

The Elgar Society JOURNAL



**MAY
1990**

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ELGAR SOCIETY JOURNAL

ISSN 0143-1269

Origination by Gemini Graphics, 43 Elmwood, Sawbridgeworth, Herts CM21 9NN

Tel: (0279) 722627

The Elgar Society Journal

104 CRESCENT ROAD, NEW BARNET, HERTS. EN4 9RJ
081-440-2651

EDITORIAL

Vol. 6, no. 5
May, 1990

The story of the Elgar Society is, generally speaking, one of steady growth. A sensible increase in the number of Branches and a continued upward movement in the number of individual and family members. Student members have yet to show any increase, but doubtless this will come. We have been very fortunate in the quality of those who have taken on the various voluntary offices which a Society such as ours creates, and also in the enthusiasm and support of a large number of our members both at home and abroad. In return the Society has tried to broaden its activities, to provide a genuine forum for Elgar studies, and act as a meeting-ground for those who simply 'like Elgar.'

It is, therefore, rather sad that at present two of our Branches, East Midlands and South West (Bristol), have ceased to hold regular meetings. There are, of course, local reasons for the success or failure of any organisation, and it is not for the Journal to hold an inquest at this time. But, it should be remembered that those branches mentioned have played their part in the growth of the Society, and if it is time to move on to a different area, or rekindle enthusiasm in a different way, then we should not be discouraged. Branch activities are only a part of the Society's work, and affect less than half the membership. The other side of the coin is that a new branch has started up in Southern England, and we wish them well. As will be seen from the Branch reports, some areas continue to hold successful, enthusiastic meetings and social functions. The lesson from all this is: Never take success for granted, and do not take your officers and committee for granted either! All depends on a continuing flow of new people and new ideas. It is only from such new blood that we shall continue to prosper. No matter how far you may live from a branch centre, or from the core of musical activity, remember it is YOUR Society, and YOUR enthusiasm and support keeps it going. The Annual Meeting takes place in Malvern on May 26th. Come along and meet your fellow members, and take part in keeping the Elgar Society a vital link in British musical life.

RONALD TAYLOR

INTRODUCES (Sir Edward) ELGAR

by

W. C. Stockley

In 1880* I had the pleasure of including an item in my December concert which brought into notice a composer who now occupies a very prominent position in the musical world, viz.: Mr. Edward Elgar, of Worcester. Mr. Elgar had been among my first violins for some time, when his friend, Dr. Herbert Wareing, asked me if I knew that Mr. Elgar was a composer as well as a violonist, and on my answering in the negative, offered to bring me one of his latest compositions. I gladly accepted his offer, and the result was the inclusion of the "Intermezzo Moresque" in the next concert programme.

The success of this composition brought into prominence the great talent of Sir Edward Elgar, and I am very proud of having had the honour and pleasure of initiating a musician of such great merit into a larger sphere of action.

Mr. Elgar's modesty, on the occasion referred to, was of the kind that so often accompanies great talent, for I could not persuade him to conduct his "intermezzo", or even to listen to its performance from the auditorium, but he insisted on playing in his place in the orchestra, from whence he came to the front in response to a most cordial demand from the audience. Two other compositions of his were afterwards performed at my concerts, viz.: "Sevilliana" [sic] (dedicated to me), and an orchestral suite, both of which he himself conducted.

The Daily Mail in its report of the "Intermezzo", said: "We hasten to give Mr. Elgar every credit for a musicianly work. A unanimous recall served to discover quite a young composer to the audience, and as Mr. Elgar is not deficient in scholarship, has plenty of fancy, and orchestrates with facility we may hope that he will not 'rest and be thankful', but go on in a path for which he possesses singular qualifications".

[*The work is correctly titled "Serenade Mauresque," and was played in 1883. EDITOR.]

††† The above short excerpt is the first part of Chapter 5 of "Fifty Years of Music in Birmingham, being the Reminiscences of W. C. Stockley from 1850 to 1900." *Birmingham*, 1913. Stockley's concerts in Birmingham were an important part of musical life in the city, and gave the young Elgar valuable experience in orchestral playing, greatly increasing his knowledge of classical and contemporary music.

AN ELGAR PREFACE

This preface appeared in "The Singing of the Future" by David Frangcon-Davies, published by John Lane in 1905, and re-issued in 1938. Insofar as it represents Elgar's thoughts on music and singing in 1904, we felt that members would welcome its appearance in our pages. EDITOR

'The soul which has seen most of truth shall come to the birth as a philosopher, or artist, or some musical and loving nature'. I do not follow Socrates(†) into his subsequent divisions; for the moment it is enough that, as one who 'has seen most of truth,' he has included the Musician: and in this rich-sounding word I include all – composers, executants and critics alike – who labour, not for any selfish ends, but for the good of the art of music.

But musicians have not always shewn to the world, when their works have come to the birth, that they have seen the most of truth. The art easily lends itself to make passing amusement for the frivolous and the unthinking; in this there is nothing to deplore; we should rather rejoice in knowing that music can be an amusement, for it, in itself, is never ignoble; this it can only be when allied to ignoble words or degrading spectacle. The manysidedness of an art is a chief joy to its possessors, but the ineptitudes, and worse, of the creators of the material on which executants and critics live, have too frequently tended to degrade the two last-named in the exercise of their duties in their branches of the complete art. But with composers and critics and instrumental executants we need not now concern ourselves; although it may be profitably read by all musicians, this book is mainly for singers. I will add, for all singers; certainly for all those proposing to sing, and certainly for many who have already embarked upon their professional careers.

With the march of time, and with it the improvement of musical education, a new desire has possessed us, – the desire to *understand*. The desire has brought with it the interpreters we need. True, they are few in number and their array is meagre compared with the ample numbers and amiable affluence of the popular vocalists; but those who have 'the most of truth' are with us all the same, working, striving, and above all, singing. Where in former days the vocalist entered upon his task with a lighthearted assurance that all the old 'points' would meet with unquestioning acceptance, the singer of the present day has to think as behoves a responsible artist. In circles of lesser value the modern ballad, with its unanalysable inanities, is still accepted as a recognisable form of art, but our better singers, – our real interpreters and our teachers – have long ceased to affront their own intelligence by presenting the rubbish demanded by the uneducated for their pleasant degradation.

This book is a serious appeal to the singer, especially to the English-speaking singer, and I welcome it and hope for much real and lasting good from its dissemination. Written with complete knowledge by a singer who is also an artist it forms a worthy portion, or it may be at this date a commencement, of that long desired new edifice of English music which will some day be raised by those, and by those only, who have seen the 'most of truth'.

EDWARD ELGAR

Hereford, December 1904

(†) Phaedrus (Jowett)

A LETTER FROM SIR LANDON RONALD

The following letter appeared in The Times on 6th June 1935, and we are grateful to Bridget Duckenfield for sending us a copy.

'TOSCANINI AND ELGAR'

To the Editor of The Times

Sir, I have been constantly told that Elgar's music is so English that it could only be really understood and interpreted by one of his own countrymen. I have always strenuously denied this.

Last Monday's magnificent performance of the "Enigma Variations" by Toscanini has, I lay claim, proved me to be correct. This great conductor rendered the work exactly as Elgar intended, and the composer's idiom obviously has no secret for Toscanini. Some of the best performances I have ever heard were from the composer himself, but this one on Friday night last excelled, because Toscanini has a great genius for conducting and Elgar had not.

