

The Elgar Society JOURNAL



**MAY
1991**

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The Elgar Society Journal

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EDITORIAL

Vol. 7, no. 2
May 1991

'Summer is i'cumen in' and whether the cuckoos are singing loudly or not there will certainly be much music and talk of music. The sounds of Elgar will be there too – much more Elgar than there would have been some fifteen years ago. It seems astonishing to me but it was as long ago as Summer 1976 that I was approached to edit the Elgar Society Newsletter (it became the Journal in 1979.) There was one more issue to come from E. Wulstan Atkins who had turned the Newsletter from just a few sheets of Society news to a mass of interesting material which could barely be held together by the staples! Wulstan Atkins was moving on to devote his energies to the Elgar Foundation, and also the Committee wanted the Newsletter to develop and to reflect the growth of the Society. We had high hopes of the future, most of which, thankfully, were to be realised.

In those early days we had a semi-official Editorial Committee, and although I had over-all authority I was very grateful for the advice and experience of those committee members. Indeed it is no exaggeration to say that we all became friends, and saw the development of the Newsletter into an authoritative Journal as crucial to the success of the Society. I had always believed that the Journal, whilst reflecting the policy of the Society, should have an independence of approach so that all members could feel that for at least some of the time it reflected their views, however divergent. In general I think this approach succeeded. Sometimes we had to restrain some rather over-active bees in bonnets, and at other times there was a certain amount of gritting of teeth by more conservative elements in the Society. Of course, there were those too who thought I was a slave of the establishment! When you attract criticism from both sides you know you are right!

Over the years I have had really splendid support from dozens of people, and kind remarks and appreciative letters have far outweighed criticism. I would like to thank ALL who have contributed – I will not single out any one person for that would be unfair. Officers of the Society, committee members, Branch officers, and many, many, members both at home and overseas, have all helped and encouraged the growth of this Journal. I have made many very good friends and have learnt a great deal – not just about Elgar, but about music and music-making.

Now, this is my last editorial, for I 'retire' from that post at the AGM in June. I shall not be deserting the Society, nor Elgar, for I hope I shall still have something to contribute. I wish my successor the best of good fortune and hope that he will have as much cooperation as I have enjoyed. I hope to contribute to the Journal from time to time, and having laid aside the cares of office may get to relax a little and listen to more music!

The Society has come a long way from my first issue in January 1977, when there were but three branches, and we still welcomed each new Elgar recording with enthusiasm as the gaps began to be filled. Many of the books which we now regard as standard texts had yet to be written. In the progress we have made I hope that you feel the JOURNAL has played its part.

RONALD TAYLOR

NEWS ITEMS

Our Chairman, Christopher Robinson, has been appointed Master of Music at St. John's College, Cambridge, in succession to Dr. Ralph Guest who retires in July. Of course St. George's Chapel, Windsor, is the loser by the departure of Mr. Robinson, but we warmly congratulate our Chairman on a distinguished appointment. Will there be a little more Elgar in the Cambridge air after July? Time will tell . . .

Plas Gwyn, once the Hereford home of Sir Edward and Lady Elgar, and now divided into flats, has been granted Listed Building status Grade II*. The asterisk means that it is of more than usual interest, and gives greater protection to the building. Would that 'Marl Bank' had had such protection in years gone by . . .

Our appeal for more performances of *King Olaf* has been heard in Colchester, for on June 29th the Colchester Choral Society will present the work in the Moot Hall. In advising us of this Mrs. A. Lawton recalls the time, in 1957, when the Society took over a local cinema and, with the LSO, performed *Gerontius*, *Light of Life* and *The Kingdom* – all in one week! Alas, the lack of suitable premises in Colchester today forbids such a bold enterprise, but we hope that the Society draws a capacity crowd to its *Olaf*. Further details in our Diary column.

The Hilton Hotels are continuing their Special Interest weekends, and announce that there will be two Elgar weekends, based at their Warwick Hotel, in July and October. Cost of the weekends is £144 per guest, and full details may be had from Beverly Whelband, on 0923 38877.

Barry Collett, of the Rutland Sinfonia, gives us advance notice of their new recording. It is described as 'The last remaining vocal and choral items', about 80 minutes playing time, including a Salve Regina of 1878 (Elgar's first work for St. George's Church, Worcester) and the Queen Alexandra Memorial Ode (1932). Also there are several items from the war years, including a Marching Song, with trumpets and drums! Teresa Cahill will sing ten Elgar songs, and the choral performers will be the Tudor Choir. This recording is being supported by the Elgar Society, and it is hoped will be ready by the summer. Those Elgarians keen to possess *everything* will have already mentally reserved their copy!

It is sometimes forgotten that other things happen in Lower Broadheath, as well as events at the Birthplace. On June 28th – 30th, from 10.30 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. each, day a Festival of Flowers and Crafts will be held in Christchurch, Lower Broadheath. On the Saturday and Sunday there will be special music in the Church. Admission is £1.00 and there will be displays of local crafts, with demonstrations, a craft stall and refreshments.

In December Roy Massey, Organist of Hereford Cathedral, was awarded a Lambeth Doctorate, for his services to Church Music. Our warmest congratulations to Dr. Massey, who has been responsible for many fine performances at Three Choirs Festivals and other events.

We are informed, by Sandrey Date of Dorset County Music Library, that on their 1990 tour to Switzerland the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, under Andrew Litton, played the *Pomp & Circumstance March no. 4* as an encore at each performance. To great acclaim, we understand!

NEWS NOTES from the Elgar Birthplace arrived just too late for any inclusion in our last issue. We are indebted to Brian Edgington for keeping us informed of events there. The Giggleswick Manuscripts have now been safely received, and a booklet describing them is available. A number of scholars continue to avail themselves of the many treasures contained at Broadheath, and television too has featured the birthplace on more than one occasion. The famous Schola Cantorum, from Aachen, gave a concert in Worcester Cathedral last year, and duly visited Broadheath while they were in the city.

A new American member, Derek Lowe, writes that his grandfather was the local postman in Malvern when Elgar lived there, and remembered the composer. He also states that his father used to clean Elgar's bicycle!

Elgar items continue to appear at auction. At Sotheby's a superb collection of very early Elgar programmes, one annotated by the composer, and including programmes from the Lunatic Asylum and the Malvern Wells Glee Society (18 items in all), went for just under £1,000. A similar price was paid for an unpublished seven-bar 'Impromptu', written out in 1932 for Miss Evelyn Dales, secretary to E. Godfrey Brown the BBC's director of music in Belfast, an ardent Elgarian and friend of the composer. Elgar visited Belfast for a performance of *Gerontius* in October 1932, and was due to make another visit in 1933, but ill-health prevented it. Both items were purchased by a music dealer, and we hope that they were intended for a national collection.

GENERAL COMMITTEE 1991

There will be two vacancies on the General Committee owing to the retirement of Dennis Clark and Geoffrey Hodgkins. Please send nominations to the Secretary, Carol Holt, with names of proposer and seconder.

JOURNAL EDITOR

Owing to the retirement of Ronald Taylor as Journal Editor, nominations for his successor should be sent to the Secretary also. To remind you of the address: Carol Holt, 20 Geraldine Road, Malvern, WR14 3PA.

A COINCIDENCE . . .

Shortly after the appearance of our January issue, with its mention of the baritone Wilfrid Douthitt, the editor attended a meeting of the Recorded Vocal Art Society, addressed by Vivian Liff. Mr. Liff recalled the story about Douthitt in Peter Dawson's "Fifty Years of Song" (Hutchinson, 1951). The quotation is worth repeating here, for it concerns Elgar:

' . . . I pass to that remarkable baritone Wilfrid Douthitt. Wilfrid was blessed with extraordinary power for sustaining notes for an incredible length of time. I recall that he held a middle 'G' for sixty seconds! This ability was not appreciated when overdone. And that grand old man of music, Sir Edward Elgar, when conducting a rehearsal of *The Apostles* in which I took part, had occasion to make the following rebuke to the baritone: "Mr. Douthitt, I should be glad if you would please stop that rather vulgar style of singing. Remember, you are singing the part of the Saviour. Please modify the phrasing. I am quite sure that the Saviour was not gifted with such breath control." . . . Let me say at once that Sir Edward Elgar did not mean his remark in any derogatory sense; Sir Edward was too much the English gentleman to hurt anyone's feelings. He had to restrain the singer firmly from bad phrasing . . . '

OUR WARMEST CONGRATULATIONS TO CAROL and JIM HOLT on joining the distinguished ranks of grandparents! Their daughter Louise had a son, James, on the 24th March, Our best wishes, too, to the happy parents!

DR. JERROLD NORTHPROP MOORE and cellist JULIAN LLOYD-WEBBER are presenting a joint 'performance' at the Hay-on-Wye Literary Festival on 1st June, at 3.30 p.m. Lasting 80 minutes the presentation will include readings from Elgar's letters and writings, with music on cello and piano. Details may be obtained from Peter Florence, Festival Office, Hay-on-Wye, Hereford HR3 5BX.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1991

The Annual General Meeting will take place at 2.15 p.m. on Sunday, 2nd June, 1991, at Huntingdon Hall, Deansway, Worcester. Please note that the day is Sunday.

It will be preceded at 12.00 a.m. by an A. T. Shaw Memorial Lecture to be given by Diana McVeagh. The title of her talk will be: 'A Man's Attitude to Life'. At 4.00 p.m. Evensong will take place in Worcester Cathedral. All are warmly invited to go on to the Birthplace for the customary sherry and birthday cake. If you would like to have lunch after the Lecture please write to the Secretary, with a cheque for £5.25, and enclose a stamped addressed envelope. Applications for such tickets should be made by 20th May.

Ronald Taylor is relinquishing his position as Editor of the Journal after fourteen years devoted service. It is universally agreed that the Journal plays a unique part in the life of the Society, and it is sometimes the only point of contact with members. During Ronald Taylor's editorship readers have enjoyed articles and reviews, and have been stimulated by his imaginative style.

In recognition of his services a presentation will be made to him at the Annual General Meeting. Please send donations to the Secretary, Mrs. Carol Holt, 20 Geraldine Road, Malvern, Worcs. WR14 3PA.

YOUR EDITOR SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER than to have admitted to a loss of memory when it came to Elgar's remarks on animals. A host of informative letters came in response to the enquiry from an American member. These answers have been passed on to him, and meanwhile the Editor hopes that readers will accept this paragraph as his grateful thanks to all who wrote in.

Now for a question to which I DO know the answer. Which was the largest orchestra Elgar ever conducted? The answer will appear in the September issue, if the new editor will allow it!

We understand that at the concert of the Rutland Sinfonia, in Malvern on 14th April, the Great Hall of the Winter Gardens is to be renamed 'The Elgar Hall.' At the same time the adjoining cinema will be renamed 'The Shaw Studio'. An apt choice and one which will add to the many Elgar/Shaw connections in Great Malvern.

THE NUPEND

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All rooms have private bathroom and colour TV. We offer a choice of breakfasts and a four-course dinner. Vegetarians catered for. Central heating and open fires in winter. No smokers please. German and French spoken.

Mrs ROSALIND TEUMA
The Nupend
 Cradley, near Malvern
 Worcs. WR13 5NP



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Mr & Mrs Blake
To meet Sir Edward Elgar, O.M.

