

The Elgar Society JOURNAL



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The Elgar Society Journal

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EDITORIAL

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Over a hundred years ago W.S.Gilbert in *The Mikado* lambasted "the idiot who praises, with enthusiastic tone, all centuries but this and every country but his own". It might be churlish to suggest that there are more than a few fitting that description on the present musical scene in Britain, but the fact remains that in general we are remarkably coy and inhibited in our support for native composers. Conversely we have been known to latch on to foreign composers of little fame and questionable merit and laud them to the skies.

Elgar's international reputation receives an obvious boost when he is championed by foreign-born musicians. The Society therefore acted with commendable enterprise when it took a decision to award an Elgar Medal to honour those "neither natives or citizens of Great Britain, who have done much to further the reputation of his music, either by performance or through scholarship". The first two awards of the Medal are to the Americans Leonard Slatkin and Jerrold Northrop Moore, and both richly deserved. With a pleasing sense of appropriateness we recognise that they are respectively a performer and a scholar. Lack of space precludes an appraisal of their work here, but suffice it to say that without them our knowledge and love of Elgar would be much the poorer. Dr.Moore will receive his medal from the Society's President Sir Yehudi Menuhin on 14 May at the launch of the new CD sets of Elgar's own recordings; while Mr.Slatkin receives his from Dr.Moore at a special occasion at the Royal Academy of Music on 8 June (see London Branch report for details).

The JOURNAL is pleased to mark this occasion with the publication of the *full* article which Dr.Moore wrote for *The Sunday Telegraph* last year, and which has generated so much interest. Professor Parrott has, perhaps not surprisingly, demanded the right to reply!

In conclusion I would like to direct members' attention to the article I have entitled *Elgar Abroad*, especially the two accounts of performances of *Gerontius* in Europe. 1992 is a significant year in relationships between Britain and the Continent, and let us hope that we can take advantage of all the cultural opportunities that are offered, as well as the economic ones. In particular Warwick University are keen to perform abroad on a regular basis, and would welcome enquiries and suggestions. Please contact Colin Touchin at the University if you can help.

GEOFFREY HODGKINS

THE HIDDEN THEME IN ELGAR'S ENIGMA

Jerrold Northrop Moore

Many of Elgar's friends were convinced that there was some other music hidden behind the 17-bar 'Enigma' which forms the theme of the famous *Variations* that follow it. Elgar himself never discouraged the idea, and sometimes seemed to lead it on. One of the series of friends portrayed in the individual variations was 'Dorabella' (who later became Mrs. Richard Powell). She was one of the most persistent of the would-be riddle-solvers, and really wrote her book *Edward Elgar : Memories of a variation* round the subject :

I almost lay awake at night thinking and puzzling, and all to no purpose whatever. It was annoying!

And most annoying of all was one day, on a visit to Malvern, when I simply begged him to tell me what it was. I suggested all sorts of tunes trying to see if I could get a rise out of him, or even a hint, and he looked at me in a sort of half-impatient, half-exasperated way and snapped his fingers, as though waiting for me to think of the tune there and then. I always feel, on looking back to that moment, that he was on the point of telling me what it was, and then he just said :

'I shan't tell you. You must find it out for yourself'.

Any real look at the subject must begin with what Elgar himself said about it. In the 1920s, a quarter century after the event, he wrote an account of the evening when the 'Enigma' came to him and the *Variations* began. He told essentially the same story early and late to friends and interviewers, and there is no substantial disagreement in any of their accounts. All make clear that the invention - if it was that - came from below the level of his consciousness.

The evening it happened was 21 October 1898. The Elgars had been travelling and visiting away from their home in Malvern for weeks. Much of their travelling had revolved round the production of his cantata *Caractacus* at the Leeds Festival in early October. The Leeds Festival was the biggest platform yet offered to Elgar's music. The subject of the cantata had been of his own choosing (with a hint from his mother) and its setting was his beloved Malvern Hills. As its music had evolved through the previous spring, however, *Caractacus* failed to give its composer that excited gratification which his best projects yielded. After he conducted the premiere at Leeds on 5 October, some of his friends made bold to agree. Miss Rosa Burley, the young headmistress of The Mount School, Malvern - where Elgar still taught the violin to any girl whose parents decreed it - had gone to Leeds for the event. In the aftermath, she made a telling observation : Elgar left Leeds, she said, "with the air of one who has fought, and is inclined to think he has lost, a heavy engagement".

From Leeds the Elgars had gone directly to London. While they were there, August Manns conducted two performances of the Triumphal March from *Caractacus* at the Crystal Palace; Elgar visited his publisher Novello (not too encouraging over finances and royalties), and lunched or dined with several noted people in the world of London music.

At last they returned home to Malvern late on Wednesday 19 October, and spent the next day unpacking and settling down for the winter. But Friday 21 October brought

the humiliating contrast with all such excitements and sophistications. For on that day Elgar had to go back to his violin teaching at The Mount School. He once compared teaching to "turning a grindstone with a dislocated shoulder". The fact was that teaching paid the bills, when all the music he wrote - whatever the celebrity - did not.

Yet that Friday's teaching preceded the evening on which the '*Enigma*' *Variations* began :

After a long day's fiddle teaching in Malvern, I came home very tired. Dinner being over, my dear wife said to me, 'Edward, you look like a good cigar,' and having lighted it, I sat down at the piano...

In a little while, soothed and feeling rested, I began to play, and suddenly my wife interrupted me by saying :

'Edward, that's a good tune.'

I awoke from the dream : 'Eh! tune, what tune?'

And she said, 'Play it again, I like that tune.'

I played and strummed, and played, and then she exclaimed :

'That's the tune.' Her voice asked, with a sound of approval, 'What is that?'

I answered, 'Nothing - but something might be made of it...'

That was how it began : Elgar's fingers wandering over the keys - until the interruption of his wife's comment recalls his mind to what he is doing, thus showing him that what he has just been playing has a coherence and character of its own. Without her intervention, it would have passed in another moment to seamless oblivion, irrecoverable. He was to acknowledge that in the finished work by placing the 'C.A.E.' variation first after the *Enigma* theme, and connecting it with a bridge passage leading straight out of the *Enigma*.

He also hinted at the less-than-conscious nature of this creation in a statement made to the writer of programme notes for the *Variations*' first performance in June 1899: "The *Enigma* I will not explain - its dark saying must be left unguessed..."

So it must be clear to anybody who stops to think about it that whatever of a creative nature had been going forward in Elgar's mind at that moment had been more or less below the level of his consciousness. That fact would seem to rule out the existence of any elaborate polyphony or counterpoint deliberately hidden within the *Enigma* at this first shaping. And Elgar was later to say that the first shaping of the *Enigma* was "in the form it is now" - its final form. So if any other music lay behind this semi-conscious invention, its relationship would almost have to be of the simplest, most obvious character.

Elgar also told the programme-note writer of a second and entirely separate mystery that concerned not the *Enigma* itself but the variations as they developed out of it : "through and over the whole set another and larger theme 'goes' but is not played...". Mrs. Powell ('Dorabella') was right when she recognised that this was an entirely separate affair, and that to conflate the two could only result in a muddle.

Yet people have tended to ignore that warning, as they went about searching for a hidden tune. Elgar never said that the other and larger "theme" going over the variations was a tune, and he rejected every suggestion put to him during his lifetime.

It seems idle to a degree to try to renew ideas (such as Mrs. Powell's *Auld Lang Syne*) which he himself specifically rejected. He did once say to 'Dorabella': "It is so well known that it is extraordinary that no one has spotted it".

She quotes that remark on page 119 of her book (3rd edition, 1947). She also wrote on the same page: "Elgar made it perfectly clear to us when the work was being written that the Enigma was concerned with a tune, and the notion that it could be anything other than a tune is relatively modern". Yet earlier on that page she had also written: "'It'. Yes; we always spoke of the hidden matter as 'it', never as tune or theme".

And until a few months ago I had regularly dismissed as idle any and all such speculation about a hidden tune as came my way.

* * *

Then last May I had the delightful chance of meeting, round a mutual friend's lunch table, the pianist Joseph Cooper. The conversation turned on Elgar, and he put to me an observation of his own. It commended my instant attention; and the more I thought of it, the more attention turned to respect.

Joseph Cooper's suggestion was that the music hidden behind the Enigma notes is a passage in the Andante slow movement of Mozart's 'Prague' Symphony. He then sent me the following notation to compare with the 'Enigma' as printed in Elgar's own piano arrangement:



The similarities are impressive. First the G-tonality: major in the 'Prague' with major-minor features, minor then major in the 'Enigma'. Both movements are marked *andante*. Then there is that tell-tale rest at the beginning - so peculiar a fingerprint, and a similarity not offered by any other proposal I know of. Finally, the exact similarity of figure-beginnings - not only in A but also in B immediately following. This again is something that no other proposed model has approached.

Heard side by side, the similarity is instantly apparent. It is indeed, as Elgar said to 'Dorabella', extraordinary that no one had spotted it.

There is also the fact that the 'Prague' passage is just that - not a principal subject but a side-issue in Mozart's *Andante*, yet repeated *in extenso* later in the movement. It is just the sort of side-issue to sink itself into a musician's half-memory - to emerge again perhaps when his own thoughts are dispersed in semi-conscious seeking.

I told Mr. Cooper that so far as I knew it was an entirely new idea, and certainly not one that Elgar himself had ever rejected. He replied by asking me to publish it.

As I thought it over, this particular congruence began to draw support from all over Elgar's biography early and late. Mozart always occupied a central place in Elgar's regard, and in his inspiration. At his Birthplace Museum in Broadheath, near Worcester, you can see a little framed quotation from Mozart written out by Elgar and standing on his desk :

Wien 1781

...the Passions, whether violent or otherwise, must never be expressed to disgust, - and music, even in the most terrific situation, never give pain to the ear, but ever delight it and remain Music.

W.A.Mozart

(letter to his father)

On the little oak frame is a note by his daughter : "This always stood on Elgar's desk".

As a child, Elgar had played figured bass in Vivaldi concertos from a score which it was thought the boy Mozart had used during his visit to London. Elgar wrote : "I always like to think we own the very book that the Wonder Child played from".

A little later he joined the amateur orchestra of the Worcester Glee Club as a violinist beside his father. One of the favourite numbers was a trio-arrangement from *Così fan tutte* called 'My sweet Dorabella'.

In the reading of literature shared with his mother, Longfellow's *Hyperion* meant much to them both. The hero of *Hyperion* announces his favourite opera as Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. It soon became the teen-aged Elgar's favourite among the touring opera performances at the old Worcester Theatre.

When he began to deputise for his father as organist of St. George's Church, his friend Hubert Leicester blew the organ for young Elgar's practice sessions, and especially recalled a "favourite piece" by Mozart. And one of Elgar's first boyish compositions for the choir of St. George's was a *Gloria* founded so directly on a Mozart Violin Sonata movement that the Mozart piano part was cut out and pasted entire below Elgar's prentice vocal parts.

That was no mere coincidence. Years later, after he had become famous, Elgar said to an interviewer :

Mozart is the musician from whom everyone should learn form. I once ruled a score for the same instruments and with the same number of bars as Mozart's G minor Symphony, and in that framework I wrote a symphony, following as far as possible the same outline in the themes

and the same modulation. I did this on my own initiative, as I was groping in the dark after light, but looking back after thirty years I don't know any discipline from which I learned so much.

That was in 1878, when he was twenty-one. He took the G minor as his example then because he had just been rehearsing and playing in a performance of it at the Worcester Festival (whose orchestra he joined for the first time that year).

Elgar had been "groping in the dark" because he never then or later had a composition teacher. So Mozart became his master in a way seldom experienced by most composition students. What more natural, then, when he found himself in a creative wilderness twenty years later, that his mind should return as if by instinct to quiz Mozart again?

