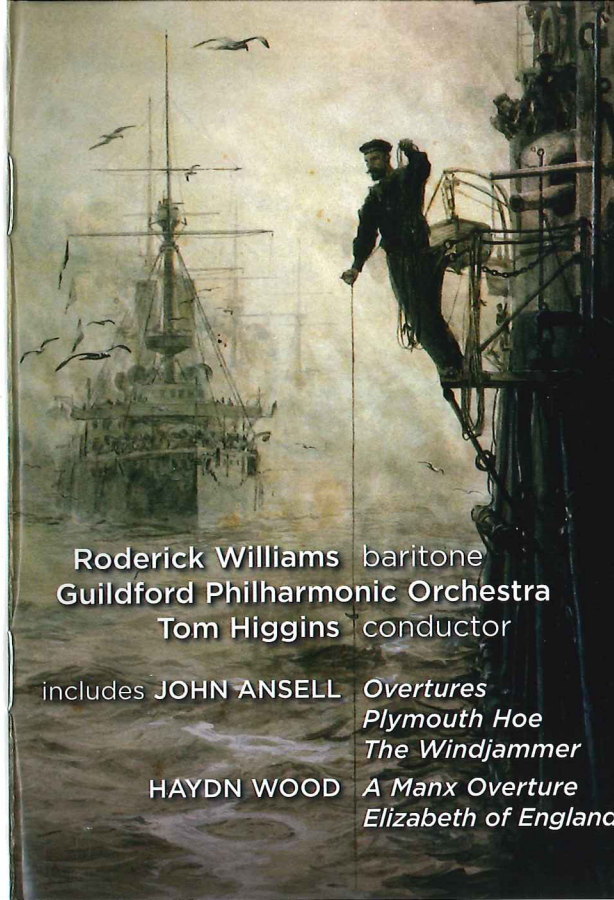




The Fringes of the Fleet. Premiere, June 1917, The London Coliseum.
From left to right: Frederic Stewart, Harry Barratt, Charles Mott and Frederic Henry.



Roderick Williams baritone
Guildford Philharmonic Orchestra
Tom Higgins conductor

includes JOHN ANSELL *Overtures*
Plymouth Hoe
The Windjammer
HAYDN WOOD *A Manx Overture*
Elizabeth of England



Edward
ELGAR

*The
Fringes
of the
Fleet*

**EXCLUSIVE
NEW
RECORDING**



Frederic Stewart. *The Fringes of the Fleet*. Premiere, June 1917,
The London Coliseum

THE FRINGES OF THE FLEET

by

SIR EDWARD ELGAR (1857 - 1934)

RODERICK WILLIAMS solo baritone

Nicholas Lester, Duncan Rock, Laurence Meikle, baritones

GUILDFORD PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

TOM HIGGINS Conductor

John Ansell (1874 -1948)

- | | | |
|-----|------------------------|------|
| [1] | Overture: Plymouth Hoe | 7:29 |
|-----|------------------------|------|

Sir Edward Elgar

The Fringes of the Fleet * -- Songs for four baritones and orchestra

New performing edition by Tom Higgins

- | | | |
|-----|--|------|
| [2] | i. The Lowestoft Boat | 3:58 |
| [3] | ii. Fate's Discourtesy | 3:31 |
| [4] | iii. Submarines | 2:40 |
| [5] | iv. The Sweepers | 3:27 |
| [6] | v. Inside the Bar (four baritones unaccompanied) | 2:30 |

- | | | |
|-----|----------------|------|
| [7] | Big Steamers † | 3:04 |
|-----|----------------|------|

Arranged by Tom Higgins for four unaccompanied baritones

John Ireland (1879 -1962)

- | | | |
|-----|--|------|
| [8] | The Soldier -- song for solo baritone †‡ | 2:34 |
|-----|--|------|

Orchestrated by Tom Higgins

- | | | |
|-----|--|------|
| [9] | Blow Out, You Bugles -- song for solo baritone † | 3:04 |
|-----|--|------|

Orchestrated by Tom Higgins

Sir Edward Elgar

- | | | |
|------|-------------------|------|
| [10] | Elegy for Strings | 4:31 |
|------|-------------------|------|

- Haydn Wood** (1882 - 1959)
- [11] A Manx Overture -- The Isle of Mountains and Glens ‡ 7:59
- Sir Edward German** (1862 -1936)
- [12] Big Steamers -- song for solo baritone † 2:58
Orchestrated by Tom Higgins
- John Ansell**
- [13] Overture: The Windjammer 8:27
- Haydn Wood**
- [14] March: Elizabeth of England § 5:05

Total duration:61:26

* First professional orchestral recording since 1917

† Premiere recording of this arrangement

‡ Premiere recording

§ CD premiere

SOMM would like to thank the following Trusts and individuals for their financial support in making this recording: The R.C. Sheriff Trust, the South East Music Trust, the RVW Trust, the John Ireland Trust, the Kipling Society, the Lynn Foundation, Mr. Michael Hartnall and Dr. Robin Darwall-Smith. Thanks are also due to Rosetta Music Productions.

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THE JOHN IRELAND TRUST

The last surviving combatant of the First World War – or the Great War, as it was originally termed – lived until 95 years after hostilities broke out in August 1914. That War may have seen the first deployment of weapons which were later to become hugely significant in armed conflict – aeroplanes, tanks, and submarines – but it remained, so far as Britain was concerned, a joint struggle between great armies on land and imperial navies at sea. This is not the place to restate Britain's unique maritime history – from the Roman invasions to the Falklands – but it must be appreciated that for composers of the generations before the rise of air supremacy, the concept of a national reliance on the sea, and of a domination of it – in peace as in war – was a constant source of inspiration. In this collection of British music inspired by the sea, much of it dating from the period of World War I – we juxtapose lighter works alongside more obviously serious scores.

