

The Elgar Society JOURNAL



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The Elgar Society Journal

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EDITORIAL

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It was sixty years ago on 23 February last that Elgar died. Such anniversaries often give rise to reassessments of the status of composers or other creative artists. To judge by the number of new articles, books and recordings there has been no diminution in Elgar's reputation since the fiftieth anniversary in 1984. For Bayan Northcott, writing in *The Independent* on 1 January, this constant flow of material creates a problem of emphasis: "What, by now, do we *not* know about Elgar?... Granted, he was born into a Victorian culture that placed an exceptional value on memory, on the souvenir, on storing up golden moments; granted his canny instinct for self-projection seems to have attracted a steady stream of friends with diaries and cameras ever at the ready. But as the memoirs, picture-books and editions of letters have tumbled from the press, they have at least been matched by earnest psychological studies of his contradictory character; by socio-economic investigations of his upwardly mobile urges and professional rivalries; by politico-cultural diagnoses of his career as bard of a dying imperialism. One has heard Elgar performances in which the music has almost seemed to sink under the weight of its extra-musical significances; one has met Elgarians who apparently regard the output as a mere soundtrack to a perpetual reliving of the joys and sorrows of his biography".

Point taken. Yet this raises another, more metaphysical issue: why do we listen to music? Is it merely to tickle our aural senses, to make us feel good, to cause us to forget our problems? If that is the sum total then the musical listener is intrinsically no different from the football fan, the hardened drinker, the drug addict. Our "savage breast" may be "soothed", but for how long? Until the next "fix"? Surely we should allow the effect of music upon us to challenge our preconceptions about our present state, and to add to our knowledge of ourselves, of others, and of the world we inhabit: in other words, to make us more mature and whole as people. Mr Northcott may be right in seeking to redress what he sees as an imbalance (he may have missed the excellent articles on Elgar's music by Ivor Keys, Christopher Kent, and Robert Meikle in *Edward Elgar: Music and Literature*. And has he not read Jerrold Moore's *A Creative Life*?) Yet to learn more about a great human being, and how he or she coped with living can help us on our voyage of self-discovery. I am therefore as grateful to those who have enlarged my knowledge of Elgar the man as I am to those who have written about his music. I enjoyed *The Kingdom* long before I discovered that that sublime music was written by one undergoing severe depression. Learning the background of the work's composition has I hope been as beneficial to me as learning the music itself.

GEOFFREY HODGKINS

ELGAR AND WILLIAM WOLSTENHOLME

Kenneth Shenton

Forli, Malvern
November 4th 1893

I have the deepest pleasure in testifying to the exceptionally great possibilities of Mr William Wolstenholme Mus.Bac.Oxon. as Organist, composer etc.

He possesses musicianship of the very highest quality and in addition to the admiration his great talent commands, he wins friends wherever he appears by his amiable and unassuming manner.

Edward Elgar

Leader, Worcester Festival Choral Society : Worcester and District Musical Union : Conductor. etc.
etc.

Edward Elgar was writing a century ago about one of his pupils who was to become one of the finest and most popular composers of his day.

Born at Blackburn on 25 February 1865, William Wolstenholme was aged six when his prodigious musical talents brought him to the attention of the distinguished Victorian musician Henry Smart. So impressed was Smart by this young boy that he made the parents promise that when William was older they would bring him to London where he would see that the boy was properly educated for the musical profession.

Unfortunately Henry Smart died before the promise could be kept and thus, in 1874, William left Blackburn to be educated in Worcester at the College for the Blind. Little could the family have realised what effect the next few years would have on William Wolstenholme's musical development. He later recounted his early days there.

I was educated at my father's expense at the College for the Blind sons of Gentlemen at Worcester and it was the late Headmaster of the College, the Rev S Forster MA who directed my studies. To the College Mr Elgar came as teacher of the violin. I was for a time one of his pupils and that was how he first knew me. His friendship and kindness to me during my Worcester life, I am proud and grateful to acknowledge.

Whilst there he played, to great acclaim, the solo part in Mendelssohn's *Piano Concerto in G minor* which Dr Done conducted with the Worcester Philharmonic Society. Because of his blindness, Wolstenholme found many musical avenues closed to him, but not the University of Oxford where the regulations allowed him to enter for the Bachelor of Music examination, without being in residence. In this he was to follow in the footsteps of an earlier blind organist, John Stanley.

For his degree Wolstenholme transcribed Beethoven's *Fidelio* Overture into braille notation and for his exercise composed a cantata *Lord Ullin's Daughter* which Elgar committed to paper for him.

In spite of his success at Oxford Wolstenholme found few offers of work forthcoming

and returned, somewhat sadly, to his native town to become a provincial musician. Here for the next fifteen years he would teach, compose and give organ recitals where and whenever he could.

I have indeed the honour to have been a pupil of the greatest of modern English composers, Edward Elgar. I learnt the violin from him for a short time when I was at school in Worcester. As I preferred the organ and piano, however, I gave up the violin; but my good teacher, fortunately for me, did not give me up - he remained an invaluable friend to me to the end of my college days, and I learned much from him out of school hours, when he would play and talk over new music with me, including his own early works.

He would often say, 'Billy, I've a theme to play to you'; then would come something new of his own or something he had found. When I went to his house, generally on Saturday afternoons, he devoted many hours to the drudgery of copying for me. I owe him indeed a debt of the deepest gratitude for these and other benefits too numerous to mention which he heaped on my unworthy head.

Central to this friendship was a correspondence between the two men which offers a fascinating glimpse of Elgar the composer and Elgar the supportive friend. The correspondence begins in 1888 as Elgar the lover of puzzles is attempting to come to terms with the braille alphabet which Wolstenholme has sent to him.

4 Field Terrace, Worcester
Feb 2nd 1888

My dear Willie,

I cannot say how glad I was to get your letter and the key which I shall carefully preserve, hoping to be favoured with more epistles sometime. I could not get on very well at first but by the time I had worried the meaning out of the first page I had almost learned your extraordinary alphabet.

Well, now the 'Suite' is to be played at Birmingham on the 23rd of this month so that I shall at last hear it, I wish you could be with us but perhaps sometime you will have the opportunity. I will tell you how it goes and all about it.

I am ashamed I have not sent your Gavotte yet, I have done some of the copying and hope to complete it in a few days now, but I have had so much writing to do during the holidays - have finished that unaccompanied Mass - distinctly barn door but easy, and several other things which I will play to you when we meet. What a good thing for you to hear so much good music : I hear of Stavenhagen - (Stave and hang-him they called him in London) play the first time he made his appearance in London - when Liszt was present - the Eb concerto of Liszt was the chief thing he did and very properly did he swing it out.

I hope you are still composing. Let me give you an idea, there seems to be a call - not a remunerative one its true for music for string orchestra; Let your ideas run in the groove a little and see what you can do. The best things of this sort (modern) are by Volkmann; think of something for two violins, viola, cello and double bass; not too extended compass in the first violin - remembering that it is for orchestra, not string quintett. Let the key be easy and the movements short.

Volkmann's second serenade, so he calls it, is a most lovely thing - it consists of

- I) Allegro Moderato, 3/4 in F
- II) Allegro 3/4 in D minor, scherzo
- III) Slow waltz in Bb
- IV) March in F

All very short. Now see if you can't get together something of that sort. I am writing one myself for a performance at the Union Concert (Rev. Hall's) which will be in G

Introduction about 16 bars

Allegretto, 4/4 in G major

Minuet in D

Slow movement in G

Finale G minor and major.

I think that's about it

Our society is, of course, resting and we shall not meet this season. Have you seen Blair's anthem? in the Musical Times of January. I think that extraordinary song of mine about the 'Wind of Dawn' is coming out in the Magazine of Music but I am not sure yet; the other one is in print and I will send a copy to you.

Last week at Birmingham we had Cowen's new symphony which nobody liked except the first movement. The second is very pretty but not fit for a Symphony. Cowen was rather annoyed because I told him that I heard the first movement before - in 1881 at the Crystal Palace when he called it a Concert Overture. He has altered the key now and the time but it is practically the same thing; no one else in London or elsewhere had noticed it and he seemed quite surprised when I told him I remembered it all those years. I wondered what he would think of *your* memory.

Now I must bring this rambling business to an end, I did hope that you would have settled to something but all in good time.

Don't forget about the string orchestra jape.

The good soul was very glad to hear from you and sends her kindest regards. Please remember me to your father and Mr Blackshaw.

Yours Sincerely
Edward Elgar

Mr Blackshaw was the organist of St John's Church, Blackburn, who was originally going to be Wolstenholme's amanuensis for his Oxford examination. Though he accompanied the composer to Oxford, Elgar was eventually summoned to do the job. By all accounts all three had a very enjoyable time and Elgar refers to Blackshaw in all his early letters.

4 Field Terrace, Worcester
May 29th 1888

My Dear Willie,

I was so delighted to get your letter; with the key you sent me with the other letter I managed to work out the meaning. About setting the verses I don't know at all what the usual fee is; I should imagine it would probably depend on the style! I never can mix up money with music somehow it's like 'salting pigs with ash'! Do you remember that tale? If not I must tell it you when you come.

For my part if the songs are to be simply in ballad style I should offer to do them from £1/1/- each: but that's nothing of course.

Glad the string business is progressing; don't make it difficult that's all.

My three movements are too beastly hard but I think they are better than anything I have hitherto done. They were played on May 7th: I am now much engaged in teaching and have no time to

write and don't think I have any ideas. A song of mine (I think I played it to you) is coming out in the Magazine of Music in July, I believe. Let me know when you are coming. I shall be here till August anyway, and we may get up some genial sport.

All of us are well now, thank heaven; I got an awful chill a fortnight ago and have coughed myself to a shadow; but I think its going now.

Give my kind regards to your Father and Mr.Blackshaw and let me hear from you again soon.

Believe me
Yours Sincerely
Edward Elgar

4 Field Terrace, Worcester
April 21st 1889

My Dear Willie,

I am writing to tell you that I am going to be married early next month and am removing to London: great changes you will say, or rather you may say safely great improvements. If you ever want to send to me (and I shall be glad to hear of you and help you if I can) 'care of Messrs Schott, 159 Regent Street' will always find me.

I hope the organ you spoke of has fallen to you and that you are getting on.

I have not time to tell you my gossip : there is not much to tell. Let me hear how you are getting on and when you have settled down. I will write again.

Give my kind regards to your Father and Mr.Blackshaw, and believe me,

Yours sincerely,
Edward Elgar

51, Avonmore Road, West Kensington
July 10th : 1890

My Dear Willie,

The above is now my address for some years, all being well, and I hope a letter from you telling of your 'goings on' will reach it soon. I heard a word of you from a friend of mine who saw you at one of Mr.Tattersall's Concerts - or rehearsals. Well how have you been and have you written anything lately.

And I want to know if you are going to Worcester Festival : you know I have written a overture for it and I hope to be there of course it won't be right unless you will be there to hear it and call it bad names! It is slightly barn door but will make what in old days, we should have called a snorting noise : I call it 'Froissart' and it is very (supposed to be that is) bold, martial and romantic as befits the theme : but you will see.

I was asked to write a book of little easy pieces for organ without pedals, so I will send you the trifles. I cannot say much for them but I think you might like no.7 and no.6 if you play it ppp : tell me sometime if you do.

I hear Mr.Tattersall will do the partsong which I also send. He proposes to do an orchestral work of mine at Blackburn so that will be fun.

Now I do hope you are getting on well and playing a great deal and generally alive. Did you ever

write those things for string orchestra? I think if you made about three (or four if short) movements easy they'd be successful and I would do what I could to get them done and published.

With kind regards to your Father and Mr.Blackshaw and much love to yourself.

Yours Sincerely,
Edward Elgar

Forli, Malvern
August 1891

My Dear Willie,

We were so very sorry we were away when you called; Why oh! Why didn't you send a card or something to say you were hereabouts? but that of course you never do! I should like to have heard of your goings on and all the music you have done and we are going to do.

We like our new quarters very much and I have been better since we changed into this place, having been unwell all the winter.

Send me a line when you can find time and with our kindest regards to your father.

Yours sincerely
Edward Elgar

Wish you could hear the music here! its awful and the young lady who tortures the harmonium has serious notions of harmony!

Forli, Malvern
July 13th 1893

My Dear Willie,

I'm sending a line or two to tell you how much we were delighted with your performance at the Musical Society's Concert (Mr.Dyson conducting!) They sang it very well indeed and you know it was encored and repeated. I was so very glad and stamped the floor well but there was tremendous applause without me.

How are you and where are you? We hope well and flourishing.

By this post I send organ arrangement of a piece of the Black Knight and hope sometime to send you a whole sonata which I have just finished. I have been writing a heap of things lately and should much like to show you some. Send me a line soon as we shall be going to Germany for holidays in a week or two.

With kind regards from Mrs Elgar
Yours Sincerely
Edward Elgar

While Elgar was beginning to approach what most would agree was his musical maturity, William Wolstenholme was winning great success with his compositions. These were generally works on a smaller canvas, organ pieces, piano music, songs, chamber music, etc, much played and admired by the leading musicians of the day. Many of his compositions had their origins in extemporisations, which became a feature of his recitals. Many stories abound about these; one in particular tells how he improvised a double fugue on *It's a Long Way to Tipperary* and *The British Grenadiers*, later adding *Rule Britannia* and *Pack up your Troubles in your Old Kit Bag* for good measure!

Forli, Malvern
December 23rd 1895

My Dear Willie,

I send at once my very many thanks for your photograph : I was most delighted to have it and we think its extremely good.

I was glad to hear from you and don't think that I have sent you a line since I read your Braille : I puzzled it out for sometime and at last found the alphabet you made for me years ago. You had better send me a note oftener and then I shall not get so rusty : I knew the characters fairly well once.

I am going to send you the Organ Sonata as soon as its out - in January I think : I am now working at a Cantata for North Staffs Festival and also a sacred oratorio for Worcester - both in late autumn. I should like you to hear some of these things.

Then there are just coming out a set of Bavarian japes for choir and orchestra, so you can see I am tolerably occupied. Let me know if you are coming here anytime.

With much love and best wishes for now and new year and with many kind remembrances to your people.

Yours Sincerely
Edward Elgar

Has Mr. Blackley (I forget if this is right - he was at Oxford with you) forgotten me?
I hope he's well.

There is one curiosity among the letters and that dates from 1906. This was a difficult time for Elgar as he attempted to complete his oratorio *The Kingdom*. The strain was to bring on increasing problems of illness, either real or imagined. In April he travelled to America for a series of concerts which he found somewhat tiresome, being described by the American press as "silent and unsocial". Just as his visit was moving to its climax on 1 May, came a telegram informing him of the death of his father.

