

The Idea of Art Music in a  
Commercial World,  
1800–1930

# *Music in Society and Culture*

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The Idea of Art Music in a  
Commercial World,  
1800–1930

Edited by  
*Christina Bashford and*  
*Roberta Montemorra Marvin*

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**David Wright** was formerly Reader in the Social History of Music at the Royal College of Music, London. He has published widely on aspects of the social, cultural and concert life of music in late-nineteenth- and twentieth-century Britain. Subjects have ranged across the ethos, funding and programming decisions of the London Sinfonietta to the significance exerted on British musical life by the grade examination system in *The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music: A Social and Cultural History* (Boydell, 2013). He also wrote on the Glock and Ponsonby Proms seasons in *The Proms: A New History*, a volume he co-edited (Thames & Hudson, 2007). Nineteenth-century topics he has addressed include the historiography of late Victorian British music and the South Kensington Music Schools.

## Bibliographic Abbreviations

AMZ	<i>Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung</i>
Bourdieu, <i>Distinction</i>	Pierre Bourdieu, <i>Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste</i> (1979), trans. Richard Nice (London: Routledge, 1984)
Cooper, <i>The House of Novello</i>	Victoria L. Cooper, <i>The House of Novello: Practice and Policy of a Victorian Music Publisher, 1829–1866</i> (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003)
DN	<i>Daily News</i> (London)
EB	<i>Edmonton Bulletin</i> (Alberta, Canada)
Ehrlich, <i>The Music Profession in Britain</i>	Cyril Ehrlich, <i>The Music Profession in Britain since the Eighteenth Century: A Social History</i> (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985)
Ehrlich, <i>The Piano</i>	Cyril Ehrlich, <i>The Piano: A History</i> , rev. edn (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990)
GMM	<i>Gazzetta musicale di Milano</i>
GMO	<i>Grove Music Online</i>
ILN	<i>Illustrated London News</i> (London)
JAMS	<i>Journal of the American Musicological Society</i>
JRMA	<i>Journal of the Royal Musical Association</i>
Levine, <i>Highbrow/Lowbrow</i>	Lawrence W. Levine, <i>Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America</i> (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988)
LHJ	<i>Ladies' Home Journal</i>
MP	<i>Morning Post</i> (London)
MT	<i>Musical Times</i> (London)
<i>Music and British Culture</i>	Christina Bashford and Leanne Langley, eds., <i>Music and British Culture, 1785–1914: Essays in Honour of Cyril Ehrlich</i> (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)
<i>Music and Performance Culture in Nineteenth-Century Britain</i>	Bennett Zon, ed., <i>Music and Performance Culture in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Essays in Honour of Nicholas Temperley</i> (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012)
<i>The Musician as Entrepreneur</i>	William Weber, ed., <i>The Musician as Entrepreneur, 1700–1914: Managers, Charlatans, and Idealists</i> (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004)
MW	<i>Musical World</i> (London)
NCBMS 3	<i>Nineteenth-Century British Music Studies</i> , vol. 3, ed. Peter Horton and Bennett Zon (Farnham: Ashgate, 2003)

ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> [online resource]
PMG	<i>Pall Mall Gazette</i> (London)
Russell, <i>Popular Music</i>	Dave Russell, <i>Popular Music in England, 1840–1914: A Social History</i> , 2nd edn (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997)
SB	<i>Richard Wagner, Sämtliche Briefe</i> , ed. Gertrud Strobel and Werner Wolf, 22 vols to date, ongoing (Leipzig: Dt. Verlag für Musik, 1967–)
Scott, <i>The Singing Bourgeois</i>	Derek B. Scott, <i>The Singing Bourgeois: Songs of the Drawing Room and Parlour</i> , 2nd edn (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001)
Scott, <i>Sounds of the Metropolis</i>	Derek B. Scott, <i>Sounds of the Metropolis: The Nineteenth-Century Popular Music Revolution in London, New York, Paris, and Vienna</i> (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008)
SEP	<i>Saturday Evening Post</i>
SR	<i>Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art</i> (London)
SSD	<i>Richard Wagner: Sämtliche Schriften und Dichtungen</i> , 16 vols (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, [1911])
Weber, <i>The Great Transformation of Musical Taste</i>	William Weber, <i>The Great Transformation of Musical Taste</i> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008)
Weber, <i>Music and the Middle Class</i>	William Weber, <i>Music and the Middle Class</i> , 2nd edn (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004)

## Conductors and Self-Promotion in the British Nineteenth-Century Marketplace

*Fiona M. Palmer*

TODAY, serving the globalized and media-driven society of our time, major orchestral institutions strategically control commercial ‘message-making’ on behalf of their conductors. Now the function of conductor is synonymous with leadership, celebrity, power and the embodiment of interpretative wisdom – a change of image that came about in continental Europe during the second half of the nineteenth century following the deaths of Wagner and Brahms.<sup>1</sup> In Britain, however, it was only as recently as the twentieth century that this personality-driven and centralized concept of the conductor’s role became normalized. This chapter focuses on two previously underexplored individuals and examines the commercial aspects surrounding conductors and their roles as mediators of art music during this time of change. It probes the ways in which two prominent musicians in Britain, Julius Benedict (1804–85) and Frederic Cowen (1852–1935), exploited, valued and promoted the function of conductor within their careers, thereby revealing a clearer sense of the extent to which they led and shaped their own progress as conductors. The ways in which their overall contributions mirrored current traditions, while also contributing to the genesis of the function itself within the scope of the commercial marketplace in which they operated, provide insights into the changing status of conducting as an art.

Prior to World War I, conductors in Britain generally promoted their own careers and depended heavily on perceptions of musical pedigree, productive networks, projected personality and, in some cases, showmanship to do so.<sup>2</sup> John

<sup>1</sup> See José Antonio Bowen and Raymond Holden, ‘The Central European Tradition’, *The Cambridge Companion to Conducting*, ed. José Antonio Bowen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 114–33, at p. 114; see also Jeremy Siepmann, ‘The History of Direction and Conducting’, *The Cambridge Companion to the Orchestra*, ed. Colin Lawson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 112–25.

<sup>2</sup> Only in 1915 were Sir Thomas Beecham and Sir Henry Wood enrolled as contracted stars by Columbia UK; David Patmore, ‘Selling Sounds: Recordings and the Record Business’, *The Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook, Eric Clarke and Daniel Leech-Wilkinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 120–39, at p. 125. For the particular circumstances of the promotion and development of orchestral concerts at the Queen’s Hall (1893–), including Henry Wood’s role as conductor and the later establishment of the London Symphony Orchestra (1904) and Beecham Symphony Orchestra (1909),

Spitzer has shown that similar trends prevailed in the context of nineteenth-century America, where, for orchestras, 'selling the conductor' was not a common marketing strategy.<sup>3</sup> The agency of the recording industry came to play a vital role in the commodification of conductors. However, not until 1913 was the 'first celebrity orchestral recording' produced;<sup>4</sup> and, as Robert Philip has shown, not until the late 1920s did the orchestral recording industry blossom.<sup>5</sup>

In Victorian Britain, the notion of the conductor as a focal and high-status artistic leader emerged gradually. The practices and expectations of visiting European composer-conductors in London (including Weber, Spohr, Mendelssohn, Berlioz, Wagner, Strauss and Mahler) broadened horizons. Stretching across the mid century and into the 1900s, the significant contributions of conductors including Michael Costa (1808–84), Charles Hallé (1819–95), August Manns (1825–1907) and Hans Richter (1843–1916) have been the subject of detailed research and evaluation.<sup>6</sup> Each of these men was intimately connected to established institutions and benefited from the increased autonomy this afforded them. Yet there were many other individuals in Britain whose portfolios of work included high-profile conducting engagements.<sup>7</sup> Both Benedict and Cowen forged portfolio careers within which their work and status as conductors constituted a substantial element. Although celebrated in their day, their involvement in this aspect of

see Leanne Langley, 'Joining Up the Dots: Cross-Channel Models in the Shaping of London Orchestral Culture, 1895–1914', *Music and Performance Culture in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, pp. 37–58.

