

The Elgar Society

NEWSLETTER



MAY

1978

Contents

Editorial	p. 3
news Items	p. 4
Article:	
"An Angel as Ever, God Bless Him" Elgar & Parry.	p. 5
Another Forgotten Elgar Song	p. 9
Elgar Foundation and Birthplace News	p.10
Dates for your Diary	p.12
Elgar Discography	p.14
Record Reviews	p.15
Worcester Three Choirs Festival	p.18
Elgar Society News and Reports	p.19
Elgar Tewkesbury Festival	p.26
Letters to the Editor	p.27
Malvern Festival	p.31
Books and Music Wanted	p.31
Subscriptions	p.32

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

ELGAR SOCIETY TEA AT THE THREE CHOIRS FESTIVAL (By kind permission of Mrs. Wood, wife of the Bishop of Worcester). Tables will be reserved for members at the tea following the concert at Hartlebury Castle, on the afternoon of Tuesday, 29th August 1978. (Please note change of date and venue from previous announcement.) Members are asked to let Alan Boon know a few days in advance if they wish to attend. [Mr. Boon's address is on the back cover.] No advance payment is needed. A coach to and from Hartlebury will leave from Edgar Tower, College Green, Worcester, and tickets should be booked early for this coach, from the Festival Club Information Desk, Worcester. Members are reminded that Hartlebury gardens are also open that afternoon.

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Elgar Society Newsletter : ISSN 0309 - 4405

Elgar Society Newsletter

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HERTS.

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EDITORIAL

NEW SERIES No. 5

Readers will notice, from the reports contained on our pages relating to the Elgar Society, that the Society continues to flourish, and yet another branch is now in being. The possibility of other branches is being explored. However, setting up branches is only part of the story - running them from year to year requires effort and continuing enthusiasm. The Society is now getting to be fairly large, and is likely to continue to grow. It follows that correspondence, planning, and general administration grow also, and increasing demands on the time of a few individuals can grow wearisome. If the tasks are shared it means an easier time for everyone involved, and members of branches as well as members throughout the country are asked to support the Society in every way they can. Attendance at meetings is a great encouragement, particularly those meetings where local business is discussed and tasks delegated. In return committees must keep members fully informed of activities. The NEWSLETTER will continue to be the link between members, and a forum for Elgar students. In this respect, perhaps, our title is becoming just a little out-of-date, and a change of title, more accurately reflecting our status, may come in time.

Just as we were completing this issue, we learned, with regret, of the death of Stanley E. Lambert, Secretary of the Elgar Society from 1958 to 1969. Mr. Lambert was a fine organist, and worked for Nicholson and Co., the firm of organ-builders of Worcester, and he was the organist of St. George's, Worcester, from 1935. This was, of course, the church where Elgar succeeded his father as church organist. When Nicholson's rebuilt the organ in 1970, it was Mr. Lambert who played, together with Edgar Day, at the Blessing and Dedication ceremony on May 8th of that year. Mr. Lambert and his wife were joint-secretaries for eleven years, when the Elgar Society was still largely based on Worcester and Malvern, and the work they did for the Society over that time helped to ensure the success of the nation-wide Society which we have today. Stanley Lambert is survived by his wife and son, to whom we extend our sympathy.

RONALD TAYLOR
Editor

News Items

ANOTHER LINK WITH ELGAR was severed just before Christmas, with the death of the Gloucester photographer Richard Hall. He was 93 and had been ill for a long time. Mr. Hall was an official army photographer in the first world war, and set up his business in Gloucester shortly after 1918. Two of his portraits of Elgar are well-known; the first, taken in 1928, was used by W. H. Reed for his book on Elgar, and was also reproduced in Jerrold Moore's book Elgar: a Life in Photographs. On p. 88 of that book Mr. Hall's other photograph of Elgar, with W. H. Reed, is also reproduced.

BRITTEN - PEARS LIBRARY Admirers of the Elgar collection at the Birthplace will be interested to know that a collection and library is being formed at the Red House, Aldeburgh, as an archive of material by, and about, the late Benjamin Britten. Mr. Frederick Ferry, recently retired Librarian of the County of Suffolk, has been appointed Librarian. The collection is still in the formative stage and not yet open to the public.

ELGAR ENTHUSIASTS who have visited Haddo House, near Aberdeen, for the concerts put on there, will be interested to know that the house and grounds have been acquired for the nation from Lord Aberdeen for the sum of £365,000, and remission of taxes. Haddo will be run by the National Trust for Scotland, and the concerts and drama performances will continue. The gardens, park and woodlands will be run by the Grampian Regional Council as a countryside centre.

'CRAEG-LEA', ELGAR'S HOME IN MALVERN, and now the home of James Walkley, is to be opened to members on Tuesday, 30th May, from 10.30 a. m. to noon. A bring-and-buy sale will take place, and coffee will be available. Profits to the Birthplace Appeal. Opening the house to coincide with the Malvern and Tewkesbury Festivals is a generous action by Mr. and Mrs. Walkley and we are extremely grateful. The address is 86 Wells Road, Malvern, but members are reminded that the house is a private residence, and is open on the above occasion only at the stated times.

THE RECORDING of Spirit of England by the London Philharmonic Orchestra, under Daniel Barenboim, has been shelved. Additionally, the performance which had been announced for April 25th at the Royal Festival Hall was cancelled. We do not know the real reason why, but it is, or rather was, a great pity. The decision on the recording makes Sir Alexander Gibson's fine version doubly precious.

CAN ANY READER ASSIST Barry Collett in getting hold of the orchestral parts for the Severn Suite? The publisher, Keith Prowse, no longer has it available for hire. Information c/o the NEWSLETTER.

"AN ANGEL AS EVER, GOD BLESS HIM"

Elgar and Parry

by Vincent Waite

In one of his early letters to Jaeger, Elgar wrote, "These great men seem to be busily employed in performing one another's works", and then tartly added, "no-one else will." The great men he specifically named were Parry, Stanford and Mackenzie, all of whom were older than Elgar - - Parry by some nine years. (Indeed, Elgar acknowledged the help he had obtained in his 'teens from Parry's articles in Grove's Dictionary.) All three men were also distinguished in the academic field, Parry being Professor of Music at Oxford, and Director of the Royal College of Music.

The backgrounds of Elgar and Parry could hardly have been more different. Elgar came up the hard way, to become the outstanding British composer of his age; virtually self-taught, entirely without financial resources, he also had the disadvantage, in the Victorian era, of being the son of a tradesman who kept a music shop and tuned pianos. This was a handicap which seemed to rankle throughout his life. Jerrold Moore quotes a letter Elgar wrote in 1900 in which he said, "As to the whole 'shop' episode...I know it has ruined me and made life impossible until I what you call made a name - I only knew that I was kept out of everything decent, 'cos his father keeps a shop'." Parry, on the other hand, the Old Etonian, was the son of a wealthy Gloucestershire landowner with a great country house and estates at Highnam. It may be added that Parry had the other great advantage (perhaps the almost indispensable qualification for an Englishman) that he was prominent "in almost every branch of athletics and sport, and constantly ran into every kind of danger that land and water afford, suffering almost every possible injury short of the immediately fatal." In fact, every game was played by Parry with impetuous vigour, and even an innocent pastime like billiards became, for him, something of a battle. As in many country houses of the period, the Highnam billiard-room was surrounded by glass cases containing stuffed birds, and one of them was nearly always smashed when Parry played a game.

Yet no-one could have been less of a philistine; indeed, he went out of his way to deprecate the undue worship of sport, saying in one of his College addresses, "But don't imagine because I am an advocate of wholesome activity, of bodily exercise and the invigorating influence of friendly emulation in open-air games and sports, that I cast in my lot with the extravagant estimates put upon sport by the world. There is no doubt that the worship of sport is carried to a very excessive pitch in this country, to the injury and depreciation of the higher pursuits of art and

literature and the achievements of mind and imagination.