At the end of that month, two days before his forty-ninth birthday, Elgar wrote to Wolstenholme in most uncharacteristic style. Its mood perhaps personifies the deep depression he was then suffering, for he not only turns down a request for help from Wolstenholme, but begins his letter in an unusually formal manner.

Plas Gwyn, Hereford
31st May 1906

My dear Wolstenholme,

Many thanks for your letter. I read the notes which you enclosed. Last year I referred to the society at length in one of my lectures.

Anything which would help forward good music, especially by young men has my warmest sympathy but I do not think the addition of my name will help matters : I can do more good outside when opportunities occur.

I imagine there is much difficulty in publishing worthy small things and obtaining a hearing also.

The difficulty in the way of publishing 'big things' is insuperable : things which require a full score and parts in print are in my mind. You must bear in mind that, however great this vogue may be, five or six full scores and a little number of sets of parts will suffice for the whole of England until the copies fall to pieces : they have to be performed ten thousand times without it bringing anything to the publisher or the author.

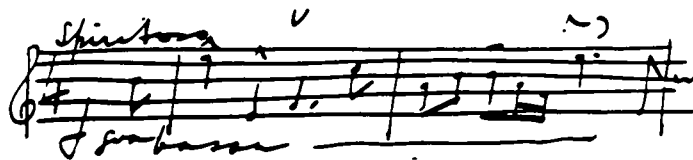
Your pieces which are as you know frequently played in most countries practically do not pay one for the paper they are written upon. The only thing to make an orchestral work pay for its printing is its success as a pianoforte arrangement and you know orchestral writers do not write with such a view.

Yours Sincerely
Edward Elgar

Of the many letters written by Elgar, those to Wolstenholme were written over a period of twenty years - crumbs from a rich man's table. By their very nature they are sometimes casual affairs often concentrating on matters of the moment - the concern of one composer for another.

They are often full of visions of youthful japes and jaunts - the child in Elgar the man. In this letter from 1904, Elgar punctuates the text with musical illustrations. Talking of Wolstenholme's compositions for the organ, Elgar states :

My last composition for that instrument, written after you left has not seen the grand light of publicity; its rather a good subject for a fugue. I call it 'outgoing voluntary for middle class Sunday mornings'.



"You will see what it spells" writes Elgar.

Why the neglect of both the friendship and the correspondence it engendered? It does seem strange and yet I wonder if it is the very provinciality of both men's origins that many struggle to fully understand today. Are we not so conditioned nowadays to a centralised bureaucracy based in London, that we fail to heed the lessons of our musical heritage?

It is these provincial roots, I think, that helped form a strong bond between the two men. Each had a problem of class and background as they tried to become professional musicians in a world seemingly indifferent to their outstanding talents. Their frustrations and problems helped cement a friendship that was to last almost fifty years and yet it is a relationship that has been overlooked by Elgar scholars.

William Wolstenholme died aged 66 in 1931, the year in which Elgar lost a number of old friends. Once labelled the English César Franck, the obituaries paid fulsome tribute to his talents ranking his compositions among the finest of the day.

Elgar, who wrote of his sadness at Wolstenholme's death, was to die three years later. While his position in English music seems assured, the work and

achievements of his friend and pupil William Wolstenholme are generally assigned to a mere footnote here and there, be it in a scholarly musical history or an Elgar biography. Perhaps his neglect mirrors the reduced role and impact of the organ loft on our current musical thinking, a tradition of training that was so important to both men more than a century ago. Wolstenholme's work and achievements had been carefully nurtured by both his family and friends. 'Willum', as he was known, was always grateful for that support and took pride in his large circle of friends throughout the world. However, one particular friendship, nurtured during his early years in Worcester influenced him more than any other.

It was Elgar's advice that the violin study was relinquished in favour of more concentrated attention to the organ and piano with harmony and counterpoint; but though the relation of master and pupil ostensibly ceased by this change, it only served to draw our kindred spirits more closely together and those later schooldays without Elgar would have been to me, I believe, like a body without a soul.

It was not until I left Worcester that Elgar began to be recognised by the musical world at large. I glory in his triumphs, but I look back with affection on the happy hours I spent with him in his 'unknown' days and he still holds two high positions in my regard - those of best friend and best musician I have ever known.

◦ K Shenton

ELGAR

James Holdroyd

[This is the text of a sermon preached by Fr Holdroyd at St Bartholomew's Church Brighton on 14 December 1980, and is reprinted with kind permission. I trust members will be tolerant of the didactic element which is perhaps inevitable given the context, and will find this Anglo-Catholic perspective interesting. One might also speculate as to how such a sermon might be preached today, in the light of the greater knowledge and insights into Elgar which have come to light in the last decade and a half.- Ed.]

Which character in the Bible brings the most tears of sympathy to our eyes? We can all think of many who would qualify for the 'most hard done by' award; for myself there is only one candidate and that is St John the Baptist, the last prophet of the old dispensation, and not quite the first of the new. There is a gloomy melancholy and bitter sadness about his cry from Herod's prison as he waited for the axe to fall; as his faith languished in the dereliction of that gruesome place he sent two of his disciples to Jesus with the message, "Are you He who is to come, or do we look for another?"

The lot of the prophet has never been easy. It has always meant a loneliness and a dereliction, a standing for truths which so often are not accepted until years after the prophet has left the scene of his witness. It has always meant a turning inwards on the resources of the self, because no man is able to understand or appreciate the

inner world of the prophet; that is a private enigma which he can only unravel with the help of his relationship with God.

St John the Baptist was a special messenger of God. He was the climax of the Old Testament figures who challenged God's people with the truth. In a unique way he prepared the way of the Lord; a forlorn and desolate figure, his faith was stretched to the limit as he stood as a bridge between the new and the old. Only those who have a strain of prophecy about them can appreciate the deep sadness and agony of being the bearer of divine truth. How wonderful it is to be inspired by the dynamic message from on high, but after it is proclaimed and the only response is either the stones of anger or the looks of indifference and contempt - how heart-rending, how tragic!

Every priest at his ordination is empowered and privileged to share the prophetic calling, and so he knows in a little way the agony and depression of proclaiming the truth to unresponsive and indifferent people. He knows the agonising doubts, as like St John, his faith is stretched on the rack in his own inner prison; he knows that so often his words will come home to roost years later when it is too late for him to realise that they have not been altogether in vain.

Some of the greatest composers have shared the stigma of being prophets; away ahead of their time, persecuted without mercy while they lived, only years after they died has their music been appreciated for the glorious beauty of God that it has enshrined.

If I was asked which music personified today's gospel most nearly, you might think I should say Mahler, or Mozart, or Tchaikovsky, or perhaps Sibelius; but when I think of St John the bridge man languishing in the prison between the old and the new dispensation, I can only think of one man and that is Sir Edward Elgar. If we forget the superficial glitter and pomp of some of his music for the occasions of pageantry, and listen at the depths to his great works, we come to grips with a man who languished in a prison where melancholy and tears were the most common fare. I think of all the music that I have listened to, Elgar's music has caused me to shed the most tears; so Michael Kennedy in his biography of Elgar wrote; "Somewhere, something or somebody wounded him so deeply, so irreparably that he never fully recovered...He buried the secret of his wounds in his heart. It showed itself only in the anguish and solitude of certain passages in his music"¹.

Elgar found himself stretched on the rack as he realised that the old age had gone and the new one had not yet come, and so his music has a nostalgia about it of which perhaps the best example is the *First Symphony* in A♭. As time went on and he composed less and less, what he *did* create became more and more a well of tears which never stopped flowing. His last great work was the *Cello Concerto* in E minor, and in that he plumbs a depth of sadness and melancholy which can only draw one to heartfelt tears at the sadness and the wounds in the heart of the one who wrote it.

¹Portrait of Elgar [2nd edn., O U P, 1982] p.332

One of the causes of these wounds was undoubtedly a lack of recognition, not so much the lack of formal recognition - for he received many honours and medals - but a lack of recognition in the hearts of people for the creative and inspired composer he was. No prophet is without honour save in his own country; very few appreciated the mysterious creativity of his music, and so the doors of that prison were never opened. Alone with his own thoughts and feelings Edward Elgar pondered on the pain of being a prophet.

St John the Baptist as he languished in his prison was tempted by the horrifying thought that his mission might have been in vain: "Are you He that should come or do we look for another?" As his inner world became ravaged with the darkness of despair and doubt, He pleaded with Jesus for some sign that he could die in peace with the sure knowledge that his mission was accomplished; and Jesus did not let him down. "Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear...and the poor have the gospel preached to them; and blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me"². It is a prophet's joy to proclaim the truth, but God alone Who can assess the results of that proclamation and bring the work to completion in His time and His way; if you are a prophet then you must proclaim and leave it at that. The response is not your concern, and sometimes that can be an agony which almost leads one to despair as one sees people stopping their ears to the truth. It is God alone Who can unstop the ears in His time and His way.

Despair is certainly one of the besetting temptations and sins of the prophet, and Elgar was no exception. Even on his deathbed he convinced Ernest Newman of his fear that his music would not live after him. That is why, in the oratorio *The Apostles*, so much energy, time and sympathy are accorded to Judas; Elgar, as most composers, was best at drawing a portrait if he could identify himself with the character's emotions. "To my mind Judas's crime and sin was despair", Elgar told Canon Gorton, his adviser about the text and theology of both *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*. Despair was a deeply ingrained element in Elgar's own character which was with him in life and death; somehow he could not help worrying that the beautiful and angelic music which God gave him might not be appreciated by the people who heard it in years to come.

We may think that being a prophet is not our special bent or calling; that we can safely leave that to priests, poets, and musicians, but all of us whether we like it or not are unique creations of God; there has been nobody like us since the world began and there will be nobody until the world ends; and because we are unique, there is only one person who can understand us completely and utterly and that is our Creator, God.

We are indeed each single one of us an enigma, a riddle, a mystery to others and to ourselves and it is only God who can unravel the mystery because He created it and gave it birth; it is only God who can give us that full sympathy and understanding we long for; no human being can give it to us, and it is as we look into the Divine mirror that slowly and surely we discover the riddle of who we really are. It is by

²St Matthew 11: 4-6

contemplation then that we come to realise the "new name which no one knows save he who receives it"³.

Elgar, like all creative artists, was a mysterious mixture of elements, truly an Enigma; and of all the works he composed the most typical are the *Variations on an Original Theme (Enigma)* - thirteen variations describing the unique character of his friends with the fourteenth which represented himself. The key to unravelling the mystery of the *Enigma Variations* has been convincingly revealed in Ian Parrott's 'Master Musicians' in which he says that the "riddle" or "dark saying" is the passage in 1 Corinthians 13 : 12 where St Paul says: "For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know even as I am known". The growing into self-knowledge and to knowledge of each other is a gift of God the Holy Spirit, and takes a lifetime and longer to come to perfection. All of us as we keep within the sphere of the Holy Spirit come to know God, ourselves and others more deeply; and truly the hidden things of darkness come to light and so easily can snuff out our faith if we do not possess the gift of patience with ourselves, with other people and with God.

In a real sense the *Enigma Variations* were the most prophetic music Elgar wrote, and in contemplating its mysterious riddle we come to know what the work of "preparing the way of the Lord" is. If only we can be patient with ourselves and with God we shall come to see ourselves in the full light of the Divine presence. The more prophetic we are, the more enigmatic we are and the more loyal to our own uniqueness; the more cut off in a sense and isolated we become from our fellows, and the more challenged we are to realise that it is in prayer to God alone that we shall understand and be understood. How much unnecessary sadness we bear if we try to make other people, and particularly our priest, God for us. The most shattering falls from grace and lapses of faith come when people try to make a priest God, and try to absolve themselves from their own responsibility to come to terms themselves with the God Who alone knows the solution to the "riddle"; He made them.

Elgar started his life as an orthodox and devout Catholic, and much of his church music such as the *Ave Maris Stella* was written very early in his life and bears the tone of docility and childlike faith which is typical of a young person. We are told he died a Catholic and that at the last he sent for a priest to give him the viaticum for that journey of the soul he had so beautifully depicted in the music of *The Dream of Gerontius*. But as he grew in musical and spiritual stature, he saw beyond the narrow ecclesiasticalism of the Roman Church of his day. That is why the oratorios, *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*, although containing the essences of Christian doctrine, have a far more universal and evangelical flavour about them; as the angelic realms which inspired his music lifted them to greater heights of consciousness, he knew he could never again accept the childlike and childish faith of his adolescence and young manhood; of course doubts assailed him and he may have rejected the narrow and legalistic ideas of the Roman Church, but his faith in the Lord whose flame of love pierced Gerontius was never shaken; as Percy Young said, if he had moved away from orthodoxy it was because he had too much faith

³Revelation 2 : 17.

and not too little.

If you are a prophet - indeed if you are loyal to your own uniqueness - your faith and spiritual life will grow and it will change, although its foundations will never alter. As we are led by the angels up the spiral staircase to the gate of Heaven, our vision will gradually be undimmed as the Sun dispels the mists of our doubts and unbelief.

Today in the church there is a dearth of prophets and a collapse of prophetic preaching. How drab and dreary we are becoming! How sad it is that so many of our young people are turning their ears to fables and other specious forms of spirituality! This is what happens when the ecclesiastical takes over from the spiritual, and obsession with rites takes over from evangelism. Each single one of us has to find our own way to God. When we have laid the foundations on the witness of the apostles and prophets with Jesus Christ as our cornerstone, we can only go forward in confidence, but we must have the courage to be loyal to our own uniqueness. Sometimes because others misunderstand us we have to languish in the prison of doubt and even despair, but the morning will come and be the prelude to an even more brilliant light of day.

Do we want to be illumined with the Light of the Spirit? Do we want to tread rejoicingly following the Light of Christ which is the Light of Life? One of the outstanding musical witnesses to following the light of true illumination must be Sir Edward Elgar. In perhaps his most inspiring music of all, where we are really given a glimpse of the Elysian fields, and where the gates of Paradise are opened, he wrote an Epitaph; "Here lies the soul of", and then left a blank. Perhaps in the most exquisitely beautiful of all violin concertos, the epitome of Elgar's uniqueness and mystery, we see the soul of the composer himself.

If I could choose music for my own deathbed it would be the Andante of this concerto played by Heifetz. Here lies enshrined the soul not only of the composer himself, but of all prophetic spirits; all who have the courage to be loyal to their own uniqueness; all who know that although they may languish in the prison of despair and self-doubt sometimes, the vision of those realms of Paradise will never desert them until one day they reach them never to leave again.

