

# The Elgar Society

# NEWSLETTER



JANUARY

1977

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Members will receive with this issue an index to the  
previous duplicated Newsletters, nos. 1 to 10.

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WE TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY OF WISHING ALL MEMBERS A HAPPY  
AND DARE WE HOPE PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR.

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

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We are indebted to Mr. J. Mawbey, a member of the Society, for the new lettering design used on the cover.

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# Elgar Society Newsletter

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## EDITORIAL

NEW SERIES No. 1

This, the first of a restyled "Newsletter" series, also marks my debut as editor, together with the committee members listed at the foot of the page. It will be our aim not only to increase the value of the journal as a link between members, but to improve its appearance and extend if possible the range of articles which we publish. First, let me pay tribute to the splendid work of the editor of the first ten issues, Wulstan Atkins. Under his guidance the Newsletter played an increasingly important part in the activities of the Society and a number of very valuable articles were published in the duplicated issues up to September 1976. We feel sure that these articles will have permanent value for Elgar researchers. Now we have changed our appearance and method of production--we can reproduce illustrations and musical examples accurately. Of course production cost is higher, and to pay for this increase we need a greatly increased membership. The committee is restricted as always by financial limitations, but one new member from each of you would be a tremendous boost for the Society, and would not only aid our work generally but would bring nearer the day when we can turn this journal into an Elgar Quarterly. I do urge you to do all you can to further the Society and its aims by lobbying your musical friends and persuading at least one of them to send a subscription to the Secretary. Full details of subscriptions will be found on the back cover.

Since early Autumn Elgar enthusiasts have much to be pleased about. Radio, television, concerts, and records--there have been a host of good things, and more is promised. We shall try to play our part and keep you informed, and add our own comments. Please write to us--any journal exists on the enthusiasm and interest of its readers, and the Newsletter is no exception. We welcome articles, correspondence, information, and suggestions. Please remember though that owing to the size of the Newsletter we cannot publish lengthy articles or letters.

RONALD TAYLOR  
Editor

Editorial: John Buttrey, Michael Rostron; Trevor Fenemore-Jones. 3

## News Items

The Society has now issued a new membership leaflet. Members who can usefully distribute copies, and thereby increase our membership, should apply to the Secretary.

The leaflet had its 'premiere' at the performance of "King Olaf" at the Festival Hall in London, when the Hall authorities permitted the Society to have an information table in the foyer opposite, but not too close, to the main bar. A high proportion of the audience took a copy and we hope for more members as a result.

The Korean violinist Kyung Wha Chung has added Elgar's Violin Concerto to her repertoire. Her first performance was at Liverpool, and was well received by the critics. Further performances have followed, and her London performance, with Solti conducting, is in February. Decca have a recording planned a little later.

The Malvern Festival is again announced for revival, this time for Summer 1977. We sincerely hope it can be revived successfully, but past disappointments have made us just a little sceptical. However, good luck to the organisers and we hope they will keep the Society fully informed.

Listeners to a B.B.C. broadcast from the Tokyo reporter heard something surprising recently. At a reception to mark his 50 years on the throne the Emperor Hirohito entered the hall to the accompaniment of the Japanese band playing "Land of Hope and Glory!"

Christopher Bishop of E. M. I. has been made an Honorary Member of the Elgar Society for his contributions to encouraging interest in Elgar's music. Mr. Bishop has long been an outstanding friend of the Society.

Geoffrey Hodgkins has agreed to answer member's questions on Elgar's music--who published which piece, what is in print, etc. Such questions should be sent directly to him at 30A Bittacy Hill, Mill Hill, London, N. W. 7.

Alan Webb, late Curator of the Elgar Birthplace, is still keeping busy. He tells us that he has recently given illustrated talks to the Hazelbury Society, to the Worcester branch of the Elgar Society, and on January 25th he gives another talk at Sturminster Newton in Dorset.

Ken Russell's film "Elgar" was revived on television in the Autumn. How well it wears! One had remembered certain outstanding scenes, but a number of telling minor scenes had slipped from the memory. Purists

may carp at certain inaccuracies or events out of sequence, but it does not really matter. The whole film creates a superb atmosphere, and is so brilliantly put together. It remains, whatever Mr. Russell may now think, one of his most successful films. May we now hope for a revival of the splendid "Delius" film?

The Sanguine Fan. A year or two ago one heard rumours from Covent Garden of a new version of Elgar's only ballet -- choreography to be by Sir Frederick Ashton, designs by David Hockney. Alas, the project was shelved, but in the autumn came a different version from the London Festival Ballet company. The critics were generally kind to the production, and particularly singled out the fine dancing of Paul Clarke, one of the most impressive of our young dancers. It was all the more tragic that Paul Clarke died a few days later. A sad loss for British ballet.

A number of Elgar letters appeared in a Sotheby sale in November. One of the most interesting lots was a group of eleven to Sir Alexander Mackenzie. In one letter Elgar reminds Mackenzie of their first encounter in 1881 "when I was at the end of the second desk of the violins." These letters went for £130.

Kilburn Letters Appeal. This has now closed at the very encouraging total of £250. All contributors are thanked, and we renew our thanks to the original purchaser. \*\*\* See a note later in this issue\*\*\*

John Patrick, General Manager of the Classical Music Marketing Division of EMI, has been made an Honorary Member of the Elgar Society. All lovers of Elgar's music owe a particular debt to EMI.

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#### A. T. SHAW

In June 1976 Mr. A. T. Shaw retired from the position of Chairman after a long and distinguished tenure of that office. It is largely through his enthusiasm that the Society exists at all, and we have since elected Mr. Shaw an Honorary Vice-President of the Society. The committee feels, however, that some further appreciation is due and that individual members may wish to be associated in a gift to Mr. Shaw. We have therefore decided to ask those members who wish to each subscribe 25p. towards a suitable gift. Details of what is purchased and the presentation will appear in a future Newsletter. It has been decided to put a closing date on the subscription of

FEBRUARY 28th.

Subscriptions should be sent direct to the Treasurer, John Knowles, 11 The Chase, Watford, Herts. and marked Shaw Presentation.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- January 19, 8 p. m.      Symphony no.1.      Royal Festival Hall  
included in NPO Concert,  
cond. Andrew Davis.
- January 30, 7.30 p. m.      Enigma Variations.      Royal Festival Hall  
included in NPO Concert,  
cond. Sir Charles Groves.
- February 6, 7.30 p. m.      Violin Concerto, and      Royal Festival Hall  
Symphony no. 2.  
Kyung Wha Chung, LSO  
cond. Sir Georg Solti.
- February 27,      Enigma Variations.      Wembley Conference  
included in RLPO concert,      Centre  
cond. Meredith Davies.  
[Further details ring 01-902-1234]
- March 4, 7.30 p. m.      Sea Pictures/Pomp & Circumstance  
Marches/The Music Makers.      Great Hall,  
CBSO, cond. Sir Ivor Keys.      University of  
Soloist: Alfreda Hodgson.      Birmingham.
- \*\*IN AID OF THE ELGAR BIRTHPLACE APPEAL.** Further  
details from Miss Anne Soden, 11 Darley Mead Court,  
Hampton Lane, Solihull, Warwickshire.
- March 5, 7.45 p. m.      Dream of Gerontius.      Croydon, Fairfield Hall  
RPO, Croydon Phil. Soc.  
cond. James Gaddarn, with  
Alfreda Hodgson, Philip Langridge,  
Raimund Herinx.
- March 7, 8 p. m.      Repeat of the above performance.      Royal Festival  
Hall
- March 19, 7.30 p. m.      The Kingdom.      Ashford(Kent)Parish Church  
Ashord Choral Soc. & Orch.  
cond. Mark Deller, with Joyce  
Rogers, Rosemary Greenhalgh,  
David Johnston, Geoffrey Shaw.  
[Phone 0233-26766 for tickets, or at door]
- March 23, 7.30 p. m.      Dream of Gerontius.      Royal Albert Hall  
St. Bartholomew's Hospital Choral  
Soc. & Orch. with Elizabeth Bain-  
bridge, David Rendall, Raimund Herinx

