

# The Elgar Society JOURNAL



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# The Elgar Society Journal

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## EDITORIAL

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One of the least attractive aspects of many recent biographies of famous people from the past is the desire to unearth something lurid relating to their private lives. Diaries and letters are scrutinised with the proverbial fine tooth-comb for tell-tale remarks, and much is often made of comments or incidents which in all probability were quite innocent. Elgar is particularly vulnerable to this approach (which unfortunately one biographer did adopt a few years ago). For one thing, there is the immense amount of archival material available. Then, there is the potent mix of his strength of feeling on the one hand, and the thin-skinned sensitivity of his nature on the other. This meant that in his early sixties, as Sir Edward Elgar OM, he could write quite deliberately that "...as a child, and as a young man, and as a mature man no single person was ever kind to me". Yet at the same time he was unstinting in his use of superlatives when describing friendships : at one stage or other Jaeger, Rodewald, Richter and Osmond Williams were all described as "my greatest friend" (or something similar); and much the same was also applied on occasions to Reed, Atkins, Shaw, Schuster, and others. There has also been much speculation over recent years about the women in his life, and the exact nature of his relationship with them.

I actually believe that this says as much about ourselves as about Elgar. We look back to the past from the modern perspective of hedonism and moral relativism, through the filter of the '60's dictum of "If it feels good, do it"; and thus we make pronouncements about our forbears, many of which are little short of ludicrous. We read of the D H Lawrences and the Sackville-Wests of this world and conclude that everyone must have behaved in a similar fashion; or worse, that there was something wrong with them if they didn't. Yet in Elgar's day, despite the hypocrisy and moral frailty which we know existed, there was a strong sense of honour - a word rarely used now except in a smirky, pejorative sense. It really meant a person's self-respect. Dishonour was falling short of a norm set not just by society but a norm that one set oneself; it was not only "letting the side down", but letting oneself down.

Clearly Elgar was no saint, but in his personal life he was a man of great integrity, from what we know of his business dealings; so it seems somewhat incongruous to assume, as some writers have tended to do, that he became a Lothario whenever women were involved. On the 12th of this month Channel 4 will show a dramatisation entitled *Elgar's Tenth Muse*. It concerns the beautiful young Hungarian violinist Jelly d'Aranyi, whose superb playing of the *Violin Sonata* in 1919 drew from the composer the compliment which gives the play its title.

Apparently after Alice's death Elgar continued to meet with Jelly, and, according to her biographer, eventually "a scene took place which ended with Jelly ensconced in a taxi 'cursing old men'". Whatever happened on that occasion - and a widower could hardly be guilty of infidelity - I hope it will not be seen by the unknowing as typical of Elgar's treatment of women. The other danger of the programme is that it purports to show that Jelly d'Aranyi's influence brought about the completion of the *Cello Concerto*, which until her appearance on the scene "lay unfinished with no prospect of another note being added". As with the recent play *Elgar's Rondo*, it looks like another case of dramatic licence riding roughshod over the known facts.

This issue of the JOURNAL also includes the first part of Kevin Allen's edition of the letters from Elgar to Rosa Burley, some of which were included in Percy Young's biography of Alice Elgar some years ago. It seems that as with Dorabella there is some mild flirtation on Elgar's part, but except to the impure for whom all things are impure (to invert St Paul) I should imagine the correspondence will appear quite harmless. Surely Elgar bore enough guilt, particularly so far as Alice was concerned, without adding adultery to it.

GEOFFREY HODGKINS

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## SONGS OF LOVE AND DEATH

### Elgar's *Sea Pictures*, Op.37

Patrick Little

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There are some dozen collections of songs or part-songs to which Elgar gave opus numbers. The earliest of these appear to have come together more or less by accident: indeed the three components of Opus 16, *Shepherd's Song*, *Through the Long Days*, and *Rondel* not only set texts by different poets, but appear to have been originally written in different years (1892, 1885 and 1894 respectively). The two songs of Opus 31 (1895) seem similarly to have no particular relationship with each other. But when we come to *Sea Pictures* (1899), the situation changes. Although the texts are by different poets, there is an obvious connection between them in subject matter, and I believe in underlying theme, which is the subject of this article. Of the later cycles Opus 41 (1901) is unified chiefly by the fact that its two songs have texts by A C Benson, while a special case is presented by the incomplete Gilbert Parker Song Cycle, Opus 59, of 1909. It seems that no more than three songs were ever written, and yet they were published as numbers 3, 5 and 6, which leads to the inescapable conclusion that Elgar had some definite plan in mind for the cycle, whether or not he ever seriously expected to complete it. One might speculate that a possible reason for its unfinished state is that Elgar could not find the texts he needed among Parker's poems. Next to this cycle come the two songs of Opus 60, to intensely personal texts by Elgar himself under the pseudonym of Pietro d'Alba.

A similar situation is to be found in the collections of part-songs, from the more or less casual association of Opus 18 to the carefully selected and highly significant texts of the part-song cycle Opus 53. There is thus clear evidence that certainly from 1899 onwards Elgar's opus numbers in his songs and part-songs reflect a deliberate grouping rather than mere convenience of publishing. I have written elsewhere<sup>1</sup> of the significance of the cycle Opus 53 in Elgar's personal and compositional life. I now intend to perform a similar investigation into *Sea Pictures*.

It was always characteristic of Elgar that after completing a major work he would go into a sort of post-natal depression, in which he would usually complain that the entire musical establishment was against him, that nobody wanted his music, that there was no point in music anyway, and (on one occasion at least) that he was going to throw it all up and become a coal-merchant. There was one striking exception to this pattern of behaviour, however. His friend Rosa Burley writes :

The *Enigma* safely launched, he now turned his attention to the completion of the Song Cycle *Sea Pictures* for the Norwich Festival of the same year. (1899). Perhaps it was because he had enjoyed writing the variations and their first performance had been taken out of his hands by an experienced conductor [Hans Richter] that for once he did not feel exhausted after the production of a great work. But whatever the reason, he plunged into the new enterprise with enthusiasm<sup>2</sup>.

After *Enigma*, then, it seems that there was no depression, and one might be excused for speculating as to the reason for this; for Miss Burley's explanation does not seem sufficient - after all, the depressions persisted throughout Elgar's later career, when there was never any difficulty about finding an experienced conductor to give his first performances. One possibility may be that there was no depression because (in a sense) the work was not yet finished : perhaps there is some private or even secret connection between the two works which makes them to some extent an emotional unity. It is not necessary to repeat here the arguments for and against the identification of the 'Thirteenth Enigma' with Elgar's early love Helen Weaver: but the submission of this article is that part of the association between *Enigma* and *Sea Pictures* is that Helen Weaver is involved in them both, particularly in the third song of the cycle.

Let us now come to the song-cycle itself, which is made up of five songs for contralto with orchestral accompaniment. These are :

'Sea Slumber Song'	[Roden Noel]
'In Haven' (subtitled 'Capri')	[Alice Elgar]
'Sabbath Morning at Sea'	[Elizabeth Barrett Browning]
'Where Corals Lie'	[Richard Garnett]
'The Swimmer'	[Adam Lindsay Gordon]

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<sup>1</sup> Little, Patrick : 'Elgar's Four Part-Songs, Opus 53' in *Studies in Music* 26 (1992), pp 48-61

<sup>2</sup> Burley, Rosa & Carruthers, Frank C : *Edward Elgar : the record of a friendship* (London, 1972), p 132

Diana McVeagh has claimed that "in his solo songs Elgar often set trash"<sup>3</sup>, a proposition with which I would be prepared to argue. Certainly he does not choose texts from the finest lyric poetry - as he said himself, "it is better to set the best second-rate poetry to music, for the most immortal verse is music already"<sup>4</sup>. But he does usually select mostly competent verse which is suitable for musical setting, and so he has done in this cycle. Curiously enough, the least successful texts come from the best-known poets, Mrs Browning and Adam Lindsay Gordon. But I suspect that for Elgar, as long as certain minimal standards were maintained, his real interest was in finding words which said what he wanted to say.

Roden Berkeley Wriothsesley Noel (1834-94), the author of 'Sea Slumber Song', was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, and published several volumes of verse, including *Livingstone in Africa* (1874), *A Little Child's Monument* (1881) and *Heights and Depths* (1885). The text of the song is much as one might expect from its title :

Sea birds are asleep,  
The world forgets to weep,  
Sea murmurs her soft slumber-song  
On the shadowy sand  
Of this elfin land;  
"I, the Mother mild,  
Hush thee, O my child,  
Forget the voices wild!  
Isles in elfin light  
Dream, the rocks and caves  
Lull'd by whispering waves,  
Veil their marbles bright,  
Foam glitters faintly white  
Upon the shelly sand  
Of this elfin land;  
Sea-sound, like violins,  
To slumber woos and wins,  
I murmur my soft slumber-song  
Leave woes, and wails, and sins,  
Ocean's shadowy night  
Breathes good night, goodnight!"

Sea, the eternal mother, lulls her children to sleep, accompanied by waves peacefully breaking in the orchestral accompaniment. But there is surely a slightly sinister undertone to this dream of the "elfin land", and here we find the first hints in the cycle of being "half in love with easeful death". The garden under the sea is beautiful and alluring, but there is a price for admission. All the mermaids and sirens and water-nymphs of literature, legend and folk-belief tell the same story : Roden Noel himself repeats it, more explicitly, in a poem called *The Water Nymph and the Boy*:

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<sup>3</sup> Sleeve notes for *Delius and Elgar Part-songs*, Argo ZK 23

<sup>4</sup> Moore, Jerrold Northrop : *Edward Elgar : A Creative Life* (Oxford, 1984) p 280

I flung me round him,  
I drew him under;  
I clung, I drowned him,  
My own white wonder.

...

Now I have taken him  
All in his prime,  
Saved from slow poisoning  
Pitiless time.<sup>5</sup>

Full fathom five thy father lies, sings Ariel - Of his bones are coral made; Those are pearls that were his eyes; Nothing of him that doth fade But doth suffer a sea-change Into something rich and strange. But do not forget that sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell. The price for admission to the garden is death.

The second song is a setting of Alice Elgar's poem 'In Haven' :

Closely let me hold thy hand,  
Storms are sweeping sea and land;  
Love alone will stand.

Closely cling, for waves beat fast,  
Foam-flakes cloud the hurrying blast;  
Love alone will last.

Kiss my lips and softly say :  
"Joy, sea-swept, may fade today;  
Love alone will stay".

The song began its life as an independent setting of an earlier version of the text entitled 'Lute Song', composed two years earlier in 1897. The only textual changes made for its inclusion in *Sea Pictures* lie in the re-ordering of the first two stanzas and in an increase of sea-imagery, and it is rather odd that Jerrold Northrop Moore should claim that "the new lyric was made too poignant for the innocent music of Edward's setting",<sup>6</sup> since the old version seems just as poignant as the new. Alice's poem was written, or at least drafted, before she even met Edward, and if with hindsight it appears to have a certain ambiguous prophetic irony, that cannot have been the author's intention. Perhaps unexpectedly, the musical setting makes no reference to the sweeping storms or beating waves; but the storm is being reserved for the final song, and here we are concerned with the haven provided by love. But notice what sort of haven it is - something rather tougher than might be expected by those who assume that Alice Elgar's ideas about love must be those of a sentimental and possibly rather silly Victorian lady. The Victorians were in any case far less sentimental about most things than is usually supposed, and this is an austere, even a stark love, which has to offer only love itself - even joy (and, in the earlier version, sunlit day) may fade; love alone will stay.

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<sup>5</sup> Quiller-Couch, Arthur (ed.): *Oxford Book of Victorian Verse*, (Oxford, 1922) p 530

<sup>6</sup> Moore, op.cit., p 278

The third song, 'Sabbath Morning at Sea', is a setting of only five of the thirteen stanzas of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poem, and the elisions make for a certain obscurity which is not relieved by Mrs Browning's sometimes rather opaque style. Moore's comment on the song seems to me to miss the point. He writes :

In Elizabeth Barrett Browning's 'Sabbath Morning at Sea', a new day's dawning showed the lonely voyager his own separation from those left behind in their haven...The voyager himself finds in the sunrise at sea a brilliance too high for contemplation even by saints...The goal of the lonely voyage, then, lay elsewhere.<sup>7</sup>

But Mrs Browning was demonstrably female, and thus one would naturally suppose that her poetic persona was female as well. Further, the cycle is written specifically for a female voice. This is surely the soliloquy of a woman who has left her home and friends, and it will be remembered that Helen Weaver fits the 'Thirteenth Enigma' description of a lady going on a long sea voyage at least as well as does Lady Mary Lygon. What follows is a brief prose summary of the gist of the complete poem :

I am tired and sad at leaving home, and have slept badly. It is now dawn. The sun rises, but there is no land, and so nothing earthly, to profane its rising : only heaven and the sea share in this sacrament. But beautiful though it is, mere nature will not satisfy love, and it is better to enjoy friends and family. Therefore, love me, distant friends, at your Sunday worship, and though there is no formal service here, God's Spirit will comfort me too and lead me to heaven.

Obviously much of the original poem had to be discarded if this song was not to become far too large for its position; but there may be more than mere abbreviation behind Elgar's choice. In his version, the summary runs :

I am tired and sad at leaving home, and have slept badly. It is now dawn. Love me, distant friends, at your Sunday worship, and though there is no formal service here, God's Spirit will comfort me too and lead me to heaven.

What has gone is not only the description of the sunrise and some reflections on its metaphysical significance, but also the reference to a possible alternative to present separation :

It seems a better lot than so  
To sit with friends beneath the beech,  
And feel them dear and dearer;  
Or follow children as they go  
In pretty pairs, with softened speech,  
As the church-bells ring nearer.

Here are Elgar's dream-children, hidden from too explicit a view as yet, though they will reappear in the two orchestral pieces of 1902 (where of course they are associated with - and camouflaged behind - Charles Lamb's essay, which is itself so painfully autobiographical). This is a manifestation of one of the strongest driving

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<sup>7</sup> *ibid*, p 279



forces behind Elgar's creativity : a nostalgia for what might have been, which becomes the more powerful if we accept that Helen Weaver the lost love is the figure hidden behind the song. But Helen's lover is also Mrs Elgar's husband, and a lover of cyphers and puzzles and enigmas, and just as in the *Enigma Variations*, in the words of the composer himself, "through and over the whole set another and larger theme 'goes', but is not played", so here in what I take to be its companion work there are "other themes" which are given significance by their very omission.

The fourth song is by Richard Garnett (1835-1906), who was Keeper of Printed Books in the British Museum. He published a collection of short stories entitled *The Twilight of the Gods*, which Elgar is known to have admired, in 1888, as well as several volumes of original and translated verse.

The deeps have music soft and low  
When winds awake the airy spry,  
It lures me, lures me on to go  
And see the land where corals lie.

