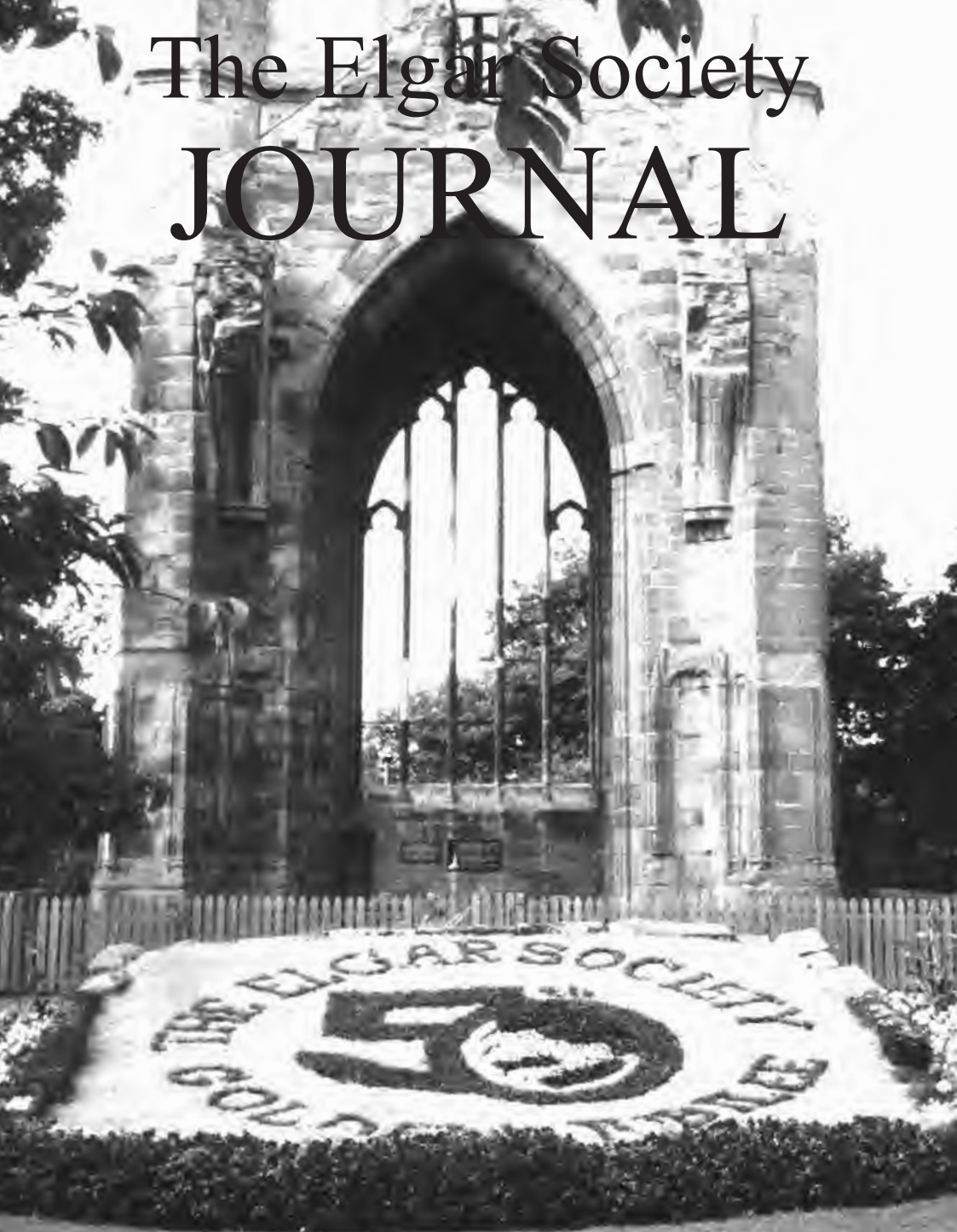


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A RECORD LIFE : 1927-1975

John Whittle

[The following is the text of a speech given by John Whittle on the occasion of his retirement. John died earlier this year, and his memories pay eloquent tribute to the debt owed him by Elgarians.]

Quite why I should, this evening, have such a distinguished chairman I am not at all sure, but it gives me exceptional pleasure. When I came back after the last war I rejoined what turned out to be a very wobbly EMI and we who have worked for what has turned into a very fine and successful company indeed owe a debt of immense size to Sir Joseph, EMI's Chairman until recently, for putting the company on to its feet again and so you see I have a Chairman tonight in every meaning of the word.

This atmosphere of continuity with one organisation, for me The Gramophone Company Ltd or HMV (to refer to its pre-EMI existence), has always been something tangible and real for me since I was about four years old.

At the outbreak of the 1914 war, my father was in the shipping business, Advertising Manager for Norddeutscher-Bremen-Lloyd, hardly the firm to be with come the end of 1914, and so he took another job, as Advertising Manager of The Gramophone Co at Hayes. We very shortly moved to a house in Harlington, looking across the fields to a large factory building with the magic words 'His Master's Voice' writ large upon it and so I was already, unknowingly, being drawn into the record business.

My father had a table model gramophone at home and being an executive got hold of plenty of records. Undoubtedly he loved music in its best sense - his record collection proved it and he could play the harp too - though I was to gain no direct or lasting influence as he was killed in France in 1917. However there were all the records and I think I played them avidly from the age of six or seven onwards. They were as natural to me as plates or pictures or food or clothing.

The great artists, particularly the singers, at that time often had their own label colour (I liked that) - pink, buff, mauve, etc. All the records were single-sided of course and mostly 78 rpm. But there were speed variants and you just twiddled a little flanged wheel on the turntable to get your 80 rpm or whatever. On the back of the discs would be embossed the angel - the recording angel - The Gramophone Company's oldest registered trade mark.

Names that are great now (or indeed forgotten now in many cases) were as normal to me as, say, Lyle's Golden Syrup - Caruso, Chaliapin, Sobinoff, Titta Ruffo, Melba, Tetrazzini, Sammarco, Plançon, Emma Eames, Louise Edvina, Marcel Journet, Jan Kubelik, Mischa Elman, Paderewski; and all orchestral music was rendered by the Coldstream Guards Band, an idea of little Freddie Gaisberg's, who collared most (and perhaps all) of the names I have just quoted. The symphony orchestra would not record effectively in those early days so the punchier military band sound was used, almost all the music consisting of overtures or ballet music from the operas, or other things of the same kind.

One strange record deeply fascinated me, a piece called Carillon by Elgar, his music, that is, but the words by a Belgian poet, Emile Cammaerts. Elgar was moved to write Carillon by the horrors of the invasion of Belgium. Here is a moment of this recording, with the words spoken by Henry Ainley. And that was my first introduction to Elgar, a name that meant nothing as yet but one with which I was to be so much associated many years later.



John Whittle

And so the school years rolled by. Before my father died we moved to Bedford Park, Chiswick, and I went to a kindergarten school there. The oldest friend I have now, Walter Goodchild, was there at the same time (and he is in the audience tonight). Then I moved to a prep school and on to St. Paul's, which I mention particularly because I would see there at the end-of-term concerts a man whom I dimly knew to be Gustav Holst. As music teacher at the girls' school only a short distance away he would like, it seems, to attend the concerts given by the boys. Our star turn then incidentally was a pianist called Norman Tucker, later to become the head of Sadler's Wells Opera.

For those years of schooling, my mother and I owed much to The Gramophone Company, to Mr Alfred Clark indeed, who saw to it that the finance gap was covered. By the time I was sixteen the question of a job began to become acute. The idea of going into a bank was mooted. That appalled me. I was never bright at school and maths were easily my worst subject. However fate stepped in for HMV offered me a job and I took it.

Though I officially spanned forty-eight years in the record business - 1927 to 1975 - I began, as youngsters do now, with a holiday job. It was due to HMV's urging that in 1925 I did summer vacation work at 363 Oxford Street, our famous shop that was to be burned to the ground. The manager of HMV then was William Manson, known as 'the father of the twins' because it was he (I have always understood) who thought of the idea of putting two single-sided records back to back. I can even now see this elderly, charming man - an Australian, I believe - escorting my mother and I down a staircase at 363 Oxford Street, running his hand down the banister rail and explaining how all the woodwork in the building had been treated against the possibility of fire. But burn down it did, at Christmas 1934, and I (and my mother) actually saw the appalling conflagration. We just happened to be passing on our way home from the Tivoli Cinema in the Strand.

The early twenties were the early days of radio of course, and I was fascinated by this new invention. I can remember in 1927 the joy of sitting up in bed night after night listening to the Savoy Orpheans. But that was to change. Not long after joining HMV in 1927, a young man there invited me home and played a record that captivated me - Beethoven's Eighth Symphony conducted by Felix Weingartner. Hearing in particular the Allegretto Scherzando that evening brought me to the classics (brought me back I suppose) and I have never been the same since.

At the time when I was doing my holiday stint in 1925, electrical recording started. Its most startling application was to be able to go out and about to record, and my first year in HMV witnessed the most successful 'on location' recording, *Hear my prayer* by young Ernest Lough and the Temple Church Choir. Ernest joined me in HMV in 1928 I think (and he is here this evening with his wife, who also is ex-HMV) but left records to go into advertising - which is my first love after records incidentally. (Could it be, I wonder, that my father's profession permeated through even though I was under seven years of age when he died?) As I said, *Hear my prayer* was staggeringly successful and sold over a million copies, though the review in *The Gramophone* was not encouraging!

