

ELGAR ORGAN SONATAS

move



June Nixon at the organ of St. Paul's Cathedral Melbourne

EDWARD ELGAR (1857-1934)

Sonata in G Major Op. 28

1st movement

– Allegro Maestoso 8'56"

2nd movement

– Allegretto 5'10"

3rd movement

– Andante Espressivo 6'24"

4th movement

– Presto (comodo) 8'17"

Sonata No.2, Op. 87A

Introduction, Toccata, Fugue and Cadenza 14'59"



This recording published by Move Records in 1985
move.com.au

Cover photograph by Peter Dunphy

The Cathedral Organist at Worcester, Hugh Blair, bullied Elgar into producing his first really large-scaled instrumental piece in four movements.

The organ sonata, op. 28, was written in 1895, only five years after completion of the Lewis instrument in St. Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne, Australia, to which it is ideally suited.

This is romantic writing for the romantic organ. The work is symphonic in conception, and full of orchestral ideas and dynamics. In fact, it explores the entire tonal range of the instrument. Elgar himself was an organist, having succeeded his father for four years at St. George's Church in Worcester. As a teenager, he heard recitals by distinguished organists on the new instrument in Worcester Cathedral.

The sonata is dedicated to Dr. C. Swinnerton Heap, the English composer and conductor of the Birmingham Festival Choral Society, which performed so many of Elgar's choral works.

Elgar's second organ sonata, opus 87A, is an arrangement by Sir Ivor Atkins, Blair's successor at Worcester Cathedral,

although Elgar's friendship with Atkins dated from 1890, several years before the Worcester appointment. Atkins asked Elgar to be godfather to his only son, (who is now chairman of the trustees responsible for the cottage birthplace at Broadheath, which Elgar himself wished to have as his memorial).

Atkins took movements from the Severn Suite op. 87 for brass band: the Introduction, Toccata and Fugue, into which he wrote his own cadenza. The idea was Atkins', but it gained Elgar's thorough approval.

This recording was produced by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation in 1984, 50 years after Elgar's death, for the programme Musicians of Australia.

Due to the Cathedral's location at a busy city intersection, some traffic noise, also some wind noise from the organ, may be audible. This is what a listener would hear in St. Paul's Cathedral.

One of Australia's best known organists, choir trainers and composers, June Nixon initially obtained Diploma of Music (piano) and Bachelor of Music (organ) from Melbourne University.

Post graduate Scholarships enabled further study in London where she gained F.R.C.O. and became the first woman to receive the John Brooke prize for the Choir Training Diploma. In 1968 she was the winner of the Australian National Organ Competition.

She was appointed Organist and Director of Music at St. Paul's Cathedral Melbourne in 1973 and only relinquished this after 40 years on 3 February 2013 and has been made Organist Emerita. She is on the teaching staff of Melbourne University Faculty of Music.

She has given numerous recitals at the Cathedral and at the Melbourne Town Hall, and given other recitals in London, the most recent at Westminster Abbey. Her influence outside the Anglican Church was recognized in 1995 by the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne awarding her the Percy Jones Award

for "outstanding dedication and service given to music for worship".

She was made a Member (AM) in the General Division in the Queens Birthday Honours in 1998 for services to church music. In 1999 the Lambeth Degree, Doctor of Music(Cantuar) was conferred on her by the Archbishop of Canterbury. She was a consultant for the restoration of the T.C. Lewis Organ in St. Paul's Cathedral Melbourne in 1990 and on the steering committee for the restoration of the Hill Organ in the Melbourne Town Hall in 2000. In 2003 June was nominated and made a member of the Association of Anglican Musicians.



RECORD REVIEW

ELGAR: A COLOURFUL AND APPEALING PERFORMANCE

BY JOHN MAIDMENT

Elgar Organ Sonatas: June Nixon at the organ of St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne. Movie MS3059.

The first of Elgar's two sonatas for organ, which was composed in 1895, has been frequently played and recorded, although most recitalists choose to play excerpts rather than the full work. The second sonata is an arrangement by Sir Ivor Atkins of Elgar's Severn Suite, op.87, for brass band, carried out with Elgar's approval, and recorded previously only once or twice to my knowledge.

It is difficult to speak of a definitive interpretation of the Elgar sonatas for organ. The music allows considerable scope to the performer in terms of tempi, registration and use of rubato, relying upon a sense of appropriate taste allied with excellent technique for a convincing performance.

In this particular medium, amply endowed with expressive and colourful registration possibilities - possibly the most tonally appropriate instrument on which these works have yet been recorded.

