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“THE PASSIONATE PILGRIMAGE OF A SOUL”

Elgar and Canon Temple Gairdner

Geoffrey Hodgkins

The above title is an oft-quoted description of Elgar's Second Symphony, and some may think it emanated from the composer himself. However, the words come from an interpretation of the work - "a guess at its inner meaning" - by a Christian missionary, Canon Temple Gairdner of Cairo. Whatever Elgar's personal beliefs were, his links with organised religion were few. He had suffered over the years from clergy objecting to his choice of words in choral works: Edward Vine Hall, Precentor of Worcester Cathedral, incurred the composer's wrath over both *The Light of Life* and *The Dream of Gerontius*. Elgar also found professional theologians somewhat unbending and narrow-minded. Rev Edward Capel Cure, librettist of *The Light of Life*, was initially called upon to help Elgar with the construction of the *Apostles'* libretto, but ultimately there was a disagreement, almost certainly over the characterisation of Judas; the two men were estranged and never reconciled, avoiding each other where possible. Elgar went into print famously in the 1920s with a member of the Worcester Cathedral Chapter, Canon T A Lacey, over the proposed inclusion of an extract from *Parsifal* at the Worcester Festival.

Of clergy from his own denomination, Elgar was probably closest to Canon Dolman, OSB, the parish priest at Hereford, and dedicatee of the motet *Ave Maris Stella*. His greatest friend from among the clergy was undoubtedly Canon Charles Vincent Gorton, Rector of Morecambe and founder of the Music Festival there, who advised Elgar on the libretto of both biblical oratorios, and after an early retirement in 1908 due to illness, moved to Hereford with his family to be near the Elgars. Temple Gairdner played a much smaller part in the composer's life - the two men only met a few times, when Gairdner was on furlough in England - but, as was the case with Gorton, he was someone who understood Elgar and was passionate about his music.

William Henry Temple Gairdner was born in Ardrossan in Ayrshire in 1873.¹ His father, Sir William Gairdner FRS, was an eminent physician, the Professor of Medicine at Glasgow University. He was educated at Rossall School, where his music teacher wrote that he possessed "... an appreciation and insight... remarkable in a schoolboy". In 1892 he went to Trinity College, Oxford, to read classics. The death of his younger brother during that first year was a crisis in his life and brought him to faith. He joined the Evangelical group at Oxford, though unhappy with many aspects of their puritan censoriousness; he had always found music and other things of beauty to be an aid to faith. A friend later said, "Gairdner was pure in heart, *not* by shutting his eyes, but by seeing in all beauty and in every variety of gift that which is Divine. He could look at an opera, a dancer, a statue, and for him the divine imperishable beauty of them was separable from the elements of sin that to less pure eyes would tarnish the whole."

The following summer Gairdner felt that he was called to serve God abroad, and after university in 1897 was accepted for service with the Church Missionary Society (CMS). He was ordained in 1899 and sailed

¹ Most of the information in this article has been taken from *Temple Gairdner of Cairo* by Constance E Padwick (SPCK, 1929). I am also grateful for the help given by Mr Ken Osborne, Archivist of the Church Mission Society.

² Worcestershire Record Office (WRO) 705:445:2568)

for Cairo. Two years later he became engaged to Margaret Mitchell, an old family friend from Glasgow, with whom, as children, he had played piano and she violin during family music-making. They were married in 1902 in the Anglican Church in Nazareth, and were to spend the whole of their married life serving in Egypt. From the outset music was a constant and vital part of their home life. "Collect all the music that ever was heard of - don't stint!" he had written to his fiancée. "We have the whole range of classical music before us". Gairdner's enthusiasm in everything he did, not least in music, was legendary. On discovering a new work he would share his joy with others by "demonstrating" it to them (his own light-hearted word). A colleague recalled: "After dinner at a visit to the Clergy House in Khartoum on a Sunday evening, Gairdner sat down at the villainous piano - all pianos were villainous in the Sudan - and played to three of us the piano transcription of Elgar's Second Symphony. Suddenly he stopped, repeated a phrase and said, 'Voilà la femme! Here she enters just like a serpent in the grass - the notes, even, have the sinuous appearance of a serpent. Elgar drives her out backwards at the end of the movement'."

Gairdner played a baby organ at his church services, and became learned in Arab music. He wrote music himself, and arranged music for soirées at his home. He had a catholic taste in music, but Wagner and Elgar were his two real loves. He came to know Wagner's music at Oxford and his enthusiasm stayed with him all his life. He once described the impact of listening to *Die Meistersinger*: "Some of the great thrilling chords, orchestrated with terrible glory, seemed to tear at my very bowels, so that it was difficult to repress a cry of mixed pain and joy". In 1906 he and his wife were able to take a rare holiday and spent nine days in Bayreuth.

The first mention of Elgar in Gairdner's life seems to be when he obtained a copy of the vocal score of *The Apostles* in June 1904, only a few months after the work's premiere, and whilst he was on furlough in England. "What strikes one is his grasp on the *whole* and the wonderful spirituality of that whole", he wrote. "Elgar seems to me to be tapping a new spring in art - dramatizing the oratorio. What can be more dramatic than the Magdalen-storm section? The *absence* of the stage enables him to disregard necessities introduced by time and space, and, grouping together events ideally connected, though in time and space sundered, to suggest a novel and most powerful dramatic situation." Two more visits to England took place in 1908 and 1910, and in 1911-12 he was given a year's study leave in the USA. By early 1914 he had received the score of Elgar's Second Symphony, and wrote to the composer about it, including in the letter details of one of the Cairo soirées.

35, Sharia Falaki, Cairo, Egypt.
8 Feb 1914

Sir Edward Elgar
Dear Sir,

I enclose a programme of some "Hausmusik" which I thought might be of interest to you. It may give pleasure to know of the various distant lands to which your music is penetrating. The evening was the greatest success, the music making a real impression though it was new to the majority of the company. A very fine lady violinist (amateur) played the concerto: the other things were played by an orchestretta consisting of 1 violin, *pf* à deux mains, and harmonium! We arranged them from the P.F. arrangements. The guesses at the Enigma may amuse, but I hope will not displease you. An Enigma invites guesses! The object was to stimulate the curiosity and interest of the hearers.

I cannot resist taking this opportunity of telling you - with how deep gratitude! - the profound delight your music has given me these past years. And with the many to whom I have introduced it, it has been the same. And beyond all other things the glorious IInd Symphony has gone straightest and deepest to the heart. I could not put into words what some things in movements 1, 2, and 4 have meant to me as I played them or dwelt on them, and to others to whom I showed their beauties. I should like to thank you wholeheartedly for it - and all the rest. And if it is not an impertinence I should like to ask for one hint, namely as to what imports that mysterious episode



Canon William Henry Temple Gairdner

in the 1st movement, with the lights all turned down, the one that reappears fortissimo in iii? I have sometimes fancied it is the *Spirit* of Delight as *spirit* (in i), for even the spirit of delight like all spirits is a mysterious thing. In iii it would then be delight manifested? - But what then is the haunting thing with which i opens and which reappears in ii & iv but not iii?

But I feel I have no right to ask questions or do more than send you the unfeigned homage of, dear Sir,
Yours very faithfully
W.H.T.Gairdner²

The composer obviously replied to the queries³ and so, when Gairdner returned to England on 8 June,

he determined to fix a meeting if at all possible.

Church Missionary Society
Salisbury Square
London EC
23 June 1914

Sir Edward Elgar

Dear Sir,

You may remember I wrote to you from Cairo, and the kind response encourages me to venture to ask whether I might have the great privilege of calling on you, if only for a few minutes, now that I am in London. It would be a satisfaction to me to be able to tell you, *viva voce*, what your music has meant to some of us.

If on the other hand this is not convenient, or if you in any way think that I may be an intruder of the baser sort, please consider my request of no importance whatsoever.

My wife and I went down to the great performance at Canterbury on Friday and were moved beyond words. I think the Apostles greater than the Dream!

I am in London till Thursday. Should you fix on that day I would contrive to bring my wife, who feels as deeply as I do.

Yours with much respect

W.H.T.Gairdner⁴

An invitation for the Gairdners to visit Severn House was extended (*vide* the following letter) but there is no diary mention. Within a few weeks war was declared and Gairdner, like the Elgars, was on holiday in Scotland when the announcement was made. From his sister's home at Newport-on-Tay he wrote to his wife that he saw that doom was inevitable: "One circumstance seemed to bring it through senses and imagination home to the mind. This was the continuous roll of sound made by the trains crossing the Tay Bridge on the Sunday. We knew it must mean the hurrying of trainsful of men and material to some military or naval base. That long-drawn rumble told us that Britain was sleepless".

Gairdner decided that he should enlist, but the Archbishop of Canterbury had appealed to clergy to stay in their posts; so the Gairdners returned to Egypt on 8 October, having put their two elder sons into boarding school. The following year he was made a Canon of St George's Jerusalem in recognition of his appointment as Secretary (ie leader) of the Egyptian Mission. When peace came, CMS summoned him to London to renew contacts and discuss the future of the work in Egypt. Prior to his departure, he had written to Elgar with his analysis of the Second Symphony.

Church Missy. Society, 35 Sharia Falaki, Cairo.
19.8.18

Dear Sir Edward Elgar,

You may perhaps remember your Cairo enthusiasts, and their call on you at Hampstead a few weeks before the war. I am sending with this a sort of psychological analysis or interpretation of

³ Unfortunately it has not been possible to locate the Elgar side of the correspondence.

⁴ WRO 705:445:2566

⁵ Elgar Birthplace MS 73724

your Second Symphony. If you care to read it, and it interests or amuses you, then that was my object in writing it. I wrote it for your eye alone; but at the same time if it should ever be deemed useful to help in interpreting the glorious work to others, it would be an additional pleasure.

Your 'For the Fallen' has reached here and has made a deep impression. A score of times I must have played and sung it to deeply-moved companies here and at distant Khartoum and Atbara in the Sudan. May I add my own heartfelt thanks to those of others for your having caught and eternalised the country's deepest and solemnest emotion at this awful time, which else would have passed unexpressed. For what but music could have expressed it? Such emotion goes beyond the power of the sister arts. What the effect of that climax must have been on hearts which were actually mourning and aching for some "Fallen", I can only dimly imagine. But it must be simply overpowering. How many must have blest you for it!

I know not whether your creative activity has been otherwise at work in these years. Except to give voice to the poignant emotion of the time - a thing which *could* only happen once or twice - I can well imagine that the singing of the singing-birds ceases in years like these and is silent.

I wonder if I have got anywhere near the mark in my Interpretation. It is original and unaided throughout, except that I must confess that in one important respect I profited from a hint given me by yourself at Hampstead, without which I might have come rather a bad cropper! I daresay you may recognise it.

If it is not too much bother, and unless you have any objection, could you kindly send the M.S. to my brother Capt E.D.Gairdner, R.A.M.C., at 7 Huntly Gardens, Glasgow, to read and return. He was thrice here, thrice wounded, and during his convalescences we made great play with the Symphony. He is as enthusiastic as I.

With deepest respect I am
Yours faithfully
W.H.T.Gairdner

Would it be too much to ask you just to acknowledge receipt of M.S. I shall naturally be a little anxious till I hear of its arrival.⁵

On 1 February 1919 Gairdner attended a performance of *The Dream of Gerontius* at the Royal Albert Hall, sung by Kirkby Lunn, Gervase Elwes, Frederick Ranaflow, and the Royal Choral Society under Sir Frederick Bridge. Alice and Troyte also went to it.

2 Feb 1919

Dear Sir Edward,

I must just write you a few lines after yesterday's performance at the Albert Hall. I am not critical enough to know whether it was the finest possible performance. But it was fine enough to make me say that I have no words to tell you what that music meant to me. Master! it is beyond words. To think that human mind can create within itself such a universe of sound, of beauty, and in addition to that be able to make it available for human ear and heart! It is too wonderful. One of my brothers (who fought through this war) is in a very critical state of mental health: as I listened with closed eyes to the Kyrie and intercession music of the First Part, it suddenly came upon me that the choir, heaven & earth were praying for *him* and the emotion of the thought and the music shook me like an aspen. I thank you. In the closing pages one seemed to have a vision of St Paul's conception of an entire universe travelling towards a future - yet present though hidden - triumph.

And this leads me, on behalf of a multitude of souls, to beseech you to execute by God's help the completion of the Apostles cycle, - your Parsifal, the true end & crown to all your work "A.M.D.G." I think that for ten years I have from time to time prayed for this, and since you

sketched for me its scope I just feel that you *can't* die with this unexpressed. Surely this final "Even so Come Lord Jesus" would be *the* message for this time, and bring unnumbered souls to Christ?

