

Abstracts

Benedict Taylor: In Search of an Elgarian Aesthetic

Ascribing particular aesthetic viewpoints to Elgar is not necessarily an easy undertaking. The composer himself seems to have been a complex, even enigmatic character, and to compound the issue the ways in which successive generations have viewed him add a further level of complexity. The present essay treats a number of key themes in Elgar's music and its reception – the notion of there being two Elgars, the public and private figures; his own sense of being an outsider; his relation to nature and the English landscape; nostalgia, childhood and dreams; his views on absolute music and relationship to modernity.

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Julian Rushton: Elgar and Religion. A Catholic Composer in Protestant England

Elgar's father played for a Catholic congregation, and his mother converted to Roman Catholicism; thus the composer was brought up as a Catholic at a time when the British establishment was still strongly Protestant. His desire for recognition as a composer, and his social aspirations, were thus in conflict with his religious upbringing. The young Elgar nevertheless received some of his musical education at the Anglican Cathedral in Worcester, both from the choral liturgy and the Three Choirs Festivals and works aimed at liturgies, including great State occasions such as coronations, were necessarily performed in an Anglican context. His major choral works, even those on religious subjects, were composed for secular venues (town halls). The overtly Catholic qualities of *The Dream of Gerontius* caused difficulties when it was proposed to perform it in Worcester Cathedral, and his second and third oratorios for the Birmingham Festival (*The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*) suggest his concern not to offend Protestant sensitivities. Elgar's attitude to religion was never dogmatic, and in moods of depression he could write things that were anti-religious, or contemplate suicide. His faith seems to have progressively weakened and in his last years it is doubtful whether he retained any belief in god or the after-life.

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Meinhard Saremba: »A tune that will knock 'em flat!«. Edward Elgar, the Nation and the Empire

The ethos of the 19th century was formative for Elgar's attitudes and choice of works. The idealistic visions of people such as Prince Albert and the writings of Thomas Babington Macaulay, Matthew Arnold, John Ruskin and others con-

tributed to this era's intellectual background, creating a complex mixture of cultural influences on Elgar's own idealism. The composer held affirmative views towards the country and society in which he grew up. His works for queen, kings and the nation are part of a long-standing European tradition of ceremonial works. Although accepting the values of the classes to which he gained access through his marriage, there are hints in his letters and his music that he was able to stand aside and maintain a distance towards banal jingoistic and imperialistic utterances. Elgar's optimistic approach received a severe blow with the outbreak of World War I.

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Jürgen Schaarwächter: »But we, with our dreaming and singing«. Elgar's Vocal Music

It would be wrong to reduce Elgar's creative output either to his oratorios or his orchestral music, though several of his vocal compositions are of a somewhat occasional nature. Fully aware of the traditions surrounding him, he pragmatically served purposes of Empire and public taste, steadily fostering his individual style which may not yet be fully developed in several of the songs or the partsongs, nor some of the early cantatas. He transcends the mere occasion in his *Coronation Ode* and the late composition *The Spirit of England* and presents a consummation of his art in *The Music Makers*, a true confessional.

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Michael Gassmann: Leap in Time. Elgar's Compositional Technique and the Simultaneity of the Nonsimultaneous

Edward Elgar's creative output has been frequently discussed in terms of »Englishness« and »progressiveness«. This essay tries to avoid these terms by examining different factors which made Elgar »original« (in the sense in which Haydn applied this word to himself). Such determining factors are Elgar's old-fashioned, 18th century style way of learning – not from professors but from the music available to him – his early career as an arranger of all sorts of music for the daily life, and his being a witness of an age specifically aware of (musical) history. All that gave distinction to his unique personal style.

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J. P. E. Harper-Scott: Aspects of Modernity in Elgar's Music

The sense in which Elgar's music participates in musical modernism can be best understood by considering modernism itself as a dialectical process of engagement with a revolutionary Event. Using Alain Badiou's theory of subjective responses to truth Events, which he calls »faithful«, »reactive«, and »obscure«, this essay argues through an analysis of *In the South* that as an

example of »reactive modernism«, Elgar's music demonstrates the way that even »conservative« music unwittingly advances the musical revolution.