By mount and mead, by lawn and rill,  
When night is deep, and moon is high,  
That music seeks and finds me still,  
And tells me where the corals lie.

Yes, press my eyelids close, 'tis well;  
But far the rapid fancies fly,  
To rolling worlds of wave and shell,  
And all the lands where corals lie.

Thy lips are like a sunset glow,  
Thy smile is like a morning sky,  
Yet leave me, leave me, let me go  
And see the land where corals lie.

Here, the two strands in the cycle, of love and death, are drawn together. The "land where corals lie" is the same place as the "isles in elfin light" of the first song. Its attractions are strong and incessant, and it is only the contrary attraction of the person addressed which restrains the singer, for the moment at least, from deliberately seeking that land, those isles, where they lie under the sea. Even so the final stanza begs for release, to go and see the land where corals lie.

In the final song, the cycle reaches its climax. It is a setting of stanzas from a poem entitled 'The Swimmer' by Adam Lindsay Gordon, who was born of English parentage in the Azores in 1833, went to Australia in 1853 and died there in 1870 at the age of thirty-seven. 'The Swimmer' consists of thirteen stanzas, of which Elgar set the first two-and-a-half and the last two - omitting, that is, eight-and-a-half stanzas in the middle. A prose summary of Elgar's selections from the text reads :

There is a violent thunderstorm on a wild and desolate [Australian] coast. When we (my love and I) wandered here ten years ago, it was beautiful and peaceful. The sun is setting in the storm, and the sea is like galloping horses, which I want to ride through forbidden strife to the place where light and love do not fade.

Moore points out that the song was written ten years after the marriage of Edward and Alice, but the reference to love in the past seems surely more likely to have called up images of the lost love Helen in New Zealand, reinforced by the antipodean setting of the poem; because New Zealand is as near to Australia as makes no difference to the average Briton even now, let alone in the days of travel by sea. Thus the text marries even more closely than the fourth song what I have called the two strands of the cycle. The love could be treated of fairly openly, as long as its subject was not made too explicit; but the matter of death was rather different. Even more than in the case of 'Sabbath Morning at Sea' it is the deleted stanzas which tell the tale :

I would that with sleepy, soft embraces  
The sea would fold me - would find me rest  
In luminous shades of her secret places,  
In depths where her marvels are manifest;  
So the earth beneath her should not discover  
My hidden couch - nor the heaven above her -  
As a strong love shielding a weary lover,  
I would have her shield me with shining breast.

...

Under the sea or the soil (what matter?  
The sea and the soil are under the sun),  
As in the former days in the latter,  
The sleeping or waking is known of none,  
Surely the sleeper shall not awaken  
To griefs forgotten or joys forsaken,  
For the price of all things given and taken,  
The sum of all things done and undone.

Shall we count offences or coin excuses,  
Or weigh with scales the soul of a man,  
Whom a strong hand binds and a sure hand looses,  
Whose light is a spark and his life a span?  
The seed he sow'd or the soil he cumber'd,  
The time he served or the space he slumber'd,  
Will it profit a man when his days are number'd,  
Or his deeds since the days of his life began?

One, glad because of the light, saith, "Shall not  
The righteous Judge of all the earth do right,  
For behold the sparrows on the house-tops fall not  
Save as seemeth to Him good in His sight?"  
And this man's joy shall have no abiding,  
Through lights departing and lives dividing,  
He is soon as one in the darkness hiding,  
One loving darkness rather than light.

A little season of love and laughter,  
Of light and life, and pleasure and pain,  
And a horror of outer darkness after,  
And dust returneth to dust again.

Then the lesser life shall be as the greater,  
And the lover of life shall join the hater,  
And the one thing cometh sooner or later,  
And no one knoweth the loss or gain.

Love of my life! we had lights in season -  
Hard to part from, harder to keep -  
We had strength to labour and souls to reason,  
And seed to scatter and fruits to reap.  
Though time estranges and fate disperses,  
We have *had* our loves and our loving-mercies;  
Though the gifts of the light in the end are curses,  
Yet bides the gift of the darkness - sleep!

Two of the Elgarian echoes called up by these unset stanzas are particularly striking, and form a sort of temporal frame around *Sea Pictures*. The first is the song *After* (1895) to a text by Philip Bourke Marston, which might almost be a paraphrase of Gordon :

A little while for scheming  
Love's unperfected schemes;  
A little time for golden dreams,  
Then no more any dreaming.

The second is Judas's forlorn desire for personal extinction in *The Apostles* (1903) which he articulates through the quotation from Chapter 2 of the Book of Wisdom beginning, "Our life is short and tedious, and in the death of a man there is no remedy".<sup>8</sup> In each case what is expressed is the hope of the suicidally depressive : the gift of the darkness; sleep; and the final stanza of Gordon's text makes this completely explicit :

Oh! brave white horses! you gather and gallop,  
The storm sprite loosens the gusty reins;  
Now the stoutest ship were the frailest shallop,  
In your hollow backs, or your high arch'd manes.  
I would ride as never man has ridden,  
In your sleepy, swirling surges hidden,  
To gulfs foreshadow'd through straits forbidden,  
Where no light wearies and no love wanes.

Elgar's text quite definitely has "through strifes forbidden" in place of Gordon's "straits forbidden". This may of course be nothing more than a casual error in copying; but it may be significant that Elgar's substitution of "strifes", meaningless as the word is in this context, certainly disguises the totally unambiguous "forbidden straits" of suicide for which the poet yearns. In a similar sort of way, the presumably unconscious similarity of the main theme of this song to a tune from Mackenzie's

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<sup>8</sup> I am indebted to Geoffrey Hodgkins for calling these two passages to my attention.

*The Dream of Jubal*, pointed out by Ian Parrott,<sup>9</sup> may be significant in that the Mackenzie tune is from a funeral march.

Elgar, like Adam Lindsay Gordon, was subject to severe depression for much of his life, sometimes it seems almost to the point of suicide. Ernest Newman recorded that at a dinner in 1902 "Mrs Elgar tactfully steered the conversation away from the topic of suicide that had suddenly arisen; she whispered to me that Edward was always talking of making an end of himself".<sup>10</sup> Here in this song-cycle is Elgar's most explicit admission and confrontation of the fact. The conventions of the time, his own sense of responsibility to his family, and his need for puzzles to mask his own self-revelations, all contribute to covering up the matter, but they cannot finally hide it.

*Sea Pictures* is not among the very greatest of Elgar's works, and it is necessarily dwarfed by its neighbouring works : on the one side *Enigma*, on the other *The Dream of Gerontius*. Yet, in addition to its purely musical qualities, which are not inconsiderable, it gives an insight into this most autobiographical of composers, his wishes, hopes and fears, his strengths and his weaknesses. Early in the morning of 24 June 1870, on the day of publication of his most popular volume of verse *Bush Ballads and Galloping Rhymes* (from which 'The Swimmer' is taken), Adam Lindsay Gordon walked alone into the bush just outside Melbourne with his rifle in his hand. His body was found at about nine o'clock that same morning. It is perhaps not the least mark of Elgar's greatness that he died of natural causes in 1934 at the age of 77.

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## ELGAR'S LETTERS TO ROSA BURLEY

Kevin Allen

Some aspects of the extensive Elgar correspondence now preserved at Broadheath and at the Hereford and Worcester Record Office are notable by their absence. No letters between Edward and Alice, save one, are known to exist, and many of the Stuart-Wortley letters were destroyed. Further, neither of these archives contains holdings of items from another important correspondence, that with Rosa Burley. Elgar knew Miss Burley for nearly thirty years, from her take-over of 'The Mount' School in Malvern in early 1891 to the time of Alice's death in 1920, and it seems likely that their correspondence was extensive, especially during Miss Burley's periods of absence abroad. Very few, if any, examples of it have been included in the standard scholarly editions of Elgar's correspondence, although copies of various letters are quoted in Young's *Alice Elgar : Enigma of a Victorian Lady* (Dobson, 1978). These and such other fragments of the correspondence as survive have been

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<sup>9</sup> Parrott, Ian : *Elgar* (Master Musicians, London, 1971) p 85.

<sup>10</sup> Moore, Jerrold Northrop (ed) : *The Windflower Letters* (Oxford, 1989) p 7.

gathered together for this article; the aim has been to present as full a collection as possible, although further letters continue to appear in auction catalogues from time to time. None of Miss Burley's letters to Elgar seem to have survived, but it has proved possible to assemble some thirty-seven letters from him.

Miss Burley's account of the acquisition - with her sister and parents - of 'The Mount', and of the gradual development of her relationship with the Elgar family, will be familiar to all who have read her book, *Edward Elgar : The Record of a Friendship* (by Rosa Burley and Frank C Carruthers, published by Barrie & Jenkins, 1972). Gradually drawing out the diffident and unhappy violin teacher, Miss Burley smoothed his passage at the School as much as she could and involved herself in music-making, taking violin lessons herself from Elgar, and setting up a string orchestra. He took her into his confidence over his ambitions as a composer, and she evidently became fascinated by him. There can be little doubt that the encouragement afforded by such a sympathetic, strong-minded supporter helped Elgar's development during the vital decade of the nineties, and in a purely practical sense also, he benefited from studying the wide range of scores that she was happy to hire from Goodwin & Tabbs (ostensibly for the school orchestra) for him to study. The friendship widened to include Alice as well, and the three had many musical and literary tastes in common, although the practical and down-to-earth Headmistress could not ignore what she saw as an element of affected vagueness in Alice's manner. The friendship was deepened when Miss Burley and the Elgars met at Munich during a German holiday in the summer of 1893. Some years later Alice and Edward gave Miss Burley the imprimatur of their special approval by sending the eight-year-old Carice to board at The Mount; after Sunday Mass she was allowed to spend what remained of the day at home with her parents before being collected, often by Miss Burley herself, and taken back to the school. Alice and Edward were not exactly ideally suited to a parental role, and there can be little doubt that Miss Burley took on a major responsibility for the education and upbringing of their daughter, and that she retained the respect of that pupil to the end of her days. It made Miss Burley almost a member of the family, and further, her relationship with Elgar became set firmly in the context of a shared experience of the natural world of the Malvern Hills and the Worcestershire countryside when he took up cycling in the aftermath of the completion of *Gerontius* in August 1900; Miss Burley would join him for long rides over the next years, affording opportunities for continued self-revelation on Elgar's part. Her ability to cheer him led Alice sometimes to work through her, asking her to influence him, just as she would use Jaeger in the same way, and in August 1901, during a period of depression, he joined Miss Burley and her family for a week's holiday on a remote part of the Cardiganshire coast. All in all it was a unique relationship, and although it would seem that the claim that she was in daily contact with Elgar during the Malvern years was an exaggeration, it nevertheless afforded her many opportunities for insights into Elgar's life, marriage and character; how far the expression of some of these views - while often refreshing when compared to those of other friends who wrote about him - reflect her own prejudices is a matter of conjecture. Early in 1906, when she had been running The Mount for some fifteen years, an outbreak of food poisoning, thought by Jerrold Northrop Moore to be not unconnected with the activities of Mrs Burley senior in the kitchens, threatened closure. The Elgars had moved to Hereford by then, with Carice attending Hereford High School. The crisis came during work on *The Kingdom* :

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Young, p 157  
<sup>1</sup> Burley & Carruthers, p 185

25 June 1906 : "Dreadful morning, for going out in to the garden after breakfast E. slipped on wet stones with his deck shoes on & bark his shoulder & knee. Dreadful to see him in such pain... Went to bed early the Dr. said nothing was broken D.G. dreadfully miserable cd. not move in bed, the

Elgar was in poor health on his return from the States, leading to delay with progress on *The Kingdom*, due for its première that October. The Doctor recommended New Radnor for a change, and some improvement was made, until:

With all good wishes  
 Believe me  
 Yours very sincerely  
 Edward Elgar<sup>2</sup>

I am having the (*lacuna*) sent out to you & shall not expect it again as we will see it first.

I am working away but I do not feel settled down to it yet.

The American visit was quite successful but since then I have been very ill - now better.

I do trust you are settling down happily in Portugal & shall be glad to know your affairs here are more peacefully settled than you anticipated, as to the cheque please do not think of that.

We only arrived home last Monday night & are overwhelmed with accumulations of letters. We were sorry to hear you had departed and are quite at sea as to your movements : we would like to know more. Miss Homer (*an ex-dupl!*) wrote to Carce and I have your note about the chair which can be case-housed until you claim it. I don't understand what you mean by having "bought" it : did you have a sale? I have seen no one from Malvern - Mr. Griffith is, I suppose, away as I have sent him a p.c. and had no reply.

June 1906  
 Plas Gwyn, Hereford

The earliest letter from Elgar, written in early June, seems to indicate that the move (to Faro on the Algarve) took the Elgars by surprise, especially as they had been on an American visit since the beginning of April. The move must have been a severe wrench for Miss Burley, and Elgar felt concern over difficulties apparently left unresolved.

In a few short weeks I saw everything that I had built up collapse hopelessly and finally. I did not allow myself a nervous breakdown however. Realising that the situation was quite hopeless, I closed the school and said goodbye to the children at the finish of the spring term, visited a few old friends and by the end of May had taken up an appointment in Portugal.<sup>1</sup>

With no-nonsense headmistress practicality Miss Burley faced the situation :

9 March 1906 "...E. to station & Malvern to see if he could advise Miss Burley - Home by 5 train & in fairly good spirits - -"

shock so upsetting to him".

Early in July, Julia Worthington visited for three days, to be followed unexpectedly by Professor Sanford. Then came a few days at The Hut, when Elgar played parts of the new work to Frank Schuster, Claude Phillips and the Stuart-Wortleys. The day after his return to Plas Gwyn, Elgar wrote again to Miss Burley.

[Plas Gwyn, Hereford]  
17 July 1906

Dear Miss Burley,

I am glad to receive your enquiries, & so glad to say I am better : it was a silly accident, simply going out of the door & I fell, smash!

It had been raining & the smooth stones were very wet. It was in Radnor where we had a cottage for a fortnight. I was brought here & had horrid massage from a Nurse Parkin twice a day. Now I can get about again but have not cycled yet. *I have no one to cycle with.*

The world seems very old to me now and all (so) changed. I had a horrid chill coming from America and have been very ill. It seems so curious I don't *smoke* now! Can you believe it! I cannot, but have no wish for it.

All you say about Faro is most interesting to me : Tell me if you think of staying any time or if it is only a temporary visit.

Everybody is out and it is a hot sunny afternoon and reminds me of some summer days in The Marsh [*ie. Longdon*], & at Birchwood, so long, long ago.

My work nears completion & will send it to you as soon as it is ready; is there any duty to pay or anything? I was afraid to send any trifles for fear you would have to pay more than their absurd value. I suppose you don't wear gloves! only mantilla and fans.