Elgar knew exactly how he wished his music to be interpreted, and the result was often magnificent. However, this was due, in my opinion, not so much to his powers as a conductor, as to the love and respect he inspired in the orchestra, both as a great musician and a lovable man.

We had the "Variations" from Toscanini exactly as Elgar wished them played, plus the genius of a great master of the orchestra. I maintain that Elgar did not write English music – whatever that may be; he wrote great music. On Monday last a great foreign conductor proved this.

Yours faithfully,

LANDON RONALD, Principal,
The Guildhall School of Music,
John Carpenter Street, E.C.4

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THE CROWN OF INDIA MARCH : A NEW RE-ORCHESTRATION

Elgar's hour-long masque *The Crown of India* ran for some weeks at the Coliseum in March 1912. It comprised twelve numbers, mainly orchestral, though some involved a chorus, and alto and baritone soloists as well. Later that year Elgar arranged an orchestral suite of four (and a bit) of the movements from the music. This runs for approximately 17 minutes, was performed at the Hereford Three Choirs Festival on 11th September 1912, was published, and has been recorded on several occasions; but the remaining items were not published in orchestral form, and this consequently makes it difficult, if not impossible, to perform these items. There is one limited exception, namely no. 10 'the Crown of India March', which was transcribed for military band in 1912 by Frank Winterbottom, then a Bandmaster in the Royal Marines Light Infantry, published by Hawkes & Co, later absorbed into Boosey & Hawkes. Also in 1912 it was recorded by the Black Diamonds Band [available on the Elgar Society LP, ELG 001.]** Doncaster audiences have been privileged to hear performances of this transcription on a number of occasions in 1982, '84 and '89, played by the Doncaster Schools Symphonic Band, whose conductor is Captain Peter A. Sumner, M.B.E.

Immediately before taking up his present position with the Doncaster Education Authority, Captain Sumner enjoyed a distinguished career in the Royal Marines, crowning this with the position of Director of Music to the C-in-C Fleet Band between 1968 and 1975. Soon after he came to Doncaster he was interested to notice Winterbottom's version of *The Crown of India* March in the Authority's collection of music, and found that it worked well in performance. It seemed to him a pity that orchestras were not now able to play this splendid march, and he was doubtless reinforced in this view by the fact that the Doncaster Authority's principal student orchestra, the Beechfield Youth Orchestra, and its associated ensembles, have over the past few years established a tradition of Elgar performance: *Nursery Suite*, *Carillon*, *Wand of Youth Suites*, *Pomp & Circumstance 1 and 4*, *Imperial March*, *Chanson de Matin*, *Chanson de Nuit*, *Serenade*, *Idylle*, *The Spanish Lady Suite*, and the *Introduction and Allegro*. So taking advantage of a recent (I write in March 1990) period of convalescence from an operation he has made his own re-orchestration of the military band arrangement. In doing so, he – no mean composer himself – drew on his own knowledge of, and admiration for, Elgar's scoring, and, just as importantly, his considerable experience of Winterbottom's technique in making military band arrangements of other orchestral music. A glance at the score suggests that *The Crown of India March* should be a notable addition to the Beechfield's repertoire, and I look forward to hearing them tackle it.

P. L. SCOWCROFT

** There was a further recording in 1913 on a Pathé disc, played by their 'house band'. EDITOR

CARICE IRENE BLAKE

Memories, 1941 – 1970

by

H. Sybil Wohlfeld

I met Elgar's daughter Carice in 1941, during the time when my mind was most deeply interested in the great man's music. Subsequently, after being invalided out of the Women's Royal Air Force, I joined her in Worcestershire, in the country adjacent to her father's Birthplace. We were both deeply musical in mind, and found our companionship very enjoyable on that account, combined with which we both adored dogs and other animals! Her home was across the lane from the Birthplace in Broadheath.

Carice had a rare character – a first class brain, a gift for languages, and intense care for the whole spectrum of her father's works. During the first world war she held a Government appointment to interpret foreign mail to this country. She spoke French, German, and some Italian, which after the war, was acknowledged by a Government Commendation. It is a measure of her innate gift for adapting herself to any circumstance, that when she married a farmer, Samuel Blake, to whom she had become engaged in 1921, her new life meant that she had to divide herself between Samuel and her father. She was constantly driving up from Sussex to London, and this must have caused great strain for her. Elgar was lonely after the death of his wife, and Carice gave as much time as she could spare to care for her famous father in London and Worcester. She had a great charm of manner and mind. In her day she was 'presented' – a fact which had dismayed her and which she never mentioned!

Although Carice was not a practising musician, she had a strongly musical ear and a natural aptitude for written works. She acquired any mss. of her father's, when such were offered by private collectors and others lucky enough to have had contact with Elgar. She it was who furnished the Birthplace with sketches, and mss. and cherished all his letters, which have now appeared in print.

When I first joined Carice, after leaving the Air Force, we were both in total agreement that the Birthplace should become better known by the music public. This suggested to me that as the Birthplace was in such a remote spot, it should be publicised as having a convenient place to rest – possibly a tea-room. Carice owned land opposite, so we searched for a portable building. Luckily we found one, and quite soon it was erected. Fittings were difficult to come by, and decorative curtains quite impossible. Luckily I was able to secure some plain material suitable for my fabric painting, and lastly, we secured a dozen small tables and suitable chairs. Not long after we opened the public began to show considerable interest to visit the small cottage, which was, of course, of great interest to Elgar lovers.

It was with trepidation that we had asked Sir Adrian Boult if he would open the tea-room for us. He accepted willingly, and he and Lady Boult lunched with us in the tea-room gardens. I was rather inept at producing such an important lunch, but Sir Adrian expressed himself warmly, wishing us every success. As the public became aware of the amenity we more than doubled the number of visitors. Later I secured a reasonably large board, and painted 'Birthplace Tea-room' which also served light meals when required.

If I might interpose a personal memory here – in connection with my Air Force service. I was billeted in Elgar's once-owned house in Worcester; in fact with a slight illness was kept in a large and handsome bed belonging at one time to Sir Edward. My hostess always reminded me as I lay in it: "Sir Edward died in that bed!"

Carice and I frequently travelled to other parts of Britain to hear performances of Elgar's major works. I recall vividly when we attended a rehearsal of 'Gerontius' in Huddersfield, with Dennis Noble a principal. We occupied a box in a vast hall, absorbed in Sir Malcolm Sargent's conducting. Suddenly he and Dennis Noble strongly disagreed! Dennis, in a rage, ripped off his tie, flinging it at Sir Malcolm's feet! We were convulsed with silent laughter, more especially as the box door opened revealing a diminutive man clutching two cups of tea, which he advanced with the words: "I orp this will be Agre-e-e-able." It was!

Carice was invited to many parts of the USA to speak about her famous father's works, the oratorios in particular, and, of course, the symphonies and chamber works. On one visit we used 28 air-lines to visit Universities, Music Centres and Schools. The enthusiasm was tremendous. I loved the opportunity to hear so much Elgar, and shared in the enthusiasm unstintedly shown by the audiences.

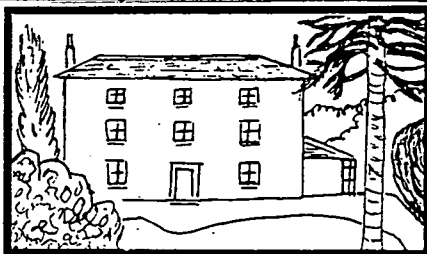
Carice and her father shared the same deep sense of humour, which I revelled in. Carice in her own was way witty, and Elgar's ebullient gifts left many memories in Carice's retentive brain. His sayings, many of them trivial, became part of our daily converse and remain in my memory.

