

Edward Elgar's *Violin Concerto in B Minor*, Op.61
Program Notes for Movement 1 and Companion Works
by Edward Elgar and Fritz Kreisler

by

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Abstract

This study provides an analysis of Edward Elgar's *Violin Concerto in B minor*, Op. 61, first movement, and selected companion works by Edward Elgar and Fritz Kreisler, as performed for a graduate recital in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Music degree.

The document is organized into four chapters, each devoted to a work included on the recital program. Chapter One examines Edward Elgar's *Violin Concerto in B minor*, Op. 61 and includes biographical information on the composer, historical background, and structural and harmonic analyses of the first movement. This chapter also considers the concerto's performance history, and technical-pedagogical considerations. Chapters Two and Three focus on Elgar's *Romance in E minor*, Op. 1, and *Salut d'amour*, Op. 12, respectively, examining their historical backgrounds, theoretical analyses, and stylistic and technical-pedagogical considerations.

Chapter Four explores Fritz Kreisler's *Liebesleid* and includes biographical information on the composer, historical background, theoretical analysis, and stylistic and technical-pedagogical considerations.

Together, these chapters position Elgar's *Violin Concerto* as the central work of the recital while contextualizing it through smaller-scale companion pieces, highlighting historical connections between Elgar and Kreisler and addressing interpretive considerations relevant to the graduate violinist.

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Chapter 1 - *Violin Concerto in B minor, Op. 61,*

Movement I (Allegro)

Edward Elgar

Early Formation and Musical Influences

Edward Elgar (1857–1934) was largely left to himself to discover his music. Violinist William Henry Reed (1876–1942), who later worked closely with Elgar on the concerto, observed that the composer “had no special privileges and no exceptional opportunities.”¹ Although musical guidance was lacking, he grew up within a musical environment. Elgar later recalled that “A stream of music flowed through our house and the shop, and I was all the time bathing in it.”² Influenced by the works of composers such as Vivaldi, Beethoven, Handel, Mozart, Mendelssohn, and Wagner, as well as the writings of Cherubini and Reicha, Elgar developed his musical language. This musical language represents a merger of Brahms and earlier classical traditions on the one hand and Wagnerian influence on the other. Elgar’s music remains grounded in classical compositional techniques while adopting a Wagnerian approach to thematic meaning, in which bass motion, intervals, tonal relationships, and chromaticism are not only expressive but also carry specific meanings and function as generative forces in the construction and development of themes. The result is a synthesis of classical technique with a more programmatic, meaning-driven approach to thematic development.

¹ William H. Reed, *Elgar* (J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd, 1939), 6.

² Percy Scholes, “Interview,” *The Music Student* (London), August 1916, 343.

Elgar's earliest years were spent in a country cottage in Broadheath called *The Firs*. Born on June 2, 1857, he joined his brother Harry and sisters Pollie and Lucy. Elgar's father, William Henry Elgar (1821–1909), was described as a dreamer who disliked sustained work and showed little inclination to guide his son's musical ambitions. Elgar later recalled his father's casual attitude toward labor: "My father used to ride a thoroughbred mare when he went to tune a piano. He never did a stroke of work in his life."³ Though an accomplished piano tuner, church organist, and second violinist, William's musical life was governed largely by personal inclination. Elgar's boyhood friend, Hubert Leicester, similarly remembered that "E.'s mother always worried as to where the money was coming from; his father taking life very easily, enjoying his rides into the country for piano-tuning, and the proceeds of each visit more than likely swallowed up by the unnecessary expense incurred in getting there."⁴

William took his son on piano-tuning rounds, during which Edward observed him scribbling musical ideas and attempted to imitate them himself. Leicester recalled one such moment during a rainstorm, when William and Edward waited together, and Elgar attempted to write down a tune "at four or five . . . very puzzled because he could not get it right," prompting his father's remark that "music is written on five lines, not four . . ."⁵

With the birth of Jo in 1859, the family outgrew *The Firs* and moved to Worcester. In 1863, Elgar's father opened the Elgar Bros. Pianoforte & Music Warehouse with his brother Henry. The family (including Frank born in 1861) settled in rooms above the High Street music shop. Edward gained access to a constant stream of scores and instruments.

³ Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life* (Oxford University Press, 1984), 4.

⁴ Carice Elgar Blake, "Notes of Conversations with Hubert Leicester," Cadbury Research Library: Special Collections, 1935.

⁵ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 21.

Elgar's mother, Ann Greening Elgar (1830–1906), was the daughter of a farmer and deeply loved the countryside, instilling in Elgar a sensitivity to nature. Elgar's sister Lucy later recalled their mother's belief that "every flower loves its life."⁶ Although Ann possessed little musical ability, she had a deep love of poetry. Lucy recalled a childhood scene with their mother, "I well recollect how beautifully she read and recited poetry, and would often gather us round her with the baby Edward on her knee, and tell us sweet stories . . ."⁷ From his mother, Elgar learned how to write and interpret poetry, a skill that he would later use in his compositions.

Elgar's first instrument was the piano. He received piano lessons from Miss Sarah Ricketts, a teacher at the Catholic girls' school he attended with his sisters. In addition to playing the piano, Elgar spent time exploring the musical scores in his father's library. He remembered, "My father had the complete set of Vivaldi's Concertos & from the cembalo part of this I made my first infantile petticoated attempts to play from figured bass . . ."⁸ An emphasis on descending bass-line motion was among the earliest characteristics of Elgar's musical language.

Elgar soon grew dissatisfied with the piano's expressive limitations. Reflecting later, he observed that "The rigid piano is capable of only two qualities of tone simultaneously in the hands of a moderate player . . ."⁹ In a quest for more variety in tone color, Elgar turned to the church organ. Elgar begged his father to let him sit in the organ loft. Elgar recalled, "The organ-loft then attracted me, and from the time I was about seven or eight I used to go and sit by my father and watch him play. After a time I began to play myself."¹⁰ In time, even the organ proved

⁶ Lucy Elgar, "Reflections," Manuscript, British Library, 1912, MS Mus. 1843, British Library.

⁷ Elgar, "Reflections."

⁸ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 23.

⁹ Edward Elgar, *A Future for English Music and Other Lectures*, ed. Percy M. Young (Dennis Dobson, 1968), 237.

¹⁰ Rudolph de Cordova, "Illustrated Interviews: LXXXI - Dr. Edward Elgar," *The Strand Magazine*, May 1904, 538.

too limited. While capable of sustaining sound, Elgar observed that it offered only three or four varieties of color.

Even though the organ ultimately proved insufficient, the church environment remained formative. He absorbed church music and books from the church library. Elgar remembered, “I drew my first ideas of music from the Cathedral, from books borrowed from the music library, when I was eight, nine, or ten. They were barbarously printed in eight different clefs, all of which I learnt before I was twelve . . .”¹¹

Elgar found the tonal expression he had been searching for at the Three Choirs Festival in Worcester in 1866. His father, engaged as a second violinist, brought Edward to the festival, where the young composer heard a full orchestra for the first time. Elgar later reflected on the profound impact of this experience, writing, “If I had that orchestra under my own control & given a free hand I could make it play whatever I liked.”¹² Elgar’s dream of composing for orchestra was born.

One of Elgar’s first surviving sketches was made in 1867 while visiting Broadheath. He sketched a *Humoreske* whose musical features would recur throughout his career. Written in a jig-like rhythm, the piece is built on a recurring pattern of fifths and fourths in the bass, suggesting string writing for cello and bass. This bass figure relies on downward stepwise motion. The music unfolds through points of arrival that accumulate into larger sequences. Elgar also introduces accidentals into this work, adding chromatic color. The piece concludes on F#, a pitch adjacent to the home key of G, yet harmonically distant. This use of repeated fourth

¹¹ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 28.

¹² Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 31.

intervals and exploratory shifts to closely related but unexpected keys would remain central to Elgar's musical language.

Soon Elgar began attending Littleton House Catholic Academy for boys. He continued to teach himself composition, later reflecting, "I am self-taught in the matter of harmony, counterpoint, form, and, in short, the whole of the 'mystery' of music . . . To-day there are all sorts of books to make the study of harmony and orchestration pleasant. In my young days they were repellent. But I read them and I still exist. The first was Catel, and that was followed by Cherubini."¹³

Elgar obtained a copy of Anton Reicha's *Orchestral Primer*. In its opening pages, Reicha accords the highest status to the violin: "Of all the instruments used in the orchestra, the violin is the most useful and important . . . The violin may be played in any key, and that with almost equal facility; this, and the rapid execution which it admits of, has gained it the title of the *king of instruments*."¹⁴ Two months after Elgar read Reicha's *Orchestral Primer*, the Three Choirs Festival returned to Worcester. Elgar attended orchestral rehearsals of Handel's *Messiah* and when he heard "*O thou that tellest*," he resolved to learn the violin. That night, Elgar begged his father to lend him a violin, and he stayed up late teaching himself "*O thou that tellest*." Elgar asked the Worcester Glee Club leader, Fred Spray, to give him lessons. After six months, Spray had taught him all he could, and Elgar soon joined his father in the club performances.

At the age of fifteen, Elgar wrote his earliest surviving dated and completed work, *The Language of Flowers*, a song setting of a poem he wrote about the human life cycle expressed through flowers. That year, he also completed his schooling and expressed a desire to study

¹³ de Cordova, "Illustrated Interviews: LXXXI - Dr. Edward Elgar," 539.

¹⁴ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 43.

music in Germany. The death of his brother Harry in 1864 left Elgar the eldest son and placed him under pressure to enter a profession. His family decided that he should pursue law, and he entered the office of a family friend.

A year later, Elgar left the law office to work in his family's music shop. Although this was not the musical career he had envisioned, he would be surrounded by music. At the shop, he had access to the scores of Beethoven's symphonies. Elgar later recalled, ". . . I remember distinctly the day I was able to buy the Pastoral Symphony. I stuffed my pockets with bread and cheese and went out into the fields to study it."¹⁵ Drawing on themes from Beethoven's symphonies, Elgar composed a *Credo* in which he experimented with tonal shifts. He opened with material in A minor derived from the *Seventh Symphony*, then followed it with a second subject in A major, moving through F major, F minor, and Ab major, before arriving at a key that is physically close yet tonally remote.

In May 1874, Elgar was playing first violin in Mendelssohn's *Elijah* with the Worcester Philharmonic Society. He was struck by the use of recurring themes to represent characters and ideas. This encounter introduced him to the principle of leitmotivic writing, before he encountered Wagner's operas. That moment would come a few years later, when Elgar heard Hans Richter (1834–1916) conduct the *Meistersinger* Overture at the Crystal Palace in London. In the overture, Wagner presents three independent themes in succession and later combines them in the recapitulation, a strategy that particularly fascinated Elgar.

¹⁵ de Cordova, "Illustrated Interviews: LXXXI - Dr. Edward Elgar," 540.

Post-School Musical Inspiration: Performance, Travel, and Relationships

Following his earliest influences and the initial development of his musical style, Elgar entered a post-school period shaped less by book and score study and more by hands-on experience. Working as a teacher, performer, conductor, and composer, he was immersed in music-making and inspired to compose by his performance, travel, and personal relationships.

Elgar began giving violin lessons. This inspired him to compose his first work for violin and piano, *Reminiscences*. Sketching between lessons, he built the work around a principal theme reminiscent of Beethoven's *Seventh Symphony*. Two days after completing the piece, Elgar heard the German violin virtuoso August Wilhelmj (1845–1908) in Worcester, performing Ernst's *Airs hongrois*. Elgar's close friend and violinist Reed later recalled the impact of this performance: "From his account of this affair Wilhelmj must have had a colossal tone; and his attack on the opening tenth on the G string must have been hair-raising. It excited Elgar to such an extent that he never forgot it; and when he showed how it was done, I felt thankful that he was content to perform upon an imaginary violin and not on mine; for the movement would have cut any ordinary violin in half."¹⁶

Wilhelmj's performance prompted Elgar to seek lessons from Adolphe Pollitzer (1832–1900) in London. With funds for only five lessons, he was able to address only basic techniques. Although Pollitzer urged him to remain in London, Elgar later explained, "I had become enamoured of a country life, and would not give up the prospect of a certain living by playing and teaching in Worcester on the chance of only a possible success which I might make as a

¹⁶ William H. Reed, *Elgar As I Knew Him* (Oxford University Press, 1989), 73–74.

soloist in London.”¹⁷ Recognizing Elgar’s interests, Pollitzer introduced him to conductor August Manns (1825–1907), giving him access to the Crystal Palace concerts. Within Victorian and Edwardian culture, the Crystal Palace became a central venue for mass public concerts, reflecting Victorian ideals of cultural improvement and Edwardian confidence in national artistic identity. Originally erected for the Great Exhibition of 1851, it embodied a new conception of music as a public, educational experience for a growing middle-class audience and, under Manns, promoted both continental masterworks and emerging British composers.

Elgar joined the Birmingham orchestra and helped found the Amateur Instrumental Society. He learned the bassoon to participate in the Worcester woodwind quintet and composed works for the ensemble. Elgar was also appointed director of music at the County Lunatic Asylum at Powick, where the medical staff formed a staff ensemble. Elgar created extensive arrangements for whatever instruments were available in those ensembles. He composed a set of quadrilles for Powick titled *Paris* inspired by his first trip abroad. Throughout his life, travel would consistently be a source of inspiration.

In 1878, the Three Choirs Festival returned to Worcester, where Elgar attended rehearsals of Mozart’s *Symphony in G minor*. Inspired by the performance, he sketched his first attempt at a symphony, later recalling that he, “. . . ruled a score for the same instruments and with the same number of bars as Mozart’s G minor Symphony, and in that framework I wrote a symphony, following as far as possible the same outline in the themes and the same modulation.”¹⁸

The same year Elgar traveled to Germany to visit Helen Weaver, who was from Worcester but was studying in Leipzig. The two soon became engaged. After his return, Elgar

¹⁷ de Cordova, “Illustrated Interviews: LXXXI - Dr. Edward Elgar,” 540.

¹⁸ de Cordova, “Illustrated Interviews: LXXXI - Dr. Edward Elgar,” 539.

composed his first orchestral work, *Intermezzo moresque*, drawing on a Spanish style popular abroad. When Helen reconsidered her engagement to a musician from Worcester, Elgar composed *Sevillana* to reassure her. *Sevillana* is another Spanish-inspired work built around three principal themes. He showed the work to Pollitzer, who brought it to Manns, leading to its performance at the Crystal Palace. Despite the success of Elgar's first composition on a London stage, Helen decided to end the engagement. The loss left a lasting emotional mark on Elgar.

Around the same time, Elgar experienced another setback. After hearing Wilhelmj perform Beethoven's *Violin Concerto*, he sought out Pollitzer for an assessment of his violin abilities. Elgar asked Pollitzer, "Shall I ever be first class?" Elgar asked. Pollitzer replied, "You will be very good." When Elgar pressed the question again, Pollitzer was forced to answer no.¹⁹

The emotional strain of rejection led Elgar to get away to Scotland, where he composed *Idylle* for violin and piano. The work moves quickly from G major to A minor (the relative minor of the subdominant, C major) and emphasizes subdominant and plagal motion. The plagal area would come to signify nostalgia and reflection in Elgar's music, becoming a defining characteristic of his style.

He was at home for the 1884 Worcester Festival where Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904) conducted his *Stabat Mater*. Impressed, he wrote to Buck, "I wish you could hear Dvořák's music. It is simply ravishing, so tuneful & clever & the orchestration is wonderful; no matter how few instruments he uses it never sounds thin."²⁰ Elgar was resolved to pursue more composition. He left the Powick Orchestra and traveled to London, where he secured his first publication, the *Romance in E minor* for violin and piano, issued as his Op. 1 by the German

¹⁹ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 106.

²⁰ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 109.

firm B. Schott's Söhne. He also completed a piano trio, a suite for orchestra, and a suite for strings.

One of Elgar's piano students, Caroline Alice Roberts (Alice), came from a higher social class. Her father had been a major-general in India, and she lived in Worcestershire with her widowed mother. Inspired by Alice, he composed a short piece titled *Liebesgruß* ("Love's Greeting"), named in German because she was fluent in the language. When the work was later published, it appeared under the French title *Salut d'amour*. Elgar dedicated the piece to "Carice," a blending of the names Caroline and Alice, and presented it to her. Shortly thereafter, the two were engaged. Alice's family disapproved of her decision to marry a musician from Worcester and disinherited her. The couple married quietly in London.

Professional Necessity and the Formation of Compositional Practice

Elgar's marriage was a challenging new phase in his creative life, shaped by financial necessity. Unable to earn a living through instrumental composition alone, he was compelled to rely on teaching and composing choral works and part-songs, the most financially dependable musical forms in Victorian England.

Edgar and Alice, facing financial pressures, returned to Malvern. The countryside inspired Elgar to sketch a choral setting of Longfellow's *The Black Knight*. For immediate income, he turned to smaller part-songs which were published by Novello & Co.

In 1890, Elgar received a welcome invitation to compose an orchestral overture for the Worcester Three Choirs Festival. Elgar chose *Froissart* as the subject. Seeking inspiration, he attended two performances of Wagner's *Die Meistersinger*. Like Wagner, Elgar structured the overture around three themes. The main theme is fragmented, chromatic, and includes contrasting masculine and feminine figures. The tonal plan is unconventional, moving from C

minor toward the subdominant F, which unexpectedly emerges as F major. Elgar sketched his ideas on separate sheets, experimenting freely before arranging them into a final order. British historian Charles Sanford Terry (1864–1936) later reflected on Elgar’s working method, “. . . There was a great mass of fluctuating material which *might* fit into the work as it developed in his mind to finality—for it had been created in the same ‘oven’ which had cast them all.”²¹

Upon completing the overture, Elgar immediately expressed doubt about its reception. Writing to a former student, he confessed, “My Overture is finished & I do not think will be liked but that must take its chance . . . I have always been wrong hitherto—at home.”²² This sense of doubt after completing a composition would recur throughout Elgar’s career.

On August 14, 1890, Elgar and Alice welcomed their daughter, Carice. With a wife and newborn child to support, Elgar relied on teaching as a source of steady income. He gave private lessons in Worcester on Mondays, taught at The Mount, a girls’ school in Malvern, on Tuesdays, and at the Worcester Girls’ High School on Wednesdays, while continuing to conduct the Ladies’ Orchestral Class on weekends. During this period, Elgar recorded in his diary that he “practised Violin very much.”²³ He made his first sketch for a violin concerto which he ultimately disliked and destroyed.

Elgar disliked teaching and described it to the critic Robert J. Buckley (1847-1938): “to teach the right pupils was a pleasure, but teaching in general was like turning a grindstone with a dislocated shoulder.”²⁴ According to the headmistress of The Mount, Miss Rosa Burley (1874-1954), “The violin lessons were unpopular and the girls who took them a dreary little company

²¹ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 145.

²² Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 151–52.

²³ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 155.

²⁴ Reed, *Elgar As I Knew Him*, 47.

who sawed away to the general discomfort in distant rooms . . .”²⁵ Seeking relief from teaching, Elgar purchased a fine old Naples violin and composed *La capricieuse*. Burley reflected on Elgar’s conflict: “The one thing he wanted to do in life, the be-all and end-all of his existence, was to write great music. For this he had lived, worked, and suffered, had abandoned the shelter of safe employment, had risked the displeasure of his parents and had plunged headlong into a difficult and uncertain way of life. . . . And yet, in spite of this urge, in spite of the glorious possibilities which he knew to be almost within his reach, he had come to a standstill and could do nothing.”²⁶

Elgar’s opportunity to return to large-scale composition came through conductor Hugh Blair (1864-1932). Blair promised to produce *The Black Knight* if it was completed. In Scene 1 of *The Black Knight*, Elgar composed two contrasting themes, one with descending motion and the other with sequences. In the second scene, he reframed thematic material as an opposition between diatonic and chromatic material. Moore observed, “The contrast of diatonic and chromatic was to be used throughout Edward’s creative life as a paradigm of good and evil, hope and doubt.”²⁷

Elgar composed whenever opportunity permitted. He wrote part-songs, choral works, and an organ sonata. While Elgar was working on the *Organ Sonata*, Burley documented his compositional process:

“To begin with there would be a period of great exaltation over the conception of the work and the commission of the Festival Committee. This was always followed by a period of black despair over the intractability of the material and the utter impossibility of ever getting it into a satisfactory shape. An immense amount of encouragement, accompanied by assurances that he was the only person able to do it and reminders that it

²⁵ Rosa Burley and Frank C. Carruthers, *Edward Elgar: The Record of a Friendship* (Barrie & Jenkins, 1972), 21.

²⁶ Burley and Carruthers, *Edward Elgar: The Record of a Friendship*, 38.

²⁷ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 163.

must at all costs be done, had now to be expended in order to shift him into the next phase which was one of increasing hope and enthusiasm. Tunes, contrapuntal patterns and sequences had begun to suggest themselves for various sections of the work and would start to build up almost without his conscious control into something like the completed whole.”²⁸

In 1895, Elgar received a commission from the Three Choirs Festival, for which he composed *Lux Christi*, and another from the North Staffordshire Festival, which resulted in *King Olaf*. For these choral works Elgar assigned specific musical themes to dramatic elements. Elgar played his themes and for Burley who commented on his process: “He did not begin at page one and write the work in the order in which it would be played. He was more likely to start with a finale and build up each section in reverse order until he reached the opening.”²⁹

The reception of both works was positive. The critic Joseph Bennett (1831–1911) remarked that, “Behind all his works lies the power of living talent, the charm of individuality in art, and the pathos of one who, in utter simplicity, pours forth that which he feels constrained to say.”³⁰ The publisher Novello I and Co. invited him to contribute two works for the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria: a march and a cantata. When Elgar submitted sketches of the *Imperial March*, Novello responded with a critique of Elgar’s phrasing: “. . . It might be adversely criticized on account of the fact that it contains so many short phrases of two bars & even one bar: & we are of the opinion that it would be enormously improved if you could remodel the march with a view to including in it phrases say sometimes of eight bars.”³¹ Despite Novello’s critique, Elgar continued to favor short two-bar phrases.

²⁸ Burley and Carruthers, *Edward Elgar: The Record of a Friendship*, 89.

²⁹ Burley and Carruthers, *Edward Elgar: The Record of a Friendship*, 89.

³⁰ Joseph Bennett, *The Daily Telegraph* (London), October 31, 1896.

³¹ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 220–21.

On October 21, 1898, after a day of teaching, Elgar began sketching at the piano. Alice noted the melody and remarked, “Edward, that is a good tune.”³² From this theme, Elgar conceived a set of variations portraying his friends, with the final variation serving as an autobiographical portrait. Elgar built his theme from a descending bass line and titled it *Enigma*, later writing that “. . . it expressed, when written (in 1898) my sense of the loneliness of the artist. . .”³³ The work premiered in London and was widely admired.

