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The Elgar Society Journal

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CONTENTS

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Articles

Front cover : After the performance of *The Dream of Gerontius* in Düsseldorf in December 1901, Elgar was awarded a laurel wreath. This photograph accompanied one of the complimentary reviews which appeared in the German press (see pp 226-230)

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ELGAR & GERONTIUS: the early performances

Lewis Foreman

[This study was first prepared as an evening for the London Branch, and was given on 3 February 1997. In presenting an oral treatment, the aim was to try to give as vivid a feeling as possible for the singers in those early performances. Although no music from Gerontius was recorded until Clara Butt made her four sides of extracts in 1916, now available on an Elgar Society CD, many of the early soloists made records, often sounding surprisingly vivid despite the primitive acoustic process, and giving an idea of how they must have tackled their roles in Elgar's music. A selection of these was played during the evening, and the discography of the main singers involved and the characteristics thus revealed, are discussed during the paper that follows.]

A few years ago a copy of the published full score of *The Dream of Gerontius* appeared in a sale at Phillips, the auctioneers. What was particularly interesting about it was that a previous owner had written the dates of a whole string of early performances on the front flyleaf, and although I failed to buy it at the sale it started a line of research trying to document the early performances, to try to understand what had been heard on each occasion, how the audience had received the music, and although no-one had recorded any of the music before Clara Butt in 1916, to *try* to understand how those singers actually sounded, albeit in other repertoire. Many of the men made records but, unfortunately, none of the women in the earliest performances. We should note, however, Louise Kirkby Lunn, the contralto who sang one of the early performances of "The Angel's Farewell" and was later associated with the full part. Also Claire Croiza who was the Angel in the first Paris *Gerontius* in May 1906.

What does survive are picture postcards of the artists, cuttings and all manner of ephemera, and these have been used to document the early performances. I think this will show that although the first performance had significant problems, which have become something of a legend, in fact almost from the first *Gerontius* was a masterpiece recognised.

A good starting point is Andrew Black, the baritone in the first Hallé *Gerontius* in March 1903, who in 1906 recorded the "Sword Song" from *Caractacus*[1]. I have never been very impressed with that recording, and I think it is quite a good example to illustrate our problem in trying to understand what was *actually* heard at the early performances of *Gerontius* : did any of these singers leave recordings, *adequate* enough for us to have *any* understanding how they really sounded in the hall? And if the recordings actually give us a good idea of the real *them*, could it be that they were prized for something different *then* from that we value today?

There is another problem too : to put ourselves in the place of the audiences of those earlier performances and try to hear the music as something startlingly *new*. Take for example the celebrated Tudor Davies recording of "And King Olaf

[1] Andrew Black with orchestra, G&T 3-2324, 2485e, recorded London 1906, reissued on LP ELG 001.

Heard the Cry" recorded by HMV in March 1923[2]. I wonder how many are familiar with the original 78 coupling: it is the aria "God Breaketh the Battle" from Parry's oratorio *Judith*, one of the most Handelian solos Parry ever wrote. If you regarded this wonderful stuff as the acme of modern music then *Gerontius* would be quite a shock.

As we will see, Parry was intimately concerned with the problems that beset the first performance of *Gerontius* at Birmingham in October 1900, because it was not only Elgar who was affected by the performers' difficulties at that time. Parry suffered, too. As *The Times* reported the week after the Festival[3]:

> In justice to the choir it should be pointed out that when they framed the programme they knew they were given a heavy task in including Bach's Passion Music, the longest task ever attempted. Then, instead of a half hour programme from Mr Coleridge Taylor, they did the whole of his *Hiawatha*. Mr Elgar's work took 35 minutes longer than they were told it would take, and putting aside the Elijah, the choir had to prepare 11 hours 40 minutes music against 9 hours 20 minutes at the previous festival.

How should the tenor taking the part of Gerontius actually sound? In a quotation[4] familiar to all Elgarians, Elgar saw[5] him as :

> a man like us and not a Priest or a Saint, but a sinner . . . no end of a worldly man in his life, & now brought to book. Therefore I've not filled his part with Church tunes & rubbish but a good, healthy full-blooded romantic, remembered worldliness.

The year 1899 had started out with Elgar almost ready to abandon his attempt to be a full time composer. He wrote to Nicholas Kilburn[6] on 6 January :

> We have been thro' a time of much searching of heart with the result that I am going to write a little more music before going back to my teaching: it seems ludicrous to think that the position I have striven for & in a great measure attained shd be utterly & entirely useless from any practical point of view . . . but - to avoid breaking my dear wife's heart I am going on once more - but without the spirit - it seems a wrecked life!

Yet it proved to be an extremely busy year for him. One only has to consider anyone who suddenly catches the public imagination and becomes famous, even

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[2] HMV D 723, the Elgar reissued on CD, CDAX 8019. The Parry has not been reissued.

[3] *The Times*, 8 October 1900, p 9.

[4] Moore, Jerrold Northrop: *Elgar and his Publishers - Letters of a creative life. Vol 1 1885-1903* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1987) p 228.

[5] A comparison of all commercially issued portrayals of the role of Gerontius is instructive. A 20-second extract of eleven different tenors, in chronological order of recording, were successively played at the lecture.

[6] Moore, Jerrold Northrop: *Edward Elgar - letters of a lifetime* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1990) p 73.

on the most modest scale, to experience the pressures this creates; and these are all unnecessary pressures that dissipate energy on every kind of activity other than one's main work. 1899 was that year for Elgar, building to the immense task of writing and printing *Gerontius* in one huge eight month period of concentrated effort in 1900. A partsong in honour of the Queen's eightieth birthday "led to a summons from Windsor to hear its performance. Later that year he was again at Windsor Castle for a concert at which a number of his pieces were performed."[7]

Of course 1899 was at first dominated by the *Enigma Variations*, first heard on 19 June. Several shorter pieces followed and then the *Sea Pictures* first performed by the 27-year-old Clara Butt at Norwich, in October. Elgar's other works including *King Olaf* and the more recent *Caractacus* were also receiving performances, and engagements were being offered for him to conduct. This was a career beginning to take-off.

Some material in *Gerontius* has been identified in the surviving manuscripts dating from November 1896 and April 1898[8], but work really only started in September 1899, when Elgar was reconciled with Novello with whom he had quarrelled over terms.

As has been stated by many commentators, Elgar had known Cardinal Newman's poem for many years[9], but the key exercise in shaping a libretto from it was only really completed when faced with a deadline. How is another lecture. But *Gerontius*, or at least the composition of the music, does not seem to have been pursued with constant drive until Elgar had been set an immutable target. That target was the Birmingham Festival of 1900.

The Birmingham Festival had first sounded Elgar in November 1898 about a work for their 1900 meeting. So for the whole of 1899 Elgar had every excuse for putting off deciding what his Birmingham Festival work was to be : he was busy. But he must have been uncomfortably aware that it would have to be faced. In the event it was not until the chairman of the Birmingham Festival Committee and his wife called and bearded Elgar in his den, on New Years Day 1900, that any decision was made.

It is worth also remembering the chronology of the creation of *Gerontius*. Dr

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[7] Young, Percy M: *Alice Elgar: enigma of a Victorian lady* (Dennis Dobson, 1978) p 141

[8] Kent, Christopher: *Edward Elgar - a guide to research* (New York, Garland Publishing, 1993) pp 172-5. *See also* Robert Anderson: *Elgar in manuscript* (The British Library, 1990) p 45

[9] "As a wedding present Elgar had received from Father Knight of St George's, a copy of Newman's Gerontius, with its original inscription by Frank Power, who had received it from [General] Gordon" - Percy M Young: *Elgar, Newman and the Dream of Gerontius* (Aldershot, Scolar Press, 1995) p 112

Percy Young published[10] a chronology of the composition of Gerontius, I am grateful to him for permission to publish this expanded summary, based on his.

GERONTIUS: chronology of composition

(With acknowledgements to Dr Percy Young: *Elgar OM*, amended and expanded)

1900:Jan 1	"Mr & Mrs Johnstone came to lunch and arranged for E's work Birm. Fest"
Jan 2	"E. sent telegram accepting terms. Began again at former libretto"
Jan 12	"E & A to Birmingham 8.30. E to Oratory"
Mar 2	Sent 1st part of Dream of Gerontius to Novello
Mar 20	Sent 2nd set of MS Gerontius to Messrs Novello
Ap 3	Had proofs of 1st part of Gerontius
Ap 6	With Fr Blakelock to go through Dream of Gerontius
May 4	Jaeger to lunch
May 21, 22, 23	E writing hard
May 25	E very engrossed last chorus Gerontius
May 29	Very hard at last chorus
May 30	Nearly finished great chorus. A not out. Jaeger *delighted.*
June 6	E finished the Dream of Gerontius [in vocal score]. Deo gratias. Rather poorly.
June 15	End of vocal score proofs received
June 27	Full score pages 1-56 received by Jaeger
July 23	Elgar received copies of vocal score
Aug 3	Full score completed.
Sept 19	Last of proofs of strings returned to Jaeger
Sept 20	Elgar goes to London to finish correcting orchestral parts
Sept 22	Full score reassembled into one volume
Sept 23	Score delivered to Richter by Elgar during evening
Sept 24	Only orchestral rehearsal, and check of parts during run-through.

It was not until well into February 1900 that Elgar was engaged on the daily intensive work, over many weeks, of actually getting the music down on paper. So, from the Birmingham Festival perspective, we have a vast project with an immutable deadline, in fact in modern parlance a project without a project manager and with the principal contractor, Elgar himself, very much an unpredictable quantity. In the end he became his own project manager - or possibly Alice Elgar did, but he did not have control over all the elements of the project.

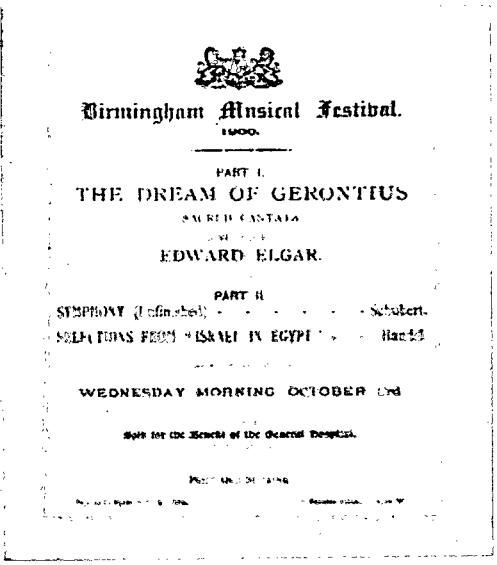
Elgar had to plan it, fix on the libretto, and then compose it in vocal score, passing the manuscript to the printer as he did so, for engraving. We should also remember that engraving printing plates was very much a craftsman's job involving hammering metal punches into sheets of metal : and the published vocal

[10] Young, Percy M: *Elgar OM - a study of a musician* (Collins, 1955) pp 88-9.

PERFORMERS ...

(Above left) Harry Plunket Greene; (above right) Edward Lloyd
(Below left) Elgar around 1900; (below right) Hans Richter and umbrella

... AND PERFORMANCES



Birmingham Musical Festival.
1900.

PART I.
THE DREAM OF GERONTIUS
SACRED CANTATA
EDWARD ELGAR.

PART II
SYMPHONY (Unfinished) . . . . . Schubert.
SELECTIONS FROM "ISRAEL IN EGYPT" . . . Handel

WEDNESDAY MORNING OCTOBER 2nd

Given for the Benefit of the General Hospital.

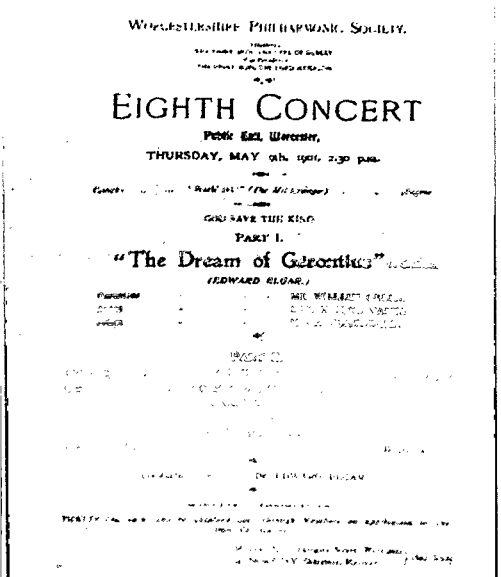
Städtischer
MUSIK-
VEREIN
Düsseldorf

Donnerstag den 19. Dezember 1901,
Abends 7 Uhr im Kaisersaal der
Städtischen Tonhalle

VIERTES
CONCERT

unter Leitung des Städt. Musikdirektors Herrn Prof. Julius Buths und unter gefälliger Mitwirkung des Herrn Dr. Ludw. Wüllner aus Cöln, Tenor; Fräul. Antonie Beel aus Frankfurt a/M., Mezzo-Sopran; Herrn Willy Metzmacher aus Cöln, Bass; Herrn Prof. F. W. Franke aus Cöln, Orgel.

Programme for the first performance at Birmingham in October 1900 (above); for the first Düsseldorf performance (above and below right); and a handbill for the performance of excerpts at Worcester.



WORCESTERSHIRE PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY.

EIGHTH CONCERT

Public Hall, Worcester,

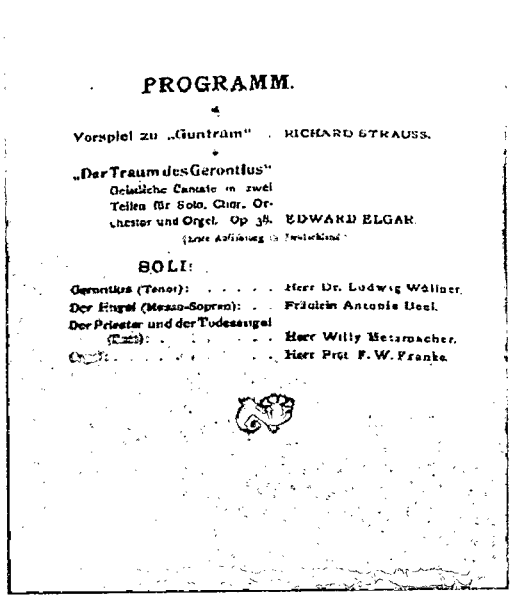
THURSDAY, MAY 9th, 1901, 2.30 p.m.

GOD SAVE THE KING.

PART I.

"The Dream of Gerontius"

(EDWARD ELGAR.)



PROGRAMM.

Vorspiel zu „Guntram" . RICHARD STRAUSS.

„Der Traum des Gerontius"
Geistliche Cantate in zwei Teilen für Solo, Chor, Orchester und Orgel. Op 38. EDWARD ELGAR.
(Erste Aufführung in Deutschland)

SOLI:

Gerontius (Tenor): . . . . . Herr Dr. Ludwig Wüllner.
Der Engel (Mezzo-Sopran): . . Fräulein Antonie Beel.
Der Priester und der Todesengel (Bass): . . . . . Herr Willy Metzmacher.
Orgel: . . . . . Herr Prof. F. W. Franke.

score runs to 177 pages. Without the printed copies, or at least choral parts, the choral rehearsals could not start. By that stage it would still have had to be orchestrated: so there would be no full score, which had to be prepared by the composer in time for the orchestral parts to be written by hand and there would then only be one score. All of this was carried out over late nineteenth century communications (although, of course, in fact with postal services in some ways better than today) between Malvern, London and Birmingham.

The first 44 pages of the vocal score, as far as "Sanctus fortis", were sent to Novello remarkably quickly - 2 March, with proofs a month later - but all was not finished until 6 June, and there were no printed copies before August. Until there were printed copies, in pre-photocopying days, there were continual problems with key personnel not having a copy to work with, including Elgar himself.

The following chronology of publication is derived from Christopher Kent's *Guide to Research*,[11] which I have again expanded.

GERONTIUS: chronology of publication
(With acknowledgements to Christopher Kent, expanded)

1900:	vocal score
	chorus parts
	tonic sol-far edition
1901	vocal score: German translation (J Buths)
	string parts
1902	full score - English & German
	full score - English, German & French
	full score - "Sanctus Fortis" only in A♭
	wind and brass parts
	full score "Prelude & Angel's Farewell" for orchestra alone, or with mezzo - soprano solo ad lib.
1903	Organ transcription of the Prelude and Angel's Farewell by Herbert Brewer
1905	vocal score - French translation
	chorus parts - French translation
1914	full score - German only.

The vocal score, chorus parts, and a vocal score in tonic sol-fa, were all published in order the first performance could take place, but the copyist of the orchestral parts, and Hans Richter the conductor at the first performance, would have used the one and only manuscript full score. The German edition came in 1901 and one in French in 1905. Also, that very curious edition, the full score in German

[11] Kent, *op cit*, p 173

published in 1914. I must say I have long wanted to hear it sung in German or French.

Various extracts were also published, not least the "Prelude and Angel's Farewell" for either mezzo-soprano and orchestra or orchestra alone, which appeared in 1902. This signalled the journey to the work's wider acceptance. When it appeared as an organ transcription, made by Herbert Brewer, in 1903, the year that performances began to take off, it was an important stepping stone in promoting the work in its early life.

