

# The Elgar Society JOURNAL



SEPTEMBER  
1994

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# The Elgar Society Journal

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

## EDITORIAL

Vol.8, No.6  
September 1994

This issue puts the number of JOURNALS I have produced into double figures; I am still a long way from my predecessor's forty-odd, and have no strong desire to overtake him! It is a labour of love, and I am grateful to contributors and others who make it so stimulating and enjoyable; however, it is very time-consuming and not without its frustrations. Perhaps the greatest of these is that the months which precede publication coincide with major public holidays, and this puts pressure on editors, contributors and printers alike.

For this reason therefore, and after consultation with my fellow-officers, the JOURNAL will henceforth appear in March, July, and November, beginning with an *extra* issue in two months time. The deadline for copy will continue to be *one calendar month before publication*, ie. 1 February, 1 June, and 1 October. Please keep your contributions coming in, especially notification of concerts and other events. I recently received four copies of the same brochure, which is wonderful, and proves that my pleas for information are getting through!

With this issue, the JOURNAL comes of age - in a way. The first NEWSLETTER - precursor of the JOURNAL - in its regular, larger format appeared in September 1973, the brainchild of the then secretary/treasurer of the Society, Wulstan Atkins. In November Mr Atkins, now a Vice-President of the Society, will celebrate his ninetieth birthday, and will be the guest speaker at the second Michael Richards Memorial Presentation organised by the London Branch (details in Random Ramblings). We extend our congratulations and best wishes to Mr Atkins and trust that, twenty-one years on, he feels that his enterprise was justified!

Members will have recently received two items of unsolicited mail on Elgarian matters. Normally such items would be included with the distribution of the JOURNAL, but for various reasons this was not possible this time, and the organisations wanted their material sent out before September. Members can rest assured of two things. First, this will not become a habit; and second, the Society is aware of its responsibilities under the Data Protection Act. The items were placed into envelopes at source, and then sent, on the first occasion to the Membership Secretary, and on the second to me, and we stuck on the labels before posting (postage was obviously paid for by the customer). I hope this sets your minds at rest.

GEOFFREY HODGKINS

## ANOTHER PIECE IN THE JIGSAW

### A retrospective survey of past attempts at solving the 'Enigma' and some further thoughts on Elgar's XIIIth Variation.

Gordon Lee

Ever since their first performance at St. James's Hall, under the baton of Hans Richter, Elgar's *Variations on an Original Theme* have provided an enduring mystery for the musically curious. In the programme note to the premiere on 19 June 1899, Elgar is quoted :

... The Enigma I will not explain - its 'dark saying' must be left unguessed, and I warn you that the apparent connexion between the Variations and the Theme is often of the slightest texture; further, through and over the whole set another and larger theme 'goes', but is not played.

The mystery caught the public's imagination, yet, as the popularity of the piece gained strength, Elgar became more and more reticent about discussing his reference to its 'dark saying'. Obviously, keeping everyone guessing made for good publicity and, at the age of forty-two, the Variations had succeeded in putting him firmly on the musical map. Had the enigma been explained too soon then Elgar, with his characteristic life-long capacity for self-doubt, may have feared that the work as a whole might also have faded from the public mind. Professionally, he had had a long and, at times, bitter struggle. Far better to let them still try to guess its secret. However, as the musical treasure-hunters persisted in their attempts to reveal the hidden meaning, did Elgar fear that they might also uncover more in the Variations than he had intended? Once under the spotlight was the situation becoming a little too hot to handle? Had he perhaps used the work as a kind of personal 'note-pad' on to which he had jotted, in his own private musical shorthand, remembrances of certain past details of his life? If these secrets had been woven into the fabric of the work did he fear that persistent digging and delving might uncover them? If this were the case it could explain his otherwise unaccountable touchiness - even, on occasions, rudeness - to some of those who tried to tackle him on the subject. There is no doubt that the work was to become something of a *bête noire* with which he was to have a bitter-sweet relationship that would ultimately haunt him for the rest of his life.

Over the intervening years this musical mystery tour has resulted in the appearance, from time to time, of attempts at probing its secret; often heralded by headlines proclaiming : "Elgar's Enigma : The Solution!", or "Solved : the riddle of the Enigma". The only problem is that, as no-one is aware of exactly what form the enigma takes, so the acceptance of any proposed 'solution' requires the approach of both an open mind and a certain amount of tolerance. Nevertheless a survey of some of these past attempts makes a fascinating starting-point to any study of the *Enigma* and so forms the subject of the first part of this article.

The original idea behind the work presents little difficulty : 'Of whom is each variation a musical portrait?' Of course, this musical parlour-game could only be

played if the subjects of the Variations were known personally to the listener - a fact which caused a minor grumble from the critic from the *Times* following the first performance of the work. We can sympathise that he was probably not alone in that first-night audience in feeling somewhat left out of the secret. Indeed, apart from Elgar and his wife, it is unlikely that even the variationees themselves knew personally all of their fellow subjects. Yet this is now of little importance and paradoxically, almost a century later, it is probable that the distinctive laugh of Richard Penrose Arnold, the stammer of Dorabella and the gruff bark of Sinclair's bulldog Dan have been 'heard' by more people than was ever the case in the subjects' own lifetimes.

When it came to trying to untangle the 'enigma' the problem was further complicated by the many different interpretations placed on the actual *musical* content of some of the variations. A good example of this is Variation VII (Troyte). The music was thought by friends of Elgar's to represent a set of nine-pins being bowled over, 'Nine-pin' being Troyte's nickname due to the shape of his profile when viewed in silhouette. Troyte himself was of the opinion that the rumbustious nature of the piece depicted an occasion when he and Elgar were caught out in a hailstorm and had to run for shelter. The matter was not resolved until years later when Elgar described this variation as being "suggested by some maladroit essays to play the pianoforte; later the strong rhythm suggests the attempts of the instructor [Elgar himself] to make something like order out of chaos, and the final despairing 'slam' records that the effort proved to be vain." Another example of confusion is that of Variation XI (G.R.S.). George Robertson Sinclair was organist at Hereford Cathedral which led many listeners to believe that his variation was a musical sketch on his style of pedalling on the organ. But, as Elgar later explained, it was "nothing to do with organs or cathedrals, or, except remotely, with G.R.S. The first few bars were suggested by his great bulldog Dan (a well-known character) falling down the steep bank into the river Wye; his paddling upstream to find a landing place; and his rejoicing bark on landing. G.R.S. said 'Set that to music.' I did; here it is."

So much for musical detectives!

Those directly involved in the enigma are no longer alive, so they cannot be called upon to give their own account of the matter, nor to answer any questions which we might like to put to them. Therefore the evidence on which we have to base our investigations is, at best largely hearsay, and at worst greatly circumstantial. Nevertheless, if the problem is going to be tackled then a start has to be made somewhere - and this must be by a thorough examination of this evidence. Much of this material is probably already familiar to most keen Elgarians, but the present author makes no apology for going over some of this territory again, nor for repeating other existing sources concerning the Variations, especially where these have a relevance to some tying-up of loose ends which will be made later in this article where new evidence will be presented concerning the identity of the person behind the XIIIth Variation.

The legacy of clues that has been handed down concerning the Enigma in general comes from three principal sources :

1899	Edward Elgar	Programme note by Elgar for the first performance at St James's Hall on 19 June 1899.	
1906	R.J.Buckley	States 'The theme is a counterpoint on some well-known melody which is not heard'.	<i>Edward Elgar</i> , Bodley Head
1928	Edward Elgar	Elgar gives an account of the 'friends pictured within' (originally published to accompany a set of pianola rolls) in which he describes the musical significance of each.	<i>My Friends Pictured Within</i> , Novello
1934	Richard Powell	Richard Powell, the husband of Dora Penny, gives <i>Auld Lang Syne</i> as the hidden melody and 'friendship' as the theme.	<i>Music and Letters</i> , vol XV July 1934 pp. 203-208
1937	Dora Penny (Mrs. Richard Powell)	Publishes memoirs. Gives background to Variations but offers no opinions. Admits she is not convinced by her husband's solution (see above).	<i>Edward Elgar - Memories of a Variation.</i> , - 1st ed. O.U.P.
1939	Ernest Newman	Considers possibility of 'leg-pull' and that there is no hidden melody. Suggests existence of abstract theme for the 'enigma' such as love, friendship, etc. Gives possible link with Sir Thomas Browne's <i>Religio Medici</i> .	<i>Sunday Times</i> , 16 April - 7 May 1939 inclusive.
1939	Troyte Griffiths	Account of visit to Elgar in 1924. Guesses at <i>God Save the King</i> and is told 'No, of course not, but it is so well known that it is extraordinary that no-one has found it.'	Letter to Ernest Newman quoted in <i>Sunday Times</i> 30 April 1939
1947	Dora Penny	2nd edition of memoirs containing additional material and an extra chapter on the Variations.	<i>Edward Elgar - Memories of a Variation.</i> , - 2nd ed. O.U.P.
1947	Carice Elgar-Blake	Letter to Dora Penny (1942) in which Carice Elgar-Blake states: 'We know there was a tune'.	Quoted by Dora Penny in the 2nd edition of her book.
1963	Misc.American suggestions.	'Una bella serenata' from <i>Così fan Tutte</i> , Bach's <i>Agnus Dei</i> , Beethoven's <i>Pathétique</i> sonata, Purcell's 'When I am laid in earth', and Sullivan's 'None shall part us from each other'.	Quoted by J.A.Westrup (see below)
1965	Diana McVeagh	Shares Ernest Newman's views (1939) that the theme may represent 'friendship'. Also supports link with Browne's <i>Religio Medici</i> .	<i>Edward Elgar: His Life and Music</i> , Dent
1966	Percy M. Young	Mentions 'Braut' and quotes Elgar's letter mentioning 'Helen'	<i>Letters of Edward Elgar</i> , Geoffrey Bles
1966	Ernest Newman	Debunks Mary Lygon dedication. Reviews Percy Young's book (above) and infers, but does not specify, the identity of variation XIII is to be found therein. (i.e. Helen Weaver).	<i>Sunday Times</i> , 18 November 1956
1959	J. Northrop Moore	Suggests that the 'enigma' represents Elgar's 'search for self-discovery and self expression through his art.'	<i>Musical Review</i> , February 1959 pp.38-44
1960	J.A.Westrup	Doubts that *** is Lady Mary Lygon.	<i>Proc. Royal Musical Association</i> , 23 April 1960 pp.79-97
1960	John Horton	Shows similarity between final cadence of Variation VI ('Ysobel') and the end of Schumann's Piano Quartet, op.47	<i>Musical Times</i> , August 1960 pp.490-492
1968	Michael Kennedy	Supports dedication to Lady Mary Lygon but considers the possibility of a 'Leipzig girl' who is not identified.	<i>Portrait of Elgar</i> , - 1st edition O.U.P.

1969	Roger Fiske	Gives account of meeting with Dora Penny in 1950's and her belief that <i>Auld Lang Syne</i> was the theme and that Elgar's denial of it had been a lie. (see 1934 - Powell)	<i>Musical Times</i> , November 1969 pp. 1124-1126
1970	Eric Sams	Supports <i>Auld Lang Syne</i> and link with <i>Religio Medici</i> .	<i>Musical Times</i> , March 1970 pp. 258-262
1971	Ian Parrott	Gives link with quotation from Vulgate version of I Corinthians xiii.12 - <i>Videmus nunc per speculum in aenigmate</i> - 'For now we see through a glass, darkly'.	<i>Elgar</i> , from 'Master Musicians' Series, Dent.
1971	Geoffrey Poole	Links the Enigma firmly with Alice Elgar by means of a cypher derived from the letters of her name.	<i>Music &amp; Musicians</i> , August 1971 pp. 26-29
1972	Rosa Burley	Claims to know identity of *** (which is not Lady Mary Lygon) but does not name the lady concerned. This account a <i>friendship</i> , Barrie & Jenkins was written in 1948 but not published until 1972.	<i>Edward Elgar: The record of a friendship</i> , Barrie & Jenkins
1973	Ian Parrott	Suggests that Variations were influenced by Bach and that Elgar's reference to "Dan's rejoicing bark" (in his account - <i>My Friends Pictured Within</i> ) was a play on words.	<i>Music &amp; Letters</i> , vol LIV 1973 pp. 57-60
1976	T. van Houten	Puts forward the idea of a 'multiple' nature to the enigma suggesting that a number of different 'clues' are concealed in the work. (see text for fuller details).	<i>Elgar Society Newsletter</i> , January 1976 - and <i>Music Review</i> , May 1976
1977	Raymond Leppard	Shows similarity between the <i>Enigma</i> theme and the opening of the Benedictus from C.V.Stanford's <i>Requiem</i> .	<i>The Times</i> , 20th August 1977
1979	Ben Kingdon	Suggests that the Variations are based on the <i>Dies Irae</i> .	<i>Elgar Society Journal</i> , May 1979
1982	Ulrik Skouenborg	Discusses influence of Brahms' songs <i>Vier ernste Gesänge</i> , op. 121, one of which is a setting of I Corinthians xiii (as suggested by Ian Parrott in 1971).	<i>Music Review</i> , vol 43 pp. 161-168
1982	Michael Kennedy	Quotes Newman and Burley. Throws doubt on Lady Mary Lygon and suggests possibility rather than probability that *** may be Helen Weaver.	<i>Portrait of Elgar</i> , - 2nd edition O.U.P.
1984	E. Wulstan Atkins	Claims identity of *** is Helen Weaver, who is also the soul enshrined in the Violin Concerto.	<i>The Elgar-Atkins Friendship</i> , E.W. Atkins, David & Charles.
1984	Nicholas Reed	Rules out Helen Weaver and says Julia Worthington is *** and also the 'soul' of the Violin Concerto.	<i>Musical Times</i> , August 1984 pp. 430-434
1984	Derek Hudson	Demonstrates possibility of <i>Auld Lang Syne</i> concealed throughout the Variations - especially in 'revised' finale.	<i>Musical Times</i> , November 1984 pp. 636-639
1986	K. Kemsey Bourne	Supports possibility of link with the <i>Dies Irae</i> .	<i>Elgar Society Journal</i> , Sept '86
1987	Michael Kennedy	Repeats text of 2nd edition of his book and gives additional information on Helen Weaver.	<i>Portrait of Elgar</i> , - 3rd edition O.U.P.
1988	Cora Weaver	Gives the full biography of Helen Weaver, the relationship with Elgar and her life in New Zealand.	<i>The 13th Enigma?</i> , Thames
1991	Joseph Cooper	Illustrates that the 'enigma' theme may be based on part of Mozart's <i>Prague</i> Symphony. Idea supported by Jerrold Northrop Moore.	<i>Sunday Telegraph</i> , 3 November 1991

(i) information attributed to Elgar himself,

(ii) ideas expressed during his lifetime by those who knew the composer personally and had spoken to him about it,

and, by far the most prolific,

(iii) the various theories that have been published by the generations of musical detectives who have taken up the challenge in more recent years.

