

From Child Prodigy to Conservative Professor?: Reception Issues of Charles Villiers Stanford

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[Stanford] touched the nation's musical life vitally in three profoundly important spheres, and enriched all three – the Church, the great body of English Choralism, and English song.

Herbert Howells¹

Stanford made a significant contribution to musical life in England throughout the course of his life and posthumously. Unfortunately, much of Stanford's early posthumous reception is clouded by Herbert Howells' statement above which can be attributed to the lack of performances of Stanford's works outside of the choral and church and song tradition. Although Howells correctly commends Stanford for his achievements in these fields, Stanford's accomplishments in other areas must be accounted for in order to portray a more fully-realized picture of a composer who enriched musical life in England.

This article seeks to unveil the changing images of Stanford portrayed during his lifetime and posthumously. Rodmell and Dibble have traced the positive reception of Stanford by the Dublin press during his childhood years. A bright future was augured for the young musician. Upon his arrival in England he was quickly assimilated into English society, taking an active role in musical circles across the country which led to an international reputation. Despite such acclamation, the reception of Stanford's music changed throughout the course of his career. Possible circumstances surrounding the changes in the public perception of Stanford's music will be examined in the context of issues relating to his intense personality, his relationships with fellow composers, his position in society and how changing attitudes towards his music may, in turn, have influenced his direction as a composer. Writing in 1935, Greene commented on Stanford's Irishness and believed that 'it is well to bear this in mind, as it is the key

¹ Herbert Howells: 'Charles Villiers Stanford (1852–1924) An Address at His Centenary', *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 79th Session (6/1952), 25.

to much that follows in these pages'.² Unfortunately, Stanford's Irishness often shaped public perception of his music and Greene's focus on Stanford's nationality continued this trend in the first half of the twentieth century. The emphasis by some writers on Stanford's nationality has affected reception of his music. In the period after his death, Stanford's music received sporadic performances and although attempts were made to renew interest in the composer's work in 1952³ it was the pioneering work of Dr Frederick Hudson in the 1960s which initiated the beginnings of scholarly interest in the Irish composer. Notwithstanding the changes in Stanford reception during his life and posthumously, reaction to his music has become favourable once more since the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the birth of the composer in 2002 through the pioneering work of a group of dedicated scholars and performers. The publication of a complete thematic catalogue of all of Stanford's works along with the continuing release of performances of his music will ensure that the entire extent of Stanford's oeuvre become known. Although some scholarly research has been undertaken on aspects of Stanford's music, some areas of his vast compositional output have yet to be exposed to critical examination.⁴

Early Impressions of a Young Musician in Dublin

Growing up in the mid-nineteenth century in Dublin, Stanford was afforded a broad musical education through the support of his parents and the rich cultural life of the city. Amateur music-making was flourishing with approximately sixty music societies which encouraged

² H.P. Greene: *Charles Villiers Stanford* (London: Edward Arnold, 1935), 15. Hereafter referred to as Greene: *Charles Villiers Stanford*.

³ B.E. Lamble: 'A Stanford Society', *The Musical Times* 93/1317 (11/1952), 509.

⁴ Some examples of dissertations focusing on aspects of Stanford's compositional output include P. Rodmell: 'The Operas of Charles Stanford' (unpublished PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 1996), J. S. Moore: 'The Shorter Sacred Choral Works of Charles Villiers Stanford' (unpublished D.M.A. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1989), N.M. Nash-Robertson: 'The Irish Part-Songs of Charles Villiers Stanford' (unpublished D.M.A. diss., University of Illinois, 1993) and D. Fennell: 'The Clarinet Music of Charles Villiers Stanford' (unpublished PhD diss., Texas Tech University, 1988). The author's present study on Stanford's solo piano works will add to this important field of scholarly research on the music of Stanford.

the progress of music in the capital at this time.⁵ Stanford fondly recounted his father's talents as both a bass and a cellist.⁶ John Stanford was active in amateur music-making in the societies of Dublin and he was instrumental in the founding of the Royal Irish Academy of Music in 1848. His mother was also an accomplished pianist. Recognizing his parents' influence during his formative years, Stanford recalled: 'When I first had sense enough to look round, and to take note of my surroundings, I found myself in a centre of real music, where amateurs were cultivated performers, who had taken their art as seriously as if it were their means of livelihood'.⁷ This 'centre of real music' was the ideal setting for a young impressionable musician to make his debut appearance.

Music-making took place on a regular basis in the Stanford household and Stanford recounts his difficulty in accompanying his father on the piano.⁸ The young boy played in at least two recitals in the family home, when Stanford was only nine and eleven years old respectively.⁹ The demanding programme for a recital given in 1864, featuring him in the roles both as soloist and as part of a piano trio, was performed from memory by the young pianist. The range of material included sonatas by Beethoven and Dussek, a prelude and fugue by Bach and a waltz by Heller, and are evidence that the young pianist had a varied interest in music. The length of the programme exhibits his talent at this young age and his ability to perform all the works from memory.¹⁰

⁵ See I. Beausang: 'Dublin Musical Societies 1850–1900', *Irish Musical Studies v: The Maynooth International Musicological Conference 1995, Selected Proceedings: Part Two*, ed. P.F. Devine and H. White (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1996), 169–178 for an account of musical societies in Dublin in the nineteenth century.

⁶ C.V. Stanford: *Pages From an Unwritten Diary* (London: Arnold, 1914), 27 and 29–33. Hereafter referred to as Stanford: *Pages From an Unwritten Diary*.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁹ J. Dibble: *Charles Villiers Stanford Man and Musician* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 32–33. Hereafter referred to as Dibble: *Charles Villiers Stanford*. See also P. Rodmell: (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2002), 29–30. Hereafter referred to as Rodmell: *Charles Villiers Stanford*.

¹⁰ Dibble: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 32–33 for programmes of recitals at the Stanford home in Herbert Street on 13 May 1862 and 6 June 1864.

Stanford was fortunate enough to have this opportunity to showcase his talents to a Dublin audience at such a young age, but it is likely that his father's reputation in amateur music-making circles in the city ensured an interest in this concert by the press. The review begins by outlining John Stanford's musical skill and refers to his interest in the promotion of music.¹¹ This sets up an expectation for the reader but also for the writer of the article. The review highlights the young Stanford's maturity as a musician while recognising his natural ability. The writer commented that Stanford was 'of rare talent, who is doubtless destined for a great position in the musical world.'¹² Rodmell believes this piano recital was in the style of 'a typical Anglo-Irish musical soirée'.¹³ While the review does not state the purpose of the musical evening, nor allude to the identity of members of the audience, it is clear from the review of this concert in *Orchestra* that John Stanford had organised this musical gathering to showcase his son's talents to a professional audience.

