

1 Styles and ideas

1.1. Aims and context

This book advances five closely interconnected but wide-ranging theses. 1: Elgar was a modernist composer. 2: His music carries meanings that can be discovered by analysis. 3: Schenkerian voice-leading analysis is a useful preliminary to the hermeneutics – the study of meaning – of all kinds of tonal music, but its foundations and presuppositions need to be examined and reworked in this case. 4: The philosophy of Martin Heidegger can at the same time aid in three tasks: the useful reformulation of Schenker's phenomenology, the understanding of music's ontology, and the hermeneutics of musical works. 5: A work of music, being an intentional object with a supratemporal form, is a mimesis of humankind's lived temporality, and lights up for us the structures of our own existence.

All of these theses are controversial to a greater or lesser extent. Few Elgarians or academic musicologists would instinctively accept thesis 1. Of those who sense *something* of the modernist in him, he has been compared, not entirely to his favour, with contemporaries: after noting that his conservatism need not rule out a kind of progressiveness, Arnold Whittall adds, echoing Adorno's view of Debussy, that 'the fractures and ambiguities characteristic of modernity are . . . less likely to be found in Elgar than they are in other tonal symphonists of the time, such as Sibelius, or, in particular, Mahler'.¹ And on the surface – the place where fractures are generally seen – he is entirely right. But James Hepokoski may be counted among those who still feel bound to call Elgar 'modernist',² and until it is proven through thorough analysis of his music, as opposed to an instinctive response to it, by however learned a listener, that that music has little to do with his historical situation, then Dahlhaus's characterization of the years 1890–1914, and therefore the heart of Elgar's mature music, as a modernist period of musical composition also still

¹ Arnold Whittall, *Musical Composition in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 16–17. He quotes some of Adorno's words on Debussy on p. 10, and quietly rebuffs them on p. 26.

² James A. Hepokoski, 'Elgar', in *The Nineteenth-Century Symphony*, ed. D. Kern Holoman (New York and London: Schirmer, 1997), pp. 327–44 and *Sibelius: Symphony No. 5* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 2.

holds, and its value as a descriptive category for Elgar's music should be examined.³

Theses 2 and 3 are supported in part by Adorno's opening remarks on Mahler: 'Inadequate as is thematic analysis to the content of Mahler's symphonies – an analysis which misses the music's substance in its preoccupation with procedure – no more sufficient would be the attempt to pin down, in the jargon of authenticity, the statement put forward by the music.'⁴ Thesis 2 points to the suggestion (in Chapter 2), through arguments put forward by Roman Ingarden and Martin Heidegger, that it is only through analysis that a work's substance may be grasped. Adorno would agree that neither an 'analysis which misses the music's substance in its preoccupation with procedure' nor a hermeneutics which has no basis in close textual analysis is an adequate approach to musical criticism: the two must be combined, and this book is an attempt to do that. It may even be argued that Elgar's mature music is, taken as a whole and in its parts – and here his modernist credentials shine out – a powerful negative dialectic so subtle that it largely goes unnoticed even now, when musicologists are on the alert for such things, one which takes apart and reconstitutes musical concepts of form, tonality, and structure, and by extension reconstructs human, existential notions of self.

I shall not balk from using 'the jargon of authenticity' (the Heideggerian tradition which Adorno distanced himself from) where it serves useful methodological or hermeneutic ends. One of the book's intentions is to establish an adequate situation for Elgar in European intellectual history, and since it is basic to the nature of his compositional procedure to argue through and with a musical tradition that stretches back to the beginning of the Enlightenment, the 'jargon' is a useful way of situating him with some precision in the intellectual development that Robert C. Solomon has called 'the rise and fall of the self'.⁵ It should come as no surprise that Elgar's ideas were bang up to date.

It seems this project is not, except in terms of its ideology, terribly different from Adorno's; it might even turn out to be a differently

³ See Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley, CA and London: University of California Press, 1989; orig. edn 1980), Chapter 6. The author of a big new history of Western music seems to think that Elgar does not warrant *any* place in musical history: see Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). But this is an extreme and polemical position.

