

Part-Songs 1889-1909

Songs, with or without instrumental or orchestral accompaniment, for multiple voices.

Year	Title	Words by :	Dedicated to :
1889	O Happy Eyes , op 18/1	C Alice Elgar	
1889	My Love Dwelt in a Northern Land , op 18/3	Andrew Lang	Rev J Hampton
1891	Spanish Serenade , op 23	H W Longfellow	
1894	The Snow , op 26/1	C Alice Elgar	Mrs E B Fitton
1894	Fly, Singing Bird , op 26/2	C Alice Elgar	Mrs E B Fitton
1895	Scenes from the Bavarian Highlands)	Bavarian Folksongs adapted by C. Alice Elgar.	Nr, & NMrs. Henry Slingsby Bethell, Garmisch, Bavaria
1896	As Torrents in Summer (from King Olaf)	H W Longfellow	
1896	Grete Malvern on a Rock (see Religious Works)	S Wensley	
1898	The Sword Song (from Caractacus)	H A Ackworth	
1899	To Her Beneath Whose Steadfast Star	F W H Myers	Queen Victoria
1902	Weary Wind of the West	T E Brown	"Composed for Morecambe Festival"
1902	Five Part Songs from the Greek Anthology , op 45		Sir Walter Parratt
	1. Yea, Cast Me from Heights	tr Alma Strettell	
	2. Whether I Find Thee	tr Andrew Lang	
	3. After Many a Dusty Mile	tr Edmund Gosse	
	4. It's Oh to be a Wild Wind	tr W M Hardinge	
	5. Feasting I Watch	tr Richard Garnett	
1905	Evening Scene	Coventry Patmore	In memoriam R G H Howson
1907	How Calmly the Evening (see Religious Works)	T Lynch	
1907	Love , op 18/2	Arthur Macquarie	C Alice Elgar
1907	Four Part Songs , op 53		
	1. There is Sweet Music	Tennyson	Canon Gorton
	2. Deep in my Soul	Byron	Julia H Worthington
	3. O Wild West Wind	Shelley	W G McNaught
	4. Owls	the composer	Pietro d'Alba

1907 The Reveille , op 54	Bret Harte	Henry C Embleton
1908 Marching Song	Capt de Courcy Stretton	
1909 The Angelus , op 56 (see Religious Works)	(Tuscan dialect)	Mrs Charles Stuart- Wortley
1909 Go, Song of Mine , op 57	Calvacanti tr D G Rosetti	Alfred H Littleton

PART-SONGS 1889-1909 – Introduction

Like many great composers, Elgar's reputation rests on a relatively small number of large scale, predominantly orchestral works that represent a numerically small proportion of his total output. But among the lesser known cantatas, chamber works, incidental music and salon pieces that make up the remainder of the opus is a significant body of songs - approximately one hundred in all. Around one half of these are songs for solo voice which, with one or two notable exceptions such as *Pleading* (op 48, 1908), are not of great merit. But the remainder are part-songs of great delicacy, beauty and inventiveness. Elgar composed part-songs throughout his working life, often, it seems, almost as a form of relaxation while working on large-scale pieces or on holiday. A few were provided, sometimes retrospectively, with instrumental accompaniment but the majority were written for unaccompanied voices. Some, notably the *Five Part-songs from the Greek Anthology* and the later *Four Part-songs* of opus 53, Elgar wrote for a general audience. From 1903, however, Elgar became particularly closely involved with the festival held at Morecambe, Lancashire and with its chairman, Canon Charles Gorton (1854-1912), who provided Elgar with theological assistance with *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*. These associations led Elgar to write many of his best part-songs. Canon Gorton's daughter, Mrs Helen Walker, recalled some performances of Elgar's part-songs in the Morecambe rectory when the Elgars stayed there, "I always remember ... my father arranging for the Morecambe Madrigal Society to be sent up on the 'landing' after dinner, their singing a number of Sir Edward's part-songs. He having never heard them sung before said 'I never realized I had written anything so beautiful'".

Two - the demanding *Weary Wind of the West* and the peaceful *Evening Scene* - were specifically written as test pieces for the 1903 and 1906 festivals, the former bearing the inscription "Composed for Morecambe Festival". Choirs eager to demonstrate their competitive edge were quick to seize upon the works – and they were a large market, with over 3,500 competitors in Morecambe in 1907.

Notes on Individual Songs

O Happy Eyes, op. 18 no. 1 (1889) 3 mins 00 secs

Words by Caroline Alice Elgar (1848-1920)

My Love Dwelt in a Northern Land, op. 18 no. 3 (1889) 4 mins 30 secs

Words by Andrew Lang (1844-1912)

Elgar composed part-songs throughout his working life, often, it seems, almost as a form of

relaxation while working on large-scale pieces or on holiday. The earliest that remain in the standard repertoire are two composed in 1889 shortly after his marriage to Alice – *O Happy Eyes* and *My Love Dwelt in a Northern Land*.

Late 1889 was an exciting time: Edward had had *Salut d'amour* published by Schott, *Vesper Voluntaries*, to be published, like his *Queen Mary's Song*, by Orsborn & Tuckwood. At the same time he composed two part-songs. *O Happy Eyes* was a setting of verses Alice wrote in February 1888, before their engagement, and was probably composed simultaneously with *My Love Dwelt in a Northern Land*.

Alice also wrote alternative words (*Afar amidst the Sunny Isles*) for *My Love Dwelt in a Northern Land* when it seemed as if Andrew Lang (1844-1912, and described by Arnold Bax as "that notorious tough") would refuse permission for his poem to be used. The poem, like *The Black Knight*, was set in Mediaeval, chivalric times, and was published in the May 1882 edition of *The Century* magazine. Eventually, Lang relented, as Elgar recalled, "with a very bad grace". The song was dedicated to the Rev. John Hampton (1834-1922), the Warden of St. Michael's College, Tenbury as well as a musician, who conducted for the Tenbury Music Society the first performance on 13 November 1890 as he was to conduct in 1893 the first performance of Elgar's *Spanish Serenade*.