Reports of the young Stanford's performance opportunities outside the home are scarce but not all amateur music events were reported on in the press. Greene records how Stanford played preludes and fugues in the drawing-room of the Greene household in Bray in 1868.¹⁴ In addition, *The Irish Times* advertised an amateur concert organised by Stewart and Robinson in May 1867 in which 'Master Stanford' was to appear as as composer of a "Kinder Waltz" and as performer in a duet by Dussek with Mr. Levey.¹⁵ Stanford's association with Stewart, Robinson and Levey was instrumental to his success in Dublin. The childhood waltz, now lost, is an early example of Stanford's aspiration as a composer. Although there are no further records of it, and neither Dibble nor Rodmell mention the work, it is significant that his talents would have been showcased in such a forum.

¹¹ *Orchestra*, 11 June 1864, 590 in Rodmell: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 29.

¹² *Orchestra*, 11 June 1864, 590 in Rodmell: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 29.

¹³ Rodmell: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 29.

¹⁴ This event may have taken place in either 1868 or 1869 as Greene states that it happened when Greene was three years old.

¹⁵ Anon.: 'Amateur Concert', *The Irish Times* 20 May 1867, 3. Mr Levey, Stanford's violin teacher, was actually Richard Michael O'Shaughnessy who had changed his name.

Other early compositions by Stanford during his youthful years include songs, a piano work called *March*,¹⁶ and an operatic piece showing his early interest in this area.¹⁷ Parallels can be drawn here between the young Irish pianist and other child prodigies such as Mozart, Mendelssohn, Chopin and Bizet who were all composing and performing from a young age. Stanford was fortunate to have his initial attempts publically performed in Dublin by such eminent musicians and performing groups as the baritone Richard Smith with the Dublin Philharmonic Society (1863),¹⁸ the Dublin Exhibition Choir (1864)¹⁹ and the University of Dublin Choral Society (1867).²⁰ The concerts of these societies, which often included appearances by distinguished foreign musicians, produced works by eminent foreign composers. Stanford's organ teacher, Stewart, was conductor of the University of Dublin Choral Society and during the 1850s and 1860s the repertoire of the society included music by Irish composers.²¹ The inclusion of Stanford's work demonstrates the promise Stewart saw in the young boy. Performances of Stanford's childhood compositions were received favourably in *Orchestra*.²² Rodmell rightly points out that the reviews strongly imply 'that Stanford's name was quite well known to music-loving Dubliners'.²³

¹⁶ The chronology for this march is unclear. In his biographical article in *The Musical Times*, a date of September 1860 is included with a reproduction of the work. Stanford stated that the work was composed for performance at the Theatre Royal production of 'Puss-in-Boots.' 'Charles Villiers Stanford', *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 39/670 (12/1898), 785–793. However, Rodmell points out that this production did not take place until the winter of 1863–1864. See Rodmell: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 28.

¹⁷ Anon.: 'Charles Villiers Stanford', *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 39/670 (12/1898), 785.

¹⁸ *Orchestra*, 21 November 1863 in Dibble: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 32.

¹⁹ *Orchestra*, 17 September 1864 in Dibble: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 33.

²⁰ Anon.: 'Charles Villiers Stanford', *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 39/670 (12/1898), 788 in Rodmell: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 31–32.

²¹ L. Parker: 'Robert Prescott Stewart (1825–1894): an assessment of his compositions and contribution to musical life in Dublin', (unpublished M.A. diss., National University of Ireland, Maynooth, 2000), 28.

²² *Orchestra*, 21 November 1863, 118 in Rodmell: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 28 and *Orchestra*, 17 September 1864, 807 in Rodmell: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 28.

²³ Rodmell: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 28.

Although Stanford's talent as a performer and composer at a young age has been acknowledged, one must be careful not to exaggerate the coverage which he received in Dublin. With his many contacts in the city, his father would certainly have helped in ensuring the promotion of his son and in encouraging his musical education at this early age. John Stanford's success as a musician in Dublin was well-documented by the press during his lifetime.²⁴ He acknowledged that his son wished to pursue a career in music and insisted that after Charles received his general education he should travel abroad for specialized music education, thereby recognising the lack of professional training opportunities in Ireland and England.²⁵ One of Charles' father's acquaintances, Joseph Robinson, wrote a song for the young Stanford in 1859,²⁶ which illustrates Stanford's links with one of the leading musical figures in Dublin at this time. Such exposure and experience at such a young age did much for the young boy's confidence, and his interest in all things musical grew. Irish perceptions of him at this young age were positive as Dublin audiences received the young musician with enthusiasm and a solid future was predicted for him.

Crossing the Irish Sea to Cambridge

Among his generation of Irish musicians and composers, Stanford would have been a popular choice to take on various roles in musical circles in Dublin. Greene believed that 'by the rules of Dublin precedent [Stewart's] mantle should have fallen on the younger man, and Stanford should have followed in his footsteps. But the spirit of adventure was abroad'.²⁷ Upon his arrival in Cambridge in 1870 Stanford quickly established himself as a rising figure in musical circles and seemed destined for a promising future. An organ scholarship at the university²⁸

²⁴ John Stanford had taken main parts in many productions in Dublin. Contemporary sources speak highly of his talent. See for example *Dublin Daily Express* 20 July 1880 in Dibble: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 10 and A.P. Graves: *A Return to All That*, 23 in Dibble: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 10. See Stanford: *Pages from an Unwritten Diary*, 28 for the circumstances relating to his father choosing law as a profession over a musical career.

²⁵ Stanford: *Pages from an Unwritten Diary*, 103.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 53.

²⁷ Greene: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 38.

²⁸ See Stanford: *Pages From an Unwritten Diary*, 106 and Rodmell: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 35 for conflicting information as to the exact nature of his initial scholarship at Cambridge.

quickly brought him to public attention in Cambridge and he was elected a member of the Cambridge University Musical Society within weeks of his arrival at Cambridge. The society at this point was in 'a parlous state',²⁹ and it was through his initial involvement with the society that Stanford rose to fame as a solo pianist and chamber musician appearing frequently in concerts at this time. Although he received positive criticism in the press it is surprising that he discontinued from performing in public in the later stages of his career. In view of this trajectory, it is perhaps telling that no reviews profess him as a virtuosic pianist. Stanford continued to perform at informal gatherings and Parry noted Stanford's 'great facility'.³⁰ Parry had an interest in piano performance and had taken lessons with Dannreuther in order to improve upon his technique so this positive criticism by his fellow composer is a reliable source in appraising Stanford's talent on the instrument. As is confirmed by many contemporary reviews, Stanford made a strong impression as a pianist throughout his life.³¹

Taking over the conductorship of the Cambridge University Musical Society was an important achievement for the young musician. It is testament to the impression which the twenty-one year old musician was making on the musical community at Cambridge, while also demonstrating the faith which the society members had in him. The conductorship was a position of honour and prestige and Stanford raised the standard of music making during his conductorship of the society. Although his plans for the society were not to everyone's liking, Stanford's innovative programmes ensured strong public interest in the society and he was soon credited with being one of the leading figures in

²⁹ Rodmell: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 36.

