

The Elgar Society JOURNAL



MARCH
1995
Vol.9, No.1

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The Elgar Society Journal

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EDITORIAL

Vol.9, No.1
March 1995

"Our roots are our branches". This slogan was used in its advertising by a well-known bank some years ago. It is certainly true of The Elgar Society. Sixty per cent of its members are attached to one of the eight branches. For a quarter of a century I have enjoyed attending branch meetings, with the opportunity to hear music and to listen to musicians and musicologists, many of international standing; to mix with fellow-Elgarians in a relaxed atmosphere. It must be self-evident that branches are one of the most effective ways of making people aware of the Society and of encouraging them to join it, far more attractive than asking them to join a "faceless" organisation. If the massive growth of the Society in the 1970s can be explained at least partly by the success of the newly-formed London Branch, then that in turn can be largely attributed to the monumental efforts of the then secretary, the late Bill Jackson.

Clearly a voluntary organisation such as The Elgar Society owes a great debt to its officers, both at national and local branch level. The branch secretary is a key figure, arranging speakers and venues, and seeing to the thousand-and-one other things that can occur. With the resignation of its secretary, Pat Hurst, the North-West Branch has been thrown into crisis (see Branch reports). Let us hope that someone from the branch membership will be stirred into volunteering their services and take on this vital position. Even a relatively short-term commitment - say two or three years - would ensure a breathing space. This seems an opportune occasion to pay tribute to the hard work done by branch officials, and to recognise the debt the Society owes them.

A new volume of the JOURNAL; a new picture of Elgar for the cover - based on the famous Grindrod photo of 1903. T L Poulton's engraving from the *Radio Times*, dating from the 1930s, has been used since 1977, and I feel that something representing Elgar at the peak of his creative powers is perhaps an appropriate alternative. In enclosing a copy with the last letter Elgar ever wrote to Fred Gaisberg on 14 December 1933 he said - possibly tongue-in-cheek - that it "represents the very serious dreamer & thinker (Gerontius days)". But is this not, as so often with Elgar, a true word spoken in jest? I hope that members will approve of the change; if not, I am sure they will let me know!

GEOFFREY HODGKINS

ELGAR AND PERCY PITT

Geoffrey Hodgkins and Ronald Taylor

Part II

The middle years of the Elgar - Pitt correspondence are something of a disappointment compared to the early years. They consist mainly of postcards sending greetings, or short notes to arrange meetings or apologies for failing to keep appointments. Few letters from Pitt appear to have survived. Much of the correspondence is undated and possibly undatable.

[fo.6 Postcard, dated Köln 21 May 1904]

Love to you. Apostles tomorrow. Edward Elgar.

This general terseness reflects the increasing busyness of the two men. Elgar was knighted in 1904, and the following year became the first Professor of Music at Birmingham University. In 1906 Pitt was appointed assistant conductor at Covent Garden for both the summer and autumn seasons; and the following year became Musical Director there, replacing André Messager. In theory Pitt had complete artistic freedom, but this was curbed by the financial restraints of what Richter called "the gentlemen of the Syndicate".

Elgar's *Introduction & Allegro for strings* was given its first performance in London on 8 March 1905. A week later his first lecture was given in Birmingham, from where he sent Pitt a card with a quotation from the new work.

[fo.64 torn scrap of letter card : postmark Birmingham March 16 1905]

My dear Pitt ;

Kalisch is spoiling the other end of this fayre sheet



That autumn was a busy time for Elgar, with more Birmingham lectures and a tour with the London Symphony Orchestra, to say nothing of the need to press on with the composition of *The Kingdom* for the next Birmingham Festival.

[fos.9-10]

Plas Gwyn. Hereford

Dec 2. 1905

My dear Pitt :

I have been on the point of writing to you for two months or more.

Now ; a gentleman has offered me a libretto 'Sappho' (with 2 p's, which offend my greek eyes) && said if I could not &c who would? I asked him to send it on to you - it may be no good, but one never knows.

Now (again) are you going to U.S.A? If so then I should like to send all sorts of messages to the Gaffer, whom you probably call Sanford in the *am* & Uncle Sam after dinner.

My love to you. but let us hear of you

Yours ever
Ed : Elgar

[fo.11. Postcard of Hereford Cathedral. Date from postmark 22 December 1905].
Love & best wishes. Edward

The following spring, with *The Kingdom* still far from complete, the Elgars went to America where Edward was to conduct at the Cincinnati Festival. Pitt was also composing a work, a *Sinfonietta*, for Birmingham; Richter had procured the commission for him, and Pitt dedicated the work to him.

[fo.12]
Plas Gwyn, Hereford
March 28. 1906

My dear Pitt :
We are off to U.S.A. next Friday & I should like to wish you good luck with your Birmingham work.

It seems ages since I was in town, except for a day & a half last month.

Any messages for the New World?

Yours ever
Edward Elgar

Despite the cheery tone of this letter, Elgar was very depressed; the completion of *The Kingdom* nearly drove him to a breakdown. But the underlying cause was undoubtedly the Birmingham University professorship - the need to prepare lectures, and the hostile reaction to them from many quarters. He was devastated by the reception accorded to the two lectures he gave at the beginning of November - especially the second one, on Mozart's *G minor Symphony* - and his eyes began to trouble him. In London the following week to conduct *In the South*, he could not bring himself to attend the first London performance of *The Kingdom* on 17 November, conducted by Allen Gill, but craved Pitt's sympathetic and understanding company instead.

[fos.74-5]
Westminster [?16 November 1906]

My dearie Pitt :
Very many thanks!.] 'they' are all going to the Kingdom at the Alexa[ndra] Palace so I am free!]
I fear I can't dine with you but will turn up at your box during the evening : I was coming in any case but it will be delightful to be with you

Yours ever
Ed : Elgar

[fo.73 Schuster's monogrammed notepaper]
22, Old Queen Street, Westminster

In awful haste

Love to you
Edward

The following summer Elgar heard from Pitt, holidaying in Germany with Richter, who added his own postscript to the card.

[fo.115 Postcard]
Weibegg
28 Aug 1907

Dear Elgar,

Just a line from Weibegg to greet you - Have been staying here for a week & am now going on to Munich - Kindest regards to all at Plas Gwyn

Yours
Percy Pitt

My holy days[sic] were sweetened by the hope that the Symphony will be ready for next season

Yours truly
Hans Richter

The symphony [dedicated to Richter] was finally produced in Manchester on 3 December 1908, and was an immediate success. One of the hundreds sending congratulations to the composer was his friend Percy Pitt.

[fo.13 Postcard dated 4 January 1909]

Many thanks for your jolly telegram - it means a lot.

Yrs ever
Ed.E

Hereford

For years Elgar had been ambivalent about London. It must have still rankled with him that he had failed to make an impact when he had first lived there. He always found it hard to compose in London. He hated the musical establishment and their power and influence. Yet he enjoyed his growing fame and its concomitants. The social aspects of London life were a great attraction, to which Hereford could not compare. As he wrote from there to Frank Schuster in November 1909: "It is deadly dull here & enough to drive one to despair - and the world is so nice & waiting for me - if I cd. only get to it".

Soon after he *did* do something about getting to it, taking a flat in Queen Anne's Mansions, and then from the beginning of March a larger one at 58 New Cavendish Street. Work on the *Violin Concerto* developed, but Elgar took ten days at the beginning of April to go on a motor tour of Devon and Cornwall with Schuster.

[fo.14 Postcard of Penzance promenade, postmark Falmouth April 7 1910]

We have begun our homeward route. Shall see you soon

Yrs ever
Ed E

Elgar had decided to attend the first night of the new Covent Garden season, which was *La Traviata* conducted by Campanini, with Tetrzzini singing Violetta. (As it happened she was indisposed and the role was sung by Donalda).

[fo.15-16]
58 New Cavendish Street, W
Ap 19 1910

My dear Percy :

I am back after a wild & delightful tour in Cornwall[.] Will you tell me Richter's address in town - I'll keep it a dead secret if he wishes & tell me if I can come into your box on Saturday evening for an hour.

I have never heard Tetrzzini!

I have a few photos : of the Doctor & myself together & I think you might like one - 'twas down at Hereford when he came down to 'see' the symph [*on 6 November 1908*]

Ever yours
Edward x

x Elgar

[fo.76 Royal Opera Covent Garden notepaper]

Dearie Pitt :

We are in the stalls - D6 & 7. Could possibly see Richter after[.] I want to say goodbye &c

love
E Elgar

[fo.72]
58 New Cavendish Street, W[deleted]
Thursday am

My dear Percy :

I had to leave at 11[.] I was sorry to miss you. Thanks for the seat in the honoured Box. I am just off. I have the photo of the Dr & me. I kept it to get him to sign it but could not.

Love to you
Yrs ever
Edward

[fo.17]
58 New Cavendish Street, W
Friday

My dear Percy

Many thanks for your letter & all your kind information.

I am so sorry but I cannot dine with you on Saturday. Some other day let us eat together

Yours ever
EE

[fo.79]
Porthgwidden, Devoran, Cornwall
July 4 [1910]

My dear Percy :

Will you very kindly complete the address on the enclosed envp[.] I do not know where R[ichter] is at the moment & my address book is incomplete

I hope you are well & all going in a flourishing way.

Yours ever

EWE

Richter had conducted a *Ring* cycle at Covent Garden in April, but then his health broke down, and he was unable to conduct there again. On 13 February 1911 the sixty-seven-year-old conductor announced his retirement. Pitt wrote to Elgar asking for suggestions as to how to mark it. Elgar replied from Brussels, where he was conducting a performance of the *First Symphony*.

[fo.18 Postcard from Brussels dated 9 March 1911]

Brussels

My dear Percy :

I was just rushing off here when your letter came : I have had several to the same effect & can do nothing until I return to London on Monday[.] I'll let you hear as I want to see you[.] I have only a moment as I sail for USA on Saturday

love

Yrs ever

EE

[fos.19-20 in Alice Elgar's hand]

Dr. Richter's retirement

16 March 1911

Dear Mr. Pitt [*crossed out by Elgar, who wrote instead My dear Percy*]

I have received many letters urging that some public recognition of Dr. Hans Richter's invaluable services to music in this country, should be made at once.

It is unnecessary to say that whatever form such recognition may eventually take, it should be national and worthy not only of the great musician, but of the vast musical public which he has so incalculably benefitted.

As I have only just returned from abroad & am leaving immediately for Canada, it is impossible for me to formulate any plan. I should be glad to give my name, and if not too late, any assistance in my power, on my return to England in May.

I think it would be well if those, most interested, could meet and discuss the matter.

Messrs. Novello would gladly provide a room for the meeting at 160. Wardour St. & assist in every possible way.

Forgive me for sending a circular letter but in the few hours I have at my disposal, it is impossible to write to each of the gentlemen who have written to me.

Yours faithfully,

Edward Elgar [*signed by himself*]

Various official farewells and presentations took place before Richter's final concert on 22 April.

By the summer of 1911 the Elgars had decided to move to London, and were buying a large house in Hampstead.

[fo.21]

Hereford [75 Gloucester Place notepaper]
Augt.23 1911

My dear Percy :
Many thanks for sending me the programme - glad to find myself in your company

I hope you are having a good rest - Devon is a good county anyway

My love to you

Ever yrs

Ed : Elgar

The move to Hampstead took place on 1 January 1912, and Pitt sent a welcoming note.

[fo.22]
Savern House, 42 Netherhall Gardens, Hampstead N.W.
Jan 11 1912

My dear Percy :
It was very good of you to write : I have been wanting to tell you that we are (*partly*) here : we are not 'settled in' yet or I shd. have reported the fact to you - but if you don't mind an awful muddle do come & see us.

Any time you wd. be welcome but I shd. like to be in when you come. Would you come on Sunday about 4.30?

My love to you

Yours ever

Edward Elgar

The Centenary concert of the Philharmonic Society was to be held on 8 February. It included the *Enigma Variations* and the *Elegy for Strings*. Bantock's "new work" was the tone-poem *Fifine at the Fair*, which was withdrawn after the fee requested by the composer was considered too high (see letter from William Wallace, the Philharmonic secretary, to R H Legge in *From Parry to Britten*, ed Lewis Foreman [1987] p 48). Wallace, who was a professed admirer of Pitt's work, was responsible for suggesting his *Sinfonietta* (now retitled *Symphony in G minor*) as a replacement (see Wallace's letters to Pitt [British Library Egerton MS 3306 fos.171 & 172]). The 'soloist' was Alfred Cortot.

[fos.23-24]
Savern House, 42 Netherhall Gardens, Hampstead N.W.
Jan 24 1912

My dear Percy :
I hear with much joy that you are to be with me at the Centenary Concert of the Philharmonic[.] I was to have shared it with Bantock but for some reason unknown to me the new work is postponed or withdrawn.

I had arranged with him to rehearse on Monday 5th *eleven o'clock to one* & on Thursday the 8th twelve to one[.] I hope that will suit you - if I can find any further minutes for you I will gladly do so.

Love to you

Yrs ever

Edward Elgar

We *may* have to dodge a little to suit the soloist but if you are tied for time I will fix or endeavour to fix him rigidly but I hope that's not necessary

[fo.25]

Severn House, 42 Netherhall Gardens, Hampstead N.W.

Jan 31 : 1912

My dear Percy :

The doctors discover I have gout - in eyes &c & must rest all I can - I shall be all right with reasonable care but must save myself all I can.

I have you down for Feb 5 Monday 11-1 & Feb 8 Thursday 12-1

Now, with all your engagements I hesitate to ask you but if you could manage it, it wd. make some considerable difference to me if you *began* the rehearsal at ten o'clock

If you cannot manage *both* days perhaps you could begin at 10 on Thursday[.] I have to travel from Leeds in the night!