But why the 'Prague'? Most immediately because he had heard it shortly before that October evening in 1898 when the 'Enigma' came into being. The performance - conducted by another Mozartean whom Elgar admired, Sir Arthur Sullivan - had taken place at the Leeds Festival 36 hours after his own *Caractacus* premiere. There the 'Prague' figured as the opening item in the Friday morning programme - just where it might create the deepest impression. Thus the sounds of the 'Prague' had been renewed in Elgar's ears and mind exactly a fortnight before the 'Enigma' evening.

Another shred of evidence, tenuous but suggestive, comes from the programme on the night the 'Enigma' *Variations* were given their premiere. The date was 19 June 1899, in St. James's Hall, London, and the conductor was Hans Richter (1843 - 1916). Elgar had just come to know Richter, through correspondence about and rehearsals of the *Variations*. Both men sensed the beginning of a big friendship. Richter ended his concert that night with the 'Prague'. Had Elgar asked him to do this, or hinted at it? There is no way to be certain after so many years, with all the witnesses long dead. But it would have been like him to arrange the dropping of such a hint - possibly without even telling Richter why he wanted it : let the audience hear what they could.

At the end of Elgar's life, Mozart in general and the 'Prague' in particular still occupied a unique place in the old composer's regard. That was discovered by his biographer Basil Maine during a visit to Elgar's home above Worcester in June 1932. And the discovery impressed the biographer so deeply that he set it down close to the end of his book :

The writer recalls a particular summer evening at Marl Bank when Elgar's niece and he were seated on either side of the composer reading a miniature score of Mozart's 'Prague' Symphony and listening to Toscanini's recording of the work.

In Elgar's opinion, it is the finest of all Mozart's symphonies. Certainly, hearing it in this way, with the cool evening air stealing into the room and mingling with the music until they became one and the same element, it seemed that there could be no more perfect work than this, for it carried the illusion (if it *is* illusion) that music is the ultimate element of the entire universe, that all things which are irreconcilable with music are worthless and carry the seeds of their own destruction.

It was the *Andante* that intensified the experience most of all. Never before, such was the impression, had it been so profoundly affecting in its sustained inspiration.

But then Maine had never until then listened to the 'Prague' *Andante* in Elgar's presence.

THE ENIGMA AGAIN

Ian Parrott

The suggestion in *The Sunday Telegraph* of 3 November 1991 ("The Enigma solution" by Jerrold Northrop Moore) that Joseph Cooper, 'Master of the Hidden Melody', has at last unravelled the mystery is perhaps a little too simple. He thinks, as if it were a new idea, that the hidden melody is from the slow movement of Mozart's 'Prague' Symphony.

Subsequent correspondence, however, has shown that this is not new at all, and that a letter to *The Daily Telegraph* of 27 March 1977 from the late Professor J.M.Nosworthy pointed out the similarity to the Andante in the 'Prague', noting that it was one of Elgar's favourite slow movements (being in the major key, it so happens that this theme is more like Winifred Norbury's variation, W.N., than the 'Enigma' theme itself, though the accentuation disguises it).

Since Prof. Nosworthy, professor of English at U.C.W., Aberystwyth, was a personal friend of mine, I would like to quote his full letter, which was written in response to an article by Michael Kennedy of a few days earlier : 'Play a tune for a penny' :

Mr. Michael Kennedy (March 21) does less than justice to the solution proposed by my friend Prof. Ian Parrott. Elgar gave his daughter the name Carice, which, though wittily compounded from her mother's names, Caroline Alice, can reasonably be equated with *caritas*.

The Bible reading (Corinthians 13) is, as Dora Penny "of all people" should have known, specifically concerned with *caritas* which, in the original Greek, we see not "through a glass darkly" but "as in an *enigma*".

A set of variations dedicated to and picturing the composer's closest friends must obviously be a manifestation of that same *caritas* - a quality in which Elgar's music surpasses that of any other major composer. It is Prof. Parrott's recognition that Elgar's love of people took precedence over love of puns and name-games that renders his solution the most acceptable of those so far proposed.

Elgar may have lifted the "never, never" phrase from 'Rule, Britannia'. However, the same phrase appears as a "larger theme" in a larger context in the Andante of Mozart's 'Prague' Symphony - one of Elgar's favourite slow movements.

As for Dan the bulldog, the curious may care to explore Variation V (R.P.A) in the hope of finding a compensating dachshund, namely Richard Arnold's dog who was immortalised in Matthew Arnold's *Geist's Grave*.

Admittedly, Geist died long before Elgar composed the *Enigma Variations* but the penchant for name-games would, perhaps, have allowed the variation to accommodate his *geist*.

Without wishing to labour the point, it might just be remembered that I did myself solve *both parts* of the Enigma twenty years ago!

In fact I had first the support of Mr. A.T.Shaw, founder of the Elgar Society, when I gave a lecture in Malvern on 21 March 1968, *The Enigma : a new slant*, which was published for the Elgar Society.

Secondly I had the enthusiastic and conscientious support of the Series Editor, Sir Jack Westrup, when my *Elgar* was published for the 'Master Musicians' by Dent in

1971. When my tracing of the Enigma's "dark saying" to St. Paul had been achieved with the help of the Bishop of St. David's (who had given me the Latin text), Sir Jack insisted that we should also include the Greek, thus clinching the word's origin. During the final week's scoring, Elgar, at St. Joseph's, heard the Quinquagesima epistle on 12 February 1899 : *Videmus nunc per speculum in aenigmate*. The subsequent acceptance of the Variations by Richter changed Elgar from a provincial nobody into a world-famous composer.

Again Westrup, as editor of *Music & Letters*, gave me the opportunity of further expanding on this and also on the larger theme that "goes" by publishing 'Elgar's Two-fold Enigma : A Religious Sequel' in that magazine in 1973.

Thirdly I was given the position of "last word" on the subject by Christopher Redwood in *An Elgar Companion* (Moorland, 1982). Here there are five chapters on the Enigma: by Richard C. Powell in 1934, A.H. Fox Strangways in 1935, Westrup in 1960, and Dr. Roger Fiske in 1969. The fifth, written specially for the book, is by myself. Michael Kennedy's *Portrait of Elgar* originally appeared three years before my Master Musicians volume. In his second edition, however, he gave the best part of a page to my theories.

Long ago I had expressed disdain for the notion that a bulldog should be a dedicatee in the Variations ('Variations for a Dog?' *Music Teacher* January 1956) since I am a firm believer that G.R.S means G.R.S and not Dan. The scoring of the Variation suggests an organist - a good pedaller too, as I know, being a "grand-pupil" of G.R. Sinclair! Subsequently, Elgar wanted to put solvers off the scent by dragging in Dan. Yes, Dan's name does appear on the autograph. Prof. Brian Trowell (*Musical Times*, June 1984) is courteous enough to admit that the word appears above the second half of the fifth bar. This, however, refers to a subsidiary motive - a growling snippet, which goes back to *King Olaf* ("watchdog", scene 9) - so the bulldog is allowed in the cathedral with his master, but he'd better keep off the pedals!

There have been suggested solutions from many others. That of Ulrik Skouenborg, which takes us to Brahms, gives me the opportunity to quote my refutation of his theory, which appeared in the *Music Review* in September 1984 :

After all [Mr. Skouenborg's] excellent arguments, there remains one fatal flaw. There is no more connection in the music (despite the relevant words) between Brahms's *Vier ernste Gesänge* and Elgar's *Enigma* theme than the drop of a minor third - a mere couple of notes. We might as well visit the Welsh voices singing at Llangrannog and trot out any number of hymn tunes. I am very suspicious of "forced" counterpoint. Indeed, I have never believed that any counterpoint was ever intended as an interpretation of Elgar's "goes". But if music is to sound reasonably similar, why not the following?

My reply included an extract from a duet in Purcell's *Dioclesian*, which I think now is every bit as close as the Mozart, if we are looking for that sort of thing.

But as I have frequently pointed out, Elgar did not say it was a tune which sounds similar or works in counterpoint : he said it "goes".

A strong case is still made, I submit in conclusion, for Bach rather than for Mozart or any other composer as the answer to "further, through and over the whole set another

and larger theme 'goes', but is not played". Although there are several works by Bach in G minor, in particular the eleven variations for organ on *Sei gegrusset* (with many *tierces de picardie*) and the unfinished pedal *Exercitium*, I think now that the answer is BACH. B is the first note; H is the last; and both A and C appear during the course of Elgar's theme as high-lights, marked *tenuto* (look at the flute and clarinet on page 2). Or is it, as in Maeterlinck, suggests Percy Young ('Friends pictured within' in *Elgar Studies*, 1990), a "secret power derived from an ambient, unseen, reality"?

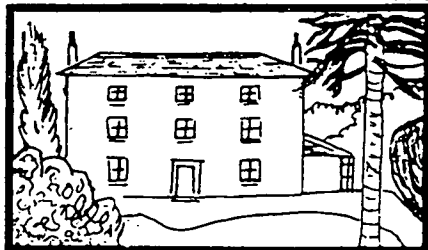


Professor Parrott at the piano with the late A. T. Shaw

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ELGAR AND PROGRAMME MUSIC

Sir J.A.Westrup

Part 2

To that theme the mind cannot help reverting, however often the variations are heard. It has been said that all Elgar's music has an enigmatic quality, and we should feel that to be true of this theme, if the title "Enigma" were lacking. The self-quotations in *The Music Makers* may be held to throw some light on the processes of Elgar's mind; yet for the most part they leave us just as much in the dark. We heard the opening bars of the "Enigma" theme at the words "Sitting by desolate streams". And hearing them there we realise more than ever how much in the circumstances of any composer's life must remain a mystery and how the music, divorced in our minds from all such circumstances, acquires a more precious value. Here, in the music, is the composer speaking to us. To grasp that discourse we need no circumstantial commentary. It might be suggested that the poet's "desolate streams" had for Elgar particular associations which made the quotation of the "Enigma" theme appropriate. But it is clear from a later passage in *The Music Makers* that the emphasis is not on the streams but on the desolation. The "Enigma" theme is heard again at the words:

O men! it must ever be
That we dwell, in our dreaming and singing,
A little apart from ye.

A fragment of the *Violin Concerto* is introduced at the words "a little apart", but the "Enigma" theme has already established the mood. All his life Elgar believed, in spite of abundant evidence to the contrary, that people neither wanted nor appreciated his music. In him the artist's natural sense of loneliness was exaggerated to an abnormal degree. That robust, military exterior was the shell of a particularly sensitive mind. Little wonder, then, that a theme which was obviously very dear to his heart should have been used in such associations. Such an interpretation may seem odd when we recall the genesis of the *Enigma variations*. "One evening", says the composer, "after a long and tiring day's teaching, aided by a cigar, I musingly played on the piano the theme as it now stands". But it is precisely in such moments of musing, when fatigue impels the mind to escape, that the creative imagination is likely to find its most characteristic expression.

It seems, then, that it would be wrong to emphasise the possible associations of the streams beside which the music-maker sits desolate. But there is no denying that Elgar, like many other composers, had a deep love for the country and that natural phenomena had a considerable influence upon him. The evidence is to be found in his habits of life; but it also finds occasional confirmation in his work. Shallow's orchard in *Falstaff* is an obvious instance, but there is a more recondite one in the *First Symphony*, of which we should know nothing if it had not been for an incident at rehearsal. He was dissatisfied, says Reed, with the playing of the Bb melody for flutes in the scherzo : it was too matter-of-fact :-

He stopped and said, "Don't play it like that : play it like" - then he hesitated, and added under his breath, before he could stop himself - "like something we hear down by the river".

