

Great is the Lord

Edward Elgar (1857 - 1934)

Shortly after the first performance of his violin concerto in 1910, Elgar began work on this setting of Psalm 48, but didn't complete it until 1912. It was first performed at Westminster Abbey in July of that year at a service commemorating the 250th anniversary of the Royal Society.

The psalm's opening statement of affirmation is set to an appropriately expansive, Elgarian melody. After an animated section as the kings assemble themselves, the baritone soloist introduces a more reflective mood at 'We have thought on thy loving kindness, O God'. The final section concludes with a triumphant reaffirmation that 'this God is our God'.

programme notes by John Bawden

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Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised in the city of our God,
in the mountain of his holiness.

Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion
on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.

God hath made himself known in her palaces for a refuge.

For lo! the kings assembled themselves, they passed by together.

They saw, then were they amazed, they were dismayed, they hasted away.

Trembling took hold of them there, pain, as of a woman in travail,
as with the east wind that breaketh the ships of Tarshish.

As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts,
in the city of our God.

God will establish it for ever.

We have thought on thy loving kindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple.

As is thy name, O God, so is thy praise unto the ends of the earth.

Thy right hand is full of righteousness.

Let mount Zion be glad, let the daughters of Judah rejoice
because of thy judgements.

Walk about Zion and go round about her, tell the towers thereof.

Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces,
that ye may tell it to the generations following.

For this God is our God for ever and ever,
he will be our guide even unto death. Amen.