The programme for Birmingham in 1900 included the following works :

Choral Works Played
Birmingham Festival, 1900

Bach: *St Matthew Passion*
Brahms: *German Requiem*
Byrd: "Mass - selections"
Coleridge-Taylor: *Hiawatha* complete
Cornelius: *Die Vätergruft*
Dvořák: *The Spectre's Bride*
Elgar: *The Dream of Gerontius*
Handel: *Messiah*
Handel: *Israel in Egypt* - selections
Mendelssohn: *Elijah*
Parry: *De Profundis*

In the last analysis, it was not his conductor, Hans Richter, in whose hands Elgar's reputation now lay, but with his chorus master, who, as we have seen, had to prepare an enormous quantity of music to very high standard in an amazingly short time. A demanding schedule was made worse by the fact that the chosen chorus master, Charles Swinnerton Heap, himself a composer, caught pneumonia and died on 11 June, at the age of 53, before rehearsals had seriously been launched. Indeed before Elgar's music had been printed. The Birmingham committee found themselves faced with impending disaster.

There was nothing for it but to ask William Cole Stockley, the choirmaster to the Birmingham Festival from 1858 to 1894, to take over at the age of 70. In spite of his long experience, in Elgar's music he found himself faced with music whose virtuosity he did not understand, a religious sentiment with which he was profoundly out of sympathy, and far too little time to prepare all the music required, and in particular the performing material of the Elgar was still unfinished.

It was not only *Gerontius* that was to suffer. The day before *Gerontius* two works by Parry were heard: his choral *De Profundis* and a new scena for baritone and orchestra, *The Soldier's Tent*, written for Parry's son-in-law, Harry Plunket Greene, who would be the bass soloist in *Gerontius* the next day. Parry documents all this in his diary, making clear the problems that were being

experienced over *Gerontius*, and that they were at least partly responsible for problems that also occurred in the rest of the programme.

It is worth considering the character of Hans Richter, at this point. In his essay "On Some Conductors and Their Methods"[12], Stanford, who had known Richter well, and who had not only played under him but also had his own music performed by him, found Richter :

> a species of ideal band-master. . . Richter was often stiff in his reading of an unfamiliar score . . . he hated extravagance, and even took the *diablerie* out of Berlioz; but his mastery of the orchestra was as great as von Bülow's, and he had authority and instrumental knowledge to back it. He took everything from the stand point of common sense: for this reason, he was strongest in what he knew best.

The orchestral rehearsals were held at Queen's Hall, in London, a week before the festival and Parry notes that rehearsals for *Gerontius* and excerpts from *Götterdämmerung* encroached on the time available for the rest of the programme. And at Birmingham Parry wrote in his diary[13] for 29 September :

> To rehearsal in Town Hall. Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* gave a vast amount of trouble and kept chorus and orchestra at work till past 5.30. No use trying to get anything out of *De Profundis* with them all tired out.

The performance duly came to grief, Parry noting it was "terrible", the sopranos making their first entry a bar too soon and the whole thing being "flabby". This is a fair indicator of the problems with the whole festival - a lack of incisive singing from the choir, who seem, literally, to have been overwhelmed. One only has to listen to Parry's score[14] to appreciate the contrapuntal idiom and the complex demands on the choir.

Now, we must not focus exclusively on purely musical matters. What were the concerns of the time? What would the solid middle class audience at Birmingham have been reading in their newspapers during the Festival? Well, one of the things we tend to forget was that it was in the middle of a general election; in those days voting was spread over several days so it was not an overnight spectacular, with high drama as the votes were declared. The results emerged cumulatively over the period of the festival. Second, the news of the war - the South African War, the Boer War - after a bad start was improving. And third, the war in China was an emotive issue with news of the relief of European interests in Peking becoming public. So the mood was a nationalist one, and not a few of the audience may well have had worries about sons and husbands serving, and a sprinkling might have lost nearest and dearest.

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[12] Stanford, Sir Charles V: *Interludes, Records and Reflections* (John Murray, 1922) pp 29-38.

[13] Dibble, Jeremy: *C Hubert H Parry - his life and music* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992) p 373

[14] *De Profundis* was last performed, on BBC Radio 3, on 23 July 1960.

One more taste of that concert on 2 October 1900 before we consider what happened on the following morning. Parry's 9½-minute scena *The Soldier's Tent* was the other novelty at Birmingham. It was a romantic, noble vision of the soldier doomed to die, an approach that could still be taken seriously by an audience for whom the realities of war would not be fully appreciated for another decade or so. When asked to present Parry as "This Week's Composer" on Radio 3, in 1995[15], I made a point of asking that this piece be included, for although revived by Garry Humphreys in September 1986 with piano accompaniment, it had not been heard with orchestra for sixty or seventy years. It proved to be a delightful piece, the orchestration, unusually for Parry colourful and romantic, and the piece a direct, if demanding, sing.

So we come to the first performance of *The Dream of Gerontius*, which took place in Birmingham Town Hall on the morning of Wednesday 3 October 1900. *Gerontius* formed the first half of a concert which went on to include Schubert's *Unfinished Symphony* and extended selections from Handel's *Israel in Egypt*!

Before broadcasting, recordings and today's availability of music in a centre such as London, the great triennial festivals were of an importance that is hard really to understand today. At comparatively high prices they attracted large audiences for programmes which I think *we* would probably find endurance tests. These were events which elicited wide national press coverage, and by 1900, Elgar was a sufficiently important figure to be a subject of sustained press commentary, and indeed the main focus of the reporting of the Festival.

As we have noted, the band rehearsals for the Birmingham Festival took place in London, in the Queen's Hall, the week before the festival, and the rehearsal for *Gerontius*, on the first day was attended by a large audience and was widely reported in the press. The rehearsal started at ten with a morning call for the orchestra only, the conductor Hans Richter being reported as having only received the full score on the previous evening. Here is the *Birmingham Post's* account[16]:

> At ten o'clock Dr Richter called the band to attention, Mr Edward Elgar took his place beside the conductor, meeting with a cordial reception, and proceedings began with the orchestral rehearsal of "The Dream of Gerontius". The whole of the morning was devoted to reading through the band parts alone, and a wonderful piece of sight-reading it was. It was, so to speak, the final revision of the instrumental parts. Mistakes were found here and there, but they were surprisingly few. The score is most intricate, and the music extremely difficult. Apart from the errors in the copies, stoppages were few, and those mainly in regard to the matter of tempi. . . . Dr Richter was unremitting in attention, and seemed to know every detail of the score. . . . as time went on the number of listeners increased. The Lord Mayor of Birmingham and Mr Alfred H Wiggins represented the festival committee and there were many of the London critics in attendance. Shortly after two o'clock the rehearsal was resumed with the vocal principals. There was a virtual recitation from beginning to end.

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[15] "Composer of the Week: Parry" BBC Radio 3, 28 September 1995. Arwel Huw Morgan (bar)/BBC Concert Orchestra/Barry Wordsworth.

[16] From the issue of 25 September 1900.

Two further days of rehearsals for the remainder of the programme followed in London before the full rehearsals in Birmingham, which took place immediately before the festival. Here is *The Musical Standard*[17]:

> Undoubtedly the most interesting feature of the coming Birmingham Festival will be the production of Mr Edward Elgar's "Dream of Gerontius".. . . it is clear enough that Mr Elgar has given us . . . the best work he has yet done. We shall be surprised indeed if at the festival the composition does not prove one of the finest achievements of British composition.

The Standard's writer launched into a critique of the impossible task that faced festival performers with so little rehearsal.

> It is late in the day to speak of the rehearsal arrangements at Birmingham. It was stated, not officially, it is true, that both "Messiah" and "Elijah" were to be rehearsed otherwise than chorally, but we note that neither of these masterpieces figures in the printed order of rehearsals, although the selections from "Israel in Egypt" do. That is rather a pity, for no festival has yet taken place for which the fashion of giving these familiar works without full rehearsal has not had bad results - at least, if one expects perfection. But when two novelties, "The Dream of Gerontius" and the "Song of Hiawatha", are in the programme, . . . all to be rehearsed with soloists, chorus within the space of a full day, an evening and a morning it is difficult to understand how time could be found for the rehearsal of familiar masterpieces. . . . Still, in listening to the orchestra trying over the orchestral music of "The Dream of Gerontius" and afterwards to the soloists running through their parts, . . . one could not help feeling strongly once again that the rehearsal arrangements at our festivals entirely prevent them taking the stand they should. . . . How all this is to be obtained from the single rehearsal at Birmingham, we do not understand, but rest in the placid hope that it will be all right "on the night".

One of the well-remembered stories about the Birmingham *Gerontius* is how, at the dress rehearsal, Elgar suddenly hurried to the platform and addressed (perhaps "berated" would be a better word) the choir, trying to tell them what was wrong. This not only antagonised his singers, but generated hostile press commentary. As Jerrold Northrop Moore pointed out "Richter, seeing an impossible situation, cut short his rehearsal"[18]. He quotes a member of the choir, W T Edgley, who, half a century later, told the story to Dora Powell[19]:

> [Elgar] was alongside Richter most of the rehearsal, prompting him and trying to explain what he required. I must record, however, that things got very chaotic and everyone worked up to a high pitch and unfortunately E E more than anyone, naturally. He seemed desperate, with whom I cannot remember, but it was not all 'the chorus' . . .

The part of Gerontius at the first performance was sung by Edward Lloyd at the end of a long and celebrated career. He had already made his Three Choirs farewell appearances the previous month - in the Verdi *Requiem*, *Elijah* and the

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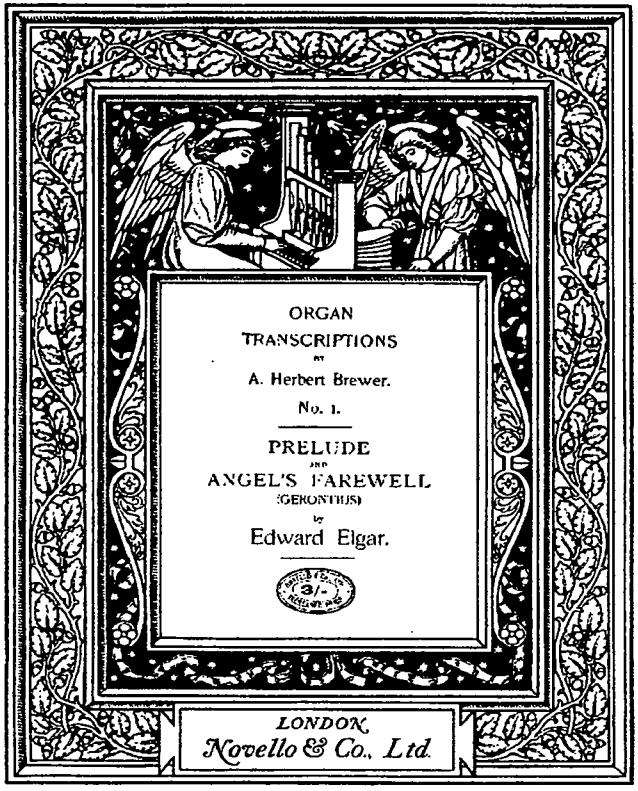
[17] *The Musical Standard*, 29 September 1900.

[18] Moore, Jerrold Northrop: *Edward Elgar - a creative life* (Oxford University Press, 1984) p 330

[19] *ibid.*

Birmingham Town Hall (above)



Cover of the score of Brewer's organ transcription of the Prelude and Angel's Farewell (left)

Richter conducting (below)

third part of *Caractacus*, and he retired at the end of the year, though he appeared on many occasions subsequently, and he lived until 1927. At the time of *Gerontius* he was 55 and was not new to Elgar premieres, having sung in the first performances of both *King Olaf* and *The Light of Life*. Rosa Burley was dismissive of Lloyd's contribution as we will see in a minute, but he had quite a good press.

The mezzo was Marie Brema, who also did not find favour with Rosa Burley, though generally having the best reception of all the soloists by the papers. At 44 she was at the peak of her career as a Wagnerian singer. Having appeared at Bayreuth since 1894 she would have been known to Richter who subsequently chose her for Brunnhilde in *Götterdämmerung* in Paris in 1902.

Finally there was Harry Plunket Greene, who had become Parry's son-in law the previous year, and at 35 based his career on songs and oratorio. Parry wrote his bass parts for him from *Job* onwards, and Stanford many of his songs. Whether this qualified him to create the bass parts in *Gerontius* is difficult to decide.

Of the first soloists only Plunket Greene participated in the performances that followed over the following two or three years. However, Lloyd and Plunket Greene both made recordings, including some very soon after *Gerontius*, and so we can at least listen to them, and see what manner of voices they were.

But firstly what did Rosa Burley have to say? She[20] wrote :

> Mrs Evans of Wolverhampton, a lady who actually sang in the choir and whose extreme candour makes her a valuable corroborative witness, remembers that the Wolverhampton contingent of the choir first heard of Dr Heap's death on the station platform when they were leaving for rehearsal.. . . so it is evident that the rehearsals had begun in good time yet the copies of Gerontius did not arrive till late in August.
>
> Stockley, [the choir master], Mrs Evans describes as a pathetic figure unable to bear the strain of even standing for the long periods required. Again and again he had to rest and eat sweets to keep himself going. The rehearsals were so ruthlessly shortened that sometimes the Wolverhampton party felt resentful at having taken the twelve miles' journey for so little result. With great honesty she admits that she did not herself realize the importance of Gerontius till afterwards - which was not surprising.
>
> When the day of the concert arrived we went over to Birmingham in a rather sober frame of mind...[but]... the overture...went off so smoothly that one breathed a sigh of relief, hoping that one's anxiety had been unnecessary but when Edward Lloyd entered with what should have been the heartrending cry of the dying man it was clear that he was not only ill at ease but completely out of rapport with the means by which Edward had expressed Gerontius's spiritual struggle. Lloyd was a lyric tenor well able to sustain so straightforward a part as that of Olaf but with no understanding of anything more profound than "I'll Sing Thee Songs of Araby" into which one almost expected him to burst at any moment. Had he done so, I thought, it might have been some relief for he would at least have understood what he was doing.

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[20] Burley, Rosa and Frank C Carruthers: *Edward Elgar - the record of a friendship* (Barrie & Jenkins, 1972) pp 139-40

Ouch! Trenchant views indeed. Edward Lloyd made quite a few recordings[21] between 1904 and 1907 and among the earliest there *is* "I'll Sing Thee Songs of Araby" from Edward Clay's 1877 cantata *Lalla Rookh*. The sound is very distant but it does give a clue to the way he sang. Perhaps more informative is the way he sang the "Prize Song" from *Meistersinger*, in a ringing free style, to see what he made of a big role. He had not been regarded as one of the leading oratorio singers for several generations for nothing. This was recorded in 1905.

The Times' critic didn't agree[22] with Miss Burley :

> Mr Lloyd's delivery of the tenor part was wonderfully beautiful in feeling, and must have filled the composer's ideal as it will scarcely be fulfilled again..

But to return to Miss Burley. After criticising the choir and Richter's tempi as too slow she moved on to the bass soloist, Plunket Greene :

> Suddenly there was the dramatic pause which follows Gerontius's death and I waited for the ringing cry of the Priest whose "Proficiscere" should, as I knew, sound like a trumpet call. But here again there was a ridiculous anticlimax, for Plunket Greene had anything but a strong voice and was always uncertain in intonation.

Plunket Greene is reported as managing to get out of tune with the orchestra towards the end and was all too aware that he had not been as helpful to the composer as he would have wished.

Plunket Greene first recorded in London in 1902, with Schubert's song "Der Abscheid" and made his last recordings some thirty years later. The late recordings are made very close to the microphone giving a remarkable impact to the voice. But from the earlier recordings[23] it is clear that while striking, in one respect at least Rosa Burley was correct, it was not a thunderous voice. He was however an exquisite singer of songs, not only publishing a book on vocal technique but also recording two 78s on "The Art of Singing"[24].

Finally Marie Brema of whom, unfortunately, no recording survives. Rosa Burley thought her "a goddess from Valhalla if ever there was one" and considered her

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[21] Edward Lloyd recorded 34 sides between 1904 and 1908. See Roberto Bauer: *The new Catalogue of Historical Records 1898-1908/09* (Sidgwick & Jackson, 1947, 1972) p 287. Since this was written, I have acquired "If with all your hearts" from *Elijah* (G&T, GC3-2801), recorded in 1907, a remarkably persuasive example of Lloyd's projection of line and words.

[22] *The Times*, 4 October 1900, p 5.

[23] See 'Harry Plunket Greene - The Records' *Record Advertiser* Vol 1 no 6, Sept-Oct 1971, pp 2-4.

[24] HMV D 40149/50, recorded in 1932.

"unsuited for her part" concluding[25]:

> had she made the most brilliant success of it she could not have saved a performance which had been hopelessly wrecked by the choir, whose pitiful stumblings indeed remained the outstanding impression.

What was the truth? A few years ago I attended a local performance of *Gerontius* when many of the same flaws were in evidence; in particular the Demons' Chorus was beyond them, the pitch sagged and there were a number of wrong entries. Yet despite these flaws one still came away with a strong impression. These intrinsic qualities of the music were certainly appreciated by many commentators in 1900 who appear to have recognised the greatness of the music but had reservations about the performance. Indeed there does not appear to have been a single adverse criticism of the *score*.

