



Composer Portfolios

SMYTH



Name	Ethel Smyth
Nationality	British
Born-Died	1858-1944
Quote	<p><i>'I feel I must fight for [my music], because I want women to turn their minds to big and difficult jobs; not just to go on hugging the shore, afraid to put out to sea.'</i></p> <p><i>'If you take passionate interest in a subject, it is hard not to believe yourself specially equipped for it.'</i></p>



Interesting Stories

The Suffragette

Ethel Smyth's life coincided with a time of great political change and Ethel did all she could to be a part of it. She became a prominent Suffragette and in 1911 wrote 'The March of the Women', dedicated to Emmeline Pankhurst. It became the official anthem of the Women's Social and Political Union and suffragettes around the world took up Ethel's rallying cry. The words are by Cicely Hamilton.

It opens with the forthright cry:

*Shout, shout, up with your song!
Cry with the wind, for the dawn is breaking;
March, march, swing you along,
Wide blows our banner, and hope is waking*

Like many suffragettes, Ethel was herself imprisoned- for throwing a rock through a window of the Houses of Parliament. More precisely, her rock went through the window of the office of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lewis Harcourt, whose views on women, Ethel and the suffragettes... took some issue with.

Thomas Beecham visited the composer in Holloway Prison in 1912 and found her conducting her fellow inmates with a toothbrush.

"I arrived in the main courtyard of the prison to find the noble company of martyrs marching round it and singing lustily their war-chant while the composer, beaming approbation from an overlooking upper window, beat time in almost Bacchic frenzy with a toothbrush".

Facts:

- Ethel Smyth was born in Kent on 22 April 1858
- Ethel studied composition at the Leipzig Conservatory
- Smyth was the first woman composer to have presented an opera at The Met in 1903.
- Smyth became a leading suffragette in the early 1910s
- Smyth served a jail sentence for her suffrage activity
- Smyth was a dog lover.
- In 1922, in recognition of her work as a composer and write, Smyth was made a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire, becoming the first female composer to be awarded a Damehood.
- Smyth died in Woking in 1944, age 86.

Smyth's Music

Now we know more about the woman, why not listen to some of her music!

- The Wreckers
- Concerto for Violin, Horn and Orchestra
- Mass in D
- Der Wald
- The March of the Women
- Serenade in D
- 3 Moods of the Sea
- String Quartet in E minor
- The Boatswain's Mate Overture
- Sonata for Piano and Cello
- Prelude and Fugue
- Fête galante
- Songs of Sunrise
- Overture to Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra
- Suite for Strings