

The Elgar Society JOURNAL



**SEPTEMBER
1990**

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ELGAR SOCIETY JOURNAL

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The Elgar Society Journal

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SEPTEMBER 1990

Vol. 6, no. 6

REPORT OF THE ANNUAL MEETING

Lawnside, Malvern, 1990

Seventy-one members attended the Annual General Meeting held at Lawnside School, Malvern, on 26th May, and sixteen members sent apologies for absence. The Chairman, welcoming all to the meeting, brought greetings from the President, Sir Yehudi Menuhin. Mr. Robinson spoke of the death of one of the Vice-Presidents, Lady Hull, the news of which had been received with great regret. He spoke of the need to recruit new and younger members, and of John Knighton's survey of membership. A new membership leaflet was under discussion. The Secretary told the meeting of the launching of the Southern Branch, and the demise of of East Midlands and South West Branches, who are in the hands of caretakers at present. Members were now to be seen sporting Society ties and badges. She referred to the London Branch event when Dame Joan Hammond gave a talk and held a Master Class. She thanked the Chairman of the Malvern Hills District Council for his kind invitation to the Society to a Civic Reception that evening. She also reported that in 1989 84 members had joined the Society and 82 resigned, and, so far this year, there have been 59 new members and 29 resignations.

The Treasurer reported a disappointing result to his appeal for covenanted subscriptions and that the income therefrom was very small. The last payment had been made for the *King Olaf* recording. The Special Fund had not been used. He told the meeting that he was unable to stand for re-election. In conclusion he reported that the accounts had been fully audited for the first time.

The Editor of the Journal reported on three more issues during the year. We were still able to attract new articles, as well as reprint some interesting items from the past. He again stressed the importance of prompt response from branches on local activities and for news of concerts and events from members. He explained some of the problems we had had with computer typesetting during the year, but hoped that such problems were now behind us. He also said that this would be the last year, his fourteenth as editor, for which he could accept nomination for office.

The Chairman of the International Sub-Committee, in his final report in office, gave thanks to all the members of the committee, and paid tribute to Garry Humphreys and Ian Lace, the first Chairman and Secretary. He stressed the importance of information on concerts being sent from abroad, and brought news from some seven different countries, the total overseas membership standing at 85, which included 10 libraries. The Chairman thanked all the officers for their work during the year.

Election of Officers

The President, Vice-Presidents, Chairman, Secretary and Editor were proposed, seconded and elected unanimously. Andrew Neill was elected as Vice-Chairman, John Greig as Treasurer, and David Morris as Membership Secretary. In three vacancies on the Committee John Knighton and David Hughes were elected for three years, and Dennis Clark for one year. It was unanimously agreed to invite Sir Charles Groves to become a Vice-President of the Society.

The Chairman outlined the difficulties he faced over the usual date for the AGM, and how his commitments with the Oxford Bach Choir prevented his attendance. All agreed that the AGM next year should be held at 2.00 pm on Sunday, 2nd June in College Hall, Worcester. The Chairman put forward to the meeting the proposal that the Society should amalgamate with the Friends of the Birthplace. He spoke of the general benefit, of free admission to the Birthplace, and an increase of membership. After some discussion, during which Vice-President Michael Pope spoke in support of the amalgamation, all agreed in principle that this should take place on condition that a report be brought to the AGM next year.

The meeting concluded with warm words of appreciation and thanks to the retiring Vice-Chairman, Trevor Fenemore-Jones, for his loyalty and untiring work on behalf of the Society. In reply he thanked his wife for her support, and spoke of the privilege and pleasure of working on the committee. The Chairman presented him with a copy of the Concise Grove, the promise of a copy of 'Elgar Studies', and record tokens. All agreed that he should become an Honorary Member.



Elgar Society Officers, in smiling mood, at the Annual Meeting in Malvern, May 1990.
1 to r: Ronald Taylor (Editor), David Morris (Treasurer), Christopher Robinson (Chairman),
Carol Holt (Secretary), Trevor Fenemore-Jones (Vice-Chairman)

Photo by courtesy of the Malvern Gazette

Many members enjoyed a performance of the *Cello Concerto*, played by the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, with Moray Welsh, conducted by Ivan Fischer, in the Winter Gardens, followed by a Civic Reception given by Malvern Hills District Council. The Council Chairman spoke of the pleasure in meeting members of the Elgar Society, and of the close relations between the Society and the town. Christopher Robinson, in reply, thanked the Chairman for the honour shown to the Society.

On Sunday, by kind permission of the Reverend and Mrs. Michael Vockins, coffee was served at Birchwood Lodge. At noon some 60 members attended a talk given by Christopher Harmer, a Trustee of the Birthplace, who apologised to the Society for the unfortunate way in which the Birthplace Appeal had been made public, and outlined future plans. After a ploughman's lunch a recital by Felix Kok (violin), Susannah Spicer (mezzo-soprano) and Christopher Robinson (piano) was enjoyed by all. The weekend concluded with sherry and birthday cake at the Birthplace.

The following weekend some members attended a performance of *The Dream of Gerontius* in the Winter Gardens, by Malvern Festival Chorus and Orchestra, conducted by Rory Boyle. The soloists were Barbara Robotham, John Mitchinson, and Arwel Huw Morgan. On the Sunday the customary laying of the wreath at the Elgar memorial in Worcester Cathedral, following Evensong, was made by Trevor Fenemore-Jones.

NEWS ITEMS

A New York member, David Pizarro, recently visited Europe and gave an organ recital in the Christuskirche, Mainz. In a programme which included works by Rheinberger, Bach, Vierni, Gounod and Karg-Elert he included the first movement of Elgar's *Organ Sonata no. 1*. Mr. Pizarro frequently includes Elgar in recitals and in his home church.

David Williams, informing us of a concert at Stow-on-the-Wold (detailed on another page), tells us that Robin Alleson (violin) and Neville Schafer (piano) have recently recorded the Op. 82 *Violin Sonata*. We look forward to more information on this new performance.

Truro Choral Society must be achieving something of a record in Elgar performances with the May production of *The Dream of Gerontius*. They performed it in 1980, and since then have done *The Kingdom* and *The Apostles*. All of them in Truro Cathedral. *The Music Makers* next?

Members of the Society, particularly those in the Worcester area, will be sad to learn of the death of Rene Ashton, formerly the owner of Rose Cottage, next door to the Birthplace. Before selling the property to the Elgar Foundation she took a keen interest in her 'next-door neighbours', and was well-known to a number of Birthplace visitors. To her next of kin we extend our sympathy.

On the 23rd September Dr. Jerrold Northrop Moore will speak at the Abbey Hotel, Malvern. Time 11.00 a.m. Subject "An American in England." An intriguing title, but undoubtedly Dr. Moore will give us a fascinating and possibly provocative account. Recommended!

THE ELGAR SEAT, placed on the Malvern Hills by the Society some years ago, continues to be a favourite stopping point for a number of people who wish to rest and enjoy the view. On a recent visit it was noticed that the exposed grain is opening, especially on the arms of the seat. This should be attended to before the winter sets in, or some deterioration will result. Is this a matter for the Conservators? Or does responsibility rest elsewhere. Treatment is fairly simple, and would not take long. We hope that this may be noted by interested parties.

NEW SOCIETY TREASURER. Following changes at the Annual General Meeting members are reminded that the New Treasurer is JOHN GREIG, Orchard Barn, Derrington Street, Barham, Canterbury, Kent CT4 6QB. Subscriptions should be sent to Mr. Greig, as should any correspondence relating to financial matters.

The former Treasurer, DAVID MORRIS, is now the *Membership Secretary*, and changes of address, membership applications, etc., should be addressed to him at 2 Marriotts Close, Haddenham, Aylesbury, Bucks. HP17 8BT.

'KING OLAF' IN SCOTLAND

King Olaf is a work not given much in Scotland, but it enjoyed a stirring performance in Glasgow on Sunday, April 1st. It was finely sung by the Good Shepherd Chorus at the Henry Wood Hall, which is also the rehearsal home of the SNO.

The soloists on this occasion were Una Barry (Soprano), John Treleavan (tenor) and well-known Scots singer Peter Morrison (baritone). The performance was conducted by Christopher Seaman. With a chorus which was not all that bigger than the orchestra, getting the balance between singers and players right was not always possible. When the chorus could be heard they were in excellent voice, giving special attention to diction and phrasing. In particular the 'Wraith of Odin' was sung with conviction and plenty of atmosphere. The 'Death of Odin' was again very well sung. The high point came in the unaccompanied 'As Torrents in Summer', which showed the choir at its very best.

Of the soloists John Treleavan was outstanding. He sang dramatically, and gave life to the rather nebulous character that Acworth and Elgar created. His voice was clear, and every word could be heard. Peter Morrison on the other hand, although a pleasant singer, had no real dramatic feel for his roles. His Ironbeard lacked impact. Una Barry sang well, but her diction in the upper register was sometimes indistinct.

The orchestra for this occasion was an ad hoc ensemble, led by SNO leader Edwin Paling. It played brilliantly, with Elgar's score being heard to great advantage. The brass especially deserve mention for their contribution. but where was the harp? Its exclusion was something of a mystery for me as it has an important part to play in the orchestra.

