

# The Elgar Society JOURNAL



SEPTEMBER  
1992

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# The Elgar Society Journal

115 MONKHAMS AVENUE, WOODFORD GREEN, ESSEX IG8 0ER  
081- 506 0912

## EDITORIAL

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These are expensive times for music-lovers, quite apart from the effects of the recession. I have spent several frustrating months unable to listen to either Radio 3 or Test Match Special in the car and must needs purchase an FM radio in order to restore that facility. Then again the flood of exciting new recordings continues unabated, the pick of which must obviously be the sets of Elgar's own recordings, both acoustic and electric (and both confusingly entitled "The Elgar Edition"). The importance of these releases can scarcely be overestimated, but forgive me if I introduce a slight note of criticism: the cost. The two sets at full price will set you back almost £100, and of course there are still two more sets of the EMI Edition to come, costing the best part of another hundred pounds. Whatever their value in aesthetic terms, I still think it was a grave error to issue the EMI set at full price, not least from a commercial point of view; surely more sets would have been sold had they been issued at mid-price.

The plot thickens with the recent report from the Director General of Fair Trading that there are "...indications that the price of CDs is higher than it should be". He lays the blame squarely on the record companies, and says that there might be a case "for formal regulatory action". A top price CD costs up to £8 more than a long-play disc, yet they both cost less than £1 to produce *including royalties to performers* which of course in the case of the sets under consideration must be negligible. Even allowing that the technology involved in the EMI transfers is not cheap, we are surely discouraging potential buyers from acquiring these sets.

The harsh realities of economic life are affecting Radio 3, and significant changes are taking place to counter the competition to be provided later in the year by the new nationwide commercial station, Classic FM. An impressive amount of market research seems to have been done and the new controller, Nicholas Kenyon, says: "We are going for certain periods when we know people have an inclination to listen, and offering shorter pieces crisply presented; background which doesn't assume a great knowledge of technical terms or musical history, and we are saying 'come into the network this way'". These "periods" which Kenyon has dubbed "entry points" and given trendy titles, are the early morning, where "On Air" replaces "Morning Concert", and the early evening, when "Mainly for Pleasure" gives way to "In Tune". No doubt we can look forward to plenty of *Cockaignes*, *String Serenades*, and salon pieces: but how often shall we be given the chance to hear the symphonies and the choral works? Watch this space.

GEOFFREY HODGKINS

## ELGAR AND THE OTHER "E.E."

Dennis Clark

Long before Alice Roberts entered his life and became the dedicatee of *Salut d'Amour*, there had been ample evidence of Elgar's awareness of the opposite sex, whether the ladies were his violin pupils, colleagues in his work at the Powick Asylum, or merely those he happened to know as neighbours or family friends. Some of his musical dedications to the fair sex are specific, such as those to Miss Holloway, the Powick accompanist. Others were perhaps less clear: his polkas of the early 1880s bore titles like *Maud*, *Nelly* and *Helcia*, the former very likely being Maud Baldwyn ("the fair Maud" whom Elgar mentioned in his letters to Charles Buck) while the latter may have referred to his early love, Helen Weaver.

However, one female dedicatee from this period, known simply as "E.E., Inverness", has always defied identification. Certainly *I* cannot name her, nor even say where she came from, but the circumstances under which she met Elgar are of interest. Their paths crossed while both were taking holidays in Scotland in the late summer of 1884 and such details as we have of this "other E.E" are contained in Elgar's hand-written account of his own travels while north of the border. The dedication itself appeared on the score of a piece for violin and piano entitled *Une Idylle* and published the following year. Dr Buck learned of this dedication, but his enquiry as to who the lady was elicited the reply that she was "nobody - that is to say that I shall ever see again".

Never again to see a lady whose company he had enjoyed enough to want to write down even a short piece for dedication to her, while the holiday was still in progress, would be a further disappointment in a year which had already gone badly for the young Elgar and again we rely on the good Dr Buck for our information. Elgar's letters to him that year revealed that in April his prospects were "hopeless as ever...I get in a mouldy desponding state". In July, they were "worse than ever...things have not prospered with me this year at all". But his July letter also revealed "to crown my miseries my engagement is broken off & I am lonely". With his marital prospects shattered, an invitation at this time to attend Buck's own wedding served only to rub in his misfortune and he declined to go.

One can understand Elgar's inclination - particularly after the breach with Helen - to take himself off somewhere well distant from Worcester to ponder his future. In a subsequent letter to Buck he would explain "I got in a very desponding state last summer (you ken what happened) and it behoved me to do something out of the common to raise my spirits...so I thought of Scotland...".

Such then was the background to Elgar's Scottish holiday of 1884. His rough diary is fuller than the scant details revealed in the Elgar biographies might suggest: the hand-writing presents the occasional problem, but studied in conjunction with a map it can mostly be pieced together. He set off on 7 August by Midland Railway to Glasgow and despite his oft-referred-to poverty that year chose no backstreet bed and breakfast house, preferring the imposing St Enoch Hotel. Built only four years earlier and with a large frontage and an impressive corner entrance arching right

across the pavement, it would provide Elgar with a more than adequate base for his first two days. He had equipped himself with David McBrayne's guide to "Summer Tours in Scotland" and on his first full day sailed down the Clyde and across to Rothesay on the Isle of Bute. He found Rothesay "a noisy little place" but spent the afternoon there. The rest of the day was a disaster. The 6.30 pm return boat only managed the first three miles to Port Bannatyne, where it broke down. A relief vessel sent from Wemyss Bay, across the Clyde estuary, took two hours to arrive, during which time they endured "a dreadful thunderstorm". This boat only took them to Greenock and it was getting on for midnight when a special train finally got the party back to Glasgow and Elgar to his bed.

Undeterred, he chose Bute again next day, this time taking the train to Wemyss Bay and the shorter sea journey to Rothesay. He used the newly-introduced horse tram to Port Bannatyne, from where he walked the two miles across the narrowest part of the island to Ettrick Bay. He stayed two days on Bute before moving on to Oban via the Crinan Canal. This time he names the vessels - the paddle steamer "Columba" as far as Ardrishaig, the smaller "Linnet" through the canal, with presumably another sea-going boat to complete the trip to Oban.

Although based now at Oban, Elgar spent the next two days almost entirely at sea! He circumnavigated the Isle of Mull twice, in opposite directions, seeing Staffa and Iona each time. Whether he landed on Staffa to view the famous Fingal's Cave he doesn't say, but the possibility is clear from a contemporary photograph showing the view seaward from inside the cave, with a paddle steamer lying offshore and a party of holidaymakers disembarking at the cave mouth from a ship's boat.

Elgar was clearly enjoying himself. His next day was spent on a circular tour ; by sea and canal to Ardrishaig, then by coach (horse-drawn of course) to Ford, at the southern end of Loch Awe. He sailed the full length of this inland loch, over twenty miles, and returned to Oban by rail from Loch Awe Station.

Next day (15 August) he was out very early. His diary records "...6.15 am! Oban to Ballachulish..." Twenty years later this could be done by rail, when the Caledonian Railway opened its extension north from Oban via the new Connel Bridge, but in 1884 - and with only horse-drawn road transport - the only practical way was by sea. The McBrayne boat, in any case, after calling at Ballachulish, would go on to the head of Loch Linnhe and into Loch Eil. And here at last we come to the significant part of Elgar's account of this holiday. We read the enigmatic entry "...met E.E. on L.E. went with her to Corpach". Corpach, of course, lies on the north shore of Loch Eil, but I would at this point invite attention to the facsimile of Elgar's hand-writing. It is, I suppose, just possible that it says "met E.E. or L.E.", rather than "on L.E." If the lady's first name was Elizabeth, it could on better acquaintance have become "Lizzie" or "Liza" and it is a fact that later on he does refer to her as "L.E". However that may be, they must have been together on Loch Eil to visit Corpach by steamer.

Later events suggest that they temporarily parted company at Corpach, with the lady transshipping to another vessel and continuing up the Caledonian Canal and along Loch Ness to Inverness. As one might expect in Victorian times, Miss E.E. was not travelling alone, but with a party and obviously following a planned itinerary.

Friday  
Aug. 15. 6.15 am!! Oban to  
Ballachulish (to Corpach) to  
back to B) Mrs' Florence Mack  
to Ballachulish - Boat to Oban  
met E.E. on L.E. went with her  
to Corpach -  
was very lovely from  
B. to Oban. met Mrs.

She seems to have revealed their plans to Elgar, however, enabling him to catch up with her at later stopping points. Elgar's day continued with a return to Ballachulish from where he made a foray into Glen Coe. An open-topped coach with seats for about a dozen people and drawn by four horses (to cope with the gradients) used to ply along Glen Coe and even as far as Glen Etive and would no doubt be used by Elgar for this excursion. The return steamer trip to Oban was marred by heavy rain and his final note for that day is "...wet thro'..."

The next day (16 August) Elgar might have planned to go to Inverness anyway...and then again he might not. He was up in time to take the 6.15 am boat from Oban, up Loch Linnhe, then along the Caledonian Canal and the length of Loch Ness to Inverness, where after taking the horse omnibus from the boat terminal and booking in at the Station Hotel, he noted "...Meet E.E..."

He doesn't mention the lady next day (Sunday) but he himself was out early, going to the Catholic Church and his day continuing with "...general larks, islands". He seems to have paid a visit to the old Free High Church (now St Columba High Church) on Bank Street, close by the River Ness, and may even have met the minister, the Irishman Dr John James Black. Elgar records "...read Dr Black's Freethink in evng - took down the hymns". I have not traced what this "Freethink" was (if any Scots member knows, I would be pleased to hear) but there was apparently a "Free Thinkers Library" at that time, which produced books of a radical theological nature and Elgar may even have been lent a volume to read in his hotel room.

The following day (18th) saw another temporary parting from his lady friend. His diary records "Saw off L.E. and party to Edinbgh". Without her for the rest of the day, he could only note "...not well...walked about...Cemetery &c..." He was equally laconic on the 19th, noting only that he travelled from Inverness to Stirling, stayed

at the Golden Lion Hotel and visited the castle.

He seemed a different man on Wednesday (20th) when he travelled from Stirling to Edinburgh, booked in at the Old Waverley Hotel and then "...met E.E.[L.E.]" Now we read of visits to the Castle and to Holyrood House, as well as a Forestry Exhibition "...bamboo 16ft..." They heard the Band of the Scots Guards and generally seem to have had a good time. Next day (Thursday) it was "...Canongate, Cowgate...Holyrood again...National Gallery..." They heard the Scots Guards band again and had another look at the Forestry Exhibition.

On the Friday, they said their goodbyes... "Adieux! Flowers..." Elgar returned to Glasgow. "...boat express...St Enoch Hotel...letters awaiting..." Some excitement in Glasgow may have served to take his mind off the sad parting. At the foot of the final page, he noted "...P of Wales...royal salutes, decorations, barricades &c..." A royal visit by the man who twenty years later would confer a knighthood on him?

\* \* \*

Any research into Elgar's life leaves unanswered questions. We would love to know the identity of "Miss E.E." and where she came from. Although she was "E.E. Inverness" to Elgar, it seems unlikely that she lived there. (She would hardly return home to Inverness from the west coast and then immediately set out for Edinburgh). And why - since they spent more time together in the Scottish capital than in Inverness - was she not "E.E. Edinburgh"?

Elgar told Buck that she was nobody that he would ever see again, but did they exchange any letters afterwards? Was the lady herself musical? It does seem that the dedication to her of *Une Idylle* was done while the holiday was still in progress and not as an afterthought when he got home. His words to Buck were "I wrote down the little air when I was there & dedicated it to her 'with estimation the most profound' as a Frenchman would say". Elgar's friend John Beare subsequently published the "little air", but one assumes (certainly hopes) that the lady already had her own hand-written copy. Did she still have it twenty years later when the young man with whom she had enjoyed the sights of Edinburgh in 1884 had become Sir Edward Elgar, England's premier composer?

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## ELGAR IN CRIME FICTION

Philip Scowcroft

As an ardent Elgar enthusiast who has made an in-depth study of Music in English Detective Fiction(1) it is interesting to see how many crime stories include mention of Elgar. Several crime writers, Agatha Christie, Dorothy L.Sayers and Edmund Crispin among them, were musicians, though none of those three mentions Elgar that I recall. A number of great fictional detectives were also musical : Sherlock Holmes, though he retired from active practice in about 1903, rather early for Elgar's great period (but see later) ; and Sayers' Lord Peter Wimsey, but his *floreat* was

1923-36, a period when E.E's reputation was near its lowest ebb. Neither mentions Elgar ; but P.D.James' Commander Adam Dalgleish is fortunate to be around now the composer's reputation has revived. In *Devices and Desires* (Faber, 1989) he listens to the *Cello Concerto* on record :

...the plaintive notes evoking those long, hot Edwardian summers known to him only from novels and poetry, the peace, the certainty, the optimism of the England into which his aunt had been born.

