

# Music's Measure

Our Spring Concert this year consists of works from two late nineteenth and early twentieth century composers, Sir Edward Elgar and Giacomo Puccini. The performance, which consists of *The Music Makers* and the *Messa di Gloria*, takes place on Saturday 19th March 2005 at 7:30 p.m. In the Hall of South Bromsgrove High School.

The choir will be accompanied by a full orchestra and the soloists for the evening will be, Kathryn Cook, Contralto, Christopher Martyn, Tenor and Peter Taylor, Bass.

Edward Elgar was born on 2nd June 1875 to a piano tuner and music shop owner in Broadheath, Worcestershire. He was musically largely self taught. He served a long apprenticeship to his craft being little known outside his local area. In 1889 he married Caroline Alice Roberts, daughter of the famous General. She encouraged and inspired him throughout their life together. Through the late 1890's his reputation began to spread to a wider audience with compositions such as the *Imperial March*, and the *Cantatas, King Olaf* and *Caractacus*.

At the turn of the century came his great religious work *Dream of Gerontius*, though it was not an immediate success.

Despite the setback he immediately began work on the concert overture *Cockaigne* which had its first performance in 1901 in which year he also produced the first two *Pomp and Circumstance Marches*.

In 1904 he was knighted by King Edward VII.



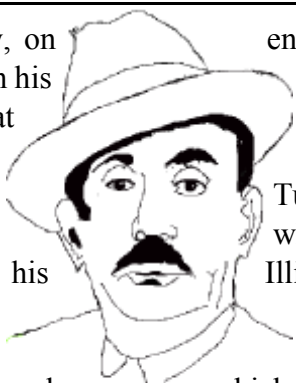
His *Symphony No 1* in A flat was first performed in Manchester in 1908 His second *Symphony* came in 1911 which closely followed the *violin Concerto* in B minor.

In the period between the second symphony and the first world war he produced only two major works, *The Music Makers* an Ode for Contralto, Chorus and Orchestra (1912) and a symphonic study based on *Falstaff*.

During the First World War Elgar produced a few patriotic pieces, incidental music for *Starlight Express* and a setting to three war poems by Laurence Binyon, *The Spirit of England* (1915-1917). In the two years 1918 and 1919 Elgar had his last great period producing the *Violin Sonata* and the *String Quartet*, the *Piano Quintet* and the *Cello Concerto*.

In 1920 Lady Caroline died and with her died his inspiration. Elgar lived in semi retirement with his dogs surrounded by the Worcestershire countryside he loved so much. He occasionally visited London to conduct and produced a definitive set of gramophone recordings of his own works for HMV. He died on 23rd February 1934.

Giacomo Puccini was born in Lucca, Italy, on 22nd December 1858. He studied music with his uncle and started his career as a musician at the age of 14 as an organist at St Martino and St Michele, Lucca. In 1880 he composed *Messa di Gloria* which is now considered to mark the end of his apprenticeship. And with a financial scholarship from his Uncle entered the Milan Conservatory. Whilst at the conservatory he



entered a competition for a one act opera.

He did not win but his entry gained the attention of the publisher, Giulio Ricordi.

In 1893 he produced *Manon Lescaut* at Turin in 1893 and it achieved a success which Puccini was never to repeat. Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa were the librettists and provided the Librettos for Puccini's next three operas the first of which was *La Boheme* now widely regarded as

the best of his operas. Also in 1896 he collaborated with his librettists to produce *Madam Butterfly* which was not a success at its first performance in February 1904. At this time he was involved in a stormy marriage and entered into a period in which he produced nothing musically. His next opera was *La Fanciulla del West* based on another Belasco drama. It had Debussian harmony and Straussian orchestration but lacked Puccini's incandescent phrasing and it has not entered the international repertory.

In his early sixties Puccini decided to go in a new direction and started work on *Turandot*, which is based on a play by Gozzi. During its production he developed cancer of the throat. He underwent treatment at a clinic in Brussels which seemed successful, but he suffered a heart attack and died on 29th November 1924.

## From the Chair

### Moods and Music.

Music has always played an important part in my life and one of my regrets is that I have never learned to play a musical instrument. However, I am grateful, not only for many opportunities to listen to music, but through membership of choirs and musical societies actually to participate in creating it.

