they would not be able to do their jobs without it, so why should conductors think themselves an exception? Technique, of course, is not everything, but must provide the solid foundation from which less tangible manifestations of the conductor's art can spring. Those who 'wave themselves about' in front of an orchestra may on occasion give a genuine frisson to the performance a virtuoso orchestra could in any case probably play in its sleep, but this is not real conducting. One is reminded of Rudolf Kempe's remark that 'one must not search, one must find. Searching implies conscious manipulation. Finding is the result of devotion to a composer and his music'.

The most striking moment of the documentary was the close analysis of a few bars from a 1970 performance of Holst's *Perfect Fool* ballet music, where the stick was seen to be so telling and powerful, the music closely reflecting the movement of the stick. Anybody who has watched and listened to any extent will know that the way in which a beat is 'put down' affects the way any sensitive and intelligent orchestra plays, whether it is the way a note is blown (hard or soft, irrespective of dynamics) or the way a bow strikes the string. It was characteristic of Handley to tell a story about his preparation of the orchestra for a television performance of Vaughan



Williams's *Fifth Symphony* (Sir Adrian had been unwell): 'When (Sir Adrian) stepped up to conduct . . . he got a much more beautiful line, much more legato and smooth playing, straightaway. My terribly clear beats had caused what he would call "bumps".'

One lesson a conductor must learn (though many never do!) is that what *feels* good does not necessarily *look* good or convey anything helpful to the orchestra. In a book about Sir Adrian, a certain young British conductor is quoted as saying that Boult 'wants everybody to conduct in the way he does . . . I feel I want to put more of myself, more of my body if you like, into the music'. Well, yes, this is self-evident in the case quoted, but to what avail? Conducting is not public self-gratification!

In view of the inevitable emphasis on the 'finger-technique', it was amusing to see early film of Boult in action, both arms going like pistons (as Henry Blofeld used to say of Bob Willis), conducting *Pomp and Circumstance*, No. 1, at a tremendous lick in Queen's Hall with the newly-formed BBC Symphony Orchestra. A 1943 *Lohengrin* Act 3 Prelude and a refurbishment and extension of the Beethoven's Fifth sequence from John Grierson's film about the BBC, 'Voices of Britain' (1935), emphasised the visible energy and passion of the younger Boult's conducting. One can now better understand Adeline Vaughan Williams' description of Boult at a performance of RVW's *Sea Symphony* in 1930 as 'nothing but a black streak in a white waistcoat - alarming'.

'I would give a good deal to possess a short film of Nikisch in-action', wrote Sir Adrian in 1963, and he clearly believed that no such thing existed. Ron Isted, however, discovered a ten-second sequence on a Japanese video disc, and this was included in the programme. What *was* he conducting? Clearly not the section of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony dubbed as a soundtrack! How about Tchaikowsky's Sixth, the 5/4 movement? He *does* appear to be beating five in a bar - or rather, 3<2<2<3, which fits the shape of Tchaikowsky's phrase, despite the two down-beats per bar. It is a short sequence, and therefore not really a basis for judgement, but Nikisch doesn't actually seem to be doing any of the things Boult spent his life telling us he did. How interesting Sir Adrian's comments on it would have been.

'The better done I hear Elgar, the worse I like him', was the sixteen year old Boult's opinion in 1905, and there were other surprising revelations about our hero, as Michael Kennedy had already revealed in 'The Adrian Boult Diaries' on Radio 3 in February 1987, and later in his full-length biography (eg. pp.22-23). But duty borne of professionalism turned to love as we now know well, despite the estrangement over threatened cuts (which never materialized, thanks to Boult's personal generosity) in the orchestra for *Gerontius* at Birmingham in 1925. Typical Elgar over-reaction resulting in a totally unnecessary period of coolness towards Boult until 1931, when the rift was healed. But it was Elgar's music that ended the programme (as it began): a splendid performance of the *Introduction and Allegro* played in the Fairfield Hall, Croydon, by the New Philharmonia Orchestra in 1963.

This hour-long programme seemed all too short, but was, it is to be hoped, sufficient to correct some all-too-readily-received opinions of a man who can justifiably be claimed to be 'one of the century's greatest musicians'. One thing is certain: there is much more to be said about Adrian Boult, and few will fail to be astonished by the resulting growth in his stature and in the complexity of his personality.