⁴ Theodor W. Adorno, *Mahler: a Musical Physiognomy*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992; orig. edn 1960), p. 3.

⁵ Robert C. Solomon, *Continental Philosophy Since 1750: The Rise and Fall of the Self* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

grounded way towards achieving certain of his interpretative ends. After all, Adorno's pronounced revulsion to technical analysis was probably only a self-defensive façade. As Max Paddison admits, Adorno 'was interested by Schenker's work . . . although his understanding of it seems to have been somewhat limited'.⁶ The result is that Adorno's analyses rarely convince or even grip the reader qua technical analyses, but that the conclusions he draws from the hidden analytical processes of his mind are usually fascinating and compelling. Viewed alongside Paddison's codification of Adorno's dialectical model of music criticism, my approach appears as a combination of the first and third of three interpretative strands, i.e. 'immanent (including technical) analysis' and 'philosophical–historical interpretation'.⁷

Adorno defines immanent analysis straightforwardly. 'Technical analysis is assumed at all times and often disclosed, but it needs to be supplemented by detailed interpretation if it is to go beyond mere humanistic stock-taking and to express the relationship of the subject to truth.'⁸ My analysis is more detailed and more fully presented for scrutiny than

⁶ Max Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 170.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 59. I have no interest in the second category, 'sociological critique', since I am not persuaded by Adorno's claim that all art is ideological: that claim seems rooted in Adorno's historical and cultural situation to an unhelpful degree. I am more persuaded that our *readings* of artworks may be ideological (and are becoming more so, ironically, the more Adorno is read), at least until reconstructed, and I shall propose a reconstructive way round some entrenched musicological ideologies in the course of this book.

By 'Adorno's historical and cultural situation' I mean not merely that of a German of Jewish extraction during the rise of fascism, although it would be difficult to overstate the importance of that, but rather his self-styled role as the philosophical voice of artistic (and especially musical) modernism. Dahlhaus's critique of Adorno's view of history – he suggests that Adorno 'reconstrue[s] aesthetic norms into historical trends to form a basis for a pre-history of the twelve-note technique' (Carl Dahlhaus, *Foundations of Music History*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983; orig. edn 1967), p. 31) – strikes at the heart of what I call Adorno's 'ideology', which is in one sense a verbal equivalent of the famous duck-rabbit image. It is either because he believes in the fragmentation of society and the individual that he gives the tenets of musical modernism control over his entire philosophy or, conversely, because he holds that the tenets of musical modernism disclose world-historical truths that he believes in the fragmentation of society and the individual. It doesn't matter which conviction came first – they probably came together, *Einfall*-like – but the combination of the two leads him to argue for the necessity of sociological critique. I see neither duck nor rabbit, and will argue for a different form of critique.

⁸ Theodor W. Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, trans. Anne G. Mitchell and Wesley V. Bloomster (London: Sheed and Ward, 1973), p. 26.

Adorno's, and the connexions between different stages in my hermeneutics are therefore more clearly visible and more easily assessed. In place of Adorno's neo-Marxian approach I set a Heideggerian philosophical–historical interpretation, and so Adorno's sociological critique becomes for me an existential–ontological critique.

This study begins with relatively abstract methodological questions, progresses to very detailed analyses of two individual works, introducing along the way more general methodological concerns of a philosophical nature, then offers a hermeneutics of the works thus analyzed, before concluding with new, relatively abstract methodological observations which result from the process.

Chapter 1 outlines the aims and context of the study, and begins to flesh out the first thesis, to be developed at greater length in Chapter 6.

Chapter 2 problematizes Schenkerian phenomenology, addressing hermeneutic and methodological problems at its heart. Schenkerian theory is reformulated in the light of ideas borrowed from post-Husserlian and Heideggerian philosophy, chiefly, but not exclusively, in relation to the way Heidegger's *Augenblick* affects our conception of Schenker's *Ursatz*. The intention is to sever Schenker's theory from its restrictive association with Beethoven's heroic style, thereby making possible a richer hermeneutics. This is probably the most complex chapter and the least easy to read, and furthermore its relevance to the book's overall argument (which builds incrementally through each chapter) only becomes fully clear in Chapters 5–7.