Elgar is associated in most minds indeed with the Edwardian age and when John Dickson Carr wrote his *The Witch of the Low Tide* (Hamish Hamilton, 1961), one of a trilogy of Scotland Yard historical novels, mere mention of *Land of Hope and Glory* played by a seaside band was enough to "place" the novel for us in 1907.

It is however the *Enigma Variations* which figure most in crime novels. There is Michael Kenyon's *The Enigma Variations* (Putnam, 1981) ; they are a clue to a crossword in Robert Richardson's *Bellringer Street* (Gollancz, 1988) ; while in Ivan Baker's *Death and Variations* (Hale, 1977) the victim dies, by gunshot, while listening to an LP of the *Variations* - but what is the significance of the subsequent substitution of a Mahler symphony on the record player? Brian Murphy's *The Enigma Variations* (Scribner, 1981) is set on an American college Campus. Rape is followed by the murder of the rapist ; a lecturer in the Music Faculty, who is working on a study of Elgar, investigates and discovers the killer. Most of the characters bear the names, or variants thereof, of "my friends pictured within". The book is too free with four letter words for my taste. T.L.W.Hubbard's *A Baton for the Conductor* (Faber, 1957) is a comedy thriller "romp". A psychiatrist treating a frustrated amateur musician arranges for a British conductor to be kidnapped on his way to a mid-European festival so that his patient can rehearse and conduct the Festival Orchestra. The programme is English - Vaughan Williams, Delius, and the *Enigma* - although the "stand-in" substitutes Beethoven's *Eroica Symphony* for Delius, whom he cannot stand. However, events dictate that he does not conduct the concert.

Finally we revert to Sherlock Holmes. Many writers, not content with Conan Doyle's sixty stories about him, have written "spoon" Holmes tales. One is *The Worcester Enigma*, by James Miles(2). In this, set in 1888 apparently (we see Elgar playing *Salut d'Amour*), not only does the Great Detective encounter our greatest composer and solves a pretty little problem involving Alice Roberts' father, but it is also revealed that the *Enigma* theme derives from Holmes' doodling on his violin when Elgar goes to consult him! It seems churlish to point out that both Alice's parents were dead by 1888 and that Malvern is not a "suburb of Worcester" ; but perhaps we can blame Dr Watson's unscientific chronicling for the discrepancies.

#### NOTES

(1) See my article in the periodical *CADS*, issue 3, pp.13-23; an update article is to be published in due course.

(2) Published in *Mystery Magazine* and reprinted in Thomas Godfrey (ed.) *Country House Murders* (O'Mara, 1989).



## ELGAR AS AMANUENSIS

Peter Ward Jones

During preparations for a recent lunchtime lecture for the Friends of the Bodleian I encountered the story of how in 1887 William Wolstenholme, a 22-year-old student at the Worcester College for the Blind, came to Oxford to sit the examination for the degree of Bachelor of Music. As had been customary since its inception at the beginning of the sixteenth century, this degree (and its companion D.Mus) was taken almost entirely by external candidates, no teaching for it being provided by the University. To obtain the degree it was necessary to submit an "exercise" in original composition, and to sit written papers in harmony, counterpoint, and the history of music. Wolstenholme (1865-1931) was a brilliantly gifted pianist and organist, who became a distinguished and highly popular organ recitalist. Being totally blind he required an amanuensis to write down his examination answers, and for this purpose he turned to his friend, Edward Elgar, then aged thirty, who taught the violin at the Worcester College. The story of their visit to Oxford is told among others by E.B.Leaver, who relates how Elgar apparently pointed out a mistake in one of the questions, much to the examiner's indignation(1). Wolstenholme's papers have not been preserved, but it was, and still is, a requirement that a copy of a successful candidate's exercise should be deposited in the Bodleian. Since Elgar wrote out the papers in Oxford, it seemed not unlikely that he may have noted down Wolstenholme's exercise for him as well. An examination of this exercise, a cantata entitled *Lord Ullin's Daughter*, confirmed that its 101 pages were written throughout in the young Elgar's hand. Further corroboration was subsequently found in an article on Elgar in the *Musical Times* for 1900, written with the composer's co-operation. This states that "he wrote down the whole of young Wolstenholme's 'exercise' from his dictation"(2). One trusts that no illicit Elgarian improvements were added to Wolstenholme's own efforts! The volume had lain unnoticed on the Bodleian's shelves as MS. Mus.Sch.Ex.d.174 for a century. This discovery means that the Bodleian is now known to possess three examples of Elgar's musical hand, the others being the full score of *The Kingdom* (given by his daughter), and his orchestration of Parry's *Jerusalem*.

### NOTES

[1] E.B.Leaver "Some impressions of Sir Edward Elgar", *Musical Opinion*, lviii (1934), p.869; quoted in J.N.Moore, *Edward Elgar, a Creative Life* (Oxford, 1984), p.121.

[2] [F.G.Edwards], "Edward Elgar", *Musical Times*, xli (1900), p.644; reprinted in *An Elgar Companion*, ed.C.Redwood (Ashbourne, 1982), p.41. See also *Elgar and his Publishers: Letters of a Creative Life*, ed. J.N.Moore (Oxford, 1987), vol.1, p.235-7.

(This article first appeared in the *Bodleian Library Record* vol.xiii no.2, and is reprinted by kind permission of the author).

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1992

The Society AGM took place this year on 31 May at Lawnside, Malvern. The Chairman, Christopher Robinson CVO welcomed all to the meeting and reported that greetings had been sent to the President, Sir Yehudi Menuhin. An engraved rose bowl had been presented to the President to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the recording of the Violin Concerto, and the President presented the Elgar Medal to Dr Jerrold Northrop Moore. All this took place in EMI's Studio 1, Abbey Road. It was also the occasion of the launch of the EMI Compact Discs of Elgar's electrical recordings.

The Secretary reported that East Midlands and South West Branches must now be regarded as defunct.

The amalgamation of the Society and Friends of the Birthplace had been achieved and a Christmas Card was the first tangible sign of this partnership.

The Society's Cup and cash prize of £100 had been presented to Keys Society Choir, King's School, Worcester at the triennial Elgar Choral Festival.

Maroon Society ties are now available; and Raymond Monk's new book of studies, *Edward Elgar: Music and Literature* was due to be published in the autumn. Two recording projects had been embarked upon and a new rose, Sir Edward Elgar, had been launched at the Chelsea Flower Show.

The Membership Secretary announced a total membership of 1364, an increase of 220 as a result of the amalgamation with the Friends of the Birthplace. A total of 493 members were attached to Branches and there were 92 overseas members.

The Treasurer presented the accounts. Since last December two-thirds of the Society's commitment of £10,000 in connection with the "Elgar Edition" CD had been paid to EMI. In future, members would receive a membership card which would serve as a receipt and form of identification for entry at the Birthplace.

The Journal Editor reported on his first year and he mentioned that he had maintained a policy of publishing original articles, reprints of articles not readily available, and regular features. There had also been large review sections this year. The Vice-Chairman reporting on the International Sub-Committee said that owing to Ian Lacey's illness the arrangement of meetings had been difficult.

Christopher Robinson commended Andrew Neill to the meeting as the Committee's nomination as his successor. Customarily it had been felt desirable that a practising musician should be Chairman and this principle should be restated for the future. But it was felt that Mr Neill's outstanding qualities and experience well fitted him for the office. He was duly elected. John Knowles was elected unanimously as Vice-Chairman and the other officers were elected en bloc. Simon Holt and Raymond Monk retired by rotation from the Committee. The vacancies were filled by the election of Kevin Allen and Carl Newton and the other Committee members David Hawkins, David Hughes, Dennis Clark and John Knighton were elected en bloc.

Two amendments were made to the Constitution : first, the Membership Secretary was now to be added to the list of Society Officers; second, that there would be one

central Society subscription and Branches' essential expenditure should be funded centrally. The Society subscription for 1993 was set at £10 with £5 for students.

Lady Evelyn Barbirolli and Mr Wulstan Atkins were each to be asked to accept the position of Vice-President of the Society.

Jacob O'Callaghan introduced a motion regarding the Elgar Centre and David Hawkins responded. After a number of contributions from the floor Carl Newton moved an amendment to delete all but the first paragraph of the motion, viz. "This meeting welcomes and supports the creation of accommodation for archives, performance space and educational facilities by the Elgar Birthplace Trust and Foundation". This was carried.

Mrs Diana Quinney reported on the Birthplace Appeal and said that the Birmingham *Gerontius* performance had realised £34,000. A "Pomp and Circumstance" Ball was planned at the Savoy in June; Dr Donald Hunt would conduct *The Kingdom* in Worcester on 17 October; and there was to be a Schools' Performance Week in November involving schools in Hereford & Worcester.

At the conclusion of the meeting Andrew Neill paid tribute to the retiring Chairman and presented him with conducting scores of *The Kingdom* and *The Apostles*.



*The Society's Secretary, Carol Holt, talking to Dr Jerrold Northrop Moore at Birchwood during the AGM weekend in May. (Photo: Professor Ian Parrott)*

## A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

A change of Chairman is an opportunity for reflection and for considering the opportunities which face a Society such as ours. I therefore ask the indulgence of the Editor to allow me to address a number of issues some of which have been with the Society for a long time and others which may need to be considered in the future.

The Society is now over forty years old. Since it was formed by a group of friends in Malvern all those years ago, we have seen it grow into an international membership exceeding 1400 : approximately half of these participate in the intellectual and social activities of five branches.

The recent Annual General Meeting approved a new method of collecting subscriptions which will have an immediate impact on how the branches are funded. Although not great, this change will to an extent impose a greater financial burden on those who do not or cannot belong to a local branch. Unfortunately as the Society increases its membership, the administration of subscriptions, membership changes and accounting responsibilities become more and more demanding. The present change was made to reduce the burden of work imposed upon the Officers of the Society (whose work is voluntary) and to give the opportunity for smaller branches to look forward to a secure future by the direct funding of their activities by the Society centrally.

The Committee is aware of the importance of members who are not attached to branches. Although I do not believe we join the Society with the prime intention of seeing what "we get for our money", it is important to ensure that we all feel we belong in some tangible way. In addition to this excellent JOURNAL, all members benefit from the less obvious activities of the Society, such as the funding of the "Elgar Edition", now in production with EMI; the recording of *King Olaf*; and the many other publications and recordings which the Society has produced over the years. All members are welcome to join in the activities of the annual Elgar weekend which was a particularly happy event this year.

We must from time to time look at where we are going and what our purpose as the largest British composer society is, and what it might be. As we have expanded so dramatically in size, I see a continuous need to respond to our new members by providing the sort of social activities which welds a society together. On the other hand we must also reflect the needs of scholarship and research. This JOURNAL should and will continue to serve many of these needs, as well as responding to the challenge of continuous renewal and the attraction of younger members. During the next few months I will ask the Committee to consider these issues which will so ensure a sense of direction for the years ahead.

Finally, it is clear that the interest of many Elgarians will be directed toward impending developments at the Birthplace. These proposals derive from the vast increase in interest in Elgar's life and music during the last thirty years - for which the Society must take some responsibility. I hope that we can achieve a closer association between the Society and the Birthplace Trust, in parity and mutual respect, so reducing misunderstandings and the genuine doubts a number of

members of this Society have as these plans move towards reality. The Society can and will have an important role to fulfil as we debate these changes to Elgar's first home.

Andrew Neill  
July 1992

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### SIR CHARLES GROVES 1915-1992

With the death in June of Sir Charles Groves, the Society has lost one of its Vice-Presidents, and British music one of its most loyal and persuasive advocates. His wide experience came from his classic musical upbringing - chorister at St Paul's Cathedral; Royal College of Music; and then a variety of roles within the BBC, culminating in his appointment as chief conductor of the BBC Northern Orchestra in 1944. His major orchestral posts were at Bournemouth (1951-61) and at Liverpool (1963-77), and he was also the first full-time director of the Welsh National Opera, and later at the English National Opera. Among his other positions he was President of the National Youth Orchestra and Associate Conductor of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

In British music, as in life generally, Sir Charles' sympathies were wide and generous. He conducted premières of works by Maxwell Davies and Tavener, and made first recordings of symphonies by Brian, Sullivan, Mathias and Daniel Jones. He was a major contributor to the revival of interest in Delius and Elgar through a series of recordings he made in the 1970s. His Elgar discs included première recordings of *Caractacus*, *The Light of Life* and *The Black Knight*, as well as the first modern recordings of the *Coronation March*, the *Nursery* and *Severn Suites*, and the *Crown of India* music. His broadcast performance of *The Apostles* in 1972, in the not altogether helpful venue of Liverpool's Anglican cathedral, was I feel sure a significant factor in the decision of EMI to record the work with Boult the following year. Edward Greenfield once described Sir Charles as "a red-blooded Elgarian", and certainly his commitment to the composer cannot be questioned.