<sup>3</sup> John Spitzer shows that American conductors were also mainly generalists in this period in 'Marketing the American Orchestra', *American Orchestras in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. John Spitzer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), pp. 219–24, at p. 221.

<sup>4</sup> The recording featured the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Artur Nikisch, performing Beethoven's Symphony No. 5; Jerome F. Weber, '7. Repertory and Marketing', in Arthur W. J. G. Ord-Hume, et al. 'Recorded Sound', *GMO* [accessed 8 July 2014].

<sup>5</sup> Robert Philip, 'Historical Recordings of Orchestras', *The Cambridge Companion to the Orchestra*, pp. 203–17, at p. 206.

<sup>6</sup> Examples include Robert Beale, *Charles Hallé: A Musical Life* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); Christopher Fifield, *True Artist and True Friend: A Biography of Hans Richter* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); John Goulden, *Michael Costa, England's First Conductor: The Revolution in Musical Performance in England, 1830–1880* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015); Stephen Johnson, 'The English Tradition', *The Cambridge Companion to Conducting*, pp. 178–90; Michael Kennedy, *The Hallé Tradition: A Century of Music* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1960); Kennedy, *The Autobiography of Charles Hallé, with Correspondence and Diaries* (London: Paul Elek, 1972); Kennedy, *The Hallé 1858–1983: A History of the Orchestra* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982); and Michael Musgrave, 'Changing Values in Nineteenth-Century Performance: The Work of Michael Costa and August Manns', *Music and British Culture*, pp. 169–91.

<sup>7</sup> As one example, Duncan Barker has examined the conducting activities of Alexander Campbell Mackenzie (1847–1935) in 'Another String to his Bow: The Composer Conducts', *NCBMS* 3, pp. 195–205.

musical life has now been largely forgotten. Both men lived into their eighties and had long careers, which taken together spanned the period from Queen Victoria's accession (in 1837) to World War I; the demands of sustaining a profile into old age can be traced in each case. Exploring the approaches these men took to self-promotion and examining the synergies between their conducting and other musical undertakings sheds new light on the internal and external factors that underpinned the musical marketplace in Britain.

German-born (Sir) Julius Benedict became a naturalized Englishman whose activities encompassed metropolitan and regional conducting engagements in opera house and concert hall. A composer of large-scale works, he also produced biographical writings on his esteemed associates Weber and Mendelssohn and edited Beethoven's piano music and Weber's operas. One of Benedict's pupils, the second subject of this discussion, was the widely travelled English virtuoso pianist and composer (Sir) Frederic Hymen Cowen, who forged multiple and important associations with key institutions as conductor. He too wrote biographies of 'great composers' but also appealed to a wider market through his popular ballads. His engagements included conducting roles for the London Philharmonic Society and Promenade Concerts, Manchester's Hallé Orchestra and Liverpool's Philharmonic Society.

Neither of these musicians can be categorized as what Spitzer has termed an 'entrepreneur conductor' of an 'enterprise orchestra'.<sup>8</sup> In Spitzer's definition, 'entrepreneur conductors', many of whom were also composers, operated in Europe and the United States taking the responsibility and the risk for the financial underpinning of their orchestras. Enjoying their heyday between the 1840s and the 1880s, these enterprise orchestras were those 'created, led and managed by a single man' and were box-office dependent. In a marketplace within which the consumption of orchestral music was tethered to social aspiration, the contrastingly composite nature of the work of those I term 'portfolio conductors' (such as Benedict and Cowen, for example) affords evidence of an awareness of the need for personal 'branding'. Each of these musicians serviced Britain's concert life during a period of transition in orchestral activities.<sup>9</sup> Their successive careers provide a sense of the evolving experiences of portfolio conductors, men whose profiles and earnings emanated from multiple aspects of their careers as musicians and connected them with myriad events, societies and other

<sup>8</sup> John Spitzer, 'The Entrepreneur-Conductors and their Orchestras', *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 1 (2008), 3–24.

<sup>9</sup> Orchestral standards were problematic due to scarcity of training provision, limited rehearsal time and pervasive deputizing practices. One reason for this was, as David Wright has shown, that Britain lagged behind its Continental neighbours and lacked established orchestras populated by players trained within a national conservatoire system; David Wright, 'The South Kensington Music Schools and the Development of the British Conservatoire in the Late Nineteenth Century', *JRMA* 130 (2005), 236–82, at pp. 267–9. In 1855 and 1877 alike, Wagner found his attempts to glean expressive, interpreted performances from the London Philharmonic Society unsatisfactory; see, for example, Johnson, 'The English Tradition', pp. 181–2.

institutions. Without the benefit of a permanent set of handpicked players with whom to develop an enduring rapport, how constrained were Benedict and Cowen, as peripatetic part-time conductors, in defining and maintaining their value and popularity and what methods did they use to that end? To what extent did they depend on the projection of their individuality? The ways in which they chose to maintain a presence as conductors via a portfolio of work in London and the provinces reveals much about the availability of opportunity and the dynamics of supply and demand.

## Conductors and Orchestras in the Marketplace

From the 1820s onwards in Britain, when baton-led conducting began to develop, the craft of interpretation was on a slow burn. Dazzling instrumental showmanship, increasing numbers of concert-giving institutions, the advent of larger concert halls and the intensified technical demands of the repertoire saw control and virtuosity transfer from the keyboard-player and lead violinist into the hands of the conductor. José Antonio Bowen and Raymond Holden have traced the evolution of conducting within the coherent central European tradition, attributing the trigger for the shift from composer-conductor to virtuoso conductor to the deaths of Wagner and Brahms.<sup>10</sup> In Britain this transferral of control was piecemeal.

This lack of homogeneity stemmed from the limited and generally closed nature of high-profile conducting opportunities in Britain. Orchestral life in Britain orbited around London with opportunities for conductors elsewhere available via seasonal provincial festivals and institutions, such as the Liverpool Philharmonic Society (founded 1840) and, after Hallé's death, the Hallé Concerts Society (founded 1858). In terms of conductor supply, the field of able candidates available to philharmonic societies, such as those in London and Liverpool, was limited, and the jobs often went to musicians of status whose conducting credentials were secondary considerations. In Britain, the lack of systematized training for conductors contributed to the continued reliance on foreigners, some of whom took up permanent residence. The British preference for conductors with explicit foreign connections was a provocative issue, which presented an obstacle to native aspirants.

At mid century the British concert marketplace was dominated by immigrant and visiting musicians of central European origin. The superior value placed on German musical training and culture cascaded through the activities of both immigrant and Continentally trained British practitioners. Two Germans, the woodwind- and string-player Manns (who, from 1855, was based

<sup>10</sup> Bowen and Holden, 'The Central European Tradition', p. 114; and Raymond Holden, *The Virtuoso Conductors: The Central European Tradition from Wagner to Karajan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005). In discussing the significance of Wagner's conducting practices and ideologies, Holden profiles the careers of Von Bülow, Nikisch, Felix Weingartner, Richard Strauss, Bruno Walter, Otto Klemperer, Wilhelm Furtwängler and Herbert von Karajan.



with the orchestra at London's Crystal Palace, with its honed structures and carefully enforced standards) and the pianist Hallé (who, from 1849, dominated Manchester's musical life), exploited the opportunities offered by their relatively stable institutions, to raise standards. Between 1846 and 1854, another continental European, the Italian conductor Costa, pioneered new understandings of the conductor's sphere of control, with a particular emphasis on disciplinary matters. His autocratic management style encompassed enforcement of contractual demands and alterations to orchestral layouts and rehearsal structures.<sup>11</sup>

A number of examples dating from the final decades of the century provide evidence of the direct prejudice in the press with regard to native origin and intrinsic merit. In 1880, Benedict's successor as conductor in Liverpool was the German composer Max Bruch. He had gained more votes from the Society's directors than Cowen, who was also shortlisted for the post. The public backlash against the appointment of Bruch – a foreigner rather than a native musician – stressed Benedict's nearly fifty years of contributions to English musical life and his consequent acceptance as a 'naturalized Englishman'.<sup>12</sup> That same year, when on the retirement of Costa the Leeds Music Festival Committee appointed the thirty-eight-year-old native Englishman Sir Arthur Sullivan as conductor, the press expressed strong approval.<sup>13</sup> Issues of xenophobia also revealed themselves at the time of Hallé's sudden death in 1895. His unexpected demise raised particular issues of succession planning for his eponymous Manchester orchestra, and the *Bristol Mercury* attempted to settle the score. The newspaper stated that Hallé's career advantages stemmed from his German origins and asserted that the free-market approach to recruiting conductors could lead to deliberate exclusion of talented local practitioners.<sup>14</sup> It was against this complex tapestry of values, prejudices and inequity of opportunity that the conducting profession evolved in Britain.

