

## Elgar: Romance, in D minor, Op 62

Edward Elgar was a passionate autodidact, teaching himself composition skills by studying scores and learning to play individual instruments. He taught himself the violin at a young age and studied violin seriously for a time before committing to a career as a composer. He learned to play viola, piano, and organ. As a teenager Elgar taught himself bassoon and was part of a woodwind quintet comprised of friends and his brother. Years later when composing the Cockaigne Overture for large orchestra, Elgar even taught himself to play the trombone, and then confidently incorporated some trombone *glissandi* in the work. It is with this intense curiosity and knowledge of musical instruments that the Romance for Bassoon and orchestra was written. Elgar was fully aware of the expressive abilities of the bassoon, and rejected the typical cliché of the bassoon as a humorous “clown of the orchestra.” Instead, he presents the instrument in a lyrical and dramatic vein.

The title *Romance* shows a gradual shift in music to use “romance” for shorter, more intimate works rather than a lengthy, extroverted, and showy concerto. This *Romance*, however, contains the virtuosity and expressiveness of a full concerto. The music asks much from the player, using notes at both the extreme high and low ends of the register.

The orchestra is rather large, using a rich blend of winds and brass: calling for three horns and three trombones, but no trumpets. Elgar wrote the Romance for his friend and colleague Edwin F. James, the principal bassoonist of the London Symphony Orchestra who gave the first performance the *Romance* in 1911, with Elgar conducting.

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