

YEAR 6 UNIT 2: ENIGMA VARIATIONS

KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER



Elgar's variations show how music can convey personality, an event, a memory or a moment in time - but also how the same piece of music can be changed slightly and then take on a different character completely.

After creating a theme based on his own personality (Enigma), Elgar wrote short musical variations that reflected the people around him.

- ⇒ one captured the quirks of a friend (6 - Ysobel),
- ⇒ one represented the memory of another friend being caught in a thunderstorm (7 - Troyte)
- ⇒ and one was the result of a friend's challenge to make music from the sound of his barking bulldog falling into a lake (11 - G.R.S.)!

Events from our lives, the way we speak, the way we move, the things we like to do - Elgar showed that all of these can be conveyed in music.

Listen out for: How Elgar created the sounds of Dan the bulldog in variation 11. Dan can be heard falling down the bank into the River Wye in bar 1, paddling upstream in bars 2 and 3, and then rejoicing at landing back on the bank with a bark in the second half of bar 5!



TERM	DEFINITION
Drone	one long, continuous sound (pitched or unpitched) that is present throughout a piece, usually at the bottom of the texture
Motif	a very short musical 'idea'
Pitched percussion	percussion instruments that can play different pitches (or 'notes') - xylophones, glockenspiels, chime bars etc.
Theme	another word for 'tune' or 'melody'. A linear line of notes, like a musical sentence
Variation	a section of music which is based on the theme but uses it in a new/different way
Unpitched percussion	Percussion instruments that make sounds that don't have a specific pitch (or 'note') - drums, shakers, woodblocks, tambourine.



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Variation 11: G.R.S



In this variation (describing his friends Bull Dog) Elgar uses three main ideas:

- panting
- scampering
- Chomping

Elgar's scampering motif (idea) looks something like this:



His chomping is simply one big, loud chord - which is made up by lots of instruments playing at exactly the same time.

His panting idea uses this rhythm:



TOP TIPS FOR A GOOD COMPOSITION

- ⇒ Sometimes its good to come up with 3-5 initial ideas and just keep the best one— your first idea won't necessarily be the best one to base a whole piece of music on
- ⇒ Make sure you can write down your ideas in a way which will help you to remember them next lesson
- ⇒ Is there a good beginning and a strong ending?
- ⇒ Does the piece balance repetition and contrast? Too much repetition will be boring, too much contrast makes it difficult to follow or remember the music
- ⇒ Are there layers in the music? Just playing one thing after another all the way through is dull
- ⇒ Does your piece meet the requirements of the brief?