The amazing thing about music is that its variety is so great that there is something to express or to meet all kinds of feelings and moods.

Let me illustrate this. My first experience of music was in the local Methodist Sunday School Choir, where the hymns of Charles Wesley, which are loved throughout the world made a deep impression on me, and still move me deeply today. But music is also fun making and enables some of us to express our need at times to stop being serious and be lighthearted. So I was delighted when we decided to sing 'Trial By Jury' last Summer. The mixture of fun and pomposity that is the benchmark of Gilbert and Sullivan was most enjoyable.

But what about the times when we are feeling serious, sad or even depressed? Then Gilbert and Sullivan would be quite inappropriate! Quite different is the music of Bach, and the St. Matthew Passion conveys both pathos and strength.

At times of joy we need something triumphant and expectant. The opening chorus of Wagner's *Bridal Chorus* makes us stand up and eagerly participate in something new and exciting. What would a

wedding be without music?

At certain times, though certainly not always, I enjoy plainchant. Some years ago I visited Solemnes in central France where a large Benedictine Community for men sings plainchant probably better than anywhere else in the world. It is a curious experience as one feels caught up in something that is both beautiful and sacred.

Perhaps that is why when we try to think what heaven will be like we picture the most important activity there to be music.

It has been my privilege to welcome several new members to B.G.C.S. over the past few months and an even greater pleasure that two are first sops!

We are now about seventy singing members in number which is really encouraging.

Some members have asked about the three missed rehearsals rule. I hope you will appreciate that when members are working hard for a concert, it is rather disconcerting for other members who have missed 3 or more rehearsals, for what ever reason, to expect to sing in the concert. However, this has always been at the Musical Directors discretion and normally if, in Steven's view, you show you know your part there is no reason why you should not sing. As I write this rehearsals for our March concert, two beautiful but demanding, works are going well and I am sure it will be a memorable evening.

It would be good if our bass section could do some recruiting, or perhaps the rest of us can recruit on their behalf?

I want to say how good it is to see Lesley, our hard working treasurer, looking so well. Lesley has now completed her treatment and I know is most grateful for all the support she has received from our members.

Norma Hazell.

The five year old boy sat in the school dining hall enjoying his beef.

"How can you eat that meat its been murdered?" asked a little girl sitting on the next seat.

The little boy looked at her for a long moment. "How can you eat that cabbage," was his reply looking at the slimy green mass on her plate. "Its been just as murdered!"

Seen on a church notice board.

Don't let worry kill you--let the church help.

Weight Watchers will meet a 7 p.m. at the First Presbyterian Church.

Please use large double door at the side entrance

## Did you know.

Singing is an aerobic activity.

It doesn't require joining a gym or finding the right shoes to wear. It can be done by anyone of any age and you won't ache for days afterwards but you will feel better for participating.

Singing improves circulation and breathing.

The concentration on the out breath and controlling the speed is very good for regulating breathing - an important skill for asthmatics. Controlled breathing is also excellent for minimising panic attacks and singing is definitely a warming activity.

In Canada singing is used to help people recovering from strokes whose speech has been affected.

Other research shows that singing:-

boosts our immune system

helps us to relax

reduces blood pressure

limits fear and stress

tones our abdominal and intercostal muscles and our diaphragm

improves posture

can help with weight loss

is a natural and almost instant antidepressant.

Most important of all it is a very pleasurable activity empowering people through mind, body and spirit.

Margot Davies.

## Friends of B.G.C.S.

Would you like to become a 'friend' of Barnt Green Choral Society?

As a 'friend' you would get reduced price tickets for our two main concerts held in November and March and priority booking for our popular Christmas and summer concerts. You would also receive a copy of our newsletter, which we hope to produce twice a year.

Your contribution would be really appreciated and would help the society continue to produce enjoyable concerts using first class soloists and musicians.

If you would like to become a 'friend' of B.G.C.S. please send a cheque for £10 made payable to Barnt Green Choral Society, to The Secretary, Fiona Brown, Barnt Green Choral Society, Stable Door House, School Lane, Alvechurch, Birmingham B48 7SA.

## The Alto's Lament.

It's awful being an alto when you're singing in the choir,

Sopranos get the twiddly bits that people all admire,  
The basses boom like big trombones, the tenors shout with glee,

The alto part is on two notes, or if you're lucky, three.

