

# Edward Elgar's Masque *The Crown of India* Resonances of the Raj at the London Coliseum

Edvige Pucciarelli

(Università degli Studi di Bergamo, Italia)

**Abstract** The music for *The Crown of India* was written by Edward Elgar in 1912 to accompany an 'Imperial Masque' with a libretto by Henry Hamilton. The impresario Sir Oswald Stoll had commissioned Elgar to compose the Masque music for the lavish celebration of the coronation of King George V as Emperor of India as part of a larger entertainment in the Coliseum Theatre in St. Martin's Lane. The Masque was part of an ample music-hall programme, involving shows as different as mime, pantomime and music. Elgar's 'Imperial Masque' was meant to be an assertion of the British Empire, bringing to the London stage the crucial political happenings behind all the pageantry of the Delhi Durbar for the crowning of George V as Emperor of India in December 1911. This event had marked the climax of the only royal tour of India undertaken by a reigning King-Emperor and had caused much public excitement in England. The Durbar ceremony itself was an adaptation of a court ritual of the Mogul Empire, an event where the ruling princes used to meet to discuss politics and legislative changes. To listen to works such as Elgar's *The Crown of India* (*Opus 66*), it is necessary to acknowledge that at the beginning of the 20th century the British nation believed in the Empire and in its concept.

**Summary** 1 Henry Hamilton's libretto: Nation and Empire in *The Crown of India*. – 2 Edward Elgar's *The Crown of India*, *Opus 66*, 1912 as the Representation of Places of the British Empire. – 3 Representations of the Raj on the London Coliseum Stage.

**Keywords** Elgar. Hamilton. Masque. Imperialism. Said.

## 1 Henry Hamilton's libretto: Nation and Empire in *The Crown of India*

The impresario Stoll wrote to Elgar early in January 1912 offering him to compose the music for an 'Imperial Masque' to be performed at the Coliseum in celebration of the newly-crowned Emperor George V. The cultural, political and royal issues were the chief motivation of Stoll's commission,<sup>1</sup> events strictly related to the Royal visit to India at the end of 1911. The Delhi Coronation Durbar 1911 was organised by the British as a means of

<sup>1</sup> Sir Oswald Stoll owned theatre chains in Britain and he is reputed to have transformed the music-hall entertainments into a more socially acceptable entertainment of multi-class appeal drawing more audience to the theatres. The London Coliseum opened in 1904, becoming an attraction for the middle class. See Barker 1957, 72.

demonstrating British power over the colony of India as well as a means of rendering manifest the close relationship that existed between the Raj and much of the Indian elite.

However, by the time of the royal visit in 1911, the first signs of deterioration in the relationship with local Indians at an institutional level were beginning to show, creating difficulties in maintaining the British hold over India and more specifically, over the totality of the Indian subcontinent. That these emerging problems in the ruling of and in India were not apparent to the British public knowledge is demonstrated by the fact that Britons were fascinated with the royal visit to India of November 1911. This very fact encouraged Stoll to commission a piece of music informed with imperialistic values as a means of celebrating the royal imperial coronation event, trying to portray and represent Britain's view of what was thought India to be from the perspective of the United Kingdom theatre and national audience.

Elgar was presented with a challenging proposal from the outset of the composition by the imperial sentiments, expressed in rather bombastic terms and by the structure devised by the librettist Henry Hamilton, a playwright of little distinction but known to the general public who appreciated his overt ways of presenting the imperial powers and achievements, also expressed in philanthropic terms, of Britain.<sup>2</sup>

The propagandist imperialist aspects of the 1911 Durbar, attended by the first time by the King-Emperor of Great Britain in Delhi, on the long-colonised Indian subcontinent, were carefully and very precisely transferred into the masque's libretto by Henry Hamilton (1912) in a straight-forward way.<sup>3</sup> So that the home audience, who had read eagerly in the newspapers about the ceremony that took place in the exotic distant 'other' space of the Empire, could easily understand and identify itself with the ideology and rhetoric Hamilton inserted in his libretto. Although such an audience could not relate to the ceremony's description in a real sense, of course, the public attending the performances at the London Coliseum could respond to an imaginary exotic far-fetched, far-flung unreal recreation of it. Hamilton's text is a visionary encounter, a successful hybridisation, between

2 Henry Hamilton, the writer of the libretto, also wrote a series of melodramas in the later years of the nineteenth century. At the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, he became one half of 'the Gilbert and Sullivan of melodrama' with his writing partner Cecil Raleigh. See MacQueen-Pope 1945, 292. It is significant that Henry Hamilton, the librettist chosen by Stoll for *The Crown of India*, does not appear in *The New Grove Music and Musicians Dictionary* edited by Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrel in 2000. See also "Grove Music Online" in *Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/> (2018-12-04). We have already anticipated the scant information on Elgar's music.