Upon the completion of the *Enigma Variations* he turned to smaller projects, including *Chanson de matin* for violin and piano and *Sea Pictures* for the Norwich Festival. Jaeger encouraged him to write a work for the violinist Eugene Ysaÿe (1858–1931) but Elgar was offered payment to compose *The Dream of Gerontius* for the Birmingham Festival. The premiere was a disaster because the choir was unprepared for the work’s complexity. Elgar expressed his anguish: “I have worked hard for forty years & at the last, Providence denies me a decent hearing of my work; so I submit—I always said God was against art & I still believe it.” The following night, his despair deepened still further: “I really wish I were dead over and over again, but I dare not, for the sake of my relatives, do the job myself.”³⁴ Novello refused to pay royalties and deemed the work a failure. The critic Ernest Newman (1868–1959) argued that Elgar’s festival work was holding back his writing, “If the road to success lies through the bog of the Festivals, a composer must needs take that path; but he cannot do so without wasting a good deal of his time and strength as an artist . . .”³⁵

³² Basil Maine, *Elgar His Life and Works* (G. Bell & Sons, 1933), 101.

³³ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 259.

³⁴ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 334.

³⁵ Ernest Newman, *The Speaker* (London), December 21, 1901, 231.

After Queen Victoria's death in 1901, Parratt invited Elgar to write a Coronation March and Ode. Elgar composed two marches which he titled *Pomp and Circumstance*. The London premiere propelled him into the national spotlight. Elgar later recalled the encores: "I had to play it again . . . merely to restore order, I played it a third time." Fame didn't seem to improve Elgar's mood. At a dinner following Elgar's successful performance, Newman also recalled Alice tactfully redirected the conversation away from suicide, whispering that Elgar was often speaking of "making an end of himself." Newman later observed, "I have the clearest memories, visual and mental, of the Elgar of that first period of significant change. He gave me even then the impression of an exceptionally nervous, self-divided, and secretly unhappy man . . ."³⁶

The performance of the marches was followed by the premiere of the *Coronation Ode* and an arrangement of the National Anthem. The concert was attended by the royal court and foreign ambassadors. Although the subsequent coronation was postponed due to the King's illness, this premiere had already secured Elgar's national fame. With fame would come the financial freedom for Elgar continued to pursue his dream of composing large-scale orchestral works.

Culmination of a Symphonic Vision and a Turning Point

With less need to teach or compose for income, Elgar was freer to follow his artistic dreams. He would compose four monumental works: *The Apostles*, his largest choral conception, and the three major orchestral works, the First Symphony, the Violin Concerto, and the Second Symphony.

³⁶ Ernest Newman, *The Sunday Times* (London), October 30, 1955.

Elgar decided to compose an oratorio, *The Apostles*, for the 1903 Birmingham Festival, envisioning it as a large-scale trilogy comparable to Wagner's *Ring* cycle. However, his new celebrity status brought disruptions. He received constant invitations to conduct and compose for orchestral and festival performances. His social calendar was full, with dinners attended by dukes and duchesses.

Five months before the premiere of *The Apostles*, the work was only about halfway finished. In *The Apostles*, Elgar was composing longer more elaborate themes. As a result, character themes were dense and difficult to distinguish. This marked a departure from Wagner's programmatic music, which favored shorter motives that could be easily combined. In this work, Elgar seems torn between telling a programmatic story and writing absolute music. Biographer Jerrold Moore (1914–1994) identifies absolute music as the primary driving force behind Elgar's music:

“For Edward the musical abstraction—whenever, wherever, however it came—was first. . . This appeal to the music first showed the fundamental difference between Edward and Wagner. It showed why, despite a lifelong fascination with Wagner's motive scheme and rich orchestration, the genius of Brahms continued to speak to him. It was why he found it so difficult to accept any proposal for writing an opera. It was why he still wanted above all things to write the Symphony.”³⁷

Due to time constraints, Edward had to abandon the third part of the *Apostles*. But the premiere of *The Apostles Part I and II* sold out. *The Mail* reported “It conveyed a complete, a triumphant success for Dr. Elgar, who was three times recalled, the audience, band, and chorus giving vent to their feelings by a perfect storm of applause and cheering.”³⁸

³⁷ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 382.

³⁸ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 416.

Encouraged by the tremendous success, Alice decided to plan an Elgar Festival. Needing a new work for the occasion, Elgar finally turned to his symphony. He composed a motive that suggests a gentle rising-and-falling motion. The work took shape around a *nobilmente* theme built from descending steps. After completing the sketch, Elgar decided instead to compose an overture for the festival, *In the South*, inspired by a Mediterranean journey.

The Sunday Times announced that the King and Queen would attend the opening concert of the Elgar Festival, noting: “. . . That in the first place special honour should be paid to Dr Elgar is right and fitting, for he is at once the foremost and the most individual of the younger generations of our composers . . .”³⁹ The festival was a success, and it was followed by a knighthood and several honorary doctorates. Novello offered Elgar a contract to publish all his works.

Elgar was commissioned to write a new work for an all-Elgar concert with the London Symphony Orchestra. Jaeger hoped he would produce a short piece, but Elgar was suddenly inspired by a melody he had heard years earlier in Wales. Reflecting on his inspiration, Elgar explained, “An idea comes to me, perhaps when walking. On return I write it down. Weeks or months after I may take it up and write out the movement of which it had become the germ.”⁴⁰ Elgar returned to G major and G minor, opening with falling fourths. The Welsh theme emerged as the second subject, and the exposition unfolded as a series of variants. Unusually, Elgar reintroduced the Welsh theme in the coda. Elgar had at long last begun his symphony.

Elgar paused work to build a bunny house for Carice’s rabbit, Peter, to embark on a lucrative tour of the United States and to cruise the Mediterranean as a guest of the Navy, a trip

³⁹ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 434.

⁴⁰ Percy Scholes, “Elgar at Severn House - II,” *The Music Student* (London), August 1916, 347.

which inspired *In Smyrna*. Elgar returned from his travels in time to attend the 1905 Norwich Festival. The violinist Fritz Kreisler (1875–1962) was performing at the festival and eagerly anticipated meeting Elgar. Speaking to the press, Kreisler declared,

“If you want to know whom I consider to be the greatest living composer, I say without hesitation, Elgar. Russia, Scandinavia, my own Fatherland, or any other nation can produce nothing like him. I say this to please no one; it is my own conviction. Elgar will overshadow everybody. He is on a different level. I place him on an equal footing with my idols, Beethoven and Brahms. He is of the same aristocratic family. His invention, his orchestration, his harmony, his grandeur, it is wonderful. And it is all pure, unaffected music. I wish Elgar would write something for the violin. He could do so, and it would be certainly something effective.”⁴¹

Flattered by Kreisler’s interest, Elgar began composing his violin concerto. Elgar chose B minor, a key he had recently used for Mary Magdalene in *The Apostles*. He had also recently heard Camille Saint-Saëns’s *Violin Concerto in B minor* at the London Music Festival, performed by Ysaÿe, which most likely influenced his choice of key. He sketched several ideas. The first sketch presents a theme marked “Allegro Orch.” Elgar shaped the second theme from his familiar descending fourths, followed by a third theme in G major.

Elgar interrupted his work to tour with the London Symphony Orchestra as conductor, performing Brahms’s *Third Symphony*. Elgar delivered a lecture on Brahms’s recurring themes, “A curious ‘motto’ theme: introducing the first subject, running through the whole first movement and knitting it together . . . The ‘motto’ theme reappears in the last movement twelve bars from the end – the first subject proper of the first movement reappears in the last nine bars from the end.”⁴² This strategy of returning themes was becoming central to Elgar’s own work.

⁴¹ “Hereford Times,” *The Hereford Times* (Hereford), October 7, 1905.

⁴² Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 473.

Elgar's discussion of Brahms's symphonic form led him into a broader debate about absolute music. Elgar stated, "The form of the [Third] Symphony is strictly orthodox, and it is a piece of absolute music . . . it is a piece of music which calls up certain sets of emotions in each individual hearer. That is the height of music."⁴³ Newman challenged Elgar's claim that absolute music was superior. He asked pointedly, "Why does Sir Edward choose to work in a medium that his judgement condemns?"⁴⁴

In a following lecture Elgar argued with Newman, ". . . absolute music the real staple of our art. . . . I hold that the Symphony without a program is the highest development of art."⁴⁵ In a later interview when Elgar was pressed again about the programmatic nature of his music, he responded, "I will never write 'program music,' never limit my musical ideas by forcing them to express what they cannot express."⁴⁶

The deadline for *The Apostles Part III* was fast approaching. Dora Penny (1864–1964), a close friend of Elgar and Alice, was at home with them when Elgar went into a composing fit. He locked himself into his study while the ladies waited by the fire. It was 1:15 a.m. when he called them in to show them his work which he played until 3:00 p.m. Elgar had opened *The Apostles III* with an orchestral prelude to deliberately offsets its programmatic content. Elgar also returned to his practice of layering multiple themes and motives. A gospel theme is followed by a theme associated with Peter. Triads and diatonic sequences symbolizing new faith resolve into descending steps in the bass representing penitence. He set the Lord's Prayer in chromatic, unharmonized octaves, symbolizing many people speaking together as a single voice. For the

⁴³ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 472.

⁴⁴ Ernest Newman, *The Manchester Guardian* (Manchester), November 9, 1905.

⁴⁵ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 480.

⁴⁶ *Chicago Daily Tribune* (Chicago), April 6, 1907.

Angel of Agony and Judas, Elgar employs a falling seventh. Chromatic leaps are used to suggest bewilderment.

Elgar was depressed and worried because the work was still only half-way finished. He decided to give up. Alice intervened with a practical solution. She offered Birmingham half of *The Apostles Part III* renamed *The Kingdom* and promised the second later, which they accepted. When *The Kingdom* was performed, the *Birmingham Daily Post* reported: “The Town Hall never presented a more crowded aspect at a Festival than it did this morning. There was not a corner in the great hall that was not occupied, right from the organ loft to the extreme end of the great gallery.”⁴⁷

The critic Bennett remarked on the popularity of Elgar’s works, “. . . Sir Edward Elgar, by a happy stroke of fortune, captured his countrymen just as they had become in sufficient measure sensible of the modern spirit . . .”⁴⁸ But Newman called on Elgar to abandon the oratorio altogether, arguing that “The wisest thing for him to do now is to abandon the idea of a third oratorio on the subject and turn his mind to other themes. These may bring him new inspiration and a new idiom; at present he is simply riding post-haste along the road that leads to nowhere.”⁴⁹

Elgar’s fiftieth birthday marked a turning point in his compositions. Elgar received a birthday gift from his uncle Frank: an old family chest. Elgar’s biographer Moore remarked, “It was almost as though the family chest opened again the old play of childhood—to show the woodland glade intersected by the stream, with old age waiting on the opposite shore to be lured

⁴⁷ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 504.

⁴⁸ Joseph Bennett, *The Daily Telegraph* (London), October 3, 1906.

⁴⁹ Ernest Newman, *The Birmingham Daily* (Birmingham), March 22, 1907.

back to ‘poor fairyland.’”⁵⁰ Feeling nostalgic Edgar arranged some of his earliest music for orchestra. The first work was *The Wand of Youth*. The music is predominantly diatonic, shaped by long phrases, as if returning to a simpler, purer world. Moore suggests, “It sang in its long phrases as if the chromatic threats which had risen steadily through the past half-century did not exist.”⁵¹ In Elgar’s music, diatonic writing increasingly represented the past, while chromaticism suggested the disruptive forces of the present and future.

Elgar’s nostalgic expressive language reflects the broader social and cultural conditions of industrial Britain. The Industrial Revolution and rapid urbanization produced widespread social dislocation within a single lifetime, fostering a longing for homeland, childhood, and a perceived unity of the past. Between 1873 and 1914, economic depression, unemployment, and declining exports weakened Britain’s global position as Germany and the United States overtook it in manufacturing. Political and military anxieties intensified through the Boer War and the rise of the German navy. At the same time, the traditional aristocracy declined, as movements such as socialism, trade unionism, Irish nationalism, and women’s suffrage challenged the political system.

Within this climate, nostalgia emerged as a powerful cultural response. Victorian musical ideals emphasized large-scale public forms, confidence in progress, and music’s role in expressing national and imperial identity through clear tonality and formal coherence. These qualities were reflected in Elgar’s early works such as *The Dream of Gerontius*, *King Olaf*, and *Caractacus*. Edwardian ideals, by contrast, increasingly turned toward nostalgia and the past, particularly the countryside and childhood. In *The Wand of Youth*, Elgar explicitly returns to

⁵⁰ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 513–14.

⁵¹ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 516.

childhood innocence, while in his later absolute music, thematic return and diatonic stability suggest a yearning for emotional connection. In this way, Elgar's music articulates a distinctly British form of nostalgia, responding to a society struggling to adapt to rapid modern change.

Seemingly avoiding his larger ambitions, Elgar distracted himself with hobbies including golf and chemistry. Reed later observed that "Elgar would retire and ease the burden of his destiny as a composer by pretending to be a chemist."⁵² The conductor Hans Richter (1843–1916) urged Elgar to complete the symphony. Writing to Richter, Elgar confessed, ". . . I think my work in the world is over."⁵³

Shortly afterward, Elgar took a vacation to Rome and finally felt inspired to write out the first subject of his symphony. Writing to Newman about the opening theme, he explained, ". . . the opening theme is intended to be simple &, in intention, noble & elevating . . ."⁵⁴ The opening theme gives way to a contrasting Allegro in D minor, a tritone from the opening Ab major. The opening theme is Maestoso, diatonic, stepwise, and grounded in noble simplicity, while the answering theme is *appassionato*, chromatic, and driven by rising triadic motion. This symbolic opposition had begun to appear in earlier works, where heaven was diatonic and earth was chromatic. Christ was also diatonic and Judas was chromatic.

In this symphony, Elgar appears to make a new, deliberate statement about diatonic and chromatic language. Diatonic writing functions as noble, stable, and reflective of the past, while chromaticism represents challenge, tension, and the pressures of the modern world. Moore writes, "The music which made such an appeal was clearly saying something the people

⁵² Reed, *Elgar As I Knew Him*, 38.

⁵³ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 518.

⁵⁴ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 520.

profoundly wanted to hear. What they heard in *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*, and what they were to hear in the Symphony, was the need to hold fast to the old ideal—together with the equal need to test that ideal by the sharpest of future tests.”⁵⁵

After sketching the symphony’s contrasting themes, Elgar turned to smaller compositions and did not return to the symphony until after his return from Rome. As Elgar worked on the symphony, a close friend and patron Frank Schuster (1852-1927) wrote to Alice, “I have not seen him in such health of body and mind for years! I think it is in great part due to that superb Symphony, the composition of which *should* make any man radiant beyond measure . . .”⁵⁶

Elgar took a break to visit his Worcester home. This may have inspired the pastoral theme of the second movement which suggests a flowing river. The river theme is disrupted by triplet figures and chromatic motion. A second diatonic theme emerges as the Adagio’s contrasting subject, only to dissolve once more into chromaticism. In the final movement, the C#-G tritone is absorbed into diatonic stepwise motion, symbolically merging chromaticism and diatonicism.

Writing to Newman about the symphony, Elgar reflected on its meaning and intention: “As to the ‘intention’: I have no tangible poetic or other basis: I feel that unless a man sets out to depict or illustrate some definite thing, all music—absolute music, I think it is called—must be (even if he does not know it himself) a reflex, or picture, or elucidation of his own life, or, at least, the music is necessarily coloured by the life.” He continued by suggesting that the listener might “identify his own life’s experiences with the music as he hears it unfold . . . pride, despair, anger, peace, & the thousand & one things that occur between the first page and the last, I prefer

⁵⁵ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 520.

⁵⁶ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 541.

the listener to draw what he can from the sounds he hears.”⁵⁷ He also wrote to the critic Walford Davies (1869-1941) about the symphony, “There is no programme beyond a wide experience of human life with a great charity (love) and a massive hope in the future.”⁵⁸

After completing the symphony, Elgar went to bed for the day. Soon after delivering the score, he remarked that he was “rather out of heart with the world in general.”⁵⁹ The premiere in Manchester was poorly attended, due to a foggy night. But the critics who attended admired the work. One critic declared, “It is quite plain that here we have perhaps the finest masterpiece of its type that ever came from the pen of an English composer,”⁶⁰ while another observed, “It bears out a contention I have often made, that Elgar’s genius lies in the direction of orchestral music rather than towards choral composition.”⁶¹

The critic Samuel Langford (1863–1932) went further, suggesting that Elgar had finally resolved the tension between absolute and programmatic music. He wrote, “But now at last, he has tackled the problem in earnest; he has put away his self-accusation of dilettantism and has written a Symphony . . .”⁶² Newman completed the assessment by writing that “. . . the Symphony is genuinely new Elgar, new both in feeling, in idiom, and in workmanship.”⁶³

Although the critical response was positive after the Manchester premiere, the symphony was better attended at the London premiere. Richter opened the rehearsal by declaring, “. . . let

⁵⁷ Edward Elgar, “Letter to Ernest Newman,” in *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life*, by Jerrold Northrop Moore (Oxford University Press, 1984), 537.

⁵⁸ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 540.

⁵⁹ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 543.

⁶⁰ “The Musical Event of the Year,” *The Daily Mail* (London), December 4, 1908.

⁶¹ Edward A. Baughan, *The Daily News* (London), December 4, 1908.

⁶² Samuel Langford, *The Manchester Guardian* (Manchester), December 4, 1908.

⁶³ Ernest Newman, *The Birmingham Daily Post* (Birmingham), December 4, 1908.

us now rehearse the greatest symphony of modern times, written by the greatest modern composer . . .”⁶⁴ The crowd proved too large for the hall. Jaeger recalled, “After that superb Coda (Finale) the audience seemed to rise at E. when he appeared. I *never* heard such frantic applause after any novelty or such shouting. Five times he had to appear before they were pacified. People stood up and even *on* their seats to get a view.”⁶⁵ There were two more packed London performances.

After the premiere Elgar was characteristically depressed. In a Christmas letter to Schuster’s sister he complained about the symphony, taxes, and carolers: “. . . I wish it uplifted me—I have just paid rent, Land tax, Income Tax & a variety of other things due to-day & there are children yapping at the door.”⁶⁶ Hoping to lift Elgar’s spirits, Alice arranged a trip to Italy.

It was in Careggi, Italy, that Elgar began sketching his violin concerto again. Alice wrote to a close friend Alice Stuart-Wortley (1848–1920), “I trust you will hear E.’s impressions, tonally, someday—some days we hear them already.”⁶⁷ Elgar started with a new variation for the solo violin and ideas for the slow movement.

Elgar soon distracted himself with other compositions. A part song based on a medieval poem, *Go, Song of Mine*, was set in B minor and incorporated a variation of the concerto’s opening theme. While traveling home through Venice, Elgar heard itinerant musicians and was inspired to sketch material for a *Second Symphony*. Following a letter from Francesco Berger, secretary of the Philharmonic Society, about premiering the concerto, Elgar worked intermittently on both the concerto and the *Second Symphony* for the rest of the year. He also

⁶⁴ Reed, *Elgar As I Knew Him*, 97.

⁶⁵ Michael Kennedy Powell, *Edward Elgar: Memories of a Variation* (Thames and Hudson, 1974), 79–80.

⁶⁶ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 548.

⁶⁷ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 551.

conducted at the Hereford and Birmingham Festivals, toured the north with the London Symphony Orchestra, and accepted the presidency of a musical league for composers. After Elgar conducted the Philharmonic Society Orchestra in November, Berger sent him another note: “We all hope you will consent to honour us again by taking a Concert in our next season and making that the occasion for introducing some new Work. Will you let us have your Violin Concerto?” On the letter, Elgar penciled a tentative reply: “Yes, praps!”⁶⁸ Before he could return to his concerto, he was asked to write an anthem for the anniversary of Queen Victoria’s death and once again reworked the opening material of the concerto.

At Christmas, a friend and philanthropist, Sir Edgar Speyer (1862–1932), presented Elgar with the scores of Beethoven’s string quartets. Elgar enclosed with the thank-you letter a section of the slow movement of *Beethoven’s Op. 59 No. 3*, where C minor turns to C major, writing, “was there ever anything so wonderful as this? This is the real Christmas feeling—apart from the world of puddings & beef.”⁶⁹ After Christmas, Elgar took a nostalgic visit to his childhood home in Worcester, where he remarked with self-doubt to his boyhood friend Leicester, “Here have I been, working all my life & done nothing of any practical use to anybody. My time has been absolutely wasted.”⁷⁰

Finally, inspired after Christmas, Elgar rented a flat in London to work intensively on the concerto. He began in the middle, composing the slow movement first. In the development, the violin presents a fragment of the second theme, which the orchestra answers by recalling the first

⁶⁸ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 557.

⁶⁹ Edward Elgar, “Letter to Edward Speyer,” in *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life*, by Jerrold Northrop Moore (Oxford University Press, 1984).

⁷⁰ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 563.

theme. In the coda, the two themes are finally placed side by side. Listening later to gramophone recordings, Elgar reflected, “This is where two souls merge and melt into one another.”⁷¹

In less than a week Elgar had prepared sufficient material to try out portions of the second movement with the violinist Leonora von Stosch (1879–1940). To his friend Alice Stuart-Wortley he confided his doubts: “I am not sure about that Andante & shall put it away for a long time before I decide its fate. I am glad you liked it.”⁷² Alice’s daughter later recalled her mother’s alarm, writing, “I remember Mother saying to me in consternation that Edward was threatening not to go on with the Violin Concerto—how dreadful his leaving it wd. be. . .”⁷³

That same day, Elgar sketched another idea for the concerto’s first movement which he labeled “in Dejection.” He inserted this material between the first movement’s primary and secondary themes, creating a transition. Under the climax of the transition he wrote, “This is going to be good! When Love and Faith meet there will be Light.”⁷⁴

Elgar named the first movement’s second theme “Windflower” after a small spring flower from his childhood. Later in life, Elgar wrote about the windflower:

“The little group of anemones commonly called windflowers are happily named too; for when the east wind rasps over the ground in March or April they merely turn their backs and bow before the squall. They are buffeted and blown, as one may think almost to destruction; but their anchors hold, and the slender-looking stems bend but do not break. And when the rain clouds drive up, the petals shut tight into a tiny tent, as country folk tell one, to shelter the little person inside. Who that has read it can forget Farrer’s story of his finding the blue wood-anemone which, like many another, he had pursued all his life as a will-o’-the-wisp? It was in Cornwall, and doubtingly he plunged into the wood at twilight in search of the phantom flower . . .”⁷⁵

⁷¹ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 566.

⁷² Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 568.

⁷³ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 568.

⁷⁴ Edward Elgar, *Violin Concerto: Sketches and Short Score*. MS Mus. 1843/1/25. British Library, London.

⁷⁵ Edward Elgar, “The Vernal Anemones: A Beautiful Native,” *The Daily Telegraph* (London), April 28, 1924.