**\*\*In aid of the Multiple Sclerosis Society.**

- April 1 Cockaigne/Pomp & Circumstance Royal Festival Hall  
March. [Details to be announced]
- April 5, 7.30 p.m. Symphony no.2. Hull City Hall  
included in concert by the Hallé  
Orchestra. cond. James Loughran
- April 8, Good Friday Dream of Gerontius. Birmingham Town Hall  
CBSO & Chorus. cond. Christopher  
Robinson. with Barbara Rowbotham,  
Kenneth Bowen, Robert McCann.
- May 28, 7.30 p.m. The Starlight Express. Complete Uppingham Theatre  
incidental music.  
Rutland Sinfonia. cond. Barry  
Collett, with Rita Jones, David  
Chambers.  
[Details from 153 Branston Road, Oakham, Rutland]
- June 4, Cockaigne /Introduction and Allegro/ Birmingham  
Sea Pictures/Enigma Variations. Town Hall  
CBSO. cond. Maurice Handford, with  
Alfreda Hodgson.
- June 5, Dream of Gerontius. Royal Festival Hall  
London Choral Society.  
[Further details to be announced]
- June 10, Symphony no.1.  
[Further details to be announced] Royal Festival Hall

THREE CHOIRS' FESTIVAL 250th Anniversary GLOUCESTER

The preliminary announcements have been made for the Festival, August 20 to August 28, 1977. The following will be of particular interest:

Dream of Gerontius. (in Gloucester Cathedral)  
Caractacus. (in the City Leisure Centre)  
Serenade for Strings. (Orchestra of St. John's, Smith Square, in Pittville Pump Room, Cheltenham, August 28.)

Lecture on Elgar by E. Wulstan Atkins, Monday, August 22,  
2.30 p.m. in City Leisure Centre.

Festival Brochure available early March, from Festival Office, Community House, College Green, Gloucester.

The first performance of Ian Parrott's new work, announced last May, was duly given at the Brangwyn Hall, Swansea, on 20th October. The work was played by Jennifer Bates as part of the 1976 Swansea Festival.

"Homage" probably owes its origin to its composer's belief--expressed in his Master Musicians volume--that "Bach was the inspiration behind the theme of the 'Enigma Variations', not as the writer of exact counterpoint but as a great and powerful imaginative writer whom Elgar admired probably more than any other composer..." Material for the piece has been drawn from Bach's famous 'Exercitum', from the first Brandenburg Concerto, from 'Enigma' and from Elgar's unfinished Third Symphony. Not unexpectedly, the key of the work is G minor and it is also in the nature of things, especially in view of what the composer has described as "Elgar's obsession with the strange tonality which we might call G minor-major", that there should be a Picardy close. It may be noted that the 'Enigma' theme makes its first appearance as a counterpoint to a recall, occurring about half-way through, of the opening bars of "Homage" (this opening being a citation from the Bach 'Exercitum'). At this point the texture is in two parts. Later, the theme is presented as the middle voice of a passage of three part writing; soon after it is heard in canon at the twelfth. These references are not to the theme in its entirety but to its first six bars (G minor). The "maggiore" section of the theme is more briefly treated: two bars only are quoted -- towards the end of the piece -- and these lead straight into a short passage -- chosen perhaps on account of its rising sevenths -- culled from the opening movement of the Third Symphony. By now the tonality has changed to B flat. There is, however, no formal return to G as tonal centre; all feeling of traditional tonality is momentarily dispelled by a telescoped version, in which successive chords embodying false relations are superimposed one on another of the last bars of the Adagio of the first Brandenburg Concerto, what time the alternation of block chords and rising arpeggios calls obliquely to mind the ending of one of Bach's best-known organ works -- the Toccata and Fugue in D minor. After this, the final bar of G major seems scarcely less precipitate than the unexpected G major close of the March in the second "Wand of Youth" suite.

While technical commentary has been fairly easy, criticism of "Homage" is very difficult, since criteria for comparison do not lie readily to hand. Perhaps, however, the piece is itself an essay in music criticism; a refutation by Ian Parrott, in terms of actual music, of solutions to Elgar's 'Enigma' offered in other quarters. Parody it is not, for the essence of parody is humour, and there can be no doubt that "Homage" is a work of the utmost seriousness of purpose, even if we are uncertain, after a single hearing, as to the composer's precise intentions.



"THE APOSTLES" at Tewkesbury Abbey & Evesham Methodist Church

Performances by the Philomusica of Gloucestershire and Worcestershire, and with the Evesham Choral Society. James Cowley and Walter Wilson, conductors. Sept. & Nov. 1976.

Nobody will dispute that a production of this great and beautiful work presents many difficulties, so it is a pleasure to report on two successful performances by an amateur group. Both performances were notable for the tremendous enthusiasm shown by the choir and the soloists, and sympathetic direction from the conductors. Particularly fine was the singing of the soprano Gillian Whitehead and the tenor John Gayford at Evesham. The orchestral climaxes at the sunrise scene and finale captured all of Elgar's mastery of orchestration. These performances were only two of fourteen given this year around the two counties, and Philomusica are already rehearsing "The Kingdom" for their 1977 season. An Elgar Festival is planned for 1978 at Tewkesbury Abbey, when the major choral works, and several important orchestral works are to be performed. It will come as no surprise that two of Philomusica's leading members are keen Elgarians: James Cowley and James Walkley, who founded the Society eleven years ago. We are grateful indeed for the splendid work Philomusica is doing and hope that their concerts will receive the support they deserve.

Michael Trott

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#### RUTLAND SINFONIA CONCERTS.

We have news of the orchestra founded and conducted by Barry Collett. At a recent concert in Uppingham, with Mr. Collett as pianist with the Dartington String Quartet, an audience of over 600 heard the Piano Quintet.

The record previously announced has been finished and will be available in March. The Uppingham Community College Choir, Judith Robinson (soprano), and various instrumentalists made the record which will include Ave Verum, op.2; Drakes Broughton; As Torrents in Summer; The Prince of Sleep; and various other part songs and solos. Also the Duet for Trombone and Piano, and the two piano pieces "In Smyrna" and "Skizze".

Orders for the record, which will include notes and words, should be sent to Barry Collett, Uppingham Community College, London Road, Uppingham, Rutland. The price is £2.50.

## THE ELGAR FOUNDATION

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The latest news from the Elgar Birthplace Appeal is that it has now reached £50,000. This is the half-way mark of the appeal, and two-thirds of the money so far subscribed represents cash donations. The Foundation has plans to make the appeal more widely known, and a programme of public concerts is planned to assist in fund raising. The need for donations is still urgent, if the targets set for important improvements and restoration of the Birthplace and Museum at Broadheath are to be achieved. At a time of rising costs the need to start the work grows more urgent, and indeed some repairs have started. Roof repairs have been completed at the front of the cottage, and work is to start shortly on treatment to deal with rising damp. Replacement of dead trees and shrubs in the garden is also in hand. Copying of manuscripts has started.

Donations should be sent to The Appeal Director, 27 College Street, Worcester. (Telephone Worcester (0905) 27202.

## ELGAR BIRTHPLACE NEWS

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The Curator, Jack McKenzie, reports: It has been a most satisfactory year at the Birthplace. Visitors topped the 6,000 mark for the first time. This is obviously due to the increasing popularity of Sir Edward's music, which in turn has been helped by the large number of new recordings on the market. The Birthplace Appeal has aroused a great deal of interest and the increase in advertising has led many newcomers to seek us out. Among the V.I.P.'s who have come to the house in the last few months have been the scholar Diana McVeagh, Michael Pope of the B.B.C., the composers Geoffrey Burg-eon and Robert Walker, and John Thaw of "The Sweeney" who is a very keen Elgarian. There have also been a great many 'old faithfuls' paying return visits, and new friends have made themselves known.

One outstanding gift has recently been received. This is an Italian postcard written by Elgar from the Hotel Royal, Bordighera, to the German conductor Wilhelm de Haan. It was Herr Hofkapellmeister de Haan who gave the third performance in Germany of 'The Dream of Gerontius'; this took place at Darmstadt on Oct. 19th, 1903. The postcard was discovered lodged in a book at the library of the University College of Buckingham, whose authorities generously donated it to the Birthplace. Sales of recordings this year have been very encouraging, totalling more than £1,300. Profits from this help considerably towards the upkeep of the house. Orders (by post) are very welcome, although, regrettably, postage is extra.

