

The Elgar Society JOURNAL



NOVEMBER
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The Elgar Society Journal

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EDITORIAL

Vol.8, No.7
November 1994

The furore over the proposed Elgar Centre at Broadheath has received considerable publicity over the last few months and, with the possible exception of those living overseas, members will be familiar with the situation. Newspapers, delighting in conflict and controversy, have seized upon it, and it has also received coverage on radio and television. The arguments for and against its building are many and complex, and beyond the scope of this Editorial. Not all comment has been helpful or informative, and despite the belief held by many that the only bad publicity is no publicity, I am not so sure. There has been bad blood before regarding Elgar matters during my twenty-five years' membership of the Society; yet over recent years careful and painstaking work towards reconciliation has been undertaken (by such as Andrew Neill) and it would be tragic indeed if this were to be undone. Whatever the final outcome, I hope that we can avoid ill feeling and factions in the Elgar world.

I have been accused of withholding information on this subject in the JOURNAL. On the contrary, I have in fact published all that I have received, including a recent letter from one of the protagonists of the proposed Elgar Centre for English Music in Malvern. This virtual absence of comment from Society members can presumably be explained by one of three reasons : a lack of knowledge; apathy; or a general approval of the plans and confidence in the Trustees, as expressed in a motion at the AGM a couple of years ago. The Society's stated purpose is to honour the name of Elgar and to promote a wider interest in his life and music. This is a vast and challenging undertaking which I trust will continue to be the focus of the Society's activities whatever may or may not happen in Crown East Lane. I can end in no better fashion than to quote Jerrold Northrop Moore, from his Envoy to Raymond Monk's *Elgar Studies* : "My hope is for us all to remember constantly the generous spirit of the man who devoted his life to creating the music which has brought us together. Never lose the sound of that generosity".

GEOFFREY HODGKINS

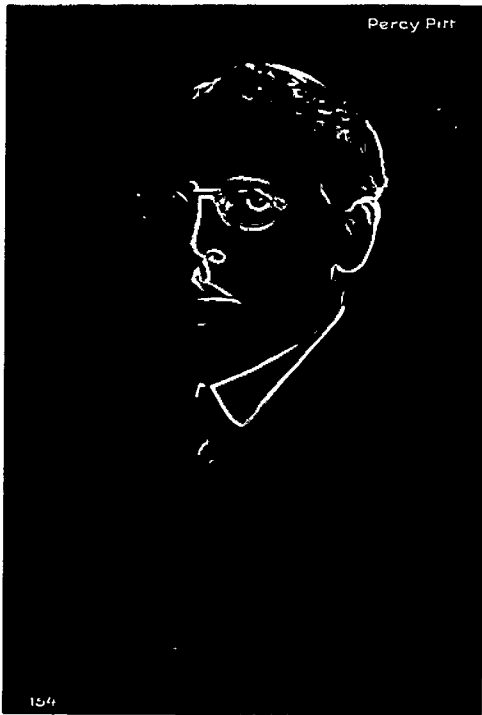
ELGAR AND PERCY PITT

Geoffrey Hodgkins and Ronald Taylor

Part I

[Pitt was a good friend and loyal supporter to Elgar for over thirty years. The correspondence between the two men can be found in British Library Egerton MS 3303. It is not complete, but fills in some interesting gaps in our knowledge of the two men. Letters written by Elgar are reproduced by kind permission of the Sir Edward Elgar Will Trust].

Percy Pitt was born in London in 1869. He showed musical ability at an early age, but this was discouraged by his family, who sent him to school first in France and then in Germany. They felt that a knowledge of languages would be an asset for a lawyer, their own choice of a profession for him. However they eventually permitted him to pursue music as a career: he studied in Leipzig (where Delius was a fellow-student) and Munich (under Rheinberger), and spent some time in Berlin, gaining a wide working knowledge of European music, and of opera in particular. He returned to England in 1893 and, like Elgar some two or three years earlier, found London stony ground for an aspiring composer/musician. Eventually - largely through the good offices of Henry Wood - he became involved in the Promenade Concerts at the new Queen's Hall, and in 1896 was appointed permanent accompanist there. He made valuable contacts, not least because his knowledge of languages enabled him to converse with foreign composers and performers who spoke no English. He continued to compose, and like Elgar, wrote specifically for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897; his *Coronation March* achieved a measure of success.



It is not clear precisely when Pitt first met Elgar, though the former's biographer states that it was at Queen's Hall¹; it could well have been at a concert in October 1898 when the orchestral dances from the *Bavarian Highlands* were given. Although London based, Pitt was not part of the musical establishment, and had

¹J. Daniel Chamier, *Percy Pitt of Covent Garden and the BBC* (Arnold, 1938) p.74

been educated abroad. The struggle of an outsider to make a mark in the musical world would therefore be a strong common bond between the two men. They certainly met again in May 1899 at Robert Newman's 'London Musical Festival' when works by both of them were included: Pitt's *Hohenlinden*, a ballad for male voices and orchestra, and Elgar's "Meditation" from *The Light of Life*. The following month Elgar's reputation was greatly advanced by the successful première of the *Enigma Variations*; and he was completing a new work for the Norwich Festival, the song-cycle *Sea Pictures*. It was the practice for the preliminary rehearsals of provincial festivals to be held in London, as that was the most convenient place to assemble the performers. Pitt attended one of the final rehearsals of *Sea Pictures* at the Royal Academy of Music on 29 September.

[fos.87-8]
211, Camden Road,
London N.W.
4/X/99

My dear Elgar,
I couldn't wait to see you at the R.A.M on Friday last altho' I much wanted to do so & take an opportunity of congratulating you on the "Sea Pictures" -

They are simply splendid, full of life & colour : as for your orchestra - beautiful! I only hope that the clever "crickets" & the Festival public will appreciate them & discover their many beauties - Then, your success should be great - Glad to see that Richter is repeating the Variations : that man has got good taste! I shall be there.

Excuse hurried scrawl & Believe me, with best wishes
Always sincerely yours
Percy Pitt

Richter's repeat of the *Variations* took place at St James' Hall on 23 October. As Elgar's fame increased, it seems likely that he began to receive commissions to write new works; in a letter to Jaeger on 9 September he wrote: "I've declined - would Pitt like to take it on?????????"² One work which loomed large was the 'Gordon' Symphony, initially promised for the Three Choirs in 1899 : Pitt, like many of Elgar's friends, was keen for him to write it, but of course it was not to be. Pitt's *Ballade for Violin* was given its first performance the following February by Pitt's friend, the great Ysaÿe. The "Symphonic Poem" to which he refers could well have been *Cinderella*.

[fos. 89-90]
211, Camden Road, NW
7/XI/99

My dear Elgar,
Many thanks for yours & apologies for having kept you so long without an answer.

I have been indulging in a mild attack of influenza & a beastly cold, caught at the last Richter Concert. I was glad to hear yr. Variations again & add my mite to the great reception you had. I

²Moore, *Elgar and his Publishers*, p.138

am very "hungry" for that Full Score Novello is bringing out and am saving a place on my shelves next to Richard Strauss. By the way, you said you liked the look of my Violin Ballade & I shall therefore "bombard" you with a copy of the same these days. Today, I am "permitting myself" (German expression) to send you a youthful indiscretion : you may look at the music while Mrs. Elgar reads the verses.

Many thanks for the invitation, at present I cannot take advantage of it as I am "worrying" a Symphonic Poem but at some future date - out of holiday time - I shall be so bold... I hope it goes well with you and that the music is kind - How about that Symphony?

With many cordial greetings to Mrs. Elgar & yourself

Believe me

Yours sincerely (...and with a sneeze!)

Percy Pitt

Pitt had met the French violinist and conductor Charles Lamoureux at the Queen's Hall where he had first appeared in 1896. Lamoureux's orchestra had shared the twelve concerts in the London Musical Festival with the Queen's Hall Orchestra the previous spring. He died on 21 December 1899 at the age of sixty-five.

[fos.91-2]
211 Camden Road, NW
Jan 4 1900

My dear Elgar,

Thanks for your "Prosit Neujahr!" duly received & announcement re "Cinderella". Am sorry you tell me you've had a poor time - What is it, appreciations or dollars lacking? If you will be so beastly sincere in your art (accept congratulations on this head & forgive the low expression!) you won't become a millionaire but you will get credit - and you *ARE* getting it. I've had the "Flue" & a poor time likewise, a promised performance (Liège) knocked into the proverbial cocked-hat - the death of dear Lamoureux, ditto ditto - ah! me, I think this is a poor sort of game.... that's why I try to write & spoil so much good MS paper. When I get a good solid attack of the "blues" I'm[*sic*] coming to you at Malvern - just to try & worry you when you're on a new Oratorio - John the Baptist (otherwise, a certain Ballade for Violin & O[rchestra]) was posted today so that's a promise I am able to keep. No more tonight (being my Birth-day) for I must answer a man who has written soliciting my attendance at a wedding....no, not as bridegroom, only best man! With the best of wishes & greetings to Mrs. Elgar & yourself

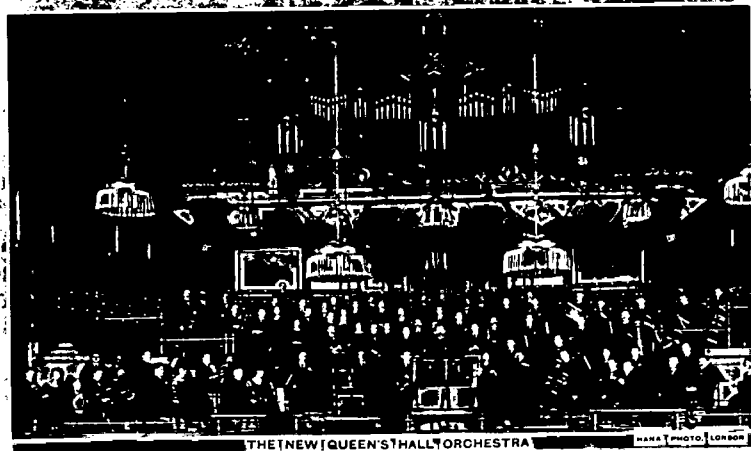
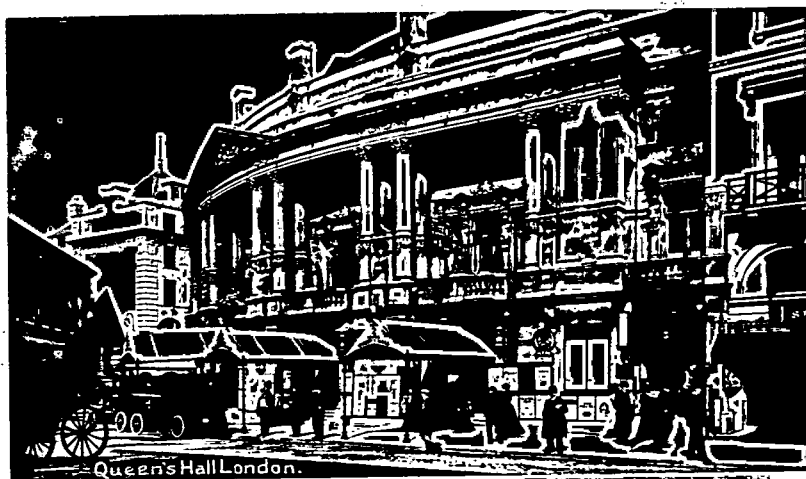
Believe me

Yours always

Percy Pitt

Elgar was proposing to play an excerpt from Pitt's suite *Cinderella* at a Worcestershire Philharmonic Society concert on 5 May 1900³. For whatever reason, it was postponed until 17 January the following year. The postscript of course refers to Elgar's award of Doctor of Music at Cambridge University; Pitt was one of the friends who had contributed to the purchase of his robes. Pitt's settings of Verlaine were never published.

³See letter to Martina Hyde in Young, *Letters of Edward Elgar* pp.79-80



[photos : Collection : Lewis Foreman]

[fos.93-4]
 211, Camden Road, N.W.
 Feb 4/[190]1

My dear Elgar,
 Many thanks for yours & news of "Cinderella" performance.

It was real good of you to have troubled about the little fairy-tale & I am very grateful to you. I will send you the "picturebook version" these days for it is quite beautifully gotten up. What about the Philharmonic Overture[Cockaigne]? I shall be most interested to hear it & only hope it is not going to be done until after Easter.