In 1892 Elgar was once again among the first violins at the Worcester Festival, when Parry's Job was having its first performance. Perhaps with a pardonable sense of hopeless despondency in the face of the well-entrenched musical establishment, Elgar wrote bitterly on his copy of the programme: "I played first violin for the sake of the fee, as I could obtain no recognition as a composer." However, it was not until six years later, in the year he wrote the letter to Jaeger quoted above, that he first met Parry. It was at the Leeds Festival, and it is clear that Elgar at once took to the older man; indeed it would have been difficult for anyone to feel anything but warmth towards someone so utterly honest, generous and transparently honourable as Parry. Even the anti-Parryite Jaeger told Elgar that "Parry of all men in England is the one who would not take offence at one's opinion if sincerely stated." At the same time Jaeger rarely lost an opportunity of gratuitously disparaging Parry as a composer. Thus he wrote of a new Parry Te Deum: "Parry, oh Parry! Very much Parry! Tourjours Parry! Fiddles sawing all the time! Dear old Parry!" - and then added sarcastically, as if on purpose to arouse Elgar's jealousy, "Now if you could write a score like that."

A year after their meeting, Elgar's Enigma Variations had their first performance. Parry was vastly impressed and was heard to say afterwards, "Yesterday I heard Richter perform the Enigma Variations by a Mr. Elgar which is the finest work I've listened to for years. Look out for this man's music; he has something to say and knows how to say it." Later he sent Elgar "a rapturous letter", as Alice Elgar described it. "Most nice of him", commented Elgar, obviously more than just pleased, as was shown by the letter he later sent Parry with a copy of the Enigma score. "When Richter produced my Variations you sent me a very kind letter; this naturally you will have forgotten - but I have not and never shall."

As it happened, two years before the appearance of the Enigma Variations Parry had conducted the first performance of his own Symphonic Variations, which have been described by Michael Pope as "the first notable set of orchestral variations by a British composer." Even Jaeger went so far as to say he thought them very good, and then added "but as usual, badly scored." Fortunately an excellent record (Lyrita SRCS 48) is available of some of Parry's music, including the Variations, so we can judge for ourselves whether they are "badly scored."

Parry continued to show his regard for Elgar in a number of ways: he was among the group of musicians who subscribed towards the cost of Elgar's robes when he received his honorary Doctorate of Music at Cambridge; and he was one of his sponsors (Stanford was the other) when

Elgar was elected to the Athenaeum Club. In 1905 Elgar received an honorary Doctorate of Music at Oxford and it was Parry who made "a fine oration", as Alice Elgar reported in her diary. By this time, Parry was to Elgar "a dear good man", and on a postcard to Jaeger he was "an angel as ever, God bless him." In a letter to Frank Schuster he paid him a different kind of compliment, saying, "All professors, except Parry, neglect to wash." On another occasion, he wrote to Parry who had done him some unspecified kindness, and offered to relieve him in some way in his administrative work - copying, transposing or adapting; - "anything in fact that an ordinary copyist could, or could not quite, do, I would take the greatest pride and pleasure in doing it for you." Another instance of his high regard for Parry was shown when he withdrew his offer to write the preface to a book when he saw that it contained things against Parry. "I could not give my name to this", was his terse comment.

Two years later Elgar burst into enthusiastic praise of Parry's new work for the Gloucester Festival, his Symphonic Poem The Vision of Life. "I say," he wrote to Jaeger, "that Vision of Parry's is fine stuff; you must hear it one day"; and added that the words (Parry's own) really were 'literature'. I find Elgar's praise of this libretto especially interesting because I think it shows how, even in 1907, his philosophy of life was moving away from the dogmas of the Roman Catholic Church. For Parry, as he grew older, departed from purely biblical texts for his cantatas, and instead used secular words, especially his own, to express a vague kind of Walt Whitmanish humanism.

But Elgar, in spite of praising The Vision of Life, was still severely critical of Parry's orchestration. "No," he said to Jaeger, "I cannot stand Parry's orchestra: it's dead and is never more than an organ part arranged." No-one will deny that Elgar, the superb master of the orchestra, had every right to pass his own personal judgment on Parry's orchestration, but his criticism of Parry's song-writing is more difficult to justify. "There is one dear good man against whom I would think nothing but the greatest admiration, and that is Parry," he wrote to Jaeger, "but he almost, if not quite, annoys me in the way he sets the words which swarm in our English - two syllables, both short, the first accented, e.g. petal." This is an odd criticism coming from one who has himself been taken severely to task for his own shortcomings in solo-song writing, by displacements of stress, etc. Diana McVeagh says bluntly that Elgar "was insensitive to word values," and that the example "of Parry's English Lyrics was lost on him." An earlier critic, Ernest Newman, drew attention to the weakness of Elgar's solo-song settings "which always (he said) seemed to follow the line shape instead of the meaning." "His ear," he went on, "is plainly insensitive to defects of phrasing; his

tune is conceived for its own sake, and the words have to be made to fit it as best they can." In Thomas Dunhill's opinion, even Elgar's better songs are "far below the less significant songs of Parry." Again, even an Elgar admirer like Dyneley Hussey is forced to admit that "for an assiduous reader of poetry, Elgar was curiously insensitive to the niceties of poetic rhythm, and even to the simpler problems of accentuation." Very properly, he hastens to add that no such reservations need to be made about Elgar's choral works "where his technical mastery is absolute."

On the other hand, as regards Parry's songs, Fuller-Maitland considers that (apart from two early songs written while he was still at Eton) he shows "wonderful skill in accentuation; the words always seem to have suggested the framework of the vocal phrase." R. O. Morris takes the same view saying that "in the scrupulous observance of the verbal rhythm Parry is, as ever, a model to composers."

In his inaugural lecture as Professor of Music at Birmingham University, Elgar went out of his way to give special praise to Parry, "a name," he said, "which shall always be spoken in this University with the deepest respect, and I will add, the deepest affection, . . . with him no cloud of formality can dim the healthy sympathy and broad influence he exerts and we hope may long continue to exert upon us." He referred to Parry as "the head of our art in this country" and spoke of Blest Pair of Sirens as "the English masterpiece"; and Parry is, of course, best known for his choral mastery, his skill in handling large masses with noble simplicity of effect obtaining climax after climax with seemingly effortless ease. For many of his contemporaries, however, it was his work as an inspiring teacher and administrator which earned their gratitude and admiration. Sir Hugh Allen, who succeeded Parry as Director of the Royal College of Music, said that "Parry's teaching and influence, throbbing with infectious energy, were almost miraculous." Dr. Douglas Fox recalls that "for many of us, Sir Hubert Parry's dynamic personality seemed to direct and inspire our College life in an extraordinary and indefinable way, though we rarely saw him except at concerts and on the first morning of term, when, after a characteristically genial welcome, he would deliver one of his sequence of College Addresses."

The Oxford Companion to Music concludes its article on Parry with the words: "His geniality, generosity, moral character and artistic ideals were of the greatest influence; indeed, he was everything that one would like the world to consider as implied in the description 'English gentleman.'" His ashes were buried in St. Paul's, "as was only fitting, because he was a national figure who had made through music a contribution to the public and social life of his country." The cathedral was packed for the occasion, so packed that Thomas Dunhill, who was then

acting as a steward, had the greatest difficulty in finding a place for Elgar and his wife. And, at the service, they sang perhaps the most beautiful motet of Parry's Songs of Farewell:

There is an old belief,
That on some solemn shore,
Beyond the sphere of grief,
Dear friends shall meet once more.

