

Classical Music Appreciation—Intermediate

Session 1 notes

Bill Buffam, instructor
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Tonight's agenda

Administrivia

Introduction

*Vaughan Williams, Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis*¹

Introductions

Form and Structure

Theme-and-Variations Form

Parks, First Romance [Theme-and-Variations Form]²

Elgar, Enigma Variations [Theme-and-Variations Form]

The major structural designs of classical music

Elgar, Serenade for strings [ABA form; arch form]

Mozart, Horn Concerto No.3 [rondo form (and also sonata form)]

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) (England) Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis



Biographical Note

Vaughan Williams counts the Wedgwoods (of pottery fame) and the Darwins among his ancestors. Born into a comfortably well-off Gloucestershire family, he began to compose at the age of six. However, child prodigy he definitely was not. Vaughan Williams worked very hard to acquire his competence as a composer. His progress was slow, yet he remained dedicated and determined. Even his family remarked on how bad he was at music in spite of all the effort and study that he put into it. He studied at Cambridge University and the Royal College of Music under Charles Wood and Charles Stanford,

¹ Italics indicate music we'll listen to.

² [brackets] explain what the piece is primarily chosen to illustrate

and even traveled to Berlin to study with Max Bruch. By the time he was in his early thirties he realized, as he later wrote, that “the years were passing, and I was adding nothing to the sum of musical invention.”

His fortunes began to change after being introduced to the craft of folk-song collecting by Lucy Broadwood. Folk tunes became a major influence, and many of his works are based on folk songs or their musical ideas. In 1904 he accepted an invitation to be music editor of a new hymn book, *The English Hymnal* (1906). This venture provided the seed for the *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis*, as Vaughan Williams harmonized the theme and restored it to the hymnal.

His principal work around the turn of the century was *Toward the Unknown Region*, a choral setting of Walt Whitman’s poem *Darest Thou Now O Soul*. However, still dissatisfied with his compositions, he spent three months of 1908 in Paris in a period of intense study with Maurice Ravel, a period that apparently unleashed his creative energies. His output thereafter grew rapidly in both quality and quantity.

With the onset of war in 1914, he insisted in enlisting in the army (at the age of 41!) and served as a hospital orderly in France and Macedonia, later becoming an artillery officer. After the war, he completed his *Pastoral Symphony*. From 1920 to 1928 he was kept busy as conductor of London’s Bach Choir. With the death of Edward Elgar in 1934, Vaughan Williams was propelled into the limelight as England’s most famous composer, and his musical output continued apace, never slowing even to his dying day.

It may seem a little odd that Vaughan Williams—eclipsed in stature only by Elgar—was never knighted. Such lesser lights as Arnold Bax, Arthur Bliss, and Granville Bantock were all knighted, as were William Walton, Benjamin Britten, and Michael Tippett., although Gustav Holst and Frederick Delius were apparently passed over. Digging into the history, however, we find that Vaughan Williams was indeed offered a knighthood in 1935, but modestly turned it down, shunning what he felt was pomposity and preferring to stay with his academic title. He did, however, accept the lesser honor of the Order of Merit.

The Music

Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis is one of Vaughan Williams’ most popular pieces. It’s one of those pieces that keeps turning up on CD after CD, being equally suited to string orchestra collections, English-music collections, “pop” classical collections, and so on.

Yet interestingly enough, the work rarely appears on live concert programs, a disparity largely explained by the logistical difficulty involved in its performance. Vaughan Williams scored the fantasia for two string orchestras of different sizes, plus a string quartet, with the second orchestra frequently echoing the first. To obtain the desired sonic effects, the two orchestras need to be seated some distance from each other, a feat not easily achievable in the average concert hall. In a recording, of course, the sonic effects

can be created through appropriate application of technology to simulate spatial separation..

Thomas Tallis was a 16th century English composer, organist, and singer who held various church posts. The theme on which Vaughan Williams based this fantasia dates from about 1567. The seed for the fantasia was planted in 1906, when Vaughan Williams, as editor, harmonized Tallis' tune and restored it to the English Hymnal. Following his three-months' Paris sojourn studying with Maurice Ravel, he composed the fantasia to fulfill a commission for the Three Choirs Festival of 1910, at which it was performed in Gloucester Cathedral.