The Good Shepherd Chorus have established an excellent tradition of singing a hymn before and after the main performance. The audience, choir, and orchestra performed them with great gusto, and this contributed to an excellent evening overall.

John Howden

PETER DENNISON

An Appreciation

Peter Dennison was born in New South Wales in 1942, and died in Melbourne just 47 years later. Educated at the Universities of Sydney and Oxford he subsequently lectured in music at Glasgow University, and later at Cambridge. He was Professor of Music at the University of Melbourne from 1975, and became Chairman of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra in 1986. Peter was a true Elgarian and his early death has deprived Elgar studies of great riches. His essays 'Elgar and Wagner' *Music and Letters* (April 1985) and 'Elgar's Musical Apprenticeship' *Elgar Studies* (London 1990) testify to that. Wagner and Tippett were his other great loves, and he had made a special study of the case of dramatic continuity between Elgar, Brahms and Schumann. Peter Dennison was a great joy to be with, and much liked by all who knew him. He will be remembered with affection by many friends on several continents and with gratitude by those Elgarians who read his fine essays.

R.M.

THE BIRTHPLACE APPEAL

The Editor has been very pleased to receive the following letter from Diane Quinney who has been placed in charge of the above Appeal. I feel that it is important that this letter should be shared with all our members.

Members of the Elgar Society may know that I have recently been appointed by the Trustees of the Elgar Foundation to direct the Elgar Birthplace Development Appeal. I am delighted to take over this work, having lived in Worcestershire for many years and being a member of the Worcester Festival Chorus.

I am also glad to have the chance to promote Elgar's life and work and to ensure that the Birthplace at Broadheath is developed and preserved for future generations. Edward Elgar is so much a part of our heritage and patriotism, and we have only to see the massed singing of 'Land of Hope and Glory' at the Last Night of the Proms, or to attend the packed performances anywhere in the country of 'The Dream of Gerontius' and the Violin and Cello Concertos, to realise that Elgar has become an intrinsic part of our life.

Although the Appeal was announced in London at a Philharmonia Concert last March, it has yet to be launched in Worcestershire and indeed throughout the country. However, we feel we should not impinge on the Worcester Cathedral Appeal at present, so although I shall be at the Three Choirs Festival in August with plenty of information about the proposed development, the main thrust of the Appeal will be next year. To that end we are forming two fund-raising committees, in London and the West Midlands, and I will keep you fully informed about our plans – and I hope you will find them exciting and appropriate.

Realistically, we need to raise £1 million: although there will be some major events and, I hope, gifts from Companies and Trusts, *every* gift counts. If one million lovers of Elgar's music contributed a pound each we could see the project completed – so get your friends to Buy a Brick for the Birthplace!

I shall find your help and advice invaluable, so please let me have your comments. Although the Foundation, the Society and the Birthplace Trust have separate identities they are very much bound together in common purpose – to perpetuate the genius of a truly great English composer.

With all good wishes, and I hope to meet as many members as possible in due course.

DIANA QUINNEY

Elgar Birthplace Development Appeal



MARL BANK, RAINBOW HILL, WORCESTER

*The last residence of the late Sir Edward Elgar, Bt., O.M., G.C.V.O., K.C.V.O.
Master of the King's Musick*

A sketch of 'Marl Bank', by W. G. Easton. This sketch was reproduced in the Memorial Concert Programme for Sir Edward Elgar given in the Royal Albert Hall, March 24th, 1934.

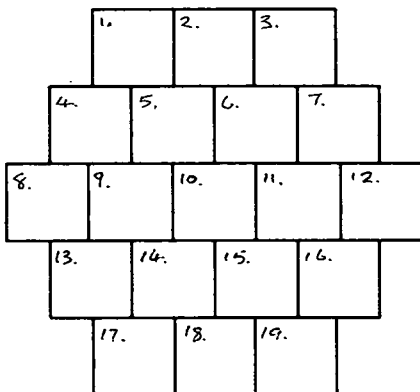
Can you solve the following clues, writing one number in each box of the grid?

HINT – Every row, horizontally and diagonally, adds up to the Opus Number for the Dream of Gerontius!

1. Soloists in Dream of Gerontius.
2. Enigma Variations + Sea Pictures.
3. Movements in Cello Concerto x Flats in key signature of 1st Symphony.
4. Songs from Bavarian Highlands + Sevillana (Op.) + WMB Variation.
5. Sounds like a Suite dedicated to G.B. Shaw.
6. Falling interval heard at Ynys Lochtyn x Soloists in The Apostles.
7. E's Characteristic Pieces x Saxophones E originally wanted in Caractacus.
8. Flats in key signature of 2nd Symphony x (Soloists in The Kingdom + E's birthdate in June).
9. The Kingdom (Op.) – Guineas first offered by Leeds Festival for a symphony.
10. Black Knight (Op.).
11. Pounds E calculated as – 'net loss' for Cockaigne
Shillings E received for copyright of Op 1

Partsongs from the Greek Anthology.

12. 'Craig Lea' – Age at which E died.
13. Book by Sir Neville Cardus, 'A Composers' _____
14. High Street address of Elgar Bros. – Scenes in The Black Knight.
15. Rising interval of Apostolic shofar x (Soloists in King Olaf x Menuhin's age when he first met E)
16. Year of first performance fo Caractacus – year Op 1 was published.
17. Instruments in Op. 83 + Instruments in Op 84.
18. 'Kelston'
E's brothers
19. Pomp & Circumstance Marches X Bavarian Dances.



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EDWARDELGAR: LETTERS OF A LIFETIME

edited by **Jerrold Northrop Moore**

including correspondence with George Bernard Shaw, Richard Strauss, Parry, Bliss, Boult, Henry Wood and those 'pictured within' Enigma Variations amongst others.

* **Jerrold Northrop Moore** will be talking about this selection of letters and reading from them with **Michael Holroyd** and **Jill Balcon** at the **CHELTENHAM LITERATURE FESTIVAL**, Friday 19th October 1990 at 2.30 p.m. For further details and a full programme please write to the Town Hall, Imperial Square, Cheltenham, GL50 1QA *

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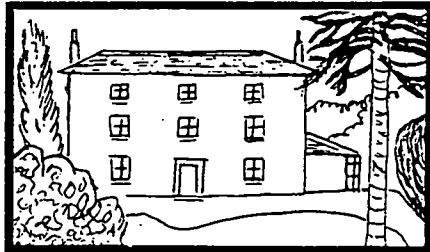
Please note that the last date for copy for the next issue which will guarantee insertion is NOVEMBER 25th. That is the date on which it must be received at the editor's office. Contributors are requested, however, to send in copy as early as possible.

NAPLETON GRANGE, as it is in 1990. This charming house was rented by Elgar in the 1920s. Please note that although marked by a plaque the house is private property, and is NOT open to visitors.

Photograph by Ronald Taylor

THE NUPEND

Unwind in peaceful surroundings at the Nupend, a small Georgian country house set in 2 acres of grounds and enjoying panoramic views of the Malvern Hills.



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'NUCES COWARDIENSES'

How Dr. Coward trains a choir

by Canon C. V. Gorton

[Members may recall an excellent article by Gareth H. Lewis on the great chorus master, Henry Coward of Sheffield, which appeared in the Journals for September 1982 and January 1983. In 1904 Coward was engaged by the Morecambe Musical Festival to train a choir to sing 'King Olaf' under Elgar's Baton at the 1905 Festival. The choir, numbering 270 voices, was drawn from Lancaster, Morecambe, Kendal and Southport, and early in 1905 Coward began to take rehearsals. After his first visit to Morecambe on 15 February Elgar's friend Canon Charles Gorton, founder of the Morecambe Festival, wrote the following article which appeared in *The Music World* on 25 February. It gives a fascinating glimpse of Coward's extraordinary personality, and of one or two insights into his preparation of 'King Olaf'.]

The world of choral music recognises in Dr. Coward a prince of chorus trainers. Those who have heard the Sheffield Choir know that the language does not supply words which can be regarded as exaggeration in describing their excellence. How does Dr. Coward achieve these results? Do the Sheffield singers possess superlative voices, is the test for voices very severe? Dr. Coward himself says: "No. I prefer good musical intelligence to an excellent voice; give me brains and enthusiasm, and I will do the rest".

Dr Coward has now taken two rehearsals – one of the Lancaster section, the other of the Morecambe section, for the forthcoming Festival, when on the concert night Friday May 19th, 'King Olaf' and 'Blest Pair of Sirens' will be given in the presence of the composers. ¹ The concert is to be the *piece de resistance* of this year's Festival. The Nelson Orchestra will assist.