Ernest Lough went off into the advertising world, but most people in the record business stay in it. From Fred Gaisberg onwards one can reel off the names of people who have spent their lives in the record business: David Bicknell, Leonard Smith (both of whom learnt their skill from Fred Gaisberg), Walter Legge and so on. Some however went into the entertainment field. Ian Cremieu Javal, one-time head of the Artists Department, went into the film world, and Rex Palmer went into the BBC as did Bill Streeton (who sad to say died very recently) and Bernard Wratten; but also I remember a clever Jewish chap, Richard Arbib: he went away to launch 'Gumption' while Richard Haigh, a UK HMV boss between the wars, went into manure. He did well, I believe.

Those days in the thirties for me meant the gallery at Covent Garden and being stunned by Eva Turner as Princess Turandot, listening to those great Wagnerians, Frida Leider, Friedrich Schorr and Lauritz Melchior, hearing John McCormack in the Royal Albert Hall, hearing Cortot, Thibaud and Casals (also in the Royal Albert Hall of all places) and the first performance of Ravel's *Bolero* in the same hall. I was sitting in the worst echo section so I heard it twice at the same time. That was by Mengelberg and the Concertgebouw Orchestra but I heard the second performance much more pleasingly in the Queen's Hall conducted by Sir Henry Wood where also I heard the great Felix Weingartner conduct Beethoven.

In those days, as now, London had much to offer musically but the centre then was West One not South East One. Concert agents naturally ply record companies with tickets. I got round the right people in HMV and would go four, five or even six times a week, sometimes twice nightly, hearing the first half of a recital at the Wigmore or Grotarian Hall and then sprinting down Bond Street to the Aeolian Hall for the second half of the evening. One learnt much, from hearing Elena Gerhardt sing Lieder and the English debut of Charles Panzéra to the first performance of Arthur Bliss's pastoral *Lie strewn the white flocks* in 1929, a piece dedicated to Elgar.

The real Mecca then was the beautiful Queen's Hall. I often felt I had sat in every seat there. I must have been to scores, perhaps hundreds, of Prom concerts, learning the skill to get a seat at the perimeter or very occasionally round the fountain. Often I saw Harriet Cohen wander in and out, always with Arnold Bax. I can also remember walking out in the middle of a Prokofiev piano concerto played by the composer. I thought it unbearable then. Times have changed. Whether I would vote to hear again the Tovey Cello Concerto is another matter. Casals gave the London début in 1935 at a Courtauld-Sargent concert. It was an hour long, two huge movements linked by a three-minute intermezzo (the best bit). I fell asleep in the middle of the first movement, for some time, I believe, but when I woke up it was still going on! Casals is said to have liked it (he and Tovey were great friends, of course) but I do not recall another performance for all that. The chronicles of the time said that that performance was grievously under-rehearsed. I can remember too Beecham and Cortot playing (of all pieces) the Emperor Concerto and the whole thing coming to a complete halt in the middle. A hurried, whispered consultation took place between conductor and pianist, Cortot led off on the keyboard and all was well again.

My war years were in the Indian Army where my only worthwhile live music experience was to hear Solomon play to troops in Bangkok. I met one of the British soldiers next morning and I asked him if he had enjoyed it. "Yes, sir, I did", he said, "and isn't he a fine chap!" Apparently Solomon went out afterwards on the tiles with the boys. And there are plenty of tiles in Bangkok!

The only other connection with classical music for me while out East was via records and very few records at that. A brother officer of mine had borrowed an HMV portable from a friend of his, the Bishop of Bombay in fact, and with it a handful of records, 78s of course.

There were three pieces of music, Beethoven's Choral Symphony conducted, I think, by Stokowski, the Brahms-Haydn Variations conducted by Toscanini and a version (I forget the artists) of *Peter and the Wolf*. I played this three-course meal of records over and over again and in due course the HMV portable and the records went back into the possession of the Bishop before my departure for Burma.

Actually, during the Burma campaign, I went on a short leave to Calcutta and suddenly realised that it would not be difficult to visit our factory in Dum Dum. This place of bullet fame is about twelve miles north of Calcutta so I hopped on a train. Those of you with long memories and long noses (as I have) will recall the special smell of record factory in the shellac days. Well, Dum Dum smelt just like Hayes. Delicious! I

was received there most graciously by the manager, Mr Evans, who showed me round. We looked in at a recording session. Very odd, I thought. All the musicians were sitting on the floor. Fascinating that some eight years later I would take Mr Evans' son on to my staff. It was another father and son HMV relationship like my own. Now David Evans, brilliant record sleeve designer then, today Father David Evans, is one of my best friends.

I returned to EMI early in 1947, when I was commanded to set up and run a Sales Promotion Department, the first of its kind in our company. Without going into the matter at great length, this meant that ere long I was publicising every record published, from all repertoires. It makes me smile often now to look back on myself, in my forties, running around with such people as Alma Cogan, Joe Loss, the Beverley Sisters, Al Martino (now a big shot but not when I promoted him), Max Bygraves, Frankie Vaughan (another chap I could not get off the ground) and so on. And at the same time I would be making considerable efforts on behalf of our artists at the Bath Festival, the Edinburgh Festival and so on. I do particularly remember that first year of the Edinburgh Festival. Ian Hunter, then assistant to Rudolph Bing, bemoaned to me that so little support was coming in from the West Country : as we had a factory viewable from West Country trains, could I do something? Well I did. The Festival people produced an enormous hoarding, perhaps forty feet long and twelve feet high and in a way I will never understand I had this thing put up on top of one of our buildings, the very one, in fact, that I gazed at across the fields at the age of four or five. Suddenly, of course, various company executives saw this huge thing which had been hauled up with block and tackle and I know not what. Oh, I did get into trouble - but more West Country people went to Edinburgh!

Bath became a delightful haunt because it was in those days a Menuhin Festival, with Yehudi and his orchestra. It was there I first met Kinloch Anderson. I can see him now, yes now, but then at the harpsichord; and also in the orchestra was a brilliant young 'cellist, Jacqueline du Pré. I had kept my eye on this girl since she was about seventeen or eighteen.

I recall one terribly dreary weekend when my friend and ex-colleague, Margaret Davis, [and I] were detailed to attend some conference on the music business in the City, at the Guildhall, in fact. After a lot of boring sessions we were regaled with some music - the orchestra from the Guildhall School of Music (Margaret's old college) who played a 'cello concerto and that was when I first heard Jacqueline du Pré. Not so long after that she was stunning audiences in the Royal Festival Hall and elsewhere playing many concertos, most magical of all being the Elgar. It really was marvellous to see this young girl with her long fair tresses sweeping people off their feet. At that time EMI operated a training course for people who sell records in shops. It was then run by Margaret Davis and, right at the beginning, had been run by my old friend, Leslie Bond; one of our bits of training was to take some of those young folk to a concert, or opera - anything that featured one of our recording artists. I think Jacqueline fascinated them most of all - a young girl of their age achieving so much before their very eyes. I used to talk to these groups every week and delighted in getting their reactions on the morning after the concerts. The classical business has grown steadily ever since, and one wonders whether this is some indication that what we did then over a ten year period has borne fruit. It is this sort of thing in the record business that is so maddening : many times you have a great success - a particular record attains tremendous sales - but you just cannot be certain what caused the success.

Well, of course, we (really my colleague, Peter Andry, head of our International Classical Division, sitting over there) went on to record Jacqueline playing the Elgar. But we were all a little hesitant because of her youth. I remember meeting Yehudi Menuhin quite by accident in the entrance of our offices at Manchester Square and as we went up in the lift I asked him his advice on the matter. Should we wait? "No", he said. "Do it now. She may play it differently when she is older but it may be no better - just different". So we did

record the Elgar and sold vast quantities, unaware of the sadness to come for this wonderful young person. One of the interesting aspects of making a gramophone record is what you do when you have to choose the item to go on the back. What to put with the Elgar Concerto was by no means obvious. The usual practice is to put another cello concerto on the other side. However in this instance Kinloch Anderson, as I remember, had the unusual but splendid idea of getting Janet Baker to sing Elgar's *Sea Pictures* on the back. Dear John Barbirolli was the conductor for both sides - you could hardly get more Elgarian than that. And so it was Jacqueline, in effect, who helped Janet Baker so much. My colleague, Douglas Pudney, was the first in the company to spot Janet. He had noticed the enterprise of Saga and persuaded EMI to sign her up (Good for you, Douglas!) We made first a mid-price LP of favourite songs which has been most successful but nevertheless her Elgar 'break' did Trojan work for her recording career.

John Barbirolli - now there's a name to conjure with! It is difficult to imagine anyone not getting on with that warm, delightful man. My memories of him, and more particularly my personal dealings with him, were many and varied but unhappily they came in, say, the last six or seven years of his life. I do wish I had known him much earlier. He once said to me (on discovering when I had joined HMV) "Where have you been all this time?" Well, I had been around, busy as a bee, working really hard most of the time but in other areas of the company and not somehow getting involved with JB himself although I had seen him conducting often enough.

Incidentally, aren't the great musicians small men (small in physique) so often? Barbirolli, Beecham (not really a tall man), Toscanini, Walter, Cortot, Casals, Elman, Edwin Fischer, Karajan, Bernstein, Barenboim, Martinon, Muti, Previn and many more. The great exception was, of course, Chaliapin. I just love that famous picture taken outside our head office at Hayes of a group of people showing particularly little Fred Gaisberg with a bowler hat jammed down over his ears (and his brother, Will, wearing a straw boater) and towering above them, Chaliapin, who to make matters worse was wearing a grey top hat!

It was Fred Gaisberg, of course, who felt the need of an all-round conductor of real ability to accompany the galaxy of famous artists he was roping in to form the backbone of the famous HMV catalogue and it was he who chose the young John Barbirolli. What perception!