3 The only article devoted to the study of Hamilton libretto's for *The Crown of India* is that by Pellegrino 2010, 13-36. Pellegrino's article focuses on the cuts made by Elgar himself in Hamilton's text.

a simplified and effective version of both Indian history and mythology with the British history and tradition. It is an epic fantasy echoing and, at times, resembling the description of *romance* and Arthurian chivalric literature. The themes in the passage of the text referred to Saint George as 'The Spirit of Chivalry', the personification of Britain embodying knightly canons. St George, who makes his entry accompanied by Tradition and Romance, introduced in the stage directions as personifications. This literary commonly-shared background was also known to the working-classes, who enjoyed the shows, which helped feed this ideological and political image of the Empire to the average general public of late Edwardian Britain. The matter of romance-chivalry literature with its topographical and cartographical vision, although itself an imaginative invention, or rather re-invention of exotic places that were part of traditional British imagery, was well adapted to describing and representing the subservient role attributed to the 'uncivilised' colony of India, with its simultaneously real and 'unreal' territory.

The libretto is an allegory of imperial British rule: the twelve most important cities of India personifying Indian ancient history and traditions, both cultural and political, as well as incarnating the economic and commercial values that were essential to the wealth of the empire and through which the cities were known to the general audience in Britain. The beginning of the libretto is dominated by feminine images of the geographical and cultural Indian references - actors impersonated the Cities and India, staging the urban topography of India as Agra, Benares (Varanasi), Mysore, Haidarabad, Lucknow, Bombay, Madras, Lahore, Allahabad and Gwalior along with the Mogul Emperors - sharply contrasting with the inserted British male figures (real, mythical and mythological): John Company, the colloquial name for the East India Company; St. George representing England, the King-Emperor George V. Only at the end of the second tableau, the Queen-Empress Mary is mentioned, accompanying the King as they both enter the Durbar in Delhi.

Moreover, the text was able to further the concepts of paternalistic philanthropic views, which the general public strongly believed in: views portraying the British rule, and functioning as a sort of evangelical, philanthropic civilising agent, defining the role the Empire had assumed over all its conquered territories. This political stance, shared by the government elite and the general public in Great Britain were everyday attitudes of the colonisers themselves in the colonised territories, commonplace beliefs for the colonised peoples of the Empire as well and were the colonial discourses of the time, which Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism* and in *Orientalism* explains, criticises and exemplifies. Such were the ideological imperialist bases conveyed by Hamilton in his libretto.

The libretto of *The Crown of India* consists of two tableaux: the first, named *The Cities of Ind*, opens with the controversial announcement that

the capital of India would move from Calcutta to Delhi; the second, is called *Ave Imperator* and concerns King George V's visit to India; it is a re-enactment of the Durbar ceremony itself. These two tableaux serve the dramatic function offering us a historical background and assessment of the situation in India. It seems that the subcontinent is presented as a kingdom of peace and prosperity due to the intervention of Great Britain in establishing the *Pax Britannica*. 'Britannia'/England is portrayed in terms of the Good Shepherd who is capable of ensuring domestic tranquillity.

In the first tableau, Mother India greets and welcomes her twelve most renowned Cities: this underlines the importance of the destinies of the personified cities of India, as recorded by historical and mythological accounts: and the insistence on a historical and mythological framework is a structural literary device used by Hamilton to write a new history of the British nation and of the Empire, all inscribed in the European chivalric tradition.

The libretto also posits dichotomies with the ideological, political values and attributes of Great Britain and those of India, thus the text plays out the primary binary opposition between England and India. As a matter of fact, quite typically of colonial discourse, India is referred to in the libretto as Mother India, an old trope identifying the land as feminine, a 'feminine other', enforcing the British rule over a colonial territory also by means of a trite gendered representation and display of imperial male power. The rule of the King-Emperor is celebrated and everyone involved seems to be happy in kneeling before him in a colourful and exotic manner intended, as it was also intended by the organisers of the Durbar that took place in Delhi, to fascinate and draw the general public to the theatrical rendering of the official ceremony performed at the Coliseum.

## 2 Edward Elgar's *The Crown of India*, Opus 66, 1912 as the Representation of Places of the British Empire

It is important to stress that *The Crown of India* for Elgar was a real breakthrough in his career since the commission not only gave him the kind of commercial success he had been looking, and striving, for but also confirmed him as the royal composer of the Empire.<sup>4</sup> His involvement with royal occasions (most notably Queen Victoria's 1897 Jubilee and the coronations of Edward VII and George V – not forgetting his *The Spirit*

4 After the success of 1912 two-weeks' performances at the Coliseum, *The Crown of India* was never performed on stage again in its entirety. Sadly, the original complete orchestral score was lost in the '60s. In 2007, the Elgar Society commissioned an orchestration of the piano score from Anthony Paine. This version was recorded by the BBC Philharmonic and Sir Andrew Davis in 2007 (Chandos).

of England (L. Binyon) in 1914, *Empire March* in 1924, *The Pageant of Empire* (A. Noyes) in 1924 - culminated in his appointment as Master of the King's Music in 1924. His participation in *The Crown of India* was another way of showing his loyalty to the Crown, and of demonstrating the national and imperialistic beliefs and values he so revered (Hughes 1989, 41-68; Kennedy 1990, 107-17).