I have to go on tour during end of February & whole of March, so that if Cowen does it at one of the concerts falling during the period, I cannot be present - which will annoy me considerably! What have you on the stocks at this moment? I have let off Four Poems by Paul Verlaine for Mezzo Soprano & Orchestra & Brema interests herself in them. I can't get at the "Blessed Damozel", altho' I have done a good bit : Queen's Hall, the tour & many minor worries stand in the way so that I think I'll save the lady for the summer months. When are you going to pay a flying visit to town? I shall be here until 25 Feb. & after this date only Sats. to Mons. (until end of March)

I was glad to see that Butts is doing the Variations at Düsseldorf [on 7 February : its German première]. Many greetings to Mrs. Elgar & yourself.

Yours always sincerely

Percy Pitt

P.S. I HAD to put "Dr" on the envelope!

Elgar had been invited to adjudicate at the Morecambe Festival in 1902, and in declining had suggested Pitt as his replacement. The Festival executive did not consider Pitt enough of a "name" and invited Mackenzie instead. Pitt had submitted a part-song - *A Love Symphony* - in a competition at Morecambe in 1900, but had been unsuccessful. The second part-song has not been identified, but is either *O Nightingale* or *Shepherds all and maidens fair*.

[fos.95-6]

15, Regent's Park Terrace,

Gloucester Gate, N.W.

Oct 5 1901

My dear Elgar,

Many thanks for yours of 2nd, & additionally for your kindness in having mentioned my name to the Morecambe man.

But I am unlucky in most things; witness the Suite de Ballet competition (Chappell & Co) which has been carried off by a man who writes coon songs! And the two Morecambe partsongs (1900-1901) However, never say die! Glad to see that Richter is doing the "Cockaigne" & Weingartner the Variations - you are a "Himmelstürmer"!

Forgive a short & stupid note : I'm rather sick of everything for the moment so kind regards & no more from

Yours always

Percy Pitt

Soon after this, in Dublin, came the first performance of George Moore's play *Grania and Diarmid*, for which Elgar had provided some incidental music, a song, and a funeral march. Several months later, when preparing the March for publication, he became worried that the opening theme was like something in Wagner and consulted Pitt who had "an 'almost superhuman memory' for music [which] astonished all who had occasion to test it. 'His mind retained practically the whole history of music...and he could answer almost any question on this vast subject without the use of reference books'"⁴.

⁴Chamier, p.181

Ysaÿe had conducted the first performance in Belgium of the *Variations* on 9 December 1901; incidentally, he claimed to have 'discovered' Elgar!

[fos.97-8]

15 Regent's Park Terrace,
Gloucester Gate, N.W.
Sunday 2/2/02

My dear Elgar,

Just a hurried line in answer to yours re "Grania" : the theme in question appears in "Parsifal" act III



given to trombones if my memory be right. With your march, it is only the 2nd appearance (Brass) which strikes one so much, the earlier one (Cor angl, etc) does not stand out enough to "worrit" -

It seems to me that one should not give the "shrieking brotherhood" of critics a chance to throw mud & go reminiscence-hunting & by letting the passage stand, you may be certain that some gentleman may be only too pleased.

Received a letter from America re Festival & feel certain that you've had a finger in this pie, for which, my dear Elgar, please accept my hearty thanks.

Just seen Ysaÿe & he tells me that your *Variations* had a huge success in Brussels.

Kindest regards to Mrs. E & self

Yours always

Percy P

Pitt had also been asked to write some incidental music for Stephen Phillips's play *Paola and Francesca*, produced by George Alexander. This was very prestigious, as Phillips was in high esteem in the theatrical world at that time, and Pitt set to work with a will. He was if anything too ambitious, and his work had to be cut down, especially where it continued through entire scenes. "Phillips not unnaturally took the view that his poetry was good enough by itself, and looked upon music during its recital as a mere disturbance"⁵. After the première Elgar sent a congratulatory telegram, and Pitt's response shows his frustration with the way the music was ultimately used.

[fo.99 telegram dated March 7 1902]

Best congratulations Edward Elgar

[fos.100-1]

15 Regent's Park Terrace,
Gloucester Gte, N.W.
March 8 1902

⁵Chamier, p.84

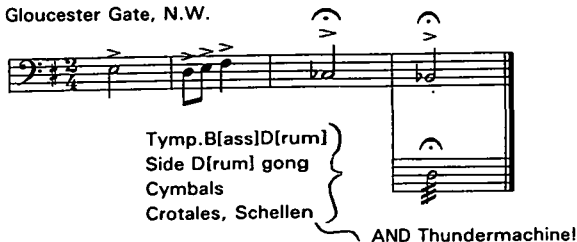
As you may easily imagine, the rush & strain entailed by the production of "P&F" have left me little time or inclination for correspondence but now that the first performance is done with, I am allowed a period of "breathing" time! And my first thought is to write in acknowledgement of your letter & kind wire.

The cutting and slashing that went on at rehearsals was simply awful & to make a long story short, out of 300 odd pages of *Score*, the people at the theatre use about 100 - all my treatment of representative themes, my attempts to illustrate dramatic situations, in short, the effects I had striven to obtain go for nothing. The poet & the actor manager have taken a fancy to some commonplace portions of my work & they 'trot' these numbers in over & over again.

I told Alexander one day that he should buy his music in Lambeth Road (where the music-hall composers live) for there he might get it at 5/- per yard & alter, chop it about to suit comedies, tragedies, society plays or what not - he wasn't pleased a bit! When do you expect to come down again? Let me know. I was on tour when you last honoured the metropolis. The best of greetings to Mrs. Elgar & yself. How goes the Ode? When you want to waste a few moments in letter writing, think of

a good joke : Phillips, becoming confidential one day, said:- "Do you know a composer named Elgar?" "Rather!" says I, "he's a great friend of mine!!" Tableau & collapse of the Poet!

15 Regent's Park Terrace,
Gloucester Gate, N.W.



I shall have great pleasure in joining yr. friend & you, O Great Pundit, at Abendbrod [supper] on Tuesday at seven of the clock altho I may, later, be obliged to go down to the theatre.

Don't order a brass band.

Yours always.
Percy P.

In 1901 Pitt's father had died, and he moved from Camden Road to Regent's Park, where his mother could live with him. The new house was a good deal bigger than the old one, and a greater financial worry. Pitt cleverly punned his new home as "Grooss 'Ouse"; the German "Gruss aus..." means "Greetings from..." Elgar received this postcard in Bayreuth, where he had gone with Archibald Ramsden, Alfred Kalisch (the 'K' of the greeting) and others to hear most of the *Ring* and other Wagner operas.

[fo.103 postcard: date on postmark 26 July 1902]

GROOSS 'OUSE Regent's Park!...and later perhaps the Bankruptcy Court!

Dear K, (or E.E.)

Thanks for card & in return, this little view of our Park!

Greet the 8 noblemen who "subscribed", the Bayreuth Karte. I am not acquainted with the last man, but it doesn't matter.

Yours in deep sorrow, affliction & emptiness of Geldbeutel[pocket, lit. 'money-bag']!

Percy P.

Pitt's new part-song *Laugh at loving if you will*, to words by Francis Money-Coutts (later Coutts-Nevill, fifth Baron Latymer) appeared in the September 1902 issue of the *Musical Times*. Elgar wrote to Jaeger: "Pitt's ptsong is good. I am going to write to him about it - good old 'antique' Pitt"⁶. The last three lines of the poem read: "Come to his altar then, in time be wise/ Bring Venus' apples, that poor lover's prize/ And pansies, softer than their mistress' eyes".

[fos.7-8]

Craeg Lea, Wells Road, Malvern

Augt 31. 1902

To Percy Pitt, esq :

Warning!

It having come under the notice of the deponent (& subscriber - to the M.T. that is) that a part song, with a suspiciously antique flavour, is alleged to be the compilation of one Pitt the said subscriber (subscription overdue) by these presents warns the said Pitt that he is trifling with the feelings of the advanced school.

This unmonied, but powerful body observe with regret that the said Pitt is running in double Arness(!) with a person, a word-monger, who is moneyed in name if not by nature & fear the contiguity of the synonym of filthy lucre may end badly for both : the fare proposed for sustenance is a bit too thin - Apples & pansies are somewhat flatulent.

The deponent nevertheless likes the effusion (good) & will recommend it to his friends.

Signed
Edward Elgar

⁶Moore, *Elgar and his Publishers*, p.372

Which is a

Mus : Doc : against his will & an admirer of P.P by nature.

The following day Elgar's mother died at the age of eighty. On Wednesday 3 September Elgar was in London for a Three Choirs' rehearsal. Pitt was annoyed at being unable to accept Elgar's invitation to attend the Festival, but at that time he was the acknowledged expert on the celesta, and was asked to play it in the "Dance of the Sugar-Plum Fairy" whenever the *Nutcracker Suite* was performed!

[fos. 104-5]

15 R. Park Tce, N.W.

Sunday [7 September 1902]

My dear old Elgar,

I was sorry to have missed you on Wednesday & shld. have come to speak with you at Paganini's but was told that you had a lot of folks at lunch & did not care to intrude. And in spite of all your kindness in having invited me for the Festival, I am afraid I shall not be able to manage it. You see, at this time of year, all the noble accompanists are away from town & nobody of experience is left. I had to see Phillips re "Herod" on Friday eve & was only able to go because Wood very kindly played 1st part of programme - one song to wit Beethoven's "Bussied". Even so, I had to return for the second half. And, as *luck* will have it, they've put the beastly "Casse-Noisette" on Wednesday, which prevents my being present at your "Gerontius". Don't think me too much of a brute - I shall certainly hear it at Sheffield & later hope to pay you the long promised visit to Malvern. Please accept all my sympathy in your hard bereavement of which I was intensely sorry to hear. The "Dream Children" went immensely on Thursday last & at once found their way to heart & ear of the Promenade audience.

I look forward to "Gerontius" at Sheffield.

Best wishes to Worcester & the best of regards to Mrs. Elgar & yrself.

Believe me

Yours ever sincerely

Percy P

Greet the mighty Grinrod[sic] on my behalf, please.

The following letter gives a fascinating glimpse of the spread of English musical conductor, whom Elgar later met in Toronto during the Sheffield Choir's tour of the Empire in April 1911. Victor Herbert (1859-1924) was born in Ireland but settled in America in 1886; he became famous largely as a result of his operettas, more than thirty in number. *The Banner of St George* was popular in Canada because of the links with the "home country".

[fo. 107]

15 Regent's Park Terrace, NW

1/3/03

= 'ISTORY' =

My dear E.E.,

Many thanks for your breezy note & news re the "Apostles" - I hope the back (of the work, not the

Apostles) is broken ere this & that we'll soon meet you wandering somewhere within the magic circle

If you are thinking of collecting
your fee from Great Novello &
want any assistance, please call on me!



I did a mighty tour in the Fatherland & heard much music of an operatic kind.

I had a letter from my friend Vogt, conductor of the Mendelssohn Choir in Toronto : he says :- "Tell Dr.E. that his "Cockaigne" Overture was enthusiastically received on the occasion of its 1st performance here Feb 11["] He also asks me to advise you touching Mackenzie & the coming Canadian Festival "our musical people are beginning to growl somewhat at the programmes they are asked to digest["]...there is a strong feeling that the occasion has offered an excellent opportunity of paying some attention to the works of younger men and at a banquet given in honour of Victor Herbert (conductor Pittsburg Symphony Concerts) he was outspoken with regard to the matter saying, "I find that Sir Alex. Mac. does not propose to conduct a single work by Elgar in Toronto, according to programme announcer, the only Elgar work is his patriotic Ballad (The Banner of St.G) & this is to be done by another man.

["]When you consider that the most brilliant composers in England at the present time are neglected in this scheme, including Elgar....., there seems to be too much of the personal element in the whole matter to promise artistic success. At least, so it appears to an American who is in close touch with the musical doings of your city"...

Alas, poor Alec - I fear he won't have such a good time after all! Hope Frau Doktor & yrself well
Many messages & greetings from
Yours always
Percy P.

By now Pitt had begun a new position as Musical Adviser to the Grand Opera Syndicate at Covent Garden, working under the managing director Henry Higgins. *Maguelone* was by the French composer Edmond Missa, and Emma Calvé sang the title role.

