

The Elgar Society JOURNAL



NOVEMBER
1996
Vol.9, No.6

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Editorial	283
<i>Articles</i>	
A Strange Apprenticeship - Elgar at Powick	284
Spirit Insights	296
Gerontius - some memories of an amateur tenor	303
Birthplace News	305
Southern Branch at Brinkwells	306
Random Ramblings	308
Concert Diary	312
Concert Review	316
Book Reviews	318
Record Reviews	320
Branch Reports	327
Letters	328
Information	331
Subscriptions	Back cover

.....

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

The Elgar Society Journal

115 MONKHAMS AVENUE, WOODFORD GREEN, ESSEX IG8 0ER
0181- 506 0912

EDITORIAL

Vol.9, No.6
November 1996

It must be obvious that the Elgar Society is a broad church. There are those who want to know every last detail of his life, down to what he had for breakfast every morning; and those whose chief interest is the music itself. Some wish to see him in the wider socio-historical and musical context. Others are outdoor types, and feel closest to Elgar when striding the Malvern Hills. Others have come to the Society via Recorded Music Societies, and love listening to music in the company of kindred spirits.

The membership is bound together by the JOURNAL, which must therefore seek to cater, as far as possible, for its varying needs. As Editor, I have the often difficult job of trying to bring balance to the content. What normally happens is that "learned" articles, which normally have a timeless quality about them, are squeezed according to the amount of material which is of current interest - Birthplace news, Branch news and other Society activities. This means that quite often articles have the inconvenience of being split. It also means that there is a log-jam of articles as the space allocated to them is limited.

In order to address this problem, the JOURNAL will, from the next issue in March, appear in two parts. The first, retaining the title 'The Elgar Society Journal', will contain articles, and reviews of recordings, books, music, videos, etc. It will be printed on glossy paper which will improve its appearance, and certainly enhance the quality of reproduction of any photographs used. The second part I have called 'The Elgar Society News', and will contain the other elements at present found in the JOURNAL: Branch news, Random Ramblings, Birthplace news, concert details, correspondence, etc. The page size will remain as at present, but obviously the overall number of pages will increase. This means that production costs and postage will also increase, but not astronomically. The Committee unanimously approved the new format, which is after all a response to the continuing or even increased interest in Elgar. I hope that you, the members, approve; if not, I'm sure I shall hear about it!

One final point. If the "article" section of the new publication does not interest you, may I suggest that you consider donating it to your public library on a regular basis? In these days of cutbacks, you would probably be welcomed with open arms, and also have the satisfaction of doing something to further the Elgarian cause.

GEOFFREY HODGKINS

A STRANGE APPRENTICESHIP

Elgar at Powick

Barry Collett

In 1877 the twenty-year-old Edward Elgar was rapidly becoming a well-known and indispensable member of various musical circles in and around Worcester. He was a skilled, if unconventional, pianist and organist, playing at the local Glee Club and assisting his father with the organist's duties at St George's Catholic Church. He helped in his father's music shop, gave lessons, and taught himself the cello, bassoon, and trombone, no doubt to help out in any musical enterprise that needed them. But it was as a violinist that the young Elgar achieved his widest musical experiences. Worcester may have been a stuffy, small provincial city, but it could offer lots of enthusiastic music-making, not least being the triennial meeting of the Three Choirs Festival. Many functions needed orchestras and Elgar worked his way quickly from among the second violins to the firsts, and often to the post of leader. In 1877, when the Worcester Amateur Instrumental Society was formed to give concerts after regular weekly rehearsals, Elgar was appointed leader, a post which also included coaching all the orchestral players in their different instruments. And earlier that same year, Elgar played, again with his father among the violins, for the first time at the County Lunatic Asylum at Powick, in a small band brought in to entertain the patients.

The Worcester City and County Lunatic Asylum, a large complex of typical Victorian-institution buildings, was situated in the small village of Powick, a few miles from Worcester, in magnificent landscape within sight of the Malvern Hills. The doctors at the Asylum in the 1870s showed a remarkably enlightened attitude when they instituted a series of orchestral concerts there, as well as Friday night dances for the inmates. Such was the importance which the doctors attached to this early type of music therapy that a small band was formed from the staff of the Asylum, and a Music Director hired to instruct the players, conduct the band, and to compose quadrilles, polkas and lancers for the Friday dances. A close watch was kept by the local newspapers on the response of the inmates. One wrote :

However much their mental powers might be damaged in other respects it was apparent that those of the unfortunate inmates of the institution who were able to be present had not lost the faculty of enjoyment, and they were not the least hearty with their applause.¹

In January 1879 Elgar's local prestige was enhanced by his appointment, in succession to Fred S May, to the post of Band Instructor. The authorities paid him £4 per annum less than his predecessor, no doubt because of his inexperience, but he received about £30 a year, plus five shillings (25p) for every polka and quadrille, and one shilling and sixpence (7½p) for accompaniments to the Christy minstrel ditties of the day. He was to spend one day a week there, which he did from 1879 until his resignation in 1884, and it was his first regular job of composing and conducting.

¹ Young, Percy M : *Elgar O M* (Collins, 1955) p 46

The staff band consisted of piccolo, flute, clarinet, two cornets, euphonium, three or four first violins and a similar number of seconds, an occasional viola, and cello, double bass, and piano. Elgar had an assistant, one John Roberts, who for £10 a year put out the music stands and gave instruction to the wind players. The Asylum also maintained a choirmaster and a pianist and organist. The latter was Miss J Holloway, to whom Elgar dedicated two of his works for the band. Elgar's brief was to write the popular dances of the day - the Polka, and Quadrilles - which always came in a set of five pieces. Of Elgar's ten original compositions for Powick the full instrumentation of the band is only used in four works (*La Brunette*, *Nelly*, *The Valentine* and *Paris*), other instruments in the remaining works appearing and disappearing according to the availability of the players. One surprise occurs in the polka *La Blonde*, where the euphonium is dropped and a trombone makes its only appearance. Elgar must certainly have had some good players at his disposal - the parts for piccolo, cornets, euphonium and first violins are particularly taxing.

The necessity of having to stick to the formula required for these dances left Elgar no scope for the kind of experimentation with form, harmony or development that he was beginning to show in the nearly contemporary *Wind Quintets*, written for a group of friends with himself playing the bassoon. But the Powick music does fulfil its requirements superbly - it is full of life and vigour, and Elgar shows remarkable resourcefulness in his handling of the motley collection of instruments at his disposal. Above all is the surprise of his melodic fecundity at this early stage of his development - good tunes simply pour out in abundance, melodies of charming innocence, character and good humour. It is fascinating to note the Elgarian style in embryo - the crotchet-quaver pulse of many of the rhythms, for example - and some of the ideas were to be quarried for later works. Lost masterpieces they are not, but they show the young Elgar in unbuttoned mood, full of *joie de vivre*, and reveal yet another side of his complex personality.

Far from needing any kind of apologia, as has been suggested, the Powick music can be enjoyed and treasured alongside the great masterworks in the same way as the German Dances and Ländler of Schubert, Haydn, and Beethoven.

Five Quadrilles : La Brunette

Elgar's first work for the band is dedicated "with every feeling of regard and esteem to Geo Jenkins, Esq" (the Asylum clerk). No doubt hoping to impress with his first composition for Powick, the young composer uses all the instruments at his disposal and sets off with ebullient high spirits (Ex.1 : see over).

La Brunette sets the pattern for the following sets of quadrilles. Most of the movements are in a sprightly two-four time (except the third, always in a more flowing six-eight), and the movements generally follow either a simple Rondo pattern (ABACA) or are in simple ternary form, with a contrasting, more lyrical, middle section. This first dance follows the latter form. After the breezy opening, first violins and euphonium in unison continue this melody. A warm-hearted and lyrical middle section theme follows, sung by first violins, first cornet and clarinet in unison, before a reprise of the opening. The second dance's second theme sounds comically athletic when played by unison first violins, first cornet, clarinet and euphonium (Ex.2).

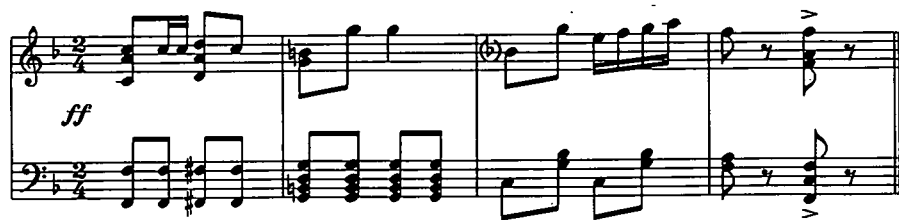
Ex.1



Ex.2



The remaining three dances all contain delightful touches of original orchestration: the euphonium's counter melody in the third dance that takes it up to the top of its compass and back down again; the gradual *crescendo* opening bars of no 4 that lead to a charmingly drunken cornet tune; and the quiet, mysterious opening of no 5, scored for strings and piano, with the quiet inner harmonies provided by clarinet, second cornet and euphonium. Common to all the dances are the delightfully abrupt endings [Ex.3].

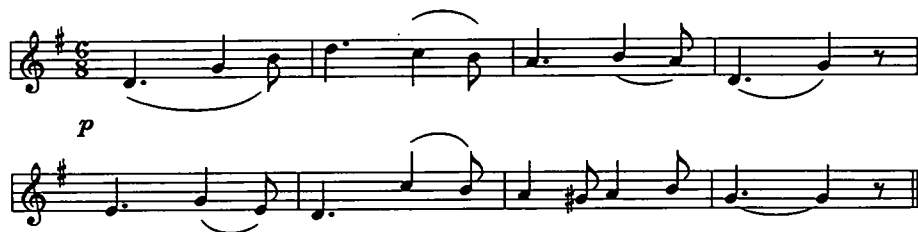


Five Quadrilles : Die Junge Kokette

It is remarkable how many of Elgar's earliest published works have a title in a foreign language, usually French. The reason was that English music did not sell, and if publishers could field a foreign title, and if necessary obscure the nationality

of the composer (the suitably vague 'Ed. Elgar' appeared often enough in the early days), then some sales might be guaranteed. None of the asylum pieces was published - but it is no surprise to note their French and German titles.

The title page of *Die Junge Kokette* states that they are Quadrilles (or Caledonians) for Orchestra, dedicated (with permission) to Miss J Holloway, the Asylum pianist. They are signed "Edward Wm. Elgar", and dated 19 May 1879. The first one is unremarkable melodically, but spins along in a lilting six-eight rhythm; while the second dance has some attractively chirpy flute and piccolo embellishments. The third dance is quieter and more mellifluous, its trio theme - scored for piano, first violins, and first cornet - having some of the wide-arched melodic intervals (including a rising seventh) of the mature Elgar [Ex.4].



Number four returns to the comically rumbustious style of *La Brunette*, with prominent cornets and sparkling piccolo [Ex.5].



Number five begins quietly, but has a strong minor key first trio played by flute, piccolo, clarinet, and first cornet in unison. There is also a second trio section, based on material from the fourth dance. The euphonium is absent throughout *Die Junge Kokette*.

Five Quadrilles : L'Assomoir

Dated 11 September 1879, this is the one set of Quadrilles which begins and ends in a minor key. This time the piccolo is absent from the ensemble. The first dance is in a more dynamic six-eight than usual, and again has melodies of an urgent arching character that point towards the future. The middle theme of the second dance is particularly attractive, with its repeated semiquavers, echoed by other instruments giving a rather stuttering effect [Ex.6].



The third dance opens with *pizzicato* strings, over which the solo clarinet sings a graceful theme - a rare chance for this instrument to shine. The fourth dance has two trio sections; attractively colourful touches of instrumentation are seen in the first trio, as the two cornets duet happily together, and in the second where the euphonium has another of those inimitable and amusing counter-melodies: The fifth dance is immediately recognisable; Elgar lifted the theme complete and incorporated it into the 'Wild Bears' movement of the second *Wand of Youth* suite [Ex.7].



The furious pace of the latter piece cannot be adopted here, particularly when the first cornet joins in with the theme - a marvellously virtuosic touch. The trio section also appears in the *Wand of Youth* movement [Ex.8]



In fact the 'Wild Bears' is all here in embryo in this Powick quadrille, and while it lacks the coruscating orchestral brilliance that Elgar brought to the later work, its more basic charm has its own appeal - not least the thought of the original Asylum band getting to grips with it!

Set of Lancers : The Valentine

Finished on 15 February 1880, and again signed "Edward Wm. Elgar", this is the only set entitled 'Lancers', although the music falls into exactly the same pattern as the quadrilles. The full ensemble is used. The lively first dance, opening with a

unison flourish, has a lovely trio for piccolo, flute and clarinet in unison over a bouncing accompaniment. The second one is equally lively, with two trios; the first of which, for first violins, is delightful when it returns a second time, rhythmically different, on piccolo, flute, clarinet, and first cornet (Ex.9).



The short third dance lopes along in the usual six-eight, while number four has another delightful trio for the woodwind instruments and first cornet. The fifth and final dance of this set is the most elaborately organised of all the quadrilles. Beginning and ending with a stately measure in triple time, it then has a main dance section followed by three trios and a coda : Introduction, A, B, A, C, A, D, A, Coda. Following the introduction, the perky main theme is announced on first violins and clarinet (Ex.10).



The first trio works over the same material as appeared in the fourth dance of this set, but after a reprise of the opening section, the second trio is all new material, featuring a strong, forthright tune played in unison by all the woodwind and brass instruments. The third trio is another reworking, this time of the third dance in six-eight. On this occasion its gently lilting flow is interrupted by a crashing diminished seventh chord followed by a rather startled pause. Thereafter the piece continues as if nothing untoward had happened. The final reprise of the opening material leads to the coda, which repeats the grand opening in triple time.

Polka : Maud

1880 saw three new works for the band, including Elgar's first polka. Entitled *Maud*, it is dated 30 May 1880. An expectant opening, two cornets with a miniature fanfare under *pianissimo* violin repeated semiquavers, leads to the swinging main theme (Ex.11)

The trio section has delightful scoring, particularly in the chirpy woodwind counterpoints to the main tune, and a reprise of the original polka music leads to a vigorous coda. The flute is dropped from the band in this work.