³⁰ Diary of Hubert Parry 11 January 1878, in Dibble: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 158.

³¹ Greene: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 30, 60, 85. See also Anon.: 'Cambridge University Musical Society', *The Musical Times* 20/431 (1/1879), 21, Anon.: 'Bristol Musical Festival', *The Musical Times* 49/789 (11/1908), 725, Anon.: 'Royal Choral Society', *The Musical Times*, 49/783 (5/1908), 322, A. De Ternant: 'Debussy and Some Italian Musicians', *The Musical Times* 65/979 (9/1924), 813, A. M. Goodhart : 'The Importance of Playing from Vocal Score', *The Musical Times* 76/1103 (1/1935), 60, A. M. Goodhart: 'Notes on Improvisation and Transposition', *The Musical Times* 78/1136 (10/1937), 873 and O. Thompson: 'Organ Memories', *The Musical Times* 79/1143 (5/1938), 371.

the musical renaissance in England.³² In the preceding centuries music was primarily a private activity with great emphasis on domestic music-making. Stradling and Hughes believe that ‘in general Victorian England had a low opinion of Art Music’ where ‘music was seen as essentially alien: to the English mind foreigners composed music and had a monopoly of its performance.’³³ Stanford strove to change perceptions of music-making in England in the nineteenth century and as a result gained a solid reputation for himself. Writing in 1871, Reverend R. H. Haweis stated that music ‘should be “harnessed” for the healthy development of the individual in the “healthful” society’³⁴ as he believed that the English lacked musical taste. He felt very strongly that ‘the English are not a Musical People’.³⁵ Stanford, however, endeavored to educate the English people by including works from all genres in concert programmes under his directorship. Through Stanford’s rich imaginative programming British audiences were exposed to a rich array of art music from the continent. Stanford gave the first English performance of many works at Cambridge³⁶ and programmed a work by Stewart in 1872.³⁷

During John Hopkins’ illness Stanford helped out at Trinity Chapel. It is likely that Stanford would have been interested in the post should it have become permanent, as this was a position of prominence which would have added to his growing fame in England. The college authorities were keen for Stanford to perform in their chapel. Dr W.H. Thompson was positive about Stanford’s presence referring to him as

³² J.A. Fuller-Maitland: *The Music of Parry and Stanford* (Cambridge: Heffer, 1934), 4. This English Musical Renaissance included such composers as Hubert Parry, Alexander Mackenzie and Walter MacFarren.

³³ M. Hughes and R. Stradling: *The English Musical Renaissance, 1840–1940*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 3–4. Hereafter referred to as Hughes and Stradling: *The English Musical Renaissance*.

³⁴ Reverend R.H. Haweis *Music and Morals* 1871 (42–43) in Hughes and Stradling: *The English Musical Renaissance*, 6.

³⁵ Reverend R.H. Haweis *Music and Morals* 1871 (124–125) in Hughes and Stradling: *The English Musical Renaissance*, 6.

³⁶ One such example is Part III of Schumann’s *Faust* which was given by the Cambridge University Musical Society under Stanford’s conductorship on 21 May 1875. See Rodmell: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 45 for further details on this concert.

³⁷ Audiences at an Amateur Vocal Guild concert on 19 November 1872 had the opportunity to hear a work by another Irish composer as Stanford invited R.P. Stewart to conduct his *Eve of St John* at Cambridge.

'an undergraduate who plays like St Cecilia'.³⁸ Thompson commented that the playing of the newly appointed organist 'always charms, and occasionally ... astonishes: and I may add that the less it astonishes, the more it charms'.³⁹ Although not written by a musicologist, this critique is nonetheless an example of the warm welcome which Stanford received among the general public in Cambridge.⁴⁰ As his playing only occasionally astonished the writer, this comment portrays that Stanford was not deemed a virtuoso in these musical surroundings, but that his musicality was certainly acknowledged. On Hopkins' death Stanford was appointed organist at the Chapel. For one so young this appointment was an important achievement, and the terms of his employment, which included permission to take leave of absences to study abroad, once more showed how valued he was in Cambridge at the time.⁴¹ Stanford was known for his enthusiastic ideas for reform, and the college authorities would have been keen that Stanford should experience rich music abroad and thereafter enrich the musical life of the university. This arrangement was to suit both parties. This privilege allowed Stanford to develop musically and the experience would help him to secure further employment over the course of his career.

In conclusion, it is suggested that the years 1870–1879 were a period full of success and recognition for the young man. In Cambridge he felt completely at ease and the university was overjoyed with the musical society's standard of music-making under Stanford's baton. His initial appointments and opportunities for exposure at Cambridge afforded him an ideal setting for his rise to prominence as composer, conductor, innovator and performer: this success eventually led to a national reputation for Stanford in England. His position in Cambridge ensured that his music was brought before an English audience. If Stanford had remained in Ireland, his works would not have received

³⁸ Stanford: *Pages from an Unwritten Diary*, 122 & Conclusion Books of the Seniority, Minute 20, 8 March 1873 in Dibble: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 53.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁴⁰ *Cambridge Chronicle*, 23 November 1872, 4 in Rodmell: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 37 for positive criticism of his choice of programme for a concert in 1872. See also *Cambridge Chronicle*, 6 June 1874, 8 in Rodmell: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 8 which stated that Stanford 'is so great a favourite as a pianist that his appearance was hailed with delight.'

⁴¹ The college was willing to allow him to travel to Germany to study in Leipzig for one term and the vacations of the two years following his degree. See Conclusions Book 1811–1886, 407 in Rodmell: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 39.

the same exposure. His future in England held great promise and he undoubtedly saw the professional advantages of remaining there rather than returning to Ireland. Stewart had been Professor of Music at Trinity College Dublin since 1862. Although this position, along with the posts at the main cathedrals in the city, may have interested Stanford after Stewart's death in 1894, Stanford records no interest in these positions in his autobiography.⁴² Evidently Stanford became too ambitious to return to Ireland and was ready to embrace music professionally abroad.

Performances, Publications and International Public Opinion (1880–1900)

From the 1880s Stanford immersed himself in the role of composer and new compositions were anticipated 'with some excitement'.⁴³ In 1881 the *Musical Times* heralded him as 'a man of the future, whose fame [was] gradually reaching its meridian'.⁴⁴ His success in this capacity was reflected in the performances and publications of many of his works across Europe which ensured more widespread recognition for him as a composer of merit. During his many visits to Europe Stanford befriended eminent musicians such as Richter and von Bülow who were both enthusiastic about his music and included Stanford's music in their concerts which added to Stanford's reputation. It was these two men who brought his 'Irish' Symphony to European audiences with performances in Hamburg, Berlin and Amsterdam in 1888.⁴⁵ On the strength of the successful performance of the symphony at Berlin in 1888 the Berlin Philharmonic invited Stanford to conduct a repeat performance of the work on the day after the Berlin première. An opportunity to conduct one's own work in a European city with a rich

⁴² Ebenezer Prout was appointed to the professorship in 1894. In Anon.: 'Ebenezer Prout', *The Musical Times* 40/674 (4/1899), 227 Prout states that the provost of the college, John Pentland Mahaffy asked him would he be willing to take the vacant post. This implies that Stanford may not have been considered for the post even if he had applied for it. There are also no records which state that Stanford was considered for the position.

