

Hywel Davies

The Elgar Society JOURNAL



MAY
1993

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Editorial	51
Elgar as a Conductor - Part II	52
Obituaries : Alan Webb. Rodney Baldwyn	57
An Evening with Elgar	60
Conservation Subcommittee	64
Elgar's Top Ten 1992	68
Birthplace News	69
Random Ramblings...	70
Concert Diary	73
Concert Reviews	75
Music Review	78
Book Review	81
Record Reviews	84
Branch Reports	96
Letters	98
Subscriptions	Back Cover

.....

The Editor does not necessarily agree with the views expressed by contributors nor does the Elgar Society accept responsibility for such views.

.....

The cover portrait is reproduced by kind permission of RADIO TIMES

The Elgar Society Journal

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

EDITORIAL

Vol.8, No.2
May 1993

My first knowledge of the Society's existence came almost a quarter of a century ago when I paid a visit to the Birthplace during a camping holiday in Worcestershire. It was a particularly cold and damp Whitsun, but I received a warm welcome from the Curator, whose smile and enthusiasm for Elgar were infectious. My knowledge of the composer's works at the time was little more than rudimentary, but he sat me down in the room where the gramophone was (his bedroom as I recall!) and played me the sublime Adagio from the *Piano Quintet* (the old Delta recording with Cassini and the Aeolian Quartet). I was hooked!

From letters I have received since his death in December, Alan Webb must have had a similar impact on many, many other people. Our tribute to him must I'm afraid be limited to Michael Trott's obituary, and to Alan's own account of his visit to Marl Bank in 1931; but it is right to recognise the significant role played by Alan in the re-establishment of Elgar's reputation in the musical world.

The sudden death of Dr Rodney Baldwyn is another sad loss for Elgarians, for he, like Alan Webb, had family links with the composer going back well over a century. In fact, he had only recently completed an article for the JOURNAL which will appear in the September issue. For a time Dr Baldwyn was Secretary of the Society and was a great help in establishing the West Midlands Branch in the mid-70s. To the two families we send our condolences.

On a happier note, it is a great joy to welcome Laurie Watt, the new Vice-Chairman of the Elgar Foundation, to our pages. His detailed review of four of the most recent releases of the *First Symphony* shows great perception and true Elgarian spirit, in the manner of the late Gareth Lewis, and I trust that this contribution will be the first of many.

GEOFFREY HODGKINS

ELGAR AS A CONDUCTOR

William Alwyn

Part II

I expect by now you will all be wondering, what on earth is this man talking about? You've been lured here to hear me talk about Elgar, the conductor, and I'm simply lecturing you on sonata form.

Please be a little patient. All that I have said already is basic to the true understanding of Elgar the composer, and Elgar the conductor, the self-interpreter. To put it in a nutshell : Elgar was a modern romantic at heart, but a classical traditionalist in mind. He was *not* a revolutionary, *not* a pioneer like Beethoven, Weber, Liszt, Wagner, or Sibelius. He had no time for the impressionism of Debussy, the ecstasies of Scriabin, or the mathematics of Schoenberg. He is *not* a landmark in the history of music. What he did was to pour new wine into old bottles - and how rich, red, and full-bodied is that wine!

Listening again to the masterly *Introduction & Allegro for Strings* - I rarely listen, I might add, analysing as I go; I just let myself be absorbed in and by the music, which I am sure is the correct way of listening - but as I was coming to talk to you here, I was interested in making an analysis to see if it did conform to my theory. Sure enough, that very free-seeming work, the *Introduction & Allegro* is in strict sonata form; and the *Cockaigne* overture is exactly the same - in strict sonata form. Elgar never felt any desire whatever to cast aside these bonds.

Having said all this, we can now turn to another point and see a little more clearly the supreme difficulty that Elgar laboured under; the same difficulty that faces any intensely romantic composer, whether he be Schumann, Liszt, Chopin or Elgar. This insurmountable difficulty, and it is a difficulty which leads to a diversity of interpretations and mis-interpretations, is the total inadequacy of musical notation to express subtleties of feeling, tempo and sometimes even of rhythm. However carefully the composer notes down music, it still only approximates to what he really means. It cannot reflect the composer's mind with any degree of accuracy. All that musical notation can do is to indicate a remorselessly exact division of note-values into halves, quarters, eighths, etc, and, with the same rigid exactitude, different intervals in pitch. All other indications as to the composer's intentions are vague, and often misleading - tempo instructions - *andante*, *adagio*, etc.

Take *andante*; what a variety of tempos can the term *andante* be made to mean! Those of you who know your Puccini will perhaps have noticed how seldom he uses the terms *adagio* or *lento*. He always preferred variants of *andante* - *andante sostenuto*, *molto andante*, *andante con moto* - for *andante* implies movement. It implies a walking pace, either faster or slower; and how important it is that music should be kept moving and not come to a halt and sit down on its haunches in an exaggerated *adagio* tempo.

Then there are the vagaries as to dynamics - for how, for instance, can any two

instrumentalists agree on the exact difference between one *piano*, and three or four *pianos*? And how much more *fortissimo* is a double *forte* from a triple or quadruple *forte*? By what inner scale of intensity can you register it, can any two people register it, however musical they are? How can one possibly define or interpret *tempo rubato*, when no two people have any built-in metronomic gauge as to time itself?

I remember McEwen at the Royal Academy doing a very interesting experiment on this point. What he did was to take four young conductors, blindfold them, stand them on the platform, and start a metronome beating at a nice, steady pace. Then he started them all beating 4/4 time, all together. He'd let the metronome go on with them for a couple of minutes and then stop it - and within *seconds*, each of those conductors was beating in a different time; they were all at sea.

Now herein lies the explanation why the various interpretations of Elgar's music are so diverse, and often so much at variance; yet each of the fine interpreters of Elgar's music, whether Sir Adrian Boult, Malcolm Sargent or John Barbirolli, would all claim to be true Elgarians, conducting Elgar from their own intimate experience of the man Elgar himself. Their interpretations, they would probably say, were personally approved by Elgar - yet in actual performance they would all produce quite different results. Which brings me back to what I said right at the start of this talk - "Memory is the least reliable of witnesses".

There is a very good example of that, which I remember as a student, when old Sir Alexander Mackenzie conducted the Academy orchestra. Practically every week a student would come along and play the first movement of the Grieg A minor *Piano Concerto*. The poor pianist no sooner began - at the normal pace we imagine the work to go - than Mackenzie would stop and say, "*Much* too fast, much too fast. It goes like this". And he would beat a very, very slow 4. "That's the pace Grieg himself took it. I ought to know because I conducted the first performance in England with Grieg at the piano". Well, there's no answer to that - but as the years went by Mackenzie's memory grew more and more faulty. His beat got steadily slower and slower and eventually we were playing the 4/4 Grieg in a nice, steady 8 in a bar.

After a long musical life confronted with this problem, I am coming to the conclusion that *the least said on a score* when you are writing a score is the better, and I am quite prepared to argue that the Mozartian economy of a single *piano* and a single *forte* for contrast, and simple tempo indications such as *Allegro* and *Adagio*, are better than all one's attempts to be more explicit. As my own teacher, Sir John McEwen once very wisely said to me, "Never use a metronome mark. If your interpreter doesn't *feel* the exact pace from the style of your music, then he's no good to you as an interpreter of your works".

Elgar suffers from his own endeavours to be explicit, to indicate absolutely as far as he could his own intentions as to the correct interpretation of his works : those numerous *accelerandos* and *rallentandos*, and suggestions for *tempo rubato*! For

example, I took at random six pages of the score of *Falstaff*.¹ Within these six pages are the following tempo variations : *poco sostenuto*, *a tempo*, *poco a poco più lento* (this extends over ten whole bars), *allegretto*, *poco allargando*, *a tempo*, *poco allargando*, *a tempo*, *poco allargando* (over four bars - and not content with this, over the following two bars he adds a *rit!*), then *a tempo* for two bars, then *allegro molto*, with the metronome mark "minim equals 120". Altogether there are twelve tempo variations in six brief pages. And the dynamics range from *ppp* to *ff*, together with many indications to various instruments to play *espressivo* - always an invitation for the player to introduce his own particular brand of *tempo rubato*!

Can one then wonder, with this sort of scope for so-called interpretation handed to a conductor on a plate - can one wonder at the liberties taken with Elgar's music in the name of truly Elgarian interpretations? And really most of these markings are unnecessary - unnecessary today, that is, because, as you will see later, they were quite important at that time. Today these tempo variations would have been made by any intelligent conductor who really understood the meaning of the music - the inner meaning of the music, which makes it come to life, born of an understanding of the texture and style peculiar to each great individual composer.

What made the intelligent listener say that Beecham was a great Mozart conductor? Richard Strauss was also a supreme interpreter of Mozart (I myself had the privilege of playing under Strauss's baton). As I said earlier, Mozart limits his dynamics to *piano* and *forte*, and expression marks and tempo variations are sparsely indicated. So to be a great Mozartian conductor you have got to have a real, wonderful understanding and appreciation of his work and its purpose, because you haven't got it handed to you : you're not being misled by the score, or guided too closely by the composer's instructions. To understand what Elgar really intended it is necessary to listen to Elgar's own interpretations of his works, and fortunately we have documentary evidence available to us on gramophone records.

I have a suspicion however that Elgar was so meticulous in his markings because he was primarily a professional composer dealing with professional players. And in those days in the first quarter of this century it was essential that the orchestral player should be fully informed as to the composer's intentions, marked clearly on the band parts, for a conductor was never quite certain whether the first oboe or principal horn who was present at the one rehearsal for a new work would not be replaced by some other first oboe or principal horn at the actual concert performance, players who would be seeing the music for the very first time, not having rehearsed it.

Sir Henry Wood used to mark his parts so carefully in blue pencil that you could hardly see the music. He spent *hours* on this - he marked every single piece of expression that he needed, and nothing whatever was left to chance. If anything ever went wrong in rehearsal always his first reaction would be to snarl at the orchestra;

¹ [From two bars before fig. 100 to fig. 107. Actually, the last two markings are on the seventh page, and the passage quoted does contain a higher proportion of tempo variations than the work as a whole : which is not necessarily to deny the point Dr Alwyn was making.- Ed.]

"Are these *my* parts?"

"Yes, Sir Henry".

"Well? Haven't I put it in there for you?"

"Yes, Sir Henry".

"Very well".

And he was right; one was always wrong! One loves his memory, not only for the fact that he was always right, but he was, I think, the kindest man I ever met in all my life.

These were palmy days for orchestral players. Every theatre and every cinema had its own orchestra, every palm court its palm court orchestra - there was no lack of employment. Added to which the woodwind, brass and percussion sections of the London Symphony Orchestra and the Queen's Hall Orchestra were in the hands of a small group of highly skilled players whose services were constantly being sought elsewhere; in chamber music concerts, theatre, ballet and opera seasons, and solo engagements. The players themselves were mostly ex-army bandsmen (and not products of the Academy and College). Each of these experts for any one day would have half a dozen engagements he had accepted, and he would attend any one according to his whim. In fairness I should say that the bona fide members of, say the LSO, were fundamentally loyal to the orchestra and would put in sufficient appearances to justify their posts; but a week's engagement as first flute at Covent Garden Opera was more remunerative than one concert with the LSO at Queen's Hall, so on the whole, who could blame them? So jobs were farmed out and the 'deputy system' came into existence.

When I first entered the orchestral playing profession as a young flautist fresh from the Royal Academy of Music at the age of eighteen, I already had some reputation as a virtuoso flute player and a reliable orchestral player. While I was still a student Sir Henry Wood had taken me with him, together with Helen Gaskell (oboe) and Gilbert Vinter (bassoon) - both of whom were to become notable orchestral players. Helen was the first woman woodwind player in a major orchestra and for years was *cor anglais* in the BBC Symphony Orchestra; Gilbert Vinter, who was an excellent bassoonist, became a highly skilled conductor. Sir Henry took us with him to "strengthen" the woodwind departments in choral society concerts in the provinces, often sight-reading works in performance without rehearsal. So I became known as a reliable deputy.

And this is the way the deputy system functioned. Robert Murchie, the famous first flute of the Queen's Hall Orchestra, or the equally famous Gordon Walker, first flute of the LSO, would ring me up and say, "Can you do the concert and not the rehearsal? I shall be there at the rehearsal, but I'm playing for the Ballet in the evening". So off I would go, always to fresh woods and pastures new, lucky if I knew the works to be played, but lucky also in always increasing my familiarity with the concert repertoire. I remember one occasion when Murchie asked me to do a Queen's Hall concert for him; he of course was appearing at the morning rehearsal (incidentally no concert had more than one rehearsal). I asked him what was the programme. "Oh, nothing to worry about. I forget what the symphony is, but look out for the Ravel *Daphnis and Chloe*; that scale that begins on the piccolo, and then by way of first flute and second flute ends with a solo scale on the third flute. If you

miss it, it leaves an awfu' gap! But nothing to worry about, old chap, it'll be all right!" This was a hard school to be brought up in, and no profession for the constitutionally nervous. But it was the foundation of the British orchestral player's abnormal talent for sight-reading, the envy of the world, and traditionally still existent.

(To be concluded).

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of the Elgar Society will take place in the Huntingdon Hall, Deansway, Worcester, on Saturday 5 June 1993 at 2.30 pm. It will be followed by tea and biscuits. At 5.00 pm Robert Anderson will give the A.T.Shaw Memorial Lecture. This will be open to the public, and admission to non-members will be £1-50.

Members are reminded that there are vacancies for two members of the General Committee. Nominations are solicited and should be sent to the Hon. Secretary as soon as possible. Each nomination must be seconded, and it is essential to obtain the permission of the nominee.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

The Treasurer acknowledges, with thanks, the many 1993 subscriptions already sent to him. Membership cards (an innovation) have been sent to all concerned. John also thanks those who have completed new Deeds of Covenant and apologises for not being able to send individual acknowledgements.

Members who have not yet paid their subscriptions which were due on 1 January are asked to send cheques in the near future.

Collectors' Room



104 CRESCENT ROAD
NEW BARNET
HERTS EN4 9RJ

Tel: 081-440 2651

*78s, Record Catalogues
Books on Music, Programmes*

ALAN W B WEBB (1900-1992)

With the death of Alan Webb on 22 December 1992 at his Dorset nursing home, the Elgar Society lost one of its staunchest advocates and another link with Elgar.

Alan Webb was born in Worcester in 1900, the year of *The Dream of Gerontius*, he proudly pointed out. His father was an amateur string player, who was taught by Elgar as far back as the 1880s. Frank Webb played in the Worcester Amateur Instrumental Society and maintained a friendship with Elgar up to the composer's death. The early salon piece *Virelai* is dedicated "à mon ami Frank Webb". It is perhaps not surprising that, being a musical boy in this environment, Alan became devoted to Elgar's music. He saw Elgar about Worcester frequently, but met him only once - in 1931, when he and his wife Joan were invited to Marl Bank for a memorable evening of records. His vivid recollections were instantly noted down and eventually were both broadcast and published.