We have had our American friends here & shewed them some of our County but I fear I make a poor guide now. I seem *tired* - oh! so tired[.] everything is so useless. I was away when your trying time at Malvern came & it is a grief to me to know that I was unable to do anything.

Carice is very busy with her studies & swimming & all sorts of things & she is very strong & full of vitality & revels in any amount of work. Everything goes on as usual. I think Mr.Griffith may leave Malvern as his partner Mr. [*lacuna*] is giving up the agency there. I saw Winifred and Mr.Hyde at the Festival practice here and all seems to [*lacuna*] on. I hope you are happy in your surroundings - I gather so. You know I wish you everything good now & always.<sup>3</sup> [Copy ends here]

Work on *The Kingdom* continued that month and into August, and Miss Homer was evidently anxious to secure a ticket for the October première that her former teacher would have to miss. Meanwhile, Carice gave gratifying evidence of the success of Miss Burley's language teaching -

25 July 1906. "...A. & C. to High School. Prize giving. Weary speeches of Bishop & Oxford College Lady - Carice had prize for German & French & a certificate..."

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<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Young, pp 157-8

- and the insurance claim over the New Radnor accident was dealt with :

3 August 1906. "...Insurance Sect. came to see E. repayment accident expenses"

Hereford  
Aug 19 1906

Dear Miss Burley,

I have asked the publishers to send some music - if it is not what you require throw it away & let me know.

- I am quite well again having claimed money from the 'accidental'.

I will very gladly send Miss Homer a ticket but I hope she will remind me of it nearer the time. I have so much to do, proof correcting etc I send a copy of the Birmingham programme book.

If you remember the Alassio fishermen you will also recollect that Mr Congreve told us that they went to Spain or somewhere for tunny fishing during some part of the year : so you may meet old Alassio friends. We are all well & they send messages.

Yours very sincerely  
Edward Elgar<sup>4</sup>

In December 1903 Miss Burley had taken Carice out to Italy to join her parents on their winter holiday at Alassio. She noted Elgar's joy in discovering that the local fishermen still drew in their nets in the manner described by Virgil, and noted too his delight in seeing them unload barrels of wine by the simple expedient of heaving them overboard.

After a three-day visit from the seriously ailing Jaeger to work on the *Kingdom* Analysis, Elgar finished the scoring of the work on the last day of August 1906. As with *The Dream of Gerontius* in 1900, the première was due to take place on 3 October, but this time the orchestration was completed nearly a month later than that of the earlier work. The pressure was such that Elgar missed a *Gerontius* performance at that year's Hereford Festival in order to continue last-minute work on the proofs. At the beginning of the first orchestral rehearsal in Manchester later that month, the string parts had not arrived.

25 September 1906. "...E. began with 'The Apostles', & just before the end the parts [of *The Kingdom*] were brought in & put on the desks. The players were so eager to peep into the new copies - Then E. said a few words & began. They read it splendidly & it sounded *gorgeous*. Wonderful to hear it & to think it was really there - D.G....The players broke into uncontrollable applause now & again..."

Elgar caught the 11 pm train that night for Aberdeen, where he was due to receive an honorary degree the next day, but he found time to write to Miss Burley and invoke her presence at the première of the new work.

[Midland Hotel, Manchester]

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<sup>4</sup> Transcribed by Richard Westwood-Brookes



[25 September 1906]

Dear Miss Burley :

The rehearsal is over - that is to say the orchestral one & the new thing sounds well. I have been awfully busy and could not write a p.c. to say I sent you some papers and hope they come safely. Do not trouble to thank me for them.

We have not heard of you for a long time but hope that you are well.

Miss Homer came to the Hereford Festival and I was delighted to see her : but I was torn in many pieces by numbers of people who [*lacuna*] to abound at such times but I missed you and thought of Gloucester (after your Hungarian rhapsody) and Worcester last year when we gave you a motor-ride. Send a p.c. & [*lacuna*] to remember I shall think of you on Wednesday morning in Birmingham when the new work is heard.

Kindest regards  
Yours Sincerely  
Ed. Elgar

P.S. I am travelling through the night to Aberdeen.<sup>5</sup>

Even after the successful first performance of the work, there were further corrections to be made.

Langham Hotel, Portland Place, London W.  
[Postcard. Post mark 12 October 1906]

Only here for a day proof-correcting : all went well at B. & *is* well with the Kingdom. Hope the papers come all right. Do not trouble to acknowledge them. We think of you much. .

Yours  
EE<sup>6</sup>

Another postcard was sent in the midst of the American tour the following year.

New York  
Ap. 2. 07

All good wishes. I hope you are well &, perhaps, having a pleasant tour. Just off to Chicago, Cincinnati & Pittsburgh

Yours ever  
EE<sup>7</sup>

Elgar returned from the States at the end of April, and was almost immediately plunged into the Morecambe Festival. The fourth *Pomp & Circumstance* March was finished in early June, and later that month he began to be occupied with the *Wand of Youth* pieces, as well as the "great beautiful tune" of the *First Symphony*. Further

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<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Young, p 159

<sup>6</sup> Northwestern University, Illinois

<sup>7</sup> Northwestern University, Illinois

work on the second movement of the symphony was noted in Alice's diary :

2 August 1907. "Fine morning. E. wrote *lovely* river piece. You cd. hear the wind in the rushes by the water - E. to fish after lunch..."

But that day he wrote to Miss Burley a letter of *general* news, playing down his current creative projects. It was left to Alice to mention the *Wand of Youth* music in a postscript.

[Plas Gwyn. Notepaper headed with 'CAE' monogram]  
August 2 1907

Dear Miss Burley :

Since I last wrote - which must be in the dark ages - we have heard with much interest of your travels. I should like to see Portugal very much & Lisbon especially : I knew the name so well since I could speak and before that, as we had a friend who was tutor or something at [*illegible*] College there in the sixties!

I came back from America safely & without adventures[.] Now we have been trying to endure the summer but it has been hard & trying work, so cold & wet. Carice rides a bicycle very well & joins me in my lonely expeditions. Also I fish a little now which is a sign of old age isn't it.

I am sorry Mr. Jaeger is so ill & although a little improvement is reported I fear he is in a very unsatisfactory condition although the new place suits him better than Davos.

I suppose it is getting late for talked of English visit : you have not missed much & it has [*illegible*]. I never remember such a dreary time & you must return in sunshine & flowers. We talk of a little forthright's change but we do not make it! but it is something to think about. I am doing little work now : my eyes are not workable & do not improve.

Kindest regards  
Yours v. sincerely  
Edward Elgar

We have had the *most* wretched pretence of summer but have been very well I am thankful to say though the Herrschaft is still ordered to rest his eyes but is very gay over his fishing & c & has written some lovely small things not published yet. Hope you are keeping well.

AE<sup>8</sup>

The German nickname dated from the holiday in Munich in the 90s, when Elgar misused the word, and it became an "endearing little family joke which...was to last for many years"<sup>9</sup>. Next month Elgar travelled to Cardiff to conduct a performance of *The Kingdom*, bringing back memories of the week that he spent with Miss Burley and her family on the Welsh coast in 1901. The Leeds rehearsals were for a further *Kingdom* performance of 11 October.

[Plas Gwyn. 27 September 1907]

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<sup>8</sup> MS in the possession of Raymond Monk

<sup>9</sup> Burley & Carruthers, p 65

My dear Miss Burley

Very many thanks for the "roes" which are famous : I am just passing through Hereford on my way to London. It seemed strange being on Welsh land (!) again & I remembered the last time I saw Cardigan from further south.

I wish the weather would be a little more *[vacuna]* to you from the south : it *has* been a most dreary year. We had hoped we should have seen you.

I find rehearsals for [Leeds?] are on the 3rd, 4th, & 5th. I return on the morning (10 a.m.) of the 5th to St. Andrew's Hall.

Again thanks & kindest regards  
Sincerely yours  
Edward Elgar<sup>10</sup>

The gift of food was to become a typical present. No letters or diary references to Miss Burley exist for the rest of 1907 and the whole of 1908, the year which saw the achievement of the *First Symphony*. In April 1909, however, while the Elgars were staying at Careggi near Florence :

26 April 1909. "...E. met Miss Burley & went to lunch at the Villa with her & heard the extraordinary story about the girl she had charge of..."

A fortnight later Alice and Carice met her at tea with the Meynell family. Miss Burley was staying at the Villa Minerva, Bagnio di Ripoli, something of a journey from the suburb of Careggi.

Villa Silli, Careggi [no date; postmark indistinct. The Elgars were at the Villa from 22 April to 28 May]  
Monday

Dear Miss Burley :

I am so sorry no word has reached you since my visit. I have been quite laid up & this cold weather is not good for me. Our friend's car - as is the way of all cars - has broken down & is at present *wheel-less* at - Boulogne! It will never reach here.

The family send love & I hope Carice & I may be able to come out to you one day but of this I will write again when I have discovered trains & ways

Best regards  
Yours ever & *[illegible]*  
Ed. Elgar

I hope *things* are calm with you<sup>11</sup>

A call some two weeks before the end of the holiday proved abortive.

14 May 1909. "E & C to Ripoli. Lunched in town - Miss Burley out."

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<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Young, p 161

<sup>11</sup> MS in possession of Raymond Monk

Four days later, and a long way away in London, August Jaeger died. Miss Burley remembered noticing his consumptive cough the first time she met him, and remembered too how on one occasion he pleaded with her "almost with tears in his eyes" to do something to discourage what he saw as Elgar's more frivolous friendships. But not even Miss Burley seems to have done that. The next existing letter would seem to come from the following year, which saw Miss Burley return to England for a time. The Elgars moved into the Cavendish Street flat on 7 March 1910.

Westminster  
March 1 [1910]

Dear Miss Burley,

This 1/2 sheet is no sign of disrespect & I give no address as I am just moving - whither I know not for one week after this we have taken a flat for a few months

58 New Cavendish St W

There is your card & the offensive notice is *ordered*. I hope to be in Paris soon & shall find you somehow & somewhere. I hope you will not be leaving yet.

Our frenzied plans were altered by influenza and have never recovered themselves.

I am old but vain enough to ask you to tell the young lady that this puzzled cadaverous person is not exactly

Yours ever  
Edward Elgar<sup>12</sup>

Some of the references in this letter are difficult to elucidate. The most recent diary entry to refer specifically to influenza comes from the spring of 1909. On 9 April that year Elgar travelled by himself to Paris and stayed at the Hôtel des Deux Mondes. There is no record of any conducting engagement, although Alice had much work to do to prepare Plas Gwyn for their absence abroad at Careggi, and she may have suggested this diversion for him just as she organised diversions at house-moving times. She brought Carice to join him on 17th, and the party, together with Julia Worthington, continued en route for Florence. There is no evidence from the diary that Elgar went to Paris in 1910. During 1911, Alice's diary notes a visit to Miss Burley on 21 May, and a reciprocal visit on 26th; in between there was the première of the *Second Symphony*, which Miss Burley attended, sitting next to Alice. Later that summer :

17 July 1911. "...Miss Burley to tea & E took her up to Kelston..."

The visit is described in chapter 23 of Miss Burley's book. 'Kelston' became Severn House, and the Elgars' grandest home, in January 1912. It was a year which saw much ill-health, leading to a "rest cure" in April, and the première of *The Music Makers* at Birmingham at the beginning of October. Afterwards Edward and Alice spent the first of several holiday breaks in the Lake District.

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<sup>12</sup> Transcribed by Richard Westwood-Brookes

Prince of Wales Lake Hotel, Grasmere.

Sunday [undated : the Elgars were at the Hotel from 5 to 14 October 1912]

My dear ~~Miss Burley~~ Rosa :

We came on here after Birmingham for a rest - the first I have had this year, really & truly & I needed it very much. Carice is here & received your card which gives me the address

We had the usual Hereford rehearsals & festival, which is more pleasant in memories & reality than that of the larger towns. When do you come to England? Shall we ever see you?

I have this year been very unwell - gout of sorts - & much depressed - I suppose I am old! However I have plenty of vitality if there was any [sic] to feel vital for. We have had a lovely week of weather but it seems to be getting wintery now & we must fly back to London.

Your travels must have been very interesting & the sound of the names of the places makes me envious but you will tell me all about it when you come : in the meantime you *might* write!

If you do not mind being burdened with useless music I wd. send you the new thing - you will like the words but you will probably know them already

My love to you  
EE<sup>13</sup>

This letter was sent to Miss Burley at the Hôtel Pays-Bas, Utrecht. The indecision over the form of address, after a friendship of over twenty years, is curious, but many of these letters are noticeably more personal and informal in tone than earlier ones. The visit mentioned in the penultimate paragraph took place on 27 October that year :

"Miss Burley to lunch - very pleasant & full of her various experiences"

At some point after a second return from abroad in 1912, Miss Burley lived in Highgate, near to Hampstead and Severn House, and she reappears in the diary over the next years as a frequent visitor there. A letter of July 1913, however, indicates a visit to Malvern.

Severn House  
Wed [16 July 1913]

My dear Rosa,

Yes I remember all the sweetness of it - the syringa, then the beans & limes. I suppose I shall never see it all again or cycle over the old places. How lovely the marsh must be - I envy your seeing it & living in it all again. During the two moments I have spent in M— all the people seem to disappear & only the eternal hills & all the memories of the old loveliness remains.

Yours ever  
Edward<sup>14</sup>

So in a burst of nostalgia for their shared experience of cycling in the early 1900s,

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<sup>13</sup> Northwestern University, Illinois

<sup>14</sup> Transcribed by Richard Westwood-Brookes

Elgar produced one of his most eloquent statements about the Malvern Hills and countryside. Another letter seems to refer to the continuing power of the Malvern landscape. A copy appears on page 171 of Young's *Alice Elgar*, with its date given as 21 July 1913. The original, inserted here, bears no date or address and would seem to belong to a period before Miss Burley's return to England.

Monday

My dear R,

Many thanks for your letter which I *must* acknowledge at once. I *knew*; the old place holds [*illegible*], but you are coming back surely & during the holidays you would be freer - more free than just now. I remember your return from Bruges via Paris - the same train still runs I think - although the service may have been quickened the arrival might be the same - it still exists in London if not in Malvern!

Sincy yours  
EE<sup>15</sup>

After a working holiday in Wales during August followed by the Gloucester Three Choirs, Elgar stayed with 'GRS' at Hereford from 13 to 15 September that year. On Sunday 14th he visited Plas Gwyn and found it "so changed". The next letter would appear to have been written that day, with the Leeds première of *Falstaff* due on 1 October. The rehearsal ticket was for the first orchestral run-through of the work on 22 September, from parts which arrived from the German engravers that very morning.

[Hereford]

Sunday [14 September 1913]

Dear Miss Burley

I see you have gone back on your 'beginnings' of letters[:] the vocative was best.