Five Quadrilles : Paris

Elgar's first visit abroad was to Paris in 1880, and on 17 October he finished these quadrilles "introducing French songs", as the title-page informs us. They are

Ex.11



dedicated to the Asylum pianist "Miss J Holloway, Powyke".

Each quadrille has a French title. The first, 'Chatelet', starts off with a burst of C major brightness recalling the high spirits of *La Brunette*, and leads to a charming passage with the two cornets duetting over a downward-moving rhythmic motif. The second quadrille is called *L'Hippodrome*; its main charm lies in the middle section tune played by all the woodwind and first cornet in unison, with euphonium countermelody. Number three, the six-eight one, entitled 'Alcazar d'Eté (Champs Elysées)' again saves its surprises for the trio, when piccolo capers above what is, to all intents and purposes, a drone bass (Ex.12).



The fourth quadrille begins with a fairly typical *crescendo* opening, and leads to a perky cornet tune with the title 'La! Suzanne!' written above it; no doubt one of Elgar's "French songs", although it must be admitted that, if this tune is original, it does not differ from the style and substance of all the other Powick music. Finally, a lively, if undistinguished, quadrille called 'Café des Ambassadeurs'. 'La Femme de l'emballeur' completes the set. The scoring of *Paris* is for the full ensemble.

The remaining four years of Elgar's tenure as Bandmaster at Powick Lunatic Asylum brought forth only four more original compositions, one each year, and all of them polkas. The dances continued, of course, and presumably Elgar used the stock of music that must have existed. Maybe he felt less need to prove his worth after his first two years in the post.

Polka : Nelly

Dated October 1881, the title page states "by Fras. Thos. Elgar". This refers to his brother Frank, an oboist. Elgar seems spasmodically to have encouraged Frank to compose by the rather dubious trick of ascribing works to him. A later *Offertoire* for violin and piano purports to be by 'Gustave Franke'. At any rate *Nelly* is one of the jolliest of the pieces, and the title is probably a dedication to Helen Weaver, the Worcester girl to whom he was later to become engaged. (One of his sketchbooks of 1878 is named 'Nellie Shed'). The full ensemble is used, including a separate part for the viola. After a stern opening, the delicately hopping main theme is launched (Ex.13).



The scoring is full of delight, not least the pirouetting piccolo countermelodies, or the main theme of the central trio, given to solo cornet and piano (Ex.14).



After this, the jollity of the opening returns, and leads to a vigorous coda in which the trio theme returns resplendent with the full ensemble over a striding bass - a glimpse of future techniques.

Polka : La Blonde

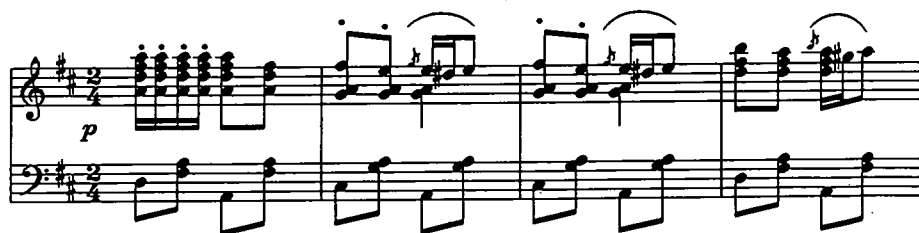
This is dated 15 October 1882, and bears the initials "H.J.W" (Helen Weaver again, who was studying in Leipzig at this time). The flute is absent from this polka, and strangely a trombone makes its only appearance in the Powick music, replacing the euphonium. *La Blonde* is one of the most adventurous of these pieces in terms of organisation of material, as well as having a main theme that is the very essence of the Polka (Ex.15).



This is developed at length, alongside some nicely-judged cornet countermelodies, until the trio is reached. The main melody of this, in a characteristically Elgarian dotted rhythm, is shared between cornet and low clarinet. Then a sudden plunge into D minor occurs, with a "vamp-till-ready" piano accompaniment, and the first violins rocket off with an extravagantly difficult and dramatic passage, which eventually resolves into a chain of high trills over the return of the dotted trio theme. A stealthy *crescendo* passage, which opened the polka, now reappears and leads to a reprise of the first part. The coda combines both the dotted trio theme and the flamboyant violin passage, and builds to an emphatic close.

Polka : Helcia

Helcia is dated 1 October 1883 and signed "Edward Elgar, composer in ordinary to the W.C. & C.L.A" (Worcester City and County Lunatic Asylum). Flute and euphonium are again absent from the scoring, but viola is included. The opening call to attention anticipates the theme itself which begins quietly and gathers momentum as it progresses (Ex.16).



The main body of the polka is less rumbustious and more elegant than the previous ones. Two bars of arching chords for the high strings over a pedal note for the cornets leads to the trio. Again it is in characteristically loping long-short rhythm, warmly scored for cornet, clarinet and first violins on their lowest strings. A simple reprise of the polka ensues, leading to a coda again based on the trio theme. The only real surprise comes with the series of concluding chords, which are identical to those which open the third song of *Sea Pictures*, written sixteen years later (Ex.17).



Polka : Blumine

Blumine, von *Eduard Wilhelm* is dated 22 May 1884 and is Elgar's last composition for the band. The adventurous scoring and dotted rhythms of the central section all point to the future, although it must be admitted the coda sounds like Percy Grainger! This time piccolo and euphonium are missing from the orchestration. An opening call for the cornets leads to a charming and lilting main theme (Ex.18).



The second violins are given more to do here, including some attractive strummed *pizzicato* double stopping which lends a guitar-like quality to the sound. The trio again revolves around the dotted crotchet-quaver idea, but is more varied than formerly. The melody is given to solo cornet. The cornets' mini-fanfare leads to a reprise of the opening polka material, and a coda, again using themes from the trio, scampers its way to a lively close. *Blumine* is graceful and elegant, with a touch more sophistication in the cut of its themes and the colouring of its orchestration.

Dr Percy Young relates how, in old age, Elgar liked to deflate affectation on the part of sycophantic visitors by commencing a conversation, "When I was at the Lunatic Asylum..." Apocryphal or not, his one day a week there from 1879 to 1884 was his first regular job of composing or conducting. In 1884, although he had no other settled position, increasing demands on his time and his growing aspirations as a composer (an orchestral work *Sevillana* had just been written, and performed in Worcester and London) led him in the autumn of that year to resign as Band Instructor to the Powick Asylum...a strange but invaluable apprenticeship to his career as a composer.

Postscript

There the matter rested for the next hundred years and the Powick music (perhaps with the *Wind Quintets*) became the least known and the least obtainable of all Elgar's compositions. The manuscripts of all the instrumental parts (there was no full score), became the property of the Powick Hospital (as the Asylum became), and were deposited at the Elgar Birthplace Museum. An occasional surfacing of the music whetted the appetite. There was a humorous scene in Ken Russell's *Elgar* film of the Asylum Band puffing its way through a snatch of the *Nelly* Polka, and the late Professor Ivor Keys resurrected some of the dances at Birmingham in 1976. This latter encouraged a few leading Elgarians at that time to pronounce that the music was really not worth performing, and did the great composer an injustice. When I wished to perform the Powick music in the 1980s, this idea was still held, and it was thanks to Raymond Monk and his colleagues that the Elgar Birthplace Trust finally gave permission for a live public performance of the complete music. By a happy chance, this took place at Powick itself, at a celebration concert to commemorate the closure of the Powick Hospital - the old Asylum. In September 1988 a group of players from the Rutland Sinfonia travelled to the chapel of the Powick Hospital and performed the complete music which was received with great enthusiasm. Later complete performances by the same players were given in the Royal College of Music in London, and in Oakham Church, and then recorded. Playing from photocopies of the original manuscripts proved a very difficult task at first, but as the infectious rhythms and melodies took hold of the players and they warmed to their task, my belief in the worth of the music was confirmed.

[Barry Collett's recording with the Rutland Sinfonia of the complete Powick Asylum music is available on cassette (only) ENS 161, from Mike Skeet, The Forties Recording Company, 44 Challacombe, Furzton, Milton Keynes MK4 1DP (£5 incl p + p); the recording was reviewed in the JOURNAL January 1990]



Barry Collett conducting the Rutland Sinfonia in the Chapel of Powick Hospital in 1988 (see opposite)

LYDIA SHAW

The JOURNAL records with regret the death of Mrs Lydia Shaw, widow of Mr Bertie Shaw, the Society's first Chairman, both of whom contributed much to the Elgar Society in its earliest years.

At the Society's inaugural meeting at Malvern in 1951 it was Mrs Shaw who gave the Society its name when she proposed the resolution "That the society shall be called 'The Elgar Society'". She was elected a member of the original committee.

Later, on the formation of the West Midlands Branch, she served as a member of the committee, and for two years as honorary secretary.

She will be remembered by members of the Elgar Society visiting Malvern as a kindly welcoming personality.

Frank Greatwich

SPIRIT INSIGHTS

Charles A Hooey

Elgar's music was very much on my mind. It had been so as work progressed on a biography of soprano Caroline Hatchard, a well-loved figure on the English musical scene in the first half of this century. Information, culled largely from accounts of musical events long past, was being sifted and catalogued for possible use, when I noticed a curious trend. Caroline's name was continually cropping up as an early and frequent performer of Elgar's *Spirit of England* and I began to wonder if she had, in fact, been first to sing the complete version of his war trilogy.

To prove or disprove this contention, the research effort had to be diverted temporarily to this area and intensified. Soon it became obvious that Caroline was a significant, but not the first, singer of the *Spirit*. But, more surprising was the discovery that more than one performance was being touted as the "first" while the one pre-dating the others, was being ignored!

It is not possible to say for certain why this strange situation should have evolved...but, it was 1917 and war-weary reporters may have failed to do the event full justice...but as we discovered this could not be the case as reviews exist in archives and libraries for anyone today to read...so other factors must have combined to distort the truth, perhaps carelessness, misunderstanding, or even, indifference.

Most of this information now appeared inappropriate for my Hatchard story, but rather than consign it to the dead file, it was decided to present it here to explain the work's development and subsequent introduction, including the identity of that elusive first complete *Spirit* performance, for those unaware of this aspect of Elgar's music.

The Great War did not end by Christmas, 1914 as a few misguided pundits had predicted; instead it ground on into the early months of 1915 with the combatants feverishly gearing up for the horror and carnage to come. Elgar, disillusioned and saddened by the course of events, nevertheless felt buoyed by acts of individual heroism he perceived and the optimism that seemed to prevail. He decided to compose his own tribute to his country's valiant warriors, selecting three powerful verses of Laurence Binyon and giving them musical meaning as *The Spirit of England*.

He completed the third part, 'For the Fallen', in 1915 and the second, 'To Women', early in 1916 but the opening section, 'The Fourth of August', eluded his creative grasp until April 1917. About thirty minutes in length, the complete work calls for a spirited chorus, a solo contribution by a tenor or soprano soloist and an exceptional orchestra. In those early days, it was not uncommon to find both soprano and tenor taking part.

As the summer of 1916 approached, Elgar completed Parts II and III and was

considering public performance. Just then Madame Clara Butt was organizing a unique concert series as her latest foray into war charity activity. Each concert was to have as its central work, Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius*, with Butt herself singing the part of the Angel. When she learned of the partially-completed *Spirit*, she realized it would be an ideal component of her programme. She knew her fellow English people were going through a period of unparalleled anxiety and sorrow and would be receptive to "a week of beautiful thoughts" to create a sort of spiritual reawakening and reaffirmation. But a number of "business people-in-the-know" decried the feasibility of a series that relied on an oratorio as its basic element.

Elgar stepped to the podium to conduct his partial *Spirit* for the first time in Leeds on 3 May 1916, where it preceded *Gerontius* on the programme. The famed Leeds Choral Union added its rich lustre to the all important choral writing while Agnes Nicholls, a favoured Elgar interpreter, sang 'For the Fallen' and tenor John Booth intoned 'To Women'. Of Agnes Nicholls' performance, Clara Butt said that she "had never heard more perfect singing." The concert was given again in Bradford the following day and then choir, soloists and conductor moved to London to repeat the programme on six successive days, starting on Monday 8 May. The response was overwhelming as Clara Butt had hoped with many of necessity being turned away. She had silenced her critics, used Elgar's music as an uplifting force in affairs of the day and produced £4500 for the Red Cross².

Following this initial presentation, the incomplete work was performed on a number of occasions. For example, Beecham included it in a series of regional concerts he gave with the Hallé Orchestra early in 1917. Whenever he had included short choral works in his concerts outside of London, Beecham usually invited the local chorus master to conduct this music, thus acknowledging the usually splendid work of preparation. Thus, on 7 February at Walsall, T W North conducted the Elgar as tenor Frank Mullings sang both parts of the *Spirit*. Then a special request was received for Agnes Nicholls to sing 'For the Fallen' during an All-Wagner Concert in Manchester on 15 March. With R H Wilson conducting, she was glad to oblige, performing the *Spirit* before the Grail Scene from *Parsifal* which concluded the concert. H A Fricker was on the podium when she sang both parts to open a similar programme the following day at Bradford.

With the opening section finished at last, Elgar conducted the complete work in a Royal Choral Society Concert at the Royal Albert Hall in London on 24 November 1917, as part of a programme that included music with nautical connotations by Stanford, Parry and Bridge. This was a stellar event which was widely publicized, perhaps accounting for the fact some today believe it to have been the "first" performance. "The solo part in The Fourth of August, as also in For The Fallen, was quite beautifully sung, as it deserved to be, by Miss Agnes Nicholls, and the composer (who conducted) was also well served by Mr Gervase Elwes, the soloist in the middle section of the completed work. There was great enthusiasm at the end"³.