During an analysis of the First Symphony in Chapter 3 an important Elgarian fingerprint is uncovered: his 'immuring–immured' tonal structure, in which an opening and closing key, posing as 'the tonic' but not necessarily in a convincing manner, immures another, perhaps more 'viable' key which, however, Elgar turns his back on. In this case the immuring tonality is A \flat and the immured tonality D. Elgar's use of a static *Kopftön* (another fingerprint) throughout the symphony helps to prolong through the entire structure a single four-movement *Ursatz*. Significant thematic, tonal, and contrapuntal problems in each of the first three movements negate a satisfactory sense of closure, and a single coherent argument is carried on through the work. It is demonstrated that the final, very delayed, closure of the *Ursatz* in the very last bar of the symphony, which on the face of it seems orthodox, is unconvincing in terms of purely musical grammar and rhetoric, and deliberately so. Another general question, related ultimately to the same hermeneutic impulse, is also confronted: why do multi-movement works have as many movements as they do, and in a particular order?

Chapter 4 discusses the nature and function of Elgar's 'symphonic study', *Falstaff*. It draws on James Hepokoski's argument that symphonic poems hold text (music) and paratext (non-musical image) in meaningful inter-connexion, and that the listener or analyst must always pay attention to both. But Elgar explicitly writes in his analytical note on the work that 'the composer's intention' (his words) is to write a piece of musical Shakespearean criticism; he quotes quite extensively from critics as early as Maurice Morgann (1777). This 'meta-paratextual' content makes *Falstaff* perhaps unique among symphonic poems or 'studies', and adds another facet to the work which must be grappled with in an analysis. Its meta-paratextual content is examined through the Shakespeare critics Elgar cites and their subsequent development in much later critical writing. Of particular importance is Morgann's notion of narrative and psychological 'inference', which has recently been picked up by Harold Bloom, and which forms the theoretical basis for Elgar's addition of the Dream Interlude, a crucial part of the work.

Through an analysis of Elgar's use of associative tonality – he associates keys with Falstaff, Hal, and the Kingship of England – a window begins to open up into a hermeneutic of the work's existential content, in terms of its analysis of Falstaff in particular and humankind more generally. The relationship between Falstaff's C and Hal's E \flat is the central interest, and the ultimately destructive role played by the Kingship's E is closely examined. The analytical technique is a mixture of Schenkerian and Hepokoskian methods, especially the 'non-resolving recapitulation deformation' and 'rotational structures', but the emphasis is principally on tonal association and the insights gained from a modified Schenkerian approach, rather than on the mechanics of undertaking one. I therefore focus on more outward-looking implications of the phenomenology, to encourage a more extensive exploration of extramusical meaning.

Chapter 5 outlines my theory of musical hermeneutics, placing it alongside Lawrence Kramer's in many ways, setting itself a little against his in others, principally because of my Heideggerian focus and insistence that music is a mimesis of human temporality, which itself leads into a broader consideration of human being and Being as such, not merely into musical hermeneutics. The second half of the chapter develops my conception of music's mimetic nature through a comparison with the quest narrative in literature. These hermeneutic and mimetic conceptions are grounded on Heidegger and Gadamer, and set apart from (Derridian and Foucauldian) poststructuralist musicology.

Chapter 6 offers an interpretation of the 'data' garnered in the analyses, drawing on Chapter 5 and the refinements of Schenkerian analysis in

Chapter 2, to establish Elgar's modernist credentials and point to new challenges for musical hermeneutics. It examines a possible existential meaning of the temporal unfolding of the First Symphony and *Falstaff*, characterizing it as a kind of failed quest narrative which rejects the Beethovenian heroic paradigm while – and this is a typically modernist move – ostensibly but disingenuously repeating it. Suggestions are made there and in Chapter 7 of ways in which we may read off Elgar's modernist music an incisive and distinctively twentieth-century commentary on human nature and the possibilities for human being in the future. In conclusion the significance of the study's findings is discussed.

