

The Elgar Society JOURNAL



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*The Editor does not necessarily agree with the views expressed by contributors
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The Elgar Society Journal

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EDITORIAL

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In the minds of Elgar-lovers, *The Spanish Lady* and the *Third Symphony* will always be linked together. They represent Elgar's last attempts at large-scale composition, in 1932-33, in two different genres. In one of these - opera - he was setting out for the first time; in the other - abstract orchestral music - he was an acknowledged master. In the sketches for both Elgar drew on fragments of old music, such as discarded dance pieces; and on unpublished or unfinished works such as *Arthur* and *The Last Judgement*. The obvious question, "Would he have completed one had not the other intervened?", will always be asked, but must remain unanswered. However, to a certain extent it must be true that "each killed the other", as Diana McVeagh put it.

Furthermore, Elgar's method of composition was such that it is impossible to know what the completed works would have been like from the sketches that remain. So while it was wonderful to be able to see *The Spanish Lady* staged at Cambridge last year, no one should imagine that this is how it would have turned out. In addition, with the *Third Symphony* we also have Elgar's charge to Billy Reed that no one should "tinker with it". It is clear from the authoritative comments made by Jerrold Northrop Moore and Christopher Kent at a Royal Society of Arts meeting a few years ago that any tinkering would be highly conjectural and thus unconvincing.

Having said all this, I was grateful to be able to hear on Radio 3 on 19 March a programme introduced by Anthony Payne, a passionate devotee of the music who on his own admission has tinkered with it over the years. (Mr Payne stirred up a minor storm in *The Independent* when an article by him about the music was followed by the statement that he would be "introducing orchestral examples from his completion of Elgar's Third"). Fortunately, the programme confined itself to what we have - the few precious pages for full orchestra (played by the BBC Philharmonic under Yan Pascal Tortelier); and extracts from the short score, played on the piano by Keith Swallow. As I listened to the glorious orchestral opening, which to me contained echoes of 'Saturn' from *The Planets*, I recalled with sadness the words Elgar wrote above the score of *Dream Children* : "We are only what might have been". The composer's death-bed comments were surely due not to despair at facing death or by depression that his music was going out of fashion, as Mr Payne suggests, but to the obvious impracticality of creating anything of musical cohesion and integrity from the remaining sketches.

GEOFFREY HODGKINS

ELGAR AND PERCY PITT

Geoffrey Hodgkins and Ronald Taylor

Part III

Elgar kept in touch with Pitt from his London club addresses.

[fo.69]

The Athenaeum
Wed 5 am

My dear Percy :

I have sent a despairing note to your London house - everything is filled up for this week - I am hoping to stay over next week & will let you hear

love
Edward

[fo.77]

Brooks's, St James Street, SW1
Wed 5

My dear Percy :

Thanks for your letter. I cannot think what can have happened to the telephone.

Now, will you lunch with me on Friday at 1.30 at this club? In case there shd. be any delay in your getting a reply through to me, *I will be there.*

In haste
Yours ever
Edward Elgar

Covent Garden reopened in 1919 after the war with a season organised by Sir Thomas Beecham. The second session in the autumn included opera in English conducted by Pitt: *Khovanshchina*, and *The Golden Cockerel*; and *Parsifal*, given in English for the first time.

Alice Elgar died in April 1920, and a year later Elgar's grief was still very real, although he tried to summon up his old bantering style when writing from Brinkwells.

[fo.34]

Severn House, 42 Netherhall Gardens, Hampstead N.W.
May 9 : 1921

My dear Percy :

I think you may be able to help me, - I know you will if you can! - I want to fix a date and the caste [*sic*] of Faust wd. probably fix it. I suppose at Cov. Garden there are all the old programmes : is there anyone there who could look it out for me at your powerful instigation? On another sheet I send the list taken from an old pencil slip. The name of the singer of Valentino is illegible but I expect it was *Cotogni*.

I wish I could see you sometime & have a talk : this has been & still is a sad house as you know & the war coming so soon after our arrival here has left me without the means of much hospitality

My love to you
Yours always sincerely
Edward Elgar

[fo.35]
Severn House
Sunday

My dear Percy
Many thanks for your card - if I possibly can I will come down to C. Garden at eleven (stage door I suppose) Shall I ask for you? or how

Yours ever sincerely
Edward Elgar

[fo.36]
Brinkwells, Fittleworth, Sussex.
May 30 1921

My dear Percy :
We are away at our tiny cottage meditating on the cold & rain at the present moment, though we have had some fine days.

Many thanks for your further words on the particular performance of Faust. I looked into the book about Covent Garden Theatre (Saxe Wyndham) a rather feeble book I think; it does not give the information I want. I hope you are going strong : if this were a more civilised place, if cooks cd. cook, I shd. ask you to forego the delicacies of London for a day or two - but it really is too rough for you.

My love to you
Yours ever
Edward Elgar

P.S. Do you want an Opera to open next season? Orders solicited; satisfaction guaranteed????

[fo.37] Brooks's, St. James St, SW1
May 2, 1922

My dear Percy :
It was a good beginning; I did not like to worry you in the midst of the work which you carried through triumphantly. I was in Lady Maud Warrender's box & had a good view of *you* as well as the stage.

Best regards & all good wishes for the great new venture,
Ever yours,
Edward Elgar

1 May 1922 saw the opening night at Covent Garden of the newly-formed British National Opera Company. Percy Pitt had been appointed Musical Director, a post he relinquished in 1924. The BNOC kept English opera alive in many parts of the country, but especially in London, until it was wound up in 1929. The opening night production was *La Bohème*, with Miriam Licette and Tudor Davies in the leading roles. Pitt had been a familiar figure in the orchestra pit at the opera house, and had conducted performances by many of the greatest figures of the operatic stage. In this

same year, 1922, he was asked to act as Music Adviser to the newly formed British Broadcasting Company - within a year he was made Director of Music, a post which soon took up most of his time, and which he held until his retirement in 1930.

[fo.38]
Brooks's
March 3 1924

My dear Percy :

I promised long ago to write again about the Broadcasting affair. If you are still in the same mind about my conducting let me hear soon.

I have seen strange sights since I left this [country] for S.Amer.

I hope you are well.

My love
Yrs ever
Edward Elgar

[Pitt has written in pencil at the head of the letter : *April 23 May 2*. He ringed the latter in blue, and has also written *write a piece*].

[fos.39-40]
37 St. James Place, SW1
March 8, 1924

My dear Percy :

Can we say fifty so as not to undersell? Many thanks for your letter : I can manage May 2nd - April 23 impossible & it is the opening of the Wembley affair at which I have to be present

In greatest haste [-] just off.

I shall be in L'pool Monday & Tuesday - I see you are in M'chester

Good luck to you
My love
Ever yours
Edward Elgar

[Pitt has written *Violin Concerto SAMMONS and 2 Entracte Jewels of Madonna* at the head of the page].

[fo.41 : typewritten memo]
From : Mr. [L. Stanton] Jeffries. To : Mr.Pitt
12 March 1924

Mr. Carpendale has handed me your telegram regarding Elgar and Goossens. I have sent Goossens a contract and I should be much obliged, as you have started the ball rolling, if you would kindly ask Sir Edward what his programme will be for this Concert.

I ask you to do this as I think this would be better than asking anyone else in the Company. There is plenty of time anyhow, yet, for you to let me have your views.

LSJ/BL

[fos.42-3]
37 St. James Place, SW1
Ap 22 1924

My dear Percy :
I hope you have had some holiday.

Now about rehearsals for the Concert, etc. tell me, as soon as you possibly can, when we meet for rehearsal - where etc. I want to get away for a few days next Thursday (24th) or, belike, Friday (25th) - but shd. naturally be back by Tuesday or Wedy (30th) - so I can fit in with your arrgts.

I could not propose myself for dinner just now - thanks all the same
Love to you
Yours ever
Edward Elgar

Elgar's return from his South American tour in the 'Hildebrand' gave Pitt the opportunity he must have been seeking to persuade Elgar to broadcast for the first time. The Wembley exhibition came first, and Elgar conducting the massed bands and choirs was relayed on the opening day. The concert - a lengthy one, with a special arrangement by Elgar of parts of *The Wand of Youth* Suites as part of the programme - was arranged for 2 May at Central Hall, Westminster, with the Royal Philharmonic Society's Orchestra. The BBC made much of the occasion and obviously relished their coup in getting such a famous composer to give his blessing to broadcasting. Elgar was one of the first to embrace the new medium. As Fred Gaisberg persuaded Elgar of the importance of the gramophone in 1914, so did Percy Pitt show Elgar the significance of the new invention of radio in 1924. As the Deputy Director of Music at the BBC, Owen Mase, wrote in 1932 in a note to accompany the Elgar Festival that year: "Sir Edward and the BBC have all along been on the best of terms, even in the early days when many members of the old brigade of music were doubtful to hail broadcasting as an ally or as an enemy. And even if Elgar had decided to hold aloof, as others did, his opposition would certainly have yielded to his warm affection for Percy Pitt; that helped again and again to smooth over the difficulties which are inseparable from the arrangement of programmes, when Sir Edward's music was to be broadcast. For they were old friends who understood one another well, well enough to indulge in banter about their own work, speaking the same language, as fellow-craftsmen do".

Elgar's relationship with the BBC continued until late in 1933, a few months before his death. L. Stanton Jeffries, an able musician, and one of the first to join the BBC, was Music Director of the 2LO (London) station. The "fifty so as not to undersell" obviously refers to Elgar's conducting fee! The "Goossens" referred to in Jeffries' note is Eugene Goossens the conductor, and father of Leon, Eugene III, Marie and Sidonie. The family's long relationship with the BBC seems to have started at this point.

[fos.44-5]
37 St. James Place, SW1
May 7 1924

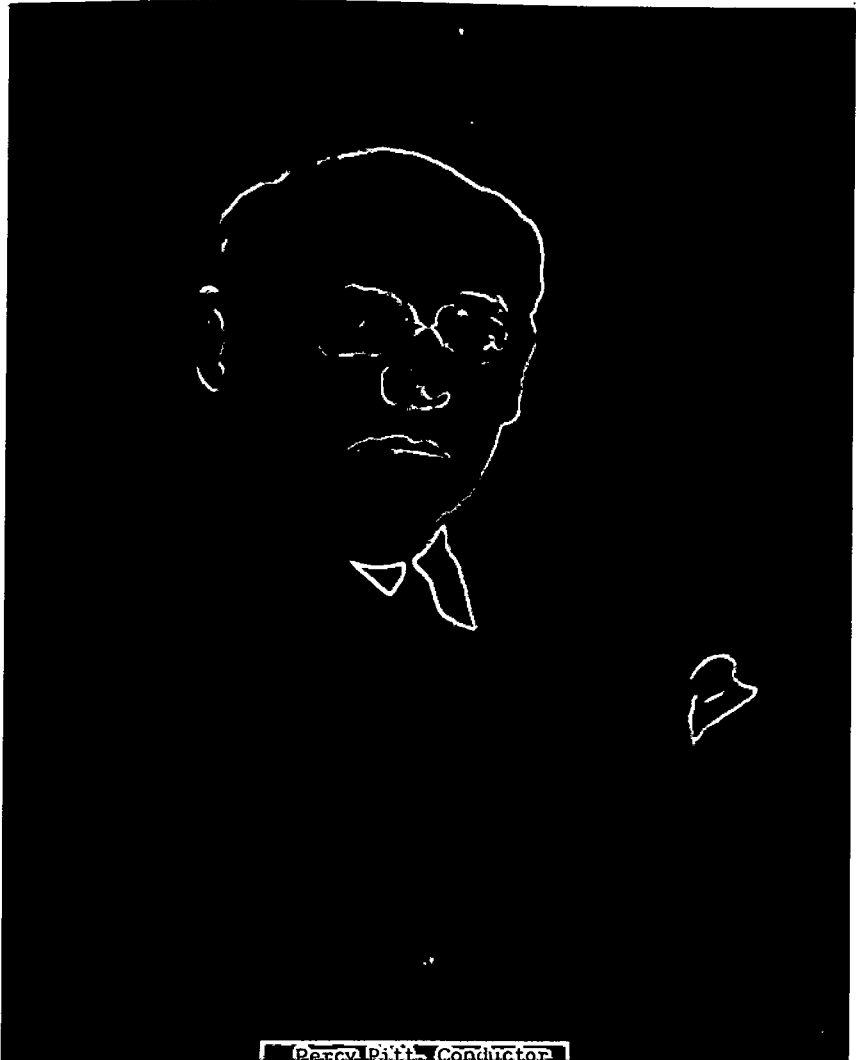
My dear Percy
Many thanks for your very kind letter about the Mastership.

I missed you at the B.B.C. but I knew you were fully engaged at the Opera. I am hoping to get to you on Thursday - *Tristan* is more for me than the Ring.

Yours ever
Edward E

P.S. I am *so sorry* but as I am going away - I hope for a few weeks - wd. you give the B.B.C. a twit to send my cheque for the Concert?

EE



Percy Pitt, Conductor

Percy Pitt, 19 November 1926 (photo courtesy Royal Opera House, Covent Garden)

Elgar's appointment as Master of the King's Musick had been confirmed, in succession to Sir Walter Parratt, who had died earlier in the year. Pitt was still Director of Music for the new season at Covent Garden, but not with the BNOC this time. Instead the opera house was putting on an 'International Season', comprising mainly German operas. The season had commenced with a somewhat under-lit production of *Das Rheingold*.

Nearly a year later came Elgar's second BBC concert :

[fo.117 BBC notepaper : typewritten]
17th March 1925

My dear Edward,

I have just had yours of the 16th. The rehearsal for your concert will be held here and upon the day of the performance itself, namely March 31st. If you want a long sitting (four hours) it will be wiser to start at 9.30. However, you could let me know about this afterwards. The public is not admitted and the conductor can choose his own style of costume but do not take this too seriously.

My love to you,
Yours ever,
Percy

Elgar's second broadcast concert was a long one, and for the first time with the BBC's own Wireless Symphony Orchestra, forerunner of the BBC Symphony. The soloist was Astra Desmond. Again the BBC made much of the occasion in the *Radio Times* and elsewhere, and the success of the concert is obvious from Pitt's next letter.

[fo.118 BBC notepaper : typewritten]
2nd April 1925

My dear Edward,

Everybody appears to have been delighted with the result of your concert on Tuesday last. I need not add my own congratulations because I was after all able to give them to you personally and further to this you will be annoyed to hear that I have asked them to send you on the cheque!

Now another matter. We should very much like to follow up this success by doing an evening of your Chamber music and although we have tried to arrange this once or twice the attitude of Novello & Co has stood in the way. By this I mean that instead of being content to accept the ordinary performing fees with which they mulct the concert organisations they demand 50% in excess from our company because of the fact that we are transmitting it.

