

When asked to list renowned classical composers, Mozart or Beethoven may come to mind. Many people may not think to mention Edward Elgar. But there's an excellent chance thousands of people are very familiar with the most famous work by Elgar.

"Pomp and Circumstance" is undoubtedly Elgar's biggest claim to fame. It has become the standard to which many soon-to-be graduates proceed into their graduation ceremonies, both in high school and college. As such, it has become one of the most recognized concert marches.

The song—the trio section of the first march in a series written by Elgar—was not written with the intention of being a graduation processional. Elgar built up his reputation as a composer of works for great choral festivals throughout England.

In 1901, Elgar began composing five marches that would be named "Pomp and Circumstance Marches." He is perhaps best known for the first of the marches, which went on to be simply named, "Pomp and Circumstance," or "The Graduation March."

Since 1905, it has been used at virtually all high school and university graduations in America.

The first time "Pomp and Circumstance" was played in a graduation setting was when Elgar received an honorary Doctorate from Yale University in 1905. It was so well received that it was soon expected to be played during graduation ceremonies at many other prominent schools.

Many graduates have fond memories of hearing "Pomp and Circumstance" at their school commencement, even remembering the exact moment they received their degrees.

For those attending a graduation ceremony in the near future, expect to hear this powerful march.