It was a sad irony, I always felt, that JB, with his gifts for conducting opera - he accompanied so many famous opera stars on record and indeed often conducted in the opera house in those days - it was an irony that he committed so little opera to record. I suppose two main things were the reason for this; his sojourn in the States when he took over Toscanini's job - indeed the Second World War itself which checked the careers of so many - and the time when he parted company with HMV and recorded for Pye. He came back to us - of that more anon - and once back in the family recorded, very properly, for our *International Classical Division* (although JB laid it down that a fair percentage of records must be with "my Hallé"). Even so Douglas Pudney and I, in the *UK Classical Division* (Douglas being a devoted admirer of JB), racked our brains to get JB into things wherever possible. Douglas will remember my saying how desirable it was that the great man should be *seen* to be great and I advocated that he should conduct (on record) all the top orchestras of the world. That idea was pursued and, apart from the British orchestras, he recorded with the Berlin Phil, the Vienna Phil, and the Orchestre de Paris; the Czech Phil, and the Dresden orchestra would have been added to the list, I think, and he would also, I believe, have fronted one of the American orchestras in due course, if his untimely death had not intervened. The other aspiration that Douglas and I had was that JB should do some complete operas. This happened - *Butterfly* and *Otello*. For *Madame Butterfly* JB went to Rome. Unruly is, I suppose, an unjust word but the Rome Opera Orchestra needs a mighty firm hand (so Kinloch Anderson, the producer, told me). Apparently they tried to play up to JB but very quickly indeed found that they had met their match. In fact we had (and have) a wonderful *Butterfly* and at the end of all the sessions the orchestra fêted JB by giving

him a very special supper indeed.

In this country we had great fun with *Butterfly* and *Otello* because we put on special presentations of both when Kinloch Anderson with Sir John Barbirolli took the audiences through the operas, playing excerpts. I would hate to impugn dear JB in any way but he did enjoy his whisky! I can see him now in the interval of at least one of those public affairs going off under the pretext of getting his coat because he was cold, but in fact he had a good nip before re-appearing!

I remember meeting JB at our Abbey Road Studios between 10 and 10.30 one morning and quite a waft of familiar fumes reached my nose as he greeted me. That was an interesting time. I had the most fascinating experience of listening, with JB and Kinloch, to tapes by three basses in order for JB to find the right person to record in *The Dream of Gerontius*. He rejected them all - well-known names but I think it is not in order for me to reveal them. Ultimately he chose Kim Borg (or Bori, to be truly Finnish). JB knew that he wanted a dark, black voice and got it but of course got some rather curious English pronunciation as well. Kim Borg does not have the facility for our language that Nicolai Gedda has who recorded the tenor part in the latest recording of *The Dream* (with Boult). However, we need not have worried. JB's *Dream* sold gloriously - it still does.

It was recorded in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, a notoriously difficult place to use. I had several phone calls from agitated Hallé supporters begging us to record elsewhere. They recommended places in Oldham or Rochdale, I think, but we went ahead as planned. Also we were not able to use our usual classical recording engineers - the one who knows the halls all over Britain best is Stuart Eltham, one of our great experts - so this time a senior 'pop' engineer went, Peter Bown, who actually is mad on opera and did that lovely Sadlers Wells *Hansel and Gretel* for us. Peter triumphed over all the supposed difficulties in the Free Trade Hall and once again we had an Elgar triumph embracing JB and Janet Baker.

Finally on JB, a word about his return to EMI from Pye. This is an intriguing aspect of the record business. In EMI we look at all classical recording projects extremely carefully before we commit ourselves - costing, assessing sales, etc. The reverse happened in this instance. The producer I now refer to is the late Victor Olof, an absolutely delightful man and a great buddy of John Barbirolli's - they both played together in the same café band when they were young. Well, Victor Olof had sessions booked with the Philharmonia Orchestra (this was in 1963) and one of the great hazards in our business occurred - the conductor due to record fell ill. The orchestra was firmly booked and would have to be paid, willy-nilly, so, in desperation, Victor rang his old pal, JB. Could he step in? Yes, he was free. What was the music to be recorded? "You choose", said Olof and JB did - the two Elgar symphonies. So their recording was entirely fortuitous, entirely unplanned (in costing terms). What luck, really! We got John Barbirolli back, we got beautiful readings of the symphonies and afterwards all that stream of glorious work right up to the time of his death. The record business is not all cut and dried.

Artists start in all sorts of ways. Though I was in no way responsible for discovering Moura Lympany, I did publicise her first records for HMV and so set the ball rolling for her in that way. At that time she was terribly busy, I remember, so we agreed on the only possible meeting place - under a hair dryer (Moura, not me) in a shop in Dover Street - Phyllis Earle's closed down, I noticed the other day: I felt quite upset.

Though I don't claim any praise for discovering Moura Lympany, I do feel the complete father figure for two budding young pianists still in their twenties, one, the young Israeli, Daniel Adni. He was recommended at the age of seventeen by so many professional people, Menuhin, Arrau, Curzon, Harold Craxton, John Lill, Kinloch Anderson : that was good enough for me and by the time I left EMI he had made thirteen LPs, one being a concerto record, the Saint-Saëns and Mendelssohn G minor

concertos with Groves and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. The other pianist was Michel Beroff. All his records were made by our French company but I drew attention to him after reading a glittering review notice in *The Times* when he had given a recital at the Wigmore Hall. Since then he has gone on to great triumphs, recording, for example, all five Prokofiev concertos. Also I stumbled across another pianist of astonishing ability, a Canterbury man called Ronald Smith, an expert on Chopin and, in particular, Chopin's friend and neighbour, Alkan. Actually I bought a tape of Ronald Smith playing Alkan from a little record company that went bust and since then I have been responsible for many recordings by him including all the Chopin Mazurkas. Though comparatively lacking in fame, I place Ronald Smith in a bracket with many of the top pianists around. David Mottley, here tonight, an EMI producer most expert at piano recording, might well agree.

Switching from young instrumentalists to the older school, I could not talk on an occasion like this without some reference to my dear friend, Lionel Tertis. I only knew him in his later years, the last nineteen or twenty, from seventy-nine to ninety-nine years of age, but I got to know him well and loved him deeply. I was responsible for the release of the two LPs that reflected his great career, the biggest piece being the Mozart *Sinfonia concertante* with his old friend, Albert Sammons.

He was a fine, trenchant little man right to the end, wagging his forefinger at you as he made some point. He lived quite near me, at Wimbledon, and so my wife and I often dropped in for a cup of tea with Lionel (the little lion) and his charming wife, Lillian, who I am delighted to see here tonight. Sitting at tea when he was well into his nineties, he would wag his finger at me and say "John, did you do your exercises this morning?" And he would swing his head to right and left and say "You should take a good look at each shoulder several times". I believe he was rigorous with himself in these matters. Also wherever we went, although his eyesight was practically nil by then he would fuss around us, asking Lillian repeatedly "Were we all right? Had we enough to eat?", making sure we had the best chairs and were comfortable - always putting himself last. Always alert, always a joke or something of the sort on his lips, he really was an exceptional person to have known. And what a marvellous tribute that birthday concert was at the Wigmore Hall when all the BBC Symphony Orchestra viola players turned out and played viola works ranging from one viola, two violas and all the way up to eight, I think. That was when he was ninety, yet at the end he got up and made a witty, appropriate speech to thank his brother players.

My old friend, Bernard Shore, was there, of course. Bernard and I used to belong to the same tennis club in Bedford Park. Not an outstanding tennis player, Bernard could all the same punch a good forehand over the net. He used both hands despite the disability of his right hand (war wounds that stopped him becoming an organist) and so you could never get him on his backhand.

Much, so much, filled those twenty-eight years, far more than I can dwell on this evening but in many ways my greatest pride and joy has been my personal activities with our splendid regional orchestras. In my last fifteen years I was a senior executive in the UK classical scene, taking over completely when Leonard Smith retired and by then I had very much seen to it that we recorded regularly with the symphony orchestras of Birmingham, Bournemouth and Liverpool. Bournemouth with its immensely able Finn, Paavo Berglund, goes from strength to strength with symphonies by Sibelius and Shostakovich in particular and Birmingham, with the brilliant Frenchman, Louis Frémaux, at its head, has given us many recordings, the biggest undertaking being the great Berlioz *Requiem*, the *Grande messe des morts*, from which I want to play you part of the 'Tuba mirum'.

Even more particularly I want to play you something from Sir Charles Groves and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic. For years I had nurtured the wish to record *Morning heroes* by Sir Arthur Bliss, a fine work that has fascinated me since 1933. Well, we did it and it brought me closely into touch with dear Arthur

Bliss and indeed the recording was only achieved just before he died. He heard and rejoiced in the recording however and earlier had had a lovely romp round the British Museum with our A & R producer, Bryan Crimp (over there), to find that fine Greek warrior figure that graces the record cover. *Morning heroes* is about man's courage but it is also a memorial to Arthur Bliss's brother, Kennard, who was killed in that war that killed my father. Here are two excerpts with a natural gap of silence between them. The speaker of the poem by Wilfred Owen was John Westbrook.

Having made fifty or sixty records with these orchestras, a tremendously stimulating experience, I found it equally rewarding to have made recordings with Paul Tortelier and Ida Haendel - both these artists have recorded concertos with Berglund and the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, and Tortelier also with Frémaux and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra - and last and certainly not least with our great Sir Adrian Boult.

Three or four years ago the BBC had some big celebration at the Royal Albert Hall when Tortelier played the Elgar with Boult. Knowing the BBC Press Officer, I managed to wriggle in and in fact he apologised to me for giving me a front seat, immediately in front of the orchestra and actually just behind a TV camera, so close to the soloist that I nearly played the darned cello myself. That night Tortelier and Boult gave the greatest reading of the Elgar I have ever heard, as my friend, Kinloch Anderson, will bear out, and as did Jeremy Noble at the time. We were almost brought to tears. Those two great artists recorded the concerto - here is as much as we have time for from the second movement. Surely some of the loveliest music ever written and what playing!