Space does not permit more than the briefest mention of most of this material but the principal published sources have been summarised in the accompanying table, which also gives the relevant references for readers wishing to make a full study for themselves of the points raised. The list is arranged chronologically according to the dates on which the information was published, not necessarily the order in which the various views were first expressed.

In trying to find some clues to the mystery we have to study the circumstantial evidence of the case. It is a well-known fact that Elgar was a great lover of puzzles in general. He had a fascination for secret codes, cryptograms and cyphers, as well as having an interest in crosswords and various other forms of wordplay such as puns, rebuses, anagrams and acrostics. This characteristic trait reveals itself in a number of known examples, for instance in the name given by Elgar to the house in Malvern into which the family moved just as he was completing composition of the Variations. This name was 'Craig Lea', and is an anagram of (C)arice, (A)lice and (E)dward ELGAR. Later in life he created the palindromic word 'Siromoris' for his telegraphic address - a word which contains reference to two of his honours - the knighthood and the Order of Merit. And, of course, his daughter's name, Carice, was an arrangement of the first and last syllables of Caroline Alice, his wife's Christian names.

Nowhere was this trait for wordplay more evident than in his correspondence with close friends. There are many examples which show that it was not uncommon for him to embellish his letters with abbreviations, condensations, cartoons, musical sketches and even invented words, to amusing effect. To Ivor Atkins he wrote :

..... mark ye, Firapeel, I waxe olde & dulle & glumme & sourmooded, bilious excursive and dispertinent.

and I wot well you are in merrie wise fallen on yr feste in Rams-hys-gate: albeite a fear, a parlous fear, holdes me, yr. true Friend, that you behave not altogether seemly in ye town.  
..... I finde ye annciente moode wearinge to ye penne, ye braine & to ye reader.

To Dora Penny he wrote :

Being a pennytential week, ..... This is Xmas sirloinidly frivolous ..... & it put Dorabellissima so sweetly prettily.

and Oh! the fickleness of you.



and Whether you are as nice as



or only as unideal as



Eh? No. Perhaps??

The last example, containing two musical quotations from the *Variations*, is to be found in a letter dated 25 October 1901 and is often quoted as an instance of where he uses the enigma theme as a reference to himself - the spoken words 'Edward Elgar' fitting the rhythm of the musical notation. Two weeks earlier, also in a letter to Dora Penny, he had actually used this same quotation in place of his signature. Can these methods of expression give us a clue as to how he could have constructed the enigma? Just as the compiler of cryptic crossword puzzles will leave characteristic fingerprints in his puzzles, can we detect any similar Elgarian prints in the *Variations*?

As we have observed, Elgar said very little about his secret and so consequently everything that he *did* say (or write) has been carefully held up for inspection and has been thoroughly interpreted and re-interpreted and, on occasions, possibly mis-interpreted. Of course, it may be that the very scarcity of material leads us into looking for hidden meanings which do not exist - or at least, were not intended. One of the few snippets known to have originated from Elgar is found in the programme note to the first performance, which was referred to earlier. He wrote :

It is true that I have sketched for their amusement and mine, the idiosyncrasies of fourteen of my friends, not necessarily musicians; but this is a personal matter and need not have been mentioned publicly. The *Variations* should stand simply as a piece of music. The Enigma I will not explain - its 'dark saying' must be left unguessed, and I warn you that the connexion between the *Variations* and the Theme is often of the slightest texture; further, through and over the whole set another and larger theme 'goes', but is not played. So the principal theme never appears even as in some late dramas - e.g., Maeterlinck's *L'Intruse* and *Les sept Princesses* the chief character is never on the stage.

If one wanted to be pedantic one could argue that there are only *thirteen* friends represented, not fourteen, (the last being Elgar himself) - unless this constitutes some other mystery which no-one else has so far spotted. However, the main result of this programme note was the assumption that the 'larger theme' referred to was a well-known, but unplayed, melody which would 'go', in counter-point or in some other way, with the theme *and* with each of the variations. Many ideas were put forward but Elgar remained suitably evasive and non-committal about all of them - and even avoided any direct reply as to whether there was any such tune in the first place. Nevertheless, adherents to this school of thought have come up with enough suggestions to fill a complete concert programme! Contenders for the honours have included, at various times, *God Save the King*, *Auld Lang Syne*, *Home Sweet Home*, *All Through the Night*, *For He's a Jolly Good Fellow*, *Pop Goes the Weasel*, *Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay*, and Chopin's *G minor Nocturne* - to name but a

few. It has been oft-repeated that Elgar himself never used the word 'tune' at all - the term that he did use was 'theme' - and this has led some interpreters into believing that the enigma was not a musical theme at all but something more abstract such as friendship, love, the personality of the composer, or even the outline of the Malvern Hills.

One of those who asked Elgar directly about a hidden tune was Troyte Griffith (of Variation VII). He relates : "One day at Kempsey, about 1924, I asked if I could have one guess at it. Elgar said 'Yes'. After my ridiculous shot [*God Save the King*] he said 'Of course not, but it is so well-known that it is extraordinary no-one has found it'".

As a general example of the way in which Elgar's comments have been carefully scrutinised for clues, we must turn to another of the Variations, X - the Intermezzo. The subject of this was Miss Dora Penny, who later published her memoirs of the friendship that she shared with Elgar (*Edward Elgar : Memories of a Variation*). At the time of their composition she was a frequent visitor to the Elgar household in her role as 'girl-Friday'. In her book she recalls one occasion on which she tackled Elgar on the subject :

Then he [Elgar] went back to the Variations, and I asked about the 'Enigma' and what was the tune that 'goes and is not played'?

"Oh, I shan't tell you that, you must find it out for yourself."

"But I've thought and racked my brains over and over again."

"Well, I'm surprised. I thought that you, of all people, would guess it."

"Why 'me of all people'?"

"That's asking questions!"

Elgar never told her. Admittedly, Dora Penny's account of this conversation was not published until 1937 so we have only her record that these were the *exact* words spoken by Elgar nearly forty years previously. Nevertheless, the phrase '*you of all people*' has since taken on a greater importance in the eyes of one or two later investigators though, strangely, Dora Penny herself seemed not to have noticed any particular significance in those four words - or, at least, if she did, she made no attempt to explain it.

When considering the mystery of the Variations writers have generally tended to be of the opinion that the enigma consisted of a single idea - be it a hidden tune, a theme, or whatever, and that once this was uncovered then the solution would have been found and that would be the end of the matter. However, this concept was radically altered in 1976 when it was suggested that the Variations concealed not just one, but a whole series of separate, yet interconnected, 'clues'. Some of these clues were fairly blatant, others were - to quote Elgar's own words - 'of the slightest texture'. This theory of a 'multiple' nature to the enigma was suggested by Theodore van Houten in "The Enigma: a solution from Holland" (*Elgar Society NEWSLETTER*, January 1976) and "You of all People: Elgar's Enigma" (*Music Review*, May 1976). The arguments that he sets out are too complex to explain here in detail, but in general he maintains that the central theme behind the work is 'Britain' and the hidden tune is *Rule, Britannia*. It will be recalled that in Elgar's programme note he uses the words "So the principal theme never appears ..... the chief character is

never on stage". The repeat of the word 'never' suggests to van Houten the phrase 'never, never' in the refrain of *Rule, Britannia*. Examination of the notes of the song at this point reveals that they are exactly the same as those in Elgar's opening phrase at the beginning of the Variations. If this is the hidden theme, Elgar's remark to Dora Penny, 'you of all people' would have, according to van Houten, the significance that the picture of Britannia appears on the reverse side of a (pre-decimal) penny. That this is the hidden tune is also supported by Elgar choosing Richard Baxter Townshend for one of the variations. Townshend was not as close a friend as the other variationees but he was included because his initials - R.B.T. - suggest the syllables of *Rule, Britannia*. The evidence that 'Britain' is the hidden theme is also suggested in other ways, for example in the G.R.S. variation. In his note to this variation Elgar uses the phrases 'great bulldog, Dan' (the bulldog is a symbol of Britain), 'late organist of Hereford Cathedral' (the composer John Bull c.1562-1628 was a former organist at Hereford in the 17th century) and 'a well-known character' (the fictional character John Bull - as created by Dr Arbuthnot - which is regarded as the personification of 'Britain'.) As van Houten says: "...we find that Elgar succeeded in hiding no less than three John Bulls in the short eleventh variation".

If van Houten is correct in his assumption of a 'multiple' enigma, much of Elgar's evasiveness can be explained. At the time of its composition, when it was popularly thought that the solution was simply the discovery of a hidden tune, Elgar was clearly in a no-win situation. He could neither confirm nor deny any suggested tune without either throwing everyone right off the track or else selling the enigma short. Consequently, Elgar's evasive answers could possibly be interpreted as saying something like "..... well, you may be right - but there's more to it than that".

In his original programme note Elgar stated that "...through and over the whole set another larger theme 'goes' but is not played". The words 'over the whole set' have led the 'hidden tune' theorists to try to adapt their chosen tunes to make them 'fit' all of the variations. This has proved a fruitless task as clearly no tune could possibly be made to do this, short of torturing it out of all recognition. But if there were a multiple enigma, all would be explained. What Elgar was saying is that the enigma extends into all the variations in the sense that hidden throughout the work are a whole set of *different* puzzles, all of which need to be solved to complete the problem.

Another of van Houten's theories states that in the construction of the Variations Elgar was influenced by certain of the works of Alexander Pope - most notably his *Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot* (the creator of the fictional John Bull, mentioned earlier). Elgar is known to have had an interest in Pope and specific lines of the *Epistle* suggest the dedicatees in the Variations. A good example of this is 'Glad of a quarrel, strait I clapt the door' which might well refer to William Meath Baker with his 'inadvertent bang of the door' which is scored into this variation. Were various stanzas from Pope's poem the reason why many of the subjects of the Variations were chosen? Van Houten gives quotes for all except four of the variationees, these exceptions being R.B.T. who was chosen because of his initials and H.D.S.-P., 'Ysobel' and B.G.N. (all included for purely musical reasons - the variations relating to their playing of, respectively, the piano, viola and 'cello). An additional interesting

aspect is that van Houten also claims that Elgar concealed the name 'Pope' in the orchestral score of the work. This can be found at the entry of the horns in variation VII (using a certain amount of imagination and reading vertically upwards).

The preceding points which have been mentioned are only a few of the many which are to be found in van Houten's work and readers are recommended to study his article for themselves. Coincidence? Wishful thinking? Or is this really one answer to the problem? An interesting product of van Houten's idea is revealed if we use his methods and apply them to evidence that was not available to him when he published his work in 1976. This relates to another of the Enigma's mysteries - the identity of the person concealed in the XIIIth Variation.

This has always presented a quite separate problem which has not, until quite recently, been satisfactorily explained. At the time of composition the name attached to the variation was that of Lady Mary Lygon, sister of Lord Beauchamp of Madresfield Court. However, on the manuscript, Elgar prefaced the variation with three asterisks. The reason that he subsequently gave was that "The asterisks take the place of the name of a lady who was, at the time of the composition, on a sea voyage. The drums suggest the distant throb of the engines of a liner, over which the clarinet quotes a phrase from Mendelssohn's *Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage*." It has been stated that Elgar had, at some stage during composition, headed the variation with the initials 'L.M.L.' but had later deleted these from the manuscript before publication of the score and substituted the three asterisks in their place. The general inference was that, being on a sea voyage (to Australia), Lady Mary had not confirmed her acceptance of the dedication and consequently her initials were not at that time appended. At the time this was generally accepted without question although some doubts were expressed that this explanation did not quite ring true. The orchestration of the score was completed by 19 February 1899, yet Lady Mary did not depart until early in April of that year. More than this, the Elgars entertained her to tea on 24 March at which time such permission could easily have been sought (as was the case with Elgar's *Three Characteristic Pieces* whose dedication was accepted by Lady Mary on this date). This would have given ample time for the relevant initials to be included before the score was sent for printing. Even so, in later life, Elgar stuck to his story that it was Lady Mary whom he had in mind for this variation. Nevertheless, sufficient doubt has remained to cast a shadow over this being the true dedication. Of course, the explanation might be quite simple - for example, with it being the thirteenth variation, superstition may have prevented too specific a dedication being given. Another possibility is that maybe Lady Mary turned it down for some reason. But the suspicion still remains that perhaps Elgar had in mind someone else entirely when he composed the variation. One thing is certain, one of Elgar's closest confidantes at the time had specific ideas of her own. Rosa Burley was the headmistress of 'The Mount' school in Malvern where Elgar taught the violin (and from where he had returned on the evening he first improvised the Variations on the piano to his wife). In her memoirs (*Edward Elgar: the record of a friendship*) she states :

[Variation XIII] is in itself something of an enigma. For many years no name was publicly mentioned in connection with this variation which, like No 10, is practically unrelated to the theme. But Edward told me quite clearly and unequivocally whom it represented and I always supposed that his reason for withholding this lady's name was that extremely

intimate and personal feelings were concerned. The throbbing and the quotation from *Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage* (which might equally have come from the Schumann pianoforte concerto or *Leonore No 3*) bore no reference to the liner and the sea voyage which were afterwards associated with this variation but, as might be expected in a movement named 'Romanza', expressed something very different.