Alan was educated at Bromsgrove School and, appropriately enough, Worcester College, Oxford. He taught modern languages at Lancing College and, after the Second World War, at Bryanston School. At one time, Alan conducted several choral societies in Blandford and surrounding districts in often ambitious programmes. Among his pupils at Bryanston were the bass Roger Stalman, and the conductor John Eliot Gardiner. Their language master's great enthusiasm for music must surely have played some part in establishing their careers. The Webbs' home in Dorset for many years was a charming, old-world, thatched cottage, where their old-world hospitality was enjoyed by all who visited them.

After retirement from Bryanston, Alan returned to his much-loved Worcestershire to succeed Carice Elgar Blake as the second curator of the Elgar Birthplace. The years 1966 to 1972 at Broadheath he claimed to be the happiest of his life. Many lasting friendships were started. He did much to further new Elgar recordings, spoke widely on Elgar, and fought with precious few others to save Marl Bank from the developer's hammer. It was characteristic of his sensitivity that, after its destruction, he could not bear to go near the site.

Alan was immensely enthusiastic and knowledgeable about Elgar's life and music, and seemed to know every note. His piano and large collection of recordings were indispensable to him. The Elgar-conducted recordings were treasured above all, for Alan always maintained the supremacy of Elgar as a conductor of his own works. He luxuriated in the marvels of modern recorded sound, in particular his compact discs, which were happily at his disposal up to his death. He was very proud of being a Vice-President of the Society and took a keen interest in its activities.

He had a wide circle of long-standing friends and correspondents at home and abroad, who helped sustain him in his last years. All will remember Alan's infectious enthusiasm, his kindness and sensitivity, and his brave determination in facing the adversities of old age.

The Society was represented at a memorial service in Sherborne Abbey on 30 January.

Michael Trott



(Top) Alan Webb at his nursing home in Sherborne, July 1992, with Michael Trott (left).

(Below) A group at the performance of The Kingdom at Worcester Cathedral, 17 October 1992. Left to right : Dr.Rodney Baldwyn, Carol and Jim Holt, Mrs. Freda Baldwyn (photo : Prof Ian Parrott).

RODNEY CLIFFORD BALDWIN (1927-1993)

It is particularly sad to report the death of Rodney Baldwin on 12 February at the age of 65.

Rodney, although born in Wimbledon, belonged to an old Worcestershire family and lived in the county from his teens. His grandfather Charles Baldwin was a senior artist at the Royal Worcester Porcelain Works and an acclaimed watercolourist, who knew Elgar for many years. Charles's father brother and sister Maud all had violin lessons with Elgar. Rodney went to Worcester Royal Grammar School and studied organ under Dr Herbert Sumsion, Geraint Jones, and the Frenchman André Marchal, who rated Rodney very highly indeed. He received much encouragement from the late A.T.Shaw and was appointed organist of Pershore Abbey at the early age of twenty-two, holding the post for over thirty years. Rodney composed service settings for Pershore, founded an all-girl choir, taught organ and piano and researched the works of C.P.E.Bach. He made several successful organ tours of Europe and was given a gold medal in Italy for his playing of Bach. Mozart was another favourite composer. He was awarded a Mus.Doc. in 1989.

Rodney was Secretary of the Elgar Society in 1972 before the establishment of separate branches, and was later a committee member of the West Midlands Branch. He was a fine exponent of the Elgar *Organ Sonata* and wrote a fascinating article on the work for the NEWSLETTER (January 1976). His other interests included his family history, puppetry, archaeology, and running. It was a cruel irony that the man who was determined to keep fit should die of a heart attack. Branch Treasurer Walter Cullis ran with him and recalls: "Rodney took it seriously and derived great enjoyment from it. He completed at least ten Marathons in good club-runner times and competed in many other events, including the mountain fell-races in Wales. It will be sad to run off Cader Idris and not hear his welcoming voice at the finish".

Many members of the Elgar Society attended a packed Pershore Abbey for his service of thanksgiving on 26 February, at which Donald Hunt played the organ. We extend our deep sympathy to his wife Freda, his daughter Stephanie, his father and his grandchildren.

Michael Trott

AN EVENING WITH ELGAR

Alan Webb

[Alan Webb was born in Worcester in 1900 into a family well-established in the business and amateur musical life of the city. His father, Frank Webb, owned a furniture business in the Cornmarket and, with three of his sisters, had been a string pupil of Elgar's in the 1880s and 1890s. Elgar frequently joined them in trios and quartets at the Webb's family home. Alan became an ardent Elgar fan as a boy, but never met him until 13 January 1931, when on a freezing night Elgar telephoned to invite him and his wife Joan to spend the evening at Marl Bank, Elgar's last home on Rainbow Hill. It was one of the great events in Alan's life and he resolved to record his memories immediately afterwards. In 1969, the year Worcester City Council to its eternal shame allowed Marl Bank to be demolished, he made the following radio broadcast, which was interspersed with the appropriate musical excerpts. A similar account appeared in *An Elgar Companion*. The BBC later destroyed the tape of the broadcast in an economy drive.

Michael Trott]

So it has come at last. He is inside expecting us. He has invited us. It is all unbelievable and this moment of waiting is almost intolerable. The housemaid opens the door to us, not even in black, for one had rather expected a butler for the Master of the King's Musick. We are ushered into a very ordinary hall. It is long and narrow, with a good, shallow flight of stairs leading straight up out of it. The maid goes to announce us, and my straining ears catch the sound of his voice, so jovial and so English. He is talking to, or about Marco, his favourite dog, somewhere in a room at the end of the passage: "Marco must have his bone..." And then Miss Clare Grafton, Elgar's niece, who is keeping house for him, comes down the hall to greet us, and he is following, with the familiar, slow, hunch-shouldered stride.

And now my father is introducing us. I feel small and frightened and intensely respectful. Mechanically, I shake hands with Miss Grafton and then turn to him. It is done. Incredible! My awe begins to drop from me like a garment someone is taking off, for he is talking easily, naturally and amusingly and the voice is rich and pleasant, with now and again a distinct trace of a Worcestershire accent. At any rate, he is nothing if not a human being. "There's one person in this house who hates you like poison", he says, and we pause expectantly, "and that's Marco - you've kept him waiting for his bone!"

We all move into the drawing room, a pleasant room with some beautiful things in it. On the mantelpiece are signed portraits of the King and Queen, dated 1927. The piano stands in an alcove by the window. On the music rest are some freshly written pages of manuscript. *The Nursery Suite*? I wonder. Now in the bigger space, it is possible to see him better. He is wearing a dark suit with a brown cardigan, brown shoes and spats. The once favourite pink tie has been discarded in favour of a black one. What magnificent features! The eyes are not big and of no particularly striking colour, and yet they are astonishingly expressive and they look at you so directly. He blinks slightly as he talks and moves his head from side to side. Sometimes he chuckles rather thickly behind his moustache when talking. Although not absent-minded in the accepted sense of the term, he gives the impression of being intensely occupied with his own thoughts and feelings. Nevertheless, the general impression one gets is that he enjoys his fellow man thoroughly and feels that the world is full

of wonderful things to think and do. The idea that he is too serious and aloof to have a sense of humour is utterly absurd; he bubbles over with it. His hands are rather small, much smaller than I had thought, neatly formed and hairy. His back is extraordinarily humped. He holds his hands up a little in front of him as he walks, almost as though he might at any moment raise an invisible baton to conduct an orchestra.

My father has only brought us in by way of introduction and he is too busy with his electioneering to stay. Elgar jokes with him about selling him his vote. "It used to be five bob in the old days, didn't it? If I'd known, I'd have gone and voted on the other side". And so on and so on. Then he turns towards us and asks with a twinkle, "Are these people very wild?", to which my father replies, "No, quite tame". He presses my father to have a drink or some fruit. No, my father really must go. And so we are left alone with Elgar and Miss Grafton, here for the evening. Good heavens! He suddenly turns to me, offers cigars and cigarettes and then :

"So you're interested in gramophones?"

"Yes, very, Sir Edward", feeling suddenly small again.

He crosses the hall to the dining room, a long, low room parallel with the drawing room, and I follow while my wife stays talking to little Miss Grafton. The gramophone, a big electric model, stands against the wall to the right of the fireplace, and he immediately goes to it, puts on an advanced copy of the newly recorded 'March of the Mogul Emperors' from *The Crown of India Suite* and switches on the current. The magnificent pompous music swells out in deafening volume.

Elgar is delighted with the mechanical marvel of the reproduction in that march and no wonder. Like an enthusiastic child, he turns the knob to show how the volume can be increased or decreased at will, and then strides restlessly about the room. He next puts on the new *Pomp & Circumstance* March no.5 with its jaunty opening air and splendid Elgarian middle section. Again one is impressed with the colossal reverberating bass of the latest gramophones. I long to ask Elgar questions, heaps of them, but he is talking all the time, and in any case the marvellous experience of watching and listening is quite enough to be going on with, so I bide my time. By now my wife and Miss Grafton have joined us, and, as expected, he asks his niece to find Verdi's *Requiem* and she does so promptly. But she is obviously the only person who knows where things are, for he is gloriously capricious, seeming to want everything at once, and often changing his mind just after having decided on something. There seems to be only one list of records, and that on rough paper, in pencil with many crossings out and additions. There are record cabinets in several parts of the room, but the table is also littered with his immediate favourites, and I as a gramophone fanatic shudder for them. They are all piled one on top of another without their envelopes and he seizes them as he would cheap crockery. Then, when they are playing, he will suddenly want to hear a favourite passage again and he will take the electrical reproducer and stab with a vicious-looking needle until he has found it. He gives us one score to follow and we sit down together at the side of the dining room table, while he with another score seats himself at the end. Then he tells Miss Grafton - "Child" or "My dear" he affectionately calls her - to put on this or that record, and with childish glee, "Let's have the full power on!" He loves the *Requiem*. He jumps from one section to another, he showing us where to find the

place in the score, and some of the record he insists on having twice. "That's one of the most superb passages in all music", he says, and as we near the favourite bit again, "Now then, look out!", and his finger comes down on to our score, placing the music along the page.

When the record of the Verdi *Requiem* is finished, Elgar turns suddenly, confronting us and asks, "What do you think of that? Did you ever hear anything like it?" And presently Marco the spaniel, as if in complete understanding, comes and puts his front paws upon his master's knee and looks lovingly at him. Then he says he wants us to hear how beautifully the gramophone reproduces the softness of string playing after all the din of the previous records. So he brings out the *Siegfried Idyll*, another great favourite of his, and while the music is in progress he hums the theme half to himself. I find his restlessness is infectious and move myself to another chair. It is all so exciting, it's impossible to sit still for long.

Now comes one of the biggest thrills of the evening. Elgar puts on a record bearing a white 'not-for-sale' label, and asks us to listen to the reproduction; and behold, it's the stately opening of the *First Symphony*, just recorded and as yet unpublished. "You know what this is?" he asks me. Do I know? He is delighted with the great advance in recording that it shows. "Listen to this crescendo, without any instruments being added. They've never been able to do that before". It is so terribly exciting that my tongue is loosed and I ask for the end of the fourth movement, the immense final pages of the symphony. This seems to please him, and while it is going on, I ask him when and where it was recorded. "Oh, about a month ago in the Kingsway Hall. It's better than the Queen's Hall. I did it".

"Why did they record the *Second Symphony* first?" I ask him.

A slight shrug: "Perversity?"

"And when are they going to record the chamber music?"

He shrugs his shoulders. "Don't know. They did the *Quintet* once".

"Not recently?"

"Oh no, a long time ago. It's out of fashion".

So it is true, this tale of his being bitter. He suddenly remembers his duties as host and offers me sherry. He himself takes a glass of lemonade. I cannot sit down, so I walk about, nursing the sherry and wondering if it is all a dream. In the middle of the symphony, Elgar says abruptly, "Best place to hear it from is out here", and strides into the hall. I follow and there we stand, alone together, listening appreciatively. It all seems perfectly normal and it is so hard to believe that I have only met him this evening for the first time. Then we go back to hear Saint-Saëns' *Le Rouet d'Omphale*, beautifully played and recorded. What strange and unexpected contrasts of music! And how completely false the charge that has been levelled against Elgar of caring for no music but his own. Elgar is a first-class raconteur, and between records he regales us with stories of all kinds. How Verdi's *Requiem* came to be written; how old Saint-Saëns, conducting the performance of his *Le Rouet d'Omphale* in London, dreamily failed to notice that the spinning second violins had not come in at all at the start, and at the end failed to notice that they had not stopped; of the trials and humours of recording; how a sneeze or a cough destroys the value of the record and it has to be done again; how sometimes the recording machines go wrong and there is a long wait, during which he tells the orchestra

anecdotes or "I tell them all to go out and back a horse in the 2.30; so they do, and it comes in fifteen places behind the winner!" And how when Richter was conducting on an important occasion in Germany, a famous bassoon player missed a lead altogether and it transpired that the unfortunate man's teeth had fallen out at the crucial moment. He laughs heartily and infectiously over these tales, which he tells with immense enthusiasm. Then he says, "Do you know the *Second Symphony*?" to which I reply promptly and quite truthfully, "Every note of it"; whereupon with a great air of mystery, he puts on a record of the Rondo, saying, "Now listen carefully", and presently the music stops and a voice is heard making criticisms, explaining how he wants a passage to go. It's himself, rehearsing the London Symphony Orchestra for the records of the *Second Symphony*, and the record, which was made without his knowledge, is the only one in existence. He chuckles gleefully over it.

Elgar then asks my wife what she would like next. "Let's have something frivolous", he says and makes up her mind for her by giving her some of the ballet music from Gounod's *Faust*, which he thinks lovely. Now my wife Joan takes her courage in both hands and asks for "The Tame Bear" and "Fairies and Giants" from *The Wand of Youth*. "Ho, ho", says Elgar, obviously pleased. Miss Grafton finds the records and he plays "Fairies and Giants" first. Then comes "The Tame Bear" and "The Wild Bears", and in the middle of the latter, he suddenly produces the original manuscript. The music is all bound into one big volume and on the flyleaf appear the titles of all the numbers in the two suits, and at the bottom of the page "1871 - 1907", these being the dates of the original composition and of the orchestration in its present form. He opens the book at "The Wild Bears" and, guided by his forefinger, we rush breathlessly through the scrawled manuscript pages, sometimes jumping from one instrument to another. Then he says joyfully, "Oh, we must have "Fairies and Giants" again".

In the drawing room again, Elgar and Joan sit together on the couch while Miss Grafton takes a chair by the door and I remain standing. First Elgar produces a little Woolworth toy which greatly intrigues him. You press the rubber top of the glass tube and a little imp moves up and down in the water inside. He is at a loss to explain how it works, "although", he says, "I am something of a scientific man". I ask him if the house at Broadheath where he was born is still standing, and he shows us a little old print of it on the wall, with the figures of some of his relatives in the foreground. Then he fishes out from the drawer some quaint family daguerreotypes, one of them showing himself as a little boy sitting on his mother's knee. "My mother", he says simply, "was one of the most beautiful women alive". And this launches him into a fascinating family history, how his father came from Kent and was employed by Broadwoods in London, and how, when Queen Adelaide came down to live at Witley Court, the Worcester Music Library sent to Broadwoods to ask them if they could recommend someone suitable to attend to Her Majesty's wants there, and how Elgar's father was chosen. "My father", he says, "used to ride a thoroughbred mare when he went to tune the piano. He never did a stroke of work in his life".