Ever yours
Edward E

Elgar had already been approached to write a new work for the Leeds Festival the following year, and to conduct a complete concert. For one of the proposed works he sought Pitt's help.

[fo.26-27]

Severn House

Dec 13 1912

My dear Percy :

I think you may be able to help me in this :-

I have proposed to do the Prologue 'Mefistofele' (Boito) at the Leeds festival & it has struck me you may have the performing rights - anyhow I wd. rather apply to you first - before Ricordi that is.

Can you tell me anything - is the 'material' in the Library - I have no doubt the Syndicate wd. put no difficulty in the way if it is in their power to assist

All good wishes[.] I have a billiard table here which yearns for your cue - when will you come?

Yours ever
Edward Elgar

Some time later - having heard nothing - he tried again.

[fo.66]

Severn House, 42 Netherhall Gardens, Hampstead NW

Tuesday

My dear Percy :

We are doing the prologue to *Mefistofele* at Leeds & the only score is for the present with you so Ricordi tells me. I want to see what extra brass is necessary - could I look at the score in the library

one day soon? If so at what hour of the day would it be possible?

I am sorry to trouble you - I wish you wd. do Mefistofele this season

My love to you

Yours ever

Edward

Elgar's health was poor during the early part of 1913, and trips to Italy and Wales did not help significantly.

[fo.68]

Severn House, Hampstead, N.W.

Monday [? 31 March 1913]

My dear Percy

It was most kind of you to write - I have had & am having a sad turn of some dyspeptic stupidity which is not cheering. I hope you are well. I am off tomorrow to the country.

love

Edward.

[fos.28-29]

Severn House

5 April 1913

Dear Mr. Pitt

Edward had your kind note lately but I am sorry to say he has still been so unwell & I want to write & tell you how sorry we are not to have seen you for so long, but we have not been able to make any plans for seeing friends on account of this indisposition - The Drs. promise he shall be all well & just now insist on his being out of doors & playing golf &c so just now he is in the country to carry out their wishes -

I trust he will soon be much better & that we shall see you again before long. I hope you have kept well through the prolonged season of sunlessness

With best remembrances

Yours sincerely

C. Alice Elgar

The Drs. want E. to have a rest just now, so I am writing & sending his thanks for your kind note.

{fo.67]

Wednesday

My very dear Percy :

Alas! I have been laid up with a rotten cough for a week. I had hoped to be well enough for yesterday's rehearsal but could not get out

All thanks

Ever yours

Edward.

At the Covent Garden summer season in 1913 and 1914 Nikisch conducted the *Ring* cycle.

[fo.65]

Severn House, 42 Netherhall Gardens, Hampstead, NW

My dear Percy

I am in the stalls & should like to see Nikisch between the acts - can you manage it like a dear

Yours ever

Ed.Elgar

I will go to the stairs to the stage door

[fos.70-1]

Wednesday

My dear Percy :

I am in despair : every blessed & unblessed evening is filled up this week : but I am trying to arrange to stay on after my wife departs on Tuesday[.] I will then communicate with you again : we have much to talk over & I want to hear about all of your doings

love

Edward

[fo.30]

Severn House, 42 Netherhall Gardens, Hampstead N.W.

Dec 4 1913

My dear Percy :

I was so glad to hear of you & wished you cd. have come up on Sunday : I had (until I heard of you at W.J's) - an idea that you were abroad nightingale hunting for Cov : Garden, or at least - larking!

Do come & see us as soon & as often as you can : we are generally in on Sunday but it just happens that next Sunday we shall be away

Yours ever

Edward Elgar

On 5 March 1914 Elgar went to Covent Garden to hear *Meistersinger* (which replaced *Tristan*) conducted by Albert Coates. He was impressed with the singing of the English baritone Charles Mott. From then on Mott became one of Elgar's favourite singers, appearing in *The Starlight Express* and *The Fringes of the Fleet*, as well as making records of both works. He died from wounds in 1918.

[fo.31]

Severn House, 42 Netherhall Gardens, Hampstead N.W.

March 16 1914

My dear Percy :

Where are you & when are you coming up?

I wish you would cast Charles Mott for Kothner again - he is far & away the best I have ever seen - I have sent a note to Mr. Higgins telling him this as he may not have been present on that chance evening - the *Meistersinger* was substituted for *Tristan*

My love to you

Yours ever

Edward

Soon after war broke out in August 1914 Elgar wrote music to accompany the recitation of a poem entitled *Carillon* by the Belgian writer Emile Cammaerts. It was an immediate success, and the following year Cammaerts presented him with another poem, *Une voix dans le désert*. But this time within the recitation were the words of a song for soprano, 'Quand nos bourgeois se rouvriront' translated as 'When the Spring comes round again'. It was the first and only time Elgar was to set foreign words to music, and he invited Pitt to Hampstead to make use of his linguistic erudition.

[fos.32-33]
 Severn House
 July 16 1915

My dear Percy :

It was angelically good of you to help me with my bourgeois tune; here it is sans acqpt. I shall be so grateful if you will verify it; I have put it exactly as you left it with me - or me with it - yesterday except the small matters mentioned below : 'Marteaux' (p.2) I hope is correct as it stands - nice & hammy but I fear (by'r lakin, a parlous fear) that its [sic] wrong. I have brought "Autour de nos prairies" a crotchet earlier : also 'Dixmude' p.3

p.4 is *pioches* right? I think so.

It was so refreshing to see you here & I hope you will come again - anytime
 Yours affectionately
 Edward E

In allowing for the simplicity you will remember the 'situation' in the poem.

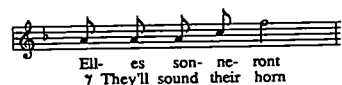
Elgar had been guilty of putting stresses which were natural in English on to French words, and in his letter Pitt corrects him. The very first phrase had to be changed: Elgar had originally written :



In order to correct this, he now had to introduce an unaccompanied bar of 2/4 to accommodate the first French word :



This change is clear in Elgar's manuscript piano score (British Library Add MS 52529 fo.7) where he has scratched out the original position of the first three words. Next, in bar 10, Elgar had given just one note to the word "elles", whereas the French practice is to articulate the "mute" 'e'. Pitt's suggestion of "knocking out the quaver rest" was taken up, although the rest was retained in the English translation:

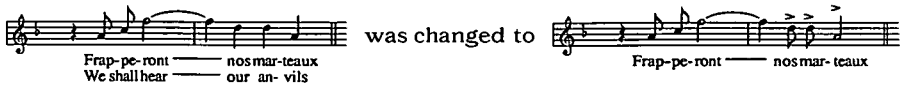


The same words were repeated four bars later, and Elgar's minim had to be changed to two crotchets or a dotted crotchet and quaver (he opted for the latter, but retained

the minim in English):



On page 2 (fo.8) Elgar set "frapperont nos marteaux" in bars 3 and 4, and as with the opening phrase, placed the stress on the wrong syllable. Yet again the original rhythm was retained for the English version:



On page 4 Elgar set "pioches" to three notes, the first two as semiquavers. Pitt said that this was unnecessary as even with the mute 'e' it was only two syllables, and suggested running the two short notes into one. Elgar did not change it. Finally Elgar had written "mulette" (deaf lady) instead of "mouette" (seagull).

[fo.116]

5, Primrose Hill Studios, NW

July 21/15

My dear Edward,

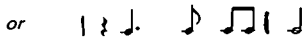
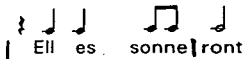
As I explained to you on 'phone this a.m. the delay in sending back your MSS. has arisen owing to my absence from town. However, I am returning it with these lines plus the following suggestions :

A I allowed this to pass last week - principally owing to your
B desire to keep the shape of your melodic phrase but really
(p.1) the declamation of the line shd. be
"Quand nos bourgeois se rouvriront"
" = " = " " =

C I missed a foot (the mute e) but this can be overcome by knocking
(p.1) out the quaver rest (making it :



D Much the same : could be -



E Declaim : " " = " " =
Frapperont nos marteaux

Your accent (*mar-teaux*) is wrong

F can be left altho' perhaps better to run i & o into one
(p.4)

G "mou." & not "mu"
(p.4)

So much for...Cammaerts

My love to you
Yrs ever
Percy

[fo.78]
The Hut, Bray, Berks
Saturday [24 July 1915]

My dear Percy :

A thousand thanks : I have been down to my sister in remote Worcestershire & found your valued advice here. I am busily amending my M.S. & once more express my gratitude to you for your fraternal help.

Bless you
Ever yours
Edward

(To be concluded).

ELGAR'S PASSAGE TO INDIA

Robert Anderson

There are cuttings about Elgar's early career in his mother's scrapbook now held at the Birthplace Museum; there is also much evidence of Ann Elgar's abundant curiosity. About 1880, when Elgar was living with the Graftons at 'Loretto Villa', she included a piece on 'Indian Art'. This cited an expert of the time, Dr George Birdwood, who described the collection of the East India Company when it was transferred to the South Kensington Museum (known from 1899 as the Victoria & Albert). Perhaps she showed Elgar the latest pastings in her scrapbook; possibly they discussed them. He had a more immediate introduction to things Indian in the spring of 1887, when he was taken to have tea with Lady Roberts at Hazeldine House. The Indian furnishings there were a product of Sir Henry Gee Roberts's career in the service of the East India Company. Born in 1800, he joined it as a cadet in 1818, married Julia Maria Raikes twenty years later, served under Sir Charles Napier on the northern frontier (1843), was political agent in Kutch when Caroline Alice was born on 9 October 1848, bought Hazeldine House in 1850, was promoted major-general in 1854, commanded the Rajputana Field Force during the Indian Mutiny (1857-8), was mentioned in a parliamentary motion of thanks on 14 April 1859, was created KCB, and died on 6 October 1860, three days before his

daughter's twelfth birthday.

Lady Roberts died at the end of May 1887. After her marriage to Elgar two years later, Caroline Alice decided to sell a family home that was now spacious and expensive beyond her needs and inconvenient for her husband's work. There was a furniture sale at Hazeldine House, but much of the Indian legacy arrived at Forli on 22 January 1892. Ann Elgar visited six days later and was given a palm-leaf table. The following month Elgar spent some time on the general's arms, was particularly fascinated by a hide shield trophy, and eventually took swords into Worcester for cleaning. From time to time General Roberts occupied the attention not only of the Elgars but of a still grateful nation. In the summer of 1895, when Elgar was working on the *Organ Sonata*, Alice Elgar was busy producing material on her father for the *Dictionary of National Biography*; and in June 1908 came the fiftieth anniversary of the Mutiny's collapse, so that the general was again prominent in the British press. At the time Elgar was much occupied by *Symphony no 1* and depressed that the pleasure of cycling round Hereford was being spoilt by the increasing number of motor cars. By 1911, when he was awarded the Order of Merit and had long cultivated his own military appearance, Elgar clearly felt he had finally laid the general's ghost. On 17 July he wrote to Ivor Atkins : "Such things as K.C.B.'s are *very cheap* it seems beside O.M."

Lady Elgar's diary entry of 1 January 1912 marked the move to Severn House, Hampstead : "Entered E.'s own House - may it be happy & beautiful for him". The Indian furniture was still with them, and it so happened that the first music emanating from the London home was to be *The Crown of India*. On 8 January Elgar outlined the scheme to Alfred Littleton of Novello : "The Masque is going to be very gorgeous and patriotic - Indian Durbar - & will last only 30 minutes : I shall write the music at once & it will not interfere with other things". The main commitment among 'other things' was *The Music Makers* for the following October. There was some confusion over publication. Elgar had already expressed unhappiness about his exclusive arrangement with Novello, but technically the agreement was still in force. He received, however, a tempting offer from Enoch for £600 against royalties and a rather improbable promise about continental performances. On the strength of this he convinced himself that the proposed Masque was not really in Novello's line of business. Eventually Enoch published a libretto and vocal score of the work, while Boosey produced the full score of an orchestral suite Elgar devised from the music.

The author of the Masque was Henry Hamilton, actor and playwright for many Drury Lane melodramas. Bernard Shaw gave little praise when he reviewed *Cheer, Boys, Cheer!* in September 1895. This was written by Hamilton in collaboration with Sir Augustus Harris and Cecil Raleigh : "Give me Rosmersholm or The Master Builder, and I am in my depth : their comparatively simple, natural, sympathetic situations do not puzzle me at all; but in *Cheer, Boys, Cheer!* I not only do not understand, but I feel that I should go mad if I tried to". A selective list of Hamilton's plays totals 24, including a version of *Carmen* (after Mérimée), *The Devil* (from the Hungarian), a *Joan of Arc*, and *The Crown of India*. The main result of the 1911 Delhi durbar, attended by George V and Queen Mary, was the shift of India's capital from Calcutta to Delhi; the rival claims of the two cities and the eventual settlement

make the Masque's essential theme.

