

## Pomp and Circumstance. Elgar's other marches.

Some people have considered Elgar's marches to be a manifestation of jingoism, but his own attitude was unequivocal: 'I know that there are a lot of people who like to celebrate events with music. To those people I have given tunes. Is that wrong?'

The first work in this genre was the *Imperial March* (Opus 32) written to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1897. It was commissioned by the publishers, Novellos, and proved an instant success. Then came the first two *Pomp and Circumstance* marches, which premiered together. (Opus number 39 applies to all five marches.) The second, in A minor, dedicated to the composer Granville Bantock, was very different from the first. No.3 in C minor, completed in 1904 and dedicated to Elgar's great friend, Ivor Atkins, is more introspective than either. It begins with a persistent rhythm while its A flat trio is lightly scored.

With the exception of No.1, it is probably No.4, in G major, that is the most popular of all Elgar's marches. Written in 1907, it was dedicated to the George Robertson Sinclair, organist at Hereford Cathedral. Its majestic trio tune was the only other one to have words added. Elgar's wife, Alice wrote *The Kingsway* in 1909 to celebrate the opening of a London street, but better known are the words by the writer A.P. Herbert, *All men shall be free*, often used during the Second World War.

Elgar's next two marches were the *Coronation March* (Opus 65) of 1911, written to celebrate the coronation of King George V, and the *Empire March* of 1924 for the Empire Exhibition at Wembley. The former displays a kind of brooding anger and, although played at the coronation, never achieved the success of some of the earlier works. The latter has some of the finest scoring that even Elgar, a master of orchestration, achieved.

The final *Pomp and Circumstance March* to be completed, No.5 in C major, was written in 1930 at the instigation of Sinclair's successor at Hereford, Percy Hull, to whom it was dedicated. Many consider its trio tune the greatest and subtlest of them all, although it never achieved the popularity of Nos.1 and 4. A sixth *Pomp and Circumstance March* exists in fragmentary form.