Cornwall was the site of Arthur's castle at Tintagel and the favorite place of Alice Stuart-Wortley. While he was sketching the first movement of his concerto, Elgar was invited by Schuster on a motor tour of Cornwall. Alice Stuart-Wortley convinced them to visit Tintagel as her daughter Clare later recalled: "It was Mrs. Wortley who after much persuasion induced Sir Edward and their mutual great friend Mr. Schuster to visit Tintagel, saying that if only Sir Edward once saw it, he would write something so wonderful! Sir Edward, highly amused, used to say that she would have to be responsible for anything, however dreadful, that he might compose as a result of the visit."⁷⁶ Clare remembered Elgar's visit to Tintagel: "We all walked down to the sea in the 'Cove', below the castle ruins; and saw it all in very bad weather, at its most stern and foreboding . . ."⁷⁷

From that point on, Alice Stuart-Wortley became Elgar's muse for the concerto, and he would refer to her as "Windflower." Clare later recalled, "I believe he ultimately called her Windflower after the theme—not the theme after her."⁷⁸ In April, Elgar wrote to Alice Stuart-Wortley, "I am now ablaze with work & *writing hard*; you *should* come & see (& hear it!)."⁷⁹ When she arrived three days later, he played her the first movement of the concerto. On another occasion he wrote, ". . . you must come tomorrow . . . it is so dreary today & the tunes stick & are not Windflowerish—at present."⁸⁰

During this period, Elgar suffered a triple loss. His beloved rabbit Peter, his editor Jaeger, and King Edward VII all died. Writing to Schuster, Elgar expressed his grief: "These times are

⁷⁶ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 572.

⁷⁷ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 573.

⁷⁸ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 569.

⁷⁹ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 574.

⁸⁰ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 575.

too cruel & gloomy . . . I have the Concerto well in hand & have played it thro' on the P.F., & it's *good*! Awfully emotional! too emotional—but I love it: 1st movement finished & the IIIrd well on – these are times for composition.”⁸¹

While seeking a violinist to assist with the concerto, Elgar encountered Reed by chance on the street and invited him to his flat. Reed later recalled that he

“had the good fortune to be invited to the flat in New Cavendish Street, to help with the arrangement of the passage-work, the appropriate bowings and fingerings, also to play over passages in different ways so that the composer could hear the effect and get it down on paper exactly as he wished it to be played. The first visit was a unique experience. There was the composer, striding about, arranging scraps of manuscript in different parts of the room, pinning them to the backs of chairs and placing them on the mantel piece with photograph frames to hold them in position. It was wonderful to note the speed at which he scribbled out another passage or made an alteration or scrapped a sketch altogether as being redundant.”⁸²

Reed remembered working on the solo violin entry: “He had got the main ideas written out, and, as he put it, ‘japed them up’ to make a coherent piece . . . He was always very diffident; but he knew when anything he had written gave him pleasure. There was no false modesty about his joy in hearing the solo violin boldly entering in the first movement with the *concluding* half of the principal subject instead of with the beginning, as if answering a question instead of stating a fact.” Reed recalled that he was repeatedly asked to play the solo entry with Elgar “. . . thundering out the first two bars on the piano as if issuing a challenge to the solo violin to come in and see what *he* could make of it.”⁸³

Following their meeting Elgar wrote to Reed, “I do not know how to thank you sufficiently for your kind help & most beautiful playing on Saturday; I am anxious to send the

⁸¹ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 580.

⁸² Reed, *Elgar*, 101.

⁸³ William H. Reed, “Elgar and His Violin Concerto,” *The Listener* (London), November 10, 1937.

first movement to the printers & am only waiting for the final ‘flourish’. . . At 44 the passage is built on an ‘affliction’ of the opening phrase. I think it is possible to make a good, festive noise but I am not sure about the bowing: whether it wd be best detached or slurred (*dug out*) in twos. Any wisdom you may have to spare will be thankfully received by the very grateful friend.”⁸⁴ On June 1, the violin and piano reduction of the first movement was sent to Novello.

Elgar was uncertain about the final movement. He wrote Schuster, “I want to *end* that Concerto but do not see my way very clearly to the end . . .”⁸⁵ The Schusters invited Elgar to their country home, *The Hut*, to continue the concerto. The third movement is in sonata form with a double exposition. The primary theme reverses the first movement’s descent. The recapitulation returns to material from the first movement. Elgar devised a cadenza “on a novel plan I think” The strings were to be “thrummed with the soft part of three or four fingers across the strings . . . the sound of distant Aeolian harp flutters under and over the solo.” Against this texture, the solo violin would “sadly think over the first movement.”⁸⁶ The cadenza begins with the primary theme in the piano and the “Windflower” theme in the violin. Elgar wrote to Alice, “I have . . . brought in the real inspired themes from the 1st movemt. & the music sings of memories & hope.”⁸⁷

As the concerto took shape, Reed visited again to help. He remembered, “We tried at last a few notes in harmonics, the sound of which pleased him so much that that method of interpretation was instantly adopted . . . We had great fun over the ‘ad lib’ passage . . . with the sudden leap of a twelfth up the G string. The first time we tried it this way instead of going to a

⁸⁴ William H. Reed, “Elgar’s Violin Concerto,” *Music & Letters* 16, no. 1 (1935): 31–32.

⁸⁵ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 581.

⁸⁶ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 584–85.

⁸⁷ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 585.

more reasonable position on the D string, the effect so electrified him that I remember he called out ‘good for you’ when I landed safely on that E with a real explosive sforzando.”⁸⁸

During his work at *The Hut*, Elgar appears to have been in notably good spirits, enjoying time with Reed. “When we were tired of playing, or if Sir Edward wanted to go out in the air for a change, the fiddle was laid in its case, and we went off together, strolling about the river-bank, watching the small fish in the water and enjoying the quiet beauty of the place.”⁸⁹

Elgar was frustrated with the cadenza: “I am appalled at the last movement & cannot get on:—it is growing so large—too large I fear & I have headaches (here); Mr. Reed comes to us next *Thursday* to play it through . . . & we shall judge the finale & condemn it, if you like.”⁹⁰ Reed arrived to a familiar scene:

“On arriving at the house, I found the studio in the state I had become accustomed to at the London flat: music-paper all over the room, scraps at any vantage point, many different versions of the same thing with the different bowings to be tried for each. At once we plunged into it. Passages were tried in different ways: the notes were regrouped or the phrasing altered. The Cadenza was in pieces; but soon the parts took shape and were knit together to become an integral part of the concerto . . . Sir Edward strode about the room, listening and rubbing his hands excitedly.”⁹¹

Reed also recalled that Elgar was precise about what he wished to express. “The *lento* between 105 and 106 merely moved him to tears as he repeated it again and yet again, dwelling on certain notes and marking them ‘tenuto,’ ‘express,’ ‘animato,’ or ‘molto accel.,’ as he realised step by step exactly what he sought to express.”⁹² When the concerto was finally finished, Elgar wrote to Schuster, “The world has changed a little since I saw you, I think—it is difficult to say

⁸⁸ William H. Reed, “Elgar’s Violin Concerto.”

⁸⁹ Reed, *Elgar As I Knew Him*, 27–28.

⁹⁰ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 585.

⁹¹ Reed, *Elgar As I Knew Him*, 28–29.

⁹² W. H. Reed, “Elgar’s Violin Concerto,” *Music & Letters* 16, no. 1 (1935): 35.

how, but it's either larger or smaller or something. This Concerto is full of romantic feeling . .

.”⁹³

Elgar decided to inscribe the Concerto with a passage from Alain-René Lesage's (1668–1747) *Gil Blas* describing a student who deciphers an inscription on a poet's tomb. He placed this inscription opposite the opening page of the concerto, replacing the poet's name with five dots: “Aquí está encerrada el alma de . . .” (“Herein is enshrined the soul of. . . .”). Writing to violinist Antón de Navarro, Elgar asked whether, if the inscription referred to a feminine soul, it should read *de la* rather than *de*, but he ultimately left it unchanged. He explained his intention: “Here—or more emphatically *in* here—is enshrined or (simply) enclosed—buried is perhaps too definite—the soul of. . . .? The final *de* leaves it indefinite as to sex, or rather gender. Now guess.”⁹⁴ Everyone has their own guess as to whether the soul was Elgar, Alice, or someone else entirely. In the end, Elgar left another enigma.

In July, after completing the concerto, Elgar did not fall into his usual post-composition depression but spent time with friends. Elgar showed the concerto to Kreisler, who exclaimed, “I will shake Queen's Hall!”⁹⁵ Elgar met with Alice, Reed, and Alice Stuart-Wortley, to play through the entire concerto. That evening, he remained awake late with Reed, reminiscing about his childhood home, London, and cycling with friends. After Elgar finished the orchestration in August, he traveled to the Worcestershire countryside, visiting the Navarros. Mary Navarro (1859-1940) later recalled: “He enjoyed the meals out of doors, especially the dinners in the old

⁹³ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 586.

⁹⁴ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 587.

⁹⁵ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 586.

courtyard, seeing the stars slowly coming out, the moon rising from behind the hills . . . He knew all about newts, water-boatmen and the like, and played about the pond like a boy.”⁹⁶

Four orchestras competed for the premiere, but the Philharmonic Society won for £200. Kreisler was scheduled to perform the concerto on November 10 and 30. Elgar found time to rehearse with Kreisler when he was at the Gloucester Festival. The critic Robin Legge (1862-1933) of *The Daily Telegraph* was present with Mary Navarro and later described the scene:

“We duly seated ourselves upon the canonical sofa with a box of cigarettes between us. Elgar took his appointed place upon one of the old-fashioned round piano stools which swung around according to the wish of the occupant. Fritz Kreisler stood, splendidly dignified as always, fiddle in hand. The corrected proofs were in their appointed place on the desk of the piano, and the atmosphere was of the most genial order . . . though interruptions were more or less frequent. At one moment Kreisler would edge Elgar off the piano stool while he himself took the composer’s place and, with a deprecatory remark: ‘Na, na, Edward,’ and an appeal to us of the audience, would attempt to show the composer his idea of the right and proper manner in which the music should go. Of course, Elgar would lift him from the piano stool laughingly and say: ‘Na, na, Fritz, this is how *I* want it played.’”⁹⁷

During a later rehearsal, Elgar’s friend Dora Penny discovered that Kreisler and Elgar were working on the concerto behind locked doors, and she sat on the top step outside the room. She recalled, “Kreisler was trying bit after bit—not playing it properly, of course—but he was getting the composer’s meaning and ideas. They did not speak one another’s language very well and it was difficult at times. Kreisler became worried and anxious now and again and then at last he understood and raced off with it joyously. Loud applause from the piano.”⁹⁸

Even though Kreisler was giving the festival premiere, Schuster suggested that Reed be given a private premiere the Sunday before. Reed later recalled his feelings before that first performance: “I must confess I had some inward qualms. I knew every note of the concerto, and

⁹⁶ Mary Anderson de Navarro, *A Few More Memories* (Hutchinson & Co., 1936), 205–6.

⁹⁷ Anderson de Navarro, *A Few More Memories*, 208.

⁹⁸ Powell, *Edward Elgar: Memories of a Variation*, 91–92.

exactly how he liked it played: every nuance, every shade of expression; yet I felt a little overwhelmed at being asked to play the solo part at what would actually be the very first performance before an audience. It was one of those facts that you cannot annihilate by just calling it private.”⁹⁹

On Sunday, Reed found the house full: “Nearly all the prominent musicians engaged at the Festival were there . . . The room was full; and all the lights were turned out except for some device arranged by Frank Schuster for lighting the piano and the violin stand.”¹⁰⁰ Dora Penny remembered Elgar removing his coat and remarking, “No one minds if I play in my shirt-sleeves, I suppose.” Turning to Mr. Reed, he said in a low voice, “You won’t leave me alone in the tuttis, will you?”¹⁰¹ On Thursday, Kreisler also gave a private premiere to a packed house. The critic Robin Legge, who was present, remarked afterward, “Is this the long-awaited master-work, the fourth violin Concerto in the literature of music?”¹⁰²

The orchestral parts arrived late from Novello, leaving Elgar to rush through corrections before the premiere. A friend Arthur Troyte Griffith (1864-1934), who was at Elgar’s house, wrote: “They played the violin concerto one Sunday at Hereford from 10 o’clock in the morning to 11 o’clock at night, only stopping for meals—Elgar objurgating Novellos whenever he found a mistake.”¹⁰³ Elgar wrote to Alice Stuart-Wortley, “I have been working too hard over this abominable printing muddle & have a slight headache.”¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ Reed, *Elgar As I Knew Him*, 30–31.

¹⁰⁰ Reed, *Elgar As I Knew Him*, 31–32.

¹⁰¹ Powell, *Edward Elgar: Memories of a Variation*, 92–93.

¹⁰² Robin Legge, *The Daily Telegraph* (London), September 26, 1910.

¹⁰³ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 591.

¹⁰⁴ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 591.

Anticipation before the premiere was intense. The concerto was scheduled for numerous performances in Britain and abroad, propelled by Kreisler's fervent advocacy, who spoke of it in lavish terms. *The Evening News* reported that Kreisler "has even gone so far as to say that it is the greatest violin concerto produced since Beethoven's."¹⁰⁵ Asked by an American interviewer whether it ranked alongside Brahms and Beethoven, Kreisler replied, "Yes; we have not yet had a romantic concerto of this value." When questioned about its novelty, he added, "In a way, quite outside; although from a player's point of view it is perhaps the most difficult of all concertos for endurance, and it is the first to have all the intricacies of modern scoring." Kreisler claimed that Elgar regarded the concerto as one of his finest works, "for emotional force it surpasses anything he has yet written."¹⁰⁶

On the evening of the premiere, pouring rain did not dampen the excitement as the hall filled to capacity. Alice Elgar left a diary entry: "Poured in desperate torrents. Crowd *enormous*. Excitement intense . . ."¹⁰⁷ *The Daily Mail* published a detailed description of the performance:

"When, after the preliminary numbers, Herr Fritz Kreisler, the soloist of the concerto, stepped, violin in hand, upon the platform with the composer a tense silence fell upon the crowded hall, and was not broken until, at the end of the first of the three movements of the concerto there burst out a hurricane of proud recognition of an English masterpiece. The storm of applause hushed itself for the assured delight of the second movement, to break out again when that was ended, and then to still itself once more not to miss a note of the concluding and culminating phase of the composition. Then, when the end came, the huge audience went wild with pride and delight. For a quarter of an hour they called and recalled the man who had achieved a triumph not only for himself but for England, and hailed him with wonder and submission as master and hero."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ *The Evening News*, November 9, 1910.

¹⁰⁶ Hadden Squire, *The Christian Science Monitor* (Boston), November 19, 1910.

¹⁰⁷ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 592.

¹⁰⁸ *The Daily Mail* (London), November 11, 1910.

The performance was met with a passionate critical response. *The Star* reported sharply divided opinions: “Some said that to write music so purely abstract was a step backwards; others that it was program music from first to last, and, if so, it was a pity the program had not been told us. Some prophesied that every violinist would play it, because it is so effective; others that nobody would touch it, because the solo part is so ungrateful. ‘What a falling off!’ said one critic. ‘Elgar stands higher than ever after this,’ said another.” *The Star* concluded: “When people talk like this about a work, two things are certain: first, that it is a work of unusual power, and second, that it has qualities of newness and unexpectedness—if such a word be permitted—which rudely move people out of their grooves.”¹⁰⁹ Newman, noticing that some listeners struggled to grasp the concerto, focused his analysis on Elgar’s formal structure: “The fault lies not with the composer, but with the form. One realises more and more each year that composers ought now to abandon the three-movement form and cast their symphonic works in one continuous movement.”¹¹⁰ Writing for *The Manchester Guardian*, Langford criticized the concerto’s constant juxtaposition of short figures, concluding that “The Concerto triumphs in every way but one, and that is in real scope of melody.”¹¹¹

Elgar had no time for his usual post-compositional depression. He needed to complete the *Second Symphony* for its premiere, so he returned to his London flat to compose. Elgar sketched the finale first with a new fragmented approach. He later told his friend Charles Sanford Terry (1864–1936): “He had no intention . . . of making the new Symphony an organic whole by means of such a connecting-motif as that which opens and ends the Symphony in Ab. He wanted

¹⁰⁹ *The Star* (London), November 11, 1910.

¹¹⁰ Ernest Newman, *The Birmingham Daily Post* (Birmingham), November 11, 1910.

¹¹¹ Samuel Langford, *The Manchester Guardian* (Manchester), January 2, 1911.

it to be the frank expression of music bubbling from the spring within him.”¹¹² Elgar worked with unusual focus. When Elgar completed the symphony on February 28, Alice recorded, “This is a day to be marked. E. finished his Symphony. It seems one of his very greatest works, vast in design and supremely beautiful.”¹¹³

At the London Music Festival crowds were again expected and three additional performances scheduled. Unexpectedly, the hall was not full for the premiere, and the audience responded with noticeably less enthusiasm. Reed recalled that the composer was keenly aware of the audience’s muted response. “That the composer noticed the coolness of its reception at this first performance was very clear. He was called to the platform several times, but missed that unmistakable note perceived when the audience, even an English audience, is thoroughly roused and worked up, as it was after the violin Concerto or the first Symphony.” Elgar remarked pathetically, “What is the matter with them, Billy? They sit there like a lot of stuffed pigs.”¹¹⁴

Critics spent considerable time attempting to understand why the work was not more warmly received. One commentator observed, “It was difficult to repress an inquiry as to the possibility that the number of enthusiasts about the composer’s music is not increasing, nay, and it may even be diminishing.”¹¹⁵ *The St James’s Gazette* reasoned, “At any rate it was difficult to follow the spirit or purpose of the orchestral scramble which formed the third movement . . . It was as though the composer had taken too many instruments along with him in his frolic.”¹¹⁶

Newman, noting a shift in Elgar’s musical voice wrote,

¹¹² Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 601.

¹¹³ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 611.

¹¹⁴ Reed, *Elgar*, 105.

¹¹⁵ *The Academy* (London), June 3, 1911.

¹¹⁶ *St. James Gazette*, May 25, 1911.

“Elgar is always saying something fresh . . . There is not a page either of the symphonies or of the violin concerto that does not reveal him like a photograph; but within this apparently restricted circle of style he manages to say an infinite variety of things, or, if you will have it so, to give an infinite number of fine shades to the highly personal things he has been saying all his life. To me the Second Symphony is full of new shades of this kind . . . In the episodic passages, again, as in the cadenza of the violin concerto, I feel that Elgar is on the point of finding a new style, one more flexible and varied.”¹¹⁷

Newman felt that Elgar’s new music had grown beyond the grasp of the public. “I doubt whether any two successive symphonies by any other composer show so great an intellectual growth, so great a deepening of the man’s whole nature, and so great a development of musical feeling and technique as are visible between these two symphonies of Elgar. It is because he is now living on a psychological plane higher than that which any other English composers have ever touched that this Second Symphony is beyond the popular grasp at the moment.”¹¹⁸

Elgar had passed the high point of popular reception, marking a decisive turning point after which his works no longer achieved the same level of public acclaim. Together the *First Symphony*, *Violin Concerto* and *Second Symphony* represented the fulfillment of his long-held symphonic and orchestral ambitions and signaled the beginning of a new phase in both his life and his compositional style.

The Final Years: Composition and Personal Transformation

Elgar’s final years were shaped by a new compositional style alongside profound personal and cultural change. For King George V’s coronation in 1911, Elgar composed an ode, a march, and an offertory. At the last minute, he chose not to attend the celebrations for reasons unknown. He also decided to end his exclusive publishing agreement with Novello. Writing to

¹¹⁷ Ernest Newman, “Sir Edward Elgar’s Symphony No. 2,” *The Musical Standard* (London), May 27, 1911.

¹¹⁸ Ernest Newman, *The Birmingham Daily Post* (Birmingham), August 22, 1913.

his publisher Alfred Littleton (1841–1914), he expressed his discouragement: “. . . I have no work on hand & contemplate no large work in the future—I may *think* of large works but I shall not write them; to write them is labour lost.”¹¹⁹

Elgar and Alice moved to a house in London, but Burley felt that Elgar was rarely happy there, claiming, “It was, moreover, a house which, for all its luxury, never seemed to suggest happiness.”¹²⁰ He sold his Gagliano violin to pay for special lighting for his new billiard table.

Elgar continued to compose shorter works, but his style had changed. The music featured simpler melodies and was often assembled from earlier sketches or past works. For the masque, *The Crown of India*, Elgar reworked material from *In Smyrna* and the *Violin Concerto*. In *The Music Makers*, composed for the Birmingham Festival, Elgar consciously returned to the themes of the *Enigma Variations*. He explained, “I have used the opening bars of the theme (Enigma) of the Variations because it expressed when written (in 1898) my sense of the loneliness of the artist as described in the first six lines of the Ode, and to me it still embodies that sense.”¹²¹ Alice noted Elgar’s uncertainty during its composition, writing, “E. not very happy over his work—not ‘lit up’ yet.”¹²²

Elgar described this emotional collapse to Alice Stuart-Wortley after completing the work: “Yesterday was the usual *awful* day which inevitably occurs when I have completed a work: it has always been so. But this time I promised myself ‘a day!’—I should be crowned,—it wd. be lovely weather . . . it was bitterly cold—I wrapped myself in a thick overcoat & sat for two minutes, tears & cold—how I hated having written anything . . . & longed to destroy the work of

¹¹⁹ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 623.

¹²⁰ Burley and Carruthers, *Edward Elgar: The Record of a Friendship*, 193.

¹²¹ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 633.

¹²² Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 633.

my hands—all wasted.”¹²³ The reception of *The Music Makers* was lukewarm, with critics objecting to the work’s reliance on earlier musical material and expressing doubts about the authenticity. About this time, The London Symphony Orchestra terminated Elgar’s conductorship, a blow that “hurt him very much.”¹²⁴

Elgar rallied for the Leeds Festival, reworking the *Falstaff* idea from an earlier sketch and reshaping the exact notes of his Broadheath tune with a new rhythm. Elgar described *Falstaff* as a “symphonic study.” At the premiere, *Falstaff* puzzled the listeners and critics. Even Alice noted, “E. rather hurried it & some of the lovely melodies were a little smothered, but it made its mark and place.”¹²⁵ Addressing the lack of popularity, Newman argued that “The style of the score shows us in many places quite a new Elgar, and one that the public used to the older Elgar will not assimilate very easily.”¹²⁶

After *Falstaff*, Elgar was invited to compose short works for the gramophone and more part-songs for Novello. Littleton, chairman of Novello, wrote to a junior agent, Henry Clayton, “I don’t want any more Elgar symphonies or concertos but I am ready to take as many part songs as he can produce, even at an extortionate rate.”¹²⁷

But in 1914 the world changed. With the outbreak of WWI music festivals were cancelled and Elgar’s compositions shifted to wartime works. He composed *Carillon* for a Belgian benefit concert and *Polonia* for a Polish relief concert. He also began setting the war poetry of Laurence Binyon (1869–1943) to music, later titled *The Spirit of England*.

¹²³ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 638.

¹²⁴ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 646.

¹²⁵ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 654.

¹²⁶ Ernest Newman, *The Birmingham Daily Post* (Birmingham), October 3, 1913.

¹²⁷ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 662.

Elgar's health declined during the war years, culminating with surgery for tonsillitis. The day before his operation, Reed and his string quartet played for the Elgars. Upon his recovery, Elgar began composing a string quartet that echoes the *Violin Concerto* and the *Second Symphony*, but in a simpler form.