### Forging Careers

Today, Benedict is mainly remembered for his biographies of Mendelssohn (1850) and Weber (1881), for his opera *The Lily of Killarney* (1862) and for his association with Jenny Lind.<sup>15</sup> This summary alone embeds direct connections with idols of the British musical imagination and with ideals associated with purity and rational recreation (via Lind, Mendelssohn and oratorio).<sup>16</sup> A Stuttgart-born

<sup>11</sup> Costa's influence with regard to revised practices has been reassessed in detail in Goulden, *Michael Costa*.

<sup>12</sup> 'Music at Liverpool', *MW*, 17 April 1880, p. 248.

<sup>13</sup> P. Teazle, 'An Englishman at Home', *MW*, 21 February 1880, pp. 121–2.

<sup>14</sup> 'Sir Charles Hallé' [editorial], *Bristol Mercury and Daily Post*, 28 October 1895.

<sup>15</sup> The main secondary sources for Benedict's life and career are Nicholas Temperley, 'Benedict, Sir Julius', *GMO* [accessed 22 August 2013]; and Clive Brown, 'Benedict, Sir Julius (1804–1885)', *ODNB* [accessed 22 August 2013].

<sup>16</sup> For further context see, for example, George Biddlecombe, 'The Construction of a Cultural Icon: The Case of Jenny Lind', *NCBMS* 3, pp. 45–61; Biddlecombe, 'Secret



Jewish banker's son, knighted in 1871, Benedict was a sought-after pianist, composer, teacher, conductor, editor and author. During the course of his lengthy career his Continental origins came to be absorbed into a perception of him as one of England's own. Yet, paradoxically, his lasting presence was founded on his formative connections – the authority of the past and the veneration of his German origins – and these provided him with a special niche in the British musical world.

Prior to his arrival in London in 1835, Benedict had conducted in opera houses in Vienna and Naples. As with his contemporary Costa, Benedict's formative conducting activities in London centred on work in opera houses. In 1836 he conducted *opera buffa* at the Lyceum Theatre, and between 1838 and 1848 he was musical director at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane. The veteran conductor and impresario Sir George Smart praised Benedict, on behalf of the Mendelssohn Scholarship Committee, for his role as conductor of Jenny Lind's debut performance in Mendelssohn's *Elijah* at the Exeter Hall in December 1848.<sup>17</sup> Benedict was now ideally positioned to assume his subsequent role as accompanist and 'fixer' ('contractor') for Lind's American tour. After directing most of the concerts in her tour (1850/1), he returned to London. From November 1852, he was naturalized and enjoyed the full rights of citizenship. Visible connections with eminent performers, conductors and composers elevated Benedict's status. In 1852, he became conductor at Her Majesty's Theatre; in 1855, he founded his Vocal Association conducting its concerts at the Crystal Palace for ten years. The provincial festival was a primary feature in his diary and between 1845 and 1878 he conducted every Norwich festival.<sup>18</sup> Between 1867 and 1880, he conducted the Liverpool Philharmonic Society. In the combined roles of conductor-composer he produced oratorios and cantatas commissioned by and featured at music festivals. These included his cantatas *Undine* (1860) and the *Legend of St Cecilia* (1866) for Norwich and his oratorio *St Peter* (1870) and cantata *Graziella* (1882) for Birmingham. Overall, Benedict's profile was that of a well-connected and distinguished generalist. Reviews of his conducting suggest

Letters and a Missing Memorandum: New Light on the Personal Relationship between Felix Mendelssohn and Jenny Lind', *JRMA* 138 (2013), 47–83; Colin Eatock, *Mendelssohn and Victorian England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009); and James Garratt, 'Britain and Ireland', *Nineteenth-Century Choral Music*, ed. Donna di Grazia (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2013), pp. 335–67.

<sup>17</sup> Royal Academy of Music, London [GB-Lam], McCann Collection 2004.1446, Box So6, copy of resolution from Smart (22 December 1848) on behalf of the Mendelssohn Scholarship Committee; includes: '[...] that he [Benedict] be requested to accept the Committee's congratulations on the success of this Performance, in which he so ably filled the duties appertaining to his important position'. Smart's status and contribution is evaluated in John Carnelley, 'Sir George Smart and the Evolution of British Musical Culture 1800–1840', Ph.D. diss., Goldsmiths College, University of London, 2008.

<sup>18</sup> This festival was founded in 1824. Benedict followed Smart and was succeeded by Alberto Randegger and then by Wood.

that he continued the tradition of understated control, implying economical gestures and unobtrusive body language.<sup>19</sup>

Cowen, like Benedict, was an accomplished all-round musician. Born into a Jewish family in Kingston, Jamaica, Cowen was based in England from the age of four until his death.<sup>20</sup> His integration into London's musical society was facilitated by family connections: Cowen's father held positions as treasurer to Her Majesty's Theatre, and later at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane, and as Private Secretary to William Ward (1817–85; who became the first Earl of Dudley). Cowen's prodigious talent as juvenile composer and pianist was showcased via performances and publications; he took lessons with Benedict (piano), John Goss (harmony and organ) and Tiplady Carrodus (violin) – associations that cemented his credentials. His establishment as a significant performer and composer took place during his teenage years when he was packaged through the advocacy of high-status musical connections and Ward's aristocratic patronage.<sup>21</sup> During Cowen's early teenage years his study in Leipzig (where his teachers included Ignaz Moscheles, Carl Reinecke and Moritz Hauptmann) and in Berlin (where he studied with Friedrich Kiel, Wilhelm Taubert and Carl Tausig) enabled him to capitalize on the British predilection for Continental connections and training.<sup>22</sup> Nursing hopes of becoming an opera conductor, he had served his apprenticeship in the opera house, overseen by Costa, primarily working as *maestro al piano* and accompanist for James Henry Mapleson's touring opera company and at Her Majesty's Theatre. His connection with star performers, such as the French mezzo-soprano Madame Zélia Trebelli-Bettini (with whom he toured Scandinavia in 1876 and 1877), further embedded his image as an accomplished pianist.

Cowen's image and popularity were enhanced by his work internationally – experience which indicated that he was sought after and able to compete in the larger arena of continental Europe and the British Empire using his specialist knowledge to enhance British musical life. The 1870s included trips to

<sup>19</sup> The details of the manner of his conducting remain reliant on scraps from contemporary criticism, which are all too often opaque in meaning – a frustrating example is 'Benedict conducted with all his usual ability', stated within the review 'Liverpool Philharmonic Society's Concert', *Liverpool Mercury*, 29 January 1873, p. 6.

<sup>20</sup> The most thorough source of information on Cowen, drawing on the main secondary biographical sources and focusing on his compositional output, is Christopher J. Parker, 'The Music of Sir Frederic H. Cowen (1852–1935): A Critical Study', 2 vols, Ph.D. diss., University of Durham, 2007.

