



**ELGAR**

**The Spirit of England  
With Proud Thanksgiving  
Carillon**

**JUDITH HOWARTH**  
soprano

**LONDON SYMPHONY  
CHORUS**

**SIMON HALSEY**  
director

**PHILHARMONIA  
ORCHESTRA**

**JOHN WILSON**  
conductor

Premiere  
Recording of

**Arthur**

(the complete  
incidental music)

**ORCHESTRA OF  
ST PAUL'S**

**BEN PALMER**  
conductor

*Somm*



## WITH PROUD THANKSGIVING

The making of this Compact Disc was made possible through the generosity of a number of individuals and organisations. It was assisted, in particular, by a legacy from the late John Harvey Boys who served with distinction in the Lincolnshire Regiment during World War II. This recording is issued in his memory and that of two of his uncles and a first cousin. Richard Boys was killed during the protracted Battle of the Somme in November 1916 and Sidney Boys died as a result of gas-poisoning a few years after the Armistice. Alastair Kinloch was killed in Burma in 1944, shortly after being awarded the Military Cross for his part in Operation Broadway.

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# ELGAR    The Binyon Settings

The Spirit of England · With Proud Thanksgiving  
Carillon · Arthur (the complete incidental music)

## The Spirit of England, Op. 80    (27:21)

- 1 I    The Fourth of August    7:36
- 2 II    To Women    6:46
- 3 III    For the Fallen    12:45

## 4 With Proud Thanksgiving    7:06

## 5 Carillon, Op. 75    8:27

## Incidental Music to Arthur    (34:41)

- 6 Introduction to Scene 1    1:47
- 7 Scene 1: “*now you have told me*” 0:20
- 8 End of Scene 1    0:21
- 9 Introduction to Scene 2    2:05
- 10 Introduction to Scene 3    2:04
- 11 Scene 3: “*Put me on the barge*” 0:54
- 12 Link to Scene 4    0:23
- 13 Introduction to Scene 4    5:16
- 14 Scene 4: Curtain rises    0:50

- 15 Scene 4: “*and both dangerous*” 1:10
- 16 Scene 4: “*It may be*”    0:56
- 17 Scene 4: “*The Queen*”    1:12
- 18 Scene 4:  
“*King Arthur’s Fellowship*” 0:13
- 19 Scene 4: “*As the King wills*” 0:27
- 20 Scene 4: “*The radiant rose*” 0:13
- 21 Scene 4: “*Our Queen!*”    0:40
- 22 Scene 4: “*Ah false*”    0:51
- 23 Scene 4: Reading letter    1:23
- 24 Introduction to Scene 5    1:51
- 25 Scene 5: “*No tree was there*” 0:27
- 26 Introduction to Scene 7    2:12
- 27 Scene 7: “*Go Lucan, to meet her*” 1:01
- 28 Scene 7: “*Thy sword*”    2:18
- 29 End of Scene 7    0:40
- 30 Introduction to Scene 8    5:04
- Total duration:**    78:21



Laurence Binyon, CH  
by Francis Dodd, 1920

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# EDWARD ELGAR & LAURENCE BINYON

## A partnership forged in wartime

The orientalist and poet Laurence Binyon (1869-1943) met Edward and Alice Elgar for the first time in December 1901. A month later Binyon wrote to Alice Elgar about a play of his that he hoped might interest her husband. Over the next few years Binyon attempted to interest Elgar in other settings but nothing came of these approaches. It was to be war that brought them together.

Shortly after Great Britain declared war on Germany on 4 August 1914 *The Times* began publishing a series of poems reflecting the different emotions of the various authors. The poems varied considerably in quality and ranged from overt patriotism to reflection and unease. The finest such as *August* by John Masefield caught the moment as did three poems of Laurence Binyon. At the end of the year he included the poems in his anthology, *The Winnowing Fan*.<sup>1</sup>

Binyon's verse takes us back to a different time: a Victorian world of self-sacrifice and honour; a time of order and patriotism; sentiments almost universally felt across the country. 'We were all delighted when war broke out on August 4th. . . . A lot of boys from the village were with me and although we were all sleeping in ditches at Harwich, wrapped in our greatcoats, we were bursting with happiness. . . . We were all damned glad to have

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1 *The Fourth of August* was published on 11 August, *To Women* on 20 August and *For the Fallen* on 21 September (although written just after the retreat from Mons at the beginning of the month). Binyon was appointed to the Assistant Keepership of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum in 1909.

got off the farms . . . We were all so patriotic then and had been taught to love England in a fierce kind of way. The village wasn't England; England was something better than the village.'<sup>2</sup>

Today these sentiments may seem naïve in their courageous honesty but it is these that imbue Binyon's poems and are what, by and large, the public wanted. In 1916 the critic Ernest Newman wrote: 'As Mr. Binyon sings: "They laughed, they sang their melodies of England, They fell open-eyed and unafraid." It is love and gratitude and pride and sorrow for these children of England and their self-sacrifice, . . . that Elgar sings in such noble accents in the third of these new works of his.'<sup>3</sup> Binyon's words were written during the first months of a war that 'would be over by Christmas'. Lines such as 'They went with songs to the battle, they were young, straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow' were neither anachronistic nor even mawkish in 1914, for they expressed a general optimism and confidence that England was worth defending, as the farm hand quoted above makes clear. This is not all however, for what is also noteworthy about Binyon's verse is his perception that the war would be long and hard ('we arm for men that are to be' and 'the hope that's never done, the seed that's in the Spring returning . . .') and that despite its military weakness a nation had perceived that she had to fight 'the barren creed of blood and iron'.

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2 Leonard Thompson, farm worker, from Robert Blythe's *Akenfield*, (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1972), 41-42.

3 From Ernest Newman's programme notes for the first London performances of *To Women and For the Fallen*, 8-13 May 1916.

## The Spirit of England, Op.80

Early in 1915, Sir Sidney Colvin a former Keeper of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum suggested to Elgar that some of Binyon's verses would be suitable for a musical setting. Eventually Elgar chose three poems and, at the composer's request, Binyon wrote an additional verse (4) for inclusion in *For the Fallen*.