How does Dr. Coward set to work? He has the choir seated in front of him, and then follow two hours of excitement and hard work. What strikes a listener as his chief qualifications are:—First, his dramatic instinct. He would have been a notable actor of tragedy or comedy. He frequently pauses to act the scene. ² Secondly, he has the keenest sense of the power of words. Next he has the most extraordinary energy. "Away with inertia. On this", he says, "I could preach sermons". One is amazed at the physical power of the man, enabling him to rehearse at full steam for five or six hours in the same day. His own speech is slow and broken, not from lack of matter, but from pauses to hit on the exact word. And hence we get this paper 'Nuces Cowardienses', or 'Cowardian Nuts'. Let us give a few. They will contain matter for any choir trainer. "Rehearsing the great chorus, 'I am the God Thor, I am the War God, I am the Thunderer', the first phrase, *I am*, is rapped out with vigour, but in the third phrase the distinction is lost. This is inertia. Inertia is the failure of effort, the failure to keep the mind at tension. This is to be mastered by the will – your whole being must be in it – mind, heart and soul. Remember what you are at. You are practising for a *Festival*. Now a festival is not a concert – it is not even a competition. You think you do your best at a competition, but you do not. I will tell you why. You sing nervously, you are anxious, you sing with fifty others. Here you sing, free to let yourselves go – you are one of 400. Your competitions are preparations for the festivals, i.e., Training grounds. In a festival you are setting a standard – in competition with the finest efforts in England – and remember we are going to make a record with 'King Olaf'. You must make up your minds that it has never been so well sung as you will sing it. There is a world of fine stuff in it, and you are going to bring every bit of it out. *So no inertia.*

"The blows of my hammer ring in the earthquake' (fff). You sang that as loud as you could, now when you have sung as loud as you can, remember I want it just twice as loud. Open your chests, throw back your shoulders, back with your heads, and then with 300 voices lift the roof.

“ ‘Thou art a God too O Galilean’ (pp). We don’t call it a *pianissimo* at Sheffield unless, when 300 are all singing, I can hear the clock tick.

“Then as to words. No music is so wonderful as human speech. Man is the finest instrument – music only assists speech. You must not use words conversationally, but rhetorically : imitate the fine speaker or preacher :–

She has fled and the *gossips* report
She has come to King Olaf’s court
And the town is all in dismay.”

“How long did it take you, Dr. Coward”, said a friend, “to teach your choir to sing ‘gossips?’”
“Just four months”, said the choir trainer. “And it was worth it”, was the reply.

“The effect in the Festival depends on the unexpected, it is not the bringing out of what everybody sees but the *surprises* which tell – and these occur in every page, every line – and to bring out these is to interpret the composer – and you must, all through, have one fixed idea. You are going to make an event. And it will pay you. You let your friends know you have something good, they hear of it, get wind of a Festival. There is something which is not to be missed. What are the seats? A guinea or half a guinea. ‘Well, when the plan is out, I must get a seat’, and you singers will taste the pleasurable excitement of helping in a great performance.

“But all this means practice. I see some young singers, under 17. Your voices are not what they will be in five years. You must make good the loss by having every word by heart. You can’t afford to have your eye off me. Your book must be in your head and not your head in your book. What is the secret of success? Rehearsals, pains with points others have not taken pains with. Leslie’s choir³ was a great choir because they had ninety practices before singing in public. An eminent pianist was once staying with me who was to play in the evening. He asked to try the piano, and what did he do? He practiced one presto passage for two mortal hours. Get rid of the foolish idea that you are clever folk to give a performance after half-a-dozen rehearsals. To take all human pains to interpret the idea, that is true art. Quick-change artists may be clever people, but let a man take an hour over his toilet so that in the end he is well dressed.

“Two things in conclusion. Away with inertia, and cultivate rhetorical speech. Give me practice and brains, and all will be as it should. But of all things remember to claim your place. It is not the orchestra which is the chief thing, it is not the principals, be they who they may, who are the chief factors. The chorus is the thing, you sing as I want you to sing and the audience will be saying – ‘When will the chorus begin again?’”

These are some of the many good things which fell as a running comment, to say nothing of actions and speech which illustrated the dramatic vigour or weird poetry of the work.

In conclusion, Dr. Coward expressed himself well satisfied with the performance. “I no longer *hope* for a splendid rendering”, he said, “I *expect* it.”

(1) Parry did not actually attend the festival due to illness, and the piece was conducted by Coward.

(2) Havergal Brian, who attended the Morecambe Festival that year, later wrote his impressions of Coward at the final rehearsal : “I recall him now gesticulating before the chorus . . . to show how Viking roysterers probably behaved at their carousals . . .” (*Musical Opinion*, March 1938).

(3) Henry Leslie (1822- 1896) was a well-known choral conductor and composed many part-songs, etc. His choir won the top prize at an international competition in Paris in 1873.

NICHOLAS KILBURN

Music – the Family Tradition

by

Wendy Labbett

[A fuller version of this article originally appeared in the *Toronto Symphony News* for March / April 1985. We are indebted to the author for permission to use the greater part of her article, and to the good offices of Richard Warren, Toronto Symphony Archivist, for drawing it to our attention. EDITOR]

“Here’s something you might want to take a look at,” said Nick Kilburn. The ‘something’ is a letter from Derek Hames of the Faculty of Music, Durham University in England, with the programme notes of a recent concert given in the Cathedral there. The concert commemorated, as the letter stated, “the great Nicholas Kilburn,” esteemed nineteenth-century citizen of Bishop Auckland, whose musical ability has been inherited by generations of the Kilburn family to the present day. Co-Principal Toronto Symphony bassoonist Nicholas Kilburn is a direct descendant of “the great Nicholas.” How far removed? “Well, he’s a great-great-uncle, but don’t put him too far back, I like to keep him close by!” Iron merchant by trade, the ancestral Kilburn was a gifted amateur musician who counted Sir Edward Elgar among his friends. He received his Bachelor of Music degree in 1880 and went on to establish musical and choral societies in several north-eastern English towns, with which he introduced works new to the areas, including those of Elgar. The present-day Bishop Auckland choir traces its ancestry to the original music society Kilburn formed. Sir Edward valued his friendship with Nicholas deeply. He fondly addressed him in a wonderful letter as “my dear great Auk” and in 1912 dedicated the score of *The Music Makers* to him. Performances of this work were given in Sunderland, Middlesbrough and Bishop Auckland, the last named conducted by Elgar in the Town Hall with the Leeds Symphony Orchestra in December, 1919. The two friends each received honorary doctorates of music from the University of Durham. On the fiftieth anniversary of Elgar’s death, Kilburn’s “home” society, the Bishop Auckland and District Choral Society, joined the Durham Choral Society in a performance of Elgar’s *The Dream of Gerontius* in Durham Cathedral.

Nephew Nicholas Arthur Kilburn – who was a proficient trombonist – emigrated to Canada from Bishop Auckland at the turn of the century. He settled in Lloydminster, Alberta, married there and had two sons, Nicholas Weldon (called Weldon) and Peter. (In an attempt to avoid confusion, the name “Nicholas” is given to every first-born male, but in only every other generation is he so called; the others use the second given name.)

Peter and Weldon exhibited the family musical heritage. Peter played the cello in trios in Toronto and, following a move to Montreal, practised his musical interest administratively, as President of the Montreal Symphony Orchestra. Weldon studied piano, organ and voice in Edmonton, then moved to Toronto in 1926 and married in 1931. “My father had been offered a position in the brokerage business by his father-in-law,” Nick recalls, “and he thought about it for a weekend, but decided to give the piano a good shot instead.” The rest is musical history in Toronto. Weldon continued to study piano and organ at the Toronto Conservatory of Music with Healey Willan, among others, and served as organist and choir master at St. Alban’s Cathedral. He gave recitals through the thirties and taught at the RCMT. He became Lois Marshall’s voice teacher and accompanist, touring with her throughout the world. Weldon started his own studio for piano and voice in 1960 and had, by this time, established a tremendous reputation as an accompanist and vocal coach.

In their north Toronto home, the Kilburn's raised four sons, three of whom became professional musicians. Michael, the keeper of Uncle Peter's cello, was first a cellist with the Toronto Symphony, then moved to Montreal to become Assistant Principal with the Montreal Symphony Orchestra. He is a full professor at the Conservatoire and teaches at McGill University. His son Raymond at twenty-three intends to pursue a concert pianist career and is studying for his Master's degree. Paul Kilburn is a pianist and composer who studied at both the RCMT and the University of Toronto. He teaches privately. All of his twelve-tone piano compositions have been performed by Anton Kubalik and he himself performed his own *Five Pieces* on Canadian Broadcasting Company's *Arts National*. John, Nick's youngest brother, a capable pianist, now pursues a business career and in his youth played the oboe.

Nicholas Weldon Kilburn has been with the TS for twenty-five years. His interest in music, naturally nurtured and influenced by his parents, began with piano lessons at four, with "recitals" at six. School itinerant music instructor Martin Chenhall visited John Ross Robertson and Lawrence Park Collegiate, his station wagon stuffed with instruments to try. "My violin playing was not up to scratch (be sure to use 'scratch' – very significant to fiddle players!) and Chenhall gave me my first bassoon lesson at Lawrence Park." When he was fourteen, Mrs. Kilburn took Nick to Denver for a summer piano session with E. Robert Schmitz. Piano was and is important, and Nick recalls teaching a little class of his high school peers after school hours. He played bassoon in the school orchestra.

During his late teens Nick studied bassoon with Samuel Dolin and "had father" for piano. In 1951 he enrolled at the New England Conservatory to study bassoon with Raymond Allard. The next year, he went to Curtis, where he studied for three years with Sol Schoenbach. It was during this period that his awareness grew of the need for such a school in Canada.

He returned to Toronto from Philadelphia newly married to soprano Ilona Kombrink (they were later divorced) and for the next few years Nick juggled playing with the National Ballet and CBC Orchestras with teaching at the University of Toronto. In 1959 he joined the Toronto Symphony as Principal Bassoon, and since 1968 he has shared the duties with Christopher Weait as Co-Principal.