Garry Humphreys

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## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

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|--------------|---|---|
| 23 September | Serenade for Strings; Elegy and Sospiri;<br>Introduction and Allegro<br><i>Eng. String Orch/Broughton</i>   | Malvern Priory, Worcs. 8.00 pm<br>Tickets: 0864-892277  |
| October 6    | Enigma Variations<br><i>LPO/Loughran</i>  | Royal Festival Hall   |
| October 13   | The same  | The same  |
| October 21   | Enigma Variations<br><i>BBC Welsh SO/Armstrong</i>  | St. David's Hall, Cardiff, 7.30 pm<br>Box Office: 0222-371236   |
| November 8   | Dream of Gerontius<br><i>Royal Choral Soc./Wren SO/Heltay</i>   | Royal Festival Hall   |
| November 11  | Severn Suite (orchestral Version); plus<br>the world premiere of Peter Woodham's<br>'Variations and Fugue on the name<br>Edward Elgar:<br><i>Rutland Sinfonia/Collett</i> | Corby Festival Hall, Northants<br>7.30pm  |
| November 18  | Coronation Ode (and other coronation<br>music by Mozart and Walton<br><i>High Wycombe Choral Soc/Armstrong</i>  | Parish Church, High Wycombe<br>Bucks, 7.30 pm. Tickets at the<br>door or phone D. Cook<br>High Wycombe 714439 |
| November 30  | Introduction and Allegro<br><i>English Chamber Orch/Preston</i>   | Fairfield Hall, Croydon, 8.00 pm  |
| December 6   | Sea Pictures<br><i>Sarah Walker/Philharmonia/Hughes</i>   | Royal Festival Hall   |
| December 13  | Introduction and Allegro<br><i>London Mozart Players/Vasary</i>   | Queen Elizabeth Hall  |

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### CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

**WANTED:** Mr. G. Lewis, 118 Lon Pferam, Benllech, Anglesey, N. Wales LL74 8RL is seeking (1) vocal scores of "The Black Knight" and "The Coronation Ode". (2) Cassette Tape (EMI 063-07258) of Robert Tear singing songs by Elgar, Butterworth and Vaughan Williams. Phone: 0248 852972.

**WANTED:** Reader requires copy of record of Randell Jackson singing Elgar's Marching Song. Early Columbia-Rena record. Offers to Box 1, c/o JOURNAL address.

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**ADVERTISEMENT RATES:** Classified £1.00 per line (minimum 3 lines); Full page £50.00; Half page £27.00; Quarter page £15.

## BOOK REVIEWS

The Thirteenth Enigma, The story of Edward Elgar's Early Love, by Cora Weaver

Wrappers, £6.95

Published by Thames Publishing, 14 Barlby Road, London W10 6AR

The pace of Elgar scholarship has accelerated in the past decade, and much that was obscure has now been brought to light. Elgar's early years, before fame and distinction came to him, have been written about and investigated. There are still a few things of which little is known, and although Elgar's engagement to a Worcester girl, Helen Weaver, has been mentioned in several works, Miss Weaver herself remains a shadowy figure.

In April 1984 the *Sunday Times* published an article which gave rise to much comment. This article gave some detail to the Weaver portrait, described her as the true 'original' of the three asterisks in the 13th of Elgar's *Enigma Variations*, and even published a photograph which purported to be the lady herself. This photo was suspect from the beginning – it was patently a 20th century young woman, and an unlikely depiction of the girl to whom Elgar was briefly engaged in the 1880s. Alas, no photograph of Helen Weaver is known to exist, though we hope that one will turn up from somewhere.

Now Miss Helen Weaver has a book devoted to her. A small book, it is true, but information is scanty, and Cora Weaver (a relation of the Weavers by marriage) has presented a very readable account, making the best use of such information as survives. The book has obviously taken a long time to research, much of it being done in New Zealand where Helen resided after leaving England in 1885, and where she died in 1927.

As well as being a most interesting study of a relationship which must have affected Elgar deeply, the book has a number of illustrations. Elgarians will want to add this volume to their collection of studies of Elgar's life.

R.P.T.

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Edward Elgar, *The Windflower Letters: Correspondence with Alice Caroline Stuart Wortley and her Family*. Jerrold Northrop Moore

Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989, £25

This is another bravura performance by Jerrold Northrop Moore, accomplished with discretion and customary thoroughness. Along this nostalgic chain of memories he points and illuminates the way, so that there is yet another of Elgar's contributions towards his autobiography. The quality of a sequence of letters – especially those to one person over a period of years – reveal particular aspects of temperament of the writer, reflected from the character and influence of the recipient. The letters to 'Windflower' (any others in this volume are of relatively minor concern) constitute an increasingly sad sequence, emphasising Elgar's loneliness, his emotional ambiguities, his hypochondria, and his consequent dependence on other people, with stark clarity. The unspoken heroine of this book is Alice Elgar.

It is clear that Alice Stuart Wortley, despite the grandness of her environment, required Elgar's dependence to fulfil her own aspirations, and to compensate for tensions within the family relationships exposed by Dr. Moore. The 'Windflower' ('Wildflower', p. 252) placed him in a setting of her own devising: she was not the daughter of John Everett Millais and Effie Gray (briefly Mrs. Ruskin) for nothing. To the great composer in Elgar she was – within the boundaries of upper middle-class prudence – the emollient alter ego; but in respect of the *Violin Concerto*, to suggest her playing the role of Aegeria (p. 45) is, perhaps, somewhat extravagant. Dr. Moore does, I think, accept literalness of direct inspiration too confidently. Music can be representational only in the most limited sense. The interpretation of Claude Phillips's 'Art Notes' into the 'nostalgia' of the *Violin Concerto* developing under 'Windflower's' tutelary genius (and Willie Reed's practical sense) runs rather wide of any musicological mark. So too does the suggestion (p. 211) that the course of a sonata movement could be changed by the accident of a lady breaking her leg. In any case Elgar was a pastmaster in the art of transferring imagery, so that – musically at least – the saint can become the sinner.