Elgar inscribed his score as follows: 'My portion of this work I humbly dedicate to the memory of our glorious men, with a special thought for the Worcesters.' The gestation of the work was complicated and caused Elgar numerous difficulties, most obviously with the composer Cyril Rootham (1875-1938) who had also begun work on a setting of *For the Fallen*. Immediately Elgar offered to withdraw his own composition. Happily for posterity he was persuaded to continue but sadly Rootham never forgave him. Composing the music for the sixth verse of *The Fourth of August*: 'Vampire of Europe's wasted will . . .' also created problems for Elgar. His setting was not completed until performances of the other two poems had taken place. Finally, in March 1917, as the U-Boat campaign led to additional food rationing, he decided to use music from the demon's chorus in *The Dream of Gerontius* to underline Binyon's powerful words. The first complete performance of *The Spirit of England* took place on 4 October 1917 in Birmingham Town Hall under the direction of Appleby Matthews.

*For the Fallen* in particular offered consolation and hope to those who listened. Sir Sidney Colvin's wife, Frances, wrote to Elgar in May 1916 after the London premiere of the first two settings of 'how deeply moved we both were – it is all quite wonderful & just what one wants at this time – & at all times – it will live always – "For the Fallen" especially will

always be the one great inspiration of the War.’<sup>4</sup> Ernest Newman echoed this when he wrote: ‘“For the Fallen” is as moving a piece of music as Elgar has ever given us – a work of passionate sincerity and a beauty that is by turns touching, thrilling, and consoling. . . It takes a lifetime of incessant practice to attain a touch at once so light and so sure as this.’<sup>5</sup>

Elgar’s choice of Binyon’s poems provided a three-movement structure reflecting the varied emotions of the time. *The Fourth of August* is a reminder to Britain of its duty, its place in the world, the need to bear the hardship of war and to anticipate the moral transfiguration that will result. In *To Women* Binyon considers the stoicism of the mothers, wives and daughters left at home to endure the suffering to come while in *For the Fallen* it is the common soldier who is remembered. In the summer and autumn of 1914 it was Britain’s ‘contemptible little army’ that died in the fields of Belgium and northern France as it slowed the advance of the invading German forces. Somehow, before the British army had fired a shot, Binyon anticipated that these men would be ‘staunch to the end against odds uncounted’, as indeed they were.

Elgar’s settings are for soloist (soprano or tenor), chorus and orchestra. *For the Fallen* included the then little known verse five. Elgar changed the order of words in the first line to from ‘They shall grow not old’ to ‘They shall not grow old’. Binyon does not seem to have objected.

The G major opening of *The Fourth of August* treads an effective path between urgency and melancholy. The octave rise for the soloist on ‘Spirit of England, ardent eyed’ reflects

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4 Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar: Letters of a lifetime* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 299.

5 From the *Birmingham Post* 9 May 1916.



Binyon's world of heroic sacrifice, a sentiment that returns towards the end with Elgar's treatment of 'Endure, O Earth!'. There is a brief excursion into A flat for the words 'we step into the grandeur of our fate' before the return to the home key at 'Among the nations noblest chartered'. There is an ambivalence in the final bars: *piú lento*: 'ardent-eyed' but wide-eyed too.

*To Women* in A flat is a meditation on domestic sacrifice as Elgar varies the pace from verse to verse most notably in the striking 'Swift, swifter than those hawks of war'. He even represents aeroplanes in his orchestra as the chorus sings 'those threatening wings that pulse the air'. The movement ends with Elgar recalling *The Fourth of August* in support of the last line and looks forward to *For the Fallen* in the chorus.

A semitone higher in A minor, *For the Fallen* opens with a slow, plodding *soleenne* march of death, a counterpoint to the words: 'With Proud Thanksgiving'. In a programme note, Benjamin Britten wrote that it 'has always seemed to me to have in its opening bars a personal tenderness and grief, in the grotesque march, an agony of distortion, and in the final sequences a ring of genuine splendour'.<sup>6</sup> The tone changes as Elgar *nobilmente* pierces the heart at 'Death august and royal'. After the chorus reflects on these sentiments the tempo changes to a march as the innocent go to war but slackens again for Binyon's immortal verse. The emotional temperature increases as the music moves, *crescendo poco a poco*, towards the climax *fff grandioso* and the stillness that follows as the chorus intones the final bars. We have arrived at an English Valhalla populated anew but remaining known 'to the innermost heart of their own land'. In a few minutes Elgar has created a profound meditation on war, death and hope. There is, despite Arras, the Somme and Passchendaele 'music in the midst of desolation'.

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6 Michael Kennedy, *Britten* (London: J M Dent 1981), 279.

## The Fourth of August

Now in thy splendour go before us,  
Spirit of England, ardent-eyed,  
Enkindle this dear earth that bore us,  
In the hour of peril purified.

The cares we hugged drop out of vision,  
Our hearts with deeper thoughts dilate.  
We step from days of our division  
Into the grandeur of our fate.

For us the glorious dead have striven,  
They battled that we might be free.  
We to their living cause are given;  
We arm for men that are to be.

Among the nations noblest chartered,  
England recalls her heritage.  
In her is that which is not bartered,  
Which force can neither quell nor cage.

For her immortal stars are burning,  
With her the hope that's never done,  
The seed that's in the Spring's returning,  
The very flower that seeks the sun.

She fights the fraud that feeds desire on  
Lies, in a lust to enslave or kill,  
The barren creed of blood and iron,  
Vampire of Europe's wasted will . . .

Endure, O Earth! and thou, awaken,  
Purged by this dreadful winnowing-fan,  
O wronged, untameable, unshaken  
Soul of divinely suffering man.

## To Women

Your hearts are lifted up, your hearts  
That have foreknown the utter price.  
Your hearts burn upward like a flame  
Of Splendour and of sacrifice.

For you, you too, to battle go,  
Not with the marching drums and cheers  
But in the watch of solitude  
And through the boundless night of fears.

Swift, swifter than those hawks of war,  
Those threatening wings that pulse the air,  
Far as the vanward ranks are set,  
You are gone before them, you are there!

And not a shot comes blind with death  
And not a stab of steel is pressed  
Home, but invisibly it tore  
And entered first a woman's breast.

Amid the thunder of the guns,  
The lightnings of the lance and sword,  
Your hope, your dread, your throbbing pride,  
Your infinite passion is outpoured.

