

Charles Villiers Stanford's Experiences with and contributions to the solo piano repertoire

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Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924) has long been considered as one of the leaders of the English Musical Renaissance on account of his work as composer, conductor and pedagogue. In his earlier years he rose to fame as a piano soloist, having been introduced to the instrument at a very young age. It is no surprise then that his first attempts at composition included a march for piano in 1860.¹ The piano continued to play an important role in Stanford's compositional career and his last piano work, *Three Fancies*, is dated 1923. With over thirty works for the instrument, not counting his piano duets, Stanford's piano pieces can be broadly placed in three categories: (i) piano miniatures or character pieces which are in the tradition of salon or domestic music; (ii) works which have a pedagogical function; and (iii) works which are written in a more virtuosic vein. In each of these categories many of the works remain unpublished. In most cases the piano scores are not available for purchase and this has hindered performances after his death.²

The repertoire of pianists should not be limited to the music of European composers and publishers, like performers, are responsible for the exposure a composer's works receives. New editions of Stanford's piano music need to be created and published in order to raise awareness of the richness of Stanford's contribution to piano literature. While there has been renewed interest in the composer's life and music by musicologists and performers – primarily initiated by the recent Stanford biographies in 2002 by Dibble and Rodmell – the

¹ Originally termed Opus 1 in Stanford's sketch book it was reproduced in Anon., 'Charles Villiers Stanford', *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, 39 670 (1898), 785-793 (p. 786). See also Paul Rodmell, *Charles Villiers Stanford* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2002), p. 28 for differing opinions on the chronology of this work.

² Publishers include Banks Music Publications, Stainer & Bell Ltd. and Cathedral Music.

intention of this chapter is to highlight Stanford's talent as a writer of piano music and to give a brief outline of his piano music which is worthy of systematic study and performance.³

This chapter, therefore, seeks to provide an introductory discussion of Stanford's compositions for piano in terms of the different styles which he employed in his writing for the instrument. It will address the genres employed by the composer in his solo piano music but will exclude a consideration of his piano duets. Reception of his piano works will be examined both during his lifetime and posthumously. I will also consider how changing events in Stanford's life affected the reception of his piano music and argue that, on account of the variety of Stanford's piano music and his skilful writing for the instrument, many of Stanford's works for piano deserve a place in the repertory. When concentrating on Stanford's contribution to the solo piano repertoire, some questions are central to gaining an insight into Stanford's composition of music for the piano: What was Stanford's experience with traditional genres for the piano? What continued to attract Stanford to piano music? Who influenced his compositional style? What aspects of his piano pieces exhibit traits of Stanford as a traditionalist? Did he build upon these traditions and did he make his own contribution to the genre? And most importantly, why does most of Stanford's writing for the piano remain virtually unknown?

Reception of Stanford's piano music

Claims by Bernard Shaw and Joseph Bennett that 'Professor' Stanford was too much an academic were laid down in the later decades of the nineteenth century, a myth that has proved difficult to dispel.⁴ There is no doubt that the reception of Stanford's piano music suffered at the hands of these early critics and what is most ironic about this ill-fated reception history is that it is probable that the music itself was not examined before it was dismissed. Stanford's role as an academic and his dedication to the work of his predecessor, Brahms, made him an unsuitable candidate for British musicians to accept as a great composer

³ Jeremy Dibble, *Charles Villiers Stanford: Man and Musician* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). Hereafter referred to as Dibble: *Charles Villiers Stanford*. See also Paul Rodmell, *Charles Villiers Stanford* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2002). Hereafter referred to as Rodmell: *Stanford*.

⁴ See for example Bernard Shaw, *Music in London*, 2 vols (London: Constable & Co. Ltd, 1949), II, pp. 303-308.

of contemporary piano music. His conservative and traditional views on composition would not have helped dispel the opinions of the critics that played a defining role in the reception history of Stanford's music.⁵

Although works for the piano represent a sizeable part of the composer's output they have received little critical attention to date. And indeed one critic even stated that 'the piano works of [...] [Parry and Stanford] need not detain us long'.⁶ To date, scholars who have included references to Stanford's piano music in their studies of music in England and music in the nineteenth century have focused primarily on Stanford's *Three Rhapsodies for Piano* op.92⁷ and many writers have failed to acknowledge the corpus of his piano music which remains in manuscript.⁸ Although Stanford's forty-eight preludes for piano (op.163 and op.179) were the focus of a survey article by Michael Allis in 1994 this did not seem to generate any real interest in the composer's piano music.⁹ In addition, James Gibb's article 'The Growth of National Schools' in Denis Matthews's book *Keyboard Music*¹⁰ failed to include Stanford as a composer for the instrument although Matthews did refer to the following composers: Sterndale Bennett, Frederick Delius, E. J. Moeran, Arnold Bax, York Bowen, John Ireland and Arthur Bliss. Gibb concluded that 'the nineteenth century was a bleak one for British music',¹¹ a statement which is unfounded as there were many composers

⁵ See comments by Hueffer and Bennett in Meirion Hughes, *The English Musical Renaissance and the Press 1850-1914: Watchmen of Music* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), pp. 169-170.

⁶ John Fuller-Maitland, *The Music of Parry and Stanford* (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons Ltd, 1934) p. 24. Hereafter referred to as Fuller-Maitland, *The Music of Parry and Stanford*.

⁷ See for example Fuller-Maitland, *The Music of Parry and Stanford*, p. 36, John Parry, 'Piano Music: 1870-1914', in *The Romantic Age 1800-1914* ed. by Nicholas Temperley (Oxford: Blackwell Ltd, 1988), pp. 424-434, John Caldwell, *The Oxford History of English Music*, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), II, p. 304 & Geoffrey Self, *Light Music in Britain Since 1870: A Survey* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 154-165.

⁸ The manuscripts are housed at the Stanford archive at the Robinson Library, University of Newcastle and the British Library.

⁹ Michael Allis, 'Another "48": Stanford and "Historic Sensibility"', *The Music Review* 55 2 (1994), pp. 119-137.

¹⁰ James Gibb, 'The Growth of National Schools' in *Keyboard Music*, ed. by Denis Matthews (Penguin Books, Middlesex, 1972), pp. 259-315. Hereafter referred to as Gibb, 'The Growth of National Schools'.