Although Vaughan Williams uses the label "fantasia," which connotes great freedom of form, the respected critic Frank Howes has pointed out that the work makes relatively little departure from the theme itself, and is thus more properly considered "madrigalian"³ rather than fantasia-like. Well, be that as it may, we're going to declare any deeper analysis as being outside the scope of this class and just enjoy it as we hear it. After all, this work wouldn't have become such a recurring feature of recorded collections if it weren't so instantly accessible.

The Theme and Variations form

[This short preview anticipates material we'll soon get into in more detail. It's a way to ease us into examination of form without trying to swallow too much in one go.]

Theme and variations is perhaps one of the most easily recognizable musical forms. A theme (i.e. a tune) is stated, usually at the beginning of the work, and the remainder of the work consists of *variations* on that theme. Variations may be based on many devices, such as:

- harmonic — the theme may be worked through different keys, e.g. major to minor, or accompanied by altered harmonies
- melodic — the theme may be elaborated with more energetic note sequences
- contrapuntal — where two or more themes are played simultaneously, or one theme is played against itself with time delay (fugue).
- rhythmic — the rhythm may be altered, keeping the pitch sequence relatively constant
- timbre, instrumentation — the theme is passed around the instruments of the orchestra

Of course, some or all of these devices may be in play simultaneously, taking the music quite far away from its thematic origins.

³ A madrigal is a song designed to a particular pattern. Or, more accurately, one of two patterns—the 14th century madrigal, or the 16th century madrigal.

Aaron Parks (7 October 1983-) (Seattle, WA) *First Romance*

Theme and variations (Modern Period, piano trio)



Okay, that's a bit of a grandiose introduction for Aaron Parks, and you might well ask what he's doing in a *classical* music class. What we're hearing is quite clearly *jazz*. However, I'm using his work as a particularly illuminating example of an important classical music concept—the theme and variations form.

Jazz—especially the traditional New Orleans style—often conforms to a theme-and-variations form in a very strict way. The theme is stated at the outset, then the various soloists take turns presenting their improvisations on it. These improvisations are variations made up on the spot, in real time. Throughout, the tempo is invariant and the length of the choruses is fixed at the length of the “theme,” as is the chord sequence. Within this rigid framework, the soloists are free to improvise on the theme.

Aaron Parks' music is a far cry from traditional New Orleans jazz, but the track we hear, *First Romance*, follows that constrained structure with unusual purity. Consequently, it is an excellent and lucid example of theme-and-variations construction in its simplest form.

Here is a map of the piece:

Theme: (which itself conforms to ABA form): A A B A (each section is 16 bars long)

First “variation”: A₁ A₂ B₁ A₃ [subscripts denote an improvisation]

Second variation: A₄ A₅ B₂ A₆

Third variation: A₇ A₈ B₃ A₉

Fourth variation (bass): A₁₀ A₁₁ B₄ A₁₂

Recapitulation: A A B A

You can read more about the youthful Mr. Parks at http://www.keynoterecords.com/aaron_parks.html , from where you may also purchase his recordings⁴.

⁴ In theory, anyway. The Website has a gone-out-of-business smell about it.

The major structural designs of classical music

Basic building blocks

Repetition

If you're standing in an art gallery looking at a picture, you can stand for as long as you like in front of that picture, examining its whole, zooming in on its parts, all the while building up your understanding of what it's all about.

You can't do that with a piece of music. Music is played from the top to the bottom in a linear progression, so once a "part" of the work has gone by you don't get to hear it again. This tyrannical property of time thus presents a challenge to the listener. How can she be expected to retain the melodies and harmonies as they whiz by, so as to be able to satisfyingly relate to the work as a whole?

It is this dilemma that the composer's device of *repetition* addresses. By repeating material, the composer more firmly lodges it into his listeners' minds.

Repetition occurs on many scales, from large tracts of music lasting many minutes, to short phrases. The repeated phrase is a familiar phenomenon in almost all forms of music. We've all heard phrases that so demand to be repeated that without the repeat the effect resembles a bull with one horn.

