Part One: 'Musikalishe Moderne', 'Elgar's Relation to Modernism' and 'Edward Elgar: Modern or Modernist?'

Transcript

Date: Friday, 14 December 2007 - 11:00AM
Location: Barnard's Inn Hall
MUSIKALISCHE MODERNE: DAHLHAUS AND AFTER

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Music in general from the decades around 1900, and music in particular from around 1910 that did not keep up with the most technically innovative compositional developments, was at one time relatively unrespectable as an object of academic study. Over the last decade or two that has changed. Musicologists who try to re-think this kind of music often appeal to the ideas of Carl Dahlhaus, or to work that, in turn, appeals to him. Indeed, the 'early appeal to Dahlhaus', as I shall call it, is something of a generic marker of studies in this area. Most paths through this region seem to lead back to Dahlhaus somehow or other; hence my topic. In his writings, most notably in Chapter 5 of his book Die Musik des 19. Jahrhunderts (1980), volume 7 in the series Neues Handbuch der Musikwissenschaft, Dahlhaus argues that the period from 1889 up to around 1910 (or possibly 1920 - he is uncertain on that point) can be called 'musikalische Moderne', a phrase perhaps echoed in the very title of this conference. So I thought this would be a good moment to review Dahlhaus’s chapter and examine, albeit extremely briefly, its impact on scholarship in both German and English. My discussion of this material will not foreground Elgar, but I hope its relevance to Elgar will become clear by the end. I should explain at the outset that I haven't come to praise Dahlhaus; in fact in a sense I've come to bury him, in that I don't think Dahlhaus does what he's usually asked to do by musicologists in this field, and that the paths leading back to Dahlhaus are crooked.

Now, in German, the term 'Moderne' has a different semantic field from the English 'modernism'. Its primary meaning is closer to the English 'modernity', and in historical studies usually indicates the period since the late eighteenth century. But in German literary studies the term 'Moderne' also has a restrictive application; it can refer to progressive literature of the period between about 1885 and 1914. When it is used in this sense, scholars adopt the terminology of the period itself, which, around 1890, witnessed a series of programmatic and polemical essays calling for German literature to break from tradition and embrace the modern world ‘die Moderne’. The period label is imperfect, and the writings of the time are themselves somewhat inconsistent, but in practice the term has been used by literary historians to refer roughly to what we would call the ‘-isms’: at first to Realism and Naturalism, but later to artistic movements in opposition to them: Symbolism, Aestheticism, Jugendstil, Art Noveau. In other words, it's something of a catch-all term. Germanists sometimes distinguish three strands of 'die Moderne', located in Berlin, Munich and Vienna. The Viennese representatives include Schnitzler and Hoffmannsthal. These Continental movements are contemporaneous with English Aestheticism, although in the study of English literature, 'high' modernism (with a capital 'M') is traditionally dated a little later (about 1910).

In Chapter 5 of Die Musik des 19. Jahrhunderts, Dahlhaus assumes that his German musician readers will understand the term 'Moderne' as 'modernity', but not that they will know its specific restrictive usage in German literary historiography. He thus has to make a case for its use in this way and for its application to music. Because Dahlhaus wants to keep music history as autonomous as he can (I refer you to the articles on Dahlhaus by James Hepokoski and Ann Shreffler), he begins not from literary sources, but with an argument in terms of general historical epochs. Throughout his book Dahlhaus is interested in a chronological periodisation of nineteenth-century music history, but in this case, he says, the years around 1890 mark a watershed in the whole of western history, and in some sense divide the twentieth century from the postmedieval period. The justification for punning on 'Moderne', that is, for applying the term to a period in musical composition, lies in what Dahlhaus calls the 'crucial link', a link - allegedly in the minds of contemporaries - between the thought of Nietzsche and the music of Wagner. Despite Nietzsche's famous attack on Wagner (which Dahlhaus doesn't mention), music that deploys a broadly post-Wagnerian idiom can thus be denoted 'Moderne'. I think the idea is that by virtue of its style alone it becomes somehow Nietzschean and therefore implicitly engaged in some kind of quasi-philosophical critique of its age. Frustratingly, Dahlhaus doesn't enlarge on that idea. Nevertheless, it is only after establishing this Wagner-Nietzsche link that Dahlhaus turns to connections between music and the visual arts and literature. In this way, his eventual reference to the literary controversy around 1890 serves to buttress, but, significantly, not to provide the foundation for his argument about the history of musical composition. Music history thus remains autonomous, aside from the tantalising allusion to Nietzsche. (But of course, we know that he has borrowed this period label from literature. It didn't just fall out of the air.)

In the English translation of Dahlhaus's book, Nineteenth-Century Music(1989), J. Bradford Robinson translates 'Moderne' as 'modernism', which obscures the pun that Dahlhaus is making, a pun which admittedly is not readily available in English. It also
means that the first two pages of Chapter 6 (as the original Chapter 5 becomes in the English edition) are extremely opaque to the reader in English until one realises that Dahlhaus is trying to justify the pun, and to do so without appealing to literature in the first instance. Moreover, since in English we have traditionally used the terms 'modernism' and 'modern music' primarily for progressive music post-1910, and, especially, post-1920 - serialism, the Second Viennese School, Stravinsky and Neue Sachlichkeit - in Robinson's version it sounds as though Dahlhaus is backdating the concept he uses for all that to include an earlier progressive phase of music as well. In fact, Dahlhaus's term for the post-1910 wave of progressive music is 'Neue Musik', with a capital 'N' for the adjective. (So this is not just any old new music but the New Music. And of course this phrase carries certain Adornian resonances.) Whatever the precise date at which musikalische Moderne come to an end - a moot point for Dahlhaus, as I mentioned - it is replaced by Neue Musik as the next chronological period in music history. Indeed, for Dahlhaus this moment marks the division between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in music, as he makes clear in the very first sentence of the book. (It's unclear how this might square with his suggestion of a fundamental division in western history at 1890.) So, at some stage, composers have to decide whether to embrace Neue Musik or not. If not, they become classicists or epigonists, and historians can stop talking about them. This becomes palpable in the next volume in the Neues Handbuch der Musikwissenschaft, the one on twentieth-century music by Hermann Danuser, in which the symphonies of Elgar and Vaughan Williams are dismissed out of hand.

Now, since this 'Neue Musik' approximates rather closely the traditional English-language textbook meaning of 'modernism' or 'modern music', Robinson has still more problems of translation. He tries several phrases for 'Neue Musik', including 'contemporary music', 'modern music', 'twentieth-century modern music' and 'modern twentieth-century music', thus obscuring Dahlhaus's clear distinction between musikalische Moderne and Neue Musik, and, still more importantly, obscuring the basic stability of the category Neue Musik in Dahlhaus's thinking. Even using the English phrase 'early modernism' for musikalische Moderne, as some writers have done, significantly distorts Dahlhaus's meaning. That he might have referred to Richard Strauss's music of the 1890s as 'frühe Neue Musik' is unthinkable. But from Robinson's translation one gets the impression that there is a progressive movement in twentieth-century composition called 'modernism' or 'modern music' that begins in 1889. This point matters. One of the German commentators on Dahlhaus, Walter Werbeck, observes that 'Moderne' is a good label for the period around 1900 precisely because its 'value-free neutrality'. I'd suggest that, in English, the term 'modernism' is not value-free or neutral.

Even on its own terms, however (in German), Chapter 6 (or 5) throws up some problems. The supposedly 'crucial' link between Nietzsche and Wagner, for instance, quickly drops out of the argument after the first few pages as Dahlhaus moves on to do his autonomous style history (Kompositionsgeschichte). Now, the link works quite well for Strauss, Mahler and early Schoenberg, but its significance becomes obscure when Dahlhaus moves on to discuss non-German composers such as Charpentier, Sibelius, Janacek and Mascagni, even though he insists that these composers participate in musikalische Moderne. He certainly shows that there are technically progressive aspects to those composers' music. But what exactly is their relationship to Nietzsche, or, for that matter, to Wagner? What, in short, is Dahlhaus doing with this slightly creaky concept, musikalische Moderne; this progressive phase that isn't progressive enough to be Neue Musik; that follows a fundamental rupture in western history, but is not yet twentieth-century music?