¹¹ Gibb, 'The Growth of National Schools', p. 301.

actively composing for the piano in England during this period. In addition, among the composers of the English Musical Renaissance there are works that are worthy of examination and performance. In his 1972 review of *Keyboard Music* Frank Dawes was clearly disappointed that the author failed to acknowledge Stanford's greatness as a composer for the instrument as he believed that Stanford 'certainly knew how to write for the piano'.¹²

This neglect of English piano music from the English Musical Renaissance has led to negative perceptions of British piano music composed during this period. John Caldwell devoted less than one page to the composition of piano music in England during the period 1870-1914 stating that 'music for piano alone occupies only a small corner of the English musical garden at this period'.¹³ Admittedly the English Musical Renaissance did not produce vast amounts of piano music; however, there are many works by Stanford which are certainly worthy of examination and performance and which are valuable and informative examples of English piano music from the period. One critic in 1901 commended the English school of composers but suggested that members of this school of composition 'from the greatest to the least, are not at their best in writing for the pianoforte'.¹⁴ He further claimed that 'the paucity of first-rate English works published for the piano is undeniable'. The present author's work on Stanford's piano music aims to dispel this myth that piano music only occupied a small 'corner' of the English musical garden. It appears that writers were not concerned with the output of piano music by British composers during the English Musical Renaissance and this lack of interest in English piano music shown by writers in the twentieth century did little to encourage performances or publications of the music. Dramatic music and music with a literary focus seemed to interest the public more and the promotion of popular ideologies by such critics as Shaw had a negative impact on audiences at the time and future music enthusiasts.¹⁵ Without

¹² Frank Dawes, 'Book Review of Denis Matthews *Keyboard Music*, (Penguin Books, Middlesex, 1972) in *The Musical Times* 113 155 (1972), p. 560.

¹³ John Caldwell, *The Oxford History of English Music*, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), (ii), p. 304.

¹⁴ Anon., 'Miss Verne's Recital', *The Times*, 12 December 1901, p. 15.

¹⁵ See for example Shaw's writings in G.B.Shaw, *The Perfect Wagnerite* (New York: Brentano's, 1911) & Bernard Shaw, *Music in London*, 2 vols (London: Constable & Co. Ltd, 1949), I, p. 71.

the support of the writers on English musical history, old myths, which commenced with the damning criticism of Shaw along with the continued emphasis on Stanford's role as a pedagogue, did little to encourage performers of the true value of Stanford's piano music.¹⁶

Before a consideration of some of these works can take place, it will be useful to examine Stanford's introduction to the piano and to the piano literature of the German masters to whom he would remain devoted throughout his life. As Dunhill claims:

the great masters of the past were again his guides, philosophers, and friends. He owed a good deal to Schubert and Schumann, and a good deal more to Brahms. He was evidently bent on writing not for his own day, but for all days, quite oblivious of the circumstance that most of those around him were experimenting with various interesting things which might or might not survive as permanencies.¹⁷

Musical surroundings

Stanford's privileged upbringing ensured that he was exposed to standard classical repertoire from a young age. His father, John Stanford (1810-1880), was commended for his numerous appearances as a bass in Dublin musical circles.¹⁸ In his autobiography Stanford described his father as 'a fair violoncellist of no mean merit, who could tackle the Beethoven trios and sonatas without disgrace'.¹⁹ Annie Patterson noted that Stanford's mother was a 'distinguished amateur

¹⁶ See Adèle Commins, 'From Child Prodigy to Conservative Professor?: Reception Issues of Charles Villiers Stanford', in *Maynooth Musicology*, ed. by Barbara Dignam, Paul Higgins & Lisa Parker, 1 (2008), pp. 28-58 for information on issues affecting Stanford's reception history.

¹⁷ Thomas F. Dunhill, 'Charles Villiers Stanford: Some Aspects of His Work and Influence', *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 53rd Session (1926 - 1927), 41-65 (p. 51).

¹⁸ See for example *Dublin Daily Express*, 20 July 1880, p. 2 *Saunders's Newsletter*, 10 Dec. 1847, p. 2, *Saunders's Newsletter*, 18 Feb. 1848 p. 2, *Saunders's Newsletter*, 18 April 1848, p. 2, *Orchestra*, 12 Dec. 1863, p. 166, F. A. Gerard, *Picturesque Dublin, Old and New* (London, 1898), p. 407 and Rodmell, *Stanford*, p. 18 & pp. 21-23 for excerpts from reviews of performances by John Stanford.

¹⁹ Stanford, *Pages From an Unwritten Diary* (London: Arnold, 1914), p. 33. Hereafter referred to as *Stanford, Pages*.

pianist'.²⁰ Mary Stanford (1816-1892) had performed the solo part of Mendelssohn's *Pianoforte Concerto in G minor no.1* at a concert of the Dublin Musical Union,²¹ while an advertisement in *The Irish Times* for the annual amateur concert at the Antient Concert Hall in aid of the Irish Academy of Music in 1860 listed Mrs J. Stanford as one of four performers who were to play some miscellaneous works by eminent composers.²² It is likely that it was Mary Stanford who encouraged her son's interest in piano. Others also recognised his pianistic abilities and duly rewarded his talent. Although the Stanford home at no.2 Herbert Street possessed an upright piano, his great-uncle, Jonathan Henn, 'descended upon' his 'house with a full-sized grand pianoforte'.²³ The frequent existence of active music-making in the family home in addition to various musical experiences to which he was exposed nurtured a love of music in Stanford from an early age.²⁴

During his childhood years Stanford was fortunate to have received instruction in the piano from an array of proficient teachers in Dublin, many of whom had received instruction in Leipzig with Moscheles and Mendelssohn.²⁵ These teachers, who included Elizabeth Meeke,²⁶ Henrietta Flynn²⁷ and Michael Quarry,²⁸ not only ensured that

²⁰ Annie Patterson, 'Eminent Dublin Musicians: Miss Margaret O'Hea', *Weekly Irish Times*, 10 November 1900, p. 3.

²¹ J. F. Porte, *Sir Charles V. Stanford* (London: Kegan Paul, 1921), p. 7. Hereafter referred to as Porte, *Sir Charles V Stanford*.

²² Anon., 'Irish Academy of Music', *The Irish Times*, 29 May 1860, p. 1. The advertisement does not, however, list the piece(s) which she was to perform. Unfortunately no further details on Mary Stanford's musical talent were forthcoming from my research.

²³ Stanford, *Pages*, p. 5. Unfortunately as with many of the details presented by Stanford in his autobiography no date is given for this event.

²⁴ See Stanford, *Pages*, p. 6, p. 55, p. 82 & p. 86 for recollections of early musical experiences in Stanford's childhood.

²⁵ See Stanford, *Pages*, pp. 56-57, p. 71 & p. 75 for information regarding his piano instruction as a child.

²⁶ Elizabeth Meeke was Stanford's godmother and she had taken over his piano instruction at the age of seven. Meeke had studied with Moscheles. See Stanford, *Pages*, pp. 56-57 for further details on his period of instruction with Meeke.

²⁷ Henrietta Flynn was a Dublin-born pianist who had travelled to Leipzig in the early 1840s to further her musical education. Here she studied with both Mendelssohn and Moscheles and she was awarded a diploma from the newly founded conservatory of music in Leipzig. See Stanford, *Pages*, pp. 74-75 for details on his lessons with Flynn.