Mr. Leo F. Schuster
at Home
Sunday, June 26th
4 to 7.

at 4.45
Elgar's Chamber Music
Messrs. A. Sammons, W. H. Reed,
Lionel Tertis, Felix Salmond,
Wm. Murdoch.

R. S. V. P.
The Long White Cloud,
Bray on Thames,
Maidenhead.

THE LONG WHITE CLOUD.
June 26th, 1927.

Homage to Elgar.

Sonata for Violin and Pianoforte, Op. 82.
I. Allegro.
II. Romance Andante.
III. Allegro non troppo.

*Quartet (2 Violins, Viola and Cello), Op. 83.
I. Allegro. Moderato. E minor.
II. Piacetole (poco andante), C major.
III. Allegro (Finale) E minor and major.

*Quintet (Strings and Pianoforte), Op. 84.
I. Allegro. A minor.
II. Adagio. E major.
III. Introduction and Allegro nobilmente.
A major.

Messrs. A. SAMMONS, W. H. REED,
LIONEL TERTIS, FELIX SALMOND
and Wm. MURDOCH.

*First performance at 22, Old Queen Street, S.W.,
April, 1919.

The invitation and Programme card for a chamber music performance arranged by Leo Schuster for Sir Edward Elgar in 1927. This card was addressed to Elgar's daughter Carice and her husband Samuel Blake. The copies were kindly supplied to us by Raymond Monk.

LADY HULL: A MEMOIR OF ELGAR

Edited by Jacob O'Callaghan

Part II

Mr. Hull and I were secretly engaged just before the Festival – Elgar being the only one we told – and naturally that 1921 Festival was a blissful time for me. I got to know many of the performers; best of all dear Billy Reed who as leader of the LSO played an important part and as a friend of Elgar's could be relied on to keep the great man happy, and, if necessary, pour oil on troubled waters. He was the life and soul of all our Festival parties. His fund of stories – always so *a propos*, and told as no one but he could in his delightful cockney accent – seemed endless, but, alas, lose all their wit and charm when written down and out of context.

The snaps taken at this time in the garden of 20 Church Street show Molly – a very pretty, vivacious 'flapper' – Percy, and Billy Reed plainly doing their best to cheer up Sir Edward. The correspondence shows that Elgar had himself been generous with help and advice in the months before this, Hull's first Festival as Conductor-in-Chief.

The Festival was a triumph for P.C. Many people wondered how successful he would be as a Conductor for he was virtually unknown outside his native city. Although Worcester had led the way in being the first of the three cities to revive the Festival after the war, it needed courage and determination to continue the wonderful tradition of the Festival, putting it on a sound foundation once more while introducing some modern music, such as *The Hymn of Jesus* [conducted by its composer, Gustav Holst]. As a tribute to P.C.'s success the Honorary degree of D.Mus. was bestowed on him by the Archbishop of Canterbury in the spring of 1922.

Elgar wrote to offer ("don't be angry") help with the kind of expenses that he himself had once (according to Rosa Burley) panicked about. And the engagement was announced of Hull to Molly Hake. "I cannot tell you . . . what happiness your 'engagement' to that beautiful, sweet girl gives me; it was just what I wanted and hoped for . . . I want to advise two dear children a little further (only this once more) – Do not wait longer than you must – that's all," Hull heeded the advice.

Never physically robust, the years spent as a Prisoner of War took their toll of him. The near-famine conditions which existed in the early months of the war, the starvation diet of practically uneatable food, affected his health gravely, and if he had not been invalided out to Holland four months before the Armistice I doubt if he would have lived. As it was he collapsed in 1920 and was operated on for the removal of his gall bladder – not now considered a serious operation but then quite a major "op" and one which took him a long time to recover from.

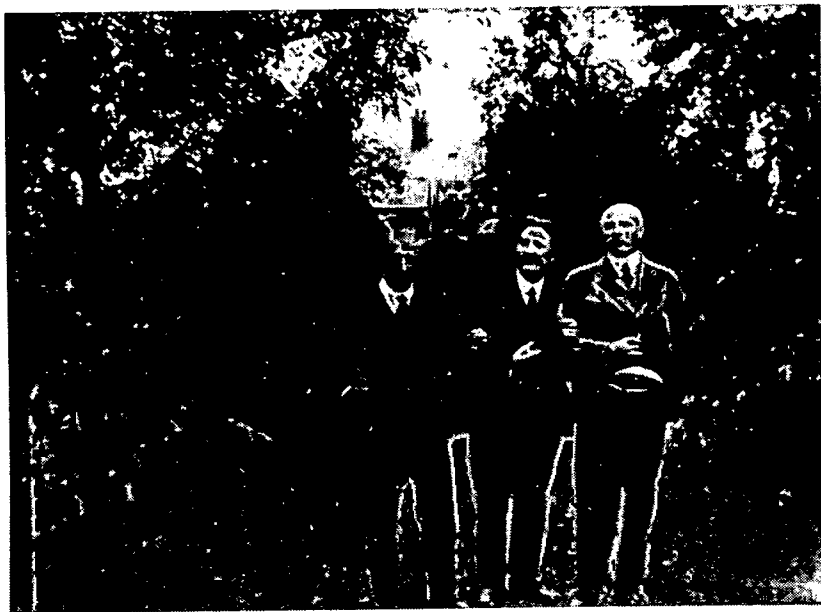
In fact he never entirely recovered from the appalling years he spent in Ruhleben. His diaries, which I still have, are heart-rending to read. But after the first nine months or so conditions in the Camp began to improve – like attracting like, there as anywhere, kindred spirits got together. Clubs were formed, sports teams organised, musicians formed orchestras, actors gave excellent shows. Red Cross food parcels began to get through, and the men soon discovered that with a little bribery to the prison warders in the shape of 'cigs', etc. many things could be smuggled into the camp. Largely due to his being a Freemason of senior rank P.C. was able to organise the delivery of food parcels from the Masonic Fraternity and there is a plaque on the stairs of the Royal Masonic Hospital at Ravenscourt Park to honour him for all the work he did.

I was thankful that I had not met him until after his return – as a matter of fact we must have passed each other at dances before the War – for he loved dancing – but I was still at the “flapper” stage and he, of course, dancing merrily with all the prettiest young women! Why he had not married earlier has always been a mystery to me – except in so far as my belief in a “plan” for everyone, and that he and I were destined for each other.

He had a mother, three devoted sisters, and two brothers, one of whom had gone to Canada after fighting in the Boer War, and returned to lose his life as the result of wounds from World War I. P.C. did not allow his family to spoil him – he believed that men should wait on women – and his opinion of “Women’s Lib” would have been terse and scathing! His father was a Herefordian, his mother Cornish: they too, had met through their love of music, each being a member of the Hereford Choral Society.

Luckily my family all approved thoroughly of P.C., though my poor father’s face fell somewhat when he discovered that P.C.’s basic salary from the Dean and Chapter as Cathedral Organist was £350 p.a. and a house! Anything extra was earned by his teaching, and later, by his adjudicating and examining for the Associated Board. My parents allowed me £50 p.a. for what was called Dress Allowance – which included not only clothes but travelling expenses and everything else, such as presents! It seems quite incredible that on this pittance we kept two maids, cook and housemaid, and when our sons were born, a nurse!

P.C. had moved into Dr. Sinclair’s old house at 20 Church Street, being the Organist’s house, [after his appointment] and it was to that same house which I had thought so stuffy and uninviting six years ago that, as a bride, I went to live at Easter, 1922, after a honeymoon spent in London, Ireland and Dartmoor.



Doing a ‘turn’ in Church Street. PC, Billy Reed, Elgar. Probably September, 1921.

Our first visitor was Elgar and I blotted my copy book as hostess by forgetting to put a carafe of water in his room. Next morning he went shopping and returned with an outsize jug and tumbler, in high glee at being able to catch me out! He found me trying to do the household accounts, and a kindly hand was put on my shoulder. "Take care of the *pounds*, the *pence* will take care of themselves."

I think, though I have no record, that I must have played the Greig Concerto with the Orchestral Society in 1924. At any rate I was practising it in the evening of April 5th, 1923, when our eldest son, Cedric, elected to make his appearance.

Elgar consented to be godfather, and he was therefore christened Edward, and Percival after my much loved uncle, Percy Bulmer.

It was in 1923 that we had our first car – an Austin 7, with, of course, no self-starter, no running boards, no permanent side screens and a hood which had to be pulled up and was liable to fly back in a high wind. In this redoubtable vehicle we sallied forth to evening parties clad in full evening dress, P.C. quite undaunted when in pouring rain he would have to get out to start the engine or pull the hood down, while I sat vainly trying to keep reasonably dry in my flimsy finery. But we had a lot of fun in that little car – and I never go down Church Street without gazing nostalgically at the door which led to the garden and our garage. Cedric shared in our "car-mindedness" and could safely be left in it for any length of time! Sir Edward was also involved and catching my husband's enthusiasm wrote to tell us that he had also bought one:

"Brook's, St. James's Street, S.W.1

Oct. 1st 1924

My dear Percy,

First thank you for your enclosure; I am glad everything [the Hereford festival] went so well; of course the thing I enjoyed most was your instruction on the Austin; I am more than ever convinced that Austin is short for St. Augustin. I am in the throes – & have decided on the newest – I think I have tried everything & this is far and away the most pleasant I have been in. I decide tomorrow . . . Billy came down for one clear day & we all went to Coventry & wallowed in Cars. I bought an Austin 7 a fortnight ago for my sister [Pollie] who loves it – the boys will drive it. I was demonstrating in the garden & backed into a row of loganberries – they fell never to rise again.

I shall be (DV) at my old home near Worcester in a short time & we must meet over and over again.

Love to Mollie, Cedric, Harry, and Austin.

Never mind P.C.

Yrs ever,

E.E."²

In 1928 Sidney Nicholson retired and the post of Organist of Westminster Abbey was offered to my husband. I think he must have been the only man ever to refuse it. But not without much serious, even agonised thought, during which he sought the advice and wise counsel of the Dean.



Probably Hereford Festival 1924. Standing, from left: PC, Molly, Wulstan Atkins. Seated: Ethel Brewer, Cedric Hull, Eileen Brewer, Edward Elgar, Dora Atkins.

His reasons for refusing were several. He knew that in order to have the highest standard of choral singing, as well as to deal with the many possible functions which might entail royalty, the job would be an extremely exacting one. His physical health, never too good, had been impaired by his years as a Prisoner of War, and it was only his indomitable will power and intense zest for life that drove him to surmount these difficulties. He was no longer a young man – nearing 50 at this time, with a young wife and two small sons. The Organist's house at Westminster was even larger and damper than our at Hereford – not, he felt, a suitable house for young children. But the most cogent reason, I am sure, was his deeply rooted love of his own county and his devotion to the Three Choirs which he could not bear to leave.

Looking back on it I think the 1930 Festival was the happiest one of all for me (excepting 1921). Elgar seemed in good form; we had (as we had foreseen) a house party consisting of all our closest friends – Billy Reed, of course, and his wife "James", for no party could be completely happy without them: Charles Palmer, organist of Canterbury Cathedral – another "regular" and the greatest fun; the names of the rest I have forgotten except that one of our luncheon guests was Bernard Shaw who arrived with Barry Jackson. I only knew a very short time before lunch that "G.B.S." was to honour us, but did what I could to provide vegetarian dishes for him.

