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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34064/khnum2-42.09>**Oleksandr Lysychka**

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e-mail: oleksandr.lysychka@num.kh.ua; ORCID iD: 0000-0002-2083-5553**“Coronation Ode” by Edward Elgar: periodizations intertwined**

The article is devoted to studying Edward Elgar’s “Coronation Ode” in a threefold way: as a self-sufficient work, as a representation of the composer’s style of early 1900s (time, defined by the author of this article as a “stage of success”), and as a work linking his creative development and career to the history of the British Empire. Brief outline of history of composition is given, as well as cultural and historical context. The purpose of the study is to show that Elgar’s already high stance as a composer after the success of “Enigma” variations and oratorio “The Dream of Gerontius” among other works allowed him to be chosen as the author of “Coronation Ode” for coronation of Edward VII, ushering a new era in history of the British Empire, as well as that his mastership and expertise allowed him to combine his recently established unique style with the expectations placed on him as the author of such “Royal” composition. A conclusion is made that Elgar was able to produce the work of high artistic quality, perfectly suitable for the Coronation, and that resulted in him receiving even a higher stance as a “national” composer in Edwardian Era.

Keywords: Edward Elgar; English music; genre; style; King Edward VII; coronation; Coronation Ode; periodization.

Statement of the problem.

Periodization is one of the most basic yet most effective tools of every history, be it general history or music history. It allows to categorize facts, events and phenomena that otherwise would be too multitudinous



to comprehend. The dissertation of the author of this article suggests periodization of Elgar's creativity in symphonic genres, yet at least question remain: can it be applied to this composer's works in other genres and how does it interact with periodization of British history? As a public figure, Elgar has obviously been influenced by the events of political life of his country, similarly, as he gained more recognition and became one of the symbols of British musical life, his works became a major milestone for British music and culture. Thus, relevancy of this article is constituted by the need to investigate relations between two lines of development: of Britain and of Elgar on the material of his work, in which those two seem to intertwine the most: his *Coronation Ode*.

Recent research and publications. Elgar's creativity has always attracted the attention not only of the public and the performers, but also of the scholars. Among the best-known researchers of his works one should name D. McVeagh, the author of outstanding monograph "Elgar the Music Maker" (2013), M. Kennedy, who had written insightful book "Portrait of Elgar" (1968), and multitude of the authors of articles, devoted to separate problems, of which the most essential for this article are the problems of Elgar's relation with the power and the state: R. Cowgill (2007), D. Heckert (2007), D. Grimley (2007) and others.

Since this article is devoted to Elgar's *Coronation Ode*, a work for orchestra, chorus and soloists, it is necessary to turn to research of choral works. For instance, although article written by O. Batovska (2023) is not aimed at Elgar's creativity (or even at British music), the approach used to the very essence of choral music allows to find new ideas in understanding Elgar's work, for her article is devoted to genre-stylistic constants, a problem crucial for Elgar. The article by L. Shapovalova and Liu Dan (2025) shows the intersection between the public performance of music and the political situation, a very important aspect for understanding the role played by *Coronation Ode* in the life of its author as well as in the life of the whole country.

Out of all the works available devoted to Elgar and his works, *Coronation Ode* receives relatively little attention of the scholars.

D. McVeagh (2013) gives a brief outline of its composition and general analysis, but she does not state the question how does the work align with Elgar's creative evolution, even though the years of its composition were the turning point for the composer. Thus, ***scientific novelty of the article*** lies in drawing the parallels between the transformations that happened in Elgar's creativity and the changes in the paradigm of British social life.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the transformations in Elgar's compositional style, as evidenced in his *Coronation Ode*, and to identify their correlation with a shift in British historical development.

Research methods used in the article are historical, genre-stylistic and comparative.

Presentation of the main material of the study.

