

Cello Concerto in E minor, op 85

A concerto for solo cello and full orchestra in four movements:

- 1 - Adagio/Moderato;
- 2 - Lento/Allegro molto;
- 3 - Adagio;
- 4 - Allegro/Moderato/Allegro, ma non troppo.

Approximate Length: 30 minutes

First Performance:

Date: 27 October 1919

Venue: Queen's Hall, London

Conductor: the composer

Soloist: Felix Salmond

Orchestra: London Symphony Orchestra

Dedicated to: Sir Sidney and Lady Frances Colvin,
friends of the Elgars

Two concertos for the cello are performed more often than any others. One is by Antonin Dvorak, an epic work brimming with melodies and embracing a wide range of emotion. The other is Elgar's: intimate, highly-concentrated and unlike any other ever written for the instrument. Pablo Casals, Paul Tortelier, Jacqueline du Pré and Yo-Yo Ma are among the cellists who have made landmark recordings of Elgar's concerto, and memorable new interpretations continue to appear. The concerto may be the work of Elgar's with the most universal appeal, but, paradoxically, it is the work of his that is most rooted in a specific moment in time.

Elgar wrote the concerto in 1919, just after the Great War. Appalled and disillusioned by the suffering caused by the war, he realized that life in Europe would never be the same after such destruction. His first reaction had been to withdraw from composition, and he wrote very little music during the war's first four years. Then, over a period of twelve months - from August of 1918 to the following August - Elgar poured his feelings into four works that rank among the finest he ever composed. The first three were chamber works in which he developed a new musical voice, more concise and subdued than his previous one. The fourth work was the Cello Concerto, Elgar's lament for a lost world. A complete guide to Elgar's Cello Concerto can be found by visiting the following pages.



Elgar at work in Severn House in 1919,
the year in which he composed the
concerto