I sang for Sir Charles several times, sadly never in Elgar, and although not the most inspiring of conductors he achieved results because he was such a nice man, liked and respected by all. His kindness and patience were very evident when he recorded Delius' *Mass of Life* - a long and difficult work - spread over several sessions. As I recall, he was particularly helpful to the young Benjamin Luxon, called up at the last minute to sing the demanding baritone part following the withdrawal of Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau. And his help and encouragement to the soloists in the final of the "Young Musician of the Year" Competition is well-known. The musical world is the poorer for his passing.

The Editor

## E W A Jackson

1904-1992

It was a great sadness but also great privilege that my first official task since becoming Vice-Chairman was to represent the Society at Bill Jackson's funeral on 12 June. It was an entirely appropriate service, concentrating on thanksgiving for the very full and long life of one who had enriched the lives of so many others. Particularly moving was the recitation of Cardinal Newman's words "I went to sleep; and now I am refreshed" to the accompaniment of Elgar's music on the organ.

When the history of the Society comes to be written, I am sure that there will be a chapter headed "EWAJ", for without doubt he was the major force in beginning to move the then small Society from its localised roots to the international and influential position it holds today. I first met him in 1971 at the meeting held in Central Hall, Westminster to consider the possible formation of a London branch. Newly retired, he agreed to take on the post of joint secretary/treasurer of a steering committee. It is no exaggeration to say that the London branch was indeed Bill's creation. He and his wife, Con, acted as host and hostess at the meetings at BIRS in South Kensington and as I write, I can picture him in its upstairs room, glasses in hand, giving the notices or proposing a vote of thanks. He had an encyclopaedic memory for names and addresses and went out of his way to make sure that the newest member was thoroughly at home. I was privileged to serve on the London branch committee in those early years and it is easy to forget now how exciting it all was. Although more than four decades separated our ages, we became good friends and I treasure memories of our car journeys down to Worcester for meetings of the central committee, during which our conversations ranged far and wide.

In 1976, Douglas Guest was invited to become Chairman but his condition for acceptance was that Bill should be secretary, he in his turn insisting that I be treasurer. Bill had a clear vision of what the Society should be like and it was enormous fun to be part of his new broom. It was a time of rapid expansion with a number of branches instigated and new members applying from all over the world. He was a stickler for accuracy and efficiency and, above all, good old fashioned manners.

The Society as a whole owes Bill an enormous debt of gratitude. Those of us who knew him well owe much more than that, in response to a friendship that was reliable, invigorating and deeply rooted in his wide experience of life and good sense.

John Knowles

## BIRTHPLACE NEWS

We were happy again to fill our traditional role as host to the Society on 31 May. The weather smiled upon us and the event was very well attended. We gratefully accepted as a gift from the Society the new hybrid Tea rose named Sir Edward Elgar by the grower, David Austin of Wolverhampton. This was ceremoniously planted by the Society's new Chairman, Andrew Neill, assisted by Carol Holt. The rose seems to have enjoyed the sunshine and showers to which it has subsequently been exposed and looks set to be a fine shrub next year.

Earlier we had heard at Lawnsend School a live performance by the young violinist, Chris Nicholls of the *Etudes Caractéristiques* for solo violin. We have stock of these very demanding pieces; and readers will be interested to know that they have been chosen for performance at Menuhin's competitive festival in Paris this year.

Reference was made in the last JOURNAL to the launch of the Elgar Edition by EMI. At the time of writing we have sold almost exactly one hundred, of which sixty have been taken by Society members and Friends of the Birthplace as part of a contract for the complete set of nine discs. This has brought and no doubt will continue to bring very useful additional revenue to the Birthplace Trust, and regular royalty income to the Society - an excellent co-operative project.

Amongst the VIPs visiting since our last notes, we were pleased to have Sir Charles and Lady Mackerras who were on their way to Cardiff where Sir Charles was to conduct the Welsh National Opera. We understand that he is planning to record *The Dream of Gerontius* and the *Second Symphony*, and we have a feeling that he is likely to pay us another visit to study our source material for these works in greater detail.

We were very happy to be hosts recently to a party of thirty-five music teachers from Hong Kong. They were attending a specially arranged course at Wolverhampton University. Earlier we entertained a large choir from Zagreb, Croatia. It was a special privilege to have these folk amongst us - people whose dreams of democratic freedom have been so besmirched by the violence that has erupted in their country.

One of the finest gifts to come into our possession during my term at the Birthplace was presented by Philip and Joanna Polack of Bristol. For many years we have had on display a photograph of the Aeolian harp that Troyte Griffith designed for Elgar and which was made by a very fine craftsman, Charlotte Ellen Jacob. I understand that, on leaving Severn House, Elgar asked Troyte to accept return of the instrument; Troyte subsequently gave it to the maker in whose family it remained until given about 24 years ago to Mr & Mrs Polack by the maker's niece. The instrument is in beautiful condition and is available for inspection on request, but will not be placed on general display until a suitable case has been made. I would add that I would appreciate any information Society members may have about the history and movements of this instrument and also of other work by the maker.

A J Bennett

## "THE ELGAR EDITION"

**EMI launch the first CD set of Elgar's own recordings.  
Society President presents Elgar Medal to Jerrold Northrop Moore.**

What an enchanted world is this,  
What music I have heard : and when  
I hear these Master fiddlers play,  
I ask - 'Are these not Marvellous men?'

*W.H.Davies*

"Today is a day of celebration". The words of Roger Lewis, Director of EMI's Classical Division, in welcoming us to Studio 1 at Abbey Road on 14 May for the launch of the first set of CDs featuring the complete electrical recordings of Elgar's music made by the composer between 1926 and 1933. It was indeed a prestigious occasion for all, not least the Society, whose Vice-Chairman Andrew Neill had originally suggested the scheme. "[His] diplomacy along with the tremendous support of the Elgar Society and the Elgar Foundation (to whom we are indebted) encouraged us back into the studio", Mr Lewis said. The launch was made by the Society's President, Sir Yehudi Menuhin, who also presented the Elgar Medal to Dr Jerrold Northrop Moore. This was extremely fitting, for it was his advocacy of these same recordings that helped to bring about their transfer to LP in the 1970s.

As well as the President, four Vice-Presidents were present (including Dr Moore) plus officers of the Society, past and present, and other members, as well as critics, journalists and others from the world of music and recording. They heard Mr Lewis pay tribute to "a group of people without whom such a uniquely valuable insight into the creative genius of Sir Edward Elgar simply would not exist". Naturally he began with "the visionary HMV producer" Fred Gaisberg, and moved on to Anthony Griffith and John Whittle (both of whom were happily present) who had worked on the LP reissues with Dr Moore. Finally "the current EMI team...they have certainly not let us down. The results continue the tradition of excellence which has been the hallmark of this project since Fred Gaisberg's day".

Andrew Neill, standing in for the Chairman Christopher Robinson, responded on behalf of the Society. He spoke of the "very happy relationship" which had been forged between the Society and EMI. Their response to his suggestion had been "enthusiastic, warm and very encouraging". Mr Neill went on : "To assist a project like this in my opinion is what an organisation like the Elgar Society is about. Elgar's recordings are fundamental to the history of the gramophone..." He too paid tribute to those "without whom this project would not have been possible"; and also spoke of the great recordings that had been made in the studio, particularly the *Violin Concerto* with "a sixteen-year-old boy under the baton of Elgar himself...That boy is here today - our President, Sir Yehudi Menuhin".

Before Sir Yehudi was asked to make the presentation he was himself presented by Andrew Neill on behalf of the Society with a glass bowl engraved with the opening bars of the *Violin Concerto* "to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of one of the greatest recordings of all time and your service to the music of Elgar".





*Andrew Neill presents Sir Yehudi Menuhin with the commemorative bowl at Abbey Road on 14 May. (Photo: Steve Hickey © EMI Records (UK))*

Sir Yehudi replied : "You are looking upon the last surviving relic. All of you are far too young to have known Elgar, far too young to have experienced what both Dr Moore and I are able to tell you. You will<sup>1</sup> have<sup>2</sup> to take it on trust. We are two transplanted Americans, and therefore most trustworthy.

"It was a summer's day such as this, a little later in the year, that I came with my father to London and that I came into this studio. It was upon the good faith of Fred Gaisberg and the rather careless trusting of Sir Edward himself that I was invited to perform it later that year at the Royal Albert Hall. It is to this occasion, sixty years ago - the studios had only been opened the year before by Sir Edward - that I owed really my whole infatuation - my 'marriage' really - with Britain; and no doubt with my wife as a result.

"I was 'baptised' here [long before it became officially so] into the British spirit. When I think of the fact that today, sixty years later, I am so closely associated with Elgar through the Society, and through the memories and the present experience of the whole British people, I become ever more grateful for this occasion when I first knew the music, met the composer, and recorded it with him in the far corner of this studio.

"And so I have every reason to be grateful to the music which made me one with the British soul.

"I shall now present Dr Moore with the Society's medal. No one could be more deserving than Dr Moore for he has come to understand and love Elgar as much as anyone".

Dr Moore, in his reply of thanks, began by paying tribute to the skilled workmanship of the medal. He went on :

"This is a wonderful day for all of us who are here. It is especially wonderful for me, for three reasons - the donor of the medal; the occasion; and the man who has presented it to me.

"I am deeply touched by the honour from the Elgar Society, whose London Branch I watched grow from the vantage point of being on its first committee twenty years ago, and now under the guiding spirit of such people as Andrew Neill, the Society has come to a point where it can sponsor the first recording ever of *King Olaf*, which was Elgar's last remaining unrecorded work; and now has entered into partnership with EMI for this latest and most marvellous re-issue of Elgar's own recordings.

"Receiving this honour here today, to do with recording, closes a circle for me because my first interest in Elgar when I was at school in America came not from the scores, not from performances - there weren't any then that I could get to - but from recordings, and from his recordings. My school had his own recordings on 78s of the symphonies, and that is how I got to know that music - from these early recordings, which are now re-issued today.

"It was always clear to me from that time that the composer, if he had any skill at all, was obviously the best performer of his music; because after all, music is sound; it is not little black dots on a piece of paper; and the final stage in the act of creating music, is to give those sounds life. And if you are equipped, as I believe Elgar was, splendidly equipped, to lead an orchestra through those sounds, then you have something that has a different kind of relationship to the score from any other performance.

"And therefore, feeling as I do about that, what is particularly important to me is the idea of the laying on of hands, of musical influence passing from one personality



*Sir Yehudi Menuhin presents the first Elgar Medal to Dr Jerrold Northrop Moore at Abbey Road on 14 May. (Photo: Steve Hickey © EMI Records (UK)).*

directly to another.

"And this brings me to Sir Yehudi, our President. He is the only great musician now active among us who knew Elgar and worked closely with him. And therefore Sir Yehudi, it means more to me to receive this medal from you than it would from any other man in the universe".

Dr Moore then played four extracts from the new transfers. He began with the opening of *Falstaff*, as these were the first sounds to be recorded in the studio on 11 November 1931. It was "a fantastic achievement", he said, that a new, untried venue could make a recording which could then be published.

Then Sir Yehudi was invited to introduce an extract from the Cadenza of the *Violin Concerto* (which will be brought out in the second set in November). Speaking of the recording sessions, he said "I had never played for a conductor who did less, apparently. He was the epitome of English understatement. He depended on the music for his statement; the orchestra. He knew he could trust them, and they played their hearts out. But he himself looked cool and calm the whole way through". When the records were issued "there was one - only one - dissident voice. We know Elgar - the nostalgia, the passion, the romanticism, the exuberance - and [the critic] said that my performance was 'too English', whatever he meant by that. Elgar's reaction was instantaneous and furious. He said, 'That's the way I like it!'"

The opening of the *First Symphony* followed, and then finally the choral entry of *The Music Makers* from the 1927 Three Choirs' Festival. The clarity of the sound was astonishing, and a triumph for the engineers. "I never thought to hear these sounds come off of these records", said Dr Moore. "It is truly a miracle. When you hear the first stanza of *The Music Makers* you are *there* in Hereford Cathedral, sixty-five years ago".

There was time for two short film clips. First, Sir Henry Wood conducting some Grainger; and then the famous Pathé film of Sir Edward himself conducting *Land of Hope and Glory* at the opening of the Abbey Road studios in 1931.

And so to lunch, and the chance to renew old friendships and savour this "day of celebration". The talk was inevitably about Elgar and records, and "marvellous men" - one "Master fiddler", Sir Yehudi Menuhin, whose music had come to us poignantly across six decades; then, Anthony Griffith and Michael Dutton, whose expertise in recorded sound had given us the music of Elgar himself in these wonderfully clear new transfers; and finally Jerrold Moore, whose tireless dedication to the cause of Elgar had been rightly and duly recognised by the Society.

## AN AMERICAN IN LONDON

### Leonard Slatkin is presented with the Elgar Medal

On 8 June at the Royal Academy of Music the Society's London Branch members (and others) had the privilege of attending a presentation of the *Enigma Variations*, in which Jerrold Northrop Moore spoke about the work. Musical illustrations were played by the Academy's orchestra conducted by Leonard Slatkin, who contributed a few thoughts of his own, especially on his approach to performing the piece.