It is now after eleven and we make several attempts to go, chiefly through fear of outstaying our welcome, but Elgar's conversation flows on almost without a break

[he quotes amusingly from Lowell's Essays]. And furthermore, he insists on our hearing some more music to finish up with. So back we go into the dining room and he gets out an overture by Suppé, whom, rather surprisingly, he admires tremendously. "You know, dear old Sullivan was all very well", he says to me, "but he didn't write for a big orchestra like Suppé and Offenbach and Johann Strauss". There is no brooking Elgar's terrific enthusiasm. It permeates the whole room and one forgets that he is an old man. We must all listen attentively. "This is one of the most divine tunes ever written", he exclaims, singing to the music and watching our faces as we listen.

We move into the hall where the formalities of leave taking are soon over, but not before we have heard the magic words, "You must come again". Once more we are outside in the cold and already the great enthusiast is playing something else on his gramophone. Is he ever away from music? Does he ever go to bed? We drive home, dazed and happy. After we had left, Elgar said to his niece, "Do you think they really loved my music?" - astonishing evidence of the humility of a great man.

ELGAR SOCIETY: CONSERVATION SUBCOMMITTEE

Many visitors to Worcester, fresh from reading the biographies or Dr Moore's Life in Photographs, and wishing to get some idea of the background of this marvellous music, are surprised to find so few of his houses surviving - as Worcester councillors ruefully acknowledge. Many Elgarians have long been concerned about this situation. A Society body, called the Conservation Subcommittee, has now been set up to compile a definitive register of sites in Britain about which there exists evidence that (1) Edward Elgar lived for a significant period in them, (2) which are known as being associated in a significant way with his work.

It will, through the Society's Secretary, write as necessary to local planning authorities explaining our interest, and requesting to be made aware of any future developments affecting such sites. All such matters shall be referred to the Subcommittee, which shall also be empowered to support or initiate any official protective status that the Department of the Environment or the local authority may wish to give such buildings or landscapes, offer advice and information to their owners and others, and make observations, through the Society's officers, on any development affecting them.

We felt it important to establish priorities. We have provisionally grouped the houses in order of importance and action to be taken: Group A comprises houses where Elgar lived for a considerable time and in which he composed his most significant works: Plas Gwyn, Brinkwells, Craig Lea, Forli, Birchwood. Also included in this group are the Birthplace and the Grave. Demolition or defacement (in the Society's opinion) would always be opposed.

Group B includes properties of close friends AND in which work of significance in the canon took place: eg. The Hut (*Violin Concerto*, etc), 20 Church Street (*The*

Apostles, sketches for *Gerontius*, etc). Also those houses in which Elgar lived for some time and composed works of worth but not of such importance as in Groups A and B : eg. Field Terrace (*Salut d'Amour*).

For these the Society will also formally register its interest with the planning authorities, keep a watching brief and take action as necessary and practicable. Some buildings mentioned are of value to the environment in their own right and therefore although the Society would not generally lead any action (unlike Group A) against demolition or defacement we would act in consultation with other groups and provide information for planning officers as appropriate.

On a somewhat lesser degree of importance, but still of concern, are houses of very close relatives in which Elgar produced no works : eg. Handley Farm and Hazeldine; and buildings of special interest for various other reasons, such as their association with Elgar's musical development : eg. Powick Asylum, St George's Church. The list is not "cast in bronze" and we are open to suggestions from members as to other candidates.

We have had three meetings in Malvern. We have already considered four planning applications: a proposal to renovate the former home of Alice Roberts, near Redmarley, Glos; a proposal to demolish and develop most of Powick Hospital, both of which come in our recommended categories C and D respectively; plans for a Visitors' Centre and stopping up of a bridleway at the Birthplace, Broadheath; and retrospective permission for listed building consent to demolish an internal structure.

The plans to renovate Hazeldine House/Pfera House were intended to convert it into a centre for sheltered and secure accommodation for disturbed people and there was some local opposition to this; but the building had become derelict. Retaining the outside structure and the substantial grounds were, it seemed, the best which could be hoped for to retain the building. We decided not to oppose the plans. We would register our interest as per our scale of priorities.

All Elgarians will remember his delight in recalling his first professional engagement - bandmaster at a lunatic asylum. But they will also recall that it was the venue for delightful early music - the quadrilles and polkas, which Barry Collett has enabled us to hear. One of Elgar's most popular pieces (judging by its popularity as a Proms encore "pop" which always brings the house down), "The Wild Bears", was re-arranged from this music.

So we were concerned that Malvern District had received an application to demolish most of Powick Hospital. The Society secretary wrote summarizing our interest but, although the central part was listed the listing, like so many others, was done by architects, not historians, and the Elgarian connection was relegated to hearsay. Yet it was obvious to us that this ballroom was where the performances of his Asylum band would have taken place. No documentary evidence of this had ever been placed on the planning files. I contacted some local members and Vivienne McKenzie with the help of Chris Bennett did some swift detective work at the birthplace and found a newspaper report (in Ann Elgar's scrapbook) establishing this. We are going to ask

English Heritage and the Dept of Environment to consider extension of the listing in light of this new evidence.

I have photographed the ballroom interior, which is still intact. Perhaps the developers might also be persuaded to turn the ballroom into a community hall. Otherwise it will join the long list of vanished Elgar buildings.

The Birthplace's new visitors' centre plans have also encountered strenuous local opposition. There are many complex issues at stake here. Residents resent the stopping up of the ancient bridleway, and letters to the planners, including one from Worcester City Council, which is the neighbouring planning authority and also the freeholder, criticized among other things the large bulk and the (in their opinion) poor quality design. They felt, in view of the national importance of the site, that a national architectural competition should have been held from the outset. They also objected to the Trustee's having removed the internal wall, or partition, defining the "Birthroom", without planning permission. Others - including the Elgar family - feel that the Trustees are missing the point : Elgar wished the cottage to be preserved for its humble, but idyllic setting - one Ann Elgar insisted upon, with lasting effects on her son - and too many "facilities" will detract from this.

The Conservation Subcommittee did not want to embarrass the trustees; on the other hand it was important to establish ourselves as impartial. We also considered the resolution passed at the AGM, which committed the Society to a neutral stance as regards the current plans. We finally decided not to make a comment ourselves but to recommend that the Society's public stance is indeed neither to be for, nor against, the present plans, their particular designs and location, while being strongly in favour of expansion of facilities for visitors and scholars coming to Worcestershire.

The retrospective application for the demolition of the "Birthroom" partition was turned down by Malvern Hills as they felt the applicants had not established that the wall was modern. The Trustees must now either reinstate the wall or appeal. While trying to keep an open mind on the evidence, our committee was surprised that the Trustees had failed to play safe and go through the usual procedures of first seeking planning consent for such work in a Grade II listed building. We noted the planners' observation to Malvern District that for years the room had been labelled as Elgar's birthroom and were even to be seen proudly displaying it as such to their royal Patron.

It may well be that the Trustees may themselves one day need our support (even Dove Cottage has had to appeal against a neighbouring overdevelopment). Meanwhile, and speaking more personally, I do hope that they will rethink their plans, as one's first glimpse of the Birthplace hidden away in the Worcestershire lanes is an unforgettable experience and one that immediately brings understanding of why Elgar wanted it preserved. Malvern, Hereford, or bustling Worcester (which has many suitable existing buildings) is the place for research and concerts, video experiences and the paraphernalia of tourism. At Broadheath, *res ipsa loquitur*.

We now face the daunting, but long overdue task of registering our interests with the various planning authorities and providing them with documentary historical

evidence - as opposed to myth - about Elgar's exact connection with those houses we have all read about in the biographies which still survive (such a project as he himself greatly enjoyed - until the next enthusiasm came along!). Conservation officers in the relevant planning areas - Malvern Hills, Worcester City and Hereford - are all supportive. Their view is that getting the houses on our group A list listed, if they are not already, is indeed overdue and is the best means of protecting them in the long run, even if there is no current danger. As the Powick plans show, we may in some cases be already too late.

While most of our concerns lie in Herefordshire and Worcestershire, there are important connections elsewhere - Brinkwells in Sussex, the Hut near Maidenhead (briefly to be glimpsed in the (other) "Hope and Glory" film by John Boorman) and in Yorkshire and London. We would greatly appreciate information and help from members and branches in these areas. Unless and until our interest is officially recognized, for instance by the planners and Department of the Environment agreeing to the Society's being a consultee body (which will only apply to the most important houses anyway), the only warning of impending doom given is a notice in the local paper or outside the property itself.

Our committee is concerned to work as far as possible with the present owners of such properties. In fact we already know and are friendly with most of those in the most important houses. They are often proud of living in Elgar houses, apart from the thankfully still unspoilt settings which they appreciate for the same reasons the composer did. Putting the Elgar connections on formal record would help them if arguments were necessary for protecting against neighbouring over-development. I do not envisage any opposition to us from present private residents, and if we are successful, future ones will realize from the outset that they are purchasing an historic and nationally- important property.

Jacob O'Callaghan

For your next trip to Elgar country, stay bed and breakfast at

1 Shuthonger Manor
Shuthonger
Tewkesbury
Glos GL20 6EF

One twin-bedded room with fine views of the Malvern Hills.

2 miles north of Tewkesbury on A38. Malvern, Worcester, Ledbury, Gloucester and Cheltenham all 20 minutes' drive away.

£15 per person.

Contact Mrs Anne Trott. 0684 294859

ELGAR'S "TOP TEN" ON RADIO 3 DURING 1992

	Number of performances
'CELLO CONCERTO IN E MINOR (Opus 85)	11
"ENIGMA" VARIATIONS (Opus 36)	9
SYMPHONY No 1 IN A FLAT (Opus 55)	6
OVERTURE "COCKAIGNE" (Opus 40)	5
INTRODUCTION & ALLEGRO FOR STRINGS (Opus 47)	5
SYMPHONIC STUDY "FALSTAFF" (Opus 68)	4
OVERTURE "IN THE SOUTH" (Opus 50)	4
SYMPHONY No 2 IN E FLAT (Opus 63)	3
SERENADE FOR STRINGS IN E MINOR (Opus 20)	3
OVERTURE "FROISSART" (Opus 19)	3

The year was indeed rich in Elgarian "rarities"; once again I have selected ten of the most memorable, as they remind devotees of the music from his earlier life, with its hardships and disappointments as a struggling composer, and of his dear wife, Alice. As usual I place these in chronological order : AVE VERUM (Opus 2, no 1) (1887); SURSUM CORDA for brass, strings and organ (Opus 11) (1894); TE DEUM & BENEDICTUS (Opus 34) (1897); "Triumphal March" from CARACTACUS (Opus 35) (1898); Coronation Offertorium O HEARKEN THOU (Opus 64) (1911); CORONATION MARCH (Opus 65) (1911); two part-songs THE SHOWER and THE FOUNTAIN (Opus 71) (before 1914); CARISSIMA (1914); excerpts from the children's play THE STARLIGHT EXPRESS (Opus 78) (1915); and excerpts from the ballet THE SANGUINE FAN (Opus 81) (1917). And of course one of the highlights of the year was the wonderful and impressive live broadcast from the Barbican Hall of CARACTACUS on 25 October. With the London Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, and a star-studded cast of dedicated soloists, it was an unforgettable experience, under the baton of Richard Hickox, who was in complete sympathy with the music.

Arrangements of Elgar's music included the *Bassoon Romance*, with piano accompaniment; the *Organ Sonata* in Gordon Jacob's orchestration; the *Imperial March* played on the organ; and a delightful performance of *Chanson de Matin*, played on flute and harp.

Features of Elgar's music and career included Jerrold Northrop Moore's brilliant survey of *Falstaff* in 'Building a Library'; Louise Chapman, aged 92, gave a brief talk of her reminiscences when she worked as a maid at Severn House after the First World War ; and of course, the weekly feature for eight instalments of 30 minutes each, "Elgar and the Gramophone", with excerpts from his music, which began in November and continued into 1993. This gave the listener an insight into Elgar's twenty-year association (from 1914 to his death) with the Gramophone Company.

The total number of performances of Elgar's music was 114. Although not as many as in 1991, the Feature Programmes compensated to a large extent.

T.W.Rowbotham

BIRTHPLACE NEWS

As these notes are being prepared Easter is approaching and it is wet and windy. The spring bulbs have flourished in the garden (they were programmed last year), but much seasonal work has had to be deferred, and the gillies have been a poor show.

We had a good measure of mail order business over the Christmas season. By the time these notes reach the reader it is hoped that subscribers will have received Volume III of the "Elgar Edition". This is available at £36-75 to members who have not subscribed for the full set, and of course volumes I & II are still available at this price.

I am very pleased to report a number of gifts and bequests received recently which have enriched our collection. Miss B.D.Longden from Norfolk has presented a fascinating collection of Elgar material assembled by her father, W.J.Longden, who used to live in Powick and play clarinet in the Asylum band, joining it in 1907 when the conductor and leader was Arthur Quarterman, who had played under Elgar's direction. The collection includes what seems to be an original manuscript full score of *La Brunette*, one of Elgar's Asylum pieces for which we have but the band parts and piano reduction.

Our thanks are due to Raymond Monk for generously presenting a number of items that up to recently were located at the County Record Office. These include Lucy Pipe's reflections about her mother, which throws invaluable light on her character and interests. This lovely document also includes recollections of Elgar's mother by friends and other members of the family. Mr Monk's gift also includes Elgar's copy of the Brooks's Club list of members; a devotional booklet given to Carice by her parents in 1903; a draft in Elgar's hand of the key events of 1904; maps of the Tyrol used by the Elgars during their visits in 1892 and 1894; and a reel-to-reel tape (which we shall have transferred to cassette) which includes the voice of Carice speaking about her father. Dr Jerrold Northrop Moore has kindly presented signed covers which nicely complement the maps already mentioned.

The Bristol Museum and Art Gallery (Bristol City Council) has, with the agreement of his executors, given two letters from Elgar to R.J.Buckley; and a draft notice in Elgar's hand which were originally bequeathed to the City Council by the late Dr J.H.Britton. We also record with gratitude the late Alan Webb's bequest of forty-six gramophone records and a substantial collection of books and papers.

Finally, these notes cannot end without mention of the very valuable news coverage in *The Times* and *The Birmingham Post* which spread more widely information about the Appeal for the new Centre, and about our activities generally. This was supplemented when Central Television included a report in their lunch-time news of Julian Lloyd Webber's visit to Broadheath on 22 February, and a slot in BBC Radio 4's "Today" programme.

A J Bennett

RANDOM RAMBLINGS...

An interesting talk was broadcast on Radio 3 during an Elgar concert in the autumn. Louise Chapman, now aged 92, had worked as a housemaid and later parlourmaid at Severn House just after the First World War. She spoke clearly and entertainingly of her experiences, although time had eroded the truth a little; visitors to the house apparently included Barbirolli (improbable) and Jaeger (impossible). Yet her portraits of the Elgars were utterly convincing. He "would either talk a lot or not talk at all" and was very moody when composing, until he had "conquered it", when he became very "boisterous". "He was not an easy man to live with but she trained him and knew how to handle him".