These few lines will, I hope, reveal the depth of influence she had on those whom she met in musical circles, and the tremendous influence of Elgar's music and personality.

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The Nupend
Cradley, near Malvern
Worcs. WR13 5NP



Telephone : (0886) 880881

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

As announced in full in the January Journal, the Annual Meeting of the Society will be held in the Hall, Lawnside School, Great Malvern, on Saturday, 26th May, 1990 at 2.30 p.m.

Members are reminded that nominations for members of the committees are solicited, and these should be sent to the Hon. Secretary as soon as possible. Remember that it is necessary for each nomination to be seconded, and that the permission of the nominee is essential. Officers of the Society are eligible for re-election at each AGM, but members of the general committee who are elected may serve for three years only, before stepping down. Chairmen of branches serve on the committee by right of office.

NEWS ITEMS

Two performances on which we missed giving information, unfortunately. In both cases details arrived after the publication of the January issue had gone ahead. We hope that both went well. On March 19th at Southwark Cathedral, *The Dream of Gerontius*, and on March 31st at Wilmslow Leisure Centre, Cheshire, a performance of *The Apostles*. PLEASE local secretaries and members, let us have an early warning!

An important publication is announced by the British Library for Summer, 1990. This is Robert Anderson's study: "Elgar in Manuscript". The work will survey Elgar's music manuscripts, list all those surviving, and discuss the insights they provide into the development of the composer's ideas. Projected price is £30.00.

Barry Collett asks us to advise members that he is collecting items of 'unrecorded Elgar' and that they will appear in due course, most probably on cassette.

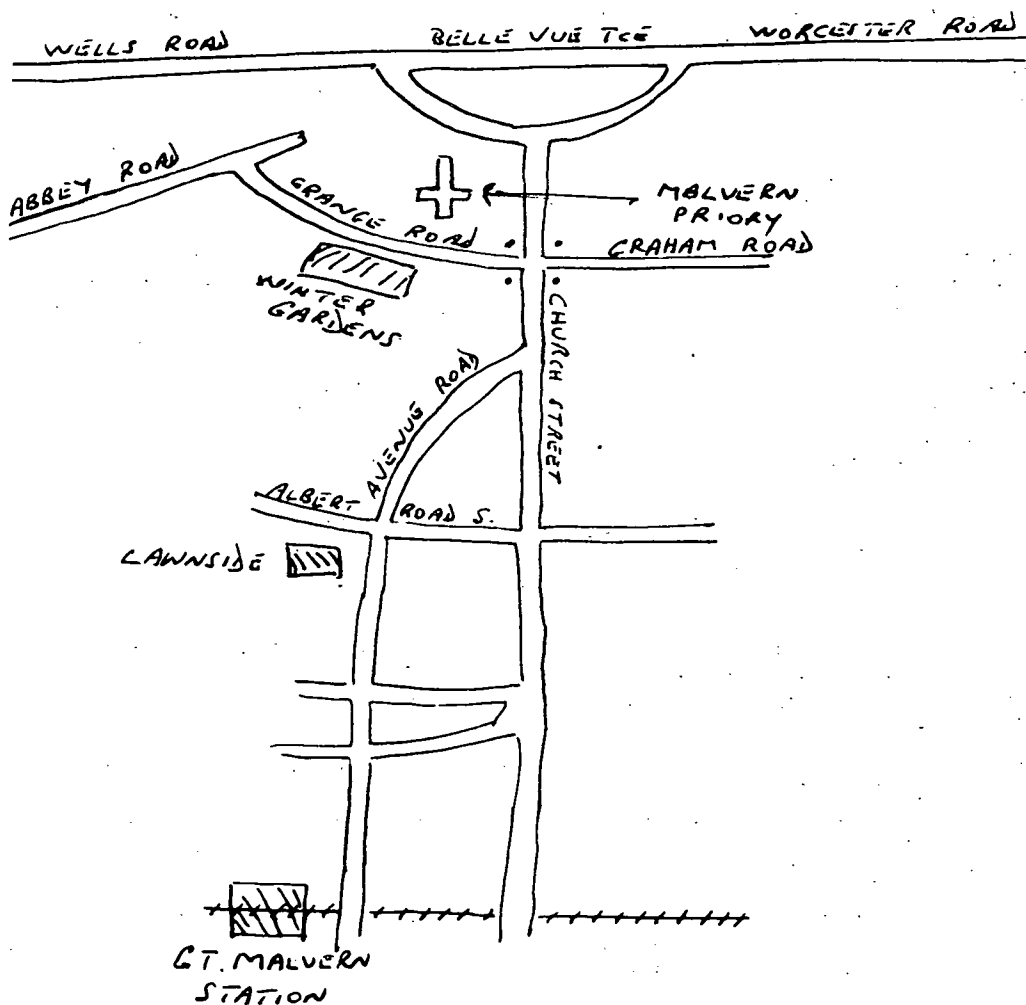
Elgar Letters. In late November Sotheby's held a sale of printed and manuscript music, including many important letters from composers and musicians. Three lots relating to Elgar included an important batch of 25 letters to W. H. Reed, on the composition of the Violin Concerto, and other matters. The letters ranged from 1910 to 1933, and additionally there were three letters from Carice Elgar Blake. What did these letters go for? £4,180!! Elgar material is a rising market . . . The lot was sold to a well-known music-dealer, but we trust that the material will be able to remain in this country for research purposes.

* * * * *

TREVOR FENEMORE - JONES

As announced in the last issue the Vice-Chairman has decided to stand down from office after many years of service to the Society.

Members are reminded that a presentation is to be made to Mr. Fenemore-Jones in appreciation of his work for us. Those who have not yet contributed to the presentation, and wish to do so, are asked to send a donation to the Secretary, Carol Holt, as soon as possible, as the presentation is to be made at the Annual Meeting at the end of the month. Please make clear that your cheque is for the Fenemore-Jones presentation, and make cheques payable to The Elgar Society. Thank you.



Map of Malvern for visitors to the Annual Meeting

Readers are advised that tickets for the CBSO concert on the evening of the 26th May are now all sold, but members are reminded that following the concert they are invited to a CIVIC RECEPTION given by MALVERN HILLS DISTRICT COUNCIL in the Pump Room, Winter Gardens, Malvern. Exact times will be announced at the AGM. The Society is honoured that the Malvern Hills District Council should wish to recognise the Society in this way, and we look forward to a very pleasant time. Members should already have applied for tickets to the Reception, but in the event of any query please contact the Secretary immediately.

Events on Sunday, 27th May, are detailed on page 20 of the January issue.

Members will recall that last year we gave publicity to the Worcester Cathedral Appeal. This appeal was launched to raise urgently needed funds to repair the fabric of the building, much of it now in poor state and in need of costly restoration. We understand that there has been a very good response to the Appeal, but £950,000 still remains to be found before work can be guaranteed. Those who wish to respond to the Appeal, but may have forgotten to send so far, should rest assured that the Appeal is still open, and contributions will be gratefully received. Worcester Cathedral Appeal, Chapter Office, 8 College Precincts, Worcester, WR1 2LG.