Yours, with true homage and thanks
W.H.T.Gairdner

PS. I have been all this time under the impression that that scrap of M.S. which you kindly wrote for me was in my attaché. To-day I find it is *not* so; did I by any chance leave it on the table in your room?⁶

Gairdner was due to return to Egypt in a few weeks' time, but Elgar was able to invite him to Severn House on 7 March as part of a large group of friends and distinguished guests to hear a private performance of the three chamber works. It was a memorable experience and he later wrote an account of it.

The scene in the fine music-room was very picturesque. The grand piano on the oak floor. The dim light, and the fire, burning silently and fitfully in the deeply recessed fireplace with its ingle-nooks, in one of which sat Elgar's rather elf-like daughter. That fire-vignette had almost an air of illusion about it - it reminded me of the fireside scene in *Valkyrie*, Act I - you know how curiously unconcerned, and therefore illusory, homely fire seems on a stage when the impossible-fantastic is being played. A fit setting then to the weird quintet. I heard it twice clean through and part of a third time that afternoon, and got to know it really well. It is glorious. The second subject of the first Allegro is one of the most haunting Elgar ever wrote - I found myself quite unconsciously using it as a prayer at my orisons that night.

The first movement begins with some pianissimo mutterings, like souls turning from side to side in mortal discomfort and numb pain; then the first subject proper, weird chords, very eerie, with terrible appealing broken utterances from the first violin. "Spirits in prison". An inferno scene - not so much in hell as in an earthly Tartarus of some evil spell. The beautiful slow movement is clearly the redemption scene. And the finale is the resurrection of those damned ones, not to a heavenly Paradise, but rather to a second chance of a blessed, healthy, sane life in a restored world. It is most moving... I don't think that chamber-music ever *could* have been heard under more exquisite conditions.⁷

c/o C.M.S. Salisbury Square, London EC 4
9 iii 1919

Dear Sir Edward,

I thank you again and again for asking me last Friday, for the music, and for your personal exertions! - the latter were most real and most effective. As for the music, there can be no doubt that in the Vth you have added to the permanent possessions of music, - the things that will force the players of the future to play them. It was most moving - that new reading of a Divina Commedia, with its spell-bound Inferno, and then the restoration through grace to - not Paradiso this time, but the unspeakable blessing of a second chance *on earth*, - the chance offered of some noble life, - offered and accepted. It moved me greatly. A curious thing happened that night, - as I knelt at my orisons I found myself (without the smallest premeditation or self-consciousness) singing *audibly* the phrase as a *prayer!*, - it seemed to convey a definite request and to be all I needed to ask.

Earnestly and always asking God's guidance and inspiration for you in your future creative work

⁶ WRO 705:445:2567

⁷ Padwick, pp 122-3

Yours truly and gratefully
W.H.T.Gairdner

I gave so much brain power to listening to the Vth that I was unable to do justice to the other 2 works : but the Romance spoke for itself, and in the finale of the IVth there were "some" effects⁸

Four weeks later Gairdner sailed for Egypt.

Liverpool
as from Ch Missy Society, Cairo
9 4 1919 [Gairdner actually wrote '3', ie. March]

Dear Sir Edward,

Just a line to bid you and Lady Elgar farewell. I have at last got a berth and sail this afternoon to rejoin my wife and family in Egypt. It has not been pleasant thinking of their being there at this time. I did intend to call and say good bye, but it was not possible. Please accept my renewed thanks for the high honour and deep pleasure you gave me in inviting me to hear the Vth, I shall never forget it. Apropos of that, I must put my musicianship right with you! - in a previous letter it comes over me that I quoted a phrase from the 1st allegro in 3 time instead of 4:- what can you have thought of me! It was a temporary aberration, - I am sure I could write the whole phrase correctly, with its modulation and repetition too.

Always praying that you may be inspired to bring forth the greatest things that are within you, and with kindest regards to Lady Elgar

Believe me
Yours very faithfully
W.H.T.Gairdner⁹

A
year
later



A very able pianist and I have been playing the 4-handed arr. of your Introduction and Allegro, with great delight and enthusiasm. For pure musicalness and musicianship I think it as fine a thing as you ever did. Is it not the case that it was inspired on summer-wind-swept cliffs in S.Wales? Musical winds, sweeping through the aeolian harp of a musician's ears and soul!

And now I hear you have done a cello concerto!

We are indeed far from many joys!

Believe me

Yours with every regard

WHT Gairdner

(I hope and pray you are being inspired with your Parsifal - "Apocalypse"!)¹⁰

Church Missionary Society, 35, Sharia el Falaki, Cairo

23 i 20

Dear Sir Edward,

Two letters in the same week, - but I shall not so offend again!

Are you interested in the question of song-translations *for actual singing*?

Those sanctioned by even reputable publishers are often so inconceivably and disgracefully bad, that on two or three occasions, when I was introducing certain songs to our circle here, I was forced into trying my hand at rendering them myself. The results I thought of sending you, and they are enclosed. They are to be judged *solely* by their suitability to the particular music which I had in mind, bar by bar, and note by note, when I was making them. I mean, that I conceive that another composer's rendering of Lorelei (for example) would require a different translation. The presumed metrical identity would not suffice.

Believe me

Yours very faithfully

W.H.T.Gairdner

How very beautiful and intriguing that

is!

Is there anything special lying behind it?¹¹

Gairdner was to visit England twice more, in 1920-21 and in 1926-27. During this last visit he went to the Three Choirs at Worcester with his son, but there is no further evidence of meetings between him and Elgar. Friends noticed on this furlough that he was looking tired, but he was still enthusiastic about the

¹⁰ WRO 705:445:2572. This letter came enclosed with a poem by Constance Padwick, containing a musical quote from 'Night' from *The Apostles*.

¹¹ WRO 705:445:2571. The songs were Liszt's *Lorelei*; Tchaikovsky's *Nur Wer die Sehnsucht Kennt*; and Cornelius' *Brautlieder*.

work in Egypt. He died at Gezira, Cairo on 22 May 1928, aged 55.

Following his death a colleague, Constance E Padwick, began work on a biography which appeared in 1929. On 2 December 1928 she wrote to Elgar to acknowledge his permission to include material in the book : "...In thinking of his musical life which was his joy and release from the hard circumstances of a mission to Moslems, I have been made to see how very much he owed to you. He turned constantly to your music with the most eager delight. I find that he had the great joy (it was a most unusual joy to him) of meeting you once or twice... People generally found themselves talking rather intimately with Canon Gairdner - he had a great capacity for friendship & was so finely sensitive to other minds..."¹²

In 1930 a collection of Gairdner's writings was issued under the title *W.H.T.G to his Friends*, and the Canon's widow sent a copy to Elgar.

10 Bradmore Road, Oxford
30.3.30

Dear Sir Edward.

I am venturing to send to you through the publisher a copy of a small book, just brought out, of my husband's letters etc. At the very end occurs his exposition of your Second Symphony, with some accompanying remarks of your own which you kindly gave permission to be used, when Miss Padwick was preparing the life.



I think that some of my husband's very happiest hours were spent, either hearing your music, or arranging it as best we could

for reproduction on the few instruments at our disposal.

Believe me

Yrs truly

Margaret D. Gairdner¹³

The final chapter of the book is entitled 'On Elgar's Second Symphony' and the analysis of the Symphony is preceded by an explanation by Gairdner contained in a letter:

* * * * *

My Second Symphony effusion had evidently touched the spot. I seem to have hit it off *absolutely* in general idea, and very largely in detail also. For example, it was absolutely correct to say that the whole thing represents the "passionate pilgrimage" of a soul; that the last movement represents the final issue of his "passion" in noble action, and that the last two pages is apotheosis and the eternal issue of the soul's pilgrimage.

He told me that the *fff* passage in the second episode of the Rondo is the most "horrible" thing he ever did. It is the *madness* that attends the excess or abuse of passion.

He pointed me out a passage in *Maud*¹⁴ where the hero imagines he has gone mad, and that he is lying

¹² WRO 705:445:2573

¹³ WRO 705:445:2574

¹⁴ *Maud*, Part II. v. I. "Dead, long dead,

under a street with the horrible traffic roaring over his head. In the music he represents this by an incessant maddening hammering on the big drum, rising at the climax to a hideous din. He said that he had been closely associated at Worcester with a lunatic asylum, and had seen a lot of the patients, and knew their histories and symptoms. He thinks that all great music ultimately rests on experience of life. Where the young moderns are so lacking, he thinks, is in their inexperience in this respect. When they try to write great music they only succeed in setting up a big frame, and have not the life experience to fill that frame really. For the same reason, they excel only in slighter works.

THE PASSIONATE PILGRIM
Elgar's 2nd Symphony (in E=)

A true Sinfonia Appassionata, if ever there was one. And because it is, in addition, one of the supreme artistic works of modern times, it becomes whoso has perceived its greatness to give voice to his perception. For this is one of the very few ways in which the debt incurred through a work of this kind can be - not paid - but at least acknowledged.

Is it not the greatest of all Elgar's works - though there are several others of the same quality? Comparing it with the first symphony, for example, one would say that the first is built on truly great lines - from the first bar it evidently starts out to achieve greatness - and succeeds. But of the second one would say that it did not start out to achieve anything except its passionate self. Its song just burst out "because it must" - Shelley's Skylark and Keats's Nightingale in one, impassioned gladness and impassioned sadness blended, even as they are in the world. And the result a supremely great work of art, straight from Nature's own deep heart.

*"Rarely, rarely comest thou,
Spirit of Delight."*

This is the only key supplied by the composer to a piece which obviously cannot be judged as "pure music." All of Elgar's orchestral works are more or less "enigmas," and some more so than the Variations which bear the name. They all of them therefore invite, practically compel, attempts at solutions. The composer must not be vexed if some of these attempts are *out*, perhaps very much out. It is his own fault! - for so evidently having had a definite idea in his own mind, and for giving us only just the far end of the golden thread along which the idea may be tracked to its deep-shaded home at the labyrinth-centre. But in the hands of many the thread will break : perhaps of most, perhaps of all.

The "Spirit of Delight" we at least are given to know hovers over this poem - shall we say at once, over the poet? She visits him at times of rare, intensest rapture : and anon leaves him, perhaps in her shyness repelled by this or that alien influence. But the soul of that poet is her lover. With all the intensity and passion of his poet's nature he longs for her, he pursues her. Life is for him, from rapturous days of youth onward, a quest of her, a "passionate pilgrimage." Shall he run her down, capture the retreating spirit, turn her rare visits into lasting companionship? Well. . . pilgrims are also strangers on this earth. It is not here that they find their continuing city and home.

Long dead !
And my heart is a handful of dust
And the wheels go over my head."

¹⁵ The movement, for all its emotional character, is a model of summary construction. An interesting novelty in this is the use of the second subject as link to introduce the recapitulation, in

ACT I

The first movement is, as clearly as if it were inscribed with words instead of notes, an ecstasy of youth. It is a veritable spring-song - the Spring of human life thrilling to nature's Spring. The Spirit of Delight has visited the soul of the pilgrim of Delight. The very first unison note in B \flat , with its lingering syncopation, like the call of the spring birds in May, tells us this - a mere up-stroke though it is to the word which immediately follows. This word is none other than the theme which, both by its intrinsic character and its significant repetition in succeeding movements, proclaims itself as the theme of the Spirit of Delight, whether conceived as yearning on the part of the soul or as bestowal on the part of the goddess. It is a melody of extraordinary passion and beauty, bursting forth headlong - an accelerando in the very opening bars - and in its veins the ichor of youth and spring. It consists of but two bars, each of which plays an important part in the sequel, and which are complementary to the other; the first (bar 2) with its syncopated, undulating arpeggio suggesting wooing, pathos, and gathering up for the second (bar 3), which bursts out and pours down like a very torrent. Even the semitone F \sharp to G which leads up to this second phrase is very significant. It denotes the last moment before yearning finds vent in ecstasy : while later in the piece (27, last bar) the baulking of yearning is poignantly depicted by the repeated utterance of this semitonal appeal *without its rapturous sequel*. Again, in the two culminations and consummations of passion in this movement (42 and 65) the repetition (rallentando) of this semitonal call acts like a spur and a goad in response to which the whole of the impassioned energies of the soul are summoned up for an expression of final and maximum intensity.

With this theme, then, the symphony begins outright. A modulation; the theme thrills out again; and away careers the Allegro on its way, like a stream down the valley of delight.

It is 12/8 time; the triplet rhythm, beloved of the light-hearted Mendelssohn, is itself eloquent of youth and joy. But what a long, long way have we travelled since Mendelssohn! (Could Mendelssohn have written his *Joy Symphony* in any key but A major? And would not Elgar have chosen any other rather than A?) Not from Mendelssohn could we have had this passion of delight which betrays an aching almost more than enjoyment; while Melusine herself shows that Mendelssohn's most poignant woe was as nothing to what we already feel *this* "passionate pilgrim" to be capable of, though now its hour is spring and the riot of youth's spring - delight. This joy pursuer, we know, has *pain* in front of him. His deep capacity for this one emotion is the measure of his capacity for the other. The one intensity involves the opposite intensity. Storm and stress await him, though now all the woods are ringing, and every passionate lover - bird singing - ringing, singing, with the Spring, the SPRING, the SPRING!