In the last pre-war summer of 1914 (a perfect summer, people used to say) Alice Stuart Wortley – an accomplished pianist – turned composer for a family wedding. The hymn tune 'O perfect love' (reproduced on p. 133), despite Elgar's modest corrections is characterised by sadly imperfect harmony. In this instance Elgar's enthusiasm dampens critical perception. Elgar's devotion to this Alice encouraged him to have special stationery designed solely for her eyes, with 'E' within a circling buckled belt. (In her youth Mary Lygon also had notepaper for her friends, among whom was Elgar, headed with an encircled 'Mary'.)

The Windflower Letters and the commentary together give an unforgettable, and generally unflattering, picture of life at the higher level during the decline of the Edwardian era. At dinner at Sir Gilbert Parker's in 1910 Elgar reported his gratification at the quality of the company. 'I do like to be amongst brains & my wretched music takes me amongst them so seldom . . .'. There is a distasteful picture of Lady Charles Beresford, at a not wholly fashionable function in Harrogate, 'loathing the whole place & people' and showing 'her contempt for the whole thing by wearing a hat at dinner and a curious sac-like robe something like a waterproof – the Majestic Hotel visitors are very much hurt I think'

During the war of 1914–18 for the mass of people in England life was drab, food in short supply and irregularly rationed, and death very near to many families. How awful it was, said Elgar in 1917, that Albert Sammons, the violinist, and Charles Mott, the singer, should be (as were all able men except the old) conscripted. 'It is inevitable, I fear', he wrote in one letter, 'unless one has much money.' In the next, he commented, 'Yes, Mott has gone off with the rest of the heroes, while those who can afford to pay are let off. Why does not someone, *not* a musician, interfere?' Within the year Mott was dead as a result of wounds received in action. It was a few days after hearing of his death that Alice Stuart Wortley meeting Carice, on her way to visit her parents, 'loaded her with choice foods . . . lobster, plaice, dates, chocolate, biscuits, jam, and teas!' On account of his nephew Gerald Grafton, a naval signaller, Elgar asked whether Windflower might be able to canvass whoever was influential in such matters to recommend him for promotion to commissioned rank. However, such efforts as were made failed. As for Elgar himself, Charles Stuart Wortley's elevation to the peerage in 1916 led Elgar to a morbid expression of his own disappointments. Some of these are collected in the Index sub-heading, 'Peerage, desire for', which by itself illustrates an unamiable trait of character. In another setting Stuart Wortley contributes one of the best letters in the book – a rousing condemnation of excessively fast tempi in performances of Bach, with a commendation of Julius Harrison as a Bach conductor.

In the light of the knowledge that the music of Elgar's last years (published and unpublished) derived considerably from the many manuscripts he had hoarded from youth, it is intriguing to consider what might have been destroyed during the two bouts of elimination recorded in 1910 and 1921. It is even more intriguing to consider what 'interesting notation of Busoni' (p. 49) Elgar sent to Alice in 1910 and asked her to 'tear it and the MS up when you have done with it'. Busoni at that time was deeply involved with new, indeed revolutionary, ideas concerning the whole nature of music, its meaning, and its notation. His own MS, to which Elgar refers, was part of the frequently attempted, never completed, *Piano Concerto* – of which there is no reference in the Index. Other significant omissions from the generally immaculate Index include Victor Horsley and the first mention in the letters of Paderewski. Victor Horsley (p. 96), who diagnoses Elgar's gout in 1912, deserves a place in the Index, and some comment in the text. The son of John Callcott Horsley, President of the Royal Academy, and grandson to the composer William Horsley, he was one of the outstanding surgeons and physiologists of the period. In 1910, the year of the celebrations in Poland of the centenary of Chopin's birth, Paderewski (as Elgar once said a composer should do) was placing himself at the head of his people – with remarkable patriotic, political speeches. Why was Elgar 'truly sorry for Paderewski and Windflower' (p. 52)? In a footnote on p. 66 the too-often forgotten parent of all Elgarian critics and biographers – Basil Maine – suffers the indignity of having his name misspelt.

The Windflower Letters carry Elgar over the peak of his achievement – and down the other side. The intense sadness of the letters of the summer of 1920 show a world in which nothing any more was secure. 'I wish I could send some cheerful news – but it is useless to pretend to a real friend – in the midst of it all I am not really depressed – only I see the inevitable . . . (the last words are lost.) In those days Elgar also suffered disillusionment when a new, and offensive, breed of 'fast people' appeared too noisily and ostentatiously to assert themselves.

