

# The Elgar Society JOURNAL



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*The Editor does not necessarily agree with the views expressed by contributors nor does the Elgar Society accept responsibility for such views.*

At a meeting of the Society's General Committee on 30 September it was decided to establish a **Carol Holt Fund**. This would be used exclusively to assist young performers in the furtherance of their career. The Committee felt that not only did this reflect Carol's love of teaching and her interest in the young but also the Society's determination to assist young musicians in as many ways as possible. The Committee agreed to allocate a capital sum to this fund annually, but to succeed it will require additional donations from Society members and other sources. A form is printed below to assist in making a contribution to the fund.

The Committee also agreed to dedicate a bench, in Carol's memory, to be placed around her tree in the Birthplace orchard when it is completed.

*Note: Members are invited to send their donations to the Treasurer using the slip below. Those who pay income tax may wish to covenant sums either by way of a lump sum commuted over a four-year period or by a gift aid donation (minimum sum £250). Either way, the Society can recover the tax already paid on the sum donated, resulting in a one-third increase at present tax rates. Further details can be obtained from the Treasurer. In order to save postage donations will not be individually acknowledged unless a special request is made.*

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# The Elgar Society Journal

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## EDITORIAL

Vol.9, No.3  
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Three years ago, at the launch of Classic FM, I concluded my Editorial by saying "Watch this space". Sufficient time has now passed for an interim analysis to be made of the state of broadcast music in this country. Whatever else may be said about the new station, it has certainly been a success; many of my friends are totally hooked on it. But apart from working wonders for Górecki and Gregorian chant, has it actually done very much to draw large numbers of its listeners to the great classics? If one wanted to be unkind, Classic FM could be described as an up-market pop station; plenty of opera lollipops, Johann Strauss and the like. But I sense a distinct feeling of unease if a piece goes beyond seven or eight minutes (except at specific and very limited times), and personally feel a real frustration that I can rarely hear a longer work in its entirety. Significantly, most best-selling "classical" records these days are compilations of short pieces and extracts from longer works, which tends to justify my assertion.

Unfortunately, Radio 3 seems to have taken a "if-you-can't-beat-them-join-them" attitude towards its virile young rival, which surely reached its nadir a couple of months ago when in a series on British song it included a programme on football songs. Richard Morrison's memorable comment on this was that "Radio 3 would broadcast an in-depth profile of Kylie Minogue's pet hamster if it thought this might pinch a few listeners from Classic FM". This year has seen the Purcell tercentenary, the pretext for the series 'Fairest Isle', described by Radio 3's Controller Nicholas Kenyon as "a panorama of British music and culture". Given Sir John Drummond's admitted aversion to music of the English musical renaissance, we have not done too badly. Elgar has been well represented, with the number of performances slightly up, and it was good to have the broadcasts of *The Spanish Lady* and the *Third Symphony* extracts. But such welcome performances as Parry's *Piano Concerto*, and the two Bantock choral works (for later release by Albany Records) have been all too few. Even the imaginative series of rare British operas was spoiled by only performing an hour's "highlights". Granted that they may not turn out to be forgotten masterpieces, but what is the point of assembling a whole cast of singers and not doing the whole thing? Could it be the Classic FM syndrome on a slightly larger scale?

Robert Tucker has shown (see my review of the book "Before...Elgar...and After") just what treasures exist in British music of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries, waiting to be retrieved from their unjust oblivion. Surely the BBC is the only organisation with the means to bring to our attention such neglected composers

as Alexander Brent-Smith, Benjamin Dale, William Baines and Arwel Hughes, to say nothing of extending our knowledge of such as Quilter, Walford Davies, Pitt, Bainton, etc etc? The worrying thing is that if the BBC have neglected these composers during a year which has been devoted to British music, what chance do we have of hearing them in the future?

GEOFFREY HODGKINS

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## THE *FALSTAFF* MANUSCRIPT DIASPORA

Arthur Reynolds

In the spring of 1992, a dealer in music manuscripts notified me that a particularly interesting Elgarian item was to be auctioned in a forthcoming Sotheby's sale. The sale catalogue dated 29 May described Lot 538 as follows :

Elgar (Sir Edward) Autograph manuscript of part of the symphonic study "Falstaff", Op.68, being one page from the full orchestral score, numbered by Elgar "39", containing five bars, the first two altered by Elgar and pasted over the original version, notated in brown ink on thirty printed staves...

At the time I did not know who owned the rest of the score, but I assumed that a manuscript of such importance must reside in a public collection. Surely, I said to the dealer, the institutional owner of the score would be bidding, in which circumstances it would be unthinkable to compete. The dealer astonished me by giving me his assurances that the relevant institution had decided not to participate in the sale.

As the successful bidder, I left the sale-room proud but puzzled : why would a page become detached from the final autograph manuscript of a major Elgar work and turn up in a public sale?

Elgar established the significance of *Falstaff* during a 17 July 1913 interview with the journalist C F Kenyon, whose *nom de plume* was Gerald Cumberland. Cumberland sought the interview to provide his readers with pre-first performance information about *Falstaff*, because the October première in Leeds promised to be a significant event on the musical calendar that year. His published piece in the 18 July edition of *The Daily Citizen* included this quotation from the interview :

I have, I think, enjoyed writing it [ie. *Falstaff*] more than any other music I have ever composed, and perhaps, for that reason, it may prove to be amongst my best efforts...I have finished all the preliminary sketch-work, and of the actual scoring, only a little remains to be done. I shall say 'good-bye' to it with regret, for the hours I have spent on it have

brought me a great deal of happiness.<sup>1</sup>

Elgar's friends and detractors alike seemed to have shared with the composer a sense of the peculiar importance of *Falstaff* vis-à-vis Elgar's other works. Ernest Newman wrote after the first performance :

The style of the score shows us...quite a new Elgar, and one that the public used to the older Elgar will not assimilate very easily.<sup>2</sup>

Arch-foe E J Dent gives *grudging* praise for the piece in his notorious 'Englander' essay published in the 1924 edition of Guido Adler's *Handbuch der Musikgeschichte*. After fourteen lines of sneering denigration, the essay surprises the reader with this comment :

His most beautiful orchestral work is the symphonic poem *Falstaff*, which, although weakened by an excessively close dependence on its programme, is certainly a work of great originality and power.<sup>3</sup>

Professor Dent misses the point when he asserts that the music is excessively dependent upon its programme. Dr Jerrold Northrop Moore sums up :

The entire strength of pattern in Edward's *Falstaff* came from its close thematic development - a prodigious skill of clothing consequent ideas in fitting orchestral dress that went beyond even the *Second Symphony*.<sup>4</sup>

*Falstaff* is a study of chivalry in decline. Elgar presents a canvas of action and allusion into which he weaves a texture that he called "the undercurrent of our failings and sorrows". Two dream interludes give us a glimpse of what might have been before the final theme descends into what Elgar called "The gargantuan, wide-compassed *fortissimo*, first given in the strings in octaves, [that] exhibits his boastfulness and colossal mendacity". Here is Newman again :

The subject of the symphonic study is really the mad, pathetic mixture of contrarities in us all, and the sense of something vast and inscrutable above us, putting an end - a harsh but perhaps bracing end of its own - to all our moral oscillations when the time comes...<sup>5</sup>

Notwithstanding the pleasure it gave him, it is clear from the extant manuscript material that Elgar's struggle with the work was unusually arduous. An

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar : A Creative Life* (O U P, 1984) pp.649-50

<sup>2</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post*, 3 October 1913, quoted in Moore, op.cit., p 654

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Brian Trowell, 'Elgar's Use of Literature', in Raymond Monk (ed.), *Edward Elgar : Music and Literature* (Scolar Press, 1993) pp 286-87

<sup>4</sup> Moore, op.cit., p 652

<sup>5</sup> *The Nation*, October 1913, quoted in Moore, op.cit., p 656

extraordinarily large number of sketches can be found in the British Library and at the Birthplace. The autograph manuscript shows a greater than usual number of paste-overs. Two additional pages bound into the front of the manuscript make clear that substantial extensions to the coda were added late in the orchestration phase. The musicological features of the revisions are admirably analysed in Dr Christopher Kent's essay entitled 'Falstaff : Elgar's Symphonic Study' published in *Edward Elgar, Music and Literature* by Scolar Press in 1993.

Some of Elgar's revisions were more than could be accomplished via paste-overs. A well-known composer gave me one example when I asked him if he had ever met Elgar. It seems that his one and only encounter took place at Ridgehurst, the home of Edward Speyer, during the 1920s. A jovial Elgar strolled into the drawing-room where Speyer's guests were assembled. He went straight to the piano and began delighting himself and his audience by playing an aria from *Norma*. The atmosphere altered abruptly when Speyer produced from a cupboard the manuscript score of *Falstaff's* first 'Dream Interlude' composed in a different key from the published version (G minor versus A minor). Elgar appeared to have forgotten that he had sent the manuscript to Speyer in July 1913. Was he disconcerted to be reminded many years later that he had been obliged to make the subsequent transposition?

Alice Elgar's diary tells us that the active *Falstaff* composition period was April to September, 1913. Yet Elgar told Cumberland in July that he had nearly finished the composition and scoring. Alice's diary makes clear that substantial work on the piece was accomplished in August and September. As for the first performance, Alice's 2 October 1913 diary entry laments that "...E rather hurried it & some of the lovely melodies were a little smothered...E changed very depressed after -..."

Although Elgar frequently experienced post-natal depression after first performances of his works, in this case the rushed rendition and subsequent gloom probably reflected his lingering doubts about whether or not the work was complete. If so, Alice certainly shared them. Her own first-edition copies of her husband's scores are normally truffled with laudatory exclamations. These are present in her *Falstaff* score; but, in addition, she annotated the text with numerous emendation suggestions. Novello must have been aware that Elgar was not wholly satisfied with the work because the firm printed an unusually small number of pre-performance copies of the miniature score.

Professor Kent's essay points out that, "Among Elgar's mature works, *Falstaff* is the only case where significant revisions were made to the printed score after the first performance".<sup>6</sup> Kent provides a musicological explanation, arguing that "...from a purely musical viewpoint the agile and economical textures of the work were a new departure requiring even greater deftness in their scoring".<sup>7</sup>

Dr Kent also hints that perhaps a deeper psychological necessity lay behind Elgar's

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<sup>6</sup> Christopher Kent : 'Falstaff : Elgar's Symphonic Study' in Monk (ed), op.cit., p 92

<sup>7</sup> op.cit., p 96

uncertainty. The works of Elgar and Shakespeare share a preoccupation with loss of innocence. Shakespeare was clearly wary of his modern late-Elizabethan age. Elgar was clearly worried that he had survived to face post-Edwardian disillusionment. The two Falstuffs - Shakespeare's and Elgar's - represent the Merrie England that was, and was in process of being lost. "Construe the times to their necessities" is an anxious Shakespearean directive that Elgar took seriously.

In the context of the *Coronation Ode*, Dr Moore writes that "...the composer as much as any man is the creature of his time. The time shares equally with the individuality in shaping an expression to define them both"<sup>8</sup>. If we agree with Dr Moore that Elgar was a human litmus test of his times, let us consider briefly the state of the real world while Elgar was composing *Falstaff*.

Hindsight confirms that 1913 was a dying-swan-song of a year. Domestically, Britain was suffering violent social upheaval. The Irish question loomed menacingly with a mooted Home Rule Bill that divided the nation. Industrial action was ferocious; the first eight months of 1913 saw more trade disputes than in any previous year. That is damning indeed considering that during 1912, one million coal miners had walked off the job in a strike that obliged the country to freeze in the dark.

If industrial strife was not bad enough, the militancy of the suffragette movement reached its apogee in 1913. Throughout the year, militant ladies planted bombs, set letter-boxes on fire, poured acid on golf courses, and even horsewhipped visiting politicians. Consider what took place at Epsom Downs in June. During the Derby, a fanatic named Emily Davison ran on to the course at Tattenham Corner, just in time to seize the reins of Anmer, the King's colt, bringing down both horse and jockey. When Miss Davison died of her injuries a few days later, her sister suffragettes organised an immense funeral on 14 June, about which Dame Ethel Smyth writes :

How they execrated Emily Davison! Some critics actually remarked "Such bad manners to the King!" apparently not grasping that the King's horse would call attention as no other animal could do to the strange fact that, for the sake of women in general, one particular woman was ready to let herself be trampled to death. Again others said, "Why, she might have killed the jockey!" though after all, this one must have seen what was coming, and jockeys are trained to fall<sup>9</sup>.

Alice was content to remain in an "old-world state". On the day of Miss Davison's funeral she took Carice to a film depicting the life of Wagner. Her diary reads as follows : "June 14...A & C to Cinema of Wagner. Hindered by crowd looking at Suffragette Funeral - Cinema wonderful..."

Meanwhile, Europe teetered on the brink of war. The previous year Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro, and Greece had launched a joint attack on Turkey, leading Continental politicians gathered in London to share with Britain an acute concern that Austria

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<sup>8</sup> From notes accompanying the Chandos recording of the work.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Virginia Cowles : *1913 : The Defiant Swan Song* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson) p 40



would intervene to prevent her rival Serbia from acquiring Turkish territory.

While Elgar was at work on *Falstaff*, the British Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, met every day with the ambassadors of France, Germany, Russia, and Austria to form a joint policy they hoped they could impose on the Balkans. "1913 was dark with omen", wrote French President Raymond Poincaré, "and in every effort to preserve peace one seemed to be frustrated by incidents which forbade it. The conference of ambassadors and of the Balkan delegates sat on in London, but...the diplomats saw no solution"<sup>10</sup>.

The dark omens of art must have appeared to Sir Edward Elgar and his generation no less worrying than the war clouds. The dissonance that would trap diplomacy into war seemed to be providing the prevailing direction of new music.

London's musical year started out favourably, however. Despite much controversy, the first performance of *Der Rosenkavalier* took place in January. The opera had been considered for the Gala Performance of 1911 to celebrate the coronation of King George V and Queen Mary, but was turned down on grounds of indecency. "I hope", wrote Queen Mary's aunt, the Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, "this novelty will not be selected for it is the most improper opera in existence, even the male singers declared their horror at having to sing such words, and the females were more than scandalised!"<sup>11</sup> The January 1913 performance at Covent Garden was sold out, and the conductor, Thomas Beecham, received a standing ovation.

What was Elgar listening to while he was working on *Falstaff*? He went often to the opera, where he heard new, predominantly chromatic works such as Claude Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, which, Alice's diary says, he "liked much". But what particularly attracted his attention were the Russian operas Sergei Diaghilev brought to Drury Lane that year. Collaborating with Beecham, Diaghilev produced three works new to Londoners : *Boris Godunov* and *Khovanshchina* by Mussorgsky, together with Rimsky-Korsakov's *Ivan the Terrible*. Chaliapin sang the eponymous *Boris* role and overnight became the darling of London musical society, including Elgar, who watched a performance of *Boris Godunov* from Lady Maud Warrender's box and subsequently described Chaliapin to Sidney Colvin as "...the finest artist I have ever heard".<sup>12</sup>

Diaghilev also presented London with three dark new ballets in 1913 : Schmitt's *La Tragédie de Salomé*, Debussy's *Jeux*, and Stravinsky's *Le Sacré du Printemps*. The difference between Paris' and London's reception of the Stravinsky work is telling. First performed at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées on 29 May, Stravinsky's "revolutionary" score, combined with Nijinsky's outlandish choreography, stirred the audience to hiss and jeer *Le Sacré du Printemps* as musical anarchy. Saint-Saëns was seen to shake his head in disgust. Critics and fellow musicians united to share

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<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Cowles, op.cit., p 39

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in Cowles, op.cit., p 14

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Moore, p 649

Saint-Saëns' view, regretting that Stravinsky had deserted Holy Russia for a primeval place and time when people performed unspeakable rites to appease an unknown god.

The tails and tiaras in the London audience responded to their first performance of *The Rite of Spring* quite differently from Paris's *beau monde*. London greeted the work with professed fascination. After the London première, leading society hostess Lady Ripon entertained Nijinsky at Coombe Court, and the popularity of Britain's entente with Russia soared among the artistically inclined members of the Establishment. In these circumstances, Elgar must have sensed that the old diatonic basis of his music-making was becoming *vieux jeu*, which may partly explain why his *Falstaff* themes are chiefly chromatic.