I think Chapter 5 must be read, ironically enough, as part of an ongoing historiographical dispute over 'Neue Musik'. Dahlhaus's target in this chapter is the category Spätromantik ('late Romanticism') as applied by historians to Central European music around 1900. He strenuously rejects that label and its implication that this music is sentimental, formless and oversize. His underlying aim is to contest Stravinsky-orientated historiographies of twentieth-century music that identify Stravinsky rather than Schoenberg as the central figure of the age, the true modernist who sweeps away the bloated, ultra-subjective legacy of Central European Romanticism and replaces it with objectivity and precision. Dahlhaus is saying above all that the early music of Schoenberg, even though it is not yet Neue Musik, is at least Moderne; he is especially defensive about Schoenberg's Expressionist phase, which Stravinskians, he fears, will try to consign to late Romanticism. (And indeed, Richard Taruskin, in the Oxford History of Western Music, tries to do almost exactly that. Adorno, incidentally, was likewise sensitive to the charge that Schoenberg was an 'espressivo musician' and took some trouble to refute it.) Dahlhaus's approach secures the continuity of the Central European tradition from the eighteenth century through Romanticism to the Second Viennese School, with Schoenberg at the centre (and, of course this also happens to be Schoenberg's own account). This, I think, explains why Dahlhaus does not rely on or develop the connections with philosophy, literature or the visual arts; the great tradition needs to unfold first and foremost through an autonomous logic of its own, the logic of Kompositionsgeschichte. And this also helps to explain why Dahlhaus doesn't bother too much about the 'crucial link' not working for composers on the geographical 'periphery'. By bringing them into the argument, he can build up a sense of a mainstream and can isolate Stravinsky; but the centre of that mainstream is what really concerns him.
Now to move on to the musicological reception of Dahlhaus's category *musikalische Moderne*. Consider first the impressively thorough treatment in the first volume of the recent 13-volume *Handbuch der Musik im 20. Jahrhundert*, edited by Siegfried Mauser and Matthias Schmidt (2005), which covers the years from 1900 to 1925. Mauser and Schmidt are especially interested in the logic by which *musikalische Moderne* turns into *Neue Musik*. They attempt a partial rehabilitation of the concept ‘late Romanticism’: music around 1900, they say, was usually Janus-faced, and must be analysed as ‘still nineteenth century’ and ‘already twentieth century’. Its condition is thus especially conflicted and unstable. They examine the ‘partial emancipation’ of various musical parameters during this phase: rhythm, melody and timbre. Although their account does not possess quite the pro-Schoenberg undertones of Dahlhaus’s, it exacerbates his teleological tendency, and adds some positively Hegelian frills. ‘Only this tension-laden, dynamic, and, in the end, unresolved condition of the turn-of-the-century *Moderne* makes the breakthrough to *Neue Musik* truly comprehensible, and even makes that breakthrough seem historically necessary and, thus, to stand within the continuum of western music history.’

By contrast, most of the recent literature in both German and English on music around 1900 that invokes Dahlhaus attempts to rehabilitate music that stands outside the mainstream of traditional historiography. Some writers criticise Dahlhaus for being too vague - quite justifiably, I think - and then attempt a more fleshed-out account. I count here the essays (listed on the handout) by James Hepokoski (on Strauss’s *Don Juan*) and by Walter Werbeck (*Richard Strauss und die musikalische Moderne*); Others pay fulsome lip service to Dahlhaus in their first pages before proceeding to do something that differs substantially from his own approach, without remarking on the divergence. This usually means filling out the connections between music and philosophy, literature or the visual arts, and then hanging the argument about ‘*Moderne*’ on that. See for instance, the recent books by Walter Frisch (*German Modernism: Music and the Arts*); and Charles Youmans (*Richard Strauss’s Orchestral Music and the German Intellectual Tradition*). Youmans solemnly invokes Dahlhaus on his first page, but elsewhere strongly disputes precisely the Schoenberg-orientated historiography of twentieth-century music that Dahlhaus was trying to defend. This is not a criticism of the content of Youmans’s book, by the way, which I think is excellent.

Potential problems do arise, however, when writers venture beyond the Central European ‘core’ of ‘musikalische Moderne’, where one cannot make an easy link to literature. Consider, for instance, the introduction to James Hepokoski’s book on Sibelius’s Fifth Symphony from 1993. This is an explicit challenge to Schoenberg-oriented criticism of early twentieth-century music; the Preface uses an anti-Sibelius quotation from Adorno as a foil. Hepokoski makes the early reference to Dahlhaus (in fact, this book may be the text that establishes that particular generic trait in English), translates ‘*Moderne*’ as ‘modernism’, and borrows Dahlhaus’s chronological period beginning in 1889, along with the idea of a pan-European progressive practice around 1900, and the method of autonomous style history, as represented by his now-famous ‘deformation’ techniques, which are presented abstractly in a list, as though available to all European composers on equal terms and with equivalent meanings. Of course, he’s doing all this for fundamentally different reasons from Dahlhaus. Whereas Dahlhaus has an interest in isolating Stravinsky outside an international ‘mainstream’, Hepokoski levels out the playing field so as to *bring in* the outsider Sibelius. There are several other arguments in this introduction that I think should be questioned. First, the inheritance of Dahlhaus’s period boundary at 1889 suggests that, in using deformation techniques, the composers of this generation were collectively doing something new, whereas in fact this kind of practice, as Hepokoski’s subsequent work has abundantly shown, goes back at least to Beethoven. Secondly the listing of ‘deformation’ techniques and their loosening from specific meanings in local traditions and contexts seems to depend on Hepokoski’s claim that, by 1889, the institutional delivery systems for art music across Europe were almost totally ‘reified’ (as he puts it). But that is surely not the case. (Think of *Gerontius* in Birmingham and Düsseldorf). Finally, by using the phrase ‘liberal-bourgeois modernism’ for the group of composers around 1900, Hepokoski comes close to reifying the concept of modernism itself, turning it into a label for technically innovative composition, rather than an overall stance within a particular cultural framework. Surely, ‘modernism’ conceived as a cultural or communicative stance is in some sense post-liberal, indeed at times openly antagonistic to Liberalism in its nineteenth-century sense. Hepokoski’s article on *Don Juan*, incidentally, deals with this issue much more convincingly than the Sibelius Introduction.

To conclude this paper, I’d like to throw out a few general observations.

1. When studying ‘progressive’ music around 1900, I think we can, if we wish, with a clear conscience, and with no loss to ourselves, abandon the generic appeal to Dahlhaus. Dahlhaus doesn’t do what we want. We run up against problems of translation; we’re pushed towards style history rather than contextual approaches; and we encounter difficulties when we study music from outside Central Europe.

2. Nevertheless the abundant gestures towards Dahlhaus in studies in this area are in one sense encouraging. It seems that most scholars who reject the crude historical determinism of some traditional accounts of modernism, nonetheless wish
to ground their work on something, to situate the music they study in relation to history in the large and to grasp its meaning, both in its own time and for us. I welcome that aspiration, and I think it has been partly accomplished by some of these writings. It's just unfortunate that, in my view, Dahlhaus doesn't offer a very good ground.

3. So, what might a non-Dahlhausian alternative look like? My not-very-revolutionary suggestion here is that we might start by considering the local institutions, attitudes and repertories that mediate compositional practices and communicative stances before doing our analyses or putting works into dialogue with one another. In the case of Elgar, for instance, we might consider to what extent the autonomy principle itself had been established in England, which musical institutions were capable of mediating it, and the relationship of Elgar's works to the ongoing efforts by various groups of musicians in England to establish it more firmly. (Here I think I'm singing the same tune as Hepokoski in his chapter on Elgar in the book on the nineteenth-century symphony.) In short, the pertinent question would now be 'on what terms was 'musical modernism' possible in England in 1900'? By answering this question, we might be able to establish where in the overall jigsaw of musical modernity to fit the piece marked 'Elgar'.