The part-songs were left in January 1890 for a contact at Novello with a request from the composer to "bring them quickly under the notice of your firm. You may remember I have been requested to write for Worcester Festival & am very anxious to get some things introduced & published before that event." Novello accepted only *My Love Dwelt in a Northern Land*, for 100 printed copies in exchange for the copyright. Four years later, Alice persuaded Edward to re-submit to Novello the rejected, but now revised, *O Happy Eyes*, and this time they accepted the song, paying 3 guineas for it, a pointer to Elgar's enhanced reputation.

Ivor Atkins gave a fine performance of *My Love Dwelt in a Northern Land* in December 1921. In a letter of 8 December 1921, he wrote to Edward, "I atoned for a very imperfect performance I gave in your hearing about 21 years ago ... People insisted upon an encore and the choir sang it even better the second time".

*O happy eyes
O happy eyes, for you will see
My love, my lady pass today;
What I may not, that may you say
And ask for answer daringly.
O happy eyes.*

*O happy flow'rs that touch her dress,
That touch her dress and take her smile,
O whisper to her all the while
Some words of love in idleness.
O happy flowers.*

*O happy airs that touch her cheek,
And lightly kiss and float away,
So carelessly as if in play,
Why take ye all the joy I seek?*

*O happy eyes my love to see,
Alas! alas! I may not greet
With word or touch my lady sweet;
More happy eyes, say all for me.*

*My Love Dwelt in a Northern Land
My love dwelt in a northern land
A dim tower in a forest green
Was his, and far away the sand,
And gray wash of the waves were seen,
The woven forest boughs between.*

*And through the northern summer night
The sunset slowly died away,
And herds of strange deer, silver white,
Came gleaming through the forest gray,
And fled like ghosts before the day.*

*And oft, that month, we watch'd the moon
Wax great and white o'er wood and lawn,
And wane, with waning of the June,
Till, like a brand for battle drawn,
She fell, and flamed in a wild dawn.]*

*I know not if the forest green
Still girdles round that castle gray,
I know not if, the boughs between,
The white deer vanish ere the day.
The grass above my love is green,
My heart is colder than the clay.*

Spanish Serenade, op 23 (1891) 5 mins 00 secs

Words by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882)

This is a setting of the serenade sung to Preciosa in Act 1 Sc. 3 of Longfellow's play *The Spanish Student*. Elgar began it in late 1891 and scored it for small orchestra on 12 June 1892. It was first performed on 7 April 1893 by the Herefordshire Philharmonic Society conducted by the Rev. John Hampton (1834-1922), the Warden of St. Michael's College, Tenbury as well as a musician, who was also the dedicatee of Edward's part-song *My Love dwelt in a Northern Land*, op. 18 no. 3. Subtitled '*Stars of the Summer Night*', it was published by Novello in 1892.

This was the second work of a Spanish influence that was to recur intermittently throughout Elgar's works later in his career, beginning with [Sevillana](#) (1884) for small orchestra, the *Spanish Serenade* of 1891, in *The Black Knight* and the late, unfinished opera, *The Spanish Lady*.

*Stars of the summer night!
Far in yon azure deeps,
Hide, hide your golden light!
She sleeps, my lady sleeps!*

*Moon of the summer night!
Far down yon western steeps,
Sink, sink in silver light!
She sleeps, my lady sleeps!*

*Wind of the summer night!
Where yonder woodbine creeps,
Fold, fold thy pinions light!
She sleeps, my lady sleeps!*

*Dreams of the summer night!
Tell her, her lover keeps watch!
While in slumbers light
She sleeps, my lady sleeps!*

The Snow, op. 26 no. 1 (1894) 6 mins 00 secs
Words by C. Alice Elgar (1848-1920)
Fly, Singing Bird, op. 26 no. 2 (1894) 4 mins 00 secs
Words by C. Alice Elgar (1848-1920)

In most respects, this was probably the happiest period of the Elgars' married life, when Edward's status as a developing but still comparatively unknown composer allowed him greater freedom to choose what to work on and with whom. As his reputation grew, together with the pressure of maintaining it, Elgar might well have abandoned part-songs and concentrated on the composition of more substantial works were it not for the growing popularity during the first years of the twentieth century of competitive choral festivals, particularly in the North of England. Not only did these festivals provide an outlet for performances of his part-songs but also created a demand for such compositions that allowed Elgar to command fees disproportionate to the effort required to write them. Novello's bemoaned the high prices Elgar asked but recognised that, if they did not meet his demands, he could readily find another music publisher prepared to pay the asking price.

Although Alice could not be ranked among the great poets, she was not without talent. She had independent literary ambitions and had published some of her work long before she first became acquainted with Elgar. Not least among these was an epic poem, *Isabel Trevithoe*, a love story based in Cornwall. It was published in 1878, and provided the words

for the best of Elgar's accompanied part-songs, composed in 1894 - *The Snow* and *Fly, Singing Bird*. These were intended to be joined by a third song, and were originally written as three-part songs for female voices with an accompaniment for two violins and a piano. Elgar provided a full orchestral accompaniment for both works in December 1903. In this form, *The Snow* in particular is an exceptional work, capturing in the space of a few minutes a full range of emotions from a haunting bleakness to an emphatic joie de vivre. Both works were given their first performance on 12 March 1904 in London's Queen's Hall. Of all his part-songs, probably none retains public affection as much as *The Snow* - written before he achieved national fame.

The two works were dedicated to Mrs Harriet Fitton, who was a splendid local pianist and organisational dynamo and was of one of Elgar's (and particularly Lady Elgar's) great friends. She had three daughters: the violinist, Hilda (to whom *Pastourelle* for violin and piano was dedicated), the cellist, Monica, and the pianist and viola player, Isabel, who became "Ysobel" of the sixth *Enigma* Variation and to whom was dedicated the short piano piece *Presto*. The part-songs, conducted by Elgar himself, featured in the inaugural concert of the Worcestershire Orchestral and Ladies' Choral Society on 8 December 1912. They were repeated in Harriet's memory in a concert in 1924, soon after her death, aged 90.