According to Alice's diary, Elgar made the last of his changes on 18 October, and Novello despatched the proofs to engravers F M Geidel of Leipzig. Unfortunately, Elgar did not see the final published score for six years because the Geidel copies could not leave Germany until 1919, owing to the intervening war.

The manuscript score that remained in Elgar's possession until his death is a fair copy in black ink comprising 230 pages of single-sided score paper. There are 28 staves with four percussion lines measuring approximately 337 x 454 millimetres. Whatever happened to the manuscript after February 1934, it did not leave Elgar's estate intact. We know this because five leaves were offered for sale by Sotheby's on 23 November 1977. The catalogue entry for Lot 94 reads :

Elgar (Sir Edward) Autograph Manuscript of *Falstaff*, Op.68, pages 1, 24, 99, 100 and 202 of the full score, in ink, on printed paper, some autograph deletions and corrections, pencil corrections and notes in another hand, rehearsal numbers stamped on two of the pages, unbound...large folio 1913. The manuscript of *Falstaff* excluding these 5 pages is in Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge. *Falstaff* was first performed on 1 October 1913 at Leeds, Elgar conducting.

The last two sentences contain three errors of fact :

- The first performance did not take place on 1 October 1913, but on 2 October.
- The manuscript is in the Fitzwilliam Museum, not the College.
- The manuscript was missing more than the five pages for sale.

The fact that the manuscript was missing more than "these 5 pages" is evidenced by the emergence of Lot 538 in a Sotheby's May 1992 sale. Happily, the five pages offered in the 1977 sale were acquired by booksellers Maggs Bros on behalf of the Fitzwilliam. The effect of inflation and the rise of Elgar's reputation in the years between the two sales is evident in the prices the two lots fetched : the five-page lot fetched £400 in 1977; the single-page lot fetched £1,500 in 1992. In due course I will see to it that Leaf 39 rejoins the others.

A label on the cover of the bound volume proclaims that Carice Elgar-Blake gave the autograph score to the museum in 1968. If the manuscript arrived in Cambridge in 1968, less than two years before Mrs Elgar-Blake's death, where had it been

previously? Elgar's daughter had given numerous Elgarian scholars generous access to her father's papers, but no one I contacted had seen the *Falstaff* autograph score. Miss Phyllis James, now in a nursing home but in 1968 employed by the Fitzwilliam as Keeper of Manuscripts and Printed Books, told me that she had worked in the museum library from 1948 to 1976, and in all that time could not recall receiving the manuscript.

The answer lies in the 1968 Annual Report of the Fitzwilliam Syndicate. Buried in the report is a sentence confirming "the conversion to a gift of a long-standing loan of the *Falstaff* score by the composer's daughter". Further research confirmed that Mrs Elgar-Blake made the loan in 1934, so we now know that the manuscript had resided at the Fitzwilliam since the year of Elgar's death.

An examination of the errant pages produced a number of small mysteries. Leaf one is peculiar because Elgar has written the title twice. The first 'Falstaff' is centred at the top of the page - which is the way Elgar habitually inscribed the title of a work in the final fair-copy manuscript. But then in the centre of the page the title appears again; this second inscription is in a darker ink and in very large letters, heavily underlined (see opposite).

Here's another small mystery : Leaf one, together with leaves 99 and 100, bear drawing-pin holes in the corners. No such holes appear in the other leaves.

If we presume that Elgar deliberately separated the six leaves, and if we believe that Elgar's sensibility was such that he would never make such a separation at random, what do the six leaves have in common? They all seem highly illustrative passages, showing actions or definite personal allusions. And they are linked in terms of tonality.

- Leaf one, the opening, presents a typical, fascinating feature of Elgar's later music : his subtle use of the tonic key. The page states the title clearly : *Falstaff* : *Symphony Study in C Minor*. The opening and central thematic idea give a first appearance of G minor : on further analysis, however, it becomes clear that aurally and structurally they are part of a prolonged dominant of C minor.

- Leaf 24 (score pp. 16-17) presents the 'impetuous rush' music that ends the scene a few bars later, tying in neatly with Leaf 1 in that this page of score ends the section begun by Leaf 1 and, significantly, concludes it in G minor. The instruction *Più animato* effectively delineates the first section's coda.

- Leaf 39 (score pp. 28-29) has strong illustrative reasons for being chosen. This page presents the 'honest gentlewomen' at Eastcheap Inn. Structurally it occurs at the end of a more developmental passage. The theme fluctuates between a 6/4 of A minor (the final key of the 'Falstaff chasing women' motif developed in leaves 99 and 100) and a 6/4 F minor, tonalities that play an important role in the work. A minor is also the key of the interlude at fig 77.

- Leaves 99 and 100 (score pp. 63, 64 and 65) are linked to leaf 39 in that they pick up where 'honest gentlewomen' left off with 'Falstaff chasing women' about the

*Allegro*

*Falstaff*

*Contra Bass*

*3. Auflage F. 31*

The musical score includes the following parts and annotations:

- Piccola:** Handwritten notes.
- I. Flauti:** Flute I.
- II. Flauti:** Flute II.
- Oboe I. II.:** Oboe I and II.
- Coro Anglosax.:** English Horn.
- I. Clarinetti in B:** Clarinet I.
- II. Clarinetti in B:** Clarinet II.
- Clarinetti Bassi in B:** Bass Clarinet.
- Fagotti I. II.:** Bassoons I and II. Includes handwritten notes: *l. - more*, *ma - more*, *l. - molto*, *l. - molto*.
- Contr. Fagotto:** Contrabassoon.
- I. II. Cori in F:** Horns I and II.
- III. IV. Cori in F:** Horns III and IV.
- I. Trombe in D:** Trumpets I.
- II. III. Trombe in D:** Trumpets II and III.
- II. II. Tromboni:** Trombones II.
- III. III. Tromboni e Tubi:** Trombones III and Tubas.
- Tromba in C:** Trombone in C.
- Timbali:** Tom-toms.
- Tamborino:** Snare drum.
- Grav. Cassa e Plauti:** Bass Drum and Cymbals.
- Asp. I & II:** Aspicorns I and II.
- Violini I:** Violins I.
- Violini II:** Violins II.
- Viola:** Viola.
- Violoncelli:** Violoncellos.
- Contro B. Bassi:** Contrabasses.

A large, stylized watermark of the word **Falstaff** is written across the center of the score.

*Allegro (f.)*

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tavern.

• Leaf 202 (score p.132) gives us Prince Hal's regret at the seventh bar after fig 130. The link is again one of tonality. The tonality shifts markedly at this juncture for two bars before reverting to Falstaff's material in a hysterical two-part counterpoint - again in G minor. This tonal statement parallels that begun on Leaf 1 and closed on Leaf 24.

Little further detective work could be accomplished without the co-operation of the seller of the errant leaves. Auction houses have strict policies designed to protect consignors' identities. Sotheby's did agree, however, to pass on to the seller of the *Falstaff* leaves a 'To Whom It May Concern' letter from me. Having braced myself for disappointment, imagine my surprise when my telephone rang a couple of weeks after my letter reached Sotheby's, and the voice on the other end was immediately familiar from the airwaves. It was Steve Race, who introduced himself as the former owner of the six leaves. When I asked how they had come into his possession, Mr Race sent me a tape that provided my next clue.

The tape was a recording of talk number 13 in Mr Race's 'Like Old Times' series broadcast by the BBC Home Service on 22 September 1966. Programme 13 consisted of a series of snippet interviews with sundry people who had known or who had encountered Sir Edward Elgar. Among them was the Duchess of Leinster née Denise Orme. The duchess told this story :

A Royal Academy of Music violin scholar shortly after the Great War, Miss Orme grew bored with the violin and decided to try her luck with her voice. A vocal scholarship was on offer at the Royal College, so she went along to the examination and found herself facing three adjudicators : the knights Parry, Parratt, and Elgar.

Evidently the Royal College panel was unaware of Miss Orme's work at the Royal Academy, which would have given her sight-reading capabilities not normally available to debutante students of voice. They reacted with surprise when their candidate sight-read every piece they asked her to sing. Miss Orme described with relish her attempts to assure the adjudicators that she had not previously seen most of the music they had put before her. Finally, Elgar broke the deadlock. "I'll give her something she cannot have seen before", he said as he took out a sheet of paper and wrote out a number of bars of music with words. The future Duchess of Leinster took up the manuscript and sang the song through without hesitation. From the stunned silence that followed, she drew the correct conclusion that she had won the scholarship.<sup>13</sup>

Steve Race ended that part of the broadcast with the comment, "What a pity she didn't put that piece of manuscript music into her pocket. Who knows what it might have become?"

Shortly after the broadcast, Race received a letter from Mr Bernard Gimber, a St Albans listener declaring that he possessed a few pages of Elgar manuscript. Perhaps

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<sup>13</sup> Reproduced here by kind permission of the BBC.

these pages might include the manuscript of the lost song. Race visited Gimber, examined the leaves and realised that these were strays from the *Falstaff* score. As such they were far more important than sketches of obscure vocal pieces. So Steve Race made an offer for them, which was accepted. A decade later he consigned all of them to Sotheby's saleroom except a single leaf, which he had framed. He kept back page 39 because he wanted to retain a single example of Elgar's musical handwriting and eventually decided to sell it because he felt that the Fitzwilliam should have the complete score.

Steve Race put me in touch with Mr Gimber, who provided the next clue in the form of a story about an encounter between Elgar and his father, William Charles Gimber. Born in 1877, William Gimber trained as a photographer and joined the staff of Leon Gaumont, when Gaumont owned and operated a film shop in Soho. Subsequently, Gaumont expanded into the business of distributing films to local cinemas, and Gimber expanded into the business of providing Gaumont with product.

Becoming a freelance film cameraman-director-editor, William Gimber produced his own series of short subjects called 'Around the Town'. The scope of 'Around the Town' was advertised as 'Beauty, Celebrity and Fashion'. Each feature film consisted of approximately seven feature-ettes; each feature-ette devoted approximately sixteen feet of film to the presentation of a well-known person at work.

Unfortunately, I have not been able to discover any extant examples of Gimber's reels, let alone the contents of Feature 19 in the film series. From a sheet of Gimber's file notes, we know that Feature 19 includes a feature-ette entitled 'At home with Britain's greatest composer, Sir Edward Elgar, O M'.

According to his son, Gimber approached Elgar, who agreed to be filmed in a manner simulating the act of composition. As soon as Gimber had arranged his camera and paraphernalia, Elgar took from a shelf his manuscript of *Falstaff*. He separated six pages and spread them on his desk as though he were at work on the score.

My guess is that the film would show two of the pages plus the title page pinned to a surface above desk level reminiscent of W H Reed's first visit to Elgar's lodgings during the composition of the *Violin Concerto*, when he found pages of score pinned to the walls. That would explain those drawing pin holes. Given the fact that Leaf 1 shows the title of the work written twice, I deduce that during the filming, Elgar wrote 'Falstaff' a second time on the title page, this time in letters large enough to be captured by the camera.

According to Bernard Gimber, when his father turned to leave, Elgar handed him the six leaves, saying, "Here, you had better have these".

Why would Elgar suggest that William Gimber take the leaves with him? Did Gimber imply that he might need further footage, in which case he could avoid troubling the composer further by focusing the camera on the score in any location? Did Gimber express a concern that perhaps the developed film might show the notations indistinctly, in which case he might wish to re-shoot that portion of the

reel that focused on the manuscript? If so, why could he not have returned to Severn House to complete his work?

Part of the answer might come to light if we could fix the filming date. Bernard Gimber's letter to Steve Race enclosed three documents from his father's files that provide dating clues. Two of the enclosures are copies of marketing brochures prepared by Gaumont to advertise the contents of features 9 to 12, and 13 to 16. The third enclosure is a typed draft contents sheet for feature 19. Unfortunately, all three documents are undated as to the year, but Features 9 to 12 are given release dates for London and the Provinces. Feature 9 appeared in London on 29 January, Feature 10 on 5 February, and so on.

Gimber's letter suggests that the filming may have taken place in 1924, but an analysis of the marketing documents suggests a more interesting date.

Feature 9 includes a visit to Jerome K Jerome. We know Jerome died in 1927, so Feature 9 could not post-date that year. Feature 12 narrows the field further by announcing that its first subject is "the fine portrayal of character which has made the success of *Tilly of Bloomsbury*...at the Apollo Theatre. All the characters are shown including...Mary Glynne as Tilly". The seventh edition of *Who's Who in the Theatre* tells us that Mary Glynne played Tilly at the Apollo between July 1919 and December 1921.

From year-end 1921, we come even closer to the Elgar session when we note that Feature 13 includes a visit to Fay Compton currently starring in *Summertime* at the Royalty Theatre. According to *Who's Who in the Theatre*, Fay Compton ceased playing Silvia in *Summertime* in January 1920. Feature 16 corroborates the first quarter of 1920 date by including an interview with Henry Ainley, presently playing in *Julius Caesar* at the St James's Theatre. *Who's Who..* tells us that Ainley played Mark Antony in *Julius Caesar* between January and March 1920.

Further proof is offered in the contents sheet for Feature 19. In addition to 'At home with Britain's greatest composer', Feature 19 includes "a brief visit with Mr Owen Nares in 'Mr Todd's Experiment' at the Queen's Theatre, London". *Who's Who..* confirms that Owen Nares played Arthur John Carrington in *Mr Todd's Experiment* at the Queen's Theatre between January and July 1920. Ergo, it is likely that William Gimber filmed Elgar in the early months of 1920. Given Elgar's inconsolable grief after Alice died on 7 April, it is unlikely that filming took place after late March.

On 3 February 1920 Elgar's own diary entry reads: "...to Film place Denman &c to see Shaw etc filmed[:] took L[alla] V[andervelde]..." Denman Street was the headquarters of the Gaumont Company, and although no reference to Shaw can be found in the brochures, it would seem likely that it was on this occasion that Elgar first met William Gimber, and arranged with him to be filmed "at home" a few weeks later.

Alice's diary records that Elgar was filmed twice in March 1920. On 1 March, a Mr Bishop of the Art and Film Company filmed her husband at Severn House. Elgar viewed the results at the Denman Street Cinema on 5 March. The second filming



# AROUND THE TOWN

BEAUTY, CELEBRITY and FASHION.  
THE SCREEN'S FINEST NOVELTY FEATURE

CONTENTS.  
Nos. 9 TO 12.

Proprietors - "AROUND THE TOWN LTD"  
Sole Distributors - THE CAUMONT COMPANY LTD

*The front cover of the brochure issued to advertise William Gimber's 'Around the Town' series of film features.*



took place on 12 March at a film theatre in London referred to as a "laboratory cinema" but otherwise unidentified. Elgar returned to see the results on 17 March.

It is unlikely that the second filming corresponds to the Gimber episode because the sheet of paper from Gimber's films listing the contents of Feature 19 specifically refers to a film with Elgar "At Home". In 1920, *chez Elgar* could only have meant Severn House. Could Mr Bishop of the Art and Film Company actually be Mr Gimber of 'Around the Town'?

If so, Gimber's timing was unfortunate. Normally, Alice would have organised such a visit, and it is unlikely that she would have consented to see part of her husband's precious manuscript leave Severn House. But in March 1920 Alice Elgar was in no position to supervise her husband's rendezvous, having been ill since the previous November and most likely bed-ridden on the day Gimber arrived at Severn House. Carice was unable to substitute for her mother in early 1920; she was away in Switzerland acquiring a fiancé, Mr Blake. If Gimber did carry out his filming of Elgar on 1 March 1920 - a bare five weeks before Alice's death - it is likely that Elgar would have responded unfavourably to any request for a return visit if Gimber found himself obliged to seek an audience for further filming. The logical compromise would have been to film the *Falstaff* leaves elsewhere.