And the poet's soul hears and answers the call. With every nerve athrill, with blood coursing through every vein, he and Nature become one in the Spring's rapture and intoxication.

The length and strength of the pressure is tremendous - it is shown in the very length of the so-called first subject, which, like the Prelude to *Tristan*, is a never-ending chain of melodies, each suggesting and leading into the others with extraordinary spontaneity. From its unseen source in the poet's deep, passionate heart it keeps bubbling up - what a true lilt of spring-song we have in §5 (last two bars), and with what an abandon of rhapsody it is repeated in §6! This leads up to an emotional climax, after which a period of rest is both artistically and physically inevitable; and thus, inevitably and neither formally nor mechanically, the quieter second subject (§8) comes, as the pool succeeds the rapid by natural sequence, not by rule. Here, as in the first subject, the proof of the immense reserves of emotional energy in this soul is the length to which the theme runs and the spontaneous way in which it throws off

sub-themes. Elgar's superfecundity in melodic material throughout this symphony is indeed extraordinary - it surpasses anything of the sort even in his works. In the case of this more meditative second theme, the note of melancholy, which we predicted for our passionate pilgrim, begins to make itself heard, whether in a poignant counterpoint to the main subject, afterwards keened out by the oboe (§13) with intensified poignancy, or the subtheme with long-drawn calls that may one day turn to wailings (§11). But not yet : for this quieter and more wistful music soon speeds up and agitates itself into a resumption of the old headlong intensity, and another emotional climax is reached as the sustained nature-call of the very first bar is shouted out, enthusiastically seconded by crashing tutti chords in slurred groups of two. And the emotional storm again begins to ebb.

We reach here a juncture which in the first symphony also at this very point was a critical one. An episode is absolutely inevitable not only constructionally but even psychologically. But what episode? In the first symphony - also (surely) the pilgrimage of another noble soul, but one less vehement and eager, more devotional and with more definite aspiration - something sinister came in at this point. And, unless one is immensely mistaken, so it does here also.

The whole atmosphere changes. Over the lovely countryside clouds cast deep shadows - not the fleeting, laughing shadows of an early April day, but shadows which bring with them a chilling wind. The birds' songs drop off, their chorus ceases, until only a single note is heard (23). We have heard that note twice before - in the first bar and at the ecstasy when it shouted and the orchestra shouted with it (20). But now it has become a melancholy note, keening in insistent rhythm (not syncopated this time), and the echo which follows each plaintive note is as plaintive as itself - it is, indeed, none other than the semitonal phrase of the second bar, but now, how much changed in spirit! Faint and ever fainter comes that wailing note, like a bird calling in vain for a lost mate; and then. . . it ceases, displaced - by what?

By a sinister theme of three chords (24) with a gride in their harmony (the augmented fifth in inversion). Snatches of the joyous liits are still heard (26-29), but are withered each time by the breath of the eerie newcomer. The lights are very low now, and when they are at their lowest, then the sinister theme has its hour. It reiterates itself time after time, always with that gride at the heart of it, which is tremendously reinforced by one of the boldest pedals even Elgar has ever conceived. The dissonances thus produced, thin, acrid, put the teeth on edge. Above, the violoncellos (28) sing out a sad, regretful song in counterpoint. Of the old themes only that of the Spirit of Delight makes its voice heard - but the *first* half of it only, the wooing half, now heartbrokenly wistful, its semitonal sequel leading now - to what? Alas! no longer to the old rapturous shout; but only, by miserable counterfeit, to the sinister gride which has cast its baleful shadow over a sunny world. And great heavens! What is this?

"Ah ! ... beneath the dust
A coppery sparkle all at once denotes
The hid snake has conceived a purpose."

(29 bar 4)

It is the whine of the oboe, thin, deadly-sweet, appealing, insinuating, sinuous as the snake, *cherchez la femme!* Beware! . . . O Eve, Delilah, Kundry, however thou art called, O Ewig Weibliche, but not of *Il Paradiso*, what doest thou here, tenfold deadlier and more dangerous because of thy cursed pathos, as Kundry was to Parsifal, as Bella to Richard Feverel, as the *deadliest* seductresses to the *noblest* of our passionate pilgrims? . . . It is over for the moment. The first half of the Spirit of Joy theme manages to

evoke the second (30), but the tone is that of heart-break. Other fragments of the old lilt come back, but sadly and tiredly; the old spring has gone out of them; the most irrepressible frisker of them is twice hushed down (31 bar 3, 32 bar 3), and then "Sinister Street" has to be traversed again : the griding chords on the jarring pedal, with the lament from the 'cellos above (33) . . . they have it all their own way this time and reach their appointed end, unprotested against, in hoarse mutters deep down in the brass. The storm is over.

It appears that our pilgrim of delight has been having an evil hour. What has happened? We do not know : but he has been given to taste - or to drain - a cup, sweet indeed but deadly; and with an aftertaste which is the very negation of Delight. . .

But youth is youth, and May is not to be quenched by however chilly a spell of weather. Lo, therefore (35), after that last ominous and antipathetic grumble, the sun begins to come out, a warm wind blows from the old sweet quarter, and a bird announces the blessed change. His insistent note

is taken up by "birds singing East and birds singing West," louder and louder, crescendo of sunshine and of bird song, till soon the woods are ringing again, and the Spirit of Delight which had fled comes again - here and here she sings, the joyous syncopation begins to chorus again, the sustained summoning call peals forth again (41), until, in immense and incredible volume, the Delight theme is *shouted* forth, thundered out (42), Lento, *fff* - the first bar that gathereth up, the second bar that bursteth forth, liberating the pent-up streams again, which now go dancing and singing down the vale, as they went at the first. Technically, it might be remarked, this is "the return to the first subject!" But emotionally and psychologically, it is absolutely inevitable, quite apart from symphonic form.

No more shadows cross our pilgrim's path. Spring and summer are long, and not for a moment does this youth tire of their length. Nor does the listener for one moment tire, up to the moment when with masterly skill, the movement is brought to a close. This close consists of an emotional climax that tops even the one just mentioned (none but a work of first-class calibre could have sustained the strains of these enormous demands). It comes (63) at the precise point where the development of the first part led up to and demanded an episode (24). At that identical point in the second part, it leads up to, demands and receives a coda which is the climax of climaxes. The lilting rhythm increases; song-snatches are intensified by repetition and excited by a scrap of counterpoint

and then again

and again with increasing insistence and passion

until a clarion call (65) ushers in these provocative semi-tones F#-G; again and again and again and yet again they shout their challenge. Not to be denied this time! For, after a second's stunning silence, they lead up to such an interruption of the Delight theme as was never heard before. With the full strength of



emphasising itself in an impassioned allargando, and a crescendo that swells in a single bar from *pp* to *fff* - Delight and the Soul, self-abandoned, close in an embrace of utter ecstasy, and the full rich, red cadence peals forth "Satisfied"!

ACT II

In the second movement, one of the most hauntingly lovely, slow movements ever conceived by musician, our pilgrim is still "passion's slave"; but a grief holds him, not a joy. What has happened? Some great sorrow has come his way. A long slow theme (67), with sepulchral chords from hushed trombones on the up-beats, seems to suggest Death. The quest of Delight is being interrupted by some Memento Mori.

The second theme, which immediately follows (69) is as poignant as two oboes in thirds can make a theme - and in the Magdalene scene in the *Apostles* Elgar showed how poignant that can be! Very melancholy is the echo of the two clarionets. And the violins (71) resume the sad, sweet strain. This leads through many bars of long, sweet, solemn melodies (74, 75) ever reinforced, deepening in volume and heightening in power, which prepare and lead up to a mighty, emotional climax (76) as passionate as anything in the first movement, but this time "wild with all regret." Yet there is nothing weak here; it is the simplicity of it that makes it as strong as it is infinitely moving. It is a noble soul that is here voicing its sorrow. And what capacity for sorrow must a soul have which had room for the sustained raptures of the first movement? It is voiding not its own pain only but the pain of humanity. See what a passionate sorrow is here : (note the truly Elgarian double-dot and semi-quaver in the first bar) ;



Is there anything quite like it in music - as simple as the sobbing of a child, and as heart-breaking? In the recapitulation¹⁵ this climax is reproduced (85) with thrilling reinforcement, thrilling, ineffable. And again it, too, dies down to a sob.

The sob, in turn, is dying away, and then - O Mater Consolatrix! Dear Spirit of Delight who "rarely comest" - thou comest now, gently this time, with healing in thy wings! A mere echo (87), but a benediction from the days that are past, she hovers a moment - and (88) slowly vanishes into silence.

In that silence the theme of deep sorrow (88 bar 3) has the last word. There is a long sustained note on the horns, chords awful and sepulchral in the basses ascending and dissolving in the upper registers. Silence . . . Is it despair for our Passionate Pilgrim in his quest for the soul's delight ?

ACT III

Called a "Rondo" - as it is, in form; and a true Scherzo in character. Not that it is entirely "a joke" but then, so were not Beethoven's scherzi!

Youth is youth, and to deepest sorrow something must succeed. Sometimes that something is a reaction to gaiety. And unbridled in its gaiety is this movement, though it is not the sweet intoxication of the first movement with the tinge of

melancholy about as sweet - 
as its joy. There is humour

here ; rollicking but sometimes rather hard. Brilliancy, but the brilliancy is a little hard also. Traces of the past are very evident on our pilgrim in this mood. He is older, and there is something ironical in his tone. . . . The fun intensifies - it becomes rather like a revel - yes,

and from a revel, a riot. And in the name of all that is wonderful - shall 
we have to say damnable - what is

this that is flinging itself into the noisy rout? We have our suspicions at 117; but at 119 whatever mask the reveller donned is torn off. It is the sinister, griding theme of the episode in the first Act! but now prodigiously transmogrified. Gone is

the weird mysteriousness with which 
it wormed itself in there; gone is the

wailing melancholy of its counterpoint companion. Now the two shout - well nigh bellow. They prance their way obscenely through the wild carnival. Small boon-companion themes shriek up and down, all round about, like little devils.

The whole thing is utterly "unbuttoned" and unbridled. Do we indeed discern the figure of our Pilgrim moving *dans cette galère*? It would seem so. . . . Well, he is certainly testing all things. He is trying to the uttermost what this strange alien spirit has to offer him. But, just as in the first movement, that spirit is fugitive. We look round the carnival for him. He is gone! . . . But the fun goes on. The dancing is kept up late and long, and our Pilgrim is in the thick of it right up to its wildly excited and tumultuous conclusion.

"Rarely, rarely comest thou, Spirit of Delight." It is notable that into this sole scene, a scene of unmitigated pleasure, that Spirit never comes, no, not for one instant. Delight's place was vacant in this carnival.

We fancy our Pilgrim was very considerably enlightened as he reflected on this fact.

ACT IV AND LAST

He has known the aspiration and the ecstasy of youth, the deep thrill of sorrow, laughter, folly and recklessness, perhaps the sting of sin. In all he has sought Delight. What is to be the end of the quest?

"Vanity of Vanity," Ecclesiastes' end?

No : it seems that, like Faust at the end of "the Second Part," he finds his soul and his soul's delight in noble action. This Act rings with this action, and the joy of it.

"Con dignità" is the direction of the opening final theme. The storms and delusions of youth are passed. Manhood has come, "open-eyed and unafraid."

In the *Nimrod* variation Elgar showed us his remarkable power of musical oratory - climax piled on climax, the peroration apparently reached and accomplished, yet ever leading to a yet higher level. But the feat is far surpassed in this movement. We reckon the whole first hundred bars of this glorious movement as a single flight! - Long melodies which throw out offshoots and lead straight into melodies more beautiful still, the whole an ascending scale of astonishing climaxes, worked up into a noble peroration which again



ever betters itself beyond all belief. Nothing shows better the intensity and the volume of inspiration that was

behind this symphony than the composer's ability to win out in these most dangerous trials of endurance,



and the ease with which these strains are borne.

Also, he has given us nothing fresher, more manly and ringing. Here is a maturer and richer *Froissart*. Here is the breeziness of some of the *Variations* and of the *Introduction and Allegro*. The *Passionate Pilgrim* now experiences the passion of action and of chivalry.

Of chivalry! For the second subject rings like the lists at a tourney. Strauss's "Hero" must have enemies, traducers whom he must meet in hideous fight and overthrow. But our Pilgrim has made no enemies. Yet "he drinks delight of battle with his peers" in the field of chivalry. Hark, a challenge (§139) at the north end of the lists - knightly, noble : instantly its answer rings out, another mounted knight stands opposite. Then a third, a fourth. The tuckets increase, the air is filled with them : the *mêlée* is joined, ha! 'tis a glorious joust; the blows ring, the shouts are heard - all is knightly, noble . . .