The Times in their review of the festival on the last day attempted to assess the choir and allocate blame[26]:

> It is certain that few, if any, of the series of Birmingham Festivals have been so ill-provided in this respect; for in the matter of tone considerations of refinement have been sacrificed to the production of a great volume of sound; in that of time, the lapses have been so numerous as to force themselves upon the least attentive hearer; and in that of intelligence, it has been made clear that there is an abundance of distinctly bad readers in the chorus who must sing mainly by ear. Where an accidental occurred in an unlikely place, it was pretty certain that two adjacent semitones would be distinctly heard simultaneously, and this, though more commonly among the tenors than elsewhere, was noticed fairly often in all parts.

There is not space here to quote from a wider range of press criticism, which have been cited by several authors. Northrop Moore's *Edward Elgar - a creative life*[27] is probably the most useful for a selection of the crits, but they all sent the same message : a masterpiece recognised in spite of a less than perfect performance.

Birmingham had two immediate effects : it persuaded Sir August Manns to cancel the performance he had scheduled for 27 October at the Crystal Palace, on the grounds of choral difficulty, and it allowed Jaeger to send the German conductor Julius Buths back to Germany with the ambition of producing *Gerontius* there[28]. At the time Elgar was despairing at what he perceived as a disaster. But his music was to establish itself as a mainstream repertoire work in a remarkably short time, though while it was doing so it must have been easy for him to believe that it would never succeed.

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[25] Burley, *op cit.*

[26] 'Birmingham Musical Festival', *The Times*, 6 October 1900, p 9.

[27] Moore, *op cit*, pp 332-4.

[28] "A wonderful work; it's the most beautiful work I know" - Michael Kennedy: *Portrait of Elgar* (Oxford University Press, 1968) p 95.

However, almost immediately there were announced performances of orchestral extracts, either of the Prelude or the "Prelude and Angel's Farewell" that he quickly extracted for either orchestra without soloist or with the mezzo-soprano taking the angel's role. Thus the Prelude was performed at a Saturday Concert at Crystal Palace on 10 November 1900, and on 16 February 1901 Elgar himself conducted Muriel Foster, who would later become so associated with the role of the Angel, in four of the *Sea Pictures* with the Bradford Permanent Orchestra in St George's Hall Bradford, preceding it with the orchestral version[29] of "Prelude and Angel's Farewell". He later conducted the latter at the 1901 Three Choirs at Gloucester, although the Dean had prohibited the full work owing to doctrinal objections to the libretto.

It reappeared at various concerts and Louise Kirkby-Lunn sang the Angel in the version with soloist on 20 February. This was conducted by a notable future champion of the work, Henry J Wood. Jaeger remarked[30]: "Wood conducted it with loving care; spent one and a half hours on it [at rehearsal] and the result was a performance which completely put Richter's in the shade." Kirkby Lunn made recordings at about this time both for the Berliner and Gramophone & Typewriter companies, but the closing bars of her slightly later recording of "But the Lord is mindful" from Mendelssohn's *St Paul*,[31] gives us a surprisingly vivid insight into her impact in the hall in *Gerontius*, and she undoubtedly played an important role in Wood's success with the aria, and in less than two years in the complete role.

A figure who would later be associated with the role of the Angel is Clara Butt, and she actually participated in the 1900 Birmingham Festival, singing four of the *Sea Pictures* under Elgar's baton. It would be 1915 before Clara Butt sang in the full work, but on 1 February 1902 she made her first association with the music when she sang the "Prelude and Angel's Farewell" under Elgar's baton at Queen's Hall.

Curiously when Busoni programmed the "Prelude and Angel's Farewell" in the first of his celebrated concerts of new music, in Berlin on 8 November 1902, that is *after* the two celebrated Düsseldorf performances of the complete work, it was greeted by an uncomprehending critic as "the most barren piece of senseless music-fabrication that has been heard for a long time"[32], reminding us how modern the piece appeared to its first audiences.

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[29] Which was the first music from the work to be recorded by Elgar himself in 1917.

[30] Jacobs, Arthur: *Henry J Wood - maker of the Proms* (Methuen, 1994) p 74

[31] "But the Lord is mindful (of His own)", HMV 03232.

[32] Dent, Edward J: *Ferruccio Busoni - a biography* (Eulenburg Books, 1974) p 131.

The Birmingham Festival had attracted a huge conspectus of British musicians and although Elgar did not know it at the time, several determined to mount their own performances. Chief among these were Henry J Wood and Dr Henry Coward, the pioneering Sheffield chorus master. They would soon achieve it together.

Let us take an overview at the sequence of early performances before we follow the story for the first three or four years.

PERFORMANCES OF GERONTIUS: 1900 - 1904

1900					
Birmingham	3/10/1900	E Lloyd	M Brema	Plunket Greene	Richter
1901					
Worcester	9/5/1901	W Green	H Valma	F Lightowler	Elgar
Düsseldorf	19/12/1901	L Wüllner	A Beel	W Metzmacher	Buths
1902					
Düsseldorf	19/5/1902	L Wüllner	M Foster	J Messchaert	Buths
Worcester	11/9/1902	J Coates	M Foster	Plunket Greene	Elgar
Sheffield	2/10/1902	J Coates	M Foster	Ffrangcon-Davies	Elgar
1903					
Edinburgh	12/1/1903	J Coates	M Foster	R Burnett	Cowen
Danzig	11/3/03	F Dierich	F Kisielnicki	J Staudigl	F Binder
Manchester	12/3/1903	J Coates(repl Wüllner)	M Brema	A Black	Richter
Hanley	13/3/1903	J Coates	M Foster	A Black	Elgar
Chicago	23/3/03	E Williams	J O Hannah	G Miles	Theodore Thomas
Wolverhampton	23/3/03	W Green	A Lakin	C Knowles	Bantock
Liverpool	24/3/03	L Wüllner	M Brema	A Black	Cowen
Birmingham	26/3/03	W Green	M Foster	A Black	Elgar
New York	26/3/03	Van Hoose	Ada Crossley	David Bispham	Damrosch
Middlesborough	23/4/03	W Green	M Foster	Ffrangcon-Davies	Elgar
Bristol	25/4/03	W Green	M Foster	D Price	G Riseley
Westminster Cathedral	6/6/1903	L Wüllner	M Foster	Ffrangcon-Davies	Elgar
Hereford	10/9/03	J Coates	M Foster	Lane Wilson/Plunket Greene	Sinclair
Darmstadt	?/10/03	Oscar Noë	E Bengel/M Obsner	A Heinemann	W de Haan
Newcastle	9/11/03	W Green	M Foster	Ffrangcon-Davies	J M Preston
Sheffield	17/11/03	Charles Saunders	M Foster	Joseph Lycett	Coward
Glasgow	24/11/03	J Coates	M Foster	Walter Harvey	Joseph Bradley
Sydney	21/12/03	A Richards	F Gibson	R Gooud	J A Delany
1904					
Queen's Hall	15/2/1904	J Coates	M Brema	Ffrangcon-Davies	Fagge
Covent Garden	14/3/1903	J Coates	Kirkby-Lunn	Ffrangcon-Davies	Richter
Queen's Hall	9/4/1904	G Elwes	"H Foster"	Ffrangcon-Davies	Weingartner

Gerontius was next performed seven months later, in Worcester, with Elgar himself conducting. This was announced as "a selection" but appears to have been most of the score, though without the Demons' Chorus. William Green, an established oratorio singer of his day took the role of Gerontius with Helene Valma as the Angel and the now forgotten Mr T Lightowler, an habitué of Worcester Philharmonic platforms, in the bass roles. This was the eighth concert of the Worcester Philharmonic Society's season on Thursday 9 May 1901 at 2.30 pm. The concert was preceded - as were all Worcester Philharmonic Programmes by the short chorus "Wach' auf" ("Awake : bright day is drawing near") from *Die Meistersinger*, and by the National Anthem. The second half offered the Overture to *Die Meistersinger*, William Green in the "Priestlied" from that opera - in the event not given - Elgar's *Sea Pictures* sung by Helene Valma, and ended with a *Romance and Bolero* by a member of his orchestra, J W Austin, jnr. *The Musical Times*[33] reported :

> The practicability of Dr Edward Elgar's setting of the Dream of Gerontius was fully demonstrated at a performance of a selection of the work given by the Worcestershire Philharmonic Society.... The Worcester amateurs sang well in tune throughout and with real devotional feeling, and the work proved to be well within the capabilities of an intelligent choir. The audience, one of the largest ever assembled in the hall, was profoundly impressed by the performance. . . . The concert concluded with a Romance and Bolero for orchestra composed by Mr J W Austin, Jnr... which was conducted by the composer, the leader of the orchestra. During its performance . . . Dr Elgar led the second fiddles.

The flavour of the occasion is perhaps more authentically given by the account in the *Worcester Herald*[34]:

> There was a large and fashionable audience at the Public Hall on Thursday afternoon on the occasion of the eighth concert given by the Worcestershire Philharmonic Society . . . Dr Elgar kept all up to their work, and not only did he keep a firm hold on the chorus and orchestra, but on the audience also. By an imperious wave of the hand he silenced untimely applause, and when the buzzing chatter and shuffling, which always fill up the interval, failed to cease when he took his stand at the conductor's desk, he called for silence, and waited with arms folded, gazing at the audience . . . The chorus singing was exceptionally good, whether in the subdued passages, or giving forth the bold, massive harmonies which are a striking feature of the work. At the close of the cantata, the audience were most enthusiastic; but though the applause was kept up for four or five minutes, the composer declined to bow his acknowledgement.

William Green was sufficiently well-known in his day to have made seven recordings[35], and in the very year of this performance he cut waxes for six of these

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[33] *The Musical Times*, June 1901.

[34] 11 May 1901.

[35] Green's oratorio recordings included 'If with all your hearts' (from *Elijah*, G&T 2-2577) and 'Be Thou faithful' (from *St Paul*, G&T 2-2599); two popular operatic arias ('Yes, Let Me Like a Soldier Fall' from Wallace's *Maritana*, G&T 2-2600) and 'O Vision Entrancing' from Goring Thomas's *Esmeralda* G&T 2-2754)

for the Gramophone & Typewriter Company. A good example is "If With All Your Hearts" from *Elijah*, a work he sang at the Hereford Three Choirs in 1900. The voice is bright and forward, rather different from the more solid heroic quality of Lloyd. This was the sort of voice that Elgar conducted later when Steuart Wilson sang *Gerontius*, and certainly the role has an honourable history of this English quality in Parry Jones and Peter Pears.

The First Düsseldorf Performance

Popular legend has it that the two Düsseldorf performances in December 1901 and May 1902 single-handedly demonstrated the stature of *Gerontius*. As we have seen, this was not strictly true, as Sheffield and the following Manchester performance were already being planned before the music was heard in Germany. But there can be no doubt of the impact of the music at Düsseldorf, or the influence it had in both countries.

The December 1901 Düsseldorf performance was reported in the press both in England and in Germany. To the *Liverpool Daily Post* A P Mignot[36] wrote :

> The first performance of Dr Elgar's oratorio "The Dream of Gerontius" seems to have been the event of the musical season at Dusseldorf, and to have attracted musical notabilities from all parts of the Rhineland, than which there is no more musical part of Germany. Professor Buths, the distinguished conductor of the local Musikverein, attended the Birmingham Festival last summer, and, it seems, he conceived there and then the idea of introducing Elgar's new work to a German audience at Düsseldorf, a town in which in the days gone by a Mendelssohn, Schumann and Bruch did not hesitate to confer a similar distinction.

The soloists at Düsseldorf were Ludwig Wüllner, who would sing the first London performance, Antonie Beel, a mezzo soprano about whom I can trace nothing, and Willy Metzmacher in the bass roles. How was it reported in the German press? Here are some extracts from *Die Musik* for January 1902 (specially translated by Julia Chandler) :

> Elgar arranges brilliantly and shows himself an excellent composer. The introduction is superb. The voices are thankful, adroit, free from all triviality. Elgar is at his most dramatic in the "demons" section. He knows how to create an effect using contrasts - powerful modulations not always free from theatrical pathos alternate with parts warm with sensitivity. An imposing finale provides the remarkable work with a worthy ending. The composer witnessed an excellent performance conducted by Buths - who also translated the text into German. The choir sang wonderfully, the orchestra performed splendidly. Wüllner shone as a performer in the title role, even if he displayed a certain arbitrariness as a singer. Metzmacher sang the bass solo very well and Antonie Beel in the mezzo-soprano role of the Angel mostly pleased. Professor Francke of Cologne was exemplary on the organ. Elgar received tempestuous applause. He may consider his work a total success.

Elgar had dithered about going to Düsseldorf, and Jaeger had to go on his own

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and several popular songs of the day by Braham, Leoni and Sullivan.

[36] *Liverpool Daily Post* cutting for 1901 in the Elgar scrapbooks at Broadheath.

because he could not afford his wife's expenses. In the end they went together.

Elgar had conducted the first British performance of Philipp Wolfrum's *Eine Weihnachts-Mysterium* for the Worcester Philharmonic on 12 December (incidentally a work which some enterprising society must promote again). The most vivid account of the proceedings was contained in a long letter that Jaeger, signing himself "Rodnim" sent to Mrs Richard Powell, "Dorabella" of the *Enigma Variations*, on 29 December. It is too long to quote complete but here are a few cameos which bring the scene to life[37]:

> We travelled to D'dorf together & had a lovely passage. Buths and a friend met us & we drove to 17 Ehrens Strasse a nice house & a comfortable one. Buths, his Frau Professor & his 2 daughters were as kind as kind could be. On Wednesday morning we went to the first orchestral rehearsal with Soloists. The orchestra of 80 odd was not like Wood's 110 for reading powers or tone, but they answered every purpose & Elgar had not very much to find fault with. ... But directly Wüllner opened his mouth to sing "Jesus, Maria, meine Stunde kam" we said that man has Brains. And by the Olympian Jove he had Brains galore. He made us sit up and realise that Elgar's intention, & what I had expected when I wrote my much maligned analysis, could be realised by an artist. I never heard such intellectual deeply felt singing. Not that W's voice is wonderful. No! But his Brains & his heart are; & they are more than mere voice in a work of such greatness as this wonderful Gerontius. We were delighted and moved to tears. As for dear Mrs E, you can imagine her state of seventh-heaven-beatitude, with eyebrow lifting, neck twisting, forget-me-not glances towards the invisible Heavens! . . . There was another Rehearsal with Chorus in the evening. The audience (admitted on payment) was quite considerable & the applause ditto.

The performance took place on the Thursday evening. The hall was reported "crammed full though it was a beastly night". Jaeger continued :

> The Hall is a fine one, and acoustically superb. . . . Every little detail came out beautifully & I can assure you I have not had such an elevating soul-stirring experience for years as listening under such circumstances to this wonderful music. The Chorus was perfect, there is no other word for it. The effect of the pianissimo 12-part passages sung dead in tune (throughout the work) was quite ethereal, while the fortissimo tutti thundered out with imposing force & splendid sonority. They speak of the 'Rhineland tone' among Choruses in Germany & I realised here, where the beauty of the tone lay. It is in a remarkable roundness & sweetness in the female voices & by a big sonority in the male. . . . The terrific Dämonen Chorus was given with perfect ease & yet with strenuous dramatic force which one could not possibly realise through studying the music on paper. Wüllner did not seem in very good voice & he made one serious blunder; but these were only as blots on a summer sun. Elgar was very nearly called after Part I, & during the long pause (20 minutes or more) he held a reception in the "Soloisten-Zimmer" where I was told many musicians from other towns congregated to congratulate E & Buths. . . . In Part 2 Wüllner was great, especially in the 'Take me away'. The big Chorus 'Praise to the Holiest' which astonished the German musicians by its monumental architecture was a masterly performance & the Finale, that wonderful Finale, was another revelation to those who heard it only at B'ham. Unfortunately the Angel was anything but angelically perfect. But though Elgar suffered sundry twitches & pangs when the Angel threatened to 'fall', the audience could not have realised, thanks to Buths' alertness, how dangerously near collapse the performance came once or twice through this d[amned] Angel's shortcomings. . . . Well at the end E was enthusiastically called, & though he had to fight his way through thronging crowds of people down the stairs & to the front, the applause & shouts were kept up until at last (the time seemed a small eternity) he

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[37] Powell, Mrs Richard: *Edward Elgar - memories of a variation* (Methuen & Co., 3rd ed., 1949) pp 45-9

reached the Podium. There the Chorus & Orchestra & Organ joined in a Tusch [a fanfare] & a large fine laurel wreath was handed to him.