I was slightly peeved to find that, as well as completely ignoring me, he helped himself to the cold chicken and ham which was our usual fare.

In 1932 I composed a group of songs which to my surprise were published by Novello's, and even sung at the 1933 Festival by Elsie Suddaby with a string quartet accompaniment arranged by Billy Reed. I had been daring enough to send the proofs to Elgar and it is typical of his kindness and thought for a humble "amateur" that he wrote the following to me:

From Sir Edward Elgar, Bart, O.M., K.C.V.O., Master of the King's Musick, St. James' Palace, S.W.1 [undated].

My Dear Molly,

I am very proud that I am allowed to see your proofs and congratulate you on the good "look" of the music.

I see nothing wrong anywhere in the music (or in you!). In "To Daffodils" the Caps, are not quite right – I enclose a typewritten copy as my edition of Herrick has the poem – I do not think it matters unless Novello's print the poem on a separate page,

You will see I have made notes about commas etc. in the margins.

I like the songs very much and hope they will be very successful.

My Love to you all

Ever yours

Edward Elgar³

and

Worcester, 26th March 1932

My Dear Molly,

This note you and Percy, the children and the dog(s), after a proper Committee Meeting, will decide to be wholly unnecessary – it's only to bring you good wishes for Easter I believe it is about. It's ages since I have heard anything of you all; I have been having influenza but have dodged it for sundry *escapades*, during one of these my eyes were dimmed and *gladdened* by the sight of your songs in Novello's window. I *spel't* the name over and over again until a policeman moved me on – perhaps in an access of terrific [*or* tearful] emotion I should be there still if he hadn't!

Love to Percy and to you

Yours ever affectionately

Edward Elgar⁴

© The Estate of Lady Hull, and Jacob O'Callaghan

References

1. 10.10.21 HWRO Hereford; see O'Callaghan, Jacob, Elgar's Letters to Sir Percy Hull, in the Three Choirs Hereford Festival Programme 1991.
2. HWRO Hereford. Spelling and underlining Elgar's. Harry was the latest successor to Dan and Ben at the Organist's House. He therefore seems to have aroused some jealousy in Marco, as a 'Memorandum' of March 1925 from the latter (on Master of the King's Musick notepaper) makes clear!
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

THE CLOCK CHIMES OF EATON SOCON

by

Trevor Fenemore-Jones

I am greatly indebted to Mr. Simon Houfe for allowing me to use as the basis for this article material published in Chapter Six of his biography of his grandfather 'Sir Albert Richardson THE PROFESSOR' (White Crescent Press, Crescent Road, Luton, LU2 0AG, 1980, £6.95). Born in 1880 but a Georgian at heart, Richardson was a remarkable personality, universally known in architectural and artistic circles as 'the Professor' and acknowledged as the foremost expert on Georgian architecture of his day. He was Professor at the Bartlett School of Architecture, University College, London, from 1919 to 1946. In 1954 he was to become President of the Royal Academy at the age of 74 and he received the K.C.V.O. in 1956.

I also wish to thank Mr. J. D. Cattell of Bedford for first drawing my attention to Elgar's involvement in this strange affair.

This little story starts in March 1931, when Elgar was nearing 74. In some ways it exemplifies the insecure position in which he found himself at this time.

Since the death of his wife in 1920 only minor works had been composed. Though time had been expended fitfully on the third part of the Oratorio trilogy and there were still to be some other major projects, Elgar, sensing that the times were not propitious, could not find the heart and will to carry large-scale schemes through to a conclusion. More recently there had been some achievements: the Severn Suite, the Pomp & Circumstance March No. 5 and the Nursery Suite had all been completed in the relatively short period from the Spring to December 1930. As against this, he was worried about his financial position and in August 1930 he suffered the first of the severe and recurring bouts of sciatica, probably symptomatic of his final illness, which necessitated injections to kill the pain. Even so, he kept going and, in particular, maintained a lively interest in The Gramophone Company's long-term programme of recordings of his music under his own baton. It was while he was waiting for the orchestral parts of the Nursery Suite to become available from the publishers, Keith Prowse, for this purpose, that he received the following letter from Professor Albert E. Richardson, a well-known architect who also happened to be a fellow-member of Brooks Club:-

[typed]

[Richardson & Gill, Architects, Notepaper]
41 Russell Square,
London, WC
11th March 1931

Dear Sir Edward,

I am venturing to write to you to ask whether you can assist in the reconstruction of the Parish Church of St. Mary's, Eaton Socon, Bedfordshire, which was destroyed by fire a year ago.

The Church prior to the fire was a fine example of English Gothic of the late 14th & 15th centuries. The tower formed the landmark in the famous village on the Great North Road.

For the past year I have been acting as Architect, and it has been found possible to save and reconstruct a good deal of the original building. When the works are completed there will be little to distinguish between the old and new.

The matter on which your kind help is solicited is that of a chime for the clock. I suggested to the Committee that if you would consent to compose a clock chime for Eaton Socon it would become as well-known to travellers as the chimes of Westminster and Cambridge.

The chime is to be on eight bells, toned from F ~~♯~~ [sic] to F ~~♭~~, to include the quarters and the full chime of the hour.

I am sending this letter to Brooks's, of which I am a member, to be forwarded to you in Worcestershire, and I hope you will pardon the liberty I have taken.

Yours faithfully

A. E. Richardson¹

The 'F ~~♯~~' mentioned in this letter is an error for 'F ~~♭~~' as the Vicar's letter dated 16 May 1931 makes clear.

Elgar wrote in pencil on this letter 'Ans[wer] No'. He did not do so immediately, however, possibly because he was suffering from a damaged tendon in his leg about this time. By the time he did reply he had changed his mind: his response was careful but favourable:-

[MS]

Master of the King's Musick Notepaper -
heading deleted
Marl Bank
Worcester
30th April 1931

Dear Mr. Richardson,

Thank you for your note of 1th - I shall be interested to hear what your committee says: if they decide against Westminster I shd be delighted to help in the affair.

Believe me to be

Your faithfully

Edward Elgar

On 19 May Richardson wrote again, forwarding a copy of a letter dated 16 May from the Vicar of St. Mary's, the Rev. E. P. Higham:-

[typed]

[Richardson & Gill, Architects, Notepaper]
41 Russell Square,
London, WC
19th May 1931

Dear Sir Edwin Elgar,

I am sending you a copy of a letter I have received from the Rev. E. P. Higham of Eaton Socon.

It is most kind of you to offer to compose the Chime. The occasion does call for more than an ordinary effort. The church was almost completely destroyed by fire in February 1930, but it is being rebuilt by local craftsmen, and when finished will not differ at all from the previous building.

Eaton Socon has a long history, and its name has been immortalised by Charles Dickens in Nicholas Nickleby. The name also suggested Eaton Swill to the great novelist.

Yours Sincerely,

A. E. Richardson

-
1. The final sentence was added in MS by Richardson.

[typed copy]

from Rev. Higham to Prof. Richardson
16th May 1931

We should be very pleased if Sir Edwin Elgar would be willing to compose a set of chimes for the eight bells of our recast peal. The rebuilding of the Church seems to be an occasion which ought to be marked by something of our own. The peal of eight is being tuned to the key of F natural.

I am holding up the clock till we settle the chimes as they are ready now for the work on these and waiting.

Yours sincerely,

Signed Edgar P. Higham.

Elgar's acknowledgement was brief:-

[MS]

[undated draft]

Dear Professor Richardson,

Thank you for sending me Mr. Higham's letter. I hope I may be able to send a suggestion in a day or two.

Yours snclly,

Edward Elgar.

P.S. My first name is Edward not Edwin.

Between mid-May and mid-June the composer was heavily involved in the arrangements for the recording of the Nursery Suite.

The sessions took place on 23rd May and, in the presence of T.H.R. the Duke and Duchess of York, on 4th June. Later he suffered more illness. By the beginning of July the Vicar was becoming concerned about the delay:-

[MS]

Brooks's,
St. James' Street
SW1
10th July 1931

Dear Sir Edwin Elgar,

I have been asked by the Vicar of Eaton Socon to write to you about the chimes which you so kindly offered to compose. The new peal of bells is now in the tower and we expect the clock to be fixed next week. Pray forgive me for troubling you.

I am

Yours sincerely,

A. E. Richardson

This time Elgar's response was prompt:-

[MS copy noted 'M M Paper']

13th July 1931

Dear Professor Richardson,

I am sorry for the delay but I have been quite laid up. Here are the chimes: I have marked the time signature only in the 1st & 2nd: but the actual measure, which is purposefully vague, can be made out from the MS. in the 3rd & 4th.

The time should be about (metronome) 76 - 80.

I heard, (at Biberich I think) some modification of tone - piano & forte; I do not know if modern mechanism allows of this but in case it should do so I have added expression marks.

I hope you will like the chimes which should sound simple and pleasant.

Believe me to be

Yours sincerely

Edward Elgar. 1

-
1. Biberich' in the penultimate paragraph of this copy letter presumably refers to a place where a carillon or similar apparatus is located. The MS leaves no doubt about the spelling, but I have not been able to trace a place of this name. There are, however, two Biberachs in Germany.

Richardson's acknowledgement came by return, but seemed to indicate that there might be a problem:-

[typed]

Richardson & Gill, Architects, Notepaper
15th July 1931

Dear Sir Edward Elgar,

I must thank you for your great kindness in composing the chime. I am sending this to the Vicar today. Unfortunately there is not chime apparatus. The new bells are in and it is proposed to arrange the chiming hammers to accord with the selected chimes. I will write to you again directly I hear from the Vicar.

I am

Yours sincerely

A. E. Richardson

The time now changes to February 1932, when four letters were written which speak for themselves but do not in themselves tell the full story:-

[typed]

Eaton Socon Vicarage,
St. Neots,
Hunts.

17th February [19]32

Dear Sir Edward,

You were good enough to write a chime for the bells of this Church when the old ones were destroyed by fire. We spent a good deal of time with the clock & bell makers trying to gain the effect of your very happy melody put into the bells but finally it was found impossible to get the tied note effect and regretfully we had to give it up. The M.S. I hold, just as you sent it, b[ut] if I have your permission I should wish to frame it and put it in the Church as a remembrance of your kind action.

Yours faithfully,
Edgar P. Higham.¹

-
1. B.L. Add. MS. 58062. I am grateful to Dr. Christopher Kent for acquainting me with the contents of this letter, filed with the Loughborough Carillon papers in the B.L. (See James R. Lawson, *Edward Elgar and the Carillon*, *Elgar Society Journal*, May 1983.)

[MS]

The King's Hotel, Brighton
[heading deleted]
Marl Bank
19 Feby 1932

Dear Professor Richardson,

Thank you for your letter. I fully anticipated the result of your effort. I fear I shall not be at the Club for some time; for the moment my only concern is the fate of the MS. — I do not want it to be in the hands of ——— Esq. the Organist!

Kind regards
Yours sincerely
Edward Elgar

[typed]

[Richardson & Gill, Architects, Notepaper]
23rd February 1932

Dear Sir Edward Elgar,

I must thank you for your letter of the 19th instant. The whole affair has been a worry to me and I cannot tell you how disappointed I am that my work has been marred by faulty chimes.