* * *

We are doubtless getting too concrete and guessing too much. The above, however, is an impression rather than a guess. This lovely and glorious piece, when its general relation to what precedes it is grasped, can be judged and enjoyed as "pure music." The imperative call for interpretation does not come

which it does not reappear.

until the very end, at the Coda.

For the moment the attention must be concentrated on the marvellous puissance of this movement in its material and structure : on the deferred climax of climaxes when it comes at last (§153 bar 6), heralded, characteristically, by a thrilling trumpet-call; and then, the marvellous art of the anti-climax . . . the ebbing after the piling up of those surging tides of sound, perhaps an even more difficult feat, and accomplished with the same effortless which characterises the masterpiece throughout.

The cadence - a lovely anti-climax - comes at last, hauntingly sweet (144); then an upward soaring in counterpoint to the opening theme in the bass, and the movement might seem to be closing, or introducing a close. But as a matter of fact, by a harmonic twist at the last moment, it (145) shakes itself and embarks on a long "development" full of animation and dignity and open-air feeling (145 to 156).

This leads back gradually to a quiet resumption of the opening theme, and the recapitulation begins. We are glad to hear the whole of that marvellous hundred bars of massed oratory again. Not a bar would we miss - but we are curious to see how the climax (see 143 in the first half) is to be made a super-climax - for at such a point mere repetition is inconceivable. Incredibly, the feat is performed (§165) and that by thickening the already gorgeous harmonies and by throwing in the most wonderful and glorious piece of counterpoint imaginable, which is fairly shouted out by the brass, a dazzling thread athwart the already thick, rich web of sound. It is a masterstroke! Then the lovely anti-climax (166) of that indescribably touching cadence, the lifting scale passage against the opening theme in the bass, and, once more, the movement might seem to have reached its close.

No : the Passionate Pilgrim has not yet reached *home* : the quest is not quite finished. The ascending passage finds the old familiar F#-G, and (168), as though evoked in obedience to the magic watchword, very softly, very high up in the violins, the SPIRIT OF DELIGHT appears, hovers, descends (§§168-170) transfigured, softly as a dove! The music is very hushed now, very mystical. Soft trills are heard from here and from there, caressing the descending and ever-broadening theme : harps thrill, in golden upward-glissades, or in arpeggios of celestial harmonies, glorifying this heavenly theophany. It is a veritable transfiguration scene, like the last in the *Paradiso*, or like the close of the Second Part of *Faust* or the descent of the Grail in *Lohengrin*. What does it mean? That the Spirit of Delight is now transformed into the Spirit of Eternity? - or that the soul of this Passionate Pilgrim is being itself transfigured as its quest nears the goal? Or both perhaps - for both must be true for either to be true. The knight-pilgrim now knows that only the Eternal Beauty can satisfy that joy-thirst of a soul not meant wholly for time.

The transfigured Delight-Theme has reached where the Knight is kneeling (170). It seems to rest upon him like a benediction as the scene closes in.

"That strain again! It had a dying fall . . ." - it is the lovely cadence-theme (170 bar 7), perfectly satisfying and satisfied. Then for the last time the manly opening theme (171), now sounded hushed and slow against an upward scale, which climbs and comes to rest on the major third. It was the characteristic note of the opening of the Delight theme in the very opening of the opening movement (see bar 2). The note thus reached again is never again released. A natural symbol of profound solace and satisfaction, it tops the great tonic chords which now announce the end through an immense crescendo . . . a burst of glory . . . an ebbing . . . a long, long fading away . . . to Requiem Aeternam.

The Pilgrim has reached Home. In that eternal mansion the Spirit of Delight no longer "rarely, rarely comes." Rather it "abides with him for ever."

OVERVIEW : ENGLISH SYMPHONIES

Roger Hecht

[Many members have expressed their appreciation of, and admiration for, Roger Hecht's in-depth look at Sea Pictures and its recordings which appeared in the Journal last year. The following article by Roger is reprinted with permission of American Record Guide. It is taken from that magazine's "Overview of English Symphonies" (July-August 2000, pp 55-72), a survey of English symphonies by Elgar, Vaughan Williams and Walton, with shorter coverage of symphonies by Alwyn, Arnold, Bax, Moeran, Rubbra, Parry, and Tippett. Roger was aided by input from other ARG critics and reviews (hence the frequent use of "we"). The magazine can be obtained from "American Record Guide; 4414 Braddock Street; Cincinnati, OH 45204-1006." Email: rightstar@aol.com. Like all such articles, it is personal and subjective, but also informative and stimulating; and contains an interesting view on a possible difference between an 'English' and 'American' approach to interpreting British music.]

"After Mahler's death the symphony languished in the German-speaking world, but took on renewed vigour elsewhere : Scandinavia, Russia, the USA - and in England as well". That was how John McKeivley began the first Overview of English Symphonies (May/June 1992). He noted that the major English symphonists are "first and foremost Elgar, Vaughan Williams, and Walton, but significant works... have also been composed by Alwyn, Bax, Bliss, Brian, Britten, Moeran, Tippett, and many more. We are beginning to see recordings of Stanford and Parry from an earlier generation as well". How right he was. The Elgar, Vaughan Williams, and Walton symphonies are well represented these days, and we also have one or more sets by Alwyn, Bax, Rubbra, Tippett, Arnold, Lloyd, Stanford, Parry, and a Brian project in progress. The British symphony has arrived, at least on recordings.

McKelvey raised a couple of interesting points in his Overview. The first is his contention that the British symphony has not travelled well to the US; that could be verified by a study of American concert programs. McKelvey was writing specifically about Elgar, but you don't see many performances of Walton or Vaughan Williams symphonies, either - forget Bax, Alwyn, etc - while works by Germans and Austrians are everywhere. One reason for this neglect is that in the early and middle part of the century when our musical tastes were being formed, most conductors of American orchestras came from Germanic countries and a few from France and Italy. None of these countries is a stronghold of British music. Deep speculation as to why is beyond the scope of this survey, but island Britain was isolated culturally from the Continent (cultures move around better by land than by sea), and British conductors didn't push their country's music abroad. The World Wars didn't help. Elgar's First Symphony was very popular in Germany before World War I, but by war's end he was a non-person. The trend continued through World War II, by which time American musical tastes were pretty well formed.

Certainly English music has its own character. It is imbued with the English countryside and the ocean with its rocky coastline and cliff-sides. It is also full of English history, literature, and Celtic and Irish folklore. This gives it, in the words of Phil Haldeman, "a sense of mystery that's quite apart from German, French, or Italian sensibilities. It is music whose romanticism is essentially dark." Not darkness as absence of light, but as the kind that hides secrets and begs the listener to search for their substance. English music is actually quite colourful, not with the sunny reds and yellows of the Mediterranean, but with the softer pastels of a misty day on a moor. It never forces itself on you. It is emotional without sobbing, reserved, yet bold - noble but rarely pompous (though it has its moments). Some of it is walking and marching music, not with arrogance, but with a confidence bordering on serenity. English composers loved the orchestra and revelled in its dark sonorities. Strings are warm and textured, and they did not spare the brass, often bringing it to the forefront with chordal passages, brilliant flourishes, and long melodies. And

English symphonies sing. All great music has melody, but English melody is very vocal and distinctive, though what makes it distinctive is hard to define. Harold Schonberg suggested that it follows the pattern of English speech, ending a sentence upward. Others point to its modal quality. Whatever it is, no country's composers talk about "tunes" as much as England's do. Perhaps this comes from the English choral tradition. The English have always sung, and they didn't stop when they wrote symphonies.

Another issue McKelvey raised was the disparity between the reserved British and the extroverted American approach to the English symphony. The distinction is valid if oversimplified. Not all British conductors are reserved, some Americans are, some do not reside in their accustomed camp on every work, and some are difficult to classify. Nor are all the conductors who have recorded these works English or American, though they do tend to fall into one stylistic category or the other. The point is worth mentioning because some ARG critics believe English music is more romantic, heartfelt, colourful, and dramatic when played in the American style; the British approach makes it sound too bland and reserved. Others, including this writer, believe that it is the essence of English music not to reveal everything at a single hearing. Of course, we like some 'American' performances just as some 'American' colleagues like some 'British' ones. (Quotes imply style, not nationality.) But the distinction does exist on our staff. These differences apply mainly to conducting styles. Nearly all the orchestras are British, and they sound it, with sleek, polished strings, straightforward winds, and polite, blended, but not unassertive brass.

The conducting personification of the British approach is Adrian Boult. A friend and champion of Elgar and Vaughan Williams (and Holst), Boult recorded their symphonies several times. He led the premieres of VW's Third, Fourth, and Sixth, and the first recording of his Ninth as well as the first triumphant Elgar Second. He had the trust of these composers, often working with them while recording a work. In discussing her husband's Fourth Symphony, Ursula Vaughan Williams observed that "Adrian had created the second movement" adding that VW "had not known how it should go, but Adrian had". In his younger and middle years, Boult was more energetic than in his autumnal period in the 1970s when he made his famous (and slower, more atmospheric) stereo recordings. Boult's detractors, more of them American than British, find those late recordings bland, plodding, and discursive. His admirers hear in them a culmination of wisdom gained through a lifetime of conducting this music. We hear in them interpretations that do not wow so much as build to a whole. They are steady and solid, with a structured bass line, and he always seemed to find the right tempo. (Either that or he convinced us that the tempo he chose was right.) Just as important was Boult's grasp of the English idiom and his "affinity for the secular mysticism of the music", as Haldeman put it. Joining Boult stylistically - broadly speaking - are Andrew Davis (always Andrew in this survey unless Colin is indicated), Richard Hickox, Edward Downes, James Loughran, Bryden Thomson, George Hurst, Andre Previn, Paul Daniel, David Lloyd-Jones, Norman del Mar, Bernard Haitink, Vernon Handley, Myer Fredman, Roger Norrington, and Alexander Gibson.

Leonard Slatkin is probably the leading 'American' stylist. Slatkin has put in a lot of time and effort to make himself a fine conductor of British music, so much so that he is well-respected and liked by British audiences and performers. He took up the Elgar Third Symphony early on, conducting it in New York and Washington soon after its first performances in Britain. If Slatkin resembles any British conductor - and this is a considerable reach - it may be Thomas Beecham, certainly a more animated conductor than late Boult. (But Beecham never recorded an English symphony. He once did a tour with Elgar's First where he cut off a little more of the score at each stop.) Slatkin can be dramatic and colourful in British music, with faster tempos, angular lines, and sometimes impulsive gestures. Detractors of Slatkin miss the breadth, weight, nobility, and reserve of the British approach. He is often joined stylistically by David Zinman, Georg Solti, Yehudi Menuhin, James Judd, Kees Bakels, Charles Mackerras, Paavo Berglund, Raymond Leppard, and Bernstein.

Defying classification altogether is John Barbiroli. Half-Italian, British born, passionate, romantic, earthy,

extroverted in a quasi-Italian style, yet unmistakably British, Barbirolli is the one conductor with a large body of work in the English symphony whom we all like in just about everything he did. If Boult had a sense of tempo, Barbirolli could do wonders with a melodic line : he seemed to sense its curvature, knowing just when to lift and when to reign in, as Lawrence Hanson put it. He was the street-wise Londoner to Boult's noble Englishman. Barbirolli recorded both Elgar symphonies but none by Walton. For reasons that elude me, he did not commercially record a complete Vaughan Williams set - ironic, given that it was VW who dedicated his Eighth Symphony to Barbirolli and dubbed him 'Glorious John'. But at least he gave us five.

Three composers who have conducted English symphonies on record are Vaughan Williams himself (the Fourth), Edward Elgar (both), and William Walton (First). All of their interpretations probably belong in the American camp!

A word about the list of recommendations. The British have done an excellent job recording their national music. There are a lot of good performances, and so many bring out different and vital aspects of each symphony that it's hard to select a 'best'. There is also that division of style preferences to contend with. With the symphonies of Elgar, Vaughan Williams, and Walton (they've had the most recordings), we list our favourites. When there is a clear-cut winner, it is marked with an *. When there is a favourite of the 'American' side that is not liked that much by the English, it is marked (A). The others are usually more or less even in quality. We have listed only stereo recordings, but all the mentioned historical recordings are important and worth hearing.

