

Pomp and Circumstance Marches Nos 1-5, Op 39

Five marches for full orchestra:

No 1 in D Major (1901)
No 2 in A Minor (1901)
No 3 in C Minor (1904)
No 4 in G Major (1907)
No 5 in C Major (1930)

Approximate Total Length: 28 minutes

March No 1 :

Approximate Length : 6 minutes

First Performance :

Date : 19 October 1901

Venue : Liverpool Orchestral Society

Conductor : Edward Elgar

Dedicated to : Alfred Rodewald and
members of the Liverpool Orchestral Society

March No 2 :

Approximate Length : 5 minutes

First Performance :

Date : 19 October 1901

Venue : Liverpool Orchestral Society

Conductor : Edward Elgar

Dedicated to : Granville Bantock, fellow composer

March No 3

Approximate Length : 5 minutes 30 seconds

First Performance :

Date : 8 March 1905

Venue : Queen's Hall, London

Conductor : the composer

Dedicated to : Ivor Atkins, organist at Worcester Cathedral

March No 4

Approximate Length : 5 minutes 30 seconds

First Performance :

Date : 24 August 1907

Venue : Queen's Hall, London
Conductor : the composer
Dedicated to : George Sinclair, organist at Hereford Cathedral

March No 5

Approximate Length : 6 minutes
First Performance :
Date : 18 September 1930
Venue : Kingsway Hall, London
Conductor : the composer
Orchestra : London Symphony Orchestra
Dedicated to : Percy Hull, George Sinclair's successor

Five Pomp and Circumstance Marches or six? When Elgar sold his first two *Pomp and Circumstance* Marches to Boosey, they commissioned him to write a set of six, not five, marches and that task lay unfinished at his death, with five published. Yet sketches were known to exist and John Norris and Chris Bennett tracked down the sixth march in sketchbooks and elsewhere. A separate note by John Norris is appended to these notes.

Elgar's first five *Pomp and Circumstance* Marches make a wonderfully diverse set of pieces, yet the name, and the shared structure of alternating scherzo and trio sections, identify these five marches as a single work. Their publication dates from different times in the composer's career, ranging from 1901 to 1930, but these dates are somewhat deceptive. Elgar produced no completely original work after Alice's death in 1920, and the fifth march is based on ideas Elgar had jotted down many years earlier, making the five marches far more contemporary in conception (and the note on the 6th March shows this to be far earlier than its numbering suggests).

Elgar was concerned to treat the quick march in a symphonic style, much as the minuet, waltz or polka had been used by earlier composers. Sir John Hawkins, in his eighteenth-century "History of Music" wrote "It seems that the Old English March was formerly in high estimation, as well abroad as with us its characteristic is dignity and gravity." Certainly no one knew better than Elgar how to retain the essential dignity of the March: his is a superb set full of masterly orchestration, and he was rightly proud of them.

It may be that Elgar saw them as something of a money spinner, bringing in the income that more substantial works of greater critical acclaim failed to do. The "big tunes" were as popular as they were fine, and the March was a form ideally suited to the opulent swagger of early twentieth-century England. Elgar caught the essence of that confident militarism, for "I have something of the soldier in me", he said to Rudolf de Cordova when being interviewed for *The Strand* in February 1904. Furthermore he had no need to apologise for reflecting so exactly the mood of the century's first decade. Earlier, referring to his Imperial March, he stated that: 'I like to look on the composer's vocation as the old troubadours or bards did. In those days it was no disgrace to a man to be turned on to step in front of an

army and inspire the people with a song. For my own part, I know that there are a lot of people who like to celebrate events with music. To these people I have given tunes. Is that wrong?'