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Writings referred to in this paper


Hepokoski, James. 'The Dahlhaus Project and its Extra-Musicological Sources.' *19th-Century Music* 14/3 (1991), 221-246.


Mauser, Siegfried. 'Musikalische Moderne und Neue Musik als kompositionsgeschichtliche Paradigmen'. In Mauser and Schmidt, *Geschichte der Musik im 20. Jahrhundert*.


Some useful literature on 'Modeme'


Wunberg, Gotthart, ed. *Die Literarische Moderne: Dokumente zum Selbstverständnis der Literatur um die Jahrhundertwende*. 
NEW MUSIC, PROGRESSIVISM AND ELGAR’s RELATION TO MODERNISM

Dr Christopher Mark

In their introduction to the *Cambridge Companion to Elgar*, published in 2004, Daniel M. Grimley and Julian Rushton state that Elgar's music can 'be understood as part of a broader modernist musical practice'. They then highlight various attributes of his music that support this view: they point, following Hepokoski, to a 'preoccupation with issues of colour, large-scale form, timbre, subjectivity - and extended diatonicism' as characteristic of a 'general wave' of European modernists born around 1860, including Mahler, Strauss, Sibelius, Nielsen, and Debussy, and go on to single out 'allusion, musical borrowing and self-quotation', reminiscences of past musical styles and styles not associated with the concert hall, distancing techniques, and the writing of the composer himself into his own music as further characteristics of modernity. In his *Elgar: An Extraordinary Life*, published earlier this year, J. P. E. Harper-Scott admits that 'it would shock many listeners to be told that [Elgar's] music, widely considered 'late romantic', is in fact as thoroughly modern as anything written in the decade' - that decade being 1903-14, the period during which resoundingly straightforward totems of modernism such as *Rite of Spring* and *Pierrot lunaire* were composed. The possibility of 'shock' comes from the distance between the stylistic surface of Elgar's music and that of Stravinsky or Schoenberg, but Harper-Scott maintains that 'older methods can often communicate modern sentiments with the same power as new ones', and that Elgar's modernism arises, not so much from its sound or stylistic surface, but from its manipulation of form and 'his handling of tonal structure'. He demonstrates this (as I am sure all present today will know) in detail in his monograph *Edward Elgar, Modernist* (2006) with particular reference to two works from 'that' decade, the First Symphony (1908) and the symphonic study, *Falstaff* (1913).

The studies I've mentioned are not the only examinations of the relationship between English music and modernism in recent years: a conference on *British Music and Modernism 1901-39* was hosted by the University of Birmingham in May 2006, and a Royal Musical Association Study Day on *Musical Modernism in Britain* is scheduled for next year. Amongst other things, the latter will seek 'to explore the concept of British modernism throughout the twentieth century' as well as 'the status of British composers as modernists'. Yet it is possible to be sceptical of the degree to which English composers have truly engaged with modernism. In a paper on Warlock's *The Curlew* that I read at the Birmingham Conference, I expressed doubt about the extent to which that work could be regarded as 'modernist': a number of commentators have draw attention to Bartokian, Debussyan, and Schoenberian traits or procedures, which I felt were being displayed as a badge of honour - the music is validated by its incorporation of tokens of progressivism. My concluding paragraph was as follows:

Warlock's compositional technique has often been seen as limited. Barry Smith, for instance, writes in his *Grove* entry that his final frustrations lay, no doubt, in his lack of formal musical training[,] and the miniature forms in which his genius moulded itself led him into a kind of artistic cul-de-sac. In the end he had no way of breaking through the barriers of his self-created musical language either to develop new harmonic techniques or explore new territories of form.
In *The Curlew* - which is, after all, a relatively early piece - those limitations were turned to rich artistic gain. The question of whether he might later in his career have broken through 'the barriers of his self-created musical language' by a more extensive embracing of continental radicalism might well exercise the kind of critic who is used to viewing all early twentieth-century music through the prism of the Stravinsky-Schoenberg axis. But English music has suffered too much from this kind of attitude. I hope to have shown that sensitivity to aspects derived from modernism is important in understanding Warlock's music, but that ultimately it is the *use* that is made of them, rather than the fact of their existence, that should exercise our critical faculties.

There can be no doubt that in his writings on Elgar - the most detailed analyses published so far - Harper-Scott steers well clear of what I'm complaining about here: Elgar's *use* of his materials is exactly what Harper-Scott examines, and (as noted above) it is in the essential, broad musical processes, rather than matters of style, that he believes his modernism resides. Yet the bold declaration of Elgar 'as modemist' still seems problematic, for reasons that I'll outline in relation to Harper-Scott's study of the Second Symphony, from the recently published *Elgar Studies*, which he co-edited with Julian Rushton.

*The study, entitled 'Elgar's deconstruction of the *belle époque*: interlace structures and the Second Symphony', is of some complexity and sophistication, involving a hermeneutic approach drawing on the philosophy of Heidegger, parallels with *Beowulf*, Elgar's attitude to the Empire, and the analytical techniques of Schenker (and more besides). I can only represent this in broad outline here, concentrating on the bare bones of tonal and voice-leading structures and giving a basic indication of Harper-Scott's interpretation of their meaning. I should say at the outset that I agree with the vast majority of his analysis, until we come to the ending, which is crucial (as in most of Elgar's works) to the interpretation of the whole. And in order to talk about the ending, I have to sketch - or allow Harper-Scott to sketch - what sets it up.

Central to Harper-Scott's argument is the identification of what he describes as an interlace structure, the charting of 'two parallel temporal courses, rooted in and given heft by a struggle between opposed tonalities - not a classical polarity between tonic and dominant, but a more radical opposition of tonalities whose presentation amounts to a crisis of hegemony, as each tonal focus vies for control of the whole structure'.[4] The two tonalities set in opposition are E flat, the titular tonic, and C. The work opens with a strong statement of E flat, which underpins the so-called 'Spirit of Delight' theme in bb. 2-3. It is crucial to Harper-Scott's argument that tonalities, themes, and sonorities have strong associations, so it is also important to recognize the full and bold (brassy) character of the orchestration. Also crucial to his argument is the 'strong gestural spotlighting [here] of the *Kopfton* G', i.e. ^3, which (as we'll see) has a pivotal role to play across work. Harper-Scott sees the exposition as 'one of [Elgar's] most conventional symphonic formal sections';[5] the Development and Recapitulation, however, are less so. The C-thread makes its appearance during the presentation of what Harper-Scott dubs the 'Spirit of Decay' theme - what is known more familiarly as the 'Ghost' theme, which roars up famously in the third movement. The theme is initially supported by E major, then by C major in first inversion; C major's claims are subsequently reinforced by a restatement of the theme underpinned by root-position C (see Ex. (a), which reproduces Harper-Scott's middleground graph of the Development). C is subsequently treated as the submedian to E flat, but Harper-Scott states that C receives stronger support than the Exposition's E flat, and that the Development is really a second, thematically contradictory, Exposition. C thus has 'equal claim on the movement's (and - the symphony's) hegemony'.[6] The threat to E flat is signalled when the putative tonic is not established convincingly at the beginning of the Recapitulation: here the sustained B flat of the opening bar is replaced with conflicted harmony; the 'Delight' theme is supported by less stable 6/4 harmony; and the primary thematic materials are contracted. Moreover, 'The first strong E flat root of the recapitulation coincides with the return after its long neighbour-note prolongation of the *Kopfton*, g² - and in a sense the recapitulation's achievement is merely to work its way towards a *starting point*'[7] (see last event in Ex. (b)). Indeed, in Harper-Scott's view the movement ends with the *Kopfton*.