Now I wonder whether you could get hold of that merchant Clayton and induce him to see things from a reasonable point of view. Of course I do not know upon what terms you happen to be with him (nobody gets on very well with the gentleman) but without unnecessarily putting yourself about if you could induce the firm to look upon this from a common-sense point of view I have no doubt we could fix this second evening of your works - a thing I should be very keen on doing. Drop me a line about this at your leisure.

My love to you, ·
Yours ever,
Percy.

It was very jolly to have you here the other night and also at supper and I much enjoyed talking

over the old times.

The difficulty with Novello persisted. Mr Clayton was not an easy man, and Pitt was correct when he said that few got on with him. The evening of Chamber music never took place, but a performance of the *String Quartet* by the London String Quartet did take place from Savoy Hill on Elgar's birthday, 2 June.

In 1926 the BBC arranged a series of "National Concerts". Many important musicians took part, including several European conductors. A special "National Orchestra" was put together, consisting of the usual BBC players and the Covent Garden Opera House Orchestra. Elgar conducted a concert of his own works at the Royal Albert Hall as part of the series, but it coincided with one of London's worst fogs for many years. Much of the fog made its way into the hall. Surprisingly, the audience was one of the largest for the series, and the concert was extremely well-received.

[fo.46]

Napleton Grange, Kempsey, Worcester
Nov.29th.1926

My dear Percy :

This is only to bring you a word of thanks for so kindly looking after me & making things pleasant all round, except, of course, the fog! & this, after all, was a very good specimen of a fog.

My love to you,

Yours ever,

Edward.

I have recd. a lot of letters - I expect the BBC has recd. any number of complaints about time being wasted on me, etc.

The comment in the postscript is all too typical of Elgar's habit of self-deprecation despite the fact that he admits to having received many letters - presumably all written in praise of his concert!

[fos.47-8]

Brooks's, St. James Street, SW1
Feb'y 24th 1927

My dear Percy :

You have put *PRIVATE* on yours so here it is on mine. Only during the last few days I have heard all sorts of 'schemes' for the pestilential day : but I have refused to have anything to do with anything : it is most kind of you to remember the date (I had not forgotten our word about it) but as I cannot take part in anything *you* might do without appearing at other things, I am going to cut the whole country in May & shall return in time for the festivals in Sept'r. - Providence (or more probably Old Nick) may interfere with this pretty idea &, after all, the seventieth birthday (seventy *first* I mean) may not arrive & it would be better for all concerned if it did not. "Pass the Veronal"

My love to you

Yours ever

Edward

I did love having you to lunch yesterday

Elgar's gloomy attitude to his 70th birthday in June did not last. A special concert was arranged at Savoy Hill, again a very full programme, with Beatrice Harrison, Muriel Brunskill, and the BBC Wireless Chorus and Orchestra. The BBC had hoped, earlier in the year, to arrange a Birthday Festival, but it may be that Elgar's lack of enthusiasm dampened the BBC's ardour for the project. However, it was at the rehearsals for the Birthday concert that Elgar was presented with a handsome silver salver 'From his friends in the BBC' - an occasion he obviously enjoyed. About this time Elgar made some effort to gain official recognition of Pitt's services to music, hence the following reference to "lettering".

[fo.49 Master of the King's Musick notepaper]
Battenhall Manor, Worcester
8 Feb 1928

My dear Percy :

Many thanks : I shall be in London on Monday &, (if you disdain to accept my lunch at Brooks's) I will gladly meet you anywhere for a simple meal : let me know at 37 St James' Place - 1 or 1.30 - but I shd. be charmed to entertain (?) you. I *wish* you had something fine in the way of lettering but what is worth having?

Yours ever
E.E.

[On the reverse of this letter Pitt has written : *Elgar Old Vic Concert for McEwen*]

[fo.50]
Tiddington House, near Stratford-upon-Avon
May 7 1928 *private*

My dear Percy :

I will write about the BBC things *very* soon : I have only just anchored here after great rushing about.

NOW : as far as I know everything is all right : of course I know nothing of *the side* you refer to & there may be political complications regarding *numbers* for instance; my side of any such affair is necessarily *wide of all this* & I do not think it worthwhile to interfere - unnecessary *I hope*.

In greatest haste
With my love to you
Yours ever
Edward Elgar

We believe that "the BBC things" was a scheme for Elgar to conduct music which had been commissioned by the BBC. One of the specially commissioned works was *The Pilgrim's Progress* by Elgar's old friend Granville Bantock. This is referred to in the next letter. The rest of the letter is more ambiguous. Was it something which concerned Elgar as Master of the King's Musick? It seems likely - and Elgar's remaining suspicions of the musical establishment are well-known. Has some scholar a more detailed explanation?

[fos. 51-2]
Tiddington House, near Stratford-upon-Avon
May 16th 1928

My dear Percy :

I have given *The Pilgrim* a good trial & find it will *not* go as I wish: I fear the want of scenery, view, or whatever, the listeners-in do not get.

I will write of the *Arthur* suite later. *King Olaf* was spoken of & I should like to do that sometime:

The other 'item' *seems* to be all right but of course you will understand that my knowledge is from the 'antithesis of' the political *business* side which naturally can hold up anything - in this case (if so) *pro tem* only.

Love to you
Yours ever
E.E.

In the event Elgar did not conduct such a concert, nor indeed was his *Arthur* suite ever broadcast as far as can be traced. He did conduct *King Olaf*, but not until 1932 when a performance taking place in Hanley was broadcast, but to the North of England only!

As to the rest of the letter we still seem to be on sensitive ground. Was the "political business" something to do with the music-publishing world, or the academicians? Or was there as danger of offending other composers or conductors? It is all most intriguing...

[fo.119 BBC notepaper]
June 5/28

My dear Edward,

Just a scribble to wish you many happy returns of tomorrow and everything of the best. Hope you are fit & well : and if you are coming to town these days let us have a birthday lunch.

My love to you
Yours
Percy.

[fos.53-4]
Tiddington House, near Stratford-upon-Avon
3rd Augt 1928

My dear Percy :

Many thanks for yours of 25th July. including the mysterious programme with the ungodly - conjunctively - constructed non-adjective (or whatever it is) Elgar-Godfrey!

I have written to Mr. Wright accepting the proposed date for the 'Arthur' suite. If you want [from?] me anything about Armistice day let me know & *K.Olaf* was thought of.

But - never mind all that : I was trying to see you last week & week before about the affair which faired [*sic*] badly in June : the matter is by no means dead - there is really no hurry just now but I want a word with you.

Best love to you and Mrs.Pitt
Yours ever
E.E.

It is too dull here to ask you to come - it is all right in fine weather with the river & the boat

Elgar's first paragraph refers no doubt to a note of the broadcast on 21 July 1928 when the Birmingham Police Band, under its conductor Richard Wassell, played an arrangement of Elgar's *Imperial March* by the composer Percy Godfrey. The reference to Mr Wright must mean Dennis Wright, composer for brass band, arranger, and pioneer of concerts by massed bands. Was Elgar present at a concert where an arrangement of the *Arthur* music was performed? It was certainly not broadcast. In 1928 Elgar did not give a concert on 11 November, though he certainly did in other years. Elgar seems to have pushed for a performance of *King Olaf* with little effect.

[fo.55]

Tiddington House, near Stratford-upon Avon
28th August 1928

My dear Percy :

By all means if my name - which does not stand for anything in religious circles - is of any use to you please use it.

Yrs ever

EE

You will see when I am to be trussed[?] etc

[fo.57 Master of the King's Musick notepaper]

Tiddington House, near Stratford-upon-Avon
6 Mar 1929

My dear Percy :

I am so sorry I could do nothing during the last week : I shd. have been delighted but developed a dry cough & only just managed the rehearsal & Concert on Saty night! Now I am better & able to look after things : let me know if there is anything 'special on'. I shall not be in town for some little time - I am lodging in Purley

My love

Ever yours

E.E.

[fo.58 Master of the King;s Musick notepaper]

S-on-A :

18 April 1929

My dear Percy.

Many thanks*. I am laid low with cold [:] better today. I had hoped to have seen you last week but had to fly (flu) here - what a climate

My love to you

Yours ever

EE

* I have not heard of the festival you name.

[fo.59 Master of the King's Musick notepaper]

Tiddington House

S-on-A

21st May 1929

My dear Percy :

Many thanks for your letter concerning the Callender Band : it is very kind of you to interest yourself therein : I shd. think 'favourably' of the proposition but it would (naturally?) resolve itself into a commercial affair. 'They' - whoever 'they' is or are might write to me outlining its or their ideas.

I hope to be in town next week & will let you hear

Yours ever

EE.

The Callender Band, under their conductor Tom Morgan, frequently broadcast at this period. However, they had only occasionally included an Elgar piece in their programmes. Were they trying to persuade the composer to write something for them? Was this the first stirrings of what was to be the *Severn Suite*?

[fo.60]

Marl Bank, Rainbow Hill, Worcester

12 April 1930

My dear Percy

All thanks for yours re Ostend : I wd. have gone but 4000 frs. does not seem (presuming they are at the French rate) to be very festive - perhaps the good people mean 40,000!?

I hope that [the] affair you spoke to me about has materialised.

My love to you

Yours ever

EE

Elgar had moved in to Marl Bank, his last home, in 1929. Ostend had regularly arranged music festivals at the Kursaal, and Elgar conducted there in 1908, with great success. On that occasion the famous Dutch mezzo, Tilly Koenen, had performed some of the *Sea Pictures* under his baton. Memories of this success may have been in Elgar's mind when he says that he would have gone, but not for 4,000 francs!

Percy Pitt reached retirement age in 1929, and was succeeded by Adrian Boult at the beginning of 1930 as Director of Music at the BBC (now a Corporation). Known in the BBC as "Uncle Percy", he was greatly admired. He still continued to broadcast regularly, and to act as consultant to the Corporation. He was even able to accept an engagement to conduct at Covent Garden.

[fo.61]

Worcester

16th April 1931

My dear Percy

Many thanks : I am so glad to hear that you will be back at C[Covent] G[Garden] - do what you can. I have not recd. a divid[id]d. from any one thing this year! We live in larky times - God wot!

I hope we may get a meal together when next I am in town

Ever yours

Edward Elgar

[fo.62 postcard]

Marl Bank, Rainbow Hill, Worcester

8th June [1931]

All thanks for your most kind message

My love to you

Yours ever

Edward Elgar

[fo.63]

Marl Bank, Rainbow Hill, Worcester

17 July 1931

My dear Percy :

I have been laid up for more than a month & London has known me not otherwise I shd. have hoped to have seen you : anyhow, I hope the time has been good for & to you : I missed all the Opera season &, of course, all things else. The weather has been on the whole so very awful that the fireside (in July!) seems the best place; however I hope you will get a good restful time & that material things will improve. Everyone seems to feel the curious circumstances under which we live now; the old proverb - a toad under a harrow - was thought once to be strange & unusual - I know now we have each a harrow & perhaps we are all toads! - *I feel like one*. My love & good wishes to you & yours

Ever yours

Edward Elgar

Pitt had married in 1925. His wife, Margaret, was an Australian singer who had been married before, and Pitt acquired two stepchildren. They had moved to an imposing house in Broadhurst Gardens, Hampstead, which "...as the depression developed...began to assume the character of an extravagance"¹. In 1928 the family had made an unsuccessful move to the country - to Heron Lodge, at Heronsgate, near Rickmansworth - for the sake of his stepson's health. This episode added to Pitt's financial problems.

[fo.121]

Friday evening

My dear Edward,

I have just wired you to let you know that your two letters have only just reached me! This will of course surprise you but, as a matter of fact, my place at Heronsgate has been shut up for a year & altho' the housekeeper or rather caretakers [s/c] has been there most of the time, they went off on holiday about three weeks since. And it was only through someone being taken over the house (a prospective lessee or, as I hope, purchaser) that the letters were found & handed to me. Anyway :

I I shall be only too delighted to help you in ANY WAY as you know

II I note about your visit to town and as far as my own movements are concerned

M[onday] available dinner[:] we might do a theatre after

T[uesday] NO (but could lunch early, say 1.0)

¹ J Daniel Chamier : *Percy Pitt of Covent Garden and the B.B.C* (Arnold, 1938)
p 230

W(ednesday)
Th(ursday)) available
F(riday))

So let me hear. My address (I have had 4 since leaving the country!) 3, Primrose Hill Studios NW1

My love to you

Yours

Percy

PHONE PRIMROSE 1908
Better ring me about 9.0 A.M.

[fo.120]
3 Primrose Hill Studios
NW1
July 18/32

My dear Edward,

What a chapter of accidents re your visit to London - I mean as far as meeting you - I have explained the preliminaries but there are other extraordinary happenings in connection with it : for instance, Kalisch came to be with me on the previous Thursday & told me that you were to be in London "gramophoning" during the week of the 18th and I was on the point of writing to try & make a date when your letters were brought back from Heronsgate. The last communication from you (from Brooks) was handed to me Friday night 11.10 (after my broadcast) and as my last post here goes at 11.0 pm, all I could do was to send you a wire early Saturday morning - However it was certainly bad luck abroad! Is there any chance of your coming to town again these days. If so, *please* let me know in order that we may meet.

Have had a frightful lot of trouble lately but more when we meet -

My love to you

Yours

Percy.

By the autumn of 1932 plans had been completed for an elaborate Elgar Festival, organised by the BBC to take place in the Queen's Hall, and in the new concert hall in Broadcasting House. Pitt was doubtless delighted at this tribute, but he was not to live to see it. Nor, as it happened, had he had time to put his finances in order nor to enjoy some of the leisure which laying down the burden of administration should have given him. He died on 23 November 1932, just one week before the first of the Elgar Festival concerts, at the comparatively early age of sixty-three.

Tributes were prompt and generous. Sir Henry Wood wrote of the shock of the news, which reached him while he was rehearsing at Queen's Hall. He reminisced : "His wide knowledge of music and particularly of Grand Opera, English, Italian, French, and German, was amazing - and no one could cast an opera better than he...The late Dr Hans Richter thought the world of him and often told me what a fine all-round musician he was : Richter directed several performances of the *Sinfonietta* which he wrote for the Birmingham Festival of 1906...During the past thirty-five years Percy Pitt and myself made much music together, and I, along with his many

musical friends, will sadly miss our dear Percy".

Adrian Boult was equally generous in his *Radio Times* tribute. "'Hullo, Sir, and what's your good news?' It seems impossible that this cheery greeting will never again be uttered by the man who did more than any other to build up the musical policy which we of the BBC Music Department are proud to follow...But it is not only our former Music Director that we miss today. Since he laid down his administrative duties three years ago he was free to enter on a time of activity for us as a conductor of concerts of a distinction that is gratefully acknowledged throughout the land. Inside the BBC a *Pitt* programme could be readily accepted as a real contribution to the week's work, needing no supervision, for it was already planned with such perfection and catholicity of taste, such a happy gift of proportion, and such a real sense of beauty and appropriateness, that no editing could improve it...We mourn our former Chief; and we mourn as well a friend whose contribution to our present work will be found to be irreplaceable".