During a temporary move to the countryside, Elgar composed the *Violin Sonata* and immediately began the *Piano Quintet*. Elgar himself later acknowledged that these works marked a departure, remarking after hearing a gramophone recording with Arthur Troyte Griffith (1864-1942) that "there is something in it that has never been done before . . . Nothing you would understand, merely an arrangement of notes."¹²⁸

The war ended as Elgar was working on his quintet, and he marked the slow movement *Piacevole* ("peacefully"). All three works, the *String Quartet*, the *Violin Sonata*, and the *Piano Quintet*, were premiered together. The public was enthusiastic to hear Elgar's music again. Alice recorded that the audience "roared and shouted."¹²⁹ Critics immediately recognized a stylistic shift. *The Daily Chronicle* remarked that, "Like Brahms in the later part of his career, Sir Edward aims at ever-increasing directness, terseness, and simplicity of expression. There are in the sonata no complications of rhythm or harmony, no thematic singularities, it is not exceedingly difficult to play, and it seems almost a protest against the far-fetched devices of the ultra-moderns. . . ."¹³⁰

Newman likewise noted the change, writing that "Elgar's style has become one of extraordinary slenderness so far as the mere notes are concerned. . . . it may be that his style in

¹²⁸ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 731.

¹²⁹ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 739.

¹³⁰ L. Dunton Green, "Music of the Week," *The Arts Gazette*, March 29, 1919.

general is becoming simpler in maturity . . . every superfluous line has been eliminated from the design, every superfluous note from the harmony; yet the music carries a surprising weight of thought and feeling.”¹³¹

Between their country retreat and their return to their London house, Elgar revisited his idea of a cello concerto in E minor. The primary theme is drawn from the opening solo chords, and there are echoes of both the *Piano Quintet* and *The Music Makers*. Rather than concluding with a traditional coda, the work breaks from sonata form in favor of a passionate, climactic ending. The concerto is roughly half the length of the *Violin Concerto*.

The *Cello Concerto* premiered at the opening concert of the London Symphony Orchestra’s first postwar season. Once again, the hall was not filled. The orchestral interpretation was problematic. Newman was puzzled: “On Monday the orchestra was often virtually inaudible, and when just audible was merely a muddle. No one seemed to have any idea of what it was the composer wanted. The work itself is lovely stuff, very simple—that pregnant simplicity that has come upon Elgar’s music in the last couple of years—but with a profound wisdom and beauty underlying its simplicity . . .”¹³²

On 7 April 1920, Alice died of cancer. After her death, Elgar struggled to recover a sense of musical inspiration, and when his doctor asked what triggered it, Elgar replied, “It is infinitely various. It may be the cry of a child; then I see a bar of music, and can write it down. It may be pain. Or it may be the sound of wind and waves, or the murmuring of a stream.”¹³³

¹³¹ Ernest Newman, *The Birmingham Daily Post* (Birmingham), April 8, 1919.

¹³² Ernest Newman, *The Observer* (London), November 2, 1919.

¹³³ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 773.

As festivals reopened, Elgar returned to conducting. Binyon asked him to write music for the entr'actes for *Arthur*. Elgar responded, "I want to do it, but since my dear wife's death I have *done nothing* & fear my music has vanished. . . . can you give me three days more to 'try'?"¹³⁴ He finished *Arthur*, wrote several new part songs, and orchestrated Bach's C-minor Organ Fugue.

On his seventieth birthday, Elgar conducted a large concert of his works with the BBC, and his friends organized an *Homage to Elgar* concert. Elgar began composing a steady stream of smaller works. He assembled older fragments into a new band work, *The Severn Suite*, conceived the fifth *Pomp and Circumstance* on a country drive, and composed *The Nursery Suite* for Princess Margaret. He signed a lifetime contract with the Gramophone Company and a new contract with the publisher Keith Prowse, which provided a retainer for three songs each year.

For Elgar's seventy-fifth birthday, plans had been made to record the full *Violin Concerto* with Elgar conducting. The recording company had been trying unsuccessfully to persuade Kreisler to record the work, but they could not afford to wait for him any longer. In August 1931, recording producer Fred Gaisberg (1873–1951) proposed recording the work with young violinist Yehudi Menuhin (1916–1999), already an international star.

Menuhin and Elgar recorded the *Violin Concerto* in London in 1932. Gaisberg and Menuhin's father arranged for Elgar to conduct the concerto in Paris the following year. Because he was weakened by a recent stroke, Elgar traveled by air to Paris. Although the performance was well attended, it was not warmly received by the French audience.

Elgar returned to England on his seventy-sixth birthday. He received a lucrative offer for a third symphony. While attending the Malvern Festival and seeing productions of old English

¹³⁴ Elgar, "Letter to Edward Speyer," 762.

plays, he also conceived the idea of writing his first opera based on *The Devil Is an Ass*. But those works were never finished. In October, a gastric operation revealed cancer. In November, Elgar collapsed. Reed was summoned and later recalled Elgar's final instructions concerning his unfinished symphony: "Don't let anyone tinker with it . . . no one could understand . . . I think you had better burn it."¹³⁵ On the morning of 23 February 1934, Elgar died peacefully in his sleep and was buried four days later, on 27 February, at St. Wulstan's Roman Catholic Church in Little Malvern, Worcestershire.

¹³⁵ Reed, *Elgar As I Knew Him*, 113.

Theoretical Analysis

The *Violin Concerto*, represents the culmination of the influences and inspirations that shaped Elgar's musical life. Composed between 1905 and 1910, the concerto is deeply introspective and emotional. Burley characterized it as tragic, writing that it would "haunt me for many days."¹³⁶ Elgar inscribed within it a mysterious soul. Although Elgar avoided explicit meanings, the work's expression lies in stylistic features to which he consistently attached meanings. Intervals are imbued with meaning and used as the structural basis of thematic construction; tonal regions are assigned expressive identities; and chromatic material is set in tension against diatonic themes to articulate a broader expressive narrative. The expressive meanings of these elements are articulated in his choral works and help to illuminate the concerto.

Structurally, the concerto reveals that Elgar stands between Brahms and Wagner, balancing absolute and programmatic music. Although Elgar often professed allegiance to absolute musical principles, much of his large choral writing is based on themes. The concerto attempts to reconcile these ideas, presenting a work built around recurring themes organized within a sonata framework – a kind of "thematic sonata." Despite Elgar's best efforts, there is a tendency for his themes to break free from traditional sonata form. This tension led Newman to remark after hearing the concerto, that Elgar should abandon formal constraints altogether.

¹³⁶ Burley and Carruthers, *Edward Elgar: The Record of a Friendship*, 188.

Compositional Process

A review of the concerto's compositional history helps explain its fragmented musical character. Elgar's typical compositional process involved initial inspiration, sketching, extended periods in which a work was set aside, and finally an intense burst of concentrated activity. He rarely composed linearly, often beginning in the middle of a work and developing ideas in fragments rather than from beginning to end.

Elgar first attempted a violin concerto in November 1890. According to Reed, Elgar worked on the piece with great enthusiasm and produced a substantial amount of music, but ultimately became dissatisfied: "He realized that it fell far short of what he felt he had it in him to write for his own instrument, the violin, and in a fit of despondency he destroyed every note of it. He did not attempt a violin concerto again for nearly twenty years."¹³⁷

Renewed inspiration came in 1905, when Kreisler publicly praised Elgar as the greatest living composer and expressed his desire for a violin work. Encouraged by this support, Elgar began sketching themes for a new concerto. As was typical, however, he did not return immediately to these sketches. Instead, he moved on to other major projects, including the *First Symphony*. Travel often reignited Elgar's creative focus, and during a trip to Italy he returned to the concerto sketches, drafting new variations and beginning work on the second movement.

Once composition resumed in earnest, Elgar continued to set the concerto aside intermittently while working on numerous other pieces, including *Angelus, Go, Song of Mine, A Child Asleep, Owls, Elegy for Strings, Oh Soft Was the Song, Was It Some Golden*

¹³⁷ Reed, *Elgar*, 34.

Star?, *Twilight*, *Twofold Songs*, *The Torch*, *The River*, *The King's Way*, and the *Romance* for bassoon. Such interruptions were characteristic of his working habits.

After these periods of distraction, Elgar often entered a phase of intense productivity. In January 1909, he rented a flat in London specifically to concentrate on the concerto. By May, he invited Reed to play through the first movement, and in June he sent the completed movement to Novello as his London lease ended. He then withdrew to the country home of his friends, the Schusters, where he completed the finale. By July 1, the short score had been shown to Kreisler, and the orchestration was finished in August.

Elgar's method of composing in fragments shaped the concerto's musical structure. After sketching the two contrasting principal themes, he focused first on the transitional material and its climactic point, then turned to the slow movement, working backward toward the opening movement and completing the finale last. Reed later recalled finding Elgar surrounded by loose manuscript pages scattered throughout his London apartment and the Schusters' country home, which could be rearranged as the work evolved.

The concerto itself reflects this fragmented compositional process. Themes emerge, dissolve, and reappear across movements, and seams remain audible. Elgar's habit of beginning in the middle and working in fragments helps explain why themes are continually reordered and reshaped rather than developed according to a single linear plan.

Thematic Conception

The concerto is saturated with thematic material. For the purposes of this analysis, a theme is defined as a musical idea with clearly defined phrases that later returns in a fully recognizable form and serves as the source of subsequent fragmentation. Elgar frequently labels as themes material that would be more precisely classified as motives.

Not all themes in Elgar's music carry equal structural or expressive weight. In his oratorios, Elgar assigns themes to figures such as Judas or Jesus, to actions such as prayer, and to abstract emotional states such as despair. In the concerto, a similar hierarchy is present. Two themes function as primary "characters," while the remaining themes appear to represent actions or emotions. The concerto's premise is a dialogue between opposing themes. Elgar referred to these opposing themes as the souls of the work. As they begin to overlap in the second movement, he described them as souls merging.

The first soul theme is the opening theme, which Elgar marks *Nobilmente*. Elgar held a deep affection for this expressive character. Many of Elgar's most personal works begin with *Nobilmente*, including *The Wand of Youth* and the *First Symphony*. Moore described the emotion of *Nobilmente* as one of desperation and desire: "desperation played as strong a role in this Allegro as in the opening Allegro of the Symphony, and that desperation was born of a deep desire thwarted – a desire that remained *Nobilmente*."¹³⁸ Elgar told his friend Charles Sanford Terry (1864-1936) that the *Nobilmente* theme from the concerto "could be carved on my gravestone"¹³⁹ (see fig.1-1).

Elgar called the second soul theme, "Windflower" (see fig. 1-5). Flower imagery resonated deeply with Elgar. His mother frequently spoke about flowers, a preoccupation reflected in Elgar's earliest surviving complete work, *The Language of Flowers*. Elgar associated the windflower with resilience. After Alice Stuart-Wortley became his confidante and muse for the concerto, he began to refer to her as "Windflower."

¹³⁸ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 579.

¹³⁹ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 566.

Elgar labeled a transition theme “in Dejection,” and it functions as a bridge between the two soul themes (see fig. 1-4). When the two soul themes finally arrive side by side, the “in Dejection” theme invariably follows, reinforcing the sense of emotional distance between them. This theme frequently embodies nostalgia. Menuhin described the concerto’s emotional core as the “nostalgia that’s born of people who travel far from their homeland and yet who love it very much . . .”¹⁴⁰ The interaction of the themes shapes the concerto’s expressive meaning, while phrase structure shapes its form.

Phrase Structure Overview

The first movement is constructed from two bar phrases, typically organized into antecedent-consequent pairs. Elgar had employed this strategy as early as the *Imperial March*, at which time Novello complained about his reliance on short phrases.

In this movement, four bar phrases appear only occasionally, most notably in the construction of the “in Dejection” theme. Phrases of irregular length such as three or five are rare and reserved for moments of transition or fragmentation. Single bar units occur only when the principal or secondary soul themes momentarily break through the musical fabric. Phrases that begin or end in the middle of a measure are rare and are generally confined to moments of lyricism; one such instance occurs in the “Windflower” theme.

This reliance on short and predictable phrase units stands in striking contrast to the movement’s fragmented, sequential, and chromatic surface. While themes are repeatedly broken apart and recombined, the underlying two-bar phrase structure holds the line of order and

¹⁴⁰ LiveSoundCapture, *The Elgar Violin Concerto - Rare Footage with Sir Yehudi Menuhin and Desmond Bradley*, 2024, 28:56, <https://youtu.be/N50a2JZpmMA?si=4IPhBuyGpzyIyr3S>.

restraint. Alongside the shadow of sonata form, this rigid phrasing keeps the music in form even as it strains against structural boundaries.

Sonata-Theme Form

Elgar remained committed to Brahmsian formal principles and the ideal of absolute music. However, his large-scale, programmatic works such as his oratorios often aligned with Wagnerian thematic structure. In the concerto, he fights to preserve sonata form. His thematic tendencies frequently destabilize sonata expectations, primarily through a secondary theme that does not appear in the dominant and does not return to the tonic in the recapitulation.

Table 1. Elgar, *Violin Concerto in B minor*, Op. 61, Mov. 1 (Allegro) Sonata Form

Section	Measures	Tonality	Motive
Introduction	1-67	B Minor, E Major	1-5
Exposition			
Primary Theme	68-84	B Minor	1-2
Transition Part 1	84-100	F# Major, Modulations	4
Transition Part 2	101-130	Modulations	3, 6
Secondary Theme	131-158	G Major	5
Closing	159 -186	Modulations	Fragments
Development	187-222	Modulations	Fragments
Recapitulation			
Primary Theme	223-250	B Minor	1, 5

Transition Part 1	238-250	F# Major, Modulations	4
Transition Part 2	251-275	Modulations	3, 6
Secondary Theme	276-297	G Major	5
Coda	298-367	F# Major, B Minor, Modulations	Fragments

Introduction (mm. 1–67)

Note on musical examples. Unless otherwise indicated, all score excerpts are taken from the score of Edward Elgar, *Violin Concerto in B minor, Op. 61*, violin and piano arrangement (London: Novello & Co., 1910), accessed via IMSLP. This analysis is based on the original piano score, which Elgar composed prior to expanding it into the full orchestral version.

The concerto opens in B minor with an expansive introduction spanning mm. 1-67, in which the piano presents five motives in succession. Motive 1, serving as both the first soul theme and primary theme, is introduced in the home key in mm. 1-4. The theme is articulated in two closely related two-bar phrases. The emphasis on scale degree six in m. 1 likely influenced the choice of G major for the secondary theme.

Figure 1-1. Elgar, *Violin Concerto in B minor*, mov. 1 (Allegro), mm. 1-4, Primary Theme.



Motive 2 serves as an answer to the primary theme and is likewise stated in B minor.

Motive 3 shares the contour of the primary theme but is a chromatic unsettling of diatonic stability. Although Motive 3 begins in B minor, it cadences in E minor, drawing attention to the plagal region. Both Motive 2 (mm. 5-8) and Motive 3 (mm. 9-12) are structured as pairs of two bar phrases, with variation introduced in the second phrase.

Figure 1-2. Elgar, *Violin Concerto in B minor*, mov. 1 (Allegro), mm. 5-8, Motive 2.



Figure 1-3. Elgar, *Violin Concerto in B minor*, mov. 1 (Allegro), mm. 9-12, Motive 3.



Motive 4, which Elgar describes as his “in Dejection” theme, begins in E minor and is tonally unstable, eventually transitioning toward E major. It appears throughout the movement in a variety of tonal contexts, including F# major. The motive is presented in two four-bar phrases (mm. 15–22 and 23–30), the second answering the first.

Figure 1-4. Elgar, *Violin Concerto in B minor*, mov. 1 (Allegro), mm. 15-22, Motive 4.



Motive 5, functioning as both the second soul theme and the secondary theme, introduces a tonal shift to E major before redirecting toward the dominant of B minor.

Figure 1-5. Elgar, *Violin Concerto in B minor*, mov. 1 (Allegro), mm. 31-39, Motive 5.



At m. 40, the movement enters a transitional section composed of thematic fragments of Motives 5, 2, and 1.

Exposition (mm. 68-101)

The primary thematic area includes Motives 1 and 2, with the piano initiating the first phrase of Motive 1 in mm. 68-69 and the solo violin completing the phrase in mm. 70-71. The effect of this violin entrance is described by Elgar biographer Basil Maine (1894-1972), who observes that “Elgar’s violin steals in like an added voice in a conversation . . . It is a masterly piece of stage-management, for it carries the illusion that the solo instrument has been there from the beginning but has only just caught our ear.”¹⁴¹

Figure 1-6. Elgar, *Violin Concerto in B minor*, mov. 1 (Allegro), mm. 67-71, Primary Theme Entry.



The passage cadences in B minor, confirming the region as tonic. This leads into a striking *più tranquillo, quasi recitativo* (mm. 72-79) which is a fragmented echo of Motive 5.

Figure 1-7. Elgar, *Violin Concerto in B minor*, mov. 1 (Allegro), mm. 72-75, *quasi Recit.*



¹⁴¹ Maine, *Elgar His Life and Works*, 144.

The transition spans mm. 84-130, with Motive 4 establishing the dominant F# major through a dramatic descending scale in the bass.

Figure 1-8. Elgar, *Violin Concerto in B minor*, mov. 1 (Allegro), mm. 84-27, Transition.



At this point the secondary theme would be expected to arrive, as the transition has successfully established the dominant. Elgar, however, departs from standard sonata practice to shift the music into a new key area. He introduces a second transitional passage, fragmenting Motive 3 and presenting Motive 6. Motive 6 is presented in two five-bar phrases (mm. 108-117). The contour of the piano accompaniment recalls the primary theme.

Figure 1-9. Elgar, *Violin Concerto in B minor*, mov. 1 (Allegro), mm.108-112, Motive 6.





Following the presentation of Motive 6, fragments of Motives 3, 2, and 1 return, often layered simultaneously. Throughout this passage, tonal areas modulate through chromatic motion to G major. The secondary theme arrives in G major (mm. 131–158).

Figure 1-10. Elgar, *Violin Concerto in B minor*, mov. 1 (Allegro), mm. 131-132, Secondary Theme in G.



Motive 5 is restated between mm. 140 and 151, first in the violin (mm. 139-143), then in the accompaniment (mm. 144-148), and finally through another iteration in the violin (mm. 148-151). The cadence arrives on an ambiguous F# chord lacking its third. Even as Elgar departs from textbook key areas, this moment suggests an attempt to gesture back toward a more conventional sonata framework.

At m. 152, the primary theme intrudes. Throughout the concerto, moments with a structural seam, thin texture, or formal break are frequently marked by the reappearance of either

the primary or secondary theme. This recurring intrusion becomes a defining structural characteristic of the work.

Figure 1-11. Elgar, *Violin Concerto in B minor*, mov. 1 (Allegro), mm. 152-153, Interjection.



At this point, the closing section begins with fragments of Motives 4, 6 and 3. The sense of dejection reaches a climax at m. 183, where the antecedent fragment of Motive 4 is repeated four times in the bass while the violin executes a long chromatic C# scale. The passage cadences in F# minor in mm. 189. Notably, when Motive 4 first appeared in the violin, it was cast in F# major. Here, its return in F# minor underscores the deepening sense of dejection.

Figure 1-12. Elgar, *Violin Concerto in B minor*, mov. 1 (Allegro), mm. 184-187, Transition.



Development mm. 187-220

The development begins at m. 187, exploring both earlier fragments and new material. The violin falls silent. The piano begins with a Motive 4 fragment which is hauntingly answered

by two fragments of Motive 5 in *Maestoso* (mm. 197-200). The closing recalls Motives 5, 4, and 1 in reverse, leading to the recapitulation. The brevity of the development section reflects Elgar's fundamentally developmental approach to the movement as a whole. Motivic transformation, tonal instability, and thematic interweaving are already active throughout the exposition, reducing the need for an extended, self-contained development.

Recapitulation

The primary theme makes two fragmented attempts at return in mm. 219-220 before finally reappearing as the recapitulation at m. 221. As before, the first phrase is stated in the piano. When the solo violin enters, however, it does not present the expected phrase but instead offers a fragmented version of the primary theme while Motive 5 intrudes in the piano. Motive 4 follows the meeting of the two soul themes, initiating the transition.

By the end of transition, the tonal area is nowhere near the tonic. At this point, Elgar makes most striking departures from sonata form. Rather than redirecting the music toward a tonic-centered secondary theme, the music moves through a second transition that returns to G major, Elgar's expressive identity for the second soul theme. The secondary theme arrives in a unison *forte grandioso* in the violins, with the solo violin doubling an octave.

Figure 1-13. Elgar, *Violin Concerto in B minor*, mov. 1 (Allegro), mm. 276-279, Recap.



This initiates an extended secondary theme section in which the secondary theme is recalled five times at varying dynamic levels, fortissimo, pianissimo, pianississimo, fortissimo, and pianissimo, with the violin and piano taking turns presenting it. As the secondary theme dissipates, the piano softly interjects with the primary theme, immediately joined by a fragment of the “in Dejection” theme.

Coda mm. 298-367

Motive 4 marks the beginning of the coda appearing in *forte* in the violin while the accompaniment rumbles alternated F# octaves (recalling the transitional passage at m. 159). The tonal area is ambiguous. The sustained F# octaves suggest a cadential arrival on the dominant of the tonic, yet the absence of the third prevents a clear tonal definition. Having already appeared in both F# major and F# minor, Motive 4 here offers no reliable clue as to the tonality. A frantic repetition of a Motive 6 fragment in the accompaniment coincides with a chromatic ascent in the violin (mm. 319-325), culminating in a unison F# climax. Even at this peak, the missing third leaves the mystery of the tonal center unresolved.

The final cadence is repeatedly delayed as the primary theme interjects in the piano while the violin surges upward in chromatic double stops. As the violin presses higher, the piano descends in a dramatic alternating *piano* and *sforzando* eighth-note pattern. The music finally cadences at m. 359 with a forceful F# major chord. At this moment, the violin rises in a scale (with added pitches), leading to a solitary, dramatic B.

Figure 1-14. Elgar, *Violin Concerto in B minor*, mov. 1 (Allegro), mm. 358-360, Coda.



As the violin arrives alone on a single, isolated B, the fabric thins and the primary theme interjects in *fortissimo* in the ensemble, firmly reasserting the tonic, B minor. This is followed by two accented F# octaves in the violin, under which the accompaniment presents the dominant and tonic harmonies in a subdued dynamic. With a final *forzando* at m. 367, the instruments arrive together on the closing B-minor chord, completing a perfect authentic cadence.

Figure 1-15. Elgar, *Violin Concerto in B minor*, mov. 1 (Allegro), mm. 362-367, Cadence.

V i i⁶⁴ V i

Compositional Characteristics

Central to an understanding of the concerto is an analysis of the core aspects of Elgar's compositional style. This includes examination of intervallic relationships, tonal organization, chromaticism, and expressive directions.