Stanford received a thorough grounding in piano technique, but they also introduced the young musician to a rich corpus of piano literature which included Chopin's mazurkas, works by Dussek and four-hand arrangements of Brahms's Hungarian Dances. Through such varied repertoire Stanford was equipped with a solid understanding of the compositional techniques employed by many eminent composers. In addition, Stanford's cultured surroundings allowed him to experience a wide range of fine music as he attended musical performances in Dublin and London.²⁹ On one such excursion to London in 1862 with his father, the young pianist was fortunate to receive piano instruction from Ernst Pauer who had studied piano with Mozart's son, Wolfgang. All respected as accomplished teachers and performers, these piano teachers equipped Stanford with a solid foundation in the piano.

Stanford and salon music

Domestic music-making was a common form of entertainment in the nineteenth century and played an integral role in Stanford's musical education in Dublin, and as he became proficient at the piano he began to participate in musical gatherings, performing in at least two recitals in the family home when he was only nine and eleven years old respectively.³⁰ These two concerts, held on 13 May 1862 and 6 June 1864, were reviewed by Dublin press who highlighted his skills as a pianist.³¹ While Stanford's choice of programme was indicative of the repertory played in the home by amateur pianists during the nineteenth century, it also emphasises that the young pianist had received thorough guidance in the canonical literature from his teachers which undoubtedly had a formative influence on Stanford.

According to de Val and Ehrlich, music in drawing-room settings had to be 'both effective and reasonably easy to play' and among many works suggested by de Val and Ehrlich one finds reference

²⁸ Michael Quarry was a gifted pianist and regularly gave performances in the Antient Concert Rooms. Harry Plunkett Greene, *Charles Villiers Stanford* (London: Edward Arnold, 1935), pp. 32-34 gives an account of Stanford's time with Quarry. Hereafter referred to as Greene, *Charles Villiers Stanford*.

²⁹ See Stanford, *Pages*, p. 55, p. 61, & pp. 70-71 for accounts by the young boy of performances he attended as a child.

³⁰ Dibble, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, pp. 32-33. See also Rodmell, *Stanford*, pp. 29-30.

³¹ For a review of the 1864 concert see *Orchestra*, 11 June 1864, p. 590 in Rodmell, *Stanford*, p. 29.

to Mendelssohn's *Lieder Ohne Worte*, one of which Stanford performed as a child.³² In later years Stanford described his home as a 'great port of call for some very interesting visitors', many of whom he entertained on piano;³³ and it is clear that the young boy was accustomed to performing in salon concerts. During each of John Palliser's visits to the Stanford household in the 1860s, Stanford performed one of Bach's preludes and fugues for his visitor.³⁴ In 1870 Stanford earned a gold sovereign from his soon-to-be colleague at Cambridge University, William Sterndale Bennett, for performing all of the English composer's Preludes and Lessons op.33 from memory.³⁵ Although Stanford was eighteen by the time of this performance, it is likely that he may have performed this set or indeed one set of Bach's Preludes and Fugues from memory at an earlier age. Many details, however, regarding Stanford's childhood performances are absent from records so it is difficult to discount or prove this. The existence of this performance of Sterndale Bennett's thirty Preludes and Lessons is not dissimilar to performances by childhood prodigies in Europe, one example being Fanny Hensel Mendelssohn who had performed all of book one from Bach's Preludes and Fugues by the age of twelve. Other accounts of Stanford's performances in informal settings do exist;³⁶ however, the two aforementioned events are worth noting as Stanford himself later completed two sets of preludes for the piano: op.163 and op.179.

In addition to taking a leading role as soloist, Stanford accompanied his father singing. In his autobiography Stanford recounted the difficulty he had in this role on one occasion, when his 'very juvenile fingers could never get over the keys quick enough for his [John Stanford's] singing of "Is not His word like a fire?" from

³² Dorothy de Val & Cyril Ehrlich, 'Repertory and Canon', in *The Cambridge Guide to the Piano*, ed. by David Rowland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 117-134 (p. 118).

³³ Stanford, *Pages*, p. 65.

³⁴ Stanford, *Pages*, p. 66. It is unclear the number of times which Palliser visited the Stanford home.

³⁵ William Sterndale Bennett (1816-1875) was Professor of music at Cambridge University during Stanford's time as musical director of the Cambridge University Musical Society. In addition Stanford's father was acquainted with Bennett.

³⁶ See Greene, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, p. 9 & pp. 33-34 for further examples of Stanford's involvement in informal music-making as a child.

Mendelssohn's *Elijah*.³⁷ These early performance opportunities on the piano surely instilled a love of the instrument in the young boy. Sigismund Thalberg, with whom Stanford had been fortunate to receive a piano lesson in 1862, acknowledged that while much musical entertainment had taken place away from the home, the greater part of musical amusement took place within the family circle with music on the piano.³⁸

In later years Stanford continued his involvement in informal musical settings and both attended and gave performances at a party in Leipzig, in the houses of such eminent musicians as Marion Scott and Paul Victor Mendelssohn Benecke.³⁹ Stanford also hosted private concerts with the popular title 'At Homes'.⁴⁰ Stanford's familiarity with the intimacy of such musical gatherings helps us understand the nature of some of his compositions which are suitable for such entertainment. Music performed in private concerts in the early nineteenth century was often 'semi-classical'.⁴¹ The works bore an array of fanciful titles,

³⁷ Stanford, *Pages From an Unwritten Diary*, p. 32.

³⁸ Quote in Edward Francis Rimbault, *The Pianoforte, its Origins, Progress and Construction*, (London, 1860), pp. 159-160 in David Rowland, 'The Piano Since c.1825' in *The Cambridge Guide to the Piano*, ed. by David Rowland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp.40-56 (p. 49).

³⁹ Other guests at Marion Scott's party included Dunhill, Bliss, Harold Darke, Howells and Gurney. See Greene, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, p. 113. Scott (1877-1953) was a violinist and pianist who studied composition with Stanford at the Royal College of Music. She was a noted performer in London musical circles, having formed 'The Marion Scott Quartet'. Paul Victor Mendelssohn Benecke (1868-1944), grandson of Felix Mendelssohn, was senior fellow of Magdalen College and a prominent pianist in Oxford musical circles during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries performing regularly at the Oxford Musical Club. This particular event was also attended by Joseph Joachim and pianist Fanny Davies. See Susan Wollenberg, 'Three Oxford Pianistic Careers', in *The Piano in Nineteenth-Century British Culture*, ed. by Therese Ellsworth & Susan Wollenberg (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 235-261 (p. 249).

⁴⁰ Stanford gave little information on informal music settings in his home in his autobiographical writings. However, Percy Grainger noted that he performed in at least four settings hosted by Stanford. The dates for these 'At Homes' are 6 July 1904, 12 July 1907, 11 July 1912 and 11 July 1913. See Anne-Marie Forbes, 'Grainger in Edwardian London', *Australian Music Research*, 5 (2000), pp. 1-16 (p. 6). Greene also details a party which was given at Stanford's home at Lower Berkeley Street at which Sybil Eaton, Leonard Borwick and Plunkett Greene performed: Greene, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, p. 276.