Copies of Dr. Jerrold N. Moore's book: Elgar, a Life in Photographs are also available price £4.50, plus postage.

E L G A R

Letters to the Editor of the Birmingham Post, \*  
Feb. - March  
1934.

Sir,

I was much interested in "E. B. 's" biographical sketch of the great composer and musician.

I well remember the incident at the late Mr. W. C. Stockley's orchestral concert at the Birmingham Town Hall, now fifty years ago. After a first performance of an orchestral composition, which was received with enthusiastic applause, Mr. Stockley, who was conducting, beckoned to a player on the second bench of "strings", who descended to the front of the platform and modestly acknowledged the well-deserved plaudits of the audience. This was Edward Elgar.

I also remember an incident connected with the first performance of "The Dream of Gerontius" at the Birmingham Triennial Festival of 1900. The late Dr. Richter was conducting the final rehearsal, for band and chorus, of this work when suddenly the composer appeared on the platform; and, turning to the male voices, who were struggling with the "demon" music shouted excitedly: "Gentlemen, you are singing it all wrong!" We were far too "polite" in our rendering of such curious and difficult music, and had not grasped at all what it was intended to portray.

In 1906 I listened to "The Dream of Gerontius" under ideal conditions. I was accommodated with a seat in the Choir of Hereford Cathedral (usually reserved, I believe, for reporters) at the Three Choirs Festival, when chorus and orchestra were arranged at the West end of the Cathedral. To any of my fellow "demons" of 1900 who may remember the incident referred to, I send "appropriate" greetings.

W. R. Smith  
February 28

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\*Reprinted by kind permission of the Editor.

Sir,

It was very interesting to me and, no doubt, to others of my fellow "Demons" of 1900 to read the letter from Mr. W. R. Smith in yesterday's "Post".

My impression of the incident is, however, rather different. At the last rehearsal in the Masonic Hall, Sir Edward was quite pleased with the effect produced. At the final rehearsal in the Town Hall, his actual words were: "Gentlemen, you are all wrong; you are singing like a party of school children."

Not only I, but many others of the chorus recognised the fact that Sir Edward had failed to allow for the disparity in the size of the two halls. The chorus filled the Masonic Hall, but only the stage in the Town Hall. However that may be the male members of the chorus were disgruntled and didn't hesitate to show it. Dr. Richter did not seem very pleased either.

Frank Richards  
March 2

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Sir,

The following may interest some of your readers. The Stockley Quartet consisted of the late Sir Edward Elgar; the late Theophilus Watkiss, for many years the distinguished organist of Broseley Parish Church, a musician of great repute in the Midlands; the late Charles Hayward, known as "The English Paganini" on account of his brilliant playing (the Haywards migrated from Broseley to Wolverhampton, I understand); and Mr. William Wadeley, who for more than fifty years has been and still is the distinguished organist of St. John's Church, Kidderminster, and as active as ever in the cause of music. He is the father of Dr. Fred Wadeley of Carlisle Cathedral.

L. A. R.  
March 5

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Sir,

As an old member of the Festival Choir of 1900, when "Gerontius" was produced, it has given me much pleasure to read your biographical notes and also the letters from old choristers. There is, however, one point which in all fairness to Birmingham should be mentioned, and that is, that although the initial Festival performance was somewhat

indifferent from several points of view, this was readjusted for the honour and prestige of Birmingham singers when the work was brilliantly given by the Festival Choral Society in 1904 under the conductorship of the late Dr. Sinclair; who, by the way, was a great personal friend of Sir Edward Elgar, and was one with Sir Edward in atmosphere and spirit.

Frederick J. Slade  
March 6

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Sir,

A fellow-chorister ventures to say in his letter to you of Monday, March 5, that our conductor "did not seem very pleased either" that Elgar should criticise our meaningless singing of his Gerontius at the final rehearsal in the Town Hall. Surely it was we whom Richter "did not seem very pleased" with. Please allow me to state that, on the morning of the performance, Dr. Richter came and stood on the steps leading to our dressing-rooms and with unforgettable voice and gesture besought us to do our very best "for the work of the English genius."

Elgar's words at the rehearsal: "It is no better than a drawing-room ballad" were not received in the large-minded spirit that their truth demanded from a body of loyal singers.

Second Soprano  
March 7

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Sir,

Referring to Mr. F. J. Slade's letter in yesterday's "Post", I am under the impression that the first performance of "Gerontius" after its production at the Festival was given by the City Choral Society in 1905, but am open to correction. I have the programme of the latter society's performance before me. The conductor was Mr. Fred Beard, who, being a Roman Catholic, was steeped in the spirit of the work; and the soloists were Marie Brema, John Coates and Dalton Baker. I heard all three performances and my recollection is that the City Choral Society's rendering was the finest of the three.

S. C. Taunton  
March 7

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Sir,

Referring to Mr. S. C. Taunton's letter in yesterday's "Post", upon further reference to my musical library I find that our Festival Choral Society gave the first performance of "Gerontius" after the 1900 production on Thursday, March 26, 1903, the principals being Muriel Foster, William Green and Andrew Black, Dr. G. R. Sinclair conductor, and C. W. Perkins again at the organ.

I had the privilege of singing on both occasions, and I have both the printed programmes in front of me as I write, so that it goes to show that our friends of the old City Choral Society were somewhat "behind the beat" in not rendering this great work until 1905. As regards who did it best, well, we will leave that as a moot point!

Frederick J. Slade  
March 8

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THE ELGAR WEEKEND

The Belsfield Hotel, overlooking Lake Windermere, was an excellent setting for the Elgar Weekend which took place from 29th to 31st October 1976. Very comfortable, well managed, good food, the hotel proved a splendid venue for the occasion, and although it was fully booked I was sorry that so few members of the Society managed to attend. It was a most memorable weekend and should not have been missed. On the Friday evening, John Pike gave the premiere of the film he made for the Elgar Foundation "Hope and Glory". The film lasted an hour and threequarters, and was enthralling. John Pike, who is a dentist from Basingstoke, has produced an excellent film about Elgar's life, made on actual locations, with authentic materials, and without resorting to employing actors. A separate sound-track of commentary, and recordings of Elgar compositions (many recorded by the composer) was synchronised to accompany the film. The total result, which was greatly appreciated by the audience, was outstanding, reflecting the care and enthusiasm of Mr. Pike for his subject.

On the Saturday morning E. Wulstan Atkins gave his talk "Personal Reminiscences of Elgar." Although I have heard it before, I still found this talk most interesting and moving. In the evening, a recital was given by the Amici String Quartet. They played the String Quartet, Op. 83, then Colin Horsley gave a fine account of the Concert Allegro. Finally, to end a delightful evening, he joined the Quartet to play the Piano Quintet, Op. 84. Coffee was served afterwards enabling the audience to meet the artists, Lionel Bentley, John Trustler, Robert Hope Simpson, and Bernard Richards of the Quartet. Colin Horsley, Wulstan Atkins, John Pike, and the director of the weekend John Wright.

Jack McKenzie

## ELGAR AND DENMARK

by Mogens Wenzel Andreasen, Copenhagen.

As a Dane I am naturally happy to learn of the success of Carl Nielsen's music in England. Nielsen himself was very upset by the failure of his music outside Denmark (except perhaps for Sweden), but now, 45 years after his death, his music seems to be internationally accepted, especially in English-speaking countries. This year we have seen the first two boxes of the complete Nielsen symphonies, one of them from EMI, containing not only the symphonies, but the three concertos and most of the non-theatrical orchestral music as well. It is heart-warming to see a great foreign company do this, because it is the only way to have it done. The Danish recording industry is small, and the economic possibilities for publishing complete symphonic boxes is even smaller. I can imagine British music-lovers asking, do Danish audiences take to British music in the same way? I am afraid not!