While reading this book in Germany I had opportunity to see a TV documentary based on the last decade of the life and career of Richard Strauss. A magnificently truthful, and hurting, record of the worst years in German history, it showed the figure of a great artist in his late years, living, without understanding, at the very end of time, as it then must have seemed. So passed, said the commentary, the last great German Romantic composer. Not surprisingly (since the two composers reminded each of the other in the closing years of Elgar's life) one was also in mind of the last great English Romantic composer.

Percy Young

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A History of the Malvern Festivals, by Roger Hall-Jones

*First Paige, 19 Abbey Road, Malvern, Worcs, WR14 3ES Wrappers: £2 (plus postage if ordered direct)*

The Malvern Festivals began in 1929, although there have been fewer than the 60 years would suggest. The war years, and the financial stringencies of the post-war period, almost buried the idea of continuing a Festival in the small town set in the Malvern Hills. In the formative years the Festivals were built around the work and personality of George Bernard Shaw, and when the Festivals were resumed on a regular basis in the 1970s it seemed logical that Shaw, and his friend Elgar, should again be featured.

Short historical notices have appeared occasionally in past Festival programmes, but no attempt has been made until now to look comprehensively at the years since 1929. This pleasant little book, which is well illustrated, has just enough information to give us the peaks, and occasional troughs, of the story. The principal actors, writers, and producers are mentioned, and each new play which was presented is duly noted. It must be said that Music gets only a comparatively cursory glance – the author's heart is in the Drama – but one would have liked a slightly more balanced view, and there is scarcely a word on the various fringe activities, now so much a part of the annual Malvern event. Another surprising omission, for Elgarians, is anything on the three post-war Elgar Festivals, which attempted a revival of Malvern's fortunes as a Festival centre. It was the last of these in 1951 which led to the setting up of the Elgar Society. These festivals were described by Frank Greatwich in the *Elgar Society Journal* for May 1981. Perhaps the author felt that they were not truly part of the Malvern Festival story?

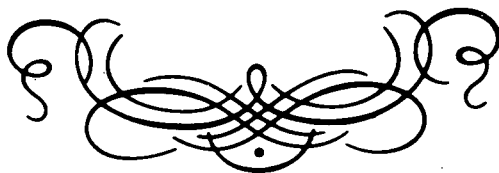
However, despite these omissions, the book fills a definite gap. At £2 it is very reasonably priced and is recommended.

R.P.T.

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The Guardian of the monastery at Glasshampton, just north of Worcester, has expressed his love of Elgar's music, which he describes variously as "haunting" and "glorious". Brother Ramon, SSF, an Anglican monk, in a recent book *FULNESS OF JOY* (Marshall-Pickering, £5.95), includes a lengthy discourse on 'The Dream of Gerontius' in his chapter entitled 'Joy in Crossing Over.' He writes: "Outside the Bible, if there is any piece of theological devotion which I would recommend as an instruction and preparation for death, it would be this double work by Newman and Elgar. It is not enough to attend a public performance with text in hand, though if you have never done that, then a great wonder is in store for you. But you must go on and listen, and listen, and listen, prayerfully, devotionally, theologically until the words and the music saturate your soul." Brother Ramon has given an exposition of 'Gerontius' to monks and nuns of various orders, in two sessions, followed by "a contemplative listening" to the work. "Each time I prepare to listen," he writes, "I feel that strange yearning for the divine Love springing up within my heart. The preparation of body in a certain passivity and rest in God, and the lifting up of the mind and heart in simple openness, are prerequisites to the awareness of the presence of God in the poetry and music."

G.H.



## RECORD REVIEWS

Symphony no. 2 in E flat, Opus 63

Philharmonia Orch/Giuseppe Sinopoli  
Deutsche Grammophon 423 085-4 (cassette)  
423 085-2 (CD)  
No LP available

I have said before that I regard the 'British tradition' of Elgar interpretation as a myth – and no where is this more obvious on record than in the diversity in the approach of British conductors to the *Second Symphony*. Indeed the Elgar discography has already been enriched by widely differing recordings of the symphony from such non-British conductors as Barenboim, Haitink, Solti and Svetlanov, each of whom brings something individual from their own musical and cultural backgrounds to extend our perception of our own traditions.

Now we have Giuseppe Sinopoli – probably the first Elgar recording by a native-born Italian conductor since Sabajno's 1909 extract from *In the South*, (but don't let us forget the musical influence of Barbirolli's origins!). I must admit that I approached this new recording with some anxiety. Sinopoli has a reputation for being a rather expansive conductor – and my fears were not allayed by a preliminary glance at the timings on the back of the CD box. Two years ago I was critical of Bryden Thomson's extremely slow speeds in this symphony. My heart sank when I noted that Sinopoli takes as long over the first movement as Thomson, while in the *larghetto* he is even slower, taking a full *five minutes* longer than Vernon Handley on his superb Classics for Pleasure recording.

