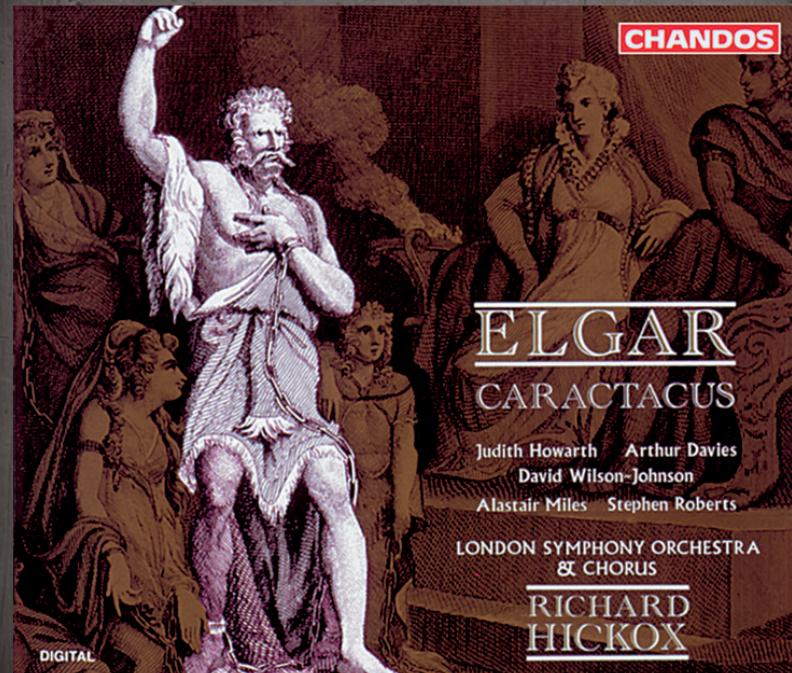


**CHANDOS** 2 FOR 1

# ELGAR CARACTACUS SEVERN SUITE



**Judith Howarth** soprano

**Arthur Davies** tenor

**David Wilson-Johnson** baritone

**Alastair Miles** bass

**Stephen Roberts** bass

London Symphony Chorus  
London Symphony Orchestra

**Richard Hickox**





Greg Barrett

**Richard Hickox**  
(1948 – 2008)

**Sir Edward Elgar** (1857–1934)

**Caractacus, Op. 35** (1898)

Cantata in Six Scenes for Soprano, Tenor, Baritone, Bass, Chorus, and Orchestra

Libretto by Harry Arbuthnot Acworth (1849–1933)

Eigen .....	Judith Howarth	soprano
Orbin.....	Arthur Davies	tenor
Caractacus.....	David Wilson-Johnson	baritone
Arch-Druid / A Bard.....	Stephen Roberts	bass
Claudius .....	Alastair Miles	bass

**Severn Suite, Op. 87** (1930)

for Brass Band  
Orchestrated 1931–32 by the Composer

**London Symphony Chorus**  
Stephen Westrop chorus master  
**London Symphony Orchestra**  
Richard Hickox

COMPACT DISC ONE

**Caractacus, Op. 35** 101:35

**Scene 1. British camp on the Malvern Hills. Night** 22:58

- |     |   |      |
|-----|---|------|
| [1] | Chorus: 'Watchmen, alert!' –  | 5:49 |
| [2] | Caractacus: 'Watchmen, alert! the King is here' –<br>with Sentries      | 6:13 |
| [3] | Eigen: 'Father!... Sire and King' –<br>with Caractacus, Orbin, Sentries | 2:22 |
| [4] | Eigen: 'At eve to the greenwood, we wander'd away' –                    | 2:45 |
| [5] | Orbin: 'On the ocean and the river' –<br>with Caractacus, Eigen         | 2:41 |
| [6] | Spirits of the Hill: 'Rest, weary monarch'<br>with Sentries             | 3:07 |

	<b>Scene 2. The sacred oak grove by the tomb of the Kings</b>	23:54
[7]	Arch-Druid: 'Tread the mystic circle round' – with Druids, Druid Maidens	4:53
[8]	Arch-Druid, Druids, Druid Maidens: 'Lord of dread and lord of pow'r' –	2:36
[9]	Arch-Druid: 'Bard, what read ye in the field...?' – with Orbin, Chorus, Druids, Druid Maidens, Caractacus	8:00
[10]	Caractacus: 'Leap to light, my brand of fight' – with Soldiers, Orbin, Druids, Arch-Druid	5:19
[11]	Druids, Druid Maidens: 'Hence, ere the Druid's wrath is woke' with Orbin, Soldiers	3:05
	<b>Scene 3. The forest near the Severn. Morning</b>	14:24
[12]	Introduction 'Woodland Interlude' (Orchestra) –	1:59
[13]	Chorus: 'Come! beneath our woodland bow'rs' –	1:14
[14]	Eigen: 'O'er-arch'd by leaves the streamlet weaves' – with Orbin	3:43
[15]	Orbin: 'Last night beneath the sacred Oak' –	1:43
[16]	Chorus: 'Come! beneath our woodland bow'rs' with Orbin, Eigen	5:43

TT 61:27

COMPACT DISC TWO

**Scene 4. The Malvern Hills 11:48**

- [1] Maidens: 'Wild rumours shake our calm retreat' – 2:30
- [2] Eigen: 'When the glow of the evening had died from the hill' – with Maidens 2:34
- [3] Soldiers: 'We were gather'd by the river' – 2:22
- [4] Caractacus, Chorus: 'O my warriors, tell me truly' 4:21

**Scene 5. The Severn 4:22**

- [5] Druid Maidens: 'Captive Britons, see them! Hark' – with A Bard

	<b>Scene 6. Rome. The Triumphal Procession</b>	<b>23:54</b>
[6]	Processional Music (Orchestra) –	
	Chorus: 'The march triumphal thunders' –	7:17
[7]	Claudius: 'Unbind his hands, silence the trumpets' –	1:11
[8]	Caractacus: 'Heap torment upon torment, woe on woe' – with Eigen, Orbin	4:41
[9]	Chorus: 'Slay the Briton' – with Claudius	0:35
[10]	Caractacus: 'I plead not for myself' – with Orbin, Eigen, Chorus, Claudius	2:41
[11]	Eigen, Orbin, Caractacus: 'Grace from the Roman!' –	2:33
[12]	Chorus: 'The clang of arms is over'	4:53
	<b>Severn Suite, Op. 87</b>	<b>18:02</b>
[13]	I Introduction. Worcester Castle. Pomposo –	2:35
[14]	II Toccata. Tournament. Allegro molto –	3:57
[15]	III Fugue. The Cathedral. Andante –	4:03
[16]	IV Minuet. Commandery. Moderato –	5:12
[17]	V Coda. Lento	2:14
	<b>TT 58:24</b>	

## Elgar: Caractacus / Severn Suite

### Caractacus

The seventy-five-year-old mother of Edward Elgar (1857–1934) suggested that he write some ‘tale’ about the Herefordshire Beacon in the Malvern Hills. ‘Look at the lovely old hill,’ she said to him in August 1897 when he visited her at the village of Colwall, ‘so full of so much historical interest.’ It was there, according to legend, that the British chieftain Caractacus had made his last stand against the Romans and been defeated. He and his soldiers were taken to Rome where the Emperor, Claudius, was so impressed by the eloquence of the British leader that he spared and pardoned them.