Of course there is a small group of English music enthusiasts--in fact I belong to it myself. Without being able to explain why, I have always been in love with English music. It speaks to me in the same way that Danish -- especially Nielsen's -- music does. Which English composer could one call the "English Nielsen?" No one, of course, for, like most English composers of this century, Nielsen is a very original composer. But England has a great composer who, like Nielsen, created his greatest works around the beginning of the century, Sir Edward Elgar. The music of these two composers is not at all alike, but I think they have almost the same national significance.

What of Elgar's music in Denmark? I am sorry but Elgar does not enjoy the same position in my country that Nielsen seems to have in Britain. Performances of Elgar's works are few, and he is not regarded as a great composer at all, normally being regarded as eclectic and sentimental. From my early years I have been a keen radio listener and concertgoer, but I only remember a few Danish performances and broadcasts of Elgar's works. Some of the smaller works such as "Salut d'amour" and "Pomp and Circumstance no. 1" are heard frequently, and as a boy in the 1940's and early 1950's I often heard these works in the popular afternoon concerts on Danish radio. But performances of the greater Elgar works have always been few in this country.

The most frequently performed of Elgar's greater works in Denmark is the cello concerto. I remember four performances in Copenhagen within the last twenty years. Efram Kurtz played it many years ago with the Danish Radio Symphony Orchestra, and a few years ago the same orchestra performed it under Daniel Barenboim with Jacqueline Du Pre as the soloist. The local critics were impressed but were reluctant to admit it, so they said: "The two young gifted musicians played the concerto as if it were a masterpiece. But it is not."

They wrote in exactly the same way recently when Paul Tortelier played the concerto with the Zealand Symphony Orchestra. A performance two or three years ago by a young Danish soloist, in the Tivoli Gardens with the Tivoli Symphony Orchestra, caused a Copenhagen critic to write: "A pale, unoriginal and uninteresting work."

About twenty years ago I remember a performance by the Danish Radio Symphony Orchestra--conducted either by Sargent or Barbirolli I think-- of "Falstaff." This work puzzled the local critics. They could not write that they found the work bad, and they could not write either that they found it great. They did not know the work of course, and no-one had told them what to think of it, so they wrote that it sounded great, but was too much Richard Straussian to be valued in its own right. Further, I remember two performances of the "Serenade for Strings, in E minor." One was in Aarhus by the Aarhus Civic Orchestra, conducted by some Danish conductor, and English friends who heard it told me that they simply did not recognize the piece! The other performance was in the Tivoli Gardens conducted by another Danish conductor, and next day a local critic wrote that Elgar had no melodic gift!

The last thing to be mentioned is a performance some four or five years ago of the Second Symphony by the Danish Radio Symphony Orchestra, under Daniel Barenboim. The performance was panned by the critics. The work was too long, too sentimental, too badly orchestrated(!) One only heard the strings said one critic, and one of the most influential writers wrote that the symphony made him think of the English navy going down the Thames. I forgot one performance, though perhaps I should not mention it at all. The Danish Radio Symphony Orchestra a few years ago performed the "Introduction and Allegro for strings" under an English conductor, whose name I am too polite to mention, and it was simply destroyed by bad conducting. The critics did not know what to say and one could not blame them for they had not heard the work at all.

Apart from a few gramophone recordings broadcast by Danish Radio, I do not recall any performances of the First Symphony, the Violin Concerto, the Enigma Variations, or the great oratorios in Denmark. There were rumours of a performance of the Violin Concerto by Kyung Wha Chung this Autumn, but it has been changed to the eternal Brahms concerto.

Finally, what of other British composers? Of course Purcell and Handel are famous and among the world's greatest composers, but otherwise... Well, Britten is fairly well-known here with many opera and concert performances of his works. But to me Britten is now an international composer rather than an English one. Vaughan Williams and Walton are known but seldom performed and not often mentioned by the critics. Two great Debussy works were recently performed, and one of them "Fennimore and Gerda" recorded by EMI, the cello concerto and the aforementioned opera. But this was because of its connection with Danish literature, its libretto being taken from Jens Peter



Jacobsen's famous novel "Niels Lyhne." Apart from this Delius is seldom performed. Bax is almost completely unknown, and Gustav Holst---well, I have never heard of a Danish performance of the "Planets Suite," a favourite work of mine.

It is difficult to explain why British composers are so little in vogue in Denmark. A few of us are doing our best to change things, but successes are few. Please forgive us for being such bad musical neighbours, and please don't stop listening to Nielsen!

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THE FIFTEENTH VARIATION.....

Elgar and Sullivan

by

Philip L. Scowcroft

"The English public is curious. It can only recognise one composer at a time. Once it was Sullivan. Now it is Elgar." Thus pronounced Sir Hubert Parry (to Thomas Dunhill) shortly before he died in 1918, and indeed Sullivan's death in 1900 did coincide more or less with Elgar's emergence from being a good provincial composer to a position of national and international stature. Although there was a mere fifteen years between the birth-dates of the two men, the fact that Sullivan developed early, while Elgar had to wait until his forties for full recognition means effectively a difference in musical terms of a generation and a half, and lends colour to Parry's implied notion of the one "succeeding" the other. Both Elgar and Sullivan had the gift of writing a few pieces of almost universal public appeal - with Sullivan it was "Onward, Christian Soldiers" "The Lost Chord" and a dozen or more numbers from the Savoy operas; with Elgar it was "Pomp and Circumstance no.1" "Salut d'Amour" and "Nimrod". It is tempting therefore to offer some random observations on the relationship of the two men and their music to each other.

Sullivan first crossed Elgar's path at Covent Garden in 1889 when one morning the orchestra was about to play through one of the latter's short orchestral pieces. Sullivan appeared and, knowing nothing of this arrangement, appropriated the rest of the rehearsal for his own works. Years later Elgar reminded Sullivan of the incident and it is characteristic of the older man that he expressed regret in contrite terms. He made generous amends in 1898 when as conductor of the Leeds Festival he helped smooth the course of the first performance of "Caractacus", a composition which did much to make Elgar a national figure. Sullivan, though not well, as Elgar noticed, spared no effort to make the affair a

success. At the London rehearsals, so Elgar wrote many years after: "I urged him to rest while I went through Caractacus, but he remained and made notes of anything which struck him in that most charming self-sacrificing way which was always his." The performance (under Elgar's baton) went splendidly; Elgar had previously expressed himself to Sullivan in a letter which reflects his own prejudices as well as his sincere gratitude: "I could not let the last night of rehearsals go by without sending my thanks to you for making my 'chance' possible. This is, of course, only what one knows you would do but it contrasts well with what some people do to a person unconnected with the Schools, friendless and alone."

The friendship between the two composers continued - we hear of Elgar having Sullivan's box at the Savoy Theatre on 22 April 1899 - but had hardly become an intimate one by the time Sullivan died at the end of 1900. Elgar, indeed, at first considered making Sullivan one of "my friends pictured within" - hence the title of these reflections - but he discarded the idea, along with a similar projected variation representing Parry, as he felt that to suggest Sullivan's musical style, en pastiche as it were, would not go well with the rest of the Variations, which abound in so many personal, and often non-musical, associations. This was surely a correct decision, though one might feel a passing pang at losing what would have been a unique tribute by one great British composer to another. Certainly its instrumentation may well have matched the delicacy of "Dorabella."