The performance was widely reported in Germany and as I have recently acquired copies of contemporary German newspapers that reported the performance at length, it is worth breaking the flow of this narrative to publish complete English translations of them for the first time. I am most grateful to David Mason who has translated these for their publication here :

1) *Düsseldorfer Zeitung* of 20 Dec. 1901

Fourth Concert by the Civic Music Society

Düsseldorf, 19 December

When cherished expectations are fulfilled we feel that a good beginning has found a perfect culmination. What was predicted in our preview came to pass in every particular. On the 12th, Dr.E.Elgar was able to telegraph from Worcester that Philipp Wolfram's Weihnachtsmysterium, a masterpiece that has been duly appreciated here at home, had also made a most profound impression at its first British performance, which he had conducted, and now in the same way the telegraph has been spreading the fame of the most important British composer of the present day from Düsseldorf to all the points of the compass. The sacred cantata "The Dream of Gerontius" was an amazing and total success. The composer attended the full rehearsal on Wednesday and even here he was given an unusually warm ovation while today, at the actual performance, the end of the first part saw the impressive audience, including many foreigners, giving the most heartfelt proof of its appreciation and at the end it was indefatigable in again and again congratulating the eminent composer. The task the composer had faced was a most unusual one and for this reason alone people who may not immediately respond to the work will find it impossible to ignore its purely musical power. The subject, deeply serious as it is, has never before been treated in music in such a manner. The composer has dealt with it here not just in a new form but by making quite superlative use of his mastery of every available means of expression, means which only his most eminent predecessors had at their disposal. The overall picture which Elgar's imagination paints is an extraordinary one and it will stir the emotions of the listener to a degree never previously achieved, so extraordinarily accurate is the composer in expressing his meaning. The language of the orchestra is rich in modulation and employs all the latest methods to colour situations and produce moods. His bold brush paints the tender, the grotesque, the lovely and the terrible. The music expresses itself in a startling mixture of the strictly religious and subjectively conveyed feeling. The first can be heard in the psalm-like passages for the choirs, while the second forms the keynote of the outcries of the dying Gerontius and the consoling songs of the Angel. But there is far more besides that Elgar parades before his tensely listening audience. In a double fugue, wildly raging apostates seek to assuage and drown their misery. Contrasting with this are the resplendent choruses of angels and those for the heavenly hosts, which are often divided into 12 parts by using semi and full chorus. The fearsome language in the Chorus of Demons is contrasted with the comforting, solemnly exultant words of the heavenly hosts. However, what must be acknowledged to be of quite outstanding merit is the final chorus of part 1. An impression of Handelian grandeur and wonderfully effective sonority is achieved at the words "Go in the name of Angels and Archangels", at which the twelve-part chorus is heard above a pedal point, several of which form a quite remarkable feature of the masterpiece, such as in the broad, supremely eloquent chorus in C major "Praise to the Holiest in the height". The chorus also has a superbly beautiful theme in A flat major in the first part at "Be merciful, be gracious" and this theme is used with particularly profound expression at the words "From all the sins that are past".

In the solos, of which a particularly large number are given to the tenor, Gerontius, it is the chromatic element which prevails. The hearer often finds himself reluctant to follow the voice and accompaniment as they slip swiftly from key to key and in the second part this produces some rather tiresome longueurs where the Soul of Gerontius carries on dialogues with the Angel in Wagnerian fashion. Yet the prelude is brilliantly atmospheric in conception. The themes of the work are woven into it with great artistry and it develops swiftly from the plaintive opening theme for the woodwind and violas in unison to a massive grandeur and anguish only to subside again into the opening theme. I have only mentioned certain details of the work which, as one becomes more closely acquainted with it, seem strikingly beautiful and unusual. Many of the English composer's colleagues from his own country and abroad were present and they acknowledged him as a great master endowed with immense erudition and great emotional empathy whose cantata had been impressive in so many ways, some of them quite new. All the parts of the work present difficulties and, as far as the orchestra and the large part it plays, the double chorus and the soloists were concerned, it was given a quite outstandingly successful performance. It was by showing the most complete devotion that Professor Buths achieved this admirable result. The chorus produced impressive power in exactly the same way as, where necessary, it took pains to

produce the most delicate pianos, as it did for the voices of the earthly participants and in the chorus of the Souls in Purgatory "Lord, thou hast been our refuge". The difficulties of getting things right in the Chorus of Demons were so convincingly overcome that there was not the slightest sign of how great they in fact were, while the two great concluding choruses can undoubtedly be numbered among the finest achievements the Society has to its credit. Dr. Ludwig Wüllner had been chosen to sing the part of Gerontius and his musical assurance and absorption in what he was singing were both of an equally high standard. Again and again his fine enunciation showed itself worthy of special mention. The physical and mental task was almost too demanding and he was deserving of all the more praise for successfully tackling it in that he appeared to be somewhat indisposed, which was evidently the reason for a number of adjustments. The mezzo-soprano role of the Angel had been given to Fräulein Antonie Beel from Frankfurt, who had probably thought her way into the role but whose forced, palatal production proved distracting now and again. Herr Metzmacher's concept of the Priest failed to take proper account of the situation in that he made too forceful an entry into the anxious hush of the death-chamber. He sounded better in the strange passage where he has to sing as the Angel of Death. The semi chorus which was composed of the town's best choral singers showed itself capable of producing an exceptionally beautiful sound. The orchestra required is large, even including two harps, and as it has so often proved able to in the past, it played at the height of its powers, while its effects were also greatly enhanced by the contribution of the organ. Preceding the cantata was the prelude to Richard Strauss's Guntram, a work whose polyphonic nature, whose harmony, whose violin tremolo to the woodwinds and whose beautiful melody can probably be looked upon a preparing the way for it. The evening passed in both a solemn and an artistic mood. Düsseldorf may take satisfaction in the fact that though this highly significant work, which was written for the Birmingham Musical Festival and was first performed there on 3 October 1900, will have started on its course through the other great German concert halls from here, the composer will always have special ties with the artistic metropolis on the Rhine.

2) *Rheinisch-Westphälische Zeitung* of 21 Dec.1901

Concerts

Düsseldorf, 20 Dec. **Fourth Concert by the Civic Music Society - "The Dream of Gerontius"** by **Edward Elgar.** (First performance in Germany). The name of this English composer has been little known to date even though "The Dream of Gerontius" has already taken him as far as opus 38. At Düsseldorf last year a very significant orchestral work of his, the "Variations", made a highly successful debut. Of the present poem - by the well known Cardinal Newman - the only translation that existed was one by Molidor but this was totally unsuitable for concert purposes so Buths himself had to produce one which, by following the English text exactly, could be fitted to the notes but which was at the same time a true and artistic reflection of the contemporary spirit of the German language. Buths has succeeded splendidly in his efforts by making use in them of Wagner's style of word and sound. When the poet called his work "The Dream of Gerontius" (he had no particular reason for choosing the name), he probably did so particularly in the light of its second part. Whereas in the first part Gerontius is dying and seeks greater strength to win through the final agony of death by professing his faith before the friends gathered round his death-bed, in the second part the world of reality is left behind and now appears to the incorporeal soul (of Gerontius), which has entered the unseen world, as simply a dream while the spiritual world, the metaphysical world, now seems a new and visible reality.

The first part consists of a highly atmospheric prelude which moulds together the main themes of the work and of the alternating pleas and prayers of Gerontius and his friends, and it ends with the priest's prayer for the dying mingled with the sounds of the funeral bell. It is someone of an indisputably religious nature who speaks to us in this part but the range of moods within which the music moves is precisely circumscribed and in the absence of any antitheses and any marked characterization it might easily be found wearisome. The second part is quite different for here, in a vividly dramatic way, the struggle between the angels of light and the demonic spirits, between the spiritual and the sensual, is acted out before the eyes of the transfigured soul. Here Elgar has produced something imperishably beautiful when he shows his particular greatness in the depiction of celestial peace and produces music whose beauty and unassuming nobility are simply ravishing. Yet he also has the power to conjure up the demonic forces in the life of the spirit with harsh characterisation, as he does in the powerful choruses for the demons, the performance of which is probably the most difficult thing a large choir could be called upon to undertake. The melodic structure, and even more so the harmony, show that Edward Elgar has been receptive to and has assimilated the enormous widening of its powers of expression that music has undergone through the work of Wagner and Liszt. At the same time he is a master of polyphonic construction who knows how to imbue his counterpoint with such genuine feeling that the listener hardly realises how skilfully interwoven the tonal strands are. Similarly, for richness and splendour of instrumental colouring, "The Dream of Gerontius" does not suffer by comparison with even the very latest orchestral works. All in all this is a work which in certain parts may suffer from a monotony of mood but which, when its finer points are appreciated, is something quite extraordinary. Today's first performance was a very considerable success. The composer, who was present but had remained hidden away among the audience at the back of the hall, was so persistently and enthusiastically applauded after both parts that he finally had to appear on the platform and from there bow to Professor Buths and the fine body of orchestral players and chorus singers to show his gratitude to them. The orchestra and chorus,

who were faced with immeasurable difficulties, performed an exemplary feat for which no praise could be too great. Of the soloists, the one most deserving of mention is Dr.Ludwig Wüllner (of Cologne), who performed the part of Gerontius in declamatory style with such intelligence that it was hardly ever possible to raise any objections to the character or nature of his vocal technique. The bass roles in the work (Priest and Angel of the Agony) were taken by Herr Willy Metzmacher (of Cologne), who in the first part was not fully alive to the situation and sang the prayer for the dying man with an excess of vocal power. His contribution in the second part was very fine. Fräulein Antonie Beel (of Frankfurt am Main) showed no lack of vocal security but her not very opulent and rather palatally produced voice had a hard struggle with the waves of orchestral and choral sound in which she seldom gained the upper hand and was never the victor. The organ part was played by Professor F.W.Francke of Cologne with the mastery he has often demonstrated before. As an introduction quite unlike it in style and mood, the new work was preceded by the prelude from Richard Strauss's opera "Guntram", a splendidly euphonious piece of music constructed with magical skill, which the orchestra played with uncommon reverence.

3) *Düsseldorfer Volksblatt*, 22 Dec.1901

Fourth Concert by the Civic Music Society

"The Dream of Gerontius", poem by Cardinal Newman
composed by Edward Elgar

Düsseldorf, 20 Dec.
A memorable and epoch-making first performance. Not since the days of Liszt - and here we include Philip Wolfrum's Weihnachtsmysterium - has anything been created in the field of oratorio which can equal the grandeur and significance of this sacred cantata. The story delves so deeply into the religious, the metaphysical, the eternal that only biblical stories can be put forward as in any way comparable to it. It was written by one of the greatest minds England has ever produced, Cardinal Newman, and in his poem Newman has given the most exalted poetic expression to the Catholic view of life after death, of judgement, heaven, hell and purgatory (in some cases by taking over word for word prayers belonging to Catholic ritual). The thoughts and feelings of a dying man and ideas about the life of the soul after death, developed on the basis of Catholic doctrine - these in short are the subjects of Newman's poem "The Dream of Gerontius". As we learn from the introduction, which we follow here, Newman is said to have been inspired to write the poem at the deathbed of a beloved friend. In the first part of the poem, he depicts for us the moment of just such a death. Gerontius (there was no special reason for choosing the name) feels the approach of death and asks the friends gathered at his bedside to pray for the salvation of his soul as his own strength is already failing. In professing his faith he is seeking extra strength to enable him to face the final agony of death. Exhausted, he sinks back on to his bed longing for the deliverance of sleep. With the words "Into thy hands, O Lord" he falls asleep. The priest has arrived and intones the "Proficiscere anima Christiana". Bells are heard tolling and the chorus of friends joins in the priest's prayers beseeching eternal rest for the departed. This scene, drawn from the real world, contrasts with the second part of the poem which describes the reception of the soul in the other world. When the poet called his work "The Dream of Gerontius", what he probably meant, particularly in relation to the second part, was this: the real world has been left behind and its place has been taken by the imaginings of a pious soul; to the incorporeal soul which has now entered this invisible world, the real world now seems to be no more than a dream but the imagined world, the world of the spirit, now seems to be a new and visible reality. Gerontius (i.e. the soul of Gerontius) awakes as from a refreshing sleep. Time and space have ceased to exist for him; what are left are his thoughts and feelings. Facing him stands the guardian angel who was his invisible companion in life. What in life was to him merely the idea of a protective love has become a being with whom he can exchange thoughts and who, as he reveals to him the wonders of the other world, is ready to lead him before the throne of the Eternal Judge. Before the gates to the judgement seat are encamped the demons and they demand the souls as their property but redeeming love and mercy await the believer. The guardian angel bears his precious charge onwards through the realms of heaven, filled with the song of the divine hosts, to the mysterious presence of the Almighty, before whose throne he stands to intercede. The soul is ready to receive its judgement; it will look into the face of the Almighty - this is rapture for it but also there is the agonizing perception that it is still in need of a purifying change and is not yet worthy of everlasting peace. The guardian angel enfolds it in his arms and bears it off to the flood that will cleanse it of sin (purgatory), into which the soul is plunged to test it. The poem closes with the angel's song of farewell, which promises that the soul will soon be received into the realms of eternal bliss.

The German translation of the poem was the work of Professor Buths, who has thus acquired for himself a sort of copyright in the work. It was no mean achievement on his part to have found a form in which the poetry could be recast in German which was suitable for musical purposes (for the piano reduction and the singers) and yet still left the German stylish and intelligible. Professor Buths, who here and there may not be entirely innocent of giving a hint of "Parsifal", did what was best and most suitable in both these senses by rightly taking as his golden rule the principle of spoken declamation. When we see from the results of Buths' work on a modern-day translation how difficult it is to

make a transposition of this kind, we may perhaps be a little fairer in our criticisms of past translators into German of operas and oratorios.

In every sense, material like this which is such a tight fusion of the highly poetical, the human and the divine, demanded from the composer an even more profound expression of the imaginative idea at the heart of it. Such deep absorption in the religious spirit could only be achieved by someone whose innermost being was rooted in the religious sentiments of Catholic dogma. As far as the technicalities of composition are concerned, what has to be borne in mind is that, although people's ideas of what the art of religious music is have been different at different times, music in the field of oratorio and the cantata has to keep pace with the art of contemporary music generally and must allow for the advancing demands that art is making. However, because of the work of Berlioz, Liszt and Wagner, the music of our own times has undergone such an enormous increase and expansion in its capacity for expression that the modern-day composer is almost faced with an embarras de richesses as far as the means of expression available to him for constructing his harmonies and melodies are concerned. Edward Elgar, whose opus 38 "The Dream of Gerontius" is, has made use of these means in his compositional practice with good sense and originality and to excellent effect. It is not, say, poor taste when he combines melodic structures from old church music with a mode of expression which seems modern but rather the spirit of the poem. There is a unity of feeling in the poem but the external form this takes is subject to fascinating changes and it is this that gives the atmosphere it creates its power and conviction. As a creator of atmosphere Elgar is supreme and here the contrapuntalist has even been able to deploy his mastery of polyphonic construction in the service of feeling and atmosphere. The first part concludes with a chorus which is divided into ten or twelve parts and develops with all the grandeur and impressiveness of the old classics above a pedal point and choruses like this, or the full and semi choruses of the angels and demons in the second part which, unrivalled though their characterisation may be, present the performers with inconceivable difficulties, are towering monuments to the art of modern-day polyphony. The listener hears the splendid multipart writing in the choruses, but in some of the solos he will also be conscious of a certain monotony of mood which even the highly artistic handling of the orchestra and the most ingeniously modulated writing for the voice cannot compensate for. Otherwise, there is in the solos a simplicity, directness and truth about the composer's melodic structures, which are as beautiful to the ear as they are deeply expressive, which go directly to the heart, and the great success which this most significant work, whose imagination and deeply felt expression cleave to a line that is not of this world, again had at yesterday's performance provides the most convincing proof of the powerful effect the work has. The composer was present and at the end of the first part and at the conclusion of the performance he was called forward. In him we have made the acquaintance of the man who is probably England's most important living composer. Professor Buths can take the credit for having given the work a masterly performance and thus for smoothing the path for it through German concert halls. So totally invigorating was the way in which he conveyed the intellectual and musical meaning of the work to the performers that the resulting interpretation was as effective as the composer could possibly have wished. The choirs, who made child's play of the formidable difficulties of the Chorus of Demons and the other choruses, some of them fugal, and the orchestra both performed with superb sound and uncommonly vivid expression. Frau Karoline Kaiser also contributed at the head of the semi chorus. Of the work's three solo roles, that of Gerontius was taken by Dr.Ludwig Wüllner from Cologne, who interpreted it with a directness of expression, a warmth of feeling and a masterly intellectual meaningfulness which allowed one to ignore the inadequacy of his purely vocal resources and the sometimes highly arbitrary way in which the notes were treated. Herr Willy Metzmacher (Cologne) sang the Priest's prayer for the dying man in the first part with the fanaticism of one of Meyerbeer's Anabaptists; the f. and ff. in this passage simply do not call for the voice to be deployed with such power. On the other hand he dealt most musically with the song of the Angel of Death in the second part. As the Angel, Fräulein Antonie Beel (Frankfurt am Main) had difficulty in making her not particularly opulent voice heard amongst the flood of sound. The organ was once again played by Professor Francke from Cologne. The first piece played was the prelude to Richard Strauss's opera Guntram.

