

**THE SYMPHONIES OF CHARLES VILLIERS  
STANFORD: CONSTRUCTING A NATIONAL  
IDENTITY?**

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*for my Grandmother,  
Eileen Winnill,  
in loving memory  
(1916 – 2003)*

# ABSTRACT

Writing in 2001, musicologist Axel Klein concluded that Stanford's reception history has been significantly impacted by the complicated national identities surrounding both the composer and his music. A lifelong devotee of the nineteenth-century Austro-Germanic tradition, Stanford's status as an Irish-born leading figure of the 'English' Musical Renaissance has compromised the place that the composer and his musical output occupy within the history of Western music.

Stanford is well-known for being an outspoken critic on matters musical and Irish. Although his views seldom appear ambiguous, there is still a sense that the real Stanford remains partially obscured by his opinions. Through an examination of his symphonic works, this thesis seeks to readdress our understanding of Stanford and his relationship with Ireland and the musical community of his time. Although A. Peter Brown has stated that the symphony was not a central genre for the composer, it is my argument that, on the contrary, the symphony was a pivotal form for him. Considering these works within the broader history of the symphony in Europe in the nineteenth century, and through a critical examination of Stanford's relationship with Ireland, this thesis seeks to demonstrate that these seven works can be read as an allegory for the composer's relationship both with his homeland and with the musical community of his time. His struggle to combine the universality of symphonic expression with a need to articulate his Irish identity parallels Stanford's own attempts to integrate himself within both British and European musical communities, and further demonstrates, in his eventual rejection of it, that it was only when he attempted to forge a more individualistic path through his music that he found a way of expressing his individual Irish identity.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this thesis represents a journey of more than seven years with Charles Villiers Stanford and his orchestral music. I have, of course, been familiar with the composer and his music for considerably longer but, like so many others, both musicians and non-musicians, the extent of his contribution to composition alluded me until I started to give the man and his music the credit and attention that he is due. It was a chance comment made to me by an undergraduate tutor of mine that resulted in the exploration of Stanford's orchestral music, and the advice and guidance that I received early on as a Masters' student that led to the eventual topic that this thesis explores. Of course, like so many other studies of this nature, it is but the start of what I hope will be a much greater exploration and critique of Stanford's orchestral music and the significance that this considerable output is to the composer and our understanding of him. Stanford has been the unfortunate victim of considerable neglect for almost a century now, and it is only thanks to pioneering studies in British music, that have begun to give this important discipline the place that it deserves, that this study has been made possible.

With this in mind my work is heavily indebted to the leading figures in contemporary musicology who have laid the invaluable groundwork in this field. Most notable are Jeremy Dibble and Paul Rodmell whose seminal monographs on Stanford reinvigorated an interest in this composer and without whom this study of one part of the man's compositional output would not have been possible. The work of A. Peter Brown, the only contemporary musicologist to my knowledge who has subjected all seven of Stanford's symphonies to detailed analytical study, has been central to this thesis, playing a central part in the discussion of the works throughout this work. Of course these are but a few of a much wider

range of scholarly works that have been of use to me throughout the last few years, and these are all recognised in the main body of this thesis.

In addition to the scholarly help and support that I have found in my own research, personal thanks are due to a number of people and institutions that have been with me on my journey. Thanks of course have to go to my supervisor, Roger Allen, who has guided me right from the early days of my graduate work and has always been on hand when I needed a steer. I am also enormously grateful to Lady Margaret Hall, to Susan Wollenberg and to Allan Doig, who have provided me with unfailing support and financial assistance throughout my time in Oxford. I am also grateful to the various libraries and archives that I have consulted, and from the cooperation of their respective staff.

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# INTRODUCTION

‘Over there,’ he said, pointing towards England, ‘things are different. Something will come out of that country.’<sup>1</sup>

Born in Dublin in 1852 into a prominent Anglo-Irish legal family, Charles Villiers Stanford was one of the most important and influential figures in British musical life in the closing years of the nineteenth century. With a musical catalogue of almost two hundred opus-numbered works he was one of the most active composers of his age, contributing to virtually every major musical genre with varying degrees of success. Furthermore, as an educator at both the Royal College of Music and the University of Cambridge he had an unprecedented influence over an entire generation of British composers who would go on to define national musical styles and tastes well into the twentieth century. However, today he is only really known for his substantial contribution of music for the Anglican liturgy while the overwhelming majority of his works remain in obscurity. The reasons for Stanford’s overall absence from the history of music, both within a British context and a wider one, have never fully been established. His arch-conservative musical stance, especially in later life, led to his music rapidly falling out of fashion during his own lifetime to the extent that many of his works had been all but forgotten long before his death in 1924. Furthermore, the inability to place Stanford nationally has further complicated his status within an historical narrative. Although born in Dublin and continually identified as ‘Irish’ throughout his life, Stanford’s political and social views were firmly rooted within the Victorian imperial setting in which he spent most of his time. To complicate matters even more, Stanford’s obsession with the Austro-Germanic tradition as embodied in the works of composers including Mendelssohn, Schumann, Schubert and Brahms, resulted in Stanford creating a musical language

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Villiers Stanford, ‘Some thoughts concerning Folk-Song and Nationality’, *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 1 No. 2 (April 1915), p. 236.

potentially lacking in originality and/or individualism, such that it questions the extent to which it could ever represent a British and/or Irish school of composition.