What parallels can we draw between Sullivan and Elgar? Both were indebted early in their careers to German musicians (August Manns is an example common to both) though in view of the importance Germans had in English musical affairs in the last century this is hardly surprising. Both men had oratorios or extended cantatas performed at the Leeds Festival: Sullivan "The Martyr of Antioch(1880)" and "The Golden Legend(1886)". Elgar "Caractacus(1898)". At the Three Choirs Festival: Sullivan "The Prodigal Son(1898)" and Elgar "The Light of Life (1896)" and at the Birmingham Festival, Sullivan "Kenilworth(1864)" and "The Light of the World(1873)". Elgar "Gerontius(1900)" "The Apostles (1903)"and "The Kingdom(1906)". Both failed with their first Birmingham effort, though for different reasons, Sullivan's "Kenilworth" being an indifferent work by his standards. Sullivan incidentally toyed around 1890 with the idea of setting Newman's "Dream" for the Leeds Festival, but did not, doubtless being fully occupied with "The Gondoliers" and "Ivanhoe" at that time. This parallel is also not remarkable as these festivals, together with those at Norwich, which also saw Sullivan and Elgar premieres, and later Sheffield, were almost the only opportunity an English composer had to make a mark in serious music in Victorian times. [TO BE CONTINUED]

## Book Reviews

TWO CENTURIES OF MUSIC IN LIVERPOOL. A Scrapbook... compiled and written by Stainton de B. Taylor. Rockliff Bros. Ltd. Liverpool. Pictorial wrappers. £4.50

Liverpool, as a major port and centre of commerce, really dates from late in the 18th century. With development of the port came an equal development of civic pride, and this "scrapbook", skilfully compiled, surveys the whole musical scene from 1768 to the present day. Both professional and amateur activities are covered, and for this we can be grateful; it has been the amateur organisations which have been boldest in their approach to new music, and most enterprising in the rediscovery of the past. Divided into sections covering the many musical societies, orchestras and choirs in the Liverpool area, the work is well illustrated, and there is a useful list of local "personalia". There is also an appendix on that remarkable series of concerts at New Brighton, under Granville Bantock, in the last two years of the 19th century. Bantock's work for English composers in that all too brief musical flowering at New Brighton has received insufficient recognition. In 1899 he announced a series of concerts to be conducted by British composers consisting entirely of their own works. Mackenzie, Parry, Stanford, Cowen, McCunn, and "Mr. Elgar". The Elgar concert included a piece described as 'Variations for Orchestra'. This was only a month after the first performance in London under Richter, and yet the author notes here that the local critics mostly ignored the music!

There are a number of surprises for Elgarians not versed in Liverpoolian musical lore. Stravinsky was in Liverpool at a lunch when news of Elgar's death was conveyed to him. He at once rose, and addressing the company gave a tribute to Elgar, "whom he regarded as the last great representative of the classical-romantic tradition." He then asked all those present to stand in homage to Elgar's memory.

There are interesting notes of early performances of Elgar's choral works, as well as many performances of the orchestral works. Among these is Kreisler playing the Violin Concerto, under Landon Ronald, in 1912. Another interesting performance of the concerto was in 1915, with Sammons making his first appearance with the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, rather surprisingly under the Polish conductor Emil

Mlynarski. The only regret with a book of this nature is the lack of an index, and the fact that space has precluded fuller details of concerts and performances. Recommended to all those who still cling to the belief that music exists only in the capital cities of the world.

R. P. T.

CONVERSATIONS WITH CARDUS, by Robin Daniels.

Gollancz, £5.95

A few months before Neville Cardus's death Robin Daniels began a series of tape recordings in which Cardus was encouraged to talk freely on music, cricket, and journalism, his three great loves. The resulting book constitutes a memorial to the leading music critic of his time. Cardus died shortly before the book was ready for publication, and Yehudi Menuhin in his preface pays tribute to Cardus and his enthusiastic approach to music. Neville Cardus was music critic of the Guardian for four decades, following that great, but under-rated, writer Samuel Langford, who in turn had succeeded Ernest Newman. In this book Cardus pays full and generous tribute to his predecessors. Each with such a different approach, both influenced the young writer so that his work became something of an amalgam of the two, overlaid with his own individual style. Cardus had his prejudices, and was never ashamed of them. He believed too that music, like cricket, was something to be enjoyed. Happily for us he enjoyed Elgar, and admired the man as well as his music. The book makes fascinating and often nostalgic reading. There is the occasional memory lapse--it is surprising to read that the young Menuhin put the violin concerto "on the map", and that Albert Sammons helped to ensure its popularity. Surely the other way round! Kreisler dropped the concerto from his repertoire at a very early stage, and it was Sammons who played it all over Britain.

R. P. T.

HAVERGAL BRIAN AND HIS MUSIC, by Reginald Nettel. Dobson, £7.50

HAVERGAL BRIAN, THE MAKING OF A COMPOSER, by Kenneth Eastaugh. Harrap, £10

Two books on that strange but compelling musical figure appear almost at the same time. Both are well produced and give very full accounts of their subject. Mr. Eastaugh's work is well indexed and he gives many interesting references to Elgar, particularly of the meeting with Brian in Birmingham in 1905. At £10 though the book seems rather expensive. Mr. Nettel wrote the first book on Brian back in 1945, "Ordeal by Music". Since then Mr. Nettel has gathered more information and brought his account of Brian up-to-date. Again there are many Elgar references.

R. P. T.

# Record Reviews

## ELGAR SONGS:

PEARL (St.) SHE 526.

Pleading, Op. 48, no. 1; The Language of Flowers(1872); Through the Long Days, Op. 16, no. 2; Is She Not Passing Fair?(1886); As I Laye a-thinkyng(1887); The Wind at Dawn(1888); Shepherd's Song, Op. 16, no. 1; Rondel, Op. 16, no. 3; Song of Autumn (1890); The Pipes of Pan (1900); After, Op. 31, no. 1; Song of Flight, Op. 31, no. 2; Come Gentle Night(1900); In the Dawn, Op. 41, no. 1; Speak, Music, Op. 41, no. 2.  
Brian Rayner Cook (baritone), Roger Vignoles (piano).

In the past twelve months Elgar discophiles have gratefully received the complete violin/piano music, the complete Starlight Express and the complete organ music--now as further valuable gap-fillers we have the solo piano works and a selection of songs duplicating only Pleading, The Shepherd's Song, and Rondel from the disc of songs issued by Saga (or re-issued) in 1969.

The songs and piano pieces have both been lightly regarded by several commentators, but I have enjoyed those that I have been able to hear and at the least they add to our knowledge of the composer. The generally chronological presentation of the Pearl record enables us to assess Elgar's development as a songwriter from The Language of Flowers, a Victorian ballad but a fluent one for a 15 year old, to the Opus 41 items composed in 1901 and at times pre-echoing the Coronation Ode, also with words by A. C. Benson. We hear Elgar responding ardently to medieval themes in Is She Not Passing Fair?, As I Laye, and Rondel, and sympathetically to nature (and his future wife's words) in The Wind at Dawn, the earliest of these songs with the authentic touch. The Opus 31 pair are deliciously tender in treatment, The Pipes of Pan has an infectious gaiety and the serene Come, Gentle Night could be an unused chip from the Gerontius workshop. Mr. Cook is an experienced Elgarian and his warm voice and smooth phrasing do well for these largely forgotten miniatures. Occasionally though, one wishes for a little more colour and dynamic contrast, perhaps a touch more rubato--compare his Shepherd's Song with John Carol Chase's on the Saga disc. Roger Vignoles accompanies excellently and the recording is full and clear.

## ELGAR. THE COMPLETE PIANO WORKS.

PRELUDE (St.) PRS

2503

Chantant(1872); Griffinesque(1884); Sonatina(1889); Minuet(1897); May Song(1901); Skizze(1901); Concert Allegro(rev.1907); In Smyrna (1905); Serenade(1932); Adieu(1932).

John McCabe (piano)

Elgar used the piano as a workbench to develop thematic ideas but left little music for it. Such as there is covers sixty years. Chantant is immature, but touchingly insistent and like the Sonatina, intended for domestic consumption; Griffinesque (just 15 seconds long and not listed in any catalogue of Elgar's works) and Skizze (1½ minutes) are Schumannesque aphorisms; Minuet, May Song, Adieu and Serenade are all miniatures touched by the familiar Elgarian wistfulness - the first two he orchestrated and doubtless given time would have done the same for the other two. This leaves In Smyrna, noteworthy for oriental colour and idiomatic piano writing, and the fine Concert Allegro, played here in the composer's slightly cut 1907 version and thus differing from John Ogdon's earlier, and slightly more virtuoso recording. It is a pity Carissima, Rosemary and Salut d'Amour, all possibly conceived for piano, were not included - there would have been room and I feel the latter in particular sounds best in this form. Mr. McCabe is a skilful and sympathetic advocate, especially sensitive in In Smyrna, and the recorded tone, sometimes a trifle plummy, is serviceable enough.

Both records have the inestimable advantage of sleeve notes by Jerrold Northrop Moore (Adieu and Serenade date from 1932, not 1933 as stated) and the Prelude record also has as an insert his closely researched, documented and argued article on "Elgar and the Piano". I cordially recommend these discs.