Variation

Closely allied with repetition is *variation*. Variation involves altering an already-stated idea in some way. The alterations may be based on many devices, such as:

- harmonic — the theme may be worked through different keys, e.g. major to minor, or accompanied by altered harmonies
- melodic — the theme may be elaborated with more energetic note sequences
- contrapuntal — where two or more themes are played simultaneously, or one theme is played against itself with time delay (fugue).
- rhythmic — the rhythm may be altered, keeping the pitch sequence relatively constant
- timbre, instrumentation — the theme is passed around the instruments of the orchestra

Variation is a fundamental idea in musical form, appearing as a key feature in many of the more-complex forms.

ABA

ABA form extends simple repetition by interposing a new idea between the repetitions of the opening idea. ABA is a fundamental form that forms the basis of several more-complex forms.

Rondo

Rondo is a rather straightforward extension of ABA, and features a recurring theme alternating with a series of episodes. Symbolically we can describe it as ABACADA.....

Ritornello

Ritornello is a form based on *rondo*, often employed in Baroque-period concertos. The A sections are *tutti* (i.e. played by the orchestra ensemble), with the episodes being played by the soloist. The episodes themselves are often based on the A material, and are normally designed to showcase the soloist's virtuosity.

Arch form

If we take basic ABA form and extend it by bracketing it with an additional idea, we get what is referred to as *arch form*, represented symbolically as ABCBA.

Binary form

Binary form was often used in the Baroque period in the movements of dance suites. It can be represented as AB, and thus amounts to ABA without the repetition. However, binary form features an essential characteristic that holds it together—the A subject modulates away from the opening key. This device creates a feeling of unease in the listener, because the new key gives the music an air of uncertainty, a feeling that something needs to be resolved. And indeed that resolution is provided by the B section, which takes the music back to the tonic key.

Note that the modulation of the A section towards the B section implicitly involves elements of *variation*.

Designs for larger-scale works

The basic building blocks outlined above may be employed for individual movements of larger works. In addition, these building blocks form the basis of more-complex designs.

Sonata form

Sonata form is most commonly employed as the template for the first movement of symphonies, concertos, and (of course) sonatas.

At its simplest, sonata form consists of three elements, which themselves form an ABA structure. The first "A," referred to as the *exposition*, normally features two themes, or "subjects," with the second subject being in a different key (often the dominant) from the first. The second "A," is referred to as the *recapitulation*, and as you might expect is in principle a restatement of the *exposition*. However, the second subject of the recapitulation usually stays in the same key as the first subject. Alert readers will recognize this device as being consistent with the *Binary form* described above. It is common for the recapitulation to vary the themes somewhat, and the recapitulation is usually shorter than the exposition, which itself is often repeated in its entirety.

Between the exposition and recapitulation is placed the development, in which the composer takes the themes from the exposition and creates a free fantasia with variations on those themes, involving much modulation, often to remote keys.

To complete the picture, it is common for the exposition to be preceded by an introduction, and for the movement to be brought to a tidy conclusion by a coda.

To summarize, we may represent sonata form with the following map.

(Introduction)
Exposition
 First subject
 Second subject
(Repeat of exposition)
Development
Recapitulation
 First subject
 Second subject
(Coda)

Sonata Rondo form

As the name suggests, sonata rondo form blends the elements of sonata and rondo form. In its pure form, sonata-rondo form is sonata form with a Development section consisting of the first subject followed by new material (rather than variations on the exposition themes) in a different key. In practice, movements based on both sonata and rondo elements are usually much more free in structure than the theory books would lead you to believe. Sonata-rondo form is often encountered as the underlying design for the final movement of a symphony.

Theme and Variations

Theme and variations is perhaps one of the most easily recognizable musical forms, in which an entire work is based on the *variation* idea described above.

A theme (i.e. a tune) is stated, usually at the beginning of the work, and the remainder of the work consists of variations on that theme. In general, multiple of the various variation devices may be in play simultaneously, taking the music quite far away from its thematic origins.