John Ansell (1874-1948)

John Ansell's nautical overture *Plymouth Hoe* is certainly one of the lighter works in intent, and for many years it was very frequently heard, but like much light music of the first half of the 20th-century opportunities for hearing it are less often encountered than used to be the case. Philip Scowcroft has well claimed that *Plymouth Hoe* is 'a potpourri of popular nautical melodies rather than a truly original work' (we may note that the melodies themselves are not so popular today), but what cannot be denied is the artistry and subtle construction of the score which was surely the composer's own reaction to the outbreak of that War – it was written soon after, but it does not convey a tragic or lugubrious mood, rather one of a stiffening of sinew and a positive resolve, with the concluding brief reference to *Rule, Britannia!* Today, of course, we may regard the sole purpose of the music as being entertaining to the listener. Ansell's later and rather longer overture, *The Windjammer*, might also be termed a 'nautical' overture – 'windjammer' is late 19th-century slang for a sailing ship, which, in the weary 1930s when this work was written, was a more common sight at sea than 70 or 80 years later. Both works are quite brilliantly written, with an admirable orchestral mastery and sense of atmosphere, the later piece making much use of the folk-song *Shenandoah*.

The major work on this album is Elgar's *The Fringes of the Fleet*, here receiving its first fully professional orchestral recording for 92 years. Tom Higgins studied various manuscripts and Elgar's own recordings of 1917 and prepared a performing edition, which stays faithful to the composer's original intentions while observing some performance practices that were not always annotated at the time. Much of the following notes on this come from an article by the conductor Tom Higgins, first published in *Musical Opinion* for July-August 2009.

Sir Edward Elgar (1857-1934) and Sir Edward German (1862-1936)

On Sunday, June 10th 1917, four young baritones assembled at Sir Edward Elgar's London home, Severn House, to rehearse Elgar's new work, *The Fringes of the Fleet*. The music had its eagerly awaited premiere at the London Coliseum on the following day as part of a bill of twice daily Variety Performances.

The dedicatee of the work was a friend of Elgar's, the infamously tattooed Admiral Lord Beresford. The genesis for Elgar's setting arose from the publication, in December 1915, of a group of poems, interspersed with prose, by Rudyard Kipling, *The Fringes of the Fleet*, on the theme of life on board ship, especially in times of war. Elgar's decision to set the poems must have seemed particularly exciting at the time: Britain's leading composer and poet united in a work for the stage! The work proved to be a notable success - within weeks of the show's opening *The Fringes of the Fleet* was recorded for His Master's Voice and taken on tour, returning to the Coliseum later in the year.

But within a few months Kipling, to general dismay, forbade further performances. It seems he had become increasingly dissatisfied with the presentation of his work in music halls. From the beginning, he had not shown much enthusiasm for the project possibly because close to the time he was contemplating lines such as — *The ships destroy us above and ensnare us beneath. We arise, we lie down and we move in the belly of Death* — his only son had been reported missing in action. To others, however, the poem — a tribute to Submariners — and the rest of *The Fringes*' poems, patriotic in character, must have appeared a golden opportunity to boost public morale. Eventually, Kipling agreed and Elgar set four of the poems in what he called, 'a broad salt-water style', essentially capturing Kipling's descriptive turn-of-phrase excellently.

In the first song, there is affability yet friction among the motley *Lowestoft Boat* crew - drawn from all ages and backgrounds. The following *Fate's Discourtesy* emphasises team-work, striking an almost curiously religious note. *Submarines*, as noted above, paints a grim picture of life below the waves, while *The Sweepers* deals with the horrors of locating and dealing with mines.

Elgar's *Fringes* was staged with the singers in costume outside a pub. The popularity of the work was immediate. The First World War was reaching its climax and Elgar's new work caught the public mood at just the right moment. Its fame was proved time and again by the Coliseum management's decision to extend its run week after week.

Demand for *The Fringes* proved so strong that it remained on the programme from June 11th until the end of July; Elgar conducted every performance, afternoon and evening, 'in person'. By June 27th he had composed one more song for inclusion in the programme: *Inside the Bar* to words by Sir Gilbert Parker, for the four baritones unaccompanied. So superb is this short and extremely rare example of Elgar's *a cappella* compositions that one regrets the absence of other, larger, settings for this medium by him.

At the time, all seemed set that *The Fringes* would eventually have joined Elgar's frequently performed works. But no-one foresaw Kipling's intervention; by the end of 1917 he had succeeded in preventing further performances, to Elgar's considerable distress. The result of Kipling's action was to air-brush an important Elgar work from the repertoire. Apart from a few sporadic performances it has lain virtually forgotten for nearly a century, and it is to be hoped that this recording will do much to reassert its proper place in Elgar's output.

Included on this disc are two settings of another poem by Rudyard Kipling — *Big Steamers* — by Elgar and by his contemporary Edward German, although Elgar's version appeared in 1918, some seven years after German's. The text first appeared in *A School History of England*, written jointly by Kipling and CRL Fletcher, but the poem itself, as Kipling later said, became 'popular in schools and had a certain vogue at certain stages of the war'. Following the success of *The Fringes of the Fleet*, short-lived as it transpired, Elgar may well have thought that Kipling could have no qualms about his setting the poem, as German had already done so in 1911. The conductor of this recording, Tom Higgins, has arranged Elgar's setting for four baritones *a cappella*, echoing *Inside the Bar*, the fifth *Fringes* song, to which it appears as a corollary.