Elgar could not but be fascinated by the inheritance from the seventeenth-century court masque. That masque was a multi-faceted, multi-layered, complex genre, an aesthetic expression of the early modern Stuart court, offering its various political ideologies as theatrical event. The genre was basically an elaborate costumed dance party, with dramatic conceits (derived from classical myth) and prose romances conceived to praise and honour the monarch. This courtly panegyric contained many different expressive forms: the masque-text, music (Walls 1996), elaborate painted scenery, stage machinery, songs, dancing and, at the end, the final revels, when the aristocratic masquers joined and danced with the spectators (cf. Butler 1994, 91-115).

Careful analysis of the multiple cultural and socio-political contexts that went into the masque's structure shows it deals with national issues and was a very powerful tool of propaganda for the Crown's policies (Orgel 1965, 62; Orgel, Strong 1973). In the masque, were embedded not only local-political concerns regarding Whitehall's closed circle of the participants in royal power discourses (also in virtue of their physical proximity to the royals). The masque also embodied the ongoing views regarding national political affairs as well as England's contemporary relations with Europe.

Such contents and purposes of the Stuart masque were ideologically shared by Elgar in his approach to a 20th-century Masque. Elgar seems to have understood that the socio-economic and political context of *The Crown of India* supports the contention of Raymond Williams that:

from at least the mid-nineteenth century, and with important instances earlier, there was this larger context [the relationship between England and the colonies, whose effects on the English imagination 'have gone deeper than can easily be traced'] within which every idea and every image was consciously and unconsciously affected. (Williams 1973, 165)

Williams has a telling grasp of the historical situation that can be found in Elgar's masque. As Williams points out, it is difficult to ascertain the strength and depth of Empire mythology in the British consciousness during the late Victorian and Edwardian times. The relationship between England and its colonies is embodied and represented in the work by Hamilton and Elgar and in how their artistic creations help the public's attitudes towards Empire.

Edward Elgar's incidental music for the 'Imperial Masque' for *The Crown of India* consists of seven orchestral numbers, two songs, and six pieces of melodrama. The general idea expressed in the libretto, and in Elgar's music itself, is that Indian music and culture was barbaric and inferior when compared with the European tradition, including English tradition (Cowgill, Rushton 2006). As Sharon Hamilton, has noted:

According to Victorian thought, European music like European society, worked precisely because it was ordered and systematic, it was everything which 'native' music - and by extension 'native society' - was not'. *The Crown of India* is full of indications that Elgar used Orientalist tropes when composing: the Masque constructs a binary opposition of East and West: India represented by pseudo-Oriental chromatic melody and harmony while Britain is illustrated by ceremonious diatonic invention. (Hamilton S. 1998, 53)

At this point, we must try to gain a true insight into Elgar's own beliefs and ideologies (Kennedy 1987, 252) since Elgar's life and works are also an expression of an ideology of Empire commonly acknowledged and shared in this period. We must bear in mind that his beliefs were built upon a political vision entirely in accord with the dominant imperialist doctrines of his time. Moreover, with his music for *The Crown of India*, Elgar was making a conscious effort, willing to confirm to the general audience, themselves enmeshed in the imperialist credo, as 'nation' and 'the people', that his own personal ideology was completely identical with the national vision of Empire. In fact, he was trying to give musical voice and artistic expression to what they believed in. Through a short composition meant to articulate structurally and culturally, Elgar wants to represent, through long-established musical tropes, a *summa* of these political doctrines both national and imperial.

Elgar expresses his imperialistic feelings and views in his music for the masque by rendering the binary opposition of East and West through the juxtaposition of an 'orientalised style' of composing to represent India and an overtly 'ceremonial pomp' music to represent St George-England and the King-Emperor George V (Gardiner, Crump 1986, 164-90). Elgar's music for the masque, with its dialectic of musical styles, really possesses the same simplicity of idea and ideology of Colonialism as 'mission' (Kipling's 'white man's burden' is not far off).<sup>5</sup>

5 The term 'imperialism' requires some in-depth definition since its meaning has altered over time. As anticipated earlier, in the nineteenth century, imperialism possessed a clearly defined, policy-driven agenda to expand the Empire and maintain control over its constituent parts. Here, the term is used in accordance with Said's definition to mean the "practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory". In Edward Said's (1993, 3), the term becomes ideologically rather than politically defined in

When viewed as part of the contemporary ideological matrix, Elgar's treatment of the Orientalist subject of *The Crown of India* reveals sympathy with the dominant imperialist tropes of the period. Musically, the East is portrayed as weak and indecisive, the West as bold and powerful, assertive in major mode against the chromaticism in the minor tonality of the Orient.

This polarity is nowhere more evident than in the music of the two marches – the “March of the Mogul Emperors” and “The Crown of India March”. The “March of the Mogul Emperors” appears in the First Tableau, as Delhi summons the ancient Emperors to testify to her greatness. The stage directions indicate the spectacle of the procession as the Emperors enter. To match this striking scene, Elgar created an *animato*, with relentless drive and changing rhythm. Perhaps he was playing a musical joke on the Emperors with the use of this tempo, to which it is impossible to march properly so that it forces an uneven, clumsy stride. One might suggest even that Elgar composed the march to force the Mogul Emperors to demonstrate their inferiority in ‘race’, education and manners. Thus, their lack of choreutic skills were put on show to suggest their political incompetence as compared to the British imperial political and cultural values.