J B PRIESTLEY - NORTH COUNTRY ELGARIAN

Frank Beck

1994 marked the centenary of the birth of J B Priestley. In honour of the occasion, publishers reissued several of his plays and novels and *An Inspector Calls* played to packed houses on Broadway, where it won four Tony Awards. The celebration was capped by a tribute from some of Britain's greatest actors at the Albery Theatre in London on 18 September.

I wonder how many members know that Priestley was an enthusiastic Elgarian? He discussed Elgar at length in several of his books, and the *Cello Concerto* figures as a musical "character" in his 1949 play *The Linden Tree*. His thoughts on Elgar are vintage Priestley, a mixture of lightly-worn erudition and sensitivity so plain-spoken that it sounds like common sense.

Priestley was part of the first generation to grow up with Elgar's music : he was born in Bradford in 1894 and heard one of the early performances of the *First Symphony* as a teenager. Year later, as a young, successful writer, he met Elgar at the Malvern festival in 1932, and it was his home movie camera that took some of the rare film footage of Elgar reproduced in Jerrold Northrop Moore's *Letters of a Lifetime*. Priestley explained the composer's lifelong appeal to him in *The Edwardians*, his 1972 memoir of Britain before the Great War.

Over and above his inventiveness and magnificent orchestration, and more important than they are, is something that never fails even now to ravish my ear and catch my heart. It is the kind of passage, forever recurring, when strings are quietened and the jagged thunder of his brass is gone, and...it is all different, strangely beautiful as music and catching at the heart because the man himself, no longer masterful, seems to be staring at us out of a

sorrowful bewilderment. These moments when the *persona* is dropped are to me the secret of Elgar's lasting enchantment.

Not many teenagers today would be going off to hear a new symphony, but Priestley had had a surprisingly good musical education just by growing up in his corner of Yorkshire :

I might have been better off in Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool, but my native Bradford, though smaller and without a university, devoted more time, money and attentive appreciation to music than most industrial towns. There were three reasons for this : it was wealthier for its size than they were; Yorkshire folk take to music; and Bradford taste had been leavened by the German-Jewish merchants, many of them rich and influential, who had migrated there.

As a result, Bradford's musical life was rich and well-rounded. Music-making at home was a popular entertainment. (Priestley himself learned to play the piano well enough to accompany a singer or a chamber group, and as an adult one of his favourite activities was playing music with his family). Military bands played in the park every Wednesday and Saturday, and there were two very good choral societies. The city's permanent orchestra drew sizeable audiences each Saturday night during the winter. The highlight of each year's musical season were the concerts by the Hallé and other visiting orchestras. Here Priestley heard performances under Richter, Nikisch, Beecham, Walter and Toscanini that he remembered all his life.

Priestley developed broad musical tastes, and, in his book *Particular Pleasures* (1975), he described some of his favourites : Verdi's *Falstaff*, Smetana's *Piano Trio in G minor*, Fauré's *First Piano Quartet*, Dvořák's *Seventh Symphony*, and Elgar's *First*. In his discussion of Elgar's symphony, Priestley considered the 'Englishness' many people have found there - a quality some have attributed to a certain emotional reticence. Priestley thought it was something very different.

What is this deep Englishness [in Elgar's music] that enchants fellow countrymen like myself? It is easy for us to recognize and enjoy but hard to explain. We are at heart an imaginative people - it is our dramatist-poets and actors who have conquered the world, not our shopkeepers - and we applaud bold dramatic statements that challenge the imagination, like those of Churchill in 1940; but behind them we welcome a brooding tenderness, and behind or below that a dreamy melancholy.

Priestley's most notable homage to Elgar's music is in his play *The Linden Tree*. The play's main character is Robert Linden, an ageing professor of history who is being pressured to retire. One of his daughters is a cellist, and in Act II she practises the *Cello Concerto* offstage, prompting Professor Linden to comment on the work.

[It's] a kind of sad farewell. An elderly man remembers his world before the war of 1914, some of it years and years before perhaps - being a boy at Worcester - or Germany in the nineties - long days on the Malvern Hills - smiling Edwardian afternoons - MacClaren and Ranji batting at Lords, then Richter or Nikisch at the Queen's Hall - all gone, gone, lost for ever - and so he distils his tenderness and regret, drop by drop, and seals the sweet melancholy in a Concerto for cello. And he goes, too, where all the old green sunny days and the twinkling nights went - gone, gone.

Elgar's nostalgia, however, is not the music's whole story.

But then what happens? Why a little miracle...young Dinah Linden...who knows and cares nothing about Bavaria in the 'nineties or the secure and golden Edwardian afternoon, here in Burmanley, this very afternoon...unseals for us the precious distillation, uncovers the tenderness and regret, which are ours now as well as his, and our lives and Elgar's, Burmanley today and the Malvern Hills in a lost sunlight, are all magically intertwined.

Written in 1949, these lines seem to foretell Jacqueline du Pré's youthful interpretation of the *Concerto* and the way it would rekindle interest in the work two decades later. Priestley - who believed J W Dunn's theory that all time is simultaneous - would not have been at all surprised.

When he was in his eighties, Priestley described how his preferences among Elgar's music had changed over the years. It was always the orchestral works he liked best. At first his favourite had been the *Enigma*, then the concertos, then the *Second Symphony*. But finally the *First Symphony* won his deepest affection.

To begin with, after a broadly spacious opening it offers us immense and delectable variety, with the grand first subject always somewhere round the corner until at last it takes command again. Moreover, its third movement seems to me one of the great adagios of all time...I find in this work the bold dramatic statements, the brooding tenderness, the underlying dreamy melancholy, of deep Englishness in all its varying moods.

How many readers and theatregoers over the years have been introduced to Elgar through Priestley's advocacy? There must have been many, and as his books are rediscovered now, there may well be a few more. Priestley would be pleased to know that at the end of this century, "in spite of wars, bombs, taxes, rubbish and all", as he once put it, Elgar's work is reaching a wider audience than ever.

Vincent Broome published a good biography of Priestley in 1988. But the best single introduction to the writer is *Bright Day*, a largely autobiographical story set in Yorkshire during the first half of this century. This novel was Priestley's own favourite among his works, and its reappearance in print (in paperback from Mandarin) is the centenary event that would have pleased him most. I also heartily recommend *Delight*, a 1949 collection of mini-essays about the good things of life - everything from rediscovering Shakespeare to lying in a hot bath to hearing orchestras tune up - all described with Priestley's usual pungency and wit. It's a book to quicken the senses and refresh the spirit. I'm happy to add that a recording of Priestley reading excerpts from *Delight* - a wonderfully entertaining performance - has been reissued on cassette by Spoken Arts, 801 94th Avenue North, St Petersburg, Florida 33702 USA (An *Informal Hour with J B Priestley*, SAC 7048, \$11.95 - about £7.50 - plus postage).

ELGAR - THE LEEDS CONNECTION

Cecil Bloom

Part I

Festivals of music came into existence in Britain early in the eighteenth century. The most famous, the Three Choirs Festival, was founded about 1715. Others sprang up around the country - Birmingham, Norwich and Chester later that century; and then in the nineteenth, Bristol, Cardiff and Sheffield joined Leeds as other towns with regular festivals. Concerts, choral and instrumental, were regularly held in Leeds from the middle of the eighteenth century onwards, and the opening of the present Leeds Town Hall in 1858 was the motivation for the Leeds Festival. The first such festival was held that year, and from 1874 it became a triennial event only interrupted by two World Wars. The last regular three-yearly Festival was held in 1970. Festivals did continue thereafter at two or three-year intervals until 1990, but, sadly, Leeds is unlikely to have another one.

The Leeds Triennial Music Festival was regarded as among the most prestigious in the country, and composers and performers alike looked upon these Festivals as places where they could establish or enhance their reputations. Birmingham and Leeds, in particular, made special features of encouraging British composers. Many important works received their first performances in Leeds which attracted composers of the calibre of Dvořák, Glazunov, Humperdinck, Massenet, Rachmaninov, and Copland; conductors such as Sullivan, Nikisch, Barbiroli and Beecham; and performers of the stature of Sarasate, Joachim, Kreisler, Artur Rubinstein, Grainger, Myra Hess, Menuhin, Clara Butt and Kathleen Ferrier.

Elgar's association with Leeds began in 1896 when he conducted the Leeds Choral Union in *The Light of Life* at the Three Choirs Festival in Worcester, and he later conducted the Union - one of the best choirs in the country - a number of times both in Leeds and elsewhere. His first public performance in Leeds was with the Choral Union in four songs from his *Scenes from the Bavarian Highlands*, and the *Leeds Mercury* report on the concert showed insight: "Mr Elgar is quite the most promising native musician of the day and, now that an introduction has been effected, we trust to be able to record many similar visits to the city in the future". It was as a result of the negotiations which led to this concert that he was invited to write a work for the 1898 Leeds Festival. Henry Embleton, the wealthy founder and patron of the Leeds Choral Union, pressed the case for a new Elgar composition for this festival, but it is of interest to note that he was not one of those originally invited. Frederick Spark, the Festival Secretary, wrote to Elgar to say that his name had been mentioned as a Festival possibility but admitted that circumstances forced Leeds to write first to Sullivan, Stanford, and one other (name illegible) all of whom had promised new works¹. Sullivan and Stanford (and perhaps the third composer) must have retracted on their promises (although a *Te Deum* of Stanford's, written for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, did receive its first performance) and this led

¹Hereford and Worcester Record Office (HWRO) 705: 445 5970.



the Committee to Elgar.

Elgar must have anticipated an invitation because in December 1897 he wrote to his publisher, Novello, to ask whether they would purchase for publication the work he planned for the forthcoming Leeds Festival. He told them : "I hear that nothing save the merest accident will prevent my being asked to contribute a Cantata to the Leeds fest:- I have hinted at other things but it seems they wish a Cantata"². Elgar had, in fact, originally suggested a choral work on the subject of St Augustine and the conversion of Britain but Leeds considered this to be "too Catholic". He then suggested as an orchestral work a series of 'Scenes from English History' to include such figures as St Augustine, Caractacus, and King Canute; but since choral works traditionally formed the core of the Festival, the Committee insisted on such a work. It was then that a cantata based on the life of Caractacus was agreed upon. Henry Embleton also encouraged him to use this subject and convinced him that "the fine natural qualities of Yorkshire voices" would give the composer an additional advantage. The two men became firm friends. In 1907 Elgar dedicated his part-song *The Reveille* to Embleton and in 1909 Embleton organised a two-day festival of Elgar's music in Leeds bringing up the Queen's Hall Orchestra from London for the event.

Elgar was shrewd enough to realise that the Leeds commission was an important one in the development of his career. In asking his publisher to purchase the work he added : "I do not know if they will offer me any fee or whether it is usual to do so". As it happened, he received £100 from Leeds only for him later to complain that he only received 15/- (75p) per week for the cantata³. If his complaint was valid, he

²Moore, J N (ed) : *Elgar and his Publishers* vol i, (Oxford, 1987) p 63

³Moore, J N : *Edward Elgar : A Creative Life* (Oxford, 1984) p 246

had worked on it for over two years and this was surely not so. The work was rehearsed by Elgar in Leeds and there is one particularly interesting story. The Festival Secretary, Frederick Spark, has been described as cantankerous and autocratic and, at the final rehearsal four days before the actual performance, there was according to Alice Elgar "...very enthusiastic, tremendous applause. Mr Spark interfered". Apparently Spark objected to such demonstrations as a mere waste of valuable rehearsal time. This cantata, however, was a key step in Elgar's career and helped to establish his reputation which finally blossomed the following year with the *Enigma Variations*.

What was the Leeds Festival like almost a century ago? Rosa Burley has given us a delightful picture of the Leeds scene. She was invited to stay at the home of the Lord Mayor, C F Tetley, which gave her, as she has written, the chance of comparing a "big North Country Festival with those of the Three Choirs". She continued :

The difference was...very marked. The Leeds Festival was a secular meeting...and the first things that struck me...was that the audience were a good deal less clerical, less County and a good deal more fashionable and opulent than those in my own district. The very programme was lavish...Musically the Festival was distinguished by the fine choral singing for which Yorkshire is noted and by a certain rather business-like efficiency.

She then went on to give a fascinating portrait of Elgar :

Edward, who never enjoyed any festival of his earlier years, was particularly unhappy at this one. Nervous and never too sure of himself, he needed an immense amount of encouragement before he was at anything like his best and, while in Worcester, where by now he had become something of a lion, this stimulus was always forthcoming, it was a different matter at Leeds which had known and entertained most of the greater composers of the later nineteenth century. Here he was merely one of a group and by no means the most important member of it, with the result that although the committee treated him with courtesy - and such committees consisted of very cultured people - he felt insulted and hurt.

The fact is of course that this was one more example of the absurd injustice which necessitates a composer's attempting to be a performer. The Leeds committee found Edward ill-tempered and difficult but it may be that they did not realise the state of his mind. After the nervous strain of creating one of his major works he was in no mood to supervise details of its performance, still less to listen to the chatter of either admirers or detractors.

When it was all over he rushed back to Malvern with the air of one who has fought, and is inclined to think he has lost - a heavy engagement⁴.

Elgar returned to Leeds for the next Festival in 1901 to conduct the *Variations*. This performance, two years after its première, convinced many in the North that here was a great composer. He was "cheered to the echo", and the *Variations* were said to be one of the "sensations" of the Festival. Because of his success with this work and (relatively) with *Caractacus*, the Festival Committee then tried to commission a work for 1904. Elgar accepted in principle and said he would prefer to write an

⁴Burley, Rosa & Carruthers, Frank : *Edward Elgar : The record of a friendship* (London, 1972) pp 113-5

orchestral work, either a concert overture of about twenty minutes or a symphony of forty minutes. Was the latter to be the long-awaited and overdue symphony? Spark quickly commissioned a symphony at a cost of 50 guineas. The Committee, however, in its wisdom, disagreed with Spark and wanted a one-hour choral work. Elgar accepted saying that he wanted to "produce my very best at Leeds for your splendid chorus". But he soon quickly changed his mind and wrote to Spark that he was "heartily sorry" but it was impossible to produce a choral work for "your gorgeous voices"⁵. Leeds again then seized the initiative by returning to the symphony and doubling their offer to 100 guineas which the composer accepted⁶. Seven months later in October 1903 he told the Committee he could not finish the symphony in time for the Festival and he withdrew from the commission. He told them the symphony was taking him too long to work out and that "as the Leeds Festival is more celebrated for its choral than its orchestral ways, I must hope that some day I may again be represented by a choral work".

