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PhD Thesis in Musicology

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Elgar as Post-Wagnerian: A Study of Elgar's Assimilation of Wagner's Music and Methodology

January 2008

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- 6 JUN 2008

PART B: THE MUSIC

CHAPTER IV: ELGAR'S CREATION OF MUSIC DRAMAS FOR THE ENGLISH

4.0: Introduction

From the end of the eighteenth century through to the outbreak of the First World War, the oratorio was Britain's most accessible and important musical genre, performed at numerous music festivals across the country. Four oratorios were composed by Elgar in the decade 1896 – 1906: *The Light of Life*, *The Dream of Gerontius*, *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*. While arising from the English oratorio tradition, Elgar's four compositions are categorically different from that tradition because of their focus, subjects and musical materials, and it is the new musical materials Elgar adopted that are of real interest in this chapter.

Elgar's intention was to make the oratorio a vehicle of modern musical styles and to create both a sacred and a characteristically English response to Wagner's music dramas. Moving away from the typical oratorio formats, Elgar brought his biblical characters to life, granting them easily comprehensible emotions and motivations, making it possible for the audience to identifying themselves with the characters before them on stage. Elgar also successfully portrayed drama based on characterisation rather than action, imbuing them with an interpretation of Christianity at once personal and universal and giving the sacred texts that he chose a sense of vitality missing in other contemporary oratorios.

Elgar's oratorios have been compared with Wagner's music dramas much more than the works of his contemporaries.¹ Such a characterisation is certainly valid. He used leitmotif in all four works and within *Gerontius*, *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*, he moved away from the smaller scene segmentation of the traditional oratorio (very much in the 'opera-by-numbers' style), to a technique of using longer, elided movements, clearly reminiscent of Wagner's music dramas. Two of Elgar's oratorios – *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom* – are even linked together by a set of the same musical leitmotifs,

¹ Whilst the works of Bantock and Mackenzie were particularly noted for their Wagnerian tendencies, their music fell out of favour so the criticism also ceased. Elgar's music however, has almost always attracted attention from choral societies, music festival and orchestras, so music criticism has followed suit.



characters and plot. They comprise an epic that is often compared to Wagner's *Ring*. So it was these tendencies – unification and greater scope of subject – that made Elgar's oratorios extremely innovative. Elgar lavished a great deal of compositional attention upon the oratorios and they contain some of the most profound and sublime music – if not some of the greatest music of the late Romantic era. Yet many scholars consider Elgar's four oratorios less important than his instrumental compositions. *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom* in particular are relegated to an inferior status. Michael Foster attempted to justify this view by noting the personal stress Elgar experienced while composing the last two oratorios.² Foster further faults the composer for not bringing the original plot of both oratorios to its fruition, and criticises the ending of *The Kingdom* as anti-climactic. Later, Foster states that these two oratorios culminate in the First Symphony, which reasserts the supremacy of instrumental music (especially the symphony) having its roots in the statements of music critics contemporary to Elgar, including Ernst Newman and George Bernard Shaw, not least because Newman and Shaw were both ardent secularists. Both considered the English festival and the vocal compositions they promoted inferior to works stemming from the Germanic symphonic tradition. This stance was part of a movement prevalent in matters of English art music at the time, which began to reject the oratorio for abstract, instrumental forms such as the German symphony as the pillar of musical taste.

This chapter's main focus is, of course, analysis of Elgar's leitmotivic systems and will largely approach this area from the standpoint put forward by Charles McGuire, in his excellent study on Elgar's narrative, published a few years ago.³ McGuire's analysis of Elgar's leitmotifs is, on the whole, provocative and well-informed, although the purpose of our analyses are completely different. McGuire's analyses serve the purpose of making claims about the narrative and characterisation of each oratorio, something my own work is not principally concerned with. Therefore, using McGuire's analysis as the starting point, I will expand on our understanding of Elgar's purely technical musical advances. McGuire believes that Elgar's leitmotifs were servants to a

² Michael Foster, *Elgar's Gigantic Worx: The Story of The Apostles Trilogy* (London: Thames Publishing, 1995)

³ Charles Edward McGuire, *Elgar's Oratorios: The Creation of an Epic Narrative* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002)

larger musical structure – namely the narrative. However, I argue that whilst leitmotifs do indeed thrust the narrative structures onto a new level, Elgar's leitmotifs serve a fundamental musical role: Elgar wanted to emulate and create English music dramas and to achieve this, he knew that he had to master leitmotifs – the binding force behind Wagner's work. *The Light of Life* shows Elgar trying to get to grips with this technique, whilst *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom* demonstrate his ultimate level of mastery.

Therefore, this chapter will look closely at Elgar's development of leitmotif technique in his oratorios. Starting with *The Light of Life* and moving onto *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*, I will show that Wagner's influence on Elgar's technique at the early stage in his career was still largely undetectable. The dramatic change in compositional methodology between *The Light of Life* and *The Apostles* has been attributed to many different factors, but I will show that the influence Wagner's music exerted over Elgar was pervasive and all-consuming. Tracing the development of Elgar's leitmotif technique across ten years will show that Elgar progressed from using themes as accompanimental patterns and reminiscences to becoming an integral part of the musical fabric. This progression came largely from the close study of Wagner's scores and attending performances, which proved to be an integral part of Elgar's musical education. The chapter will progress from a general introduction concerning musical precedent in English oratorios in the late nineteenth century, to identifying what a Wagnerian leitmotif actually is. It will then move on to look at aspects of Elgar's early attempts to copy Wagner's leitmotifs and will culminate in an extended section, driven largely by a critique of McGuire's analysis, on how Elgar took what he needed from Wagner's leitmotif methodology and developed his own way of creating a multi-layered fabric of motives in his oratorios.

It is both deliberate and significant that the present chapter does not deal with *The Dream of Gerontius*. In the swathes of literature written about Elgar's music and particularly his oratorios, almost every author chooses to focus on *Gerontius*, thus leaving very little (if any) room for a close study of *The Light of Life* or *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*. This chapter serves as an effort to readdress this imbalance.⁴ Whilst *Gerontius*

⁴ While *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom* have never been as popular as *Gerontius*, they are certainly not the artistic failures Foster claims them to be. Part of Foster's criticism stems from the quiet ending of *The*

is a hugely important work, both in terms of its position in Elgar's oeuvre and its Wagnerian influence, so much focus has been placed on it that there is almost nothing new to say. For the purposes of this thesis, yes, it does show a new post-Wagnerian Elgar, one who was able to use leitmotif organically to bind the entire work together. But several commentators have noted this before. Kennedy, McGuire, Adams and Northrop Moore, to name a few, have all chosen to focus attention on the Wagnerian elements of *Gerontius*. I am not completely ignoring *Gerontius*, for in the section on Elgar's emulation later in the chapter, I have shown some of the motives in *Gerontius* are derived from Wagner's own motifs. Whilst it is true that *Gerontius* was the first work where Elgar effectively employed motifs across the entire structure of a work, the motifs he 'composed' were heavily dependent on Wagner's. Moreover, though *Gerontius* uses a large array of leitmotifs, these are not subject to the symphonic treatment of *The Apostles*. I also feel that in *Gerontius* what Elgar gets right is that sense of orchestral dominance and vocal flexibility which drives the story along, but there is not that matrix of thematic interrelationships which *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom* have. This perhaps makes his achievements in *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom* even more significant because for the first time, the motifs and employment of these motifs, whilst being Wagnerian in style and execution, were entirely Elgarian.

I have chosen to examine *The Light of Life* and *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom* because I am interested in how Elgar learnt to use and apply this highly advanced technique across an entire work. It is this reason then, that the present chapter chooses to focus on the 'before' and 'after' snap shots of Elgar's musical maturity. *The Light of Life* is crucially important because Elgar attempted to employ leitmotifs and failed on several counts and to my knowledge, no one has yet attempted a close analytical study of it.

Kingdom, which forgoes a triumphant 'blaze of light'. The remainder of Foster's criticism comes from the continual (and realistically invalid) assertion that Elgar did not accomplish 'his goals' in setting specific scenes from within both oratorios. The end of *The Kingdom* in anything but a hushed and reverential tone would be contrary to the personal spirituality that permeates it, and would make the newly-discovered powers of *The Apostles* more dramatic and, to a certain extent, more important than the passing of Christ. Further, Elgar used the 'hushed' ending in the other three oratorios (each of which ends quietly, if triumphantly) and this type of conclusion represents an important fin-de-siècle concept of the infinite, focusing on the position of humanity in the face of that infinite. Secondly, while *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom* do not set all the events outlined in a revised scheme Elgar first forwarded in 1902, the plot both oratorios did accomplish was what Elgar originally set out to do in the project: to show the human Apostles as they strove to develop and ultimately understand Christ.

Curiously, this is also the case with *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*. Apart from Jaeger's analyses of both works, close motivic studies of these works are strangely missing from the literature. This is partly due to the fact that all the emphasis is focused on *Gerontius*, but also because many authors follow their *Gerontius* paragraphs with a brief section on *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom* where it is plainly stated that they are Wagnerian: a) because of their unifying motives systems, and b) because they were meant to form an English answer to *The Ring Cycle*. *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom* help forge a crucial line of ancestry to Wagner because Elgar's technique of leitmotif, with all its transformational and contrapuntal involution, came closest to Wagner at this point and this is why they have been concentrated on.

It is therefore my aim to strengthen the Elgar literature by providing what has been lacking for so long: a close study of the forgotten oratorio, *The Light Life*, and a detailed picture of the epic *Apostles* and *Kingdom*. By comparing the before and after works of Elgar, I will show that Elgar's technical brilliance was the product of many years of struggle and hard work, which sometimes involved him failing musically and learning from his mistakes, to achieve eventual success.

4.1: What is a Wagnerian Leitmotif?

Untangling the relationship between Elgar and Wagner necessitates accurately defining what Elgar understood as a leitmotif and how that definition might differ from what we categorise as a Wagnerian leitmotif today. The following discussion will serve as a broad introduction to Elgar's use and understanding of Wagner's method, which will then be expanded on to show progression from *The Light of Life* through to *The Kingdom*. The problem is complex because Elgar's own understanding and use of leitmotifs evolved through his compositional career and the meanings of leitmotifs contemporary to Elgar were almost as varied as spellings and translations of the term. Often, such definitions were informed by extremely subjective laudatory or damning criticism, depending on the view of the definer. The definition was also extremely slippery, usually constructed only around the textual/dramatic importance of the leitmotif and ignoring its musical aspects

and mediation almost entirely, as can be seen from an early definition in *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*:

[Leitmotifs are] figures or short passages or melody of marked character which illustrate, or as it were, label, certain personages, situations, or abstract ideas which occur prominently in the course of a story or drama of which the music is the counterpart; and when these situations recur, or the personages come forward in the course of action, or referred to, the figure which constitutes the leitmotif is heard.⁵

No musical characteristics – only dramatic ones – are given for the ‘figures or short passages’. The leitmotif ‘speaks to the representation of characters, situations or abstract ideas’ but it is not clear how this representation differs from the more common reminiscence theme, prevalent in the works of many nineteenth-century composers including Berlioz, Schumann and Mendelssohn. Much of the remainder of the Grove article constructs the leitmotif as wholly Wagnerian without distinguishing its musical characteristics.

Carl Dahlhaus, in his study *Richard Wagner's Music Dramas*, commented at some length on Wagner's use of leitmotif. Dahlhaus's definition of the leitmotif arises from his distinction between opera and music drama. The music drama contains the ‘art of transition’ by using leitmotifs.

...in music drama, one of the essential ingredients of which is Leitmotivic technique, threads are incessantly knotted together and connections established. Everything that happens recalls something earlier, to which it is linked by either causation or analogy. The whole work is tied together by a dense network of motivation: musical motives are simultaneously dramatic ones and vice versa. Opera, its separate parts distinct from one another, feeds on contrast, music drama on mediation.

⁵ Hubert Parry, *Leit-Motif* in *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, edited by J. A. Fuller Maitland (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1906) It is interesting to consider here that Parry should have written an article like this and yet never fully understand the *practical* application of leitmotif. In addition to this, that Elgar could possibly would have read and digested this article too.

Opera emphasise the plasticity of musico-dramatic form, music drama the logic.⁶

Dahlhaus requires convincing Leitmotivic technique for a work to be called a music drama, and a real leitmotif requires a theme to be firmly and convincingly anchored within the drama, specifically identified with an object or an action on the stage. Dahlhaus further identifies the leitmotif through its musical characteristics:

On the one hand, these motives came to an end without a perfect or imperfect cadence; harmonically undetermined, they suggest that more is to follow. On the other hand their rhythmic outlines are so clear – cut that continuation is unnecessary as a means of giving them syntactic sense or identity. Thus the motive is neither a complete period in itself, nor will it tolerate the construction of a consequent clause to make up a period.⁷

The two elements of a true leitmotif then are:

1. A harmonic and/or irregularity (lacking periodicity), meaning that the leitmotif cannot be complete unto itself, and
2. An extra-musical sense of recognisable identity, not just to the composer, but especially to the audience.

Therefore, motives differ from leitmotifs in the most fundamental of ways: motives are anchored to the text (they are heard when the text mentions a specific word) or a specific character (character walks on stage and the motive is heard in an unchanged form), whereas leitmotifs are much more developmental: a leitmotif might start out being associated with a certain character or idea, but gradually throughout the course of the music-drama, that leitmotif's inherent meaning will transform. For example, a leitmotif

⁶ Carl Dahlhaus, *Richard Wagner's Music Dramas*, translated by Mary Whittall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979 & 1992) p. 27

⁷ Carl Dahlhaus, *Between Romanticism and Modernism: Four Studies in the Music of the Later nineteenth Century*, translated by Mary Whittall (Berkley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1980) p. 45

might start out as seemingly representing a character, but over the course of the action will transform so that the first part of the leitmotif will be developed and come to represent an emotion, whilst another part of the original leitmotif will come to represent an interaction between two different characters. (See later in the chapter for examples of Wagner achieved this). Consequently, leitmotifs end up forming the structure of the work itself as the length and development of each leitmotif will dictate the length of a section, while motives are composed to fit an existing structure.

So, in its most primary sense, a leitmotif is a coherent musical idea which is clearly defined so as to retain its identity if modified on subsequent appearances. The leitmotifs purpose is represent or symbolise a person, object, place, idea, state of mind, supernatural force or any other ingredient in a dramatic work. The leitmotif may be musically unaltered on its return, or altered in rhythm, intervallic structure, harmony, orchestration or accompaniment and may also be combined with other leitmotifs in order to suggest a new dramatic situation. But, in addition to all of these things and perhaps most significantly for this thesis, their significance is also the embryonic mutability with which they can develop the expressive whole, encompassing both music and drama. It is this ability to 'mediate' drama and music, as Dahlhaus calls it, that distinguishes them from other types of theme.

In relation to Elgar's works, Charles McGuire believes that the definition of 'mediating' leitmotif raises problems with identifying leitmotifs in oratorios. McGuire highlights the importance of 'visual associations' as one of the most crucial aspects of a successful leitmotif and argues that because these visual associations are not possible with an oratorio, labelling Elgar's motifs as leitmotifs is consequently problematic.⁸ This is point to which I have two responses. Firstly, none of the many commentators on Wagner's leitmotif cite 'visual associations' as one of the most important features, instead preferring to concentrate on the leitmotifs ability to bind the music and drama together.⁹ Secondly, even if such a focus is placed on upon such visual associations, the argument cannot be used to prove that Elgar's motifs are not leitmotifs, as McGuire does. McGuire argues that Wagner's leitmotifs are successful in part because of the visual

⁸ McGuire (2002) p. 86

⁹ For example, see

associations that come about from staging. My response to this point is simple: The English National Opera performed Wagner's *Ring Cycle* in 2004/5 at the Barbican Centre in London and it was not staged. In fact, to the audience, it was sung and presented rather like an oratorio with the chorus seated behind the orchestra, who were on stage, with the soloists seated on benches across the front of the stage to the left and right of the orchestra. Indeed it was the habit of Victorian choral societies to perform individual acts of Wagner's music dramas in concert form.

Fig. 1: Semi-Staged performance of *The Valkyrie*, English National Opera, Barbican Centre © Copyright 2002 English National Opera. All Rights Reserved. Reproduced by permission.





So, according to Dahlhaus and McGuire, Wagner's leitmotifs in this non-staged context should not be classified as such, but should be referred to as reminiscence themes, which are not so dependent on 'visual associations'. This dependence on the visual therefore seems null and void for it seems ridiculous that a theme would be considered a leitmotif in a staged version of the *Ring Cycle* but should be classified as something else when heard in a non-staged version of the same work.

Elgar's themes differ in each oratorio. All of Elgar's oratorios use themes as markers of scene, person, object and feeling, but their adaptation to the characteristics Dahlhaus identifies as true leitmotifs is varied. In *The Light of Life*, Elgar's themes are simple, with a periodicity that blocks necessary incorporation into the musical fabric. In the latter three oratorios, Elgar develops well beyond this language, coming closer to what Dahlhaus would consider a real leitmotif, as the motives become the main fabric of the oratorio itself. This allows for a much more connected and less segmented approach to composition, and further enables expression of the changing dramatic

situations noted by Warrack: 'the essence of the power of the leitmotif in Wagner resides in its suggestive adaptability to changed dramatic situations.'¹⁰

4.2: Wagner's Leitmotivic Groups

In order to be able to understand and dissect Elgar's own leitmotivic groups, we must first come to understand Wagner's own methodology as so much of Elgar's own technique stemmed from the study of Wagner's music. The mature works of Wagner have traditionally been tied to the concept of leitmotif. The term 'leitmotif' did not originate with Wagner himself, but with Hans von Wolzogen, who published the first thematic guides to Wagner's works.¹¹ Of von Wolzogen's systematics Wagner wrote:

.. ich habe nur des einen meiner jungen Freunde [von Wolzogen] zu gedenken, der das Charakteristische der von ihm sogenannten 'Leitmotive' mehr ihrer dramatischen Bedeutsamkeit und Wirksamkeit nach, als (da dem Verfasser die spezifische Musik fern lag) ihre Verwertung für den musikalischen Satzbau in das Auge fassend, ausführlicher in Betrachtung nahm.

....I just have to think of one of my young friends (von Wolzogen), who looked more closely at the dramatic meaning and effect of the so called 'Leitmotive' than (as this specific type of music was unknown to the author) at their use for the musical structure.¹²

Wagner thus seems to emphasise that von Wolzogen in his analysis restricts himself to the dramaturgical significance of the different motifs without considering in detail their place in the musical structure.

Wagner himself did not use the term 'leitmotif', but rather words like 'melodische Momente' (melodic moments) and 'Grundthemen' (basic themes). In *Oper und Drama* he wrote concerning the meaning of these 'melodische Momente' in the dramatic context:

¹⁰ John Warrack, *Leitmotif* in *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, edited by Stanley Sadie (Macmillan and Sons, 1980)

¹¹ Hans von Wolzogen, *Thematic Guide Through the Music of Parsifal*, translated by J. H Cornell, Sixth Edition (New York: G. Schirmer, 1891)

¹² Richard Wagner, *Über die Anwendung der Musik auf das Drama* in *Richard Wagner's Complete Prose Works*, edited by William Ashton Ellis (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trueber & Co., 1899; Reprint, New York: Broude Brothers, 1966)

These Melodic Moments [...] will be made by the orchestra into a kind of guide-to-Feeling through the whole labyrinthine building of the drama. At their hand we become the constant fellow-knowers of the profoundest secret of the poet's Aim, the immediate partners in its realisation.¹³

In other words, it is the fundamental emotional contents of the work, which is communicated through the symphonic web of the leitmotifs. The fact that the function of the motifs also is of symphonic nature, was also pointed out by Wagner, in 'Über die Anwendung der Musik auf das Drama'. He wrote:

None the less, the new form of dramatic music must show the unity of the symphonic movement, if it still shall constitute an artwork as music. The music will achieve this if it progresses over the complete dramatic duration and in the closest connection with this, and not only over shorter, arbitrarily chosen sections. This unity is established by a penetrating web of basic themes (Grundthemen) [i.e., leitmotifs], which are contrasting and complementing each other, which are formed anew, divided and joined in the same manner as in a symphonic movement. But now it is the dramatic action that establishes the rules for separation and connection, while they [i.e., leitmotifs] in their utmost origin are taken from the movements of dance.¹⁴

The leitmotifs in Wagner accordingly have two basic functions:

1. They communicate the emotional nuances of the moment.
2. They shall constitute the building blocks of a symphonic composition where the dramatic action is decisive for the structure.

Wagner's use of the leitmotifs is therefore often dynamic, changeable, seldom static, never purely referring.

It is a well-known tradition to give names to selected leitmotifs, attached to central dramatic events, characters, objects or emotions. The tradition originated with von

¹³ Richard Wagner, *Opera And Drama*, translated by William Ashton Ellis (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trueber & Co., 1893; Reprint, Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995) p. 81

¹⁴ Wagner (1966) p. 251

Wolzogen¹⁵ and continued up to the brilliant analysis by Deryck Cooke.¹⁶ The different commentators largely agree on the main motifs, like the motifs for Valhalla, the Giants, Hunding and a handful of others. However, some motifs have been interpreted differently and as a result have been given associations that are incompatible. A classic example is Freia's motif. Von Wolzogen names this motif 'flight', but Cooke designates this 'Love in its totality'. Consequently, more recent commentators like Barry Millington have often chosen not to give the leitmotifs descriptive names, only a numbering.¹⁷ The reasons given for this have been Wagner's dynamic use and treatment of the motifs - but also the fact that the dramatic and psychological situation that the motif arises from is different each time. These circumstances make it difficult to label a motif with a unique or constant name when the motif appears in different manifestations – they evolve throughout the score so should not be labelled, rather grouped together.

The dynamic aspects in Wagner's use of the leitmotifs may be demonstrated by a few examples:

1. There are motifs that gradually change into another motif.
2. There are motifs which are only hinted at, and which only later appears more explicitly.
3. There are motifs which are associated with *another* motif or dramatic event and thereby obtains a secondary meaning.
4. There are motifs that only at a later moment gets their precise association, or which obtains a new meaning or a secondary meaning later.
5. Vice versa, there are ideas that are associated with a number of more or less different motifs.
6. There are motifs that resemble each other and thereby constitute a family of motifs.

¹⁵ von Wolzogen (1891) p. 81

¹⁶ Deryck Cooke, *I Saw The World End* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979)

¹⁷ See Barry Millington in *The Wagner Compendium: A Guide to Wagner's Life and Works* (London: Thames Hudson, 1993)

7. Finally, there are an almost infinite number of instances of the phenomenon that a motif can change its character - and the range here is from the smallest of nuances to the major, dramatic change of character.

Motifs Transformed

Probably the most obvious example of a motif that is transformed into another motif is *Alberich's Ring* and the motif for *Valhalla*. Wagner himself demonstrates, so as to leave no room for doubt, that the second motif is a transformation of the first. This happens in the music that constitutes the transition between the first and the second scene in *Das Rheingold*. With the most refined means in orchestration, harmonisation and rhythmic/melodic technique of variation Wagner has composed precisely such a transformation. Wagner himself was quite aware of the fact that he was the unchallenged master of the art of composing transitions from one expression to another:

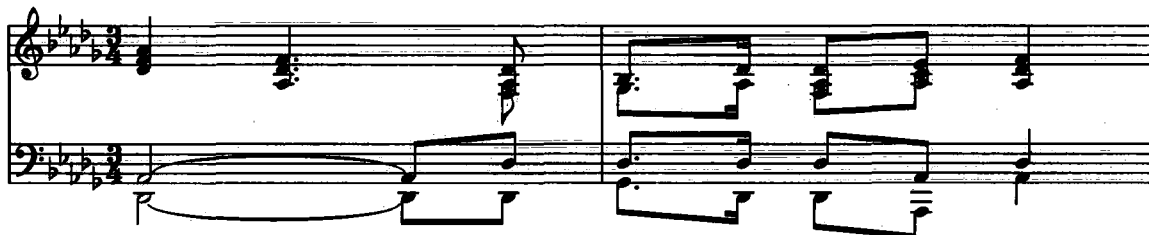
I recognize now that the characteristic fabric of my music (always of course in the closest association with the poetic design), which my friends now regard as so new and so significant, owes its construction above all to the extreme sensitivity which guides me in the direction of mediating and providing an intimate bond between all the different moments of transition that separate the extremes of mood. I should now like to call my most delicate and profound art the art of transition, for the whole fabric of my art is made up of such transitions: all that is abrupt and sudden is now repugnant to me; it is often unavoidable and necessary, but even then it may not occur unless the mood has been clearly prepared in advance, so that the suddenness of the transition appears to come as a matter of course.¹⁸

The two motifs are:
Ex. 1.0: *Alberich's Ring*

¹⁸ Cf. this extract from his letter to Mathilde Wesendonck of October 29, 1859, quoted in Stewart Spencer, *Wagner Remembered* (London: Faber and Faber, 2000) p. 139



Ex. 1.1: *Valhalla*



These two motifs are apparently quite different, both in character and significance. When Wagner demonstrates the close relationship between the two, and thus establishes a sort of identity, this is not only relevant to the purely musical structure of the two motifs, but also with their meaning. That these motifs are almost identical in structure, despite of the huge difference in expression and these similarities are easy to demonstrate in reductions:

Ex. 1.2: *Alberich's Ring Reduced*



Ex. 1.3: *Valhalla Reduced*



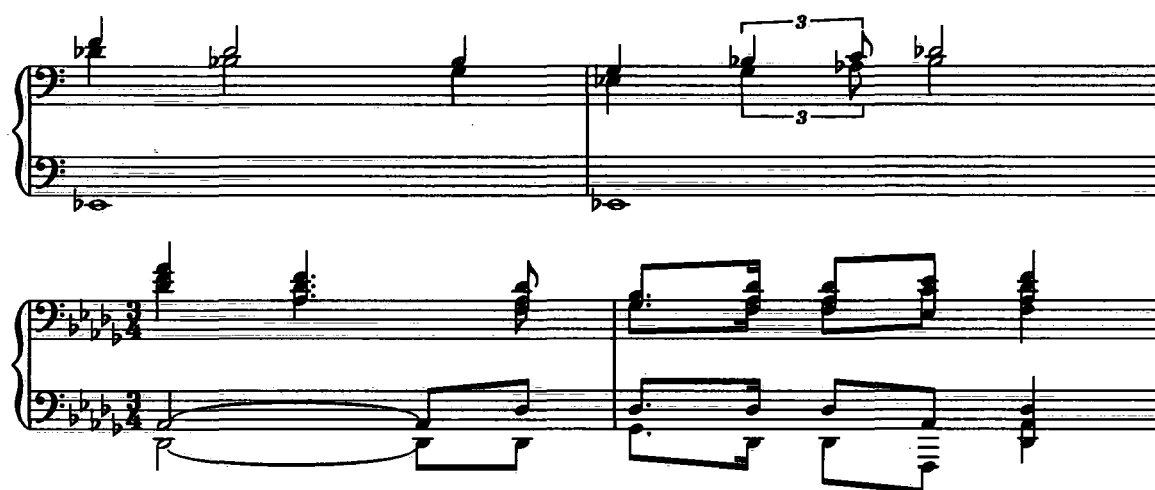
Note that the intervals are the same - thirds are thirds and seconds are seconds, and they both move in the same direction. The rhythm is almost identical. This obvious musical-structural identity hides an identity of meaning on the symbolic level. *Alberich's Ring* is both a symbol of, and an instrument for, the unreserved exercise of power - a power that is made possible by the renunciation of love. Similarly, the fortress of

Valhalla symbolises the Gods' need of reigning in safety, unchallenged. This is also an example of the exercise of power. The Giants, ordered by the Gods, built Valhalla - the promised wage is Freia, Goddess of Love. The underlying identity is clear: Power is chosen and Love is sacrificed to enable this power. This transition between scenes 1 and 2 in *Das Rheingold* demonstrates clearly that it is not sufficient to regard only the static or simply the dynamic aspects of the leitmotifs. Only by viewing the *Ring* motif as a de facto *Ring* motif and vice versa with the *Valhalla* motif, and *at the same time* understanding that the one may be transformed into the other, is this identity of meaning made clear.

Let us have a closer look at the details of this transition between scene 1 and scene 2 in *Das Rheingold*. Between each of the illustrations below there is two bars. The change from line to line in orchestration, harmonic foundation and voice-leading, are refined and results in an organic and almost imperceptible transformation of one central motif to the other. Sections like this, with series of unresolved dissonant dominant-chords, and with vivid orchestration, are clearly anticipating the orchestral treatment and the harmony of impressionism half a century later.

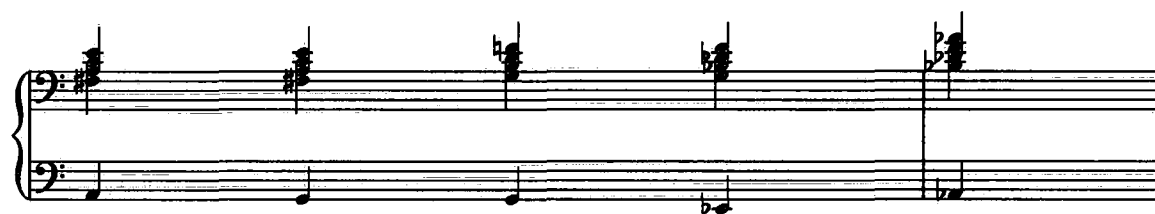
Ex. 1.4: *Das Rheingold*

The image displays three staves of musical notation, likely piano accompaniment, from Wagner's *Das Rheingold*. Each staff consists of a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The notation is in 4/4 time and features a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first staff shows a sequence of chords and a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand. The second and third staves continue this musical progression, with the second staff featuring a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand and a triplet of eighth notes in the left hand. The notation is clean and professional, typical of a music score.



The orchestral development from the mysterious sound of clarinets and cor anglais to the majestic sound of the Wagner-tubas is done with the utmost assurance. If we extract the harmonic foundation for each of these figures, the harmonic development becomes even more evident. It becomes clear how Wagner connects unresolved, dominant pentachords.

Ex. 1.5: Harmonic Foundation



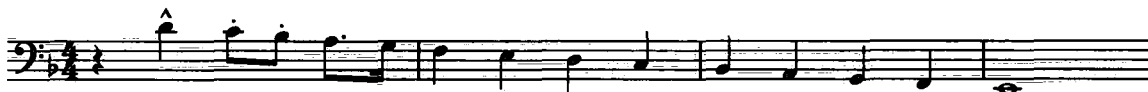
It is characteristic of this chord progression that one or more notes in each chord are chromatically changed to reach the next chord. From chord 2 to 3 there is at the same time a diatonic, step-wise movement upwards, and from chord 4 to 5 there is likewise an upward displacement by a third.

Motifs Suggested

In the *Ring*, it is not uncommon for a motif to emerge from the background, and readily in a connection where we (at the first time of listening) do not know anything about the meaning of the motif - not even that this is the anticipation of a new motif. An example of this is the motif for *Wotan's Spear*, a motif that is suggested or anticipated early in

scene 2 of *Das Rheingold*. The motif of the *Spear*, as it is established later in the same scene is:

Ex. 1.6: Wotan's Spear



But at a point where neither the action nor the text as given us any hint at all in the direction of a motif for this *Spear*, the following melody appears in celli and contrabasses:

Ex. 1.7: Cello and Bass Melody

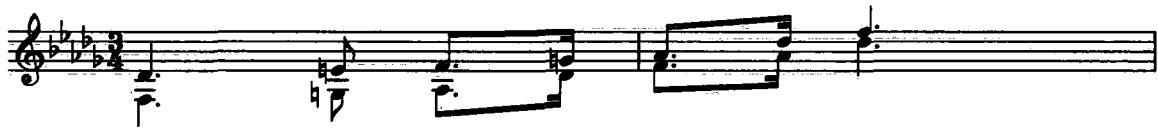


This happens where Fricka says to her husband, Wotan: 'Erwache, Mann, und erwäge!' ('Wake up husband, and consider!'). For the time being, the text gives no indication of what he is meant to consider. Later, however, it is clear that Wotan has made a deal with the Giants to build the fortress Valhalla. As wages for their work, the Giants are promised Freia, the goddess of Love and sister of Fricka. It is this agreement that concerns Fricka as she does not want to lose her sister. However, the fact is that Wotan rules according to, and by force of, his treaties, and these treaties are written on his *Spear*. The *Spear* is therefore also a symbol of these agreements and the obligations that fall on Wotan. When Wotan is asked 'to consider', and we at the same time hear a suggestion of what will later become the motif of the *Spear*, the conclusion is that herein is a hint of what *he* should consider.

Another motif which is only suggested, and in this case, a very long time before the motif is established, is the motif of the *World Ash-Tree*, *Die Welt-Esche*. This is the same tree that Wotan cut a branch off, to make his *Spear*. This motif is suggested, barely, *once*, at the very end of *Das Rheingold*, when Wotan says about Valhalla: 'Von Morgen bis Abend, in Müh' und Angst nicht wonnig ward sie gewonnen. Es naht die Nacht, vor

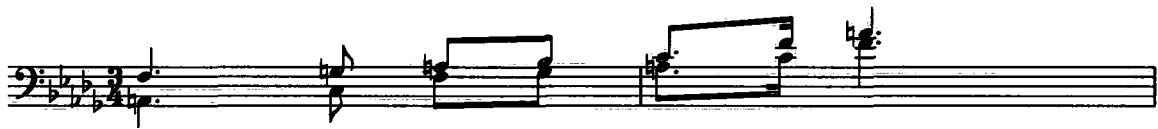
ihrem Neid biete sie Bergung nun.' In woodwinds and horn, the chromatically coloured motif is heard:

Ex. 1.8: Suggestion of *Die Welt-Esche*



This may easily be perceived as a suggestion of the real *Welt-Esche* motif, which appears for the first time in *Siegfried*, Scene 2:

Ex. 1.9: *Die Welt-Esche*



This chromatic variation of a motif, which later appears to be diatonic, is obviously coloured by Wotan's worry and fear, and possibly a vague consciousness that he himself has brought himself and the Gods in this situation with his actions, especially the damage he once did to just the World Ash-Tree. Wotan has good reason to worry, because this rape of nature result in the World Ash-Tree withering and dying, as we are told by the Nornes in the Prelude to *Götterdämmerung*.

Motifs Creating Associations

Sometimes a motif reminds us of an earlier motif, or an earlier musico-dramatic event that was not explicit. A motif sung by Alberich as he proclaims his power over the Nibelungs is a good example.

Ex. 2.0: Subjugation



If we compare this motif with Fricka's motif in *Die Walküre*, the association becomes clear for the motif is played by the orchestra just prior to Fricka's arrival at the scene, and to Wotan's words: 'Der alte Sturm, die alte Müh!'

Ex. 2.1: Frika

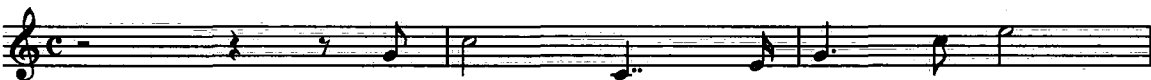


We can see that the interval structures of the two motifs are the same, except that Fricka's motif is somewhat longer, and that in Alberich's motif there is a descending diminished fifth from Eb to A, whereas it in Fricka's motif is a pure fifth from Eb to Ab. Hesitantly one has to interpret this similarity in the direction that Fricka's subjugation of Wotan (something which actually will happen in the scene to follow!) is a slightly milder variant of the subjugation Alberich is exposing the Nibelungs to.

Motifs Acquire Meaning

Sometimes it happens that motifs are introduced quite unambiguously, without the meaning of the motif being clear in the context. An example is the motif that appears towards the end of the last scene of *Das Rheingold*:

Ex. 2.2: Wotan's New Idea

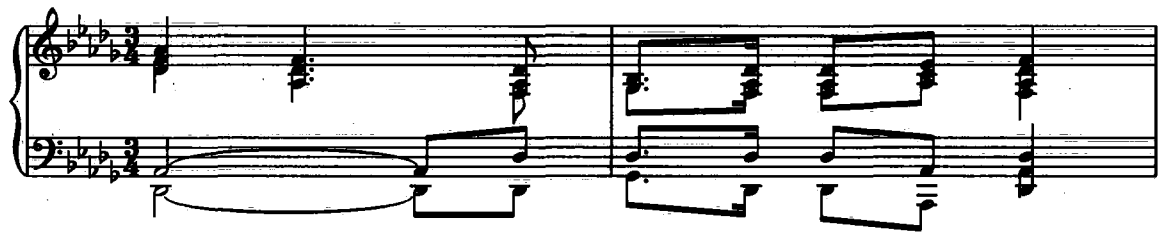


At this point the score says the following (and this is obviously about Wotan who has both the previous and the following line): *Wie von einem grossen Gedanken ergriffen, sehr entschlossen* ('How seized from a large thought, much decided'). What this new Great Idea might be, we as an audience are never told. This leitmotif is only made clear in the transition between Scene 2 and Scene 3 in the first act of *Die Walküre*. There it is associated with a sword, which Wotan earlier on has thrust into the mighty tree trunk

inside Hunding's house, a sword that Sigmund has been promised to find when he really needs it.

Similarly, a motif, which already has had a clear meaning, gets another connotation later. The central example of this is the *Valhalla* motif. From *Die Walküre* on this motif is just as much associated with Wotan himself, and especially in scenes where he is absent, where he is spoken of, remembered or missed.

Ex. 2.3: Valhalla



Multiple Motifs

Sometimes, different characters, objects, ideas, events and emotions are sometimes attached to a single leitmotif. But there are also instances where one person or one idea is expressed through several, different, leitmotifs. The person with the largest number of motives is of course the semi-god Loge, who has six or seven different leitmotifs associated with him.

Ex. 2.4: Loge 1



Ex. 2.5: Loge 2



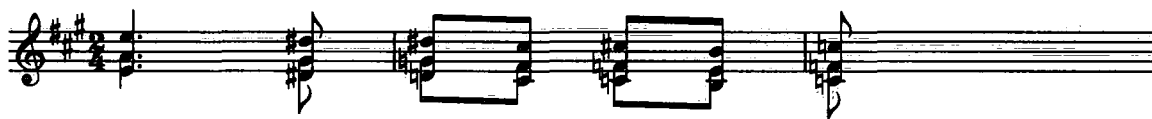
Ex. 2.6: Loge 3



Ex. 2.7: Loge 4



Ex. 2.8: Loge 5



Ex. 2.9: Loge 6



The technique of attaching different motifs to the same person or the same thought is an excellent way of shedding light on different aspects of the same phenomenon. Loge manifests himself both as a person and as fire in the course of the tetralogy, and some of these motifs are reflecting to a larger degree the one manifestation than the other. Another example of this is the different motifs for the *Sword*. The first two of these motifs represent the Sword as *Wotan's Idea* and as *Unformed Sword*. The third represents the Sword as Siegmund pulls it out from the tree in Hunding's house and gives it the name 'Nothing'.

Ex. 3.0: Wotan's Idea 1/Sword 1

So gruess' ich die Burg, sich - er vor Bang' und Grau'n

Ex. 3.1: Wotan's Idea 2/Sword 2

So gruess' ich die Burg, sich - er vor Bang' und Grau'n

Ex. 3.2: Northung/Sword 3

Siegmond No - thung! No - thung! So nenn ich dich Schwert

These three motifs all have in common the falling octave and the triad-based structure following the falling octave. Otherwise there are obvious differences in rhythm, melody and harmony.