Four months after this visit to his mother, Elgar was invited by the Leeds Festival committee to compose a work for the 1898 festival. He first offered an orchestral suite based on historical characters such as Canute, Caractacus, St Augustine, and others. But Leeds wanted a cantata. The patriotic fervour and excitement surrounding Queen Victoria’s diamond jubilee the previous summer were still in the air, so Elgar decided to set the story of Caractacus, even though a British defeat might hardly have seemed

appropriate for a celebration of imperial glory. He turned for his libretto to a Malvern neighbour, Harry Arbuthnot Acworth (1849–1933), who had retired from the Indian Civil Service and had supplied Elgar with some additional lines for his cantata based on Longfellow’s *King Olaf* (1894–96). Acworth provided some love interest by supplying Caractacus with a daughter, Eigen, whose lover, Orbin, was a member of a ‘half-priestly order of minstrels’. Eigen and Orbin encounter a Druid maiden who tells them to warn Caractacus not to advance into open country. When, on the next night, the Druids assemble at a sacred grove to seek omens from the gods, Orbin interprets the omens as portents of disaster. But the Arch-Druid deceives Caractacus and urges him to join battle with the Romans. Orbin protests and is expelled from the order. Later he joins Caractacus’s army which, as was foretold, is routed.

Elgar began to compose the music early in 1898. He tramped over the Malvern Hills and followed the Druid path along the top from end to end. On one of these walks, near Storridge, he came across a small, unoccupied cottage, Birchwood Lodge,

which reminded him of his Broadheath birthplace. It was in the midst of woodland and commanded wonderful views of the Severn Valley. A short lease was negotiated and Elgar and his wife moved in for the summer. It provided the solitude and quiet he needed in order to work and he loved the birds and animals in the woods. He was never happier than at Birchwood, and its atmosphere is reflected in *Caractacus*, which is predominantly pastoral. Quoting a few bars of the 'Woodland Interlude' which opens Scene 3, in a letter to A.J. Jaeger at Novello's, Elgar wrote:

This is what I hear all day - the trees are  
singing my music - or have I sung theirs?  
I suppose I have.

In August 1898, in another letter to Jaeger, he said how much he wanted his friend to see the Birchwood woodlands, and continued:

I made old Caractacus stop as if broken  
down and choke and say 'woodlands'  
again because I'm so madly devoted to  
my woods.

This refers to the final scene in which Caractacus pleads before Claudius and sings, 'We dwelt among our woodlands, and were blest'.

But there were aspects of the libretto which troubled the German-born Jaeger. The reference in the final chorus to 'menial

tyrants' seemed to him to be 'truculent'. Elgar replied:

Any nation but ours is allowed to war  
whoop as much as they like but I feel we  
are too strong to need it - I did suggest we  
should dabble in patriotism in the Finale,  
when lo! the *worder* (that's good!) instead  
of merely paddling his feet goes & gets  
naked & wallows in it...

A month later he wrote:

I knew you would laugh at my librettist's  
patriotism (& mine) - never mind: England  
for the English is all I say - hands off!  
There's nothing apologetic about me.

The fuss about this final chorus - which today, surely, can be regarded as a period piece, like the texts of Purcell's *Welcome Odes* - has tended to obscure the beauty of most of the music, its lyrical charm and fancy, with passages in mock-folksong, ballad, and madrigalian styles. The 'Woodland Interlude', the quintessence of the Elgar of pieces such as *Chanson de matin*, had been sketched in 1887, perhaps even earlier, indicating how this vein in his music was there from the start. The vocal and choral writing clearly points the way to *The Dream of Gerontius* and the orchestration is as masterly as could rightly be expected from a composer whose next work would be the 'Enigma' Variations. Indeed the genius of these two works seems

less unexpected the more one hears and studies *Caractacus*.

#### Severn Suite

In 1930, when he was in his seventy-fourth year, Elgar was asked to write a test piece to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the National Brass Band Championship at Crystal Palace. The organisers suggested that, if he provided a short score, the work could be scored for brass by Henry Geehl, a specialist in this field. Their collaboration was prickly, Geehl rejecting many of Elgar's suggestions (which have since been shown to be practicable). The *Severn Suite* was dedicated to Bernard Shaw, who was overjoyed and declared it would ensure his immortality when all his plays were forgotten.

During 1931–32, Elgar scored the suite for symphony orchestra, giving the movements subtitles associated with the city of Worcester. The music had nostalgic associations for him, most of it being based on sketches made in his youth. The themes of the Minuet ('Commandery'), for example, had been composed for wind quintet in 1878 and 1879. The first performance of this version was given in the recording studio in April 1932, when Elgar conducted, as he did when the work was first played in public, at the Worcester Festival five months later. It is

the music of an old man looking back on days that could never return but which were green and vigorous in his memory.

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At the time of his premature death at the age of sixty in November 2008, **Richard Hickox** CBE, one of the most gifted and versatile British conductors of his generation, was Music Director of Opera Australia, having served as Principal Conductor of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales from 2000 until 2006 when he became Conductor Emeritus. He founded the City of London Sinfonia, of which he was Music Director, in 1971. He was also Associate Guest Conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra, Conductor Emeritus of the Northern Sinfonia, and co-founder of Collegium Musicum 90.

He regularly conducted the major orchestras in the UK and appeared many times at the BBC Proms and at the Aldeburgh, Bath, and Cheltenham festivals, among others. With the London Symphony Orchestra at the Barbican Centre he conducted a number of semi-staged operas, including *Billy Budd*, *Hänsel und Gretel*, and *Salomé*. With the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra he gave the first ever complete cycle of Vaughan Williams's symphonies in London. In

the course of an ongoing relationship with the Philharmonia Orchestra he conducted Elgar, Walton, and Britten festivals at the South Bank and a semi-staged performance of *Gloriana* at the Aldeburgh Festival.

Apart from his activities at the Sydney Opera House, he enjoyed recent engagements with The Royal Opera, Covent Garden, English National Opera, Vienna State Opera, and Washington Opera, among others. He guest conducted such world-renowned orchestras as the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, and New York Philharmonic.

His phenomenal success in the recording studio resulted in more than 280 recordings,

including most recently cycles of orchestral works by Sir Lennox and Michael Berkeley and Frank Bridge with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, the symphonies by Vaughan Williams with the London Symphony Orchestra, and a series of operas by Britten with the City of London Sinfonia. He received a Grammy (for *Peter Grimes*) and five Gramophone Awards. Richard Hickox was awarded a CBE in the Queen's Jubilee Honours List in 2002, and was the recipient of many other awards, including two Music Awards of the Royal Philharmonic Society, the first ever Sir Charles Groves Award, the *Evening Standard* Opera Award, and the Award of the Association of British Orchestras.

## Elgar: Caractacus / Severn Suite

### Caractacus

Die fünfundsechzig Jahre alte Mutter von Edward Elgar (1857–1934) schlug dem Komponisten vor, doch eine "Geschichte" über Herefordshire Beacon in den Malvern Hills zu schreiben. "Schau dir doch nur diesen herrlichen alten Berg an," sagte sie im August 1897 zu ihm, als er sie in dem Dorf Colwall besuchte, "ein Berg, der soviel historisches Interesse birgt." Dort hatte, der Legende zufolge, der britische Hauptmann Caractacus seine letzte Schlacht gegen die Römer ausgetragen und war besiegt worden. Er und seine Soldaten wurden nach Rom gebracht, wo Kaiser Claudius von der Wortgewandtheit des britischen Hauptmanns so beeindruckt war, daß er ihn begnadigte und ihm verzieh.

