PHOTOS

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The Elgar Society Journal

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EDITORIAL

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The present upheaveal and turmoil in education must cause concern, not least in music. The effect of the combination of financial cutbacks and local management by schools has yet to be seen; but there are many who are already worried about a long-term deterioration in the quality of instrumentalists, with a knock-on effect on orchestral standards, particularly as the decline in local authority supervision casts doubt on the network facilities they once provided, such as youth orchestras , wind bands, and the like. Several university professors of music wrote to *The Times* earlier this year to voice their fears on this issue.

Another serious problem which has existed for some time is the decline in singing. As recently as 1935 "singing" - but not "music" - was one of a core curriculum of subjects issued by the Board of Education. (It is a wonder that our political masters, motivated by the same ideals of cheapness and efficiency as the mid-Victorians, have not promoted singing more positively. The Victorians also believed that it reduced the fear of social unrest among the lower classes; as Michael Hurd put it, "..the breast that swelled in song was less likely to be savage"). This decline has occurred in both of the traditional nurseries for singers - church and school. Cathedral organists have been alarmed at the small number and poor quality of prospective choristers. And a recent questionnaire of primary and secondary schools showed that in 85% of the 4000 schools that replied there is *no singing* in the curriculum, and that such choral singing as does happen has become an out-of-school-hours activity. It was to counter this trend that the British Federation of Young Choirs was formed ten years ago (they sponsored the Singing Day in May in Leicester when the *Coronation Ode* was given). Choral music is a key element in the cultural heritage of this country, and vital to an understanding and appreciation of Elgar and many other composers. For this reason BFYC deserves our thanks and support. It receives no income from public sources, but manages to run courses, conferences, workshops, etc. for singers, teachers and conductors. Most children love singing, and they have a rich heritage to enter into. Whoever we are - parents, grandparents, musicians, teachers, taxpayers, voters - we should do all we can to reverse the present trend and ensure that the next generation will have many opportunities to hear works such as *The Dream of Gerontius*. The few good choirs that do exist can mask the true situation regarding singing, and we can ill afford to be complacent about the future.

GEOFFREY HODGKINS

ELGAR AS A CONDUCTOR

William Alwyn

Part III

These then were the conditions in which Elgar conducted his works - the performance depending, not on a number of rehearsals, but on the skill of the conductor himself and the brilliant talents of the individual players. We now at last reach the year 1927 - a red-letter year for me, as Sir Henry Wood gave the first performance of a new orchestral work of mine at the Proms, and it was the year when I first played under Elgar. I was twenty-one at the time, which was pretty young, even in those days, for an orchestral player.

This is how it came about. One of the principal flautists in the New Queen's Hall Orchestra was enjoying a little relaxation, with a summer engagement playing in a scratch orchestra on the bandstand at Broadstairs. But something more lucrative cropped up and he asked me to deputise for him on the bandstand for a fortnight in August. It's worth telling you, that that engagement was particularly interesting to me - I'd never played on a bandstand before, but in actual fact we only played *once* on the bandstand before it rained solidly for the whole fortnight. The conductor, who was known as Captain Waterhouse - captains in the army in the First World War were allowed to keep their rank - was a Wagner enthusiast, and we used to go into the tent for a perfunctory rehearsal in the morning, the little band of eight or nine of us, and do excerpts from *Götterdämmerung* and *Tristan*. You can just imagine the result. Captain Waterhouse had one more claim to fame and that was he was the sole performer on the bass oboe in the country. He had one engagement every year, and that was at the Promenade Concerts, when Sir Henry Wood always did the Delius *Dance Rhapsody*, in which there was a bass oboe part; so, once a year, Captain Waterhouse enjoyed his moment of glory.

While I was in Broadstairs, out of the blue from the manager of the LSO came a telegram for me : "Can you accept 3rd Flute and Piccolo, Three Choirs' Festival at Hereford?" At last one of my wildest dreams was to be fulfilled - membership of the LSO and a whole fortnight of great music-making, rehearsals, concerts and all.

These were the great days of English music. Although there were many fewer concerts than there are today British music was always well represented - not grudgingly doled out as it is at present. The Three Choirs' Festival that year consisted of untold riches : *Gerontius, The Music Makers*, the *Cello* and *Violin Concertos*, the *Second Symphony* and *Cockaigne* overture, under Elgar himself : the Delius *Cello Concerto* (again with Beatrice Harrison as soloist), Holst's *Hymn of Jesus*; Vaughan Williams' *Pastoral Symphony*, and the first performance of *The Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains* conducted by VW himself. There was a symphony by Sir Walford Davies; and the leader of the orchestra, W H Reed, had himself written a Symphonic Poem for the Festival entitled *The Lincoln Imp*. (Incidentally his successor as leader, George Stratton, patiently taught me all there is to learn about writing for strings, during the years when he led the LSO for me in film sessions). So the entire Festival in that year of 1927 was principally of British

music. They *did* throw in the *Ninth Symphony* of Beethoven as a sop to the classically-minded!

The crowning glory of that Festival was Elgar's performance of *The Dream of Gerontius* - surely the greatest ever performance of this, his greatest work. A few years ago I was discussing this performance with Sir Neville Cardus, who was also present on that occasion. He told me that he had heard many performances of *Gerontius* before and since, but never one to touch the heights of that momentous performance at Hereford in 1927. Neville said that he was so moved that he stopped to congratulate Elgar after the performance on the greatness of the work and the splendour of the interpretation. Elgar's reply was, "Thank you, my dear Cardus, but I still prefer my *Pomp & Circumstance* Marches"!

Unbelievable, of course. He could not really have thought so, for every great creative artist instinctively knows the value of his own creations - but it was typical of Elgar the man, who shied away from praise, and sheltered behind a self-protective barrier, a kind of elephant's hide to conceal his hyper-sensitivity. With his orchestra he was different. He was on excellent terms with his players - quiet and unassuming. Like all great conductors, he said little at rehearsals, knowing that an orchestra is there to work and not to be lectured.

You may have seen, as I did a few weeks ago, a rehearsal of *Gerontius* on television; short bursts of wild enthusiasm, and after every few bars, the conductor would abruptly stop to tell the orchestra and choir what he wanted them to do. The performers were given no chance to get the full effect of the onward sweep of the phrases, or the overall shape of a section. How different from Elgar's quiet control of a rehearsal! Seldom did he stop - and then only to make a brief remark. All he had to say was, "It's all carefully marked in the band parts, attend to your individual markings, and follow me".

As an example of that, note how carefully Elgar has marked the individual dynamics in Variation I of the *Enigma Variations* : the two oboes in octaves with the two bassoons are marked ***f*** *largamente espressivo* - the first flute and first clarinet ***pp***, the fourth horn just ***p*** solo *marcato*, and the rest of the orchestra all marked down to ***ppp***. There is no excuse for faulty balance, and no need to waste time in explaining the effect he wanted.

In my own experience of the great composer-conductors I played under, they were concerned primarily with the shaping of the work as a whole. Whether they were conducting their own works or someone else's, what mattered to them was the build of the work and its overall structure, whereas the average professional conductor is much more concerned with details. Elgar, Strauss, and Rachmaninov I thought were really great conductors : their interpretations were a re-composition of their own works. They all had this quiet, controlled approach - and to see Rachmaninov conduct and perform his own *C minor Piano Concerto* was to hear this hackneyed work in a new and more classical light. No doubt the same was equally true of Berlioz, Mahler, and Mascagni.

You may not be aware of it, but Mascagni, apart from being a great opera composer -

not just the composer of one single work, he wrote fifteen operas, each one getting more intensely interesting, and more and more contemporary - he was a very fine conductor in his own right, and for a time was conductor at the Vienna Philharmonic, where he was greatly admired for his interpretations of the classics. And most of you, I am sure, have heard Benjamin Britten's wonderful performance of *Gerontius* - a performance as though seen with the eyes of Elgar himself.

As to Elgar's performances, he communicated his feeling with his eyes and his expressive face, and drew the phrasing and accentuation he required with his left hand and his baton. Again, like all great conductors, his gestures were economic - but not as economic as Richard Strauss, who reduced economy of gesture to apparent immobility, though he too fired his orchestra to intense passion by sheer personality. The professional conductor nowadays is often too conscious of what he looks like to the audience, as he has to be part showman, part conductor, and part interpreter.

Rudolf Schwarz told me an amusing story about Strauss's economy of beat. He would always conduct absolutely quietly with hardly any movement at all, and Richter, I think it was, was sitting up in one of the boxes while Strauss was rehearsing his *Salome*. At one ***ff*** entrance of the trombones he was unable to bear it any longer, and got up in the box and said, "Herr Strauss, you *cannot* bring in the brass like this". Strauss said nothing, but went on conducting in his own sweet way. At the performance that night, Richter was in his box, to attend the performance. When it came to this particular spot Strauss gave the most almighty gesture to the trombones, nearly frightening them out of their wits - so that they came in with an enormous blast. Strauss then turned and bowed, solemnly and ironically, to Richter in the box.

To return to Elgar. Elgar's beat was absolutely precise, and founded on the belief, as was current in those days, that the first duty of the conductor is to indicate the beat. This was also the basis for dynamics : a broad sweep of the baton indicating *forte* and a miniature beat implying *piano*. But always the beating of time was the foundation for expression. This was invaluable in classical music, where a wind player would sometimes have to count a hundred bars of rests before his next entry, and usually with nothing cued in his part to correct him if he had miscounted. In the Beethoven *Violin Concerto*, the first flute at one place has 150 bars of 4/4 time to count, and considering the variations of tempo depending on the temperament of the violin soloist, a clear down beat is invaluable.

Today this has all changed. The conductor does not consider himself a mere time-beater, but uses his hands and baton to shape the phrases. This, of course, has developed from the modern composer's technique of constantly changing time signatures - the music changing from say 3/4 to 5/8 to 1/4 to 6/16 in quick succession, and an occasional down-beat is all the orchestral player can hope for. As the conductor cannot describe changing mathematical formulae with his baton, so he relies more on gesture, and sometimes dispenses with the baton altogether - as does Boulez, for example.

But classical music and nineteenth-century music knew little of this. Music was

solidly rooted in 2/4, 3/4 and 4/4 time and, as I said earlier, Elgar's own music was solidly rooted in tradition. Moreover some of the great conductors of Elgar's period had considerable difficulty with coping even with 5/4 time. I remember a performance by that very great conductor, Weingartner, of the Tchaikovsky *Pathétique Symphony*, and I swear that he was conducting the 5/4 movement in 4/4 time. At the rehearsal, although Weingartner was a strict disciplinarian, he could not stop the irrepressible humour of the principal orchestral players, and one or two of the livelier ones under cover of their desks were beating themselves, "1 - 2 - 3 - 4. 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5".

The late Norman O'Neill once told me a wonderful story about Jesse Stamp, who was first trombone in the LSO and probably the greatest trombonist there has ever been. O'Neill, a composer himself, was the secretary of the Royal Philharmonic Society when they had Weingartner conducting, of all things, *The Planets*, and when he came to "Mars", the 5/4 movement, it was too much for him. At the big moment when the brass entry came, they were all over the place. So O'Neill went round to see Jesse Stamp after the rehearsal and said, "What about this, Jesse? What's it going to be like tonight?"
"You leave that to me, Mr O'Neill", said Jesse, "It'll be all right - don't worry". And sure enough at the concert they came in with *thrilling* effect. Norman was very intrigued about that, and in the interval asked Jesse how he had managed it.
"Well", said Jesse, "I took one look at Weingartner and I saw as how he was sunk, so I says to the boys, 'Keep your eye on me, and when I give the signal, let him have it' - and by Christ, they did!!"

Jesse Stamp was a very remarkable man, an extraordinary virtuoso. He had the reputation of being able to get anybody, any orchestra, back in time from a provincial concert by hurrying the trombone parts, if they had too little time to catch the train. I remember him, when we were celebrating in the pub after that 1927 Three Choirs' Festival, entertaining his hilarious friends with hymn tunes in three-part harmony on the trombone, long before Aubrey Brain did that celebrated cadenza in three-part harmony in Ethel Smyth's *Horn Concerto*.

Today modern music has dictated its own terms. No longer is it considered possible to give an adequate orchestral concert on one three-hour rehearsal, as was the universal custom in this country when I was a young orchestral player. So the conductor also benefits by more rehearsal time and his baton consequently has that much more freedom.

But I must stress the fact that Elgar was no mere time-beater. He knew exactly how to draw richness of expression and plasticity of phrasing from his players, and his orchestra had absolute confidence in him and would follow him anywhere. And at times, whatever he said to Cardus, he was profoundly moved by his own music. I remember vividly from that 1927 Festival how Elgar built up to that great climax in *Gerontius* where Gerontius is led into the presence of God. At the crucial point of that stupendous *crescendo*, Elgar was so carried away by his emotions that his arms refused to move, and he stood there with arms extended as if crucified. But such was his magnetism over the orchestra that the crash of the mighty chord, with its *ff* thrill of the gong and the scream on my piccolo came with shattering precision.

We knew what Elgar wanted and gave it with every fibre of our bodies - an unforgettable moment in an unforgettable performance.

When I wrote my notes on *Gerontius* for Benjamin Britten's recording I was writing from memory. I had no idea that any evidence remained of that unique occasion. You can imagine my delight when the box of records "Images of Elgar" was issued, and some short excerpts of the outside broadcast had been salvaged - I can now not only remember that occasion but can hear myself play! What a pity the whole recording was not kept - however bad its quality; but perhaps it suffered from the same awful flaw which appeared in Beecham's performance of the César Franck *Symphony*, I think at the previous Three Choirs' Festival. You must remember these were the early days of outside broadcasting, and everything was experimental. When they came to play back the recording, over one of the quietest parts of the whole symphony a female voice was heard saying, "And *where* did you get those silk stockings, my dear?" For a long time after this the César Franck was known as "The Silk Stocking Symphony".

