

Robert Prescott Stewart as a music educator in Dublin in the latter-half of the nineteenth century

Lisa Parker

Robert Prescott Stewart's professional career as a music educator was greatly enhanced in 1862 when he was offered the music professorship at Trinity College Dublin.¹ Nine years later his association with the Royal Irish Academy of Music commenced when he was appointed professor of piano and harmony and composition. This article will discuss contributions made by Stewart as professor of music at Trinity College to the area of the examination of the music degree candidates and will consider similar practices at Oxford and Cambridge in order to evaluate these contributions in a wider context. Accounts and opinions of Stewart as a teacher at the Royal Irish Academy of Music and as music professor at Trinity College will also be observed. Some of Stewart's lectures will be discussed in relation to how they reflect Stewart's awareness of and interest in current trends and opinions.

The first professor of music at Trinity College Dublin was Garret Wesley, the Earl of Mornington (1735–1781), and the honorary position of professor that he held for ten years from 1764 carried a stipend of £100 per annum. Mornington was not expected to teach or examine as part of this sinecure but he was required to compose suitable music for occasions at the university such as the installation of the Duke of Bedford, John Russell, as chancellor of the university in 1765.² Trinity

¹ For further information on Robert Prescott Stewart see Olinthus Vignoles: *Memoir of Sir Robert P. Stewart*, 2nd edn (Dublin: Hodges, Figgis; London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent and Co., Ltd, 1899), hereafter referred to as Vignoles: *Memoir*; James Culwick: *Sir Robert Stewart: with Reminiscences of his Life and Works* (Dublin: Chadfield, 1900), *The Works of Sir Robert Stewart* (Dublin: Dublin University Press, 1902) and *Fifty Years in the Life of a Great Irish Musician* (Dublin: Chadfield, 1903); and Lisa Parker: 'Robert Prescott Stewart (1825–1894): An Assessment of his Compositions and Contribution to Musical Life in Dublin' (unpublished MA diss., NUI Maynooth, 2000). The terms 'Trinity' or 'Trinity College' refer to Trinity College Dublin only for the purpose of this article.

² R.B. Mc Dowell and D.A. Webb: *Trinity College Dublin 1592–1952: An Academic History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 58. Hereafter referred to as Mc Dowell and Webb: *Trinity College Dublin 1592–*

did not retain the post after Mornington's resignation and the chair of music lay dormant until 1847 when John Smith (1797–1861) was elected to the position.³ Smith taught pupils in a private capacity and examined the compositions for the Bachelor and Doctor of Music examinations known as 'exercises'. Under the terms of Smith's employment he was not granted an annual salary at first. Instead, he received a fee for each of the degree candidates that he examined but in 1859 the Board decided that Smith was to be awarded a salary of £4 in place of examination fees.⁴ The annual *Dublin University Calendar* records that seven non-honorary music degrees (three MusB and four MusD degrees) were awarded during his fourteen year professorship.⁵

According to James Culwick (1845–1907) writing at the end of the nineteenth century, Smith was 'admittedly more of a musician than a *litterateur*',⁶ and his competence, ability and suitability as professor of music had been questioned more than once by his peers. His book

1852. A short composition by Mornington entitled *March as performed at the Installation of his Grace the Duke of Bedford* is located in the National Library of Ireland, JM 4148 although it is not certain that this piece was actually played at the installation ceremony.

³ Despite the fact that some sources list 1845 as the date that John Smith was awarded the music professorship, the Board Books of Trinity College Dublin record that Smith was elected on 27 March 1847: 'Dr John Smith appointed Professor of Musick to the University, he is to receive the Professor's fees of those graduating in Musick', Trinity College Dublin Board Books Mun/v/5/8, back page. Hereafter referred to as TCD Board Books. Smith taught harmony and composition at the Royal Irish Academy of Music, he was Master of the King's Band of State Musicians in Ireland and composer to the Chapel Royal. See Richard Pine and Charles Acton, ed.: *To Talent Alone: The Royal Irish Academy of Music 1848–1998* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1998), hereafter referred to as Pine and Acton ed.: *To Talent Alone*, and R.H. Newmarch: 'Smith, John', *Dictionary of National Biography*, iii, ed. Sidney Lee (London: Smith, Edler and Co., 1898), 81–82. It is however possible that Smith may have acted as professor of music in an unofficial capacity from 1845 in order to examine the two MusB graduates, Nicholas William Stack (July 1845) and William Murphy (February 1847) and was then officially elected to the position in March 1847.

⁴ Board Meeting 29 January 1859, TCD Board Books Mun/v/5/11/2, 321.

⁵ *The Dublin University Calendar* (Dublin: Hodges, Smith & Co.; London: Whittaker and Co., and Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans & Roberts, 1847–1862). Hereafter referred to as *The Dublin University Calendar*.