He took the title, *Pomp & Circumstance*, from Shakespeare's *Othello*, Act 3 Scene 3, in which Othello bids farewell to his soldier's profession, his warrior-like character undermined by the mistaken belief in Desdemona's infidelity:

*Farewell the tranquil mind! farewell content!
Farewell the plumed troop, and the big wars,
That make ambition virtue! O, farewell!
Farewell the neighing steed, and the shrill trump,
The spirit-stirring drum, the ear-piercing fife,
The royal banner, and all quality,
Pride, pomp and circumstance of glorious war!*

He also added an epigraph to the marches that sets out their apparent intention. It comes, according to Dr. Young, from Lord de Tabley's 'The March of Glory', quoted by Newman in a version that differs profoundly from de Tabley's published version:

*Like a proud music that draws men on to die
Madly upon the spears in martial ecstasy,
A measure that sets heaven in all their veins
And iron in their hands.
I hear the Nation march
Beneath her ensign as an eagle's wing;
O'er shield and sheeted targe
The banners of my faith most gaily swing,
Moving to victory with solemn noise,
With worship and with conquest, and the voice of myriads.*

Nevertheless, if the Marches are heard as a suite rather than as a somewhat arbitrarily assembled collection of discrete pieces, then the acute listener can detect an unease which lies below the glittering surface and which Elgar, like several other sensitive creative artists of the time, felt all too keenly. The moods of the whole vary: that of the three lesser-known marches, which display a restlessness and measure of diffidence, is substantially different from that of Marches 1 and 4, containing the most confidence and swagger. Two are in a minor key and, even in Marches Nos. 1 and 4, the trio sections are scored with a sombre mellowness that echoes the Recessional, rather than the Processional.

As an interesting observation, Jerrold Northrop Moore points out how, after high points of achievement and recognition in 1901 and 1904, Elgar sank each summer into a black depression from which he was extricated by composing the first three *Pomp & Circumstance* marches.

Pomp & Circumstance March No. 1 in D op. 39 (1901)

March No. 1 was sketched on 3 June 1901 and completed in July, within a month of No. 2. Its central tune hails from before these dates, for Dora Penny recounted how she visited in May 1901 Craeg Lea, Elgar's home in Great Malvern, and Elgar told her about his "damned fine popular tune": "I've got a tune that will knock'em – knock'em flat". He sent Nos. 1 and 2 to Boosey's in August and the first was premiered on 19 October 1901 in Liverpool by its dedicatees, the Liverpool Orchestral Society with the composer conducting. It was repeated in London a few days later by Henry Wood. The result was sensational, and Wood subsequently wrote of the occasion: "The people simply rose and yelled. I had to play it again – with the same result; in fact, they refused to let me go on with the programme. After considerable delay, while the audience roared its applause, I went off and fetched Harry Dearth who was to sing Hiawatha's Vision; but they would not listen. Merely to restore order, I played the march a third time. And that, I may say, was the one and only time in the history of the Promenade concerts that an orchestral item was accorded a double encore.'

Boosey published the March in 1902. Years later, on 2 May 1924, it featured in Elgar's first broadcast for the BBC, played by the Royal Philharmonic Society's Orchestra at the Central Hall, Westminster.

The march begins with an Elgarian "jape", starting behind the main beat in the key of E flat major, about as far away as possible from the home key of D. The joke is repeated just before the arrival of the trio's glorious melody, which comes as a relief after the enormous energy of the introduction. Even more than with **the *Imperial March of 1897*, Elgar gave us with this first *Pomp and Circumstance* march a perfect template with which to design future marches, and a benchmark against which to measure them.**

The *Coronation Ode* and *Land of Hope & Glory*

Arthur C. Benson (1862-1925) was responsible for thrice creating words for the Trio of *Pomp & Circumstance* No. 1, but Elgar did not write the tune with the intention of setting words to it. He claimed that the idea was first put to him by King Edward VII some months after the première of the orchestral version, by which time the march itself had already attained a significant popularity. This proved not to be true but the words written by A.C. Benson became part of the libretto for the *Coronation Ode*, a work Elgar dedicated to HM King Edward VII and composed for the June Coronation Gala Concert held at Covent Garden to commemorate the King's Coronation in 1902, where the tune is gorgeously orchestrated. Boosey's paid Elgar the princely sum of £100 for the score, with a royalty of 5d on every copy sold.

Elgar had promised Clara Butt, who wanted a tune to sing similar to *Pomp & Circumstance* No. 1, that "You shall have that one, my dear", and subsequently set the final section of the *Coronation Ode* to the tune of *Pomp & Circumstance* No. 1 with her in mind. But the commercial possibilities were greater if the tune were issued as a solo song, so Benson revised the words and Clara Butt sang it at a "Coronation Concert" in the Albert Hall, a week prior to the performance of the *Ode* at Covent Garden.