Playing the record, I was at once irritated by Sinopoli's very slow opening, Elgar's markings are quite specific: by the fourth bar the tempo should ease into 92 dotted crotchets per minute, increasing to 104 at bar nine, thus immediately introducing a slight sense of urgency. Sinopoli starts at slightly below Elgar's marked tempo (around 88 per minute) and then continues steadily at his initial speed.

Nevertheless, despite this unpromising start, as the symphony progressed, I found myself warming more and more to this recording. The first movement is interpretively the weakest part. Sinopoli has not yet lived with the music long enough to instinctively feel the rhythmic flexibility within the phrase necessary to bring Elgar's long melodic strands to life, and he ignores many other clearly marked minor but important tempo adjustments. On the other hand Sinopoli's operatic recordings have already shown his remarkable ability to keep a firm grip on rhythm, even at slow tempi – and this quality helps to keep things moving positively forward, right to the end of the movement.

It is again this firm rhythmic control that keeps the *larghetto* moving inexorably forwards, without the tempi really seeming as slow as it undoubtedly is (Bryden Thomson, three minutes quicker, actually *feels* slower). It is, in fact, a most moving account – and I quarrel only with Sinopoli's slowing for, and unnecessary emotional underlining of, the two climaxes of the movement, although he quickly returns to his earlier, steadily controlled speed. In the scherzo, too (although there is here less disagreement amongst conductors over the tempo) Sinopoli's skillful control of rhythm keeps things moving, and the sudden biting harshness of the climax satisfactorily raises the hair on the back of the neck.

Bolt in his earlier two recordings, and Handley, following Elgar's own 1927 recording, have reminded us that the last movement, far from being an autumnal 'dying fall', is an optimistic looking forward, after the sadness, regret and bitterness of the earlier movements. William Mann, in his notes for the record, reminds us of Elgar's enigmatic description of the work as 'joyous and light-hearted!' Sinopoli cannot be blamed for missing this aspect, which has eluded many

interpreters, at least on record, and his steady, sober, slightly understated finale is in every way a satisfactory summing-up and a confirmation of his intellectual grasp of the symphony as a whole.

A consequence of Sinopoli's great emphasis on rhythmic clarity (supported by the superb playing of the Philharmonia and DG's exceptionally clear, but rather dry recorded sound) is the amount of internal detail revealed, which will even surprise listeners long familiar with this great symphony. I cannot recommend this recording as a 'safe' first choice Elgar *Second*: it is just too far from the 'mainstream' of Elgar interpretation. On the other hand Sinopoli has given us a thought-provoking alternative approach, which for me, at any rate, has cast a new light on a very familiar musical masterpiece.

G.H.L.

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String Quartet in E minor, Opus 83 (with: DELIUS *String Quartet*)

*Brodsky String Quartet*  
ASV DCA 526 (LP)  
ZCDCA 526 (Cassette)  
CDDCA 526 (CD)

This recording seems to have slipped through the Journal reviewing net on its first appearance (on LP and cassette) four years ago. Its recent CD release, however, has given a belated chance to catch up with it.

The still young members of the Brodsky Quartet have, in fact, been playing together for sixteen years – since their Manchester student days, and in 1983 they were appointed resident artists at Sutton Place, Surrey. In January 1986 I reviewed a Meridian recording of the Elgar Quartet by the Medici Quartet, and there are several parallels between the two performances, not the least being the fact that both were made at Sutton Place. The Brodsky players are a trifle brisker than the rather relaxed Medici Quartet, giving the work a slightly tougher, harder outline. This is all to its advantage, although the Medici performance is a very fine one – and is certainly considerably firmer than their rather too easy-going performance of their coupling, the *Piano Quintet* (with John Bingham).

Both the Medici and the Brodsky Quartets are given a fairly close microphone balance in a rather dry room (curiously the Medici recording of the *Piano Quintet* sounds more spacious). Of the two, the Medici version is marginally preferable for sound quality: the Brodsky first violin sound has a rather hard edge, and dynamics seem a trifle constricted.

Nevertheless, this is a most interesting and satisfying performance. I have not heard the EMI Bernard Roberts/Chilingirian Quartet coupling of the quartet and quintet, but it did not appeal to our editor. For anyone wanting these two works, the Medici recording on Meridian is a safe recommendation (on cassette and CD – beware! the LP does *not* contain the quartet, despite a similar catalogue number). Collectors not wanting another quintet recording will not be disappointed with the Brodsky performance of the *String Quartet* – the rarely-heard, somewhat rhapsodic Delius Quartet, written two years before the Elgar, responds particularly well to the Brodsky Quartet's direct approach, and makes a particularly interesting coupling.

G.H.L.