⁴³ Anon.: 'The Birmingham Festival, 1882', *The Musical Times* 22/466 (12/1881), 617 in Dibble: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 124.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁴⁵ On the strength of the performance at Hamburg the composer was invited to conduct the work in a programme which included the music of Wagner, Brahms, Beethoven and Goldmark.

musical tradition was a significant achievement and an important privilege for Stanford at this time; it appears that von Bülow stood aside to allow Stanford conduct his own work.⁴⁶ A fruitful outcome of Stanford's friendship with von Bülow, for example, was the invitation which Stanford received to travel to Berlin in 1889 to conduct a concert entirely of his own compositions, which included his Symphony no.4 in F major, the overture to *Oedipus Tyrannus* and his Suite for Violin op.32. The concert was reported on in *The Musical Times* and included favourable contemporary reviews from local press in Germany at the time.⁴⁷ Another significant venture was the concert of English music given by Stanford in Berlin which included Stanford's Piano Concerto,⁴⁸ his Symphony no.5 in D major and Irish folk songs. Positive criticism was received from the local press commenting on the composer's imaginative prowess.⁴⁹ An important realisation was made by the German press in relation to English music at this time, one which Stanford could be responsible for:

we feel free from the suspicion of over-estimating what is foreign, and we have always demanded that preference should be given to German art; but when what is foreign presents itself in such perfection as in the work of this English composer, we are the first to demand the deserved tribute of acknowledgment for the genius of such a master.⁵⁰

This praise for Stanford is significant not only in terms of his own reputation as a composer but also in terms of the English school of composition at this time in the eyes of the German public. Further recognition from Germany came in May 1904 when Stanford was elected to Royal Academy of Arts of Berlin. According to Greene, he was 'the only British musician to receive this particularly high honour'.⁵¹

⁴⁶ See Anon.: 'Dr Stanford's "Irish" Symphony in Germany', *The Musical Times* 29/541 (3/1888), 154–155 for a review of the performance of the 'Irish' Symphony in Berlin in February 1888.

⁴⁷ See Anon.: 'Professor Stanford in Berlin', *The Musical Times* 30/553 (3/1889), 153 for an excerpt from the review in the *Börsen Courier*.

⁴⁸ This work was most likely his Piano Concerto no.1 which was completed in 1894.

⁴⁹ See Review from *Berliner Bürsen Courier* in Anon.: 'Occasional Notes', *The Musical Times* 37/636 (2/1896), 89.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁵¹ Greene: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 268.

This was significant as it represented positive reception of Stanford as a musician in a country so central to the development of art music. Further performances of Stanford's music in Germany continued to inform German audiences of the quality of contemporary English composition.⁵² The reputation of English music together with Stanford's reputation was growing steadily in Germany. Positive reception of Stanford's work in Germany resulted in many publications of his works by German publishing houses including Bote & Bock in Berlin and Breitkopf & Härtel in Leipzig.

Stanford Reception in America (1888–1900)

Stanford's 'Irish' Symphony earned the composer an international reputation as a symphonist, having received its American première in 1888. The Americans reviewed his music favourably, in particular those compositions which were infused with a Celtic idiom which were more popularly programmed in American concerts. Although the symphony was only completed in April 1887, the Symphony Society included the work at the Metropolitan Opera House New York on 27 and 28 January 1888. Despite some elements of the programme being criticised,⁵³ it was an important achievement for a symphony by an Irish composer to reach American audiences so soon after its completion. The 'Irish' Symphony, which was championed by Gustav Mahler in New York, continued to appear in concert programmes across America including venues such as Carnegie Hall and the Century Theatre in New York.⁵⁴ American audiences rated the work on a par with Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* Symphony and Dvořák's 'New World' Symphony, an important achievement for a composer from the 'English School'.⁵⁵

American press also included a review of the symphony written by George Bernard Shaw from the *World*, an English publication. This inclusion in the *New York Times* of 1893 is testament to the interest which the American public had in this work at this time. Stanford's

⁵² See Anon.: 'Occasional Notes', *The Musical Times* 40/674 (4/1899), 235 and Anon.: 'Foreign Notes: Cologne', *The Musical Times* 53/829 (3/1912), 192 for details concerning concerts of Stanford's music in Germany.

⁵³ Anon.: 'The Symphony Society', *New York Times*, 28 January 1888, 4.

⁵⁴ Anon.: 'Music in America', *The Musical Times* 31/566 (4/1890), 230 regarding the performance by the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

⁵⁵ Anon.: 'Philharmonic Society', *New York Times*, 26 Feb 1911, x7.

most cruel critic was his fellow Irishman, Shaw.⁵⁶ The outspoken Shaw always strived for musical perfection, basing 'his judgments not only on his remarkable musical knowledge, but on the extent to which he had enjoyed a performance'.⁵⁷ Although Shaw was disliked by many musicians, he 'was adored by his general readers'⁵⁸ as he made music criticism comprehensible to all. More significant to this study is his tendency to repeat public perceptions at the time. Shaw's well-known criticism of Stanford's Third Symphony in 1893 is cutting: in it he comments on the composer's dullness; he is unimpressed by the composer's use of 'so-called' folk music,⁵⁹ and goes as far as describing the symphony as a shindy. Although the writer offers some constructive criticism by commending the composer on his fragmentation of the air *Molly McAlpin*, the opening paragraph does little to encourage the reader that the symphony was a work worth listening to.⁶⁰ Unfortunately for Stanford Shaw did not share the same musical ideals — Stanford found his 'aesthetic ideas realized in the music of Brahms' while Shaw was a 'Wagnerite'⁶¹ — and, as Shaw disliked the mixture of the Celt and the Professor in Stanford, it was clear that Shaw would not commend his fellow countryman's music. Shaw's damning criticism of Stanford was a crucial turning point in Stanford reception in the nineteenth century. Holroyd suggests that the rivalry between the two Irishmen may have stemmed from personal reasons. Stewart, Stanford's organ teacher, had successfully exposed Vandaleur Lee, Shaw's mother's singing teacher, as an imposter in Dublin which inevitably led to his

⁵⁶ George Bernard Shaw (1856–1950) was an Irish dramatist who also worked as a critic. In that role he wrote under the pseudonym 'Corno di Bassotto'. Some of the magazines and journals which he worked for included *The Pall Mall Gazette*, *The Star* and *The World*.