The central movements are ostensibly in C, though Harper-Scott sees the second as spending little time in that area, moving quickly from it at the outset towards an immured F (see Ex. (c)). The F-based secondary material is transposed to a second immured tonality, E flat (see Ex. (d)); however, the strong cadence into E flat set up for fig. 87 doesn't eventuate - the music side-slips to C. Thus while a strong cadence into the key of Delight is prepared, the music swings into the key of Decay. This coincides with the recall of Delight motives, clothed, as Harper-Scott puts it, 'in the softer timbre of Decay'. At end of the second movement the *Kopfton* g² of the first movement is restored to prominence 'as a reminder that the biggest question still facing the symphony is how reliable the delight it introduced at the outset actually is'.[8]

Most discussion of the third movement (which is based more securely in C, thought the mode is frequently equivocal) is dominated by what I described earlier as roaring up of the 'Ghost' theme, i.e. 'Spirit of Decay theme', which Harper-Scott sees as...
being ‘as close as Elgar comes to a topic of dystopia in his music’. Crucial for his argument is the identification of an illusion, at pitch, to the end of the Prelude to Tristan und Isolde. The parallels outlined by Harper-Scott are reproduced as my Ex. (e). Wagner moves, in the Sailor’s song, to E flat, but Elgar chooses to cadence directly into C minor, after which the music continues with the reprise of the scherzo as if nothing had happened. Harper-Scott comments that ‘There is an inevitability about this progression and Elgar’s rejection of E flat, even within an allusive context which seems to offer a precedent for a confirmation of Delight’s associated key, that we could be foolish to disregard’. The key of the Decay episode is E flat, therefore while the theme and tone (of utterance) are related to Decay, the tonality is that of Delight. Harper-Scott sees the job of the finale, if conventional closure is to be achieved, to be ‘to provide a new synthesis of the opposed forces but also to reconstruct the Delight-thread’.

He regards the finale up to the recapitulation as conventional. This signals that a conventional ending is a real possibility. But, he argues, this would be simplistic, and ‘too hidebound to a tradition that at the time of composition had lost the historical justification for its ubiquity’. That the ending pursues a different course revolves, in Harper-Scott’s view, around the disposition of the Urlinie, which he graphs as in Ex. (f). In essence, the structural cadence at fig. 167 is the end-result of an interpolated ^5-line that, through correspondence with the ^5-line descent from B flat in the Decay episode in 3rd mov (see Ex. (g) from fig. 18), is associated with Decay. Harper-Scott comments:

The melodically insistent materials of S2 arrive heftily in E flat - the tonic of the movement and the symphony, the key of Delight, and with its original brassy timbre [this is at fig. 163 in Ex. 6] - but now their mighty insistence prolongs a new Kopfton, b flat\(^1\), the starting-point within E flat-Delight for a ^5-line Urlinie of Decay. The symphony will compose-out an Ursatz at last, but not in unambiguous terms. A classic heroic resolution to ^1/I, with the Urlinie’s stepwise descent from the Kopfton given contrapuntal support by a I-V-I bass arpeggiation, is forgone, and an option that has presented itself twice in the course of the symphony so far [for others see Exx. 4 and 7] will serve as denouement in its stead: a ^5-^1 descent in E flat throughout section S2 (beginning [at] fig. 163).

A further attempt to descend from ^5 (B flat) proceeds no further than ^2 (F), and the work ‘ends ambiguously with [a] strong recall of the Kopfton G in harp, brass, and woodwind, but with unequivocal E flats on strings’. Resolution is thus qualified, in a way that might seem ‘characteristic of the musically modern conception of closure’.

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It would be odd if any analysis of so rich a work - and one so suffused with so many possibilities for autobiographical and cultural interpretation - did not prompt some disagreements. As I have said, I find the vast majority of Harper-Scott’s technical commentary persuasive, but find it difficult to agree with some of the crucial points of his argument - especially the role of the end of the Decay episode, and the plausibility of the role he allot to the Urlinie.

Turning to the Decay episode first. A good deal in Harper-Scott’s hermeneutics hinges on the avoidance of following Wagner to E flat, the key of Delight. A decisive point in the work’s narrative (using the term loosely) therefore depends on the listener recognizing the illusion to Tristan (which Harper-Scott admits is easily missed), remembering what happens next in that context (i.e. the strong cadence in E flat in the Sailor’s song), and noting that that is not where Elgar’s music goes. In terms of the framework of the movement and its solid evocation of tradition, the continuation of reprise of the scherzo with the second theme in C minor is entirely logical, and the harmony provides a seamless progression. That the Decay Episode has no apparent impact on the course of the movement as a whole is certainly disturbing - perhaps more disturbing than its actual force - but this is, I’d suggest, a product of the acceptance of C minor, rather than any rejection of a continuation in E flat. Harper-Scott’s graphing of the passage suggests something less straightforward, but I have to admit to particular problems with buying into the Urlinie in this repertory.

The use of what we might call ‘classical’ Schenkerian theory as a yardstick to test the modernity of twentieth-century music has been common, of course, with variable results, but one needs to ask - even, in my view, in the case of repertoire for which the method was devised, which surely wouldn’t include Elgar - whether the Urlinie is truly a reflection of what one hears, or an artefact of a reductive method that is predicated on preconceived notions of linear and hierarchical behaviour. Harper-Scott problematizes the use of Schenkerian analysis in Edward Elgar, Modernist discussing the role of the Ursatz post-Beethoven, suggesting that the Ursatz may still have a role to play, even if it can no longer be presumed to be the driving force of the piece: it is conceivable that the articulation of the Ursatz may in some way act as a structural support while some other, less Beethovenian force pulls the material of the work along and over it. Perhaps understandably, given the amount of ink already spilt on the matter, he does not go back to interrogate some of the fundamental principles of Schenkerian theory:
rather, he appears to accept the *Ursatz* as a commonly experienced and, indeed, consciously employed phenomenon, even to the extent of writing about Elgar's manipulation of the *Urlinie* as if the composer was fully up to speed with what one was. But while we can be confident that Elgar gave consideration to matters of harmonic motion, weight, speed, ambiguity, and contrapuntal interplay, we should ask whether we can be confident that he thought in terms of the middle- and background projection and completion of two-part contrapuntal frameworks. This is, of course, an old-fashioned complaint about Schenker, and would no doubt be countered by saying that the composer's intention is irrelevant - that, since we cannot know a composer's intention, it is what we discover that is of significance. Yet Harper-Scott's tone throughout his writings, reinforced by his invocation of Heideggerian philosophy, is that Elgar's structures are as they are because he intended them to be precisely so.

I'm not sure that I would disagree with many of the details of Harper-Scott's graphs, but I would want to view the overarching structures with a greater degree of scepticism (which is something he is more inclined to do with the First Symphony, whose 'traditional' closure onto \(^1/I\) he questions as denoting a 'happy ending'\[18\]). For Harper-Scott, as we've seen, one of the chief ways in which Elgar's modernity is manifested in the Second Symphony is the way in which, at the end of the work, the *Urlinie* remains marooned on \(^3\) and fails to descend. Yet, while it is certainly the case that the attempt to descend from \(^5\) from fig. 170:7 gets only as far as \(^2\) in the obligatory register, the E flat in the cellos in the octave below (and an octave above the E flat in the bass of Harper-Scott's graph) is easily enough heard as its continuation (even if the 1\(^{st}\)horn and flute pick up the F and resolve it upwards to G). Meanwhile, Harper-Scott's relating of the \(^5\)-descent from fig. 163 to the two previous instances in Exx. 4 and 7 seems beyond my capacity to hear.