1.2. A musicological context

This study will draw on and open up new areas for debate with several contexts which range from challenging new ideas in musical analysis through studies of reception history to works on hermeneutics and the philosophy of music.

In the last twenty years a number of Schenkerians have been persuaded by Robert Bailey's rejection of the classic monotonal view of the structure of neo-Romantic and early modernist music, and his proposal that it may be better understood in terms of the prolongation of a 'double-tonic complex'. 'Directional tonality' and 'associative tonality' may also have an important part to play in the overall structure of movements or works.⁹ As yet, there is no consensus among Schenkerians as to how these tonal structures, especially the first two, are to be assimilated into Schenker's explicitly monotonal conception of music's unfolding. It is one of this book's concerns to show how this is possible. By regarding prolongation of and resolution into 'the tonic', understood as the governing key in a monotonal hegemony, as a *possibility* rather than a *necessity* we may see secondary keys, whether in a double-tonic complex or in a directional-tonal structure, as choices to be made rather than difficulties to be overcome. This requires a fundamental

⁹ The most recent 'duotonal Schenkerian' studies are the essays in William Kinderman and Harald Krebs (eds.), *The Second Practice of Nineteenth-Century Tonality* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1996). Like Patrick McCreless's *Wagner's 'Siegfried': Its Drama, History, and Music* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1982), Christopher Orlo Lewis's *Tonal Coherence in Mahler's Ninth Symphony* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1984) and Warren Darcy's *Wagner's 'Das Rheingold'* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), they are greatly influenced by Robert Bailey's 'An analytical study of the sketches and drafts', in *Richard Wagner, Prelude and Transformation from 'Tristan und Isolde'* (New York and London: Norton, 1985), pp. 113–46 and 'The structure of the *Ring* and its evolution', *Nineteenth-Century Music* 1 (1977), pp. 48–61.

reformulation, but not a corruption, of Schenker's phenomenology, one which makes sense of a significant change of emphasis.

Schenker's contention, as I wish to formulate it, is that each 'present' moment of a piece of music, each point along the unfolding of the *Ursatz*, holds within itself the entire 'past' and 'future' of the work in a meaningful union: his conception is on a 'retentive–protentive' model familiar to the philosophical school of phenomenology, and as such is basically identical to the Husserlian and Bergsonian understanding of time-consciousness which is the basis of the thought of Ingarden and Heidegger.¹⁰ At each stage, we know what has passed and predict what is to come. Yet Schenker insists that we *know* what is to come, i.e. the closure of the *Ursatz* and the reaffirmation of 'the tonic'. After Scott Burnham's reading of Schenkerian theory in the light of nineteenth- and twentieth-century reception history, it is clear that this claim – reasonable enough in its historical context, given the fact that many nineteenth-century composers seem to have held this view themselves – points not to necessity but merely to possibility. We cannot now agree that the closure of the *Ursatz* in 'the tonic' is a necessity. And that is the fundamental change to Schenker's conception which allows for the reconciliation of his monotonal outlook with the duotonal outlook of more recent scholars. His retentive–protentive model is not smashed, but merely opened up and made more pliable. We know at each musical moment that it 'protains' a future, but we are open to the possibility that it might not be a heroic Beethovenian future. The reasons for this will be more fully explained in Chapter 2.

Here duotonal Schenkerian analysis and Hepokoskian Sonata Theory may join hands. Daniel Harrison has pointed out Bailey's and Hepokoski's implicit, shared Heraclitean ancestry:¹¹ for all three (as well as for Heidegger), everything flows. Since the early 1990s, James Hepokoski has been developing an increasingly rich and vivid way of thinking about early modernist structures and the meanings they may carry.¹² His discussions

¹⁰ In Chapter 2 I shall say more on studies by phenomenologists of music – but this book is not a phenomenology of music; it is merely a combination of my interpretation of two different but (I think) related phenomenologies: those of Schenker and Heidegger.