Intervallic Relationships and Interpretation

Rather than relying primarily on traditional harmonic progressions to shape the music, Elgar constructs themes and motives around specific intervals that carry expressive meaning. The most prominent interval in the movement is the minor second, which appears in both the first and second themes. Its persistent use, together with its complementary major seventh, contributes significantly to the work's chromatic tension. Also prominent throughout the movement is the major second, which provides a diatonic counterbalance to the chromatic pull of the minor second. The perfect fourth and tritone play a significant role, creating nostalgia and tension. The minor sixth and its counterpart, the major sixth, are moderately featured. The intervals associated with triadic and dominant-seventh structures, such as the perfect fifth, major and minor third, and minor seventh, appear more sparingly.

Intervallic Profile of Motive 1 and Motive 2

The motive of the primary theme, Motive 1, is constructed from a rise of a half step followed by a leap up of a perfect fifth, producing a total ascent of a minor sixth. This upward motion is followed by a descent of a major second and a minor sixth, concluding with a final fall of a minor second. Taken as a whole, the theme's downward span covers the distance of a major seventh.

Figure 1-16. Elgar, *Violin Concerto in B minor*, mov. 1 (Allegro), m.70, Motive 1 Intervals.



This intervallic design establishes the minor second as a point of closure. The contrast between major and minor intervals produces an unsettled, ambiguous character. A contour consisting of stepwise ascent, followed by an upward leap and subsequent descent, serves as a generative melodic pattern that recurs throughout the movement.

Motive 2 exemplifies Elgar's recurring practice of building sequences from a pair of intervals, here the perfect fourth and minor third. When Motive 2 is introduced in the piano, the beats fall by perfect fourths D-A-E-B. The descending intervals between the dotted quarters and the eighth notes are three minor thirds and one major third (mm. 5-6). When Motive 2 is reintroduced in the violin, the beats fall by perfect fifths F#-B-E. The intervals between the dotted quarters and the eighth notes are major third, perfect fourth, and minor third (mm. 80-81).

Figure 1-17. Elgar, *Violin Concerto in B minor*, mov. 1 (Allegro), mm. 5-6, Motive 2 Piano Intervals.

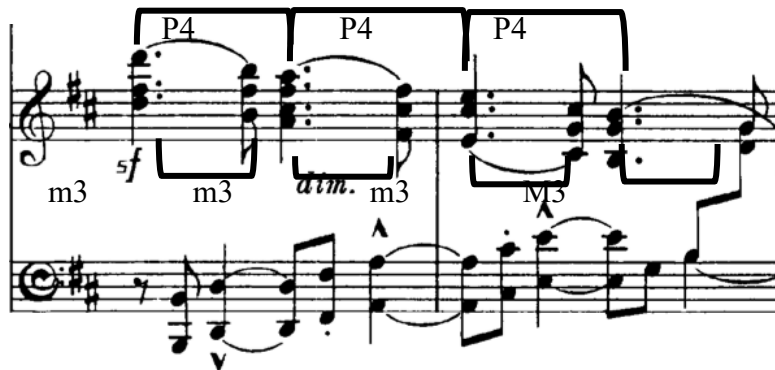
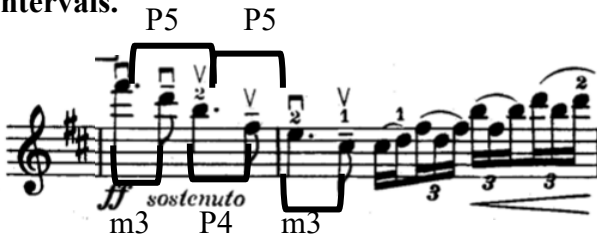


Figure 1-18. Elgar, *Violin Concerto in B minor*, mov. 1 (Allegro), m. 80-81, Motive 2 Violin Intervals.



This motive carries a nostalgic character shaped by its use of fourths, while the triadic intervals reinforce a sense of the tonic. The motive functions as a stabilizing answer to the primary theme.

Intervallic Profile of Motive 5

The motive of the secondary theme, Motive 5, is diatonic, contrasting with the complexity of the earlier chromatic material. It consists of three ascending major second steps followed by a minor third, outlining a triad and spanning the distance of a perfect fifth. At its most expressive moment, the theme falls by a minor sixth. This dramatic drop is followed by an upward stepwise motion that includes a minor second and major second, ending at a perfect fourth below the phrase's highest pitch.

Figure 1-19. Elgar, *Violin Concerto in B minor*, mov. 1 (Allegro), mm. 148-149, Motive 5 Intervals.



reaching and collapse, allowing dejection to be articulated through the motive's intervallic construction.

Intervallic Relationships in Motive 3 and 6

The opening of Motive 3 consists of two ascending minor seconds, followed by a leap of a major seventh, and a descent spanning a tritone. The closing gesture features two descending tritones. These intervals signal disruption and unsettle the diatonic stability.

Figure 1-21. Elgar, *Violin Concerto in B minor*, mov. 1 (Allegro), mm. 101-102, Motive 3 Intervals.



Motive 6 (mm. 108) closely resembles the contour of Motive 3, including minor-second motion followed by a broader rise and fall. The motive is built from a two-bar phrase followed by a three-bar phrase. In the two-bar phrase, the violin emphasizes the minor second. In the three-bar phrase, the violin first expands through leaps, perfect fourths, major sixths, or minor sixths, before descending over the remaining measures in triplets that outline a triad and frequently land on tritone-related pitches.

Figure 1-22. Elgar, *Violin Concerto in B minor*, mov. 1 (Allegro), mm. 108-112, Motive 6 Intervals.



Interval Variations of Motives 1 and 5

By varying the intervallic structures of Motives 1 and 5, Elgar generates new motives. In the *quasi recitativo* in the primary theme area (mm. 78-79), the violin presents a motive built from three ascending major steps followed by a descending major or minor sixth. This contour is reminiscent of Motive 5 (see fig. 1-5).

Intervallic variations of Motives 1 and 5 recur frequently in the transitions. At m. 169, a variant of Motive 1 in the violin preserves the initial rise of minor second and perfect fifth but the descent is altered.

Figure 1-23. Elgar, *Violin Concerto in B minor*, mov. 1 (Allegro), m. 169, Violin Variant of Motive 1.



At mm. 181-182, another variant of Motive 1 appears in the piano, this time featuring a rise of a minor second and a leap of a major sixth followed by a different descent.

Figure 1-24. Elgar, *Violin Concerto in B minor*, mov. 1 (Allegro), mm. 181-182, Piano
Variant of Motive 1.



At m. 175, the piano presents a motive combining a minor second, perfect fifth, two major seconds, and a minor sixth. This intervallic hybrid recalls both principal souls, combining the rising gesture of Motive 1 with an inversion of the rising gesture of Motive 5. This variant recurs for six bars.

Figure 1-25. Elgar, *Violin Concerto in B minor*, mov. 1 (Allegro), mm. 175, Variant of
Motives 1 and 5.



Interpretation of Intervals

In his absolute music, Elgar was clear that he did not wish to assign specific narratives to themes, motives, or intervals. Instead, he wanted listeners to identify their own life experiences through the music's emotional impressions. Among the emotions Elgar believed could be heard were pride, despair, anger, and peace. However, in his choral works, Elgar does attach meaning to his themes, intervals, and motives, which can inform our understanding of the concerto.

Elgar's oldest and most characteristic intervals are the perfect fourth and fifth. The perfect fourth, especially in its falling form, functions as a signifier of nostalgia and remembrance.¹⁴² This gesture is central to *Enigma Variations*, most notably in the E.D.U. and "Nimrod" variations. It creates the nostalgic tone of *The Wand of Youth*. In the concerto's *Allegro*, the falling fourth shapes both the opening theme and the "in Dejection" theme.

The perfect fifth symbolizes heroism and nobility, evident in heroic moments in *King Olaf* and Druids in *Caractacus*. The interval is used sparingly in the concerto's *Allegro*, but is notably present in the primary theme. Thirds represent sunrise in *The Apostles* and are found sparingly in the concerto's Motive 2 and 4.

Minor seconds are associated with anxiety and demonic unrest in *The Dream of Gerontius*. In the concerto's *Allegro*, they are found in Motives 1, 3, and 4. Dramatic leaps, including wide displacements and major sevenths, are also demons in *Gerontius*. They are startling and unsettling when they occur in the movement's transitions.

Falling motion consistently signifies fear, darkness, and mortality in Elgar's music. This motion appears in *The Dream of Gerontius* as slow descending bass lines associated with night and spiritual cold, in *King Olaf* as pagan imagery and Thor's hammer, in *Lux Christi* as blindness, in *Caractacus* as dying delight, and in *Sea Pictures* as the closing of the eyes. In the concerto, this symbolism persists through falling octaves, descending bass, and falling triplet figures in the transitions.

Rising motion functions as a musical signifier of light and spiritual ascent. In *Lux Christi* and *The Dream of Gerontius*, upward gestures represent Christ and transcendence, while in *King Olaf* they accompany the arrival of Christianity. The concerto's *Allegro*, reflects this language

¹⁴² {Citation}

through rising triplet figures, ascending chromatic scales, and upward chordal motion in transitional passages.

Alternating ascent and descent convey despair and psychological unrest in Elgar's music. This pattern appears in *The Dream of Gerontius* as sequences of despair and in *Caractacus* as plunging nighttime figures. In the concerto, rapidly rising and falling triplets occur at times of unrest in the transitions and development.

The gesture of descent followed by a leap often signals surrender or unrest. In *The Dream of Gerontius*, it marks the moment of Committal and in *Caractacus* it contributes to nighttime unrest. In the concerto's *Allegro*, this motion features prominently in the two soul themes.

Chromatic downward motion carries a specific association with prayer and supplication. In *The Dream of Gerontius*, it accompanies moments of spiritual pleading, while in *The Apostles* it represents Christ's loneliness. The concerto's *Allegro* draws on this symbolism most clearly in moments of sectional transition, particularly in the shift from Transition 1 to Transition 2.

Elgar reserves his most sustained lyrical lines for expressions of peace and forgiveness. This character appears in *King Olaf* as sailing imagery, in *The Dream of Gerontius* in the "softly, gently" passage, and in *The Apostles* as forgiveness. In the concerto, the "Windflower" theme continues this tradition.

Open octaves and unison signify unity of voice and spiritual elevation in Elgar's music, most clearly in *The Dream of Gerontius*, where they represent heavenly voices. In the concerto's *Allegro*, this symbolism reappears in the recapitulation with the "Windflower" theme, in the accompaniment to the primary theme, and again in the coda.

Opposing motion between upper voices and bass is a sign of spiritual struggle. It is associated with fear in *The Dream of Gerontius*. The concerto's *Allegro* adopts this texture when

Motive 2 answers Motive 1 and in passages where rising triplets in the solo line oppose descending bass figures in the transitions.

Double stops and chordal writing carry associations of judgment and finality, appearing as the shadow of the cross in *Lux Christi* and as judgment in *The Dream of Gerontius*. In the concerto's *Allegro*, rising double stops over a bass ostinato, intensified *più animato* chordal writing, and the chordal climax at the close of the first movement all recall this same character.

Ostinato functions as a symbol of fear and destructive force in Elgar's music, appearing in *King Olaf* to depict fear and fire and in *The Dream of Gerontius* as spiritual unrest. In the concerto, seven major bass ostinati recur at structurally charged moments, appearing alongside Motive 4 throughout transitional passages, and extensively in the coda where their persistence creates an atmosphere of pressure.

Triplet motion in Elgar's music conveys strength and agitation, descending in *King Olaf* to signify power and force. In the concerto, triplets appear in multiple ways, rising, falling, chromatic, and alternating. They create propulsion and instability, particularly in the development of the first movement. In the recapitulation, set in opposition to the "Windflower" theme, their motion undermines the music's lyrical calm.

Tonal Regions

In the first movement of the *Violin Concerto*, the most significant key is B minor, the key of the primary theme. The second most important tonal area is the submediant, G major, the key of the secondary theme. Elgar frequently uses G major to suggest a sense of home and peace: in the *Enigma Variations*, it represents Elgar himself; in *The Wand of Youth*, it evokes childhood; and in *Caractacus*, it is associated with memories of the woodlands.

Major and minor modes also hold symbolism in Elgar's music. The major modes represent Christ, peace, and spiritual home. The minor modes signify humanity, suffering, and struggle. This contrast can be found in *Lux Christi* (*Christ vs humanity*), *Caractacus* (*captivity vs. woodlands*), and the *Children's Suite* (*sorrow vs. dream*). In the concerto the two souls are set in major-minor contrast.

Diatonicism vs. Chromaticism

For Elgar, diatonicism represented the old, the established, and the peaceful. Chromaticism, by contrast, signifies the new and the disruptive forces that intrude upon and unsettle a peaceful past. In the concerto, the "Windflower" theme is the most diatonic passage. Notably, in the third of the theme's four phrases, Elgar momentarily alters the expected falling sixth to a falling tritone, introducing a subtle chromatic disturbance that gently disrupts the theme's otherwise serene surface.

The *Nobilmente* theme is a blend of diatonic stability and chromatic tension. In the opening chord of the concerto, the *Nobilmente* theme avoids immediate confirmation of B minor, beginning instead on a minor v chord, which weakens the expected leading tone pull toward the tonic. The sense of instability is further intensified at the end of the theme by its chromatic final interval. The most intense chromaticism emerges in the transitional material (Motives 3, 4, and 6) and in the development section.

The interaction between major and minor modes, as well as between diatonic and chromatic materials, creates a multifaceted narrative of opposing souls. The main themes represent the diatonic. The first soul, cast in the minor mode, is restless and desirous, while the second, in the major mode, is peaceful and trusting. The "in Dejection" theme shifts between major and minor. Its nostalgic character expresses a longing for the unattainable and illuminates

the emotional distance between the two souls. Elgar described the bridging of the themes in poetic terms: “where love and faith meet, there will be light.” Following the “in Dejection” theme, when the souls fail to fully unite, chromaticism breaks in, bringing tension and struggle. Not until the second movement, however, does Elgar permit a full merging of the themes, allowing the two souls to unite completely.

Expressive Markings

When Reed worked with Elgar on the concerto, he observed that Elgar was exceptionally particular about expressive markings, repeatedly revising them until the precise sound and character he imagined was achieved.

The first movement contains approximately seventy-seven expression markings, two hundred and sixty dynamic markings and symbols, and sixty-nine tempo markings. Of these markings, five tempo markings, six dynamic markings, and fourteen expression markings occur only once. Single-occurrence expression markings include *sostenuto*, *molto sostenuto*, *poco sostenuto*, *tranquillo*, *grazioso*, *maestoso*, *grandioso*, *brillante*, *sonoramente*, *con passione*, *con forza*, *dolce e legato*, *simile*, and *cantabile e largamente*. Elgar was meticulous about every marking, attaching expressive meaning to each note and shaping the music with extraordinary precision. Menuhin, reflecting on Elgar’s expressive markings in a masterclass, observed that “there’s very little music that is as heavily marked as this concerto because he was attached to every note and wanted every note played in a particular way.”¹⁴³

The most frequent expressive markings, *espressivo*, *dolce*, *largamente*, and *cantabile*, suggest that the concerto’s prevailing expressive character is one of tenderness and sweetness.

¹⁴³ LiveSoundCapture, *The Elgar Violin Concerto - Rare Footage*.

Menuhin taught that the piece must be played with tenderness, innocence, and simplicity that “lacks self-assertion.”¹⁴⁴ The juxtaposition of lyricism with rigid two-bar phrase structures poses a challenge for sustaining long lyrical lines.

Tempo-related instructions also dominate the score, particularly *ritardando*, *a tempo*, and various forms of *animato*. Menuhin understood these markings as Elgar’s attempt to mirror the natural inflections and pacing of spoken language: “every one of these notes is heavily laden with something that you might call almost speech. . . you wait before some, you hold others, you reflect on a few.”¹⁴⁵

The first movement is marked by frequent dynamic shifts. While soft dynamics (*p*, *pp*, *ppp*) occur often, they are nearly matched in number by loud dynamics (*f* and *ff*), creating a broad expressive range. Most striking, however, is the exceptionally high number of accented dynamics, particularly *sforzando*. These markings indicate that Elgar shapes the music through sudden dynamic moments.

In Elgar’s music, extreme dynamics function symbolically rather than merely as indicators of volume. The softest dynamics (*pp* and *ppp*) are consistently associated with states of removal from earthly time, spiritual states, stillness, and introspection. In *The Dream of Gerontius*, these dynamics signify the state of existence after death, while in *The Apostles* they evoke spirits and profound loneliness. In the concerto, they appear in passages connected to the “Windflower” theme and its surrounding transitions.

By contrast, *ff* dynamics and accented chords are reserved for moments of struggle or force. In Elgar’s earlier works, these dynamics traditionally represent demons as in *The Dream of*

¹⁴⁴ LiveSoundCapture, *The Elgar Violin Concerto - Rare Footage*.

¹⁴⁵ LiveSoundCapture, *The Elgar Violin Concerto - Rare Footage*.

Gerontius or war, as in the *Fantasia Overture*. They frequently carry associations of judgment and confrontation. In the concerto, these forceful dynamics are concentrated in transitions, developmental passages, and expansive gestures in the coda. Loud dynamics disrupt lyrical continuity, acting as destabilizing forces that challenge the concerto's introspective world.

The *Violin Concerto* stands at the height of Elgar's career, bringing together the influences, ambitions, and compositional habits that shaped his musical life. The concerto demonstrates Elgar's position between Brahmsian ideals of absolute form and Wagnerian thematic structure. Although Elgar sought to avoid overt narrative meaning, the movement unfolds as a narrative driven by two main themes. Along with a network of subsidiary themes and fragments they are pressed into a sonata form that frequently strains under their expressive weight. The density of expressive elements reveals Elgar's intense concern for the expressive weight of each note and musical line. The overall character of the piece is one of nostalgia and tenderness.

Performance History and Technical-Pedagogical Considerations

The *Violin Concerto* was received with remarkable enthusiasm at its premiere, but its later reception reflects its technical and pedagogical demands. *The Star* reported on the uncertain future of the concerto after the premiere: "Some prophesied that every violinist would play it, because it is so effective; others that nobody would touch it, because the solo part is so ungrateful."¹⁴⁶ Which of these predictions has proved closer to the truth?

Although the concerto has been regularly performed and recorded since its premiere, its place in the international repertoire has remained complex. The work's exceptional length,

¹⁴⁶ *The Star*.

expressive demands, and stylistic complexity have at times made violinists like Kreisler and Joseph Szigeti (1892–1973) hesitant to adopt it. British violinists such as Marie Hall (1884–1956) and Albert Sammons (1886–1957) championed the work on a national scale. However, these performers were not positioned to advance the work broadly across Europe. World War I and II further disrupted the concerto’s trajectory and changed the musical landscape. Performers such as Menuhin and Nikolaj Znaider (1975–) have continued to champion the work.

Fritz Kreisler

As the concerto’s dedicatee and first interpreter, Fritz Kreisler was uniquely positioned to determine its early fate. Yet his failure to record the concerto may have limited its early circulation, helping to explain its delayed acceptance in the repertoire.

Born in Vienna, Kreisler was a child prodigy who attended the Paris Conservatoire but was largely self-taught. After a period away from the concert stage, he began to reassert himself around 1907. He was just achieving renewed prominence in 1910 when he was asked to premiere the concerto.

After the premiere, Kreisler performed the concerto frequently in England with Elgar conducting. Elgar hoped Kreisler would take the concerto to Germany and assisted him with plans to introduce it there. But the first confirmed German performance was undertaken instead by Ysaÿe. By his final London performances, Kreisler had grown increasingly impatient with the concerto’s length and had already begun cutting the finale.

Repeated attempts were made to persuade Kreisler to record the concerto, but he consistently avoided or delayed these requests. At one point, there was a plan to record it in Berlin, but this plan never materialized. There are several reasons that could have contributed to

Kreisler's hesitation. First, Kreisler had signed an exclusive recording contract with Victor in 1910. His gift lay in composing and performing shorter works suited to the gramophone.

Second, Kreisler's career was disrupted by World War I. In 1914, he was conscripted into the Austrian army. Upon his return to the United States, he was initially celebrated as a hero and celebrity. In 1917, when the United States entered the war, Kreisler was banned and his concerts cancelled. He withdrew from public life and did not regain widespread popularity until around 1920. In 1920, he returned to Germany to assist the survivors of the war and established residence in Berlin.

Third, a serious accident in 1941 raised fears that he might never play again. He approached his return to performance with great caution. Observers noted that his intonation had become less secure, with missed notes occurring more frequently. While his playing kept its charm, it was less energetic than before. He no longer appeared fully comfortable with large-scale, technically demanding works.

Finally, even before his accident Kreisler was well known for his dislike of intensive practice. His biographer Louis Biancolli (1899–1969) concludes: “He did not simply avoid it himself; he was evangelical on the subject, advising colleagues not to spend too much time rehearsing. Excessive practice numbs the creative spirit, he admonished.”¹⁴⁷ He was known for memory lapses and inaccuracies in concert. At a Kreisler concert, violinist David Sackson (1947–) recalled that “three things would happen: he would play out of tune, he'd have a memory lapse—and he'd play so gorgeously that you'd forget about everything.”¹⁴⁸ He would

¹⁴⁷ Amy. Biancolli, *Fritz Kreisler: Love's Sorrow, Love's Joy* (Amadeus Press, 1998), 76.

¹⁴⁸ Biancolli, *Fritz Kreisler: Love's Sorrow, Love's Joy*, 241.

rely on stylistic improvisation when memory faltered, which worked convincingly in concert but posed significant risks in the recording studio.

Considering these factors, it is plausible that the gramophone men were correct in suggesting that “the great violinist, no longer young, was afraid of the microphone’s immortality in this most daunting of the big concertos.”¹⁴⁹ Kreisler’s refusal to record the concerto contributed to uncertainty surrounding the work in its early years. Some violinists, including Joseph Szigeti, took great stock in Kreisler’s artistic judgment and hesitated to take up the concerto themselves.

Joseph Szigeti

Joseph Szigeti did not take up the concerto, a decision that reflects his early recognition of the work’s exceptional artistic and physical demands. Born in Hungary, Szigeti began violin lessons at the age of seven and, owing to his extraordinary aptitude, was soon admitted to the class of Jenő Hubay. By 1910, the year of the concerto’s premiere, Szigeti was still a young violinist who had only recently completed his formal studies with Hubay. He later recalled attending the premiere in vivid detail:

When Kreisler gave the premiere of the Elgar Concerto in 1910, a premiere that created such a stir as we cannot visualize today, there I sat among the rapt audience, pencil poised above the music on my lap, trying to seize the *insaisissable* of Kreisler’s eloquence, making notes ... and yet I did not have the stamina to start work on it next day.¹⁵⁰

Szigeti’s recognized that the work demanded not only technical mastery but also endurance. Szigeti later contrasted his own hesitation with the reaction of Ysaÿe, noting that

¹⁴⁹ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 777.

¹⁵⁰ Joseph Szigeti, *Szigeti on the Violin* (Cassell & Company, 1969), 8.

Ysaÿe, then in his fifties and rarely persuaded to undertake a new work of such scope and difficulty, was nevertheless eager to perform the concerto.