And reading that one recalls how the melting and lovely theme in the *Introduction and Allegro* for strings was suggested not merely by the sound of Welsh voices but by the sound of those voices overheard in hilly country. The influence of the natural setting is powerful here, and it is particularly striking in the chamber music, which was all composed at Fittleworth in Sussex. We can see the composer's reaction to the woodland environment in the slow movement of the *String Quartet*. But there is also a more sinister note. Near the cottage was a group of trees, "with gnarled and twisted branches, bare of bark or leaves - a ghastly sight in the evening, when the branches seem to be beckoning and holding up gaunt arms in derision". Reed, who knew the place well, is probably right in finding an answering atmosphere in the opening of the *Piano Quintet*, in the slow movement of the *Violin Sonata*, and in the *ponticello* passages in the finale of the *String Quartet*.

The influence of the withered trees may well go further. Everyone has been struck by the exotic local colour - Spanish or Moorish - of the lilting A major theme in the first movement of the *Quintet*. Local tradition in Fittleworth had it that the plateau where the trees grew was once a settlement of Spanish monks. For some act of impiety they were struck dead and turned into trees. The connexion in the composer's mind is obvious. Yet this association is in no sense a clue to the music, since the music as music is self-explanatory; and Maine errs in saying that Reed's description of the scene "seems to offer an explanation of various passages which puzzled some of the critics and repelled others when the music was first performed". Music which is puzzling does not become intelligible when the origins of its inspirations are revealed; nor, if repelled, does it become less so by acquiring picturesque associations. On the contrary, the listener may fail to see the significance of the music because he has become absorbed in those associations. To do so is as fatal an error as to let the mind languidly create its own associations when listening. The musical ear should be independent of these distractions. George Moore may or may not have been right when he wrote of the funeral march in *Grania and Diarmid* :-

Elgar must have seen the primeval forest as he wrote, and the tribe moving among the falling leaves - oak leaves, hazel leaves, for the world begins with oak and hazel.

If he was right, we shall have here another instance of the influence of a natural scene - in this case an imagined scene. But no knowledge of such a programme could make the music more moving.

The same may be claimed of *Falstaff*. The claim may seem a paradox, since the composer himself wrote a detailed analysis of the work. But the value of such an analysis lies not in the service it may do to our understanding of the music but in the barrier it erects against unauthorised interpretations. The many musicians who have admired *Falstaff* have admired it as music. Tovey, to whom many aspects of Elgar's idiom were antipathetic, wrote of it :-

It seems to me one of the immeasurably great things in music, and entirely free from anything that can be imputed to Elgar's other works as faults.

His analysis of the work was written before he had read Elgar's, and rather quixotically he reprinted it as it stood, adding footnotes where the composer's annotations suggested corrections. But he claims, with some reason, that his failure

to read Elgar's analysis first had its advantages. It gave rise

to a unique opportunity for demonstrating how far a great piece of "programme music" can be intelligible as pure music and at the same time convey the subject of the composer's illustration to other minds without the use of words.

It is important, too, to realise that *Falstaff* is just as much an expression of Elgar's personality as any of his works that have no programme attached. Just as the characters in the *Enigma Variations* appear not as themselves but as Elgar saw them and reacted to them, so Falstaff and Prince Hal and the rest of the company are aspects of Elgar himself. How could it be otherwise? He had soaked himself in Shakespeare and read widely in Shakespearean literature, but the result is as unmistakably Elgarian as anything could be. To regard *Falstaff* as an objective work is to misunderstand the workings of creative genius. If a work of this kind did not reveal the composer's personality, we should be forced to the conclusion that he had no personality to reveal. He would be the dullest of dull dogs. *Falstaff* has a programme, but it is not realistic, if we except the snore on the double bassoon and tuba. And even that snore, translated into musical terms, is part of a *diminuendo* passage which might occur in any symphonic work without arousing curiosity or calling for interpretation. It is a natural transition to the first of the two interludes.

How faulty a thoughtless interpretation can be we can see in the case of the *Second Symphony*. The fact that it was dedicated to the memory of Edward VII has misled people into thinking that it is somehow an epitome, or alternatively the swan-song, of the Edwardian age. For the same reason the solemnity of the slow movement has been interpreted as a funeral march for the late king, though the inscription says that the symphony was "designed early in 1910 to be a loyal tribute". If external associations are sought, it would be better to look for them in Venice and Tintagel, where the work was written. The characteristic scenery of both these places may have had its influence on Elgar's mood. One detail in the work - the fluttering figure in the Rondo - is known to have been suggested by a flight of doves at Venice, an interesting parallel to Beethoven's galloping horse. But such an origin explains nothing. Such casual suggestions do not create emotion; they can only stimulate or release it. This is equally true of the withered trees at Fittleworth. They struck the composer's imagination because the allied emotion was already in him waiting to be released. The friends of the *Enigma Variations*, the withered trees, *Falstaff* and the doves at Venice - all these in their differing ways stirred pre-existent chords, exactly as the Aeolian harp which gave Elgar such innocent amusement was stirred by the passing breeze.

The *Second Symphony* is no tribute to imperialism nor a regret for changing times. Least of all is it a premonition of 1914 - perhaps the most fantastic of the suggested interpretations. It is the expression, one might almost say the record, of a spiritual experience. That experience is alluded to in the quotation from Shelley at the beginning of the score :-

Rarely, rarely comest thou,
Spirit of delight!

Rarely - but it does come; and that is the best answer to those who see the dominant mood of the symphony as a restless discontent. Canon Temple Gairdner describes the

first movement as "an ecstasy of youth...a veritable spring-song". For him the symphony as a whole is a passionate pilgrimage - a pilgrimage through sorrow and extravagance to a sure haven of rest. And not for him only. Greatly daring, he discussed his interpretation with the composer, who overcame his habitual reticence to the extent of agreeing and supplying further commentary. Gairdner wrote to a friend -

My second symphony effusion had evidently touched the spot. I seem to have hit it off *absolutely* in general idea, and very largely in detail also. For example, it was absolutely correct to say that the whole thing represents the "passionate pilgrimage" of a soul; that the last movement represents the final issue of his "passion" in noble action, and that the last two pages is apotheosis and the eternal issue of the soul's pilgrimage.

Elgar told him that the *fff* passage in the third movement stood for "the madness that attends the excess or abuse of passion", and quoted in illustration some lines from Tennyson's *Maud* :

Dead, long dead,
Long dead!
And my heart is a handful of dust
And the wheels go over my head.

And then came a curious remark :

He said that he had been closely associated at Worcester with a lunatic asylum, and had seen a lot of the patients, and knew their histories and symptoms.

That Elgar in his youth was director of music at an asylum is well-known, and it has more than once been observed that the experience of arranging works for a miscellaneous collection of instruments must have helped to develop his uncanny sense of orchestral effect. But Gairdner's testimony, which is unimpeachable, shows that the asylum had other associations, and that Elgar was not unaffected by them in writing what he called the "horrible" thing he ever did. The passage, as Gairdner says, is accompanied by "an incessant maddening hammering on the big drum, rising at the climax to a hideous din".

Elgar went on to say that he thought that "all great music ultimately rests on experience of life" - one of those simple truisms which will bear re-stating, particularly when delivered with the authority of a composer. A knowledge of that experience cannot make the music any more vivid to the hearer, but it may illuminate our knowledge of the composer. The objection sometimes advanced to the study of musical biography is that it interferes with our appreciation of the music. So it does if we make our appreciation dependent on biography. The argument for biography is simply this: that having heard in music the revelation of a personality we are irresistibly drawn to know more about its author. If we are shocked by such further acquaintance and find a harsh contrast between the man and the musician, our appreciation of the music is likely to have been superficial. A composer does not withhold himself in his music; he is much more inclined to be reticent in his life. The important thing is that a study of a composer's life, habits and associations should follow, not precede, a study of the music. If the music fails to make us want to know him better, we may as well leave him alone. In the case of Elgar only an insensitive listener could be incurious about the man. Man and music - there are enigmas in both. We may not solve them; but meeting them face to face we shall at least avoid conventional assumptions. The bracketing of Elgar with Kipling is one; the charge of vulgarity is another.

BIRTHPLACE NEWS

We have taken advantage of the four weeks annual closure to undertake some refurbishment, and to set up a new exhibition of the *Enigma Variations* with the help of a schoolgirl who has been with us for brief work experience periods. Her knowledge and enthusiasm have again demonstrated the appeal of Elgar's music to the young, and the enrichment they can gain here. Over this seasonally quiet period we have nevertheless had the pleasure of welcoming many more visitors than is usual. Clearly we have benefited in this respect from the interest, press reports, correspondence, etc on the subject of the proposed new Library and Visitor Centre.

Visitors will have noticed that the undergrowth on the left as you enter the premises - which had become uncontrollable, was stifling the beech boundary hedge and tending to obscure the Dogs' Grave - has been removed, and new turfing and planting undertaken. In this work we have been grateful for the advice and help of the Leisure Services Dept. of the City of Worcester.

On 4 April a meeting was arranged for Society members, mainly from the West Midlands Branch, to inspect the site for the Library and Visitor Centre, to see the architect's plans explained by David Hawkins, a Trustee of the Elgar Birthplace Trust and of the Foundation, and generally to discuss the scheme.

On the following day we opened specially in the morning for a party taking an "Elgar weekend" organised by a Stourport firm. The weather was fine, the daffodils in the garden at their best, and this proved a very good start to the party season.

Elsewhere in the Journal will be found details and an order form for the new EMI collection of CD transfers of Elgar's electrical recordings. The Birthplace is pleased to be associated with this important event and to be able to offer very attractive terms to Society members and Friends of the Birthplace. We look forward to a busy time fulfilling your orders.

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**FOR SALE**

Full score of Elgar's *Symphonic Prelude Polonia*. Very rare.

Also *Music Student* for 1916 (twelve copies, unbound). The August issue is a Special Elgar Number.

### Offers, please, to the Editor



## ELGAR'S "TOP TEN" ON RADIO 3 DURING 1991

|                                              | Number of performances |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| OVERTURE "COCKAIGNE" (Opus 40)               | 8                      |
| 'CELLO CONCERTO IN E MINOR (Opus 85)         | 8                      |
| INTRODUCTION & ALLEGRO FOR STRINGS (Opus 47) | 7                      |
| OVERTURE "IN THE SOUTH" (Opus 50)            | 6                      |
| SERENADE FOR STRINGS IN E MINOR (Opus 20)    | 6                      |
| VIOLIN CONCERTO IN B MINOR (Opus 61)         | 6                      |
| SYMPHONY No 2 IN E FLAT (Opus 63)            | 5                      |
| VIOLIN SONATA IN E MINOR (Opus 82)           | 5                      |
| SYMPHONIC STUDY "FALSTAFF" (Opus 68)         | 5                      |
| "ENIGMA" VARIATIONS (Opus 36)                | 5                      |

A considerable number of lesser-known Elgar compositions came to the musical surface, many from the unknown years before national and international recognition that England had at last produced a musical genius after 200 years.

I have selected 12 of these "rarities" (in chronological order) : AVE VERUM (1887); PRESTO for piano (1889); QUEEN MARY'S SONG (1889); LIKE TO THE DAMASK ROSE (1892); A SONG OF AUTUMN (1892); SURSUM CORDA for brass, organ & strings (Opus 11)(1894); DREAM CHILDREN (Opus 43) (1902); SKIZZES for piano (1903); GO SONG OF MINE (Opus 57) (1909); THE SPIRIT OF ENGLAND (Opus 80) (1915-7); Ballet music THE SANGUINE FAN (Opus 81) (1917); MINA for orchestra (1933).

Mina, one of Elgar's pet dogs, was a great comfort to him in his long years as a widower at Marl Bank. This short work is Elgar's last composition. I like to think that had Elgar not died Mina's companion Marco would have also received a canine musical tribute from his master.