⁶ James Culwick cited in Vignoles: *Memoir*, 5. Culwick was an organist, composer and professor of piano and theory at Alexandra College, Dublin. He received a MusD *honoris causa* from Trinity College in 1893.

entitled: *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Music*⁷ was widely criticized and attacked by John Bumpus (1861–1913) as being an ‘absurd production’ giving a ‘prescription by which any person, by a mechanical process, might make a melody and add appropriate harmony thereto’.⁸ Even the poet John Francis Waller (1809–1894) ridiculed the work in rhyme in 1852 in *The Dublin University Magazine* confirming Bumpus’s statement that Smith was the subject of endless practical jokes at Trinity College.⁹ Nevertheless, *The Saunders’ News-letter* demonstrated that a certain amount of support existed for Smith in 1851 when it reported that: ‘until the appointment of the present eminent professor Dr. Smith, it was a pure fiction that there were any students in this college in respect of music’.¹⁰ Smith died on 12 November 1861 and the Board Books of Trinity College do not refer to any other person except Stewart as a suitable successor to him.¹¹ Stewart was of course well known at Trinity College by this time; he was elected chapel organist in 1844, he succeeded Joseph Robinson (1816–1898) as conductor of the University of Dublin Choral Society in 1846 and he received his MusB and MusD degrees there in 1851.

The music professor at Trinity College Dublin

When Stewart assumed his professorship Trinity, in a similar vein to Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh and London, did not contribute anything to the training of music degree candidates.¹² Stewart’s responsibilities contracted him to examine the ‘exercises’ of the music

⁷ John Smith: *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Music: With the Principles of Harmony and Composition and an Approved Method of Learning to Sing by Note and in Parts as a Class-Book for Academics* (Dublin: McGlashan, 1853).

⁸ John S. Bumpus: ‘Irish Church Composers and the Irish Cathedrals Part II’ *Proceedings of the Musical Association* (26th Session, 1899), 127. Hereafter referred to as Bumpus: ‘Irish Church Composers II’. Bumpus specialised in ecclesiastical music and was regarded as a distinguished expert on the subject. Anon.: ‘Obituary, John Skelton Bumpus’, *The Musical Times* 54/843 (5/1913), 317.

⁹ Bumpus: ‘Irish Church Composers II’, 128.

¹⁰ Anon.: ‘University of Dublin’, *The Saunders’ News-letter*, 10 April 1851.

¹¹ There is no reference in the Board Books of this period to the death of John Smith, the vacant chair of music, the procedure to recruit a new professor or any possible applicants to the position.

¹² Deborah Rohr: *The Careers of British Musicians, 1750–1850: A Profession of Artisans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 66.

degree applicants and approximately sixty-three MusB and thirty-two MusD degrees were awarded during his thirty-two year professorship.¹³ Stewart's duties as professor of music and college organist were clearly specified at a Board Meeting on 22 March 1862.¹⁴ As music professor Stewart was responsible for conducting the music degree examinations and for presenting the candidates to the vice-chancellor and the senate of the university at the Commencements or graduation ceremonies. Stewart was at liberty to deliver public lectures if he thought it appropriate, and could provide private instruction to members of the university on condition that the Board approved of the fees that he charged. His annual salary was resolved at £34 and the post of professor of music that Stewart was offered was for a period of five years with the possibility of re-election at the end of the tenure.

As professor of music Stewart was also expected to compose music for noteworthy occasions at Trinity College, an obligation he was quite happy to fulfill. His output includes an ode entitled *Who shall raise the bell?* composed in 1854 for the official opening of the campanile, an *Ode for the Installation of the Earl of Rosse as Chancellor of the University of Dublin* composed in 1863 and a *Tercentenary Ode* for the university celebrations in 1892.¹⁵ Stewart's salary was increased to £100 in 1871 and three years later he was nominated to the chair of music for life.¹⁶

¹³ These figures do not include honorary music doctorates that were awarded between 1862 and 1895. *The Dublin University Calendar, 1862–1895*.

¹⁴ Board Meeting, 22 March 1862, TCD Board Books Mun/v/5/11/2, 475–477.

¹⁵ *Who shall raise the bell?* or the *Belfry Cantata* was composed in 1854 and first performed on 8 June 1855. The bell was employed several times during the performance of the composition and was wired up to a battery by a member of the Engineering School while a member of the orchestra controlled the switch. See Gerald Fitzgibbon: "College Choral" 1837–1987', *Hermathena* 144 (Summer 1988), 35–68. The location of this composition is unknown. The *Ode of Installation of the Earl of Rosse as Chancellor of the University of Dublin* was performed on 17 February 1863 when William Parsons, Third Earl of Rosse, was elected to the position of chancellor and the remaining manuscript parts are in the possession of the University of Dublin Choral Society. The *Tercentenary Ode* received its first performance on 5 July 1892. The vocal score was printed by Novello, Ewer and Co. in 1892 and the score parts remain in manuscript form in the Manuscripts Room of Trinity College at Mun/Soc/Choral/3/7.

¹⁶ Board Meeting, 11 February 1871, TCD Board Books Mun/v/5/13, 3. *Decree of the Provost and Senior Fellows*, 30 May 1874. TCD Board Books Mun/v/5/13, inserted between 179–180.

The duties of the college organist ensured that Stewart was obliged to preside at the organ in the college chapel at morning service on Sundays and holidays and to perform upon the organ on graduation days. It was also his responsibility to ensure that the organs in the chapel and hall were properly tuned and cleaned and to take charge of the music books, to catalogue them, and to see that the members of the choir were duly supplied with the parts required for the performance of the music ordered by the Provost. Stewart was also required to take a Saturday afternoon rehearsal with the choir boys for the Sunday service and to hold auditions once a year to select the choir boys for the chapel. He was appointed organist for a term of five years initially, 'provided he gives satisfaction by the regular and efficient discharge of his duties'.¹⁷ Stewart occupied this position concurrently with the professorship until his death in 1894.