It goes without saying that Edwardian Era is a period of British history, marked by the reign of King Edward VII (1901–1910). Not every reign of British monarch becomes a period, and distinction of this is conditioned by several factors, describing the context of that time. Firstly, it was a beginning of a new era in British history, as it began after Victorian Era (1837–1901), lasting comparably to the average lifespan. Secondly, those are essentially the last years prior to the First World War, a catastrophe that influenced everyone in Britain, including Elgar himself. It would be not full correct to state that evolution of music history in general and of composers' styles are dependent exclusively on the factors of "outside", on the political life. Yet, we cannot but notice a paradox (although paradoxicality of Elgar's life makes it much easier if not to understand, but at least to accept) that the end of Queen Victoria's 64-years reign quite paradoxically almost coincides with a major turning point for the composer as 1900 was the start of the new stage of Edward Elgar's (1857–1934) creativity. The stage that was dubbed a "stage of success" by the author of this article in his PhD dissertation (Lysychka, 2024), indeed started couple years earlier (its beginning was bifold and consisted of the two premieres: of "*Enigma*" Variations in 1899 and oratorio "*The Dream of Gerontius*" in 1900), had equally bifold significance: not only was that an important milestone for

Elgar as he almost “became popular overnight”, but also for the reputation of British music as a cultural phenomenon, because prior to that time British music was regarded subpar in Europe, with book titled “The Land without Music” being written (Botstein, 2007: 365). Yet, in the early 1900s it has finally received long-awaited recognition in the continental Europe: the music lovers outside of the British empire finally accepted that British music was worthy of attention, with multiple performances being organized from the USA to Russian Empire in the best halls and those performances were met with the highest critical acclaim.

One could say that Elgar's dramatic increase in popularity was sudden, although in fact it was a result of his long-lasting evolution as a composer, which, in its turn, allowed him to present two abovementioned works in different genres. Yet, there was another serendipitous coincidence in his career. The process of planning for the Coronation of soon to be Edward VII was started when Elgar's stance as a composer was already strong, when he was a symbol of British music. As a result, he was commissioned to write a work that eventually became equally important both for him and for the whole Empire (and even became popular in the USA). This work was *Coronation Ode*. It is worth saying that its best-known part, “*Land of Hope and Glory*”, has a story of its own. Initially it was a trio of “*Pomp and Circumstance March No.1*” a lyrically-patriotic tune, written as though it was an anthem. By that time Elgar had already had the experience of either creating anthem-like themes or transforming (quite like Liszt's monothematicism) initially ordinary themes into anthems. Examples of that are plentiful, including “*Nimrod*” theme and Finale of “*Enigma*” or “*Praise to the Holiest in the Sky*” from “*The Dream of Gerontius*”. The difference between those and “*Land of Hope and Glory*” lies in the context, as in the former ones there was not clear programmatic indication to patriotism.

As shown by D. McVeagh, it was direct future King's decision to ask Elgar to write *Coronation Ode* using the Trio from “*Pomp and Circumstance March No.1*” reworked into patriotic tune as its Finale (although D. McVeagh argues that overall this decision was made even before “*Pomp and Circumstance March No.1*” became popular)

(McVeagh, 2013: 1560). Elgar did not object, and asked Arthur Benson to provide him with the appropriate lyrics. The work's fate was not quite a lucky one, as the Coronation was postponed due to King's appendicitis (McVeagh, 2013: 1597), and the first time the Royal Family heard it was a year later, in 1903. But Elgar's work was done nevertheless, and more importantly, the Ode clearly indicates stability of Elgar's compositional style at the point of his creative evolution defined by the author of this article as the "stage of success".