From the hearts that are as one high heart,  
Withholding naught from doom and bale  
Burningly offered up, – to bleed,  
To bear, to break, but not to fail!

### **For the Fallen**

With proud thanksgiving, a mother for her children,  
England mourns for her dead across the sea.  
Flesh of her flesh they were, spirit of her spirit,  
Fallen in the cause of the free.

Solemn the drums thrill: Death august and royal  
Sings sorrow up into the immortal spheres.  
There is music in the midst of desolation  
And a glory that shines upon our tears.

They went with songs to the battle, they were young,  
Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow.  
They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted,  
They fell with their faces to the foe.

They fought, they were terrible, nought could tame them,  
Hunger, nor legions. Nor shattering cannonade.  
They laughed, they sang their melodies of England,  
They fell open-eyed and unafraid.

They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old:  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning  
We will remember them.

They mingle not with their laughing comrades again;  
They sit no more at familiar tables of home;  
They have no lot in our labour of the day-time;  
They sleep beyond England's foam.

But where our desires are and our hopes profound,  
Felt as a well-spring that is hidden from sight,  
To the innermost heart of their own land they are known  
As the stars are known to the Night;

As the stars that shall be bright when we are dust,  
Moving in marches upon the heavenly plain,  
As the stars that are starry in the time of our darkness,  
To the end, to the end, they remain.

## With Proud Thanksgiving

The signing of the Treaty of Versailles on 28 June 1919 formally ended the war. For this event the British Government organised an official celebration by arranging a Victory Parade in London on 19 July that would march past the temporary Cenotaph in Whitehall. The Cenotaph had been designed and built by the great architect Sir Edwin Lutyens in less than two weeks and quickly became a focus for the people of Britain. On 30 July the Government agreed to erect a permanent structure that would be unveiled by King George V on the second anniversary of the Armistice on 11 November 1920. This would be part of a short ceremony prior to the main event of the day: the solemn service of interment in Westminster Abbey for the body of the Unknown Warrior that had been brought from Boulogne to Dover the previous day aboard the destroyer HMS Verdun. The coffin was taken to London by train where it lay, guarded overnight, in Victoria Station.

Towards the end of 1919 Elgar had been commissioned by The League of Arts (to which the work is dedicated) to provide a choral work for the unveiling ceremony. On 5 May 1920 the *Worcester Herald* reported the commission and added that: 'it is hoped that on the occasion of the unveiling every Choir in London – both Church and Secular – will take part in the ceremony . . .' Elgar turned to his setting of 'For the Fallen' as the basis of his material, shortening Binyon's poem to almost half its length by omitting verses 3, 4 and 6. He also changed the first word of verse 7 from 'But' to 'For'.

It is clear that Elgar was thinking about his setting early in 1920 as a diary entry of 13 January attests: 'Worked on Cenotaph stuff'. However, it was obvious that an orchestral accompaniment would not be possible for an outdoor ceremony and Frank Winterbottom (1861-1929), a Professor of Instrumentation at the Royal School of Military Music at Kneller Hall, made an arrangement of Elgar's score for Military Band.

It turned out that Elgar's music was not required for the short prelude to the main event of the day, the burial of the Unknown Warrior. However, in March 1921 Elgar heard that *With Proud Thanksgiving* was required, after all. It would be performed, as part of a Royal Choral Society concert to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Royal Albert Hall and would 'have to be scored for an ordinary Orchestra'. It was this version that was first performed on 7 May 1921.

'For the Fallen', composed largely in the minor, manages a balance between solace and anger whilst *With Proud Thanksgiving*, reworked into the major, is less subtle and lacks the profundity of the earlier work. Nevertheless, Elgar changes key to E major for the third verse thereby adding to the poignancy of the words. *With Proud Thanksgiving* is the forgotten offspring of *The Spirit of England*: ignored at birth and rarely performed since;

although the BBC broadcast it on occasions between the two World Wars. However, with Elgar introducing some new music at the beginning and notably at the words: 'But where our desires are and our hopes profound . . .' he offered, albeit briefly, something new to a nation grieving still.

### **With proud thanksgiving**

With proud thanksgiving, a mother for her children,  
England mourns for her dead across the sea.  
Flesh of her flesh they were, spirit of her spirit,  
Fallen in the cause of the free.

Solemn the drums thrill: Death august and royal  
Sings sorrow up into the immortal spheres.  
There is music in the midst of desolation  
And a glory that shines upon our tears.

They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old:  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning  
We will remember them.

For where our desires are and our hopes profound,  
Felt as a well-spring that is hidden from sight,  
To the innermost heart of their own land they are known  
As the stars are known to the Night;

As the stars that shall be bright when we are dust,  
Moving in marches upon the heavenly plain,  
As the stars that are starry in the time of our darkness,  
To the end, to the end, they remain.

# Carillon, Op. 75

Words by Laurence Binyon

Towards the end of 1914 Elgar set the poem *Carillon* by the Belgian émigré poet Emile Cammaerts (1876–1953). Composed for speaker and orchestra *Carillon* commemorated the fate of Belgium through the metaphor of the destroyed bell towers of Flanders. In 1942, during another war, Laurence Binyon contemplated the silencing of the church bells that would be rung again when peace was declared. Set within Elgar's composition, Binyon obtained Cammaerts's consent to publish a new version of *Carillon* to which Elgar's publisher, Elkin and Co also assented. Binyon avoids the passion, grief and anger that inhabits Cammaerts' poem and, instead, offers a reflection on his country and his longing for peace; a peace when the bells would ring again.

## Carillon

Over all this home-land of our fathers  
The bells are dumb.  
Far down the years, far down forgotten centuries  
Their floating echoes come, —  
Voices that mingled with the unresting roar  
Of cities, and from vale and upland called,  
By meadow and sea shore,  
Far and familiar, old and new,

Where hamlets nest about an ancient tower  
And generations sleep beneath the yew.  
They failed not, sure as to their seasons true  
The springing and the falling of the leaf, —  
Peal of joy, toll of grief.

But now the belfry must forgo its chime:  
The bells are vowed to silence. For this time  
They wait their hour.