SPECIAL OFFER TO SOCIETY MEMBERS

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This Pearl disc features twenty-three tracks of Elgar's music dating from 1872 to 1932, most of them previously unrecorded. The soloists are Teresa Cahill (soprano) and Stephen Holloway (bass), with Barry Collett at the piano and conducting the Tudor Choir of Leicester. Financial support for this project was given by the Society. Copies of this disc (Pearl SHE CD 9635) are obtainable to members at a preferential price of £10.50 (including postage), direct from Pavilion Records, Sparrows Green, Wadhurst, East Sussex TN5 6SJ. Send a cheque or credit card details with your order or telephone 089 278 3591 (fax : 089 278 4156).

ELGAR AND PETER WARLOCK

Prof Ian Parrott

1994 is the centenary of the birth of 'Peter Warlock' (born Philip Heseltine in London). It is also sixty years after the deaths of Elgar, Delius and Holst.

Philip Heseltine's entire life-span occurred within that of Elgar, but as far as is known, they never met. His mother, Edith (née Covernton from Knighton), and his stepfather, Walter Buckley Jones, lived only fifty miles from Elgar's Worcestershire at Abermule in Powys. This provided his only "stable" address for a very restless period from 1903 until his death in 1930.

From a well-to-do family, Philip lived as if he was always short of money - which he was - whereas Elgar, from a poor background, enjoyed living like a lord - which he did as often as he could. Another contrast is that Philip made a considerable number of enemies during his short life, while Elgar made many friends.

There are, however, some similarities. Elgar, as a boy, was closer in many ways to his mother than to his father and Philip lost his father before he was three. Both showed strong maternal influence. A suggestion has been made, with which we may not agree, that Elgar was "rejected" by his father and tied to his mother, his later relationships with women being unsatisfactory. The same could to some extent be said for Philip Heseltine who, in cynical vein, presumed his own father to be "excessively pious" and "fervent in his devotion to the 'grand tradition' of Christianity and the...empire, no doubt"¹.

Philip was a "bad picker of women"², noted Michael Kennedy. However, he managed to father two children, one pre-marital and the other born out of wedlock. To balance this, we have been surprised recently³ to learn that Elgar, at an early stage, was alleged to have had an affair with a Mrs Nelson, which produced an offspring. It doesn't seem in either case that there was any real love in these liaisons, both composers expressing throughout their lives a much more relaxed attitude in their friendships with men. Here the congenial male company produced some happy correspondence, Elgar's full of fun and "japes", while Philip's referred to rowdy ale-swigging boozing parties and the like. In both there is a sort of immaturity and a cover-up for an essentially retiring nature. This is not to say that there were not some exceptional romantic attachments: Alice Stuart-Wortley, who inspired Elgar, and Elizabeth Poston, who felt herself to have a special relationship with Heseltine, for example. As a counterblast to any femininity there were *Pomp & Circumstance* Marches from the former, and some fine drinking songs from the latter.

¹ Heseltine to Delius, 17 December 1913. See Smith, Barry: *Peer Warlock: The Life of Philip Heseltine (1894-1930)* (O U P, 1994)

² Kennedy, Michael, *Sunday Telegraph* 7 February 1993, reviewing *Capriol for Mother*, the biography by Warlock's son, Nigel Heseltine (Thames, 1992)

³ Kennedy, Michael in *Sunday Telegraph*, 15 November 1992.

Heseltine was tied to his mother less by apron than by purse strings throughout his life, while Elgar had to come to terms with the real world in which his wife, Alice, the daughter of a Major-General, took over to some extent as a mother figure, her death being a great shock to him in every way. She had helped Elgar to the absolute top of the ladder of respectability, while Philip on the other hand wished always to escape from upper class respectable society. When Heseltine's mother re-married it was also to a member of a family with strong military associations. Walter became not only a JP, to the amusement of his brother, Lumley, later a Brigadier-General⁴, but visiting magistrate to the lunatic asylum. This was in fact only twenty years after Elgar had been appointed band instructor from 1877 at the asylum at Powick in an adjoining county. "When I was at the Lunatic Asylum", he used to joke to deflate unwelcome visitors⁵. Similarly Philip, who was born in the Savoy Hotel, used to say he was born on the Embankment.

Philip Heseltine was something of a hero-worshipper. Apart from Delius and Bartók, whose contrasted influences can be observed especially in his masterpiece *The Curlew*, completed in Wales in 1922, there were other lesser figures who aroused his admiration. One of these was the Dutch-born Bernard van Dieren (1887-1936), whose musical influence was certainly not negligible, but whose personal influence like that of D H Lawrence⁶, was wastefully draining. Philip's attempt, for example, to promote the "obscene" novel, *The Rainbow*, by Lawrence, was a failure, the author moreover being ungrateful and later objectionable. In the case of van Dieren, Philip spent much time and energy as well as his mother's money on trying to get his friend's compositions published. This was at the expense of his own compositions, sometimes prejudicing *their* publication.

"The family trait", wrote Denis aplvor⁷, "was bankruptcy, which affected both his father and his mother". It also affected the son, Bernard J van Dieren (Junior), whose activities involved not only borrowing money from Sir Adrian Boult and Sir Arthur Bliss, like his father had done before, but also the running of the Elgar Birthplace Trust. This had been after a spell of fund-raising with John Cameron White, husband of Lady Eirene, daughter of Dr Thomas Jones, CH. In 1969, a year after the death of White, he accompanied Elgar's daughter, Mrs Carice Elgar-Blake, and her companion, Sybil Russell (later Wohlfeld) on a coast-to-coast lecture tour of the USA. Instead of raising money for the Trust, this actually cost a great deal⁸; so much so, in fact, that Scotland Yard's Fraud Squad were called in. It was only the

⁴ Letter from Lumley Owen Williams Jones (then a company commander in South Africa) February 1902, to his mother Catherine.

⁵ Young, Percy Elgar, *O M* (Collins, 1955) p.46

⁶ Copley, I A : *A Turbulent Friendship - a study of the relationship between D H Lawrence & Philip Heseltine* (Thames, 1983). Copley was also the author of *The Music of Peter Warlock* (Dobson, 1979)

⁷ aplvor, Denis : "Bernard van Dieren" in *The Music Review*, vol 47, no 4, 1986/7. See also Tomlinson, Fred : *Warlock and van Dieren* (Thames, 1978) p.36

⁸ Information from Raymond Monk, a senior trustee.

death of Carice in 1970 that saved him from prosecution, the Trustees being made to make up the deficit. An audit had been called for by Sir Gerald Nabarro, MP for South Worcestershire.

For a while Bernard J van Dieren (junior) also ran the affairs of the Peter Warlock Society. After putting on a concert at the Victoria & Albert Museum in 1968, the deficit was made up only by the entire committee all becoming life members!

Philip Heseltine became quite an expert in Celtic languages, especially Irish and Welsh, the latter being partly a form of protest against the anglicised gentry of mid-Wales. Scottish folk influence can be found in *An Old Song* for small orchestra; in the *Folk Song Preludes* for piano of 1917; and in the *Lillygay* songs of 1922. He also honours Breton by dedicating his most popular composition, *Capriol*, (1926) to Paul Ladmirault. It is Cornish, however, which he thought of especially as his own; and he wrote the two *Cornish Christmas Carols* (only one being published in his lifetime)⁹.

Elgar, of course, enjoyed his many visits to Wales, including possibly a romantic dip in the sea with Rosa Burley at Llangrannog in 1901¹⁰. We wonder why he didn't then complete a *Welsh Overture*, but should be glad that the masterpiece, the *Introduction & Allegro* gradually took shape instead. Elgar's interest in the language, though not as strong as Heseltine's, appeared in many letters and there was much bantering with his great friend, Arthur Troyte Griffith, whose father was from Carmarthen, when they recalled the exploits of their supposed ancestors : a renegade Saxon, Aelfgar, and Gruffydd ab Llywelyn, who together sacked the city of Hereford¹¹.

After 1916 Philip Heseltine adopted the name of "Warlock". Treated as something of a joke, particularly when a publisher accepted some songs under the new name which had been rejected under the old, it nevertheless suggests satanic overtones and the influence of Aleister Crowley. The more benign Rosicrucian influence of Algernon Blackwood affected Elgar as that of Victor Neuburg¹², writer of the *Lillygay* verses, did Heseltine. It was probably Neuburg's enthusiasm for the Elizabethan period which had another beneficial effect on Heseltine's musical style, his transcriptions significantly, being almost entirely of secular music. Both Elgar and he came under the spell of the mystic poet, W B Yeats, the fruitful results being *Grania & Diarmid* and *The Curlew*.

⁹ For the Welsh origin of the song *The Jolly Shepherd*, 1927, see Parrott, Ian : "The Jolly Shepherd" in *Peter Warlock : A Centenary Celebration* ed. David Cox (Thames, 1994)

¹⁰ Parrott, Ian : "Elgar's Harmonic Language" in *Elgar Studies* ed. Raymond Monk (Scholar, 1990)

¹¹ Young, Percy, ed : *Letters of Edward Elgar* (Geoffrey Bles, 1956)

¹² See Fuller, Jean Overton : *The Magical Dilemma of Victor Neuburg* (W H Allen, 1965. rev. Mandrake, Oxford, 1990).

Elgar's interest in pseudonyms was of an inoffensive nature, though these were equally a form of escape from the real world. For the use of the word "Reynart", for example, the reader is referred to Wulstan Atkins's substantial volume on Elgar and the author's father¹³. Both composers enjoyed referring to their friends - and others - by "enigmatic" substitutes or initials, Heseltine's boon companion Cecil Gray becoming "Timpany" because of the familiar orchestral direction : "Timpani in C and G". But Heseltine certainly took the lead in the creation of witty, scurrilous and "unprintable" limericks.

Despite his strong and often prejudiced opinions of many composers, which brought him not a few enemies, Philip Heseltine seems to have developed a genuine admiration for Elgar. Writing to his mother from Eton (where he was something of a misfit) on 24 May 1911, he considered the *Symphony no 2* to be "an exceptionally fine work". This was the day of its first London performance. Philip read Ernest Newman's review and continued that it was a "product of Elgar's heart and soul"¹⁴.

It is a pleasure, in conclusion, to record that one of Philip's last vigorous gestures was to rally positive support for Elgar. Edward J Dent had produced a derogatory article on Elgar in Adler's *Handbuch der Musikgeschichte*, which was noticed in Britain in 1930, though it had been in print in Germany from 1924¹⁵. Philip's letter to his friend, Sir Augustus John, of 21 November 1930¹⁶ asks for his signature, reminding him that "many friends of Elgar have signed and we hope to get several more on the list"¹⁷. Bernard Shaw went so far as to add, "Professor Dent should not have...belittled his country by belittling the only great English composer who is not dwarfed by the German giants".

Sadly, when the letter appeared in *The Musical Times* of April 1931, Philip was dead. He had died under mysterious circumstances in his basement flat in Tite Street, Chelsea, on 17 December 1930.

¹³ Atkins, E Wulstan : *The Elgar - Atkins Friendship* (David & Charles, 1984)

¹⁴ British Library Add. MS 57960

¹⁵ See Trowell, Brian, in *Edward Elgar : Music & Literature* ed. Raymond Monk (Scolar, 1993)

¹⁶ National Library of Wales NLW 22781 D Folio 110

¹⁷ The full text of the Open Letter is in Foreman, Lewis *From Parry to Britten : British Music in Letters, 1900-1945* (Batsford, 1987) p. 147

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of the Elgar Society will take place in the Main Hall, Lyttelton Rooms, Malvern Priory, Church Street, Malvern on Saturday 4 June 1994 at 2.30 pm. It will be followed by tea, and at 5.30 pm an Organ Recital will be given by Simon Holt in Malvern Priory. Geoffrey Hodgkins will introduce the works to be played and they will include Elgar's Organ Sonata in G. Members are reminded that there are vacancies for two members of the General Committee. Nominations are solicited and should be sent to the Hon. Secretary as soon as possible. Each nomination must be seconded, and it is essential to obtain the permission of the nominee.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION

Article 4. Officers.

"The Officers of the Society shall consist of a President, Vice-Presidents, Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Membership Secretary, Editor of the 'Elgar Journal' and Publicity Officer".

Article 5. General Committee.

"a). This shall consist of the following :

- 1) The Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Membership Secretary, Editor of the 'Elgar Journal' and Publicity Officer".

The activities of the Society are such that some kind of co-ordination is essential and Ian Lace has undertaken this work for over a year. Therefore, to regularise the position the Committee has proposed that the Constitution be altered to recognise formally Mr Lace's activity.

There will be a brand new Constitution ready for the 1995 Annual General Meeting.

ELGAR'S BROADWOOD PIANO

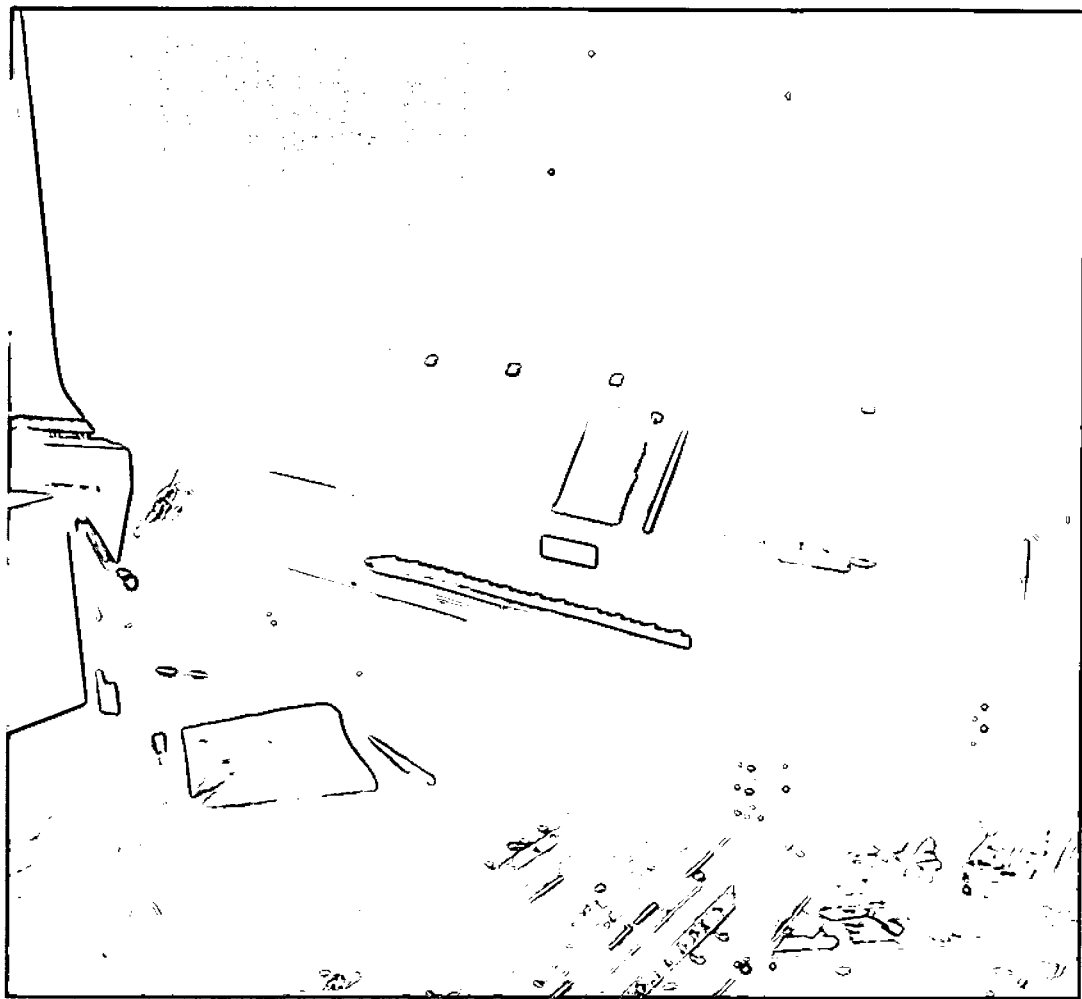
The Elgar Society was well represented at the launch on 25 January of the exhibition at the British Museum of the recently-restored Broadwood square piano of 1844 which Elgar had at Birchwood. The piano was kept in a glass case and the exhibition (which closed on 4 April) also contained scores and sketchbooks showing extracts of the works which were composed during his time there.