This episode aligns with one of Szigeti's central convictions: that concertos do not automatically succeed but require a performer capable of revealing their meaning to the public. Throughout his writings, Szigeti argues that violinists bear a responsibility to champion new concertos, even when they are difficult, controversial, or slow to gain acceptance. In this context, he famously suggested that Kreisler "made" the Elgar Concerto, being impressed that it was a Viennese violinist who transmitted the Englishness of Elgar's music to England and, ultimately, to the wider world.¹⁵¹

Szigeti's reluctance to take up the concerto himself may reflect his awareness that the work had already been decisively shaped by Kreisler and Ysaÿe. His recollections of hearing them perform in Berlin suggest that he did not yet see himself as occupying the same position. As he recalled, "When I heard Kreisler and Ysaÿe again in Berlin it made a clear impact on me—a playing of a fire, an elegance, a rhythmic incisiveness which I had never imagined . . . I was bowled over by Ysaÿe, Kreisler, and Elman."¹⁵² Rather than competing with performances that had already made the concerto, Szigeti deferred accordingly.

Eugène Ysaÿe

Ysaÿe was uniquely positioned, as both a leading performer and teacher, to become the concerto's most influential champion. Born in Belgium, he was a child prodigy who began violin lessons with his father at the age of five and later studied at the Royal Conservatory of Liège. An

¹⁵¹ Joseph Szigeti, *With Strings Attached* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1947), 332.

¹⁵² Louis P. (Louis Paul) Lochner, *Fritz Kreisler* (Macmillan, 1950), 127–28.

international concert tour established him as one of the leading violinists in the world. His playing was celebrated for its noble tone, expressive use of portamento, rhythmic flexibility, and commanding musical authority. Many composers wrote for him as Jaeger had originally suggested to Elgar.

In 1910, when the concerto was premiered, Ysaÿe lived in Brussels, where he was Professor of Violin at the Royal Conservatory. He was beginning to reduce his extensive solo touring because of diabetes and became more selective about the repertoire he accepted. Elgar's concerto was one that Ysaÿe was eager to perform claiming it was the finest thing in its way since the concerto of Brahms.¹⁵³ Elgar looked forward to Ysaÿe's interpretation.

When Ysaÿe requested orchestral materials for performances with the Brussels Orchestra, the publisher Novello informed him of the required performance fees. Ysaÿe reacted angrily and canceled all planned performances. Novello's chairman Littleton criticized Ysaÿe, accusing him of prioritizing money over artists and threatening to expose the dispute publicly. The firm feared that waiving the fee for Ysaÿe would insult other prominent violinists, including Kreisler.

Elgar, still eager to hear Ysaÿe perform the concerto, arranged with Novello to change the policy so orchestral costs would be absorbed by the orchestra rather than the soloist. Ysaÿe still refused to perform the concerto if anyone was paying for the scores. He had considered performing the concerto at the Norwich Festival but chose to play the *Beethoven Concerto* instead.

Ysaÿe kept the orchestral parts Novello had sent to him and proceeded to perform the concerto in Berlin, Vienna, and Russia, regions where British copyright laws were not enforced.

¹⁵³ "M. Ysaÿe and the Elgar Violin Concerto," *The Musical Times* 54, no. 839 (1913): 19, <https://doi.org/10.2307/906107>.

After the 1912 performance in Berlin, he wrote to his wife, “*une victoire pour l’œuvre et une grande joie pour l’interprète*” – “a victory for the work and a great joy for the performer.”¹⁵⁴

Kreisler himself remarked that the greatest performance he had ever heard was given by Ysaÿe in Berlin. This impression was echoed by the pianist and writer Vladimir de Pachmann (1848–1933), who described Ysaÿe’s playing in striking terms. In *Humour and Harmony*, he recalled that “he had a way of playing the cadenzas in that very beautiful work in such a detached manner that, for once, the expression ‘music from heaven’ seemed inadequate.”¹⁵⁵

Novello demanded the return of the materials and threatened legal action. Finally, Elgar wrote directly to Ysaÿe which stopped the unauthorized performances. Meanwhile, Kreisler, having heard Ysaÿe rehearse the concerto in Berlin, insisted that he too be allowed to perform the work without fees. Faced with mounting pressure, Novello announced that performance fees for the concerto would be abolished. This caused further complaints from those who had already paid. Frustrated, Novello published its correspondence with Ysaÿe in *The Musical Times*, creating a public controversy. This dispute hindered the concerto’s early international promotion, but the work remained popular in England, where it was performed by violinists such as Hall and Sammons.

Marie Hall

Marie Hall was the first to make a commercial recording of part of the concerto, conducted by Elgar. Hall was born into a musical but financially unstable family. Her father was a harpist, but when he fell into financial difficulty, Hall was compelled to play the violin on the

¹⁵⁴ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 625.

¹⁵⁵ Michael Kennedy, *Portrait of Elgar* (Oxford University Press, 1968), 197.

streets to help support the family. Like Elgar, she lived in Malvern and lacked the financial means to pursue formal studies in London.

Her talent was eventually recognized by Jan Kubelík, who arranged for her to travel to Prague to study with Otakar Ševčík. Following her studies, Hall quickly embarked on an international touring career and achieved considerable fame. Hall began recording in 1903 for the Gramophone & Typewriter Ltd.

Hall first performed the concerto at the Queen's Hall in 1912, with Elgar conducting the London Symphony Orchestra. In 1916, she recorded an abbreviated sixteen-minute version of the concerto for Gramophone, the first recording conducted by Elgar. Although Albert Sammons had made an earlier recording of the concerto nine months earlier, Hall's recording was the first to be published. Upon receiving the discs, Elgar declared Hall's 1916 version superior.

Critic Tully Potter (1942–) described Hall's performance in *The Strad*, "The plentiful portamento is in style, and I always find Hall's artistry seductive, not least in the finely phrased Andante. She is balanced a little forward, but Elgar's conducting keeps the orchestra in the picture."¹⁵⁶

Although Hall has been described as "perhaps the most successful woman violinist of any during the pre-war period, a truly international celebrity"¹⁵⁷ she largely disappeared from the public not long after the recording. While Hall was the first to preserve the concerto for the public, her national career declined relatively early. Albert Sammons, by contrast, sustained the work through repeated performances over a long and prominent career in English concert life.

¹⁵⁶ Tully Potter, "Marie Hall: Elgar," *The Strad*, accessed December 31, 2025, <https://www.thestrad.com/reviews/marie-hall-elgar/19837.article>.

¹⁵⁷ Emma Hornby and David Nicholas Maw, eds., *Essays on the History of English Music in Honour of John Caldwell* (Boydell & Brewer, 2010).

Albert Sammons

Albert Sammons became one of the concerto's most devoted advocates. He was born in London to a shoemaker who was also an amateur violinist. Sammons received a small number of early lessons from his father but, like Elgar, was largely self-taught. Conductor Adrian Boult (1889–1983) remarked that Sammons “had had no special preparation, no training abroad, no scholarship luxuries.”¹⁵⁸ He rose through London's orchestral ranks, eventually becoming leader of the London Symphony Orchestra, underscoring the remarkable nature of his achievements. After the premiere of the concerto by Kreisler in 1910, Sammons took up the work and first performed it in 1914. He made the earliest recording of the concerto in April 1916 for the Columbia record company. This was an abbreviated version lasting approximately fifteen minutes. In 1929, he recorded the first complete version with the New Queen's Hall Orchestra conducted by Henry Wood (1869–1944).

Potter strongly preferred Sammons's interpretation of the concerto, praising the violinist's full tone:

“I seem to be the only listener who rejects the 1932 version by the young Yehudi Menuhin, with its jejune playing, slow tempos and indulgent conducting. Wood imparts a sense of urgency from the start, and when Sammons enters he takes charge: the virtuosity in faster passages, with lavish portamentos (lovely!), is all directed to putting over his dramatic view of the music. The second subject has a speaking, improvisatory quality, and the movement ends in a blaze. Wood's introductory bars in the Andante are tender, solicitous; Sammons's tone is full but not thick; his pianissimo is memorable.”¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ Adrian Boult, “Albert Sammons,” in *Boult on Music* (Toccata Press, 1983).

¹⁵⁹ Tully Potter, “Albert Sammons: Elgar,” *The Strad*, accessed December 31, 2025, <https://www.thestrad.com/reviews/albert-sammons-elgar/19075.article>.

Sammons frequently performed the concerto with Elgar himself conducting, and in 1921, as an expression of gratitude for his advocacy of the work, Elgar gave him his James Tubbs bow.

Sammons is estimated to have performed the concerto over one hundred times during his career, with his final performance occurring in 1946 on his sixtieth birthday. Despite this extraordinary commitment, Albert Sammons's career remained primarily national, limiting his ability to carry the concerto to sustained international prominence. That role instead fell to an international sensation capable of elevating the work onto the global stage: Yehudi Menuhin.

Yehudi Menuhin

If there was anyone whose life and career stood in contrast to Elgar's, it was Yehudi Menuhin. Born in 1916 in New York City to Russian Jewish immigrants, he began studying the violin at the age of four. His parents organized their lives entirely around his musical education. He did not attend formal school but studied with several private teachers. His performing career began at the age of seven, and by 1932 he was an international star.

Menuhin was invited to record the concerto in 1932. He was living in Paris and studying with George Enescu (1881–1955) and he worked on the concerto with Enescu before traveling to London. Menuhin later recalled, "I remember Enesco's commenting on how English the soloist's second theme was, a judgement which, in spite of my travels, I didn't then thoroughly understand, but which I have since come to agree with, seeing 'Englishness' in this context as a kind of passionate innocence, very different from the passions—volcanic, aggressive, sophisticated, etc.—of other countries."¹⁶⁰

¹⁶⁰ Yehudi Menuhin, *Yehudi Menuhin Unfinished Journey* (Macdonald and Jane's, 1976), 121–22.

When Menuhin arrived in England, he was unprepared for his first impression of Elgar, recalling that “. . . composers in my experience were Biblical prophets (Bloch) or heroes of chivalry (Enesco), not grandfatherly country gentlemen who would properly have had a couple of hounds gamboling at their heels and whose attire for duty seemed, to say the least, relaxed.”¹⁶¹

Elgar and Menuhin met for the first time on July 12, 1932. The pianist Ivor Newton (1896-1982) later recalled that “Menuhin and Elgar discussed the music like equals, but with great courtesy and lack of self-consciousness on the boy’s part . . . I could not be other than amazed at his maturity of outlook.”¹⁶² As they played through the concerto, Newton remembered that Elgar sat with his eyes closed, listening intently and clearly moved by Menuhin’s artistry. They had not yet reached the second theme when Elgar stopped them and suggested going to the races.

Menuhin performed the concerto at the Royal Albert Hall, where *The Daily Mail* reported: “Once Sir Edward caught the boy’s eye . . . and Yehudi gave him a quick, shy smile. Side by side they carried their audience away from the world of reality on the wings of music.”¹⁶³ Following the performance Elgar wrote to Menuhin: “. . . I have never felt such a reading as you gave it, with such a thrill of expression.”¹⁶⁴

Menuhin’s father invited Elgar to conduct the concerto in Paris. Because he was weakened by a recent stroke, Elgar traveled by air, his first flight. Menuhin recalled that he and Enescu had rehearsed the orchestra three times in advance so that Elgar could run through the concerto once without interruption. The French premiere was attended by the President and

¹⁶¹ Menuhin, *Yehudi Menuhin Unfinished Journey*, 122.

¹⁶² Ivan Newton, *At the Piano: The World of an Accompanist* (Hamish Hamilton, 1966), 185–86.

¹⁶³ *The Daily Mail*, November 21, 1932.

¹⁶⁴ “Elgar and the Boy Violinist: A Batch of Letters,” *The Daily Telegraph*, October 20, 1934, 6.

many ministers of state. Menuhin later reflected on its lukewarm reception “. . . the French audience received it politely, but it has never been performed in Paris since.”¹⁶⁵ In Menuhin’s view, only the United States truly welcomed Elgar’s music, because American audiences were open-minded and receptive, “to the new as to the old, to the exotic as to the overfamiliar—that every music finds its public there.”¹⁶⁶

Menuhin’s experiences during World War II marked a decisive turning point in his life and career. He spent the war years performing extensively for Allied troops, displaced persons, and concentration-camp survivors, encounters that profoundly affected him and reshaped his understanding of music’s purpose. After the war, he moved away from the identity of a virtuoso prodigy toward a more reflective role as humanitarian, teacher, and cultural ambassador.

In November 1945, Menuhin became the first foreign artist to perform in the Soviet Union after the war. He wished to perform the concerto but had brought only his violin score. Although the work was known through BBC broadcasts, full scores and orchestral parts were unavailable. Novello declined to send materials, fearing that Soviet authorities would not observe copyright restrictions. Menuhin left his own score and later remarked that Novello need not have worried, since he doubted the concerto was performed again after his departure, noting that “the score must still be gathering dust in the library of the conservatoire.”¹⁶⁷

He recorded the concerto again in 1965 with the London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Boult. Menuhin continued to perform the concerto well into maturity, including a

¹⁶⁵ Menuhin, *Yehudi Menuhin Unfinished Journey*, 123.

¹⁶⁶ Menuhin, *Yehudi Menuhin Unfinished Journey*, 123.

¹⁶⁷ Menuhin, *Yehudi Menuhin Unfinished Journey*, 190.

notable 1982 performance with Robert Shaw (1916-1999) and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra marking the fiftieth anniversary of his original recording.

Nikolaj Znaider

In 2010, Znaider marked the centenary of the concerto with a landmark recording and a series of international performances. Znaider is a Danish violinist with a distinguished career as a soloist and conductor. Born in Copenhagen to Polish-Jewish parents, he studied with Delay, Milan Vitek (1938-2012), and Boris Kuschmir (1948-2020). His international career was launched by major competition successes, including a decisive victory at the Queen Elisabeth Competition in 1997. He currently serves as Music Director of the Orchestre National de Lyon.

In 2010, for the centenary of the concerto, Znaider recorded it with Sir Colin Davis (1927–2013) and the Staatskapelle Dresden. He performed on the historic “Kreisler” Guarneri del Gesù, the same instrument used by Kreisler at the concerto’s 1910 premiere.

He has spoken of a deep connection to the work, describing it as large in scope, formally clear, and emotionally complex. Prior to a performance with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Znaider discussed the concerto with Principal Guest Conductor Stéphane Denève (1971–), who remarked on the work’s extraordinary scale, calling it “extremely huge.” Znaider, in turn, highlighted the finale as a “kaleidoscope” that revisits earlier themes, emphasizing the concerto’s emotional depth and sense of meaning, noting that “you can hear the message of love.” Denève concurred, observing that nearly every bar is charged with emotion as if “Elgar is offering

something of himself, from himself, touching.”¹⁶⁸ This tribute to Elgar demonstrated that the concerto remains both loved and artistically significant in the modern era.

Performer’s Perspective

From a performer’s perspective, the concerto is not primarily difficult because of speed or overt virtuosity, but because many skills must be managed at once over an unusually long span. Its length requires exceptional physical endurance and sustained concentration. The solo writing presents unstable tonality and unusual intervallic patterns. Intonation is particularly challenging due to Elgar’s intervallic leaps, with additional difficulty arising from octave scales and extended passages of rapid double stops. Frequent shifts to *sul G*, *sul D*, and high-position passages demand constant left-hand remapping. Dense dynamic writing requires advanced bow control and tonal maturity. Detailed expressive markings call for sophisticated interpretive judgment. Structurally, the concerto often places expansive lyrical lines over rigid two-bar phrases complicating the lyrical phrasing.

The concerto is performed at a wide range of tempi. Sammons and Wood complete the work in 42’32”, while Menuhin and Elgar take 49’47”. An even faster performance was given by Heifetz and Sargent in 1949 at 41’28”. Most other recordings are considerably longer, with Haendel and Boult extending to 55’19”.¹⁶⁹ The score’s dense tempo markings demand a high level of interpretive judgment and close collaboration between soloist and pianist or conductor.

¹⁶⁸ *Nikolaj Znaider on Elgar’s Violin Concerto*, directed by New York Philharmonic, 2011, 3:04, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EWp-NBamGcw>.

¹⁶⁹ “Elgar’s Violin Concerto,” *Gramophone*, February 2024, 100, Gale General OneFile, <https://link-gale-com.er.lib.k-state.edu/apps/doc/A780849393/ITOF>.

Vibrato in the concerto functions as a primary expressive device. The sustained lyrical writing, frequent low-string passages, and extended high-position playing require continual recalibration of vibrato width and speed. The constant left-hand rebalancing disrupts vibrato continuity, making sustained vibrato especially challenging.

The concerto requires an intense emotional commitment. The constant shifting, fluctuating tempos, and expressive vibrato leave little room for technical disengagement. The densely marked expressive details require constant emotional investment. The result is a work that requires the performer to dedicate all their skills and give a part of their soul.

The history of the concerto reveals neither great fame or disappearance, but selectivity. From Kreisler's hesitant support through Szigeti's recognition of the work's difficulties, to Ysaÿe's unrealized potential as a champion, the concerto repeatedly encountered obstacles. British violinists such as Hall and Sammons ensured its survival within English musical life, while Menuhin tested its viability on the international stage. In the modern era, Znaider demonstrated that the concerto remains deeply valued. Ultimately, the concerto endures as a work preserved by those willing to meet its profound artistic and emotional demands.

Chapter 2 - *Romance in E minor*, Op. 1

Historical Background

Romance in E minor, Op. 1, was published in 1885 during a period when Elgar's personal experiences with romance were especially significant. Shortly before publishing the piece, he experienced a romantic disappointment following the dissolution of his year-long engagement to Helen Weaver. Seeking diversion, Elgar traveled to Scotland, where he spent much of the summer in the company of a young woman referred to in his diary only as "E.E." His final diary entry from this period reads, "*Adiux! Flowers. Edinburgh to Glasgow.*"¹⁷⁰ Shortly after his return to England, he began to reassess his artistic direction and pursue a professional career centered on composition.

Elgar traveled to London and successfully negotiated the publication of the *Romance*. He signed a contract with the German firm Schott for one shilling and twenty gratis copies. Notably, the first piece he chose to publish was written for his own instrument, the violin. It is suggested that Elgar composed this piece in 1878 or 1879. Elgar dedicated the piece to Oswin Grainger, a local grocer who aspired to be a poet. Grainger later wrote to Elgar, "Though condemned to get my living by means not to my taste—nothing will quite crush the poetry of me."¹⁷¹ Elgar likely recognized a kindred spirit in Grainger as this composition marked his determination to earn his livelihood through music. The first performance was in Worcester on October 20, 1885, at a fundraising concert for the Cathedral choristers' pianoforte. It was played by one of Elgar's students, W.H. Dyson.

¹⁷⁰ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 107.

¹⁷¹ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 73.

Theoretical Analysis

Romance belongs to the Romantic salon tradition. Marked *Andante* and lasting approximately five minutes, it is written in 12/8. The piano alternates between arpeggiated and lilting accompaniment figures, balancing Romantic lyricism with a gentle, dance-like character.

Elgar constructed *Romance* in rounded ternary form with an expanded B section (A-B-B'-A). The work demonstrates his early attempts to employ compositional devices that would later become characteristic of his style. One such device is Elgar's propensity to construct a movement from multiple interwoven themes. This includes the use of a piano-only introductory theme with material never taken up by the soloist. Elgar follows this with an extended violin melody whose lyrical romantic character unfolds without clear cadential articulation. He then introduces two additional themes that are more classically predictable in structure. Each theme differs in style and character, foreshadowing the more developed use of leitmotivic thinking in his later oratorios.

A second characteristic device is his approach to tonal centers, an idea influenced by Beethoven, in which he moves swiftly between keys, creating moments of surprise. The intervallic construction and sequential writing are also Elgarian, particularly through the prominent use of the perfect fourth.

Formally, the piece reflects Elgar's negotiation between adherence to conventional models and a persistent impulse to stretch them. After he disrupts the form, he apologetically reasserts balance through clear returns and structural reinforcement, demonstrating a deliberate commitment to established formal practice.

Table 2. Elgar, *Romance in E minor*, Op.1, Ternary Form

Section	Measures	Tonality	Themes
Piano Intro	1	e minor	1
A	5	e minor	2
Piano Intro	15	e minor	1
B	19	G major, b minor, e minor	3 and 4
B1	34	G major, e minor	3 and 4
A	49	e minor	2
Coda	59	e minor	

Ternary Form and Themes

Note on musical examples. All music examples and figures are taken from the score of Edward Elgar's *Romance in E minor*, Op. 1 (London: Schott & Co., ca. 1885), accessed via IMSLP.

The work opens with a four-bar piano introduction (Theme 1), presented before both the A and B sections. This theme is exclusively played by the piano and is never restated by the soloist.

Figure 2-1. Elgar, *Romance in E minor*, Op.1, mm.1-4, Piano Theme 1.



The violin enters at the beginning of Section A with Theme 2. Theme 2 is an extended, uninterrupted phrase spanning mm. 5-14, notably avoiding clear phrases and cadences. This theme suggests short phrases ending on tonic and dominant harmonic areas. However, these harmonies change mid-measure while the piano maintains a continuous arpeggiated accompaniment pattern throughout, which leads to the conclusion that it is one long phrase.

Figure 2-2. Elgar, *Romance in E minor*, Op.1, mm. 1-4, Theme 2.



The piano then restates Theme 1, but with a modified conclusion: the final chord functions as a pivot, leading to the relative major, G major. Section B begins in G major with the introduction of Theme 3.

Figure 2-3. Elgar, *Romance in E minor*, Op.1, mm. 19-25, Theme 3.



Theme 3 consists of two four bar phrases organized as antecedent and consequent. The second phrase functions as a transition, employing a piano pivot chord to modulate to B minor.

Theme 4 provides a clear demonstration of Elgar's penchant for abrupt and unexpected shifts in tonal center. Theme 4 is introduced in B minor, after which Elgar restates the theme in the second phrase abruptly in E minor. Theme 4 has short two bar phrases that begin and end in

the middle of the measure (mm.26b-28a and 28b-30b). The piano keeps a consistent rhythm which provides a longer line despite the short phrases.

Figure 2-4. Elgar, *Romance in E minor*, Op.1, mm.26b-30b, Theme 4.



This tonal shift is followed by transitional material that returns the music to G major. Section B is then repeated in a modified form (B'). In this iteration, only the opening phrase of Theme 3 is heard, followed by Theme 4 presented twice, remaining in G major. At the point where transitional material previously occurred, Elgar introduces a pivot chord that leads directly back to the home key of E minor. The violin emphasizes the return through prolonged dominant activity, including repeated B pitches. This dominant emphasis culminates in the climactic high B of the work, followed by two measures of virtuosic solo writing that continue to stress the dominant. Measures 47-48 feature *colla parte* followed by *ad libitum*. A fermata occurs on a leading-tone seventh chord, resolving with C to B in the bass and A to B in the solo line. The extended emphasis on the dominant intensifies the sense of resolution, dramatically emphasizing return to Section A. The fermata creates a suspension that resolves to the dominant seventh before the solo continues.