Motifs Changing Character

Motifs change character in the *Ring*, and it would be possible to demonstrate with literally hundreds of examples, from the tiniest nuance to large-scale, dramatic changes. A few instances will be considered here. The motif for the *Rhinegold* appears for the first time in the middle of Scene 1, *Das Rheingold*. This motif is central in the whole of the tetralogy and appears in a great number of different contexts and versions. The first form presented might be called 'the original form':

Ex. 3.3: Rheingold

So gruess' ich die Burg, sich - er vor Bang' und Grau'n

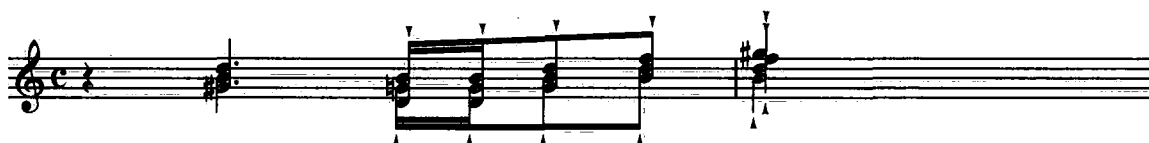
When Loge later tells the Gods that Alberich has stolen the gold from the Rhinemaidens, this motif is heard in the following form:

Ex. 3.4: Rheingold (Loge's Version)



The only changes at this point are that the motif has changed major to minor, and that it is transposed a third up. Considerably greater difference is shown at the moment when Wotan forcefully takes the Ring from Alberich, the Ring Alberich has forged from the Rhinegold:

Ex. 3.5: Rheingold (Alberich's Version)



The motif is presented in chromatic form, the instrumentation is changed from solo horn to a group of woodwinds (oboes and clarinets), and the dynamics and tempo are much intensified. All this expresses the anger and despair of Alberich, as well as the violence of the situation. Additionally, the opening upbeat is missing. Let us compare this last form of the *Rheingold* motif with another motif, a motif that is associated with Alberich's threat to take one of the Rhinemaidens by force:

Ex. 3.6: Alberich's Threat



This is almost the same diminished chord (transposed) as above, the orchestration is similar, as are tempo and dynamics, and the last three chords show the same rising movement. It seems to appear that properties in one motif have been carried over to another motif, because of similarities in the situation. This instance of character change in

the motif of the *Rhinegold* motif demonstrates that a motif may change both character and structure, and still be audibly identified as the ‘same’ motif. There are complementary instances where the change in character is such that the motif no longer is perceived as the ‘same’, but where the change in structure is so small that this must be some sort of manifestation of the ‘same’ motif. In cases like this, the structural identity obviously takes on a form-shaping function. This example indicates to what degree Wagner’s compositional technique should be called *symphonic* and how it creates unity, development and diversity of expression at the same time. In this context one should consider the fact that this symphonic structure consists of four operas and fifteen hours of music, an artistic feat that is unsurpassed.

Relationships Between Motifs

Several motifs associated with different persons, events, ideas and objects are different in expression and character, but they may all the same have structural similarities that connect and bind them together. There are examples that opposites are based on an underlying unity, and there are examples that motifs belong together in a sort of family. These sorts of relationships between motifs seems to be very important in *The Ring*, both to the musical structure and to the possibilities of interpretation and appreciation of the details and the totality of the work. Such a fundamental structural similarity is to be found in two motifs that appear early on in *Das Rheingold*:

Ex. 3.7: The Rheinmaiden’s Joy

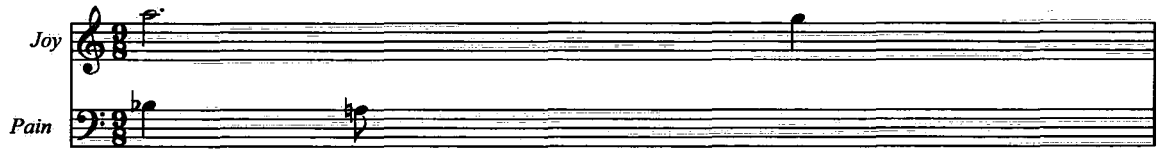
Rhein - - - - - gold!

Ex. 3.8: Alberich’s Pain

Alberich We - he! ach we - he!

The motifs for Joy and Pain are both based on a two-note rhythm - long-short - and both are based on a falling second. The interval is a major second in one case, a minor second in the other.

Ex. 3.9: Joy and Pain



In other words, the two motifs are structurally identical; it is a small difference in an interval that results in completely opposing expressions. That opposites have a common structural ground must give an indication for how to interpret the complete work of art. It demonstrates the idea that opposites can be seen as expressions of a fundamental unity. This idea is central to the *Ring of the Nibelung*, both in text and in music. In the following example, the underlying identity can be brought to another level by also considering the *reasons* for the Rheinmaidens' joy and for Alberich's pain. The Rheinmaidens are joyous because of the existence of their gold, the Rhinegold, which they guard for their unnamed father. Their joy is simply a joy over the beauty and the naturalness of this gold in its original form. Alberich's pain, on the other side, is a result of him and his sexual advances having been rejected by the Rheinmaidens. He is in pain because they refused him their love. What happens at this stage of the drama is that Alberich forswears Love and steals the Gold. He hopes that without love, the power that the gold brings him can be a good substitute. One might say that he tries to convert the pain he feels to the joy the Rheinmaidens feel by stealing the Gold. But, alas, the Gold must be forged into a Ring, and it is corrupted in the process.

Here follows another pair of motifs with the same relationship as the Joy / Pain pair. These are the motifs for Freia and for Ageing:

Ex. 4.0: Freia



Ex. 4.1: Aging



The motif for Ageing is clearly a chromatic variety of Freia's motif. Considering that Freia is the Goddess for Youth and Love, this makes complete sense. Old age may be seen as the absence of youth in exactly the same way as pain may be seen as the absence of joy. The Ageing motif relates to the *Freia* motif in precisely the same manner as the *Pain* motif (Alberich's Pain) relates to the *Joy* motif (the Rheinmaidens Joy) - they are chromatic variants and they are symbolic opposites with a structural identity.

In the case of Freia / Ageing, it is especially interesting to note that the reason that the Gods are ageing is just the fact of Freia's absence. We know that it is her Apples that keep the Gods eternally young, and when she is gone, there are no longer Apples to eat. Another form of structural relationship is notable between groups of motifs that may be said to constitute a family. An example of three motifs which clearly are closely related, both in structure, musical expression and extra-musical association:

Ex. 4.2: The Rheine/Nature



Ex. 4.3: Erda



Ex. 4.4: Die Welt-Esche



It should come as no big surprise that motifs that are associated with nature have similarities in structure and character. These three central motifs represent (probably) *Nature* (or the Rhine as one of Nature's manifestations), *Erda* (the Earth Goddess) and the *World Ash-Tree*. This Tree links the different parts of the world, and is guarded and nursed by the Nornes, female creatures who speak to Erda during the night. A comparison of the three motifs will clarify the similarities:

Ex. 4.5: Nature Motifs

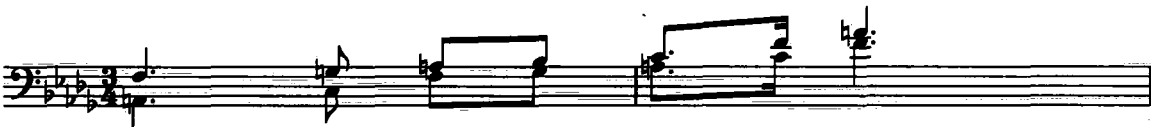
Nature:



Erda:



Welt-Esche:



The (original) Nature motif and the World Ash-Tree motif are identical in tonality and interval structure. The last is a (transposed) rhythmic diminution of the first one. *Erda's* motif is a minor mode variant of the *Nature* motif, with a somewhat calmer rhythmic profile, otherwise identical in interval structure.

A series of motif families like this has been described and analysed by Robert Donington, Deryck Cooke and others.¹⁹ Our understanding of Wagner's leitmotivic groups is absolutely crucial when getting to grips with Elgar's own leitmotif technique. Firstly, it is important because in the early stages of Elgar's compositional career, some of Wagner's own motives found their way into Elgar's music. This is significant because it was only Wagner's motives that found their way into Elgar's music – at no stage did

¹⁹ See Robert Donington, *Wagner's 'Ring' and its Symbols: The Music and the Myth* (London: Faber and Faber, 1976) and Deryck Cooke, *I Saw The World End* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979)

Elgar quote Mendelssohn or Brahms. This form of quotation was the first stage in Elgar's maturity. Wagner's influence in these crucial years proved not only important from the quotation standpoint, but also because from copying Wagner's motivic groups and discovering how they worked together, Elgar was able to digest the methodology and make it his own.

4.3: Elgar's Musical Borrowing

Elgar's 'distillation' of Wagner's musical legacy has been commented on a number of times by Diana McVeagh and this was the original starting point for the present chapter. It is unquestionable from the evidence that she puts forward, both in her original monograph and in the more recent edition, that some of Wagner's most famous leitmotifs found their way into almost all of Elgar's early compositions. Whether or not this was deliberate is a subject for debate, but what is not debateable is how strong and obvious the emulation is at the start of his career, and how it peters out towards the end of 1899.²⁰ Here, I trace Elgar's distillation of Wagner's musical legacy by examining particular leitmotivic episodes in Elgar's early works from the 1890s where there are inescapable resonances of specific episodes in Wagner's music. Such episodes afford graphic evidence of the debts Elgar owed Wagner as he worked his way through the creative process, and they confirm the decisive importance of Wagner's music in the shaping of his later mastery.

Elgar made his greatest technical advances during the 1890s. At the beginning of the decade he was a composer of short pictorial pieces but by the end he stood on the threshold of acclaimed mastery. While the mastery of the later decades is progressively anticipated in these early works the external factors which were contributing to the perfecting of that mastery were still highly conspicuous.

The first major work of the 1890s was the concert overture *Froissart*. Although its exposition is made up of what he later called, in reference to the first movement of the

²⁰ For a detailed description of Elgar's 'emulation' of Wagner's motifs in the cantatas of the 1880s and 1890s, see McVeagh (1955) pp. 78-93 and Diana M. McVeagh, *Elgar the Music Maker* (London: Boydell Press, 2007) Chapter 3.

Second Symphony, ‘an assemblage of themes’,²¹ these maintain a new tautness and economy of invention and reveal some striking resemblances to Wagner’s music. After an initial flourish, trumpets and trombones announce a theme that will generate much of what is to follow.

Ex. 4.6: *Froissart*’s Main Theme, bars 5-6



Elgar’s motif is made up of two overlapping motifs which are identical to the motif that, as Deryck Cooke demonstrated,²² recurs in most of Wagner’s music dramas away associated with love.

Ex. 4.7 : *Die Walküre*, Act I, bars 1507-8



This example from Wagner shows the motif at the end of the Act I love duet in *Die Walküre*, in a form that closely resembles Elgar’s in rhythmic organisation. It is interesting to note that only three years earlier, the same love duet had made a strong impression on Elgar when he saw it performed at one of the Hans Richter concerts in London; Elgar put three stars next to the duet in his programme.²³ In his article in *Music and Letters*, Peter Dennison goes one step further by saying that this theme forms a motivic cell that is of seminal importance to the rest of the exposition. Dennison is referring to the previous example provided, which does form a motivic cell that gives birth to four separate themes. These are shown below.

²¹ Quoted in a letter dated 13 April 1911 to Alfred Littleton of novello’s concerning the analysis of the Second Symphony, which was eventually done by Ernst Newman and published in *The Musical Times*, Vol. 130 (1984), pp. 16-18

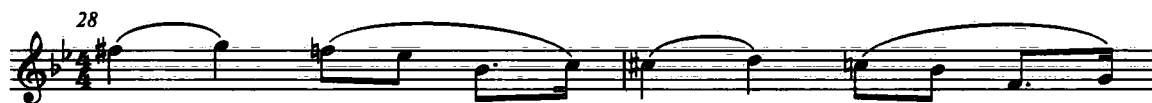
²² Cooke (1979) pp. 49-61

²³ McVeagh (1952) p. 71

Ex. 4.8: *Froissart*, bars 14-15



Ex. 4.9: *Froissart*, bars 28-29



Ex. 5.0: *Froissart*, bar 50



Ex.5.1: *Froissart*, bars 110-113



Such thematic concentration and economy shows an early application by Elgar of creating a family of motifs, much as Wagner had done so many times before as I have already show earlier in this chapter. The first three themes come from the first subject group and the fourth begins the second. In examples 5.2 and 5.4, the second note of the common contour creates a dissonance with the bass on a strong beat. In examples. 5.3 and 5.5, the first phrase of the common contour is extended by sequence, reflecting further the practice of Wagner. But the similarities with Wagner become even closer. Diana McVeagh has previously noted that this three-note motivic cell is identical to the opening of Walter's Act II Prize Song in *Die Meistersinger* and in Wagner's use of the contour, the second note also creates a dissonance with the bass.²⁴

Ex. 5.2: *Die Meistersinger*, Act III, bars 2615-2617



The opening of the *Prize Song* is itself closely related to, and probably was extracted from, the phrase in the second strophe that is none other than Wagner's love contour.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 46

Ex.5.3: *Die Meistersinger*, Act III, bars 2651-2



The appearance in *Froissart* of a principal theme identical to Wagner’s basic love motif and of other themes derived from it, which themselves have affinities with a theme that Wagner himself may have evolved from his basic prototype, confirms the strength of Wagner’s influence at this impressionable period of Elgar’s career. By 1890 Elgar had both played and heard the *Proze Song* separately and perhaps most significantly, he had seen *Die Meistersinger* three times in July 1889 and once during the composition of *Froissart* in June and July 1890, as I have previously detailed in Chapter II.

Elgar’s next substantial work, *The Black Knight*, Op. 25, designed as a symphony for chorus and orchestra is interestingly divided into four scenes. While much of its chorus writing is still in the style of the traditional English cantata, its orchestral writing assumes a new prominence and is notable for its finely wrought and sustained developments of a number of leitmotifs. One episode that appears in scene 2 to the words ‘a prince of mighty sway’ bears a striking resemblance to the opening of Act III Prelude of *Siegfried*, which Elgar heard in London in June 1890. The episode, show in Ex. 5.8, is made up of a four-bar motif (representing the Knight), which rises and falls in the bass against tremolos in the upper orchestra.

Ex. 5.4: *The Black Knight*, bars 44-52

The scoring is temporarily reversed from bar 48 with the motif placed in the upper parts for the first two bars against tremolos in the bass. This is all strikingly similar to *Siegfried* begins with Erda's rising motif in the bass, which from bar 5 becomes the motif of the need of the Gods.

Ex. 5.5: *Siegfried*, Act III Prelude, bars 5-10



The latter rises and falls over a four-bar span, as does Elgar's version, but each example has a different organisation of conjunct and disjunct linear movement. In Wagner's Prelude, the motif in the bass is joined by the motif of riding in the upper parts, and at bar 23, Wagner reverses the parts.

Ex. 5.6: *Siegfried*, Act III Prelude, bars 23-25

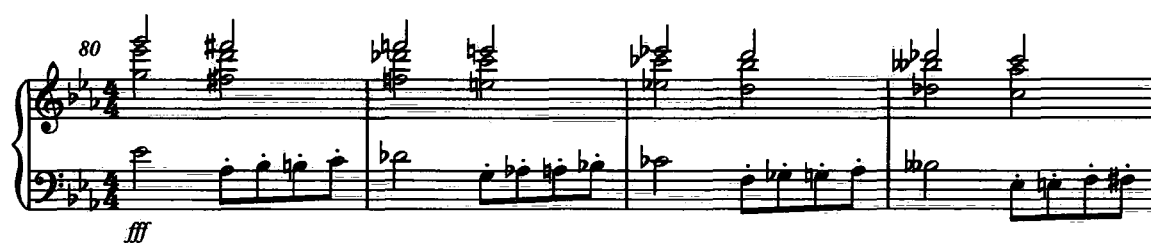


This procedure seems to have been in Elgar's mind, although the result is only a partial reflection of Wagner's mastery: Elgar's reversal of parts lasts for two bars and there is no real counterpoint at the start to enhance the inversion.

Another example in a similar vein occurs in scene 2 at the chromatic climax of the final word of the text 'The Castle 'gan to rock!' (Ex. 6.1) This section bears a specific similarity to the magic sleep motif in the *Ring*, most particularly to its climactic statement during the orchestral conclusion of Act III of *Götterdämmerung*, where it accompanies the burning Valhalla (Ex. 6.2).²⁵

Ex. 5.7: *The Black Knight*, scene 2, bars 80-83

²⁵ Diana McVeagh alluded to this moment in her article, '



Ex. 5.8: *Gotterdammerung*, Act III, bars 1511-1512



A similarity of illustrative intention lies at the basis of the similarities of music substance in these extracts. Elgar had heard this scene in London in 1888 and 1889.²⁶

Elgar's first oratorio is described as a short oratorio for soloists, chorus and orchestra and the style is more eclectic than any other of Elgar's major works of the decade. It is also the work from which he most often borrowed material later in his career.²⁷ Its weaker moments seem to reflect the constraints of the conventional English oratorio, coupled with Elgar's youth and naiveté, but it does boast episodes of dramatic power and beauty that place Elgar wholly above the parochialism of the contemporary English oratorio. In *The Light of Life*, Elgar's harmonic practice shows a new assured control of a more advanced species of chromaticism than he attempted before and this almost invariably adds new expressive dimensions to his work. These significant advances in technique strongly reflect the deepening of Elgar's experience and understanding of Wagner, and in particular of *Parsifal*. Elgar heard *Parsifal* twice in Bayreuth in 1882 and its influence was to become stronger as his career progressed. No. 14 of *The Light of Life*, scored for soprano soloist and woman's chorus, settles into a passage of peaceful contrast, which is not dissimilar to Act II scene 2 of *Parsifal* where the Flowermaidens, after their initial frolics, attempt to woo Parsifal with sensuous enticements.

Ex. 5.9: *The Light of Life*, No. 14, bars 25-30

²⁶ See list of works heard by Elgar in Chapter II.

²⁷ Significant phrases from *The Light of Life* are found in *Caractacus*, *The Apostles*, *The Kingdom*, *The Music Makers* and *Falstaff*.



Ex. 6.0: *Parsifal*, Act II scene 2, bars 565-70



The two passages share the same closely spaced women's voices moving conjunctly in triple time over a tonic pedal and crucially, the initial entry is a major ninth above the bass. The last phrase of Elgar's soloist, is almost identical to Wagner's last. Elgar's orchestral passage in No. 15 (bars 30 ff.) over which Elgar wrote the rubric concerning the blind man and Jesus, 'And he worshipped Him', has the underlying harmonic progressions (created by a chromatically descending bass) of the episode in Act III scene 2 of *Parsifal* (bars 519 ff.) where Kundry offers her worship to the redeemer by washing his feet with her hair. In the context of a dramatic situation virtually identical to Wagner's, the extent to which Elgar drew on musical resources strikingly similar to those used by Wagner confirms the breadth and depth of his understanding of Wagner's practice. The differences of detail in Elgar's organisation of these resources are no less revealing. His sequence has a faster rate of harmonic change and his melody is more complicated as he weaves it imitatively through the orchestra. Elgar is more active and lacks the rarefied simplicity of Wagner at this early stage in his career.

If *The Light of Life* was fettered by the moribund conventions of the English oratorio, *Scenes from the Saga of King Olaf*, Op. 30, was marred by severe dramatic inadequacies in its libretto. Nevertheless, despite the libretto, it is the work of the mid 1890s in which Elgar makes his most apparent advances towards the distinctive sound he had developed by the end of the decade. Composed between July 1894 and August 1896, it was Elgar's first major work that he began after seeing his first and only complete Ring

cycle at Bayreuth, in August 1893. The influence of the *Ring* is inescapable, most conspicuously in the large-scale dramatic structures that Elgar attempted and in the wealth of illuminating detail with which he sustained them.

Apart from *The Ring*, of equal importance to *King Olaf* was *Die Meistersinger*, which Elgar heard towards both the beginning and the end of the composition of the cantata. Its influence is felt in the new lyrical vein and the contrapuntal detail that suffuse the scoring. Within the Epilogue, a composite structure, Elgar wrote a short 28-bar trio whose lyricism, counterpoint and dramatic placing strongly suggest the influence of the quintet of *Die Meistersinger* Act III scene 4, which he so admired.²⁸ The Epilogue goes on to integrate this trio with the chorus in a radiant finale which maintains affinities with the end of *Die Meistersinger*.

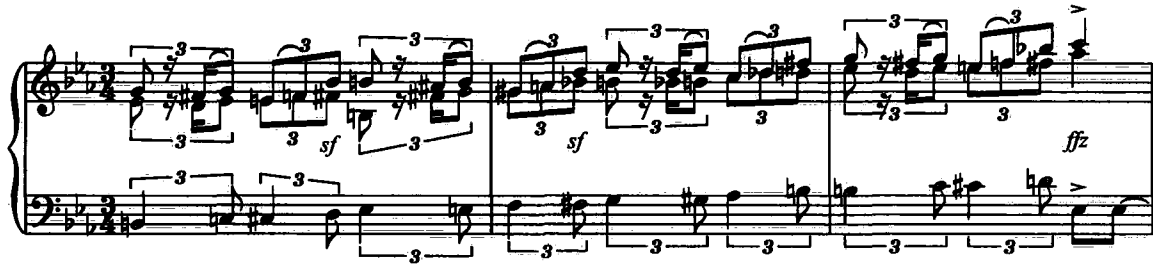
Of the three dramatic cantatas of the 1890s, *Caractacus* is the most ambitious in design and the most successful in execution. Its plot contains engaging characters and situations into which Elgar was able to breathe life, supported by techniques of leitmotif and harmonic manipulation, orchestration and scoring now firmly under his control. Its texture is rich in the constant interplay of leitmotifs. These are fewer in number than those of the immediately preceding works, but they are subjected to a greater variety of mutation and serve a structural, as well as illustrative function. Elgar's scoring also reaches new heights of evocative colouring, particularly at the suggestion of nature, mystery and night. By this time, as Elgar's own musical personality became more prominent, resonances of Wagner tend to become more oblique and they are more subtly woven in to the musical continuities. Nevertheless, debts to Wagner remain basic to Elgar's musical language. The borrowing of rhythmic and melodic motifs ceases with *Caractacus* and Wagner is now felt in the distance. There are hints here and there, but hardly any direct references, indicating perhaps that Elgar had finally found his own voice.

In the first of the cantata's six scenes, Caractacus's heroic account of riding into battle with the Romans concludes with an orchestral passage depicting the war-like fury

²⁸ Elgar had commented on the quintet several times, most famously to Dora Penny, having been to a performance together in Munich. See, Donald Hunt, *Elgar and the Three Choirs Festival* (Worcester: Osborne Books LTD, 1999)

of his ride which, with its galloping rhythm and augmented triads inevitably recalls Wagner's riding Valkyries.

Ex. 6.1: *Caractacus*, bars 267-269



Elgar's organisation of these resources is distinctively different from Wagner's and this is symptomatic of his greater measure of artistic identity. The first scene is a composite structure that acts as an exposition of the drama. It settles into a hushed conclusion in which voices if the chorus acting as sentries quietly warn, 'Watchmen alert!'

Ex. 6.2: *Caractacus*, bars 381-6



This episode recalls the almost identical mood at the end of Act II of *Die Meistersinger*, where the last word is left to the night-watchman and the peace of night descends. Each cycle of Elgar's sequence descends a major third until an octave is completed and the consequential juxtapositions of remote harmony suggest the mystery of the night. This passage illustrates in miniature the structural importance of juxtapositions by the interval of a third, a principle that was important to Wagner and assumed increasing importance in Elgar's music.

Another brief but telling example from *Caractacus* occurs in scene 2. The Arch Druid's ominous pronouncements in 'The dark and dreadful spell' are intensified by a sequence of tritons in the bass accompanied by tremolando strings identical in dramatic

function to those that preface the appearance of Fafner at the beginning of Act II of *Siegfried*.

Ex. 6.3: *Caractacus*, bars 249-255



Ex. 6.4: *Siegfried*, Act II



The sixth scene of *Caractacus* begins with the triumphal procession of the British slaves into Rome that heralds the denouncement of the drama. The large structure of the march followed by an integrated chorus suggests the March and chorus of *Tannhauser*, which Elgar had known since his earliest orchestral days, as he had played and arranged sections of it whilst he was still an organist. Elgar's march is a grand pageant in C major whose principal material has been anticipated frequently as a leitmotif associated with the Romans as victors. As previously discussed, in *King Olaf* Elgar had written a short, lyrical trio that reflected the influence of the quintet in Act III of *Die Meistersinger*. Now, in bars 348-421, Elgar returned in spirit to the quintet he admired and wrote a quartet of 74 bars celebrating the resolution of hostilities in lines of long, lyrical counterpoint.

By this time in his career, Elgar had achieved a reputation as an excellent orchestrator (a point that I discuss in depth in Chapter VI), but at this relatively early stage in his career, there are still places where his debt to Wagner as orchestrator is still very much apparent. At bar 205 of scene 2, as the Arch Druid ascends the throne to proclaim supernatural wisdom, he is introduced by solemn chords on an ensemble of three trumpets, three trombones and tuba and from bat 210, he is accompanied by the same ensemble without trumpets but with the addition of a harp. Such use of low brass suggests Wagner's similarly noble accompaniment of Wotan as magisterial God, for

example in the second scene of *Das Rheingold* or as the Wanderer in *Siegfried* Act I scene 2. Another resonance of Wagner's scoring is found in scene 4 of *Caractacus* from bar 171, where the plaintive theme associated with Caractacus as captive is assigned to the bass clarinet and sparsely accompanied. This inescapably recalls the motif associated with King Marke on the bass clarinet in *Tristan* Act II scene 3, which Elgar had seen only three days before composing this episode.

Elgar grew progressively more confident with each major work of the 1890s, until by the end of the decade he had fully integrated the broad spectrum of external influences into a distinctive artistic voice of his own. But his debt to Wagner was in no way diminished. The spirit of Wagner hovers ever-present around all of his oratorios, but never more obviously than Elgar's next large-scale choral and orchestral work. *The Dream of Gerontius*, explores issues that haunted many late-Romantic sensibilities and each of its two parts consists of continuous music uninterrupted by any division into numbers. From the start, Elgar's most astute critic, his friend and publisher August Jaeger, recognised the Wagnerian connection. Having studied the proofs of Part I in vocal score, he wrote to Elgar on 13 April 1900, 'Since *Parsifal* nothing of this mystic, religious kind of music has appeared to my knowledge that displays the same power and beauty as yours', and in later letters Jaeger continued to draw parallels with *Parsifal*.²⁹ Of the opening of the *Angel's Farewell* at the end of Part II, Jaeger wrote on 15 June 1900: 'That lovely contrapuntal movement beginning at 126 has gone straight to my heart and burned itself into my brain. I fancy I have not seen any such lovely writing of a quiet soothing character since *Die Meistersinger*...' ³⁰ This orchestral passage introduces the *Angel's Farewell* with sustained imitative writing that is as ingenious as it is inconspicuous.

Jaeger was right in recognising the affinities with *Parsifal*. *Gerontius*, like *Parsifal*, begins with the first phrase of a decisive leitmotif announced as an unaccompanied melody on low clarinets and bassoons with muted strings in Elgar, one desk each of muted violins and cellos, and is of four bar duration – in Wagner, five.

²⁹ Young (1968) pp. 83, 86, 93

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 93

Ex. 6.5: Opening of Prelude to *The Dream of Gerontius*

The image shows the opening of the Prelude to 'The Dream of Gerontius' by Edward Elgar. It consists of two staves, piano and bass. The piano staff begins with a half note G2, followed by a half note F#2, then a half note E2, and a half note D2, all marked 'pp mistico'. A 'rit.' (ritardando) marking is placed over the first four measures. The bass staff begins with a half note G1, followed by a half note F#1, then a half note E1, and a half note D1, all marked 'pp'. A 'mf' (mezzo-forte) marking is placed over the first four measures. The piano staff continues with a half note C2, followed by a half note B1, then a half note A1, and a half note G1, all marked 'pp'. The bass staff continues with a half note F#1, followed by a half note E1, then a half note D1, and a half note C1, all marked 'pp'. The piano staff ends with a half note B1, followed by a half note A1, then a half note G1, and a half note F#1, all marked 'pp'. The bass staff ends with a half note E1, followed by a half note D1, then a half note C1, and a half note B1, all marked 'pp'. The piano staff has a 'cres.' (crescendo) marking over the first four measures. The bass staff has a 'p' (piano) marking over the first four measures. The piano staff has a 'pp' (pianissimo) marking over the first four measures. The bass staff has a 'pp' (pianissimo) marking over the first four measures.

Ex. 6.6: Opening of Prelude to *Parsifal*

The image shows the opening of the Prelude to 'Parsifal' by Richard Wagner. It consists of six staves: English Horn, Clarinet in Bb, Bassoon, Violin I, Violin II, and Violoncello. The English Horn staff begins with a half note G4, followed by a half note F#4, then a half note E4, and a half note D4, all marked 'p'. A 'f' (forte) marking is placed over the first four measures. The Clarinet in Bb staff begins with a half note G3, followed by a half note F#3, then a half note E3, and a half note D3, all marked 'p'. A 'f' (forte) marking is placed over the first four measures. The Bassoon staff begins with a half note G2, followed by a half note F#2, then a half note E2, and a half note D2, all marked 'p'. A 'f' (forte) marking is placed over the first four measures. The Violin I staff begins with a half note G4, followed by a half note F#4, then a half note E4, and a half note D4, all marked 'p'. A 'f' (forte) marking is placed over the first four measures. The Violin II staff begins with a half note G3, followed by a half note F#3, then a half note E3, and a half note D3, all marked 'p'. A 'f' (forte) marking is placed over the first four measures. The Violoncello staff begins with a half note G2, followed by a half note F#2, then a half note E2, and a half note D2, all marked 'p'. A 'f' (forte) marking is placed over the first four measures. The English Horn staff has a 'dim.' (diminuendo) marking over the first four measures. The Clarinet in Bb staff has a 'dim.' (diminuendo) marking over the first four measures. The Bassoon staff has a 'dim.' (diminuendo) marking over the first four measures. The Violin I staff has a 'dim.' (diminuendo) marking over the first four measures. The Violin II staff has a 'dim.' (diminuendo) marking over the first four measures. The Violoncello staff has a 'dim.' (diminuendo) marking over the first four measures. The English Horn staff ends with a half note B4, followed by a half note A4, then a half note G4, and a half note F#4, all marked 'p'. The Clarinet in Bb staff ends with a half note B3, followed by a half note A3, then a half note G3, and a half note F#3, all marked 'p'. The Bassoon staff ends with a half note B2, followed by a half note A2, then a half note G2, and a half note F#2, all marked 'p'. The Violin I staff ends with a half note B4, followed by a half note A4, then a half note G4, and a half note F#4, all marked 'p'. The Violin II staff ends with a half note B3, followed by a half note A3, then a half note G3, and a half note F#3, all marked 'p'. The Violoncello staff ends with a half note B2, followed by a half note A2, then a half note G2, and a half note F#2, all marked 'p'. The English Horn staff has a 'piu p' (pianissimo) marking over the last four measures. The Clarinet in Bb staff has a 'piu p' (pianissimo) marking over the last four measures. The Bassoon staff has a 'piu p' (pianissimo) marking over the last four measures. The Violin I staff has a 'piu p' (pianissimo) marking over the last four measures. The Violin II staff has a 'piu p' (pianissimo) marking over the last four measures. The Violoncello staff has a 'piu p' (pianissimo) marking over the last four measures.

Elgar had actually inscribed the first six notes of the opening of *Parsifal* in his wife's diary on 28 July 1892, the day he first saw the opera at Bayreuth. The last paragraph of Part I of *Gerontius* introduces the Priest as the agent of the supernatural whose role it is to despatch the soul of Gerontius in its long journey through the next world. He is introduced by a succession of solemn chords principally on three trombones and tuba, again recalling Wagner's accompaniment to Wotan as well as several similar proclamation by Gurnemanz in *Parsifal*. The Priest's dismissal is followed by a trudging march, heavy in implication, accompanied by repeated crotchets until it breaks into the chorus 'Go in the name of Angels and Archangels', one of Elgar's finest massed

ensembles. The whole episode suggests a dramatic and musical affinity with the end of Act I scene I of *Parsifal*, where Gurnemanz makes an impassioned speech to the innocent Parsifal as he leads him on the momentous journey from the grounds of the castle to the hall of the Knights of the Grail, bars 1073-105. Gurnemanz is accompanied by trudging patterns of repeated quavers on the strings, joined on occasion by solemn low brass until the dialogue dissolves into the magnificent transformation music.

Ex.6.7: *The Dream of Gerontius*, Solemn chords leading to the end of Part 1

Another telling example occurs immediately before the Soul of Gerontius confronts its Creator in Part II, Elgar prepares the impending dramatic climax with a solemn orchestral crescendo that explodes in a momentary flash, Figs. 118-120. The first eight bars are built over a pedal A, but when the bass part moves, it forms two overlapping phrases of the pattern B-A-C-H, actually sounding these pitches in the second cycle of the sequence; the same pattern is mirrored in the highest part:

Ex. 6.8: *The Dream of Gerontius*, Part II

In *Tristan und Isolde* Act I scene 5, after the lovers' first stunned reaction to the love potion, the texture leaps into an impetuous expression of their ecstasy and Wagner's bass line moves by two overlapping phrases of the same B-A-C-H pattern, although at a higher pitch than Elgar's:

Ex. 6.9: *Tristan und Isolde*, bars 1687-1690



It is unlikely that either composer was concerned with, or perhaps even conscious of, any Bachian connections. It is significant, however, that each responded to the need for a burst of energy with an identical bass contour that generated a progression of chromatically saturated harmony and it would not seem out of place to say that Elgar undoubtedly got his inspiration from Wagner's line.

After *The Dream of Gerontius*, any systematic search for specific resonances of Wagner's music become less relevant to the study of the evolution of Elgar's musical style. The ingredients that went into the making of that style, extracted from Wagner and a host of others, had become wholly subordinated to Elgar's distinctive artistic individuality and from this time Elgar's developments became generated from within.

The remainder of this chapter is devoted to the study of Elgar's least studied oratorios: *The Light of Life*, *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*.

4.4: Going it Alone: Thematic Development in *The Light of Life*

The Light of Life was Elgar's first oratorio. It was composed before Elgar became famous and consequently, it has been viewed as a less important work and a harbinger of things to come.³¹ Hardly any analyses of the oratorio exist and those that do dwell on

³¹ See, for instance, Michael Kennedy's liner notes to the oratorio on Richard Hicox, dir., *The Light of Life* by Edward Elgar (London Symphony Orchestra and London Symphony Chorus) Chandos CHAN 9208, 1993.

describing the work as Wagnerian – looking at themes as the oratorio's most important aspect. Given that the later three oratorios are constructed mainly of themes it seems inevitable that early descriptions of *The Light of Life* would focus only on them too. For example, Buckley refers to 'leit-motive' (as he spells it) on two occasions in relation to the work and discusses no other elements.³²

Later discussions continue along the line of themes – spotting the extent of this is clear when a quote from Young is considered. Young highlights themes as the driving force behind his analysis:

As in his secular cantatas, Elgar is faithful to the principle of the Leitmotive. So, if inclined, the serious student of *The Light of Life* may point to the exposition of demonstrative themes in the introductory orchestral Meditation: at the letter B the 'blind man' Motiv, given by the horns; at letter C his 'longing for light' in a brief passage in G minor – expectation held out in rhythmic hesitancy – which, however, develops passionately towards E flat major; at letter E a cognate tune – but with conventional rhythm, which appears later as an accompaniment to 'I am the Light of the World'; finally as letter G, where G major is re-established, a phrase (with Elgarian syncopation) which is used to point to Jesus as the giver of light.³³

Like McGuire, whose response to all of Young's analysis is somewhat scathing, it seems somewhat obvious that Young does not really understand the fundamentals of motifs as he manages to identify them in language than by actual music examples. This is one of the main problems with tackling any aspect of Elgar's technical ability, for Young is typical of Elgar biographers. Little reference to the score is ever made but each author, Young in particular, seems able to provide reams of 'critical analysis' without the reader being able to reference a music example to see if it makes any sense at all. And for the majority of the time, it does not. The most substantial published analysis of *The Light of Life*, that by Moore, is a little over four pages long. Much of it is taken up by a similar

³² Buckley (1905) pp. 33 and 48

³³ Young (1973) p. 310

list of themes and proposed names for them.³⁴ Whenever other authors devote more than a paragraph to *The Light of Life*, a similar list is given, with either textual descriptions of the themes or a few short score examples of the themes. Identification of the number of themes in these analyses is not consistent, nor is the nomenclature used by critics.³⁵

The themes used in *The Light of Life* cannot be called Wagnerian. As McGuire notes, apart from their initial presentations, the themes do not comprise the fabric of the individual movements, sounding at times as if they are simply grafted onto the otherwise complete orchestral texture.³⁶ Some are reminiscence themes, representing a specific person or idea. Once that representation is complete, they are no longer needed and thus cast off. Others represent theological concepts (such a 'Light', one of the most important metaphors throughout the work), and should constantly appear (as such themes do in Elgar's later oratorios), but do not. Little development occurs with any of these themes and the themes Elgar presented in the opening 'Meditation' reappear in later movements in nearly identical forms. The only changes that occur are the key in which each theme returns and (in some cases) its orchestration.

As we have seen with Young overleaf, critics and biographers describe ten themes when analysing *The Light of Life* and six of these are presented within the opening instrumental 'Meditation', Elgar's first real attempt at a Wagnerian-style Prelude. As biographers have used the Meditation as a point to consider leitmotifs and McGuire also chooses to focus on it to prove the biographers wrong, the following analysis will also be formed around the orchestral prelude. The only themes to appear in more than two movements (including the 'Meditation') are the reminiscence themes that portray characters (such as the Mother and Christ) and the Narrator, and a concept theme identified by most of the biographers as 'Light'.³⁷ To elucidate their qualities, the

³⁴ Moore (1984) pp. 207-212. A quarter of p. 207, most of p. 208 and a third of both pp. 209 and 210 are taken up by printing ten motives from *The Light of Life* and one motive from *The Black Knight* as a point of comparison.

³⁵ See Anderson (1993) pp. 207-210; Thomas Frederick Dunhill, *Sir Edward Elgar* (London: Blackie & Son Ltd., 1938) pp. 43-45; and Basil Maine, *Elgar, His life and Works* (London: Bell, 1933) pp. 34-36. Moore refers to the theme, heard generally when the Narrator speaks, as the 'Musical figure of the Narrator recitative' while Anderson calls it the 'Passion motive' (Moore 1984, p. 209; Anderson 1993, p. 210)

³⁶ McGuire (2002) p. 35

³⁷ Young's opinion differs, as he sees a theme he names 'Light' as ever present: 'After its appearance on every page – sometimes in deep disguise – one is tempted to consider whether it has, in fact, made any

following section will analyse the construction of the themes in the opening 'Meditation' to show their relation to *The Light of Life*'s general musical structure.