THE THREE CHOIRS ELGAR SOCIETY TEA

The traditional Elgar Society Three Choirs tea will be held at 4.15 p.m. on Sunday, 19th August, 1990. As on previous occasions in Worcester the venue is the attractive Friends' Meeting House, Sansome Place, Worcester, almost opposite St. George's R.C. Church, where Elgar played the organ. There is a change in arrangements - admission will be by **TICKET ONLY, price £1.50 each.**

Application should be made as much in advance as possible (to arrange for catering) to Carol Holt, 20 Geraldine Road, Malvern, Worcs. WR14 3PA. Please remember to enclose a s.a.e. for reply. This is an excellent opportunity to meet old and new friends in a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere - so come along and make this the best attended Tea Party ever! But tickets *in advance* please!

HIGHFIELD

Twins Catherine and Marguerite are pleased to welcome you to
'HIGHFIELD' - an elegant, friendly and comfortable Edwardian House, with a large sunny garden, in a
tranquil location just 1½ miles from Leominster on the Ivington Road.

(Hereford approx 25 mins, Worcester and Malvern approx 40 mins)

Delicious Home-prepared food is served in the attractive licensed dining room, and special diets may
be catered for on request. Barbecues in the garden may also be organised.

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'Birchwood Lodge'. The house as it is today, photographed in 1989 by member Alan J. Horne. By kind permission of the Rev. and Mrs. Vockins the house will be open for visitors, and coffee, on May 27th from 10.30 p.m.

BACK ISSUES OF THE JOURNAL

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

- 1977 September 75p
- 1978 January and September 75p each
- 1979 January, £1.25. September 85p each
- 1980 January, May and September 95p each
- 1981 January, May and September 95p each
- 1982 January, May and September 95p each
- 1983 January, May and September £1.00 each
- 1984 January, May and September £1.25 each
- 1985 January, May and September £1.50 each
- 1986 January, May and September £1.50 each
- 1987 January, May and September £2.00 each
- 1988 January, May and September £2.00 each

THE BIRTHPLACE APPEAL – a word to our readers

Keen-eyed readers of the Journal will have noted in the last issue that under the concert diary we drew attention to the fact that a special London concert was to be held to launch the Birthplace Appeal (for £900,000 we understand). We picked up this information **only from the advance concert brochure**. At an earlier date members had told us that the appeal was to be launched, but no definite launch date had been set, and, apart from drawing attention in a previous Journal to the fact that an appeal was in the offing, we had no other information to give. Your editor also found out the name of the Appeal publicity organisation and wrote asking for early information to be available to our members. This letter was not acknowledged.

Apart from the fact that we were never advised of the special concert, the editor was surprised to see a write-up in the London "Evening Standard" on 9th March headed CHARLES BACKS £900,000 ELGAR APPEAL, and then a short news story obviously based on a publicity release. Doubtless other papers also carried the story.

Members of the Elgar Society; and other Elgarians, may well wonder why The Elgar Society Journal carries no information on what must be the largest Appeal ever launched by those responsible for the Birthplace. The answer quite simply is that we have never been given any official information, nor have we been given anything concrete about the Appeal to put in our pages. We in the Society value the Birthplace greatly, and we would not wish members to think that we are distancing ourselves in any way from this latest Appeal. **However, we have been completely ignored, and there seems little we can do to inform our readers or indeed to explain the Appeal to them.** Constructive comments or information would be gratefully received by the Editor.

NATIONAL EVENT 1990

About 75 members enjoyed an afternoon with Dame Joan Hammond at the event organised by London Branch at Imperial College on Saturday, 10th February.

Dame Joan showed that she had lost none of her ability to sweep an audience along with her in a virtuoso performance of great energy, humour and charm.

After an interval which provided ample opportunity for old acquaintances to be renewed, and new ones formed, Dame Joan was joined by Sophie Grimmer – a very promising student of the RCM – who sang "Speak, Music" and "The Shepherd's Song" most delightfully, and clearly benefitted from Dame Joan's advice.

Personalities



A Recent Snapshot of Yehudi Menuhin and Sir Edward Elgar. The Violinist Has Not Yet Played Sir Edward's Concerto With Orchestra in This Country, After His Successes in Europe With It, Although the Work Was On One of His Last Season's Recital Programs in New York

Not the usual picture of Menuhin and Elgar. Was this taken in Elgar's garden?

AN AUTHOR'S (or EDITOR'S) APOLOGY

The following delightful early-19th century apology might well be confused in readers' minds with our occasional (!) errors in the Journal. But . . . it has a Worcester connection! The volume from which it was taken was once in the possession of St. George's Church, Worcester. A church which has its place in the Elgar story . . .

THE AUTHOR'S avocations in the country not having allowed him to attend to the correction of the Prefs, he hopes the Public will accept of this apology both for the numerous errata, and the tardiness of the following publication.

festivals . . . festivals . . . festivals . . .

This year the MALVERN FESTIVAL (20th May to 2nd June), and the City of Gloucester ELGAR FESTIVAL (26th to 31st May) overlap. Fortunately for Elgarians only one Elgar 'clash' has resulted, and a feast of Elgar is the result, as well as a remarkably fine series of drama, music, exhibitions, talks, etc. at Malvern.

In August it is the turn of Worcester to host the THREE CHOIRS FESTIVAL, and another magnificent series of concerts and recitals are promised. Full details are set out below. Notice for the Malvern Festival is necessarily brief (these details were not available when the January issue was prepared), so urgent application is necessary, and seats may be at a premium. Copies of the Malvern Festival Brochure may be obtained from the Festival Box Office, Grange Road, Malvern, Worcs. Telephone: 0684-572725.

This year's Shaw play is "Mrs. Warren's Profession" and is presented by the excellent Cambridge Theatre Company. Orchestras include: BBC Welsh Symphony, the City of Birmingham Symphony, the English String Orchestra, the Bournemouth Sinfonietta, and the Malvern Festival Orchestra. There are many soloists, among them the pianists Anthony Goldstone and Yeoh Ean Mei. Marisa Robles, the harpist, and the guitarist Nicola Hall will also appear. There is so much that is interesting, but we have only one space to detail the Elgar items: Cello Concerto (Moray Walsh, soloist) on 26th May, Concert Allegro (Anthony Goldstone, soloist) on 28th May, and *The Dream of Gerontius* on 2nd June.

The Gloucester Elgar Festival is presented by the enterprising Philomusica of Gloucestershire and Worcestershire, this year in collaboration with Vocal Ensemble Jack Loorij of Holland. The Festival opens on 27th May with a special service in Gloucester Cathedral at 3.00 p.m. and in the evening a concert includes the Violin Concerto (George Ewart, soloist), *Froissart Overture*, and Parry's 'Blest Pair of Sirens.' On the 28th a performance of *The Apostles* in the Cathedral, *The Dream of Gerontius*, and on the 31st the Cello Concerto (Rachel Howgego, soloist), *The Spirit of England*, and the Faure 'Requiem'. Tickets are available immediately from the Tourist Information Office, The Cross Gloucester, the Cathedral Cloister Gift Shop, Gloucester, or Patrons' tickets from Mrs. B. Edwards, 2 Howcroft, Churchdown, Gloucester. The details given above were correct at time of going to press, but we cannot be responsible for any last-minute alteration to arrangements.