Nick works consistently to encourage musicality and artistic expression among his peers. "It's not enough to just play the notes" he says emphatically, "... musicians tend to strive more and more for accuracy and less for artistic expression. The spark of musicality and creativity *must* be there." In recognition of his political contributions to the welfare of Canadian musicians, Nick received the 1981 Canadian Music Council Medal for outstanding service to music in Canada.

* * * * *

AN INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD HICKOX

by Geoffrey Hodgkins

At the end of March I was fortunate enough to take part in a performance of *The Apostles* at the Barbican Hall conducted by Richard Hickox, and the following week the work was recorded by Chandos for future release. This means that in less than five years Hickox has recorded the bulk of Elgar's music for voices and orchestra – ten major works – far more than any other conductor. He kindly agreed to be interviewed for the JOURNAL, and a few weeks later I spoke to him at his London home.

GH: To what extent was Elgar a formative influence in your younger days? Was he someone you regarded as a back number, and were you more influenced by say, Britten or Tippett?

RH: Yes, I was 'into' Britten: we did a performance of *St. Nicholas* at school when I was about twelve, and I played the organ for part of it. Gerald English came down and sang the tenor part. That was a great evening for me, and I loved Britten from that moment, and always have. Later at school, we did the *Enigma Variations* as a set work for 'A' level, and I played that over and over and over again. But it was really at Cambridge that it struck me just what a marvellous composer Elgar was, when David Willcocks conducted a performance which I sang in, with the CUMS society, of *The Dream of Gerontius*; and getting to know that work with Willcocks (who obviously knew it so well) made its first real impression, and then I wanted to know much more about Elgar. So it's really from the age of twenty that Elgar meant a great deal.

GH: And when you were at Cambridge what opinions did you find people held about Elgar? did you meet the hostility and resistance that apparently exist in some quarters?

RH: I think that those barriers are being broken down, mainly through the success of the recordings of English music. Michael Kennedy is about to review and compare all the recordings of the *Sea Symphony*: until about two years ago there were only two recordings available. Now there are about twelve! I think that the recordings that companies like Chandos and Hyperion and Virgin are doing have really opened up English music into the main stream. There was a whole evening devoted to Vaughan Williams on Radio 3 last week.

GH: So you found no hostility towards Elgar at university?

RH: No. At Cambridge, when we were doing *The Dream of Gerontius*, it was a very exciting night for everybody. We all loved it.

GH: Let's turn to recordings. You've recorded a tremendous amount in a relatively short time. To what extent do the works you have recorded reflect your own personal taste? For instance, in English music, you have done a lot of Elgar, Vaughan Williams and Finzi.

RH: Which certainly does reflect my taste. But I am basically a musician, and if you're a musician you have the capacity to assimilate any style. So, yes, all the works I've recorded I believe in absolutely. English music is a special interest because I found I had an affinity with it very early on. Recently we've brought out Monteverdi's *Poppaea*, which has had super reviews, but the reviewers can't help saying 'How can this be? Hickox is not known as an out-and-out early music specialist'. But the fact is that I can read books, I can talk to people, I can assimilate a style, I can spend time, and I can do it!

Although I've recorded a complete cycle of Beethoven symphonies, because I wanted to do them with small forces, and I thought it was right for the Northern Sinfonia to do it (it really did

revitalise their whole profile) I don't really see the point in my duplicating another Tchaikovsky cycle or Dvorak cycle, when it has been done so marvellously by other people who have had far more experience than I have.

GH: Apart from choral works, I notice that most of the Elgar and Vaughan Williams you have recorded have been shorter pieces.

RH: I am actually going to do the Vaughan Williams symphonies, and in quite an interesting way. We're going to prove just how international that music has become. We've done the *Sea Symphony* with the Philharmonia, and we'll do the *London Symphony* with the London Symphony! But after that, the other records will all be done by foreign orchestras with whom I have a relationship: so the records are being done in Houston, in Oslo, and other places.

The Elgar symphonies I haven't conducted enough to want to record. I've conducted no. 1 on two or three occasions: I've never done *Falstaff*, although obviously it's a masterpiece. *The Enigma* I would like to record: it's a piece I know backwards.

GH: Moving on to the choral works, and the oratorios in particular: we know that Boult was a devout Unitarian, Sargent a practising Anglo-Catholic, Barbirolli a wonderful mixture of earthiness and devotion. Do you have strong personal beliefs in that area?

RH: Well, my father was a vicar, so I've been brought up steeped in the church. If you've been brought up with the workings of the church you tend to become a little cynical about the organisation of the church: but yes, I do have beliefs. They aren't so conventional these days, but some people have said that they feel a spirituality in my conducting of, say, *The Dream of Gerontius*, that might not be in other people's, who are agnostic.

GH: Of the three main works, which did you find the easiest to perform and record?

RH: To record, I think *The Apostles* went the smoothest. To perform, I suppose *Gerontius* because I had done it so often. *The Kingdom* I had done several times, but *The Apostles* I'd never done before: so the first time you do something you're always anxious, but I felt that the sessions of *The Apostles* were very straightforward, with a good atmosphere.

GH: Some would say that the weakest parts of *The Apostles* come in the Mary Magdalene section, which can tend to drag on a bit, but I thought you overcame that by taking it slightly faster than Boult had done,

RH: Yes, I did press on a bit, but that was because Alfreda [Hodgson] also agreed with me, and we wanted to move it on, and I think we've got drama in it. Actually I like that part very much, and I don't find it a longeur. I find that some of the tenor recits are not very inspiring, but otherwise I think it's a very strong piece, but not perhaps as great as the sum of its parts,

GH: Tell me about *The Banner of St. George*, because that was your first Elgar choral recording: yet it had never been recorded before, and I suppose that many Elgarians would say that it is the weakest of his major works.

RH: I would certainly agree with that. In fact, this arose because Simon Foster (who was then at EMI, now at Virgin) wanted to bring out a huge boxed set of all the Elgar choral works. But there were certain gaps, of which this was one. He asked Tod Handley to do *King Olaf*, and me to do *The Banner of St. George*. I thought it sounded a great idea; but when I looked at it I thought 'Well, no, this just is not worth doing: I don't see the point in doing this'. But then, in fact, Michael Pope convinced me otherwise. When I actually heard Elgar conduct it himself [the finale: 'It comes from the misty ages'] on tape which Michael played to me I was persuaded that it would be worth

doing, and indeed I was very glad that I had done it. It was amazing: once the chorus had got over laughing at the words they actually enjoyed it tremendously.

GH: What about *The Music Makers*? Elgarians are supposed to be divided over it. . . .

RH: . . . because it's derivative, and so forth. But I feel you judge music on how it speaks to the people who hear it, not how you analyse it; and people who come to hear *The Music Makers* are always deeply moved by it. It's a piece I love to do. You can't talk about it in the same breath as *Gerontius*, of course, but it's a super piece. The singers loved it: it was a great highlight when we recorded that. I remember we all had a great big picnic in the middle of Watford Town Hall. It was a very happy day – a great atmosphere.

GH: And *The Spirit of England*?

RH: Oh, I think that's a fantastic piece! The last movement, 'For the Fallen', is one of the greatest things he ever wrote. I'd love to do it at the Proms one day.

GH: You've just recorded *Hodie*, which is the first part of a project to do the complete choral works of Vaughan Williams for EMI. Which do you regard as the highlights?

RH: *Dona Nobis Pacem*. I think that's one of the great works of our time. But that's not until 1992, I think! We're rather committed to other things at the moment, but that's next in the plan.

GH: One of the aims of our Society is to spread the fame of Elgar overseas. You've travelled a good deal. Have you ever come across enthusiastic Elgarians in other countries?

RH: In Holland there's a man called Van der Meer at the NCRV, who's an Elgar fanatic. We did *The Starlight Express* about three or four years ago. Stephen Roberts came and sang and I got Michael Berkeley to write a linking narration. In the same concert we had his own oboe concerto, and the concert was broadcast on Dutch radio. It was great fun. Then in Russia I was involved in the first performance there of *The Dream of Gerontius*. In the States I've done *Enigma*; but it's much easier there to programme Vaughan Williams than Elgar for some reason. People don't know the oratorios at all. I'm hoping to do *The Dream Of Gerontius* in Washington in the next few years: but it is difficult to get orchestral managements to accept Elgar. I think things are looking up in Germany: and I did *The Dream of Gerontius* in Denmark, and they adored it. So I've done a fair bit.

GH: To come back to *The Apostles*. I was interested that you read to the choir from contemporary comment on the work. Is that your usual practice?

RH: No, not at all: but I did it on this occasion because the work is so bitty that from the piano rehearsals the chorus had no idea what the work was about; there are huge gaps when things are happening that they're not involved in. So I was just trying to arouse their interest in the whole project. And I felt that although they were being quite open-minded about it, it was just impossible for them to visualise how it was going to be. A lot of people found it quite helpful, I think. With *The Dream of Gerontius*, it's so much more obvious: it's the story of one person who dies, goes to paradise, etc, and that's very easy for people to grasp; but *The Apostles* is such a sprawling subject, I just felt I had to pull the thing together in people's imaginations.