No more with dancing clamour on the air  
The chimes resound and ring.  
Like those who sleep, the silent bells are there,  
Like those who sleep, like those who dream.  
And only dreams of memory can bring  
The old sound near,  
The tossing music and the ordered swing  
To fancy's ear.

Over all the land the bells are waiting  
The longed for day  
When the vow shall be accomplished and the darkness be turned away –  
The day of the deliverance of the nations,  
Loosening those tongues of bronze  
To shake the air with jubilant vibrations  
From coast to coast in chiming antiphons,  
When city and hamlet hear from throbbing towers  
The silence burst and blossom in festal flowers  
Of sound, of sound that swells  
Triumphant into torrents of thanksgiving  
Released at last, the living,  
Exulting resurrection of the bells.

Triumphant into torrents of thanksgiving  
Released at last, the living,  
Exulting resurrection of the bells.



# ARTHUR

## A Tragedy

From time to time Binyon attempted to interest Elgar in setting other works of his, most notably his *Peace Ode* of 1918.<sup>1</sup> However, it was the appeal of the story of King Arthur, in Binyon's verse play of 1919, which eventually stimulated the composer's interest. The tale, as told by Sir Thomas Malory in his *Le Morte d'Arthur* more than four hundred years before, had at its heart characters who reflect the best and worst of the human condition. Much of what is good is turned to dust as flawed heroes and a villain in Mordred circle around the King and either die or are banished. Binyon draws on Malory's tales (largely the final two parts) and paints an austere, subtly shaded world drained of colour: the consequences of passion already played out. Guenevere and Launcelot may embrace but they do not seem to touch; their physical relationship is in the past even though it is their adultery that destroys Arthur and his kingdom.<sup>2</sup>

In a letter to Binyon on 31 January 1923 Elgar admitted that 'since my dear wife's death [in 1920] I have *done nothing* & fear my music has vanished . . . my wife loved your things & it may be that I can furnish . . . music for 'Arthur' – Can you give me three days more to "try"?' Binyon replied 'I can't thank you enough. Even should you find that the spirit does not move you, I shall always prize the recollection of your wish to do this music for my play.'<sup>3</sup> A few days earlier Elgar had written to his daughter Carice asking if he could stay at her husband's farm in Surrey where he could work in peace at their piano. He realized this would be something of an imposition and asked that 'you send me a wire as soon as you

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1 Elgar wrote to Binyon on 5 November 1918: 'I think your poem beautiful exceedingly – but I do not feel drawn to write peace music somehow . . .'

2 Binyon's spelling of the names of characters in *Arthur* is maintained in these notes.

3 Moore, 370.

can on receipt of this just saying “Yes dearest father” – or “No, you drivelling old blighter” . . .’ Of course Carice said yes. Binyon’s *Arthur* seemed to be a genuine stimulus as a small number of works subsequently emerged from Elgar’s pen as he moved towards the attempt at large-scale composition once more. Anthony Payne, in his performing version of Elgar’s third symphony, incorporated some of the music from *Arthur* in the second and fourth movements, in accordance with Elgar’s intentions.

In his music for *Arthur* Elgar rekindled the ‘heroic melancholy’ of *Grania and Diarmid* from 1901. He seems to be writing for a lost England; the reality of the loss heightened by the thousands that had died in the mud of Flanders five or more years before. Elgar’s music is more melancholic than heroic and matches the mood of the play as conveyed by Guenevere in her last speech mourning the King and the passing of his world:

They are fallen, those famous ones  
Who made this kingdom glorious, they are fallen  
About their King, they have yielded up their strength  
And beauty and valour.

In the final scene Binyon also acknowledges a world still vivid:

Cloister and ante-chapel both are filled;  
And still they bring them in, the dying and dead.  
Never was seen such slaughter in the world.

Binyon’s interest in writing a play based on Malory was first stimulated in 1912 and he worked on it from time to time during the war. A grand production for the Covent Garden Opera House was planned for December 1919 but the illness of one of the leading

actors Robert Loraine (Lancelot) led to its cancellation. Although disappointed, Binyon realised that a more modest production would be in keeping with the rhetoric of *Arthur*.<sup>4</sup> After several failed attempts to stage the play 'it found its predestined home in the theatre at the opposite end of the spectrum from the splendours of Covent Garden, Lilian Baylis's Old Vic among the pubs, cafés and cheap boarding houses of the Waterloo Road.'<sup>5</sup> Elgar conducted on the first night and the matinee and evening performances on the last night (31 March). In what is his only recorded intervention in the production, Elgar told Binyon in a letter of 18 March that 'The end of a play which depends upon two persons or one only is always risky: for *theatrical* purposes I shd have liked Arthur & all his train to march mistily past, seen through a window on the stage R. – however you know best.'<sup>6</sup> *Arthur* had a short run of only ten performances between 12th and 31st March 1923, as was common with verse plays at the time.

Elgar seems to have accepted with equanimity the necessary compromises whenever he composed for the theatre. The Old Vic's orchestra was even smaller than that available to him for his previous work for the stage and for *Arthur* he composed for a small pit band augmented by some extra instrumentalists engaged by the theatre at his request.<sup>7</sup> As far as we know the orchestra comprised thirteen or fourteen players (as in this recording): flute (doubling piccolo), clarinet, two cornets (doubling on trumpets for the sequence of

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4 The Covent Garden production had already spent £1,600 on costumes when it was withdrawn. The total cost of the later production at the Old Vic was £15.10s.

5 John Hatcher, *Laurence Binyon Poet. Scholar of East and West* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 223.

6 Percy M. Young, *Letters of Edward Elgar* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1956), 280.

7 Elgar's works for the stage are: *The Crown of India* (1912), *The Starlight Express* (1915), *The Sanguine Fan* (1917), *The Fringes of the Fleet* (1917) & his incomplete opera, *The Spanish Lady* (1933).

fanfares), trombone, percussion (Elgar wrote ‘Drums etc’: timpani, triangle, side drum, cymbal, bass drum, tambourine, gong, bell in E), harp, piano, two first violins, one second violin and one each viola, cello and double bass. Ben Palmer, who has edited the *Arthur* music for publication by the Elgar Complete Edition writes: ‘The score is striking for its leanness of orchestration. Though the music itself is always noble and, at times, very grand, the textures are very simple and transparent throughout. The piano part is rarely independent, and from the markings Elgar added to the manuscript (he conducted the performances from this score) it looks to have been used to “cue in” instruments missing from certain performances.’ Binyon dedicated *Arthur* to the actor-manager Sir John Martin-Harvey and his wife.