The music critic Ernest Newman, writing in *The Sunday Times* in November 1956 makes a similar inference :

.... a study merely of Elgar's scoring of the variation should make it clear to any person of more than average sensitivity that here he was dwelling in imagination on somebody and something the parting from whom and which had at some time or other torn the very heart out of him.

Clearly, Ernest Newman also did not regard Lady Mary Lygon - whom another writer has since described as 'charming...but quite cold' - as a suitable candidate either. The difficulty about disputing the dedication to Lady Mary Lygon had always been that there appeared to be no other convincing alternative to take her place. The names of Alice Stuart-Wortley and Julia Worthington have been suggested but these were no more convincing than Lady Mary's had been. Then, in 1984, another name was thrown into the arena - Helen Jessie Weaver.

The first conclusive suggestion that this might be the identity behind the Romanza came with the publication of *The Elgar-Atkins Friendship* by E Wulstan Atkins. This book, an account of the friendship between Elgar and the author's father, Sir Ivor Atkins, reveals the full impact of the trauma behind Elgar's broken engagement and the reason why it had not before been made publicly known :

It was on one of my father's visits at this time [1932 or 1933] that Elgar told him about his first engagement in 1883 and how by mutual consent the engagement was broken off the next year. I was not present, and my father did not tell me about it until some years after Elgar's death. He said that he was in a difficult position. Elgar had not stipulated that the matter was confidential, but for nearly fifty years he had never disclosed his first engagement, and my father was certain that Carice did not know about it. On the other hand he felt that this experience had profoundly affected much of Elgar's music and should, therefore, at some time be revealed. After much thought my father considered that in order to avoid any possible distress it should be kept secret until fifty years after Elgar's death, and hence his disclosure to me on the understanding that I would ensure that this information became known in 1984.

In addition, Wulstan Atkins also affirms that it is Helen Weaver who is referred to in the inscription which heads the manuscript of the violin concerto, 'Herein is enshrined the soul of .....

- the five dots standing for the letters of Helen's name. This would seem plausible when it is remembered that Helen was a student of the violin and had gone to study at Leipzig. But was Helen the person whom Elgar had in mind when he scored the thirteenth variation and was it she who, in Ernest Newman's words, had torn the very heart out of him? If this were the case the symbolic aspect of an 'unlucky' 13th variation would seem appropriate.

Prior to 1984 the importance of the Helen Weaver/Edward Elgar relationship had not been fully documented although a brief reference about the ending of his

engagement appears in a letter to Dr Charles Buck, a Yorkshire friend, in 1884. A search of the major biographies of Elgar which include the relevant period and which were published before 1984 reveal scant mention of Helen Weaver. Michael Hurd, Ian Parrott, R J Buckley, Diana McVeagh, and *Grove's Encyclopaedia* (1980 edition) make no mention of Helen specifically nor of any early romance. Percy M. Young (*Elgar O M*) in reference to Elgar's visit to Leipzig describes a "Fraulein, much taken with the young Englishman", thus supporting a popular misconception that the association was with a German girl. Michael de-la-Noy and Simon Mundy also make similar assertions. This erroneous assumption that the relationship was with a German girl comes about by Elgar referring to her as 'my Braut' (my fiancée) in a letter of about this time. Only Michael Kennedy suggests that Helen Weaver, Elgar's 'Braut' and the engagement refer to the same person.

Following Wulstan Atkins' revelation Helen Weaver has emerged from being, to quote Jerrold Northrop Moore, 'a shadowy figure' and has since become a much more convincing contender for the title to the thirteenth variation. The Weaver family owned a prosperous shoe shop at 84 High Street, Worcester, not far from the Elgar's music shop at number 10. Apart from being fellow traders there seems little connection between the two families until the late 1870's when both Elgar and Frank Weaver were active in the music making societies of the city. Frank was Helen's older brother and it is probably through Frank that she and Elgar were first introduced. In 1877 Elgar joined the Worcester Amateur Instrumental Society in which Frank played in the first violins, and by 1882 Elgar had been appointed conductor of the group. Helen Weaver, herself a talented violinist, was studying at the Leipzig Conservatory with the intention of becoming a professional player. It had been Elgar's ambition to study at Leipzig but lack of family funds had always ruled this out. During the summer of 1882 he and Helen began their short association and in October of that year he dedicated to her a polka, *La Blonde*, - 'H.J.W. vom Leipsig gewidmet'. By saving hard Elgar managed to put by enough to visit Helen at Leipzig during January 1883, where they both attended a number of concerts together (also in the company of Edith Groveham, one of Helen's friends). During his stay Elgar lodged at the same pension as Helen and Edith and if this arrangement caused any raising of eyebrows amongst the Elgar and Weaver families, the fact does not appear to have been recorded. Their romance continued to blossom, though necessarily from a distance following Elgar's return to Worcester in mid January. By July 1883 he was looking forward to the summer vacation and it was at this time that he made reference to his 'Braut' returning to Worcester. By the time that Helen had gone back to Leipzig in the September, they had announced their engagement - but this was destined not to last. In November, Helen's stepmother became terminally ill and Helen returned to Worcester to nurse her. Following Mrs Weaver's death on 13 November Helen abandoned her studies in Leipzig and by April 1884 had decided to move away from Worcester - possibly to stay in Bradford with her friend Edith Groveham. Clearly the romance was foundering and by July 1884 Elgar wrote to Charles Buck to say that the "engagement is broken off & I am lonely". No specific reason has ever been discovered, but a difference in religion may have been one possible cause - the Elgars were Catholic and the Weavers, Unitarian. The summer of the following year (1885) saw another brief romantic attachment, this time with Sarah-Anne Wilkinson-Newsholme whom Elgar had met in Yorkshire. The association was terminated by her father who disapproved of the "penniless

musician". The final separation with Helen was sealed at about this time when she decided to emigrate to New Zealand. Writing again to Charles Buck he wrote : "Miss W. is going to New Zealand this month - her lungs are affected I hear & there has been a miserable time for me since I came home". The wording suggests that he had received this information via a third party and was no longer in direct communication with Helen Weaver. The illness referred to was pulmonary tuberculosis, the same disease that had killed her stepmother two years earlier. Why Helen chose New Zealand is not clear - possibly the reason was to benefit from the milder climate. Nicholas Reed, writing in *The Musical Times* in August 1984 ('Elgar's Enigmatic Inamorata') says that Elgar was informed that Helen had died not long after arriving in New Zealand. However, more recent research by Cora Weaver (a relation by marriage) reveals that Helen recovered from her illness and subsequently married and brought up two children. She was to live until 23 December 1927, dying from a tumour just four days short of her 67th birthday.

By this time Elgar was himself seventy years of age and there is no positive indication of how much he knew of Helen's life between the breaking of their engagement in 1884 and her death in 1927. During that time she never returned to England and there is no record that she and Elgar ever communicated again. So what evidence have we that Helen Weaver might be the person in Elgar's thoughts as he composed the thirteenth variation?

When Theodore van Houten published his account of the Variations in 1976, the significance of Helen Weaver's part in the story was not apparent and so he took the popularly held view that it was Lady Mary Lygon who was behind number XIII. The argument that he gives is a lot weaker than those for the other variationees - a fact that is not surprising if he was trying to make the wrong person 'fit' the clues. Using the methods outlined by van Houten can we apply them to the known facts concerning Helen Weaver?

Significant mention has been made of the Mendelssohn quotation in this variation which Elgar states is taken from the overture *Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage*. In identifying this overture, Elgar is leading us to think of Lady Mary Lygon and her voyage to Australia. Could this be a red herring? If Helen Weaver is the true subject, the choice of a quotation by Mendelssohn takes on an added significance as the Gewandhaus at Leipzig - where Helen and Elgar attended concerts - was founded by Mendelssohn. But we can go further than this. We have considered Rosa Burley's statement that the quotation used by Elgar could equally have come from the Schumann piano concerto (which Elgar and Helen heard together at the Gewandhaus) or from Beethoven's Overture Leonore No 3. There is another possible tune, also by Mendelssohn, which can be considered. This is the 'Wedding March' from the incidental music to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Mendelssohn I



The first four notes of the opening melody are strikingly similar to the quotation in Variation XIII. A few bars from the end of the overture Mendelssohn uses the phrase:

Mendelssohn II



By shifting the key of the first four notes of this phrase and transposing it to the time signature of Variation XIII we get a sequence - shown here with the ascending tails - which compares pretty closely to the quotation used by Elgar :

Mendelssohn II (transposed)



Elgar



Could this be the tune that sprang to Elgar's mind - the breaking off after four notes symbolically representing the breaking of the engagement? The 'Wedding March' is, to use Elgar's own words, "so well-known that it is extraordinary that no-one has found it". Indeed, it would be reasonable to say that there can be few tunes that are better known than this one. Admittedly, Elgar was referring to the Enigma theme and not to the quotation in variation thirteen - but maybe some keen musicologist can detect a link there as well. But can we find any further significance for the inclusion of this quotation? Now, Elgar knew his Shakespeare, and the march by Mendelssohn was written specifically for a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Using van Houten's methods of lateral thinking and cryptic cross-referencing can we find any further significance for the choice of this particular Shakespearean play? Whilst he was at work on the Variations he wrote to A.J. Jaeger at his publishers, Novello :

...I have sketched a set of Variations (orkestra) on an original theme : the Variations have amused me because I've labelled 'em with the nicknames of my particular friends - you are Nimrod. That is to say I've written the Variations each one to represent the mood of the "party" - I've liked to imagine the "party" writing the var : him (or her) self & have written what I think they wd. have written - if they were asses enough to compose - its a quaint idea & the result is amusing to those behind the scenes & won't affect the hearer who "nose nuffin." What think you?

In the letter he uses the phrase "if they were asses enough to compose" and in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the ass is Bottom (or, at least, Bottom is the character who ends up with an ass's head). In the *Dramatis Personae* to the play Shakespeare gives Bottom's profession as 'a Weaver'. There is also a character in the play called Helena so, by not too great a stretch of the imagination, we have a Helen(a) and a 'Weaver' appearing together on the same stage. Is it possible that Elgar, with his liking for wordplay, and possibly even subconsciously, had used the sequence : ass



- Bottom - Weaver in the same way as he had also linked Nimrod - Hunter - Jaeger in the ninth variation?

Perhaps it's stretching a point, but if we accept the possibility of an influence by the works of Pope, the following extract, also from the *Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot*, has an added double reference to an ass :

Keep close to Ears, and those let Asses prick,  
'Tis nothing' - Nothing? if they bite and kick?  
Out with it Dunciad! let the secret pass,  
That Secret to each Fool, that he's an Ass:

Finally, to quote Pope again, consider the following couplet from his translation of the *Odyssey* :

Accept, dear youth, this monument of love  
Long since, in better days, by Helen wove.

Did Elgar see in that quotation a reminder of the long-lost love of his youth - the two consecutive words "Helen wove" suggesting to him the name of Helen Weaver? And did the *Odyssey* of the poem's title put him in mind of the final separation - Helen's voyage to the other side of the world?

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## A KEY TO THE ENIGMA

Charles Ross

The identification of the "other" theme of the *Variations*, the "Enigma" itself, has for a long time baffled musicians. It is assumed to be a well-known tune. Certainly, it must be in some way related to the theme; for, as Elgar wrote : "The Enigma I will not explain - its 'dark saying' must be left unguessed...further, through and over the whole set another and larger theme 'goes', but is not played".

It seems to me that a very strong candidate is *Heart of Oak*, which was composed by no less a figure than William Boyce, with words by David Garrick, for a pantomime in 1759, *Harlequin's Invasion*. It was Boyce's swansong for the theatres, and thus signified the end of ten years' collaboration with Garrick<sup>1</sup>; the nationalistic sentiment of this popular Sea Song ("Still Britain shall triumph, her ships plough the sea") which is a march in 4/4 time, could well have helped recommend the tune to Elgar.

To proceed with the points as they arise in Elgar's score. The opening of the theme, a sequence of minor thirds, is directly harmonically related to *Heart of Oak*, but with the latter in the minor key, not in the original major. Could not the phrase, "dark

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<sup>1</sup> See the article on Boyce in the New Grove Dictionary.

saying", be Elgar's cryptic way of hinting that the theme was actually in a *minor* key? If we arrange *Heart of Oak* in G minor, we can set it beside Elgar's work and see if the "larger theme" 'goes'.

The first two bars of the *Variations* have the following harmonic sequence : G minor (tonic), D (dominant seventh, with F# as the leading note), G minor (first inversion), C minor, and in the third bar G minor (second inversion). As can be seen from Example 1 below, *Heart of Oak* fits the sequence exactly, with the second G minor chord (ie. first inversion) corresponding to a G minor chord on the first syllable of "glory".