If we assume that the release dates given in the brochure for Features 9 to 12 are for the year 1920, and that a new feature appeared every week, then Feature 19 containing "Britain's greatest composer, Sir Edward Elgar O.M" would have been released in London on 8 April, the day after Alice Elgar died at Severn House.

If Gimber filmed Elgar in the first quarter of 1920, it is likely that the errant leaves would have been forgotten in Elgar's post-April period of desolation followed by the move out of Severn House in December 1921. A few months before Gimber's putative visit, Elgar had received his copies of the long-delayed final printed score, so he would have had no need to re-visit the autograph manuscript. And so the errant pages inadvertently lay forgotten in Gimber *père's* files until Gimber *filis* discovered them on his father's death in 1959.

I can peel the onion no farther. I leave it to other Elgarians to take up where I have left off, and I say good luck to them!

CONTENTS OF NO. 19 "AROUND THE TOWN."

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MAIN MOVING TITLE - TOWER BRIDGE.

Edmund Dulac.

One of the greatest modern illustrators, at his studio at Holland Park, London.

At home with Britain's greatest composer Sir Edward Elgar, O.M.

~~George Hirst. Yorkshire and England.~~

~~Who has so often been almost "half the side."~~

Steeple-chasing at Auteuil (Paris), and some beautiful Spring Frocks by Bertholle.

A brief visit with Mr. Owen Nares in "Mr. Todd's Experiment" at the Queen's Theatre, London.

THE GOLDEN APPLE CHALLENGE.

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SUBJECT TO ALTERATION

*William Gimber's typed draft for number 19 in the 'Around the Town' series. If it did appear on 8 April, that may help to explain the deletion of the feature-ette on the Yorkshire cricketer George Hirst; Gimber may have decided to delay this until nearer the start of the new season at the beginning of May.*

## ELGAR - THE LEEDS CONNECTION

Cecil Bloom

### Part II

Elgar must have quickly forgotten his criticisms as did the city fathers of him because, when Stanford retired as the chief conductor, Elgar was invited to share the conductor's podium in 1913 with Arthur Nikisch and Hugh Allen. But even this gave rise to much acrimony. For this Festival, it was decided not to have a sole conductor on the grounds that a single one could not possibly be sympathetic to all the music to be played. Charles Haigh, the Festival secretary, with four colleagues visited Elgar on 7 February 1912 to discuss the Festival, and although Elgar expressed doubt (at considerable length apparently) about the wisdom of having three conductors, he finally said that he was prepared to be one of them, provided that he was satisfied regarding the standing of the other two. He found no objection to four possible names mentioned to him - Allen, Nikisch, Mengelberg, and Shalk [sic]<sup>1</sup>. He then wrote to Haigh to confirm his understanding of their discussions and part of this letter is worth quoting in some detail.

Your Committee, I feel sure, will acquit me of any petty conceit or small feeling in the matter if I presently propose some conditions, - these conditions are suggested by the high, and in some cases supreme position I hold in several organisations, and I feel it would be derogatory to such positions, not for my own sake, but for the sake of those societies in which I take such leading parts, if I assume a kind of second place elsewhere, although the Leeds Festival is naturally in the highest class and indeed in a class apart. I am therefore willing to accept the conductorship of the two or three concerts you offered me if the Committee feel that the first announcement can be made with perfect candour somewhat as follows. "The Committee of the Leeds Festival have engaged Sir Edward Elgar O.M. as Conductor and Musical Director of the Leeds Festival; Sir Edward will be consulted as to the engagement of some celebrated conductors for special performances &c". And secondly, if the announcement can be made within one week from this date on account of very important engagements pending. In any case any announcement, in whatever form you choose, must be seen by me before any publication. It is of course understood that the lines proposed by the Committee should be followed in the engagement of such eminent men as Nikisch, Mengelberg and others and I think the proposed announcement covers this regarding future proceedings<sup>2</sup>.

There was also a postscript which stated "I leave all question of new works for the present".

Clearly, this letter was at odds with what Haigh had reported to his committee on the day following the meeting with Elgar, and Haigh then replied to contradict all

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<sup>1</sup>MC 8 February 1912. The last reference is to Franz Schalk (1863-1931), conductor of the Vienna Court Opera, who had conducted at Covent Garden in 1911.

<sup>2</sup>Filed with MC 27 February 1912

the salient points<sup>3</sup>. The episode promised to produce as much bitterness as any that had gone on between them previously, but the whole thing was fortunately and quickly resolved thanks to Lady Elgar, who suggested that Haigh see Littleton of Novello to discuss the matter. Littleton then wrote to confirm that Elgar would write a new work for 1913 for a fee of 100 guineas, and that he would conduct two concerts also for another 100 guineas. Nikisch, incidentally, negotiated a fee of 400 guineas for four concerts. Elgar would have been furious had he known this.

The most important item, however, that emerges from the records relates to the new composition planned for 1913. Early on, Elgar had been asked for a new choral work but said he doubted whether he had sufficient time to get such a work ready, but he believed he could be ready with a new orchestral work. Management Committee minutes for 8 February 1912 contain a sketch programme which included a "new orchestral work by Sir Edward Elgar (including appearance of solo pianist or violinist)" Does this mean he was contemplating a concerto or similar work for either of these two instruments? Had he given the delegation any indication of this when he had seen them the previous day? The Programme Committee minutes for 12 June then state "...the question as to the inclusion therein of either Sir Edward Elgar's 3rd symphony or the concerto for violoncello and orchestra was left over for the secretary to ascertain what fee Señor Casals would require for playing the concerto". The great Spanish virtuoso quickly replied that he wanted 125 guineas which the Committee considered prohibitive, and a later minute stated that it was recommended to include "the new concerto for violoncello and orchestra if Señor Casals can be engaged for a fee not exceeding 100 guineas and if Sir Edward Elgar is prepared to complete the work"<sup>4</sup>. The July 1912 sketch programme was, in fact, left partly incomplete with the statement "The rest of the programme was left open until the secretary heard from Sir Edward Elgar as to his new work to be included in the programme"<sup>5</sup>. Nevertheless, on 1 August, Leeds was prepared to engage Casals on his terms "if a new concerto by Sir Edward Elgar for violoncello and orchestra is included"<sup>6</sup>. All was finalised the following month when Elgar wrote that he was proposing to write a symphonic poem (sic) entitled *Falstaff*.<sup>7</sup> But Leeds was still uncertain two months later because Haigh was instructed to "arrange to see Sir Edward Elgar with a view to getting something more definite settled".

The postscript to Elgar's letter quoted above could imply that there may have been some discussion on a new work at the meeting held with the five delegates from Leeds. It is surely inconceivable that the Leeds Committee would have negotiated with Casals to play an Elgar cello concerto unless they had received some indication from the composer, and the conclusion must be drawn that Elgar had been thinking about such a work as early as 1912. A piano concerto (which he is known to have

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<sup>3</sup>MC 27 February 1912

<sup>4</sup>MC 2 July 1912

<sup>5</sup>Programme Committee minutes (PC) 9 July 1912

<sup>6</sup>Executive Committee minutes 1 August 1912

<sup>7</sup> PC 10 September 1912

been considering a little later than this) or a second violin concerto may have been brief thoughts in his mind, but the Festival records do suggest a cello concerto was a more serious proposal for the 1913 Leeds Festival. W H Reed, who knew him well, has written that Elgar scribbled the sketch of the first section of the first movement of his *Cello Concerto* in October 1918<sup>6</sup>; but was he serious in considering such a work six years earlier? Is this another enigma? Perhaps Casals had approached Elgar about a possible concerto. Elgar conducted the Spanish virtuoso in London with the London Symphony Orchestra in November 1911 - ie. shortly before his discussions with Leeds - which would have given the two men the opportunity of discussing such a composition. It could also explain the Leeds correspondence with Casals and his quick reply. One thing is certain, and that is that a concerto for cello and orchestra written in 1912-13 would have been very different from the Op 85 masterpiece which was profoundly influenced by the events of 1914-18; but the newly-found data does appear to be the first indication that Elgar had some plans for such a work earlier than 1918.

The reference to the "third symphony" can perhaps be explained by Elgar's use of the term "symphonic poem" in his discussions with Haigh and his colleagues. He certainly used it in a letter and Haigh may have perceived this as a symphony. The description "symphonic study" is in the actual programme for the Festival. Incidentally, Elgar took his daughter Carice and two friends to visit Fountains Abbey, the twelfth-century Cistercian abbey some 25 miles from Leeds, on the morning of *Falstaff's* performance, coming back to conduct it in the evening. What sang-froid! *The Dream of Gerontius* was also performed at the 1913 Festival, but there had been serious discussion as to whether to include *The Music Makers* which had received its first performance at the Birmingham Festival in October 1912.

1913 was, however, Elgar's last visit to the Leeds Festival, but he did do some work for the 1922 Festival when he orchestrated Parry's *Jerusalem* for a concert which paid homage to Parry's work. He was asked to conduct a concert at the 1928 Festival but icily told Leeds that his fee for one concert would be 200 guineas. Perhaps he had learned what Nikisch received in 1913! 200 guineas for one concert only was clearly beyond the finances of the city. There does seem to have been further negotiations on this because Elgar later offered to reduce his fee to 100 guineas; but a later minute notes that "the proposals with reference to Sir Edward Elgar having regard to the terms asked should be considered to be at an end". The 1928 programme did, nevertheless, include *Sea Pictures*. And every Festival from 1898 up to and including 1961 contained an Elgar work. Only Beethoven can also claim this distinction.

However, Elgar did continue his association with the city through the Leeds Choral Union whose quality he consistently praised. For its part, the Choral Union held him in high regard and in July 1903 it presented him with a gift as a memento of "the most successful concert that we have ever attended". After one Choral Union performance in 1913 in London's Queen's Hall Elgar called it a "magnificent" one. The following year there was an important concert in Canterbury when 270 voices sang *The Apostles* to fine reviews. Henry Embleton defrayed the expenses of this

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<sup>6</sup>Reed, W H : *Elgar* (Master Musicians series) (London, 1939) p 123

performance so that the total proceeds could be devoted to the Cathedral's restoration fund. Clearly, Embleton's generosity was not restricted to the North Country. Elgar conducted *Caractacus* again in Leeds in 1915 and this he considered was "the best *Caractacus* ever done". He returned to Leeds yet again in 1916 to conduct the Union in the first performance of settings of the two war poems by Laurence Binyon. The *Yorkshire Post* reported that 'To Women', a short hymn to those who stay at home and suffer, was written in "a vein of high nobility and uplifting passion"; and 'For the Fallen' was "a moving theme treated with power and beauty". Eighteen months later these two pieces were sung again in Leeds as part of the completed *The Spirit of England* trilogy - its first performance. Elgar next conducted the Choral Union in 1920 in *The Apostles* (when he commented that the chorus was better than ever) and also in 1922. His last performances with the choir were in Paris and Dieppe in 1924 with *The Dream of Gerontius*. These French concerts were enthusiastically received. The *Yorkshire Evening News* reported that the Choral Union "took Paris by storm". Embleton paid the expenses for the whole trip. The two concerts were sell-outs and "ecstatic audiences" called for encore after encore. Paris critics were said to have "bemoaned the fact that Paris had no such comparable choir which sang with one voice and one soul".

Elgar had originally planned a third oratorio to form a trilogy with *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*, and many in the musical world pressed him to complete it, none more so than Embleton who developed a passion for getting its first performance for his Choral Union. In 1914 Elgar did promise him this, but Embleton had to pester him continuously. Later, Embleton sincerely believed that composing a third oratorio would help Elgar to get over Alice's death, and he even went so far as to advance him £500 out of his own pocket. Once he also suggested that this oratorio would be a most appropriate work to mark the retirement of the Choral Union's great conductor Sir Henry Coward. But sadly it was not to be. Embleton must have been a very patient as well as a generous man. Even though he had advanced Elgar £500 some five years earlier, he was diffident enough to write to him in 1926 :

My Dear Edward,

...We have nearly made our arrangements for 1926 and 1927 and I wish very much we could say a third work by Sir E.E., but I dare not put this on until you give the word to go.

What a tactful way in which to press his case; but he was put off with the same answers as Elgar gave to others. Embleton's contribution to music in Leeds was a very special one. He was a great son of the City and has been described as "one of the best-loved figures in Leeds".

He inherited considerable wealth and spent it lavishly in the cause of music, especially in the town of his birth. On his death, the *Leeds Mercury* wrote that he took a special interest in the music of Edward Elgar, and a great delight in promoting performances of his work. Elgar had only to express a wish and he "saw that it was carried out regardless of expense". There appears to have been no tribute from Elgar following Embleton's death. He died in 1930 soon after he had made one more try to get Elgar to fulfil his promise on the oratorio; and his executors, finding that the amount of money at their disposal was much less than had generally been

expected, immediately presented Elgar with a demand for the return of the £500<sup>9</sup>. Poor Harry Embleton had almost made himself bankrupt in the cause of music and his executors needed all the money they could find to meet his obligations. The executors' demand (addressed, incidentally, to Sir Edward Glear O.M.!) caused not a little aggravation. Elgar argued that Embleton had converted the loan into an outright gift and he even consulted his legal advisers over the matter. He told the executors that Embleton had said to him on several occasions that the £500 should be considered as a gift and he added that, if Embleton had not said that, then he would have paid it back long ago. Nevertheless, within a month he sent a cheque for £500 to the executors.

Elgar was also associated with the Leeds Philharmonic Society, and in 1912 he conducted its 320 voices in *The Reveille and Go, song of mine*. The first Leeds performance of his *Second Symphony* was also given by the Hallé Orchestra at this same concert.

There are some other items on Elgar/Leeds which are worthy of note. Leeds can claim some, if only minor, credit for the *Enigma Variations*. Depressed after returning home from the 1898 Festival, Elgar was musing about some of his friends who had been at Leeds. He began to potter on the piano with some notes which reminded him of the way Hew Steuart-Powell used to warm up his fingers before playing the piano. From this he went on to another piece, this time depicting Basil Nevinston who had also been in Leeds; and these two pieces became the second and the twelfth variations of this beloved masterpiece<sup>10</sup>.

Elgar once referred to Leeds as a "weary town", but he had a better opinion of its citizens. During his observations on the 1898 performance of *Caractacus*, he told his publisher that "all was well at Leeds and they are intelligent". There was, however, a row with Leeds in 1902. He had been asked by the Master of the King's Musick to write a Coronation Ode for Edward VII and to get the finest body of singers for it. The coronation ceremony was postponed due to the King's illness, and the Ode was first performed by the local choir at the Sheffield Festival in October 1902. The same choir repeated the work in London three weeks later. In Leeds, it had been expected that Elgar would have chosen their choir for London, and his choice of the Sheffield choir for the London performance piqued some in the city. One called it "a slap in the eye", but not all agreed with this view, and some were gratified that the honour of singing the Ode had not left the County of Yorkshire. But a lot of ill-feeling was generated by this episode. Spark wrote to Elgar to clarify his own position :

When you asked the Sheffield Festival Chorus to sing your Coronation Ode in London, it seemed to me to be the wise & natural course. That chorus was in full practice, & you were rehearsing it for Gerontius. Whether there was a direct mandate from the King that you were to select the best Chorus in existence is not much to the point, as a matter of choice. But your selection has been exploited here by some of Stanford's people, as proof that you considered the Leeds Festival Chorus far inferior to the Sheffield Chorus. *Ergo*, Mr. Benton is not fit to be a Chorus Master.

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<sup>9</sup>HWRO 705: 445 3194

<sup>10</sup> Moore : *A Creative Life* pp 249-50

This foisting upon you of opinions, to serve professional jealousies by Leeds men, I have long intended to bring to your notice<sup>11</sup>.

Elgar's reply was somewhat acerbic.