Spark then proposed again that Elgar write a choral piece and suggested that "a Mass would be greatly acceptable"⁷, but there must have been an immediate negative response because Spark wrote again : "I quite understood your first letter and that was the cause of my suggestion you should not leave us in the 'lurch'...It was some months since I invited you to produce a choral work but you were unable to find a suitable libretto and offered a symphony. This we accepted...By withdrawing it now, you place us in a difficulty as to new works. Could you write for us a short choral work if a Mass would be too exacting? We have a Committee meeting on Wednesday next and I should like to be in a position to say that we are to have something from your pen"⁸. But Elgar still felt unable to oblige and there was, consequently, bad feeling between the two parties with the city feeling that it had been shamefully treated.

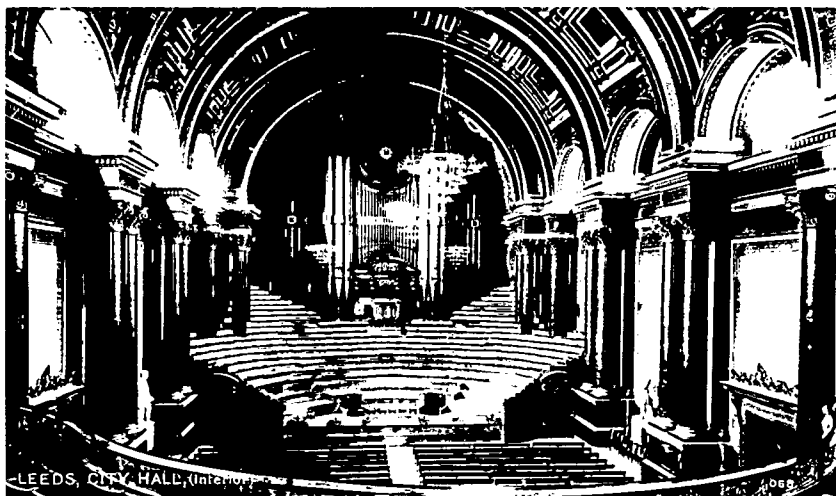
About this time *In the South* was completed and the whole situation was exacerbated when Leeds learned that this work would be receiving its première at Covent Garden a few months before the Festival. Understandably, it was felt that the least that Elgar could do, given his inability to produce the symphony or the choral piece he had promised, would be to offer its first performance to the Leeds Festival. Some Committee members even went so far as to suggest that no Elgar work should appear at the Festival when Elgar went ahead with the Covent Garden performance. However, Charles Villiers Stanford - the Festival's musical director - pleaded on his behalf and as a result a compromise was reached whereby Elgar was invited to repeat this new concert overture at the Festival and conduct it himself. There must have been some question of *The Dream of Gerontius* being included in the Festival programme (in the event it was not) because Stanford wrote to J H Green, secretary of the Leeds Philharmonic Choir, to point out in no uncertain terms that a work which was the first English composition to be given at the celebrated Lower Rhine

⁵Spark, F R : *Memories of my life* (Leeds, 1913) pp 35-6.

⁶Young, P M : *Elgar O M* (London, 1955) p 122

⁷HWRO 705: 445 5987

⁸HWRO 705: 445 5988



Festival was not one to be simply dismissed "because one or two people don't personally care for it". Stanford told Green that Sheffield had changed its plans in order to include it and he added : "Surely it is for a choral society such as yours to lead and not to follow"⁹. Stanford who personally did not care for *Gerontius* showed real generosity towards Elgar even though their relationship was never a happy one. Much must have gone on before the resolution of the wrangling but Elgar did write to Alfred Littleton to tell him that he had visited Leeds and he believed that "all is now smoothed"¹⁰. He must have been satisfied with the Festival itself because on 28 September he wrote to Littleton that he would like him to hear *In the South* with "that superb Leeds orchestra"¹¹. From the city's standpoint, all must have been forgiven for he received a storm of applause on appearing on the platform. Despite all these difficulties, there were no problems up the road at the University because on the day following the performance Elgar, with other notables, was given an honorary doctorate at the first such ceremony at the new University. There was even discussion on whether he should be offered the Chair of Music.

Spark was anxious to have Elgar compose a work for the 1907 Festival but this ran into problems. He wrote three times about this but Elgar was suspicious of his motives. Elgar wrote to Littleton : "I know that 'they' (generally) do not want me, but they do want to be able to say I have been asked"¹², and he implied that Stanford, the Festival director, was against his presence. These doubts were probably misplaced because, in the event, he conducted *The Kingdom* in a performance considered to be one of the finest given. His relationship with Leeds plumbed new

⁹Greene, H Plunket : *Charles Villiers Stanford* (London, 1935) pp 156-7

¹⁰Moore, J N : *Elgar and his Publishers* vol ii, p 551 [24 March 1904]

¹¹Moore, op.cit., p 584

¹²Moore,J N, op cit, p 650 [14 July 1907]

depths in 1910. He wrote to Alice Stuart Wortley : "About Leeds festival [-] I am not going as I am not asked : my popularity shews, in dismal relief, the unpopularity of someone else! They propose to ruin the Variations, to travesty (the accompaniments) to the Sea Pictures & conventionalise Go song of mine. The festival has steadily gone down in interest & is now a dull affair of only Kapellmeister interest"¹³. Festival records now held at the West Yorkshire archives in Leeds reveal that Elgar was being somewhat disingenuous in making these sour comments. In the first instance, he was asked for a new choral or instrumental work¹⁴. He replied 'no', but added that he would be willing to conduct the *First Symphony*, the work he had promised to write for Leeds in 1904 for 100 guineas, and which caused so much anguish and disappointment when he let them down. It is quite clear from Festival Committee minutes that his proposal was looked upon not unfavourably because there was then discussion on the fee. It was pointed out that he had been paid 100 guineas in 1907 for conducting *The Kingdom* and that, if nothing was said, he would probably accept the same sum which appeared to the Committee to be far too much. It was then decided to write to Elgar to enquire what his fee would be although it was felt that "20 guineas would meet the case"¹⁵. How naive could they have been? A letter was quickly received from Novello stating he wanted 100 guineas¹⁶. It was then decided not to include his symphony in the Festival or have him conduct there. To what extent there were some in Leeds anxious to exact revenge for the 1904 incidents can only be speculation. Nevertheless, the final programme included the three works Elgar quoted to Alice Stuart Wortley, and this surely points to the regard Leeds always had for his music. Elgar was quite unfair in making his allegations. All three works received critical acclaim and, as for Leeds being "a dull affair", Vaughan Williams' *Sea Symphony* was given its first performance at this Festival, and this was another landmark in the history of British music and of the Leeds Festival.

Perhaps a quite separate but interesting point is appropriate at this stage. In reporting the 1910 Festival, the *Musical Times* stated that "the feminine sex formed the great bulk of the audience. At daytime concerts there were at least twelve ladies to one man and the proportion at evening concerts was nearly the same". Obviously 'women's lib' had arrived in Yorkshire as early as 1910!

(To be concluded)

¹³Moore, J N : *Edward Elgar : the Windflower letters* (Oxford, 1989) p 56 [31 July 1910]

¹⁴Leeds Triennial Music Festival : Management Committee minutes (MC) 1 March 1909

¹⁵MC 19 July 1909

¹⁶Spark, *ibid.*

DAME JANET BAKER AT BROADHEATH

There cannot be many occasions when the police have to control the traffic in Lower Broadheath! This was the case on Wednesday 3 May when a large body of invited guests converged on the Birthplace to see Dame Janet Baker present a cheque for £50,000 to the Elgar Foundation on behalf of the Foundation for Sport and the Arts.

The day was hot and sunny, the Worcestershire countryside looking its best with its blossom and spring colour and the Malverns blue in the misty distance. The presentation was made in the new Elgar Centre adjacent to the Birthplace, and it was exciting for us all to be able to set foot in the new building for the first time. The new Centre is, of course, incomplete but the walls and roof are there and one can see how well it blends in with its surroundings.

I do not know if Timothy Waterstone, Chairman of the Elgar Foundation, has training as a football referee but a loud blast on his whistle brought the animated assembly to order and he introduced Wulstan Atkins, Joint-President of the Foundation, who was obviously revelling in the occasion and belying his ninety years! It was he who had had the vision to turn the hopes of the Trust (formed by Carice Elgar in 1955) to erect a museum and study centre into the bricks and mortar which we see today, and something that will be a fitting and lasting tribute to her illustrious father.

Before welcoming Dame Janet, Wulstan Atkins reminded us that there was still much to be done. There was still a need for sponsorship and financial support so that the furnishing and landscaping of the site could be completed. It was planned to plant an orchard of apple and pear trees using varieties which have now almost vanished, but which were well-known to Elgar in his day.

Dame Janet expressed her delight at being associated with the new Elgar Centre. She was in the position of "wearing two hats", one as a Vice-President of the Elgar Trust, and another as a trustee of the Foundation for Sport and the Arts, who were making the donation. All visionary projects stimulated a diversity of opinion and thought. This was no bad thing as it provided an opportunity for changes and new ideas to be put forward. It was inevitable that some ideas would prevail while others would not. Now was a time for a generosity of spirit, and pride in what had been achieved. Wulstan Atkins gratefully received the cheque for £50,000 on behalf of the Foundation, and Dame Janet unveiled a plaque to mark the occasion.

Our own Chairman, Andrew Neill, also handed over a commemorative display marking the successful launch by the Society of a CD of the 1945 Sargent recording of *The Dream of Gerontius* on the Testament label. There was a good chance that this could be displayed in the space provided by the new Centre!

A presentation was also made to mark the retirement of Jim Bennett after many years of faithful service as Curator of the Birthplace. He is succeeded by his son, Christopher.

The speeches, the presentations, the unveiling were over. The last thing we heard,

quite rightly, was Elgar - his music drifting out of the unglazed windows and doorless doors of the new Elgar Centre and across the sunlit fields, as Donald Hunt and the Worcester Cathedral choristers sang *O Happy Eyes*, *The Prince of Sleep* and *Go, Song of Mine*. We went home hot, dusty, but happy. It had been a memorable day.

Hywel Davies

In the course of her speech Dame Janet said : "The scheme has caused pain and distress to some people. This is so with every important human endeavour. Whenever a great idea is mooted, there is always concern and opposition, and this makes for determination by the promoters to overcome the difficulties.

"I feel this to be a quite remarkable building which is a wonderful harmony of wood and brick and fits well into its beautiful setting. One feels an immediate sense of it belonging here, and I am sure it will be a source of great pride and joy when complete.

"But it is important there should now be a sense of deep sympathy and generosity of spirit towards those who have fought the scheme in a real battle. That generosity must flow out in a positive way and hopefully lead to a sense of friendship and communication".

The Appeal Director, Mrs Diana Quinney writes : "Through the generosity of many individuals, companies and trusts we have now completed the shell of the building, but we have to raise a further £600,000 to furnish the interior, install the educational and multimedia equipment and provide the surrounding gardens, orchards and car park". Mrs Quinney will be grateful for all donations, whether by covenant, Giftaid, or cheque; or equally for gifts in kind. Lists of equipment and furniture required, together with costs and suggested manufacturers, can be obtained from her at The Old School, Abberley Avenue, Stourport-on-Severn, DY13 0LH (tel : 01299 826382; fax : 01299 879993).

Another way of helping is to sponsor a tree. For £25 a tree can be planted in your name, and it will be professionally maintained for at least a year. The trees, flowers and shrubs, and the fruit trees in the orchard will be those native to the area in Elgar's day, thus helping to establish the Centre in truly natural surroundings.

Finally, a concert in aid of the Appeal will take place at Cheltenham Town Hall on 30 September at 7.30 pm. Brian Etheridge will conduct the Oriel Singers, the Burford Singers, and the Oxford Symphony Orchestra in a performance of *The Dream of Gerontius*. The soloists are Justin Lavender, Margaret McDonald, and Stephen Roberts. No less an authority than Michael Kennedy has been quoted as saying that Justin Lavender is, in his opinion, the finest Gerontius since Heddle Nash - praise indeed. Tickets range from £6.00 to £17.00 and can be obtained from the Town Hall Booking Office, Imperial Square, Cheltenham GL50 1QA (tel : 01242 227979) or from Diana Quinney (details as above). Why not book a weekend in Cheltenham - to include first-class Hotel, Tour of the Racecourse with Lunch, a Talk on Elgar by David Mellor, the Concert and Supper on Saturday evening, and a Visit to Elgar's Birthplace and Worcester Cathedral on Sunday? For further information contact Diana Quinney.



Unveiling a plaque to mark the completion of the shell of the new Elgar Centre: Dame Janet Baker, a Vice-President of the Elgar Foundation and Trustee of the Foundation for Sport and the Arts, with Tim Waterstone (left), Chairman of the Elgar Foundation, and Wulstan Atkins (right), Joint President

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1995

The Chairman, Andrew Neill, welcomed 70 members to the Lyttelton Rooms, Malvern on 3 June. Apologies had been received from fourteen.

The full text of the Chairman's speech (slightly amended) is included with this issue. He paid tribute to Elizabeth Parrott, Sir Alexander Gibson, and Sir Vivian Dunn who had all died in the past year. He referred to the new Constitution which would be presented at next year's AGM. There had been developments in the concept of an educational video; an Elgar Family Tree had been drawn up; and a new gravestone had been agreed at Astwood Cemetery to mark Elgar's parents and two of his brothers. The Society had supported the Cobbe Foundation's recording of Elgar's piano, for which John Knowles had prepared the notes. Carl Newton had proposed the concept of a CD-Rom of the *Enigma Variations*.

He reported that Margaret Benselin is now responsible for the International Sub-Committee. The Chairman paid tribute to all Society Officers, Branch Chairmen, and Committee Members. He referred to changes at the Birthplace, developments at Lawnside, the Cambridge Elgar Festival, future recordings, and a growing association with Chetham's School of Music. He concluded by paying tribute to all who formed and maintained friendships under the umbrella of the Society.

The Secretary reported that the Society advertises in *Classic CD*, *BBC Music Magazine* and *The Gramophone*. Testament's CD reissue of the 1945 Sargent recording of *The Dream of Gerontius* had been supported financially by the Society and had won the *Classic CD* 'Historical Reissue' Award. There had been an improvement in St Wulstan's churchyard, and the Elgar seat on Malvern Wells Common had been repaired by the Conservators. Branches were satisfied with the new financial budgeting arrangements. She had agreed to take over the duties of Secretary of the North West Branch for a year in the hope that a new Secretary can be found from within the membership. Southern Branch is organising a Special event on 28 October entitled 'Elgar at Brinkwells'. She thanked David Bury for his excellent work as Minute Secretary and welcomed John Kelly in his place. She also referred to the Elgar Centre and welcomed the plans to plant trees of Elgar's time which would serve as an arboretum as well as a museum.

