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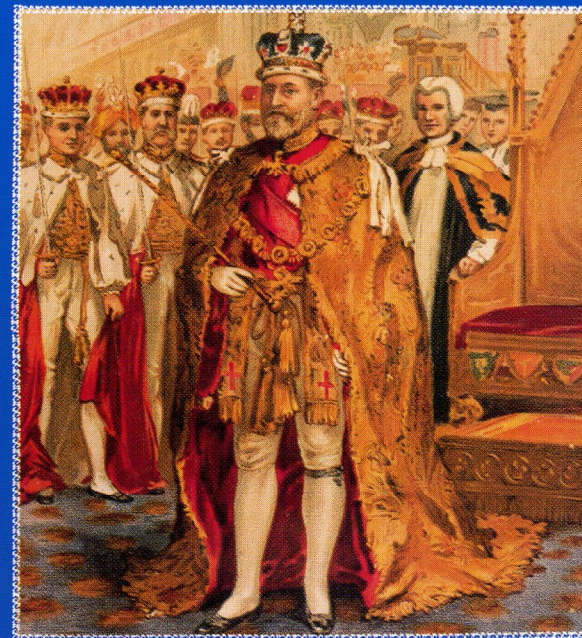
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**DIGITALLY
REMASTERED**

ELGAR

CORONATION ODE • THE SPIRIT OF ENGLAND



Teresa Cahill • Anne Collins • Anthony Rolfe-Johnson • Gwynne Howell

SCOTTISH NATIONAL ORCHESTRA AND CHORUS
SIR ALEXANDER GIBSON

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The composer as much as any man is the creature of his time. The time shares equally with the individuality in shaping an expression to define them both. This disc contains the first recordings ever published of two major works by Elgar. They are his largest and finest works of ceremonial music. Yet each was deeply felt, and the contrast between them makes the very sharpest measure of Elgar's response to the two worlds of his life in our century – the world of peace and empire, the world of war and loss. The contrast emerges clearly enough in the two texts. Arthur Christopher Benson's *Coronation Ode* was written not only for the special occasion of Edward VII's Coronation in 1902, but actually with Elgar's music in mind. And its beginning hymns all the assurance which would become so intolerable for later generations to whom its sovereign security would be denied:

*God shall save the King,
God shall make him great,
God shall guard the state;
All that hearts can pray,
All that lips can sing,
God shall hear today; —
God shall save the King!*

Yet the sense of threatening fate and threatening violence runs deep in Benson's *Ode*. After greeting the King and Queen, his very next section pictures what would follow from beginning another war:

*Under the drifting smoke, and the scream of the flying shell,
When the hillside hisses with death . . .*

The difference from modern experience comes in the end of the line:

. . . and never a foe in sight.

Benson's next section invokes the arts in order, beginning with Music:

*Fiery secrets, winged by art,
Light the lonely listening soul . . .*

There Elgar's presence was greater: his setting would repeat the word 'Light', turning the simple declaration to a prayer. But Benson's concluding words in themselves struck a retrospective note:

*As the golden days increase,
Crown your victories with peace!*

The lines were being written at the end of the South African War; the words following after implore the return of peace:

When comest thou? Our brethren long for thee.
Yet the famous 'Land of Hope and Glory' Finale actually anticipates the end:

*Tho' thy way be darkened, still in splendour drest,
As the star that trembles o'er the liquid West.*

When Benson asks 'How may we extol thee, praise thee, honour thee?', then, his question conveys a concern to realise a moment of incredible good fortune in the flux of history – and to preserve the moment, at least in the language of art, against any future entry upon what can only be a downward path.

Benson was the eldest son in an eminent literary family. His friendship with Elgar had begun about the time of King Edward's accession in January 1901. And when the *Coronation Ode* was formally commissioned by the Covent Garden Syndicate in the Autumn of that year, it proved a splendid working relationship. For Benson himself was a keen amateur musician and a sensitive listener to music.

But the keynote for the entire piece was given by the King himself. Hearing Elgar's new *Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1*, Edward VII said that the Trio-tune ought to have words so that it could be sung. Elgar decided to implement the King's idea as the climax of the *Coronation Ode*. He set Benson the task of matching verses to the melody already existing, and Benson evolved the words all the world was to know.