As McGuire highlights, the 'Meditation' is the only movement of *The Light of Life* composed entirely of representative themes.³⁸ An analysis of its construction reveals that Elgar designed most of the themes with a simple periodic structure, as one theme often comes to a complete rhythmic close before the next theme begins, rather than overlapping in a Wagnerian way. When themes are repeated, Elgar creates contrast through changes in orchestration – adding progressively more instruments to the texture – to increase the volume and weight of a particular section. Yet this structure is not like that of Wagner, because the themes are repeated only a few times when they occur.

The 'Meditation' is in three large sections. The movement modulates from an opening G minor (A) through to C minor (B) and then to G major (C). The (C) section has some of the same accompanimental elements of the first, but the melodic and motivic material is not a close enough match to address it as an A1 section. Section A presents four themes; B two; and C concentrates on a single theme. McGuire's analysis concentrates on two themes within the Meditation, rather than examining the entire movement. He chooses to trace these two themes because they ultimately show how one theme transfers to another and also how climaxes are constructed. However, McGuire only reflects on the impact of these themes on structural climaxes because it serves a greater role later on during his analysis of *The Apostles*. Therefore, my analysis traces McGuire's steps but extends it by showing that the themes cannot be deemed Wagnerian due to their lack of development and are therefore closer to reminiscence themes. It will also be highlighted how Elgar was consistently trying to emulate Wagnerian technique, but kept falling short.

What McGuire rightly calls 'transference' (as opposed to development for my own argument) between themes is most easily seen in an excerpt from the A section of the Meditation.

Ex. 7.0: Edward Elgar, *The Light of Life*, 'Meditation', bars 20-37

contribution to the masterly or dramatic development at all' (Young 1973, p. 310). While 'Light' appears more often than any other theme in the oratorio, it is not obviously present in every moment.

³⁸ McGuire (2002) p. 98

20

Flute

ff *sf dim* *p* *pp*

Oboe

ff *sf dim* *p* *pp*

Clarinet in B \flat

ff *sf dim* *pp*

Bassoon

ff *sf* *pp*

Horn in F

ff *p* *pp*

Horn in F

ff *sf*

Trombone

sf *pp*

Tuba

Timpani

f *pp dim.*

Harp

Violin

ff *sf dim* *p* *pp*

Violoncello

26

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

Hn.

Hn.

Tbn.

Tba.

Timp.

Hp.

Vln.

Vc.

fp

pp

z

pp

p

z

pp

z

z

pp

fp

z

p

z

z

33 *Piu Lento*

Fl. *p express. legato*

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

Hn.

Hn.

Tbn.

Tba.

Timp.

Hp.

Piu Lento

Vln. *p express. legato*

Vc. *p*

Even here, Elgar's early attempts at creating a system of leitmotifs is evident, although he seems to deliberately emphasise the uniqueness of each theme, instead of highlighting their similarities. This almost certainly proves Elgar's naïve appreciation of motif manipulation at this early stage in his career. For example, McGuire points out that between bars 20-37, parts of three different themes are heard, all of which could have overlapped and grown organically from one another.³⁹ However, Elgar chose to emphasise the 'transference' between the themes by giving each a completely different orchestration, providing each with a rhythmic slowing down and also a change in time signature. Elgar's youthful attempts at leitmotif could not get any further away from his Wagnerian model. Indeed, McGuire points out each of his Wagnerian failings.

During the transfer between the first theme and the second, melodic rhythm gradually slows. In bar 20, a crotchet is articulated on every beat in many of the parts. In bar 21, most of the parts end the bar in a minim, while only a few instruments articulate two minims followed by three triplet crotchets. The overall rhythm of the passage stalls completely in bar 22, as all of the parts heard sustain at least the first three beats. The fourth beat is the point of transfer to the next theme, articulating the resolution of V7, with a 4-3 suspension.⁴⁰

McGuire's point, that Elgar marks almost every point of difference between themes, is decisively made. Elgar does seem to almost deliberately mark each new theme as distinct from one another. However, whereas McGuire believes that Elgar did this so that the lesson of the oratorio would not be overshadowed, it seems to me that Elgar did this to draw attention to the oratorio's message. When Elgar composed the *Light of Life*, his understanding of Wagner's method was still in its infancy. It is quite possible that Elgar believed Wagner's own leitmotif technique emphasised changes between motifs in the same way and therefore, what he produced was, in Elgar's eyes, totally Wagnerian. His lack of critical study of Wagner's works by this point in his career could therefore indicate that even though the themes are primitive, under-developed and inorganic, Elgar truly believed that he was emulating Wagner's example. We have already seen that at the same time, Elgar was experimenting with themes heavily influenced by Wagner's own in

³⁹ McGuire (2002) p. 98

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 96

King Olaf and these, too, were developed in the same juvenile way. The complexity of Wagner's achievement had not been totally realised or digested by Elgar at this stage, so what resulted sounds like a crude, hand-fisted attempt, when in fact it was the height of sophistication for Elgar's developing music voice.

Section B (bars 54-77) consists of the fifth theme of the 'Meditation', heard sometimes in conjunction with the third. McGuire highlights that contrast with the previous section is created by another shift in time signature (from 3/4 to 9/8) and a key change, from Eb major to a solid C minor.⁴¹ In addition however, the orchestration is also lighter (no brass or organ is employed here – just strings, woodwinds and horn). Section C (bars 78-99) modulates to G major and returns to a full orchestral texture, through a structural crescendo. The only theme presented in this section begins, accompanied with the syncopated figure that opened the movement, but no other elements of the opening are present, so this cannot be seen as a convincing return to A. The initial presentation of the theme within this section in the first and second violins is accompanied by flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoon, horns, harp, organ, viola, cello and bass (bar 78-85). The second presentation of the theme (bars 86-89) places the melody in the flutes, oboes and clarinets, accompanied by the full orchestra, growing from pp to a ff/sf.

While few themes are heard in the 'Meditation', those presented are heard at least twice. Their repetition is neither elaborate nor always brought on through sequencing or development: most of the repetitions in the A section occur only within a small space. Some sequencing does occur in the B and C sections of the 'Meditation', but not with the relentlessness one would expect in a Wagnerian composition. The A section of the 'Meditation' contains the most themes, while the last two sections concentrate on a new theme each. The rest of the themes of the 'Meditation' are constructed with a periodicity that is opposed to a Wagnerian reading.

All of the themes presented in the 'Meditation' are constructed, employed and executed in this way. The 'Meditation' therefore, as an orchestral prelude that presents themes to the listener can only introduce their sounds and characteristics. To understand fully both the syntactic use of themes themselves and Elgar's method, McGuire examines the themes in the movements beyond the 'Meditation' to see how they function to

⁴¹ McGuire (2002) p. 102

forward the narrative of the oratorio.⁴² He tracks two themes throughout the work that elucidate their local manifestations, construction and qualities and they are chosen because of their different functions: one represents a person, the other a concept: ‘The Mother of the Blind Man’ theme representing the first, ‘The Blind Man’ theme the second. Presentations of these themes throughout *The Light of Life* are always periodic, and are not significantly altered or developed when they are heard. They really are the calling-cards Debussy accused Wagner of at the first performance of the Ring Cycle. Each theme is used primarily in one movement and when they are heard again later in the oratorio, the themes are unusually placed into recitative or melodic structures as points of reminiscence only.

The theme that represents the ‘Mother of the Blind Man’ is one of several in the oratorio associated with a person or a group of people but they are all dealt with in the same way – most often as part of a larger old-fashioned ritornello structure, which was a clear move by the young Elgar: this was an easy way of getting his theme to form a crucial part of the fabric. The theme is first heard in movement 4, when the Mother sings a contemplative aria. The form of movement 4 is based on a ritornello structure, with the Mother’s theme as the ritornello:

Ex. 7.1: Edward Elgar, *The Light of Life*, The Mother’s Theme (simple form)



Ex. 7.2: Edward Elgar, *The Light of Life*, final appearance of mother's theme, movement 13, bars 6-14

6 *accel*

Horn in F *p* *cres.*

Contralto

Violin I *pp* *cres.* *f*

Violin II *pp* *cres.*

Viola *pp* *cres.*

Violoncello

5

Hn.

C.

Vln. I *sf* *p*

Vln. II *sf* *p*

Vla. *sf* *p*

Vc.

and his pa - rents an - swered them and said:

Elgar drops the theme into the Contralto's recitation like a calling-card. McGuire is correct when he asserts that its use is easily identified, as the recitation's accompaniment changes from simple wind chords supporting the Contralto's initial words (bar 3-5) to the melodic Mother's theme, presented by the violins, supported by the rest of the strings as a sort of punctuation.⁴³ However, it should be noted in addition that the theme, while in a different key from its first presentation, is a literal repetition of the opening ritornello of movement 4. Only parts of the accompaniment are changed. As the Mother no longer appears after this scene in the oratorio, neither does the theme. It remains an untransformed melodic idea, keeping to a literal restatement of its first appearance and expresses nothing other than an obvious identifier of the Mother in its second iteration.

'The Blind Man's' theme has a slightly more sophisticated use than the 'Mother's' theme since it seems to be both a person theme as well as a concept one, since it represents both the Blind Man and his infirmity. McGuire asserts that The Blind Man is the main character of the oratorio and the only one within the work that undergoes any significant transformation and as a result, makes The Blind Man's theme the closest to its Wagnerian counterpart of the entire work.⁴⁴ McGuire writes:

this theme, when first used in the 'Meditation' at bar 23 characteristically included a plaintive sound, derived from the use of G minor, further emphasised by its small compass and its continual reliance on the rising antecedent rhythmic pattern of a dotted crotchets followed by a quaver and a crotchet followed by a descending consequent figure of the second and third bars are broadened to a minim followed by a crotchet (still presented in the same orchestration of the horns, bars 28-29).⁴⁵

There is much to digest here. McGuire highlights a crucial rhythmic pattern inherent in The Blind Man's theme whenever it occurs, but interestingly with the theme, it affects what happens around it. The same rhythmic pattern can be heard in successive voices between bars 29-33. However, this development is still relatively short-lived and the theme reverts back to its original form in Movement 2, between bars 52-61:

⁴³ McGuire (2002) p. 106

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 110

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 107

Ex. 7.3: Edward Elgar, *The Light of Life*, Blind Man's Theme, movement 2, bars 52-61

The musical score for Ex. 7.3 shows two systems of music. The first system, starting at bar 52, features a tenor voice line and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "O Thou in Hea - ven's dome Hea - ven's dome, In Light's". The second system, starting at bar 6, continues the lyrics: "ter - nal home, For Whom the clou Of". The score is in 3/4 time and includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

As is the case with so much of Elgar's motif manipulation in *The Light of Life*, Elgar emphasises the theme by changing time signature (from 4/4 to 3/4). The only significant change is heard in the orchestration: in this movement, Elgar presents the theme in the high strings and the tenor voice (instead of horns), accompanied by a pedal in the low strings. Besides the orchestration, the main differences between the two presentations of the theme are the lack of the concluding section in the second movement example, and rhythmic extension: the four bars of the theme used in its 'Meditation' version are stretched out to eight within this movement, the characteristic motive 'z' is dropped from some bars (for example, bars 6-7) and the second half of the theme is begun twice, initially by the first violins as sort of anticipation and then in earnest by the tenor.⁴⁶

In this movement, the Blind Man's theme only begins his verse. Following the introduction, completely new material is heard. The antecedent motive z returns at the end of the first verse (bars 76-77), in a brief form without its consequent. The next

⁴⁶ Motif 'z' can be seen littered throughout Ex. 7.0 and always uses the same rising rhythmic pattern of a dotted crotchet-quaver-crotchet.

occurrence of the theme in this movement opens the Blind Man's second verse, which behaves the same way as the opening of the first: Elgar shifts the time signature to 3/4, modulates once again to G minor and adds the rhythmic extensions. The theme is obviously used for reminiscence, since it begins both verses, and is then discarded without affecting the fabric of the rest of the verse. These large structural changes are not unique to this movement. In the next recitative (the opening of movement no. 3), Elgar presents motive z again, but only within a shift to a 3/4 time signature.

Elgar uses the Blind Man's theme for the last time in movement 9. During the theme's long progression, other characters mention the Blind man several times, most importantly Christ (movement 5) and the Narrator (movement 7). While Christ refers to 'this man', He does not mention the Blind Man directly, providing a clue that the theme represents the infirmity rather than the person. However, in Movement 9, the Blind Man's theme appears when he explains the miracle to the crowd:

Ex. 7.4: Edward Elgar, *The Light of Life*, Blind Man's Theme in the recitative, movement 9, bars 51-57

Oboe

Clarinet in B \flat

Bassoon

Tenor

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

pp Go to the pool of Si - lo - am and wash:

p

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

T.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

mf *sf* *dim.*

mf *sf* *dim.*

sf

McGuire asserts that the theme becomes the musical response to Christ's command 'Go to the pool of Siloam and wash', and seems to represent the last moments of blindness before the miracle.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, Elgar neither develops this theme, nor does he use it in its entirety – only an overlapping presentation of the z motive, heard in a variety of instruments (bassoons, basses and cellos, clarinets and first violins). Elgar does not present the theme in the expected G minor, but he does change the time signature of the recitative for its presentation (from 4/4 to 3/4), returning quickly to the original 4/4 immediately at the point when the Blind Man resumes his narration. However, after this, the theme disappears, even though the now-seeing Man still exists in the plot, interacting with other characters. With the cure of the blindness, the theme disappears. It is a theme which represents the concept of infirmity itself.⁴⁸

It seems evident from tracing these examples that Elgar submits his themes to little development, and what development he does allow occurs only on a local level in *The Light of Life*. I concur with McGuire that whilst the themes may be fragmented or their rhythms slightly changed, they appear too seldom for any substantial development to take place.⁴⁹ The themes are constrained to specific time signatures (3/4 for the Blind Man's themes, for example) and keys. Unsurprisingly for Elgar, orchestration provides the only variety for development. Indeed, McGuire concludes, 'Thus, within *The Light of Life*, themes are used only for representation on the most general level.'⁵⁰ They do not develop to show changes in the drama (except by their absence) and they are certainly not an integral part of the work's larger fabric. Finally, a number of the themes (such as the original presentation of the Blind Man's theme and the Mother's theme as the ritornello to movement 4) have a periodic structure, with antecedent and consequent phrases. They could easily be separated from the rest of the work, and do not rely upon the surrounding structure. As such, Elgar's employment of these reminiscence themes is not as complex as in his later oratorios.

⁴⁷ McGuire (2002) p. 109

⁴⁸ Basil Maine names this theme 'Yearning for light' and Percy M. Young calls it 'Longing for Light' (Maine, 1932, vol. 2, p. 34; Young 1973, p. 310). Given the fact that it is discarded so quickly when healing does come, these may be better descriptions for it, if one feels it necessary to adapt such nomenclature.

⁴⁹ McGuire (2002) p. 111

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 110

4.5: Epic Scale: Leitmotif Groupings in *The Apostles*

McGuire argues that themes in *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom* are closer to Dahlhaus' conception of music drama than those Elgar previously composed and anyone who has heard either work will realise that he is absolutely correct.⁵¹ In *The Apostles*, themes evoke extra-musical meaning through their repetitions against certain situations and texts and although they are occasionally separated from each other through rhythmic cessation, a number of them avoid such periodic structure, requiring other themes or parts of the orchestral fabric for harmonic and rhythmic completion. Thus, the Wagnerian flow of themes adds to the musical characterisation of 'epic' and pushes Elgar closer to the concept of music drama.

In order to provide a convincing unity to the work and to supply musical continuity throughout, Elgar, like Wagner, relied on specific overarching groups of leitmotifs. Many of these theme-groupings are obvious, but for this discussion, we will concentrate on two, explored by McGuire and previously discussed in this chapter in relation to Wagner's leitmotifs. Indeed, like Wagner's motives, each unifies the work on a particular level, organising a different proportion of the plot. Firstly, this section looks at Elgar's motifs that transform and expands on McGuire's work based around 'The Spriti of the Lord' and 'Prayer' motifs. Secondly, it looks at introductory motifs that are laid out in the Prologue and traces how they are developed across the entire work. These theme groups clearly show Elgar reaching towards the sort of organic unity present within Wagner's music dramas: crafting themes for specific musical purposes and imbuing them with a continuously growing meaning, until they themselves become as important as any text or character in *The Apostles*.

Motifs that Transform

Elgar's unifying themes in *The Apostles* are both local and work-spanning and present the listener with small moments of musical congruency – almost like signposts along a path, directing the careful listener further towards the musical and goal of *The Apostles*. Elgar

⁵¹ McGuire (2002) p. 188

constructed the 'transformative' theme as a sort of advancement on the unifying theme. In the same vein as the merged-theme climax at the end of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, transformative themes in *The Apostles* provide an important musical pivot. McGuire focuses on two primary themes that fulfil this function: 'The Spirit of the Lord' and 'Prayer'.⁵² 'The Spirit of the Lord' is incredibly important on a number of leitmotivic levels as, in addition to being a transforming theme, it also acts as a unifying theme across the first half of the oratorio as well. 'Prayer' is also important throughout the oratorio, heard at climatic points in movements I, III and VII.⁵³ McGuire argues that in Movement I, Elgar uses 'Prayer' (presented in a harmonic reduction below) as the instrumental equivalent of the sunrise, between Fig. 35 and 36, but the climax dissipates quickly, replaced by a simple tenor line announcing that Christ chose the Apostles. The sunrise is an orchestrally powerful statement, but the theme shows only a shadow of its future importance.



Its presentation here is critical to understanding how far Elgar had developed as a composer by this stage. Listening to the first presentation of the 'Prayer' theme, the audience is completely unaware as to how (or if) it will be developed and is an example of Elgar demonstrating his cemented understanding of the Wagnerian process. Like Wagner, Elgar takes the opportunity to use this theme out of context and detaches it from what will later become its purpose, so that when it does achieve its later 'meaning' the audience will recognise it due the level of familiarity. Wagner achieved this throughout his music drama and also took the idea to a new level: with some of Wagner's transforming motifs, they are hinted at throughout the score but not heard in completed

⁵³ The 'Prayer' theme occurs briefly in two non-climactic locations: in movements I and III, when the Tenor narrates Christ ascending mountains to pray. These uses seem to be why Jaeger called the theme 'Prayer'. One can thus understand Grogan's frustration with Jaeger's nomenclature. The limited nature of the description 'Prayer' might cause the listener not to delve into the deeper meaning of the theme and to miss its didactic point entirely.

version until Wagner has fully transformed it, being a certain sense of relief to the audience. In line with this Wagnerian method, the second use of 'Prayer' in the third movement, refers to the Apostles' mission of evangelism through a chorus and it still yet to be connected to the idea it will come to represent. Following Christ's Prologue pronouncement, the chorus sings a fully orchestrated version of 'Prayer' (Fig. 116). The text emphasises the importance and jubilation of the declared evangelical mission, stating 'Proclaim unto them that dwell on the earth, and unto every nation, and kindred, and tongue, the everlasting Gospel.' But the orchestral climax is again brief. As the passage winds its way down to a long, sustained chord, Christ sings a final Quasi Recit. speech, describing the power that would be granted to the Apostles in order to undertake the preaching described by the chorus.

In keeping with Wagnerian technique, both of these uses of the 'Prayer' theme do not directly affect the Apostles: the first occurs as a sunrise, a natural event and the second is a commentary by a chorus outside the frame about God's plan for the Apostles. Only in the final movement can the Apostles sing the theme. 'Prayer' is not complete in and of itself, and its final resolution depends on another theme: 'The Spirit of the Lord'. Indeed, McGuire takes this idea even further and writes that 'the entire seventh movement, and even the final design of the oratorio as a whole, can be read as a slow advance to a climactic meeting of both themes.'⁵⁴

Movement VII follows Christ's final lesson to the Apostles and culminates in the prediction of their power to be fulfilled in *The Kingdom*. Christ reminds the Apostles that they will always be responsible for evangelising the Church and remembering Christ's sacrifice. The movement thus shows the Apostles' transformation from supporters of Christ to active, independent Christians. Elgar's text makes this change in state obvious: from this moment forward, like any other divine character in the oratorio, the Apostles are allowed to use texts from any point in the Bible. The movement also reveals the symbolic importance of the 'Prayer' theme: the sunrise from movement I becomes the Ascension of Christ, as well as the beginning of the Apostles' own ministry.

McGuire's analysis divides the movement into two main sections. The first encompasses Christ's farewell to the Apostles. The second section begins the long

⁵⁴ McGuire (2002) p. 237

crescendo to the oratorio's climax, occasionally referring to the 'Prayer' theme, but holding back its final resolution until the very end. McGuire rightly interprets the movement as an A, b, A1 form and details the overall layout before approaching the details of the leitmotif structure. Again, as has been the previously, Elgar hints at the 'Prayer' motif throughout the A section but it does not form a prominent aspect of the fabric until the end of the section when three texts culminate over the first really prominent setting of 'Prayer'. However, 'Prayer' does not fully resolve even here: instead of the expected triumphant resolution to Eb major (which is prepared on the last beat of the last bar before Fig. 222) Elgar leaves the theme on the dominant of Eb and prolongs V of Bb (initiating a momentary pedal), reverses the rising scale of the orchestra, and cuts back the orchestra through a decrescendo into what becomes the hushed stillness that begins section B.

McGuire perceives Section B (from Figs. 223-229) as a momentary pause in order to begin the structural rise to an explosive, final climax and offers no further presentation of the 'Prayer' motif. The crescendo towards the final climax begins at Fig. 229 (A1), with entrances of the chorus of the Apostles and Disciples, the mortal characters, and the two mystic choruses (in that order). The four groups sing until the repetition of the 'Prayer' theme at Fig. 231. At this point, all of the choruses except the Apostles leave the texture, allowing for a final, cyclical accompaniment of 'The Spirit of the Lord' theme. The themes do not yet merge, but are layered on top of each other forming a kind of melange. When the quartet of soloists rejoins the Apostles' chorus at Fig. 232, both 'Prayer' and 'The Spirit of the Lord' disappear momentarily for the section. When the theme returns at Fig. 233, it moulds back into the triplet texture, now played over the entire orchestra.

All four choruses come together for a final time at Fig. 233, and the 'Prayer' theme holds forth, still searching and gaining strength with a full orchestral accompaniment. Whenever the 'Prayer' motif had been heard previously, it was rarely sustained for long, usually because it needed to modulate, or perhaps because the theme was being used to set up the later climax and was not in its correct setting. Either way, in movement I, the 'Prayer' theme lasted only ten bars before disappearing; in movement III, eleven. However, at this most climatic of moments, McGuire posits that 'Prayer' is

relentless: it occurs over eight bars with 'The Spirit of the Lord' theme as a counter-motive, and then continues for eight bars by itself. But even with this length, 'Prayer' is not complete. For its resolution, it is merged into 'The Spirit of the Lord', climaxing finally with a cadence on the tonic – Eb major.⁵⁵

Ex. 7.6: Edward Elgar, Union of the 'Prayer' and 'Spirit of the Lord' themes, *The Apostles*, movement VII, Figs. 233-234

⁵⁵ The tempo indication at the climax changes to 'Nobilmente', the same indication used at many structurally important climaxes in Elgar's works, including the Eb 'Nimrod' variation of Op. 36 (Enigma Variations).

Prayer Theme

Musical notation for the Prayer Theme, featuring a piano introduction with triplets in both hands.

ed at the right hand

Virgin Mary

Mary Magdalene

That

Peter

That

shall be born, that He, that He

Apostles

shall be born, that He, that He

Spirit of the Lord

of the power of God Al le lu

He hath done, He hath done this They shall come and shall de - clare the

hath done this. They shall de - clare shall de clare

hath done this. They shall de - clare shall de - clare

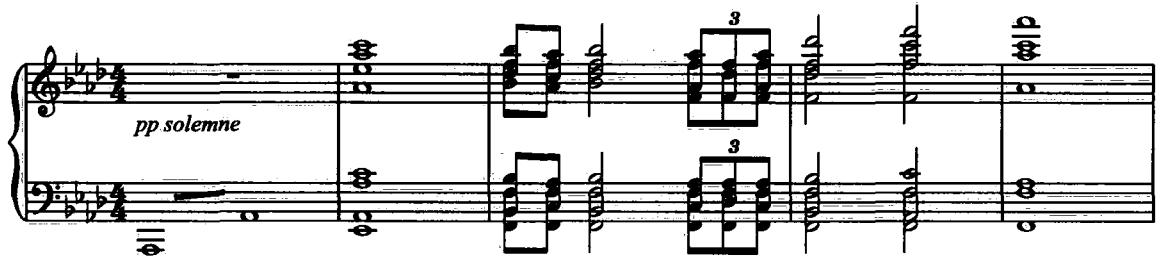
Thus, the final climax of the 'Prayer' theme ends where the work began: with a call to preaching and a future evangelism. Its full impact and complete resolution was incomprehensible without the Apostles knowledge of Christ's sacrifice and their own evangelical mission. The merging of the two themes closes the episode of *The Apostles* in a most complete way, but leaves enough story-space for the next episode: with a new set of heroes, yet with the same human thoughts and failings. The difference is that the Apostles now understand their own mission, and will be granted the power to fulfil it. From the score it is very difficult to tell that both of the leitmotifs are heard shimmering beneath the singing quartet of the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalene, Peter and the remaining Apostles: whilst it may appear that the 'Prayer' and 'The Spirit of the Lord' motifs are simply juxtaposed in a dramatic manner in their original form like reminiscence themes, it is crucial to remember that both motifs have come full-circle to reach this point. The themes have been transformed throughout the oratorio and it is only at the end we hear them one final time in their original form, with 'The Spirit of the Lord' now completing the 'Prayer' motif one final time. 'Prayer' has never been complete unto itself (hence the sheer amount of transformation it undergoes in the oratorio as it searches for its conclusion) and it has taken Elgar until the final moments to show the audience how it finally resolves – 'The Spirit of the Lord' completes it. It is almost as if Elgar realised that they should complete one another before being carried on into *The Kingdom*. This kind of ending is only possible because of Elgar's previous skilful manipulation of both motifs; bringing them to a climactic resolution by granting the listener Wagnerian foreshadowing of these important ideas before the final close. This clearly shows that Elgar understood how to create musical structures and manipulate both the music and the audience to the desired outcome, just as Wagner had done before him.

Introductory Motifs

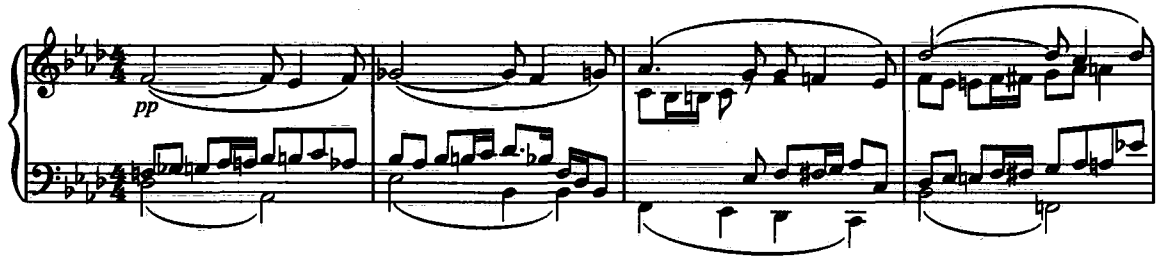
Whilst Elgar's transforming themes focused upon 'Prayer' and 'The Spirit of the Lord' to demonstrate one aspect of leitmotivic unity, this section turns to a set of themes presented in the Prologue, related to Christ himself. The curious and unusual thing concerning

these motifs is that they all recur later in the drama, but always appear in the same order, thus helping to pull the musical fabric together. These themes are:

Ex. 7.7: Edward Elgar, ‘The Spirit of the Lord’ Motif



Ex. 7.8: Edward Elgar, ‘Comfort’ Motif



Ex. 7.9: Edward Elgar, ‘Church’ Motif



As McGuire’s analysis states, Christ’s entrance as a visible character does not occur until the very end of the first movement and His entire speech only lasts four lines.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ McGuire (2002) p. 235

However, in the middle of this speech (beginning two bars before Fig. 56), the chorus quietly enters with a statement that directly comments on His words. They first sing 'God hath chosen them' on a unison Eb and follow this with the text from the opening of the Prologue: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Him'. The text is altered slightly. Christ accepts the power described in the Prologue and grants it to the Apostles, thereby creating the Christian community. In His words, Christ defines what is needed for this community: 'And he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me', below which the chorus sings as extended version of the first half of 'The Spirit of the Lord' theme, beginning on the word 'Spirit'.

Ex. 8.0: Edward Elgar, *The Apostles*, Christ's Speech, movement I, Fig. 56

ppp

Soprano *ppp* The Spir - it of the Lord -

Alto *ppp* The Spir - it of the Lord -

Tenor *ppp* The Spir - it of the Lord

Bass *ppp* The Spir - it of the Lord

Jesus
ceiv - eth Him that

4

S. is up - on Him

A. is up - on Him

T. is up - on Him

B. is up - on Him

B. sent Me.

In the next two movements, Christ sings Prologue themes in the order we now expect. These occur at two climactic moments. He sings the ‘Comfort’ theme following the last of his Beatitude statements in movement II.

Ex. 8.1: Edward Elgar, ‘Comfort’ theme, *The Apostles*



The text commands the Apostles to ‘rejoice and be exceeding glad’ because the reward for their future evangelism of the Christian Church will be great. In movement III, Christ sings the ‘Church’ theme at Fig. 115, stating that Peter is the rock upon which the church would be built. In both cases, Elgar emphasises the return of these themes unsubtly: when Christ repeats them, they return to the key in which they were originally presented in the Prologue and are clearly separated from the material heard around them by a change in orchestration, a technique harking back to *The Light of Life* discussed previously. Therefore, over the progression of the first part of the oratorio, three main themes of the Prologue are brought back into play when Christ addresses the Apostles, speaking of their evangelical mission. Themes from the prologue become a thread which permeates the oratorio’s musical narrative and unifies its entire first part.

The Apostles was the beginning of an epic: the struggle between New and Old, told through the lens of both mortal and immortal characters. Elements of epic in the oratorio include its use of formal biblical language, the archetypal proving ground provided for *The Apostles*, the episodic nature of the composition, and its grand scale. Elgar tied the oratorio directly to the history of his own country: the evangelism of the Apostles, mentioned throughout the work and finally explained in the last movement, culminates in the message being told to ‘a people that shall be born’: the English audience of the oratorio itself. In Elgar’s mind, *The Apostles* sought to teach a series of lessons about the importance of love and forgiveness, not only to the Apostles, but to the audience as well.

4.6: Epic Scale: Leitmotif Groupings in *The Kingdom*

Elgar's use and adaptation of themes from *The Apostles* within *The Kingdom* is one of the most crucial ways of maintaining character references and general continuity as many themes are common to both works. They are referred to and then developed along Wagnerian lines. This will be shown through tracing and expanding McGuire's examination of the Temple themes from movement II in *The Apostles* and the themes in *The Kingdom's* Prelude.

Motifs that Transform

The Temple Singers' theme from *The Apostles* returns throughout movement II of *The Kingdom*. The theme was originally intoned by the Temple Watchers as they greeted the dawn.

Ex. 8.2: Comparison of Temple themes, from *The Apostles* (movement I) and *The Kingdom* (movement II)

Theme as originally presented in *The Apostles*



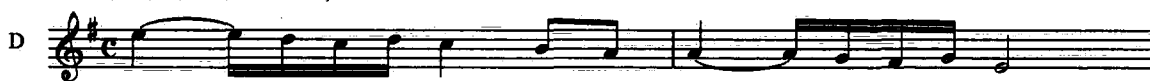
Presentation 1: *The Kingdom*, movement II, bars 4-5



Presentation 2: movement II, bars 9-10



Presentation 3: movement II, bars 17-18



Presentation 4: movement II, bars 30-31



In the first movement of *The Apostles*, this theme (A, in Ex. 6.7, which Jaeger titled ‘Pastoral’) was heard continuously in the section devoted to the Morning Psalm and Sunrise. When presented for the first time in *The Kingdom*’s second movement (B), the theme matches the statement presented initially by the Temple Watchers’ statement A. With each subsequent repetition in *The Kingdom*, the theme is slightly altered. The second occurrence of the theme (C) has an added ending, which changes the shape of the melisma: instead of circling around a central note, the last four semiquavers of this version rise to a new one. The third statement (D) also changes the shape of the second melisma, this time stalling on A instead of falling to G, causing an abrupt harmonic shift: the theme ends on a different scale degree, allowing for modulation if necessary. The final presentation (E) sharply cuts the theme (cutting it down to just the first bar and then repeating it) before moving on new material.

McGuire points out that like some of the themes from *The Apostles*, a number from *The Kingdom* are not periodic and thus rely on other elements of the musical fabric for completion, in line with Wagner’s methodology.⁵⁷ As Example 6.8 shows, the first presentation of the Temple Singers’ theme is laced into another smaller group of themes.

Ex. 8.3: First Presentation of Temple Singers’ theme, *The Kingdom*, movement II, Fig. 56



The group as a whole is made separate from what follows by its spinning down to a sustained pitch at the end. However, the approach to the individual motif is one of rhythmic elision. When this theme appears in *The Kingdom*, it is often accompanied by this group. Elgar’s alterations of the Temple theme is one example of how material from *The Apostles* was developed into *The Kingdom*. *The Kingdom* employs it for both scenery and foreshadowing of the later miracle, proving once again the transcendence of the Old Testament world.

⁵⁷ McGuire (2002) p. 250

Elgar's Prelude to *The Kingdom* contains the most concentrated amount of themes from *The Apostles*, and is the template for how he would show his characters growing beyond the world of the earlier oratorio. It is not at all surprising that the Prelude should be the first point Elgar had of reminding the audience what had taken place and also providing the opportunity to foreshadow what will happen later on. It also provided Elgar with the opportunity to discard those themes he would not take forward into the new oratorio and make it clear to the audience which themes would be important. The form of *The Kingdom's* Prelude differs highly from Elgar's three previous opening oratorio movements. It avoids both the pronounced cyclical nature of the opening gestures in these oratorios and incorporates some local development of motifs. Such development includes not only their repetition and re-orchestration, but also a certain amount of motivic mixture. While *The Kingdom's* Prelude is not outwardly the most unified of Elgar's Preludes, it is the most successful in terms of its Wagnerism for it accomplishes two tasks: the separation of *The Kingdom* from *The Apostles* (by advancing Peter as the new leader) and through the presentation of structurally important new motifs, foreshadowing the important plot developments to come in the new oratorio. You cannot help but think that perhaps Wagner would have approved.

Elgar presents the Prelude in a two-part form. The first part (bars 1-71) is a large-scale introduction and link to *The Apostles*. It presents a series of six themes, five from *The Apostles*, thus providing the audience with a microcosm of that oratorio's most important events. Table 1 provides a list of the theme names and their locations in the first part of the Prelude.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Motifs from *The Apostles* are indicated in **BOLD**

Table 1: Presentation of themes in Part I of the Prelude

FIG.	BARS	TIME SIG	THEMES USED
[0]	1-11	4/4	Gospel/Preachers
1	12-19		Gospel
	20-24		Peter
2	25-33		Questioning
3	33-36	2/2	Christ's Loneliness
	37-57		Paraphrase of Women's Chorus
4	47-58		Transitional passage
5	58-71		Peter in augmentation
	[67-71]		Preachers in augmentation

McGuire makes the valid point that each of these themes also revolves around Peter and his actions in the earlier oratorio, as he becomes symbolic of all the Apostles.⁵⁹ The ‘Gospel’ and ‘Preachers’ themes were heard when the Apostles were called to ministry in movement I. ‘Questioning’ occurred when Peter denied knowing Christ to the servants. The section also incorporates a paraphrase of the soprano and alto narrative chorus from *The Apostles*’ fourth movement, which described how Peter wept after betraying Christ. On theme is exclusive to Christ’s feelings (‘Christ’s Loneliness’). However, it is used to underscore the Apostles’ betrayal of Christ during his arrest and crucifixion. In this way, Elgar emphasises the grand subject of the epic: by concentrating on themes associated with the Apostles’ experience, he shifts the focus away from Christ and places it fully upon the Apostles themselves.

However, this part of the Prelude is only an introduction. It cannot stand by itself, as it begins in Eb and ends on Ab (as V of Db, the opening key of the next part). Nevertheless, none of the themes reappear, so there is no sense of convincing closure.

⁵⁹ McGuire (2002) p. 256

The 'Preachers' motif does recapitulate, but its augmentation and the slowing of the harmonic rhythm do not provide a sense of finality, because in performance it is not always easy to see how the motifs are the same. The sense of conclusion for this section comes from the second part, which Elgar used to extend the musical idea beyond reminiscence into a full-scale Wagnerian foreshadowing of events within *The Kingdom*, cast into a rough A B C (figs. 6-15; 72-174). Each of these sections can be further subdivided as all of the themes used in the second section are new. It begins in Db and moves through a variety of modulations until finally returning to Eb and C for the close. The Prelude as a whole does not convincingly end in Eb (where the movement began), nor can it be separated from the first movement, as it spills right over the bar line to the first choral statement, showing that Elgar had gone well beyond the music-by-numbers approach of *The Light of Life*.⁶⁰ Table 2 provides an outline of the various sections of this part.

⁶⁰ This is a device Elgar had not used since *The Light of Life*. The opening movements to both *Gerontius* and *The Apostles* were written to be detached from their parent-works. It is clear from the full score that *The Kingdom's* Prelude was not conceived as detachable. It contains no indication where to end in a concert performance. However, it was eventually recorded separately by Elgar in 1933 and arranged as an organ piece by Herbert Brewer. See Moore (1974) p. 194 and Kent (1993) p. 221

Table 2: Themes and Divisions in Part 2 of the Prelude

FIG.	BARS	SECTION	SUBSECTION	TIME SIG	THEMES
6	72-78	A	a	4/4	New faith
7	79-87		b		Pretence
8	88-95		a		New faith
9	96-99		b		Pretence
	100-101	Transition			Contrition
10	102-113				The Real Presence
11	114-121	B	c	3/4	No. 12
	122-129		d		[No name]
12	130-137		c		No. 12
	137-144		e		No. 13 (Cadential)
13	145-148	C	a		New Faith
	149-152		c		No. 12
14	153-157		a		New Faith
15	158-166		e		No. 13 (Cadential)
	167-170		d		[No name]
	171-174				Codetta

Section A is comprised of two smaller subsections (a and b). Each subsection contains only one theme.⁶¹ The two themes work well together, since the first statement of (a) cadences in Bb minor and (b) begins in that key before returning to Db. The slowing of harmonic rhythm (usual in Elgar’s Prelude themes, as he does the same thing in *Gerontius* and *The Apostles*) does not occur here and the themes mould fluidly into each other, rather than being held separate from one another.

⁶¹ These themes were called ‘New Faith’ and ‘Pretence’ by Jaeger (1906) p. 6

The section between bars 100-113 acts as a transition. While this area contains two small themes of its own, the function of this passage is modulatory: the key moves to Eb and the motifs are not heard again in the Prelude. The transition is completed by a shift into 3/4 (at bar 114), the opening of section B. Elgar constructed B out of three themes, called (c), (d) and (e).⁶² The (c) theme brackets the (d) theme, and each has a different accompaniment: Elgar scored both iterations of (c) for strings and woodwinds, while (d), he increased the orchestration to a full texture including brass, percussion and harp.