4) *Kölnische Zeitung*, 27 Dec.1901

Art, Science and Life

[The Dream of Gerontius], an oratorio for choir, soloists and orchestra by Edward Elgar, words by Cardinal Newman, translated into German by Julius Buths, had its first performance in Germany under the baton of the latter as part of the fourth subscription concert by the Civic Music Society of Düsseldorf. Even though the work undoubtedly employs the very latest means of expression and is based on how music is experienced by modern-day audiences, the impression made on listeners of all proclivities was so gripping that this "Dream" will unquestionably be followed by a large number of realities in the form of performances. It is rare enough that the light of an important new work should shine forth to us from England. Of Sullivan only the immortal and comic Mikado managed to cross the Channel, leaving aside his Ivanhoe which was accorded a solemn funeral at the Berlin Hofoper. But of serious English music there have only been isolated examples of works that have beaten a path to us. A quartet by Stanford and a few instrumental works by Mackenzie are virtually all that there has been while a productive symphonic composer like Cowen is still awaiting his

call outside the gates of the German Reich. When the strains of Edward Elgar's orchestral variations were first wafted to our ears two years ago at a Richter concert at London's Queen's Hall, we took the liberty of drawing the attention of German conductors to this work, in which the unusual mastery of technique and the splendid tonal colouring made it highly eligible for export. Buths was the first to take up our suggestion and he has now been joined by others. Yet in the present work Elgar plumbs even greater depths and although Newman's poem describes in poetic language the profoundly disturbing spiritual dilemmas faced by the Catholic believer, Elgar summons up the involving and expressive force required to totally resolve them by the affecting eloquence of his vocal and orchestral writing. The work as a whole is as it were a transposition on to the religious plane of Richard Strauss's Tod und Verklärung. The first part depicts the release of the soul from its ailing body: there are a plea and a prayer from Gerontius, a chorus and words of intercession from his friends, and a farewell from the priest. In the second part the guardian angel conducts the soul to purgatory, while imparting to it the most profound and heartfelt enlightenment and not without its being vouchsafed a promised and therefore intimidating sight of the Almighty. In both parts we find beauties of imperishable splendour such as in the chorus "Rescue him, O Lord, in this his evil hour.", in the final chorus of the first part with its subtle suggestion of the tolling of bells, and in a vocal polyphony which is a modern revitalisation of the work of the old masters. The second part is of course less spirited rhythmically but the sombrely defiant demons which endeavour to deny the soul access to the pastures of heaven provide a refreshing contrast, and the final chorus of the souls in purgatory is probably the finest thing in the whole work. Elgar stands on the shoulders of a Berlioz, a Wagner, and a Liszt but, except for the need to retain a significant measure of individuality, he has freed himself from their influence. Technical skill of genuine virtuosity may perhaps still be exploited at the expense of depth of imagination but at all events he is one of the leaders of modern music. We have never heard a performance like the one in Düsseldorf and, particularly looking back on the last decade, we must proudly acknowledge the salutary way in which Professor Buths has trained the choirs and also his total absorption in art and all its works. The tenor part was taken by Dr.L.Wüllner with gripping expressiveness and Herr Metzmacher was an estimable singer of the bass part, while the agreeable talent of Fräulein Antonie Beel brought a substantial voice and rhythmic security to the mezzo-soprano part. The orchestra and Professor Franke at the organ could not be faulted.

(To be continued).

Many people have helped with this article : full acknowledgements will appear with the concluding section.

REACTIONS TO ELGAR/PAYNE SYMPHONY NO 3

The first performance of this work on 15 February came too late for anything but an instant reaction by the Editor in the Review section of the NEWS. However, when *The Times*' critic summed up his review with the remark : "A landmark in the history of British music", it was clear that there was something about the work and the occasion itself which demanded fuller coverage. The great and good were present in large numbers at the concert : the Home Secretary, Jack Straw; the leader of the Conservative Party, William Hague, who said, "They were definitely right to do it"; former Heritage Secretary, David Mellor; BBC Director General, John Birt; and Sir Roy Strong, former head of the Victoria & Albert Museum, who said : "It gave me the authentic Elgar blub. It has all the elegiac quality one associates with him, and it is so quintessentially English". The following Sunday, Paul Driver said in *The Sunday Times* : "The symphony is seizing the popular imagination". Critical reaction was almost totally complimentary, and some enthusiastic. There was universal praise for Anthony Payne's "elaboration", and for the outstanding performance by Andrew Davis and the BBC Symphony Orchestra.

Michael Kennedy had reviewed the recording(s) and the score for the *Telegraph* and for the JOURNAL, and on the following Sunday he commented on the première.

"The hall was packed to overflowing and there was a heartwarming ovation for Payne. All media hype? That would be the cynical view, but I think there was genuine admiration for his achievement and a sense of gratitude that a major work by Elgar had been given life of the kind he envisaged for it - no composer can want his music to be condemned to eternal silence in a museum drawer.
"Perhaps the most remarkable part of Payne's achievement is that he has placed the music so accurately within Elgar's last period. This is the weary, disillusioned Elgar of the Cello Concerto. Vigour and vitality are there but they are pale reflections of the pre-1914 splendours, and the valorous attempt to recapture that glory is what makes the work so moving".

Rob Cowan in *The Independent* commented : "Payne has, in composing stretches of the piece from scratch, intuited himself into Elgar's very soul, coaxing moments of private reverie that recall parallel passages in the first two symphonies...I have certainly never heard a "completion" that works better, nor one that hints at what might have been with greater emotional exactitude".

In the sister paper, *The Independent on Sunday* the following week, Michael White called it "...a magnificent achievement...It *sounds* convincing, even though the material has largely been assembled, *Frankenstein*-like, from discarded flesh...As Andrew Davis brought his baton down on those concluding bars, there was a sense not just of having heard a fine performance...but of having opened up a time capsule. This has to be the last Romantic symphony to reach an audience: there won't be any more. It is the freakish coda to a finished culture : grandly melancholic, and a fond farewell".

Writing in *The Guardian*, Andrew Clements called the work "...a wonderfully satisfying symphonic structure, with the emotional sweep and bitter-sweet flavour of the real composer in every bar...what [Payne] has come up with is never less than convincing. The structure certainly has a breadth and natural pacing that are unmistakably Elgarian. The best tunes are as memorable as anything in the established works...- none of this ever seems for a moment to be pastiche".

The Times' Barry Millington wrote : "Payne's deep knowledge and love of the Elgar style...have enabled him to "elaborate" the sketches...with a skill and a fidelity to the original that take the breath away". Some of the "touches", he said, "are so typical of Elgar that it is easy to forget that this is not quite the genuine article". The greatest test of all was the finale, where "not only did Payne have to conceive and elaborate a basic structure, but he also had little to guide him as regards the mood of the ending : Elgar probably had not decided himself"; but "the result is convincingly ambivalent, utterly Elgarian and deeply moving. It is impossible to imagine this work of reconstruction being more skilfully done".

Paul Driver said that Payne "has elaborated this material into a continuity that is not merely plausible but leaves one constantly in doubt as to what is Elgar, what Payne, and what Elgar-Payne". He concluded : "Having heard Andrew Davis's superb account...what music-lover would want to be without the new Elgar 3? It was a moving experience not just because Elgar was speaking to us at all but because what he was saying was so new and true". Geoffrey Norris, writing in *The*

Daily Telegraph agreed : "It sounds like Elgar; it feels like Elgar; but most importantly, it has the powerful impact of *new* Elgar, living and breathing as his Third Symphony might have done if he had lived to complete it...The finished score may be speculative in certain regards, but it deserves to find its place in the repertory long after the current furore about its completion has died down... Anthony Payne has had to do much more than fit the pieces of a recalcitrant jigsaw together. He has had to steep himself in Elgar's creative imagination, and try to deduce the path of musical events Elgar might have followed. That the result has such integrity suggests that, although the truth will never be known, his solution is as close as we are likely to get".

Rick Jones in the *Evening Standard* was in no doubt as to its future standing : "Payne has made sense of Elgar's last musical thoughts and produced a dark, somewhat insecure, but ultimately unashamed younger step-sister to Elgar's two completed symphonies which nevertheless stands comparison with them".

'A.C.', writing in the *Financial Times* was less effusive. "It was a worthy outcome, in so far as it sounded unmistakably Elgarian and gave us the chance to hear a speculative account of what the old man was up to in the last year of his life...The work is not a blazing masterpiece, but it bears the spirit of Elgar, and at its heart lies an Adagio of eerie imagination and power. This movement alone suggests something truly momentous."

The March edition of *The Gramophone* contained an article by Lewis Foreman built round a session that he had spent (with Andrew Neill and the JOURNAL Editor) with Anthony Payne last year. In a comprehensive review, Andrew Achenbach warmly welcomed the two discs ("a fascinating and, above all, deeply rewarding pair of CDS which no Elgarian will want to miss"). His own response to the Payne's achievement was, he said, "one of immense gratitude". In *BBC Music Magazine* Matthew Rye reviewed the discs and called "the result... a triumph". The symphony, he said, "feels like a finished, rounded work. Every bar smacks of the authentic Elgar". Robert Layton, judging from his remarks in the *Classic FM Magazine*, disapproves of the project. However, he did admit : "If you do decide to 'tinker' with the sketches, I can't imagine anyone better equipped to do so than Anthony Payne, a composer of quality with an obvious feeling for, and understanding of, Elgar". He gave the accompanying CD "the higher priority", and added; "Although what the composer left us is not top-drawer Elgar, there are still many characteristic and vital ideas". Michael Oliver discusses the ethics of the completion in a well-reasoned article in *Classic CD* entitled 'Desecration or restoration?' He concludes : "Anthony Payne has sought... simply to give us a vision - sometimes tantalising, sometimes dazzling - of what the Symphony might have been like if Elgar himself had lived to finish it. Would he have regarded that as 'tinkering' or as a fine composer subjecting his own great gifts to Elgar's genius, in an act of loving homage?"

The *New York Times* featured a long article on 12 March, including an interview with Anthony Payne. "In anticipation of the event, the legions of Elgar lovers and music critics were at battle stations, but all that broke out was peace and rapture", the paper said. However, there were dissenting voices; Norman Lebrecht in *The*

Daily Telegraph reiterated that it should never have happened, and that anyway the public seemed to have fallen for the propaganda of the very effective BBC publicity machine. A correspondent in the same paper found the concert "a rather disappointing occasion", adding that "much of this 'symphony' did not sound like Elgar...To me.. the work had a cobbled-together quality, with fragments of 1934 Elgar floating around in a sort of post-modern 'Mahleresque' soup".

It seemed a good idea to record the reactions of well-known Elgarians. Some were unwilling or unable to do so in the time available, but the views of those who did respond are found below (contributors are in alphabetical order).

Robert Anderson

The dying Elgar was insistent the task of ordering his Third Symphony sketches must not be attempted; Bernard Shaw and W H Reed were convinced it could not be done. The decision of the Elgar family after more than sixty years to allow a full-scale working-up of the symphony was controversial, perhaps courageous, certainly risky, and in the event completely justified. Elgar had left a stark and imposing opening fully orchestrated, and there was a first movement exposition in short score. Furthermore, there was evidence that the old genius was unerringly at work in the contrasting approaches to the second subject group, initially Vera Hockman's tune, in exposition and recapitulation. First time the transition was forceful and almost angry; next time echoes of the first tune were recollected in a calm tranquillity that moved quietly towards the serenity of C major. Elgar had enjoyed this passage sufficiently to score it. There were many structural signposts towards the shape of the opening Allegro, not least telling evidence that Elgar would again indulge his tonal penchant for far subdominants. Nothing, though, can detract from Anthony Payne's achievement in translating Elgar's hints into a movement of utmost cogency.

The Scherzo is maybe less successful. The opening idea, straight from the *Arthur* banquet scene, is both appealing and slight. It suggests a lightweight movement such as Brahms produced in his first three symphonies. Payne's realisation does not outstay its welcome, yet the proportions are not ideal. Scherzos with two trios are commonplace; here the trios total at least three and a half, with repeats for all of them. The fault is partly Elgar's. At one moment he provides a bit of cunning dovetailing from trio material to the opening motif; he worked out also a subtle conclusion to the movement from a different trio idea. The omnium gatherum of trios are all Elgar's. Perhaps Payne should have said no to some of these themes; but how could he, or still less deprive us of the chance to hear them?

Elgar's slow movements never failed; and this Adagio solenne promised more than most. The boldness of its discords, associated mainly with ideas for the Third Oratorio, show Elgar experimenting beyond the bounds of his usual harmonic language. If Vaughan Williams' Fourth Symphony and Walton's First were quintessential statements for the 1930s, this Adagio lacks nothing of their power. The great bronze doors of which Elgar wrote to Ernest Newman have indeed

opened on to a vista strange and awesome; Payne's fine structure, based on some of Elgar's finest ideas, underlines the symbolism with two quiet strokes on the brazen gong.

In the finale chivalry lifts its lance once more and it is as if Elgar's major orchestral works have come full circle. *Froissart* began the series and this Arthurian movement now ends it. The most moving passage in the 1923 music for Binyon's *Arthur* play was the augmentation in G minor for the king himself of the knights' prancing 'nobilmente' theme. It appeared in the drama three times, as Arthur braced himself for the fatal encounter with Mordred. Elgar intended it for the symphony precisely as Payne has realised it at the end of the exposition. The core of the development is another G minor idea, this time for the third oratorio. At the point where Payne brings to it the trumpets and trombones, their melodic line follows what the chorus would have sung to the words based on *Revelation* 19:1: 'Alleluia, Salvation and glory, and power belong to our God'. The falling thirds of the orchestral counterpoint suggest the motif so beloved of Brahms in his late works, and most significantly in the *Vier ernste Gesänge*. One of Payne's happiest touches comes as the finale's recapitulation moves towards its coda. King Arthur's majestic theme begins in the B♭ minor that Elgar's sketches had indicated as integral to the work. It ascends into F minor and C minor, then leads with the inevitability of genius into the 'Alleluia' climax. Such thematic interconnections were always the stuff of Elgar, his proof that the materials for a work, however disparate their origin, had indeed come from the same oven.

It would have been tempting to end the symphony with the dying fall of this glorious music. Elgar never wrote 'A.M.D.G.' at the start of an orchestral work; such a conclusion to the symphony would almost have justified the initials. Anthony Payne's solution, though, has equal validity, with the final taps on the side drum that keep Elgar's essential chivalry in mind, and that last *pp* touch on the gong recalling a vision of the infinite as suggested in the Adagio. Payne has used the gong throughout the symphony more freely than Elgar ever did. Perhaps it is his own signature on the music he has brought so magnificently to life, a signature writ large in bronze.

Elgar was right : the music has great strength. Fred Gaisberg was right : there is not a hint of decline in the work. All one wishes is that he, or Shaw, or Reed had stood over Elgar with a stopwatch as he played; but they were not to know the symphony would never be completed by the composer. If Elgar said it was going to be more concise than nos 1 and 2, he might have been as mistaken in the outcome as he had been with *Falstaff*, which he estimated for an Austrian conductor as little more than half its eventual playing time. Anthony Payne's realisation lasts longer than both other symphonies; yet my gratitude is such I would not subtract a bar.

Sir Colin Davis

I have heard the CD of the Third Symphony and have the score. What impressed me most was that it "sounded" like Elgar. All the great man's finger prints were there. That's a great achievement on the part of Anthony Payne, and that's why we

want to play it. I am busy learning it - slowly though! - and later I shall have a much clearer idea of what I feel about it.

Professor Peter Evans

I was a little hesitant about [offering some reactions to the Symphony], since, having known Tony Payne for some forty years, I was privileged to see his draft score at a late stage, and so I can't pretend that the performance came entirely as an ear-opener. Yet, however impressed I was with so many contexts in the score, only when I heard it unfold in sound did I fully experience the cumulative impact of the symphonic design he had shaped from Elgar's materials.

Because the first movement presents the most powerfully connected spans of invention Elgar left for the work, we may easily underestimate what Payne has done in rounding out this piece. For a start, the composer's projected dimensions were difficult to predict, given that unexpected repeat of a shortish exposition. My own assumption had always been that this implied a notably smaller scale than in the earlier symphonies, but in fact Payne's movement (including the repeat) totals 345 bars; the first movement of Symphony no 2, cast in a very comparable 12/8 tempo, had 343 bars. Obviously, the Third Symphony's recapitulation could rework only the 69 bars of the notated exposition (not the 133 of its playing time), but Payne has built up a very satisfactorily integrated 110-bar closing span of Recap + Coda, the latter expanding Elgar's own sketched juxtaposition of first- and second-subject shapes by interleaving also the new thematic ideas (from Elgar's sketches) of Payne's development.

This development, of 102 bars, is twenty bars longer than that of Symphony no 2, but the predominance there of the 'Ghost' idea gave it an emotional concentration quite unlike the vast compendium of thematic citations in the First Symphony's 180-bar development. In Payne's context the first new theme (Poco meno mosso) seems to me even more arresting than the equivalent moment in Symphony no 1, and its much later return in the darker key of B♭ minor effectively defines the tonal plateau in which Payne works out the cryptic march he has extrapolated from an Elgarian fragment (the recession of this section, with its tenderly drooping counterpoints, epitomises Payne's extraordinary creative credentials for his task). Even the moment of recapitulation required imaginative handling : by superimposing the subsidiary idea from bar 11 on Elgar's scaffolding as the tonic is regained a neat structural ambiguity is forged, and a body of assertive C minor music sufficient to justify Elgar's strikingly early, and subdued, transition. After the synthesis noted above, the coda further reorders first-subject ideas to tersely climactic effect; that we recognise the closing flourish's origins in Symphony no 2 doesn't detract from its cogency in the new context.

The Second Symphony showed how a scherzo could follow an elegiac slow movement without slackening the tension, but it seems unlikely that Elgar in 1932 could command the sustained creative energy such a movement demands. His material from *Arthur* has many appealing touches, but his decision to place this piece, an Intermezzo rather than a Scherzo, before the Adagio was surely right.