Isn't it interesting how Elgar constantly dominates the scene? True, HMV did for Elgar, from 1914 to 1934, what CBS did for Stravinsky and what Decca have done and are still doing for Britten, showing the gramophone at its best in terms of a sense of duty to posterity; but three of our great artists all made their mark by playing Elgar at the beginning of their careers, Tortelier winning at the age of sixteen a cello competition where the Elgar concerto was the competition piece (in Paris of all places), Menuhin at about the same age recording it [sic!] with Elgar himself and then Jacqueline du Pré, scarcely any older, setting the town alight with her concept of the same work. And then, of course, *Sea Pictures* sung by Janet Baker, the two symphonies recorded by Barbirolli, and *The Apostles* and *The Dream of Gerontius* conducted by Boult. The very name of Elgar seems to be a lucky omen!

If I were asked to name my proudest and indeed most difficult achievement it was, after much thought and many re-costings (because the project was so expensive), the recording of Elgar's *The Apostles* with, of course, Sir Adrian. A colleague in my department then, Douglas Pudney, and the brilliant producer of this recording, Christopher Bishop, and myself made the final resolution over a curry lunch, a kind of hot battlefield to which we frequently resorted. I don't know whether an Indian curry gave me Dutch courage but I did in fact take this proposal, showing a possible loss to the company of £8,000, to my Dutch boss, Gerry Oord, who had the courage and, I suppose, belief in me, to countersign my recording proposal. It has all been justified. As I left EMI our sales showed splendid figures. It was clear that we had just about broken even and now this risk, an essential part of the recording business from time to time, is turning into a project making money.

Here is the conclusion of *The Apostles*, and it is my way of saying goodnight to you and of thanking you for listening.

Recorded illustrations:

Excerpts from:

1. ELGAR: *Carillon*. Henry Ainley (speaker) & Symphony Orchestra, cond. Sir Edward Elgar. HMV D 177
2. BEETHOVEN: Symphony no 8 - Scherzando. Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, cond. Felix Weingartner. Columbia COLH 27
3. BERLIOZ: *Grande messe des morts* - Tuba mirum. City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra & CBSO Chorus, cond. Louis Frémaux. HMV SAN 374
4. BLISS: *Morning heroes*. - Spring offensive. John Westbrook (speaker), & Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, cond. Sir Charles Groves. HMV SAN 365
5. ELGAR: Cello concerto - Adagio. Paul Tortelier & London Philharmonic Orchestra, cond. Sir Adrian Boult. HMV ASD 2906
6. ELGAR: *The Apostles* - conclusion. Soloists, London Philharmonic Orchestra & London Philharmonic Choir cond. Sir Adrian Boult. HMV SAN 357

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The following is a list of Elgar recordings in which John Whittle was involved.

With Sir John Barbirolli:

Second Symphony, *Falstaff* (Hallé); Cello Concerto (du Pré/LSO); *Sea Pictures* (Baker/ LSO); *The Dream of Gerontius* (Hallé, etc).

With Sir Adrian Boult:

The Music Makers (Baker/LPO); *The Kingdom*, *The Apostles*, *The Dream of Gerontius* (LPO/N Philh); Cello Concerto (Tortelier/LPO); First and Second Symphonies (LPO); Violin Concerto (Menuhin/N Philh).

With Lawrence Collingwood:

The Miniature Elgar.

With Sir Charles Groves and the RLPO:

Caractacus; *Nursery Suite*; *Severn Suite*; *The Crown of India Suite*, etc.

With The Music Group of London, John Ogdon *et al*:

Violin Sonata; String Quartet; Piano Quintet; piano pieces.

ELGAR'S CONCERT ALLEGRO

Diana McVeagh

[This article first appeared in *The Musical Times* in February 1969, and is here reproduced by kind permission of Diana McVeagh and the current Editor].

There has just come to light the autograph of a complete, substantial, 10-minute work by Elgar, listed in *Grove V* under PIANOFORTE as 'Op 46, Piece without title'. It has long been thought lost. When John Ogdon plays it on television on 2 February it will have its first public performance for 60-odd years. This article is an attempt to gather together the facts about why it was composed, when it was performed, why it was never published, how it was lost, what exactly has been found, and what it is like.

The story opens in the autumn of 1901. Hearing that Elgar was to be "at our friends the Speyers on Saturday," Fanny Davies wrote to him to Malvern enclosing two tickets for her Brahms recital the Friday before, "in case you are in Town".

Fanny Davies was then 40. As a person, she must have been an absolute poppet. As a pianist, people still recall her profound musicianship. She had studied first in Birmingham, then at Leipzig, then for two years with Clara Schumann. She made her London debut in 1885 at the Crystal Palace in Beethoven's G major concerto. As significant for this story was her first appearance in Birmingham Town Hall with Stockley's orchestra on 21 October the following year, 1886, when Elgar was still playing in the first violins.¹ So - to jump ahead a few years - he knew what he was talking about when in his Peyton lectures at Birmingham in 1905 he said, on English Executants :

When we come to piano playing, the case is different : a series of great names is immediately called to mind; not of the Herculean school, but real artists - restrained and capable of the highest things; one name occurs to me here in Birmingham, Fanny Davies, a name known all over Europe.²

In a letter to him of 12 January 1906 she replied :

Thank you for the nice things you said in allusion to me in your B'ham lecture. I *do* try to uphold the truth in art and it *is* such an encouragement when somebody like you understands.

But back to 1901. In her letter enclosing the tickets for her Brahms recital she asks :

Do tell me, have you anything for piano for me to play? I am always hoping for a Concerto, or Concertstück; - but besides that, in my 3rd recital on Dec: 2nd I want to play some English music but there is *so almost nothing* I should care to play for piano, is there! I wanted to make a group of 'Historical English' - beginning with Papa Purcell, then Bennett, then Elgar. That is what I want.

Now have you some Elgar? or can you have some by a not too distant date.

She goes on charmingly to invite the Elgars to lunch or dinner, but firmly returns in a PS to her main point :

Do keep it in mind to do something for piano & orchestra & let me have it to play; and first

¹ Percy M Young, *Letters of Edward Elgar*, pp.27, 168

² *A Future for English Music*, ed Young, p.129

a nice brilliant piece for my English group now, - yes?

But No it must have been, for on 6 November she writes :

I am so disappointed if you can't let me have just a nice "little Elgar"... I can't have a really adequate nice English group without an Elgar in it, now can I? Won't you write me a study or an impromptu - I could learn it very quickly if I had it & the concert is not till December 2nd.

How could he refuse her, even with only a few weeks to compose it? Many years later she recalled that he sent her 17 pages of manuscript saying "Here is something to be going on with - the rest will follow shortly"; and a few days after the concluding four pages arrived.³ (Not a bad memory : the newly-found autograph consists of 25 pages including the title-page.) He must have been working against time for some pages are literally pasted together. Percy Young - from Lady Elgar's diary? - gives 21 November as the date it was finished.⁴

And so on 2 December 1901, at St James's Hall, Fanny Davies began her recital with a group of pieces by Purcell, Nares, Sterndale Bennett, Coleridge Taylor, Norman O'Neill, and Elgar. (*Grove V* commends her for constantly including old English music in her programmes, many years before the modern revival.) Of Elgar's Concert Allegro *The Times* next day said :

After a very rhapsodical prelude in C, a marked rhythmic figure is carried on pretty regularly, but beyond this it is difficult to detect at first much organic connection between one part and another.

Why was it not published? A week after the recital Elgar wrote to Jaeger of Novello : "I'll write to the firm about my things when they're ready. I don't want them to buy any 'pigs in Bags'", and Young identifies the "things" as the Funeral March from *Grania and Diarmid* and the Concert Allegro.⁵ The *Grania* music, composed for the Gaiety Theatre, Dublin, in October 1901, was published by Novello in 1902. Elgar obviously had publication of the Concert Allegro in mind, for on the autograph are directions to the engraver in red ink, as was his custom: for instance, 'small notes' over the unbarred, cadenza-like passages on the first page. It seems unlikely that Novello would have refused to publish it had he pressed them, for the month of Fanny's recital also saw the triumphant Düsseldorf performance of *Gerontius*. He did press for *Grania*, in a letter to Jaeger, 30 December 1901. Perhaps Fanny's next letter (undated) had something to do with it :

Here is the MS. I have left in my pencil remarks or rather *requests* from a pianist's point of view, to have one or two tiny things more playable - more easy to get hold of - don't you know when one is 'in' a passage with a certain figure and swing, it's like running suddenly against a barbed wire when you are in full go, to come across a subtle little change ... will you consider these anyway?

I thoroughly enjoyed studying your work & wish you would write more for the piano - get to like the piano better! !! it will do such things if you are kind to it! won't it.