² Ponder, Winifred: *Clara Butt, Her Life Story* (Harrap, 1928) pp 167-68

³ Daily Telegraph

And yet, accounts of the day readily reveal that three weeks earlier on 31 October, Agnes Nicholls and Elgar had combined to present the complete *Spirit of England* in Leeds with the Choral Union, where once again it preceded *The Dream of Gerontius* on the programme. There are two errors being perpetuated in connection with this performance: first that it was the "official première" which it was not; and secondly that tenor Gervase Elwes took part. Elwes was present that evening but acutely suffering from laryngitis and barely able to struggle through his role in *Gerontius*. Fortunately he did not sing in *The Spirit of England* on this occasion⁴.

But dusty newspaper files had further secrets to yield. Soon we had evidence of a performance in Birmingham on 4 October 1917 with New Zealand soprano Rosina Buckman and Appleby Matthews conducting. By nature of its date, we know that this must have been the FIRST COMPLETE PERFORMANCE of *The Spirit of England*. Some think that only 'The Fourth of August' was performed but, in fact, the complete work was given⁵.

Ernest Newman was duly impressed by "the towering glories and solemnities of 'The Fourth of August'"...observed that "Elgar's confidence in Mr Matthews was not displaced"... and that "As the Carillon was also given at last night's concert, we had Elgar's full contribution to the emotional history of these tense and mournful times." As for the singer : "Miss Buckman was seemingly moved rather too deeply to have complete command of her voice, but she made a noble centre figure for the music."

Rosina Buckman had come to England in 1898 to begin her vocal studies in Birmingham and had maintained close ties with that community ever since. Her operatic career had recently prospered with a sensational interpretation of Isolde when the Wagner opera was given by Beecham in Birmingham earlier that year. Newman had referred to her Isolde as "the most perfectly finished study". Herein lies the probable reason for Rosina Buckman's selection as the first soloist in *The Spirit of England*.

Caroline Hatchard's first experience with *The Spirit of England* came when she was invited to sing it in the Manchester première on 15 December 1917. Elgar was to conduct but he became ill and withdrew two days before the event. Beecham travelled to Manchester to take over and conducted most of the programme, but just before the *Spirit*, he again handed the baton to R H Wilson⁶.

Caroline achieved a huge success, being acclaimed as "a soloist who combined exquisite beauty and liquid purity of tone with a temperament so manifestly in sympathy with the spirit of the work...the emotional content of Elgar's music is always hard to come at, and few soloists - perhaps half a dozen at the outside - have displayed any affinity for Elgar interpretation. Miss Caroline Hatchard is clearly of this elect company and in future can be confidently expected to share with Miss

⁴ Yorkshire Post & Musical Times

⁵ Birmingham Post, Yorkshire Post, and Musical Times

⁶ Manchester Guardian



Appleby, Matthews
(photo by kind permission of the City of
Birmingham Library Services)

Agnes Nicholls the task and privilege of revelation throughout Britain of the loftiest musical thought uttered in these fateful times"⁷.

After such a reaction, she became much in demand, going on to strike great chords of emotion in response to *The Spirit of England* throughout the country, judging from the following reports in the *Musical Times*.

On 23 February 1918, Bristol received its first exposure to *The Spirit of England* at Colston Hall where "Mr George Riseley had under his direction a large choir and a fine orchestra, and with such competent principals as Miss Caroline Hatchard, who took

the solos in the first and third parts of the trilogy, and Mr Frank Mullings who contributed with rich expression the solo in the central section, a memorable reading of this notable war work was secured."

The Halifax Choral Society celebrated its first century of uninterrupted existence on 14 March 1918 with a concert which included a complete *Spirit of England*. It was to have featured Agnes Nicholls as soloist but her last minute illness prompted Caroline to rush to the rescue. The performance "received a most sympathetic interpretation, 'To Women' being in particular very beautifully sung, and the soloist, Miss Caroline Hatchard, realizing fully the note of tender pathos that characterizes the music. Mr C H Moody conducted."

"The principal work in the programme of the Stockport Vocal Union's 182nd Concert which took place on March 24 (1919) at the Centenary Hall was Elgar's *The Spirit of England*. Dr Keighley secured an expressive performance that revealed much of the beauty and thoughtful appeal of the music. The soloist was Miss Caroline Hatchard."

"An important concert was given by the Croydon Philharmonic Society on May 28 (1919). The capabilities of the Choir satisfied an exciting test in a complete performance of Elgar's *Spirit of England*, ably conducted by Mr Alan J Kirby. Miss

⁷ Musical Times

Caroline Hatchard and Mr John Booth sang the solo parts."

Just over a year after Agnes Nicholls had introduced the *Spirit* in Glasgow, Caroline had her chance to sing it there on 20 December 1919. Conductor Warren T Clemens created a poignant moment when he halted the music just prior to 'For the Fallen', turned to face the audience and read aloud the names of Glasgow's musical family who had been victims of the war.

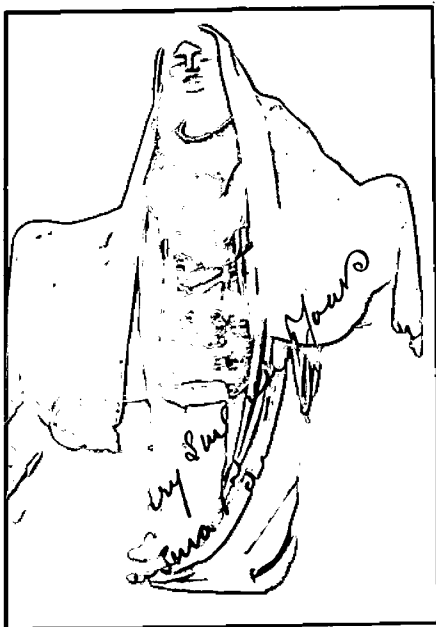
Caroline continued to present *The Spirit of England* in the 1920s, including a pair of notable offerings in 1925. She sang the *Spirit* on 31 January at a concert with the Royal Choral Society in London, and, as well, participated in Ethel Smyth's *Mass in D*. Then on 19 March in Hanley, she performed the *Spirit* and took the soprano part in Elgar's *Apostles*.

The *Spirit* was still being performed in the thirties, especially on one occasion when it was broadcast with soprano Elsie Suddaby and the BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sir Adrian Boult. And, yes, a recording of this event exists.

Although the music was originally written as a source of inspiration in wartime, it is encouraging to see modern audiences accepting it for its enduring musical values. Recent performances and a new CD released by EMI with Felicity Lott are positive signs of renewed interest. My experience with the work stems from the Chandos CD where Sir Alexander Gibson leads the London Symphony Chorus and soloist Teresa Cahill in a passionate rendition. When I hear Miss Cahill lift her sumptuous tones above the choral forces, I can easily imagine Caroline Hatchard soaring in like fashion.

While most of us would agree that *The Spirit of England* is one of Elgar's most moving choral creations, that's not to say there were no dissenting voices. Sir Hubert Parry was one who dismissed his famous colleague's effort: "Very poor stuff for the most part," he sniffed!

I had been intrigued when I first heard a sparkling version of the Doll song from Offenbach's *Tales of Hoffmann* emerging from a recording that Caroline Hatchard had made in 1910, when 31-year-old Thomas Beecham and members of his Opera Company went to the Gramophone Company studio for his first series of recordings. I imagined I was hearing a fully dimensioned doll, created through perfect coloratura matched to full-bodied lyric power. I had to know more about this singer. Fortunately fate was ready to intervene; a friend was able to put me in contact with Ewen Langford, Caroline's younger son, and he readily agreed to help by opening family archives and by providing his own memories to enrich the story. And in Tony Benson, then much involved in researching the period, we found an indispensable ally. (For this article, thanks are due also to Roger Beaumont in New Zealand for his data on Rosina Buckman). Caroline was known as an active supporter of Elgar's music, as in addition to *The Spirit of England*, she frequently took part in *King Olaf*, *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*. Her biography is due to appear in 'The Record Collector' magazine.



Early interpreters of the solo part in 'The Spirit of England' : (clockwise from top left) Rosina Buckman, Caroline Hatchard, Gervase Elwes, Agnes Nicholls (Photos courtesy Lewis Foreman, Ewen Langford, and Ronald Taylor).

[Mr Hooey is to be congratulated on discovering the correct date and place of the *Spirit of England* première. One of the reasons this may have been overlooked in the past is that the section of Ernest Newman's *Birmingham Post* review which is quoted in the *Musical Times* does not make it clear whether all three movements were given at the concert, although the latter publication states it quite unambiguously on p 516 of the November 1917 Issue. Writing in the *Birmingham Gazette*, Robert J Buckley wrote : "Mr Appleby Matthews is in close affinity with the Elgar mood, and he and his choir achieved a joint triumph in the three numbers...which filled the second part of the concert. A really magnificent performance from every point of view - precision, intensity, dramatism, and intelligence". The most perceptive comment on the whole work, and especially its cyclic nature, came from 'A S' in the *Birmingham Evening Despatch* : "Linked up in a completely successful performance with the second and third parts, the first part has a glory which is a new endowment for 'To Women' and 'For the Fallen'. The second part is shaded down by contrast to an even more beautiful truth, and the third we find recapturing the glamour of the first. The grand rise at the end is not now simply an exultation; it is a return to the plane of the high beginning. With the three now public, the work is completely rounded, and it stands, definitely born of the war, worthy of the war, to survive the war". This means that Birmingham Town Hall witnessed the first performances of five great Elgar choral works : *The Dream of Gerontius*, *The Apostles*, *The Kingdom*, *The Music Makers* and *The Spirit of England*. Appleby Matthews was an active and widely-respected Birmingham musician. It was at his instigation that a permanent orchestra - what later became the CBSO - was founded in the city in 1920. He was also the first conductor (1921-26) of the City of Birmingham Choir, which celebrates its 75th anniversary this year with a performance of *Gerontius* on 16 November. At the concert on 4 October, as well as *Carillon* and the Mozart *Serenade* mentioned by Mr Hooey, Rosina Buckman sang 'One Fine Day'; and the choir, by special request, sang *As Torrents in Summer*, *The Shower* and *Wearry Wind of the West*. But why does Elgar appear to ignore the performance of *The Spirit of England*? In fact he was only a few miles away on that day, at his sister's at Stoke, near Bromsgrove. There is no mention in the diary or correspondence. Did he even know of its occurrence? Or was he merely unhappy that Matthews and his forces were doing it? We may never know! - Ed.]

NOTICE TO ALL MEMBERS

The Annual General meeting on 2 June 1996 approved a new Constitution on the basis of the document sent to all members with the March 1996 JOURNAL but with the following amendments :

1. The objects of the Society to be unchanged from those in the previous Constitution, ie "*The Society is founded in honour of the memory of Edward Elgar with the object of promoting a wider interest in his life and music*" (Editor's Note: This amendment was insisted upon by the Charity Commission)
2. Clause 10.4 to be amended by inserting the words "cease to hold that office" after "person" in the fourth line.

Members may like to insert these amendments in their copies of the document circularised in March, but those who prefer to have a copy of the Society's 1996 Constitution will be sent one on application to the Membership Secretary.

Copies of the 1995 Society Accounts as approved at the Annual General Meeting in June 1996 can be obtained on request by application to the Treasurer (address on back cover)

THE DREAM OF GERONTIUS

Some memories of an amateur tenor

Lewis W Headley

I have read with much interest and gratitude in the JOURNAL the expert view of the recorded legacy by Walter Essex. Over the years I have accumulated many memories of the great work. With the encouragement of the Editor I have compiled this singer's aspect.

As a schoolboy I was taken by Geoffrey Hoyland, my headmaster at the Downs School, Colwall, to the Three Choirs at Gloucester (1928) and at Hereford (1930). There I watched and listened as the *Dream* was conducted by the composer. In 1930 he was seated because of lumbago. The LSO was led by W H (Billy) Reed, friend and confidant of Elgar.

By 1948 I was among the tenors in the Royal Choral Society under Sir Malcolm Sargent who was the Society's conductor and who took nearly all the weekly rehearsals. My first participation in the *Dream* was in the Albert Hall - the regular venue for the RCS - on 11 February 1948 with Heddle Nash, and Kathleen Ferrier, whose glorious voice filled the hall with such apparent ease. We could not know then of the tragedy that lay ahead, the recording by The Angel that never happened (it remains a dream), and her sad death in 1953. A memorial to her is a beautiful wall plaque in the radiotherapy department of University College Hospital, London : "Her voice and spirit gave hope and radiance to the world".

We usually gave the *Dream* on or near to Ash Wednesday, so with better acquaintance I came to understand more subtleties, more themes, more flashbacks, for instance the 'Judgement' theme which accompanies "There was a mortal who is now above"; and its treatment as the music approaches "The Glance of God" (fig 120). Then again, the wonderful horn parts between figs 26 and 28 in Part II, repeated later between figs 123 and 124.

Because we sang the work regularly it was usually with minimum rehearsal - two piano practices. I expect the orchestra had the usual three-hour session on the day of the concert, but we were not called for that. The continuous flow, 35 minutes for Part I and about 60 minutes for Part II, came together only at the concert.

I was often in the semi-chorus; Sir Malcolm was always very careful over the *ppp* entry by the few tenors of the semi-chorus for 'Kyrie Eleison' at fig 29, where we are alone for six beats. He had us in the conductor's room just before the concert to be sure of head-voice tone which would float from the top of the RAH, heard but not seen.

I have vivid memories of the Barbirolli concert in the Royal Festival Hall on 3 June 1952, the last time that Kathleen Ferrier sang the Angel's role in London. In 'Praise to the Holiest' many conductors increase the tempo at fixed points - figs 89, 93, 95, and 98. Sir John created a continuous relentless acceleration from fig 89 (p 126) to p 147. It was tremendous.

Through twenty years in the RCS, followed by sixteen years in the Philharmonia Chorus, and in other choruses, I have had the privilege of singing in the *Dream* for the following conductors : Sir Malcolm [23] Andrew Davis [5], Boult [2], Barbirolli, Groves, Handford, Pritchard, Mark Deller, Seaman, Foad, Miles, Gadsden, and others.

Over the years I have stood behind, and admired, the following (in alphabetical order) : Webster Booth [2], Kenneth Bowen [4], Ronald Dowd [3], William Herbert [3], Richard Lewis [11], Heddle Nash [4], and others.