* * * * *

Elgar's were not the first British symphonies. They were preceded by some very good ones by Charles Stanford and Hubert Parry; preceding those were lesser-known efforts by William Boyce, Arthur Sullivan, Frederic Cowen, Sterndale Bennett, Alexander Mackenzie, William Wallace, and Ebenezer Prout. But Elgar's were the first great ones. They put the British symphony on the world map. They are also, probably, the two finest British symphonies - not necessarily the most immediately appealing, but the most deeply probing and complex, the richest. They are full of mystery and yearning and can be taken on many emotional levels, often saying several things at one time. They are not always happy works, nor are they easy to get to know, but the effort is worth it, for their depth is limitless. Elgar speaks to a part of our being that is not easily coaxed from behind the walls we erect around us. His music touches us deeply but only when we are receptive. As an orchestrator, Elgar was masterly. He did not write a lot of solos but spoke in choirs and sections. Look at an Elgar score and you'll see instruments coming and going in a given passage, adding colour here, shading it there. Very subtle.

First Symphony. The 51-year-old Elgar waited a long time before writing his First Symphony. He had written oratorios and programmatic orchestral works, but he believed that abstract music in the form of the symphony was the most noble form of music - hence the hesitation and the false starts. The wait was worth it. Elgar's First was Britain's First Symphony in terms of impact. I is glorious and affirming, right from the noble march. The Allegro begins a long, complex, and rhapsodic movement, full of big tunes, exhortations, and reflection. It is a dualistic Allegro with a sharp-edged, even sinister, march followed by a lighter Mahlerian trio. The transition to the Adagio is a stroke of genius, as Elgar introduces fragments from the major Adagio theme into the breezier milieu of the Allegro where they flit through the texture as if floating on air before melting into the Adagio. The Adagio itself is one of the most eloquent, heartfelt movements in music. At its end appears another stroke of genius - a third theme entering out of nowhere as if from Heaven itself. The finale seems awkward. It is based on an odd rhythmic figure, yet that figure is beautifully resolved into something magical, like a frog into a princess, when it is played without warning, lyrically and softly in the strings. Wonderful, too, is how everything culminates in a powerful, thrusting recap of the opening march theme in the brass.

We all love the Barbirolli on EMI. The sound is a bit forward and lacking in depth, but no matter. This is a very personal, passionate and moving reading of great power. It is slow in tempo and broad in manner, yet intense and full of the surging line that so characterized this conductor. Some will love it right away, some will come to it soon enough, others may always find it too slow, but it is a great recording. Barbirolli's concert BBC performance on Intaglio - his last recording - is similar in concept, but not as powerful, concentrated, or held together. Barbirolli was not in good health at the time. He collapsed in a rehearsal and died a few days later after conducting the Beethoven Seventh. Barbirolli's 1956 Hallé reading is stunning, powerful, sweeping, and exciting. The Allegro is more explosive than Slatkin's. The 1962 reading is more romantic, but this is more passionate and one of the symphony's great performances. Boult's last (and best) recording with the London Philharmonic is large-scaled, lush, and direct, with power and sonority. It is more regal than Barbirolli's earthier account (a common comparison between the two conductors) but is as valid and convincing, except for a slow movement that could use more concentration. Loughran is more moderate and classical in his structures and lighter in weight, though still warm and expressive. He is close to the best, though the slightly covered sound may annoy some. Judd combines Menuhin's boldness (see below) with Loughran's structured warmth. He is an excellent compromise of styles : colourful, bold, and exuberant, with moderate tempos, yet warm and expansive. String and brass tone are full yet crisp, and the Hallé sounds better than it did for Barbirolli. Judd may be ideal for one just coming to this work.

Otaka is vocal in style, with a velvet string sound and long lines that linger - sometimes too much - as they savour the phrasing. II changes the mood entirely. The tempo is quick, and it packs more punch and drive. III is grand, elegiac, expansive, often heart-rending, and again, so beautiful : Otaka's lingering here is more convincing. The opening of IV is highly atmospheric and colourful; the rest is slow, but not outrageously so, and it works. If beauty of tone is paramount to you, this one rates high.

Andrew Davis has Boult's luminous, nostalgic, and autumnal warmth. He also has much of Boult's detail and expression, but he lacks the older conductor's command of motion, especially in I, where he is too relaxed and the orchestral textures too misty to catch all the power in the music. Nor is his BBC Symphony as sleek and polished as Boult's LPO. Be warned that the Ultima reissue is murkier than the Teldec original.

Previn is moderate, civilized, poetic, and graceful. He is sensitive to tempo and harmonic changes and easy to follow, though he makes the trio of II sound jazzy, and his Adagio lacks passion. Hurst is a decent but not great budget choice, somewhat lightweight, with odd tempo changes that get in the way, but with a warm Adagio. Mackerras is smaller scaled, angular, even intimate, with lots of detail, sometimes at the expense of the overall picture (particularly the strings). He can be choppy, but his Elgar-as-Janacek is a fascinating supplement. McKelvey likes Haitink's "outsider's" approach - English with perfect grammar and no accent - for its dedication, familiarity, poise, and intelligence. He believes Haitink is second only to Barbirolli and Davis in shaping Elgar's larger works. The Germanic textures are appealing, but it still sounds lightweight, with no Elgarian rubato and flow and little sense of what the piece is about.

Menuhin misses some of the work's sentiment, and he doesn't drain the last ounce of emotion from the climaxes, but he makes up for it with a bold, exciting, yet transparent performance with clear lines and textures. The dark horns of the Royal Philharmonic burnish what could have been a brassy approach. This is among the finest of the more vigorous readings and is another excellent recording if you are approaching the symphony for the first time.

Slatkin is Elgar in Technicolor and interesting and entertaining, if not very involving emotionally. His treatment of the outer movements is episodic (and slow in I) with some odd transitions, especially in the quiet sections, but never boring. The London Philharmonic's low brass is a pile-driver. II is startlingly

militaristic (that brass again, and fast tempos), while the steady and, in this performance, treading Adagio uses brightly coloured woodwinds to lend a Wagnerian cast. Our reviewer found everything in place, but the piece didn't come alive for him.

Solti is said to have modelled his recording after Elgar's, with its famous fast tempos. The London Philharmonic is sleek like a powerful automobile, and its playing is less angular than Elgar's orchestra. Solti pushes the music with his patented nervousness and explosive attacks, and slow movements are not very contemplative. Some of us find it powerful and exciting; others (including me) find it aggressive and superficial, flying over too many emotional points.

Pritchard's clear structure and tone frames a performance of elegance and grace. It is uplifting and even innocent in a way. Tempos are slightly fast but never hurried, and there is still plenty of sentiment. The BBC Symphony follows suit, and the sound is very clean.

Handley is solid, straightforward, strong, and vigorous. Others are more sentimental, but this is very satisfying. The finale is not quite as solid as the first three movements, but that is not too serious a problem. The London Philharmonic is first rate, especially its noble brass.

Norrington is very different from the others. It is fast and light in weight, with sharp rhythms and bright textures. There is little of what we think of as Elgarian breadth or boldness. Best is the very fast, structurally tight, and sharply conflicted finale – a revelation in a way, in terms of handling the difficult structure, and very exciting. On the other hand, the Allegro is much too light, while the Adagio is too fast and with woodwind colour too dominant over the strings. The fast, lightweight first movement is not all that unusual : it's just not impressive enough. Hardly classic Elgar, and not everyone will respond positively, but this could appeal to those who have liked Elgar's lighter works but have found his symphonies too long or heavy.

Among the also-rans, Barenboim's Adagio is tastefully Wagnerian, and II and IV are decent enough, but the vital first movement is meandering and indulgent to the point of perversity. Thomson is sluggish and without flow. Sinopoli is slow and bombastic, with too Wagnerian a brass sound and too much exaggeration. Zinman's Baltimore performance is fast and direct like Menuhin, but less idiomatic, with excess brassiness and some odd tempos. Somary's is a clueless disaster both in conducting and playing.

Barbirolli (EMI): Boult (EMI): Judd (IMP): Otaka (BIS): Menuhin (Virgin).*

Second Symphony. The Second followed the First by three years. It is less complex structurally but more so emotionally. It is probably the greater of the two symphonies and appears easier to perform, if recordings are any indication. When conductors record both, their Seconds are better than their Firsts. Still, it did not enjoy the same success as the First at the premiere under Elgar's baton. (Richter introduced the First.) The audience sat like "stuck pigs", Elgar complained. Actually the reception was mixed, and the performance may not have been that good. (Boult conducted it eight years later, and Elgar was effusively grateful.) Critics have debated the symphony's meaning. It was completed after Edward II died, and some thought its sadness reflected Elgar's grief over the death of a monarch who had always admired his music. Others point out that he was also saddened over the death of his friend Alfred Rodewald. Some thought it represented his apocalyptic view of Europe at the abyss of the Great War. Others read it as a sign he was aware of nearing the end of a creative burst that had lasted two decades. Elgar himself called it his 'Spirit of Delight' symphony (based on a quote from a Shelley poem).

Whatever its meaning, the Second is a magnificent work, filled with nobility, power, joy, longing, sadness, anxiety, and other worldliness. It plunges into I with an abandon and driving energy that makes the

sudden halt for the ghostly middle section all that more remarkable. The Larghetto is suffused with terrible, magnificent sadness, at once a processional and a richly layered lament. The Rondo tries to recover the positive mood of the opening with a jaunty tune, but it soon gives way to the minor and finally a nightmarish, percussive reappearance of the ghostly music from I. The finale ambles at the start but becomes more complex, leading to a lurching fugue before ending quietly and serenely (or with resignation).

No one performance can capture all of this symphony's essence, but a few come close. Boult is even better than in the First : magisterial, glowing, ethereal, and this time he does not falter in a slow movement that is as magical as the rest of the performance. Boult is power with warmth and glow. Just as good is Barbirolli's vast, tremendously warm, earthy, and lyrical performance, with its wonderful quiet moments. If you like slow tempos, it goes to the top of the list. The sound is warmer than his EMI First, and the Hallé actually plays a bit better than the Philharmonia did on the First. Andrew Davis's serious reading is better and more assertive than his First. It is warm, sweet, and dark, if more straightforward and not as profound as Boult and Barbirolli and with playing not quite as exalted. (Again, prefer the Teldec original to the Ultima.) Loughran's classical and reserved approach to the Second makes it similar to his First and just as good. Downes is spacious, more resonant and clear-toned than Davis or Boult. The approach is straightforward, except for a tendency to exaggerate tempos in both directions, and his colouring is not quite as dark. Tate has some Barbirolli emotion in him. It's a dramatic and strong reading with sharply contrasted movements that call for and get remarkable transitions. It lurches about a bit but is engrossing, with stunning concentration in the 'ghost' section of I. It's not as smooth in the transitions as JB - or as great - but try him if you like Barbirolli's romanticism but not his slow tempos. For something fast, sleek, and large-scaled with shimmering playing, Solti's Second is better than his First. The superficiality is gone.

Menhin's Second is similar to and as good as his First : dramatic, assertive, not inspired in spots, but exciting, transparent, and bracing, dominated by the warm RPO brass. Slatkin is beautifully played, slow in tempo, sustained and arching. This one is 'American' more in terms of colour than tempo. Textures are refined and lean, with silvery strings and moments of chamber-music intimacy, and it is full of yearning, desolation, and melancholy. What it misses is the conflicting emotions of anger and ghostliness, and there is little in the way of urgency, tension, or strong bass. Our reviewer said many good things about this recording, but it is beautifully lifeless.

Gibson is slightly fast and literal with light textures tilted toward the violins - a nice airy alternative with fine orchestral blend. Solti does some of that, but with more depth and imagination. Handley is also fast, but his rhythm has more drive than Gibson's, creating greater contrasts. The problem is that he becomes stiff in III and IV. Barenboim's Second is also finer than his First. The piece flows more steadily - though it has a slightly laboured quality - with full if hardly colourful textures. Barenboim still indulges himself - I meanders some, and the finale huffs and puffs - but not so perversely. The slow movement is passionate, and the frequent portamento is endearing, but most of its best qualities can be heard elsewhere. Haitink's Germanic yet light approach is not idiomatic - it's actually superficial - but it works better here than in the First and creates more interest. Thomson's slow, broad reading seems to be all breadth with little depth. Tempos bog down here and there.

Elgar was the first composer to conduct most of his works for records. Most critics look on them as touchstones - unsentimental but passionate, direct, even Mahlerian in their intensity and drama, without the bloated tempos and slow, pompous meanderings we sometimes hear today. But some of us have never liked them and agree with the composer's contemporary, Landon Ronald - reputedly a solid Elgar conductor - that Elgar may not have been the best interpreter of his own works. His recordings are too fast and driven; he hurries through many of the most beautiful moments, and the phrasing is clumsy. Elgar's interpretations differed from performance to performance, so it seems odd to take one snapshot as a model

for a given work. Furthermore, Elgar was conducting for the four minute sides of 78s : it may have caused him to rush many times. He was also known to enjoy pushing orchestras hard, and not always for musical reasons. At any rate, his recording of the Second is better than the First.