David Morris reported that membership of the Society now totalled 1341 of whom 254 were family members. 422 members were not affiliated to any branch.

The Meeting approved the Treasurer's report showing a surplus of £3104, and a balance in the General Fund of £11034, with £222 in the Medal Fund. The improvement was due mainly to recording royalties. Mr A Benselin was re-elected as Auditor.

The JOURNAL Editor reported that changes in publication dates had been successful. He strives to keep a balance between articles and news content. New books and recordings continue to appear for review. He welcomed contributions from members, and particularly thanked those professional writers who gave their services free. The Chairman thanked the Editor for the very important part the JOURNAL plays in the life of the Society.

The President - Lord Menuhin - and the Vice-Presidents were re-elected, plus two new Vice-Presidents, Sir Charles Mackerras and Sir Colin Davis. The Officers were re-elected *en bloc*, as were the four eligible Committee members. Diana Quinney and Richard MacMillan were elected to the Committee in place of Jennifer Nicholas and Carl Newton who retired.

Under Any Other Business, Paul Grafton reported that Malvern Hills District Council had offered £10,000 towards a feasibility study to purchase Lawnside as the Elgar Centre for English Music. Dr Clifford Harker and Spencer Noble were elected Honorary Life Members of the Society.

The 1996 AGM will take place on Saturday 1 June in Malvern, following a performance the previous evening of *The Apostles* as part of the Malvern Festival.

After the meeting, members of the Society and visitors enjoyed a performance in Malvern Priory of the *Violin Concerto*, in Elgar's own transcription for the piano. It was played by Peter Thomas, Leader of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, and Philip Fisher, a 15-year-old student at the Purcell School.

Some seventy people met at the Foley Arms Hotel for a Pimms reception on the Terrace overlooking the Severn valley, and dinner at which our guests were Marjorie Thomas and her husband Clifford Seville.

Marjorie Thomas delighted us all with the recollections of her musical childhood and the preparation of the role of the Angel in *The Dream of Gerontius*.

On Sunday Birchwood was bulging at the seams. Two coaches came from Bristol and all who came for coffee appreciated a visit to the bedroom where Elgar wrote his music, overlooking the hills.

Forty-two attended lunch at the Gifford Hotel, Worcester; and afterwards Professor Stephen Banfield of Birmingham University in his A T Shaw Memorial Lecture spoke of 'Elgar's Counterpoint'. Those who had envisaged just a scholarly dissertation must have been pleased, for Prof Banfield was a wonderful communicator and his talk was much enjoyed. There were larger numbers than ever in the Cathedral for Evensong; the service was Stanford in A, and the anthem 'The Spirit of the Lord' from *The Apostles*. After the service all processed, as the organist played 'Nimrod', to the Elgar Memorial Window where Andrew Neill placed a chaplet of laurel and red carnations, and the choir sang *They are at rest*.

This was followed by the customary sherry and birthday cake at the Birthplace, where all were able to look at the new Elgar Centre.

Carol Holt

ELGAR CHORAL FESTIVAL 1994

The third Triennial Elgar Choral Festival was held at Worcester on 21 and 22 October 1994 with the object of commemorating the composer and furthering the national heritage of choral singing. Over the two days the venues included such suitably Elgarian places as the College Hall, the Chapter House, the Guildhall, and the Cathedral itself.

Primarily a competition open to amateurs from all over the country, the Festival

offers various categories of choral and solo singing, with instrumental and organ solos in addition. Sir David Lumsden headed a distinguished panel of judges, allocating marks for technical quality, balance and vocal quality, and style and interpretation. The first three in each category received a money prize, with a special prize of £300 and the Elgar Trophy being awarded to the winning choir, with an Elgar Society Cup and Prize being awarded to the most promising choir, presented on behalf of the Society by Carol Holt.

The finals, held before a supportive and enthusiastic audience in the Cathedral, built up a suitably highly-charged atmosphere with many committed and highly enjoyable performances. A feature of the Festival is the encouragement it offers to youngsters, and the Elgar Society Cup and Prize were well and deservedly earned by the remarkable Lewis Girls' School Choir from Glamorgan, conducted by Val James.

Kevin Allen

CHETHAM'S SCHOOL OF MUSIC

The valued links between Chet's and the Elgar Society have been strengthened further in recent months. In December the Queen attended a concert there and opened the new boarding house. Members will remember that London, North-West and Yorkshire branches were small sponsors of a concert in 1993 held to raise funds for the new building, an occasion which helped to forge links between the School and the Society.

Ruth Williams, the young violinist who played the Elgar concerto at that 1993 concert, is now studying music at Cambridge, and was the leader of the orchestra at the world première of *The Spanish Lady* in November. Ruth is now a London branch member, and will perform the *Violin Sonata* (amongst other works) at the opening meeting of the new season in October.

In March, under their conductor Julian Clayton, the School orchestra gave performances of the *First Symphony* in Derby, Manchester, and the Barbican in London. Members of the London branch were invited to the rehearsal, and several were present at the concert itself, despite the unfortunate clash with the branch's monthly meeting. The performance was unfavourably received by *The Times*; but Edward Greenfield of *The Guardian*, who was present in a personal capacity, spoke appreciatively of the performance and subsequently wrote to the Headmaster to counter the report in *The Times*. Inter alia he wrote : "In such moments as the glorious passage in the middle of the finale where the Introduction theme comes in augmentation on the violins, there was the irresistible tug, the gulp in the throat, that is the mark of the finest Elgar performances...To my astonishment there were many tiny details in the scoring which I had never noticed before, a tribute to your orchestra's texturing even next to that of the LSO. And it is a work that, as I see from my score, I have heard in concert on some 30-odd occasions over the last 30 years".

In May this year a second visit to the Elgar Birthplace by some fifteen pupils took

place on a fine sunny day (see below). Jim Bennett showed them round, and the interest and enthusiasm of these young people in both the memorabilia and also the music which was being played on tapes was a moving challenge to all older Elgarians present.

After lunch the party split into two. One section was led to the top of the Worcestershire Beacon by John Kelly, London Branch treasurer, while the rest prepared for a recital in Christ Church. This was at the pupils' own suggestion, and the sixty or so members of the audience which assembled were treated to some outstandingly fine playing by a string quartet. The highlight was of course Elgar's *String Quartet*, which followed Mozart's *Dissonance Quartet* and Schubert's *Arpeggione Sonata*. The day concluded with a tour of Malvern, viewing Craeg Lea and Elgar's grave, with tea in Grundy's Meadow at the Wyche Cutting.

In developing its links with the School, the Society seeks to encourage the top professional musicians of tomorrow in an understanding and appreciation of Elgar's music, and so help to strengthen the foundations for its safe future. Early "returns" are neither expected or sought, so it was an added surprise and delight not only to receive warm thanks from all our visitors, but to hear a declared wish by a young double-bass player that he wants to join the Society now that he knows of its existence. Also, a young German trainee teacher from Braunschweig University, Petra Heinrich, who is on a one-year attachment to Chetham's, declared that she intended to return to Malvern and the Birthplace Museum to undertake further research for a dissertation on 'Elgar and Germany'. The Society responded to her initiative by inviting Petra to participate in the AGM weekend, and to attend the Dinner as its guest.

An invitation to all members of the Elgar Society to visit Chetham's has been received from the Headmaster, Rev Peter F Hullah (see p 102).

John Kelly



RANDOM RAMBLINGS...

Two items of interest to Elgarians from the recent Bergen Festival. First, a performance of *King Olaf* - in his homeland! It would be interesting to know how many times it has been done there. Second, a recital by the pianist David Owen Norris included his transcription, and the first public performance, of the *Five Improvisations* which Elgar recorded in the Small Queen's Hall on 6 November 1929. As Elgarians will know, these were never released in Elgar's lifetime but transferred to LP in the 1970s, and are now on CD as part of the 'Elgar Edition' from EMI. Mr Norris's recital on 4 June also included all Delius's works for solo piano and pieces by Grieg and Grainger. It is hoped to repeat the *Improvisations* in a London concert in the not-too-distant future.

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The answer to the question raised in the last issue concerning those conductors who have recorded the *Enigma Variations* more than once : Sir Adrian Boult heads the list with four versions, followed by Sir John Barbirolli, Sir Malcolm Sargent, and Andrew Davis with three; then come Sir Henry Wood, Sir Charles Mackerras, Sir Neville Marriner, Lord Menuhin, and Andre Previn.

* * * * *

Elgar's works are either very early or very late at the Proms this year. On 22 July (one hundred years to the very month of its composition) the *Organ Sonata* will be played in its orchestral dress in the arrangement by Gordon Jacob, conducted by Vernon Handley. Two days later, in his only Prom appearance this year, Leonard Slatkin conducts the *Enigma Variations*. (As on his recent British tour, Mr Slatkin will speak about the work beforehand). Four days after that, Yan Pascal Tortelier conducts *Cockaigne*. On 10 September Natalia Gutman plays the *Cello Concerto*, to be followed three days later by Andrew Davis's *Falstaff*.

* * * * *

Several Society members attended a concert on 16 March at the National Portrait Gallery to mark the launch of the first recording made on Elgar's piano (see Review section). A painting of Queen Adelaide looked down on the proceedings - entirely appropriately, as she had hired W H Elgar to tune the piano at Witley Court in 1844, the very year in which this piano was made. Anthony Goldstone played Elgar's own piano version of the *Variations*, and some of the other pieces from the record. Considering the limitations imposed by the instrument, this was a real *tour de force*. Inevitably the piano found it hard to cope with the faster, louder variations; and one missed the extra octaves at top and bottom in *In Smyrna*, 'WN', 'RPA', and elsewhere. But I was enthralled to hear the sound that a fine pianist could get from it. Of course all Elgarians should buy the record, a unique document. I was rather disappointed that there was nothing from the works mentioned on the soundboard. Granted that they are vocal compositions, yet the 'Woodland Interlude' from *Caractacus*, or better still the opening of Part II of *Gerontius* - the playing of which

on this piano was so evocatively described by Dorabella - would have been a real bonus. Perhaps for inclusion on Volume II?

* * * * *

With this edition of the JOURNAL comes a copy of the new Elgar Society brochure together with a revised membership application form. The brochure was developed by the Society's Publicity Committee : Carl Newton, Arthur Reynolds, and Ian Lace (Chairman). The colourful design was by Paul Clark in association with Masters in Marketing based in Eastbourne. Paul discovered Elgar only three years ago when he heard the *Cello Concerto*, then *Salut d'Amour* and the *Enigma Variations*. He is already a keen Elgarian and one of our newest members.

We ask you to pass on the brochure and application form to anyone whom you think might be interested in joining the Society. We are particularly interested in recruiting young people.

Also included with this issue is a copy of the Elgar family tree which has been put together by Michael Trott, West Midlands branch Chairman. We hope members will be interested in owning this, and are grateful to Michael for making it available.

* * * * *

The Dream of Gerontius was given by the Brussels Choral Society on 29 April, accompanied by the Belgian National Orchestra conducted by Yuri Simonov. The soloists were Penelope Walker, Barry Banks, and Nicholas Folwell.

* * * * *

I remember a few years ago being thrilled at seeing that "Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd" was operating out of Cheltenham, and had visions of a stream of musical monographs. Sadly, it was not quite what it seemed, as a member has written to remind me; Edward Elgar is the founder and managing director of an academic publishing company specialising in social sciences, especially economics and politics. So please don't write to them with your pet theory on the *Enigma*!

* * * * *

Frank Beck from New York has sent in an interesting report from the American Symphony Orchestra League on the repertoire of 47 member orchestras based on 1994-95 schedules. In Elgar's case, the *Enigma Variations* was perhaps predictably the most popular work, having been given by twelve of the orchestras; three of the ten conductors - Bramwell Tovey, James Judd, and Mark Elder - were British. The *First Symphony* had three performances as against one of the *Second*; five *Cello* and three *Violin Concertos* were played. Of particular interest were a performance of *Polonia* in Winnipeg in October last conducted by Janusz Powlony; and three performances in Indianapolis on successive evenings in May of *The Dream of Gerontius*. Raymond Leppard conducted the local forces, with soloists Florence Quivar (members may recall that she was the Angel in the opening night of the Proms in 1991), John Aler, and John Cheek.

Performances promised for next season include two of particular interest in New York in March; the *Second Symphony* conducted by Leon Botstein, and the *Piano Quintet*, given by the Chamber Music Society of the Lincoln Center.

* * * * *

Radio 3 celebrated the Sargent Centenary with a short series of archive recordings, which included a *Music Makers*, and a *Second Symphony* (which apparently he slightly preferred to the *First*). According to Peter Sargent, his father 'wrote' a symphony, "in style very Elgarian", but it was never committed to paper.

* * * * *

In April, a year or so after his comparative review of recordings of the *First Symphony*, Jerrold Northrop Moore tackled the *Second* on Radio 3's 'Building a Library'. Elgar's own 1927 recording - available on Vol I of 'The Elgar Edition' - was the firm recommendation. Dr Moore noted that every other conductor was slower than Elgar, down to Jeffrey Tate ("winner of the graveyard stakes") who took a full quarter of an hour longer than Elgar! He was also concerned that modern conductors find it difficult to cope with the changing pulse which is so crucial to a successful performance. "Does it portend the helpless, gradual decay of a vital tradition?" he asked; but thought that there were enough honourable exceptions to prevent him believing this. Along with Tate, others dismissed summarily were Previn, Downes, Thomson, Boult (1976), Loughran, Slatkin ("curiously withdrawn, almost cold"), and Gibson ("he plods through the first movement like Klemperer on a bad day"). Barbirolli "spawned the slow school of Elgar interpretation"; yet in his 1964 recording there was no mistaking his emotional commitment, or his understanding of structure, or command of changing pulse, Dr Moore said. Others receiving general commendation included Handley, Barenboim, Andrew Davis, Boult (1944); and Mackerras, who was impossible to recommend due to his inclusion of the optional organ passage in the Finale, which sounded "like a jumbo jet landing on the roof of Walthamstow Town Hall". He made a plea for the reissue of Menuhin's recording, and recommended Solti of the modern versions.

* * * * *

The ever-active and resourceful Chairman of the South-West Branch, Ron Bleach, has organised an interesting concert in Bristol at 3.00 pm on 7 October. It will be held in Shirehampton Hall, Station Road, Shirehampton where 75 years ago Marie Hall gave the first performance (with piano accompaniment) of Vaughan Williams' *The Lark Ascending*. The concert also includes Elgar's *Piano Quintet* and works by Frank Bridge. Tickets are available from 29 Callington Road, Brislington, Bristol BS4 5BZ. The project has been planned jointly by the Elgar Society and the Vaughan Williams Society. We take this opportunity of welcoming this new Society, founded last September, and wish it well. Those interested in finding out more should contact the Secretary, The RVW Society, Dr Robin Barber, The Chantry, Stoney Lane, Stocklinch, Ilminster, Somerset TA19 9JJ.