* * * * *

Another recent broadcast was of a short story by Graeme Fife entitled "Will you, won't you", based loosely on Elgar's doings at the Powick Asylum. It was a somewhat fanciful tale which seemed to suggest that Elgar's experience in the asylum gave him the impetus to make something of himself. He met a doctor whose conversation was as inconsequential as that of the inmates. Again, credibility was stretched, most notably when we were told that the band comprised patients, and not staff! The author obviously knew his Elgar : on walking through a crowded bathroom on his way out, Elgar heard a "sour and uncouth dissonance".

* * * * *

A new play entitled "Elgar's Rondo", written by David Pownall and starring Alec McCowen as Elgar will be premiered by the Royal Shakespeare Company at the Swan Theatre, Stratford-on Avon, on 26 October. Further details will appear in the September JOURNAL. The play "focuses on the life and work of Elgar and how his personal doubts and fear of the future finally destroyed him". Hmm.

* * * * *

The Conservative MP for Buckingham dragged himself away from trying to remedy the country's ills to write an unfortunate piece for *The Daily Telegraph* on 2 January. Under the appalling title (more worthy of tabloid than broadsheet) "Who let these second-raters sneak into the hall of fame?" he complained of "a steady progression of nervously overblown claims made on behalf of English writing, painting, music, sculpture and architecture". Elgar, he said, "is increasingly bloated beyond his natural stature". Perhaps significantly, the only work mentioned was *Pomp & Circumstance*. Other targets were Britten, Philip Larkin, and Eric Gill. It would be a kindness to say no more about the article : the author was duly put right by, among others, Julian Lloyd Webber.

* * * * *

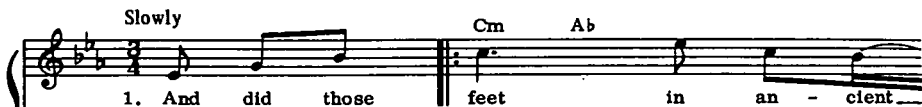
Much better news from January : a recording took place at Liverpool of *The Dream of Gerontius* by the Huddersfield Choral Society, and the Royal Liverpool

Philharmonic Choir and Orchestra conducted by Vernon Handley. The soloists were Anthony Rolfe Johnson, Catherine Wyn-Rogers, and Michael George. Andrew Neill, who was present for the sessions, was thrilled by the performance. The only niggle is that once again, as with the *Violin Concerto* a few years ago, Handley is restricted to a budget-price label (this time Music for Pleasure). Let us hope that this new recording is of a similar excellence, and as well received.

* * * * *

"Jerusalem"

By C. Hubert and H. Parry.



I thought members might be interested in the above, which I came across in an album of "religious"[sic] songs. Has modern scholarship thrown doubt on the authorship of William Blake? Are solicitors representing Mr Hubert even now applying for back-payments on royalties? A delightful faux pas which I am sure both Elgar and Parry would have enjoyed.

* * * * *

On 27 March a retired sub-postmaster from York chose "The life and works of Elgar" as his specialist subject on *Mastermind* (questions set by Michael Kennedy). He struggled a little, confusing the *Violin Concerto* and the *First Symphony*, and failing to know the first Elgar work to be performed in London, in 1884 (*Sevillana*); though he knew the source of the words "pomp and circumstance" (*Othello*).

* * * * *

A performance of *The Kingdom* conducted by Dino Anagnost was given on 27 March at the Greek Orthodox Cathedral in New York. The promotional blurb encouraged potential patrons to "welcome Easter with a rarely performed masterpiece of the British choral tradition".

* * * * *

The Three Choirs Tea will take place at the Huntingdon Hall, Deansway, Worcester, on Sunday 22 August following the afternoon recital. This will be given by the Allegri String Quartet who will play quartets by Haydn, Elgar and Britten. Admission to the tea is by ticket only obtainable from the Secretary. Please enclose a s.a.e.

Details of the AGM and the A.T.Shaw Lecture appear elsewhere in this issue : as usual on the following day there will be coffee served at Birchwood Lodge at 10.30 am; then Evensong and wreath-laying at the Cathedral at 4.00 pm, followed by sherry and birthday cake at the Birthplace.

* * * * *

The concert at Leicester on 9 May (see Concert Diary below) is worthy of mention. It comes at the end of a "Singing Day" organised by the British Federation of Young Choirs, and as well as the *Coronation Ode* also features three Coronation Anthems by Handel, and the march *Crown Imperial* played by the Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra. It's always good to see young people performing Elgar : I suppose the choice of the *Ode* may have been influenced by the presence in it of "Land of Hope and Glory".

With youth very much to the fore at the moment, it is interesting to note that the LPO Youth Orchestra concert on 26 September features a 13-year-old cellist, Richard Harwood, the Audi Junior Musician of the Year in 1992.

* * * * *

On 25 January *The Times* ran a major feature article on the plans for the new Elgar Centre at the Birthplace, and a leading article stated "[Elgar] and Britten are the nearest England has to international composers. Elgar was arguably the greatest English musician of the past two centuries". The writer enthusiastically backed the appeal for the remaining funds to be raised, and the latest news is that work on the Centre will begin in the next few months. Unfortunately the Albert Hall concert on 21 June (see January issue) has had to be postponed.

* * * * *

We are sad to report that the Secretary, Carol Holt, has recently undergone major surgery, but glad that she has made a full recovery and is back in action! It seems an ideal opportunity to pay tribute to Carol for all the hard work she does on the Society's behalf. Perhaps she will also be able to see a little more of her husband, Jim, now that he has finally relinquished office in the West Midlands Branch!

* * * * *

Members will be receiving with this issue an insert from the Cobbe Foundation relating to the restoration of Elgar's piano. Due to the financial commitment which the Society undertook in relation to the "Elgar Edition", we are not able to respond as a body to this appeal; but have no hesitation in commending it to our members as a project of the highest importance.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

8 May	In the South <i>Rutland Sinff/Collett</i>	Corby Festival Hall 7.30 pm
9 May	Coronation Ode <i>BFYC/Willcocks</i>	De Montfort Hall Leicester
13 May	Enigma Variations <i>ASMF/Marriner</i>	Royal Festival Hall South Bank
18 May	Symphony no.2 <i>English SO/Boughton</i>	Royal Festival Hall South Bank
19 May	The Dream of Gerontius <i>D.Johnston,M.Macdonald,J.White/ Watford Phil.Soc/Temple</i>	Town Hall Watford 7.30 pm
21 May	Cello Concerto <i>Lowri Blake/LPO/Bamert</i>	Royal Festival Hall South Bank
22 May	The Apostles <i>Soloists, Uniu.of Essex Choir, Essex Sinff/ Cooke</i>	Norwich Cathedral 7.00 pm
24 May	Piano Quintet	Elgar Hall, Gt.Malvern 1.00 pm
24 May	A Schools' Extravaganza (featuring items from the Schools' Elgar Performance Week)	Elgar Hall, Gt.Malvern 7.00 pm
28 May	Repeat of above concert (Blake,etc)	Royal Festival Hall South Bank
29 May	Elegy <i>Martel Ensemble</i>	Malvern Festival Theatre 11.00 am
2 June	Pomp & Circ 1, Coronation Ode <i>Malvern Fest.Chor & O/Boyle</i>	Elgar Hall, Gt.Malvern 7.30
2 June	The Black Knight <i>Elgar Chorale/Hunt</i>	Worcester Cathedral 7.30 pm
5 June	Serenade for Strings <i>Goldberg Ensemble</i>	Malvern Festival Theatre 8.00 pm
6 June	Credo in E minor <i>Noel Singers/Bates</i>	Salisbury Cathedral 12.30 pm

9 June	Froissart, Nursery Suite, Violin Concerto <i>Little/BBC Welsh SO/Handley</i>	Elgar Hall, Gt.Malvern 7.30 pm
21 June	Cello Concerto <i>Cohen/Philharmonia/Willcocks</i>	Royal Festival Hall South Bank
26 June	The Dream of Gerontius <i>C.Wyn-Rogers,J.Graham Hall,M.Pearce/Whitehall Choir/Rosebery O/Herrick</i>	Queen Elizabeth Hall South Bank
26 June	Introduction & Allegro <i>Trinity Coll.Mus. Junior O</i>	Queen Elizabeth Hall South Bank
26 June	Give unto the Lord <i>SW Essex Ch/Temple</i>	St.Mary's Church Woodford 7.45 pm
29 June	Credo in E minor (as above)	Priory of Our Lady Sayers Common
3 July	Cockaigne <i>Forest PO/Shanahan</i>	Royal Festival Hall South Bank
18 July	Bach Fantasia & Fugue <i>CBSO/Seaman</i>	Symphony Hall Birmingham 3:00 pm
21 August	Cockaigne <i>BBC PO/Downes</i>	Worcester Cathedral 8.15 pm
22 August	String Quartet <i>Allegr Quartet</i>	Huntingdon Hall Worcester 3.00 pm
25 August	Violin Concerto <i>Little/BBC PO/Maksymiuk</i>	Worcester Cathedral 8.00 pm
26 August	Enigma Variations <i>CBSO/Rattle</i>	Symphony Hall Birmingham 2.30 pm
27 August	Introduction & Allegro, Spirit of England <i>Festival Ch/RLPO/Sanders</i>	Worcester Cathedral 8.00 pm
21 September	Cockaigne <i>RPO, Temirkanov</i>	Royal Festival Hall South Bank
26 September	Cello Concerto, Symphony no.1 <i>Harwood/ LPO Youth O/ Gee</i>	Queen Elizabeth Hall South Bank

CONCERT REVIEWS

The Light of Life (Lux Christi) Op.29.
Barbican Hall, London, 31 January 1993.

Judith Howarth (soprano), Linda Finnie (contralto), Arthur Davies (tenor), John Shirley-Quirk (bass), London Symphony Chorus and Orchestra conducted by Richard Hickox.

The problem of *The Light of Life* is that it is rarely performed, and therefore not widely known. It has for too long been placed in that category of "pre-Enigma" works which meant that "it was not worth hearing". We know better today of course, but even though scholarship may have caught up with the facts, concert promoters can lag many years behind! It was therefore particularly welcome that the London Symphony Orchestra was prepared to promote a performance. Richard Hickox led the proceedings before a near capacity audience, recalling the performance of *Caractacus* under similar forces only three months earlier. The fact that this concert hall, set amidst the empty streets of the city's concrete jungle, can attract such large audiences on a Sunday evening with relatively rare music should be noted by the less adventurous promoters on the South Bank.

As a substantial opener to the evening, Jon Kimura Parker gave an eloquent, cool, but well-articulated performance of Beethoven's 'Emperor' Concerto, which I seemed to enjoy more than most critics. It set the scene more effectively than I expected for the different world of Elgar's "Meditation" with its recollections of *Lohengrin* and Gounod, as it raised the curtain on the opening chorus for male voices: "Seek him that maketh the seven stars", well sung by the LSC, who would have had more time to rehearse than the orchestra; their unfamiliarity with the score was occasionally exposed. I had the pleasure of attending the final recording session in Tooting during the week following the performance, where already greater familiarity was paying dividends in what had become a more relaxed and accurate interpretation. Indeed, some of the more emotional moments tended to be overdriven in the performance, leaving the chorus short of wind and the horn players embarrassed! Again, I feel certain these points will have been ironed out in the recording.

I do wish Richard Hickox would play his Elgar with divided strings, which would have added to the occasion, particularly in the great solo "I am the Good Shepherd". Nevertheless he managed to avoid that sense of anticlimax in the final chorus, "Light of the World", which has afflicted every performance I have heard, including the otherwise fine recording by Sir Charles Groves, just re-issued by EMI. Common to both performances is the dominating but benign voice of John Shirley-Quirk, who paced this solo with devastating effect. His voice was less dry in 1980, but his stature remains.

Judith Howarth gave a bright, lyrical soprano contribution, somewhat overshadowing Linda Finnie, whose part is anyway of minor significance. Arthur Davies, the usual tenor for Hickox, began tentatively but warmed to the role of the blind man by his second number, "All is dark to me". Confusingly, the programme notes printed the original words, which contained a verse which prompted the Rev

Vine Hall to complain to Novello, four days after the first performance on 8 September 1896. He described the offending words as "absolutely irreverent", thus prompting a minor theological dispute with Elgar's librettist, Rev Capel-Cure, who did however ultimately change the text. The offending words, spoken to Christ by the blind man's mother, were :

Hadst Thou a son, O Lord, how could'st Thou bear
To see him made Thy curse, to love and yet to hate
Thy child, Thy sin's own signature, a gift
Not given in love but as the sinner's fate?

Andrew Neill

Violin Concerto in B minor, Op.61.
Royal Northern College of Music, 18 February 1993.

"I want to be a violinist". So said 17-year-old Ruth Williams, a pupil of Chetham's School of Music, Manchester, speaking of her life ambition. Shortly afterwards she captivated an experienced audience with a memorable performance of the Elgar *Violin Concerto*. Ruth was the star of the first Elgar Society sponsorship of Chetham's, brought about by the initiative of John Kelly and Geoff Scargill. Their respective branches (London and North-West) joined forces with Yorkshire to donate the funds which turned dream into reality and forged a vital and positive link between the Society and the next generation of performing musicians.

On the previous Saturday members from all three branches had been invited to the School by the Headmaster to attend rehearsals. They spent a fascinating day moving from room to room to hear the players, ranging in age from fourteen to eighteen, being put through their paces by section leaders from the country's major orchestras, giving their own time to the task. The highlight was the visit to the soloist's rehearsal room. Those present were in awe at Ruth's skill and confidence. Yet also impressive was her professionalism, repeating phrase after phrase until entirely satisfied with each.

Another party of us foregathered for the concert at the RNCM a few days later. The concert-hall is a little-known gem, intimate and welcoming, accommodating the audience in tiered semicircles, with excellent acoustics - ideal for the Elgar concerto, and for creating a sense of shared experience for hearers and performers alike.

The concert began with Debussy's orchestral suite *Iberia*, sparkingly delivered with gusto and panache. The strings particularly enjoyed using their instruments like guitars in the finale.

But the concerto was something else. Never have I heard such spirited attack in the opening tutti, even from a mature professional orchestra. From the moment of her first entry the soloist held us in the palm of her hand. This was a reading full of passion, strength and tenderness. The only emotion missing from the Elgarian gamut was nostalgic regret; the player was too young to render that successfully yet (thank goodness!). Her tense face betrayed concentration and commitment,

marvellously sustained throughout the long and taxing work. The result a revelation. And the orchestra were equal to their part in bringing out the essential passion and vitality of this concerto.

Truly a case of the taught teaching.

Carl Newton

Symphony no.2 in E flat.

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Charles Mackerras. Barbican Hall, 8 March.

Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by John Eliot Gardiner. Royal Festival Hall, 31 March.

Two quite outstanding performances of Elgar's *Second Symphony* were given in London within a month, both very different from the typical reading one hears today, yet at the same time noticeably different from each other.