Through the early months of 1902 Elgar wrote the music for the present sections 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6. Then it was realised that there was not a mention of the Queen. So Benson wrote the 'Daughter of Ancient Kings' poem about Alexandra, whose father was King of Denmark. This Elgar set on 4th April, and inserted it to follow the opening chorus. The first performance was fixed for 30th June with the Sheffield Choir, then considered the finest amateur chorus in the country. Then almost on the eve of the Coronation the King was taken seriously ill. He recovered, but the *Coronation Ode* premiere together with all the festivities had to be put back to the Autumn. The reign of Edward VII did not outlast the decade, and for the Coronation of George V in 1911 the *Ode* was revived. But as 'Daughter of Ancient Kings' had referred especially to Alexandra, an entirely new chorus was created to replace it with a hymn to Queen Mary – 'True Queen of British homes and hearts'. Already the changing

attitudes of the century were beginning to emerge:

*Oh kind and wise, the humblest heart
That beats it all your realms today
Knows well that it can claim its part
In all you hope, in all you pray.*

The War poems of Laurence Binyon were written in far different circumstances, and they envisioned no musical setting. But their purpose was the same as Benson's purpose in the *Coronation Ode*—to provide a focus of expression for an outstanding event in the nation's history. Many composers responded to the quality of Binyon's verses, and Elgar was not alone in feeling moved to set them to music. But his is the setting which survives. And that is as it should be. For all the themes in Benson's *Coronation Ode* reappear in the most remarkable way through Binyon's War poems:

*Now in thy splendour go before us,
Spirit of England, ardent-eyed . . .*

But this is a *Coronation Ode* for a different king:

Death august and royal

Sings sorrow up into immortal spheres.

The queen of British homes and hearts is now the whole of sorrowing womanhood:

*Your hearts are lifted up, your hearts
That have foreknown the utter price.*

And Benson's lonely star trembling in a darkened West

has become a midnight galaxy of the dead:

*As the stars that are starry in the time of our darkness,
To the end, to the end, they remain.*

As the 44-year-old Elgar had responded to Benson's hymn at the meridian of his own career, so the 57-year-old Elgar could meet himself again in Binyon's elegies. From them he shaped the last of the great choral works which had begun with *The Dream of Gerontius* in 1900. The Binyon music was slowly achieved: 'To Women' and 'For the Fallen' were mostly written in 1915, but 'The Fourth of August' was not completed until two years later. As if to signify its position at the beginning of the end, a reminiscence of the *Gerontius* 'Demons' Chorus' was set against words that could condemn the war-making of every nation:

*The barren creed of blood and iron,
Vampire of Europe's wasted will.*

At the beginning of the war Elgar had made a setting of the Belgian poem *Carillon*, with an *idée fixe* of four descending tones quickly ringing across the orchestral landscape to evoke a mending of shattered hopes. 'For the Fallen', by contrast, is dominated by a two-note figure slowly tolling an open fifth at the bottom of the whole ensemble. Following the tonic note, the lower sub-dominant opens out a bottomless void into which all the carefully wrought harmonies of the late civilisation echo as they empty through its hollowness.

Jerrold Northrop Moore.

CORONATION ODE Op. 44 Words: Arthur Christopher Benson

Crown The King!

Introduction: Soli and Chorus

CROWN the King with Life!
Through our thankful state
Let the cries of hate
Die in joy away;
Cease ye, sounds of strife!
Lord of Life, we pray,
Crown the King with Life!

Crown the King with Might!
Let the King be strong
Hating guile and wrong;
He that scorneth pride,
Fearing truth and right,
Feareth nought beside;—
Crown the King with Might!

Crown the King with Peace;
Peace that suffers long,
Peace that maketh strong,
Peace with kindly wealth,
As the years increase,
Nurse of joy and health;—
Crown the King with Peace!

Crown the King with Love!
To his land most dear
He shall bend to hear
Every pleading call;
Loving God above,

With a heart for all;—
Crown the King with Love!

Crown the King with Faith!
God, the King of Kings,
Ruleth earthly things;
God of great and small,
Lord of Life and Death,
God, above us all!
Crown the King with Faith!