When devising the music, Elgar ran through his sketchbooks. Any promising ideas were stamped 'COLISEUM MASQUE'. Thus he incorporated themes associated with an 'Antioch' scene originally intended for the 'Apostles' project, and considered others that ended up in *The Music Makers*. The prelude to the work begins with 'The sinful youth of Dan', inscribed in the visitors' book of George Robertson Sinclair under April 1903. Elgar incorporated into the Masque parts of *In Smyrna*, the piano piece he had written to remember his 1905 Mediterranean cruise; they appeared in the 'Sacred Measure' and in Agra's song 'Hail, Immemorial Ind!'. The music for 'The Dance of the Nautch Girls' was headed 'Sneak's Noise', the tune beloved of Doll Tearsheet from Shakespeare's *Henry IV part 2* and therefore linked with *Falstaff*. The East India Company suggested 'pigtail stuff', to be enshrined in a Tempo di Menuetto played 'Maestoso antico'. The work was completed on 25 February. Soon John Austin arrived from Worcester to help with checking orchestral parts, and Hugh Blair was in attendance to make a vocal score. Lady Elgar described the final rehearsal in her diary entry for 10 March : "dresses lovely. lights rather vague...to Claridge's for lunch. Then back to rehearsal all rather better. Speeches & Calcutta's & Delhi's arguments much too long". *The Times* had outlined the plot three days before, said the Masque was "deliberately intended to be (in the best sense) popular", claimed wrongly it was Elgar's first time of writing "for the secular stage", and mentioned that the "orchestra will include a new gong contrived by Sir Edward Elgar for his special purpose".

The first tableau of the Masque, which opened at the Coliseum on 11 March, revealed a temple typifying the "legends and traditions of India", with a view of the Taj Mahal at the back. There were seats for India and her ten main cities, though Calcutta and Delhi were not yet in place. At the sides were a native musician with tom-tom and a couple of snake-charmers with pipes. After two files of nautch girls had executed their dance, India rose to praise her cities with a wealth of historical detail, recalling the distracted state of her empire previous to its unification under the raj :

Into one nation welded by the West,
That in the Pax Britannica is blest.

India regretted the absence of Calcutta and Delhi and their constant bickering. Whereupon a fanfare sounded for Calcutta, who entered attended by Commerce and Statecraft, and there was a flourish for Delhi, accompanied by Tradition and Romance. As claim to be India's future capital Delhi pleaded her antiquity :

And wilt thou vaunt to *me* thy mushroom pomp
Of new-made palaces? thou wast a swamp
One hundred years ago; when I a Queen
Enthroned for forty centuries had been.

Delhi summoned as witnesses the four greatest Mogul emperors, Akbar, Jehangir, Shah Jehan and Aurangzeb; Elgar marched them in. Calcutta relied on John Company and his minuet :

A strenuous Yesterday, a strong To-Day
Are better than an aeon of decay,
Barbaric splendours and bejewelled ease
Adorned by Despots - and by Debauchees.

For witnesses Calcutta had such worthies as Clive, Warren Hastings and Lord Wellesley, with heroes of the Mutiny such as Sir Henry Lawrence, Sir Henry Havelock and Sir Colin Campbell, but unfortunately not Sir Henry Gee Roberts. Delhi then summoned as arbiter the spirit of English chivalry :

Thou that in Cappadocia's gloomy gorge
Did'st beat the Dragon down - appear, St George!

But the saint proved too chivalrous to make a decision "Where either famous is and both are fair". Instead he referred the matter to the King-Emperor, and proceeded to hymn the Flag of England, briefly citing *Land of Hope and Glory* in the last verse, at the words "Dear Land that hath no like".

A distant view of Delhi was background to the second tableau, which symbolised the durbar. The climax of the initial procession was the arrival of the royal pair :

He comes! he comes! Upon our dazzled eyes
The Sun of Britain and of Ind doth rise.

Meanwhile Queen Mary was praised as one who "to our swooning Indian heats" brought "The fragrant freshness of a Northern Spring". In front of the assembled grandees George V had India pronounce his decision :

The Majesty of Ind his will proclaims :
Delhi to be his capital he names :
And, of his Empire, further makes decree
Calcutta shall the premier city be.

It was a diplomatic masterstroke, and Agra could now launch 'God save the King' with imperial words of homage :

God save the Emperor!
Hear now, as ne'er before ,
One India sing!...

There was general agreement that the women playing India, Calcutta and Delhi had expatiated at far too great length. Elgar had jotted down at the outset : "N.B. There is *far too much* of this political business E.E." Frances Colvin wrote two days after the première : "I longed to stop those women shrieking & just have the music, & the wonderful colours to look at". *The Times* emphasised the symbolical nature of the Masque "when a smooth-faced female figure heralded as 'George, by the Grace of God, of that great name the fifth', enters in triumphal procession", heard that cuts had been made, and recommended more. At last Elgar and his daughter called on Oswald Stoll, owner of the Coliseum and whose brainchild the Masque had been. On 15 March Lady Elgar noted in her diary : "E. & C. to Putney to see Mr. Stoll about

cuts".

In its own way Elgar's India had been as successful as that of General Roberts. Artistically well received, *The Crown of India* had been rewarding financially, as Elgar explained to Frances Colvin : "When I write a big serious work e.g. *Gerontius* we have had to starve & go without fires for twelve months as a reward : this small effort allows me to buy scientific works I have yearned for & I spend my time between the Coliseum & the old bookshops". The extent of Elgar's library can be partially assessed from the Severn House inventory, taken in January 1913 for insurance purposes.

The Indian objects once collected by Lady Elgar's father have a separate section in the inventory and are catalogued in more detail. Among the general furnishings were a "carved Bombay rosewood square footstool", and "Indian marble group of two elephants fighting", an "Indian octagonal game board", a "marble idol with dog", a "salver decorated with peacocks & foliage". The military relics were recorded too : they included a "general's sword in gilt scabbard", a "trooper's sword in steel scabbard", "cavalry swords", a "Sikh dagger", "Cingalese dagger", and the "trophy comprising hide shield" that Elgar had admired 21 years previously. The furnishings were presumably dispersed when Severn House was sold and Elgar moved into his St James's flat. A letter at the Birthplace Museum suggests that the military equipment followed the East India company's collection to the Victoria & Albert Museum. The letter is from the Town Clerk of the Borough of Monmouth to Carice Elgar Blake and is dated 11 August 1949. It advises her "that the following Indian Armour has been received from the Victoria & Albert Museum, South Kensington" and goes on to itemise eleven objects that can be readily equated with the Severn House inventory. For the moment that seems to be the end of the story, as Monmouth now disclaims any knowledge of General Roberts and his weapons.

ELGAR

Nicholas Thistlethwaite

[The following is the text of the sermon preached by the Vicar of Trumpington, at the Elgar Festival Matins at Great St Mary's Church, Cambridge on 20 November. Many members who were present for the weekend spoke highly of the sermon, and Mr Thistlethwaite has kindly allowed us to reproduce the text here.]

Dreams have led many astray, and disappointed those who built their hopes on them. Unless they are sent by intervention from the Most High, pay no attention to them.

Ecclesiasticus 34 : 1,7

Not for the first time on reading the Book of Ecclesiasticus we are tempted, when we hear those verses and the passage (our First Lesson) from which they come, to think what a tiresomely sane, feet-on-the-ground sort of fellow the author must have been.

Paying attention to dreams was (for him) "like clutching a shadow or chasing the wind" (v.2); a futile, self-deluding, slightly disreputable activity. Much better give heed to the diligent obfuscations, the worldly wisdom of men such as himself. Forget dreams.

Another age. Another millennium. In 1912 Edward Elgar, looking for a text to set to music for the forthcoming Birmingham Festival, came upon these words from an Ode by Arthur O'Shaughnessy :

We are the music makers,
And we are the dreamers of dreams...

The Ode is not great poetry. But it sounds a rather different note from Ecclesiasticus. For it is O'Shaughnessy's suggestion that music (composition) is intrinsically the product of dreams and that the composer is of necessity a dreamer.

Elgar evidently assented passionately to both propositions. In setting O'Shaughnessy's verse his identification with the text was complete. Snatches of musical reminiscence from his earlier compositions are woven into the score, giving it an explicitly autobiographical quality. There is no doubt who the 'dreamer of dreams' is.

But then Elgar had always been a dreamer. In later years, when he had long been acknowledged as England's premier composer and had been rewarded with all manner of accolades he could confide to a friend :

I am still at heart the dreamy child who used to be found in the reeds by [the] Severn...with a sheet of paper, trying to fix the sounds and longing for something great...

Worcester : the Severn : the cottage at Broadheath where he was born : these all remained with Elgar as sources of inspiration. They were there in his dreams and he sought to explore them in his music.

"We are the dreamers of dreams". Is it too much to say that *all* art is a form of dreaming, or (perhaps better) imagining? For it strives to reveal things as they truly are rather than as they appear superficially.

A portrait doesn't merely depict the clothes, the face, the figure : it reveals to us the true character of the sitter. Novels do more than tell a story, however entertaining that may be : they reveal the moral character of the people and societies they encompass. Music does more than give us tunes to whistle in the street : it probes under the surface, revealing what is hidden, changing our perceptions. And it has a universal quality. As Elgar himself said : "Music is written on the skies". The composer's task is to translate it into sounds for the benefit of us all : like the boy who dreamed beside the River Severn trying to capture in notation the sound of the reeds.

How does music reveal? Well, it does it in a variety of ways, the most obvious of which is by describing character in musical terms. The *Enigma Variations*, with its sharp little portraits of the 'friends pictured within', is an unambiguous example. The variations reveal Elgar's friends as he saw them, caught in his imagination, his dream-world, and committed to the musical page.

More challenging, though, is the exploration of character in the choral works. Take *The Apostles*. How was the character of Jesus to be depicted? How Judas? Elgar thought long and hard. A painting provided the trigger for his musical imagination. It showed Jesus seated on a rock in the desert, staring at the ground, surrounded by a desolate landscape. Here was 'the lonely Christ', and that is how Elgar's music seeks to 'paint' the character. And Judas? Here Elgar allowed his own imagination to provide the solution. He wrote to a friend : "To my mind *Judas*' crime & sin was *despair*..."; and it is that sense of abandonment, of sad, defiant hopelessness, which pervades Judas's music in the score. In such ways music provides its own commentary, its own revelation of character. But in so doing, it reveals something else to the listener. It reveals the composer himself.

When Elgar (famously) on completing the score of *Gerontius* appended the quotation from Ruskin beginning, "This is the best of me...this, if anything of mine, is worth your memory", he was not only expressing the conviction that, with *Gerontius*, he had taken a mighty step forward as an artist, he was making a statement about the creative process itself. Twelve years later, he wrote to a friend :

I have written out my soul in the [violin] concerto, Sym[phony] II & the Ode & you know it...in these three works I have *shewn* myself.

"I have *shewn* myself"; "This is the best of me". Music (good music) reveals the person who wrote it. For those who have ears to hear, it is often a much surer guide to character than outward appearance.

Certainly, that would be true of Elgar. Ever sensitive to criticism, defiantly aware of his humble background, conscious as a Roman Catholic of being an outsider, he protected himself with all the outer trappings of the Edwardian upper classes. He looked and behaved like a major-general. The horse-racing, the golf, the socialising, the large house in Hampstead : all contributed to the façade and led the next generation to write him off as an obsolete survival. But the music tells another tale. The note of wistfulness and melancholy, of unease and self-questioning is never far away (you can even detect it in the *Pomp & Circumstance* marches), and it reveals to us someone who had no illusions about the permanence of the society to which he belonged or its assumptions. There is no complacency. No triumphalism. Only a sense that change is inevitable. To quote O'Shaughnessy :

...each age is a dream that is dying,
Or one that is coming to birth.

Elgar's dream was dissipated by the horrors of the Great War and, coming hard on its heels, the death of his wife. He wrote little of consequence after 1920.

Was it, then, all a dream? Illusions? Mere reflections? One of those dreams that have "led many astray and disappointed those who built their hopes on them" (to return to Ecclesiasticus)? But the author of Ecclesiasticus makes a significant exception in his contemptuous dismissal of dreams. Pay no heed to them, he writes, "unless they are sent by intervention from the Most High" (34 : 6).

But what if dreams *are* sent from God? What if the creative artist is caught up - consciously or unconsciously - in God's unfolding revelation of himself and the more perfect Creation he is fashioning? What if music and the dreams which have

inspired it speak with the voice of truth? Then, surely, we must heed them. Writing of the *First Symphony*, Elgar said it embodied

a wide experience of human life with a great charity and a *massive* hope in the future...

For many of us, that is precisely what Elgar's music discloses. It is life enhancing, affirmative; without entertaining any illusions about the tragedies of human life it celebrates human persistence (both now and in the future) against considerable odds.

The truth is that music reconciles and heals. That it can put us in touch with something which transcends the conditions of human life, and all that is trivial, burdensome and heart-breaking. That it can reveal to us something of that new heaven and new earth which, as Christians, is part of *our* "massive hope in the future".

We need the music-makers and their dreams. They sustain our faith and reveal to us the love and power and glory of the Creator. They teach us (in a phrase from *Sea Pictures*) "to look higher". And among them, none speaks more eloquently, more passionately than the dreamer from Severn-side; Edward Elgar.

WULSTAN ATKINS AT 90

The second Michael Richards Memorial Presentation at London Branch on Saturday 26 November was always going to be the highlight of the current season. Wulstan Atkins, godson of Elgar, pillar of the Elgar Foundation, doyen of Elgarians was to be "In Conversation" with London Chairman, Martin Passande, just two days after celebrating his ninetieth birthday.

True, there were alarms, as one car bringing Wulstan and his wife Jane became enveloped in traffic somewhere in the vicinity of Crystal Palace's Football Ground ('Selhurst Park' to the cognoscenti!) The London Secretary hastily turned to Elgar's recording of *Froissart* to pacify a large waiting and expectant audience. However, all soon turned out well, events were under way slightly late, and lost time rapidly made up! Meanwhile another car bearing other members of Wulstan's family had even less fortune.

Wulstan's performance was astonishing and he seemed not one whit less energetic, enthusiastic and inspiring than he had when one heard him for the first time. His memories of Elgar and things Elgarian are quite unique, and his audience was captivated by his recollections of Alice, Carice, Three Choirs Festivals, the War, the *Third Symphony* and so many other things. A brief pointer from the London Chairman and Wulstan was unstoppable - save that, great professional that he is, he had taken on board Imperial College timings and ensured that we reached tea at the scheduled time.