In no little contrast, German's setting (orchestrated by Tom Higgins) is more 'direct', more down-to-earth as it were, in the circumstances of course, composed before the Great War had cast its profound schisms within the consciousness of every European — combatant or not. One might have expected that Elgar would have found deeper causes for expression in the poem, the intervening conflict notwithstanding.

Elgar's *Elegy for strings* Opus 58, was written in six days in June 1909 in response to a suggestion from Alfred Littleton, chairman of Novello, the composer's publishers. The suggestion itself arose from Littleton's attendance at the funeral of the Rev Robert Hadden, Chaplain to the King and Junior Warden of the Worshipful Company of Musicians, when it was pointed out that the Musicians' Company had

no suitable memorial music of its own to perform on such occasions. Elgar inscribed the score: 'In Memoriam late Junior Warden of Musicians' Company Rev R Hadden MA'. The little epicedium was first played a few weeks after it was written; the manuscript is in the possession of the Musicians' Company. Novello published the work in 1910.

John Ireland (1879-1962)

Rupert Brooke was only 27 when he died, a serving naval officer, on the Greek island of Skyros – a consequence of continued ill-health in the Great War – but not before he had created a considerable reputation as one of the most admired of English 'soldier-poets' of the War. Brooke's early death hastened a wide posthumous fame, but it was well-merited: he was one of the finest poets of his generation. For John Ireland, eight years Brooke's senior, his two Brooke settings, composed in 1917-18 and published in the latter year as *Two Songs*, the choice of such a well-known text as the first, 'If I should die, think only this of me; That there's some corner of a foreign field that is forever England' caught the public mood as effectively as his pre-War song, *Sea Fever*; a setting of John Masefield, had done. In keeping with the rest of the music on this album, Tom Higgins has orchestrated both songs.

Haydn Wood (1882-1959)

Haydn Wood was a close contemporary of John Ireland, but Wood spread his compositional aims somewhat wider, for although he wrote two concertos (for piano and for violin) alongside other orchestral works of more serious intent, his greatest claim to fame, and therefore perhaps immortality, resides in his very popular song *Roses of Picardy*, written about the same time as Elgar's *The Fringes of the Fleet*, together with a number of light orchestral pieces, which place him musically closer to Eric Coates than to Ireland. Wood was a pupil of Stanford, having been born in West Yorkshire, but when he was two years old the family moved to the Isle of Man, which – later in life – he commemorated in a number of orchestral works, including *A Manx Overture – the Isle of Mountains and Glens*, from 1936. The following year, Wood made a purely orchestral version of four songs by Elgar, drawing from the composer and critic, Havergal Brian, coincidentally writing in *Musical Opinion*, the comment that Wood possessed 'The true Elgarian touch'.

Havergal Brian was right; there is a breadth and expressive power to Haydn Wood's best music which suggests it manifestly does not deserve the neglect which has befallen it – not that Wood and Elgar are in any way consistently comparable figures, of course, but the older master never disparaged the lighter touch, either in his own music or in that of others, and both would respond directly to public mood. When Queen Elizabeth II ascended to the throne on the death of her father in 1952,

Wood responded to the youthful aspirations of the new Elizabethan age with one of his last orchestral pieces, the march *Elizabeth of England*, which appeared some months before Her Majesty's Coronation Review of the Fleet in June, 1953.

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[after original notes by Tom Higgins - Elgar: *The Fringes of the Fleet* © 2009]

Tom Higgins *conductor* studied conducting at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, winning a silver medal with honours in his first year; he continued his studies with James Lockhart, formerly Music Director of the Kassel Opera House in Germany. He regularly conducts leading British orchestras, including the Hanover Band, the Brandenburg Sinfonia and the Guildford Philharmonic. During a four-year association with London's Opera Holland Park he directed the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, notably in Sullivan's *The Yeomen of the Guard*, and a rare revival of Menotti's *The Consul*. He has also conducted many of the prominent choral societies in the London area, including the Croydon Philharmonic, the Epsom College Chapel Choir, and the Hertfordshire Chorus.

Tom Higgins made his German debut in 2003 when he conducted the New Year's Day Concert with Dresden's Staatsoperetten Orchestra. Recent debuts in the United Kingdom include appearances at St. Martin-in-the-Fields, the Covent Garden Festival, the Brighton Festival and Cadogan Hall, where he conducted the New Queen's Hall Symphonic Wind Band.

Tom Higgins is a noted champion of light music and operetta. In May 1999 he was commissioned by *BBC Music Magazine* to conduct the world premiere recording of Sir Arthur Sullivan's last completed work for the stage – *The Rose of Persia* – coupling it with a number of Sullivan's rarely-heard symphonic overtures. Chosen by the *Observer* as its 'Classical CD of the Week', the recording, now available on the CPO label – featured the Hanover Band performing on period instruments.

In April 2000 Tom Higgins was awarded a Diploma of Honour by the International Robert Stolz Society of Vienna. A former member of English National Opera Orchestra, he worked with a number of distinguished conductors, including Sir Charles Mackerras and Sir Simon Rattle.

Opera credits include *L'amico Fritz*, *Beatrice di Tenda* and Adolphe Adam's *Si j'étais roi* for Opera Omnibus. In 2004 he directed a concert of Viennese music in Berlin for the Tertianum organisation; by popular demand this concert was repeated in Berlin the following year. In May 2007, by special

invitation of the district of Charlottenburg, he conducted a further series of concerts in Berlin, prompting an immediate return invitation for 2008.

Now Resident Music Director of Opera South, his repertoire for the company has included Gounod's *Faust*, Donizetti's *L'Elisir d'amore*, and a significant series of revivals: Nicolai's *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Balfe's *The Bohemian Girl* and Flotow's *Martha*.