God shall save the King,
God shall make him great,
God shall guard the state;
All that hearts can pray,
All that lips can sing,
God shall hear to-day;—
God shall save the King!

Daughter Of Ancient Kings

Chorus

DAUGHTER of ancient Kings,
Mother of Kings to be,
Gift that the bright wind bore on his sparkling wings,
Over the Northern Sea!

Nothing so sweet he brings,
Nothing so fair to see,
Purest, stateliest, Daughter of ancient Kings,
Mother of Kings to be!

Britain, Ask Of Thyself

Solo (Bass) and Chorus (Tenor and Bass.)

BRITAIN, ask of thyself, and see that thy sons be strong,
Strong to arise and go, if ever the war-trump peal;
See that thy navies speed, to the sound of the battle-song,
Then, when the winds are up, and the shuddering bulwarks reel,
Smite the mountainous wave, and scatter the flying foam,
Big with the battle-thunder that echoeth loud and long;—
See that thy squadrons haste, when loosed are the hounds of hell:—
Then shall the eye flash fire, and the valorous heart grow light,
Under the drifting smoke, and the scream of the flying shell,
When the hillside hisses with death,—and never a foe in sight.
So shalt thou rest in peace, enthroned in thine island home;—
Britain, ask of thyself, and see that thy sons be strong!

Hark, Upon The Hallowed Air

Soli (Soprano and Tenor.)

Only Let The Heart Be Pure

Quartet

HARK, upon the hallowed air,
Spirits pure of sight and sense,
Hovering visions, rich and fair,
Lend their radiant influence!
Airy powers of Earth and Sky
Bless our meet solemnity!
Music, sweetest child of heaven,
At thy touch the heart is free,—
Ancient wrongs by thee forgiven,
Cares uplifted, healed by thee,

Listen smiling, borne along
In the sacred tide of song.

Music of the poet's heart!
Widening yet the echoes roll;
Fiery secrets, winged by art,
Light the lonely listening soul,
Till the aching silence rings
With the beat of heavenly wings.

Magic web of woven hues,
Tender shadow, linked line,
Sweet mysterious avenues
Opening out to Light Divine!
Painter-poet, thou canst teach
More than frail and faltering speech.

Quartet

ONLY let the heart be pure,
Pure in steadfast innocence;
Stainless honour, strong and sure,
Stem the ardent tide of sense!
So shall Wisdom, one with Truth,
Keep undimmed the fires of youth.

Strong to conquer, strong to bless
Britain, Heav'n hath made thee great!
Courage knit with gentleness
Best befits thy sober state.
As the golden days increase,
Crown your victories with peace!

Peace, Gentle Peace

Quartet and Chorus (unaccompanied.)

PEACE, gentle Peace, who, smiling through thy tears,
Returnest, when the sounds of war are dumb,
Replenishing the bruised and broken earth,
And lifting motherly her shattered form;
When comest thou? Our brethren long for thee.

Thou dost restore the darkened light of home,
Give back the father to his children's arms;
Thou driest tenderly the mourner's tears,
And all thy face is lit with holy light;—
Our earth is fain for thee! Return and come!

Land Of Hope And Glory

Finale (Contralto Solo and Tutti.)

LAND of hope and glory, Mother of the free,
How may we extol thee, who are born of thee?

Truth and Right and Freedom, each a holy gem,
Stars of solemn brightness, weave thy diadem.

Tho' thy way be darkened, still in splendour drest,
As the star that trembles o'er the liquid West.

Throned amid the billows, throned inviolate,
Thou hast reigned victorious, thou hast smiled at fate.

Land of hope and glory, Fortress of the free,
How may we extol thee, praise thee, honour thee?

Hark, a mighty nation maketh glad reply;
Lo, our lips are thankful, lo, our hearts are high!

Hearts in hope uplifted, loyal lips that sing;
Strong in faith and freedom, we have crowned our King!

THE SPIRIT OF ENGLAND Op. 80

Words: Laurence Binyon

The Fourth Of August

Now in thy splendour go before us,
Spirit of England, ardent-eyed,
Enkindle this dear earth that bore us,
In the hour of peril purified.