The Snow

*O snow, which sinks so light,
Brown earth is hid from sight
O soul, be thou as white as snow,
O snow, which falls so slow,
Dear earth quite warm below;
O heart, so keep thy glow
Beneath the snow.*

*O snow, in thy soft grave
Sad flow'rs the winter brave;
O heart, so sooth and save, as does the snow.
The snow must melt, must go,
Fast, fast as water flow.
Not thus, my soul, O sow
Thy gifts to fade like snow.*

*O snow, thou'rt white no more,
Thy sparkling too, is o'er;
O soul, be as before,
Was bright the snow.
Then as the snow all pure,
O heart be, but endure;
Through all the years full sure,
Not as the snow.*

*Fly, singing bird
Fly, singing bird, fly,*

*From the wood where lies shelter'd thy nest,
From the tree whence thou pourest thy song,
Fly away, far away to the west,
Tell my love that I wait,
Ah! too long and lonely, I wait.*

*Fly, singing bird, fly,
O'er the blossoming meadows, where grow
Yellow cowslips and daffodils pale.
Say I wait where anemones blow,
Weary wait, till with waiting I
Fail, and failing, I sigh.*

*Fly, singing bird, fly,
Leave thy nest 'midst the wood, lone, unsought,
Leave the cradling boughs, spread thy wing,
And swift as my following thought,
Onward speed, and swift flying, still sing,
Come, or I die!*

Scenes from the Bavarian Highlands, op. 27 (1895) 25 mins 00 secs
Bavarian Folksongs imitated by C. Alice Elgar (1848-1920)

1. *The Dance*
2. *False Love*
3. *Lullaby*
4. *Aspiration*
5. *On the Alm*
6. *The Marksman*

During the 1890s, the Elgars spent a succession of holidays in Southern Bavaria, staying in Oberstdorf in 1892 and in Garmisch in four of the following five years. The holidays were arranged by Mary Frances ('Minnie') Baker, sister of William Meath Baker who is pictured in the fourth *Enigma* Variation, and subsequently to become stepmother to Dora Penny, 'Dorabella' of the tenth variation. In those days, Garmisch had not developed into the bustling resort it is today and evening entertainment was sparse and unsophisticated. 1894 saw the Elgars on holiday for some weeks in Garmisch, staying at the guest-house run by an English family they met the previous year, the Bethells, and garnering many happy memories including the part-singing and Schuhplatt'l dancing of the villagers. Back in England, Elgar returned to work once more on *Scenes from the Saga of King Olaf*. At the same time he worked on some lighter 'scenes', a suite of part-songs of Bavarian Dances, to words written by Alice in imitation of Bavarian folksongs. He completed them on 9 April 1895 in their original form with piano accompaniment (adding an orchestra in 1896) and published by J. Williams in 1896, after rejection by Novello. Finally, he took three of the songs (*The Dance*, *Lullaby* and *The Marksman*) and provided arrangements for orchestra alone. The multiplicity of versions may have been Elgar's way of extracting maximum financial benefit from the tunes but it may equally reflect his deep affection for the music

and the area it represents. Each version has its own particular merits and, while this is definitely the lighter side of Elgar - there is no significant development or elaborate structure to each piece - the pieces are unsurpassed as simple melodies, containing an undeniable warmth and spirited happiness.

The collaboration with Alice reached its apogee on these and two of his finest part-songs *The Snow*, op. 26 no. 1 and *Fly, Singing Bird*, op. 26 no. 2 (see the notes on these.) In most respects, this was probably the happiest period of the Elgars' married life, when Edward's status as a developing but still comparatively unknown composer allowed him greater freedom to choose what to work on and with whom. The songs each bore a subtitle remembering a place they had visited: *The Dance (Sonnenbichl)*, *False Love (Wamberg)*, *Lullaby (In Hammersbach)*, *Aspiration (Bei Sanct Anton)*, *On the Alm (Hoch Alp* – and Alice added a further title, *True Love*), *The Marksman (Bei Murnau)*. With the intimate memories of shared places, the dedication to friends - Mr & Mrs Henry Slingsby Bethell, Garmisch, Bavaria – and the inter-relatedness of the themes, they were a distant precursor of the *Enigma Variations*.

The songs were first performed in Worcester by the Worcester Festival Choral Society, conducted by the Composer, on 21 April 1896. The orchestral version of nos. 1, 3 and 6 (Three Bavarian Dances) were performed under the baton of August Manns at the Crystal Palace on 23 October 1897 and published in this form by Novello in 1907.

The Dance

*Come and hasten to the dancing,
Merry eyes will soon be glancing,
Ha! my heart upbounds!
Come and dance a merry measure,
Quaff the bright brown ale my treasure,
Hark! what joyous sounds!*

*Sweet-heart come, on let us haste,
On, on, no time let us waste
With my heart I love thee
Dance, dance, for rest we disdain
Turn twirl and spin round again,
With my arm I hold thee!*

*Down the path the lights are gleaming,
friendly faces gladly beaming
Welcome us with song.
Dancing makes the heart grow lighter,
Makes the world and life grow brighter
As we dance along*

False Love

Now we hear the Spring's sweet voice

*Singing gladly through the world;
Bidding all the earth rejoice.*

*All is merry in the field,
Flowers grow amidst the grass,
Blossoms blue, red, white they yield.*

*As I seek my maiden true,
Sings the little lark on high
Fain to send her praises due.*

*As I climb and reach her door,
Ah! I see a rival there,
So farewell! for evermore.*

*Ever true was I to thee,
Never grieved or vexed thee, love,
False, oh! false, art thou of me.*

*Now amid the forest green,
Far from cruel eyes that mock
Will I dwell unloved, unseen.*

*Lullaby
Sleep, my son, oh! slumber softly,
While thy mother watches o'er thee,
Nothing can affright or harm thee.
Oh! sleep, my son.*