Both readings knocked firmly on the head the notion that Elgar's own recorded performances were rushed in order to fit the four minutes duration of the 78 sides. Both were at times within an inch of Elgar's tempi, similarly characterised by an opening that was not broad and expansive in the manner to which we have become accustomed, but urgent and dynamic. Mackerras, with a performance that was suitably abounding in nervous energy - and almost neurotic in its refusal to sentimentalise - was the closer to the composer's own. Indeed, as he explained in a reply to a congratulatory letter, his interpretation has been based on Elgar's own 1927 recording in an attempt "to emulate Elgar's continual fluctuation of tempo which is such a reflection of the music of that period and this symphony in particular". This he achieved convincingly with results that were thrilling, in particular drawing some virtuoso playing from the RPO horns. It was as revealing as any of the "authentic" performances given today of Berlioz, Beethoven and the like, and his recording expected next year should also be an eye-opener.

Gardiner, hardly any less exciting, was by contrast occasionally self-indulgent, but to glorious effect, at times almost emulating Barbirolli. Only a hard-driven slow movement just failed to make its total impact. But the orchestral playing was beyond reproach, especially when in the first half of the concert, because of the soloist's last-minute illness, orchestra and conductor had stepped into the breach with Beethoven's *Seventh* - given without any rehearsal! A rousing success.

Incidentally, both Elgar performances incorporated the organ pedal, though again with a difference. While Mackerras seemed to confine it to the climax in the last movement, Gardiner also used it to underpin the scherzo's big moment. Can we now expect to hear it soon sounding through the motto theme's triumphant return in the *First Symphony*?

Stephen Lloyd

MUSIC REVIEW

Music for Organ. Elgar Complete Edition : volume 36.

Novello £79-95 (cloth) : £54-95 (paperback)

The advent of the Elgar Complete Edition must surely be a matter for rejoicing and the organ works have been awaited with great interest. The result is a great success - the consequence of painstaking research and prolonged study. The principal work is, of course, the *Sonata no 1 in G*, Opus 28 and this is beautifully laid out here, and numerous points are made plain. The editors, Robert Anderson and Christopher Kent, indicate editorial markings by the use of square brackets. The use of curved brackets demonstrates points made on the authority of Elgar's sketches (although these do not necessarily represent his final thoughts, except in the *Vesper Voluntaries*, where the curved brackets refer to the second printed edition). Many of these brackets refer to *staccato* dots which have been inserted fairly liberally in many obvious places. It will take me some while to accustom myself to the pedal *staccatos* in bars 6-8 of the first movement, where I have always enjoyed the *legato* pedal under *staccato* manuals! Many of Elgar's orchestral effects need some adjustment of course, and the editors make no attempt (perhaps rightly) to solve the problems of the difficult manual change at bar 54, or the difficult stretches in bars 116 and 117 of the first movement. Dr Harold Darke showed me excellent ways of tackling these, which I am happy to pass on - for a fee!

It should be noted that there is a bad misprint on page 29, bar 167; the pedal C# should be an A#! On page 21, the left hand chord at the end of bar 11 should read G.B.D and not B.D.F#! The perceptive student of this music may well, also, want to make slight adjustments to the printed phrasings etc. I feel, for example, that the pedal tie from bars 250 to 251 is better omitted and likewise in the finale, the tie between bars 349 and 350 (pedal) is also better left out. It may be also that the instruction concerning choice of manuals may need modification, depending entirely on the instrument being played. It would be a great mistake to be pedantic about such matters.

It is rightly pointed out that the 1874 Hill organ in Worcester Cathedral was the instrument for which this work was composed (not the Hope-Jones, as we used to believe), but this poses problems : the Editors make it clear that the registration markings refer to the Hill, but how do they account for the markings in bars 126 (Choir Oboe 4); 127 (Great : Flute-Clarabella), and 128 (Choir : Oboe)? None of these stops is listed in the stop list of the 1874 Hill. Does the marking in bar 126 imply that we are to play an octave higher when playing on the Choir, or is a 4ft intended to be added to the Oboe? Are we to revert to 8ft pitch with Oboe in bar 128 or 130? Perhaps we shall never know. Elgar's concern for balance, normally to the fore in the published versions of his works is not evident in bars 133ff. where the L.H. must surely become more prominent in relation to the R.H. which has held all the interest in the previous bars. The "hole in the middle" effect produced by the high trills is very obvious unless the player makes a substantial adjustment with swell boxes. Elgar's many accent marks appear very clearly in this edition and I hope players will confine themselves to *marcato* and not attempt to give us aggressive *staccatos* at these points. I have always taken the third movement to be tonally linked to the

second movement by a tie from the final G of the second into the chords which begin the third. Neither the old nor the new editions place a tie at this point, but to insert one is so much in accord with Elgar's known transition techniques (*vide* the second and third movements of the *First Symphony*) that I find it hard to believe that this linking was not intended. In bar 38 the composer marks "con 8va ad lib..." and this is obviously appropriate, but *why* did he leave out a similar marking at bar 74 which cries out for the same treatment? One or two markings are virtually impossible (see bar 245 of the Finale) where *crescendo* and *diminuendo* are hard to make, when both feet are occupied with the pedal phrase, and the composer asks in addition for a *crescendo* on the pedals! Such things might have been possible at Hereford after Willis's 1930s' rebuild, as hand controls to the Swell Pedals (now removed, alas!) made it possible for the registrant/page turner to control such things, but at the time of composition these marks must have represented some wishful thinking on the part of the composer! The point of such markings is, of course, to enable us to see into the composer's emotional intentions, even when his actual instructions cannot be conveyed literally.

The *Vesper Voluntaries* begin this volume. They are skilfully written and make their effect economically and musically. As yet the composer's imaginative powers were relatively undeveloped and it cannot be claimed that they are much, if at all, better than many other similar pieces of the period. Some of the fingerprints are there of course, and it is good to have them as splendidly presented as they are here. The *Cantique* (Opus 3 no. 1) is also an early work which, while melodious enough, lacks very strong character. Worth playing, but it is not mature Elgar!

With the *Fugue in C minor* and the *Sonata no 2* we enter a world of transcription. The *Fugue* is from the *Severn Suite* for brass band and (later) for full orchestra. It was scored by Sir Ivor Atkins for organ with the composer's permission and represents the mature Elgar at his best. Obviously inspired by the Cologne Cathedral Movement of Schumann's *Rhenish Symphony*, this movement (hardly a fugue in the conventional sense) has soaring lines which build up cumulatively to a fine climax and subside to a peaceful conclusion. This is worth playing as a separate piece at a service or at a recital.

The *Sonata no 2* is also based on the *Severn Suite*. Perhaps this work should be seen in the light of Elgar's disillusionment with the world of music in the 20s and early 30s. Its transcription was carried out by Atkins only when the tired composer was obviously unwilling to take on the considerable labour required. The Minuet ("At the Commandery") is omitted - a matter for regret - and Atkins added a Cadenza. The transcription is excellent, except we miss some of the swagger which drums and percussion can produce in the opening movement, and the omission of some material of rhythmic importance in the orchestral version at bars 65 and 141 of the Toccata is a pity (its inclusion would have been difficult, I think, but possible).

The *Fugue* appears here in B \flat minor, instead of C minor, as in the version reviewed above, but it is equally effective. Controversy enters at this point as I find it hard to believe that Elgar sanctioned the Cadenza by Atkins from any motive other than gratitude to his greatest friend for a lifetime's loyalty and all the labour of making the transcription. The composer and Atkins agreed certain changes before the work

was published, but the resulting roulades and (diminished 7th) arpeggios are not on the same level as the rest of the work. Those who agree with me may like to make a cut from the end of bar 36 (p.85) to the last note of bar 47 (p.86), with a consequent gain in structure of a work which, with the Cadenza,¹ appears rather discursive. The Coda, on the other hand, is very well put together out of existing material and provides a fitting conclusion. Despite a narrower range of colour, the transcription works well on the organ, and makes a smaller-scaled but worthy successor to *Sonata no 1*.

The other works in the Appendix are of great interest of course, but only the Cadenza for C.H.Lloyd's *Organ Concerto* (a work which appears to have been lost) and the *Loughborough Memorial Chime* are complete enough for performance. The latter appears at first glance to be rather pianistic in places, but a convincing performance could be made of it.

It is difficult in a limited space to convey an adequate impression of the superlative scholarship and skill in presentation that have gone into this edition. The engraving and binding are of a very high standard, and for this one expects to pay a high price; however, a problem remains for the student who is short of money. At the moment he can buy the Fentone print of the original Breitkopf edition of the *First Sonata* for quite a low figure, and presumably the *Second Sonata* is still available in the Keith Prowse edition also. The *Vesper Voluntaries* are available from Faber & Faber in a new edition at £5-95. Obviously the old editions may not convey all the scholarship and skill which has gone into the latest Novello edition, but the latter may be beyond student pockets.

Would Novello consider an offprint of the principal works in this edition, either separately or together, and without quite such elaborate editorial details in the Preface? £15 or even £20 would be reasonable for such an issue and might solve the problem. For the rest, *if you can afford it, buy it!*

Roger Fisher

[Roger Fisher's recording of Elgar's *Organ Works* illustrates many of the points made in this review and is available on Motette CD 11501 and cassette M11505 (reviewed JOURNAL January 1992). The British distributors are Priory].

¹ In bar 58 of the Cadenza (p.58, line 3, bar 4) it is worth cutting the pedal F♯ to a minim, and inserting a crotchet rest in the pedal part on the third beat. This enables the *forte* tone of the manuals to come on without making a sudden splurge in the middle of a held pedal note. The music's message remains the same, but the effect is cleaner.

BOOK REVIEW

Edward Elgar : Music and Literature.

edited by Raymond Monk. 355pp. (Scolar Press, £45)

One of the factors which makes Elgar endlessly fascinating is that he was an incurable hoarder. Apart from the manuscripts, books, letters, scrapbooks and programmes he left, there are visiting cards, paper napkins, and hundreds of other memorabilia at the disposal of scholars. Thus it is that only two years or so after the very successful *Elgar Studies* (reviewed January 1991), Raymond Monk and his contributors have come up with original and compelling material which takes the reader into a yet deeper understanding of the composer and his works. Perhaps I should say here that this new book is no light read, but one to be studied carefully with score(s) and perhaps a dictionary at hand - try 'belletristic' (p.191) and 'pabulum' (p.192) for starters.

The centrepiece is 'Elgar's Use of Literature' by Brian Trowell, a major composition which comprises over two-fifths of the entire volume. This started life as the first A.T.Shaw lecture in 1983, and has grown enormously since then; indeed, it had been intended to include it in *Elgar Studies*, but it was eventually withdrawn on the basis that there was sufficient material for a separate book. Even now, Professor Trowell writes tantalisingly that "I can here present no more than a selection from my researches", and we can only hope that he will find the time and energy to continue his work. It is in many ways a controversial piece of writing, and not everyone will agree with his conclusions. Inevitably there is a good deal of conjecture, and hypotheses which are ultimately unprovable; but from the wealth of quotations Professor Trowell has attempted to distil common themes which dominated Elgar's outlook and thinking throughout his life. He is no doubt aware of the aphorism that "a text out of context is a pretext"; also that poetry is by nature allusive, and thus personal application to the one who reads it by a third party may be dangerously subjective. The shadowy figure of Helen Weaver is never far away, and the Professor believes that it was the need to express the grief which Elgar felt over her loss which made him into a great composer.

Controversial is a word which could also be applied to Professor Trowell's analysis of the Dent affair. He is inclined to plead for clemency for Dent on the grounds that the offending article was probably written in 1921 or 22, when Parry was only recently dead and Stanford still alive; yet to write in such a way about Elgar surely showed either musical incompetence (which is unlikely) or plain mischief. Professor Trowell has also showed that although Elgar, especially in his Birmingham lectures, apparently displayed an amazing wealth and breadth of literary knowledge, many of his quotations and anecdotes were from a single source; in other words, if you read one book which quotes from eight others, it appears that you have read nine books. This is not to say (and Trowell doesn't) that Elgar was not a widely read man; but the Professor reflects on the "unsystematic nature of his acquisitions" (of books), and quotes Buckley who describes Elgar as "a haunter of the remoter shelves of the second-hand bookshops". (I can confirm from my own limited research that the books Elgar used to compile the libretto of the oratorios were a real mixture; some very scholarly, certainly, but Hillard's 'Life of Christ' - which Elgar used extensively

- was written for boys in public schools!)

It is no exaggeration to say that the book is worth buying for this article alone, and I fear that for reasons of space I shall do less than justice to the other distinguished contributors. Two articles deal with the "might-have-been" in the world of Elgarian opera. First, Percy Young outlines the writing of the incidental music to *Diarmuid(sic) and Grania*, and of the attempts by George Moore to persuade Elgar to extend it into an opera. Then, Christopher Grogan looks at Elgar's friend R.A. Streatfeild who provided a libretto based on *The Pilgrim's Progress*. For various reasons this never really excited the composer's imagination and was found among his papers at his death.

Diana McVeagh's contribution, 'A Man's Attitude to Life', which begins the book, is another A.T. Shaw lecture, this time from 1991. It deals with the depressive Elgar, and analogous aspects of the lives and work of three Victorian poets; Gerard Manley Hopkins, Tennyson, and James Thomson. It is all too short, but exceedingly valuable, in particular the comparison between part of *In Memoriam* and Elgar's description of his behaviour at the death of Rodewald in 1903.

The second article by Christopher Grogan covers the evolution of the libretto of *The Apostles*, a vast subject which Dr Grogan has introduced and explained with admirable clarity. Elgar's decision to compile the libretto as he went along created real problems, and in retrospect it is a miracle that he wrote the oratorios at all. Much time was lost by compiling texts which were never used, and even in some instances by writing music for them which was later discarded.

Ivor Keys' 1987 A.T. Shaw lecture also deals with *The Apostles*, but makes a link with Bach's *St Matthew Passion*. It is good to have Professor Keys' work recorded for posterity; I well remember an outstanding lecture to the London Branch many years ago on the works written at Brinkwells and their tonal interrelationship. Now here it is in print under the title "Ghostly Stuff": the Brinkwells Music'. Professor Keys has the happy ability to write about music in a technical way without losing his non-musical readers.

Robert Meikle's article on the symphonies 'The True Foundation' is harder work, especially for non-musicians. Those unfamiliar with such things as subdominant inflections should approach it carefully, but along with Wulstan Atkins in his excellent Introduction to the book, I would encourage "the ordinary reader not to glance quickly at it and decide that this is not for him". It is an extremely valuable piece of writing, and repays close study.

The same could be said for Christopher Kent's account of the composition of *Falstaff*, based on a detailed analysis of the various sketches for the work. Not the least interesting section deals with the changes to the printed score after the first performance, a unique occurrence among Elgar's orchestral works.

Michael Kennedy's contribution about the *Violin Concerto* suggests a link both with Helen Weaver and Alice Stuart Wortley. He gives the text of a cutting from the *Daily Telegraph* of 30 April 1910, the sense of which would seem to imply that the latter was the natural successor to the former in Elgar's affections. Therefore he concludes, reasonably, that they are *both* the "soul" of the concerto.