Coronation Ode op. 44, 1902, is relatively large work lasting around 30 minutes, that includes six movements. Given the circumstances of its composition, it is demands for a large number of performers as it is written for the orchestra, featuring additional military band (consisting exclusively of brass instruments: cornets, trumpets, trombones), mixed chorus and four soloists (instead of usual SATB Elgar uses soprano, contralto, tenor, and bass). Inclusion of contralto is another feature of Elgar's style, that he uses only on rare occasions. For instance, his only song cycle "*Sea Pictures*" op. 37 (with opus number between two "monuments" of his creativity, "*Enigma*" and "*The Dream of Gerontius*") is written for contralto with orchestra; in another Ode by Elgar, "*The Music Makers*" op. 69, 1912, the only solo voice used is contralto, and this part includes quotation of one of the most iconic and personal Elgar's tunes, "*Nimrod*" from "*Enigma*".

The first movement is the largest one in the whole Ode, lasting about 10 minutes (third of total duration of the work). It is named by the first words sung "*Crown the King*" and bears a subtitle "*Introduction, Soli and Chorus*", although the soloists are introduced later than the chorus. Its very first bars create such sonority that can only be attributed as "Elgarian", which became a "trademark" of his style well known from his previous works. The first page shows unique Elgarian mixture of grandeur and lyricism as the first four bars are written for *tutti* and dominated by the brass, followed by soft raising sequence (strings and woodwind) and typical for Elgar downward melody with abundant suspensions. The key of the first movement is E-flat major, the same as "*Nimrod*" from "*Enigma*" or Second Symphony, written about 10 years later and devoted

to late Edward VII, although the scholars consider that to be a way to divert attention from personal issues that have inspired the Symphony (Gimbel, 1989: 239).

After quite long orchestral introduction the chorus enters with a variant of the initial theme, this variant being repeated several times with the subsequent changes to it, in a manner typical for Elgar. The composer's approach to choral writing mixes homophony and polyphony as the degree of independence of the voices changes quite often, with clearly defined chords stressing the most important words. The structure of the movement is governed by the text as each stanza opens with "*Crown the King with ...*", followed by a word denoting one of the most important aspects: Life, Might, Light, Faith etc. Orchestration, choir writing, tempo and volume change accordingly to the content of the words. This usage of word painting is quite typical for Elgar who had already used that in his preceding choral works, including "*The Dream of Gerontius*". The segment starting with "*God shall save the King*" is perceived as a grandioso ending due to *fff* for all the instruments, active employment of all the brass section and quite obvious reference to the National Anthem. Yet, Elgar's compositional approach to the large symphonic structures supposes two more things: presence of Coda as an important stage of development and a *Nobilmente* theme (both in the works before and after *Coronation Ode*). So, in this case Elgar uses Beethoven-like foreshadowing, as the "*Land of Hope and Glory*" theme is played by a clarinet solo in crystal clarino register, with remark "*dolce e semplice*"¹. The chorus joins after a few bars: first in unison and then in usual four-part writing.

As a "Royal" work used for all the coronations since being written (except for the coronation of Charles III), *Coronation Ode* underwent some structural changes to its inner movements. There are two variants of the second movement, labelled in the score as *Ila* and *Ilb*, both of them are devoted to the Queen. The more popular *Ilb* with initial words is a lyrical

¹ Elgar combines *Nobilmente* and *semplice* remarks quite often, even though at first, they could be seen as contradictory.

centre of the whole Ode, quite compact in time and having a simple ternary structure. The sections are divided by typical Elgarian *ritornello*, sounding quite similarly to the beginning of the second movement of Elgar's *Serenade for strings* op. 20. Its unprepared suspensions and expressive bass line create a mood combining lyricism and prayer-like elevation. If the first movement shows balance between the chorus and the orchestra, the second one is mostly choral, with the orchestra performing accompanying function. The key of the movement is A-flat major, the same as the "motto" chorale theme of Elgar's First symphony. Here the composer does not use polyphonic writing as the choir alternates between homorhythmic chords and choral unison. Harmonic language of the movement is unusually simple and clear as Elgar avoids using modulations in distant keys or dissonant chords. The lyricism of the movement is underscored by the prevalence of strings in the orchestra, the brass section is employed very sporadically, in a manner somewhat unusual for the instruments yet not unheard of for Elgar (for instance, chords **pp** for trombones, although **pp** for trombones can be done effectively in low / middle registers and is quite common, especially for works of late Romanticism). Other variant of the second movement, *Ila*, begins with the words "*Daughter of Ancient Kings*", was used only twice: in 1902 and in 1953, for Queen Elizabeth, as it was replaced in 1911 (McVeagh, 2013: 1587). It is also a lyrical movement, absolutely miniature in structure as it fits one page of the full score.