It is splendid to find *Falstaff* in the list. I have in my archives a long letter to me dated 13 April 1954 from Elgar's daughter Carice. Most of the contents deal with *Falstaff*, and include 14 diary notes made by her mother, Lady Alice Elgar. These are brief but fascinating comments, giving personal details she wrote in her diary reporting her husband's progress on the work between May and October 1913, when the first performance was given at the Leeds Festival. It is an absorbing "glimpse behind the scenes", as we know that before writing a note of music Elgar closely read and studied Shakespeare's plays *Henry IV Parts 1 & 2*, and the brief mention in *Henry V* of Falstaff's death. I am quite sure that he thought of Falstaff as a much deeper, complex character than the comic buffoon as depicted in opera. Mrs. Blake closed her letter to me :- "I think my Father did consider it his best work orchestrally, but people just do not seem to take the trouble to understand it - when they *DO* they become devoted to it".

A splendid total of 191 performances of works, large and small, on Radio 3 in 1991. This is the highest total since I began compiling statistics from the *Radio Times* in 1986.

T.W.Rowbotham

## ELGAR ABROAD

We are always happy to hear of performances of Elgar's music taking place in other countries, and notices of a number of interesting concerts have come our way recently. In March last year Sir David Willcocks conducted a memorable *Dream of Gerontius* in London, Ontario. Also in North America in September the Boston University Symphony Orchestra included a performance of *Sospiri* in a memorial concert to one of their students from Poland, tragically killed in an accident. The English conductor Richard Bradshaw (an old school friend of the Editor's, and best remembered here for his work with the Saltarello Choir in the 1970s) gave a performance at New York's Lincoln Center of the *Symphony no. 1* with the Juilliard Orchestra.

Further afield, on 16 July at the 7th Tokyo Summer Festival a young Japanese soloist Asako Urushihara performed the *Violin Concerto* with the New Japan Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Ryusuke Numajiri.

On Easter Monday (still in the future as I write) the London Symphony Chorus will be taking part in a performance of *Gerontius* given in Athens by the Athens State Orchestra conducted by Alexander Symeonides, with soloists Christine Cairns, Keith Lewis, and John Shirley-Quirk. Maestro Symeonides has a great love for British choral music, and wishes to perform more of it with his orchestra and British singers.

These reports, encouraging enough by themselves, are really a prelude to two detailed accounts of continental performances of *The Dream of Gerontius*. They reveal several common features - an almost complete lack of previous knowledge of Elgar by the audience; an enthusiastic reception of the music; considerable enterprise and initiative in the planning both here and on the continent; and the music performed largely by amateurs. Let us hope that many more similar ventures are undertaken in future.

### GERONTIUS GOES TO BONN

On 22 September 1991 the Oxford Harmonic Society and the Philharmonischer Chor der Stadt Bonn gave a joint performance of Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*. This formed the climax of the Oxford Week in Bonn, celebrating the twinning of the cities. The performance was given to a packed audience in the Kreuzkirche with the Kölner Philharmoniker Orchestra and soloists Lynton Atkinson (*Gerontius*) from England, and Evelyn Herlitzius and Klaus Hager from Germany. (see opposite)

In preparation for the Bonn concert the conductor, Thomas Neuhoﬀ, came to hear the OHS performance of the work in March 1991. This was under the baton of conductor Robert Secret, and marked the choir's 70th anniversary. Thomas Neuhoﬀ later came to Oxford to rehearse the English choir and had some interesting comments to make on Elgar's reception in Germany. *Gerontius* is relatively unknown to German audiences nowadays. This is particularly ironic considering that its first performance at Birmingham in 1900 was conducted by Hans Richter and its second complete performance took place at Dusseldorf in December 1901, conducted by Dr Julius Butts. It was here that the work received the recognition it deserved as a choral



345 1-5  
249 1-4  
294 1-6-7  
151 1-5  
152 1-2

masterpiece.

The reasons why the Birmingham performance was so disastrous are well documented; under rehearsal and the consequent failure of the performers to appreciate the work in full meant that the audience never had a chance. The German performance had better preparation and was consequently well received. The audience would have been familiar with the scale and Romanticism of Wagner and the emotive subtlety of Brahms; both are factors which place Elgar in the Germanic tradition. They would have been more accustomed to following the dramatic leitmotifs which Elgar took from Wagner, and probably been more sympathetic than English audiences to the spirit of the Catholic libretto with its graphic portrayal of Hell and salvation.

This dramatic intensity proved to be a feature of the Bonn performance. The response of Thomas Neuhoﬀ to the varying moods of the piece, especially in handling fluently the tempo changes, and encouraging the choirs to take advantage of the dynamic range of the contrasting sections of the work, demonstrated great sympathy for the composer's intentions and effects.

The result was : rapt silence, then thunderous applause. Elgar was back in Germany - we hope and trust other performances will follow.

**Susan Beardmore, Nicola Lisle, Dinah Trowbridge**  
(Oxford Harmonic Society)

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#### **UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK : *THE DREAM OF GERONTIUS* IN PARIS**

Some 170 members of the University's chorus and orchestra arrived in a cold and wet Paris on 14 March to give two performances of *The Dream of Gerontius* - the first that same day at the church of St Jean-Baptiste de Grenelle and the second on Sunday 15 March at the small town of Coulommiers, some 35 miles east of Paris.

The settling-down period was not without drama : neither conductor nor soloists had arrived at the start of the first rehearsal (Heathrow departure slots once again being responsible) and the percussion section wrestled with the bass drum-like sounds from the metro, seemingly a few feet under the chancel in the Paris church.

Both concerts were given in generous acoustics; and it was especially interesting to enjoy the addition of a Cesar Franck-sounding organ at Coulommiers.

Colin Touchin (charmingly advertised for the Sunday concert with a knighthood) directed most faithful performances, attending to every Elgar marking with precise and persuasive instruction. His soloists too brought authority - the clarion-clear Martin Hindmarsh (tenor) captivating the large audiences who were surely so new to both Newman and Elgar.

Christopher Maltman's rich and focussed bass made one long for his voice to be superimposed on many a definitive recording : we shall surely hear of this young man

again. The hushed audience in the stunning "Angel's Farewell" was also deeply impressed with Vanessa Williamson's angelic sound. Both audiences were baptised into Elgar with accuracy above all; and both chorus and orchestra demonstrated their concern for interpretation.

It was indeed a privilege to be present at the *Dream*, not 300 miles from Worcester, yet where first-time listeners were electrified by that beauty which we know and love. Standing ovations, not to mention after-concert conversations, testified further to this.

Perhaps a last word should come from the mayor at Coulommiers, who at the champagne reception said, "We feel we have been visited by a good fairy who has brought us this generous gift". The French audiences asked about "more Elgar, please". Well, therein is a parting reminder that market forces alone will not suffice in publishing abroad the great name of Sir Edward; for there is no hunger for him if he has not been tasted. The University of Warwick set a perfect example of the ambassadorship which is needed.

Graham Smith

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**The Annual Meeting of the Elgar Society will take place in the Hall, Lawnside School, Albert Road South, Great Malvern, on Saturday 30 May 1992 at 2.30 pm.**

**Members are reminded that there are vacancies for Chairman of the Society, and for two members of the General Committee. Nominations are solicited and should be sent to the Hon. Secretary as soon as possible. Each nomination must be seconded, and it is essential to obtain the permission of the nominee. Officers of the Society are eligible for re-election at each AGM, but members of the General Committee who are elected may serve for three years only before stepping down. Branch Chairmen serve on the Committee by right of office.**

### 1992 SUBSCRIPTIONS

The Treasurer wishes to draw Members' attention to the fact that subscriptions for 1992 became due on 1 January. Those who have not yet paid either direct, by standing order or through Branches are asked to forward the appropriate sum to John Greig without delay. The amounts due and the Treasurer's address are given on the back page. He will be pleased to supply standing order and/or deed of covenant forms.

The Treasurer regrets that because of the high cost and workload involved it is not possible to send individual reminders nor, at the present time, to acknowledge payment of subscription unless a stamped addressed envelope is forwarded.

## RANDOM RAMBLINGS OF AN ELGARIAN EDITOR

The fiftieth anniversary of "Desert Island Discs" was celebrated on 26 January when the Prime Minister, John Major, became the 2053rd castaway. One of his choices was *Pomp & Circumstance No. 1*. The half century was marked by the publication of the Top Twenty choices made during that time. The most popular choice was the final movement of Beethoven's *Choral Symphony*, having been selected sixty times. This was followed by Debussy's *Clair de Lune*, with *Pomp & Circumstance No. 1* third. Elgar shared the distinction with Beethoven of having three pieces in the list, the other two being the *Cello Concerto* (number 11), and "Nimrod" from the *Enigma Variations* (number 16). It was interesting to note that despite the universality of popular culture the list was almost entirely made up of "serious" music, the sole exception being Charles Trenet's *La Mer* at number 20 (though I suspect purists might also include *Rhapsody in Blue* (no.5)).

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One of the most recent castaways to select Elgar was the actor John Thaw. He said "I must have some Elgar on the island" and chose the *Cello Concerto*. Mr. Thaw's fame is based almost exclusively on his television portrayal of two widely-differing police inspectors - the boorish and unscrupulous Jack Regan of the Flying Squad in *The Sweeney*; and the lugubrious music-lover Morse. It has been pointed out that Morse, whose musical taste thus far has been largely confined to opera, especially Wagner and Mozart, drives a red Jaguar with the registration 248 RPA. That combination of letters is of course significant to Elgarians, as Richard Penrose Arnold is the fifth variation of the *Enigma*. Barrington Pheloung, who composes the music for the series, has learned of this and has decided to "include cryptic references" to the *Variations* in the next series, as well as Mozart's K.248 (a *March* in F, incidentally). Perhaps Morse could be persuaded to leave Oxford, where the homicide rate appears to be reaching levels normally associated with North American cities, and turn his attention to the *Enigma*, or the "soul" of the *Violin Concerto*...

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A welcome repeat on BBC2 during the winter was the series of master classes by the late lamented Paul Tortelier, surely one of the finest ambassadors the cello has ever had. The programme on the Elgar concerto was a classic. His pupils were two rather nervous young ladies, but the maestro quickly put them at their ease: "It's not easy, eh?" he said to one after a particularly tentative attempt at the opening. "You are an immaculate person", he told the other. "You look like a virgin - your playing must be immaculate". Tortelier's striking appearance, especially in profile, and a zealous commitment to the music gave the air of a slightly eccentric professor, but his performance throughout, either as tutor or executant, was completely riveting. As the players relaxed, he continued to encourage them with cries of "Bravo!" and "Allez!" The ascending figure leading to fig.5 in the first movement led to an intriguing digression on musical scales. "Shakespeare said that music was the food of love" he said. "We could say that scales are the food of music". To illustrate the point he contrasted an Indian scale - "more passionate" - with a typically Western scale - "a little colder". "You

have the root of the soul of a people in their scales", he said. The programme ended with Tortelier playing the final pages of the *concerto*. The recapitulation of the theme from the slow movement (the *lento* just after fig.71) represented "sadness...his dream is over". Then the final *adagio* and *allegro molto*: "But I am English...I shall be brave".

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Members will be sad to hear of the death of Martin Grafton at the age of 72. He was the grandson of Elgar's sister Polly, and owes his place in the Elgar story to a famous incident when as a twelve-year-old boy he conspired with his great-uncle (then aged 74) to attack a pompous local tradesman who was a regular visitor to Polly's house in Bromsgrove by firing a pea-shooter from the bathroom window at his retreating figure. The attack failed, but the incident is graphically described in Jerrold Northrop Moore's *A Creative Life*. Martin Grafton had a distinguished career with the John Lewis Partnership, rising to managing director, and then became director-general of the National Federation of Building Trade Employers for fifteen years. He was a CBE, and a colonel in the Territorial Army. *The Times* described him as "a Pied Piper of a man; people followed him and loved him". Some idea of the esteem in which he was held can be found in the fact that when he retired he was given a party by his staff at John Lewis, though he had not worked there for fifteen years.