¹¹ Daniel Harrison, 'Nonconformist notions of nineteenth-century enharmonicism', *Music Analysis* 21 (2002), pp. 115–60.

¹² Hepokoski's largest study is his *Sibelius: Symphony No. 5* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), but other important ones are 'Back and forth from *Egmont*: Beethoven, Mozart, and the nonresolving recapitulation', *Nineteenth-Century Music* 25 (2001–2), pp. 127–54, 'Beyond the sonata principle', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 55 (2002), pp. 91–154, 'Fiery-pulsed libertine or domestic hero? Strauss's *Don Juan* reinvestigated', in *Richard Strauss: New Perspectives on the Composer*

of sonata deformations and rotational structures are in important respects similar to my refined Schenkerian methodology, with its emphasis on the choice of whether to be ‘another heroic Beethovenian piece’ (compose out an orthodox *Ursatz*), and, through a more explicitly Heideggerian formulation of music’s goal-directedness, on the teleological thrust towards the end of all possibilities – the close of the piece, whether that be monotonal or duotonal in implication or in fact.

The two central Hepokoskian categories to be drawn on in this book require brief introduction now: sonata deformations and rotational structures. Hepokoski has recently defined a sonata deformation as

an individual work in dialogue primarily with sonata norms even though certain central features of the sonata-concept have been reshaped, exaggerated, marginalised or overridden altogether . . . The appropriate formal question to be asked of such a piece – more often, of one of its movements – is not the blunt, reductive one, ‘Is it in sonata form?’, but rather, ‘Are we invited to apply the norms of the traditional sonata in order to interpret what does (or does not) occur in this individualised work?’¹³

He discusses three kinds of deformation in Elgar’s symphonies, of which a complicated form of the ‘non-resolving recapitulation’ also reappears in *Falstaff*.¹⁴ In this deformation, ‘a sonata’s “second theme” (or any theme that is used to bring the exposition to a non-tonic close) is not permitted to resolve satisfactorily to the presumed “tonic” in the recapitulatory space, thus creating a sense of unease, alienation, futility, recapitulatory failure, or the like’.¹⁵ As we shall see in Chapters 2 and 3, the ‘failure’ of the First Symphony’s and *Falstaff*’s recapitulations to provide the necessary

and His Work, ed. Bryan Gilliam (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), pp. 135–75, and ‘Structure and program in *Macbeth*: a proposed reading of Strauss’s first symphonic poem’, in *Richard Strauss and His World*, ed. Bryan Gilliam (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 67–89. He has recently summarized many of his ideas in ‘Beethoven reception: the symphonic tradition’, in *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Music*, ed. Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 424–59, and in collaboration with Warren Darcy is completing a very substantial book explaining Sonata Theory: *Elements of Sonata Theory – Norms, Types, and Deformations* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

¹³ Hepokoski, ‘Beethoven reception’, p. 447.

¹⁴ He observes deformations mostly in his First Symphony analysis: see Hepokoski, ‘Elgar’, esp. pp. 328–36.

¹⁵ Hepokoski, *Sibelius: Symphony No. 5*, p. 94, n. 17; he discusses the usual pattern of resolution in such cases, which usually comes in the coda space, in ‘Back and forth from *Egmont*’.

tonal resolutions for the exposition themes is crucial to their semantic content. Elgar thematizes, by engaging in explicit, intricate ‘play’ with, three interrelated traditions:

1. The multi-movement ‘narrative’ form, found in several of Beethoven’s symphonies and works inspired by them, which often charts a course *per aspera ad astra*.¹⁶
2. The fused multi-movement form frequently used by Liszt and Strauss (the source probably being Schubert’s ‘*Wanderer*’ *Fantasy*), which had by Elgar’s time a strong pedigree of use in symphonic music.
3. Sonata form itself, with its generic implications of statement, development, and (resolute) restatement of a definite, identifiable, central idea.