Too Irish for the English, too English for the Irish and too German for both, he fell between all stools, where only a new appreciation in a more multicultural environment will help his position.<sup>2</sup>

Finding an accurate way of labelling Stanford and his music is by no means a new problem. Herbert Howells, writing in 1952, was keenly aware of the problems that hampered an objective assessment of the composer and his music:

But here there is a problem: a problem related to almost every vital aspect of his [Stanford's] creative work, its content, its formal aspects, its gestures, its compromises, and to the sum of all these that goes by the name of 'style.' What I am calling a 'problem' must take not of certain opposed, irreconcilable claims upon Stanford's mind and heart. First, the claims of blood and nationality. Second, those of a generally-accepted, widely diffused culture. Narrowed to Stanford's case and reduced to a possible reprehensible over-simplification, there was in him a struggle for ascendancy as between a richly Hibernian sympathy and an even more compelling respect and admiration for the mainstream of Austro-German music. Add to this a tough conservatism. The sum of these states was, in large measure, Stanford. But not the whole of him.<sup>3</sup>

Throughout his professional life, Stanford and Ireland would have a complicated and, at times, tortuous relationship. His Unionist political opinions distanced him from the harsh realities facing many of his fellow countrymen on the other side of the Irish Sea.

Furthermore, it gives rise to question the legitimacy of Stanford's expressions of Irish identity at a time when Ireland was not only facing extreme hardship as a nation, but also when defining itself was proving to be a challenge, rendering these gestures as hollow and meaningless. However, this aside, the large number of musical works that Stanford wrote with Irish connections of one sort or another suggest that, throughout his life, the search for an Irish identity or a way of expressing his Irish heritage was of great importance to the composer. Indeed, within the various genres that Stanford approached, almost all contain some works with Irish references or connections. What we see emerging is a composer,

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<sup>2</sup> Axel Klein, *Irish Classical Recordings: A Discography of Irish Art Music* (Greenwood Press, 2001), p.145.

<sup>3</sup> Herbert Howells, 'Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924): An Address at his Centenary', *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*, 79<sup>th</sup> Session (1952-1953), pp. 19-31.

arguably desperately in search of his own identity and/or a way of expressing his inner identity through the medium of music.

Probably the primary expression of Irish sentiment, not surprisingly, was through the medium of song, and there are numerous song cycles and individual works that have Irish themes and connections, whether it is in their subject matter or through the use of Irish folksong, another fascination for Stanford throughout much of his life. However, there are also examples in his operatic output, again hardly surprising, along with concertos, works for solo instruments and, of course, the symphony. Indeed, Stanford's Third Symphony, the 'Irish', was the first work substantial in which the composer made any attempt to engage with Ireland on a musical level. Furthermore, it is this work, along with his comic opera *Shamus O'Brien* (1896), also with Irish connections, that established Stanford as a composer of international acclaim, and were arguably his two most successful works from a financial perspective, even if he would eventually censor the latter for fear that it could be misread from a national perspective.

The search for a national identity is, itself, intertwined with the understanding of a personal identity. Although nationalism implies a sense of community, belonging to a wider whole bound together by common traits and aspects, the ability to identify oneself with a particular national community is fundamental to understanding the individual as well as the community. It is with this in mind that this thesis seeks to set forth on the task of assessing the symphonic works of Charles Villiers Stanford. It will question what Stanford was or might have been trying to achieve in approaching the symphony as a form, how he explored its possibilities, and why he would eventually come to a point in his career where it no longer offered him the expressive voice that he sought throughout his life. This form of expression is intimately bound up with his Irish identity and it is on this basis that the title asks the question 'in search of a national identity?'

## STANFORD TODAY

I must tell you about Stanford's funeral... On Thursday soon after 11 in the morning I got to the Abbey and sat in the South aisle in the reserved seats close up to the transept. I was joined before long by 'Hanky' [Fuller-Maitland], who came and sat down beside me. In the front row on the other side of the aisle I saw Vaughan Williams, Davies; Adrian Boult was conducting the College band down near the West door, and Plunket Greene walked with the chief mourners behind the coffin which was covered by the Abbey pall, a magnificent piece of embroidery, having the arms of England and the Abbey on either side... Afterwards we all passed by the grave which is in the main aisle, behind the North side of the choir, next to the Grave of Purcell.<sup>4</sup>

Today the only reminder of Stanford's funeral can be found set into the floor of Westminster Abbey in the North Choir aisle where a small, unassuming stone tablet reads:

SIR CHARLES VILLIERS STANFORD  
BORN 30TH SEPTEMBER 1852  
DIED 29TH MARCH 1924  
A GREAT MUSICIAN

Daniel Grimley has observed that 'Composer's final resting places can often provide valuable insights into their historical reception and the context in which their music was originally created.'<sup>5</sup> Certainly from a contemporary perspective, Stanford's position in Westminster Abbey, where members of this ancient choral foundation regularly perform music from the composer's vast repertory of liturgical music, affirms his reception in the twenty-first-century musical world. Furthermore, in Stanford's own time, it seems similarly appropriate that he would find his final repose in a building that, as the focal point of major national events for centuries, in so many ways could be seen to represent the political and social ideology of the British establishment within which the composer became entrenched. By and large his music was written for members of a social demographic that represented the ruling classes in Britain and across the Empire, and so, on this basis, Stanford's final resting place, at least superficially, would appear to affirm both the contexts for his music's creation and its reception in his own time and today. The implication behind all of this is that

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<sup>4</sup> Letter from J. H. F. McEwen to R. F. McEwen, 6 April 1924, Reproduced in Jeremy Dibble, *Charles Villiers Stanford: Man and Musician* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 459-60.

<sup>5</sup> Daniel Grimley, *Grieg: Music, Landscape and Norwegian Identity* (Boydell, 2006), p. 1.