Mezzo soloists included Janet Baker [5], Kathleen Ferrier [2], Alfreda Hodgson [4], Yvonne Minton, Marjorie Thomas [11], Gladys Ripley [7], Josephine Veasey. I once asked Marjorie Thomas if she ever felt tired of singing the Angel's part. Her reply was : "Never".

I have sung in this work forty-five times.

I must also write of *The Music Makers*, because of the brief relationship with the *Dream*. There are those who denigrate the poem but this does no harm to Elgar, who has clothed it in sound and in a variety of moods. Perhaps he has enhanced its quality and increased its significance. I have taken part in ten performances of which two were specially memorable.

The Elgar Centenary Concert, conducted by Sir Malcolm, took place in the RAH on the afternoon of Sunday 2 June 1957. After the National Anthem the LSO played the *Enigma Variations*, reminders of "my friends pictured within". Then followed the *Violin Concerto* with Yehudi Menuhin who of course recorded the work as a teenager with Elgar himself. Finally, *The Music Makers* with reminders of his own inspirations and creations. The 'Enigma' appears, but the full choral treatment of 'Nimrod' is over too soon. There are other flashbacks. Then, at the final lines of the poem, "In spite of a dreamer who slumbers and a singer who sings no more", we hear at fig 101 an unmistakable fragment of the *Dream*, and again at 102, the cue for the splendid brass chords of "Proficiscere anima Christiana..."

Gerontius "sings no more" in Part 1.

The second big occasion was on 29 April 1965, Sir Malcolm's 70th birthday, when he conducted a large choir with contingents from London, Leeds, and Huddersfield. *The Music Makers* was preceded by three settings of the *Te Deum* - by Walton, Dvořák, and Verdi.

Some advice from an amateur tenor

Have your own copy of the *Dream* - hardback even if second hand.

Record, on a flyleaf, date, place, conductor, soloists.

Have the Analytical Notes by A J Jaeger (Nimrod), published by Novello.

Write in your vocal score the names of themes as they appear in the work.

Use arrows for Stand ↗ and Sit ↘

Number the beats for two bars before fig 74, to prevent early entry!

See the Gerontius window in Worcester Cathedral.

In gratitude for these many opportunities
(Royal Choral Society 1947-1968
Philharmonia Chorus 1968-1984)

BIRTHPLACE NEWS

The Birthplace now has a chance to draw breath after a very busy summer. As expected, the Worcester Three Choirs Festival had a big impact on the visitor figures and it was very encouraging to receive so many positive and interested responses to both our current work and future plans.

The beginning of the Festival was celebrated with a street fair in Worcester - called a 'Bal Public' - and the Museum hired a stall for the day along with many other local traders. As well as selling a selection of our shop goods, the Museum set up a small display to promote the Birthplace, which seemed well received. Although mainly intended as a public relations event, the Bal was very enjoyable and even managed to cover costs. Also to coincide with the Festival, and to celebrate the centenary performance of *The Light of Life*, the Birthplace installed a new temporary exhibition entitled 'Edward Elgar : A Musical Apostle'. This is still on view at present, and is an exploration of Elgar's inner spirituality, featuring the original manuscripts of two of the works premièred in the Worcester Three Choirs Festivals - *Froissart* and *The Light of Life*.

The Museum is also focusing on its School Education Service. This is still in the early stages of development, but Schools are now offered the chance to complement a trip to the Museum with the loan of a temporary exhibition - currently 'Music and Nature' - and a visiting talk by the Curator, to include slides, music, and a handling collection. In the future it is planned that the Museum will have a schools/workshop room where related activities can be performed, such as music workshops, artist in residence demonstrations, and science and technology practicals. It is envisaged that the new Centre will be a very lively place, featuring live music, lectures, recitals, and group activities for adults and children alike.

Although the Museum has now commenced its winter opening hours, there is still an enormous amount of work to be achieved "behind the scenes". The designs for the new Visitor Centre are well under way, and are proving very exciting. We have also leapt into the twentieth century with the generous gift of a computer from Worcester City Council. It is hoped that a detailed inventory of the Collection will shortly be produced, which will greatly benefit the many researchers among the Society!

The Birthplace will be closing in November for structural repairs and this may well be an opportunity for a few changes in layout. Certain alterations are required for security and conservation needs, but any changes will be performed with sensitivity and a desire to retain the unique atmosphere and charm that this small cottage possesses.

Finally I would like to thank all those members who have so generously expressed an interest in helping out at the Birthplace as a volunteer. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like any further details on voluntary work, or any other issue relating to the Birthplace.

Melanie Weatherley

SOUTHERN BRANCH AT BRINKWELLS

Coincidences in life are often very happy, but one of the happiest was when Jennifer Nicholas, Secretary of the Southern Branch, found herself working with the actress and author Jane McCulloch. on discovering that Jane had written a children's book called *Sir Edward and Nimrod*, Jennifer was more than a little intrigued! Inquisitiveness turned to open-mouthed surprise when it transpired that Jane and her husband, the composer/conductor Don Fraser, are the current tenants of Brinkwells. The very happy outcome of this meeting was an invitation to the Southern Branch to spend an afternoon at Brinkwells!

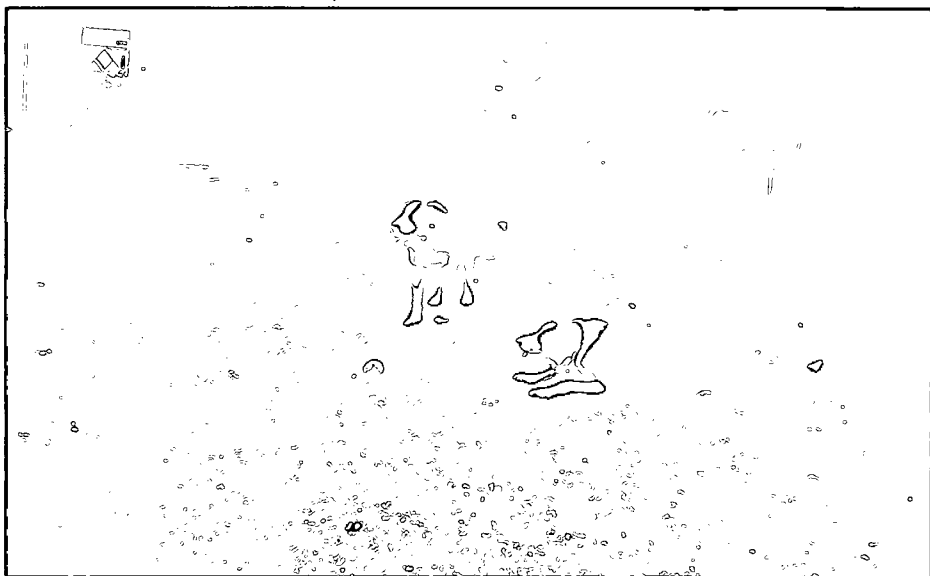
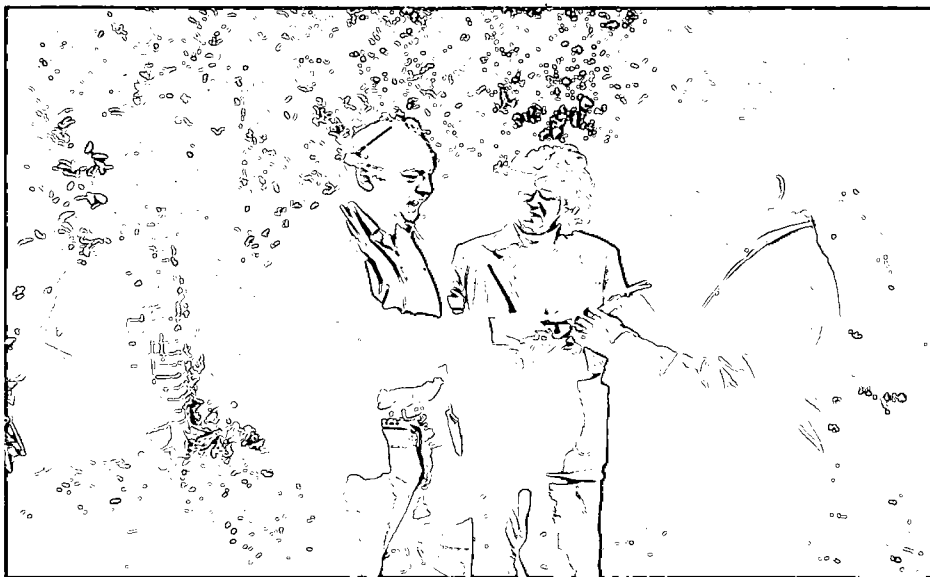
On a beautifully sunny Saturday afternoon in September, 20 Branch members, armed with sketch maps(!), found themselves assembled at the end of the footpath leading to Brinkwells. over the years, many of us had located the house and gazed at its walls, but this time we were going in! We had the warmest of welcomes from Don and Jane. Their own love of the music of Elgar was very much in evidence. In small groups we were given the run of the house and used our imaginations to conjure up the shades of Edward and Alice in those tiny rooms. Don and Jane have plans to restore some of the original features of the house, although even now I am sure that the Elgars would easily recognise their erstwhile retreat.

The garden was in early autumn mode and its sheer peacefulness, and that of the surrounding woodland, enabled one to conjure up the atmosphere which inspired Elgar at such a crucial time in his life. Fanciful that might seem, but it was nevertheless *real* to us Elgarians who were able to savour the magic of the afternoon.

To show our appreciation to Don and Jane for their kindness and hospitality, the Branch made a presentation of two photographs of Elgar, by no means regular portraits which are commonly seen. With his usual keen detective work, Kevin Allen had tracked down the photographs and had copies made. The first showed Elgar in the Brinkwells garden with his dog. The second photograph is to hang in Don's local "hostelry". The present landlord's father was landlord in Elgar's time and knew the composer well; so another link is being perpetuated.

And what of *Sir Edward and Nimrod*? Well, I am very pleased to say that both are alive and well at Brinkwells and they made twenty new friends on that Saturday afternoon, especially when the tennis ball was thrown for them to chase! They are two sheepdogs who have been part of Don's and Jane's lives for many years. (Don was anxious to point out that *Sir Edward's* alternative name is 'Enigma', and that *Nimrod* is *Sir Edward's* son - a Variation!!) These two dogs are the chief characters in Jane's book for children. It was amazing to watch twenty reasonably sane adults melt into childhood as Jane presented each of us with a copy of the book, suitably inscribed. Clichéd it may be to say it, but it was the icing on the top of a particularly delectable cake. It was a memorable afternoon, and one that we shall all hold as very special in our hearts.

Walter Essex



(top) Walter Essex, Chairman of Southern Branch, presents two photos of Elgar to Don Fraser and Jane McCulloch in the garden at Brinkwells.

(bottom) Sir Edward and Nimrod alive and well at Brinkwells. Copies of Jane's book are available from her at Brinkwells, Fittleworth, W.Sussex RH20 1JL, price £6-50 (incl. p + p)

RANDOM RAMBLINGS...

One hundred years ago, on the morning of Friday 30 October 1896, Elgar conducted the first performance of his new choral work *Scenes from the Saga of King Olaf* in the Victoria Hall, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent. It had been composed at the request of Dr Swinnerton Heap especially for the North Staffordshire Music Festival. The audience on that occasion was left in no doubt that here was a masterpiece from a truly great composer. Reginald Nettel, in his *Music in the Five Towns* wrote: "By the time the opening chorus was over the audience was in a state of high expectation, and when the second chorus burst upon them, 'The Challenge of Thor', they knew they were on the verge of a new age in music". With *King Olaf*, Elgar's future seemed assured. The *Staffordshire Sentinel* reported: "...by *King Olaf*, Mr Elgar unquestionably takes rank among the greatest masters of the age".

On Saturday 2 November, 1996, the present day guardians of the splendid choral traditions of the Five Towns, the Ceramic City Choir, are to give the Centenary Performance of *King Olaf* in the same venue, the Victoria Hall, famed for its superb acoustics, and substantially unchanged since Elgar knew it. (Elgar first visited the Hall as a member of the orchestra and subsequently conducted many of his major works there.) The conductor on this occasion will be Donald Hunt, recently retired from Worcester Cathedral, accompanied by the BBC Philharmonic.

* * * * *

Around the turn of the century, England produced two blind organists of outstanding ability. One was Elgar's friend, William Wolstenholme, for whom Elgar acted as amanuensis for his Oxford music degree in 1887 [see JOURNAL September 1992 p 9]. The other was Alfred Hollins (1865-1942), six months younger than Wolstenholme, but who also made for himself a successful career, including overseas tours. A Yorkshire man, educated at the Blind School in York, he was for many years the organist at St George's Presbyterian Church in Edinburgh. The minister there, Dr Alexander Whyte, was a great admirer of Cardinal Newman and was anxious to hear Elgar's work at the Sheffield Festival in 1902. Henry Coward allowed Hollins to attend the final rehearsal. "When Gerontius came on and I heard the wonderful 'Judgment' theme with which the prelude opens I was transported to another world, and there remained to the end", he wrote. "Tristan had moved me deeply at Bayreuth, but not like this". He found the performance "even finer than the rehearsal. It was as great a success as the performance at Birmingham had been a failure. I shall never forget the realistic effect of the demons' chorus; the snarling was terrifying. I have not heard it sung like that since and I fancy it did not find favour with the critics. What Elgar himself thought of it I do not know. Choruses now seem to sing as though they thought only of the notes; they cannot be "foul spirits" for the nonce. In the Sheffield rendering I lost much of the musical detail of the chorus of demons, but the effect was infinitely more realistic. More than once I could not keep back my tears, and Whyte patted my hand to show that he understood how I felt".

Hollins also attended the Westminster Cathedral *Gerontius* the following year, and in 1911 the first performance of the *Second Symphony*. His story is told in his autobiography, *A Blind Musician Looks Back*, published in 1936.