The main idea sets up a curious expectancy in that its move to the dominant is always denied a complementary paragraph of tonic restoration, even at its transposed central outburst. Elgar's wealth of episodes slightly blurs the structural contours, but his echo from the first movement (the development's first new theme) is poignant, and Payne's treatment of the coda intensifies the references to the refrain's characteristic figure as the original A minor is sighted at last. Those chromatically sliding perfect fourths at the close can be heard as an evocation of Elgar's sturdy consecutives in the first subject of the first movement, or of Payne's final flourish in that movement.

Though the slow movement, like that of Symphony no 2 a sonata scheme without development, did not require the long navigation of uncharted waters of the first movement's central section, it called for sensitive decisions as to how a collection of discontiguous ideas, some magnificently characterised, others apparently more routine, could be welded together in a convincing emotional sequence. Payne's achievement here strikes me as superb. In particular I admire the way in which that desolate closing phrase Elgar showed to Reed is not only made the Adagio's logical opening gesture and central turning point but is drawn (especially at the coda) into a close relationship with other material. There are echoes of *Tristan* in this music, both in melodic gesture and in the role played by Wagner's most famous chord (heard already at Elgar's first melodic peak); Payne's use of that harmony of infinite implications as a highly charged link between the strange tonal flux of the muted-string idea and the second subject is totally convincing. Elgar's intended 'cumulative crescendo' in the recapitulated first subject is reinforced by postponing the subsidiary idea of bar 17 (hauntingly scored by Payne, incidentally) to a position just before the coda. And those interpolations by Payne, after the model of the 'city of dreadful night' passages in Elgar's previous symphonic slow movement, fuse into the argument what might otherwise be a rather mystifying final bar in Elgar's second-subject sketch.

If we accept that finales have traditionally handled sonata structure quite differently from first movements, relying more on engagingly contrasted thematic entities than on unfolding potentialities, then the invigorating mix of the Elgar-Payne finale makes good sense. Yet it must have been daunting to be offered so much second- (and third-) group material and so little on which to round out the hints of the first subject's swaggering ebullience. To have attempted, for instance, a final peroration by blowing up that initial fanfare would surely have contradicted its oddly terse nature and have degenerated into vulgar flatulence; still less than in the Second Symphony can Elgar have envisaged unquestioning triumph as the outcome of this emotional journey. Payne's decision, to take the still more formulaic tub-thumping that follows (at bar 17 in his working), and then to expose precisely its inability to *achieve* by allowing it to subside from extravagant climax to eventual silence, was courageous, for it certainly imposes a reading of the whole work we cannot know that Elgar intended. But if we were to regard this amplification of the composer's 'wagon' procedure as improbable in a symphonic context, we should, I think, find it difficult to propose an alternative conclusion that challenges the disturbing finality of Payne's solution.

The *Arthur* material Elgar intended for this movement presented a different

problem, of selecting and ordering the many variant forms of essentially the same thematic/rhythmic profile. Payne's use of the basic shape to articulate a succession of expanded paragraphs makes a well-shaped expressive arch. Yet it seems stronger for its shortening in the recapitulation; here the melting of the closing version into a recall of the broad cantabile theme Payne placed at the centre of his development (after some *Falstaff*-like furtive military activity) is an effect Elgar would surely have applauded. The working-up to the recapitulation cross-cuts, to fine dramatic effect, between the first-subject ideas; the long dominant pedal underpinning this tonal adventure receives its balancing tonic pedal only with the thirty-five bars of Payne's coda.

As that suggests, Payne has planned such relationships on a scale appropriate to so big a work. Yet size is made convincing not simply by ground plans but by the succession of foreground events. Payne has had the courage to sustain the scale in an Elgarian way, whatever the manifold phrase repetitions and protractions that called for - devices that can *look* uninspired but contribute so strongly to the larger momentum of Elgar's instrumental scores. This intimate understanding of Elgarian process extends to Payne's handling of the orchestra, on which I'm tempted to write a lot more, for its constant flux of blended sonorities is beautifully idiomatic.

...If there are any Elgarians around who still frown on the idea of 'tinkering' (a dismissive term that has no possible relevance to Payne's blend of understanding, skill and inspiration), then clearly they are under no obligation to listen to the piece. For my part, I am exhilarated by this unexpected enlargement of our view of the composer, and deeply grateful to Anthony Payne.

Diana McVeagh

Like most Elgarians, I think, I was apprehensive when I heard that the Third Symphony was to be 'finished'. But I have known Tony Payne since the 1950s, and all that time have been aware of his passion for Elgar's music. The fact that he began pondering the sketches some 25 years ago, for their own sake, with no thought of performance or publication, showed his involvement. He seemed obsessed; and while obsession does not guarantee excellence, I felt that in this case no good was likely to be achieved without it.

Payne ended his 1995 broadcast about the Symphony with the words 'it's infinitely sad that we'll never hear this music in the concert hall', and he said he was constantly frustrated because 'we'll never know what Elgar really intended'. He himself at one point wrote of 'crucial gaps that will always prevent a convincing completion'. Over Easter 1996 he spent a day here with me; it was fascinating to observe his grappling with the problems. He left with me a Xerox of the first two movements. At that point he had apparently only half seen the implications of the B♭ minor chord in bar 8 of the first movement, so at bar 144 the march passage fell in C minor rather than continuing the B♭ minor of bar 133 - the later, settled tonality seems to me far stronger. It is an extraordinary and moving experience to listen again to his broadcast, his commentary on the sketches, and to his finished work : to watch the work growing in parallel, but across the years, in both Elgar's

and Payne's mind. For Elgarians, has there ever been anything like it? As an insight of one artist into another - the action of one creative imagination on another - I would suggest only Ashton's Enigma ballet. Both are unsurpassed critical commentaries.

Even this last year people, even Payne himself, have spoken of Elgar's edict being given 'on his deathbed' ...or 'with almost his last breath'. But it was 7 October 1933 that Elgar went into hospital for his operation. Between then and November 20 he made his noble remark to the consultant physician Arthur Thompson 'If I can't complete the Third Symphony, somebody will complete it...in fifty or five hundred years'. Reed was summoned on 20 November 1933; Elgar, much weaker, begged 'don't... tinker', but tacitly agreed that the sketches should not be burnt. He referred to the Symphony twice more before he died three months later on 23 February 1934, on neither occasion renewing his request nor asking for the sketches to be destroyed. Indeed, on 22 December 1933 he posted to Ernest Newman the sketch of the 'bronze doors opening', and later Newman visited him. He also saw Reed again, when he handed him 'the end'.

Many people have wondered why Reed published the sketches. For the first time, I think I understand. The majority of those who have examined them have been writers, scholars, students. Payne is, to my knowledge, the first *composer* to have worked on them: his approach and attitude are that of an insider. By the same token, Reed was a performer, one who, moreover, had played the music with Elgar. He knew its worth. How could he not want to share his experience?

For over sixty years the promise has been kept. During that period, a movement from the Piano Concerto (1956) and the whole of an opera (1994) have been edited and performed. In 1968 Roger Fiske was invited to present them, but Sir Adrian Boult - a man of admirable rectitude - was among those who objected. That was 30 years ago. A moment arrives when an artistic creation becomes larger than its creator. Also, there is a distinction between 'completing' a work that exists in time and one in space. Elgar's sketches remain what they were, intact, unharmed, unaltered; a painting, a sculpture, a building, would be irredeemably destroyed by being 'finished'. Above all, the time is right when the right man arrives to undertake the task.

For days after hearing the Symphony at Maida Vale last October I was 'invaded' by the music. I woke each morning with it sounding in my ears. It was familiar yet new. Some of us, looking at the sketches, condemned the symphony on the grounds that it used old material. I think now we were wrong. That was always Elgar's way. In Elgar's defence, Bach's habit of using up secular movements in sacred contexts has been cited, together with Handel's self-borrowings. Nearer home, what about Vaughan Williams and his *Pilgrim's Progress*, in which he recycled music from 1925 to 1951 : a masque, incidental music for a broadcast, and a symphony? However, if so much of Elgar's material was composed earlier, I would question Payne's confident assertion that the sketches give 'the lie to those who said Elgar was a spent force after the death of his wife'. That extraordinary opening : is anyone sure of its date? If it came from *The Last Judgement*, could it be even as early as 1906? But at any rate we can all agree with Gaisberg,

Wulstan Atkins, even Elgar himself, that the music sounds strong and fresh.

Indeed, much of the symphony is Elgar at his best. The old imperious sweep and ardour are there. The opening theme - whenever it was composed - has a new, raw, 'modern' quality. The step up by thirds of the opening sequences is characteristic. The many double themes show fertile invention. There are mystical moments such as the wonderful first movement transition from bar 177; bars 183-4 especially I wouldn't be without. There is the searing opening, then the tragic eloquence, of the Adagio's great long first paragraph. Payne's absolute identification with Elgar's style is shown by his noble extension of the big tune at its recapitulation on page 105. His back-calculation on p 81 and 83, from page 84 which Elgar marked 'good', is detective work at its most ingenious. In the *Adagio* after bar 62, Payne's free composition, based surely on the nightmare 'Rodewald' passage at figure 74 in the *Larghetto* of the Second Symphony, is exactly the kind of fantasy needed to balance the sustained cantabile themes. There could be many more examples to indicate and admire unreservedly. Always the music sounds authentic, never pastiche.

So, at any given moment I am convinced. A couple of bars sliced out anywhere with, as it were, an apple-corer, and the idiom and the orchestral sound-world are pure Elgar. It is only at the end of each movement I feel slight doubts; so they must be to do with the proportions. In his 1995 broadcast Payne believed that Elgar was abandoning the 'panoramic breadth' of the earlier symphonies, yet Elgar/Payne lasts 56 minutes (the First lasts 47 minutes, the Second 43, in Elgar's recordings). Tentatively, diffidently, I raise some questions. First movement : in the development, are the two dying fall cadences, on pages 27 and 33, one too many, or too close together? Scherzo : could it have done without the repeat on page 78 of that interlude? and somehow gone straight to bar 172? Allegro : my problem here is with what Payne calls 'an enchanting new tune in G minor'. To my ears, it is too square, coming after all the Arthur short sequences. Certainly, the finale of the Second Symphony is not short on rhythmic repeats, but it seems to have a sense of propulsion (a tension between rhythm and harmonic movement?) that this Arthur movement lacks. On the other hand, Payne's conflation of the G minor theme and the *maestoso* Arthur theme at bar 275 is immensely satisfying. Perhaps something between bars 239 and 275 could have been cut? At the end Payne gathers up emotions and memories not only of *The Wagon Passes*, but also of *Falstaff*, and of the Second Symphony, its suffocating Rondo episode and its sunset ending: an extraordinary summation of a life. At the concert, I was certain of the rightness of Payne's concept of an ending, less certain of its execution : it seemed too brief. Now I feel that any imbalance lies further back in the movement.

How easy it is, for those of us who lacked Payne's vision, to criticize his work! I realise how simplistic these remarks are, and that other factors - long-term tonality, for instance - would need to be considered. The important thing is that Elgar's last thoughts have come off the page into the concert hall. Elgar/Payne 3 is a superb achievement. The biographers, the doubters, the zealous letter-of-the-law guardians, have all been proved wrong, and I for one am delighted.

(In my own defence, I quote from my *Elgar* (1955) that *The Spanish Lady* and

the Third Symphony 'were no playthings of a composer's retirement such as had tantalized his admirers for the last thirteen years, but a promised resurgence of genuine creative activity.' even though in *Grove* I pontificated that the symphony 'cannot be completed from the remaining sketches'.)

Professor-Emeritus Ian Parrott

Anthony Payne, known to me as a fine composer in his own right, has done a first-rate job of "elaboration". No one could have been more skilful and imaginatively "in tune". For all that, I have some reservations, since masterpieces do not normally get written after a composer's death. At the Festival Hall on 15 February, Payne received a well-deserved standing ovation, but, as Lebrecht observed (*Daily Telegraph*, 18 February), the poor dead composer had to take it lying down.

Many years ago, I studied the SYM:III sketches as given in *Elgar as I knew him* by William H Reed (Gollancz, 1936). Rather ominously, Reed starts by quoting from a letter by Bernard Shaw of 17 August 1934 : "What is a symphony?...if half a symmetrical design is completed, any draughtsman can supply the missing half...Beethoven could...(make) a perfect Haydn symphony...(But) to reconstruct a lost expressionist composition...from fragments...is (not possible) ... Consequently, though Elgar left some sketches of a third symphony and was actually at work on it when he died, no completion or reconstruction is possible". So has Payne attempted the impossible? And is the material worth spinning out - like Haydn?

After looking at the sketches, I decided that by far the most characteristic theme seemed to be that given as Example 5*b* in Reed (the second subject of the first movement)[38]. This recognisably Elgarian theme must have been a scrapbook idea dating back many years. Although the opening pages are fully scored (giving a valuable insight into the proposed orchestration), the first music here, with its bare fifths, sounds rather more like something for Puccini's *Il Tabarro* (written in 1914 and produced at the Met, New York in 1918). Nor do the remaining sketches suggest the great ideas of which Elgar was capable when at the height of his powers.

Payne has "tied up loose ends" (Rick Jones in *Evening Standard*, 16 February), and "culled some sparks from the smithy's anvil" (Rob Cowan in *The Independent* 16 February). His excellent work, moreover, has had all the publicity of which the modern Western World is capable : a performance with pre-concert talk, a recording, a beautifully printed score, etc.

So, like the film *Titanic* (which also has a moral dimension), it has been an assured success. Will it be something to turn to and *love* like "real" Elgar in ten, twenty or thirty years time?

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[38] Used by me in *Homage to Two Masters*, first conducted in London by Ruth Gipps on 21 November 1976 - and listened to, with approval, by Wulstan Atkins!

I now look forward to hearing some more genuine Payne compositions.

Michael Pope

The courteous request of the Editor to comment on Anthony Payne's elaboration of Elgar's sketches for the Third Symphony is indeed a challenging one. The wide significance of the subject merits a more detailed response than is at present possible; and the following remarks are confined to a general view of the work, after much listening to the splendid recording by the BBC Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Andrew Davis, and to Mr Payne's illuminating recorded commentary on the sketches, as well as studying the recently published full score and perusing afresh the sketches printed in Dr W H Reed's *Elgar as I knew him*.

To hear such wonderful music brought to radiant life is to experience a fresh revelation of beauty. The melodic invention is of a quality which is truly memorable; the harmonic language is at once striking and deeply expressive, even for those accustomed to the notably original combinations and progressions in *The Apostles*; the texture contains many examples of 'the spiritual value of counterpoint'. Thanks to Mr Payne's realisation, all these aspects can now be more readily appreciated from the 42 pages of sketches in Reed's 1936 publication.

We are fortunate that Elgar wrote out several passages into full orchestral score, indicating the overall instrumentation; fortunate also that the complete manuscript in the British Library extends to about 130 pages, many in short score, some as a violin part containing valuable markings for bowing or expression. Anthony Payne's achievement has been to grasp the inner meaning of the music so thoroughly as to succeed in arranging the sketches in logical sequence : to fill in the gaps, some of them substantial, basing his work, so far as was possible, on Elgar's own material; and to complete the orchestration idiomatically. All of this he has done with great insight : the tone of voice is that of Edward Elgar, a remarkable accomplishment. Elgar's great American contemporary, Dr Edward MacDowell, said in his professorial lectures at Columbia University that 'Form should be a synonym for *coherence*'. It is a tribute to Mr Payne's masterly skill that this Symphony proceeds in uninterrupted flow, from start to finish.