The concept of variation is fundamental in classical music. Although the theme-and-variations form employs the concept at its purest, *variation* is the foundation of many structural elements of a symphonic work. For example, the development section of a sonata-form movement typically consists of variations on themes from the exposition, as does a coda. On a smaller scale, the bridge passages that link together the major statements of the work are themselves normally fashioned from variations on already-heard thematic material.

It is this reworking and restatement of a relatively small amount of thematic material that integrates a substantial symphonic work and gives it intellectual manageability. Each repeated element reinforces listeners' familiarity and thereby consolidates their understanding.

Scherzo and Trio

Scherzo (or minuet) and Trio is a particular form of ABA, and merits a mention in its own right because of its frequent appearance as the second or third movement of a symphony. A minuet is a rather sedate and stately dance in triple time. A scherzo is also in triple time, but is much more lively (it's literally the Italian word for "joke").

The "trio"⁵ section typically provides a contrast to the scherzo. While the scherzo is usually lively and rhythmic, the trio tends to be more lyrical and relaxed.

The Symphony

Symphonies of the Classical and Romantic periods usually have four movements. The following design is typical:

First movement: Sonata form

Second Movement: Slow movement

Third Movement: Scherzo (or Minuet) and Trio

Fourth Movement: Sonata form (or sonata-rondo, or rondo)

The order of the slow movement and the scherzo may be reversed.

Serenade

The term "serenade" has been employed at least since Mozart's time to describe a work of symphonic structure but much shorter duration than a symphony, and usually for a smaller ensemble, such as a string orchestra. However, it's a somewhat confusing designation, and there is overlap of works recognized as "symphonies" with those recognized as "serenades." For example, Mozart's *Eine Kleine Nachtmusk*, written originally for string quartet plus bass (and now generally performed by chamber-sized string orchestra) is regarded as a "serenade," and indeed described as such by the composer. It runs to 18 minutes and is of symphonic construction. Yet Mozart's own Symphony No. 32 runs for only 10 minutes.

Concerto, Sonata

A "concerto" normally involves a solo instrument and a symphony orchestra, often reduced in size so as not to overwhelm the soloist. Sometimes more than one "soloist" is involved, leading to such terms as "double concerto" and "triple concerto."

A "sonata" may be for solo piano or for a solo instrument accompanied by piano.

⁵ The trio section's curious name derives from early Baroque-period suites that featured minuet-and-trio movements. It was common at the time for the trio section to be played by just three instruments, with the minuet being played by the full ensemble.

Concertos and sonatas of the classical period are similar in construction to symphonies, except they usually consist of three movements, with the symphony's scherzo-and-trio movement being omitted. Concertos of the Romantic period tend to be freer in design, while those of the Baroque period (which predated the maturation of sonata form) are usually simpler in design, often employing the Ritornello form.

Suite

A “Suite” is, as its name implies, a collection of movements that are more or less related in some way. The movements may be, for example, a selection of pieces from a larger collection (for example Grieg's Peer Gynt Suite), a collection of dances (for example Malcolm Arnold's English Dance Suite and Cornish Dance Suite), or a selection of scenes from a ballet. Or the movements may be specifically written for performance as a suite, with no ulterior ancestry, as for example Gustav Holst's Moorside Suite.

A Suite is distinguished from a Symphony by being freer in format. There are usually three or more movements, which are generally much shorter than the movements of a symphony. Being shorter, their structure can be simpler (often simply ABA) without running the risk of losing the listener.

Overture

The purpose of an overture—originally at least—is to warm up the audience with some previews of the themes they are to hear in the opera proper. With that aim, the structure of an overture was quite free, and composers often knitted together their themes with creative variations.

Overtures are inherently constrained in length. After all, how long can you expect an eager audience to sit still? They're keenly awaiting the performance, and it's hard enough to get them to stop talking as it is.

As early as the baroque period, overtures from operas gained retrospective recognition as fine free-standing concert pieces. They proved to be effective and popular opening works for orchestral concerts, so much so that the overture rather quickly attained the status of a legitimate “form” (or should that be pseudo-form?) in its own right, quite dissociated from an opera or other larger work. Such free-standing works are sometimes labeled “concert overtures” or “comedy⁶ overtures.”

