

Music written for two flutes, oboe, clarinet and bassoon:

| Title | Year | Approx. Length |
|---|------|----------------|
| Harmony Music | | |
| No.1 | 1887 | 4 mins |
| No.2 | 1887 | 10 mins |
| No.3 (unfinished) | 1887 | 3mins 15 secs |
| No.4 - <i>The Farmyard</i> | 1887 | 12 mins |
| No. 5 – <i>The Mission</i> | 1879 | 28 mins |
| No. 6 | 1879 | |
| No. 7 | 1881 | |
| Promenades | | |
| | 1887 | |
| No. 1 | | 1 min 30 secs |
| No. 2 - <i>Madame Taussaud's</i> | | 1 min 50 secs |
| No. 3 | | 2 mins 20 secs |
| No. 4 – <i>Somniferous</i> | | 2 mins 30 secs |
| No. 5 | | 3 mins |
| No. 6 – <i>Hell and Tommy</i> | | 2 mins 40 secs |
| Andante con Variazoni | | |
| <i>(Evesham Andante)</i> | 1878 | 5 mins |
| Four Dances | | |
| | 1869 | |
| No. 1 – Menuetto | | 4 mins 15 secs |
| No. 2 – Gavotte (<i>The Alphonsa</i>) | | 2 mins 30 secs |
| No. 3 – Sarabande | | 2 mins 40 secs |
| No. 4 - Gigue | | 2 mins |
| Intermezzos | | |
| | 1879 | |
| No. 1 – <i>Nancy</i> | | 1 min 30 secs |
| No. 2 – <i>Mr and Mrs Howell</i> | | 1 min 30 secs |
| No. 3 | | 1 min 10 secs |
| No. 4 | | 2 mins |
| No. 5 | | 1 min 30 secs |
| Adagio Cantabile | | |
| <i>(Mrs Winslow's Soothing Syrup)</i> | 1879 | 3mins 45 secs |

Elgar grew up in a musical environment. His father's shop brought him into contact not only with a wide range of music but also with local musicians, while

several family members and friends played an assortment of instruments. Elgar himself became a proficient pianist, organist and violinist, sufficiently skilled to be appointed organist at St George's Church in Worcester, to play in the first violins at Three Choirs Festivals and to give violin lessons. Before the advent of radio and television, most home entertainment was self-made and it was natural for amateur musicians of even the most basic standard to get together in ad-hoc ensembles to play whatever music they could adapt for their own peculiar collection of instruments.

Such music making gave Elgar the first opportunities to expose his compositions to a wider audience and some of his earliest works reflect the varied and unusual instrumental combinations that offered him such opportunities - the Allegro for oboe, violin, viola and cello, for example, and the Introductory Overture for Christy Minstrels, scored for flute, cornet and strings, both compositions dating from 1878. But one more orthodox and less transient ensemble which played an important part in Elgar's early development as a composer was a wind quintet for which he not only composed but also played regularly during the years 1878-79. Elgar's younger brother Frank was a competent oboist while, to judge from the scores, his friends Hubert Leicester (later to become Mayor of Worcester) and Frank Exton were flautists of near professional standard. Hubert's brother William was co-opted to play the clarinet, while Elgar taught himself to play the bassoon to complete the quintet.

The five met on Sunday afternoons to play together in a garden shed and Elgar attempted to provide a new composition or arrangement for them to rehearse each week - a daunting task. Elgar later claimed to have prepared many of these works in the organ loft at St George's during the sermon. While this may be true of the shorter pieces, Elgar's ambitions expanded to produce works requiring significantly more effort. The best known and most substantial series of compositions - the Harmony Music, a name Elgar took from Harmoniemusik, the German name for wind ensembles - clearly demonstrates this trend : Harmony Music no. 1, composed in April 1878, comprises a single movement little more than 4 minutes long, while Harmony Music no. 5, composed some thirteen months later, is a full-scale chamber work in four movements lasting over 25 minutes.

Elgar gave a number of the pieces whimsical names of largely personal significance. Harmony Music no. 2, for example, he named 'Nelly Shed', after Helen Weaver, to whom he was engaged for some months in 1883-84 and who has in recent years been put forward as the identity behind the thirteenth Enigma Variation (***) . And the Adagio Cantabile of 1879 he christened *Mrs Winslow's Soothing Syrup* after a patent medicine of the time

whose beneficial effects Elgar no doubt wished to suggest would be equalled by the music.

But the Shed Music, as it has come to be known, is of more than curiosity value. The seven pieces in the Harmony Music series, as well as containing some delightful melodies, display a remarkable understanding of classical sonata form and structure for a self-taught provincial English musician of the late nineteenth Century. And the shorter pieces - the Six Promenades, the Four Dances and the Five Intermezzos - are all but forgotten gems, enchanting cameos of little pretention and sophistication but of great vitality and lasting charm, containing some remarkably daring experimentation in harmony and instrumentation. As a whole, the wind music is of considerable significance in charting Elgar's musical development. Beneath the youthful exterior can be glimpsed the talent that was to surface in the Enigma Variations. And they are works to which Elgar increasingly returned for inspiration in his later years. He adopted the fifth of Six Promenades and the Minuet from Harmony Music no 5 to form the minuet of the Severn Suite, while the Sarabande from Four Dances and a number of other pieces from this period found their way into the sketches that Elgar produced for his unfinished opera, *The Spanish Lady*.