* * * * *

The Brazilian contemporary dance company, Grupo Corpo, were in London in June and at Sadler's Wells on 18th gave the British première of their *Enigma Variations*. The choreographer Rodrigo Pederneiras chose not to portray the characters represented in each variation (as Sir Frederick Ashton did in his well-known version dating from the late 1960s); instead, as the critic of *The Times* said, "he seizes upon the varying personalities of the music..., creating danced moods of romantic, mysterious and light-hearted flavours. But his choreographic language is a strange hybrid of styles which is compiled...with no clear sense of context...To ally his irresolute creative impulses to Elgar's purposeful vision makes for a very odd juxtaposition indeed".

* * * * *

The Southern and London Branches have organised two Day Schools at Surrey University in Guildford. The first was held on 26 October (report in the next issue) and the second will be on 8 February next year, when Relf Clark will speak on Elgar and Vaughan Williams; Kevin Allen on Elgar and Parry; and Walter Essex on *The Music Makers*. As well as Society members, it is hoped to attract university students, and also members of the Leith Hill Festival Chorus, who will be singing the Elgar work and Parry's *Blest Pair of Sirens* and their next festival in April. The cost is £9 and tickets can be obtained from David Bury, Flat 6, 19 Ringstead Road, Sutton, Surrey SM1 4SE.

* * * * *

At the AGM weekend each year members are given a warm welcome to Birchwood for Sunday morning coffee by Mike and Eileen Vockins. Mike is secretary of Worcestershire County Cricket Club and a non-stipendiary minister in the Church of England. We congratulate him for his award of an OBE in the Birthday Honours for his services to cricket.

* * * * *

I recently received a report that on 30 July last year an all-Elgar concert in aid of charity was given in Sydney Town Hall by the Australian Doctors Orchestra. It contains representatives from all branches of medicine, and the reviewer noted that "in *Pomp & Circumstance March no 4* their opening was incisive, and if the climaxes in excerpts from the *Enigma Variations* were not exactly heart-stopping, the pulse in *Pomp & Circumstance no 1* never faltered". A young cellist, Liwei Qin, played the *Concerto*, and the concert was conducted by Christopher Martin.

* * * * *

As mentioned in the March JOURNAL, the inaugural concert in Manchester's new Bridgewater Hall on 11 September contained the *Enigma Variations*. However, it

was not the first Elgar to be heard there.

On the previous Saturday, before the official opening, the Hall was used as the venue for the British Brass Band Open Championship, where the test piece was the *Severn Suite*. The work was given twenty-two times from just before 9 am until after 5 pm! The rules of the competition insist that the judges sit behind a curtain and have no contact with the public or the musicians during this time. The *Guardian* commented : "Some might wonder how three blokes can possibly listen to 22 performances without ending up in the Worcestershire County Lunatic Asylum, whose band Elgar once directed". The winners were the band from Marple in Cheshire.

That same week in Birmingham's (not quite so) new Symphony Hall, Daniel Barenboim conducted the Chicago SO in what was apparently a memorable performance of *Falstaff*. The *Times* commented : "The Chicago *Falstaff* is outstanding in its characterisation : it is as alive to the poetic nostalgia as to the vulgarities, to the pastoral idyll as to the brawling, to the pathos as to the swagger. And yet it was all achieved by scrupulous attention to the letter of the score...This was a *Falstaff* as true in its colouring, as vividly realised in its textures, as compassionate in its emotional motivation as anyone, surely, could wish to hear".

* * * * *



Following the enormous popularity of *Nessun Dorma* during the 'Italia '90' soccer World Cup, the BBC introduced their coverage of the 'Euro '96' championships with part of the final movement of Beethoven's *Choral Symphony*, to be greeted with reactions of hysterical jingoism by sections of the media. The *Sunday Times* linked this in the accompanying cartoon with the pre-tournament attention given to the possibility of hooliganism. The choice of music was, I suppose, vindicated by Germany winning the tournament.

* * * * *

Members are reminded that 1997 subscriptions fall due on 1 January, and the Treasurer would be pleased to receive them on or before that date (details on the back cover).

* * * * *

Last time we included a piece on John Williams, the film composer. He was recently interviewed on *Classic FM*, and said that he had taken up golf "in his dotage". He went on : "I said to our orchestra, 'If you can't play golf, you will never understand British music, because you can't understand Elgar unless you understand golf'. I think there's a connection there...Elgar was a passionate golfer in his later years, so

I think any insight into his personality might be enhanced by [understanding golf]...There's a story of Elgar hitting a golf ball into a passing train, into a coal cart". It would be interesting to know what members believe he meant by these remarks. Suggestions, please; we will publish the most plausible! (Actually I thought Elgar's peak time for golf were the Malvern years, especially when he lived at Craeg Lea, just up the hill from the course).

Mr Williams asked for an excerpt from the *Cello Concerto* - "...his masterpiece. The measure of all twentieth-century cello concerti - the high water mark - is certainly the Elgar".

* * * * *

The first Malvern Elgar Festival held in May and June was considered to have been a success. "The general response was really encouraging", said Anna Preedy, the Festival Administrator. "In fact, a small profit was made". As reported at the AGM, the Winter Gardens complex is being refurbished, and so the 1997 Festival will be centred around the Priory. Clearly adjustments will need to be made, but it is hoped to be back to normal for 1998.

* * * * *

The Birthplace Museum carries a large stock of Elgar discs and other supplies, which can be purchased by mail order. A current list is now available, and will be sent to anyone who requests one. Just telephone or write to the Birthplace (details on inside back cover).

* * * * *

Last month a musical festival for youth was held in Vienna. Entitled 'Britten & Britons' it comprised twelve concerts made up very largely of British music, including some modern works by Turnage and MacMillan. Several British orchestras and one French attended, and many eminent British musicians were there too. On 4th David Garrett played Elgar's *Violin Concerto* accompanied by the RPO under Lord Menuhin; while on the 13th Roger Norrington conducted the LPO in *Cockaigne*. Then on 21st the *First Symphony* was given by Andrew Davis and the BBC Symphony Orchestra; and at the final concert the Bournemouth SO conducted by Yakov Kreizberg gave the *Enigma Variations*. We hope to include a report next time.

* * * * *

In the *Classic fm Magazine* for September, Elgar was "the month's composer", and Julian Haylock pieced together a short life-history, generally accurate in content (though *The Black Knight* is not an "oratorio"). I must be getting old, but I found myself rather irked by the somewhat tabloid language. Elgar's "first real break" came in 1884 with the performance of *Sevillana* in London (did it really?); and he "effectively hit the jackpot" in 1899 with the *Enigma Variations*. Nevertheless the article was generally fair and favourable. The "Essential Works" were listed as

Gerontius, the two symphonies, the two concerti, the *Variations, Falstaff*, and the *Introduction & Allegro*. In a separate piece in the same issue, Stephen Johnson looked at the *Variations*, describing its composition, and recommended a recording - Barbirolli's EMI version from the 1960s, coupled on CD with *Falstaff*.

* * * * *

The answer to the quiz question in the last issue may well surprise many people. The first performance of *The Dream of Gerontius* at the Promenade Concerts did not take place until 1957, Elgar's centenary year. It was given on 29 August by the Royal Choral Society and the Croydon Philharmonic Society with the BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sir Malcolm Sargent. The soloists were Marjorie Thomas, William Herbert, and John Cameron. Though the date seems late, it should be remembered that there was no choral tradition at the Proms during Sir Henry Wood's tenure; the situation was changed when Sargent took over at the end of the war. Charles Reid wrote that "...it was a performance worth waiting 57 years for...The 'Praise to the Holiest' climax...will ring for a long time in many ears and hearts". The following year it was given again on 2 September with the same forces (apart from Richard Lewis for Herbert in the title role). Sargent "dedicated the performance on behalf of those taking part in it to the memory of the late Ralph Vaughan Williams. At the end, the crowded audience stood in silent homage". Vaughan Williams had died the week before, on 26 August.

* * * * *

Profound apologies are due to Mr Neil Mantle whose pioneering performance of *The Music Makers* in Orléans was described in the Letters section of the last issue. I inadvertently decimated (literally) his audience of 2000 by omitting the final nought. A reduced performance of an Elgar work took place recently according to a concert notice sent to me, which advertised Elgar's *Serenade for String*. But the current prize for sustained misinformation must go to Redbridge Council, in a leaflet giving local entertainment details. On 21 July the Redbridge Youth Orchestra, conducted by Bramwoli [sic] Tovey, played *Shehorazade* [sic] by Rimky-Korsavok [sic]; and what is clearly an early work, Elgar's *Callo Concerto*!

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

1 November Cockaigne
 CBSO/ *Seaman*

Derngate Centre
Northampton 7.30 pm
01604 24811

1 November Symphony no 1
 Philh/ Slatkin

Corn Exchange
Bedford
01234 269519

2 November	King Olaf <i>Soloists/ Ceramic City Ch/ BBC PO/ Hunt</i>	Victoria Hall Hanley 7.30 pm 01782 207777
3 November	The Dream of Gerontius <i>C.Wyn-Rogers, J.Lavender, A.Michaels-Moore/ Philh Ch/ Philh/ Slatkin</i>	Royal Festival Hall South Bank 7.30 pm 0171 960 4242
9 November	Sospiri <i>Rutland Sinf/ Collett</i>	Oakham School 7.30 01572 787573
9 November	Serenade for Strings <i>East of England O/ Lloyd-Jones</i>	St George's Hall Bradford 7.30 pm
13 November	The Dream of Gerontius <i>S.Fryer, W.Kendall, M.Best/Waynflete Sgrs/ Bournemouth S Ch & O/ Hill</i>	Poole Arts Centre 7.30 pm 01202 685222
16 November	The Dream of Gerontius <i>C.Wyn-Rogers, A.Rolfe-Johnson, M.Best/ City B'ham Ch/ CBSO/ Robinson</i>	B'ham Symphony Hall 7.30 pm
16 November	Enigma Variations (extracts) <i>R.Stilgoe (narr.)/Ernest Read SO/ Stark</i>	Royal Festival Hall 11.00 am
16 November	The Starlight Express (songs) <i>J.Dewhurst, P.O'Reilly/ St Edmundsbury Bach Ch & O/ Oxley</i>	St Mary's Church Bury St Edmunds 7.30 01284 769505
17 November	King Olaf <i>W.MacDougall, J.Job, R.Williams/ Strathaven Ch Soc/ City of Glasgow SO/ Hamilton</i>	Hamilton Town Hall Lanarkshire 7.30
24 November	Enigma Variations <i>Guildford PO/ En Shao</i>	Guildford Civic Hall 3.00 pm 01483 444 555
27 November	Introduction & Allegro <i>CBSO/ Rattle</i>	Symphony Hall, B'ham 7.30 pm 0121 212 3333
27 November	Introduction & Allegro <i>Bournemouth SO/ Carney</i>	Poole Arts Centre 7.30 01202 685222
28 November	Introduction & Allegro <i>CBSO/ Rattle</i>	Cambridge Corn Exchange 7.30 pm 01223 357851
28 November	Introduction & Allegro <i>Bournemouth SO/ Varga</i>	Colston Hall Bristol 7.30 pm 0117 922 3683

29 November	Introduction & Allegro <i>CBSO/ Rattle</i>	Warwick Arts Centre 8.00 pm 01203 524524
29 November	Violin Sonata <i>Madeleine Mitchell/ Andrew Ball</i>	Purcell Room 7.30
3 December	Introduction & Allegro <i>CBSO/ Rattle</i>	Symphony Hall, B'ham 7.30 pm
4 December	Violin Sonata <i>Tasmin Little/ Martin Roscoe</i>	King's Hall, Ilkley 8.00 pm
4 December	Cello Concerto <i>N.Clein/ Bournemouth SO/ Fujioka</i>	Poole Arts Centre 7.30 pm
7 December	Introduction & Allegro <i>CBSO/ Rattle</i>	Leeds Town Hall 7.30 0113 245 5505
14 December	Cello Concerto <i>N.Clein/ CBSO/ Harding</i>	Symphony Hall, B'ham 7.00 pm
19 December	Cello Concerto <i>repeat of above concert</i>	Symphony Hall, B'ham 7.30 pm
15 January 1997	Wand of Youth Suite no 2 <i>Hallé/ Lazarev</i>	Bridgewater Hall Manchester 7.30 pm 0161 907 9000
16 January	<i>repeat of above concert</i>	Bridgewater Hall
18 January	<i>repeat of above concert</i>	Leeds Town Hall 7.30
19 January	<i>repeat of above concert</i>	Bridgewater Hall
4 February	Symphony no 2 <i>Philh/ Slatkin</i>	Royal Festival Hall 7.30 pm
5 February	<i>repeat of above concert</i>	Colston Hall, Bristol
6 February	Cello Concerto <i>S.Isserlis/ Philh/ Slatkin</i>	Royal Festival Hall 7.30 pm
8 February	Symphony no 2 <i>Philh/ Slatkin</i> (with pre-concert talk by Ian Lacey)	The Hawth, Crawley 01293 553636
9 February	Cello Concerto, Symphony no 2 <i>Isserlis/ Philh/ Slatkin</i>	Corn Exchange Bedford
10 February	Cello Concerto <i>Isserlis/ Philh/ Slatkin</i>	Cliffs Pavilion Southend 01702 351135
12 February	Cello Concerto <i>H.Roberts/ Hallé/ O.A.Hughes</i>	Bridgewater Hall 7.30 pm
13 February	<i>repeat of above concert</i>	

16 February	<i>repeat of above concert</i>	
26 February	Symphony no 1 <i>Bournemouth SO/ Litton</i>	Poole Arts Centre 7.30 pm
27 February	<i>repeat of above concert</i>	Colston Hall 7.30 pm
5 March	Symphony no 2, Cockaigne <i>Bournemouth SO/ Litton</i>	Poole Arts Centre 7.30 pm
8 March	The Kingdom; Prelude & The sun goeth down <i>C.Martin/ Rutland Sinf/ Collett</i>	Corby Festival Hall 7.30 pm Corby 402233
22 March	Sea Pictures, The Music Makers <i>J.Rigby/ Luton Ch Soc/ Chiltern SO/ Mann</i>	Stopsley Baptist Church 7.30 pm 01582 424777

Elgar Society visit to Bavaria

The possibility of a visit to Bavaria in 1997 or 1998 has been mooted. The visit would be organised by members of London Branch, of whom a number have so far indicated possible interest. At the moment there are no firm details and no firm costings, but all Elgarians, from whatever branch, would be most welcome to join London Branch members for the visit. If you think you might be interested, please let Paul Rooke know by writing to him at:

22, Shortacres Road, Peterborough PE2 9DZ
or by telephoning 01-733-897627.

