

Crown of India, op 66

Incidental music to a masque for contralto and bass soloists, chorus and orchestra, to a libretto by Henry Hamilton, in twelve parts:

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| 1(a) - Introduction; | 7 - Interlude; |
| 1(b) - Sacred Measure; | 8 - Warriors' Dance; |
| 2 - Dance of the Nautch Girls; | 9 - Cities of India; |
| 3 - Hail, Immemorial Ind; | 10 - Crown of India March; |
| 4 - March of the Mogul Emperors; | 11 - Crowning of Delhi; |
| 5 - Entrance of John Company; | 12 - Ave Imperator. |
| 6 - Rule of England; | |

Parts 1(a), 2, 5, 8 and 4 subsequently arranged by Elgar into an orchestral suite.

The Masque

Approximate Length:	60 minutes
First Performance:	
Date:	11 March 1912
Venue:	London Coliseum theatre
Conductor:	the composer

The Orchestral Suite

Approximate Length:	18 minutes
First Performance:	
Date:	11 September 1912
Venue:	Hereford Festival
Conductor:	the composer

In 1911, King George V and Queen Mary were crowned in India. To commemorate the event, a huge masque was commissioned and staged at the Coliseum Theatre in London in March 1912. As composer of the Coronation Ode, written for King Edward VII's planned coronation in 1902 and revived in 1911 for King George's coronation, it was natural that Elgar should be approached to write the incidental music to accompany the masque.

Elgar composed twelve pieces for the masque, around sixty minutes of music in total, for contralto, bass, chorus and orchestra. He subsequently extracted five of these and added an intermezzo for solo violin to form a suite, first performed at the Three Choirs Festival in Hereford in September 1912. It is in this form that the work is normally heard today.

The similarities of purpose with the Coronation Ode inevitably lead to musical comparisons being made between the two works. But it should be remembered that, while the Coronation Ode was written as a self-sustaining choral work, The Crown of India was written for the theatre, with the orchestral suite constructed subsequently and representing

what Elgar presumably considered to be the best of the music. And whereas the Coronation Ode resulted from a true collaboration between Elgar and a sympathetic librettist, A C Benson, over a period of more than a year, for the masque Elgar was presented with a completed libretto by Henry Hamilton. Elgar considered it to be riddled with the rhetoric of Empire and omitted passages with which he had little sympathy. Finally, Elgar was given an impossible deadline of barely more than a month in which to complete the score.

Having only recently moved into Severn House, Hampstead and faced with substantial bills to settle, Elgar nevertheless took on the task for the money it would earn him. He put together a score composed almost entirely from themes he had jotted down over the previous ten years. This is in many respects the key to the work : as music conveying the pomp and pageantry of the times, it clearly takes second place to a number of his better known works. But leave behind the circumstance and you will find passages containing the beauty, craft and inventiveness one traditionally associates with Elgar....something of a mixed bag, but certainly not a work to be discarded or ignored.