I can't help but think, in listening to *Gerontius*, what an enormous pity it was that Elgar, with his wonderful, dramatic talent, his great gift for writing for voices and writing for orchestra, never wrote an opera. It leaves us with a field of speculation as to what kind of opera it would have been.

"THE FAIR MAUD"

Rodney C.Baldwyn

Dennis Clark's article "Elgar and the other E.E", contained in last September's issue of the JOURNAL, once again raises the question as to whether "the fair Maude" mentioned by Elgar in his letters to Dr Charles Buck could be my great-aunt Maud Baldwyn, and therefore the possible dedicatee of a Polka dating from the 1880s. It had long been suspected by me that this could be so, in view of the length of time that they knew each other and the many letters that passed between them continuing almost to the month of Elgar's death. Some of the letters may be found in the Birthplace, the others are in my possession. Be it said at once that with a few exceptions that I will mention later, they add little or nothing to our knowledge of Elgar's music or his methods.

Elgar's letters to Buck dated 1882 and 1883 tell us that Maud was seen in the company of "Capt" Corkran. On reading the full text of the three letters printed in J.N.Moore's *Letters of a Lifetime* I remembered having heard the name Corkran mentioned probably by my grandfather or Maud herself. Confirmation that Maud knew Sutton Corkran has come recently from my 93-year-old father who said that Corkran was nicknamed "Capt" on account of his sartorial style and military

bearing.[1] He was always to be seen around Worcester wearing a cravat held in place by a fashionable stock-pin. His name appears in some programmes of the time as a 'cellist and Hon. Secretary of the Worcester Amateur Instrumental Society which Elgar conducted. Maud's younger brother Edgar was one of the second violins in the orchestra and as well as having violin lessons from Elgar, he took part in several first performances under his baton.

How Elgar came to know Maud is not so much of a mystery. Maud, who was born in 1856, was the only surviving daughter of the four children born to Henry and Maryanne Baldwyn and was the possessor of the most wonderful golden hair almost to the day she died. Besides Edgar, her other brother Charles became a leading painter of birds for the Worcester Royal Porcelain Company, an artist whose work is much prized today. The gyrations of the Baldwyn family in Worcester have been ably chronicled in "A walk round Elgar's Worcester" (JOURNALS May, September 1985, January 1986) and *The Elgars of Worcester* (Elgar Society, 1984) by Prof Ken and Marion Simmons. Suffice it to say here that when Elgar was living in Loretto Villa, Chestnut Walk, Henry Baldwyn and his family were living in Hazel Cottage almost next door. Prior to this the family had had several addresses in College Street and College Precincts, never very far from the Elgar family. Henry Baldwyn and Elgar's father must have known one another well as they both were engaged in similar business activities and both were members of the Worcester Three Choirs Band. Henry Baldwyn was an harpist, together with a Mr Lockwood.

The reason for the Baldwyns' constant change of address is possibly due to the fact that Henry Baldwyn (who was a capable pianist and even better harpist) had travelled extensively in the British Isles showing off his own talents and the prodigious musicality of his infant daughter Maud. She and her father played in many music halls and concert halls displaying her extraordinary ability for improvisation, a talent shared with the young Elgar. Her press notices and posters refer to her as "the infant wonder", comparisons being drawn between her, the infant Mozart, and the young Arthur Napoleon. It was probably the gift for spontaneous music making as well as the obvious proximity of the two families that brought them into close contact.

The Baldwyns had been established as musicians and music dealers at least since the 1820s when John Baldwyn, Maud's grandfather, set up business as an organ builder. His two elder sons George and Charles later established a music warehouse, first at 98 High Street and later at 101 High Street. A passage between the two was known as "Baldwyn's Passage" until the late 1920s. Charles Baldwyn was also the very talented but slightly eccentric organist of St George's Roman Catholic Church, bringing the music heard there to a very high standard (see Hubert Leicester, *Notes on Catholic Worcester*). Henry Baldwyn for a time also lived in premises at the back of 10 High Street which in the 1860s became owned by the Elgar Brothers. The

[1] [Without wishing in any way to discredit the story of Mr Baldwyn Senior, it should also be pointed out that "Captain Corcoran" was one of the leading characters in Sullivan's *H.M.S. Pinafore*, which had enjoyed a phenomenal success throughout the land since its première in 1878. It seems inconceivable that Elgar and Maud would have been ignorant of this fact.- Ed.]

(above) Maud Eugenie Baldwyn photographed at about the time of the "Corkran" episode; (right) Maud the infant prodigy, aged about six, with her father Henry.

Baldwyn and the Elgar businesses operated almost opposite to one another at least until the mid 1880s when, on the death of Charles Baldwyn, the business passed into the hands of William Orme.

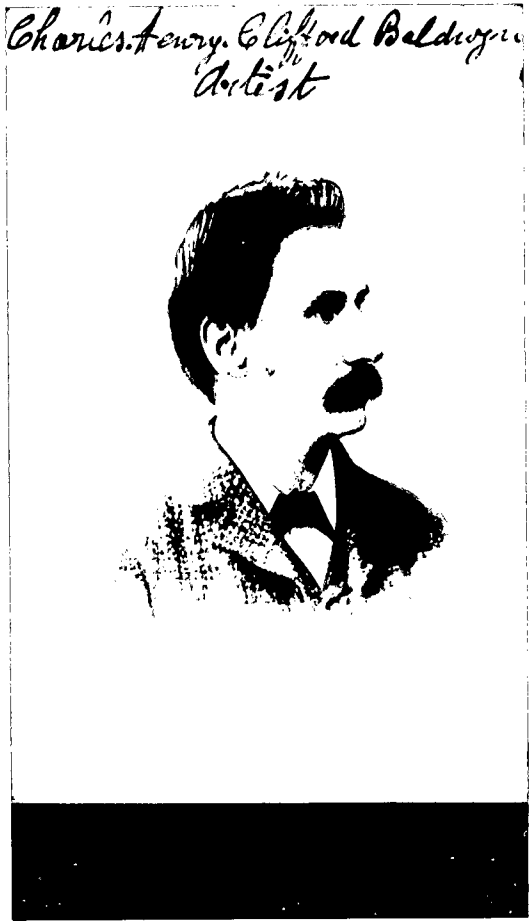
Unfortunately there are no extant letters in my possession mentioning Maud's friendship with Sutton Corkran, which is not unusual when it is remembered that as they both lived in Worcester they did not perhaps need to correspond with each other, nor do we know how deep her attachment to Elgar may have been. Elgar's feelings as witnessed in his letters to Dr Charles Buck of 21 September and 21 December 1882, and 1 July 1883, are a little more obvious. Elgar's letters to Maud are mostly of a fairly domestic nature, but there is one supporting her application for membership of the Incorporated Society of Musicians, two or three pointing out minor errors in some of her songs, a letter to "M" advising her that Prout's Primer on composition was to be preferred to that of Stainer, and several late ones that seem to suggest that he and Maud were interested in setting up a Gramophone Society. The last, a postcard dated 26 December 1933 is only signed by him, being too ill and weak to do more.

On 1 January 1885 when Maud was twenty-nine the family moved from Hazel Cottage to what is now 6 Arboretum Road. The house had previously been owned by Mr Frederick Wells, and prior to this the occupier had been Helen Weaver's stepmother. A good photograph of the house appears in *The Thirteenth Enigma* by Cora Weaver. The new occupants of the house were Henry Baldwyn and his wife, Maryanne, and their children Maud, Edgar and Charlie. Henry pursued his business of tuning and repairing pianos, and playing at soirées and concerts in the city and district. Edgar studied the violin with Elgar, going to the High Street shop for his lessons. Charlie was busy at the Porcelain Works and at times had several other painters working with him in a studio at home. Maud tended to stay at home and give piano lessons and look after her ailing mother and run the household.

Into this scene stepped the young William Wolstenholme. The Baldwyn family, more especially Maud and Charlie, read the textbooks out loud to him as he was studying for his Mus.Bac. exam in October 1887. The necessary books were not then available in braille and were borrowed by Charlie from the library. Henry Baldwyn kept a meticulous diary of the family accounts, visitors to the house, and of Worcester life generally from 1885 to 1909. It is an interesting account of Worcester social life across the turn of the century.

Henry had been in the habit of inviting itinerant musicians visiting the city to musical evenings at his home. Everyone played or sang and they were continued by Maud and Charlie long after Henry's death in 1917, and included people whose names are not perhaps so well remembered now, such as Ronald Gourlay, Sinclair Logan, and Echevarria. Players at the Theatre Royal, Public Hall, and the Cathedral were entertained, including Felix Hall, father of Marie the famous violinist. Wolstenholme was a frequent visitor for many years and became very attached to Maud.

We read in the diary that Elgar came to the house to see the Baldwyns and Wolstenholme, to make arrangements to accompany him to Oxford.



William Wolstenholme at about the time of his Oxford exam; and Charles Baldwyn, who with Maud read to him the books which enabled him to pass.

Thurs 20 October 1887
Mr Wolstenholme here. Mr Edward Elgar came about Mr Wolstenholme.

Sat 22 October 1887
Mr Wolstenholme to remain a few days with us. Maryanne bought an iron bedstead 3 ft wide at Hunt's price 14/6. Mr H Leicester sent me a cheque on Old Bank £3.1.9 for Mr Grainger, The Cross (Porcelain Works)

Sun 23 October 1887
Maud and Charlie and Mr Wolstenholme went to St Mary's

Tues 25 October 1887
Mr John Stoyle (Lay clerk at the Cathedral) called at night and did a little singing for us.

Wed 26 October 1887
This day Mr Wolstenholme left us. Maud and Charley took him to Shrub Hill Station for Oxford.

Wolstenholme took his Mus.Bac. degree with Elgar acting as his amanuensis on 27 October 1887.

The friendship between Maud and William Wolstenholme may have developed into marriage had not Maryanne died suddenly leaving Maud to care for her father and two brothers which she did for several years. Maud remained unmarried. After her death in 1942 two photographs of Wolstenholme were discovered, one taken when he was in his twenties; and one when he was in his sixties, on the back of which was fastened the notice of his death at the early age of sixty-seven on 23 July 1931.

Maud and Elgar continued to correspond all their lives, the letters being more frequent during the 1920s and 1930s. In 1931 Elgar called at the house in Fernhill Heath where Maud was living with her brother Charles and his wife Emily. Leaving his chauffeur Dick to look after the car in the lane, he walked up the long garden path and surprised them all having an afternoon "snooze". He came with a gift of a signed and framed photograph of himself as a token of his friendship.

It is pleasant for me to reflect that the Baldwyns of those days helped to fashion a small corner of English musical history, and in doing so left behind some tangible mementoes of their efforts.

* * *

Henry Baldwyn's diary also contains references to Elgar and his music in Worcester, and details of theatrical performances at the Theatre Royal, Public Hall, and elsewhere. Charles Henry Clifford Baldwyn died in 1943.
I am greatly indebted to Prof Simmons and his wife for invaluable information on the early Baldwyns in Worcester, and to help received from Jerrold Northrop Moore and Prof Ian Parrott.

ELGAR AND THE CLASS SOCIETY

Digby Hague-Holmes

Part I

One wonders how Elgar would view our present Prime Minister's vision of a truly classless society? Perhaps his immediate and instinctive reaction might be to welcome any new social order which was based solely on individual effort and achievement. This, after all, had been the hallmark of his own career. But on subsequent reflection he might come to regret the final passing of the English structured social hierarchy through which he had climbed and which had, in turn, both hindered and helped him throughout his long life. In any event, the prospect of any radical change to any existing order would surely only serve to resurrect all those old doubts and insecurities which had plagued him on such occasions in the past.

There can be no doubt that one of the contributory causes, if not root cause, of Elgar's inferiority complex was the feelings of social inadequacy which he had somehow acquired in his youth. Almost all his biographers have in one form or another drawn attention to these feelings, but few have really analysed the kind of society into which Elgar was born, and how its influences shaped his development both as a man and as a composer. All biographers inevitably tend to focus the spotlight exclusively on their subject, often neglecting the wider circumstances which are equally relevant. In Elgar's case his social behaviour is often ascribed to his "touchy" personality and "idiosyncratic outlook"; whereas, in truth, on most occasions he behaved no differently from many others of his particular class and background. In his social life, Elgar was really quite conformist.

In this two-part article I hope to review relevant aspects of the rigid Victorian society into which Elgar was born, and relate these to his political, social and religious attitudes. In this way we might deepen our understanding of this extraordinary man and his creative achievements.

Over the span of so many years, it is very difficult for most of us to really appreciate the ossified divisions which made up the class structure of nineteenth-century society, and the often harsh manner in which those same divisions could impact on many individuals in a way which would be totally unacceptable today. And yet, on the surface, Britain (with the exception of Ireland) was a society of quite remarkable stability and balance between the 1850s and 1890s. It was a society in which everyone knew his or her place within a caste system which lauded the virtues of "respectability" and "independence", and frowned on such aberrations as "opportunism" and "self-promotion". People were born into a particular social group (and there were many within each designated class) and, for the most part, remained in that group all their lives. Indeed, the majority felt quite comfortable with this stratification; it provided a measure of social stability and, for each individual, a clear identity as to his station in life. Nonetheless, this apparent complacency did not inhibit many people from striving to emulate the appearances and behaviour (at least) of the group immediately above them, to pretend to be "better" than they

really were. In the late nineteenth century there were many, besides Elgar, setting ambitious goals for themselves, and as many others trying to climb the social ladder whenever they could. But the opportunities were few. What little upward social mobility there was during Elgar's formative years came about largely through marriage, although throughout the century those individuals who had acquired considerable personal wealth through industrial enterprise were to achieve an enhanced social status of their own. Others later were to cross the class barriers on the basis of their superior education.