Musicologist Corissa Gould asserts that the march is a ‘musical expression of the common Orientalist tropes’ (Gould 2007, 15) so much so that Elgar, to stress the opposition, devised and composed a noble, sombre orderly march for the ‘civilised West’ to show British supremacy through the music. The prevalent Orientalist trope of the time proposed by the composer was one of the central justifications in reaffirming the rights of Western domination. With this trope, the unchanging ancient old barbaric, unmannered and unpolished East is denied any modernity or progress. It is seen as without grace or artistic development throughout the millennia; it follows that without the West's intervention it would have remained a land uncivilised without grace or power.<sup>6</sup> Thus Rudyard Kipling, an almost exact contemporary of Elgar and an imperialist poetic voice, wrote that if the British were to leave India, the country would dissolve into “one big cockpit of conflicting princelets” within six months.<sup>7</sup> It was this perceived aspect of the, uncivilised, uncouth nature of the Indian people that Elgar aimed to portray in his incidental music – the Indian Moguls despite their best attempts to march cannot quite manage the dignified imperial stride in respect of the civilised British King-Emperor.

The music critic Nalini Ghuman expresses this very view in her assessment of the Elgar's masque stating that:

Said's theoretical framework. Our aim is to use Said's insights and also integrate his views with a more political discourse when possible.

6 See Hughes 1989, 41-68; Kennedy 1990, 107-17 and Moore 1985, 242; Anderson 2002, 311.

7 Quoted in Kennedy 1987, 252. See also Percy 1955, 355.

The masque is a fascinating work of imperialism: historically illuminating and often musically rich, it is nevertheless a profoundly embarrassing piece – a significant contribution to the orientalized India of the English imagination. We might hear it, in some ways, as the realization of British imperialism’s cumulative process: the control and subjugation of India combined with a sustained fascination for all of its intricacies.<sup>8</sup>

In the “March of the Mogul Emperors”, the music becomes incessant in rhythm and takes on a rather ferocious quality that propels the movement forwards. The incessant rhythms suggest the volatility of the Indians, with the syncopated motive of the first theme becoming an unrelenting *ostinato* behind the more lyrical second theme and towards the end of the movement, a new *ostinato* figure begins which was the leading-note but avoids resolution and this gives the orchestral texture a disquieting and insistent dissonance, as minor chords close the movement.

Corissa Gould affirms that:

Elgar apparently sympathetic with the imperialist ideology inherent in the libretto is demonstrated by more than his written comments on the work; he also endorses it on the musical level. In his score, he renders the binary opposition of East and West through juxtaposition of a quasi-Oriental style of writing to represent India with ceremonial pomp to represent St. George and the King. (Gould 2007, 154)

“The Crown of India March”, composed for the imperial procession of functionaries, soldiers, courtiers, and of course the Emperor and Empress, appears to be in stark contrast to the preceding dissonant march. It contains the stately pomp one might expect Elgar to produce in response to such a stately imperial parade also remembering that the composer had already written an ‘Imperial march’ and a ‘Coronation Ode’. The sliding chromaticism of the previous march disappears and the music is dominated by the major mode throughout. The difference in tonality makes a strong contrast to the minor mode of the ‘oriental’ march (Gould 2007, 156). It seems to me both Ghuman and Gould fail to recognise that Elgar’s “The Crown of India March” is deeply influenced by the chromaticism and tonality of Rimsky-Korsakov’s “The Song of India” (1861), which Rimsky-Korsakov later developed in a complete opera entitled *Sadko* (1891). Elgar, in his composition, derives the Oriental sound-scape and stately pomp directly from the great Russian composer and uses it to set the mode and tone for the celebration of the British Empire.

8 Ghuman 2007, 249-85 (278). Ghuman’s and Gould’s are the only two scholarly contributions devoted to Elgar’s masque existing in the literature on the composer.



Once this opposition is asserted, Elgar proceeds with it to confirm the imperialist attitudes which have been exemplified by the contrasting marches: “The Crown of India March”, which had been diatonic for British officials against “The March of Mogul Emperors”, an apparent parody of Indian culture with a 3/2 – a time inappropriate for a march, crude orchestration and sudden modulations and at the end a trumpet *ostinato* with a shocking dissonance. The military suggestions in the text are also overtly expressed in Elgar’s music: the fanfare theme of the opening is taken up during the song and will serve also as the start of “The Crown of India March”. One must stress that, whereas the song accompaniment contains these military suggestions, Elgar seems not very attentive to the word setting. Elgar also includes here a rendition of the chorus of the song “The Rule of England”, offered as an interlude, thus emphasising repeatedly the ‘honour and righteousness’ of English rule in overt terms. Moreover, it is important to declare here that this repetition does not feature in the libretto at this point and it was, one supposes, Elgar’s own idea to add it as an explicit reaffirmation of the sentiments he wished to portray in the music and convey to the audience of the Coliseum in London. One must underline, in addition, that the binary opposition of musical styles is incessantly maintained throughout Elgar’s music for the masque: India’s music is constantly in the minor mode, Britain’s is always in the major; India’s is largely chromatic in contrast to Britain’s diatonicism; India’s rhythmic volatility contrasts with the regular rhythms of the West. Having established this musical style and mode, Elgar is able to use these musical signifiers to reiterate the ideologies inherent in the libretto of Hamilton, even though the composer does not pay much attention to the lyrics.