Dr Moore began by emphasising that the "Enigma" is nothing more than the first seventeen bars, and should never be confused with the "larger theme". It is not a puzzle to be solved. "It is a black hole - a nothing", he said.

Leonard Slatkin pointed out that HDS-P and WMB should be played at the same speed, which makes the former slower than it is normally played. "Could this be described as running over the keys?" he said. Dr Moore suggested it might be Powell coming into a very cold house in winter, and starting his exercise very slowly! Mr Slatkin spoke of what he saw as the unconscious influence of other composers on Elgar at this time, and said that this second variation was much like a *scherzo* by Mendelssohn. He pointed out too that there is no tempo variation in RPA; "so maybe his laugh is not so funny after all", he said.

Another interesting observation he made is that from WN onwards the metronome markings are in parenthesis, but he had never understood the reason. "Nimrod" was the only place in the entire work marked *adagio*, he said, and was therefore more solemn than the rest of the variations. Even BGN was only marked *andante*. Dr Moore believed that this was because it leads into the Romanza. "I always feel it turns cold in Var. 13 where the Mendelssohn quotation comes in", he said. "There's a kind of seriousness, as though an enormous figure suddenly emerges out of the mist. You can't make too much of 12, or 13 loses its impact".

These and many other comments gave new insights into this endlessly fascinating composition. In summing up, Leonard Slatkin said: "Great music endures everything. It lives and breathes and changes with the times in which we live. We do not go back and totally immerse ourselves into Elgar's world because we don't live in that world. We can imagine what it was like and we assume that it is presented to us in a kind of postcard, but we look with the 1990s thoughts and convictions that we all have. Any great musical work requires that to survive most of all; and the *Enigma Variations*, along with so many other works, survives because they undergo a transformation as the times change".

Andrew Neill, newly-elected Chairman of the Elgar Society, then presented Leonard Slatkin with the Elgar Medal, and in his speech paid the following tribute: "[He] not only performs Elgar here and has recorded Elgar's music with British orchestras, but has used his knowledge and love of the composer to play his music in the States. In fact, the most important thing of all is that he treats Elgar normally: in a sense that is what any of us who joined the Society twenty-odd years ago wanted - not someone who was taken down, dusted by the odd enthusiast, and then played". He also



*Andrew Neill, Chairman of the Society, presents the Elgar Medal to Leonard Slatkin at the Royal Academy of Music on 8 June.*

presented Mr Slatkin with the first set of "The Elgar Edition", including, among other things, the two symphonies; "not to teach you how to conduct them, however", he added.

The applause was long and loud, and the great conductor was obviously deeply appreciative of the honour which the Society had paid him. His European tour schedule was quite hectic, but I was able to interview him at his London flat a few days later, despite being delayed by a security alert on the Underground!

**GH** Mr Slatkin : one of the fascinating things I discovered was that your love of Elgar and British music generally came from Walter Susskind.

**LS** I tend to think that's where it came from : I really didn't know the majority of the music very well as a youngster. I heard the occasional *Enigma* or *VW Four*, but basically you didn't hear a lot of English music played in the States. So when I began my studies with Mr Susskind in '64 one of the first pieces I heard him do in Aspen was the *London Symphony*. This music was a whole new world to me. Also when he brought me to Saint Louis as his assistant he was doing *VW Six*, and at one point he just turned round to me and said "I'd like to go out and listen to it in the hall to see what it sounds like while you conduct the opening"; and thirty-five minutes later when the piece was over and I'd finished it, that was the opening! He really did seem to want to pass on the repertoire.

**GH** How did you respond to Elgar as opposed to Vaughan Williams?

**LS** Vaughan Williams came earlier. Actually Walton came first, when you think about it; my parents had recorded the Walton *Quartet* many years ago - '49, I think - so that was the music I heard first. And VW tends to be played a little more in the States than Elgar. The *Variations* we all knew through recordings, and it was played frequently enough in performance that you heard it; but I think the real turn around with Elgar came from hearing a performance of the *Second Symphony* which Solti did with the Chicago Symphony on tour in Minneapolis. At that moment it wasn't the piece which struck me, but the performance was just unbelievably virtuosic, it was really quite something. It made me want to go and look at the work just to see how all those notes could be played by trombones and horns; and as I began to look at the music - this is some fourteen or fifteen years ago - the piece began to open up to me and I looked past the performance itself. And at that point I began to really seriously look at the other works of Elgar that were simply not known to me. I didn't know the symphonies, though I'd heard them in passing once or twice; and I certainly didn't know the choral works. Within a short period of time, I was driving and heard a beautiful piece on the radio, and pulled off the side of the road to wait and see what was going to happen, and it turned out to be *The Kingdom*. I knew I had to programme it almost immediately, and I set it up for as performance out in Chicago in an open air facility called Grant Park. I put that on right away - I just had to get it done! So clearly once the bug struck, it was love and I've stayed with it ever since.

**GH** And you have no problem in seeing Elgar as part of the mainstream European tradition along with Sibelius, Mahler and so on?

**LS** Even though he was self-taught, you can't help but see the influences of the time in which he lives. Brahms is there; to a lesser degree Wagner is there - Germanic influences in particular. Although there is an inherent individual quality in the music, I'm not so certain that I always call it specifically an English quality, much

more than I call it an Elgar quality - dark textures, clear orchestration, clear use of instrumental passages, an attention to detail and counterpoint which you don't see any of his counterparts really dealing with. No, I tend not to think of him as an isolated nationalistic composer at all, but perhaps an isolated individual one.

**GH** In the reviews of your recordings and performances of Elgar's music, certain words tend to recur - "despair", "insecurity", "tragedy" - the darker side of Elgar. Is that something you particularly perceive in his music?

**LS** I tend to think of him as being a person who spent many years not achieving a public success like he seemed to want for a lot of his life. He had his friends around him, but somehow he was a very regional composer for so many years, and I think when he finally achieved a little more attention he always looked back on that time of really struggling. I think he was a peaceful man, essentially, but I think inside him there was turmoil about how much his music could be appreciated by others. I suspect that is why he was one of the first composers to turn to the use of the gramophone to say "This is what I want to leave for people"; again it was a crying out for wanting attention, and I find that quality in his music. Even with the marches, and things like that, you must understand that these are not light little works; these are very severe, heavy marches!

**GH** How do you find American audiences react to Elgar?

**LS** Well, now everything seems to be quite acceptable. The symphonies are played on a very regular basis. The choral music not so much, because we don't have the same tradition of choral societies that you have over here; but recently you see more and more performances of *Gerontius*, and even the occasional *Kingdom* and *Apostles* coming up. You don't see so much incidental music coming up, and you don't see the overtures quite so much, but the symphonies, the large works, seem to be appearing on a fairly regular basis now, and it's good to see that. Audiences themselves take things very well; they understand it now, because we've become accustomed to the broader symphonic statements. I think American audiences don't place national emphasis in listening to the music. They just listen to say, *Symphony no.1*; then they listen to *Symphony no.1*, just as they would anybody else's *Symphony no.1*! They'll read the programme note, certainly, and learn a little bit about the time. They also, of course, have a keen interest in *Enigma* as a programme work as well as piece of absolute music, and I guess the great thing is that you can appreciate it as it is; you don't have to know anything about the characters and subjects, and the audiences choose to take it whatever way they wish to take it.

**GH** That brings me to my next point. It's obvious from the works you perform - not just American and English, but your whole repertoire - you seem to have an incredibly impressive background of knowledge of the composer, the background of each individual work, and what may have influenced him in writing it. Does that come before you look at the dots on the page?

**LS** No, no, afterwards. What the composer leaves us first on the page is what we have to deal with primarily. And then after that you try and understand a little about the social times, when it was created, put it in context of other things being written around the time, perhaps know a little more about the composer's background itself, and then you start to develop extra-musical theories and ideas about the composer.

**GH** And does that cause you to adjust your approach to performing the work?

**LS** Sometimes. In Elgar; yes, a little bit. The darker characteristics; yes, I think so.



And that may change over the years - I may do it quite differently in five or ten years time. I always feel that any great artist is influenced by the times in which they live, and that they are to a certain degree consciously or subconsciously putting those feelings about the time into their music.

**GH** Isn't that where Elgar's insecurity came from, as he realised that the world he grew up in was just disappearing round him?

**LS** One can look at Elgar and say "Yes, he was yearning to go back to a different time", but clearly he is a product of his time. He falls, fortunately for him and for us, in a time of musical history when we can accept him, as opposed to say Parry or Stanford, or Finzi, who seemed to live just not exactly at the right time for the way they write, and so they couldn't achieve the same kind of success. Elgar to a certain degree is the outsider because he is a little out of the main stream, in writing in a very individual way that hasn't really been seen - certainly in this country - before. You have to look quite long and hard to find a composer before Elgar in the immediate vicinity who had achieved any kind of success at all.

**GH** Two statements of yours which on the face of it seem slightly contradictory: "English composers are not overtly nationalistic"; but you go on describe some English works you are performing as "striking individual pieces that couldn't have been written anywhere else".

**LS** That's right: by "anywhere else" I usually put it in a time frame, a time context. Also, most composers - especially VW and Elgar - use some of their music to either deal with folk elements or elements of tunes they knew around them. It doesn't mean to say that the whole of the music is nationalistic at all, but rather that there are elements in it that they use from their regions, their locales, but they place them into a broader context. In the same way we don't think of Schubert as such, as a Viennese composer, though there are ländler in virtually every symphony. It's the same kind of thing: you are using elements from your time, but putting them into a much broader context. Otherwise it's not going to translate to anything other than a local audience; it's too regional. No, I think VW is a more interesting case for that, because he had written enough essays on national music and yet I find again here's a case where he uses elements of it in his symphonic works, but not to the exclusion of a broader international method of performance or listening. The reason Elgar works so well now is because orchestras throughout the world have become more in tune with playing more Bruckner, more Mahler, more Strauss, and these were his contemporaries essentially who fall into the same kind of context, and you can see these similarities in certain approaches to the way the orchestra is used.

**GH** Obviously your interest in American music has majored on twentieth century composers -

**LS** - Well, we have to : we're sort of stuck!!

**GH** I was wondering if you had any knowledge or love of Elgar's American contemporaries -

**LS** Oh, MacDowell, and so on. Certainly! And they're fascinating composers. But they're fascinating because we see the roots of what is to become an American language; but not nationalistic. We've recorded a Paine mass. But really if you listen to all of this music, and just put it on cold without telling anybody who wrote it, you probably wouldn't have anybody identify the composer, because they don't have such individual voices yet. It hasn't emerged in American music yet. And that's why Elgar is so unique, because he's the first one after Purcell really to emerge with a true voice that's not like anybody else.

**GH** Do you think there's any merit in resurrecting such music occasionally?

**LS** There's some beautiful music there that needs to be heard : one, because it's beautiful; and two, because it helps us place into context where our original music comes from; how does it start; where do we leave off the world of Franck and Wagner, and enter into the world of Ives and Copland. Big American music really doesn't start having its own identity until Ives, and even at that he wasn't recognised until much later in his life, so we were looking at the 1920s, when American composers came to Europe to study with Boulanger and so forth, and came home with these wild new ideas and incorporated their principally native tongue into the music. A lot of it has to do with language, by the way: not in vocal music but utilising speech patterns unconsciously and the way the language sounds, into the music. A good example of that is to listen to pretty much any piece by Bartok or Kodály and then listen to someone slowly speak in Hungarian, and realise where the stress and the accent is, and how the music is played. I really tend to think that again each composer is influenced by what is around him and how they place the context of the surroundings, so if you hear people talking to each other or saying things back and forth that tends to come into the music in some way.

**GH** You're on record as saying that you've no wish to conduct complete corpora of composers -

**LS** Oh, no, no. Because you wind up doing unfortunate pieces you don't believe in - including Beethoven and Mozart!

**GH** What is left then from the Elgar corpus?

**LS** Well, certainly the two other major oratorios. We'll be recording the *Violin Concerto* in December with Pinky Zukerman - but in St Louis not here. Certainly *Falstaff* at some point. Probably a few suites : just, you know, excerpts of things. After that, we'll see : it's hard to say. I may want to re-record *Enigma* at some point, because I had this theory going on when I was recording it, and I'm beginning to shift away from it a little bit : not enough yet to want to re-do it entirely, but at some point I will.

**GH** Another quote of yours which interested me is that you always look for the pivotal point in a score. Where would you say that the pivotal points are in the symphonies, for example?

**LS** In the *First Symphony*, it is at that time when you are winding down from the *scherzo* into the slow movement. The symphony is leading to this point. It's not for me the high point of the slow movement, but that lead-in itself.

**GH** Why that particular point?

**LS** Because it's the most dramatic shift of mood. We're all of a sudden going from what has been on the one hand a noble work, slightly frantic in the *scherzo*, into a world of dreams, a world that is now quite different from what has gone before. So that for me is the crucial point.

