

## Transcript of Granville Bantock Audio Clip

In August of 1940 the committee of the Actors' Orphanage, which included Noel Coward of course as president, decided to – to evacuate the orphans from Chertsey to America, Hollywood, and leading American and British actors and actresses had agreed to sponsor the children. So arrangements were made for us to travel across to – to America. Anyway, interestingly and luckily for us the ship that we were due to sail on was the City of Benares from Liverpool and at the very, very last moment, we were even on the coaches, we were called off and taken off and it was decided that we would have to wait for another available ship. Then I think it was on the 20 – on the 15<sup>th</sup> of September which was the last day of the Battle of Britain, daylight bombing that is, the daylight raids, when we finally left Silverlands and processed to Euston station to catch a train to go to Scotland, to Gretna to board a liner named the Emperor of Australia.

I remember very clearly the coach ride from Chertsey up to Euston station, which where the – the aero combat and the bombs coming down and I remember particularly we were mustered and we got on a train which pulled out of – out of the station and stopped and we children just let the blinds up cos all the blinds were pulled down in the carriage windows but we let them up so we could see the aerial combat going on and indeed the train was rocking as the bombs were falling were over and we saw our chances of getting to Scotland were not particularly good but anyway we did. We duly arrived up in Scotland and very, very late at night and boarded the liner and collapsed into a – into bed and that really was the – the end of my experiences and the children of the Actors' Orphanage of the early stages of the war because we – whilst onboard we heard that the liner City of Benares had been torpedoed and sunk with the loss of a lot of children's lives. Hundreds of children I think as well as other passengers that drowned. As a result of that Churchill, the Prime Minister, decided that the evacuation of children overseas must be stopped. But as we were onboard and we were a private evacuation, being paid for by the theatrical profession, that we should sail and we duly sailed and had a un – uneventful trip across the Atlantic arriving in – in Nova Scotia, Halifax, Nova Scotia, on October the 4<sup>th</sup> 1940. We got on the train and went off to Montreal, which was quite a long trip. I do remember that very clearly, the – the wonderful colours of the trees in the autumn foliage.

Anyway, at Montreal we were mustered into a hostel and the secretary of the Actors' Orphanage, who were travelling with us, the very first morning informed us that we were not going off to Hollywood to live with the film stars. We were going to go down to New York into an institution, into a home for children, and that was a big disappointment cos we'd all been looking forward to the long train ride across America to Hollywood but, anyway, that wasn't to be.