...I can quite imagine that it is to the interest of some people, whose position & popularity are not quite secure, to manufacture ideas to suit the varying moods of their constituents;- these methods are not mine & I have yet to learn how to combat them : it will be a new experience if I, an Englishman and I will say a straightforward one, have to apologise to English people, in an English town in the English county which is the backbone of England for having an honest opinion & for expressing it honestly:- since *when* has it been necessary to import into Leeds - I cannot believe it to be an indigenous growth - intrigue & all the other pettinesses now rife amongst a section of your musical folk  
I blush for your town, or city isn't it?<sup>12</sup>

Everything must have blown over quickly because in November Elgar conducted the Choral Union in Leeds in this *Coronation Ode*. The *Leeds Mercury* reported that Elgar received hearty applause from a "large but by no means crowded gathering". There is a general view, incidentally, that Elgar had problems with Spark (who was clearly a difficult man), but this was really not so. Spark was naturally upset by Elgar's failure to keep his promises on the symphony and on the choral work, but Spark did have a high opinion of his judgment, and had a number of favourable and complimentary things to say of the composer.

Elgar usually, but not always, stayed at the Queen's Hotel when in the city. There is one particular item when in March 1917 he wrote to Alice Stuart Wortley of his experience there :

...The *service* here is beyond belief - e.g. I ordered breakfast at 8.40 sole & porridge - at 9 o'clock the young lady came back to say they had no sole : I sd. What have you? She didn't know : then she went away for ½ an hour to find out...eventually she (& anr. handmaiden worse than herself) produced from the lower regions coffee (for A) & tea for me & the eatables, two pint jugs of *cream*, no serviettes...It's like being in a nightmare<sup>13</sup>.

And this was when men by the thousands were dying in the nightmare of the mud of Flanders.

Elgar first visited Leeds in September 1882 on his way to Giggleswick to visit Dr Charles Buck who became a good friend. Buck was involved in one intriguing item. It is not generally appreciated that Elgar made some, albeit weak, attempts to become principal conductor of the Leeds Festival long before 1913. Sir Arthur Sullivan retired after the 1898 Festival and there was much discussion on the succession. Elgar was vigorously opposed to Stanford and favoured Frederic Cowen.

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<sup>11</sup>HWRO 705: 445 5974 [27 October 1902]

<sup>12</sup>HWRO 705: 445 5975. Young, who quotes this letter (*Elgar O M p 119*) wrongly has "impart" in the penultimate sentence.

<sup>13</sup>Moore, *Windflower Letters p 177*



He wrote to Buck that Cowen was "far & away the best man & failing him of course I am the next in". He asked Buck not to mention his name at all, but urged his friend to do all he could to have Cowen elected; he went on : "If your friends are against him [ie. Cowen] then ME"<sup>14</sup>. Stanford was appointed.

Leeds clearly had an important association with this country's greatest composer. Elgar's relationship with the Triennial Festival was a love-hate one, but the city can be proud of its role in the emergence of two of his major works, one of which is among his greatest. Leeds can also be proud of its function as midwife to Vaughan Williams' *Sea Symphony*, and to William Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast* - two other landmarks in twentieth-century British music. The city still has the International Pianoforte Competition, and an important one for young conductors, but it is a tragedy that the great Festival that was Leeds was eventually reduced to a mere shambles. Oh, for all those dedicated souls who worked so hard and took pride in ensuring that Leeds was known for the promotion of the best of British music as well as of Western music in general!

\* \* \*

I am grateful to Mr William J Connor, District Archivist at West Yorkshire Archive Service, Sheepscar, Leeds LS7 3AP, for permission to quote from minutes of Festival Committees; and to the Elgar Birthplace Trust for permission to quote from the Elgar correspondence.

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<sup>14</sup>Moore, J N : *Edward Elgar : Letters of a Lifetime* (Oxford, 1990) p 82

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**The ELGAR Society  
North West Branch Manchester**

**AN ELGAR LUNCHEON**

to be held at  
**The Portland Thistle Hotel  
Piccadilly Gardens Manchester**  
on  
**Sunday 24 March 1996 at 1.00 pm**

The After Luncheon Speaker will be  
**ARTHUR BUTTERWORTH**  
the Northern composer

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## DR HERBERT SUMSION (1899 - 1995)

### Some personal recollections

To every chorister the name Sumsion is surely synonymous with canticle settings in G major. In my day this music was fairly new. Though we may have smiled a little at the triplet figure in the *Nunc Dimittis* we delighted in the soaring phrases of the *Magnificat*; the whole experience was like a breath of fresh air. My own particular favourite was the *Te Deum*. The thrilling D major outbursts at the words "praise Thee", the occasional Warlockian harmonies and the undulating beauty of the final pages still give me enormous pleasure.

My first sight of Dr Sumsion was in Gloucester Cathedral at a Choral Festival (around ?1950). After the service I was shown discreetly to the organ loft where he was playing Bach's *Fantasia & Fugue in C minor* as the concluding voluntary. The playing sounded masterly but he made it all look so easy. Like Thalben-Ball his demeanour at the console was totally relaxed and he had no difficulty whatever in getting his fingers around fistfuls of notes. Both were fine pianists, of course.

Later I was to see Dr Sumsion at the Three Choirs Festivals which I attended occasionally in my student days. Though my main memories, perhaps, are of the music of Howells and Vaughan Williams, conducted by the composers themselves, I remember well Sumsion's fine performance of the Kodály *Symphony in C*. He obviously had something of an affinity with this composer following the historical performance of *Psalmus Hungaricus* at his first Festival in 1928.

When I became organist of Worcester Cathedral in 1963, Dr Sumsion, or 'Daddy' as he was known, became known to me as John. I am proud to say that we became the firmest of friends and I always felt great affection for him. He often seemed quiet and shy but he was decisive, well-organised and rarely without a twinkle in his eye. His performances were always meticulously prepared, the music carefully analysed and the scores marked. Like many others I owe a great deal to his example and kindness. Though I do not recall clearly any of his performances of the big Elgar choral works, his incomparable recording of the *Organ Sonata* illustrates his rare understanding of the Elgarian idiom. I do, however, remember vividly an impassioned account of *Psalmus Hungaricus* (Kodály again), a radiant reading of Strauss's *Four Last Songs* with Heather Harper and perhaps best of all, a gripping *Job*. John was apt to be critical of some of the new choral music which appeared in the 1960s which he found irritating and predictable. Composers' endless use of seconds, 7ths and 9ths annoyed him. "Why don't they settle for an octave?" he used to say. Also the fake four-part writing in which soprano and alto, tenor and bass double each other in octaves was a particular *bête noire*.

By 1964 my wife and I felt that we knew John and Alice well enough to invite them to accompany us on a short trip to Brittany. They accepted. John had not been to France for over thirty years. His reserved, typically English manner and his cloth cap delighted everyone. Alice attacked everything with the inquisitive zeal of an American tourist and went armed with letters and photos from a French pen-friend dated 1919. She was convinced that she would find this man and I fear that the rest

of us laughed slightly at this unlikely project. However, after much research he was found and there was a great deal of embracing, champagne and a degree of charming embarrassment from John. This quality had also been noticed by one of the waitresses at the hotel where we were staying. By the last day John managed in hesitant French, "Quelle est votre nom?" There was, as always, much mirth!

In retirement John busied himself with teaching and composing and spent many hours mowing the vast area of lawns at Hartley. We visited frequently during this period. As the years passed it was good to see more and more of John's music appearing in print. At our last meeting I remember talking to him about his *Cello Sonata*, a copy of which was lying on the table. It is good to hear of cellists who are taking up this excellent work. To those who are perhaps only familiar with his church music it shows a completely different facet of John's output. The inclusion of a movement from it at the Memorial Service at Gloucester Cathedral added greatly to the atmosphere of this intensely moving occasion.

Christopher Robinson

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## CAROL HOLT

The news of Carol Holt's death will have reached those members who attended this year's AGM and accompanying weekend when it was still vivid in their memories. The effective organisation and happiness which was the hallmark of the two days was a reflection of Carol's personality and her abilities. With Jim, her husband, they organised a very special series of activities. Shunning the limelight they nevertheless presided benignly over the various events which unfolded like clockwork.

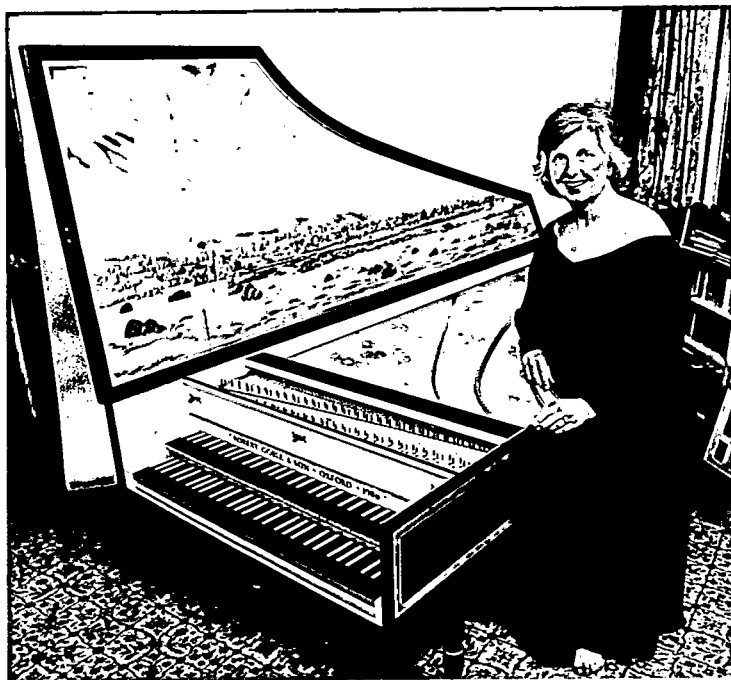
I was Secretary to the Society when Carol Holt and her family first entered on my life, joining the newly created 'family membership' scheme with the enthusiasm and commitment which personified her time of service to the Society and her attitude to life. When, after six years as Secretary, I felt it was time to stand down in 1985, I found myself facing the prospect of continuing in the role until we found a successor. Carol quickly offered herself for the position, and the rest is part of her legacy. When I became Chairman Carol's support, friendship and advice was invaluable, and I found myself working with someone who, although she had her ear close to the ground in Malvern and Worcester, could always be relied upon to give completely honest and impartial advice. This was crucial during the dispute over the Birthplace development.

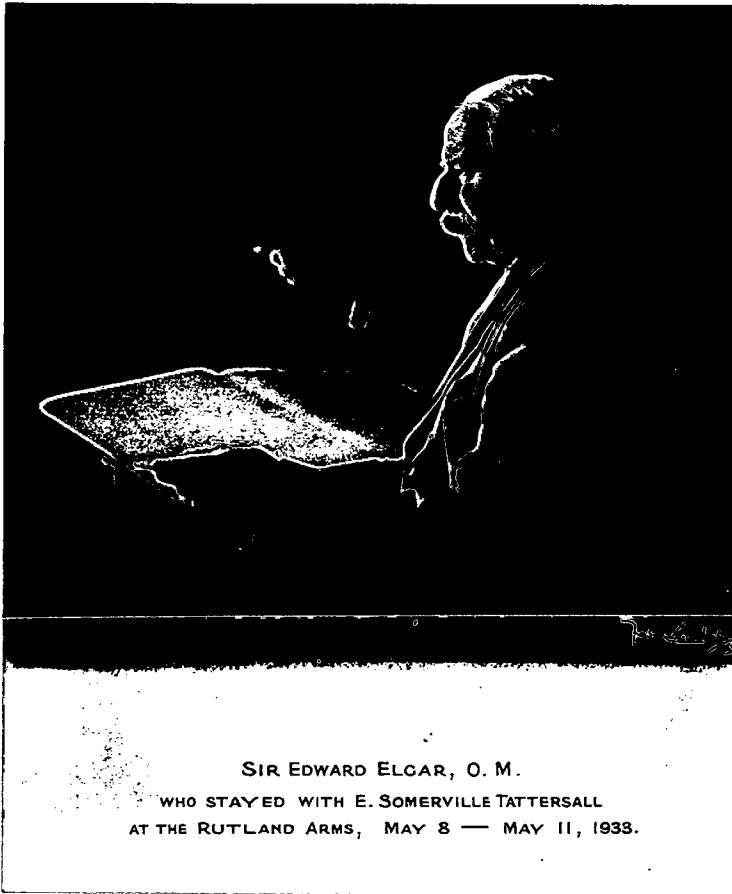
Carol's premature death has not so much robbed the Society of a Secretary (she was to stand down in 1996), but someone who personified the Society: its friendliness (which she had done so much to foster) and its ability to look ahead and undergo renewal. During her ten years as secretary Carol served three Chairmen, performed

and lectured at most branches, stoically overcame cancer, and kept open house for us all. Carol's going will leave a gaping hole, but one which she would have expected us to fill as quickly as possible and with the minimum of sentiment.

Personal memories include long talks on the telephone, Carol's wonderfully eclectic musical tastes, her communicative skills, her great joy of living and her wise, patient thoughts which turned the most intractable problem into a simple clear issue. Along with all who knew her I will miss Carol beyond description. I know the Society will wish me to record our deep sense of loss and join me in sending their condolences to her husband Jim, her children Simon, Louise and Pippa, and her beloved grandchildren.

Andrew Neill





SIR EDWARD ELGAR, O. M.

WHO STAYED WITH E. SOMERVILLE TATTERSALL  
AT THE RUTLAND ARMS, MAY 8 — MAY 11, 1933.

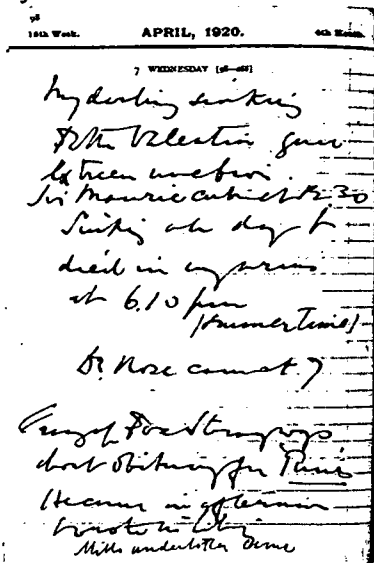
Walter Henry 'Pip' Taylor owned the Rutland Arms, Newmarket, where Elgar stayed as a guest of Somerville Tattersall, of the famous family of horse auctioneers. Mr Taylor died in 1969, his wife in 1983, and among the artefacts was this treasured photograph. Earlier this year, Mrs Close, a family friend of the Taylors and one of the executors of their estate, presented it to the Birthplace via the West Midlands Branch. (Information from Robin Hales).

Prints (with or without wording) can be obtained by members from Michael Trott, 1 Shuthonger Manor, Tewkesbury, Glos GL20 6EF. Approximate prices are £5 for 7" x 5", £5-50 for 8" x 6", and £7-50 for 10" x 8".

## THE UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM'S ELGAR COLLECTION

Reading through the University of Birmingham's staff magazine, my attention was brought to a sharp halt by Elgar's familiar features staring out from amongst its pages. My initial reaction was to think it was an article about Elgar's tenure as first Professor of Music at the University (the general understanding here amongst my colleagues is that Elgar was appointed to the post but never actually lectured - a belief which I try and rectify as gently as possible). But no; the photograph accompanied an article announcing the acquisition by the University's Barber Fine Art and Music Library of what they refer to as 'The Elgar Collection', comprising diaries, letters and other material related to him.

There are fifty-nine diaries in total; ten by Elgar, thirty-three by Alice, and sixteen by Carice. It is well-known that Alice was assiduous in her recording of the



everyday life of the family, but most especially that of her husband; there are descriptions of their social engagements, dinners, royal occasions and visits to the theatre, etc. We also learn through Alice's words about Elgar's compositional process, and the physical strain that it created. Other passages relate to individual works: "Most beautiful, most wonderful in cathedral. Prelude never to be forgotten...a most wonderful day to have in one's life", she wrote of the first Three Choirs' performance of *Gerontius* in 1902. Diary entries also clearly show Elgar's doubts over accepting the Birmingham Professorship in 1904.

Elgar's own diaries span thirty-five years, and include his heartbreaking entry on 7 April 1920: "My darling sinking. Father Valentine gave extreme unction...Sinking all day & died in my arms at 6.10 pm..."

The majority of the letters now at Birmingham are made up of those to Fred Gaisberg of The Gramophone Company, including this from 22 November 1932, after a famous performance of the *Violin Concerto*: "Now I should be a very ungrateful person if I did not at once send hearty thanks to you...for bringing about the wonderful performance. Yehudi was marvellous..."