In the *Second*, it tends to come right at the big recapitulation of the main tune in the last movement, because here you are combining elements from the other movements : the broad tune is going on, there's some sharply punctuated chords that happen over this, and just when you think it's going to settle down, it doesn't, it's got to move on. So I look at that point in particular. A lot of people would say, "yes, when the organ comes in", and all that. But that's not the place for me.

In the *Variations* it's in, again, the transition into "Nimrod", a few bars before it. All of a sudden, we have a very different, perhaps even more personal world than we have seen in the rest of the piece.

**GH** You have very mixed feelings about the so-called 'authentic' approach to music -  
**LS** It's not mixed; it's very clear!

**GH** But you did say that people like Roger Norrington have done great things?

**LS** The music research, the things they taught us, are very good. But it's all well and good to try and play the music as it might have sounded, but no one in this time can listen to it the way it was heard back then. We have too many other things - we are listening to the traffic as we talk; you had a bomb scare on the tube! All these things alter the impact; and so that is why I have a problem. I admire the research; I've incorporated some of the things mostly to make it more interesting for audiences now.

I think Elgar again is another case in point : he recorded some of his pieces two times and they're vastly different. So what are we supposed to do? How are we supposed to know what to do?

**GH** There have been one or two suggestions regarding authenticity in Elgar; for instance, the use of *portamento*, and the use of gut strings. Jerrold Moore has pointed out that in the *Cello Concerto* the gut strings make an essentially different sound. Do you have any views on that?

**LS** One : he's right. Two : the halls are larger - significantly larger - and metal strings project better over the very thick orchestration. In a small hall it works. Now, it's not so easy to do that. Each cellist has developed new kinds of techniques to play and to project their sounds. When we recorded the *Cello Concerto* with Mr Starker he puts a cork between the tail piece and the actual instrument itself. The idea is that this will help somehow project some of the sound. They certainly didn't do it in Elgar's time, but it's his way of getting a better sound. Also you must remember, gut strings tend to go out of tune quicker. Halls these days change temperature a little too rapidly : players are looking for more security in intonation.

As far as *portamento* goes, I think we can still use it very discreetly but you have to understand that at the time - and all you have to do is listen to early Bruno Walter Mahler recordings - it was in many cases a substitute for technical limitations, not being able to get from one on to the others, and rather to use a slide to get there. Nowadays we are comfortably able to do that. So it remains a question of where it's in taste. The best example I know is the Bruno Walter Mahler *Nine*. If you ask any orchestra to try and play it the way it is on that recording, you'd be laughed off the platform - pure and simple! It just doesn't work in our time.

**GH** It can give a slightly amateurish sound if it's misused.

**LS** Exactly. And again, although the Elgar performances are fine on discs, we wouldn't allow that kind of performance to go on now; it's not accepted.

**GH** It's wonderful to us that as an American you are an ambassador for English music -

**LS** I try to be an ambassador for American music as well!

**GH** But how do you find that Elgar goes down with European musicians; for example, the Berlin Philharmonic?

**LS** Well, they enjoyed the piece [the *Variations*] and I guess the best compliment was they said we should have a little more rehearsal time to do it. However, it's still hard to get it programmed; so when orchestras ask me what I'd like to do, I usually send them a list of between eight and ten major works in which there is inevitably either an Elgar Symphony or the *Variations* - as there is a couple of American works - and very rarely will they take it. So it's met by resistance from the administrators, but not so much once the musicians get hold of it. They rather enjoy it.

## ELGAR CHORAL FESTIVAL CONCERT

Worcester Cathedral, Saturday 2 May

The second Elgar Choral Festival presented by the Elgar Foundation was held on 1 and 2 May and the culminating Concert and Final Competition was given to a very large audience in the Cathedral on the Saturday evening. The standard of performance at this concert was extremely high and much fine music-making was heard.

There were three finalists in each of the classes. For the Women's Choirs the set piece was Elgar's *Weary Wind of the West*, and the winning choir was the Keighley Vocal Union, followed by the Oldham Girls' Choir. In third place Cantores Sabriniensis gave the first performance of Donald Hunt's *The Joy of Singing* (with the composer at the piano) as their "own choice" item.

In the smaller Mixed Voice Class (less than 30 voices) the set piece was *The Shower*, and first place was given to the Joyful Company of Singers, Enfield, with the Oriol Singers from Cheltenham second, and the Reading Phoenix Choir third.

After the interval, Male Voice choirs performed *Feasting I watch* together with their own choice pieces. The winners were the Four Lanes Choir from Redruth followed by the Nelson Arion Glee Union and the Imperial Male Voice Choir from London.

The final class was for larger Mixed Choirs with the Prologue to *The Apostles*, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me", as the set piece. First place was awarded to the Manchester Chorale, with the Reading Phoenix Choir in second place and the Silver Ring Choir of Bath third.

During the evening, and whilst waiting for the adjudication of each class, the audience also heard winning items from classes held earlier in the Festival. The hard-working adjudicators, who included Simon Lindley and Dr. John Sanders, were chaired during this final session by Sir David Willcocks who also conducted the entire audience and choirs in a rousing "sing-in" of *Land of Hope and Glory* to conclude the Festival's proceedings. The Elgar Society prize (of £100) to the most promising choir of the Festival was presented to the Keys Society Choir of the King's School Worcester; the Elgar Foundation prize and statuette for the outstanding choir of the Festival was awarded to the Joyful Company of Singers from Enfield.

Altogether the Festival was a most enterprising venture and due thanks must be given to the various sponsors for their generous financial support; to Dr. Donald Hunt, Festival Director; S. Driver White and all members of the Festival Committee whose efforts made the Festival such an outstanding success.

Bernard Hall-Mancey.

## RANDOM RAMBLINGS OF AN ELGARIAN EDITOR

A sharp-eyed gramophile has spotted an inconsistency in the quote from Basil Maine used by Jerrold Northrop Moore in his article on the Enigma in the last issue. Maine speaks of an occasion at Marl Bank in 1932 when he and Elgar listened to "Toscanini's recording" of the *Prague Symphony*. That would not have been possible, as the great maestro never recorded the work; but Elgar *did* possess the recording made by Erich Kleiber and the Vienna Philharmonic (see Dr Moore's *Elgar on Record* p.235), as well as records of Haydn, Mendelssohn, and Rossini conducted by Toscanini.

A sharp-eared gramophile has drawn attention to the performance of *Cockaigne* on the recent Naxos recording (reviewed in the May JOURNAL), pointing out that the third and fourth bars of fig.11 are missing, "swallowed up in some digital editing suite", he suspects. Is this a unique occurrence, I wonder? I have heard of wrong notes, and occasionally wrong words (Clifford Grant sings "by the beams of the sun" in Boul't's *Apostles*); but I have never come across incomplete recordings before. Are there others?

\* \* \* \* \*

On 22 April *The Guardian* carried an intriguing piece by one of its chief political commentators, Edward Pearce, in which he sought to answer the question, "Can music represent good?" There are references to Wagner, Verdi, Nielsen, and Bruckner, and the following :

Edward Elgar was not an admirable man : a bundle of petty snobberies and anxieties, a social climber and, so far as the record assembled by his biographers makes clear, lacking any understanding of the pain of other people.

Elgar responded to the first world war by grieving for the horses and explicitly stating that he didn't care about the men. He was an unintelligent Conservative of the frightened kind and a preposterous aspirer to the rights of acquired class, resigning membership of a London club when poor Ramsay Macdonald was admitted a member. It isn't possible to like Elgar, though very easy to feel sorry for him.

But for the general public, who came nearer to an expression of good than Elgar with his *cello concerto*? It may have taken 40 years to sink in, but that extraordinary cry, the plangent grief of it, has taken a wide public by the ventricles of the heart. And it truly is a wonderful piece of music. But it has nothing to do with the world war or dead soldiers. Elgar was too egotistical to give them his attention. It expresses exactly the sentiments of that underrated poet Lawrence Binyon writing 20 years later: "The world that was ours is a world that is ours no more".

It is a lament for his private world, socially secure, idyllic, green, English and trance-like. The point about Elgar is that you can't make an arithmetical judgment of his moral stature in the way of the Americans for Democratic Action awarding a senator points for his voting record. Elgar, in Cromwell's phrase, knew what he loved and loved what he knew. And it transcended the snobbish thing, embracing an idealised and unreal, but undoubtedly *good* image of England.

How else would he have distilled from the robustness of Shakespeare's Falstaff the single sentiment "a died babbling o' green fields"? Elgar had a right to love the things he did and his celebration of them in the *Cello Concerto*, *Falstaff* and above all, his greatest composition, the *Introduction and Allegro for Strings*, is the avowal of love for something, and thus near enough to good.

\* \* \* \* \*

British music suffered another tragically premature loss in April with the death of the contralto Alfreda Hodgson at the age of 51. The music of Elgar was one of her specialities, and she recorded four of the large-scale choral works, all with different conductors : *The Dream of Gerontius* with Gibson; the *Coronation Ode* with Ledger; *The Kingdom* with Slatkin; and *The Apostles* with Hickox, who in a tribute in *The Gramophone* wrote : "In *The Apostles* she displayed perhaps her most dramatic singing on record, and I am proud to have shared that performance with her. She commanded huge respect from everyone she worked with and was not only a singer's singer but also a musician's musician". How tragic that she never gave us a *Sea Pictures* or *The Music Makers*.

\* \* \* \* \*

An American member, Philip Brunelle, is Artistic Director of the Plymouth Music Series of Minnesota. As general editor of the Cathedral series of church music, he has recently published *Ave verum corpus, O salutaris hostia* (the version in F), and *Ecce sacerdos magnus*, which are "selling very well". Mr Brunelle's interest in English music is well-known, and reflected in his recordings of Britten's *Paul Bunyan* and *The Company of Heaven* for Virgin Records. Another Society member from the U.S.A. has brought out a new biography of Charles Ives, entitled "My Father's Song" [Yale University Press]. Dr Stuart Feder is a practising psychoanalyst and holds an advanced degree in music from Harvard University. The book should be available in Britain later this year.

\* \* \* \* \*

On the day of the launch of The Elgar Edition (see above) the *Daily Telegraph* crossword contained the following clue : "Number of Elgar's overture announced [9]". The answer is "Cockaigne" (if you are mystified, find a crossword buff and ask for an explanation). Elgar of course loved puzzles and quizzes and was very good at them. From time to time the JOURNAL has tested members' knowledge, and I am pleased to continue the tradition. So : to which of his friends did Elgar dedicate most works? There are no prizes, as the answer can be found in any number of places; the solution will be given in the January issue.

\* \* \* \* \*

The latest episode in the saga of locomotive no.50007 (the "Sir Edward Elgar") is that it was withdrawn from service in July last year; however, after repair it has been restored to traffic for special duties (eg. railtours) based at Plymouth. However, the class to which it belongs has been largely superseded from active duties, and 50007 is likely to be sold out of service before too long.

\* \* \* \* \*

The retiring Chairman, Christopher Robinson, in his final address to the AGM spoke of his first year conducting the choir of St John's Cambridge. He has introduced them to Elgar's two settings of the psalms (*Great is the Lord* and *Give unto the Lord*). "I think they enjoyed them", he said.

While on the subject of church music (and I know that there are many organists in the Society) the latest catalogue from the publisher Kevin Mayhew contains a number of Elgar pieces, including *Cantique* and some of the *Vesper Voluntaries*, as well as some of the shorter anthems. Mayhew's address is Rattlesden, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP30 0SZ.

\* \* \* \* \*

A rare professional performance of *Caractacus* is scheduled to take place at the Barbican, London on Sunday 25 October at 7.30. Richard Hickox will conduct the London Symphony Chorus and Orchestra with soloists Judith Howarth, Arthur Davies, David Wilson-Johnson, Alastair Miles and Stephen Roberts.

London Branch has reserved a block of seats for this performance at a discount of 15% (£12-75) or 20% (£12) on seats with a face value of £15, depending on the size of the final party.

Applications for places on this block booking should be sent to the Secretary of London Branch (address on the back cover) by 15 September. Cheques should be made out to "Elgar Society (London Branch)" with the amount payable left open but with a limit based on the higher ticket price - viz. £12-75. It would be appreciated if a stamped self-addressed envelope could be enclosed for reply.

\* \* \* \* \*

One of my very favourite Elgar works is *The Light of Life*, and the *Financial Times* recently announced that it has been given in Washington. However, Andrew Porter's reference to it was an aside : the purpose of his article was to draw attention to the singing of the mezzo soloist, Denyce Graves, in whom, he says, "America has acquired a new Kathleen Ferrier".