Stanford, the man, was the product of the Victorian establishment, an Anglican and an ardent supporter of the Empire and all that it stood for. In many ways we know this to be true from the numerous anecdotes and personal documents that survive to this day which confirm this understanding of Stanford. However, the glaring omission from all of this is Stanford's own Irish heritage, itself a fundamental and inextricable aspect of the composer, his life and, most crucially, his artistic output. Howells stated that 'Stanford belonged to Ireland'<sup>6</sup> and even today the composer's entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* mentions that Stanford 'retained an Irish brogue throughout his life and his nationality was reflected in his brilliant and often painfully sharp wit, which made him both friends and enemies.'<sup>7</sup>

Understanding Stanford's Irish identity and its significance both personally and professionally is, as will become apparent through the following discussion, no easy task. In order to appreciate the man and his identity we need first to be able to understand this on his own terms, perhaps even seeking the multicultural environment that Axel Klein calls for.<sup>8</sup> Stanford was Irish, yes, but he was Protestant, a member of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy, unacquainted with, as far as we know, the Irish language, a Unionist, and, perhaps most importantly, absent from the country for his entire professional life.

... a voluntary exile from his native country. For Dublin, city of his birth, had what proved almost its last sight of him in 1870. It was the year in which he exchanged the Liffey for the Cam. Thereafter he crossed and re-crossed the Narrow Seas, searching the continent for stimuli his native city, for all its fantastically brilliant wit and fascinating society, could not provide.

It was normal enough that he should have done so. Irishmen have for centuries raised exile – voluntary or other – to the level of a fine art. Their triumphs in communities other than their native oven have been legitimately achieved through versatility and charm: quite often, too, by their being born fighters.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Howells, 1952-53, p. 20.

<sup>7</sup> Rosemary Firman, 'Stanford, Sir Charles Villiers (1852–1924)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, 2004), [<http://ezproxy.ouls.ox.ac.uk:2117/view/article/36239>, accessed 30 Jan 2012].

<sup>8</sup> Klein, 2001, p. 45.

<sup>9</sup> Howells, 1952-53, p. 19. It would appear that Howells was perhaps exaggerating the extent to which Stanford actually remained absent from Ireland. The composer did visit the country a number of times at least until the death of his father in July 1880. See Jeremy Dibble, *Charles Villiers Stanford: Man and Musician* (Oxford University Press, 2002).

Whilst for Howells, and indeed even for many today, accepting the necessity of exile does not appear to be a problem, when dealing with Stanford's claims to Irish identity it still raises issues that are yet to be resolved. We might be happy to accept and acknowledge that Dublin could never have afforded the composer the professional development and opportunities that he encountered in Cambridge and London, but this does not necessarily mean that we have to accept that he retained his Irish identity in his marked absence. Not only did Stanford benefit from the educational and professional environment that he benefited from and exploited when in these two English cities, but he also, arguably, became a product of them, replacing his Irish heritage with a more Imperialistic, British, and maybe even English identity at the expense of his Celtic roots. A number of scholars and critics over the years have referred or alluded to the notion that Stanford could be viewed as an 'Irish Imperialist', a concept which, today, might seem totally foreign and unintelligible. However, what this perceptively observes is that, irrespective of what we might think today, this concept was very real during Stanford's lifetime, not only for the composer but for British society at large. Stanford, in late-Victorian society, could exist as both an Irishman and an Imperialist, by which we might understand simply a supporter of the British establishment, without running the risk of adopting a dual-aspect personality. Indeed, the anonymous publication *1848-1911: The old conspiracy, an attempt to present in popular form the leading points in connection with the present Home rule agitation, by an Irish imperialist* implies that this concept at least had some form of currency in Stanford's time.<sup>10</sup> Again, returning to Klein, the question we might productively pose is the following: Is it possible to find a way in which Stanford's complicated personal identity can coexist with the equally complex identities that his music embodies, in a way that is both meaningful and productive today?

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<sup>10</sup> *1848-1911: The old conspiracy, an attempt to present in popular form the leading points in connection with the present Home rule agitation, by an Irish imperialist* (London, 1911).

## HERMENEUTIC AND NATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Carl Dahlhaus, in his *Foundations of Music History*, has stated that ‘surviving texts, whether musical or linguistic, remain partially obscure after an initial naïve reading and do not disclose their full meaning until their historical preconditions and implications have been thoroughly analysed.’<sup>11</sup> It is the musicological challenge that Dahlhaus effectively lays down that will be addressed within this discussion. However, the establishment of national constructions and their significance within the symphony – ostensibly an ‘abstract’ musical form even if the history of the genre within the nineteenth century shows that it is anything but ‘standard’ – is no small task and is one that is fraught with problems on a number of levels.

Firstly, delving beyond the surface level of these musical works, the term ‘work’ being used deliberately, implies an acceptance that music *has* the capacity to mean something. What this meaning may or may not be, of course, relies on a heavily subjective reading of the musical texts, even if the aim is to understand this reading on a more objective level. The ability of music to convey meaning, or at least make some form of reference to the external world, is a topic that continues to occupy scholars to this day. As early as the outset of the nineteenth century, if not earlier, musical critics, including E. T. A. Hoffmann for example, discussed the significance of musical gestures, assessing what these say about not only the musical work itself but also its creator and his genius.<sup>12</sup> More recently, hermeneutics has moved on from the overtly romantic and, at times, even programmatic descriptions of music, into the realms of attempting to ‘unlock’ a work’s ‘hidden’ or at least obscured meaning.

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<sup>11</sup> Carl Dahlhaus, *Foundations of Music History*, translated by J. B. Robinson (Cambridge, 1983), p. 4.