Ex. 8.4: Two unnamed themes from the Prelude, *The Kingdom*, Part 2, section B

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system, labeled 'Theme 'c'', shows a melody in the treble clef and a bass line in the bass clef. The second system, labeled 'Theme 'd'', shows a more complex texture with multiple voices in both staves. The third system shows Theme 'c' returning, with the bass line continuing from the previous system. The key signature is three flats (Eb major) and the time signature is 3/4.

The bass line of (c) moves in stepwise motion, while (d) is accompanied by a syncopated figure of a quaver followed by two crotchets and a final quaver in each bar in the strings. These two themes blend into each other at the same time as the two themes from the A section: without any slowing of rhythm, they meld together at bar 122 and again, back to the (c) theme at bar 130. The second presentation of the (c) theme (only partially shown in the example) extends to the (e) theme, a cadential figure that provides a moment of

⁶² These themes show another difference between the Prelude to *The Kingdom* and the opening gestures of *The Apostles* and *Gerontius*: Jaeger gave all his Prelude themes descriptive names. Themes (c) and (e) are given only numbers – his examples 12 and 13 respectively. No. 13 is loosely termed a ‘cadential figure’. And the (d) theme is not noted at all. Jaeger (1906) p. 7

rhythmic pause before Fig. 13 – but this is the first time that such a rhythmic cessation has been heard in thirty bars of music: another sign that Elgar was moving away from the previous opening movement models he used in *The Light of Life*, *Gerontius* and *The Apostles*. The C section begins at Fig. 13. It incorporates elements of both A and B telescoped into a smaller area. It combines themes from both sections in the time signature of the second (3/4), while fragmenting them.

Ex. 8.5: End of the Prelude, *The Kingdom*, Part 2, section C, Figs. 13-15: Mixture of various themes

The musical score consists of four systems of piano music, each with a treble and bass staff. The first system (Figs. 13-15) shows Theme (a) in the treble and Theme (c) in the bass. The second system (Figs. 16-17) shows Theme (a) in the treble and Theme (e) in the bass. The third system (Figs. 18-19) shows Theme (a) in the treble and Theme (d) in the bass. The fourth system (Figs. 20-21) shows Theme (a) in the treble and Theme (d) in the bass. The score is in 3/4 time and D major.

The order of themes in the last section of the Prelude is a, c, a, e, d and whilst the structure of the (a) theme is altered slightly to make it fit with the 3/4 time signature, but the character of the theme is unmistakeable. The themes require each other for completion, keeping with the Wagnerian conception of leitmotif. Each of these five theme-fragments reaches a point of commonality with the others. They are discerned

from one another by quickly shifting orchestrations and registers. Theme (a) begins with winds, seconds violins, violas, cellos and basses, and theme (c) enters with the addition of the violins in a much higher register. The second presentation of (a) returns to the original octave and the final repetition of (d) occurs over a decrescendo, carried on through (e) to the final cadence of the Prelude.

Thus, while the second part of the Prelude contains elements of a cyclical nature, there is no convincing return. The large-scale structure of the Prelude is made up of two discrete parts: the opening section which refers to the narrative of *The Apostles* (specifically focusing in Peter's experience in that oratorio), and the closing section, which presents new material, setting the scene for what will come. The first section follows the older model of Elgar's opening gestures by presenting a series of discrete themes, distinguished from each other by orchestration and rhythmic separation, in much the same way that motifs were distinguished in *The Light of Life*. In a way, this movement becomes a microcosm of all dramatic motion in *The Kingdom*: a large part that refers to *The Apostles* is followed by a transition to new material. The two parts of the Prelude cannot exist without the other. The first needs the second to return to the key of the opening, and the second needs the first to modulate it to its starting point.

4.7: Conclusion

McGuire's analysis has shown that in *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*, Elgar's motifs behave much more like Dahlhaus' conception of music-drama leitmotifs than they had in *The Light of Life*. Motifs permeate *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom* are not entirely periodic and become the primary source of unification. On the most basic level are the representative motives that identify people and things within the oratorio, using them in groups to portray landscape and provide a background for Elgar's didactic contrasts instead of representing characters. Such representations are at the heart of Jaeger's method of analysis and these motives make up an important part of the oratorio – but not the most important. Conceiving most themes as simple representations, Jaeger often missed their greater significance. For instance, his 'Son of God' is a theme Elgar used to express certain aspects of miracle and power within the narrative, rather than a strict

representation of Christ. Elgar used other motifs for structural unification. Magdalene's Mercy theme is termed 'Forgiveness' by Jaeger, probably because Christ sings it to Magdalene when He forgives her sins at the end of the third movement, yet Jaeger does not mention any of the theme's unifying properties.⁶³ In spite of Elgar's occasional reticence on the matter, the themes in *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom* are Wagnerian, in the sense that they portray a series of extra-musical events and unify both works, particularly through the final climax culminating in the union of 'Prayer' and 'The Spirit of the Lord' in *The Apostles*. The importance of motifs to Elgar cannot be denied within *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*. Their deliberate and skilful use throughout is anything but intuitive, contrary to Elgar's claims that they came to him fully formed and that he did not perceive them as inter-linked motifs until someone pointed out the link to him.

A comparison of Elgar's and Wagner's leitmotif technique such as this is always going to raise questions of authenticity. However, what I have achieved in this chapter is to demonstrate Elgar's learning process across some twenty years. Wagner's leitmotivic shadow across all of Elgar's oratorio and cantata scores is unmistakable, but by breaking down how each composer used and developed leitmotifs, perhaps brings them closer together than we had previously thought.

As I have shown, at the start of Elgar's real musical career, there is a definite element of Wagnerian quotation. Whether it was a conscious working is insignificant – the quotations are audible and conspicuous. However, as time passed and Elgar studied Wagner's technique more thoroughly, his attempts became increasingly stronger. This all results in *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom* being the closest Elgar came to creating a music drama for the English, and it is perhaps this mix of Germanic technique presented within an English format that makes it work so well. The merit of both works lies in the fact that everything from the music language to the orchestration is Elgarian.⁶⁴ We no longer hear Wagner lurking in the texture because Elgar had assimilated everything

⁶³ Jaeger (1903) p. 27

⁶⁴ The question of what makes Elgar's music sound 'Elgarian' is an interesting one, but all I mean here is that by the time Elgar had completed *The Apostles*, there were certain characteristics in his compositional arsenal that were peculiar to him – his use of chords without a root in sequence, his persistent doubling of the third, his method of motif manipulation, his chameleon-like scoring (which is dealt with in Chapter VI) where some instruments are always doubled together so as to produce a distinct melding of voices etc etc. The list is endless. But when added together, all of these qualities lend a work a characteristic and individual musical voice, and that voice is Elgar's.

Wagner had to offer, had made his mistakes, had practiced and what resulted were two works that transcend the expectations of nineteenth-century oratorio and the English Musical Renaissance. Whilst Vaughan Williams and Holst turned to folk song to find their musical voice, Elgar found his by turning to Germany. Ironical really.

CHAPTER V: ELGAR'S USE OF CHROMATIC HARMONY

5.0: Introduction

Of the various narratives we relate about the history of Western tonal music, two are especially familiar: in the realm of culture, the story of the development of the Teutonic canon to a position of ascendancy in Europe by the late nineteenth century; and in the realm of musical language, the story of the chromaticisation of this music from the time of Corelli, Handel, and Bach, to that of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, to that of Liszt and Wagner, and finally to that of Strauss, Debussy, Schoenberg...and Elgar. Even if we tend to grant less authority to such narratives than we used to, the place of Elgar in the European canon of art music of his time is nevertheless clear. He is an English composer of the turn of the twentieth century, his music steeped in both the diatonicism of Handel and Wesley and the chromatic harmony of Wagner and Strauss. Culturally, he is a post-Wagnerian tonal composer, one whose principal concert works were written with the explicit intent of gaining the power and prestige—both for himself and for England—of admission into what James Hepokoski has called ‘the now reified, culturally politicised, and largely Germanic canon.’⁶⁵ Musically, he is, to be sure, an English composer, and thus somewhat removed from the centres of power; but he is one who understood that a central feature—possibly *the* central feature—of the advanced, German music of his time was chromaticism. That his music was championed by the likes of Richard Strauss and Hans Richter early in the twentieth century, is in no small part due to his extraordinary capacity for making chromatic writing his own - his chromatic usage is as technically adept as that of his German peers, and it is expressive and communicative in a way that is uniquely his. He was a composer who, like his contemporary Germanic models, had an uncanny knack for making the most transcendental diatonicism and the most daring chromaticism work together beautifully in the same piece.

But how did he do it? Why is his use of chromatic harmony and chromatic tonal relations so powerful? There is a way, of course, in which we all know, and have known for years, how chromaticism works for Elgar. For him, the chromatic is simply that

⁶⁵ James Hepokoski, ‘Elgar,’ in *The Nineteenth-Century Symphony* (New York: Schirmer, 1997) p. 327.

which is marked against, and thus that which is opposed expressively, to the diatonic. When Jerrold Northrop Moore, in his study of Elgar's life and works, writes, in an interpretation of *The Black Knight*, that '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,' or, in his description of some of the music in Part II of *The Dream of Gerontius*, that 'In the middle of this chromatic intensity the Angel of the Agony found a moment of diatonic comfort,' we know instinctively what he means, and we know that he is right.⁶⁶ This is precisely the way that the music works. The same could be said, in many respects, of *Parsifal*. But wait. Byron Adams, quoting some critical writing on *Gerontius* by W. J. Turner, warns us against 'a reductive binary opposition between diatonic and chromatic that reflected the received opinion of many male British musicians and critics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries': that diatonicism is upright, healthy, Protestant, and masculine, chromaticism decadent, morbid, Catholic, and effeminate.⁶⁷ Of Elgar's working and composing in a culture in which such a polarising of diatonic and chromatic operated only slightly below the surface there can be little doubt. So there was a problem with his composing when he did, and in England. Consider the wild emotional and creative contradiction that such polarising of musical styles must have set up for him. In order to gain something that he deeply desired in the core of his being—admission into the highest international circle of composers, and public recognition of the value and originality of his art—he had to write music of the sort that could most compromise his own masculinity and the respect that he could hope to command in his own country.

This inner conflict plays itself out in absorbingly interesting ways over the course of his creative career. One way in which it makes itself manifest is that, instead of reserving chromaticism for representation of evil, doubt, fear, and terror, Elgar instead foregrounds it in some of his most upright, optimistic, masculine, proud music, thereby going directly against the grain of precisely the reductive binary opposition noted by Adams. For example, consider the following passage from *Pomp and Circumstance*

⁶⁶ Moore (1984) p. 163, 312.

⁶⁷ Byron Adams, *Elgar's Late Oratorios: Roman Catholicism, Decadence, and the Wagnerian Dialectic of Shame and Grace*, in *The Elgar Companion*. Edited by Daniel Grimley & Julian Rushton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) p. 88.

March No. 1, Elgar's most famous work, and one that has indubitably earned its stripes, at least in the culture in which he composed, as energetic, masculine, and patriotic.

Ex. 1.0: Edward Elgar, *Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1*, bars 26-34

26

mf *animato.* *molto cresc.* *sf*

30

80

Or, consider his setting of the words 'To give unto them that mourn a garland for ashes' in the Prologue to *The Apostles*.

Ex. 1.1: Edward Elgar, *The Apostles*, Fig. 5

SA *p* 5 *poco animato dolce e legato* *pp* *poco*

To give un-to them that mourn a garland for ash - es the oil of joy for mourning, the

5

pp *poco animato*

con Ped.

This music is nothing if not righteous, healthy and uplifting; perhaps even Protestant. And so it is not just the simple opposition diatonic/chromatic that enables us to understand and interpret these passages. If it were, we would be compelled to link them with darkness, fear, and doubt. It is rather the diatonic/chromatic dialectic coupled intimately with many other utterly essential aspects of the music: mode, tempo, instrumentation, dynamics, melodic contour and character and harmonic underpinnings.

Understanding the import of these critical features of the music helps us to realise that the chromatic lines and harmonic progressions in *Pomp and Circumstance* No. 1 make its swaggering pride even more pronounced, and that the chromatic undercurrent in the passage from *The Apostles* affords it a soothing, yet intense, quality that a purely diatonic version of the same music would not have.

But yet again, how did he do it? But this time, how did he do it, in a compositional way? It is here that another narrative becomes relevant to our task—a narrative less well-known and even at times arcane: that of the history of the theory of chromaticism in tonal music. The history of music theory can help in two ways. Firstly, much of the *expressive* force of Elgar's music is tied up with chromaticism, and secondly, because music theory has, since around the time that Elgar began his compositional career, developed a number of effective tools for analysing chromatic music. Of course, a central task of harmonic theory, going back however far in time one wants to go—back to Riemann, back to Rameau, back to times when harmonic theory was not even called harmonic theory (Vicentino, or even further)—has been to deal with chromaticism. To tell the history of the theory of chromaticism would entail in no small way the telling of the history of Western harmonic theory, an exercise that is inappropriate here. However, the various theories of chromaticism, as they have developed in the past 125 years or so, can illuminate Elgar's music in ways that musicologists can ill afford to ignore.

5.1: Modern Chromatic Theory

A quick overview of our situation clarifies the problem. The modern project of chromatic theory properly begins in the United States, with two works of the late 1970's: Robert Bailey's essay 'The Structure of the *Ring* and Its Evolution' in 1977, and Gregory Proctor's dissertation, 'Technical Bases of Nineteenth-Century Tonality,' in 1978.⁶⁸ These two works, both fostered by a desire to understand underexplicated aspects of chromaticism in nineteenth-century music, opened the gates to a flood of studies, on topics ranging from Schenker's treatment of chromaticism, to neo-Lorenzian formal and

⁶⁸ Robert Bailey, 'The Structure of the *Ring* and Its Evolution,' *19th-Century Music* 1/1 (1977), pp. 48-61; Gregory Proctor, 'Technical Bases of Nineteenth-Century Chromatic Tonality,' Ph. D. dissertation (Princeton University, 1978)

tonal analysis, to studies of music employing the octatonic and hexatonic collections, to neo-Riemannian theory, transformational theory, the notion of tonal pitch space, and in general to all sorts of analytical and interpretive work on chromatic music from the late eighteenth century to the early twentieth. As it turns out though, most of this recent Anglo-American chromatic theory is deeply indebted to the work of four German theorists, working from roughly 1880 to 1935: Hugo Riemann (1849-1919), Heinrich Schenker (1868-1935), Ernst Kurth (1886-1946), and Alfred Lorenz (1868-1939).⁶⁹ Virtually all the central ideas of the modern theories appear, at least *in nuce*, in the work of these earlier German writers. The net result of all this work, both older German and newer Anglo-American, has been a deeper musical and hermeneutic understanding of the music of a number of composers, with whose music the theoretical work has intersected: Wagner, to be sure, but also Schubert, Liszt, Bruckner, Wolf, Mahler, Strauss, and Franck, to name a few. But one composer with whose music the work has not intersected is Elgar: the name Elgar is not so much as mentioned in any sources on the theory of chromaticism.

The task then, is clear: to bring these rich resources into contact with a music whose tonal language shares so much with that of the Wagnerian and post-Wagnerian Germanic *lingua franca* of the turn of the twentieth century. The resultant chapter therefore aims to distil available analytical approaches to chromaticism into two techniques, each employing the insights of a particular theorist or theorists. To illustrate both areas, rather than citing the theorists' examples from the canonical, mostly German repertoire, I will adduce examples from Elgar's music, which employ precisely the same techniques. The first technique involves Elgar's usage of chromaticism at the foreground and middleground levels—that is, from individual harmonies to passages of a few dozen

⁶⁹ The literature by and about these four theorists would fill volumes. For present purposes, the primary sources are: Hugo Riemann, *Skizze einer neuen Methode der Harmonielehre* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1880); idem., *Harmony Simplified* [*Vereinfachte Harmonie, oder die Lehre von der tonalen Funktionen der Akkorde*, 1893], trans. anonymous (London: Augener, 1896); Heinrich Schenker, *Harmony* [*Harmonielehre*, 1906], trans. Elizabeth Borghese, ed. Oswald Jonas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954); idem., *The Masterwork in Music: A Yearbook* [*Das Meisterwerk in der Musik: Ein Jahrbuch*, 3 vols., 1925, 1926, 1930], ed. William Drabkin, trans. Ian Bent et al., 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994–1997); idem., *Free Composition* [*Der freie Satz*, 1935], ed. and trans. Ernst Oster (New York: Longman, 1979); Ernst Kurth, *Romantische Harmonik und ihre Krise in Wagners Tristan* (Bern: Haupt, 1920; reprint Hildesheim: Olms, 1975); Alfred Lorenz, *Das Geheimnis der Form bei Richard Wagner*, 4 vols., (Tutzing: Schneider, 1924-33; reprinted 1966).

measures. For this, I will take a single, core idea from a relevant theoretical work or works, and show how it is central to Elgar's expressive use of chromaticism. The second technique deals with chromaticism at more global levels and here I will draw examples exclusively from *The Apostles*, the largest compositional project of Elgar's career.

Technique 1) is simply the usage of the Tristan, or half-diminished seventh chord, which Ernst Kurth ably demonstrated to be absolutely crucial to Wagner's musical language in *Tristan*, and which is surprisingly ubiquitous in the music of Elgar.

Technique 2) involves the control of global tonal structure by means of various patternings of keys, often in a manner that interprets keys as players in a tonal narrative. Analytical work of this sort almost always combines associative keys with clear long-range tonal patterning. Examples include Lorenz's volumes on Wagner's music dramas, Bailey's work on the *Ring*, David Lewin's and Fred Lerdahl's on *Parsifal*, and Hepokoski's on a scene from Verdi's *Falstaff* and on Elgar's First Symphony.⁷⁰

Two final observations are necessary before we begin to bring chromatic theory and Elgar's music into creative contact. First, any references to 'chromatic theory' by no means suggest that there exists, either now or at any time in the past, any single, monolithic theory of chromaticism in tonal music. The analytical approaches represented by the two techniques noted here developed rather haphazardly and independently of one another, over a hundred years or more. Some of them, such as those of Schenker and Rosen, were not conceived with the massive dramatic and instrumental works of the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in mind. Others, such as Schenkerian and neo-Riemannian theory, at times make incompatible claims about the music to which they are applied. And so forth: 'chromatic theory,' as invoked here with respect to Elgar's music, constitutes less a unified theory than a useful arsenal of tools to approach chromatic tonal music.

⁷⁰ David Lewin, 'Amfortas's Prayer to Titurel and the Role of D in *Parsifal*: The Tonal Spaces of the Drama and the Enharmonic Cb/B,' *19th-Century Music* 7/3 (1984), pp. 336-49; Fred Lerdahl, *Tonal Pitch Space* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 119-38, 298-302; James Hepokoski, *Giuseppe Verdi: Falstaff* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) pp. 91-109; idem., 'Elgar,' pp. 329-36.

5.2: Elgar and the Tristan Chord

Of all the insights that our theorists have to offer regarding surface harmony in chromatic tonal music—chord spelling, harmonic progression, local modulation—just one will be chosen: Ernst Kurth's observation, in *Romantische Harmonik und ihre Krise in Wagner's Tristan*, that the Tristan chord (or the half-diminished seventh) is absolutely central to Wagner's opera in particular, and to what Kurth called the 'intensive alteration style' in general.⁷¹ Alfred Lorenz tagged the same chord as a focal harmonic and symbolic entity, the *mystische Akkord*, in *Parsifal*, and it is but a small leap to the music of Elgar, which, like that of the Wagnerian models, is replete with occurrences of the chord.⁷² Kurth's approach to the chord, and to all Romantic harmony, is dictated by his thoroughgoing psychological point of view: music is not merely an acoustical phenomenon, but a dynamic, psychological one, a play of unconscious, psychic energies that press forward in melodies and contrapuntal lines, and that sometimes coalesce into chords. For Kurth, the members of a chord are not inherently stable, but bristling with potential energy. In Romantic harmony, as he conceives it, even ostensibly stable major and minor triads are invested with linear-melodic tensions, and are therefore not really stable at all. The site in the nineteenth-century repertoire at which this principle reaches its apogée is, not surprisingly, the Tristan chord, of which, at least in the form in which it first occurs in the *Tristan* Prelude, the individual members are each charged with a powerful urge for melodic resolution.⁷³ Kurth devotes over forty pages at the beginning of *Romantische Harmonik* to the Tristan chord, differentiating carefully between what he calls 'energetic' instantiations of it (occurrences in which the chord spelling contains

⁷¹ Kurth (1920) pp. 44-87. For a recent view of the half-diminished seventh chord, influenced by neo-Riemannian theory, see Richard Bass, 'Half-Diminished Functions and Transformations in Late Romantic Music,' *Music Theory Spectrum* 23/1 (2001) pp. 41-60.

⁷² Lorenz (1966) vol. 4, pp. 29-45. Lorenz laboriously tracks appearances of the chord throughout the music drama.

⁷³ The name 'Tristan chord' has often been used for any four-note chord made up of a minor 3rd, a diminished 5th and a minor 7th, reckoned upward from the lowest note; a generic term sometimes used for this chord is the half-diminished seventh chord. Apart from its dramatic importance, as a single vertical sonority which carries all the qualities of a leitmotif, the Tristan chord has been viewed (by Kurth and others) as the basis of a 'crisis' in Romantic harmony. For although it can be explained in ordinary functional harmony as an augmented French 6th F/B/G sharp/A with the G sharp as a long appoggiatura to the *a*, or alternatively as an added 6th chord in first inversion with chromatic alterations (e.g. D/F/A + B, inverted to F/A/B/D with lowered 3rd and raised 6th = F/Ab/B/G sharp), it seems to have its own harmonic significance in this work and later operas of Wagner especially *Parsifal*.

contradictory urges for melodic resolution and thus cannot be analysed as a functional chord spelled in diatonically stacked thirds in some key) and ‘sensuous’ instantiations of it (occurrences in which the chord spelling *is* that of a diatonic seventh chord, and in which, therefore, the urges toward resolution in the individual notes of the chord tend toward a single chord).⁷⁴ The very first statement of the chord in *Tristan*, of course, is of the energetic type, while the occurrence at the climax in bb. 81-2 of the Prelude is of the sensuous type—although it changes into a energetic type again at b. 83.

1.2: Richard Wagner, Opening of the Prelude to *Tristan und Isolde*

Lento e languido



An inherent tension in Kurth’s understanding of the Tristan chord is in fact that, even though he considers its sensuous versions to be more stable than its energetic versions, his idea that even triads are full of linear energy suggests that *any* half-diminished seventh is surging with potential energy. That energy is surely, according to Kurth, a primary source of the wistful, yearning quality, and the symbolic power, that accrues to the chord, whether sensuous or energetic, through Wagner’s music dramas.

Describing Wagner’s use of the chord in the *Tristan* Prelude, Kurth writes, ‘Its dominating position not only is implied by frequent occurrence, which discharges its basic permeating character over the entire symphonic music of the piece, but also it represents the decisive point in the Prelude’s architectural design.’⁷⁵ Frequency, permeation, rhetorical emphasis and occurrence at important nodes of musical design: these are precisely the reasons for choosing the half-diminished seventh chord, in and of itself, as the first crucial *locus* in bringing about an intersection of chromatic theory and Elgar’s chromatic writing. Elgar uses the chord tellingly hundreds of times in purely

⁷⁴ See Allen Rothfarb’s useful exposition of Kurth’s sensuous/energetic distinction in *Ernst Kurth as Theorist and Analyst* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988) pp. 113-15, 132-33, 152-89.

⁷⁵ Kurth (1920) p. 63. Translation from Robert Bailey, *Richard Wagner: Prelude and Transfiguration from Tristan und Isolde* (New York: Norton, 1985) p. 193.

diatonic contexts, a few examples of which we will turn to later. But it demands attention especially in chromatic usages—usages that resonate with *Tristan*, *Götterdämmerung*, and *Parsifal*, and that somehow import into Elgar's music a weighty history from those works. Naturally, the two composers use the chord differently. The energetic/sensuous distinction is considerably less relevant to Elgar's music than to Wagner's: 'energetic' examples occur with considerable frequency in Wagner's music, at least from *Tristan* on, but somewhat more rarely in Elgar's. Elgar's way of intensifying the chord was not so much to use non-diatonic instances of it, as Wagner did in the opening measures of *Tristan*, but to use the number of Tristan chords in succession—something that Wagner rarely did. Elgar's usage may seem conservative by comparison with Wagner's, but the chord permeates his work at least as much as it does his predecessor's, and his skill at using it to maximum expressive effect shows that he learned his Wagnerian lesson well.

An early and characteristic example of Elgar's use of half-diminished sevenths occurs in the opening of the first movement of the *Organ Sonata*.

Ex. 1.3: Edward Elgar, *Organ Sonata*, Opening

Allegro maestoso.

Manual. *ff* *risoluto*

Pedal.

7 *ten.*

Here there are three such chords and they are all of the 'sensuous' variety: a diatonic one built on F# (occurring two times, in two different inversions, in bb. 6-7 and 8), and two

others involving chromatic notes—one on C# (in b. 5), and one on A (spelled enharmonically as A-C-D#-G, in b. 6). Elgar achieves maximum melodic tension by placing the seventh in the top voice in each case, always resolving it by step downward. Both diatonic half-diminished sevenths resolve to I^6 , accentuating his tendency to resolve vii^7 's conventionally to the tonic in the major mode.⁷⁶ Of the chromatic half-diminished seventh chords, the vii^7/V (b. 5) resolves to V^7/V before resolving to V, and the 'energetic' chord on the second beat of b. 6, surely the most poignant of them all, resolves to a diminished seventh, thereby rendering the half-diminished seventh more dissonant than its resolution. These chords, taken together, lend a particularly Elgarian cast to the use of the chord in this way.

Given the linear-harmonic tensions embodied in each Tristan chord, Elgar sometimes achieves a remarkable effect by lining them up in succession, without resolution. The simplest progression of this sort is exemplified by the third and fourth measures of the opening movement of the Second Symphony.

Ex. 1.4: Edward Elgar, Second Symphony, Opening



Here the $vii\ 4-3/V$ in Eb major progresses not to the expected I^6 , but to another half-diminished seventh, which soon leads to a brief tonicisation of the subdominant. Crucial to the effect is the behaviour of the leading note in the $vii\ 4/3$, which slides down to Db rather than resolving up to Eb. However, this move has a history: it dates back to the

⁷⁶ In the minor mode, where the half-diminished seventh is common as ii^7 , he frequently makes the resolution to some form of I, rather than to V—as in the theme of the Enigma Variations, bb. 2, 3, 4, and 6. It should be mentioned here that whilst Elgar is obviously adopting the Tristan chord in a conscious manner, his treatment of the chord is anything but Wagnerian. What is interesting about Wagner's Tristan chord is that it appears unexpectedly and never resolves the way you expect, which is almost exactly the opposite of what Elgar has achieved in the musical example above. However, the fact that he has used Tristan chords at all is interesting, even if his use of them is unconventional and not adhering to Wagner's own example.

descending, chromatic lament bass of the seventeenth century, 8 - #7 - b7 - 6 - b6 - 5. Surely some of the expressive resonance of this move, both in the seventeenth century and 400 years later, arises from the fact that the leading note (#7), instead of following its natural inclination and resolving up, presses immediately down to the b7. In the passage from the Second Symphony, this motion occurs not in the bass, but in an inner voice. Ex. 1.4c illustrates how this explanation works, in the 'tenor' voice, in the symphony. Robert Hatten has called attention to the #7 - b7 - 6 effect in the music of Beethoven, dubbing the move from #7 to b7 the 'yielding' effect; the *locus classicus* is the bass F# - Fn - E in the opening phrase of the second movement of the Piano Sonata in E-Flat Major, Op. 7 (there, of course, the harmonies are V6-5/V - V 4-2 - I6). What makes this inner-voice 'yielding' progression so Elgarian in the Second Symphony is precisely the move from one half-diminished seventh, which presses strongly toward I⁶, to another, which frustrates this desired motion, while at the same time retaining the tensile, half-diminished sound. We can gain a sense of what the second half-diminished chord accomplishes expressively simply by imagining the harmony on the downbeat of b. 4 to be a tonic in first inversion. (Indeed, the passage soon modulates to Ab major, to which the music of b. 3 is transposed in b. 6, but the first beat of the following measure has not a half-diminished seventh, as in b. 4, but the expected I6 in Ab.)

Elgar achieves a related effect at the massive structural cadence at the end of the final movement of the Violin Concerto. Here he hammers home eight of these half-diminished sevenths successively, with each of the first three pairs producing precisely the same progression as noted above in the Second Symphony (see especially Fig.. 114:3-4).

Ex. 1.5: Edward Elgar, *Violin Concerto*, Fig 114-116

The image displays three staves of musical notation from Edward Elgar's Violin Concerto.
Figure 114: The top staff is a violin melody featuring triplets and various ornaments. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment with dynamic markings *sf*, *p*, *ff*, and *strepitoso*.
Figure 115: The top staff continues the violin melody with the marking *Nobilmente*. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment with a *ff* dynamic marking.
Figure 116: The top staff continues the violin melody with an *allargando* marking. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment with dynamic markings *sf*, *allarg. f*, and *a tempo*.

The #7 – b7 motion is now in the bass, with the former occurring regularly on strong beats. The entire cadential passage, of which this extraordinary moment is but a part, screams for hermeneutic harmonic interpretation.⁷⁷ What does it mean that:

- 1) The violent 'hammering' in the orchestra actually begins at Fig.114:1, two bars before the half-diminished-seventh passage establishes the duple high-low melodic contour for

⁷⁷ By using the term 'hermeneutic' here, I am merely trying to suggest reasons some biographical reasons for the provocative harmonic tensions Elgar uses in the passage.

each pair of beats, the descending (almost complete) chromatic scale in the bass, and the predilection for half-diminished sevenths (the chords on the first and last beats of Fig. 114:1 -2 are of this quality).

2) What initially sounds like the structural melodic resolution, 5 – 4 – 3 – 2 – 1, occurs *not* in a melodic part over a supporting functional bass, as happens in thousands of other tonal pieces. Rather, picking up the chromatic downward energy of the preceding four measures, the descending scale-wise line, from the F# of Fig. 115:2, blasts out in parallel octaves in the bass, and indeed in all parts for the 5 – 4 – 3, as far as the C# at Fig. 115:5-6, whereupon the changing harmonies and a more active bass line deny the expected resolution to B, and a more conventional cadence ensues at Fig. 116.

3) Even here, the cadential preparatory chord at Fig. 115:9-10 projects more the half-diminished vii⁷ (A# - C# - E - G#) as cadential dominant than V⁷, which enters only at the last moment. Note also that this chord is already present in the two measures (just before Fig. 114) that lead into the long cadential progression, so the entire passage is bookended by the A# half-diminished seventh chord.

But what can mean? Surely, given recent discoveries of biographical evidence, it has something to do with Alice Stuart-Wortley (to whom Elgar dedicated the concerto, and to whom he consistently referred to it as 'our concerto') - with Elgar's intense feelings for her, and the utter impossibility of their ever consummating this love.⁷⁸ The half-diminished seventh, with its Kurthian urgings and incompleteness, is itself emblematic of this impossibility. The descending hammer-blows, one right after the other, seem to nail any hope of consummation into the ground. But the sudden C# timpani-roll at Fig. 115 clears the air, and what emerges is pure B-major diatonicism, both in the 'Nobilmente' solo violin part, and in the powerful, low-register parallel-octave descent. That the whole orchestra is engaged in the half-diminished-seventh hammer-blows (at Fig 114), but that the music, after being stopped in its tracks for a moment at Fig. 115, then 'splits' into the

⁷⁸ See, for example, Michael Kennedy, *The Soul Enshrined: Elgar and his Violin Concerto*, in *Edward Elgar: Music and Literature*. Edited by Raymond Monk (Scholar Press, 1993) pp. 72-82. Kennedy offers a valuable, up-to-date summary in Kennedy (1982) pp. 116-24.

solo violin's triple stops and the descending parallel octaves (also a kind of nailing into the ground, but maybe a less negative one) is surely significant: might the split signify a joint acceptance of the situation, in two different voices, even a rejoicing in that acceptance? And note that the F#, octave-doubled head-note of Fig. 115:2 picks up at exactly where the descending chromatic scale of the previous measures left off—at G (see Fig. 114:4).⁷⁹ Perhaps the loveliest touch of all is the solo violin line (at Fig. 115:2-10), the top voice of whose double stops also traces the descending Urlinie from 5, but wonderfully out of phase with the bass, and with a three-note melodic figure (up a step, then up a third, on each note of the descending Urlinie; see brackets in the example) that embroiders and comments on the resolution. The bass of the orchestra joins in for the last two of these melodic figures, accompanying the violin's line a tenth lower, the melody and bass reaching the cadence together at Fig. 116—a joint acceptance of the reality in which 'our concerto' was written?⁸⁰

The Apostles offers another instance of successive iterations of the half-diminished seventh chord. In this example, successive chords simply slide down chromatically by semitone, with slight rhythmic adjustments, and with an adjustment of the harmony to a fully diminished seventh at the end.

Ex.1.6: Edward Elgar, *The Apostles*, 'Christ's Loneliness'



Occurring early in *The Apostles*, the figure was dubbed by Elgar's friend, August Jaeger, in his published analysis of the oratorio, as 'Christ's Loneliness.' Whatever one's opinion of Jaeger—and he has come in for heavy criticism in the last few years - this leitmotivic

⁷⁹ Indeed, the bass's scalewise 5 to 1 motion continues and completes a descending scale that started diatonically back at fig 113, turned chromatic just before fig. 114, and now is diatonic again.

⁸⁰ Conversely, failing to achieve that joint acceptance because the melody does not cadence on tonic?

designation is spot on. It may be characteristically limiting and over specific, and expressed in poetic language, but it does capture the musical essence of a distinctive moment: the first event in the drama, Christ's praying all night on the mountain. Jaeger may use more flowery language than we now use, but his description of how the chords function, along with the implication of their inherent tension, suggests that he is finely tuned to their resonance: 'This is the symbol of Christ's Loneliness, a sequence of wailing chromatics, the two lower parts moving in diminished fifths. It is scored for viole and violoncelli, a conception well able to express acutest feeling—'tears from the depth of some divine despair.'⁸¹

The figure of half-diminished sevenths descending by semitone has strong influential resonances, both within Elgar's music and beyond. If we start here in *The Apostles* (in 1903), with the descending succession of half-diminished seventh chords representing suffering and, in this case, 'divine' despair, and cast our net seven years into Elgar's future, we encompass the passage, discussed just above, at Fig. 114:3–4 of the Violin Concerto (1910). This later passage embodies the same chromatically descending bass line as the 'Christ's Loneliness' motif, with the circle-of-fifths root motion in the concerto (C# – F# – B – E – A – D – G) replacing the descending-semitone root motion in the oratorio.⁸² Yet the two passages seem worlds apart. The passage in the Violin Concerto has none of the sullen piety of the oratorio, and none of the quality of decadence (in spite of the religious subject) that Bryan Adams perceives in both *The Dream of Gerontius* and *The Apostles*. If there is despair, it is purely human despair, bespeaking Elgar's often noted turn away from religion over the course of the first decade of the twentieth century, from oratorios to symphonies and concertos.

If we cast our net beyond Elgar—backwards twenty years or so to *Parsifal* (composed 1877–1882, premiered 1882) and forward exactly thirty years to Alfred

⁸¹ A. J. Jaeger, *The Apostles, by Edward Elgar, Op. 49: Book of Words, with Analytical and Descriptive Notes by A. J. Jaeger* (London: Novello, 1903), 10. Christopher Grogan sharply critiques Jaeger's analyses—especially his obsession with the naming of themes—in 'My Dear Analyst': Some Observations on Elgar's Correspondence with A. J. Jaeger regarding The Apostles Project, *Music and Letters* 72/1 (1991), 48–60. Charles Edward McGuire, in turn, critiques Grogan's work in *Elgar's Oratorios: The Creation of an Epic Narrative* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 188–91.

⁸² Note the striking effect whereby the upper melodic voice in the concerto leaps about, a tenth higher than the circle-of-fifths root motion, as though it were a bass line, while the bass descends quickly through the chromatic scale.

Lorenz's celebrated analysis of that work in 1933, we encounter what is perhaps an even more telling intertextual reference. The theme or motif that Lorenz designated as the 'Heilandsklage' was surely Elgar's model for the similar progression in *The Apostles*.⁸³

Ex.1.7: Richard Wagner, *Parsifal*, 'Heilandsklage'

The 'Heilandsklage'—a locution tantalisingly close to Jaeger's 'divine despair'—places the circle of fifths root progression in the bass, so that the second chord of each pair is *not* a half-diminished seventh, as in both Elgar examples, but a dominant seventh.

Wagner also strongly displaces the upper voices rhythmically and doubles the pace of the bass in the third measure, such that, even though we can ultimately understand that the motif is a straightforward sequence, with the bass moving by circle of fifths and articulating a half-diminished seventh sonority on alternate chords, this regularity is obscured even in the initial bar. The parallels of harmonic technique and expressive import in the three passages place Elgar firmly in the orbit of the Wagnerian and post-Wagnerian musical worlds.

For Kurth, the *locus classicus* of the half-diminished seventh in Western music is the *Tristan* chord—in Wagner's whole opera in general, and in its first-act Prelude in particular. At a critical moment in the third movement of the Second Symphony, Elgar explicitly quotes a moment near the end of the *Tristan* Prelude. After the shattering

⁸³ Lorenz (1966) vol 4., pp. 67-71. In *Parsifal* sometimes the initial chord is a half-diminished seventh, and other times it is simply a minor triad.

climax of the movement at Fig. 121:1-5, the music quickly disintegrates. Beginning at Fig. 121:6, a sliding chromatic descent, with major thirds in the upper voices, combines with an out-of-phase bass in such a way as to produce alternate augmented and major 6/4 triads.

Ex.1.8: Edward Elgar, Second Symphony, Third Movement, Fig 121

At Fig. 121:10, the progression stalls, the bass reaching as low as F#, but the alternating F# and G, as the dynamic level recedes to ppp. At Fig. 122, the bass reaches its lowest point, F natural, and, at the entrance of the two horns, reaches a moment of total stasis. The chord here, of course, is the Tristan chord, at its original pitch level from both the beginning and end of Wagner's Prelude. Indeed, the passage here almost exactly duplicates bar 102 of the *Tristan* Prelude, with two bassoons holding F and B (one octave lower than Wagner's bassoons) below, while two wind instruments above (two horns here, oboe and English horn in Wagner) hold Ab and Eb (in the Elgar as a fifth instead of a fourth, as in the opera). In the next measure, exactly as in the Prelude, the timpani (accompanied by the double basses in the Symphony) enter with a rolled G, while the melodic Eb moves down to a D.

Finally, two examples give an intriguing biographical twist to Elgar's use of the half-diminished seventh. Jerrold Northrop Moore notes that, while composing *The Dream of Gerontius*, the composer wrote on a scrap of paper a chord that he dubbed an 'appalling chord'—used in the oratorio to introduce the Angel of the Agony.