Robert Anderson's "fyrrst the noble Arthur" is just the sort of impressive and scholarly piece of writing that one has come to associate with the co-ordinating Editor of the Elgar Complete Edition. *Arthur* is important as it represents the first substantial attempt at composition since Alice's death over two years before. We are

taken through a synopsis of the play and how Elgar's music was used, and then Mr Anderson explains how Elgar raided *Arthur* ten years later for two projects which were left unfinished at his death - *The Spanish Lady* and the *Third Symphony*. The final article, by my predecessor Ronald Taylor, is in some ways the most fascinating of all. Entitled 'Music in the Air : Elgar and the BBC', it deals briefly with Elgar's own broadcasts and his relationship with the Corporation and its first Director of Music, his old friend Percy Pitt. But it also charts live performances of Elgar's music during his lifetime, and the reader will be astonished at the vast number and range, especially as we have always been led to believe that Elgar's reputation went into decline during the years covered (1922-1934). Those of us who in the '70s heard what we believed to be the first broadcast performances of *The Light of Life* and *King Olaf* may be surprised to learn that they were given four and eight times respectively before Elgar's death. And consider the following figures for works believed to be long forgotten : *Sursum Corda* (41), *Sevillana* (39) *Romance for violin, Op.1* (11), *Feasting I watch* (94), and many more. Mr Taylor reviews the major works which remained unbroadcast, and it is a small list indeed (although he omits *The Sanguine Fan*). Maybe Elgar was rejected by the critics during this period, but obviously not by the musical public; as Ronald Taylor concludes : "The BBC would hardly have persisted in giving us so much of his music...if the listeners had not wanted it".

There are one or two minor errors (see Letters *infra*), and discrepancies in material quoted twice (letter to Granville Barker, pp.134 and 148; and the cutting referred to above, pp.77 & 250); and I was not thrilled by having to wade through the 394 footnotes to the Trowell article! But once again Elgarians are heavily indebted to Raymond Monk (in more ways than one, as all royalties go to the Society). This is a book to which Elgar lovers will turn again and again. It contains so much of value that even at £45 it is cheap at the price.

The Editor



Limited Edition Elgar Print
by Philip Downs

Only approx.25 prints remaining.
Price (includes p + p) £10-00

Requests to:-
32 Woodbury Rise,
Malvern
Worcs WR14 1QZ

RECORD REVIEWS

"The Elgar Edition" Vol.2

Variations on an Original theme [Enigma] Op.36; Violin Concerto Op.61; The Wand of Youth [suites 1 & 2] Opp. 1a & 1b; Nursery Suite; Severn Suite Op.87; The Crown of India Op.66; Three Bavarian Dances; Chanson de Nuit Op.15, no.1; Chanson de Matin Op.15, no.2; Three Characteristic Pieces Op.10; Land of Hope and Glory; Fantasia & Fugue in C minor [Bach, orch.Elgar] Op.86; etc.

Yehudi Menuhin (violin), various orchestras conducted by Sir Edward Elgar.

EMI 3 CD set : CDS7 54564 2

The "Gramophone" award to EMI for the best Historical non-vocal issue in 1992 for Volume 1 of their Elgar Edition will give pleasure to the many Society members who have purchased it. There is something heartening to discover all the latest resources of audio technology being so successfully applied to recordings made long before they were dreamed of. And now we have a further instalment to savour and much that has already been said in praise has to be said again.

The second volume is dominated by two major works : the *Enigma Variations* and the *Violin Concerto* which together fill the first of the three discs. The remainder of the issue is taken up with suites and some shorter orchestral pieces.

Five years separate the recordings of the *Variations* and the concerto and it is immediately evident to the ear that they were years of technical development in the fidelity of recording technique. The *Variations* were recorded electrically at only the second and third sessions Elgar undertook after emancipation from the cramped studios at Hayes and the intrusive recording horn used for the acoustic process. He clearly felt some elation at the change as evidenced from the letter he wrote to his friend Frank Schuster on the day after the first session: "It is curious that I do not tire now - 3 hours solid rehearsal Sunday; - the like on Monday & the concert; early on Tuesday HMV [large orchestra] Wedy. afternoon also. Dinner on Tuesday & theatre last night & I am 69!!"¹

The *Enigma Variations* were recorded in the Queen's Hall which of course easily housed the "large orchestra" and also enabled use to be made of the organ - a luxury far beyond the capabilities of Hayes. What is apparent from listening to these transfers (and had escaped notice hitherto - possibly on account of the "cleaning up" process) is the occasional reinforcement of the orchestral string basses by tuba and/or contrabassoon. It was already known that this reversion to pre-electric studio practice had been resorted to in the *Chanson de Nuit* which does not contain parts for those instruments in the score and they would have had to be specially brought in. Their presence at the *Variations* sessions, in which they have their own parts to play, would not have called for comment and no doubt they were "seconded" by discreet cuing to reinforce the string basses on occasion. If anybody doubts this, just listen to the two *pizzicato* crotchets two bars before the end of Ysobel, not to mention almost the entire bass line in Dorabella and BGN if it hasn't become evident already. Shorn of the surface noise that has hitherto shrouded these records a few

¹ Quoted in Young, "Elgar OM", 1955, p.224



The Chairman taketh, and the Chairman giveth away.... EMI have generously allowed the "Gramophone" Record of the Year award for Vol.I of "The Elgar Edition" to be on display at the Birthplace. (Top) Andrew Neill receives it from Roger Lewis, Director of the Classical Division of EMI. Also in the picture are Richard Abram (left) Re-issues Manager, EMI (UK); and Michael Dutton, sound engineer. (Below) Andrew Neill presents it to Laurie Watt, Vice-Chairman of the Elgar Foundation.

imperfections become audible for the first time but seldom amount to more than a slight distraction here and there. As with many recordings of its time there is a tendency to enhance the low frequencies, doubtless to compensate for the inability of reproducers of the day to "capture the bass". This tends to a certain muddiness of texture which it is presumably beyond the ability of the digital process to redeem so that, when the organ pedal enters in the Finale, it is not distinguishable from the rest of the texture of the same pitch. This is a pity for the performance has a lot to commend it. Some of the tempi are not such as find favour nowadays but all the idiosyncrasies of the friends "pictured within" are portrayed with relish, and restoration of the pictures now brings them before us in clearer detail than before.

The recording of the *Violin Concerto* by the sixteen-year-old Yehudi Menuhin is truly a *tour de force* and rightly stands as a landmark of gramophone history. Recorded in July 1932 and released for sale in November that year this performance remained available in the UK HMV catalogue until February 1955 whereupon it was deleted only to reappear as a long playing record in June 1957. Since then it has enjoyed reissue in various forms, the latest as partner of the *Cello Concerto* on an earlier CD from EMI. The performance needs no critical appreciation here, being justly renowned, and having, for example, been washed ashore on many a desert island! Had Kreisler, its dedicatee, recorded the concerto instead of the young Menuhin, would it have enjoyed such currency, one wonders? Forty-one years Menuhin's senior, there can be no doubt that we would have been presented with a differently conceived performance from the soloist who had given the work's première twenty-two years before. Menuhin, who made his recording debut only some three years previously, was the choice of HMV's impresario F.W. Gaisberg who had been unable to prevail upon Kreisler to take part. No doubt the combination of composer and soloist almost sixty years apart in age fired the imagination as well as did the undoubted virtuosity of the young soloist. The story is well-known and a reminiscence of the making of the recording is given by Sir Yehudi himself in the booklet accompanying the set. A comparison of this transfer of the *Concerto* with previous transfers is instructive. The silent surface of the original LP transcription (ALP 1456) suggests it was taken from vinyl pressings of the masters. The transcription in the collection "Images of Elgar" on the other hand seems to have been made directly from commercial pressings and it is likely the independent CD referred to came from this source digitally remastered. What we now have is understood to have been made from vinyl pressings made from matrices obtained in the USA similarly remastered, but the resulting sound - to this pair of ears at least - seems harsh and edgy giving the violin a prominence that tends to aural fatigue. Presumably this is the result of preference in equalisation in the remastering studio but it may not be to everybody's liking.

The undoubted "scoop" of this issue is the publication for the first time of the *Serenade Mauresque* which was rescued from a strange oblivion. The music was almost too long for the wax allotted to it and the recording machine switched off seconds before the piece concluded with a resultant swoop of pitch on the last chord. That the original pressing with this fault should have been traced is remarkable enough but for it to be transferred so successfully with the pitch corrected is a bonus indeed. So now we are able to hear for the first time all three of the *Characteristic Pieces* conducted by the composer.

New transfers have been made from the 78s for this Volume with the exception of the *Nursery* and *Severn* suites and Croft's *O God Our Help*. For these the transfers made for the "Elgar on Record" LPs were deemed adequate, subject to the digital remastering process. Here and there one suspects one can hear the supernumerary tuba on loan to the string bass line as, for example, in the "Meditation" from *The Light of Life* [scarcely surprising, if true, for this dates from one of the *Enigma* sessions in which the practice had already been suspected]. Technically the high standard set in Volume 1 has been maintained but for the odd lapses which are as nothing set against the overall success of the venture. Just now and again comparisons show the Edition to disadvantage. The first *Bavarian Dance*, for example, develops some roughness which is not evident on my copy of the original (although it seems the LP transfer had something of the same problem). Again, the *Fantasia & Fugue* transfer is presumably taken from a published copy of the 78 (originally only available abroad, incidentally) yet a rough start to the *Fugue* might have been avoided if the transfer had been made from a copy of the vinyl 78 specially pressed for and published by Symposium Records which sounds perfectly satisfactory. Nevertheless, throughout these reissues one is brought by the overall technical mastery to appreciate afresh the felicities of the performances which are, after all, of oracular importance to a proper understanding of Elgar in concert.

Once again we are indebted to Dr J.N.Moore for his involvement behind the scenes and an illuminating essay in the accompanying booklet. This also contains an article by Robert Philip entitled "Authenticity and Performance Practice" which deals intriguingly with such matters as portamento and vibrato and similar characteristics in the playing of the orchestras Elgar conducted. Now, for Volume 3!....

David G. Michell

Symphony No.1 in A flat, Op.55. Cockaigne Overture Op.40

Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Sir John Barbirolli
EMI CDM 7645112

Symphony No.1 in A flat, Op.55. Sea Pictures, Op.37

Hallé Orchestra conducted by Sir John Barbirolli
Intaglio INCD 701-1

Symphony No.1 in A flat, Op.55. Cockaigne Overture, Op.40

London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Jeffrey Tate
EMI CDC 754414-2

Symphony No.1 in A flat, Op.55. Pomp & Circumstance Marches, Op.39

BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Andrew Davis
Teldec 9031-73278-2

Judging by the number of recordings of Elgar's *First Symphony* now available, it appears that the world is, finally, taking to heart Richter's words to the London Symphony Orchestra on 6 December 1908: "Gentlemen, let us now rehearse the greatest Symphony of modern times...". Of course, the record companies never seem to do things by halves and currently the record buying public is presented with

a bewildering choice of new or refurbished recordings.

This review is concerned with four of those recordings. In April 1962, Sir John Barbirolli took the Philharmonia into the Kingsway Hall to record the symphony for EMI. That recording has just been issued on compact disc, after an inexcusable length of time, in EMI's 'British Composer' series. At the Kings Lynn Festival on 24 July 1970, Sir John conducted the Hallé Orchestra, before a packed audience, in what was to be the penultimate concert of his life. The concert concluded with an electrifying performance of Elgar's *First Symphony*. Five days later he suffered a fatal heart attack. The good news is that the BBC were on hand to broadcast the concert and record it for their archives; the bad news, that contractual restrictions have, so far, prevented the BBC from releasing this unique document. Whilst it is hoped that this position may soon change, such considerations of UK copyright and contractual exclusivity have, meanwhile, not prevented the Italian company Inta'glio from releasing a CD of a recording made from a broadcast of this performance. It reappears intermittently and was available at one point from EMI's own stores.

Jeffrey Tate's performance, with the London Symphony Orchestra, also forms part of the same EMI series featuring British composers, and was recorded at St. Augustine's Church, Kilburn almost 21 years to the day from Sir John's performance enshrined on the Inta'glio disc. Andrew Davis' performance with his BBC Symphony Orchestra was recorded a few months earlier, in March 1991, and in general maintains the standard of his previous recordings of British music for the dramatically rejuvenated Teldec label.

First of all what do the recordings sound like? The Barbirolli pirate is an off-air stereo recording and is not particularly marvellous, with squashed and unpredictable dynamics; however, it is not bad either and the perspectives are natural rather than contrived. The ear quickly adjusts and it is surprising how well some details come through compared with what the wonders of modern technology are supposed to be able to produce - the same can be said too of Elgar's own 1930 performance recorded at Abbey Road Studio number 1 - although modern technology had a hand there too! (I refer, of course, to Volume 1 of the recently refurbished EMI "Elgar Edition"). Barbirolli's 1962 recording has the benefit of the warmth and clarity of the lamented Kingsway Hall acoustic and, throughout, in terms of clarity of the smallest detail without artificial highlighting, it shows up the two new recordings. Tributes therefore for the contemporary engineers, for those who have lovingly transferred the recording to compact disc, but above all to Sir John Barbirolli for his masterly control of balance and internal dynamics within a Philharmonia in peak condition.

It is in their dynamic contrasts and an almost holographic realism that many modern recordings score over those of thirty years ago, and, both the new EMI and Teldec recordings succeed in capturing the full range of a real orchestra in a believable acoustic. If anything, the Teldec has greater transparency - for example as the underpinning staccato crotchet tread of the andante opening is developed, the tuba is easily identifiable from the cellos and double-basses. On closer analysis, however, it is all the more surprising to find what does not come through on these two modern recordings. Too often subsidiary wood-wind detail is obscured and the important harp hardly shows in some of the crucial entries (for example the nine

bars up to figure 30 in the first movement); compare Elgar and both Barbirolli performances at these points.

Bearing in mind that all these recordings, save Barbirolli in 1962, end the first movement within five seconds of each other it is amazing how different they feel; perhaps the secret here is that they are up to a quarter of a minute apart after the first 50 bars of the Symphony - nobilmente but variably semplice. It is interesting to note that Sir John's two performances end the same introductory section, when the motto is established, within three seconds of each other, although the later live performance feels much more drawn out and almost laboured at the outset. The key, I believe, is the observation of the staccato marking, already referred to above, over the marching tread on accompanying lower strings, which in the 1970 performance, is more honoured in the breach - of which more below! So how important is meticulous observance of the score? - particularly one where the composer takes such effort to mark what he wants. Is it an instruction or a guide? Well, judging from his own performances, very much the latter. However, it takes a very special insight and experience to seek to merge one conception within another, and Barbirolli at the end of his life had that. For all his talent, as you will see below, I do not think that Jeffrey Tate, in taking the liberties he does with the score, yet has it.