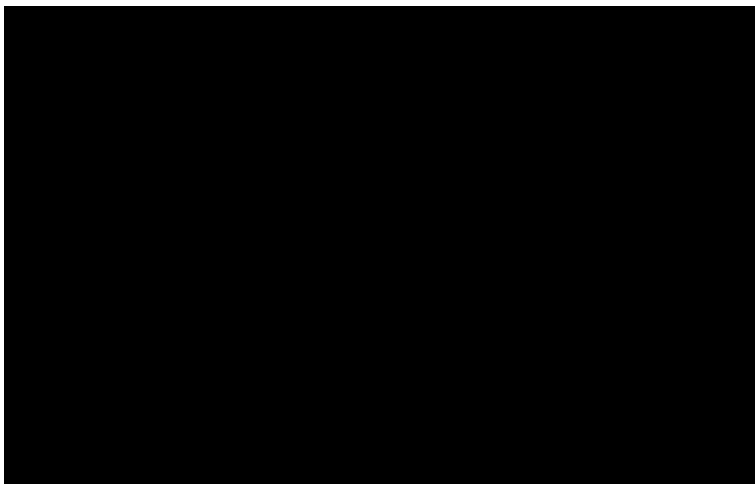
And there, on the autograph, almost rubbed out, faint, but just decipherable, are her comments, mostly ending 'Humbly, F D'. 'Lies under the hand so much better in such a quick passage' is written beside one suggestion; and he must have scraped out his version - the paper is just rough to the touch - and amended it. 'Unnecessary and nasty to play coming in the middle of a figure. I played ...' and again suggestions, and amendments. At a very thin bar leading to a *molto maestoso*, just a few words can be

³ 'Fanny Davies and Elgar', *Daily Telegraph*, 8 Dec 1934

⁴ Percy Young, *Elgar OM*, p.406

⁵ *Letters to Nimrod*, ed Young, p.152

picked out - 'can't... enough... climax'; and he sketched something fuller on the stave above. Example 1 shows his grand *fff* presentation of the opening bars and underneath what looks like a second thought about it, in ink in his hand on a blank stave on the previous page.

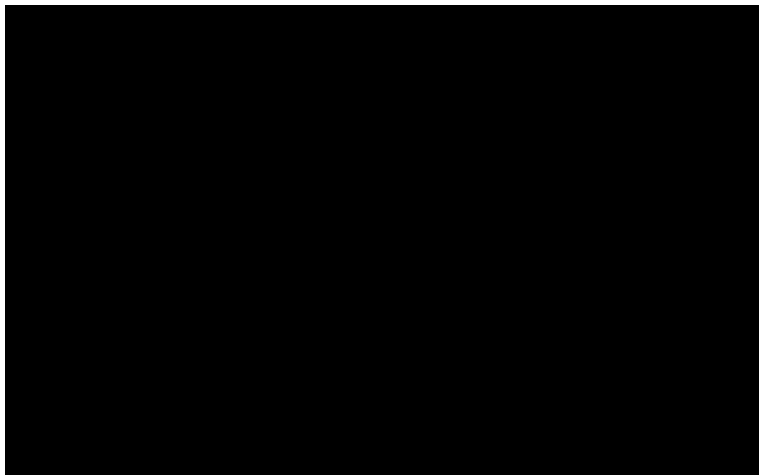


These details are of the same kind, though much less extensive, as those he worked over with Billy Reed on the Violin Concerto.⁶ They are simply to do with the mechanics of the instrument. Elgar played the piano, but was never a pianist. Bernard Shaw commented on effects in the Piano Quintet : "I have my doubts whether any regular shop pianist will produce them; they require a touch which is peculiar to yourself."⁷ *The Times* (more later of that article⁸) thought that the autograph looked like the short score of the first movement of a concerto awaiting orchestration. But John Ogdon finds nothing unpianistic about it. To me, several passages cry out for two manuals, couplers, pedals. And I would not be surprised to discover that Elgar had played this theme as a voluntary at St George's, Worcester :

⁶ W H Reed, 'The Violin Concerto' *M&L* (1935), xvi, 30

⁷ Diana M McVeagh, *Edward Elgar*, p.178

⁸ 2 Oct 1942



More important than the small adjustments made at Fanny's request are some vigorous pencil markings which show that he *did* think of turning the Concert Allegro into a piece for piano and orchestra. There are marks of 'Orch' and 'Pf'. There are cuts, mostly of repetitions, made with bold wavy pencil lines. (A couple of cuts, in red or black ink, are surely before the first performance.) There are words; for example, 'Modulate' and then 'Orch in another key', at a point where the introduction returns too soon rather weakly in its original C major. There are contractions : the third full bar (two minims) is slashed out each time when the opening theme is later developed. The whole thing looks as though he meant to tighten up the material, broaden the key-scheme; and it looks as though the work was done fast, confidently, and for no eyes but his own. On the title-page ' & orchestra' is a pencil addition. So is 'To Fanny Davies' - her letter below proves that this was added after 1901! The words heavily scratched out in ink read 'Concerto without orchestra'.

This then was the position when on 12 January 1906, after a gap of five years, Fanny wrote him what seems like a letter following a conversation. She is to give a concert in Birmingham, and begs :

Please let me have my piano piece... I remember it, yes, but I *do* want to study it again. I remember putting in some fingering etc. I don't think I should want to do that now! A couple of years or 3 years makes a great deal of difference to one's development! Let me do it in the form it is in now any rate, if you don't have opportunity or inclination to do anything to it.

'Opportunity' : well, at the turn of 1905-6 Elgar was hard at work on *The Kingdom*, promised - to Birmingham - for October. Early in 1906 he thought he was too overdone and dispirited to finish even that, so he would hardly have had time to spare to tidy up a piano piece. His reply is easy to deduce from her next letter, 27 January 1906 :

Don't you think you can let me have the MS even in an impossible condition? for you see I want to make my Birmingham programme next week, and I *want to play that*. Everyone will be *interested* to hear it; and you know how people love a MS piece too, especially as it is going to be published. You *will* dedicate it to me won't you ? for I look upon it as mine you know... I'm certain I can decipher the MS even if it's rough.

She goes on to say a few words about her travels - (the letter is written from Brussels) but then starts

wheeling again. "Oh! do let me have that MS. Please. Next week. Just B'ham of all places [je where she had first studied, where his *Sérénade Mauresque* was played as early as 1883, where they had performed together, where he had publicly praised her...] I'll come and fetch it if you like. Yours not obediently but hopefully."

Adorable, impossible woman! Of course, she got her way, and performed it on 20 February 1906 at the Masonic Hall, Birmingham, when MT described it as "a brilliant rhapsody",⁹ and then again on 26 February at the Gentlemen's Concerts, Midland Hall, Manchester. From there, in a letter headed simply Artists' Room, she wrote :

I must send this, for the Allegro has had such an enormous success tonight. Richter said 'It is as though Bach and Liszt had married each other!!!' He is going to telegraph to you. He got so excited over it, he ran about crying 'grossartig', and said if I had to play again after the showpiece would I repeat the Elgar! This very undemonstrative public had already had me back once after it was first played so as they did seem to want something else I replayed the Allegro, and they settled themselves down and on the second hearing got stirred up and I(it!) had to go back again after it.

The proof of a programme note for that concert exists, and among Elgar's sketches is a draft showing that he supplied the analysis. There are two interesting points. He described the work as "in C major and minor". Now the autograph¹⁰ of the Introduction and Allegro has "in G minor and major", and I feel that in the Concert Allegro he was aiming at the kind of free, intricate, virtuoso piece he achieved with greater distinction in the later string work. Second, the Concert Allegro is op 41, not op 46 as *Grove* and all Elgarians have listed it. A hand-written addition to the programme proof reads "Op 41 should be altered to include besides two songs [*In the dawn* and *Speak, Music*] this Concert Allegro". (Buckley, in his list dated 1904 "which has the approval of the composer", gives for the MS of opp 46, 47 and 48, *Falstaff*, concert overture; a string quartet; and the unnamed pendant to *Cockaigne*.¹¹)

Even if he was not prepared to publish the piano piece Elgar must have been fond of it, for in his letter to Troyte Griffith of 17 March 1906 he says : "If Fanny Davies is playing solos ask her to play the MS piece if there's time if she would like to do so?" And Troyte wrote to the *Daily Telegraph* in response to a request published there after Elgar's death to confirm that she did play it at the Malvern Concert Club on 9 May.³

The *Daily Telegraph* request in 1934 was for particulars of this work "the MS of which, after it had been returned to the composer for revision, was lost". But according to *The Times* Elgar "used chaffingly to accuse Fanny Davies of having lost the MS".⁸ If she did return it to him, it is curious that her accompanying letter should not be with her others.

Perhaps he went over from Hereford to hear her Malvern performance, and she handed it back in person with a pretty speech? But no; for in May 1906 he was in America. Sometime between 1904 and 1909 a Mr Alfred Vale heard her play at Bromley a "concerto for pianoforte without orchestra"³ (it is this that gives the clue to the scratched-out words on the title-page of the autograph) but after that the Concert Allegro disappears.

⁹ MT March 1906, p.192

¹⁰ BM Loan 44 no 18

¹¹ Robert J Buckley, *Sir Edward Elgar* (1904)

Until one day, when both composer and pianist were old, there took place what must have been a touching scene. Fanny was staying at Broadway, at the magnificent home of Mme de Navarro, who before her marriage had been the actress Mary Anderson. Elgar, now retired in Worcestershire, went over to see her, and in the course of conversation asked Fanny

whether she could possibly recall any or all of a work he had once written for her when she was giving recitals of British music. His object in wishing to recall it was that he thought it might be re-written for orchestra. She did succeed in recalling certain portions, but, as she remarked, it was more than 30 years [actually 28 at most - they both died in 1934] since she had last played it, and her memory of it was necessarily disconnected.³

According to this account by Fanny's pupil Edward Rice she had returned the MS to Elgar "and he most unfortunately mislaid it". At any rate, after his death the complete but rough copy inside a Liberty board folder, together with some sketches, the programme note proof, and all the letters from Fanny Davies quoted in this article, were found among his papers.