I have asked the Vicar to write to you. The manuscript is quite safe, it is in the Vicar's hands, and we will do whatever you wish. Personally I should like to frame it and have it kept as a record of what might have been done.

I am,
Yours sincerely
A. E. Richardson

[typed]

Master of the King's Musick

[heading deleted]

Marl Bank

Worcester

26th February 1932

Dear Professor Richardson

Thank you for your letter of the 23rd. I have now heard from the Vicar and have asked him to send the MS. to me; I will then decide if it is worthy of the honourable preservation so kindly suggested.

Believe me to be,

Yours sincerely,

Edward Elgar

One crucial letter, the one from Richardson to Elgar acknowledged by the composer on 19 February 1932, is missing from this correspondence. It seems reasonable to assume, in view of the tone of Elgar's reference to 'the Organist', that this letter explained something of what had transpired between the receipt by the Vicar of Elgar's music and the Vicar's letter of 17th February giving reasons for its rejection. Whatever the technical problems might have been, the facts are that the Church Council decided to institute a competition for the provision of the music for the chimes. Other musicians were invited to submit entries. Two entries, those of Dr. Sydney H. Nicholson¹ and S. G. Wilkinson, the Organist at St. Mary's, were, with Elgar's music, tried out on the bells of the parish church of the neighbouring town, St. Neots. Local feeling was that the music should come from the locality and the chimes music composed by Wilkinson was finally chosen in preference to that of Elgar or Nicholson. Richardson was highly embarrassed and furious that something he called 'nothing more than "Ding dong bell, pussy's in the well"' should have been preferred to Elgar's music.

Correspondence between Simon Houfe, Professor Richardson's grandson and biographer, and Mrs Carice Elgar-Blake in the mid-1960s confirmed that Elgar was deeply nettled by the whole affair at the time and that he tried to avoid Richardson for the last two years of his life, even though he continued to use the amenities of Brooks's club. For his part, Richardson was bitterly sad not to enjoy Elgar's company there after this incident.

The fate of Elgar's rejected manuscript remains obscure. His letter dated 26 February clearly states that he had asked the Vicar for its return and in consequence it seems inconceivable that this did not happen. In 1965 Mrs. Elgar-Blake made a thorough search of her late father's papers for it but found no trace of it, so it seems probable that it was scrapped at the time.

Elgar's letter of 26th February is reminiscent of his letter to Novello & Co dated 11th August 1923² in which, irritated by his publishers' reluctance to pay a satisfactory lump sum for the copyright of two partsongs for men's voices, he wrote: 'just tear up the M.S.S. - or return them to me & I can do so.' Then Novello & Co. relented; now, the situation was different. In the light of what had happened there was no foreseeable future for Elgar's Clock Chimes.

The date of Elgar's last letter in this correspondence came less than two years before his death. The whole incident did not augur well. By 1932, however, there was already talk of a possible BBC commission for a symphony. In the April the orchestral version of the Severn Suite was recorded under his baton and in July the young Yehudi Menuhin arrived from the United States to make the classic 1932 recording of the Violin Concerto. Later, as well as the 3rd Symphony, the Ben Jonson opera 'The Spanish Lady' was being worked on. So followed a busy twelve months before the final illness rendered nugatory all the effort the 76-year-old composer had put in to what could at last have been the production of two major works to crown the autumn years of his career.

There is one sequel to this wry tale. The sculptor, Percy Bentham, working on the restoration with Richardson, as he had done frequently in the past at other churches, was of course fully aware of the course events had taken. When completing the corbels depicting with customary sculptor's licence the Vicar, the churchwardens, the architect, etc., he included one entitled 'Discord, or a satyr snatching the pipes from the mouth of the musician'. The face of the musician was not exact, but the likeness of the satyr was based on a surreptitious portrait. It perhaps gave Richardson some slight consolation some weeks later when paying an unexpected visit to St. Mary's to discover the Organist studying the horned satyr's features with obvious and considerable concern.

-
1. Sydney Hugo Nicholson, 1875-1947, was Organist at Westminster Abbey 1918-27. In 1927 he founded the School of English Church Music at Chiselhurst, which became the Royal School of Church Music in 1945. He was knighted in 1938. His compositions included organ pieces, church music and two operas.
 2. Dr. Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Elgar and his Publishers*, pp 832-3.



ELGAR'S "TOP TEN" ON RADIO 3 DURING 1990

	Number of Performances
INTRODUCTION & ALLEGRO FOR STRINGS, Opus 47	12
VARIATIONS ON AN ORIGINAL THEME, "ENIGMA", Opus 36	8
'CELLO CONCERTO IN E MINOR OPUS 85	8
SYMPHONY No. 1 in A Flat, Opus 55	7
CONCERT OVERTURE: "COCKAIGNE", Opus 40	7
SYMPHONY No. 2 in E flat, Opus 63	6
VIOLIN SONATA in E Minor, Opus 82	5
CONCERT OVERTURE: "FROISSART", Opus 19	5
VIOLIN CONCERTO in B Minor, Opus 61	4
MUSIC FROM "THE WAND OF YOUTH", Suites 1A and 1B, Opus 1	4

And so, to the 'rarities', and here are 10 of special interest to lovers of Elgar's considerable output of enduring music. All received a single broadcast performance, but they are wide-ranging, from Church Music, Songs, a Piano Solo, and some particularly Elgarian orchestral music. I have arranged them in Chronological Order as some do not have a specific Opus Number:-

O SALUTARIS HOSTIA (Circa 1880); AVE MARIS STELLA (1887); SONG "THE POET'S LIFE" (Circa 1892); SONG: "LIKE TO THE DAMASK ROSE" (1892); IMPERIAL MARCH (1897); "IN SMYRNA" for Pianoforte (1905); "CARRILON" (the orchestral version), (1914); "POLONIA", SYMPHONIC PRELUDE (1915); "KING ARTHUR SUITE" (two movements only were played) (1923); and "NURSERY SUITE" for Orchestra, published in 1931 and completed by Elgar from earlier sketches. He would be in his 74th year when the lovely Suite was first heard in the concert halls.

As was the case in 1989 Elgar was again in "COMPOSER OF THE WEEK", every morning from 8.35 on August 6th to August 10th inclusive. All the music was repeated in late evening programmes in the following week, for those who for one reason or another could not hear and listen and enjoy the previous week's presentation of recorded music by Elgar.

Elgar arranged and transcribed compositions by other composers, notably his beloved Bach and Handel, not forgetting Chopin. In his turn he was and still is being "arranged". We had some very stimulating Organ pieces in this respect, including the Pomp & Circumstance March No. 4, arranged for organ by his friend, George Robertson Sinclair, the organist of Hereford Cathedral in Elgar's time. Another organist attracted to Elgar's music was Edwin Henry Lemaire, a distinguished organist born in Ventnor, Isle of Wight, in 1865, and his arrangement for organ of the "Triumphal March" from "Caractacus" certainly pulled out all the stops.

Then, from Organ to Orchestra came on November 18th a brilliant performance of Elgar's Organ Sonata in G, Opus 28, with a masterly arrangement for Orchestra by Gordon Jacob, and the Royal Philharmonic orchestra played superbly under the baton of Vernon Handley.

In 1990 on RADIO 3 there were 171 performances, live or recorded. In the previous year it was 172. . . so Elgar who in latter years enjoyed a day at the races would have said:- "A CLOSE FINISH. NECK AND NECK".

T. W. Rowbotham

H. Sybil Wohlfeld

A Memoir

On Wednesday afternoon, November 28th last, the ashes of the late Sybil Wohlfeld were laid to rest alongside her friend Carice Elgar Blake at the Church of St. Wulstan's, Little Malvern. Wulstan Atkins, Raymond Monk, and David Hawkins represented the Elgar Foundation at the simple committal ceremony, during which Raymond Monk gently lowered the casket into the grave. Thus were the partners in a long and remarkable friendship finally reunited.

Sybil Wohlfeld's own recollections of Carice Elgar Blake appeared in the May 1990 Journal but they tell only a very small part of the story. Together for over 25 years, they offered warm hospitality to a wide range of visitors to their successive homes in various parts of the West Country. To those visitors Elgar was never far away for, quite apart from the presence of Carice herself, so many of his personal possessions were either 'on view' or in daily use. Many of these items are now in my own home and are a constant reminder, not only of Edward Elgar himself, but of Carice and Sybil and those happy days of long ago.

Nothing pleased Carice Elgar Blake more than to be considered an interesting personality in her own right and this she undoubtedly was. Sybil would often show her displeasure at anyone who failed to recognise this by adroitly changing the subject from Elgar to Vaughan Williams whose music she greatly loved. Carice was always delighted to be able to talk about her present life and she had many non-musical interests. She revered her famous parents but refused to live wholly in the past and I must have sensed this very early on. Many years later I asked Sybil why it was that I had been singled out for such friendship. 'Oh' she said 'during that first meeting with Carice you never once mentioned Elgar or his music and this was almost unique in her experience'. Later, however, we must have talked a lot about her father since in 1969 she invited me to become a Trustee of the Birthplace. Sybil Russell, as she then was, had become a Trustee some years earlier and she was eventually to become a Vice-president of the Foundation. This pleased her greatly and she took an active interest in the plans for a new Elgar Centre. Sybil Wohlfeld was a firm supporter of the Elgar Society and attended many of its meetings and social functions. She died in her 88th year and will be greatly missed by a small circle of close friends who retain nostalgic memories of her years with Carice, and recall with affection her marriage in 1971 to Dr. Henry Wohlfeld which brought her great happiness until his death in 1984.

R.M.



THE MALVERN FESTIVAL

18th May – 2nd June

As this year's attractive booklet for the Festival says: "Book early for the best seats for three Mozart Operas, a superb Shaw play [Arms and the Man], 4 great Orchestral Concerts, a Family Gala . . . fine choral singing, quartets, singers, soloists . . .". An accurate assessment of the excellent offerings to be put on at this year's festivities in the Malverns. Of course the 'fringe' will also be offering several *recherché* delights. Elgar is not forgotten, in a year in which Mozart seems to dominate so much programme planning.

On 21st May, at Lawnside, Michael Holroyd will talk on the Shaw – Elgar Friendship, and later in the evening at Malvern Priory the Royal Northern College of Music Wind Ensemble, conductor Timothy Reynish, will include the 'Harmony Music' in its programme. On the 23rd in the hall of the Winter Gardens the Chandos Sinfonia, conducted by Nicholas Kok, will include items from the Wand of Youth suite no. 1 in its special Family Concert. On the 25th the 'Serenade for Strings' will be played by the English Sinfonia, in a concert conducted by Sir Charles Groves. This too in the Winter Gardens hall.

At 5.00 p.m. on 27th May John Winsor presents his slide show 'Elgar's Malvern' and is certain of a large audience. This will be given in the Cecilia Hall. On 30th May the Nash Ensemble will perform Elgar's Piano Quintet and the Mozart Piano Quintet at 7.30 p.m. at Madresfield Court. On the 1st June at the Festival Theatre the Techinski String Quartet will be offering Elgar's String Quartet, together with Mendelssohn's Quartet no. 2. This concert is in the morning, and in the evening at the Winter Gardens the BBC Welsh Symphony Orchestra, conductor Bryden Thomson, close their concert with the Symphony no. 1.