*Far-away
Zithers play,
Dancing gay
Calls to-day.*

*Vainly play
Zithers gay!
Here I stay
All the day.*

*Happily
Guarding thee,
Peacefully
Watching thee.*

*Sleep, my son, oh! slumber softly,
While thy mother watches o'er thee,
Oh! sleep, my son.*

Aspiration

*Over the heights the snow lies deep,
Sunk is the land in peaceful sleep;
Here by the house of God we pray,
Lead, Lord, our souls to-day.*

*Shielding, like the silent snow,
Fall his mercies here below.*

*Calmly then, like the snow-bound land,
Rest we in his protecting hand;
Bowing, we wait his mighty will:
Lead, Lord, and guide us still.*

On the Alm

*A mellow bell peals near,
It has so sweet a sound;
I know a maiden dear
With voice as full and round.*

*A sunlight alm shines clear,
With clover blossoms sweet;
There dwells my maiden dear
And there my love I meet.*

*There flying with no fear
The swallows pass all day,
And fast, my maiden dear,
Sees chamois haste away.*

*I cannot linger here,
I cannot wait below;
To seek my maiden dear,
I, to the alm (*) must go.*

*The mountain's call I hear,
And up the height I bound;
I know my maiden dear
Will mark my Juchhé (**) sound.*

*Rejoicing come I here
My flaxen-haired sweet-heart;
I love thee maiden dear,
Nay! bid me not depart!*

(*) German: an alpine meadow or pasture

(**) "Juchhe" is an interjection of joy in German (English: hurrah or hooray). The accent over the 'e' is not present in German.

The Marksman

*Come from the mountain side,
Come from the valleys wide,
See, how we muster strong,
Tramping along!*

*Rifle on shoulder sling,
Powder and bullets bring,
Manly in mind and heart,
Play we our part.*

*Sure be each eye to-day,
Steady each hand must stay
If in the trial we,
Victors would be!*

*Sharp is the crack! 'tis done!
Lost is the chance, or won;
Right in the gold is it?
Huzza! the hit!*

*The sun will sink and light the west
And touch the peaks with crimson glow;
Then shadows fill the vale with rest
While the stars look peace on all below.*

*In triumph then we take away,
And with our prizes homeward wend;
Through meadows sweet with new-mown hay,
A song exultant will we send.*

As Torrents in Summer (from Scenes from the Saga of King Olaf) (1896) 2 mins 15 secs
Words by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882)

King Olaf is a setting by Longfellow of "*The Nun of Nidaros*", part of No. 22 in *Tales of a Wayside Inn* in *The Musician's Tale: The Saga of King Olaf*, published in 1863. This extract is set for unaccompanied chorus and forms part of the Epilogue to the work where, after the death of King Olaf, Astrid Abbess of Drontheim hears "the voice of one speaking without in the darkness" which delivers the 'lesson' of the work, through the unaccompanied chorus, that:

"Stronger than steel
Is the sword of the Spirit;
Swifter than arrows
The light of the truth is,
Greater than anger
Is love, and subdueth!

... Love is eternal!
God is still God, and
His faith shall not fail us
Christ is eternal!"

Unsurprisingly, the extract became popular with choral societies as the music contains a moving and expressive recapitulation of a number of earlier themes leading into the final chorus, bringing the work to a musical climax which Elgar hardly equalled in any of his later works.

As Torrents in Summer
As torrents in summer,
Half dried in their channels,
Suddenly rise, though the
Sky is still cloudless,
For rain has been falling
Far off at their fountains;

So hearts that are fainting
Grow full to o'erflowing,
And they that behold it
Marvel, and know not
That God at their fountains
Far off has been raining!

The Sword Song (from *Caractacus*, op.35, 1898) 2 mins 45 secs
Words by Harold Arbuthnot Acworth (1848-1943)

The last and most ambitious of Elgar's dramatic cantatas, *Caractacus* was written to fulfill a commission negotiated for the Leeds Festival Committee by Henry Embleton (1854-1930), a businessman and secretary of the Leeds Choral Union. It was furnished with a libretto by H.A. Acworth, a retired neighbour who had collaborated with Elgar on *Scenes from the Saga of King Olaf* two years before. The work was begun shortly after Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee, and Elgar was able to secure permission, through Sir Walter Parratt (1841-1924), to dedicate the work in Queen Victoria's honour.

Caractacus relates the story of a British chieftain who fought against the invading Roman legions in the Malvern Hills area of Britain. After a devastating defeat at the hands of the Roman armies, Caractacus was taken to Rome for trial, but instead so impressed the Emperor that he was pardoned and allowed to live out his life in Rome with his family.

The extract is taken from Scene 2, when the Arch-Druid and his band seek to foresee the fate of the Britons' fight against the Romans. The omens are bad but, when Caractacus and his soldiers join the priests, the Arch-Druid spurs them on to the fight, and Caractacus joins in the song of defiance.

The Sword Song
[Arch-Druid & Druids]

*But Rome and all her legions
Shall shudder at the stroke,
The weapon of the war god,
The shadow of the oak;
The blade that blasts and withers,
The dark and dreadful spell,
Which reaping in the whirlwind,
Shall harvest them in hell.*

*[Caractacus & Soldiers]
Leap to the light, my brand of fight,
Flash to the heav'n's thine edges bright;
Where those sharp lips of steel shall go,
Red from the kiss a fount shall flow,
And many a gallant head lie low:
Leap to the light!*

*Be thou my bard, with note of fire
To sound thro' heav'n my royal lyre:
Sing till the fiery echoes roll
To every free-born warrior's soul,
Piercing as lev'n that cleaves the bole:
Sing to the light!*

*Cry naked to a country free,
Guerdon and gold be none for thee;
Land of my sires, land of mine,
Hark to the song and make it thine –
Wake, wake and see my signal shine:
Wake to the light!*

To Her Beneath Whose Stedfast Star, (1899) 5 mins 15 secs

Words by Frederic W.H. Myers (1843-1901)

In 1602, Thomas Morley published *The Triumphs of Oriana*, a volume containing works by, inter alia, John Wilbye, Thomas Tomkins, John Mundy and Thomas Weelkes and dedicated to Queen Elizabeth I.

