

Fringes of the Fleet

Four songs for four baritones and orchestra, with words by Rudyard Kipling :

1. The Lowestoft Boat
2. Fate's Discourtesy
3. Submarines
4. The Sweepers

A fifth song, for four unaccompanied baritones with words by Glibert Parker, was subsequently added:

Beyond the Bar

The Four Kipling Songs

Approximate Length:	14 minutes
1. The Lowestoft Boat	3 minutes 40 seconds
2. Fate's Discourtesy	3 minutes 55 seconds
3. Submarines	2 minutes 55 seconds
4. The Sweepers	3 minutes 25 seconds

First Performance:

Date:	11 June 1917
Venue:	Coliseum Theatre, London
Conductor:	the composer
Dedicated to :	Admiral Lord Beresford

Inside the Bar

Approximate Length:	3 minutes
First Performance:	
Date:	25 June 1917
Venue:	Coliseum Theatre, London
Dedicated to:	The Four Singers

Unsurprisingly, most of Elgar's output during the years 1914-18 reflected the great conflict then being fought. Carillon, Une Voix dans le Desert, Le Drapeau Belge and The Spirit of England each comprise settings of poems relating directly or indirectly to the war. But whereas the first three are poems of a patriotic nature - intended to raise the spirits and rouse the nation to ever greater efforts - the poems which Elgar chose for The Spirit of England, taken from Laurence Binyon's book The Winnowing Fan, are of an altogether different nature, attempting to capture the realism of wartime in its many guises.

The story is told elsewhere of how, having finished setting To Women and For the Fallen, the poems he had chosen for the latter two sections of The Spirit of England, Elgar encountered difficulties - of an emotional rather than musical nature - in completing the

setting of *The Fourth of August*, the poem that was to open the work. For a period of some months during 1916, he put the work to one side, returning to complete it only in the early months of 1917. It is therefore somewhat surprising that, with that work out of the way, he immediately embarked on a further setting of war-related poetry, although this time of a somewhat less sombre mood.

The four poems he chose were by the celebrated poet and novelist Rudyard Kipling. Each had a nautical theme, leading Elgar to determine on the title *Fringes of the Fleet* for the cycle. He set the poems for the unusual combination of four baritones and orchestra. On finishing the four Kipling poems, Elgar immediately set to work on a fifth poem, *Inside the Bar*, by Gilbert Parker. Although he set this poem for four unaccompanied baritones, he subsequently added it to the *Fringes of the Fleet* cycle.

Like *Carillon*, the cycle was exceptionally well received. After a series of performances at the Coliseum Theatre, London during June 1917, Elgar took the work on an extensive provincial tour, lasting until November. Further performances at the Coliseum were planned but cancelled when Kipling belatedly objected to use being made of his poems in this way. But Kipling's objections came too late to deter Elgar from recording the cycle with the original four soloists in July 1917.