⁴¹ Arthur Miuton, 'Parlour Music', *American Speech*, 13/4 (1938), 255-262 (p. 255).

sometimes exotic, suggesting different moods and emotions, people and places. Of Stanford's piano works only three bear poetic titles: *Une Fleur de Mai*, *Night Thoughts* and *Scenes de Ballet*. Stanford's practice of including the genre in the title of the work, outlining his preference for the traditional, may have been an indication of his desire to elevate the tradition of salon music-making in Britain, while maintaining a musical content which would make them accessible to amateur musicians. While Shaw claimed that 'Mr Stanford is far too much the gentleman to compose anything but drawing-room or classroom music', this biting criticism, reminiscent of Wagner's diatribes against Mendelssohn, is clearly unfounded.⁴² Stanford's piano music displays qualities which ensure that it should be treated as more than 'semi-classical' in design. Arguably there are piano compositions and also some songs by Stanford which are suitable to the salon context and also which fills a social and financial need. As with much of the serious music baptised in a serious salon context – Schubert, Brahms and even Mendelssohn lieder being obvious examples – much of Stanford's salon music is worthy of performance in more formal settings. It not only demonstrates the composer's elegant workmanship, his clear handling of form, his treatment of harmony and imaginative use of motivic development, but also redresses the misconception that the piano music of the English Musical Renaissance was only worthy of a cursory glance.⁴³ The simple form of many of the works in this category of composition demonstrates that he was able to shape his musical ideas into relatively small works.

Stanford's interest in the piano and piano technique

As a child Stanford received thorough grounding in piano technique and in later years his own technique on the instrument was commended.⁴⁴ Although many details are omitted from Stanford's autobiography, *Pages from an Unwritten Diary*, it is interesting to note that he devoted much space to commentary on different pianists and their technique on

⁴² *Shaw's Music: The Complete Musical Criticism in Three Volumes*, ed. by Dan Laurence, 3 vols (London: Bodley Head, 1981), II, p. 69. Hereafter referred to as Laurence, *Shaw's Music*.

⁴³ John Caldwell, *The Oxford History of English Music*, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), II, p. 304.

⁴⁴ See Greene, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, p. 33 & p. 85.

the instrument.⁴⁵ As a pianist he himself understood the potential of the instrument and in his role as professor of composition at the Royal College of Music he insisted that all of his students become proficient keyboard players.⁴⁶ The expressive capabilities of the instrument fascinated him greatly and this undoubtedly contributed to his continued interest in writing for the instrument.⁴⁷ In addition, Stanford feared that many composers did not exploit the full range of the piano, preferring to write music which remained predominantly in the middle three octaves of the instrument.⁴⁸ Many of Stanford's own compositions for the piano exploit the full expressive range of the instrument in a Beethovenian attempt to achieve an array of different tone colours.

In view of Stanford's interest in piano technique, many of his pieces would be suitable as pedagogical material. For example, *Ten Dances for Young Players* op.58 (1894) was dedicated to his two children Geraldine and Guy, aged eleven and nine years respectively in 1894. Stanford's composition of these miniatures, with the inclusion of 'young players' in the title, is reminiscent of Schumann's *Album for the Young* op.68 and Tchaikovsky's *Album for the Young* op.39. Stanford's ten traditional dances in the set give students the experience of playing in different meters while at the same time experiencing dance music from a variety of European countries.⁴⁹

Later works for children by Stanford would clearly appeal to the child's imagination in their use of child-friendly titles from *Six Sketches in Two Sets* such as 'The Bogie Man' and 'The Golligwog's Dance'. Most creative of all his pieces for children is *A Toy Story* in which each piece in the story has an evocative title; some examples being: 'Alone', 'The Broken Toy' and 'The Mended Toy'. Although not a substantial part of his piano output, Stanford's works for the younger pianist make an

⁴⁵ See Stanford, *Pages*, pp. 56-60, p. 108, & p. 200 and Stanford, 'William Sterndale Bennett', *Interludes, Records and Reflections* (London: John Murray, 1922), pp. 161-209 (p. 163) for Stanford's comments on a selection of pianists and their technique.

⁴⁶ Geoffrey Self, 'Coleridge-Taylor and the Orchestra', *Black Music Research Journal*, 21/2 (2001), 261-282 (p. 262).

⁴⁷ Stanford, *Musical Composition: A Short Treatise for Students* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1911), p. 92. Hereafter referred to as Stanford, *Musical Composition*.

⁴⁸ Stanford did not refer to any specific composers in relation to this comment.

⁴⁹ The ten traditional dances included Valse, Galop, Morris Dance, Polka, Mazurka, Saraband, Gigue, Branle, Minuet and Passepied.

important contribution to children's musical literature. It is clear from Stanford's autobiography that his own lessons as a child were filled with 'classical' works which were aimed at developing his technique. Stanford believed that 'it is important that in music, as in other branches of education the teaching should be on the lines of interest and of charm, and not on those of mechanism: mechanism revolts; interest and charm never', which could also be attributed to his philosophy of music education in general.⁵⁰ Stanford's pedagogical music exposes the young player to many different challenges and provides experience in a range of musical expression, dance meters, rhythmic figurations and changes in hand positions. While the works would serve as studies in alberti bass, broken chords, contrapuntal playing and independence of hands, melody is of primary focus throughout the pieces, for Stanford maintained that 'melody is essential to all work if it is to be of value'.⁵¹ Stanford's pedagogical music offers children an opportunity to have a greater understanding of music by allowing them to achieve a competent level of artistic understanding and technical facility.

Although the piano works for children from 1918-1920 were not assigned an opus number, Stanford would have recognised the financial potential of composing works of this nature.⁵² Published with Joseph Williams, a company which 'had a strong interest in educational music', the two sets of *Six Sketches* were not unlike other works published by this publishing house.⁵³ Remaining piano miniatures were published with Stainer & Bell, the firm with which Stanford had strong connections in the later decades of his life.

Local centre examinations took flight in England in the late nineteenth century and Stanford's participation in the Associated Board

⁵⁰ Stanford, 'Some Notes Upon Musical Education', in *Interludes Records and Reflections* (London: John Murray, 1922), pp. 1-17 (p. 4).

⁵¹ Stanford, 'Some Recent Tendencies in Composition', in *Interludes Records and Reflections* (London: John Murray, 1922), pp. 89-101 (p. 97).

⁵² See Rodmell, *Stanford*, p. 311 and letters from Stainer & Bell Ltd. to Stanford 23 May 1910, 31 March 1911 and 27 January 1913 housed at Robinson Library, University of Newcastle for examples of works which Stanford signed away royalties.