The music for the final scene of the composition reaffirms Britain dominant role in its rendition of a eulogy for imperial power: the theme is in the minor tonality, always directly associated with India throughout the masque. The India theme in the minor chord is placed against the theme of “The Crown of India March” in the relative major and so yet again, musically Britain overpowers the East and India is made to submit to her British rulers –once again faithful to the sentiment of the libretto. The general effect that Elgar wants to obtain with the marches is to represent aspiration and hope brought to India by British rule – in fact, this incidental music is a testimony to Elgarian imperialism and it expresses a political ideology he fully supported. *The Crown of India* marches are magnificent display pieces, apt for their time, and still of some worth, if they can be listened to without nostalgia for an imperial past remembering that Elgar’s march style can cause embarrassment if read and understood from our contemporary post-colonial critical theories.<sup>9</sup>

9 For further discussions on Elgar’s marches, see McVeagh in Riley 2009.

On this topic, musicologist Jeffrey Richards states that:

Elgar's vision of Empire [...] is a vision of justice, peace, freedom, and equality, of the pax Britannica and of the fulfillment by Britain of its trusteeship mission, to see the countries in its charge brought safely and in due course to independence – a far from ignoble dream. (2002, 51)

The critic Lawrence James maintains that, through the tonal qualities mirroring the power balance inherent in the masque's text, Elgar provides a musical depiction of the imperial doctrine of the time, portraying the "foibles of Eastern people, their iniquities, their mindless autocracies, and their general inadequacy in the face of an easy Western superiority" (MacKenzie 1984, 54). The available evidence leaves no doubt as to Elgar's imperial ideals and beliefs; the discomfort surrounding this work, with imperialist content, is entirely the result of later postcolonial generations attempting to relieve the guilt of what was revealed to be a morally questionable regime, motivated primarily by greed. The scholars do not stress enough that the production and reception of imperial works was not subject to the sense of immorality felt by our contemporary world. Exposed to a huge propagandist effort in the years between the Boer War and the First World War, an 'imperial consciousness' was manufactured in the minds of the Edwardian public, extolling the virtues of Empire, both for coloniser and colonised, creating a sense of righteousness and pride that few thought to question (James 2001, 327). It was not until after the First World War that this vision began to disintegrate.

By recapturing the innocent view of imperialism held by the majority of his contemporaries, a reading of Elgar's *The Crown of India* as a social text of the early twentieth century reveals and confirms many aspects of the mechanisms of British imperialist culture at that time. Elgar's work becomes a constituent of the ideological web which "supported and perhaps even impelled" imperialism, and includes the "notions that certain territories and people require and beseech domination, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with domination" (Said 1998, 8). On a more local level, *The Crown of India* also opens a window on Elgar's ideology allowing one to see behind the constructed image of the composer and providing a starting point for a more honest and historically accurate reassessment of Elgar's life, devoid of the effects of the embarrassment and discomfort provoked by England's imperialist past.

It must be stressed that Elgar's Orientalism was an imaginative recreation of the idea of the Orient that was commonplace in Great Britain and in Europe at this time. The general public was acquainted with harmonies and rhythms and its typical music to represent the East. In contrast to the British Imperial music style and mode, oriental music was interpreted entirely within a Western musical context with a dialectical mode meant

to underline the differences between the two contrasting and opposing worlds, values and 'races' both in the East and in the West. As such, Elgar echoes the libretto's story of British dominance, observing India from a British viewpoint. In fact, the perspective given is only British and India is not allowed to speak for herself. For all its chromaticism and *ostinati* (by then old musical signifiers of Western musical depictions of the exotic), the "March of the Mogul Emperors" is essentially a march in the form of Western art music, albeit, as we noticed, with an unusual tempo. The obsolete tropes used by Elgar's oriental signifiers were not lost on contemporary commentators, some critics observing that with the use of such tropes, his music lost part of its characteristic individuality.

However, the majority of audiences at the Coliseum would have been familiar with the conventions of Orientalism in music and their significance. The exotic was a highly popular subject in music-hall, theatre, songs, and salon pieces; musical comedies reinforcing standard Indian stereotypes were commonplace in the theatre tradition at the end of the nineteenth century. By employing standardised techniques, music language and tropes, Elgar was communicating with the audience in terms that would have both appealed to them and been understood as representing the East. In addition, he was adhering to the propaganda made also by the press that the music was deliberately intended to be popular and for the secular stage (Head 2000, 164). It seems for Elgar, then, Orientalism was simply a tool for communication and representation of commonly shared ideological values through music tropes that had become clichés. He felt no need to experiment further with the sense of 'otherness' and never appears to have considered that it might be used to further his own musical language or convey India in its own terms. Instead, he inserts in his musical suite the oriental tropes already accepted and fashionable and the resulting music is ultimately, music of the Raj - of the Englishman abroad - composed in a setting no more exotic, as Lawrence James wrote in 1997, than Elgar's Hampstead home (James 1997, 4; see also Gardiner, Crump 1986, 389). In the imperial counterpoint between centre and periphery, the critic John MacKenzie wrote in 1995 that Elgar's work provided overwhelmingly dominant melodies (MacKenzie 1984, 54; see also Said 1998, xv).