It is good to know that this important archive has passed into the keeping of this fine institution, whose music section is one of the largest university music collections in the country.

Dominic Guyver

*(The assistance of the University of Birmingham in the preparation of this article is gratefully acknowledged).*

## RANDOM RAMBLINGS...

As the Chairman has pointed out elsewhere, Carol Holt had broad musical sympathies and was extremely active in many fields of music. For some years she had conducted a Carol Concert in Malvern Priory in aid of charity. This year's concert is dedicated to her memory, and will take place in the Priory on 27 December at 3.00 pm, admission £1-50. Proceeds will go to the Worcester Hospitals Charitable Trust. Taking part will be the Malvern Festival Chorus, whose Chairman, Hywel Davies, is also Secretary of the West Midlands Branch. The Society has decided to set up a fund in Carol's memory to assist young musicians. Details of this, and how members can contribute to it, are to be found on a form included with this issue.

\* \* \* \* \*

With the death on 11 August of Dr Herbert Sumsion, the Society loses its oldest Vice-President and last remaining link with those who worked with Elgar at the Three Choirs. The story is well-known of his being thrust into prominence at the 1928 Three Choirs after taking over at Gloucester on the sudden death of Sir Herbert Brewer. The accomplished way in which the 29-year-old directed the Festival drew an Elgarian compliment, dressed up as ever in a pun: "What at the beginning of the week was assumption has now become a certainty!" It was also said of Sumsion that his account of *The Dream of Gerontius* sounded as if the composer himself was conducting it.

\* \* \* \* \*

Professor Ivor Keys died on 7 July. An eminent scholar, teacher, composer, conductor, organist, he was Professor of Music at Nottingham University from 1954-68, and then Peyton Professor in the University of Birmingham, which of course put him in direct line from Elgar himself. I well remember the talks he gave in the early years of the London Branch on the *Cello Concerto*, and on Elgar's writing for the orchestra. His 1987 A T Shaw Lecture on *The Apostles* and its links with the *St Matthew Passion* has been expanded and included in Raymond Monk's *Edward Elgar: Music & Literature*, together with another essay on the music written at Brinkwells. We are the poorer for the passing of not just an eminent musician and Elgarian, but of a genuinely nice man. The notice in *The Times* said simply: "He was loved and respected by all who knew him".

\* \* \* \* \*

In the last issue we reported on the performance of *King Olaf* at the Bergen Festival in Norway at the beginning of June. It now transpires that it was given to commemorate one thousand years since Olaf Tryggvason set out for Norway from Britain to convert his fellow-countrymen; *The Times* reported that "Norway is bristling with millennium celebrations". We know that Elgar got the story of *King Olaf* from Longfellow's *Tales of a Wayside Inn*, but is it too much of a coincidence that he began his composition during 1895, ie. the nine-hundredth anniversary of

Olaf's return? I wonder whether Elgar read a magazine or newspaper article on this subject which prompted him to choose it at this particular time?

\* \* \* \* \*

Around the turn of the century the organist at our local parish church was a Dr E Markham Lee, a well-known recitalist and composer of small pieces for organ and for piano. I recently came across a book by him entitled *The Story of Symphony*. It was written in 1916 as part of the 'Music Story' series (in the same series Nicholas Kilburn had written the volume on chamber music). It is always interesting, with hindsight, to read early impressions of works now firmly established. Of Elgar Dr Lee wrote: "Its success [the *First Symphony*] was phenomenal, a fact largely due to the great reputation which Elgar had already gained, and so far as can be seen, this success has been but short lived. The music is fine, but not necessarily symphonic: the mystic theme with which the work opens, although particularly typical of its composer, is not perhaps specially typical of the symphonic form. The *Second Symphony* in E flat, dating from 1911, also appears to have gained but a meagre foothold on the shore of success. Great as are these works they are neither so strong nor so convincing as many of Elgar's less classically conceived tone pictures for the orchestra".

\* \* \* \* \*

A West Midlands Branch member has kindly lent me the programme of an Elgar Memorial Concert. It took place on 26 May 1947 in the Royal Albert Hall, and was organised by the Trustees of the Birthplace in aid of the Elgar Memorial Fund. The Administrators of the Trust Fund were Carice Elgar-Blake, Sir Adrian Boult, Sir Barry Jackson, Lady Atkins, and John Littleton. In the light of recent events, the following from the appeal is interesting: "At present the sum needed is relatively small, but when building is possible it is hoped to add a small library and museum where occasional lectures and recitals might be given; so that those who visit the birthplace of one of England's immortals might have an opportunity of listening to some of his music and gain a more intimate knowledge of his surroundings". The programme notes were by Basil Maine, and the works performed were the *Introduction & Allegro* and the *Second Symphony* conducted by Sir Adrian. The rest of the programme consisted of Elisabeth Schumann singing songs by Mahler and Strauss, and Phyllis Sellick playing Walton's *Sinfonia Concertante*.

\* \* \* \* \*

We also report with sadness the death aged 83 of Vivian Cooke of Malvern on 5 September. Miss Cooke was a well-known local artist, and exhibited locally as well as teaching art in local schools and organising exhibitions for the Malvern Festival. She was a founder member of the Elgar Society and indeed a member of the first committee along with such as Spencer Noble, David Willcocks, and Bertie and Lydia Shaw. The West Midlands Branch has been offered several of her paintings of Elgar houses which may eventually be displayed at the new Visitors' Centre at Broadheath.



\* \* \* \* \*

There has been a major shake-up at the Malvern Festival. After this year's loss-making event the Director, the composer Matthew Taylor, has been replaced by William Boughton, the renowned founder and director of the English String Orchestra. There has also been changes in the management personnel; and from next year the Festival will be known as the Malvern Elgar Festival. Commenting on this, Mr Boughton said that it was time to take the festival back to its roots and make the connection between Malvern and Elgar as strong as the links between Salzburg and Mozart, Bayreuth and Wagner, and Stratford and Shakespeare. "It needs to be made into an international festival attracting artists from around the world. An international Elgar Festival will attract not only international performers but international audiences", he said. The 1996 event will run from 30 May to 8 June, and Elgar and Ravel will be the featured composers. The Elgar works are certainly attractive: Tasmin Little playing the *Violin Sonata*; Raphael Wallfisch the *Cello Concerto*; Peter Donohoe some salon pieces; David Owen Norris the UK première of the *Five Piano Improvisations*; the Lindsay Quartet will play the *String Quartet*, and Kaleidoscope the *Piano Quintet*. Rory Boyle will conduct the Festival Chorus in *The Apostles*, the Finzi Singers will perform some part-songs, and William Boughton will conduct the New Queen's Hall Orchestra in the *First Symphony*. More details in the March JOURNAL.

\* \* \* \* \*

On 10 August a reception was held at the Barber Institute of Fine Arts at Birmingham University to mark the formal acquisition by the University of the Elgar diaries (see the separate article by Dominic Guyver), which have been the subject of some debate in recent years. The collection was initially offered at a fraction of its probate value to both the Hereford & Worcester County Council and to the Foundation, but they both declined. Actually the diaries can now be consulted in four places, as bound facsimile copies are available at the Record Office in Worcester and at the Birthplace; and the British Library has a copy of Jerrold Northrop Moore's typescript. It is good to know that the contents are thus readily accessible, and that the originals remain in safe keeping in Britain.

\* \* \* \* \*

For those who missed the October issue of the *BBC Music Magazine* containing the CD of *The Spanish Lady* and the *Third Symphony* talk and extracts (see Robert Anderson's review on p 144), copies can be obtained from BBC Music Magazine (Back issues), PO Box 425, Woking, Surrey GU21 1GP (tel: 01483 733719). The cost (including p + p) is £4-95.

\* \* \* \* \*

Members will have noticed that the rear inside cover now contains information of various descriptions. May I draw your attention again to the Elgar Loan Collection. This is a facility which John Morrison has built up over the years and is *absolutely*

*free to members.* Even if we are not practising musicians, surely we are all in touch with singers, instrumentalists, church choirs, choral societies, wind bands, full orchestras, etc for whom the collection might be an introduction to a wider appreciation of Elgar. The object of the collection is to get more Elgar played and known, and this is an excellent way of helping to bring that about. John Morrison awaits your call or letter! He only asks that you indicate which areas of music you are interested in; it is pointless for him to send a 20-page list if you are only interested in one or two. He is particularly anxious to emphasize that he has arranged a number of pieces for wind band and brass band which are otherwise unavailable in those categories.

\* \* \* \* \*

I mentioned some time ago that Elgar's music is often played now by companies who are keeping you "in a queue" on the telephone. The *Daily Telegraph* reports that Her Majesty's Stationery Office is now playing...*Land of Hope and Glory*, the reason being that it wanted something more uplifting after complaints when it was relaying the shipping forecast!

\* \* \* \* \*

Leonard Slatkin's decision to preface his Prom performance of the *Enigma Variations* with a ten-minute talk did not please everyone (see Letters section). The line he took was also contentious, viz. that it came out of Elgar's depression: 'E.D.U' was written, the composer said later, "at a time when friends were dubious and generally discouraging as to the composer's musical future". From this Slatkin is led to suggest that some of the friends "pictured within" are not so much portraits as caricatures. As he said in an interview in *The Times*, "My view of the *Variations* is rather dark, because I take literally Elgar's comment about the lack of support from his friends at the time of composition. I think some of the variations are actually mean-spirited". So the Finale - written in what Michael Kennedy calls Elgar's "I'll show 'em" mood - actually lifts him above his motley crew of friends and his own depressive state.

\* \* \* \* \*

With the conclusion of Cecil Bloom's article on Elgar's links with Leeds, it seems opportune to point out that the choral tradition in the city is alive and flourishing. The concert of 18 November (see Dates for your Diary) includes two extended choral pieces by Stanford, whilst on the previous Saturday Simon Wright conducts the Leeds Festival Chorus in Mendelssohn's *Die Erste Walpurgisnacht*; and Parry's *Invocation to Music*, a commission for the Leeds Musical Festival exactly one hundred years ago.

\* \* \* \* \*

Next year's Three Choirs Festival will be held at Worcester from 17 - 24 August. It will mark the last appearance at these meetings of Dr Donald Hunt, who has been

Organist at Worcester for over twenty years. He will close the 1996 Festival with the work with which he opened his first in 1975 - *The Dream of Gerontius*. Other Elgar includes a concert performance of Dr Young's version of *The Spanish Lady*, the *First Symphony*, Elgar's arrangement of Bach's *Fantasia & Fugue in C minor*, the *Piano Quintet*, and the one hundredth anniversary performance of *The Light of Life*, premièred at Worcester in 1896. There is also an "Elgar drama" (no details given) entitled *Wand of Youth*.

\* \* \* \* \*

Members who have responded to the special offer of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation recording of the *Cello Concerto* are advised that there has been an unavoidable delay in the production, and it should now be sent out in December.

### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

4 November	The Apostles <i>Soloists/RLP Ch &amp; 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
8 November	Serenade for Strings <i>Milton Keynes City O/Davan Wetton</i>	Queen Elizabeth Hall, South Bank
9 November	The Spirit of England <i>J.Howarth/BBC Ch &amp; SO/Hickox</i>	Royal Festival Hall South Bank
11 November	Cello Concerto <i>A.Baillie/Guildford PO/J.Willcocks</i>	Civic Hall Guildford
18 November	Violin Concerto <i>Oleg/RLPO/Pešek</i>	Philharmonic Hall Liverpool 7.30 pm
18 November	Sea Pictures (with V.Williams : Sea Symphony) <i>S.Fulgoni/St Edmundsbury Bach Ch &amp; O/ Oxley</i>	St Mary's Church Bury St Edmunds 7.30 pm 01284 769505
18 November	Froissart (with Stanford : Te Deum, & Stabat Mater) <i>Soloists/BBC Phil/Leeds Phil Chor, Huddersfield Chor Soc/Hickox</i>	Town Hall, Leeds 7.30 pm
19 November	Symphony no 2 <i>Scottish Sirj/Mantle</i>	Greyfriars Church Edinburgh 7.45 pm
23 November	In the South <i>BBC SO/A.Davis</i>	Royal Festival Hall South Bank

2 December	The Black Knight (with Stanford : The Revenge; Parry : Blest Pair of Sirens) <i>Reigate &amp; Redhill Ch Soc/Lambeth O/Fifield</i>	St Matthew's Church, Redhill 7.30 pm
2 December	The Kingdom <i>Soloists/Wells Cath Orat Soc/Crosland</i>	Wells Cathedral
13 December	Symphony no 1 <i>LPO/Mehta (Barbirolli Memorial Concert)</i>	Royal Festival Hall South Bank 7.30 pm
17 December	Wand of Youth Suite 2 <i>National Children's O/Williams</i>	Queen Elizabeth Hall
13 January 1996	Symphony no 1 <i>RLPO/Handley</i>	Philharmonic Hall 7.30 pm
17 January	Cello Concerto <i>J.Lloyd Webber/B'mouth Sinf/Studt</i>	Poole Arts Centre 7.30 pm
11 February	The Dream of Gerontius <i>J.Rigby, J.Tomlinson, tenor - tba/Royal Chor Soc/RPO/Mackerras</i>	Royal Albert Hall 7.30 pm
25 February	"Elgar on Film" (Ken Russell, plus archive film, etc) <i>Andrew Youdell</i>	Barbican Cinema London 4.30 pm
7 March	Cockaigne, Cello Concerto <i>L.Anstee/Bath SO/Holroyd</i>	Forum, St James' Parade, Bath 7.30 pm 01225 448831
13 March	Introduction & Allegro <i>City of London Sinf/Hickox</i>	Corn Exchange Cambridge 01223 357851
16 March	The Music Makers (with Lloyd : A Litanie) <i>J.Watson/Guildford Chor Soc/Philh/Wilson-Johnson</i>	Royal Festival Hall South Bank 7.30 pm
23 March	The Light of Life <i>K.Flowers,M.McDonald,D.Fieldsend, P.Savage/Hereford Chor Soc/Orchestra da Camera/Massey</i>	Hereford Cathedral 7.30 pm
23 March	The Dream of Gerontius <i>J.Higgins,B.Bottone,A.Dale Forbes/Luton Chor Soc/Chiltern SO/Mann</i>	St Mary's Church Luton 7.30 pm
30 March	Wand of Youth Suites 1 & 2 (with Alfred Hill : Symphony no 4) <i>Lambeth O/Fifield</i>	All Saints', West Dulwich SE 21 7.30 pm

## MUSIC AND RECORD REVIEW

The Spanish Lady. An opera in two acts after Ben Jonson 'The Devil is an Ass', edited, arranged and orchestrated by Percy Young.

Novello, Vocal Score £14.95

The Spanish Lady : first recording of an unfinished opera.

Jonathan Veira, Christopher Maltman, Phyllis Cannan, Niall Morris, Ian Storey,

Alan Ewing, Lisa Milne, Scottish Opera Chorus,

BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra conducted by Anne Manson

Sketches from Symphony no 3. A Radio 3 broadcast presented by Anthony Payne.

Keith Swallow (piano), BBC Philharmonic Orchestra

conducted by Yan Pascal Tortelier

(Extracts from the 'King Arthur' Suite by the Bournemouth Sinfonietta

conducted by George Hurst (Chandos CHAN 6582))

BBC MM 38 (available only with the 'BBC Music Magazine')

The headline to Novello's publicity announces "Elgar's Opera Published", and the *BBC Music Magazine* refers to the work as "completed by Percy Young". Nothing could be further from the truth, as Dr Young would be the first to admit. The 180 or so sketches that Elgar left for the opera can be boiled down to ideas, some of them extensive, for about thirty numbers, few of which were given a fixed place in the projected scheme. This material, for libretto and music, has been published with meticulous scholarship in vol.41 of the Elgar Complete Edition by Dr Young. W H Reed, who played through parts of the music many times with Elgar, was nonplussed by the 'story': "If I am ever asked what it was all about I shall have to confess that I have not the faintest idea, and never had". That is hardly surprising. Stratford has now shown us *The Devil is an Ass*, and Elgar's fastening on the play seems the more incomprehensible. Percy Young has made sense of the surviving libretto by means of massive cuts, some additions and much rearrangement. The result is a viable couple of acts divided into five scenes. It is piquant to note that some of Jonson's bawdiness, carefully ignored by Elgar, has been surreptitiously restored. Less admirable is the confusion in the vocal score 'Synopsis' whether Frances is Fitzdottrel's daughter or ward. She is both within five lines. If the former, the elderly Fitzdottrel is proposing incest; Elgar and his colleague Barry Jackson had been concerned enough at implications of adultery by the young Wittipol to have Frances as ward rather than Fitzdottrel's wife. Novello's novel twist befits the closing years of a remarkable century.