[fo.109]
15 Regents Park Terrace NW
5 Aug 1903

My dear Elgar,
Right glad to hear from you again & to know that you & Mrs Elgar are well. I had hoped you might be in town for some Operas - more particularly the "Ring" performances which were "busting" - but there I need not tell you how great Richter was. You were however busy over the "Apostles" parts of which I saw, by the way at Jaeger's house on Sunday. I was supposed to keep this secret but all the same, can't help sending you a word of hearty congratulations on your fine work. I am convinced that it will be splendid & shall do my utmost to come & hear it at Birmingham Festival, altho', of course I shall be obliged to fly back to town immediately after the performance on acct of those horrid Promenade Concerts. Do you think you can find me a corner in the town Hall if I come down?

I was extremely annoyed that I couldn't manage the Morecambe Festival after all : originally Higgins promised to let me get off Covent Garden for the days in question, but when the time arrived, said he could not spare me! The Opera season was alright as long as the German repertoire lasted but

the last month of "Rigoletto" - "Faust" - "Romeo" - "Manon" - to say nothing of "Maguelone" (!) left an unpleasant taste in my mouth!! When shall I see you again - I imagine during Hereford Festival rehearsal week, eh?

I am going for a week's holiday (can't spare more) & shall be back in town about 17 August to finish off some incidental music (a few numbers) for Tree's production of "Richard II" & start in the Proms. Long letter from Richter yesterday with reference to next year's German Opera campaign at Covent Garden : he seems to be very well & only laments that work does not begin at once. Kindest rgds. to Mrs. Elgar also to Rodewald when you see him. Love to yourself from

Yours ever
Percy Pitt

What about that long promised photo?

By the time the Elgars left for a holiday in Italy in November 1903, a three-day Elgar Festival had been arranged for Covent Garden the following spring, for which Elgar would write a new [orchestral] work - possibly a symphony.

[fo.1 : postcard]
Hotel Royal, Bordighera. 1 Dec 1903

Arrived here via Paris, resting a day or two. Raining torrents & bitterly cold!

Yours ever
Edward

Pitt wrote to Elgar about the possibility of installing a temporary organ at Covent Garden for the performances of *The Dream of Gerontius* and *The Apostles*.

[fos.2-3]
V[illa] San Giov[anni] : Alassio
Jan 13 : 04

Dear old Pitt.

I choose this sheet because there's a woful blot on the back & I cannot use it except to a familiar spirit.

Best wishes for the New Year & we thank you very much for yours.

As to Organ : I have several *orchestral* effects which wd. be only possible on a large organ, so they must go for nix : what is absolutely necessary for useful business will be a *heavy* pedal - can't be too heavy - & a few Diap[ason]s :- such things as the Voix celeste in the finale [*at this point comes the blot*] must be left to the strings which double it.

There is nothing absolutely *churchy* required, so a general useful '*filling in*' instrument wd. do - see? If big enough a 16ft on the manual might be good for the heavy Chorus work. *Two* manuals if you can but I expect the whole inst. will have to be a 'fake'!

I leave it to you & know your judgement will be better than mine.

Who is to play it?

Now, Oh! Pitt

What art thou writing & are any alive in London, musically?

Are you coming to S.Saëns' Opera at Nice [*Hélène*] or wherever it is?

These things are necessary to be known in order to solidify the happiness of

Yr affecte

Edward Elgar

The Elgars returned to England on 1 February, and Edward completed an overture he had begun in Italy, *In the South*. His "cheery letter" is sadly missing, but it must have given preliminary details of the new work. Pitt and Kalisch (1863-1933), a musicologist and critic who had helped Elgar with Jewish melodies in *The Apostles*, were to write the programme notes for the Festival. However, the score was not yet printed, and Jaeger wrote to Elgar on 17 February: "I dont see how Pitt & Kalisch Ltd can have the Score of 'In the South' for their Analysis. Dodd [the copyist] really cannot spare it a minute...I fancy you will have to send them your themes, all nicely copied out for 'em"⁷.

Pitt's "Ballet Scenario" was *Sakura*, but it was not produced for more than another ten years.

[fos.110-1]
15 Regent's Park Terrace,
Gloucester Gate, N.W.
25 Feb.04

Eduardo Miol

Many thanks for your cheery letter & kind messages re my "Pomes".

About the Orchestra for "your" Festival, all arrangements are in the hands of Richter & any extra players you may require, please write him direct.

For the analyses of the "Down South" Overture, I rely upon you to send some details either to "The Carlisle" or to your humble servant. We've done yr. Variations & are having fun over our notice. By the way it would be quite nice if you'd solve the Enigma for this Covent Garden orgy so please be decent & let me know the COUNTER SUBJECT which has caused the spilling of so much ink!

I've got a charming Ballet Scenario with which I hope to make something but the Opera ditto hangs fire. How are you? When may one expect to see you about town again?

Regards & much love from

Yours

Percy.

[fos.4-5. Worcestershire Philharmonic Society paper]
Malvern Feb 26. 1904

My dear Pitiless Pitt :

Good. I've written to Richter in re : Harp the Second & percussion.

Do make the Carlisle serious : I am sending you rubbish concerning Froissart & '*In the South*'⁸ - as to the Vars : I'm not going to unbuzzum now about that unknown theme.

⁷HWRO 705 : 445 8713

⁸ See Hodgkins, Geoffrey : *Elgar's Notes on 'In the South'* Elgar Society Journal January 1987 pp.14-20; May 1987 pp.18-19

I'm so glad you have the Ballet scenario - I've been poking about for a *motif* for your opera & have reread about fifty old plays from Lope de Vega downwards to try to find a new, or rather unhackneyed idea for the main spring : I told the Carlist to look at 'The Fatal Curiosity'[1736] by Geo[rge] Lillo [1693-1739] as I had forgotten it & it is 'starred' in my list - place time & everything wd. have to be altered. but we'll find you something not too bluggy & yet alive for you if you will only be good & patient.

Yours ever
Edward

[fos.112-3]
15 Regents.
28/2/04

My dear Elgar,

Thanks for yours & matter for programmes, likewise suggestions re a book for opera : I have asked the Carlist to hunt it up for me. Re the Organ for Festival, I am afraid you will have to put up with a "Positive", larger however than the specimen in use during the Coronation Year. In the course of my wanderings round organ works, I found a beautiful new instrument (at Hill's) but, unfortunately it would be a matter of 8 days to erect it & as there is a Fancy Dress Ball on March 11th, the thing was quite out of the question. The "Positive" is pretty heavy in tone & will, I think reinforce the Tutti quite satisfactorily.

Best of greetings & messages to the family

Yours always
Percy P:



Schuster has just called & told me of splendid success Manchester "Apostles" performance [on 25 February, conducted by Richter].
BRAYVO!!

The Festival was a great success, and Elgar was elated by it. Even a week later his good humour overflowed into the following letter, in which he teases Pitt and Kalisch about their programme notes, including printers' errors.

[British Library Add.MS 60501 fos.19-20]
Craig Lea[,] Malvern
March 24 1904

To Percy Pitt, esq :

(alias the Cosmopolitan

* the Bottomless Pit &c &c

and to

A. Kalisch, esq :

(otherwise the Carlist

* The And elusion &c.&c.

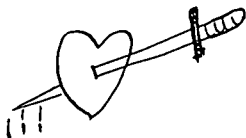
these, more in sorrow than in anger.

Be it known that all is over between us (Mark that!)

The undersigned reached home last night & for the first time saw sundry musical notes & aspersions (good!) perpetrated by the said Pitt & Kalisch for & by a Concert (dated March 16) to wit :

p.1 What *is* an Encyclopaedia? there is something sly in this; nicht wahr?

Passing over the fact that accelerando does not require such a L of [a] lot of letters as it is given on p 42 the writer is pained



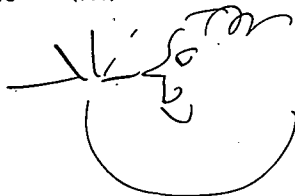
to observe, on p.11, the following impertinent & horrible phrase

- 'which *almost*, Almost, ALMOST (Damn it all!) 'ALMOST - *assumes* (assumes! look ye!) the importance of a theme'.

Hml

Now : this is too much.

N.B. 1). All my ideas are themes; (?)
2). All my themes are important*; (??)
Ergo. Pitt & Kalisch are ----- (???)



*As to other peoples' themes enquire round the corner.

I - to write in the first person - (very) singular - pass over such mild jokes as to put H.D.J.P. - he (Var :ll) is not a J.P. but a respectable member of a University Club & therefore worthy of respect not only in St James' St & Regent's Park, but also in Kensington & Earl's Court.

I am grieved thus to spank budding analysts but my duty calls me on : a certain dignity must be upheld & programme books &c&c. &c&c. but -


---'Almost assumes' ---

'Almost *ass* - ASS - ASS - assumes.' It *does* stick somehow; Kalisch wrote that - I feel it; I know it; - it burns into my - no - I'll *burn* it!! Hurrah! now it goes into the fire. 'LOGE Lieber!' (Pause)

After all perhaps Pitt wrote it; - and then - I have a buzzum; *is* Pitt a SERPent : Have I folded him to me & now, fired with the genial warmth, he stings?* 'Almost *assumes*' Alas! to think that 2 friendships shd be buried under 13 letters; - but that's an unlucky number.

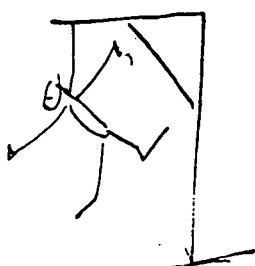
*Note by AK. 'Tis true, 'tis pitty, & pitty 'tis, 'tis true'.

(The Bard adapted)

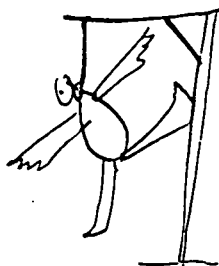
Well; I'll look over it this once; my  shall be shut to your plural baseness & open to your

good will. I am going to send you both a memento of this auspicious occasion *soon* - but not yet.
Farewell.

Yours, as you demean yourselves
Edward Elgar :



Pitt



Kalisch

sus. per col.

"Assumes!" Hal Hal

Pitt's reply makes mention of an "Ode" - *The Music Makers*, which would take another eight years to come to fruition. But what was the "good news from the Richter quarter"? Could it be Elgar's knighthood? And if so, what did Richter have to do with it? Had he suggested it to the King and Queen at the Elgar Festival?

[fo.114 Royal Opera House notepaper]
April 3 04

Eduardo miol

Thanks for your four pages of bad language which shall be submitted to the Carlist ere sentence is passed upon your miserable self! Dear, dear, how a festival can alter folks - now you surely do not wish us to believe that the stunted theme in question is worthy of.... but never mind, I will say no more.

How goes the Ode? I came across the complete poem these days in an "Inside completuar" of literature & find it excellent. What about the other lyric by O'Shaughnessy of which you told me?

I am still enthroned at the Opera but shall be abdicating about Wednesday next when Higgins returns from U.S.A. Times have been so "roaring" lately, with all these singers & other furriners that I pine for a peaceful life. I lunched with Richter on Good Friday & incidentally celebrated his approaching birthday by which occasion (as the Germans say) our one toast concerned your good self & the future ink-slings of your quill, steel, fountain & other pens.

Without wishing to break any vows of secrecy, I imagine you'll have good news from the Richter quarter ere many moons & I hope that I may be one of the first to congratulate you. Now for a rest, a pipe - and a book which make it necessary for me to draw a veil over things. The best of messages to Frau Doctor & much love to yourself

Ever yours
Percy

Re your low joke (see Italian Folk Song : "Down South" overture) I can only say that you will soon be undone for I've written to the "Times" in order to provide copy for approaching "dog" days.

(To be continued)

A COMPARISON OF VIOLIN SONATAS BY ELGAR AND IRELAND

William Baines

[William Baines was born at Horbury near Dewsbury in Yorkshire on 26 March 1899. Apart from a few lessons with Albert Jowett in Leeds, some advice and encouragement from Frederick Dawson, he was otherwise self-taught. Like his father, Baines was a cinema pianist but also studied advanced music written for piano, and experimented with new ideas himself. Always physically frail, he contracted influenza soon after joining the army in 1918 and was eventually invalided out. Only a few of his many piano pieces were published during his lifetime, although he wrote a good deal of music, including a symphony and other orchestral works, chamber music, and songs.

