

Elastic form, a modular manner of composition, is a compound from Cowell's interest in the music of other peoples and his early theosophical imprint, which he, though not consciously and actively, his life carried with him.

Cowell's sources of inspiration are diverse in their effects and unfold in many sub-categories. The most important are: Primitivism, open forms preferring musical and not-musical developments, a penchant for experimental approach, the interest to natural laws such as the overtone series, a preference of rhythmic and contrapuntal work coupled with a rejection of harmony and the desire to create a wholeness.

These conditions meant that Cowell's entire creating from 1910 to ca. 1935 was dominated by steady evolution and change that culminated in elastic form. His work required towards the end of the twenties a reorientation and was as a consequence of this repeatedly exposed to a deliberate break between 1930-1935.

It was not Cowell's objective to blow up traditional concepts of composition, but rather to liberate music from artificial rules and to come back to its natural sources. Elastic form represents the most important part of Cowell's universal musical style. Elastic form is the innovation, which was able to unite most of his ideas and which can be realized most easily. Elastic form is the height in Cowell's work, as an independent method also as a part in Cowell's universal musical style: like the universal musical style is elastic form the sum of all influences to which Cowell was exposed, and represents what was originated from them.