P. L. S.

SYMPHONY No. 2, in E flat.

HMV ASD 3266

London Philharmonic Orchestra, conductor Sir Adrian Boult

It is probably fair to say that the foundation of Elgar's output is the Symphonies, the two concertos, the Enigma Variations, and the Dream of Gerontius. Without these works Elgar would be a composer of considerably less stature, whilst, had he not composed two or three of his other major works, such as The Apostles and The Kingdom, our appreciation would be altered but not necessarily diminished. Our critical response to Elgar's music is based therefore on these former works, which explains why such considerable attention is paid to a new recording of any one of them. This is particularly true when a record is produced of Sir Adrian Boult conducting, and here we have his latest view of the Second Symphony. As has been emphasised by others, this is fifth time he has entered the studio to record this work, which in itself must be some kind of record; and reflects the importance we should attach to the concept of the man who has probably conducted the work more than anyone else.

I must admit that I purchased this record with a degree of reluctance, as the performances by the composer, Barbirolli, Barenboim, Solti and earlier ones by Sir Adrian seemed more than sufficient in these costly times.

However, my doubts were swept away as I settled down to listen to this rich, warm and deeply satisfying experience. E.M.I.'s recording fits the mood perfectly, and although at times some of the instrumentation is obscured, it faithfully enhances what is obviously a labour of love by Sir Adrian and the L.P.O. It may be fanciful, but I believe that Sir Adrian's view of this work has changed little over the years, and indeed why should it have done? His 1945 performance seems more tightly controlled, with tempo and dynamic changes managed more obviously than here, where the music unfolds inevitably, like the story in a favourite book rediscovered. The excitement is not that of the unknown, but that of being reminded of how the tale is told.

To pick out particular points in this performance would be somewhat invidious. However I must mention the *Larghetto*, which builds up to the points in the score marked *Nobilmente e semplice* showing them to be the very pivots of the work. Barbirolli for example takes a contrary view of the movement focussing our attention on the climax at cue 86; Elgar's 'inexpressible grief', to use Michael Kennedy's evocative phrase. It is curious how two such different views can be equally valid, although both demand a different response. Sir Adrian then allows the movement to unfold naturally leaving no sense of anti-climax during the last bars, which can so often happen.

If the last movement is a little low-keyed when compared to, say, Solti's performance, the finale has everything in its favour, ending in an Autumnal glow which I have never heard equalled on record before. A recording for all time then, which will remain the one by which all others are judged for years to come. Elgar summed up the work himself in a letter to Frank Schuster's sister Adela, shortly after the former's death, and there could be no more fitting description of this record: "... and again in the final section of the second symphony in the key he loved most I believe (E flat) - warm and joyous with a grave and radiating serenity... "

A. H. A. N.

**SOLILOQUY FOR OBOE:** Chanson de Matin: Chanson de Nuit: Serenade Lyrique: Salut d'Amour: Dream Children: Contrasts: Woodland Interlude from 'Caractacus': Two Interludes from 'Falstaff': Three Bavarian Dances.  
RCA LRL1 5133

Bournemouth Sinfonietta, conducted by Norman del Mar. Leon Goossens(Oboe)

"My dear Leon, Alas! I have been a martyr to sciatica ever since I had the pleasure of seeing you: I have managed to keep one or two engagements but that's all. However I have most of the material available. As soon as I can write decently shall get to work and let you hear. In the meantime best regards to Mrs. Goossens and to you."

Thus wrote Elgar in January 1931 to Leon Goossens who, since being appointed principal oboe of the Queen's Hall Orchestra in 1921, had established himself as one of the world's great oboists. Now incredibly, some 45 years later, comes the first recording of the "material", the Soliloquy for Oboe, performed by the very instrumentalist to whom Elgar dedicated it. Elgar

only wrote an accompaniment in short score, and this has been orchestrated by Gordon Jacob. At first it seems rather disappointing--barely four minutes music and no great tune to excite the listener. This was apparently just the slow movement of a projected Suite for Oboe, which, as the letter above indicates, Elgar intended to complete, but sadly never did. Could it be that he found it difficult to write music in a lighter vein for this instrument? The solo oboe passages in Elgar's music are mostly memorable for the poignancy that they convey. Furthermore in the wind quintet of the 1870's, the oboe was played by Elgar's brother Frank; he had died in 1928, just two years earlier. It is perhaps understandable then that Elgar continued to write only in an elegiac mood for the instrument. It would seem that the Soliloquy represents newly-written music, and not just the reworking of earlier sketches. This sets it apart from the "Severn Suite" and the "Nursery Suite" both written at about this time, which are mainly based on much older material.

So there is considerable interest for Elgarians in the Soliloquy. Despite its brevity, it possesses what Michael Kennedy calls the 'autumnal' quality which finds its way into much of Elgar's post-war music, including the Cello Concerto and King Arthur. It is beautifully played by soloist and orchestra.

The remainder of the record consists of salon pieces and short excerpts from larger works. The recording is nicely balanced and the acoustics of the Southampton Guildhall are superb. The Bournemouth Sinfonietta play with great feeling, but above all this is another triumph for Norman del Mar, who with this record has produced a worthy successor to his highly acclaimed "Enigma Variations". I hope that these are just the first of many recordings by this gifted and sympathetic Elgarian.

G. H.

VIOLIN CONCERTO IN B MINOR.

CBS S 76528

London Philharmonic Orch. Conductor Daniel Barenboim.  
Pinchas Zuckerman (Violin)

With so much of Elgar's music appearing on record for the first time this year, one could be forgiven for overlooking a new performance of a standard work. In fact, the violin concerto has not been nearly so fortunate on record as either the Cello Concerto or the symphonies. For a really satisfactory performance one has to go back to the 'historical' performances of Sammons (HMV HLM 7011) and Menuhin (HMV HLM 7107). In passing how sad it is that HMV assume that the catalogue cannot support both of these quite different readings. The Menuhin has just reappeared but the Sammons is now deleted.

I have enjoyed Barenboim's previous Elgar recordings rather more than some writers. In particular, I rate his performance of Falstaff very highly. Unfortunately, each one has been flawed in some way, either from the technical point of view or from extremes of interpretation. Hence it is a real pleasure to be able to welcome a Barenboim record without hesitation. Technically this is by far the best sound that CBS has yet given to Elgar.



Any fears that Zuckermann might produce a superficial virtuoso performance are rapidly dispelled. His first entry is quite magical, calm, poised and yet confident. It really is quite a revelation to hear the solo part so well-played. When virtuoso technique is required, Zuckermann provides it. When beautiful tone is called for, he supplies it. Supported by a real pianissimo in the orchestra his treatment of the G major 'windflower' theme is breathtaking and quite unforgettable. Clearly soloist and conductor have studied this score together most carefully. The very close rapport between soloist and orchestra demonstrates just how closely many small points have been thought out. One example will suffice. When Zuckermann re-enters in the recapitulation with his opening phrases, he plays them quite differently from their first appearance. This is quite clearly indicated in the score but is all too often played down or even ignored. Perhaps the only disappointment is at the end of the first movement. After building up the tension so superbly, it seems a pity that Barenboim should throw this all away by pulling up the tempo so drastically for the final chords. Space does not permit further details, but one aspect of the last movement cannot be ignored. A review of a concerto suggesting that the cadenza was the highlight of the performance might be taken as a back-handed swipe at orchestra and conductor. With the Elgar concerto this is far from the case. Supported most carefully and sympathetically by Barenboim and the LPO (who throughout play magnificently), Zuckermann's handling of the cadenza is most moving; emotional - yes, but perfectly controlled. The interplay between soloist and orchestra is remarkable and above all, it is this partnership between conductor and violinist which in the ultimate ensures these wonderful results.

J.G.K.