I am just making a day here on my way from Gloucester : many thanks for the arms.

I was sorry about your M.S. I intended to take it with me to Wales but, it, & much music which it sitered in a brotherly parcel, was left behind. Then came Gloster and now Leeds. Forgive me.

I am glad you will be in Leeds & if you are in town 22nd morning I will send you a rehearsal ticket.

I do not *hate* (as you say) anyone - I only wonder why they are alive - why they ever were & what an insult to intelligent people to propose it [*illegible*] heaven for us! The family is dispersed for a day or two but we meet this week.

Best regards  
Yours sincy  
Ed Elgar

The rehearsals are in the dull old Hall in Newman St.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Northwestern University, Illinois

<sup>16</sup> MS in possession of Raymond Monk

The reference to an MS of Miss Burley's is one of several throughout the letters. Possibly she composed, but it may be more likely that she attempted arrangements for the choirs she enjoyed conducting. Without her side of the correspondence, it is impossible to understand the strong remarks in the final paragraph. A week later, Elgar wrote again; meanwhile, Miss Burley had evidently read the *Falstaff* essay.

The Hut, Bray, Berks.

Sept 21, 1913

My dear Miss Burley :

I was so glad to hear you like the article. There *is* some subtle music floating around. I am sorry you will not be in London for the rehearsal; after Leeds we have no plans, but we shall meet at Leeds & perhaps something definite could be settled.

Please send me anything you write - I have not been home yet to release your MS. but next week when I have got over my rehearsals I shall be able to attend to things. I feel very guilty in having kept it so long. Please find us at Leeds : we shall be at the Metropole Hotel.

If you should change your mind, and why should you not, & come to London next week, let me know. I go home tomorrow.

Always sincerely yours,  
Edward Elgar<sup>17</sup>

The visit that Elgar seemed so anxious to arrange may well have been settled at Leeds, for Miss Burley came to Severn House for three days later in October, taking Carice to an exhibition of Spanish pictures. She left on the 24th.

\*Miss Burley left - very pleasant visit\*

Next month the Elgars spent a few days with Lord and Lady Beauchamp at Madresfield Court, and Elgar went on to visit his sister's family at Stoke, near Bromsgrove.

Severn House, Hampstead N.W.

Dec. 6 1913

My dear Miss Burley :

I have never sent you a word of thanks for the lovely ducks : they arrived when I was away but I returned in time to eat them - part of them of course. I hope you are well & that the competition preparations progress. I heard from Novello a few days ago that they were now prepared to send *me* all the *music you* are doing. I prevented the flood of melody by rushing to the telephone which for once justified its existence - which is more than I can do. When are you coming to London again?

Best regards  
Yours sincerely  
Edward Elgar<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Young, p 172

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Young, p 172

Elgar was to take a practical interest in Miss Burley's efforts to enter her choir in competitions. At the year's end Elgar wrote again, to invite further meetings and to thank her for a Christmas gift. The letter was addressed to Bayons Manor in Lincolnshire, where she spent most of 1913 and 1914, and where she became involved in training the village choir.

Severn House, 42 Netherhall Gardens, Hampstead, N.W.  
Dec 30 1913

My dear Rosa :

A happy new year to you & all good things & if it bring you sometimes to London so much the more shall I praise 1914. This last awful year had better be forgotten by most of our friends [,] so much sorrow has been poured upon them.

I have seen felt & admired a beautiful soft blue wrap - it reposes on the couch now - and is the correct blue [-] how clever you are & how good.

Bless you  
Love  
EE<sup>19</sup>

A newspaper description of the interior decoration of Severn House which appeared the previous year had contained the following : "Most attractive of all is the Blue Study - Lady Elgar's special pride - where carpet, chair covers and hangings are all a lovely shade of deep blue, blue-bound books abound, and some fine specimens of old blue Bristol glass give a note of glorious colour. Deep blue flowers are chosen, and even the blotting paper in the wide writing pad is a deep shade of blue".<sup>20</sup> The wrap was indeed a well-chosen gift. Early 1914 saw a letter, again to the Lincoln address, which mixed practical advice with something more intimate, and with continued suggestions of meetings.

Severn House, 42 Netherhall Gardens, Hampstead N.W.  
Feb 16 1914

My dear Miss Burley :

I was very glad to receive your letter - but you had much better have brought it, or better still said it. The Spring *is* the saddest season of the year if you do not take what is offered to you & only yearn for the things which are far off : you should leave your flowers now and again for a day, or two days [,] be in London & go back refreshed & ready for flowers : good advice.

I will enquire for the metronome - but in these days any thing quiet is not wanted & I have not seen a silent metronome for years. .

The partsongs will not be ready yet. They are very big & you shall have them as soon as the printers send them.

Do not work too hard at your choir. I am sending you some books on the training of it. I have not seen the books but I hope they may have some practical ideas in them.

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<sup>19</sup> Northwestern University, Illinois

<sup>20</sup> Cutting found at the Elgar Birthplace



I am or have been better - last week I had another internal chill & am just recovering. Let me know when you come up - it will of course be soon now - even for a day or two days.

Here all goes on as usual & I am worked very hard to little purpose having many worries not worth writing about but worth the telling.

With love  
Yours Sincerely  
EE<sup>21</sup>

The partsongs were presumably *Death on the Hills*, Op 72, and *Love's Tempest* and *Serenade*, Op 73, composed that January. The next letter confirmed the sending of the choir training books.

Severn House, 42, Netherhall Gardens, Hampstead N.W.  
Feb 24 1914

My dear Rosa :

I am sending you via Novello a few of their primers which I hope will be useful - if they are not advanced enough let me hear (you may let me hear anyway!) & I will try to find something better suited to your requirements. I heard only today about the silent Metronomes [:] they are no longer made I am told - but a little *tape* indicator which I am sending may serve - I am sorry there is nothing of a better & more *present-able* quality.

The Birds are singing  
Yours Sincerely  
EE<sup>22</sup>

No further letters from 1914 survive, although Alice's diary records visits from Miss Burley during May, July, August and over Christmas that year. In July she took Carice out for the day.

3 July 1914. "Very wet - Miss Burley & C. to Cambridge - & Miss B. went on to Highgate..."

It is the only diary reference to Miss Burley and Highgate. That year she had planned to visit Russia, but after the outbreak of war she changed her plans and took up an appointment with the family of Admiral Caulfeild (sic) at Midhurst in Sussex, where the Elgars would visit and enjoy the countryside and people; it was an opportunity to escape from the hectic activity and illness of the years of the Great War, and a pointer to the later visits to Fittleworth and the works composed there.

(To be concluded).

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<sup>21</sup> Northwestern University, Illinois

<sup>22</sup> Northwestern University, Illinois

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**The Annual Meeting of the Elgar Society will take place in the Main Hall, Lyttelton Rooms, Malvern Priory, Church Street, Malvern on Saturday 1 June 1996 at 2.30 pm. Members are reminded that there are vacancies for the offices of Vice-Chairman, Secretary, and Publicity Officer; and for three members of the General Committee, two for a full three-year term, and the other for one year only. Nominations are solicited and should be sent in writing to the Hon Secretary as soon as possible, and at the latest by 11 May. Each nomination must be seconded in writing, and it is essential to obtain the permission of the nominee.**

## BIRTHPLACE NEWS

Last year was certainly one of mixed fortunes, but although we were disappointed to have our application to the Heritage Lottery Fund turned down, we were at the same time encouraged by the Trustees' advice to address various aspects of our Business Plan and to re-apply. This we are now doing with the help and advice of the City and County Councils, the Heart of England Tourist Board, and the West Midlands Area Museum Service. The latter also enabled a Conservation Survey to be carried out at the Birthplace, as a result of which a considerable amount of essential work will be carried out at the cottage over the next few months, all of immense value to its long-term preservation.

Through the generous support of the Malvern Hills District Council and also some Charitable Trusts we are able to resume work at the Centre in April; I hope visitors, particularly to the Malvern Elgar Festival and later to the Worcester Three Choirs Festival, will see marked progress from the rather bleak-looking building which has been standing in bare earth since the shell was completed. We hope to complete all the landscaping, including the car and coach parks, and to provide access to the Birthplace via the Centre's reception area. The site for the orchard will be levelled ready for Bulmer's to do the final preparation and planting of the fruit trees in the late autumn, and I will then have the complicated but enjoyable task of labelling them all!

Many of you will be aware that Chris Bennett, who has done splendid work caring for the Birthplace and its visitors since his father's retirement, is leaving, but has kindly agreed to stay until he can be replaced. All being well the Trustees hope to make an appointment within the next month and to see the new Curator installed by late spring, and he or she will certainly have an exciting and challenging time ahead.

I hope many Society members will be able to support our Gala Concert at Symphony Hall, Birmingham on Thursday 17 October; it is a tremendous privilege to have our President to conduct the Philharmonia Orchestra, and in an outstanding programme comprising Mendelssohn's *Hebrides Overture*, Elgar's *Violin Concerto* played by

Leland Chen, and Dvořák's *New World Symphony*. We will also be celebrating Lord Menuhin's eightieth birthday and the centenary of the British Motor Industry (who are sponsoring the concert), so help us to make it a night to remember!

Diana Quinney

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## ELGAR IN BONN

John McGinn

In the music world of Germany, some truly remarkable concerts have been taking place over the past few years.

While Elgar's orchestral music is of course performed occasionally in Germany, this is usually under the direction of a British conductor - a rare exception to this was a performance of the *Cello Concerto* with Lynn Harrell under the Czech conductor Jiří Bělohlávek at the Bad Kissinger Music Festival a few years ago. The reaction of the



German press, though to be sure not without exception, is all too often rather condescending and ill-disposed towards Elgar's music - perhaps even motivated in part by what some critics may see as chauvinism on the part of the [usually British] conductors.

But the opportunity to witness one of Elgar's major choral works is a rare event indeed, and then it is usually a performance of *Gerontius*. In fact, viewed historically, in all likelihood the last performances of *The Apostles* were those under the direction of Fritz Steinbach (Cologne, 1904) and Fritz Volbach (Mainz, 1904); while performances of *The Kingdom* do not appear to have ever taken place in Germany - until now.

Against this backdrop, then, it is an event utterly without parallel when a German conductor performs not just one of Elgar's three great choral works, but all three. In Bonn, the young German conductor Thomas Neuhoff - himself a member of the Elgar Society - together with his Philharmonischer Chor Bonn and the added support of other choirs and a first-class soloists' ensemble - interpreted *The Dream of Gerontius* as far back as 1991 and have now followed this with *The Apostles* in February 1995 and with their crowning achievement, *The Kingdom*, in July of last year, the latter as part of the festivities of the seventh Oxford Week in Bonn, a performance in which a fine choir from Oxford also took part.

Critical acclaim of these performances, while subject to the usual differences of opinion, for the most part praised Elgar's works with an enthusiasm seldom accorded this music in German concert reviews. And there is no doubt that much of the credit for these favourable impressions belongs to Thomas Neuhoff and his Philharmonischer Chor - unanimously praised for their superb musicianship in all of their concert reviews.

I was fortunate in being able to attend *The Kingdom* on 1 July and can truly echo the sentiments of these highly praiseworthy concert reviews. Indeed, I was deeply sorry at not having been able to be at the earlier performances as well. With performances of such artistic merit made available to at least a limited German public, a *dream* of Elgarians has come true - and surely a dream of Herr Neuhoff as well.

It is indeed a great pity that there seems to be little hope for their being able to give these works in future, not because their performances to date have found no acceptance (for clearly they have); but because of the considerable difficulties of financing such large-scale concerts. For what he has already achieved, however, Thomas Neuhoff deserves the utmost admiration and respect of all Elgarians.

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## "ELGAR'S TENTH MUSE"

On 12 March Channel Four will show a film made for TV entitled *Elgar's Tenth Muse*, starring James Fox as Elgar. It purports to show the relationship between the ageing composer and the young Hungarian-born violinist, Jelly d'Aranyi (played by the Bosnian actress, Selma Alispahic). Jelly d'Aranyi was born in Budapest in 1895, the younger sister of the violinist Adila Fachiri, and the great-niece of the famous violinist Joachim. She began her international career at the age of thirteen, and in 1913 she and her sister settled in England. Apart from her ability as a violinist, she was a great beauty, who captivated the hearts of many who met her. Several composers wrote works for her, including Bartók, Ravel, and Stravinsky; nearer home Ethel Smyth (*Concerto for Violin and Horn*), Vaughan Williams (*Concerto Accademico*), and for the two sisters, Holst (*Double Concerto*).

The film has been made by Emmy-award winner Paul Yule, and the music composed and arranged by Donald Fraser, who in fact lives at Brinkwells, Elgar's summer cottage in Sussex. Fraser studied composition with Sir Adrian Boult, who "always insisted that Elgar was essentially a 20th-century composer who people play as a late romantic". One of the play's central tenets will almost certainly be controversial - that Jelly was an inspiration for Elgar's *Cello Concerto*. The concerto will be played in this production by Natalie Clein, the current Young Musician of the Year. In what is obviously a fantasy sequence, Elgar listens to her playing. "Elgar liked young musicians with sparkle and he would have loved Natalie, just as he was inspired by Jelly and by the teenage Menuhin", says Fraser. "So in our film, as Natalie plays in modern dress, the spirit of Elgar appears to listen and take pleasure".

It is true that Jelly and her accompanist Ethel Hobday attended a soirée at Severn House on 29 February 1920, just a few weeks before Alice Elgar died. They played the Brahms *Sonata in D minor* and then the Elgar *Sonata*; "perfectly beautiful" recorded Alice, "slow movement quite inspired. Mrs. Hobday said she felt quite overcome. One of the



most beautiful movements in existence". Jelly's reaction was quite different. She is reported to have said, "I went to Elgar's and played there for a lot of early Victorian antiques. I wanted to kick everybody!"

But the diaries are remarkably silent about meetings between Elgar and Jelly either before or after Alice's death, so for the play to represent the facts they must have met clandestinely. Elgar as usual did have many lady friends whom he saw regularly around this time, particularly Alice Stuart Wortley, Muriel Foster, and Lalla Vandervelde; and their visits and lunches out, etc are dutifully recorded by Elgar and Alice. The play implies that the gap in their ages - thirty-eight years - and between their respective worlds -the pre-war Victorian and the bohemian Bloomsbury - meant that any "relationship" between the composer and the violinist was doomed from the outset. Whether this was the case or not we shall probably never know.

James Fox is thrilled to be playing the part of Elgar. "I come as a punter", he said. "Who would turn it down? Elgar was such a great man, a country boy made good. But then in the immediate post-war period when musical fashion was changing with social events, he became unfashionable. He took an enormous amount of stick. And then, when he met this girl, he was at a difficult time in a man's life, 61, when you feel perhaps the best is past, and you wonder what there is to look forward to".