As an arranger, Tom Higgins has also recently worked with the international violinist, Midori, in the creation of a number of solos intended for her own use. She premiered one of these works with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra in February 2006.

The **Guildford Philharmonic** is the only UK orchestra to be managed, funded and run by a local authority: Guildford Borough Council has supported the Philharmonic as part of its arts provision for the borough since the orchestra's inception in 1945, when it was the Guildford Municipal Orchestra.

The Guildford Philharmonic is at the heart of music-making in the south east, with a huge repertoire extending from the 17th century to the present day. Its main concert season runs from October to July and takes place in a variety of venues including Guildford Cathedral, the Electric Theatre, Holy Trinity Church, the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre, Abbot's Hospital and Loseley House. In addition, the orchestra is invited to give concerts throughout London and the South of England in a number of venues.

The Guildford Philharmonic's scope ranges from concerts for children and with children, via chamber concerts in more intimate venues, to large-scale choral and orchestral works. The repertoire covers everything from jazz and light music to new music, and the emphasis is to work with young soloists at the outset of their careers. Past Principal Conductors include Crossley Clitheroe, Vernon Handley, Sir Charles Groves, Sir Alexander Gibson and En Shao. The orchestra now works with a variety of conductors and directors including Barry Wordsworth, Tom Higgins, Edward Gardner, Stephen Bell and Paul Barritt.

Roderick Williams *baritone* encompasses a wide repertoire, from baroque to contemporary music, in the opera house, on the concert platform and in recital.

He has enjoyed close relationships with Opera North and Scottish Opera, and is particularly associated with the baritone roles of Mozart. In autumn 2007 he gave highly acclaimed performances of Papageno/

The Magic Flute for English National Opera and in 2008 sang in *La bohème* at Covent Garden. He has also sung world premieres of operas by, among others, David Sawer, Sally Beamish and Alexander Knaifel.

He has worked with orchestras throughout Europe, including all the BBC orchestras in the UK, and his many festival appearances include the BBC Proms, Edinburgh, Cheltenham and Aldeburgh.

Future and recent engagements include a return to ENO for a revival of *The Magic Flute* as well as Saariaho *L'amour de loin*, Van der Aa's *After Life* for Netherlands Opera, *Il barbiere di Siviglia* for Scottish Opera as well as concerts with the Britten Sinfonia, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, BBC National Orchestra of Wales and London Sinfonietta.

He has an extensive discography, and his recordings of English song with Iain Burnside have received particular acclaim.

He is also a composer and has had works premiered at the Wigmore and Barbican Halls, and on national radio.

Nicholas Lester *baritone*, recent graduate of the National Opera Studio (London) studied at the Adelaide Conservatorium of Music and is now resident in London where he studies with Russell Smythe.

On the concert platform Nicholas Lester has performed the Brahms *Requiem* (Beijing), *Messiah*, *Elijah*, Bach *Cantatas* and Rameau *Motets*.

Recent roles include **Aeneas** *Dido and Aeneas* (Adelaide Festival) **Speaker** *The Magic Flute* (British Youth Opera), **Leporello** *Don Giovanni* *Jerwood Scenes* (Glyndebourne Festival Opera) **Kagler** *Wiener Blut* (English Touring Opera), **Theseus** *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Co-Opera, Australia), **Fiorello** *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, **Kuligin** *Katya Kabanova* (Opera Holland Park).

Recent engagements include the *Fauré Requiem* and Vaughan Williams' *Five Mystical Songs* at St Martin-in-the-Fields and *Messiah* with Laurence Cummings and the Guildford Philharmonic Orchestra.

Future engagements include **The Foreman** *Jenufa* (Glyndebourne Opera on Tour), **Count** *The Marriage of Figaro* and **Theseus** *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (English Touring Opera) and **Schaunard** *La bohème* for Nationale Reisopera.

In 2008 Nicholas was awarded the Anne Woods/Johanna Peters Award (GFO), Simon Fletcher Charitable Trust, Tait Memorial Scholarship and Independent Opera. He is supported by Chris Ball and Serena Fenwick.

Duncan Rock *baritone* recently completed his Masters Degree in vocal performance at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama (London). He is now continuing his studies in the Guildhall Opera Course. His studies have been supported by *The Musicians Benevolent Fund*, the *Countess of Munster Trust* and the *Australian Music Foundation*. He is also a 2009 Royal Philharmonic Society *Susan Chilcott Scholar*.

Duncan grew up in Perth, Western Australia where he studied voice at the West Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA) while concurrently reading Law at the University of Western Australia (UWA). During this time he was also part of the West Australian Opera Young Artists' program. Other operatic experience has included performances with the Longborough Festival Opera, British Youth Opera and Opera Holland Park.

Duncan was the winner of the 2006 Australian Singing Competition where he was awarded the Marianne Mathy Award and the Symphony Australia young vocalist award. More recently he received 2nd place and was winner of the song prize in the 2009 National Mozart Singing Competition. He was also awarded 3rd place in the Patricia Routledge English Song Competition (2008).

On the concert platform Duncan has appeared as a soloist in the UK, Austria, Italy and Australia. He most recently appeared singing the Bass solo in *Messiah* at the Royal Albert Hall under the baton of Sir David Willcocks. He has appeared in numerous recitals at some of London's leading venues including the Barbican Centre, LSO St Luke's and the Wigmore Hall. He was also featured in recital in the 2008 Salzburg Festival and was a Stean's Institute Young Artist for the 2009 Ravinia Festival (Chicago).

Laurence Meikle *baritone* was born and studied in Australia. He originally trained as an actor at Deakin University before undertaking vocal studies at the Victorian College of the Arts with Anna

Connolly. Laurence commenced his career at a young age, making his operatic debut at 19 as Angelotti in *Tosca* with Melbourne Opera. This was swiftly followed by many other important baritone roles.

