



Composer Profile: Sir Charles Hubert Hastings Parry (1848 – 1918):

Born in Bournemouth, Parry was an English composer, teacher and historian of music.

After early attempts, at his father's behest, to work in insurance, Parry was taken on by George Grove; who was a writer on music, renowned music administrator and the first director of The Royal College of Music for a term of 11 years.

Parry worked firstly as a contributor to Grove's massive Dictionary of Music and Musicians in the 1870s and 80s. In 1883, Parry became professor of composition and musical history at the Royal College of Music, succeeding Grove as the head of the college and remaining in the position for the rest of his life.

As a composer, Parry's first major works appeared in 1880, and he is best known for the choral song 'Jerusalem', his 1902 setting of the Coronation Anthem 'I Was Glad', and the choral and orchestral ode 'Blest Pair of Sirens'.

Within in his lifetime and beyond, Parry's reputation and critical standing have varied. His academic contributions were considerable and prevented him from devoting all his energies to composition.

Some contemporaries such as Charles Villiers Stanford rated him as the finest English composer since Henry Purcell. However, others such as Frederick Delius, did not.

Parry's influence on later composers, by contrast, is widely recognised. Edward Elgar learned much of his craft from Parry's articles in Grove's Dictionary. Those who studied under Parry at the Royal College of Music were Ralph Vaughan Williams, Gustav Holst, Frank Bridge and John Ireland.

Programme Notes: I Was Glad:

Numerous settings of Psalm 122 have abounded in churches for hundreds of years. Purcell and Boyce both each composed one. However, Parry's setting, known by the first line ('incipit') of the text as published in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, has become one of the most celebrated versions.

Parry's setting only has verses 1-3, 6 and 7 and perhaps it is the most popular because, musically, it is intent on achieving exactly what the opening words state: I Was Glad.

Eliciting tingles and shivers upon hearing it even for the hundredth time, it resounds energy and vigour.

He originally wrote it to accompany the crowning of Edward VII in 1901. But Parry took a few coronations to get it exactly as he wanted it; offering it up again nine years later for the coronation of George V, with a great amount more pomp added, including the now familiar introduction, and the addition of the acclamations 'Vivat Rex...' (or 'Vivat Regina...') central section (that is performed at coronations, but often omitted at other occasions).

The imperial splendour and opulent choral sound that Parry achieves in this anthem has made it the fixture for all subsequent coronations and a clear favourite with concert audiences across the land.

Particularly noteworthy, is the beautiful tune in the episode for the semi-chorus: "O pray for the peace of Jerusalem".

At the first performance of Parry's arrangement, at the 1902 coronation, the director of music, Sir Frederick Bridge, misjudged the timing and had finished the anthem before the King had arrived, having to repeat it when the right moment came. Bridge was saved by the organist, Walter Alcock, who improvised in the interim.

I was glad, glad when they said unto me
We will go into the house of the Lord.

Our feet shall stand in thy gates, O Jerusalem.

Jerusalem is builded as a city
That is at unity in itself.

O pray for the peace of Jerusalem,
They shall prosper that love thee,

Peace be within thy walls, and plenteousness within thy palaces.