Next year sees the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Granville Bantock. The

Bantock Society will be holding a special meeting at Trinity College on 14 October, and details can be obtained from Ron Bleach at 48 Ravenswood Road, Redland, Bristol BS6 6BT.

The South West Branch will also be organising the Elgar Society Tea at the Three Choirs Festival at Gloucester on 20 August. It will take place after the opening service in the Old School Room, St Mary le Crypt, Southgate Street.

* * * * *

At Sotheby's on 18 May two Elgar manuscripts were offered for sale. The first was the orchestration of Purcell's motet *Jehovah Quam Multi Sunt Hostes Mei*, and the lot included the autograph full score of 27 pages (dating from 1929), a proof of the original anthem with Elgar's markings, two copies of the motet, and a covering letter from Elgar.

The second item was the 98-page autograph MS of the *Severn Suite*, Elgar's orchestration of a piece originally written for brass band in 1930. This has been missing presumed lost since the 1960s. The catalogue (still available for purchase) showed a page from each manuscript. Neither work reached its reserve price, and was withdrawn from sale.

* * * * *

"To err is human..." The last JOURNAL carried three (at least) examples of my humanity. First, "muette" is French for "dumb" not "deaf" (p 14); the du Pré films are not available on CD (p 41); and the very first Promenade concert was given on 10 August 1895 and not as given (p 33). That last (erroneous) information I culled from *The Times*; which goes to show that you can trust no one these days!

* * * * *

A correspondence circle has been set up, mainly as a service for overseas members who cannot normally attend meetings and other events. If any British members would like to join, please contact the Liaison Officer of the International Sub-Committee, Margaret Benselin, who would be glad to hear from you. She can be contacted at 5 Oakdene Road, Brockham, Betchworth, Surrey GU2 5HE.

* * * * *

A performance of *The Dream of Gerontius* will be given in Liverpool's Anglican cathedral on 28 October to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of the National Federation of Music Societies. A choir of more than 500 voices has been formed from NFMS members; those interested in singing in this can obtain more information from Miss N Dale, 63 West Avenue, Rudheath, Northwich CW9 7ES. Tickets are from £7 to £13 and available from the Philharmonic Hall Box Office (telephone and other details regarding the concert can be found in the Concert Diary).

* * * * *

One of our members, Mrs Ray Coyston, is blind and has to send away each JOURNAL to be put on to tape. This is not only an expense, but more importantly, there is often difficulty with technical terms and musical examples. I wonder if there is a Good Samaritan out there who might take this on (only three times per year); and whether there are other blind or partially-sighted members who would like to take advantage of such a facility? Please let me know if you are interested.

* * * * *

This year sees the centenary of the Wells Cathedral Oratorio Society. It also marks the retirement of the Cathedral organist, Dr Anthony Crosland, who has been the Society's Conductor since 1966. The choir's Chairman, Alan Locke, is a member of the Elgar Society, and informs us that Dr Crosland's last season will be an 'Elgar in Wells' occasion, with a performance of *The Kingdom* on 2 December and *The Dream of Gerontius* on 11 May 1996. Does anyone know whether Elgar ever visited Wells?

* * * * *

This year is the 25th anniversary of the death of Sir John Barbirolli, and on 13 December the London Philharmonic Orchestra are giving a Memorial Concert in the Festival Hall to include Brahms' *Piano Concerto no 2* played by Daniel Barenboim, and Elgar's *First Symphony* conducted by Zubin Mehta.

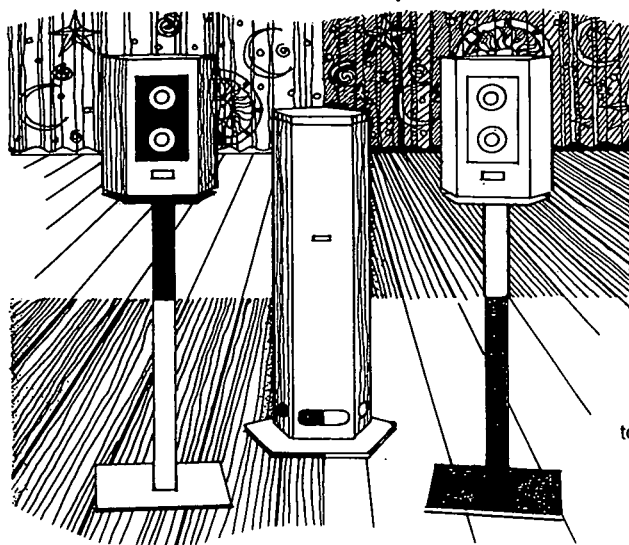
DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

2 July	Serenade for Strings Wells Cathedral School CO	St John's Smith Square SW1P 3HA 0171 222 1061
8 July	The Kingdom A.Pearce, E.Bond, R.Green, R.Halton/ SW Essex Ch/Aurelian Ens/Temple Pre-concert talk by Geoffrey Hodgkins at 7.00 pm	Walthamstow Assembly Hall 7.45 pm 0181 529 466
8 July	The Kingdom J.Kelly, H.Summers, M.Hart-David, M.Pearce/Chichester Singers/ Bournemouth SO/J. Willcocks	Chichester Cathedral 7.30 pm
13 July	Serenade for Strings New London O/Corp	St John's Smith Square SW1P 3HA 7.30 pm
22 July	Organ Sonata (orch. by Gordon Jacob) BBC Concert O/Handley	Royal Albert Hall

24 July	Enigma Variations <i>Philharmonia/Slatkin</i>	Royal Albert Hall
28 July	Cockaigne <i>Tortelier</i>	Royal Albert Hall
19 August	Handel Overture <i>Gloucestershire YO/Peebles</i>	Gloucester Cathedral 8.15 pm
20 August	Elgar Society Tea (details from Catherine Jones: address on back cover)	St Mary de Crypt, Southgate St 4.00 pm
24 August	The Apostles <i>Soloists/Fest Ch/Bournemouth SO/ Hickox</i>	Gloucester Cathedral 8.00 pm
26 August	The Kingdom <i>Soloists/Fest Ch/Bournemouth SO/ Briggs</i>	Gloucester Cathedral 7.30 pm
4 September	Violin Sonata <i>Lydia Mordkovitch, Julian Milford</i>	Wigmore Hall 7.30 0171 935 2141
10 September	Cello Concerto <i>Natalia Gutman/RSNO/Järvi</i>	Royal Albert Hall
13 September	Falstaff <i>BBC SO/A.Davis</i>	Royal Albert Hall
13 September	Piano Quintet <i>S.Isserlis, D.Philips, A.Marwood, C-M.Rodriguez, S.Hough</i>	Wigmore Hall 7.30 pm
30 September	The Dream of Gerontius (for details see p 79)	Cheltenham Town Hall
7 October	The Dream of Gerontius <i>N.Jenkins, J.Koc, A.Kubrick/Weald Choir of Crawley/Guildford PO/ Finney</i>	The Hawth Crawley 7.30 pm 01293 553636
7 October	Piano Quintet <i>L.Osbon, J.Tomlinson, A.Turner, M.Mace M.Bale (see Random Ramblings)</i>	Shirehampton Hall Bristol 3.00 pm
8 October	Symphony no 1 <i>BBC SO/A.Davis</i>	Royal Festival Hall South Bank
11 October	Introduction & Allegro <i>Bournemouth Sinf/Donohoe</i>	Poole Arts Centre 7.30 pm 01202 685222
26 October	Violin Concerto <i>Little/Hallé/O A Hughes</i>	Huddersfield
28 October	repeat of above concert	Sheffield

28 October	The Dream of Gerontius <i>J. Lawton, P. Walker, C. Underwood/ NFMS choirs/RLPO/Tracey</i>	Anglican Cathedral Liverpool 7.30 pm 0151 709 3789
29 October	Violin Concerto <i>Little/Hallé/O A Hughes</i>	Manchester
4 November	The Apostles <i>Soloists/RLP Ch & O/Handley</i>	Philharmonic Hall Liverpool 7.30 pm 0151 709 3789
8 November	Symphony no 1 <i>Bournemouth SO/Armstrong</i>	Poole Arts Centre 7.30 pm
9 November	The Spirit of England <i>BBC SO/Hickox</i>	Royal Festival Hall South Bank
18 November	Violin Concerto <i>Oleg/RLPO/Pešek</i>	Philharmonic Hall Liverpool 7.30 pm
18 November	The Black Knight, Serenade for Strings, The Music Makers <i>Hutton & Shenfield Ch Soc</i>	Brentwood Centre 7.45 pm 01277 374370
19 November	Symphony no 2 <i>Scottish Sinf/Mantle</i>	Greyfriars Church Edinburgh 7.45 pm

Pentachord Loudspeakers



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RECORD REVIEWS

'Elgar's Piano'. The composer's piano version of the Enigma Variations and other piano works, performed on Elgar's 1844 Broadwood.

Anthony Goldstone (piano)

Cobbe Foundation in association with the National Trust MRCD 94001

Noting that the *Enigma Variations* were the main item on this CD, I confess I put it into my player with some trepidation. Just what sounds would I hear, and how could any instrument something short of a modern concert-grand possibly do justice to the richness of texture and colour contained within that brilliant orchestral score? Looking at the picture of Elgar's 1844 Broadwood square piano reproduced in the accompanying booklet made me think : composing the *Variations* on it is one thing, but how could a *performance* ever come out if it?

The story goes that Elgar chanced upon the opening phrase of the *Variations-to-be* whilst doodling away at the keyboard one evening after yet another dispiriting day teaching the violin, but that would have been on his piano at Forli in Malvern Link (in the October of 1898), where most of the work was actually written. However, as Dr Robert Anderson says in his notes, "...it is unthinkable that he would not have tried out material for the work on the square piano". This latter was installed in his summer retreat, the cottage at nearby Birchwood, in the April of that year, at a time when Dora Penny was staying with the Elgars and visiting the cottage. In her delightful book, *Memories of a Variation*, she writes : "...the study was a tiny place. When a piano, a table, and two chairs were in it there was not more than room to turn round. When they first went up there they had a most comic little old piano. I played a few notes on it and it made a tinny little noise rather like a spinet". Then comes a puzzling thing, as revealed in her next statement : "The next time I went there, however, I noticed that they had changed it for a more modern one - and there was even less room in the study". She then describes going there for the day in August, as well as further visits during the next two summers. So just which piano was Elgar using at Birchwood? Perhaps he kept them both in the cottage, as the Broadwood certainly remained at Birchwood Lodge until the family left the place in October 1903. What is clear, as the booklet illustration shows, is that he inscribed "Caractacus 1898, Sea Pictures 1899" and "Gerontius 1900" on the soundboard of the square Broadwood. My guess is that Elgar was as fond of his little "box" as he could be of any piano, but Dorabella's use of the word "tinny" leads one to suspect that the instrument's condition was considerably worse when Elgar had it than it is today after careful restoration.

John Broadwood made his first square piano in 1773, and his first grand in 1781. After introducing the sustaining pedal a couple of years later, the London firm held world leadership for some time, both in quality and distribution. Beethoven liked the full tone of his Broadwood grand which was manufactured in 1817. Elgar's altogether more humble specimen dated from 1844, and Mrs Elgar said of it to Miss Penny, "It does sound rather funny, dear Dora, but I assure you dear Edward makes it sound beautiful!" It was repaired by Elgar's father's firm, Elgar Bros in Worcester in 1867 and then gradually deteriorated, first through weathering choruses from *Caractacus* and *Gerontius* and the first two *Pomp & Circumstance* marches, and

then from general neglect. In the 1970s, the hammer heads were covered in thick, modern felt. Finally in 1992 David Hunt, its restorer for the Cobbe Foundation, refurbished the hammers with authentic mid-nineteenth century hammer coverings. It now resides in the Cobbe Collection of Historic Keyboard Instruments at Hatchlands Park, East Clandon in Surrey.

So how does it sound today? It provides a sound of nostalgia certainly, transporting us in time to a moment in musical history. Given our knowledge of its location at the turn of the century, a picture is easily conjured, as we listen, of the summer cottage deep in the tranquil countryside, the composer pausing, ruminating, trying over again what he has already heard in his mind's ear. What he hears is not piano music, but the sound of his true instrument, the orchestra, fully clothed and articulated in colour. It would be unreasonable to expect the Broadwood to emulate more than a tiny percentage of this. We must redefine our listening values for the duration. But it is not just a question of accepting the sound, if we are willing, of a 'period' instrument. Such a piano, ideally, would be one of the thousands of very fine grands coming out of the numerous factories, including Broadwood, during the latter part of the nineteenth century. No, here we must adjust our reactions some way further, for this is not a 'performing' piano at all; it is not even an upright, let alone a grand; it is a square piano for home pleasures, a 'cottage' piano if you like, for use in enclosed surroundings. Its performance qualities are precluded by two of its very 'selling points' - price and compactness. With pianos, generally, you get what you pay for - in this instance, a small soundboard and short strings.

Therein lies its main drawback : an inability to sustain and so, manifestly, to "sing". This limitation is most cruelly exposed at the long-held link-note G into 'Nimrod'. By virtue of construction, the "dying strain" is inherent in any piano, but when the sound dies as quickly as here, the tie-over, the suspension so intrinsic to Elgar, is also jeopardised. The tension between the overlapping note and the changed harmony underneath cannot occur for one simple reason - the original melody note has all but disappeared. However, the central register is clean and rich and Anthony Goldstone does make those vital suspensions in Ysobel work (Isabel Fitton would have sustained them on her viola), but there is nothing he can do about higher register ones or long-note bass lines in general. For both top and bottom are thin, as is to be expected from the size of the instrument; mind you, the same, to a degree, could be said of many a grander piano. To be super-critical, the damping in the bass seems to be not quite clean and the texture down there ill-defined; some of Elgar's bottom octaves are not even on the instrument. On the other hand, it is good in accumulation, as in 'Troyte'.

A second disadvantage is the difficulty of achieving a true *pianissimo* (in two variations and the Finale, the score also calls for *ppp*). It seems that the action is such that a minimum firmness in execution is required in order to guarantee the sound. The instrument has no soft pedal. The result is that the first change of colour in the score - the *pp* at bar 4 - simply does not happen, and one of the most magical of all - the contrasting theme halfway through 'Nimrod', where we can enter a new, rarefied dimension - goes for nothing. No doubt deliberately, the later quote from Mendelssohn's *Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage* (so evocative on the clarinet) is voiced to the fore rather than as a distant reminiscence. That freedom to "brush" the

keys is not available; at such moments, the pianist can only feel frustration.