The third movement of the Ode, "*Britain, ask of thyself*", calling on the nation to be prepared for the possible war, shows significant differences between Elgar and Mahler. Contrary to his Austrian contemporary, he does not interpret march as something banal, quite the contrary, he combines it with hopeful sonority of the strings and the uplifted verses. On the one hand, this belligerent mood is quite an expected one since Britain was an empire, whose navy became a symbol of power (since in extremely popular patriotic song it is sung "*Britania rule the waves*", and the lyrics of this movement mostly refer to the navy). On the other hand, this could be a result of militarization of British society on the turn

of 19th and 20th centuries, which has largely affected Elgar as well (Adams, 2000). This movement employs orchestra with active usage of the brass and the percussion sections (which reflects militaristic inclination of the verses), male voices of chorus and a bass soloist. In a way, this creates a contrast between this movement, masculine in topic and sound, and the previous one, celebrating the Queen. The movement's structure can be seen as rondo-like ABACA, its key is C minor. The A sections use a call-response structure as the chorus mostly repeats after the soloists, which is quite typical for any kind of military songs. Section B is devoted to thematic development of the material as it does not create strong contrasts with the previous one. Section C, on the contrary, has a completely different sonority as it is written in a parallel C major. This decision was motivated by the lyrics "*So shalt thou rest in peace*", implicating that military might will be used only to deter the foe. Yet, the instrumentation remains quite similar, with lots of heavy brass, and active dotted rhythms never cease to exist. The movement ends with restating the initial theme in full orchestral *tutti* with *fff*, showcasing readiness to defend the country.

Striving to fill *Coronation Ode* with contrast and diversity, after vigorous "*Britain, ask of thyself*" Elgar continues the work with the fourth movement, devoted to the beauty of art. It has binary structure, as "*Hark upon the Hallowed Air*" is followed by quartet "*Only Let the Heart Be True*" without intermission. Here the composer uses a wide variety of means of expression. For instance, the melody alternates between *recitativo* style and *cantilena*; the soloists (two at first and four later on) have different types of interaction between each other; the orchestral part is very restricted in the beginning just to be elegant and flourishing afterwards; harmonic language is also quite diverse since the movement opens with a long pedal point of C minor, yet later Elgar modulates so abundantly that the feeling of a certain key is sometimes lost whatsoever (like he does occasionally in his symphonic works). The reasoning behind this could be seen in close correlation with the lyrics: Elgar simply showcases his mastership, shows all the range of possibilities of his art.

The penultimate movement “*Peace, Gentle Peace*”, F major, is rather a short one. Although it bears subtitle “*Quartet and Chorus (unaccompanied)*”, it is not completely *a cappella* as there is orchestral support, even if it is very scarce. The content of its lyrics as well as placement near the end allows to draw parallels to “*dona nobis pacem*” from mass, which gives the *Ode* another dimension, a sacred one. Harmonic language is rather straightforward, although in-between the sections Elgar uses modulations to distant keys (F major to D-flat major). The chorus and the quartet of the soloists are in direct dependence since one group introduces a phrase, and the other one repeats.