Please state your name, address, telephone number and the number of possible participants. You will in no way be committed at this stage, but an indication of the possible interest would be most helpful.

Collectors' Room



104 CRESCENT ROAD
NEW BARNET
HERTS EN4 9RJ

Tel: 081-440 2651

*78s, Record Catalogues
Books on Music, Programmes*

CONCERT REVIEW

Elgar Weekend : Barbican Centre, London. 20 - 22 September, 1996.

As I headed for The Barbican Centre on the Friday evening and the first of the three weekend concerts to include Elgar's great choral masterpieces, *The Dream of Gerontius*, *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*, I felt a keen sense of anticipation. The performers were the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, and the London Symphony Chorus, with a fine array of soloists, all conducted by Richard Hickox.

At the first pre-concert talk and in his interview in Friday's *Times* Richard Hickox stressed that he wanted to accentuate the dramatic, even operatic, nature of the oratorios. While I have severe reservations about some of the implications of these comments, I would certainly agree that they need careful pacing and must never be allowed to stand still.

From the start of *The Dream of Gerontius* I was delighted with Richard Hickox's pacing. Performances of Elgar's music must have that ebb and flow, not all of which, I believe, is written in the score. I know that to some this will appear a heresy, but I do not believe that everything can be written in any score : musical judgement must still be applied. And this is where taste and differences of opinion about performances begin. The beginning of the Prelude was sombre and foreboding, with some beautiful cor anglais playing. The *pianissimo* playing from the orchestra was exquisite and was to remain so throughout the weekend, while the full orchestral climaxes had strength and nobility, forceful but unforced. John Aler had a passionate and lyrical tenor voice, and was for me an excellent Gerontius. For other colleagues from The Elgar Society who were also present, his performance lacked variety. There was, however, no disagreement about Jean Rigby. This Angel was delightful throughout and her performance culminated in a great and moving 'Softly and gently'. Peter Coleman-Wright sang the Priest's part nobly and gave a distinguished performance as the Angel of the Agony, but his head was for the most part too buried in the copy for me to find his performance totally satisfying. The London Symphony Chorus were in total command of their part. Their combined attack was superb - and there are many awkward choral entries to be negotiated in this regard. Their *pianissimo* singing was a real *pianissimo* and their great moments were superbly done; in particular, 'Praise to the Holiest' was thrilling, and the 'Demons' Chorus' had menace. This was in total a *Gerontius* to be treasured and I went home afterwards licking my lips in anticipation of the next two days.

Saturday began with Andrew Youdell's presentation, 'Elgar on Film'. Having seen this at the Barbican some eighteen months previously, I was fascinated to note the additional pieces of information which Andrew has gathered in that time. I first saw Ken Russell's film biography when I was 16, having been allowed to stay up late to watch it on the housemaster's television and, like hundreds of others, its impact on me was extraordinary and is still being played out.

In the evening there was *The Apostles*. It was right near the end of this that I first realised the extra revelation that this weekend would have. It was not just that we

were hearing three of Elgar's choral masterpieces, as if in isolation, but hearing them in close proximity. The connections between them would thus be revealed. I know that there is a quotation from *Gerontius* at the end of *The Apostles*, but when they are played on consecutive evenings as here, the effect was extraordinary. In some way, the whole of *Gerontius* was recalled, not just the words that fit the quotation, "And Thou art calling me". It was an intensely moving moment.

This was a great performance. In his newspaper interview, Richard Hickox acknowledged that "... some bits are weak...But a performance that catches fire transcends that." In this performance there was fire in abundance; it was transcendental in more ways than one. Indeed, I disagree with him: in his performance there were no "weak bits". For me, the 'Fantasy' is the section which most often fails to convince, but Hickox showed once and for all that this is not Elgar's fault, but the performers'. Elgar might have paraphrased Schoenberg and said, "My music is not weak, only badly played."

This was a performance of so many merits that I cannot enumerate them all. The Bournemouth Chorus proved a match for the London Symphony Chorus and what I said about the latter applies with equal force to them. Among the soloists, Susan Chilcott as The Blessed Virgin was superb and Linda Finnie sang the part of Mary Magdalene without the pronounced vibrato that for me spoilt her singing in *The Light of Life* some years ago. Indeed it was her part in the third section of the work that helped to redeem any supposed weaknesses. Adrian Thompson and Peter Coleman-Wright as St John and St Peter gave fine performances, as did Stephen Roberts as Jesus; but Matthew Best in the part of Judas was outstanding, and his monologue in Part IV, 'The Betrayal', was searing, almost unbearably intense, a fine performance of some of Elgar's best music. The whole orchestra was magnificent. This is my favourite of the three works and I went home revelling in what I had heard. It was a performance to treasure.

On Sunday there was a talk by Peter Evans, which my colleagues found most interesting. It was certainly well delivered and well informed, but I have reservations about Elgar's use of motives. He himself said that he took it from Mendelssohn, and I feel that the Wagnerian influence in his music is over-stressed. Certainly it is there in the harmony and in some of the orchestration, but I think that his use of motives differs radically from Wagner's. Now is not the time to explain, so I will leave it there.

The Kingdom completed the trilogy with a performance of matching splendour. Many radiant moments remain in the mind, but perhaps the finest was Susan Chilcott's performance of 'The sun goeth down'. This was one of the best performances I have heard : great vocal beauty allied to great musical intelligence, the whole supported by an orchestra and conductor with great sensitivity and with exquisite solo violin playing from the orchestra's Leader, Brendan O'Brien. *The Kingdom* is generally more reflective than *The Apostles*, and there was a great calm and meditation about this performance. It was, of course, not without its dramatic moments - 'Pentecost' was marvellously done - but what came through most was an inner feeling of spirituality, both in the music and in the performance. As Richard Hickox said at the end of his opening talk - and I do not quote! - Elgar had not lost

his faith, only his faith in conventional religion.

Hickox was for me the hero of the weekend, not just for doing it but for doing it so well, with such enthusiasm and with such commitment. He has his detractors, but they were not in evidence during this weekend. However, it was sad that the audiences were so thin. I believe that many in the Elgar Society think that the battle is now over, that Elgar's music has won its rightful place. Don't believe it! They should have been there for this weekend: some of his music is well-known, but the rest is hardly known at all by the public at large and is not supported. It is certainly not in the regular repertoire. Indeed, at this weekend it was not even supported by the Elgar Society.

On an upward note, I leave Richard Hickox with this thought: how about *all* Elgar's choral works some time?

Paul Adrian Rooke

BOOK REVIEWS

Festival Memories by Donald Hunt.

Osborne Books, Worcester, 1996. £3-95 (incl p + p)

It is a sad fact of musical life that cathedral organists, or, in the grander edifices, Directors of Music, seldom - if ever - have books written about them. As with some of his colleagues in the organ and choral world Donald Hunt has wisely decided to write his own record for posterity, concentrating on his Three Choirs Festival performances during twenty-one years at Worcester Cathedral. After Sir Ivor Atkins' retirement there were several holders of the Cathedral office, but Donald Hunt's tenure has been a long one and has brought continuity again to choral, orchestral, and organ music in Worcester. The festivals have inevitably varied both in content and quality as the years have gone by, but the high spots have been very high. The writer remembers some fascinating and enjoyable occasions, as well as disappointments along the way. But the Festivals (and generously Donald Hunt does not only dwell on those which took place in Worcester) have changed in the last two or three decades. There is today a great deal of competition for the Three Choirs, where once they reigned almost supreme and artists vied with each other to appear there. First the Edinburgh Festival, and then the host of other smaller festivals around the country have all taken their toll of support for the Three Choirs, not least in their ability to attract the best of artistes and orchestras. The growth of the 'Fringe' has helped, but the author warns of the danger of the 'Fringe' getting out of hand, as at Edinburgh, and dominating, to some extent, the main event.

This is an interesting little book, attractively produced in stiff paper covers, with a number of illustrations. A list of all the works performed at Worcester since 1975 contains a multitude of both new, experimental, and standard works. Of course Donald Hunt could only conduct a proportion of them, and lists the other conductors where he did not hold the baton. As a record of his stewardship of the musical life of the Cathedral it will be essential reading for Worcester Elgarians, and our wider circle of readers will welcome this account of the generous amount of Elgar in a

surprisingly bold series of concerts and recitals. One can only wish the author a happy retirement, though one suspects that his energies will still go into music-making from time to time!

Ronald Taylor

Musical Knights - discographies of Wood, Beecham, Boult, Barbirolli, Goodall, and Sargent, compiled by John Hunt.

(Available from Mr Hunt at Flat 6, 37, Chester Way, London SE11 4UR.
Price : £20)

This substantial 474-page book consisting of six separate discographies is bound to be of interest to Elgarians as certainly four of the six conductors would be regarded as amongst the most important early interpreters of Elgar's music.

For each conductor, the listings are arranged alphabetically by composer but the order thereafter is rather strange and somewhat user-unfriendly. Symphonies and concertos are listed first, but not always that way round, followed by other works in what seems to be no specific order. It is therefore difficult to find a specific work : and would have been much better to list works entirely alphabetically or at least alphabetically within certain categories.

For each recording, there is a brief location and date description (eg. "London May 1975"); the surnames of the artists involved together with catalogue numbers preceded by '78', 'LP' or 'CD'. No tapes are included (reel-to-reel, or audio cassette), although there are just a few video cassettes listed. Since there is clearly an attempt to include all disc numbers even where there have been numerous reissues, it seems inconsistent to ignore the tape formats. The general appearance, derived from an electric typewriter or daisy wheel printer is acceptable and certainly readable, but a laser printer would have opened up the possibility of different font sizes, italics and bold, which would be a definite improvement. There are some pages of illustrations, reproductions of the Royal Mail's conductor stamps, together with concert handbills and record advertisements.

Of course, I immediately dived for the Elgar entries to see if there were any items that were new to me! The only things I found were two 1960s performances of the *Second Symphony* conducted by Sargent, described as "unpublished radio broadcasts"; and an unpublished 78 side of Maartje Offers singing 'Sabbath Morning at Sea' conducted by Barbirolli, presumably at the same session as the published 'Where Corals Lie'. I didn't know that Sargent's 1952 *Wand of Youth Suite no 2* was issued on 78s as well as LP.

I know that people who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones but there are some omissions! There is no reference to Boult's second recording of the *Chopin Funeral March*, or Sargent's *Pomp & Circumstance no 1* taped at the opening of the Royal Festival Hall. The details of reissues are far from complete and there are just a few wrong numbers. I am sure that RLS 7716 has Boult's 1955 recording of *Pomp & Circumstance no 3* rather than the 1953 one as claimed by Hunt.

I realise I have been somewhat critical. It is all too easy to find mistakes in such material! Don't let me put you off buying the book. I'm very glad to have it for it is a wonderful achievement and will give you hours of fascinating browsing.

John Knowles

RECORD REVIEWS

Cockaigne Overture, Op 40 (with works by Rossini, Handel, Dankworth, and Brahms)

London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sir Edward Heath
EMI CDM 566063-2

The Lighter Elgar

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Lawrance Collingwood
Northern Sinfonia conducted by Sir Neville Marriner
EMI CDM 565593-2

These EMI reissues give ample opportunity for a spot of nostalgia and reminder of the days when HMV was still *the* Elgar label.

I already had a ticket for the LSO Gala Concert in November 1971 when it was announced that the then Prime Minister, Edward Heath, would be conducting the first item of the programme. It is no secret that Andre Previn tried to persuade him to substitute *Cockaigne* for something a little "easier", but apparently it was a special favourite and that was what he wanted to do. Under the very bright lights then needed for the television cameras that transformed this into an international event, the Prime Minister came to the rostrum and following three very clear "dead" beats, *Cockaigne* was launched.

Fortunately the performance was preserved for disc and its first appearance on CD is to mark its conductor's 80th birthday. This is no mere run-through, guided by the leader, but a very convincing, well-prepared account. Not surprisingly, there is a real sense of occasion, of enthusiasm and commitment to the music. The LSO play wonderfully with some powerful contributions from brass and percussion. Some of the tempi may sound a touch indulgent but if I had the LSO for just one piece, I guess I might want it to last for as long as possible! The entry of the organ gives a wonderful glow and the precision of the final bars shows just how well orchestra and conductor were communicating with one another. How ever many recordings of *Cockaigne* you have, this is a one-off that should be in your collection.

By 1971 the resurgence of interest in Elgar's music was well under way. The situation in 1964 was rather different, but then it is perhaps worth pointing out that 1964 is closer to 1934 than to 1996. It was Lawrance Collingwood who was called upon by HMV to conduct at Abbey Road studios the *Caractacus* excerpts that Elgar "supervised" from his bed in 1934, and it was the same Lawrance Collingwood who was called out of retirement to take over an Abbey Road session at which George Weldon was to conduct a "plum label" programme of Elgar miniatures. In spite of a very lukewarm review in *The Gramophone* by Trevor Harvey, 'The Miniature

Elgar' became a best-seller.

Since then, all of this music has been recorded again, and it is interesting to see how this old favourite stands up by comparison. Frankly the first two tracks (*Chanson de Matin* and *Beau Brummel*) are rather disappointing, a bit stodgy and without the sort of sparkle that, for example, Ernest Tomlinson brings to the *Beau Brummel* minuet on his recent Marco Polo disc of 'British Light Music' (8.224522). Things do look up though with the two *Starlight Express* excerpts sung by Frederick Harvey. Livelier than in Handley's complete *Starlight Express*, they are sung with a real twinkle in the eye. Collingwood's *Salut d'Amour* has appeared on countless EMI compilations over the years and still sounds fine, displaying a touching simplicity that is gently and persuasively moulded, descriptions that could also be applied to the account of *Dream Children*. The LP also included the 'Lullaby' from the *Bavarian Dances*, a movement from the *Nursery Suite*, and three from *The Wand of Youth*, but only the lively account of the 'Sun Dance' remains. The others are not really a loss since they have been superseded by complete recordings. One of Trevor Harvey's complaints was that the whole programme did seem to be dominated by slow movements!