Tone Poem

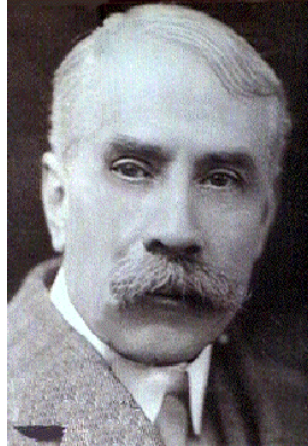
The term *tone poem* designates not a form as such, but rather a work intended to tell a story, describe a scene, or evoke a mood. I mention it here for completeness, because the term *tone poem* appears to have acquired pejorative connotations, apparently having become synonymous with “long, boring, miserable piece of music” in many people's minds. Perhaps because of these connotations, composers have taken to attaching alternative labels to their tone poems. Thus, Elgar calls his *Cockaigne* an “overture;” Delius give the collective label *Two Pieces for Small Orchestra to On Hearing the First*

⁶ As far as I can tell, “comedy” is a simple synonym for “concert” in this context. There is no connotation that the work is supposed to be funny.

Cuckoo in Spring and *Summer Night on the River*, and Bantock calls *Prometheus Unbound* a “symphonic prelude.”

Edward Elgar (1857-1934) (England) Enigma Variations

Symphony orchestra (Modern Period)



Elgar’s *Enigma Variations* is perhaps the best-known set of variations in the entire orchestral repertoire. Its first performance, conducted⁷ by Hans Richter in London in 1899, brought Elgar immediate success and the recognition that had up to then largely eluded him.

Elgar had left his native Worcestershire in 1889 to make a career in London, but after two years of frustration and disappointment he returned home. Continuing to compose—primarily for local music festivals—his reputation steadily grew. It was the *Enigma Variations* that propelled him at last to national prominence.

The work, like so many of the good things in life, was the result of serendipity. One day, Elgar, returning home from giving violin lessons, sat down to unwind at the piano and began improvising. His wife commented favorably on the tune that emerged and Elgar responded by suggesting how certain of their friends might play it. That spontaneous exchange was the seed from which the *Enigma Variations* germinated.

The work is dedicated to “My friends pictured within,” and each variation is annotated with the initials or nickname of the friend portrayed. Elgar eventually cleared up any mystery⁸ as to their true identities in a note written for issue with pianola rolls.

The title “Enigma” was said by Elgar to refer to another well-known tune, which does not itself appear in the variations but of which the theme is the counterpoint. Basil Maine, Elgar’s biographer, colorfully referred to the enigma as the theme’s “silent companion.”

⁷ But who was Richter conducting? No-one seems to know. I’ve searched high and low, and nowhere can I discover the identity of the orchestra. <http://members.cox.net/datimp/simco.html> says it was the Halle, but the Halle’s own site (<http://www.halle.co.uk/publishedsite/cd-hll-7501.asp>) refutes that notion.

⁸ With the very likely exception of Variation 13 (is that number mere coincidence?)

It is of course possible that this was one of Elgar's 'japes' and that the enigma tune does not exist. If so, it has become a spectacularly successful jape, taken to great lengths and sparking a feverish debate that continues unabated. *Auld Lang Syne* is the most frequently touted candidate but excerpts from a range of works by composers Elgar admired, notably Mozart, have been found to show strong musical similarities with the theme, while a 1975 correspondent to the Elgar Society Journal put together a convincing argument in favor of Rule Britannia as the solution.

Elgar never explained this mystery, and it is commonly thought to remain unsolved to this day. However, a [1988 article](#) in *The Economist* claims that, according to Richter's daughter, Richter's diary records that Elgar told him that the answer to the enigma was indeed that no such tune existed⁹. Elgar mentioned that he finished the variations on April 1st, so he invented the non-existent theme as an April Fools' joke.

Elgar claimed no more ambitious aim for the work beyond "that each variation should illustrate some little characteristic of a friend." To his editor (August Jaeger) at publisher Novello he remarked that in the Variations he has written "what I think *they* would have written—if they were asses enough to compose."