June Nixon performs the two sonatas with great fluency and attention to detail. The kaleidoscopic changes in registration have been well thought out and involve virtually the whole of the range of stops in the Lewis organ (with the exception of the Vox Humana!). Once or twice these changes are not as smoothly carried out as one might have wished, but one must fully acknowledge the present state of the combination action, which is lamentably sluggish.

It is interesting to compare this interpretation of the Elgar Cathedral by HMV almost 20 years ago. June Nixon's tempi are in general more brisk (made possible by the drier acoustic at Melbourne) while Sumsion's pace is more leisurely and contemplative. However, the vastly superior voicing of the Melbourne Lewis compared with the Willis-Harrison hybrid at Gloucester makes the present recording far more colourful and appealing to the listener.

The technical quality of the recording is excellent throughout and the balance admirable, although not as brilliant and spacious in quality of sound as Peter Nicholson's recent digital recording on the same instrument. The jacket of the recording is most attractive and incorporates a photograph of the cathedral lectern rising up before the reredos. The specification of the organ and notes on the

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performer are also given.

This, then, is a wholly admirable recording of two major works in the English organ repertoire skilfully and sympathetically played by one of our leading Australian organists on an instrument of international significance.



Reproduced from the
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GREAT		FEET	FEET	
1. Clarion		4	40. Orchestral Oboe	8
2. Trumpet		8	41. Flute harmonic	4
3. Double trumpet		16	42. Flute harmonic	8
4. Mixture	4 ranks		xii. Tremulant	
5. Fifteenth		2	xiii. Solo octave	
6. Twelfth		2 2/3	xiv. Solo sub-octave	
7. Principal		4	xv. Orchestral to Solo	
8. Gemshorn		4		
9. Flute Harmonique		8	PEDAL	
10. Gamba		8	43. Posaune	16
11. Stopped Diapason		8	44. Bass Flute	8
12. Open Diapason II		8	45. Violin Cello	8
13. Open Diapason I		8	46. Quint	10 2/3
14. Bourdon		16	47. Violone	16
i. Solo to Great			48. Bourdon	16
ii. Swell to Great			49. Open Diapason	16
iii. Choir to Great			50. Double Open Diapason	32
iv. Orchestral to Great			xv. Great to Pedal	
			xvi. Swell to Pedal	
			xvii. Solo to Pedal	
			xviii. Choir to Pedal	
			xix. Orchestral to Pedal	
SWELL (Enclosed)			ORCHESTRAL (Enclosed)	
15. Clarion		4	51. Viol d'orchestra	16
16. Oboe		8	52. Viol d'orchestra	8
17. Horn		8	53. Viol d'orchestra	4
18. Contra Fagotto		16	54. Tibia clausa	8
19. Mixture	3 ranks		55. Tibia clausa	4
20. Flautina		2	56. Tuba Mirabilis	16
21. Rohr Flute		4	57. Tuba Mirabilis	8
22. Principal		4	58. Tuba Mirabilis	4
23. Voix celeste		8	Tuba unit off	
24. Vox Angelica		8	Tibia unit off	
25. Viol di gamba		8	Viol unit off	
26. Rohr Flute		8	3 thumb pistons to Solo (1 adj)	
27. Open Diapason		8	6 " , to Swell (2 adj)	
28. Bourdon		16	6 " , to Great (2 adj)	
v. Tremulant			6 " , to Choir (1 adj)	
vi. Swell octave			3 Toe Pistons to Great and Pedal	
vii. Swell sub-octave			6 " , to Swell (duplicating)	
viii. Orchestral to swell			1 Reversible toe piston for pedal Posaune	
CHOIR (Unenclosed)			1 " , " , for pedal 32 ft.	
29. Corno di bassetto		8	1 " , " , for Great to Pedal	
30. Piccolo Harmonic		2	1 Thumb piston for pedal Posaune	
31. Lieblich Flute		4	1 " , " , for Pedal 32 ft.	
32. Flauto traverso		4	1 " , " , for Great to Pedal	
33. Dulciana		8	Doubles off	
34. Salicional		8	Ped Compositions to Solo Pistons	
35. Lieblich Gedeckt		8	" , to Swell Piston	
36. Lieblich Gedeckt		16	" , to Great	
ix. Swell to choir			" , to Choir	
x. Orchestral to choir			Balanced Swell Pedal	
SOLO (Enclosed)			Balanced Solo Pedal	
37. Tuba mirabilis		8	Balanced Orchestral Pedal	
38. Clarinet		8		
39. Vox humana		8		

The specification of the Lewis organ at the time of this recording.

built by T. C. Lewis (1890)—rebuilt by Hill, Norman & Beard Ltd. (1929)

Compass: Manuals—CC to C, 61 notes

Pedals—CCC to F, 30 notes