The 1861 census of Worcester shows a population of about 18,000 of whom almost a half were employed in local industries, with a further third engaged in domestic service to the remainder! The employment of servants was the clear and acknowledged dividing line between the middle and working classes. At least three servants - a cook, a housemaid and nursemaid - were regarded as the minimum necessary for proper household management,[2] and the Elgar family were fortunate in being able to afford all three. Nonetheless William Elgar, as the keeper of a shop designated "ELGAR BROTHERS : PIANOFORTE AND MUSIC DEALERS, PROFESSIONAL PIANOFORTE TUNERS (BY APPOINTMENT TO HER LATE MAJESTY QUEEN ADELAIDE) 10 HIGH STREET", would also have been one of those more unfortunate Worcester citizens (the census showed about 5% to be engaged in commercial activities) to attract the socially derogative label of "trade" - the stigma of which was to rankle Elgar all his life. A letter to a journalist in 1900 said it all : "As to the whole '*shop*' episode - I don't care a d--n! I know it has ruined me & made life impossible until I what you call made a name - I only know I was kept out of everything decent, 'cos 'his father keeps a shop' - I believe I'm always introduced so now, that is to say - the remark is invariably made in an undertone.."[3]

There were, of course, different levels and forms of "trade", but the young Elgar would have soon become aware from an early age that, as the son of a tradesman, he belonged to a social group which was generally viewed by the upper strata of society as somewhat "commonplace", somewhat "vulgar". This attitude, which still persists in some quarters even today - that "trade" is not quite the proper occupation for a gentleman - has deep historical roots. As far back as 1586, a treatise noticed that "The practice [of trade] consisteth of most ungentle parts, as doubleness of tongue, violation of faith".[4] One wonders on just how many occasions and in what circumstances did the Elgars, as a family or as individuals, experience the social slights this sort of disdain is bound to create? In such a stratified society snobbery was inevitable; it was practised throughout the upper and middle classes, often quite openly, sometimes in more subtle ways. A French observer of that time noted that English boys began "swaggering about their social position" as soon as they left the nursery; and he recorded "the sons of professional men pointing out other boys, commenting 'Sons of merchants, don't you know!' But they, in turn, took their revenge as they looked at others, 'Sons of clerks, you know!' But see the

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[2] Bradley, Ian : *The English Middle Classes* (Collins, 1982) p.81

[3] Moore,J.N : *Elgar and his Publishers* (O.U.P, 1987) p.240

[4] Ferne, Sir John : *The Blazon of Gentrie* (John Windet, 1586) p.7.

contemptuous glances of the latter as they pass the sons of shopkeepers, 'TRADESPEOPLE'S SONS, I BELIEVE!!!'"[5]In this sort of atmosphere, even in provincial Worcester, we must assume that there were perhaps many such social slights; mostly trivial, no doubt, and not recorded at the time; slights implicit in conversations which were patronising, and in commercial dealings which were rigidly formal. Perhaps the young Elgar had first become aware of this snobbery accompanying his father on his piano-tuning rounds of the grander houses of the gentry and aristocracy. Whatever the actual incidents, it was probably the expectation of further slights rather than the reality which caused the real damage, and forged Elgar's early determination to escape altogether from his class background. Rosa Burley describes how "he told me with a concentrated bitterness I have never forgotten that I did not know what sort of social handicap it was to be the son of a tradesman".[6] If we add that handicap to the separateness, inevitable in their minority Roman Catholic faith, then we can begin to sympathise if the whole family had learnt to adopt a defensive mentality in their dealings with their "betters". They could have consoled themselves (had they so wished) by looking down on people such as artisans and labourers, although there is no evidence of them ever having done so. And yet, in later years, Elgar was not averse to pouring social scorn on those who failed to match his own notions of gentility. In 1924, for example, he objected to the customary and automatic election of a Prime Minister, the Socialist Ramsay MacDonald, to the Athenæum and resigned in protest when someone he clearly did not consider a "gentleman" was finally admitted.

One wonders with what trepidation the socially awkward Elgar was taken by Alice Roberts in 1887 to take tea with Lady Roberts and some of her friends! On this occasion, his entry to Hazeldine would have been through the front door and not the customary tradesmen's entrance. We don't know how these prim ladies of the gentry reacted to their diffident guest on this occasion, but their subsequent concerns can easily be imagined. They would not have considered anything to be "disreputable" about the Elgar family as a whole, but they would have all agreed that Edward could never be considered a "gentleman" in their clear class-definition of that word. In these circumstances, it is perhaps as well that Elgar was spared the ordeal of actually having to ask the formidable General Sir Henry Gee Roberts for his daughter's hand in marriage! And it's interesting to speculate whether that distinguished soldier would have approved or not!

It was the fact of simply being a "gentleman" which established a man's true social status, not his income nor his property, but such a description could never have been accorded to the son of a "tradesman". Indeed, the very idea of being a "gentleman" centred around two criteria; "respectability" and "independence". "Respectability", in particular, is a difficult term to define with any precision - but all those who craved its status knew full well what society expected of them. In character, they had to be serious-minded, hard-working and thrifty. They were

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[5] Best, Geoffrey : *Mid-Victorian Britain 1851-1875* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1971) p.94

[6] Burley, Rosa & Carruthers, F.C : *Edward Elgar ; the record of a friendship* (Barrie & Jenkins, 1972) p.148

required to appear outwardly unemotional and self-controlled. Perhaps this "stiff upper lip" attitude accounted for much of the adverse criticism of Elgar's music from certain quarters as being "too emotional". "Gentlemen" were also expected to attend church or chapel regularly. Their dress had always to be in fashion, and their manners impeccable, in conformity with the accepted social conventions. In their political views, "gentlemen" were assumed to respect the Monarchy and to support the Establishment. They were expected to avoid all public participation in proscribed activities and eschew all forms of radicalism. "Gentlemen" (Elgar would have further noted) did not frequent public houses and drinking clubs, nor did they patronise games such as football which, even then, was being transformed into "soccer" for the adulation of the masses. If we are to understand Elgar's social career we need to realise that the attainment of a secure "respectability", together with a degree of "independence" in financial and professional terms, was the universal preoccupation of everyone in middle class society right through the nineteenth century. That the middle class, in particular, laid such tremendous stress on "respectability" can be ascribed, at least in part, to their own sense of insecurity about their place in the social order. Aristocrats were automatically born into "respectability" whereas the middle class had always to work hard for the social standing accorded to them. It could never be taken for granted. This may help us to understand why Elgar, in later years, along with many others who had achieved social distinction, came to view the "new men" rising through their ranks as something of a threat. They tended to have little sympathy for those whose social success had only been achieved through economic or educational opportunities.

Whilst Ann Elgar undoubtedly made a bold personal decision when she became a Roman Catholic in 1852, such conversions within the upper and middle classes were not unfashionable in the wake of the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829, and under the influence of the Oxford Movement which had begun in 1833. In fact, only two years before her own reception, the Catholic Hierarchy had finally been restored in this country, though not without considerable protest. The prejudice against Catholics at that particular period was based more on political than religious grounds - a fear that the governance of the Established Church, as enacted through Parliament, might conceivably fall under the control of an ever-growing number of Dissenting and Papist MPs. Nonetheless Worcester, as a prominent cathedral city, would have its own share of bigots. As a young man, Elgar clearly considered himself to have been the particular subject of discrimination when he told Rosa Burley that "post after post" had been denied to him because of his Catholicism.[7] On the evidence this appears to have been something of an exaggeration, but he presumably believed it to be true. But equally on the evidence he does not appear to have been a particularly enthusiastic or pious Catholic; for example, getting involved in any local religious activities outside formal attendance at church. Perhaps he was lacking in missionary zeal because his faith was not deeply rooted. His mother had only been converted after her marriage, and both sets of grandparents had been Protestants; whilst during his formative years his father had openly objected to both denominations. Perhaps, in personal terms, his faith gave him little solace or security, and his resentment therefore against discrimination on religious grounds was probably all the more bitter as a consequence. It is interesting

[7] Burley & Carruthers, p.26

to note that throughout his life Elgar never sought out - as others in his situation might well have done - the patronage or support of prominent Catholics who might have furthered his ambitions. And whatever his father's fulminations at home about organised religion, Elgar would have perceived that a public display of religious conformity was an essential ingredient of "respectability", and it would thus have been impossible for him to have aired even minor deviations in polite society, outside the privacy of the family. He probably felt it prudent to keep his counsel in such matters from an early age. If so, this may have contributed to his later reluctance to discuss personal religious attitudes, even with close friends. Billy Reed noted that Elgar "never talked about his religion"[8], and their friendship spanned almost thirty years. George Bernard Shaw told his biographer that Elgar avoided the subject "with a deliberate reticence". In any case, church attendance in this country was never particularly strong. The first church census - held one March Sunday in 1851 - showed that barely half the population attended any form of organised worship, and by the end of the century it was in further decline[9]. Materialism and a scientifically-inspired scepticism had both contributed to that decline to such an extent that by the 1900s regular Sunday church or chapel attendance was no longer considered the socially respectable imperative of previous decades. Whatever his private views and inclinations, Elgar appears to have outwardly mirrored those trends. From going to Holy Mass some fifty times in 1890[10], he thereafter frequently misses the odd Sunday for "compositional" reasons, despite the Church's ruling that all must attend each week, on pain of mortal sin. It was not long before he ceased attendance altogether.

[To be concluded].

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[8] Reed,W.H : *Elgar as I knew him* (Gollancz, 1936) p.74

[9] Jones, R.B : *An Economic and Social History of England 1700-1970* (Longmans,1971) p.376

[10] Hodgkins, Geoffrey : *Providence and Art* (Elgar Society, 1980) p.4

FOR SALE 1932 recording of Elgar's Violin Concerto (Menuhin/Elgar). Original 78s in boxed set. Inside cover autographed by Menuhin. Records in very good condition. Offers to Kevin Allen (details on back cover)

ALFRED MELVILLE COOK, Mus Doc, FRCO, Hon FRCCO (1912-1993)

We were all saddened to learn of the sudden death of Dr Melville Cook in Cheltenham on 22 May. Melville was a youthful 80-year-old, who had been a keen walker and swimmer until the onset of heart trouble.

A native of Gloucester, Melville attended the King's School and was one of Herbert Brewer's choristers at the Cathedral, singing under Elgar at the Three Choirs' Festival at Hereford in the 1920s. He was drawn to the organ and later took the RCO exams and an extra-mural B Mus at Durham. In 1932, he became assistant organist to Brewer's successor, Herbert Sumsion, and later took on All Saints', Cheltenham. In 1937 Melville was appointed organist at Leeds Parish Church, the youngest ever, and continued there till 1956, with a break for war service and his doctorate. He did much good work with choirs in Yorkshire.

Next came ten extremely busy years as organist at Hereford Cathedral. He was particularly proud of introducing Benjamin Britten's music to the Three Choirs'. Melville felt the need to broaden his horizons, and in 1967 he bravely resigned and emigrated to Canada, where for nineteen years he was organist and choirmaster at the cathedralesque Metropolitan United Church in Toronto. Many friends were made there, including Andrew Davis at the Toronto Symphony, but the happiness was tinged with sadness, for Melville's wife Marion died there in 1985 after a long struggle with cancer. He decided to return to England to retire in 1986 and bought a flat by the Pittsville Pump Room in Cheltenham. Arthritis in his hands sadly curtailed his public piano-playing, but Melville was in demand as an adjudicator and was an avid concert-goer, naturally including the Cheltenham Festival on his doorstep.

Melville had a wide circle of friends, not only in music. All took to his gentle, unassuming nature. He was a deeply civilised and compassionate man, and we are the poorer for losing this distinguished member.

Michael Trott

The Birthplace

The proposed development at Broadheath was the only item for discussion at a meeting of the Trustees on 7 July in Worcester. Paul Grafton, a spokesman for the Elgar and Grafton families, was also invited to attend, and put the views of the family to the meeting. As a result it was agreed that both parties would continue their discussion, albeit at length, and move towards issuing a joint statement by, or shortly after, 31 July.

At the time of going to press this statement had yet to be issued.

Andrew Neill

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1993

Some sixty people attended the 43rd AGM on 5 June in the Huntingdon Hall, Worcester. The Chairman, welcoming members, announced that Volume 3 of "The Elgar Edition" was due for release by EMI at the end of June. Excerpts from the issue (the soundtrack of the Pathé film, and *Mina*) were played. The Chairman announced with deep regret the deaths during the past year of Sir Charles Groves and Alan Webb (Vice-Presidents), and also of Bill Jackson, Dr Rodney Baldwyn, and Dr Melville Cook. Greetings were read from the President, Sir Yehudi Menuhin, who stated that he had recently conducted *Gerontius* twice in Spain to enthusiastic response.