The music degree requirements that Stewart inherited from John Smith in 1862 were as follows:

A Bachelor in Music must be matriculated in Arts, and must compose a piece of music in five parts, which, if approved by the Board, is to be publicly performed in such place and manner as they shall direct, at the expense of the candidate. The candidate must also produce a certificate signed by at least two musical persons of celebrity, to prove that he has studied or practised Music for seven years. Before the private grace of the House is obtained, the candidate must pass an examination in the Theory and Grammar of Music, Thorough Bass, and Musical Composition.¹⁸

A Doctor in Music must be Mus.B., and must have spent twelve years in the study or practice of Music. He must also compose a piece of Music in six or eight parts, which, if approved by the Board, must be publicly performed at the expense of the candidate. Before the private grace of the House is obtained, the candidate must pass an

¹⁷ Board Meeting, 22 March 1862, TCD Board Books Mun/v/5/11/2, 477.

¹⁸ In practice it was not unusual for music candidates to submit their exercise and have it performed in public before they officially matriculated with the university. For example Stewart's exercises were performed on 9 April 1851, he matriculated with the university on 8 May and was awarded his MusB and MusD on 1 July 1851.

Examination in the Theory and Grammar of Music, Thorough Bass, and Musical Composition.

The full score of the exercise was to be lodged with the senior proctor one month before the degree ceremonies were due to take place.¹⁹

In order to matriculate for the Bachelor of Arts degree at Trinity College Dublin in the early 1860s a student had to take an entrance examination in Latin and English composition, arithmetic, algebra, English history, geography, and two Greek and two Latin authors including Homer, Sophocles, Plato, Virgil and Horace.²⁰ As Mc Dowell and Webb point out, this entrance examination may have been 'imposing enough on paper' but in reality the university policy was to 'select and reject not at matriculation but at later examinations', making it rare for more than two or three per cent of the candidates to be refused admission.²¹

With Stewart's new regulations we see a more detailed description of the degree requirements emerge in an attempt to enhance the academic merit of the newly expanded music syllabus. It was now specified that the MusB composition had to contain a 'portion at least' in five parts, and the MusD exercise similarly required a 'portion at least' in six or eight parts. This contrasts with the previous regulations that vaguely called for 'a piece of music' and stated the number of parts required. The accompaniments are also specified for the first time as being for a stringed band or organ for the MusB exercise and for a full band for the MusD candidate. Smith's examination on musical composition introduced in 1861 was replaced with an *ex tempore* piece of counterpoint composition written on a proposed subject within a given time, and the composition element of the MusD was also modified by Stewart to the 'composition of pieces of harmony on given subjects or on given basses written within a prescribed time'.²²

The major amendment to the MusB regulations under Stewart's scheme was the introduction of a 'literary examination'. Stewart's own matriculation at Trinity College in 1851 consisted merely of the completion of a form and the payment of fees which he duly described

¹⁹ *The Dublin University Calendar*, 1862, 12–13.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 1861, 26.

²¹ Mc Dowell and Webb: *Trinity College Dublin 1592–1952*, 118.

²² *The Dublin University Calendar*, 1863, 8.

as ‘a degradation of the Musical Faculty’.²³ Almost immediately after he was appointed professor Stewart applied to the Board of Trinity to attach a literary examination to the music degree requirements. This meant that music students had to matriculate in arts, take a literary examination, and satisfy the regulations for the MusB, although not necessarily in this exact order.²⁴ The literary examination that Stewart introduced consisted of examinations in the areas of English composition, history and literature; a modern language including Italian, German or French; Latin or a second modern language, and arithmetic, although no examples of this examination have come to light so far.

Stewart was of the opinion that the music graduates who hoped to occupy a high place in society as musical artists ‘should be sufficiently educated to enable themselves to meet such literary men as they may encounter, freely, and upon equal terms’,²⁵ and he remarked that his life’s work since becoming professor of music had been to raise the status of music graduates from that of ‘craftsmen’ to that of ‘artists and litterateurs’.²⁶ These comments demonstrate that the academic standing of music degrees during the middle of the nineteenth century was not on a par with degrees in areas such as arts, medicine, law or divinity and the professors of Oxford and Cambridge mention similar situations in their respective universities. George Alexander Macfarren (1813–1887) in his first year as professor of music at Cambridge was attempting to improve the academic status of music in his own environment as this extract from his letter to the vice-chancellor in November 1875 illustrates:

I wish that music were indeed a branch of University education in the same sense as other subjects are. Unhappily it is, I believe, the sole subject in which the University confers honours but affords no means

²³ Letters from Robert Prescott Stewart to William Pole, 10 February 1877, 6 and 7 August 1877, 18 May 1879, 20 June 1879, and 24 August 1886 in Vignoles: *Memoir*, 109–110.

²⁴ Details of this change first appeared in the 1863 issue of *The Dublin University Calendar*, 13.

²⁵ Letter from Robert Prescott Stewart to the editor of *The Monthly Musical Record* 5/60 (12/1875), 173.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 173 and letters from Robert Prescott Stewart to William Pole cited in Vignoles: *Memoir*, 109.

of qualifying for them, and in which Candidates for these honours not only may, but must, obtain their education beyond the University precincts. These honours moreover are rather titular than real, at least in the University itself, since they do not admit, as other degrees do, to membership of the Senate ... I wish the study of music might be encouraged, by its being made an avenue to the attainment of a real Degree, such as is the case with all other Faculties of the University ...²⁷

In 1877 the Oxford music professor, Frederick Arthur Gore Ouseley (1825–1889), spoke to the Selborne Commission emphasizing that music degrees ‘do not carry the weight that other degrees do’²⁸ and it was all too apparent that Ouseley, Macfarren and Stewart in Dublin were fighting similar battles.