And when we sing an anthem and lift our hearts in praises,

The men get all the juicy bits and telling little phrases.

Of course, the trebles sing the tune - they always come off best -

While altos only get three notes and twenty-two bars rest.

It doesn't matter what we sing, from hymnbooks or from psalter,

The choirmaster looks at us - our voices start to falter;

Too high! Too low! Too fast! Too slow! You hold that note too long!

It doesn't matter what we do, it's certain to be wrong.

Oh! shed a tear for altos: they're the Marthas and they know

In ranks of choral singers they're considered very low.

They are so very humble that a lot of folk forget 'em:

They'd love to be sopranos, but their vocal chords won't let 'em.

And when the final trumpet sounds and we are wafted higher,

Sopranos, tenors, basses, all will form the heavenly choir.

When they sing Alleluias to celestial flats and sharps,

We altos in the corner will be polishing our harps.

*Anon* (submitted by Fiona)

## Advanced Notices

### Summer Concert:

June 11th 2005 Victorian Evening ,

with cheese and wine supper.

St. Andrews Church, Barnt Green.

### Autumn Concert:

November 19th 2005 Rutter's Mass of the Children

North Bromsgrove High School.

## Who am I.

How well do you know other members of the choir, especially if they are not in your section? We thought it would be a bit of fun if we could find a way for members to introduce themselves to everyone rather than to the small group with whom they normally associate. Here's one to start us off.

I was born in Lymington, Hants, a beautiful town on the South Coast. At the age of five I moved with my family to Bournemouth where I received my education. When I was old enough I joined a church choir where I sang until I went to college. I also sang in three of Bournemouth School's Choirs. In 1964 I went to Shoreditch Teacher Training College in Egham, Surrey. While there enjoying the beauty of the nearby Windsor Great Park I met my future wife. She was a student at the nearby Royal Holloway College. Whilst at college I was a member of the college choirs and Egham Choral Society.

After qualifying in 1967 I took up my first post at the Hurst Secondary School, Baughurst, near Basingstoke. Whilst lodging firstly with the local rector and then in the home of my head of department I sang with Newbury Choral Society. Living in the triangle formed by Newbury, Basingstoke and Reading, I was often called upon to fill in gaps with other choral societies. How about Hiawatha in two rehearsals?

In 1970 I was married and moved to live in Malvern, Worcestershire. I moved to work in a Special School. Whilst in Malvern I was blessed with the birth of two daughters and I sang with Malvern Musical Society. I moved to work in Birmingham Special Schools. This led to the family moving to Rubery where we still live. This move meant I was looking for a new choir. Barnt Green choral seemed an obvious choice, so I joined under the baton of one Mr C. Horn. Here I have remained and enjoyed many an evening practising for various concerts.

During this time I have also been a member of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Operatic society until ill health forced me to give it up. As you can see music, especially singing, has been a major part of my social life. If you need a last clue as to my identity I am one of the illustrious, or should I say infamous, tenors. Thanks for this indulgence and I hope to read someone else's Who am I, soon..

The answer? You'll have to wait. It will be published in the next edition hopefully with the next who am I.

Please come along to  
St Andrew's Church  
on March 13 at 3.00pm  
to listen to

## The Queen's Park Sinfonia

Among the leaflets on display you will find details of the next concert to be given by the Queen's Park Sinfonia, an orchestra of young professional musicians. They will be giving their second concert in St Andrew's Church, Barnt Green on Sunday afternoon March 13 at 3.00 pm. A family concert, the programme will include:

### Peter and the Wolf.

Elena Duran, The Narrator and Solo Flute, has played with many International and British Orchestras such as the Royal Philharmonic, Bournemouth Sinfonietta and has made recordings with Stephane Grapelli. For the past 10 years she has been artistic director of the International Flute festival in Stratford upon Avon.

The conductor, Peter Bridle, has since 1976 combined his post of Music Master at King Edward's School Edgbaston with conducting and as an accomplished violinist. He has performed with the BBC, CBSO and Orchestra da Camera, He is currently the resident conductor of the Birmingham Schools Symphony Orchestra.