The Elgars first took Birchwood as a summer retreat in the spring of 1898. The piano arrived on 25 April and *Caractacus* was the first work to be associated with the cottage. As every Elgarian knows, Birchwood and the surrounding woodlands were a major source of inspiration to the composer. Here he could get away completely from the things which caused his "black moods" of depression; and his many letters from here are generally vibrant and full of the joys of life. Two famous phrases from them will stand as examples: on 21 August 1898 he wrote to Jaeger: "I made old *Caractacus* stop as if broken down...& choke & say 'woodlands' again because I'm so madly devoted to my woods". And on 11 July 1900, orchestrating *The Dream of Gerontius*, "This is what I hear all day - the trees are singing my music - or have I sung theirs? I suppose I have. It's too lovely here".

By contrast, the sounds made by the piano could not have been the most musical, but it served its purpose; and on the soundboard Elgar recorded the works he had composed on it [see accompanying photograph]. First, of course, is *Caractacus*, then the following year *Sea Pictures*, and most notable of all *The Dream of Gerontius*. The other written comments remind us that the times at Birchwood were Elgar family holidays as Carice was away at boarding school during the year. In these comments Elgar comes across strongly as the fun-loving father: after 'Gerontius 1900' comes 'Mr Rabbit!' We know that Carice had a pet rabbit later in Hereford - the famous Peter, or Pietro d'Alba - but we do not know whether this refers to an earlier pet or to one of the "150 rabbits under the window" (letter to Jaeger, 5 July 1900).

Gerontius is the last work found on the soundboard. The following summer, 1901, there was no major work, although Elgar may have completed the orchestration of the first two *Pomp & Circumstance* marches there. It was a low point for him, as Arnold Bax discovered when he paid a visit to Birchwood in August. However, that month is inscribed on the soundboard, following the inscription "Carice & Edward Elgar pianoforte repairs &c". The nature of the repair is not clear, and the last comment "Edward Elgar Birchwood Lodge" has almost an air of finality about it. Certainly no more works were written there, as they did not go to Birchwood during the next two summers, partly due to other commitments as Elgar's fame grew. When the occupation of Birchwood formally ended in October 1903, the piano went to Elgar's sister, Pollie Grafton, at Stoke Prior, and eventually was reacquired by Broadwood's. They presented it to the Royal Academy of Music in 1989, and it was transferred to the Cobbe Foundation two years later. It is gratifying to know that this unique instrument is in safe hands.

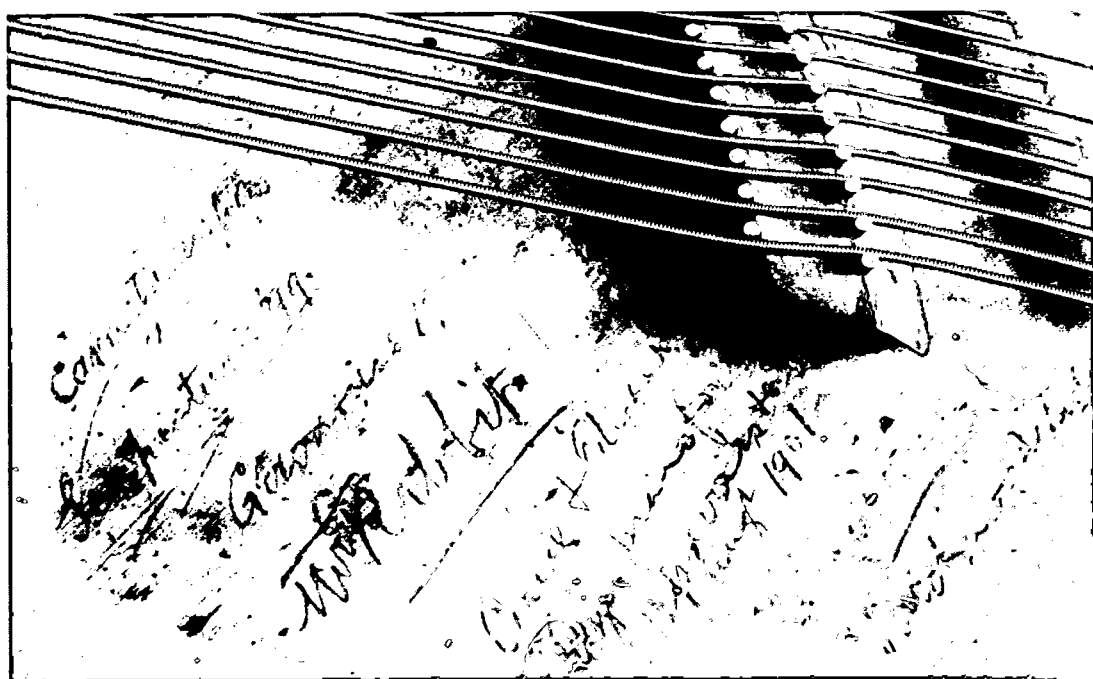
The Editor



(above) Elgar's Broadwood piano in its permanent home, Hatchlands Park, East Clandon in Surrey, where the Cobbe Collection of Historic Keyboard Instruments is housed.

(above right) Elgar's inscriptions on the soundboard of the piano (see notes in the text on previous page).

(below right) The keyboard and name label of Elgar's piano.



ELGAR'S "TOP TEN" ON RADIO 3 DURING 1993

	Number of performances
"ENIGMA" VARIATIONS [Opus 36]	10
OVERTURE "IN THE SOUTH" [Opus 50]	7
INTRODUCTION & ALLEGRO FOR STRINGS [Opus 47]	7
SYMPHONY No 2 IN E FLAT [Opus 63]	6
'CELLO CONCERTO IN E MINOR [Opus 85]	6
SERENADE FOR STRINGS IN E MINOR [Opus 20]	5
OVERTURE "COCKAIGNE" [Opus 40]	4
SYMPHONY No 1 IN A FLAT	4
VIOLIN CONCERTO IN B MINOR [Opus 61]	4
SYMPHONIC STUDY "FALSTAFF"	3

The "rarities" of the year once again displayed Elgar's wide range of interests. I have selected twelve of these covering some 37 years of his life. All these pieces received just one performance each during the year : *SIX PROMENADES* for wind quintet (1878); *O SALUTARIS HOSTIA* (1880); *AVE MARIA* (Opus 2, no 2)(1887); *THREE CHARACTERISTIC PIECES* for small orchestra (Opus 10)(1888); *"SPANISH SERENADE"* part-song with orchestra (Opus 23)(1891); *THREE BAVARIAN DANCES* for orchestra [from Opus 27](1895); *SERENADE LYRIQUE* for small orchestra (1899); *DREAM CHILDREN* for small orchestra (Opus 43)(1902); *POMP & CIRCUMSTANCE MARCH No 3 in C minor* [Op.39](1904); *Suite : "THE CROWN OF INDIA"* [Opus 66](1912); Anthem, *"GIVE UNTO THE LORD"* [Opus 74](1914); Symphonic Prelude *"POLONIA"* [Opus 76](1915).

Two of Elgar's finest arrangements of other composers' music are the Overture in D Minor by Handel; and the Fantasia & Fugue in C minor by Bach, both transcribed in the early 1920s. It was splendid to hear the full orchestration in one performance of the Handel and three of the Bach. Two arrangements of Elgar's music gave great pleasure to me; the *Organ Sonata in G* of 1895, superbly re-scored for orchestra in a truly Elgarian manner by Gordon Jacob, was a highlight. Also a transcription by Lemare of the *Pomp & Circumstance no 1* was presented in a regal and majestic style.

The three chamber works of 1918 and 1919 were also remembered, the *Piano Quintet* receiving two heartfelt performances, the others one each. One of Elgar's most beautiful part-songs is for women's voices, *The Snow*, and was given twice. Finally, in the review of 1993 we must not forget Elgar's large-scale choral works. The oratorio *The Light of Life* was a broadcast of a magnificent concert performance from the Barbican Hall, conducted by Richard Hickox. Another live performance was of *The Kingdom* from the Royal Festival Hall. *The Dream of Gerontius* and *The Music Makers* each received two performances, completing a wonderful quartet of masterpieces.

The grand total of Elgar compositions was 113...just one item less than in 1992. I am happy to record that since 1986 when I began this annual report Elgar has in every one of the eight years achieved his century of performances.

T W Rowbotham

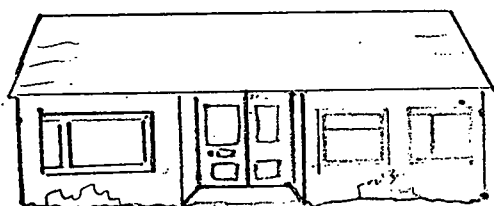
BIRTHPLACE NEWS

As these notes are being prepared we are emerging from the winter season and preparing for the steady seasonal increase in the number of visitors. Bookings have been accumulating for group visits over the season, and leaflets are being widely distributed in the local catchment area. The garden is waking up after a winter the wetness of which was not appreciated. Primroses are in bloom along the base of the hedgerows, and these will soon be succeeded by cowslips and windflowers in abundance. On fair mornings the larks have been rising in full song from the fields behind the cottage, and I hope against hope that the beauty of this will not be lost to future visitors if the golf course project, now the subject of a ministerial enquiry, should ultimately be accorded planning approval by the Malvern Hills District Council.

Sales by the Birthplace have been well maintained over this quiet period thanks to a higher volume of vocal scores being ordered by choirs and choral societies and also to the success of the Elgar Society launch of the CD transfer of the 1945 recording of *The Dream of Gerontius* conducted by Sargent with Heddle Nash in the title role.

I am very happy to report that Lawnside School, in anticipation of its merger with St James's and The Abbey, has offered to present us with five original letters written to Winifred Barrows by Elgar in 1930 referring to the play for which she had Elgar's permission to use the *Wand of Youth* music.

On the occasion of a concert in the Huntingdon Hall to commemorate the 60th anniversary of Elgar's death, we were very pleased to welcome the Chairman of the British Library Board, Sir Anthony Kenny, and the Music Librarian, Hugh Cobbe. This occasion afforded the opportunity to exchange facsimiles of the autograph full score of the *First Symphony*, the original of which is owned by the British Library, for that of the *Second Symphony* which belongs to us.



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"GERONTIUS" LAUNCH

Imperial College 31 January 1994

A full house was present at this special event organised by the London Branch to officially launch the transfer on to CD of the first complete recording of *The Dream of Gerontius*, issued by the Society on the Testament label (see review on p.232). The evening was given a unique quality by the presence of John Heddle Nash, whose father sang the role of Gerontius; Malcolm Walker (himself a member of the Society) whose father sang the Angel of the Agony; and Peter Sargent, son of Sir Malcolm. Also present was Andrew Walter, the engineer responsible for the transfers; and the proceedings were expertly chaired as ever by Andrew Neill. In his introductory remarks he paid tribute to the eminent critic Alan Blyth whose enthusiasm for this recording was a major factor in its appearance in the new format. He also mentioned that EMI had tested Kathleen Ferrier for the part of the Angel in August 1944 but decided that she was insufficiently known by the record-buying public.

Andrew Walter described the process of transfer under three headings; 'de-scratch', 'de-crackle', and 'de-hiss'. He said that the use of computers greatly facilitated the removal of such extraneous noises. "You just identify the problem and tell the computer to rectify it!" he said. However, one problem which could take a long time was the need to re-centre the metal masters absolutely accurately.

John Heddle Nash spoke of his father's demeanour before an audience. "He stood perfectly still, and all the acting was done with the voice". Heddle's wonderful diction and vocal expression he put down to the fact that in the mid-1920s he and Dennis Noble had worked with the new generation of English actors - Olivier, Gielgud, Richardson, etc.

Malcolm Walker said how much his father's singing had been appreciated in pre-war Germany; he had sung at the Vienna State Opera in 1938 and was due to sing at Bayreuth in 1940. His career had been cruelly cut short by a stroke in 1955. Mr Walker also spoke about Gladys Ripley. She was largely self-taught and made an impression at an early age, singing in *Elijah* under Albert Coates at the age of seventeen. He compared her career with that of Kathleen Ferrier; both began as pianists who then turned to singing, and both sadly died young from cancer.

Peter Sargent spoke of the special place that *Gerontius* occupied in his father's life. A deeply religious man, he identified five "spiritual peaks" in music - Bach's *Mass in B minor* and *St Matthew Passion*, Handel's *Messiah*, Beethoven's *Choral Symphony*, and *The Dream of Gerontius*. This last work seemed to be associated with crises and other important times in his life. It was the last work to be performed in the old Queen's Hall before it was bombed in 1941; and on another occasion he was given the news of his daughter Pamela's death (she had contracted polio at the age of fourteen) just before a performance. She was not expected to live long, and he had always insisted that news of her death should not be kept from him. After the concert he discovered that a dreadful mistake had been made, and in fact she had not died. Mr Sargent ended by describing one of his last visits to his dying father. Sir Malcolm talked quite openly about death and showed no fear. "You're lucky to have faith", he said. "I'm more than lucky", his father replied, smiling and laying his hands on a pile of scores lying by his bed; "no more of these". He paused, and then said, "But there is one I would like to take with me"; and he laid his hand on the

score of *The Dream of Gerontius*.

