

Serenade for strings in E minor, op 20

For string orchestra, in three movements:

1 - Allegro piacevole; 2 - Larghetto; 3 - Allegretto.

Approximate Length : 12 minutes

First Performance :

- in private :

Date : 1892

Venue : Worcester

Conductor : the composer

Performed by : Worcester Ladies' Orchestral Class

- in public of complete work

Date : 23 July 1896

Venue : Antwerp

- in England :

Date : 16 July 1899

Venue : New Brighton

Conductor : the composer

Dedicated to : W H Whinfield

Although not formally published until 1892, the Serenade is believed to be a reworking of a suite Elgar had written some years earlier, before he had firmly set his sights on a career as a composer. Apart from the Wand of Youth suites, it is therefore probably the earliest of his compositions to survive into the standard repertoire. Certainly, it has a youthful charm while at the same time displaying indications of the skills Elgar developed as he progressed towards musical maturity. It is reportedly the first of his compositions with which he professed himself satisfied.

The opening bars of the first movement will be familiar to most, particularly to listeners to a classical music station which uses it as introductory music. It is however the central Larghetto which is generally accepted as containing the finest and most mature writing. The work remains among the most frequently performed of all his music.