The relationship between Imperialism, Orientalism and the East-West power balance has become familiar also to contemporary music critics from the writings of Edward Said. In his book *Culture and Imperialism* (1994), Said emphasises that all Western discourse on the Orient, including art and music, is dominated by the East-West power display and balance - most notably he devoted a section to Verdi's *Aida*, set in Egypt, and there Said shows how the power of Western dominance is constructed, enacted and performed from a Western perspective. It is a pity that Said does not investigate other cultural musical phenomena.

To Said, *Orientalism*, defined as Western discourse on ‘the Orient’, is a regime of power inextricably linked to Imperialism and he seeks to demonstrate the centrality of Western culture in the rationalisation, justification and transmission of imperialist values, stating that “culture is a sort of theatre where various political and ideological causes engage each other” (MacKenzie 1995, xiii-xix).

In doing so, Said warns us to remain critical of the Imperialist discourses developed by the West to defend its political and cultural supremacy. Even though, in contrast to Said’s position, John MacKenzie suggests that Elgar’s *Orientalism* can have functions other than the political one; the critic states, for instance, that composers at the beginning of the twentieth century began to experiment with oriental ideas as a way of extending their musical language, a venture distinct from imperialist ideas (Head 2000, 25). In the case of music, it has been suggested by Head that “sometimes, a musicologist works at a level of musical detail that can make Said’s thesis of a binary opposition of Self and Other seem too broad to account for what matters most: the music itself” (25).

Though of course accepting the opinion of Head, we cannot but agree with Said’s critical insights offered on Verdi for our current analysis of *The Crown of India*, and, making Said’s affirmations our own, we might say that all regimes depicted in music should be approached with reference to ‘the imperial process of which they are manifestly an unconcealed a part’ (Said 1998, xiv). In this critical perspective, the *Imperial Masque* is not only influenced by the East-West power relationships of imperialist regimes’ ideologies, it is constructed to display the dominant power of the British-rule ideology and render it manifest as an inherent civilising factor as understood by British subjects at home and abroad – an attitude we may derive from the ‘Courtly Music Panegyric’, a form inherited directly from the Stuart period through the Jonsonian Masque.

### 3 Representations of the Raj on the London Coliseum Stage

The performances of Elgar’s Masque at the London Coliseum helped ‘feed’ the ideological and political image of this imperial space to the average British home-public – with the masque’s topographical and cartographical re-reinvention of the exotic places of the colony of India then represented as simultaneously real and ‘unreal’ territory on the stage. The constitution of two contradictory spaces, the real and the mythical, makes such spaces at once both a perfect microcosmic analogy of the libretto’s wider universe and in the theatre offers privileged locations where such spatial disjunctions can occur. In fact, *The Crown of India*’s opening scene also presents an encounter on stage with foreign female outsiders coming from a different nation and continent and, hence, from a different culture and

'race', thus momentarily on the threshold of two apparently incompatible worlds and spaces. In its explicit juxtaposition of binary oppositions of cultures, 'races' and geographical territories and boundaries, *The Crown of India* embodies and enacts a 'landscape' of the British Nation and Empire through a representation of different sites. This visionary welcoming encounter with outsiders in *The Crown of India* also reflects the political notion of the imperial dominance of the British Isles over the foreigner travellers coming from the colonial East. And yet again, the broader implication, displayed throughout the masque's performance, is that of the British control over the outer distant colonial world.

Moreover, the meeting on-stage predicts the inclusion of the female personifications of the Indian Cities-Daughters of the Empire and of Mother Ind before the audience at the London Coliseum Theatre. Through the act of summoning and naming the Indian Cities, Mother Ind lists their origins, their histories, individual worth and purpose, locating them spatially and geographically at the core of the Empire on the stage of the London Theatre. This first meeting in the Coliseum represents an extended moment in which both performers and onlookers dwell, visually and physically, on the threshold of assimilation and inclusion on either side of the proscenium, creating a structurally hierarchical, ideological coherence for both the British audience and the represented sub-continental colony as a microcosm of the Empire.

The audience thus witness the incorporation and assimilation of the outsiders on-stage. This is the moment in which the Empire's cohesion expands to incorporate the new members. But before full assimilation can take place, 'Britannia' must experience itself as an ethnic hybrid, a Nation and an Empire made coherent by its ability to expand and incorporate at the same time.