In 2007 Laurence made his debut as a principal artist with Opera Australia, where he performed the role of Luiz in *The Gondoliers* at the Sydney Opera House. In 2007 he also sang *Malatesta* in the Melbourne International Comedy Festival's production of *Don Pasquale*.

In addition to operatic roles, Laurence has performed as a principal artist in concerts for Opera Australia, Canberra Symphony, Australian Pops Orchestra, Royal Melbourne Philharmonic Orchestra and London Festival Orchestra. He has a large repertoire of over 20 oratorio roles as well as orchestral cycles of Mahler and Brahms, and has given lieder recitals in most Australian capital cities.

Since his arrival in the UK in 2008, Laurence has been continuing his studies at the Royal Academy of Music with Janice Chapman whilst performing as a recitalist throughout the UK and Europe.

Recent engagements include Vaughan Williams' *Five Mystical Songs* with St Bartholomew's Orchestra and Choir, recitals at Kings Place London, The Great Hall at Christie's, The London Arts Club, and in Montreux, Switzerland.

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The Fringes of the Fleet. Premiere, June 1917, The London Coliseum.
From left to right: Frederic Stewart, Charles Mott, Harry Barratt and Frederic Henry.

THE FRINGES OF THE FLEET

[2] i. The Lowestoft Boat

In Lowestoft a boat was laid,
Mark well what I do say!
And she was built for the herring trade,
But she has gone a-rovin', a-rovin', a-rovin',
The Lord knows where!

They gave her Govenrment coal to burn,
And a Q.F. gun at bow and stern,
And sent her out a-rovin', a-rovin', a-rovin',
The Lord knows where!

Her skipper was mate of a bucko ship
Which always killed one man per trip,
So he is used to rovin', rovin', rovin',
The Lord knows where!

Her mate was skipper of a chapel in Wales,
And so he fights in toppler and tails —
Religi-ous tho' rovin', rovin', rovin',
The Lord knows where!

Her engineer is fifty-eight,
So he's prepared to meet his fate,
Which ain't unlikely rovin', rovin', rovin',
The Lord knows where!.

Her leading-stoker's seventeen,
So he don't know what the Judgments means
Unless he cops 'em rovin', rovin', rovin',
The Lord knows where!.

Her cook was chef in the Lost Dogs' home,
Mark well what I do say!.

And I'm sorry for Fritz when they all come
A-rovin', a-rovin', a-roarin' and a-rovin',
Round the North Sea rovin',
The Lord knows where!

[3] ii. Fate's Discourtesy

Be well assured that on our side
Our challenged oceans fight,
Though headlong wind and heaping tide
Make us their sport to-night
Through force of weather, not of war,
In jeopardy we steer.
Then welcome Fate's discourtesy
Whereby it shall appear
How in all time of our distress
As in our triumph too,
The game is more than the player of
the game,
And the ship is more than the crew!

Be well assured, though wave and wind
Have mightier blows in store,
That we who keep the watch assigned
Must stand to it the more;
And as our streaming bows dismiss
Each billow's baulked career,
Sing, welcome Fate's discourtesy
Whereby it is made clear
How in all time of our distress
As in our triumph too,
The game is more than the player of
the game,
And the ship is more than the crew!

Be well assured, though in our power
Is nothing left to give

But time and place to meet the hour
 And leave to stvie to live,
 Till these dissolve our Order holds,
 Our Service binds here.
 Then, welcome Fate's discourtesy
 Whereby it is made clear
 How in all time of our distress
 And our deliverance too,
 The game is more than the player of
 the game,
 And the ship is more than the crew!

[4] iii. **Submarines**

The ships destroy us above
 And ensnare us beneath.
 We arise, we lie down, and we move
 In the belly of Death.

The ships have a thousand eyes
 To mark where we come ...
 And the mirth of a seaport dies
 When our blow gets home.

5] iv. **The Sweepers**

Dawn off the Foreland — the young flood
 making
 Jumbled and short and steep —
 Black in the hollows and bright where it's
 breaking —
 Awkward water to sweep.
 "Mines reported in the fairway,
 "Warn all traffic and detain.
 'Sent up *Unity, Claribel, Assyrian,*
Stormcock and Golden Gain."

Noon off the Foreland — the first ebb making
 Lumpy and strong in the bight.
 Boom after boom, and the golf-hut shaking
 And the jackdaws wild with fright!
 "Mines located in the fairway,
 Boats now working up the chain,
 Sweepers — *Unity, Claribel, Assyrian,*
Stormcock and Golden Gain."

Dusk off the Foreland — the last light going
 And the traffic crowding through,
 And five damned trawlers with their syreens
 blowing
 Heading the whole review!
 "Sweep completed in the fairway.
 No more mines remain.
 'Sent back *Unity, Claribel, Assyrian,*
Stormcock and Golden Gain."

Poems by *Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936)* . From
Sea Warfare, in *The Fringes of the Fleet*, publ.
 1915. Set by Sir Edward Elgar.

[6] v. **Inside the Bar**

I knows a town, an' it's a fine town,
 And many a brig goes sailing' to its quay;
 I knows an inn, an' it's a fine inn,
 An' a lass that's fair to see.
 I knows a town, an' it's a fine town;
 I knows an inn, an' its' a fine inn —
 But Oh my lass, an' Oh the gay gown,
 Which I have seen my pretty in!
 I knows a port, an' it's a good port,
 An' many a brig is ridin' easy there;
 I knows a home, an' its a good home,
 An' a lass that's sweet an' fair.

