

Sospiri, op 70

Adagio for string orchestra, harp and organ.

Approximate Length: 5 minutes

First Performance:

Date: 15 August 1914

Venue: Queen's Hall, London

Conductor: Sir Henry Wood

Dedicated to: W H (Billy) Reed,
leader of the London Symphony Orchestra,
close friend and confidant of Elgar

Elgar provisionally called this short work *Soupir d'Amour*, intending it as a companion piece to *Salut d'Amour*, a light popular work for the masses. What emerged, however, was a work of considerably greater substance. He composed it in the months leading up to the outbreak of the First World War and it was perhaps the gathering stormclouds of war that moved him to write a heartfelt, bleak adagio that would not be out of place as the slow movement of an Elgar symphony.

The dedicatee, W H (Billy) Reed was the leader of the London Symphony Orchestra. He became a close personal friend of Elgar. Although Elgar was himself a violinist of some ability, he frequently turned to Reed for advice on technical issues when composing works such as the *Violin Sonata*. After Elgar's death, Reed was encouraged by George Bernard Shaw to record his memories of Elgar in the book *Elgar as I knew him*.