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The second volume of Elgar studies, edited by Raymond Monk and published by Scolar Press, is due out in October. Entitled *Edward Elgar : Music and Literature*, it contains an Introduction by E.Wulstan Atkins, and is fully illustrated with plates and musical examples. The contents are as follows :

"A man's attitude to life" by Diana McVeagh; *The Apostles : Some Thoughts on the Early Plans* by Christopher Grogan; *The Apostles : Elgar and Bach as Preachers* by Ivor Keys; "The True Foundation" : The Symphonies by Robert Meikle; *The Soul Enshrined : Elgar and his Violin Concerto* by Michael Kennedy; *Falstaff : Elgar's Symphonic Study* by Christopher Kent; "Ghostly Stuff" : The Brinkwells Music by Ivor Keys; *Elgar and the Irish Dramatists* by Percy M.Young; *Elgar, Streatfeild and The Pilgrim's Progress* by Christopher Grogan; "Fyrst the Noble Arthur" by Robert Anderson; *Elgar's use of Literature* by Brian Trowell; and *Music in the Air* : Elgar and the BBC by Ronald Taylor. This fascinating compilation sounds like a worthy successor to *Elgar Studies*. Further details will be found in the September JOURNAL, including a special offer to Society members.

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On 17 May one of our distinguished Vice-Presidents, Dr.Percy Young, celebrates his eightieth birthday. In wishing him many happy returns we hear with great pleasure that he is still as busy as ever; as well as his contribution to the new book from Scolar (see above), he is at present revising his performing version of the *Spanish Lady* extracts, and has also revised the famous Suite from the work. His article on Elgar, Newman and *The Dream of Gerontius* (see JOURNAL January 1990) has been expanded into a book which Scolar are publishing. *Grove* aptly describes Dr.Young as "an

exceptionally fluent and prolific writer" - and not just about music; his list of over fifty books includes a history of Wolverhampton Wanderers, and an account of football on Merseyside! His 1967 *History of British Music* is for me the finest single-volume study on the subject. Dr. Young's first published work on Elgar dates from 1939 in a book entitled *Pageant of England's Music*. His *Elgar O.M.* in 1955 was the first post-war reappraisal of Elgar and still impresses by the depth and range of its scholarship. Elgarians had further cause to be grateful with the appearance of two volumes of letters (the second from Elgar to Jaeger); the Birmingham University lectures; and a biography of the composer's wife.

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Congratulations are also due to the Society's retiring Chairman, Christopher Robinson, who was made a Commander of the Royal Victorian Order in the New Year's honours list.

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Last November Prof. Ian Parrott gave a lecture to the South Wales branch entitled "Elgar and Cyril Scott" (see January JOURNAL). Members may be interested to know that Prof. Parrott's new book *Cyril Scott and his Piano Music* is published by Thames at £8.50.

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No-one has surpassed the father-and-son *Gerontius* reported in the last JOURNAL, but Dr. Melville Cook has informed us that during his time as organist of Hereford Cathedral he conducted the Three Choirs Festival Chorus which contained four members of his family, including his wife and father. And of course Dr. Cook is a direct link with Elgar, having sung as a treble for him in the great choral works at the Festivals in the 1920s.

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Controversy still surrounds the construction of the new Elgar Centre at the rear of the Birthplace. *The Times* ran an article in February in which the writer set out the arguments very well, and made it clear that there is no easy answer to the dilemma which the trustees face. It seems difficult to retain the charm and quiet of the cottage and the surrounding area while at the same time attempting to accommodate some 10,000 visitors a year. The construction of a nearby centre to house valuable archive material and to provide facilities for scholars - to say nothing of audio-visual displays, gift shops and all the other concomitants of modern tourism, thus relieving pressure on the cottage - seems to be an eminently sensible scheme. Yet I respect the views of those who fear that we may be in danger of changing the atmosphere of the place and thereby losing something very precious. The article concludes : "If the number of visitors continues to rise, [the atmosphere] will change anyway, and in ways that may be more damaging both to the museum and its surroundings".

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The official announcement of the Society's AGM on Saturday 30 May is given elsewhere. Tea will be available at the close of the meeting at a cost of £3 per head. That evening in the Elgar Hall Simon Rattle conducts the CBSO in a Malvern Festival concert which comprises Brahms's *Piano Concerto no.2* and Nielsen's *Symphony no.2* (the Festival Office is at Grange Road, Malvern, tel : 0684 572725).

On Sunday coffee will be served at Birchwood from 10.30 am. A ploughman's lunch will be available at Lawnside at 12.30 pm at a cost of £4 per head. Then at 2.00 pm there will be a Recital given by Judy Dodd (soprano), Chris Nicholls (violin) and Barry Collett (piano), which will include a group of Elgar songs (some very rare ones), the *Etudes Caracteristiques* (Op.24) for solo violin, the *Mazurka*, *Adieu* and *Serenade* for violin and piano (the last two arranged by Josef Szigeti). Tickets for this concert will be at £2 for members; £3-50 for non-members.

This is followed by Evensong in Worcester Cathedral and the Birthplace tea; and for those lucky enough to get tickets, Elgar's *Symphony no.2* in the Elgar Hall (see Concert Diary).

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I am indebted to a Malvern member, Miss Vivien Bowkley, for information regarding the former Hazeldine House at Redmarley D'Abitot in Gloucestershire, the home where Alice Elgar was brought up. It featured in Ken Russell's film - the tennis on the lawn sequence - but in recent years it became a nursing/convalescent home named Pfera Hall. This fell on hard times, and eventually closed down, leaving the property empty and falling into neglect. Happily the house is now being renovated and developed for further use as a nursing home, though not without drastic alterations to the interior, so I understand.

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Members may be interested to know that a Richard Strauss Society has been formed. The annual subscription is £10; or £15 for a couple. Details may be obtained from the secretary Mr John Shelton, 1 Homestead Mews, Grange Hill, West Kirby, Wirral L48 4HR.

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It is more than a year since London members heard the sad news of the untimely death of Mike Richards (see JOURNAL January 1991), a devoted Elgarian and keen Branch member and Committee member. The Branch was one of several organisations remembered in Mike's will and has now received his generous bequest of £5000. This money will be kept apart from ordinary Branch funds and used for special projects and purposes which it is felt would have had Mike's support.

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Interviewed by a local journalist before the Canadian concert mentioned in the previous article, Sir David Willcocks spoke of his vivid memory as a 12-year-old Westminster Abbey chorister of singing for Elgar. The occasion was the unveiling of the Memorial to Queen Alexandra in 1932, for which Elgar wrote *So many true Princesses who have gone*. "I was right at the end of a row, in a white surplice swaying in the breeze, and I could have sworn that he was watching me the whole time. But I spoke afterwards to this boy at the other end and he said he felt the same thing". Elgar had such charisma, such a terrific presence, Willcocks said, that "we had the impression that this was really the end of an era".

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## PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN** that the following amendments to the Constitution will be proposed on behalf of the General Committee at the Annual General Meeting of the Society to be held in Malvern on Saturday 30 May 1992.

1. Articles 4 and 5(a)(i) to be amended by the insertion of a comma after the word "Treasurer" in both Articles and the insertion of the words "Membership Secretary" in both places.

2. The existing Article 14 to be replaced by the following :

### "14. BRANCHES.

Branches of the Society may be established in suitable locations if authorised by the General Committee. Except as hereinafter provided they shall be autonomous and shall elect annually a Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and not less than three other Committee members. Under no circumstances shall the offices of Chairman and Secretary be combined. Branch Secretaries shall notify the Secretary of the Society of Annual General Meetings and shall also provide a copy of the minutes of such meetings.

The Society shall provide sufficient funds to Branches to meet the cost of hiring meeting rooms, the payment of speakers' fees and expenses and the cost of administration. Branches shall be responsible for financial commitments which they undertake and may raise supplementary funds for Branch purposes except they shall not levy a separate subscription.

It is a pre-requisite of Branch membership that all such members shall also belong to the Society and have paid the current subscription. Branch Treasurers are responsible for accounting to the Treasurer of the Society for all monies collected on behalf of the Society, for preparing an annual budget estimating Branch expenditure for the following year and for submitting income and expenditure accounts and a balance sheet each year as required by the General Committee."

## EXPLANATORY NOTES

### Note 1 - Membership Secretary

The General Committee wishes to regularise the appointment of a Membership Secretary as an Officer of the Society. The post was informally created in 1985 on a trial basis and the opportunity is now being taken by the General Committee to regularise the situation by formally recognising the Membership Secretary's status as an Officer of the Society and a member of the General Committee.

### Note 2 - Subscriptions

Considerable debate has taken place over the past year in connection with a proposal by the Treasurer to simplify the present subscription and Branch funding arrangements. The proposals have now been approved by the General Committee and the amendment to the Constitution being proposed is necessary to give effect to the scheme which, if adopted, will result in one standard subscription sum of £10 for all full members to include basic membership of a Branch of the member's choosing. Members will be invited to nominate one other person at the same address for family membership at no extra charge subject to a single copy of the Journal being supplied.

No change is proposed to the overseas member's subscription which will remain at £10 for 1993 and the student subscription will also remain at £5. If approved, the changes will come into force on 1st January 1993 and will greatly assist the Treasurer and Branch Treasurers in avoiding the double handling of varying rates of subscription. The proposal will result in the ordinary activities of Branches being financed from central funds leading, it is hoped, to greater Branch stability.

The General Committee regrets that the new scheme will result in non-Branch members having to pay more but it should be noted that, despite inflation, the ordinary subscription will have remained at £7 for four years. The £10 now being sought is considered by the General Committee to be a modest figure and the Committee earnestly hopes that it will be seen by members in the same light.

Carol Holt  
Secretary

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## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

|        |                                                                                                                                                        |                                              |
|--------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| 2 May  | Cello Concerto<br>(& V. Williams : Sea Symphony)<br><i>Schmidt/Guildford PO/Groves</i><br>(There will be a pre-concert talk by Sir Charles at 6.15 pm) | Civic Hall, Guildford<br>7.30 pm             |
| 9 May  | The Dream of Gerontius<br><i>C. Wyn Rogers, W. Kendall, M. Pearce/ Wells Cath. Orat. Soc/ Crossland</i>                                                | Wells Cathedral<br>7.00 pm                   |
| 9 May  | Gala Opera Evening (to include excerpts from Caractacus)<br><i>Soloists/Rutland Sinf/Collett</i>                                                       | Festival Hall, Corby<br>7.30 pm              |
| 16 May | The Fringes of the Fleet, Pomp & Circumstance Marches 1 & 5<br><i>Rutland Sinfonia/Collett</i>                                                         | Elgar Hall,<br>Great Malvern<br>7.30 pm      |
| 17 May | In the South<br><i>BBC Welsh SO/Handley</i>                                                                                                            | Elgar Hall<br>Great Malvern<br>7.30 pm       |
| 20 May | Cello Concerto<br><i>Starker/Philh/Y.P. Tortelier</i>                                                                                                  | Royal Festival Hall<br>South Bank            |
| 21 May | The Kingdom<br><i>J. Eaglen, C. Watkinson, M. Hill, J. Howard/ Pro Musica Chorus/RPO/O.A. Hughes</i>                                                   | Royal Festival Hall<br>South Bank<br>7.30 pm |
| 25 May | In the South<br><i>Philadelphia Orchestra/Muti</i>                                                                                                     | Royal Festival Hall<br>South Bank            |
| 28 May | The Music Makers<br><i>Adele Paxton/Malvern Festival Chorus &amp; Orch/Rory Boyle</i>                                                                  | Elgar Hall<br>Great Malvern<br>7.30 pm       |
| 30 May | Caractacus Triumphant March<br><i>Royal Scottish Orch/Neil Mantle</i>                                                                                  | Usher Hall,<br>Edinburgh                     |
| 31 May | Symphony no. 2<br><i>BBC Welsh SO/Otaka</i>                                                                                                            | Elgar Hall<br>Great Malvern<br>7.30 pm       |
| 31 May | Violin and Song Recital<br>(for details see Random Ramblings)                                                                                          | Lawnside School<br>Great Malvern<br>2.00 pm  |