I knows a port, an' it's a good port,
 I knows a home, an' its a good home —
 But Oh the pretty that is my sort,
 What's wearyin' till I come!

I knows a day, an' its a fine day,
 The day a sailor man comes back to town;
 I knows a tide, an' it's a good tide,
 The tide that gets you quick to anchors down.
 I knows a day, an' it's a fine day,
 I knows a tide, an' it's a good tide —
 An' God help the lubber, I say,
 What's stole the sailor man's bride!

Poem by Sir Gilbert Parker (1862-1932). No.
 5 from *The Fringes of the Fleet*, added later
 to the cycle by Sir Edward Elgar and set for 4
 baritones unacc.

NB: There are occasional variations in the words
 set by Elgar. These are in *Fate's Discourtesy*,
Submarines and *Inside the Bar*.

[7] & [12] **Big Steamers**

"Oh, where are you going to, all you Big
 Steamers,
 With England's own coal, up and down the salt
 seas?"
 "We are going to fetch you your bread and
 your butter,
 your beef, pork, and mutton, eggs, apples, and
 cheese."
 "And where will you fetch it from, all you Big
 Steamers,
 And where shall I write you when you are
 away?"

"We fetch it from Melbourne, Quebec, and
 Vancouver.
 Address us at Hobart, Hong-Kong, and
 Bombay."

"But if anything happened to all you Big
 Steamers,
 And suppose you were wrecked up and down
 the salt sea?"
 "Why, you'd have no coffee or bacon for
 breakfast,
 And you'd have no muffins or toast for your
 tea."

"Then I'll pray for fine weather for all you Big
 Steamers
 For little blue billows and breezes so soft."
 "Oh, billows and breezes don't bother Big
 Steamers:
 We're iron below and steel-rigging aloft."

"Then I'll build a new lighthouse for all you Big
 Steamers,
 With plenty wise pilots to pilot you through."
 "Oh, the Channel's as bright as a ball-room
 already,
 And pilots are thicker than pilchards at Looe."

"Then what can I do for you, all you Big
 Steamers,
 Oh, what can I do for your comfort and good?"
 "Send out your big warships to watch your big
 waters,
 That no one may stop us from bringing you
 food."

*For the bread that you eat and the biscuits you
 nibble,*

*The sweets that you suck and the joints that
you carve,
They are brought to you daily by all us Big
Steamers
And if anyone hinders our coming you'll
starve!"*

Poem by Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) from *A School History of England*, publ. 1911.
Set by Edward German (1911). Orchestrated by Tom Higgins 2009.
Also set by Sir Edward Elgar (1918) for voice & piano & arr. by Tom Higgins for 4 unacc. Bar.

[9] The Soldier

If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made
aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to
roam
A body of England's, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of
home.

And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by
England given;
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her
day;
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English
heaven.

[10] Blow Out, You Bugles

Blow out, you bugles, over the rich Dead!
There's none of these so lonely and poor of
old,
But, dying, has made us rarer gifts than gold.
These laid the world away; poured out the
red
Sweet wine of youth; gave up the years to be
Of work and joy, and that unhoped serene,
That men call age; and those who would have
been,
Their sons, they gave, their immortality.

Blow, bugles, blow! They brought us, for our
dearth,
Holiness, lacked so long, and Love, and
Pain.
Honour has come back, as a king, to earth,
And paid his subjects with a royal wage;
And Nobleness walks in our ways again;
And we have come into our heritage.

Rupert Brooke sonnets reprinted from *1914 and other Poems* (publ. 1915). Set for voice & piano by John Ireland 1917 ('the Soldier') and 1918 (Blow Out, You Bugles'). Arranged and orchestrated by Tom Higgins 2009.

Le dernier survivant des combattants de la Première Guerre Mondiale – ou de la Grande Guerre – comme on l'appelait alors – est décédé 95 ans après la fin des hostilités en août 1914. Cette guerre vit pour la première fois le déploiement d'armes qui devaient, plus tard, jouer un rôle significatif dans les conflits internationaux – avions, tanks et sous-marins – mais elle resta dans l'Histoire anglaise comme une double bataille, sur terre, des grandes armées, et sur mer, des flottes impériales. Ce n'est pas, ici, le lieu de rappeler les hauts faits de l'Histoire de la marine britannique – depuis les invasions romaines jusqu'aux Falklands – mais on doit tenir compte du fait que pour la génération de compositeurs qui vécurent avant l'avènement de la suprématie aérienne, le concept d'une puissance maritime, garantissant la domination en temps de paix comme en temps de guerre, fut une source constante d'inspiration. Les œuvres réunies pour ce programme, toutes britanniques et inspirées par la mer, datent pour la plupart de l'époque de la Première Guerre Mondiale : nous avons alterné des œuvres légères et d'autres de toute évidence plus graves.

John Ansell (1874-1948)

L'ouverture nautique *Plymouth Hoe* de John Ansell est sans doute une des œuvres les plus primesautières de ce programme : durant de nombreuses années, elle fut très fréquemment interprétée, mais, comme c'est souvent le cas avec la musique légère de la première moitié du XXe siècle, elle a peu disparu des concerts. Philip Scowcroft remarque à juste titre que *Plymouth Hoe* est « davantage un pot pourri de chansons populaires de marins qu'une œuvre originale », même si on notera que ces chansons ne sont plus si populaires aujourd'hui, mais on ne peut nier l'art avec lequel le compositeur a subtilement construit sa partition et il faut y voir, à n'en point douter, la traduction de sa réaction au déclenchement de cette guerre : l'œuvre fut composée juste après, mais, loin de véhiculer une atmosphère tragique ou lugubre, elle exprime une énergique détermination et une issue positive, avec la brève citation finale de *Rule Britannia!* De nos jours, bien entendu, on aurait tendance à considérer que cette pièce n'a d'autre objet que de divertir l'auditeur. L'ouverture *Le Voilier Marchand*, plus ancienne et plus développée, pourrait également entrer dans la catégorie des ouvertures « nautiques » : « windjammer » était un terme en usage à la fin du XIXe siècle pour désigner, en argot, un voilier qui, à l'époque où cette pièce fut composée dans les années 1930, était plus fréquent dans le paysage maritime que 70 ou 80 ans plus tard. Ces deux œuvres sont brillamment écrites : on y discerne une admirable maîtrise de l'orchestre et un authentique sens des atmosphères. Dans la seconde, on notera l'usage abondant de la chanson folklorique *Shenandoah*.