The Chairman reported on many notable achievements during the year : the revival of the South-West Branch under the leadership of Ron Bleach; Volume 1 of "The Elgar Edition" had gained the "Gramophone" award for the year's best non-vocal historical recording; Leonard Slatkin had been presented with the second Elgar Medal; and *Edward Elgar : Music and Literature* (edited by Raymond Monk) had been published.

The Chairman spoke of the recording sessions of *The Dream of Gerontius* and *The Light of Life* which he had attended, and outlined several future initiatives under consideration. He paid tribute to the Officers and Committee and thanked the retiring Committee Members for their work. Finally, the Chairman read a prepared statement regarding developments at the Elgar Birthplace. He reminded the meeting of the debate at last year's AGM and the motion then passed, and asked that members wishing to make *new* points do so under "Any Other Business". Some journalists had attempted to exploit a "perceived" split between Society and Foundation and this was regrettable, especially when progress had been made in the past two years in improving relationships. The issue of the developments at Broadheath had been much discussed at the Society's Committee Meeting of 15 May, and a letter had been sent to the Chairman of the Elgar Foundation asking that note be taken of concerns expressed "by members of the Elgar family, and other members of the public" as the next steps in the development were considered. In a joint statement the Foundation Chairman, Mr Timothy Waterstone, and our mutual President, Sir Yehudi Menuhin, had said : "The Elgar Foundation has no intention of taking action on the plans for the Elgar Birthplace without the full agreement of the Elgar family. We fully support their well-considered suggestions and look forward to working with them on this great project". Subsequently Sir Yehudi had written to Mr Neill; "I am sure that the developments for the Birthplace will be carried out with the greatest respect for the Birthplace itself and for the quality and charm of the location. In this respect I am wholeheartedly with the family in their concern for the development, and I know that the Chairman of the Elgar Foundation agrees with me".

The Secretary gave her report and confirmed that the South-West Branch was back on course and that the outlook at East Anglia Branch was more optimistic. Much work this year had involved young people. There was the link with Chetham's School, and the School's concert at which a pupil, Ruth Williams, had been the soloist in the *Violin Concerto*. In May students from the School had enjoyed a day trip to Malvern and the Birthplace. Meanwhile, John Knighton had launched a pilot scheme in Yorkshire aimed at making personal contact via talks at educational

establishments. The Birthplace Trust had co-operated with the County Education Department in organising an "Elgar Performance Week" in schools in November. There had been an excellent response. Subsequently, two "Elgar Extravaganzas" had been presented in the Malvern Festival and over £4,000 had been raised for the Birthplace Appeal. The Secretary concluded by thanking members for their kind messages and support during her illness.

The Membership Secretary reported membership up from 1,364 to 1,479. This was partly due to the changed subscription arrangements [eg. family] and the agreement with the Friends of the Birthplace. It was none the less satisfactory. Categories of Membership attached to Branches were : London 240, West Midlands 205, South-West 102, East Anglia 39, South Wales 29, North-West 50, Southern 30, and Yorkshire 50. There were 103 Overseas members and 190 Birthplace members.

The Treasurer reported that the new central subscription had been generally well received and the funding of the Branches was working satisfactorily. Membership cards had been issued to members. It had recently been learned that royalties of some £2,800 were due from EMI. The Treasurer appealed to members to covenant their subscriptions where appropriate. It was decided that in 1994 the subscription be held at £10.

Geoffrey Hodgkins reviewed the work of the JOURNAL. Issues had been very full once more and had reflected the exciting events of the past year. Improved photographic reproduction had been a result of changing printers. It remained necessary to furnish information regarding concerts, etc. well in advance. It was his intention to commission articles from time to time but at the moment Society finances precluded this. The Editor reported with sadness the death during the year of Dr Gareth Lewis, stalwart regular reviewer and contributor.

Ian Lace, Chairman of the International Sub-Committee, commented on the widespread nature of overseas membership. There was considerable evidence in performances, broadcasts and the availability of recordings of an increase in interest in Elgar. Contacts had been made with the British Council and this would lead to publicity for overseas concerts. Ideas were in hand to seek commercial sponsorship.

Jacob O'Callaghan reported on the work of the Conservation Sub-Committee. Elgar-associated properties had now been finalised in the Sub-Committee's list of properties. An immediate priority was the future of Powick Ballroom. Hereford City Council proposed to affix a plaque at Plas Gwyn. Contact had been made with the neighbours of St Wulstan's Church, Little Malvern; and cessation of work at Hazeldine House placed a question mark over its future.

Andrew Neill was re-elected Chairman and all other Officers were re-elected, there being no other nominations. The eligible elected Committee members were re-elected and, after a ballot, Paul Grafton and Arthur Reynolds were elected to serve for three years, and Jennifer Nicholas for two years.

The next AGM will be held in Malvern on 4 June 1994.

RANDOM RAMBLINGS...

The Birthday Honours in June contained the good news that our President, Sir Yehudi Menuhin, has received a Life Peerage. It is encouraging that his enthusiasm and concern for a number of important issues will be able to be expressed in the Upper Chamber.
Other awards include MBEs for Mr E Wulstan Atkins, a Vice-President and former Secretary/Treasurer of the Society, and former Chairman of the Elgar Foundation, for services to the cause of Elgar; and for Dr Donald Hunt, organist of Worcester Cathedral, for services to the Three Choirs' Festival. We send our congratulations for these well-deserved awards.

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Ken Russell's love for English music continues, and there was plenty of Delius, Grainger, Elgar et al, in his recent television production of *Lady Chatterley*. Extracts from the *Second Symphony* accompanied a particularly passionate moment. A few weeks before I received details from Warner Classics regarding a new CD entitled "Sensual Classics II". It consists of seventeen tracks by such as Chopin, Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov, and includes "Nimrod" from Andrew Davis's recording of the *Variations*; and *Chanson de Matin* played by the Brodsky Quartet in an arrangement by Paul Cassidy. After "exhaustive[sic] research", Warner discovered that "classsical music ...could work like a love potion and reach the parts that other music couldn't reach". Mr Bill Holland, General Manager, said : "We're not saying it will turn an 80-year-old into 20-year-old...However, many are discovering that when the music starts, the sap rises and the earth starts to move...There may be some who will need a fire extinguisher". You have been warned.

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Another compilation containing some Elgar to come my way was Decca's "Classic Commercials", nineteen extracts from such works as Verdi's *Requiem*, Bach's *Suite no.3*, and *The Planets*, which have been used over the years to advertise products on television. The first movement of the *Cello Concerto* played by Lynn Harrell was used to promote a certain brand of mineral water (not from the Malverns, strangely enough). One hopes that such things will make people go on to appreciate the whole work, but I have my doubts. It is not a new problem : Vaughan Williams' justification of his arrangement of the cantata *In Windsor Forest* from his opera *Sir John in Love* was that it might be the only opportunity for people to hear music from the opera, as all they wanted was "the plums and no cake".

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Listening to the new recording of Elgar's music for violin and piano (see Review section) reminded me of the strange dedication of the piece *Offertoire* to "Serge Derval" of "Anvers"(the French name for the city of Antwerp). Who was this gentleman, and where did Elgar meet him? Could it be that he is no more human than Pietro d'Alba (Carice's white rabbit, Peter)? Some years ago Trevor Fenemore-

Jones pointed out to me that starting with the last letter of the Christian name, then the last letter of the surname and working forward alternately gives you "Elgar versed". The word "verse" is often mistakenly used for "stanza", but is properly only a single metrical line; thus "Elgar versed" could mean the name "Elgar" hidden in a single line. Alternatively, the word means "experienced, practised, skilled", as in the expression "well versed". I now await letters from descendants of M.Derval to prove me wrong!

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News of Elgar performances in Europe and elsewhere. In May and June the London Forest Choir toured Italy and included *Give unto the Lord* and the *Three Motets, Op.2* in their repertoire. After their concert at St Paul's Church in Vicenza, the local press reported: "...The 'Elgar option' was beautiful and particularly full of feeling... It was stimulating music, influenced by late German romanticism, which we are very little accustomed to hearing in a choral context...For everyone, at the end, applause after applause".
On 16 May there was a performance of *The Apostles* (sung in English) at St John's Church, Göttingen, conducted by Hermann Amlung. It is always good to hear of Elgar performances in Germany, and especially the rarer works such as *The Apostles*.
Also in June Brian Wright conducted the Bulgarian Radio Symphony Orchestra in a performance of the *Cello Concerto* (no soloist given); and last month the Fine Arts Brass Ensemble included Elgar in their programme at the Capuchos Festival in Portugal. Presently Laurence Perkins and Michael Hancock are touring Eastern Europe and will play the *Bassoon Romance* in Prague, Ukraine and Russia. The Bavarian State Orchestra under Erich Leinsdorf are performing the *Enigma Variations* in Munich on 3, 4 and 5 October.
Finally the Berkshire Choral Institute, conducted by Nicholas Cleobury performed *The Kingdom* on their summer tour of the USA.

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Many members will know that when Elgar was composing *The Apostles* his friend Troyte Griffith was designing the church of All Saints', The Wyche, just close by. In January 1903 the composer wrote to Jaeger : "Troyte is architecting this church here and wants me to give it or imbibe from it local colour". It is believed that Elgar advised on the building of the organ in the church, which is similar to the mobile instrument in Hereford Cathedral, designed to Elgar's specifications. All Saints' contains a memorial tablet to Troyte, whose funeral was held here in 1942.
The church authorities are currently discussing plans for the re-ordering of the interior, whilst maintaining its integrity and worthiness as a place of worship. They would be glad to welcome any Society members who may like to visit the church.

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The Proms are with us again, and *Radio Times* asked five celebrities to preview the season and to pick their favourite concerts. Dudley Moore chose 19 July : "I love

Elgar's *Concerto in E minor* - my God" (I assume the lack of an exclamation mark meant admiration for the composer rather than blasphemy!); and 25 July : "I find the Elgar *Introduction and Allegro* very strong and there's something old and Edwardian about it". Andrew Davis chose *The Music Makers* (which he conducted on 22 August) - "Elgar's celebration of the creative spirit". Other Elgar works included this year were *The Wand of Youth* Suite no 1, and the usual Last Night fare.

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The performance of the *Violin Concerto* given by Tasmin Little on 9 October at The Hawth, Crawley (see Concert Diary) will be preceded at 3.30 pm by a Seminar on Elgar's life and career given by Terry Barfoot and Christopher Headington. Tickets for this are £7 and obtainable from the Box Office, The Hawth, Hawth Avenue, Crawley, W.Sussex RH10 6YZ (tel:- 0293 553636).

Pinchas Zukerman gives the work in London the following day. His recent performance in New York brought some straight speaking from the critic of the *New York Times*: "In Elgar's slow movement Pinchas Zukerman's lovely sound and natural instincts for the instrument found a home. Elsewhere, the rough, casual quality of his playing was disturbing. No violinistic problem is beyond Mr Zukerman's easy reach, a fact that may tempt him to sail through rather than penetrate and examine". It will be interesting to see what the English critics make of his interpretation.

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On 20 June the ITV religious programme "Highway" visited Worcester. It featured among other things the Festival Chorus singing a short extract from "Praise to the Holiest". Sir Harry Secombe interviewed Dr Donald Hunt, who spoke of Elgar's link with the city, the Cathedral, and the Three Choirs' Festival.

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A Day School has been arranged for 5 March 1994 at Bristol, when Dr Percy Young will present "Elgar and Opera". This will be held in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital School Theatre, Jacob Wells Road, Clifton. The fee for the day will be £10 per person, to include coffee and biscuits before the first session, with tea and biscuits at a suitable break in the afternoon.
The day has been organised by the South-West Branch. Those members and friends who attended previous Day Schools at Bristol University will recall Dr Young's very successful day on "Elgar and Tradition". The forthcoming day will follow similar lines. Full details will be available shortly from Ron Bleach at 48 Ravenswood Road, Redland, Bristol BS6 6BT. A stamped addressed envelope would be appreciated. Places are already being reserved.

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Writing to Alfred Littleton in April 1911 just before the première of the *Second Symphony* Elgar said that the Larghetto second movement "..is elegiac but has nothing to do with any funeral march...". However Alice's diary comment was "A. hears lament for King Edward & dear Rodey and all human feeling". And in the same letter to Littleton Elgar comments on the passage from fig.79 where the solo oboe plays triplets over the slow march theme; "The feminine voice *laments* over the broad manly 1st theme". Bernard Shore, who as principal viola in the BBC Symphony Orchestra played under Elgar many times, says in his book "Sixteen Symphonies" that at this point the composer said to the players : "I want you to imagine a great crowd of silent people, watching the passing of a beloved sovereign". Recently, in some notes accompanying a CD, I read that "..Elgar said this passage was intended to suggest the tip-toe craning of necks to see the passing cortège". Can anyone identify this last reference, or is it a critic's elaboration on the remark Shore reported?

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On 24 June the final Volume in "The Elgar Edition" was released, a most happy and successful conclusion to the project launched by EMI in association with the Elgar Society and the Elgar Foundation. The first copy of Volume III was presented to Wulstan Atkins at a ceremony at Abbey Road Studios, at which Mr Atkins unveiled a plaque to mark the inauguration of the studios by Elgar in 1931, and spoke of his own memories of Elgar and the gramophone from the inter-war years (see p.135).