Nearly three hundred years later, on 20 July 1898, Sir Walter Parratt (1841-1924), the Master of the Queen's Music and organist and director of music at St. George's Chapel, Windsor, wrote to Elgar with a request, enclosing a poem by Frederic Myers: "I am getting up a sort of Victorian Triumphs of Oriana, a tribute by the Composers and Poets of the day to the Queen. Madrigals must be for unaccompanied part singing not however in antique form. Will you set the enclosed?"

Parratt and the writer Arthur Christopher Benson (1862-1925), who was then teaching at Eton, collaborated in selecting poets and composers to produce these madrigals for Queen Victoria's 80th birthday which fell on 24 May 1899. Among the composers were Parratt

himself, Stanford, Parry, Somervell and Stainer, and the poets included Edmund Gosse, Robert Bridges, Benson and Alfred Austin. But it was only the works by Parratt and Elgar that Parratt selected to be performed on the Queen's birthday itself, and Elgar was invited to conduct his work. This morning serenade combined 250 members of the choirs of St George's Chapel, Eton College and the Windsor Madrigal and Choral Society to sing the works in the quadrangle of Windsor Castle. (Benson wrote after of "two madrigals, one very poor" - possibly because his poem set by Stanford was not included?) The Queen was not present for the first performance of the entire cycle which took place a few days later.

*To Her Beneath Whose Steadfast Star
To her beneath whose steadfast star
From pole to pole in lusty play
Her English wander, forcing far
Their world-ingathering way; -
Outsoar the Caesar's eagle flight,
Outrun the Macedonian reign,
Flash from the flamy Northern night
Speech to the Austral main: -*

*To her whose patient eyes have seen
Man's knowledge wax thro' ebb and flow,
Till some have felt those bars between
Wind of the Spirit blow; -
Tho' some, heart-worn with doubt and strife,
Would bid the doomful thunder fall,
Bind as with bands the cosmic Life,
And dream the end of all: -*

*Beyond, beyond their wisdom's bound,
Thro' fairer realms the Queen shall roam,
Till soul with soul the Wife hath found
Her mystic-wedded home: -
While her long-rumoured glories stir
The blue tide's earth-engirdling wave,
With love, with life, her Prince and her
The All-Father shield and save!*

Let the Queen live for ever!

*Weary Wind of the West, (1902) 5 mins 15 secs
Words by Thomas Edward Brown (1830-1897)*

From 1903, Elgar became particularly closely involved with the festival held at Morecambe, Lancashire and with its chairman, Canon Charles Gorton (1854-1912), who provided Elgar with theological assistance with *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*. These associations led to Elgar's making the injudicious remark, in a letter to Canon Gorton published in the *Musical*

Times, that "the living centre of music in Great Britain is not London, but somewhere farther North". They also led Elgar to write many of his best part-songs. Canon Gorton's daughter, Mrs Helen Walker, recalled some performances of Elgar's part-songs in the Morecambe rectory when the Elgars stayed there, "I always remember ... my father arranging for the Morecambe Madrigal Society to be sent up on the 'landing' after dinner, their singing a number of Sir Edward's part-songs. He having never heard them sung before said 'I never realized I had written anything so beautiful'".

Two songs - the demanding *Weary Wind of the West* and the peaceful *Evening Scene* - were specifically written as test pieces for the 1903 and 1906 festivals, the former bearing the inscription "Composed for Morecambe Festival". This song sets the Manx poet, T.E. Brown, and the composer himself conducted the first performance, reportedly before an audience of 6,000!

Weary wind of the west
"Weary wind of the west,
Over the billowy sea -
Come to my heart, and rest!
Ah, rest with me!

"Come from the distance dim,
Bearing the sun's last sigh;
I hear thee sobbing for him
Thro' all the sky."

So the wind came,
Purpling the middle sea,
Crisping the ripples of flame -
Came unto me;

Came with a rush to the shore,
Came with a bound to the hill,
Fell and died at my feet,
Then all was still.

Five Part-songs from the Greek Anthology, op. 45 (1902) 7 mins 15 secs

1. *Yea, Cast Me from Heights*, 1 min 30 secs
Anon, translation by Alma Strettell (1856-1939)
2. *Whether I Find Thee*, 1 min 00 secs
Anon, translation by Andrew Lang (1844-1912)
3. *After Many a Dusty Mile*, 1 min 45 secs
Anon, translation by Edmund Gosse (1849-1928)
4. *It's Oh! to be a Wild Wind*, 1 min 00 secs
Anon, translation by William Money Hardinge (1855-?)
5. *Feasting I Watch*, 2 mins 00 secs
Marcus Argentarius, translation by Richard Garnett (1835-1906)

These miniatures were written at same time as *The Apostles* and dedicated to Sir Walter Parratt (1841-1924), the self-styled “poor provincial organist” who served three monarchs as Master of the Queen’s Music and organist and director of music at St. George’s Chapel, Windsor. It was he who invited Elgar three years before to contribute to the madrigals celebrating Queen Victoria's 80th birthday in May 1899.

Michael Kennedy writes how *Five Part-songs from the Greek Anthology* is “a title that must have deterred many from discovering the beauties of the music it concealed”. In the second song “we hear the innocent Elgar, the boy from Broadheath, the dreamer by the reeds of the Severn. It epitomises the charm and lyricism of Elgar, what I would call his Tennysonian element.”

The texts were culled from translations by English poets contributing to an anthology of Greek verse. Written for male voice choir, the works were not actually intended for the burgeoning competitive choral movement, receiving their first performance in the Albert Hall on 25 April 1904 by the London Choral Society. Nevertheless, after being published by Novello in 1903, they were seized upon by choirs for their colour, humour and varied technical challenges.