|              |                                                                                                                    |                                         |
|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| 13 June      | Sea Pictures (with Parry : Symphony no.4)<br><i>Janet Schell/Warwickshire SO/<br/>Woolfenden</i>                   | St.Mary's Church,<br>Warwick<br>7.30 pm |
| 17 June      | Piano Quintet<br><i>Music Group of Manchester</i>                                                                  | Purcell Room<br>South Bank              |
| 19 June      | Repeat of RSO concert above                                                                                        | International Concert<br>Hall, Glasgow  |
| 22 June      | Cello Concerto, Enigma Variations<br><i>Colin Carr/ENO Orchestra/Elder</i>                                         | Royal Festival Hall<br>South Bank       |
| 27 June      | Part Songs (with V.Williams : On Wenlock<br>Edge,etc)<br><i>Thames Singers</i>                                     | Purcell Room<br>South Bank              |
| 27 June      | The Kingdom<br><i>Dorset Phil.Choir, Southampton<br/>Chor.Soc/soloists</i>                                         | Wimborne Minster<br>Dorset              |
| 28 June      | Repeat of the above                                                                                                | Centenary Hall<br>Shaftesbury           |
| 11 July      | The Dream of Gerontius<br><i>Neil Jenkins/choir &amp; orch/A.Brown</i><br>(part of Bromley Summer Choral Festival) | Fairfield Hall<br>Croydon               |
| 11 July      | The Kingdom<br><i>Surrey Festival Choir</i>                                                                        | Guildford Cathedral                     |
| 14 July      | Symphony no.1<br><i>Kensington SO/Russell Keable</i>                                                               | Queen Elizabeth Hall<br>South Bank      |
| 26 September | The Dream of Gerontius (provisional)<br><i>Philharmonia/Svetlanov</i>                                              | Royal Festival Hall<br>South Bank       |

## MUSIC REVIEW

Arthur Wills : The Spirit of Elgar (a suite for organ).

It is interesting to review the three pieces which comprise this suite some six years after their composition and to find how intriguing they are musically and how demanding they are technically.

The idea of the suite came to the composer during a holiday and the movements are named after three houses where Elgar wrote some of his greatest masterpieces. The expert may be aware of stylistic points and similarities with particular works - eg. the *Serenade for Strings* in "Forli", perhaps the "Nimrod" variation in "Birchwood", and surely the first two *Pomp & Circumstance* marches in "Craig Lea" - but there are hints of many others and numerous harmonic and rhythmic similarities to Elgar's music. These references should interest and intrigue not only the organist and/or pianist but also the Elgarian scholar.

The suite is ideally suited for the organ and "lies well under the fingers" - a hallmark of all Wills' music : this doesn't imply that the pieces are easy to play : there are quite demanding passages in "Craig Lea" where the finger articulation is exciting and a challenge for any organist. The pieces are less successful as piano pieces : in performance it was necessary to rearrange chords, textures, and compass to provide the piano idiom. The charm of "Birchwood" however would be immediately available on both piano and organ.

Over all, the suite can be recommended whole-heartedly for its musical inspiration and for its challenge to the player. The three pieces should be part of the organist's repertoire.

David Robinson.

Chamber Music. Elgar Complete Edition : volume 38, 1988.

Novello £79-95 (hardback) : £54-95 (paperback).

These volumes become richer, more illuminating, more informative as they proceed. Beautifully printed as the familiar *Quartet* and *Quintet* are, the value of this collection lies in its Appendix, 21 fragments and incomplete works published for the first time. Here are workings towards twelve string quartets, three string trios, two piano trios, two pieces for two violins and piano, one for piano quintet, and the "Barber of Capri".

They range in date from 1878 to 1907. The evidence for the latter dating includes Elgar's French lessons at the Rome Berlitz School, Lady Elgar's and Carice's diaries, a social call on Princess Rospigliosi, and a visit to an Exhibition of Feminine Ornaments : all collated to solve precisely when Elgar acquired handmade Italian ms paper - as delicate a piece of detective work as one could wish for.

The fragments fill pp.133-174. One, in D minor c.1888, fragment X, is the only quartet sketch clearly planned as a four-movement scheme, though no movement is complete; the Intermezzo was later completed as No.3 of the *Vesper Voluntaries*. Here, too, is the Minuet and Trio, performed in 1881 by Dr.Buck, his mother and Elgar; the Trio has been played by countless small orchestras since as *Rosemary*. Indeed, the later use of some of the sketches is absorbing. The editor, Robert Anderson, has entered into Elgar's mind, and given us a chance to follow, as we listen to the Wind Quintet in *Shed No.4* (The Farm Yard), watching how the material was developed from a string trio (p.156). Part of an 1878 fragment in D minor (No.III) would have gone into *The Spanish Lady*. (The several versions, copies and their sources of this had me confused; it would have helped, rather than giving 'see below' or 'see above', to have cited page numbers as well, or to have given the Add.MS. source number alongside each printed fragment).

Fragment XI shows that in the *First Symphony* that magical theme transformation between Scherzo and Adagio was first made in a string quartet. It may well have been a concert in Malvern by the Brodsky Quartet that prompted Elgar to begin this. The important point is made that it was not his practice to draft orchestral scores other than in short or piano score : the quartet would not have been in preparation for the symphony. Fragment XII shows that those remarkable, far-seeing chords in *The Music Makers* again began as a quartet : abstract music, not drawn - as I for one supposed - from the words "A wondrous thing of our dreaming" (cue 42) and "From the dazzling unknown shore" (cue 86). (There is a misprint here; on p. xxiv, bars 365-389 should read bars 385-389). It is good to see that already there are cross-references to earlier ECE volumes, as the research for one project fertilizes research for others.. On the other hand, owners of some previously published Volumes will need to add their own cross-references; in particular to Volume 30, which gives no indication of the origin in quartet form.

Any Society Branch which can muster some chamber music players could provide a useful and enjoyable evening, illustrating the music in this Appendix.

For Opus 83 and Opus 84 the more familiar documentation is gathered together. The "Spanish monks" story is now firmly linked with Blackwood's visit rather than with a local community. The Spanish flavour in the music is commented on, but nothing more is contributed to the possible plainsong connection for the opening piano part. Colles, in 1919, wrote of the "cold plainsong melody", and surely Professor Ivor Keys has more recently suggested a source?

All in all, a wonderfully useful and stimulating volume.

Diana McVeagh

## RECORD REVIEWS

"Jerusalem" - choral music by Elgar, Stanford, Parry, Hadley and Bairstow.

Winchester Cathedral Choir, Waynflete Singers  
Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra conducted by David Hill  
Argo CD 430 836-2

"Organ Imperial" - organ music by Elgar, Parry, Wesley, etc.

Carlo Curley  
Argo CD 433 450-2

There is a body of opinion that would seem to maintain that Elgar's big church pieces should be thought of as works for cathedral choir plus organ that were orchestrated as an afterthought for special occasions. I'm not sure that is fair. *Great is the Lord* was written in the wake of the *Violin Concerto* and I feel sure that orchestral sonorities were in Elgar's mind. *O harken thou* was composed for the 1911 Coronation and therefore conceived for "chorus and orchestra", as was *Give unto the Lord* which followed in 1914. I therefore think of these as "big" pieces for chorus and orchestra which sometimes are performed on a small scale by a cathedral choir with organ accompaniment as is, for example, the Prologue from *The Apostles*. I must confess to a certain antipathy to the highly polished, yet essentially milk-and-water accounts that can emanate from cathedral choirs. This is big emotional music that should be put over with the power of the overtures or symphonies.

I therefore welcome most enthusiastically the performances on this new Argo disc. This is music-making on a large scale. Comparing even just a few bars from this account of *Give unto the Lord* with say, Worcester Cathedral Choir (Abbey LP ABY 822), is like moving from regular size monochrome to wide screen technicolour! It's not just a matter of the orchestra so much as the incisiveness of the singing and scale of the performance. A fairer comparison would be with Richard Hickox's EMI recordings with the London Symphony Chorus and Northern Sinfonia Orchestra (EMI CDC 7494812 & CDC 7476582). The Winchester acoustic adds a glow inevitably lacking from the EMI discs which emanate from the Abbey Road studios. The sound opens out very impressively with a rich depth and there is no lack of impact. Hill's brass blaze out making Hickox's orchestra sound much more restrained although Hickox has some very insistent drums on p.5 of *Give unto the Lord*, an effect inaudible on the Argo disc. Compared with Hickox's mixed voices, Hill's choir sometimes sounds a little underpowered in the wealth of orchestral richness but their words are much clearer. However I do think that Hill rather overdoes the *molto maestoso* instruction on p.18; Hickox keeps things moving at a rather faster pulse.

The contrasting characters of the two choirs is very evident in *O harken thou*. Hickox's ladies have a much more rounded sound than Hill's raw toned, incisive trebles, who are miles away in style from the traditional Anglican cathedral tradition. They also make much more of the dynamic contrasts - *ppp* really is different from *p*. Both performances of *Great is the Lord* are fine although I marginally prefer the lighter, more straightforward singing of Donald Sweeney to EMI's Stephen Roberts.



Stanford's *Te Deum, Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis* in Bb sound splendid in their full dress versions. Parry's *I was glad* and *Blest Pair of Sirens* are probably more familiar but it is fascinating to hear the extract from *Judith* with very different words from the "Dear Lord and Father of mankind" usually attached to the tune in the hymnals. Parry and Elgar come together in the final track with the latter's orchestration of the former's *Jerusalem*. It sounds wonderful! How ever often I hear this arrangement, I still enjoy the frisson of Elgar's imaginative orchestration and especially those characteristic violin parts in the second verse. This most attractive issue is enhanced by very full and informative notes by Diana McVeagh.

These are good days for those wishing to explore the music of Parry and Stanford. The latest instalments in the two Chandos series offer each composer's *Second Symphony* (Parry CHAN 8961; Stanford CHAN 8991), both maintaining the high standards of performance and recording of their predecessors; but perhaps most interesting is another Chandos disc with premiere recordings of two important Parry choral works, *The Soul's Ransom* and *The Lotos Eaters* (CHAN 8990), both well worth investigating.

Parry also appears on Carlo Curley's organ recital from the church of St Mary Redcliffe in Bristol. As usual with this artist, there are very full notes in the form of a letter beginning "My dear listeners". There are four Elgar transcriptions - *Imperial March*, *Chanson de Matin*, *Chanson de Nuit* and *Nimrod*. They sound effective enough, but frankly I view such arrangements as expedients for when an orchestra is unavailable. The G major *Sonata* is a different matter...or at the risk of being inconsistent, and certainly heretical, is it? I have always felt that it is a piece just waiting to burst out of its organ strait-jacket into full orchestral dress and so have enjoyed enormously Vernon Handley's disc of the Gordon Jacob orchestration (EMX 2148, reviewed January 1990). In many ways Curley's account, particularly of the finale, is closer in style to that version than some of the other organ accounts. He attacks the music with tremendous verve. Too often this music is deadened by over-respectability, with the central movements made to sound like two rather similar slow movements, but not here! Curley takes the *Allegretto* at a flowing pace with the central section positively jaunty. For me, the music makes much more sense when taken like this. The *Finale* is breath-taking - I didn't think it was possible to take it at this pace on the organ! - and the closing bars are very thrilling, enhanced by the bold, clear recorded sound.