Ex. 1

Variations

G minor    D Dominant 7th    G minor    C minor    G minor

"Heart of Oak" in G minor

Come cheer up my lads 'tis to glo- ry we steer

G minor    D Dominant 7th    G minor    C minor    G minor

Elgar's theme is binary. The second element of the theme, which is actually in G major (with B $\flat$  raised to B $\sharp$  and E $\flat$  raised to E $\sharp$ ), follows the opening harmonies of the theme closely, with the inverted dominant seventh unchanged (see Example 2). This time *Heart of Oak* goes in its proper major tonality.

Ex. 2

The second element consists of a rising figure of four notes on flutes, clarinets and violins in thirds, plus an answering falling motif again in thirds. Although, as stated, this section is in the major tonality, there is a strong connection with the relative minor (as indeed there is throughout the work; as, for example in the minor sixths' polarity to the home key of G minor and the related B $\flat$  major in the repeat of the opening theme on the violins at fig.1 in the score, the second violins adumbrating the melody of Variation IX to appear later in E $\flat$  major). Here, the ascending thirds in G major share the same notes of the key of E minor. If we now invert the four notes, they will be equal to the descending figure in *Heart of Oak* ("glory we steer") in the minor.

Ex.3



Variation V (R.P.A.) is actually based on and starts with the descending four-note figure in the minor key (C minor) where it is stated by the violins in unison, with the opening theme now subordinated and dovetailed as an answering figure on the bassoons, cellos and basses.

Ex.4

Moderato

15 sul G largamente

Violini I II

*mf*

Fg Vcl Bassi

Ex.4 shows musical notation for Variation V. The top staff is for Violini I and II, starting at measure 15. The key signature is C minor (three flats). The tempo is Moderato. The instruction "sul G largamente" is written above the staff. The dynamic marking *mf* is below the staff. The bottom staff is for Fg Vcl Bassi. The music features a descending four-note motif in C minor.

The descending four-note motif is perceived in the major key - now as it should sound! - in Variation IX at fig.35 in the noble *crescendo* linking passage before the *forte* restatement of 'Nimrod'.

Ex.5

35

vcl

*pp*

viole bassi

violini viole

*p* *cresc* *mf*

Ex.5 shows musical notation for Variation IX, starting at measure 35. The top staff is for vcl (violin), and the bottom staff is for viole bassi (viola and bass). The key signature is G major (one sharp). The dynamic marking *pp* is below the vcl staff. The bottom staff has dynamic markings *p*, *cresc*, and *mf*. The music features a descending four-note motif in G major.

The inversion of the four-note motif in the major figures predominantly in the Finale, which re-elaborates all the themes. At fig.66 the motif is announced in the major in counterpoint against the same theme in its original ascending form (see Example 6), a treatment which is repeated later in the Finale at fig.74. Worth noting is fig.68, where in the full orchestra the inverted four-note motif occurs again, but this time against the opening theme.

Ex. 6

Violini I

Violo

And so to Variation XIII (Romanza). Elgar's quotation on the clarinet from Mendelssohn's Overture *Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage* is significant on two counts. First, its title might well provide a clue to the *Sea Song Heart of Oak*; but in addition to any nautical connotations, it is answered by another phrase, still on the clarinet, which is identical to another phrase from *Heart of Oak* - again, in the minor ("to honour we call").

Ex. 7<sup>2</sup>

To hon - our we call you not press you like slaves

Elgar repeats the quotation and answer over a rocking accompaniment on the strings three times in all. First over the key of A $\flat$  major modulating to C minor; then again over A $\flat$  major modulating to F minor through C major. And finally, dropping the melody by a fourth, so that it is now identical to Example 7, over E $\flat$  major modulating to the merest *pianissimo* back to the home key of G major.

Ex. 8

Clarineti

Violo  
Violoncelli

molto tranquillo

solo

ppp

molto express

dim e rit

etc

PPPP

<sup>2</sup> Boyce's original version was actually the following :

Consultation of various nineteenth-century arrangements suggests that this was still the published version around the time of the composition of the *Variations*. The later version, however, occurs in a choral album arrangement of 1912, and we must assume that it was familiar before that.

Variation XIV ("Finale") opens with a series of descending fourths and fifths, which proceed insistently for seventeen bars. The fact that we are now in a major key can only be grasped from the concluding *pppp* B $\sharp$  of the second clarinet at the close of the preceding piece, followed by a pause, and by the syncopated *ppp* B $\sharp$  fairly low in the brass.

Ex. 9

61 Allegro

pp

Violini I

Vcl. I

Tromboni e Tuba  
Vcl. II e Bassi

If we supplied the B $\sharp$  to the descending figure of the strings, we would have a phrase to all intents and purposes equal to "Steady, boys, steady!" (in the major). In addition, the rhythm is reminiscent of *Heart of Oak* if we bear in mind the placing of the rests, and omit the last fourth.

Ex. 10

steady boys, stead - y!

steady boys stead - y

This triad in root position with octave has actually been announced, with a different configuration, at the beginning of the 'Romanza' on the clarinet.

Ex. 11

55 Moderato

Clarineti

## MENUHIN RECORDS ELGAR FOR TRING INTERNATIONAL

On a dull Sunday afternoon in May, the President of the Elgar Society, Lord Menuhin, was putting the finishing touches to his recording of Elgar's Concert Overture *In the South (Allassio)* with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra for Tring International. He drew a brilliantly exciting finale from the orchestra after producer John West had felt that morning that its tempo was rather slow.

In the lunch break interview, immediately after the long morning's session, Menuhin confirmed that it had to be speeded up. "There should be no let up until the *poco ritardando* of the penultimate bar", he exclaimed. He was in fine form with no trace of tiredness, eyes sparkling as he talked animatedly about Elgar's music.

"I was delighted to learn that the Orchestra adore this piece; some of them feel that *In the South* is their favourite Elgar work", he enthused. "The exuberance, the gentleness, the *fortissimo* and *dolce* contrasts...and the accents are never brutal, never aggressive. The music is full of vitality carrying you forward through the whole piece from the first note to the last, and the viola melody of the Canto Popolare is very beautiful.

"I was concerned to observe the basic pulse of the music. It's very important with Elgar, the pulse should not be pulled around too much as it marks the music".

John West has worked with Menuhin on many of the Virgin Elgar recordings - and others including Menuhin's 75th Birthday recording of Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* - and has built up a strong mutual rapport. John commented that it was always a great joy working with the Maestro. "He has such a fantastic musical insight", he said. "He understands the Elgar idiom so well having played the music for sixty-odd years. He shapes it brilliantly and the orchestra really enjoy working with him".

In recent years Lord Menuhin has made a number of distinguished recordings of Elgar's works including one of the *Cello Concerto* with Julian Lloyd Webber for Philips. His recording was judged to be the best version available in one magazine's comparative survey of recordings of the work. His Virgin recording of the *First Symphony* also drew high praise from Jerrold Northrop Moore in a recent Radio 3 comparative survey. Menuhin has to date recorded for Virgin the *Symphonies* and the *Pomp & Circumstance Marches* plus the *Violin Concerto* with Dmitry Sitkovetsky (produced by Andrew Keener) which is reviewed in this issue.

Yehudi Menuhin was also scheduled to record the *Violin Concerto* again, as conductor, about a week later in May. This time it would be with an ex-student - Leland Chen - in Arnhem, Holland, with the Het Gelders Orkest.

Ian Lace



*Lord Menuhin's third recording of the Elgar Violin Concerto, this time as conductor of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra which accompanied the young Russian violinist Dmitry Sitkovetsky. (The disc is reviewed on p.288) The photograph was taken on those steps at the entrance to the Abbey Road Studios. (Photo : Leonard Smith • Virgin Classics)*

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1994

Eighty members attended the AGM held in the Lyttelton Rooms, Church Street, Malvern on 4 June at 2.30 pm. The Chairman, Andrew Neill, welcomed all to the meeting and read a message of good wishes from the President, Lord Menuhin.

He referred to the successful issue during the year of the CD transfer of the Sargent recording of *The Dream of Gerontius* by Testament Records. The Chairman referred with pleasure to the honours bestowed upon Dr Donald Hunt and Wulstan Atkins of the OBE and MBE respectively. The re-formed South-West Branch is flourishing; but there had been a disappointing take-up by former Friends of the Birthplace. He spoke of various recordings recently issued and future recording projects, including the piano music by Anthony Goldstone on the Elgar Broadwood piano owned by the Cobbe Foundation. The Chairman spoke about the possibility of a Dinner in 1995, and the matter of publicity and recruitment. He spoke at length about the situation at Broadheath, the opposition to a golf course, and the progress with the proposal for an Elgar Centre for English Music at Malvern. He voiced his preference for 'British' Music.

The Secretary reviewed the work of the Committee. She was acting as caretaker Treasurer to the East Anglian Branch which was experiencing difficulties at present. A working party was examining the Constitution. It was hoped that some form of financial assistance be found for Plas Gwyn. The third Choral Festival would take place on 21/22 October. Marjorie Thomas has agreed to speak to the Society at the next AGM possibly as the A T Shaw Memorial lecture.

The Membership Secretary reported a total of 1,387. A decline of 92 from last year was mainly due to friends of the Birthplace not joining the Society when their free period of membership expired. There have been 92 new members so far this year. Branch membership is as follows : London 281; West Midlands 216; South West 99; Yorkshire 62; North West 57; Southern 45; East Anglia 39; South Wales 31. There are 100 overseas members.

The Treasurer presented the accounts showing a deficit of £1,679 and a balance in the general Fund of £7,930. It was agreed to raise the subscription to £15 (£7-50 for students). The Treasurer stated that it was hoped to present a new constitution at the 1995 AGM. Mr A G Benselin was re-elected as Auditor. The Constitution was amended to include Publicity Officer among the officers.

The Journal Editor reviewed the work of the JOURNAL and announced a change of publication dates to March, July and November to avoid the difficulty of holidays. There would be an extra edition this November.

Ian Lacey, Chairman of the International Sub-Committee, told the meeting that most Overseas Members were in the USA or Canada, and there had been interest in forming branches there.

Jacob O'Callaghan, Chairman of the Conservation Sub-Committee, reported that attempts to obtain listing for the Powick Ballroom had been unsuccessful. The



following motion was put to the meeting, proposed by Jacob O'Callaghan and seconded by Hilary Elgar:

In the light of the expression of public opinion, backed by the Elgar family, against the controversial nature of current proposals for the development near and around the Birthplace, this AGM calls for a full public debate, before any irrevocable steps are taken, with the participation of all interested parties, on how the whole locality can honour Elgar.

70 voted for, 5 against, 4 abstained.

Lord Menuhin was re-elected President and the Vice-Presidents were re-elected with the addition of Robert Anderson. The Chairman and Officers were re-elected and Ian Lace elected as Publicity Officer. The re-election of eligible members of the Committee was carried and, after a ballot, it was declared that James Holt and Warwick Round had been elected.

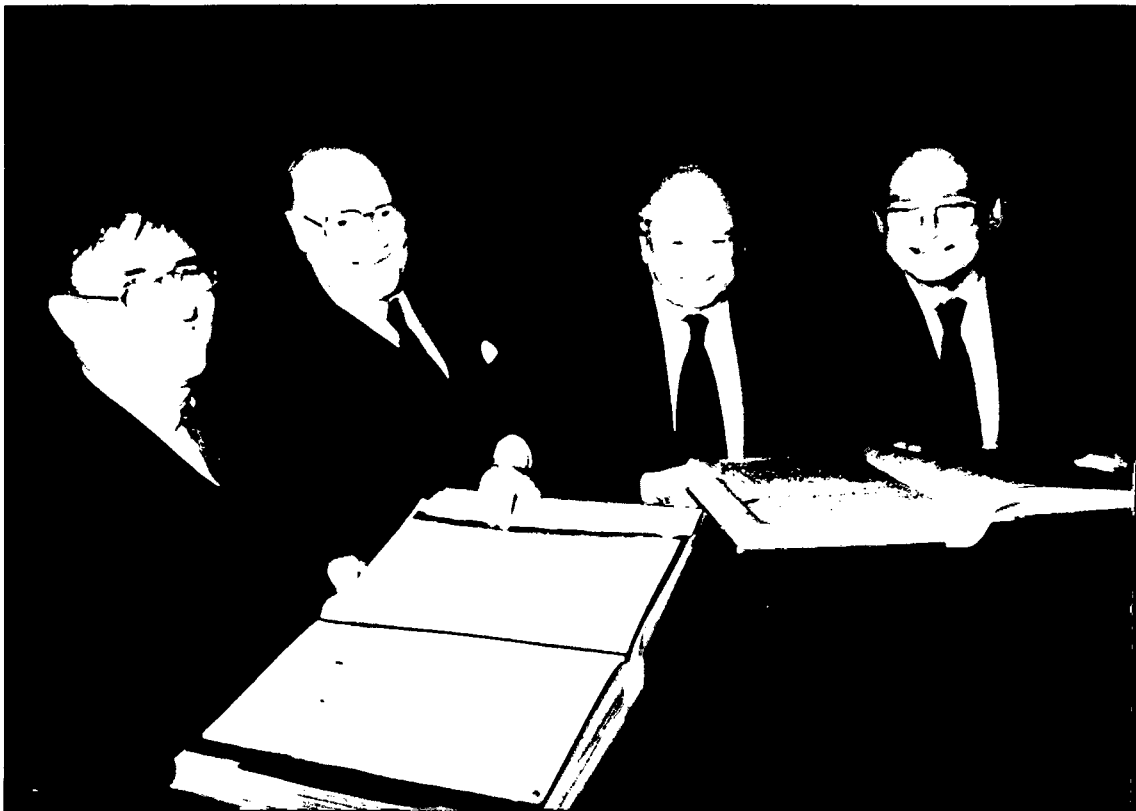
Under Any Other Business it was announced that financial assistance was being sought by the composer's widow for the production of William Alwyn's opera *Miss Julie*; and it was hoped that the Society look for means to encourage composers as well as performers.