Oxford, Cambridge and Dublin were comparable not only because of the low status that was attributed to music as an academic subject by their respective university communities, but also in terms of the music degree requirements themselves, requirements that evolved from the tradition of the Laudian Statutes and that stipulated the composition of a piece of music and its public performance. Up until 1856 the music degree requirements at Oxford under Ouseley called for the submission of an exercise followed by its public performance. After 1856 Ouseley introduced a written examination to the MusB requirements containing two papers, one in harmony and one in counterpoint, so that the candidates were required to take an examination as well as write their exercises. A year later William Sterndale Bennett (1816–1875) at Cambridge introduced a similar written examination for the bachelors candidates. From 1845 to 1855 Trinity College requirements stipulated that the MusB and MusD candidates were requested to compose a piece of music that had to be publicly performed (in conjunction with matriculating, which at this time included the completion of forms and the payment of fees). After 1855 students would have to matriculate in arts and sit the entrance

²⁷ Letter from George Alexander Macfarren to the vice-chancellor of Cambridge University, 19 November 1875, cited in Jeremy Dibble: *Charles Villiers Stanford: Man and Musician* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 67–68. Hereafter referred to as Dibble: *Charles Villiers Stanford*.

²⁸ Susan Wollenberg: ‘Music’, *The History of the University of Oxford*, vii, ed. M.G. Brock and M.C. Curthoys (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 432.

examination for the Bachelor of Arts students. In 1861 Smith, probably taking note of the regulations at Oxford and Cambridge, introduced an examination in the theory and grammar of music, thorough bass, and composition to both degree requirements. This demonstrates that apart from Stewart's literary examination, all three universities had similar methods of examination in terms of the music requirements for the degrees in the 1860s.

Stewart's literary examination preceded the introduction of similar examinations at Oxford and Cambridge by about fifteen years. At Oxford the written examination for the MusB was divided into two separate examinations in 1871, with harmony and counterpoint in the first examination and more advanced harmony, counterpoint and history in the second.²⁹ The 1876 Oxford Statutes required MusB candidates who were not members of the university to show 'evidence of having received a liberal education' either by certifying that they had passed 'Responsions' or an equivalent, or by taking tests at the university in the areas of English and Mathematics, Latin, and either Greek or a modern language.³⁰ The Cambridge Report instituted similar changes to those in place at Dublin and Oxford, and called for the introduction of a 'Previous Examination' or an equivalent to test 'the literary and scientific qualifications of the candidates'.³¹ Despite the fact that Trinity was the first to introduce a literary examination, Ouseley and Macfarren had been attempting to institute similar procedures for some time before changes were finally implemented at their respective universities.

A board meeting at Trinity College in January 1883 reported that Stewart's literary examination for the MusB had been abolished, without any explanation as to what prompted this action.³² The university authorities may have concluded that Stewart's literary examination was no longer required because of a noticed increase in the educational standard of the most recent music graduates or because the extended, and as a result more demanding, matriculation syllabus had

²⁹ Susan Wollenberg: *Music at Oxford in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 102.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 108.

³¹ Anon.: 'Musical Degrees at Cambridge', *The Musical Times* 18/412 (6/1877), 295.

³² Board Meeting 17 March 1883, TCD Board Books Mun/v/5/14, 281.

promoted a higher required level of education among the MusB candidates. Stewart is not recorded in writings by Olinthus Vignoles or James Culwick as having discussed the termination of this examination and neither the Board nor the Council Books record any correspondence from Stewart protesting against the decision.

In 1886 an examination on the sacred and secular 'masterpieces' (which the candidate was expected to have heard and studied) was added to the MusB requirements at Trinity, and in the following year all MusB candidates had to sit an acoustics examination which was to be taken at the Bachelor of Arts entrance examination. Sedley Taylor's book *Sound and Music* was the recommended text.³³ The regulations published by Trinity referring to the acoustics examination were copied *verbatim* from *The Cambridge University Calendar* of 1878,³⁴ once again demonstrating that Dublin kept a close eye on the music syllabus at its sister universities of Oxford and Cambridge.

The acoustics examination was the last addition implemented during Stewart's professorship and the 1887 terms and requirements remained unchanged until 1895 when Stewart's successor, Ebenezer Prout (1835–1909), introduced a system for the MusB candidates that included matriculation in arts, a preliminary examination in music, the performance of the exercise and, if approved, a further examination in counterpoint, harmony, Bach's preludes and fugues and the history of the oratorio. Following the successful completion of the exercise the MusD applicant was examined in counterpoint, instrumentation and the lives and words of the great composers.³⁵

While music students at Trinity did not have to conform to a residence requirement, this was instituted at Cambridge in 1893 and at Oxford after 1918.³⁶ One feature in common with all three universities

³³ Board Meeting 20 March 1886, TCD Board Books Mun/v/5/15, 24; Board Meeting 20 October 1887, TCD Board Books Mun/v/5/15, 135.

³⁴ *The Cambridge University Calendar* (Cambridge: Deighton Bell and Co., London: George Bell and Sons, 1878), 22ff.