The following typescript of a lecture he gave can be found in the British Library (Add MS 50225). It must have been quite innovatory in those days to give a lecture illustrated by recorded music. The versions concerned were those by Marjorie Hayward and Una Bourne (an abridged version) of the Elgar, made in 1920; and by Albert Sammons and William Murdoch of the Ireland, which dates from 1919. At the end of the typescript Baines' mother has written : "William was not well enough to read it himself. The recital duly came off & was a success". Baines died in York on 6 November 1922, aged twenty-three].

Paper read to members of the York Centre of the British Music Society on 4 February 1922 (the lecture to be followed next week by a recital by Henry Dunstone (violin) and William Baines (piano).

If I was asked to say which two Violin Sonatas, written by English composers, I considered to be the most striking, I should without hesitation choose Sir Edward Elgar's and John Ireland's 2nd Sonata.

Ireland's 1st violin Sonata is good, but it is not nearly so vital as the 2nd work. Other of our noted English composers have written Violin Sonatas. Cyril Scott for instance has written a tremendously long, and a tremendously difficult work for this combination. To mention two more excellent examples [:] there is one by Frederick Delius (one of the greatest of our contemporary composers) and recently a fine work by Eugene Goossens.

To very briefly outline the history of the Sonata. The word "Sonata" defines a sound-piece, and a sound-piece alone. It is a thing unexplained by text or title. The whole process of the development of the Sonata as an Art-form, from its crudest beginnings to its highest culmination, took nearly two hundred years. It came into notice about the same time as the Cantata - at the end of the 16th century, when a band of enthusiasts led by visionary ideals, unconsciously sowed the seed of true modern

music in an attempt to wrest the monopoly of the Art in its highest forms from the predominant influence of the Church, and to make it serve for the expansion of human feelings of more comprehensive range. The earliest examples discovered by Burney were written by a man named Turini, published at Venice in 1624. These consisted of one movement.

Later the domain of the Sonata was for a long time almost held by violinists and writers for the violin. This was because the violin had so great an advantage in point of time over key-instruments used for similar purposes.

The Sonata reached its highest form of perfection in Beethoven. Beethoven was the first great composer to whom the limitless field of unconventionalised human emotion was opened, and his disposition was ready for the opportunity.

In the middle of the eighteenth century the imaginative side of music had not a fair chance. Music, then, was too much dependent upon the narrow limits of the taste of public circles; and the field of appeal to emotion was not free.

With Beethoven the idea asserted its rights, and he thus became the prototype of genuine modern music, and the first exponent of its essential qualities. He did not ignore structure - no great composer can do that - but he allowed himself the utmost liberty. I like Edgar Allen Poe's idea of music, he said "Music when combined with a pleasurable idea is Poetry. Music without the idea is simply Music".

But to return to the two modern Sonatas before our notice tonight. Keats tells us that "a thing of beauty is a joy for ever". We have only to think of the Minster to realise this. Whenever I look at the Minster, whether it is in the full glow of the day, or in the half-light of evening, the thoughts of past ages usually flick across my mind, and I think "Frozen Music - a continual joy".

Thus does Elgar's Sonata appeal to me; especially the first movement. It is a joy from the first chord struck out by the violin to the magnificent chordal effect at the close. The symmetry of this first movement is very beautiful : the music flows as smoothly as a river amongst woods. Nothing jars, but everything is lucid and fresh. It is like the liquid tone of a Tennyson poem coming to our ears. The ideas expressed in this first movement are all loftily serene.

After the sparkling close, the 2nd movement lulls us into solitude with what seems to me to be an old world romance, like a breath of lavender. You will notice that this movement is given the title of 'Romance'.

After this we go on to the last, and third, movement. Here again the essence of the expression is joy. Joy impetuous, and abounding with vigour, although it has its moments of respite. I am sure it will appeal to you, as does the sweet, natural music of our own English countryside. Elgar's music is very English-like in its qualities, probably more so than any other of our English composers.

The Sonatas of Elgar and Ireland entirely differ in idiom and feeling. There is as much difference between Elgar and Ireland as there is between Tennyson and Byron.

Ireland to me always seems to be striving for something. His idiom is not always graceful - there is more often an expression of rugged strength - but I feel that there is sincerity and a strong personality behind the music. He is no respecter of Violinists or Pianists!

In this 2nd Sonata the music is broad - and full of a striving ecstasy. If I have one fault to find with it, it is that the piano part is rather on the heavy side; but nevertheless it is a magnificent work, and it is, to my mind, the finest work Ireland has yet given us.

You will probably find this Sonata more difficult to assimilate than Elgar's. The musical colouring is more vivid and daring. Elgar gives us subdued tints; Ireland revels in startling splashes of colour. With Elgar we seem to walk in cool groves, and through the lush of the level countryside; Ireland takes us to the mountains, and we strive up to the blue. You may not grasp the form and the melodies of this Sonata at a first hearing, and that is a reason why the gramophone is so welcome tonight; it will help prepare the way up the hill.

The piano leads off with a vigorous principal theme, like the whirl of a north wind, and then the Violin carries on with the scheme. At times it becomes contemplative, but throughout there surges an inward impulse, a persistent emotion that shows itself continually. Some of the chords in this first movement are magnificent.

The slow movement overflows with beauty, and Ireland creates some wonderful effects with what I call his "square-chordal" writing. After these two movements, the last movement pulsates with happiness, although it is not built on such big lines as the previous two. After a fiery introduction, a light rollicking tune is given out by the violin, and on, on it goes from joy to joy, tripping along like so many leprechauns, till it comes to the crashing Finale.

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BIRTHPLACE NEWS

At the time of writing we are settling into our winter schedule with shorter public opening hours. We are enjoying a few days of bright sunshine and there is still plenty of colour in the garden, in which the lavender and the roses in particular seem to have benefited from the wet spring.

We were about as busy as usual during the summer period which peaked at the time of the Three Choirs Festival, held this year in Hereford. Over the Festival period we were pleased to welcome members of the National Youth Chamber Orchestra who were attending intensive rehearsals under Roy Goodman at Malvern College. We were also most happy to welcome Natalie Clein, this year's Young Musician of the Year, who came with her family. Readers will recall her outstanding performance of the *Cello Concerto* which gained her the title.

A group of some twenty American music teachers took the opportunity to come; and we had a number of visits from Probus, National Trust, and Women's Institute groups.

Initial talks took place with Ealing Studios which may lead to a new film on the subject of Elgar.

Tireless as ever, Dr Percy Young came not only in preparation for the performance of his arrangement of *The Spanish Lady* at the Cambridge Elgar Festival in November, but also to review source material for a new book.

Construction of the Visitor Centre on the adjacent site has begun. At the time of writing bulldozers and graders are levelling the site and putting down the foundations. It is expected that the contractors, Thomas Williams, will be well ahead with the brickwork by the time these notes reach you.

A J Bennett

ELGAR'S BIRTHPLACE

OPENING HOURS

1 May - 30 September : 10.30 am - 6.00 pm

1 October - 15 January : 1.30 pm - 4.30 pm

16 January - 15 February : CLOSED

16 February - 30 April : 1.30 pm - 4.30 pm

CLOSED ON WEDNESDAYS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

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An impression by the artist David Birtwhistle of the new Elgar Centre at Lower Broadheath as seen from an upstairs window of the cottage.

The latest event to be organised by the Elgar Birthplace Appeal was a concert on 11 October at Birmingham's Symphony Hall by the London Philharmonic Youth Orchestra conducted by Andrew Constantine. A disappointingly small but enthusiastic audience heard the *Second Wand of Youth Suite*, followed by the *Cello Concerto* performed by Hannah Roberts. After the interval Lucy Jeal was the soloist in Finzi's *Introit* for small orchestra and solo violin; and the concert concluded with the *Enigma Variations*.

Places are still available on a weekend at the Cambridge Elgar Festival 19-20 November, which includes a performance of *The Apostles* in King's College Chapel, dinner at King's and visits to the Fitzwilliam Museum and other places. The all-inclusive charge is £147 per person, and further information on this and future events planned for 1995 can be obtained from the Appeal Director, Mrs Diana Quinney, The Old School, Abberley Avenue, Stourport-on-Severn DY13 0LH Tel : 0299 826382.



In August 1912 the Elgars spent a few days at a house called 'Little Langleys' (top photograph) at Steep, near Petersfield, the home of Mrs Winifred Murray. The orchestration of *The Music Makers* was completed there, and Elgar wrote "Little Langleys" at the end of the score. The Southern Branch recently visited the house (see Branch Reports) and a framed photograph of the last page of manuscript was presented to the current owners. The lower photograph shows (from left to right) : Walter Essex (Branch Chairman), Mrs Pike, Kevin Allen (retiring Branch Secretary), Mr David Pike, Martyn Marsh (Branch Vice-Chairman).

RANDOM RAMBLINGS...

The bookshelves at our summer holiday flat provided an interesting find : a volume entitled "Historic Worcestershire" by W Salt Brassington, published in 1894. It seems well written, and covers the period from prehistory up to the Civil War; and contains on p 124 the two-stanza poem *Grete Malverne on a rocke* which Elgar set to music on the family's Christmas card three years later. The list of subscribers in the front includes "Elgar, Mr E, Forli, Malvern", so it would seem that this was where he came across the words. Can any member verify this?

* * * * *

Brassington's book makes clear that the suggestion of the Herefordshire Beacon as the site of Caractacus' last stand in 50 AD owes more to legend than to historical probability. Despite this, Elgar, inspired by the romantic nature of the tale, wrote his cantata four years later. Now Professor Barri Jones of Manchester University claims that the only site that fulfils all the criteria in the description given by Tacitus is the great hillfort of Llanymynech, south of Oswestry in Shropshire. However, an expert from London University has challenged the thesis; the written record is imprecise; and in the absence of undisputed archaeological evidence, who knows? it might be the British Camp after all!

* * * * *

You just can't keep a good tune down. In August *Land of Hope and Glory* received its four-yearly dusting-down to be used as the English anthem at the Commonwealth Games in Canada (*God Save the Queen* being precluded as the home countries compete separately). The large number of dark-skinned gold medallists who stood so proudly during its playing made me reflect on where their forebears might have been when the tune was written! "Wider still and wider" indeed. At the same time another adopted Englishman, the Derbyshire cricketer Devon Malcolm, was performing prodigious if unexpected feats with the cricket ball - 9 for 57 against South Africa at the Oval. The source of his inspiration? In *The Times* England manager Ray Illingworth related how he approached Malcolm before he went out to bowl and found him with his habitual headphones clamped in place. "I lifted it up to speak to him and Land of Hope and Glory blared out", said Illingworth. "I left him to it". English sports fans will be praying that Devon will be made "mightier yet" in Australia this winter.

Acceptable to foreign-born nationals apparently, but not to foreigners. A German politician has been reported as adopting *Land of..* as the theme tune in his campaign for the forthcoming election, eliciting a predictably chauvinistic headline of "Hans[sic] Off!" in *The Sun*. However, foreign businessmen prosper through it; David Mellor reported in *The Guardian* that the plastic Union Jacks waved during its performance at the Last Night of the Proms bore the legend "Made in Taiwan". And its continued use as a hymn-tune confirms that people still enjoy singing it despite Jaeger's comments as to its unsuitability. The latest version to come my way begins "Glory in the highest to the God of heaven".

* * * * *

Sales of the Testament set of *The Dream of Gerontius* have been very gratifying, and I have enjoyed listening to this inspirational performance. I confess that I had only heard it once before, having been brought up on the Barbirolli version and finding money particularly tight when the LP transfer was brought out in the '70's! It is so good in so many ways that members will perhaps forgive mention of a little disappointment - the singing of Dennis Noble. Certainly his high baritone (sounding almost tenor-like at the top of the range) is ideal for the role of the Priest, and he delivers the words with just the right mixture of gravitas and spiritual encouragement (*solenne e con elevazione* indeed) and with impeccable diction. Yet to me he often sounds breathless, and sometimes splits phrases in a way that would be considered poor form today. Worst of all, he cuts short the final note of his first two phrases - "mundo" by three beats, and "world" by a whole bar. The wonderful effect Elgar wanted of hearing these held notes against the changing harmonies in the brass is thus totally lost, which is a great pity.