Other aspects of the music lead me to hear the ending of the Symphony in a rather more traditional way. In particular I would want to lend more weight to the rhetoric of the final pages of the work. Passed over by Harper-Scott is Elgar's own statement that 'the whole of the sorrow is smoothed out & ennobled in the last movement'.\[19\] This is obviously at odds with Harper-Scott's reading - which is not to denigrate it as a consequence, but to ask why this evidence is not brought into play. I have suggested elsewhere in a commentary that is somewhat attenuated by the standard of Harper-Scott's that Elgar's comment suggests process of catharsis. I note that 'the augmented version of the so-called 'Spirit of Delight' theme [...] has a breadth and harmonic poise that suggests acceptance'.\[20\] A good deal of this has to do with the quality and sheer protraction of the subdominant harmony that underpins the theme, as if Elgar had at the last moment remembered his comment (to Jaeger I think) that whilst most folks have a liking for \(V\), he tends to veer towards \(IV\). It is true that main melodic lines descend, in the conventional attitude of mourning, but this is counterbalanced by the ascent of various subsidiary lines, and the final upward leap in cello's departing truncated recall of the movement's main theme. Meanwhile, the scoring is among Elgar's most luminous, though distinct from the kind associated with 'Delight' by Harper-Scott - it is rather less extrovert if not actually inward-looking for that: it retains too much of the ceremonial. (It is desire for luminosity that, to my mind, explains the upper-voice Gs in the final chords, rather than a sustaining of the \(\text{st}\) harmonic in the obligatory register, the E flat in the cellos in the octave below (and an octave above the E flat in the bass of Harper-Scott's graph) is easily enough heard as its continuation (even if the 1\(^{st}\)horn and flute pick up the F and resolve it upwards to G). Meanwhile, Harper-Scott's relating of the \(^5\)-descent from fig. 163 to the two previous instances in Exx. 4 and 7 seems beyond my capacity to hear.

In his chapter on 'British Music in the Modern World' in the *Blackwell History of Music in Britain: the Twentieth Century*, Arnold Whittall notes that 'the Musical Times's Elgar obituary implied that his greatest achievement - and most legitimately 'modern' trait - was to have ensured that musical romanticism found its fulfilment in Britain, not Germany'.\[22\] Key phrases from the passage he goes on to quote includes the statements that Elgar 'prolonged the standing tradition - by showing what new adventure and discovery lay in the old ways' and that 'it cannot be doubted that Elgar's music, by its strength, weight and popularity, acted as a bulwark against the too ready influx of modernism'. If Elgar's music was thus press-ganged to shore up a sense of British musical identity, one wonders what agenda might be behind declaring him a modernist. Labelling him thus has been a useful strategy in demythologizing the composer and forcing a rethinking of the relationship between his music and the aesthetic movements of the time. It has had the effect of drawing attention to compositional detail to an unprecedented degree (as we have seen), and of encouraging a consideration of Elgar, not as an isolated figure - which had been tendency before Hepokoski's bracketing of Elgar with Strauss and Sibelius in the introduction to his book on Sibelius's Fifth Symphony - but as part of a broader tendency. Given the tendency of British musicology from the 60s onwards to privilege modernist music in its
evaluations of twentieth-century music (a tendency mitigated only to a certain degree by the rise of the 'new musicology' in the 80s), the use of the label 'modernist' can also be seen to assert the belief that Elgar's music is worthy to stand beside that of Schoenberg and Stravinsky, who are still well-entrenched as the standard-bearers of early 20th-c musical achievement. Today's conference will, I'm sure, provide a litmus test of the degree to which the broader understanding of Elgar's music can be enhanced by viewing it within the context of modernism. Meanwhile my own feeling remains that it is part of Elgar's essential identity that, while he draws on aspects of emerging modernism, he does so to enrich a highly personal approach which floats free of any single aesthetic a

[5] Ibid., 186.
[7] Ibid., 199.
[8] Ibid., 203.
[9] Ibid., 205.
[10] Ibid., 206.
[12] Ibid., 211.
[14] Ibid., 214.
[15] Ibid., 213.
[17] Ibid., 28.
[18] Ibid., 104.
EDWARD ELGAR: ‘MODERN OR MODERNIST’? - MEMORY, NOSTALGIA AND AMBIVALENCE IN THE VIEWS OF THE BRITISH PRESS 1900-1920

Dr Charles Edward McGuire

The 1 January 1909 issue of The Musical Herald contained a lengthy article entitled ‘The Strongest Impression.’[i] John Spencer Curwen, the editor of the journal, printed 63 responses from numerous music critics, orchestral and choral conductors, cathedral organists, scholar-composers, and the like regarding what they thought to be the most significant musical event of 1908. Many of the responses were typical for the time: six noted performances of Johann Sebastian Bach’s compositions, four discussed hearing works of Richard Wagner, two mentioned Felix Mendelssohn, and one even George Frederic Handel. By far the most popular ‘Strongest Impression,’ however, was the premiere of Edward Elgar’s Symphony no. 1 in Ab major, op. 55, with thirteen respondents - mostly positive - giving it pride of place.[ii] When The Musical Herald repeated the exercise in 1910, Elgar’s Violin Concerto in B minor, op. 61, received by far the most votes: 17 out of 67.[iii]

These were startling admissions by the Musical Herald. In the years between 1896 and 1920, this journal of musical discussion aimed at both the choral singer and the general public had, at best, an ambivalent relationship with Elgar. It was this journal, after all, that published a stinging rebuke to the composer after the premiere performance of The Dream of Gerontius at the 1900 Birmingham Triennial Musical Festival, for his ‘unsingable’ composition (Example 1 on your handout):

. . . it must be noted that the strain put upon the choir was at times enormous. Such are the extraordinary demands made by some modern composers upon the voice that it is not surprising to hear members of the chorus make such remarks as 'It is perfect slavery,' 'The drudgery is awful,' 'The remuneration given for such an expenditure of time and labour is paltry,' &c. &c. It was quite evident that the choir did not take pleasure in certain portions of their work, and that there was a feeling of relief when the closing chords of certain numbers had been sung. A choir will be interested and take pleasure in such works as the Elijah, Messiah, and Hiawatha, because such compositions are singable. Modern composers - even men in the front rank - will find it worth their while to remember that a chorus must be reckoned with if they wish their works to live beyond a season or two. [iv]

Even though Elgar is not mentioned by name, it is clear he is the focus of the admonishment. In the Birmingham festival of that year, Elgar was the only composer from 'the front rank' aside from Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, with a major piece performed - and the anonymous compiler of this report makes sure to identify Coleridge-Taylor's work as 'singable.' Note here, though, that Elgar is addressed as a 'modern composer.'
Such 'modern' tendencies resonate in one debate current among Elgar scholars: whether or not Elgar was a 'modernist.' On one side are Paul Harper Scott and Daniel Albright. Albright, in his landmark 2000 study, Untwisting the Serpent: Modernism in Music, Literature, and Other Arts described The Dream of Gerontius, one of Elgar's most 19th-century Wagnerian scores, as modernist. For Albright, Elgar's modernism could be seen in his 'paralysis of the sublime,' or, as he states, 'the pulsedness of heaven as an ebbing and flowing of a long, repetitious melodic line' that reconfigured the traditional notion of heaven and time. Harper-Scott, through two recent volumes (Edward Elgar: Modernist and Elgar: An Extraordinary Life), posits Elgar as modernist because he rejected in an 'ironic, pessimistic' manner the commonly accepted nineteenth-century Beethovenian heroic narrative trajectory. Both Harper-Scott's and Albright's concept of modernism is expansionist in nature, and argues that what many consider 'late-romantic' music was the first presentation of musical modernism - an 'early modernism,' if you will. This modernism, besides Arnold Schoenberg and Igor Stravinsky, includes Claude Debussy, Richard Strauss, Gustav Mahler, Jean Sibelius, Giacomo Puccini, and, of course, Elgar.

The first real response to Albright's and Harper-Scott's ideas has come from the pen of Leon Bottstein. In the 'Summation' chapter to Elgar and His World, Bottstein notes, 'Despite recent efforts to construe Elgar as a modernist innovator, he remained within the framework of the ideas, conflicts, forms, and vocabulary of the late nineteenth-century.' Bottstein, following the model of Geoffrey Hodgkins, posits an Elgar as a pre-Raphaelite romantic, interested in words and the countryside as well as progress and gadgets.