³⁵ These regulations were adopted in 1895 but first appeared in the *The Dublin University Calendar* in 1898. *The Dublin University Calendar*, 1898, 9–10.

³⁶ Ernest Walker and Walter R. Spalding: 'Degrees in music', *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ii, ed. H.C. Colles (London: Macmillan, 1940), 34 and letter from Charles Villiers Stanford to *The Times*, 28 November 1898. Susan Wollenberg: 'Oxford', *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, xviii, 2nd edn, ed. Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell (London: Macmillan, 2001), 832.

was that all of the professorships were non-resident (Stewart and John Stainer (1840–1901)³⁷ happened to reside at the same location as their respective universities). Ouseley and Stainer did lecture but not necessarily on subjects that were directly relevant to music degree examinations. Similarly, while Stewart was not obliged to lecture, he felt it a requirement of his position and gave over fifty lectures between 1862 and 1893 on a diverse range of musical topics. Bennett also lectured at Cambridge and his successor, Macfarren, was required as part of his appointment to lecture not less than four times during the year. This tradition was continued in turn by Charles Villiers Stanford (1852–1924) who provided illustrated lectures with orchestra which students were expected to attend.³⁸

According to Susan Wollenberg, the examination papers survive for 369 successful MusB candidates at Oxford between 1854 and 1914, along with the submitted exercises composed by some of the graduates.³⁹ Trinity College has unfortunately not retained any similar documents. It is interesting to note however that approximately eighty-four MusB candidates graduated from Trinity during the same period. The July 1874 issue of *The Monthly Musical Record* provides us with a specimen of the examination papers for the MusB and MusD examinations at Trinity College and can be consulted in Figure 1 at the end of this article.⁴⁰ Questions on false relation, double counterpoint, thorough bass, ancient modes, pitch, stave, clefs and cadences form the core questions for the MusB examination while the MusD candidates had to answer questions on diminished seventh, Neapolitan, French and German sixth chords, the laws of fugue, the arrangement of a score for instruments, and the ‘devices’ of modern orchestration. An exercise beginning in C major had to incorporate the following pattern of modulation: from C through A, F sharp minor, E flat, D flat, G minor, F

³⁷ John Stainer succeeded Frederick Ouseley as professor of music at Oxford and remained there from 1889 to 1899.

³⁸ Nicholas Temperley, ed. with Yunchung Yang: *Lectures on Musical Life: William Sterndale Bennett* (Ashgate: Boydell Press, 2006); Dibble: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 208.

³⁹ Susan Wollenberg: ‘Music in Nineteenth-Century Oxford’, *Nineteenth-Century British Music Studies*, i, ed. Bennett Zon (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 206.

⁴⁰ Anon.: ‘Dublin University Musical Examinations’ *The Monthly Musical Record* 4/7 (7/1874), 99–100. Hereafter referred to as ‘Dublin University Musical Examinations’.

major, G and ending in the key of C. The 1874 examination papers reproduced in *The Monthly Musical Record* also confirm that a *viva voce* was part of the examination process for the MusB and MusD candidates.

Some of the MusB and MusD questions reproduced in *The Monthly Musical Record* also appear in harmony papers set by Stewart at the Royal Irish Academy of Music between the years 1873 to 1888.⁴¹ Examples of these 'multi-purpose' questions include those on the pitch of musical sounds, the derivation of the stave and the clefs, the difference between the time signatures 3/4 and 6/8, Neapolitan, French and German sixths, the laws of fugue, and the harmonisation of the first few bars of the National Anthem, the latter two questions also appearing in the Senior Harmony Candidate examinations at the Royal Irish Academy of Music. It becomes difficult here to speculate whether this suggests that the standard of the music degree candidates was not particularly high at Trinity in the 1870s or whether the standard of the harmony students at the Royal Irish Academy of Music was very high indeed, but I suspect the former scenario was probably the case. In the area of the history of music the MusB candidates were not required to have a knowledge beyond that of the approximate birth and death dates of Handel, Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Mendelssohn. The inclusion of Helmholtz in one of the MusD questions may be attributed to William Pole (1814–1900), music degree examiner at the University of London, to whom Stewart had written that he would try and put Helmholtz's book *On the Sensations of Tone* into the Trinity College curriculum.⁴²

Despite Stewart's lengthy occupation of the music chair and the number of music candidates at Trinity College between 1862 and 1894 there is surprisingly little extant information recorded by music degree candidates at Trinity College in relation to their interaction with and opinion of Stewart as their music professor. The information that does survive emphasizes very positive opinions of Stewart as the anecdotes

⁴¹ These examination papers are located in the Minute Books of the Royal Irish Academy of Music located in the National Archives, Dublin, collection NA 1120/1/6, 1120/1/8, and 1120/1/9.