<sup>12</sup> Ian D. Bent. "Hermeneutics." In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/12871> (accessed August 6, 2012).

Methodologies, of course, differ. Edward T. Cone writing in 1982, for example, believed that musical meaning relied on an understanding of an individual work's inner musical workings in order for its overall external significance to be understood.<sup>13</sup> He likened musical processes and instances to human experiences, notably in the works of Schubert, and in so doing showed how a piece of music might be read as an analogy for life. More recently, Lawrence Kramer has examined music not from a linguistic point of view, as one might expect when interpreting music, but instead seeking to understand it as a form of cultural practice and what that practice can tell us about the work and its creator. However, he still maintains that music is 'definite enough to support critical interpretations comparable in depth, exactness, and density of connection to interpretations of literary texts', although music does not 'give up' its answers easily.<sup>14</sup> The access point to our interpretation for Kramer is the use of 'hermeneutic windows' which enable us to evaluate the expressive acts contained within musical discourse. He identifies three types of window, which are increasingly difficult to source. The first and easiest to detect are textual inclusions: markings or annotations on the score by the composer, evocative titles, epigraphs, descriptions and the like. Essentially, anything written by the composer that leaves little or no doubt as to how the work can be read and/or interpreted. Secondly, are what he calls citational inclusions: some form of musical reference, either to another work, within the work, or to some form of musical construction. The purpose of these is to make links to other musical works whose meaning is more concrete or more widely understood, to visual images, or to the external world. Finally, the most difficult to locate but which are the most powerfully revealing, Kramer calls 'structural tropes': expressive acts within music that occur and recur under different circumstances. While no hermeneutic approach is flawless, Kramer's accepts that

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<sup>13</sup> Edward T. Cone, 'Schubert's Promissory Note: an Exercise in Musical Hermeneutics', *Nineteenth-Century Music*, Volume 5 (1981–2), pp. 233–41.

<sup>14</sup> Lawrence Kramer, 'Tropes and Windows: An Outline of Musical Hermeneutics', *Music as Cultural Practice, 1800-1900* (Berkeley, 1990).

more than one reading may exist at any one ‘window’ and that they are neither prescriptive nor restrictive.

There are of course numerous other theories, but as this is a thesis about Stanford’s symphonies rather than musical hermeneutics per se, there seems to be little merit in providing a succinct history of the discipline. Although there will be few references made to hermeneutic literature throughout the ensuing discussion, Kramer’s theories will be very much in the background, as well as those of Gary Tomlinson and Susan McClary, although the latter more in rejection than acceptance.

Along with an understanding of hermeneutics, notions of nationalism and a state of national consciousness are also fundamental to this thesis. What a nation is and what makes someone part of a nation has been the subject of discussion for centuries. Although most recent theories posit that nationalism as we might understand it today only emerged in the last few hundred years, mankind has separated himself into distinct communities according to various criteria throughout its history.

What is so important about the existence of nations? Throughout history, humans have formed groups of various kinds around criteria that are used to distinguish ‘us’ from ‘them’. One such group is the nation. Many thousands, indeed millions, have died in wars on behalf of their nation, as they did in World Wars I and II during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, perhaps the cruellest of all centuries. This is one of the reasons why it is so important to understand what a nation is: this tendency of humanity to divide itself into distinct, and often conflicting, groups.<sup>15</sup>

But what is a nation, and how does this have an effect on our understanding of Stanford’s music? I will deal with the first part of this question here and the thesis will, I hope, attempt to address the second. The study of nations and nationalism is complicated by the fact that many terms are used interchangeably, where in fact they have subtly different meanings. Nation and country, for example, are frequently used in such a manner, where in

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<sup>15</sup> Steven Grosby, *Nationalism* (Oxford, 2005), p. 1.

fact they can mean very different things. Understanding these terms is, however, no easy task. It is probably easier to define a country than a nation, understanding the former as an autonomous political entity that is physically defined by geographical borders and/or other distinguishing features. Invariably nations and countries can be synonymous, however they are mutually exclusive: a nation can exist without a country, or at least this will certainly be the assumption for the purposes of this discussion. How then might we understand a nation?

*The nation is a territorial community of nativity.* One is born into a nation. The significance attributed to this biological fact of birth into the historically evolving, territorial structure of the cultural community of the nation is why the nation is one among a number of forms of kinship. It differs from other forms of kinship such as the family because of the centrality of territory. It differs from other territorial societies such as tribe, city-state, or various 'ethnic groups' not merely by the greater extent of its territory, but also because of its relatively uniform culture that provides stability, that is, continuation over time.<sup>16</sup>

The emergence and evolution of nations is difficult to track and trace, not least as their definition is all too often so uncertain that it ceases to be of any real use. What can be said, and which is alluded to in the above quotation if not stated, is that it is part of a state of consciousness as much as it is a state of being. Memory, shared experience and, more often than not, imagination are central to its essence. It is this concept of imagination, and notably with regard to communities, that has influenced Benedict Anderson's seminal discussion on nationalism in *Imagined Communities*.<sup>17</sup> In this he posits the theory that a nation is a community, a fact that probably goes without saying when referring to nationalism, but that this community is effectively the product of imagination. A nation is born through shared experiences and the ability for a community to acknowledge the shared nature of these experiences. Through this process of sharing, individuals are grouped together into these communities, bound not necessarily by political or geographical affiliations per se, even though these invariably do come hand in hand with nationalism, but through an allegiance

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p. 7.