It sounds as though I am seeking to deny the role of the interpreter, which I must hasten to add I am not, particularly when with such highly charged music so much depends on what one seeks from it. It is very much a question, though, of finding only what is there to be found rather than superimposing something else without very special reason. In this symphony one might well ask whether one is tracing Christian's path in Pilgrims Progress or that of St. George, to find and vanquish his dragon? This is probably the wrong place to say that both may be perfectly valid; but, particularly in the later performance, one only has to hear Barbirolli recreating so surely the product of Elgar's genius, whilst, at the same time, making such an overt personal statement out of a work which flows from such introspection, to realise how a really great conductor can reach such accord with that which he seeks to recreate - and so confound any attempt at rationalising or defining the limits of the role of the interpreter in such a unique situation!

It must always, ultimately, be the integrity of the conception which is paramount and it is here that I part somewhat from Jeffrey Tate. Jeffrey Tate's first movement is actually terrific although it has to be said that he does impose his own idea of rubato at points where he should just trust Elgar's sure instinct, although, in this movement, he does not do this to the destructive degree which occurs later. The London Symphony Orchestra play with consistent virtuosity and with them Tate brings out the extremes of dynamic, particularly in the brass (great horns) much more effectively than what appears, on direct comparison, to be a slightly reticent Davis. However, this reticence is definitely not a problem which afflicts Davis' performance of the *Second Symphony* and it may well be that Davis' view of the *First Symphony* forms part of a more unified conception, taking in both symphonies. It is worth thinking about although it must be said that *fff* is *fff* when you get down to it. However, within these self-imposed constraints, Davis does let the music speak for itself to a much freer degree than Jeffrey Tate.

Whilst Davis enjoys, on balance, better recording, the EMI has no problem in showing off the qualities that Tate brings forth from the LSO. Listen, for example, to the greater frisson that the LSO realise at the climactic moments in this movement to get the blood moving - the *tutta forza fff* at letter 17 or the edge on the trumpets crescendo - *molto e vibrato* -, through *fff* just before letter 47. The Philharmonia trumpets blaze here for Barbirolli, but amazing as the older recording is, EMI's own 1990 technology has the edge.

At the other extreme, Elgar is most particular about his instructions to the strings at letter 48 - 'piano' and 'last desks - only' - he was quite specific about the contrast between, on the one hand, the "soft diffused sound" emanating from the back of the section and, on the other, the whole section uniting when they come in after 11 bars. It is ironic that it takes Elgar himself with the LSO and the EMI engineers of 1930 to show us how to do it. Tate does not *sound* as though he even tries. Davis does, but the contrast only really has lip service paid to it. With Sir John's live performance, your guess is as good as mine as the recording hides it effectively; however you have only to turn to his earlier Kingsway recording to hear how it should be done.

In the second movement the danger is to go too fast - Leonard Slatkin leads the London Philharmonic in a very exciting but somewhat hectic scramble in this movement. Elgar who is much quicker in the first, third and fourth movements is positively sedate in the second movement, compared with Barbirolli who cuts nearly a minute off Elgar's timing in 1967 and forty seconds or so back in 1962. However, listen to the sizzling articulation of the Hallé strings in Barbirolli's opening bars. Both Davis and Tate fare well throughout most of this movement. However, for me, the last section of the movement, from letter 88 to the end, is a masterpiece of craftsmanship as Elgar kills the impetus he has generated (forgive me, but I am reminded here of the slowing down of Honegger's great railway locomotive in *Pacific 231*; another amazing piece of similar craftsmanship, but utterly different!) slowing the whole movement down but *without* altering the basic pulse right through to the moment of magical transition: he simply lengthens the note values.

Andrew Davis is meticulous here as are all the other conductors I have compared on record (nine of them) with the exception of Jeffrey Tate - I should add that I have not heard Sinopoli... In any event, it is here that I part serious company with Mr Tate; he wrecks the effect imposing a wholly unnatural break on proceedings to ensure that he can ease into what I feel is an unnecessarily self-indulgent approach to the Adagio. I have always thought that Bryden Thompson was near the extreme edge of indulgence in this work, and the Adagio in particular. Leonard Slatkin after the quickest "Scherzo" on record, produces the slowest Adagio that I have heard. In neither case do these two suffer the excesses which somewhat disfigure Jeffrey Tate's performance in this movement. If Slatkin and Thompson, under those circumstances, can manage the transition from the previous movement without riding rough shod over the score, then Tate should be able to.

In Tate's hands the slow movement takes an exceptional 14¼ minutes and his lingering on the incidental beauties has the inevitable effect on the structure and momentum of the movement. Fortunately for him it is lovingly played by a very

much on form London Symphony Orchestra who respond to his every gesture; this, for many, will more than compensate for the indulgences which he does take. Also, having been a bit critical, above, about the woodwind balance, it is not a serious problem in this movement and there is some wonderful woodwind interplay which is beautifully balanced by the conductor and EMI's engineers.

Back to Barbirolli to get the third movement into a beautifully formed but flexible perspective in both recordings, although the transition from the second movement, in the Kings Lynn performance, is a bit lumpy compared with its predecessor. Not much of Jerry Moore's "passing shadow of B \flat minor tonality into D major..." there. There is a marked difference between the two Barbirolli performances in this movement.

In 1962, Sir John, within the same seamless flexibility, is meticulous here and throughout the symphony, in observing Elgar's dynamic markings, subservient always to the composer's creation. On the other hand, in contrast to his earlier recording, the performance at the Kings Lynn festival in 1970, at a superficial level, appears to ignore many incidental details of balance and dynamics, particularly within this movement. Much more significantly, however, it gives way to almost a new dimension of hyper-reality surrounding the music; a sublime symbiosis of the conductor's life, dedicated to his art, and embracing the conception of a composer to whom Sir John had given a lifetime's devotion. Gerontius must have been close to his mind in the dark chords between letter 95 and 96 where between sublime melody the music withdraws like a cloud crossing hazy sun. It is as though, here, the composer glimpses his mortality and, at this point, in this performance, Barbirolli joins him, reaches within and sees his own. "This chill at heart, this dampness on my brow".

Davis is also very fine in the slow movement, his more restrained approach coming into its own here. Listen to the gorgeous interplay between solo violin, clarinet and solo bass clarinet at letter 98 ... but, oh dear, those nasty slurs by the muted trombones on those crucial resolving triplets, in the third and fifth last bars - at least they are pianissimo, but the horns do not do it and the slur is not marked.

All three conductors in all four recordings are successful in the last movement. Tate is more emotionally exciting, starting the movement very slowly - he has to, of course! The wonderful transmutation at letter 130 of the march into the long breathed cantabile melody (shades of the last movement of Sibelius' *First Symphony* here) on the strings, with rippling harps is most successfully done. Davis loses his harps, or, rather, one has to listen too hard for them. However, his ending, with the tidal wave of the opening A \flat motto bursting through and finally overwhelming, is wonderful, as is Jeffrey Tate's. Barbirolli's Hallé bass trombone (in contrast to his inaudible counterpart in the Philharmonia) takes the prize adding heightened tension, as the re-emerged motto theme shifts key and girds its loins, if I may put it that way, before the commencement of the allegro and the final onslaught.

Comparing the two Barbirolli performances is again illuminating here. In the live Kings Lynn performance, at the climax of the movement, Sir John imperiously brushes aside the orchestral obstacles to the final catharsis of the triumphant motto

theme, overpowering in its final headlong momentum. It is almost as if he is saying "Yes, I know you for what you are, you cannot stop me now". The colliding of colossal forces, the joining of *battle* with the motto triumphant, is much more apparent in 1962. It really is amazing writing at this point. We are in 1908 and the temptation is to compare the eruptions, which seek to impede the re-emergence of the opening motto, with the symbolic and destructive catastrophe depicted by Ravel, in cold impressionistic light, at the end of his orchestral showpiece, *La Valse*, but, of course, the one is the mirror image of the other and Ravel in 1920 had the considerable benefit of hindsight! So far, for Edward Elgar, despite ominous stirrings around the world, all is all right and triumphantly so at the end. Of course, with *Symphony No.2* we move on a bit; but that is another story.

What about the accompanying works? To my amazement and disappointment you can forget Davis' straitlaced *Marches* - rather pompous and of little circumstance. I rushed to Del Mar and the RPO to make sure it was not just me at the end of a long day. No, there they sparkle from the first note to the last. Although Jeffrey Tate takes an amazing 17 minutes for his performance of *Cockaigne*, I have to say I thoroughly enjoyed it. It ebbs and flows freely - the reflective Guildhall melody in the middle section is possibly a bit slow but when we come to the military band section there is a wonderful balance between structure and vulgarity with superb brass, wind trills and hand-stopped horns with the bass drum under-pinning as it should. At the end the organ launches in with a terrific pedal, - deep and solid, rather than 'woofy' as it so often is - although for some reason, whilst it is very well integrated with the orchestra, the pressure of low frequencies is not maintained to the very end. Barbirolli's *Cockaigne* first appeared on CD in 1988 coupled with the *Pomp & Circumstance Marches* and *Froissart*. Very fine it is, with perhaps a more coherent view of the work's structure than Tate. The recording is a bit murkier than the symphony, with no real bass line for the organ and bass drum. Barbirolli's *Sea Pictures* work very well and are very moving indeed although Kirsten Meyer is neither a Janet Baker nor, indeed, a Bernadette Greevy.

Laurie Watt

Caractacus, Op.35.

Judith Howarth, Arthur Davies, David Wilson-Johnson, Alistair Miles,
Stephen Roberts, London Symphony Chorus and Orchestra
conducted by Richard Hickox
Chandos CHAN 9156/7

There seems to be an increasing acceptance that the appreciation of great art cannot be divorced from an understanding of the times in which it was created. Great paintings are not dismissed on the grounds that the subject does not appeal to modern tastes or the people depicted are not in the dress of our day! Just as Gorecki's music must be understood in the light of late twentieth-century post-communist Poland, so do Elgar's choral works need the background of late nineteenth-century imperialistic England. After all, *Caractacus* was written in the vanguard of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee and in that context the words of the last chorus are hardly surprising! The libretto is flawed but around it is some wonderful music. Above all, a conductor must accept the score as it is and present

it with absolute conviction and no hint of an apology.

Richard Hickox does just this. There is a sense of purpose from beginning to end, aided by state of the art recorded sound that reproduces effortlessly, allowing many wonderful points of orchestral detail to emerge and encompassing the widest dynamic range. David Wilson-Johnson launches into the Sword Song with great gusto, sounding much more ready for battle than Peter Glossop on the Groves recording. His account of the Lament is beautifully controlled and dignified, coming to a wonderfully noble and rich climax before sinking to a genuine *ppp* at the end. This is music-making of real distinction, although I have to admit that in spite of the lack of a chorus and the sonic limitations Peter Dawson and John Barbirolli's old 78 is unforgettable. Judith Howarth as Eigen sings "O'er-arched by leaves" with a touching simplicity that is very moving and when she is joined by Arthur Davies for the inspired love duet at the end of Scene III, they both sing most sensitively and with beautiful control.

The adrenalin really flows in a swashbuckling account of the Triumphal March. With incisive choral singing from the London Symphony Chorus, it is very obvious how much is missed when the march is performed without singers. A few minutes comparison here between this and the stolid sounds on the only previous recording, conducted by Sir Charles Groves in Liverpool in 1976 shows that the latter is now entirely eclipsed by the newcomer. The final section is all that lovers of great Elgarian tunes would want it to be!

The coupling is also valuable. The orchestral version of the *Severn Suite* has only been recorded twice before - Elgar in the thirties and Groves in the sixties. It is good to welcome this energetic performance with virtuoso playing from the LSO and first rate recorded sound.

Not that long ago, any recording of *Caractacus* would have seemed an unlikely proposition. Now we have a second and I trust that it will finally dispel the old myth that Elgar wrote nothing of real significance before the *Variations*.

John Knowles

CD Round-up

Two important Elgar re-issues, both première recordings, now at mid-price. Boulton's 1969 version of *The Kingdom* (CMS 7642092) is a major landmark in the history of Elgar recording, and needs no recommendation from me. This just has to be John Shirley-Quirk's finest hour; and of course every Elgarian should have a copy in his collection. The Kingsway Hall recording still sounds well, though some vocal detail is lost in the tuttis; I listen in vain for the wonderful final entry of the soloists ("hath glorified") in Part 3. The fill-up is a total contrast emotionally and spiritually - Philip Ledger's *Coronation Ode* from 1977. It has a lot to recommend it, especially the lush orchestral sound reverberating around King's College chapel; and the youthful enthusiasm of the CUMS choir. The only disappointment is the somewhat indifferent singing of the soloists (the peerless Alfreda Hodgson excepted).

The other re-issue, the 1980 *Light of Life*, conducted by Sir Charles Groves (CDM 7647322), is presumably EMI's attempt to pre-empt the new Hickox recording on Chandos later in the year. It can be safely recommended, and although for me it lacks a little fire in places (especially the final chorus) Groves gives a very sympathetic and thoughtful account of the work. Once again, Shirley-Quirk is in fine form, as are the other soloists.

Recently there have been some very interesting releases of music by Elgar's friends and contemporaries, and following the precedent of Gareth Lewis I have decided to review them here. Elgar was one of the early champions of Samuel Taylor-Coleridge, and a recent disc from Koch International of instrumental and chamber music deserves comment (3-7056-2H1). It includes piano arrangements of negro spirituals and of the well-known *Petite Suite de Concert* (much more familiar to us as an orchestral work); but the highlight is undoubtedly a youthful *Clarinet Quintet*, tuneful and exuberant, and astonishingly mature for a young student.

Another long-neglected composer whose major works are gradually being recorded is Granville Bantock. Some believe that his prolificacy and versatility worked against him: Frank Howes said of Bantock, "the more he wrote the less did he consolidate a recognizable individuality". Yet Henry Raynor was surely right when he wrote; "Without the unique genius of either [Elgar or Delius], Bantock seemed to do nothing that is not marked by a massive competence". Vernon Handley and the RPO have followed up their acclaimed recording of the *Celtic* and *Hebridean* symphonies by another fine Hyperion disc (CDA 66630) containing the *Pagan Symphony* of 1928, and the tone-poem *Fifine at the Fair*. This latter work is reasonably well-known thanks to a pioneering recording by Beecham in 1949. But the symphony is a great find; as Michael Hurd says in his notes: "It is a matter for astonishment that the work has been largely neglected since...1936". Incidentally, no-one's propriety will be compromised by this work: the word "pagan" is merely used to evoke the world of the Greek gods!

The revival of interest in Bax proceeds, and Lyrita are re-issuing recordings of the symphonies first released in the seventies. The latest contains the *First Symphony*, conducted by Myer Fredman with the LPO, and the *Seventh*, with Raymond Leppard conducting the same orchestra (SRCD 232). The recordings are remarkably fine, and the performances are likewise exemplary. Highly recommended.

