

# THE ALTAR FIRE

## Part One - The Invasion

### Prelude

An orchestral introduction with wordless soloists and chorus sets the scene for the story - invasion, war and hopeless retaliation.

### The Argument

A narrator tells of the lives of the Celts in Gwalia ( Wales ).

The narrator also tells of the invading Romans and the ultimate sacrifice made by the Celts when faced by the conquering Roman army.

### The Ritual.

Soloist and chorus become the Celts. Led by their Archdruid they pray to their gods to help them.

### Dance of the two heroes

The Archdruid calls for the two Celtic heroes to dance in celebration of hopeful victory in the war that is almost upon them.

### War Song

Following on from the dance of the two heroes the Celtic chorus voice their hatred for the invading Romans.

### Interlude

Orchestra alone.

There is a relaxation of tension and the quieter music sets the tone for the scene that follows.

### Morden and Calonvar

The soprano soloist describes the Celtic lovers Morden and Calonvar.

Morden is a craftsman who has sometimes traded with the Romans. The Celts see him as a traitor and condemn him and Calonvar to death. After a violent climax the music becomes quieter again and leads into the next section.

### The Roman Camp

Some Celtic maidens release the lovers. They go to the Roman camp where they plead with the Romans to have pity and to offer love instead of war. The Romans will not listen.

The music fades and part one ends quietly but ominously.

## Part Two - Attack

### Orchestral Introduction

Frantic, busy and aggressive music with a quieter middle section describing the unrest and difficult times ahead.

### Morden and Calonvar

A narration tells of the lovers, free in the forest. These are gentle words from Morden and Calonvar.

A series of choral dances follows.

The music darkens and leads to the next section.

### The Romans

The narrator describes the Romans longing for home.

They gaze at the same morning star as their loved ones so far away.

Very soon, however, they turn their thoughts to war and victory.

### The Advance

The Romans advance to meet the Celts in battle.

Meanwhile the Celts call to their gods for help.

### The Battle

The Romans are almost upon the Celts, whose screams and incantations drive them away for a while.

However, the Romans rally and prepare for the finish!

### The Fire

The Celts light fires on the altars to their gods. They throw themselves onto the fires in sacrifice.

At the point of triumph all the Romans find are the ashes and remains of their Celtic foes.

Among the dead are the bodies of Morden and Calanvor and the Celtic maidens.

The soprano soloist gently talks of mercy and eventual reconciliation.

## Finale

The full chorus sing of Gwalia (Wales) rising like a phoenix from the ashes.

This begins gently and ends with great power.

‘Rise now phoenix for you shall beckon

Life anew from Gwalia’s might.

Fire of death give life to our children,

Altar of Fire, Altar of Light.’