*(Above) Elgar (James Fox) tends the dying Alice (Faith Brook).*

*(Opposite) Elgar and Jelly d'Aranyi (Selma Alispahic).*

*(Previous page) James Fox as Elgar.*

*(Photos courtesy of Channel Four).*



**The ELGAR Society  
North West Branch Manchester**

**AN ELGAR LUNCHEON**

to be held at  
**The Portland Thistle Hotel  
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**Sunday 24 March 1996 at 1.00 pm**

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

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If any member has the deleted Chandos CD *Enigma Variations* (CHAN 8610) for either sale or exchange, please contact me by letter or phone.  
Paul Irving, 10 West Moss Lane, Ballam, Lytham St Anne's, Lancs FY8 4NH  
Telephone: 01253 739633.

## RANDOM RAMBLINGS...

We offer our congratulations to our President Lord Menuhin who next month celebrates his eightieth birthday. It seems that, like the patriarch, as is his days so is his strength. His continuing advocacy of British music, and of Elgar in particular, is shown in the choice of the *Serenade for Strings* at his birthday concert at Birmingham on 10 April, and of the *Enigma Variations* at the Albert Hall the following week. Long may he continue to inspire and edify us.

Two of our Vice-Presidents also reach the four-score-year mark; next week Professor Ian Parrott, still very active and a staunch supporter of the South-Wales Branch; and in two months time Dr Douglas Guest, first Chairman of the London Branch, and later of the Society. Again we send greetings and all best wishes to them.

\* \* \* \* \*

Elgar was 'Composer of the Week' in January, although the series was a repeat of the one first broadcast a year ago. The idea of building each programme around an interview with a well-known Elgarian, such as Jerrold Northrop Moore and Richard Hickox, was a good one, and the programmes were informative and interesting. Sadly this series, now going out at lunchtime, appears to be succumbing to competition from Classic FM, so that longer works such as symphonies are represented by a single movement only.

\* \* \* \* \*

And a final postscript on the subject of listening to music in small bites. A friend of mine, in his capacity as head of a national children's charity, attended one of the great self-styled classic spectacles at the Albert Hall complete with special effects, lasers, and the orchestra in brightly-coloured outfits. Predictably perhaps *Land of Hope and Glory* was accompanied by the waving of programmes, the back cover of which had the Union Jack printed on it. But, tastelessness aside, what worried my friend most was the patent irritation and impatience of the audience during the quieter central section of the *1812 Overture* (the finest part of the work, in my estimation). It was, he said, as if they could not wait until the next "big" tune arrived. Titillating the aural senses in the way that these concerts do is not necessarily a bad thing, but it is surely worrying if people's musical appreciation stops there.

\* \* \* \* \*

One of the least familiar of Elgar's completed works is the *Etudes Caractéristiques*, Op 24. for solo violin. The two main reasons for this neglect are presumably that, as exercises, they are not meant primarily to be listened to; and their extreme difficulty. The story is told of an internationally-famous violinist who was shown the pieces with a view to performing them; he went rather white and had to sit down. Now it seems that it is possible that the *Etudes* may receive their first commercial recording (the Society arranged its own recording a few years ago, still available - see the Information page for details). I was asked if I might provide some music for the



violinist concerned. I decided to go directly to the publishers -Bosworth - situated in Heddon Street, a quiet lane just off the bustle of Regent Street and, without the inevitable parking meters and sandwich bars, almost Dickensian in its quaintness. The small firm, seemingly unaffected by multinational takeovers, was similarly quaint, but refreshingly different from vast stores where no-one seems to know anything. Here the assistant's knowledge showed the virtue of continuity. He said he had worked there for over twenty years, and during that time had sold no more than ten copies of the *Etudes* - perhaps a predictable figure for such a difficult piece.

\* \* \* \* \*

Crossword compilers continue to make use of Elgar. I suppose the lack of other well-known composers beginning with E means that Elgar has to be called upon when compilers need that letter in a musical context. Some time ago *The Times* had "He worked in bars, distributing lager (5)" (a straight anagram); and more recently, "Prelude from Elgar's first in concert (5)". I will give the answer to the latter next time; but the word can be found as the title of one of the six Gilbert Parker poems (Op 59) which Elgar intended to set to music, and one of the three he didn't.

\* \* \* \* \*

A "special event" Amateur Radio Station - call-sign GB2JEB - will operate from Malvern over the period 31 May - 3 June, to cover Elgar's Birthday Weekend. Amateur bands 20 and 80 metres (14 MHz & 3.5 MHz) will be in use, and contacts over the UK and Europe are certain, and possibly world-wide, if radio conditions are good.

Any interested member, short-wave listener, or licensed amateur, is invited to contact the Acting Secretary of the Society John Kelly (G3YGG) for further details.

\* \* \* \* \*

The significance of the year 1896 in Elgar's career has been recognised by Elgarians for a long time now. In 1933 Basil Maine wrote : "In this oratorio of 1896 [*The Light of Life*] Elgar cannot be said to have left behind his *Lehrjahre*; but here, nevertheless, is evidence of the sure coming of his *Meisterjahre*". Some would see in the other choral work of this year - *King Olaf* - even greater evidence. The year will see centenary performances of both works, including the original venues. As mentioned in these pages in the November JOURNAL, the oratorio will be given at the Three Choirs at Worcester on 18 August; the cantata at the Victoria Hall Hanley on 2 November by the Ceramic City Choir and the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra under Donald Hunt. Further details can be obtained from Mrs Jean Armstrong, Festival Administrator, 10 College Green, Worcester WR1 2LH; and from the Secretary of the Ceramic City Choir, Ann Taylor, 12 Silverton Close, Bradwell, Newcastle, Staffordshire ST5 8LU.

\* \* \* \* \*

Elgar lovers in Central and Southern England should have no trouble finding a

concert to attend on 11 May. A glance at the Concert Diary will show no less than six Elgar concerts in that area on that day. As reported in these pages last year, the performance of *Gerontius* at Wells marks the retirement of the Cathedral organist, Dr Anthony Crosland.

Members' attention is also drawn to the change of venue for the Luton Choral Society *Gerontius* on 23 March, which is now in the new Stopsley Baptist Church, which apparently boasts a marvellous acoustic. The choir have a noble Elgar pedigree, particularly during the Second World War : they were often called upon when the BBC Symphony Orchestra were based at nearby Bedford.

For members in the London area the concert 'Music in the Air' to be given on 29 March in the Grosvenor Chapel, South Audley Street, W1 (just off Oxford Street) is of particular interest. The Orlando Chamber Choir under its conductor Brian Gordon will perform the *Te Deum & Benedictus*, *Give unto the Lord*, the three Latin motets (Op.2), and some part-songs. The programme will also include organ and piano music by Elgar. Tickets cost £7 and the price includes a glass of wine at the interval. For details ring Helen Cormack on 0171 376-5992.

\* \* \* \* \*

Last year we reported on the enthusiasm for Elgar displayed by Petra Heinrich, a young German music student who was an assistant teacher at the Chetham's School of Music. She has now returned to Germany, but her professor has refused her request to do her dissertation on Elgar, saying that he "doesn't fit into the curriculum". There is clearly still much to be done, but as an antidote it is good to read the encouraging article about Thomas Neuhoff's work in Bonn. Let us hope that ways can be found to fund more concerts of this nature.

Performances of Elgar abroad which have come to our attention include Heinrich Schiff playing the *Cello Concerto* next month in Frankfurt, Leverkusen, and Regensburg among other places; the following month the City of London Sinfonia will play the *Serenade for Strings* in Kristiansand in Norway; while last autumn the English Concert Singers under Roy Wales did a tour of Israel where their repertoire included *The Snow* and *Feasting I Watch*.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Society is investigating the possibility of setting up a site on the World Wide Web, and/or using E-mail.

It would be very helpful if any member with experience or special knowledge in this area, and who is currently a user of Internet generally, would contact the Acting Secretary, John Kelly, in writing at the address on the back cover; or his son, Dr Mark Kelly, by E-mail, at lip95mpk @ sheffield.ac.uk.

\* \* \* \* \*

In its travel section *The Times* recently recommended Worcestershire as ideal for a winter break. Pershore, Evesham, and Broadway were all mentioned, as well as Worcester. And the season was seen as a distinct advantage for a visit to the Birthplace. "Being so tiny it gets horribly crowded in summer. In winter, it's a joy".

\* \* \* \* \*

A few snippets relating to the filming of Elgar in 1920 and the *Falstaff* manuscript have come to light. As stated in the article in the November *JOURNAL*, Elgar viewed the results of the first filming at Denman Street on 5 March. The following day he wrote to Alice Stuart Wortley : "I saw myself(?) on the film yesterday & you shd see it some day - it is going to be 'edited' a little" (Moore, *The Windflower Letters*, p 237). More significantly, Elgar's own diary for that same day includes "left M.S. paper for film at Denman St". Despite Arthur Reynolds' logical assumption that all the filming should have been at Severn House to deserve the description of Elgar being "at home", it does seem now that the filming of the pages from the *Falstaff* manuscript took place at the second session, held at Denman Street, on 12 March. Elgar wrote in his diary : "very hot [:] one electric thing flamed up". Presumably the heat came from extra lights needed to show up the score as clearly as possible. The results of this second session were viewed five days later, when Alice's diary reads: "E. & C. to Film to see E's pixture - very amused & pleased".

\* \* \* \* \*

In all my years in the Elgar Society I have never yet met a member who was not enthusiastic, or at least sympathetic to other British composers or to British music generally. How sad then that a recent issue of the *Journal of the British Music Society* contained an article entitled 'The Appreciation of Elgar', which turned out to be quite the opposite of that. Apparently "...Elgar has been elevated to God-like status and any criticism of his music is now regarded as sacrilege", and "...the over-promotion of Elgar precludes BBC time for other British composers". There is much more in a similar vein, and the author backs his case with anti-Elgar quotes from various musical worthies. (This last approach proves absolutely nothing, of course, as it is possible to do the same thing about anyone, even Beethoven and Mozart; indeed, writers such as Demuth and Slonimsky have edited whole books containing adverse criticism of composers). Well, it's a free country, I suppose, and people are entitled to their views; no doubt the editor publishes a similar disclaimer to the one on our own Contents page. But what a pity that the BMS should give credibility to such a jaundiced piece of writing. For after all, it is surely a greater 'appreciation' of Elgar over the last thirty years or so that has contributed to a reappraisal of those British composers formerly neglected.

\* \* \* \* \*

The notice of the Society's AGM refers to the need for a new Publicity Officer; due to the increasing pressure of his professional business Ian Lace feels that he must stand down. This is obviously a vital role to fill if the Society is to continue to grow, and would obviously suit someone with experience in PR or marketing, although this is not absolutely essential. Anyone interested in finding out more can contact Ian Lace at 17 Chandlers Way, Steyning, West Sussex BN44 3NG.

\* \* \* \* \*

The shock news that Sir Simon Rattle will be relinquishing his post as Music Director of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra in 1998 is tempered by the fact that he will continue as a guest conductor, and "will work with the CBSO more than any other orchestra". There are "open-ended plans to tour and record together". Let us hope that this includes more Elgar; to date only *Gerontius*, *Falstaff*, and the *Variations* are the only major works to be committed to disc. It's been a few years now since we had new recordings of the symphonies from EMI (the less than universally acclaimed Tate accounts); so perhaps this could be part of the new post-1998 CBSO/Rattle plans?

Following Birmingham's example, Manchester has a new concert venue - the Bridgewater Hall. This will be opened in the autumn with an inaugural concert on 11 September, when the Hallé Orchestra under their Principal Conductor Kent Nagano will include the *Enigma Variations* along with Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast* and a newly-commissioned work by George Benjamin.

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### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

2 March	Handel Ov, Bach Fantasia & Fugue <i>Rutland Sinfonia/Collett</i>	Festival Hall Corby 7.30 01536 402233
2 March	From the Bavarian Highlands, Cockaigne <i>Bristol Cath Special Ch/Orch/Brayne</i>	Clifton Cathedral Bristol 7.45 pm 0117 968 7021
7 March	Cockaigne, Cello Concerto <i>L.Anstee/Bath SO/Holroyd</i>	Forum, St James' Parade, Bath 7.30 pm 01225 448831
10 March	Music Makers <i>H.Boyd/Dundee Chor U/RSNO/Mantle</i>	Caird Hall, Dundee 7.30 pm
13 March	Introduction & Allegro <i>City of London Sinf/Hickox</i>	Corn Exchange Cambridge 7.30 pm 01223 357851
16 March	The Music Makers <i>C.Wyn-Rogers/Guildford Chor Soc/ Philh/Wetton</i>	Royal Festival Hall South Bank 7.30 pm
16 March	King Olaf <i>Soloists/Reading University Chor Soc &amp; O/Kent</i>	Great Hall, Reading University 7.30 pm 01734 316696
20 March	King Olaf <i>Soloists/Hitchin Girls' Sch &amp; Hitchin Boys' Sch Chor &amp; O/Rooke</i>	St Mary's Church, Hitchin 7.30 pm 01462 432162
21 March	repeat of the above concert	

23 March	The Light of Life <i>K.Flowers,M.McDonald,D.Fieldsend,P.Savage</i> <i>Hereford Chor Soc/Orch da Camera/Massey</i>	Hereford Cathedral 7.30 pm
23 March	The Dream of Gerontius <i>J.Higgins,B.Bottone,A.Dale</i> <i>Forbes/Luton Chor Soc/Chiltern SO/Mann</i>	Stopsley Baptist Church 7.30 pm 01582 424777 <b>Please note new venue</b>
23 March	The Dream of Gerontius <i>Soloists/St Cecilia Chor Soc/Essex Ch O/J.Del Mar</i>	St Peter Ad Vincula Coggeshall, Essex 01245 495538
29 March	"Music in the Air" Orlando Chamber Choir/Gordon (see Random Ramblings)	Grosvenor Chapel South Audley St 7.30
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
30 March	The Kingdom <i>Soloists/N Herts Guild of Singers/Herts Ch O/Wilkes</i>	St Andrew & St George, Stevenage 01462 682212
4 April	Cello Concerto <i>S.Isserlis/RPO/Handley</i>	Royal Albert Hall 7.30 pm
10 April	Serenade for Strings <i>Warsaw Sinfonia/Menuhin</i>	Symphony Hall, Bir'ham 8.00 pm
19 April	Cello Concerto <i>Harnoy/LPO/Pehlivanian</i>	Royal Festival Hall South Bank 7.30 pm
20 April	Enigma Variations <i>RPO/Menuhin</i>	Royal Albert Hall 7.00 pm
20 April	Symphony no 1 <i>Kent County YO/Vincent</i>	Royal Festival Hall South Bank
25 April	Sea Pictures, Enigma Variations <i>C.Wyn-Rogers/Philh/Wordsworth</i>	Greenwich Naval Chapel 7.30 pm
26 April	Cello Concerto <i>details as for 19 April</i>	
11 May	The Light of Life <i>St Mary's Singers/Hitchin Concert O/Rooke</i>	Hitchin Girls' School 7.30 pm
11 May	The Dream of Gerontius <i>C.Wyn-Rogers,J.G.Hall,G.Hargreaves/Leicester Phil Ch/Bardi O/Constantine</i>	De Montfort Hall Leicester 7.30 pm 0116 254 7407