Figure 2-5. Elgar, *Romance in E minor*, Op.1, mm. 45-48, Transition to A.



At the return of the A section, Elgar again demonstrates his commitment to formal balance. After extending Section B through B', he restores form by repeating the Section A almost verbatim. Only the final three measures are altered, with the soloist emphasizing the conclusion in octaves. The work closes with a brief coda that allows the music to fade quietly.

Motives and Intervals

The piece is unified by a recurring rhythmic motive consisting of a sequence of quarter notes slurred to eighth notes, which gives a lilting, flowing quality to the melodic line. In Theme 2, the intervallic content between the quarter note and the following eighth note alternates between perfect fourths and minor seconds (P4-m2-P4-m2), forming a stepwise descending sequence of C-B-A.

Figure 2-6. Elgar, *Romance in E minor*, Op.1, mm. 45-48, Intervals in Theme 2.



In Theme 4, Elgar reverses this intervallic pattern: (M2-P4-m2-P4). Notably, the second motive in this sequence is a perfect fourth lower.

Figure 2-7. Elgar, *Romance in E minor*, Op.1, mm. 45-48, Intervals in Theme 4.



Stylistic and Technical-Pedagogical Considerations

Despite its seemingly modest scale, the *Romance* is surprisingly complex. The violin part requires a sustained, singing tone and careful control of long phrases. The simplicity of the texture leaves little room to conceal intonation errors. Vibrato must remain flexible and varied. The sixteenth-note passages require light, active, and accurate fingers. Pianissimo accents must be clearly articulated without disturbing the hushed mood. As in the concerto, Elgar employs a dense array of expressive markings, frequently calling for extreme dynamic contrasts such as *pianissimo* and *fortissimo*. These include double stops marked *pianissimo* and octave passages marked *fortissimo*, which require carefully controlled bow pressure to maintain intonation and clear tone. The piece concludes with a dramatic forte-pianissimo swell (mm. 63-64).

Figure 2-8. Elgar, *Romance in E minor*, Op.1, mm. 63-65, Dramatic Dynamics.



Dense tempo markings, such as the stringendo in the piano followed by *accel.*, *rit.*, *pp*, and *dim.* in m. 30-33 requires close ensemble coordination.

Figure 2-9. Elgar, *Romance in E minor*, Op.1, mm. 30-33, Dense Tempo Markings.



Elgar's *Romance* aligns with the Romantic salon tradition through its modest scale, lyrical emphasis, and intimate expressive character. In the nineteenth century, the salon tradition centered on private domestic music-making and encouraged short, expressive works designed for close listening rather than large concert halls.

From a pedagogical perspective, *Romance* does not appear on publicly available graded exam syllabi, but it is frequently categorized as intermediate difficulty in sheet-music collections. The Suzuki Association provides recommended supplemental repertoire for students working in Volumes 6 through 8, and while *Romance* is not specifically listed, other similar Elgar salon pieces are included alongside composers such as Kreisler.

Though *Romance* is an early and less frequently performed work, its lyrical writing demands refined control of tone, intonation, and expression. It foreshadowed Elgar's later approach to shaping sound in the violin concerto.

Chapter 3 - *Salut d'amour*, Op. 12

Historical Background

Written in 1888, *Salut d'amour* was inspired by Caroline Alice Roberts (Alice), to whom Elgar presented the piece as a personal gift. He originally titled the work *Liebesgruß* ("Love's Greeting") in German. It was in Germany that he formed an attachment to his first fiancée, Helen. His later love interest, Alice, also had a strong affection for German culture and was fluent in the language. When the piece was later published, it appeared under the French title *Salut d'amour*. In the late 19th century, German titles were associated with weightier, more intellectual repertoire. French titles were associated with refinement and romance, especially in the salon music market. A French title would have sounded immediately fashionable to a wide European audience.

Theoretical Analysis

Salut d'amour also belongs to the Romantic salon tradition. Marked *Andantino* and lasting approximately three minutes, it is written in 2/4. Elgar chose the key of E major to emphasize the violin's singing quality. It is often performed on the violin in the more accessible key of D major. He constructed the piece in rounded ternary form (A-B-A'), with Themes 1 and 2 presented in clear, predictable phrases. The two themes are closely linked through shared melodic and rhythmic material. Elgar reshapes and recombines existing elements to create continuity across the movement. In the coda, Elgar abandons strict phrase symmetry, allowing the piano to nostalgically recall fragments of themes.

Although the work is largely diatonic, Elgar introduces moments of chromatic tension through his characteristic stylistic devices, including descending bass lines, intervallic relationships, and climatic sequences.

Table 3. Elgar, *Salut d'amour*, Op.12, Ternary Form

Section	Measure	Tonality	Theme
A repeated	3	E	1
B	21	G	2
B1	35	E	2
A1	43	E	1
Coda	71	E	Fragments of 1, 2

Section A

Form and Thematic Construction

Note on musical examples. All music examples and figures are taken from the score of Edward Elgar's *Salut d'amour*, Op. 12 (London: Schott & Co., 1899), accessed via IMSLP.

Section A presents a lyrical violin melody supported by a syncopated piano accompaniment in 2/4 time. The violin solo opens with a fall and leap of a major sixth.

Figure 3-1. Elgar, *Salut d'amour*, Op. 12, mm. 1-6, Opening.



Elgar's melodic structure in Theme 1 is concise and economical. The theme consists of four four-bar phrases (mm. 3-6, 7-10, 11-14, and 15-18). The antecedents of the first three phrases are nearly identical, with only a subtle variation in the second phrase: beat two introduces a chromatic inflection from B to B#.

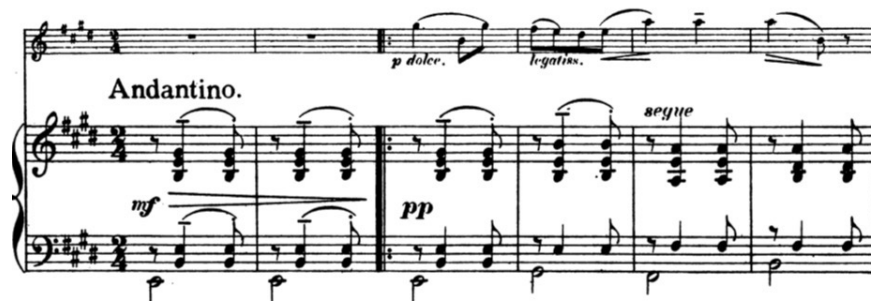
The repetition of this opening phrase creates a strong sense of anticipation, which Elgar uses in the consequent to generate a phrase climax. While the consequent phrases of the first three periods share the same rhythmic profile, Elgar varies the melodic direction each time, preventing literal repetition while maintaining coherence.

The final bar of the third phrase leads seamlessly into the fourth phrase by preserving the opening rhythmic gesture but introducing descending stepwise motion, a feature that becomes a crucial link to Theme 2. Phrase 4 departs from the strict repetition of the earlier phrases, rounding off the melody.

Tonality and Chromatic Expression

The opening phrase establishes a stable tonal framework through a straightforward progression establishing E major: I – I⁶ – ii⁷ – V⁷ – I.

Figure 3-2. Elgar, *Salut d'amour*, Op. 12, mm. 1-6, Chord Progression.



Elgar uses secondary dominants to create chromatic tension and expression. In m. 7, G $\sharp$ major functions as V/vi, leading to C $\sharp$ minor, the relative minor of E major, in bar 8. The piano builds the harmony with its characteristic descending stepwise bass motion. The progression V/V-V briefly tonicizes the dominant before resolution and create the chromatic A $\sharp$ -B.

Figure 3-3. Elgar, *Salut d'amour*, Op. 12, mm. 7-13, Chord Progression.

I V/vi vi V/V V I I⁶ V

Another chromatic device Elgar employs are secondary diminished seventh chords. At the end of the first statement of section A, Elgar introduces an A $\sharp$ diminished seventh chord (vii $^{\circ 7}$ /V) that leads into a V-I resolution.

Figure 3-4. Elgar, *Salut d'amour*, Op. 12, mm. 14-21, Diminished Sevenths.

The musical score for measures 14-21 of Elgar's *Salut d'amour*, Op. 12, is presented in 3/4 time. The piano part (bottom staff) features a series of chords and melodic fragments. Dynamics include *p* (piano), *dol.* (dolando), *dim.* (diminuendo), *pp* (pianissimo), and *rit.* (ritardando). Pedal markings (Ped.) are indicated at measures 14, 15, and 16. The violin part (top staff) has two endings, marked 1. and 2. Chord symbols are provided below the piano staff: I IV⁶⁴, vii^{°43}/V, V, and I.

Section B

Form and Motivic Construction

Section B continues Elgar's economical approach of using earlier motives to construct new material. Most measures are built from a quarter note slurred to two eighth notes, which becomes a fundamental motive. The opening of Theme 2 directly recalls the same rhythm and descending stepwise motion introduced at the close of Theme 1, creating a connection between the two themes. The piano harmonizes with a variation of the syncopated rhythm that has more emphasis on the first beat.

The theme is presented in three eight-bar phrases. In the third phrase, the piano carries the melodic material while the violin sustains high harmonics. In performance, the violin often continues the melodic line instead, with the harmonics omitted. The second and third phrases overlap by two measures: the violin completes the resolution of Phrase 2 while the piano initiates Phrase 3, creating a smooth and continuous transition.

Tonality and Expression Through Intervals

Section B begins with a sequence (mm. 21-24) before continuing in a sequential ascent by perfect fourths (B-E-A-D) (mm. 24-27). The phrase reaches its climax with an accented emphasis on F $\sharp$, the third of the D major harmony. This pitch is harmonized against B $\flat$, forming a leading-tone seventh chord to the dominant (vii $^{\circ 7}$ /V), which resolves to the dominant D-major chord (V).

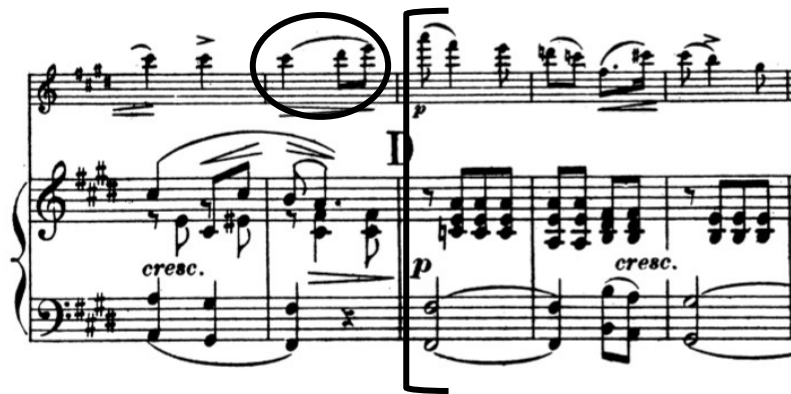
Figure 3-5. Elgar, *Salut d'amour*, Op. 12, mm. 21-28, Tonality and Intervals.

G: I 64 (V pedal) vii $^{\circ}$ /V V

Section A' and Coda

When Theme A returns, the first three phrases are identical to the first A Section in the violin melody with slight variation in the piano accompaniment. What would traditionally function as Phrase 4 begins with the familiar rhythmic motive of a quarter note followed by two eighth notes. But this time instead of the three descending notes there is a surprising three ascending notes. The ascent reaches the highest pitch of the piece (A) marking the beginning of the coda.

Figure 3-6. Elgar, *Salut d'amour*, Op. 12, mm. 21-28, Climax to Coda.



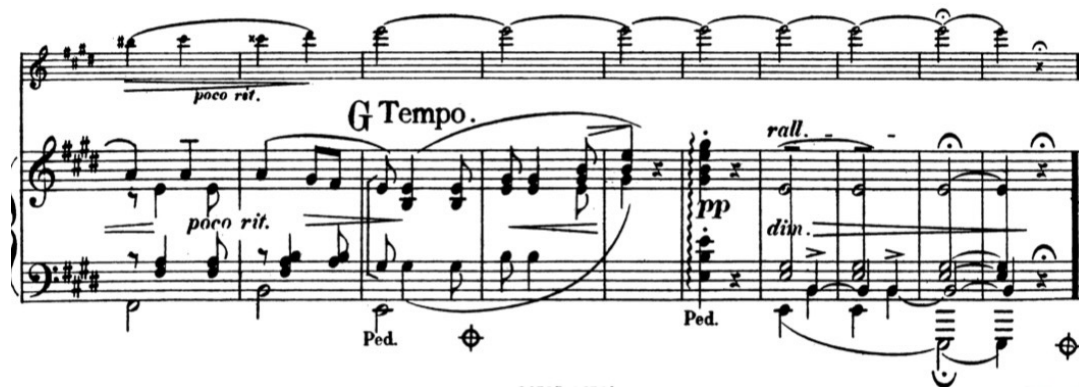
In the coda, Elgar abandons the clear phrase symmetry established earlier and allows the melody to wander through lower registers and new rhythmic patterns. To signal the close of the work, the piano very softly recalls Theme 1. Phrase 3 is transposed an octave lower and whispered in pianissimo, followed by a fragment of the accompaniment from Theme 2.

Figure 3-7. Elgar, *Salut d'amour*, Op. 12, mm. 21-28, Theme 1 in Coda.



Meanwhile, the violin reinforces the tonic through a chromatic ascent resolving to E major (mm. 77-78), a gesture repeated an octave higher to bring the piece to a gentle close.

Figure 3-8. Elgar, *Salut d'amour*, Op. 12, mm. 77-86, Closing.



Stylistic and Technical-Pedagogical Considerations

Although *Salut d'amour* appears simple on the page, the piece requires a high level of control and expressive maturity. While the tempo and basic left-hand demands are accessible, the simplicity of the writing quickly reveals issues in tone production, intonation, and vibrato control. The sustained lyrical lines demand careful bow distribution and bow changes, with expression shaped through phrasing, dynamic nuance, and color.

The original E major version is brilliant and resonant, but it also exposes intonation. The upper-register lyricism requires left-hand balance and a well-controlled vibrato that supports the resonance. The E-major version is frequently replaced with the warmer D-major version, a choice made even by advanced performers such as Itzhak Perlman. D major also has more natural shifts, encouraging expressive shifting into third position and above. At climactic moments, passages written in very high positions on the E string are usually performed an octave lower to preserve tonal warmth and lyrical continuity.

The dynamic markings in this work are simple, with Elgar often sustaining a single dynamic level for extended passages and reserving sudden dynamic contrasts for brief moments of expressive emphasis. Most of the piece is in *pianissimo* and *piano*. The difficulty for the

performer lies in creating expression and shape within a dynamic level. The solo violin enters at *piano* and makes a sudden *crescendo* in mm. 13-14 before returning to *piano* in m. 15. Similarly, the second theme is marked *piano* until the *sforzando* in m. 31, followed by a *diminuendo* two measures later. The coda intensifies to *fortissimo* and cadences on a fermata at *forte* in m. 48, after which there is a sudden drop in dynamic level as the main theme concludes in *piano* and *pianissimo*.

The tempo remains steady throughout the piece, with only a *ritardando* at the end of each section and a *rallentando* at the close. In *Salut d'amour*, rubato should feel natural and flexible and should not disrupt the underlying pulse. Its clear phrase structure lends itself to classical shaping, with phrases directed toward points of harmonic arrival.

From a pedagogical perspective, *Salut d'amour* (the D-major version) is commonly placed at the late-intermediate to early-advanced level. It is included in the Royal Conservatory of Music Level 8 violin repertoire, where it appears alongside pedagogical works such as Antonio Vivaldi's *Violin Concerto in G major*, Joseph Haydn's *Sonata in A major*, George Frideric Handel's *Sonata in A major*, and Antonín Dvořák's *Sonatina in G major*.¹⁷²

Though technically accessible, *Salut d'amour* requires refined control of tone, phrasing, and vibrato, particularly in its original E-major version. It is best situated within a late-intermediate to early-advanced pedagogical context.

¹⁷² The Royal Conservatory of Music, *Violin Syllabus* (Toronto, 2021), <https://www.rcmusic.com/learning/examinations/academic-resources-and-policies/syllabi>.

Chapter 4 - *Liebesleid*

Fritz Kreisler

Early Years and the Child Prodigy

Friedrich “Fritz” Kreisler was born on February 2, 1875, in Vienna, to Salomon and Anna Kreisler. His father, a polish-born physician and enthusiastic amateur violinist, hosted weekly chamber music gatherings that shaped Kreisler’s early musical environment. Kreisler began violin lessons at the age of four under the guidance of his father. At seven, he studied with Jacques Auber and was admitted to the Vienna Conservatory as its youngest student, an entry secured when his mother misrepresented his age. There, he studied violin with Joseph Hellmesberger Jr. (1855–1907) and composition with Anton Bruckner (1824–1896). He was awarded the Conservatory’s gold medal, along with a three-quarter-size Amati violin. During his years at the Conservatory, Kreisler taught himself piano and formed some of his most lasting musical impressions through encounters with leading performers and composers, including Joseph Joachim (1831–1907), Pablo de Sarasate (1844–1908), Carl Flesch (1873–1944), and Anton Rubinstein (1829–1894). He was particularly captivated by Johannes Brahms (1833–1897) after hearing the *Violin Concerto in D major*, Op. 77.

Following his completion of studies at the Vienna Conservatory, Kreisler attended the Paris Conservatory, accompanied by his mother. There, he studied composition with Léo Delibes (1836–1891) and violin with Lambert Massart (1811–1892). He concluded his studies by winning the Premier Premier Prix gold medal at the remarkably young age of twelve.

The following year, the pianist Moriz Rosenthal (1862–1946) invited Kreisler to join him on a tour of the United States, marking the violinist’s American debut in November 1888.

Kreisler first appeared in Boston and made his New York debut the following evening at Steinway Hall, where he performed Mendelssohn's *Violin Concerto in E minor* under the Hungarian conductor Anton Seidl (1850–1898). Critical response was mixed. *The New York Times* observed that “his tone is as yet quite small and not at all times absolutely pure; yet it has a pleasing cantabile quality which will probably develop in time into true instrumental song.”¹⁷³ Similar assessments appeared in other reviews. After attending several performances, Howard Malcolm Ticknor (1861–1935) of the *Boston Daily Globe* wrote, “He is certainly a remarkable lad, and ought to come to a fine future by and by. His very great faculty leads him at times toward undue haste and his intonation is not always what it should be. But he has a strong tone and sense of color in phrasing.” The tour continued through major east coast cities before moving west with a demanding schedule.¹⁷⁴

Upon returning to Vienna, Kreisler set aside the violin, suspending his musical education and career for reasons he never fully explained. He entered the Gymnasium to complete the requirements for the *Abitur* (equivalent to a secondary diploma plus preparatory university study) and subsequently enrolled in medical school at the University of Vienna in 1892. After two years, he abandoned his medical studies to fulfill his mandatory two-year service in the Austrian army, completing his enlistment in 1896.

Just as his reasons for abandoning the violin remain unknown, Kreisler's decision to return to the instrument is equally unclear. With his father's assistance, he rented a room in a tavern outside Vienna, where he spent eight weeks playing in the saloon while reacquainting

¹⁷³ “Mr. Seidl's Concert,” *The New York Times* (New York, New York), November 11, 1888.

¹⁷⁴ Howard Malcom Ticknor, “Rosenthal and Kreisler,” *The Boston Globe* (Boston, Massachusetts), December 18, 1888.

himself with the violin. Reflecting on this period, he later recalled that the isolation also prompted his first compositional efforts: “I spent eight weeks there in seclusion and solitude, getting back into my stride and recovering my manual dexterity. I even made one of my arrangements of a Paganini composition.”¹⁷⁵

Kreisler began performing in salons across Vienna, adopting a lifestyle that, according to fellow violinist Flesch, troubled his father. Flesch recalled, “To the dismay of his ambitious father, he embraced a bohemian lifestyle, drifting aimlessly from day to day, consumed by his love for café life.”¹⁷⁶ Kreisler was frequently found at Café Griensteidl, where he mingled with a circle of musicians that included the violinist Joachim and the composer Brahms, who served as president of the Tonkünstlerverein (Club of Artists of the Tone).

While Kreisler appeared content with this carefree existence, his father urged him to take his career more seriously and encouraged him to audition for the Vienna Hofoper orchestra. The audition proved unsuccessful. Concertmaster Arnold Rosé (1863–1946) rejected him, citing deficiencies in music reading and rhythm. Kreisler returned to freelance solo work, touring the Mediterranean under private sponsorship before undertaking two concert tours of Russia, where he performed Tchaikovsky’s *Violin Concerto*. During this touring period, Kreisler began composing cadenzas for his concert repertoire. He made his first public appearance in Vienna on January 23, 1889, performing Bruch’s *Violin Concerto No. 2* with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of Hans Richter (1843–1916).

During his Russian tour, Kreisler attracted the attention of Ernst Posselt (1838–1907), a carpet manufacturer and enthusiastic patron of young musicians. Impressed by Kreisler’s

¹⁷⁵ Lochner, *Fritz Kreisler*, 41.

¹⁷⁶ Carl Flesch, *Memoirs* (Rockliff, 1957).

playing, Posselt invited him to perform at his silver wedding anniversary and subsequently arranged, in collaboration with Hermann Wolff (1845–1902), for Kreisler to give a debut concert in Berlin by guaranteeing the sale of four hundred tickets. By the early 1890s, Berlin had established itself as Germany's leading musical center, due in large part to the opening of Bechstein Hall in October 1892. Designed by Wolff, the hall was created specifically for the Berlin Philharmonic. Through his concert agency, Wolff & Sachs, Wolff provided emerging artists with opportunities to secure engagements, and performances with the Berlin Philharmonic became an important means of gaining critical attention and future bookings. As Flesch, who made his debut with the orchestra in 1897, later observed, "A personal recommendation from him almost always led to the conclusion of the desired engagement."¹⁷⁷

At his concert with the Berlin Philharmonic in March 1899, Kreisler performed Vieuxtemps's *Violin Concerto in F-sharp minor* and Paganini's *Non più mesta*. The success of this appearance led to an invitation to perform Mendelssohn's *Violin Concerto* with the Berlin Philharmonic in December 1899. Among those in attendance was the violinist Eugène Ysaÿe, who immediately recognized Kreisler's potential. Ysaÿe told Jacques Thibaud (1880–1953), "There's a young fiddler named Kreisler up in Berlin. You must hear him. He is marvelous."¹⁷⁸

International Career and the Rise of Recording

Following his Berlin performances, Kreisler signed with Wolff & Sachs, which assumed responsibility for his bookings. Between 1900 and 1902, he performed widely across Europe, including Scandinavia and the British Isles. In 1900, the New York impresario Henry Wolfhohn

¹⁷⁷ Flesch, *Memoirs*.

¹⁷⁸ Lochner, *Fritz Kreisler*, 60.