For us the myth of King Arthur still resonates: his name embedded in the English imagination; a name that is almost redolent of a time when a leader would make all well, a time when black was black and white was white. It would be a time when a *once and future king* might emerge and secure a golden future: a better time. As the tolling bell accompanies the solemn procession to Avalon, Elgar’s music suggests that hope for an Arthurian resurrection is slim indeed.



[These notes for ‘Arthur’ were first published in the 2012 programme of the English Music Festival and have been adapted for this recording with the kind permission of the Trustees.]

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In the following the quotations are from *Arthur*.  
Cues and stage instructions incorporated in the score by Elgar are underlined.

# ARTHUR

[6] **Introduction to Scene 1:** Adagio – Allegro moderato (*Curtain up*)

FIRST SCENE: *Sir Bernard's castle at Astolat.*<sup>8</sup>

Lavaine, Sir Bernard's son, announces Arthur's victory over northern rebels but warns of a new faction 'brewing in the west'. A herald from the King arrives, seeking Sir Launcelot whom Lavaine considers may be their wounded un-named guest. Lavaine's brother Torre bursts in and confirms Lavaine's suspicions and from the window Launcelot can be seen walking in the garden with their sister, Elaine.

A heated discussion between Bernard and his sons develops, with Torre condemning Launcelot as the lover of the Queen. Quietly Launcelot enters and confirms his identity, telling how Elaine has healed his wounds. Torre accuses Launcelot of stealing his sister's heart and Elaine, on joining the group, expresses her astonishment at the identity of her patient. She persuades a reluctant Launcelot to wear her 'favour . . . a red sleeve sewn with pearls'. Elaine then implores the man whom she has nursed back to health over several months, to take her as his wife. Launcelot tells her that his duty takes him to the side of the King and that he loves another: 'My heart is given – lost!' *Curtain up*

[7] **Scene 1:** Adagio: (*She sinks half fainting*) Elaine, 'Now you have told me'.

Launcelot leaves for London accompanied by Lavaine: 'Peace come to you, Elaine, kind host, again farewell. In the white fire of her young heart be grief consumed away'.

[8] **End of Scene 1:** Adagio: *Torre, 'Oh, father she will die.'* (*Curtain*)

[9] **Introduction to Scene 2:** Moderato – nobilmente – poco meno mosso – più lento – a tempo primo (*Curtain up*)

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8 Modern day Guildford.

SECOND SCENE: *A room in the palace at London.*

Arthur and Sir Bedivere discuss the disappearance of Launcelot and the treason of Sir Mordred. As Bedivere retires, Queen Guenevere enters, disturbing the King who is deep in thought. Cries herald the arrival of Launcelot to the joy of Arthur and embarrassment of the Queen. Launcelot assures the King that he had not fled from his side and tells of how he was wounded at Dolorous Gard and how Elaine healed him at Astolat. He introduces Lavaine, who kneels and retires.<sup>9</sup>

Arthur announces a joust in celebration and, as he leaves, commends Launcelot's loyalty to Guenevere. The Queen chides Launcelot for his silence, detecting a change in his character. They converse about their love and the conflicting love Launcelot has for the King. Guenevere tells of how she felt abandoned 'to the mercy of Mordred' who, with his brother, Sir Agravaine and his friends Sir Colegrevice, Sir Patrice and Sir Mador, do their best to undermine Launcelot through 'their barbed whispers'.

Launcelot rails against Mordred and his subtle treachery. He embraces the Queen and they talk of how their love brings them no happiness: 'I fled from love that was too strong for me'. Guenevere retorts 'And fled to her'. She 'rushes out in great anger' and Launcelot curses Mordred as the scene ends.

### **[10] Introduction to Scene 3: Lento**

SCENE THREE: *Astolat. Sir Bernard and Torre watch Elaine, who sleeps by the window.*

Bernard and Torre talk of Elaine. She wakes and imagines Launcelot is coming to her. She then asks Torre to take down a letter to Launcelot: '. . . I was your lover though you would not love me. . . . Since you would not come to me, now I come to you. Bury this my body that is dead for love of you . . . ?'

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<sup>9</sup> Dolorous Gard, renamed Joyous Gard after Launcelot's victory, was once more named Dolorous Gard again after his banishment. It was probably Bamburgh Castle in Northumberland.

**11 In Scene 3:** Lento: *Elaine, – ‘Put me on the barge.’*

‘Let old Simon take me and steer downstream to Thames. So I shall come to him.’  
Torre asks his father *‘Will she really die?’* She, so young.’

**12 Link to Scene 4 – attacca**

**13 Introduction to Scene 4:** Allegro maestoso – Maestoso e grazioso – Maestoso

FOURTH SCENE: *Westminster. A vast circular banqueting hall with steps to the river in front. Lavaine by the river steps, leaning pensive on the balustrade.*

Lavaine converses with Sir Gareth and Sir Gaheris. Gareth, on the entrance of Mordred, points out how Launcelot once ‘tumbled down’ Mordred. *Curtain [attacca]*

**14 Scene 4:** Moderato: *[Curtain rises, music continues ppp].*

Lavaine, Gareth and Gaheris leave on the entry of Agravaire who joins Mordred.

Gareth: *‘Hush! He is dangerous.’* Mordred tells Agravaire that he needs to act quickly if he is to support the rebels. They realise they must remove Launcelot from the feast and plot to expose his relationship with the Queen.

**15 Scene 4:** Moderato: *Gareth, – ‘and both dangerous.’*

**16 Scene 4:** Moderato: Mordred, – ‘Wine will be drunk tonight, and with the wine, *it may be, the truth spilt upon the floor!’*

*Curtains draw back and disclose the Round Table spread for a banquet.  
The knights are already assembling.*

Bedivere enters and announces that the Queen will preside at dinner, as the King is pre-occupied with the news from the West.

**17 Scene 4:** Andante: [Bedivere, -] ‘The Queen approaches.’

Guenevere enters and discloses the ‘sudden cares about the king’ which delay his attendance. She greets and praises the assembled knights.

