

## INTRODUCTION AND ALLEGRO, Op. 47

Edward Elgar (1857 – 1934)

"Edward Elgar is the personification of the true English character in music  
... a noble personality and a born aristocrat". (Jean Sibelius)

Even though Edward Elgar has written many symphonies, concertos, operas and chamber music, he is probably most recognized as the composer of ***Pomp and Circumstances Military March No. 1***. It is often played at commencements and one of its themes "The Land of Hope and Glory" has also been recorded by many notable singers around the world. Another well known composition of Elgar is the ***Introduction and Allegro, Op. 47***, a masterpiece in the string orchestra repertoire.

Edward Elgar wrote the ***Introduction and Allegro, Op. 47*** for the newly-founded London Symphony Orchestra in March of 1905 and is scored for string quartet and string orchestra. One of the themes of the music was a Welsh folk tune that Elgar heard during a family trip in Cardiganshire, West Wales. The musical form of the piece resembles the "*concerto grosso*" of the Baroque period even though the ripieno sections seldom play the exact music as the string quartet (concertino). The work was dedicated to Samuel Sanford, a professor at Yale University, who was instrumental in helping Elgar to receive an honorary Doctorate of Music from the university. Since Elgar was a trained violinist, he has written some very challenging music for the violins; even the cellos and double basses have some passages that require musicians of calibre to perfect. After all, August Jaeger has mentioned that this piece was to showcase the virtuosity of the string section of the London Symphony Orchestra.

Sir Edward Elgar was born in Lower Broadheath, Worcester, England. His father, William, was a piano tuner by trade and his mother, Ann, was very interested in the arts and encouraged all her children to take music lessons early in life. Elgar began taking piano and violin lessons at the age of eight, and his father would sometimes bring him along on his jobs so as to provide his son an opportunity to show off his talents to important local officials. Elgar married Caroline Alice Roberts, one of his former students, in 1899 and had a daughter named Carice in 1890. He wrote little music after the death of his wife, Caroline, in 1920 and died in 1934 of intestinal cancer. He was buried at St. Wulstan's Church in Little Malvern, next to his beloved wife.

Elgar has always considered himself a self taught musician. He once mentioned that "my first music was learnt in the Cathedral... from books borrowed from the music library, when I was eight, nine or ten." Elgar's violin teacher, Adolf Pollitzer, thought that he was good enough to earn a living playing the violin professionally, but he never did so. Instead, he was more interested in composition and devoted most of his time in writing music. His first major success came with the "**Enigma Variations**" in 1899, a piece that was dedicated to "*my friends pictured within*". Other important compositions include the lovely *Salut d'Amour* for violin and piano, *Serenade for Strings, Op. 20* and *Cello Concerto in E Minor*.

## FANTASIA ON A THEME OF THOMAS TALLIS

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872 – 1958)

"***Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis***" by Ralph Vaughan Williams was written in 1910 (later revised in 1913 & 1919) for double-orchestra, based on the Thomas Tallis' psalm chant tune "Why fum'th in Fight?", written in 1567. It was premiered at Gloucester Cathedral for the Three Choirs Festival in September, 1910. Thomas Tallis was an English composer who lived between 1505 and 1585 and was remembered as one of the notable British church music composers of the 16th. century

Ralph Vaughan Williams was born on October 12, 1872 in Down Ampney, Gloucestershire and was the son of the Reverend Arthur Vaughan Williams. He was brought up by his mother after the death of his father when he was only three. He first attended Charterhouse School and then Trinity College. Later, he went to study composition with Sir Hubert Parry, Charles Stanford and Henry Wood at the Royal College of Music in London. He was also a pupil of Max Bruch (Berlin) and Maurice Ravel (Paris). Like Bela Bartok, Vaughan Williams was very interested in folk songs, he would travel into the countryside to collect them from singers and notated them for the enjoyment of future generations.

During Vaughan Williams' life time, he has written music of every genre. He wrote nine symphonies, concertos for various instruments, five operas, incidental music, film scores and most of all, vocal music for solo voices, choir and numerous arrangements of Christmas carols. His musical style is considered very patriotic and English in the sense that he loved to incorporate English folk tunes in his compositions.

Vaughan Williams was married twice. He first married Adeline Fisher in 1896 who passed away in 1951 from chronic arthritis. In 1953, he married Ursula Wood, a British poet. She wrote the libretto for his choral work *The Sons of Light* and later published his biography "RVW: A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams in 1964. Vaughan Williams died on the 26th August 1958, his ashes are interred in Westminster Abbey.

#### **THE OLD BACHELOR SUITE, Z. 611**

**Henry Purcell (1659? – 1695)**

***"Here lyes Henry Purcell Esq., who left this life and  
is gone to that blessed place where only his harmony can be exceeded."  
(Henry Purcell's Epitaph)***

Henry Purcell, a highly regarded British composer of all time, was born in Westminster, England 1658/59? and died there in 1695. He was one of the three children of Henry Senior and his younger brother Daniel was also a composer. Unfortunately, his father passed away when he was only seven years and was placed under the guardianship of his uncle Thomas. His first music teachers were Captain Henry Cooke, Pelham Humfrey and Dr. John Blow (soon after the death of Humfrey in 1674). In 1680, Dr. Blow decided to resign his position as the organist at Westminster Abbey due to the impressive talents demonstrated by the young Purcell. In 1682, Purcell was appointed organist of the Chapel-Royale, a position that he was able to hold simultaneously with his commitment with Westminster Abbey.