The last movement of the *Ode* is famous “*Land of Hope and Glory*”. It is more than just a tune that brought Elgar popularity and recognition: according to M. Kennedy, “It swept the country in 1902 and became a second national anthem” (1968: 140). The movement has a subtitle “*Finale. (Contralto Solo and Tutti)*”. It is the only modulating movement in the *Coronation Ode* as it opens in B-flat major and ends in E-flat major. The movement serves as a compelling ending to the whole work, not only because of its grandeur but also because Elgar uses powerful structural devices. The movement opens with a figure resembling the beginning of “*The Queen*”; entrance of the chorus after contralto is accompanied by a motive taken from the Introduction (it is easily identifiable due to its “Bruckner-rhythm”); in the very last bars the brass section repeats opening fanfare motive of the whole *Coronation Ode*. This is not unusual for Elgar since “*Enigma*” variations also end with the return to the original theme. Another “finishing device” typical for the composer is subdominant cadence in the end, used in multiple instrumental works. All these features show Elgar’s preoccupation with treating *Coronation Ode* not just a suite for official occasions, but a close-knit musical unity. Another unifying factor is the choice of the keys, since every movement of *Coronation Ode* is in a key with flats (in range from F major to A-flat major), although this could be as well influenced by the inclusion of military band.

Conclusion.

Just as the change of the British monarch became a beginning of a new era while still preserving the essence of British Empire, Elgar's *Coronation Ode* became one of the first works written in his "stage of success", a period of time when he used all his previous achievements and was able to find his own, "Elgarian" voice. On the one hand, it was merely a serendipitous coincidence that his new era began almost at the same time as the new era for the whole country. But on the other hand, the success of *Coronation Ode* made him a "state" composer, so it does not seem a surprise that his fortune was intertwined with the destiny of British Empire.

Perspectives of the research are seen in further studying of Elgar's works written around 1900 and of the works of said time written by the other composers.

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«Коронаційна Ода» Едварда Елгара: переплетені періодизації

Постановка проблеми. У статті висвітлюється «потрійний» статус «Коронаційної Оди» Едварда Елгара: як самостійного мистецького об'єкта; як твору, написаного на стадії творчої еволюції композитора, що визначена автором статті як «етап успіху»; нарешті – як твору, що поєднує кар'єру Е. Елгара з долею Британської імперії – адже відбувся збіг у часі двох перехідних періодів: руху до вказаного «етапу успіху» в житті митця та до «Едвардіанської ери» в житті британського суспільства.

Мета, методологія та новизна дослідження. Мета статті – висвітлити зміни композиторського стилю Е. Елгара на матеріалі «Коронаційної Оди» як віддзеркалення періоду змін в історії Британської імперії. Методами дослідження послуговували історичний, жанрово-стильовий та компаративний. Наукова новизна результатів розвідки полягає в тому, що на підставі жанрово-стильового аналізу «Коронаційної Оди» Е. Елгара проведено паралелі між трансформаціями, що відбулися в його творчості на початку 1900 років, та епохальними змінами в історії Британської імперії на початку правління короля

Едварда VII. Відзначено, що в обох випадках ідеться про збереження інгерентних системних рис, але з подальшим їх розвитком та оновленням.

Висновки. Подібно до того, як зміна монарха в Британії стала початком нової ери, при цьому зберігаючи сутнісні риси Британської імперії, «Коронаційна Ода» Е. Елгара стала одним із творів, написаних митцем на «етапі успіху», у часи, коли він використав усі свої попередні досягнення і на основі їх синтезу зміг знайти свій, неповторно «елгарівський» голос та стиль. З одного боку, видається лише вдалим збігом, що цей новий етап почався приблизно в той же час, коли британське суспільство опинилося на порозі нової епохи. Тоді як з іншого боку, успіх «Коронаційної Оди», попри всі несприятливі чинники, пов'язані з її першим виконанням, закріпив статус Е. Елгара як «композитора нації»; тому видається цілком закономірним, що доля та кар'єра видатного музиканта тісно переплелися з долею Британської імперії.

Ключові слова: Едвард Елгар; англійська музика; жанр; стиль; король Едвард VII; коронація; «Коронаційна Ода»; періодизація.

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