<sup>21</sup> See Charles Willeby, *Masters of English Music* (London: Osgood, 1893), pp. 214–15, for a comment on the relationship between Ward and Cowen.

<sup>22</sup> The main secondary sources of information on Cowen's life and music are George Biddlecombe, 'Cowen, Sir Frederic Hymen (1852–1935)' *ODNB* [accessed 22 August 2013]; Audley C. Chambers, 'Frederic Hymen Cowen: Analysis and Reception History of his Songs for Voice and Piano', Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 2007; Frederic Cowen, *My Art and My Friends* (London: Edward Arnold, 1913); Jeremy Dibble and Jennifer Spencer, 'Cowen, Sir Frederic Hymen', *GMO* [accessed 22 August 2013]; and Parker, 'The Music of Sir Frederic H. Cowen'.

France, Germany, Italy, America and Scandinavia.<sup>23</sup> He emphasized his Nordic associations in his successful Symphony No. 3 'Scandinavian' (1880), a work that was performed to great acclaim across Europe and in New York and that took Cowen to Germany, Hungary and Austria in the early 1880s.<sup>24</sup> Further to his success in Australia in the late 1880s he impressed audiences at the Vienna Exhibition in 1892 with his ability to gain a nuanced interpretation of the colours of his music from the resident orchestra.<sup>25</sup> As Christopher Parker has highlighted, Cowen's compositional output ranged from hundreds of the lighter-end popular ballads, pantomime, ballet, comedietta and operetta to art songs, (six) symphonies, operas, cantatas, oratorios, piano concertos and chamber works.<sup>26</sup> Notwithstanding the extensive travelling he undertook championing his compositions, his native profile constrained his opportunities at home, including his conducting.

A key example of Cowen's astute exploitation of demand for his conducting services is found in his engagement by the Victoria Government of Australia between August 1888 and March 1889 as director of 263 concerts for the Melbourne Centennial Exhibition (with the explicitly stated high payment of £5,000). (The opportunity made him unavailable to adjudicate for the Welsh Eisteddfod and for his Philharmonic Society engagements too.) The *Illustrated London News* for 15 September 1888 carried depictions of the sumptuous and densely populated opening of the Melbourne Exhibition, including one of Cowen conducting musicians to the rear of the stage.<sup>27</sup> The ways in which his role was publicized, both in Australia and at home, provide a key example of his awareness and exploitation of the commercial value of his skills.<sup>28</sup> On his return to London,

<sup>23</sup> An example of the promulgation of his spreading fame is found in a paragraph in *MW*, 18 January 1879, p. 41, titled 'Mr F. H. Cowen at Angers', reproduced from the *Maine-et-Loire Journal d'Angers* and reporting on the twelfth popular concert in Angers. Here Cowen is described as a remarkable conductor, accompanist for Mapleson's troupe, and the already famous author of the five-act opera *Pauline*, the performance of which was greeted with unanimous shouts of 'bravo' by the French audience.

<sup>24</sup> Cowen spoke of the inspiration for his third symphony in 1898: 'It was an effort to produce in music the ideas and emotions suggested by the stern mountains and gloomy forests, the silent fjords and sounding shores of Scandinavia; as viewed not merely in their physical aspects, but also in the light of the heroic traditions, and fantastic legends which make that country so attractive to men of our kindred race'; 'A Chat with Mr Frederic Cowen', *Musical Opinion and Music Trade Review*, June 1898, p. 607.

<sup>25</sup> 'This Morning's News', *DN*, 27 June 1892, p. 7.

<sup>26</sup> Parker, 'The Music of Sir Frederic H. Cowen', vol. 2, Appendix 3: 'A Catalogue of Works of Frederic Hymen Cowen 1852–1935', pp. 351–504.

<sup>27</sup> 'Opening of the Melbourne Exhibition', *ILN*, 15 September 1888, p. 303.

<sup>28</sup> For a study of the marketing of Cowen prior to and during his work in Australia, see Jennifer Royle, 'Preparing to Exhibit: Frederick [sic] Cowen in the Public Press Preceding Melbourne's Centennial International Exhibition, 1888–89', *Context: Journal of Music Research* 14 (1998), 53–62.

the rumour mill included the front-page suggestion that Cowen would be knighted in 1889 for his services to the British Empire.<sup>29</sup>

His conducting work was enduring and international, but his mode of negotiation and his artistic agendas ruffled feathers. Cowen sought to champion British music through his conducting engagements nationwide. At the London Philharmonic Society he was dedicated to including 'one work from an English pen' in every concert,<sup>30</sup> a campaigning mentality which may have stymied his advancement as an interpreter of the central European repertoire.<sup>31</sup> His non-specialist profile meant that men such as Hans Richter and Henry Wood (1869–1944), who focused solely on conducting (i.e. as 'career conductors'), upstaged him. From the 1880s onwards, Cowen's orchestral conducting career began to gather momentum; he remained a key figure in the conducting business until around 1914; and thereafter he was at the helm for the grandiose Handel Festivals.<sup>32</sup> Cowen deliberately fought to ensure that conducting activities did not fill his calendar entirely, however – his vocation as composer was vital to him.<sup>33</sup>

In succeeding Sullivan in 1880 as conductor of the London Promenade Concerts, Cowen's emergence as a genuine contender in the field of orchestral conducting was unambiguous. While as conductor Benedict had not been strongly attached to London's core orchestral activities, Cowen was now gaining acceptance among influential circles. In June 1880 the *Athenaeum* proclaimed that Cowen was 'well-known as a thoroughly qualified conductor'.<sup>34</sup> His subsequent conducting engagements included the (London) Philharmonic Society (1888–92 and 1900–07), the Hallé Orchestra (1895–99) until he was replaced by Richter, the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra (1896–1913), the Bradford Festival Choral Society (1897–1915) and Bradford Permanent Orchestra (1899–1902); he also conducted the Scottish Orchestra for a decade (1900–10) and was conductor of festivals including Scarborough (1899), and the triennial Cardiff (1902–10) and Handel festivals (1902–23).

On Cowen's death in 1935 the *Musical Times* obituary observed, 'Had Cowen never played or written a note, he would deserve to be remembered as one of the most hard-working conductors of his time. It was he alone who stood out against the supremacy of the foreigner.'<sup>35</sup> This is in stark contrast to the analysis of the

<sup>29</sup> 'Our Kith and Kin', *PMG*, 1 March 1889, p. 1.

<sup>30</sup> London, British Library [GB-Lbl], RPS MS 288, Directors' Minute Book 1887–92, fols 36r–37r.

<sup>31</sup> Parker emphasizes this point in 'The Music of Sir Frederic H. Cowen', vol. 1, pp. 293–4.

<sup>32</sup> Parker makes the point that Cowen's conducting career was highly significant in its day and that it is underestimated by posterity in *ibid.*, vol. 1, chapters 1 and 7.

<sup>33</sup> Cowen, *My Art*, pp. 283–4.

<sup>34</sup> 'Musical Gossip', *Athenaeum*, 26 June 1880, pp. 833–4. The reference to Cowen was made in relation to the prospectus for the Saturday Evening Orchestral Concerts in St James's Hall (November–December).

<sup>35</sup> 'Frederic Hymen Cowen / January 29, 1852–October 6, 1935', *MT*, November 1935, p. 1008.

generalist nature of Benedict's contribution to British musical life in the two-page article in the *Musical Times* on 1 July 1885, just twenty-seven days after Benedict died. Emphasizing his distinction in multiple branches of the profession including conducting, teaching and composing, and as a solo pianist and an accompanist,<sup>36</sup> the obituary imparts a strong sense that, by 1885, conductors were expected to be more focused on and identifiably competent within their role than Benedict, deeply entrenched in past practices, had been. Fifty years later, Cowen's career moved much closer to these expectations and demonstrated attachment to and authority in the art of conducting through institutional and repertorial ties and through his publication of pedagogical views of the conductor's art. In their shrewd negotiation of useful networks and publicity, both Benedict and Cowen worked to maximize their individual statuses and profiles. It is to their self-promotion, and the particular impact this had on their reception as conductors, that we now turn.