THE THREE CHOIRS FESTIVAL is outstanding this year. Worcester has done itself – and us – proud! In an article in the attractive little blue brochure sent out with the main programme Donald Hunt reminds us that 1890, also at Worcester, marked a turning point in the career of Elgar with the *Froissart Overture*. In 1990 the organisers of the Festival have included more Elgar than usual to mark the anniversary. There is, of course, a host of other music, talks and recitals, but here we have only space to concentrate on the Elgar items: an Organ recital, by Simon Preston, to include the *Vesper Voluntaries*, and *Imperial March*, on August 20th. The *String Quartet* on August 22nd. On August 23rd the cathedral concert will include the Bach/Elgar *Fantasia & Fugue*, and the *Second Symphony*. On August 24th Dr Percy Young gives a morning talk on 'Newman, Elgar and Gerontius', whilst the evening concert includes *Froissart*, and *The Coronation Ode*.

On the last day, August 25th a presentation in the morning of "My Friends Pictured Within", and in the evening *The Dream of Gerontius*.

The Festival opens on Saturday, 18th August, and in the afternoon of that day Wulstan Atkins will be giving a talk at the Huntingdon Hall on the Elgar/Atkins Friendship.

Brochures may be had from the Joint Festival Secretary, Jean Armstrong, 103A High Street, Worcester WR21 2HW. Telephone: 0905 613988.

NEWS FROM THE BRANCHES . .

LONDON Branch has met four times since the last issue of the Journal. In December Professor Ian Parrott spoke on "Elgar's Harmonic Language" with enthusiasm and wit, as well as his customary authority. This was a talk from which much was to be learned, and which made one admire and wonder at Elgar's genius afresh. The common feature of the next three meetings was that each speaker addressed himself to a vast topic, gave excellent value and yet could well have gone on for twice as long had time-limits allowed. Andrew Neill's subject was "Elgar and the Great War". Rarely can we have had so assiduously researched a topic. The evening was further enhanced by a meticulously prepared soundtrack, and the live readings of John Cater and Lorraine Landau. In February Bernard Keeffe made a welcome return, and spoke about "Elgar and Mahler", two giant figures with much in common as well as many differences. Here again we were given plenty to ponder. But the most crowded evening of all was, perhaps, in March when Edward Greenfield discussed Elgar's Symphonies and Concertos on record. What a good thing that our newly-purchased cassette player stood up to this presentation! We were treated to a fascinating evening, from which each member of a large audience will have favourite moments of anecdote or recording to treasure.

The Branch AGM will be held on Monday, 4th June, at 7.45 p.m. at the Institute of Christian Studies, Margaret Street, W1N 8JQ. It will follow a short organ recital, to be given by Harry Bramma, at All Saints' Church, Margaret Street, at 7.00 p.m. Agendas and minutes will be available at the meeting. Nominations for officers and committee should be sent to the Secretary (address on back cover) to arrive by June 2nd.

WEST MIDLANDS Branch. By the time this appears in print our 1989/90 programme will have run its course and we will be looking forward to Autumn 1990, and a visit from Michael Pope. He will address the Branch on "Elgar and the English Orchestral Heritage." We hope to see you at the Friends' Meeting House at 2.30 p.m. on Saturday, 29th September.

Our AGM was on 10th March when Bridget Monahan invited the Branch to 'the Stables', an annual invitation. The officers were re-elected, but there are three new faces on the committee. *Sad News* – the Branch subscription, from 1st January, 1991, goes up to £3.00 per person: *Good News* – Margaret Elgar is now an Honorary Life Member of the Branch.

In his annual report the Chairman, John Warren, applauded the fact that a joint meeting with the Newman Society has been arranged for 23rd June 1990. The programme will include a visit to Edgbaston Oratory to view the Newman memorabilia, and after tea, to Birmingham Town Hall for a performance of *The Dream of Gerontius* conducted by Christopher Robinson.

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YORKSHIRE BRANCH was very kindly treated by another mild winter and no meetings have suffered due to weather conditions. This has been a particular relief as the meetings most at risk have this season been the occasions for some particularly good presentations. Our Chairman's annual offering, on January 8th, was an enjoyable selection of Elgar music, interspersed with Jim's usual relaxed, interesting commentary. Music teacher David Fligg was in good form on February 12th, when he gave a scholarly, yet witty, lecture on how Elgar had influenced – and been influenced by – other composers. Examples on record and also live from the piano were used to good effect and David ensured the interest of his audience by involving them in his examination of his subject matter.

A diversion from our usual fare came on March 12th, when Robert Bashforth, of the Aireborough G & S Society gave us a fascinating and tuneful presentation based on the lives and music of W. S. Gilbert and Arthur S. Sullivan. All the witty lines and great tunes were there. Mr. Bashforth, himself a latter-day Savoyard, had the right delivery and provided a very entertaining evening which was greatly enjoyed by all.

After the April AGM, we have Brian Stocks on May 4th to talk on Elgar's religious convictions and to look at "some of the words and music of the man who 'always said God was against art' ". On June 11th there will be a welcome revisit by organist and society member Charles Myers, who will discuss Elgar's use of organ and piano.

The branch continues to enjoy good attendances and there has been some welcome interchange with members of the NW Branch when opportunities have occurred for members, on either side, to cross the Pennines. We hope this can continue, to the benefit of both branches.

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NORTH WEST Branch has had an enjoyable and interesting season. In October James Eastam gave us an insight into "The Music Makers – as seen through the Conductor." Our November meeting was an excellent talk by Professor Ian Parrott on "Elgar's Harmonic Language." Our AGM and Christmas Social, with music performed by RNCM students, was held in December. At our first meeting in the New Year Dennis Clark gave a beautiful visual presentation of "Elgar in Yorkshire". In February Henry Sandon talked about his time as a Lay Clerk in Worcester – "A personal look at Elgar, the man and musician." Our season concluded in March with a programme of English music through three centuries, given by the excellent vocal group Cantilena.

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EAST ANGLIA have little to report as there were no meetings in January and February. The AGM was in March, followed by a selection of Choral Songs, presented by Eric Smith. We are looking forward to visits by David Bury, Margaret Elgar and Trevor Fenemore-Jones.

ELGAR'S "TOP TEN" ON RADIO 3 DURING 1989

CELLO CONCERTO IN E MINOR, Opus 85	10 performances
ENIGMA VARIATIONS, Opus 36	10 performances
SYMPHONY No. 1 IN A FLAT, Opus 55	9 performances
INTRODUCTION AND ALLEGRO FOR STRINGS, Opus 47	8 performances
SYMPHONY No. 2 IN E FLAT, Opus 63	7 performances
OVERTURE "COCKAIGNE" (IN LONDON TOWN), Opus 40	7 performances
OVERTURE "FROISSART", Opus 19	6 performances
SERENADE FOR STRINGS, Opus 20	6 performances
OVERTURE "IN THE SOUTH", Opus 50	6 performances
ELEGY FOR STRINGS, Opus 58	6 performances

From time to time Elgarian rarities were played, and here are six of special interest, all receiving but one performance :

Part Song, "DEATH ON THE HILLS", Opus 72; Romance for Bassoon and Orchestra, Opus 62; Coronation March, Opus 65; Five Part Songs from The Greek Anthology, Opus 45; Serenade Mauresque (being one of his Opus 10), and probably the most illuminating in relationship to his earlier years as a teacher of his favourite instrument, the violin, was "6 Very Easy Melodious Exercises in the First Position, for Violin and Piano, Opus 22."