Normally that would end the Festival, but on the Sunday evening (June 2nd) at Downs School "An Evening with Donald Swann" will include what is described as 'his own tribute to Elgar'.

Tickets for Malvern Festival events go quickly so a phone call to the Festival Box Office is advised without delay. The number is 0684 892277. The postal address for brochures is Festival Office, Malvern Festival Theatre, Grange Road, Malvern, Worcs. (Phone 0684 572725).

THREE CHOIRS FESTIVAL — HEREFORD 1991

There will be an Elgar Society Tea following the opening service on Sunday 18th August at 4.30 p.m. in the Shire Hall. Do come and meet your friends. The cost is £2.00 and tickets are not necessary.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- | | | |
|--------|--|---|
| 11 May | Scenes from the Bavarian Highlands
<i>Charlton Kings Choral Society</i> | Pittville Pump Room
Cheltenham. 7.30 pm |
| 18 May | The Black Knight; Bavarian Highlands;
& orchestral items
<i>Brierley Hill Choral Society/S. Block</i> | King Edward VI College,
Lower High Street,
Stourbridge. 7.30 pm |
| | Tickets for above concert £4.00 (£3.00 concessionary) from
Miss J. Adams (tel: 0562 883294) or Stourbridge Library | |
| 18 May | The Music Makers (& Bliss: The
Beatitudes) <i>Phil. Choir/London Orph.
Orch/Gadden. S. McCullough/B. Mills/
M. Hill</i> | Fairfield Hall, Croydon
7.30 pm |
| 18 May | Cello Concerto
<i>Rutland Sinfonia/Collett/
Agnes Vesterman</i> | Festival Hall, Corby
7.30 pm |
| 18 May | The Apostles | Haddo House |
| 19 May | The Kingdom
<i>P. MacMahon/J. Rigby/A. Roden/
H. Herford/M. Pearce/D. Stephenson</i> | Aberdeen |
| | Tickets £12.00 & £8.00. Details from Haddo House,
Aberdeen, AB4 0ER. Tel: Tarves 666 | |
| 26 May | Enigma Variations
<i>BBC SO/G. Rozhdestvensky</i> | Royal Festival Hall
South Bank. 7.30 pm |
| 1 June | Serenade for Strings
<i>English Heritage Orch/G. Mayo</i> | Queen Elizabeth Hall
South Bank |
| 1 June | Symphony no. 1
<i>Lambeth Orchestra</i> | St. Luke's Church
West Norwood, 7.30 pm |
| 9 June | Introduction & Allegro
<i>Primavera Chamber Orch/
P. Manly</i> | St. Luke's Church
West Norwood, 7.30 pm |

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY *(Continued)*

22 June	Banner of St. George: Serenade for Strings: <i>Birmingham Hospitals Choir/Choir/Orchestra da Camera/Warren</i>	Birmingham Town Hall 7.30 pm
26 June	Pomp & Circumstance March no. 1 <i>National SO/Anthony Inglis</i>	Royal Festival Hall South Bank
29 June	King Olaf <i>Colchester Choral Soc/Colchester Sinfonia/J. Fugelle/A. Woodrow/B. Rayner Cook</i>	Moot Hall Colchester Essex 7.30 pm or phone Colchester 574960
6 July	Light of Life (& Sullivan: The Prodigal Son) <i>Soloists, Choir & Orch/G. Hodgkins</i>	All Saints Church, Inman's Row, Woodford Green, Essex, 8.00 pm
	(Tickets available from beginning of June)	phone: 081-504 0266
14 July	Piano Quintet <i>Nash Ensemble</i>	Purcell Room South Bank
20 July	Froissart Overture (& Brahms Double Concerto & Stanford's Symphony no. 5) <i>Lambeth Orchestra</i>	St. James Church, Piccadilly, W1. 7.30 pm
21 Sept.	Banner of St. George <i>Broadheath Singers/Windsor Sinfonia/Tucker</i>	School Hall, Eton 8.00 pm

THREE CHOIRS FESTIVAL

Just as we closed for the press the brochure arrived advertising the Three Choirs Festival at Hereford in August. There is no space or time to deal with the matter as we would like. We note that the brochure includes ticket prices at the new VAT rate of 17½ per cent and therefore must blame the Chancellor!

ELGAR BIRTHDAY WEEKEND

June 1 – 2

TWO DAY TOUR IN HEREFORDSHIRE & WORCESTERSHIRE

led by Robin Hales, M.A., F.R.C.O., A.R.C.M.

Visits to various locations with associated music, including Elgar's First Symphony at the Winter Gardens, Malvern

CULTURAL HERITAGE TOUR

May 7 – 10, July 9 – 12 September 10 – 13

*Beautiful Homes and Gardens; 18th and 19th Century English Furniture and Porcelain
Bath – Georgian City and its Roman Origins. Jane Austen Dinner Party*

RURAL SURPRISES

**May 23 – 24 June 20 – 21 July 25 – 26
August 22 – 23 September 26 – 27**

Visits to rural crafts, potter, woodturner, glass maker, wool spinner, furniture and carpet maker.

Visits to various farms – piggery, herd of Hereford Cattle, Sheep farm and dairy producer

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BOOK REVIEWS

Edward Elgar: Letters of a Lifetime. Edited by Jerrold Northrop Moore

Clarendon Press, Oxford, £35. 1990

The last – as it seems – harvest of Elgar's letters is a sumptuous offering to an undernourished world. For who now writes letters that are part of a national culture? Who, indeed, writes letters? Those of Elgar not only concern the past: they are the past. By the same token so is the music, so that both words and music become a refuge for a disenchanting generation. The supercilious critic finds in the music at the same time a laudation of and a lament for the age of 'empire'. But overall there remains the eternal question: what is music?

To this, in 1919, Elgar gave his answer to Ernest Newman (with whom discussion on the contest between 'absolute' and 'programme' was of long standing) in these memorable words written in the dreadful year of 1919:

The glory of music is that it is absolutely creative; in this it differs from everything else except in some measure, architecture. It is true that vital music must be written by a *man* & must be influenced & tintured by his life experience but it need have no literary basis. Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is the height.

(A misspelling of 'architecture' in this passage on p.322 is an isolated typographical error.)

In this declaration Elgar was restating what he had written to Walford Davies more than ten years previously, that in his First Symphony 'there is no programme beyond a wide experience of human life with a great charity (love) & a *massive* hope in the future'. In relation to this persistent philosophic motif there is also a letter to Newman of 26 September 1913 relating to Falstaff 'over it all runs -even in the tavern - the undercurrent of our failings & sorrows'.

In respect of such philosophic consideration the classical nature (as Constant Lambert once acknowledged it) of Elgar's music is enshrined in Newman's 'Elgar and the Gramophone' (1927) - a piece that carries echoes of Ruskin. Counting Elgar among the 'great musical logicians... beside Beethoven, Wagner, Brahms and Strauss' he observes of all of them that

they are skilled architects, there is something more than the formal perfection of design in their big works; the design is *alive* at every point. Their themes seem to have a life of their own and behave like living persons, and very intelligent persons . . .

Elgar's love and knowledge of architecture, however, stopped short of approval of Elizabeth Scott's Memorial Theatre at Stratford, his eyes, he wrote to Sir Archibald Flower in 1932, were still aching 'from the ugliness and ineptitude of that ghastly and disgusting building . . .'. Here, as at many corners of Elgar's life, the presence of Troyte is to be felt. In respect of him Dr. Moore excavates a quite new detail of architectural history, in Troyte's submission of a design for the projected LCC County Hall'. He was, perhaps, fortunate that it was not successful.

How Elgar followed his star can be understood from the essay – in the form of a letter to the Editor – which he contributed to the *Malvern Advertiser* on 21 December 1886. Taking an overview of the musical situation in nineteenth century Germany, with apt reference to authority and apology for the unavailability of music-type, with ‘an enthusiasm which I would fain communicate to others’ – he held up ‘the classical composer *par excellence* of the present day . . . who writes for the whole world and for all time – a giant, lofty and unapproachable – Johannes Brahms’. The still youngish Elgar, with as yet hardly a toe on the lower slopes of Parnassus, was certainly sending a cultural challenge to the Malvernians. To their credit, in that they helped to establish chamber music in the town, they listened.

In the social context in which he was then placed, as a peripatetic violin instructor to the not always willing pupils of a ladies seminary, who – so I used to hear from one of them – laughed behind his back, Elgar was an unenthusiastic teacher. His correspondence, however, as his editings of string parts, and the orchestrations supplied to some of his friends, shows him in another light. A gem of a letter to the young Robert Elkin, written in 1920, is a small masterpiece in tuition by correspondence.

Elgar’s belief in a social value of music (best expressed in his professorial lectures) has seldom been fully appreciated. Amplifying what Dr. Moore contains about the Morecambe Festivals, it is illuminating to turn to the pages of the local newspaper. In a long essay of appreciation of the Festival of 1904 in the *Morecambe Visitor* of May 4 reference is made to –

the immensely important social influence of an art which brings people together in groups to do something decently and in order, and with all hope of success depending on precision, restraint, and refinement in the use of voice and speech organs. This, which is not a matter of speculation, but a fact of experience, merits far more attention than it has yet received from persons who are animated not so much by the special enthusiasm of music as by a general desire for the betterment of our multitudinous workers.

The *Morecambe Visitor*, thus tuned to a lofty moral key went on at length to explain how by their singing and their generosity of mutual appreciation and encouragement the choristers, for whom Elgar – in the same newspaper described as ‘the King of Musicians’ – wrote so inspiringly, would become better citizens.

Concerning the affairs of the ‘real world’ (as is commonly understood), on 29 May 1906 Elgar wrote one of the most remarkable letters of his life, in which he proposed himself, if called, as a willing sacrifice to the Worcester Conservative Party. In the preceding January a General Election has taken place, in which, in the country, the Conservatives were heavily defeated. In Worcester, however, the candidate had been elected, but almost immediately unseated – ‘for corrupt practices’. Joseph Chamberlain described the local committee – who turned down one of his friends anxious for a safe seat – as ‘a set of fools’. This opinion was shared by Stanley Baldwin, who, having been selected as candidate but discovering that the new writ, in response to a ‘radical’ protest, was to be suspended for a year, therefore withdrew his name.

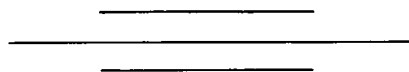
The whole story of this prolonged affair is after the best descriptions of the worst political practices by Trollope. It is small wonder that the guileless Elgar was not able ‘to follow anything about the Worcester Petition’. Considering that he was at a generally low ebb, according to Alice, it is not likely that a political career commenced under such circumstances would really have been ‘an escape’ from the chores of finishing *The Kingdom*.

Letters, of course, are as remarkable for what they do not contain as what they do. In 1903 Elgar received a copy of Thomas Traherne's recently published *Poems* from Newman, and characteristically replied that he had read all he could find about Traherne. But beyond that his responses to the visionary seventeenth century Herefordshire Vicar – now very much an influence of our times – remained hidden. It was Finzi, the Elgar neophyte, who was to set, with understanding, *Dies Natalis*.