Four years later, Elgar was present at the unveiling of a memorial tablet to Parry in Gloucester Cathedral, and the occasion led to a token reconciliation between Elgar and Stanford, who had been estranged for many years. Parry himself would surely have been happy that it was this ceremony which brought the two together, for, like many other friends of Elgar and Stanford, he had long felt distress and embarrassment at their mutual antagonism. Indeed, such bitter ill-feeling, harboured for so long, would have been impossible in the warm-hearted, generous Parry, who, in Sir Hugh Allen's memorable phrase, "carried the stimulus of sunshine wherever he went."

ANOTHER "Forgotten" ELGAR SONG

In June 1899, the Charing Cross Hospital held a Hospital Bazaar at the Albert Hall in London. It was a lavish affair, and a special souvenir volume was produced and sold for charity. For this volume Herbert Beerbohm Tree approached the leading composers of the day for a contribution, and the volume duly appeared, attractively bound, and with a portrait of each composer at the head of his contribution. The other composers represented, apart from Elgar, were Bridge, Cowen, German, Mackenzie, MacCunn, Parry, Stanford, and Sullivan.

However, no reports of the event mention the music at all, and it must be assumed that these works were not, in fact, performed at that time. In addition the volume is now very rare, which seems to suggest that only a limited number of copies were printed.

Elgar's contribution was the song Dry those Fair, those Crystal Eyes. Ronald Taylor, the editor of the Newsletter, has managed to get hold of the volume, and photocopy Elgar's song. This he gave to Barry Collett, that tireless researcher and performer of the 'unknown' Elgar, who, with the soprano Jane McDouall, gave the first modern performance of the song at an East Midlands Elgar Society recital last year. It would be interesting to know if the song has been performed at all before this. Can any

Barry Collett adds: Although no undiscovered masterpiece, the song, a setting of words by Henry King, Bishop of Chichester, (1591-1699), is most attractive. Like several of Elgar's songs, it looks ordinary, even sketchy, on the page, but is, in fact, surprisingly full and rich-sounding in performance. The key is G major, and the song is in two verses, separated by a sequence of chords that also begin and end the work. The flexible voice part has some irregular phrase lengths, and the accompaniment follows a simple chordal scheme, although with Elgar's own characteristic spacing of the piano sonorities, as in the last three bars.

Incidentally, what is surely needed now is a complete publication of all Elgar's songs, perhaps in two volumes. Those of us wishing to perform them work under all sorts of difficulties, even trying to get hold of most of them.

E L G A R F O U N D A T I O N and BIRTHPLACE NEWS.....

Following Ken Russell's appearance on television earlier this year, and his appeal for 'PLAS GWYN' to be saved, the Foundation has decided to take up his challenge. 'Plas Gwyn' was the home where Elgar created some of his greatest works - The Kingdom, the Violin Concerto, both the Symphonies, and the Introduction and Allegro, as well as a number of lesser pieces.

The present Appeal target of £100,000, of which £65,000 has already been collected, is to be doubled to £200,000, the additional amount being the estimated sum necessary for the purchase, restoration, and refurbishing of the house, to make it suitable for use in connection with music studies and live concerts. The new Appeal Campaign will be launched at the Royal Albert Hall concert on Friday, May 5th, when H. R. H. the Prince of Wales will be present.

An architect, Sam Scorer, who has had a wide experience in converting and renovating Victorian houses, has been retained to prepare plans, and consult with the authorities. Discussions with all interested parties will take place once the results of the first survey are known. In addition, appropriate planning permission must be obtained. Plans under discussion would provide for, as far as possible, restoration of the house and gardens to the condition in which they were in Elgar's time. Additionally, special restoration would be made to the ground floor rooms, including Elgar's study, and his chemical laboratory, 'The Ark.' Sufficient photographs survive for this to be done. Restoration of the remainder of the house would be 'in period.'

The Foundation is assured that it should be possible to raise the extra amount needed, but the house is in poor state, and a great deal of money is needed - some of it quickly, to arrest further decay. For this reason the Foundation urges all Elgar enthusiasts, and music-lovers in general, to be as generous as they can. After years of neglect there really is a chance to save 'Plas Gwyn' this time. One of the conditions of the new appeal is that no money already given or promised for the Birthplace, or money donated in the future expressly for the Birthplace, shall be used for 'Plas Gwyn.' Apart from that restriction priority will be given to the 'Plas Gwyn' project, once it is confirmed as a practical proposition.

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The Curator of the Birthplace (Jack McKenzie) writes: The Worcester City Parks Department has again contributed towards the upkeep of the Birthplace garden, for which it deserves the gratitude of all Elgarians. In particular, the area surrounding the dogs' graves has been cleared up and given new turf; the graves themselves have had a fence placed around them, and a beech-hedge has been planted so that, in the course of time, this corner of the garden will always be foliaged. The flowering cherry, that Lady Barbirolli planted last year, has been moved to replace one of the trees blown down in the gales, and we are hoping that a few more shrubs will be added in the next few months. Our notice-board, also damaged in the winds, has been given some exceptionally sturdy legs to support it. Lastly outdoors, the front flagstones have been levelled, and the driveway re-gravelled, both of which measures will contribute to the more comfortable arrival of our visitors!

As far as the house itself is concerned, there has been some repointing of the brickwork, and the Study floor is now repaired. We have also been given a new door leading from the lane to the patio that forms the backyard. All of which helps us to maintain the Birthplace in a fit condition for the many contributions that continue to arrive from generous donors. Mrs. Leicester has given us the clarinet which belonged to William Leicester and which he played in the Wind Quintet that Elgar formed with his youthful friends. From Ian McCafferty has come a copy of Maine on Music, and from Frank Quinn we were delighted to receive Billy Reid's copy of the String Quartet, autographed by Elgar. The music collection has been augmented by a copy of Op. 2, no. 3 the Ave Maria Stella of 1887; and we are also grateful for a copy of The Dalesman magazine, sent by an anonymous donor, which contains an article on Elgar and his Yorkshire friend, Dr. Buck. Our most recent acquisition is a copy of Elgar's letters to the publisher Keith Prowse, who handled so much of Elgar's material in the last years of his life. After a slow start to the year, the Easter holiday and some fine following days increased numbers substantially, making a total of 650 visitors to March 30th. With finer weather we hope for another excellent year.

The porcelain busts of Elgar are now the only type available, and are priced at £5, with stand, and £3.50 without.

D A T E S F O R Y O U R D I A R Y

Fri. May 5	Foundation Celebrity Concert, cond. Sir Charles Groves and Donald Hunt, with Yehudi Menuhin. R. P. O, and Worcester Festival Choral Society. <u>Civic Fanfare, National Anthem, Prelude to The Kingdom, Coronation March, The Music Makers,</u> and the Brahms <u>Double Concerto,</u> and Tortelier's <u>Concerto for Violin, Cello & Orchestra</u> (Slow Movement.)	Royal Albert Hall Tickets £1.00 to £5.50 in aid of Birthplace and Plas Gwyn Appeal.
Fri. May 5	<u>Introduction and Allegro</u> London Mozart Players, cond. Stanley Pope	Royal Festival Hall
Sun. May 14	<u>Enigma Variations</u> Hallé Orch. cond. James Loughran	Free Trade Hall Manchester
Sat. May 20	<u>Sursam Corda, Nursery Suite*</u> , Rutland Sinfonia, cond. Barry Collett. *change from item previously announced	Uppingham School Hall. Further details from Oakham 2504. —
Sat. May 20	<u>The Dream of Gerontius</u> Cathedral Choir, Bach Choir, and St. Edmundsbury Orch. cond. by Harrison Oxley. with Jean Allister, David Johnston and John Noble	St. Edmundsbury Cathedral, Bury St. Edmunds. at 7.30 p.m.
Sun. May 21	<u>In the South, Sea Pictures</u> (soloist: Janet Baker), <u>Symphony no. 2.</u> Philharmonia Orch. cond. Norman del Mar	Royal Festival Hall
Mon. May 22	<u>In the South</u> Royal Liverpool P. O. cond. Vernon Handley	Peterborough Cathedral
Fri. June 2	Tea will be served at the Birthplace, Broadheath, during the afternoon. This has been arranged to coincide with the Tewkesbury and Malvern Festivals.	
Sun. June 4	Evensong and Annual Wreath-Laying Ceremony. All welcome.	Worcester Cathedral at 4p.m.
Wed. June 14	<u>Violin Sonata</u> Rosemary Furniss, with Miriam Juviler (piano)	Purcell Room South Bank