John Knowles

#### Elgar Favourites

*Bournemouth Sinfonietta*  
conducted by Norman del Mar and George Hurst  
Chandos Collect CHAN 6544

This mid-price CD includes the contents of three LP sides recorded by Chandos in the mid-seventies but issued by Polydor and RCA. George Hurst's collection, originally coupled with music by Vaughan Williams, was recorded in Christchurch Priory in 1975 and contains a stirring account of *Sursum Corda*, together with shorter pieces including the *Beau Brummel* Minuet and *Sospiri*.

I wonder how many members remember Robert Tucker's enterprise in getting Leon Goossens to play the *Soliloquy* for oboe at a concert he arranged in Slough Parish Church with a largely amateur orchestra? Soon after that, Chandos were persuaded to record it with Goossens and del Mar, making this an important historical document, the gramophone preserving the interpretation of the dedicatee, for the *Soliloquy* is in fact the only movement Elgar completed of a projected suite for oboe and orchestra, intended as a tribute to Goossens' unforgettable playing, not least in the composer's records of *Froissart*. The two *Chansons* receive sensitive performances; the *Bavarian Dances* are played with great enthusiasm and gusto. The analogue recordings sound very well on CD, making this a bargain not to be missed.

John Knowles

Elgar - Part Songs (with Vaughan Williams: Mass in G minor; Festival Te Deum)

*The Holst Singers*  
 conducted by Hilary Davan Wetton  
 with John Birch (organ)  
 Unicorn-Kanchana DKP(CD) 9116

It is always good to have new recordings of Elgar's wonderful part-songs, for so long neglected on disc. The first thing to comment on must be the superlative singing of the Holst Singers. They combine the purity and precision of the Louis Halsey Singers on Argo with the greater commitment and interpretative qualities of the BBC Singers under Boult on EMI. The sopranos have an almost boyish quality to their tone which is especially effective in the Vaughan Williams church music, and equally satisfying in the Elgar songs. The recital begins with the popular but ever-haunting *My love dwelt in a northern land*, and proceeds with the Op.71 songs *The Shower* and *The Fountain*. Then comes a wonderful performance of *Go, song of mine*, for me the finest yet recorded; and finally *Death on the Hills* (Op.72), and the two Op.73 songs, *Serenade* and *Love's Tempest*. Tempi are a little slower than those marked, but that seems to be the norm with these songs; in fact the *meno mosso* towards the end of *The Fountain* carries just the right weight of dolefulness when taken slower than its speed of crotchet = 92. If I have a disappointment it is that the Great Hall of St.Paul's Girls' School is a fraction too resonant; part-songs sound better in a drier acoustic. However, the church music of Vaughan Williams sounds perfect. The *Te Deum* is not vintage VW, but the *Mass* is a great work, with echoes of the *Pastoral Symphony* in the "Sanctus" and elsewhere. The recording amply brings out the dynamic contrasts between the choirs at the start of the "Gloria", and all in all this is a worthy successor to the classic Willcocks recording. Those members who took advantage of the Unicorn offer have got a real bargain: those who didn't will find that even at full price this is well worth the money.

The Editor

Violin Concerto in B minor, op.61  
Concert overture *Cockaigne*, op.40

*Dong Suk-Kang (violin)*  
*Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra conducted by Adrian Leaper*  
*Naxos 8.550489*

Violin Concerto in B minor, op.61  
(with Walton: Violin Concerto)

*Salvatore Accardo (violin)*  
*London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Richard Hickox*  
*Collins Classics 13382*

In some ways these two new recordings of the violin concerto are exact opposites. Leaper's orchestral introduction is perfectly paced - played, incidentally, with great sensitivity and conviction by the Polish orchestra - but just a touch self-effacing. It is, however, a perfect preparation for Dong Suk-Kang's strong, positive and passionate approach to the solo part. It is a performance with a clear sense of purpose and direction, emphasised by the forward (but not too prominent) balance of the soloist.

Hickox, on the other hand, launches far more impetuously into the introductory section, aided by weighty, spacious, but slightly diffuse orchestral sound, reminding me strongly that these sixty bars encapsulate with miraculous concentration the full range of moods of the movement, as well as containing the germs from which all the themes develop. Accardo, however, is a much more reticent soloist than Dong Suk-Kang, and his entry produces a slight feel of anticlimax. Indeed, Hickox's positive grip on the first movement was, for me, frequently undermined by Accardo's rhapsodic and rather directionless approach, and the movement does not hold together nearly as well as on the Naxos recording. The impact of Accardo's playing is further softened by the recording: the solo instrument is always clearly audible, but is rather backwardly balanced against the bold orchestral sound.

If there is a fault in Dong Suk-Kang's playing of this concerto, it is his reluctance to relax, and his slight tendency to inflexibility in his phrasing, which makes his slow movement a little prosaic in comparison with Accardo, who is here heard at his sweet-toned best. In the third movement, however, Dong Suk-Kang's strength and drive creates a much more positive impression, although it is Accardo who finds the right touch of wistfulness in the Cadenza.

Technically Dong Suk-Kang is just about faultless. Having always held Accardo in high regard as one of the master fiddlers of the present time, I was disappointed to find his technique here more than a little fallible under pressure. I have already noted the excellent playing of the Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra under Leaper's direction. Throughout I was impressed by their responsiveness, unanimity of style and sensitivity in music which must be unfamiliar to them - no doubt jointly attributable to Adrian Leaper's skills, and the provision of adequate rehearsal time. By comparison the LSO sounds somewhat brash and uninvolved, with far too many slight lapses in ensemble.

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CMS 7642062

Leaper's bold, energetic *Cockaigne* is a splendid fill-up. The Accardo/Hickox performance of the Walton concerto suffers from the same limitations as their Elgar. The generally sunny, relaxed first movement tends to meander, and Accardo has great difficulty with the fiendish virtuosity demanded by the *Scherzo*. Of course Walton's dedicatee, Heifetz, expected to be provided with music to show off his unrivalled technique, which presents problems for any other prospective performer. But we have Heifetz's own recording available on a mid-price RCA Gold Seal CD (GD 87966, coupled with the Elgar concerto) to show us just what he could do: Accardo is less secure in intonation and rhythm.

The Dong Suk-Kang/Leaper recording is an outstanding bargain at under £5, and is up amongst the very best versions of the Elgar concerto at any price. The Accardo/Hickox recording, however, is a disappointment.

Gareth H. Lewis

Overture *Cockaigne*, op.40

Introduction & Allegro for Strings, op.47

Serenade for Strings, op.20

Variations on an original theme (*Enigma*), op.36

BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Andrew Davis  
Teldec 9031-73279-2

If you are looking for a CD with a programme of popular Elgar orchestral works, you need look no further than this one. This is Andrew Davis's third recording of the *Variations*, and his interpretation has grown in stature over the years. Indeed this recording, beautifully and characterfully played and with the tempo of each movement judged to perfection, stands very near the top of my league table of recommended versions. *Cockaigne* is appropriately brisk and rumbustious; the strings of the BBC orchestra are rich and sonorous in *Introduction & Allegro* (the members of the quartet are unfortunately not credited); and although the full body of strings is used, the little *Serenade* is played gently and gracefully, never sounding over-inflated.

The recorded sound is most beautiful. In the warm, resonant acoustic of St Augustine's Kilburn, engineer Tony Faulkner has managed to produce an exceptionally well-integrated sound, combining clarity of detail with natural depth and perspectives. I cannot understand why EMI, with far more experience of this location, provided much less satisfactory results on Jeffrey Tate's recent *Second Symphony* recording.

Gareth H. Lewis

Concerto in E minor for cello and orchestra, op.85  
(with Schumann concerto)

Torleif Thedeen (cello)  
Malmo Symphony Orchestra conducted by Lev Markiz  
BIS CD-486

In the last JOURNAL I reviewed a new CD of the same coupling on the French Lyrix label. The cellist was a young Norwegian (but trained in Sweden) called Truls Mork. Now, in direct competition, comes a further recording featuring another young Scandinavian, and a close contemporary of Mork. For me Thedeen starts off with one advantage. The Mork version was spoilt by a balance which placed the soloist much too close. I know this is the current fashion in concerto recordings, but I find it artificial. BIS has a reputation for sensitive balancing of concerti, and this is no exception. Thedeen is always clearly captured, but in a natural perspective within the framework of the orchestral sound picture. This is, for example, one of the few recordings where, in the fourth movement, eight bars after fig.50 in the score the soloist, playing a rapid semiquaver passage at dynamics varying between *f* and *ff*, does not completely mask the accompanying *pp* divided strings.

The slightly drier-toned Thedeen plays with great dignity and lack of emotional exaggeration, often reminiscent of Tortelier. His technique, too, is most impressive (he certainly matches Mork in the crispness and clarity of his *Scherzo*). However, much as I enjoyed this recording, I would not put it near the top of my list of recommendations. Tempi, unfortunately, are often just a bit too slow, so that in the outer movements the occasional moments of fire, passion and bold defiance do not adequately counterbalance the general air of sadness and nostalgia. The *Adagio* is, as often, played much more slowly than Elgar's tempo marking. Thedeen at this stage in his development is not yet able to convey the spontaneity and subtlety of phrasing necessary to hold the attention, and which have enabled other distinguished cellists to get away with such a slow tempo.

Nor, for me, does the contribution of the Russian conductor suggest more than a short and superficial acquaintance with this music, although I was most impressed with the Malmo orchestra: the tonal warmth of the strings, characterful wind playing and sonorous, well-integrated brass put many distinguished (and overworked) international star orchestras to shame. The Schumann *Concerto* needs to be tackled boldly if it is to hold the attention. The best interpretations are characterised by a self-confident swagger, which is not yet in Thedeen's nature, and his performance is decidedly low-key, lacking the fire to carry conviction in this (to me) rather unconvincing work.

It is satisfying that the Elgar *Cello Concerto* seems to be becoming increasingly popular with non-British players. However, considerable maturity and experience of life is needed to plumb its depths. Perhaps younger cellists, on the threshold of their careers, should be discouraged from recording it - although we might then miss the emergence of another Jacqueline du Pre...

Gareth H. Lewis

## CD Round-up

Chandos's mid-price *Elgar Favourites* compilation, reviewed above by John Knowles (CHAN 6544 - misleadingly titled, in view of the rarities included), is one of the most welcome of an unusually interesting batch of recent re-issues of classic Elgar recordings. For me, however, all the others are overshadowed by the transfer on to two CDs of the complete Elgar music for Wind Quintet, played by the Athena Ensemble (also on the new Chandos *Collect* label: CHAN 6553/4). I well remember the great excitement aroused by the release of the original, short-lived RCA 2-LP box of these recordings in 1979. The music, generally unknown and almost certainly never played in public until a 1976 broadcast, was written in 1878-9 for Elgar and his friends to play - hence the unusual instrumental combination of two flutes, oboe, clarinet and bassoon. The writing also allows for the differing accomplishments of the original players.

The survival of these early Elgar works is shrouded in mystery: the manuscripts no longer exist, but copied parts in various hands reached the British Museum from the collection of a Sheffield musician, John Parr. How and when he obtained access to the originals remains unknown. Most of the pieces are slight but tuneful, influenced by the French wind ensemble tradition, but showing evidence of careful study of the chamber music of Haydn and Mozart. There are delightful little groups of intermezzi, dances and promenades, but the most substantial pieces are the five carrying the title *Harmony Music* (derived from the German "Harmonienmusik"), some with bizarre and now inexplicable subtitles. They are mostly single movement pieces, which Elgar used as an opportunity to perfect his skill at writing a classically constructed sonata movement. The most substantial work included is the four-movement *Harmony Music* 5, although the surviving fragments of no.3, which close the second disc, show Elgar attempting something even more ambitious.

