

Works composed or arranged for church organ.

Eleven Vesper Voluntaries

	Approx. Length		Approx. Length
No. 1	3 mins 15 secs	No. 7	3 mins 30 secs
No. 2	2 mins	No. 8	
No. 3	2 mins 30 secs	No. 9	
No. 4	4 mins 15 secs	No. 10	
No. 5	1 min 30 sec	No. 11	
No. 6	2 mins		

Dedicated to: Mrs W A Raikes

Organ Sonata No 1 in G

Approximate Length: 28 minutes

First Performance:

8 July 1895

Worcester Cathedral

Organist: Hugh Blair

Dedicated to: Charles Swinnerton Heap

Memorial Chimes for a Carillon

First Performance (in arrangement for carillon)

22 July 1923

Loughborough War Memorial Carillon, Loughborough, Leicestershire

Organ Sonata No 2

Approximate Length: 20 minutes

First Performance:

1933

Organ Music Society, London

Although Elgar composed at the piano, it is with the violin that he had the strongest professional associations, both as a performer with various Worcestershire ensembles including the Worcester Philharmonic, and as teacher. The wind quintet music helps us remember that he was also a competent bassoonist, but there remains little to remind us that, during the formative stages of his musical development, he also held the post of organist at St. George's Church in Worcester. In fact, this post is remembered more for Elgar's claim that he composed much of his wind quintet music during sermons in the organ loft at St. George's than for any work for organ written at this time. Although Elgar composed numerous small religious works with organ accompaniment and no doubt

arranged and adapted many others for solo organ, to be played before or after services at St. George's, he did not do so primarily with a view to publication. Few of these works survive except where they were later reworked for inclusion in more substantial works and, in fact, Elgar wrote only two works specifically for unaccompanied organ – the Vesper Voluntaries and the Organ Sonata in G major. In addition, although not originally composed for organ, three other works are normally considered to fall within the genre: Cantique, Memorial Chimes for a Carillon and the Second Organ Sonata. There are, of course, other, shorter works by Elgar which others have adapted for organ, including the first five Pomp and Circumstance Marches and, inevitably, *Nimrod* from the Enigma Variations.

Vesper Voluntaries op. 14 (1890)

The first work expressly for organ was a set of eleven Vesper Voluntaries. In contrast to the five Pomp and Circumstance Marches whose composition spanned a period of nearly thirty years, the eleven voluntaries were composed in quick succession immediately after his marriage to Alice in 1889, although one was taken from a string quartet Elgar had started the previous year but never completed. Although composed as a set, they are often performed separately or as selections from the complete set.

They were published in 1890, soon after their composer stopped being the full-time organist at St George's Church in Worcester, a post he held from 1885 until 1889 and which his father had also held. They were sold to Orsborn & Tuckwood for £5 and dedicated to Mrs Veronica Raikes, a cousin of Alice Elgar. She and her husband were the only members of Alice's family to attend the Elgars' wedding and lent the couple the house in Upper Norwood where the Voluntaries were composed on a small organ installed soon after the Elgars took up residence.

Like so many of Elgar's small works from the beginning of his career, they are mostly in simple A-B-A form. These pieces also mostly gravitate around D major and minor and, in several cases, the middle notes of a primary theme were used to form the middle subject (cf. *Salut d'Amour* for a similar example). Further unity is achieved in that the Introduction, Intermezzo and Coda derive from a single pair of themes.

Organ Sonata in G major op. 28, (1892)

Besides the Vesper Voluntaries, Elgar's only other work specifically written for organ is the Organ Sonata in G of 1895 which he composed for the four-manual Hill organ in Worcester Cathedral. When Hugh Blair became organist of Worcester Cathedral, he asked Elgar for a large organ work that would show off the Cathedral organ. Amazingly, the work took only two weeks from conception to first performance. Elgar started to assemble the work from sketchbook jottings in late June 1895. He completed it by 3 July (writing on the score "One week's work"), five days before the first performance which Hugh Blair, the cathedral organist and dedicatee of *The Black Knight*, gave to an American Organists' convention meeting in Worcester. Apparently the haste with which Blair had learnt the work showed in a somewhat muddled rendition, but the work itself shows no sign of a hasty

composition. It is the most significant of his instrumental compositions preceding the Enigma Variations, containing clear precedents for the major symphonic works, notably the two Symphonies and the Variations themselves, that were to come. The work was dedicated to Charles Swinnerton Heap, the Staffordshire conductor who had commissioned Elgar's cantata King Olaf for the following year.

Allegro maestoso (8 mins 30 secs)

In straightforward sonata form, the movement's first theme is assertive whilst the second subject trickles rather than bowls along. Elgar's fingerprints are all over the work, with aspiring leaps upwards of a fifth, descending sequences and tension building through ascending trills. The recapitulation is straightforward.