Next year's AGM will be held on 3 June in Malvern.

Following the AGM and tea, members heard an Organ Recital given by Simon Holt in Malvern Priory. The programme consisted of works by Gigout, Festing, Boëllmann, Howells and Walton. The first movement of the *G major Organ Sonata* was played, plus the *Imperial March*, and *For Dot's Nuns*, a rarely heard piece written for Elgar's sister's Order.

On Sunday a larger number than usual enjoyed coffee at Birchwood by kind invitation of Rev Michael and Mrs Eileen Vockins, and many visited the upstairs room, overlooking the Malvern Hills, where Elgar wrote much of *The Dream of Gerontius*. 78 members joined the Secretary and her husband for a ploughman's lunch in their new flat. Fortunately, the weather was good so that some could spill out into the garden!

The customary Evensong and Wreath-laying ceremony took place at Worcester Cathedral. Many commented on the suitable choice of music : Atkins' *Evening Service* and Elgar's *Go, Song of Mine*. There followed sherry and birthday celebrations at the Birthplace and the presentation of a cover for the Aeolian harp by the 'Promenaders'!



*On 23 February - the 60th anniversary of Elgar's death - a ceremony took place at the Huntingdon Hall in Worcester, when important manuscript copies of Elgar's works were exchanged between the British Library in London and the Elgar Birthplace at Broadheath.*

*First, British Library President Sir Anthony Kenny and Music Librarian Hugh Cobbe gave the Elgar Foundation a facsimile copy of Elgar's First Symphony.*

*Then Wulstan Atkins, joint President of the Foundation, presented a facsimile copy of the Second Symphony, which will be placed in the British Library. It is hoped that this will be the first of many such exchanges.*

*Mrs Diana Quinney, Appeal Director for the Foundation, said : "By sharing our resources like this, we are doubling the opportunities for those who want to study Elgar's music".*

*The photograph shows (from left to right) : Hugh Cobbe; Wulstan Atkins; Sir Anthony Kenny; and James Bennett, Curator of the Birthplace Museum.*

*The evening concluded with a short recital led by Dr Donald Hunt.*

*(Photograph courtesy of the Worcester Evening News)*

## CAMBRIDGE ELGAR FESTIVAL

A celebration of British Music

6 - 26 November 1994



In 1991 a Mozart Festival to celebrate the bi-centenary of the composer's death was successfully held in Cambridge. As a result the organisers were asked to consider arranging another festival at some point, to involve local musicians, students, work among schoolchildren, and to enable local business to sponsor events. After consultation with local musicians, they came back with the idea of an Elgar Festival as this year sees the sixtieth anniversary of Elgar's death (also Delius and Holst). The decisive impetus came from the University Opera Society, who had been offered the chance to put on the world première of *The Spanish Lady*, the opera left unfinished by Elgar at his death. It has been recently reconstructed by Dr Percy Young, himself a Selwyn graduate, who was very happy to work in Cambridge again.

The Festival will include music by living composers, some with a Cambridge connection, and so provide an "overview" of British music over the last sixty years. The organising committee includes two eminent university musicians with impeccable Elgarian credentials, Christopher Robinson (former Society Chairman) and Stephen Cleobury.

Although the Festival officially begins on 6 November, there is a 'Pre-Festival Recital' on 4th by the Angell Piano Trio which will include the Elgar *Violin Sonata*. On Sunday 6th the Festival Service at 3.30 in King's College Chapel will include *Give unto the Lord*. That evening the opening orchestral concert will feature the University Chamber Orchestra under Jacek Kaspszyk playing *Polonia*, and Tasmin Little will play the *Violin Concerto*. The following evening the CBSO conducted by

Mark Elder will play the *Second Symphony*. Tuesday 8th sees a cello recital by Julian Lloyd Webber; while on the Wednesday Susanna Walton and Richard Baker are the reciters in Walton's *Façade*. Thursday 10th sees a song recital "In fields where roses fade" by Stephen Varcoe, featuring songs and poetry of wartime, by Elgar, Ireland, Gurney, and Butterworth, among others. On Friday 11th - Remembrance Day - Christopher Robinson conducts the University Choir in *The Spirit of England*, and the *Enigma Variations* are also on the programme. Saturday evening will be busy for Elgarians; a performance of the *Organ Sonata* by Stephen Cleobury in King's at 6.30, while at 8.00 in St John's the Fairhaven Singers perform Stanford's *Three Motets*, and *The Light of Life* (with organ accompaniment). That same evening Nicholas Daniel will conduct the Britten Sinfonia in the *Introduction & Allegro* and other British works.

The second week begins on Sunday 13th. The second Festival Service (at St John's) will include *Great is the Lord*, and then at 7.30 *The Dream of Gerontius* will be given by the Cambridge Chorus under Alan Rochford. On Tuesday 15 Elinor Carter (contralto) will sing *Sea Pictures* accompanied by the Clare College Music Society Orchestra. On Wednesday 16th the Endellion Quartet and Peter Pettinger will give a recital to include the *Piano Quintet*; and on Thursday Guy Woolfenden conducts the Sinfonia of Cambridge in the *Serenade for Strings* and works by Vaughan Williams, Brahms and Bartók. On Saturday 19th from 10.00 to 6.00 Paul Trepte will direct an Elgar Choral Workshop in Saffron Walden Parish Church including the *Motets* (Op.2) and *From the Bavarian Highlands*. In the evening the Cambridge Philharmonic Society under Matthew Rowe perform *The Apostles* in King's College Chapel.

The third Festival Service on Sunday 20th is a Sung Matins at Great St Mary's, and will include the *Te Deum and Benedictus* and *The Spirit of the Lord*. Christopher Robinson's organ recital at 6.30 in St John's will comprise *Cantique*, *Vesper Voluntaries*, and the *Organ Sonata no 2*. At 8.30 English Voices under Timothy Brown perform English music including *From the Greek Anthology*. On 21st the New Queen's Hall Orchestra conducted by James Judd will perform the *First Symphony*, and works by Vaughan Williams. On Wednesday 23rd the Cambridge University Musical Society conducted by Stephen Cleobury will give *The Kingdom*. Then on the 24th, 25th and 26th *The Spanish Lady* will be given by the University Opera Society conducted by Will Lacey. Also on the 24th the Coull Quartet's programme includes the *String Quartet*. The 'Last Night of the Proms' on Saturday 26th includes *Cockaigne*, and Anna Carewe playing the *Cello Concerto*, and of course *Land of Hope and Glory*.

One stands amazed at the comprehensiveness of the Festival - every major Elgar work except *Falstaff* and *In the South*, and there is so much more besides which lack of space precludes. The organisers regret that they were unable to send a copy of the brochure to every Society member; but I trust that those living within reach of Cambridge (and perhaps many who don't!) will write off and support this wonderful enterprise. The brochure, which contains a booking form, is available from the Administrator, Cambridge Elgar Festival, 10 Gurney Way, Cambridge CB4 2ED (telephone and fax: 0223 350544). We wish the Festival every success.

## RANDOM RAMBLINGS...

On 23 April in Radio 3's 'Building a Library' Jerrold Northrop Moore reviewed the available recordings of the *First Symphony*, not an easy task with so many versions to choose from. Dr Moore emphasised the uniqueness - musical as well as historical - of Elgar's own recording of 1930, currently only available in the three-disc set of "The Elgar Edition" Vol 1. Much of the comment focused on tempo, and a distinction was drawn between those conductors who tend towards *allegro*, and those who tend towards *adagio*. Dr Moore was dismissive of the 1962 Barbirolli recording, which falls firmly into the second category. "Adagios were his meat and drink", he said. "If you can't resist this issue, go and get it, and God go with you!" Even guiltier in this area were Thomson and Sinopoli. Versions which gained general approval were those by Solti, Andrew Davis, Slatkin, and Judd; but Dr Moore's top three were by Marriner, Zinman, and his final choice, George Hurst on the budget label Naxos (reviewed by John Knowles in our last issue).

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One of the early champions of this symphony was Artur Nikisch, who introduced it to Germany soon after its première in December 1908. In London the following May to conduct the work at a Philharmonic Society concert, he was interviewed for *The Musical Times*, and his remarks are worth quoting in full.

"I consider Elgar's symphony a masterpiece of the first order, one that will soon be justly ranked on the same level with the great symphonic models - Beethoven and Brahms. The music is strong in invention, workmanship, and development from beginning to end. I find that some critics have expressed a somewhat unfavourable opinion of the first movement; but it is so logical, so well balanced, and there is so much in it that only needs to be properly expressed in order to make everything clear. Each time I conduct the work my admiration for it - very sincere and not superficial from the beginning - increases. It was the same with my orchestra at the Gewandhaus, Leipzig. There I held four rehearsals of the symphony, and on each successive occasion the players became more and more excited, until they were almost as enthusiastic as myself. Our audiences are naturally cold towards anything new, but the work was a great success, and aroused great enthusiasm.

"You will remember that when Brahms produced his first symphony it was called 'Beethoven's Tenth', because it followed on the lines of the nine great masterpieces of Beethoven. I will therefore call Elgar's symphony 'the fifth of Brahms'. I hope to introduce it to Berlin, with my Philharmonic Orchestra there, next October, and in the same week we shall play it in Hamburg : to these performances I look forward with much pleasure".

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This year sees the one hundredth season of Promenade Concerts, which as might be expected is somewhat retrospective in its choice of programmes. There is a reproduction of a Prom from September 1900, and several evenings devoted to those particularly associated with the Proms - Henry Wood, Constant Lambert, Sargent, Boult, Basil Cameron, William Glock, and Boulez. The Henry Wood evening includes

the Funeral March from *Grania and Diarmid*, dedicated to the conductor; and other Elgar this year includes both symphonies, the *Variations*, the *Violin Concerto* (soloist Tasmin Little), the *Introduction & Allegro*, *In the South*, two organ pieces, and the Last Night regulars.

An unlikely Elgar aficionado has appeared in the form of Jools Holland, TV presenter, jazz pianist, and cult figure among the young. He wrote in *Radio Times*: "I love Elgar. I went to his cottage in Worcester which had things like his gloves, record player and golf clubs. I play his music in my car and feel even closer to the great bod himself. If you like the person you'll like his art".

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The second Michael Richards memorial presentation at London Branch has been arranged for Saturday 26 November at 2 pm in the Read Theatre at Imperial College, South Kensington. Wulstan Atkins MBE who celebrates his 90th birthday just two days before the meeting will be "In Conversation", and doubtless share some of his unique Elgarian memories as well as letting us hear some favourite and appropriate music. There is no charge for admission, but tickets are to be issued in advance and may be obtained from the Branch Secretary David Bury (address on back cover), Please enclose a s.a.e. It is recommended that those intending to be present acquire tickets, since we hope for a full house. Tea will be available after the meeting at a small charge. Parking is available at Imperial College, but again this is charged for by the College authorities.

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A Study Day focusing on the music of Elgar and Strauss and the links between them is to be organised jointly by the Richard Strauss Society and the Elgar Society's London Branch. The tutor will be David Nice, author, music critic for *The Guardian*, and Radio 3 Saturday Review broadcaster.

The Study Day is planned for Saturday 14 January 1995 and will be held at the Swedenborg Hall, Barter Street, off Bloomsbury Way, London WC1 (roughly half-way between Holborn and Tottenham Court Road tube stations) from 10 am - 5 pm (coffee served from 9.30). The cost is £11 for Society members and £12-50 for guests, to include morning coffee and biscuits and afternoon tea and biscuits. Once again, tickets may be obtained from David Bury (s.a.e. required).

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The July issue of the *British Journal of Psychiatry* contains an article entitled 'Creativity and Psychopathology' by Felix Port. The article seeks "to determine the prevalences of various psychopathologies in outstandingly creative individuals", whom he classifies under six headings : scientists and inventors, thinkers and scholars, statesmen and national leaders, painters and sculptors, composers, and novelists and playwrights. The study involved 291 men - women were excluded because of a lack of sufficient biographical information. Dr Port found that they were mostly "emotionally warm, with a gift for friendship and sociability" : most had "minor 'neurotic' abnormalities in greater measure than in the general population";

but severe personality deviations were "unduly frequent only in the case of visual artists and writers". His conclusion is that "certain pathological personality characteristics...are causally linked to some kinds of valuable creativity". Each group of people were grouped in one of four psychopathological categories - none, mild, marked, and severe. Fifty-two composers are selected : Elgar is placed in the "severe" group along with fifteen others, including Berlioz, Wagner, Rachmaninov, and Tchaikovsky. The only other British composers included are Britten and Sullivan, who both fall into the "mild" category. A fascinating theory upon which I feel unqualified to comment, except to say that as most of those chosen are dead, there must be a high degree of subjectivity in any analysis of their characters.

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In June Radio 3 featured a series of interval talks entitled "Where are they now?" by Kenneth Shenton (members will recall his article on Elgar and Wolstenholme in the last JOURNAL). The series looked at the careers of five composers, popular in their day, but who had fallen into relative oblivion. Wolstenholme was one of those featured, along with John Stanley, Thomas Attwood, Mary Wakefield, and Cyril Rootham. Rootham's place in the Elgar story is well-known, with the controversy surrounding *For the Fallen*. Mary Wakefield, a close friend of Ruskin, was founder of the Westmoreland Festival, and one of the prime movers in the competitive festival movement which sprang up around the turn of the century. She tried without success to involve Elgar in the Association of Music Competition Festivals which she set up in 1904, knowing of his experience at Madresfield and Morecambe. However, he did offer moral support and made several helpful suggestions.