Finally, in 1914, Elgar wrote to Benson to write some topical words for the tune that was already being sung everywhere.

LAND OF HOPE AND GLORY

*Dear Land of Hope, thy hope is crowned.
God make thee mightier yet!
On Sov'ran brows, beloved, renowned,
Once more thy crown is set.
Thine equal laws, by Freedom gained,
Have ruled thee well and long;
By Freedom gained, by Truth maintained,
Thine Empire shall be strong.*

*Land of Hope and Glory, Mother of the Free,
How shall we extol thee, who are born of thee?
Wider still and wider shall thy bounds be set;
God, who made thee mighty, make thee mightier yet.
God, who made thee mighty, make thee mightier yet.*

*Thy fame is ancient as the days,
As Ocean large and wide:
A pride that dares, and heeds not praise,
A stern and silent pride:
Not that false joy that dreams content
With what our sires have won;
The blood a hero sire hath spent
Still nerves a hero son.*

CORONATION ODE

*Land of Hope and Glory,
Mother of the Free,
How may we extol thee,
Who are born of thee?
Truth and Right and Freedom,
Each a holy gem,
Stars of solemn brightness,
weave thy diadem.
Tho' thy way be darkened,
Still in splendour drest,
As the star that trembles
O'er the liquid West.
Throned amid the billows,
Throned inviolate,
Though hast reigned victorious,
Though has smiled at fate.*

*Land of Hope and Glory,
Fortress of the Free,
How may we extol thee,
Praise thee, honour thee?
Hark, a mighty nation
Maketh glad reply;
Lo, our lips are thankful,
Lo, our hearts are high!
Hearts in hope uplifted,
Loyal lips that sing;
Strong in faith and freedom,
We have crowned our King!*

LAND OF HOPE AND GLORY
Benson's 1914 words

*Dear Land of Hope, our helm of pride
Upon thy brow is set.
Thy keen-eyed navies span the tide;
Be strong, be patient yet!
Then let thy thunders' rolling smoke
O'er echoing seas be borne,
To shatter with their lightning stroke
The braggart sons of scorn.*

*Land of Hope and Glory, Mother of the free,
How shall we uphold thee, who are born of thee?
Gird thee well for battle, bid thy hosts increase;
Stand for faith and honour, smite for truth and peace!*

*The gage is flung, the secret hosts
Pass out in serried throng,
They gather on the far-seen coasts,
To do thy comrades wrong.
Then leap to battle for the right,
Rise, haste thee, be not blind!
Heave up thy sword of old to smite
The tyrants of mankind.*

Land of Hope and Glory, etc.

Pomp & Circumstance March No. 2 in A minor op. 39 (1901)

This was sketched on 1 January 1901 and completed on 13 August of that year, a month after No. 1. It is considered by some to be the finest of the set, and was dedicated to Granville Bantock, the composer, conductor and, from 1897, Musical Director of the Tower in New Brighton. Bantock programmed Elgar's music in his concerts, and Elgar returned the

compliment; he also helped Bantock gain a knighthood in due course. Bantock succeeded Elgar both as conductor of the Worcestershire Philharmonic Society in 1904 and as Peyton Professor of Music at the University of Birmingham in 1904.

This second March was first performed, along with the first, on 19 October 1901 in Liverpool by the Liverpool Orchestral Society under the direction of the composer.

It is invested throughout by a tense, nervous restlessness which is far removed from the opulence of the first. The opening exclamation is superseded by the restless strings. The trio section features a rather Schubertian tune on the woodwind over a swinging triplet accompaniment in the strings, and the coda is dominated by the brass.

Boosey published the March in 1902. Years later, on 2 May 1924, it featured in Elgar's first broadcast for the BBC, played by the Royal Philharmonic Society's Orchestra at the Central Hall, Westminster.

Pomp & Circumstance March No. 3 in C minor

No. 3 was the only music Elgar finished in the Autumn of 1904, and appeared in November of the same year. Boosey published it in 1905, when they gave Elgar £50 with a royalty on every arrangement sold. On the score of a sketch from 7 February 1902, there is the inscription "I.A. Atkins gewidmet (dedicated) Ed. E. Feb 7: 1902". Ivor Atkins (1869-1953) was Elgar's friend and the Organist of Worcester Cathedral from 1897 to 1950. The dedication occurred soon after Atkins secured a performance of *The Dream of Gerontius* for the Worcester Festival. Subsequently the completed March was dedicated to him, giving him immense pleasure and pride.