11 May	The Dream of Gerontius <i>C.Denley, A.Murgatroyd, Q.Hayes/Wells Cath Orat Soc/Wells Sinf/Crosland</i>	Wells Cathedral 7.00 pm 01749 672773
11 May	The Kingdom <i>Soloists/Gravesham Chor Soc &amp; O/Vincent</i>	Rochester Cathedral 7.30 pm 01471 321977
11 May	The Music Makers, Sea Pictures <i>Y.Howard/Pershore Dist Chor Soc/Regency Sinf/Seacombe</i>	Pershore Abbey 7.30 pm 01386 556586
11 May	Fringes of the Fleet, Pomp & Circumstance Marches 2 & 4, Nelly <i>Rutland Sinfonia/Collett</i>	Festival Hall, Corby 7.30 pm 01536 402233
12 May	The Light of Life <i>details as for 11 May except venue</i>	St Mary's Church, Potton, Beds
16 May	Cello Concerto <i>Kirshbaum/Prague SO/Belohlavek</i>	Symphony Hall, Bir'ham 8.00 pm
18 May	<i>as above</i>	The Anvil, Basingstoke 01256 844244
18 May	The Dream of Gerontius <i>J.Rigby, A.Davies, R.Hayward/Leeds Phil Ch/Hallé/Hickox</i>	Leeds Town Hall 7.30 pm
19 May	Cello Concerto <i>as above</i>	Royal Festival Hall South Bank 7.30 pm
21 May	Enigma Variations <i>RPO/Temirkanov</i>	Royal Albert Hall 7.30 pm
30 May 8 June	Malvern Elgar Festival <i>(see accompanying brochure)</i>	Various venues in Malvern area
11 June	Introduction & Allegro <i>ASMF/Marriner</i>	Symphony Hall, Bir'ham 8.00 pm
22 June	The Dream of Gerontius <i>A.Gunson, M.Hill, G.Hargreaves/ Croydon Fest Ch/Lambeth SO/Fifield</i>	Fairfield Hall, Croydon 7.30 pm
13 July	The Kingdom <i>Soloists/Bromley Summer Chor Fest Ch/Bromley SO/Brown</i>	Ravensbourne School Bromley 8.00 pm
17 - 24 August	Three Choirs Festival	Worcester

## MUSIC REVIEW

At a Solemn Music : Majestic Music arranged by Harrison Oxley. £11-99

Romances for Organ, arranged by Harrison Oxley. £10-99

Favourite Anthem Book no 8, arranged by Harrison Oxley. £9-99

All published by Kevin Mayhew.

There is much of interest in the two organ collections, and Harrison Oxley's musicianship and taste, coupled with Kevin Mayhew's excellent presentation makes it worthwhile to acquire them. All the transcriptions are laid out with the player's comfort in mind, and they are full of practical good sense.

Any quibbles must be seen in the light of the above, but some decisions do raise doubts. It is good to see that Elgar features seven times in *At a Solemn Music*, and most of the transcriptions are good, but why replace Elgar's *poco largamente, dolcissimo* marking in the 'Angel's Farewell' (bar 12) with the more general word *rubato* which could imply a wider range of *accelerando* or *rallentando* options?

'Nimrod' is very playable and so is the Interlude from *Falstaff*. A section of *For the Fallen* makes a noble sound, and the *Dream Children* make a delicate and winsome effect. It is in the 'Go forth upon thy journey' from *Gerontius* that I part company to some degree with the editor. Make no mistake, the piece makes a solemn effect, but isn't it all too bland? My copy is now littered with insertions from the full score, as I have found that to reproduce more of the verbal rhythms brings the music to life. I know that some listeners will not know the words, but those who hear the verbal rhythms coming from the organ will either have a pleasant reminder of words they know well, and/or they will be excited by the splendid rhythmic vitality of the music. At bar 59 it helps to solo the melody on a more powerful manual at 8-foot pitch (and 16?), while all the accompaniment notes are taken by the LH on the Swell. I think it can also be effective to reproduce the repeated note rhythm of the lower strings, instead of sustaining 11 bars of bass A natural from the same point onwards. Why not look at the music between figs 75 and 76 in the full score to see what might be done here? This particular transcription makes a useful basis to work from and there is space in the transcribed score for additional rhythmic material (no deletion is necessary), so a study of the full score at this point could be very beneficial indeed.

I'm not sure why Grieg's *Elegiac Melody* appears in both volumes, but it is useful to have. I am, however, worried by the transposition of the beautiful *Elegy* by Hubert Parry from A $\flat$  major to G, and a similar transposition of 'Prière à Notre Dame' from Boëllmann's *Suite Gothique*. Such transpositions may make the music fractionally easier to play, but surely any organist worthy of the name ought to be able to play in the key of A $\flat$ . I know that organs differ in pitch, but I find that even with equal temperament there are subtle differences in key colour, which have some effect on the mood of the listener.

I'm sorry that Wolstenholme's *Question and Answer* have not both been printed. The *Question* is attractive, but leaves us guessing at the response the composer had

in mind. Readers might like to know that the *Serenade in C* which we all thought to be by Haydn is now found to be by Romanus Hofstetter (1742 - 1815). It is lovely music, but some of the accompaniment has been thinned out, with the comment that "...if preferred, the LH pattern of bars 1-2 may be maintained throughout".

Quibbles apart, we have transcriptions of Bach, Elgar, Walford Davies, Schubert, Grieg, Parry and MacDowell in one volume and music by Wolstenholme, Hollins, Peter Oxley, Schumann, Pierné, Grieg (the same piece again), Bach, Delius, and Guilmant in the other. Taking each volume as an entity, do go ahead and purchase.

The anthems are all well edited. I'm not sure about the added voice parts for Fauré's 'Pié Jesu', or indeed Mendelssohn's 'If with all your hearts' but the transcription of music from Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* for the words 'Loving Shepherd of Thy sheep' is movingly beautiful, and it is good to see Elgar's 'Light of the world' and 'The Spirit of the Lord' set out with accompaniments that are playable and easy to read.

Roger Fisher

### **BOOK REVIEWS**

Edward Elgar : A Guide to Research, by Christopher Kent.

*Composer Resource Manuals vol 37; Garland Reference Library of the Humanities. New York & London, 1993. Price about £60*

Edward Elgar : A Source Book, by Stewart R Craggs

*Scolar Press, 1995. £45.*

Elgar : A Bibliography, by Geoffrey Hodgkins.

*Reprinted from The Music Review, 1996. £5.*

*(Obtainable from the Membership Secretary, Elgar Society)*

The provision of good guides to sources is a *sine qua non* of effective scholarship, though it inevitably attracts less fame than the narrative monograph. This can result in the source guide appearing after all the main research has been done. During a period of some twenty years, in which there has been a plethora of books and articles on Elgar, only one such guide (Diana McVeagh's bibliography in the New Grove 'Twentieth Century English Masters', 1986) has been available. We are suddenly provided with no fewer than three. True, the Kent volume was published in 1993, but in so obscure a manner that it has almost escaped notice until now. All three works display in different ways both the value of such offerings and the problems they face.

*A Guide to Research* is divided into three parts. Part 1 (75% of the book) is devoted to a collation of Elgar's musical autographs from 1866 to his death. For each is listed the surviving MSS versions and their whereabouts, dates, first performances, editions and literature references. Part 2 is a critical bibliography, and Part 3 a schedule of the Elgar Archives at the Birthplace and the Hereford and Worcester Record Office.



Some interesting facts can be gleaned from this rather arid compilation. For example no fewer than fifty-five works (not all, of course, completed) post-date the *Cello Concerto*. This does not seem to square with the theories about Elgar losing the urge to compose. Why is it that the only MS of the controversial Thirteenth Variation is in private (unspecified) hands? And how many of us knew that the Ranee of Sarawak was a frequent contact of the composer after his wife's death?

A *Source Book* is somewhat similarly organised. There is also a chronology beginning with the birth of Elgar's father in 1821 but somewhat illogically, therefore, ending with his own death. This is followed by a *catalogue raisonné* of the works, a list of Elgar's recordings of his own music, a list of institutions holding the musical MSS and archives, and a select bibliography which includes sleeve-notes from recordings.

A *Bibliography* is just that. It is a reprint funded by the Elgar Society from *The Music Review* of a bibliography compiled by the Editor of the Journal. It contains over 1,000 entries arranged chronologically from 1895 to December 1992 but subdivided into categories, eg. Elgar's Own Writings, Personal Reminiscences, Life-and-Work Studies, etc. It includes newspaper articles and letters as well as more obvious sources.

It is not easy to sum up this unexpected *embarras de (moyenne) richesse*. Each of the works has a different objective, although they all share at least some of the same data as a means of attempting to achieve it. Kent is the most wide-ranging and scholarly, but his bibliography is much less extensive than either Craggs or Hodgkins. It does, however, have added value by being a critical survey, not simply a listing. He also deals with the musical MSS and cross refers, often very extensively, to the relevant literature in the bibliography, although in a manner not always easy to follow. Kent is more likely to appeal to scholars (the price alone being an inhibitant for anyone else). However there are peculiarities appertaining to the production of the work.

The layout adopted results in a fifth of the book being blank paper - extraordinary in these environmentally-conscious days. And whatever can have possessed a publisher to issue a work on Elgar only in the USA? Obtaining a copy in the UK is a feat comparable to accessing a state secret.

Craggs is both more immediately accessible in all senses, and more of a rag-bag. He is less meticulous and his work is actually in real terms more expensive than Kent (188 pages against 513 -but see above). The "select" bibliography neither states the principles of selection, nor identifies references in works in which Elgar is not the principal subject, although it must be said it is the most up-to-date listing we have. The chronology hardly seems to have value, given its partial nature and the existence in print of so much biographical material and editions of the letters.

More importantly both books demonstrate the lack of adequate work in an area which cries out for attention - the question of the Elgar archives.

Kent reproduces two archive lists, both second-hand. The section covering the

material deposited at the Hereford and Worcester Record Office is a simple reprint of the basic inventory, compiled as an accession record. It can be purchased very cheaply from the Office. The Birthplace listing is more useful in that nothing comparable has previously appeared, However, both are far from being a professionally acceptable catalogue, and merely serve to whet the appetite. Kent also produces a note of 'Some Further Collections', which merely displays lack of research. A list of libraries and universities without any attempt at stating what are the relevant Elgarian items held by them, and their references, is meaningless.

In Craggs the section dealing with archives is so nugatory as to be praised if called inadequate. Entitled 'Collections' (of what?), it extends to a mere six pages with many of the entries simply reading "correspondence" (of whom, when?) The same criticism made above of Kent in regard to location and references also applies.

And what about a catalogue of Elgar's library?

Hodgkins has a more limited objective and therefore attains it. However the approach, also used by Kent and Craggs, of attempting to subdivide by classification is open to question. A straight chronological or alphabetical listing would make items easier to find and the former would also provide interesting data on the relative rate of publication over different periods. There are some irritations. Multi-authored works are dissected by their individual contributions, resulting in the work itself "disappearing". Page references can be misleading; for example, Pirie, *The English Musical Renaissance* is referenced for only eight pages despite the fact that there are considerably more, and in some cases more significant, references elsewhere in the book. Another drawback is that, given the assiduity of the Elgar "industry" the bibliography is already becoming seriously outdated.

But these are quibbles and others can be similarly made of both Kent and Craggs.

Reviewers of this type of work often delight at finding errors in obscure places and demonstrating their learning by exposing them. This seems to me an arcane, not to say time-consuming, exercise not helpful to the potential reader. The main criticism to be levelled at the two major works reviewed here is that in their desire to be all-inclusive they have avoided the issue of how good their own sources are in those areas in which the authors have less direct knowledge. The compiler of such work must have a clear idea of the target audience and of the standards which such an audience will accept. Data presented must be of sources within their personal knowledge. If they lack this and still wish to cover those sources they must seek help from those who have such knowledge.

The thought must be expressed that there may be a role for the Society in encouraging scholarly work in new directions and perhaps even ultimately acting as a clearing house of information for would-be researchers. Certainly the works under review fail to reach the standard necessary for them to be claimed as definitive guides to all of the sources for Elgarian scholarship which they include.

Carl Newton

## RECORD REVIEWS

Sonata for Organ, Op. 28.

Christopher Herrick : Hyperion CDA 66778

Thomas Murray : Gothic G 49076

The Earl of Dudley donated a four-manual organ to Worcester Cathedral. It was built by Hill, in the south transept, and opened in 1875, the year of the so-called 'Mock' Festival. Its case, by Gilbert Scott, is what one sees today, though little remains of Hill's pipework. At the 1875 Festival, Elgar heard S S Wesley playing Bach on this organ, and the experience appears to have created a profound impression upon the young composer. Some twenty years later, on the same instrument, Hugh Blair gave the first performance of Elgar's *Sonata for Organ*, Op. 28.

It is a difficult and at times ungrateful work, some of it lying rather awkwardly under the hands, some of it requiring changes of colour and dynamics which cannot be comfortably managed (or managed at all) except on a large instrument with a fair complement of aids to registration; and it is hard not to conclude that Elgar, though a reasonably proficient performer, was here and there thinking not of the organ but of the orchestra, many passages looking on paper like reductions from an orchestral score (Gordon Jacob's transcription for full orchestra is for this reviewer a somewhat more satisfying experience than the organ original).

Christopher Herrick and Thomas Murray make light of the various difficulties, in performances which can be recommended almost without reservation. Herrick's chosen instrument is the historic organ in Wellington Town Hall, New Zealand (Norman & Beard, 1906); Murray's the stupendous Newberry Memorial Organ in Woolsey Hall, Yale University (Hutchings-Votey, 1902; Steere, 1915; E M Skinner, 1928). The Wellington organ, though built some thirty years later, has much in common with Hill's Worcester organ of 1875 and is entirely appropriate. So, too, is the Yale organ, though this is a much larger, much smoother instrument, altogether more orchestral in conception. (Elgar's friend Professor S S Sanford played a part in the design of the 1902 organ, and Elgar heard it when he received his Yale doctorate in 1905. Two of the stops in that organ, the Tibia Plena and Tuba Sonora, may have been copies of the stops of the same name in the Hope-Jones organ in Worcester Cathedral, which replaced Hill's organ of 1875, and which Sanford knew and admired).