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Booking is now open for David Pownall's new play "Elgar's Rondo" starring Alec McCowen as the composer. As stated in the last JOURNAL, the première will be on 26 October, with public previews from 20 October. There will be thirty-two performances up to the end of January. The play is directed by Di Trevis, and also stars Sheila Ballantine as Alice Elgar and John Carlisle as Jaeger. Details and booking from the Box Office, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwicks CV37 6BB (tel : 0789 295623)

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Having missed an Elgar Festival in Gloucester last May for lack of information, I am glad to be able to give advance notice of three outstanding occasions next year.
First, an "Elgar Plus" weekend at Warwick over the May Bank Holiday (29 April - 2 May). Works to be performed are *The Dream of Gerontius*, the *Organ Sonata*, and piano and chamber music; the "plus" is mainly British music (Bridge, Bliss, Howells, Ireland, etc), and master classes are also being held. Artists include Kevin Bowyer (organ), John McCabe (piano), and the Coull String Quartet.
Then, the English Arts Chorale are holding a Festival at Reigate from 16 - 24 July, including the three major oratorios, and "a number of other Elgar items". They are also hoping "to welcome a number of recognised international Elgar experts..for lectures and seminars".
Even more ambitious is the Cambridge Elgar Festival (subtitled "A Celebration of

British Music"] from 6 - 26 November 1994. Works include both symphonies; the three oratorios; both concerti (Tasmin Little - violin); the *Introduction & Allegro*; *Enigma Variations*; part-songs; piano, organ, and chamber music; *The Spirit of England* conducted by the Society's former Chairman Christopher Robinson; and the "world première" of *The Spanish Lady*, reconstructed by Percy Young. Those appearing also include Jerrold Northrop Moore, Mark Elder, Peter Donohoe, Lady Walton, Stephen Varcoe, Peter Pettinger, and many more.
Details of all these events will be given nearer the time.

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After the AGM on 5 June, Society members stayed on to hear the sixth A T Shaw Lecture given by Robert Anderson on Elgar's connection with India. Speaking without notes, Mr Anderson gave us much interesting detail on Alice Elgar's father's military career, and the mementoes he brought back which found their way into the Elgar household. This led eventually to a fascinating synopsis of the masque *The Crown of India* and what Elgar's music for it was meant to portray. Extracts from Elgar's own recording were played, and links made with other works such as the piano piece *In Smyrna*. A stimulating and informative way to close the AGM proceedings!

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At the AGM the Chairman announced that the Society was "going back into the record business". An anonymous benefactor has generously provided the substantial funds necessary for the Society to pay for the costs of remastering the 1945 recording of *The Dream of Gerontius*. This was of course the first complete recording. Sir Malcolm Sargent conducted the Huddersfield Choral Society and the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra in what many have felt to be the finest recording of the work. Modern remastering techniques have improved the sound astonishingly. The two-disc set (which will include Paul Tortelier's first recording of the *Cello Concerto* - also conducted by Sargent) will be issued on the Testament label, thus enabling it to benefit from world-wide distribution.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

21 September	Cockaigne *RPO/Temirkanov*	Royal Festival Hall South Bank
26 September	Cello Concerto, Symphony no.1 *Harwood/ LPO Youth Orch/Gee*	Queen Elizabeth Hall South Bank
26 September	String Quartet *Lindsay Quartet*	Wigmore Hall 7.00 pm
2 October	Piano Quintet *Peter Frankl, Lindsay Quartet*	Wigmore Hall 7.30 pm

4 October	Enigma Variations *RPO/Menuhin*	Royal Festival Hall South Bank
9 October	Violin Concerto *Little/Philh/Slatkin*	The Hawth, Crawley (see Random Ramblings)
10 October	Violin Concerto *Zukerman/Philh/Slatkin*	Royal Festival Hall South Bank
22 October	Wand of Youth Suite no.2 *LPO/Wordsworth*	Royal Festival Hall South Bank
29 October	Repeat of above concert	Royal Festival Hall South Bank
7 November	Dream of Gerontius *Soloists/Arun Chor.Soc/Sinf.of Arun/Henville*	Arundel Cathedral 7.30 pm
10 November	Symphony no.2 *LSO/Previn*	Barbican Hall London
11 November	Repeat of above concert	Barbican Hall London
13 November	The Kingdom *Newport Phil.Choir*	St Julian's School Newport 7.30 pm
20 November	Sea Pictures *Jennifer Nicholas/Phyllis Shipp* (Enquiries: K.Allen 0705 696286)	Bedhampton Arts Centre Havant 2.00 pm
20 November	The Kingdom *Soloists/Croydon Phil/Gaddarn*	Fairfield Hall Croydon 7.45 pm
1 December	Symphony no.1 *Hallé/Litton*	Assembly Rooms Derby
10 December	Introduction & Allegro *BBC SO/A.Davis*	Royal Festival Hall South Bank
6 January	Fantasia & Fugue, Enigma Variations *RSNO/Lazarev*	Royal Concert Hall Glasgow
26 February	The Spirit of England *Edinburgh Bach Choir/ Scottish Sinf/Mantle*	Greyfriars Church Edinburgh

CONCERT REVIEW

An Elgar Extravaganza.
Elgar Hall, Winter Gardens, Great Malvern, 24 May 1993.

This concert, part of this year's Malvern Festival, arose out of the successful Schools' Performance Week held in Hereford & Worcester last autumn (see the report in the January JOURNAL). The schools which had taken part then were invited to participate. In fact, there were so many that an extra concert the following evening had to be arranged. According to my dictionary, an extravaganza should be "marked by wildness and irregularity in form and feeling". There was certainly a good deal of variety, for not all the music was by Elgar, and there was dance and drama too. Then again, the schools ranged from local primary schools to the likes of Malvern College. And the forces went from solo voices and instruments through to full choirs and orchestras.

The evening began with a lively brass quintet from Hagley, and then came the first Elgar - *Chanson de Nuit* played on the violin by Kate Alcock of Hereford Cathedral School. It was a first-rate performance, marred slightly by a quickening of the pace, possibly due to nerves. Then followed the choir of Lawnside School, directed by the Society's Secretary, in an SSA arrangement of *The Dance*. Rather depleted in numbers by exams (only fourteen voices) they were a little tentative in a song which by its nature should be brimming with enthusiasm.
Hanley Castle High School then presented two original items. First, a dance to a recording of *Chanson de Matin*, choreographed and performed by Clare Rimell and Becky Mason. In my experience such things can be acutely embarrassing, but this was a triumph - a sensitive interpretation of the music, evoking the joy of living on a beautiful morning. The second item was an extract from a longer play on the life of Elgar which had been given at the school in the autumn. Entitled 'Pictured Within', it had been written by Lorna Cartledge, an English teacher at the school.
Hagley Middle School then gave what for me was the performance of the evening. Not the most musically accurate, as it was a string ensemble of about thirty instruments played by children as young as eight or nine. They played arrangements of the "Andante" and "Andantino" from the *Six Easy Pieces* for violin and piano; and they played their hearts out! It was exhilarating to see and hear; yet my enjoyment was tempered by the thought that education cutbacks are liable to make such events less likely in the future.

After the interval the extravaganza restarted with Diana Walkley (soprano) singing *Pleading* and *The Shepherd's Song*, accompanied on the piano by Carol Holt. Mrs Walkley's performance was an object lesson to the aspiring singers present. Malvern Girls' College began with Mary Proctor singing a rare Elgar song, *The Poet's Life*. She began a little tentatively, but by the end her pleasant voice was coming through strongly. The College Choir then gave a very impressive rendering of some extremely taxing settings of Shakespeare by John Gardner. Wind instruments dominated the contributions of the John Masefield High School, Ledbury and Bewdley High School, the only exception being Rachel Argyle's expressive playing of the cello arrangement of *Salut d'Amour*, accompanied by her mother.

The Extravaganza ended with the orchestra of Malvern College conducted by Rory Boyle. They began with the *Romance* for Bassoon, with a very studied and capable performance from James Elias in the solo part; and the final work was the *Three Bavarian Dances*, not an easy proposition for a school orchestra, even one as good as this. They gave a spirited account, and were especially successful in the "Lullaby", although the one-in-a-bar *allegro vivace* of "The Marksman" became a much more sedate 3/4. However, this allowed us more time to hear some of the wonderful orchestral detail in the piece.

The children and their teachers had done us proud. Diana Quinney, of the Elgar Birthplace Appeal, thanked everyone for taking part, especially the Music Adviser, Christopher Polyblank. The one sad note in an otherwise uplifting evening was the extremely small audience.

The Editor

MUSIC REVIEWS

The Dream of Gerontius, Op.38. Study score.
String Quartet, Op.83. Study score.

Price: £18-95 and £10-95 respectively. Novello.

It is good to welcome these new scores from Novello. Produced in a new A4 format in paperback, they make use of the scholarship which went into the publication of these works in the Elgar Complete Edition. Indeed, they go further than that, for they contain much interesting information which has come to light since the ECE volumes first appeared. *Gerontius* contains a new Foreword by Robert Anderson; and facsimiles from the original proofs of the end of the work, showing how Elgar changed the order between figures 117 and 126 after Jaeger's stinging criticism of the setting of "Take me away". A useful new addition for scholars (and now a feature of all volumes in the ECE) is a list of sources - manuscripts, sketches, proofs, etc - and where they can be found. Alterations to the original full score are few, and mostly refer to clarifications in dividing the string parts. The score is now twice the size of the old miniature score, and is obviously much easier to read. It could even be used by singers performing the work, although of course they would have to copy page numbers from the vocal score.

The *String Quartet* has been completely reset, and is also much easier to read. In the old miniature score there was a feeling of congestion in some sections as signs and expression marks jockeyed for position, especially when there were leger lines about. The printing was very heavy on the ink, and minims on a line could easily be read as crotchets at a cursory glance; likewise the bars on groups of semiquavers sometimes coalesced. Thankfully the new edition sets all these right, again aided by doubling the size of the page. There are also two minor additions to the original score, found in some final proofs from a private collection which have recently come to light. Elgar obviously wanted to incorporate them into the original printing, but it seems that he was too late and Novello had already begun to print. One is a lengthened note in the Violin I part in the first movement; the other an expression mark (*con fuoco*) for the same instrument in the Finale. Two facsimiles from these

proofs are included.

Essential possessions for the serious student of Elgar.

The Editor

VIDEO REVIEW

"Organ Imperial" - music by Elgar, Parry, Bach, etc.

Carlo Curley
Decca VHS 071 148-3

This is not for those who find the idiosyncrasies of musicians unbearable. Carlo Curley, labelled by some as "The Pavarotti of the Organ" is undoubtedly a very distinctive performer. I hesitate to use the term "showman", because for many that smacks of charlatanry, and that is certainly not the case. A *poseur*, possibly, but like Stokowski, his flamboyancy has brought within the sphere of his art people who would not otherwise have been drawn to it. John Knowles has already reviewed the CD (Argo 433 450-2; JOURNAL May 1992); the video is enhanced (or marred, depending on your point of view) by comments from the soloist on some of the pieces played, their composers, and how they show the versatility of the magnificent St Mary Redcliffe organ. Mr Curley is a gifted and entertaining raconteur. He informs without talking down to his audience; in fact, he sees this as an integral part of his life's task of establishing the organ in the concert repertoire.

There are some slight differences between the CD and the video. The choir of the church are seen singing Parry's *I was glad* and *Jerusalem*; and Curley plays Bach's famous *Toccata and Fugue in D minor*, and a piece by Festing. These items are missing from the CD, which contains organ works by Samuel Wesley and Parry, and *Chanson de Nuit* which are not on the video. The Elgar works found on both are *Chanson de Matin*, *Imperial March*, *Nimrod*; and the *Organ Sonata*, the chief work of the programme, and more than twice as long as anything else played. Like John Knowles, I liked the contrast Curley makes between the two inner movements by setting a really fast pace for the *Allegretto*; and the final *Presto* is a real *tour de force*. But I thought the opening movement rather lacked the grandeur that its *maestoso* marking calls for.

There is some excellent camera work, including views looking directly down on to the manuals, and on to Curley's feet playing the pedals! The sound is well balanced, but I had to turn the volume up considerably. (Do remember to turn it down before switching back to the television). And the idiosyncrasies? The only one that really irked me was his habit of conducting with his spare hand!

The Editor

BOOK REVIEWS

"Not the Least" - the story of Little Malvern, by Ronald Bryer
Available from Images Ltd, 19 High St, Upton-on-Severn, Worcs WR8 0HJ. £9-95.

Little Malvern sits on the east side of the Malvern Hills just below the climb to British Camp and is the smallest and remotest of the districts which make up "The Malverns". This modest volume will be of interest to the person wishing to learn how a community evolved and changed around its Benedictine Monastery founded nearly 800 years ago.

Little Malvern Priory is the smaller of the two priory churches flanking the Malvern Hills (hence the title). The author, a past churchwarden, has painstakingly pieced together the history of the present-day Priory, the adjacent Little Malvern Court and the nearby St Wulstan's Roman Catholic Church. It is the latter which is of particular interest to Elgarians for it is there that Sir Edward and Lady Elgar attended church when they lived at 'Craeg Lea', and it is there, of course, that they are buried.

Only one of the book's nine chapters is devoted to the Roman Catholic Community at St Wulstan's but the historic juxtaposition of the 'Catholic' Court and the 'Anglican' Priory is well explained in the rest of the book.

It is a pity that a photograph of the Elgar grave only appears on the dust-cover of this book for, as the author admits, "this is the principal object of pilgrimage to St Wulstan's".

This book does not tell us more than we already know about Elgar's life but it does go some way to picture the area which meant so much to him.