The programme will be:-

IBERT - Divertissement  
EDUARDO ANGOLA - Los Centinelas de Etersa  
ZYMAN - Mexican Flute Concerto  
PROKOFIEV - Peter and the Wolf

Tickets are available from:  
Olivia Goodborn (a new member) at rehearsals,

by telephone (0121 447 7671)  
or on the door.

**Quick Quiz, Film, Television and Theatre**

- 1). What were the Christian names of the comedians Laurel & Hardy?
- 2). Which British actress starred in the film Gone With The Wind?
- 3). Which singer and comedian presented the religious T.V. programme Highway?
- 4). Which actors took the title roles in the film Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid?
- 5). Which TV ventriloquist has a puppet called Orville?
- 6). Who composed the music- Gilbert or Sullivan?
- 7). Who was the first Dr Who?
- 8). Norma Jean Baker was the real name of which actress?
- 9). Where is Shakespeare's Othello set?
- 10). Who was the presenter of TV's This is your Life, who died in 1987?
- 11). George, Zippy and Bungle appeared in which TV show?
- 12). Merman and Skeletor appear in which TV series?
- 13). Who joined Dorothy, the tin woodman and the lion in their adventures?
- 14). In which TV series are there characters called Ted Bovis, Gladys and Spike?
- 15). Who wrote the play The School for Scandal?
- 16). On which mythical planet was Superman born?
- 17). In which year did Cadbury's first produce their Dairy Milk Chocolate Bar?

**Answers to Quick Quiz.**

- 1). Stanley and Oliver
- 2). Vivien Leigh
- 3). Harry Secombe
- 4). Paul Newman Robert Redgrave
- 5). Keith Harris
- 6). Sullivan
- 7). William Hartnell
- 8). Marilyn Monroe
- 9). Venice and Cyprus
- 10). Eaman Andrews
- 11). Rainbow
- 12). He Man & Masters of the Universe
- 13). Scarecrow
- 14). Hi-de-hi
- 15). Sheridan
- 16). Krypton
- 17). 1905

**Focus on You.**

If you don't fancy a 'Who Am I' why not just tell us all about yourself. Nothing you wouldn't tell a polite enquirer at a party.

It was Africa In 1957. We sailed off into the blue to Nigeria, to the University of Ibadan.

Four children later I joined the Operatic Society. It was rather a randy group so my husband, a groaner, decided to join as Stage Manager to keep an eye on me. One little stagehand used to stand at the top of the stairs which lead from the dressing rooms hoping for a kiss from each of the girls as they passed. He was small enough to push to one side.

We had parties after performances, sometimes around the pool. After a sufficient quantity of alcohol had been consumed most people ended up, fully dressed, in the pool.

After a spell in England the children and I went out to Durban in South Africa. I joined The University Choir but at the end of the year pulled out as it consisted mainly of Music students.

Although there were several African choirs and a few Indian and Afrikaans choirs the only Ladies choir in Durban did not accept anyone over 50!!

Moving to a village on the outskirts of Johannesburg I could have gone into the city for a choir but the journey would not have been safe on my own.

On my visits to the UK from South Africa I used to attend choir practices at Fairfield Church where my brother was Choirmaster. He was involved in forming a village choir so I sang there too. This choir collapsed and I was introduced to the Barnt Green Choral Society and I have enjoyed every moment.

I now live in Bromsgrove and only visit my daughters in Southern Africa for short periods.

**June Lawton.**

The following are a few letters sent to Abigail Van Burin (Dear Abby) that she herself admitted she was at a loss to answer:

Dear Abby, What can I do about all the sex, nudity, language and violence on my VCR?

Dear Abby, Our son writes that he is taking Judo. Why would a boy who was raised in a good Christian home turn against his own?

Dear Abby, I joined the Navy to see the world. I've seen it. Now, how do I get out?

## From a back seat.

This edition I'd like to share some thoughts with you which have been rattling round my head for some time but were brought into sharper focus by what Steve said at the beginning of break last Monday. My mind has been going back to when I had just joined the choir. I was lucky in that Paul Goldsmith introduced me, so at least I had him to talk to during break, and I also knew Wally Davies as we'd worked together some twenty years previously. However, I must admit I did feel quite isolated especially during coffee breaks. Of course Paul talked to me, but he had other friends as well. Wally and I had things to say to each other, but again, he had other choir members he wished to spend time with. You can't monopolise people so that left me standing nurturing my coffee and staring into space for the majority of break. The sense of isolation was heightened by the fact everyone else, being longer established, always seemed to be part of an active, friendly group. It wasn't that people weren't willing to be friendly, it's just I wasn't really integrated into any of the existing groups and there seemed to be no way in..