Herrick's first movement seems more *maestoso* than Murray's, and his characteristically rhythmical style of playing puts one in mind of Elgar's nonsense conducting. Conversely, however, his second movement sounds a little hurried, Murray's slightly more relaxed approach seeming a better vehicle for Elgar's wistfulness. Again, Herrick is perhaps just a shade too fast in the lovely *tranquillo* sections in the third movement, Murray capturing here a kind of rapt, Birchwood stillness. The Murray first movement is a fraction less taut than Herrick's, with some inexplicable pauses in bars 142-145. Here are the respective timings of the four movements :

	<b>Herrick</b>	<b>Murray</b>
1	8' 26"	9' 36"
2	3' 44"	4' 33"
3	5' 44"	6' 45"
4	7' 04"	7' 36"

Murray succumbs to many of the temptations offered by the great Yale organ, and one is glad that he does, but the result is sometimes a rather over-lush sonority, somewhat removed (one imagines) from Hill's organ of 1875. Herrick's registrations are more restrained and always entirely apt, whereas in bars 40-50 of the second movement, Murray abandons Worcester Cathedral in favour of the Tower Ballroom at Blackpool.

The Murray CD is an all-Elgar compilation, including the *Vesper Voluntaries*, Op.14 and transcriptions of *Chanson de Nuit*, *Imperial March*, *Carillon* and the Solemn March from *The Black Knight*. The Herrick CD is a more general compilation, including trumpet pieces by Cocker, Hollins, and Lang, and a transcription of the 'Vorspiel' to *Die Meistersinger*; the inclusion of Herbert Sumsion's fine *Introduction and Theme*, however, makes this particular CD just as indispensable for the Elgarian.

Magnificent recordings; warmly recommended.

Relf Clark

[Dr Clark is Editor of the Journal of the British Institute of Organ Studies, and his Ph D was on the subject of the 1896 Hope-Jones organ in Worcester Cathedral. He is Secretary of the London Branch of the Society.

The previous recordings by these same two organists were reviewed in the JOURNAL for September 1988.

The new Murray recording is not yet available in the UK - Ed.]

Enigma Variations, Op.36. With : Strauss, *Symphonia Domestica*.

*National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain*  
*conducted by Christopher Seaman*  
*IMP Classics PCD 2051*

Enigma Variations, Op.36. Serenade for Strings, Op.20. In the South, Op. 50.

*Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Andrew Litton*

*Virgin Classics Ultraviolet 7243 5 61255-2*

Enigma Variations, Op.36. Serenade for Strings, Op.20. Introduction & Allegro for Strings, Op.47.

*London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Richard Armstrong*  
*Belart 461 112-2*

There's not a great deal to choose between these *Enigmas*; they are all given strongly argued and convincing performances, though I did find a preference. The NYO under Seaman make a glorious sound, if a little under-defined in the reverberant Watford Town Hall. This is a Boult-type interpretation and none the worse for that, the nuances nicely judged, the tempi finely paced. The solos are well taken, in particular Oliver Wilson with Ysobel's viola, Rosie Bliss as the cellist Basil Nevinson, and Katherine Spencer's magical clarinet playing in the 13th \*\*\* variation. The youthful players let their hair down in the invigorating Finale with prominently robust percussion and blazing brass. The strings play with warmth throughout and are unashamed exponents of Elgarian style. Seaman has interesting things to say in the booklet about Elgar and acrostics and sees the theme as 'A CARICE' if you transpose it up a tone into A minor. He describes it as one of the most extraordinary coincidences in music, but I still find Richter's inclusion of Mozart's *Prague Symphony* in the programme on 19 June 1899, with its uncanny resemblance to the 'Enigma' theme in the middle movements, an even more extraordinary coincidence in programme planning. Perhaps Carice, who said she was glad not to know, is ultimately right.

John Mayhew's notes in the RPO/Litton disc confuse Richard Penrose Arnold (who played the piano in a self-taught manner) with Ysobel Fitton who was learning the viola (hence the first two notes of her sixth variation being the open G and C strings). The RPO sound fresh in the Abbey Road studios, and at their most exciting in W M Baker's fourth variation; he leaves the room in a strikingly evident way. Dora Penney is played with felicitous grace and lightness, Nimrod gets the full treatment despite some over-enthusiastic timpani work, and Dan is recognisably canine after his unexpected dip. My one gripe is the Finale in which Litton rushes the full orchestral passages to an uncomfortable extent and the music loses its shape, nevertheless the pedal board of the organ is used to good effect at the climaxes.

Armstrong and the LPO get off to a very self-indulgent start, reflective and wistful throughout the theme and first variation (wife Alice), both of which are too slow for my taste. In this 1986 recording the LPO play with skill and elan as one would come to expect, with the strings in particular at their most impressive. Once again, however, I would take issue with some details in the Finale, a tricky movement to pace. On this disc there is a disturbing tendency for the engineers to switch off abruptly between some of the variations. This nullifies the thrilling effect of the final chords which should have been left to ring longer.

Of these three renditions of *Enigma*, therefore, I would select the refreshing performance by the NYO for the sheer exuberance of teenage youth, but then the couplings may influence your choice. The NYO play a vivid account of Strauss's tone poem. I don't know whether their own insights and observations provided this younger generation's view of home life in their playing, but I'm certain the composer would have approved of the result. The other two discs offer workmanlike accounts of the string works. Despite a rather pedantic *Serenade*, Armstrong seems more at home in the more intimate and chamber orchestra milieu, particularly in the *Introduction & Allegro* and its excellent quartet of solo principals, but this disc comes in at just under the hour. Litton encourages and gets inspired playing from the RPO in *In the South*, from the exciting Straussian opening and offers a full

palette of the colours of the Italian Riviera where Elgar holidayed. The viola solo is excellent and the conclusion suitably noble.

Christopher Fifield

Nursery Suite; Orchestral Favourites Vol VI

*English Symphony Orchestra conducted by William Boughton  
Nimbus NI 7029*

The opening and closing recordings on this disc are appropriately *Chanson de Matin* and *Chanson de Nuit* and in between come *Dream Children*, the *Nursery Suite* and a host of orchestral miniatures all very well recorded in June of last year at Birmingham's Symphony Hall with its first-rate acoustics. Severn Trent, a privatised water company, supported the English Symphony Orchestra for the disc and have a page in the booklet to sell their wares. If, as it purports, Severn Trent means clean water and fresh air it also sponsored a clean recording with fresh interpretations of an admittedly potential ragbag of works. Dealing with the two more substantial works first, the Charles Lamb-inspired *Dream Children* captures a wistful, at times mournful mood in this brief pair of idylls whilst the *Nursery Suite* gives the ESO more scope to reveal its warmth of string tone ('The Sad Doll'), delicacy of woodwind playing (fine flute playing in 'The Serious Doll'), and fully burnished tone in the relatively seldom used brass section. 'Busy-ness', with its reminiscences of *Enigma*, and 'The Wagon Passes' are impressively played. It's about time that record companies got into the habit of listing the orchestral players in the booklet so that credit can be duly given for excellent playing; bravo to IMP Classics for doing so on their recording of the NYO playing the *Enigma Variations* (reviewed above), and hopefully that was no mere patronising gesture to the younger players? The uncredited leader of the ESO (is it Michael Boehmann?) deserves praise for his cadenzas in the Coda, entitled 'Envoi'. William Boughton knows how to phrase his Elgar in the winsome *Sérénade Lyrique*, and the ebb and flow of dynamics are particularly fine in *Salut d'Amour*, *Rosemary* and the two *Chansons*. Also included on the disc are vigorous accounts of the pastiche 'Gavotte' a contrast between styles two hundred years apart, and the 'Mazurka', both movements from Elgar's aborted four-movement Suite which became the *Three Characteristic Pieces* (the 'Sérénade mauresque' is unfortunately omitted here). *Carissima* and *May Song* are both sensitively played by this orchestra which is based in the heart of Elgar country, the Malvern Hills. A highly enjoyable disc of gentle, intimate music which is highly recommended.

Christopher Fifield

Symphonies no 1 in A♭, Op.55 and no 2 in E♭, Op.63

*Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Yehudi Menuhin  
Virgin Classics 561276-2 (2 CDs)*

Symphony no 1 in A♭, Op.55.

*Chetham's Symphony Orchestra conducted by Julian Clayton  
Olympia OCD 278*

Symphony no 2 in E $\flat$ , Op.63. Prelude to 'The Dream of Gerontius', Op.38. Sospiri, Op.70

BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sir Adrian Boult  
Beulah 3PD15

Symphony no 2 in E $\flat$ , Op.63. Serenade for Strings, Op.20. Elegy for Strings, Op.58  
London Philharmonic and English Chamber Orchestras conducted by Daniel Barenboim

Sony Essential Classics SBK 67176

Two very different versions of the *First Symphony*, but both are highly recommended. Of particular interest is the version by the Chetham's School of Music Orchestra, recorded during a concert at the Barbican last March. It was severely panned in *The Times*, but the reason for such a response completely eludes me. This is a version which compares very favourably with many made by internationally-famous orchestras and conductors. It was enthusiastically greeted by Michael Kennedy and Edward Greenfield, Elgarians of an impeccable pedigree; and they are right. From the outset there is a confidence and a commitment which is very convincing. The opening motto builds splendidly to the grand statement at fig 3, and the listener's appetite is immediately whetted. The following *Allegro* I found a touch too slow, with *minim* = 92 rather than 104 as marked, and the restless energetic searching of this passage is a little muted, but magnificent playing partly compensates. The slightly slower tempo allows much incidental detail to be heard in what for a live recording is exceptionally good.

I suspected that the slower speed was to accommodate teenage instrumentalists, but not a bit of it! The second movement *Allegro molto* goes off at a terrific lick, and the movement is actually faster than in Elgar's own recording! The bridge to the slow movement is not as smooth as it could have been, and the *Adagio* is slow, ♩ = 42 (marked 50) but Julian Clayton is superb here. The slow pulse is very even, which gives the movement structure, and once again playing which belies their tender years makes this *Adagio* a magical experience. The last movement sees no diminishing in the overall standard, and Chetham's had done Elgar proud.

The Society can feel honoured to be associated with what is clearly an excellent institution. Please buy this disc, if only to encourage the next generation of musicians; you will also acquire a marvellous recording of the symphony.

Our President, Lord Menuhin, has for some time been the only remaining musician to have played with Elgar, and his recordings thus have a unique quality. The two symphonies which first appeared in 1989 and 1991 respectively are now available together in a two-CD set. The *First* is by far the most satisfactory. It is faster than most - just under 51 minutes - and a full-blooded, no-nonsense account; for example, the playing in the second movement is very incisive and exciting. I'm afraid that the playing is occasionally less than top flight, and the rather brash sound of the recording doesn't help. But overall this has a lot to recommend it.

For some mysterious reason the *Second* is much less successful. The first movement, always a minefield, just doesn't hang together at all. The *poco a poco rall* just before fig 23 leads to a major slowing by the time the *poco meno mosso* is reached at 24. The climax of the movement rushes the *allargando* before fig 66 and the ending loses its impact. Menuhin seems more at home in the second movement,

though again climaxes are somehow understated, almost to the point of disinterest. The *Rondo* is adequate but otherwise unremarkable; and the final movement is spoiled by an extremely slow Coda.

Boult's 1944 recording of the *Second Symphony* has appeared on CD before, in EMI's 'Great Recordings of the Century' a few years ago. Now Beulah complete their fine Elgar series (discs by Collins and Van Beinum were reviewed last time) with a version taken from commercial pressings. The BBC orchestra, depleted as they must have been by the war, play like giants and Sir Adrian - always a master of structure - really shows how the first movement should be taken. So much has been written about this performance I can really add no more; if you haven't got it, I recommend that you do.

Strange are the ways of record companies. It is only just over a year that Barenboim's 1972 recording of the *Second Symphony* first appeared on CD at mid-price (reviewed by JGK in November '94), and now here it is again in Sony's 'Essential Classics' budget-price series with two different fill-ups. For all its interpretive idiosyncracies, for me this version has a lot to recommend it. The Coda is very much *à la Barbirolli* but none the worse for that, and is just about right.

The Editor

Symphony no 1 in A $\flat$ , Op.55. Overture Cockaigne, Op.40.

*London Symphony Orchestra conducted by André Previn  
Philips 442 152-2*

Symphonies no 1 in A $\flat$ , Op.55 and no 2 in E $\flat$ , Op.63. Overture Cockaigne, Op.40. Overture In the South (Allassio), Op.50.

*London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Georg Solti  
Double Decca 443 856-2 (2 CDs)*

The Dream of Gerontius, Op.38. With works by Holst and Delius.

*Yvonne Minton (mezzo-soprano), Peter Pears (tenor), John Shirley-Quirk (baritone),  
London Symphony Chorus and Orchestra conducted by Benjamin Britten  
Double Decca 448 170-2 (2 CDs)*

"Britten conducts English Music for Strings".

*English Chamber Orchestra conducted by Benjamin Britten  
Decca 448 569-2*

Previn's was I think the first digital recording of the A $\flat$  *symphony* - it was certainly the first to appear on CD. The performance drew widespread praise with recorded sound clearer but less beefy than the typical EMI Elgar sound of the day. It was announced as the first of a Previn/RPO/Elgar series and a coupling of the *Variations* and *Pomp & Circumstance Marches* appeared a year later in 1987. The *Second Symphony* was promised but it was not until the end of 1993 that Previn recorded it and then it was with the LSO. With such a delay, I almost wonder if there is a Previn/RPO recording that has never seen the light of day.

I make these preparatory remarks because I find myself much less enthusiastic about this newcomer than its precursor. The opening bars, as is so often the case



with this symphony, tell all. The opening is very steady with plenty of *nobilmente* but precious little *Allegro vivace*. More than that, there is very little flexibility of pulse with the changes marked clearly in the score (eg. leading up to fig 8) underplayed. Unlike other recent accounts, Previn eschews "authentic" *portamenti* although paradoxically he rather overdoes the violin *glissandi* in the second movement. At fig 16, marked *impetuoso*, the blood hardly races. Somehow it is all very worthy, beautifully balanced and firmly controlled, but to my mind missing the spirit. There is some beautiful *pianissimo* playing around figs 30-31 but it is a pity that all the violins are to the left for the antiphonal effects are clearly part of Elgar's conception. All in all, this seems a long seventeen minutes!