There is a third possibility, one that allows Elgar more sophistication than either side of the Late Romantic/Early Modernistic duality can provide: that of the 'Ambivalent Modernist.' The concept was formulated by Marion Deshmukh and first applied to music by Walter Frisch. Frisch used the term in reference to Richard Wagner's contribution to German Modernism. Deshmukh and Frisch's ambivalent modernists are on the cusp between Romanticism and Modernism. They were naturalists who used images of the land to celebrate aspects of nationalism, but also believed in scientific progress, and celebrated scientific achievements. But without delving into a bathetic Ruskin-like rejection of the industrial, the ambivalent modernists were also suspicious of the potential anti-humanism that unfettered adherence to scientific progress for the sake of profit might bring. One might compare them to Elgar in his World War I retreat at Brinkwells: in love with the land, but willing to spend many precious hours in a pursuit of 'improving' it, through building 'rustic' footstools and playing the arborist.

Examining contemporary accounts regarding Elgar within the Musical Herald between 1900 and 1920, it is clear that the opinions cited and forwarded within this journal ascribed to Elgar this sort of 'ambivalent modernist' status, only they did so referring to the concept by describing Elgar as one of a number of moderns. But close reading reveals that the Musical Herald used 'modern' in the way we understand ambivalent modernism. Such moderns, in the parlance of the Musical Herald were on the forward edge of harmony, design of formal structures, and execution of musical rhetoric that all pushed aesthetics beyond the boundaries of the accepted 'Classics.' Yet such 'modemrs' were either naturalists or metaphorically associated with England's countryside and cognizant of the importance of tradition. Even in negative portrayals of Elgar, discussions of the composer within this journal constructed him in precisely this fashion. And a musical representation of such ambivalent modernism cones to the fore within The Music Makers, Elgar's 1912 Birmingham Festival commission for contralto soloist, chorus, and orchestra.

It is clear that the writers and reporters of the Musical Herald in the first two decades of the twentieth century did not consider Elgar to be a 'Modernist.' The journal bandied about the term frequently in the first two decades of the twentieth century, but did not bother to define it until 1919. By this point (as I discussed at the last International Elgar Conference, held in Stratford-upon-Avon in 2005) Elgar, identified as a Bard of the Great War, was clearly associated by most elite musical thinkers with the old guard - composers, like Strauss and Debussy, who had once been thought of as 'modemrs' but now, according to Philip Heseltine, effected a mere 'commonplace' sound. The definition as first presented in The Musical Herald was written in a way that wholly excluded Elgar. R. Dunstan's article, 'Futurist and 'Modernist Composers,' meant for the third edition of the Cyclopedaeic Dictionary of Music, but previewed in the August 1919 issue of The Musical Herald, concentrated on a modernism defined on specific sound combinations and timbres. This is Example 2 in your handout, which I will not read. But you can see from a quick glance at it that it in essence includes a laundry-list of what we would describe in an undergraduate survey as tenets of modernism: discords, new and unusual scale patterns, limited exoticism, and bitonality. [PAUSE]

The chief characteristics of this modern School are:

(1) The constant employment of extreme discords, often resolved in an irregular and unusual manner, or not resolved at all.

(2) The employment of mathematical scales, e.g. a six-tone scale, with the octave divided into six (approximately) equal whole
tones; the scale of the harmonic chord of nature; scales constructed on arbitrary divisions, e.g. with two or three augmented seconds, etc.; scales in which certain diatonic tones are consistently omitted, e.g. pentatonic and Hindu scales, etc. etc.

(3) The development of new forms of melody, full of disjunct and dissonant intervals, and absolutely free (and sometimes disjointed) in metre and rhythm.

(4) The absence of all regular metrical form.

(5) The employment of the higher (dissonant) partials of ‘fundamentals’ in conjunction with the lower consonant partials (which are usually held to constitute the ‘musical’ chord).

(6) In some cases - (a) The employment of two or three distinct keys together, e.g. a scale of Ab in one instrument with a scale of A in another. (b) A contempt for all the ordinary rules of harmonic progression, e.g. the employment of long chains of consecutive fifths, etc. [xvi]

Dunstan implicitly contrasted the ‘Moderns’ with ‘Modernists’ by noting that the moderns - the older composers - used these elements occasionally, but the new modernist composers used them constantly [xvii]

On one earlier occasion, the Musical Herald did in fact refer to Elgar as a modernist. But the main point of calling him such was to underscore what the author of this article saw as an internal contradiction within Elgar, akin to the trope we are discussing today: that Elgar was both a Romantic (here called ‘conservative’) and a modern composer. This occurred in the lead-article in the 1 August 1912 issue of the magazine. The article is mostly an assessment of Elgar’s work to that date, with some celebration of his accomplishments, but much more discussion of his presumed limitations. [xviii] The beginning is a case in point: while eventually calling him ‘a great man’ it calls him illogical and (in a way that only a more xenophobic time than ours could consider insulting) compares him to an overly-emotional foreigner (Example 3):

Sir Edward Elgar gives us the music of a calm, philosophical optimism. . . . But the mind of man is complex, and the English mind in particular has never been noted for its logical consistency. Hence we often find among us creative artists who work very diversely perhaps in ignorance of what is their true métier certainly with unequalled results. Elgar is one of these. He is by practice both a conservative and a modernist, a setter-up of old idols and an iconoclast. He is an exclusive, but still reveals himself with the child-like unreserve of the most spiritually harassed Russian. It is by the product of his hours of complete self-revelation that he stands as a great figure in the world of men to-day. [xix]

Thus the magazine presented a bifurcated Elgar that was at once an old-fashioned Romantic composer as well as an iconoclastic. [xx] Like the earlier Romantics, he was presumed to be explicitly autobiographical within his music, but further unaware of his powers, and exclusive in temperament. But did the 1912 writer mean ‘modernist’ in the same way that Dunstan did in 1919? The aesthetic route this article travels is complex and in and of itself somewhat contradictory. Shortly after referring to Elgar as a ‘spiritually harassed Russian,’ the author calls Elgar ‘the musician for the middle-aged’ because his music lacks warmth and because he, as the article states, ‘sympathizes mostly with the spiritual aspirations of the intellectual, transparently, clean-minded humanity. He is something of an aristocrat among musicians. There is nothing in him of the earth earthy or the flesh fleshly. [xxi] In short, Elgar’s music can express the intellectual remove of the modernist, but is still capable of the soul-stirring melody of the romantics, a trait the author sees in the ‘Ideal Call’ melody of the Symphony in Ab major, calling it ‘one of the grand things of modern art’ - but not modernist art.

Much more frequent in this era, though, was calling Elgar simply ‘modern.’ Sometimes this meant giving multiple reports on the ‘moderns’ via who used ‘modern harmony’ (according to a Dr. Sawyer, in 1906, the three main exponents were Strauss, Elgar and Debussy). [xxii] or noting the speed at which modern music moved (Example 4):

The art of music developed at such a pace that the maximum speed allowed for motor cars might well be imposed. The composer in these days was apt to think that he must not write down anything like what he had heard before. Steady progress was best. The art of music, which was formerly in a rude state compared with the other arts, had overtaken them all . . . The art of music was very aggressive; it was ‘the most expensive of noises. [xxiii]

The era before the war saw a number of such discussions, usually garnered from a paper or lecture presented by a famous British musician. The last quotation, as an example, was a report of a talk by Sir Walter Parratt at the Author’s Club in 1910. Such discussions were more apt to describe than criticize, or criticize - but in a humorous fashion.
Humorous discussions aside, the Musical Herald redacted reports from other journals of those articles that made a serious attempt to present the aesthetics of the moderns. One such example came from an encapsulation of an article from the Edinburgh Review that described what was modern in no uncertain terms. Modern composers were the ones willing to expand the possibilities of the musical arts (Example 5):