Fri. July 7

Dream of Gerontius
Goldsmiths Choral Union &
Highgate Choral Society, cond.
Brian Wright, with Helen Watts,
Robert Tear, & Gwynne Howell

Royal Festival Hall

MALVERN FESTIVAL CONCERTS & EVENTS

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|----------------|------|---|
| <u>May 28</u> | 3.00 | <u>Jerrold Northrop Moore on The Enigma and the Variations. Illustrated Lecture.</u> |
| | 7.00 | LSO, cond. Christopher Seaman, play <u>Enigma Variations</u> , and works by Holst, Delius & Bruch. |
| <u>May 29</u> | 3.00 | LSO, cond. Neville Marriner, play <u>Introduction and Allegro</u> , and works by Vaughan Williams and Dvorak. |
| | 7.00 | LS Wind Ensemble, play <u>Music for Wind Quintet</u> , and works by Mozart and Dvorak. |
| <u>June 1</u> | 7.00 | Gabrieli String Quartet, with John McCabe, play <u>Piano Quintet</u> , and works by Walton and Mozart. |
| <u>June 3</u> | 2.30 | Jacqueline Du Pré gives a Master Class on the Elgar <u>Cello Concerto</u> . |
| <u>June 4</u> | 2.30 | Further Master Class. |
| | 4.00 | Aldwyn Consort of Voices give programme including works by Elgar, Bridge, Rubbra, Britten, Finzi et al. |
| | 7.00 | Hallé Orchestra, under James Loughran, plays <u>Second Symphony</u> , and Beethoven's <u>Symphony no. 6</u> . |
| <u>June 8</u> | 7.45 | Malvern Musical Society and the Orchestra da Camera, under Neil Page, with Anne Collins, perform <u>The Music Makers</u> , and works by Vaughan Williams. |
| <u>June 11</u> | 7.00 | RLPO & Chorus, under Vernon Handley, with Teresa Cahill, Kenneth Woollam & Peter Glossop, perform <u>King Olaf</u> . |
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STOP PRESS FOR LONDON MEMBERS!

Due to an oversight the May Meeting of the London Branch is advertised for May 1st (a Public Holiday). This should of course have read May 8.

At that meeting Robert Tucker is presenting what he mysteriously describes as "something that 99% of members of the Elgar Society will not have heard before!" David Michell, our other speaker, is dealing with 'Impressions of people who met Elgar.'



**Elgar's Interpreters
on
Record**

an Elgar Discography
compiled by
John Knowles

Copies available by post from The Treasurer, price £1.20. Cheques or postal orders should be made payable to The Elgar Society, and sent to 11 The Chase, Watford, Herts, WD1 7JQ

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This new discography lists for the first time all recordings of Elgar's music, traced up to the time of publication. Wherever possible the recordings are dated, and the discography is divided into seven sections: Orchestral, Chamber, Instrumental, Vocal and Choral, Stage Works, Arrangements, and Miscellaneous.

Any additional material discovered will be carefully noted, and some details may appear in future issues of the NEWSLETTER.

Record Reviews

ENGLISH PARTSONGS

Elgar: Five Partsongs from the Greek Anthology; The Wanderer; The Reveille. and Partsongs by Vaughan Williams, Howells, Bax, Deli us, Warlock and Britten.

The Baccholian Singers of London, with Jennifer Partridge(piano).

HMV CSD 3783

This finely recorded disc provides the first-ever complete recording of the Greek Anthology Partsongs, Opus 45, and as such is valuable, for, though one or two of them are well-known separately, they are so short and well-contrasted that they are much better heard as a five-movement choral suite. The impulsive character of Yea Cast Me from the Heights, the intermezzo-like (with several characteristically Elgarian turns of melody and harmony) Whether I Find Thee, then After Many a Dusty Mile, which evokes so well the shady grove affording relief from the Mediterranean sun, It's Oh to be a Wild Wind - the scherzo of the set, albeit a gentle one - and the bold, firm Feasting I Watch are all splendidly realised by the Baccholian Singers, just eight voices, but excellently focussed and perfect in balance and diction (the words of all the songs appear on an insert).

Further gaps in the Elgar discography are filled by the performances of the shapely, beautifully imagined The Wanderer and of The Reveille - a true "test piece", this, quite long, over six minutes, with its urgent, insistent march-like tread and countless points of subtle harmonic and dynamic detail, to catch out less well-prepared choirs. Here the many changes of mood are excellently managed, though this, more than most of the other items on the record, calls for a large choir.

Several of these songs look backwards to the Victorian era, but Sir Edward's touch is apparent in all of them. In effect, they form a bridge between the 19th and 20th century male voice repertoires; the latter is effectively represented (Bantock is missing, but he again needs a larger singing group than this) by the remaining pieces on the disc, which are likewise most sympathetically performed. Some are folk settings; others, like Warlock's Duchess of Malfi and Howells' Dirge ("Full Fathom Five") are art songs of great sensitivity. The Britten is a narrative ballad, almost a miniature concert opera of amazing power, while the Delius, his only song for unaccompanied men's voices, has many typical harmonies. An essential record for Elgarians and amateurs in small-scale choral music.

P. L. S.

SYMPHONY No. 2 in E flat, Op.63

Scottish National Orchestra, conducted by Sir Alexander Gibson.

RCA RL 25104

The new Elgar Discography tells me that there are now eight versions currently available of the Second Symphony, including those by Boult (four), Barbirolli, Barenboim, Solti, and the disc under review. Four of these have appeared in the last five years. How fortunate we are to have so many fine recordings of Elgar's major works! This new RCA record is the latest in the Gibson/Elgar series, and, despite the formidable opposition, can be unhesitatingly recommended. The E flat symphony, which is the peak of Elgar's instrumental writing, holds many dangers for the unwary conductor. The first movement in particular is a positive minefield, with over 70 markings indicating a change in tempo. Some of these are major changes, indicating a new section, while the others last just a few bars, and are usually marked by the letters R, A or L, standing for Ritardando, Accelerando and Largamente. The danger lies in losing one's way by pulling about the tempo too much, as I feel Barenboim does, or in preventing the music from breathing by largely ignoring the markings. Gibson succeeds perfectly in avoiding both these traps; the impetus created by that exhilarating opening is never lost, and the trochaic rhythm, which dominates much of this movement, is never sloppy or rushed, but always under complete control. This rhythmic urgency is maintained throughout and gives a strong feeling of unity, yet within this framework the slight variations in tempo are always observed.

There is no self-indulgence in the Larghetto either; Gibson is very restrained and never wallows. He follows closely the composer's markings, and his timing is nearest to Elgar's own for this movement, yet occasionally he permits himself a personal touch. For instance, he ignores the marking sostenuto three bars after the climax at 76, and makes a slight accelerando in order to point up the next climax at 77.

The last two movements maintain the high standards set in the first two, and complete a performance which is almost totally lacking in idiosyncracies, but which is thoroughly convincing and satisfying. Perhaps the secret lies in the fact that each movement was recorded at a single take, and any amendments were inserted from other complete takes. The RCA sound cannot quite match that produced on the recent HMV and Decca recordings, but this is more than made up for by an outstanding performance.