Scenes from the Bavarian Highlands, Opus 27 (with HOLST, Dirge and Hymeneal, H124; Two Motets, Opus 43; Five Partsongs, Opus 12.)

*City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra Chorus*  
*Richard Markham (piano), Cond: Simon Halsey*  
*Conifer CDCF 142*

This record was made in 1986, and issued the following year, but has only now been submitted for review. It includes the fourth complete recording of the six *Bavarian Highlands* part songs in the version with piano accompaniment. Previous recordings have featured smaller choral resources (the Worcester Cathedral choristers, the Donald Hunt Singers, and the Exon Singers) but the Birmingham Choir is probably closer to the size of the choirs which enthusiastically took up the work following its publication in the late 1890s.

Few, if any, large Victorian choral societies, however, would have possessed the tonal purity, accuracy of intonation, and clarity of diction of the current Birmingham group. They are also capable of projecting great commitment and enthusiasm which helps make acceptable the simple sentiments expressed in Alice Elgar's unpretentious verses. The choir is given a most attractive spacious balance in the warm acoustic of Birmingham Town Hall, but the more closely balanced piano, to my ear, seems rather detached from the general ambience of the choral sound.

It is good to have a splendid modern recording of these Elgar part songs – and it nicely complements the Del Mar Bournemouth recording of the orchestrated version, reissued on EMI CDC 7 497382. However, no-one would claim that they are major Elgar works. I can guarantee, however, that the Holst songs are a revelation. They are transferred, though in a less than satisfactory order. The five unaccompanied part songs, opus 12, come last. They are an interesting rediscovery (dating from 1902/3 – only three were published, the other two having only recently been unearthed and edited for performance) but they are mostly fairly simple, strophic settings of undemanding texts, set in a style reminiscent of Parry. Stylistically they would have followed on naturally from the Elgar songs. As it is we leap from Elgar to the spare sounds of the mature Holst of 1915. *Dirge and Hymeneal* is a setting for female chorus and piano of verses by Beddoes, withdrawn by Holst because of thematic links with 'Saturn' in *The Planets*. We then move on to an astonishing, and harmonically exceptionally taxing, unaccompanied setting of Henry Vaughan's *The Evening Watch*, dating from 1924, which builds to a climax of overwhelming intensity. This was coupled for publication, as Holst's opus 43, with the following part song *Sing Me the Men*, contrastingly vigorous in style, and with a theme reflecting Holst's understanding of the rhythms of traditional song.

Elgarians will enjoy the fine performance and recording of the *Bavarian Highlands* songs – but they will be as bowled over as I was by the Holst pieces.

G.H.L.



## NEWS FROM THE BRANCHES . . .

The EAST ANGLIAN Branch's season began with the AGM in March, and following the meeting our Chairman, Alan Childs, gave a short lecture/recital entitled 'Chairman's Choice.' Leisure activities since then have included 'Elgar, the recording artiste' by Tony Merrill, and probably the highlight of our season, to date, an evening of colour slides with organ and choral music recorded and introduced by Michael Woodward. Michael has now made many recordings of mainly Cathedral organs, and although not a recording engineer by profession, the results of both his photography for record sleeves and the quality of the recordings are anything but amateur. Of greatest interest to Elgar Society members is his English recording of the two organ sonatas by Stephen Cleobury at Kings College, Cambridge - high recommended (Nimbus Records).

The June meeting featured video recordings of the Ken Russell Monitor film, and excerpts from Hope and Glory. Although the weather tried to dampen our spirits, our summer party in July went off with a swing, and was enjoyed by all attending.

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The LONDON Branch season ended with a mass of "extra-curricular" activities. In April Brinkwells was visited on a lovely Spring day, and the following day a party attended the Philharmonia Orchestra's Adrian Boult Centenary Concert - *Gerontius* conducted by Andrew Davis. Another centenary, that of the marriage of Edward and Alice Elgar, was marked by an arrangement to include appropriate music in the Vespers and Benediction Service at the Brompton Oratory on May 7th, the eve of the anniversary. Then it was off to Yorkshire for the matter of the Settle Plaque unveiling (fully reported elsewhere).

Meanwhile the normal meetings programme was pretty remarkable too! In May the 90-year-old Margaret Harrison, sister of Beatrice, surmounted the obstacle of a threatened transport strike, to delight us with her reminiscences of Elgar, Delius, and many others. The season ended in June with the AGM, held in the Jerusalem Chamber of Westminster Abbey no less! Officers and Committee duly elected, we delighted in the Purcell Club's musical and architectural tour of the Abbey specially laid on for us. The evening concluded convivially back in the Jerusalem Chamber for a splendid supper.

We now look forward to next season, beginning on October 2nd with live music at the Royal College of Music. Barry Collett is to bring a group of his Rutland Sinfonia players and we are to hear the complete Powick Asylum music. Let us have a large turn-out for yet another very special event.