Elgar wrote of a performance of the first song, *Yea, cast me*, in a letter to Canon Gorton about the Morecambe Festival held in May 1907, “I wish you could have heard the combined men’s chorus sing ‘Cast me’ on Saturday evening: not because it was the best thing to hear but because it was a new idea, unpremeditated and effectual”. Gorton and the Morecambe Festival, which he founded, were intertwined for Elgar, who adjudicated there and enjoyed and appreciated Gorton’s hospitality and his advice on textual matters for *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*. Elgar dedicated *There is Sweet Music*, op 53 no. 1 to him, and *Weary Wind of the West* and the peaceful *Evening Scene* were specifically written as test pieces for the 1903 and 1906 festivals, whilst he dedicated *O Wild West Wind* to his fellow Morecambe adjudicator and editor of the *Musical Times*, Dr William Gray McNaught (1849-1918).

The songs featured in a special supper given by Frank Schuster for Elgar after the première of the *Violin Concerto* on 10 November 1910. After the composer’s health was drunk, the men’s chorus appeared in order to sing the Five Part-Songs, to Elgar’s surprise and pleasure.

*Yea, cast me from heights
Yea, cast me from heights of the mountains to deeps of the ocean,
Let the thunderbolt strike me, o'erwhelm me with fire or with snow!
Since him whom Love's burden hath crushed, and whom Eros hath broken,
Not even the swift-winged lightnings of Zeus can o'erthrow!*

*Whether I find thee
Whether I find thee bright with fair,
Or still as bright with raven hair;
With equal grace thy tresses shine,
Ah, queen, and love will dwell divine*

*In these thy locks, on that far day,
When gold or sable turns to grey!*

*After many a dusty mile
After many a dusty mile,
Wanderer, linger here awhile;
Stretch your limbs in this long grass;
Through these pines a wind shall pass
That shall cool you with its wing.*

*Grasshoppers shall shout and sing,
While the shepherd on the hill,
Near a fountain warbling still,
Modulates, when noon is mute,
Summer songs along his flute;*

*Underneath a spreading tree,
None so easy-limbed as he,
Sheltered from the dog-star's heat.*

*Rest; and then, on freshened feet,
You shall pass the forest through.
It is Pan that counsels you.*

*It's oh! to be a wild wind
It's oh! to be a wild wind - when my lady's in the sun,
She'd just unbind her neckerchief, and take me breathing in.*

*It's oh! to be a red rose - just a faintly blushing one,
So she'd pull me with her hand and to her snowy breast I'd win.*

*Feasting I watch
Feasting I watch with westward-looking eye
The flashing constellations' pageantry.
Solemn and splendid; then anon I wreath
My hair, and warbling to my harp I breathe
My full heart forth, and know the heav'ns look down
Pleased, for they also have their Lyre and Crown.*

*Evening Scene, (1905) 3 mins 30 secs
Words by Coventry Kersey Dighton Patmore (1823-1896)*

Like *Weary Wind of the West* of three years earlier, *Evening Scene* was composed as a test piece for the Morecambe Festival. It sets verses that mirror the scene and language of the beginning of the more famous Gray's *Elegy* written in a country churchyard and Elgar described it as "my best bit of landscape so far in that line". It was composed in August 1905, receiving its first performances in Morecambe on 12 May 1906 and published that

year by Novello. Setting words from Coventry Patmore's *The River*, it was dedicated "In memoriam R.G.H. Howson". On 24 August 1905 Edward wrote to Canon Gorton (1854-1912) "I have written – or rather completed - a part-song in memory of our friend Howson. You will like it". In 1906, Elgar wrote to Troyte Griffith "Howson, a good man, was conductor at Morecambe (amateur, a fine fellow, he was really the Bank Manager in his spare moments.) H. was the musical soul of the Morecambe affair and chose the music". Howson had died in 1905, and this serene setting is a fine memorial.

Evening Scene

*The sheep-bell tolleth curfew-time;
The gnats, a busy rout,
Fleck the warm air; the dismal owl
Shouteth a sleepy shout;
The voiceless bat, more felt than seen,
Is flitting round about.*

*The aspen leaflets scarcely stir:
The river seems to think:
Athwart the dusk, broad primroses
Look coldly from the brink,
Where, list'ning to the freshet's noise,
The quiet cattle drink.*

*The bees boom past, the white moths rise
Like spirits from the ground;
The gray flies hum their weary tune,
A distant-dream-like sound;
And far, far off to the slumb'rous eve,
Bayeth an old guard-hound.*

Love, op. 18 no. 2 (1907) 2 mins 45 secs
Words by Arthur Frank Maquarie (1874-1955)

Elgar waited some eighteen years before sending to Novello a third part-song to complete his Opus 18. Written on Edward's 50th birthday whilst Alice and Carice were at evening church, *Love* was dedicated to C.A.E. "wh. made A. feel very unworthy & deeply deeply touched." in recognition of Alice's devotion and unswerving support for his music. As is to be expected from its genesis, it is a gently reflective and intimate setting.

Love

*Like the rosy northern glow
Flushing on a moonless night
Where the world is level snow,
So thy light.*

*In my time of outer gloom
Thou didst come, a tender lure;
Thou, when life was but a tomb,
Beamedst pure.*

*Thus I looked to heaven again,
Yearning up with eager eyes,
As sunflow'rs after dreary rain
Drink the skies.*

*Oh glow on and brighter glow,
Let me ever gaze on thee,
Lest I lose warm hope and so
Cease to be.*

Marching Song (1907)/*Follow the Colours*, (1914) 4 mins 30 secs
Words by William Stapleton de Courcy Stretton (1861-1936)