G. H.

Organ Sonata in G, Op.28

Rollin Smith, at the Walter Holtkamp Organ in the Church of
S. Rose of Lima, Brooklyn, New York.

Repertoire Recording Soc. RRS 11

In his article in the A.G.O. - R.C.C.O. Magazine, for November 1973, Rollin Smith outlines the fortunes of Elgar's Organ Sonata in the U.S.A. He reveals the remarkable fact that it was 'recorded' there as early as 1918, in a series of player-organ rolls published by the Aeolian Company. He also discusses the technical problems of interpretation, and offers an ingenious, yet musically satisfactory, solution of the passage at bar 115 in the first movement.

On the question of the instrument used for the first performance of the Sonata Mr. Smith argues correctly against the 1896 Hope-Jones organ (opened in Worcester Cathedral one year after the premiere of the Sonata), but fails to appreciate that Elgar conceived the work for the large four-manual Hill organ of 1874. The composer recalled, in his profile in the Strand Magazine of 1904, that he had known the instrument since his boyhood; moreover, the registration markings in the sketches indicate conclusively that this was the intended instrument for his Sonata.

The article concludes with a surprising inaccuracy: "Whatever muse inspired Edward Elgar to produce the organ Sonata quickly left, for he never wrote for the organ again..." Elgar did write for the organ again, beginning in 1895 (the year of the Sonata) with a Cadenza for George Sinclair to play at the Gloucester Festival performance of C.H. Lloyd's Organ Concerto in F minor. There then followed the important colouristic and dramatic parts for the organ in the scores of Caractacus, Gerontius, The Apostles and The Kingdom. In 1906 he composed a piece For Dot's Nuns, and a Fugue in C minor at Napleton Grange in January 1923; the list could be continued...

It is unfortunate that Rollin Smith chose an organ with such historically inappropriate timbres for his recording. The bright crystalline sounds of a 'neo-classical' organ are as inappropriate to Elgar's Organ Sonata as the sound and texture of a consort of viols would be to a performance of his Serenade for Strings. Yet, the problem of finding a suitable mid-19th century organ for the Sonata is difficult. It is ironic that one of the few 'intact' Hill organs, similar in size to the 1874 Worcester instrument, is in Sydney Town Hall!

The performance is technically secure, save some slips in the finale, but it is as literal and objective as befits the instrument used. The elasticity of tempo, which Elgar considered vital to the performance of his music, is missing. A largamente in bar 3 of the first movement is ignored,

so are many of the subtle rits and tenuti enewhere. In the Allegretto (taken at a fair Allegro Moderato) Elgar's legato markings are ignored, so that the movement re-emerges with an excess of staccato articulation. The third movement also suffers from excessive speed and insensitivity, whilst the jovial second subject of the finale is unaccountably broadened.

Mozart's Fantasias in F minor, K 594 and 608 make up the other side of the disc.

C. J. K.

RECENT RECORD RELEASES

Pomp and Circumstance March no. 1, and Jerusalem(Parry, orch. by Elgar) BBC SO/Sir Charles Groves (From Last Night of the Proms 1974) BBC REH290(Gramophone 11. 77)

Pomp and Circumstance March no. 1. (From above) BBC RES L48 (45 r. p. m) (See Gramophone 11. 77)

Pomp and Circumstance March no. 4, and 'Nimrod'. LPO/Sir Georg Solti. Decca F13713. ('Nimrod' from SXL6795) (45 r. p. m) (See Gramophone 8. 77)

Enigma Variations. RLPO/Sir Charles Groves. HMV (SQ)ASD3417. (See Gramophone 2. 78. and R & R 2. 78)

Serenade for Strings. Hart House Orch, Toronto/Boyd Neel; 'Nimrod'. LSO/Jochum (from DGG 2530 586); Pomp and Circumstance no.1. RPO/Del Mar. DGG 2535 250.

Worcester 1978

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Concerts likely to be of particular interest to Society members are detailed below. Prompt booking is essential, and application should be made without delay

August 27. Dream of Gerontius. RPO, with Sandra Browne, Michael Rippon, Anthony Rolfe Johnson, cond. Sir Charles Groves. August 30. BBC Northern SO, cond. Bryden Thomson, concert including Second Symphony. Same evening 'Elgar Serenade' including Starlight Express music. September 1. Medici Quartet play String Quartet in E minor.

The Elgar Society

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Although formal notice was given in the January Newsletter, it was intended to circulate the agenda, accounts and minutes of the previous meeting to all members beforehand. In the event this became impossible for two reasons - - firstly, the illness of the Hon. Secretary, and secondly, the unexpected delay in receiving the accounts back from the auditors. The latter only reached us one week before the meeting, so by the time they had been duplicated, along with the agenda and minutes, and packed up for posting at second-class rate, it was felt that they would be too late for those attending the meeting, and thus a waste of postage (£60). With hindsight, it is clear that the date of the meeting was fixed at least a fortnight or three weeks too soon. We apologise to all members for this omission, and for the inconvenience it may have given to some. The Hon. Secretary is despatching copies to members in the ordinary course of correspondence, and will be happy to meet demands from others on request.

The 28th Annual Meeting of the Society was held in the Central Hall, Westminster, London, S.W.1 on Saturday, 11th March, 1978. The Chairman, Mr. Douglas Guest, C.V.O. was unavoidably prevented from presiding over the early part of the meeting owing to his professional duties, his place being taken by a member of the Central committee, Mr. T.C. Fenemore-Jones.

The acting chairman, having welcomed those members who had made the effort to attend, referred to the great loss sustained by the Society during the year through the untimely and unexpected death of our most distinguished Vice-President, Viscount Cobham, K.G. Lord Cobham had been a Vice-President of the Society almost since it was founded over 25 years ago and took a keen interest in its work and development. An appraisal written by the Society's former chairman, Mr. A. T. Shaw, was published in the Newsletter for May, 1977.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read out and approved. The only matter arising concerned the proposal to set up a liaison committee on which the Society, the Birthplace Trustees, and the Elgar Foundation would be equally represented. The Hon. Secretary reported that he had discussed the matter informally during the year with the chairman of the Elgar Foundation, Mr. Wulstan Atkins. As the functions of the Society and the Foundation differ fundamentally, it was difficult to see what useful purpose a liaison committee would serve. At the same time it was agreed that the two bodies should co-operate as closely as possible and be seen to do so. There was every likelihood that this would be clearly demonstrated in the very near future.

The Hon. Secretary also reported that since the last meeting 84 new members had joined the Society, and 5 had resigned. Thus the current membership had increased to 820, and continued to grow steadily. A major contribution to this satisfactory performance had been made and would continue to be made by the two new branches of the Society. These were formed to cater for members living in the North-West, and East Anglia, respectively, and were already attracting new members to the Society. We offer our best wishes to both these new branches for a successful and healthy development. After some problems of internal administration, West Midlands branch has been re-organised, and we look forward to it resuming its former prosperity and influence in our affairs. East Midlands branch, too, is having to re-organise its administration in consequence of Mr. Gordon Richmond's entry into a theological college. Happily, he remains as branch chairman. London branch continues to flourish and its membership to expand; attendance at meetings is now around 100.

The Hon. Treasurer presented the Accounts and Balance Sheet. Despite the increase in the cost of the Newsletter and postage to over £800, income exceeded expenditure by nearly £200. This was due mainly to the success he had had in collecting arrears of subscriptions amounting to over £250. Adoption of the accounts was proposed by Mr. Geoffrey Hodgkins and seconded by Mr. Andrew Neill - it was carried unanimously. Thereafter, both Mr. Knowles and Auditors were thanked by the Chairman for their able conduct of our financial affairs.