A choir isn't a place that makes it easy to get to know the other members. We are at rehearsals to learn the music not to 'do the social rounds' and we sit in our own little voice groups. It's not like a drama group, or even an operatic society where the very nature of rehearsal tends to make people mix. But new members do need to be made to feel welcome and supported until they're part of us. In fact I didn't really begin to feel I belonged until the incident of the refreshments. Let me explain. It was at the first annual general meeting nearly a full year after I joined that the ladies who had been doing the refreshments dropped the bomb shell. They'd had enough. They'd been doing the refreshments for seven years and felt it time others did their share. They also intimated it was about time the men had a go. So, feeling full of righteousness and good will I sprang to my feet and said, "Look no further. I will be your hero. I will take on the fiery dragon of the coffee urn....." No I did not! I went home for the summer and thought no more about it!

Paul and I came early for the first rehearsal the next September. I remember Brian Jones, then our secretary, was busy putting out the chairs.

"Had a good summer?" he greeted us. "Yes, thanks," we replied. Inspiring conversationalists weren't we?

"Good," he continued. "Grab a pile of these chairs and help me put them out." We did as we were told. I was just picking up a new load of seats when in a conversational tone Brian remarked. "You know, there won't be any coffee at break today. No-one has volunteered to do it." I looked towards him expecting to hear how he'd solved the problem. "Good lad," he continued smoothly, "The ladies left a bag with coffee and tea in it. Get yourself into the kitchen and see if you can work out how to produce it. We can't have the ladies crowing no man can do it, can we?"

And that's when I began to find friends, Paul, of course, came to help. . Wally rolled up his sleeves and took over the washing up, Ta Walley, and Andrea and Helen took pity on us and took over the serving hatch with quiet efficiency. Thanks girls! My point? It took a long time, over a year, before I began really to become part of the choir and the thing that made the most difference was having the opportunity to do a job that ensured I came into weekly contact with most choir members. Not many members, let alone new members, are given this opportunity. After all we only need one 'coffee wallah' at a time and at the moment that's me! So, new members can spend a very long time before they know enough of the rest of us to feel truly at home.

Now, a choir such as ours, a non audition choir after all, needs a steady inflow of new voices who stay with us. It cannot survive without them. It behoves every one of us to go out of our way to make sure every fellow singer who walks through our rehearsal door, no matter what their standard, is cared for and nurtured. If this doesn't happen the choir will slowly shrink in numbers until it hasn't enough members to perform.

Look around you in rehearsal and cast your mind back just a few short years. How many of the original faces are still here? Thank goodness, quite a few, but there are also a substantial number of new members. What would the choir be like if they had not been made to feel they belonged to B.G.C.S? Would the choir still exist for us to sing in?

Barnt Green Choral Society isn't you; it isn't me. We are small parts, single, small voices, little cogs in the whole. We come, we stay a while, we go. Eventually, if the organisation is to continue, we will have to be replaced. Why are we not going out of our way, all of us, not just the officers and committee, to make sure each new member is not only welcomed on the first visit but supported until they have truly become part of us. We should all be making sure the message goes out loud and clear, 'for the joy of music, sing with us!' Its not just you, or you, or even you over in the corner. It is all of us who fail. I've done it; passed by a new member, looking lost at coffee break, and because I'm busy, got to get the table out, put the biscuits on it, whatever.. I've walked on by instead of just saying a few words. I've done it recently. I brought a new member into rehearsal and introduced her to Norma. I went away and got on with doing the things I do and I forgot all about our new member. Only this Monday, after Steve's timely reminder, did my conscience twitch and I made the time to just go and say, "Oh good, I'm so glad you're still with us. Are you enjoying yourself?"

I'm upset that we need reminding how to behave towards the 'stranger at our door!' I'm upset not only because as decent, civilised people we should ever need reminding, but also because in our own self interest we need every new member we can get, especially those with good voices.

If we don't go out of our way to make sure new members become old members, in the future, there will not be a B.G.C.S. For any one to sing with!