By recalling India's imperial forbears, Mother Ind expands the encounter happening across the proscenium, allowing both the onlookers and the Indian Cities impersonated by the singers to identify themselves as active agents of the Empire, all playing different roles in a process of a dramatized meeting for assimilation. In fact, the description rendered by Mother Ind offers a fitting analogy and a perfect metaphorical symmetry between the British and Indian nations and their histories, with their intertwining ancient histories of national and imperial rule, thus creating a mythical and historical framework for British imperial rule. All the while, each group is a focal point for the other and the masque invites them to dwell on their respective forms of sameness and difference. Thus, the masque magnifies their spatial and social coherence by extending their coming-together in the dramatic action. The stage offers the onlookers a romantic vision of the world outside the British Nation and frames the foreign travellers who are about to enter the threshold of two spaces, calling attention to their outsider position and status, while reaffirming the

Empire's own integrity. The masque stresses the ability of the British Raj to assimilate the East into the West in a grandiose epic narration in which the histories of the nations, of the colonised and the coloniser, as well as that of the Empire, are strictly intertwined. In this perspective, *The Crown of India* asserts the Coliseum Theatre as a geopolitical and topographical centre of the British Raj, also in the felt need for a welcoming ceremony to accept outsiders into the 'West', a kingdom where the 'East' must be rightfully welcomed, contained and dominated by negotiating the incorporation of its out-sidedness.

Such transactions enabled the masque to construct the identity of the two parties involved and to merge them, by affirming the coherence of the group through performance. These spatial interactions mark these spaces as different from the spaces surrounding them. In the most literal sense, these spaces exist as part of the Empire's 'landscaped' sites at the Coliseum. These 'other spaces' coexist and are asserted by the innumerable thresholds entered and exited by the characters-singers on stage in achieving coherence and unity inside the hall. This unity is only created by reconfiguring the Coliseum as an 'other space' in which its occupants can perceive and see themselves as a self-reflexive commentary on the British Raj. Thus the masque staged implies an imperial coherence between singers-performers and public looking at themselves across the proscenium as if they were both reflected in a looking-glass.

The mirroring acts as symbol for the seemingly contradictory facets of the dramatic action by coalescing different spaces and we find combined the opposing nations and 'races' present in the hall during the masque's performance. Thus, the masque enacts the participants' inclusion within British society at the very centre of the Empire, while simultaneously mirroring the imperialist ideology embodied by the audience in the Coliseum Theatre through the spectators' visual access to the scene's illusions performed on stage. These overlapping and interpenetrating spatial dynamics were also active within the Coliseum's physical space. In a way, the hall functioned as a containing, private-event space in which participants were a uniform collective group of British loyal subjects -united by virtue of their inclusion in the event and reminded in several visual and spatial ways of their coherence. This process not only symbolises but also constitutes an exterior perspective from which two different contrasting realities are made to enact and coexist.

There are also geographical references in the libretto, along with detailed topographical indications and descriptions linked to the mapped colonised Indian nation, reminding the audience of British colonial territories. Remembering that all maps are politically-charged representations of space, this textual material emphasises the unreality of the space they enclose - since the act of mapping brings together a unified, all-embracing vision of different spaces, with their political, colonial, national and impe-

rial coefficients. This unification happens in the Coliseum where with the physical inclusion on stage of the Indian Cities, 'Britannia' creates a new cartographic 'reality' that allows one to conceive the Coliseum as comprising the multitude of incompatible worlds described and enacted by the masque. The audience perceives the hall as a protected realm of display of power in a fictive geographical 'other' space of 'Britannia'. Inside the Coliseum, the theatre is capable of coalescing these different and incompatible 'other spaces', and onlookers are encouraged to conceive of that space as a framework for their own supposed coherence.

Thus, the *Crown of India* as a whole constitutes an imperial world, with its two contradictory Nations-Empires now merged into the British Raj ostensibly occupying exactly the same space. The British Empire, rather than being exclusively located in the libretto's impossible cosmology is a space defined as being both in particular exact places that make up the landscape described in the epic fictional world of the libretto and in the 'landscaped' performing space of the London Coliseum stage and Theatre at the same time. It is a spatial divide, with its geometrical and topographical anomaly, which represents the intrusion of a different world into the onlookers' sense of reality, leading to a different mode of perception and consciousness of this 'other space'. The space enacted on the stage is flawed by numerous inconsistencies and impossibilities because the topographical referents are in a quite different place and are always wandering into an 'other space' continually suggested in the repeated performance when they are slid into another dimension - at a geographical, historical and political level. Throughout the narrative the characters personifying places metamorphose into the real British place and space of the Coliseum, where they become visually assimilated to the British Nation and Empire. The performance on the stage functions as a reflection of the libretto's central theme. The masque itself works as a mirror characterised by projecting the material worlds existing apart from each other into a unified and unifying geopolitical transcendent prototype of the British Empire. The ordered world of 'Britannia', as Nations-Empires merged into the British Raj, is contained in the Coliseum as cartographic representation, a map conflating multiple nations ostensibly occupying the exact same space and creating also a geographical integrity in the 'landscaped' hall. The theatre-stage, itself imaginatively conceived as a map of the Empire, becomes a site where different 'races' and cultures are merged in incommensurable and impossible spaces, thus reinforcing a political unifying vision of 'Britannia'.