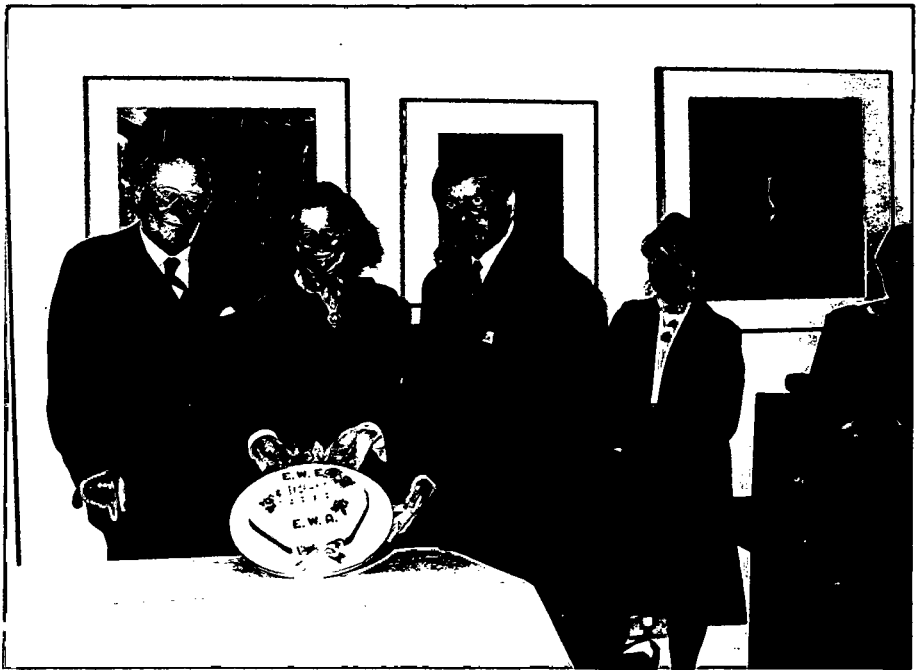
This was a presentation that could have gone on all night - Wulstan apparently

tireless - and did, indeed, go on after tea in a fascinating session of questions from the floor. No one is going to exhaust Wulstan's memories of Elgar in an afternoon!

Tea too was a splendid affair with time for friends to talk. The Society Chairman, who proposed a wonderful vote of thanks to Wulstan, was there with his wife, Victoria. Carol Holt had journeyed from Malvern. A busy photographer was faithfully recording the gathering. Finally, a Martin Passande-inspired birthday cake was presented to our guest, with the totally appropriate decoration of the 'Friendship' theme from *The Apostles*.

Dear Wulstan, we hope so much that you and Jane and your family enjoyed the day with us; but how typical that you, yourself, should have given so much to Elgarians.

David Bury



The presentation of the celebratory birthday cake on the occasion of Wulstan Atkins' ninetieth birthday. (Left to right) Wulstan and Jane Atkins, London Branch Chairman Martin Passande, the Atkins' daughter Catherine, and Mary Passande (photo : Stephen Harper).

CAMBRIDGE ELGAR FESTIVAL

6 - 26 November 1994

General reactions to the Cambridge Elgar Festival were very favourable. There had been some doubt in the city as to whether the success of the 1991 Mozart Festival could be repeated. But the concerts were attended by over 15,000 people, and more than 1500 local musicians took part. And support certainly came from far afield. "People came from all over the country for the big Elgar set pieces at the weekends", said Gillian Perkins, the Festival Administrator. "Generally the attendances were much poorer for the smaller scale concerts, such as the chamber works. And attendances at the concerts of new music were very poor indeed".

The undoubted "hit" of the Festival, said Mrs Perkins, was the performance of *The Spirit of England* in King's College Chapel. It was given under the direction of Christopher Robinson, Director of Music at St John's College, and former Elgar Society Chairman. The 'University Festival Choir' comprised about 135 voices from the choirs of Selwyn, Clare, Gonville and Caius, and St Catharine's Colleges; plus the University Chamber Choir. "They started off very cynical, when they knew what it was", Mrs Perkins said, "but they were completely bowled over by the music and by the historical context. It was probably the best large choir we've heard in Cambridge for years". All those I have spoken to, including the current Society Chairman, Andrew Neill, testified to the power of the performance, which doubtless received added poignancy by being given on 11 November - Remembrance Day.

I suppose the climax of the Festival came with the 'world première' of *The Spanish Lady* on 24 November. Diana McVeagh's excellent background article and review of the performance are found below. I was glad to have been there, and it was wonderful to see the culmination of all Dr Young's work; but while being grateful for the opportunity of hearing some marvellous music - in particular the love duet, and the number for Lady Tailbush and men's chorus, 'If once we have it under seal' - the overriding sensation is a mixture of sadness and frustration. Would the work have been finished had not the BBC intervened with the symphony commission? We shall never know.

The weekend arranged by the Foundation was thoroughly enjoyed by those who attended it. The main musical item that weekend was a performance of *The Apostles* in King's College Chapel, given by the Cambridge Philharmonic Society conducted by Matthew Rowe. The acoustic was rather too reverberant in the tuttis, but against that there were some wonderful "distant" effects with the "pastoral" woodwinds and the shofar. All in all this was a deeply felt performance, with some excellent solo singing, in particular by Rita Cullis and Adrian Thompson in the 'Golgotha' scene. Stephen Richardson brought some suitably dark tones to his portrayal of Judas, but I felt was still feeling his way in the part. The young conductor held his large forces together well, all but for a few bars in Part II - unfortunately at one of the most dramatic moments, where the chorus sing "Lord, how long shall the wicked triumph?" But definitely an evening to remember.

There was a good turnout of Society members at the same venue four days later for

a performance of *The Kingdom* given by the University Musical Society under Stephen Cleobury. John Kelly, London Branch Treasurer, writes of the "muffling acoustic" of the Chapel, but thought that the young voices came across with good diction and tone, and were an adequate support for the four professional soloists. Of these he was particularly impressed with the young mezzo, Hilary Summers, who had also sung in the earlier work.

The Festival was not of a uniformly high standard. I had planned to attend *The Light of Life* but due to unforeseen circumstances was unable to. However, the performance was far from good, apparently, and a member who had travelled from some distance to attend wrote in and complained, and was duly reimbursed.

There was no complaint from me though about the concert by the New Queen's Hall Orchestra on 21 November at the Corn Exchange. It looked an innocent enough programme - the first half Vaughan Williams, including *The Lark Ascending*, and then Elgar's *First Symphony*. But I was not prepared for the musical experience which followed. For the New Queen's Hall Orchestra is, in the words of its founder and Artistic Director, John Boyden, "the only orchestra in the world to use the instruments, and to attempt the performing style, of an orchestra of some eighty or ninety years ago". Orchestral players need to be released "from the straitjacket of 'standardised' or 'international' playing", and "to return to a more expressive type of playing, particularly in the strings." Also, "the instruments of the symphony orchestra have changed so much since the late 1920s that, in music written before the 1940s, it is impossible for them to achieve either a correct internal balance or to reproduce the characteristic timbres of their predecessors". I have no space to develop Boyden's other arguments (I would refer those interested to his booklet 'The Reasons Why'), but this is most assuredly *not* authenticity for its own sake, as was amply proved by the performance of the *First Symphony* that followed. Although I have heard the work many times in the concert hall, here it was almost like hearing a completely new piece: the warmth of tone from the cellos' gut strings after fig 8; the wonderful clarity of the flute triplets accompanying the *cantabile* theme at fig 96; the vivid separation of string sound by having cellos behind the first violins, violas behind the seconds, and basses at the back behind the woodwind; I could go on and on! At fig 48, and especially fig 129 it was amazing to hear how much sound the last desk of a string section can make *when the overall orchestral balance is as the composer intended*. My admiration for Elgar's orchestration is even higher now; and if I have rather gone on about it, it is because I feel that authenticity in Elgar performance is actually an issue, and I confess to being a convert. And if you *do* have the chance to hear the NQHO, I urge you not to turn it down.

A word of praise, finally, for the excellent programme book, containing explanatory notes on the works, biographical notes on the performers, the text of the choral works, and a number of learned articles; 'Elgar and English Music' by Stephen Banfield; 'Elgar and Cambridge' by Percy Young; 'Elgar's Choral Music' by Robert Anderson; and 'Elgar: a personal reflection' by Hugh Wood. Copies of this 84-page booklet are still available at a cost of £2 (including p + p) from Gillian Perkins, 10 Gurney Way, Cambridge CB4 2ED.

The Editor

ELGAR'S SPANISH LADY

Diana McVeagh

An opera by Elgar? To be given its first staged performance sixty years after his death? It is not so surprising as it seems. All his life Elgar loved music in the theatre: from his visits to a touring opera company and his arrangements from *Norma* and *Faust* for local bands when he was young, to his stage music for *Grania and Diarmid*, *The Starlight Express*, *The Sanguine Fan*, and *Arthur*. But nothing came of his idea for a Rabelais ballet, nor yet of the sketchbook dated 1909 and headed 'Opera in 3 Acts'; later he contemplated, never began, a Hardy opera, even a *Lear*. He was offered, and refused, a *Pilgrim's Progress*, among many other scripts.

In 1920 Bernard Shaw saluted him in *Music & Letters* - "Elgar is alone for Westminster Abbey" - and the two men became friends. Living near Stratford, then in Worcester, Elgar was in good theatre country, for Barry Jackson of the Birmingham Repertory founded a Drama Festival at Malvern; the first, in 1929, was dedicated to Shaw. Jackson ached to commission an overture for *The Apple Cart* from Elgar, but could not afford the orchestra.

Elgar became stage-struck. He asked Shaw for a libretto : but Shaw replied that "the verbal music" of his plays "would make a very queer sort of counterpoint" with Elgar's music. Elgar then turned to Ben Jonson, his choice falling on the little-known *The Devil is an Ass* (1616). In 1932 he asked Barry Jackson for help. Jackson at first considered the play moribund, then - thinking he might deprive the world of Elgar's opera - delivered a rough libretto, working from the copious markings on Elgar's own copy. The two men met and talked often during 1932 and 1933. Elgar was fired with enthusiasm, as in the good old days.

Jackson found him headstrong : Elgar was determined his opera was to be a grand affair. He planned stage sets, entrances and exits, properties. He drew up cast lists, the vocal ranges based on *Tosca*. He ransacked earlier sketchbooks for musical ideas, Jonson's other plays (and other poets) for lyrics. The sketches ranged from 1878 to 1933, and he planned to use up passages rejected from his earlier works. But disaster struck through a BBC commission for a third symphony. Neither opera nor symphony was completed before Elgar's death : each killed the other.

Elgar's libretto was never more than work in progress. Excitement leaps off the typed page, scribbled over in pencil, ink, red ink; with changes, arrows, crossings-out, marginal reminders. Around the plot swarm minor characters, crowds, adventurers, lesser intriguers, all the bustle of street, tavern and salon of Jacobean London.

This much can be deduced : Wittipol (tenor, Cavaradossi) loves Frances (soprano, Tosca), heiress and ward of Fitzdottrel (basso cantabile), who also loves her, but covets new clothes more. Meercraft (baritone, Scarpia) is a con-man, a bogus company promoter, who tricks Fitzdottrel into believing he can make him a duke. So Fitzdottrel wishes his ward to be taught noble manners, for which service he will pay a diamond ring. Wittipol dresses up as a Spanish Lady, just arrived in town with

news of fashion and etiquette. In Act II, a reception at Lady Tailbush's, 'she' arrives, and Fitzdottrel, eager for 'her' to instruct his ward, leaves them together. Wittipol discards his disguise, and a priest is found to marry the young lovers.

The play was revived at Edinburgh in 1976, and at the Lyttleton in 1977. Anyone who saw it, not knowing Elgar's libretto, might have been astonished at his choice. He once declared he wanted something "heroic and noble" for a subject, but was offered only "blood and lust". In Jonson, Satan allows his apprentice, Pug, to visit earth to make mischief, but Pug finds London so sleazy and corrupt that he can do no worse - a dark *Gerontius* indeed. Jackson and Elgar, however, sweetened the play, romantically changing Frances from wife to ward, cutting Satan, and making Pug simply a manservant.

Elgar left about 180 sketches. Luckily all were initialled BJ (Ben Jonson? Barry Jackson?). Many were wordless, only some were fixed in their final positions in the libretto. Some were revisions, some bare outlines, some extended, but only a few bars were fully scored. Elgar relished the idea of setting Jonson's dialogue as recitative; in the event, scarcely any pieces were connected or developed. A longish dialogue turns out to be discarded from *The Kingdom* and sounds exactly like it! There is some ravishing, tender love music, a catchy song with male chorus, a striking if drunken 'Memento Mori', a rich saraband, a dashing bolero. Most of it is instantly recognizable Elgar.

The "Spanish" dances (partly based on very early material) were nearly complete. Dr Percy Young, Elgar's biographer, edited them and two songs, and published them in the 1950s - enough to whet the appetite. He has also broadcast talks on the opera, arranged a concert performance at St John's Smith Square in 1986, and in 1991 published the sketches for the Elgar Complete Edition. No-one knows the unfinished work better than he. Now Dr Young has bravely "edited, arranged, and orchestrated" Elgar's opera for stage performance. He has re-introduced Pug in a non-singing role, framing the piece with devils, as in Jonson. He has provided a narration for concert performance. His libretto is not quite Elgar's and Jackson's, but there is no knowing how they might have revised it.