In a letter of 13 February 1905 to Frank Schuster, a rich patron, Elgar wrote "The new 'Pomp & C' is a devil & the string thing most brilliant with a real tune in it however". Along with the *Introduction and Allegro*, it received its first performance on 8 March 1905 at the Queen's Hall played by the London Symphony Orchestra. Alice wrote to Jaeger on 28 March 1905 that "The new march is thrilling – the most pacific friends were ready to fight!"

Possibly the least known of the set, the prevailing mood of the third March is restless and agitated rather than grandiose. Its introduction is the quintessence of the first two marches in that it is only when one listens to the third straight after them does one realize that the first two both have openings that are fundamentally tense and nervous. After the dark-hued, turbulent march theme, the music comes to a halt and the expansively lyrical trio section emerges to bring more light and warmth into the score. Despite its inherent perkiness, it still retains a dignity and, after its recapitulation, the march grows in strength and vigour before ending with a rather brusque coda.

Pomp & Circumstance March No. 4 in G

The fourth was completed on 7 June 1907, five days after Elgar's 50th birthday, and was given its first performance just under seven weeks later, on 24 August, with Henry Wood conducting. It is dedicated to George Robertson Sinclair, who had been appointed organist at Hereford Cathedral in 1889 and who remained in that post for the rest of his life until he

died in 1917. He (or rather, his dog, Dan) was also immortalized in the *Enigma Variations* and Sinclair was the dedicatee and first conductor of the *Te Deum & Benedictus*.

The first performance took place in the Queen's Hall on 24 August 1907 and Boosey published it in the same year. Elgar himself described it as "gaudily gay and brilliant" in a letter of 16 September 1909 to Canon Gorton, and the orchestration matches that description, bearing a passing resemblance to that of *The Crown of India* suite.

No. 4 is similar to No. 1 in having a lively, rhythmic march section and a very broad lyrical trio melody, the first of Elgar's tunes to be marked 'nobilmente'. As with No. 1, the tune has already been played once before it reaches its climax. After the Trio, the March returns and then the Trio again. Finally, with a sly smile, Elgar shows us that the Trio melody and the March theme can fit together in the lengthy coda.

Attempts have been made to fit words to this melody à la Land of Hope and Glory. The first was made by Alice Elgar in 1910, who called her new song *The King's Way* after the road which was opened in London in 1909. In 1928, that was replaced by Alfred Noyes's *Song of Victory* and a later attempt was made in 1940 during the Second World War, when the author A.P. Herbert (1890-1971) provided his *Song of Liberty*. He wrote two verses for the song, each followed by a refrain from which the song gets its title:

*All men must be free,
March for liberty with me.
Brutes and braggarts may
Have their little sway –
We shall never bend the knee ...*

But, years before, Elgar had revised his view of the patriotic "bards ... (who) ... step in front of an army and inspire the people with a song." When Boosey sent him in 1928 Noyes's words to be fitted to the central tune of No. 4, he wrote: "I think the pronounced praise of England is not quite so popular as it was; the loyalty remains, but the people seem to be more shy as to singing about it."

***The King's Way* by Alice Elgar**

*The newest street in London town,
The Kingsway, the Kingsway!
The newest street in London town,
Who'll pace it up and pace it down?
The brave, the strong, who strive and try,
And think and work, who fight and die
To make their England's royal way
The King's Way, the King's Way!*

*The noblest street in London town,
The Kingsway, the Kingsway!
The noblest street in London town,*

*The stir of life beats up and down;
In serried ranks the sabres shine,
And Art and Craft and Thought divine,
All crowd and fill the great highway,
The Kingsway, the Kingsway!*

*On dreary roads in London town
The sick and poor sink sadly down in gloom:
But grace and pity meet
When King and Queen stretch hands and greet
The weary ones;
This, they say,
Our King's way, and our Queen's way.*

*There is a path across the deep, -
The King's Way, the King's Way!
There's a path across the deep, -
A path the Island ships shall keep;
A way by which to those we win,
Whose hands we clasp, whose hearts are kin,
England's sons across the sea;
They too will fight to keep it free:*