Thirdly, there is some action noise in the more robust sections, but I found my ear quickly adjusted to this. One curious thing, only of interest to those either blessed or afflicted with perfect pitch : although the piano is tuned near enough a semitone flat, it sounds, to me at least, in the proper key.

What of the idea of playing the *Variations* on the piano at all? Well, there is a case for it. The whole piece was published in Elgar's own piano version (admittedly as a commercial move), and the composer wrote descriptive notes to accompany player-piano rolls of the work; his comments were reprinted by Novello in 1949 as *My Friends Pictured Within*. When I was planning my own collection of the "complete" piano music in 1986, I gave the idea serious consideration, but then I thought, if the *Variations*, why not then, for example, the *Violin Concerto*, on whose printed piano part Elgar lavished much care; and so on?

For the piano publication of the *Variations*, Elgar included some passages in small notes as being optional to the player. Goldstone plays all of these, and adds a few of his own (faithfully extracted from the orchestral score, I hasten to add). He knows his *Enigma*, as witness the positioning of his breathing in 'W.N.', where there is a phrasing discrepancy between the two scores. Whilst making such comparisons, it is fascinating to see how the composer took the trouble to adapt the delicate 'Dorabella' motifs (on strings) for the gifted amateur pianist, the home market for which he was catering :

The image displays a musical score for a piece labeled 'Ww' (Waltz). The score is written for piano (pp) and includes parts for strings (Vlms and Celli Bass). The tempo/mood is marked 'scherz.' (scherzo). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The piano part is on a single staff, while the strings are on two staves (Violins and Celli/Bass). The score shows two measures of music. The first measure features a piano introduction with a 'pp scherz.' marking. The second measure continues the piano part with a 'pp scherz.' marking. The string parts are marked with 'Vlms' and 'Celli Bass'. The score is written in a standard musical notation style with various musical symbols and dynamics.

Other pianistic compromises are inevitable : occasionally a chord is split (by Elgar) in either hand or both, and I was worried in advance by the tricky problem of the *tremolando*, a "ham" device obligatory to all orchestral reductions, and abundant on the final page. I would normally defy any pianist to make this arranger's ploy sound attractive, but Anthony Goldstone actually manages to do so. Given a modern grand, the problem might be better solved by sustaining a single chord per harmony in pedal, but that plainly would not carry through on the Broadwood square. The problem hardly arises in the original, shorter version of the Finale (played separately at the end of this disc) which finishes well short of those vast tracts of *trem.* It is most interesting to hear this first version, with which Elgar was initially content. It does seem to finish abruptly to our otherwise conditioned ears; how right Jaeger was to press for its elongation.

Anthony Goldstone is one of those pianists who relishes being an orchestra, and I enjoyed his *Enigma* enormously. He thinks through his phrases well, choosing sensible, flowing (but not over-compensatory) tempi and shaping his arcs sensitively. The cello tune (later with viola) in 'B.G.N' comes off particularly well in the rather fruity tenor register. The pianist is adept at bringing out an inner line. The pomp of 'W.M.B' and the riverside antics of 'G.R.S's dog Dan come off splendidly, the bluster of 'Troyte' marginally less so, if only because the one-in-a-bar *presto* at semibreve = 76 demanded by the composer is hardly on if you are tackling those scurrying string arpeggios in the right hand whilst impersonating three trombones and a tuba in the left! Goldstone paces the succession of moods well, culminating in a sweeping Finale of total commitment, presenting a convincing, though not a compelling, case for the work in this format.

The rest of the programme, being of the drawing room variety, is more obviously suited to the instrument. The pianist chooses a selection of original and arranged pieces, and two of them call for comment by virtue of their rarity value. *Une Idylle* is the violin piece, Opus 4, No 1. It is one of those dozens of pieces that may be thought of as "borderline", being adaptable to many arrangements. Edwin Ashdown published it for piano, violin and piano, or organ, all at four shillings each. The original violin version has a three-bar introduction not played here, as it was not retained in the piano edition. Another such arrangement is 'Echo's Dance', extracted from the ballet *The Sanguine Fan*. Both these pieces, as far as I am aware, are receiving their first recordings for piano. A curious thing happened to me whilst listening to the *Idylle* : I became aware of a distant and irregular bass thumping noise in the background. Oh no, I thought, the neighbours are at it again, playing that wretched pop drivell far too loud. Not so; it turned out to be the sustaining pedal working flat out to achieve the impossible - that is, pure *legato*.

All in all, this is an intriguing venture, a unique document preserving a valuable historical link, since the Broadwood was, for a while, one of Elgar's pianos. But that does not make it a *good* piano as of right. The big question will not go away : given the unavoidable limitations of this humble domestic instrument, do the historical connections justify the recording? Certainly all concerned - producer, restorer, technician, engineer, and artist alike - have done their best with the given instrument in order to make the answer a resounding Yes. And so it is, provided the listener makes a little effort on behalf of its quaint sound-world and restricted

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*Leland Chen (violin), Arnhem Philharmonic Orchestra
conducted by Yehudi Menuhin and Roberto Benzi
Upbeat Classics URCD 115*

"He's one of the most subtle, elegant players. He's got power, too, but he's never aggressive - and that's important. Elgar should be noble, never aggressive". The words of Lord Menuhin to a journalist about one of his protégés, Leland Chen. When they had recorded the work in Arnhem in May last year, Menuhin wrote in Chen's score : "I had such a deep joy to hear you play this concerto as Elgar himself would have loved (I can say this with authority!) and to accompany you 62 years later in a performance which will become, along with that old one, the authoritative version".

Such a build-up raises many expectations in the prospective listener, but I must say that they are truly fulfilled in this new recording. Chen is still a relatively young man; but he not only possesses the technical mastery to tackle this work, he is, to use the kind of phrase Elgar himself might have employed, a player with brains. His approach is thoroughly convincing, whether in the bravura passages or the intimate musings of the Andante and the Cadenza. In fact, the number of occasions when I found fault with his playing are so few and so minor as to be itemised : the first 'Windflower' theme at the fifth bar of fig 10 is too matter-of-fact and could "sing" more (Elgar has marked it *cantabile e largamente*). I felt this same tendency once or twice too in the slow movement. Also, and again just very occasionally, I thought that Chen's playing in the quicker passages, such as the rushing semiquavers at the beginning of the third movement, was a little "muddy". However, if I were to set these against the positive features, we should need to go into another JOURNAL! Passage after passage comes alive under his fingers; the second 'Windflower' theme at fig 16, for instance, is excellent. And the biggest interpretative challenge of all, the unaccompanied Cadenza, is simply magnificent. One can see why Lord Menuhin spoke as he did, and simply endorse his words.

Which brings us to the accompaniment. The Arnhem Philharmonic play as to the manner born in a well-balanced recording in which the soloist is clearly audible but never dominant as in some versions. And Menuhin just has to be the ideal accompanist in this work. He is alive to all the nuances of tempo and dynamics. The scene is set perfectly in the orchestral opening before the entry of the soloist. It is so refreshing to hear a conductor make such a clear distinction between *mf*, *f*, and *ff*; the *poco a poco più animato* following fig 37 is perfectly gauged. Again, there are many, many such features which could be pointed out if space were to permit. But it doesn't (and for the same reason I must skate over a hugely enjoyable performance of the Bruch concerto, under the orchestra's chief conductor Roberto Benzi). This well-filled disc would be excellent value at full price; at mid-price it is an absolute bargain. Don't miss it.

The Editor

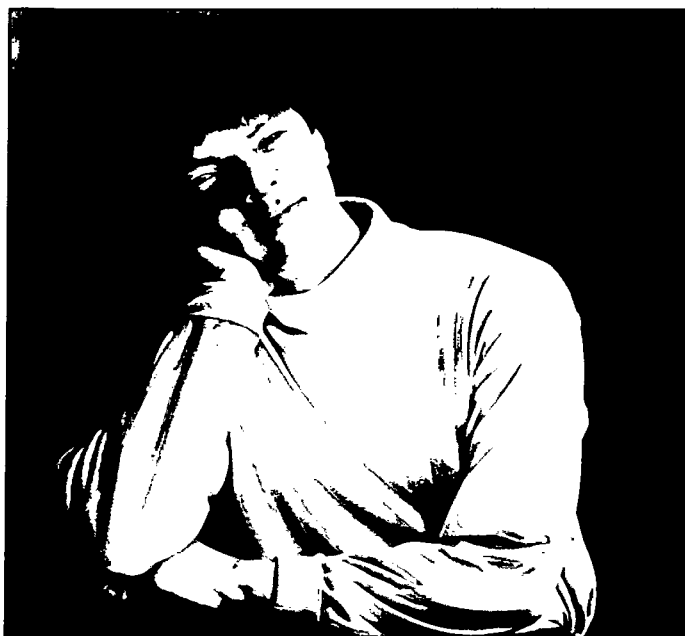
'Twenty-four Aspects of an Amorous Nature'

Peter Jeffes (tenor), David Woodcock (piano)
Symposium 1183

In the years of the LP record, and now the CD, song recitals have been fairly common. The only complaint has been that often there are songs which one would rather *not* have, and songs that one would dearly like to hear are missing. One of the best compilations in a long while, for this reviewer, is on this new Symposium CD, where a collection of late-nineteenth and twentieth-century English song is splendidly performed by Peter Jeffes. The title of the disc may be a little off-putting, but one A Lloyd Webber had already used the more suitable title 'Aspects of Love'. But this is mere quibbling; here are some of the very best of English love songs, by John Ireland, Frank Bridge, Quilter, Maude Valérie White, Finzi, Michael Head, Warlock, Armstrong Gibbs, Somervell, Vaughan Williams, Mark Raphael, and of course, Edward Elgar. The latter is represented by two of his more than eighty songs; *Is she not passing fair?* and the less familiar *Rondel*. We are used to the more caressing style of John McCormack in the former, and Peter Jeffes treats this charming piece very differently. He deliberately poses the question raised in the title, and in ringing tones almost dares the listener to doubt the fairness of his beloved! *Rondel* is less successful, but to be truthful it is not one of Elgar's best songs, and the singer would be hard put to get much out of it. Jeffes has a fine, strong, tenor voice, capable of a lyrical approach when needed, but his operatic training and experience shows in his treatment of the various texts. He has sung in many of the major opera houses of Europe, and it is strange that one of the major companies has not signed him up for recordings before this.

The Finzi songs - *As I lay in the early sun*, *The market girl*, and *Since we loved* - are beautifully rendered. The latter, Finzi's last song, is particularly poignant. It is interesting too to have that fine singer Mark Raphael as composer on this occasion. His *Cherry Robbers*, with words by D H Lawrence, is a fascinating little song. Space forbids detailing all twenty-four items, but this is a collection worth having, and it would be a very difficult listener who did not find pleasure in at least some of the songs on offer. A word too on the accompanist; David Woodcock plays with skill and feeling, and in some songs it is very much a duet between the two artists.

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Symposium is to be congratulated on a fine disc, very well recorded, and with an informative booklet.

Ronald Taylor

CD Round-up

Hyperion's series 'The English Anthem' featuring the St Paul's Cathedral Choir conducted by John Scott is a noble venture, and here reaches its fifth volume (CDA 66758). As a memento of a superb building and an excellent body of singers it is fine; but a sublime musical experience it is not. The choir battle bravely against the enormous acoustic, but are easily overwhelmed by the organ in the louder passages. The unaccompanied pieces, such as Walford Davies's lovely *Blessed are the pure in heart*, fare better, but the problem here is the distant hum of London traffic. Another problem, one familiar to readers of these pages, is that large scale late Romantic works such as Elgar's *Great is the Lord* and Harris's magnificent *O what their joy and their glory must be* are best served by larger forces. The subdivision of parts dilutes the vocal line on occasions and severely reduces the works' impact. Having said all that, I did enjoy the disc enormously, and the Elgar is generally pleasing. In places small but important dynamic or expressive nuances (such as the *animato* after letter A, and the *crescendo* four bars after G) go for nothing, presumably being difficult to bring off in such a vast building.

Another size problem afflicts the first Elgar work to appear on the super-budget label Discover International. The Virtuosi di Praga under Oldrich Vlcek play string pieces by Grieg, Respighi, Elgar and Roussel (D1CD 920236). The size and personnel of the group are not stated, although it consisted of eleven when founded in 1976. The very forward recording is adequate, and although there is some rough playing in places the ensemble is very sound, almost quartet-like. This is helped by a generally fast tempo; Elgar's *Serenade* is considerably quicker than the composer's own recording. Frankly, there are much finer performances of this work to be had.

It was a brilliant idea by someone at Pickwick to gain access to the vast amount of recorded material at the BBC, and so to launch a new label 'BBC Radio Classics'. However, it must be said that most of the initial releases in the series are disappointing, comprising predictable hardy annuals of the repertoire in none-too-distinguished recordings, many from live concerts such as the Proms. Those who like the excitement generated by a live performance, or have an affinity with the performers, will be attracted to this series, but the rest of us must live in hope that the really great recordings - particularly of rarer music - will eventually emerge. One of the problems with live performances is of course the occasional errors. These are certainly found in Zara Nelsova's playing of the *Cello Concerto* from the 1969 Proms conducted by Sir Charles Groves, a fairly undistinguished affair all round, despite the final rapturous acclamation by the Promenaders. The rest of the disc includes Groves conducting Vaughan Williams and Britten, and Sir Malcolm Arnold in Purcell's Suite from *Abdelazar* - again Prom performances (BBCRD 9111). Sir Malcolm Sargent conducts a pleasant - and quite fast - *Enigma* from the 1966 Proms; together with *The Planets* from February of the previous year - again, very acceptable apart from the consumptive-sounding contributions from the winter

audience (BBCRD 9104).

Also from Pickwick is a reissue of James Judd's account of the *First Symphony* with the Hallé (PCD 2019). I felt a little more positive than GHL in the original review (JOURNAL January 1992), and it can be safely recommended for anyone seeking a budget-price version. The slow movement in particular is very successful - Judd creates a wonderfully dreamlike atmosphere - but the ending of the work is disappointing, being a little too rushed for my taste. As before, there is no fill-up.