Nearer home, the work was given in April by the combined forces of the Hitchin Girls' and Boys' Schools in St Mary's Church conducted by Paul Rooke, Director of Music at Hitchin Girls' School and a London Branch member. It was a wholly amateur production; indeed, the ladies' solos were taken by two fourth form girls who gave an excellent account of themselves. At the end of May a chamber choir from the Girls' School visited Salzburg and their programme included the choruses "Doubt not Thy Father's care" and "Woe to the Shepherds". They were very well received : and Mr Rooke wonders whether this is the first time that any part of *The Light of Life* has been performed in Salzburg.

\* \* \* \* \*

I hope the leaflet promoting Radio 3 programmes for June was not a portent for what we can expect from the new-look station. It announced that one of the works to be covered in 'Building a Library' was "Elgar's opera[sic] *Falstaff*". Fortunately the only voice to be heard was Jerrold Northrop Moore weighing up the respective

merits of the seven available versions of this orchestral work. Two were dismissed early on; Dutoit - "too neat and scrupulous" - and Gibson - "lacklustre". Elgar's recording, part of the first set of the "Elgar Edition", is obviously in a class of its own, though the first choice among more modern versions was Barbirolli's 1964 EMI recording, available at mid-price and apparently saved from imminent deletion by being recommended here. There was also qualified praise for the other three versions - Solti; Barenboim; and Christopher Seaman conducting the National Youth Orchestra, whose young leader, said JNM, provided the finest violin playing of all in the first Interlude.

\* \* \* \* \*

London Branch will be host for the first M.D.Richards Memorial lecture on Saturday 28 November (2 pm - 5 pm) at Imperial College (Sherfield Building), South Kensington SW7 2AZ. Dr Vernon Handley will speak about "Conducting Elgar's Oratorios".

Admission to the event is free to members of the Society and Guests since funding will be provided from the M.D.Richards Bequest (see May JOURNAL p.25). However, the London Branch very much hopes that members will avail themselves of the College "VIP" tea during the interval at a cost of £2-50 since, if tea is laid on, it is necessary to have a viable number eating it!

It is not intended to issue tickets for this event, but it would be most helpful if intending members of the audience could indicate such intention in advance to the Secretary of the London Branch (address on back cover) to facilitate planning.

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### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

26 September	The Dream of Gerontius <i>J.van Nes, D.O'Neill, D.Wilson-Johnson/ Philh. Chor. &amp; Orch/Svetlanov</i>	Royal Festival Hall South Bank
8 October	Symphony no.1 <i>BBC Welsh SO/Otaka</i>	Symphony Hall Birmingham
9 October	Cello Concerto <i>C. Carr/BBC Philharmonic/J.P.Tortelier</i>	Symphony Hall Birmingham
10 October	The Kingdom <i>J.Rigby, C.Cairns, L.Dale, D.Wilson- Johnson/ BBC Singers, Chor &amp; SO/ A.Davis</i>	Symphony Hall Birmingham
11 October	Violin Concerto, Enigma Variations <i>K.Nikkanen/ BBC Scottish/Maksymiuk</i>	Symphony Hall Birmingham



12 October	The Kingdom <i>P.Coburn, C.Cairns, L.Dale, D.Wilson- Johnson/ BBC Singers, Chor &amp; SO/ A.Davis</i>	Royal Festival Hall South Bank
17 October	The Kingdom <i>H.Field, S.Burgess, N.Jenkins, B.Rayner Cook/Worc.Fest.Chor.Soc, Roy.Liv.PO/ Hunt</i>	Worcester Cathedral 7.30 pm
18 October	Symphony no.1 <i>BBC SO/A.Davis</i>	Royal Festival Hall South Bank
25 October	Caractacus (see Random Ramblings for details)	Barbican Hall 7.30 pm
27 October	Cello Concerto <i>J.Lloyd Webber/ Young Musicians SO/ Blair</i>	Royal Festival Hall South Bank
30 October	Symphony no.1 <i>RSO/ Gibson</i>	Usher Hall Edinburgh
31 October	Repeat of the above concert	Royal Concert Hall Glasgow
9-16 November	Hereford & Worcester Schools' Elgar Performance Week (for details see Random Ramblings)	
27 November	Enigma Variations <i>RPO/ Wordsworth</i>	Royal Festival Hall South Bank
29 November	Introduction & Allegro (with Bax : Winter Legends; and Derek Bourgeois : Trombone Concerto (1st performance)) <i>Guildford PO/ Handley</i>	Civic Hall Guildford
15 December	Etudes Caractéristiques pour violon seul	Purcell Room South Bank
8 January	Enigma Variations <i>RSO/ Glover</i>	Usher Hall Edinburgh
9 January	repeat of above concert	Royal Concert Hall Glasgow
10 January	Cello Concerto <i>LPO Youth O/ artistes to be announced</i>	Queen Elizabeth Hall South Bank

## MUSIC REVIEW

Variations on an Original Theme, Opus 36. Elgar Complete Edition : volume 27.  
Novello £79-95 (cloth) : £54-95 (paperback).

The introductory pages to *Enigma Variations* follow a now familiar pattern : a long historical Foreword by Robert Anderson and Jerrold Northrop Moore, four facsimiles, a detailed setting-out of the sources, and a commentary by Robert Anderson on the actual notational changes.

It is splendid to have all the quotations, dates, and relevant material for the genesis of this famous English work gathered together and so cogently laid out. However it is important to check all the footnotes, for it is strange to find that the first account given here of how the work came to be written was published in December 1932, the second in 1911, and only the third during the year of performance, 1899. (Greedy, I would have liked one more, the still earlier and characteristically humorous letter on 16 February 1899 to Edwards, editor of *Musical Times*, which mentions that the theme was original, that Elgar recognized the superstition about the number 13, and that in each variation he had looked at the theme 'through the personality' of the subject - 'another Johnny'.) But the probable point of this order is to lessen emphasis on the 'mystery' or 'enigma'. If, as the editors stress, the theme emerged during extemporisation, it was unlikely to conceal some counterpoint or cipher (though recently Dr Moore seems to have endorsed Joseph Cooper's suggestion of a link with the Andante of Mozart's *Prague Symphony*).

If the Foreword does not proceed strictly chronologically in its quotations, it yields enough details and dates that anyone interested may draw up a month by month (almost week by week) chart of the *Variations*' progress from the conception on 21 October 1898 (just after the production of *Caractacus*) to the publication of the printed score in January 1900 - even to a metronome mark change for Nimrod in 1903.

One point is brought out by making such a time-chart. The MS full score was sent to Richter in Vienna during February 1899, and he agreed in early April to produce the work. Only then did the score reach Novello, so this would have been Jaeger's first chance to write the word 'enigma' over the theme. Was it possibly some comment by Richter, either in a letter or in a meeting with Jaeger, that gave rise to this? Elgar was in London on 10 April, just after the score arrived, and saw Jaeger.

For the personalia the editors have printed the draft now at the Birthplace which Elgar wrote for the pianola rolls issued in 1929, familiar from the booklet *My Friends Pictured Within*. The Foreword lays to rest any old speculations about whether or not Variation XI was Dan the Bulldog (it was), whether or not Variation XIII was Lady Mary Lygon (it was) - though no mention is made of a possible emotional connection with Helen Weaver.

It is good to find the original ending in an appendix; after all, it was used for Ashton's ballet, and has a considerable interest, as the comments on it in the text show. The exact source of the Tasso quotation, however, still seems elusive. As for

the Commentary, it is a humbling experience to compare an old well-worn miniature score with just bars 15-17 of this edition, and find a missing tie, pianissimo, and pause. It is a pleasure to listen afresh to this music with such a handsome edition.

Diana McVeagh

## BOOK REVIEW

A Short Guide to Edward Elgar in Malvern by Cora Weaver

Available from the Cora Weaver Press, 4 Hall Green, Malvern Worcs WR14  
3QX Price: £1-95

Mrs Weaver will be remembered for her informative book *The Thirteenth Variation* (reviewed September 1989), a monograph on Elgar's early love, Helen Weaver (to whom she is related by marriage). She has already written other short guides to the Malvern area, and was also involved in the production of the tape guide to the Elgar Trail. This latest addition is a well-produced little booklet of 16 pages, with some interesting photographs, including Fair Lea - home of the Fitton family - and Wyche Side, where Dr Grindrod lived. The text is accurate and clear, though surely Forli and Craeg Lea deserve greater prominence, considering their importance in the Elgar story. (Space could have been created by omitting the facsimile of a postcard of 1903 from Jaeger to Carice, which seems to bear no relevance at all to the rest of the booklet). The fifteen places on the itinerary include a few where the Elgar connection seems somewhat tenuous; for instance, the Gentlemen's Club and the Public Library. A map of Great Malvern shows the location of all the places mentioned, excepting Wyche Side and St Wulstan's Church.

A very useful aid for new members and others visiting Malvern for the first time.

The Editor

## RECORD REVIEWS

"The Elgar Edition" Vol.1

Symphony no.1 in A♭ Op.55; Symphonic study, Falstaff Op.68; Symphony no.2 in E♭ Op.63; The Dream of Gerontius Op.38 - excerpts; Civic Fanfare & National Anthem; The Music Makers Op.69 - excerpts.

London Symphony Orchestra, Royal Albert Hall Orchestra, soloists and choirs  
conducted by Sir Edward Elgar  
EMI 3 CD set : CDS7 54560 2

The prominence of Elgar's place in the history of recorded sound is beyond question. He was the first composer fully to understand the importance of the gramophone as a disseminator of his own music and his achievements for EMI in that capacity are of immense value. We live in days of obsession with "authenticity". Well, here in this first CD release of Elgar's electrical recordings are authentic performances indeed, in which we hear not only the style and manner of Elgar's performance but also the actual sounds and technique of the instruments of his day - *portamenti* and all! Of

course there will always be room for future interpretation and styles of performance but on these discs we may safely assume to have a demonstration of how the works were conceived and these recordings must always stand as a reference point.

Much has been written already concerning the performances and the many insights they afford on Elgar's approach to his own works which sometimes overrode the explicit instructions he gave to his players in the score. The fascinating differences between the two readings of the *Second Symphony* - here and, acoustically, in the Pearl set - bear witness to his own refusal to submit to a rigidly self-imposed manner of performance. We also have most interesting glimpses of Elgar recorded 'live' at a Three Choirs' Festival and in London's Royal Albert Hall when it was impossible to re-take any unsatisfactory passages. It is among these excerpts that are to be heard many of the recordings which had not been published prior to the LP releases which the CDs are intended to supersede. Those LPs were brought together in two boxed sets issued in the 70s but soon deleted although some of the constituent records enjoyed a further lease of life as individual LPs. Test pressings of the *Gerontius* Prelude from the 1927 Albert Hall performance, however, were not discovered until after the EMI LP release had been completed and they were therefore made available subsequently to Pearl who issued them with the other *Gerontius* excerpts in their Opal series. That LP has now been transferred to CD in which format it is available concurrently with the issue under review. Many of the LP re-issues have assumed 'collector's item' status so that it has to be assumed that many younger Elgarians may not be familiar with the performances at all. It will be noted that EMI are asking full price for these discs on the ground of their having to bear the heavy expenditure of the elaborate computer processing involved in their production. It is most regrettable, however, that having been so long out of copyright and with all royalties settled long ago the issue should be burdened with such a purchasing disincentive. These recordings are the musical equivalent of listed buildings and should never have been allowed to be "demolished" in the first place. Notwithstanding this imposition, however, newcomers to these performances should need little inducement to familiarise themselves with them and it is to be hoped they will avail themselves of the premium price offer available through the Birthplace.

The engineers have applied their skills to the original masters of the two symphonies and the oratorio excerpts. For *Falstaff* and the *Civic Fanfare* they were apparently satisfied with the master tape produced for the LP issues and then submitted it to the computer process. It cannot be claimed that the resulting sound quality is greatly different from the transfers in the remainder of the issue. Where the original 78 stampers have survived it has been possible to clean them and take vinyl pressings having all the advantages of silent playing surfaces. Otherwise it has been necessary to resort to commercial pressings in shellac or surviving test pressings of the unpublished items and the computer has had to reconcile the often disparate sounds from all these sources to present as far as possible consistency of sound quality for the listener. Many prospective purchasers will nevertheless regard the use of computer "improvements" with suspicion in view of the unsatisfactory results obtained from previous attempts. It is evident from the outset, however, that the technique as applied to these CDs has undergone some noticeable refinements although opinions will doubtless differ as to the degree of success achieved. Your reviewer, reared on 78s with all their imperfections finds himself more tolerant of

extraneous noise than many of his acquaintance brought up on the luxury of microgroove. There is, to be sure, an underlying "hiss" of varying prominence on these discs but the ear quite soon becomes accustomed to it and it will only jog the listener's attention when it changes as at side-joins of the originals. Typical of these is the connection between the first and second sides of the second movement of the *First Symphony* where there is a changeover from shellac to vinyl pressings. More reprehensible at this point, however, is the loss of a quaver of the music in the process [at 4 m 21 sec of the track or fig.77 in the score]. Otherwise the piecing together of the original records is efficiently carried out and the ear is quickly drawn into the absorbing stream of the music itself. The digital technology seems to allow more "elbow room" to the music, as it were, and there doesn't seem to be any awareness as hitherto that these are mono and not stereo recordings, such is the ambience now achieved. The voices in the choral excerpts also seem to come over more effortlessly than before; for example, some of the soprano "peaks" which always seemed to distort are now negotiated more smoothly.