⁵⁷ E. Gates: 'The Music Criticism and Aesthetics of George Bernard Shaw', *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 35/3 (autumn 2001), 64. Hereafter referred to as Gates: 'The Music Criticism and Aesthetics of George Bernard Shaw'.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁵⁹ Dan Laurence, ed.: *Shaw's Music: The Complete Musical Criticism in Three Volumes*, ii, (London: Bodley Head, 1981), 879. Hereafter referred to as Laurence: *The Complete Musical Criticism in Three Volumes*.

⁶⁰ This was not the only work by the composer to receive damning criticism.

⁶¹ Gates: 'The Music Criticism and Aesthetics of George Bernard Shaw', 66.

exile from Dublin.⁶² Whatever his motivation, it is clear Shaw's radical criticism tainted public perception of Stanford at the time.

The international success of the 'Irish' Symphony ironically marked the beginnings of changing perceptions towards Stanford and his music in England. While English society had been generous in accepting Stanford as one of their own and awarding him prestigious positions, the popular reception of Stanford's Irish compositions and his increasing output of works based on Irish melodies altered English opinion of the man. Shaw's damning criticism of Stanford's use of Irish folklorism in his compositions affected public perception of the composer.

Reception of the 'Celt' in Ireland (1888–1921)

Stanford's reputation in his native country changed over the course of his career. Stanford's fellow professor at the Royal College of Music, Sir Hubert Parry, was invited to Dublin to receive an honorary doctorate from Trinity College in 1892. At this stage in his career Parry had an impressive list of compositions and he had established himself as a leading figure in the promotion of music in England. Parry's music was also making an impression on a Dublin audience.⁶³ Interestingly Stanford's own invitation to receive a doctorate from the university did not arrive until 1921. It is difficult to account for the delay in Stanford's nomination to receive a doctorate at Trinity. In his role as Professor of Music at this university Stewart may have felt it inappropriate to nominate one of his previous pupils. News of Stanford's achievements and accomplishments had reached Irish soil as the *Freeman's Journal*, *Irish Independent* and *Irish Times* reported on many of these contemporary events. According to Klein, Stanford was the first Irish composer to study music abroad.⁶⁴ Notable musicians such as the

⁶² M. Holroyd: *Bernard Shaw, Volume 1, 1856–1898: The Search for Love* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1988), 48–49. Shaw had acknowledged the influence which Vandaleur Lee had on the Shaw household. In 1876 Shaw moved to London to join his mother and Lee.

⁶³ Parry's 'Ode on St Cecilia's Day' was performed by the Dublin Musical Society under the baton of Joseph Robinson on 13 March 1890 and received positive comments in the press. See Anon.: 'Music in Dublin', *The Musical Times* 31/566 (4/1890), 221–222.

⁶⁴ A. Klein: 'Irish Composers and Foreign Education: A Study of Influences', *Irish Musical Studies v: The Maynooth International Musicological Conference*

Robinson brothers and Stewart had all decided to stay in Ireland and develop the tradition of art music in the country. According to Greene, musicians in Dublin:

were so imbued with the stay-at-home spirit that Dublin treated them as part of the landscape. It no more occurred to them that one of their number could migrate than that the Three Rock Mountain should suddenly transfer itself to Holyhead.⁶⁵

An event in Dublin in 1888 could also have attributed to negative perceptions of Stanford at the time. A series of National Concerts at the Irish Exhibition was held at the Olympia theatre and organised by Mr Ludwig, a baritone. The intention was to include music by Irish composers, but the writer in *The Musical Times* reporting on the event commented that, although the programmes included music by Balfe and Wallace, ‘the greatest living composer from the neighbouring island, Dr. Villiers Stanford, was not represented’⁶⁶ It appears that after Stanford’s voluntary removal from Dublin some musicians no longer recognised him as an Irish composer of note.

According to Greene, Stanford had hoped for two things in his life: to be made a Fellow of Trinity College Cambridge and to receive an honorary doctorate from Trinity College Dublin.⁶⁷ Greene firmly believed that the invitation in 1921 ‘was no doubt a true endeavour to make amends’.⁶⁸ It also may have been an attempt to raise awareness of the composer in Ireland as a writer in the *Irish Independent* raised the question in 1921: ‘why ... is Stanford, the greatest living Irish musician, practically unknown?’⁶⁹ Although Greene may have felt that Stanford had deserved this award, due to his failing health Stanford could not travel to Dublin to receive the award from his native city. If Stanford had felt that he had deserved this recognition in 1892 he may have been unjustified in this belief as his music had yet to make an impact on an

⁶⁵ 1995, *Selected Proceedings: Part One*, ed. P.F. Devine and H. White (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1996), 271.

⁶⁶ Greene: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 20.

⁶⁷ Anon.: ‘Music at the Exhibition’, *The Musical Times* 29/547 (9/1888), 539.

⁶⁸ Greene: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 77.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 275.

⁶⁹ A. Mac Rompian: ‘Ireland’s Musical Soul: Its Quest by the Feis Ceoil’, *Irish Independent*, 10 May 1921, 4.

Irish audience. Although he had completed his ‘Irish’ Symphony in 1887, many of his typically ‘Irish’ compositions were not composed until after 1892. One of his greatest successes in this country was his comic opera *Shamus O’Brien*. The opera ‘made a triumphal tour of Ireland in the Autumn of 1896 ... [and this] turned the opera into a patriotic event that celebrated Ireland, the composer, the performers and Irish music’.⁷⁰ In the words of Denis O’Sullivan, ‘it appeals to the Irish that’s in me’.⁷¹ It went on to be one of Stanford’s most performed operas both during and after his lifetime. The opera’s popularity seemed to lie in Stanford’s endeavour to convey through music the conditions that prevailed in Ireland after the 1798 rebellion. The story, which an Irish audience could easily relate to, was scored using many familiar and memorable Irish melodies. Stanford’s ‘Irish’ compositions made up a considerable part of his oeuvre and these works contrasted with his more serious music. It was his ‘Irish’ compositions which ensured his success in Ireland and America. Although the duality in his compositional output demonstrates his facility and cleverness as a composer, he suffered for this at the hands of Shaw.

It was the fruits of Stanford’s dedication to the promotion and preservation of Irish folk melodies which finally brought him to public attention in Ireland. Examples of Stanford’s compositions, excluding songs, which found melodic inspiration from Irish folk melodies are listed in the following table (Table 1):

⁷⁰ J.M. Hoover: ‘Constructing Ireland: Culture and Politics in Stanford’s *Shamus O’Brien*’, *Nineteenth-Century British Music Studies*: ii, ed. J. Dibble and B. Zon (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 70.