There is endless opportunity to discuss what other letters or documents might have gone into the net. In consideration of what Dr. Moore has done and the skills applied to the task, one's tongue and pen must now begin to seek silence. His interpolations are generally apt – there are errors on the side of charity in dealing with less attractive personalities – and he often achieves a phrase that echoes the word-flow of the hero. Concerning Frank Webb's departure from Worcester, in 1890, to work in Rouen, he writes, 'it was typical of Elgar to choose such a moment of beginning separation to invite an increase of intimacy'.

But how did Elgar ever find time to write music?

Percy M. Young



Elgar in Manuscript, by Robert Anderson.

British Library, 1990; ISBN 0712302034. £30

Robert Anderson's name is now firmly linked to his excellent supervisory role in editing the Elgar Complete Edition, but he has much experience in preparing Elgar works for performance (the writer recalls excellent performances of *The Kingdom, and Gerontius*). This combination of the academic and practical makes Anderson a wise choice for this first detailed study of Elgar's manuscripts and sketchbooks. We have often read of Elgar's methods of composition, but following the subject through in such detail is something which has not previously been attempted. This book provides us with many fascinating insights into the composer in action, as well as indicating why some materials were rejected, brought back in altered form, or in some cases carefully husbanded until a more propitious moment could be found. Elgar's methods of sketching fragments, scenes, or whole sections, and then recasting them as his ideas took definite shape, are not necessarily unique to Elgar. But his treatment of his material, and his ability to make new, brilliant, use of old ideas, is probably something which *was* peculiar to Elgar.

This book does not cover every Elgar manuscript and sketch. It restricts itself (if over 80 mss. can be called 'restrictive') to those manuscripts which the author was able to examine in the British Library and at the Birthplace. And there are riches indeed, including reproductions of passages from discarded and uncompleted works. Of particular interest is the building up of the character of Simon Magus, intended for *The Last Judgement*. The use of much of this music in later Elgar works shows exactly how the composer could adapt and refine his original ideas to new purposes. And how many knew that the First Symphony drew some of its music from an abandoned 1907 String Quartet?

The arrangement is chronological, from juvenile copying-out, through the creative years, to those last flurries of activity when an opera and another symphony were possibilities. In such a volume as this excellent reproduction of manuscripts and illustrations is essential, and the BAS Printers Ltd. have done a superb job. The design of the book by John Mitchell, is a model of clarity and good taste. If I find a fault it is that I would have liked to know where other mss. are to be found, and I must admit that when I looked up one item in the index it was incorrectly paged. However, such criticisms are minor. The book is essential for further understanding of the composer, and readers should be grateful for the meticulous attention to detail which has gone into the work. In today's market the book is reasonably priced, and will repay continued use and study.

R.P.T.

Twentieth Century English Cathedral Organists, compiled by Enid Bird.

*Published by the author, available from
16 Miller Avenue, Sandal, Wakefield,
West Yorks. WF2 7DJ. ISBN 09516550 0 0
£6.00 incl. post*

In 1921 the late John E. West published his extremely useful work on 'Cathedral Organists, Past & Present'. Now Mrs. Bird, herself an organist, has brought the details up to 1990, with even a look ahead to 1991! Not only has she given us considerable detail on each organist, as in West's book, but she has also taken the opportunity to include a photograph of each subject.

The work is printed in large 4to format, in pictorial wrappers, and is very modestly priced when one considers the great amount of research which must have gone into its compilation. Highly recommended.

R.P.T.

BOOK ANNOUNCEMENT

Not yet seen, but apparently an important work of reference, is *Victorian Music Publishers: an Annotated List* by John A. Parkinson. (Harmonie Park Press, U.S.A., \$40.00) this is an alphabetically arranged catalogue of music publishers in operation in the British Isles during the period 1830 to 1900. In addition to geographical information, representative examples of the type of music emanating from each firm are included, with further historical information where possible. The index to firms outside London is of particular interest. It may be possible to order from one of the larger booksellers – we are unaware of a British agent at the moment.

RECORD REVIEWS

The Apostles (Op. 49)

Alison Hargan (soprano), Alfreda Hodgson (contralto), David Rendall (tenor), Stephen Roberts, Bryn Terfel, Robert Lloyd (basses): London Symphony Chorus, London Symphony Orchestra, Richard Hickox.

Chandos CHAN 8875/6

Another *Apostles*! When one remembers the years of waiting for the first recording, it is difficult to believe that within twenty years there will be another two (one by Handley is promised). This must surely indicate that musical opinion about the work has changed for the better. I'm convinced that its neglect by choirs over the years has been due to the expense of having six soloists and to the discontinuous nature of much of the choral writing which frustrates singers, despite the sublime music.

Hickox's Elgar has not met with universal approval. AHAN was quite dismissive of *The Kingdom* in a recent Journal, and here again Hickox is up against a well-loved and revered Boult recording (though the CD version is now deleted). Generally he prefers a broader pulse than Boult, though he is only just over four minutes longer overall, a negligible amount in a work lasting over two hours. He has tried, as he told the Journal, to get "drama in it". The sections dealing with Judas and Mary Magdalene are actually faster than Boult and are certainly more exciting and convincing. Hickox is slower than Boult in the Prologue, the finales of both parts, and one or two other places, notably the glorious "Proclaim unto them", and in the passage for ladies' voices describing Peter's denial. To me it works well, as the music is great enough to take it, particularly (as here) when it is well played, sung, and recorded. Time and again I found myself thinking that here was an *Apostles* such as Barbirolli would have conducted: your reaction to that statement may well determine whether you approve of this new recording or not.

The slower tempi certainly enable the listener to pick out orchestral detail, and this is aided by a magnificent digital recording. St. Jude's in Hampstead has a marvellous acoustic, spacious enough to cope with the transcendental element in the music, yet the voices are crystal clear and "close" (maybe too close for some). The Boult recording was considered demonstration quality in its day, but you only need to compare those ravishing final pages, with every part (soloists, ladies' semi-chorus, full choir and orchestra) fully audible, to hear the superior quality of the Chandos recording.

With so many solists it would be very rare to find a perfect team. Once again, Hickox scores heavily overall. The biggest plus is undoubtedly Robert Lloyd, as the role of Judas is absolutely crucial to the success of the work. His rich tone, facility at both ends of the range and dramatic expression are a vast improvement on EMP's Clifford Grant. Bryn Terfel is rapidly making a name for himself, and his singing of Peter has a youthful impetuosity that gives him a clear lead over Luxon for Boult. There is little to choose between Robert Tear (Boult) and David Rendall. I was disappointed that Arthur Davies (who sang in the concert) was unavailable for the recording. Rendall has a nice voice, but is unnecessarily operatic, especially in the short recitatives, and has a tendency to flatten on held notes. The ladies are admirable on both recordings. I have a slight preference for Sheila Armstrong's pure, almost boyish tone – particularly in the Angel's solo – and Alfreda Hodgson sounds a little more worldly (in the nicest possible way!) than Helen Watts as Mary Magdalene, but one could be happy with either pair.

This leaves the part of Jesus. Stephen Roberts sings well enough, apart from a hint of strain on the very top notes, and is suitably devotional in tone: yet he lacks that distinctiveness which sets Jesus apart from the rest. Here is where Boult scores by having John Carol Case. Though his voice is not to everyone's taste, for me his timbre speaks both of strength and vulnerability, of remoteness and compassion: in short, of the divine and the human. (As an example of this listen to "Be of good cheer . ." at fig. 100). Christ's first entry, with the words "Behold I send you forth" is a magical moment in Boult's recording: with Hickox it lacks the same impact.

The choral singing on both recordings is of a very high standard, but I think the London Symphony Chorus have the edge here, having paid heed to recent criticisms of poor diction. For ensemble and expression listen to the unaccompanied sections of the Morning Psalm and "Turn you to the strogold".

To sum up: no Elgarian will want to be without the Boult set, but there is every reason why you should have Hickox too. It will not replace the earlier recording, but will add to your appreciation and enjoyment of this wonderful choral masterpiece.

G.H.

Variations on an Original Theme (Enigma) opus 36.

Falstaff opus 68.

Montreal Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Charles Dutoit
Decca 430 241-2
c. d. or cassette

I have reviewed so many new recordings of the *Variations* in recent years that it requires something special to arouse my enthusiasm. This, however, is just such a performance. Various writers have commented on the French influences in Elgar's scoring, particularly in the earlier works (also, perhaps, the example of Dvorak, in the prominent role of the woodwind instruments). Dutoit, like Monteux a generation ago, instinctively understands this. The distinctive orchestral colours have rarely come over with such clarity of detail. Dutoit, like Monteux a generation ago, instinctively understands this. The distinctive orchestral colours have rarely come over with such clarity of detail. Dutoit's tempi are brisker than some of his rivals on record (but a glance at the score reminds us that he is generally spot on) and he gives the music a wonderfully attractive lightness and grace, aided by delightfully crisp, perky wind playing. In the slower movements like XII (BGN) and Nimrod, Dutoit achieves a seamless flow that can only be achieved by careful shaping of Elgar's long phrases.

The *Variations* is the music of a young, provincial and very English composer. *Falstaff* is the mature, international Elgar – confident, a bit brash and, dare one say, rather less refined. Dutoit is not the first conductor to find it less than easy to step quickly between the two worlds. His *Falstaff* is beautifully played but a little lightweight and inhibited. Dutoit misses the element of caricature in this work. His brass players sound quite tame compared with Barbirolli's Hallé or the LPO brass for Boult and Barenboim, and I miss the self-confident swagger which each of those conductors brought to the section depicting Falstaff leading his ragged, ill-trained army to support Prince Hal at Shrewsbury. In this context Dutoit's subsequent speeding up for the subsequent battle sounds merely hectic. On the other hand, the interludes themselves have never sounded more magical, aided by Decca's warm, mellow, slightly recessed recorded sound.

A good, well played, but not a great *Falstaff* – but an outstanding version of the *Variations*.

GHL

CD Round-up

Geoffrey Hodgkins gave an enthusiastic welcome to Sir Alexander Gibson's recording of Elgar's *2nd Symphony* on its first release on the RCA label ('Newsletter' May 1978). It is now an excellent bargain on a mid-price CD in the new Chandos 'Collect' series (CHAN 6523), with a generous fill-up in the form of the *Crown of India* suite. The symphony is given a generally brisk performance, with an attractive freshness and spontaneity. GH rightly commended Gibson's close adherence to Elgar's tempo markings, and I was glad to see that, in the opening bars, unlike certain recent interpreters on record, Gibson carefully observes the slight accelerando necessary between bars 4 and 9 to reach *dotted crochet* = 104 by bar 9, thus setting the correct, brisk, basic tempo of the movement. All Elgar's marked tempo variations can be followed (including a slight slackening for the second subject) without undermining the forward flow of the movement.

Gibson's *Larghetto* has an unsentimental directness, and he adopts quite a quick tempo in the *Moderato e maestoso* fourth movement, giving it a most attractive steady, lilting flow. Only in the *scherzo* is there a certain lack of tension and softening of the impact of the fierce climax, although the acoustic of Glasgow City Hall may be partly responsible. The recorded sound, in the customary Chandos manner, is rather recessed, with natural perspectives. The hall is very resonant, however, and there is some masking of inner detail and the percussion instruments lack clarity and focus. This is an occasional problem in heavily scored passages such as the end of the *March of the Mogul Emperors*, which becomes something of an aural muddle.