Before the election of the officers and committee, the chairman made a personal statement to the effect that he wishes to relinquish his office as soon as a suitable successor can be found prior to the next A.G.M. He feels that his inability to attend either general or committee meetings outside London, or to visit the branches, because of his many other engagements, is increasingly unfair to the whole of the Society and must not continue. Thus it will be for the committee to consider the matter and take soundings. As chairman of the committee until his successor is appointed, Mr. Guest will naturally take part in the discussions; his guidance, as always, will be extremely valuable. Finally, the present Officers and Committee were re-elected, with the addition to the committee of Dr. J. M. Buttrey, proposed by Mr. Fenemore-Jones, and seconded by Mr. John Knowles. Mr. R. P. Taylor asked why no Vice-Chairman had been proposed, although allowed under the constitution, and suggested Mr. Fenemore-Jones. It was agreed to leave this for consideration by the committee at its next meeting, especially in view of the fact that a new chairman had to be selected and the two appointments were likely to have some bearing on each other.

BRANCH REPORTS

WEST MIDLANDS

Secretary: Alan Boon, Old School
House, Martley, Worcester
WR6 6QA.
Tel: Winchenford 419.

Feb. 4th. Joint Meeting with Worcester Recorded Music Society.

An always enjoyable event of the West Midlands Branch year is the joint meeting with Worcester Recorded Music Society, held at the Old Palace, with Mr. A. T. Shaw (Bertie) as guest speaker. Thanking this "ringleader" in the formation of the Elgar Society, a Music Society member remarked that he felt that he had been in close contact with the great man Elgar himself, and indeed, Mr. Shaw's reminiscences are a joy to hear.

Scenes from Caractacus opened the evening's programme. It was revived only some five years ago, having been superseded by the quality of Elgar's later music. Any criticism of Elgar's methods of construction was fiercely resented by many at the time, and here we were amused by a personal memory of Mr. Shaw's. George Butterworth's The Banks of Green Willow, fresh and charming as an English Spring, came next. This intensely self-critical young man, friend of Vaughan Williams, was killed in 1916. Variations on an Original Theme, Elgar's fourteen portraits in music, with his own programme notes for pianola, completed the evening. Mr. Shaw mentioned the many possible explanations of the Enigma, from Auld Lang Syne to other, later, solutions by Professor Parrott (Bach-inspired), and a Dutch critic's suggestion (Rule Britannia), centred on the subject of Variation 10.

March 4th. Branch A. G. M.

At the kind invitation of the Headmistress, Miss Millest, the Annual Meeting was held at the Alice Ottley School in Worcester, with some thirty members present. Business was attended to as quickly as possible, as everyone was waiting to hear Rodney Baldwyn, organist of Pershore Abbey, speak on "Ceremonial Elgar."

Mr. John Savage was re-elected Chairman, with Mr. Michael Trott as Vice-Chairman. Mr. A. L. Boon took over as Treasurer, as well as Secretary. The chairman thanked Frank Greatwich and Alan Boulstridge, the retiring Vice-Chairman and Treasurer, for their many years of service to the Society; Frank in particular being there at its formation in 1951. Mr. Michael Dawson was elected to the committee in place of Miss Anne Soden, who had been forced to resign due to pressure of work. Members discussed time, place, and frequency of meetings. Saturday evening was voted most popular day, and time, and Mrs. A. T. Shaw proposed that the number of meetings be reduced to two before Christmas and two after, plus the annual wreath-laying

and Three Choirs week tea. There was general agreement on this.

Rodney Baldwyn was introduced by Michael Trott, and began his talk by drawing a picture of formal life in the Worcester-Malvern area in late Victorian times, and how Elgar existed on the edge of this society. His ceremonial music began with a variety of small religious works and continued right through to the final Pomp and Circumstance march. We heard of the background to, and short extracts from, the March of the Roman Soldiers, Imperial March, Funeral March (Grania & Diarmid), the Coronation Ode (evocative of Handel), March of the Mogul Emperors, Carillon (with Henry Ainley's reading of the poem by Emile Cammaerts). Incidentally, Rodney had a copy of this music (with a lurid cover) bought in the Elgar's music shop in 1915. He continued with excerpts from Polonia, For the Fallen, and Arthur's Passage to Avalon. There was also, of course, the Civic Fanfare, and arrangement of the National Anthem, recorded at Hereford in 1927. East Midland branch members will be pleased to know that Mr. Baldwyn will be repeating his talk at a meeting in their area. Branch chairman, John Savage, thanked both Rodney Baldwyn and Miss Millest for all that they had done to make the evening a most pleasant one.

LONDON

Secretary: E. W. A. Jackson,
'Killiegray' 7 Batchworth
Lane, Northwood, Middx.
Tel: Northwood 22010.

Since our last report we have been delighted to welcome six new members to the branch, and hope they will find their membership both enjoyable and rewarding. There have been three further meetings:

Dec. 5th. Edward Greenfield - 'Elgar-The Reviewer's Model.'

Mr. Greenfield chose the title of his excellent talk with some care. He believes that Elgar's music presents few problems for the competent reviewer, because the composer was so meticulous in marking his scores that he left no doubt how he wished the music to go, and the effect he intended to create. Thus the critic has a bonus to begin with, and is able the more readily to concentrate his attention on the performance itself to judge how successful, or otherwise, the performers have been in interpreting Elgar's directions. Regular readers of The Guardian, and The Gramophone will have little difficulty in agreeing that Mr. Greenfield's reviews are consistent with this premise, and are themselves models of objective criticism. For his most interesting talk Mr. Greenfield brought a pile of records, comprising various interpretations of a number of works - Pomp and Circumstance no. 1,

Violin Concerto, 1st Symphony, etc. - using similar extracts from each recording to make an illuminating comparison. Invariably Elgar's own recordings were played first (including one of his own piano improvisations) and thus became the yardstick by which subsequent interpretations were judged. In fact, Mr. Greenfield might well have been preparing the ground for one of his model reviews! A thoroughly enjoyable meeting.

Feb. 6th. Michael Hurd - 'The Challenge of Biography'.

This almost turned out to be a non-event. Through an unfortunate error, Mr. Hurd had entered the date wrongly in his diary, and arrived for the meeting the following evening! All our efforts to get in touch with him had failed. When he discovered his 'dreadful error' he sent an abject apology which he requested should be passed on to those members who had arrived at the meeting expecting to hear him. As this was the first time in seven years that our speaker failed to appear, we must not complain too much. No doubt there will be another opportunity to hear Mr. Hurd later on.

Happily, all was not lost. Dr. Jerrold Moore very kindly stepped into the breach and gave a most entertaining 'impromptu' talk entirely without notes or preparation. Many members said afterwards that they had never heard him speak better, and wished he had continued longer. There is obviously a moral to be learned here! We are all most grateful to our good friend Jerrold Moore for so readily agreeing to help out.

E. W. A. J.

March 6th. Dr. Gareth Lewis - Elgar's Singers.

Dr. Lewis is himself an enthusiastic singer, and a student of vocal art, and he therefore brought a critical approach to bear on his survey of the singers for whom Elgar wrote, or who he heard and admired. Alas, some of the great names of the past had retired, or were long past their best, by the time the gramophone appeared. However, it is remarkable how much was put on to wax and preserved. As well as giving us a valuable insight into the styles of singing in the 1890's and early in this century, the speaker played us a number of records, some very rare. Included were records by Edward Lloyd, Clara Butt, Andrew Black, Agnes Nicholls, and Harry Plunket Greene. A record of the latter, made very late in his life, of a Somerset song was encored by an appreciative audience, with only the gentlest of prods from the speaker! A fascinating evening, and a talk which should be heard by other branches.