The cares we hugged drop out of vision.
Our hearts with deeper thoughts dilate.
We step from days of sour division
Into the grandeur of our fate.

For us the glorious dead have striven,
They battled that we might be free.
We to their living cause are given;
We arm for men that are to be.

Among the nations noblest chartered,
England recalls her heritage.
In her is that which is not bartered,
Which force can neither quell nor cage.

For her immortal stars are burning,
With her the hope that's never done,
The seed that's in the Spring's returning,
The very flower that seeks the sun.

She fights the fraud that feeds desire on
Lies, in a lust to enslave or kill,
The barren creed of blood and iron,
Vampire of Europe's wasted will . . .

Endure, O Earth! and thou, awaken
Purged by this dreadful winnowing-fan,
O wronged, untameable, unshaken
Soul of divinely suffering man.

To Women

YOUR hearts are lifted up, your hearts
That have foreknown the utter price.
Your hearts burn upward like a flame
Of splendour and of sacrifice.

For you, you too, to battle go,
Not with the marching drums and cheers
But in the watch of solitude
And through the boundless night of fears.

Swift, swifter than those hawks of war,
Those threatening wings that pulse the air,
Far as the vanward ranks are set,
You are gone before them, you are there!

And not a shot comes blind with death
And not a stab of steel is pressed
Home, but invisibly it tore
And entered first a woman's breast.

Amid the thunder of the guns,
The lightnings of the lance and sword,
Your hope, your dread, your throbbing pride.
Your infinite passion is outpoured.

From hearts that are as one high heart,
Withholding naught from doom and bale
Burningly offered up,—to bleed,
To bear, to break, but not to fail!

For The Fallen

WITH proud thanksgiving, a mother for her children,
England mourns for her dead across the sea.
Flesh of her flesh they were, spirit of her spirit,
Fallen in the cause of the free.

Solemn the drums thrill; Death august and royal
Sings sorrow up into immortal spheres.
There is music in the midst of desolation
And a glory that shines upon our tears.

They went with songs to the battle, they were young,
Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow.
They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted,
They fell with their faces to the foe.

They fought, they were terrible, nought could tame them,
Hunger, nor legions, nor shattering cannonade.
They laughed, they sang their melodies of England,
They fell open-eyed and unafraid.

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

They mingle not with their laughing comrades again;
They sit no more at familiar tables of home;
They have no lot in our labour of the day-time;
They sleep beyond England's foam.

But where our desires are and our hopes profound,
Felt as a well-spring that is hidden from sight,
To the innermost heart of their own land they are known
As the stars are known to the Night;

As the stars that shall be bright when we are dust,
Moving in marches upon the heavenly plain,
As the stars that are starry in the time of our darkness,
To the end, to the end, they remain.

Laurence Binyon.

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Editor of The Times.*

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SIR EDWARD ELGAR (1857–1934)

CORONATION ODE Op. 44

Words: Arthur Christopher Benson
Teresa Cahill soprano Anne Collins contralto
Anthony Rolfe Johnson tenor Gwynne Howell bass

- [1] I — Introduction: Crown the King (9:50)
Soli and chorus
[2] II — (a) The Queen (2:40)
Chorus
[3] II — (b) Daughter of Ancient Kings (2:24)
Chorus
[4] III — Britain, ask of thyself (3:54)
Bass solo and chorus; tenor and bass
[5] IV — (a) Hark, upon the hallowed air (8:43)
Soli: soprano and tenor
(b) Only let the heart be pure
Quartet: soprano, contralto, tenor, bass

- [6] V — Peace, Perfect Peace (4:08)
Soli and chorus
[7] VI — Finale: Land of Hope and Glory (4:14)
Contralto and chorus

36:05

THE SPIRIT OF ENGLAND Op. 80

Words: Laurence Binyon
Teresa Cahill soprano

- [8] I — The Fourth of August (8:42)
[9] II — To Women (6:39)
[10] III — For the Fallen (15:00)

30:39

TT=66:50

ADD

SCOTTISH NATIONAL ORCHESTRA CHORUS
Chorus master: John Currie
SCOTTISH NATIONAL ORCHESTRA
SIR ALEXANDER GIBSON conductor

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