The Playing of the SNO in the late 1970s was not quite top drawer, and the improved clarity of the CD transfer reveals some thinness of string tone and occasional lapses in ensemble. In compensation there is, however, an attractive sense of commitment and enthusiasm in their playing.

Barenboim's series of Elgar recordings for CBS, with LPO, started to appear in the early 1970s. Perhaps they received less than their due at the time of their first release: Solti's recordings with the same orchestra attracted much wider interest, and benefitted from stunning Decca sound, whereas the earlier of Barenboim's recordings (particularly the two symphonies) sounded decidedly murky. Nevertheless John Knowles wrote enthusiastically about several of these performances on their initial release, and I subsequently found myself sharing his reaction when I reviewed certain LP reissues. We now have a 2-CD selection from Barenboim's Elgar series on CBS 'Maestro' M2YK 46465.

Included are a very fine, rumbustious *Falstaff*, a spirited *Cockaigne* and one of the best *Variations* on record. *Falstaff* was originally released in 1976, the other two works in 1974. The original LP versions were amongst the best recorded of the Barenboim cycle, and in their CD transfer they now sound spacious and vivid. So do the five *P&C* marches which open disc one, and the *Crown of India* suite and the *Imperial* march which are on disc two. My only disappointment is a heavy and over-sentimentalised *Serenade for Strings* (with the English Chamber Orchestra), one of the later recordings, but far too thickly recorded.

All in all, a well-chosen selection of some of the best Barenboim Elgar recordings. The list of items in the booklet (but not the back of the box) also includes *Chanson de Matin* and *Chanson de Nuit* – but without them each disc already contains well over 70 minutes of music. I wish, however, that each of the *Variations* had been separately indexed.

Decca's *The World of Elgar*, (430 094-2, midprice) closely follows the similarly titled LP and cassette selections. It is a bit of a curate's egg: the early *POC marches* 1 & 2 conducted by Sir Arthur Bliss have long ago been superseded, but Marriner's 1967 *Serenade* and Kyung Wha Chung's *Salut d'Amour* have an unpretentious directness. *Nimrod* is plucked from the famous Monteux *Variations*, and there are three choral items – the Louis Halsey Singers in *There is Sweet Music*, Canterbury Cathedral Choir under Allan Wicks in the lengthy anthem *Give unto the Lord and Praise to the Holiest* from *Gerontius* with the LSO and Chorus, from the Britten recording. What for me makes this CD well worth the price, however, is the other item conducted by Britten, his superb version of *Introduction and Allegro* with the English Chamber Orchestra.

The bargain Naxos label has already given us a fine *Variations* recorded by the Bratislava Radio Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Adrian Leaper. They have now issued a most imaginative CD titled *English String Festival*, (8.550331) on which Leaper conducts a very fine chamber Orchestra from Bratislava called Capella Istropolitana, and which is an absolute delight, apart from one reservation. There is a curtain-raiser in the form of a Dowland Galliard, but we then rapidly leap forward in time to three Elgar items, *Elegy*, *Introduction and Allegro* and *Serenade for Strings*, all outstandingly well played. I was fascinated, however, by Bridge's *Lament* of 1915, and thoroughly enjoyed Parry's *An English Suite* and *Lady Radnor's Suite*. My reservation, however, concerns the recorded sound. It is natural and spacious, but edgy: a producer friend tells me that he thinks a de-emphasis circuit has been accidentally omitted at some stage in the processing (producing an effect rather like leaving the Dolby correction out when playing an encoded tape). This is a pity: it can be tamed by a steep treble cut, but I hope this excellent record will be remastered some time.

Finally a rare gem for anyone interested in the byways of British music – especially the fringes of Elgar scholarship. On Hyperion CDA66450 Vernon Handley conducts the RPO in music by Bantock – his extraordinary Hebridean Symphony of 1913 (more of a tone-poem than a true symphony) the late Celtic Symphony for strings and six harps, and a couple of shorter works also reflecting Bantock's obsession with Hebridean traditions and culture. This is highly individual music sounding like nothing else I know, wonderfully scored, and superbly played and recorded.

GHL



TWO NEW ELGAR STUDY SCORES

May 1991 sees performances of two late Elgar works rarely heard in public – the *Severn Suite* (1932 orchestral version) and the *Civic Fanfare*. In both cases the performances will coincide with the publication for the first time of study scores of the works concerned,

The death of Caroline Elgar in 1920 effectively marked the end of Elgar's career as a composer. His later compositions have fallen into relative obscurity, but this is largely due to a combination of accidents rather than to any inherent musical failings.

The *Severn Suite*, the most substantial of Elgar's post-1920 works, provides a good example of adverse circumstances in action. By 1932 the Brass-band *Suite* had already established itself in the repertoire, making it difficult for the orchestral version to make any headway. The 78s were not issued until after Elgar's death, by which time his music was waning in popularity. The *Severn Suite* publisher did not have the advantage of Novello's "publicity machine" which had served his earlier works so well. The proposed 1933 publication of a printed score did not materialise. As a final misfortune, the manuscript full score was stolen in the 1960s and has not yet been recovered.

Fortunately a hand-written copy of the manuscript score had been made by the publishers, Keith Prowse. This score contains errors audible on Elgar's 78s, and is thus presumably authentic.

The *Civic Fanfare* did not have such a chequered history, but has remained unperformed for a considerable period. It was written for the opening of the 1927 Three Choirs Festival in Hereford, and was performed at every Hereford Three Choirs Festival up to 1949. After that date performances ceased (possibly as a result of Percy Hull's retirement). The manuscript full score was believed lost, but turned up in 1987 in a collection loaned to the British Library.

The full score of the *Civic Fanfare* differs to some extent from the draft short score (illustrated in Jerrold Northrop Moore's *Elgar – A life in Photographs*) and from the first draft full score held at the Elgar Birthplace. There are small changes of rhythm, while the original orchestration (which omitted flutes and oboes) was expanded to encompass the full symphony orchestra including organ.

THE PERFORMANCES

The *Civic Fanfare* will be performed on Saturday 11th May 1991, and will open a concert in Coventry Cathedral by the Birmingham Philharmonic Orchestra (the concert also including Strauss's *Alpine Symphony* and Honegger's *Symphonie Liturgique*). It will be conducted by Robin Page, a young London-based conductor who has established a reputation for performing unusual repertoire (including a performance of the orchestral *Severn Suite* in 1988). There will be a further performance in Lichfield Cathedral on Sunday May 19th.

The *Severn Suite* will be performed on Thursday May 23rd in Gloucester Cathedral, with the Gloucestershire Symphony Orchestra conducted by John Sanders.

THE NEW PUBLISHED SCORES

The publication of the *Severn Suite* and the *Civic Fanfare*, neither of which have previously been published in printed score format, will take place to coincide with the two performances. The scores have been professionally engraved and are designed to resemble Novello's orchestral scores of the 1940's. The first three hundred copies of each score will be numbered.

TELEVISION REVIEW

'There is Music in the Air'

BBC2 January – February 1991

This series of six programmes was announced in the last Journal, but in fact the order was changed due to rescheduling because of the Gulf War. This meant that the final two programmes were broadcast on successive days, February 9-10, and actually it seemed more appropriate to finish thus with the two largest works: *The Dream of Gerontius* and the *First Symphony*. The performers were the BBC Welsh Symphony Orchestra conducted by Andrew Davis, in the St. David's Hall, Cardiff. The only exception was *Gerontius*, which was the 1984 Three Choirs' performance from Worcester. There have been considerable personnel changes in the orchestra since then, and the conductor now wears contact lenses!

The series was presented by Michael Berkeley, and each programme began with a discussion between him and a contemporary composer about the work(s) being performed, the aim being "to see Elgar's music through the eyes of distinguished composers working in Britain today". This worked reasonably well: Berkeley is improving all the time as a presenter, though he is still a trifle donnish at times. The composers were predictably better at discussing the music *per se* than at providing the background to the work. We were not spared phrases such as "the rolling Malvern hills" and "the glorification of the Edwardian era in music": we also learnt that Elgar "traipsed around the country as a violin teacher". However it was good to hear of the high regard in which he is held by his successors.

The most recent large-scale television production on Elgar was Jim Berrow's film for Central in 1984, and this showed that the composer's biographers are all excellent verbal communicators. We could have been spared many of the clichés had Messrs. Moore, Kennedy and company been invited to set each work in its context. Composers are not always the best people to speak on music, and some of the conversations did tend to err on the cerebral side as far as the average music-lover is concerned.

The first programme, the *Enigma Variations*, began slowly: I found Nigel Osborne rather rambling in his introduction. The performance was enjoyable without being special. It was good to begin each variation with the appropriate portrait (from the set of photographs compiled by Carice after her father's death) and a short descriptive sentence.

This was followed by a programme of "occasional" music, comprising the fourth *Pomp & Circumstance* march: *Chanson de Matin*: the Triumphant march from *Caractacus*: *Sospiri*: *Great is the Lord* (Psalm 48): and *Froissart*. The composer here interviewed was Steve Martland, of whom I confess I had never heard. He claimed that Elgar had often been misrepresented, "hi-jacked" even: his music had been used by other people for their own (nationalistic) purposes. He also made the interesting comment that much music since Elgar was written to appeal to the intellect rather than the emotions. Again the pieces were nicely played: it's always good to hear the Psalm in its orchestral dress, here with the added bonus of Bryn Terfel's marvellously rich tones in the short solo for bass.

The following week Oliver Knussen launched *Falstaff* as 'Elgar's greatest symphony', and much was made of the fact that Elgar considered this his finest work. It was certainly given a most persuasive performance by Andrew Davis, which reminded me that his recording of the work for Lyrita has never received the widespread recognition it deserves. One small complaint: the headings of Elgar's four "divisions" of the work were given, but each of the four contains a variety of scenes, so that it would have been better to give each part of the heading as it happens. For instance, the second division reads "Eastcheap, – Gadshill, – The Boar's Head, revelry and sleep": so by the time we reach that marvellous passage for bassoon which indicates 'sleep' those unfamiliar with *Falstaff* would have probably forgotten what was being portrayed.

An opportunity was also missed the following week when the *Cello Concerto* and the *Introduction & Allegro* for Strings were performed. Here surely we could have been treated to some views of the wonderful scenery – Ynys Lochtyn and the Wye Valley – which inspired the latter work, particularly as the programme featured a Welsh composer, William Matthias. He spent most of the time speaking about the concerto and the air of disillusionment which infuses the work. Robert Cohen played it with great passion and confidence. He is still young enough to become one of the great interpreters of this piece.