Mention must be made of some bonuses included in the issue. The track of Elgar rehearsing the orchestra which first appeared in the box *Images of Elgar* is included in somewhat extended form although the fresh material is more of the orchestra than of Elgar's voice. Whereas the LP version was transferred with maximum "top" exposure (presumably to enhance the voice) the digital remastering eliminates the "crackly" surface noise but substitutes a "hiss" which is more obtrusive than on the purely musical tracks. New to this issue is the inclusion of the offending first take of this portion of the Rondo (of the *Second Symphony*) whose second take had been recorded in rehearsal. A further refinement made possible by the CD technology is the indexing of the respective episodes in *Falstaff* enabling one to select any of six sections from the divisions of the work set out in Elgar's "Analytical Essay" which he wrote for *The Musical Times* in 1913 and which owners of the original 78s will recall comprising the notes included in the album.

As in all ventures of this kind a great deal is owed to the indefatigable Dr Jerrold Northrop Moore whose diligence and untiring energies have hounded down the unpublished material in the series. Particulars of these discoveries together with much other absorbing background information concerning the whole project are set out in a most informative booklet of notes accompanying the issue. Our thanks are also due to the EMI engineers who have presented the result of these labours in such remarkably good sound. We await their next instalment expectantly.

David G. Michell

"The Elgar Edition" : Elgar's complete recordings 1914-25

*Pearl GEMM CDS 9951-5*

I wonder how many people remember the original Pearl LPs which appeared one by one in the early 1970s, with their plain white covers and framed oval photographs? They were exciting days, with EMI bringing out the two boxes of electrical recordings at about the same time. It is propitious that the timing of the CD release of the two sets should again coincide, for there is no real competition between them (though undoubtedly there will be confusion over the use of the same title).

Obviously the sound quality is far superior on the later recordings, which have the added advantage of being taken from the shells, as opposed to the Pearl which are from commercial pressings. In addition, Elgar recorded considerably more music during the "electrical" era, and the works concerned are all in their entirety (with the exception of the choral pieces).

Yet it would be foolish to overlook or minimise the importance of these early recordings. Clearly Elgar was what we might term a "natural" in the recording studio. Despite the limitations imposed by the acoustic process, there is a tremendous verve and commitment on the part of the performers (as of course there is on the later records as well). Also, many of the works were not recorded again, most notably *Sea Pictures* and the works written during the war. Some have a special significance in that they were recorded soon after their composition - *Carillon*, *The Fringes of the Fleet*, the *Starlight Express* music, and the *Cello Concerto*. Sadly the two concerti are horribly disfigured in their abridged arrangements, but even here there is much to enjoy; and how fortunate we should feel to possess these extracts if Elgar had not gone on to record the works in full! Beatrice Harrison was able to give a complete account of herself nine years later, as we know, but I was impressed as never before by the violin playing of Marie Hall, which is full of confidence and passion.

This brings us to the transfers and the quality of the sound. The LP transfers used a noise reduction system which cut out most of the "sausages-in-a-frying-pan" effect we are all familiar with, but which at the same time made the performers sound rather distant and two-dimensional, and much of the orchestral detail was lost. The man entrusted with the CD transfers was our own David Michell, Vice-Chairman of the London Branch, who has succeeded brilliantly. He has used cleaner copies (nearly all his own); and the volume, clarity, immediacy and ambience are a revelation, similar to listening to a 78 through a horn. Yes, there is some surface noise, and the odd click and bump, but I soon became so engrossed in the performance of the music that I hardly noticed. And some of the transfers are from very clean pressings indeed; listen to *Carillon* on the first record, which sounds like a mint copy. The use of the lower brass and woodwind to boost the double bass line seems to work well; just occasionally the different timbre jars a little, as at the recapitulation of the main theme in the slow movement of the *Second Symphony* (fig.79). This wonderful work - recorded in full, and in the view of some an ever finer version than the later electrical recording - is undoubtedly the highlight of the set.

Lack of space denies a more detailed appraisal which this collection really deserves. As Andrew Neill said at the launch of the EMI set, Elgar's recordings are fundamental to the history of the gramophone; and no gramophile, certainly no Elgarian, should be without this set. It is indeed a Pearl - of great price possibly, but of great value also! Take your LPs to the charity shop, and revel in the delights and beauties of these unique recordings in their new transfers.

The Editor

Music for Violin and Piano.

Romance in E minor, Op.1. La Capricieuse, Op.17. Salut d'Amour, Op.12. Chanson de Nuit, Op.15, no.1. Chanson de Matin, Op.15, no.2. Gavotte.

Isabelle Flory (violin), Barry Collett (piano).

Mazurka, Op.10, no.1. Serenade (arr.Szigeti). Adieu (arr.Szigeti). Etudes Caractéristiques, Op.24.

Chris Nicholls (violin), Barry Collett (piano).

Whitetower ENS 177 (cassette only), available from the Elgar Society.

Barry Collett has done sterling service to the Elgarian cause over the years by unearthing, performing and recording unusual or occasional pieces which would otherwise have been forgotten. Most notable in this regard have been the War Music (Pearl SHECD 9602) and the dances for the Powick Asylum (Whitetower ENS 161). The current recording, sponsored by the Society, contains the *Etudes Caractéristiques* for solo violin, never before recorded, and extremely difficult to play. Elgar wrote them to improve his own technique after he had received lessons from Pollitzer in 1877-8. They were, he wrote later, "...mainly for the 'poise' of the bow, although the left hand is not neglected...". Chris Nicholls, a young violinist of great ability and promise, copes well with the severe technical demands of the pieces, yet to be honest I was disappointed with the result. Although primarily exercises, they are meant to be listened to as pieces; yet here they are made to sound like a collection of notes, especially A and D (the five studies are lettered not numbered for some reason). Admittedly having to play thirty-two bars of demisemiquavers marked *allegro* makes it difficult to pick out a tune, but I think some sort of compromise with the composer's directions was necessary to make them sound easy on the ear. A few years ago on the radio Carl Pini played three of them - slightly slower, but they made more musical sense. The anapaestic figure which comprises the "tune" throughout much of B is made to sound rather muddy when taken at such a rush. C and E are the most successful of the set, but here again Pini with a more mature and unhurried approach made them more convincing musically.

The rest of the side is well played and of considerable interest. The Mazurka is Elgar's own arrangement of the opening movement of the *Three Characteristic Pieces*; while the two late piano trifles, *Serenade* and *Adieu* are in very acceptable arrangements by the great Hungarian violinist, Josef Szigeti (and recorded by him in the 1930s) - acceptable, that is, except for his decision to begin the *Adieu* arrangement with a quote from the first movement of Elgar's *Violin Concerto*, which doesn't really work.

All the works on the other side have been recorded before, though only once for the *Romance* and the *Gavotte* [by John Georgiadis on Pearl SHE 523, no longer available]. What a pity some of the more popular tracks could not have been replaced by one or two rarer pieces, in particular the beautiful *Idylle*. The soloist on this side is the French violinist Isabelle Flory, who plays intelligently and well. I prefer a bigger sound on occasions (such as at the end of the *Romance*) and this is not helped by the balance on this side of the tape which slightly favours the piano. The highlight of this recording for me is *La Capricieuse*, deliciously played with

Gallic charm, pushing *rubato* to the limit, but you can almost see the fluttering eyelashes, the toss of the head, and the twirl of the parasol. I defy you not to enjoy it!

Barry Collett is as ever a considerate and sensitive accompanist; and at £5 this is not to be missed.

The Editor

The Wand of Youth : Suites I & II, Op.1a & 1b. Dream Children, Op.43. The Starlight Express, Op.78 : songs.

*Alison Hagley (soprano), Bryn Terfel (baritone),  
Orchestra of the Welsh National Opera conducted by Sir Charles Mackerras  
Decca Argo 433 214-2*

This record is an absolute delight. It was an imaginative stroke by Decca (or Mackerras) to bring together a collection of Elgar's music inspired by childhood memories.

The gem of the record is undoubtedly the performances of the songs from *The Starlight Express*. I don't know whether the pioneering Bournemouth/George Hurst Chandos CD of a similar selection is still available (CHAN 8428, coupled with the *King Arthur* Suite), but in any case it is now quite superceded. The Chandos sound (a digitally remastered 1973 tape) still sounds perfectly acceptable, but the new Argo is quite a lot clearer in orchestral detail. Mackerras conducts with greater crispness, and his soloists certainly have the edge on their predecessors, Cynthia Glover and John Lawrenson, who sound just a touch arch and precious by comparison. Alison Hagley and Bryn Terfel, two of the brightest young British vocal talents, sing the songs "straight" and with superbly clear diction.

The selection of items is not exactly the same as on the Chandos recording : near the end, Hurst and his soloists include the brief and inconsequential "Dandelions, Daffodils" from the start of Act III, placed between "My Old Tunes" and the Finale. Mackerras substitutes the marginally more substantial little song "O Think Beauty", sung in the play by the little girl Jane-Anne. He also includes the brief but evocative "Wake up, you Night Winds" (complete with wind machine) sung by the Organ Grinder in Act II - the winds being summoned to assist the very large Woman of the Haystack squeeze into the Star Cave (you will need to read the story to make any sense of this!)

The two *Wand of Youth* Suites are played with great verve and rhythmic energy and the playing of the Orchestra of the Welsh National Opera is very accomplished indeed, some lack of body in the strings being more than balanced by fine wind playing, and very exciting brass sound, and I love Mackerras's delicate handling of the two linked little pieces *Dream Children*. The recorded sound is excellent, the warm acoustic of the Brangwyn Hall, Swansea adding a slightly boomy resonance to some of the louder passages.



As I have said, a delightful record. Of course no true Elgarian should be without Vernon Handley's complete recording of the *Starlight Express* music, dating from 1976 and currently available on a two CD box in the mid-price "Studio" series. The Elgar is imaginatively coupled with Handley's 1979 recording of the music Delius wrote in 1920 for Flecker's play *Hassan*. I have to say, however, that Mackerras's two soloists have the edge over Handley's Valerie Masterson and Derek Hammond-Stroud - but only just.

Gareth H.Lewis

The Wand of Youth : Suites I & II, Op.1a & 1b. Dream Children, Op.43. Nursery Suite. The Starlight Express, Op.78 : Overture and Finale.

*Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra conducted by Raymond Leppard  
Koss Classics KC-1014*

What a fascinating record! A generous helping (over seventy minutes) of Elgar's music for children played by an American orchestra under its music director, an Englishman with no previous Elgar recordings to his name; and recorded on a relatively new label. The name of Koss will always be associated with stereo headphones, but in 1986 the Corporation President, Michael J. Koss outlined a plan to produce CDs. He was "disappointed by the lack of attention accorded less popular orchestral and chamber music repertoire by compact disc producers".

This new recording amply justifies his decision. I approached it with a good deal of anticipation, as Leppard, with his energetic flair and rhythmic vitality, seemed ideal for the three suites; and I was not disappointed. These are faithful and loving performances, flamboyant in places but avoiding the Scylla of bombast on the one side and the Charybdis of sentimentality on the other. One striking feature is Leppard's attention to the dynamic markings; the contrast between loud and soft passages is exemplary, and there is a clear difference between *p* and *pp*, for instance. In "Fairies and Giants" from the first *Wand of Youth* Suite, he saves something for the third giant at fig.49 so that the *fff* is significantly louder than the preceding pages. [Elgar once said he loved to hear the three giants coming on one after another : he would have loved these].

Leppard's tempi are normally very close to the metronome marking, though he is much faster than usual in the "Minuet"; and the "Slumber Scene", though beautifully played, is a little too wide awake (no one matches Elgar's own recording here). In "Fairy Pipers" Leppard is much closer to ♩ = 120 than Elgar, but the faster speed is achieved at the expense of the *rubato* which Elgar calls for in the clarinets.

The orchestra play to the manner born. There is excellent ensemble, and plenty of scope for virtuoso performances from virtually every instrument in the band, as they revel in the superb orchestration. Listen to the horns enjoying their fat little phrase just before fig.3 in the "Overture". The recording is beautifully clear and well-balanced, though the percussion in "The Wild Bears" is almost inaudible, which is a pity.

There are far too few recordings of this wonderful music; in fact, this is only the second time that the *Wand of Youth* and *Nursery Suites* have appeared on the same disc. It is therefore slightly ironic and sad that this disc should be released concurrently with the Mackerras reviewed above (which I have not yet heard), which has a considerable overlap. However, full marks to Koss's initiative in producing such a disc : dare we hope for more?

The Editor

Sea Pictures, Op.37. The Music Makers, Op.69.