⁴² Letters from Robert Prescott Stewart to William Pole cited in Vignoles: *Memoir*, 110.

and reminiscences that follow demonstrate. John Bulmer (MusB 1880) wrote this anecdote to Stewart's wife in 1896:

You will observe that, as though with the double object of checking conceit and preventing despair, Sir Robert administers, throughout, a fatherly caress with one hand, and almost simultaneously, a tremendous box upon the ear with the other! What right-minded pupil (at least with any sense of humour) would not delight in such a preceptor as this?⁴³

Vignoles was also aware of Stewart's willingness to help the music candidates in their time of need:

Moreover, his extreme good-nature made him accessible at all times (often at great personal inconvenience) to those who sought his advice and aid in their musical studies; patiently correcting their mistakes, smoothing their difficulties; no matter how busy he might be; disentangling the 'hidden ties of harmony' for puzzle-headed would-be contrapuntists; or from the resources of his amazing memory scoring a passage from some forgotten or occult composition on the back of a letter; or scribbling a melody or musical phrase, which no one else remembered, on the blank page of an old song or anthem!⁴⁴

The extract from the letter below to Arthur Froggatt (MusB 1888 and MusD 1894) demonstrates the type of advice that Stewart gave to the music degree candidates at Trinity College when they submitted drafts of their compositions to him for inspection.

I have only this morning managed to get a look over your ingenious work. I like your two subjects in it, *Thou art the King of Glory*, and one in the last chorus. It seems unfair to find faults which arose from your adherence to your subjects; but I don't think the canonic feature is worth the octaves between E—C sharp. I like your idea of the *Dies Irae*, but when you are as old as I am you will find that the bass trombone of your days will not reach softly down to low D. You will obtain that note softly from the D horn, if it is not too low for the

⁴³ Letter from John Bulmer to Lady Marie Stewart, 7 March 1896. *Ibid.*, 215.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 215.

player, although you will not get it from the C horn securely. E flat or F horns are safe. I cannot say you are a very gushing melodist, but the exercise will do well. We need only perform a solo and an eight-part chorus. There will be commencement in July, but only for the honorary degrees in connection with the tercentenary.⁴⁵

A letter from Stewart to the same student also exhibits one of the disadvantages of the music education system in the latter half of the nineteenth century—the lack of any system of regular interaction or meetings between the professor and the music candidates on a frequent basis.

I don't know that I ever heard you play either on organ or piano, or drilling a chorus, or (save in Trinity) conducting. So, query? How can I add anything to the testimonial of your degree from the old place—of 1592—a long time ago?⁴⁶

Frank Bates (MusB 1880 and MusD 1884) left one particular fond memory in connection with his doctor's degree at the University of Dublin and the informal way in which he found out that his application for a MusD had been successful.

I was the only candidate, and having submitted myself to the usual written and oral examination by Sir Robert Stewart, the Professor of Music, and Professor Mahaffy (who, gifted with many other extraordinary accomplishments, was a profound musician), I was anxiously waiting to know the result of this examination before preparing for the final stage, viz., the public performance of the work submitted to the examiners. One afternoon I went to pay my respects to Sir Robert Stewart, with whom I found Sir Robert Ball, the Astronomer Royal. In introducing me to Sir Robert, the professor in his own charming way said: 'May I introduce you to'—and then a

⁴⁵ Letter from Robert Prescott Stewart to Arthur Froggatt, 15 May 1892. *Ibid.*, 189.

⁴⁶ Letter from Robert Prescott Stewart to Arthur Froggatt [no date]. *Ibid.*, 189.

pause—‘well, yes, I think I may—*Dr. Bates!*’ My relief and pride may be better imagined than described.⁴⁷

From Vignoles’s *Memoir* it is also apparent that Stewart knew some of the music degree recipients very well and traveled with them abroad. For example the Dublin singers who traveled to perform in the choir at the Triennial Handel Festival in Sydenham in 1862 included John Dunne (MusB 1866 and MusD 1870) and George William Torrance (MusB and MusD 1879). Torrance knew Stewart since his days as a chorister at Christ Church Cathedral.⁴⁸ Stewart also met William Spark (MusB and MusD 1861) on several occasions when he attended the Handel Festivals in England.⁴⁹

It was reported in *The Musical Herald* that one of the ‘great treats’ for Harry Crane Perrin (MusB 1890) was to ‘join Sir Robert Stewart at Trinity Chapel service at 9.30 on a Sunday morning, go on with him afterwards to Christchurch (*sic*) Cathedral, where full matins and choral celebrations went on sometimes until two o’clock, then after a hurried lunch attend with him evensong at three o’clock at St Patrick’s’.⁵⁰

These anecdotes and nostalgic memories demonstrate the high opinion with which Stewart was held by the music candidates both during and after their supplication for music degrees at Trinity College and illustrates that Stewart was highly respected as a serious music academic and composer.

The lectures of Stewart

In the second half of the nineteenth century weekly lectures were offered at Trinity in subjects such as mathematics, classics, Hebrew, French, German and science subjects, but because music students were external it was not obligatory for them to attend classes. Stewart’s professorial lectures were therefore open to the public and were usually free of charge.⁵¹ The topics of Stewart’s lectures included the ancient

⁴⁷ Frank Bates: *Reminiscences and Autobiography of a Musician in Retirement* (Norwich: Jarrold and Sons, Ltd, 1930), 25.

⁴⁸ Vignoles: *Memoir*, 63, 67.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 67, 69, 84.

⁵⁰ ‘Dr. H.C. Perrin’, *The Musical Herald* 719 (2/1908), 35.

⁵¹ For a more detailed discussion of the lectures of Robert Prescott Stewart see Lisa Parker: ‘For the purpose of public music education: the lectures of Robert

music of Ireland, the harp and bagpipe, the preludes and fugues of Bach, church music, stringed-keyed instruments and national music education. His lectures were usually delivered in the Examination Hall at Trinity College on Saturday afternoons and the musical illustrations were performed either by members of the University Choral Society or by Stewart himself at the keyboard.