Mordred, - ‘The honour that you do us dumbs our speech.’ The Queen notes the absence of Launcelot whose prowess in the lists the day before is being discussed.

Colegreance, - ‘For me these jousts are toys.’

Guenevere proposes a toast. The knights, rising, respond with a great shout:

**18 Scene 4:** Con spirito: Guenevere, - ‘King Arthur’s fellowship!’

A lady enters and tells the Queen that ‘King Arthur takes private counsel of Sir Launcelot, who prays to be excused.’

**19 Scene 4:** Moderato: Guenevere, - ‘As the King wills.’

The knights consider the unrest in the West, Mordred suggesting that Launcelot is a ladies man: end suddenly Mordred, - ‘I say no more.’

The knights toast the Queen:

**20 Scene 4: Maestoso:** All knights, - ‘The radiant rose of Britain and the world.’

Guenevere thanks the knights and Mordred in particular, who proposes another toast:

**21 Scene 4: Maestoso:** All Knights, - ‘Our Queen!’

Mordred now begins his move to discredit the Queen and Launcelot and, thereby, the King, - ‘Yet something, give me pardon, something lacks Your feast, Queen Guenevere.’

He marvels ‘at the red sleeve which [Launcelot] wore, beauty’s proud badge: my Queen, it was your sleeve conquered me’. Lavaine confesses it was his sister’s sleeve.

Mordred, - ‘Not the Queen’s?’ The feast develops into an angry discussion with insults flung across the table. Mordred’s insinuations become more blatant as the hall empties.

Mordred is the last to leave: ‘I have pulled the sluice. Now let the torrent stream.’



At last, Launcelot enters. Launcelot and the Queen argue about the red sleeve, Guenevere accusing Launcelot of faithlessness. Launcelot protests that he did it for the lady who ‘won me back from death’.

**[22] Scene 4:** Lento: *Guenevere, – ‘Ah false and faithless, you will go to her.’*

Their argument is interrupted by the arrival of the barge on which Elaine’s body lies. *Guenevere, – ‘Why does he speak no words’.*

**[23] Scene 4:** Lento: play on thro’ reading the letter –

The dumb steersman hands Launcelot Elaine’s letter as Arthur enters. Guenevere leaves, begging Launcelot’s pardon and Arthur, suspicious, doubts Launcelot’s trust: ‘There’s something hidden from me.’ Launcelot steps into the barge: ‘There’s no end now but exile. I must hence, back with tomorrow’s dawn to my own land, Brittany.’

FIFTH SCENE: *The Queen’s tower. Night.*

*Guenevere stands by a window, holding the curtain and peering out.*

**[24] Introduction to Scene 5:** Poco lento - più mosso - più lento

Guenevere, – ‘. . . And yet there is a shadow among those shadows . . . Is it a tree-stem gives body to the dark?’

**[25] Scene 5:** Lento: Guenevere, – *‘No tree was there.’* She ponders Elaine:

*‘Did she love better than I?’* She looks out of the window again:

*‘It has not moved.’ Guenevere, – ‘It must be fear’s invention.’*

Unarmed, Launcelot enters by a secret way and tells Guenevere how Elaine is now ‘laid in earth’. Guenevere, in distress, wonders who might have spied on him, for she is convinced there are watchers in the shadows. Launcelot tells her that he must sail for Brittany on the morrow and, as she swoons in his arms, there is a knocking on the door and the voice of Agravaine shouts ‘Launcelot! Traitor knight!’

Mordred's laughter is heard as Launcelot searches in vain for a sword with which to defend himself. Mordred's men attempt to batter down the door. Launcelot dims the light and opens the door ajar, grabbing Colegrevice, stunning him and dragging him into the room. Launcelot draws Colegrevice's sword and opens the door wide to take on Mordred and his followers. Agravaine is mortally wounded, as are Colegrevice, Patrice and Mador. Mordred escapes.

Guenevere tells Launcelot that he is now the enemy of the King and that he should join the rebels. Launcelot tells her that he cannot, for his love for the King is too great. However, he hopes to reach Arthur before Mordred.

SIXTH SCENE: *The King's tower. The same night. Arthur pacing up and down.*

Gawaine and the King discuss the slanderous talk of Mordred and his followers and the absence of Launcelot at the feast and the burial of Elaine. Arthur questions Launcelot's loyalty but Gawaine vehemently defends him. They talk of past battles and how Launcelot fought by the King, but Arthur continues to doubt his friend.

Mordred appears and tells of Launcelot 'where we found him, with the Queen, in her own chamber'. He tells of the deaths of his brother and friends 'on the Queen's threshold' and demands justice. Arthur marvels at Launcelot's prowess and demands proof of his treachery. He asks Gawaine to arrest the Queen and Launcelot. Gawaine refuses, believing that Mordred set up what has passed. Arthur then demands that Gawaine fetch his brothers and, meanwhile, prays for guidance.

Gareth and Gaheris enter and reluctantly take the warrant for the arrests. Gawaine returns and stubbornly defends Launcelot before Sir Bors and Lavaine appear with drawn swords. All defend Launcelot's love for the King but Arthur resolutely continues to protest his favourite's treachery and turns on his friends: 'Choose: if your will be on the King's side, stay; but if on Launcelot's, turn your faces from me. It shall be battle when we meet again.' Bors and his friends leave silently.

A Man-at Arms arrives, telling Arthur that Launcelot has fled with the Queen and in so doing has killed the unarmed Gareth and Gaheris. Mordred has run, too, and aligned himself with the rebels in the west.

SEVENTH SCENE: *The King's Camp before Joyous Gard. Stormy weather. Black skies against which the earth shows up white and livid. The towers of the Castle appear above rising ground.*

**[26] Introduction to Scene 7: Allegro**

Bedivere and Lucan discuss the King and his depression: 'And here unnatural strife. Arthur and the brother of his heart. And the Queen betwixt them, like some baleful star.' They recognize the threat of Mordred who gathers strength whilst Arthur is diverted. Suddenly they see 'a damsel riding hither from Joyous Gard.'

**[27] Scene 7:** Bedivere exclaims: 'She is in white; like a white dove; like peace. *Go, Lucan, to meet her.*' A distant *trumpet afar* sounds from Joyous Gard.