It follows, therefore, that as these develop [sic] and interchange, as the use of the scale becomes more flexible, and the range of harmony more extensive, so there will arise in music not only a new idiom, but a new vocabulary... the very language of Art is undergoing a change, by which, for good or ill, its future must be largely determined.[xxiv]

But even though they were willing and able to experiment, and make the basic materials of music flexible, they were still rooted within certain 19th-century concepts, such as ‘genius’ and music being a ‘divine gift’ (Example 6):

... the critical standard is determined by principles, not by rules; and that these principles are all ultimately derived from the sympathy which obtains between the artist and his public. Genius does not so transform a man as to put him out of touch with ourselves: it is an acuter of vision of that which we dimly see, the more eloquent utterance of that which we stammeringly confess, the revelation, by divine gift, of truths which we imperfectly recognize.[xxx]

Not surprisingly, Elgar is a part of this discussion. In a telling move, the author centers Elgar within the Romantic tradition, and notes his modern, experimental tendencies, stating that “[Elgar’s] position is in some ways comparable with that of Berlioz at the beginning of the last century; there is something of the same audacity, the same wayward brilliance, the same desire to push musical expression across the verge of articulate speech.”[xxvi]

Besides defining Elgar as a combination of modern and romantic, the Musical Herald also mapped onto Elgar elements of the pastoral. These can be easily seen in the short reports and biographical sketches about the composer that the Musical Herald either commissioned itself or redacted from other journals. Sometimes these were simply metaphors comparing Elgar to geological formations, such as the 1914 article that described him as a mountain.[xxvii] At other times, these were unedited comments from Elgar himself, such as a report on Elgar's Peyton Lecture at the University of Birmingham on 16 March 1905. In this report, Elgar described the ideal source of inspiration for English music. This impetus comes from the countryside, as he states: 'The inspiration of English music should be drawn from our country, our literature, and our climate... English music should grow out of the English soul, and be a broad, chivalrous, healthy, out-of-doors sort of thing.'[xxviii]

The three elements that the Musical Herald considered to be modern - pushing compositional boundaries while having a food in tradition, and the pastoral - can be easily seen within The Music Makers. Perhaps most obvious are the poem's references to the pastoral, of which one is personal, and one is hopeful. While not the central metaphor within Arthur O'Shaughnessy's poem 'Ode' - societal progress via aid of art is... pastoral images do frame the poem, being found in the first and last verse. Elgar treats these moments with special emphasis. In the first verse, he presents quotations of the theme from the Enigma Variations, which matches well the tenor of the verse, since it presents images of the individual within a wide, desolate landscape. In the last verse, Elgar sets four lines of pastoralic imagery ('Great hail! we cry to the comers/From the dazzling unknown shore;/Bring us hither your sun and your summers,/and renew our world as of yore') to a contralto solo, and some of the most hopeful music of the entire composition. The music is also perhaps the most self-consciously Wagnerian in all of The Music Makers, including the quotations and allusions to Elgar's oratorios. Hope comes here because the setting shows joy in the tact acceptance: the world will indeed go on, and those artists will continue to try. The imagery of the sun here, as well as teaching is the complement to the 'lone artist' within the 'desolate' landscape, who was engulfed in the night and moonlight. Having the choir sing the first part - about the artist being alone - and the soloist the second (the artist as part of a living community and tradition) is an interesting juxtaposition.

Aside from such pastoralism, within The Music Makers, Elgar combines elements of the new and experimental with rhetoric self-consciously designed to 'push musical expression across the verge of articulate speech.' The former can be seen in Elgar's use of whole-tone scales within parts of the composition and the generous post-Straussian orchestration. The latter is evident within Elgar's use of musical rhetoric, especially (but not limited to) the use of quotation, self-quotiation, and allusion, that underline and emphasize the language of the poem.

Part of this rhetoric arises because of the use of quotations familiar to those who love Elgar's music. I find that I must disagree with Harper-Scott's contention that such allusions lead to a 'deconstruction' that destroys the idea of the artist as subject for the composition.[xxix] Instead, Elgar turns the Romantic conception of the artist-hero into a modern one via downplaying ideas of triumph and focusing instead on the harder realities of the individual alienated from society around him. The use of
quotations from the Enigma Variations solidifies this. The persona Elgar forwards within the finale to the Variations is its purported hero. And his interpretation of the piece, as he reminds us in My Friends Pictured Within, was that it was composed when that persona felt alienated from both musical society and his friends. It was, after all, 'Written at a time when friends were dubious and generally discouraging as to the composer's musical future.' [xxx]

The use of this persona via quotations from Enigma satisfies the requirements of O'Shaughnessy's verse, which practically begs for an ambivalent setting. O'Shaughnessy's poem emphasizes the artist's place within a progressive, Romantic society is to create history and record it (they are the 'movers and shakers' of the world; they help proclaim a robust self-confidence of the nation within the space of the world, and inspire at times all to pull together as one, be they 'solider, king' or 'peasant'). [xxi] But since they look at history from the vantage point of the artist, they note that they mark death and the passing of all within their songs ('ye of the past must die') and that to frame these tales and songs, the artists must be outside of society. After all, they 'dwell . . . A little apart from ye.'

This artist is a powerful figure. Elgar's own thoughts about the setting, as expressed to Ernest Newman, before the latter wrote an introductory analysis of the work for the Musical Times, discussed the power of the artist as including a great deal of responsibility (note that he mentions the word twice within Example 8):

In interpreting O'Shaughnessy's Ode, I have felt that his 'music makers' must include not only poets and singers but all artists who feel the tremendous responsibility of their mission to 'renew the world as of yore.'

As I have felt, so I have insisted on this responsibility, therefore the atmosphere of the music is mainly sad; but there are moments of enthusiasm, and bursts of joy occasionally approaching frenzy; moods which the creative artist suffers in creating or in contemplation of the unending influence of his creation.

Yes, suffers: this is the only word I dare to use; for even the highest ecstasy of 'making' is mixed with the consciousness of the somber dignity of the eternity of the artist's responsibility.[xxxii]

This conception of the artist is certainly heroic, because the artist is a creator (what Elgar calls, after the poem a 'maker'). But with power comes duty - and Elgar noted to Newman that it was 'the duty of the artist to see that this inevitable change is progress.'

What is the place of the quotations from the Theme of Enigma within this? Aidan Thomson believes that Elgar, by using quotations, was only perpetuating an early-Romantic idea that

... the intertextuality of The Music Makers, if we take Elgar at his word, is no different from the works of many of his contemporaries: a practice whereby the informed listener might make connections between the later work and its predecessors, and 'appreciate the - appositeness' of the quotation, but might equally understand it to be part of a 'purely' musical argument intrinsic to the piece in question.[xxxiii]

Can we, as knowledgeable listeners, look at the quotations from Enigma this way? Besides two moments within the instrumental introduction, the places Elgar locates the theme from Enigma all either emphasize or presage the isolation of the artist. The first entrances (at cue 11, m. 4 and cue 14) underline the word 'desolate streams' (the first of our two pastoral images) and note the long, lonely immortality of the artist, being set to the words 'forever, it seems.' The second set of entrances, at cues 75 and 76, m. 5, set off the idea of isolation, by framing the words 'O men! it must ever be/That we dwell, in our dreaming and singing/A little apart from thee.' If Elgar meant for his listeners not to associate the hero/persona of Enigma with the lonely creator within The Music Makers, this is a strange coincidence indeed.

It is possible (though not likely) that some of the audience members at the Birmingham premiere might not have known the Variations. However, any member of the audience at the premiere would have easily understood two quotations within the second stanza: that of the 'Marseilles' and 'Rule Britannia.' These quotations appear at cue 19, m. 2. At this moment, as Elgar told Ernest Newman, the meaning is sarcastic. He mixes the tunes together, 'deliberately commercializing' them. [xxxiv] 'Rule, Britannia' is almost inaudible in most recordings (thus rendering the need to hear this composition live to really understand it), while the blaring trumpet line of the 'Marseilles' cuts right through the thick orchestration. While it is rushed, it sounds more triumphant than commercial. Perhaps it is a commentary on the role the bard must take at times in spite of himself.