Vier Monate nach dem Besuch bei seiner Mutter wurde Elgar von dem Festivalsausschuß von Leeds beauftragt, ein Werk für das Festival von 1898 zu komponieren. Erst bot er eine Suite für Orchester an, die auf historischen Figuren wie Canute, Caractacus, St. Augustinus und anderen beruhte. Doch in Leeds wollte man eine Kantate. Die patriotischen Gefühle und die Begeisterung von Königin Victorias

Diamant Jubiläum im vorangegangenen Sommer lagen noch immer in der Luft, so daß Elgar sich für die Geschichte von Caractacus entschied, obwohl eine britische Niederlage eigentlich kaum für die Feier des kaiserlichen Ruhms geeignet schien. Für das Libretto wendete er sich an seinen Nachbarn in Malvern, Harry Arbuthnot Acworth (1849–1933), der sich aus dem Staatsdienst in Indien zurückgezogen und Elgar einige zusätzliche Zeilen für seine auf Longfellows *King Olaf* (1894–1896) beruhende Kantate hatte zukommen lassen. Acworth sorgte für etwas Liebesthematik, denn er versah Caractacus mit einer Tochter namens Eigen, dessen Geliebter namens Orbin Mitglied eines "halb priesterlichen Ordens" war. Eigen und Orbin treffen auf eine Jungfrau der Druiden, die ihnen aufträgt, Caractacus zu warnen, nicht in das offene Land vorzudringen. Als sich am folgenden Abend die Druiden in dem heiligen Wald versammeln, um Omen von ihren Göttern zu erhalten, deutet Orbin die Omen als Anzeichen einer Katastrophe. Aber der Druidenälteste täuscht Caractacus, und zwingt ihn, am Kampf mit den Römern teilzunehmen. Orbin protestiert und wird

aus dem Orden ausgestoßen. Später stößt er auf Caractacus' Armee, die, wie in den Vorhersagen angekündigt, in die Flucht geschlagen wird.

Elgar komponierte die Musik zu Beginn von 1898. Er wanderte in den Malvern Hills und folgte, am Gipfel entlang, dem Pfad der Druiden von einem Ende zum anderen. Auf einer dieser Wanderungen kam er, in der Nähe von Storridge, an einem kleinen, leeren Cottage vorbei. Es war Birchwood Lodge, das ihn an seinen Geburtsort in Broadheath erinnerte. Es war von Waldland umgeben und hatte einen herrlichen Blick auf Severn Valley. Ein kurzer Mietvertrag wurde ausgehandelt, und Elgar und seine Frau zogen den Sommer über in das Cottage ein. Es herrschte dort die Einsamkeit und Stille, die er für seine Arbeit brauchte und außerdem liebte er die Vögel und Tiere in den Wäldern. Niemals fühlte er sich glücklicher als in Birchwood, und die Stimmung dieses Ortes spiegelt sich in *Caractacus* wider, denn das Werk weist hauptsächlich pastorale Züge auf. Mit einem Zitat von einigen Takten aus dem die dritte Szene eröffnenden mit Woodland überschriebenem Zwischenspiel, schreibt Elgar an A.J. Jaeger von Novello:

Das höre ich den ganzen Tag lang – die  
Bäume singen meine Musik – oder habe ich  
ihre Musik gesungen? Wahrscheinlich habe  
ich es wirklich getan.

Im August 1898 schrieb er in einem anderen Brief an Jaeger, wie gerne er seinem Freund das Waldland von Birchwood zeigen würde und fuhr dann fort:

Ich veranlaßte den guten, alten Caractacus  
noch einmal dazu anzuhalten, als ob er  
zusammenbrechen würde, ließ ihn stottern  
und noch einmal "woodlands" sagen, da ich  
meine Wälder so sehr liebe.

Er bezieht sich hier auf die letzte Szene, als Caractacus Claudius anfleht und singt "We dwelt among our woodlands, and were blest" (Wir verweilten in den Wäldern und waren selig).

Aber einige Aspekte des Librettos verwirrten den in Deutschland geborenen Jaeger. Der Bezug im Finale des Chors auf "menial tyrants" (niedrige Tyrannen) schien ihm zu aufsässig. Elgar antwortete:

Jede andere Nation außer der unseren darf  
zu soviel Kriegsgeschrei wie es ihr beliebt  
anheben, aber ich habe den Eindruck, daß  
wir so stark sind, daß wir es überhaupt  
nicht brauchen – Ich schlug vor, wir sollten  
uns im Finale etwas mit patriotischen  
Gefühlen befassen, wenn lo! der *Worder*  
(gut) statt einer Andeutung, ab geht & sich  
entblößt und sich darin ergeht ...

Einen Monat später schreibt er:  
Ich wußte, daß du über den Patriotismus  
meines Librettisten (& meinen eigenen)

lachen würdest – das macht auch weiter nichts: Ich kann nur sagen, England den Engländern – Weg mit Euren Händen! Ich muß mich dabei für nichts entschuldigen.

Die Aufregung um dieses Chorfinale, das heute als ein von der Zeit geprägtes Stück angesehen werden kann, wie die Texte der *Welcome Odes* von Purcell, beeinträchtigte fast etwas die insgesamt meist sehr schöne Musik, ihren lyrischen Zauber und die lyrische Phantasie, die Passagen parodierter Volkslieder, den balladesken Ton und Madrigalstil. Das "Woodland Zwischenspiel", ein typisches Werk für den Elgar von Stücken wie *Chanson de matin*, wurde 1887 oder vielleicht sogar früher skizziert, und zeigt somit, daß diese Stimmung in seiner Musik von Anfang an da war. Die Vokal- und Chorpassagen sind sehr deutlich auf *The Dream of Gerontius* gerichtet, und die Orchestrierung ist so meisterhaft, wie es einem Komponisten gebührt, dessen nächstes Werk die "Enigma"-Variationen sein sollte. Das Geniale in diesen zwei Werken scheint weitaus weniger überraschend, je mehr man *Caractacus* hört und sich mit dem Werk auseinandersetzt.

**Severn Suite**  
1930, in seinem vierundsiebzigsten Lebensjahr, wurde Elgar beauftragt, ein

Teststück für den fünfundzwanzigsten Jahrestag der Nationalen Blaskapellen Meistervorführungen im Crystal Palace zu schreiben. Der Organisator schlug vor, daß wenn er ein Particell erststellen würde, das Werk dann für Blaskapelle von Henry Geehl umgeschrieben werden könne, der Spezialist auf diesem Gebiet sei. Die Zusammenarbeit der beiden war etwas schwierig, denn Geehl wies zahlreiche Vorschläge von Elgar zurück (die sich seitdem doch als durchführbar erwiesen haben). Die *Severn Suite* ist Bernard Shaw gewidmet, der hocherfreut war und erklärte, damit wäre seine Unsterblichkeit garantiert, wenn alle seine Stücke schon vergessen sind.

1931/32 bearbeitete Elgar die Suite für Sinfonieorchester und versah die Sätze mit Untertiteln, die sich auf die City von Worcester bezogen. Die Musik enthielt für ihn nostalgische Züge und beruhete hauptsächlich auf während seiner Jugend entstandenen Skizzen. Die Themen des Menuetts ("Commandery") wurden beispielsweise für ein Quintett für Holzbläser im Jahre 1878 und 1879 komponiert. Diese Fassung gelangte erstmals im April 1932 mit Elgar als Dirigenten im Aufnahmestudio zur Aufführung. Er dirigierte das Werk ebenfalls, als es, fünf Monate später, erstmals öffentlich beim Worcester Festival gegeben

wurde. Es ist Musik eines alten Menschen, der zurückschaut auf die Tage, die niemals wiederkehren würden, die aber frisch und lebendig in seinem Gedächtnis haften geblieben waren.

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Übersetzung: Sabine Schildknecht

Bei seinem frühzeitigen Tod im November 2008 wirkte der sechzigjährige **Richard Hickox CBE**, einer der begabtesten und vielseitigsten britischen Dirigenten seiner Generation, als Musikdirektor an der Opera Australia. Sein Name verbindet sich vor allem auch mit der 1971 von ihm gegründeten und künstlerisch geleiteten City of London Sinfonia sowie dem BBC National Orchestra of Wales, dem er von 2000 bis 2006 als Chefdirigent vorstand und danach als Conductor Emeritus treu blieb. Außerdem war er Gastdirigent beim London Symphony Orchestra, Conductor Emeritus der Northern Sinfonia und Mitbegründer des Collegium Musicum 90.