### The Power of Association

In the furtherance of success, a demonstrable network of close associations with persons of high standing and influence was a vital tool. Obvious patronage by monarchy, aristocracy, and merchant classes needed to be combined with constructive relationships with journalists, which could allow personal image, authority and importance to be reinforced. In exploring the manner in which Benedict and Cowen negotiated their press profiles, it is important to examine how each of them underlined and exploited explicit links with central Europe and the 'great composers' through programming, music publishing, insightful biographies and interviews.

#### *Benedict*

Authority automatically stemmed from Benedict's oft-touted connections with past masters. His musical pedigree was replete with links to revered German composers: he was known to have been a pupil of Hummel (in whose company he met Beethoven in October 1823), to have been Weber's first student, and to have met with Mendelssohn on many occasions, enjoying his approbation. Making this lineage publicly known did not happen by accident but stemmed from careful promotion of Benedict's illustrious background. The British concert public's reverence for Hummel, Beethoven, Weber and Mendelssohn rubbed off positively

<sup>36</sup> 'Sir Julius Benedict', *MT*, 1 July 1885, pp. 385–6. This obituary includes such statements as: 'But it would be hard to say in which department Benedict gained most of his reputation. He made essays in all, and in all he won distinction. Perhaps it cannot be said that he was ever a great conductor, but he would scarcely have been suffered to wield the baton for so many years at the Norwich Festival and the Liverpool Philharmonic Society had he not proved himself competent to discharge the duties appertaining to his office in these undertakings' (p. 385); and: 'Here again we note the many-sided nature of his powers' (p. 386).

onto Benedict's image, transferring wisdom and status by positive association and breeding confidence in Benedict's authority to conduct the music of these composers.

The book-length biographies that Benedict chose to write recorded his perspectives on two of these figures. In the aftermath of Mendelssohn's death, Benedict gave lectures at the Camberwell Literary Institution (1849), and these became the basis for his *Sketch of the Life and Works of the Late Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy* (1850).<sup>37</sup> Striking while the iron was hot, in this *Sketch*, by describing his intimate friendship with Mendelssohn, Benedict articulated his ownership of special status. A decade later, his selection and arrangement of recitatives and pieces by Weber for the librettist James Robinson Planché's *Oberon* at Her Majesty's Theatre was highlighted in an advertisement in the published libretto:

Deeply as it is to be regretted that the gifted composer [Weber] has not lived to superintend the revival of his work in England, – the country for which it was originally composed, and in which it was produced under his personal direction, – the musical world will admit that the task could not have been confided to a more competent substitute than Jules Benedict, his favourite pupil and affectionate friend. By such hands it was sure to be performed as reverently as efficiently.<sup>38</sup>

Again, the message that Benedict had unique connections and had enjoyed the admiration of canonized Continental musicians was reinforced. In 1881, when the publishing firm Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington issued Benedict's substantial biography of Weber as part of *The Great Musicians* series, the sense that Weber's kindly hand was on Benedict's shoulder was established more strongly still.<sup>39</sup> Describing his first meeting with Weber (which took place at the beginning of February 1821), Benedict recalled his tricky ascent of the staircase to the third floor of Weber's house in Dresden's old marketplace – creating a metaphor of struggling upwards to reach an exalted domain.<sup>40</sup> As a pioneering conductor and composer whose tragically premature demise had taken place in

<sup>37</sup> Jules Benedict, *Sketch of the Life and Works of the Late Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy Being the Substance of a Lecture delivered at the Camberwell Literary Institution in December 1849* (London: John Murray, 1850).

<sup>38</sup> GB-Lbl, Norcott 292(i), [Libretto] *Oberon / An Opera in Four Acts / By J.R. Planché / The Music Composed by / Carl Maria von Weber / The Recitatives and Additional Pieces Selected and Arranged from the Works of the Same Composer / By Jules Benedict / As Represented at Her Majesty's Theatre* (London: J. Miles & Co.). For a re-evaluation of the mixed reception of Planché's English libretto for *Oberon* and of his professional fortunes, see Alan Fischler, 'Oberon and Odium: The Career and Crucifixion of J. R. Planché', *Opera Quarterly* 21 (1995), 5–26.

<sup>39</sup> Sir Julius Benedict, *The Great Musicians: Weber*, series ed. Francis Hueffer (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1881). Benedict dedicated the volume to Queen Victoria.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.



the London home of Sir George Smart, Weber provided another vital association within Benedict's web of connections with the past.

The patterns of programming during Benedict's popular conductorship of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society (1867–80) reveal that he did not use his role to over-promote his own compositions. The works of Beethoven (symphonies and overtures), Weber, Mozart and Handel are present in abundance. Programming of operatic material by Auber, Donizetti, Rossini, Mozart, Bellini, Verdi and Wagner provide another pronounced thread. Elsewhere in his portfolio of activities, Benedict's Annual Grand Evening Concerts featured in London's concert schedule for fifty years. To take one example (from around mid century) of the style and content of these long-established concerts, the programme for 21 May 1856 at Exeter Hall shows that Weber's *Jubilee* overture opened the concert, followed by items by J. S. Bach, Handel, Mozart, Rossini, Spohr, Meyerbeer, and Benedict's own compositions; Jenny Lind topped the bill of star performers, which included Heinrich Ernst, Alfredo Piatti, Pauline Viardot and Giovanni Belletti, directed by Benedict whose role encompassed conductor and pianist. The patronage of the Queen and the Prince Consort, together with that of the Duchesses of Kent, Gloucester and Cambridge, was trumpeted in the concert's book of words.<sup>41</sup> The *Morning Post* review of the concert asserted: 'It were strange indeed if Mr. Benedict's annual concert lacked patronage, for no artist has a larger connection, and a man more popular in society, or in the profession he follows, does not exist.'<sup>42</sup> In a wise act of self-promotion, Benedict's *Century Magazine* feature on Jenny Lind, published in 1881, served to remind readers, well after the fact, of his illustrious connection to the star vocalist.<sup>43</sup>

Benedict ensured that his network of patrons was influential, and evidence of his success in this regard is particularly abundant in the 1870s and 1880s. At Windsor Castle on 24 March 1871 he was dubbed a 'Knight Bachelor' alongside fellow musicians William Sterndale Bennett and George Elvey and the Director of the National Gallery at Windsor Castle, William Boxall.<sup>44</sup> Knighthoods conferred advantage and access to the top tables of high society and were, as yet, rarely awarded to musicians. Although Benedict did not hold a doctorate in music, he was now upgraded from 'Esquire' to 'Sir'.<sup>45</sup> Such connections can have only enhanced Benedict's ranking in the music business and increased his attractiveness to an upper-class clientele within his teaching practice in Manchester Square. Benedict's enjoyment of Queen Victoria's patronage indicates that his value as a musician and his effectiveness as a networker were recognized

<sup>41</sup> *Book of the Words of M. Benedict's Annual Grand Evening Concert on Wednesday May 21<sup>st</sup>, 1856* (London: W. Golbourn, 1856).

<sup>42</sup> 'Mr Benedict's Concert', *MP*, 23 May 1856, p. 5.

<sup>43</sup> Julius Benedict, 'Jenny Lind', *Century Magazine*, May 1881, pp. 120–32.

<sup>44</sup> See 'The Court', *DN*, 25 March 1871; and William A. Shaw, *The Knights of England*, 2 vols (London: Sherratt & Hughes, 1906; reprint, Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, 2004), vol. 2, p. 363.