\* \* \* \* \*

I found the letters from Elgar to Wolstenholme extremely interesting, particularly the reference to the piece for string orchestra that Elgar mentions in his letter of 2 February 1888. It "will be in G", he says, beginning with an "Introduction about 16 bars" followed by "Allegretto, 4/4 in G major". It seems that either or both of these could be identified with what became the Woodland Interlude from *Caractacus*, which is certainly 4/4 in G, and its *Allegro piacevole* marking is similar to *allegretto*. The music is found in a sketchbook dated 1-11-87 and labelled "Intro?/Suite for Strings prelude" (see Anderson, *Elgar in Manuscript*, p.189). The first movement of Elgar's Suite as it was played in Worcester on 7 May 1888 was headed 'Spring Song' (*Allegro*). Could this have become, ten years later, "The Forest near the Severn. Morning"?

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More Elgarian news from abroad. Eight amateur musicians and Elgar enthusiasts met in Vancouver, Canada, early this year to listen to some of the chamber works, including the *String Quartet*, and a number of the songs which were unfamiliar to all. The event which included a presentation on Elgar and our Society was arranged by Vancouver member, Dr Patrick Kinahan MD. It was so successful that further meetings are planned and it is hoped that the group's membership will be extended

further afield to cover the Pacific North West of America including Seattle.

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The third Elgar Choral Festival will be held in Worcester on 21 and 22 October. For amateur choirs and performers, each of the nineteen classes has an Elgar piece plus an "own choice" which must be by a British composer. The adjudicators include George Guest, John Sanders and Marjorie Thomas. The closing date for entries has now passed, but those wishing to attend the final competition and concert should apply to the Festival Administrator, Far Netherbury, Old Road, Lower Wick, Worcester WR2 4BU.

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In April the children's supplement to the *Daily Telegraph*, "Young Telegraph", carried a full-page comic-strip life of Elgar, complete with captions and speech balloons. It concentrated on *Land of Hope and Glory*, and was fairly accurate. One caption stated that "Elgar's wife was wealthier than him, so he was able to spend his time composing music". The next cartoon of Elgar conducting an orchestra has one of the audience saying, "The music is so complex - the composer must be a genius", a wonderful post-Schoenbergian *non sequitur*.

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On 15 September at Screen 2 at the National Film Theatre on the South Bank there will be a showing of the 1962 Ken Russell film on Elgar, together with archive film of Elgar at home and at work. The programme will be introduced by film historian and Society member Andrew Youdell. Telephone bookings can be made on 071-928 3232. Further screenings are planned for 10 October at the Taliesin Arts Centre, University College, Swansea at 7.30 pm (tel : 0792 296883); 12 October at Cinema City, Norwich at 7.30 pm (tel : 0603 622047); 30 October at Watershed, 1 Canon's Road, Bristol at 3.00 pm (tel : 0272 276444); and on 6 November at the Arts Cinema, Cambridge at 2.00 pm (0223 462666).

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On successive evenings, 3 and 4 June, *The Dream of Gerontius* was given its first performances in Buffalo, N Y, by the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Raymond Harvey. Considerable excitement was generated in the city, and the performances were well received. The *Buffalo News* described the work as "a 1900 masterpiece that ranks right up there with Handel's *Messiah* and Mendelssohn's *Elijah* among the greatest of all oratorios". The critic said that "the musical setting can be a powerfully involving experience for people of any faith or none", and was highly complimentary of the performers. Three separate choirs made up the chorus, and "in the huge crescendo in.. 'Praise to the Holiest' they unleashed a power that sent chills down the spine". A friend of Society member Walter Firmstone was present and told him: "When *Gerontius* came to a close, the large crowd rose to their feet and accorded everyone concerned three standing ovations!!"



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Many members will be familiar with the bust of Elgar in Priory Park, Malvern, which was unveiled in 1960; but few will know the name of its sculptor, Hilary Carruthers, who is the widow of the first Principal of the Yehudi Menuhin School. Sadly she is now in failing health, but recently Malvern Hills District Council have agreed to have a suitable plaque placed on the plinth giving credit to its creator.

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While preparing the notes for Simon Holt's organ recital at 4 June, I was struck by the similarity of the second subject of the *Organ Sonata's* first movement to the "big" tune in the penultimate section of *The Light of Life* - written within a few months of each other and both, incidentally, dedicated to Dr Swinnerton Heap.

ELGAR: Organ Sonata, Op28 (1895) - 1st Movement, 2nd subject

ELGAR: The Light of Life. Op 29 (1895-96) - No 15, letter G  
(transcribed down a semitone)

[Allegro]

Andantino, Crotchet = 66



\* \* \* \* \*

The journal *Book & Magazine Collector* has in its August number produced a bibliography of books about Elgar, including a guide to current values of first editions. It is quite comprehensive, though there are omissions, such as Thomas Dunhill's 1938 book, Keith Alldritt's 1979 novel, and the second edition of John Knowles' *Discography*. The introductory article by the Editor, Crispin Jackson, is certainly contentious - he ranks Purcell, Vaughan Williams and Britten as greater among English composers - but is generally a very fair summary of writings about Elgar. It even includes a recent paperback publication by Oberon entitled *The Composer Plays* (pun unintentional?) by David Pownall, which includes not only *Elgar's Rondo* but the radio play *Elgar's Third*, broadcast in March. The price is £8.99.

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Stephen Bottomore is researching a book about the early years of the cinema, from around 1895 to 1914, and is particularly interested in examining the reaction of important artists and writers to the new medium. If anyone knows of any link between Elgar and the early cinema, they should contact Mr Bottomore at 27

Roderick Road, London NW3 2NN.

### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

3 September	The Dream of Gerontius <i>A.Murray,P.Langridge,A.Miles/RSNO &amp; Ch/Mackerras</i>	Usher Hall Edinburgh 8.00 pm
4 September	Cello Concerto <i>Alban Gerhardt/City London Sinf/ Jenkins</i>	Arundel Cathedral 6.00 pm
14 September	Violin Concerto <i>Peter Thomas/CBSO/Rattle</i>	Town Hall Cheltenham 7.30 pm
15 September	Repeat of above concert	The Anvil Basingstoke 7.30 pm
16 September	Repeat of above concert	The Derrnigate Centre Northampton 7.30 pm
24 September	Grania & Diarmid (complete), Wand of Youth Suite no 2 <i>Rutland Sinf/Collett</i>	Festival Hall Corby 7.30 pm
25 September	Symphony no 1 <i>L Phil Youth O/ Andrea Quinn</i>	Queen Elizabeth Hall South Bank 7.45 pm
4 October	Violin Concerto <i>Kremer/CBSO/Rattle</i>	Symphony Hall Birmingham 7.30 pm
8 October	The Kingdom <i>P.McMahon,H.Boyd,G.Lovatt,J.Hearne/ Edinburgh Bach Choir/Scott Sinf/Mantle</i>	St Michael's Church Linlithgow 7.30 pm
9 October	repeat of above concert	Greyfriars Church Edinburgh 7.45 pm
12 October	Introduction & Allegro <i>London Festival O/Pople</i>	St John's Church Smith Square 7.30 pm
16 October	Serenade for Strings <i>Vivaldi Concertante</i>	St John's Church Smith Square 7.30 pm
19 October	Symphony no 1 <i>RLPO/Handley</i>	Anglican Cathedral Liverpool 7.30 pm

19 October	Cello Concerto <i>Harrell/RPO/Menuhin</i>	Royal Concert Hall Nottingham
20 October	repeat of above concert	Royal Festival Hall South Bank 7.30 pm
22 October	The Dream of Gerontius <i>P.Bardon, J.Lavender, J.Rath/ Bradford Fest Chor Soc/RLPO Lloyd-Jones</i>	St George's Hall Bradford Box Office : 0274 752000
26 October	Cello Concerto <i>Wallfisch/RLPO/Leppard</i>	Anglican Cathedral Liverpool 7.30 pm
27 October	repeat of above concert	Anglican Cathedral Liverpool 7.30 pm
30 October	Symphony no 2 <i>Guildford PO/Handley</i>	Civic Hall Guildford 3.00 pm Tickets : 0483 444666
1 November	Symphony no 2 <i>CBSO/Elder</i>	Symphony Hall Birmingham 7.30 pm
2 November	repeat of above concert	Symphony Hall Birmingham 7.30 pm
6 November - 26 November	Cambridge Elgar Festival (see separate article)	Various venues around Cambridge
19 November	Caractacus <i>T.Cahill, J.Oxley, R.Williams, M.Shaw/ St Edmundsbury Bach Ch &amp; O/H.Oxley</i>	St Mary's Church, Bury St Edmunds 7.30 Tickets : 0284 769505
26 November	Pomp & Circumstance 4, Cello Concerto, Symphony no 1 <i>Rochester Arts O/James Clinch</i>	Central Hall Chatham
4 December	The Black Knight <i>LSChorus/LSO/Hickox</i>	Barbican Hall London 7.30 pm
11 December	The Dream of Gerontius <i>A.S.von Otter/T.Moser/A.Michaels-Moore LSChorus/LSO/C.Davis</i>	Barbican Hall London 7.30 pm
15 December	repeat of above concert	Barbican Hall London 7.30 pm

## BOOK REVIEWS

Elgar, Britten & Co : A history of British Music in twelve portraits, by Meinhard Saremba  
M & T Verlag, Zurich. 509 pp.

This book is by a missionary. Intended for German readers and not yet available in English, its aim is to introduce British music, here defined as originating in the mid-nineteenth century, to "those who are ready to explore new or perhaps unfamiliar fields". When English-speaking readers find these fields contain such familiar blooms as Vaughan Williams, Britten, and "der meister" himself, Edward Elgar, we realise how far British music has still to travel to reach our close Continental neighbours. What a welcome surprise, writes Sir Colin Davis in his foreword, to find a German book about British composers, and a glance at the Bibliography makes the point mathematically : 167 English sources, 4 German. A reproduction of the title page of a 1904 book *The Land without Music* shows how deeply rooted unfavourable judgments of musical Britain are and what a mountain Saremba is out to climb.

Judging the success of his enterprise in German-speaking countries is rather beyond the scope of the JOURNAL. We must wish him well, for the book's fresh judgments, pace and grasp of detail deserve success. Here are twelve composers whose lives and works support the assertion that the development of British music in the last 150 years is "one of the most exciting chapters in the history of music". His starting point is Sullivan (b.1842) and ends with Harrison Birtwistle (b.1934) so the book has breadth. As well as the two stars of the title, and the three others already mentioned, most of the & Co would be on everyone's list : Parry, Holst, Walton, Tippett, Maxwell Davies; and Ethel Smyth (an exciting and tragic chapter), who is due for reassessment as the performance of her opera *The Wreckers* at this year's Proms, and four new recordings suggests. Rutland Boughton as twelfth man rather than Frank Bridge, Ireland, Bax or Bliss seems on a par with some of Illingworth's test selections but certainly provides stimulation.

The aim throughout is to link the music of the composers to the times they live(d) in, a routine enough device, but one which the author's different standpoint brings alive. He also provides in an appendix a comprehensive list of musical events linked by year to what was happening in the world at the time, a useful corrective to those of us who prefer to listen to music with our eyes closed, not just literally but metaphorically as well. Some juxtapositions are striking. 1888 : Jack the Ripper murders - Sullivan *The Yeoman of the Guard*. 1936 : Spanish Civil War - Bliss *Things to Come*. 1986 : Chernobyl - Birtwistle *Earth Dances*. I also liked 1928 : Women win the vote - Ethel Smyth *A Final Burning of Boats*.

An unusual feature is the emphasis on money. Walton ("the greediest composer I've ever met", according to John Ireland) is quoted as saying that he would write anything as long as he was paid, preferably in dollars. Sullivan complains, "We're always making steam engines and cotton mills but when it comes to music we buy it from abroad". The two longest footnotes detail the falling value of the pound from the nineteenth century to the 1980s and the incomes from music that Bridge and Holst received.

Which brings us to the Master. Elgar would have welcomed the author's recognition of financial reality for as we all know, he frequently complained of being short of the readies. Shaw is quoted as giving him £1000 "even though he's the Master of the King's Musick". The *Variations* had brought him £8 by 1904. "I need £300 a year to live on", he writes to Jaeger in 1899. "Last year I had £200".

None of this is written carpingly. Saremba reveres Elgar. Apart from the chapter heading - 'Der Meister und Alice' - the portrait on the cover and Elgar's prominence in the title, the author's admiration for the music is undisguised. His description of the "friends pictured within" is affectionate and concise. "Central to the work is Nimrod, dedicated to his German friend, August Jaeger. It rises to one of the most powerful and impressive passages in the literature of the orchestra". The highest praise from a German author is reserved for *Gerontius* : "A successful performance offers a spiritual and artistic event which is perhaps equalled only by Bach's St Matthew Passion". Throughout a long chapter he justifies Colin Davis' statement in the Foreword : "The appearance of Edward Elgar and his successes in Germany heralded the renaissance of British music". Eleven of the chapters begin with a quotation in German. Only Elgar's is in English : it is, as might be expected, Shakespeare's reference to "pomp and circumstance" in *Othello*. However, the author's sensitivity to Elgar's tensions is shown by the inclusion of the lines immediately preceding it : "Farewell the tranquil mind; farewell content".