The music is more problematic. One can sympathise with Dr Young in the task of trying to order so many scattered sketches. He has been right, I think, to ignore Elgar's sometimes precise markings at the head of a piece. The delightful 'Burlesco', for instance, that here accompanies the initial dance of the junior devil Pug on his way to earth was repeatedly shown by Elgar as for 'Act II sc i' and titled 'Mock Espana'. Never mind; the music is good enough to be welcome anywhere. It is less acceptable to ignore Elgar's indications for expression. Some of the opera's numbers have a violin part copied out by Elgar for W H Reed. These have detailed markings in Elgar's usual manner, and it is needlessly misleading to slur *staccato* passages and omit many of Elgar's characteristic markings. Dr Young claims to have

reconstructed 'Money's a Drudge' out of "material to be heard later in the work". That is largely true; but he has lifted one phrase, to illustrate "Dogs' skins are worth twelve thousand pounds" from the 'Moods of Dan'. Enough said, except that Elgar also used the idea to launch *The Crown of India*. If it is a counsel of despair, though understandable enough, to introduce music not by Elgar and of which he may have had no knowledge, it is nonetheless naughty of Novello to make no mention of the intrusion in the case of no 7. What Percy Young has achieved from Elgar's torso is a *divertissement* containing snatches of light Elgar. It is indeed a pleasure to hear, as demonstrated by the team Anne Manson conducts with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra. If the paucity of vocal material (Percy Young has done his valiant best to provide it where Elgar hadn't yet bothered) was a real problem in last autumn's Cambridge production, taxing the choreographer's ingenuity in devising a seemingly interminable series of dances, here one can be grateful that so much has been rescued from one of Elgar's less promising projects.

The loss of the *Third Symphony* can be much more keenly felt. Elgarians will doubtless approve the family's refusal yet again to "let anyone tinker with it", so that Anthony Payne's sympathetic talk on the music allows most of the sketches to be played only on the piano. We have learnt recently how effective, even on a Broadwood square of 150 years ago, Elgar's orchestral music can sound on the piano. It is a very different thing, though, to be asked to imagine the orchestral splendour of music Elgar never scored. The problem is at once apparent in this fascinating recording. The actual opening has its instrumentation complete, and there it is, sardonic and acrid music, something strikingly new in Elgar's output. It matters not a jot, and is indeed the more intriguing, that this powerful idea was originally meant for the Third Oratorio and had probable links with the Antichrist; it is apt enough for the 1930s. But all too soon the keyboard must take over for the comparatively short exposition. Vera Hockman's second tune urgently needs the kaleidoscope of Elgar's orchestra to emerge from what seems rhythmic stalemate. The slow movement was to be the repository of much distinguished music, the beginning and end showing again considerable unease. The 'Scherzo' and finale were to have relied heavily on the *Arthur* music of 1923. As late as June 1928 Elgar wrote to the publisher William Elkin : "wd a sort of short 'Suite' (Arthur) be worth considering?" Thenceforth there is Arthurian silence for the good reason that Elgar planned some of the music for *The Spanish Lady* and considerable chunks of it for the *Third Symphony*. The CD does not make clear that the so-called 'King Arthur' music played here comes from a suite edited by Alan Barlow. The orchestration is neither Elgar's for the original Old Vic production nor what he might have devised for the *Symphony*. Nor under the circumstances do we get a chance to hear the subtle alteration Elgar made in the *Arthur* 'Banquet' music when making revisions for the new context.

Robert Anderson

## MUSIC REVIEWS

Salut d'Amour for violin and piano [P 7429]

Peters, £3-95 (£3-35 to Elgar Society members)

Salut d'Amour for solo piano [P 7369]

Peters, £2-95 (£2-50 to Elgar Society members)

Chanson de Nuit; Chanson de Matin for violin and piano [P 7370]

Peters, £4-50 (£3-80 to Elgar Society members)

All three publications are produced in an Urtext Edition by Donald Burrows.

(Discount prices include postage and packing. Orders, which must be received *before 31 December*, should be directed to Victoria Pope at Peters Edition Limited, 10-12 Baches Street, London N1 6DN. Tel: 0171 253 1638. Fax: 0171 490 4921).

*Salut d'Amour* was composed between 1886 and 1888 and by 1899 was available in no less than twenty versions (though not necessarily in arrangements made by Elgar). Although it was originally written for violin and piano, there were even vocal versions, two of them in English entitled *Pansies* and *Woo thou, sweet music*, and also one in French! The genre of music, shorter and more lightweight pieces for instruments around the home and written mainly for the amateur or semi-professional musician among whom Elgar plied his Worcester-based trade as a violin teacher and conductor at this time, had respectable forbears in the romantic music of Schumann and, before him, Mendelssohn's *Songs without Words*. Yet Elgar had as much regard for this humbler repertoire as he had ambition to write works for large-scale forces, particularly choirs, which would bring him greater acclaim. There was room for both lyricism and emotional range within the miniature framework of such instrumental solos.

It is established that the version for piano and violin was the original form of *Salut d'Amour*, and its conception is much to do with Elgar's meeting of his future wife, Caroline Alice Roberts. She came to him in October 1886 for lessons in piano accompaniment and nearly two years later, in September 1888, they were engaged. At some point in that two-year period Elgar wrote *Salut d'Amour*, possibly as a practical exercise for her instruction. It is dedicated to her with three asterisks, presumably 'C.A.R.', on the MS, and 'Carice' on the published version. Carice was a conflation of her Christian names and later became the name of their daughter. Interestingly the composer called the piece *Liebesgrüss* (German for 'Love's Greeting'), presumably capitalising on Mendelssohn's continued popularity in Victorian England, but his publishers (the German Schott) overruled him and gave it the French title befitting a piece of salon music. They paid him two guineas outright for the initial copyright and a further ten for some of the subsequent arrangements, but later paid him royalties when it was an evident best seller, although they were under no obligation to do so. He was lucky; the stories of other composers writing instant hits but missing out on such royalties because they gambled on selling the copyright are legion (Bruch and his *First Violin Concerto* come to mind).

Peters have produced the first and second versions of *Salut d'Amour*, ie. the autograph followed by the first published version and they make interesting comparison in Donald Burrows' thorough treatment. There is no difference as such in either number of bars or notes, but there is in the treatment of the music, the most obvious being the climax of the work at bar 53 (not 54 as stated in the informative Preface), *ff* and full-blooded in the original, *p dolcissimo* in the more ruminative second. It is, however, in the detail of the violin part that further differences are more prevalent; indeed it is virtually another treatment of the same piece, and would be fascinating to have juxtaposed on disc. Phrases are longer, the approach more reflective in the autograph. There are no fingerings or bowing marks in the autograph, but there are plenty of both in the second implying for the former a less extensive use of the higher positions, and for the latter a more hands-on approach by the composer in his relationship to his interpreters. Even the tempo indications differ, *Moderato*, *quasi allegretto* becoming *Andantino*. There is certainly a loss of intimacy in the second version, which is a more extrovert reworking. Further differences may be encountered by listening to Elgar's own 1914 and 1929 recordings of the chamber orchestra version of *Salut d'Amour* and comparing them to both versions found in this new edition.

The piano solo version could well have been considered by innocent purchasers of the day to have been Elgar's original version of *Salut d'Amour* because the title page read 'Piano in E (Original)', but this now appears to refer only to its key as the next version, also for piano, listed in Schott's catalogue transposed it to B flat. The arrangement obviously incorporates the original solo violin line with its accompaniment with suitable revisions (eg. bars 43 and 44) mainly to accommodate two normal-sized hand spans. There is a comprehensive critical commentary which elaborates on the differences between the published version and the autograph of this version, which the composer also used as a short score for the orchestral version. This is not an easy piece to play and should not be underestimated or dismissed as a pretty piano solo. Balance between melody and accompaniment is more critical than in the version for piano and violin, pedalling requires both dexterity and sensitivity, and again it may well be worth taking the trouble to listen to Elgar's own pianism in the five piano improvisations recorded in November 1929.

At the end of October 1897 Elgar offered *Chanson de Nuit* to Novello and once again sold its copyright outright, this time for ten guineas. Again he had his own title suggestions (first *Evensong* then *Vespers*) overruled by his publishers in favour of *Chanson de Nuit*. Two years later it was followed by its companion piece *Chanson de Matin*. They both subsequently appeared in orchestral arrangements. Once again interest focuses on Elgar's bowings and fingerings in the violin part, and his pedal indications in the piano accompaniment.

Producing these pieces has been a shrewd move by Peters as they are assured best sellers with an obvious immediate, practical outlet in performances by both amateur and professional. Handsomely produced, adorned by Manet's *Roses in a Champagne Glass*, they contain much valuable information. Mr Burrows (a Handel scholar) has been thorough, consulted the obvious oracles and produced detailed, informative critical commentary to support his editorial work. I would urge members to take advantage of the offer detailed at the start of this review and start planning those



### BOOK REVIEWS

Elgar, Newman and *The Dream of Gerontius* in the Tradition of English Catholicism  
by Percy M Young Scholar, 1995, hardback. 162 pp, £35.

Dr Young's Elgarian credentials have been well-established for at least forty years, since the publication of *Elgar OM*. This book, the most discerning and profound study of Elgar to appear since his death, and the first to be written by one without personal knowledge of the composer, was an important milestone in the reinstatement of Elgar as a composer of international significance. Since then Dr Young has produced two volumes of letters, an edition of the Birmingham University lectures, plus a biography of Alice Elgar, to say nothing of his work on *The Spanish Lady*.

Now in his eighties, he has turned his hand to examine the origins of Elgar's greatest choral work. The scene is set by tracing the development of English Catholicism from the mid-eighteenth century through the Emancipation Act of 1829 to the resurgence in Victorian times under such as Newman, Wiseman and Manning. The importance, so far as music is concerned, of the foreign embassy chapels is rightly stressed; these were the only places in the eighteenth century where Catholics could legitimately worship, and there was a tradition of musical excellence in many of them, thanks to Samuel Webbe, Vincent Novello, and others. This background is covered in five chapters, comprising nearly half the book; Newman does not appear until p 69, Elgar p 82. Whether one thinks such a detailed account of the background is necessary will depend on how one perceives the impact which the English Catholic Church made on the two men. I tend to the view that Newman was converted more because of the failure of the Anglican Church to bring to fruition those values which he had come to hold dear, than because of the overwhelming attractiveness of Catholicism as it was practised in this country at the time. In Elgar's case he seems never to have been an activist, whatever private beliefs he may have held. A regular worshipper certainly, in his early years; but composing wind quintet music during a sermon, and rushing out of church to hear the concluding voluntary in the Anglican Cathedral, are hardly marks of piety. Again, there are no large-scale works of Catholic liturgy dating from Elgar's maturity, though he was often urged to write them. Dr Young makes the valid point that Catholic music had a drama and a colour that were missing in the rather unadventurous and emotionally guarded hymns and anthems of the English church; but is the Elgar of *Gerontius* any more indebted to Webbe and Samuel Wesley than to, say, Walmisley or Goss? Surely the significance of Elgar's musical background is its comprehensiveness, with the visits by opera companies to Worcester, the performances of the great choral and orchestral classics at the Three Choirs, his day trips to the Crystal Palace, etc, etc.

When we come on to Elgar's work Dr Young deals in passing with the question of whether Dvořák ever intended setting *Gerontius*. However, he does not include a

detailed account of the way in which Elgar wrote it; quite rightly, as it has been adequately done elsewhere. Similarly, he does not dwell on the first performance, but concentrates more on the 1902 Three Choirs' performance when the more overtly Catholic parts of the text were changed; and on the first London performance in June 1903 at the as yet unconsecrated Westminster Cathedral.

Unfortunately the book is not free from mistakes; p 82 in particular, with its details of the Elgar family, contains several glaring errors, including W H Elgar's age and the date he arrived in Worcester, wrong dates for the births of Henry, Polly and Jo, and no mention of Frank or Dot at all (Jo is referred to as "the youngest of the Elgar sons"). One or two printing errors can also be found; the musical examples are not always clearly linked to the text; and the numbering of the illustrations goes awry.

Really there are two books here; one is an overview of the English Catholic Church over a century and a half; the other is the creation of a fine poem and a choral masterpiece. Dr Young has combined them cleverly, but I for one would rather have had less of the former and more of the latter.

The Editor

Elgar's Gigantic Worx : the story of the Apostles trilogy, by Michael Foster.

Thames, 1995, paperback. 120 pp. £9-95.

The revival of interest in *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom* during the last quarter century can be linked to the pioneering recordings of both works by Sir Adrian Boult (since when Richard Hickox has also recorded both, and Leonard Slatkin the later work). Our knowledge of the works' background has been enhanced by several writers, most notably Jerrold Northrop Moore in *A Creative Life and Elgar and his Publishers*; and Robert Anderson in *Elgar in Manuscript*, and his biography in the 'Master Musicians' series. Other valuable insights can be found in the two symposia edited by Raymond Monk, especially Christopher Grogan's article on the early plans for *The Apostles*, from the second book.

Now this material has been re-assembled, with some comments of his own, by Michael Foster, the Administrator of the Three Choirs Festival Endowment Fund. It seems that Mr Foster has not gone back to primary source material - most of which is readily accessible - but has largely confined himself to the writings mentioned above.

The use of secondary source material is a perfectly valid aid to research, as long as one remembers the dangers and limitations. For the further away one gets from the original, the more likely one is to distort the truth, as in the parlour game 'Chinese Whispers'. For an example in this book, consider the following from p 19: "Canon Gorton, who had been Elgar's main adviser so far [up to March 1903] on Anglican doctrine, invited the composer and his wife to adjudicate at the Morecambe Competitive Music Festival towards the end of April 1903. Whilst the Elgars came away from the Lancashire seaside town very much unimpressed by their experiences..."

So far as I am aware, no other writer has stated that Gorton advised Elgar before their meeting at Morecambe in April-May 1903; there are no references whatsoever in the correspondence before this time (the first mention seems to be in a letter from Gorton of about 8 May when he writes, "I should be so grateful for a copy of the libretto"). Such a statement, if true, requires amplification. Then, whilst it is true that the Elgars' "first impressions of Morecambe...were depressing" (Anderson, *Elgar*, p 59), Elgar eventually came away delighted with what he had heard, as he made clear in his notorious letter to Gorton of 26 May. In this he said that "the living centre of music in Great Britain" was not London but "somewhere further north". Indeed, so "impressed" was Elgar that he returned to the Festival several times in succeeding years. So from where do we learn that he was "unimpressed"? And to be really pedantic, Alice was not an adjudicator!

Sadly, there are many similar passages throughout the book, containing either errors of fact, or unsubstantiated opinions, or both. The German singer Wüllner was a tenor, not a bass (p 21). The *Coronation Ode* was not premièred in July 1903 in London (p 22), but in Sheffield the previous October. (Actually, the concert referred to was not even in July but on 24 June). The Gregorian Gradual which Elgar used is not *Constitues est* (p 23), but *Constitues eos*. Michael Kennedy was not responsible for *Letters to Nimrod* (p 26n). We learn that by 1909 Elgar had written "another symphony and the Violin Concerto" (p 36). *The Light of Life* is not a 'Cantata' (p 56). The Antiphon *O Sacrum Convivium* is not used in *The Apostles*, but only *The Kingdom* (p 90). "G.C." means 'gran cassa', ie. bass drum, not "large gong" (p 117). I could go on.