(1848–1911) arranged Kreisler’s return to the United States, where he made his Carnegie Hall debut on December 7, performing Bruch’s *Violin Concerto No. 1* and Tartini’s *Sonata for Violin*. Kreisler undertook a second American tour in 1901, this time in collaboration with pianist Josef Hofmann (1876–1957) and cellist Jean Gérardy (1877–1934). During this tour, his playing received widespread critical acclaim. A reviewer for the *Inter-Ocean* in Chicago praised his artistry, writing, “With all his robustness of exterior and his apparent vast physical strength, Mr. Kreisler handles his bow with delicacy and finesse, and the touch of his muscular fingers on the strings in the pianissimo passages is as light as the caress of a summer breeze upon thistledown that it hesitates to destroy.”¹⁷⁹

Kreisler met Harriet Lies (1877–966) during his voyage home. He later recalled seeing the “reflection of a beautiful red-headed American girl in that mirror” and claimed that he “fell in love with her instantly.”¹⁸⁰ They became engaged before reaching port and married in 1902. Harriet, a divorcée and the daughter of the German American tobacco merchant George Lies (d. 1924), would prove a stabilizing force in Kreisler’s life. Although Harriet was not universally admired by his circle, she exerted a strong influence on Kreisler’s personal habits and career. Yehudi Menuhin later observed that Kreisler “loved her because she actually saved him from drink and drugs and gambling and women.”¹⁸¹ Franz Rupp (1876–1941), writing in *The Strad*, noted that “Harriet had a gift for publicity but no interest whatever in music,” an outlook reflected in Kreisler’s own explanation for avoiding large-scale composition: “My wife always said there was no money in it.”¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ “The Chicago Orchestra,” *The Inter Ocean* (Chicago, Illinois), January 11, 1902.

¹⁸⁰ Biancolli, *Fritz Kreisler: Love’s Sorrow, Love’s Joy*, 77.

¹⁸¹ Biancolli, *Fritz Kreisler: Love’s Sorrow, Love’s Joy*, 92.

¹⁸² Biancolli, *Fritz Kreisler: Love’s Sorrow, Love’s Joy*, 88–89.

With Harriet by his side, Kreisler's career gained momentum. In 1907, he toured the British provinces, assuming the Brahms *Violin Concerto* in the wake of Joachim's death. The following year, he again crossed the Atlantic for a Pacific Coast tour. In 1908, the firm B. Schott's Söhne began publishing Kreisler's short pieces and arrangements, many of which had been composed between 1905 and 1910 as encore pieces and salon-style miniatures designed to be programmed alongside larger concert works. These included *Liebesfreud*, *Liebesleid*, and *Schön Rosmarin* (from *Alt-Wiener Tanzweisen*), *Caprice viennois*, Op. 2, *Tambourin chinois*, Op. 3, and *Praeludium and Allegro* (in the style of Pugnani).

By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, Kreisler was in exceptionally high demand. An exclusive recording contract with the Victor Phonograph Company in 1910 proved especially significant. His short character pieces were ideally suited to the 78-rpm format, and the resulting recordings broadened his audience and reinforced his international celebrity. That same year, he premiered Elgar's *Violin Concerto*, a work he would champion extensively throughout England.

In 1911, Kreisler appeared in chamber music for the first time, collaborating with cellist Pablo Casals (1876–1973) and pianist Harold Bauer (1873–1951). In 1913, he undertook an intense concert schedule across Germany. During this period of intense performance, Kreisler continued to compose and publish original violin works for concert use and recording. These included *Romance*, Op. 4; *Aubade provençale* (in the style of Couperin); *La chasse*; *Caprice* (in the style of Cartier); *Allegretto* (in the style of Porpora); and *Recitativo und Scherzo-Caprice*, Op. 6.

War, Exile, and Artistic Transition

Kreisler's career came to an abrupt halt on August 1, 1914, when he received orders to report for duty in the Austrian army. He later recounted his experiences in *Four Weeks in the Trenches: The War Story of a Violinist*, noting that the only way his musical training proved valuable was in his ability to identify the precise position of incoming missiles by their sound, remarking, "It is the only instance where my musical ear was of value during my service."¹⁸³ On September 6, he was wounded in the hip by a Cossack sword during an attack by Russian forces, hospitalized in Vienna, and subsequently discharged. His military service lasted less than three months.

Upon his release, Kreisler and Harriet traveled to the United States, which had not yet entered the war. There, Kreisler quickly became a public sensation, with *The New York Times* publishing several stories that celebrated him as a brave Austrian hero, while newspapers and magazines nationwide amplified his fame. Writing in *The Nation*, Henry T. Finck (1854-1926) observed, "Fritz Kreisler is the lion of the musical season. In Greater New York, he has already played fifteen times to overflowing audiences," concluding that "the greatest of living violinists has at last come into his own."¹⁸⁴

In the years following his service in the war, Kreisler's compositional style shifted toward a more lyrical and introspective character, with a reduced emphasis on virtuosity. *Berceuse* ("Cradle Song"), published in 1916, is among the earliest works to reflect this stylistic turn. Kreisler also began to explore larger and more serious compositional forms.

¹⁸³ Fritz Kreisler, *Four Weeks in the Trenches; The War Story of a Violinist* (Houghton Mifflin co., 1915), 26.

¹⁸⁴ Henry T. Finck, "Lion of the Musical Season," *The Nation*, March 18, 1915.

He began work in 1916 on his first operetta, *Apple Blossoms*, for the theatrical producer Charles Dillingham (1868-1934)

Kreisler's world was again disrupted by war when the United States entered the war in April 1917 alongside France and Britain. As anti-German sentiment intensified, Kreisler was publicly labeled an enemy soldier, leading to the cancellation of his performances. The first cancellations occurred in Pittsburgh in November 1917, where an article in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* accused him of espionage, asserting, "The Austrian Army is not letting its officers off on prolonged furlough without a fine object. It is time we Americans woke up to some of these things."¹⁸⁵ A recital scheduled that same month at Carnegie Music Hall was also canceled. On November 26, 1917, Kreisler withdrew from his concert tour in a statement published in *The New York Times*, affirming his loyalty to the United States: "I shall always remain deeply sensible of my debt of gratitude to this country for past kindness and appreciation of my art."¹⁸⁶ In the years that followed, he appeared less frequently in public performance, devoting his efforts instead to benefit recitals.

Although the war ended on November 11, 1918, Kreisler did not immediately return to regular concert performance. His operetta *Apple Blossoms* premiered on October 7, 1919, at the Globe Theatre in New York City. During this same period, he completed the *String Quartet in A minor* and the *Violin Sonata*. In 1920, he traveled to Austria to deliver food and clothing. In response both to his treatment in the United States and to the suffering he witnessed in Austria, Kreisler articulated a broader artistic philosophy in *The Literary Digest*: "Music has no vehicle

¹⁸⁵ "Hot Protests Made Against Fritz Kreisler," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania), November 4, 1917.

¹⁸⁶ "Kreisler Quits Concert Tour," *The New York Times* (New York, New York), November 26, 1917.

in which it is held down and confined to nationalities any more than religion is for one favored people alone. I feel I have a mission to bridge the abysses between the people, working with the universal language of art and its deep-rooted feelings of goodwill. My whole life is based on the great hope that I may be able to help in the rebuilding of art and the upbuilding of artists.”¹⁸⁷

Kreisler left the United States in 1924 to settle in Berlin. In 1926, he commenced a two-month European tour. During this period, he composed *Rondino on a Theme by Beethoven* (1928) and *Syncopation* (1928). In 1932, Kreisler was invited to composed *Sissy*, a three-act operetta with a libretto by Ernst Marischka (1893–1963) and Hubert Marischka (1882–1959). By 1935, Kreisler’s status as a performer and recording artist had been fully restored.

The year 1935 marked a turning point in the reception of Kreisler’s works, as questions of authorship brought scrutiny to his compositions. The episode began when New York Times critic Olin Downes (1886–1955) was organizing a concert series with Menuhin at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. While preparing the program, Downes attempted to locate the original score of Kreisler’s *Praeludium and Allegro*, which had been attributed to the eighteenth-century composer Pugnani. Unable to find any such source, he cabled Kreisler requesting clarification. Kreisler replied that no original existed, as he himself had composed the piece.

Downes published this revelation in *The New York Times* on February 8, 1935, presenting it as the exposure of a long-standing deception surrounding Kreisler’s works. The article sparked a public scandal and prompted broader questions about Kreisler’s practice of attributing his own compositions to earlier composers. Kreisler initially explained that, as an unknown violinist at the beginning of his European career, he hesitated to perform works under his own name for fear that doing so would appear arrogant.

¹⁸⁷ “Fritz Kreisler Discusses America’s Attitude Toward Him,” *Literary Digest*, January 3, 1920.

In an article for *The Etude*, he told critic Louis Biancolli (1907–1982), “The violinist’s repertory was then very small. To be a success in those days, you had to know how to make programs.” He further observed that any violinist attempting to perform a concerto with only piano accompaniment would “be laughed off the stage,” noting that orchestras were prohibitively expensive and largely inaccessible to performers without established reputations. Reflecting on this limitation, Kreisler recalled, “You fiddled around with Bach’s Chaconne or The Devil’s Trill of Tartini or sonatas by Corelli, Veracini, and Geminiani. The rest of the program was made up of smaller pieces...but I wanted to play other things. And there just weren’t any. That is why I resolved to create a repertory of my own. I wanted some pieces for myself, so I wrote them. I was eighteen then, and I wanted to be a violinist, not a composer. I wanted to give recitals, and I couldn’t put several pieces on the program and sign them all ‘Kreisler.’ I would have looked arrogant.”¹⁸⁸ To avoid scrutiny, he therefore attributed his works to lesser-known eighteenth-century composers.

Over time, Kreisler embellished this practice with humorous stories about discovering manuscripts in ancient European monasteries. Known for his wit and fondness for tall tales, he often enriched these narratives for effect, and few contemporaries attempted to verify them. When directly challenged, however, Kreisler readily acknowledged his authorship. On one occasion, after performing *Liebesleid*, *Liebesfreud*, and *Caprice viennois*, he credited only *Caprice viennois* to himself, attributing the other two works to Joseph Lanner (1801–1843). A Berlin critic expressed outrage that Kreisler would place his own music alongside what he considered Lanner’s superior compositions, prompting Kreisler to respond that all three pieces were, in fact, his own.

¹⁸⁸ Louis Biancolli, “The Great Kreisler Hoax,” *Etude*, 1951.

Kreisler offered a second defense of his practice during a lengthy newspaper exchange with the critic Ernest Newman in the *London Sunday Times*. He argued that the deception was not entirely his responsibility, explaining that when the works were first published by B. Schott's Söhne they were clearly labeled "in the style of," a designation that also appeared on his concert programs. As the pieces entered the wider violin repertoire, however, other performers frequently omitted the qualifying phrase, allowing the misattributions to continue.

Many musicians and violinists felt compelled to weigh in on the matter, claiming that they knew all the time which pieces were composed by Kreisler. The Jascha Heifetz remarked, "His style was too typical for any of us not to recognize."¹⁸⁹ Menuhin commented, "I think it was a delightful and justified hoax. Some people overreacted at the time. They're excellent pieces."¹⁹⁰

Later Years: Performance, Adaptation, and Legacy

A bigger concern soon eclipsed the authorship scandal. After Germany annexed Austria in 1938, Kreisler was drafted as an officer into the German army, prompting him to flee to the United States leaving behind his home and possessions, including many gifts collected during his travels that would be destroyed in WWII.

Kreisler was settling into a new life in New York City when he suffered a tragic traffic accident that would dramatically change his career. In 1941, an egg-delivery truck slammed into him as he was crossing the street in Manhattan on his way home from lunch. The accident left him with a fractured skull and his concert tours in 1941 and 1942 were canceled. He had lost part

¹⁸⁹ "Kreisler's Secret Known to Heifetz," *The New York Times*, February 10, 1935.

¹⁹⁰ Biancolli, *Fritz Kreisler: Love's Sorrow, Love's Joy*, 161.

of his memory, including the years 1928–1930 and 1933–1936. Harriet and the doctors were worried that he would no longer be able to perform or have memory lapses when playing.

Despite his injuries, Kreisler continued to compose and completed *Fantasietta* during his recovery, premiering the work at Carnegie Hall on November 1, 1942. Although the performance included a few noticeable technical slips, critics widely agreed that the accident had not affected the warmth or quality of his tone. After returning to the stage, however, his approach to performance changed: he appeared less frequently, avoided premieres, and increasingly favored familiar repertoire that was less technically demanding.

Kreisler's overall health continued to slowly decline. In 1946, he was admitted to LeRoy Sanitarium for an emergency appendectomy. His final concert tour took place in 1949 along the East Coast, culminating in his last performance on March 6, 1950, during NBC's Bell Telephone Hour radio show. In his final years, he suffered from hearing loss and cataracts. Kreisler died from a heart condition in New York City on January 29, 1962, and was interred in a private mausoleum at Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx.

Throughout his career, Kreisler remained first and foremost a performer, and his creative work, whether original compositions or the many arrangements and transcriptions he produced, were primarily an extension of his performing life. His legacy lies in the way he brought music to life on stage, through a warmth of tone, expressive immediacy, and an unmistakably personal voice that shaped every performance.

Historical Background

Liebesleid (“Love’s Sorrow”) was composed by Fritz Kreisler around 1905, originally as part of a set of three short character pieces titled *Alt-Wiener Tanzweisen* (Old Viennese Dances),

alongside *Liebesfreud* and *Schön Rosmarin*. These works were conceived as salon-style miniatures inspired by Viennese dance music.

At the time of composition, Kreisler presented *Liebesleid* not under his own name, but as a work by Lanner, an Austrian composer and violinist and one of the founders of the Viennese waltz tradition. Kreisler did not publicly acknowledge authorship of *Liebesleid* until 1935, when he revealed that several works long believed to be rediscovered classical pieces were in fact his own compositions. By that time, *Liebesleid* was already firmly established in the violin repertoire, and the revelation did little to diminish its popularity.

Kreisler's *Liebesleid* later gained additional popularity through Sergei Rachmaninoff's (1873-1943) virtuosic piano transcription in 1921. Rachmaninoff expands the harmonic texture, expands the inner voices, and intensifies dynamic contrast, transforming the original into a concert showpiece.

Theoretical Analysis

Liebesleid is marked *Tempo di Ländler* and lasts approximately three minutes. It is written in 3/4 time. The formal design of *Liebesleid* is a freely constructed rondo, with the recurring A section providing structural cohesion amid a sequence of returning and varied episodes (B, C, and D). The piece begins in A minor and alternates between A minor and A major, ultimately concluding in A major.

Table 4. Elgar, *Liebesleid*

Section	Measures	Tonality	Theme
A (repeated)	1-32a	A minor	1
B	32b-49a	A minor	2

C	49b-65a	A minor	3
A	65a-80a	A major	1
D	80b-96a	A major	4
A	96b-112a	A minor	1
C	112b-128a	A minor	3
D (repeated)	128b-160b	A major	4
Coda (extended D material)	160b-167	A major	Motive from 4

Note on musical examples. Musical examples from Fritz Kreisler's *Liebesleid* are taken from *The Fritz Kreisler Collection*, vol. 1 (New York: Carl Fischer Music, 1990).

Section A of *Liebesleid* is organized into three four-bar phrases that repeat the same melodic theme. The anacrusis rises by a perfect fourth to the first downbeat. The motive then opens with an ascending perfect fifth and lingers on a repeated pitch before unfolding into a turn figure that descends by step, returns to the central pitch, and ascends by step.

Figure 4-1. Elgar, *Liebesleid*, mm.1-4, Theme 1.



Section A concludes with four additional bars of closing material. In this section, Phrase 1 cadences on the subdominant, Phrase 2 on the mediant, Phrase 3 again on the subdominant, and the closing material resolves to the tonic, A minor.

Section A is presented twice. In the second statement, the violin melody is repeated exactly, while the piano waltz accompaniment is retextured. The upper voice sustains held tones while the accompaniment motion is transferred to the bass. The piano also introduces chromatic leading-tone chords, including a $\text{vii}^{\circ 7}/\text{iv}$ resolving to iv and a bII^6 resolving to iv , which heighten harmonic interest and emphasize cadential motion toward the subdominant cadences.

Section B consists of three phrases that begin mid-measure. The first two phrases are introduced by three eighth notes and feature a new theme characterized by three sustained dotted half notes. This new theme is supported by a gentler, more lyrical piano accompaniment.

Figure 4-2. Elgar, *Liebesleid*, mm. 32-36, Theme 2.



The third phrase (mm. 41b–48a) shifts to a shorter motive that is stated three times. This motive is tied across the barline, placing its primary accent on beat three and obscuring the metrical downbeat in the violin. The piano maintains the meter through its original waltz-style accompaniment, creating an interplay between metric displacement and metrical stability.

Figure 4-3. Elgar, *Liebesleid*, mm. 41a-43a, Section B Motive.



The first two phrases cadence on the mediant and the subdominant, while the final phrase cadences on the tonic of A minor.

Section C is also constructed from three phrases. The first two phrases draw on the same motive introduced in the final portion of Section B, but with expanded material that creates a third theme.

Figure 4-4. Elgar, *Liebesleid*, mm. 48-51, Theme 3.



The third phrase repeats Phrase 3 from Section B in the violin, now supported by a more lyrical piano accompaniment. Phrase 1 cadences on the mediant, while Phrases 2 and 3 cadence on the tonic, A minor.

Section A is restated in A major and followed by new material in Section D. Section D unfolds in three phrases and introduces a more sharply rhythmic theme characterized by dotted figures, with the piano's right hand supporting the melody while the bass sustains a waltz-style accompaniment.

Figure 4-5. Elgar, *Liebesleid*, mm. 81-84, Theme 4.



This section is less nostalgic in character and does not favor the subdominant. Instead, the first phrase cadences on the dominant, the second on the mediant (with a suspended F $\sharp$), and the final phrase resolves to the tonic. This cadential trajectory reinforces a stronger sense of tonal homecoming through clear tonic orientation and resolution.

Section D is followed by a repeat of Section A and C in the violin with the lyrical piano accompaniment. The piece is concluded by Section D with a slightly altered rhythm. Rather than resolving, the third phrase of D is altered to move upward to a I^4_3 chord, leaving the phrase unfinished and facilitating the repeat of Section D. After the final statement of Section D, the closing motive is extended to form a brief coda derived from this material. The coda concludes with four measures of a sustained A while the piano recalls the motive from D, before the work ends abruptly with a sharply articulated staccato D.

Stylistic and Technical-Pedagogical Considerations

The primary challenge of *Liebeslied* lies in sustaining subtle lyrical expression while maintaining a clear sense of rhythm. The piece must consistently retain the character of a Ländler. A Ländler is a rustic Austrian dance in triple meter, marked by a moderate tempo and a strong emphasis on the first beat. It features simple diatonic harmony, folk-like melodies and a waltz-style accompaniment. Achieving this character depends on precise rhythmic articulation. Rhythmic clarity is frequently obscured by ties across the bar line and accents that fall on beat three, while the piano maintains a more strictly articulated waltz accompaniment.

The alternation between A minor and A major contributes to a sense of nostalgia and an eventual return to tonal “home,” a contrast that should be emphasized through changes in tone

color. Frequent *sul D* shifting poses a notable technical challenge, requiring careful left-hand rebalancing to maintain secure intonation.

Kreisler's expressive markings further shape the character of each section: Section A is marked *con sentimento* and *espressivo*; Section B, *espressivo*; Section C, *grazioso*; and the returns of Sections A and C, *con passione*. The tempo remains generally steady, with only brief *ritardandi* at sectional endings, until the concluding Section D, marked *poco meno mosso*, settles into a sense of resolution. The central challenge for performers lies in balancing expressive characterization with the clear lifts, accents, and staccato articulation necessary to create a buoyant, dance-like Ländler feel.

Dynamics throughout the piece remain predominantly soft, rarely rising above *piano*, with only brief crescendi and diminuendi. The final statement of Section D fades to *pianissimo*, marked *perdendosi* at the close, requiring all expressive color to be achieved within a soft dynamic framework. This requires a controlled bow pressure and contact point. Within the soft dynamic framework vibrato functions as a principal expressive tool, shaping tone color in place of dramatic dynamic contrast.

Within a pedagogical context, *Liebeslied* is well suited to late-intermediate students, corresponding approximately to Suzuki Violin School Book 6. The piece appears on suggested supplementary repertoire lists, such as those published by the Illinois Music Society.¹⁹¹ *Liebeslied* aligns closely with the technical and musical skills developed at this level, including sustained lyrical tone, controlled vibrato, and refined bow control. It serves as a

¹⁹¹ Illinois Music Society, *Required Violin Repertoire List* (Illinois Music Society, n.d.), accessed January 5, 2026, https://www.illinoismusicsociety.com/documents/ims_required_violin_repertoire_list.pdf.

valuable supplement to standard Baroque and Classical pedagogical repertoire and an effective bridge toward more advanced Romantic works.

Chapter 5 - Conclusion

The works selected for the master's recital on March 10, 2026, *Romance for Violin and Piano*, *Salut d'amour*, *Liebesleid*, and the first movement of Elgar's *Violin Concerto*, were chosen to create a unified program centered on the theme of love: romance, love's greeting, love's sorrow, and ultimately the interplay of love and faith in the concerto's first movement. This programming also highlights a meaningful contrast between Elgar's large-scale orchestral writing and an earlier more intimate salon style. Kreisler's *Liebesleid* further provides context, mirroring the concerto's premiere by representing the kind of repertoire Kreisler performed alongside it. Together, these works create a unified narrative that explores varied expressions of love and situates the concerto within its compositional and performance context.

This study suggests several avenues for further research. Elgar's intention in composing the concerto as a work of absolute music, in part to align himself with the great European tradition represented by composers such as Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Brahms, invites deeper investigation into how consciously he positioned himself within that lineage. At the same time, later musicians and musicologists have frequently framed both the concerto and Elgar's broader output as distinctly "English," raising important questions about how the work relates to emerging ideas of national style. Further research might therefore examine where the concerto fits within an English musical idiom and how Elgar's music engages with, resists, or redefines English nationalism. Additionally, situating the concerto within broader trends in English music, particularly within Victorian and Edwardian aesthetics, could illuminate how shifting cultural values shaped its style and reception. Such inquiry might also consider the impact of pre-war and post-war musical developments on the concerto's place within the repertoire. Finally, comparative studies of works by Elgar's English contemporaries could clarify shared stylistic

traits and points of divergence. This approach would provide a more nuanced understanding of his place within the musical culture of his time and his influence on future composers.

Another area for further research would involve a detailed examination of the full orchestral score that Elgar prepared following the piano version which he composed first. This approach would also allow for a closer comparison between the piano score and the orchestral version, clarifying how Elgar conceived the work at different stages of its composition. Such a study could reveal important insights into his treatment of orchestration and tone color, particularly through analysis of how specific instrumental combinations are used to shape thematic material and expand the expressive palette of the concerto.

Another area for further research would involve a closer examination of pedagogical perspectives on the concerto. A study of influential violin pedagogues could reveal how the work has been evaluated within teaching traditions and where it has been placed in the progression of advanced repertoire. In addition, interviews with major performers could provide valuable insight into the technical and interpretive challenges of the piece, how violinists approach learning it, and how they understand its position within the broader violin repertoire.

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