<sup>45</sup> William C. Lubenow, *Liberal Intellectuals and Public Culture in Modern Britain, 1815–1914: Making Words Flesh* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010), p. 62.

in her circles.<sup>46</sup> Further evidence of his leverage and profile within society's higher echelons is apparent from occasions such as the afternoon of 20 May 1875 when the sumptuous Dudley House in London's Park Lane was the venue for a testimonial to him, hosted by the Earl of Dudley and attended by royal and artistic subscribers.<sup>47</sup> Those assembled gave Benedict a 'massive service of plate' and the Earl delivered a speech, punctuated by applause, emphasizing gratitude for Benedict's forty years of great devotion to the 'cause of musical art in this country'. His royal connections again featured in the press in 1883 when the *Pall Mall Gazette* provided a listing of guests at a dinner party he attended, given by the Prince of Wales at Marlborough House on 8 May.<sup>48</sup> So it was that, in view of substantial losses in failed undertakings in which he had been 'induced' to invest, a financial testimonial was mounted in June 1884 to assist him in achieving fiscal equilibrium.<sup>49</sup>

### *Cowen*

Cowen too wrote books and articles; dating from the twentieth century they span a broad spectrum mirroring that found in his compositional output. Like Benedict, he wrote monographs on 'great composers': his four short studies of Mozart, Haydn, Mendelssohn and Rossini appeared in the *Masterpieces of Music* series, published by T. C. & E. C. Jack in 1912. Regardless of the biting criticism in the *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, which described his contributions on Haydn and Rossini as 'slipshod', Cowen's biographies

<sup>46</sup> He valued what he considered to be the genuine interest of gentlemen such as the Earl of Westmorland, Lord Falmouth, the Duke of Cambridge and Sir Andrew Barnard; see Thomas Willert Beale, *The Enterprising Impresario by Walter Maynard* (London: Bradbury, Evans, 1867), p. 311.

<sup>47</sup> 'Testimonial to Sir Julius Benedict', *Era*, 23 May 1875, p. 10. William Ward, first Earl of Dudley (1817–85), known as 'The Lord Ward' (1835–60), was a British landowner and benefactor; Cowen's father was his secretary.

<sup>48</sup> *PMG*, 9 May 1883, p. 7, 'Dinner Party at Marlborough House', reported that guests included the high-status musicians Sir Julius Benedict, Mr Joseph Barnby, Mr Thomas Chappell, Mr William G. Cusins, Mr Otto Goldschmidt, Dr George Grove, Professor George A. Macfarren, Dr John Stainer and Sir Arthur Sullivan; others at the royal table included the Duke of Edinburgh, Earl Granville, Rt Hon. Lyon Playfair, Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild, Sir Thomas Gladstone and so on.

<sup>49</sup> The details of the nature of Benedict's investments are not provided in the various newspaper and periodical accounts of the genesis and enactment of the testimonial. At the February meeting convened to establish the nature of the testimonial, it was reported by the chairman, Mr Alderman de Keyser, that 'the testimonial should be a substantial one. "The money was wanted to make good losses that were not in any way attributable to extravagance, to thriftlessness, to neglect of prudential duties and obligations. [...] [Benedict] had suffered reverses which no recklessness of expenditure had brought upon himself. He had been induced, no doubt by well-meaning friends, to invest his money, saved from the fruit of a life's toil, in undertakings which had failed.'" 'The Benedict Testimonial', *MT*, 1 June 1884, pp. 330–1.



confirmed his specialist knowledge of these oft-programmed composers, thereby enhancing his authority on the podium, and they connected him with fellow authors, including Stanford (who wrote the volume on Brahms).<sup>50</sup> His other publications ranged from a lighthearted look at long-haired musicians of note (1907) and his tongue-in-cheek (yet barbed) musical definitions in *Music as She is Wrote* (1915), to his serious efforts to codify the conductor's role and approach within his articles for the *Musical Times*, for example, in 'Hints on Conducting' (1900), and for *The Musical Educator* in 'The Art of Conducting' (1910).<sup>51</sup> In his sardonic glossary in *Music as She is Wrote*, Cowen's biting description of the role of conductor reads:

CONDUCTOR (Modern Style)

Any musician of foreign nationality who conducts, and can interpret the work in some entirely new way that the composer never dreamt of. The less he thinks about the composer and the more about himself the finer conductor he is. The modern conductor is a great athlete, and changes his underclothing after every piece.<sup>52</sup>

Notwithstanding the jocular tone adopted, Cowen's message was that the emergence of an egocentric, athletic approach to the role was a disservice to the music and that British musicians were automatically overlooked and consistently unsupported. Here, and elsewhere, he openly lamented the reality of negative discrimination against British conductors in the marketplace. His mission to reinforce and develop high artistic standards was a sustained feature of his years as conductor. Cowen's two serious articles on conducting confirmed his awareness and support of the changing understandings of the qualities and remit of the role of the conductor. By providing practical guidance to budding conductors he showed mentorship and initiative in an as yet limited field of discourse, exhibiting common sense and considerable experience. As the role of conductor evolved, Cowen's urging for increased rehearsal time, including its careful distribution to ensure the continued reinterpretation of standard works, was an important aspect of his efforts.

<sup>50</sup> "'Masterpieces of Music": Haydn and Rossini by Frederic H. Cowen; 'Schubert' by George H. Clutsam; 'Brahms' by Charles V. Stanford. London and Edinburgh: Jack, 1912. 1s 6d each', *SR*, 4 January 1913, p. 23.

<sup>51</sup> Frederic H. Cowen, *Music as She is Wrote, being a Glossary of Musical Terms Very Much up to Date* (London: Mills and Boon, 1915). Some of the definitions had featured in the *MT*. Examples of the style adopted include (p. 10): 'ACCELERANDO (al Fine) "Get to the end as quickly as possible." This is often as much desired by the audience as it is by the composer. ACCENT Used mostly by foreign Conductors when trying to speak English to the orchestra.' Frederic Cowen, 'Long Hair and Music', *The Strand Magazine: An Illustrated Monthly* 33 (January–June 1907), 89–94; Cowen, 'Hints on Conducting', *MT*, 1 May 1900, pp. 307–9; Cowen, 'The Art of Conducting', *The Musical Educator: A Library of Musical Instruction by Eminent Specialists*, ed. John Greig, 5 vols (London: Caxton, 1910), vol. 5, pp. v–xii.

<sup>52</sup> Cowen, *Music as She is Wrote*, p. 43.

## Managing the Press

Benedict was keenly aware of the need to foster positive relationships with the press. His well-known difficulties in working with Henry Chorley of the *Athenaeum* (his untalented librettist for his oratorio *St Peter* of 1870) caused the *Musical Times* commentator Joseph Bennett to remark retrospectively on Benedict's careful approach to maintaining good terms with influential men.<sup>53</sup> In 1880, a frisson of speculation had surrounded seventy-five-year-old Benedict's second marriage to the Indian-born Miss Mary Comber Fortey, aged 'two and twenty', one of his Crystal Palace piano pupils.<sup>54</sup> The *Liverpool Mercury* helpfully transferred the youthfulness of his new wife onto Benedict:

Sir Julius Benedict has not ceased to produce musical works. A composer who marries at 76 is not likely to rest. Sir Julius is writing a musical cantata. [...] At 77 Sir Julius Benedict comes into the concert room and asks who can rival him on his own ground. Sir Julius is in fact still, to all appearances, a young man. I heard him play the other day, and he had such a firmness of touch, and so complete a possession of the instrument that he might have been 17 instead of 77.<sup>55</sup>

Demonstrating the value placed on elders with undiminished work ethic, in 1883 the *Pall Mall Gazette* featured a profile of Benedict, which cleverly crafted an image of him, now seventy-nine, as youthful, influential and generous, and as a conduit between past and present. A *London Herald* correspondent, who visited Sir Julius at his residence in Manchester Square in London's cultural centre,<sup>56</sup> published Benedict's comments on his career, his travels, his perceptions of the relative successes and personal preferences within his own music, and his wistfulness in relation to the untapped potential of a much-requested lecture tour of America.<sup>57</sup> The article provided a snapshot of Benedict's status and schedule in old age and underlined his continuing role as an agent and advisor to singers, reconfirming the strength of his formative associations.