Four outstanding Feature Programmes on Radio 3 in 1989 highlighted Elgar's achievements as a great composer. In February (4th) David Nice on Saturday Review featured excerpts from new recordings of "The Dream of Gerontius" and "The Kingdom", conducted by, respectively, Richard Hickox and Leonard Slatkin.

Then in March (27th to 31st, Monday to Friday) Elgar was in "COMPOSERS OF THE WEEK", and each programme included a Piano Improvisation played by Elgar and by good fortune recorded for posterity by a quick-witted Sound Engineer who saw the chance of capturing a rare event . . . Elgar playing the piano. This was on the 6th November 1929 when the composer was in his 73rd year, and relaxing after a recording session in the Small Queen's Hall, London. These 5 Impromptus certainly demonstrate that Elgar, who often said he disliked the piano, had a brilliant pianistic technique . . . how one wishes he had composed a Piano Concerto as he is said to have contemplated during his last years about the time of his, alas, unfinished Third Symphony.

August (15th) produced a musical novelty entitled "ELGAR IN ARRANGEMENT", a highly original programme. Briefly, these were the works, all well-contrasted : "Salut d'Amour" played on the Flute with Wind Ensemble, delightful playing by Flautist Georges Barrere. Then the Cello Concerto arranged by Tertis for Viola and Orchestra; Elgar's own abridged version of his Violin Concerto, arranged for Marie Hall led us to the finale of this nearly 2 hour concert with the Piano Version of the First Symphony, in an arrangement made by Sigrid Karg-Elert and played by David Owen Morris.

And then on November 4th "BUILDING A LIBRARY" included a journey to Italy, with "IN THE SOUTH" and the guide being Edward Seckerson, comparing different recordings of this noble Concert Overture, in which Elgar enshrined memories of himself and his wife and their holiday at Alassio.

So, all in all, a great year for Elgar and his music, with a total of 172 performances of his compositions (136 in 1988).

He often said : "Music is in the Air, and I take what I want," I would also say that his music is very much "ON THE AIR".

T. Rowbotham

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

May 26	The Dream of Gerontius <i>Truro Cathedral Soc/Orch/Y. Howard/ D. Johnston/M. Glanville/Cond. D. Leach</i>	Truro Cathedral, Truro, Cornwall 7.30pm
June 2	Elgar Birthday Concert	Leominster Priory
June 2	Spirit of England; Sea Pictures; The Music Makers <i>Ross on Wye Choral Soc/Orch da Camera/J. Whitehead/C. Botes</i>	Ross Parish Church, Ross on Wye 7.30 pm
June 30	The Apostles <i>Crouch End Festival Choir/Ealing SO/ Temple</i>	All Hallows Church/Savernake Road, Gospel Oak, NW3 7.30 pm
July 6	Elgar Concert (for Dalvington Appeal) <i>English String Orch/Boughton</i>	Malvern Priory 7.30 pm
July 8	Repeat of June 30 Concert "The Apostles" Norwich	
July 16	Violin Concerto <i>H. Bean/Stoneleigh Youth Orch/Brown</i>	Queen Elizabeth Hall, South Bank

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RECORDING WANTED : 1975 LP re-issue of 1945 Sargent recording of the "Dream of Gerontius" (HMV RLS 709 or equivalent Cassette) with Ripley, Nash, Noble & Walker. Buy, hire or borrow. Offers to Raymond Side, 43 Noah's Ark, Kemsing, Kent TN15 6PA (Telephone : 0732 61712).

BOOK REVIEW

VIOLIN CONCERTO, CELLO CONCERTO

Elgar Complete Edition : volume 32, 1988. *Novello* £64.95 (hardback)
£37.95 (paperback)

First, there is the sheer pleasure of listening to recordings of the two Elgar concertos while following the music in these beautifully and clearly printed scores. It would be anti-social to take them to a concert – too big – but very tempting. Then, as one studies the impeccably detailed and scholarly notes by Robert Anderson, one begins to wonder if any piece of music reaches us exactly as the composer intended. There is so much that can and does go wrong: the composer's own carelessness (understandable in the circumstances of creation), copyists' mistakes, engravers' errors, changes of mind by composer and soloist at rehearsal, and so on. In Elgar's case errors were often his own fault. He left proof correction until perilously near the first performance and then had to do it in a hurry – and probably in a bad temper. Will conductors and instrumentalists, accustomed to the full score and parts they have used for years, devote the time to studying a critical edition such as this? One can only hope so.

As in all the preceding volumes, the documentation in the foreword is of the utmost interest and fascination, particularly in the case of the Violin Concerto which, like *Enigma*, is one of Elgar's mystifications: whose soul is 'enshrined' in the music? Who is disguised by those five dots after the Spanish quotation *Aqué está encerrada el alma de*? We shall never know.

Keeping strictly to the events of the years of the concerto's composition, Anderson and Jerrold Northrop Moore make no mention of the recent, plausible theories about Helen Weaver, the love who went out of his life a quarter of a century before he wrote Opus 61. They put forward no definite candidates beyond mentioning the claims of Alice Stuart-Wortley and Julia Worthington. It doesn't matter, I suppose, except that so many of us are romantic nosey-parkers about these 'inspirations'. In a way, too, it *does* matter, because of the light it throws on Elgar's frame of mind while he was composing. It is for this reason, and especially because of all those 'Windflower' references which extend to other works of those years, that I believe Alice Stuart-Wortley to have the strongest claim bracketed in his mind, perhaps, with Helen, both being out of reach and might-have-beens.

Every book on Elgar mentions the abandoned Violin Concerto of 1890. It now seems there were also two other projects, in A minor and E flat, between 1902 and 1906. The musical impetus came from Fritz Kreisler, eventually to receive the concerto's dedication. He asked for a work in 1905 and told the press that he considered Elgar to be the greatest living composer; no other nation could produce anything like him. 'Elgar will overshadow everybody . . . I place him on an equal footing with my idols Beethoven and Brahms'. Perhaps some of this was soft soap to make sure he obtained what he wanted from the composer who was, as we would say today, the flavour of the month. Anyway it worked, although after 1911 Kreisler never appears to have been all that smitten with 'his' work. He used to cut the finale drastically in the United States (as did Menuhin) and his lack of zeal to record it has been fully documented by Dr. Northrop Moore in *Elgar on Record*.

Another nugget of gold unearthed by the editors: we know that Elgar wrote dejectedly to Alice Stuart-Wortley on 7th February 1910 that he had doubts about the slow movement and would 'put it away for a long time before I decide its fate'. That same day he composed bars 23 - 26 of the first movement, the beautiful theme marked *dolce* which, with the movement's second subject, came to mean the 'Windflower' for him.

There was also a long gap between the first request for a cello concerto and its fulfilment. Carl Fuchs, cellist in the Brodsky Quartet and a legendary figure in Manchester and Liverpool music at the turn of the century, asked Elgar for 'something for Cello' in 1900. This was reinforced in 1906 and 1913 by Paul Grummer, who was to be the Busch Quartet's cellist. But work did not begin until the last night Elgar spent in hospital after his tonsil operation, when he sketched the world-weary 9/8 theme of the first movement, copying it out a few days later 'as a thank offering to a good Windflower'. That it was a different kind of music was apparent to Lady Elgar as early as August 1918 when her diary mentions how Sir Landon Ronald had visited their Sussex cottage, Brinkwells, and 'loved the mysterious Orch. piece.' This suggests that the theme was not originally intended for a cello concerto.