* * * * *

A member has written in to say that he owns a copy of Basil Maine's 1933 biography of the composer. As you will probably know, it was published as two separate volumes - "Life" and "Works". However this copy is a one-volume edition which contains the inscription "Twenty copies of this book (of which this is no 4) have been specially bound, two volumes in one, and autographed by Sir Edward Elgar". After his signature, Elgar has added the words "who knows nothing of the contents". This limited edition was the idea of the publishers, G Bell & Sons, and Maine wrote to Elgar asking for his approval. He replied on 5 January 1933; "I am truly sorry your horrible project matures ; God help us! Of course I will sign the copies if necessary and if it is of service to you" (see Maine, *Twang with our Music*, p 102). It would be interesting to know how many more of the twenty copies have survived.

* * * * *

There are some appetising Elgar performances to come in 1995. In February Our Lady's Choral Society in Dublin will celebrate fifty years of music making with performances of *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom* on consecutive evenings in February (see Concert Diary). The soloists will include Bernadette Greevy and Ian Caddy. The OLCS has a long association with the works of Elgar going back to Barbirolli, who conducted them in *The Dream of Gerontius* on a number of occasions; and more recently they have also performed *The Music Makers*, *From the Bavarian Highlands*, and *The Light of Life*. A special package will be available to Elgar Society members covering flights, hotel and concert tickets, and details of this are available from Robin Moore, 2 Corrig Avenue, Dun Laoghaire, Co Dublin, Eire. (telephone: (353) 1 284 2046).

Then on four dates in March the BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Andrew Davis are presenting a series of concerts entitled 'Edward Elgar - the Music Maker'. Works include *Falstaff*, the *Enigma Variations*, the *Second Symphony*, both concerti, and *The Dream of Gerontius*, this last in Westminster Cathedral, the venue

of its London première in 1903. Fuller details in the next JOURNAL.

For only the second time since the composer's death, both *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom* will be given at the Three Choirs Festival at Gloucester next year. On 24 August Richard Hickox will conduct the former, and two days later *The Kingdom* will bring the Festival to a close, conducted by David Briggs, the new cathedral organist at Gloucester.

Vernon Handley will conduct the Guildford Philharmonic Choir and Orchestra in *The Apostles* on 6 May; and in what is obviously a major year for the oratorios, *The Kingdom* will be performed on 28 May at the Malvern Festival conducted by Rory Boyle.

Last, but by no means least, members will recall the important links made, by John Kelly and others, between the Society and the Chetham's School of Music in Manchester (see report in JOURNAL January 1993 pp 19-20). On 13 March next year the Chetham's Symphony Orchestra conducted by Julian Clayton will perform the *First Symphony* at London's Barbican Hall. No doubt coachloads of supporters will be coming down the M6, but it is to be hoped that members in the south-east (and further afield?) will support this laudable venture in large numbers.

* * * * *

On several occasions recently the Society's Committee has discussed the possibility of preserving archive film of Elgar. Some years ago a plea was made in the JOURNAL for any film of Elgar taken on cine-camera to be made known, and now we do so again. It is sixty years since Elgar's death; film deteriorates over the years and should be copied if the pictures are to survive. The Society hopes that any members having such film would allow a copy to be made for archive purposes; failing that, if they know of the existence of any such film that they inform the Society of its whereabouts. Ron Bleach would be pleased to hear from any member who could help. He can be reached at 48 Ravenswood Road, Redland, Bristol BS6 6BT (telephone : Bristol 240506).

* * * * *

On 29 May as part of the Dresden Music Festival Sir Neville Marriner conducted the Saxon State Orchestra (Sächsische Staatskapelle) in a concert comprising a Mozart symphony and piano concerto, and Elgar's *Enigma Variations*. The review of the concert in the *Sächsische Zeitung* commented on the variety and richness of the sound in the Elgar, and made special mention of the 9th and 10th variations and the Finale. The performance was generally agreed to be magnificent and received enthusiastic applause.

Other Elgar to be performed abroad by British artists in the near future includes the Nash Ensemble playing chamber music in Jerusalem, Haifa and Tel Aviv this month; in February the London Sinfonietta Voices visit Berlin and *There is sweet music* is included in their repertoire; and Guy Woolfenden will conduct the Tallinn Chamber Orchestra in the *Serenade for Strings* in the Baltic countries in March.

* * * * *

An unusual feature of the annual Royal Tournament at Earl's Court in July this year was a performance of the first movement of the *Cello Concerto*. Two vintage open-top Rolls Royces entered from opposite ends of the arena, one containing a cellist, the other a young lady, both in appropriate period costume. The accompaniment was provided by a military band, with the conductor dressed up to look like Elgar.

* * * * *

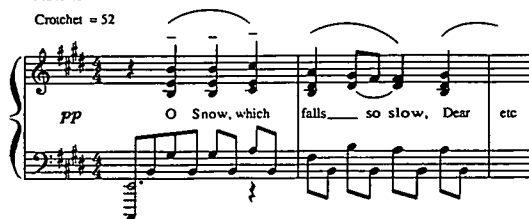
I have just received a new book, too late for a review in this issue, I'm afraid, but I mention it as Christmas is coming, etc. Its title is *Edward Elgar : Sacred Music* by John Allison, assistant editor of *Opera* magazine, and music critic of the *Financial Times*. The book deals specifically with music written for the church (including sketches and unfinished works), and therefore excludes the four major oratorios. An initial impression is that it is both scholarly and readable. It is published by Seren in their 'Border Lines' series, and is available from them at 2 Wyndham Street, Bridgend, Mid Glamorgan CF31 1EF. The price is £12.95 hardback, £6.95 paperback.

* * * * *

In the last issue I drew attention to the similarity of two themes in Elgar's works dating from the mid-1890s. Another theme from that period was surely echoed by another composer (unconsciously I'm sure) eight years later. The opening to the "chorus" section of the part-song for female voices, *The Snow*, where the tune moves from E minor into E major, is remarkably similar to the chorus of "O peaceful England" in Edward German's operetta *Merrie England*, which dates from 1903. The themes are laid out below.

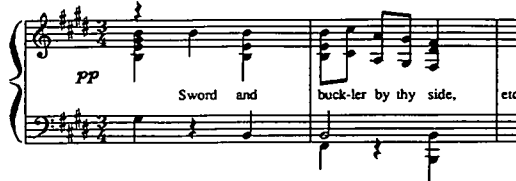
ELGAR: *The Snow* (Op. 26, no. 1) (1895)

Piu lento
Crotchet = 52



GERMAN: 'O Peaceful England' from *Merrie England* (1903)
(transcribed down a semitone)

Moderato (not too fast)



* * * * *

On 15 October the *Violin Concerto* became the latest Elgar work to feature in 'Building a Library' on Radio 3's *Record Review*. There have been a number of new recordings recently, and together with re-issues of older versions, Michael Kennedy barely had time to do justice to them all. He set aside the Menuhin/Elgar recording from the rest, for obvious reasons; also the versions by Sammons and by Heifetz. Generally, he said, the work had been well served by its interpreters, although he dismissed the performances by Zukerman and Perlman as "too sentimental" and "rather over-heated". Mr Kennedy felt that Menuhin's 1966 account had often been

overlooked, but he liked its "mellower, more philosophical approach". He was glowing in praise of the most recent versions - Nigel Kennedy was the finest of all in the introspective passages; Kang's "outstandingly good performance" on Naxos was recorded too closely; Accardo's was "an extremely fine interpretation" but "not consistently inspired". The final recommendation was the recent RCA release by Kyoko Takezawa, "technically flawless" and having "the full measure of the music".

* * * * *



Among the many redevelopment plans in Manchester at the moment is the construction of a new Concert Hall, which will be home for the Hallé and BBC Philharmonic orchestras, as well as serving other ensembles and also students from the Royal Northern College of Music and Chetham's School of Music. The Hall is planned to be ready in 1996. One outcome of this is the announcement that the Free Trade Hall (pictured above) will no longer serve as a concert hall. As Elgarians will know, it was the venue on 3 December 1908 of arguably Elgar's greatest triumph - the première of the *First Symphony*, played by the Hallé Orchestra under Hans Richter. The future of the old Hall is unclear : possible schemes include turning it into a hotel, or into luxury flats.

SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 1995

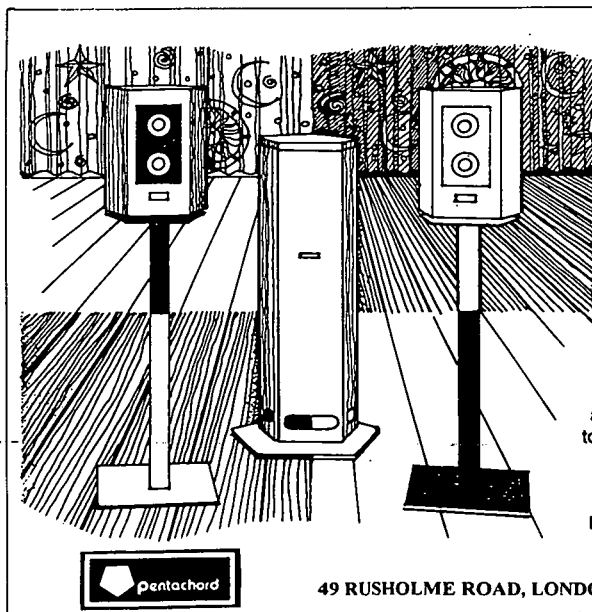
Members are requested to forward cheques in respect of their 1995 subscription to the Treasurer in January or before. His address is given on the back cover. It should be noted that the subscription rate has increased to **£15 (£7-50 for students)**.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

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	Various venues around Cambridge
9 November	Elgar films, etc <i>Andrew Youdell</i>	Medina Theatre Newport, IOW 7.30 pm Tickets: 0983 527020
18 November	Enigma Variations - ballet <i>Birmingham Royal Ballet</i>	Bristol Hippodrome 7.30
19 November	repeat of above	as above 2.30 & 7.30 Tickets: 0272 299444
19 November	Caractacus <i>T.Cahill, J.Oxley, R.Williams, M.Shaw/ St Edmundsbury Bach Ch & O/H.Oxley</i>	St Mary's Church, Bury St Edmunds 7.30 Tickets : 0284 769505
24 November	Elgar films, etc <i>A.Youdell</i>	Film Theatre 12 Rose St, Glasgow Tickets: 041 332 6535
26 November	Pomp & Circumstance 4, Cello Concerto, Symphony no 1 <i>Rochester Arts O/James Clinch</i>	Central Hall Chatham
27 November	Introduction & Allegro <i>Brighton PO/ Ellis</i>	The Dome, Brighton 2.45 pm
2 December	Serenade for Strings <i>Malvern Ch O/Boyle</i>	Priory Church Gt Malvern 7.30 pm Tickets: 0684 892277
2 December	Symphony no 2 <i>RSNO/Loughran</i>	Usher Hall Edinburgh Tickets: 031 228 1155
3 December	repeat of above concert	Royal Concert Hall Glasgow Tickets: 041 227 5511

4 December	The Black Knight <i>LSChorus/LSO/Hickox</i>	Barbican Hall London 7.30 pm
10 December	The Apostles <i>Soloists/Salisbury Chor Soc/Chelsea Opera O/Halls</i>	Salisbury Cathedral 7.30 pm Tickets: 0722 334535
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
11 January 1995	In the South <i>RLPO/Gerard Schwarz</i>	Anglican Cathedral Liverpool 7.30 pm
20 January	Enigma Variations <i>BBC Nat O Wales/Atherton</i>	Brangwyn Hall Swansea 7.30 pm Tickets: 0792 475715
1 February	The Kingdom <i>J.Rogers,C.Wyn Rogers,P.Langridge, S.Roberts/RLP Ch & O/Handley</i>	Anglican Cathedral Liverpool 7.30 pm Tickets: 051 709 3789
4 February	The Kingdom <i>Soloists/CUMS Ch & O/Cleobury</i>	Sheldonian Theatre Oxford 7.30 pm
10 February	The Apostles <i>Soloists/Our Lady's Ch Soc/Nat SO Ireland/O Duinn</i> (see Random Ramblings)	National Concert Hall Dublin 8.00 pm
11 February	The Kingdom (as for previous concert)	National Concert Hall Dublin 8.00 pm
15 February	Falstaff <i>Bournemouth SO/Pletnev</i>	Wessex Hall Poole Arts Centre
23 February	Symphony no 1 <i>LPO/Mehta</i>	Royal Festival Hall South Bank 7.30 pm
2 March	Sea Pictures <i>Della Jones/BBC Nat O Wales/Otaka</i>	Arts Centre Aberystwyth 8.00 pm Tickets: 0970 623232
3 March	repeat of above concert	Prichard Jones Hall Bangor 8.00 pm Tickets: 0248 351708