Ex. 1.9a & 1.9b: Edward Elgar, *The Dream of Gerontius*, The Angel of the Agony

Months later, he wrote to Jaeger that he only realised 'long after it was in print' that this 'appalling chord' is precisely the same chord as a chord that he had used in Part I with the text 'In Thine own agony' and another that he used at the end of the Angel of the Agony's music.⁸⁴ In the context of our discussion here, it is noteworthy that the 'appalling chord'—surely this is Elgar's most dramatic surviving reference to a particular chord in his music—is in fact a half-diminished seventh, but with a melodic appoggiatura a whole step higher. Note also that, with the exception of Example 1.8b, all the half-diminished sevenths to which the appalling chords resolve are 'sensuous'.⁸⁵ From all the above, we might surmise that Elgar had an intuition of the importance of the half-diminished seventh in his work, and that the specific features that make these particular chords appalling are 1) the appoggiatura, and 2) the 'energetic,' enharmonic spelling.

⁸⁴ Moore (1982) pp. 311–12. It is in this letter, and with respect to this chord, that Elgar made the well-known comment, 'I really do it without thought—intuitively, I mean.'

⁸⁵ As both of these examples resolve to 'sensuous' examples (the first is again a dominant 9th without the root and the second one is a classic French 6th with appoggiaturas in stepwise motion) it is interesting here to draw a comparison with what Elgar has achieved and the harmonic practices of Liszt.

The final example comes from the end of *The Music Makers* (1912), Elgar's valedictory, autobiographical work—the work which, with the Violin Concerto and the Second Symphony, he described to Alice Stuart Wortley as those in which '...I have written out my soul, I have *shewn* myself.'⁸⁶ Seven measures from the end of the F-minor work, the music comes to a dead halt in E minor, a semitone below the tonic. After a poignant silence, we hear a single, haunting, *fp*, accented half-diminished seventh on G, which at an instant turns the music back to F minor, in which we hear the chorus intone again the first line of the poem, 'We are the music makers, And we are the dreamers of dreams'—with the starkest possible orchestral accompaniment, and one last reminder of the same chord, *a cappella*, just before the final cadence.

5.3: Theories of Global Chromaticism

For Elgar, there is no larger scale than that of *The Apostles*, his longest work. Ultimately the work is tonal, like Wagner's dramatic works.⁸⁷ But many of the sections, within the oratorio are in keys chromatically related to Eb, so questions should be asked that shed light on these key relations. For example, how do theories of tonality, or theories of chromatic function within large-scale tonal pieces such as symphonies and operas, shed light on the large-scale tonal structure of *The Apostles*?

What do we need, music-theoretically speaking, to make large-scale tonal sense out of a two-hour, harmonically ambitious, post-Wagnerian, turn-of-the-century dramatic work? We need harmonic theories that can deal with extensive chromaticism, and we especially need harmonic principles that can govern the tonal relations of triads across wide spans of musical-dramatic time. By the early twentieth century, harmonic theories of chromaticism had developed sufficiently to have much to say about harmony in the works of Wagner and his contemporaries, and of composers of the following generation. Rameau, hardly a theorist of chromaticism, recognised the enharmonic capabilities of diminished-seventh and similarly unstable chords, as did later eighteenth and early nineteenth-century theorists such as Kirnberger and Reicha. Vogler reified such

⁸⁶ Quoted in Kennedy (1982) p. 4.

⁸⁷ Charles Edward McGuire, 'Elgar, Judas, and the Theology of Betrayal,' *19th-Century Music* 23/1 (2000), 258.

capabilities in his concept of *Mehrdeutigkeit*, and his student Gottfried Weber put them to productive, if obsessive, use in his famous analysis of the slow introduction to Mozart's Quartet in C Major, K. 465. Weber also contributed the first exhaustive chart of key relations—relations that had been theoretically possible since Heinichen's circle of fifths in 1711, but in Weber's time were beginning to be worked out in real pieces. Weber's was the first of many such maps of tonal relations conceived spatially - the *Tonnetze* of Oettingen and Riemann, Schoenberg's 'Chart of the Regions,' and Fred Lerdahl's more recent maps of tonal space all harken back to Weber. In the mid-nineteenth century Carl Weitzmann published treatises on the symmetrical diminished seventh and augmented sixth chords, in an attempt to come to grips with the harmonic practice of Liszt; and the essentially unknown Heinrich Joseph Vincent argued for the replacement of diatonic fundamental bass theory (like that of Sechter) with a legitimately chromatic theory. Picking up threads from both Weber and Oettingen, Riemann developed theories of harmonic function and harmonic transformation that were fully chromatic, explaining the relation between any two major and/or minor triads.⁸⁸ Yet, although his theories could have coped with the chromaticism of Wagner's post-*Tristan* music, he himself limited his analyses to the music of Bach and Beethoven. Finally, as we have seen above, Ernst Kurth, in the early twentieth century, fashioned his harmonic analyses solely on principles that he derived from the Wagnerian *Tristan* style.

But of these later writers, whose theories could in one sense or another, handle the chromaticism featured in the music of their time, virtually none paid any attention to large-scale tonal relations—not even in Beethoven, much less in Wagner or his successors. Kurth's *Romantische Harmonik*, as is shown elsewhere, comes close. He recognises the dramatic association of pitch-specific chords (such as the Samiel chord in Carl Maria von Weber's *Der Freischütz*), as well as the tendency of acts in Wagner's music dramas to move by third – often a 'chromatic' third.⁸⁹ It was left to Alfred Lorenz, whose monumental *Das Geheimnis der Form bei Richard Wagner* began to appear in

⁸⁸ I am indebted in this paragraph to David Bernstein's useful summary of the historical development of harmonic theory in the nineteenth century, in 'Nineteenth-Century Harmonic Theory: The Austro-German Legacy,' in *The Cambridge History of Western Music Theory*, ed. Thomas Christensen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) pp. 778-811. See also Robert Wason, 'Progressive Harmonic Theory in the Mid-Nineteenth Century,' *Journal of Musicological Research* 8 (1988) pp. 55-90.

⁸⁹ See McCreless 'Ernst Kurth and the Analysis of the Chromatic Music of the Late Nineteenth Century,' *Music Theory Spectrum* 5 (1983) pp. 56-75.

1924, to conceive of dramatic works on the scale of whole operas or music dramas as a tonally coherent whole. It was once fashionable to dismiss and ridicule Lorenz. After all, he was a member of the National Socialist Party in the 1930's, and his obsession with *Barform* and with leitmotifs, in the manner of Hans von Wolzogen, makes his sometimes eccentric and easily refutable analyses an easy target. But after David Lewin reprimanded Lorenz's critics and proceeded to make insightful use of his work in his magisterial analysis of the entirety of *Parsifal*, and especially after Stephen McClatchie's even-handed study of the theorist and his work, his ideas now are common currency.⁹⁰ Whatever his faults, he unquestionably pinpointed precisely both of the techniques identified in this chapter: the absolutely critical notion that the works of Wagner and of many composers in the succeeding generation make large-scale *tonal sense*—a sense that derives usually from a combination of the dramatic association of keys and the abstract planning of keys on a massive scale. For example, he noticed that Scenes 2-4 of *Das Rheingold* form a ternary structure in the pattern tonic/relative minor/tonic (Db/Bb minor/Db), and that Scene 1 prepares the larger structure in Eb major, the dominant of the dominant, and that all these keys are associated with a dramatic symbol—Eb major for the *Rhine*, Db major for *Valhalla*, and Bb minor for *Nibelheim*. Similarly, he claimed that the governing tonality of *Tristan and Isolde* is a modally indeterminate E, the fulcrum between the opening of the opera in A minor and its conclusion in B major.⁹¹ On a slightly smaller scale, he frequently demonstrated all sorts of relations of more chromatic keys, applying for the first time Riemann's powerful and flexible functions and transformations to forge a way through a massive tonal work containing many keys. Hardly anyone now would accept this tonal view of *Tristan*, but he still at a single stroke advanced Wagner analysis by a number of decades. Before him, Wagner analysis, was concentrated in the Leitmotif-hunting initiated by von Wolzogen; it was Lorenz who made it abundantly clear that the tonal structure, including especially its associative key relations, is at least as important an aspect of these works as the motivic structure—that keys, like motifs, span coherently across dramatic time. Without Lorenz, or at least without someone to come to the same sorts of conclusions about tonal structure in large-

⁹⁰ David Lewin, 'Amfortas's Prayer,' in *Analyzing Wagner's Operas: Alfred Lorenz and German Nationalist Ideology*. Edited by Stephen McClatchie (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1998)

⁹¹ Lorenz (1966) vol. 1, p. 30.

scale turn-of-the-century tonal works, much of the theory and analysis, from Bailey and Proctor to Lewin and Lerdahl, on which the present study relies, would not have been possible.

5.4: Elgar's Global Tonal Structure

Of what I am calling tonal-narrative patterning there are many examples in Lorenz, and also in more recent work by many writers noted above. Wagner frequently manages to make a number of tonal-chromatic techniques work simultaneously. For example, to recount some of Patrick McCreless's work on *Siegfried*, Act I of *Siegfried* progresses from Bb minor in Scene 1 to C in Scene 2 and D in Scene 3. These keys are cross-referential, since Bb minor is the key of Nibelheim, C of Wotan's plans for the redeeming of the world, and D of the reforging of the Sword. At the same time, they trace part of an equal division of the octave (three loci in an ascending whole-tone scale), and instantiate, over an hour or so of dramatic time, the chromatic third relation of Bb minor and D major—a relation easily describable by Riemannian harmonic theory, and now, happily, identifiable as a relation of hexatonic poles. Warren Darcy's analysis of *Das Rheingold* goes one step further: *every* key that he shows is associated with a dramatic element, there are numerous cross-referential relationships, the tonal structure exhibits a clear patterning at both background ([Eb] – Db – Bb – Db) and middleground (filling in of thirds, and so forth) levels, *and* the whole music drama plays out a Schenkerian *Ursatz*.⁹²

What I hope to show is that the oratorio, which traverses many keys chromatically related to the global tonic of Eb major, relies for its large-scale structure on associative and cross-referential tonal relationships, and on the abstract, but dramatically motivated patterning of keys. Indeed, one would like to do for *The Apostles* something rather like what Lorenz and Bailey did for the *Ring* and Wagner's other music dramas: to show that there is far more to this music than leitmotifs, and that the tonal cross-references are at least as crucial to the dramatic and musical plan as the motifs, sometimes even more so. This is not to denigrate the work of von Wolzogen and Jaeger, who made necessary and

⁹² See Patrick McCreless, *Wagner's Siegfried: Its Drama, History, and Music* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982) pp. 100-101 and Warren Darcy, *Wagner's Das Rheingold* (Clarendon Press, 1996) pp. 216-19

critical contributions to Wagner and Elgar analysis, respectively. If they both pursued motif-naming in ways less sophisticated than the music deserves, they nevertheless had a lot to say, and their observations are central to our modern understanding of the works. Most musicians—critics, historians, and theorists as well as composers and performers—give little thought to tonal structure in dramatic works; without perfect pitch, and without a specific curiosity about such matters, why would they care what key a passage is in? But there can be no doubt that Wagner lavished the greatest care on tonal structure in his works, even though he virtually never wrote about it, and it will be argued here that Elgar did the same in composing *The Apostles*.

We begin with the fundamental key of the oratorio—Eb major, the key to which all the others must ultimately relate. Eb major is without question the global key of the whole, just as D major/minor is the key of *The Dream of Gerontius*, and Eb major of *The Kingdom*.⁹³ Eb, as we have seen, makes a crucial appearance even within the opening chorus in Ab major. More importantly, it is the key in which the choosing of the apostles is confirmed and made manifest, in the chorus, ‘The Lord hath chosen them to stand.’ Of course, it is the key of Jesus’s final commandment, ‘Go ye therefore and teach all nations,’ his parting words immediately before his ascension, and the final chorus of affirmation. Eb major anchors the work of Jesus and the work of the apostles; it is the key of the beginning of the Church.

A few Elgar scholars have given attention to tonal structure in *The Apostles*. Jerrold Northrop Moore’s contribution to the discussion involves less his observations about the tonal structure of individual works, which, though valuable and insightful, tend to be as broad and general as possible, than his tracking of keys through Elgar’s compositional life. Thus G major and minor dominate the works of the 1890’s, the D minor and major of *Gerontius* briefly interrupts the tendency toward flat keys that begins with the Eb major of *Caractacus*, the Ab major opening chorus of *The Apostles* is Elgar’s ‘furthest journey into a tonic of flats for a major work,’ ‘There is Sweet Music’ (1907)

⁹³ J. P. E. Harper-Scott offers some broad insights about tonal usage in *The Dream of Gerontius*, including a persuasive claim that it makes use of associative tonality. In addition, in ‘Elgar and the Invention of the Human,’ he argues for associative tonality in *Falstaff*. See J. P. E Harper-Scott, ‘Elgar and the Invention of the Human: *Falstaff* Op. 68’ in *Nineteenth Century Music*, 28/3, pp. 230-258

juxtaposes the 'old G major' with the Ab of the Symphony to come, and so forth.⁹⁴

There is, as it were, a 'tonal structure' stretching across Elgar's work as a whole, often combining conventional key associations with the resonances that emerged and grew as his compositional career proceeded. Within *The Apostles* itself, he notes the principal keys that are used, and he points out that Part I unfolds from the opening Ab major to the tritone-related D major. More importantly, he identifies D minor with Judas in Part II (an association that will be challenged below), and ties *The Apostles* closely to the First Symphony, which would follow a few years later: 'So Edward's Symphony embodied again the central theme of *The Apostles*—an ideal set in the diatonic music of an older world, and then put to the extreme test of a chromatic future. . . . And the tonal territory of *The Apostles* also lay between the A flat major Prologue and the D minor uprising of Judas—precisely the tritone of the Symphony. Only the Symphony's D minor 'Judas' now rose up directly on the heels of its master. The challenge not finally met in *The Apostles* stood at the head of the Symphony with peremptory insistence.'⁹⁵

Charles McGuire offers much more in his study of the character of Judas in the oratorio. On the broadest level he, like Moore, points out a large-scale tritone relation: not Ab/D, but the global Eb major of the whole oratorio (representing Jesus, the Church, and the goal of the apostles' spreading the gospel) and the A minor (*not* D minor, *pace* Moore; Judas's scene revolves clearly around A minor) of much of Judas's music in Part II. Especially perceptive is his more detailed reading of the dramatic and musical function of Eb major in the work. In Part I, and particularly in the chorus 'The Lord hath chosen them to stand,' Eb major has a tendency to swerve toward G minor, the purity of Christ's actions contaminated by the inability of the very human apostles to understand his purpose (see, for example, the move to G minor at Fig. 43:5ff.).⁹⁶ In Part II, McGuire's analysis addresses a troubling paradox: why, if Eb major represents the purity of Christ and the church, is much of the music portraying his betrayal in this key (see, e.g., Fig. 153)? The answer seems simple: because this action concerns Christ himself and what is happening to him and when the drama turns toward Judas's experience, it establishes A minor. McGuire's recounting of the tortuous relation of Eb major and A

⁹⁴ Moore (1984) pp. 162-3, 189-94, 387, 524.

⁹⁵ Moore (1984) pp. 397, 521.

⁹⁶ McGuire (2000) p. 258.

minor in the scene climaxes with his description of the very middle of Judas's monologue, where he is suddenly moved by his memory of Jesus ('Never man spake like this man; He satisfied the longing soul,' Fig. 176:3). Not only does the music turn to the Beatitude Leitmotiv from 'By the Wayside' (as pointed out by Jaeger a century ago) but it—incongruously, in the A-minor context here—brings back Christ's key of Eb major.⁹⁷ The poignance of this touching moment resides as much in Elgar's calculated disposition of keys across time as in his dispersal of themes across time.

But there is much more in this moment. To understand what that is, will require that we return to Part I and consider more closely the tonal portrayal of Jesus. His first appearance, naturally, is in the Eb-major triumphant chorus of the anointing of the apostles (Fig. 55, 'Behold, I send you forth'). When Jesus begins his ministry immediately after this chorus, with the Beatitudes, his music is in F major (Fig. 60), diverging only occasionally to other keys. He next appears in order to reassure the disciples in the violence of the storm (Fig. 100). Although the storm is centered on C minor, at Jesus's appearance the music turns, suddenly, to F# major.⁹⁸ The warmth of F# major surrounds the scene, the soft F#-major triad undergirding Jesus's first word, and especially his self-identification: 'It is I.' Thus, his first three appearances involve a stepwise ascent of keys, each one referencing an element of the drama, in the manner of *Siegfried*, Act I: Eb, Jesus himself and his mission; F, the Beatitudes; F#, Jesus's self-identification. Jesus's remaining music in Part I is more tonally diverse, touching upon Eb, Ab, and Db major, with respect to the establishment of the church (Fig. 113-116), and D major for the passage in which he offers forgiveness to Mary Magdalene.

In Part II, Jesus's only pre-Crucifixion appearance occurs at the moment when, after Judas's betrayal, the soldiers come to take him away.⁹⁹ This passage, from Fig. 157 to Fig. 159:4, constitutes some of the densest, richest, most powerful music in the oratorio; coming together here are stunningly many leitmotivic and tonal cross-references, resonating with moments ranging from the very beginning to the very end of the drama. It is in every sense what we might call, recollecting the music dramas of the

⁹⁷ McGuire (2000) pp. 268-70.

⁹⁸ Might we hear a *Tristan* reference in the three measures [fig. 99:5-7] that connect the C-Minor music to the F# major music? The passage sounds remarkably like bb 83-84 of the Prelude.

⁹⁹ This melody is reinvented in much the same way as when Wotan recounts important moments in the *Ring*.

late Wagner, a 'node': a musico-dramatic ganglion in which the most critical dramatic themes of the work come miraculously together, and whose thematic and tonal connections extend throughout the drama: Tristan and Isolde drink the love potion in Act I of *Tristan*; Brünnhilde, her long wait finally ended, sees a horrific and unrecognisable Siegfried emerge from the fire near the end of Act I of *Götterdämmerung*. To attempt to untangle all the threads here would deflect us from our task of tracing Jesus's 'expressive' (as Bailey would call it) ascent of keys, so it will not dwelt upon here. But even to show only how this music incorporates a step on that ascent will give a sense of how this short passage constitutes a dramatic crux in the oratorio.

When Judas and the men arrive at Gethsemane, he speaks first, hailing Jesus. The first word of his greeting, 'Hail,' is set to an F#-minor triad, suggesting a recall of Jesus's self-identification in Part I, and a picking up of the scale-wise ascent of associative keys. The following music does much to strengthen this suspicion. The F#-minor progression in this and the following measure brings back the Leitmotiv of the Beatitudes, and the descending scale of the progression arrives, at Fig. 158, at an F#-major triad, which enharmonically changes to Gb major as Jesus begins to sing 'Whom seek ye?' (The bare thirds in the accompaniment also derive from 'By the Wayside.') The soldiers shout Jesus's name on Gb, and the musical upbeat to his answer consists of a Gb-major triad. The same triad occurs on the second beat of the measure in which Jesus sings the words, 'therefore ye seek Me.' Both the F# and Gb major triads clearly function as musical symbols to refer to who Jesus is.

Jesus is present once more before the Crucifixion—not physically present, but present only in the imagination of Judas. The passage occurs as a sort of flashback: Judas, tormented by his betrayal of Jesus, and never free from the unforgiving, A-minor Psalm 94 in the background, is struck by a phrase from the psalm ('Rest from thy days of adversity'), which sparks in him a distant memory of Jesus. From Charles McGuire we have already learned that this moment, at which Judas begins, 'Never man spake like this man,' juxtaposes Jesus's key of Eb major against the local A minor of the psalm and of Judas. To this insight we can now add the observation that the image of Jesus invokes not only Eb major and the Beatitudes theme, but also his self-identifying F# major, to the words 'And filled the hungry soul,' with music (in both vocal melody and

accompaniment) from the opening chorus of the oratorio (Fig. 5)—the real Jesus, whom Judas could never see. But, of course, as McGuire points out, the memory of Jesus dissolves quickly, by Fig. 177:2, and Judas comes back to his misery and guilt, and the stern, A-minor psalm, which was briefly interrupted for his vision, returns in all its grimness. We thus have a powerful instance of associative keys (Eb major, F# major, A minor) ascending through a partial equal-interval cycle of minor thirds—at a critical moment in the drama.

After the Crucifixion Jesus appears one last time and his ascent of keys progresses by one last step. His first words, ‘Peace be unto you’ (Fig. 209) are set in G major, leading to his first instruction to his disciples (‘Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you...’), to the accompaniment of a full-fledged return of the opening music of the oratorio, now a semitone lower than in its original appearance. The long-range ascent goes no further than G, however, and by the time Jesus comes to his final commission (‘Go ye therefore and teach all nations,’ Fig. 213), the music is back solidly in his home key of Eb major, in which key he made his first appearance in the oratorio (Fig. 55), and in which key he proceeds to his final words, ‘I am with you always, even unto the end of the world,’ and thus to his majestic cadence in Eb, already noted, at Fig. 215.

Table 1: Key Associations in *The Apostles*

KEY	CHARACTER	ASSOCIATION	FIG.
Eb major	Jesus	Mission	55
F major	Jesus	Beatitudes	60
F# major	Jesus	Storm/'Hail'	100
Gb major	Jesus	Whom seek ye?	158
G major	Jesus	Peace be unto you	209
A minor	Judas	Guilt	
Eb major	Jesus	Go ye therefore and teach all nations	213
Eb major	Jesus	I am with you always even unto the end of the world	215

But between these two moments—his initial ‘Peace be unto you’ and the final cadence—there is one last, telling reference to F#/Gb major. At the critical words ‘[baptizing them in the name of the] Father, and of the Son, [and of the Holy Ghost]’, Jesus sings F# - G# - A#, as the orchestra (at Fig 213:5) articulates a short progression moving from a Gb first-inversion chord to the dominant seventh of Eb major—the two principal keys associated with Jesus throughout the work (the vocal part is spelled in sharps, the orchestra in flats). In his analysis, Jaeger points out the confluence of associative themes here: using his names, ‘Father’ is set to his Lord’s Prayer theme, ‘Son’ to what he calls the Christ theme, and ‘Holy Ghost’ to his Peter theme.⁴⁸ But the tonal reference is compelling as well: F#/Gb major has accumulated a considerable referential charge, in association with Jesus, over the course of the oratorio, and it is fitting, and meaningful, that it make one last appearance here, just prior to Jesus’s Ascension.

What will soon become apparent is that the F#/Gb reference resonates through the work to an even greater depth than one have shown thus far. But before pursuing that issue, I want to pause a moment to consider Elgar’s dramatic characterisation of Jesus, because here the cross-referential chromatic key relations begin to intersect significantly

with my hermeneutic reading of the piece. Charles McGuire has pointed out that *The Apostles* is a drama of *character*; we, and Elgar's audience, all know how the plot goes before we hear the first notes, so the drama turns on the composer's musical characterisation of the protagonists.¹⁰⁰ It has long been known that it was the character of Judas who first attracted Elgar to the subject of the apostles,¹⁰¹ and modern criticism has strongly claimed that Mary Magdalene and Judas—especially the latter—are the central characters of the oratorio, not Jesus. Particularly persuasive is Byron Adams, who writes of 'Elgar's oddly hesitant treatment of the Saviour,' who is 'reduced to a mere bystander at the drama of the apostles unfolding around him.' For him, 'Elgar is clearly more interested in the human sufferings and doubts of the apostles than in the supernal travails of their Master.'¹⁰² McGuire's description of Christ's music lends musical credence to Adams's claim: 'During all of His speeches in *The Apostles*, Christ sings in a very formulaic manner, with a small vocal compass, and a static orchestration. His melodic speech patterns are either themes recalled from the Prologue, used for dramatic pronouncements, or what Elgar termed 'Quasi Recit.' passages for teaching the apostles.'¹⁰³ By contrast, the far richer vocal parts of Mary Magdalene and Judas are positively operatic in character, and even Peter, John, and the Virgin Mary have more interesting melodic lines than Jesus.

All these perfectly correct observations go against the grain of the conventionally Christian view of a critic like Jaeger, who takes *The Apostles* at face value, seeing in it 'the old, yet ever-new and ever-welcome message brought to a stressful, materialistic world by this great contribution to sacred art—the good tidings of Peace, of God's goodness and the love of Christ.' The Elgar that produced *this* oratorio is a 'master whose [artistic] contributions...make a powerful appeal to our noblest emotions...and leave us the better for having come under his exalting influence.'¹⁰⁴ Against Jaeger we can contrast McGuire's revisionist, but still Christian view, that sees Mary Magdalene and Judas as the central characters in a didactic drama, in which Judas is 'Christ's

¹⁰⁰ McGuire (2000) p. 237.

¹⁰¹ Moore (1984) pp. 294–5.

¹⁰² Adams (2005) p. 96.

¹⁰³ McGuire (2002) p. 213.

¹⁰⁴ Jaeger (1902) p. 63.

betrayal, unrepentant sinner, and...eternal outsider.'¹⁰⁵ McGuire takes a somewhat darker view of the work, and an entirely darker view of its composer: 'The mixture of subterfuge and revelation surrounding Judas resonates with Elgar's own ambivalence in the face of...conflicts [between science and religion] and hints of the difficulties of living in a rapidly changing and dehumanizing world.'¹⁰⁶ Adams then takes a still darker view of the work, and a stark and disturbing view of its composer, whose libretto for *The Apostles* '...reflects how deeply *fin-de-siècle* aestheticism pervaded [his] imagination,' and who 'subverted, perhaps inadvertently, the original meaning of his biblical sources in order to realise his own artistic vision'—a vision of 'habitual despair,' 'repression,' and 'self-betrayal.'¹⁰⁷

It goes without saying, of course, that Jaeger's interpretation of the drama comes off as a bit naïve and unsophisticated, even for its day, not to mention for us, a hundred years later. So it will not be argued here for a wholesale critical revival of his earnest, hopeful, turn-of-the-(twentieth)-century Christianity. But it *will* be argued that a *tonal*, as opposed to a vocal, reading of Jesus's music in the oratorio yields a far stronger picture of 'the Saviour' than is suggested by McGuire and Adams. The extent to which such a reading might serve as a gauge of the state of Elgar's religious faith in 1903—whether it was steadfast or fading—must be left open to question; but it is claimed that, at the very least, Elgar was fully engaged in his representation of Christ, and a careful hearing of the oratorio's tonal plan hews closer to a traditional view than the blandness of his vocal parts might lead us to suspect.

The music of Jesus, in a word, constitutes the central nervous system of *The Apostles*, and his own appearances—plus the exposition of his mission and purpose in the Prologue and 'The Lord hath chosen them,' and Judas's vision of him in Scene 4—serve as the nodes and ganglia of that system. In terms of Leitmotifs, one of McGuire's insights about the oratorio in his monograph lays the foundation for such a claim: that the piece contains both 'local' and 'work-spanning' themes, and the latter are almost exclusively concerned with Christ and his mission.¹⁰⁸ Many of these originate in the

¹⁰⁵ McGuire (2000) p. 270.

¹⁰⁶ McGuire (2000) p. 271.

¹⁰⁷ Adams (2005) pp. 96-7, 99.

¹⁰⁸ McGuire (2002) pp. 229, 235-8.

Prologue (in which Jesus himself is essentially present, since it is he who read the words of Isaiah in the passage from Luke imported into the libretto), and a few others appear first in 'In the Mountain—Night' (Fig. 14:1 – 24:8 I have to leave it to reader to know the tunes), in which he is at prayer. The Wagnerian parallel here is completely transparent, of course: motifs such as Jaeger's 'Spirit of the Lord,' 'Christ the Man of Sorrows,' and 'Christ's Prayer' are analogous to, say, the Ring, the Curse, and the Sword in the *Ring*; while most of the music of the chief two human characters, Mary Magdalene and Judas, is analogous to, say, Siegmund's 'Winterstürme' in Act I of *Die Walküre*, and Mime's 'Starling Song' in Act I of *Siegfried*. Even Jesus's early, brief appearances bring back previous Leitmotifs, and his betrayal scene and scene before the Ascension are perhaps the most concentrated thematic nodes of the drama.

A strength of Jaeger's analysis is that he, like his model, von Wolzogen, knew well what a node was—what it was like for reminiscence themes to enter, one right after, or even at the same time as, others, delivering powerful juxtapositions of meaning that the listener must work to absorb. His description of part of the chorus, 'The Lord hath chosen them,' is characteristic:

Thence...we pass into a perfect maze of leitmotifs, of highly ingenious combinations of different rhythms, and very Elgaresque spinning of long melody-threads out of the filaments distributed broadcast over voices and instruments. With consummate art the different themes are dovetailed, linked together, and combined, and the whole complex movement is made to run its stately course to a most impressive close.¹⁰⁹

To recognise and to internalise the concentration and intensity of such musico-dramatic nodes is, in some deep sense, to know one's Wagner—and also to know one's Elgar. Jaeger knew both. What is more, he goes further than von Wolzogen—he is, in my view, the more perceptive analyst - and offers the occasional, but usually insightful, observation about harmony.

It is here that we can begin a more nuanced critique of Jesus and his musical portrayal. Significantly, even though the flat-side, major-mode character that so dominates the music depicting Christ's mission and the establishment of the Church (Eb

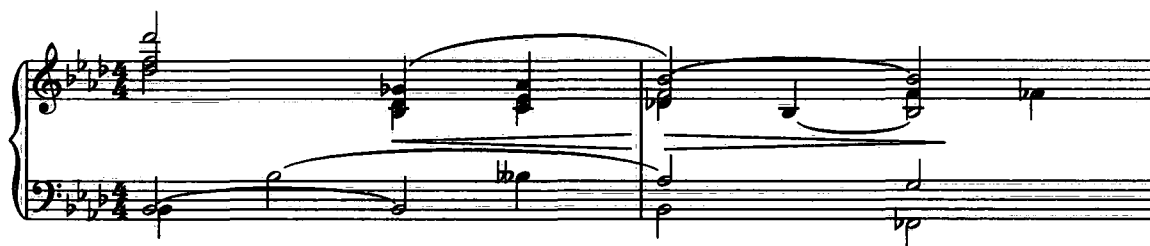
¹⁰⁹ Jaeger (1902) p. 18. Jaeger's metaphor of threads and filaments fits nicely with my nodes and ganglia.

as the global key, Ab for the Prologue, Db for the building of the Church [Fig. 155ff.]) is predominantly diatonic, some of his music has strongly chromatic elements. Until now we have followed the Eb/F#(Gb) tonal argument (itself a relation of a chromatic third) over long spans of time; but now we can see the concentrated moment in which it is introduced in the first place. Jaeger points to the end of the very first vocal phrase in the work, noting that:

The concluding notes, Gb, Ab, and Bb, embody in their progression of whole-tones a leitmotiv of the utmost significance. Yet it is as mere soulless clay without its life-giving harmony. The unfathomable power of genius, however, is 'Dead things with inbreathed sense able to pierce,' and thus we have three bare notes transformed by the magic of a master's harmony into the most solemn motive in the work—suggesting 'Christ, the Man of Sorrows'....The one touch to work this wonder his the 'passing-note' Bbb, the resulting dissonance giving to the progression of chords that suggestion of mystery, of sorrow and suffering which the circumstances demand...¹¹⁰

Jaeger's instinct is absolutely on target: analysis of the piece offers ample justification for designating this motif as one of 'utmost significance,' and I, for one, would second his claim that it is 'the most solemn motif in the work.'

Ex.2.0: 'Christ Man of Sorrows' Motif



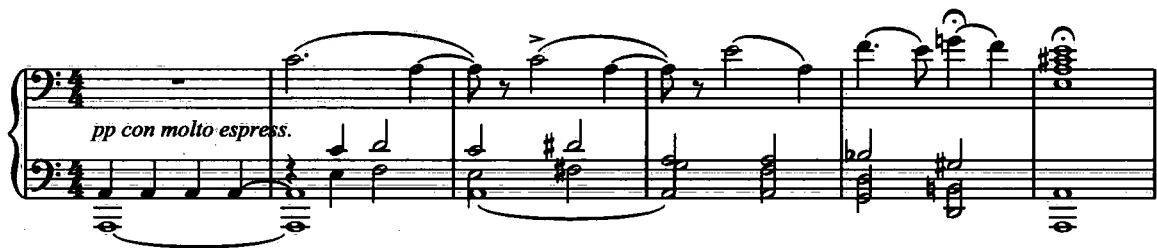
We can begin to see why. First, the progression moves from a Gb-major 6 chord, through a dissonant passing chord, to a root-position Bb minor with an added 7th: that is, it directly juxtaposes, at the end of the first vocal sentence of the piece, Gb major and Eb major (the latter implied by its dominant, despite the flattened third) the two keys or

¹¹⁰ Jaeger (1902) p. 5.

triads that we have already seen to be so central to Jesus's tonal path through the oratorio. Second, and even more pointedly, the text on the three melodic notes of the ascending whole-tones—Gb, Ab, Bb—is '[a-]nointed me...' The 'me' thus anointed is none other than Christ himself, since it is at this moment that he stands up to read Isaiah 61 in the synagogue, at the beginning of his ministry. Thus arises the association of not only this motif, but these three melodic notes, with Christ. Clinching this association are not only the F#-G#-A# melody in his passage just before the Ascension, but also two melodic fragments in the scene where he is accosted by the soldiers in Gethsemane. When he asks them, 'Whom seek ye?' they reply, 'Jesus of Nazareth,' on the notes Gb-Bb-An (the dramatic context here clearly calls for Gb, Bb, and An, rather than Gb, Bb, and Ab). In his response, 'I am He; if ye seek me,' these last three words are on the Gb-Ab-Bb Figure, over the harmonic motif in the orchestra.

There is much more to say about this motif, but to do so requires that we focus briefly on Jaeger's observation regarding the Bbb passing note in the 'tenor' voice. As in his characterisation of the parallel half-diminished seventh chords in 'Christ's Desire,' his language here, however flowery, is perfect: *it is the passing Bbb that imbues the progression with the wrenching quality that it exudes. It is also the passing Bbb that makes the short progression absolutely original; we can usually, if we look hard enough, find at least one or two other instances in the turn-of-the-century repertoire of virtually any progression that we encounter, but this one seems unique. Elgar makes brilliant use of this aspect of the progression; it is an essential component of much of the harmonic and melodic expression of suffering in the oratorio. Consider, for example, the agonizing chord at the climax of the searing orchestral statement (just before Fig. 193), 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' at the very beginning of Scene 5, immediately after Christ's death: it is the same chord as the dissonant passing chord of 'Christ, Man of Sorrows,' (Bbb-C-Eb-Ab), transposed down a semitone.*

Ex. 2.1: 'Christ Man of Sorrows', transposed, Scene 5



The progression ramifies in other directions if we consider its top (Gb-Ab-Bb) and tenor voices (Bb-Bbb-Ab), moving in contrary motion. The two lines together comprise the pitch set (Gb-Ab-Bbb-Bb), or the pitch-class set (0, 2, 3, 4) (not put into prime form). If we posit that the soldiers' line, 'Jesus of Nazareth,' from the Gethsemane scene is an untransposed reference to the motif Gb-Bb-An, or more generally, to the inversely related sets (0, 1, 4) and (0, 3, 4), we can quickly extrapolate to other related instances, all implying, to my ears, sorrow. For example, in 'Golgotha' (Fig. 193-199) the closing notes of Mary's mournful refrain, '[The sword hath pierced] through my own soul,' are always Bn-G-Bb-Ab-G, or (0, 1, 3, 4), the Bn-G-Bb always seemingly doing the piercing (cf. Jaeger's 'inbreathed sense able to pierce').¹¹¹

Ex. 2.2: 'The sword hath pierced', *The Apostles*, Fig. 198



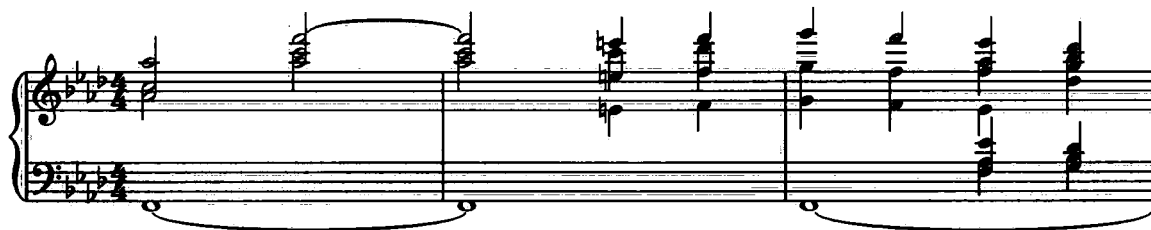
We might then hear the Ab-En-F that accompanies the words 'The Spirit of the Lord' at the first vocal entry of the Prologue, and then becomes its own motif, at the same pitch level, at Fig. 4:3, a few measures later, to be an inversion of the soldiers' tune. And

¹¹¹ See also John's 'and they shall mourn for him,' on Ab-C-Bn, a transposition of the soldiers' line up a whole-tone [fig. 196:3]

finally, Christ's very first words in the oratorio, 'Behold, I send you,' on [Bb]-C-Bn-Eb, represent a retrograde inversion of the same melodic pattern. Jaeger, of course, made none of these connections, and he surely considered the last two (the motifs in the Prologue and Christ's opening words) entirely benign. In contradistinction, I prefer to suggest that his instinct that the 'Christ, Man of Sorrows' motif holds in its brief span the seeds of much of the representation of suffering in *The Apostles*, is precisely right. I further suggest that indeed the Ab-En-F in the orchestra at the first entrance of the choir already hints at Christ's inevitable suffering, though perhaps not so tellingly as the crucial progression that follows a few measures later.

Our detailed focus on 'Christ, Man of Sorrows' has shown its progression to spawn a melodic figure that spans much of the work, and our study of this figure has in turn led us back to the beginning of the Prologue. Let us now take the Ab-En-F figure previously noted, and focus, not on the three-note melodic motif, but only on the single chromatic note within it, En.

2.3: The E natural Pivot



This note, like the 'Man of Sorrows' motif, is work-spanning; it has an important story to tell—a story that will take us through the most wrenching part of *The Apostles*, but which will also ultimately link up with the 'Man of Sorrows' motif to bring the work to an extraordinary conclusion. Consider Judas's entire monologue, in 'The Temple' and 'Without the Temple' (Fig. 167-192:6), including the chorus's brutal chanting of Psalm 94, and then its transforming itself into the mob that brings about Jesus's Crucifixion. What single note pierces our consciousness throughout the scene? Surely that note is E. Although the monologue is unquestionably in A minor, it is the structural melodic note, E4, that holds our attention in the opening verses of the psalm (Fig. 167:1 – 169:5).

2.4: ‘O Lord God’, *The Apostles*, Figs. 167-168

The musical score is for a four-part vocal setting of 'O Lord God'. It consists of two systems. The first system has four staves: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. Each staff has a vocal line with lyrics underneath. The lyrics for the first system are: 'O Lord God, to Whom venge - ance be - long - eth,'. The second system also has four staves: Soprano (S.), Alto (A.), Tenor (T.), and Bass (B.). The lyrics for the second system are: 'Ren - der a re - ward to the proud.' The Soprano and Alto parts have a '3' above the first measure of the second system, indicating a triplet. The Tenor and Bass parts have a '3' below the first measure of the second system, indicating a triplet. The Bass part has a 'p' (piano) marking before the first measure of the second system. The music is in 4/4 time and the key signature has one flat (B-flat).