<sup>17</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of Nationalism* (London, 1983).

and subscription to that which these shared experiences represent. Of course, crucial to this emergence is the ability for the community to share their experiences and understanding of national status. It is primarily due to this reason for scholars such as Anderson and Liah Greenfeld that nationalism and the nation in this sense are the products of the ‘modern’ industrialised age. The advent of the printing press, a gradual increase in literacy, and the mobilisation of these and other factors enabled nationalist sentiments to be disseminated across a large body of people.<sup>18</sup> This distinguishes the nation from the tribe, city-state etc., in that it represents a significant, large body of individuals, sometimes spread over a wide area, rather than a smaller and more concentrated group. On this logic, nations and nationalist sentiments can transcend geo-political boundaries.

For the purposes of this thesis, however, while understanding the nature of nations and nationalism is of fundamental importance, so too is the way in which different competing national(ist) tendencies, traits and opinions can coexist and/or compete with one another in a given musical work or works. Furthermore, the particular situation present in Ireland during the closing decades of the nineteenth century, its relationship with Britain and the Empire, and, in turn the relationship of these three entities with the European mainstream of artistic expression as defined by the practices of Austro-Germanic composers.

Nationalism should not be equated with the possession or display of distinguishing national characteristics – or not, at any rate, until certain questions are asked and at least provisionally answered. The most important ones are, first, who is doing the distinguishing? and second, to what end? Just as there were nations before there was nationalism, music has always exhibited local or national traits (often more apparent to outsiders than to those exhibiting them). Nor is musical nationalism invariably a matter of exhibiting or valuing stylistic peculiarities. Nationality is a condition; nationalism is an attitude.<sup>19</sup>

If we accept Taruskin’s view that music has always exhibited local traits and that these traits were often more apparent to outsiders than to those exhibiting them, by which he

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<sup>18</sup> See Anderson 1983 & Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Harvard, 1992).

<sup>19</sup> Richard Taruskin, ‘Nationalism’, in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/50846> (accessed August 30, 2012).

presumably means the composer, what kind of national expression are we left with? The implication seems to be that composers inherently pour their national being into their artistic creations, inadvertently 'giving away' their national status without realising it. Furthermore, this kind of nationalist expression can only be understood on a more international level, rather than being critiqued and/or appreciated internally and locally. To word it bluntly, in the case of Stanford one might say that he was an Irish composer who continually resorted to writing music that exhibited stereotypical Irish characteristics that both he himself and the wider Irish population either did not or could not appreciate, and it was only his non-Irish audience who could understand the nature and significance of this almost hidden musical language. If one was to accept this provocative reading, it suggests that to talk about music in national terms is to talk about it at the level of the lowest common denominator. If nationality is a condition, as Taruskin states, it is one that manifests itself irrespective of compositional intent. Such an understanding could lead us to conclude that Stanford was Irish, could not help being Irish, and thus his music inevitably displays Irish characteristics, where the reality is that Stanford and his relationship with Ireland is considerably more complex

Before continuing discussion of Stanford within an Irish context, however, it is important to raise at this point that Stanford's claims for nationality have been the subject of contention for some time. Arnold Bax, in his autobiography, stated that Stanford simply 'wasn't Irish enough',<sup>20</sup> an unusual comment to make, perhaps, given that Bax had no direct claims to being Irish himself. While others have perhaps addressed the issue more subtly, Stanford's national position is by no means a simple one, and it is in understanding the complicated political and social milieu in which the composer existed that we can ever hope to begin to understand not only what forms of national expression are used in his music, but also what the significance of these gestures might be.

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<sup>20</sup> Arnold Bax, *Farewell, my youth* (London, 1943), p. 27.

## **BRITISH NATIONALISM VS. IRISH NATIONALISM**

One problem particular to the study of British and Irish music of this period is that neither country, accepting for the time being that Ireland in the nineteenth century was a country, followed trends in political nationalist behaviour that we can witness in much of Europe at the same time.

The 19th century, which saw the rise of nationalism to supremacy among ideologies, fostered it in both its progressive and reactionary guises, and in both its actively political and its passively 'cultural' forms.<sup>21</sup>

During the nineteenth century, the desire to express national sentiments was primarily due either to emerging nation states wishing to assert themselves and their identity on a more international level, or for nation states which were under some form of occupation to assert their individual cultural identity over and above that of their occupier(s). One might look to the emergence of Germany as a nation state, for example, or the plight of Czech composers while their country was subsumed by the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Similarly, one might look to post-Revolutionary France, unified Italy, occupied Finland, and numerous other countries where the expression of nationalist sentiment was crucial to binding together either a new nation or one where their national status was under threat.

Britain and Ireland present two individual case scenarios, at least within European terms, during the period. Both of these will be dealt with throughout the thesis, but it seems prudent to outline my understanding of the situation which, in turn, has had a profound influence on the way in which I have interpreted Stanford's music.

Firstly, dealing with Britain. One thing which must be stated immediately is that, when dealing with Victorian and Imperial Britain, one is often faced with the

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

interchangeability of the terms Britain and England. England was the core which formed the Union, emerging over a period of centuries before the 1801 Act of Union finally included Ireland into this political entity, formally uniting the British Isles. Liah Greenfeld posits the theory that England was itself the first nation in the world, the exact date of its emergence being unclear but that it was certainly a nation by the year 1600.<sup>22</sup> Whereas by the year 1800 many European nations were only beginning to emerge and come together as single units, and accepting that Britain and England are essentially one in the same, Britain had existed in this state for at least two centuries, arguably negating its need to assert its identity on a more international level. Furthermore, as the most powerful and influential nation of the period with an Empire stretching quite literally across the globe, Britain's power was, at least during most of the nineteenth century, never under any real question or threat. While Britain could be, and indeed was, a proud nation, this pride could afford to be more understated as, for the British, there was little if any insecurity connected with it, as one might expect from an emerging nation still finding its national feet, so to speak.