The book is a mine of nuggets. Perhaps not everyone knows that Elgar was the co-author of the music for a *silent* film in 1927; or that Cipriani Potter wrote a piano piece in 1825 in the style of five well-known artists of the day - and called it *Enigma Variations*. Ethel Smyth, no gentleman(!), hated Elgar, "that arrogant grouch", who once was kept waiting whilst *she* was asked to play an encore. "I've seen him off", she exulted - rather prematurely, considering it has taken her fifty years to her first Prom. Some statements are well worth mulling over. "English music is often understood better by foreigners than by native conductors". "Sullivan was the first composer to realise the potential of the press, Elgar that of records, Vaughan Williams and Walton films". "Parry and Elgar's horror of war in 1914 parallels the pacifism of Britten and Tippett twenty-five years later". One passage raises a rich theme and deserves to be quoted in full : "Elgar, the composer, partly because of external influences, burned out prematurely. Artists like Sullivan and Walton in their later years suffered similar crises of creativity, perhaps not unconnected to the differing cultural and historical conditions prevalent in the British Isles as compared to the Continental countries. Verdi in his operas was able to develop the genre in a generally acceptable way and was allowed to compose mediocre pieces. In contrast English composers could attract public attention only by producing masterpieces". Discuss, bearing in mind Parry (1918) : "The English public are strange. They can only recognise one composer at a time".

Nuggets a-plenty in a splendid and authoritative collection of highly individual portraits. But there's the rub. The book ends in mid-air with Birtwistle. It lacks a coda. As I finished it a quotation came to mind : "Through and over the whole set another and larger theme 'goes' but is not played". Even a final variation would have been welcome, a drawing together of the separate portraits, an "E.D.U" reflecting the parts and reflecting on them. More than that, though. Ninety-two years after the

*Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* called Elgar "a man of genius of whom much is expected" the fact remains that missionary work has still to be done on the Continent not only for this great composer but for British music as a whole. Hence this excellent book. But why? It would be fascinating to receive an answer from Mr Saremba. On the evidence of this book he could respond lovingly and with insight, but not cosily.

Indeed his emphasis on the social and political context of music could perhaps structure his answer. Why our music is still separated from the Continent and undervalued "over there" is perhaps not unrelated to the social and political context of our uneasy relationship to Europe. Now *there's* a "larger" theme for your next book, Mr Saremba : "From Elgar to Maastricht"!

Geoffrey Scargill

The Crying Curlew. Peter Warlock : Family & Influences. Centenary 1994. by Ian Parrott.  
*Available from Gomer Press, Dyfed. £9-50.*

There is always a fascination in writers and composers who "died young". What might have they achieved...? Burns, Mozart, Keats, Chopin - all spring to mind. Not quite in the same class is that elusive personality and wayward talent Philip Heseltine, who, for most of his fairly brief life (1894-1930), preferred to be known as Peter Warlock.

In the last three years there have been two major critical works, the first in 1992 by his son Nigel, and the second in the current year by Barry Smith. The small work under review is really a collection of eight essays, the "influences" in the title referring mainly to the Welsh side of Warlock's ancestry and work. In fact the book is very Welsh, for there are numerous references to a number of Welsh families and their sometimes tenuous connection with Heseltine/Warlock, or with his Welsh contemporaries. There are, too, many references to Warlock's relationship with D H Lawrence, Delius, van Dieren, and others. In this respect it may be considered a useful supplement to work contained in the larger volumes, and for Professor Parrott's summing-up of a man he admits he does *not* worship!

There have been a number of "interesting" minor composers, and Warlock is undoubtedly one of them. Whether his was a slight talent which was already burning itself out by the time of his mysterious death, and whether he could have overcome his troubles, and produced more music of lasting value, is an arguable point. Professor Parrott adds to the literature to help us make up our minds.

Ronald Taylor

Edward Elgar : Memories of a Variation, by Mrs Richard Powell. (Fourth Edition, edited and revised by Claud Powell, and with an Appendix by Jerrold Northrop Moore).

*Scolar Press, 1994. 196 pp. £25*

There are three books on Elgar written from personal experience. W H Reed's book

is a valuable account of the composer's life from 1910 onwards. Rosa Burley (if indeed the writing is completely hers) has too many axes to grind to give a totally accurate picture, though there seem to be genuine insights which have a distinct ring of truth. However, Dorabella's book is surely the most valuable of all, for although it is a relatively slight work, it covers the years of Elgar's greatest musical achievements (1895 - 1914). Furthermore, Dorabella was present and sometimes intimately involved in aiding the creative process on several important occasions. Elgarians will be eternally grateful to her for the evocative descriptions of Birchwood, where she arrived as the opening of Part II of *Gerontius* was being played by Elgar on the piano; and that memorable evening in 1905 when after hours of struggling with inspiration he finally emerged from his study, having written "The sun goeth down". These and many other incidents make this a book which should be in every Elgarian's collection.

It has been known for some time that the book contains a few inaccuracies, mainly with dating certain events. In a very useful appendix, Jerrold Northrop Moore gives the correct dates based on evidence from Alice Elgar's diaries and the voluminous correspondence, especially that between Elgar and his publishers. Similarly, it is necessary to remember that the dialogue was written down over thirty years after the events, and thus should not be taken verbatim. Nevertheless it is sad that in recent years Dorabella and her book have been subjected to some unfriendly treatment. First Keith Alldritt based his 1979 novel *Elgar on the Journey to Hanley* on it and hints that there may have been more to the relationship between Elgar and Dora than is revealed in her book. Five years later Michael de-la-Noy found it "a book which seems to a surprising extent to have been accepted until now at face value...There is in a great deal of her book an element of the absurd of which neither she nor Carice was remotely aware...Much of what she recorded about the Elgar household so long after the events has to be taken with a pinch of salt". He suggests that the reason Carice encouraged Dorabella in writing the book is "the possibility that in adult life Carice...enjoyed the posthumous portrait of her mother as a simpering, incompetent ninny incapable of ministering to the most elementary needs of a famous husband". But *honi soit qui mal y pense*. Mr de-la-Noy's predilection for ascribing ulterior motives to the personalia in the Elgar story is typical of an age obsessed with sexuality and self-fulfilment. Personally I have never had any problem in accepting Dorabella's account of events. I believe she visited the Elgars partly out of altruism, to be of assistance; no doubt she was also thrilled and proud of her involvement with someone who later became so famous. But I am also convinced that she had nothing but the highest regard for both Edward and Alice. And why not? If Alice perceived that Dorabella's company would help Elgar, not least in the area of composition, then is it not something for which she should be admired? Perhaps it was unusual and possibly shocking to some for a married man to spend so much time alone with a single woman; but to present Alice Elgar as some kind of procuress would be obscene were it not so nonsensical. Whatever else may be said about Dorabella - the rector's daughter - she was clearly an ingenue. She took people as she found them, and although it seems in retrospect that Elgar indulged in mildly flirtatious behaviour towards her, it also seems to have been totally lost on her; which I think proves my point.

This new (fourth) edition obviously stays as close to previous editions as possible.

When Dora quotes from her diary the exact wording has now been used (see p.14 for instance). Footnotes in previous editions (normally quite short) are now included in the text in parenthesis, without any loss of narrative flow. On pp.43-4 new material on the first performance of *Gerontius* has been inserted. Jaeger's long letter of 29 December 1901 about the German première of *Gerontius* has been made a separate chapter, thus dividing what was formerly the 'Craig Lea' chapter into two parts. The other main change (on pp.110-116) relates to the *Violin Concerto*. Claud Powell provides a useful Introduction giving family and personal background, and a final Appendix includes the text of a talk Dora gave in 1951 entitled 'Elgar's greater works in the making'. It is sad that the facsimiles of Elgar's letters - such a lovely feature of previous editions - have been replaced by black and white photocopies, but I suspect that financial constraints operated here.

The Editor

## RECORD REVIEWS

Symphony no 2 in E flat, Op.63

*BBC Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Edward Downes*  
*Naxos 8.550635*

This is a real bargain. A first-class, thoughtful performance - exulting, exciting and sensitive with a tremendous breadth and depth of sound. Although not quite up to the brilliance of the full-price Andrew Davis reading with the BBC Symphony Orchestra on Teldec (coupled with a thrilling account of *In the South*), this certainly qualifies as a top runner in the bargain issues. Downes, with the BBC Philharmonic, has great rhythmic drive and the majesty and sweep of the score is thrillingly realised. Both Davis and Downes reveal fresh insights. Davis, for instance, accentuates the string writing in the opening movement episode described as "a love scene in a garden at night interrupted by ghostly memories", so that you really feel its chill and threat. His final climax in the *Larghetto* is breathtaking too. Downes's *Larghetto* reveals all its subtlety and beauty and the climaxes are terraced very well leading to a very moving final peroration. The famous hammering dissonance in the Rondo is here remarkably suggestive of the passage of tanks amid shell bursts as if Elgar was peering over the abyss at the approaching Great War. And the closing movement march is at first correspondingly more measured, more reflective. The Coda is glorious. A confident recommendation.

Ian Lace

Violin Concerto in B minor, Op.61

*Dmitry Sitkovetsky, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Yehudi Menuhin*  
*Virgin Classics 545065-2*

Menuhin's 1932 HMV recording of the *Violin Concerto* with the composer conducting is of course a classic of the gramophone, so comparison is inevitable. As conductor, Menuhin brings a deep understanding of Elgar and the same loving care and subtlety of phrasing that he did as soloist. His *Andante* is lovingly shaped; a



tender, dreamlike, romantic landscape. Yet at the same time he propels the work firmly forward adopting faster tempi in all three movements than Kennedy/Handley for instance, sweeping vigorously through the more rugged masculine passages. He is clearly concerned to observe the structure and maintain the basic pulse of the music and one is often reminded of Elgar's own conducting. Sitkovetsky responds with silken playing and impressive technical virtuosity. He is nicely wistful in the accompanied Cadenza (the *pizzicato tremolando* strings are quite magical here) but in the final analysis he is rather lukewarm; one misses the poetry of the Master that distinguishes a good from a great performance. Nigel Kennedy is more ardent and his version remains my choice amongst modern recordings.

Ian Lace

(These reviews first appeared in the BBC Music Magazine).

Violin Concerto, Op.61. Introduction & Allegro for Strings, Op.47

Kyoko Takezawa (violin), Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra conducted by  
Sir Colin Davis  
RCA 09026-61612-2

Coleridge once said that a great mind must be androgynous. To me that is the key to a successful performance of Elgar's *Violin Concerto*, for the work makes the highest possible technical and interpretive demands, so that the soloist must be vigorous and assertive in a 'masculine' way; and yet there is a great need for emotional sensitivity, because the solo part in many places suggests a hesitancy, an uncertainty, a vulnerability, a hint of suffering even (Jerrold Moore, in *A Creative Life*, develops this idea of 'masculine' and 'feminine' themes, first suggested by Ernest Newman. And of course Elgar himself said that the 'soul' was feminine).

Kyoko Takezawa is a young Japanese violinist of exceptional ability who has already established an international reputation, and who has a number of distinguished recordings to her name. From a technical point of view she certainly justifies all the praise that has been heaped upon her. This complex and demanding score appears to hold no terrors at all; her effortless playing in the bravura passages is at times quite breathtaking, as in the closing pages of the first movement which are very exciting and dramatic. Another impressive passage is the beginning of the third movement, played at breakneck speed but with great rhythmic control. She gives the impression of really enjoying playing this work, and stamps her personality on it; to that extent it is a really 'masculine' performance. Any reservations I may have therefore concern her interpretation of the more reflective sections. The first of these is the second subject (one of the 'Windflower' themes) at fig.16, marked *a tempo*, *pp dolce* and *semplice*. Takezawa plays it very protractedly, dragging every last ounce of emotion from it, and missing the point rather. The *Andante* seems very slow and rather laboured in places; for instance, at the *più mosso* after fig.53, where she comes dangerously close to plodding. However, I was surprised to find that in this movement she was not much slower overall than Menuhin/Elgar. And there is some beautiful playing, such as the exquisite top D $\flat$  at fig.59; from there to the end of the movement there is expressive playing of the first order. Takezawa is not always

helped by Davis, whose choice of tempo in some of the orchestral passages does not seem to make much musical sense, although generally he is a thoughtful accompanist. The playing of the Bavarians is first-rate, as is the recording, with well-nigh perfect balance between soloist and orchestra. This is a stirring performance, for all my slight reservations, and I urge you to get it.

The fill-up is a none too inspired account of the *Introduction & Allegro*, which takes a long time to warm up, and the interpretation is somewhat idiosyncratic. It gets better as it goes along but even then is not wholly convincing.

The Editor

String Quartet in E minor, Op.83. With Bridge : Three Idylls, and Walton : String Quartet in A minor.

Coull Quartet  
Hyperion CDA 66718

After my enjoyment of the Hyperion disc of the other Elgar chamber works by the Nash Ensemble, and in mind of the reputation that the Coull Quartet has built up, I was really looking forward to their account of the *Quartet*. I have to say from the outset that it was a great disappointment. The playing is excellent, as is the recording; but the interpretation is frankly dull, as if the players are unconvinced by the piece. It never really takes off, and is strangely subdued throughout - even the final bars from the *con passione* at fig.57 fail to set the pulses racing - and my notes contain such comments as 'rum-ti-tum', 'too leisurely', 'rather bland', 'distinctly somnolent'. I think it is because the underlying restlessness and tension in this work seems to be totally lacking. I thought that my initial reaction was maybe due to the powerful impression that the remastered version by the Stratton Quartet (Dutton Laboratories CDLX 7004, reviewed January 1994) had made on me, but after further listenings, my reaction was much the same. A comparison of the timings of the two versions is illuminating. In each movement the Coulls are considerably slower; just over a minute in the first, nearly a minute and a half in the second, and nearly two and a quarter in the third. There have been a number of new recordings recently - at least eight in the last ten years - so the competition is great. (The late Gareth Lewis was particularly taken by the Britten Quartet's recording on Collins Classics 12802 [reviewed January 1993]).