Judas’s line immediately thereafter ranges from E3 to E4, and after just two measures the orchestra establishes a massive, hostile, low E pedal that will, with little respite, take us all the way to Judas’s vision of Jesus at Fig. 176:3. Who, having heard this passage, can forget the octave (or unison) shrieks on E with the word ‘Selah!’ (Fig. 171). Or who, despite the A-minor tonic, will remember A-minor triads here rather than the hideous C#-minor 6 chords (at Fig. 170:1 – 171:1), grounded by the low-E bass? And who, after Judas’s vision of Jesus, and after a contrasting turn to D minor rather than A minor in the monologue (Fig. 178 – 186:4), will not cringe at the sinister C#-minor 6 chord return on Judas’s words ‘A sudden fear’ (Fig. 186:4), immediately after the chorus’s first ‘Crucify Him!’ Elgar portrays the moment of Crucifixion neither with the pitch-class E, nor with A minor, but with a bitterly ironic return to Eb major, the key of the betrayal, and the whole chorus singing on G4 (Fig. 187:1-188:1). But the grisly bass E returns to introduce the end of the scene (Fig. 189). It is the goal of the gruff, chromatic bass

ascents at Figs. 190:4-9 and 191:1-6, and it pierces our very being as the bass of the last C#-minor 6 chord at Fig. 191:4, and as the last, howling note after Judas's final words (Fig. 191:6), leading into a brief echo of the psalm, again with E4 as the melodic fifth scale degree, which never resolves. Leaving the scene of the Crucifixion, what remains in our ears is E.

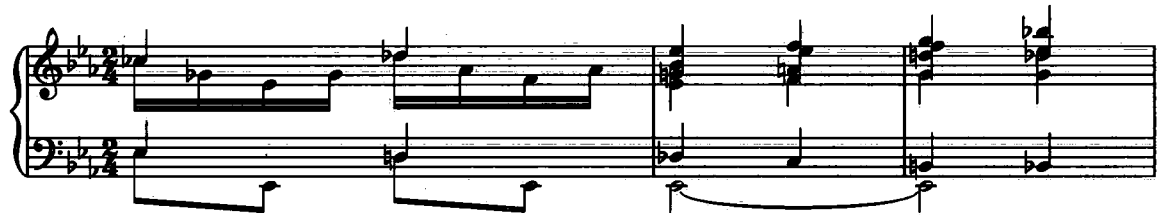
It remains now only to tie together the two central chromatic/harmonic ideas of the oratorio—the 'Christ, Man of Sorrows' motif and the pitch-class E—to show how the tonal structure turns on the play of chromaticism in a globally diatonic context. In *The Apostles*, E, in the context of Eb major, is a 'pitch-class motif' *par excellence*. It does everything that the pitch-class motifs of Cone and Rosen do.¹¹² En is the first chromatic note in the drama, just before Fig. 1. Spelled as Fb, it slides in as a passing note at Fig. 1:4, in preparation for its already discussed role once the choir enters. Its relation to 'Christ, Man of Sorrows' already begins to be made manifest in the Prologue. The first time the choir sings the text 'The Spirit of the Lord...hath anointed me,' En is not in the picture, except for the Ab-En-F motif in the orchestra at Fig. 2:2; as we have seen, the words 'anointed me' bring the 'Man of Sorrows' motif, juxtaposing Gb and V7 of Eb, with the melodic notes Db5-Gb4-Ab4-Bb4. But when the choir sings the same words to the same tune at the end of the Prologue (Fig. 10:5), no longer do we hear the Gb/Eb juxtaposition; now we hear the motif on Fb (Cb – Fb – Gb – Ab), accompanied by the first Fb/En triad in the work. Even before Christ's ministry, with the calling of his apostles, begins, the seeds of his betrayal and death are planted. We learn this, not through some random planting of En's and Fb's early in the piece, but from the specific use of this pitch class as its very first chromatic element, and especially the unmistakably clear juxtaposition of Christ's keys of Eb and Gb in the first statement of 'anointed me' in the Prologue, and of the threatening Fb/En at exactly the same place in the last statement.

In the tradition of Beethoven and Wagner, these chromatic elements must be recuperated to the ultimate tonal centre at the end. Elgar is more than up to the task. Almost at the end of the final, triumphant, Eb-major chorus, the chromatic elements make their stunning, final appearance. At Fig. 235:5 we hear 'Christ, Man of Sorrows,' now

¹¹² See Edward T. Cone & Benjamin Boretz (ed), *Perspectives on Contemporary Music Theory* (New York: Norton, 1972) p. 25/27 and Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (London: Fonatana, 1999) p. 231

transposed down a fifth (or up a fourth), so that it starts on a Cb-major 6 chord—a transposition that means that the third chord of the progression is no longer V of Eb, but Eb7 (presumably V7 of Ab), and that the descending chromatic motion below is Eb-Dn-Db.

Ex. 2.6: Final Permutation of ‘Christ, Man of Sorrows’, *The Apostles*, Fig. 235



The contrary motion that is of the essence of the figure is now allowed to continue scalewise in opposite directions, so that, as the music approaches Fig. 236, we reach the same motif at the same pitch level, but now registrally dispersed over a number of octaves. Elgar makes two critical changes here. First, in the penultimate measure before Fig. 236 he alters the expected Fn to Fb; this Fb resolves then down to Eb, after which it never appears again; the global Eb is purified of En/Fb. Simultaneously, for the first time in the oratorio, the descending figure in the tenor of the motif does *not* move by semitone, but by whole-tone—Eb-Db-Cb, and then one step further, to Bb. Thus, for the first time ever, the ‘resolving’ chord is not an unstable dominant seventh, but a pure Eb-major triad—albeit with a brief suspended Ab. The pitch-class motivic and leitmotivic chromaticisms are worked out of the piece at exactly the same time, and the final ‘Alleluias!’ conclude the drama in a purely diatonic Eb.

5.5: Conclusion

The musical drama that is *The Apostles* is Wagnerian in the sense that it is not only a drama of themes, but a drama of tonal structure—not one so complex, say, as that of *Götterdämmerung* or *Parsifal*, but unquestionably one that shows that Elgar had learned his Wagnerian lessons thoroughly. *The Apostles*, of course, is his largest work, the one that he started as the beginning of a sacred trilogy, adopting the conscious model of the

Ring. Whatever its relation of the work to Wagner—and it is pointless to claim that it, as opposed to *Gerontius* or *The Kingdom*, is the most Wagnerian—one thing is certain: here, as in Wagner, pitch counts, and it counts at all levels, from the single En, to surface harmonic progression, to the tonal organisation of scenes, to the tonal structure of the entire oratorio. The harmonic and tonal relations that I have shown are demonstrably present in the music, and they raise all sorts of intriguing questions concerning Elgar's relationship with Wagner's music.

For have we not heard *The Apostles* before, in another way - somewhere else entirely, on a different stage, and in a different context? Does this cadence and continuation not remind us of the moment, at the end of *Die Walküre*, where Wotan kisses the godhead from Brünnhilde (Act III, bars 1615-17) A critical, defining moment at the end of a musical drama, featuring the central male character; a melodic cadence on the tonic; a long-short-long melodic rhythm; the orchestral elision, bringing in a major triad with the third in the melody (in the opera, of course, the eliding chord enters on bVI of the tonic, C, whereas in the oratorio the eliding chord is on the tonic itself); the slow, majestic, homophonic texture and rhythm of the entering orchestra, proceeding from major triad to major triad, with an initial descending semitone in the melody? Why, at the moment that an at-least-partially mortal man finally establishes his divinity and departs from the human world, with his 3-2-1 cadence in Eb, do we hear a reminiscence of a defining moment in a spectacularly secular work, where a divine figure kisses away the divinity of a previously immortal figure—and a woman, at that? In the words of the current vernacular, 'I haven't a clue'. But the juxtaposition of the divine and the mortal, the sacred and the secular, the diatonic and the chromatic, suggests that I have but scratched the surface of a work that richly repays concentrated listening and study.

CHAPTER VI – ELGAR’S SYMPHONIC ORCHESTRATION

6.0: Introduction

‘Orchestration’ is broadly defined as the art of combining the sounds of a complex of instruments to form a satisfactory blend and balance, whilst the term ‘orchestration’ is often used to denote the craft of writing idiomatically for these instruments. There have been many attempts to differentiate the terms ‘orchestration’ and ‘instrumentation’ since Berlioz juxtaposed the two in the title of his *Grand traité d’instrumentation et d’orchestration modernes*¹¹³; in this context the two terms should be considered as inseparable aspects of a single musical concept. Instrumentation by itself is a more general term, denoting the selection of instruments for a musical composition, either as part of the composer’s art or by the performers for a particular performance.

Orchestration is thus more than the effective disposition of pitches (not to mention rhythms) among the instruments of the orchestra; but this skill remains indispensable, and advice on the craft of instrumentation forms a substantial literature. The most significant example of such a treatise is by Berlioz, and was for many years incomparably the most influential and most widely used in teaching.¹¹⁴ Orchestration treatises concentrate mainly on technical details, including some description of instrument mechanisms and a comprehensive listing of the possibilities and impossibilities of the various instruments, with examples of recent usage. The creative, aesthetic dimension of orchestration is less open to explanation in a textbook, but more vital to the composer and listener, and it is this aspect of Elgar’s orchestration that I am interested in. Orchestral sonorities form an integral part of musical thinking in the European traditions of concert music and a vital element of its expressive language and rhetoric. Berlioz, indeed, had a wider aim than mere instruction; his treatise contains some of the most telling aesthetic and critical observations, relating to the practice of past and contemporary musicians independently

¹¹³ Hector Berlioz, *Grand traité d’instrumentation et d’orchestration modernes* (Paris, 1843, English trans, 1856)

¹¹⁴ Berlioz, (Paris, 1843, English trans, 1856) Hugh Macdonald, *Berlioz’s Orchestration Treatise: A Translation and Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) includes supplementary notes and a summary of treatises before Berlioz.

significant as original composers, and lack their especial insights, but also their idiosyncrasies.

Elgar, in a lecture given to students on orchestration at Birmingham University on 1 November 1906, endorsed Berlioz's juxtaposition of orchestration and instrumentation and indeed, took it a step further:

Orchestration, in the older edition of the largest English musical dictionary, is defined thus:-

"The art of ADAPTING musical ideas to the varied capabilities of stringed, wind, keyed and other instruments".¹¹⁵ This curious definition no doubt describes the method of a certain class of composers: but it is fundamentally misleading. Literary dictionaries *treat us better*, the Century and the Standard give "the art of composing OR arranging for the Orchestra". This is correct: orchestration in its highest sense, is the art of composing for an orchestra: NOT the perfunctory matter of arranging ideas for instruments.¹¹⁶

Thus, for Elgar, orchestration was an integral part of the art of composition: something that could not be separated from the compositional process. This falls in line with nineteenth century thinking about orchestration, as espoused by Berlioz, Prout and Rimsky-Korsakov. As we have seen in chapter II, Elgar had copies of Prout and Berlioz's treatises and acknowledged that they were, in his opinion, the only useful books on the topic:

Berlioz's book has been available for many years and still remains the most inspiring work on the subject. It is no longer practical in many ways. The great improvement in the execution of our string players, for instance, renders many of the recommendations for the division of difficult passages unnecessary – a small point.

All works on orchestration must deal chiefly with analysis and much music has been written since Berlioz penned his inspiring volume. A most useful

¹¹⁵ *Grove's Dictionary of Music*, vol 2, pp.566-73, article on 'Orchestration' by W. S R[ockstro] (1880)

¹¹⁶ Edward Elgar, *A Future for English Music* (London: Dobson, 1968) p. 235

work is the small handbook of Prout, and this can be recommended for beginners.¹¹⁷

However, what is important about the treatises for the purposes of this study, is how they tend to assume an entirely new, major step in the compositional enterprise, one that takes place after completion of a bar-for-bar draft playable at the keyboard. Around 1900, when the orchestra was at the height of its cultural significance and musical glory, a provocative view was expressed by the musician and critic Frederick Corder.¹¹⁸ For the second edition of *Grove's Dictionary*, after eliminating much of the historical material supplied in its predecessor, he revealingly combined a progressive view of technical means with a pained conservatism as to aesthetic ends. For Corder, orchestral colour was essentially decorative, and dependent on solid structural principles.

[A]n attempt is now being made to produce still greater emotional effect by a style of orchestral writing which defies analysis, and in which the music per se has but a weak structure and material of the utmost degree of tenuity...there are very few of the musical works we now allude to which will bear the simple but infallible test of being played upon the piano.¹¹⁹

If orchestral music failed this 'black-and-white' test, the fault lay with inadequate harmonic and contrapuntal technique; the symphony and symphonic poem (Corder refers to Liszt and Strauss), as much as music for homogenous sonorities such as string quartet or solo piano, should be subject to harmonic, contrapuntal, or voice-leading laws. From the view-point of the early twenty-first century, such a restriction may appear not so much pedantic as absurd; but our view of music is radically altered not only by twentieth-century musical innovation in pitch, rhythm and timbre, but also by the existence of recordings. The music now available for fully-coloured reproduction in our homes makes redundant a whole literature of music adapted to keyboard – transcription of orchestral and chamber music for solo piano, duet, two pianos, organ – that was once

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 249. Berlioz's *Modern Instrumentation and Orchestration*, translated by Mary Novello (Alfred Novello: 1854). Prout's *Instrumentation* was issued in 1878.

¹¹⁸ 'F.C.', 'Instrumentation', in J. A Fuller-Maitland (ed.), *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London, 2nd edn, 1906), vol. II, pp. 473-84; Frederick Corder, *The Orchestra and How to Write for it: a Practical Guide* (London, 1896).

¹¹⁹ Corder (1896) p. 47

indispensable to the dissemination of the repertory. Operas, for instance, usually existed in vocal score long before the final full score and parts were ready; composers talked of having nearly finished a work, with only the orchestration left to do.

For some composers, musical thought does apparently proceed with sufficient abstraction for piano reductions to sound meaningful. Instrumentation is sometimes determined at a relatively late stage in the compositional process and original intentions in instrumentation are subject to radical change. Brahms's first attempt at a symphony became the Piano Concerto in D minor, with the interesting result that the tunes sound better on the orchestra than on the solo instrument. Elgar converted music drafted for string quartet into the superbly coloured central movements of his First Symphony. Both of these composers, however, were keyboard players whose music would seldom, if ever, fail Corder's piano test. On the other hand, Berlioz's orchestral songs, *Les Nuits d'été*, were published with a piano accompaniment which feels like a transcription; nevertheless, orchestrating them years later was a new creative action, almost as if the composer were orchestrating music by someone else.¹²⁰ Orchestration of keyboard music has a recognised place in teaching, including scoring for the monochrome string ensemble; Riemann produced exemplary transcriptions of Haydn piano sonatas for strings, and Strauss advocated preliminary training by writing for string quartet.¹²¹

So conceived, nineteenth century orchestration amounts to a dialectic between the initial composition of passages with a particular scoring in mind, and the craft of subsequently distributing the rest among the available force. It could scarcely have been otherwise, given the multitude of different instruments (and transposition schemes) available to the symphonist, who now needed a fundamentally different compositional process than that which was required to compose a work for keyboard, chamber ensemble or strings alone.

Elgar remained adamant throughout his life that orchestration could be taught to a certain point, rather like painting, and believed that the only way to learn was to study scores and go to concerts, just like he had:

¹²⁰ Berlioz orchestrated Schubert's *Erlkönig*.

¹²¹ Hugo Riemann, *Katechismus der Orchestrierung (Anleitung zum Instrumentieren)* (Leipzig, 1902); Richard Strauss, *Instrumentationslehre von Hector Berlioz* (Leipzig, 1905)

Orchestration can be best learnt or assimilated by listening to orchestras: the opportunities in this country are comparatively few, and it is a matter of surprise and congratulation that we have so many composers who are good orchestrators among us.¹²²

6.1: Elgar's Orchestral Models

In order to fully comprehend the complexities posed by specific areas of Elgar's orchestral technique, it is important to appreciate where and how it had developed, and how it had come to culminate in the two symphonies. By getting to grips with Elgar's mosaic-like methodology, where small fragments are often juggled around whilst be constantly developed, we will be better positioned to come to terms with several aspects of Elgar's orchestral manipulation which are discussed later in the chapter.

As with other crucial areas of composition, Elgar's orchestration was inevitably susceptible to Wagnerian influence. As I have commented on previously in this thesis, Elgar studied Wagner's scores in minute detail and copied out sections he found particularly impressive. As noted in Chapter V, Elgar was keen on Wagner's method of leitmotiv manipulation and this led Elgar to take Wagner's orchestration to pieces, layer by layer, motivic germ by motivic germ. He found that Wagner's revolutionary redistribution of the orchestral force proceeded along two distinct avenues: the weaving of intricate orchestral counterpoint into a foundation of string sonority on the one hand, and the block opposition of large homogenous choirs, or bands, on the other. The brass were especially appropriate to the subject matter of the *Ring*, with its dominant themes of heroism and strife and its frequent allusions to the nether regions; the result was a prevailing sonority of ponderous low-register brass, including not only bass trumpet, bass trombone and contrabass tuba, but also the specially designed choir of Wagner tubas. By contrast the unfulfilled longing of *Tristan und Isolde* is established largely by way of the melancholy double-reed sonorities; its ecstasy and night-time passion, by the strings. In sheer numbers, the Wagnerian orchestra constitutes a quantum leap from a few dozen to nearly a hundred players, the size assumed by many later composers to be the orchestral

¹²² Elgar (1965) p. 255

norm. Other post-Wagnerian composers like Bruckner, Saint-Saëns and Franck (all of whom were organists) sensed and carried forward a correlation between Wagner’s manipulation of the orchestral choirs and the registration of the pipe organ, just as Elgar did. Elgar retained Wagner’s strong reliance on the horns and low brass, and Elgarian textures are often defined by string tremolo and pizzicato, the latter frequently outlining bass ostinato patterns over which various contrapuntal strategies are played out, but there is a concomitant effort to escape Wagnerian density in a search for clarity and sobriety of expression.

Elgar’s mature method of orchestration is deeply intertwined with his whole compositional process, seemingly pulling different orchestral strands together that he heard elsewhere and liked. He often remarked that melodies came to him as a completed whole, ready scored. This probably has a lot to do with his innate sense of orchestration; he could easily imagine what a melody would sound like on a particular instrument thanks to his intricate knowledge of so many orchestral instruments. A good example of Elgar’s innate sense of what was needed, orchestrally speaking, comes in the second movement of the Second Symphony. Having established a theme depicting deep mourning, Elgar extends the movement’s magnificent main melody with a train of glorious ideas, which reach up to one the great climaxes of all symphonic music. One particularly arresting sequence of phrases, for example, could easily have sounded bold and forthright:

Ex. 1.0: Edward Elgar: Symphony No.2, *Larghetto*, Fig. 73

73 *piu mosso*

Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Violoncello
Contrabass

ppp

However, what Elgar actually does at this point is quite remarkable. In mid-sequence, he suddenly drops the dynamic from *f* to *ppp* – the music suddenly withdraws in the most poignant way and the outpouring of emotion becomes inward and private, and seems to have distinctly Beethovenian twist.

Ex. 1.1: Edward Elgar: Symphony No.2, *Larghetto*, Fig. 73

73 piu mosso

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

Contrabass

f sf cresc. sf ppp p

ppp

Elgar's compositional process evolved throughout his life, but it is well documented that in his mature composition process, elaborations of half a page or so were not necessarily written in order. W.H. Reed described the heterogeneous work on the Third Symphony right at the end of Elgar's life:

He began to get all these fragments – in some instances as many as twenty or thirty consecutive bars – on paper, though they were rarely harmonically complete. A clear vision of the whole symphony was forming in his mind. He would write a portion of the Finale, or of the middle section of the second movement, and the work at the development of the first movement. It did not seem at all odd to him to begin things in the middle, or to switch from one movement to another.¹²³

¹²³ Reed (1973) pp. 170-171

His mind was here, there, and everywhere over the entire surface of the work, evolving developments and cross-references as they struck him, gradually shaping the wealth of interconnections for concatenating in a final pattern.

Through all this phase his piano-playing skills could be drawn into the process. Piano-playing did not usually serve actual thematic invention: he had not (as he was at pains to make clear to the interviewer) 'evolved his thoughts in a keyboard shape, as the early training of so many composers impels them to do. His thoughts came to him, and still do, as abstractions, just music...'¹²⁴ But having assembled a number of ideas, he could use the piano to weave them speculatively into webs of possible structure. In playing over his themes in this way, the presence of other people could stimulate him. It is an experience that comes to many of us – most often perhaps in conversation. Elgar became adept at responding to silent attitudes and measuring silent responses. The very magnetism of his quickness and his insecurity would become the encourager of both. When the music had been elaborated to a certain point on separate sheets, then came the task of arranging their final order. Separate sheets of short score sketch made possible every sort of arrangement. Reed was to see it vividly when Elgar sought his assistance at this point in the writing of the Violin Concerto in 1910:

I found E. striding about with a lot of loose sheets of music paper, arranging them in different parts of the room. Some were already pinned on the backs of chairs, or struck up on the mantelpiece ready for me to play... he had got the main ideas written out, and, as he put it, 'japed them up' to make a coherent piece.¹²⁵

Having set the sketches round the room, he could survey the whole landscape of any proposed formal arrangement in a single sweep.

The central feature of the symphonies and concertos was their almost continuous pattern of melody and variation. From this pattern followed the principles of Elgar's orchestration. One principle was safety. It was vital to protect the melody: so he almost always gave it to more than one instrument at a time, very often slicing the melody up and scoring to be played by several different instruments which would overlap at the ends

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 67

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 23-4

of phrases. In 1890 and for many years after, the standard of orchestral playing in the provinces was so low that it was unsafe to count on always having a player capable of sustaining a long solo line on any given instrument. It was a problem which Schumann had faced in Germany. But Elgar's experience of instruments saved him from the charge of thickness sometimes levelled at Schumann's orchestration. Elgar introduced into his doublings a constant variety.

Using just a few instruments at a time (as Dvořák did) was the best way to achieve variety, because there were always others to be brought in. Certainly there was no variety in using the entire force continuously – a tendency Elgar criticised in other composers: 'It is possible to see what Strauss is driving at when he superimposes one mass on another: but his imitators frequently blaze the whole orchestra in an immature way...' ¹²⁶ In most of his mature symphonic works no solo or combination of instruments was allowed to persist for more than a few bars, with a few exceptions, which will be discussed later in the chapter.

In fact, Elgar's orchestral experience led him to use his constantly varied doublings to solve a practical problem in a unique way. ¹²⁷ Orchestras never had enough rehearsal time, especially to prepare a new work. So Elgar applied the principle of continuously varied doublings to shape the actual phrasing he wanted – using different instruments to touch in points of emphasis at the beginnings and end of a phrase, or to add fresh colour in the middle. In this way the scoring itself phrased the music, and so made its interpretation easier. Jerrold Northrop Moore identifies Elgar's process or technique in distinctly Wagnerian terms. Wagner was well known for making melodies and harmonies work horizontally and vertically (nearly always in different permutations) before he made a final decision. So it should not be too surprising to learn that this is what Elgar did too. Whether or not it was a conscious re-enactment of Wagner's process or not, is in many ways irrelevant. Elgar mirrored Wagner's compositional technique and is therefore unsurprising to realise that the orchestration mirrored Wagner's in so many different ways too.

¹²⁶ Elgar (1968) p. 253

¹²⁷ Point suggested by Bernard Keffe in a masterclass given on conducting symphonic works at Trinity College of Music in 1972. With many thanks to Trinity College of Music for providing me with a transcript of the session: 'How to approach conducting large symphonic works'.

Elgar was an incredibly fast orchestrator once he had it in his mind what he wanted certain moments to sound like. He could be so quick over what Arnold Bax was to call 'the Egyptian labour that is orchestration'¹²⁸ because his instrumental thinking was an aspect of the actual composing. As an interviewer of later years described it: 'His thoughts came to him, and still do, as abstractions – just music, but clothed in one colour or another, determining their disposition on one line or another of the orchestral score.'¹²⁹ The quickness of Elgar's instrumental thinking would become proverbial among his professional friends. One of them wrote:

Elgar was extremely modest about his music; but he was rather proud, and rightly so, of his prodigious skill in laying it out for the orchestra. He knew unerringly what he wanted in the way of orchestral or choral tone, balance and colour... Meyerbeer's plan of writing alternative scorings in differently coloured inks to find out how they sounded was a favourite subject of derision with Elgar.¹³⁰

Another friend remembered:

I once watched him orchestrating something, the 24-stave music paper held at the bottom by his left hand, the first finger on the lowest line, the right hand and pen running up to the top to do a passage for the flutes, coming down to put in something for the brass, lower for the harp, and below, a whole cascade of notes for the violins.¹³¹

Throughout the course of this chapter, three aspects of Elgar's technique of orchestration will be highlighted and explored, all of which demonstrate their close ties with Wagner's music dramas, particularly *Parsifal* and *Tristan*. Indeed these three areas are arguably the aspects that make Elgar's music sound so 'English', which is ironic considering that they were learned from a German master. The areas to be discussed are:

¹²⁸ Arnold Bax, *Farewell, My Youth* (Longmans, Green, 1943) p. 31

¹²⁹ *The Music Student* (August 1916) p. 343

¹³⁰ Reed (1973) p. 149

¹³¹ Richard Powell, *Edward Elgar; Memories of a Variation* (Scholar Press: 1994) p. 127

1. Constant developing and rescoring of material
2. Dovetailing phrases into each other
3. Klangfarbenmelodie

It seems a strange but common phenomenon that musicologists are content to write about instrumentation but reluctant to discuss orchestration in close analysis. But it is precisely the way in which the *actual notes* and melodies are scored that determines a good orchestrator from an average one. It is therefore my intention to focus entirely on these nodules of technique: techniques Elgar gleaned directly from Wagner's scores will be studied in the remainder of this chapter and specific moments will be pinpointed in Elgar's symphonies that resonate with Wagner and through him, the German symphonic canon.

6.2: Elgar's Methodology of Constant Development

Melodic construction is one of the most important branches of all musical art but it is the one branch about which few theorists will ever commit themselves. Like Beethoven before him, Wagner built up his melodies with patient deliberation and great labour and when you look at them closely, it becomes apparent that they are all formed from a few small musical germs, often sewn together in varying permutations. Whilst this is not always the case in some of Wagner's early works, melodies found in the later music dramas, vast in scale as they are, are all intricately connected by rhythmic manipulation. For example, if we look at the opening melody from the *Meistersinger* Prelude we can see how Wagner uses the melody to form part of the second subject:

Ex.1.2: Richard Wagner: Opening of *Die Meistersinger* Prelude and the Prelude's Second Subject



This kind of development is so common that examples are endless, but it is a crucial technique to grasp before turning to Elgar as he continued in this compositional vein with both of the symphonies, particularly the Second.

The huge opening of Elgar's Second Symphony is utterly characteristic of its creator – as a man and a visionary artist, as well as a craftsman and technician. The Second Symphony is packed with musical ideas whose rhythmic thrust is apparently exuberant and cheerful, but actually they are underlined by a subtle melancholy in the drift of the harmony. It is the sort of thing that makes Land of Hope and Glory for instance, a tune of noble resignation rather than Imperial pomposity. This is a deeply characteristic aspect of Elgar's art and it lends his works a multi-layered irony.

Considering the huge amount of literature that exists about the composer, we perhaps never get to what is essentially new and original about the symphonies. They seem to belong to the great Austro-Germanic mainstream, in the wake of Beethoven, Schumann and Brahms, yet deep down Elgar is doing something different from these composers. It has to do with the way Elgar got his inspiration: often in short and immediately arresting ideas that often came to him out of context. Elgar, like Wagner, constructed his scores rather like building up jigsaw puzzles using those inspired snippets as the pieces. Like Wagner, Elgar juggles these fragments, varies and develops them and brings them back in a different order, this seemingly adopting a Brahmsian methodology of developing variation, which ultimately helped to create works on such a large, post-Wagnerian scale.¹³² In effect, it means that from the word go, Elgar is developing his material in a Wagnerian way because both composers chose to develop material from the outset, even though the beginning is where a composer lays out his material in its original form, for a proper development later. However, due to this post-Wagnerian method of constant development, Elgar builds up problems for later on: what is he going to do in the middle of his movement? Is there going to be still more development? The answer to these questions will be dealt with in due course.

Elgar is rightly considered to be one of the great masters of the late-romantic orchestra. But if you look at the opening pages of the Second Symphony, which are black with notes, you might be forgiven for thinking that it is over-scored. This is a

¹³² Walter Frisch, *Brahms and the Principle of Developing Variation* (University of California Press, 1984)

similar experience to looking at Wagner's score – with both composers, there seem to be a number of instrumental layers that would not be missed if they were dropped. This does not fit well with the traditional notion of good orchestration, which is that every note 'tells' and you only use as many as you need to make the musical idea completely clear. But Elgar, like Wagner, was not only thinking about the listener: he was thinking about the players and helping them to achieve maximum momentum in transmitting his own energy. If a number of the wind instruments, for instance, were not playing, we might not notice. But the fact that they do play contributes something to the communal orchestral experience, enabling greater electricity to be generated, as is the case in so many of Wagner's vast scores. Elgar knew all about orchestral psychology and believed in making the player's jobs as enjoyable as possible. A young clarinetist once asked Elgar why he gave his bass clarinet a long line of music to play in the middle of a full orchestral tutti, when you would never hear it. Elgar pointed to the next page where the bass clarinet had an exposed solo – he was giving the player a chance to warm up away from the spotlight, so that the solo might be more enjoyable and better played.¹³³

Perhaps the most important things to keep in mind is that the fundamental basis of all Elgar's orchestral thought is the string orchestra. In the opening paragraph of the Second Symphony all the basics of the music are present in the strings.

¹³³ Episode recounted in Moore (1984) p. 286

Ex.1.3: Edward Elgar: String Opening to the Second Symphony

This musical score shows the first three measures of the String Opening to the Second Symphony by Edward Elgar. It features five staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass. The key signature is two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The Violin I and Violin II parts begin with a 'V' marking and a forte (*f*) dynamic. The Viola part enters in the second measure with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic. The Violoncello and Contrabass parts also enter in the second measure, with the Violoncello marked *f* and the Contrabass marked *ff*. The dynamics for the Violoncello and Contrabass change to *sf* (sforzando) in the third measure. The score illustrates a clear division of labor: the violins play the primary melodic line, while the viola, cello, and bass provide harmonic support and a strong bass line.

It is a simple musical layout; a dominating melodic line at the top, basic harmonies in the middle and the strong bass line as a foundations: three elements. You would therefore be forgiven for concluding, and indeed many composers would have done this, that the violins would play the top, middle instruments the harmony and cellos and basses on the bass line. But Elgar preferred to individualise his player's parts more subtly: it was part of his orchestral philosophy to manage a democratic sharing of functions and you can see this at work even within the first three bars of the piece. Actually, the first violins do play the thematically important line, as you might expect:

Ex. 1.4: Edward Elgar, Symphony No. 2, *Allegro vivace e nobilmente*, bars. 1-12.

This musical score shows the first 12 bars of the first movement of Edward Elgar's Symphony No. 2, specifically the Violin I part. The key signature is two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The score is divided into four systems, each containing two staves. The first system shows bars 1-3, with dynamics *f*, *ff*, and *sf*. The second system shows bars 4-6, with dynamics *sf*, *ff*, and *sf*. The third system shows bars 7-9, with dynamics *sf*, *ff*, and *sf*. The fourth system shows bars 10-12, with dynamics *sf*, *ff*, and *sf*. The Violin I part is marked with a 'V' at the beginning of each system. The score demonstrates a democratic sharing of functions, with the Violin I part playing a thematically important line throughout the first 12 bars.

But one must observe what the second violins are doing: they begin by doubling the notes the first violins played, add some reinforcing chords and then they play in thirds with the firsts before returning to the top:

Ex. 1.5: Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 2, *Allegro vivace e nobilmente*, bars 1-12.

Violin II

The musical score for Violin II consists of four staves. The first staff (bars 1-3) begins with a 'V' marking above the first measure, followed by a 'f' dynamic. The second staff (bars 4-6) starts with a '4' marking above the first measure, followed by a 'ff' dynamic. The third staff (bars 7-9) starts with a '7' marking above the first measure, followed by 'sf' dynamics. The fourth staff (bars 10-12) starts with a '10' marking above the first measure, followed by 'sf' dynamics. The score includes various musical notations such as eighth notes, sixteenth notes, and chords.

The violas do take responsibility for the harmonies in the middle, but they also take responsibility for the tune as well:

Ex. 1.6: Edward Elgar, Symphony No. 2, *Allegro vivace e nobilmente*, bars 1-11

Viola

5

8

10

div

The cellos perform two functions – a very Wagnerian and Elgarian procedure. Firstly, they start by doubling the big unison signal with which the violins launch the movement and then they abandon that line to switch to the boldly leaping bass line. However, totally unexpectedly, they jump upwards by nearly two octaves in the middle of the phrase to double the violin theme, complete with great chord across four strings. Then they go back to the bass. All this complex activity happens within the space of three bars. It is a line that adds great vigour to the whole picture:

Ex. 1.7: Edward Elgar, Symphony No. 2, *Allegro vivace e nobilmente*, bars 1-12.

Violoncello

4

8

11

f

ff

sf

ff sf

sf

sf

Finally, here is what the double basses play. At last they provide something more straightforward: they give us the bottom line unadorned. A good solid foundation to a multi-layered sound picture.

Ex. 1.8: Edward Elgar: Symphony No.2, *Allegro vivace e nobilmente*, bars 1-12.

Contrabass

5

9

ff *sf* *sf* *ff sf* *sf* *ff* *sf* *decrescendo*

The horns, as always in Elgar and Wagner’s scores, are hard at work. Together with the oboes and the cor anglais, they start by sharing the violas harmonic duties, but do not play quite the same notes, reflecting Elgar’s individualisation once again. Then, at the end of the phrase, they join the violin melody.

Ex. 1.9: Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 2, *Allegro vivace e nobilmente*, bars. 1-12.

Oboe

Cor Anglais

Horn in F

Horn in F

f *sf* *f* *sf* *f* *sf* *f* *sf*

The trumpets have a strictly rhythmic developmental function. They mark the syncopation of the main theme, but they also double three notes of the melody at its peak.

Ex. 2.0: Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 2, *Allegro vivace e nobilmente*, bars. 1-3.

Trumpet in B♭

Trumpet in B♭

f *ff*

Add all of these elements together and you get this commanding sonority, full of life and vigour.

Ex. 2.1: Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 2, Opening

Oboe

Cor Anglais

Horn in F

Horn in F

Trumpet in B♭

Trumpet in B♭

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

Contrabass

f *ff* *sf*

Using the same way of building up a melody through several parts united by a rhythmic cell that permeates the texture, Wagner’s model is always traceable. If we take a snapshot of the opening the Prelude to *Meistersinger*, we find exactly the same methodology of building blocks. Almost everything we hear in the Prelude is derived from the opening melody:

Ex.2.2: Richard Wagner: Opening Melody from the Prelude from *Die Meistersinger*



So, by the time we get to bar 14, Wagner has modulated to F major but is constantly developing rhythmic cells set out at the start:

Ex.2.3: Richard Wagner: Rhythmic Development in the Prelude from *Die Meistersinger*

Oboe *ff*

Clarinet in B \flat *ff*

Bassoon *ff*

Horn in F *ff*

Horn in F *ff*

Trumpet in C *f*

Trombone *f*

Trombone *f*

Violin I *ff*

Violin II *ff* *tr* *p*

Viola *ff*

Violoncello *f*

This musical score page, numbered 238, contains ten staves for various instruments. The woodwind section includes Oboe, Clarinet in B \flat , and Bassoon, all marked *ff*. The brass section consists of two Horns in F (both *ff*), a Trumpet in C (*f*), and two Trombones (both *f*). The string section includes Violin I (*ff*), Violin II (*ff* with trills and a *p* dynamic), Viola (*ff*), and Violoncello (*f*). The score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first three measures show a complex interplay of notes and rests across the instruments, with many notes beamed together in eighth and sixteenth notes. The woodwinds and strings provide a rhythmic foundation, while the brass instruments add harmonic texture and dynamic contrast.

Ob. 4

Cl.

Bsn.

Hn.

Hn.

C Tpt.

Tbn.

Tbn.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

tr

Detailed description: This is a page of a musical score, page 239, featuring a woodwind and brass section. The score is written for three measures. The woodwind section includes Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Bsn.), Horns (Hn.), and Cor Anglais (C Tpt.). The brass section includes Trombone (Tbn.). The string section includes Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vc.). The Oboe part starts with a measure rest followed by a four-measure rest, then plays a melodic line. The Clarinet part follows a similar pattern. The Bassoon part has a melodic line in the first measure, then rests. The Horns and Cor Anglais parts have melodic lines. The Trombone parts have melodic lines. The Violin I part has a melodic line. The Violin II part has a melodic line with a trill (tr) in the second measure. The Viola part has a melodic line. The Violoncello part has a melodic line.

Elgar's democratic treatment of the orchestra has already been discussed – the way he obviously likes to give each player a turn in the spotlight, allotting independent functions to the players. That is one way of looking at the method of orchestration, but in the context of a section that is always changing and evolving, this kind of orchestration also gives us a constant play of light and shade and this point is perfectly highlighted a few bars later. Here, Elgar toys with another striking texture – the difference is subtle, but palpable. The violins, as always, present the basic melody:

Ex. 2.4: Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 2, *Allegro vivace e nobilmente*, bars 7-10.

Violin I

Violin II

Vln. I

Vln. II

Added to this is one sensational element that stands out like a flash of light – a little spurting upward figure played by the violas:

Ex. 2.5: Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 2, *Allegro vivace e nobilmente*, bars 7-8.

Viola

The trumpets and horns take over this and add a long swelling note to it. No other instrument is playing and it therefore gives the line a new bold, primal colouring.

Ex. 2.6: Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 2, *Allegro vivace e nobilmente*, bars 7-8.

Wagner, like Elgar, liked to punctuate a sonorous melodic line with similar flashes of light coming from the middle of the orchestral sound. For example, if we look at *Death and Transfiguration* from *Tristan*, we see how the violas perform an almost identical role to Elgar's as described above.

Ex.2.7: Richard Wagner: Violas Punctuating the Melodic Line, *Tristan und Isolde*, bars 12-15

Oboe

Clarinet in A

Bassoon

Viola

Violoncello

Contrabass

pp

3

3

3

2

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

pp

3

3

3

3

3

3

Similarly bold orchestral colour contrasts occur in Elgar’s woodwind. The clarinets with flutes, and then oboes, sail above the strings to brilliant affect. They seem to be exchanging thoughts with antiphonal questions and answers, but provide something like a painters flecks of light on a canvas:

Ex. 2.8: Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 2, *Allegro vivace e nobilmente*, bars 7-8.