Ireland, on the other hand, presents a totally different picture. As a member of the Union from 1801, the dawn of the nineteenth century represents the next step in what had been, for them, centuries of oppression and foreign occupation. However, while officially part of the Union, and thus part of Great Britain the national entity, Ireland's actual national status is considerably less clear-cut. On the one hand it was a constituent country within the Union, in the same way that Scotland was, for example; yet on the other its membership of the Union brought few, if any, noticeable changes, and thus at times Ireland was treated more as a neglected colony than part of the British political mainstream. On this level, one might consider Ireland to be akin to other 'colonised' nations, such as Finland and Bohemia, for example, in that it was a nation state that was being subsumed by an imperial power.

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<sup>22</sup> Greenfeld 1993.

However, it is probably at that point where the similarities end in that, although an oppressed people who fought hard for independence throughout the century, so many competing factions vied for dominance during this period that no one consensus could be reached on what being Irish actually meant. The historical events of the century, which saw Ireland continually devastated by one instance after another, certainly did not help the situation, but what we see emerging in nineteenth-century Ireland is a confused body of people, whose only common goal was to be rid of the British, a goal that, while emotive, was not, of itself, sufficient to unite them together productively.

# STANFORD AND THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY SYMPHONIC PARADIGM

Since Bach's death, the rule as to fugue has been, "First learn to write one, and then don't." It is time, and has been ever since Beethoven's death, to extend the rule to the symphony.<sup>1</sup>

By virtue of its size, scale and the ever increasing aesthetic expectation placed upon it in the wake of Beethoven's contribution to the genre, the symphony in the nineteenth century became one of the most important musical forms for a composer to approach. In many ways it could be seen as the measuring stick against which a composer's worth could be assessed. Furthermore, the appeal of the symphony continued to grow throughout the latter part of the eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth. Although it started life as a form more concerned with entertaining than making more profound statements, the nature of the symphony chimed with political and social ideals of the nineteenth century in a way that no other genre managed.

Performed by a large number of players on a diverse range of instruments and projected to a large gathering of listeners, the symphony came to be seen as the most monumental of all instrumental genres. The all-embracing tone of the symphony was understood to represent the emotions or ideas not merely of the individual composer but of an entire community, be it a city, a state, or the whole of humanity. As reflected in the writings of such critics as Paul Bekker, Arnold Schering and Theodor Adorno, this perspective continued into the 20th century, yet by the end of the century it was all but lost. It nevertheless constitutes one of the essential elements in perceptions of the symphony throughout the 19th century. Indeed, the essence of this perspective is evident as early as 1774 in Schulz's entry on the Symphony for J.G. Sulzer's *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste*, where Schulz likened the symphony to a 'choral work for instruments', in which no single voice predominates but in which, rather, 'every voice is making its own particular contribution to the whole'. It was specifically in this latter connection that Schulz compared the symphony to a Pindaric ode, a work written to be sung in communal celebrations by a large chorus and expressing the ideas of an entire community, as opposed to those of the poet alone.<sup>2</sup>

Although other genres managed to combine some of these features, the symphony's ability to give voice to both individual and public sentiments appealed to both composers and

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<sup>1</sup> G. B. Shaw, 'The Second Richter Concert this season', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 15 May 1888.

<sup>2</sup> Mark Evan Bonds, 'Symphony II: 19<sup>th</sup> Century', in Jan Larue, et al. 'Symphony', in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/27254pg2> (accessed August 30, 2012).

audiences throughout the nineteenth century and came to represent a monumental, community-building effort. Beethoven's incorporation of voices and poetry in his final symphony only enhanced this further.<sup>3</sup> However, as Bonds has noted, although the genre outwardly demonstrates a great deal of coherence, beneath the superficial appearance of symphonic works lies a complicated, even troubled, history in which composers continued to struggle with attempts to retain a sense of artistic integrity in their works.

Symphonic practice in later nineteenth-century Europe was no unitary activity that we should collapse into a crisp, linear narrative. The reality was messier. It would be more accurate to regard the world of orchestral composition as an arena of competing ideologies and diverse aims, a field of energy and circulation.<sup>4</sup>

## **BEETHOVEN AND THE SYMPHONIC PARADIGM**

Although contemporary musicology would discourage us from viewing history from the perspective of 'great' people, usually men, doing 'great' things, there is no denying that Beethoven's impact on the symphony in the nineteenth century was hugely significant. His First Symphony, composed in 1801, appeared on the musical scene at a point in history when instrumental music was emerging as the dominant musical form, eclipsing the importance of vocal music which had reigned supreme for centuries.<sup>5</sup> This was by no means a new phenomenon and Beethoven was building on decades of success that the symphony had already enjoyed in the eighteenth century in which it rose to be the primary instrumental genre of the Classical era. However, while the importance of composers of this earlier period, notably but by no means exclusively Mozart and Haydn, was being recognised, Beethoven's contribution to the symphony at a point in history when the aesthetic importance of the genre

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<sup>3</sup> See Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> James Hepokoski, 'Beethoven reception: the symphonic tradition' in *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Music*, ed. Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 424.

<sup>5</sup> See Bonds, 'Symphony II: 19<sup>th</sup> Century'.

was finally being recognised exposed him to a level and degree of critical attention that enabled his works to gain almost iconic status during his own lifetime.