The celebrations marking the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War have included several records, and naturally Elgar features strongly. EMI have brought out a double set entitled 'The Official British Legion Classical Album' (CZS 568696-2). The first disc is a musical evocation from various military bands of the annual Service of Remembrance at the Cenotaph, and comprises national airs, solemn music (including 'Nimrod'), and a number of marches. The second disc begins with several hymns, and then, more interestingly, comes "Film Music and Ceremonial Marches". This includes Walton's music for *The First of the Few* and a short extract from *Henry V*; Coates's *The Dam Busters*; Addinsell's *Warsaw Concerto*; and the first and fourth *Pomp & Circumstance* Marches and *Crown Imperial* conducted by Boult. The "Choral" section which concludes this disc comprises "For the Fallen" from Hickox's recording of *The Spirit of England*; "Land of Hope and Glory", the final section of the *Coronation Ode*, conducted by Philip Ledger; and Elgar's arrangement of *God save the King*. This is the elevated face of military music; only three of the pieces are based on "popular" tunes, and only one of those - *There'll always be an England* - from the Second World War. Good transfers - especially of the older military band music from 78s - and well over two hours of listening.

Quite different in concept is "Lest we forget" from Warner Classics (0630 10201-2), "a collection of poetry and music dedicated to the memory of those who fell in two world wars". The poets fairly reflect the two wars - Binyon, Sassoon, Brooke, and Owen among others from the First, and Causley, C Day Lewis, and Dylan Thomas the second; but the music is decidedly early rather than late, and this was presumably dictated by the works recorded thus far in Andrew Davis's 'British Line' series, from which all the extracts are taken. Only 'Dawn' from Britten's *Peter Grimes* represents the later conflict. The other music is Delius's *Summer Night on the River*; 'Mars' and 'Venus' from Holst's *The Planets*; and the lion's share goes to Sir Edward, with the two most popular *Pomp & Circumstance* marches (again), the two *Chansons*, the *Elegy for Strings*, *Salut d'Amour* and 'Nimrod'. Sometimes the poems are read over the music, and this tends to work quite well; Brooke's *The Soldier* accompanied by the strains of the *Elegy*, and Sassoon's *Attack* and *The General* to 'Mars', are particularly effective. The readers are Sir John Gielgud, Sir Derek Jacobi, Phyllis Calvert; and Peter Orr, who masterminded the project. A worthy venture, and a fitting tribute to those who fell in two world wars, to whose memory the disc is dedicated.

The Editor

BRANCH REPORTS

LONDON Branch's season has continued - not without alarms - at Imperial College. In February Andrew Neill thought it best, given the abundance of Elgar/Strauss in London just now, to vary his advertised presentation. The substitute topic, 'The Winnowing Fan and after', dealing with the poetry and music of the First World War, provided a most moving and memorable occasion, and a fitting appendix to Andrew's presentation a little while back on 'Elgar and the Great War'. As announced in the March JOURNAL, Andrew Litton could not be with us that month, and London Secretary David Bury substituted a programme cunningly retained for such emergency entitled 'Elgar and the Sad Doll', which was generously and well received. After an April break taken up largely by attending the four concerts in the BBC Symphony Orchestra's Elgar series, it was back to normal in May. Except that "normal" is not the word to be used of Peter Sargent's great *tour de force*, 'An Evening with my Father'. This was a magnificent commemoration of the centenary of the birth of a great musician and remarkable man. A very large audience was captivated. It should moreover be recorded that at the start of the proceedings Mr Sargent presented to the Society the magnificent framed award which he had received some weeks earlier when the Testament reissue of the 1945 recording of *Gerontius* was proclaimed winner of the *Classic CD* magazine award [see March JOURNAL p 34].

By the time this JOURNAL appears the Branch AGM will have been held. A number of new faces are expected on the Committee, and David Bury is standing down after eleven years as Secretary. Already plans are well in hand for another season, not forgetting that 1996 will see the 25th anniversary of the inauguration of the Branch.

SOUTH WEST. Branch meetings continue to be well attended, with Philip Scowcroft's 'Transcriptions and Transcribers of Elgar's music' in April; a lecture recital on 'Elgar and Britten' in June with Diana Walkley and Carol Holt; and Denis Clark's 'Elgar's World in Contemporary Pictures' in June. This final meeting took place in Exeter where we were joined by the Exeter Recorded Music Society.

YORKSHIRE Branch's activities in recent times have been marked by more than one departure from the printed word, with lecturers pleading to be allowed to come on dates other than those originally agreed! Fortunately, our own 'in-house' speakers were willing to exchange dates and we survived the crisis. Chairman Robert Seager rose to the occasion on 15 May with a CD recital. On 6 March Tony Rawnsley had spoken on 'Elgar in the 'Nineties', and works played included *Froissart*, the *Serenade for Strings* and Variations 8 to 14.

Having had our lowest-ever attendance in January (just twelve), it is now pleasing to report our highest-ever; on 12 June, when an audience of 48 heard broadcaster Lyndon Jenkins speak on 'Some Elgarian Purple Patches', a wide-ranging choice of recorded extracts; often a mere few bars but mostly longer and each one a special moment of Elgar magic which Lyndon so obviously enjoyed sharing with us. A memorable evening in the company of a most engaging speaker.

WEST MIDLANDS. At the AGM in March the Officers were re-elected and a new Committee was elected. The season ended on 6 May when Garry Humphreys spoke on 'Elgar and Germany'. The first event of the new season will be a recital to include

Elgar's *String Quartet* played by The Angela Richey Quartet. This will be held at Harborough Bank, Shelsey Beauchamp (near Worcester) the home of Mr & Mrs Richard Haigh, on Sunday 1 October at 4.00 pm. Light refreshments will be available. There is no charge for members, but members' guests are welcome at a charge of £4 per head. As accommodation is limited, booking will be necessary through the Branch Secretary. An interesting season is in prospect and details will be sent out in due course.

SOUTHERN. The Branch will hold a special Event on 28 October at 1.30 pm at Havant Arts Centre - 'Elgar at Brinkwells', a presentation by Kevin Allen of readings, music and slides which seeks to recreate in detail the nature of the composer's day-to-day life at the cottage and attempting in particular to cast some new light on Elgar's relationship with the artist Vicat Cole, the owner of the thatched retreat. The Belmont Ensemble will play Elgar's *String Quartet* plus other pieces to complement the presentation.

NORTH WEST. At the extraordinary meeting in April it was agreed to keep the Branch going, but no one could be found to take on the vital job of Secretary. Carol Holt has kindly agreed to hold the fort for one year, during which time it is to be hoped that someone local will come forward.

LETTERS

From : Arthur Reynolds

Southern Branch's beau geste at 'Little Langleys' (JOURNAL November 1994) is not the first time the owners of the house received a splendid Elgarian house present.

Having completed the scoring of The Music Makers there in August 1912, Elgar and his family ended their stay by presenting their hostess Mrs Winifred Murray with a copy of The Dream of Gerontius. But this was no ordinary edition. Elgar's gift was a folio facsimile of the MS of Cardinal Newman's poem, one of 525 copies of a limited edition on limp vellum with ties, produced by Longman's in 1909.

Some years ago I was lucky enough to have been able to acquire the folio and would gladly make it available to Southern Branch. The flyleaf is signed by Elgar, Alice and Carice - a rare instance of the appearance of all three signatures on the same page.

From : Reverend Peter F Hullah

Chetham's School of Music, the specialist music school in Manchester, is twenty-five years old this year. The dream of establishing an educational community for talented young musicians has become a reality. We are delighted that, over the years, a link has been made with the Elgar Society and it gives us great pleasure to have this opportunity to perform in Malvern. The Elgar Society gave its support to a performance of the Elgar Violin Concerto in Manchester given by the School,

with a pupil as the soloist. We are grateful for the gift which the Society has given to our Library in the form of a most valuable collection of CDs. Most recently the School's Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Julian Clayton, has performed Elgar's First Symphony in the Barbican, London and this will be broadcast on Classic FM on 16 May. Many thanks for the support and encouragement which the Elgar Society has given, and continues to give, to the School.

At Chetham's instrumental lessons, practice, aural training, chamber music and orchestral work all combine to give pupils the opportunity to discover and develop their talents. The academic work which surrounds the musical core of the curriculum offers an education which is both broad and deep. Some pupils leave School to attend conservatoires and colleges of music, while others gain places at university to study music or other subjects. Chetham's is a unique boarding community and, through living at School, teenagers can come to value the friendship of other musicians.

During the last twenty-five years the School has sought to develop ways of expanding the frontiers of music education. Through setting high standards and offering pupils personal guidance and encouragement, the School and its pupils have made a significant contribution to the world of specialist music education. I would like to extend a warm invitation to members of the Elgar Society to visit Chetham's School of Music in Manchester. Thank you once again for giving us this unique opportunity to perform a concert of chamber music in Malvern, including Elgar's String Quartet.

From : Harrison Oxley

As a devoted Elgarian who was a cathedral organist for nearly thirty years, I often had cause to play his orchestral scores on the organ, either as accompaniments to choruses from the oratorios (used as anthems), or as arrangements for organ alone. In the case of the vocal music, of course, the printed keyboard part was always designed for the rehearsal pianist, and had to be greatly modified to fit it to the idiom of the organ. Many of the solo organ arrangements, made during Elgar's lifetime for the heavily romantic and orchestral organs of the period, seemed to me in their striving for decorative detail to risk missing the essential heart of the music; I rarely played one of these without some degree of adaptation.

In more recent years the publisher Kevin Mayhew has encouraged me to develop further my great interest in this field, beginning with his Favourite Anthem Book 2 (treble voices) in 1992 in which I wished to include 'Doubt not thy Father's care' from The Light of Life. As always with an Elgar work previously known only from a vocal copy, it was moving and inspiring to study the subtlety and artistry of the orchestral writing, and to try to reproduce something of its imagination and elegance in arranging it, I believe for the first time, specifically for the organist. Favourite Anthem Book 8 (SATB), published last month, goes further, including the chorus 'Light of the World', and also the opening movement from The Apostles, 'The Spirit of the Lord'. Again, so far as I know, these are the first ever arrangements of the accompaniments that are specifically for organ.

At the same time, in my album of organ arrangements *At a Solemn Music*, also

published last month, it has given me joy to include no fewer than six Elgar pieces. From the choral works come 'Go forth' and the 'Angel's Farewell' (Gerontius), and 'For the Fallen' (The Spirit of England) : and of purely orchestral scores there is 'Nimrod', Dream Children, and the second Interlude from Falstaff. Beginning again in each case from the full score, in a spirit of devotion and dedication, I have found this task a huge labour of love.

From : Ian Lace

New from Hyperion is a welcome recording of music by Sir Alexander Mackenzie (1847 - 1935). The illuminating booklet notes by John Purser make many references to Elgar. Early on Purser claims : "Mackenzie's work has been pardoned for being Elgarian. In fact, not unnaturally, it was the younger Elgar who was Mackenzian : 'My meeting with the great man was the event of my musical life', wrote Elgar in 1931 in an article as fulsome in its praise of Mackenzie's music as of his influence as conductor, teacher and administrator, referring to him as the 'revered head of our art in this country'".

Mackenzie was Principal of the Royal Academy of Music from 1888 until he retired in 1924. His distinction in that post was expressed by Elgar : "Here he identified himself with everything that was great and good".

Purser goes on to say ; "When Mackenzie was very old and dying and to some extent forgotten, he was not forgotten by Elgar who repaid many a musical debt by sending, now and again, a basket of flowers and fruit from his own garden". Elgar also tried to get Mackenzie's Violin Concerto revived. "Sarasate played it - in 1883 or 1884 - and I should love to hear it again".

Purser also tells us that "...when a burglar stole a dozen bottles of whisky from the cellar of Elgar (who had been awarded the Order of Merit) Mackenzie was heard to utter in his strongest Scotch accent, 'Oh, we all know he was a Hoarder of Merit'".

The new CD (Hyperion CDA 66764) features the BBC Scottish Orchestra under Martyn Brabbins playing with great verve and enthusiasm, and the sound is warm, clear and spacious. The Incidental Music to Coriolanus has an Elgar-like nobility; and Benedictus - Mackenzie's best-known piece - is sentimental and sweepingly romantic; one can imagine it appealing to Elgar.

From : Michael Trott

Frank Holmes wonders why the address of the Elgar Birthplace is given as Lower Broadheath, when his map indicates Upper Broadheath as the location. He confuses geographical address with postal address : they do not have to coincide. Postal addresses are an invention of the Post Office to suit their delivery system. Bredon in Worcestershire, for example, has the postal address 'Bredon, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire'.

From : John France

Alan Bush, the composer and Marxist, told me about the time when he met Elgar, who was at that time living at Severn House in Hampstead. The young Alan had been taken to visit the great man. He was shown into the study, where he played a number of his own compositions. The great man had offered a few criticisms. Some of the pieces were too short or perhaps too long. The interview was finished and Bush was shown to the door. Just as he was leaving Elgar said to him: "Well, my boy - I advise you to have a go! Good afternoon!"

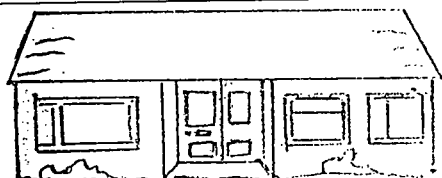
Alan Bush is 95 years old on 22 December 1995. He has spent an entire lifetime in composing music, teaching and involving himself in the politics of the day. With some two hundred compositions in his catalogue, Bush certainly did 'have a go'. It is perhaps an irony of British musical life that Elgar's most trifling works are played many times more often than Alan Bush's masterpieces. But such is life.

From : Ronald Bleach

Further to the letter from Ronald Taylor (JOURNAL March 95) about Shapcott Wensley, I have been researching this gentleman for some years. Henry Shapcott Bunce was born in Bristol in 1854 of an old Devon family Shapcott on his mother's side. During the 1850s and later his grandfather with his seven sons toured as 'The Celebrated Shapcott Brothers', performing on silver saxhorns, with the youngest playing the drums.

In 1878 Henry Shapcott Bunce married Alice Wensley and the following year she gave birth to their only child, Gertrude, who predeceased them in 1905. Bunce was an author and poet - he was an 'in-house' writer for Novello - and for this purpose he combined the names of his mother and wife, as the Musical Times obituary related. Alice Bunce was a teacher of music at Colston Girls' School for many years, and was also a choral conductor; her husband provided the words of several works for her choir to perform. The family resided in Clare Road, Cotham, where he died on 1 March 1917 (not June as in the obituary) aged 62. He is buried in the churchyard at Westbury-on-Trym.

Incidentally, Elgar conducted in Bristol on several occasions, the last time on 28 January 1928 when the programme included Cockaigne, The Music Makers, and The Black Knight. Herbert Brewer conducted his own work Sir Patrick Spens at the same concert.



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(Left) The grave of Shapcott Wensley and his family at Westbury-on-Trym (see letter from Ron Bleach on preceding page). As well as The Banner of St George Wensley also wrote the words of a Christmas carol Lo! Christ the Lord is born, published by Novello in 1909 to a tune Elgar had composed in 1897 for his own Christmas card. Elgar's letter to Novello about this can be found in Jerrold Northrop Moore's Elgar and his Publishers vol ii, pp 713-4.

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