The Irish Times remarked that Stewart's desire in giving his lectures was 'not merely to amuse the public, but to make them better',⁵² reflecting a popular attitude of educators in Victorian times who attempted to 'rescue the lower classes from their dismal surroundings, and from brutal amusements'.⁵³

While discussing the present condition of music education in Ireland in his 1862 lecture 'Music: with illustrations', Stewart pointed out that Ireland lacked the luxury of a resident aristocracy to patronise and encourage the native composer and he criticised his fellow countrymen for not supporting performances by resident musicians:

It has been proved again and again by the surest test,—pounds, shillings, and pence,—that an oratorio or cantata, properly performed, with full chorus, full orchestra, and the best resident singers, has no attraction for our citizens when compared with an *olla podrida* of music executed by strangers.⁵⁴

The 1862 lecture emphasized that Ireland was not a 'paradise of musicians', and the author continued by explaining that the Irish public was far behind that of London, who 'sit out and warmly applaud those grand choruses and symphonies, of which people here scarcely take pains to conceal their dislike'.⁵⁵ Stewart vented similar frustrations two decades later when in 1881 he delivered a talk on the status of music in Ireland to the Social Science Congress.

Prescott Stewart', *Irish Musical Studies ix: Music in Nineteenth-Century Ireland*, ed. Michael Murphy and Jan Smaczny (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007), 187–210.

⁵² 'Sir Robert Stewart', *The Irish Times*, 26 March 1894.

⁵³ Vignoles: *Memoir*, 184.

⁵⁴ Robert Prescott Stewart: 'Music: with illustrations', *Lectures delivered before the Dublin Young Men's Christian Association* (Dublin: Hodges Smith, 1863), 166.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 166.

Stewart's lectures also reflect events and experiences of the time. For example, his 1876 lecture on 'Natural music and its relation to modern musical art' illustrates the pervading elements of orientalism and exotica that he came into contact with at Trinity College, elements that were the subject of much interest in the British Empire in the second half of the nineteenth century. His group of 1877 lectures concluded with Wagner, influenced by his trip to the Bayreuth Festival in the previous year. In 1864 and 1878 Stewart delivered lectures on Irish music and musicians to raise funds for memorials to John Stevenson and Michael Balfe at St Patrick's Cathedral Dublin and his lecture on the comparison of the bagpipes of Ireland and Scotland was so popular that it had to be repeated a week later. Stewart's frequent visits to music festivals on the continent ensured that he kept himself *au fait* with current developments in music and helped him to overcome the insularity that he felt in Dublin.

Stewart at the Royal Irish Academy of Music

Stewart was offered the unfilled position of professor of harmony and composition previously held by John Smith and the position of professor of piano at the Royal Irish Academy of Music in September 1869. He became the organ professor in 1879 and taught chamber music from 1880 until 1888. By the late 1870s however, Stewart complained to the Academy about his falling income. In a letter to the Academy in 1878, he claimed that his income had dropped from £98 to £32 per term with only nine pupils per week and recorded his annoyance when he wrote 'it could never be supposed a man in my position could be contented with a pittance like this'.⁵⁶ He insisted that the Academy make the appropriate arrangements so that he would not be 'utterly sacrificed' as he alleged that he had been and asked for two three-hour teaching sessions on Mondays and Thursdays. The Academy's reply pointed out that Stewart's salary over the last four years had in fact been between £120 and £135 per year and suggested that should Stewart 'induce pupils of talent to come to the Academy' he would soon find his pupil numbers increase. Nevertheless Stewart was given more pupils, most probably taken from a junior teacher at the

⁵⁶ Royal Irish Academy of Music Minute Books 1876–1879, NA 1120/1/7 and Pine and Acton eds: *To Talent Alone*, 117–118. Hereafter referred to as RIAM Minute Books.

Academy, and was granted permission to rent a room in the Academy for private instruction in an effort to further appease him.⁵⁷

Despite this incident Stewart had a very successful time at the Academy and became a member of the board and a vice-president. In 1887 he was teaching eight hours per week in harmony, counterpoint and composition, along with his piano and organ instruction and from the mid-1880s to 1894 he was one of the top five earners at the Academy along with Joseph Robinson, Michele Esposito (1855–1929), Theodore Werner and T.R.G. Jozé (1853–1924).⁵⁸

In terms of Stewart's teaching methods, unfortunately the only extant information consists of anecdotes left by former pupils of Stewart including Annie Patterson (1868–1934) and Annie Curwen (1845–1922). Curwen referred to Stewart's ability to put himself in the place of a child and in her *Pianoforte Method* we find the following anecdote:

The late Sir Robert Stewart ... has been known to vary his blackboard demonstration of [the clef] by making a collection of sticks and umbrellas, laying them on the floor to represent a staff, and placing his hat on one of them for a clef; then, by manipulating the 'lines,' he would show how, though the clef never moved, it was seen in different positions in each five-line staff that he made. He would finish the lesson by saying, 'Now, children, take this away with you—Clefs never move. Say it after me.' And as they broke up there came a chorus of 'Clefs never move!'⁵⁹

Annie Patterson had a successful career as an organist, conductor, composer, lecturer, professor and leading musical figure in Ireland. She was particularly fond of Stewart as her comments demonstrate:

There was a kindness and enthusiasm about ... Stewart—a placing himself in sympathy with young intelligences ... I always felt inspired and encouraged by the fact that, talented and distinguished as he was,

⁵⁷ RIAM Minute Books 1879–1883 NA 1120/1/8, 19 November 1879.