Elgar had been to Bayreuth, and loved going to Covent Garden. He envisaged a 'grand' opera, nothing less than Wagner or Strauss - he would "out-Meistersinger the *Meistersinger*". Jackson, working in a provincial repertory company, begged him to be more modest. Young sensibly employs a small orchestra. His main problem was how to stretch the music over the action; he needed to add a little from other Elgar sources. From all this he has salvaged something between a ballad opera, with set numbers and spoken dialogue, and a masque, with the many dances. It promises to make an absorbing evening.

Perhaps *The Devil is an Ass* is not, after all, such a strange choice for the composer of *The Dream of Gerontius*. Jonson's play is satirical, mocking greed, vanity, dishonesty, lewd behaviour. Elgar, born a Catholic, kept a strong sense of sin. Two other strands in this late opera ran through all Elgar's life. One is Spain. There are 'Spanish' idioms in works such as *The Black Knight* (1892) and the *Piano Quintet* (1918), let alone in the charming part-song *Spanish Serenade*. Elgar, who loved

Italy, never went to Spain, so it remained an exotic symbol.

The other strand is that of disguise - things are not always what they seem. In his note about *Enigma* he wrote : "So the principal Theme never appears, even as in some late dramas...the chief character is never on the stage". Both strands come together in the Spanish quotation on his *Violin Concerto*, which leaves a blank for the essential word. The Spanish Lady, who never existed, seems yet another example of his love of mystery and disguise.

[A shortened version of this article first appeared in *The Observer*].

* * *

Not quite an opera by Elgar, but a bold try. Cambridge University Opera Society mounted Elgar-Young's *Spanish Lady* for three performances on November 24, 25, 26. The West Road Concert Hall was packed for both the evenings I was there - cast supporters, of course, but also opera enthusiasts and Elgarians from far and wide.

The most remarkable feature was how authentic the orchestral sound was; in this Dr Young seemed to have got right into Elgar's mind, and time and time again I found it hard to believe the scoring was not the composer's own. However, the band was on the stage, which did not help the young singers. The stage was in any case crowded : Adrian Osmond directed a very lively show, so lively that in the interval people around me admitted to being utterly lost in the plot and baffled by the motivation. Act II was easier to follow, though for my taste at times rather coarse - Dame Edna rather than Spanish Lady.

There had to be as much spoken dialogue and vigorous dancing as singing, but Rowan Wright as Frances and Cristoph Genz as Wittipol sang the beautiful brief love-duet touchingly.

It was, of course, a fascinating evening. *The Spanish Lady* as seen at Cambridge was certainly not the *Tosca*, *Meistersinger*, or whatever other opera Elgar seemed to have intended at one point, and not even Dr Young (who knows Elgar's mind on this matter better than anyone else) can say how it would have ended up had Elgar had the energy and the time to complete it. The vocal score is now published by Novello (£14.95). Dr Young has made it clear that any future producer "will be able to plan production - including the pattern of the dances - according to circumstances".

Diana McVeagh

[*Opposite : two scenes from the Cambridge University Opera Society's production of The Spanish Lady. (Top) the rascally Meercraft (Leigh Melrose, left) and his henchman, Everill (Adam Green) discuss their favourite preoccupation - money. (Bottom) Manly (Keith Perry) seeks to resist the amorous advances of Lady Tailbush (Elizabeth Atherton).*]



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of the Elgar Society will take place in the Main Hall, Lyttleton Rooms, Malvern Priory, Church Street, Malvern on Saturday 3 June 1995 at 2.30 pm.

Members are reminded that there are vacancies for Vice-Chairman, Secretary, and for two members of the General Committee.

Nominations are solicited and should be sent to the Hon. Secretary as soon as possible. Each nomination must be seconded, and it is essential to obtain the permission of the nominee.

The A T Shaw Memorial Lecture will be given by Stephen Banfield, Professor of Music at Birmingham University, at the Giffard Hotel, Worcester on Sunday 4 June at 2.15 pm.

PROGRAMME FOR A G M WEEKEND

Saturday 3 June in Malvern

- 2.30 A G M, Main Hall, Lyttleton Rooms, Church Street.
- 4.15 Tea
- 5.00 Violin & Piano Recital in Malvern Priory by Peter Thomas, Leader of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, and Philip Fisher, Purcell School. Admission : £2.00. To include the Elgar *Violin Concerto* with piano accompaniment.
- 7.30 Reception at the Foley Arms Hotel, Worcester Road.
- 8.00 Dinner (see sheet). Speaker : Miss Marjorie Thomas
- ‘The role of the Angel in *The Dream of Gerontius*’.

Sunday 4 June in Worcester

- 10.30 Coffee at Birchwood Lodge by kind permission of the Rev & Mrs Michael Vockins.
- 1.00 Lunch in the Restaurant, Giffard Hotel (cost : £9.95)
- 2.15 A T Shaw Memorial Lecture by Professor Stephen Banfield, Birmingham University.
- ‘Elgar’s Counterpoint’.
- 4.00 Evensong, Worcester Cathedral, followed by sherry and birthday cake at the Birthplace

RANDOM RAMBLINGS...

We report with sadness the death on 18 October last of Mrs Elizabeth Parrott. She and her husband Ian had been married for over fifty years, and theirs was a partnership in every way, with his interest in Elgar matched by her artistic gifts; so that paintings by Mrs Parrott graced record sleeves and illustrated her husband's book on the composer, which was dedicated to her. I am sure I speak for many Elgarians in paying tribute to the genuine warmth of the welcome she gave to visitors to the family home in the Ystwyth Valley. An obituary commented: "Generations of university students...remember with affection her tea parties...and her kindly concern for their futures". To Professor Parrott and the family we send best wishes and our deepest sympathy in their loss.

* * * * *

I am sad to announce the demise of one of the JOURNAL's regular features - *Elgar's Top Ten on Radio Three*. This has been presented faithfully for the last eight years by Tom Rowbotham, but now ill-health has forced him - most reluctantly - to stop. The way he has painstakingly logged each broadcast, plus his obvious thrill and enjoyment in hearing rare or unfamiliar music, has added interest to this valuable annual retrospect. I would like to thank Mr Rowbotham for his dedication and enthusiasm, and wish him many more years of happy listening!

* * * * *

For whatever reason, Elgar never seemed to like Christmas; correspondence from him around this time of year often contains disgruntled remarks about the festive season. He wrote little Christmas music, and the best of it - *A Christmas Greeting*, Op 52 - was actually written in Italy, where he spent several Christmases. For a New Year concert of the Worcestershire Philharmonic Society in January 1899, Elgar arranged *The Holly and the Ivy* for choir and orchestra. The score has been missing for many years, but is apparently in the possession of a musical family in Moseley, Birmingham, according to a report in the *Birmingham Post*. It would be fascinating to hear the arrangement; perhaps some enterprising TV producer could include it in a carol concert later this year, if the owners would make it available?

* * * * *

I humbly admit to giving a false impression in a report in the last issue, and Michael Plant has quite rightly corrected me (see *Letters* section). The current Free Trade Hall in Manchester is *not* the same building in which Elgar's *First Symphony* was first given. Michael Kennedy, in his biography of Barbirolli, tells how music by Elgar featured in the opening ceremony of the current Hall in November 1951, when Kathleen Ferrier sang *Land of Hope and Glory*. The *Manchester Guardian* reported: "It was fine and it was right, but lovers of this tune will fear that never again can they hope to hear it in such glory. There were few dry eyes, as notices of such events used to say".

* * * * *

I have received a charming letter from Mr Stan Freed, father of a Southern Branch member, who has recently given a talk entitled 'The Light Music of Elgar' to a group of twenty-five people in Haifa, Israel. He writes : "The evening was a great success...They gave me their undivided attention as I went through a selection of light pieces, with anecdotes about the composer and the music. Most of the music used was new to the audience and it was a surprise to me that one member of the group had been a violinist in the London Philharmonic Orchestra with Sir Adrian Boult, and even he didn't know many of the pieces.

"Elgar, apart from the symphonies and concertos, is not too well-known in Israel, and there are a few fine orchestras capable of performing his music to a very high standard. So there is much work that could be done to promote the music of one of our greatest composers".

* * * * *

The *Daily Mail* recently included an article by the novelist Angela Huth entitled "The debt I owe Miss Barrows". It was an account of her days as a pupil at Lawnside School in Malvern in the days of the redoubtable headmistress, Winifred Barrows, friend of Shaw and Elgar, who taught at the school from 1925 to 1960. She is best remembered for arranging Elgar's *Wand of Youth* (with his permission) as a 'Faery Fantasy' which was performed at the school in 1930 under Sir Ivor Atkins. Ms Huth paid her this remarkable tribute : "Her enthusiasm and energy for things she loved...not only influenced us at the time but ignited something that still burns forty years later". We also learned that she owned a spaniel called Marco (now I seem to have heard that name before somewhere?)

* * * * *

In the midst of a marathon session listening to the new releases of the *Enigma Variations* (see Review section), I was led to muse on how many conductors have recorded the work more than once. Elgar did, of course, but his early acoustic recording - available on Pearl - is not quite complete. There have in fact been nine others, including two of the current releases. Can you name them (no prizes, as usual, and the solution next time)?

* * * * *

Last year the JOURNAL carried an account of the renovation of Elgar's Broadwood piano, which was exhibited for a time at the British Museum, and is permanently housed at Hatchlands Park in Surrey. Now the distinguished pianist, Anthony Goldstone, has recorded an Elgar recital on this instrument, for release shortly. The main work is the *Enigma Variations*, in Elgar's own version for solo piano, plus the original Finale. The other pieces include *Dream Children*, *In Smyrna* and 'Echo's Dance' from the *Sanguine Fan* ballet music.

* * * * *

It is good to welcome back to Britain the conductor Leonard Slatkin, whose 'British Series' tour in May with the Philharmonia takes in Newbury, Nottingham, Salisbury and London. As well as Elgar Mr Slatkin will conduct works by Tippett, MacMillan, Walton, Britten, and Michael Berkeley. The schedule gives the *Enigma Variations* "with special introduction", which I understand will be a spoken introduction by the conductor - something which is not unusual in America, but which is relatively rare in Britain.

* * * * *

Mention was made in the last issue of Elgar at the Three Choirs this year. Apart from *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom* on 24 and 26 August respectively, Elgar's transcription of Handel's *Overture in D minor* is being performed on 19th, and the Finzi Singers' concert on 26th includes some unspecified Elgar. On the morning of 24th Michael Foster will give a lecture entitled 'Elgar on the Road from Emmaus'. The full programme and booking form is now available from The Secretary, Gloucester Three Choirs Festival 1995, Community House, College Green, Gloucester GL1 2LZ. The Elgar Society Tea will be on Sunday 20 August : further details in the July issue.

* * * * *

Members may have heard with regret of the death in January of Sir Alexander Gibson at the age of sixty-eight. Orchestral players, quick to seize upon the foibles of conductors, had named Sir Malcolm Sargent 'Flash Harry' because of his flamboyance; the young Scot, showing similar exuberance, was given the soubriquet 'Flash Haggis'. Over the years his work with the Scottish (later Royal Scottish) National Orchestra, to which he was appointed in 1959, was exceptional. With them he recorded a large Elgar repertory for Chandos (some of which first appeared on RCA). It would be true to say that his interpretations are not generally considered in the first rank; but I have a high regard for a number of them, *Gerontius* and the two symphonies in particular. And of course in 1977 he made the first ever recordings of *The Spirit of England* and the *Coronation Ode*. I have always agreed with JGK that Gibson's recording of the latter, while lacking the sumptuousness of the rival EMI version, is nevertheless the more convincing performance.

* * * * *

1995's musical anniversaries will be dominated by the Purcell Tercentenary; and on 6 October the centenary of the first Promenade concert. Yet the year also celebrates significant anniversaries of some of Elgar's greatest interpreters. Both Sir Malcolm Sargent and Isobel Baillie were born in 1895, and in 1947 they came together for Baillie's only Elgar recording - "The sun goeth down" from *The Kingdom*. This year also sees the fiftieth anniversary of John MacCormack's death; and most poignant of all, Jacqueline du Pré, had she lived, would have been fifty this year (see also Review section).

* * * * *

Some three-and-a-half years ago, the Oxford Harmonic Society joined forces with the Philharmonischer Chor der Stadt Bonn in Germany to perform *The Dream of Gerontius* under Thomas Neuhoff [see review in JOURNAL May 1992]. On 3 February this year the Bonn choir gave *The Apostles*; the soloists included Lynton Atkinson and Klaus Häger who sang in the earlier concert. On 1 July in the Kreuzkirche in Bonn the two choirs will team up again to give *The Kingdom*, this time accompanied by the Cologne Philharmonic Orchestra. Messrs Atkinson and Häger will complete a full set of oratorios, and will be joined by Julia Borchert (soprano) and Joy Robinson (mezzo-soprano).

* * * * *

A welcome item of late news : the CD set of Sargent's *Gerontius*, issued by the Society on the Testament label, has won the 'Historical Reissue' section in the annual awards made by the magazine *Classic CD*. Such awards are naturally very gratifying in themselves, but should also ensure continuing sales of the disc.