Map of the work, with notes

Numbers in brackets are the rehearsal numbers given in the Novello score. The notations '+n' and '-n' indicate the number of bars beyond or ahead of a rehearsal figure. Thus [15+6] indicates 6 bars beyond figure 15. Note that [15+0] (not [15+1])¹⁰ would indicate [15] itself, but in that case I'd omit the '0'. In addition, the timing relative to the start of the variation in the LPO/Barenboim recording (Sony SK 92763) is appended after a dash. Thus [16+1-0:36] indicates 1 bar after rehearsal number 16, 0:36 into the variation.

⁹ It may or may not be significant that the *Economist* article appeared on April 2nd. Furthermore, the article states that "Richter's diary recounts how Elgar told him that there was no thematic link to the variations," an assertion that is plainly false on its face. But when we consider that we are reading an article recounting an interview by an obscure author (Erich Merkwürdigliebe) with Richter's daughter about what Richter had written in his diary about what Elgar had told him, we clearly see four levels of indirection through which whisper-down-the-lane distortions could have been introduced. It may also be significant that the very active [Elgar Society](#) does not even acknowledge the existence of the *Economist* article (in spite of my specific inquiry to them), preferring to maintain on its Web site that the enigma has never been solved.

¹⁰ Hey, I'm a computer science graduate. We count from 0, not 1.

Theme chart

Main theme, A	
Main theme, B	
Nimrod	
“Calm Sea”	
Theme C	
Theme D	

[0] The theme is individual enough to be easily recognized in its various transformations. It falls into three short sections—a simple **ABA** formula which is also preserved in many of the variations. Other features worth noting are the characteristic falling sevenths in the third and fourth bars, and the fact that while it begins in G minor, the middle part is in the major mode, as is its final chord.

Variation 1 (C.A.E.)

CAE is Caroline Alice Elgar, the composer's wife. The music is an eloquent testimony to a life which was to her husband "a romantic and delicate inspiration." It is so transparently based on the theme that it barely sounds like a variation.

Variation 2 (H.D.S-P.)

Hew David Steuart-Powell was an amateur pianist with whom Elgar played in chamber ensembles. Elgar himself was a violin player who early in life aspired to becoming a virtuoso. However, this aspiration did not form quite early enough, and his late start on the violin (having begun with the piano) effectively closed out that path.

A relentless sixteenth-note figure pervades the entire variation, representing Steurt-Powell's mastery of the piano. [6-0:14] Several bars in, basses and cellos underscore the busy figure with the A figure of the theme.

Variation 3 (R.B.T.)

Richard Baxter Townshend was a an amateur actor. The quick changes of mood in this woodwind variation are a tribute to his caricature of an old man, in which he ranged from deep bass to high falsetto.

The variation begins with, and is chiefly based on, a cheeky-sounding variant of the A part of the theme, contrasted against [9-0:11] a figure that you could just about persuade yourself is a chromaticized variant of the B part of the theme.

Variation 4 (W.M.B)

Variation 4 is a vigorous affair, following the theme closely, but with dramatic transposition of the rhythmic accents, William Meath Baker is depicted as an energetic country squire, reading out the arrangements for the day and leaving with an inadvertent bang of the door.

Variation 5 (R.P.A.)

Gravity tempered by wit was the distinguishing trait of Richard Penrose Arnold (the son of poet Matthew Arnold), perfectly captured in this C minor variation.

[15-0:00] The theme (A) appears first in the bass, against a counter theme (itself derived from that same theme) on the violins. After the [16+1-0:37] quirky middle section the [17-0:52] two melodies switch places, with the original theme riding high on flutes and oboes. The variation concludes with a [18-1:33] brief coda consisting of restatement of the "quirky" figure followed by the opening idea.

Variation 6 (Ysobel)

Ysobel Fitton was a student of Elgar's. Her instrument, the viola, fittingly¹¹ takes the lead (largely solo) in this delicately pensive reverie, which begins with an exercise that Elgar wrote for her. Ms. Fitton was an unusually tall woman, a trait that Elgar japingly portrayed with the large intervals.

¹¹ Ha!