Here, too, are the precise details of those dreadful days of rehearsal on 26th and 27th October 1919 when Albert Coates took up Elgar's time. The original schedule had not been generous, anyway – on the first day, Elgar's concerto was booked for 11.30 a.m. but Coates went on until after 12.30. Next day the Queen's Hall rehearsal was fixed for 12.30. Coates finished just before 1.00 p.m. and the orchestra – 'like angels' – stayed till 1.30. It's no wonder the concerto made so little impression in spite of Ernest Newman's immediate perception of its rare and special qualities.

Considering the price of this and other volumes, it is likely that only a few privileged people will possess them. But what matters is that England's great composer should be the subject of a definitive edition, for which he has not had to wait as long as Berlioz. All connected with this enterprise are entitled to feel justifiable pride in the results.

MICHAEL KENNEDY



RECORD REVIEW

Symphony No. 1 in A flat, opus 55

*Royal Philharmonic orchestra, conducted by Sir Yehudi Menuhin
Virgin Classics VC 7 90773-2*

This is a highly individual, but ultimately not entirely satisfactory, recording of the first symphony. The first movement is fast (the quickest since Boult), fiery and hard driven. No one else gets the same degree of snarling menace from the rapid trombone figures – and, as in Previn's Philips recording, with the same orchestra), which I reviewed in the September 1986 'Journal', the leaner string tone of the RPO not only allows more wind detail through, but somehow changes the balance of Elgar's orchestration, making it sound much less lush and romantic.

Despite his many years of intimate familiarity with Elgar's music, Menuhin still manages to convey a sense of spontaneous rediscovery. On the negative side, however, he seems too often to get carried away by the emotional power of the individual moment. The result is a somewhat erratic progress through Elgar's lengthy, discursive, but clear-sighted symphonic argument. Far too often a sudden change of tempo catches the orchestra unawares, and there are many moments of untidy ensemble.

Menuhin's *scherzo*, too, is one of the quickest on record, matched only by Previn. Menuhin, however, finds a hair-raising extra dimension of fierce aggression in the music. Commendably, he does not slow down for the central section (no *ritardando* is indicated in the score), and the reprise of the first section is, if anything, quicker and even more aggressively played. Previn, however, was able to get crisper, cleaner articulation from the RPO players, and, by comparison, their playing for Menuhin sounds at times rather coarse.

On the other hand Menuhin paces the slow movement perfectly. He allows the music to unfold steadily but not too slowly, and with just enough flexibility to allow the wind players (and, in particular, the clarinettist) to phrase their solo passages most characterfully. In the last movement, however, Menuhin's 'heart on the sleeve' approach leads to a lack of steady pulse, some ensemble problems and, ultimately, a failure to satisfactorily link the disparate section of the movement into a convincing summing up of the symphony as a whole.

The recorded sound is excellent, the slightly dry accoustic of Studio One, Abbey Road admirably suiting Menuhin's direct and somewhat impulsive interpretation.

This is not, therefore, a recording of Elgar's first symphony that I can strongly recommend – but, as usual, Menuhin's unique musical intellect commands respect, and devoted fans of the symphony may well find themselves listening to certain aspects of this familiar masterpiece with fresh ears.

G.H.L.

CD ROUNDUP

The remarkable number of CD reissues of older Elgar recordings which have been released since my last *CD Roundup*, has made it extremely difficult to keep track of them all – let alone have time to listen to them! I have not, for example, had time to listen to EMI's Boulton centenary Elgar issue – a 3 CD box, containing the well known later recordings of the two symphonies, the Variations, the P&C marches, Serenade for Strings and some lighter pieces (CMS 763099-2). Nevertheless, the items are all familiar enough, and are already available on individually packaged CDs, in very satisfactory sound quality. I have however heard, and can strongly recommend, an EMI 'Studio' mid-price disc bringing back into circulation Boulton's pioneering *Sanguine Fan* recording of 1973, his firmly controlled, if ultimately rather under-characterised, *Falstaff*, and the Bach-Elgar Fantasia & Fugue in C minor (CDM 763133-2). One must not forget, however, that Barbirolli's wonderful 1964 *Falstaff* is available on the same label, number CDM 769185-2.

I must also mention two further very important reissues from EMI, bringing back into circulation other pioneering Elgar recordings from the 1970s. CDM 769889-2 brings together the late, lamented John Ogden's recording of the Concert Allegro and the slight Sonatina, (actually recorded in 1969), my personal favourite recording of the Piano Quintet (Ogden again with Allegri Quartet) and the Hugh Bean and David Parkhouse recording of the Violin Sonata. An extremely generous 77 minutes of music.

The second special reissue, a two-CD set, number CDM 769891-2 couples Vernon Handley's 1975 recording of the complete *Starlight Express* music (with the LPO, and singers Valerie Masterson and Derek Hammond-Stroud) with his 1979 Bournemouth recording of Delius's music for Flecker's *Hassan*. All these recordings, incidentally, were amongst the best of their time, and sound more than satisfactory in the new format. EMI also deserve praise for the comprehensive notes accompanying these reissues: I was particularly pleased to see that Jerrold Northrop Moore's detailed original notes for *Starlight Express* are reproduced in full in a superb 35-page accompanying booklet.

I have never shared the enthusiasm of some distinguished critics for Solti's Elgar recordings. Those who do enjoy these performances, however, will not be disappointed by Decca's fine CD transfers of what were always outstandingly good recordings. Once again, I have not been able to survey the whole set, (although I know most of the interpretations well from the original LP issues), and have only listened in detail to perhaps the best performance of the series, a wonderfully dramatic, virile *Falstaff* (with the LPO) on Decca-London 425155-2, coupled with a far less satisfactory, somewhat sentimentalised *Variations*, played by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, in rather close-miked sound, which does not allow for much dynamic variety. The other Solti-Elgar reissues, all recorded at Kingsway Hall with the LPO are: Symphony No 1 and *Cockaigne* (421387), Symphony No 2 and *In the South* (421386-2), and the Violin Concerto, with Kyung Wha Chung, in top technical form, sharing Solti's rather forceful, restless approach (421388). Two little Elgar miniatures for violin and piano are added as encores.

Decca have also reissued Lyn Harrell's rather bland recording of the Cello Concerto (recorded at Cleveland, with Maazel and now coupled with Kyung Wha Chung's Walton violin concerto: 421385-2) and a fine disc of British string music (mainly by Elgar) from Marriner and the Academy of St Martin in the Fields (421384-2). These Decca-London Elgar reissues are part of a splendid series called *The British Collection*, and there are many other CDs in the series well worth exploring. The presentation is generally good, with adequate, scholarly notes and interesting cover illustrations, specially commissioned by Courage Breweries.

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I have never shared the enthusiasm of some distinguished critics for Solti's Elgar recordings. Those who do enjoy these performances, however, will not be disappointed by Decca's fine CD transfers of what were always outstandingly good recordings. Once again, I have not been able to survey the whole set, (although I know most of the interpretations well from the original LP issues), and have only listened in detail to perhaps the best performance of the series, a wonderfully dramatic, virile *Falstaff* (with the LPO) on Decca-London 425155-2, coupled with a far less satisfactory, somewhat sentimentalised *Variations*, played by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, in rather close-miked sound, which does not allow for much dynamic variety. The other Solti-Elgar reissues, all recorded at Kingsway Hall with the LPO are: Symphony No 1 and *Cockaigne* (421387), Symphony No 2 and *In the South* (421386-2), and the Violin Concerto, with Kyung Wha Chung, in top technical form, sharing Solti's rather forceful, restless approach (421388). Two little Elgar miniatures for violin and piano are added as encores.