These early chips off the growing oak tree are real little gems, and music lovers curious about Elgar's early development are once again in the debt of Brian Couzens of Chandos for resurrecting these unique recordings, which have come up well in the digital transfers, although the original tapes have acquired some pre-echo in the intervening years.

Deutsche Grammophon has put together an interesting 2-CD collection of British Music in their new 'two for the price of one' "Compact Classics" series of CD reissues (413852-2). The main work on the first disc is Steinberg's stunning 1971 recording of Holst's *The Planets*, with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, which is followed by the classic RPO/Del Mar recordings of the 1st and 3rd *Pomp & Circumstance* marches. Disc 2 contains the 1967 Fournier/Wallenstein *Cello Concerto* and Eugen Jochum's 1975 *Enigma Variations* with the LSO. Fournier's performance of the concerto is superb, but his forward balance levels out dynamic contrasts and is a bit wearing on the ear. The rather pedestrian orchestral support is quite sparsely recorded, and is rather less overshadowed by the soloist than on the original LP issue. Nevertheless all these performances of popular British works are very good indeed, and the compilation would make an excellent starter for a youngster building up a record collection.

The Jochum *Variations*, however, is outstanding. Not perhaps one of the more strongly characterised interpretations, but handled with exceptional warmth and sensitivity, aided by playing of great beauty from the LSO. The recorded sound, too, is outstandingly good: slightly recessed in a warm resonant acoustic. This is one of the best of the "Compact Classics" series to date - but what a pity DG's packaging is so poor! The very narrow plastic case, which opens at either end, contains no notes on the music, and the splines holding the discs are so flimsy that most had broken off before I had even opened the box for the first time!

There are two Elgar issues in Decca's new mid-price "Headline Classics" series, aimed at the popular market. 'Includes the music used in the Buxton Spring advertisement' proclaims the cover of 433 633-2, which contains Lynn Harrell's *Cello Concerto*. This performance was well received when it was first issued eleven years ago. I was a bit harsh on it in these pages, however, and on rehearing it I can see why. Nevertheless I found myself enjoying it much more this time round. There is no more technically accomplished version of the *Scherzo* on record, and few equals in the seamless flow of tonal beauty in the *Adagio*.

I still retain some misgivings over the first movement. Harrell opens strongly, with carefully observed tempi and rhythm. At bar 9, however, when the orchestral violas introduce the main theme, Lorin Maazel and the Cleveland Orchestra are not only too slow, but introduce an unmarked *rallentando* two bars before the soloist reappears, and the intended smooth continuation of the theme is disturbed by a jerk in tempo as Harrell readjusts the basic speed. This is not the only occasion when Maazel's tendency to slow the tempo and exaggerate the melancholy mood of this movement leads to something of a "push-pull" effect between him and the soloist.

Also included is Neville Marriner's classic 1968 *Introduction & Allegro*, the use of a chamber-sized string body resulting in a rare transparency of textures. The really imaginative stroke, however, is the linking of these popular Elgar works with a rarely heard British concerto - the *Delius Piano Concerto* in a 1969 recording by Jean-Rodolphe Kars with the LSO under Alexander Gibson. The sound is a little on the thin side, but it is good to have this much under-rated and rarely heard British work (far from typical of its composer's mature style) available at such a low price.

The other Decca Headline CD, 433 629-2, allows Zubin Mehta to show his deep understanding of the real Elgar style - and it must not be forgotten that his father was a violinist in the Halle in the 1950s. His *Variations*, in typically vivid Decca sound of the early 1970s, is lively and dramatic, yet not lacking in warmth and sensitivity. Marriner's attractive *Serenade for Strings* comes from the same sessions as the *Introduction & Allegro* on the other Headline CD. Sir Arthur Bliss's *Pomp & Circumstance* Marches date from a decade earlier (1958, in fact) and the sound is thin, forward and dry. They are, however, amongst the liveliest recorded versions, and well justify their continuing existence in the catalogues.

Gareth H. Lewis



## BRANCH REPORTS

LONDON Branch has enjoyed a series of excellent meetings since the publication of the last JOURNAL. In December Graham Melville-Mason presented his "Dvorak and Elgar". So often in talks of this nature, one hears plenty about the "other" composer and little about Elgar. But his was a model of the genre, in which fascinating comparison was genuinely made both in matters of biography and musical style. In January our guest was artist and cartoonist John Minnion. Rarely can a speaker have taken so much trouble to entertain us. His wide-ranging presentation was illustrated with over 50 specially constructed slides and a delightful music track. Elgar loomed large, but did not totally dominate an evening which was hugely enjoyed. In February Dr Robert Anderson, co-ordinating Editor of the Elgar Complete Edition, was in total command of his subject in a scholarly yet entertaining talk about Elgar, Binyon and the *King Arthur* music. Finally in March London member Relf Clark more than consolidated the reputation made on an earlier occasion with a splendid address entitled "Elgar and the three organists" (Atkins, Brewer, Sinclair) which also had much to say about the remarkable Worcester "Hope-Jones" organ.

We look forward now to Dr Vernon Handley in May and to the opportunity provided by Leonard Slatkin's planned visit in June.

The Branch AGM will be held on Monday 8 June but not at the previously advertised venue. Members are advised that on that date we shall be visiting the Royal Academy of Music, Marylebone Road NW1 5HT (nearest tubes: Baker Street and Regent's Park) where Leonard Slatkin will discuss the *Enigma Variations* with Dr Jerrold Northrop Moore. This presentation, for which there will be no charge, will commence at 6.30 pm. At the close of the discussion, Mr. Slatkin will be presented with the Elgar medal. Subsequently London members will hold the Branch AGM. 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 5 June. It should be noted that Maxwell Hutchinson will be relinquishing the office of Chairman and nominations in respect of this post are especially welcome.

Michael Plant has agreed that his presentation projected for 8 June be postponed until next season.

**YORKSHIRE BRANCH.** The first meeting since our last report (11 November) was the occasion for Tony Rawnsley's twice-postponed talk on "Sullivan without Gilbert". Third time lucky for everyone except the Secretary, who was laid low at the time and missed his first-ever meeting. He understands that it went well... The Christmas Social on 9 December (it gets earlier) went as well as ever, with the slight reservation that in a Methodist Hall alcoholic drinks were not allowed. Ever-honest in Yorkshire, we resisted the temptation to re-label the bottles.

6 January was Chairman's evening and Robert Seager chose the occasion to talk on the Plas Gwyn years, covering the successful period following Elgar's knighthood in good style and playing the appropriate music. On 10 February Lance Tufnell spoke on a relationship not previously explored at a Yorkshire meeting - that between Elgar,

Bantock and Rodewald. Incidentally we learned that night what happens when you take a cold CD player (loaded much too soon into the car) into a warm meeting room. The tiny lens steams up and will not transmit the laser beam. Fortunately a spare machine was on hand and enabled us to rescue a very interesting talk.

9 March was the occasion for Jim Anderson to discuss Elgar's friendship with Bernard Shaw, a well-researched talk that was much appreciated.

6 April will be the AGM and we would advise members that Andrew Neill's talk on "Elgar and the Great War", due on 11 May, has been unavoidably postponed and will now take place next season.

The NORTH-WEST Branch's season which has just ended was not only most enjoyable but very varied. Since the last JOURNAL we have met three times. Our first meeting in 1992 was a well-researched talk by John Weir on Parry entitled "Not just Jerusalem". It gave us a rare insight into the man and his music. For our February meeting Geoffrey Hodgkins very kindly made the journey north to give his excellent talk on "Canon Gorton and the Morecambe Festival". This was very well received and made all the more interesting due to the subject being linked with the North West. Our season came to a close with a recital by a local music group Cantilena who performed a varied programme of songs including four by Elgar.

Our meetings have been well attended ranging from twenty to thirty members per meeting. As in past years we are hoping to make our annual visit to Malvern and Worcester for the Elgar birthday celebrations.

At the November meeting of the SOUTHERN Branch we were privileged to welcome Wulstan Atkins, who held a large audience spellbound with his unique memories of Elgar, supplemented with musical extracts and slides. Two talks at subsequent meetings were given by our own members; Stuart Freed gave us an excellent presentation of his choice of "The Lighter Elgar" in January, and at our March meeting Branch Treasurer Nigel Riches gave us a well-illustrated talk on "Elgar's Contemporaries", from whom he selected Parry, Stanford, Brian and Bliss. We are proud to feature and enjoy so much home-grown talent. We look forward to welcoming David Bury and his "Awful Female" in April, and Ron Bleach, who will talk to us in June about Elgar and the theatre; and we are already anticipating with delight Percy Young's October lecture "The consequences of being an organist". Meanwhile we are lucky to have enjoyed within the space of just one week performances of *The Apostles* at Chichester Cathedral, and *The Dream of Gerontius* at the newly renovated Portsmouth Cathedral. Both performances were superb, and conducted by Jonathan Willcocks, a committed Elgarian, whom we are lucky to have in our area.

## LETTERS

From: Frank Beck, New York

*In the September issue, you mentioned several things individual members can do to promote the Society's aims, and the ones you cited are good ones. In particular, buying copies of music for active musicians should always be at the top of our list - since it keeps Elgar's music alive as only living musicians can (even in this day of electronic miracles).*

*I'd like to add another suggestion: most municipal and university libraries have CD and video collections, but funds for stocking them are low right now. If every member contributed a recording or two to one of these libraries each year (June 2 might be a good time to do it), we would help to update their collections and bring more listeners to Elgar's music. In particular, I would like to see a copy of the recently released Jacqueline du Pre film, featuring the Cello Concerto, in every library. A second priority is the recording of King Olaf, in which as you know members already have a "vested interest".*

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From: Ronald Taylor

*Since January 1977 the majority of issues of the JOURNAL have carried an engraving of Elgar on the front cover. This has always appeared by kind permission of the editor of the RADIO TIMES. Observant readers may have spotted the tiny initials under the portrait - T.L.P. These stand for the artist Tom L.Poulton, who died in 1963. I am indebted to our Toronto member, Alan Horne, who has given me some information on Poulton which will appear in Mr.Horne's forthcoming study on British book illustrators of the 20th century.*

*Poulton was a painter and illustrator, and was one of the few artists commissioned by Francis Meynell to illustrate works from his Nonesuch Press at the end of the 20s and early 30s. Poulton also contributed fine-line drawings for the Southern Railway's journal Over the Points, distributed to First Class passengers of that line to explain the electrification of the system from 1929. He supplied a number of illustrations for RADIO TIMES, and his Elgar portrait was not only used several times during the 30s in that magazine, but was also the cover portrait used for the Elgar Festival Programme put on by the BBC in 1932. When the writer was researching Elgar's broadcasts in the mid-70s he first came across Poulton's Elgar portrait, and decided it should have a new lease of life under the Elgar Society banner. It has been surprisingly successful as when we dropped it on one or two occasions readers requested its reinstatement.*

## THE ELGAR SOCIETY

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

**ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION:** £7. Family membership is available if only one Journal is received per family: two members per family £8: three members £9: four members £10: student members £5: overseas members £10 or equivalent. Branch members pay their branch subscription in addition to the basic amount. Applications for membership should be sent to the Hon. Membership Secretary, David Morris, 2 Marriotts Close, Haddenham, Aylesbury, Bucks HP17 8BT. Renewal of subscriptions, due 1 January, should be made to the Hon. Treasurer, J.R.Greig, Orchard Barn, Derrington Street, Barham, Canterbury, Kent CT4 6QB. The Hon. Secretary is Carol Holt, 20 Geraldine Road, Malvern, Worcs WR14 3PA. Tel: 0684 568822.

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