As by now might be expected, the second movement is emotionally on the cool side; come back, JB, all is forgiven! There is a stiff upper lip and lack of real thrust from the strings at climaxes. As in the first movement I miss the nervous energy, potential that is just waiting to erupt into kinetic. The end of the movement is wonderfully rapt with very responsive playing particularly from the lower strings. The last two movements go rather better. The Scherzo has a jaunty rhythmic openness and the *sonoramente* passage (remember the composer's rehearsal record) shows the strings digging into the music. Again I miss the antiphonal violins and predictably the climax is more energetic than menacing, a playful terrier rather than a tethered rottweiler. The Finale sets out at a relaxed yet very pointed jog trot. It is strong and purposeful with every note firmly in place. Perhaps the final climax is achieved too easily, and the closing bars are stately rather than heart-tearing in the manner of Barenboim or Barbirolli.

*Cockaigne* goes rather better. I like the perky start and no-holds-barred punctuations from the brass. It makes a very good fill-up.

The recorded sound is outstanding. There is a richness allied to a remarkable clarity. Points of detail from the lower strings emerge in a way not always apparent on disc, although at the end of the Finale the harps seem rather backward. In sum, there are far worse performances available on disc but I can't imagine that I would want to take it off the shelf very often. Of recent issues, I would remain faithful to Mackerras's inspirational account in spite of the gross miscalculation of the overripe organ addition at the end of the Finale, which irritates me more and more each time I hear it. I wonder if there is any chance that Decca will be able to do a remix at some stage?

For the price of the Previn, you can now buy Solti's accounts of *both* symphonies, one of Decca's two-for-the-price-of-one series. Solti's 1972 account of the *A♭ Symphony* is very special, the slow movement in particular, recorded in one take and threatened by the power cuts hitting London at the time, is for me a real classic. His account of the *E♭ Symphony* never quite drew the same critical acclaim, although Radio 3 listeners will know that Jerrold Moore chose it as his recommendation in a 'Record Review' survey last year. I used to think that the Finale really was too fast. Now I'm not so sure, and playing Solti's disc straight after Previn's made me really sit up and listen. The music-making is so much more involving. Previn's is a respectful view of an old master. With Solti, you are there inside the music. You don't have to agree with everything he does but there is such a sense of conviction that you can't remain neutral! Inevitably the sound is less full but perfectly acceptable.

In the early seventies, Decca suddenly woke up to the Elgar revival, not only with Solti's records but also Benjamin Britten's distinctive account of *The Dream of Gerontius*. It now forms the major part of another 'Double Decca', with the very generous couplings of *Sea Drift* from Richard Hickox and *The Hymn of Jesus* from Sir Adrian Boult. This was not the sort of music that folk expected Britten to conduct, and the impetus for the recording came from the TV recording that Peter Pears made with Janet Baker and Sir Adrian. It is an exciting red-blooded account which was criticised at the time for some of its rather brisk tempi. As others have pointed out, these no longer seem so abnormal when placed beside the records made by the composer, unpublished until comparatively recently, and certainly unheard by Britten. (In this case, the Elgar recordings are from a live concert and so the argument that he was constrained by the four-minute side is not applicable). There are certainly some unusual things, for example the lack of a comma after Noe, Job, Moses, and David in the pseudo plainsong in Part I, but I have always thought that this was the best account of the wonderful passage when Gerontius glimpses God. The characteristic sound of the Choir of King's College, Cambridge brings a special quality to the prayers of "The Voices on Earth", followed by a strong, purposeful orchestral build-up to the moment. It sounds splendid on the new CD transfer. Overall the recording is still a touch too resonant and this robs some intensity from the choral sound, but it is a great improvement on the LPs.

A few years earlier, Britten had recorded a delightful concert of English music for strings with the ECO, including what has become over the years my favourite recording of the *Introduction & Allegro*. It is a fresh and vivacious performance, full of energy, yet never rushed. This collection now appears in Decca's 'The Classic Sound' series complete with the original sleeve photograph of The Maltings, and even a black label to recall the look of an original Decca SXL. The sound is clear and with plenty of bite, but is not quite as warm as I remember the LP. Nonetheless a collection I would not want to be without.

John Knowles

### CD Round-up

To mark Jacqueline du Pré's fiftieth anniversary year in 1995 EMI released a three-disc tribute, including previously unreleased accounts of Strauss' *Don Quixote* (with Sir Adrian Boult) and the Lalo *Cello Concerto*. The first disc comprises the two great romantic concertos by Elgar and Dvořák. Once again, where does a reviewer begin to describe the du Pré/Barbirolli *Cello Concerto*? Clearly for some it is over-stated and indulgent - much more than, say, the composer's own recording with Beatrice Harrison. But listening to it again (and I had not heard it for some time) one is struck by the assuredness of technique, and the passion and commitment of her interpretation. And not the least significant factor in the disc's success is Barbirolli's contribution, with a knowledge of the work stretching back nearly half a century, and with a passion for it to match the soloist's. The Dvořák dates from 1970 with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under Barenboim, and is possibly a little more indulgent than the Elgar, but still an extremely persuasive account (CDC 555527-2). Robert Cohen was also very young when he first recorded the concerto; as with du Pré, he benefited from the accompaniment of a sympathetic and experienced Elgarian, in his case Norman Del Mar. The result, to my ears, is extremely pleasing;

I cannot understand the rather half-hearted way in which many critics first greeted the CFP recording (with *In the South* and the *Elegy*). Cohen plays with a virtually flawless technique, bags of confidence and a great deal of mature expression. Just occasionally, as at the beginning of the Scherzo, the ensemble falters a little, but this is a minor flaw. This re-issue is one of CFP's 'Silver Double' series, brought out to celebrate twenty-five years of the label. On two discs for the price of one, you also get the Dvořák *Concerto*, the Tchaikovsky *Rococo Variations*, and the Beethoven *Triple Concerto* in which Cohen is joined by Wolfgang Manz and Franz Peter Zimmermann (CDB 568836-2). Outstanding value; as is DG's 'Digital Masters' series, which includes Itzhak Perlman's account of the *Violin Concerto*. In what is now a very competitive field, for me this version just shades it despite strong competition from Chen, Kennedy, and Takezawa. For this man is surely a giant among modern violinists. He makes light of the most difficult passages, and his intonation is always impeccable. It is a beautifully judged performance, with just the right amount of intimacy in the slow movement, and careful and judicious use of *portamento*. Chausson's *Poème* completes the disc (DG 445 564-2).

Yet another double CD, this time from EMI on their Seraphim label, entitled 'Serenades', includes string serenades from Dvořák, Wirén, Tchaikovsky, Elgar (Boult's version), and Mozart's tautological 'notturna'; plus pieces for solo violin and orchestra by Tchaikovsky and Sibelius. Two hours' worth of ravishing string sound (Seraphim 569110-2).

Finally, a German recording of the *Piano Quintet* by the Pihtipudas Kvintetti, a group formed from the leaders of the various sections of the chamber music course of a Finnish music Festival. They are all free-lance musicians, university professors, or section leaders in orchestras, and the interesting thing is that they only perform piano quintets (which is why they had to encounter Elgar eventually!). Seriously, this is a thoughtful account, excellently played, and on occasions a refreshingly different approach to the work. The fill-up is the *Saint-Saëns Quintet*. Well worth investigating (Edition Absents EDA 004-2; distribution by RRD, 13 Bank Square, Wilmslow Cheshire SK9 1AN).

The Editor

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## BRANCH REPORTS

**WEST MIDLANDS.** In our first meeting of the season on 1 October members visited Harborough Bank, Shelsey Beauchamp where they were entertained by the Richey Quartet who played a string quartet by Haydn and Elgar's *String Quartet* and *Six Easy Pieces*. This was a lovely occasion enjoyed by all. On 21 October we joined with the Worcester Recorded Music Society to hear David Wilmot give descriptions of some of the many houses in which Elgar had lived, and to introduce examples of the music that had been written in them. The whole spectrum of Elgar's music was heard during this entertaining and instructive evening. On 11 November we met in Droitwich to hear Barry Marsh speak on the life of E J Moeran and the influence that Elgar had on his music. Moeran often trod the same path as Elgar, though separated by ten years in time. Again we were educated and entertained by our speaker.

It is a concern that more members are not able to attend our advertised events. The membership is dispersed widely over the West Midland area, and so transport must be the greatest problem. It has been our custom to meet on Saturday afternoons in the Worcester area; but if members feel it would help to change the day of the week or time of future meetings, or have ideas for meeting at a different venue, please contact the Branch Secretary.

Arthur Reynolds' visit to YORKSHIRE Branch on 9 October turned out even more of a treat than expected. Arthur brought along an impressive collection of original autographed scores, annotated by Elgar or by Alice, all luxuriously bound at what cost we dare not imagine. There were autographed photos and concert programmes and much else. A most valuable collection which *must* be seen, and which is at least now safe in this country.

On 6 November we had a visit from David Young of NW Branch, speaking most interestingly on 'Barbirolli - Elgar's Interpreter'. After a well-attended Annual Dinner on 11 December at a local inn, we returned to our rooms on 8 January to hear John Knighton's personal thoughts and experiences on Elgar, musically illustrated and followed by a slide show of Elgar-associated houses.

We are currently struggling through a snowy period, but hope all will be clear on 11 March for a visit by Naxos with their Elgar record releases; and on 13 May for a visit by Elgar's great-nephew, Paul Grafton.

The 1995-95 LONDON season got off to an excellent start with a programme of chamber music given by two students from Cambridge University, Ruth Williams (violin) and Hugh Watkins (piano); it included a fine performance of the *Violin Sonata*. At the November meeting, Relf Clark presented a paper on Elgar and Howells, setting Elgar against the Kensington-based official renaissance, and taking Howells as one of its typical products. In December Dr Christopher Kent spoke about Bach and Elgar and we heard, for the first time at any meeting of the Society, some of Elgar's string quartet arrangements of fugues from the 'Forty-Eight'. The performers, students from Reading University, made one reflect upon the way in which young people are becoming increasingly involved with the activities of the branch.

At the January meeting Dennis Hall (Chairman of the Pianola Institute) and Rex Lawson gave a fascinating presentation entitled 'Elgar and the Pianola'; and at the time of writing we are looking forward to hearing Geoffrey Brand (February), Diana McVeagh (March) and A P Hollingworth (May). We are looking forward also to a lunch at Monkey Island, Bray to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the branch. Adjoining The Hut, Monkey Island is an idyllic location on the Thames and a most appropriate setting. The meal will be followed by a service of Choral Evensong at St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle; the service music will consist almost entirely of works by Elgar and Hugh Blair.

John Norris has kindly agreed to be responsible for membership matters.

**SOUTH-WEST.** We have a new Secretary, Roger Dubois; at just twenty years of age his enthusiasm for Elgar will hopefully encourage other younger people to join the Society and our Branch in particular.

At the time of writing this report, we are eagerly awaiting the visit of composer and writer Anthony Payne whose talk will be 'Elgar's Third Symphony' to be given on

Bury of the London Branch; then on 27 April we have Peter Sargent talking about his father Sir Malcolm. Our May meeting on the 11th is to be held in Exeter; and also that month on the 18th we have an Elgar Day School when Joan Burns MBE is the tutor. She will follow the lectures with a piano recital. (This Day School has been arranged through the Bristol branch of the WEA). As an added attraction a coach trip has been arranged for the Day School on 15 June to Malvern and the Birthplace. We welcome visitors, especially Society members : further details from the Secretary.

The NORTH-WEST Branch AGM took place on 2 December. The branch welcomed David Morris, the Society's Membership Secretary, and John and Ann Kelly from London Branch. John Weir stepped down as Vice-Chairman and Geoffrey Scargill was proposed and elected in his place. Pat Hurst agreed to continue to serve as Secretary for the interim period.

On 10 February Dennis Clark gave a talk on Fred Gaisberg. An Elgar Luncheon will be held on Sunday 24 March at the Portland Thistle Hotel, Manchester, when the guest speaker will be Arthur Butterworth. All Elgar Society members and friends are welcome. For further details contact John Mawbey on 0161-485 6356. The season will close on 27 April with a talk by Ian Lace on Gustav Holst.

After the summer break, SOUTHERN Branch reconvened in October for its 'special event' entitled *Elgar at Brinkwells*. This was an extended afternoon in the first half of which Kevin Allen gave a memorable presentation of the genesis of Elgar's chamber music during his southern sojourn. Kevin's skilled research brought out many interesting sidelights on what is thought to be familiar territory. There were fascinating slides and even a world première of a song by Parry! This was found inscribed in the visitors' book in a Fittleworth hostelry and it was delivered by the Branch Chairman in a style somewhat fitting of its provenance! The second half of the afternoon was given over to live music, in the form of the Belmont Ensemble, who gave a moving account of the *String Quartet*, preceded by arrangements of some of Elgar's lighter pieces. All thanks to John Morrison for the generous loan of the music. The large turn-out of members, including visitors from other branches, had a memorable afternoon.

In December there was a light-hearted quiz, skilfully compiled by the Branch's resident "disc-jockey", Stuart Freed. Immediately following the Branch AGM in January we had a showing of the famous Ken Russell/Monitor film on Elgar. For many it was a reminder of what a moving document this is. For others it was a joyful first encounter. Much stimulating discussion followed.

In the coming months we look forward to return visits by Ian Lace and Dennis Clark.

## LETTERS

From : Ian Lacey

Another issue from Hyperion, released in November, has interesting Elgarian connections. This is a collection of music by Sir Granville Bantock. It includes The Cyprian Goddess, Dante and Beatrice and The Helena Variations. Elgar and Bantock were, of course, great friends. There is the story (related by Lewis Foreman in his notes to this album) about Edward and Alice Elgar staying with the Bantocks soon after Elgar had conducted a concert with Bantock's orchestra in New Brighton. Alice would then have been fifty. Helena Bantock noticed with astonishment "no less than seven hot water bottles filled for his bed, on the occasion of Elgar complaining of a slight chill". Bantock had met Helena through a mutual friend. She was beautiful and intellectually stimulating, and collaborated with her husband on Songs of the East, Helena writing thirty-six lyrics. They were married in 1898. The following year Elgar's Enigma Variations were first performed in London in June, and the next month he conducted it in New Brighton to Bantock's great delight. As Lewis Foreman says: "It seems highly probable that Bantock then impulsively set out to write his own variations, albeit Pauline-like on his wife's moods rather than his various friends...Could it be that in emulating Elgar by ending in high spirits it was not only Helena he was celebrating in the Finale?" Some of the Variations' titles give some indication of their moods: Poco tranquillo, Quasi religioso, Capriccioso, Poco agitato, Allegro impetuoso. Lady Bantock must have been a most interesting lady!

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From : Bruce Burley

Every year I read with great interest (and some amusement!) a copy of Old Moore's Almanack, which is published in mid-summer. When I turned to the page of anniversaries for the month of June, there on the Second was the Queen's Official Birthday, but no Edward Elgar's Birthday. I wrote to Foulsham's, the publishers in Cliftonville, asking them to repair the omission. I have received a letter from the Annuals Co-ordinator informing me that they will hope to include the great man's Birthday in the 300th issue in 1997. At last!

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