⁵³ Peter Ward Jones, 'Williams, Joseph', in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* 2nd edition ed. by Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 2002), pp. 410-411 (p. 411).

bears testament to his interest in the promotion of music education.⁵⁴ Although Stanford's role as a pedagogue is largely associated with his work as professor of composition, he also took a keen interest in the musical education of the younger generation, as exemplified in the many lectures and articles he wrote on children's musical education.⁵⁵ In his role as pedagogue Stanford was keen to educate all ages through his compositions and his rich programming of concerts under his direction.

David Wright believes that the spread of the examination system in England gave colleges power 'to shape musical taste nationally and across the Empire'.⁵⁶ Stanford's participation in this enterprise is testament to his interest in the promotion of music across all strands of society in addition to raising the standards of music-making and music education across the country. Works included on the syllabus 'effectively determined what repertoire pupils should study, and so – by omission – what they would be less likely to encounter'.⁵⁷ Interestingly, a range of Stanford's compositions were chosen as test pieces on the graded examinations of various examination boards and his *Six Sketches* from 1918 featured most prominently of all his piano compositions.⁵⁸ Regrettably, the fact that many of Stanford's other works were never chosen for inclusion on the examination syllabi ensured that some students were less likely to be exposed to his piano music.

Early posthumous reception of Stanford focused on his pedagogical talents. Guy Stanford believed that 'too much emphasis [...]

⁵⁴ See for example Anon., 'The Associated Board of the R.A.M. and R.C.M. for Local Examinations in Music', *The Musical Times* 39/670 (1898), p. 785 for a list of eminent professors associated with the initiative of which Stanford was one.

⁵⁵ Stanford, 'Music in Elementary Schools', in *Studies and Memories* (London: Archibald Constable & Co., 1908), pp. 43-60 and Stanford, 'Some Notes Upon Musical Education', in *Interludes Records and Reflections* (London: John Murray, 1922), pp. 1-17.

⁵⁶ David Wright, 'The South Kensington Music Schools and the Development of the British Conservatoire in the Late Nineteenth Century', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 130/2 (2005), 236-282 (p. 258). Hereafter referred to as Wright, 'The South Kensington Music Schools'.

⁵⁷ Wright, 'The South Kensington Music Schools' p. 258.

⁵⁸ Examination of syllabi included those of Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, Trinity College London, Leinster School of Music and the Royal Irish Academy of Music.

[was] given to his teaching and far too little on his composition'.⁵⁹ If Stanford was noted as a fine educationalist, why then do examining boards in England and Ireland fail to identify the pedagogical value of his piano literature and include his music on examination syllabi? A wide-spread recognition of Stanford's talent as a writer of pedagogical music, is long overdue and it is time to award it the full prominence it deserves. In addition to their carefully chosen titles, the technical and musical challenges these works present to the young pianist make his music suitable for the standard repertoire employed by teachers and for inclusion on examination syllabi in both Ireland and England. For example the last appearance of a work by Stanford on the syllabus for the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music was in 1991. Although Stanford may not have consciously set out to reform piano pedagogy in England in the early decades of the twentieth century, his contributions to this sphere contributed to the culture of piano playing among the youth.

Stanford as performer and virtuosic piano compositions

During his time as an undergraduate at Cambridge University, Stanford featured prominently as piano soloist and chamber musician. It was through his initial involvement with the Cambridge University Musical Society that he rose to fame as a solo pianist and chamber musician, performing a *Nachtstück* by Schumann and a waltz by Heller for his debut performance on 30 November 1870 only two months after his entry as an undergraduate to Cambridge University.⁶⁰ As well as performing much of his own chamber music, his repertoire was clearly dominated by the German school of composition which would have a lasting effect on his own piano compositions. Although Stanford's piano playing was received positively in the press, no reviews profess him a virtuosic pianist. The *Cambridge Chronicle* did comment, however, that 'this gentleman is so great a favourite as a pianist that his appearance

⁵⁹ Letter from Guy Stanford to Susan Stanford 7 November 1952 quoted in Frederick Hudson, 'Stanford, Sir Charles Villiers', in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, edited by Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan Publishers, 1980) pp. 70-74 (p. 72).

⁶⁰ Anon., 'Charles Villiers Stanford', *The Musical Times* 39 670 (1898), 785-793, (p. 788). Which *Nachtstück* or waltz by Schumann and Heller was performed by Stanford is unclear.

was hailed with delight'.⁶¹ More importantly and perhaps most interestingly, his playing in the capacity of soloist, chamber musician or accompanist was never criticised and this helped to promote him as a young emerging pianist. Unfortunately, Stanford gradually discontinued from performing in public after his undergraduate years. Sterndale Bennett had been the last composer pianist from England to forge a reputation for himself as a performer across Europe and England. Although Bennett was Stanford's idol it seems that he did not want to emulate the Englishman in this capacity. After taking up the professorship at Cambridge University in 1856, Bennett ceased composing and performing out of the necessity to provide for his family. Although Bennett was noted as one of the finest pianists in Europe at the time, had he wanted to forge a career as a pianist he could not have survived in this capacity if he had remained in England. Stanford also had the responsibility of providing for his family and he succeeded in doing this through his roles as composer, conductor and pedagogue. Against this background, it was unlikely that Stanford could have become a concert pianist. Solo roles as pianist diminished after his undergraduate years at Cambridge. In addition, after his marriage to Jennie Wetton in 1878 Stanford's appearances were as accompanist and as a chamber musician. His role as pianist was, however, responsible for allowing him exposure in England to ensure success in these other capacities. Although the 1870s and 1880s were Stanford's most prolific years in terms of public appearances on the instrument, he did continue to make sporadic performances in the role of accompanist after this period.

As an accomplished pianist Stanford understood the demands of the instrument and it is clear that some of his compositions for piano were written with the virtuosic pianist in mind. The dedication of some of his works to eminent performers ensured at least one public performance. Eminent pianists to whom Stanford dedicated piano pieces include: Raoul de Versan (c.1875), Marie Krebs (1875), John Fuller-Maitland (1876), Fanny Davies (1894), Percy Grainger (1904), Moritz Rosenthal (1913) and Harold Samuel (1921). Other pianists including Leonard Borwick, Agnes Zimmermann, Adela Verne and Dora Bright programmed his piano music. Bright, Verne and Davies were

⁶¹ *Cambridge Chronicle*, 6 June 1874, 8 in Rodmell, *Stanford*, p. 39.

involved in projects aimed at proclaiming the greatness of piano compositions by English composers in 1892, 1901 and 1902 respectively. Unfortunately, there are few records which suggest that these pianists continued to include his piano compositions in their programmes. In her study on the piano sonata in Britain Lisa Hardy suggests that performers 'became inundated with compositions, all competing for an airing'.⁶² Other viable issues such as the tensions between Stanford and Parry may have accounted for the lack of interest shown by students in performing Stanford's piano works at the college. Other performers may have been more inclined to support the music of the next generation of rising stars in England, Elgar, Dale and Bowen, to name but a few. As Stanford's music was suffering at the hands of the critics in England, this would not have won him many favours with pianists attempting to forge reputations for themselves. The programmes of some piano recitals outlines the continued programming of works by Beethoven, Liszt, Brahms and Schumann, and this demonstrates a view expressed by Plantinga in 2004:

there is no denying that a great deal more piano music of real consequence was written in the first half of the nineteenth century than in the second. The decline of the piano as a vehicle for the musical thoughts of the leading composers seems to have paralleled the general fall from grace of sonata-type pieces' [...] 'a general feeling in this arena, after that shorter keyboard works of Schumann, Liszt, and many others, such associations were already an old story.'⁶³

This trajectory did not hold well for the promotion of Stanford's piano music in the twentieth century and may well explain the lack of interest in English piano music of the period.