Er dirigierte regelmäßig die namhaften Orchester Großbritanniens und gastierte vielfach bei den BBC-Proms und anderen Festivals, wie Aldeburgh, Bath und Cheltenham. Mit dem London Symphony Orchestra gab er im Barbican Centre

konzertant inszenierte Opernaufführungen, darunter *Billy Budd*, *Hänsel und Gretel* und *Salome*. Mit dem Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra brachte er zum erstenmal in London den gesamten Zyklus von Vaughan-Williams-Sinfonien zu Gehör, und im Rahmen seiner langjährigen Zusammenarbeit mit dem Philharmonia Orchestra dirigierte er Elgar, Walton und Britten gewidmete Konzertreihen im Londoner South Bank Centre sowie beim Aldeburgh Festival eine konzertante Inszenierung von *Gloriana*.

Trotz seiner Tätigkeit in Australien konnte er weiterhin Einladungen an die Royal Opera Covent Garden, English National Opera, Wiener Staatsoper und Washington Opera folgen. Weltberühmte Orchester wie das Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, das Orchestre de Paris, das Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks und die New Yorker Philharmoniker verpflichteten ihn als Gastdirigenten.

Sein phänomenaler Erfolg im Schallplattenstudio schlug sich in mehr als 280 Aufnahmen nieder; jüngste Projekte waren Gesamteinspielungen der Orchesterwerke von Frank Bridge sowie Sir Lennox und Michael Berkeley mit dem BBC National Orchestra of Wales, die Sinfonien von Vaughan Williams mit dem London Symphony Orchestra und eine

Reihe von Britten-Opern mit der City of London Sinfonia. Richard Hickox wurde mit einem Grammy (für *Peter Grimes*) und fünf Gramophone Awards ausgezeichnet. Neben dem britischen Verdienstorden CBE (Commander of the Order of the British

Empire), der ihm 2002 verliehen wurde, erhielt er zahlreiche weitere Auszeichnungen, so etwa zwei Royal Philharmonic Society Music Awards, den ersten Sir Charles Groves Award, den *Evening Standard Opera Award* und den Association of British Orchestras Award.

## Elgar: Caractacus / Severn Suite

### Caractacus

La mère d'Edward Elgar (1857 – 1934), alors âgée de soixante-quinze ans, lui suggéra d'écrire un "conte" ayant pour thème Herefordshire Beacon (la Colline de Herefordshire) dans les Malvern Hills. "Regarde cette magnifique vieille colline," fit-elle remarquer en août 1897 lorsqu'il lui rendit visite dans le village de Colwall, "elle est d'un tel intérêt historique." C'est là, selon la légende, que Caractacus, le chef britannique, livra sa dernière bataille contre les Romains et fut vaincu. Il fut emmené à Rome avec ses soldats, où l'empereur Claudio fut si impressionné par son éloquence qu'il les gracia.

Quatre mois après avoir rendu visite à sa mère, Elgar fut invité par le comité du Leeds Festival à composer une œuvre pour le festival de 1898. Il proposa d'abord d'écrire une suite orchestrale s'inspirant de quelques figures historiques telles Canut, Caractacus, Saint Augustin et d'autres. Mais Leeds voulait une cantate. La ferveur patriotique et l'exaltation manifestées lors de la célébration des soixante années de règne de la reine Victoria, l'été précédent, étaient

ardentes encore, si bien qu'Elgar décida de faire de Caractacus le héros de son œuvre, même si le récit d'une défaite britannique ne semblait guère se prêter à la célébration de la gloire de l'empire. Il s'adressa pour le livret à un voisin, à Malvern, Harry Arbuthnot Acworth (1849 – 1933), fonctionnaire retraité de l'administration des Indes, qui avait contribué à l'élaboration de sa cantate inspirée de l'œuvre de Longfellow, *King Olaf* (1894 – 1896). Acworth y ajouta une note romantique, en dotant Caractacus d'une fille, Eigen, dont l'amant, Orbin, était membre d'un ordre mi-sacerdotal de ménestrels. Eigen et Orbin rencontrent une jeune druidesse qui leur dit d'avertir Caractacus de ne pas s'avancer à découvert. La nuit suivante, les druides se réunissent dans un bocage sacré pour observer les présages envoyés par les dieux; ceux-ci paraissent à Orbin de funèbre augure. Le chef suprême des druides abuse Caractacus et l'exhorté à engager le combat avec les Romains. Orbin proteste et est exclu de l'ordre. Plus tard, il rejoint l'armée de Caractacus qui, conformément aux prédictions, est vaincue. Elgar commença à composer la partie musicale de cette œuvre au début de 1898. Il

arpenta les Malvern Hills et suivit de bout en bout, au sommet, le sentier des druides. Lors d'une de ces promenades, près de Storridge, il vit une petite chaumière inoccupée, Birchwood Lodge, qui lui rappela sa maison natale à Broadheath. Elle était située au milieu des bois et la vue sur la Severn Valley était superbe. Elgar négocia un maigre loyer et s'y installa avec son épouse pour toute la durée de l'été. Il y trouvait la solitude et la tranquillité nécessaires pour travailler et il adorait les oiseaux et les animaux qui peuplaient la forêt. Elgar y était au comble du bonheur; l'atmosphère des lieux est reflétée dans *Caractacus*, dont le caractère est essentiellement champêtre. Elgar écrit à A.J. Jaeger chez Novello et, citant quelques mesures du "Woodland Interlude" (interlude des bois), il dit ceci:

Voici ce que j'entends toute la journée - les arbres chantent ma musique - ou ai-je chanté la leur? Je pense l'avoir fait.

En août 1898, dans une autre lettre à Jaeger, il insiste pour que son ami vienne découvrir les bois de Birchwood et poursuit:

J'ai interrompu la marche du vieux Caractacus, comme s'il avait atteint un état d'épuisement extrême, et d'une voix étranglée, il prononce une fois encore le mot "bois", car je ne peux échapper à leur fascination.

Ceci se rapporte à la scène finale lorsque Caractacus implore la clémence de Claudio et chante: "We dwelt among our woodlands, and were blest" (Nous vivions dans nos bois et y étions heureux).

Mais certains aspects du livret troublaient Jaeger qui était allemand de naissance. L'allusion dans le chœur final aux "menial tyrants" (tyrans serviles) lui semblait "agressive". Elgar répond:

N'importe quelle nation, à l'exception de la nôtre, a le droit, sans nulle contrainte, de pousser un cri de guerre, mais j'ai le sentiment que nous sommes trop puissants pour avoir besoin de cela. J'ai bien sûr suggéré que le Finale baigne dans le patriotisme, mais voilà que le librettiste au lieu d'y tremper les pieds seulement, s'y immerge tout nu et s'y vautre...

Un mois plus tard, il écrit:

Je savais que le patriotisme de mon librettiste (et le mien) vous ferait sourire - ce n'est pas grave: l'Angleterre aux Anglais, c'est tout ce que j'ai à dire - bas les pattes! Je ne me confonds nullement en excuses.

La controverse au sujet de ce chœur final - qui aujourd'hui peut être considéré comme une curiosité au même titre que le texte des *Welcome Odes* de Purcell - a tenu quelque peu la beauté, mais aussi le charme et la fantaisie lyrique de cette

musique, avec ses passages à caractère pseudo-folklorique ou s'inspirant du style de la ballade et du madrigal. Le "Woodland Interlude", la quintessence de ce qu'est Elgar dans des pièces telles *Chanson de matin*, fut esquissée en 1887, peut-être même plus tôt, et montre à quel point cette veine a, depuis toujours, marqué sa musique. L'écriture vocale et chorale ouvre très nettement la voie à *The Dream of Gerontius* et l'orchestration, magistrale, est bien celle à laquelle l'on s'attend de la part d'un compositeur dont l'œuvre suivante est les Variations "Enigma". En effet, le génie de ces deux pièces s'explique au fur et à mesure que l'on écoute et que l'on étudie *Caractacus*.