GH Do you have any plans for recording more Elgar?

RH On the last night of *The Apostles*' recording Chandos said they were very keen to do some more. I think they'd like to do *Caractacus* next, but I'm afraid this won't be for some years.

* * * * *

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

29 September	<p>Dream of Gerontius <i>Mole Valley Festival Choir/ Guildford PO/C/Findlay/Robert Tear, Alfreda Hodgson, Neal Davies</i></p>	Dorking Halls, Surrey
2 October	<p>Violin Concerto <i>Dmitri Sitkovetsky/RPO/Menuhin</i></p>	Royal Festival Hall 7.30 pm
10 October	<p>Cello Concerto <i>Julian Lloyd-Webber/RPO/Menuhin</i></p>	Royal Festival Hall 7.30 pm
16 October	<p>Viola Concerto (arr. Tertis) <i>Rivka Golani/RPO/Handley</i></p>	Fairfield Halls, Croydon 8.00 pm
18 October	Repeat of above concert	Royal Festival Hall
23 October	<p>Sea Pictures; P & C no. 1 <i>Linda Finnie/Eng. SO/Groves</i></p>	Royal Festival Hall
3 November	<p>Violin Sonata <i>Robinson Allesen (v)/Neville Schafer (p)</i></p>	St. Edward's Church Stow-on-the-Wold. 7.30 pm
10 November	<p>Three Characteristic Pieces <i>Rutland Sinfonia/Collett</i></p>	Corby Festival Hall, Northants. 7.30 pm
10 November	<p>The Apostles <i>E. Midlands Concert Orch/N. Page Nottingham Harmonic Soc. Choir/ R. McGibbon/C. Wyn Rogers/J. Cornwell/ M. George/J. White/C. Purves</i></p>	Royal Concert Hall Nottingham. 7.30 pm
13 November	<p>Cello Concerto <i>Rbt Cohen/LPO/Daniel</i></p>	Royal Festival Hall
17 November	<p>Dream Children (Programme incl: Vaughan Williams 'Serenade to Music', Howells 'Hymnus Paradisus', Leighton 'Laudes Montium'). <i>St. Edmundsbury Bach Choir & Orch/ Oxley/J. Kelly, J. Oxley</i></p>	The Cathedral, Bury St. Edmunds. 7.30 pm

17 November	The Kingdom <i>Southend Bach Choir/Hutton & Shenfield Choral Society</i>	St. George's United Reform Church, Crowstone Road, Southend-on-Sea
24 November	Repeat of the above concert	Brentwood International Centre, Brentwood, Essex
29 November	Violin Concerto <i>Salvatore Accardo/LPO/Slatkin</i>	Royal Festival Hall
1991		
24 January	Cockaigne Overture <i>LPO/Thomson</i>	Royal Festival Hall
7 February	Symphony no. 2 <i>RLPO/Pesek</i>	Birmingham Town Hall
23 March	Cello Concerto <i>E. Midlands Concert Orch/Page/ Soloist not yet announced</i>	Royal Concert Hall, Nottingham. 7.30 pm
26 March	The Dream of Gerontius <i>CBSO & Chor/J. E. Gardiner/C. Robbin, A. Rolfe-Johnson/S. Varcoe</i>	Birmingham Town Hall
27 March	Repeat of above	

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BAINES AND SCARSDROOK, PRINTERS, 9 WISB COTTAGE, N.W.6.

The advertisement for the first performance of Elgar's Violin Sonata. Bridget Duckenfield, who kindly supplied this to us, points out that radio notes and the sleeve notes on Lorraine McAslan's recording state that it was at the Wigmore Hall, with another accompanist!

RECORD REVIEWS

The Kingdom Op 51; Sospiri; Sursum Corda

Chandos CHAN 8788/9

Margaret Marshall (soprano), Felicity Palmer (Mezzo), Arthur Davies (tenor),
David Wilson-Johnson (baritone); London Symphony Chorus, London
Symphony Orchestra, Richard Hickox.

Cello Concerto in E minor Op 85; Variations on an Original Theme (Enigma) op 36

The Classical Collection
DDD 402 (for Boots plc)

Alexander Baillie (cello), BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, Edward Downes

Cockaigne Overture Op 40; Variations on an Original Theme (Enigma) Op 36; Serenade in
E minor Op 20; Salut d'amour Op 12

Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, David Zinman

Telarc CD80192

The Editor was understandably annoyed when I failed to deliver the script of this review in time for the May edition of this journal, for after all I had been sitting on these records for some four months. However, my failure was neither because of sloth or lateness, but derived from my difficulty in coming to terms with my disappointment in this, the third recording of *The Kingdom*. I am aware it has been well received elsewhere, as was *The Dream of Gerontius* with similar forces, a recording with which I expressed frustration in a previous issue.

I can be specific about certain points which concern me, but it is the structure of the performance which primarily lets it down, and I will attempt to explain this later in the review. The most obvious problem is, however, the soloists. Arthur Davies, perhaps predictably, emerges as the strongest voice, and though the role of John is important, it is not of the significance of the Blessed Virgin or Peter. I feel here that David Wilson-Johnson is miscast for this important part. He makes only a modest impact, and fails to preside, as it were, in the way John Shirley-Quirk did in Sir Adrian Boult's recording. Felicity Palmer does not, I believe, have the right sort of voice for Elgar, as I have said before, and it is certainly not right for the cushioning role of Mary Magdalene, as she comes over rather uncomfortably, which may be relevant, but was not, surely, what Elgar intended.

Fundamentally though, there is a feeling that the recording was put together in sections, thereby precluding a cohesiveness which should underpin the performance. If that feels right the other deficiencies will be diminished. I recently attended a performance of *The Apostles* in the Barbican, again with similar forces, and here inadequate rehearsal, particularly in the orchestra, was obvious. Over the next few days a recording was to be made, and I can only hope that these deficiencies will be put right. However, it does demonstrate that this music is not in the performer's blood, which means that the natural flow of the music will always be contrived. What made and makes Sir Adrian's performance unique was the love and years of experience he brought to *The Kingdom*. His understanding of pace (he was no mean Wagnerian) and authority guaran-

ted that an orchestra and chorus not used to the music would, at least, be on the edge of their seats. Slatkin too conveyed a love of the work and the freshness of a newcomer, who had, nevertheless, immersed himself in the music. In contrast, this recording of *The Kingdom* seems almost perfunctory, and I fear *The Apostles*, when it is issued, will fare no better.

In illustration of my concern I will make two further points. From 76 to the end of the section there is what must be one of the most exciting passages in all Elgar's music. The passage is wonderfully orchestrated (the LSO brass here is superb) with the march rhythm 'who walketh on the wings of the wind' underpinning the first part of the section's flow towards its nobly concluded conclusion. The problem seems to be that of sustaining the momentum whilst accommodating Elgar's pauses, which are just that, not breaks which interfere with the momentum. Unfortunately, I feel that this is just what happens here, with Hickox having to pick up the momentum again after every pause for reflection. Felicity Palmer's interjections also add nothing to the atmosphere, and the miscasting of David Wilson-Johnson is all the more obvious. His 'Ye men of Judaea' should not be a sermon in an Anglican Cathedral but a ringing statement of what the life and death of Christ meant for all mankind.

In part two, what should be the climax at 'The sun goeth down' is an anti-climax. Too great a sense of detachment by Margaret Marshall robs the piece of its intensity. Again I wonder if there was adequate rehearsal time for this difficult music; and what happens at the fortissimo on 'glad' (3 after 156). Is this a bad edit? Having said all this, it is only fair to point out that there are some fine things in what is, technically, a first-class recording. The chorus is more effectively integrated than in the Chandos/Hickox *Dream of Gerontius* and both chorus and orchestra perform and sing the final radiant pages most movingly.

Increased investment by the BBC, and the work of Edward Downes, has turned the Corporation's Philharmonic Orchestra into a fine machine, worthy to stand alongside its southern brother. You can now buy their fine performance of yet another Enigma Variations when you purchase your next tube of toothpaste at Boots. I liked a number of things in this slightly distant recording. A fine unsentimental Nimrod, a delicate Romanza and a sturdy finale (alas no organ). However, lighter variations such as HDS-P and Dorabella do not fare as well, seeming to be firmly rooted to the earth.

Alexander Baillie produces a warmly lyrical performance of the Concerto which is immediately arresting. Whilst I was listening to the record, a cello student from Australia stayed in our home for a few weeks. She was immediately attracted to the record placing it on a level with those of Navarra and Casals! It is certainly worth having and Baillie's depth of tone and commitment makes up for one or two difficult moments which will inevitably test any technique to the full. Just listen to the *poco piu lento* in the finale movement – this is fine playing with a sense of drama. Baillie is his own man, and the interpretation is no carbon copy of more famous predecessors.

The Telarc record is well worth seeking out. Committed playing by the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, and an original view of the works by David Zinman, makes this one of the finest records of these much-recorded works to come my way for some time. The engineering however, is eccentric, highlighting orchestral details unnecessarily. If you like *Cockaigne* as an Organ Concerto then this is the record for you! Re-mixed this would be a very competitive record indeed.

Having said all this, I would point out that with Monteux and Toscanini now on CD in the *Variations* we now have only to await the composer's own interpretation to be re-issued to make available the three indispensable performances of this ever-fascinating work.