An example of one of Stanford's more virtuosic compositions is his *Three Rhapsodies for Piano* op.92 which was dedicated to Percy Grainger. The work is moderately technically challenging: wide stretches, widely-spaced chords and the emphasis on arpeggiated

⁶² Lisa Hardy, *The British Piano Sonata 1870-1945* (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2001), p. 4.

⁶³ Leon Plantinga, 'The Piano and the Nineteenth Century', in *Nineteenth-Century Piano Music* ed. by Larry Todd (Routledge, New York, 2004), pp. 1-15 (p. 13).

figures demand an agile hand. However, a convincing performance of the trilogy demands a skilful interpretation of the many mood changes throughout, from the portrayal of darkness to the more passionate and expressive sections of music. By far his longest composition for solo piano, this trilogy exhibits many characteristics of Stanford's expert handling of the piano in addition to his absorption of traditional elements of composition and demonstrates the influence of Schumann, Brahms, Schubert and Beethoven. In a tribute to his former teacher Vaughan Williams commented on Stanford's susceptibility to the music of other composers and noted: 'at times his very facility led him astray. He could, at will, use the technique of any composer and often use it better than the original'.⁶⁴

Stanford's penchant for romantically inflected harmony also is evident throughout the set. A good example of this is found in the passages of augmented sixths employed in a Brahmsian manner. Although many standard progressions are traditionally employed, Stanford's harmonic palette, which includes a range of diminished seventh chords and chromatically altered chords, adds elements of musical colour and dramatic tension to the work. This harmonic palette is extended to include some modal progressions, for example VI – flat VII major – IV, which may reflect his parallel engagement with Irish folk melodies. Stanford's fondness for romantic inflected harmony is also evident in his use of a mediant pedal in the E flat section of *Capaneo*, which is reminiscent of the mediant pedal found in Brahms's Symphony no.2 in D major. Both passages involve the same chordal pattern, alternating from Ib to VIIIdim7, as the following musical examples illustrate. Stanford was familiar with the work having conducted the Philharmonic Society's performance of the symphony in March 1884, while the orchestra of the Royal College of Music performed it in 1887.

⁶⁴ Ralph Vaughan Williams, 'Charles Villiers Stanford' in *National Music and Other Essays*, ed. by Michael Kennedy (London: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 195-198 (p. 195).

Example 1. Brahms: Symphony no.2 in D major, bars 183-186

Clarinet in A

Bassoon

Horn in D

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

Contrabass

p

p sempre

p sempre

p sempre

p sempre

p sempre

Example 2. Stanford: Capaneo, bars 153-155

8^{va}

8^{va}

Although some traditional means are employed for modulatory purposes, it is interesting that the composer's expert handling of chromatic chords leads to quick shifts in key-centre reminiscent of Wagner and Brahms in *Francesca* (bars 40-41). One tonal device which

appears to aid organisation in terms of the tonal design of the work is Stanford's penchant for mediant relations, which is reminiscent of Beethoven, Brahms and Schubert. Many modulations in *Capaneo* move to keys a third apart (bars 12 & 120).

Whether intended or not by the composer, the third rhapsody shows many similarities to the works of Johannes Brahms. The heroic element found in Brahms's Rhapsodies of op.79 and the rhapsody of op.119 both seem to have left their mark on Stanford's *Capaneo*. The opening block chord texture in C major, reminiscent too of Brahms's Piano Sonata no.1 in C major, calls to mind the opening of Brahms's rhapsody from op.119. Both opening themes hug their tonic closely with a feeling of extensively hovering around the one key. When compared to Brahms's Sonata op.1 in C major, there are similarities in texture, but here also closer connections in terms of the melodic contour. The contour of the melodic strand, from e' to a', is shared by both, as noted in the following examples:

Example 3. Stanford: *Capaneo*, bars 1-4

Allegro

Example 4. Brahms: Rhapsody op.119, no.4, bars 1-7

Allegro risoluto

Example 5. Brahms: Piano Sonata no.1, bars 1-5



Unity of musical ideas is achieved through Stanford's use of a musical trinity in his three rhapsodies. The inspiration for Stanford's *Three Rhapsodies* came from Dante Alighieri's *La Commedia*, or *Divine Comedy* as it is sometimes referred to. Dante had written the poem in honour of the Holy Trinity and this idea of a trinity re-emerges as a motif throughout the story. Divided up into three sections, the action takes place in three different settings, namely Hell, Purgatory and Paradise. In each section there are thirty-three cantos (excluding the introduction) and he uses a three-line rhyming scheme. The verse form created by Dante was named 'terza rima' and is a three-line stanza which uses chain rhyme. In particular scenes words are repeated three times for effect. Dante is helped on his journey by three guides: Virgil, Beatrice Pontinari (1265-1290) and St Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153).

A keen scholar of classics with an interest in the poetry of such poets as Robert Browning, Robert Bridges, Walt Whitman and Alfred Tennyson, Stanford had a keen literary sense and his songs and choral music bear testament to this. Stanford clearly realised the potential of replicating the literary trinity as a musical trinity throughout this work and there are many examples where Stanford is clearly influenced by the number 'three'. As a starting point he chooses to represent three characters, one in each rhapsody: Francesca, Beatrice and Capaneo. In *Francesca*, the opening introduction is extended and varied in three ways when it returns at the end of the work. In *Capaneo* many motivic ideas are presented three times and some recurring motifs are founded on three notes (bars 11-12 & 174-175). The interval of a third appears to be an important melodic cell used in the set and ideas are founded on this interval. In *Capaneo*, for example, some of the thematic material is based on the interval of a third (bars 1-2). Stanford's fondness for

mediant-based modulations also runs throughout the set. In *Capaneo* also the sections often end with three repeated chords as noted in the following musical example:

Example 6. Stanford: *Capaneo*, bars 88-90



An interesting textual reading is detected in Stanford's choice of keys for the three rhapsodies; namely A minor, B major and C major, forming an upward cycle of keys. This tonal ascent closely mirrors the poetic path in Dante's narrative which begins in hell, travels through purgatory and concludes with an ascension into heaven.