In SOUTH WALES Friendship House, Swansea, continues to be the nerve-centre of the Branch, and it was here that Trevor Fenemore-Jones, Vice-Chairman of the Society, addressed Branch members on 13th May, his topic being "Elgar: Man of Mission". Concerning himself not so much with the merits of Elgar's music as with certain aspects of Elgar's personality, the speaker touched upon such matters as Elgar's patriotism, his choice of texts for part-songs (to which the composer attached considerable importance) and his assessment of the role of the artist in society – something, this, to which Elgar had given very definite expression in the pages of *The Music Makers*. Such was the strength of Elgar's personality that, in spite of setbacks and disappointments and in spite, too, of the shocks caused by the outbreak of World War I and the death of Lady Elgar, he never lost sight of his noble aims or of his mission in life. Music used to illustrate the talk included *Froissart*, the part-song for S.A.A.T.T.B. *Go, Song of Mine* excerpts from *The Kingdom* and *The Apostles*, and the finale of the *Cello Concerto*. Something of the more unusual kind was provided by a recording of some of the *Harmoniemusik*; something that surprised at least one member was the speaker's disclosure that the *Cello Concerto* is now the most frequently played of all Elgar's large-scale works.

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The outstanding event for YORKSHIRE Branch in recent months has undoubtedly been the unveiling of a plaque to commemorate Elgar's many visits to that part of Yorkshire. This is described elsewhere in this issue. A Nat-West officer, John Kelly, also a member of London Branch, had, with the Branch, undertaken most of the administrative work involved. Suffice to say that 24 Yorkshire members attended the event, blessed by beautiful weather. This was a long-awaited occasion, marked by the way in which London and Yorkshire joined forces.

Yorkshire's attempts to get Claud Powell up north to speak on 'Dorabella' have been dogged by misfortune. On the first occasion Mrs. Powell suffered a serious fall, while the reconvened date of May 8th found Mr. Powell unwell. Both are now much improved, and we go for 'third time lucky' on Nov. 6th. The new season's programme will also include visits by organist, Charles Myers and Yorkshire composer (and conductor of the Settle Orchestra) Arthur Butterworth. We open the new season with an illustrated talk on 'Sir Henry Wood and Elgar' on Sept. 25th, by Millicent Albrow.

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CENTRAL SOUTHERN BRANCH. A preliminary meeting of members and potential members was held on 22nd April. It was decided to press ahead with plans for a branch and a small steering committee has been formed. As yet a 'centre' for meetings has to be agreed, and the response of members living in Hampshire, East Dorset, and West Sussex will be crucial to a decision. Please contact Walter J. Essex, 39 South Road, Hayling Island, Hants, P011 9AE for further details.

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NORTH WEST Branch write: Our 1989-90 season will commence on October 7th with a talk by James Eastham on 'The Music Makers – a conductor's point of view'. On November 18th Prof. Ian Parrott will give a talk on Elgar's Harmonic Language. On December 2nd our AGM and Christmas Social will take place, and as usual we hope to have live music. Our first meeting in 1990 will be on 13th January with a talk by Dennis Clark on Elgar in Yorkshire. In February we have a visit from Henry Sandon who will speak on 'A very personal look at Elgar, the man and musician, from one who has trodden in so many of his actual footsteps'.

The season ends in March with a return visit from the excellent vocal group Cantilena.

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WEST MIDLANDS Committee met on June 27th, at the home of the new Branch Treasurer, and was made very welcome by Pat and Walter Cullis. Members were reminded of the Autumn 1989 programme:

Sept. 30th	'Elgar's Yorkshire' – Dennis Clark
Oct. 14th	'Elgar's War Music' – Robin Hales
Nov. 25th	'The Opera that Never Was' – Dr. Percy Young

All three meetings will be held in the Friend's Meeting House, Sansome Walk, Worcester, at 2.30 p.m.

At the Society's AGM in June Miss Margaret Elgar completed her three-year term of office on the General Committee. Her place has been taken by Simon Holt, who has been a member for about 10 years, and is at present on the Music Dept. staff at Ardingly College, Haywards Heath.

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A vote of thanks was recorded to MISS PATRICIA SOPER who has tended the Elgar grave unstintingly for the past 15 years. An excellent record, and not to be glossed over lightly. However, Miss Soper has decided that the time has come to hand over to someone else and, in future, the task will be undertaken by Richard and Olive Hessel, both West Midlands Branch members. Miss Soper will continue to oversee the grass-cutting which will be the financial responsibility of the Society. The Branch will bear the cost of providing flowers for the grave on the following dates, 23rd February, 7th April, 2nd June, Easter Day, Christmas Day, and for the Three Choirs week. Obviously there will be many weeks when there will be no flowers on the grave, but it is felt that that is preferable to having vases of dead flowers because no-one is available to look after them. If members, or Branches, would like to contribute to the cost of either grass-cutting or flowers, please write to the appropriate Treasurer. In addition, the Hessels plan to plant small shrubs at the foot of the grave, eg. Juniper Horizontalis, Erica and Eunonymus. The Priest-in-Charge at St. Wulstan's, Father Dennis Mannel, has given his approval to this scheme.