The damsel tells the knights that Launcelot wishes to parley with the King. As Bedivere wonders: '*what sends Sir Launcelot? Is it peace?*', the King arrives. (A *Trumpet sounds from the King's side* and a *Trumpet afar* answers from Joyous Gard). Arthur asks the Damsel 'How is it with the Queen? The Damsel replies that she weeps. *Gawaine, - 'Send her to her lord again' (Trumpet afar).*

*Launcelot and his knights appear.* He tells Arthur that he will restore the Queen on the assurance 'that harm come not to her'. Goaded by Gawaine, now bitterly opposed to Launcelot, Arthur challenges Launcelot to 'bring all your boast of knights into the field'. Launcelot tells Arthur of his repentance: 'Had Mordred and his crew not set their miserable snare for me that night -', he would not be there now for he had already bid the Queen farewell. His keeping of the Queen was to save her from becoming a 'prey to those fanged foxes. Could I forswear her in her hour of danger?'

A storm breaks as the King's resolve weakens, but Gawaine draws his sword, demanding vengeance for his dead brothers. Launcelot tells of his grief and how he will do penance for their deaths. Gawaine throws his glove in Launcelot's face, shouting at him: 'Liar and traitor!' (*Trumpet afar*). The opposing knights join in a battle that soon moves off stage. In the dim light Bors and Arthur continue the fight, Launcelot arriving in time to stop Bors striking Arthur down. Launcelot asks Arthur: 'My King! Is there a hurt?' Arthur replies: 'Not in my flesh. It is of stone, and feels not any more.'

*(A long-drawn note is sounded by a distant (Bishop's trumpet).*

The King is left alone with Launcelot, who confesses his love for Guenevere and offers her back to Arthur. Torn between his duty and his love for Launcelot, the King is saved by the arrival of the Bishop who demands the end of the fighting and the return of the Queen, unharmed.

Launcelot brings Guenevere to the King. Arthur, in great sadness, exiles Launcelot to Brittany and, as he leaves, Launcelot re-affirms his oath of fealty and 'passes out with his knights'

**[28] Scene 7:** Slow: 'Thy sword, my life, are yours.' Cantabile

Despite all that has passed Arthur feels unable to reproach Guenevere who agrees 'to renounce the world and choose the cloister'. Arthur stands alone: 'Set you forth. Farewell until the last farewell of all! Launcelot, Launcelot! Guenevere, Guenevere!'

**[29] Scene 7: End of scene:** Launcelot & Knights for curtain, end of scene Slow

EIGHTH SCENE: *The Nunnery at Amesbury. Guenevere is discovered lying prostrate on the stone steps.*

**30 Introduction to Scene 8: Lento**

Guenevere tells a nun how she is unable to find peace. The King is announced, and they talk of forgiveness and reconciliation. Arthur is to join battle with Mordred: ‘... A voice within my heart assures me that I go to the last of all my battles.’ Guenevere says farewell and gives Arthur her blessing as he leaves: ‘That peace which can remember, and yet hope, because love makes us greater than we know, come to you, Guenevere!’

NINTH SCENE: *Same as Eighth Scene. Early light.*

Dying and wounded fill the cloister and chapel. Guenevere asks for news of the King for she knows Bedivere is at the gate. The nun enters: ‘The King is dead. The flower of Kings is fallen. . . . He and the traitor Mordred met their last and smote each other, even to the death. . . . [The King] spied Mordred among the heaped dead, leaning on his sword, and cried aloud and smote him; and that traitor, even as he gasped his bitter soul out, struck our anointed.’

A distant chant (the only music in the scene) is heard, becoming louder until darkness covers the stage.

The King’s body lies awaiting the ‘three sad Queens [that] should fetch King Arthur home across the water of Avalon to his rest.’ As the convent bell tolls, Guenevere reflects on the consequences of her actions. The nun sends Arthur’s body on its way as darkness envelops the stage. ‘After a pause the gloom melts, gradually revealing a wide distance of moonlit water over which glides a barge, bearing King Arthur, and the three Queens sorrowing over him, to the island of Avalon.’

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## JUDITH HOWARTH

One of the most sought-after sopranos in Europe, Judith Howarth first came to public attention when she joined the Royal Opera House as a Principal. During nine seasons there she sang many roles including Oscar *Un Ballo in Maschera*, Musetta *La Bohème*, Liu *Turandot*, Gilda *Rigoletto*, Norina *Don Pasquale* and Marguerite *Les Huguenots*. Subsequent engagements include Musetta in *Cincinnati*, Ellen Orford *Peter Grimes* in Toulouse and Santiago de Chile, Christine *Intermezzo* and Aithra *Die ägyptische Helena* in Santa Fe, Nedda *I Pagliacci* and all four soprano roles in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* for Florida Grand Opera, Violetta *La Traviata* for the Minnesota Opera, ENO and Glyndebourne. Recent and future engagements include title role *Madama Butterfly* in Helsinki, title role *Maria Stuarda* in Minnesota (and for WNO), Ellen Orford in *Peter Grimes* at Oviedo Opera (and for ENO) and Verdi Requiem at the Royal Albert Hall.



On the concert platform Judith has toured with Plácido Domingo to Seattle, Hong Kong, Australia, New Zealand, Brussels and Amsterdam, going on to sing Strauss's *Four Last Songs* in Vienna conducted by Sir Simon Rattle.

Judith has appeared on television all over the world and has a discography of more than 30 recordings including *Troilus and Cressida*, conducted by Richard Hickox, which won Gramophone Magazine's Opera of the Year. Her latest recordings are *Il Segreto di Susanna* with the Oviedo Filarmonia under Friedrich Haider and the title role in Mercadante's *Maria Stuarda, Regina di Scozia* for Opera Rara.

## JOHN WILSON

John Wilson has developed close, long-term relationships with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Philharmonia, CBSO, and the BBC orchestras with appointments as Principal Conductor of the Northern Sinfonia and Principal Guest Conductor of the RTÉ Concert Orchestra in Dublin.