Elgar had triumphant and commercial candidates of his own that would have fit well at that point. He might have used the Imperial March. (Likely he would have not used 'Land of Hope and Glory,' since in the years between 1910 and the outbreak
of World War I, it was widely used - with rewritten words - as a Women's Suffrage anthem. But this would have moved from the purpose of his pre-existent materials. All of the quotations and allusions Elgar used had their basis in music stretching towards words: either because (like Sea Pictures, Gerontius, and The Apostles) there were words set to the themes used, or because (in the 'Enigma' Variations, the Violin Concerto, and the two symphonies) there were either explicit or implicit programs. Elgar borrowed rhetoric associated with words in the process of trying to articulate speech. If the work is autobiographical, as Diana McVeagh states, it is not merely as simple as a mere deconstruction. It contains both the seeds of triumph and despair, and moments of the sublime and the crassly popular. Just the use of the theme from the Enigma Variations occurs expressly - either in full, original quotation or slightly varied - when Elgar discusses the alienation of the individual.

It is for these reasons that the sobriquets 'Modemist' or 'Late Romantic' do not work by themselves when describing Elgar. Calling him one or the other means a selective application of his own discussions of his compositions in favor of enigmas and hidden meanings. Think, for a moment, of the First Symphony. Elgar described a program for this symphony as simply 'great charity (love) and a massive hope in the future.' The 'Ideal Call' that begins and ends this work in a direct reading would seem to indicate that even in the face of tribulation, hope is somehow maintained. Yet more than one analyst looks only at the negative. The modern tricks with keys Elgar used become symbols of abject pessimism, and only such pessimism.

Ultimately, this is the difficulty with trying to ascribe a complex personality into a neat box: he (especially if it is Elgar) will never fit. Elgar generated and composed his music in response to his context, and that context was of a shifting landscape. Victorian ideals of God and progress were ingrained within him, but he faced new technologies and new ideas (aesthetic and philosophical) through the lens of a manic personality. Should we expect no less of man whose mood swings are infamous within biography to have them within his compositions as well? It would be wise to heed one of the final warnings from the Edinburgh Review that so aptly summarized the Modern in its own time of 1906, and is identical to the ambivalent modernism Frisch and Desmukh now theorize within our own (Example 8):

The chief danger, no doubt, is that we come late into the field, that we are beginning where our neighbors have already achieved, and that some of us are still tempted to regard them not only as teachers but as models for our imitation. To do this is to ignore no less than the limitations of our national character. We have our own language to speak, we have our own message to deliver, we have our own ideals to maintain . . .

Whether that language is of turn-of-the-century composition or simply of Elgar studies, it is a message we must take to heart today.

[ii] Because of the popularity of Elgar's composition in this survey, most of the 'strongest impressions' were for 20th-century music (24), followed by 19th-century music (11) and then music from the 18th century and before (9). The remainder of 'impressions' were for more general topics, such as the rising of 'musical intelligence,' the incompetence of Australian orchestras, and the 'baleful effect' of music criticism. British music fared better than all other nationalities, receiving 23 votes, compared to 18 for Germanic and 3 for French.
[viii] Leon Botstein, Transcending the Enigmas of Biography: The Cultural Context of Sir Edward Elgar's Career in Elgar and His


(xi) Frisch, German Modernism, p. 8.

(xii) Frisch, German Modernism, p. 37-38.


[xiv] A certain amount of caution, however, is warranted. Sometimes the writers and editors of the Musical Herald used 'modern' simply as a synonym for the words 'contemporary' or 'recent.' Even by 1912, this journal used 'modern' to refer to Brahms. See, for instance, the article 'The Cost of Modern Music,' in the issue of 1 June 1912, p. 178.

[xvi] ... composers whose reputation rests upon the novelty of their instrumental effects or the startling nature of their technique or their sound combinations, rather than on any intrinsic importance or spiritual message, cannot reasonably hope that their novelty will not soon wear off and that those very effects which were most startling at the time they were first introduced will become the merest commonplaces after the lapse of a few years. Examples of this may be found in the collapse of the vogue of Richard Strauss and Debussy.' From 'The Modern Spirit of Music,' a report on Philip Heseltine's 13 May 1919 talk at the Musical Association, as reported in the Musical Herald, 1 June 1919, p. 187.


[xviii] R. Dunstan, 'Futurist' and 'Modernist' Composers,' p. 268. Dunstan's view was unabashedly negative. He concluded his article with the metaphor 'that while the classic composers gave us solid food with occasional condiments, the others give us condiments with occasional solid food.' Interestingly, Dunstan drew his list of his 'new school' from before the war, and it includes many individuals who used fewer of the elements on the six-point list than Elgar did (Mahler, Rachmaninoff, Max Reger, Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov, etc.). The entire list was one that pre-dated the end of the war, drawn as it was from a May 1916 issue of the American magazine The Etude. The list also notably does not include many British composers (save Percy Grainger and Cyril Scott) who used folk-song as the basis of their composition.


[xx] The singularly dichotomous presentation of Elgar as 'modernist' and 'old fashioned' peppers the pages of the Musical Herald. The illustration by Edmond X. Kapp that graces the cover of Harper-Scott's Edward Elgar: An Extraordinary Life (London: Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, 2007) is a case in point. This illustration appeared in the pages of The Musical News and Herald (the successor to the Musical Herald) in the October 21, 1922 issue (p. 367). The caricature-like image, spare of line, with angular exaggerations worthy of a Max Pechstein expressionist painting, is entirely modernist in its presentation. However, the discussion of Elgar that accompanies this picture (pp. 366) includes in its list of compositions only three: The Black Knight, Sea Pictures, and Gerontius - each of which is heavily indebted to 19th-century Romantic traditions.


[xxii] 'Modern Harmony' [a report on a talk at the Lowestoft Conference of the I.S.M. by Dr. Sawyer], Musical Herald, 1 March 1906, pp. 84-85. Here the identified 'moderns' include Strauss, Elgar, and Debussy.


[xxiv] 'Some Tendencies in Modern Music,' The Edinburgh Review, vol. CCIV, no. CCCXVIII (October 1906), pp. 381-399; this
quotation from p. 390. Within the *Musical Herald*, a shorter excerpt of this selection can be found in the 'Editorial' section of the 1 December 1906 issue, pp. 368-369.


[xxvii] 'Great English Composers' in *The Musical Herald*, 1 January 1914, p. 24. The article is a report on a lecture given by Ernest Fowles at the November 1913 meeting of the Tonic Sol-fa Association. Besides Elgar, the composers discussed were Stemdale Bennet, Arthur Sullivan, Hubert Parry, and Charles Villiers Stanford. Elgar was the only composer within the list to receive such a naturalistic metaphor.

[xxviii] 'Sir Edward Elgar Speaks' in *The Musical Herald*, 1 April 1905, p. 115. In *A Future for English Music and Other Lectures by Edward Elgar* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1968; p. 57), Percy Young transcribes this passage as: 'There are many possible futures. But the one I want to see coming into being is something that shall grow out of our own soil, something broad, noble, chivalrous, healthy and above all, an out-of-door sort of spirit.'

[xxix] See Harper-Scott's *An Extraordinary Life*, p. 84.


[xxxi] In his introductory analysis to the composition, Ernest Newman noted that 'The 'motif' of O'Shaughnessy's poem is the idea that the poets - the music makers and dreamers - are really the creators and inspirers of men and their deeds, and the true makers of history and human societies.' From "The Music Makers,' by Edward Elgar' (in *The Musical Times*, 1 September 1912, pp. 566-570; this quotation from 566.


[xxviii] 'Some Tendencies in Modern Music,' op. cit., p. 399.

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