* * * * *

A variety of pressures means that there are often large gaps between my attendance at concerts. However, having attended three at the Cambridge Festival, I attended three more in the first fortnight of December! A young cellist, Oliver Gledhill, played the concerto at a concert in South Kensington. Assurance of technique, warmth, and expressive playing were there in abundance; and I was led to reflect on the excellence of so many of our young musicians. Then to Salisbury Cathedral for *The Apostles* (where some friends were singing in the chorus). A wonderful setting aesthetically, but the enormous acoustic created problems for soloists and chorus alike. The 'big' ending was electrifying in its power, as always. The conductor, David Halls, Assistant Organist at the Cathedral, is an enthusiastic Elgarian, apparently. Finally, with fellow London Branch members to *Gerontius* at the Barbican. I confess to going primarily to hear Anne Sofie von Otter, but the soloists were the only slightly disappointing aspect of what was otherwise an outstanding performance. Sir Colin Davis's reading of the work was a revelation, and it can rarely have been played or sung better than here with the London Symphony forces. There is much more I could say, but I end with the hope that some enterprising record company (RCA?) will ensure that this interpretation is preserved for ever.

* * * * *

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

2 March

Sea Pictures
*Della Jones/BBC Nat O Wales/
Otaka*

Arts Centre
Aberystwyth 8.00
0970 623232

3 March	repeat of above concert	Prichard Jones Hall Bangor 8.00 pm 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 0352 755114
6 March	repeat of above concert	Monmouth School 7.30 0600 772747
6 March	Falstaff, Enigma Variations <i>BBCSO/A Davis</i>	Royal Festival Hall South Bank
10 March	The Dream of Gerontius <i>J.Rigby,D.O'Neill,A.Miles/ BBCSO & Chor/A Davis</i>	Westminster Cathedral
13 March	Introduction & Allegro <i>Hallé/Nagano</i>	Guild Hall Preston
13 March	Symphony no 1 <i>Chetham's SO/Clayton</i>	Barbican Hall London 7.30 pm
15 March	Handel Overture,Cello Concerto, Symphony no 2 <i>A Meneses/BBCSO/A Davis</i>	Royal Festival Hall South Bank
18 March	The Apostles <i>E.Woolett,M.McDonald,D.Fieldsend, G.Titus,W.K.Ong,P.Hudson/ Nottingham Bach Soc & O/Hale</i>	St Mary's Church High Pavement Nottingham 0115 926 5693
18 March	The Spirit of England <i>Hereford Ch Soc/Massey</i>	Hereford Cathedral 7.30 pm
18 March	The Dream of Gerontius <i>Wilmslow O</i>	Wilmslow Leisure Centre
18 March	Wand of Youth No 2 (plus works by Finzi, Moeran, Rutter, etc) <i>St Edmundsbury Bach Ch & O/Oxley</i>	St Marys, Bury St Edmunds 0284 769505
19 March	Bach Fantasia & Fugue in C minor, Violin Concerto <i>Haendel/BBCSO/A Davis</i> (preceded at 2.30 pm in the Chelsfield Room by a symposium on the Violin Concerto led by Wilfred Mellers)	Royal Festival Hall South Bank
24 March	In the South <i>RSNO/Weller</i>	Usher Hall Edinburgh 031 228 1155

25 March	repeat of above concert	Royal Concert Hall Glasgow 041 227 5511
31 March	Introduction & Allegro <i>Hallé/Nagano</i>	Victoria Hall Hanley
7 April	Cello Concerto <i>Watkins/BBC Nat O Wales/Hurst</i>	Brangwyn Hall Swansea 0792 475715
9 April	Violin Concerto <i>Cher/Worthing SO/Cervenka</i>	Assembly Hall Worthing 3.00 pm
11 April	Introduction & Allegro <i>Hallé/Nagano</i>	Assembly Rooms Derby
26 April	Cockaigne <i>Bournemouth SO/Temirkanov</i>	Wessex Hall Poole Arts Centre
26 April	Symphony no 2 <i>RLPO/Hickox</i>	Anglican Cathedral Liverpool 7.30 pm
29 April	The Dream of Gerontius <i>Soloists/Liverpool Welsh Chor U/ Williams</i>	St George's Hall Liverpool
6 May	The Apostles <i>M. Vassiliou, R. Halvani, A. Mackenzie- Wicks, C. Maltman, J. Koc, T. Tomasson/ Guildford Phil Ch & O/Handley</i>	Guildford Cathedral 7.30 pm 0483 444555
6 May	Violin Concerto <i>Cher/Midland SO/Sutherland</i>	Leas Cliff Hall Folkestone 7.30
6 May	String Quartet <i>Nossek String Quartet</i>	Trinity Church Golders Green 7.45
12 May	Cello Concerto <i>Ma/LSO/C Davis</i>	Barbican Hall London 7.30 pm
13 May	Dream Children, Wand of Youth no 2 <i>Rutland Sinfonia/Collett</i>	Royal College of Music 8.00 pm
14 May	The Dream of Gerontius <i>C. Wyn-Rogers, A. Thompson, A. Holland/ Highfields Sch Ch, Derbyshire Sgrs, Chesterfield Phil Ch/Derbys Sinf/Clark</i>	Highfields School Matlock 7.30 pm 0629 56686
20 May	Sanguine Fan, Cello Concerto, Enigma Variations <i>Philh/Slatkin</i>	St Nicholas' Church Newbury, Berks
21 May	Chanson de Matin, Chanson de Nuit <i>LPO/Tovey</i>	Royal Festival Hall South Bank 11.30 am

25 May	Sanguine Fan, Enigma Variations <i>Philh/Slatkin</i>	Fairfield Halls Croydon
27 May	Sanguine Fan <i>Philh/Slatkin</i>	Royal Festival Hall South Bank
28 May	The Kingdom <i>Malvern Fest Ch & O/Boyle</i>	Elgar Hall Great Malvern 7.30
4 June	Enigma Variations <i>Philh/Gardiner</i>	Royal Festival Hall South Bank 7.30
8 June	In the South <i>Philh/Gardiner</i>	Royal Festival Hall South Bank 7.30
24 June	From the Bavarian Highlands <i>Luton Chor Soc & SO/Mann</i>	St Mary's Church Luton 7.30 pm
27 June	Bassoon Romance <i>K.Ordish/Rutland Sinf/Collett</i>	Oakham School Chapel 8.00 pm
8 July	The Kingdom <i>Soloists/SW Essex Ch/Aurelian Ens/ Temple</i>	Walthamstow Assembly Hall 081 442 1748
8 July	The Kingdom <i>J.Kelly,H.Summers,M.Hart- David,M.Pearce/Chichester Singers/ Bournemouth SO/J.Willcocks</i>	Chichester Cathedral 7.30 pm

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BOOK REVIEW

Edward Elgar : Sacred Music by John Allison, with Afterword by John Powell Ward.
Seren Books, 1994. 144 pp. £12-95 hardback. £6-95 paperback.

When writing about the 1905 *Introduction & Allegro*, Elgar referred to "that sweet borderland" where he then lived. This Border Lines Series of books seeks to throw light on the cultural life of that indefinable area that might be England or Wales and through history has tried to be both. Elgar fits in naturally, as does another composer he greatly admired, Samuel Sebastian Wesley, the special care of Donald Hunt in the series. The bulk of Elgar's sacred music is of course contained in *The Light of Life*, *The Dream of Gerontius*, and the two 'Apostles' oratorios. These occupy only a tiny fraction of the present book, and do not feature at all in the appendix that lists the fifty-seven works treated. Elgar's major achievements have been more than adequately described elsewhere, but it is good to have Allison's conjecture about the influence of Kundry on Elgar's controversial *Magdalene*. On the other hand, it is refreshing to have more than a cursory glance at music that is little known or heard. Yet when it is realised that over half the music dealt with in the book dates from before Elgar's marriage, among which the majority of pieces is unpublished and a considerable number incomplete, it has to be admitted that interest is sometimes marginal. Indeed the whole study is inevitably 'borderline'.

John Allison makes some excellent points. A constant leitmotif is the significance of Elgar's Catholicism, and he is right to emphasize at the outset the crucial importance of Vincent Novello and his pioneer publication of Catholic church music. Equally happy in view of the intimate association at St George's and later, are the many quotations of material associated with Hubert Leicester and his family. There is acute observation about a fragmentary *O salutaris hostia* in E minor, surviving only as a soprano part in the Jesuit archives. Here Allison has connected a 'Paganini' superscription in Elgar's hand with the great violinist's G minor Caprice. The melodic line is identical and is a touching reminder of Elgar's ambitions as a violinist. Another fascinating observation concerns an A flat hymn tune to an unknown text, perhaps dating from 1879. In later life Elgar wrote 'Richardson' above it, which probably links the piece to Sir Albert Richardson, the architect responsible for the restoration of St Mary's, Eaton Socon, after a 1930 fire. Richardson requested a chime from Elgar for the newly completed church, and this seems to have been his response. The subsequent history of the chime, as recounted by Richardson's grandson, is bizarre indeed.

Allison is a comparative newcomer to the Elgarian field (in the context of this JOURNAL I had almost said 'minefield'), and it is perhaps unfair to expect him to be sensitive to every nuance. Among a number of half-truths, the following could easily be put right. In a sense it was for financial reasons that the Dean and Chapter refused an orchestral Three Choirs festival at Worcester in 1875; but the finances were those of the Earl of Dudley, who had just paid for a new organ in the Cathedral and wanted no charges for admission to the building. The 1922 letter to Ivor Atkins about "the strong (it is *that*) characteristic stuff" refers, specifically to *King Olaf* rather than "his works of the 1890s". Elgar would not have described *The Light of Life* in such terms. The dedication of what was to be *Salut d'amour* indeed went to

'C A Roberts', but in the particular and prophetic form of 'Carice'. It is very improbable that the 'Apostles' project was originally conceived as a trilogy; the quasi-Wagnerian scheme came about when Elgar realized that two hours' music would never get him from Nazareth to Antioch. Plans for the 1914 Three Choirs Festival at Worcester were meticulously laid and programmes printed, but it had to be abandoned because of the war. The 1924 Pageant of Empire was a more complex matter than Allison suggests. Far from being a work by Elgar, the three days' celebration involved roughly eighty musical items, and Elgar's name appeared against a quarter of them, from the *Imperial March* of 1897 to the songs specially composed for the occasion.

More disturbing is the crop of inaccuracies. Recent writers on Elgar can be readily divided into two groups : those whose scholarship is sound, if also at the mercy of the inevitable slip or gremlin misprint, and those whose every statement or quotation must be checked. Despite solecisms such as *Domine, saluum fac* when applied to Queen Victoria, and an equally transsexual *Der junge Kokette* among the Powick productions, I hoped to enrol John Allison among the former. But the more I checked his admirably chosen quotations, the more he risked relegation to the latter. *A Creative Life* and the letters thereof may not be infallible, but their scholarly integrity is unassailable. With a considerable count of words added or subtracted, misreading and mispunctuation, John Allison falls lamentably short of his most frequently cited sources, as anyone can quickly prove. This defect is worth labouring, as it can be so easily righted next time round. Elgar deserves the best, as Allison would doubtless agree.

Robert Anderson

Music in England 1885 - 1920, as recounted in *Hazell's Annual* : edited with illustrations, introduction and index by Lewis Foreman.

Thames Publishing, 1994. £15-95.

I must admit to a fascination with works of reference of all kinds. Particularly interesting are those annuals which once graced bookstalls and shops, and were given as presents to book-loving members of the family. Few survive today - Whitaker's *Almanac* is perhaps the hardiest survivor to keep us up to date with what has happened during the year just gone, and to remind us of events to come. *Hazell's Annual* was never a serious contender against Whitaker's, but it lasted from 1885 to 1922, and during most of those years it contained a necessarily brief survey of music events in Great Britain during the previous year. Lewis Foreman has had the idea of photocopying all the music articles, and prefacing them with a lengthy introduction to the period under review. Also he had the happy inspiration of including a number of photographs of musicians and composers, and occasionally concert platforms, taken from the many photographic postcards then so popular. It must be said that these photographs have been splendidly reproduced by the printer - among the best examples that I have seen, and in most cases an improvement on the originals.

However, it is to the text that most will turn, and here there is a problem. Yes, it is fascinating to take each year in turn and see what was happening, not just in

London but in other parts of the country too. But those who now wear spectacles, as I do, may well find the very small type-face of these photocopied entries something of a trial to read. There is no clue as to who wrote these surveys during thirty-five years, but from odd clues scattered among many entries I would hazard a guess that many are taken from newspaper and magazine accounts of the period. It would obviously be impossible for one person to have attended so many events. Mr Foreman has chosen to emphasise, in his prefatory essay, the British composers, and the revival of British music in Victorian and Edwardian times. He traces the performances of Parry, Stanford, Sullivan, Mackenzie, Cowen, and others. He has deliberately excluded from his study the "big" men, such as Elgar, as he feels that Elgar and others are sufficiently covered in many other works.

The essay is interesting, but when I turned to the actual reprinted yearly accounts I found that I was reading something quite different. Of course British music is mentioned, as are the many festivals, but often the mention is of the briefest nature. What one finds here is music from the widest spectrum, not just a nationalist account, which the British public had placed before them in those years. The compiler of Hazell's *Annual* obviously regarded opera as being the peak of musical achievement, and the account of operatic performances and singers is short but nevertheless very interesting. Those looking for detailed accounts of such events as the Promenade Concerts will be disappointed, for they are usually dismissed in such terms as in 1919: "...opened on Aug. 16, and continued for ten weeks". Vocal and instrumental recitals are usually confined, unless of considerable importance, to a list of the artists concerned. Sometimes there are surprising omissions - Elgar's *Cello Concerto* is not mentioned in the year of its first performance.

Oratorio and opera are really what the surveys serve up to us in the most acceptable helpings, and it is perhaps a little depressing to note those operas which failed to find an audience after their first hearing. Not only are most of the titles unknown to us today, but the composers too have failed to leave their names in musical history. But not everything can succeed in any of the arts, and we must be grateful for the riches which did come from the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early years of this. Mr Foreman has decided to concentrate on certain British composers of that period, but I found the international picture, as it impinged on the British scene, of more interest. A book to dip into on those long winter evenings, but keep a magnifying glass handy for the second half of the book. The index is set in even smaller type!