He has maintained a life-long love of British music. The latter was kindled at the age of twelve upon hearing Sir John Barbirolli's EMI recording of Elgar's *Serenade for Strings*, and much of his own catalogue of over 40 discs is devoted to English Romantics. Across a range of orchestras he is currently conducting all nine symphonies of Vaughan Williams whose *The Lark Ascending* is included on his disc *Made in Britain* with the RLPO which also features music by Walton, Bax, Butterworth, Delius and Edward German. He has recorded both of German's symphonies on the Dutton label where he has also recorded English music by Eric Coates, Anthony Collins, Robert Farnon and beyond with the BBC Concert Orchestra, and music by John Ireland with the Hallé on its own label and the RLPO on Naxos.

But it is his performances with his own John Wilson Orchestra that have introduced him to the widest audiences. Celebrated for his immensely popular annual appearances at the BBC Proms, his 2009 Prom celebrating 75 years of MGM musicals took him from being a highly respected conductor across an unusually broad spectrum of music to an overnight sensation. Televised live on BBC2 and watched by 3.5 million viewers, it generated so much public demand that it was repeated three times, released on DVD and led directly to an exclusive recording contract with his eponymous orchestra on EMI.



photograph: Robert Garbolinski

He made his operatic debut in 2010 with Gilbert and Sullivan's *Ruddigore* at Opera North and has also conducted semi-staged performances of *The Merry Widow*, *Singin' in the Rain*, *The Yeomen of the Guard*, André Previn and Johnny Mercer's neglected musical *The Good Companions* and a newly choreographed production of *West Side Story*.

This disc marks John Wilson's second recording on the SOMM label.

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Today, the Philharmonia has the greatest claim of any orchestra to be the UK's National orchestra. It is committed to presenting the same quality, live music making in venues throughout the country as it brings to London and the great concert halls of the world. In 2014/15 the Orchestra is performing more than 160 concerts, as well as recording scores for films, CDs and computer games. Under Esa-Pekka Salonen a series of flagship, visionary projects – *City of Dreams: Vienna 1900 -1935* (2009), Bill Viola's *Tristan und Isolde* (2010), *Infernal Dance: Inside the World of Béla Bartók* (2011) and *Woven Words*, a celebration of Witold Lutosławski's centenary year – have been critically acclaimed. The latest such project, *City of Light: Paris 1900-1950*, is launched in November 2014 and headlines the Orchestra's 2014/15 season.



## THE LONDON SYMPHONY CHORUS

The London Symphony Chorus was formed in 1966 to complement the work of the London Symphony Orchestra. The partnership between the LSC and LSO was developed and strengthened in 2012 with the joint appointment of Simon Halsey as Chorus Director of the LSC and Choral Director for the LSO. The LSC also partners other major orchestras and has worked internationally with the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonics, Boston Symphony and the European Union Youth Orchestra. The LSC tours extensively throughout Europe and has visited North America, Israel, Australia and South East Asia.

The Chorus has recorded extensively; recent releases include Britten's War Requiem with Gianandrea Noseda, Haydn's *The Seasons*, Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast*, Verdi's *Otello*, and the world premiere of James MacMillan's St John Passion all under the late Sir Colin Davis; and with Valery Gergiev, Mahler's Symphonies Nos 2, 3 and 8. The recent recording of *Götterdämmerung* with the Hallé under Sir Mark Elder won a *Gramophone* award. Last season the Chorus undertook critically acclaimed performances of Mozart's Requiem, Brahms' Requiem, Szymanowski's *Stabat Mater* and Berlioz's *The Damnation of Faust*. The 13-14 season includes Berlioz's *Romeo and Juliet*, Haydn's *The Creation*, the world premiere of Sir Peter Maxwell Davies' Tenth Symphony, Beethoven's Mass in C major and a series of *a cappella* concerts including the Rachmaninov Vespers and Tallis' *Spem in Alium*.

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HARP	Keziah Thomas

## **BEN PALMER**

Ben Palmer is Artistic Director of the Orchestra of St Paul's and is in demand as a guest conductor throughout the UK and abroad. Recent debuts include the Royal Philharmonic Concert Orchestra, the Kazakh State Chamber Orchestra and the London Mozart Players; other orchestras he has conducted include the Hallé, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, the Royal Ballet Sinfonia, Britten Sinfonia and Birmingham Contemporary Music Group. He is regularly invited to work as rehearsal conductor for the Royal College of Music Symphony Orchestra, preparing Berlioz for Sir Roger Norrington and Mahler for

Bernard Haitink. He has worked closely with Norrington since 2011, acting as his assistant conductor on concerts, recordings and on tour, and at the BBC Proms. He is increasingly making a speciality of conducting films live to screen, and works regularly in sessions for television, radio and film. In addition to his work as a conductor, he is in demand as a composer, arranger and orchestrator.

[www.benpalmer.net](http://www.benpalmer.net)

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## SIMON CALLOW

Simon Callow is an actor, a director and a writer. He created the part of Mozart in Peter Shaffer's *Amadeus* at the National Theatre, and played George Frederick Handel on television in *Honour, Profit and Glory*; he has also played, among others, the composers Tchaikovsky and Prokofiev with the LPO and Vladimir Jurowski and Beethoven with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under Muti. He has directed 10 operas and appears regularly with the Hallé Orchestra, the London Mozart Players, the London Symphony Orchestra and the London Philharmonic; he has been involved in premieres of music by Hallgrímsson, Norgard, Stephen Oliver, Steven Isserlis, Roxanna Panufnik and Jonathan Dove, and has recorded Isserlis's *The Haunted House*, Rawsthorne's *Practical Cats*, Schoenberg's *Survivor from Warsaw* and Elgar's *Starlight Express*. He is at present working on a study of British conductors of the 20th century.

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for soprano, chorus & orchestra

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for chorus & orchestra

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PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA, John Wilson *conductor*

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the complete incidental music

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4	<b>With Proud Thanksgiving</b>	7:06
5	<b>Carillon, Op.75</b>	8:27
6 – 30	<b>Incidental Music to Arthur</b>	34:41
	<b>Total duration:</b>	<b>78:21</b>

Recording locations: *Arthur*: St. Mary's Church, Walthamstow 24 March 2014

*The Spirit of England* and *With Proud Thanksgiving*: Henry Wood Hall 23-24 April 2014

Recording Producer: Siva Oke Recording Engineer: Ben Connellan

*Carillon*: Watford Colosseum 13 February 2012 Recording Producer: Neil Varley Recording Engineer: Paul Waton

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