Hywel Davies

'True Artist and True Friend' - a biography of Hans Richter, by Christopher Fifield.
Clarendon Press, Oxford. £35

The role of orchestral conductor, as we generally understand it, dates from the nineteenth century. In Britain the influence of Mendelssohn led to the adoption of an elegant style, with occasional moves to the flamboyant, as with Jullien, or a more sober approach as with Sir Michael Costa. The visit in 1877 of the thirty-four-year-old Hans Richter not only began the eclipse of the Mendelssohnian style, but in due time brought about such a change in orchestral playing that we are still in Richter's debt to this day.

Perhaps many people think, due to the Wagner/Bayreuth connection, that Richter was a German, but he was Hungarian-born, and a citizen of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. At the age of nineteen he was a horn-player at the Kärtnerthor Theatre in Vienna, and in time - it was said - could play every instrument in the orchestra, except the harp! His musical memory was prodigious (in later years he mostly

conducted without a score) and his capacity for work quite astonishing. His connection with Wagner dates from 1866, when Richter was only twenty-three, and two years later he was chorus-master for the Munich première of *Die Meistersinger*. From then on he conducted in many European towns and cities, both in the pit of the opera-house, or on the rostrum at concerts. His fame internationally came when he conducted the complete *Ring* cycle at the first Bayreuth Festival. From then on his services were in great demand until his retirement in 1912. As well as being an apostle of Wagner and "new" music, he was an ardent advocate of Brahms, Dvořák, and Bruckner. He also conducted many first performances by contemporary composers, not least of course Edward Elgar.

Richter receives mention in many a reference book, in musical biography, and his Hallé years were dealt with in some detail by Michael Kennedy in his book on that orchestra. However, despite the fame which grew with the years no-one has until now attempted to publish a biography. The gap has now been filled, and filled handsomely, by Christopher Fifield. This is a big book - over 500 pages of text, plus an index of names, but the author has kept our interest throughout. It is not just adulatory, though the author obviously admires his subject, but contemporary critical remarks are given prominence where they arise. There are surprises - Richter was not just a dedicated Wagnerian who happened to admire Elgar, but a conductor who, sometimes against his better judgment, performed an amazingly wide range of music. In opera Gluck, Donizetti, Auber, Gounod, Rossini, and especially Bizet, came under his baton, and he was considered a remarkably sympathetic and understanding Mozartian. He had his lighter side, too, despite his reputation for seriousness and high standards. It is charming to read that for relaxation, between concerts, in London he visited the Empire Theatre in Leicester Square there to witness "decorated parrots, dogs, a mandolin player, and *tableaux vivants*". Despite the fact that his command of English was decidedly restricted (and many funny examples are given), he made many British friends, played a central role in British music making over two decades, and possibly launched Elgar's most creative years in a way which no other conductor could have achieved. When he first met Elgar just before the first performance of the *Variations*, he wrote : "Elgar a nice man". Elgar's dedication, which gives the book its title, shows how the feeling was reciprocated. What particularly struck me about the book was the fact that Richter and other continental musicians of the time regarded Elgar as a *European* composer. There are references to Elgar being a natural successor to Brahms, and critics generally did not regard Elgar as an English nationalist composer, but as one in the broad stream of European music. Perhaps the hijacking of Elgar by the public at large as a patriotic composer only dates from the First World War? Certainly a study of contemporary accounts of overseas performances of Elgar's music tends to confirm this. In one of Richter's 1916 letters (the year of his death in Bayreuth) he writes : "I cannot believe Elgar is writing anti-German music. A German (me) freed him from his English problems, German Kappelmeisters (such as Buths in Düsseldorf) performed his works and thereby made his name. He himself complained bitterly and angrily about the English and considered himself a descendant of the Spanish nation..."

Richter had his faults and his prejudices, but his influence on European music and performance was profound. We have waited many years for a biography, but the

wait was worthwhile, for this book is compulsive reading. It tells us so much about music in the years from the 1860s to 1914 that it is going to be a permanent work of reference. The book has a number of illustrations and facsimiles, but it is the well-researched text which has added so much to our knowledge of this "true artist".

Ronald Taylor

Elgar by Robert Anderson.

The Dent Master Musicians. 493 pp. £30.

Sadly this wonderful book has only just arrived, and the sort of review it deserves will have to wait for the next issue. It is the first new biography since 1984 (and includes all that has come to light in that time), and the largest volume ever to appear in the Master Musicians series. The usual format for these books is retained - an account of Elgar's life, followed by an analysis of the works in five different categories; a final chapter dealing with Elgar's musical characteristics, and the standard Appendices. Robert Anderson will need no recommendation to those familiar with his work in Raymond Monk's two books and his own book on the manuscripts. Suffice to say that in my opinion this will be *the* book on Elgar for music students (and others!) for the next generation. But more about it in our January issue.

The Editor

John Henry Newman, Edward Elgar and "The Dream of Gerontius" by Dr Percy M Young

Institute for Advanced Research in the Humanities, Birmingham University. 26 pp. £2-50

This is the text of a lecture which Dr Young gave to the Faculty of Arts at the University in November 1990. The previous year he had given the fourth A T Shaw lecture with a similar title, and the text was published in the JOURNAL for January 1990. Dr Young's mastery of his subject, his assimilation of facts and presentation of his material are as impressive as ever. Speaking in Birmingham with its associations with Newman means that this publication is as much about the Cardinal as the Worcester lecture was about Elgar, and of course there is a good deal of material common to both. Bearing in mind that Dr Young's complete study of this subject is due out in book form from Scolar next year, my advice to those interested is to wait for that.

The Editor

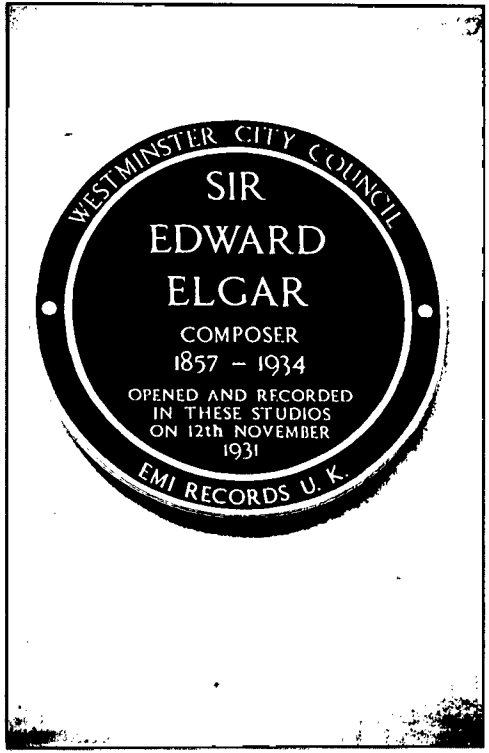
Cello Concerto, Op.85. The Music Makers, Op.69.

Jacqueline du Pre, Marjorie Thomas, Royal Choral Society, Huddersfield Choral Society, Leeds Philharmonic Society, BBC Symphony Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sir Malcolm Sargent [live concerts 1963/5]
Intaglio INCD 7351

Malcolm Sargent made his concert debut as a choral conductor in April 1918 with a programme that included *The Banner of St George* and he was a great champion of Elgar's music. In the concert hall it became a central part of his repertoire, yet Sargent's legacy of Elgar recordings is not large. This makes this issue of 'live' performances recorded in the Royal Albert Hall towards the end of his life most interesting.

In 1963 the only available version of the *Cello Concerto* (how times have changed!) was Tortelier's with Sargent, which had been made a decade earlier. Here he accompanies the eighteen-year-old Jacqueline du Pre, two years before her celebrated recording with Barbirolli. Already the interpretation was in her blood but the two conductors bring out different characteristics in her playing. The basic tempo of the first movement is slightly faster with Sargent and the approach more straightforward. The second movement has a wonderful youthful enthusiasm with hardly a hint of a slowing down in the cantabile bars (fig.22 etc) - how different from the records of the 78 era! The slow movement is very moving but here one becomes aware of tape hiss and more seriously some fortissimo coughing just when one could do without it. In the finale, the orchestral playing is a little leaden, not quite matching her *joie de vivre* and there is a momentary breakup of the sound. At fig.59 the *nobilmente* passage doesn't dig as deep as with Barbirolli, but further on (fig.71) the playing is wonderful. There is an intense concentration, an inward quality and *pianissimo* playing of the utmost delicacy. Mercifully even the coughers are silenced. The recorded sound is more than acceptable. The soloist is placed well forward with a really rich tone supported by a warm orchestral cushion characterised by the ambience of the hall.

Even Sargent's detractors generally acknowledge his supremacy as a choral conductor. This April 1965 performance of *The Music Makers* predates the first complete recording conducted by Boult in December 1966. (A short extract was included in a BBC Records tribute issued just after Sargent's death). The work had long been in his repertoire and in September 1934 it had been the Elgar work in a concert he conducted to mark the deaths of Elgar, Delius and Holst. The orchestral introduction is quite steady with a serious, portentous feel. From the outset, I felt I was in the hands of a man who from long experience knows the score inside out and for whom every bar is significant. Throughout, the tempo fluctuations and moulding of phrases are entirely convincing in a work that is difficult to bring off. The vocal lines are very clear and Sargent's mastery of his large choir is never in doubt. Marjorie Thomas, a singer who often worked with Sargent, makes a valuable contribution. When I reached the quotation from the *A flat Symphony* I remembered that earlier that month (April '65) I heard the symphony in concert for the first time



The plaque unveiled by Wulstan Atkins on 24 June at Abbey Road Studios to commemorate the official opening by Elgar in 1931.

Wulstan Atkins (second left, front row) in a group comprised mainly of representatives of EMI and Westminster City Council. Society Chairman Andrew Neill is at the far left back row.

when Sargent conducted it in Liverpool, one of a series of concerts he gave to mark his 70th birthday. After the concerto recording, the sound here seems much less good - starved with little depth but the ear soon adjusts and within a few minutes, I found it did not distract from the power of the music-making.

I have enjoyed this disc very much. Such issues tend to be available for only a short time and so if you are interested, I wouldn't delay!

John Knowles

Cello Concerto, Op.85. Enigma Variations, Op.36. Froissart, Op.19.
Robert Cohen (cello), Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Charles Mackerras
Argo 436 545-2

It is the mark of great music that it is enhanced rather than diminished by a variety of interpretations rather as spotlights may illuminate the different facets of a building. Gone are the days when the rare arrival of a new Elgar disc could be warmly welcomed just because it had been made or an all-time top recommendation be drawn from the limited list for each work. Now it is hard to keep track of the wealth of new issues pouring out from the companies, not least of the now very popular *Cello Concerto*. I can take and enjoy a wide range of interpretations as long as they do not make the music sound dull!

This is Robert Cohen's second account of the concerto - the first for the bargain Classics for Pleasure label, made well over a decade ago, has been a best-seller. It is a performance that I have enjoyed but it is completely eclipsed by this newcomer. The overall approach is unchanged but Cohen's playing is now much more assured and gives the sense that he really knows what he wants to do with the music. The opening bars immediately sound much more portentous. This is to be a serious performance, emotional but in a stiff upper lip sort of way. He hardly dares utter the opening notes so dark are the clouds. Even when the music opens out into an autumn glow at fig.8 there is still a sense of severity and utter control. The cello tone is seamless, beautifully controlled and rich. The recorded sound is ideal, such details as the ***pp*** timpani at the end of the first movement, with each note clearly articulated separately, and it is easy to register the addition of the double basses in the last bar of the slow movement.

The pizzicato arpeggios at the opening of the Scherzo are taken very slowly as if he can't bear to go on, but the *allegro molto* when it comes is taken with bravura, each of the semiquavers clearly articulated but with a very smooth sustained tone and absolute sense of control. The *tenuto* notes in the opening bars of the slow movement are beautifully placed with each followed by a shocked silence. There is a wonderful sense of forward movement at the *stringendo* before fig.38 but it is still beautifully controlled with no sense of unseemly rush. After that moment of extrovert bravery, the music falls back on itself into a sense of inward grief.

The orchestra ushers in the Finale in a purposeful manner shifting the mood, but the soloist initially holds the sombre mood before being whisked off into the *allegro*.

Throughout, the orchestral playing is very sensitive with Mackerras an alert and responsive partner. This is a very different reading from, say, du Pre's. The emotionalism is much more in check, the stoic mood suggesting a hard won fight. A very fine achievement.

This is also a second time round for Mackerras. His account of the *Variations* coupled with an excellent *Falstaff* was one of EMI's early digital recordings. Not surprisingly the interpretation has changed very little. There's plenty of excitement in the exuberant variations coupled with a nobility in "Nimrod" and an inwardness in the more sensitive moments - just listen to the withdrawn poise of the clarinet playing in the Mendelssohn quotation. The phrasing of the theme sounds less fussy with less use of portamento. The Finale had slightly more drive in the EMI account but the organ is now better integrated into the texture - on EMI it sounds "glued on" and perhaps a little too overwhelming. Overall, the Argo sound is rather better, better focussed yet not lacking in warmth.

The disc opens with an excellent account of *Froissart* with Mackerras moulding the music with an idiomatic flexibility and no lack of excitement. Of the most recent recordings this is probably the best, making this very well-filled disc a very desirable asset.