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FORTHCOMING RECORDINGS: "Dream of Gerontius" SNO/Alexander Gibson, with Alfreda Hodgson, Robert Tear & Benjamin Luxon+++++"Sea Pictures" Yvonne Minton, LPO/Barenboim, recorded in April 1976 and to be issued by CBS+++++"Caractacus" RLPO/Sir Charles Groves, with Sheila Armstrong, Robert Tear & Peter Glossop, for release in June 1977+++++"Symphony no. 1, LPO/Sir Adrian Boult+++++"Coronation Ode"(Complete) To be recorded by EMI in 1977+++++"In the South" LPO/Barenboim, To be issued by CBS++++

OTHER RECORDS RELEASED: Symphony no.1 SNO/Gibson.RCA LRL1 5130++ [See Records & Recording 9. 76]+++++"Cello Concerto" & "Enigma Variations" Jacqueline Du Pré, Philadelphia Orch/Barenboim, & LPO/Barenboim++ [See Gramophone 11. 76 & Records & Recording 11. 76]+++++"Enigma Variations" & "Cockaigne" Chicago SO/Solti & LPO/Solti. Decca SXL 6795++[See Gramophone 11. 76 & Records & Recording 11. 76]

## B R A N C H N E W S

EAST MIDLANDS Secretary: Gordon Richmond, 1 Blankley Drive,  
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Telephone: 0533-704930

Sept. 18th. Talk by J.R. Griffin, B. Mus., F.R.C.O., L.R.A.M.

We had an excellent attendance for a talk by one of our members, who when first asked said that some of the things he would say about Elgar might be regarded as controversial by Elgarians! The Branch chairman had already been advised that no-one in Leicester knew more about Elgar than Mr. Griffin. It was a splendid meeting and the Branch members can assure the speaker that they thoroughly enjoyed his talk. It took the form of a Distillation of Thoughts about Elgar. Mr. Griffin said that most people think of Elgar as a legendary figure, and that he himself is a lover of anecdotes about great men, and likes to learn about the relationship between the man and his music. Beecham was another legendary figure. The speaker suggested a formula for Legendary Figures. Elgar, said the speaker, is the greatest English composer since Purcell, his music comes from the heart and although the interest in his music has never been greater Genius doesn't guarantee Legend. We were reminded of the famous remark "I am folk music." Elgar's music also came from the head, and he was susceptible to all influences. Was there anything unusual about his life-style? He didn't look like a composer. What is a composer supposed to look like anyway? He wore tweed suits because he felt comfortable, and they suited him. He did not conform. He had social barriers to contend with. Another requirement of the formula is Independence of Spirit. We heard here the first of Schoenberg's "Five Orchestral Pieces"(1909) and compared it with Elgar's First Symphony (1908).

Elgar was in constant need of assurance. He was often ready to give up, as at the time of the first performance of "Gerontius", and the cool reception of the Second Symphony. Although a genius he was not a natural eccentric. His major work as a composer finished with the Cello Concerto, but perhaps it really finished in 1914. Could it be that Elgar had said all he had to say? Was it mere disguised repetition?

Oct. 16th. "Elgar the Dreamer" an illustrated talk by Rodney Baldwin.

At this meeting we heard some most interesting facts about the 'dreamy' connections between a large number of Elgar's compositions, some of the more wishful passages of his music, and how he frequently used a sequence of four notes. From the passage in "Gerontius" 'I went to sleep...' we passed on to consider the four note sequences in a number of compositions such as "The Black Knight," "Wand of Youth," "Vesper Voluntaries" etc. The speaker gave a personal account of how he felt Elgar's presence strongly whilst on a car journey in the Drakes Broughton/Wadborough Wood area of Worcestershire. Definitely a place to be visited. The speaker told us how the early years of struggle cost Elgar dearly, each emotional scar left its mark. Each time

we find the music became emotionally more tender. We heard excerpts from "Wand of Youth", and wondered whether all the turmoil of the early years might not be better termed "The Wound of Youth." We hear more of his 'dreamy' music, and of course the magnificent Cello Concerto, in the closing pages of which there is a heartfelt outpouring of personal sadness.

Nov. 13th. "Faith and Works" an illustrated talk by another member the Rev. T. Hughie Jones, M.A., B.D.

Mr. Jones told us he did not hero-worship Elgar, but he was intrigued by his life, and enjoyed his music enormously. He was going to tell us something of the relationship between Elgar's faith and the works he produced. Elgar was a man filled with doctrinal doubts, there was also an Elgar who was a pagan, and somewhere inside him there was a frightened child. He had a pathological obsession with the failure of his works. He was convinced "they" were ganging up on him, and his work reveals his lack of faith in God and man. We heard two versions of "O Salutaris Hostia," and considered how lucky was a small Roman Catholic church in the shadow of the Cathedral to have music of that stature at that period. Elgar was very well read, consider the contents of the bookshelves at Broadheath, and knew his Bible thoroughly. We heard excerpts from "The Apostles" and "The Kingdom". We then considered the three people in "Gerontius"--Elgar, Newman, and Gerontius himself who is Everyman and whose soul contemplates Purgatory. Lastly we heard a long excerpt from "The Music Makers" and the connection was emphasised between faith and the 'Movers and Shakers of the World.' A fascinating meeting which ended with an interesting discussion.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS: Jan. 29: Annual Meeting, followed by a Party. All members needed please! Feb. 19: Record Evening, Elgar, Parry, Vaughan Williams. March 19: John Hammond on 'Elgar, Romantic and Visionary' April 30: Peter White on Elgar's Organ Compositions.

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WEST MIDLANDS Secretary: Martin Passande, "Housemartins" 1 Stoney Street, Madley, Hereford HR2 9NJ

Sept. 18th. "The Sea Pictures" a talk by Dr. John Buttrey.

This meeting opened our season, and was held in Malvern in the hope of persuading more elderly members in that area to attend a meeting near at home. Unfortunately the attendance was disappointingly small, though a substantial number of apologies were received. The piano needed was out of commission having only three legs (!), so Dr. Buttrey sang examples and illustrated with excerpts from Janet Baker's recording of the song cycle. We were amazed at the Holmesian fashion in which Dr. Buttrey had investigated the structure, and the links he showed between poems, which indicated the subtlety of Elgar's mind in using images of coral and an

Australian poet to recall a lady love gone to that continent. Our interest did not slacken while such an interesting 'detective' retraced the sequence. Questions and conversation with Dr. Buttrey continued for some time after the formal closing of the meeting.

Oct 16th "Elgar and the 'Angel as Ever (Parry)" a talk by Vincent Waite

Here again attendance was disappointingly low, for those not present missed a most illuminating talk on Elgar and his relations with Parry. Not only this but an account of Parry as a person, professor and composer. How sad that so little of his excellent music is performed. This talk was highlighted by the use of well-chosen examples of Parry's songs, especially those found in his books of English Lyrics. They are of exceptional quality. Examples of his orchestral, organ, church and secular music were heard. One member not hearing the announcement of Parry's "Symphonic Variations", believed quite firmly that it was some seldom heard Elgar. Away with dark hints of poor orchestration!

Nov. 13th. "The Variety of Elgar" a talk by Alan Webb

At last the West Midlands members had responded and appeared in force. A most promising number of members and visitors were noted. Let us hope it bodes well for the future. The talk was essentially a record programme with link passages from the speaker. Mr. Walter Cullis of the Worcester Record-ed Music Society, and a Branch committee member, provided an admirable service using his own record equipment. We were led through Elgar's output mainly through the byways, thus giving us variety, and in at least one instance real novelty, when we heard the new recording of Elgar's "Oboe Soliloquy." The evening ended with Elgar's own recording of "In the South" and how sumptuous it sounded--small wonder he loved the work, it glistened in southern splendour under his baton. Mr. Webb, and Mr. Cullis were thanked by John Savage, Branch Chairman.

Nov. 24th. Worcester Salon Arts Club Choir and Orchestra Concert.

Although there was competition in the city from other concerts, none specifically Elgarian, the response to this concert from members was a disgrace. The choir and orchestra, and soloist Mary Thomas, conducted by Bridget Monahan regaled their audience with an exceptional selection of lighter Elgar, and gave us a fair quota of rarities into the bargain. We often forget the pleasure and sense of enthusiasm engendered in an amateur performance. There were moments of patchy intonation and shaky entries, but they did not mar the over-all shape of warm and affectionate performances. Among the choir's offerings were "O Happy Eyes," "Fly, Singing Bird," and "The Snow" with violin obligato. Mary Thomas brought life and interest to "The Damask Rose," and "The Shepherd's Song" by careful phrasing and a pleasing tone. The audience was genuinely enthusiastic and grateful, much as Elgar himself would have heard many of his own works locally.