Many of Foster's assertions are at best debatable. Such statements as "Some of the music that was being written [in May 1903] reflected Elgar's lack of inspiration and appeared almost meaningless"; "Elgar is not always seen at his best in really simple music of this kind [the 'Alleluias' at the end of *The Apostles*]"; "Why does [Peter] never achieve any real status musically [in *The Kingdom*]?" cry out for amplification and justification which are not there.

The book was published to coincide with the performances this year at the Three Choirs, and there are signs of haste - a line missing at the foot of p 39; a repeated line from the foot of p 94; some repeated words (usually "the the"), and a whole host of spelling errors. Some could be slips; "redeptive", "receieved", "bretheren", "interupts", etc; but "assunder" should have been noticed, as should "Ezekial", "Chaldeean", "guage", "focussed" and "prevaracations"; plus those which come more than once, "annoint", "lietmotif", "sabachtani", and the ungrammatical "Pastor Pastorem". "Prophecy" (p 104) is not a noun.

The derivative nature of the book is further reinforced by its illustrations, which seem to be photocopies from other published material (unacknowledged), particularly Robert Anderson's two books and Grogan's article (mentioned above), and even Percy Young's *Elgar OM*. In fact no acknowledgement of the debt to other writers on Elgar is given anywhere. Other depressing features are a lack of an index, and undecipherable punctuation in several places. A source index for the libretto, which was promised in the pre-publication blurb, and which would have been useful, is not to be found.

I have not enjoyed writing this review, and despite the many interesting and useful things the book contains, it is not really possible to recommend it to members. Elgar and his 'Gigantic worx' deserve better than this.

The Editor

Sir Dan Godfrey - champion of British composers by Stephen Lloyd

*Thames, 1995. Paperback. £14.95*

Godfrey's name today, outside of long-remembered inhabitants of Bournemouth, probably means very little, but in his day he did more for "new" music, especially of British composers, than any other conductor since August Manns, and I do not forget to include Sir Henry Wood. Godfrey came of a musical family, mostly connected with military bands, but he became the most famous of them all. His connection with the founding of an orchestra in Bournemouth dates back to 1893, and from a tentative beginning Godfrey built the Bournemouth Municipal (later Symphony) Orchestra to be one of the best and boldest of provincial orchestras.

The boldness sprang from Godfrey's determination, frequently against local opposition, to programme little-known music and compositions by new composers, as well as including the established and popular repertoire. Stephen Lloyd has documented Godfrey's career as well as the history of the Bournemouth Orchestra. It is not a conventional biography in the sense that for several decades Godfrey and Bournemouth were synonymous in musical terms, and it is almost impossible to split the two. The programmes were remarkable in many ways. Much of the new music has faded away today, and one wonders if some pieces ever received another public performance, but like Manns at Crystal Palace in the nineteenth century Godfrey gave many composers their first chance of a public hearing. Even after only a few years the list of first British performances, under Godfrey's baton, is impressive. After the 1900-01 season Godfrey claimed to have programmed all the symphonies of Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Dvořák, Brahms & Tchaikovsky! An astonishing achievement for the time. Elgar too in his turn had reason to be grateful to Godfrey and this is all meticulously detailed in the book. I, for one, did not know that the first provincial performance of the Elgar *Violin Concerto* was given at Bournemouth with Kreisler as soloist. The book is full of fascinating facts, and is really more of a work of reference than a biography.

One or two points of criticism - there is very useful discography of the recordings with the Bournemouth players to be found as an appendix, but Godfrey's recordings - and there were quite a few of them - with other orchestras are to be found in footnotes on pp 115-6. They should surely be put together in any reprint. The footnotes are remarkably informative, but they are also lengthy, sometimes occupying over a quarter of the page. The need for the eye to keep jumping around does not make for comfortable reading. Could not some of the information have been incorporated in the main text? There is the occasional printing error - that remarkable young Welsh violinist Tessie Thomas, whose career was all too short, is referred to as 'Jessie' in both text and index. The author also perpetuates an error regarding Basil Cameron which appears in several reference works, including Grove. In *The Musical Times* for August 1901 W L Jacob finally put paid to the story that

Cameron early on adopted his mother's maiden name of Hindenburg because of a prejudice against British musicians. Basil Cameron's birth certificate, easily obtainable, shows that he was christened at Reading as Basil George Cameron Hindenburg. His father was Frederick Clement Hindenburg and his mother's maiden name was Sherman. This sort of musical error does get repeated over and over in books, so it is as well to scotch it when possible! This apart, Stephen Lloyd has done Godfrey proud - just as Godfrey did British music proud.

Ronald Taylor

Gordon Jacob : a centenary biography by Eric Wetherell.

*Thames, 1995, paperback. 112 pp. £9.95*

Gordon Jacob remembered watching Queen Victoria's funeral procession; for the coronations of George VI and Elizabeth II he was in the Abbey; he died aged 89 in 1984. One of the charms of this slight but lively book is the account of the social changes in the making of music during his life, from the days when it was polite to take your party piece to an informal gathering, to the present when perfection of international performance is ours at the touch of a button.

Jacob was the tenth child of an Indian Army family, and himself retained a military bearing. His sensitivity however can be read in a letter from the Front in 1916 when, after surveying ruined homes, he wrote to his sister : "What romances these buildings must have seen, what whispered words of love...And all this for nothing but human greed and lust for power".

He got himself to the RCM, then taught there on and off till 1966. Gradually he built up a reputation as all-round musician : teacher, conductor, orchestrator, arranger, adjudicator, composer. He was amazingly prolific : he composed some 400 works, of which Wetherell prints a select list (twenty concertos) with publisher but no dates (and no discography - his trombone concerto is just released). His *Orchestral Technique* (1931) became an indispensable textbook. Apart from his long list of well-known pupils, there were dozens of others, some even more distinguished, who turned to him for occasional help. The book gives glimpses of many musicians which will interest Elgarians, and yes, the scoring of Elgar's *Organ Sonata* is mentioned.

Wetherell makes no attempt to assess Jacob's compositional style, and simply recounts without bitterness the "wind of change" in post-war taste. When BBC commissions dried up, Jacob turned to composing for brass and wind bands, and youth orchestras. His words on critics [p 40] are extraordinarily judicious and generous (*The Composer and his Art, 1955*). There is no bibliography, so as a start may I direct interested readers to Lewis Foreman's interview with Jacob in 1982, printed in the BMSJ vol 7, October 1985.

When his wife died, after a happy but childless marriage, Jacob married her niece, and in his sixties had two children. Disarmingly, Wetherell admits that he feared he might paint too rosy a picture of the man, and tried to look for flaws : "I could find no one to say a harsh word about him". On a personal note : when I wrote the

obituary of Frank Howes for the RCM Magazine, the sweetest letter I received was from Dr Jacob, though he and I had never exchanged more than the occasional "good morning".

Diana McVeagh

Before...Elgar...and after : British music in performance edited by David J Brown  
*The Broadheath Singers, 1995. 39 pp. £4.95*  
Obtainable from 225, The Parkway, Iver Heath, Bucks SL0 0RQ.

At the inaugural meeting of the London Branch of the Society in 1971 I remember meeting a young man who had just put on a performance of *The Light of Life*. His name was Robert Tucker, and he had formed a choir and an orchestra for the purpose. As he told me years later, he found conducting so addictive, and people generally so encouraging, he continued; the concerts are still going strong, and now in their twenty-fifth year, to celebrate which this little book has been produced. Though short, it is well-presented, and I think of value beyond the Broadheath Singers and their acquaintances; for Tucker has over a quarter-century, in what must be a unique series of concerts, given performances of many long-forgotten works by British composers, many of whom are unknown even among music-lovers. Those of a cynical nature would probably say that there must be good reason for neglect; but even Elgar works which we now take for granted such as *The Light of Life* and *The Spirit of England* were real rarities in those days. I remember attending the 1972 concert which, as well as *The Spirit of England*, contained the Schumann *Requiem*. The following year, Tucker brought off a great coup by getting Leon Goossens to come and play the *Oboe Soliloquy*, the only movement of a projected Suite that Elgar meant to write for the great oboist. I remember that it was so short, that he played it twice!

The book begins with the text of an interview with Robert Tucker by Garry Humphreys, and continues with an authoritative overview of the works performed by Lewis Foreman, the acknowledged expert in neglected British music of this period. Then the composer and arranger Rodney Newton writes of the two works which he orchestrated for the series - Ernest Farrar's *The Blessed Damsel* and Eric Fogg's *The Hillside*. It is something of a scandal that full scores of many such works have disappeared, but it is easily done, and we must be grateful to such as Robert Tucker for re-establishing this part of our musical heritage.

The Editor

A Guide to the Symphony, edited by Robert Layton  
Oxford, 1995. 501 pp. £15.00, paperback

I have long treasured the two-volume Pelican symposium on the Symphony, edited by Robert Simpson, which appeared about thirty years ago, and still well worth reading. But much has happened in that time, views change, etc; and it is surely time for a new perspective. Robert Layton is an eminent musicologist, known particularly for his work on *The Gramophone* over the years, and several of his colleagues there - Stephen Johnson, Richard Osborne, and David Fanning - are

called into service in this book. Clearly this is an authoritative book, and will be a standard work for years to come. The strength of a symposium is the use of experts in each field; the weakness the lack of an overview. Again, even a book of 500 pages can hardly expect to give adequate coverage to all symphonic composers, and inevitably there will be emphases with which many may disagree. No one would argue with separate chapters for Bruckner (18 pages) and Mahler (20 pp); but Tchaikovsky lies buried in 'Russia before the Revolution' with just seven pages. There is, to me, a strong bias towards Scandinavia, a total of 54 pages, with separate chapters for Sibelius (16 pages) and Nielsen (12). As against that 'The Symphony in Britain' (written by Layton himself) is the last chapter, and just 27 pages long. Elgar receives 3½ pages, as does Vaughan Williams; and other important composers scarcely receive fair play, in such a compressed account. Malcolm Arnold, although unfashionably diatonic, surely deserves more than 3½ lines.

The Editor

### RECORD REVIEWS

Introduction & Allegro, Op.47. Serenade for Strings, Op.20. Elegy, Op. 58. With string music by Vaughan Williams and Britten.

*Orpheus Chamber Orchestra*  
*DG Masters 445 561-2*

Introduction & Allegro, Op.47. Serenade for Strings, Op.20. With string music by Vaughan Williams.

*Scottish Chamber Orchestra conducted by Wilfried Boettcher*  
*Pickwick IMP Classics PCD 2042*

Serenade for Strings, Op.20. Elegy, Op.58. With string music by Barber and Richard Strauss.

*Smithsonian Chamber Players conducted by Kenneth Slowik*  
*Deutsche Harmonia Mundi 05472 77343-2*

It is a sobering thought that, had Elgar died at that fashionable age for musical genius, between 35 and 40 as Mozart, Schubert or Mendelssohn did, it would be the *Serenade for Strings* by which he would probably be remembered today. Three very differing versions are on offer here. Slowik's Washington-based Smithsonian Chamber Players use gut strings on modern instruments, whose necks, bridges and bass bars have evolved since the last century to adapt to the music being written for the instrument. It is always ironic to me that although metal strings are dispensed with, the resultant sound (coupled with no vibrato of course) invariably produces a "wiry" sound, and so it does on occasion here, despite their sensitivity to Elgarian style. Their playing has nice touches after a rather bumpy start. Their fellow-Americans, the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, are a conductorless group playing on modern instruments with lashings of vibrato in this remastered recording from 1985 recorded (as was the Smithsonian group in 1994) at the Purchase Performing Arts Centre at New York State University. There are some over-indulgent moments here and there, they linger rather too much in the Larghetto, but the recording is warmly pleasing. Would that the Scottish Chamber Orchestra had taken a leaf out of their Orpheus colleagues' book and dispensed with their conductor. Boettcher seems a

man in a hurry, embarrassed by any hint of Victorian sentiment, and there is some unsteady ensemble in the Larghetto, interspersed with occasional impassioned moments. The orchestra has been distantly recorded, from which the solo violin and viola gain no benefit, and their German director seems equally remote in this breathless, unsatisfying interpretation. Elsewhere the American performers are both committed in their respective accounts of the *Elegy*. I was brought up on Barbirolli's *Introduction & Allegro* (grunts and all) and have rarely heard anything to touch it, but Orpheus come jolly near. Despite not having a conductor (or perhaps because they don't have one) their ensemble is impeccable, breathtaking in the swift fugue and its staccato semiquavers, for example. I've not heard some of their *rubati* before (eg. at fig 13) and they don't indulge in Barbirolli's huge *fp* followed by a huge *crescendo* in the penultimate bar of the work (quite rightly as it's not marked), an Elgarian fingerprint often met elsewhere. Boettcher and the SCO do, if rather feebly but generally, make a better job of this piece than the *Serenade*, though the distant recording only sends the solo quartet even further away, a silly blunder. Of the three discs I recommend the Orpheus highly or the Smithsonians if you favour the authentic touch.

Christopher Fifield

Cello Concerto, Op.85. With Dvořák : Cello Concerto.

*Karina Georgian, Alexander Rudin (cellos), Moscow Symphony Orchestra  
conducted by Constantine Krimetz  
Lydian 18149*

It is very easy to be parochial about Elgar's music and assume that only knighted conductors can conduct it or that only double-barrelled surnames can play it. Karina Georgian can, although praise is strictly qualified. Some of the tempi fairly race along, and the Moscow Symphony Orchestra players often have to hang on to her coat tails. She seems embarrassed to linger in the more melancholy parts, yet her tone is gorgeous, her technique very fine. Nevertheless however accomplished those two elements are, it's not enough for Elgar. Although in terms of timing Georgian is actually a minute or two slower than du Pré, her reading lacks the space for those special nuances that always make the listener catch breath. The *tenuti* in those upbeats, the poise on the bar line (poise and not pause, there is a marked difference), those idiosyncratic *portamenti* which connect notes and give line to Elgarian melody. Balance is a bit woolly, the soloist very forward, the orchestra rather distant and remote from affairs. As a result Mr Krimetz doesn't seem to make much of an impression on proceedings. Perhaps (Slatkin excepted) it is best left to those GB plates after all, though I still wish Richter had left us something.

Christopher Fifield

Sir Malcolm Sargent conducts British Music.

*Mary Lewis, Tudor Davies, Royal Choral Society, London Philharmonic, London Symphony, and New Symphony Orchestras conducted by Sir Malcolm Sargent  
Beulah 1PD13*

Falstaff, Op.68. Introduction & Allegro, Op.47. Serenade for Strings, Op.20



*London Symphony and New Symphony Orchestras*  
conducted by Anthony Collins  
Beulah 1PD15

Cockaigne Overture, Op.40. Cello Concerto, Op.85. Wand of Youth Suites 1 & 2, Opp. 1a & 1b. Elegy for Strings, Op.58.

*Anthony Pini (cello), London Philharmonic Orchestra*  
conducted by Eduard van Beinum  
Beulah 2PD15

With commendable enterprise Beulah Records have made available again some valuable recordings which have not been seen for a very long time. The Sargent record is particularly appropriate in this his centenary year, as it contains the soundtrack of the 1946 film 'The Instruments of the Orchestra' for which, of course, Britten wrote his *Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*. Sir Malcolm not only conducted but spoke the commentary, all of which is included here. Other notable tracks include Coleridge Taylor's enchanting *Othello Suite*; Holst's Ballet music from *The Perfect Fool*; and the 1924 recording of the Love Duet from Vaughan Williams' *Hugh the Drover*, which has the added interest of being Sir Malcolm's first recording. Sadly the Elgar is not of such a high standard. The *Pomp & Circumstance March no 1* is extremely slow (over seven minutes) and rather dreary, although *No 4* comes off better. The live performance of *I Sing the Birth* by the Royal Choral Society at the Albert Hall on 10 December 1928 is of great interest to Elgarians - the Society included it on its first record in 1980 - but quite frankly it is a poor thing. (Is it significant that it was not included in Elgar's own inventory of his record collection, as found in Jerrold Moore's *Elgar on Record*?) The tone, pitch, balance, ensemble are all found wanting. Recording techniques at live events were still relatively primitive in those early years of electrical recording, and there is one particularly hideous tenor near the microphone whom one wishes had missed his tram that evening!