December 1907 saw Elgar compose a series of part-songs: the hymn *How calmly the evening*; a setting of a poem by Alice that was a Christmas Greeting set for high voices accompanied by two violins and piano and destined for George Robertson Sinclair (1863-1917) and his Hereford choristers' Christmas concert; the *Marching Song* for Alfred Henry Littleton (1845-1914); *The Reveille* for Dr William Gray McNaught (1849-1918); and then his *Four Part-Songs*, op. 53. *Marching Song* was the result of Littleton's persistent request for a marching song as part of the rising tide of nationalism at the time. It was first published in 1908 as a part-song under the title of *Marching Song*, the more imaginative title of *Follow the Colours* being only added (with the subtitle 'Marching Song for Soldiers') on republication by Novello six years later as a solo song with optional male chorus refrain. Captain Stretton, who served in the Royal Artillery, won the "prize of 20 guineas offered by Mr W.H. Ash, on behalf of the Worshipful Company of Musicians" for a marching song. At the request of Littleton, the Chairman and Managing Director of Novello's, Elgar had agreed to set the winning words, but complained in October 1907: "I have been through the words for Marching again & again & I fear the result remains disappointing ... You see I cannot do anything with them: I am sorry but it is so. Now you had better see if the words will inspire some other minstrel."

In fact, he did complete it just after Christmas 1907 and the Royal Choral Society gave the first performance at the Empire Concert at the Albert Hall on 23 May 1908. According to a report in the Worcester Herald, the piece "was a manly and inspiring marching song for soldiers ... which is certain to become popular in the ranks by reason of its strict avoidance of complexity and its splendid rhythm". Actually, the setting is better for musicians than marching soldiers, and research in 2010 has shown that Elgar provided his own orchestral accompaniment for *Follow the Colours*.

Marching Song

*Thousands, thousands of marching feet,
All through the land, all through the land.
Gunners and sappers, horse and foot,
A mighty band, a mighty band.
Follow the colours, follow on,
Where'ere they go, where'ere they go.
Loyal the hearts that guard them well,
'Twas ever so, 'twas ever so.
March, march, march.*

*Roll the drums and blow the pipes
And make the bagpipes drone,
Glory for some and the chance for all
'Til we come again to our own.*

*England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales
Send forth their sons, send forth their sons.
Children of Empire, seas beyond,
Stand to their guns, stand to their guns.
Follow the colours, follow on,
Where'ere they go, where'ere they go.
Loyal the hearts that guard them well,
'Twas ever so, 'twas ever so.
March, march, march.*

Roll the drums and blow the pipes etc.

*Some will return and some remain:
We heed it not, we heed it not.
Something's wrong – to put it right's
The soldier's lot, the soldier's lot.
Follow the colours, follow on,
Where'ere they go, where'ere they go.
Loyal the hearts that guard them well,
'Twas ever so, 'twas ever so.
March, march, march.*

Roll the drums and blow the pipes etc.

*The Reveille, op. 54 (1907) 6 mins 00 secs
Words by Bret Harte (1839-1902)*

December 1907 saw Elgar compose a series of part-songs: the hymn *How calmly the evening*; a setting of a poem by Alice that was a Christmas greeting set for high voices

accompanied by two violins and piano and destined for George Robertson Sinclair (1863-1917) and his Hereford choristers' Christmas concert; the *Marching Song* for Alfred Henry Littleton (1845-1914) of Novello; *The Reveille* for Dr William Gray McNaught (1849-1918); and then his *Four Part-Songs*, op. 53. Blackpool commissioned *The Reveille* for its 1908 festival, no doubt anxious not to be left behind by its Lancashire neighbour, Morecambe, whose prestigious festival welcomed Elgar as an adjudicator in the early years of the century and for which Elgar wrote *Weary Wind of the West* and *Evening Scene* as test pieces for the 1903 and 1906 festivals. The Reveille's words were taken from Bret Harte's *The Lost Galleon*, which was published in 1867 and they are set for men's voices. Elgar dedicated it to Henry Embleton (1854-1930), a businessman and secretary of the Leeds Choral Union who had negotiated the commissioning of *Caractacus*. Elgar composed the piece in Rome between 20-26 December 1907 and the first performance took place on 17 October 1908, Novello publishing it in the same year.

In his *Edward Elgar, A Creative Life*, Jerrold Northrop argues persuasively that the semitone difference between *The Reveille*'s main theme in D minor and the 'fragments of noble melody' in D flat major echo the dissonances at the heart of his First Symphony, on which he was working at the time. Certainly, the setting reflects the doubts and fears depicted in the text.

The Reveille

*Hark! I hear the tramp of thousands,
And of armed men the hum;
Lo! a nation's hosts have gather'd
Round the quick alarming drum, -
Saying, "Come, Freemen, come!"
"Ere your heritage be wasted,"
Said the quick alarming drum.*

*"Let me of my heart take counsel,
War is not of life the sum;
Who shall stay and reap
When the autumn days shall come?"
But the drum echoed, "Come!
Death shall reap the braver harvest,"
Said the solemn-sounding drum.*

*"But when won the coming battle,
What of profit springs there-from?
What if conquest, subjugation,
Even greater ills become?"
But the drum answered, "Come!
You must do the sum to prove it,"
Said the fateful answering drum.*

*"What if, 'mid the cannon's thunder,
Whistling shot and bursting bomb,*

*When my brothers fall around me,
Should my heart grow cold and numb?"
But the drum answered, "Come!
Better there in death united
Than in life a recreant, Come!"*

*Thus they answered, - hoping, fearing,
Some in faith, and doubting some,
Till a trumpet-voice proclaiming,
Said, "My chosen people, come!"
Then the drum, Lo! was dumb,
For the great heart of the nation,
Throbbing, answered, "Lord, we come!"*

Four Part-songs, op. 53 (1907) 17 mins 00 secs

1. *There is Sweet Music* 5 mins 00 secs

Words by Lord Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892)

2. *Deep in my Soul* 5 mins 00 secs

Words by George Gordon Noel Byron, Lord Byron (1788-1824)

3. *O Wild West Wind!* 3 mins 45 secs

Words by Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822)