⁷¹ Anon.: “‘Shamus O’Brien’: An Irish-American Signal Success, Mr Denis O’Sullivan of Skibbereen Descent”, *The Southern Star*, 14 March 1896, 5.

Table 1. Examples of Works by Stanford Which Were Influenced by Irish Folk Melodies

Op. no.	Title of Work	Date of Publication
28	'Irish' Symphony	1887
54	Six Irish Fantasies for Violin and Piano	1893
62	<i>Phaudrig Crohoore</i>	1895
61	<i>Shamus O'Brien</i>	1895
78, 84, 137, 141, 147, 191	Irish Rhapsodies	1902-1922
89	Four Irish Dances	1903
-	St Patrick's Breastplate	1912
-	Ulster March	1913
153	Six Irish Sketches for Violin and Piano	1918
161	An Irish Concertino	1918
-	Irish Airs Easily Arranged for piano	1922
-	Six Irish Dances	n.d.

Stanford's involvement with the publication of Irish airs and songs also brought him to public attention in Ireland. Volumes of such collections are outlined in the table below (Table 2):

Table 2. Collections of Irish Folk Melodies Published by Stanford

Title of Work	Date of Publication
Songs of Old Ireland	1882
Irish Songs and Ballads	1893
The Irish Melodies of Thomas Moore, the original airs restored	1894
Songs of Erin	1900
The Complete Collection of Irish Music as noted by George Petrie	1902-1905

Dibble believes that it was the Petrie Collection which ‘marked the climax of Stanford’s “scholarly” encounter with the Irish ethnic repertoire.⁷² However, in a letter to Graves when he offered the manuscript to the Irish Academy Stanford confided to his Irish friend that ‘Dublin has invariably shown me such a cold shoulder’.⁷³ Ireland critically reviewed the publication and a Father Brennan, of Killarney, stated that ‘the result [of appointing Stanford as editor of the collection] proved that they were extremely unfortunate in their choice’.⁷⁴ An anonymous critic in *The Irish Musical Monthly* criticised Stanford for including English airs in the Petrie Collection and condemned him for not having recognised airs which were already in the volume but under a different title.⁷⁵

It appears that there may have been some ill-feeling in Ireland towards him and perhaps by 1921 any trace of this feeling had disappeared. Stanford had helped in the promotion of the Feis Ceoil in Dublin from the outset and the committee were keen for Stanford to be associated with the new venture. Although he resigned from the presidency in 1896 as a result of his differing views from committee members, he continued to act as adjudicator for the composition classes at the Feis.⁷⁶ On his acceptance of the adjudicating position in 1915 Stanford offered to waive his fees for his services.⁷⁷ Stanford’s music appeared regularly in the feis syllabus and his editions of Irish folk music ensured the spread of Irish music. By 1921 Trinity College Dublin

⁷² Dibble: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 368.

⁷³ Stanford to Graves, 16 February 1912 in Dibble: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 369.

⁷⁴ Anon.: ‘The Complete Petrie Collection of Ancient Irish Music’, *The Irish Musical Monthly* 1/12 (2/1903), 133.

⁷⁵ Anon.: ‘The Complete Petrie Collection of Ancient Irish Music’, *The Irish Musical Monthly* 1/11 (1/1903), 121. James Culwick also dismissed Stanford’s use of Irish airs. See M. Murphy: ‘Nation, Race and Empire in Stanford’s Irish Works: Music in the Discourse of British Imperialist Culture’, *Music in Ireland 1848–1998*, ed. Richard Pine (Dublin: Mercier Press, 1998), 46–55.

⁷⁶ Stanford adjudicated the composition competition at Feis Ceoil in 1899, 1902, 1908, 1913, 1916.

⁷⁷ Letter from Stanford to Feis Ceoil Committee in: ‘Minutes of the Eighth Meeting of the Executive Committee 24th June 1915’, *Executive Committee, Finance Committee and Music Sub Committee Minute Books 1903–1929*, National Library of Ireland, MS 34.915/4.

had a new Professor of Music, Charles Herbert Kitson. Members of the board who were responsible for nominating those to receive honorary doctorates in 1921 may have felt it appropriate to offer their native musician an honorary doctorate from the university in view of his involvement in musical matters in Ireland.⁷⁸

Old-Fashioned and Obstinate (1890–1924)

In addition to his negative perception of the ‘Irish’ Symphony, Shaw found fault with Stanford’s talents in other areas including his conductorship of the Bach choir. Commenting that Stanford was ‘too thorough an Irishman to be an ideal Bach conductor ... he lacks the oceanic depth of German sentiment that underlies the intense expression of Bach’s music’,⁷⁹ Shaw’s negative criticism had a damning effect on Stanford’s career as a conductor and was in direct contrast to the positive reception which Stanford received from other critics for his conducting skills.⁸⁰ What is more ludicrous is that shortly after Stanford’s appointment as conductor of the Bach Choir, Shaw believed that Stanford would ‘supply the Celtic fire so sadly missed in the performances’ of the Bach Choir.⁸¹ Shaw’s comments on Stanford’s conducting clearly had an impact on public opinion of the Irishman’s capabilities as a conductor. Although Stanford had held many prestigious positions as conductor during his career, after Shaw’s damning review in 1890 his talents as a conductor were less in demand and his conducting engagements declined. In 1911 the committee for the 1913 Leeds Festival wished to engage some other conductors as they believed that one conductor ‘could not be in sympathy with each individual school of music represented at the Festival’.⁸² This prompted Stanford’s resignation from the position.

⁷⁸ See Anon.: ‘University Intelligence University of Dublin: Honorary Degrees Approved’, *The Irish Times*, 14 March 1921, 7 for a list of the members of the Senate of the university including list of all recipients of honorary degrees.

⁷⁹ G.B. Shaw: ‘On the Subject of Fiddling’, *Star*, 25 February 1890 in Dibble: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 217.

⁸⁰ See for example Anon.: ‘Cambridge University Musical Society’, *The Musical Times* 21/448 (6/1880), 288 for positive criticism of Stanford’s skills as a conductor.

⁸¹ Laurence, ed.: *Shaw’s Music: The Complete Musical Criticism in Three Volumes*, 373.

⁸² Leeds Festival Management Committee report 7 December 1911 in Rodmell: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 273.