Purcell's first composition was believed to be an ode for the king's birthday in 1670. His greatest works include his *Te Deum* and *Jubilate*, written for St. Cecilia's Day in 1694. He also composed a number of Baroque operas including the famous *Dido and Aeneas* (1689) and *The Fairy Queen* (1692; an adaptation of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), incidental music, some 250 songs, 12 fantasias for viol consort, a limited number of suites for harpsichord and numerous anthems. He also set music to many plays such as Thomas d'Urfey's comedy "*The Virtuous Wife*" or "*Good Luck at Last*" (1679) and was premiered at the Dukes Theatre by King's servants. Unfortunately, he did not write much music for the organ probably because he was too involved as an organist at Westminster Abbey.

Henry Purcell died on November 21st., 1695 in Dean's Yard, Westminster and was laid to rest near the organ of Westminster Abbey. Although his music was never published during his lifetime, his widow managed to accomplish that before she died in 1706.

**"The Old Bachelor"** was a Restoration comedy written by William Congreve (1670 – 1729), an English playwright and poet. The main plot of the story is centred around an "Old Bachelor" named Heartwell and his adventures/misadventures with the women in his life. These comedies were mostly written between 1660 – 1710 and they are famous for their sexual explicitness. In fact, Charles II, King of England at the time, encouraged the production of such theatrical works. This particular instrumental suite is scored for strings and basso continuo, and is consisted of nine short movements that include a number of Baroque dances and airs.

## **A PRAYER FOR ELIZABETH**

**Jean Coulthard (1908 – 2000)**

"A Prayer for Elizabeth" was commissioned by the CBC to commemorate the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953. It is one of Coulthard's early works and is scored for string orchestra. Coulthard's has instructed clearly at the beginning of the piece that it is to be performed "*In the Spirit of Quiet Devotion,*" which is in contrast to what one might expect in most music written for coronations with the sounds of trumpets and percussion. This piece actually offers a little prayer to Her majesty on this very special occasion. In terms of musical style, this work contains much of the chromaticism and harmonic structure found in the music of the 20th. century.

Jean Coulthard, together with Violet Archer and Barbara Pentland, are considered to be the trio of women composers who dominated the Western Canadian music scene in the 20th. century. She was born in 1908 in Vancouver, British Columbia to Dr. Walter Coulthard and Jean Blake Robinson. Coulthard began taking piano lessons with her mother at an early age and later with pianist Jan Cherniavsky and music theory with Frederick Chubb. She also had the opportunity to study with many great composers of the 20th. century such as Béla Bartók, Aaron Copland and Arnold Schoenberg. In 1928, she received a scholarship from the Vancouver Women's Musical Club which enabled her to further pursue her musical studies at the Royal College of Music where she studied composition with Ralph Vaughan Williams. In addition, she spent a year at New York's Juilliard School of Music studying with Bernard Wagenaar, a Dutch/American composer. Between 1947 – 1973, Coulthard was a Professor of Composition at the University of British Columbia.

In total, Jean Coulthard has written over 350 works and some of her well-known compositions include *Cradle Song (1927)*, *Threnody (1935)*, *Canadian Fantasy*, *Ballade "A Winter's Tale" (1940)* and the opera *Return of the Native (1979)*

In 1978, Jean Coulthard was made an Officer of the Order of Canada and Freeman of the City of Vancouver. In 1984, PRO Canada declared as the "composer of the year". She also received an honorary doctorate from the University of British Columbia for her tremendous contribution to the university and Canadian music in the spring of 1988, and was named to the Order of British Columbia in 1994.

## **SIMPLE SYMPHONY, Op. 4**

**Benjamin Britten (1913 – 1976)**

Benjamin Britten was born on St. Cecilia's Day (patron saint of music) in 1913 in Lowestoft, Suffolk and died on December 4, 1976 in Aldeburgh. He was buried in the churchyard of Sts. Peter and Paul's Church next to this partner, Sir Peter Pears. Britten's father was a dentist, while his mother was gifted pianist who gave him his first lessons on the piano and music theory. At the age of 7, Britten began studying the viola with Audrey Alston and shortly after his 14th. birthday, he became the student of British composer Frank Bridge. Between 1930 and 1933, Britten studied at the Royal College of Music with composer John Ireland and pianist Arthur Benjamin. He also had the opportunity to get acquainted with the music of Stravinsky, Mahler and Shostakovich by regularly attending concerts in his home town.

Britten was a prolific composer who wrote more 800 works during his life time. They include the "**Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra**", "**Peter Grimes**" and "**The Beggar's Opera**", "**Hymn to St. Cecilia**", the "**War Requiem**" and "**Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge for string orchestra**", Op. 10 (1937). He also wrote numerous vocal pieces were written especially for his partner and tenor, Sir Peter Pears, such as the "**Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings**".

During Britten's life time, he has received many accolades and awards such as UNESCO's International Rostrum of Composers in 1961 for "**A Midsummer Night's Dream**", a 1963 Grammy's Awards for the Best Classical Album of the Year, Royal Philharmonic Society Gold Medal in 1964. Even though Britten had previously declined a knighthood, he accepted a life peerage in July, 1976 as Baron Britten of Aldeburgh in the County of Suffolk, a few months before his death.

Britten's "***Simple Symphony***", Op. 4 was written between December, 1933 and February, 1934 in Lowestoft and was dedicated to his viola teacher, Ms. Audrey Alston. This short symphony, with four movements, is scored for string orchestra and it was premiered in 1934 at Stuart Hall in Norwich, with Britten as the conductor. The music has a very child-like character because the thematic materials used were music written when Britten was a teenager.

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