Variation 7 (Troyte)

A choleric figure in timpani and bass strings, based on the A of the theme but impetuously overdriving its rhythm, introduces Arthur Troyte Griffith, a Malvern architect of radical views. The [23+4-0:03] phrase that follows is based on the middle section of the theme, and is later [25-0:18] given out by the brass. Brilliant runs on the strings add to the general picture of boisterous bonhomie.

Variation 8 (W.N.)

Elgar now adopts the key of G major for a gently appealing portrait—for this it seems to be, rather than a depiction of some idiosyncrasy—of Winifred Norbury, whom Elgar knew through her association with the Worcestershire Philharmonic Society. The variation captures both her laugh (via the [31-0:28] oboe trills) and the atmosphere of her eighteenth-century house.

Variation 9 (Nimrod)

As the long-held tonic note (G) of the preceding variation is softly joined by the lower strings in the key of E flat major, there is a feeling that the music has been elevated to another plane. The pages that follow are truly among the most sublime in Western music.

“Nimrod,” the Old Testament hunter, was the nickname of August Jaeger, with whom Elgar developed a close friendship, and who did much to keep Elgar going during the period when he was struggling to secure a lasting reputation. The variation represents a summer evening spent with Jaeger during which Jaeger discoursed on the slow movements of Beethoven. The falling sevenths of the theme are much in evidence, while for a brief contrast [35-1:32] the rising phrase of the middle part is inverted (horns and lower strings). The music reaches an [37-2-2:51] awe-inspiring climax—during which the dramatic appearance of the note C flat indicates a very brief excursion into E flat minor—before subsiding in a last lingering E flat major chord.

Variation 10 (Dorabella)

Borrowed from *Cosi fan tutte*, the pseudonym refers to Dora Penny, daughter of the Rector of Wolverhampton, whose winsome manner—coupled with characteristic hesitation in speech—is charmingly caught.

I must confess to having some difficulty finding a connection to the theme from this variation. The lyrical solo viola melody’s [39-0:18] relationship to the A of the theme is the best I can come up with. Here, the falling sevenths are replaced by rising seconds (i.e. the note fallen onto is raised an octave).

Variation 11 (G.R.S.)

George R. Sinclair, one-time organist of Hereford Cathedral, owned a bulldog who fell into the river Wye. “Set that down in music,” said Sinclair. “I did, and here it is,” explained Elgar later. The variation portrays the initial splash, the desperate swim accompanied by intermittent barking, and the final joyful bark upon regaining dry land.

Variation 12 (B.G.N.)

Basil G. Nevinson was an amateur cellist who completed the chamber-music trio with Elgar and Hew Stuart-Powell. The variation begins appropriately with [52] solo cello singing a variation on the A of the theme (and retaining its original mood), followed by tutti cellos carrying the tune. Later, [53+3-1:03] a beautiful melody on violas and cellos is discreetly accompanied by a fairly straightforward version of the B of the theme played by woodwinds and second violins.

Variation 13 (***)

This variation is cryptically subtitled *Romanza*. And what are those asterisks about? This strange label seems to be another of the enigmas associated with this work. Most scholars attribute this variation to Lady Mary Lygon, a local noblewoman who sailed for Australia at about the time Elgar wrote the variation, which quotes [56+3-0:31] from Mendelssohn's *Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage*¹². However, the mysterious asterisks in place of initials—not to mention the *Romanza* subtitle—have invited speculation that they conceal the identity not of Lady Lygon, but of Helen Weaver, Elgar's fiancée for eighteen months in 1883-84 before she emigrated to New Zealand.

Variation 14 (E.D.U.)

E.D.U. are pseudo rather than real initials, and represent “Edoo,” his wife’s pet name for Elgar himself. However, there is no implication that the variation represents a self-portrait. Rather, it portrays a vigorous assertion of optimism for the future, and harks back to the grandiose mood of the Pomp and Circumstance marches. This concluding variation unifies the entire work by incorporating much material from the first and ninth variations. Significantly, those variations depict Elgar’s wife and his publisher friend August Jaeger (Nimrod), the two most important influences in his life.