4. *Owls* 3 mins 15 secs

Words by Edward Elgar

December 1907 saw Elgar compose a series of part-songs: the hymn *How calmly the evening*; a setting of a poem by Alice that was a Christmas greeting set for high voices accompanied by two violins and piano and destined for George Robertson Sinclair (1863-1917) and his Hereford choristers' Christmas concert; the *Marching Song* for Alfred Henry Littleton (1845-1914) of Novello; *The Reveille* for Dr William Gray McNaught (1849-1918) and then his *Four Part-Songs*, op. 53. In *There is Sweet Music*, taken from the *Choric Song* in Tennyson's *The Lotos-Eaters*, the parts for female voice are written in a key one semitone higher than those for male voices. True, male and female voices generally alternate with little direct harmonisation between the two, but the effect is both dramatic and pleasing: Elgar called it 'a clinker, and the best I have done'. It is dedicated to Canon Charles Gorton (1854-1912) his friend who founded the Morecambe Festival. Elgar adjudicated at the festival and enjoyed and appreciated Gorton's hospitality and his advice on textual matters for *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*. Elgar dedicated *There is Sweet Music*, op 53 no. 1 to him, and *Weary Wind of the West* and *Evening Scene* were specifically written as test pieces for the 1903 and 1906 festivals.

The words for *Deep in my Soul* come from Byron's "*The Corsair*", Canto I, xiv, 1-2 and it is dedicated to his American friend, Mrs Julia H. 'Pippa' Worthington, at whose villa at Careggi, near Florence in Italy, Elgar spent the spring of 1909 on holiday and wrote *The Angelus* op. 56 and his finest part-song *Go, Song of Mine*, op. 57 whilst jotting down melodies and phrases that he used in the Second Symphony and *Falstaff*.

O Wild West Wind! is a setting of the final section of Shelley's "*Ode to the West Wind*" and is dedicated to Elgar's fellow Morecambe adjudicator and editor of the *Musical Times*, Dr W.G. McNaught. Like *Deep in my Soul* and *Owls* it is in E flat and is marked with the characteristically Elgarian direction *nobilmente*.

The haunting and impressionistic *Owls*, subtitled '*An Epitaph*', whose words, written by Elgar himself, are meant to capture the sounds of a wood at night. It is dedicated "To my friend Pietro d'Alba" (Carice's white Angora rabbit, Peter) whose literary gifts allegedly provided the words for the solo song, *The River*. Elgar wrote in a letter to Jaeger that the song "is only a fantasy and means nothing. It is in a wood at night evidently and the recurring 'Nothing' is only an owlish sound". But the poem is the last in a sequence of settings of the poetic titans: Tennyson, Byron and Shelley, and Edward's own contribution must surely mean more than nothing?

There is sweet music

*There is sweet music here that softer falls
Than petals from blown roses on the grass,
Or night-dews on still waters between walls
Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass;
Music that gentlier on the spirit lies,
Than tir'd eyelids upon tir'd eyes;
Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful skies.*

*Here are cool mosses deep,
And thro' the moss the ivies creep,
And in the stream the long-leaved flowers weep,
And from the craggy ledge the poppy hangs in sleep.*

Deep in my soul

*Deep in my soul that tender secret dwells,
Lonely and lost to light for evermore,
Save when to thine my heart responsive swells,
Then trembles into silence as before.*

*There, in its centre, a sepulchral lamp
Burns the slow flame, eternal - but unseen;
Which not the darkness of Despair can damp,
Though vain its ray as it had never been.*

O wild West Wind

O wild West Wind!

*[20 verses omitted by Elgar] Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies*

*Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness harmonies. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!*

*Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,*

*Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawakened earth*

*The trumpet of a prophecy! O, Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?*

*Owls
What is that? ... Nothing;
The leaves must fall, and falling, rustle;
That is all:
They are dead
As they fall, -
Dead at the foot of the tree;
All that can be is said.
What is it? ... Nothing.*

*What is that? ... Nothing;
A wild thing hurt in the night,
And it cries
In its dread,
Till it lies
Dead at the foot of the tree;
All that can be is said.
What is it? ... Nothing.*

*What is that? ... Ah!
A marching slow of unseen feet,
That is all:
But a bier, spread
With a pall,
Is now at the foot of the tree;
All that could be is said.
Is it ... what? ... Nothing.*

*Go, Song of Mine, op. 57 (1909) 5 mins 30 secs
Words by Guido Calvacanti (c1250-1300) translated and adapted by Dante Gabriel Rossetti
(1828-1882)*

The most remarkable, ambitious and probably finest part-song Elgar ever wrote is *Go, Song of Mine*, which, together with *The Angelus*, he wrote while on holiday near Florence in Italy. Elgar spent the spring of 1909 at a villa owned by an American friend, Mrs Julia 'Pippa' Worthington, at Careggi, near Florence, to whom he dedicated the part-song *Deep in my Soul* op. 53 no. 2. Michael Kennedy relates how Elgar was jotting down melodies and phrases that he used in the Second Symphony and *Falstaff* but not in an opera that he was also considering at the time but that did not materialise. (He began there a sketchbook labeled "Opera in Three Acts".) On that trip, he composed *Go, Song of Mine*, which, in the - at times almost discordant - harmonies, displays a level of originality and inventiveness not subsequently encountered in the part-songs. When Ivor Atkins heard it, he wrote enthusiastically and perceptively on 2 July 1909 that the song "still rings in my ears ... one of the VERY BEST you have ever done ... your insight is marvellous". It was first performed in the 1909 Three Choirs Festival on 9 September at Hereford and published by Novello in the same year.

It was dedicated to Alfred Henry Littleton (1845-1914), the Chairman of Novello, who also in 1908 and 1909 respectively requested of him the *Marching Song* and *Elegy* op. 58, the latter as a memorial to the Rev. Robert Haddon of the Worshipful Company of Musicians.

Go, Song of Mine

Dishevell'd and in tears, go, song of mine,

To break the hardness of the heart of man:

Say how his life began

From dust, and in that dust doth sink supine:

Yet, say, th'unerring spirit of grief shall guide

His soul, being purified,

To seek its Maker at the heav'nly shrine.