The formal part of the evening came to a close with the playing of some short extracts from the new record; and then we adjourned for refreshments and socialising. Our grateful thanks are due to David Bury and the London Committee for organising the evening, and to Testament Records for covering all the costs.

The Editor



Speakers at the launch of *"The Dream of Gerontius"* on 31 January (from left to right) : Andrew Neill, John Heddle Nash, Peter Sargent, Andrew Walter, and Malcolm Walker.



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RANDOM RAMBLINGS...

Details of the Annual General Meeting on 4 June are found elsewhere. As usual there will be a visit to Birchwood on the following morning at 10.30 for coffee (courtesy of the owners), and at 4.00 pm Choral Evensong in Worcester Cathedral, followed by the wreath-laying ceremony at the Elgar Memorial. Then to the Birthplace for birthday cake and sherry. I would encourage as many members as possible to attend; a visit to Malvern in late spring is very invigorating!

* * * * *

Am I alone in my annoyance with the British Gas commercial on "Classic FM"? I hear the wonderfully exhilarating opening bars of Elgar's *Serenade for Strings*, only for my anticipation to be cruelly dashed a few seconds later when the voice enters and the music gradually fades.

It seems that the playing of music to accompany other activities is on the increase. My predecessor Ronald Taylor recently rang the Royal Mail Parcelforce to be told by the ubiquitous disembodied voice that he was "being held in a queue", etc : after which the opening of the *First Symphony* was played! And when he finally got through, the girl was nonplussed when he thanked her for being kept waiting!

A few weeks ago we entertained some Finnish friends. I played a CD of some popular Elgar, and they listened politely. At the Trio of *Pomp & Circumstance no 1* the husband said, "I know this tune! They play it at the 'Miss Finland' competition!"

* * * * *

It is well known that during their holiday in Italy in 1903-4 the Elgars met the Dean of Westminster, J Armitage Robinson, in whom Elgar found a kindred spirit in his work on *The Apostles*. It is not so well known that they also met another eminent Anglican. On a postcard from Bordighera on 6 December Alice wrote to the Gorton family : "The Archbp. of York is here & E. has lent him yr. little book" - the Canon's *Interpretation of the Libretto of 'The Apostles'* (there is a photograph of this card in Percy Young's *Letters of Edward Elgar*). The Archbishop was William Dalrymple Maclagan (1826-1910) who apparently had taken holidays in Italy since the 1870s for reasons of his health. He certainly had an interest in music, as he wrote both words and tunes for hymns. Some of them are still sung today, most notably the tunes *Newington* to "Thine for ever, God of love" and *Bread of Heaven* to the Communion hymn of that name.

* * * * *

This year sees the 25th anniversary season of the Plymouth Music Series of Minnesota. During that time, under its founder and artistic director, Philip Brunelle, it has pioneered a great deal of British music in the Midwest, and eminent lecturers, composers and performers from this country have appeared there. The final concert in the current series on 6 May is entitled "There will always be an England" and features John Gardner's *Mass in D*, Finzi's *Magnificat* for chorus and orchestra; and the Midwest première of *The Spirit of England*, with Lynda Russell as soloist. We

send our congratulations and best wishes to this enterprising organisation and everyone connected with it.

* * * * *

We report with sadness the death in February of the conductor Norman del Mar aged 74. A versatile conductor with wide interests (to say nothing of his authorship of an acclaimed book on Richard Strauss) del Mar championed many contemporary British composers. His recorded legacy for Elgarians is a fine *Enigma* and *Pomp & Circumstance Marches* from 1975 (underrated by many as DG saw fit to issue it on a budget-price label); and the following year a record of salon music for Chandos, including the *Oboe Soliloquy* played by its dedicatee, Leon Goossens.

* * * * *

The *Dirge for Strings* by Elgar was given its first public performance at a Philharmonic Society concert at the Queen's Hall on 8 February 1912, in memory of the Duke of Fife. No : it is *not* a lost Elgar work, but another name for the *Elegy*. As the *Musical Times* explained : "The *Dirge* was written for the Musicians's Company and had been performed by a string quartet at two of that Company's functions. The present occasion was therefore the first public performance". The rest of the concert included Beethoven's overture *Coriolan* and "*Emperor*" *Concerto* (the soloist was Cortot, who also played some Chopin), the *Variations*, and Percy Pitt's *Symphony in G minor*.

The title "*Dirge*" was the suggestion of Alfred Littleton of Novello (see Elgar's letter to him of 25 June 1909 in Jerrold Moore's *Elgar and his Publishers*, p.724); Elgar assented to this, saying he preferred the word to "*Elegy*", but obviously his original choice won the day, for whatever reason. It was played at another Philharmonic concert, this time in memory of the King of Denmark, on 23 May 1912, conducted by Nikisch.

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Members may be interested to know that there is now a cross stitch kit of the Birthplace. It is available in the "Companions" series made by Heritage Stitchcraft.

* * * * *

Our apologies that the consumer guide to exploring Elgar country in the last issue omitted to mention HF Holidays, who run special interest holidays throughout the country. There are two 'Elgar' holidays; a week based on Malvern in June, and also a four-night "Elgar in the Dales" based on Malham in Yorkshire (this took place in April, but will be repeated next year). The holidays are led by Robin Hales, a practising musician and active member of the West Midlands branch. Brochures can be obtained from HF Holidays Ltd, Imperial House, Edgware Road, London NW9 5AL (tel: 081-905 9388).

* * * * *

One has to hand it to Warner Classics. After the success of their 'Sensual Classics' CD, you can now buy 'Classic Stressbusters' to help you cope with the pressures of the modern world. Once again, they have used all their "resources...in a serious attempt to analyse the therapeutic value of classical music", and "as is our normal practice, researched the concept with discussion groups", etc.etc.etc. I can reveal that the *Larghetto* from Elgar's *Serenade for Strings* is one of the eleven tracks (4509 94358-2). I would have thought that a seven-year-old of average intelligence would be able to see through this rather flimsy attempt to boost record sales, but I suppose it proves that you can fool some people all the time. And coming soon, their latest release - 'Gardening Classics' - "music to dig by" (and, no, I am not writing this on 1 April!). They end their selection unashamedly with Copland's *Hoe Down* (ouch!), and mercifully there is no Elgar, though they could have chosen (from Barry Collett's new disc) *The Language of Flowers*; or even a song for potato growers, *The Little Eyes that never knew light*.

* * * * *

This year's Three Choirs Festival is at Hereford, and celebrates the centenaries of Warlock and Moeran. Elgar's *Te Deum & Benedictus* will be sung at the Opening Service on 21 August, and the Society Tea will follow this in the Large Jury Room in the Shirehall. (Tea includes mixed sandwiches, scones and cakes, and will cost £3). *The Dream of Gerontius* will bring the Festival to a close on Friday 26th, when the soloists are Catherine Wyn-Rogers, Adrian Thompson, and Brian Rayner Cook. On Wednesday 24th at 11.00 am the Kingsdown Duo will include the *Violin Sonata* in their recital, while at the evening concert the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra conducted by Richard Hickox will perform *Froissart* (with Finzi's *Cello Concerto* and Walton's *First Symphony*). After the concert in the Green Dragon film historian John Huntley will show archive film of Elgar conducting at Abbey Road in 1931, together with footage of Elgar, Shaw and Vaughan Williams at the Three Choirs 1929-1931. Incidentally, a similar programme (plus the added bonus of the 1962 Ken Russell film) will be given by Andrew Youdell at the Malvern Cinema as part of the Malvern Festival on Sunday 29 May at 2.30. Details of the Three Choirs can be obtained from the Festival Office, 11 Castle Street, Hereford HR1 2NL (tel: 0432 274455); the Malvern Festival from the Box Office, Festival Theatre, Grange Road, Malvern WR14 3HB (tel: 0684 892277).

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The Oxford Bach Choir's performance of *The Dream of Gerontius* at the end of May (see Dates for your Diary) will be preceded by an open rehearsal on Monday 9 May when the speaker will be the distinguished contralto Marjorie Thomas, who sang on Sir Malcolm Sargent's second recording of the work in 1955. Drinks and sandwiches are provided at 6.00 pm, followed by the talk at 6.30. The rehearsal follows at 7.30 preceded by a few words from the conductor of the Oxford Bach Choir and former Society Chairman, Christopher Robinson.

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I attended Dr Percy Young's Day School "Elgar and Opera" at Bristol on 5 March. We were treated to a fascinating whistle-stop tour through musical history. Dr Young took us back to the beginnings of opera and Monteverdi, who was of course a contemporary of Johnson. The English equivalent - the masque - was then dealt with, culminating in the great Purcell, and his *King Arthur*. The speaker then traced the theme of Arthur through English culture, up to Elgar's own incidental music of 1923, some of which he was intending to incorporate into *The Spanish Lady*. The work could then be seen to belong to a tradition of English music and drama. Dr Young also drew some fascinating parallels between Johnson's time and Elgar's time; commercial prosperity linked to overseas trade (Fitzdottrel, Merchant Adventurers, etc), and social uncertainty created by the death of a long-lived monarch (Elizabeth I and Victoria).

After lunch Dr Young played generous extracts of the work, both on the piano and from tapes of broadcasts and concerts, and one's appetite was certainly whetted for the "first performance" at Cambridge in November. I think it is fair to say that there will be a good deal of Dr Young in it, as the work as Elgar left it was far from complete; nevertheless one is grateful to him for his painstaking and sensitive work on the sketches to prepare them for performance. Ronald Bleach is to be thanked for his enterprise in setting up the Day School; it was a great pity that the attendance was shamefully small - less than the average for a South-West branch meeting. Where was everyone?

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Some time ago we reported on a performance of *Pomp & Circumstance no 1* given in Dresden. Last month the Dresden Philharmonic under its Principal Conductor Jörg-Peter Weigle gave two performances of the *Introduction & Allegro for strings*. [The other works were Shostakovitch's *Symphony no 15*, and Bruch's *Violin Concerto no 1* played by Igor Oistrakh]. I have received a very friendly letter from Prof Dieter Härtwig giving me details of these concerts, and also pointing out that the orchestra performed the *Enigma Variations* in 1953 under Heinz Bongartz and in 1980 under Johannes Winkler. The former was of particular interest, coming as it did in the darkest days of the Cold War.

The increasing interest in Elgar in Germany is reflected in the publication of two recent articles in German periodicals. First, in 'Musik & Bildung' an analysis of the *Cello Concerto* by Rainer Fanselau (author of a book - in German - on Elgar's organ music which appeared some years ago). He places the concerto at the very end of the Romantic era, with its sense of nostalgia which he links with the Sussex countryside around Brinkwells. The second, in the journal 'Orchester', deals with *The Dream of Gerontius*; the author, Andreas Friesenhagen, "undertakes for the first time in the German language an attempt at a consideration of the formal basic structures of the work". Both articles have been translated by London Branch member Michael Burrows and are available from him at 28 Bowerdean Street, Fulham London SW6 3TW.

* * * * *

We learned too late of a production which took place on 24 April at the Crescent Theatre, Birmingham, of *Music of the Trees*; "an anthology of words and recorded music commemorating the 60th anniversary of Sir Edward Elgar's death". Let us hope that the company can be persuaded to repeat it in the West Midlands area at some stage.

A weekend course entitled "Edward Elgar and the English Musical Renaissance" is being given by Ian B Gleaves at the Hill Residential College, Pen-y-Pound, Abergavenny, Gwent NP7 7RP on 17-19 June. The works to be studied in detail are *The Dream of Gerontius* and the *Violin Concerto*. The College is fully booked, but the Course is still open to non-residents at a cost of £67 to include lunch and supper. Further details from the College (tel: 0873 855221).

The University of Southampton is marking the 60th anniversary of the deaths of Elgar, Delius and Holst with a series of events. First, on 3 May a concert of music for violin and piano by the three composers (plus Walton). Details from Miriam Phillips (0703 592223). Then a series of eight Wednesday evening lectures on "Elgar, Delius and Holst" beginning on 4 May. The tutors are Charlotte Purkis, Michael Jameson and Fiona Richards, and the cost is £35. Details from the Adult Continuing Education Department (0703 593469). On Saturday 7 May a one-day course on "Ethel Smyth: A Celebration of her Music", given by Charlotte Purkis, Sophie Fuller and Liz Garnett, and costing £14. Finally, a "Summer Academy", a residential course at King Alfred's College, Winchester from 13-20 August, entitled "British Music in Elgar's Time". A variety of activities are planned, including a coach trip to Sussex to places connected with Ireland and Bax. The cost is £315, or £190 for non-residents. Details from 0703 593469.

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As reported in Arthur Reynolds' review in the last issue, David Pownall's play "Elgar's Rondo" is transferring to The Pit at the Barbican Theatre in London. Previews have already started, and the première is on 11 May. It will run in repertory for 22 performances, ending on 2 July. Booking information from the Barbican Box Office, Barbican Centre, Silk Street, London EC2Y 8DS (tel: 071-638 8891).

* * * * *

The BBC Young Musician of the Year is Natalie Clein, a seventeen-year-old cellist. She came through to win the competition on 10 April after a "sensational and incandescent" performance of the Elgar *Cello Concerto*. *The Times* reported that "[Natalie] was instantaneously propelled into the pantheon of British musical prodigies. Underneath the lush romanticism of her lyrical performance of Elgar lay a grasp of technical detail of metronomic precision".