At some point before 1942 the conductor Anthony Bernard was consulted about the possibility of following up Elgar's intentions to score the work. Wisely, he came to the conclusion that it was best left as a piano piece. Possibly he in turn took advice. In 1942 there appeared an article in *The Times* headed 'Elgar and the Piano : a recovered MS',⁸ which could have been written only after perusal of all these papers. *The Times* came to the conclusion that this MS was not the one Fanny Davies had : "it was a copy so rough that no-one could have played from it, scored all over with his corrections and deletions, but quite complete and legible to the discerning eye". But John Ogdon *has* now played from it, and recorded it for television at shorter notice than Fanny had for her St James's recital. And I believe that most of the scribbings were made by Elgar between Fanny's 1901 and 1906 performances : that there was only one copy, and this is it.

But Elgar's biographers since 1942 (shame on us all!) failed to follow up the clue, and the work remained listed as missing. Anthony Bernard died in 1963. His wife recently found the file of material in his library and wrote to tell Elgar's daughter, who would have made the work's existence known much sooner had she not been under the impression that the MS had been destroyed by enemy action during the war, along with others of Anthony Bernard's.

At first the autograph was thought to be - following *The Times* - only Elgar's rough copy. But working from photocopies, John Ogdon and I independently came to the conclusion that it was Fanny's. When I saw the autograph with its red and black inks, with Elgar's bold pencillings and Fanny's faint ones (invisible in the photocopy), surmise became certainty.

Now the autograph lies safely in the vaults of Glyn Mills, and I trust will soon join the valuable Elgar collection in the British Museum.

* * * *

We should like to acknowledge the ready and valuable cooperation of John Drummond of BBC television and Laurence Swinyard of Novello; also of Edward Rogers of Glyn Mills.

ELGAR VIOLIN CONCERTO

Frank-Peter Zimmermann

[The following is a translation of the text of an interview with the distinguished German violinist on 9 March 2001, on the occasion of a performance of the concerto in Munich. We are grateful to John McMinn for acquiring a copy of the original interview tape and for the translation, and would like to thank Bavarian Radio, Munich and Herr Leypold for permission to reproduce it here.]

Bavarian Radio announcer :

Friedeman Leypold met with the soloist, Frank-Peter Zimmermann, who was born in 1956 in Duisburg and at present certainly belongs to the internationally most acclaimed violinists. Already at the age of 10 he first performed as a soloist with orchestral accompaniment in concert. He thus celebrated 25 years of performing in concert in November 2000.

Friedeman Leypold, interviewer from Bavarian Radio :

Mr Zimmermann, the violin concerto of Edward Elgar was given its first performance in 1910 by Fritz Kreisler, for whom Elgar also wrote this concerto. Kreisler is supposed to have said at that time, "It is the greatest concerto since Beethoven." But it has of course never established itself as the Beethoven concerto did.

Frank-Peter Zimmermann :

No. And that's really a pity, because I find that this work - in spite of its length - has incredible moments

and - probably precisely due to its length - there are certain very special atmospheres and certain moments which in this work are without equal, absolutely unique. These need a certain time to build up to their climax. And Elgar, I believe, understood as no one else how to weave truly mystical moments into this work. And when I think of the cadenza and also especially certain moments in the second movement, which is imbued with a truly heavenly beauty. And this concerto also needs time to learn. I must admit that, when I was younger, I didn't understand it and probably never would have wanted to play it. But as I get older, it grows more and more on me and I believe I'll play it more and more often now.

FL : It was composed for Fritz Kreisler. Would you say that it's a virtuoso concerto?

FPZ : It is without any doubt a virtuoso concerto. It is a technique which reminds me very much of Ysaÿe, that is to say less of the southern European virtuosity which we find with Paganini or with Sarasate, but more - how can I say this - a broad technique, which allows playing out details to their fullest. But there are enormous difficulties, particularly in the last movement. And the virtuosity is woven so naturally into this work that you don't have the feeling that the soloist is playing virtuoso music just for its own sake.

FL : The concerto lasts nearly fifty minutes. This requires very good condition on your part, doesn't it?

FPZ : Physically, it is a very strenuous work, of course. But I think when a violinist plays a solo evening and plays Bach solo sonatas that these are more strenuous than this concerto.

FL : Mr Zimmermann, earlier you mentioned the cadenza accompagnata in the last movement, that is an accompanied violin cadenza. There, Elgar introduced remarkable and unusual tonal effects for the orchestral accompaniment.

FPZ : Yes. It is said that Elgar had a set of chimes in his house - I don't know just how to explain this. Anyway, a sort of chime hung on the door, and in the summer the wind would always gently rush across this. And it is just this atmosphere that he wanted to obtain from the strings in the violin concerto. This is, just as I already mentioned before, something of these mystical moments, and I always see before me this saga of King Arthur when I play and listen to this music.

FL : What brought you as a violinist of international format, who of course has played all the best known repertoire in recent years, to play such an unusual piece?

FPZ : First of all, I would not call this work unusual. It is true that it is not played very often in Central Europe. But, viewed internationally, Elgar is a very important composer. And when we look at the violin literature, the really well known violin concertos from the first half, or the first ten years, of the 20th century, one finds only Sibelius, and perhaps Glazunov, and then the Elgar concerto. And I played this concerto for the first time about five years ago. And strangely it was only after I was on stage that I became aware what a colossal work it really is. It often happens that you prepare with incredible thoroughness, but then only sense through this "live" experience what the music is really all about. And this feeling has remained with me each time I play the Elgar concerto. It is and remains a very difficult work, a colossal work.

FL : It is said that, together with the violin concerto of Carl Nielsen, it is the last of its kind. Do you also agree with this?

FPZ : I don't know really. I find, to focus on English music, if I consider the English violin concertos, that there is a very smooth transition from the Elgar to Walton and then to the concerto of Benjamin Britten,

which I also played here once with the Symphony Orchestra. And here I see no end with the Elgar concerto. But certainly, when you experience the work in concert and also play it yourself and feel a completely different sense of time. Really, every time as I approach the cadenza, and then play the cadenza, and it passes and then dies away. And then I think, what did people - and this was shortly before the First World War - have for a completely different concept of time? You see this with Gustav Mahler as well. There it is very similar. And it is just this First World War which changed all of music, all of the arts, and people everywhere. And this is probably what you are referring to.

FL : Edward Elgar's violin concerto has a very special motto, from a novel by Alain-René Lesage, *Le Soir de Gil Blas*. And, after this novel, it reads "here is enshrined the soul of", followed by a few dots. And many people have speculated whose soul is enshrined in this violin concerto. What is your personal interpretation of this?

FPZ : Well, in his important works Elgar always poses riddles for his friends and acquaintances. We see this in the *Enigma Variations*, and we see it in the symphonies as well. All over there are hidden riddles. And in the violin concerto, it is fully apparent to me, this very likely refers to a woman whom he loved very, very much and - somehow - let me say, held his hand out to with this declaration of love. Especially the second theme, about which the famous violinist Yehudi Menuhin always spoke, saying it was so English and so rich in feeling. I am convinced that he was really thinking of a woman whom he loved very much.

FL : Thank you very much for this conversation.

Post-Scriptum to NIMROD IN THE METRO

Anthony Suter

During the weekend of Saturday 2nd and Sunday 3rd June, as if to counteract some of the negative things I say in my article in the July 2001 JOURNAL, 'France-Musiques' did Elgar proud. It devoted its prime Saturday evening opera slot to the Centenary performance of *The Dream of Gerontius* under Sakari Oramo. René Machart, who presented what turned out to be an evening of nearly four hours of Elgar's music, was at pains to acquaint French listeners with various aspects of the composer's output. He admitted Elgar had a bad reputation in France, but insisted this was through sheer ignorance of the composer's work! He placed *The Dream of Gerontius* in its musical and historical context (the Three Choirs Festival etc) and talked about its ambiguously hybrid form, half-way between opera and oratorio. The recorded performance (a suitably and notably moving musical event) was framed by a representative selection of Elgar's works : first, *Salut d'Amour*, *Chanson de Matin* and *Chanson de Nuit* by I Salonisti, plus *Froissart* conducted by Andrew Davis; then after the main work, the String Quartet by the Maggini Quartet, followed by the *Enigma Variations* conducted by Simon Rattle.

Next day, to complete an expatriate Elgarian's weekend, the French music programme's comparative recordings "show" once again featured the Cello Concerto. This was not a repeat, but a new broadcast devised by the new producer, Frédéric Lodéon. Himself a cellist and a pupil of André Navarra, he explained he had decided to omit the reissue of the latter's interpretation of the work with Barbirolli because the recording quality totally betrayed the sonority of the soloist. Lodéon was joined by a fellow cellist, Roland Pidoux, who is cello professor at the Paris Conservatoire; Patrick Szersnovicz the music writer; and music broadcaster François Hudry, all of them enthusiastic about Elgar. Roland Pidoux contributed an interesting point when he said Elgar's concerto was now studied at the Conservatoire, but often at a stage when the pupils were both technically and psychologically immature, so that (my interpretation) the great French tradition - Fournier, Tortelier, Navarra - was not being upheld. There was also an interesting technical discussion of the different bowing techniques to use in the virtuoso Scherzo, because Tortelier, in his last recording, was found sadly lacking by the panel, but his recording with Groves was the only one of his currently available in France. Another recording featuring in the first broadcast, Maisky/ Sinopoli, was also again dismissed, and Yo Yo Ma/ Previn was again found largely impressive. But the cello professor's choice was the restrained and profound reading by Isserlis/ Hickox, also appreciated by the other members of the panel, but not as much, especially in the final movement, as du Pré/ Barenboim. Then in a muted but intense diatribe against the other panellists, Roland Pidoux said he had felt intimidated at the beginning of the programme at being in the company of a group of experienced music broadcasters, but that he had now (he implied) caught them out liking a performance that bore only a tenuous relationship to the letter and spirit of the score! It was more or less on this note that the programme came to an end.