John Knowles

Violin Sonata, Op.82. Violin Concerto, Op.61.
Hugh Bean (violin), David Parkhouse (piano), Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Charles Groves
Classics for Pleasure CD-CFP 4632

Violin Sonata, op.82. Piano Quintet, Op.84.
The Nash Ensemble
Hyperion CDA 66645

The Complete Works for Violin and Piano.
William Bouton (violin), Leonore Hall (piano)
Pickwick DPCD 1039 (double-record set)

"I fear it does not carry us any further but it is full of golden sounds & I like it". So wrote Elgar on 6 September 1918 about his new *Violin Sonata* to its dedicatee, Marie Joshua. That same day Alice wrote in her diary : "The Sonata was vibrating through his very being". Despite general, if sometimes cautious, approval from musicologists over the years (even Ernest Walker spoke of its "many characteristic beauties") it has lived in the shadow of its two Brinkwell successors (or three, if you count the *Cello Concerto*). Yet when performed by accomplished and sympathetic violinists the *Violin Sonata* can be seen as a major work of Elgar's maturity.

Of these three new releases, one is an old and trusted friend - that by Bean and Parkhouse, dating from 1971. They play it with great affection and integrity, and it is a beautifully paced performance, carefully thought out. It is a very intimate interpretation, which works especially well in the Romance; but I find it could do

with a little more passion in places, eg. the *molto allargando* at fig.12. The recording wears its age well, though the violin has to fight to be heard in some of the *ff* passages, such as the end of the first movement.

William Bouton is an American who is Concertmaster (ie.leader) of the Munich Symphony Orchestra. He has gone for the grand statement : the two outer movements are very dramatic, but very slow and overblown. The first movement is slower by more than two minutes than the classic Sammons recording, and the third movement by a minute and a half. His crotchet reading for this movement (marked *allegro*) is a mere 88. Bouton is most succesful in the Romance where he is actually *faster* than Sammons. (Nigel Kennedy's otherwise excellent performance on Chandos is ruined for me by his extreme self-indulgence in this movement). On the violin arpeggios beginning at fig.5 Bouton has an annoying tendency to play the accented first note of each group with a *tenuto*. That this is *not* what Elgar wanted can be seen from the occasions where Elgar *does* ask for a *tenuto* (as in the second bar of 7). Two further points of criticism; some very noisy piano pedals, and two wrong *pizzicato* notes in the fourth bar of 22 (and wherever this figure recurs). Having been so negative I should also say that I did derive a good deal of pleasure from this performance, and it contains some very fine playing indeed.

The third recording, by Marcia Crayford of the Nash Ensemble accompanied by Ian Brown, was a revelation to me - a faithful interpretation by an extremely accomplished player. It is poetic, full of intense feeling, and confirms the view of Diana McVeagh that this is the most lyrical of the chamber works; the violin has a wonderfully radiant, singing tone. This version can stand comparison with the best. There are some magical moments, such as the change from A to F at the *dolcissimo* at fig.28, and some exquisite ***pp*** playing at fig.39. I cannot recommend it too highly.

In the accompanying work, the *Piano Quintet*, the soloists are joined by Elizabeth Layton, Roger Chase, and Christopher van Kampen. If it fails to reach quite the same heights as the *Sonata*, this is still a performance to be reckoned with. The sinister nature of the work - the "ghostliness" - is perhaps not brought out as much as in some other recordings, but it is full of that sense of sad resignation which was close to the heart of Elgar at the time. By any standards this is a major Elgar recording.

Hugh Bean is one of four violinists (Sammons, Menuhin and Kennedy are the others) to have recorded both the *Sonata* and the *Concerto*. Bean's only other "concerto" recording is Vaughan Williams' *The Lark Ascending*, which although written with orchestral accompaniment, has more of the same sense of intimacy as the *Sonata*. The *Concerto* is much more of a mountain to climb, and although Bean attacks it manfully, it is not a completely convincing interpretation, and he is not helped by Sir Charles's rather lack-lustre conducting. The slow movement contains the best moments, but even here other soloists have done it better.

Despite my reservations about Bouton's playing of the *Sonata*, I heartily recommend the Pickwick set (especially at budget-price) as it fills a gap in the Elgar discography. Its claim to be "The Complete Works for Violin and Piano" seems to be justified, and most of these pieces have been unavailable for years ever since the John

Georgiadis/John Parry recording on Pearl (SHE 523) was deleted. In fact the arrangements of *May Song, Carissima* and *Rosemary* have never been recorded before. Bouton plays with great ability and zeal, and an obvious fondness for the music, and Leonore Hall is a gifted accompanist. The more bravura pieces - *Romance, Gavotte, La Capricieuse* in particular - come off splendidly, but some of the slower pieces - *Une Idylle, Chanson de Nuit* - are rather driven, and need time to "breathe" a little more. But an unqualified welcome to this set, and full marks to Pickwick and Mr Bouton for their enterprise.

The Editor

The Dream of Gerontius, Op.38.

Anthony Rolfe Johnson, Catherine Wyn-Rogers, Michael George, Huddersfield Choral Society, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Choir and Orchestra conducted by Vernon Handley
EMI Eminence CD EMXD 2500 (tape : TC EMXD 2500)

I must confess at the outset to a certain partiality or prejudice, and in doing so I will state my case. This for me is the most satisfying recording of this elusive work yet made, and despite the many claims of the other recordings which have been made since 1945 offers a completeness based on a wide experience for all concerned and a commonality of view which, when combined with the intensity evident at the recording sessions, has produced something unique. I had the privilege of attending some of the recording last January in the Liverpool Philharmonic Hall where the fervour, commitment and intensity of all concerned underpinned two very happy days. If I say that the occasion was dominated by the quiet authority of Vernon Handley, this I am sure will not be taken as diminishing the involvement of the three soloists, of Andrew Keener, Mike Hatch, and of Trish Byrne of CFP, whose brain-child this project is.

The claims of other recordings are many, whether it be for the authority of Sir Adrian Boult's conducting, the drama of Barbirolli and intensity of a Janet Baker or the experience of a Richard Lewis. Much as I might feel that the Gibson performance and second Sargent might have much to offer, there is insufficient individuality to commend them as a first choice. Simon Rattle's performance will, I am sure, one day show the insight of Vernon Handley, and benefit from the older conductor's experience, which manifests itself in ways too numerous to relate here. However one strikingly obvious moment is Handley's ability to comply (or at least virtually comply) with Elgar's tempo markings at fig.64 in Part I with the semi-chorus's entry, "Noe from the waters..", where crotchet = 76. It seems to me that it is rare to experience this, and to hear the tempo sustained over those few bars to fig.65 when *moderato* gives way to *andante*.

The recording is exemplary, a tribute to the fine work which Messrs Hatch and Keener have been doing over the years in Liverpool. Elgar's textures are well caught, the underpinning of the orchestra in the Prelude by the organ, the vividness of the viola writing and the balance with the large choir, which is quite marvellous in its depth of tone and virtuosity. The combination of two choruses (the red and the white rose) proved not only to be a happy one, but enabled a volume and depth of

sound to be achieved which is evident here. Immediately Anthony Rolfe Johnson enters his experience and commitment to the role are apparent, and his identification with the words is perhaps unique in all the recordings of this work. The enunciation of many passages places the words as an equal with the music; for example, "I wish to hold with thee conscious communion; though I fain would know a maze of things, were it but meet to ask". There is the occasional sense of strain, but this largely adds to the sense of drama (although I am not sure about the strange sound one bar before fig.48 in Part I).

Catherine Wyn-Rogers sings with great beauty of tone and confidence and if I feel there could be a greater sense of drama and variety in her interpretation this is only a minor cavil. Michael George on the other hand could perhaps have achieved a greater degree of contrast between the Priest and the Angel of the Agony, but again this is only a minor quibble. His is a contribution which adds greatly to the sense of atmosphere which imbued the Liverpool Hall during the sessions.

In some ways there is little more to say, but to stress that this is a major undertaking and a great performance of a work which has now been recorded more times than Elgarians have any right to expect. There is a sense of drama here which is exemplified in the way Handley propels the work forward; but there is, I would stress, no sense of rushing. The benefits are numerous : at no time is there a sense of anticlimax, particularly if you move from Part I to Part II with a minimal break. The Demons' Chorus exemplifies the strength of the combined choruses and why the use of such a large chorus was worthwhile. This is the finest choral singing of any recording. This virtuosity pays off in so many ways, not just in depth of tone and volume. Details, such as the *largamente* marking (five bars before fig.89 in Part II) provide the contrast Elgar wanted, not something to be walked over; again offering a variety of colour which helps sustain this long chorus.

The final reason to buy this recording is to read the booklet notes, written by Vernon Handley's brother, Dr Graham Handley, an English scholar, currently editing the novels of Trollope. His approach to the way Elgar adapted Newman's text and the way it was set to music is illuminating, and all too short! As a bonus, those readers who did not acquire Gordon Jacob's orchestration of Elgar's *Organ Sonata* will find this colourful contribution completing two discs representing tremendous value. I have already made clear that I admire this recording greatly.

It is impossible, in a work so complex as *The Dream of Gerontius* to single out the finest of recordings, but I am prepared to state that this is *one* of the finest performances to have been committed to disc, and certainly the outstanding recording to have appeared in the last twenty years.The Peter Moores Foundation, which made the recording possible, can take pride in the end result as well as the gratitude of us all. Those concerned should be proud of what has been achieved, including the two Chorus Masters, Ian Tracey and Brian Kay. It is however the conductor who carries the full weight of the performance on his shoulders, and Vernon Handley's contribution is exemplary : his involvement shines from every bar!

Andrew Neill

"Great is the Lord" - church music by Elgar and Stanford.
Choir of Trinity College, Cambridge directed by Richard Marlow
Conifer CDCF 214

Elgar would probably be surprised to find himself on the same disc as Stanford but would, I think, be amused that the designer of the cover has him looking over the shoulder of the older composer!

Stanford is represented by two settings of the canticles for Evening Prayer (in A and G); the *Te Deum* in B flat which he orchestrated for the 1902 Coronation; the *Gloria* written for that of 1911; and two anthems. His successor as organist of Trinity directs lively and imaginative performances. I would not venture to express an opinion on the suitability or otherwise of female voices in church choirs, but will limit myself to the observation that they sound fine here!

At first sight you may think that there is an Elgar première here and in a sense there is. *Intende voci orationis meae* is the Latin version of *O hearken Thou* and this is I believe its first recording in that format. I can't see why anyone should want to sing it in Latin as it was written to be sung in English at the 1911 Coronation. The three short motets *Ave verum, Ave Maria,* and *Ave Maris Stella* were however written for the Roman church and are rightly sung in the original Latin rather than in the English version published by Novello to soothe Protestant sensibilities. They are sung very sensitively with a beautiful contribution for the soprano soloist in *Ave verum.* The remaining Elgar works are his setting of the *Benedictus* and *Great is the Lord.* These are big pieces and polished as the performances are here, I would still go for David Hill's splendid Argo disc which includes the latter and Richard Hickox's EMI the former, in their full dress versions with orchestra. Once heard like that, then performances with small choir and organ inevitably sound rather limited.

For those who want to have every note that Elgar wrote, on record, I should point out a recording première that you may have missed. In Volume 7 of Priory Records' survey of The Psalms of David (PRCD 409), Norwich Cathedral Choir make use of one of the Anglican chants that Elgar wrote for the New Cathedral Psalter in 1907. To buy a 79-minute CD just for a few minutes of previously unrecorded Elgar might seem somewhat excessive, but who knows you might thoroughly enjoy the imaginative way the choir and organist tackle all sixteen of the Psalms on this disc as much as I did!

John Knowles

Severn Suite, Op.87; and works by Rubbra, Vinter, Ball and Fletcher.
John Foster Black Dyke Mills Band conducted by Roy Newsome and Peter Parkes
Chandos Brass CHAN 4508

The *Severn Suite* stands as one of the great pillars of the brass band repertoire. In the 1930s Herbert Whitely, then editor of *British Bandsman* (the *Times* of the brass band world) and music editor of the publishing firm of R Smith and Company, persuaded several great composers to write for the medium including Holst,

Vaughan Williams, and Elgar. Much has been written about Elgar's reluctance to take on the work, and the engagement of Henry Geehl to help with the scoring. What is usually forgotten is that the piece which emerged is one of the best original works for brass band ever written and it is given fair treatment on this CD. Sadly it is not a new recording, but dates from 1977 and is reissued on a compilation called "Epic Brass". The band is conducted by Roy Newsome in Rubbra's *Variations on 'The Shining River'* and Gilbert Vinter's *James Cook - Circumnavigator*; and by Peter Parkes in works by Eric Ball (*Sinfonietta for brass band 'The Wayfarer'*) and Percy Fletcher (*An Epic Symphony*). Roy Newsome takes the baton in a faithful reading of Elgar's suite, perhaps at its best in the reflective Fugue. This is dramatic music and, for me, the Toccata could do with more panache, achieving a greater contrast with the following fugue. The Minuet is a little lack-lustre : it is a dance, after all. I have always felt Elgar's Coda to be a weak ending to the suite, and this recording does little to convince otherwise. Tim Mutum's notes, though not inspiring, will be of help to those new to brass bands.

Recordings of *The Severn Suite* in its original band version are not all that common, so this reissue might represent a good way to get to know the piece if it's unfamiliar. Some will prefer to wait for a new recording by a modern-day band in full flight. Let us hope Chandos will oblige.