* * * * *

Music from the Elgar Loan Collection is available to members. It contains about 600 items, and a list will be sent on request, enclosing an A4-size SAE, to John Morrison, 23 Ferrymoor, Ham, Richmond, Surrey TW10 7SD.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

6 May	Introduction & Allegro <i>LPO/Simon</i>	Royal Festival Hall South Bank
7 May	Falstaff, Pomp & Circumstance 3 <i>Rutland Sin/Collett</i>	Festival Hall Corby 7.30 pm
7 May	Enigma Variations <i>Guildford PO/Willcocks</i>	Guildford Civic Hall (ring 0483 444666)
7 May	Music Makers <i>A.Renvoize/Hampton Ch Soc/ Pro Re O/ Sutton</i>	St Mary's College Chapel, Strawberry Hill Tickets: 081-979 5674
8 May	The Dream of Gerontius <i>P.Davis, N.Jenkins, J.Hawker/ Walsall Ch Soc/Morris</i>	Walsall Town Hall 8.00 pm Tickets: 0922 653183
12 May	Piano Quintet <i>Nash Ensemble</i>	Wigmore Hall London 7.30 pm
12 May	Serenade for Strings <i>Philh/Stefan Sanderling</i>	York University Central Hall 7.30 pm
13 May	Introduction & Allegro <i>LPO/Simon</i>	Royal Festival Hall South Bank
14 May	Sea Pictures <i>Della Jones/BBC Nat O Wales/Atherton</i>	St David's Hall Cardiff 7.30 pm
14 May	Music Makers, Sea Pictures, Bavarian Dances, Pomp & Circumstance 1 <i>Fiona Kimm/Fareham Phil/Hall</i>	Ferneham Hall Fareham (enquiries : 0329 232576)
21 May	Cello Concerto <i>L Gorokhov/RPO/Menuhin</i>	Royal Festival Hall South Bank
23 May	repeat of above concert	Fairfield Hall Croydon
26 May	The Dream of Gerontius <i>M.McDonald,J.Mitchinson,White/ Malvern Fest Ch & O/Boyle</i>	Elgar Hall Great Malvern 7.30 pm
28 May	The Dream of Gerontius <i>M.McDonald,M.Hill,M.Wildman/ Oxford Bach Choir/CBSO/Robinson</i>	Sheldonian Theatre Oxford 7.30 pm

29 May	Serenade for Strings <i>Guildhall String Ensemble</i>	Elgar Hall, Gt.Malvern 7.30 pm
4 June	Introduction & Allegro <i>BBC Nat O of Wales/Llewellyn</i>	Elgar Hall, Gt.Malvern 7.30 pm
8 June	Introduction & Allegro <i>East of England O/Peter Donohue</i>	Southwell Minster Tickets: 0602 419741
11 June	Pomp & Circumstance 1 <i>London Concert O/Arnold</i>	Royal Festival Hall South Bank
11 June	The Dream of Gerontius <i>C.Wyn-Rogers,A.Davies,D.Thomas/ Bach Choir/O da Camera/Willcocks</i>	Lincoln Cathedral 7.30 pm
22 June	The Dream of Gerontius <i>as for 11 June except Philh O</i>	Royal Festival Hall South Bank 7.30 pm
23 June	Serenade for Strings <i>City London Sinf/Watkinson</i>	Christ Church Spitalfields 7.30 pm
25 June	Serenade for Strings <i>Guildhall Junior String Ens</i>	Purcell Room South Bank
26 June	Spirit of England, Music Makers <i>Stour Music Ch & O</i>	Boughton Aluph Church, Kent 3.00 pm
29 June	Cello Concerto <i>Lynn Harrell/BBC Phil/Downes</i>	Royal Festival Hall South Bank
29 June	Piano Quintet <i>Barry Collett, Rutland Sinf Ens</i>	Oakham Parish Church 8.00 pm
2 July	Cello Concerto <i>Regina Ivanova/Rutland Sinf/Collett</i>	St Joseph's RC Church Gerrards Cross 7.30 pm
9 July	Serenade for Strings, Music Makers <i>C.Wyn-Rogers/Chesterfield Bach Choir/Hallam Sinf/Baker</i>	Chesterfield Parish Church Tickets: 0246 271177
14 July	Enigma Variations <i>RPO/O A Hughes</i>	St David's Hall Cardiff 7.30 pm
16 July	The Kingdom <i>M.Hegarty,J.Rigby,T.Randle, A.Michaels-Moore/Royal Ch Soc/ BBC Nat O of Wales/O A Hughes</i>	St David's Hall Cardiff 7.30 pm

18 July	The Dream of Gerontius <i>Elgar '94 Festival/Olive</i>	St Mary's Church Reigate 7.30 pm
21 July	The Apostles <i>Elgar '94 Festival/Olive</i>	St Mary's Church Reigate 7.30 pm
23 July	The Kingdom <i>Elgar '94 Festival/Olive</i>	St Mary's Church Reigate 7.30 pm
20-26 August	Three Choirs Festival at Hereford (see Random Ramblings for details)	Hereford Cathedral and other venues
3 September	The Dream of Gerontius <i>A.Murray,P.Langridge,A.Miles/ RSNO & Ch/Mackerras</i>	Usher Hall Edinburgh 8.00 pm
8 October	The Kingdom <i>P.McMahon,H.Boyd,G.Lovatt,J.Hearne/ Edinburgh Bach Choir/Scott Sing/Mantle</i>	St Michael's Church Linlithgow 7.30 pm
9 October	repeat of above concert	Greyfriars Church Edinburgh 7.45 pm

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RECORD REVIEWS

The Dream of Gerontius, Op.38. Cello Concerto, Op.85.

Gladys Ripley, Heddle Nash, Dennis Noble, Norman Walker, Paul Tortelier
Huddersfield Choral Society, Liverpool Philharmonic and BBC Symphony
Orchestras conducted by Sir Malcolm Sargent
Testament SBT 2025

The Elgar Society began 1994 on a high note with the launch in January of a Society label to reissue in CD format distinguished historical recordings of Elgar's works.

The first offering pays tribute to Sir Malcolm Sargent by combining in a two-disc set two of Sargent's finest recordings : his 1953 version of the *Cello Concerto* with Paul Tortelier, and his 1945 recording of *The Dream of Gerontius*. Visually, the new label makes a vivid impression with its reproduction in cameo form of a rarely-seen 1912 portrait of Elgar by Joseph Simpson. The image, painted in preparation for a "Spy" cartoon that was never realised, dominates both the box front and the booklet cover within. The booklet's text opens with Tully Potter's essay on the whys and wherefores of Tortelier's intimate connection with the Elgar concerto. Potter gives a wholly convincing explanation as to why this version has been hailed by critics as "the first and in many ways best of his recordings of it". Alan Blyth's reflections on Sargent's first recorded *Gerontius* admirably complement the reprint of Dr Jerrold Northrop Moore's splendid sleeve notes on the 1975 LP transfer.

The relative importance of this particular *Gerontius* recording is made clear in "Classic CD"'s issue for October last. After comparing all versions of the work then available on CDs issued by the major labels, the feature article's commentary on Sargent's 1954 recording ends with these words : "Taken over all, Sargent is far less fervent and engaging here than in his 1945 recording, which should be re-issued by EMI as a matter of urgency".

Dr Moore argues that the spiritual intensity of the 1945 *Gerontius* recording derives from the spirit of the times. With the Second World War's end in sight, Britain was awakening from a half-decade of survival exhaustion to contemplate the lacerating psychological legacy of the blitz. During the recording sessions, Sargent would shudder from the still-fresh memories of conducting *Gerontius* in the Queen's Hall on 10 May 1941, a few hours before the Luftwaffe's incendiary bombs obliterated the beloved building. His assembled choir and orchestra included many who had been with Sargent that fateful day. Imagine what the Angel's Farewell must have meant to them :

Farewell, but not for ever! brother dear,
Be brave and patient on thy bed of sorrow;
Swiftly shall pass thy night of trial here,
And I will come and wake thee on the morrow.

You can hear that awakening in every note of this performance.

Music lovers of the day were stunned. "This is a magnificent recording", exulted

"The Gramophone" in its June 1945 issue. "Nothing like it, in the field of choral recordings, has been heard before..." Accolades for the soloists were no less fervent. Heddl Nash, the last great Gerontius to know Elgar's praise, impressed the critics with his unfailingly lovely tone and excellent diction. Gladys Ripley's Guardian Angel was thought "touchingly tender" yet vocally assured. Sargent's decision to differentiate the roles of the Priest and the Angel of the Agony was an inspired innovation. Dennis Noble's baritone voice met the high-range demands of the Priest, while Norman Walker's bass reached the lower-lying requirements of the Angel of the Agony.

Twenty-two years later, Sargent struggled to say his own farewells in the certain knowledge that he was dying. One of his last acts was to send a copy of his Elgar *Cello Concerto* recording with Tortelier to the Prince of Wales. Prince Charles was then eighteen and in earlier days had consulted Sargent about his own efforts to play the cello. In Sargent's last hours full of incalculable pain, he managed to write a letter accompanying the gift from "your Royal Highness's most devoted servant and friend, Malcolm". The letter drew HRH's attention to the concerto's slow movement and ending as "beyond this world".

A fitting valediction for Sargent and a fitting commencement for the Elgar Society's new label.

Arthur Reynolds

"The Enigmas". Two versions of Enigma Variations, Op.36. Dream Children, Op.43. Coronation March, Op.65.

Hallé, Queen's Hall, and London Philharmonic Orchestras conducted by Sir Hamilton Harty, Sir Henry Wood and Sir Landon Ronald
Pearl GEMM CD 9087

Before considering the vintage performances transferred here it is necessary to ask the question "Do you want two versions of the Variations on one disc?" It is unlikely that anyone would want to play both versions through one after another. There is a further complication : the *Coronation March*, under Sir Landon Ronald's baton, was transferred recently in the third volume of EMI's "Elgar Edition". Will those who purchased the expensive "Edition" want the same recording over again? The individual must give his or her own answer, but putting variant versions together like this does not, I think, increase the chance of sales.

The Columbia Hamilton Harty version of the *Variations* dates from 1932, and was for a time the only rival to Elgar's own version on HMV. Henry Wood's version, on Decca, was recorded in 1935, reaching the catalogue early in 1936. Harty's performance remained available until June 1952, but Wood's version was deleted during the war when Decca "slaughtered" many of their pre-war recordings. *Dream Children* was the fill-up on the last side of the Harty 78s, and is a welcome return. Let me say at once that the transfers - from the best available copies of the originals which the compilers could find - are very well done. There is no electronic wizardry here. As with Pearl's well-known series of operatic re-issues the transfers are done

with the minimum of filtering or interference with the original sound. This means that here and there there are some slightly rough passages, some of which can be put down to the condition of the records used, or faults in the original recordings. However, one's ears soon adjust and it is interesting to compare Harty and Wood, both experienced Elgar interpreters, known to the composer, and aware of the performance which would find favour with their audiences. It must be said that both versions are very different from Elgar's own - wayward at times, and with some curious tempi to our present way of thinking. But Elgar has always thrived on differences of approach, and on the whole I found myself preferring Harty after more than one hearing. Neither version represents the best in recording of their time, and the harsh acoustic of Decca's City of London studio does not help Wood's orchestra. Harty's performance falls down only at the end, when "EDU" is given a curiously restrained performance. Wood, on the other hand, lets it rip! Unfortunately there is an audibly uneven side change which disturbs the concentration just as the music was sweeping us along. In "Troyte" the emphasis is the other way round. Wood's tympani sound muted, whereas Harty's drums sound suitably vigorous and noisy.

Dream Children is taken at a faster pace than I care for in the Hallé performance. No doubt the need to get it on to one side dictated much of the conductor's tempo, but this is indeed "dreamy" introspective music of a rare beauty, and rushing it does it no favours. The best recorded of the items on this disc is the *Coronation March*. Ronald was a distinguished Elgarian, and contemporary critics often said that he was the finest interpreter next to the composer himself. Alas, this march is the only Elgar music which he recorded, and we shall never know what he made of the larger works. The resonant acoustic of the Kingsway Hall gives us sound in a different class to the other recordings, but all are worth hearing by the student of Elgar's interpreters on record.

Ronald Taylor

"The Unknown Elgar". The Language of Flowers(1872). Rondel : The little eyes that never knew light(1897). Dry those fair, those crystal eyes(1899). Grete Malverne on a Rocke(1897). Four Litanies of the Blessed Virgin Mary(1882). A War Song, Op.5 (1884). Always and everywhere(1901). Speak my Heart(1902). The merry-go-round(1914). The Brook(1914). Windlass Song(1914). Fight for Right(1916). Follow the Colours(1914). A Child Asleep(1909). The King's Way(1909). In Moonlight(1904). The Birthright(1914). Big Steamers(1918). The Chariots of the Lord(1914). Sailing Westward(1924). The Immortal Legions(1924). It isnae me(1930). So many true Princesses who have gone (Queen Alexandra's Memorial Ode)(1932).

Teresa Cahill (soprano), Stephen Holloway (bass), Barry Collett and Ken Burley (piano), Tudor Choir directed by Barry Collett
Pearl SHE CD 9635

Barry Collett is a man after my own heart. My fascination with Elgar's music led me, quite early on, to want to hear every last note he ever wrote. This has been brought considerably nearer by this disc, although one has to say that the title is very apt. In many cases it is not difficult to see why the music is unknown, or why it should ever be brought before a wider public. There are still a few gaps in the discography -

for instance the remainder of the *Pageant of Empire* music, which is not as Barry believes "lost"; I have copies of the part-song *A Song of Union* and the other solo songs - but not many now.

Much of this music was only written out of financial necessity in response to requests from publishers and others, and the inspiration found in the great works is so obviously missing; as Elgar wrote to Schuster, "I must write & arrange what my soul loathes to permit me to write what you like & I like". Sometimes he used music from larger works: *In Moonlight* is the "Canto Popolare" from *In the South* set to some words from Shelley; and *The King's Way*, a poem about the London street of that name by Alice Elgar, uses the Trio from *Pomp & Circumstance no 4*. It is difficult to imagine a modern performance of this, and the other "tub-thumping" works on this disc, of which the least said the better; although I can imagine *A War Song* being found on the sort of Victorian anthology that Luxon and Tear used to do so well. Stephen Holloway, who sings this and *The Chariots of the Lord*, has a nice voice but is perhaps understandably a little tentative in his interpretation and the results are rather wan. Most of the other solo songs are on a higher plane, and it is good to have them. *A Child Asleep*, written in 1909 for Muriel Foster's son, is particularly well crafted; and the four songs written around the turn of the century all have their moments, as does the late *It isnae me*. We could have done with the words of this (and the other songs, incidentally) in the accompanying booklet, as Teresa Cahill sings it with a broad Scottish accent, and clarity of diction has never been her strongest asset. Her singing on this disc is variable, with a hint of strain and a seeming lack of confidence in places, and an occasional lapse in intonation. This last fault also afflicts the choir who lose a semitone in each of their unaccompanied pieces. To be fair to the singers the choral works are frankly humdrum; even in the best of them, the *Queen Alexandra Ode*, the inspiration is fitful, although Elgar was not helped by having to set such words as "Now here we set memorial of her stay That passers-by remember with a thrill".

It would probably be unwise to play this to someone who is not already a convinced Elgar-lover! But I would urge all committed Elgarians to buy it, for at the very least it has curiosity value, and the best of the music is very enjoyable; and of course for those fanatics like me who want every last note, it is obviously a must!

The Editor

Violin Concerto, Op.61. In the South [Alassio] Op.50.

Pinchas Zukerman, London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Daniel
Barenboim
Sony SMK 58927

Violin Concerto, Op.61. Salut d'Amour, Op.12.