Stanford the traditionalist

One thread woven through much of Stanford's piano music is his association with the past. Stanford's knowledge of a variety of classical forms is evident in his piano compositions in which his use of baroque, classical and romantic models and romantic harmonic language indicate that he had a profound reverence for the composers of earlier generations. Dyson, Dunhill and de Versan have all commented on Stanford's engagement with the music of the past.⁶⁵ Dunhill noted that 'in the large amount of purely instrumental music which Stanford achieved he was seldom tempted to desert classical traditions. He clung to the orthodox forms with extraordinary tenacity'.⁶⁶ Fuller-Maitland shared a similar view, believing that Stanford was content with the 'classical patterns as they stood'.⁶⁷ Dyson shared a similar view:

⁶⁵ See for example R. C. de Versan, 'Professor Villiers Stanford', *The Irish Times*, 23 March 1896, p. 6.

⁶⁶ Thomas F. Dunhill, 'Charles Villiers Stanford: Some Aspects of His Work and Influence', *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 53rd Session (1926 - 1927), 41-65, (p. 49).

⁶⁷ Fuller-Maitland, *The Music of Parry and Stanford*, p. 32.

'Stanford had an encyclopaedic knowledge of music, and this alone was a notable experience to those who came in contact with it. He had also been in close touch with all the finest traditions and all the most gifted exponents of his time'.⁶⁸

Stanford's exceptional knowledge of different musical trends was acquired through the various activities in which he engaged throughout his work as a musician. As a pedagogue he was always keen to further his own knowledge. Through his visits to Germany, Italy and France he kept abreast of contemporary compositional developments and in his role as conductor he programmed a variety of works with the variety of orchestras and choirs with whom he worked. An examination of many of the works Stanford conducted and directed during his lifetime offers a definite image of a composer with an extensive knowledge of a broad range of music. Indeed, the range of music performed by Stanford on the piano also illustrates this point. And the range of traditional genres and dance forms chosen by Stanford clearly exhibit a broad interest in a variety of styles from a range of musical periods (see figure 1.)

The inclusion of at least one work written in a genre synonymous with composers of the past may have been a deliberate attempt by Stanford to add to the rich body of piano literature. Stanford may have believed 'that he could make even grander use of the devices' used by the composers, and contributed to a developing European tradition.⁶⁹ Chopin, for example, is represented by the ballade, mazurka and nocturne; Schumann by the novelette; Brahms by the intermezzo and rhapsody; Mendelssohn's presence is clearly felt in his *Lieder Ohne Worte*; and the 19th century revival of interest in the music of J.S. Bach is represented here by the Baroque dances.

⁶⁸ George Dyson, 'Charles Villiers Stanford', *Music and Letters*, 5 3, (1924), 193-207 (p. 198).

⁶⁹ See Charles Rosen, 'Influence: Plagiarism and Inspiration', *Nineteenth Century Music* (1980), 87-100 (p. 90) for his discussion on the question of influence of the music of Haydn on Mozart.

'tread on the heels of his predecessors.'⁷⁵ Other composers have exhibited and still exhibit traits of the music of past masters in their compositions. Although Stanford is faulted for this he should be commended for his successful utilisation of past ideas.

Brahms was noted for his use of plagal cadences, one firm favourite being IVc-I, a progression which permeates much of Stanford's writing. Examples of final plagal cadences can be found in Stanford's Prelude nos. 29 & 36 op. 179. In addition, Brahmsian dense textures are widespread throughout much of the piano music. Some are noted in the following musical examples:

Example 7. Stanford: *Five Caprices* no. 1 bars, 80-84

The musical score for Example 7, Stanford's *Five Caprices* no. 1, bars 80-84, is presented in four systems. The first system (bars 80-81) features a treble clef with a melodic line and a bass clef with a rhythmic accompaniment. The second system (bars 82-83) continues the melodic line with a slur. The third system (bars 84-85) shows a more complex texture with multiple voices in both hands. The fourth system (bars 86-87) concludes with a final cadence in the bass clef.

It is also clear, however, that inspiration was drawn from a number of other sources. Stanford's Prelude no.15 from op.163 shares the same

⁷⁵ Brahms, *Letter to Clara Schumann*, March 1870 in Korsyn, 'Towards a New Poetics of Musical Influence', p. 15.

harmonic structure as the opening as Schubert's *Ellens Dritter Gesang III* D839 op.52 no.6:

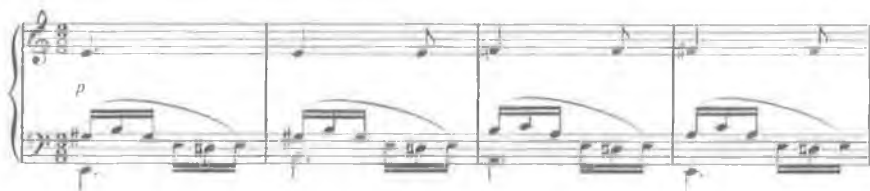
Example 8. Stanford: Prelude no.15 op.163, bars 1-3

Example 9. Schubert: *Ellens Dritter Gesang III* D839 op.52 no.6, bars 3-4

Beethovenian figurations are also evident in many of the piano pieces and some of Stanford's preludes are reminiscent of passages from Beethoven's *Pathetique* and *Appassionata* Sonatas. Some textual features in Stanford's music are especially reminiscent of Mendelssohn. Stanford's *Intermezzo* from *Six Concert Pieces* op.42 shares some similarities with Mendelssohn's *Lieder Ohne Worte*, for example a soprano melody is accompanied by an arpeggio-like figure in the alto line over a tonic pedal in the bass. Stanford extends the idea further by putting the arpeggio idea in the tenor line which closely resembles Mendelssohn's development:

Example 10. Stanford: *Six Concert Pieces Intermezzo* op.42 no.4, bars 47-50

Example 11. Mendelssohn: *Lieder Ohne Worte* op.19 no.2, bars 29-32



Moving away from the Germanic tradition, Chopin's Piano Sonata op.35 no.2 provides the inspiration for both Prelude no.22 op.163 and Prelude no. 44 op.179:

Example 12. Chopin: Piano Sonata no.2 op.35 III, bars 1-4

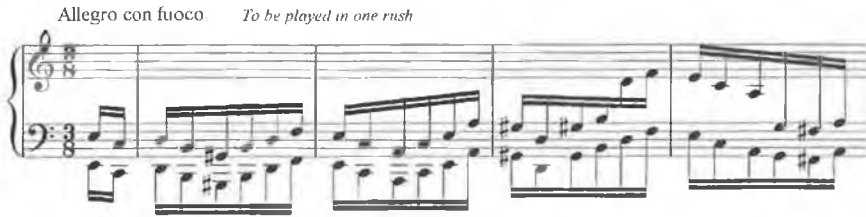


Example 13. Chopin: Piano Sonata no.2 op.35 IV, bars 1-3



Example 14. Stanford: Prelude no.22 op.163, bars 1-4



Example 15. Stanford: Prelude no.44 op.179, bars /1-4

Stanford's modelling on the work by Chopin raises the issue of why Stanford borrowed from Chopin and not other composers?⁷⁶ In the case of Charles Ives's borrowings, Burkholder suggests that the borrowed music may have served a musical function.⁷⁷ For Stanford, using the opening of Chopin's 'Funeral March' as the basis for the opening passage of prelude no.22 obviously held some musical significance, particularly as he dedicated the work to one who had died during the war.