3 March	In the South <i>RPO/Menuhin</i>	Barbican Hall London 7.30 pm
5 March	Enigma Variations <i>BBC Nat O Wales/Otaka</i>	Theatr Clwyd Mold 8.00 pm Tickets: 0352 755114
6 March	repeat of above concert	Monmouth School 7.30 Tickets: 0600 772747
6, 10, 15, 19 March	'Edward Elgar - Maker of Music' series (see Random Ramblings)	Royal Festival Hall & Westminster Cathedral
13 March	Symphony no 1 <i>Chetham's SO/Clayton</i> (see Random Ramblings)	Barbican Hall London 7.30 pm
18 March	The Spirit of England <i>Hereford Ch Soc/Massey</i>	Hereford Cathedral 7.30 pm



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RECORD REVIEWS

Cello Concerto in E minor, Op.85

Mstislav Rostropovich, Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Gennadi Rozhdestvensky

*With works by Milhaud and Respighi
Russian Disk RDCD11104*

Arto Noras, Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra conducted by Jukka Pekka Saraste

*With Lalo : Cello Concerto
Finlandia 4509-95768-2*

*Paul Tortelier, London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Adrian Boult
With : In the South, Op.50, Introduction & Allegro for Strings, Op.47
EMI Classics 7243 5 68030 22*

Here are three more recordings of the *Cello Concerto*. One old friend, one from Helsinki and one recorded thirty years ago in Moscow - at much the same time as Jacqueline du Pré's recording with Barbirolli! It is trite knowledge that English music, and Elgar in particular, has the quite unwarranted mystique that it can only properly be understood by English interpreters. Here we have the Cello Concerto recorded by a Frenchman, a Russian and a Finn with only one English Orchestra and conductor between them; and so, it is very easy to listen with the score, and, being picky about minutiae, dismiss the whole with the easy excuse that the soloist is not **English**. And yes, for connoisseurs of this work there are details which perhaps take one by surprise, but there is nothing that has not been well thought out or which might either jar uneasily with the essential outward simplicity of the work, or lighten the concerto's brooding depths.

Rostropovich's Scherzo rattles along a great deal faster (stunning articulation!) than any other recording I have heard - he recorded the Britten *Cello Symphony* in the same year with its eerie scherzo and his skittish performance of the second movement of the Concerto brought the Britten very much to mind. However, his performance, wayward at times in dynamic (no crescendo at all in bar 4 and the bar before 73 in the finale) and tempi (occasionally a bit casual with his *largamente*), is enthusiastic, heartfelt, and contains some truly wonderful playing. The end of the slow movement and between figures 71 and 72 in the finale, I found particularly moving. The Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra, who are somewhat four square and accompany variably, are not helped by a fairly scrawny recording which places Rostropovich to the fore at the expense, from time to time, particularly, of the woodwind. In any event, I enjoyed the performance very much, despite being brought up short by a distinctly ugly note from the tympani on the very last chord.

The coupling on Rostropovich's recording includes an engaging trifle by Respighi, engagingly played and a short concerto by Milhaud whose main claim to fame (and for inclusion on this disc) is an opening on the cello alone on much the same lines

as Elgar's concerto before quickly being diverted into the sidings so far as I was concerned with oompah chugging on tuba and muted trombone beneath a cute tune in classic tongue-in-cheek Milhaud style. Perhaps I am being unkind because it is quite fun and well played - but not much more!

Arto Noras is a cellist who is new to me. He is a fine player who clearly deeply feels this Concerto and immerses himself completely within the idiom. I found his performance very affecting. He is sensitively accompanied by Jukka Pekka Saraste and the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra and both combine to realise the "wistful brooding upon the loveliness of earth" - Ernest Newman's perceptive words reviewing the first performance. His first movement is expansive; I could do with more orchestral cellos doubling the soloist at 59; they are more or less inaudible (they are marked *forte*); the LPO for Tortelier are much more effective here. The fault is not with the recording which is excellent, integrating the soloist well with the orchestra. Although Noras demonstrates a beautiful *pianissimo* at times (for example at the end of the slow movement and the autumnal reverie between sections 71 and 72 in the finale), his tone is occasionally a bit monochromatic at points where Elgar asks for greater dynamic variation within a short span. I should also add that at one point in the second movement Noras allows himself to shift his tone perilously close to *sul ponticello*, which could be said to be seeking effect for effect's sake. The moment passes, however.

Noras couples a concerto by Lalo which I had not heard before. In contrast to the rhetorical bombast of the orchestral contribution in the outer movements, it has some lovely reflective moments, with a few unusual elements which take it out of the normal run of three movement concerti to which it superficially conforms. It is, as can be imagined, well played and recorded although I will not mind terribly if I do not hear it again.

What can I say about Tortelier's exceptional performance that has not been said before? On the one hand his Gallic temperament does not allow him to hold back but yet he understands fully and realises the simple nostalgia of the piece. He is very well accompanied by the London Philharmonic under Boult and the recording comes up superbly. It is interesting comparing this performance with his recording with the BBC Symphony Orchestra under Sir Malcolm Sargent recorded in May 1953. Although he was perhaps a bit more bashful about some of Elgar's *largamente* markings then, the interpretation has hardly changed in the intervening nineteen years. Perhaps the reflective moments linger more wistfully. The coupling in this recording is made up of Boult's recordings of *In the South* and the *Introduction and Allegro*; the same plaudits apply to them. They are performances we all know well and they come up like new paint in this reissue.

A postscript to this review. It is always a revelation turning back to Elgar's own performances, and listening to his 1928 recording with Beatrice Harrison is no exception. However, I could not help thinking, comparing these three recordings under review, that Beatrice Harrison abetted by the composer almost overdoes the *largamente* in the second movement, (will I ever be invited to write again, I wonder!) in the sense that I feel it should eddy in the flow rather than hold it up completely. I returned at various points to all three recordings thinking they were paying lip

service to Elgar's markings. Once or twice I was right but most of the time it was all there but it just flowed more serenely.

Laurie Watt

Symphony no 2 in E flat, Op.63

With Imperial March, Op.32. Overture Cockaigne, Op.40
London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Daniel Barenboim
Sony SMK 46672

With Sea Pictures, Op.37.
Della Jones (mezzo-soprano), Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir
Charles Mackerras
Argo 443 321-2

BBC Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Edward Downes
Naxos 8.550635

In the last issue the editor reminded us of the historical importance of Solti's 1972 recording of the *First Symphony*, but we should not forget that the appearance of Barenboim's disc of the *Second Symphony* six months later also broke the mould. Whilst it is true that there had been eight previous recordings, these had been the work of just three conductors [Elgar(2); Boult(4); Barbirolli(2)]. By 1972, Barenboim had conducted the symphony all over the world to great acclaim. I know that he approached his usual recording company EMI but they were less than enthusiastic about his proposal to make a series of Elgar discs and so the surprise at the time was not only that Barenboim was conducting the symphony but also that Elgar was appearing on the American CBS label.

It is a fair reflection of the enormous growth of interest, particularly in the symphonies, that on its first appearance on CD, it is in competition with two new recordings, the 25th and 26th to be made! In this symphony at least, what happens in the first movement is often a touchstone for the rest. The stop-watch gives some clues with Barenboim at 18'47"; Downes at 17'16", and Mackerras at 16'13", suggesting large and significant differences of approach.

With Downes, you feel that you are in safe hands. Throughout the movement he maintains a stately coolness that is impressive in its way but ultimately somewhat earthbound. However, the sense of control and the quality of the orchestral playing certainly make their effect.

Barenboim is much more red-blooded. This is warm, reactive conducting. There is evident enthusiasm but it is a pity that he felt the need to underline so many points of detail as inevitably this approach tends to hinder the flow and is in danger of masking the overall structure. The recorded sound is not ideal although the CD sounds much better than the original LPs. Set down at Abbey Road in September 1972, it is not the best of its day, perhaps through compromises brought about by the use of the ill-fated quadraphonic format in which it was made. The sound is opaque with a very muddled, resonant middle register.

Mackerras's performance grabs the attention from the outset and within a very few bars it is clear that he has a different and distinctive view of how the music should go. There is a sense of purpose and energy about the music-making. He allows the horns to have a field day, bringing us amazingly close to the world of *Rosenkavalier*, a work contemporary with this symphony. But, as Mackerras explains in the booklet, there is much more to it than just that. He has consciously gone back to a performing style closer to Elgar's day than our own, firstly in the adoption of an ever-fluctuating pulse, secondly in the placing of the violins to the left and right, and thirdly in the use of *portamenti*. Working from Elgar's own recordings, Mackerras marked up the string parts, adding over 500 instructions where *portamento* should be applied. This would of course have been done by instinct in Elgar's day but now goes against the grain for players brought up to play "cleanly".

The final bars of the movement highlight the huge difference between these three performances. Downes secures extremely precise playing with every note firmly in place and articulated, an effect I can admire without being moved by it. Mackerras draws a wash of sound that is full of nervous energy with a firm final chord. With Barenboim, it is as if he and the orchestra are rather surprised that they have reached the end together and the last chord is rather lost and lacking in impact, but that may be the fault of the recording.

In the second movement it is Barenboim who is fastest and his flowing account is certainly very powerful. Mackerras's *portamenti* and *glissandi* come into their own but then these effects are not eschewed by Barenboim either. At the climax, with Mackerras it is again the wonderful brass sounds that overwhelm but the intensity of the LPO violins for Barenboim is very telling.

Tempi in the Scherzo are very similar with all three making the most of the "throbbing of a head in fever" passage. The Finale brings no surprises. Downes is very suave but a mite too pedestrian for my tastes. Barenboim lives for the moment with an achingly beautiful (and indulgent!) account of the Coda. Mackerras prepares the last climax with great skill, punctuating it with organ pedal notes as in the versions by Handley and Slatkin.

As to couplings, Downes on the super-bargain Naxos label has none. Barenboim on mid-price Sony has the *Imperial March* and the fine account of *Cockaigne* that was originally coupled with his excellent performance of *Falstaff*. Mackerras's full-price Argo disc has the *Sea Pictures* with Della Jones, which sound more urgent than on the celebrated Baker/Barbirolli account. The more modern recording opens the orchestral sound, with again brass to the fore, especially in 'The Swimmer', yet I do miss some of the inward quality and sheer beauty of sound of Dame Janet.

John Knowles

In the South (Alassio) Op.50. With works by Rimsky-Korsakov, Ravel, Dvořák, Borodin and Tchaikovsky.

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra conducted by Constantin Silvestri
EMI CZS 568229-2

String Quartet in E minor, Op.83. Piano Quintet in A minor, Op.84.

Chillingirian String Quartet, Bernard Roberts (piano)
EMI CDM 565099-2

Choral Suite: From the Bavarian Highlands, Op.27. With Stanford : Symphony No 3 in F minor 'Irish'.

Bournemouth Symphony Chorus, Bournemouth Sinfonietta conducted by Norman Del Mar
EMI CDM 565129-2

Serenade in E minor, Op.20. With works by Holst, Vaughan Williams and Delius.

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Bournemouth Sinfonietta conducted by Norman Del Mar
CDM 565130-2

Pleading, Op.48. Three Songs, Op.59. Two Songs, Op.60. With other songs with orchestral accompaniment by Butterworth and Vaughan Williams.

Robert Tear (tenor), Thomas Allen (baritone), City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra conducted by Vernon Handley and Simon Rattle
EMI CDM 764731-2

The Banner of St George, Op.33. Great is the Lord (Psalm 48), Op.67. Te Deum & Benedictus, Op.34.

London Symphony Chorus, Northern Sinfonia conducted by Richard Hickox
EMI CDM 565108-2

EMI have seized the initiative, once again, in revitalising their contribution to British music with their "British Composers" series. EMI's strength is, of course, their back catalogue, which is not to say that some recent new recordings have not been valuable. New recordings of Elgar have not fared so well, however, which is partly explained by the fact that they keep their finest Elgar conductor, Vernon Handley, recording with Eminence. Handley is coming to the end of one of the finest set of Vaughan Williams' symphonies in the catalogue - something which should not be ignored by Manchester Square.