Barbirolli (EMI): Boult (EMI): Tate (EMI): Menuhin (Virgin): Downes (Naxos): Solti (Decca): Slatkin (A) (RCA).*

Third Symphony. The Third Symphony is actually a product of Anthony Payne's reconstruction of sketches Elgar left unfinished when he died (see Sept/Oct 1998). While not on the level of the first two symphonies, it is an excellent piece and sounds like Elgar. The style is sparer than in the other symphonies, but Elgar meant it to be that way. I opens with a striking passage of thrusting parallel fifths - unusual for Elgar, yet it is the one part Elgar actually finished. The romantic second theme provides contrast for a dramatic working out. II is light and seems gayer, but there are some dark overtones. The Adagio is strange and episodic, taking us to eerie places we've never visited with this composer, not even in the 'ghost' section of the Second Symphony. The finale is heroic and chivalric. Some of it sounds like a Walton movie score, but much came from Elgar's music for King Arthur.

Andrew Davis brings out the darker qualities and is lyrical and nicely romantic in I; the Finale is heroic and stirring. The Scherzo is dark and idiomatic for the first part, but then loses some focus. Only the Adagio is unconvincing, with Davis's blocky, vertical style making it sound stolid and too modern. Paul Daniel is brighter, lighter in weight, and more rhythmic, energetic, and dramatic. The way he brings out the cut and thrust of the outer movements works well in I, where he creates more tension and power than Davis, but the Finale is not as sweeping or grand. In the Scherzo, Daniel is rushed at the beginning but more dramatic and interesting in the second half. His Adagio is indispensable, with light textures and lyricism tying the music together to make it meaningful. Get both recordings for a more complete picture of the work; if you prefer energetic Elgar, Daniel might be enough.

Davis (NMC): Daniel (Naxos)

FRANK BERNARD GREATWICH (1906-2000)

It is sad to report the death in Malvern on 20 September of Frank Greatwich at the age of 93. Frank was a founder member and Honorary Member of the Elgar Society, Honorary Secretary from 1970-72, and Vice-Chairman from 1972-5 and from 1976-78.

Frank Greatwich was a man of quiet charm, yet decided abilities, very much a gentleman of the old school. A T Shaw once wrote of him that "he was a man of comprehensive mind, whose modest manner concealed a character of strong attachments and wide-ranging sympathy".

Frank's involvement with the Society went back to its very beginnings, and we are indebted to his JOURNAL article of May 1981 for a record of the early years. In the 1970s, it was due to Frank's persistent advocacy that the London Branch came into existence. He was responsible for organising the commemorative plaque that marks the site of the Elgar music shop in Worcester High Street; and, more importantly, for bringing about the Elgar Memorial Stone in Westminster Abbey. The stone unveiling ceremony in 1972 saw him and A T Shaw in line with Sir Adrian Boult, Sir Arthur Bliss, and the Prime Minister, Edward Heath; Frank remembered this occasion as one of the high points of his life.

Born and educated in Stourbridge, he was a newspaper man all his professional life. He was for twenty-eight years Editor of *Berrow's Journal*, Worcester's weekly newspaper with the distinction of being the oldest newspaper in the world (of which he wrote a history), and ultimately rose to become Editor-in-Chief of the Berrow's group of publications.

He is survived by his widow, Jean, and three daughters, to whom we extend our sympathy.

Michael Trott

TWO RARE ELGAR PHOTOGRAPHS

One of the delights of Kevin Allen's new book *Elgar in Love* is the author's choice of photographs, many of which will be unfamiliar even to seasoned Elgarians. It seemed a good idea, then, to include two more unusual photographs of Elgar in his later years which have come my way recently.

The first (below) can be found in Landon Ronald's book *Myself and Others*, published in 1931. (This was the second of Ronald's books of reminiscences, *Variations on a Personal Theme* having appeared in 1922.) Chapter 8 is entitled 'Pen Sketches of some Friends and Others', and Elgar is the first "friend" dealt with (others include Melba, Massenet and Beecham). Towards the end of the chapter Ronald speaks of the novelist A S M Hutchinson, author of *If Winter Comes* and *This Freedom*, and ends with the following anecdote. "It will be à propos to tell here the story of an amusing occurrence that took place at a certain hotel in Sussex when Hutchinson and I found ourselves together with Sir Edward Elgar, Sir Frederic Cowen, and Sir Ernest Hodder-Williams. It was suggested that a group photograph should be taken of us, and a photographer from the village was commissioned to do his worst. After the operation was over, I was asked to tell the old fellow that the copyright of the portrait was to be ours, and it was not to be sent to the Press.

"And 'oo are ye all?' he asked.

"I told him, with as modest an air as I could assume, the names of the five of us. He looked me up and down, and said, 'Oh, that's all right, that's all right. *Personally, I've never 'eard of one of yer*'".

Hutchinson may be a clue to the whereabouts of the hotel, as he lived in Eastbourne.

The other photograph (below) has only recently come to light and has an extremely interesting history, related in an e-mail by Mr Edward Boucher, who has kindly given permission for the photograph to be published. It came from Bevanhill Cottage, Bromsberrow - a tiny hamlet at the southern end of the Malvern Hills - and the home of Victor (Sam) Morris, the blacksmith, and his wife Edith (nee Boucher). It was a photo of the cottage itself, and on Edith's recent death it passed to her eldest nephew, John Boucher, whose wife Sue decided it would go well on their stairway in a new frame. On removing the photo of the cottage from the frame, behind it they found the photo here reproduced, and on the back the



*Standing
(left to right) :
A S M Hutchinson,
Sir Ernest Hodder-
William;
Seated
(left to right) :
Sir Frederic Cowen,
Sir Landon Ronald,
Sir Edward Elgar*

name of the three men on it and the date "March 1928". Detective work then began, including advertising on the Internet, where it came to the attention of the eagle-eyed Lani Spahr in America. He was able to tell the Bouchers that Charles Lee Williams had been organist of Gloucester Cathedral towards the end of the nineteenth century. The trail then led to Gloucester, and eventually the details were filled in. The dress worn on the photograph suggests a formal, serious occasion, as indeed it was - the funeral of Sir Herbert Brewer, organist of Gloucester Cathedral from 1897-1928, on Tuesday 16 March 1928. (Brewer had died on 1 March). The three men (from left to right) are Charles Lee Williams, Elgar, and Theodore Hannam-Clark. Lee Williams was Brewer's predecessor as organist, and had retired in 1896 through ill-health after fourteen years in the position; ironically he outlived his successor by some seven years. He also worked on bringing the history of the Three Choirs Festival up to date. Hannam-Clark was a valued member of the Executive Committee of the Gloucester Three Choirs. The three were walking across College Green : in the back-ground is the Chapter House and behind it the schoolhouse on the corner of College Court. How the photograph came to be in the cottage in the first place is a complete mystery. Mrs Morris had been a widow for more than fifty years, and not much is known of her husband or his family, although his parents had lived in the cottage before him. Mr Boucher thinks that the picture may have been bought at a house clearance sale just for the frame, as was the custom then.

The Editor



ELGAR AND THE CAMBRIDGE DOCTORATE

One hundred years ago this month, Elgar received an honorary Doctor of Music from Cambridge University. The date was auspicious, 22 November, St Cecilia's Day, the patron saint of music. Alice described the ceremony in her diary as a "memorable and delightful scene". Frederic Cowen was also a recipient of a doctorate, and his award came first (alphabetical order?). Several other degrees were conferred at the same ceremony - seven Inceptors (doctors) and one Bachelor in Arts, and four awards in Medicine and Surgery. The Public Orator, in presenting the recipients of the honorary degrees to the Vice-Chancellor, gave a speech in Latin, as was the custom, in which he listed their achievements. The Latin is rather flowery, and was not faultless in Elgar's eyes : Alice wrote to Ann Elgar : "E. criticised the Public Orator's Latin much to that great person's astonishment & amusement!" The speech is printed below, together with a translation, for which grateful thanks are due to Mrs Mollie Whittemore.

* * *

Musarum in silva hodie ramus 'non deficit alter aureus,' non 'lunoni infernae' sed Sanctae Caeciliae virgini caelesti consecratus. Rami illius frondes (ut viri huiusce operum peritis notum est) non Equitis tantum Nigri umbra transvolat, sed etiam Lux Christi lumine divino illustrat. Hunc ducentem prosecuti, modo Bavariae saltus pererramus, modo Regis Olafii, Regis Caractaci fortia facta cognoscimus, mode maris imagines varias contemplamur, modo Reginae nostrae Victoriae ferias saeculares recordati, Sancti Georgii vexillum denuo veneramur, et imperii nostri milites ad numeros Martios incedentes denuo admiramur. Nuper modorum musicorum arte quail Gerontii animam temporis in puncto minutissimo caeli per spatium infinitum leniter labentem descripsit; arte quali chores caelestes 'laudem Deo in excelsis, laudem Deo in profundis' cantantes induxit. Quotiens orchestrae totius e concentu quam admirabilem sonorum varietatem elicit. Operis totius in argumentis musicis et in ipso exordio indicandis et opere in reliquo deinceps iterandis, Mendelssohnii potissimum vestigia secutus, magistri tamen nullius in verba iuravit. Musarum potius ipsarum discipulus, si quando Malvernii sui e collibus, prope ipsa Musarum Britannicarum incunabula, prope castra Britannica Caractaci fortasse conscia, solis orientis in lumine tot templorum turres prospicit, vitaeque suae primordia respicit, vatis antiqui verbis usus non sine superbia quadam modesta potest confiteri:

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Duco ad vos EDWARDUM WILLELMUM ELGAR.

* * *

Today in the grove of the Muses 'another golden bough is not lacking', consecrated, not to the 'pagan queen of the Underworld', but to the heavenly virgin Saint Cecilia. As is known to those versed in the works of this man, the shadow of the Black Knight does not darken the foliage of the bough in its flight, but the Light of Christ illuminates it with divine radiance. Respectfully following this man as he conducts, we wander through the Bavarian Highlands, we learn about the valiant deeds of King Olaf, of King Caractacus; we contemplate the changing aspects of the sea, then calling to mind the special anniversary celebrations of our own Queen Victoria we venerate anew the Banner of Saint George and we admire anew the soldiers of our Empire marching to martial numbers. Recently, through his skill in musical expression he describes in exquisite detail the soul of Gerontius gently drifting through the infinite space of the heavens; with the same skill he conducts celestial choirs singing 'Praise to the Holiest in the height,

and in the depths be praise'. Time after time he draws out a truly wonderful range of sounds in the blending together of the whole orchestra. In the musical construction of a whole work and in announcing an introductory theme and reiterating it throughout the work he follows chiefly in Mendelssohn's footsteps but by no means merely echoes the master's turn of phrase. As a disciple of the classical Muses, when perhaps from the hills of his native Malvern, the very birthplace of the Muses of Britain, near British Camp, which may have known Caractacus, he gazes at the towers of the churches in the light of the rising sun and looks back on the early days of his life, applying the words of the ancient seer, he can confess, not without a certain modest pride :

'I am self-taught, but God has planted many gifts in me'.

I present to you EDWARD WILLIAM ELGAR.

* * *

NOTES.

Line 1 : "another golden bough". Virgil says that when one bough is taken another grows - a possible allusion to Sullivan, who had died that very morning. The Golden Bough was magic, so associated with the dark powers.

Line 2 : "pagan queen" gives the better understanding, although 'Junoni infernae' literally means 'the Juno of the Underworld', ie. Proserpina, wife of Pluto.

Lines 7-8 : a reference to *Sea Pictures*.

Line 10 : a reference to the *Imperial March*.

Line 13 : literally 'Praise to God in the heights, praise to God in the depths'.

Line 15ff. : Presumably a reference to the *Variations*, otherwise unmentioned.

Lines 19-20 : "the very birthplace of the Muses of Britain"; a reference to *Piers Plowman*, the fourteenth-century poem by William Langland written on the Malvern Hills, and regarded as the first great English poem.

Line 24 : a quote from Homer's *Odyssey*.

BOOK REVIEWS

In the Bavarian Highlands : Edward Elgar's German Holidays in the 1890s,
by Peter Greaves. *Elgar Editions*, 2000. £5.99.

There will soon be scarcely a feature of Elgar's life which has not been closely examined and documented by researchers. These specialised monographs are invaluable appendices to the larger biographies. In the latest of them, Peter Greaves delves into the visits Edward and Alice, with friends, paid to Bavaria in the 1890s. It is the first in a promised series of Elgar Society monographs, runs to 96 pages and is generously illustrated, including eight colour photographs by Jean Greaves and many older pictures in black-and-white.