The image shows a musical score for two woodwind parts: three Flutes and one Clarinet in Bb. The score is for bars 7 and 8 of the second movement of Edward Elgar's Symphony No. 2, 'Allegro vivace e nobilmente'. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats) and the time signature is 12/8. The Flute parts are written in treble clef and feature a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together. The Clarinet in Bb part is written in bass clef and provides a rhythmic accompaniment with eighth and sixteenth notes, including some grace notes. A dynamic marking of 'sf' (sforzando) is present at the end of bar 8 for the Clarinet part.

The total effect looks like this: flickering and changing constantly – it is another step in the journey of continual development.

Ex. 2.9: Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 2, *Allegro vivace e nobilmente*, bars 7-8.

This musical score excerpt shows the orchestration for bars 7 and 8 of the second movement of Edward Elgar's Symphony No. 2. The score is written for a full orchestra, including three flutes, a clarinet in B-flat, a trumpet in B-flat, and strings (Violin I, Violin II, and Viola). The key signature is two flats (B-flat major or D-flat minor), and the time signature is 3/4. The music is characterized by rapid, rhythmic patterns and dynamic contrasts. The flutes play a melodic line with slurs and accents. The clarinet and trumpet provide harmonic support with rhythmic figures. The strings play a driving, rhythmic pattern. Dynamic markings include *ff* (fortissimo), *sf* (sforzando), and *f* (forte).

So far, a fair amount of time on disconcertingly small phrases, but Elgar, following his Wagnerian model closely, was creating an enormous structure from these tiny building blocks and each one is intricately worked out. The whole of the opening span of the Second Symphony shuffles re-shuffles and develops these short blocks of material. They share melodies and rhythms and they develop each others ideas. For example, looking at the violin line, we hear:

Ex.3.0: Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 2, *Allegro vivace e nobilmente*, bars 2-3.

This musical score excerpt shows the Violin I part for bars 2 and 3 of the second movement of Edward Elgar's Symphony No. 2. The key signature is two flats (B-flat major or D-flat minor), and the time signature is 3/4. The melody is characterized by rapid, rhythmic patterns and dynamic contrasts. The Violin I part plays a driving, rhythmic pattern. Dynamic markings include *ff* (fortissimo) and *sf* (sforzando).

Four bars later, the evolution of this melody has reached this stage:

Ex. 3.1: Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 2, *Allegro vivace e nobilmente*, bars 7-18.

Violin I
Violin II
Viola

ff sf sf sf sf

This musical score shows the first three staves of a section from Elgar's Symphony No. 2, bars 7-18. The staves are Violin I, Violin II, and Viola. The key signature is two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The music is in a 3/4 time signature. The Violin I and Violin II parts start with a forte (*ff*) dynamic and then move to a sforzando (*sf*) dynamic. The Viola part starts with a sforzando (*sf*) dynamic. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some rests and ties.

Now, Elgar takes the second half of that phrase and develops it by itself:

Ex. 3.2: Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 2, *Allegro vivace e nobilmente*, bars 13-14.

Violin I
Violin II
Viola

mf cresc. mf cresc. mf cresc. ten. ten. ten.

This musical score shows the next three staves of the section, bars 13-14. The staves are Violin I, Violin II, and Viola. The key signature remains two flats, and the time signature is 3/4. The music continues with a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes. The Violin I and Violin II parts start with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic and a crescendo (*cresc.*) marking. The Viola part also starts with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic and a crescendo (*cresc.*) marking. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some rests and ties.

Elgar then reverts back to the earlier phrase and extends it with subtle differences.

Ex. 3.3: Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 2, *Allegro vivace e nobilmente*, Fig. 4.

The image displays a musical score for six staves, organized into two systems of three staves each. The top system includes Violin I, Violin II, and Viola. The bottom system includes Violin I (labeled 'Vln. I'), Violin II (labeled 'Vln. II'), and Viola (labeled 'Vla.'). The key signature is B-flat major (two flats) and the time signature is 3/4. The score features various musical notations including slurs, accents, and dynamic markings such as *sf* (sforzando) and *div* (diviso). The first system shows a melodic line in the violins with a *sf* marking, while the Viola plays a more rhythmic accompaniment. The second system continues the melodic development in the violins, with a *sf* marking in the Violin II part, and the Viola providing a sustained harmonic support.

This idea is akin to what Wagner achieved in the *Tristan* Prelude. Like the Elgar example, Wagner uses the opening rhythmic gesture to derive the entire opening section of the Prelude, in one long seamless gesture.

Ex.3.4: Richard Wagner: Opening of Prelude from *Tristan und Isolde*

The musical score for the opening of the Prelude from *Tristan und Isolde* by Richard Wagner. The score is in A minor (three flats) and 3/4 time. It features five staves: Oboe, Cor Anglais, Clarinet in A, Bassoon, and Violoncello. The Oboe, Cor Anglais, and Clarinet in A parts enter with a melodic line marked 'p' (piano). The Bassoon and Violoncello parts enter with a lower melodic line, with the Violoncello marked 'pp' (pianissimo). The score shows the first seven measures of the piece, with a repeat sign at the end of the first system.

In almost the exact same way Elgar develops his melody above, Wagner weaves the same rhythmic pivot through his orchestral texture, so that everything grows organically from one crucial idea. Wagner's opening melodic cells are, however, linked with famously ambiguous harmony, whilst Elgar's opening is firmly rooted in Eb major. This is a classic example of Elgar extracting one small aspect of Wagner's methodology and using it for his own end: in this case, Wagner's rhythmic pivot is adopted and made into something completely new and exciting.

Moving back to Elgar, a final burst of energy comes from what seems to be a new theme but, as with Wagner, it too is drawn from previous ideas. The rhythm and outline are all developments of earlier motifs and the story of this opening, like Wagner's *Tristan* Prelude, is one of constant contrast and development. These melodic fragments are

thrown against each other and constantly re-worked, in a subconscious bid to reconcile Brahms's developing variation with Wagnerian large-scale formal constructs.

Ex. 3.5: Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 2, *Allegro vivace e nobilmente*, Fig. 5.

The image shows a musical score for four instruments: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello. The music is in 4/4 time and B-flat major. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The score is divided into two measures. In the first measure, Violin I and Violoncello have a *cresc.* (crescendo) marking, while Violin II and Viola have an *f* (forte) marking. In the second measure, all instruments have a *ff* (fortissimo) marking, and there is a *2* (second ending) marking above the Violin II and Violoncello staves.

Elgar then prepares the way for his second group of themes. There are certainly contrasts in the musical ideas but relaxation is still a long way off. The music is unsettled and its beauty is that of ambivalence and restlessness. You never know what the next chord is going to bring.

Ex. 3.6: Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 2, *Allegro vivace e nobilmente*, Fig. 8.

in tempo, ♩ = 106

Violin I
pp espress. legato

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello
pp cresc. dim.

Contrabass
pp cresc. dim.

3

Vln. I

Vln. II
unis.

Vla.
div

Vc.

Cb.

The expansiveness of that paragraph lays the foundation for what is going to be a section of great breadth. When Elgar brings that melody back a little later, it could have sounded like this:

Ex. 3.7: Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 2, *Allegro vivace e nobilmente*, Fig. 13, direct recapitulation.

13

Bassoon

Horn in F

Horn in F

Violin I

Viola

3

Bsn.

Hn.

Hn.

Vln. I

Vla.

pp

unis pizz

p

arco

But Elgar did not do this. Instead, in a Wagnerian-inspired moment, he places two woodwind solos over the top of the string melody. This is a common move in Wagner's scores. For example, if we look at the *Siegfried Idyll* from bar 180, the string orchestra move in steady counterpoint through three keys before arriving at B major at bar 200, where an oboe solo floats above, sounding as if it is being played from another world.

Ex.3.8: Richard Wagner: Solo Oboe in the *Siegfried Idyll*, bar 200-216

200

Oboe

p dolce

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

207

Ob.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

211

Ob.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

When Elgar uses a solo instrument so that the instrument's voice speaks to the audience unalloyed, it is often possible to feel that he is taking us into his confidence, revealing some touching confession and the personal stance is also taken from Wagner. Solo statements in both composers' music are rare; Elgar, like Wagner, preferred mixtures of orchestral colours, so when solo moments do happen, they are to be cherished.

Ex. 3.9: Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 2, *Allegro vivace e nobilmente*, Fig. 13.

13

Oboe *pp espress.*

Clarinet in B \flat

Bassoon

Horn in F *pp*

Horn in F

Violin I

Viola *unis pizz* *p*

Violoncello

Contrabass *ppp*

15

Ob.

Cl. *p espress.*

Bsn.

Hn.

Hn.

Vln. I *pp*

Vla. *arco*

Vc. *p pizz*

Cb.

After this interlude of calm and intimacy, Elgar begins to marshal his forces to bring this exposition to a close, but as always he seems to be developing rather than exposing. He suddenly launches a mad development – moments like this are so characteristic of Elgar. The lower strings give out a new version of a familiar idea.

Ex. 4.0: Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 2, *Allegro vivace e nobilmente*, Fig. 17.

This musical score excerpt features five staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass. The key signature is two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 12/8. The Violin I and II parts are marked *ff brillante* and feature rapid sixteenth-note passages. The Viola part is marked *ff* and includes some slurs. The Violoncello and Contrabass parts are also marked *ff* and play more rhythmic, dotted-note figures. Dynamic markings include *sf* (sforzando) in the Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello parts. The score is divided into two measures by a bar line.

On top of this, the violins and upper wind instruments dash madly across the landscape whilst the trumpets add brilliant staccato figures. Here is Elgar’s sheer creative energy and joy in his ingenuity.

Ex. 4.1: Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 2, *Allegro vivace e nobilmente*, Fig. 17.

256

2

Fl.

Fl.

Ob.

C. A.

E♭ Cl.

Cl.

Cl.

Bsn.

Hn.

Hn.

Tpt.

Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

257

This is a page from a musical score, labeled with the number "3" in the upper left corner. It contains staves for the following instruments: Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Cor Anglais (C. A.), E-flat Clarinet (Eb Cl.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Bsn.), Horn (Hn.), Trumpet (Tpt.), Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Contrabass (Cb.). The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, beams, slurs, and dynamic markings like *sf* (sforzando) and *ff* (fortissimo). There are also numerical markings like "2" and "3" placed above or below notes, possibly indicating fingerings or multi-measure rests. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is not explicitly shown but appears to be common time based on the lack of bar lines between measures.

Elgar's exposition has been about as far as you can get from an orderly Germanic laying out of ideas – it is a turbulent journey full of drama, surprise and constant development. So what does he do next? I said earlier that he faces the problem of where to go because he has spent so much time developing his material in the exposition. But there is not really a problem, as what happens next was one of the first ideas he had for the work. In fact, it is the soul of the movement, almost of the whole symphony. All the music we have been dealing with so far is designed to lead up to this moment and Elgar maximises the contrast. The dynamic symphonic process now gives way to an extraordinary dream world. The restless thematic working of short thematic snippets is replaced by a long poignant melody. We have had our development and this enables us to enter a new visionary world. We enter it as if down a long tunnel through hypnotically repeated notes with pastel colours and the ghostly memories of a once energetic figure are heard underneath.

Ex. 4.2: Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 2, *Allegro vivace e nobilmente*, Fig. 23.

Flute

Oboe *ppp* *ppp*

Clarinet in Bb

Bassoon

Horn in F

Horn in F

Violin I

Violin II *pp*

Viola *pp* *dim.*

Viola *pp* *dim.*

Violoncello *pp*

Contrabass *pp*

Detailed description: This page of a musical score covers measures 23, 24, and 25. The woodwind section includes Flute, Oboe, Clarinet in Bb, and Bassoon. The brass section consists of two Horns in F. The string section includes Violin I, Violin II, two Violas, Violoncello, and Contrabass. The key signature has three flats (Bb, Eb, Ab) and the time signature is 12/8. The Flute part has a long note in measure 23 and a short phrase in measure 25. The Oboe part has a melodic line in measure 23 and a long note in measure 25. The Clarinet in Bb and Bassoon are mostly silent. The Horns in F are also silent. Violin II has a melodic line in measures 23 and 24. The Violas have a melodic line in measure 25. The Violoncello and Contrabass have a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes throughout the measures.

4 24

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

Hn.

Hn.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

pp

pp

pp

arco.

The musical score is arranged in two systems. The first system contains the Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Bsn.), Horns (Hn.), Violins I (Vln. I), Violins II (Vln. II), Violas (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Contrabass (Cb.). The second system contains the Horns (Hn.), Violins I (Vln. I), Violins II (Vln. II), Violas (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Contrabass (Cb.). The score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). Measure 4 shows the Flute and Oboe with a whole note rest, while the Clarinet and Bassoon have a half note rest. Measure 24 shows the Flute and Oboe with a half note rest, while the Clarinet and Bassoon have a half note rest. The unlabeled measure shows the Flute and Oboe with a half note rest, while the Clarinet and Bassoon have a half note rest. The dynamics *pp* (pianissimo) are indicated for the Flute, Oboe, Horns, Violins I, and Violins II. The *arco.* (arco) instruction is indicated for the Violoncello and Contrabass.

7

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

Hn.

Hn.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

pp

pp

pp

pp

pizz

arco.

pp

pp

As is so often the case with Elgar in ‘Wagnerian mode’, we seem to have been allowed to look through a window at a view he is laying out: everything is slowed down; ideas from earlier drift around, but these elements coalesce into a vast intricate backdrop to form one of Elgar’s most inspired melodies.

Above the whole tapestry floats a solo violin, subtly and beautifully differentiated from the rest of the first violins. They muse on the dreaming material we have just been introduced to:

Ex. 4.3: Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 2, *Allegro vivace e nobilmente*, Fig. 28.

Beneath Elgar’s solo, the second violins with a solo viola refer to the very opening of the symphony, which they link up with the dreamy material.

Ex. 4.4: Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 2, *Allegro vivace e nobilmente*, Fig. 28.

Across that tapestry of sound, flutes and the rest of the violas trace scales in thirds. It is as if mist drifts across the new landscape:

Ex. 4.5: Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 2, *Allegro vivace e nobilmente*, Fig. 28.

This musical score excerpt features three staves. The top staff is for Flute, the middle for Viola, and the bottom for Violoncello (labeled 'Vla.'). The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 12/8. The music is characterized by a rich harmonic texture with many accidentals. The Flute and Viola parts have melodic lines with slurs, while the Violoncello part provides a rhythmic and harmonic foundation with repeated eighth-note patterns.

The rich harmonic basis for this sound is provided by muted horns, muted trombones and the bass clarinet: the colours gently alternating. It is worth noting that only one instrument plays the sustained bass note over which the chords are poised – and that is the bass clarinet.

Ex. 4.6: Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 2, *Allegro vivace e nobilmente*, Fig. 28.

28 Più lento. (♩=76)

This musical score excerpt shows three staves for the lower woodwinds and brass. The top staff is Bass Clarinet in B-flat, the middle is Horn in F, and the bottom is Trombone. The tempo is marked 'Più lento' with a quarter note equal to 76 beats per minute. The key signature has two flats. The Bass Clarinet part features a sustained, low-pitched line marked 'pp'. The Horn and Trombone parts play chords and moving lines, with the Horns marked 'ppp' and the Trombone marked 'pp'.

However, the bass clarinet is not totally alone. The double basses quickly drum on the same note with pizzicatos. This is an ominous image of distant unrest and it returns much later in the symphony.

Ex. 4.7: Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 2, *Allegro vivace e nobilmente*, Fig. 28.

The musical score for Ex. 4.7 shows a double bass line. The top staff is marked 'pizz' and the bottom staff is marked 'p' and 'pizz'. The dynamics are 'p' and 'pp'.

Threading its way through this gorgeous panoply of textures is the cellos poignantly searching melody.

Ex. 4.8: Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 2, *Allegro vivace e nobilmente*, Fig. 28.

The musical score for Ex. 4.8 shows a cello line. The dynamics are 'p', 'dolce', 'f', and 'p'.

A similarly high searching cello occurs in Wagner’s *Meistersinger* Prelude when Walter’s love theme is presented. Violins and violas take the melody and the cellos take it over, occasionally dovetailed by the upper strings, and the reappearing in the top of its register.

Ex.4.9: Richard Wagner: *Meistersinger* Prelude, Cello theme, bars 70-80

The musical score for Ex.4.9 shows a cello line. The dynamics are 'ff espress', 'mf', and 'sempre ff espress'.

It is easy to follow Elgar from now on. He brings back his material and then makes a brilliant dash for home in the movements’ final bars, but nothing can be taken for

granted. No ideas sound exactly the same as when we first heard them but there is one vital non-appearance: none of the material in that dream sequence reappears and that turns out to be very significant.

6.3: Endless Melodies: Elgar's Use of Dovetailing in the Symphonies

Dovetailing is an orchestral technique, adopted by composers from the late eighteenth century onwards, used primarily to add light and shade to a melodic line. This is achieved mainly by one instrument/group of instruments playing the melody whilst other instruments are added to the same line for very short moments, adding emphasis to a particular moment by causing flashes of light and shade to the overall texture. Mozart, Beethoven, Haydn, Berlioz, Wagner and Tchaikovsky were just a few composers who dovetailed their orchestral melodies to add an extra glimmer to the texture.¹³⁴

Elgar's individuality of orchestration lies primarily in his highly developed faculty for blending tone-colours or dovetailing; the primary colours of the orchestra are rarely employed in an unmixed state. In the first movement of the First Symphony there are only about twenty bars left entirely to the strings and hardly any to either the woodwind to brass families alone. The parts are distributed in a manner which provides plenty of colour-contrasts, but these merge into the other without exposing clearly defined boundaries, much like Wagner's use of the same technique. This elaborate process of blending is carried out, sometimes with the object of creating particular qualities of sound, and at other times with a view to adjusting the balance of tone. Elgar's colouring is never very obvious, neither is his method of arriving at the various tints transparent or easy to reconstruct without seeing the full score: rather we hear the melody as a whole, even though the line itself has been touched and lightened by different instruments along the way. The minutely graded inflections of tone-colour often require careful attention if they are to be heard and appreciated, and the more delicate textures especially are more highly organised than might be expected from simply hearing the result. In fuller orchestration the parts are often dovetailed from all

¹³⁴ For example, see: Haydn, *Symphonie Concertante* in Bb, first movement; Mozart, Symphony No. 36 ('Linz'), last movement; Beethoven, Symphony No. 4 & 7, first and last movements; Berlioz, *Roman Carnival Overture*; Wagner, *Siegfried Funeral Music*; Tchaikovsky, *Romeo and Juliet Fantastie Overture*.

over the orchestra with such tone-weight that will ensure proportionate prominence and adequate penetration. The details of how Elgar achieved this method are interesting, the more so because they reveal methods that are very close to those employed by Wagner.

There are two types of dovetailing commonly found in Wagner's scores, which are also common in Elgar's and these will form the main discussion of this section, focusing primarily on Elgar's First Symphony and Wagner's *Parsifal*. They are:

1. Dovetailing that occurs mid-phrase, where the melody is presented by an instrument/group of instruments and this line is inflected by another instrument/group of instruments on a small number of notes and falls away almost immediately. The additional instrument/instruments adds an extra layer of colour for a few seconds and then melts away.
2. Dovetailing that occurs when the melodic line is passed from one instrument/group of instruments to another with a seamless break, often giving the impression of what Wagner called Infinite Melody.

Whilst it would be a fair observation that Wagner favoured the latter and Elgar the former, it does not mean that each composer employed one method exclusively. Elgar favoured the first type of dovetailing and this has led some Elgar scholars to comment on the chameleon-like quality of Elgar's scoring. Wagner, on the other hand, favoured the second technique because it made it easier to manipulate his complex web of leitmotifs, whilst adding splashes of light and shade at the same time would mean that there were too many musical ideas occurring at the same time. Wagner only tends to adopt the first technique when the musical texture thins out and the subtleties of dovetailing can be heard.

Infinite Melody is possible within both dovetailed and *klangfarbenmelodie* textures, the difference being the way in which the orchestral forces are blended. Dovetailed Infinite Melody is employed by both Wagner and Elgar to add a momentary glimmer of light or shade, or to blend one instruments' melodic line with another's. *Klangfarbenmelodie*, on the other hand, draws attention to the differences in tone colour

and swaps about frequently between one another. This way, the audible differences have attention drawn to them whilst with dovetailing, the flashes of light and shade pass by so quickly that very often, they are not perceived consciously by the audience – it just happens and passes by.

Using the two definitions of dovetailing (set out above) to form the structure of the remainder of this section, examples will be provided from both Wagner’s and Elgar’s scores to demonstrate that one of the methods Elgar was best known for, and for which he showed advanced mastery, stemmed from a close study of Wagner’s late music-dramas.

The opening bars of the Prelude to *Parsifal* clearly demonstrate the first type of dovetailing defined (where you have one melody that is injected with light and shade by other instruments, forming momentary glimmers).

Ex. 5.0: Richard Wagner: Prelude, *Parsifal*

The musical score for the opening of the Prelude to *Parsifal* by Richard Wagner is presented for six instruments: English Horn, Clarinet in Bb, Bassoon, Violin I, Violin II, and Violoncello. The key signature is three flats (E-flat major/C minor) and the time signature is 4/4. The music begins with a unison melody in the lower strings and woodwinds. The English Horn enters in the second bar, playing a descending line. Dynamics include piano (*p*), forte (*f*), and diminuendo (*dim.*). The score ends with a *p* and *piu p* marking.

Here, violins, cellos, bassoons and clarinet all play the opening theme in unison, which is then dovetailed by the alto oboe in the second bar and drops out in the final bar. The additional touch of the oboe adds an extra sense of melancholy to the opening and helps to set the tone for the entire of Act I. This opening leitmotif is of imperative importance to the music drama and is repeated throughout the Prelude, always with the same

dovetailed scoring.¹³⁵ This moment is mirrored by the opening of Elgar's First Symphony, but not only by the key and time signature. Elgar scores his theme in a similar way: flute, clarinet, bassoon and viola play the melody, whilst the lower flutes dovetail.

Ex. 5.1: Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 1, Andante Nobilemente e semplice, bars 1-7.

¹³⁵ For example, it re-enters at bar 11-12 and 20-24 always with the same instruments and dovetailing as the opening.

Flute *p dolce*

Flute *p*

Flute *p*

Clarinet in B \flat *p dolce*

Bassoon *p dolce*

Viola *p dolce*

5

Fl.

Fl.

Fl.

Cl.

Bsn.

Vla.

At Figure 5: 3, Elgar uses the same technique to emphasise the start of a new section by dovetailing the flutes against the clarinets, bassoons and upper strings.

Ex. 5.2: Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 1, *Andante Nobilmente e semplice*, Fig. 5.

Allegro. $\text{♩} = 104$

The musical score for Ex. 5.2 is a page from a manuscript or printed score for Edward Elgar's Symphony No. 1, specifically the *Andante Nobilmente e semplice* movement, Figure 5. The tempo is marked 'Allegro' with a quarter note equal to 104 beats per minute. The key signature has one flat (Bb). The score is arranged in a system with six staves: three for woodwinds (Flute, Clarinet in Bb, Bassoon) and three for strings (Violin I, Violin II, Viola). The woodwinds and strings play a melodic line, while the flutes punctuate it with short, sharp notes. The dynamics range from piano (p) to forte (f) and mezzo-forte (mf). The score shows a dovetailing technique where the upper instruments (Flutes) punctuate the melodic line of the lower instruments (Clarinet, Bassoon, Violins, Viola).

These tiny flashes of light may seem fairly insignificant on the page, but in performance they jump out of the orchestra to seek the attention of the listener. And it happens everywhere. Whilst Wagner tends to only use dovetailing in *Parsifal* whenever the opening leitmotif is heard, Elgar’s dovetailing permeates the scoring on every level. It is most commonly found, as shown, where the strings or lower wind have the melody and the upper wind punctuate the line, but it also happens on a much grander scale. For example, as the symphony comes to a close, Elgar completely lets go at Fig. 146 and dovetails two themes as they battle through the thick orchestral texture, trying to win musical dominance. The themes are familiar by this point as Elgar has developed them endlessly throughout the course of the symphony, but it is only towards the end that they are drawn together and pitched against one another. The upper first violins have one theme, which is punctuated by flutes, upper second violins, upper cellos and even at

times, by the basses. Against this, the oboes, cor anglais, bass clarinet, horns and trombones play the funeral theme, with added glimmers from the lower first and second violins and violas. The result is spectacular: half of the orchestra fighting against the other whilst the audience is unaware as to which sections the melodies are coming from – they just emerge from the dense texture.

Ex. 5.3: Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 1, *Lento-Allegro*, Fig. 146.

4

Fl.

Ob.

C. A.

Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

Hn.

Hn.

Tpt.

Tpt.

Tbn.

Vln. I

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vln. II

Vla.

Vla.

Vc.

Vc.

Cb.

3 3 3

sf

sf

sf

sf

This moment sounds particularly Wagnerian for two reasons. The first is due to the way Elgar has layered his themes. He has a strong quaver motion in theme (A) driving directly against the long, funeral march (B) and whilst the ear is immediately caught the quaver movement, the listener cannot help but be drawn in by the slow, lyrical melody at the same time. Wagner uses exactly the same method of pitching a moving leitmotif against a slow, lyrical motif prolifically in his music dramas, probably most memorably in the Prelude to *Die Meistersingers*. It is towards the end of the Prelude that we really hear where Elgar got his inspiration from, for we find precisely the same melodious interests being manipulated in precisely the same ways. It is at this moment we realise exactly how much Elgar had learnt from Wagner's scoring. He had learnt his orchestration lessons well. So well, in fact, that you can not hear where Wagner stops and Elgar begins.

The second type of dovetailing we notice time and time again in Elgar is the sort where a melody is presented and is dovetailed and continued by an instrument with a similar tone-colour. This results in what sounds like a free and endless melody and something akin to what Wagner described as Infinite Melody. Infinite melody (*unendliche Melodie*) can also be translated as 'endless melody' or 'unending melody' and is one of those Wagnerian coinages (like total artwork of the future) that provided an easy target for the composer's detractors, who equated it with the seemingly amorphous, 'unmelodic' character of his vocal and instrumental lines and with the 'endless' proportions of the operas as a whole.¹³⁶ Since then, the phrase has stuck as an evocation of Wagner's open-ended musical syntax, above all the ubiquitous tendency in the later operas to elide cadential junctures by means of deceptive resolution or interruptive techniques. While Wagner used the phrase 'infinite melody' only once in '*Music of the Future*', the idea is adumbrated earlier on too.¹³⁷ 'Infinite melody' is presented as the musical counterpart to Wagner's new conception of poetic-dramatic structure, although one could cite the instrumental Prelude to *Tristan und Isolde* as a paradigm of the kind of seamless, linear-evolutionary process connoted by the term. The general tendency towards cadential elision and free, irregular phrase structure of vocal lines is already characteristic of *Das Rheingold*, where its origins in traditional recitative idioms are still

¹³⁶ See, 'A Wagnerian Glossary' in *The Wagner Compendium*. Edited by Barry Millington (Thames and Hudson, 1992) p.235

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 130

evident. Wagner himself did not equate the term with these or any technical characteristics however. Instead, he emphasised the aesthetic implications of a melody that never sacrifices dramatic, gestural expressivity or musical ‘meaning’ to easily apprehended but formulaic (meaningless) melodic patterns. In *Music of the Future* Wagner emphasised the correlation of ‘infinite melody’ with the emancipation of the libretto from the constraints of rhyming, metrical verse. The consequent emancipation of melody allowed the composer to forgo textual repetition for the sake of filling out the musical phrase. The ‘form’ of *Tristan und Isolde* – its infinitely evolving melodic-motivic substance – is said to be entirely prepared or prefigured in the ‘weave of words and verses.’¹³⁸

As I will demonstrate in this section, ‘infinite melody’ in both Wagner and Elgar’s scores is possible within dovetailed and *klangfarben* textures; the difference being that with dovetailed ‘infinite melody’, the ‘join’ is not heard and the instrument taking over is of a similar tone-colour, whereas with *klangfarben* ‘infinite melody’, the ‘join’ is still seamless but the audience is supposed to hear that another instrument has taken over, as the instruments do not share the same tone-colour – like brass handing over to the viola, rather than strings passing to the flutes or clarinets.

One such example of Wagner dovetailing a melodic line so as to protect the melody occurs early on in the *Tristan* Prelude. Wagner thins out the orchestral texture between bars 6-10 so that a soaring cello theme can penetrate the texture from bar 11. This cello theme is punctuated by viola and bass and soothed from above by clarinet and bassoon. At bar 22, the first violin joins the melancholy cello, reinforcing the melody in all of its contours for four bars and just as the violin and cello seem ready to fade away, the theme is picked up by the second violin and viola and extended for four further bars, whilst the oboe and clarinet introduce a new melody, the rhythm of which becomes a pivot for the following six bars.

Ex. 5.4: Richard Wagner: Prelude, *Tristan und Isolde*, bars 11-29

¹³⁸ Richard Wagner, *Complete Prose Works*, edited by William Ashton Ellis (London, 1899; Reprinted New York: Broude brothers, 1966) Vol. VII, p. 123

11

Oboe

Clarinet in A

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

Contrabass

ff *p*

ff *p* *pizz* *arco*

ff *p*

p *f* *dim.*

ff *p* *pizz* *arco*

ff *p* *f* *dim.* *p*

16

Ob.

Cl.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

p *cresc.* *f* *dim.* *p*

p *cresc.* *f* *dim.* *dolce* *p*

cresc. *f* *dim.* *p*

dim.

21

Ob.

Cl.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

dim. *p* *f* *p* *f*

dim. *p cresc.* *f* *p cresc.*

26

Ob.

Cl.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

p *cresc.* *f*

p *cresc.* *f*

p *cresc.* *f*

p *cresc.* *f*

p *cresc.*

Wagner’s use of the second violin and viola is clear: they are there to protect and extend the melody, whilst forming as clean a bridge as possible. Aurally, there is not a great difference in sonority. Elgar adopts exactly the same musical idea in his First Symphony on several occasions. The first example occurs in the second movement where Elgar orchestrates a melody in the upper winds, predominantly in the flutes, which then is taken over by Violin I for seven bars before it is handed back briefly to the oboes, cor anglais and flutes for three bars before continuing towards a key and textural change in the upper violins. The alteration between violins and upper woodwind, as in the Wagner example, does not cause a major change in tone-colour and as a result the melody passes unnoticed between the instruments forming one long melodic line lasting eighteen bars.

Ex. 5.5: Edward Elgar: Symphony No.1, *Allegro molto*, Fig. 70.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for Edward Elgar's Symphony No. 1, Allegro molto, Figure 70. The first system, labeled '70', features four staves: two for Flute (Fl.), one for Oboe (Ob.), and one for Violin I (Vln. I). The Flute parts play a melodic line starting with a piano (*p*) dynamic, which then softens to *pp* (pianissimo). The Oboe part is silent. Violin I is also silent in this system. The second system, labeled '10', continues the melody. It features four staves: two for Flute (Fl.), one for Oboe (Ob.), and one for Violin I (Vln. I). The Flute parts continue the melody with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The Oboe part enters, playing a melodic line that overlaps with the flute melody. The Violin I part continues the melody, with dynamics *mf* (mezzo-forte) and *sf* (sforzando) indicated. The notation shows a step-by-step process of the melody passing between instruments, with overlapping phrasing.

From this example, the overlapping of Elgar’s phrasing is completely clear: Elgar uses the oboe to bridge the potential change in tone-colour by covering the minim in the violin with two crotchets which then pass up to the flutes in a step-by-step process. This way, we do not hear:

Violin - flutes - violin

chopping and changing, but:

Violin – flutes - violin

with the oboes covering the link.

oboes oboes

And this is exactly how Wagner achieves the same effect. Looking back at the example from *Tristan und Isolde*, you can see that Wagner avoids an abrupt change in tone colour by using the seconds and violas to smooth over the break.

This technique of smoothing over the bridge as a melody is passed from one instrument to another is a common phenomenon in Elgar's symphonic scores, but it is occasionally taken to a new level of complexity. An example from the third movement should illustrate this point perfectly. From Fig. 100, Elgar introduces a theme in the violins that is picked up by the upper winds after six bars. The wind section all toss the theme around snippet by snippet so that the score looks disjointed and bitty, whilst what the audience hear is a smooth theme in the wind section. The theme is constantly bridged as it is handed around by the woodwind, mostly by the clarinets – probably because their tone-colour is the least evasive in the section. Whilst the clarinets are used to bridge the winds, the violas are employed by Elgar to perform the same task in the strings and interestingly, Elgar often uses the clarinet and viola together when passing the melodic line from strings to wind, as their tone-colours are extraordinarily similar.

Ex. 5.6: Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 1, *Adagio*, Fig. 100.

100

The musical score is for Figure 100 of the *Adagio* movement from Edward Elgar's Symphony No. 1. It features eight staves: two for Flute, one for Cor Anglais, one for Clarinet in B \flat , one for Bass Clarinet in B \flat , two for Bassoon, and three for the string section (Violin I, Violin II, and Viola). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4. Measures 100 through 104 are shown. The woodwind parts are mostly silent, indicated by whole rests. The string section begins a melodic line in measure 100, marked *pp* (pianissimo). The Violin I part includes a triplet of eighth notes in measure 102. The Viola part also begins in measure 100, marked *pp*.

6

Fl. *p* *pp*

Fl. *pp*

C. A. *pp*

Cl. *mf* 3

B. Cl. *pp*

Bsn. *pp*

Bsn. *pp*

Vln. I *mf*

Vln. II *pp*

Vla. *mf* *p* *pp* *pizz*

Detailed description: This musical score page contains measures 6 through 9 of a piece. The instrumentation includes two Flutes (Fl.), Contralto (C. A.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bass Clarinet (B. Cl.), two Bassoons (Bsn.), Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), and Viola (Vla.). The key signature has three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 4/4. Measure 6 features a flute entry with a *p* dynamic, followed by woodwinds and strings. Measure 7 continues the woodwind and string textures. Measure 8 introduces a triplet in the Clarinet with a *mf* dynamic. Measure 9 concludes the section with various dynamics including *mf*, *p*, *pp*, and *pizz* (pizzicato) for the Viola.

11

Fl.

Fl.

C. A.

Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

Bsn.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

pp

cresc.

cresc.

mf

arco

p

ff

ff

ff

ff sost

15

Fl.

Fl.

C. A.

Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

Bsn.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

ff

pp

p dim

p

ff

dim.

p

p

It seems clear from these examples that Elgar's method of dovetailing phrases into one another is extremely close to Wagner's and it is this technique that made Elgar such a renowned orchestrator: his chameleon-like scoring, or the play of light and shade across a rich tapestry of colours, is what makes Elgar's music sound distinctly 'English'. It just seems somewhat ironic and that the thinning out of textures that produced this orchestral effect had been learnt from a Teutonic master, rather than an English predecessor.

6.4: Elgar's Development of Wagnerian Klangfarbenmelodie

'The modern orchestra is capable of an unending variety of *shades of tone*, not only in succession, but in combination.'¹³⁹

Klangfarbenmelodie, a term coined by Schoenberg in his *Harmonielehre* (1911), refers to the possibility of a succession of tone-colours related to one another in a way analogous to a relationship between the pitches in a melody. By this, he implied that the timbral transformation of a single pitch could be perceived as equivalent to a melodic succession, but was by no means the first orchestrator to experiment with it: indeed, many Romantic composers were experimenting with varying tone-colour across orchestral canvases long before Schoenberg had picked up his pencil. Berlioz, in his treatise, quotes a notorious passage in his own *Requiem* where eight trombones play the bass to chords on flutes, with the orchestral middle entirely empty. The passage is essentially without rhythm or melody; the musical message lies in the sound – the passing from trombones to flutes, and back to trombones – rather than the harmony the two groups produce. This early example of a klangfarben texture is taken a step forward when observing an example from Wagner who, like many other Romantic composers, experimented with tone-colour and what Schoenberg would later call klangfarbenmelodie. Wagner's blend of heterogeneous themes into a harmonically directed whole remains a paradigmatic in orchestral tuttis and one of the best examples of Wagner's instrumental manipulation can be heard at the opening of *Das Rheingold*. Here, the timbral transformation cannot be heard as the melody itself is heard from all quarters of the orchestra – the audience cannot detect which instrument has the melody, as no single instrument does: it is being passed from one section to another constantly.

¹³⁹ Elgar (1965) p. 239

Ex. 5.7: Richard Wagner, *Prelude to Das Rheingold*, bars 29 - 40

29

Bassoon

Contrabassoon

This musical score shows measures 29 through 34 for the Bassoon and Contrabassoon. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 8/8. The Bassoon part (top staff) consists of six measures of whole notes, each with a fermata and a 'p' (piano) dynamic marking. The Contrabassoon part (bottom staff) also consists of six measures of whole notes, each with a fermata and a 'p' (piano) dynamic marking. The remaining staves in the system are empty.

35

Bsn.

Cbsn.

Hn.

Hn.

Hn.

Hn.

Hn.

Hn.

Hn.

Hn.

38

Bsn.

Cbsn.

Hn.

Hn.

Hn.

Hn.

Hn.

Hn.

Hn.

Hn.

Wagner's textural legacy has been interpreted diversely across the continents, and even from country to country. In Germany and Austria, Wagner's instrumentation was taken up most readily. The rich polyphony of Strauss is spiced by conflicting harmonic combinations, notably in *Elektra* and we also find another Wagnerian pointer in Strauss's counterpoint, which, like Wagner's seems indifferent to its harmonic context. Mahler's music anticipates modernist instrumentation in its implied conflict between sections of the orchestra; his scoring is a polyphony of equal voices, overlapping and completing each other's musical sentences; rather like expanded chamber music, an aspect which particularly appealed to his Viennese admirer Schoenberg. Wagner's legacy was differently interpreted in France, where it became a more potent example than Berlioz.

The delicate patina of sound in Debussy's orchestral music may be obtained by offering the instrumental groups slightly different materials, creating a depth in the sonic field that is particularly successful for all kinds of evocation. In Russia, Wagner's legacy was more literally felt: one need only turn to the final movement of Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony to see *klangfarbenmelodie* at work across a vast orchestral texture. The melody comes from no single orchestral section but is instead felt from many directions – the strings and the woodwind most significantly.

Schoenberg merely took the musical concept a leap further, with his radical treatment of the orchestra as a source of evocative sounds: that is, that one could invoke tone-colour as a structural element in composition. The third of Schoenberg's Five Orchestral Pieces op.16 (1909), originally entitled *Farben*, had already hinted at the idea of structured timbre transformation. Beginning with a single sustained chord, he achieves a sense of musical movement by articulation of colour alone: the only element of change is instrumentation.

Ex.5.8: Schoenberg, *Five orchestral Pieces*, Op. 16

Flute

Cor Anglais

Clarinet in B \flat

Clarinet in B \flat

Bassoon

Bassoon

Horn in F

Trumpet in B \flat

Viola

Double Bass

ppp

ppp

ppp

ppp

ppp

ppp

ppp

ppp

pp

5

Fl.
C. A.
Cl.
Cl.
Bsn.
Bsn.
Hn.
Tpt.
Vla.
Db.

Although the chord does change, almost imperceptively, the colouristic element remains integral to the conception; yet Schoenberg sanctioned versions for smaller orchestra, chamber ensemble and two pianos. Webern's attempts to make the timbral structure of a work clarify as well as enhance its pitch structure (e.g. in his orchestration of the six-part *ricercare* from Bach's *Musical Offering*) may also reflect the influence of Schoenberg's concept.