Cowen's private life does not appear to have provided a source of notoriety. He remained a bachelor until 1908 and did not marry into exclusive circles. The recipient of a doctorate in music from Cambridge University in 1900, he did not gain a knighthood until 1911 (aged fifty-nine) – too late for this badge of acceptance

<sup>53</sup> Joseph Bennett, 'Some Recollections: VII, An Amazing Transaction', *MT*, 1 March 1899, pp. 158–60, at p. 159.

<sup>54</sup> 'Multum in Parvo', *Newcastle Courant*, 2 January 1880, p. 2: 'Sir Julius Benedict, the eminent musician and composer, has been married in London to Miss Fortey. Sir Julius is in his 75th year, and his wife is two and twenty.' Mary Comber Fortey was the daughter of Madras-born Henry Fortey. Benedict had been widowed in 1852. His first wife, Therese Margaret Adeline Jean (1815–51/2), bore three daughters and two sons.

<sup>55</sup> 'Our London Correspondence', *Liverpool Mercury*, 28 December 1880, p. 5.

<sup>56</sup> In 'A Visit to Sir Julius Benedict', *PMG*, 9 May 1883, p. 11.

<sup>57</sup> The tour was in demand by Americans who wanted to hear more about his connections to the great composers.

to enhance his progress during the central period of his career. Through his strong sense of justice, Cowen was given to involvement in public controversies and disputes. Examples include his lobbying of the London Philharmonic Society (to his own detriment) over rehearsal time and programming licence in 1892<sup>58</sup> and his protracted wrangles with the Hallé executive in 1898 over questions of permanency in the post of conductor. He trod a dangerous tightrope in his candidness with the press and in his negotiations with institutional directors, and public tumbles were the consequence.<sup>59</sup>

It is clearly the case that Cowen did not shy away from publicity, either good or bad.<sup>60</sup> Features on Cowen, some incorporating illustrations including posed photographs, that appeared in many publications during the 1890s (a turbulent decade for him) reveal strategic self-promotion and advocacy of his musical outlook.<sup>61</sup> The photographs did not include musical props but rather showed Cowen, smartly attired, seated and gazing seriously into the distance. As Lewis Foreman explains in his discussion of kinds of illustrations used by Elgar and his contemporaries, conductors rarely posed with a baton until after World War I.<sup>62</sup> In Cowen's case, the professional demeanour of these portraits had the double purpose of serving his image as conductor and composer. That the articles proliferated following his Philharmonic Society demise in 1892 cannot have been coincidental. In January 1893, the *Strand Magazine: An Illustrated Monthly* briefly profiled Cowen (including pictures of him aged 3, 11, 16, 24 and 41), emphasizing his precocity of early talent and the popularity of his works.<sup>63</sup> That same year, in reinforcement of his status, he was included alongside Alexander Mackenzie, Hubert Parry, Stanford and Sullivan in Charles Willeby's *Masters of English Music*. Here Cowen's early talent, humour, ambition, experiences through much travelling, and profile as composer and conductor were emphasized.<sup>64</sup> In March 1894, featuring a commissioned photograph of him on the front cover, *The Minim* included a short appreciation of Cowen in which his ability to connect with and appeal to a wide spectrum of musical interests – a kind of 'musical

<sup>58</sup> 'Leeds Musical Society', *Yorkshire Gazette*, 1 October 1892, p. 5; 'Current Notes', *The Lute*, 1 September 1892, p. 218. For Cowen's comments on this incident, see Cowen, *My Art*, pp. 227–8.

<sup>59</sup> See, for example, Michael Kennedy's account of the controversy over Cowen's position at the Hallé Concerts in 1898 in *The Hallé Tradition*, chapter 10.

<sup>60</sup> For a different view, see Parker, 'The Music of Sir Frederic H. Cowen', vol. 1, p. 302, who asserts that Cowen was reticent.

<sup>61</sup> For examples of Cowen's profile not covered here, see Parker, 'The Music of Sir Frederic H. Cowen'.

<sup>62</sup> Lewis Foreman, 'Picturing Elgar and his Contemporaries as Conductors: Elgar Conducts at Leeds', *Elgar Society Journal* 15, no. 6 (November 2008), 30–46, at p. 35.

<sup>63</sup> 'Portraits of Celebrities', *The Strand Magazine: An Illustrated Monthly* 5 (January 1893), p. 161.

<sup>64</sup> Willeby, *Masters of English Music*, pp. 173–256.

classlessness' – was underlined.<sup>65</sup> Subsequently, John Evans Woolcott's 1895 *Strand Musical Magazine* feature on Cowen, as one of a series of 'interviews with eminent musicians' (thus in a question-and-answer format), is particularly interesting for its concern with not just Cowen's compositions but also his views on the dissemination of the wider appreciation of 'good [i.e. art] music'. In answering, Cowen used the opportunity to emphasize the agency needed in promoting British music.<sup>66</sup> The main non-composition-related messages in this feature stressed Cowen's urging for the standard provision of increased orchestral rehearsal time and for the state subsidy of music (in the form of opera and training school provision).

The publication of Frederick George Edwards's detailed profile of Cowen in the *Musical Times* in November 1898 was no accident.<sup>67</sup> Cowen was embroiled in the final throes of a very public and divisive debate over his conductorship of the Hallé Orchestra that was to culminate in Richter's appointment as his successor.<sup>68</sup> An article titled 'Conductors – Native or Foreign?' (appearing just a handful of pages later) made a balanced assessment of the Hallé-Richter-Cowen debacle before proceeding to debate the problems in the promotion of progress within British music if foreigners always pipped native musicians to the post by dint of assumed automatic authority.<sup>69</sup> It recommended that the conservatoires consider remedying the lack of training for conductors. The preceding, highly strategic profile of Cowen was designed to assert his well-travelled education and career, fluency in four languages, literary interests and networks, innate and prodigious gifts as pianist, composer and conductor (allowing him to avoid teaching) at a time when his ongoing Hallé tenancy was overshadowed by rumours of Richter's availability. Here, Edwards, with Cowen's full support, chimed in with the *Zeitgeist* created by Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee celebrations by taking a colonial angle as the prelude to the biography. With illustrations and music examples, packaging Cowen as a product of the colonies whose career had made him 'one of our representative British musicians', Edwards's seven-page article amply retold the story of Cowen's precocious early progress and subsequent successes, highlighting his birth in 'one of our' West Indian islands, while in

<sup>65</sup> 'Mr Frederic H. Cowen', *The Minim*, March 1894, pp. 80–1. The photograph was taken in Cowen's study by Messrs Wayland and Company of Blackheath and Streatham.

<sup>66</sup> J. E. Woolcott, 'Interviews with Eminent Musicians: No. 4. Mr Frederic H. Cowen', *The Strand Musical Magazine: A Musical Monthly* 1 (April 1895), pp. 249–52. Woolcott asked Cowen if he thought 'that the love of good music is spreading in England'. In his response Cowen focused solely on English music, noting that more of it was performed than in the past, and he outlined the particular economics attached to composition and performance in England.

<sup>67</sup> F. G. Edwards, 'Frederic Hymen Cowen', *MT*, 1 November 1898, pp. 713–19.

<sup>68</sup> Richter was appointed as conductor of the Hallé concerts from the beginning of the 1899/1900 season. For an evaluation of the circumstances leading to Cowen's loss of the conductorship, see Kennedy, *The Hallé Tradition*, chapter 10.