The Bavarian visits were in 1892, 1893, 1894, 1895 and 1897. The first was with Mary (Minnie) Baker, sister of W.M.B. of the *Variations*, who was a friend of Alice, and included a long-wished for visit to Bayreuth where they heard *Parsifal*, *Tristan* and *Die Meistersinger*. On the way they visited the Beethoven birthplace in Bonn and sailed up the Rhine to Mainz where Alice found the railway station "chaotic", as she did those in Bayreuth, Munich and Nuremberg! We do not have Elgar's reactions to the operas (except in his music) but Mr Greaves quotes a touching letter from Edward to his mother written in Heidelberg, which reminded him of Longfellow's *Hyperion*, the book they loved so much.

Elgar's Wagner explorations were mainly conducted in Munich, although on the first visit there in 1892 he seems only to have heard *Cavalleria Rusticana* (then still a new work). In 1893, when Rosa Burley accompanied them, he heard *The Ring* plus *Meistersinger*, *Tannhäuser*, *Tristan* and - great rarity - *Die Feen*. Most of the operas were conducted by Hermann Levi and Elgar was critical of some of the orchestral playing. But it is clear from Miss Burley's account of the holiday that Elgar was in relaxed mood throughout. He enjoyed shocking Alice by reminding her that Hans Sachs probably blew his nose between his fingers and he became addicted to the beer gardens and restaurants in addition to the art galleries. On the 1897 visit he heard Richard Strauss conduct *Tristan* and *Don Giovanni* and met him afterwards, the start of a long friendship.

But these were not simply musical holidays. They went into the mountains in 1892 to stay in Obertsdorf where they visited the three Loretto chapels and where, on walks, Elgar saw "millions of butterflies" and grasshoppers "half as long as my finger & bright green & they jump yards and make such a noise". Subsequent holidays were spent in the Garmisch-Partenkirchen area. Garmisch was then a village and was not to be the home of Strauss until 1908. There, in the now demolished *Der Drei Mohren* inn, Elgar and his wife watched the *Schuhplättler* dancers performing to zither music. The dances involved vigorous hand-clapping over and under the legs and something of their exuberance is captured in the choral songs *From the Bavarian Highlands*, to words by Alice, which were the principal musical result of those holidays. (Herkomer's painting of *Schuhplättler* dancers is reproduced on this monograph's front cover and very evocative it is.) From Garmisch Edward and Alice walked to other places named in the songs - Hammersbach, for example, Wamberg and Sonnenbichl. Garmisch had a sizeable English colony. The Elgars stayed with the Slingsby-Bethells, to whom the *Bavarian Highlands* are dedicated. On the 1894 holiday their companions were Mrs Fitton and her daughters Isobel ('Ysobel' of the *Variations*) and Hilda. August holidays meant that their daughter Carice spent her holiday at home without her parents. On her birthday she received "best birthday wishes from father and mother", a somewhat formal message to which Elgar added a drawing and "Love E.E.". Poor Carice.

The Slingsby-Bethells kept a guest house/*pension* called the Villa Bader. Entertainment included football, an "Elgar benefit" cricket match and, when wet, charades and musical chairs. Mr Greaves has dug deep into Garmisch archives to discover that the villa still stands. If Elgarians wish to seek it out, as he did, it

is now the Sanitas Klinik at no 12 Von Mullerstrasse. Henry Slingsby-Bethell bought it from Karl Bader in 1889 and ran it until 1914, although it was still being run as a *pension* in 1921 by Irene Bethell.

Mr Greaves ends his book with a chapter on the *Bavarian Highlands* songs, detailing their composition, performance and eventual publication after Novello had rejected them. He provides no solution to the question of whether they were conceived with orchestral accompaniment even though first performed with piano. The evidence is contradictory but I have no doubt that, as in the parallel case of Mahler's *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*, the orchestra was foremost in Elgar's mind. Mr Greaves chides some of Elgar's biographers for "dismissive" treatment of the songs, which seems a bit harsh, but quotes with approval Hans Keller's perception of their quality ("a civilised internationalisation of nationalism". Gosh!). Their principal claim to importance is that they are among the few works in which we discover a carefree, domesticated and uncomplicated Elgar.

Michael Kennedy

Elgar in Love: Vera Hockman and the Third Symphony, by Kevin Allen.

*Published by the author at 23 Benbow Close, Malvern Wells,
Worcs WR14 4JJ, 143pp, paperback. £10*

"The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there." The famous opening line of L P Hartley's *The Go-Between* could act as a useful sub-heading for this book, for its title - absolutely justified, as the contents show - will undoubtedly attract the prurient. The relationship between the 74-year-old composer and a young violinist, some forty years his junior (no date of birth is given for her, or maiden name) was obviously an important one for both of them, though the nature of it is far from clear. As Michael Kennedy comments in his Foreword, today many will want to know whether there was a sexual side to it. In an age in which sex is seen as not just a right, but almost a duty, it may be difficult for some to believe that a relationship could be so passionate without something "going on". Kevin Allen is surely right to say that "[Elgar] had always been attractive to women and deeply susceptible to feminine influence" (p 1), but my opinion, for what it is worth, is that there was no physical consummation, whatever may have gone on in the emotional and intellectual spheres. Just as Elgar's 'Dream Children' were "nothing... dreams... only what might have been", so too were his 'dream lovers'. All the passion went into the music - Helen Weaver in the third of the *Sea Pictures* and in the *Variations*; Alice Stuart-Wortley in the Violin Concerto (and the Second Symphony); Julia Worthington in *Deep in my Soul*, and possibly *Sospiri* (one of the sketches was headed 'Absence': she had died in June 1913 and work on *Sospiri* was begun later that year); and Vera Hockman in the Third Symphony. Kevin draws attention to the fact that virtually nothing was written about Elgar and Vera until Jerrold Moore's *A Creative Life* in 1984, and despite quotes from Vera's various writings and from letters in that book, no one then seems to have picked up on it (much more attention was given at the time to Helen Weaver). Prior to this her name is mentioned in passing in a letter from Elgar to Reed in Dr Young's 1956 anthology. The silence from those writers regularly in touch with Elgar during his last years - Maine, Reed, Wulstan Atkins - is deafening; yet they must have been aware of the relationship and its importance to the composer. Their silence was probably not because they objected to Vera - she seems to have been liked and accepted by the Elgar circle, including both Reed himself, and Carice, who became a close friend - but was presumably to protect him from gossip and tittle-tattle. The age difference would have been one source of embarrassment, the other presumably the fact that Vera was a married woman.

The most important parts of the book are Vera's two accounts of the relationship, both given in full. The first, 'The Story of November 7th, 1931', was written shortly after the events described, while 'Elgar and

Poetry' was not written until eight years later. But both possess a real ring of authenticity and are deeply moving in the way they reveal how Vera's friendship gave Elgar a new lease of life. She was obviously a "soul-mate", someone who understood, who was his intellectual equal, who could talk intelligently on a wide variety of subjects. Kevin calls Vera "a major influence on the life and work of a great composer", but such a statement seems hard to justify. It may be true in potential, but sadly the relationship was not able to produce anything really concrete in the way of music : we have 'V.H.'s own theme' in the Third Symphony, but as we know that work was "completed" by another hand.

As we have come to expect, Kevin has unearthed an amazing amount of interesting material, much of it previously unpublished. This includes illustrations; we have a photo of Elgar's funeral (rather poor quality, admittedly, from a newspaper), Carice and her husband on their honeymoon, and many others of considerable interest, including a page of a humorous "score" which Elgar sent to Vera's young daughter, Dulcie. The final chapter of the book, 'Life Goes On', deals with what happened to Vera after Elgar's death, including some of her correspondence with Vaughan Williams (he called her "dearest Vera" or even "Verissima", and signed himself "Uncle Ralph"); the repercussions over the money paid to Elgar regarding the Third Symphony; Vera's continuing friendship with Carice; and an Appendix containing an account of Elgar's last days by the lady who nursed him, Kathleen Harrison. This last part, interesting as it is, I found something of an anticlimax after the passion and personal detail of Vera's own writing. After the 1932 Worcester Festival we see the Elgar-Vera relationship at a distance; and in some ways the book would have had a clearer focus with a short tailpiece after 'Elgar and Poetry'. But there is so much that is new in this book that it should be on every Elgarian's shelf. It is a remarkable achievement.

The Editor

RECORD REVIEWS

Symphony no 1 in A flat, Op 55. With Wagner : Prelude to *Die Meistersinger*.

*SWR Radio Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sir Roger Norrington
Hänssler Classic CD 93.000*

Sir Thomas Beecham had a notorious way with this Symphony, mainly by means of short cuts. But always he could turn a sow's ear into a silk purse and, though even he might have hesitated to call Elgar's Op 55 a sow's ear (St Pancras Station is undoubtedly a nobler and vaguely more apt description), he had the infallible gift of making most music sound finer than ever seemed possible. On this occasion Sir Roger lacks that gift, and the Symphony is diminished. Allowance should perhaps be made that this is a live performance and that Norrington is playing the advocate for a work hardly familiar in southern Germany. The final applause suggests that orchestra and conductor managed to whip up notable enthusiasm, and there is no denying much excitement during the course of the piece. Misled by some unwarranted and unsatisfactory *accelerandos*, mainly in the outer movements, I had imagined the performance to be minutes shorter than Elgar's. Far from it. Only the finale cuts off half a dozen seconds, while the first movement is more than a minute longer. How is it that Elgar is so much more moving than Norrington?

A main reason is the lack of mystery in Norrington's performance. As Elgar explained to Ernest Newman, the opening theme, "simple &, in intention, noble & elevating" has its apotheosis only in the Symphony's final bars, where it emerges as "the conquering (subduing) idea". Between times its appearance is a mostly remote and subtle reminder of the musical and moral issues at stake. After a January 1918 performance under Landon Ronald, Lady Elgar pitched in vehemently on the moral front. Her diary paid tribute to the "great tune so majestic & beautiful". She then conjured up "wild underspirits & vain things" and, in uncompromising patriotic vein, "the pagan tune absolutely a picture of the Huns & the great

struggle ending in absolute triumphant Victory for the great rights of humanity". Elgar himself put the matter more succinctly to Neville Cardus : "the fierce quasi-military themes are dismissed with scant courtesy" and "the coarser themes are well quashed!" Norrington has failed to address the powerful polarities that tug at the Symphony. The sinister aspects of the work are underplayed amid page after page of gorgeous sound. Sheer opulence, with headlong *accelerando* here and indulgent *rallentando* there, is not enough, and the Symphony's drama has not been realised.

The *Meistersinger* prelude is billed as a 'bonustrack'. It was recorded at the beginning of November 1999, a few days after the Symphony, by which time it seems all concerned wanted a speedy conclusion to the project. It has been achieved, though at Wagner's expense. The normal procedure in mediaeval Nuremberg, as the opera makes clear, is that apprentices might in the fulness of days aspire to become masters. Sir Roger's tempos suggest the process could be reversed. His masters have cast aside their accumulated experience and cavort once more as apprentices, while the apprentices themselves line up for kindergarten. Of course the new century is in a hurry, but that is no reason why the greatest music of the past should follow suit. "Sehr mässig bewegt", says Wagner, and woe betide the conductor who cannot translate that into a properly Teutonic *molto moderato*.

Robert Anderson

Violin Sonata, Op 82. With Bax : Violin Sonata no 2.

Tasmin Little, Martin Roscoe
GMN CO 113

These are big-boned, full-blooded performances. Tasmin Little launches into Elgar's Sonata fast and tempestuously, causing one to check the directions *Risolto* and *con fuoco*; and Martin Roscoe fully matches her. Occasionally she uses a slight and welcome portamento, occasionally a heavy vibrato. The pair relax the tempo for expressive passages in the first and last movements, but not indulgently and always with the overall structure in mind. One of the joys of Little's playing is that she seems so aware of the harmonic implications under her solo line : tiny leanings on notes are perfectly related to her pianist's chords. For all its boldness hers is sensitive playing. Listen to the way she nudges into the sequence nine bars after figure 8.

I have reservations about the first part of the Romance, finding her tone too fruity for this will-of-the-wisp music, though Roscoe gives it an unusual and effective air of menace and threat. If not "elusive and delicate", as Alice Elgar is said to have found it, it is certainly spectral. At some past date I timed the Romance in three recorded performances : Menuhin takes 9' 39", Hugh Bean 7'44", Alan Loveday 6' 33" (Bean and Loveday were pupils of Sammons). Little takes 8' 20" - but timings are only one factor in any performance. The last movement finds the partners superbly matched in every way, in balance, style, commitment. Theirs is certainly a recording Elgarians should beg, borrow, or buy. I look forward to hearing Miss Little in the Concerto.

Commitment is also the word for their playing of Bax's Sonata, from the urgent, arresting opening, all through this passionate work which has some ravishingly beautiful passages. It is thematically linked to the tone poem *November Woods*, for which I have a personal and quite irrelevant fondness as I drive past the woods regularly on one of my shopping routes. I am trying hard to avoid saying that I find the Sonata less than totally convincing. It has too many stops and starts, and Bax seems more concerned with his strong but passing moods than with the overall architecture, so there is no real resolution. Others will disagree with me. Certainly the piece could have no more commanding and persuasive advocates than these two artists.