Eric Wilson

CD Round-up

First, apologies from the last Round-up for confusing an Anglo-African composer with an eminent English poet!
Two new releases of great interest to Elgarians and essential for those interested in British music. EMI have issued a mid-price disc (CDM 764719-2) to commemorate the centenary of the Bournemouth Symphony (originally Municipal) Orchestra. It is a compilation of recordings by the ten principal conductors of the last hundred years, beginning with Sir Dan Godfrey, the Orchestra's founder. (It also includes an eleventh conductor, Simon Rattle, who received a two-year contract to conduct the orchestra after winning a competition in 1974). Many of the tracks are extracts from complete works; the most substantial work is Elgar's *In the South*, recorded under Constantin Silvestri in 1967, and long considered to be one of the finest versions on record. It now appears on CD for the first time, and I urge you to get it. It *is* a very fine performance indeed, with some wonderfully exhilarating playing, especially in the final section. The transfers are excellent, with the exception of a very scratchy extract from the Delius *Violin Concerto*, conducted by Richard Austin in 1937 and taken from a BBC broadcast (Austin made no commercial recordings with the orchestra). The soloist here is May Harrison, who also appears on a disc entitled "The Harrison Sisters" (Claremont CD GSE 78-50-47, available from The Complete Record Company Ltd, 12 Pepys Court, 84 The Chase, London SW4 0NF). It comprises transfers from recordings made (with one exception) in the late '20s by Beatrice (cello), May (violin) and Margaret (violin and piano). The chief works are cello sonatas by Delius and Brahms, played by Beatrice accompanied by Harold Craxton and Gerald Moore respectively; and Delius' *Violin Sonata no.1* played by

May accompanied by Arnold Bax. However, those familiar with John Knowles' *Elgar's Interpreters on Record* will be intrigued with the appearance for the first time of private recordings of the Adagio from the *Cello Concerto*, played of course by Beatrice; and *Salut d'Amour*, where she is joined by Margaret on the violin. The accompanist in each case is HRH Princess Victoria (1868-1935), fourth child of Edward VII and Queen Alexandra, and sister to King George V. To be frank, the royal playing leaves much to be desired, and there is a wonderful example of the consummate musicianship of the sisters, when after a mistake in the accompaniment they wait for the Princess to catch up, and then proceed as if nothing had happened! There is a fair amount of surface noise, but the transfers are clear and easy on the ear.

Another historic release on Testament (SBT 1010) is of two superb violin prodigies who tragically died young - Ginette Neveu (aged 30, in 1949) and Josef Hassid (aged 26, the following year). Kreisler said that a violinist like Hassid comes along once every 200 years, and you can see why he thought that. These recordings dating from 1940 when he was sixteen are astonishing and that much over-worked word "genius" seems almost inadequate here. Among the nine tracks - his complete recorded output - there are two recordings of *La Capricieuse*, one a commercial recording with Gerald Moore as the accompanist; and one discovered relatively recently - a test record, accompanied by Ivor Newton, and a remarkable achievement for a boy just turned fifteen. The Neveu recordings are excellent too, and the transfers are first class.

EMI's "Studio Plus" series at mid-price are generous re-issues of well-loved and revered performances. CDM 764748-2 contains Sir Adrian Boult's 1970 recording of the *Enigma Variations*, and his 1978 version of Holst's *The Planets* - his final thoughts on two works with which he was closely linked throughout his long career, having recorded them four and five times respectively. There are arguably finer versions of the *Variations*, but no Elgarian would want to be without this one, and if you haven't already got it, this is a bargain (nearly 79 minutes of music).

In January I reviewed James Loughran's recording of the *First Symphony* with the Hallé on ASV's bargain Quicksilva label. Much of what I said then applies to his version of the *Second* (CD QS 6087). I cannot find major fault with it (although it is too slow for my taste); it is sensitively handled, and nicely played, but somehow it just fails to ignite. I suppose that I could have loved Loughran better, did I not love Boult, Barbirolli, Handley, Slatkin, etc, more... At the price, though, it represents excellent value, especially with the fill-up which is Marriner's personable 1983 recording of the *Serenade for Strings* with the Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields.

The Editor

BRANCH REPORTS

All went smoothly at LONDON Branch as the 1992/93 season came to its end. In April Martin Passande gambled once more with the weather and emerged a good deal luckier than forecasts had suggested, when he led about thirty intrepid members on an excursion to Brinkwells. At the May meeting Professor Ian Parrott was with us and proved that he has lost none of his energy, wit and enthusiasm with his presentation "Cyril Scott and Elgar". In June the AGM was preceded by Michael Plant's dip into his amazing collection of 78s to give us not so much Elgar, but the sounds which we know Elgar heard in the earlier years of this century - some of which he heartily disliked, but many of which, often surprisingly enough, he vastly enjoyed. This "Very Light Programme" was beautifully scripted and involved both Michael Plant and our Vice-Chairman in a virtuoso display of not-unsuspected comic talent!
The new season begins at Imperial College on 4 October with Dr Jerrold Northrop Moore as our guest. We shall hope to have plenty of "extra" activities this year, and to start with we are planning a block-booking at discount prices to the LSO concert at the Barbican on 11 November when André Previn conducts the *Second Symphony*. Further information from the Branch Secretary.

The two meetings which brought the SOUTHERN Branch season to a close were quite outstanding and were enjoyed by large numbers of Branch members and several guests. In May Philip Scowcroft gave a fascinating illustrated talk on "Transcriptions and Transcribers of Elgar's Music". It is always good to come across hitherto unknown facts concerning Elgar's music and such 'facts' were given in abundance.
In June there was a recital by Dolf Polak (violin) and Eunice Pike (piano). A large audience was treated to a beautiful account of Elgar's *E minor Sonata*. Also in the programme was Grieg's *Sonata no.1* and some early pieces by Elgar. The recital was a thrilling climax to the season.
The Branch meets again in October when Nigel Riches will enlarge upon Elgar's Three Choirs Festival connections, and in November two more Branch members, Jennifer Nicholas (mezzo) and Phyllis Shipp (piano) will give a recital which will include *Sea Pictures*. There is a steady trickle of new members and we are endeavouring to ensure that this continues.

SOUTH-WEST. We were delighted with the large attendance on 27 March for Lewis Foreman. His talk on "Bax and Delius" held everyone's attention. Elgar and other contemporary composers were included in a very full audio-visual presentation, for which we were joined by the SW Branch of the Delius Society. This was followed on 24 April with "O lovely Knight", a talk given by Bridget Duckenfield about Landon Ronald. At our 22 May meeting Dennis Clark from the Yorkshire Branch gave his latest audio-visual presentation taken from original postcards,"Elgar's world in contemporary pictures", to a very appreciative audience. On 12 June the Branch Chairman with others travelled down to Exeter, where he presented his "Elgar and the Theatre" at the Arts Centre. This gave an opportunity for those members living in that part of the south-west to attend a Branch meeting. A sufficient turn-out has encouraged us to arrange a similar meeting in 1994. We commence our 1993/94 season on 25 September when Dr Percy M Young will examine *The Dream of*

Gerontius within the historical, philosophical and theological area in which it was created. Then on 23 October the Society's Chairman Andrew Neill will present his illustrated talk on "Elgar and the First World War". Both these meetings take place at the Bristol Music Club, St Paul's Road, Clifton and start at 2.15 pm. We look forward to a large turn-out for both these meetings. The Branch AGM will be held at The Folk House, Park Street, Bristol at 2.15 on 27 November; and following the meeting, a Members' Choice. All Branch members are asked to attend if possible. A full programme has been arranged for 1994.

YORKSHIRE Branch will return to its original meeting room at "The Willows" Community Centre to start the 1993/94 season. The Council realised their mistake in raising the rent as almost every society left; they have now lowered it to an acceptable figure and most of our members are looking forward to going back. Chairman Robert Seager will open proceedings there on 27 September with recordings of his favourite Elgar.
Our closing meetings in the Church Hall included "Victorian Musicians" by Yorkshire member Philip Scowcroft, who discussed and played works by several of Elgar's early contemporaries, leading up to the great man himself. John Weir from NW Branch came on 14 June to give a very well-prepared talk on Parry. The final get-together on 19 July was the annual "soirée" at the Secretary's home, and an even greater squeeze than usual; with a growing branch this may move to "The Willows" next year.
Members will soon receive the printed word on next season's meetings, but we can advise that visitors will include Prof Ian Parrott, Raymond Wood (who will include excerpts from a collection of very rare foreign Elgar recordings) plus members of our own lecture team.

The second half of last season's NORTH-WEST Branch's programme began in January with a Quiz on English Music presented by John Mawbey. In February Dennis Clark gave us one of his excellent presentations "Elgar's World in Contemporary Pictures". In March David Young talked on "Elgar's interpreter - Barbirolli". This was full of nostalgia and very much enjoyed by all. The season closed in April with a recital given by Cantilena. Our 1993/94 season will begin on 9 October with a talk by Prof Ian Parrott "Peter Warlock : accident, suicide or murder?" On 6 November Robert Elliott will talk on "The Symphonies of Vaughan Williams" (to be confirmed). The AGM and Christmas Social will take place on 4 December.

SOUTH WALES. On 24 April Ronald Taylor told members of his experiences as JOURNAL Editor. Mention was made of some of the early articles, and of the application of computer type-setting in the '80s - a step forward in one sense, but one that created new problems for the Editor, since the correction of one error at the proof stage could well be accompanied by the perpetration of another. It was Mr Taylor's view that the JOURNAL existed for the benefit of the Society's members and not just for that of the Committee, and from the first he had insisted upon complete editorial independence. A talk of this nature might seem not to have offered much scope for musical illustration but in the event a fair amount of music was heard.
Geoffrey Hodgkins addressed the Branch on 19 June, his topic being "Elgar and Llangranog". Though the composer's stay in this rather remote Welsh village was

not a long one, Rosa Burley had seen fit to give a rather different impression - perhaps for the purpose of bequeathing to posterity a larger-than-life idea of her relationship with the Elgar family. The provision of a screen enabled the speaker to present some slides of Llangranog, and the first ever recording of the *Introduction & Allegro* (a National Gramophonic Society issue) was played.

WEST MIDLANDS. The programme for the new season is now in place. There are two social events; a "Members' Afternoon" on 2 October at 2.30 pm, and a Lunch Party on 12 February at 12 noon. Both these events will be held at The Stables, 37 Albany Terrace, Worcester.
The lecture programme begins on 6 November when Andrew Neill will speak on "Richard Strauss, Elgar and England", followed on 20 November by John Weir whose title is "Parry - Not Just Jerusalem". Both meetings are at the Friends' Meeting House, Worcester at 2.30 pm. Details of the talks to be given in 1994 will be given in the January JOURNAL.
The Branch AGM will be held at The Stables at 2.15 on 15 March 1994 and this will be followed by a musical presentation by Michael Castle.
Friends of members are welcome at a nominal entrance fee of £1. We would be delighted to see new faces at these events.
The Branch Chairman, Michael Trott, has a collection of archive recordings of talks and broadcasts relating to Elgar. These are available on loan to members of the Society. Please contact Michael for further information (0684-294859).

LETTERS

From : Harrison Oxley

For someone who was present at the Kings Lynn Festival concert in 1970, it was indeed moving to read Laurie Watt's most perceptive review of the recent re-issue of Barbirolli's recording of Elgar's First Symphony. *No-one who was there will ever forget the occasion.*
When we arrived at the church, a friend involved in the Festival administration told us that Sir John had been too ill to attend the afternoon rehearsal, which had been taken by the leader of the orchestra, Martin Milner. It was not certain whether he would be able to conduct the concert. We greeted his arrival with joy and relief, tempered with concern at the great difficulty he had in climbing the steps up to the platform. Knowing that the end was near, the Hallé players gave themselves totally. Everyone in the audience was overwhelmed.
It is good to know that after 23 years that performance can still make its impact.

From : Andrew Dalton

As well as being a passionate admirer of the music of Elgar, I am also a great enthusiast for the works of the artist Sir Frank Brangwyn, RA. I recently acquired the catalogue for an exhibition of Brangwyn's work held in Brighton in 1980, which contains the following comment on Brangwyn's work for Royal Dalton in

the early 1930s : "It is thought that Brangwyn was introduced to Charles Noke, Doulton's Art Director, by their mutual friend Edward Elgar". This is the only reference that I have ever come across linking Elgar with Brangwyn, and I would be most interested to hear from any reader of the JOURNAL who can supply any further information on their relationship.

From : George Spridgeon

Your quote from The Times, *despite its apparent amiability and reasonableness has great potential for wreaking mischief and damage. The statement that '[Elgar] and Britten are the nearest England has to international composers' not only emphatically damns with faint praise those it purports to honour but incidentally casts aside as of no account a great many of their compatriots whose music is certainly heard in concert halls far from their native shores. It is well in any case to be wary of that word "international". A little reflection will show that a degree - any degree - of international fame (or notoriety) is neither a yardstick nor a guarantee of excellence. Music is as prone to be swept in or out of favour on the tides of fashion and powerful advocacy as any other commodity, and much of what is good amongst contemporary English music suffers from the effects of an arid cultural climate where informed and committed championing is scarce. Most countries recognise and proclaim their own creative artists. All too often, the English exhibit instead a propensity to overlook the talents of those born and bred in their midst.*

Nevertheless, it is nonsense to say that Elgar is 'nearly' an international composer. No apology nor qualification is necessary. His music is not deficient in comparison with the most exalted company, and it is not infrequently called upon to join the same in concert and recital programmes around the world. But then, so is that of, for example, Dunstable, Byrd, Tallis, Dowland, Morley, Purcell, Arne, Boyce, Parry, Vaughan Williams, Walton, Ireland, Brian, and Lloyd. Not to acknowledge this is not only absurdly unjust to other great or outstanding composers; it diminishes the true scale of Elgar's achievements.

THE ELGAR SOCIETY

FOUNDED 1951

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President: Lord Menuhin, O.M.
Chairman: Andrew Neill

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