Allegretto (5 mins 00 secs)

Underneath the contrapuntal configurations is the Elgar of the straightforward melodies from the early works for piano solo, violin & piano and the Vesper Voluntaries. It is in extended ternary form.

Andante espressivo (6 mins 00 secs)

The relaxed, "nobilmente" melodic line is extensive, taking one-eighth of the movement to unfold on its initial statement. Again, it is in ternary form, though the middle section offers only a slight contrast in mood. With no major climax, and the return of the theme offering some discreet decoration, the effect is more a meditation as in The Light of Life.

Presto (comodo) (6 mins 15 secs)

A confident first theme progresses to the second subject with its hint of the opening of The Black Knight of 1889. The development and recapitulation are outweighed by the extended coda incorporating the Andante's main theme that shows off the organ's hitherto hidden power.

Gordon Jacob arranged the work for orchestra in 1947, chosen for the role on the recommendation of Sir Adrian Boult, who conducted the orchestral première in a BBC Home Service radio broadcast with the BBC Symphony Orchestra. It was also Jacob who arranged, at Leon Goossens' request, the Soliloquy for Oboe. Those hearing the organ work in his excellent arrangement will be surprised that Elgar did not conceive the work in its orchestral form.

Cantique op. 3 (1879)

Arranged for organ 1912; arranged for orchestra 1912

This has a curious provenance. In 1877-8, Elgar and his friends formed a quintet, "The Brothers Wind", to play the wind ensemble music that the Germans dub "Harmonie Musik", with a slightly unusual instrumentation. Hubert Leicester and Frank Exton played flutes, Frank Elgar oboe, Willie Leicester clarinet and Edward bassoon. Edward wrote or arranged a new work each week for the group (usually during the sermon in the church where he was

organist) and initially called them Harmony Music. As they rehearsed in a shed behind Elgar's music shop, the music was quickly also called "Shed Music".

When Elgar was in one of his low periods after the lack of success of *The Music Makers* in 1912, and felt unable to accept Ivor Atkins' offer of a commission to complete *The Apostles* trilogy for the 1914 Worcester Festival, he wrote in May 1912 to his friend, Hubert Leicester, who had been the nominal leader and librarian for these early works, and secured the wind music of thirty-three years earlier. He then extended and orchestrated the work that had been the slow movement of *Harmony Music No. 6*, giving it the opus number 3 which places it firmly in the period of its original (the music for wind quintet never having received opus numbers). At the same time, he also arranged the work for organ. Why he was so enamoured of this somewhat four-square tune with its feminine endings is a mystery, but the extended version is in a form ABACABA. Section B's theme is a development of Section A's, whilst Section C is the more spiritual and reflective centre of the whole. The third appearance of A is given quietly, but reasserts itself forte for its final appearance.

Landon Ronald (the pianist-conductor and dedicatee of *Falstaff*, who would give the première of the *Violin Sonata* in 1919) conducted the première of the orchestral version of *Cantique* at one of his Sunday Concerts on 15 December 1912, but Edward was disappointed at the work.

Memorial Chimes for a Carillon (1923)

The self-explanatory *Memorial Chimes for a Carillon*, more commonly referred to as the *Loughborough Memorial Chimes*, hail from the same period as the *King Arthur* music of January-March 1923. Having produced the Chimes to a commission for the opening on 22 July 1923 of the Loughborough War Memorial Carillon, Elgar must have realised the limited scope for further performance imposed by the unusual instrumentation. He therefore produced an organ transcription which, like *Cantique*, is still occasionally performed, and so this description applies to that version, as it is more likely to be heard.

The chorale-like opening, adorned with organ filigree, gives way to a wistful little melody that, in outline, could have come from any of Elgar's early short works, except that, after a while, it seems to meander, emerge and disappear in little flourishes. A succession of sequential passages and broken chord figures leads once more into the wistful tune. The broken chords reappear and again cede to the tune, which draws the piece to a quiet close.

Organ Sonata No. 2 in B flat op. 87a. (arr. 1933)

The second *Organ Sonata* is a transcription of the *Severn Suite*, which Elgar was commissioned to write as a test piece for the 1930 national brass band championships, and which he subsequently arranged for orchestra. It was not Elgar but his close friend Ivor Atkins, the successor to Hugh Blair as organist of Worcester Cathedral, who transcribed the work for organ in 1933 (in which year it was also published), adding his own cadenza (which Elgar edited) and coda. He also did not include the Suite's fourth (minuet) movement, thereby losing some of the work's melodic coherence (see note on the brass band version of the **Severn Suite**). In the Suite, the fugue ended on a final cadence and was separate from

the Minuet, which morphed into the Coda; in the Sonata, Atkins' cadenza links the fugue to the coda (again adapted by Atkins). These differences led to the work being given the modified opus number 87a to distinguish it from the brass band and orchestral arrangements which both retain the opus number 87. But in other respects the organ work is an honest transcription of the original, the opening movement adapting particularly well to the organ.