Diana McVeagh

Powick Asylum Music: Quadrilles & Polkas. Duet for Oboe & Violin. Duett for Double Bass & Trombone.
Rutland Sinfonia conducted by Barry Collett
British Music BML 029

Perhaps music therapy is not so new after all, for the doctors at the Worcester City and County Lunatic Asylum, situated at Powick on the rural outskirts of Worcester, started a series of concerts and Friday night dances for the inmates during the 1870s. Elgar as Band Instructor spent one day a week there ("When I was at the Lunatic Asylum" was a useful putdown or conversation killer he used throughout his life), de facto conductor and composer from 1879 to 1884, preceded by a couple of years as a violinist in the band. It was to prove a bizarre but useful apprenticeship to his composing career. His duties were to write Quadrilles and Polkas for a band which consisted of piccolo, flute, clarinet, two cornets, euphonium, three or four first and second violins with single lower strings as required. Even on paper this combination sounds bright, dazzling and top-heavy, and so the in-your-face sound proves to be on this lively disc (a transfer from a cassette made in 1989), but full marks to Barry Collett and his enthusiastic Rutlanders despite a variety of blemishes and approximations in tuning from piccolo down to euphonium. The music is sometimes tricky (as easy to underestimate as any Waltz by Johann Strauss), has Graingeresque moments and often threatens to break into "He's going to marry Yum-Yum", or some other Sullivan ditty. It should not be heard too soon after *Gerontius* or the Adagio from Tony Payne's realisation of the Third Symphony, neither is it easy to believe it's Elgar's music, though the spotters will no doubt have a field day identifying quotes from later music (eg. *Sea Pictures* at the end of *Helcia* on track 24 - yes, there are 32 tracks on this 54' disc, so the average length of a polka or quadrille is under two minutes). A couple of brief fugal duets for unlikely combinations make interesting listening. It's all worth a hearing - just.

Christopher Fifield

Piano Quintet in A minor, Op 84. Sospiri, Op 70. Harmony Music no 4 'The Farm Yard'. With Delius : Violin Sonatas and Cello Sonata.

Soloists of the London Symphony Orchestra, Israela Margalit (piano)
EMI CZS 573992-2 (2 CD-set)

I reviewed the Elgar disc when it first appeared (CDC 555403-2, in JOURNAL November 1996) as part of an imaginative series entitled the 'Anglo-American Chamber Music Series', in which members of the London Symphony Orchestra and New York Philharmonic orchestras recorded chamber music of their respective countries (Elgar, Delius, Britten and Walton; and Barber, Copland, Ives, and Korngold). If you missed it first time you can now get it with the Delius disc (CDC 555399-2) as part of a two-for-the-price-of-one package. The chamber music of both men suffered neglect for many years, much more attention being paid to their choral and orchestral music. But they are given very persuasive performances here, in clear bright recordings (although the piano is a shade too strong for the strings in the Quintet). Although there is less than two hours music here (only 53 minutes of Elgar) this package remains excellent value for money.

The Editor

LETTERS

From : Michael Messenger

Three surviving letters from Charles Mott to Arthur Troyte Griffith (all in the Manchester City Libraries collection) throw some additional light on Mott's circumstances between November 1916 and his embarkation from France. Elgar is not mentioned at all in the correspondence, but the composer was continuing to recommend to Troyte likely artists for the Malvern Concert Club which he himself had initiated in 1903 and of which he remained Vice-President; it seems likely, therefore, that Mott was one such, for the singer wrote to Troyte Griffith, the Club's Secretary, on 29 November, apologising for the delay in responding to an earlier approach by Griffith, caused, he explained, by his wife's serious illness from which she was now recovering. He suggested a date between 11 and 18 February, and Griffith annotated the letter "Feb. 12. Monday 3 o'clock Mott" - an obvious reference to the agreed date and time, bearing in mind that during that era the Club concerts were invariably held in the afternoon.

Mott's wife clearly suffered a relapse, however, for on 8 February Mott wrote to the Secretary thanking him for his expression of sympathy, expressing his relief that Griffith had managed to find a replacement (the Catterall String Quartet), and promising to keep November in mind when, "DV", he hoped to visit the Club. God, however, was clearly not willing, for the third letter (undated) on Artists' Rifles notepaper, and written from Hut 18, Hare Hill Camp, Gidea Park, Romford, makes it clear that a November date is now impossible, and that the proposed recital would have to wait "until after the war". That suggests that he may have already known that he was to be posted to the Front - the result, suggested Sir Dan Godfrey in 1924, of personal animus - with the tragic outcome clearly expressed in Charles Hooley's article.

(Mr Messenger is Chairman of the Elgar Birthplace Management Committee, and is currently working on a comprehensive history of the Malvern Concert Club which, it is hoped, will be published during the Club's centenary year of 2003).

From: Michael Plant

The Editor does well to consult the best authorities on the pronunciation of 'Gerontius' (NEWS July 2000). The word itself is derived from the ancient Greek for "old man" (GERON, spelled gamma - epsilon - rho - omega - nu). Gamma in ancient Greek is always hard and since few escaped from their public schools in the years before 1939 without at least some knowledge of Latin and Greek, it is not surprising to find a consensus among those of that generation in favour of the hard 'g'.

However, those without the benefit of a classical education will always expect 'Gerontius' to start with a soft 'g', as in German, gerrymander, germinate and (the related) geriatric. There is some precedent for anglicising classical words, eg. Caesar is usually SEEZAH but should be KAISAR, and I myself, though classically trained, would say the (correct) hard and the (well-established) soft 'g' are genuine alternatives in English for 'Gerontius'. It seems a little pedantic to expect foreign words and names which are widely used in English and in English derivatives to retain their authentic pronunciations. See, for example, Paris, which is PARRISS in London but PAREE in the French capital (apart from that now outmoded English expression 'Gay Paree').

From : Carl Newton

One of the roles of the Elgar Society must surely be to ensure that public state-ments about his life and works are reasonably correct. I recall reading in a recent programme note that he was "the son of a village organist" and hated towns so much that he spent only one year of his life in London! More seriously the National Trust announces to visitors to Lamb House, Rye, that E F Benson wrote "four war poems" which Elgar set to music, but which have never been performed.

Benson states in Final Edition that Elgar asked him to write four poems on flying, which he duly did, but was told by Elgar that, although the works were complete, they could not be performed because of a dispute with the management of the Coliseum. Prof Trowell makes reference to this matter in his footnote (no 321) to his 'Elgar's Use of Literature' but reads more into Benson's comments than they strictly warrant. He also suggests that Elgar lied to Benson as to the reason for the failure to have the songs performed, referring to a statement by Carice that her mother destroyed the MSS because she disliked the words. This latter is barely credible, and in any case Benson's chronology is hopelessly confused. He conflates events which clearly took place over more than a decade as if they had all happened at the same time. The same passage is also the origin of the story that Elgar searched Winchelsea churchyard for an hanged ancestor. According to Benson this was his great grandfather. This, too, is plainly absurd. Indeed much of this account seems to be pure mythology, and what is not is confused.

Reed in his 'Master Musicians' volume says (p 127) that Elgar wrote some Air Songs, "according to the records". What records? Moreover this was allegedly in 1919, a date hardly reconcilable with Benson. Is it not more likely that Elgar simply abandoned the project (if it ever existed) on Alice's death, but avoided telling Benson in case he passed on the poems to someone else? All the protagonists in the affair seem to have been involved in an elaborate mutual double-cross.

If any reader of the JOURNAL can offer any positive evidence, or explanation, of the mysterious 'Air Poems' I would be grateful. I have warned the E F Benson Society that their hero's story is seriously defective, but cannot at the moment offer them, or the National Trust, a viable alternative.

From: Tony Smith

As a practising ophthalmologist, I was happy to discover Britain's ophthalmologist-composer William Wallace through the wonderful Hyperion disc featuring four of his symphonic poems (CDA 668848). Apparently the Great War kept Wallace busy with his medical vocation, though he was later to focus primarily on composition, and his chief claim to fame today was writing the first British symphonic poem.

One of the works on the disc is entitled Villon, which is based on the life of the early French lyric poet, François Villon. After hearing this work, I was struck by the similarities with Elgar's Falstaff, and I assumed that Wallace had been influenced by it, until I checked the dates and realised that the 1909 date for Villon pre-dated Falstaff by several years.

Both are episodic representations of the life of a "loveable rogue", with thematic elements recurring throughout the work. Both feature a "drunken" bassoon solo; both have episodes of mediaeval-sounding music suggesting pipe-and-tabor; and both are imaginatively orchestrated. And both have a heart-breaking ending in which the music represents the protagonist's death.

I would not suggest that Villon is as great a work as Falstaff, which I consider one of Elgar's finest. I wonder, however, if Elgar might not have heard the earlier work and been inspired to even greater things. Are there any readers who know if he would have had occasion to have heard Villon performed, or if he knew Wallace or his music?

From : Philip Scowcroft

I particularly enjoyed Kevin Mitchell's article on Barbirolli and Elgar in the July JOURNAL. I was born and brought up in Sheffield, whose Philharmonic Society concerts were then usually given by the Hallé Orchestra, often, though not always, conducted by Barbirolli. During the period 1949-60 I heard him do the Second Symphony - but not the First which was once in that period conducted by Basil Cameron, something of a forgotten conductor but a good servant to Elgar's music - and The Dream of Gerontius several times. The fifties were not the best of periods for Elgar performances but Barbirolli's work for him shone like a beacon.

100 YEARS AGO ...

The Elgars returned from the Birmingham Festival on 5 October, two days after the *Gerontius* premiPre. The daily routine of teaching, Worcestershire Philharmonic rehearsals, rounds of golf, social visits recommenced. Edward was in the depths of despair. It might be thought that the offer of an honorary doctorate from Cambridge University, which he received on 17 October, would dispel the depression, but Rosa Burley recorded that he initially decided to turn it down as he could not afford to buy the robes. He told Alfred Littleton of Novello on 31st that he thought the degree might be "a considerable expense". In the end a number of friends paid for the robes. The ceremony was held on 22 November - St Cecilia's Day - and Frederic Cowen also received a degree. The Elgars travelled to Cambridge with Steuart-Powell and dined at King's College. Alice wrote that Elgar "thoroughly enjoyed the day".

On 19 October the Elgars had gone to Hasfield Court to stay with the Bakers for ten days. Elgar walked, cycled, boated, fished, and played billiards. It seems he may also have turned to composition again, as from there on 26th he wrote to Jaeger: "I've practically got a Concert overture ready". This would eventually become *Cockayne*.

But he was still in dark despair; in the same letter he wrote: "I wish I were dead over & over again", and called his influence on people "always evil". There had also been trouble with Novello concerning his payment for *Gerontius*, with the publishers denying they knew anything of a royalty to Elgar. With the help of Johnstone of the Birmingham Festival, the issue was eventually settled in Elgar's favour.

Yet his mood changed within a week: a letter to Jaeger of 4 November was much more like his old self, and there was more on the new work: "Don't say anything about the prospective overture yet - I call it 'Cockayne' & it's cheerful & Londony - 'stout & steak'."

On 24 November Elgar travelled to Liverpool where Alfred Rodewald conducted the *Variations* with his Liverpool Orchestral Society. This visit cemented a friendship which had begun sixteen months earlier when the two men had been introduced at New Brighton by a mutual friend, Granville Bantock. Rodewald's friendship and encouragement was to be a valuable help to the composer over the next three years. During a five day visit to London in December Elgar conducted Clara Butt in two of the *Sea Pictures* at Edward Lloyd's Farewell Concert on the 12th. He also met with Arthur Boosey and Henry Embleton during this visit. Despite the failure of *Gerontius* in Birmingham, Elgar's reputation was growing and Novello were not slow to cash in on it. They were looking to bring out the Prelude and 'Angel's Farewell' in an orchestral arrangement, plus three choruses; also arrangements for small orchestra of *Chanson de Nuit* and *Chanson de Matin*. They were also publishing the full score of his early overture *Froissart*.

The new year (and century) saw Elgar conduct two concerts in Worcester in four days. First on the 14th the Festival Choral Society gave *The Snow*, *Fly Singing Bird* and *My love dwelt in a northern land*, and the Serenade for Strings was played. Then on the 17th the Worcestershire Philharmonic gave a concert of mainly British music, including Stanford's *The Last Post*, Walford Davies's *Hymn before Action*, the 'Idyllic' Symphony by Frederic Cowen, and movements from Percy Pitt's *Cinderella Suite*.

The Elgar Society Journal

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Front Cover : The 12ft high Gerontius statue unveiled in Indianapolis on 16 September 2000 during the Gerontius weekend reported on page 12 of the NEWS.

Photo : Drew Endicott

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