Composers had deliberately played with generic conventions throughout what Dahlhaus calls the ‘second age of the symphony’,¹⁷ but Elgar’s play was particularly advanced, and he was manifestly aware of it himself, as we shall see in later chapters.

The other Hepokoskian concept to be introduced is the rotational model that has been identified particularly with Bruckner and Sibelius.¹⁸ A rotational form is a progression of varied strophes,

a series of differentiated figures, motives, themes, and so on (which . . . may also be arranged to suggest such things, for example, as a sonata exposition). The referential statement may either cadence or recycle back through a transition to a second broad rotation. Second (and any subsequent) rotations normally rework all or most of the referential statement’s material, which is

¹⁶ Robert Bailey observed some time ago that by the time of *Tristan und Isolde*, ‘the major and minor modes [had] . . . become equivalent and interchangeable, so that either one can substitute for the other’ (Bailey, ‘An analytical study of the sketches and drafts’, p. 116). This is unquestionable, and an important theoretical point, but should not be taken to imply that the difference between major-feel and minor-feel music has been eradicated, which would be a nonsense, even in the first movement of Mahler’s Ninth Symphony, whose post-*Tristan* modal mixture is perhaps uniquely asseverative. Despite ‘interior’ post-*Tristan* modal mixture in many of his themes, Elgar makes a deliberate and careful distinction between major- and minor-‘feeling’ music, and for that reason I shall continue to refer to ‘C major’ etc. not ignorant of Bailey’s observation, but aware of its limitations. This is a crucial point: it allows Elgar to play more clearly with the *per aspera ad astra* narrative.

¹⁷ Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, pp. 265–76.

¹⁸ Hepokoski, ‘Beethoven reception’, p. 451. The forthcoming *Elements of Sonata Theory* promises to explain the eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century origins of the process.

now elastically treated. Portions may be omitted, merely alluded to, compressed, or, contrarily, expanded or even ‘stopped’ and reworked ‘developmentally’. New material may also be added or generated. Each subsequent rotation may be heard as an intensified, meditative reflection on the material of the referential statement.¹⁹

Expressed in these terms, the concept might seem unmanageably vague, with themes that may or may not return or be alluded to and so on, but Hepokoski is careful to say that a rotational structure is a process, and not an architectural formula. In Elgar’s music the sonata deformation and the play with fused/actual multi-movement ‘narrative’ structures provides the scaffold for the work, but it is pulled across this scaffold in variable strophes, or ‘rotations’.²⁰

In terms of musical hermeneutics, this work enters a debate centred on Lawrence Kramer’s *Music as Cultural Practice*.²¹ It accepts his proposal of three ‘hermeneutic windows’ into musical works, but owing to the assertion, based on Ingarden and Heidegger, that music is a mimesis of human temporality, suggests the opening of a fourth, ‘mimetic window’, which allows the philosophy of Heidegger to illuminate the discussion.²² This philosophy, as it has been argued in two recent monographs by Julian Young,²³ establishes strong existential and even ethical reasons why music’s meanings ought to be grappled with. Not the least of these is Heidegger’s startling contention that we are, as moderns, oblivious to the complexity of our own Being, and that artworks, and in the view of this study the human mimesis of music in particular, can wake us up to ourselves, to our responsibilities in the face of our own existence, and to our place among other human beings and in the world.

1.3. Elgar the progressive

The titles of this chapter and this section are, of course, stolen from Schoenberg, a contemporary of Elgar’s (a fact easily forgotten). The

¹⁹ Hepokoski, *Sibelius: Symphony No. 5*, p. 25.

²⁰ As I apply these ideas in the course of this book I shall expand on them further; for the moment this brief introduction should suffice.

²¹ Lawrence Kramer, *Music as Cultural Practice, 1800–1900* (Berkeley, CA and London: University of California Press, 1990): see esp. Chapter 1.

²² ‘Mimesis’ is a word with ancient associations and modern meanings in musicological discourse. I shall clarify my use of it (and other terms) in Chapter 2.

²³ Julian Young, *Heidegger’s Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), and *Heidegger’s Later Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).