Pinchas Zukerman, St Louis Symphony Orchestra conducted by Leonard
Slatkin
RCA 09026 61672-2

Is it really seventeen years ago that I was writing with enthusiasm in these pages about Zukerman's recording of the *Violin Concerto*? It was the final instalment of the series of Elgar records that Barenboim made for CBS and in many ways the

finest. Barenboim was discovering the music for himself and in the best of the performances there is a wonderful sense of enthusiasm and adventure that is very infectious but perhaps inevitably this freshness brings with it some miscalculations and over-emphases. If I respond slightly less warmly to this performance now, it may be because of the steady flow of excellent performances on disc in the intervening years. Zukerman's was only the seventh ever to appear, but since then there have been nine newcomers.

Barenboim prepares for the soloist's first entry with an opening tutti that is strong and purposeful, following the myriad of markings in the score and shaping the music with a flexibility of pulse and dynamic. Zukerman's first entry is pure magic, with an inward musing quality that fits the music like a glove. I had particularly remembered the frisson of the *pianissimo* playing of the second subject (fig.16) and I was not disappointed rehearing it. However, the orchestral tutti after fig.23 now sounds rather fat and sticky and I am not sure why Barenboim felt he should make such a massive *ritardando* in the final bars of the movement for none is marked. The composer himself eases up slightly and it sounds much more effective.

The slow movement again has some beautiful *pianissimo* playing with very sensitive orchestral support. The finale goes well; there is plenty of drive and bravura but also some lovely inward playing in the Cadenza. The recording has been well transferred to CD. As on the LP, the soloist is placed slightly too forward for me but by and large the balance is satisfactory. The generous coupling is Barenboim's quixotic account of *In the South*, not one of the best in his series but it certainly has its exciting moments.

As the film industry knows only too well, sequels and remakes rarely live up to the originals! To turn to Zukerman's new recording of the concerto with Slatkin is a disappointment. The recorded sound is certainly smoother but the brass seem somewhat distant and don't bite through the texture as they should in the big orchestral tutti. Slatkin's opening seems more natural than Barenboim's. There is flexibility but it has a flow and inevitability which flows from the score rather than as a sort of add-on interpretation. The same is true of the tutti after fig.23. One feels confident that Slatkin knows where he is going. That, though, is the end of any kind of enthusiasm for this performance. After these well-prepared introductions, the entry of the violin is unbelievably matter-of-fact with little sense of anticipation or inwardness. All the spontaneity has gone and the second subject (fig.16) is as cold as ice.

Nothing in the two following movements changes the judgment. In the Andante, Zukerman now seems to stand apart from the music, the coolness showing that he is never really inside it. I found increasingly as the movement went on that the music was not engaging my attention and that can't be right! If anything, the finale is even more disappointing! It is badly lacking in drive and sounds very tired, a gentle amble through the pages. To take just one example, the violin part marked *con forza* at fig.84 is unbelievably tame. Sadly the overall impression is that the music doesn't really matter much to him now. There is none of the evangelistic spirit that is so apparent in the admittedly flawed Barenboim disc. The coupling confirms the thumbs down : *Salut d'Amour* is not much of a fill-up on a full-price

disc which could have included over twenty minutes more music.

John Knowles

Symphony no 1 in A flat, Op.55. Imperial March, Op.32.

BBC Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by George Hurst
Naxos 8.550634

Symphony no 2 in E flat, Op.63. Sospiri, Op.70. Elegy, Op.58.

Hallé and New Philharmonia Orchestras conducted by Sir John Barbirolli
EMI CDM 764724-2

There are certainly some fine bargains to be found in the Naxos catalogue and anyone picking up this one on impulse for under a fiver will be well satisfied. The disc has the benefit of outstanding recorded sound with the BBC Philharmonic playing on their home ground, the Concert Hall of New Broadcasting House in Manchester. The balance is excellent with sweet but incisive string tone and insistent but never raucous sounds from the brass. The performance of the *Imperial March* is as fine as any, building up to a thrilling climax. The interpretation of the symphony is one that always has the finishing post and its final musical resolution clearly in view and so tends to press on, refusing to linger or to gaze on individual delights en route. In this, Hurst is therefore much closer to Solti (and the composer!) than Barbirolli or more recently Sinopoli, who incidentally takes a full two-and-a-half minutes longer over the first movement. Hurst can therefore at first seem a bit brutal but it is all for a purpose. After a slightly ordinary statement of the motto theme, the Allegro bursts into life with the orchestra in top form throughout. The Scherzo has poise and panache and then melts beautifully into the Adagio. Here Hurst does relax and draws wonderful sounds from his orchestra.

With the Finale, the long term view becomes clear. At first, I was disappointed that we were not allowed to stop and admire the scenery when the theme becomes augmented (fig.130), but then remembered Hugh Bean's story about Sir Adrian Boult leaning over to him and deflating his emotions just as he was about to make the most of this passage, with the words "Boiled beef and cabbage in the canteen for lunch, I believe". This isn't the climax of the movement, let alone the symphony and too much can be made of it. And so Hurst presses on to the end with great skill, making the final resolution stand out all the stronger. However many discs of the symphony you have, this is well worth investigating, especially at its modest price.

At the opposite end of the interpretative spectrum stands Barbirolli's recording of the *E flat Symphony* which has just been released on CD for the first time. I had not heard this for many years and was almost surprised how much I enjoyed it! In the first movement, he does stop and linger but this is only because he is so enthusiastic about the music and longs for us to see what he has seen. The slow movement is very powerful with string playing of great strength and emotion but it is the stately progress of the Finale which I have found most gripping, building to a mighty peak and then ebbing into a glowing heartfelt account of the final pages. *Sospiri* and *Elegy* make appropriate couplings.

John Knowles

Great European Organs, no 34. John Scott on the organ of St Paul's Cathedral.

Priory PRCD 401

English Organ Music, vol 1. Gareth Green on the organ of Chesterfield Parish Church

Naxos 8.550582

English Organ Music, vol 2. Donald Hunt on the Bradford Computing organ in Worcester Cathedral

Naxos 8.550773

Elgar's *Organ Sonata in G major* is one of the finest examples of the English organ sonata and is generally considered to be more orchestral than most others. It was first performed on the old 1874 Hill organ at Worcester. This organ had singularly few aids to registration, unlike those available to John Scott at St Paul's. I am full of admiration for his performance, which is full of life, spectacular when required, quiet and sensitive on other occasions, and always intensely musical. He understands very well the acoustic problem of St Paul's, with its ten second reverberation, and although the *accelerando* on the final page is very thrilling on full organ, might it not detract from the clarity of the last couple of lines?

Sir Edward Bairstow's *Organ Sonata in E♭* was written in 1937 and proved a landmark of the English organ sonata in the inter-war years. There is an Elgarian *nobilmente* flavour in the opening theme of the first movement yet, unusually, the work ends quietly. The final work on this CD is the *Organ Sonata in A minor* by Sir William Harris, composed in 1938 when he was organist of St George's Chapel, Windsor. Less well-known than those mentioned previously, it is nevertheless a fine sonata in the best English tradition and I well remember his inviting me up to the organ loft in 1952 when he played the first movement at the end of Evensong.

I commend this very fine recording by John Scott not only for the splendid playing but for the insight it gives into the English organ sonata tradition - something we should treasure.

Gareth Green held organ scholarships at St Paul's Cathedral, Worcester College Oxford, and Canterbury Cathedral. His programme opens with the rousing *Tuba Tune* of C S Lang, and finishes with that by Norman Cocker.

The three *Psalms Preludes* of Herbert Howells are short atmospheric pieces particularly suited to cathedral acoustics. They are gems of the repertoire. Howells was a master of the art of commencing a work *pianissimo*, developing it up to full organ, and gradually returning to *pianissimo*, all within the space of a few minutes. No greater contrast could be envisaged than between the ending of the Howells and the opening bars of the Elgar *Sonata*. It is interesting to compare the timings of Gareth Green (24'28) and John Scott (28'04) with that of Herbert Sumson (30'55) who, with that maturity of age, takes the longest time. The 3½ minute difference between the two younger organists is surely accounted for by the less resonant acoustic of Chesterfield.

Listening to the *Organ Sonata* over the past fifty years has convinced me that it is the most difficult organ work to bring off satisfactorily, and it is the one work which has caused me the most disappointment in concert or on record. Some organs and some buildings are totally unsuitable. Depending upon the specification of the instrument, upwards of four hundred stop changes may well be required during the performance, so how does one person accomplish this and play all the notes? Be assured that Gareth Green knows how to do it.

Cantique is a short, unpretentious but charming piece which first appeared in an early *Suite* for wind quintet (Op.3), which was later orchestrated by Elgar and performed by Landon Ronald in 1912. Novello published the organ version, dedicated to Hugh Blair, in 1912.

Other pieces on this CD are the *Hymn Preludes* on Darwall's 148th and Song 13 by Whitlock, and on Rhosymedre by Vaughan Williams.

Donald Hunt, a pupil of Herbert Sumsion, was born in Gloucester and was a chorister at Gloucester Cathedral until at the age of 17 he was appointed assistant organist. He is thus "musically descended" from Elgar and is indeed a noted interpreter of Elgar's works at the Three Choirs Festival. Opening with Elgar's *Sonata no 2 in Bb major, Op.87a* he admirably demonstrates the Bradford Computing Organ in Worcester Cathedral. (It is not, of course, a pipe organ but it certainly acquits itself well in the sympathetic acoustic). This sonata is a transcription by Ivor Atkins of the *Severn Suite* for brass band, and dedicated to George Bernard Shaw.

I am not at all sure that the transcription by Atkins is all that good - indeed, I positively dislike his cadenza and would wish it omitted - and I suspect that the piece works best when played with such bravado as to be positively risky. Be that as it may, Mr Hunt does remarkably well with it.

The Parry *Choral Fantasia on an Old English Tune* "When I survey the wondrous cross", is the second of *Three Choral Fantasias* published in 1915. The eighteenth-century tune reappeared in the 1904 edition of *Hymns A & M*, called "Eltham". Fuller-Maitland considered it marked "the composer's highest pinnacle of emotional power", a sentiment with which I agree wholeheartedly. Additionally, there are works by Sumsion, Vaughan Williams, Howells and Whitlock. Congratulations to Donald Hunt for giving us so much fine fare to suit many tastes and moreover, extremely well played into the bargain.

Douglas Carrington

[Douglas Carrington is Reviews Editor of the international quarterly *The Organ* and a former Secretary of the North-West Branch.- Ed.]

Introduction & Allegro for strings, Op.47. With Vaughan Williams : Tallis Fantasia, and Walton : Sonata for Strings.

City of London Sinfonia conducted by Richard Hickox
EMI CDC 754407-2

Introduction & Allegro for strings, Op.47. With Serenades by Tchaikovsky and Wolf, and Barber : Adagio.

Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Semyon Bychkov
Philips 434 108-2

Richard Hickox brings to this recording of the *Introduction & Allegro* all his wide experience of Elgar. There is an assurance about the playing and the interpretation, and this is helped by a clear recording, which places the orchestra a little farther away than normal, but this is no bad thing. The City of London Sinfonia respond to every nuance in the music, and there is a wonderfully wistful quality in their playing

of the 'Welsh' theme. They are no less impressive in the fugue, in which every stress and accent is observed, and where the Baroque influence in this work can be clearly heard. At fig.30, the final statement of the 'Welsh' theme, Hickox holds back the tempo to perfection to give the music its *nobilmente* quality (though strangely enough this direction is not given in the score at this point); and the final *pizzicato* note, all precision and confidence, sums up this exhilarating performance. If for me it does not quite match up to the finest recorded performances (Britten, Barbirolli, Collins) it is not far behind, and can be safely recommended. The other works are equally enjoyable.

It would have been nice to have welcomed the version on Philips more warmly. Bychkov is a young conductor who has quickly established an international reputation, and the choice of programme, played by the Berlin musicians, really whetted my appetite. But the signs were not good from the outset : Bychkov starts slowly - the *moderato* much more like an *adagio* - and the work's impact is muted. The 'Welsh' theme with its long notes almost loses its shape, and Bychkov sails straight over the *largamente* at fig.3 (where the solo quartet develop the theme *molto espressivo*) presumably worried by the effect of slowing even more. Things improve slightly with the *Allegro*, but there is a curious lack of drive; his strings do not dig deeply enough into the music, and the results are prosaic. The fugue starts promisingly but after a dozen bars or so he loses pace and seemingly interest too. Like Hickox the playing of the *molto sostenuto* at fig.30 is very good; and although there are some nice moments, and the playing of the Berlin strings is exemplary, it really doesn't convince as a performance. This strange dullness also afflicts parts of the Tchaikovsky, too. The Wolf and especially the Barber Adagio are the highlights.

The Editor

CD Round-up

We begin with two important releases in Decca's "The World of British Classics". First, the two concertos performed by Lynn Harrell from 1981 and Kyung Wha Chung from 1977, both widely acclaimed accounts (440 319-2). Harrell's is a confident, direct account of the *Cello Concerto*, but he gets close to the heart of the piece, and is ably supported by Maazel and the Cleveland Orchestra. If I found the Adagio somewhat idiosyncratic it is a very minor blemish. The cello is a shade too prominent but not distractingly so. Chung imposes her ebullient personality on the *Violin Concerto*, and again enjoys sympathetic accompanists in Solti and the LPO. She copes effortlessly with the bravura writing, and plays with real passion, but is also sensitive and lyrical in the slower passages, though I felt that sometimes she could have lingered a little longer. Wholeheartedly recommended.

Then, a disc mostly from Solti and the LPO with recordings dating from the late 1970s (the only exception is Sir Neville Marriner's beautifully paced and intimate account of the *Elegy*). Solti's *Pomp & Circumstance Marches* are very dramatic and brilliant. This is music for marching Magyars, rather than British Grenadiers, and very refreshing it is too, aided by wonderful LPO playing. *Cockaigne* I found similarly exciting, with a vigorous military band, though there is plenty of

tenderness in the "Lovers" section. In an admirable account of *In the South* I was disappointed that, unlike most other interpreters, Solti does not broaden at the *nobilmente* at fig.6 (does "nobly" imply a slowing of the pace?) However, there are many excellent things, especially the "Canto Popolare", the finest I think I have heard. Again, well worth obtaining, especially at mid-price (440 317-2).

Another *Violin Concerto*, this time Menuhin's 1966 account, in EMI's "British Composers" series [CDM 764725-2], together with his 1976 recording of the Delius *Concerto*. Obviously Menuhin's knowledge of this work is *sans pareil*, and although his classic 1932 recording with the composer is in a class of its own, it is fascinating to hear him at 50 and to compare the two. Perhaps the hemidemisemiquaver runs are approached a little more cautiously than they were at sixteen! But then there are some wonderful insights from the older player. The sense of intimacy in the quieter passages almost makes you feel as if you are eavesdropping. Once again, the soloist is favoured by his accompanist. Sir Adrian is in superlative form, and you only have to listen to the first few pages to recognise an Elgarian of the first order. A slight reservation concerns the rather recessed position of the violin, which causes it to be overwhelmed in the louder tutti; but this is preferable to being too close.