Chandos deserve the gratitude of every lover of English music for their willingness to promote neglected composers. The cycle of Alwyn recordings by Richard Hickox and the LSO is well under way, and has received deserved plaudits. Like Elgar, Alwyn learned his craft slowly. In his case his work on films gave him greater facility to write for orchestra, and his finest works follow the *First Symphony* of 1949. This delightful work is coupled with the *Piano Concerto no.1*, a spiky, neo-classical piece after the manner of Prokofiev, and written in 1930 for Clifford Curzon, a fellow-student (CHAN 9155). Another disc is devoted to "concerto" style works (though none is called that) with string accompaniment: the *Autumn Legend* for cor anglais; the *Pastoral Fantasia* for viola; the *Tragic Interlude* for two horns; and the *Lyra Angelica* for harp, possibly Alwyn's greatest work. The orchestra here is the City of London Sinfonia (CHAN 9065). A third disc contains the *Second Symphony*

[Alwyn's own favourite of his five) and a number of smaller occasional pieces, including the Overture *Derby Day*, inspired by Frith's famous painting (CHAN 9093). There are five discs in the series so far, and I look forward to the rest.

Finally, a recording of Vaughan Williams' masterpiece, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, given by the students of the Royal Northern College of Music under Igor Kennaway. No concessions need be made for youth here : this is a totally convincing performance, very moving, and hugely enjoyable. The recording had the added difficulty of being made during three performances in March last year, the main problems being the inaudibility of the chorus once or twice, the sound of the performers moving around the stage, and unsolicited audience noise. However, the benefits in having the immediacy of a live performance far outweigh the disadvantages. (Thus there is no competition with the Boult version from 1970 which is a studio recording). In urging you to buy this, I should add that the two-disc CD set costs only £16-00 (plus 50p p + p) from RNCM Promotions Dept, Room 417, 124 Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9RD. The 2-cassette set costs a mere £9-00. You will not only acquire a fine performance of a great work, but have the privilege of supporting the next generation of English musicians.

The Editor

Falstaff Op.68. Overture "Cockaigne" Op.40. Introduction & Allegro for Strings Op.47.

*London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Vernon Handley
Classics for Pleasure CD-CFP 4617*

This was the first of Handley's Elgar recordings for CFP and it is surprising that it has taken so long to appear on CD. Recorded in St Augustine's, Kilburn in 1978, the sound on the LP was vivid and yet within a very credible acoustic. If anything, this is further enhanced by the transfer and like many of the last analogue recordings it comes over very well.

London members with long memories will perhaps bring to mind the fascinating talk that Dr Handley gave in the early '70s on Falstaff in which he illustrated passages by singing in imitation of the different orchestral instruments. Clearly this was a score of which he had intimate knowledge and strong opinions and the LP was eagerly awaited. I wrote enthusiastically about it in the JOURNAL at the time and see no reason to change my view now! Tempi are on the steady side but there is plenty of energy with each section sharply etched. It's a pity that CFP have put it on the disc as just one track.

To the original coupling of *Cockaigne* has been added the *Introduction & Allegro* recorded digitally in Watford Town Hall in 1983. I have always thought this was one of Handley's less successful Elgar recordings, not helped by the sound which is rather edgy at the top and reticent in the middle and lower registers. Nonetheless a very fine, self-recommending bargain disc but don't forget Christopher Seaman's similar coupling for Pickwick with the National Youth Orchestra on sparkling form.

John Knowles

BRANCH REPORTS

WEST MIDLANDS. After a most successful Supper Party on 12 February the Branch met again on 6 March for the Annual General Meeting, attended by about 40 members. The meeting was preceded by Michael Trott's presentation of a transcript of Alan Webb's 1969 broadcast "An Evening with Elgar". (Michael was busy again on 20 March at the annual joint meeting with Worcester Recorded Music Society. His subject on this occasion was "The Wand of Youth", an excellent presentation).

The AGM took its usual course of reports and thanks. However, it marked the final appearances of John Warren as Chairman after eight years, and Jim Holt as Secretary after four years (and Treasurer four years before that!). They are succeeded by Michael Trott and Hywel Davies respectively.

A note of sadness was contained in the Secretary's report when he referred to the death of Dr Rodney Baldwin. A number of branch members attended the Memorial Service in Pershore Abbey on 26 February.

The 1993-94 season will commence on 2 October in the form of a "Members' Afternoon". This will be held at 2.30 pm at The Stables, 37 Albany Terrace, Worcester.

LONDON Branch was able triumphantly to circumvent the problem of Walter Essex's inability to present his "Gerontius on Record" in December. There was sufficient time to organise an in-house symposium on the same subject at which four distinguished members (Martin Passande, Trevor Fenemore-Jones, Arthur Reynolds and Malcolm Walker) spoke briefly about favourite and/or interesting recordings. All acquitted themselves splendidly and there was - by luck rather than judgment! - no overlapping. There was also the added bonus that Malcolm Walker's father sang the Angel of the Agony in the first complete recording - a delightful personal memory and a fine performance! In February, however, David Mellor's cancellation (three-line Maastricht whips) left very little time for substitution. The evening was saved principally by a tape of the B&C's 1957 tribute to Elgar with the voices of Carice, Vaughan Williams, Boulton, Menuhin, and so many others. As the years pass it becomes an increasingly valuable document, and one which many members had never heard.

We are able to report, in January and March, meetings which went to plan. Richard Morrison's "Kipling and Elgar" was an outstanding occasion. The speaker did not simply chat about the odd "collaboration" (eg. *Fringes of the Fleet*) but explored fascinating parallels between these two great contemporaries - men of vast acclaim, but essentially insecure and deeply sensitive in an age which was disintegrating around them, and this is mirrored in their work. In March Malcolm Ruthven presented his "Elgar in Camera" with the true professionalism of the BBC stalwart. His choice of mainly lighter Elgar, often in rare and unusual performances, linked by a most apposite commentary, was truly delightful.

Meanwhile the Branch's extra-curricular activities grow. Following visits to *Caractacus* and then *The Light of Life* at the Barbican, we had a further block booking of sixty members for Sir Charles Mackerras's Elgar concert (*Introduction & Allegro, Sea Pictures, Second Symphony*) in the same hall on 8 March. A visit to Brinkwells will soon follow.

The Branch AGM will be held on 7 June at Imperial College and will follow Michael Plant's presentation entitled "A Very Light Programme". Agendas and Minutes will

be available at the meeting. Nominations for officers and committee should be sent to the Branch Secretary (address on back cover) to arrive by 6 June.

The newly relaunched SOUTH-WEST Branch got off to a flying start when Ron Bleach gave a talk on Elgar and Sullivan, pointing out the similarities of their early years and culminating in their meeting for the rehearsal of *Caractacus* at Leeds. The February meeting - a "bring along a British record" - was also well attended. It was an opportunity for members to meet and talk about their particular Elgar favourite. The March meeting has had to change venue to Clifton R.C. Cathedral, otherwise our meetings are as shown in the January JOURNAL. The autumn programme begins on 25 September with Dr Percy Young. Full details later.

YORKSHIRE Branch continues to enjoy good attendances at its meetings, with figures in the mid-twenties being achieved on most occasions. Particularly cold weather on 11 January deterred some, but it was rewarding to see several of our more outlying members among the nineteen who risked the snow and ice. The occasion was the secretary's showing, in slide form, of about 150 period postcard issues showing the people and places Elgar knew, from about the turn of the century to his death. On 8 February Elgar's music for wind quintet was explored by Mark Jepson in an extremely interesting talk. Our March meeting was the occasion for a very informative talk by Bridget Duckenfield about Landon Ronald.

After the AGM on 19 April, our speaker on 10 May will be Philip Scowcroft, visiting us again after a long gap to speak on "Victorian Musicians". We shall complete the 1992/3 season with a talk on Parry by John Weir on 14 June. Our final fling will be the annual get-together at the secretary's home on 19 July. The new season will start on 27 September when we shall be back in our original meeting room at "The Willows".

SOUTH WALES. Standing in at short notice for Ronald Taylor, who was indisposed, Ian Parrott, on 10 October, delivered a talk entitled "Elgar, Janáček and the Germanic Tradition". Although, at first glance, it might appear that Janáček and Elgar formed an oddly-assorted pair, it was possible, nevertheless, to discover certain parallels that were worthy of notice.

Ronald Taylor, now recovered from his illness, will address the Branch on 24 April, and Geoffrey Hodgkins will visit us in June.

Despite major problems, the EAST ANGLIA Branch is trying to keep going, and members will be receiving details shortly. For information and offers of help, please contact the Chairman, Alan Childs, at the address on the back cover.

LETTERS

From: Ronald Taylor

It is always annoying when, having written something in all good faith, information suddenly becomes available which proves one wrong. But this is exactly what happened to me over a statement I made in my contribution "Music in the Air: Elgar and the BBC" in the new volume Edward Elgar: Music & Literature edited by Raymond Monk.

Curiously it was when visiting the BBC commemorative exhibition at Broadcasting House, in Raymond's company in September 1992, that I spotted an exhibit which contradicted a passage in my essay. It occurs on p.339 and refers to the opening of the Stoke-on-Trent relay station. I stated that three Elgar pieces were performed, but in the exhibition copy of the original opening brochure there are pencil alterations showing that the two Pageant of Empire songs were NOT given at all, but two songs by another composer were substituted at the last moment. Pomp & Circumstance no.4 was kept in the programme, though. The reason for the omission is not clear, perhaps the music was not readily available, but this does mean that in the list of First Broadcast Performances, p.354, the dates for "The Blue Mountains" and "Sailing Westward" are now incorrect, and 7.11.24 should be substituted in both cases.

Finally, despite a fine piece of production - of which Raymond Monk may be justly proud - the odd error does occasionally break through. In my case it is on p.331, line 17, where "satisfied" should of course read "dissatisfied"!

From: Frank Beck

I would like to alert members to an excellent recording they may have missed. It's called "English Music for Strings" and was recorded by the Guildhall String Ensemble (BMG/RCA 7761-2-RC, also available on cassette).

This disc was not reviewed in the JOURNAL on its release in 1988 and isn't listed in the Penguin Guide, but it is a superb compilation of works by seven of Britain's best twentieth-century composers. Some of the pieces are rarely heard, so even those who know modern British music well are apt to find new pleasures here. The main attraction for Elgarians is a spirited version of The Spanish Lady Suite, but the other works are appealing, too. The Guildhall players perform Holst's St. Paul's Suite zestfully, then turn wistful for Two Aquarelles by Delius and two impressive Finzi works, Prelude and Romance. Ireland is represented by the tuneful Minuet from his Downland Suite, Walton by excerpts from Henry V, and Warlock's Capriol Suite brings the disc to a rousing finish. Producer Andrew Keener captures the ensemble's outstanding playing throughout with great presence and naturalness.

Normally I shy away from musical anthologies like this, but this one offers a programme so carefully chosen and lovingly played that it's as satisfying as many recordings of single, "bigger" works, and I recommend it wholeheartedly.

From : Richard Abram, EMI Records, UK

As members of the Elgar Society might well imagine, nothing would have given us greater pleasure than to have crowned the Elgar Edition with what we had hoped would be the first publication of a recording of Elgar's in true stereo. My heart sank, therefore, when I saw the reprint (JOURNAL January 1993) from Barry Fox's New Scientist article.

Truly it is said that no journalist ever let the truth stand in the way of a good story. Almost every material statement relating to EMI and adduced by Mr Fox in support of his thesis is untrue; indeed, he has since considerably toned down the story in the retelling (most notably in the BBC Music Magazine). If Mr Fox had had the courtesy when he first phoned me about this matter to say that he was interviewing me for an article, I should have made sure he understood - as he so manifestly did not - what I was saying, and I should have given him chapter and verse.

These are the facts. It has never been claimed that the recordings of Elgar that Gaisberg made double-banked were done using a single microphone. To quote Anthony C. Griffith, whose experience as a recording engineer goes back to the 78 era and who of course transferred Elgar's recordings to LP in the 1970s : "Elgar was getting on...and waxes had a high mortality rate in those days. So two machines were used for cutting the masters fed from a single mixer. It was essential that the two waxes cut for each side were identical as far as quality and recorded level so that the final set could if necessary be a mixture of both sets, as it indeed often was. The number of microphones used does not come into the reckoning as they would be combined in the mixer".

Michael Dutton was not "taken off the project" (I have discussed this with him) : other things supervened. He maintains his interest in experimenting with "stereo" Elgar, and I have assured him that EMI would not stand in his way.

Mr Fox's views appear to be a victory of wishful thinking - well, wishfulness anyway - over rational enquiry. Your readers may judge for themselves his devotion to the cause of scientific debate by the fact that he effectively suppressed Mr Griffith's reply to the original NS article (in a remarkable letter, Fox offered to help reduce the length of the reply - all 1½ typescript pages of it - "eg. by deleting the references to me and Brad Kay"). Prospective purchasers of the final volume of EMI's Elgar Edition may wish to know that the booklet includes an essay by Mr Griffith which deals with this among other early recording matters.

THE ELGAR SOCIETY

FOUNDED 1951

Registered as a Charity No.298062

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

Chairman: Andrew Neill

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION: £10.00 payable 1st January each year. The subscription includes membership for one other nominated person residing at the same address and sharing a single copy of the JOURNAL. Student members £5.00. Overseas members £10.00 payable in sterling. All subscriptions should be sent to the Hon. Treasurer, John Greig, Orchard Barn, Derrington Street, Barham, Canterbury, Kent CT4 6QB. Tel : 0227 831841. Deeds of covenant and bank standing order forms are obtainable from the Treasurer.

APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP should be sent to the Hon. Membership Secretary, David Morris, 2 Marriotts Close, Haddenham, Aylesbury, Bucks HP17 8BT. Tel : 0844 290742.

BRANCH MEMBERSHIP is included in the basic subscription for those who wish to be associated with one of the Society's Branches which are listed below.

BRANCHES AND BRANCH SECRETARIES :

LONDON
(South Kensington)

*David Bury, Flat 6, 19 Ringstead Road, Sutton,
Surrey, SM1 4SE. Tel: 081-661 2120.*

WEST MIDLANDS
(Worcester)

*Hywel Davies, 24 College Grove, Malvern WR14
3HP. Tel: 0684 562692.*

NORTH WEST
(Manchester)

*Mrs. Pat Hurst, 60 Homewood Road, Northenden,
Manchester, M22 4DW. Tel: 061-998 4404.*

EAST ANGLIA
(Norwich)

*Sarah Childs, 14 Nelson Road, Fakenham,
Norfolk NR21 9EN. Tel: 0328 862434.*

SOUTHERN
(Southampton/Portsmouth)

*Kevin Allen, 33 Wilson Road, Stamshaw,
Portsmouth PO2 8LE. Tel: 0705 696286.*

YORKSHIRE
(Leeds)

*Dennis Clark, 227 Tinshill Road, Leeds, LS16
7BU. Tel: 0532 671533.*

SOUTH WALES
(Swansea/Cardiff)

*Ken Wallace, 6 Ridgeway, Newport, Gwent NP9
5AF. Tel: 0633 267345.*

SOUTH WEST
(Bristol)

*Catherine Jones, 16 The Hornbeams,
Marlborough Drive, Frenchay, Bristol BS16 1PW.
Tel: 0117 9569237.*

THE HON. SECRETARY OF THE SOCIETY is Carol Holt, 20 Geraldine Road, Malvern Worcs WR14 3PA. Tel: 0684 568822.