And so to the last weekend, a feast of music. There is always something special about a performance of *Gerontius* in Worcester Cathedral, and one could sense this here. I think Davis is more successful as an orchestral rather than a choral conductor, but here was a finely-wrought *Gerontius*, played and sung with great conviction. Particularly memorable was Dame Janet Baker. All budding mezzo-sopranos with aspirations to sing the role of the Angel should be made to watch this film. The voice is obviously not so solid as in her heyday, but she communicated tremendous passion and drama while avoiding ostentation: it was an emotional yet dignified performance. Stuart Burrows has a fine voice, ideally suited to *Gerontius*. Generally he sang well enough, if a trifle breathless, but seemed uncertain over one or two entries. These days when Benjamin Luxon sings *forte* on anything above middle, the pitch is a bit of a lottery because of the vibrato: his sensitive singing of the central section of the Angel of the Agony shows what an impressive voice is there still. The Festival Chorus were in good form, but the Cathedral choir (semi-chorus) seemed strangely distant, possibly due to the balance of the recording. Robert Saxton knowledgeably provided the introduction.

The following day David Matthews and Nicholas Maw talked about the symphony in glowing terms. Both expressed amazement at Elgar's confidence in having the score engraved before the first performance, and stressed the work's pivotal place in the history of English orchestral music. Andrew Davis has been a recognised exponent of the *First Symphony* for many years now. His reading was urgent and committed, yet there was plenty of lyricism in the slow movement. It was a worthy and glorious way to end the series. One final thought: I wonder if any enterprising soul in BBC Wales has realised that two generously-filled videos (each three hours long) could be compiled from the programmes to make them available to a wider audience?

G.H.

VIDEO REVIEW

Jacqueline du Pré and the Elgar Cello Concerto. A Christopher Nupen Film.

Teldec/Warner, 1990. 2292-46240-3

Running time 73 mins. 50 secs.

RRP £14.99

Some eight years ago a moving and remarkable film was shown on television. It depicted Jacqueline du Pré's life and career, from her earliest days to the time of her marriage and subsequent overseas tours. Much of the film had been shot earlier and later material had been added to take account of the tragedy of the cruel illness which struck her at the age of 28. Her courage in adversity was depicted with dignity and tact, and finally a television performance of the Elgar concerto was added to the film. This latter performance, made in the early 1970s, was conducted by her husband Daniel Barenboim.

Teldec/Warner have now released a video of Christopher Nupen's film, and Elgarians should be grateful for this souvenir of a rare and beautiful talent. Sound and vision are both excellent, and I suggest that you buy this film even if only as a memorial to a very great artist.

R.P.T.

A decorative border of musical notation, including eighth and sixteenth notes, surrounds the central text.

SEVERN SUITE and CIVIC FANFARE

Study scores of these two works now available for the first time.

Severn Suite (orchestral version) – study score £12.50.

Civic Fanfare (for full orchestra) – study score £6.00.

Both scores fully typeset with editorial and historical appendices.

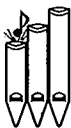
Special Numbered Edition offer to Elgar Society members

For orders received before 1st June 1991, Elgar Society members will be entitled to purchase both scores at a special discounted price equivalent to **two scores for the price of one**. The first 300 copies will be numbered and will entitle holders to additional discounts on future publications.

Pre-publication price £12.50 for both volumes (post free in U.K.)

(orders received before 1st June 1991 by 'phone or on order form included with this *Journal*.)

Orders (cheque, IMO or credit card) to :



**ACUTA MUSIC
HAMBROOK
LEDBURY HR8 2PX
England tel. 0531-670634**

(Trade and library enquiries welcomed. Performance material available).

See article on page 35

NEWS FROM THE BRANCHES . . .

It has seemed a long winter at LONDON BRANCH and four meetings have gone by since the deadline for the last issue of the "Journal". In December Piers Burton-Page, Presentation Editor for BBC Radio 3, talked with authority about Elgar's broadcasts. In January Jim Bennett made the long journey from Broadheath and was lucky with the weather. We much enjoyed his talk - "A Life in the Day of a Curator". Less lucky with the snow was Vernon Handley. February found him marooned in Wales, while most members were equally stranded in London's suburbs or the Home Counties. The London Secretary chose a fortuitous occasion to be absent (abroad) from a meeting for the first time in over ten years, safe in the knowledge that staunch committee members would improvise on the night, and with the bonus that we hope to rearrange Dr. Handley's visit next season - at a more temperate time of year! In March, Branch Chairman, Max Hutchinson spoke about architecture and music, both serious and popular, illustrating a typically lively address with a battery of eccentric instruments including electric guitar and 'synthesiser'. Will London Branch ever be the same?

The Branch AGM will be held on Monday, 10th June, at 7.30 p.m. at **Imperial College** (please note change of venue from that printed in the prospectus.) Agendas and minutes will be available at the meeting. Nominations for officers and committee should be sent to the Branch Secretary (address on back cover) to arrive by 3rd June. The AGM will be followed by an Elgar Quiz and the evening will conclude with a social 'get-together', with refreshments in the ante-room on level 1. Members who wish to stay for the latter are asked to note that there must be a charge of about £2.00 to cover expenses.

The Secretary of NORTH WEST BRANCH writes: Our first meeting in 1991 took place in January when Dennis Clark gave us his presentation 'Elgar and the Malverns'. This combination of talk, slides and music was superb. In February we were fortunate to have a piano recital given by Anthony Hughes who is one of the RNCM's most promising students. Our season ended on 3rd March with a visit from Claud Powell who gave us a talk entitled 'Dorabella'. This personal insight into the subject of Elgar's tenth 'Variation' was indeed a very special occasion for the North West Branch.

I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of myself and the North West Branch to thank Ronald Taylor for his hard work and devotion over the years as editor of this Journal. Our best wishes go to him and also to his successor.

Another year, another WEST MIDLANDS BRANCH Annual general Meeting. This year's was held on Saturday, 9th March at The Stables, Worcester, home of Bridget Monahan, to whom we are indebted both for this occasion and for providing the setting for the 1991 Branch Supper on 14th February.

The AGM afternoon began with a programme entitled "Masters of the Sovereigns' Music" given by our Vice-Chairman, Warwick Round. In 45 minutes we travelled from Boyce to Williamson via Elgar, Walford Davies, Bax, Bliss and heard an example of each composer's music. The meeting, under the chairmanship of John Warren was well attended with about 40 members being present. There were no fresh nominations and all the committee were returned unopposed.

The Chairman, in reviewing the previous year, mentioned, in particular, the joint meeting with the Newman Society and suggested a similar venture, possibly with the Holst Society, in 1991 or 1992. Anne Roadknight the Events Secretary, gave details of the 1991 Autumn programme which will include a lecture by Dr. Melville Cook on the "Three Choirs Festival", and a talk by Jim Bennett on his work as Birthplace Curator. Both will be at the Friends' Meeting House in Worcester, the first on October 5th and the second on November 16th. During the past year we have made a number of new members and we hope to see them on these occasions.

YORKSHIRE BRANCH have made so much use of compact discs recently that it is perhaps not surprising that we have now bought our own machine and no longer need to borrow, albeit from willing lenders. We decided many years ago that music would be played at all our meetings (never just a 'talk') and a good sound on decent equipment has long been our policy. Perhaps inevitably – it must be somebody's 'law' – having got our machine we are having a spell when we do not need it. On 7th January we had live music in the shape of a choral concert. The Wendell Choir, under their Conductor and Branch member David Fligg, gave a recital of part-songs by Elgar and others. The weather was not of the best and we only just avoided being outnumbered by the choir, but the evening was very enjoyable. We heard *As Torrents in Summer* and some of the *Bavarian Highlands* songs, but also some Jerome Kern, Edward German, and Ivor Novello. Elgar's *The Snow* was a particular delight. At least two of our members, who sing in other choirs, needed no second bidding to join the Wendell Choir to help with the final item. An extremely enjoyable evening, which we hope to repeat.

On 11th February, when we were due to welcome Mr. Wulstan Atkins, we were buried in snow. Neither he nor we could possibly get to the meeting and this has been reconvened to take place on 7th October. All the snow had gone by 11th March when we had one of our diversions in the form of a talk on Delius, using his *North Country Sketches* as the accompanying music. Our own member Bob Walker spoke interestingly on Delius's life, with particular reference to his early life in Yorkshire.

After the AGM in April we shall welcome Malcolm Ruthven on 13th May to give 'Elgar in Camera', a talk on Elgar's chamber music, incorporating readings from letters and some personal anecdotes. We know Malcolm very well, and those who have only heard him gravely introducing Mahler on BBC Radio 3 will find him an extremely witty and entertaining speaker. Visitors are welcome.

The EAST ANGLIAN Branch do not have a lot to report as January and February are our close season. We ended last year with our Christmas Party, enjoyed by all, and we are opening our year with the Annual General Meeting in March, followed by 'Falstaff' presented by Tony Morris.

The Southern Branch made its first birthday! After a year of ups and downs in establishing the Branch, the AGM held on 12th January showed that there was a place for the Branch amongst Southern Elgarians. One major decision taken was to decide on the Arts Centre at Havant as a permanent meeting place, having travelled the region during our first year, with varying success. We were all sorry that the Branch Secretary, Jennifer Nicholas, had to stand down. She did some sterling work in helping to establish the Branch. The Chairman's delight at relinquishing the post of acting-Treasurer during the meeting was short-lived as he has swapped it for the post of acting-Secretary!

After the business side of the AGM, we were hugely entertained by member Kevin Allen, who gave a delightful illustrated talk on "Elgar in Fiction", complete with a dancing Dorabella! Our next meeting is in March when Trevor Fenemore-Jones will talk on "Elgar, Man of Mission". This will mark a welcome return to the South for Trevor who did so much to get the Branch started.

On 11th May, the Chairman, Walter Essex will be talking about "Gerontius on Record", a survey and some personal assessments of all the recordings of this work. At the time of writing he is awaiting delivery of Barbirolli's 1960 Rome performance, with Jon Vickers. We shall know in May whether the anticipatory mouth-watering was justified. Looking a little further ahead, David Hill, organist at Winchester Cathedral, and Branch member, will be discussing the Organ Sonata in September.

We may be young and we may be small, but the Branch is alive and kicking!



LETTERS

From Michael Wilcox

At the recent Young Conservatives' Conference, Prime Minister Major went on a hyped-up, triumphant walk-about to the tune of 'Land of Hope and Glory'. Would the Elgar Society make a formal complaint to the Conservative Central Office about the abuse of Elgar's marvellous music?

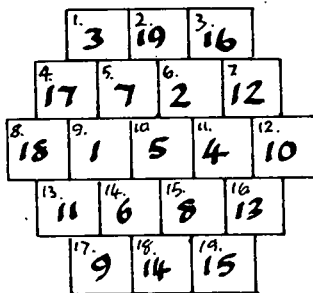
Brahms' First Symphony, the Red Rose, the Union Jack and Elgar do NOT belong to one political party but to all citizens, regardless of their political views. The Elgar Society can, at least, stick up for Elgar and protest against the politicisation of his music.

From Richard Turbet, Music Librarian, Aberdeen University

In a much-quoted letter of 14th November 1900 to A. J. Jaeger, referring to the "Cambridge Jamboree" of the 22nd, when he was to be given an honorary doctorate, Elgar writes "I feel Gibbonsy, Croftish, Byrdlich & foolish all over."

Does anybody know why Elgar, not an admirer of much early music, chose these three composers? Was their music to be sung at the honorary degree ceremony or at an appropriate service in Cambridge that day? I can find no explanation in my Elgarian literature.

ANSWERS TO QUIZ
in our issues of
September 1990
and
January 1991



THE ELGAR SOCIETY

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

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