Elgar's *Te Deum*, written in 1897, is an interesting work. Thirty years later Elgar spoke of the "irregularity of the text". It's not clear what he meant; possibly he felt that for a song of praise, the final words are somewhat subdued. That is certainly reflected in his setting, where there are several *ff* or *fff* climaxes throughout the work, but it ends quietly. It can be found on two recent discs, one called "Te Deum and Jubilate" by the Choir of Norwich Cathedral conducted by Michael Nicholas (Priory PRCD 470). The rest of the disc contains other settings of the *Te Deum* by Heathcote Statham (two) Britten and Gladstone; and of both works by Howells (the Collegium Regale), Moeran and S S Wesley. The other is by the Dyfed Choir under Christopher Barton on Alpha CDCA 954. Elgar's *Benedictus* is also included, and his *Ave Verum Corpus* and *Ecce Sacerdos Magnus*. The major work on the disc is Dvořák's *Mass in D*. The singing on both discs is clear and fresh. The Dyfed Choir obviously contain female voices (unlike the cathedral choir) but they have a young sound which is entirely appropriate for the church music.

The Editor

BRANCH REPORTS

LONDON Branch's season has continued to be busy. Monthly meetings at Imperial College have been well attended and, since the last issue of the JOURNAL, have comprised Dr Percy Young speaking about Elgar's Cambridge connection; an 'home team' presentation "The Cello Concerto on Record"; Andrew Keener's "Tales from the Recording Studio" and Ian Lace's "Bax and Elgar". We shall remember especially Dr Young's personal memories of Edward Dent and Cyril Rootham, Andrew Keener's powers of mimicry, and Ian Lace's splendid visual aids. The great highlight, however, was the special meeting at the end of January which marked the issue on CD of the 1945 Malcolm Sargent *Gerontius*. This delighted an all-ticket capacity audience and is fully reviewed elsewhere in this issue.

Additional activities proliferate. Over 40 members attended a performance of the *Violin Concerto* at the Festival Hall at the end of March. Martin Passande is busy organising a party to Malvern to coincide with the Society AGM weekend. A Branch Dinner is on the cards; and an attempt is even under way to drum up support for a Branch Cricket XI!

The Branch AGM will be held on 13 June at Imperial College and will be followed by a programme of live music. Agendas and Minutes will be available at the meeting. Nominations for officers and committee - including the office of Programme Secretary - should be sent to the Branch Secretary (address on back cover) to arrive by 12 June.

SOUTHERN. The first two meetings of the year have been splendid occasions. In January, having cleared away the AGM business, we were hugely entertained by Branch Secretary Kevin Allen with his presentation of the correspondence between August Jaeger and Sir Hubert Parry. As most of this correspondence remains unpublished, it was an illuminating experience, and we are indebted to Parry's great-granddaughters, Kate Russell and Laura Ponsonby, for giving Kevin access to the material. However, not only was it an illuminating occasion, but it was also deeply moving. Kevin had asked an actor, George Goldsbrough, to read Jaeger's letters, and through his skills we were able to see and hear Jaeger weaken and crumble towards his death. This, combined with a credible and beautifully modulated German accent, created a cherishable characterisation.

For our March meeting, students from the South Downs College performed some of Elgar's music for wind quintet, as well as works by Ireland, Mayerl, and Lennox Berkeley. All was skilfully played and the enjoyment in the playing communicated itself fully to the substantial audience. The Branch continues to grow apace!

SOUTH-WEST. Our meetings continue to receive the support of a loyal group of members and friends. The standard of presentations has been first-class, and our venue is situated in a very pleasant part of Bristol. We also meet at Exeter - on 25 June - when Ron Bleach will talk on *In the South and Falstaff*, at 2.15 in the Arts Centre. All Branch members received details of our season's programme; all the meetings take place on the **fourth** Saturday of the month at **2.15 pm**. We would like to see more members attending, and they are assured of a very warm welcome.

YORKSHIRE Branch have had four meetings since the last JOURNAL issue. On 10 January Mark Jepson, our new Vice-Chairman, spoke on *The Apostles*, and we look

forward next season to him tackling *The Kingdom* and *The Light of Life*. 7 February was our CD Request evening, when the earlier arrivals chose their favourite Elgar from a comprehensive CD display. 7 March saw a visit from Prof Ian Parrott with his talk on Peter Warlock. Ian was his usual witty self, but the evening was remarkable for some unusual recordings and also for live, four-handed piano illustrations, with Ian helped both by our own David Fligg, and also by Society Secretary Carol Holt, who happened to be in our area and whom we were delighted to welcome to our meeting. She also obliged Ian and us with some vocal Warlock. All in all, a splendid evening.

Our AGM on 11 April saw the election of officers and committee, with few changes, and the announcement of some of next season's highlights. Allan Green FRPS, one of the best audio-visual men in the country, has recently turned his attention to Elgar and will be presenting slide-sound sequences at our opening meeting on 26 September. We look forward to an interesting and enjoyable series of talks and presentations in the new season.

WEST MIDLAND's season concluded on 16 April with Prof Ian Parrott's talk on Warlock. It has been a stimulating year with talks in the autumn by Andrew Neill on Strauss and John Weir on Parry. In February nearly sixty members were present for a very successful lunch party at "The Stables". Postprandial entertainment was a recital of English songs performed by members Gill and Geoffrey Bradshaw. As a prelude to the Branch AGM on 5 March Michael Castle, Director of Music at the Downs School and a Society member, delighted the meeting with a recital entitled "Enigmatic Inspirations". As part of their musical education Mr Castle had induced his pupils to write musical variations portraying their friends, all based on a sequence of notes derived from the word "Enigma". One of these variations was played as a duet by Mr Castle and a colleague. At the AGM the Chairman Michael Trott was re-elected together with the existing officers and committee members. Margaret Elgar was also elected to the Committee.

Members expressed concern about the redevelopment of the Elgar Birthplace site. It was difficult to formulate opinions because of the lack of precise detailed information about the Birthplace Trust's plans. Members were urged to make their opinions known to the Trust and other relevant bodies.

Also in March a joint meeting with the Worcester Recorded Music Society was held at which Robin Hales spoke on Vilhelm Stenhammar.

Members will be sent a programme card for next season as soon as dates and speakers are confirmed. It is a concern that the West Midlands membership is scattered over many counties, and members without transport find it difficult to attend meetings in the Worcester/Malvern area, which is our geographical centre. Would members who are willing to offer lifts or take part in car-pooling arrangements please make their names known to the WM Branch Secretary.

It is ten years since the NORTH-WEST moved its venue from Liverpool to Manchester, and our March meeting took the form of an anniversary lunch at the Portland Hotel, Manchester, when about 40 people attended. It was an extremely happy occasion. We were joined by friends from both the Yorkshire and London branches, Chetham's School, and also by one of the Society's Vice-Presidents, Professor Ian Parrott. A painting - by John Mawbey our Branch Treasurer - of the Malvern Hills was presented to Dr John Wray our Chairman in appreciation for all

that he has done for the branch in the last ten years. After lunch we were given a talk by Geoffrey Thomason, a past secretary of the branch, entitled 'Dear Sir Elgar'. His subject was the correspondence between Elgar and his friend Adolf Brodsky. This proved to be both informative and entertaining, and was received with enthusiasm by all.



Group at the North-West Branch's Anniversary Dinner in March. From left to right: John Mawbey (Treasurer), Dr John Wray (Chairman), Mrs Pat Hurst (Secretary), John Weir (Vice-Chairman), Professor Ian Parrott.

LETTERS

From : Hilary Elgar

On behalf of the Elgar family I would like to correct any possible misunderstanding arising out of the article concerning developments at Elgar's Birthplace on p.164 of the January JOURNAL. It remains our attitude that any development at our great-uncle's Birthplace should be as small scale as possible so that the threatened atmosphere surrounding the Birthplace may be preserved for future visitors. We consider that the educational side of the development would be far better sited in either Worcester or Malvern where transport and parking facilities as well as alternative attractions would make school visits more feasible. In our efforts to find a solution to the problem of overcrowding at the Birthplace,

a group of people in Malvern under the direction of Dr Brenda Watson is spearheading a project to establish an Elgar Centre for English music. This is receiving widespread national support. We want to underline that the proposed centre in Malvern will be complementary to the Birthplace and not in any way duplicating its functions.

Should anyone care to receive more detailed information, please contact Hilary Elgar, Wyke House, Croft Bank, West Malvern, Worcs WR14 4BP.

From : J R Hammond

I cannot understand why so many modern conductors of *The Dream of Gerontius* increase the pace of 'Go forth in the name' at fig. 73, contrary to Elgar's intentions. His markings on the score are quite explicit. At fig. 73, after the words "and in the name of Cherubim and Seraphim, go forth", Elgar has written *allargando* (slower) and *molto largamente* (very broadly).

Clearly he intended the great chorus 'Go forth in the name' to sound majestic and inspiring. Why then do so many conductors, both on recordings and at live performances, consider it necessary to conduct it at breakneck speed?

From : Sheila Burgess-Smith

"Thin and inconsequential stuff" (*JOURNAL* January 1994). Yes, I was most disappointed seeing "Elgar's Rondo" at Stratford. I felt that we members of the Society (and therefore knowing quite a bit about this magnificent composer) should either stay away or see the play, knowing that a lot of it is highly skit-like! At times one really did not know whether to laugh or regret that certain items had been included.

From : Barry Fox

As I understand I was abused by Richard Abram of EMI in the pages of your *JOURNAL* last year, I would appreciate the opportunity to set the various matters straight.

In the 80s I reported (in *New Scientist* and elsewhere) how an American record collector had matched different disc masters that had been simultaneously cut, and created what sounded like stereo from them. The collector (Brad Kay) suggested that different masters had been cut from different recording chains and different microphones, and thus accidentally captured two sound perspectives of the same performance - like the two microphones of a modern stereo recording.

These reports created a split inside EMI, with some people anxious to try matching master pairs, eg. of Sir Edward Elgar's recordings, and others even more anxious to pronounce that the stereo effect was pseudo-stereo created by phase errors in the matching.

In 1992, EMI Records put out a press release saying that one track on the Elgar Edition would be in stereo, recreated from a matching pair of master discs. The

plan was to use modern digital equipment to eradicate phase errors etc. But Richard Abram cancelled the project on the strength of an unpublished report by an ex-EMI engineer, Anthony C Griffith.

Abram's reason for refusing even to conduct the test was, and apparently remains, that he knew in advance what the results would be, on the strength of Griffith's report. My argument was, and remains, that this is an unscientific approach to a matter of historical interest and importance, and to run tests with the digital equipment which is at EMI's easy disposal could go a long way towards settling once and for all, the intriguing question of whether the effect heard from matching is genuine stereo, or pseudo stereo.

Both Anthony Griffith and Richard Abram have been extremely rude to me, and about me, both in private correspondence and in print. I believe this rather childish behaviour does them and EMI more damage than me, so I usually let it pass. But it is important to have two points on the record for future reference.

Anthony Griffith (in a letter to Studio Sound magazine, September 1993) and Richard Abram (I am told in this journal, May 1993) accuse me of trying to suppress a reply by Anthony Griffith to my article in New Scientist. This is wholly untrue, and I am providing the editor of this journal with copies of my letters of 18 November 1992 written both to Anthony Griffith and Richard Abram. These letters show how Griffith and Abram have grossly misrepresented my genuine attempts to be helpful.

In his letter to Studio Sound Griffith sought to support his argument that it is not worth even trying to recreate stereo from the Elgar recordings with the following statement :

"I have at the back of my mind a memory that someone once told me that work had been done on this at Abbey Road".

It worries me that Richard Abram, who has proved himself to be so casual with facts, should cancel EMI's plan to recreate stereo from a matched pair of Elgar recordings on the strength of a report from Anthony Griffith, who has also proved himself to be so casual with the facts.

Richard Abram writes:

I think the first line of Mr Fox's letter nicely sets the tone for the content of what follows, which is something of a historical performance in terms of conspiracy theory : assertion masquerades as fact, everyone is horrible to the author, and it all points towards a cover-up.

There is little for Elgarians in a debate at that level, and only sadness for all those who worked to produce the Elgar Edition that it should have become a focus for a man who finds everyone out of step except himself.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, I find my original reply (*JOURNAL* May 1993) covers most of the ground, and I respectfully refer your readers back to it and to the essays in Vol.III of the Elgar Edition. I would add only three points :

1. As the Elgar Edition proceeded, it was decided (not just by me) after due investigation and consultation (not just with Anthony Griffith) that the 'stereo' was a chimera; all those involved in the Edition - both inside and outside the company, including the Edition Associates of the Elgar Society - agreed that EMI Records would not be warranted in proceeding further with it. Others are free to disagree, as they are to pursue such a project (the records are in the public domain).

2. I admire Mr Fox's nerve, but as he submits the letter in which he offers to delete "references to me and Brad Kay", both the Editor of this journal and I can confirm the accuracy and construction of my quotation. Mr Griffith's letter to *New Scientist* was never printed.

3. Is Mr Fox in a position to accuse others of rudeness? I'm afraid the above is a fair example of his attentions. If I have been less tolerant of them than Mr Griffith - who is a private individual, incidentally - that is because, as will be agreed by all who know him, Mr Griffith is the perfect gentleman.

[Richard Abram was compiler, booklet editor and picture researcher of EMI's Elgar Edition - Ed.]

Andrew Neill writes :

At the risk of prolonging the debate about the possibility of creating a 'stereo' sound from Elgar recordings where more than one microphone was used, may I explain why I supported the decision of EMI not to proceed with the experiment in Vol.III of their Elgar Edition. Those members who have purchased the set will have read Anthony Griffith's illuminating description of what were then contemporary recording techniques. Although it may still be possible to gainsay what he has written it seems to me very unlikely. It is for this reason that people like Mike Dutton of Dutton Laboratories did not proceed independently to see if the experiment was worth completing.

Furthermore I once had the opportunity of hearing a 'stereo' Elgar recording (part of the *Prelude to The Kingdom*) played to me without being told what I was likely to hear. The sound was excellent, but I detected no evidence of 'stereo' spread. It was important that I heard this with an innocent ear so that I was not in a position to convince myself that I was hearing something that was not really there.

I would not expect EMI to undertake the experiment which Mr Fox is keen to hear, but would suggest that for reasons Mr Abram conveys, that he could arrange it for himself. By doing so he might demonstrate that we are all wrong!

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