Decca have also reissued Lyn Harrell's rather bland recording of the Cello Concerto (recorded at Cleveland, with Maazel and now coupled with Kyung Wha Chung's Walton violin concerto: 421385-2) and a fine disc of British string music (mainly by Elgar) from Marriner and the Academy of St Martin in the Fields (421384-2). These Decca-London Elgar reissues are part of a splendid series called *The British Collection*, and there are many other CDs in the series well worth exploring. The presentation is generally good, with adequate, scholarly notes and interesting cover illustrations, specially commissioned by Courage Breweries.

The gem of the collection for Elgar fans, however, must surely be the reissue of the Britten recording of *The Dream of Gerontius*, with Pears, Minton and Shirley-Quirk as the soloists. Britten's fresh, dramatic approach to the work, revolutionary in its day, still has the ability to make us listen afresh to this familiar music. Many critics found the choral balance somewhat backward on the original LPs. On CD the choral sound is much clearer in detail, but the solo voices (especially Pears) seem a little too close. A wonderful bargain on a 2 CD set, with Boult's 1962 recording of Holst's *Hymn of Jesus* preceding Part One of *Gerontius*.(421381-2).

The bad news of the past six months has been the demise of the PRT company, successors to Pye Records. Towards the end of 1988, PRT had revived the old Nixa label for a series of CD reissues of 1950s Pye recordings, mainly featuring Boult and Barbirolli. Any copies still in the shops should be snapped up smartly by fans of British music. The discs to look out for are: NIXCD 6002, (the Halle under Barbirolli in the 1st symphony and *Introduction and Allegro*), NIXCD 6003 (Barbirolli again: British music, mainly Delius, but with the Elgar *Elegy for Strings*), NIXCD 6006 (Barbirolli's superb 1956 *Variations*, the Cello Concerto, with Andre Navarra, with two Grieg *Elegiac Melodies* thrown in for good measure), NIXCD 6011 (Boult and the LPO in the 2nd Symphony). The sound quality is nearly always excellent: the Boult recording is a bit foggy, the Barbirolli 1st Symphony rather close-miked, and the Cello Concerto is in mono, the original stereo tapes have sadly deteriorated. Elsewhere the thirty year old recordings have come up exceptionally well in the new transfers, and the packaging, unlike PRT's earlier attempts at CD reissues, is satisfactory, with good notes.

Finally an interesting pair of new recordings from ASV. On a disc called *Serenade to Music: Three English Serenades* (number CD-DCA655) the *Serenade for Strings* is given a pleasant, direct performance by the New York Virtuosi Chamber Symphony, conducted by Kenneth Klein. There are any number of equally good recordings of the *Serenade*, but what makes this record worth investigating is the imaginative programme, bringing together the Elgar work, Britten's *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings* (very well sung by Grayson Hirst, and with fine horn playing from William Kuyper of the New York Philharmonic), and the Vaughan Williams *Serenade to Music* performed as originally conceived for sixteen solo singers. The young singers do not have the strong individuality of the original singers on Wood's recording (recently reissued on CD) nor even the young British singers used by Boult – nor is Klein's conducting quite flexible enough – but, nevertheless an unusual and interesting issue.

The second ASV release also has Vaughan Williams as composer of the main work. On CD-DCA 634, Owain Arwel Hughes conducts the Philharmonia in a fine performance of the *London Symphony*, (its Ravelian impressionism never more strongly conveyed), coupled with two other London-inspired pieces – Ireland's *London Overture* and Elgar's *Cockaigne*, both performed with vigour, most attractively recorded in a resonant acoustic. On the LP version, all three works are accommodated on one disc. For CD, however, the programme was too long, and ASV have packaged it in the form of a two-CD box (for the price of one), with *Cockaigne* separately mastered onto a 3" CD single. A very convenient format for works of modest length, at present only being exploited by Deutsche Grammophon – but which I hope will not be allowed to fade away like the equally convenient 45 rpm extended play records of thirty years ago.

G.H.L.

LETTERS

From Derek Webb

You may be interested in news of Elgar in Eastern Europe. On 11th January the Latvian State Symphony Orchestra played the Enigma Variations in the Philharmonic Hall, Riga; a cutting has been sent to me by a Latvian friend. Last week in Warsaw, I saw the Elgar Violin Concerto on LP for sale in a central record shop, and last year at the far end of Siberia in Khabarovsk I bought Gerontius on LP (the LSO Choir and Moscow Orchestra recording)

I saw Elgar for sale in East Berlin last year too.

From G. Nall

What a brilliant suggestion of Mr. Graham Lewis in the September JOURNAL to hold a centenary performance of The Dream of Gerontius in the year 2000 at Birmingham. I certainly hope the idea will take root, and will come to fruition in what will then be the well-established concert hall in the Birmingham Convention Centre.

I have written to the Elgar Foundation proposing that the idea was worthy of their consideration, but so far I have received no answer.

I quite agree with Mr. Lewis, that if it doesn't take place in Birmingham it will be to the shame of all Elgar supporters.

From Carl Newton

Surely one of the more bizarre Elgarian associations is now recorded in a book with the unlikely title of From Grace to Botham, an anthology of cricket reports from the Times. In the introduction there is an account of the concert conducted by Elgar on 19th November, 1925, at which he was presented with the Royal Philharmonic Society's Gold Medal. It seems that Sydney Pardon, editor of Wisden, was in the audience but collapsed and died immediately afterwards. Whether this was the result of Elgar's music is not stated, but the writer hints that this was a sort of symbolic end to the era of Fry, 'Ranji', Hirst, and Elgar. An interesting thought.

From Caroline Wessel

I am sure that all members of the Elgar Society wish Raymond Monk every success with his new publication 'Elgar Studies.'

A practical way of ensuring good initial sales of his book would be for every member to order it from his or her public library, thus obliging every county library to purchase a copy. No doubt there are society members in almost every county of the U.K. – so this should add up to a fair number of sales. Congratulations, Raymond!

LETTERS

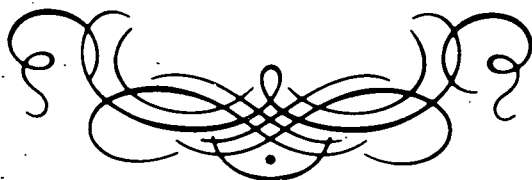
From Andrew Keener

Oh dear ! Yet another review of Rivka Golani's recording of the Elgar (Tertis) Concerto in which the reviewer's ear has been led astray by that chapter in Tertis's book.

I know that Tertis shocked, then impressed, the composer by nimbly tuning down his C string to encompass the low B flat at Fig. 41 of the slow movement. But with Vernon Handley's and my strong support on the session, Miss Golani decided against such Scordatura.

I'm indebted to G.H.L. for his characteristic perceptiveness elsewhere in his review, but I suspect he'll blush a bit if he checks Fig. 41 again !

P.S. Not a single microphone was changed – position or level – in the Slatkin 'Froissart'; and to my ears there's no extra 'space' around the sound in this work compared with 'Enigma' or 'Cockaigne'. Sorry to harp. I know from my days as a reviewer what a pain these letter-writing producers can be!



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