A.H.A.N.

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*The Tudor Choir, conducted by Barry Collett.
Whitewall ENS 157 (cassette only)*

From the Bavarian Highlands, Op 27 (with Barry Collett, piano). Part-songs By Stanford, Sullivan, Pinsuti, Warlock, Frank Bridge, and Finzi.

The Bavarian Highlands suite has been comparatively neglected on record, compared with other popular works by Elgar. The only full recording (with orchestra) by Del Mar and the Bournemouth forces was rather disappointing; the most recent account of the version with piano accompaniment was by the CBSO Chorus on Conifer, and this was enthusiastically reviewed by *GHL* in the September 1989 Journal.

The Tudor Choir from Leicester consists of only sixteen voices, and sounds a little thin in places, especially where the parts divide. The CBSO Chorus, with greater numbers, are far more convincing.

The piano is recorded extremely close and almost drowns the singers in the louder passages: turning down the bass makes a slight improvement. With Barry Collett accompanying, I wonder who conducted the Elgar? The solution is not given in the notes.

Side 1 of the cassette contains an interesting selection of unaccompanied English part-songs from the 19th and 20th centuries (what no Pearsall?). The most interesting are the five Bridge songs, written separately between 1903 and 1913. Performed together, as here, they form a delightful choral suite. The singing is generally pleasing, with good attack, although intonation is a little wayward at times, and individual voices protrude.

A recording mainly for lovers of English part-songs, friends and families of the singers, and for those who must have every Elgar recording.

G.H.

* * * * *

Violin Concerto in B minor, opus 61

*Igor Oistrakh, violin
Moscow Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Valentin Zhuk*

coupled with Britten: Violin Concerto

*Played by Boris Gutnikov, with the Leningrad
Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by A. Dmitriev
Olympia OCD 242*

Igor Oistrakh's recording of the Elgar violin concerto has been intermittently available on LP from certain specialist import shops for several years. Now, on this Olympia CD it is at last on general release. Technically it is, without doubt, one of the finest performances ever committed to disc: as brilliant and secure as Heifetz, yet with an extra degree of warmth and involvement. Not

everyone will like Oistrakh's approach: these days we tend to favour rather more restraint in Elgar interpretation, and Oistrakh uses plenty of *rubato*, and extracts the maximum emotion from the music. For me, however, he always stays within the limits of good taste, the shape of the music always remains clearly defined and there is never any feeling of loss of direction – and Oistrakh's security of attack and technical confidence in the quick passages really is something to marvel at.

On the negative side, I would have appreciated more sensitive handling of some of the quieter passages – but I wonder to what extent the sound quality is to blame. The engineers have given Oistrakh a very close microphone balance, and it is a tribute to his phenomenal technical skill that this playing can take this degree of spotlighting without the slightest extraneous scrape or twang being caught. The forward balance does, however, flatten the dynamic range. It also prevents the solo violin blending satisfactorily with the massed orchestral sound, which, in any case, is given a rather recessed placing in a somewhat dry acoustic. Nevertheless the conductor shows a good understanding of the Elgar idiom.

The Elgar concerto is a genuine digital production, recorded in 1984. The Britten dates from four years earlier, and is an analogue recording. Nevertheless, apart from some tape hiss, the sound is perfectly satisfactory, and, indeed, the recording is better balanced than the Oistrakh Elgar, the Leningrad Philharmonic adding a much more positive contribution than their Moscow colleagues. This, surprisingly, rarely-heard concerto, written during Britten's American years at the start of the second world war, is given an outstanding performance, Gutnikov being fully worthy to share a disc with his internationally-known fellow fiddler. The Britten concerto, of course, occupies a very different world to Elgar's secure Edwardian England – and these two great concerti make an unusually satisfying complementary pair.

G.H.L.

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Falstaff – symphonic study in C minor, opus 68
Introduction and Allegro for Strings, opus 47
Fantasy and Fugue in C minor (Bach arr. Elgar) opus 86

*National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain, conducted by Christopher Seaman
Pickwick-Imp PCD 934*

Introduction and Allegro for Strings, opus 47
Serenade for String Orchestra in E minor, opus 20
(with Vaughan Williams: Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis
Fantasia on 'Greensleeves,)

*Scottish Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Wilfried Boettcher
Pickwick-IMP PCD 935*

Christopher Seaman and the young players of the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain here give us an outstanding recording of *Falstaff* – technically totally secure, and full of spirit and character. Without doubt it is one of the best versions currently available, and a splendid tribute not just to the young instrumental talent currently available in this country, but to Seaman's skills as an orchestral trainer. It is also good to have three of his Elgar interpretations preserved on record: I know I am not alone in holding his many Elgar broadcasts (with various BBC regional orchestras) in high regard.

Falstaff and the Bach-Elgar *Fantasy and Fugue*, were recorded at St. David's Hall, Cardiff, in July, 1988, no doubt benefiting from having been made during a series of concert performances. Both enjoy warm spacious sound quality. *Introduction and Allegro* is also given an exceptionally fine performance, showing off well the depths of tone of what I take to be a comparatively large body of strings. The members of the solo quartet are, I believe, the orchestra's current string tutors. In this work the recorded sound is not quite so satisfactory, having been made (in April last year) in the rather dry acoustic of the chapel of Oundle School. Nevertheless, an outstanding Elgar recording which can be safely recommended.

On the other Pickwick CD, Bremen-born Wilfried Boettcher joins the growing ranks of non-British conductors who have committed Elgar interpretations to disc. His *Introduction and Allegro* is outstanding, brisk in tempi and with exceptional rhythmic drive and clarity of detail. Boettcher's *Serenade* is also rather quicker than we are used to, but the *Larghetto*, at Boettcher's chosen speed and careful phrasing, acquires a steady, gentle flow which is quite magical. The Vaughan Williams *Tallis Fantasia* is also exceptionally well played, although the smallish body of strings (and, perhaps, a touch too literal and precise direction from Boettcher) prevents the performance quite finding that unique VW mysticism.

Throughout this disc the playing of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra is most beautiful, and the recorded sound well balanced in a warm acoustic and clear in detail. One slight mystery: the recording was made in 1982, but only now released. Perhaps the fact that, at 44 minutes, the CD is not particularly well filled, may have made Pickwick doubtful about its commercial prospects. At their reasonable price, however, these very fine performances can be given a strong recommendation.

G.H.L.

* * * * *

'In the South', opus 50 (with Saygun: Viola Concerto, with Rusen Gunes, Viola)

*London Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Gurer Aykal
Koch-Schwann CD311-002-H1*

Major Elgar works have been subjected to some unexpected couplings on record in the past, but none so odd as this pairing of *In The South* with a viola concerto by a veteran contemporary Turkish composer. The link is former LPO principal viola, Rusen Gunes, who gave the first performance of the Saygun concerto (with the present conductor) in 1979, and who loves playing the viola solo in the Elgar work.

Ahmed Adnan Saygun, born in 1907, is, in fact, a most interesting figure, having studied in Paris with d'Indy, subsequently tramping the hills of the Balkans, Near East and North Africa with his friend Bartok, collecting folk music. It is difficult, however, to know what to say about his viola concerto. It is pleasant, tuneful music, skilfully scored (with extensive use of tuned percussion) which could have been written any time within the first half of this century, the musical developments of the past fifty years or so having passed Saygun unobserved. It is none the worse for that, of course – but there are few really memorable moments. The *scherzando* middle movement contains exciting and imaginative use of conflicting rhythmic patterns, reminiscent of Walton, and the last movement opens with a haunting solo passage for the viola, but little else holds the attention.

Any curious non-British purchaser wishing to explore Saygun's music will be rewarded with a quite satisfactory, if not top-rank performance of *In the South*. It gets off to a slowish and slightly indecisive start, but soon settles into a warm and colourful interpretation, well played, and marred only by the conductor's tendency to occasionally underline the more romantic moments by excessive *rubato*. The recorded sound is excellent.

G.H.L.



CD ROUND-UP: the 'Gerontius' situation

In the May 1990 issue of the JOURNAL, I noted with pleasure Decca's compact disc reissue of Britten's revelatory 1971 recording of *The Dream of Gerontius*. This time I have two further *Gerontius* reissues for review, both from EMI, which puts us in the extraordinary situation of now having every complete recording of *Gerontius*, except one, on compact. The exception, sadly, is the classic 1945 Sargent version, featuring Heddle Nash. Elgar fans who did not buy the LP reissue fifteen years ago, can glimpse what we are missing by investing in EMI compact disc CDM 763370-2, issued to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, and which includes Nash's passionate singing of 'Sanctis Fortus'. Listening to it confirms my feeling that EMI has made a mistake in choosing the later, 1954 Sargent recording, with Richard Lewis, for reissue in its 'Great Recordings of the Century' series (2 CDs, CHS 7 63376-2).

Much admired in its day, to me this performance now sounds dated: tempi are slow, there is little dramatic thrust, and the overall style is devotional to the point of often seeming rather lugubrious. The orchestral playing (the Liverpool Philharmonic again) is reasonably good, but the soggy, thick-toned and inflexible Huddersfield choral singing is no longer acceptable. The recorded sound, mono of course, has transferred to the CD with remarkable clarity.