The omissions allow the whole of Neville Marriner's collection 'The Lighter Elgar' to be included on this very well-filled disc (nearly 79 minutes). This 1970 LP broke new ground in a number of ways. First, it included two premières - *Sevillana* and the *Romance for Bassoon and Orchestra*. The former has only recently had its second recording and that from the Czecho-Slovak Radio SO! (Naxos 8.550086). The latter is of course a real gem, a chip from the mature craftsman's work bench and does not really fit under the title of the disc. Martin Chapman's performance is excellent. The rest of the programme was new to LP. *Carissima*, premiered at Elgar's first gramophone session, had not been recorded for 50 years. The only previous recordings of *Mina* were those by J Ainslie Murray (Elgar's comments were less than enthusiastic and it was never issued), and its replacement conducted by Haydn Wood in 1936.

The recording of the Mazurka from *Three Characteristic Pieces* was a sort of UK gramophone première as the only previous recording, that by the composer, had only been issued in Japan! The other items on the LP had also been recorded by the composer but by 1970 had long been unavailable. This disc therefore brought this music afresh to a new generation. Come to think of it, even in the 90s, you don't often hear these pieces, so the reissue of these, by turns sensitive and lively, performances should be greeted enthusiastically.

John Knowles

Three Motets, Op 2. Vesper Voluntaries, Op 14 (excerpts). Angelus, Op 56. Give unto the Lord, Op 74. O Hearken Thou, Op 64. Te Deum & Benedictus, Op 34. Organ Sonata, Op 28.

Herbert Sumsion (organ),
Choir of Worcester Cathedral conducted by Christopher Robinson
EMI 'British Composers' CDM 565594-2

This is a disc which I suspect will have wide appeal. It restores to the catalogue, for the first time on CD, not only Sumsion's definitive account of the *Organ Sonata*, but also one of the ground-breaking EMI records of the Elgar revival in the 1960s, containing his choral music, previously unrecorded with the exception of *Ave verum corpus* and *O harken Thou* (and *they* were new to LP). The works found on this record have all been recorded since - some many times - but it would be a brave man to say that these versions have been equalled, let alone surpassed.

The Worcester record (made in the Cathedral) is a fine recording. It faithfully retains the sense of space and grandeur of the building, yet the voices are clear and immediate, unlike some cathedral recordings where the sound is frankly fuzzy. And the singing is a revelation, with much more passion and drama than is often associated with cathedral choirs, and surely ideal for Elgar's church music which has greater colour and depth than the usual Anglican fare. The diction is impeccable, and the singers' commitment and expression really make these scores live. When the choir sing (in *Great is the Lord*) "The Lord remaineth a King for ever" they sound as if they really mean it! They are equally effective in the quieter passages (for instance, the final bars of the *Te Deum*). Just occasionally the top notes could be more precise (as at "the everlasting Son of the Father"), but really I cannot speak too highly of their performance. The re-mastering for CD is exemplary. Sumsion's 1965 recording of the *Sonata* was only the third ever (the first two were by Harold Darke). It is a thoroughly 'Elgarian' account in that one of its main features is the slight and subtle ebb and flow within a tempo which is always pushing forward, and which produces that restlessness which characterises so much of the composer's music, especially music without a specific programme. Having said that, I do feel that the work benefits from a faster pace than that which Sumsion prefers, particularly in the second movement. His *Allegretto* is $\text{♩} = c.88$, which is more like *moderato* in my book. It also means that, followed as it is by the wonderful *Andante espressivo* third movement, there are two slow movements at the heart of the *Sonata*, and the balance of the work is affected as a result. (It should perhaps be added that no metronome markings are given anywhere in the work). Similarly, I personally prefer a quicker pulse in the final movement, marked *Presto (comodo)*; the second subject especially could be a touch more jaunty. But these are personal preferences, and must not detract from what is a heartfelt account by a great Elgarian. Just the thing for the Elgar-lover's Christmas stocking; and at mid-price too!

The Editor

Violin Sonata, Op 82. With sonatas by Vaughan Williams and Walton.

Yehudi Menuhin (violin), Hephzibah Menuhin, Louis Kentner (piano)
EMI CDM 566122-2

Menuhin's recording of the Elgar *Violin Sonata*, accompanied by his sister on the piano, dates from 1978, and apart from its initial LP format has never appeared again until now. Though the soloist's fingers may lack the dexterity of his prime, there is the compensation of a lifetime of experience and love of Elgar's music which is evident from first bar to last. This is a performance which emphasises the nobility and *weltschmerz* of the piece, and Menuhin often lingers musingly and intimately in a way similar to his prodigy Nigel Kennedy, especially in the slow movement.

Like the *Organ Sonata*, this is a work where Elgar has not provided metronome markings. I found the first movement the most successful and nearest to Elgar's description of the work to Rosa Burley; "concise & clear & passionate". The violin arpeggios (after fig 5) are beautifully articulated, and the movement hangs together well, although more perhaps could have been made of the little nuances of tempo which give Elgar's music its intensity and restlessness. The slow movement (Romance) is very slow, almost ten minutes in length, and longer even than Kennedy. *Andante* is surely quicker than this, although the tempo is not inappropriate for the central section and gives it a slightly funereal quality. The Finale begins well, but at the second subject (fig 41) the pulse drops again to a *moderato* and the movement begins to lose shape. That Elgar did not want this is shown by the fact that every time he writes *poco sostenuto* he follows it in the next bar with a *tempo*; this must mean that he did not want to depart from the *allegro* stipulated at the head of the movement.

The Vaughan Williams sonata, a late work, is given a fine convincing performance (the Menuhins consulted Frederick Grinke, the dedicatee, when making the recording). The Walton Sonata, accompanied by Kentner, dates from the late 1940s and was commissioned by Diana Menuhin; it is dedicated to her and her sister, Louis Kentner's wife. This was the first recording (in 1950) and it wears its age well.

This generously-filled record brings together chamber works by three composers who are not normally associated with the genre, played by one who has done so much for British music over the years, and it is fitting that they should be available again in this his eightieth year.

The Editor

Piano Quintet, Op 84. Sospiri, op 70. 'The Farmyard' (Harmony Music no 4).

Soloists of the London Symphony Orchestra
EMI CDC 555403-2

I must confess to some trepidation on learning of EMI's 'Anglo-American Chamber Music' series, in which members of the LSO and the New York Philharmonic were to record chamber music by composers native to their own country. However talented the players, the necessary understanding, sympathy and precision possessed by the best chamber ensembles are not something which can be achieved overnight. I have no idea how much rehearsal was allowed for this disc (I suspect not a great deal, knowing the punishing schedules of the top orchestras); so I was surprised (and not a little relieved) to discover that it is an outstanding recording. Of the versions of the *Piano Quintet* I have heard this new one is closest in style and mood to the Cohen/Stratton version (now on CD and enthusiastically reviewed by me in the JOURNAL January 1994). It is also very close in timing, incidentally. There are the occasional fuzzy moments in ensemble and one or two smudged piano chords, but the overwhelming impression is one of confidence in approach and outstanding technique all round. They are alert to every challenge presented by the music, and are as effective in the dark, uneasy restlessness of the first movement as in the yearning *longueurs* of the Adagio. Generally, the *Quintet* has been well served on record, and this can stand comparison with the best.

The two other shorter pieces are also very professionally and enjoyably done. My only real complaint with this disc is that at 53 minutes, there was room for a great

deal more.

The Editor

'Agnus Dei' : music of inner harmony.

Choir of New College Oxford conducted by Edward Higginbottom
Erato 0630 14634-2

This choral compilation contains a sort of Elgar première. Rather than "But on one's man soul..." we are offered "Lux Aeterna"; but whereas in *The Music Makers* Elgar recomposed and developed the Nimrod music, John Cameron's arrangement is a straight transcription for unaccompanied choir of the *Enigma* movement, preceded by the single held note from 'W.N'.

Even after a small number of hearings, it still sounds rather strange and somewhat unidiomatic. I don't care for the way the choir tends to make a *crescendo* and *decrescendo* through each note, rather like a leaky harmonium, and there are lots of rather clattery consonants which tend to break up the line. Perhaps it would be more effective hummed without any words at all. The recorded sound doesn't help; the choir sound is very immediate with a slightly harsh edge to it. At the same time, there is a more than generous amount of reverberation sort of stuck to it, as if one were sitting in the choir stalls and at the back of the cathedral all at the same time.

The programme of popular works by Bach, Mendelssohn, Allegri, Górecki *et al* is otherwise very attractive, and this is the sort of disc that is likely to be a best seller. It is also the first time a new Elgar recording has appeared on the Erato label! In the notes, the conductor welcomes the new arrangement, as "Elgar wrote relatively little music for the church". Is he unaware of such fine pieces as *O Harken Thou* and *They are at rest*? They were conceived for choral singing, and there's the difference.

John Knowles

'Love's Tempest' : part-songs by Parry, Coleridge-Taylor, Elgar and Stanford.

Ionian Singers conducted by Timothy Salter
^Usk USK 1220 CD

A total of twenty-three songs (five by Coleridge-Taylor, six each for the others) lasting almost eighty minutes is a rich feast indeed. Many of the songs (not the Elgar) are receiving their first recording, and these performances by the Ionian Singers are really superb. There is here all one could wish for in a chamber choir; clarity of diction, total security of pitch, glorious expression, and much more. Salter just fails to capture - as Boult does so superbly with the BBC Singers - the almost mysterious opening "Silent lay the sapphire ocean" at the start of *Love's Tempest*, but this is a highly enjoyable version of this superb song; in particular the attack and inner detail of the succeeding *allegro con fuoco* ("Till a tempest came to wake"). The words of *The Prince of Sleep* are similar in many ways to those of *Evening Scene*, written twenty years earlier, and Elgar creates much the same mood, captured perfectly here. It is slow, but I suppose a soporific mood is not inappropriate in such a song. If the tempi (here and elsewhere) occasionally do err

on the slow side it is more than compensated for by the outstanding performances. *The Fountain*, *Go Song of Mine* (always a severe test), *My Love dwelt in a Northern Land*, and *O Wild West Wind* are the other Elgar songs. Performances like these show how great these little choral masterpieces are. Do buy this disc; you will not be disappointed.

The Editor

CD Round-up

Elgar's *Sursum Corda* has rarely found its way on to disc, possibly due to its somewhat unusual scoring for brass, organ and strings. I love it; when played sympathetically it certainly lifts my heart. Unfortunately none of the recorded versions quite do it justice; Hurst's 1976 Bournemouth recording lacked feeling, while Hickox rather wallowed in the piece, wringing out every last ounce of emotion. (What a pity Handley has never recorded it; a broadcast performance a few years back was superb). A new recording has appeared on a Hyperion disc called 'Royal Eurostar', containing music written by Paul Patterson for the London Brass Virtuosi to play at Waterloo Station at the opening of the Channel Tunnel link in 1994. The rest of the disc is given over to brass music by Richard Strauss and Derek Bourgeois, plus two pieces for brass and strings - *Sursum Corda* and Hindemith's *Konzertmusik*. The conductor, David Honeyball, approaches the Elgar in a very similar fashion to Hickox, and takes almost as long. At times "wallowing" seems too mild a word; I felt Bernstein would have approved! Having said that, the playing of the LBV and the strings of the Philharmonia are of the highest quality, and the rich sonorous recording is excellent. Altogether an unusual and highly enjoyable disc (CDA 66870).

The latest compilation disc of British music, entitled 'This England' (EMI CDC 489364-2), is mainly what one would expect, beginning as it does with *Jerusalem* and the *Greensleeves Fantasia*. But there are some interesting inclusions - two Tallis motets for instance - and a couple of relatively substantial works, *The Lark Ascending* (Bean/Boult), and *The Banks of Green Willow*. The Elgar pieces are Collingwood's *Chanson de Matin*, the Larghetto from Del Mar's *Serenade for Strings* - both a little heavy to my mind - the Dream Interlude from Rattle's *Falstaff*, the Adagio from the *Cello Concerto* played by du Pré, and Boult's 'Nimrod'. Not for the serious Elgarian, but yet another recommendable introduction to anyone still at the 'Classic fm' stage of listening. The disc celebrates the 70th anniversary of the foundation of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England, to whom 40p is donated for each CD purchased.

Granville Bantock, like his great friend Edward Elgar, was an enthusiastic supporter of the competition festivals which were so popular at the turn of the century and - again like Elgar - wrote many part-songs as test pieces. However, Bantock was drawn further into writing large *a capella* canvases for large choirs, and the two most celebrated - *Atalanta in Calydon* (1912) and *Vanity of Vanities* (1914) - are now recorded for the first time, fifty years after the composer's death, by the BBC Singers under Simon Joly (Albany TROY 180). Each work is described as a "choral symphony", lasting over half an hour each. The first piece is based on extracts from

Swinburne's poem, fatalistic and pessimistic, even anti-religious. The words which form the climax "All we are against thee, O God most high" were unlikely to endear the work to the devout who doubtless made up the bulk of the large choirs of the period. The second work is probably the finer of the two, set to words selected from Ecclesiastes. The BBC Singers, numbering more than 50 in *Atalanta*, give outstandingly good performances, and this disc should be in the collection of everyone interested in choral music.