R. P. T.

NORTH WEST

Secretary: D. Carrington, 84 Park View
Road, Lytham, Lytham St. Annes, Lancs
Tel: 0253 737859

The branch has held two well-attended meetings in Liverpool since its formation in November last year. The first, on January 14th was given by a

member Peter Dutton (piano), and Peter Newman (violin), who performed the Sonata for Violin and Piano, and talked about the chamber music. The February meeting was to have been a talk on King Olaf by Vernon Handley, a few weeks before he conducted the work in Liverpool on March 14th. Unfortunately, Mr. Handley was assaulted in Manchester, sustaining a broken jaw, and was unable to give his talk, his place being taken by Mr. Percy Welton of the Royal Northern College of Music who gave a most comprehensive and interesting talk, at very short notice, on music from John of Dunstable to Elgar. Members of the branch attended the performance of King Olaf, and plan to attend The Apostles and The Kingdom at Tewkesbury's Elgar Festival on May 27th. The organist of Chester Cathedral, Mr. Roger Fisher, a member of the Society, has invited the branch to a summer outing at the Cathedral, when he will perform both Organ Sonatas for us.

An interview with the Branch Secretary on Radio Merseyside was broadcast on February 19th, giving listeners some idea of the objectives of the Society, and concluding with excerpts from the most recently released Elgar records.

Negotiations are in hand with Jerrold Northrop Moore, Roger Fisher and Caleb Jarvis for the completion of the Calendar of Events for June, July and September. Lady Barbirolli has offered to speak to us at the first Annual Dinner, planned for January 1979 at the conclusion of the season. In October Christopher Kent is to talk to us on 'Recent Researches', and in November Charles Myers on 'The Piano Music of Elgar.'

EAST ANGLIA

Secretary: Barry Marsh, 'Homelea',
Whitwell Road, Reepham,
Norfolk.

The main inspiration for the formation of this branch must have been the all-Elgar concert organised in Norwich on February 4th, when an audience numbering some 400, and including the national Society secretary, Mr. E. W. Jackson, heard the local Academy of St. Thomas, and the Hanson Quartet from London, give exciting performances of the Chansons, Elegy, Sospiri, the String Quartet and the Introduction and Allegro.

The result of some 30 or so people staying behind after the concert was the Inaugural Meeting held at Norwich Assembly Rooms on March 10th. Our host for that evening was Alan Childs, and under his expert guidance those present were thanked for the encouraging turnout, and the business of electing a . . . committee was soon under way. Mr. Childs was elected Chairman, a monthly venue set - at least for the first year, for it was mooted that the branch may have to spread its wings in the future to take in the needs of members as far away as Cambridge and Lowestoft - in the pleasant, informal surroundings of the Norwich rooms. Although it was felt that in its early stages the programme might have to include a large proportion of local speakers, there

was no shortage of volunteers, whilst letters of encouragement had already been received from the Norwich Cathedral organist, Michael Nicholas, and Prof. Peter Aston of the University of East Anglia. Further good wishes had already been passed to us from Douglas Guest by Mr. Jackson. The meeting concluded with Mr. Reg. Williamson presenting a recorded performance of the Violin Sonata. Our thanks go to him and the Norwich Gramophone Society for the loan of stereo equipment. Further details of programme events will be included in future issues of the Newsletter.

On March 11th, in St. Andrew's Hall, Norwich - the scene of an Elgar premiere The Sea Pictures - a large audience heard The Dream of Gerontius, given by the University of East Anglia Chorus, and New English Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Peter Aston. Gerald English, Sarah Walker and Michael Rippon were the soloists. On March 15th, a member of the branch committee, David Bunkell, who has just finished an original thesis on The Apostles and The Kingdom, conducted a performance of the rarely-heard choral version of Songs from the Bavarian Highlands, at the University.

EAST MIDLANDS

Secretary: Gordon Richmond, 1 Blankley Drive, Stoughton Road, Leicester. Tel:0533 704930

Jan. 21st. Branch A.G.M., followed by Punch and Mince-Pie Party. Only 12 members were present; Gordon Richmond was elected as Branch Chairman, Secretary/Treasurer, for 12 months only. A new secretary to be elected at the next A.G.M. Committee: Mrs. L. Richmond and I.G. Stevens re-elected, K. E. L. Simmons and T. A. R. Dowell newly elected members. At a committee meeting held subsequently on Feb. 25th, Mr. Dowell was elected Vice-Chairman of the branch, in place of Martin Passande, now a London member. We look forward to the pleasure of Tom's company on our committee. J. Hammond continues to serve as committee-member. The Chairman, in his report said that although the branch now had a membership of 33, we had lost 8 members through resignation, for one reason or another. Financially we have had a successful year, the remainder of the loan from the Society, at the branch's inauguration, having been paid in full. Most of the discussion during the business part of the meeting had regard to the future running of the branch, keeping in mind the chairman's future commitments, due to theological training and subsequent ordination, and also how we might re-awaken interest in branch activities.

Feb. 11th A record recital given by Martin Passande, who gave the 13 members present an account of the relationship between Elgar and Laurence Binyon, with some fine musical illustrations from Spirit of England, King Arthur, some of which music was felt to be the best of Elgar's 'chivalrous' work. We also heard two Elgar songs, Fly Singing Bird, and The Snow. We look forward to another visit from Mr. Passande next February.

ELGAR FESTIVAL TEWKESBURY ABBEY

SUNDAY MAY 21st — SUNDAY JUNE 4th
1978

Since our announcement of the Elgar Festival in our January issue, a number of alterations to the programme have been made. Tickets for series concerts are available from James Walkley, 'Craig-Lea' 86 Wells Road, Malvern, Worcs., and individual tickets are now available from the Abbey Bookstall, Tewkesbury; The Elgar Birthplace, Broadheath, Worcester; Good Music, Albion Street, Cheltenham; Stroud Music Centre, Stroud, Glos; and Music, 47 Friar Street, Worcester.

The following are the changes announced since our January issue appeared:

- Sunday, 21st May. 7.45p. m. Concert now includes For the Fallen.
- Thursday, 25th May. 7.45p. m. Organ Recital and Vocal Music, by Raymond Salisbury-Jones.
- Saturday, 27th May. 11.30 a. m. Talk by Jerrold Northrop Moore on The Kingdom and The Apostles.
- Monday, 29th May, 7.45 p. m. Serenade for Strings, replaces Sea Pictures.
- Wednesday, 31st May, 7.45p. m. Gramophone Society meeting presents Elgar on Record.
- Friday, 2nd June, 7.45p. m. Concert now includes Imperial March.
- Saturday, 3rd June, 7.45p. m. Concert includes Sea Pictures, in place of Enigma Variations, which is transferred to May 28th.

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE:

March 18th. Another delightful evening, this time provided by our good friend Jack McKenzie, who gave an account of something of his life as Curator of the Birthplace. Mr. McKenzie also brought a fascinating display of photographs, and a selection of records. Sadly, once again the meeting was lightly attended. Those present, however, had a most enjoyable evening.

Letters

From DAVID LUCAS

The article In Moonlight by Dr. K. E. L. Simmons, in the January issue, was interesting, and members may like to be reminded of what Mr. Ernest Newman had to say when he wrote his Elgar in the "Music of the Masters" series in 1905:

"With Elgar, the cases of really felicitous verbal-phrasing in his vocal music are quite scarce. Sometimes it is startlingly bad; at other times, while not bad enough to disturb us very deeply, the words are indeed made, by a process of lengthening this or that syllable, to go with the music, but without any sense of inevitableness. He has lately published the Canto Popolare from the In the South overture as a song, with words by Shelley, and this may serve to illustrate the point I am enforcing. It is quite true that you can sing Shelley's words to the music, but only by the same process by which Procrustes made his victims, tall or short, fit his bed of torture. Your sense of verbal-rhythm is pushed and pulled and jolted till its ribs are broken; and you finally declare that, by similar treatment, anything - an Act of Parliament or a patent medicine advertisement - could be made to 'go with' the melody equally well."