Shaw, however, was not the only one who spoke negatively about his music. If one surveys reviews of performances of Stanford's works over his career, an obvious trend can be identified. Towards the latter part of his compositional career the critics commented on Stanford's reliance on orthodox forms to which he 'clung with extraordinary tenacity'.⁸³ His music has been described, among other things, as 'old-fashioned – at least a decade behind the times',⁸⁴ and lacking 'warm inspiration'.⁸⁵ What seems to carry him through was his consummate craftsmanship: 'He may not always have had things of insistent importance to say, but everything was extremely well said'.⁸⁶ Commenting on Stanford's old-fashioned trends, critics were responding to Shaw's absurd opinions of the composer and this in turn had a bearing on the way the aging composer was viewed by the public. By the turn of the century the English audience no longer recognised Stanford as a composer of merit: his period of fame had almost passed. An examination of programmes from the period reveals that his works were appearing less often in places where he had once dominated the listings. Stanford was well aware of the situation and confided in Richter: 'You know probably how things are going musically here ... Of the Englishmen of my generation next to nothing. The younger generation is excellent, ... but it should not in justice cut out entirely the men who prepared the way for them ...'.⁸⁷ This final comment reveals that Stanford felt unfairly treated because he had done so much for these rising composers in his adopted country. Although he was known for the outrageous comments which he made about his students' compositions,⁸⁸ he generously supported their music in other ways and nominated their works for performances while his own compositions

⁸³ Anon.: 'The Work and Influence of Charles Villiers Stanford', *The Musical Times* 68/1009 (3/1927), 258.

⁸⁴ Anon.: 'Music in the Provinces: Bournemouth', *The Musical Times* 58/887 (1/1917), 36.

⁸⁵ Anon.: 'The Birmingham Musical Festival', *The Musical Times* 44/729 (11/1903), 727.

⁸⁶ Anon.: 'The Work and Influence of Charles Villiers Stanford', *The Musical Times* 68/1009 (3/1927), 258.

⁸⁷ Letter of 12 November 1901 from Stanford to Richter in Dibble: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 326.

⁸⁸ E. Goossens: *Overtures and Beginners*, 80–81 in Rodmell: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 357 for examples of Stanford's comments about his student's compositions.

remained unperformed. This did not deter him from composition although many of the works from this period remained unperformed and unpublished in his lifetime, even to this day. The professor who was once in demand to write commission pieces for the great musical festivals in England was soon overshadowed by the next group of composers, which included Edward Elgar and Ralph Vaughan Williams. The programme for the Leeds Festival in 1913 saw the English school of composition represented by George Butterworth, Granville Bantock and Hamilton Harty.⁸⁹ Shaw's criticism did little to encourage performance of Stanford's works and unfortunately most of his criticism was founded on inconclusive theories and personal distaste of music associated with Brahms. In the words of Stanford: 'Music, the favourite art, declined and languished and everything became tainted with politics, wirepulling and discontent'.⁹⁰

The neglect of a more experienced composer in favour of a younger one made an impression on Stanford's circumstances, compositional direction and indeed his character. He was aware of the impact which this lack of interest in his compositions would have on his lifestyle and financial security, and his compositional output from the later years of his life reflects these issues. Work at the Royal College was diminishing due to the war, and with no commissions from festivals Stanford turned his attention to writing music with a specific market in mind, one which would guarantee a source of income for the composer. This resulted in many solo instrumental and chamber works, and in the publication of some of these works he had to sign away the royalties to ease his financial burden at the time.⁹¹ However, Stanford's relationship with other composers seems, at times, to have been influenced by circumstances which hindered the progress of his career. These relationships have been well-documented by writers in the press

⁸⁹(http://www.leeds.gov.uk/discover/discovery.asp?pageno=&page=2003110_356182278&topic=2003110_154781521&subsection=2003118_412594021 accessed 25 /09/2007).

⁹⁰ Stanford: *Pages From an Unwritten Diary*, 101.

⁹¹ Stanford signed away the royalties to Stainer & Bell for *Irish Song Cycles*, *Harvest Anthem* and *Eight Part-Songs* in 1910, *Four Four-Part songs* in 1911 and *Festal Communion Service* and *Eight Part-Songs* in 1913. See letters from Stainer & Bell Ltd. to Stanford 23 May 1910, 31 March 1911 and 27 January 1913 housed at Robinson Library, University of Newcastle. According to Rodmell: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 311 Stanford signed away the royalties for *Night Thoughts*, op.148 and *Six Pieces for Violin and Piano*, op.155.

and in scholarly works, most recently in the publications of Dibble and Rodmell. His reputation for having a quick-temper was well-known throughout England and unfortunately the reception of his music suffered as a result. The naturally polite Englishman would have found it difficult to accept Stanford's brashness. Stanford was aware of the difference between Irishmen and Englishmen and concluded that:

the cause of much of the friction between the typical Irishman and the typical Englishman always appeared to me to be easy enough to diagnose. If one Celt offends another and apologizes, the injured party does not only forgive, he entirely and completely forgets. Tempers in Ireland are quick but not bad. The Englishman does not appreciate this distinction; he may quite honestly forgive, but he never forgets. In this natural disability lies, I feel sure, in great things as well as in small, the true source of the proverbial incompatibility of the Irish and English temperaments.⁹²

News of his quarrels spread among musicians in England and this undoubtedly contributed to a decreasing interest in Stanford's music. Arguments with Parry, in his capacity of Director of the Royal College of Music, may have discouraged some timid performers from performing Stanford's compositions for fear of appearing to take sides in the ongoing quarrels. Stanford also felt neglected at times in relation to appointments. He fought tirelessly for better teaching conditions for himself at the Royal College but to no avail. One wonders why he was not made permanent at the college. Although Dibble believes that the college authorities 'could not risk a volatile personality as the head of an institution with royal patronage'⁹³ it is likely that this was also at the root of not making him permanent. Public opinion at the time may have influenced college authorities in their decision. According to George Grove:

⁹² Stanford: *Pages from an Unwritten Diary*, 101.

⁹³ Dibble: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 257.

someone said to me the other day that he [Stanford] was the most disliked man in England. He can be very disagreeable; but I have never yet seen that side of him towards myself.⁹⁴

The College stood for all things English and the promotion of English ideals, and although they had been keen to have Stanford's association at the inception of the College in 1882, it may have been felt that it was inappropriate to give Stanford, as an Irishman, a permanent position there. Perhaps this could indicate Irish prejudice at the time in England. In England Irish composers were in a minority. There may have been suspicion among the English towards an Irishman being as successful as Stanford had become in England, for Stanford had been the first Irish man appointed as a professor of music at Cambridge University. In the 1880s Stanford was not afraid to voice, in the newspapers, his opinion on matters which he felt strongly about. In many letters written to *The Times* and *The Musical Times* Stanford openly engaged in debates with other correspondents. During the summer of 1887 a series of bitter letters between Stanford and Edmund Garrett were printed in the Cambridge Review. According to Rodmell the letters 'caused quite a stir in Cambridge circles'.⁹⁵ It is most likely that news of this argument would have upset college authorities at the Royal College of Music.

Continued Popularity Across the Atlantic (1900–1914)

On the other side of the Atlantic reception of Stanford remained favourable. Stanford was fortunate enough to have forged a friendship with Horatio Parker who had visited England on occasions.⁹⁶ Parker was instrumental in introducing Stanford's Seventh Symphony to the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1912⁹⁷ and performed *Songs of the Fleet* at a male chorus concert in Philadelphia in 1914.⁹⁸ In November 1914

⁹⁴ Letter of 21 February 1892 from George Grove to Edith Oldham in Dibble: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 257.