<sup>69</sup> 'Conductors – Native or Foreign?', *MT*, 1 November 1898, pp. 723–4.

conclusion expressing the hope that he would continue to compose to the advantage of native (English) music.

Making play of his studentship at Berlin's Stern Conservatorium with its opportunities for training in the art of conducting – as Edwards pointed out, no such education was available in Britain at the time – the author stated Cowen's advocacy for the introduction of such training: 'but so important and eminently practical a matter as conducting, as well as that of accompanying, is left to the student to find out and pick up for himself; whereas a regular course of training in both these subjects would be of incalculable benefit to him as part of his professional equipment.' Edwards was careful to ignore the 1892 rumpus with the London Philharmonic Society. (Cowen had scandalized directors, players and press alike at the final concert of the season, by apologizing in advance to the audience for the deficiencies he expected from the ensuing performance of Beethoven's Symphony No. 6 citing lack of rehearsal time; his preemptive action backfired and he lost his conductorship of the Society for a period.)<sup>70</sup> Instead, Edwards underlined Cowen's 'acknowledged gifts as orchestral conductor'. Letters from Ferdinand Hiller and Hans von Bülow were incorporated into the article, thereby reinforcing Cowen's high-status networks. Four days after the profile was issued, Cowen wrote to Edwards saying that he thought 'the article had turned out capitially' and thanking him warmly for 'all the trouble' he had taken over it.<sup>71</sup>

Evidence of Cowen's awareness of the commercial value of his art as conductor and his efforts to exploit that value during his career is found in his autobiography, *My Art and My Friends* (1913). In fifteen chapters, Cowen painted a candid picture of himself as a man for whom commercial gain was secondary to the pursuit of high artistic standards.<sup>72</sup> He mocked his own failure to develop the commercial potential either of his ubiquitous ballad, 'The Better Land' (instead allowing Boosey full rights to it), or of the mounting of his own Saturday evening

<sup>70</sup> For Cowen's retrospective account of this furore, see Cowen, *My Art*, pp. 223–4. For the minutes of the relevant Directors' Meetings, see GB-Lbl, RPS MS 288, 20 June 1892–15 July 1892, fols 165v–72r.

<sup>71</sup> GB-Lbl, Egerton MS 3095, fol. 120r; letter from Cowen to F. G. Edwards, 5 November 1898. Cowen enclosed a song album at Edwards's request. In 1899, Isabel Brooke Alder furnished a profile of Cowen in *The Minim* (May 1899, 'Frederic H. Cowen', p. 194), in which his ceaseless work, reliability, connections and determination were highlighted: 'As a conductor, Frederic Cowen has won the esteem of the highest authorities in matters musical, and the devotion to the interests of his associates has ever testified to their true regard for his sterling merits and unsurpassable qualifications.'

<sup>72</sup> In 1894, his lack of financial cushion left him, for example, unable to invest personally in the Queen's Hall project managed by Robert Newman; Cowen, *My Art*, pp. 234–5; and see also Leanne Langley, 'Building an Orchestra, Creating an Audience: Robert Newman and the Queen's Hall Promenade Concerts, 1895–1926', *The Proms: A New History*, ed. Jenny Doctor and David Wright (London: Thames and Hudson, 2007), pp. 32–73, at p. 289 n. 11.

orchestral concerts in 1880 (which were a financial flop).<sup>73</sup> Cowen considered that it was in 1880 that he began his genuine attempt to

take my art and career more in earnest and to endeavour to establish myself, as far as lay in my power, as a composer of serious purpose, if nothing more. Besides this, the opportunity – long sought for – came to me of making a real start in that other branch of the art to which I have since devoted a considerable portion of my life – namely, that of conducting.<sup>74</sup>

He understood the prestige of his election to the conductorship of the Philharmonic Society in 1888 and was frank in describing the 1892 ‘rupture’ created by frustrations relating to programming, rehearsal time, deputies and foreign composer-conductors.<sup>75</sup> His re-evaluation of this incident shows his pragmatic take, some twenty years later, on what he now described as his ‘own indiscretion’. His retelling of the process of gaining the prestigious period of work in Melbourne is self-effacingly coy – he stated that he named a prohibitive fee, which they then all but offered him, and he clarified that this exorbitant sum was indeed £5,000 (£472,000 in today’s money).<sup>76</sup> Overall, *My Art and My Friends* confirms Cowen’s ongoing sense of being at odds with the status quo within British concert life. His tales of negotiation, amelioration and conflict, and some evidence of improvements shaped by his arbitration form a thread throughout his account of his conducting career. His view of his Britishness in Britain (he placed no emphasis in his autobiography on his colonial origins) was that it had automatically handicapped his progress.

## Conclusions

By the end of the nineteenth century in Britain the expectation of specialist concentration on conducting as a profession was developing apace. Both Benedict and Cowen, their deaths separated by fifty years, gained from self-promotion of explicit connections with continental European traditions despite having had to work around anti-British prejudice. Through his assorted associations, including the triangulation of conducting work in London, Norwich and Liverpool, Benedict occupied a cherished position in the musical life of the nation. Institutional representatives as well as artists whose lives he had touched attended his Kensal Green (London) burial in June 1885.<sup>77</sup> Benedict’s skills as a conductor were secondary to the perception that in him was vested a unique

<sup>73</sup> Cowen, *My Art*, pp. 53 and 103.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 145 and 223–4.

<sup>76</sup> Cowen reported that he undertook more than 260 performances for this payment (roughly equating to £1,850 per occasion); *ibid.*, pp. 151–2. The value of the payments in today’s money is drawn from the calculations for the Retail Price Index available at <http://www.measuringworth.com>.

<sup>77</sup> ‘Funeral of Sir Julius Benedict’, *Birmingham Daily Post*, 10 June 1885, p. 8.



understanding of the music of the great masters. His elevated, gentlemanly, elder-statesman-like and paternalistic approach was in stark contrast to Cowen's sense of agency on behalf of his art. When Cowen's core period of conducting activity drew to a close in 1914, the country was at war. A well-read, talented musician and opinionated individual, whose compositions were overshadowed by those of Sullivan and Elgar, Cowen was less circumspect than Benedict, and timing and competition were often against him. His was a dual profile (composer and conductor), which thus differed from Benedict's generalized one. Press furores over his departures from the London Philharmonic Society and from the Hallé Orchestra added up to many thousands of words. Generating controversy, partly through a tendency to be governed by entrenched convictions, meant that Cowen personified the vexed issues facing conductors as mediators of art music in Britain. Both men had demonstrated a keen awareness of reputation-building through the powers of association, the value of connections, and the embodiment of wisdom and specialist knowledge, as well as of management of the written word. Their experiences, opportunities, choices and influence contributed to the development of the expectations and status of the orchestral conductor's role in Britain.

The opportunities available to Benedict and Cowen – as British conductors of art music in a commercial world – were limited by others' monopoly of core institutional conductorships. Yet both men enjoyed some success and popularity as conductors. They accomplished this by following convention and, in Cowen's case, by leading change via assertive imposition of requirements and expectations drawn from first-hand experience of Continental practices. Cowen, operating in a period of transition, held principled convictions that were significant both in his shaping of concepts of the role and in his capacity to execute it. Cowen responded to the demands of a musical public that was becoming ever more familiar with Continental standards of interpretation at the hands of crowd-drawing conductors, such as Richter, Richard Strauss, Charles Lamoureux and the image-conscious Wood.<sup>78</sup> Career conductors, such as Richter and Wood, recognized the importance of a dedicated, carefully packaged profile in satisfying audiences in a competitive marketplace. Cowen and Benedict were productive portfolio conductors, and there is no question but that their experiences, though they differed, mirrored the process of adaptation that was taking place.

<sup>78</sup> For a discussion of Richter's role in what Johnson describes as 'the development of the conductor as a quasi-religious figure in Britain', see Johnson, 'The English Tradition', pp. 182–3. See also Langley, 'Joining Up the Dots'.