The evolution of tonal harmony at the end of the nineteenth century, with its expansion of resources and its loosening of the structural and semantic ties of diatonicism, allowed other aspects of sound, including instrumental colour, a far greater prominence. Composers began to recognise that it was not only the melodic, harmonic and rhythmic features of a musical form that could legitimately claim the listener's prime attention; agogics, dynamics and timbre began to be manipulated more consciously and more prominently. Again the obvious instances provide an apt correlation, for the most

strikingly virtuoso handling of these formerly neglected 'parameters' is found precisely in the work of those composers most intimately concerned in the dissolution of diatonic harmony, Debussy, Schoenberg, Webern and, in his highly individual way, Elgar.

In the *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* (1894) Debussy showed himself acutely responsive to the sensual properties of instrumental sound; it is hard to study the work's opening bars without seeing in them a refined development of Weber's orchestral thinking. The fine textural distinctions in the string writing achieved by using solos and subdivisions of the groups owe something to Berlioz and Wagner (see the string distributions in *Lohengrin*, for example), and the application of colour is often frankly impressionistic, but the evocative blends themselves are entirely within the Romantic tradition. Debussy's *Nocturnes* (1899) were in this respect an important step forward. A sense of melodic, harmonic or rhythmic purpose is entirely absent from the steadily moving chords and wispy arabesques of *Nuages*; texture and timbre are heavily relied on to convey not merely the required atmosphere but the whole of the composer's intentions. The fading percussion at the close of *Fêtes* foreshadows many a 20th-century composer's emancipation of 'noise' (Milhaud, Stravinsky, Bartók, Varèse, and eventually electronic music). In *Sirènes* Debussy used the additional colour of a wordless women's chorus, though here it is clearly programmatic – an uncharacteristic 'literalism' which obscures appreciation of the voices' timbral qualities. This idea, too, was taken up by later composers, for example by Ravel in *Daphnis et Chloé* (1912) and by Milhaud in *Les choéphores* (1915–16) and *L'homme et son désir* (1918). Debussy's later orchestral works are notable less for their colouristic innovations than for their elaboration of the figural role of each instrument – an interest which may have come to him from the Russians in general and from Rimsky-Korsakov in particular.

Wagner, Debussy and Mahler seem to have been the predominant influences on the orchestral technique of Schoenberg. In *Pelleas und Melisande* (1903) and *Gurrelieder* (1911) the orchestration is both adventurous and ambitious, the latter work bringing into play a multitude of performers. More significantly, it is primarily with Schoenberg's name that the concept of the *klangfarbenmelodie* (melody of sound-colours) is associated; in 'Farben' (as shown in Ex. 5.4) there is a minimum of melodic, harmonic and rhythmic activity, and the interest centres on the alternations and manipulations of

blended instrumental colour. The piece is, in other words, a logical successor to Debussy's *Nuages*. If 'melody' is defined as 'that continuous aspect of music claiming the listener's chief attention', one can understand both the special application of the term to tone-colour and the peculiar conditions that must be accepted by a composer wishing to replace 'pitch melody' by 'timbre melody'.

6.5: Klangfarbenmelodie: Elgar's Parisfalian and Tristanesque Models

Both Elgar and Wagner use *Klangfarbenmelodie* far less than they use dovetailing. As I have already shown, both composers' scores are saturated with the dovetailing of phrases, which occurs regularly throughout the symphonies and the Preludes in *Parsifal* and *Tristan*. Following Wagner's lead, Elgar tends to use *klangfarbenmelodie* during moments when the scoring is less dense, so that the line weaving through the various instruments can be heard. It would seem that Wagner does this because it is difficult to weave *klangfarbenmelodie* across expansive textures which already have several layers of leitmotif battling against each other. For Wagner, the thinner textures are an opportunity for subtlety of technique – *klangfarbenmelodie* can actually be heard at work rather than forming yet another layer of complexity. Elgar, like Wagner, elects to use *klangfarbenmelodie* with two distinct functions: the first occurs when a melody is obviously passed from one section of the orchestra to another, causing a distinct play of light and shade in terms of tone colour. This is precisely the technique that has caused scholars to refer to Elgar's orchestration 'luminous' – Elgar and Wagner's luminosity is achieved through a constant play of light and shade realised by a combination of relentless dovetailing of phrases mixed with *klangfarbenmelodie* when the texture is thin enough for it to be appreciated. The second function *klangfarbenmelodie* serves is to generate energy when small fragments of a melody are tossed back and forth between various instruments, be it a short outburst or an extended period of building energy that eventually subsides or falls apart, thus demonstrating that *klangfarbenmelodie* does not just serve a colouristic function but an important structural function too. Here, again, the perceived tone colour is also very important, because the creation of light and shade with

the different pitches and tones of different instruments is crucial: both to the sound we determine as distinctly 'Elgarian' and in turn its dependence upon Wagner's art.

If we first look at examples of Elgar and Wagner's use of *klangfarbenmelodie* where the melody is passed across different sections of the orchestra, we can see exactly how close Elgar's study and absorption of Wagner's technique had become by 1907/8.¹⁴⁰ At the end of the first movement at Fig. 53 of the First Symphony, Elgar uses *klangfarbenmelodie* to thin out an already thinning orchestral texture and to slow down the metre so that the beginning of the second movement will come as more of a shock to audience. Here, Elgar adopts a distinctly Wagnerian sound by writing a quaver theme that runs between the strings and is then passed up the winds.

¹⁴⁰ It is especially interesting to consider here that Elgar saw a complete version of *Parsifal* in 1907, at the time of composing the First Symphony. See Chapter II.

Ex 5.9: Edward Elgar: Symphony No 1, *Andante Nobilmente e semplice*, Fig. 53.

53 *in tempo* ♩=72

Flute

Oboe

Clarinet in B♭

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

4

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

7

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

pp

p

ppp

piu lento

a tempo

A similar moment occurs at the tail end of *Parsifal*'s Third Act Prelude, where Wagner merges a melody initiated in the strings with all of the winds, so that the overall melodic shape is not heard in any one particular line: rather the melody heard is from a combination of sources, constantly overlapping and weaving in and out of one another.

Ex. 6.0: Richard Wagner: *Parsifal*, Third Act pg. 521.

Not only is the use of *klangfarbenmelodie* very similar between the two examples, the choice of instruments is also very close. There are many similar examples to be found in Elgar extended from Wagner where the upper strings present a theme which is then woven into the texture through the winds, normally with a flute, clarinet and occasionally an oboe playing an obligato line.

The next example of Elgar's manipulation of *klangfarbenmelodie* comes from the third movement of the First Symphony. Yet again, the musical conversation occurs

between divisi upper strings and upper woodwinds, but this particular example is more interesting because it commences with some typical Elgarian dovetailing which then gives way to klangfarbenmelodie. The same is also true of the equivalent example from Wagner's *Parsifal*: in the Prelude to first act, Wagner uses dovetailing for five bars and lets his phrase give way to klangfarbenmelodie of the most extraordinary type. The moment we are looking at follows a broadly orchestrated moment and both composers use dovetailing to initially thin the texture out. The dovetailing, in Wagner's case of the Prelude's opening leitmotif, allows for the focus to come back to a small group of instruments and when the respective composer feels he has sufficiently broken down the broad orchestral texture, he uses klangfarbenmelodie between strings and upper winds, with extraordinary consequences.

Ex. 6.1: Richard Wagner: *Parsifal*, Prelude to Act I, Pages 24-25

Flute

Flute

Flute

Oboe

Oboe

Oboe

Baritone Oboe

Clarinet in Bb

Clarinet in Bb

Clarinet in Bb

Horn in F

Trumpet in Bb

Viola

Violoncello

pp

pp

pp

p *dim.* *dim. p*

pp

pp

pp

p *sf dim. p* *sf*

p *sf dim.* *sf*

p *sf dim. p* *cresc. f dim.* *piu p*

6

Fl. *f dim p*

Fl.

Fl.

Ob.

Ob. *p cresc. f dim. p cresc. p*

Ob.

B. Ob.

Cl. *cresc. f dim. p*

Cl. *cresc. f dim. p cresc. p*

Cl. *p cresc. f dim. p cresc. p*

Hn.

Hn.

Tpt. *p*

Vla. *p cresc. f dim. p p cresc. f dim. p*

Vc.

Wagner's use of *klangfarbenmelodie* at this point in the Prelude is interesting for a number of reasons. Firstly, because of the way the main theme is passed from the viola to the flutes, oboe and trumpet. The clarinets and second oboe all dovetail the viola's phrase, using a crescendo across all of these parts, leading to the moment of the melodic exchange. The clarinets perfectly match the viola's moody middle register and so the change of tone when the melody is passed to the flutes and trumpet is audible immediately: the tone goes from mellow to bright rather abruptly, which presumably, was Wagner's intention. This was not intended to be a seamless 'infinite melody' exchange as we have seen in the previous section of this chapter, but rather an exchange to draw attention to differences in tone. The example from Elgar selected shows exactly the same methodology. Elgar prepares for *klangfarbenmelodie* by thinning the texture through the use of dovetailing phrases that gradually disintegrate so that his paired instruments can pierce through the new lighter texture. As with Wagner, Elgar pairs the violas with the clarinets and the flutes with violin 2, leaving the horns, oboe and bassoon to puncture the texture with their addition to the melodic line. This adds an additional layer or deviation to Elgar's texture – from looking at the score, it is not at all obvious which instrument has part of the melody, if at all, because of the disjunct way *klangfarbenmelodie* has been applied to the surface of the orchestral make-up. Wagner's example here is much more visually obvious because of the way he blocks instruments together, whereas Elgar's texture is initially blocked and then looks as if it is falling apart, when aurally it sounds anything but.

The end effect of both examples, however, is exactly the same: we hear one seamless melodic line weaving its way across the surface of the music, unaware that the melody we hear is coming from several different sources.

Ex. 6.2: Edward Elgar: Symphony No 1. *Adagio*, Fig. 94.

Flute *p* *p espress.* 3 3

Flute *p*

Oboe 3 *pp* *espress.*

Clarinet in Bb 3 *pp*

Bassoon 3 *pp*

Violin I

Violin I

Violin II *p* *espress.* 3 3 *pp*

Violin II *p* *espress.* 3 3 *pp*

Viola *pp* *pizz* *arco* 3

Viola *pp* *pizz* *arco* 3

Violoncello

Violoncello

Contrabass

This image shows a page of a musical score, likely for a symphony orchestra. The score is written for multiple instruments, including Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Bsn.), Violins I (Vln. I), Violins II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Contrabass (Cb.). The music is written in a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'mf' (mezzo-forte) and 'p' (piano). The page is numbered '4' in the top left corner. The notation is complex, with many beamed notes and slurs, indicating a fast and technically demanding piece.

6

Fl. *mf* *3*

Fl.

Ob.

Cl. *mf* *p* *dim.* *pp* *3*

Bsn. *mf* *3* *p*

Vln. I *pp*

Vln. I *pp*

Vln. II *p*

Vln. II *p*

Vla. *pizz* *dim*

Vla. *pizz* *dim*

Vc. *pizz* *dim.*

Vc. *dim.*

Cb.

In Wagner's Prelude to *Tristan und Isolde*, dovetailing and klangfarbenmelodie are abundant, but perhaps the best example comes at the end of the prelude where, yet again, Wagner's employs dovetailing to thin out the orchestral instruments and then uses klangfarbenmelodie to focus the mood, this time in immediate preparation for the first act. The section to which I refer covers the last twenty-eight bars of the prelude, where Wagner plays with the music-drama's most fundamental of melodies: the Tristan chord. As was common with Wagner's scoring, he places the wind and string sections in opposition to one another, allowing them to perform as a section. As the example below shows, the violins open the conversation and briefly answered by the violas and cellos before the upper winds take over and announce the 'Tristan' motif, supported by the clarinets and bassoon. Whilst they pronounce this infamous chord, the upper strings dovetail the last bar by re-pronouncing their original statement a third higher, which leads to same things happening: violas and cellos answer and upper winds pronounce the Tristan chord.

Wagner then allows himself to let go: small snippets of what we have already heard are passed back and forth across the orchestra, causing somewhat spartan scoring to read. However, this differs greatly from what is actually heard: one long seamless melodic line, starting with violas, then flutes, the violas, to cellos, to flutes, back to cellos, back to the flutes and finally completed by the violas who pass the melody to the lamenting cor anglais as it announces the Tristan chord, in its original key. It seems that the Tristan chord in its original state is the cause for the klangfarbenmelodie to break down, which is significant when it is considered that the previous twenty bars have all been different permutations of the same key, yet the texture breaks when the motif is heard as it was heard in the opening of the whole music drama.

The effect is truly amazing, for we witness a sequence of notes that weave amongst the orchestra, producing a melody without seams, yet with tone colours which are distinct from one another.

Ex. 6.3: Richard Wagner: *Tristan und Isolde*, Prelude, bars 84-100.

[illegible]

7

Fl.

Ob.

C. A.

Cl.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

p

cresc.

f dim.

dim.

12

Fl.

Ob.

C. A.

Cl.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

p

cresc.

p

p

cresc.

pizz

cresc.

f



16

Fl.

Ob.

C. A.

Cl.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

p

f

f

f

In Elgar's symphony, a very similar phenomenon occurs. In the approach to Fig 130 in the final movement of the First Symphony, Elgar dovetails a marching melody (set up in the first bars of the movement) and gradually starts to add a new layer, which slows the pulse of the movement down. The new melody is material we have already heard: it is material from the first movement, now presented with a lamenting shadow. At Fig 130, this melody takes over completely and is principally heard in the string orchestra, with winds dovetailing here and there. However, after eight bars, a counter-melody is heard in the second violins, having passed their new melody to the first violins. They are subsequently joined by the violas and together they crescendo over the next four bars as the first violin theme fades. It is then that an extraordinary thing occurs: Elgar hands the main theme from the seconds and cellos to the flutes, leaving the whole string section playing the counter-melody. This exchange is remarkable because of its seamlessness. We are not really aware that an exchange has even taken place because we are overcome by the sheer beauty of the moment. Elgar's *klangfarbenmelodie* methodology is flawless and he does exactly the same thing a further eight bars later when the flutes hand the tune back to the string section. This *klangfarbenmelodie*, like Wagner's, was not intended to draw the ear to the differences, but rather to wash over us as the orchestra colours blend without seams.

Ex. 6.4: Edward Elgar: Symphony No.1, *Lento-Allegro*. Fig. 130-133.

Flute

Flute

Flute

Oboe

Clarinet in Bb

Bassoon

Violin I

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

Violoncello

Contrabass

p

pp

p cantabile

p cantabile

pizz.

p

7

Fl.

Fl.

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

Vln. I

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Vc.

Cb.

p

p

p

p

p

cresc.

p

cresc.

p

cresc.

p

arco

[illegible]

21

Fl.

Fl.

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

Vln. I

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Vc.

Cb.

26

Fl.

Fl.

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

Vln. I

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Vc.

Cb.

p

Detailed description: This page of a musical score contains measures 26 through 30. The woodwind section (Flutes, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon) and strings (Violins I & II, Viola, Violoncello, Contrabass) are active throughout. The brass section (Bassoon) has a prominent part in measures 27-30. The score is written in a key with three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and a common time signature. The woodwinds and strings play sustained notes with various articulations, while the brass plays a more rhythmic, accented pattern. A dynamic marking of *p* (piano) is present in measure 27 for the Oboe and Clarinet.

Elgar's *Scherzo* from his Second Symphony is another crucial example of Elgar employing *klangfarbenmelodie* to vary tone colour. After the funeral overtones of the slow second movement, Elgar launches a Scherzo of capricious exuberance. But this is no light hearted affair, for there is a dangerous energy and forms some of the most modern music Elgar has ever composed. Elgar is playing with tone colour throughout the movement and constantly employs *klangfarbenmelodie* to keep the energy and interest in the melodic line. The opening theme scitters and hops about, as the strings and woodwind literally toss little fragments of it around.

Ex. 6.5: Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 2, *Rondo: Presto*, bars 1-5.

Presto. (♩ = 108)

Some of the gaps are filled in by the three clarinets:

Ex. 6.6: Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 2, *Rondo: Presto*, 1-5

Presto. (♩ = 108)

The violins bind further segments of the theme together:

Ex. 6.7: Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 2, *Rondo: Presto*, bars 1-5.

Presto. (♩ = 108)

Violin I

pp

Add to that the slyly ascending bass line and you have this oddly unpredictable theme:

Ex. 6.8: Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 2, *Rondo: Presto*, bars 1-5.

Presto. (♩ = 108)

Flute *pp*

Flute *pp*

Flute *pp*

Oboe *pp*

Clarinet in Eb *pp*

Clarinet in Bb *pp*

Bass Clarinet in Bb *pp*

Bassoon *pp*

Violin I *pp*

Violin II

Viola *pp* *cresc* *pp*

Violoncello *pp*

Contrabass

Elgar is soon playing characteristically ingenious games with that theme. He makes it run in such tightly organised canons that the sense of key is almost completely lost. Taking the first five notes, Elgar creates a little sequence for the flutes:

Ex. 6.9: Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 2, *Rondo: Presto*, Fig. 98.

98

Flute

pp

cresc.

Flute

pp

cresc.

Flute

p cresc.

Next, he adds the oboes and clarinets, to make a three-part canon out of the little snippet, resulting in a klangfarbenmelodie texture as all of the instruments interact with each other to produce a melody split between seven separate parts:

Ex. 7.0: Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 2, *Rondo: Presto*, Fig. 98

98

Flute

pp

cresc.

Flute

pp

cresc.

Flute

p cresc.

Oboe

pp

cresc.

Clarinet in Eb

pp

cresc.

Clarinet in Bb

pp

cresc.

As the idea develops, it becomes increasingly outrageous. The upbeat pattern into Fig. 98 grows into an upbeat scale and the whole thing takes off in a mad whirling of weaving notes:

Ex 7.1: Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 2, *Rondo: Presto*, Fig. 98.

Flute

Flute

Flute

Oboe

Clarinet in Eb

Clarinet in Bb

9

Fl.

Fl.

Fl.

Ob.

Eb Cl.

Cl.

18

Fl.

Fl.

Fl.

Ob.

Eb Cl.

Cl.

22

The image shows a musical score for woodwinds, starting at measure 22. The instruments listed are Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Eb Clarinet (Eb Cl.), and Clarinet (Cl.). The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The music is characterized by frequent melodic fragments, often marked with 'dim.' (diminuendo), and a sense of nervousness and restlessness. The Flute and Oboe parts have many short, slurred notes, while the Eb Clarinet and Clarinet parts have more sustained, lower notes. The overall texture is dense and active.

This music is nervous and restless in the extreme. You can see it as an attempt perhaps to fall back on determined activity in the absence of real joy.

In many ways, this is very similar to what Wagner achieves in the opening section to his Prelude to *Tristan und Isolde*. Between bars 36-42, Wagner employs *klangfarbenmelodie* in the most simplest of forms. What initially looks like imitation between the lower strings and upper winds is actually a carefully woven melodic line being passed between the instruments in the same way that Elgar had used in the previous example. In both cases we have a chordal bass, falling in sequence by semitone with the melody processing over the top. Whilst Wagner's instruments are blocked together to produce an antiphonal exchange, the alteration in tone colour is deliberate and obvious and this is the case with Elgar: despite the busy semiquaver lines weaving in and out of the winds, the Bb clarinet maintains the pitch direction, which is supported by the lower strings. Wagner pushes the harmonic boundaries with his short snippets in exactly the same ways that Elgar does – short snippets constantly pushing the harmony 'upwards' towards a key change and whilst the Wagner example does not exhibit the whirling, uncontrollable element of Elgar, the harmonic function for using *klangfarbenmelodie* was the same.

Ex. 7.2: Richard Wagner: Prelude, *Tristan und Isolde*, bars 36-42.

Flute

Oboe *dim. p*

Cor Anglais *dim.*

Clarinet in A *dim. p*

Viola *dolce* *p* *animato*

Violoncello *p*

4

Fl. *animato* *cresc.*

Ob. *cresc.*

C. A. *cresc.*

Cl. *cresc.*

Vla. *sf* *molto cresc.*

Vc. *sf* *molto cresc.*

The second movement of Elgar's Second Symphony provides a good example of Elgar using *klangfarbenmelodie* in the string orchestra. The section from Fig 74 forms an important link in the movement's great chain of events and is one of the most extraordinary passages in the whole symphony. All the music up until this point has sounded a note of noble resignation or restraint, in spite of the colour and play of light and shade, or Elgar's famous chameleon scoring. Now, from nowhere it seems, comes an intricately decorated passage. The air seems full of rustling sounds, which are tossed around the string orchestra as each member of the section takes over the melodic line for a second and then passes it on. Underpinning the music is another processional idea of majestic progression signalling progress with clarinets, bassoons, horns and trombones:

Ex 7.3: Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 2, *Larghetto*, Fig. 74.

74

Clarinet in Bb: *pp* (measures 74-75), *cresc.* (measure 76)

Clarinet in A: *p* (measure 74), *cresc.* (measures 75-76)

Bass Clarinet in Bb: *pp* (measures 74-75), *cresc.* (measure 76)

Horn in F: *pp* (measures 74-75), *pp* (measure 76)

Horn in F: *pp* (measures 74-75), *pp* (measure 76)

Trombone: *pp* *3* (measures 74-75), *3* (measure 76)

4

Cl.: *mp* (measures 77-78), *f* (measure 79)

Cl.: *f* (measures 77-78), *p* (measure 78), *cresc.* (measures 78-79), *f* (measure 79)

B. Cl.: *cresc.* (measures 77-78), *cresc.* (measures 78-79)

Hn.: *cresc.* (measures 77-78), *cresc.* (measures 78-79)

Hn.: *cresc.* (measures 77-78), *cresc.* (measures 78-79)

Tbn.: *p* *3* (measures 77-78), *3* (measure 79)

That is very much in the spirit of what has already occurred in this movement, but above, Elgar weaves an elaborate decorations. The strings are crucially divided into nine parts, with the upper violins, upper violas and upper cellos contributing the following:

Ex. 7.4: Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 2, *Larghetto*, Fig 74.

The musical score for Ex. 7.4 consists of two systems of staves. The first system includes Violin I, Viola, and Violoncello. The second system includes Violin I, Viola, and Violoncello. The first system includes dynamics *mf*, *p*, and *f*, and a crescendo marking. The second system includes dynamics *mf*, *p*, and *f*, and a crescendo marking.

Whilst the lower first violins and upper second violins play:

Ex 7.5: Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 2, *Larghetto*, Fig. 74.

The musical score for Ex 7.5 consists of two systems of staves. The first system includes Violin I and Violin II. The second system includes Violin I and Violin II. The first system includes dynamics *pp* and *cresc. 3*. The second system includes dynamics *pp* and *cresc. 3*.

Elgar also adds a shimmering of string tremelandos while other strings characteristically touch in some of the wind and brass phrases. The result is this astonishing new sounding texture. The crowd is expectant; we seem to be viewing the funeral procession from a different perspective.

Ex 7.6: Edward Elgar: Symphony No. 2, *Larghetto*, Fig. 74.

74

Clarinet in B \flat *pp*

Clarinet in B \flat *p* *cresc.*

Bass Clarinet in B \flat *pp*

Horn in F *pp*

Horn in F *pp*

Trombone *pp* 3

Violin I *mf* 10

Violin I *pp* 3 3 3 3

Violin II *pp*

Violin II *pp*

Viola *p*

Viola *pp*

Violoncello *p*

Violoncello *mf* 10 *pizz*

Contrabass

75

Cl. *cresc.*

Cl.

B. Cl.

Hn. *pp* *cresc.*

Hn. *pp*

Tbn.

Vln. I

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vln. II

Vla. *f*

Vla.

Vc.

Vc.

Cb. *cresc.*

76

Cl.

Cl.

B. Cl.

Hn.

Hn.

Tbn.

Vln. I

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vln. II

Vla.

Vla.

Vc.

Vc.

Cb.

cresc.

mf

pp

pp

mf

cresc.

cresc.

3

10

33

33

10

77

Cl.

Cl.

B. Cl.

Hn.

Hn.

Tbn.

Vln. I

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vln. II

Vla.

Vla.

Vc.

Vc.

Cb.

mp

f

p

cresc.

This musical score page contains measures 77 through 80. The instrumentation includes Clarinet (Cl.), Bass Clarinet (B. Cl.), Horn (Hn.), Trombone (Tbn.), Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Contrabass (Cb.). The score is written in a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a 4/4 time signature. Measure 77 begins with a woodwind entry, featuring a Clarinet playing a half note G4 (marked *mp*) and a Bass Clarinet playing a half note B3. The Horns and Trombone play sustained notes. The Violins and Violas enter in measure 78 with a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, marked with a *f* (forte) dynamic. The Violoncello and Contrabass provide a harmonic foundation with sustained notes and moving lines. The score concludes in measure 80 with a crescendo (*cresc.*) marking in the Horn part.

But have we not heard this type of luminous texture before under a different guise in a very different setting? Wagner's *Tristan Prelude*, one of Elgar's favourite works, is full of exactly the same lumosity in the string orchestra. From Bar 50, we hear a broad section based on the rhythmic motif from the opening and this dissolves in the same way in which Elgar's texture in the previous example does – one broad and distinctly recognisable theme dissolves into ascending scalar motions in the strings, whilst the flutes and oboes are left to provide some kind of harmonic direction by playing the underpinning theme.

Ex. 7.7: Richard Wagner: Prelude, *Tristan und Isolde*, Woodwind passing to Strings, bars 58-63.

The image displays a musical score for Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, specifically bars 58-63. The score is divided into two systems. The first system includes parts for Flute, Oboe, Cor Anglais, and Clarinet in A. The second system includes parts for Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet in A (C. A.), and Clarinet (Cl.). The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#), and the time signature is 3/4. The music features a broad, lyrical theme that dissolves into ascending scalar motions. Dynamics include *f* (forte), *piu f* (pianissimo forte), and *ff* (fortissimo). The woodwinds play a melodic line, while the strings provide a harmonic foundation.

Ex. 7.8: Richard Wagner: Prelude, *Tristan und Isolde*, bars 63-70.

The musical score for Wagner's Prelude to *Tristan und Isolde*, bars 63-70, is presented in three systems. The first system includes Violin I, Violin II, and Viola. The second system includes Violin I, Violin II, and Viola. The third system includes Violin I, Violin II, and Viola. The music features complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth notes, and dynamic markings such as *f* (forte) and *p* (piano). The score is written in G major and 3/4 time.

6.5: Conclusion

Throughout the course of this chapter it has been argued that, as with so many other crucial areas of compositional methodology, Elgar gleaned significant techniques from Wagner's methods of orchestration. The three main areas that contribute so crucially to that famous 'Elgarian sound' are constant development, dovetailing of phrases and *klangfarbenmelodie*, each of which were lifted directly from a study of Wagner's late music dramas. Wagner famously developed small germs of ideas into vast swathes of music, punctuated by dovetailed phrases which often thinned out so that a *klangfarben* texture could be given the spotlight. This chapter has clearly shown that this also occurs frequently in Elgar's symphonic scores, often in moments that reverberate so strongly with Wagner it is difficult to know where one composer and another begins.

FINALE

I take no credit for the inspiration that people may discover in my music, I cannot tell you how it comes to me. Of course, I could write out a piece of music here and now as you would write a letter, mechanically that is to say. But before the real stuff will come I must be quiet and apart.¹⁴¹

The purpose of this thesis has been to examine the relationship between Elgar and Wagner's music and establish exactly how far Elgar was a post-Wagnerian composer. It was proposed in the introduction that Elgar's Wagnerian tendencies had been alluded to in various Elgar biographies and monographs, but no study had ever dealt with specific aspects of Elgar's compositional methodology that resonate with Wagner's music.

In order to tackle this vast topic, the thesis was divided into two sections, where the first part dealt with historical context. In the first chapter, I began by looking at how widespread Wagnerism was at the end of the nineteenth century in England. This idea was explored by looking at particular individuals who provided the driving force behind the 'Wagner mania' that consequently erupted across the country. Had it not been for the extraordinary efforts of David Irvine, George Bernard Shaw, Rutland Boughton, Ernest Newman, William Ashton Ellis and Edward Dannreuther who translated Wagner's writings, published articles, papers and books on his works and supported performances of his works, it is possible that Elgar would not have composed in the way that he did, as Wagner's influence would not have disseminated so strongly. As noted in the second chapter, Elgar did not have access to a university education like other prominent British composers at the same time, so attending concerts in Worcester, London and Germany, studying scores, reading articles in newspapers and discussing music with his friends provided an absolutely crucial learning environment. And, as we have seen, a good deal of this 'study' was based around Wagner's music and writings. Understanding how Wagner's music was promoted and his writings disseminated in nineteenth-century England is crucial to an understanding of how Elgar came into contact with Wagner and is therefore an important place to start any study of this special relationship.

¹⁴¹ Basil Maine, *Elgar: His Life and Works* (London: Bell, 1933) p. 77

The third chapter took this idea a step further: as Wagnerism was so popular in late nineteenth-century England, Elgar could not have been the only British composer who fell under the 'Wagner spell'. With this in mind, the chapter focused on several British composers who were all thought to be post-Wagnerian. The study looked at the music of Parry, Mackenzie, Boughton, and Bantock and demonstrated that despite each composer showing significant signs of Wagnerian emulation, not one of them was able to fully digest Wagner's techniques and make them his own, as Elgar was.

In the second part of the thesis, specific compositional ideas adopted by Elgar that resonated strongly with Wagner's influence became the focus. Chapter IV dealt with issues of leitmotif manipulation and discussed how Elgar, like Bantock and Mackenzie, had emulated some of Wagner's leitmotifs in his early secular cantatas. It was argued that these quotations became less apparent with each composition, so that by the composition of *The Dream of Gerontius*, Elgar was employing full-scale Wagnerian leitmotif textures of his own with confidence. I compared *The Light of Life* with *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*, deliberately using a primitive example of theme manipulation with the most advanced. It was also argued that Wagner's influence on Elgar's technique at the early stage in his career was still largely undetectable because he had not been able to fully get to grips with Wagnerian methodology. Instead, Elgar composed themes that were always heard in the same permutation or else he used a Wagnerian motif for inspiration. The dramatic change in compositional ability between *The Light of Life* and *The Apostles* show that the influence Wagner's music exerted over Elgar was all-consuming because by tracing the development of Elgar's leitmotif technique across a ten year span, I argued that Elgar progressed from using themes as accompanimental patterns and reminiscences to composing leitmotifs that formed an integral part of the musical fabric, just as Wagner's had.

In Chapter V, Elgar's harmony was addressed. Elgar's music is often perceived as diatonic, but it was argued that his music balances diatonicism with chromaticism; chromaticism learnt from Wagner. The chapter was divided into two sections. The first looked at Elgar's use of Wagner's Tristan chord and concluded that despite his usage and resolutions of the chord being vastly different to Wagner's, Elgar deliberately used the Tristan chord to break up particularly diatonic moments. In the second section, Elgar's

patterning of keys across *The Apostles* was traced and it was argued that Elgar had deliberately assigned certain keys to particular motifs, characters and larger sections of the drama, much in the same way that Wagner did across his music dramas. This results in the music and narrative being bound together on many different levels. The harmonic and tonal relations highlighted in the chapter raise intriguing questions concerning Elgar's relationship with Wagner's music.

The final chapter dealt with aspects of Elgar's orchestration. Three aspects of Elgar's technique of orchestration were highlighted and explored, and were chosen because they each demonstrated close ties with Wagner's music dramas, particularly *Parsifal* and *Tristan*. The areas discussed were constant developing and rescoring of material, dovetailing phrases into each other and *klangfarbenmelodie*. It was argued that it is a combination of the three methods that causes Elgar's 'sound' to be so distinctive, which is ironic considering that they were learned from a German master. By pinpointing particular moments in Elgar's scores and providing a Wagnerian model for direct comparison, it was demonstrated that there can be no doubt that Elgar learnt all of his most important orchestral lessons by studying Wagner's scores and hearing how these methods worked in performance.

To draw together the final threads of discussion, it might be worth reflecting on one main difference obtaining between Elgar and Wagner. As opposed to the 'ample resources of German melody, harmony, counterpoint, orchestra, and architecture' which place Wagner so securely in a great tradition, Elgar seems to stand in a non-tradition, or rather, in a culture where each composer had to 'make it new' in order to 'make it' at all. In nineteenth-century British music, very little (apart from church music tradition) was handed down, leaving each major musical figure a law unto himself, seemingly without a direct ancestry. This could have something to do with the thought of being cut off - an Island nation not really connected to the traditions of Europe and beyond, preferring to dominate culture abroad than learn from it. To solve the problems raised by this newness, the turn-of-the-century British composer had to fall back on his interior resources rather than using the accumulated experience of a conventional language. Newness in a conventional language is originality, which expands the language's

capacities without vitiating the spirit of its canons. Newness in a history without inherited traditions tends towards the exotic (Bantock, Bishop) or the idiosyncratic - where we end up with a series of styles rather than a language handed down and constantly developed.

Elgar, even amongst his fellow British composers, was so unusual that it is now easier to understand him as a 'mutation' than to see him as connected with his origins. Consequently, his work has been interpreted in divergent ways – the essence of tradition for some, and the essence of modernity for others. Whilst seeing him in either camp can and has been argued, it nonetheless has the effect of slightly dislocating the perception of his relation to the past – of obscuring his importance and making it difficult to gauge its extent.

The purpose throughout this thesis has been to try to show Elgar in a different light: I have tried to show that for all his manifest originality, much of the profundity of meaning in his music came about through the rich elements of Wagner working in secret. Elgar's possession and transformation of Wagner gave him a substantiality, signification and depth that was lacking in many of his contemporaries. Wagner, for Elgar, was the 'new'.

Of course, Elgar can never be called the heir to Wagner in any traditional sense by which influences are understood to be passed on. Rather than a follower who continued his line, Elgar was Wagnerian in a unique way, standing at an angle to him, in a relationship at once factual and ideal. The 'factual' I have documented in the first part of the thesis; the 'ideal' I have attempted to build up in the second part through similarities, comparisons and contrasts. In the combination of the two lies my interpretation of the meaning of their special connection. My introduction ended with an assertion, premature and perhaps a little rash, that Elgar 'must be recognised as one of the most post-Wagnerian of all composers.' It has been my intention in the chapters that intervene to have gradually substantiated the crudity of this assertion. So, by the time of its reiteration here, at the end of my study, it will seem not only to be properly validated, but also to possess a certain air of inevitability.

APPENDIX 1

Elgar's Books

During his early Worcester years, Elgar acquired a number of books concerned with musical composition and those that have survived from his library are detailed here:

Figure 1: Musical Editions Surviving from Elgar's Library

Hector Berlioz, *A Treatise on Modern Instrumentation and Orchestration to which is appended The Chef d'orchestre* (London: Novello, 1882) Inscribed by Elgar 'May 27. 1882)

Charles Simon Catel, *A Treatise on Harmony* (London: Novello, 1854)

Luigi Cherubini, *Counterpoint and Fugue*

George Grove, *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. First Edition. (London: Macmillan, 1878)

W A. Mozart, *Succinct Thorough-Bass School* (London: Novello, 1854)

Ernst Pauer, *The Elements of the Beautiful in Music* (London: Novello, Ewer, n.d. [Author's Preface 1877])

_____, *Musical Forms* (London: Novello, Ewer, n.d) [Author's 'Introductory Remarks' dated 1878.

Ebenezer Prout, *Instrumentation* (London: Novello, ewer, 1876) Inscribed by Elgar 'October: 7: 1878)

Anton Reicha, *Orchestral Primer*, inscribed by Elgar 'E W Elgar March 9th 1867', and annotated with Elgar's corrections

Albert Schweitzer, *J S Bach*, trans. by Ernest Newman, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Hartel, 1911)

John Stainer, *Composition* (London: Novello, Ewer, n.d.c.1878)

_____, *A Treatise on Harmony* (London: Novello, Ewer, n.d., Fifth edition)

John Stainer and W A Barrett, *Dictionary of Musical Terms* (London: Novello, ewer, 1898)

W H Stone, *The Scientific Basis of Music* (London: Novello, Ewer, n.d.) [Author's Preface dated 1878]

APPENDIX 2

Elgar's Scores

The scores which have survived from Elgar's collection are also detailed here, although it should be remembered that he owned or had access to more than these thanks to his father's music shop.

Fig. 2: Scores and Parts Surviving from Elgar's Library

Composer	Name of Work	Publishing Details	Interesting Markings
Philip Armes	<i>Hezekiah</i>	Vocal score	Signed 'E. E. Second Violin'
J. S. Bach	<i>48 Preludes and Fugues</i>	Undated	2 Volumes bound into one
Beethoven	Complete String Quartets	Eulenberg miniature score	
Hector Berlioz	<i>Waverley, Corsaire, Benvenuto Cellini, Carnaval romain, King Lear, Franc-juges, Beatrice et Benedict</i> overture scores.	Eulenberg miniature scores	Pencilled phrases in <i>Francs-juges</i>
Max Bruch	<i>Romanze for violin and orchestra</i> op. 42	Arranged for violin and piano	Given to Elgar by Alice in 1891
	<i>Concerti for Violin</i>	Eulenberg miniature score. Bound together with Spohr Concerto No 8 in A, Beethoven in D, Mendelssohn in E minor, Brich in G minor, Brahms in D, Tchaikovsky in D.	Some phrase markings in the Brahms
Leo Delibes	<i>Sylvia</i>	Piano score	'1880 Paris' and in the thematic table, a cross appears next to Prelude No. 3, 4 Intermezzo, 13 Scene Finale, 14 Marche and 15 scene.
Haydn	83 String Quartets	Eulenberg miniature scores	Occasional corrections by Elgar
Liszt	<i>Twelve Symphonic Poems</i>	Breitkopf editions in three columns	A few markings in Elgar's hand against the cor anglais part in <i>Orpheus</i>
Mozart	27 String Quartets in four part books		K 387 in G major through to K 465 in C major have been played.

Schubert	Chamber music. <i>String quartets in A minor, Eb, E, G, Bb, D minor, G minor, d and C minor. Piano trios in Bb and Eb, String Quintet</i>	Miniature scores	Unannotated
Schumann	Octavo volume of piano music: <i>Abegg Variations, Papillions, Paganini studies, Six Intermezzi, Impromptus on an Air of Clara Wieck, Toccata, Allegro, Carnaval</i>		Unsigned and undated
	<i>Kammermusik: String Quartets Op. 41, 1-3, Piano Trios Op. 63, 80, 110 and 88, Piano Quartet op 47, Piano Quintet Op. 44</i>	Leipzig: Eulenberg miniature scores bound together	
Spohr	<i>Complete Duets for Two Violins, Op.3,9,39,67,148,150,153</i>		Dated by Elgar '1876'
Strauss	<i>Ein Heldenleben</i>	Full score presented to Elgar by Strauss	Inscribed by Strauss, 'Meinem hochvercherben Freunde E. Elgar, Richard Strauss London, 6. December 1902'.
Wagner	<i>Die Meistersinger von Nurnberg</i>	Schott vocal score undated	Over the last 2 bars in Act I, Elgar wrote 'schon'.
	<i>Tristan und Isolde</i>	Schott vocal score undated	'This Book contains the Height,-the Depth,-the Breadth,-the Sweetness,-the Sorrow,-the Best and the whole of the Best of/This world and the Next./Edward Elgar.'

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