By suggesting a strange configuration of space in the mapped colony, the personifications of India can be in two places at once. The illusory quality of the map reflects the mingled realities of the Colony and the Empire. The map functions as a space where the imperialist ideology and policies are symbolically enacted and thus the action in the masque assumes mean-

ings as reference to realities outside its own limits. Through the map, the masque, by reasserting colonial dominance on the exotic territory of the Indian subcontinent, acquires a full political meaning as a social enactment of power ordering social and political coherence. The staging of this cartographical vision renders the London Coliseum a precise site of courtly imperial inclusion and cohesion and it inserts the British Raj into this cohesion. Thus the London Coliseum Theatre becomes the microcosm of the British Empire.

## Bibliography

- Adams, Byron (ed.) (2007). *Edward Elgar and His World (The Bard Music Festival)*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Anderson, Robert (2002). *Elgar and Chivalry*. Rickmansworth: Elgar Society Edition.
- Barker, Felix (1957). *'The House that Stoll Built': The Story of the Coliseum Theatre*. London: Allen.
- Butler, Martin (1994). "Ben Jonson and the Limits of Courtly Panegyric". Sharpe, Kevin; Lake, Peter (eds), *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England*. Basingstoke: MacMillan, 91-115.
- Clayton, Martin; Zon, Bennett (eds) (2007). *Music and Orientalism in the British Empire*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing.
- Colls, Robert; Dodd, Philip (eds) (1986). *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1920*. London: Routledge.
- Cowgill, Rachel; Rushton, Julian (2006). *Europe, Empire, and Spectacle in Nineteenth-Century British Music*. London: Routledge.
- Gardiner, John; Crump, Jeremy (1986). "The Identity of English Music: The Reception of Elgar 1898-1935". Colls, Robert; Dodd, Philip (eds), *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1920*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 164-90.
- Ghuman, Nalini (2007). "Elgar and the British Raj: Can the Mughals March?". Adams, Byron (ed.), *Edward Elgar and His World (The Bard Music Festival)*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 249-85.
- Gould, Corissa (2007). "An Inoffensive Thing: Edward Elgar, The Crown of India and Empire". Clayton, Zon 2007, 146-60.
- "Grove Music Online". *Oxford Music Online*. URL <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/> (2018-12-05).
- Hamilton, Henry (1912). *The Crown of India: an Imperial Masque*. London: Enoch.
- Hamilton, Sharon (1998). "Musicology as Propaganda in Victorian Theory and Practice". *Mosaic: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Study of Literature*, 31, 35-56.



- Head, Matthew (2000). *Orientalism, Masquerade and Mozart's Turkish Music*. London: Routledge.
- Hughes, Meirion (1989). "The Duc D'Elgar: Making a Composer Gentleman". Norris, Christopher (ed.), *Music and the Politics of Culture*. London: St. Martin Press, 41-68.
- Kennedy, Michael (1990). "Elgar the Edwardian". Monk, Raymond (ed.), *Elgar Studies*. Aldershot: Scholar Press, 107-17.
- Kennedy, Michael (1987). *Portrait of Elgar*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lawrence, James (1997). *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India*. London: Routledge.
- Lawrence, James [1994] (2001). *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire*. London: Routledge.
- Lycett, Andrew (2000). *Rudyard Kipling*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
- MacKenzie, J.M. (1984). *Propaganda and Empire: the Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- MacKenzie, John M. (1995). *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- MacQueen-Pope, W.J. (1945). *Theatre Royal, Drury Lane*. London: W.H. Allen.
- Monk, Raymond (ed.) (1990). *Elgar Studies*. Aldershot: Scholar Press.
- Moore, J.N. (1985). *Edward Elgar: Letters of a Lifetime*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Norris, Christopher (ed.) (1989). *Music and the Politics of Culture*. London: St. Martin Press.
- Orgel, Stephen (1965). *The Jonsonian Masque*. Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press.
- Orgel, Stephen; Strong, Roy (1973). *Inigo Jones: the Theatre of the Stuart Court*, 2 vols. Berkeley: Berkeley University Press.
- Pellegrino, Joe (2010). "Mughals, Music, and "The Crown of India" Masque: Reassessing Elgar and the Raj". *South Asian Review*, 31(1), 13-36.
- Young, Percy M. (1955). *Elgar, O.M.: a Study of a Musician*. London: Collins.
- Richards, Jeffrey (2002). *Imperialism and Music: Britain 1876-1953*. Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press.
- Riley, Matthew (2009). *Edward Elgar and the Nostalgic Imagination*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Sadie, Stanley; Tyrrel, John (eds) (2000). *The New Grove Music and Musicians Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Said, Edward (1998). *Culture and Imperialism*. London: Vintage.
- Sharpe, Kevin; Lake, Peter (eds) (1994). *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England*. Basingstoke: MacMillan.

---

Williams, Raymond (1973). *The Country and the City*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Walls, Peter (1996). *Music in the English Courtly Masque 1604-1640*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.