Ronald Taylor

VIDEO REVIEW

Jacqueline du Pré and the Elgar Cello Concerto. The Trout : two films by Christopher Nupen.

*Teldec, 1994. 4509-98908-3
Total playing time 129 minutes*

The Elgar film included here has been available before. It was released in 1990, and reviewed in the *JOURNAL* in May 1991. So far as I can see it is exactly the same as

before, down to the same accompanying article by Christopher Nupen. I suspect that many members will already own it, for it is a wonderful memento of a memorable artist, who would have been fifty this year. While reflecting ruefully on the tragedy of her illness and premature death, we should be grateful for her recorded legacy, which for Elgarians is the two recordings of the *Cello Concerto*; plus this television film from around 1970, with the Philharmonia Orchestra again conducted by her husband, Daniel Barenboim. The sound is obviously not hi-fi quality, but is more than adequate; but it is riveting just to sit and watch the total dedication - artistic and emotional - with which she imbues her performance. The little smiles and nods to her husband to show that she is ready to proceed with the next movement; in retrospect such things are very touching. And although she "throws herself around a lot", as my father would have said, there is not the merest hint of showmanship, but rather it is an aspect of her commitment to the music; as Paul Tortelier said of her at a London Branch meeting many years ago; "elle s'abandonne".

The performance of Schubert's *Trout Quintet* was filmed at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in 1969, with du Pré and Barenboim being joined by Itzhak Perlman (violin), Pinchas Zukerman (viola), and Zubin Mehta (double-bass). The five were great friends as well as being outstanding musicians, and the clowning about at rehearsal is almost as entertaining as the performance. During a jazzy improvisation, du Pré gives a wonderful impression of a jazz bassist, playing the cello *pizzicato*, with closed eyes and 'gone' expression. As to the *Trout* itself, perhaps understandably there has been better ensemble in chamber music, but the immense talent and enthusiasm of the five players evokes a tremendous admiration and pleasure. This double-CD set is available at mid-price and is an outstanding bargain.

The Editor

RECORD REVIEWS

The Music Makers, Op.69. With short orchestral pieces.

*Jean Rigby (mezzo-soprano), BBC Symphony Chorus and Orchestra
conducted by Andrew Davis
Teldec 4509 92374-2*

I guess that many readers got to know *The Music Makers* through Sir Adrian Boult's pioneering recording of 1966, which is hardly surprising as it had the catalogue to itself for just on twenty years! As I have observed elsewhere, the choral singing is somewhat lacking in sparkle, but there is no doubting the authority of the direction and the atmosphere it generates. In the last decade, there have been two new rivals (Richard Hickox and Bryden Thomson) as well as a performance from Sir Malcolm Sargent, which actually predates the Boult by some eighteen months and which has been rescued from the vaults by Intaglio.

Into this arena comes Andrew Davis and his BBC forces as part of Teldec's ongoing 'British Line' series. I was initially somewhat disappointed as Davis sets a rather brisk pace for the opening which as a result tends to sound rather matter-of-fact. Remembering that this music represents the composer sinking back into himself looking for inspiration, I do think these opening pages need to sound more inward,

more mysterious - in short, to reflect more of the sense of world weariness which we can glean from Elgar's letters of the time.

Things improve radically on the entrance of the chorus. They are well disciplined with some ravishing singing which really is *pp* and then *ppp* and which at fig 12 ("world losers") displays that necessary inward quality. "We fashion an empire's glory" has just the right swagger and there are some nicely focused sounds from the timpani after fig 26. The *ppp* singing at fig 39 ("A breath of our inspiration") is wonderfully poised and guaranteed to touch any heart however hard, especially when it is echoed so beautifully by the clarinet.

Jean Rigby, who often sounds uncannily like Janet Baker, ushers in Nimrod with supreme sensitivity and the precision of the orchestral playing as the music becomes more agitated in the pages following fig 55 ("and therefore today is thrilling") is ear-catching, and the chorus show that they are just as effective in loud as in soft music as they reach the defiant *fff* rendering "We are the Music Makers". As the music sinks back on itself, reminding me of the bars surrounding Gerontius's "I can no more", the chorus unleash a glorious warm glow at "With our dreaming and singing", which then builds up in confidence in a very impressive way.

The musing which accompanies the quotation from the *Violin Concerto* is again finely controlled and very moving, but the passage incorporating the theme from the *First Symphony* is just a little too buttoned down without the thunderous *fff* outburst on the word "morning" that I was expecting. Am I alone in hearing the opening of *Caractacus* at fig 83 following the words "ye of the past must die"? Davis steers a skilful path through the final section, conjuring up a real world-weary sound as Gerontius steals into the picture. The last page is taken very slowly but such is the precision of singers and players that it comes off very well.

The recorded sound is excellent, allowing the often quite busy choral lines to be clearly distinguished. Teldec have the whole of *The Music Makers* as one track, albeit with ten index points which is fine if your machine has the technology to cope with that, but potentially irritating if it does not.

The rest of the programme is skilfully planned to move us without haste from the stillness and visionary quality of those final bars. First *Dream Children* edges us from O'Shaughnessy's "dreamer of dreams" to Charles Lamb's "We are nothing; less than nothing, and dreams. We are only what might have been". I don't think I had been so aware before of how close both the sentiments and the musical world of the two works really are. The effect is certainly heightened here by the steady pace Davis sets for the first piece, as if he is reluctant to break the spell of the previous track although I am well aware that it is extremely unlikely that the one was recorded immediately after the other! Listening to the *Elegy*, one is very aware of the excellence of the recorded sound with a clearly defined and focused bass line. Davis is not surprisingly rather "straighter" in this music than for example Barbirolli, but there is no denying a dignified and genuinely heartfelt quality that is very convincing.

Recordings of *Sursum Corda* are rather rarer - this is only the third in its original

and unusual orchestration for strings, brass and organ. The interesting colours that emerge are well balanced, with the organ well integrated into the texture. Davis brings a real sense of yearning to the music, and the big climaxes open out very effectively. There is logic in following this with *Sospiri*, for its scoring for the similarly unusual combination of strings, harp and organ makes an interesting comparison. Here, harp in place of brass heralds inward musing in place of external ceremony, with the "sighing" violin sounds amply supported by the plush cushion of the lower strings and the organ.

Chanson de Matin is taken on the slow side, making it seem rather grander and more sophisticated than it really is, but the playing is delightfully pointed. This approach suits its companion rather better, which moves on with a lovely flowing style which is dignified but not over-inflated.

I think I would have programmed the *Chansons* the other way round for by the time we come to *Salut d'Amour*, the dark introspective clouds of the *Music Makers* have fully lifted to reveal the sweet unalloyed simplicity of young love. As ever these two sides of Elgar's genius seems "as far as the east is from the west", and yet it is their frequent juxtaposition that gives his music that special quality that is so appealing. The disc that opened with what is only the fourth complete recording of *The Music Makers* closes with what is, by my reckoning, the 149th of *Salut d'Amour*. That it still sounds so fresh and appealing is a fine tribute to Andrew Davis and his players who capture its ebb and flow to perfection with judicious *portamenti* and the fluttering hesitations implicit in its intentions.

John Knowles

Variations on an Original Theme (Enigma) Op.36.

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BBC Symphony and Hallé orchestras conducted by Sir Adrian Boult
VAI Audio VAIA 1067-2 (2 CD set)

With Cello Concerto, Op.85.

Mischa Maisky (cello), Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Giuseppe Sinopoli
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With Suites The Wand of Youth, Opp.1a & 1b

Academy of St Martin in the Fields conducted by Sir Neville Marriner
Capriccio 10 501

With In the South (Alassio) Op.50; and Pomp & Circumstance March no 4, Op.39.

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Yehudi Menuhin
Tring International TRPO 18

With Falstaff, Op.68; and music from Grania and Diarmid, Op.42

City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sir Simon Rattle
EMI CDC 55501-2

Six *Enigmas!* Four new ones, plus a mid-price reissue of a relatively recent recording; and one nearly sixty years old, of great historical interest. Let's take this first; it is of course Sir Adrian Boult's first recording of the work, from 1937. A few months before his death, Elgar made clear that he believed Boult to be the person to record the *Third Symphony*. Sadly that never happened, as we all know; but it does seem that Gaisberg saw Boult as the natural successor to Elgar. The works he got the conductor to record in the mid '30s were all gaps in the composer's own discography - the *Introduction & Allegro*, the *Prelude to The Dream of Gerontius*, the *Imperial March*, and *Sospiri*. These are all present on this disc, and have previously been reissued, but the *Variations* has only ever appeared on 78s - until now. The first impression is that it is very fast; at just over 26 minutes, some three minutes faster than Elgar himself! Boult really drives his players - the BBC band were on superb form at the time - and the fast movements are very exciting. The slower movements occasionally feel rushed, but there is plenty of expression and good dynamic shading.

Elgar's works make up the second CD of this American set, the first comprising a thrilling *Portsmouth Point*; and *Crown Imperial*, brought out in time for the 1937 Coronation for which it was composed. Butterworth's *A Shropshire Lad*, Vaughan Williams' *Tallis Fantasia* and Bliss's *Music for Strings* complete this valuable set. The transfers are capably done; my only criticism is the lack of indexing for the *Variations* - it is just one track.

Sinopoli's version first appeared in 1990 and was reviewed in the *JOURNAL* for January 1991 by GHL, who gave it a muted welcome. He coped better than me with the slow tempi. CAE, RPA, WN, and the *Romanza* all suffer in this way, and even RBT is drawn out to the extent that he loses a good deal of his quirkiness. To me it only really works in *Ysobel*, bringing out the beauty of this charming vignette, and reminding me here of Sinopoli's compatriot Toscanini in his NBC recording. There are some other lovely movements, especially *Nimrod* and *EDU*, where Sinopoli really indulges himself in the final pages. You may also be interested in this disc because of the other work - Mischa Maisky's much-praised interpretation of the *Cello Concerto*, where Sinopoli takes a much more orthodox approach to the music in the role of accompanist.

The four new recordings are all excellent in their own way. I was drawn initially to the Berlin PO/Levine recording, made at live performances in Berlin in 1992. The opening was a little tentative, I felt, but HDSP is very exciting with wonderfully precise playing; in fact, the orchestra amply justifies its high reputation throughout. This is an outstanding recording, especially when one realises that the work is hardly core repertoire for either conductor or orchestra. I felt there was a truly deep affection for the piece, the embodiment of the friendship Elgar meant to convey. The nobility of *Nimrod* is followed by a very sprightly *Dorabella*, which really dances along. My only sadness was a lack of organ in the finale. The coupling is Debussy's *Images*, which is also played with great conviction and appeal.

Genuine warmth for the work and its composer is also evident in the version by

Menuhin on the super-budget Tring label. This is a beautifully prepared, even subtle, account, with the quieter variations rather understated, and the fast ones not sounding rushed, although a comparison of times shows little differences with other versions! The recording is good, though strongly reverberant, and the brass are rather too prominent in the louder passages, eg. in GRS. To be brutally frank, there are one or two ragged edges to the orchestral sound, but I would not wish to detract from my positive response to the recording. The accompanying pieces are *In the South*, which is not quite so successful, and an uplifting *Pomp & Circumstance 4*. At its ridiculously low price, I urge you to buy this.

Sir Neville Marriner surprised a few people with his version of the *First Symphony* three years ago, and his new *Enigma* on the German Capriccio label proves that he is clearly in the front rank of present Elgarian interpreters. It is another relatively 'straight' performance, but Marriner brilliantly highlights the 'lightness' of the piece. For me Ysobel is *much* too fast (faster even than Boult or Elgar!), but elsewhere there is little to complain of. Nimrod is slow, but there is a sure grasp of pulse, and it works most successfully. Marriner's lightness ensures an excellent performance of the two *Wand of Youth* Suites, and reminded me that some twenty-five years ago (can it really be that long?) he brought out a disc of occasional pieces for EMI entitled 'Contrasts - the Lighter Elgar'. Though few in number, recordings of the *Wand of Youth* music are generally accomplished, and Marriner is by no means overshadowed in such company.

Finally, Sir Simon Rattle's long-awaited version, together with *Falstaff* and the *Grania & Diarmid* music. And the wait was worth it, for it is outstandingly good. Just occasionally I felt Rattle was striving for too much expression - eg. unmarked and unnecessary *ritardandos* in the flute figures in WN, and the intensity of the string playing in RPA makes Arnold sound almost sinister - but overall this is a memorable reading, with much to enjoy. Once again there is first-rate articulation in HDSP, beautifully expressive playing especially in Ysobel and BGN, showing what a fine outfit the CBSO is.

The opening to *Falstaff* was a little disappointing; I felt that the fat knight was not quite large enough! More could have been made of the *molto grandioso e largamente* at fig 25. However, it improves immensely as it goes along. There is some exquisite *ppp* playing at the beginning of the Gad's Hill episode. In fact attention to detail, and dynamic contrasts in particular, is one of the most striking features of this record. The sound is not so successful as in the *Variations*; it is quite messy at times, eg. the *giusto con fuoco* at fig 65. But this is a very minor flaw. In general this version can be safely recommended; and as with Rattle's EMI 'stable-mate', Jeffrey Tate, the death of Falstaff is absolutely stunning. As well as these two great masterpieces, there is the added bonus of the *Grania and Diarmid* music. Rattle keeps the Funeral March moving along nicely, and ably brings out the tragic feel to the music.