Les Auxiliaires de la Flotte est la pièce maîtresse de cet album : c'est la première fois depuis 92 ans qu'elle est enregistrée par un orchestre entièrement professionnel. Tom Higgins a étudié plusieurs

manuscrits ainsi que l'enregistrement qu'en fit Elgar lui-même en 1917, afin de préparer, pour cette version, une édition qui soit fidèle aux intentions originales du compositeur tout en respectant certains usages d'interprétation qui n'étaient pas toujours indiqués sur les partitions à l'époque. La majeure partie du texte qui suit est extrait d'un article du chef d'orchestre Tom Higgins, paru dans le *Musical Opinion* de juillet-août 2009.

Sir Edward Elgar (1857-1934) et Sir Edward German (1862-1936)

Le dimanche 10 juin 1917, quatre jeunes barytons se réunirent à Severn House, la maison londonienne de Sir Edward Elgar, pour répéter la nouvelle composition de ce dernier, *Les Auxiliaires de la Flotte*. La partition fut créée le lendemain au London Coliseum dans une atmosphère d'expectance fébrile : elle figurait à l'affiche d'une série de concerts programmés deux fois par jour.

Le dédicataire de l'oeuvre était un ami d'Elgar, le sulfureux amiral tatoué, Lord Beresford. À l'origine de cette partition se trouve la publication des *Auxiliaires de la Flotte*, une série de poèmes, entremêlés de prose, écrits par Rudyard Kipling sur le thème de la vie à bord d'un navire, en particulier en temps de guerre. La décision prise par Elgar de mettre en musique ces poèmes dut sembler extrêmement passionnante à l'époque : le plus éminent compositeur britannique et le plus illustre poète anglais réunis pour une oeuvre conçue pour être interprétée sur scène ! Le succès fut notable : quelques semaines après sa création, *Les Auxiliaires de la Flotte* fut enregistré pour La Voix de son Maître et repris en tournée de concerts, avant de revenir au Coliseum, au cours de la même année.

Mais après quelques mois, et à la stupeur générale, Kipling interdit que l'oeuvre soit interprétée. Il semble qu'il se soit montré de plus en plus insatisfait de la façon dont ses textes étaient présentés dans les salles de concert. Dès le début, il n'avait pas témoigné beaucoup d'enthousiasme pour ce projet, peut-être parce que peu de temps après avoir imaginé des vers tels que *Les navires nous anéantissent à la surface et nous entraînent au fond. Nous émergeons, nous gisons et nous nous abîmons dans le ventre de la Mort*, son unique fils fut porté disparu au combat. Pour d'autres, cependant, ce poème, qui est un hommage aux sous-marinières, et les autres, de caractère patriotique, sont apparus comme une opportunité en or pour stimuler le moral de la population. Finalement, Kipling donna son autorisation et Elgar mit en musique quatre des poèmes dans ce qu'il appela « un style ample et iodé », restituant à merveille la dimension descriptive des textes du poète.

Dans la première mélodie, il existe une urbanité mais aussi des frictions entre les membres de l'équipage bigarré du *Navire Lowestoft* qui sont d'âges et d'origines différents. *Les Indélicatesses du Destin* met

l'accent sur le travail d'équipe, sur un ton curieusement religieux. *Sous-marins*, ainsi qu'il a été dit précédemment, dépeint une image sévère de la vie sous les eaux, tandis que *Les Dragueurs de mines* évoque la terrifiante recherche des mines et leur désamorçage.

Les Auxiliaires de la Flotte fut représenté sur scène avec des chanteurs costumés, devant un décor représentant un pub. La popularité de cette oeuvre fut immédiate. Au moment où la Première Guerre Mondiale atteignait son apogée, la nouvelle partition d'Elgar cristallisa l'état d'esprit de la population. Son succès se vérifia de semaine en semaine, tandis que la direction du Coliseum prolongeait les représentations. La demande était telle que la partition resta à l'affiche du 11 juin jusqu'à la fin du mois de juillet : Elgar dirigea « en personne » toutes les représentations, en matinée et en soirée. Le 27 juin, une mélodie qu'il venait d'achever fut ajoutée au programme : *Au bar*, sur des paroles de Sir Gilbert Parker, est écrit pour les quatre voix de baryton sans accompagnement. Ce superbe et rare exemple de composition *a capella* chez Elgar fait regretter que son catalogue ne contienne pas d'autres pièces plus développées du même type.

À l'époque, toutes les conditions semblaient réunies pour que *Les Auxiliaires de la Flotte* entre au répertoire de ses oeuvres fréquemment interprétées. Mais personne ne put prédire l'intervention de Kipling ; à la fin de 1917, il parvint à empêcher toute nouvelle représentation, au grand désespoir d'Elgar. La décision de Kipling se solda par la disparition de la partition d'Elgar. Hormis quelques représentations sporadiques, elle est restée pour ainsi dire oubliée durant près d'un siècle, et il faut espérer que cet enregistrement contribuera à lui rendre sa place légitime au sein du catalogue d'Elgar.