*Let ev'ry voice in England say, -
"God keep the way by night and day,
The King of England's Way!"
The King's Way, the King's Way!*

Pomp & Circumstance March No. 5 in C

The fifth March dates from 1930 although it was certainly sketched much earlier. Despite arriving well towards the end of the composer's life, it is in many ways the most jaunty of the set, swinging along in a breezy six-eight. The Ordnance Survey map still survives on which Elgar jotted down the main theme of this march as he was motoring through Gloucester. It is perhaps the only work he wrote after the First World War which recaptures the splendour and orchestral opulence of the earlier orchestral works. The time-signature imparts to the march a rhythmic swagger that never falters, although again the Trio theme adds a typical Elgarian tinge of mellow nostalgia to this glittering score. Like two others, it was dedicated to a Three Choirs Festival organist, this time "To my friend Dr. Percy C Hull, Hereford". The request for the dedication was set out humbly in a letter to Hull of 2 September 1930, asking "whether you would allow me to dedicate my new Pomp and Circumstance to you". Hull was born in 1878 in Hereford and became a chorister and pupil of Sinclair there. He became Assistant Organist at the Cathedral in 1896, fought and was captured during World War One, and became Organist after Sinclair died in 1917, the post having been kept open for him. He retired in 1949.

No. 5 turned out to be the last work to be published by Boosey's (in 1930), despite the contract for six marches. On 18 September 1930, Elgar recorded the March two days before its public première under Henry Wood in the Queen's Hall. Despite Elgar's absence through illness, the hall was sold out, the reception "rapturous", and the Daily Telegraph reported that "No recent announcement can have given greater pleasure to a vast number of people than the promise of a new Military March by the Master of the King's Music". Its first broadcast performance took place on 19 March 1931, by the Shepherds Bush Pavilion Orchestra under Louis Levy. A jaunty opening ushers via an abrupt change of key the main trio tune, which seems faintly incongruous against the introduction. This incongruity almost conceals the very real quality of the melody.

Pomp & Circumstance March No. 6 in G minor (1910?)

A note by **John Norris**

The sixth *Pomp & Circumstance* March might have been a 'Soldier's Funeral March' according to an interview in the May 1904 edition of the Strand Magazine. However, the material we uncovered remained as a series of sketches until completed by Anthony Payne in 2006. It was premiered at the 2006 London Promenade Concerts and was subsequently recorded by the BBC National Orchestra of Wales under the late Richard Hickox.

The dating of Elgar's sketches for the March was a mystery. Its numbering, implying a later work than March No. 5 of 1930, is misleading, as was the erroneous and short-lived 1950s publication of the *Empire March* under the title *Military March No. 6*. Not only does *Pomp and Circumstance March No. 6* share its trio with the *Empire March* of 1924 but another sketch from March No. 6 turns up firstly in *Fate's Discourtesy*, a song in Elgar's *Fringes of the Fleet* of 1917, and again in the second of his five *LPiano Improvisations* of 1929. Surely Elgar would have realized that his re-use of material already published by a different publisher would have led to copyright complications? No - it is far more likely that Elgar's sketches predate his other works and, having put the unfinished march to one side, he later raided them for more pressing needs, as was his custom.

It was an entry in Alice Elgar's diaries from 1910 which first put us on the trail of the unfinished march, and adjacent sketches in the sketchbook in which Elgar jotted down some of his thoughts for the March tend to support this date. That Elgar was indeed working on the unfinished march in the years shortly before *Falstaff* was confirmed by the emergence (coincidentally at Elgar's Birthplace on the 150th anniversary of his birth) of a previously unknown manuscript. In Elgar's hand, and given to its current owner by Elgar's close friend Billy Reed, the manuscript is stamped *Pomp and Circumstance March No. 5* and is written on the reverse of drafts stamped *COLISEUM MASQUE*, with one sheet containing a draft of *O, soft was the song*, a song published in 1910. A quick play-through instantly revealed this to be not the work we now know as March No. 5 but a far fuller and more coherent draft of the sketches available to Anthony Payne. Although inevitably it will now be forever known to us as *Pomp and Circumstance March No. 6*, the now published and recorded work actually contains the first recording of Elgar's final thoughts on the march he originally intended to follow No.4.