The Editor

CD Round-up

The transcription for cello of Elgar's *Bassoon Romance* was first recorded in 1987 by Julian Lloyd Webber. The same artist has recorded it again, this time as part of a delightful disc entitled 'English Idyll'. With virtually all the music having been

written in the first 35 years of the century, one could guess that some of it was written for Beatrice Harrison, which was in fact the case. It is a wonderful mixture of the popular - Walford Davies's *Solemn Melody*, Grainger's *Brigg Fair*, and Ireland's *The Holy Boy* - with lesser known works such as the *Fantasy* by George Dyson. The Elgar *Romance* is played with great expression and affection; but at the risk of carping I felt that the lovely *Idylle* (originally for violin) could have been a little more dreamlike. Marriner and the Academy play with similar sensitivity and intelligence as the soloist. Music-making at its best (Philips 442 530-2).

Two new releases from Albany of extreme interest to Elgarians. First, a recording of piano music by Parry (TROY 132), played by Anthony Goldstone on the composer's own Hagspiel grand in the Prior's Chamber at Shulbrede Priory in Sussex, where Parry's daughter lived, and where he spent many happy times. The major works are the two sonatas (previously unrecorded); and the disc also contains a short *Adagissimo*; *Charakterbilder* (seven 'Character Pictures'); and the *Theme and 19 Variations*, the D major peroration of which "must have influenced Elgar", according to Mr Goldstone.

Of even greater interest (to me) is the première recording of Horatio Parker's *Hora Novissima*, a choral work using words by the 12th-century monk Bernard of Cluny. Parker was one of a number of American musicians whom Elgar befriended, and the work received its first British performance at the Worcester Three Choirs in 1899. The previous year Elgar wrote to Jaeger; "*Hora Novissima* contains more 'music' than any of your other englishmen have as yet managed to knock out"; although after having heard the work he wrote: "I fear I didn't make much of Parker". The Latin words (familiar to some in J M Neale's hymn translations, such as 'Jerusalem the golden'), cataloguing the joys of heaven, are hardly engaging, but the music is delightful - tuneful and inventive, with a surety of touch in the orchestration. The work is very much a product of its age, with obvious debts to Gounod and Verdi, but it has something too of the choral style of Dvořák, whose *Te Deum* was premièred in America in 1892, the year before *Hora Novissima* was completed. The American forces give a spirited account of it - I particularly enjoyed the singing of the mezzo, Julie Simson - and the two-disc set is completed by Parker's *Organ Concerto*, played by Stephen Krahn (TROY 124-5). Well worth investigating.

An enchanting disc of music for string orchestra, played by the Serenata of London directed by Barry Wilde, and available on Pickwick PCD 1108. There are a few well-known pieces, such as Dvořák's *Humoresque*, Elgar's *Salut d'Amour*, and Grieg's *Elegiac Melodies*; plus some more obscure works by those three composers (in Elgar's case the heart-rending *Sospiri*), an *Elegy* by Tchaikovsky, and the *Suite Champêtre* by Sibelius. Delightful listening.

The Editor

BRANCH REPORTS

LONDON Branch's season got under way with a most enjoyable evening of live music provided by a very able student group, the Mistral Quartet. Elgar's Wind Music went down very well with a glass of wine and in the up-market ambience of Imperial College's Senior Common Room. We have enjoyed three meetings since. In November Dr Robert Anderson gave us his 'Elgar's Passage to India' - one of our leading Elgar scholars speaking about an often neglected work (*The Crown of India*) in a beautifully-illustrated presentation. In December Dr Jeremy Dibble, another distinguished scholar and author of the standard Parry biography, took as his subject 'Parry and Jaeger'. Though there was significant reference to Elgar, it was fascinating to see Jaeger from a slightly different angle. Dr Dibble's talk embodied genuine original research and was, moreover, in part one very amusing, and after the interval unbearably moving.

In January Arthur Reynolds presented another talk rich in remarkable research. What happened to the *Falstaff* manuscript? Why were there six missing leaves and what became of them? Perhaps "detective work" rather than mere "research" is what underpinned this fascinating evening!

Meanwhile the Branch has enjoyed two successful visits to the Barbican. On 4 December Richard Hickox was heard conducting the LSO in *The Black Knight* (a second chance this season for members to get to a live performance of this vibrant work); while on 15 December Sir Colin Davis conducted an unforgettable *Gerontius*. We had a take up of forty-plus for each occasion.

With a BBC season scheduled in March there is no immediate shortage of opportunity to hear a vast range of Elgar's orchestral works, and we shall be hoping to arrange outings to a number of concerts.

On 14 January we joined the Richard Strauss Society in sponsoring a Day School in which David Nice compared and occasionally contrasted the two composers. His was a virtuoso performance - hugely knowledgeable, apparently spontaneous, yet controlled and meticulously ordered. Question time, too, was lively and informative. The event proved financially viable - indeed a small profit ensued - though it should be noted that Elgarians outnumbered the Straussians by three to one and clearly rescued the event from what otherwise would have been a let-down.

Members should take note that, because of an unforeseen conducting engagement, Andrew Litton will not be able to be present at the March meeting. Instead David Bury will present a programme entitled "Elgar and the Sad Dolls".

NORTH-WEST. In December we held our AGM when Pat Hurst announced her retirement as Branch Secretary. Pat has held the post for the past six years : we are very grateful to her for all her hard work, and accept her resignation with regret. Unfortunately no one has expressed a wish to take over, so Pat has agreed to stay on until April and see the season through. The April meeting will be a lecture/recital by Carol Holt and Diana Walkley. After the meeting we will be holding an Extraordinary Meeting to decide the outcome of the Branch. Our January meeting was a very interesting and amusing talk by David Young, one of our members, called 'Elgar and his Northern Music Makers'. It was received with enthusiasm. In February we shall be having a talk by Arthur Butterworth, who has had a long association with the Hallé Orchestra and Manchester, on 'The English Muse'. Our March meeting will take the form of a visit to Chester Cathedral for a guided tour,

after which we will attend Choral Evensong which will include music by Elgar. The Cathedral Organist is a Branch member.

SOUTHERN Branch welcomed Ian Lacey in October with his presentation of 'Elgar's Sussex'. As we soon discovered, it was also Bax's, Ireland's, and Coates's Sussex, too! Ian skilfully evoked differing moods, with magnificent slides and an eloquent choice of music. The 1994 season ended in December on a controversial note, with Branch Chairman Walter Essex deliberately ruffling a few feathers with his own views on Elgar as the quintessential English composer. This was not a place to be if seeking comfortable complacency!

1995 began in fine style with a presentation of the play 'Rose Imperial' by John Hunt. Whilst essentially a "reading" of the play, minimal movement and props brought it alive. It helped greatly that John Carter actually resembled the composer! But even without this, he managed to convey Elgar's mercurial changes of mood with astonishing conviction. The Branch was magnificently entertained: we laughed and were moved in equal measure.

WEST MIDLANDS began their season with a most enlightening talk by Dr Relf Clark on 'Ivor Atkins, Herbert Brewer and George Sinclair', the three Cathedral organists who each made a distinguished contribution to musical life and who championed the music of Elgar, particularly at the Three Choirs Festivals. In November Dennis Clark presented an illustrated talk on 'Elgar's World in Contemporary Pictures'. With humour and charm and appropriate musical illustrations, he painted a fascinating picture of Elgar's life and times. We are grateful that Dennis was able to come at such short notice; our speaker was to have been John Heddle Nash, who sadly died suddenly on 29 September.

Our Annual Lunch party was held at St Swithun's Institute in Worcester on 12 February, and our Branch AGM will be held at 'The Stables', 37 Albany Terrace, on 4 March at 2.15 pm. Our final two meetings of the season will be on 25 March at 7.30 when John C Phillips will speak on 'Elgar, Cantor for the Nation' in the Old Palace, Deansway (a joint meeting with Worcester Recorded Music Society); and on 6 May in Christchurch Hall, Malvern when Garry Humphreys will speak on 'Elgar and Germany'.

YORKSHIRE. It was clearly tempting fate that we should appear to brag, in the last issue, about large attendances. To our great embarrassment, our first meeting of 1995, on 9 January, saw the lowest attendance we have ever had! Just twelve members turned up for a visit by Yorkshire composer and conductor Arthur Butterworth. Having received an MBE in the New Year's Honours list only a week earlier, Mr Butterworth spoke eloquently on 'Elgar: a Conductor's Viewpoint'. It was a great pity that so few should be present to hear such an excellent talk, one which deserved - and received - our rapt attention.

Following the above, our fingers were firmly crossed on 6 February when we next arrived at 'The Willows'. Fortunately, with illnesses now at bay, winter holidays over, etc. we were about back to normal, with 27 present to hear Simon Lindley (standing in for Esther Harrison, who was ill) speak on 'Elgar & the Concert Hall'. Simon is Organist & Choirmaster at Leeds Parish Church - successor there to Donald Hunt - and well-known as an involving and witty speaker. His talk, with recorded excerpts including part of a Beecham *Enigma*, was greatly enjoyed. Simon,

incidentally, is a great-grandson of Marie Brema, the first Gerontius 'Angel' at Birmingham in 1900.

Tony Rawnsley is our speaker on 6 March, on 'Elgar in the 'Nineties', replacing Lyndon Jenkins, whose own talk is now deferred until 12 June. Our AGM and election of officers and committee is on 10 April.

LETTERS

From : Ronald Taylor

Probably the least-known of Elgar's collaborators was Shapcott Wensley, librettist of The Banner of St George. Dr Jerrold Northrop Moore in his sleeve notes for the 1987 issue of the EMI recording described him as a man "otherwise unknown to fame". Dr Moore's magnum opus is even briefer in its reference.

I have just been researching an entirely different matter, and in reading the July 1917 issue of The Musical Times came across the following obituary notice. Since it gives us his real name as well as detailing his other work I think it worth quoting in full.

H S Bunce ('Shapcott Wensley', the combined names of his mother and wife), at Bristol, on June 1. Although not a musician, his skill as a lyrical writer associated him with many composers, amongst whom may be named Elgar (The Banner of St George), Leoni (The Gate of Life), J H Maunder (From Olivet to Calvary), Jacobi (operettas, Cinderella and The Babes in the Wood), J L Roeckel (The Hours and Little Snow-white), Arthur Somervell (operetta, The Enchanted Island), J Frederick Bridge (three humorous cantatas), F H Cowen (cantata Summer on the River), John E West (The Star of Bethlehem). Besides his ability as a writer he had considerable gifts as a reciter and speaker.

I have thought to check on various old biographical and music reference books in my possession, but not a mention anywhere of Mr Bunce. At least the above now gives us a little more information, and explains that very Dickensian pseudonym.

From : Frank W Holmes

The address of Elgar's Birthplace is invariably shown as : Crown East Lane, LOWER Broadheath. The current Ordnance Survey Landranger Sheet 150 indicates the Birthplace firmly planted in UPPER Broadheath (Grid Ref. SO 808556) with Lower Broadheath about a mile distant in a northerly direction. No doubt there is a perfectly logical answer to this apparent anomaly. No doubt someone with knowledge of the locality could elucidate.

From : Michael Plant

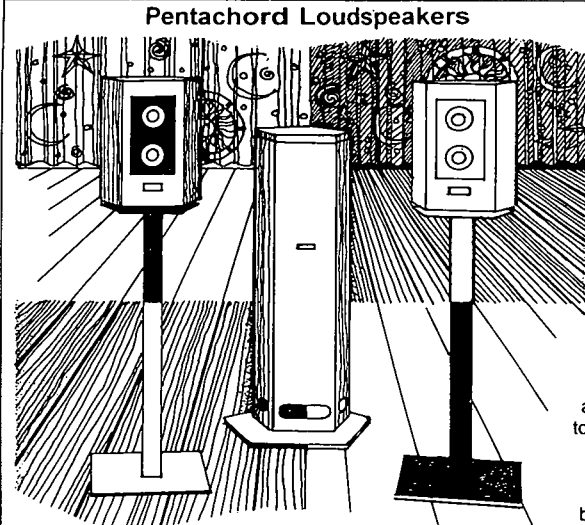
Readers of the November JOURNAL should not be misled into supposing that an important Elgar venue is at risk if and when the Free Trade Hall closes its doors.

The building which saw the première of the First Symphony was destroyed by enemy action in December 1940. A new concert hall was constructed after the war in a rather plain 'modern' style (which itself is now part of history) and was opened by the Queen Mother (then still Queen) in November 1951. The original façade was retained but the rich acoustics proved impossible to match. They can, however, still be appreciated on the pre-war recordings made in the old Hall, which include a famous one of Manchester schoolchildren in Nymphs and Shepherds.


The present Hall has served Mancunians and the Hallé for over forty years and is thought not to meet future requirements of capacity, facilities and location, but I fancy some noses have been put out of joint by Birmingham's new Symphony Hall; hence the new plans.

From : Dr Geoffrey Roper

The query raised by Stephen Lloyd in the last issue is easily answered. The Cambridge Daily News of Friday 2 February 1912 carried a report of the concert in the Guildhall the previous evening. This states quite clearly that the Stanford symphony performed by the London Symphony Orchestra under Elgar was the 'Irish' in F minor, Op 28 - ie. no 3. If there had previously been an intention to perform the new Seventh Symphony, it was evidently abandoned before the event. The report commended Sir Edward for "making the most of the careful, sound work which always characterises Stanford's compositions", no doubt causing further amusement if he read it. The rest of the programme was the Tragic Overture by Brahms, Elgar's own Violin Concerto, (performed by Pecscai) and Beethoven's Leonora Overture.



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