It was in 1968 that I first became acquainted with *In the South*; no casual introduction, but a red-blooded, all-embracing experience through the recording of Constantin Silvestri and the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. I have at last caught up with its CD reincarnation and remain of the view that it is unequalled in terms of excitement, momentum, and in many ways, recording quality! [Other memorable recordings, other than the composer's own, are George Weldon's of 1954 and Boult's of 1956]. The recording was a fine one for its day and the CD largely recaptures what was a fabulous sound, a fine example of analogue recording technique, with the spread of the orchestra laid out before you - every instrument identifiable in its position, but at the same time part of the whole. My only complaint is that Silvestri did not divide his strings, something which would have made the score even more transparent, even if the slight thinness in this department would have been emphasised in unison passages.

Do not be put off by the double-album format, which is good value, for with this great *In the South* you have a wide selection of other music. I cannot say I was particularly enamoured with Tchaikovsky's *Fifth Symphony*, but Ravel's *Rhapsodie Espagnole* and Dvořák's *Eighth Symphony* remind me vividly of Silvestri's personality.

Happily Elgar's chamber music is now becoming accepted as part of the standard repertoire. In some ways the music has had to rely on some pioneer recordings to gain this position. To the Cohen/Stratton Quartet recordings now issued by Dutton Laboratories, I would add the famous Ogdon/Allegri/Music Group of London records of 1971. To an extent the recording by the Chillingirian Quartet and Bernard Roberts falls into this category too, even though it never received the credit it deserved. The performances can perhaps be best described as "middle-of-the-road", falling between the excitement of the Music Group record and the heartfelt introspection of the Medici/Bingham performances. For this reason it may well be worthwhile obtaining, although I have a feeling that Eminence will cause something of a sensation later in the year with their first recording of the Vellinger Quartet and Piers Lane in the two Elgar works. I heard a performance of the Quartet by this young, talented group earlier this year, one of the most exciting I have heard - in the Silvestri class, in fact. Do look out for it.

In August 1897 Edward and Alice travelled to 'The Bavarian Highlands' for a fifth holiday in the area. On the way they went to the Munich Opera where they heard Richard Strauss conduct *Tristan & Isolde*. Twenty years later Strauss would complete his massive *Alpine Symphony* which is partly a celebration of an ascent and descent of the Zugspitze, the mountain he could see from the villa he built in Garmisch. Elgar's more modest celebration of the same derived from his previous visit to Bavaria in 1894 and also refers directly to the local countryside, more specifically to the local community and its rustic pursuits.

I have never been fond of these songs, particularly with their piano accompaniment. Alice Elgar's words seem to me to be clearly rooted to the ground, and Elgar's music attempts to float them, at times very effectively, by producing a lightness of touch that can cloy. JGK pointed out in his original review (JOURNAL vol 2, no 4) how much more a substantial work the piece seems with orchestra. That is why I prefer the purely orchestral arrangement of three of the dances. Norman Del Mar's recording remains "full-blooded and clear" and is furthermore a charming performance, with light, forward movement and attention to the detail of the score, proving his sympathy with the world Elgar was creating. The recording is now coupled with Del Mar's pioneering recording of Stanford's *Irish Symphony*. Again I must confess a disappointment, this time with Stanford's symphonies as a whole. Vernon Handley's complete set on Chandos shows exactly why Elgar burst so uncomfortably on to the academic musical world of his day. Stanford's orchestration is at times wonderfully effective and compelling, but the material just does not live long enough in the memory to drive one back for more. For me Stanford's legacy lies in his songs, and choral music such as his *Service in B flat*; that is where his personality and skill can be discerned most clearly.

Del Mar is commemorated again on a disc of pieces by Holst, Vaughan Williams and

Delius with the ubiquitous *Serenade* to complete a well-filled programme. EMI achieved a warm, clear sound with these analogue recordings, made thirteen years apart in 1967 and 1980. The Elgar falls into the earlier sessions with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra at Christchurch Priory. In the *Serenade* Del Mar keeps the first and second movements moving well, but sustains a real *larghetto*. However in the final movement I felt the *allegretto* could have been prodded a little more. Nevertheless this is a lovely performance, part of a fine record, with as good a performance of the Vaughan Williams and Holst pieces as you will find. The string playing in the *Concerto Grosso* is particularly vivid.

Next a record I love but not, sadly, for its Elgarian contribution. Vernon Handley, that most sympathetic of partners, does not compensate for an off-day on the part of Robert Tear who sings all six songs with little feeling or thought. His voice has an edge to it which means that the words lose their meaning. As those of *The Torch* and *The River* are by Elgar this is particularly unfortunate¹. These songs are rarely recorded and Elgar's orchestration is a model (of course) of its type. In my view the reason for buying the record is Thomas Allen's interpretation of the Vaughan Williams' songs, variously but consistently orchestrated. This Stevenson centenary year makes them all the more poignant as they recall, evocatively, a world banished for ever by concrete and the motor car. Every word is clearly conveyed and Simon Rattle, like Handley, is a model accompanist.

Finally, the only recording we are likely to have for the foreseeable future of *The Banner of St George*. Try as I might I cannot become excited about this celebration of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, which is all the more regrettable when you recall that the work followed *King Olaf*. Jerrold Northrop Moore puts the work in context in his excellent notes, but points out that the libretto is an unexciting example of Victoriana giving little aid to Elgar's inspiration. When he recorded the Epilogue thirty years later his inflexible beat is perhaps an insight into his real feelings towards this runt of his choral litter. The music has, at times, great charm and the choral writing and orchestration are colourful. Neither is helped by such words as :

Hark! 'tis the ringing hoof of steed,
A warrior comes at foaming speed,

The sterile reaction of St George to the Princess Sabra, whom he has rescued from certain death, adds to the perfunctory nature of the work and the unreal atmosphere which the librettist Shapcott Wensley spawned. All the same every Elgarian should have the record in his collection, particularly for the other works, the magnificently orchestrated *Great is the Lord* and *Te Deum & Benedictus*. Richard Hickox gives a satisfactory and meaty performance of all three works, although I recall a somewhat more vivid performance of the *Te Deum & Benedictus* by him shortly before the recording was made. Berlioz comes to mind as Elgar extravagantly throws all he can at the orchestral parts which means it becomes a different work to the more familiar version with organ. Dr Moore reminds us how deep and close Elgar's associations were with the Three Choirs festivals, and thus by association the Anglican tradition. It has been pointed out that a more literal translation of the Latin

¹ Geoffrey Hodgkins has an interesting letter on this in the JOURNAL vol 2, no 3.

in the final words of the *Te Deum* is "O Lord, in Thee have I trusted : I shall not be confounded". This allows a composer to indulge in a more dramatic ending than the traditional Anglican supplication. Elgar stays firmly within his borrowed Anglican shoes for this little known, but important work.

Andrew Neill

Variations on an Original Theme (Enigma) Op.36. With Strauss : Symphonia Domestica.

*National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain conducted by Christopher Seaman
Pickwick IMP Classics PCD 1080*

This is one of those discs that I took out, played and really enjoyed and could leave it at that. Seaman and the NYO already have a widely acclaimed *Falstaff* to their credit on an earlier Pickwick disc and this is a worthy successor. Both technically and musically, it is of the finest and can stand comparison with any of the many other recordings of the *Variations* currently available.

What impresses me most is the boldness of spirit, the sense of players discovering the music for the first time and enthusing about it. There is a wide dynamic range encompassing a warm and affectionate yet not self-indulgent interpretation. 'Troyte' and 'GRS' are suitably rousing with ample percussion as might be expected from a conductor who was once a distinguished tympanist. 'Nimrod' flows along seamlessly with many fascinating points of orchestral detail nicely etched in. There is here a mood of thankfulness and hope, not merely regret. In 'BGN' the lower strings produce beautifully rich and velvety tones.

However recordings you already have of the *Variations*, I am sure you will find much to enjoy here and the full notes include Christopher Seaman's own Enigma theory, a musical cryptogram that unveils an inscription "A Carice".

The coupling is an unusual yet apt one. Both works were written within five years of each other, and both centre on human relationships. More significant too is the strong autobiographical aspect of the pieces : Strauss as the father is placed very firmly at the centre of his depiction of family life. But then Elgar too is central to the understanding of his "friends pictured within". Just as the composer forms the common bond that links the subjects of his variations, so too his own variation forms the musical synthesis that gives unity and completeness to the set.

John Knowles

Part-songs -

*The Finzi Singers directed by Paul Spicer
Chandos CHAN 9269*

"I don't want any more Elgar symphonies or concertos, but am ready to take as many part songs as he can produce, even at extortionate rates", wrote Augustus Littleton, chairman of Novello in 1914. Times have changed and part-songs are perhaps the one area of Elgar's output that has not really been embraced amidst the

huge growth in the public esteem of his music. This disc then, containing a generous selection of the most important of Elgar's work in the genre, ought to be welcomed with open arms and yet I must record some disappointment.

The most successful items are those that are limited in scope and scale. *How calmly the evening goes* particularly well, very sensitive and warm, the intimate personal quality of the music wonderfully captured. The same is true of *Weary wind of the west*, *Evening scene*, and *The Prince of Sleep*. However, most of the disc is taken up, quite rightly, with the important songs composed in Rome in 1907 and the sets of 'Choral Songs' dating from just before the war. These are all big experimental pieces and frankly do not sound their best when sung, as here, by a choir of just nineteen voices. I wouldn't want the symphonies played by a string quartet and single woodwind! It's not just the number of singers, though; I fear that the music is treated with kid gloves. The emotions are understated. There are many incidental beauties but it's all rather too controlled for me. I am looking for something more robust, something more daring to set the pulse racing. The few recordings of part-songs that date from the 78 era are far less polished and refined but they have a real sense of commitment and forward movement.

My love dwelt in a northern land was the first Elgar to be published by Novello. It is marked *moderato* but Paul Spicer takes it very steadily so that when he reaches the middle section, which is marked *poco più lento*, the pulse becomes very slow indeed. Even in this early work, the range of expression seems stunted. The overall dynamic range is limited and the *sforzando* at the word "battle" disappointingly muted. In its companion piece *O happy eyes* I could detect no real difference between *f* and *pp* yet there is some beautifully controlled and precise staccato singing. The penultimate semiquaver is held for so long, you could be forgiven for thinking it had a pause over it but it hasn't!

The *Greek Anthology* songs for male voices alone go rather better. The men produce a well-focused blend of sound and these short pieces are polished off with much more panache, although again I found the lack of dynamic range disappointing.

Tempi in the Opus 53 set are again very steady. Spicer takes a minute longer than Boult over *Deep in my soul* but I must admit there are some very beautiful moments. *There is sweet music* unfolds in an unforced, controlled way and demonstrates the excellent technical command of the singers not least in their intonation in this very tricky piece; but there are just not enough of them to make the desired effect in *O wild west wind*. *Owls* is also a minute slower than Boult's recording which in a piece lasting two minutes is a staggering difference. It certainly takes some getting used to, but there are some compensations in for example the evocation of the leaves as they fall and "falling rustle".

My favourite of all these songs is *The Shower*. Spicer's account is poles apart from Swingle II's extraordinary, mercurial interpretation which I hope will not be lost for ever in RCA's vaults. Here we have very lazy drops of rain painting a rather sad and pathetic picture as opposed to that of a forward-looking hopeful spirit that looks to the "sunshine after rain", which is how I have always viewed it. Its less memorable companion *The Fountain* is attacked with much more gusto. *Death on the hills* is

appropriately lugubrious but again I fear that the emotions are too confined. This is a big piece and should sound it. The Opus 73 set go better, with the *Serenade* in particular having a nice lilt with a flowing forward movement. As on "our" Choral Song record (Elgar Society ELGS 002), the best is kept to last. *Go song of mine* is an undoubted masterpiece but again I think it needs much more drama, more guts, more thrust and less reflection than we are offered here if it is to make its full effect.

Perhaps I have been too harsh in my judgments! Try to hear it if you can. It presents a different view on some underrated music and perhaps I just need time to get used to it.