#### Severn Suite

En 1930, à l'âge de soixante-treize ans, Elgar fut invité à composer un morceau imposé pour célébrer le vingt-cinquième anniversaire du National Brass Band Championship à Crystal Palace. Les organisateurs proposèrent qu'en échange d'une particelle, Henry Geehl, spécialiste en la matière, l'adapte pour cuivres. Leur collaboration fut houleuse, Geehl rejettant nombreuses suggestions de Elgar (qui depuis se sont avérées réalisables). La *Severn Suite* fut dédiée à Bernard Shaw, qui était au comble de la joie et déclara que cela lui assurerait

l'immortalité lorsque toutes ses pièces auraient sombré dans l'oubli.

Entre 1931 et 1932, Elgar orchestra la suite et donna aux différents mouvements des sous-titres associés à la ville de Worcester. La musique, pour lui, avait des réminiscences nostalgiques, dont la plupart étaient liées à des esquisses datant de sa jeunesse. Les thèmes du Menuet ("Commandery"), par exemple, furent composés pour quintette à vent en 1878 et 1879. La version symphonique fut créée par Elgar en studio d'enregistrement, en avril 1932. Elgar en dirigea aussi la première exécution publique, cinq mois plus tard, au Worcester Festival. C'est l'œuvre d'un vieil homme contemplant le passé qui jamais plus ne revivra, un passé marqué, dans sa mémoire, par la jeunesse et la vigueur.

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Traduction: Marie-Françoise de Meeùs

Au moment de sa disparition prématurée à l'âge de soixante ans en novembre 2008, **Richard Hickox CBE**, l'un des chefs d'orchestre britanniques les plus doués et les plus complets de sa génération, était le directeur musical d'Opera Australia. Auparavant, il avait été chef principal du BBC National Orchestra of Wales de 2000 à 2006,

date à laquelle il devint chef honoraire. Il était le directeur musical du City of London Sinfonia qu'il fonda en 1971. Il était également chef invité associé du London Symphony Orchestra, chef honoraire du Northern Sinfonia et co-fondateur de Collegium Musicum 90.

Il dirigea régulièrement les plus grands orchestres du Royaume-Uni et participa souvent aux Proms de la BBC ainsi qu'aux festivals d'Aldeburgh, de Bath et de Cheltenham entre autres. Avec le London Symphony Orchestra, il dirigea au Barbican Centre à Londres plusieurs mises en scène partielles d'opéras dont *Billy Budd*, *Hänsel und Gretel* et *Salomé*. À la tête du Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, il donna la première intégrale des symphonies de Vaughan Williams à Londres. Dans le cadre de son association avec le Philharmonia Orchestra, il dirigea des festivals Elgar, Walton et Britten au South Bank de Londres et une mise en scène partielle de *Gloriana* au Festival d'Aldeburgh.

Outre ses activités avec l'Opéra de Sydney, il avait récemment travaillé entre autres avec

le Royal Opera de Covent Garden, l'English National Opera, l'Opéra d'état de Vienne et le Washington Opera. Il fut invité à diriger des orchestres de renom mondial tels le Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, l'Orchestre de Paris, l'Orchestre symphonique de la Radio bavaroise et le New York Philharmonic.

Connaissant un succès phénoménal en studio, il réalisa plus de 280 enregistrements, dont dernièrement des cycles d'œuvres orchestrales de Sir Lennox Berkeley, Michael Berkeley et Frank Bridge avec le BBC National Orchestra of Wales, les symphonies de Vaughan Williams avec le London Symphony Orchestra ainsi qu'une série d'opéras de Britten avec le City of London Sinfonia. Il obtint un Grammy (pour *Peter Grimes*) et cinq Gramophone Awards. Crée Commandeur de l'Ordre de l'empire britannique (CBE) en 2002, Richard Hickox remporta de nombreux autres prix, dont deux Music Awards de la Royal Philharmonic Society, le tout premier Sir Charles Groves Award, l'*Evening Standard* Opera Award et l'Association of British Orchestras Award.

## Caractacus, Op. 35

### COMPACT DISC ONE

#### Scene 1. British camp on the Malvern Hills. Night

##### Chorus

[1] Watchmen, alert! the Roman hosts  
Have girdled in our British coasts;  
On ev'ry river's swelling tide  
The sharp-beak'd Roman galleys ride;  
Our homesteads burn, and, all between,  
Wide wasted lie our woodlands green.  
Beneath the stern unfal'tring tramp,  
As legions roll from camp to camp.  
Watchmen, alert! the Roman hosts  
Have girdled in our British coasts.  
Night has clos'd above us, sleep, and wake again  
Ready for the legions gath'ring on the plain;  
Loose not helm or buckler, rest like men of war,  
Soldier in his harness, captain by his car;  
So the King shall find you, when he gives  
command,  
In the final muster ready for the land.  
On like men undaunted, not a look behind,  
Roll the voice of freedom rushing on the wind;  
Comrades, firm and fearless, breast the hill  
and sing  
To the foe defiance, glory to the King.  
Watchmen, behold the warnings dire,  
Writ eastward far in signs of fire;  
On these green mountain tops the last  
Of Britain's hosts is fortress'd fast.  
Before us Habren's thousand rills,  
Behind, the dark Silurian hills.

##### Caractacus

[2] Watchmen, alert! the King is here,  
Your weary brethren slumber near;  
Well rest ye on your batter'd shields,  
O heroes of a hundred fields;  
Your comrades wake your lines to guard;  
Rest warriors, rest beneath their ward.  
  
The air is sweet, the sky is calm.  
All nature round is breathing balm,  
The echo of our warfare falls  
Faint, distant, on these grassy walls,  
O spirits of the hill, surround  
With waving wings this holy ground.  
And from your airy censers show'r  
Strength to me in this lonely hour.  
I have fought and I have striven,  
Fought with foes and striv'n with friends,  
Fought for white-rob'd priests and gleemen,  
Fought that Britons might be freemen;  
I have driven, I have driven  
O'er the ridges steep of war  
Like a King my thund'ring car.  
Thro' the cloven ranks of battle  
Rome has heard my wheelblades rattle,  
And has known  
Golden torch and helm together  
Shimm'ring thro' the stormy weather;  
And my arm the spear uplifting  
Thro' the sleet of jav'lins drifting  
Like a king, like a king alone.  
But it ends, the heroic story,  
Freedom ends, and pow'r and glory;

**Sentries** (*distant*)  
Watchmen, alert!

**Caractacus**  
Nay! not yet, the steadfast Roman  
On his ranks shall feel the foeman  
Once again, one last endeavour,  
Britain, my land, is sav'd forever.

**Eigen**  
3 Father!

**Caractacus**  
'Tis Eigen.

**Eigen**  
Sire and King,  
Why wand'ring by the pale starlight?

**Caractacus**  
Nay! daughter, what can Eigen bring  
Untended through the camp by night?

**Eigen**  
Nay, not untended, Orbin waits,  
Close at my side, a guard from bale,  
With me to read thee Britain's fates.

**Caractacus**  
Hail! Orbin.

**Orbin**  
Lord and Captain, hail!

**Caractacus**  
Fates! they have left me; gods are far;  
Yet women view the light of heaven,  
Say, can't thou read in yonder star  
One ray of hope to Britain given?

**Sentries** (*distant*)  
Watchmen, alert!

**Orbin**  
Far off the distant sentry's hail  
Keeps vigil o'er the army sleeping.  
Here all is peace; attend the tale  
Which Eigen's gentle breast is keeping.