*Linda Finnie, contralto; London Philharmonic Choir,  
London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Bryden Thomson  
Chandos CHAN 9022*

The traditional dark-toned British contralto seems to be an almost extinct species (except perhaps within the ranks of the D'Oyly Carte company). Current musical taste seems to favour a lighter-toned mezzo voice, but to me the vocal writing and orchestral scoring of *Sea Pictures* calls for a solo voice with greater depth of tone (not to mention a richer, more resonant lower register) than any of the soloists on the four currently available recordings.

Each of the four conductors - Barbirolli, Handley, Hickox, and now Thomson - adopts broadly similar, but for my taste rather slow tempi, with Thomson generally marginally the slowest. One advantage of his slow speeds, helped by meticulous balancing and Chandos's superb recorded sound, is a greater clarity of orchestral detail than on any other recording I know. Thus one is more aware than ever how imaginatively these songs are orchestrated; I was particularly struck by the unsettling effect of the persistent, surging undertow from the lower strings in the first song "Sea Slumber Song".

No one, however, would regard these songs as consistently great Elgar, and keeping them moving at least does something to disguise their weaknesses. At Thomson's tempo the last song, "The Swimmer", which always strikes me as overlong, is dragged out interminably and loses direction. On the other hand, "Sabbath Morning at Sea", the powerful central point in the cycle, despite a slowish speed, is most successfully done, projecting a strong sense of drama (it is also the only half-decent poem in the cycle).

For many Elgarians the Baker/Barbirolli recording has a very special place. It still sounds well, but I have to admit to a personal antipathy to Dame Janet's swoopy style, occasionally suspect intonation and over-precious projection of the words. She also has a habit on record of dropping the tone into a veiled *mezzavoce*, superficially lovely, but which would be inaudible in the concert hall. This has had a bad influence on several of her younger colleagues hoping to emulate Dame Janet's success. Linda Finnie is one of these, but in slower passages her quiet singing tends to be colourless in tone and sometimes a little unsteady. Bernadette Greevy, with Handley and the LPO on a mid-price Classics for Pleasure disc, is probably the nearest to a true contralto amongst modern interpreters on record. The only rival to

Linda Finnie at full price is Felicity Palmer (with Hickox and the LSO on EMI) who is even more of a mezzo in vocal colour (she started as a soprano), but her range is impressive, and her bright, edgy tone undoubtedly enhances the impact of the more dramatic songs. However I would still recommend the cheaper Greevy recordings as first choice amongst CD versions of *Sea Pictures* - but lovers of these songs should scour the second hand record shops for the Lauris Elms version on RCA Gold Seal, still my favourite recording.

The Palmer/Hickox shares the same coupling as this new Chandos recording. There is little to choose between Thomson's and Hickox's interpretations of *The Music Makers*. Their tempi throughout are almost identical, although Hickox brings a touch more rhythmic vitality to the faster passages, aided by a rather less resonant acoustic. The new Chandos recording finds the London Philharmonic Choir below best form, although some of the muddiness of detail and tonal gruffness may in part be due to the rather backward choral balance. The London Symphony Chorus sings splendidly for Hickox and, of the rival mezzo soloists, I again found Felicity Palmer more involved and assured.

The only other recording of *The Music Makers*, Boult's pioneering 1967 version, reissued on CD as a fill-up to *Gerontius*, is currently unavailable, although it might well have reappeared in EMI's mid-price "British Composers" series before you read this. Hickox is therefore my preference of the two current versions, and the new Chandos recording must take second place for any one wanting this particular coupling. For the *Sea Pictures*, however, Greevy and Handley win by a short head.

Gareth H.Lewis

Symphony no.1 in A flat, Op.55. Pomp & Circumstance Marches, Op.39, nos 1 & 4  
*Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Giuseppe Sinopoli*  
*Deutsche Grammophon 431 663-2*

Sinopoli's recording of the *Second Symphony*, which I reviewed in the May 1989 JOURNAL, caused great interest, and not a little controversy. He cast a refreshing new light on the symphony, and although there were many interpretative points with which I disagreed, and I could not place it amongst my top recommendations, I commended it to Elgarians as a thoughtful, carefully planned and beautifully played reappraisal of this familiar music.

I had therefore looked forward to reacting similarly to Sinopoli's recording of the *First Symphony*, but somehow it seems to me to be far less successful. The new recording starts off, however, with one big advantage : the recorded sound is exceptionally beautiful. The recording was made at All Saints' church, Tooting - the same location that Chandos used for their LPO/Thomson version - and the sound is basically similar : somewhat recessed in a resonant acoustic, but the DG engineers have obtained just a little more detailed clarity.

As far as the performance is concerned, Sinopoli is renowned for his tendency to slow tempi, supported by exceptional rhythmic control which often belies the slow

speeds. In the first movement, however, the tempi are not uniformly slow. A comparison of his timings with other currently available versions shows that Sinopoli's overall speed is about average - but within this there are wide variations of tempo. Sinopoli starts off well by taking the introductory fifty bars of the first movement at not far below the marked tempo - about the same speed as Boult and Elgar himself - and quicker, and with a steadier forward pulse, than some of his recent rivals on record. Indeed, the main part of the movement gets off to a good brisk start, but at the second subject (fig. 12 in the score) Sinopoli inexplicably slows drastically; in my view seriously interrupting the forward flow of the movement. The rest of the movement tends to follow this pattern, with moments when one is captivated by Sinopoli's sensitive understanding of the music, followed by longeurs when the flow of the movement seems to come to a standstill.

Sinopoli's tempo for the second movement is just right, lacking perhaps the fiery crispness of Slatkin's superb handling of the movement, but with fine rhythmic drive. His third movement, however, at over fourteen minutes, is just too slow - over a minute more than the leisurely Bryden Thomson on Chandos, and an astonishing four minutes longer than Elgar himself. He also falls heavily into the trap of pulling the music about excessively. Unlike his handling of the *Larghetto* in the *Second Symphony*, Sinopoli never allows the tempo to settle down, and his sentimental use of rubato is more appropriate to the slow movements of Elgar's great contemporary Mahler (although as I write, the 'authentic Mahler' movement is already under way!...)

The fourth movement is much more conventional in approach and tempo, but as the overall shape of the symphony has already fragmented (and been irretrievably unbalanced by the inordinate length of the *Adagio*), it cannot hope to provide any sort of summing up of the symphonic argument.

The two most popular *Pomp & Circumstance* Marches, recorded in the drier but still warm acoustic of Watford Town Hall, are beautifully done with great excitement and swagger. They are amongst the best recordings of these two marches; but the disappointing performance of the symphony has, sadly, already ruled this new disc out of court.

Gareth H.Lewis

## BRANCH REPORTS

LONDON Branch suffered the disappointment of seeing the postponement of Vernon Handley's scheduled visit in May following his involvement in a serious road accident. However, things might have been much worse and we rejoice that Dr Handley escaped serious injury. Meanwhile we are well on the way to re-arranging his London visit for next season. Not for the first time Andrew Neill came to our immediate rescue and at short notice produced, prior to the launch, examples of the magnificent EMI Elgar transfers.

A number of members formed a party based at the Cotford Hotel over the weekend of the Society AGM in Malvern, taking full advantage of the programme of events laid on by the Society. A week later came our own AGM prefaced by our eager eavesdropping on the Leonard Slatkin/Jerrold Northrop Moore discussion of the *Enigma Variations* at the Royal Academy of Music, culminating in Mr Slatkin's receiving the Elgar Medal from the hands of Andrew Neill. Needless to say an AGM must be anticlimax after such a splendid Elgarian occasion and, no doubt, there were those amongst us who envied the dignitaries who had gone off to the reception which followed the Slatkin/Moore event! But for the record, we welcomed Martin Passande as Chairman in succession to Maxwell Hutchinson, whom we trust will still find lots of time for Elgar amid all his other campaigns. Committee vacancies were filled by Bridget Duckenfield and Arthur Reynolds.

The next season begins on 5 October with "An evening with Dr Jerrold Northrop Moore". Then on 2 November Anthony Bowden will speak on "The Three Choirs', and *Emmaus* re-discovered". Walter Essex, Chairman of the Southern Branch will compare versions of "*Gerontius* on Record" on 7 December, while on 4 January Richard Morrison's title is "Kipling and Elgar : Two Kindred Spirits".

WEST MIDLANDS Branch. Apologies to all those members who searched in vain in the May issue for news of the branch. Since the last report in the January issue we have had the now annual Supper Party, the Branch AGM, and Margaret Elgar's interesting musical collection "Music in my life". At the AGM the Officers and Committee, excluding Patricia Soper, were re-elected and the Chairman thanked her for all her work associated with the Elgar graves. New faces on the Committee are Michael Trott and David Hughes. Both of the events were held at the Stables and were well attended. Our hostess, Bridget Monahan, has busied herself recently by persuading the present occupiers of what was the Shades Tavern in Mealcheapen Street to display a notice reporting its association with the Elgar family. The original plaque mysteriously disappeared when the property changed hands last year.

At the Elgar Choral Festival in May the Secretary, on behalf of the Branch, presented to Oldham School Choir a copy of "A Life in Photographs" as their prize for winning the Children's Choir Class.

Most of the Committee, together with other members, visited the Birthplace on 4 April to hear David Hawkins, a Trustee, talk about the plans for the new Centre : an excellent opportunity to see for ourselves.

Now we look forward to our 1992/93 programme which begins on 3 October with the second part of Dr Melville Cook's reminiscences of the Three Choirs Festival. Come and join us at the Friends' Meeting House, Worcester at 2.30 pm. (Members please note : the meeting in March is on the 20th, NOT the 21st).

YORKSHIRE Branch have settled well into their new premises. On 11 May we tackled "The Elgar Trail", the audio cassettes produced for playing back in the car while following the 'trail' around Worcestershire. We saved on petrol by using slides of all the Elgar houses and other buildings. Our CD request evening on 8 June was well attended, as was the Summer Social, held as always at the Secretary's home.

Our 1992/93 programme is being coaxed into readable shape and will be sent out to members well in time for the first meeting on 21 September. It will include an opportunity on 9 November to hear recorded music as Elgar would have heard it, played on period machines of the 1920s and 30s, including the famous EMG 'Handmade' Gramophone. Andrew Neill will give his talk on "Elgar and the First World War" on 12 October.

SOUTHERN Branch has continued to welcome new members recently. We were impressed with the originality and research which lay behind David Bury's "Awful Female" talk, and we hope to continue to develop links with the London Branch, our nearest neighbour. Our final meeting of the season was addressed by Ron Bleach, who gave us a thoughtful and well-illustrated talk on Elgar's Theatre Music. It was a most enjoyable way of rounding off a memorable season, and we look forward to our new season which will be launched by Dr Percy Young's visit in October.

The NORTH WEST Branch season begins in October with a talk on the *Sea Pictures*, but the date has yet to be confirmed. Our November meeting will be a talk on John Ireland followed by a performance of the *Ireland Piano Sonata*. Our AGM and Social will be held in December. Programmes for the new season will be sent out as soon as possible.

## LETTERS

*From: Ralph H. Thomas*

*I was intrigued by the comment "Elgar is not a household name in the States..." in the January edition of the JOURNAL.*

*It is all a matter of definition, of course, but here in the San Francisco Bay area the works of Elgar (and many other British composers) are well-known to many music lovers.*

*An example will suffice - we have two radio stations devoted to classical music (KKHI and KDFC). These serve to make the otherwise tedious commute by car enjoyable. During my one hour drive back and forth each day, scarcely a day goes by when Elgar's music is not played - and not just the old familiar "lollipops", but across the entire breadth of his work.*

*But then we Californians have always believed that this is "where the action is"!!*

*From: Stephen Lloyd*

*Your reviewer of Elgar's early music for wind quintet (re-issued on CD) comments on the mystery surrounding the survival of these pieces and suggests that they were never played in public prior to 1976.*

*However, the Musical Times reports a "first performance" of Promenade no.4 at one of John Parr's chamber concerts on 9 March 1935, and the January 1936 issue mentions three of his wind-and-string concerts in Sheffield at each of which "an early Elgar work" was played. Presumably the works in question were others from the now familiar set of quintets.*

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*From: Raymond Monk*

*The newly established Elgar Medal should be the first of a series of awards given by the Elgar Society. May I suggest an Elgar Record of the Year award which could be chosen annually by members of the Society. This would not be costly to administer and the Society would gain further useful publicity. Sadly, great Elgar recordings are few and far between but when they do appear the Society should be prepared to acknowledge such achievement publicly. And perhaps we could do something to raise the standard of the notes which usually accompany Elgar recordings. I fear that these often leave much to be desired. So far as 1992 is concerned we are unlikely to hear a finer recorded performance of any Elgar than that of the Quartet as played by the Mistry Quartet on Argo 433 312, and we are even more unlikely to read better notes than those provided by Diana McVeagh for this disc and also for Sir Charles Mackerras's fine Wand of Youth disc (Argo 433 214). These are a joy to read and set a standard by which all others should be judged.*

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