Also from Albany is a disc of English music for piano duet or two pianos by the husband-and-wife team of Anthony Goldstone and Caroline Clemmow (TROY 198). [Members may remember Mr Goldstone's disc of the *Enigma Variations* and other pieces played on Elgar's own piano (MRCD 94001), reviewed JOURNAL July 1995]. The most substantial pieces are arrangements by their composers of orchestral works - Holst's *Planets*, and his *Elegy (In Memoriam William Morris)*, this last from the second movement of his early *Cotswold Symphony*; and Elgar's *Serenade for Strings*. Frankly, all they tend to do is to show the limitations of the piano. Sustaining chords, particularly in the left hand, by *tremolando* repetitions, makes the music sound like accompaniments to the dramatic passages in old silent films. For anyone who knows the orchestral originals, comparisons are inevitable and the outcome a no-contest. Also, retaining the same expression marks only serves to illustrate the difference in timbre and often produces inappropriate results; for instance, the staccato notes at the very opening of the *Serenade*, and towards the end of the *Larghetto* of the same work (which sound fine in the version for strings) produce a spiky effect which is totally at odds with the character of the music. Perhaps not surprisingly the most effective items on the disc are the two short pieces by Edgar Bainton and the little-known Frank Bury which were written specifically for two pianists, and for those interested in the highways and byways of English music worth getting for these alone. And the playing is of course of the highest quality.

The young conductor Andrew Constantine founded the Bardi Orchestra in 1986 and to celebrate its tenth anniversary they have produced a recording of Dvořák's *Seventh Symphony* and Elgar's *Cello Concerto* in which the soloist is the young Russian cellist, Leonid Gorokhov. The disc's producer, Robert Mandell, in a note, describes the Elgar as "one of the most original and outstanding performances of this masterwork...to enter the recording catalogue in recent times". Sadly, I cannot agree with him, for although it is played with great conviction and ability by both soloist and orchestra it lacks the subtlety and world-weariness of the finest versions. It is too passionate and lacks contrast; the intensity is relentless and rather tires one out by the end. I wish I could be more complimentary about such a worthy project (RR 1001).

I have been trying for some time, and with no success, to obtain review copies of the following discs from Carlton Classics (formerly Pickwick); and include here such details as I have. BBC Radio Classics 15656 91672 *Sea Pictures* Baker/BBC SO/Loughran; *The Music Makers* Walker/BBC Sgrs, S Ch & O/Del Mar. 15656 91802 *Froissart*, *Sursum Corda*, *Sospiri*, *Give unto the Lord*, etc Scottish Ph Sgrs, BBC Scott SO/Groves. Carlton Classics 30367 00682 *Serenade for Strings* (plus other English music for strings) RPO/ Groves. 30366 00112 *Cello Concerto* (no soloist specified ?Tortelier) RPO/Groves.

The Editor

BRANCH REPORTS

SOUTH WALES. At Friendship House, Swansea on 15 June members were addressed by George A Davies who, in giving a talk entitled 'The Bakers of Fenton', broke what was to many of those present entirely fresh ground. The Bakers in question were the family to whom the friend pictured in the fourth of the *Enigma Variations* belonged, and the speaker provided a great deal of background information, reminding us, amongst other things, that the Bakers were a family of Staffordshire potters, that Elgar had been a guest at their home (Hasfield Court), and that "W.M.B" himself had been a philanthropist, a member of the audience at the first performance of *King Olaf*, and a brother-in-law of R B Townshend (of the third of the *Variations*). A number of photographs were exhibited, including one of Hasfield Court, where one member of the family - Gregory Meath Baker - still lives. Music heard during the course of the afternoon included parts of *King Olaf* and of the original version (for voices and piano) of *From the Bavarian Highlands*. Alice and Catherine Jones will address the Branch on 16 November, when their topic will be 'Deliuss and his Friends'. John Kelly and Kevin Allen are amongst speakers who will visit Swansea during 1997.

After the usual summer break, YORKSHIRE Branch restarted its activities on 23 September with a survey of British light music, naturally including some of Elgar's lighter pieces. We have a full programme of monthly meetings lined up to take us right through to July '97, but the one we look forward to with keen anticipation is that on 11 November, when we are to have a visit from Geoffrey Scargill, of Chetham's School in Manchester. The Elgar Society has for a few years enjoyed a mutually beneficial association with 'Chet's', resulting in visits by students to the Birthplace and visits by Society members to the school. Geoffrey will tell us much about the school and play excerpts from recordings made by the school orchestra. The highlight is expected to be some live music played by the Chetham's students, who are expected to include some very early Elgar. We have sent them copies of some very early manuscript scores discovered a few years ago in Giggleswick. Handwritten, bearing dates in the early 1880s and with Elgar's own humorous annotations, they are a fascinating collection. Who knows, we may even get a "world première" on 11 November!

The NORTH-WEST Branch continues to flourish, and we begin our new season on 5 October at the RNCM with a talk by Martin Milner, former leader of the Hallé Orchestra. On 9 November we are meeting at Chetham's School of Music for a recital by pupils given especially for the branch; and we shall also be given a tour of this fine historic building. Our AGM will take place on 7 December at the Swan Hotel, Bucklow Hill, near Knutsford.

Our first meeting of the New Year will be on 18 January when one of the members will be "cast away" and will share her choice of eight records. On 22 February we are to have a talk by one of our Vice-Presidents, Michael Kennedy, on 'Elgar, Strauss, and their wives'. On 15 March we have a visit to Liverpool Anglican Cathedral for an Elgar Choral Evensong, preceded by lunch and a tour of the Cathedral. An Elgar luncheon will be held at the Portland Thistle Hotel; date, details, and guest of honour to be announced.

The second part of the SOUTH-WEST's season began in September with an exhilarating presentation by Arthur Reynolds entitled 'Elgar memorabilia collecting - an unruly passion', and branch members were able to see and handle much of the Elgariana shown. In October we are honoured by a return visit from Michael Hurd to speak on 'Novello and Company - Elgar's publishers'. At November's meeting members will be invited to contribute and to share some of their knowledge and enthusiasm with us. The Branch social is in December, and there is an exciting list of programmes in the New Year. Full details from the Branch Secretary.

LETTERS

From : Raymond Monk

May I contribute a footnote to Kevin Allen's splendid survey of Elgar's letters to Rosa Burley which graced the two previous issues of this JOURNAL. Rosa's claim that Carice Elgar Blake remained her friend may indeed have some validity since there is an entry in Carice's 1922 diary supportive of this:

September 25th Miss Burley came to lunch and stayed till 5.41 - lovely to have her - liked it all very much

By the way, the Elgar Diaries lack an Index. It would be good to see the Society commission one - a task made easier by the existence of Jerrold Northrop Moore's admirable typescript.

From : David Bury

The Editor is surely right when he argues (July issue, p 253) that the Novello Collection of letters for sale at Sotheby's on 15 May were either already reproduced in Dr Jerrold Northrop Moore's Elgar and His Publishers or deliberately ignored by Dr Moore because they were of no interest. Let us agree that we are not concerned here with great national art treasures nor vital and irreplaceable aids to scholarship. Why then the conclusion that "in a perfect world" this collection of the academically superfluous or irrelevant would have been retained via the outlay of money from "some national source" (the taxpayer?) in some library or other?

My own view is that "in a perfect world" the present situation would obtain - a rare thing! Namely, that such material would, in a free society, be available for individual purchase by interested collectors. These exist in goodly numbers both within and beyond the Elgar Society and I can see no reason to prevent their innocent enjoyment by the imposition of draconian state interventionism.

Incidentally, given that dealers would certainly ask plenty for an Elgar item (eg. Item from a current catalogue - "ELGAR, Sir Edward A[utograph] N[ote] S[igned], one side of correspondence card making arrangement for a visit 'but it will depend on weather' £175"), there were, arguably, bargains to be had at Sotheby's where

twenty or thirty items were often consolidated in a single Lot. That a number of Lots failed to reach the reserve was, I suspect, because of the sheer quantity of Elgar material up for sale on one morning. Perhaps Novello should have phased their planned disposal.

At all events I was pleased at the tendency of the prices since I was, thus, enabled to make a purchase!

From : Michael Plant

Much as I enjoyed Walter J Essex's thoughtful account of Gerontius on record (JOURNAL July 1996), I found it disappointing that he made no reference to the very first "complete" recording. This was a brave and pioneering venture by the Edison Bell company and the eight 12-inch records - about two thirds of the score - went on sale in 1924.

The recording remains scarce and little known; the limitations of the pre-electric sound, the cuts and the severely reduced forces (a chorus of eight!) make it difficult listening today, yet it is too important to be dismissed as just a curiosity. Elgar's keen interest in the project and delight at the results are well attested by Wulstan Atkins and others, while the soloists, led by the Welsh tenor, Dan Jones, acquit themselves with distinction. The prime mover, producer and conductor was Joe Batten, who tells the whole story in Joe Batten's Book (1956), including the moment when Dan Jones, who had been seen to lunch unwisely and very well, brought the house down at the afternoon session when he started to sing "I went to sleep..."

Both Columbia (with some notable sides cut by Clara Butt) and HMV recorded extracts from Gerontius while it was still new music, but it was left to Edison Bell, a small company which did not survive the depression years, to present the work as a whole. By doing so, it earned the composer's thanks and congratulations and showed the way to others. Such enterprise surely merits at least a footnote in any serious account of this marvellous music.

From : Harrison Oxley

For many of us in the Society to go to Elgar's Birthplace can be almost a religious experience; so I remember it from my previous visit thirty years ago. Surrounded by things that were personal to him, one needs stillness, and silence, to hear the voice of his spirit in this very special place. But today's visitors are bombarded by 'The Lighter Elgar', a beautiful recording, but played loudly and inescapably as background music. A number of us musicians who were there the other day pleaded for a break, but were denied it; it is official policy that the sound must be continuous. To a musician, music heard takes precedence over everything else; proper attention cannot be given to what is there to be seen.

We must not forget that many of those visiting the Birthplace, especially some from overseas, do not already know Elgar and his music. For them to come and go without hearing a note of it presented to them would be quite out of order. But the needs of us who are worshippers at the shrine deserve to be considered too.

Would it be fair to suggest that after each piece, there should follow a silence of equivalent length? What do other members think? Do our views matter to the Birthplace Trust?

From : Richard Turbet

In the JOURNAL for September 1993 John Knowles drew attention to a recording by Norwich Cathedral Choir of one of Elgar's Anglican (double) chants on Priory PRCD 409. Those who want on record "every note that Elgar wrote", plus lovers of superb psalm-singing, will be interested to know that on a companion disc PRCD 460, Ely Cathedral Choir sing a 'single' chant for part of Psalm 30 : a distillation of Elgar's genius in ten chords.



Former London Branch Chairman, Diana McVeagh, speaking at the lunch held in May at Monkey Island near Bray to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Branch.

ELGAR'S BIRTHPLACE

OPENING HOURS

1 May - 30 September : 10.30 am - 6.00 pm

1 October - 15 January : 1.30 pm - 4.30 pm

16 January - 15 February : CLOSED

16 February - 30 April : 1.30 pm - 4.30 pm

CLOSED ON WEDNESDAYS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

Elgar's Birthplace, Crown East Lane,
Lower Broadheath, Worcester WR2 6RH
Telephone : Cotheridge (01905) 333224

Parties by arrangement with the Curator
Elgar Society members admitted free on production of Membership Card

* * *

The following are available to members from the Membership Secretary
(address on back cover)

Elgar Society ties (navy blue) £6-50

Elgar Society badges £3

Elgar Society scarves £8

Etudes Caracteristiques, etc (cassette) £5-50

Cello Concerto CD £8

Elgar's Broadwood Piano CD £12

Elgar Bibliography £5

Prices include postage and packing

* * *

Back numbers of most issues of the JOURNAL
are available. Please send a s.a.e. to the
Editor for lists and prices.

* * *

The Elgar Loan Collection contains over 800 items
in sets ready for performance. This music is
available **on free loan** to members of the Elgar Society.
Please apply to John Morrison, 23 Ferrymoor, Ham,
Richmond, Surrey TW10 7SD for a comprehensive list,
stating areas of interest, eg. orchestral,
choral, brass, song, etc.

* * *

THE ELGAR SOCIETY

FOUNDED 1951

Registered as a Charity No.298062

President: The Rt. Hon. the Lord Menuhin, O.M., K.B.E.

Chairman: Andrew Neill

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION: £15.00 payable 1st January each year. The subscription includes membership for one other nominated person residing at the same address and sharing a single copy of the JOURNAL. Student members £7.50. Overseas members £15.00 payable in sterling. All subscriptions should be sent to the Hon. Treasurer, John Greig, Orchard Barn, Derrington Street, Barham, Canterbury, Kent CT4 6QB. Tel : 01227 831841. Deeds of covenant and bank standing order forms are obtainable from the Treasurer.

APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP should be sent to the Hon. Membership Secretary, David Morris, 2 Marriotts Close, Haddenham, Aylesbury, Bucks HP17 8BT. Tel : 01844 290742.

BRANCH MEMBERSHIP is included in the basic subscription for those who wish to be associated with one of the Society's Branches which are listed below.

BRANCHES AND BRANCH SECRETARIES :

LONDON
(South Kensington)

*Dr Relf Clark, 61 Torridge Drive, Didcot, Oxon
OX11 7QZ. Tel: 01235 813257.*

WEST MIDLANDS
(Worcester)

*Hywel Davies, 24 College Grove, Malvern WR14
3HP. Tel: 01684 562692.*

NORTH WEST
(Manchester)

*Mrs Pat Hurst, 60 Homewood Road, Northenden,
Manchester, M22 4DW. Tel: 0161-998 4404.*

EAST ANGLIA
(Norwich)

*Sarah Childs, 14 Nelson Road, Fakenham,
Norfolk NR21 9EN. Tel: 01328 862434.*

SOUTHERN
(Southampton/Portsmouth)

*Mrs Jennifer Nicholas, 9A Guildown Road,
Guildford, Surrey GU2 5EW. Tel: 01483 560244.*

YORKSHIRE
(Leeds)

*Dennis Clark, 227 Tinshill Road, Leeds, LS16
7BU. Tel: 0113 2671533.*

SOUTH WALES
(Swansea/Cardiff)

*Ken Wallace, 6 Ridgeway, Newport, Gwent NP9
5AF. Tel: 01633 267345.*

SOUTH WEST
(Bristol)

*Roger Dubois, St Barnabas Vicarage, Daventry
Road, Knowle, Bristol BS4 1DQ. Tel: 0117
9664139.*

THE HON. SECRETARY OF THE SOCIETY is Wendy Hillary, 29 Van Diemens Close, Chinnor, Oxon OX9 4QE. Tel : 01844 354096.