The other works on the disc fare much better, and one can see from these why the Coull Quartet have achieved such a high reputation. Bridge's *Three Idylls* deserve to be much better known; and the Walton *Quartet* of 1947 has in recent years become more familiar thanks to the orchestral version (which he renamed *Sonata for Strings*) written at the request of Neville Marriner in 1971.

The Editor

## CD Round-up

In any historical overview one tends to find the word 'landmark' grossly over-used. Yet in the world of Elgar recordings the word is most apt as applied to Solti's account of the *First Symphony*. It seems amazing that when it appeared twenty-two years ago only five versions of the symphony had ever been recorded, by just three conductors (Elgar, Barbiroli, and Boult). Since 1972 there have been at least twenty new recordings, eight by foreign-born conductors. A landmark indeed. But what made Solti's *First Symphony* such an important release was that it enabled many people to see the work from a fresh viewpoint. He stripped away many of the layers of late-Romantic abandon with which some conductors had imbued the work. This approach was not to everyone's taste, but it was much closer to the composer's own interpretation. It is now available at mid-price as Vol VII in Decca's 'World of British Music' series (DWO 440322-2), with three generous fill-ups, all from Argo's 1967 record of Elgar's music for strings by Neville Marriner and the Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields. The *Introduction & Allegro* begins disappointingly - too grandioso and heavy-handed - but it settles down in the *Allegro* and overall has a lot to commend it. *Sospiri* and Percy Young's arrangement of dances from *The Spanish Lady* complete the disc. If you don't already have Solti's *First Symphony*, get it.

Solti's other disc in this series (DWO 440326-2) contains the *Enigma Variations* from 1976 and *Falstaff* from 1980. Both contain many good things, but for me ultimately fall short of the highest standards. In the *Variations* there is not enough contrast between the fast and the not-so-fast movements. He is excellent in the former, 'W.M.B' and 'Troyte' in particular being very exciting. 'Nimrod' begins magically, with a wonderfully-controlled *ppp*, but at fig.34 Solti gets faster and faster, and after slowing down for the bridge passage at fig.35, observes another (unmarked) *stringendo* at 36. It's as if he is afraid of appearing to wallow in the music. Similarly, there is no recognition of the *grandioso* marking at fig.68 in the *Finale*.

*Falstaff* suffers from the same urge to press on, which is especially noticeable in the closing section. The important theme which occurs during King Henry's march at fig.119 is marked *sostenuto* although one would never think so. And the death of Falstaff lacks the tenderness and sensitivity which was such a feature of Tate's recent recording. The fill-up here is Marriner's *Serenade for Strings*.

Another *Enigma* from an internationally-renowned conductor appears on the new DG mid-price *Classikon* series (439 446-2). Eugen Jochum conducts the LSO in a recording which first appeared in 1975, and is here paired with Steinberg's excellent Boston recording of *The Planets*. The recording, made in Walthamstow Town Hall, is first-rate, with a wealth of orchestral detail clearly audible, and the interpretation is also extremely effective without actually setting the pulses racing. Jochum's 'Nimrod' is very slow, the crotchet played at 30 rather than 52 as specified, but there is no lack of nobility, and a wonderfully controlled *pp* ending. Worth investigating.

A bonus for admirers of that great Elgarian Sir Charles Groves. His 1950s recording of the *Introduction & Allegro* with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra is now available on a Saga CD entitled 'Music of England' (EC 3353-2). It is a very acceptable and enjoyable interpretation though some of the playing and especially

the recording leave something to be desired. He also conducts works by Delius and Holst; and John Shirley-Quirk, Janet Baker, and John Carol Case sing English songs (Case sings Elgar's *The Shepherd's Song*). Less than forty minutes music, but the cost of around £5 is not excessive.

Finally two re-issues of first recordings of choral works. From Chandos in their bargain 'Collect' series, the Worcester Cathedral Choir under Christopher Robinson sing *From the Bavarian Highlands* (with piano accompaniment) and a number of short sacred pieces - anthems from Elgar's Worcester days, and two extracts from *The Light of Life* (CHAN 6601). The singing is first-rate, especially clarity of diction and expression. The church music comes off best as, frankly, the choral suite needs a mixed choir of much larger numbers. To hear teenage boys sing "Sleep, my son, O slumber softly while thy mother watches o'er thee" certainly strains credulity; and there is some understandable thinness of tone when the men divide and sing contrapuntally in 'On the Alm' at the words "I cannot linger here". But worth having for the church music. The recording was first issued in 1975.

EMI have released Elgar's two earliest secular cantatas on a mid-price double CD (CMS 565104-2). *King Olaf* has appeared in this format before, but *The Black Knight* is new to CD. The earlier work comes first, which enables the listener to appreciate just how much Elgar had developed in the three years since 1893 and 1896. *The Black Knight* has its moments, and is well performed by Groves and the Liverpool forces, but *King Olaf* is on a much higher level of inspiration altogether. I did the original review seven years ago, and can see little need to add to the enthusiastic welcome I gave it then. Nicely as Philip Langridge sings, I still hanker for more of a *heldentenor* in 'And king Olaf heard the cry'; but this disc is clearly indispensable for any Elgarian who missed it the first time around.

The Editor

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## BRANCH REPORTS

LONDON Branch's season came to a successful close with the AGM in June followed by a delightful Song Recital given by Louise Hood (alto) and Franz Busuttill (piano), two artists whom we must surely have back before too long. The AGM saw Carl Newton leave the Committee after his three-year stint, to be replaced by Robert Flute. The rest of the Committee and the Officers were re-elected and agreed, wearily in at least one case, to soldier on! The other AGM - the Society's - saw a party from the Branch take up residence at the Cotford Hotel, Malvern for a convivial weekend, the highlight of which was, perhaps, the visit to Madresfield Court by kind permission of Sir Charles and Lady Morrison.

Meanwhile, prior to all this, we had Dennis Clark's virtuoso slide presentation of "Elgar's World in Contemporary Pictures". This was hugely enjoyed, as indeed were Dennis and Betty Clark's presence with us.

The new season begins at Imperial College on Monday 3 October with the convivial notion of live music from a talented young wind quintet plus a glass of wine.

WEST MIDLANDS Branch members should now have received their 'events card' for the coming season, together with a copy of the summer newsletter. Our proposed programme begins on 1 October when Dr Relf Clark will be speaking on "The Three Organists - Atkins, Brewer and Sinclair" at the Old Palace, Deansway, Worcester at 2.30 pm. Then on the 5 November John Heddle Nash will speak on "Heddle Nash - his Gerontius" at the Friends' Meeting House, Sansome Street, Worcester also at 2.30. In the New Year there is a Lunch Party on 11 February and the AGM is on 4 March (further details in the next issue).

SOUTH-WEST Branch members have again enjoyed a very successful season, ending with a meeting at Exeter in June. We are now looking forward to what promises to be another, starting on 24 September when Anthony Boden will talk on "The Three Choirs Festival". Then on the following Saturday 1 October Ronald Alan Smith will give his "Elgar and the Three Choirs Festival" (this meeting is a joint affair with the Exeter Recorded Concert Society), and this will be followed by a talk by Ron Bleach on "Elgar in Bristol". Then in November our AGM. A full programme has been prepared and Branch members will receive their copy in good time before the meetings restart. All members are welcome; meetings usually take place at the Bristol Music Club, Clifton.

NORTH-WEST. Our 1993/4 season ended in April with a recital by 'Intermezzo'. Sadly this was a very poorly attended meeting this year, but the few who were there were extremely well entertained by this talented group. The next season will start on 1 October with a talk by Percy Young on "The Spanish Lady". On 12 November Ian Lacey will give a talk on "Elgar and Arnold Bax", and we shall be having our usual AGM and Christmas Social on 3 December. Arrangements are currently in hand for our January - March meetings.

Speakers at the two YORKSHIRE Branch meetings held since the May JOURNAL issue have both been our own Yorkshire members. On 9 May, Lance Tufnell compared the backgrounds and musical achievements of Elgar and Arthur Somervell, who were almost exact contemporaries. Secretary Dennis Clark was absent that evening

(waving the Yorkshire flag down at Imperial College) but understands that Lance displayed his usual thorough preparation and eloquence in delivery.

On 6 June, under the title of 'Under the Influence (Part 2)', music lecturer David Fligg gave his further thoughts on how earlier composers had influenced Elgar's style and how he in turn would influence a later generation. Another excellent talk given in David's erudite, yet witty, manner.

The programme for 1994/95 is already out (surely a record) and commences on 26 September with 'Elgar in Sound and Vision' by Allan Green FRPS. Later speakers include composer and conductor Arthur Butterworth, and broadcaster and music reviewer Lyndon Jenkins. Recent calls to encourage lady members by including the occasional female speaker are answered by the inclusion on 6 February of Esther Harrison, Principal Music Officer for Leeds Leisure Services, who will speak on 'Elgar and the Concert Hall'.

**SOUTH WALES.** On 23 April the Branch had the pleasure of welcoming for the first time Bridget Duckenfield, a collateral descendant of Sir Landon Ronald and the author of the biography *O Lovely Knight*. Ms Duckenfield spoke about Ronald and Elgar, illustrating her talk with a number of slides and a considerable variety of recordings. Some of Ronald's own music was heard - two movements from the *Suite de Ballet*, and the song *O Lovely Night* (in Eva Turner's recording).

Some confusion having arisen over dates, it was not possible for the lecture-recital by Diana Walkley and Carol Holt to be given on the date planned (18 June) and, at short notice, Ian Parrott kindly brought forward to that Saturday a talk he had intended to give later in the year. It was a talk that to some extent dealt with matters that had been discussed in the article in the May JOURNAL. Ian Parrott had the advantage of having recently been in correspondence with Nigel Heseltine (Warlock's son), now living in Western Australia. Excerpts from *Capriol*, *The Curlieu*, the *Folk-song Preludes* and other works by Warlock served to illustrate the speaker's talk.

Andrew Neill will address the Branch on 16 October next, and on 12 November Ronald Bleach will speak on "Elgar, Bantock and Friends". Both meetings will be held at Friendship House, Swansea.

## LETTERS

*From : Raymond Monk*

*My old friend Ian Parrott will surely forgive me if I attempt to put the record straight concerning one aspect of his otherwise excellent 'Elgar and Warlock' article which appeared in the May JOURNAL. Bernard van Dieren junior did not escape prosecution because of the death of Carice Elgar Blake. I seem to recall that Scotland Yard's Fraud Squad found no firm evidence of criminality and in any case Sir Gerald Nabarro did not seek their help until 1971, the year after Carice had died. Bernard van Dieren signed a Deed of Covenant designed to replace a large part of the "missing" funds. He died before the first payment became due and the Trustees to their credit decided not to impoverish his widow by making a claim against a negligible estate. The Trustees themselves made good the deficiency to the entire satisfaction of the Charity Commissioners. During*

*this unhappy period the Birthplace Trust survived only by the personal generosity of Sir Adrian Boult. Thus the Birthplace remained open but it was indeed a close run thing.*

*Bernard J van Dieren was a person of great charm who was kind and courteous to all around him. He had a rich and seemingly inexhaustible supply of stories about Jacob Epstein, Peter Warlock, Cecil Gray, Osbert Sitwell, John Goss, Kaikoshru Sorabji, and many other important figures who had been friends of his parents during his early days. After 25 years it is these factors rather than his alleged misdemeanours which spring readily to my mind.*

---

*From: Ian Parrott*

*As a sequel to my article, 'Elgar and Peter Warlock', which appeared in May, I must not forget that I had intended to show that both Elgar (with many friends) and also Warlock (making many enemies) had rubbed up against Ernest Newman. Elgar, of course, 'made it up', later dedicating his Piano Quintet to his severe critic. Warlock, on the other hand, produced another of his then unprintable but witty limericks. Readers who may wish to have access to the limericks, etc should become members of the Peter Warlock Society by contacting the secretary, Malcolm Rudland, 32a Chipperfield House, Cale St, London SW3 3SA.*

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*From: Walter J Essex*

*I should like to express my concern that the Elgar Society is becoming increasingly embroiled in the rancour that surrounds the proposals for development at the Elgar Birthplace, Broadheath.*

*On 4 June many people travelled long distances to attend the Society's AGM in Malvern, only to find themselves, once again, in a situation whereby certain individuals attempted to hijack the Meeting in order to air their own views concerning the Birthplace development. I would suggest that the Elgar Society is not the body to provide a platform for what appears, increasingly, to be turning into local issues. The Society exists outside of Worcestershire, and the composer himself is not merely of local interest. To quote from the Society's Constitution : "The Society is founded in honour of the memory of Edward Elgar with the object of promoting a wider interest in his life and music". How can the Society "promote" any interest when it is seen in the unseemly light of the AGM, to say nothing of previous AGMs when the same problems have arisen?*

*The body concerned with all matters relating to the Birthplace is, surely, the Elgar Foundation, and the Trustees are the people with whom objectors should deal. The Trustees are of exemplary Elgarian pedigree, people more than able to deal with the thorny problems of development, at the same time having due consideration for the man whom we ALL seek to honour.*

*If I am to attend next year's AGM, I shall be seeking some assurance that the question of development at the Birthplace is not on the Agenda, so that I can set out on my northward journey contemplating a joyful weekend among friends.*

## THE ELGAR SOCIETY

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