The first Elgar works to be released on LP were recorded on Decca by the distinguished Dutch conductor, Eduard van Beinum, who at the time was principal conductor of the London Philharmonic. As John Knowles points out in the introduction to his Discography, in the '50s "records of Elgar's music conducted by foreigners were still greeted with suspicion by the critics", but hopefully we are a little less parochial today, and these versions can be taken on merit. And what merit there is! I remember them from a budget LP on Decca's 'Ace of Clubs' in the '60s, and in their new transfers they come up as bright as a button. As Malcolm Walker says in his excellent notes, van Beinum was "...never flamboyant, thereby unjustly giving the impression of understatement". The performances of *Cockaigne* and the two *Wand of Youth Suites* are certainly brisk, no-nonsense accounts, but there is also plenty of expression and conviction. Anthony Pini's sensitive playing of the *Cello Concerto* finds van Beinum an ideal accompanist, in much more wistful mood, and altogether this is a lovely version, underrated and well worth a listen, although possibly not quite in the top bracket. The sound is generally good and well balanced, and the orchestra give of their best. This well-filled disc (77 minutes) is worth every penny.

Much the same could be said of the disc featuring Anthony Collins, an interesting musician who moved from the ranks of the LSO violas into conducting, and also composing for films both here and in America. Elgar and Delius were his favourite English composers; indeed, Elgar's *First Symphony* was included in Collins' conducting debut in 1936, receiving ecstatic notices. Again, I knew these recordings from 'Ace of Clubs' and played them until they were worn out! Collins' instinct for the dramatic from his experience in films stands him in excellent stead in *Falstaff*. This is a very good version indeed, worthy to stand alongside the fine recent accounts by Tate and Rattle (both EMI). The music for the "scarecrow army", for instance, is beautifully articulated, with really crisp *staccato* quavers; and the recording wears its age remarkably well, with plenty of detail including the percussion - very important in this work. If the *Introduction & Allegro* lacks the rhythmic precision in the contrapuntal passages that one finds in the finest versions, eg. Britten, it is nevertheless an invigorating, out-of-doors account, with all the freshness of a spring day. A more-than-adequate *Serenade* completes an outstanding record, and group of records. Full marks to Beulah here.

The Editor

*Introduction & Allegro*, Op.47. Incidental Music and Funeral March from 'Grania & Diarmid' Op.42. With music by Bax, Hadley, Bliss, Holst, and Ireland.

*BBC Symphony, London Philharmonic and Philharmonia Orchestras*  
conducted by Sir Adrian Boult  
IMP BBC Radio Classics BBCRD 9127

Symphony no 1 in A ♭, Op.55. With music from the Proms conducted by Pritchard, Sargent, Leppard, Barbirolli, Kempe, and Rozhdestvensky.

*BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sir Adrian Boult*  
IMP DMCD 98

In the South (Alassio), Op.50. Symphony no 1 in A ♭, Op.55.

*BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sir John Pritchard*  
IMP BBC Radio Classics BBCRD 9121

More releases from the infuriatingly uneven new series of 'BBC Radio Classics'. The score here is two out of three. First, the good news. The disc of English music conducted by Boult is a classic, particularly at budget price. Despite the valid claims for Barbirolli and others, I believe Sir Adrian is without peer in this repertoire. Most of the recordings date from the '60s, and are outstandingly good for their age. Holst's *Hammersmith*, Ireland's *The Forgotten Rite*, and the little Hadley miniature, *One Morning in Spring*, are Boult at his best. So too is the *Grania and Diarmid* music, which Boult committed to disc a few years later. This version, I venture to suggest, is even finer than that later account. (Only the 'Funeral March' is credited in the notes, although the recording includes the Incidental Music as well). The only disappointment is the *Introduction & Allegro*, from a 1975 Prom (the rest of the disc comprises studio recordings). It is very slow for Boult, and he sounds rather uninvolved.

Another Prom performance from Boult, from the following year, of the *First*

*Symphony* can be found on a double-CD celebrating one hundred years of the Proms. It is a real mixed bag of pieces, with the emphasis on the BBC connection - five of the eight conductors were in charge of the BBC Symphony Orchestra at some stage. There is music from *Tannhäuser* by Beecham in 1954, one of only three Proms he ever conducted; suites from the *Nutcracker* from Sargent in 1966, and from *Der Rosenkavalier* from Barbirolli three years later - in each case their last Prom season.

Michael Kennedy, in his excellent book on Boult, quotes a letter of congratulation from the then BBC Controller of Music, Robert Ponsonby after this performance : "You bring to that symphony a poignant strength which I've never heard with any other conductor". A few weeks after this, Boult made his final recording of the work with the LPO (which won the Orchestral class of the first *Gramophone* Record of the Year awards in 1977); but here with the BBC he is no less convincing and compelling. As with the best of Boult, there is a strong sense of pace and structure, and a lack of fuss; the integrity of the work is never in question. The orchestra are a perfect foil; there is a freshness and enthusiasm about their playing, and the predictably uproarious ovation at the end seems highly appropriate this time. The sound is remarkably good, although just occasionally in the *tuttis* the gigantic acoustic is overwhelming.

Just why anyone saw fit to release the disc of John Pritchard conducting Elgar is completely beyond me. Sir John was an extremely gifted and versatile musician, but although there some nice moments in these performances they are generally unremarkable. The *Symphony* in particular finds the orchestra sounding rather tired and uncommitted. The playing is frankly sloppy in places and I lost count of split notes in the brass section. *In the South* comes from a 1974 Prom, and the 'Canto Popolare' is accompanied by unmarked coughs and bumps from a very noisy audience. Pritchard gives the work a drawn-out ending which makes it sound rather Mahlerian, but really there is no good reason why you should buy this. Strictly for Proms and Pritchard fans only!

The Editor

#### CD Round-up

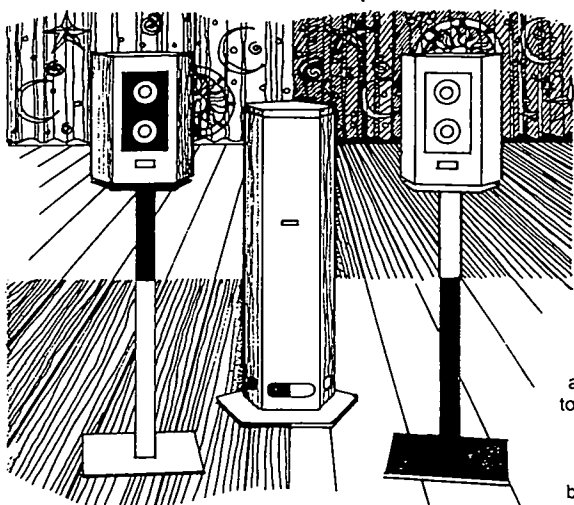
Looming large in my memories of student days are the Kenwood Open Air concerts, where you could sit on the grass for half-a-crown, and enjoy great music (I remember George Hurst conduct a fine *Cockaigne* there). Now Warner Classics in conjunction with English Heritage - who now run the Kenwood concerts, as well as those at Marble Hill (Twickenham), Audley End in Essex, and Wrest Park in Bedfordshire - have brought out 'Music on a Summer Evening' (0630 11383-2). Needless to say these are commercial recordings, not open air performances. In fact, I wonder whether the violin in *The Lark Ascending* (here in Tasmin Little's excellent account) would be heard in the open air; the only concerto I ever remember hearing at Kenwood was Haydn's *Trumpet!* Popular classics by Haydn, Handel, Mozart, Johann Strauss, etc, played by Warner artists are the order of the day; Andrew Davis's *Pomp & Circumstance no 4* is the Elgar contribution. The only unusual item is the *1812 Overture* in Mengelberg's 1940 recording with the Concertgebouw.

Davis's 'British Line' series of recordings is the basis of another Warner compilation entitled 'The Best of British'(0630 10933-2). This would be an ideal introduction to a wider appreciation of British Music, containing as it does the standard "lollipops" such as *Pomp & Circumstance 1 & 4*, *Chanson de Matin*, *Salut d'Amour*, *Nimrod*, *Jerusalem* (in Elgar's orchestration), etc; as well as extracts from longer pieces, such as movements from Vaughan Williams' *Fourth* and *Eighth Symphonies*, the *Larghetto* from the *Serenade for Strings*, and the *Rondo* from Elgar's *Second Symphony*. High quality performances and recordings.


Conifer have taken the two records of British part-songs made a few years ago by the City of Birmingham Symphony Chorus under Simon Halsey and released them as a double-CD set (75605 51752-2). Disc 1 includes the choral suite *From the Bavarian Highlands*, with piano accompaniment by Richard Markham. It is good to hear a large choir tackle these pieces, and there is some excellent singing; I particularly admired the wonderful central section of 'False Love'. The performance is rather spoiled by fast tempi in the last two songs; the words are gabbled, and the songs sound rushed. The rest of the disc comprises pieces by Holst, and Gareth Lewis waxed enthusiastic about them in the original review (JOURNAL September 1989). Disc 2 is made up of the complete Delius part-songs, plus a generous helping of Grainger. Wonderful stuff; I couldn't get *Shallow Brown* out of my brain for days afterwards! This set is extremely good value and well worth having; for those interested in British choral music it is essential.

The Editor

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## BRANCH REPORTS

LONDON Branch continues to thrive, with an increasing membership now standing at over 300. 'Extra-Mural' events in this new season include a visit to the Barbican on 7 October to hear Sir Charles Mackerras conduct the *First Symphony*, and our Silver Jubilee lunch at Monkey Island, Bray on 19 May next year. The new season opened on 2 October with a violin and piano recital by two ex-Chetham's pupils now studying at Cambridge. The Branch has appointed a Publicity Officer, Paul Rooke, who asked members for assistance in distributing Branch Programme leaflets. To date he has had requests for one thousand leaflets for distribution among music clubs, libraries and shops. The creation of this post has come at a most appropriate time in the Elgarian calendar, since interest will be aroused by centenary performances.

YORKSHIRE. The season ended on 24 July with our annual 'Summer Soiree' - an informal evening of good food, drink and general conviviality. Our 1995-96 programme is already under way, and includes a visit by Arthur Reynolds with an impressive collection of Elgariana; a presentation by the Naxos Record Co of their Elgar recordings; and a talk by Elgar's great-nephew Paul Grafton on "Elgar's Other Family".

Due to the untimely death of Carol Holt who had very kindly agreed to take over the Secretaryship of the NORTH-WEST Branch, Pat Hurst will continue to serve as Branch Secretary for the time being.

Our season began on 21 October with a violin & piano recital by Alan Bevis and a friend. Our AGM will take place on 2 December at the Swan, Bucklow Hill (close to M6 Junction 19 A556); the meeting will commence at 2.00 pm and coffee and sandwiches will be provided. Our first meeting in 1996 will be on 10 February when we will have a talk by Dennis Clark on 'Elgar and Fred Gaisberg'. On Sunday 24 March we shall hold an Elgar Luncheon at the Portland Thistle Hotel in Manchester (details on p 132). All members are welcome. The season will close on 27 April with a talk on Gustav Holst by Ian Lacey.

SOUTH-WEST Branch restarted on 16 September, a joint meeting with the Delius Society. There is a full programme which takes us into the new year. Branch members supported the 'Three Choirs' tea at Gloucester, and the concert at Shirehampton Hall on 7 October, which was an excellent vehicle for publicising the Society. Plans are in hand for another Elgar Day School in Bristol, on 18 May 1996; details next time.

SOUTH WALES Branch closed their 1995 season on 1 July with an address by Branch member A J Heward Rees about his work as Director of the Welsh Music Information Centre. This was established in 1976 and since that time has built up a substantial library of music by Welsh composers. The Branch has two meetings arranged for this autumn, and plans for 1996 are in hand.

EAST ANGLIA. The wide geographical dispersion of the members means that meetings are poorly attended. The Branch is still "in being" - just - but there is no programme planned for the autumn.

## LETTERS

From : Derek Johnstone

The Proms have once again produced an Enigma + Gimmicks performance, this time prefaced by an amusing talk from Leonard Slatkin giving us some "new" ideas about Elgar and his friends. And once again, we have endured the now traditional self-indulgent, tearstained funereal version of Nimrod. May I suggest for next season's gimmick that we find a conductor willing to do Variations on an Original Theme (Op 36) - (a) omitting the word 'Enigma', (b) playing Variation 9 at Elgar's metronome marking of crotchet = 52, and (c) omitting the organ at the end. I'm sorry the Editor is saddened by the absence of an organ in the BPO Enigma recording (reviewed March '95). But surely many must find that the all-enveloping mass of organ sound totally ruins Elgar's marvellous orchestration? (Try the balcony or gallery at the Albert Hall). I have heard the Variations once without organ - the Scottish National Orchestra under Alexander Gibson at Bristol's Colston Hall - and for once one could hear what the orchestra was doing at the end. The same applies to Cockaigne, but certainly not to the imaginative use of organ in the big choral works. (As for the idea of organ pedals at the climax of the Finale of the Second Symphony, the less said the better).

For the record, I am an organist.

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From : Dominic Guyver

Following on from Ian Lacey's letter (JOURNAL July 1995) concerning Mackenzie, I feel it is worthwhile drawing attention to a new disc of music by another composer whose music Elgar strongly admired, Sir Edward German.

The CD, Volume 1 of a proposed set featuring orchestral music by this fine British composer, comes from Marco Polo (8.223695), with the RTE Concert Orchestra under Andrew Penny, and contains a range of mostly unfamiliar music in excellent performances - the Richard III Overture, The Seasons orchestral suite, and one of German's finest pieces, the Theme and Six Diversions. This last piece was most probably inspired by a suggestion from his friend Elgar, for a work based upon an incident in the life of King Canute who was moved to compose a song after hearing the singing of the monks at Ely.

Numerous references are made to Elgar in the admirable booklet accompanying this recording, underlining not only the warm friendship between the two, but also the great mutual admiration each had for the other's (often very different) music. It repeats Thomas Dunhill's assertion that German was the "firm favourite" of Elgar amongst all British composers.

Now that we seem to be in the happy position of seeing the music of many of our past composers being revived and re-evaluated via modern recordings, it is to be hoped that this first volume will help to bring about a greater appreciation of German's genius, as well as enabling Elgarians to assess for themselves the sort

of music which Elgar knew well and regarded with great admiration and affection. As he said on one occasion to German, "However much you like my music you cannot possibly like it as much as I love yours!"

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From : Michael Plant

Is it really eleven years since my letter to the *JOURNAL* (September 1984) celebrating the appearance on our railways of a large diesel locomotive named 'Sir Edward Elgar'? It was for the next few years a well-known and popular performer and has latterly enjoyed honoured retirement in the West Country, with many outings on special trains. Now in private hands, this locomotive is believed to have resumed its old identity as 'Hercules', while the fine brass nameplates were last heard of as a prize (not won by me) in a magazine competition.

The new 'Elgar' is No 92009 and belongs to a class, just coming into service, of very large electric locomotives. They have been designed and built in anticipation of heavy and increasing cross-Channel freight traffic and will therefore be seen in continental Europe as well as Britain. These imposing machines bear names which honour great men and women of international reputation : 'Beethoven', 'Wagner', and 'Johann Strauss' (not Richard), 'Chaucer', 'Shakespeare', 'Schiller' and even 'Oscar Wilde'. New to me is 'Louis Armand' but 'Jane Austen' does not, to my mind, quite fit the powerful, heavyweight image of a giant of the rails as well as 'Milton', 'Goethe' or 'Brahms'. The selection of 'Honegger' pays tribute to Switzerland and also to the composer's own railway tone poem, Pacific 231.

I personally regret that the impressive names of this distinguished company, amongst which 'Elgar' so rightly belongs, are merely painted on to the locomotives. They are unfortunately not provided with the polished nameplates of yore, such as the fine specimen of Worcestershire interest which caught my eye at Didcot not long ago. A member of Class 37, it proudly called itself 'Lea & Perrins'.

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