[Anthony Suter has pointed out that his 1997 collection of poetry is called *Mélisande* at the Angel; and yes, it refers to the London underground station!]

BOOK REVIEWS

Married to Music : the authorised biography of Julian Lloyd Webber,

by Margaret Campbell

Robson Books, 2001. 177 pp, + appendices. £16-95

Julian Lloyd Webber is one of the great British instrumentalists of the last quarter century, admired and respected throughout the world. He is a great Elgarian, a member of the Society, and his recording of the Cello Concerto with Lord Menuhin was chosen some ten years ago by Jerrold Northrop Moore in the Radio 3 'Building a Library' programme as the finest available version. He has performed the work in a large number of countries, and is thus one of the great Elgarian ambassadors. Over the years he has also recorded several other Elgar pieces, including the composer's own arrangement of the Romance for Bassoon; *Chanson de Matin*, *Une Idylle*, and *Salut d'Amour*.

The title of the book is striking, given the failure of Mr Lloyd Webber's two marriages, about which no punches are pulled. Yet although in many respects this is a very frank biography, it is not sensationalist or a "warts and all" account, but a well-written book, easy to read, and very anecdotal. Julian Lloyd Webber comes across as a very engaging and likeable person, perhaps summed up best by his friend and former Arts Minister David Mellor : "Julian is one of those musicians... who get top marks as a human being as well as very much higher marks as a musician than some people, in the British way of denigrating success, would be willing to allow him... He is a real and genuine person... [he] presents himself exactly as he is and has remained remarkably unspoiled".

There are some recurring themes in the book. Having in Andrew a world-famous elder brother has not always been easy : although the relationship between the two men is good, it has been strained from time to time by such things as mischievous press stories. Then there is the music composed by William, Julian's father, which he has "rediscovered" and done much to bring back to the public's attention, encouraging recordings, and getting such as Richard Hickox on board in the process. (On a personal note, I can vouch for a Passiontide cantata by Lloyd Webber entitled *The Divine Compassion*, which I have conducted twice : it is superbly written, especially the opening chorus 'O glory of the Word of God eternal', 'Unto the end', and the men's chorus 'O proud heart, low thou'rt fallen'. I found that singers came to really love this music.)

Julian Lloyd Webber has also been a great champion of neglected cello music by Delius, Holst, Vaughan Williams, Sullivan, and others : and even pieces by forgotten or unfashionable composers, including Bridge and Bantock. He is also concerned about the future of classical music, and is furious that it only tends to get reported when there is an angle : he laments "a total lack of interest from the general media - unless semi-naked bimbo violinists or something like the David Helfgott circus are involved". Jerrold Moore commented on his total integrity in playing the Elgar, and that word could well sum up the cellist's whole life and career. As if to illustrate this, a chapter deals with his crusade against the representation of Jacqueline du Pré in the *Hilary and Jackie* book and film.

The book contains many fascinating and humorous anecdotes, some about the Elgar concerto - but you will have to read the book to find them out! An ideal Christmas present for a musical friend.

The Editor

Elgar, by Simon Mundy (Illustrated Lives of the Great Composers).

Omnibus, 2001. 220 pp. £12-95, paperback.

This book first appeared from Midas Press in 1980, and reappeared in the same format in 1984 from Omnibus. This new edition is almost double the length, and the author calls it "a complete revision... a fundamental rewrite". This has become essential, he says, because of all the material on Elgar's life and music that has appeared over the last twenty years; plus the fact that Anthony Payne's performing version of the Third Symphony "has thrown all the music of his last years into sharper focus".

There is a real need for a book on Elgar which introduces its readers to the *man*, as opposed to the man and the *music*. Basil Maine got over the problem by separating the life and works into separate volumes; recently we had a small book from Classic FM by David Nice; and now Simon Mundy's book, in expanded state, has appeared. Does it fill the gap? On one level, yes. It is comprehensive, covering adequately the main events of Elgar's life. Mundy writes in an easy, readable style. And the text is enhanced by judicious use of quotes, and by excellent use of photographs (including some very unusual ones). It is not too long, and comes at a very reasonable price. One might quibble with some of the author's views, but overall this is a very sympathetic and rounded view of Elgar the man.

However, the book suffers from a serious lack of editing. There is a large number of basic errors which deeply compromise the book's value. Some are spelling mistakes : "competant", "Sevilliana", "foreignness", "Morecombe", "Betws-y-coed", "Holbroke", and - unforgivably - "Stewart-Powell", but there are also gross departures from fact. Dorabella did not go to Germany with the Elgars in 1892 - or any other time for that matter (p 58); the first sentence of her book on the composer states that she did not meet him until 6 December 1895. The hero of *King Olaf* is Olaf Tryggvason (968-1000), not Olaf Haraldsson (995-1030) (p 54); and Elgar did not watch football on the day of the *Olaf* premiPre - that was artistic licence in the novel by Keith Alldritt. The Madresfield Music Festival was not held in Madresfield Court (p 68); anyone who has been there would know how impossible that would be! Earl (not Lord) Beauchamp went as Governor of New South Wales, not New Zealand. The correct destination is given in a further reference on pp 78-9, but Mundy then compounds his error two pages later by creating a link between the voyage of Lady Mary Lygon, celebrated in the 'Romanza' of the *Variations*, and Helen Weaver's emigration to New Zealand fifteen years earlier. This is frankly sloppy writing.

Also, on p 81 the 1899 performance of *King Olaf* is correctly placed at Sheffield, but two pages later it moves up-county to Leeds. Mundy repeats the fable that Swinnerton Heap died "halfway through the rehearsals" for *Gerontius*, (p 87) whereas in fact Heap died on 11 June and the first (choral) rehearsal was on 20 August (see *The Best of Me*, pp 4, 173). The *Concert Allegro* was written in the autumn of 1901, not 1900 (p 89). Was Elgar paid for orchestrating Brewer's *Emmaus* (p 90)? I can find no record of any remuneration, and in any case it was not a "purely money-making" venture, but was done to help out his friend. Elgar's *Apostles* project did not include "his own original words" (p 100); they all came from Scripture (except one or two from Jewish and other ancient texts). Alfred Rodewald died aged 42, not 53 (p 102). It is highly debatable that the period of Elgar's Birmingham professorship "spurred him on to greater creativity" (p 115); of the three works Mundy cites, much of *The Kingdom* was already composed (if not orchestrated), the *Wand of Youth* music was the reworking of childhood pieces, and the First Symphony largely dates from a period when Elgar had arranged to give up the Birmingham post, and long after his last lecture there (November 1906). The Opus 53 part-songs date from the Italian visit of December 1907, not the earlier visit that year to Capri and Rome (p 123). Dates are askew again in this section of the book : Elgar was eight years older than Brahms (not eleven) at the time of their first symphonies (p 126); and Vaughan Williams' *Sea Symphony* dates from 1910 not 1909 (p 127); while 1909 was apparently "the tenth anniversary of Queen Victoria's death" (p 132). We are told that *The Music Makers* is "the last of Elgar's great choral works" (p 142), but then we learn that *The Spirit of England* is

“his last major choral work” (p 158).

Strangely enough, most of the final three chapters of the book, dealing with the years after Alice’s death, is gaffe-free and excellently written, incorporating much new material; I was left wishing that the rest could have been like this. I am aware that I have focused on the mistakes rather than the book’s many merits. It would be a brave writer indeed who would claim that his work is free from error. But the question here is : does such a list of inaccuracies seriously undermine the book’s value? Sadly, I have to say it does; others may think differently.

The Editor

RECORD REVIEWS

Cockaigne Overture, Op 40. Serenade for Strings, Op 20. Enigma Variations, Op 36

*Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham
Sony Classical SMK 89405*

I confess that I had previously been one of those who believed that Sir Edward and Sir Thomas did not get along well, on the (relatively) few occasions when they collaborated on performances of Elgar’s work. It is a tribute to the quality of the notes accompanying this CD that my opinion has now changed; it would seem that whatever hostility may have existed when the Elgars met the young conductor came from Lady Elgar, and her husband seems not to have been bothered by any difference in personality, but appreciated Beecham as a musician.

If these recordings, dating from November and December 1954, were the only Elgar which Sir Thomas made, then they also represent the three works of his which Beecham conducted most. I was not aware that his very first concert (8.11.1899) included the *Spanish Serenade*, Op 23, while his last public concert included the *Serenade for Strings* (26.9.58), and his last recording for the BBC was the *Variations* (15.12.58).

Cockaigne is recorded here with great charm, wit and skill. One can forgive the (very) occasional acoustic imperfections of Walthamstow Town Hall, since the remastered sound is superb overall. The *Serenade* was shown by Sir Thomas to have been a fine work when he performed it with the LPO in 1937, and it receives excellent treatment here (it is the nearest in quality I have heard to my own favourite version, by the LPO under Handley on EMI), and the *Larghetto* is simply gorgeous!

The excellent booklet notes (by Graham Melville-Mason) really come into their own when commenting on the solo and section performances in the *Variations*: Frederick Riddle (viola) in no 6; John Kennedy (cello) - now best known as the father of Nigel Kennedy - in ‘B.G.N.’; Gwydion Brooke (bassoon), no 3; Lewis (Titch) Pocock (timpani), no 7; and Jack Brymer (clarinet) in the ‘Romanza’. All are supported well in the Finale by Denis Vaughan on the organ. This can stand comparison with the finest recorded versions.

The notes contain the following comment: “Jack Brymer remembered the unusual anguish that Sir Thomas went through over these Elgar recordings, in his endeavour to achieve the best possible results and so honour his pledge to the composer. I am sure Sir Edward would have been well pleased with the results”.