Miss Diana McVeagh, in her Edward Elgar: his Life and Music, records that certain of Newman's notices did not please Lady Elgar, and the critic was not invited to Severn House, i. e. 1912 onwards. That coolness did not last long, as is shown by the dedication, in 1919, of the Piano Quintet to Ernest Newman.

From J. H. ROBERTS

Can anyone offer information on the collaboration between Elgar and Jack Hylton? I have read (see the notes on the sleeve of SH 218: World Records) that Sir Edward possibly did some arranging for Hylton's Dance Band, but I have no further details.

From Professor IAN PARROTT

Christopher Kent has pointed to certain affinities that Elgar had with Verdi (the Requiem of 1874). Rather more powerful, I suggest, were the derivations from Wagner (some of which I have already recorded in my book). Perhaps the following, from the third act of Parsifal (1882), is worth looking at in the present context:



This is what we normally describe as a typically Elgarian passage, a sequence with a particular type of suspension (bars 2 and 4 being first inversions).

An interesting feature of Mr. Kent's illustrations is, that the Verdi first chord involves a 6-5 on a root-position chord. The Elgar quotations he makes from The Light of Life, Caractacus and The Music Makers use the same suspension-like dissonance on a first-inversion (4-3); the quotation from the Cello Concerto has this sound on a second-inversion (9-8). The favourite device for Elgar is on first-inversions (as in the Wagner excerpt), frequently used climactically; but in the slow movement of the Violin Concerto he creates one of his finest climaxes over a second-inversion:



This follows a passage involving consecutive unrelated dominant-sevenths, which, indeed, can be said to come from Verdi (see for example 'Celeste Aida', Act.1 of Aida, 1871), but Elgar nobly invests it with his own personality.

The direct influence of Wagner was usually less in Elgar's later works, but one of the most lyrical parts of the slow movement of the Violin Sonata (1918) uses this modified material (which he rightly used again in the last movement):



leading to the highly characteristic:



In between, one need hardly say, Elgar uses two of his most expressive rising sevenths, so that, with all his eclecticism, he again speaks with a very individual and unmistakeable voice.

From TREVOR FENEMORE-JONES

In his enjoyable article 'The Strange Case of the Odious Letter' (Newsletter, January 1978) Vincent Waite considers what might have prompted Stanford to write the offending missive received by Elgar on 27 December 1904. The theory he puts forward is that it was the explosion of suppressed anger over Elgar's behaviour at a dinner party on the preceding 13 March, together, perhaps, with suppressed ill-feeling resulting from Elgar's procrastination in connection with the Leeds Festival commission in 1903. I fully accept the point that, given the temperaments and contrasting careers of the two men, a serious break between them was inevitable at some time, and that something quite trivial could have triggered off the estrangement. In considering this whole matter I think that a chronological review is helpful in sorting out the probabilities and possibilities. The dates I refer to are taken from the works of Dr. Percy Young.

A basic query which immediately springs to mind is whether it is really likely that Stanford, noted as he was for writing letters on impulse, would have taken Elgar seriously to task on these particular matters so long after the events in question. Such a letter written at the season of goodwill, and in cold blood, was not to be expected, even of Stanford. When we bear in mind that Stanford had already written to Elgar on 30 March, just over a fortnight after the dinner party, in friendly enough terms, and, moreover, that in the letter he had specifically referred to the Leeds commission, stating that he was glad that Elgar had put himself 'all right' with the Leeds Committee, I feel we must conclude that if he had wanted to criticise Elgar on either of these points this is when he would have done it. It follows that the real rift must have come later.

We know that the two composers met socially on at least two occasions after the dinner party. On 14 April Elgar accepted an invitation from Stanford to lunch at the Atheneum. Elgar had only heard of his election to membership on 13 April, so presumably he had this very welcome news in a letter from

Stanford himself. Elgar was duly given lunch, shown round, and introduced to members. He clearly enjoyed himself. Stanford, of course, had seconded Elgar's election to membership. The second known meeting was as late as 11 December. Fritz Volbach, a well-known German composer and conductor, was in London to conduct one of his own compositions at the R. C. M. Elgar met him and accompanied him to the Stanfords' and also to the Stuart-Wortleys' before proceeding to the concert.

There is no hint that either of these occasions was other than pleasant. It follows that we should look for something even later in December which might have caused irritation. Two particular topics seem to me to constitute especially dangerous ground at precisely this time. In the first place, Richard Strauss, whose music Stanford detested, was in England to conduct a concert of his own music in Birmingham on 20 December. Elgar was particularly well-disposed towards Strauss, who had gone out of his way to praise Elgar's music in Germany. They dined together in London on 18 December, and again in Birmingham on the night of the concert, this time in the company of Lady Elgar. If in a letter Stanford had made any critical remarks about Strauss, or his music, there is little doubt that Elgar would have been deeply offended. Secondly, the news of Elgar's appointment at Peyton Professor of Music in the University of Birmingham was widely publicised in an 'inspired' article which appeared in the Birmingham Post of 21 December. The likely appointment had been rumoured for some time before this, but Elgar did not finally accept the post until 10 December. It seems highly likely that, as soon as definite news reached him, Stanford would have written to Elgar. It may be significant that Harry Plunket Greene, close friend and biographer of Stanford, links the 'real' estrangement not with earlier events, but with Elgar's acceptance of the Peyton Chair and with the lectures that followed. I appreciate, of course, that it is somewhat idle to speculate in the absence of firm evidence. My main point is that at least we should not assume, in the absence of such evidence, that Elgar's actions, or lack of them, were the immediate cause of the break. It seems to me more likely that the break came as the result of the giving of gratuitous advice, or an ill-judged attempt at humour at the younger man's expense, either of which would have been found offensive by the proud and somewhat over-sensitive Elgar.

What happened after the 'odious letter' arrived is interesting. Elgar is said to have replied with patience and courtesy. It must, however, have been a formidable reply because thereafter the normally masterful Stanford was wont to 'flee' in order to avoid his rival. It was not until 1922 that Stanford felt himself able to make the direct approach which led to a grudging reconciliation. In this context another very interesting fact is sometimes overlooked. Early in February 1911 Elgar conducted a performance of Stanford's new Symphony no. 7, in D minor. He was 'amused', we are told, to have to do this, but clearly agreed to do it without resentment. That Elgar should

Malvern Festival

22 May-11 June 1978



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BOOKS AND MUSIC WANTED.

Letters of Edward Elgar, edited by Percy Young. Mr. Trevor Fenemore-Jones requires a copy of this book, and would appreciate offers from members.

Elgar, by Ernest Newman. Mr. Geoffrey Hodgkins urgently needs a copy of this book, and would also appreciate offers.

The Light of Life, Vocal Score. The editor still needs a copy of this, and any offers would be gratefully received.

OFFERS of any of the above, with prices required please, can be sent to the editor who will pass them on to the appropriate person.

MEMBERS are invited to put their requests for books or music in this section, free of charge, and subject to limitations of space.

Continued from previous page:

conduct Stanford at this period seems almost unbelievable, but there are two other interesting points to note. The first is that the concert was in Cambridge, where Stanford had been Professor of Music since 1887. Secondly, this performance must have been either the first, or at least a very early performance, since Grove gives the date of composition as 1911. The more one thinks about this, the more one concludes that this was as propitious a moment as any for a reconciliation. But where was Stanford? It is hard to believe that there was no contact between them on such an occasion. But if, indeed, no contact was made I have to draw the conclusion that Stanford lost an ideal opportunity to heal the breach some 11 years before the much-publicised Gloucester hand-shake of 1922.

THE ELGAR SOCIETY

(President: Sir Adrian Boulton, C.H.)

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