Mass Vexilla Regis
for Five-Part Choir
1912

Fritz Hart
1874 – 1949

Edited by
Richard Divall

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Introduction

Fritz Hart was part of the extraordinary diaspora of British composers who, attracted to the Dominions and colonies of the then British Empire, disseminated the British musical tradition and the fashionable Celtic revival to many parts of the world. Hart’s contribution to music in Australia, and later Hawaii, is remarkable, a distinguished composer, teacher and mentor as well as a conductor and writer. With the exception of Charles Edward Horsley, he was the finest orchestrator to work in Australia before 1930, and his musical influence here lasted for a considerable time, especially through his students, including Margaret Sutherland and Peggy Glanville-Hicks. Both as teacher and mentor, he was especially encouraging to female composers.

Born in Brockley, Kent in 1874, Fritz Hart was a chorister at Westminster Abbey and studied at the Royal College of Music, where he formed lifelong friendships with Gustav Holst, Ralph Vaughan Williams and Granville Bantock. He migrated to Australia in 1909 and for many years was Director of the Albert Street Conservatorium of Music in Melbourne, in succession to G.W.L. Marshall-Hall. He was also a joint founder, with Alfred Hill, of the Australian Opera League. In 1937 he relocated to Honolulu, where he conducted the Honolulu Symphony Orchestra. After his death in Hawaii in 1949, all of his scores were returned to Melbourne, where they are held in the Latrobe Library of the State Library of Victoria.

Hart’s output included twenty-two operas, two large-scale symphonies, two string quartets, several concertos and a Symphonic Rhapsody for violin and orchestra, three sonatas for violin and piano, and choral, organ, and other keyboard music. He is remarkable for his 500-odd songs set to diverse texts, including poems of the Celtic revival and those of many Australian poets. These songs have not been forgotten: Stephen Banfield, for example, gives them serious consideration in his 1985 study of twentieth-century British song. Details of Hart’s life and career, and a full catalogue of his works are found in Peter Tregear’s excellent “Fritz Bennicke Hart—An Introduction to his Life and Music”, M.Mus. Thesis, University of Melbourne, 1993.

The Mass Vexilla Regis is scored for one soprano, two tenors and two basses, and was composed throughout May 1912 in Adelaide and Brisbane whilst Hart was on a conducting tour around Australia. The work is dedicated to the then Anglican Bishop of Western Australia, Charles Owen Riley. Born in Birmingham in 1854, Riley was Bishop from 1894, and was created the first Archbishop in 1914, a position he held until 1929. This Mass is one of two major sacred works composed by Hart, the other being his Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis of 1931, a work that will form part of this series. The composer’s manuscript of the Mass Vexilla Regis is held in the State Library of Victoria, Latrobe Library, LaTL 9528/1 + 2.

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Richard Divall
November 2013.
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Gloria in excelsis
Pater omnipotens.

Domine Deus, Rex cael'estis.

Pater omnipotens.

Domine Deus, Rex cael'estis.
S. - -

tus est,

T. I - -

tus est,

et resurrexit

T. II - -

tus est,

et resurrexit

B. I - -

tus est,

et resurrexit

B. II - -

tus est,

et resurrexit

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S. - -

tertiadie secundum Scripturas, et ascendit in

T. I - -

tertiadie secundum Scripturas, et ascendit in

T. II - -

tertiadie secundum Scripturas, et ascendit in

B. I - -

tertiadie secundum Scripturas, et ascendit in

B. II - -

tertiadie secundum Scripturas, et ascendit in

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S. - -

caelum, sedet ad dexteram Patris. Et iterumventus est cum

T. I - -

caelum, sedet ad dexteram Patris. Et iterumventus est cum

T. II - -

caelum, sedet ad dexteram Patris. Et iterumventus est cum

B. I - -

caelum, sedet ad dexteram Patris. Et iterumventus est cum

B. II - -

caelum, sedet ad dexteram Patris. Et iterumventus est cum
Sanctus

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus.

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus.

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus.
Agnus Dei

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