Beethoven nevertheless played a central role in transforming the genre at a crucial moment in its history, and his direct impact would continue to be felt by several subsequent generations of symphonists. Particularly from the 'Eroica' onwards, Beethoven was seen to have explored a variety of ways in which instrumental music could evoke images and ideas transcending the world of sound. The notation of a 'poetic idea' has been a central constant in the reception of Beethoven's instrumental music from the composer's own day down to the present, and nowhere is this understanding more evident than in the reception of the Fifth Symphony. Long before Anton Schindler had related Beethoven's putative comment about the work's opening – 'Thus fate knocks at the door' – E.T.A. Hoffmann and others had perceived in this symphony an idealized trajectory of struggle leading to victory.<sup>6</sup>

During the twenty-five years or so in which Beethoven engaged with the symphonic form it is probably fair to say that the composer continued to innovate and surprise. Beethoven explored a wide variety of compositional techniques and approaches in his symphonies to the extent that it is impossible to speak of a 'Beethovenian' symphonic plan or model, unless we adopt the perspective that there are in fact nine different possible Beethovenian symphonic trajectories that could be traced from the composer and his music.

Much could be said, and indeed already has, about the contribution of Beethoven to the symphony and the subsequent journey that his legacy took through the following century. Asserting that the nineteenth-century symphony and the course that it took was a (post-)Beethovenian phenomenon would create a neat teleological historical narrative, which as Hepokoski has noted was far from the case.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, contemporary musicology would certainly dissuade us from viewing such a narrative in this way. However, there is no denying that Beethoven's influence over the symphonic genre throughout much of the nineteenth century was significant. Whether we look at the writings of those such as Schumann or Hoffmann, or even at Brahms's intense anxieties over the form, we do need at least to accept

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Hepokoski, Ibid, p. 427.

that Beethoven was viewed in this manner both contemporaneously and for many decades of musicology. The earliest recognisable musicological investigations used Beethoven as a measuring stick for compositional practice. A. B. Marx for example, lecturing in Berlin in the 1830s, examined Beethoven's symphonic form, and Schumann famously stated that 'When the German speaks of symphonies, he means Beethoven. The two names are for him one and indivisible.'<sup>8</sup> These references, along with many such others made to Beethoven the composer within such a conceptual construct, almost certainly fuelled the notion in the nineteenth century that any composer approaching the symphonic form had first to reconcile themselves with Beethoven's symphonies.

Schumann's writings from the later 1830s brought together three convictions: (1) the Germanic post-Beethovenian symphony must retain a strong, ethical component; it needed to be underpinned with moral seriousness and consistency of national character and not lose itself in special effects, amusement or divertissement; (2) in the absence of a foregrounded problematisation or transformation in individual works, 'traditional form' decayed into insipid formula; and (3) the resulting formal shapes, whatever their relationship to tradition might be, needed justification through a strong expressive content, implicit or explicit, that could draw the movements together under a single conception. His subsequent four symphonies (1841–51) were doubtless intended as object-lessons. In beguilingly ingenious ways each of them seeks to reconcile earnest, Beethovenian (self-consciously 'Classical') sonorities with formal experimentation.<sup>9</sup>

What Schumann observes is that post-Beethovenian symphonic composers had to reconcile the tension between tradition and innovation. The symphony, to an extent by default, was a traditional form that represented a compositional practice extending well back into the eighteenth century. The form was essentially fixed, albeit with some scope for manipulation, and audiences no doubt had expectations with regard to overall structure and musical treatment when they encountered such a work. However, for the genre to continue to prosper, and to retain artistic integrity and legitimacy, the symphony also had to display innovative aspects. Indeed, this need for innovation surely inspired Wagner's own observations on the symphony as a whole, as expressed in his various critical writings,

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<sup>8</sup> Robert Schumann, *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, (2 July 1839), p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Hepokoski, *Ibid*, p. 427.

notably those on Beethoven and his Ninth Symphony, and developments throughout the nineteenth century suggest that he was by no means the only composer who questioned the role of the symphony in nineteenth-century composition. The rise of the symphonic poem, pioneered by Liszt in the 1850s, suggests that whilst the symphonic principle could provide composers with ways of articulating their thoughts and emotions within a musical construction, the symphony itself was not necessarily the ideal vehicle for this. This rise of course was part of a larger struggle between absolute and programme music in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

What Beethoven succeeded in doing was to create nine symphonic works rooted in traditional compositional practice that, at the same time, forged a new path for the genre. These included expansion of form, notably in the Third Symphony, integration of cyclic motivic treatment as in the Fifth Symphony, blurring of the boundaries between absolute and programmatic music as in the Sixth, and, most notably, using the symphony to make a profound statement on the nature of humanity as in the Ninth Symphony, also remarkable in its use of the human voice as part of the expressive quality. However, and this is essentially what Shaw remarks upon, Beethoven himself has already provided the symphony with a nineteenth-century response. His works, based in Classical practice, combined the traditional with the innovative, leaving subsequent composers with little more to say, or at least if there was something more to be said it had to be done so on an even greater level.

Subsequent symphonies can, and indeed have been read within the context of a Beethovenian response. Schumann's symphonies, as Hepokoski has himself highlighted, can almost certainly be read not only in response to Beethoven's works but also in response to Schumann's own commentaries on the symphony. His contemporary, Mendelssohn, also composed five symphonies, of which at least four can be seen to address some of the issues composers were faced with. The Second Symphony, *Lobgesang*, surely was a response to

Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. The Third and Fourth symphonies, with their quasi-programmatic intent, are arguably influenced by Beethoven's own use of the programmatic, and the sacred aspects of the Fifth Symphony, with its integration of Lutheran chorale melodies, could also be read as an instrumental response or equivalent to the transcendental message of the text in Beethoven's last symphonic work. These are but two early examples, and numerous studies of the symphony have themselves wrestled with the extent to which the Beethovenian legacy extended through the century.