**Eigen**  
4 At eve to the greenwood, we wander'd away,  
To hear the birds singing, as happy as they.  
When we came to the oak where the mistletoe  
grows,  
Before us a fair Druid maiden arose,  
In her hand a weird emblem, a sickle, she bore,  
She rais'd it, and thrice reap'd a twig from the  
oak,  
And the songs of the forest were hush'd as she  
spoke:

'When the voices of earth  
At the midnight are still,  
Go forth thro' the camp  
On the crest of the hill;  
On the mound tow'rd the sunrise,  
By Taranis' spring,  
Speak thus to thy father,  
O child of the King:

"From ocean to river,  
From river to rill,  
The wings of the eagle  
Shall follow thee still;  
But deep in the forest  
Their vigour may fail,  
And high on the mountain  
The dragon prevail!"

**Orbin**

[5] On the ocean and the river,  
By the stream that cuts the plain,  
Sail and pennon fill and quiver,  
And the war horse champs the grain;  
Thro' the close entangled forest  
Is the legion's toil the sorest,  
On the mountain steep and dreary  
Mailed war horse shall grow weary.  
High on the mountain the dragon prevail.

**Caractacus**

I have met them in the forest,  
And they bore my fiercest shock,  
We were broken like the torrent  
That is hurl'd against the rock:  
Shall I meet them - the legions -  
In the wild Silurian regions?

**Eigen**

'Deep in the forest  
Their vigour shall fail  
And high on the mountain  
The dragon prevail.'

In the Oak grove tomorrow  
The Druids shall meet,  
To read thee the omens  
Of joy, not defeat.

**Eigen, Orbin**

By the song of the maiden  
The omen shall be,  
My father, the glory  
Of Britain and thee.

**Caractacus**

By the song of the maiden  
The omen shall be,  
O Britain, my Britain,  
The triumph of thee.

**Spirits of the Hill**

[6] Rest, weary monarch; tow'r'd the day  
The night is waning fast away;  
Bent on thee with benignant eye,  
Morn's silver star ascends the sky;  
Sleep, and awake, again inspire  
Thy warriors with thy soul of fire,  
Casting afar with morning light  
The brooding cares that burden night.  
The air is hush'd, the armed hill,  
Save for the sentry's voice, is still.

**Sentries (*distant*)**

Watchmen, alert!

**Scene 2. The sacred oak grove by the tomb  
of the Kings**

**Arch-Druid**

[7] Tread the mystic circle round,  
Measure off the holy ground,  
Thro' the fire and thro' the smoke,  
Girdle slow the sacred Oak.

**Druids**

Thro' the fire and thro' the smoke,  
Girdle slow the sacred Oak,  
Tree of eld, whose branches show,  
Brightest in the winter snow;  
The pearl-fruited mistletoe;  
Tree of eld! Girdle slow the sacred Oak.

**Arch-Druid, Druids**

Bear your torches thro' the gloom,  
Quench them on the hero's tomb,  
Where the stones are wet and red  
With the blood of victims dead,  
Girdle slow the sacred Oak.

**Druid Maidens**

Thread the measure left and right,  
Druid maidens, clad in white,  
Loose your locks, your bosoms bare,  
Breathe the god-head brooding there,  
Hov'ring round your floating hair.  
Thread the measure left and right...

**Druids**

Thro' the fire and thro' the smoke,  
Girdle slow the sacred Oak...

**Arch-Druid, Druids, Druid Maidens**

[8] Lord of dread and lord of pow'r,  
This is thine, the fateful hour,  
When beneath the sacred Oak,  
Thrice the sacred charm is spoke,  
Thrice the sacrificial knife  
Reddens with a victim's life,  
Thrice the mystic dance is led,  
Round the altar where they bled.  
Taranis, descend to aid,  
Let the future fate be said.

**Arch-Druid**

[9] Bard, what read ye in the field  
Of the war god's silver shield?

**Orbin**

Round the field the shadows gather,  
Dull, and dim, and dark, my father.

**Arch-Druid**

Vanish, shadows! let him see  
Clearly what the omens be.

**Orbin**

I see an eagle flying  
With beak and talons red,  
I see a warrior lying  
On the green earth dead.

**Chorus**

Taranis, descend to aid.

**Arch-Druid**  
Grim the vision, grim and stern,  
Minstrel, which thine eyes discern:  
Gaze again, and mark it well,  
What thou see-est, speak and tell.

**Orbin**  
Dim and dark the shadows gather  
Round the shield again, my father.

**Arch-Druid**  
No more, the fated hour is past.

**Arch-Druid, Druids**  
The omens speak in gloom at last;  
And must our hero toil in vain  
Unbless'd upon the battle plain?  
Or, with the Druids' blessing go,  
Like fire from heav'n, upon the foe?  
Desert your priests, ye gods; tonight  
Still shall his soul be arm'd for fight.

**Druid Maidens**  
Thread the measure left and right,  
Druid maidens, clad in white...

**Arch-Druid**  
Children, break off the mystic ring:  
Attend, obey, behold the King.

**Caractacus**  
Hail to thee, father! Druids, hail!  
Interpreters of bliss and bale:  
Tell me, before I meet the foe,  
What fate the holy omens show.

**Arch-Druid**  
For the banded tribes of Britain  
I stretch my arms abroad,  
Mine is the ancient wisdom,  
And mine the voice of god;  
Go forth, O King, to conquer,  
And all the land shall know,  
When falls thy charmed sword edge,  
In thunder on the foe...

**Druids, Druid Maidens**  
Go forth, O King, to conquer,  
In thunder on the foe.

**Arch-Druid**  
...But Rome and all her legions  
Shall shudder at the stroke,  
The weapon of the war god,  
The shadow of the Oak;  
The blade that blasts and withers,  
The dark and dreadful spell,  
Which reaping in the whirlwind,  
Shall harvest them in hell.

**Caractacus**  
10 Leap to light, my brand of fight,  
Flash to the heav'n's thine edges bright;  
Where those sharp lips of steel shall go,  
Red from the kiss a fount shall flow,  
And many a gallant head lie low,  
Leap to the light!

**Soldiers**  
Leap to the light!

**Caractacus**

Be thou my bard, with note of fire  
To sound thro' heav'n my royal lyre:  
Sing till the fiery echoes roll  
To ev'ry free-born warrior's soul,  
And pierce as lev'n that cleaves the bole,  
Sing to the light!

**Soldiers**

Sing to the light!

**Caractacus**

Cry naked to a country free,  
Guerdon and gold be none for thee;  
Land of my sires, land of mine,  
Hark to the song and make it thine,  
Wake and see my signal shine:  
Wake to the light.

**Soldiers**

Wake to the light, my brand of fight!

**Orbin**

Shall we greet them?  
Shall we meet them?  
And with mighty spell defeat them?  
No!  
Meet them with our war cry ringing,  
Meet them songs of triumph singing.  
In thy hand thou bear'st the omen.  
Trust to that against the foemen;  
Spell and charm shall fail thee ever,  
But thy sword deceive thee never!

**Caractacus**

Meet them with our war cry ringing,  
Meet them songs of triumph singing.

**Druids**

Meet them with our war cry ringing,  
Meet them songs of triumph singing.  
In thy hand thou bear'st the omen,  
The sword, the sword!

**Arch-Druid**

No more!

**Orbin**

May I unfold no more?  
Then grant me to surrender  
The song of bard and priestly lore,  
And be my land's defender.

**Arch-Druid**

Cease, Orbin, cease; around our shrine  
To aid our country's cause is thine;  
There, where in slumber dark and deep  
The hearts of ancient heroes sleep,  
Where broods the spirit of the god  
Above the earth which once they trod,  
Inspiring in the fateful hour  
The Druid's sacred soul with pow'r.

**Orbin**

O hear me, father! hear me, ere the fray  
Sweep all our country's hopes away,  
Hear me before my brethren go,  
Inspir'd by thee to meet the foe,

By justice, mercy, right, and ruth,  
O be thy words the words of truth.