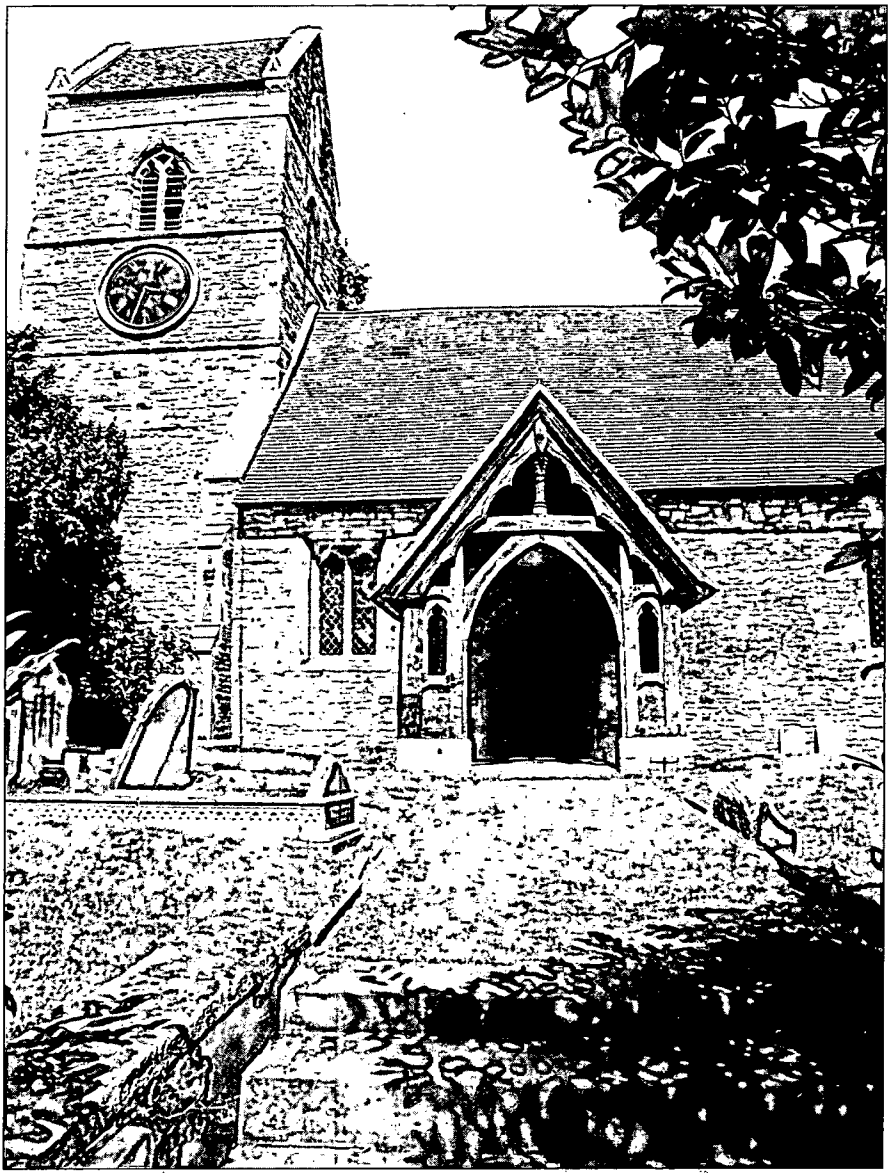
It may be worthwhile to express some views about the Finale. In his recorded commentary Mr Payne poses the question : 'when all is said and done, what is this Symphony about?'. It seems to the present writer that this last movement, indeed the whole work, is infused with the Arthurian spirit, which shines through the dark background of those fateful events in Germany which erupted in February 1933. By March that year, Elgar was writing to a friend that the pain of the recent news was unbearable. The Adagio solenne expressed the composer's 'stately sorrow' : it was sorrow, in Ernest Newman's words, for a decaying civilisation. Characteristically, Elgar told Newman that 'naturally what follows brings hope'; and with what magical effect the Finale, after the rousing opening fanfare, moves firmly into the major mode, with an uplifting theme for the violins, 'Con moto' and *piano*, which swiftly grows to a resolute *fortissimo*! It is significant that Elgar introduces important themes from his incidental music for Binyon's play *Arthur*

of 1923, including those for 'Chivalry' and for the protagonist himself, quite apart from the earlier use of the 'Banquet' motif in the second movement. It is clearly possible that he might have followed these with a Coda embodying the passing of Arthur. It was an integral part of the Arthurian legend that the hero was 'Rex quondam Rexque futurus', and he could return symbolically through a spiritual heir, in Geoffrey Ashe's words, to fight for civilisation and freedom. Seven years later, in May 1940, the legend was fulfilled. We may note that Mr Payne's inspired solution to the problem of the Symphony's close, as impressive as it is fitting, incorporates one of Elgar's most evocative ideas, the 'haunting repetitions' of 'The Wagon Passes' from his *Nursery Suite* of 1930; also that the last note in the full score is a single stroke on the Tam-tam, a device Elgar had used in 1900 to signify the passing of the soul of Gerontius.

It is to be hoped that a fully annotated edition of the score can be issued in due course. Meanwhile, the Symphony stands as a truly convincing work of art. Although the 'classical' tendency in Elgar's mind might have suggested a shorter duration than those of the A flat and E flat Symphonies, the listener's attention is fully held throughout. The doubts expressed previously about the project were based on two of Elgar's comments : (i) that no one would understand the sketches, and (ii) that accordingly no one must 'tinker' with them. Elgar was a man of letters, and we may take it that his use of the word 'tinker' would have carried with it the implication of unskilful work; but no one could have accomplished this task with greater dedication and skill than Anthony Payne. Above all, he seems to have grasped the innermost spirit of the music. Although Elgar would quite possibly have modified the sketches when writing out the full score, his family are to be congratulated for guarding against the future by commissioning this definitive realisation. What we now have is an inspiring addition to our knowledge of Elgar's genius.

Leonard Slatkin

It may interest the members to learn that I will be doing the first Washington and New York performances of the Elgar/Payne Third Symphony. I find the work to be thoroughly satisfying and although we will never know what the final outcome would have been, it is certainly better to have this than nothing at all. I think people in the United States will be quite surprised and even knowledgeable Elgarians will be hard pressed to tell where Elgar leaves off and Payne begins.



Queenhill Church, on the edge of Longdon Marsh. Elgar often visited this area during 1903 as he was completing The Apostles. According to Basil Maine, one day whilst in the church, he bought a penny tract which contained the words 'What are these wounds in Thine Hands?' "...and these corresponded exactly with the idea which had been forming in his mind and which finally found expression in the form of a Mystic Chorus". (Photo: Gordon Lee).

ELGAR AND LIGHT MUSIC - further observations

Much no doubt remains to be said on the topic of Elgar and light music; I would not rule out doing so myself. Meanwhile it is worth noticing that Sir Edward sometimes inserts light music into an ostensibly serious work. I am thinking of the two Interludes for small orchestra from *Falstaff* which could be and indeed, as far as I remember, actually were extracted and separately performed as a pair of movements by light orchestras up to the 1950s. We might similarly regard the Dorabella variation from the *Enigma*, also at one time occasionally performed separately. The practice has now apparently ceased due no doubt to the decline of the light orchestra as an institution and also perhaps to the decline of the practice of performing extracts from larger works in live concerts. Anthony Payne's realisation of the sketches of the Third Symphony seems to show the same thing happening, as the intermezzo-like second movement sounds like a perfect example of Elgar in lighter mode. Elgar is not of course unique in this; one could point, for example, to the scherzo, entitled 'The Fair Day', from Sir Hamilton Harty's *Irish Symphony* which I recall being played on its own in a concert in the BBC's Light Music Festival in March 1949. But the examples I have quoted show that Sir Edward was always alive to the possibility of marketing lighter music even when he was preoccupied with an ostensibly serious composition.

Turning to my postscript on Elgar and Title Music, a number of people have kindly written to the Editor with their recollections of Elgar's music being used as incidental to radio or TV productions. David McBrien of Maidenhead recalls rushing home from school in the 1940s to listen to Children's Hour on the radio and in particular the adventure serials based on the Bunkle books by Margot Pardoe for which the signature tune was *Chanson de Matin*. More recently, late night readings of 'Anne of Green Gables' during the 1970s was accompanied by the piano piece *Serenade*, as Mr R L Clifford of Sudbury (Suffolk) informs us. Tony Rhodes of Kendal, John Knowles from Birmingham, and Peter Greaves from our London Branch all remember that the title music for the 1970s BBC TV adaptation of 'David Copperfield' was not *The Serious Doll*, but *Mina*, although memory insists that the former was used as background music in one episode at least.

It is of course impossible to achieve completeness in such a survey. How many times, one wonders, has *Pomp & Circumstance 1* been employed as background? Several TV commercials, I recall, have used at least a few notes thereof. The large screen has similarly used it on many occasions, most recently perhaps in the film *Brassed Off*, set against the background of a South Yorkshire brass band, fictitiously named in the film but Grimethorpe in actuality.

P.L.S

Sea Pictures, Op 37. The Music Makers, Op 69.
Janet Baker, Sarah Walker (mezzo-soprani), BBC Singers, BBC Symphony Chorus and Orchestra conducted by James Loughran and Norman Del Mar
Carlton BBC Radio Classics 15656 91672

Dame Janet Baker's first recording of *Sea Pictures* was a memorable coupling with du Pré's first version of the Cello Concerto, and a heartfelt account it was too. Carlton Classics have released this live Prom performance on 9 September 1982 at the Royal Albert Hall. This is another rapt account with Baker's lush sounds, uninhibited portamento and total commitment to every word she sings. Her ability to be tender one moment ('Where Corals lie') and dramatically full-blooded the next ('The Swimmer') makes her the supreme artist she is. The Albert Hall gives spacious orchestral sound, occasionally too much so resulting in fogged, dense string textures, but the BBC SO are never less than totally at home in their Elgarian heritage, which mantle Loughran takes up with natural ease.

Del Mar as a conductor was able, in such recordings as his *Enigma Variations* with the RPO, to root out that elusive Elgarian rubato. Here it is most notable in the noble introduction to *The Music Makers*. Later some of his quicker tempi (for example at 'With wonderful deathless ditties') accelerate too much and produce a lack of clarity between orchestra and chorus. The best of this recording is in the singing of the BBC Symphony Chorus and BBC Singers, with their clear enunciation of the text and their total involvement in a piece which has enormous ebb and flow of colour and mood. Sarah Walker is no contralto and her mezzo-soprano, glorious in the middle and at the top lacks the rich and full sounds so typified by Clara Butt and Muriel Foster.

English Anthems and organ solos from Christ's Hospital.
Choir of Christ's Hospital conducted by Peter Allwood, with Mark Wardell (organ)
Carlton Classics 30366 00532

Of the sixteen tracks three are works by Elgar. 'The Spirit of the Lord' (the Prologue to *The Apostles*) is sung with excellent line by the 112-strong choir of this renowned West Sussex public school founded by King Edward VI. Mark Wardell provides an idiomatic representation of Elgar's orchestra on the organ of Portsmouth Cathedral, the venue for the recording. *Ave verum corpus* is sensitively sung by the trebles followed by a well-balanced full sound of SATB and discreet accompaniment by Wardell, who provides the final piece of Elgar - a rousing performance of the *Imperial March* in an arrangement by Sir George Martin, Stainer's successor at St Paul's. The rest of the disc has works by an intriguing mix of composers; Parry, Wesley, Stainer, C S Lang, Ireland, Patrick Hadley, Balfour Gardiner, William Harris, Charles Wood and David Willcocks, of whom the last two provide the most cheerful music.

Christopher Fifield

'Sospiri' : music for violin and piano.

Lydia Mordkovitch (violin), Julian Milford (piano)
Chandos CHAN 9624

By coupling the Violin Sonata with a series of shorter pieces for violin and piano, this disc follows the pattern of a Chandos issue of a dozen or so years ago. That was Nigel (sic) Kennedy's first Elgar on record and remains in the catalogue. Lydia Mordkovitch has made a large number of recordings for Chandos but this is also her first foray into Elgar.

The novelty on the disc is the first recording of F Louis Scheider's contemporary arrangement of *Sursum Corda*. Julian Milford, the pianist on the disc, in his very full and fascinating booklet notes, defends the arrangement on the grounds that much of the material of *Sursum Corda* was drawn from the uncompleted 1887 Violin Sonata. He argues that we could therefore be listening to something approaching what might have been that early sonata's slow movement. I can report that it sounds remarkably effective and that Mordkovitch plays in it with commitment.

It is preceded by a work bearing the same opus number, *Offertoire*. Both works date from 1893/4 but *Offertoire* was not published until 1906 and even then under the pseudonym of Gustav Francke. Milford argues that Elgar chose a Germanic sounding name in the hope of winning a wider public, but elsewhere it is suggested that Francke implies the composer's brother, Frank, whose composing career Edward sought to encourage. No one would claim that this is an Elgar masterpiece. In a simplicity of utterance, Mordkovitch adopts a very clean style that is rather more characteristic of the late rather than early twentieth century. I would have preferred something a bit more gutsy.

The other short pieces are much more familiar. I like the way Mordkovitch treats *Salut d'Amour* in a light and flowing way that speaks of fresh, young love rather than the more nostalgic lingerings that characterise other more inflated accounts. The two *Chansons* are taken very steadily. Here the playing seems a touch inflexible. The music does not breathe naturally. The performance of *Sospiri* on the other hand is much more convincing with an elasticity of pulse that allows the music to speak. *La Capricieuse*, really Elgar's only virtuoso piece for violin, goes well as does Elgar's own arrangement of *Canto Popolare*.

With the ever increasing popularity of the Cello Concerto, perhaps the other Brinkwells works will now come into their own. (They used to be regarded as late Elgar, but perhaps Anthony Payne's work means new descriptions are needed! ??) Certainly there have been a fair number of new recordings of the Violin Sonata in recent years, including a much praised version recently from Midori. My first impression of Mordkovitch's performance is of a cool efficiency. Later on, things do warm up a bit, but she still seems to stand outside the music. I am not always sure what is meant when a performance is described as unidiomatic, but I rather think this one is just that! Turning to Kennedy is to enter a very different landscape. The music breathes more, the playing more involving. Kennedy's tone is less steely and there is an ebb and flow that is most persuasive. The stopwatch

is not always a fair indicator but I think it is somewhat significant that in Mordkovitch's hands the slow movement is over in 8' 4" whereas Kennedy takes a full 9' 42"!

John Knowles

Cello Concerto, Op 85. With works by Walton and Delius.
Janos Starker (cello), Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Leonard Slatkin
RCA 09026 61695-2

Janos Starker is undoubtedly one of the great modern cellists. Born in Hungary, he settled in the USA in 1948, and after a decade as principal cellist in various orchestras, he took to solo work, and has had several concertos written for him by such as Dorati, Rózsa, Heiden and Martinon. He has played in chamber ensembles with Josef Suk, Julius Katchen and others, and has recorded almost 200 works, including (famously) the Bach Cello Suites. He is also held in high regard as a teacher, and editor of music. It is a mystery why it has taken him so long to record the Elgar concerto (and why it took so long - six years - for the recording to be issued).

I approached the disc with some trepidation. There are so many fine recordings of this work available, and I find it increasingly rare to be impressed with a new recording of a work with which one is so familiar. However, I must say at once that this is a very fine recording indeed. Starker's approach is sensitive and intensely personal and intimate; there are no histrionics, just good 'straight' playing, with impeccable technique (clearly no diminution in his powers as he approached his seventieth year). The Scherzo is delicately played, with exemplary articulation (and clearly audible in an excellent recording from Abbey Road); while the Adagio I found deeply moving in its 'straightness'. There is no need to 'interpret' this music, if that means adding extra layers of emotion to it. Only occasionally does Starker stray from the score. In the opening Moderato the trochaic 9/8 theme is phrased by Elgar in complete bars; whereas like Casals Starker breaks it up from time to time, sometimes as a separate 3/8 beat, sometimes tying the quaver on to the following crotchet. Although it breaks the flow a little, it works to the extent that it gives a fractured feel to the music, almost like someone sobbing. The only other major departure is in the Finale, where the rallentando leading into the Poco più lento at fig 66 begins eleven bars early at fig 65. It seems to work, heightening the impact of the last few pages, and I'm sure that Elgar would have approved.

All this time I have said nothing about the role of Leonard Slatkin and the Philharmonia. The greatness of their achievement is summed up in their lack of obtrusiveness (although the cello is not over-recorded, and has to fight to be heard in the occasional *tuttis*). Slatkin has an unerring grip on the tempo throughout, even in the Adagio, when it can get sloppy in some recordings. At 27'44" this is much faster than a lot of versions, although it never sounds hurried. All in all, a memorable achievement by two outstanding musicians and a fine orchestra; and, even allowing for the competition, a recording to own and treasure.

The other works are the Walton Concerto (Slatkin's first contact with British

music was as a boy hearing his parents - members of the Hollywood String Quartet - play the Walton Quartet; see my interview with him in JOURNAL September 1992), and Delius' late *Caprice and Elegy*. My remarks about integrity, interpretation and technique apply equally to these works.

The Editor

CD Round-up

The late Paul Tortelier recorded the Elgar Cello Concerto three times; in 1953 with Sir Malcolm Sargent, in 1972 with Sir Adrian Boult, and in 1988 with Sir Charles Groves. This final version is faster than the Sargent and slower than the Boult. However, comparisons are invidious as any one of these versions is perfectly acceptable, as one would expect from this consummate musician. In his original review, Gareth Lewis spoke of "one of the great interpretative artists of our time", and surely no one would disagree. If Tortelier sounds to be struggling on occasions (there are one or two minor lapses in intonation) it adds to the atmosphere of vulnerability and world-weariness. The first two movements are the strongest, with wonderfully rhythmic semiquavers in the Scherzo. The Adagio rather fails to create the intimate atmosphere which is needed; and Tortelier makes hard work of the Allegro in the Finale. However, the last few pages are superb; he really gives us *molto espressivo* and *con passione*, and the dying fall from the *ff molto allargando* at fig 70 is magical. Sir Charles is a sympathetic and helpful accompanist; and fine performances of Tchaikovsky's *Rococo Variations* and Dvořák's neglected *Rondo* complete the disc (Carlton Classics 30366 00112).

Carlton also give us (on their IMP Classics label) a delightful disc of English string music, also from Groves and the RPO, brought out in 1990 to celebrate the conductor's 75th birthday, and for some reason not reviewed in the JOURNAL at the time. It's a good job that a full body of orchestral strings was employed in the very reverberant acoustic of St Barnabas' Church, Mitcham, and that the RPO strings were on such excellent form. Vaughan Williams' *Tallis Fantasia* is ideally suited to such a venue, and receives a wonderfully spacious account. Sir Charles is in fine form throughout, not least in the demanding *Corelli Fantasia* of Tippett. I prefer Elgar's *Serenade* in a closer, drier sound, but as a performance this is near to ideal, with plenty of expression and feeling but never losing sight of the need to keep a firm hold on the tempo, even in the Larghetto. This would seem to have been Groves' final Elgar recording, and it could not have been bettered. Britten's *Frank Bridge Variations* completes a well-filled disc of outstanding value (30367 00682).