## LETTERS

From A. C. MORRISON

*Apart from the Enigma itself, the big remaining mystery for me is the original scheme for the "Wand of Youth" play and music. Although Dr. Moore incorporates a careful account (principally pp 46-48) in "The Creative Life" it seems to me that some substantial questions remain unresolved, perhaps mainly due to the reticence and ambiguities in Elgar's own accounts. Although we presumably have to accept that the planning never reached a very advanced stage, it is clear that there would scarcely have been enough children (two elder sisters and one younger brother) in the Elgar family to have acted, undertaken the stage effects (which would have been quite complex), and performed the music (piano 2-3 strings, flute and percussion, according to Elgar). Also, it is not clear if all the thirteen pieces constituting the two Suites were actually part of the original scheme. For my part, the two pieces "The Tame Bear" and "The Wild Bears" seem to be somewhat separate from the rest. We know that the latter was also, at one time, a Powick quadrille, but was it "Wand of Youth" material before that?*

*To sum up, there are several unanswered questions:-*

*1. How far advanced was the play? Is there a script? Was it then called "Wand of Youth"? 2. To what extent was the music completed? Is there any extant pre-1907 material? 3. Is the music that we know all there is? To what extent did Elgar make additions or changes in 1907/08? 3. Elgar gives two dates - 1869 and 1879- for the original planning. Which is the more likely? 5. How could the acting/production/musical roles be distributed? Is there any other reference to the three-string double-bass?*

*I find it odd that contemporary family records contain no record of Elgar's involvement in the extensive preparations, even if performance had to be abandoned. This would have been a considerable achievement for a 12 or 14 year old boy. All the information currently available seems to derive from notes made by Elgar in either 1908 or 1929, and clearly he was not on oath when writing them. Is it possible that further research will answer these questions? Can we hope that the complete Elgar Edition will provide eventual enlightenment?*

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From M. J. CHURCHER

*The number of Elgar works that remain unrecorded amount now to a mere handful. Apart from complete recordings of "Crown of India" and Pageant of Empire, which demand large forces, and are perhaps thereby rendered impracticable, there appear to be left only a number of minor works and songs.*

*The only Opus Number completely unrepresented seems to be Opus 24, "Etudes Caracteristiques". Perhaps Mr. Barry Collett could be prevailed upon to produce a tape of this, and a number of the Songs (e.g. "So Many True Princesses who have Gone", "It isnae Me"; and the settings of various C. A. Elgar verses), and so earn the gratitude of many Elgarians. Could the Society sponsor a tape, if sufficient members agreed to purchase copies?*

From GRAHAM LEWIS

*I am wondering if anyone has given thought to a performance of "The Dream of Gerontius" in Birmingham in the year 2000. It may seem a long time yet, but I feel that plans should begin now.*

*2000, of course, will be its centenary year and it would be wonderful if a really inspired performance by sympathetic performers could be given. This would redress the balance of the fiasco that took place at the first performance in 1900.*

*My own choice of performers would be the City's Orchestra and chorus, plus a large contingent of singers from the Three Choirs cities, under the direction of Dr. Donald Hunt, who in my opinion, is the finest conductor of Elgar's choral music around today. Being a reasonably young man still (certainly young in spirit) I am sure Dr. Hunt will still be in his prime in the year 2000.*

*Perhaps the Elgar Foundation could sponsor the performance with help from the BBC. It must surely be broadcast on both radio and television. If it doesn't take place in Birmingham it will be to the eternal shame of all Elgar supporters.*

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From KEN DAVEY, Vice-Chairman, Powick P C C

*Having been associated from the start with the organisation of the Powick Hospital Elgar Concert, I was most perturbed to read the account appearing in your May journal. There are two reasons.*

*Firstly it strikes me as a great pity that the description of a worthy commemoration of the work of the Hospital, and of Elgar's contribution to it, should be overlaid with recrimination. I am particularly sorry that this should apparently be at the expense of the District Council whose generous financial and logistic support converted the joint ideas of the Society and the PCC into a reality.*

*Secondly, I can see no purpose in the account other than to suggest how resourceful the writers had been and how incompetent everyone else. Many arrangements of course had been made of which the writers were unaware, and which duly came to fruition "on the night". It was a memorable weekend and our thanks as Powick people are due to those who had planned it over a long period, particularly Carol Holt, Barry Collett, and Mike Cresswell.*

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From BRIDGET DUCKENFIELD

*I am looking for material for a book on Landon Ronald's connections with Elgar, and would be grateful for any copies of programmes, letters, or other information, as a conductor, friend, or champion. Offers or information should be sent to 94 Station Avenue, West Ewell, Epsom, Surrey KT19 9UG.*

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(President: Sir Yehudi Menuhin, O.M., K.B.E.)

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