**Druids, Druid Maidens**

[11] Hence, ere the Druid's wrath is woke,  
Hence, ere the awful curse is spoke,  
Here in the shadow of the Oak!

**Orbin**

I hear; and ere the morning gray  
I cast my snow-white robe away.

**Druids, Druid Maidens**

Hence, ere the Druid's wrath is woke...

**Orbin**

I hear, and cast my snow-white robe away,  
And I go,  
Like a bard my paean flinging  
On the front of battle ringing,  
Like a warrior for my land  
Charging sword in hand  
On the foe!

**Druids, Druid Maidens**

Hence, ere the awful curse is spoke  
Doom him to your deadliest thro'e,  
Go hence, apostate, go.

**Soldiers**

Leap to the light,  
My brand of fight,  
Flash to the heav'ns thine edges bright.

**Druids, Druid Maidens**

Taranis! descend to aid!  
Ye gods! oh! doom him...

**Scene 3. The forest near the Severn. Morning**

[12] **Introduction. Woodland Interlude**  
Orchestra

**Chorus**

[13] Come! beneath our woodland bow'rs,  
Wreathè our hallow'd wreaths of flow'r's,  
Priestly crowns of crimson hue,  
Opening roses bright with dew;  
Come! Scatter bud and blossom round you on  
the way,  
Come! Till the tender greensward blushes like  
the day;  
Come! beneath our woodland bow'rs,  
Wreathè our hallow'd wreaths of flow'r's.

**Eigen**

[14] O'er-arch'd by leaves the streamlet weaves  
Its meshes in the sun,  
The violets blue with diamond dew  
Are jewell'd ev'ry one;  
My heart is bright as morning light,  
And tender as the flow'r,  
For here I rove to meet my love,  
In this, the chosen hour.  
The gentle wind with kisses kind  
Is playing on my brow,  
The fawn is leaping round the hind  
Beneath the rustling bough;  
The dove is cooing to her mate,  
All things in earth appear,

To joy around me while I wait  
For Orbin to be here.

**Orbin**  
Mine Eigen, behold me, a fugitive now,  
I fly to the camp with a brand on my brow.

**Eigen**  
O tell me, my bard, for thy garment of white  
Why bear'st thou the mail and the weapons of  
fight?

**Orbin**  
15 Last night beneath the sacred Oak,  
The dreaded rite was ta'en,  
Last night the mystic word I spoke  
That told of Britain's bane;  
Then came the King, and, false as hell,  
A blessed bode the Druids tell,  
Alone my voice was rais'd to sing  
A warning to our glorious King;  
Silenc'd, and curs'd, and driven to flight,  
I tore my bardic robes of white;  
A warrior now, for Britain's weal  
I change my golden harp for steel.  
Eigen, my lady lov'd, I go,  
And but for thee no tear should flow;  
Pray to the gods to grant my arm  
To guard thy father's head from harm,  
And pray this parting may not be  
Our last beneath the greenwood tree.

**Chorus**  
16 Come! beneath our woodland bow'rs...

**Orbin**  
They gather the wreaths that shall hang on the  
shrine  
When the curse must be sung o'er this treason  
of mine;  
O weep not!

**Eigen**  
Nay linger not, haste ye and go,  
Fly far from the Druid, the shrine, and the woe.

**Orbin**  
Cling closely to me, hold me still,  
Heart of my heart, and life and pow'r;  
Thou, only thou, the hope, the thrill,  
And impulse in the coming hour.

**Eigen**  
Thine in death, to thy latest breath,  
If it be thy fate to die,

**Orbin**  
Then hand in hand, in the far-off land  
We will wander, thou and I.

**Eigen, Orbin**  
In the land where the fear of the hostile sword,  
Or the Druid's spell, or the rite abhor'd,  
Shall vex our love no more; under summer suns,  
And clear of battle the river runs,  
And in placid waters the lilies float,  
And the sweet birds sing an untroubled note;  
Where never are heard the sounds of strife,  
But all is radiant, joyous life;  
When this sad life is o'er...

COMPACT DISC TWO

**Scene 4. The Malvern Hills**

**Maidens**

[1] Wild rumours shake our calm retreat,  
There comes a noise of hurrying feet,  
Of bodesmen straining fast and far,  
And the air breathes low of distant war,  
Faint sounds of battles lost and won  
Quiver and die when day is done.  
Sweet lady, hope of Britain's line,  
What fears of ours can match with thine?  
Whatever woe the gods may bring,  
Pray, sisters, pray for our gallant King.

**Eigen**

[2] When the glow of the evening had died from  
the hill,  
And the murmur'ring voice of the forest was still,  
Once again thro' the thicket  
Came the maid of the Druids  
I met there of yore;  
No breath was abroad that might ruffle her form,  
But her tresses were toss'd as if lash'd by a  
storm,  
And she spoke and she curs'd thee,  
O father, beware!  
'Who falls from the mountain  
Shall fall by the sword,  
Who flits from the forest  
Be bound with a cord;  
The King and his kinsfolk  
Are captive at home,  
And all deck'd for the triumph  
The forum of Rome.'

**Maidens**

Wild rumours shake...

**Eigen**

O hush ye, my maidens, be hush'd: can it be?  
What soldier comes hither so dreadful to see?  
By the armour I know him, the torc and the ring,  
And the dragon of gold, 'tis my father, the King.

**Soldiers**

[3] We were gather'd by the river  
In a deep and hidden glen,  
Sword and spear and bow and quiver,  
Many a myriad gallant men:  
In our front the battle splendid  
Of the foe upon the plain,  
Wide its iron ranks extended,  
When we burst on him amain;  
And the roll of cars was sounding,  
And the clash of shields resounding,  
And the hiss of jav'lins falling,  
And the clang of trumpets calling,  
And all day the mighty battle  
O'er the bloody meadows spread  
While we fell like butcher'd cattle  
Till the living trod the dead;  
And our arms were faint and failing,  
We were dying with the day,  
When at last the foe prevailing  
Swept our ranks away.

**Caractacus, Chorus**

[4] O my warriors, tell me truly  
O'er the red graves where ye lie,  
That your monarch led you duly,  
First to charge and last to fly:

O my warriors!  
Speak, ah! speak, beloved voices,  
From the chambers where ye feast,  
Where the war god stern rejoices  
That his host has been increas'd,  
Say that first I clove the legions  
Where the golden eagle flew  
O'er the head to whom allegiance  
From the Roman foe was due,  
Say too, when the fight was ending,  
That with glazing eyes ye saw  
Me, my quiv'ring ranks defending  
From the greedy Roman maw;  
And the god shall give you heeding  
And across the heav'nly plain  
He shall smile, and see me leading  
My dead warriors once again!

**Scene 5. The Severn**

**Druid Maidens**

5 Captive Britons, see them! Hark  
To their tears as they embark!

**A Bard**

Fetter'd, weary, worn, and white,  
Sun of Britain shun the sight!

**Druid Maidens**

Heav'ns of Britain, weep in rain,  
They shall ne'er return again!

**A Bard, Druid Maidens**

Lap their bark with sob and sigh,  
Sombre Habren, swirling by;  
For they never more shall see  
British heav'n, or land, or thee...

**Scene 6. Rome. The Triumphal Procession**

6 **Processional Music**

Orchestra

**Chorus**

The march triumphal thunders  
Amid the shouting crowd,  
With flash of helm and corslet,  
While trumpets scream aloud;  
And cymbals sharply ringing  
The car of triumph greet,  
With the milk-white steeds that draw it,  
Along the sacred street...

Before the car how diff'rent they  
Who barefoot drag their weary way.

The march triumphal thunders...  
Over the marble palace,  
Over the golden shrine,  
O'er street and square and forum  
Glaring, the noonbeams shine;  
Widely the robes are waving,  
Brightly the jewels glance,  
Eager eyes that lighten  
Each joyous countenance;  
And cymbals sharply ringing  
The car of triumph greet.  
But hark! a shout that shakes the air,  
The Emperor fills the curule chair;  
The captives halt before...