The variation begins with a busy figure based on the theme. The busyness develops to optimism and confidence [62-0:23] and introduces a very brief but very forceful new idea (let’s call it “C”) (derived from the A of the theme), which plays a substantial subsequent role in this variation. The music eventually subsides to a somewhat pensive passage [65-0:57] that combines another new idea (let’s call it “D”) (again derived from the A of the theme) with the B of the theme. Gradually regaining its confident optimism (by [68-1:32]), we hear a forceful brass rendition of Nimrod as the music moves towards a climax [69-1:48]. After a brief reprise of the introduction [70-1:59], we hear [73-2:31] a reprise of variation 1 in its original mood. The mood continues as theme D now returns [74-2:56], again over B. Again the music builds to a climax [76+4-3:28] with the organ¹³ joining in for the first time, adding rich substance to the orchestral texture. The

¹² Notice the timpani effect here, imitating the ship’s engines. The score directs the timpani be played with snare-drum sticks, but the creative timpanist on the first performance employed coins(!) instead, and most timpanists today follow that tradition. The recording we’re listening to certainly sounds as if it’s adhering to the coin tradition.

¹³ The score marks the organ part as *ad lib*, presumably in deference to practical logistics. The recording we’re hearing (Daniel Barenboim conducting the London Philharmonic) indeed includes the organ. I went and bought this recording when I realized that the recording I had (Andre Previn conducting the Royal Philharmonic) ad-libbed it out.

triumphant and optimistic mood continues in full force to the end, the material being largely based on Nimrod and idea C.

In Elgar's original submission this final variation was shorter, but on Richter's suggestion Elgar revised and extended it, so as to make for a more satisfying conclusion.

Edward Elgar (1857-1934) (England) Serenade for string orchestra

String orchestra (Modern Period)

This is one of Elgar's earlier works, and dates from 1892, having been in gestation for some four years. It is the first of Elgar's compositions to satisfy the composer himself. He associated it with the happiness of his engagement and marriage.

The serenade is in three movements, and we may regard it as a suite. Its construction is disarmingly simple. The first movement is based on two themes, the first of unhurried yet purposeful energy, the second more expansive and lyrical. The first theme is repeated, giving the movement a straightforward ABA form.

The second movement is the traditional slow movement, and this movement is indeed *very* slow. After a lengthy (in comparison with the movement as a whole) introduction, Elgar crafts his first theme—a dreamy melody—with infinite care and patience. A second theme follows, still in the same mood as the first. The opening melody then returns, this time with a new accompaniment, much busier than before, still calm and soothing until the theme itself builds to a rather forceful climax, before subsiding to a brief reprise of the introduction that gives the movement a satisfying symmetry. The movement thus has the shape of ABCBA.

The third movement is of nearly identical tempo and rhythmic design to the first. It opens with a new theme, but Elgar nicely integrates the entire work by then bringing back key features of the first movement. We hear its second theme in its entirety, underpinned by several bars quoting the figure that fills the very first two bars of the piece. Somewhat oddly, the work ends here, with no reprise of the third movement's own theme.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) (Austria) Horn Concerto No. 3

Concerto (Classical Period, Symphony Orchestra)



Mozart wrote four concertos for his friend Ignaz Leutbeg (or Leitbeg), a very capable horn player who was nevertheless obliged to hold onto his day job as a cheesemonger. Friends from their home town of Salzburg both made new homes in the more culturally rich magnet of Vienna.

Here is a map¹⁴ of the sonata-form first movement of Concerto No. 3:

	Exposition
1	First theme (violins)
2	Second theme (violins)
3	First theme (horn)
4	Second theme (horn)
5	Development
	Recapitulation
6	First theme (violins)
7	First theme (horn)
8	Second theme (violins)
9	Second theme (horn)
10	Coda
11	Cadenza

The second movement, the traditional slow movement, is a rather uncomplicated rondo that's rounded off with a coda.

The third movement reverts to the tempo of the first movement, but with a 6/8 rhythm. It too is an uncomplicated rondo rounded off with a coda, which again excuses me from the need to draw a map.

¹⁴ Wot, no bar numbers? No, the Kalmus score doesn't have them, so even if I counted them myself they wouldn't be much use to anyone else.