Stanford's use of traditional forms and genres in his writing suggests a reflective nostalgia. Riley attributes reflective nostalgia to a sense of loss and longing.⁷⁸ Stanford revered the music of the Leipzig school of composition and it was widely known that Stanford disapproved of many of the modern advances in composition. His conservative views on modern trends in composition are evident in an address to the Royal Musical Association, entitled 'On Some Recent Tendencies in Composition'.⁷⁹ Although he took a very traditional stance on the use of consecutive fifths, over-crowding modulation and the neglect of diatonics in favour of chromatics, he did, however, admit that he welcomed innovations in music which made for the

⁷⁶ I have chosen the term 'modelling' as suggested by Burkholder's typology of musical borrowings. See Peter J. Burkholder, 'The Uses of Existing Music: Musical Borrowing as a Field', *Notes*, 2nd series, 50 (1994), 851-870 p. 854. Hereafter referred to as Burkholder, 'The Uses of Existing Music'.

⁷⁷ Burkholder, 'The Uses of Existing Music', p. 864.

⁷⁸ Matthew Riley, *Edward Elgar and the Nostalgic Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 16.

⁷⁹ Charles Villiers Stanford, 'On Some Recent Tendencies in Composition', *Proceedings of the Musical Association 47th Session (1920-1921)*, pp. 39-53. Hereafter referred to as Stanford, 'On Some Recent Tendencies'.

enhancement of beauty.⁸⁰ In Stanford's case such reflective nostalgia not only signalled his musical roots in the Leipzig school, but also embraced longing for his homeland which is evident in his use of Irish idioms, modal progressions, Irish dance rhythms and Irish dances in his *Four Irish Dances* op.89.

Conclusion

Stanford was noted as one of the leaders of the English Musical Renaissance along with such composers as Hubert Parry and Alexander MacKenzie. Prior to the emergence of these leading musicians in England, few English composers had established international reputations. From the 1890s onwards some critics began to classify Stanford's music as being old-fashioned and dull and lacking inspiration, but many were following the lead given by the Wagnerite Shaw in his outrageous criticism of the Irish composer.⁸¹ Stanford himself felt an allegiance to those composers whose music he had studied and performed. He wrote, 'the road (of orthodoxy) may be sometimes dusty and heavy, but it was made by the experience of our forefathers, who found out the best direction for ensuring our progress'.⁸² Although he believed himself to be a Progressive, he only welcomed 'every innovation, however unfamiliar, provided that it makes for the enhancement of beauty'.⁸³

Stanford's strong associations with the Leipzig school of composition ensured that he continued to assimilate the trends of the German tradition which remained with him throughout his compositional and pedagogical career. However, Stanford was not the only one of his generation to promote traditional forms used by European composers. Anthony Milner believed this to be problem among many of the British composers of the period and wrote:

At the beginning of the 20th century many composers were still more attracted to Continental models than to developing individual styles. Imitation of leading composers has of course always featured in

⁸⁰ Stanford, 'On Some Recent Tendencies', p. 39.

⁸¹ See for example Laurence, *Shaw's Music*, II, pp. 59-60, p. 309, p. 427, p. 515, p. 613, pp. 876-877, & p. 879.

⁸² Stanford, *Musical Composition*, p. 164.

⁸³ Stanford, 'On Some Recent Tendencies', p. 39.

musical development but where Britain was concerned such imitation, delayed the return to a native tradition.⁸⁴

Harold Rutland's claim that Stanford did not show any true feeling for the piano does not hold up in any serious examination of Stanford's writing for the piano.⁸⁵ There are many passages in the Irish composer's piano music which exhibit a sense of melodic beauty, while many of his compositions bear witness to the work of a composer who clearly understood the instrument. When John Parry wrote that Stanford had a 'disdain for virtuoso display'⁸⁶ he obviously failed to appreciate the many Lisztian passages throughout Stanford's oeuvre for piano. Certainly, this is not the main focus of Stanford's writing for piano; however, his expert handling of motives and melodic content certainly make up for this apparent deficiency as noted by Parry. Contrary to Parry's criticism, the mixture of the two different facets to Stanford's piano writing is commendable. According to Hermann Klein, 'Stanford's versatility was extraordinary, and, once he had gained his equilibrium after an early predilection for Brahms, there was no school or style, old or new, that he could not easily assimilate and reproduce without plagiarism'.⁸⁷

The appeal of composing works for solo piano in preference to other instruments was cultivated in Stanford's youth and his early exposure to a rich body of music served him well. With few compositional models in England or Ireland it is no wonder that he assimilated the trends of European composers in his piano compositions. Stanford's use of genres and forms by highly respected composers was a clear attempt to seek a place in the lineage of serious composers. His place as a composer of piano music was obviously significant to him and his continued composition of pieces using traditional forms and genres demonstrated his assimilation of European models while also confirming his status as an accomplished composer.

⁸⁴Anthony Milner, 'British Music – a Misunderstood Tradition? 3. The 20th Century', *The Musical Times* 133/1788 (1992), 71-72 (p. 71).

⁸⁵Harold Rutland, 'Notes and Comments', *The Musical Times* 98/1368 (1957), 74-75 (p. 74).

⁸⁶John Parry, 'Piano Music: 1870-1914', in *The Romantic Age 1800-1914* ed. by Nicholas Temperley (Oxford: Blackwell Ltd, 1988), p. 429.

⁸⁷Hermann Klein, *Musicians and Mummies* (London: Cassell & Company Ltd.), p. 302.

In addition to such lineage, it also confirms that he was completely devoted to the Romantic aesthetic. Contrary to past reception histories his preference for writing in this vein should not continue to taint the reception and promotion of his piano music. On the contrary, his historicism makes his piano music accessible to musicians and concert-going audiences. In this climate of re-evaluation so richly reopened by Rodmell and Dibble, the significance of Stanford's piano music demands reassessment. New recordings and complete editions of his piano music are long overdue, for in terms of compositional output and diversity of genre, Stanford's contribution to the romantic piano tradition makes him one of the leading composers of piano music during the English Musical Renaissance.

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