A must for all Elgar collectors with an appreciation of “historic” recordings. Warmly recommended.

Ian Morgan

'The Crown of India Suite' and other works : music for Military Band.

Imperial March, Op 32. The Crown of India, Op 66 - Suite. Chanson de Matin, Op 15, no 2. Three Bavarian Dances. Pomp & Circumstance March no 3, Op 39. Sevillana, Op 7. Salut d'Amour, Op 12. Empire March. Chanson de Nuit, Op 15, no 1. Pomp & Circumstance March no 1, Op 39.

*Band of the Grenadier Guards conducted by Lt-Col P E Hills, FLCM, psm
Specialist Recording Company SRC 101*

Available from SRC, 45 Crossway, Harpenden, Herts AL5 4QU

Price : £10, plus £1-20 p + p

Many people would have heard Elgar's music for the first time played on a bandstand by a military band, and the fact that much of this music was arranged within months of its first appearance would imply that the composer himself had approved of such treatment. The ubiquitous Godfrey family had a hand in much of the work, so did the splendidly named Frank Midwinter King Winterbottom, Bandmaster of the Royal Marines at Plymouth. Succeeding Walter Parratt in 1924, Elgar coveted his post of Master of the King's Musick, this despite his long-held and disillusioned view of Court life as 'hopelessly and irredeemably vulgar'. Fortunately this is not (always) reflected in the music; on the contrary the 1912 *Crown of India* suite and *Sevillana* (the latter brilliantly played here) are brimfull of exotic colours.

This disc is part of an enterprising project which the Specialist Recording Company (SRC) has undertaken, and judging by the fine ensemble playing by the Band of the Grenadier Guards, one that should fulfil the highest expectations (look out for another disc of music by another Master, Sir Arthur Bliss, played by the Scots Guards). Some occasional lack of uniformity in tuning apart (the middle woodwind range in particular) the standards of technical virtuosity achieved are highly laudable with especial plaudits to the high woodwinds and heavy brass. Not all of the music takes on its new guise successfully, particularly the two *Chansons* and *Salut d'Amour*, but those that do include the *Three Bavarian Dances*, and predictably enough the two *Pomp and Circumstance* Marches. No doubt because they are on their own familiar territory, it is these ceremonial occasional works and the Empire March which produce the most thrilling sounds from the Band's playing in the warm-toned resonance and spacious acoustics of the Chapel in the Royal Hospital, Chelsea. A military band may not have the full range of tonal colours of an orchestra but it is by no means a monochrome result here, and the final track will raise the hairs on the back of your neck.

Christopher Fifield

LETTERS

From : Carl Newton

Your paragraph on page 2 in the July ESN raises an interesting question as to what extent the conventional view that Elgar's music was neglected from the 1920s until the 1960s is correct. Ron Taylor has already drawn attention to the fact that the BBC promoted his work quite strenuously, at least until 1934 ('Music in the Air' in Edward Elgar: Music and Literature). Moreover from my records of the much lamented Yorkshire Symphony Orchestra, I note that in their first four seasons, 1947-51, they performed a minimum of twenty-one Elgar works. Inevitably the Variations were frequent, but the works include the First Symphony, the Violin Concerto, Nursery Suite and Falstaff. In addition they chose two Elgar items for their broadcasts, one inevitably Cockaigne but the other, interestingly, was The Music Makers. The orchestra had a fine reputation for promoting English, especially modern, music and their championing (it cannot be called less) of Elgar and others is a credit to their memory and that of their conductor, Maurice Miles. It is also an indication that Elgar never went out of fashion with the ordinary concertgoer. It was the Hampstead Mafia and their epigones, the mandarins of the post-War BBC, who attempted to damn him with faint praise. The critical reception of Elgar is a topic worth much more extended research than it has so far received, as there are important issues of British social and political history involved.

From : Professor Brian Trowell

Carl Newton's letter in your issue of November 2000 (Vol 11, no 6) leaves me uncertain as to how my discussion of E F Benson and the lost 'Air Songs' (fn. 321 of Elgar's Use of Literature) "reads more into Benson's comments than they strictly warrant". And why should it be "barely credible" that Lady Elgar disliked the words? Carice Elgar had no discernible reason to make this up, and her mother had earlier persuaded Elgar to abandon his apparently indecorous Rabelais ballet. I can now, however, add the relevant entries from Alice Elgar's 1919 diary to the picture, which date the beginning of the project, and the third of them shows that the music had her approval at the time of sketching:-

March 2 : E.F.Benson came to tea with the Elgars (along with several other guests).

March 29 : "E. saw Mr [Oswald] Stoll regarding the 'Air' piece, and he was interested". [Stoll was the impresario who owned the London Coliseum, where he had staged Elgar's *The Crown of India* in 1912 and *The Fringes of the Fleet* in 1917.]

April 17 : "E. wrote charming 'Air' Songs."

That's all. Benson and Elgar seem to have set out to celebrate the fledgling RAF, much as Elgar had celebrated the war effort of the coastal merchant marine by setting the poems of Kipling's *The Fringes of the Fleet*. Perhaps, the war being over, the time proved inopportune; perhaps there was trouble over Stoll's terms; perhaps Lady Elgar came to dislike the idea : without further evidence we cannot tell. But at least Alice's diary, as one might expect, confirms and explains W H Reed's dating "according to the records" and answers one of Mr Newton's questions. One further possible connection may be worth following up : from 1917 to 1919 the RAF's Musical Director was Major Henry Walford Davies, a protégé of Elgar since 1902 and a composer whose second most popular piece was the 'RAF March-Past' : was the Benson-Elgar collaboration his idea?

From: Paul A Kampen

I was interested in your comment on p 4 of the July issue of the NEWS to the effect that Elgar had no interest in railways and certainly wrote no rail inspired music.

That is certainly true but, as Bill Mitchell points out in his book Elgar in the Dales, Elgar will have used Settle station within a couple of years of the opening of the Settle-Carlisle railway on his visits to his friend Dr Buck. And he also had Hellifield connections in the days when that township was a major railway junction (where the Midland Railway from Leeds/ Bradford/ Skipton met the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway from Blackburn and East Lancashire).

It may interest you to know that the ~~Settle Orchestral Society~~, with their conductor Howard Rogerson, gave a concert in Appleby Public Hall to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the opening to passenger traffic of the S & C. This was on Sunday 1 July and three Elgar works were featured - Chanson de Matin, Chanson de Nuit and Rosemary, the original piano version of which was of course composed on a visit to Dr Buck.

100 YEARS AGO...

After returning on 21 September 1901 from his stay at Hasfield, Elgar began work on the incidental music to George Moore's play *Grania and Diarmid*. He had met the author at a London rehearsal for the Three Choirs earlier that month, since when the two men had corresponded. The score was finished on 3 October and posted to Moore the following day; Elgar then went to Leeds for the Festival, where the *Variations* were rapturously received, and he and Alice were fêted by a number of their friends. Edward was also introduced to Edward Speyer, whose house at Ridgehurst in Hertfordshire was to become a popular resort for him. Speyer's wife Antonia was an old friend of Alice.

While Elgar was away, Moore had written saying how much he enjoyed the music: "there is nothing in Wagner more beautiful and it is quite original", he wrote. Now he asked Elgar for a song (*There are Seven that pull the thread*) to accompany the incidental music. Elgar duly wrote this at Rodewald's home in Liverpool; he had gone there on 15 October for the first performance of the two *Pomp & Circumstance* marches on the 19th; the two dedicatees - Rodewald and Bantock respectively - had Liverpool connections. The premiPre was "splendid" according to Alice's diary. But three days later, while the Elgars were still in Liverpool, Henry Wood gave them in the Queen's Hall in London, where the reception was nothing short of sensational, particularly for the first march, as the conductor famously recorded in his autobiography: "The people simply rose and yelled. I had to play it again - with the same result; in fact they refused to let me go on with the programme... Merely to restore order, I played the march a third time... the one and only time in the history of the Promenade concerts that an orchestral item was accorded a double encore".

On 24 October the Elgars were in Manchester where Richter conducted *Cockaigne*. Edward was very impressed by the sound of the Hallé - "the finest I ever heard", he told Jaeger. But on the composition front, little progress had been made, though several projects were under consideration : a *Coronation Ode* for Covent Garden; a cantata, *The High Tide on the Coast of Lincolnshire* for the Norwich Festival; a new choral work for the next Birmingham Festival; and of course, he was still trying to write a symphony. Yet he now had a request for a short piece from the pianist Fanny Davies. He set to work, completing it in about a fortnight, and discarding some of the material (the fragment *Skizze* is dated 16 November). The *Concert Allegro* was given at a recital on 2 December, but despite Alice's diary comment of its being "enthusiastically recd.", it was only a qualified success, and with no publisher prepared to pay Elgar's price, it faded into obscurity for more than sixty years (apart from another performance in 1906).

On 12 December Elgar conducted the ninth Worcestershire Philharmonic Society concert, a seasonal performance of *Ein Weinachts-Mysterium* by Philipp Wolfrum (1854-1919), the work's British premiPre. The composer of *Gerontius* recognised a kindred spirit, as his programme note reveals : "It is a bold thing in a sacred work, which most hearers will persist in calling 'an oratorio' to throw over the whole convention of the Oratorio maker, fugues, canons, etc., and to give us a piece of pure and expressive music". On 16 December the Elgars left for Düsseldorf, where on the 19th Julius Butts conducted the second complete performance of *Gerontius*; the occasion "was in every way successful", as a delighted composer reported back to the publishers.

The Elgar Society Journal

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(Front Cover) The floral display in Deansway, Worcester to celebrate the Golden Jubilee Weekend of the Society, September 2001 (Photo: Paul Rooke)

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