⁵⁸ RIAM Minute Books, Finance Committee Reports NA 1120/1/11 and 1120/3/1.

⁵⁹ Annie Curwen: *The Teacher's Guide to Mrs. Curwen's Pianoforte Method*, 16th edn (London: J. Curwen & Sons Ltd, 1913), 359. I am grateful to Jennifer O'Connor for brining this reference to my attention.

he could yet enter into the initial difficulties of the inexperienced, and invariably bring out the best abilities that they possessed.⁶⁰

Stewart did acknowledge that the strain of getting up at six o'clock in the morning on a continuous basis in order to fulfil his duties did take its toll on him, and referred to 'the drudgery of teaching' that made it impossible for him to devote more time to composition.⁶¹ Nevertheless, Stewart was described by Vignoles as an 'excellent and patient instructor' whose approachable nature made him accessible to his students at all times, despite the pressure that he may have experienced through his association with the main musical institutions in Dublin.⁶²

Stewart has been described as a 'pioneer in the endeavour to raise the social status of musical graduates, so as to bring music into closer touch with the other faculties' at Trinity College.⁶³ His changes to the music degree syllabus were not hugely radical but they did clarify in more detail the requirements for the music degrees, and the implementation of additional examinations no doubt helped to improve the academic content and standard of the music degree, while also providing a foundation for further music professors such as Prout and Percy Buck (1871–1947) to further improve upon. Trinity's imitation of Cambridge's guidelines on the acoustic examination and indeed the introduction of the Responsions and Previous Examination regulations at Oxford and Cambridge which were similar to Dublin's literary examination demonstrate that the three music professors were pushing for similar reforms at their respective universities.

Stewart's varied lectures and his association with the Academy as a teacher of several disciplines exhibit that Stewart was an erudite scholar and distinguished musical figure who, along with musicians such as Joseph Robinson, James Culwick and Michele Esposito, was fundamental to the promotion and dissemination of art and church music in Dublin in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

⁶⁰ Annie Patterson: 'The Royal Irish Academy of Music', *Weekly Irish Times*, 12 May 1900.

⁶¹ Letter from Robert Prescott Stewart to an unnamed friend in Vignoles: *Memoir*, 217.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 16.

⁶³ 'The new Professor of Music in Dublin University', *The Monthly Musical Record*, 24/288 (12/1894), 265–6.

Figure 1. 1874 MusB and MusD Examination Papers

Dublin University Musical Examinations

The following examination papers in music for the present year will probably interest our readers:-

Examination for Mus.B.

Sir Robert Stewart

1. What is false relation?
2. What is double counterpoint, in the 8va, 10th, 12th?
3. What is the true meaning of the term 'thorough bass'?
4. Describe the ancient modes: What two choruses in Handel's *Israel* are supposed to be written in any of them?
5. Did the old masters (seventeenth and eighteenth centuries) ever use different signatures from modern composers?
6. Upon what depends the pitch of musical sounds?
7. Explain the derivation of the stave and the clefs?
8. Give some of the names and values of ancient notes.
9. What are the meanings of the word 'cadence', and how many cadences are there?
10. Various forms of the minor scale exist; explain and justify them.
- 11.



Bar the above melody in two different ways.

12. What is the principle of time-signatures?
13. The fractions $\frac{3}{4}$ and $\frac{6}{8}$ are generally equal; why do they represent different effects to the musician?

Maynooth Musicology

4. Compare the effects of alto and contralto voices in musical composition.

In addition to the above there was a portion of the day devoted to a *viva voce* examination.

Examination for Mus.D.

Sir Robert Stewart

1. What are the chords of the added ninth; diminished seventh; added sixth; Neapolitan, French and German sixths; eleventh; and thirteenth?
2. Modulate from C through A, F sharp major, E flat, D flat, G minor, F major, G, to C.
3. Add a bass and inner part to the melody of a chromatic scale descending from C# to C#, one octave.
4. Express the following figured harmony by chords:

The image shows two staves of figured bass notation. The top staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The bottom staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). Both staves show a sequence of notes with figured bass symbols below them.

Top staff (Bass clef):
Notes: G2, F2, E2, D2, C2, B1, A1, G1.
Figured bass symbols: 6, 6, 6, 6, 6, 6, 6, 6.

Bottom staff (Treble clef):
Notes: G4, F4, E4, D4, C4, B3, A3, G3.
Figured bass symbols: 6, 6, 9, 27, 4, 3, 0.

5. What are (briefly) the laws of fugue? May the pedal be ever introduced on any note save the dominant? Is it ever found in any part except the bass?

Mr. Mahaffy

1. What changes has Gounod made in his present *Faust* as compared with its original published form?
2. Cite examples from great composers of the use of a *drone* bass (like that of the bag-pipes).
3. Can you remember any two distinct melodies which can be harmonised together? Explain how it can be done.
4. How has Helmholtz accounted for the various *qualities* of tone on physical principles?
5. Describe his *vibration-microscope*.
6. What actual remnants have we of old Greek tunes?

In addition to the above there was a *viva voce* examination upon fugue, the sonata form, and modern instrumentation.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ 'Dublin University Musical Examinations', 99–100.

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