John Knowles

CD Round-up

A question with which to impress your musical friends : What was the first major Elgar work to be recorded, when, and by whom? The answer is *In the South* (from fig 51 to the end) by the La Scala Symphony Orchestra of Milan in 1909 conducted by Carlo Sabajno - and very good it is too, given the limitations of recording at the time. (Many of you will possess the Society's own record ELG 001 - still available, incidentally - which contains this and many other fascinating early recordings). Now, eighty-five years later, comes the first *complete* recording of *In the South* by Italian forces - again the Orchestra Filarmonica della Scala conducted by Riccardo Muti (Sony SK 57973). It represents another nail in the coffin of those who maintain that only the English can perform Elgar, for this is a radiant, exhilarating performance, totally convincing as an interpretation, and finely played. It is an expansive reading, but not indulgent; in fact, Muti pays commendable attention to the little *tenutos* and other marks of expression which bring out the richness in this wonderful score. The players obviously relish it, the brass in particular attacking their parts with zeal and panache. The final pages show them to be worthy successors of the 1909 band; the build up from fig 51 (*tranquillo ppp dolcissimo*) is magical - very restrained and slow to begin with. The excitement mounts at the *molto allegro* at fig 55, and Muti leads us perfectly into the climax at fig 58. The work is actually a fill-up to Brahms' early *Serenade No 1*, which is equally well done. However many versions of *In the South* you have, you need this one.

Two more re-issues of the *Cello Concerto*. The one by Stephen Isserlis and the LSO conducted by Richard Hickox appearing on the new mid-price Virgin Ultraviolet label (7243 561 125-2) is one of the finest of modern versions, in my opinion. Isserlis adopts a very "straight" almost understated approach, with no histrionics, yet he is vigorous where necessary, playful in the Scherzo, and very tender and lyrical, particularly in the last few pages. As an example, listen to the expression in the *Lento* after fig 71, just before the *Come Prima*. It is good to hear a soloist give such close attention to the dynamics; would that this were always the case! The balance between soloist and orchestra is much as one would hear it in a concert hall, which means that in the *tutti* the cello is sometimes struggling to be heard. All in all, this is a performance to live with. The fill-up is another outstanding performance by the same forces of Bloch's *Schelomo*. Only fifty-one minutes music, but well worth the

money, especially at mid-price.

Ralph Kirshbaum's recording, with the Royal National Scottish Orchestra conducted by Sir Alexander Gibson, dates from 1979 but has appeared on CD before. This new release is on the Chandos budget-price Collect series (CHAN 6607). I should say from the outset that it is very slow; at nearly 33 minutes, it is almost two minutes longer than Jacqueline du Pré's 1970 recording with Barenboim and the Philadelphia Orchestra yet, sad to say, it lacks the passion and commitment which (some would say) justify the longueurs of that performance. The opening sets the tone - very slow and sounding emotionally detached. The playing is generally fine, but with everything so slow the contrasts within the work are muted and the performance comes perilously close to boring the listener (this one at any rate). Even at budget price this version faces some rather formidable opposition. The rest of the disc is Gibson's account of *Falstaff*, a reading which is generally respectable without being totally convincing. However, this is a work which many experienced Elgarian conductors have found elusive, and the field is more restricted; so if you are looking for a budget-price *Falstaff*, you will not be disappointed with this.

I once heard Campoli, at a recital about thirty years ago, and can confirm that he was "a most self-effacing, modest artist who hated to be labelled a 'virtuoso'", as we are told in the excellent notes which accompany the CD transfer of his recordings of the Elgar and Mendelssohn concerti (Beulah 1PD10). Campoli's no-nonsense approach can be ascertained from the fact that this recording of the Elgar is a good deal faster than most. He is most reluctant to linger - even when given opportunity, as at the *tenutos* after fig.13 - and this generally works well in the first movement, giving a sense of restlessness and searching which is in character with the music. However, the Andante is much too fast, especially at the outset. The sense of the soloist, and *ergo* the composer, musing in an introspective manner during this very personal movement is greatly diminished, and the situation is exacerbated by Campoli's other chief fault, which is a lack of sufficient dynamic contrast. There is often precious little difference between *pp* and *ff* (I assume that this is due to the soloist and not the engineer). The Allegro molto third movement starts brilliantly; but again, the Cadenza is spoiled by aggressive, rather uninvolved, playing. Boult is typically sensitive to his soloist throughout, but this hardly ranks among his greatest Elgarian achievements. The sound is rather tinny at times, the violins sounding particularly brash during the louder passages. Campoli's Mendelssohn is by contrast an absolute delight; it seems that the work, emotionally and structurally more straightforward than the Elgar, eminently suits his direct, "self-effacing" style. I am sorry to be so negative about a version which will be very dear to a great number of people; I did enjoy it very much, especially the first and third movements; and if you can afford it, buy it in memory of a great artist.

The Editor

BRANCH REPORTS

LONDON Branch offered two pre-season outings in September. On 10th a small group were enabled to visit the home of Mr Norman McCann in Sydenham which houses his remarkable collection of memorabilia and is, in effect, a veritable private museum. Particularly featured are items associated with nineteenth-century performances at the Crystal Palace. We are grateful to Mr McCann for his warm welcome, and hope very much that before long we shall be able to make a return visit. A fortnight later we supported a concert at Eton College at which our member Robert Tucker conducted the Broadheath Singers in a programme of rare Moeran, Stanford and Bax as well as Elgar's *The Black Knight*. This was the latest in a long series of concerts at Eton in which Robert has annually explored little known British repertory.

Members are reminded that the season proper opens at Imperial College on 3 October with the Mistral Quintet; also that tickets may be obtained for the Wulstan Atkins interview (Richards Memorial Event) on 26 November, for our planned visits to LSO concerts at the Barbican on 4 and 15 December, and for the Elgar/Strauss Day School on 14 January. Further information and tickets from David Bury.

SOUTH-WEST Branch have started their 1994-5 season, with two meetings in Bristol, plus another in Exeter on 1 October when Ronald Alan Smith presented 'Elgar and the Three Choirs Festival'. The Branch AGM is on 26 November, and we re-commence after Christmas on 28 January with 'Rutland Boughton at Glastonbury', an illustrated talk by his biographer Michael Hurd. Society Chairman Andrew Neill makes a return visit with 'Strauss, Elgar and England' on 25 February, followed by 'On the road to Emmaus' by Michael Foster, conductor of the BBC Welsh Choir on 25 March. Further meetings are arranged for April, May and June; all members and friends are welcome.

Before the summer recess, the SOUTHERN Branch had two very enjoyable meetings; Dennis Clark's slide show on 'Elgar's World in Contemporary Pictures', and Alice Jones (assisted by her daughter) presented 'Delius and his Friends'. A somewhat unusual, yet quite thrilling, event was the Branch's visit to 'Little Langleys' near Petersfield, the house in which Elgar completed his full score of *The Music Makers* in August 1912. Despite persistent rain we enjoyed the hospitality of Mr & Mrs David Pike and, brollies aloft, explored the beautiful gardens which were ablaze with a breathtaking variety of azaleas. We were delighted to present Mr & Mrs Pike with a framed photograph of the last page of the full score of *The Music Makers* which, in typical Elgar fashion, was inscribed with the date and place of completion: 'Little Langleys'. Thus we have added a little Elgarian history to the house.

We are sorry to have lost our Branch Secretary to the West Midlands Branch! Kevin Allen, who was one of the driving forces behind the creation of the Southern Branch, has moved to Malvern. Whilst we are full of envy, we wish Kevin and his wife Carol many happy years of retirement (and Elgar research) in his spiritual home.

YORKSHIRE Branch got their new season off to a splendid start on 26 September with 'Elgar in Sound and Vision', presented by Allan Green FRPS. Superb photography was allied to well-chosen music, including *Sospiri*, the Adagio from the *First Symphony*, and the *Cello Concerto*. Mr Green's closing sequence, 'Edward

Elgar, England', was a short Elgarian biography in words, music and pictures, using dissolving images. The whole evening was a delight, thoroughly enjoyed by one of our larger attendances.

On 10 October our own member Cecil Bloom gave us 'Elgar : the Leeds Connection', the story of Elgar's association with the Leeds Triennial Festival. We heard extracts from the works premièred at Leeds, including *Caractacus* and *Falstaff*, but of particular interest were readings from correspondence, particularly of the earlier negotiations between Elgar and the Festival Committee, as well as newspaper accounts of the early Festival performances, including contemporary opinion of "Mr Elgar's" contributions. A very well-researched talk benefited greatly from Mr Bloom's extremely lucid style and was appreciatively received.

Attendances at both the above meetings were in excess of thirty and with the branch in good heart we look forward to another good attendance on 7 November when Society Chairman Andrew Neill will speak on 'Strauss, Elgar and England'. If our annual dinner at Donisthorpe Hall on 4 December is as successful as last year's event, we shall have rounded off the year in good style.

WEST MIDLANDS. Our November meeting has been changed due to the sudden sad death of John Heddle Nash. We are fortunate that Dennis Clark has agreed to step in and give his slide presentation "Elgar's World in Contemporary Pictures". The annual Lunch Party will be at 12 noon on 11 February at St Swithun's Institute, The Trinity, Worcester; and the Branch AGM will take place at 2.15 pm at the Stables, 37 Albany Terrace, Worcester. Finally on 25 March at a joint meeting with the Worcester Recorded Music Society John C Phillips will speak on 'Elgar, Cantor for the Nation' at The Old Palace, Deansway, Worcester. We look forward to welcoming as many members and friends as possible to all our meetings.

LETTERS

From : Stephen Lloyd

Percy Young, in his *Elgar O.M.* p.161, tells us that in 1912 Elgar "found Cambridge 'amusing', not least because he had to conduct Stanford's new D minor Symphony (No 7)..." Michael Kennedy, in his *Portrait of Elgar*, p.155 (second edition) also tells us that "at Cambridge in February 1912 Elgar conducted Stanford's new Seventh Symphony and was 'amused' to do so..." Jerrold Northrop Moore in *Elgar : The Windflower Letters* p.97 quotes a letter, dated 31 January 1912, in which Elgar writes that he would be at "Cambridge tomorrow". The linking commentary informs us that he conducted the London Symphony Orchestra in a Stanford symphony.

If it was indeed the Seventh Symphony that Elgar conducted, then it would surely have been the work's première. Stanford's previous symphony, No 6 in E♭ "In Memoriam G F Watts", had first been performed in January 1906, and the première of the Seventh in D minor is generally stated to have been at the Queen's Hall Philharmonic Society concert on 22 February 1912, with the composer conducting. Yet Elgar's performance would seem to predate this event by three weeks. It does seem inconceivable that Elgar could have given so important a Stanford première without it being widely publicised. But if it was not the Seventh

Symphony that he conducted on that Cambridge occasion, which symphony was it?

From : Edward Bates

I thought I would like to tell you how wonderful I found the performances of Gerontius, The Apostles and The Kingdom during Summer Music Week recently held at Reigate, organised and conducted, in the main, by Leslie Olive. It is a long time since I heard (at Tewkesbury) all three choral works in close succession.

The orchestra - made up of brilliant young players - the choir and the soloists were superb.

I understand that Wulstan Atkins and Antony Hopkins were present and were equally complimentary.

As a personal note, I found the closing passages of The Apostles simply out of this world, and I and others with me were lifted right up; the last ten minutes or so of the Ascension moved me more than any other passage in the three choral masterpieces.

I remember Owen Brannigan telling me that The Apostles was "BEAUTIFUL", his rich voice rolled around that word, and how right he was!

From : Professor Ian Parrott

Let me congratulate Gordon Lee on his most convincing development of the Weaver theme ('Another piece in the Jigsaw' September '94).

I notice more than once that he accuses Elgar of lying : "...in later life, Elgar stuck to his story" (p 260), for example. So, if HDS-P, Ysobel and BGN refer to piano, viola and cello, would Mr Lee tell us why, oh why, is poor Dr Sinclair not allowed to be an organist? I have never heard paddler Dan's "gruff bark" (p 253), but did myself study with a pupil of the brilliant organ pedaller.

Elgar's later suggestion that "GRS has nothing to do with organs or cathedrals" is utterly outrageous and would never be accepted by anyone unaware of the clumsy deception. Are Mr Lee and others still unable to accept on this matter that the great Elgar could deliberately tell an untruth?

Incidentally, I was "ass enough" to write an article, 'Variation for a Dog?' for The Music Teacher as long ago as January 1956.

THE ELGAR SOCIETY

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