On trouvera sur ce CD deux autres mélodies, à nouveau sur un poème de Rudyard Kipling — *Grands Vapeurs* — composées respectivement par Elgar, en 1918, et par son contemporain, Edward German, en 1911. Le texte parut tout d'abord dans *Une Histoire d'Angleterre à l'usage des écoliers*, écrite conjointement par Kipling et CRL Fletcher, mais le poème lui-même, ainsi que son auteur le fit remarquer plus tard, devint « populaire » dans les écoles et connut une certaine vogue à certains moments de la guerre ». Suite au succès éphémère des *Auxiliaires de la Flotte*, Elgar pourrait bien avoir estimé que Kipling ne verrait pas d'objection à ce qu'il mette ce poème en musique, puisque German l'avait déjà fait avant lui. Le chef d'orchestre de cet enregistrement, Tom Higgins, a arrangé la partition d'Elgar pour quatre barytons *a cappella*, en écho à *Au Bar*, la cinquième mélodie des *Auxiliaires de la Flotte* dont elle semble être le pendant.

Par contraste, la version de German (orchestrée par Tom Higgins) est plus « directe », plus terre-à-terre: elle fut composée dans d'autres circonstances, avant que la Grande Guerre n'imprime profondément son empreinte dans les consciences des Européens, qu'ils soient combattants ou non.

L'*Élégie pour cordes* Opus 58 d'Elgar fut écrite en six jours au mois de juin 1909, en réponse à une suggestion d'Alfred Littleton, Président de Novello, la maison d'édition du compositeur. Cette suggestion vint à l'esprit de Littleton en assistant aux funérailles du Révérend Robert Hadden, Aumônier du Roi et Gardien de la Vénérable Compagnie des Musiciens : il observa à cette occasion que la Compagnie des Musiciens ne disposait pas de musique cérémonielle pour une telle circonstance. Elgar écrivit sur la partition : « In Memoriam du défunt Révérend R Hadden MA, Gardien de la Compagnie des Musiciens ». Le bref chant funèbre fut créé quelques semaines après son achèvement ; le manuscrit est en possession de la Compagnie des Musiciens. Novello l'a publié en 1910.

John Ireland (1879-1962)

Rupert Brooke était officier de marine en activité sur l'île grecque de Skyros et n'avait que 27 ans lorsqu'il décéda des suites de soucis de santé réitérés durant la Grande Guerre, mais il avait eu le temps de se bâtir une grande réputation en devenant un des « soldats-poètes » les plus admirés d'Angleterre. La mort prématurée de Brooke contribua à accroître sa renommée posthume, mais c'était bien mérité : il était un des poètes les plus raffinés de sa génération. John Ireland, de huit ans l'aîné de Brooke, mit en musique deux de ses poèmes : composées en 1917-18, ces *Deux Mélodies* furent publiées en 1918. Le choix d'un texte aussi connu que « Si je dois mourir, retiens seulement ceci de moi ; Qu'il existe un coin de terre étrangère qui sera pour toujours l'Angleterre », résuma l'état d'esprit de la population de façon aussi efficace que sa mélodie d'avant-guerre, *Fièvre océane*, sur un poème de John Masefield. Afin de rester cohérent avec les autres pièces enregistrées sur cet album, Tom Higgins a orchestrés ces deux mélodies.

Haydn Wood (1882-1959)

Haydn Wood fut un contemporain presque direct de John Ireland, mais il explora un champ musical un peu plus large : il composa certes deux concertos (pour piano et pour violon) ainsi que plusieurs oeuvres orchestrales de plus grande ampleur, mais ce par quoi il peut prétendre à la renommée, et par conséquent, peut-être, à l'immortalité, ce sont la mélodie *Les Roses de Picardie*, devenue très populaire

et composée à peu près à la même époque que les *Auxiliaires de la Flotte* d'Elgar, et plusieurs pièces orchestrales légères qui le situe davantage, musicalement, dans la mouvance de Eric Coates que dans celle de Ireland. Wood fut un élève de Stanford, étant né dans le West Yorkshire, mais lorsqu'il eut deux ans, sa famille s'installa sur l'Île de l'homme que, plus tard, il célébra dans plusieurs oeuvres orchestrales, parmi lesquelles *A Manx Overture – the Isles of Mountains and Glens* écrite en 1936. L'année suivante, Wood réalisa une version entièrement orchestrale de quatre mélodies d'Elgar, suscitant chez le compositeur et critique Havergal Brian, qui travaillait pour le *Musical Opinion*, le commentaire selon lequel son arrangement possédait « l'authentique cachet elgarien ». Havergal Brian avait raison ; il y a une ampleur et une puissance expressive dans les meilleures oeuvres de Haydn Wood qui font regretter qu'elles soient tombées dans un oubli aussi injuste. Non pas que Wood et Elgar soient comparables en terme d'importance historique, bien entendu, mais le vieux maître ne dédaigna jamais la légèreté, que ce soit dans sa propre musique ou dans celle des autres, et tous deux surent s'adapter à l'état d'esprit du public. Lorsque la Reine Elisabeth II accéda au trône, à la mort de son père en 1952, Wood salua les jeunes aspirations de cette nouvelle ère élisabéthaine en composant une de ses dernières oeuvres orchestrales, la marche *Elizabeth of England*, qui vit le jour quelques mois avant la Revue de la Flotte par Sa Majesté en juin 1953.

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[d'après les notes originales de Tom Higgins – Elgar: *Les Auxiliaires de la Flotte* © 2009]

Traduction : Baudime Jam