Carlton are also re-releasing recordings from the London Symphony Orchestra in a series called 'LSO Doubles'; as the name suggests, two for the price of one. The two discs were both recorded in Walthamstow Town Hall in 1988 and received rave reviews in the JOURNAL for January 1990, Gareth Lewis comparing them favourably with full-price versions of the same works. On the first CD, Barry Tuckwell conducts the *Enigma Variations*, the *Coronation March*, *Imperial March*, and the complete *Pomp & Circumstance Marches*. These are first-rate performances; Tuckwell does not hang about, but still manages to imbue the

works with commendable expression. The second disc is conducted by Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, and contains Vaughan Williams' *Tallis* and *Greensleeves Fantasias*, plus the Elgar Cello Concerto, played by Felix Schmidt - a persuasive and appealing account of the work. Outstanding value for outstanding performances (Carlton 30368 01137).

Some record titles certainly make large claims. A new release from Disky Classics (DC 703512) is called "The Best Ever Violin Classics", but it is too much of a curate's egg to begin to approach that. However it does contain some interesting and delightful pieces. Ten of the fourteen tracks feature Ida Haendel or Jin Li taken from EMI recordings of the early '80s; the others feature Ulf Hoelscher, Lord Menuhin, and David Oistrakh. I found the bravura efforts of Sarasate tiresome and almost totally resistible; while the arrangements of Schubert's *Ave Maria* and Mendelssohn's *Auf Flügeln des Gesanges* are over the top and bordering on bad taste. The two Kreisler pieces are better; but the finest tracks are those works by the great composers - Fauré's *Berceuse* (Menuhin), Tchaikovsky's *Valse-Scherzo* and Wienawski's *Légende* (both Oistrakh). Jin Li plays Elgar's *La Capricieuse*, rather failing to make the most of the skittish coquetry in the piece, yet playing with considerable intelligence and accomplishment. Geoffrey Parsons is as ever a helpful accompanist.

From Naxos (8.553876) comes 'Songs of Praise', not the happiest title, conjuring up as it does dirgeful accounts of the worst of Victorian hymnody. But not here. This is the Halifax Choral Society under its conductor John Pryce-Jones in a (relatively) popular programme of five hymns and ten anthems. The hymns are taken at a good lick, and sung with gusto by the youthful-sounding choir. Tempi tend to be brisk throughout; I could have done with a little more room in Stainer's *God so loved the world* and Mozart's *Ave verum corpus*. But it's lovely to hear a large, mixed-voice choir in pieces such as *I was glad, O Thou the central orb* and Elgar's *Give unto the Lord*. This last-named sounds a little rushed to begin with (crotchet = 84 as against the marking of 72), but it levels out and sounds convincing, especially in its *molto maestoso* ending. The accompaniment is given on the organ of Huddersfield Town Hall, played by Darius Battiwalla, who also gives a spirited account of the opening movement of the Elgar Organ Sonata. At Naxos' budget price, a disc to suit all pockets.

The Editor

LETTERS

From: Raymond Monk

David Greer's Elgar in Belfast *which was such a notable feature of the March* JOURNAL *contained a reference to John McCormack and to the "coolness" which had existed between the great singer and Elgar for twenty years. Below is the transcript of a letter sent by McCormack to Elgar in 1933 which clearly demonstrates the warmth of their friendship at this time. The letter will be of particular interest to those who have read Professor Greer's article and will delight Andrew Neill who plans to include McCormack's unique performance of*

Is she not passing fair? *in Volume II of* Elgar's Interpreters on Record.

Ritz-Carlton Hotel
Madison Avenue & Forty Sixth Street
New York
March 10 33.

My dear Friend

I got quite a thrill when I recognized your handwriting - and I would like you to know I do recognize your calligraphy. God love you for the kind thought that prompted your letter which reached me here yesterday. You have been much in our minds and heart. Lily and I talk of you all the time. I am still singing our song "Is she not passing fair?" and my accompanist Teddy Schneider and I had a real thrill when we "tuned in" one Sunday afternoon in Shreveport Louisiana and were told by a rather blatant announcer that we would now hear The Enigma Variations ~~played~~ of Sir Edward Elgar played by the New York Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Bruno Walter. I still think the Enigma The great Variations!!! I am glad I lived in the days when the Enigma were [*sic*] written, but Edward, I am still jealous of old "Jaeger"

I am tremendously interested in the tenor part of your opera in six flats. Nowadays a tenor has a hell of a time singing in one flat. Is there a Key signature for the side walk?

God keep you dear friend. You have a very warm spot, a special spot in the hearts of the McCormack family.

Affectionately yours
John McCormack

P.S. I hear Toscanini will do The First Symphony next season. It will be his privilege For my sake I hope it is true

John

From: Robert Darlaston

Some professional writers on music have objected to the principle of completing the Third Symphony *in contradiction of the wishes expressed by Elgar. While I sympathise to an extent with such comments, I feel that there are two factors which should be considered. First, there is Elgar's well-known volatility of opinion on the merits of composing music. But my second reason is that the professionals are being unfair to people such as myself who have a great interest in Elgar's music and his development over the years, but lack the professional's ability to "hear" instruments simply by reading the score.*
I first encountered the sketches of the Third Symphony *as published in Reed's* Elgar as I knew him. *I was in my late teens and I remember persuading a school friend who was a talented pianist to play them through one lunchtime. I was fascinated and wondered endlessly how they would sound played by an orchestra. Thanks to Anthony Payne I now know, and a wonderful sound it is! Indeed, the experience of hearing Elgar/Payne 3 for the first time recalled to mind the sensation felt so long ago on hearing for the first time Symphonies 1 and 2.*

From: David Colbeck

Having just attended - along with most other members of the Elgar Society, it seems! - the première of the Elgar/Payne Symphony no 3, *I would like to express my own observations.*
Anthony Payne's wonderfully inspired work is quite incredible unless one can believe, as he obviously does, that the spirit of Elgar himself actually influenced him during its composition. To me there is no other explanation for this truly remarkable achievement, when even Andrew Davis says he cannot tell when it is "pure" Elgar and when it is Payne that he is conducting!
This achievement completely vindicates my own, and others', views dating back to 1995, that the work needed to be "completed" and performed. The subsequent worldwide publicity alone has made the exercise more than worthwhile.
Elgar and his Society are truly "on the map" once more. Roll on the various centenaries (Variations, Gerontius, *etc) to take us all into the Millennium - and beyond.*

From: Alan Machin

As a music lover I am a mere amateur and so for years I could only look at the sketches for "Sym.III" published in Billy Reed's book without being able to evaluate their worth for myself. When Anthony Payne's "elaboration" was announced I was desperately keen to hear Elgar's last symphonic thoughts, but even more anxious not to be disappointed. I need not have worried. The Elgar/Payne Symphony no 3 *is a magnificent achievement, and all concerned with bringing the sketches to life deserve our gratitude and congratulations : the Elgar family, the BBC and its musicians, and above all Anthony Payne who has done his labour of love in such a brilliantly idiomatic way.*
When R J Buckley went to visit the composer at Forli in 1896 he was told "My idea is that there is music in the air, music all around us, the world is full of it and you simply take as much of it as you require!" In these days of radio and CD, music is so readily available that anyone, and no longer just composers, can capture as much as they require from the air at the touch of a button. Our opportunities to hear the widest range of music and study it in depth are unprecedented, yet it all means that for all except the young the unique experience of hearing a great piece of music for the first time is increasingly rare. Many of us in the past will have tried to imagine what it was like to be present at an Elgar first performance. Those of us who were fortunate enough to be present in the Royal Festival Hall on 15 February will now have some idea. It was a unique and unforgettable experience.
Whether the symphony survives 5, 50 or 500 years will ultimately depend less upon who wrote what, fascinating though that is, than whether it works by itself as a piece of music. I think it most emphatically does, and its creation has added immeasurably to our knowledge and appreciation of Elgar and his work in the last years of his life.

From: Dennis Clark

I have recently acquired a full album set of 78 rpm records of the Second Symphony, *recorded in the Queen's Hall in 1927 by the LSO under Elgar's own baton. The Gramophone Company seems to have been a little worried about public reception of the work, even though it had already been issued three years earlier in the acoustic form.*
In what passed in those days for a sleeve note - a printed sheet pasted inside the front heavy board album cover - the following advice is given to the prospective listener:

The Symphony is cast in four movements and to those music lovers who are not familiar with the Composer's very personal idiom it might prove wise to approach the work through the magnificent last Movement, then from the delicately pensive Larghetto (Second Movement) to the elfin Rondo (Presto) which forms the Third Movement, and lastly, the rhapsodic Opening Movement. The true proportions of the work are, of course, best grasped by playing the Symphony with the movements in the correct order (when the climax built up by the succeeding movements is brought home with full force) but such proportions are also best perceived after the idiom and general mental aspect of the music has become familiar. The suggestion is that, before attempting a comprehensive survey of the work as a whole, the details should be made familiar. Many will find the manner suggested the simplest.

Whatever we may think today about the suggestion of playing movements in a different order, none of us will argue with the final words of this "sleeve note"...

Few will deny this Symphony its place amongst the greatest Masterpieces of Music, nor will they deny that in the last Movement something of that fleeting "Spirit of Delight" has been permanently enshrined.

From: Harrison Oxley

The renewal of interest in Caractacus *is exciting, and Patrick Little's analysis of the text (March JOURNAL) brings much enlightenment. The fact still remains that the words of the final chorus do present a stumbling-block to many singers. Michael Kennedy produced a version, still available from Novello, in which the entire libretto was re-written and modernised. With respect to so eminent an authority, I feel that this was quite unnecessary and unfortunate. The period flavour of the words is part of the essence of the work, and they are perfectly easy to understand.*
My solution in 1994 was to make only small adjustments to the words of the final chorus, which enabled all singers to perform it with total conviction. This version is appended, and readers are very welcome to use it (contributions to the Oxley beer fund gratefully received, IP31 2RL!)
We found the work immensely enjoyable to prepare and perform, indeed, a revelation, and I for one cannot wait to do it again.

The clang of arms is over;
Abide in peace and brood
On glorious ages coming,
And slavery subdued.

The light descends from heaven,
The centuries roll away,
The empire of the Roman
Is crumbled into clay;

The eagle's flight is ended,
His weary wings are furled;
And freedom's pow'r enlightens
The shores of all the world.
Free men, alert! and fear not,
Though round your path of power
Opposing cohorts gather,
And jealous tyrants lower;
On - though the world desert you,
On - so your cause be right;
Free men, alert! and fear not,
But gird your loins for fight.
And ever your dominion
From age to age shall grow
O'er peoples undiscovered,
In lands we cannot know;
And where the cause of freedom
Its noble standard rears,

No slave shall be for subject,
No trophy wet with tears;
As nation speaks to nation
And joins in peace entwined,
The glorious joy of freedom
Shall spread o'er all mankind.
Nor shall her might diminish
While firm she speaks the faith
Of equal law to all men -
And holds it to the death;
For all the world shall learn it -
Though long the task shall be -
The text of freedom's teaching,
The message of the free;
And when at last they find it,
The nations all shall stand
And hymn the praise of freedom,
All nations, hand in hand.

From: J H Roberts

In listing the orchestral forces needed for a performance of his Symphonic Study Falstaff, Sir Edward specifies four percussion players (besides tympani) and, indeed, a fifth player is desirable at one point in the score. Reviews of concert and disc performances of this work often comment upon the importance of the percussion and it is known that Sir Edward was especially pleased with the four "percussion cadenzas" that portray Falstaff's scarecrow army. Sir Ivor Atkins remembered that when on a visit to Elgar at Marl Bank the composer took great pleasure in playing sections from the set of records presented to him after the opening of the Abbey Road Studios; "I want you to hear the drums in Falstaff", he said.
These 78 rpm discs have now been transferred to CD with enhanced reproduction but it is clear that the original engineers took special care to bring out the percussion; the quietest tambourine taps are captured very well.
However, with this background, a careful listening to the 78 rpm performance suggests the following:-
a) Fewer than the requisite four (or five) percussion players were engaged for the recording sessions.
b) What the players contribute can differ from the printed score.

Taking point a), in Jerrold Northrop Moore's Elgar on Record, *the size of the London Symphony Orchestra engaged for the Abbey Road opening is listed, and we read 'Timpani and two percussion'. Further, we are in the exceptional situation of having a Pathé film taken at the studio inauguration when (with the same conductor, same orchestra, same studio, same day) the main tune from Pomp & Circumstance March no 1 was played and filmed. As the camera pans across the orchestra only two percussion players are to be seen.*
Regarding point b), this is brought out most clearly with the four scarecrow cadenzas mentioned earlier, where cymbals play quietly and effectively but are not indicated in the score. The notes they play are assigned to the bass drum but so far as the writer has been able to ascertain, the bass drum is entirely

absent from the Elgar performance, even though, in the score, it has telling contributions to make both loud and soft.
(The passages concerned occur in the miniature score on p 84 (sixth and seventh bars of fig 85), p 98 (bar before fig 96), p 99 (sixth bar of fig 97), and on p 113 (sixth bar of fig 112)).
It would be interesting to know if any departures from the score have been noticed for other sections of the orchestra (strings, brass, etc).

Whatever we make of these oddities, it is clear that Sir Edward was delighted with the discs produced at the Abbey Road opening so perhaps the cymbal player misread his part (reading a tails down note for a tails up note - the convention used in scoring bass drum and cymbals parts), and thereby made the scarecrow passages come through the recording process more vividly. The other alternative is that Sir Edward gave the players special instructions. If this is the case then perhaps none of the many recordings (and performances) of Falstaff since 1931 fully comply with the composer's final thoughts about the orchestration of this great work.

Whilst in Australia recently, John Norris took this picture of a gate in the Blue Mountains (an area with Elgarian associations in Pageant of Empire). The owner is (or was) certainly musical, as the two clefs testify; but are the six Es Elgarian ones? And is the train the Starlight Express?

100 YEARS AGO...

The inaugural concert of the Worcestershire Philharmonic Society was considered a success : "Had nice papers re concert", Alice noted on 9 May. But time was now getting short if *Caractacus* was to be completed and orchestrated in time for its October première : "E.writing...busy with proofs" on 11 May. He had had to send the choral parts separately so that the Leeds chorus could start to practise them. The undisturbed peace he needed was provided by a country cottage called Birchwood Lodge, three miles north-west of Malvern, and from where the British Camp could clearly be seen. They rented it from March, and began to furnish it; the square Broadwood piano (see JOURNAL May 1994) arrived on 25 April. The Elgars went there for the first time on 16 May, staying for five days; "*Very* lovely here", Edward wrote to Jaeger on 18 May. An upstairs bedroom was turned into a study. On 20th, "E. & A. at Birchwood all by their souses [selves] - Very wet - Walked home [ie. to Forli] to lunch - lovely through the wood".

The work was completed on 12 June, ten days after Edward's forty-first birthday, and the following day he took the final parts of the score to London to Novello, staying a week in order to correct proofs. On 18th he met with Andrew Black, who was to sing the title role at Leeds. During the week, he and Alice also went to concerts, the opera, art exhibitions, shops and the zoo! On returning to Malvern, he began orchestration straight away. They went to Birchwood on 28 June, and from then on most of the work was done there. There was an interruption when Edward went to Leeds to attend the first rehearsal on 9 July. This was a success apparently : Alice wrote "joyous telegram D.G.", and Elgar later wrote to Jaeger: "All well at Leeds thank you & they *are* intelligent". He had written to the Master of the Queen's Musick, Sir Walter Parratt, seeking permission to dedicate *Caractacus* to Queen Victoria. Parratt wanted a proof from Novello, saying "I am not allowed to recommend works I have not seen". Permission was granted, and Elgar received notification of this on 4 August.

Elgar was helped in the correction of proofs and parts by Isabel Fitton, and also by the Norbury sisters, who lived nearby at Sherridge. The work was finished on 21 August, and though it had been hard going, the cottage and its surroundings had been a vital inspiration to him. As he wrote that day to Jaeger, in an oft-quoted remark : "...you will see our 'woodlands' someday.- I made old Caractacus stop as if broken down on p 168 & choke & say 'woodlands' again because I'm so madly devoted to my woods. I've got the place for years now & another summer..."

He went to Leeds again for a choral rehearsal on 27 August; and at the beginning of September took two of the soloists through their parts - the tenor Edward Lloyd at his home in Brighton on 4th, and the soprano Medora Henson in London on 6th. For the Gloucester Festival later that month the Elgars stayed with the Bakers at Hasfield Court, where the squire, 'WMB[aker]' was, according to Moore, "his peppery self, assigning members of the party for various expeditions and slamming doors for emphasis".

The only Elgar at Gloucester was the 'Meditation' from *The Light of Life*, played as an orchestral voluntary at the opening service. That he still felt like an outsider on such occasions is made clear in a letter to Jaeger, where he writes that "...a 3-choir festival always upsets me - the twaddle of it & mutual admiration...I detest humbug & sham & can't talk it well".