**Claudius**

7 Unbind his hands, silence the trumpets; plead,  
Briton, if plea can purge thy crimes away,

Or turn the doom of many a bloody deed,  
The ling'ring doom that waits on thee today.

**Caractacus**

8 Heap torment upon torment, woe on woe,  
Let months and years of anguish'd life be mine;  
Tears from these eyes Rome cannot cause to  
flow,  
Nor bend this knee by any pow'r of thine.

We liv'd in peace, was that a crime to thee,  
That thy fierce eagle stoop'd upon our nest?  
A freeborn chieftain, and a people free.  
We dwelt among our woodlands, and were blest.  
For liberty, wives, children, hearth and shrine,  
From sea to plain we fought, from plain to hill,  
Now all is lost, all that was ours is thine;  
My soul alone remains unshackled still.  
Do then thy worst on me; my people spare  
Who fought for freedom in our land at home;  
Slaves they are not, be wise and teach them  
there  
Order, and law, and liberty with Rome.

**Eigen**

O for the sward of Britain, and the hills!  
The whisp'ring forest by our Habren's side!  
O for our Habren, and her silver rills,  
Before we lost them would that we had died!

**Orbin**

O for mine Eigen in her woodland glade,  
Light as the morning! O for mine Eigen!  
Spare her, Roman, spare her, spare,  
And measure ten-fold torment upon me.

**Chorus**  
9 Slay the Briton.

**Claudius**

Captive, dost thou hear?  
The Gods themselves breathe through a people's  
breath;  
The Gods condemn thee: dost thou learn to fear?  
How say ye still, Quirites?

**Chorus**  
Death! Slay the Briton.

**Caractacus**

10 I plead not for myself: not earth or heav'n  
Can shake a soul like mine prepar'd for all;  
Yet I plead, that mercy may be given  
To these, my comrades of the Roman thrall.  
My guileless daughter and the warrior bard,  
Her lover, fled from priestly bonds at home,  
Is there no grace for them, and is it hard  
To win so little from Imperial Rome?

**Orbin**

Plead not for me, I will not quit thy side;  
But plead for Eigen while thy breath endures:

**Eigen**

Plead not for me, King's child, and Orbin's bride,  
Yours be my fate, as all my life was yours.

**Chorus**

Slay them! Slay the Britons.

**Claudius**  
By the Gods they shall not die;  
Their blood would curse the ground to which  
it grew.  
We grant you grace; young warrior, clasp thy  
bride;  
Brave chieftain, all thy suff'rings are o'er;  
Dwell here in Rome, and by the Emperor's side  
Find safety, peace and rest for evermore...

**Eigen, Orbin, Caractacus**  
[1] Grace from the Roman! peace and rest are ours,  
Freedom is lost, but peace and rest remain;  
Britain, farewell! Thro' all the ling'ring hours,  
Hope, mem'ry, love shall hide our golden chain.

**Chorus**  
[2] The clang of arms is over,  
Abide in peace, and brood  
On glorious ages coming,  
And Kings of British blood.  
The light descends from heaven,  
The centuries roll away,  
The Empire of the Roman  
Is crumbled into clay;  
The eagle's flight is ended,  
His weary wings are furl'd;  
The oak has grown and shadow'd  
The shores of all the world:

Britons, alert! and fear not,  
Though round your path of pow'r,  
Opposing cohorts gather;  
And jealous tyrants low'r;  
On though the world desert you,  
On so your cause be right;

Britons, alert! and fear not,  
But gird your loins for fight.  
And ever your dominion  
From age to age shall grow  
O'er peoples undiscover'd,  
In lands we cannot know;  
And where the flag of Britain  
Its triple crosses rears,  
No slave shall be for subject,  
No trophy wet with tears,  
But folk shall bless the banner,  
And bless the crosses twin'd,  
That bear the gift of freedom,  
On ev'ry blowing wind;  
Nor shall her might diminish  
While firm she holds the faith  
Of equal law to all men  
And holds it to the death;  
For all the world shall learn it  
Though long the task shall be,  
The text of Britain's teaching,  
The message of the free;  
And when at last they find it,  
The nations all shall stand  
And hymn the praise of Britain,  
Like brothers, hand in hand.

Harry Arbuthnot Acworth (1849 - 1933)

Greg Barritt



Richard Hickox



The premature death of Richard Hickox on 23 November 2008, at the age of just sixty, deprived the musical world of one of its greatest conductors. The depth and breadth of his musical achievements were astonishing, not least in his remarkable work on behalf of British composers. An inspiring figure, and a guiding light to his friends and colleagues, he had a generosity of spirit and a wonderful quality of empathy for others.

For someone of his musical achievements, he was never arrogant, never pompous. Indeed there was a degree of humility about Richard that was as endearing as it was unexpected. He was light-hearted and, above all, incredibly enthusiastic about those causes which he held dear. His determination to make things happen for these passions was astonishing – without this energy and focus his achievements could not have been as great as they were. He was able to take others with him on his crusades, and all in the pursuit of great music.

Richard was a completely rounded musician with a patience, kindness, and charisma that endeared him to players and singers alike. His enthusiasm bred its own energy and this, in turn, inspired performers. He was superb at marshalling

large forces. He cared about the development of the artists with whom he worked and they repaid this loyalty by giving of their best for him.

An unassuming man who was always a delight to meet, Richard was a tireless musical explorer who was able to create a wonderful sense of spirituality, which lifted performances to become special, memorable events. For these reasons, Richard was loved as well as respected.

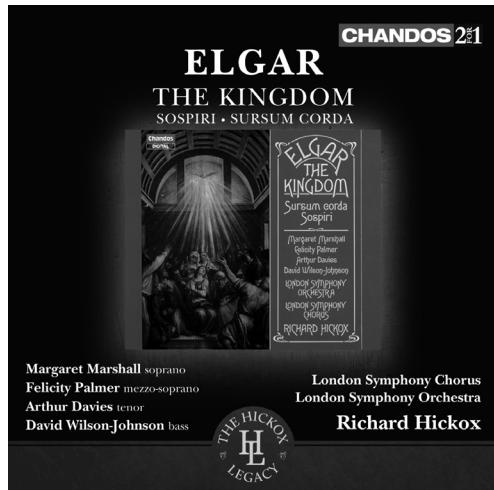
The Richard Hickox Legacy is a celebration of the enormously fruitful, long-standing collaboration between Richard Hickox and Chandos, which reached more than 280 recordings. This large discography will remain a testament to his musical energy and exceptional gifts for years to come. The series of re-issues now underway captures all aspects of his art. It demonstrates his commitment to an extraordinarily wide range of music, both vocal and orchestral, from the past three centuries. Through these recordings we can continue to marvel at the consistently high level of his interpretations whilst wondering what more he might have achieved had he lived longer.

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**Sound engineer** Ralph Couzens

**Assistant engineer** Peter Newble

**Editor** Peter Newble

**Mastering** Jonathan Cooper

**A & R administrator** Sue Shortridge

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CHAN 241-58

Sir Edward Elgar (1857–1934)

**Caractacus, Op. 35** (1898)

Cantata in Six Scenes for Soprano, Tenor, Baritone, Bass,  
Chorus, and Orchestra

Libretto by Harry Arbuthnot Acworth (1849–1933)

Eigen ..... Judith Howarth soprano  
Orbin ..... Arthur Davies tenor  
Caractacus ..... David Wilson-Johnson baritone  
Arch-Druid / A Bard ..... Stephen Roberts bass  
Claudius ..... Alastair Miles bass

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for Brass Band  
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Caractacus, Scenes 1–3  
TT 61:27

COMPACT DISC TWO  
Caractacus, Scenes 4–6  
Severn Suite  
TT 58:24

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