⁹⁵ Rodmell: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 130-132.

⁹⁶ See W. Kearns: 'Horatio Parker and the English Choral Societies 1899–1902', *American Music* 4/1 (Spring 1986) 20–33. See also letters of 26 November 1901, 4 March 1902 and 5 March 1913 from Stanford to Parker, Yale University Music Library. I am indebted to Paul Rodmell for furnishing me with transcripts of material from Yale University Music Library.

⁹⁷ Dibble: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 398.

⁹⁸ Stanford to Parker, 13 January 1914, Yale University Music Library.

Parker invited Stanford to visit Yale University to receive an honorary doctorate in 1915.⁹⁹ This was a significant achievement for an Irishman at this time to receive an invitation of this kind from Yale University in recognition of his talents. It could be read, however, in a less flattering way for the Irishman. Stanford had been instrumental in securing an honorary doctorate at one of England's most prestigious institutions for his American acquaintance and Parker may have felt it appropriate to return the same favour to Stanford. To coincide with this visit to Yale, Carl Stöckel, the president of the Norfolk Festival in Connecticut, invited Stanford to conduct a concert of his own music. Unfortunately the Lusitania was torpedoed off Kinsale eight days before his own sailing to America and, as Stanford was too afraid to travel, he never received his honorary doctorate. The concert in America which was conducted by Arthur Mees was a huge success with many American newspapers commenting favourably on the work.¹⁰⁰ Stanford's proposed visit to Yale to receive his honorary doctorate and the performance of the concerto in Norfolk were reported on in the *Musical Times* and this appears to have raised the profile of the work in England.

Changing Times (1924–2007)

On Stanford's death one obituary¹⁰¹ recognised that many of his compositions remained unknown. However, the journalist hoped that this would not always be the case:

⁹⁹ Anon.: 'Occasional Notes', *The Musical Times* 56/867 (5/1915), 274.

¹⁰⁰ Anon.: 'Sir Charles Stanford's New Pianoforte Concerto', *The Musical Times* 56/870 (8/1915), 478–479. *Musical America* review in *Report of the Music Committee of the Litchfield County Choral Union*, Norfolk Historical Society and Museum, See *New York Times* review in *Report of the Music Committee of the Litchfield County Choral Union*, Norfolk Historical Society and Museum & *New York Sun* review in *Report of the Music Committee of the Litchfield County Choral Union*, Norfolk Historical Society and Museum. I am indebted to the Norfolk Historical Society for furnishing me with this material.

¹⁰¹ Anon.: 'Walter Parratt & Charles Villiers Stanford', *The Musical Times* 65/975 (5/1924), 403.

we believe that a revival of the bigger Stanford works will take place, and that it will show him to be of greater stature than was evident to most musicians during his lifetime.¹⁰²

The change in renewed interest in the Irishman's work did not happen immediately after his death, though his importance as a musician was recognised at this time. Stanford was buried in Westminster Abbey near Henry Purcell, and his gravestone reads 'A great musician.' In his teaching room at the Royal College of Music a plaque was erected by his pupils in his memory.¹⁰³ His pedagogical talents overshadowed his compositional talents in reminiscences by his students which were printed shortly after his death. Some of his music was given sporadic performances in churches and his art songs appeared at times on feis syllabi in Ireland.¹⁰⁴ After the war attempts were made in 1952 to set up a Stanford society and, while this was unsuccessful, many events were organised in his centenary year in England and Ireland.¹⁰⁵ Works which were accessible and which had not lost their charm continued to be performed, but little interest was given to performing lesser known or unpublished works.

In England Dr Frederick Hudson, who had a great love of Stanford's music, was responsible for instigating a revival of interest in the composer and his music. Beginning in the 1950s he worked tirelessly until his death to gather together all material relating to the life and music of Stanford, including copies of music and original manuscripts, into the newly formed archive which is housed at the Robinson Library at the University of Newcastle. In 1976 he donated all the items from his own personal collection to the library. This work has stimulated a renewed interest in Stanford and as a result the body of

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 403.

¹⁰³ Unfortunately there is no record at the Royal College of Music identifying those students who undertook this project.

¹⁰⁴ In 1947 his native Ireland finally recognised his genius and named a street after him in Walkinstown, Dublin while in 1985 An Post issued a stamp in his honour and a plaque was erected outside his house in Herbert Street, Dublin.

¹⁰⁵ Examples of commemorative event to celebrate the centenary of the birth of Stanford included a special Evensong at Westminster Abbey in July 1952, the programme of which was entirely made up of Stanford's compositions. See Anon.: 'Centenary of Birth of Irish Composer', *Irish Independent*, 2 July 1952, 4 while Radio Eireann in Ireland organised a concert devoted to the performance of Stanford works at the Phoenix Hall conducted by Arthur Duff.

scholarly literature concerning him has expanded in the last thirty years. The year 2002 marked the 150th anniversary of the composer's birth and saw the release of two detailed biographies.¹⁰⁶ These two scholarly works were the first to be published since an account of Stanford's life by his good friend Plunkett Greene in 1935. Critical commentaries and articles on aspects of the composer's life and music have appeared frequently in journals and books in the last decade.¹⁰⁷ The most recent initiative, the foundation of the Stanford Society, will prove instrumental in the continued promotion of the music of the composer. The Society, which held its inaugural concert in Cambridge in March 2007, hopes to foster and support the promotion of the music of Stanford through the publication of a journal and the organisation of concerts devoted to the music of this Irishman.

Stanford's music appeared in programmes for a time after his death and concerts consisting exclusively of his music were soon organised to celebrate his musical contribution. Some of Stanford's compositions, such as *The Bluebird* have remained popular since their first performance while his Anglican church music continues to be included in service listings. Other works, such as his chamber music, are worthy of a more permanent place in concert programmes.

To ensure continued recognition for his music, a complete thematic catalogue of his works is overdue and more recordings and publications of his works warranted although many projects are currently underway. The reputation of the man and musician has undergone a transformation over the course of his life and posthumously. The size and diversity of Stanford's compositions, as well as his untiring promotion of music in England, are testimony that his contribution to musical life in England deserves to be recognised.

¹⁰⁶ P. Rodmell: *Charles Villiers Stanford* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002) and J. Dibble: *Charles Villiers Stanford* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

¹⁰⁷ See P. Rodmell: 'A Tale of Two Operas: "Savonarola" and "The Canterbury Pilgrims" From Gestation to Production', *Music and Letters* 78 (1997), 77–91 & M. Allis: 'Another "48": Stanford and "Historic Sensibility"', *The Music Review* 55/2 (5/1994), 125.

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