like most of the 'Scottish Romantics', demonstrates that he was eager to embrace musical influences that were more cosmopolitan than local. Delightful though they are, these two orchestral pieces are written in little more than the picturesque idiom synonymous with 'Scottishness' in music, a style initially used by other musicians such as MacCunn and Mackenzie to bring their music to public attention before they started to compose more serious works. The *Musical Times* picked up on the fact that the Overture 'evidently has an underlying story, but Mr Lamond does not reveal it, which is a pity'.[1] In his notes Purser explains that the work was originally named for and based on Scott's novel *Quentin Durward*, which goes some way to filling in the narrative gaps of which the first listeners were unaware. Of the two works, the *Sword Dance*, with its wonderful reel, is by far the most enjoyable.

Duncan Barker
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Parry
Elgar

Parry 'I was glad' (Coronation Anthem)

Elgar National Anthem (arr. Elgar)
Coronation Ode op. 44

Dame Felicity Lott *sop* Alfreda Hodgson *con* Richard Morton *ten* Stephen Roberts *bass*
Cambridge University Musical Society, Choir of King's College, Cambridge
New Philharmonia Orchestra
Band of the Royal Military School of Music, Kneller Hall
Sir Philip Ledger *cond*

Elgar 'O hearken thou' (Coronation Offertory)
The Spirit of England op. 80

Dame Felicity Lott *sop*
London Symphony Chorus
Northern Sinfonia
Richard Hickox *cond*

EMI Classics (74 minutes: DDD/*ADD), £5.99
Notes included.

The three principal works on this disc, Parry's anthem 'I was glad', Elgar's *Coronation Ode* op. 44, and his setting of Laurence Binyon's poetry, *The Spirit of*

[1] 'Philharmonic Society', *Musical Times*, 1 April 1895: 232. Review of first performance of the Overture.

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England op. 80, trace the political and cultural trajectory of the British Empire in the first years of the twentieth century. Elgar's *Ode* and Parry's anthem were both written for the coronation of Edward VII in 1902, perhaps the high water mark of Britain's imperial cultural practice. *The Spirit of England*, however, was Elgar's largest war work, composed in 1916–17 and dedicated 'to the memory of our glorious men, with a special thought for the Worcesters', at a point when notions of empire and nationhood had taken a decisive turn.

Parry's anthem was commissioned by the organist of Westminster Abbey as a processional for use during the coronation service; it was later revised for the coronation of George V in 1911, when the composer completely rewrote the opening orchestral introduction and included additional trumpets. The music's diatonic sequential lines emerge crisply in this recording of a 1977 performance conducted by Sir Philip Ledger (originally released to tie in with the Queen's Silver Jubilee celebrations). The reverberant acoustic of King's College Chapel, where it was recorded, and extended musical forces lend the work a suitably spacious mood, aided by Ledger's leisurely tempos. Dynamic shading could be much sharper, and there is a tendency for much of the music to hover around the forte/mezzo-forte level. However, two moments of textural and harmonic contrast are articulated vividly: the first is the optional vivat, inserted for use as part of the coronation ceremony (Ledger uses those published in the score, prepared for the coronation of Elizabeth II); and the second is the magical passage for semi-chorus in G♭ major, later enharmonically resolved in the sopranos' final affirmatory ascent to B♭.

Elgar's *Coronation Ode*, to a libretto by A.C. Benson, was commissioned by the Grand Opera Syndicate of Covent Garden, although because the Coronation was delayed the work finally received its premiere at the Sheffield Festival. Elgar later reported to Clara Butt that the decision to close the work with a version of the tune from the trio of his *Pomp and Circumstance March* No. 1, the familiar 'Land of Hope and Glory' of the Last Night of the Proms, had been inspired by the King himself. In this performance, the work is less well served by the recording venue than Parry's anthem. Some of the inner detail in Elgar's orchestration is obscured, so that the impression in some of the more rhythmically energized movements is of a certain loss of focus and precision. This is less apparent in the moments of more contemplative introspection, such as the chorus 'The Queen' that Elgar added in 1911, the following chorus, 'Daughter of ancient Kings', or the beautifully poised 'Hark, upon the hallowed air', music, which looks back nostalgically to the woodland sequences in *Caractacus*. Likewise, the opening of the penultimate number, 'Peace gentle peace', sung by King's College Choir, sounds suitably distant and rarefied, a mood inevitably broken for most present-day listeners by the use of 'Land of Hope and Glory' as the work's apotheosis.

Laurence Binyon was a curator at the British Museum and an amateur poet, whose patriotic collection of verse *The Winnowing Fan* (1914) enjoyed considerable popular success. Binyon's work reveals a complex set of metaphors in which images of war are sanitized by their ritualization. In 'For the Fallen', military struggle becomes a form of solemn service, a duty to the nation as motherland that stresses the supposedly organic relationship between community and nation state ('England mourns for her dead across the sea/Flesh of her flesh they were, spirit of her spirit'). The suggestion for Elgar's setting came from Sidney Colvin, who wrote to the composer on 10 January 1915, 'Why don't you do a wonderful Requiem for the slain – something in the spirit of

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Binyon's "For the Fallen"?'. Elgar sketched the settings before discovering that 'For the Fallen' had already been set by Cyril Rootham, a composer at Cambridge. Elgar initially withdrew, but then completed the set following the intervention of Colvin and Binyon directly. The opening number 'The Fourth of August', begins with a confident swagger that recalls the first movement of the Second Symphony. The remaining two numbers, however, betray a more ambivalent response to aspects of Binyon's text. The first entry of the chorus in 'To Women', for example, has a chilling coldness, and the stark opposition of diatonic triads at the opening of 'For the Fallen' creates an underlying sense of instability that is only partially resolved by the coda. The ultimate impression is of an intense sense of hollowness or loss, an expression of private grief that the outward spirit of public restraint cannot wholly conceal.

Richard Hickox's account, reissued here, dates from 1987, and receives a cleaner and more balanced sound than the older Ledger items on the disc. Unfortunately, however, Hickox's interpretation tends strongly towards the over-expansive, with insufficient attention to rhythmic detail or points of instrumental colour, and there is little sense of urgency or tension despite the excellence of the performance. More effective, as a result, is one of the additional items, Elgar's setting of Psalm 5, 'O hearken thou', composed for use during the coronation service in 1911. Under Hickox, the music has a soft stillness and repose that is undeniably moving.

Listening to this disc shortly after the celebrations to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the D-Day landings, at a time when expressions of nationhood and imperial ambition seem strangely inappropriate, has been a disconcerting and alienating experience. It is no longer clear what context the ceremonial works recorded on this disc can occupy. But attending to their historical reception will surely aid our understanding of their musical significance, a process of critical reflection that this disc can potentially strengthen and promote.

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