However, it is good that Richard Lewis's celebrated interpretation of the role of 'Gerontius' was preserved in its prime, although there are moments of unsteadiness and suspect intonation, to balance against the mellifluous tonal beauty and great sensitivity to the text. The recording also captures two other outstanding singers of the period – Marjorie Thomas, one of the very best Angels on record, and Australian baritone John Cameron.

Gerontius is coupled with Sargent's 1958 *Belshazzar's Feast* – another performance rather let down by some lack of forward drive and fire, and, again, by choral singing which lacks clarity of harmonic detail and range of tone colour. On the positive side, however, Canadian baritone James Milligan, who died, I seem to recall, not long after, is outstandingly good in his solo passages. Surprisingly, this recording is also reissued in mono form, although I have a recollection that there was once a stereo version available.

Richard Lewis was also the tenor soloist chosen for Barbirolli's recording of *Gerontius*, made a decade later, and now available on EMI 'Studio' CMS 763185-2. By then Lewis's voice had become tonally rather dry, and his style more declamatory – an effect perhaps exaggerated by the rather close-niked balance of the solo voices. I seem to recall some disappointment amongst Barbirolli fans when this recording was first issued, as his rather expansive handling of the recorded performance was not felt to capture his celebrated interpretation at its best. By comparison with Sargent, however, and despite some even slower tempi, Barbirolli conducts a flexible, dramatic performance with a unique atmosphere of spiritual ecstasy.

The combined Sheffield Philharmonic and Halle choirs may not be the most polished choral body on a *Gerontius* recording, but they respond with great commitment and enthusiasm. Of the other two soloists, the eager, light-toned mezzo of the young Janet Baker casts an appealingly different light on the role of the Angel – but I still have difficulty in accepting Barbirolli's eccentric choice of the Finnish bass Kim Borg as the Priest and the Angel of the Agony. The voice is right in timbre, but the English language sits uncomfortably on his technique.

The recorded sound, apart from the rather forward balance of the soloists already mentioned, is spacious and attractive. Without a doubt, this is a 'classic' recorded *Gerontius*, worthy, in this excellent CD transfer, to be considered, alongside the Boult, Britten, Hickox and Rattle versions, in anyone's short list for a top *Gerontius* recommendation.



NEWS FROM THE BRANCHES . . .

SOUTH WALES. The first meeting of the year was held at Friendship House, Swansea, on 21st April, when Miss Margaret Elgar, the composer's great-niece, offered some personal recollections of Elgar and his family. Though this was not the first occasion upon which Branch members had been addressed by somebody who could speak of the composer from personal recollection, never before had they enjoyed the privilege of meeting one who could claim the distinction of actual consanguinity. Miss Elgar was, of course, still a child when her great-uncle died. Nevertheless, there were certain memories that she still quite clearly retained. One such was his interest in the gramophone, and Miss Elgar amusingly reminded us of the curiosity that she shared with her sisters as to which of Elgar's canine companions was pictured on the old HMV label! We were vouchsafed the sight of a number of photographs, and the provision of equipment kindly made available by Mr. Brian Rayner, a Branch member, enabled Miss Elgar to illustrate her talk with recordings of some largely unfamiliar music, including the *Ave Verum* of 1887, and the very early song *The language of Flowers*, written in 1872, when the composer was a mere 15 years of age, for the birthday of his sister Lucy. The speaker also referred to the two versions of the piano Sonatina in G, composed on 1889. As to which of the composer's works she liked best, Miss Elgar remarked that she had no particular favourite, year in, year out. . . . She had, however, an especial fondness for some of the small-scale compositions.

Emeritus-Professor Ian Parrott, who attends South Wales meetings whenever he can, proposed the vote of thanks. Due to Kenneth Wallace we were able to hear the RLPO/Vernon Handley recording of Gordon Jacob's orchestral version of the Organ Sonata. Mr. George Davies initiated discussion as to the merits of the transcription.

Regrettably, however, this occasion was not without an unfortunate incident. An hour or so before she was due to speak, Miss Elgar sustained a fall at Swansea's Grand Hotel, and she was in some pain when she delivered her talk. Medical examination later revealed that she had a broken hip and, in consequence, she was obliged to spend some time in hospital. Members of the South Wales Branch will hardly be alone in hoping that she is soon restored to complete health.

[** We understand that Margaret Elgar has made good progress and is now restored to health. We are certain that all members will wish to send greetings and good wishes to her, and express admiration for her courage in continuing with her talk after a most painful accident. EDITOR].

The LONDON BRANCH season continued in May, when member Relf Clark gave a quite outstanding presentation – 'Elgar and Vaughan Williams'. Illustrating his theme with both recorded excerpts and at the piano, Mr. Clark convincingly suggested all sorts of unsuspected, fascinating and often amusing influences. Any Branch able to lay on a piano is strongly advised to get Relf Clark along to one of its meetings.

The season ended in June with what is becoming almost the tradition of an "away from Home" AGM. This year we visited All Saints', Margaret Street, and enjoyed both the remarkable architecture of this famous Church, and a well-constructed and superbly played recital by Harry Brama, now director of the Royal School of Church Music, as well as organist at Margaret Street, and formerly of Southwark and Worcester Cathedrals. An unusually large number of committee vacancies had to be filled at the AGM, which followed the recital; but the main change was

the ending of John Greig's period of office as Branch Treasurer. To say we are sorry to lose him would be an understatement, but we are consoled by the fact that our loss is the Society's gain (John was elected Society Treasurer at the Malvern AGM), and that we have a first-class replacement in John Kelly, whose credentials both Elgarian and financial are unimpeachable!

Next season will get under way on October 8th with live music at Imperial College, to be followed by a social event in the Senior Common Room and, we hope, an auction of Elgariana and associated items. Members are enjoined to see what they have got to and to bring it along on the night!

It was good to see so many members in the WEST MIDLANDS area for the Society AGM Weekend, and I know that the Branch Committee would wish to congratulate the Society Officers on the excellent organisation. The following weekend was busy too, but time was taken out of the programme for four members to visit the Elgar Grave at St. Wulstan's. It had been beautifully decorated by Richard and Olive Hessel, who are in charge now that Patricia Soper has relinquished that part of her responsibility.

The major event of the Summer was a joint meeting with members of the Newman Society. In all about 30 people visited Birmingham Oratory, and were privileged to get an account of its origins and an insight into Cardinal Newman's life there. This was given by Father Gregory Winterton, the Provost, who allowed us to see the original score of *The Dream of Gerontius*. A tour of the buildings was conducted by Brother Richard. The day concluded with a performance of *Gerontius*. A tour of the buildings was conducted by Brother Richard. The day concluded with a performance of *Gerontius* by the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and the City of Birmingham Choir, conducted by Christopher Robinson, to mark the centenary of Newman's death. This was given to a full house in the Town Hall, and was a tremendous occasion. The Branch now looks forward to the Autumn and our first meeting, which is on 29th Sept., when Michael Pope will address us on 'Elgar and the British Orchestral Heritage'. As is customary, this will be in the Friends' Meeting House at 2.30 p.m. and is open to all members.

Since the AGM in March the EAST ANGLIAN Branch has enjoyed illustrated lectures by David Bury entitled 'Elgar: the Awful Female', and Trevor Fenemore-Jones on 'Elgar Man of Mission'. During both of these lectures we were enlightened on certain lesser-known aspects of Elgar's career. Unfortunately Margaret Elgar's visit due in May was cancelled due to her accident. All in the branch wish her a speedy recovery, and we hope that she will be able to visit us next year. Recently the branch was well represented at an excellent performance of *The Apostles* in St. Andrew's Hall, Norwich, given by the Crouch End Festival Chorus and Ealing Symphony Orchestra. Unfortunately the hall was not filled to capacity, and we wonder at the reasons for this comparatively poor attendance; could it have been the World Cup Final, insufficient publicity, or the godless nature of our present society? In any case the local press gave good reviews, and we can recommend them as first class and well worth noting for future performances. Our season concluded with our annual summer fund raising party.

SOUTHERN BRANCH report that their first three meetings were most enjoyable, with Terry Barfoot talking on 'Elgar and the Orchestra', Ronald Taylor on 'Elgar in the Recording Studios', and Diana Walkley and Carol Holt on 'Elgar in Words and Pictures'. The Autumn programme comprises: 6th October 'Edward Elgar and the Great War' (Andrew Neill at the Beaumont Rooms, Aldershot). 21st November 'English Liturgical Music' (St John's RC Cathedral Choir,

Our Lady and St. John School, Beach Road, Hayling Island). 12th January AGM, followed by 'Elgar in Fiction' (Kevin Allen at Havant Arts Centre). All at 2.30 p.m. Southern Branch is still in need of information concerning possible venues, especially in the west of the area - Bournemouth/Dorchester. Please contact the Chairman if you can help. Please keep Friday, 26th April 1991 free, as there will be a concert by the Bournemouth Sinfonietta, sponsored by Tesco, for Rushmoor Borough Council and the Elgar Society, at the Prince's Hall, Aldershot.