The Annual Meeting of the West Midlands Branch is on January 22nd. All members in the area are urged to attend this very important meeting. In the last issue of the Newsletter the venue of the April 1977 recital meeting was given as St. Lawrence's Church, Newland. This should have read St. Leonard's Church.

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22010

During 1976 there have been 24 new London members so far, with a distinct prospect of this number being increased by the end of the year. We are delighted to welcome these Elgarians to the branch and look forward to seeing them at our meetings whenever possible. Three meetings have been held since the start of the current season, attendance being well up to the average

Oct. 4th. "Elgar and the Orchestra" by Bernard Keeffe.

We could not have had a better speaker to open the season than Bernard Keeffe whose radio and television broadcasts have rightly attracted an increasingly large audience. Talking almost entirely without notes, Mr. Keeffe ranged widely over Elgar's purely orchestral works (the one exception being "Caractacus"), using his own specially prepared tape to provide at least a dozen illustrations from the Symphonies, Engima Variations (Troyte), "Froissart", "In the South", "Caractacus" (Woodland Sketches), "The Wand of Youth" and pieces from the lighter Elgar. The Chairman both introduced, and, at the end, thanked Mr. Keeffe for his enthralling talk, which completely riveted our attention.

Members will be interested to know that, with his permission, a tape was made of Mr. Keeffe's talk, from which the editor hopes to publish an abstract in a future Newsletter.

Oct. 25th. "King Olaf" by Bryan Fairfax.

Specially arranged as an introduction to a live performance of "King Olaf" in the Royal Festival Hall a fortnight later, this meeting served a dual purpose. Firstly, Mr. Fairfax outlined the work in some detail, including the historical background. The later is important, as it explains part of the libretto used by Elgar which would be obscure to many who were unfamiliar with the work. Secondly, he had the forethought to bring with him his assistant, Miss Greta Stubbs, who very ably played numerous extracts from the music on the piano. This helped enormously, especially as performances are rare and little of the music has so far been recorded. It certainly made the subsequent R. F. H. performance (conducted by Mr. Fairfax) even more enjoyable to those who had previously heard his excellent talk. Credit for the success of this meeting belonged equally to Bryan Fairfax and Greta Stubbs, a fact which the Chairman emphasised when thanking them both at the close of the meeting.

Dec. 6th. "Elgar's Association with Novello's" by Robert Walker.

Although he has recently left Novello's to devote more time to his composition, record production, adjudication and other activities, Mr. Walker is well qualified to speak about the modus operandi of a great music publishing house in its relations with composers generally. Having access to the records of Novello's business at the turn of the century and earlier, Mr. Walker was able to give us a fascinating account of the gradual development of Elgar's personal relations with the firm from the beginning, when his 'fee' for an early song was 100 free copies! At a time when Novello's were almost inundated with large-scale choral works from fully established composers, it is easy to understand their reluctance to publish work by an unknown composer such as Elgar was at that time, especially choral works. In fact, both "The Black Knight" and "King Olaf" made a loss for the publishers. What they sought were songs and piano pieces which could readily be sold to a public averse to buying more expensive music. Even when Elgar offered them the "Enigma Variations", Novello's would only pay half the agreed fee on publication, the balance being held over until 10,000 copies had been sold! No wonder Elgar so often despaired of the attitude of the British people and publishers alike to his music. It is impossible here to do justice to such an interesting and informative talk, full of anecdote, especially as much of what Mr. Walker had to say is not to be found in any biography. We were indeed privileged to learn a great deal about Elgar's early struggles, which explains much of his bitterness at a crucial time of his life. All this was most skillfully presented, and we are most grateful to Robert Walker for a splendid evening.

CORRECTION. For his talk on April 4th, 1977, Dr. William Reed asks us to correct the impression given in the published title. He states: 'The slides of the houses are just the main pillars of the narrative, which is a resumé of Elgar's life, with illustrations on records of the music.'

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## LETTERS

From DR. GARETH LEWIS.

Dear Sir,

Philip Scowcroft's excellent examination of Elgar's relations with younger composers [Newsletter 9] gives us yet another glimpse of the psychological complexities of this extremely vulnerable personality. It would seem that Elgar appreciated very much the respect of younger colleagues & clearly obtained a great deal of psychological satisfaction from helping them as much as he could and was proud to be the instigator of patronage for promising young composers. Elgar was, however, such an insecure personality that once the young composer became established and began to build up a reputation for himself, Elgar could not prevent him-

self seeing the young man as a rival and potential threat who could no longer be tolerated as a friend. It is interesting that Bax, after an interval of many years, was eventually able to rekindle the spark of friendship. One might, perhaps, speculate that this could only have been possible when Bax's music was sufficiently familiar for Elgar to assure himself that musically the younger man occupied a totally different world, despite the 'Elgarian' characteristics in Bax's music, and therefore did not constitute a 'threat.'

Elgar's real and very deep feelings of uncertainty in his talents is clearly shown in the superficial and rather silly dismissive remarks made about other composers. It is interesting that Elgar's friendship with Bantock and Walford Davies survived without threat; perhaps the fact that they considered themselves primarily as teachers and academics rather than composers enabled them to be accepted without threat.

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From MISS DIANA McVEAGH

Dear Sir,

There has been much speculation about the identity of Three Stars in the "Enigma Variations." Is it too naive to wonder if the reason Elgar did not want definitely to associate anyone with it is that it is no.13? He did, in one letter, refer to the 'ill luck' of the number. This, of course, would not settle who Three Stars is; merely, perhaps, suggest why no. 13 is the only variation with a symbol rather than initials.

I'd be glad to have other people's reactions.

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Mr. Adrian S. Pitts, writes to say that he is researching some of Elgar's minor Church Music, and instances chants for George Martin and the New Cathedral Psalter (1909). Members with relevant information should write directly to Mr. Pitts at 124 Fairfield, Buntingford, Herts.

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PERSONALIA. The West Midlands Branch Secretary, Martin Passande, announced his engagement on Sept. 25th, 1976 to Mary Elizabeth Fecitt of the London Branch. The marriage will take place on August 13th, 1977 at All Saint's Church, Hereford. [Our congratulations and warm good wishes. Editor]

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\*\*\* KILBURN LETTERS APPEAL. A total of 65 members contributed to the total of £249.60 raised. A special ceremony will be held later at the Birthplace at which we hope the original donors will be present. Further details in the May issue.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

The Annual Subscription to the Society is £2.00 for the year commencing January 1st 1977. Members in arrears for 1976 should send their subscriptions immediately to the Hon. Treasurer, John Knowles, 11 The Chase, Watford, Herts. WD1 7JQ. Tel: Watford 49149.

### BRANCH SUBSCRIPTIONS

These are additional to the Society's annual subscription, at the following rates:

LONDON	£3.00 per annum, the combined subscription to be sent to E. W. A. Jackson, 'Killiegray' 7 Batchworth Lane, Northwood Middx HA6 3AU
WEST MIDLANDS	£1.00 per annum, the combined subscription to be sent to Alan Boulstridge, 27 Hanbury Park Road, Worcester
EAST MIDLANDS	£1.00 per annum, the combined subscription to be sent to Gordon Richmond, 1 Blankley Drive, Stoughton Road, Leicester LE2 2DE

NEW MEMBERS are needed, and warmly welcomed. The appropriate subscription, unless you live in a Branch area, should be sent to John Knowles, Hon. Treasurer, at the address given above. If you are not sure if you reside in a branch area the Society will be pleased to advise you. It is hoped to form further branches as support increases. All members receive the NEWSLETTER, at present issued in January, May, and September.

Enquiries on general Society matters should be addressed to the Hon. Secretary, E.W.A. Jackson, whose address is printed above.

ELGAR SOCIETY NEWSLETTER. A few of the back numbers remain, nos. 1,4,5,7,8,9,10. The other issues are completely out of print. All enquiries for these issues should be addressed to the Editor, and a charge of 10p, plus 9p postage, is made for each available back issue.