YORKSHIRE BRANCH's 1989/90 season concluded with three very well attended meetings. We felt that our own member, Brian Stocks, was the ideal man to talk on 'God and Elgar, on May 14th. Initially a Methodist minister, later an Anglican clergyman and now taking instruction with a view to becoming a Catholic priest, he seemed to have all the necessary qualifications and, indeed, his talk was well-chosen from Elgar's 'Apostles' and 'The Dream of Gerontius'. Charles Myers has now retired as organist of Clitheroe Parish Church, and though still keeping busy with various musical matters, found time to speak to us on June 11th on Elgar's use of piano and organ in works other than those for the solo instrument. He illustrated his points from the piano and also with recordings. Well laced with Charles's usual wit, the talk was greatly enjoyed.

The Annual Summer Social, held at the Secretary's home on July 23rd, showed yet again how easily Yorkshire members can while away a whole evening doing nothing other than eat, drink and talk - sometimes managing to do all three at once! Always a worthwhile gathering, even if the walls at No.227 appear to bulge sometimes.

The programme for 1990/91 is still receiving its final touches as we write. Members will receive the printed word well before the opening meeting on September 24th. The contents require a little juggling before being entrusted to the printer, but will include evenings on Sullivan (this time without Gilbert) and Delius as diversions from our usual Elgarian fare. Other evenings include 'Elgar and the Three Choirs Festival', a recital of Elgar and other songs by the Wendell Choir, conducted by our own David Fligg, and a visit by BBC Radio 3 announcer Malcolm Ruthven.

NORTH WEST reports that although the official programme for the 1989/90 season ended in March, 24 members journeyed to Malvern for the Birthday celebrations on Sunday, 27th May. This included coffee at Birchwood, Lawnside School, and the Birthplace for sherry and cake. A most enjoyable day.

Our 1990/91 season begins on 7th October, with a talk by Dr. John Wray mysteriously entitled "E.E.C.!" On 3rd November Ronald Taylor will give his talk "Music in the Air All Around Us: Elgar and the BBC." Our AGM and Christmas Social will take place on 1st December, with a performance of seasonal music given by students of the RNCM. The first meeting in the New Year will be in January when Dennis Clark will give his presentation "Elgar and the Malverns." In February we shall have a programme of live music, and our season ends on 2nd March with a visit from Claud Powell, who will speak on 'Dorabella'.

LETTERS

From: M. P. Burrows

I write with reference to the death of Sydney Pardon, then editor of Wisden, at a concert conducted by Elgar in November 1925. (See May JOURNAL).

Mr. Pardon's demise was most definitely not an adverse result of hearing Sir Edward's music, as Sydney Pardon, born in 1855 and thus a near contemporary of the composer, was an enthusiastic admirer of Elgar's music and had been a champion of his for many years. He was in the audience in Manchester on that memorable evening in December 1908 when the A flat Symphony received its first performance, and had followed Elgar's career prior to that almost from the very beginning.

Sydney Herbert Pardon was one of three brothers who, in succession edited Wisden between 1887 and 1925, the others being Charles Frederick, until 1890, and Edgar Searles from 1890 until 1898 when S.H. took over. Sydney watched his first cricket match in 1863, the same year that John Wisden himself retired from the editor's chair. The Pardon brothers, with C. Stewart Caine, were instrumental in founding the Cricket Reporting Agency, which survives to this day.

Sydney Pardon was an accomplished pianist and came from a musically educated family, his father George Frederick Pardon, a great friend of W. G. Grace, having been a very talented singer, who played no small part in the Bach revival of the 1840's, and who was still active until his death in 1884. Sidney was a great opera lover in his later years and developed an almost encyclopaedic knowledge of the repertoire, its performers, and conductors. He contributed many articles and criticisms to 'The Times' and leading periodicals of the day, in the winter months when not engaged in cricket matters.

The link with Elgar was apparently formed as a result of a favourable review of a performance of Sir Edward's early works at St. James's Hall in London. An introduction followed and the acquaintanceship lasted right up to that day in November 1925. Sydney's death was marked by many tributes from the cricket and music worlds in which he had been active for over half a century.

The relationship between cricket and music is very interesting – think of the prime example of Neville Cardus, spending days at Old Trafford in the 1920's, reporting on the great Lancashire teams of the time, and evenings in the concert hall and opera house. Not a few cricketers have been quite gifted amateur musicians. It is a field perhaps worth exploring.

From: Sheila Burgess-Smith

Having been urged by some members at the Malvern Elgar Weekend to send this letter, I feel it is an appropriate time to do so.

I have always wondered why the great man should have written 'Sea Pictures' at the picturesque Birchwood. This query was partly answered when one Autumn day I was in Birchwood garden and saw patches of mist, like sea mist, rising over Worcester, joining sky to land and looking exactly like the ocean. Could this be the answer?

From: Michael Plant

What a pleasure to read Mr. Rowbotham's account in the May JOURNAL of the frequent performances of Elgar's music on Radio 3 during 1989! However, he is a little misleading on the circumstances in which Elgar's piano playing came to be recorded. Briefly, the session was by arrangement, at Elgar's request and in advance of a session with orchestra the next day, at which 'Carissima' and other short pieces were recorded.

The details are, of course, all in Jerrold Moore's invaluable 'Elgar on Record'. We shall never know how spontaneous these 'piano gymnastics' really were; their real importance is the chance they give us to listen, as so many of his friends used to do, by Elgar's side as he tries out his ideas at the keyboard. This importance was recognised not long ago by EMI Records, when permission was given for release of Elgar's Improvisations in their original form (i.e. as 78 rpm records) as a special edition for collectors. A few sets may still be available (on application to Symposium Records - telephone 081 368 8667); the LP transfer, in the boxed set 'Elgar on Record', has been deleted for several years.

From: Trevor Fenemore-Jones

May I ask for space in your columns to convey my grateful thanks to everyone for their kindness to me when I stood down from the office of Vice-Chairman at the AGM.

The most generous 'basket' of gifts presented to me proved to contain, first of all, the Grove Concise Dictionary of Music, a most valuable and welcome addition to my library, and secondly, record tokens which have enabled me to acquire CD versions of some favourite performances, notably the Boult 'Gerontius', 'Apostles' and 'Music Makers', as well as to add some items previously missing from my collection. Also in the basket was an attractive blue wrapper for the forthcoming Elgar Studies volume - a strong hint of something very desirable still to come! I shall cherish these gifts.

I have always found membership of the Society most stimulating and rewarding and my standing down does not indicate any lessening of interest; I was therefore particularly pleased to be made an honorary member of the Society. I hope to see it continue to thrive and prosper in the future. Thank you all for the gifts and for your support over the years.

From: Bob Hellen

As a librarian, may I correct Caroline Wessel's mistaken view (May JOURNAL) that mass reservations of a book will automatically result in public libraries buying more copies.

A book will only be purchased for a library authority if it is felt that sufficient use will be made of it to justify the expenditure. This does not mean that a copy will not be provided by the library, but it may be that the authority will choose to borrow it from another library system rather than make its own purchase. Ms. Wessel's suggestion would only succeed in creating lengthy waiting lists for the book, without influencing the number of library copies bought.

From: Dr. Gareth H. Lewis

Andrew Keener, who produced the Rivka Golani recording of Tertis's viola arrangement of the Elgar Cello Concerto is quite right to take me to task for misleading readers in my review (Letters, 'Journal', May 1990). I related the old story of how Tertis astonished Elgar by surreptitiously tuning down his C string in order to play the low B Flat near the end of the slow movement. I omitted to mention, however, that Miss Golani and Vernon Handley, aware of the impracticability of this procedure at a live performance, decided against.

Having been present at the recording sessions, (and having even marked my score accordingly!) I was fully aware that this difficulty had been avoided by adopting the alternative of moving the solo line up an octave for nine bars, from the fourth bar after figure 39 in the score, until one bar after 41. My apologies, therefore, to all concerned: my only excuse is that I overlooked this point when I was editing my notes on several new recordings of the cello concerto, to group them together into one review.

Andrew Keener's other point, concerning the Leonard Slatkin recordings of Froissart, Cockaigne and the Variations raises interesting questions about how the nature of a performance can influence our impression of the sound quality. I noted that the sound seemed more 'open' in Froissart in comparison with the other pieces. I do not doubt that there was no change in the microphone balance during the recording sessions. Nevertheless my subjective impression of a slight difference in sound quality remains, even after repeated listening. The explanation must surely lie in my personal (and more favourable) response to Slatkin's brisk, rhythmic, 'open air' interpretation of Froissart in comparison with his rather less dynamic handling of the other works.

From: Michael Trott

I have recently been given a copy of the list of baptisms in the Bournemouth parish of Holdenhurst for March, 1848. This shows for March 20th the baptism of Charles Hubert Hastings Parry, son of Thomas Gambier Parry and his wife, Anna Maria Isabella, of Highnam Court, Gloucestershire. (In the column headed 'Quality, trade or profession' for the father is written 'Esquire'.) The previous entry is for one Elizabeth Elgar, daughter of John Elgar, a local tailor. Given the relative scarcity of Elgars beyond East Kent, I thought this was a remarkable coincidence.

From: Barry Collett

I was surprised to read P. L. Scowcroft's article in the May JOURNAL, about a new orchestration of the Crown of India March. Only a few years ago I performed this March (along with the Crown of India Suite) in Elgar's own orchestration, with parts readily available from Boosey & Hawkes. Did the new orchestrator know they were there?

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

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