We cannot avoid that time and time again, almost every major composer from the nineteenth century who approached the symphony had to decide, in one way or another, how to respond to Beethoven's symphonic legacy. They could not copy his style, whichever one they might choose, but similarly they felt compelled to write works that at least confirmed their awareness of the composer's contribution and how their works would retain a sense of legitimacy in a post-Beethovenian symphonic world. Of course, many might see this as being a specifically Austro-Germanic problem only affecting those operating within this tradition, especially if we accept Schumann's observation that the symphony was the property of the Germans. However, we cannot limit the importance and influence of the Austro-Germanic tradition to this one geographical area and the composers active there. Bonds observes that 'For all practical purposes, the 19th-century symphony was for many decades an essentially German genre, not only by virtue of the nationality of its outstanding practitioners, but indeed by its very nature.'<sup>10</sup> Composers from across the European continent, and indeed further afield, could not write symphonies without at least being aware of the Central European school, and even when they attempted to distinguish their works from those of Beethoven and his potential 'successors' they still acknowledged the primacy of this tradition.

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<sup>10</sup> Bonds, 'Symphony II: 19<sup>th</sup> Century'.

## STANFORD AND THE SYMPHONY

It is against this wider European symphonic backdrop, with its Beethoven legacy issues and the attempts of subsequent composers operating both within and without of the Austro-Germanic tradition, that we must assess Stanford's early exposure to and subsequent engagement with the symphony and the symphonic form.

In Victorian and post-Victorian England, the symphony came to be a significant genre and a test of supreme accomplishment for native composers. English composers saw a need to pursue it as part of a validation process that indeed England was capable of producing a composer comparable to the great German symphonists: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Mendelssohn, and Brahms. As a result, the composers of British birth or residence are to some degree clones of one or more of the Germans.<sup>11</sup>

The theme of German deference will be a recurring one when dealing with Stanford's symphonic output, and indeed it is true that many of his symphonies owe a stylistic debt to several symphonists from the Austro-Germanic tradition, notably Mendelssohn and Schumann, with an increasing influence of Brahms. However, to sum up Stanford's symphonies within this context is to miss the point, at least in part, and, as will be argued, that these works owe something to the Austro-Germanic tradition does not immediately mean that they exist in a nationalistic state of limbo, incapable of joining that tradition due to the composer's national heritage, but also prevented from joining a native tradition due to their more international musical leanings.

Quite when Stanford first encountered the symphony is unclear. We know surprisingly little about Stanford and his actual background, and much of what we do know has to be based on informed conjecture derived from his various writings, most notably his quasi-autobiographical publication of 1914, *Pages from an Unwritten Diary*. As Stanford kept no actual diary that we know of and little of his correspondence survives it is from this

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<sup>11</sup> A. Peter Brown, *The Symphonic Repertoire, Volume 3b: The European symphony ca. 1800-ca. 1930 : Great Britain, Russia and France* (Indiana, 2008), p. 241.

and a couple of other similar publications that we are able to build an at least partial picture of his life, and in particular his early musical experiences.<sup>12</sup> We know from *Pages from an Unwritten Diary* that he attended many operatic performances during his childhood in Dublin, and this is unsurprising given that historical evidence shows that opera was the favoured musical pastime of members of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy in Dublin in the mid to late-nineteenth century when Stanford was resident there. Many touring opera companies would travel across the Irish Sea to Dublin when visiting Britain and so Dublin enjoyed a lively operatic tradition at this time. However, it is unclear how much symphonic music Stanford would have had access to. There are no mentions whatsoever in any of his writings of any symphonies from his Dublin years. That is not to say that he did not experience any symphonic music during his childhood, nor that it necessarily had little impact upon him. However, it is somewhat surprising that he gives no mention to any of these possible experiences. There were societies in Dublin that would have been performing orchestral music of some sort, notably the Dublin Philharmonic Society and the Anacreontic Society, and it is quite possible that Stanford would have attended performances by at least one of the two given his musical background, but beyond this assumption we know little about what, if anything he would have heard, and given that he does talk about the dearth of orchestral ability in Dublin during his childhood it is equally possible that he avoided performances by the groups. Stanford also visited London in two summers during the 1860s and he mentions that he attended a number of concerts at the Crystal Palace, although we know nothing about the music he heard or his opinions of this, perhaps unsurprising given that this was recanted in *Pages from an Unwritten Diary* which was written some fifty years later. He would not have been able to attend any of Augustus Manns's popular Saturday Concerts at the Crystal Palace during either of his visits as these did not continue during the summer months,

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<sup>12</sup> See also Charles Villiers Stanford, *Studies and Memories* (London, 1908), and *Interludes, Records and Reflections* (London, 1922).

assuming that Stanford was there for some period between July and September on each occasion.

However, whilst it is possible that Stanford experienced little or no symphonic music performed orchestrally during his childhood, this does not mean that he had no access to the repertoire at all in some form. Stanford was a child in an era when music publishing was thriving and, given that the only ways one could experience music was through a live performance either as a performer or an audience member, many orchestral works, including symphonies, were published in piano reductions that Stanford may well have played, especially given his extraordinary piano technique. Furthermore, it is also possible that Stanford would have at least encountered some of the popular orchestral repertoire of the time whilst in the organ loft at St. Patrick's Cathedral. Stanford studied the organ for many years with Sir Robert Prescott Stewart who was well-known for performing large orchestral works on the organ either from the full score or from memory. Indeed, Stewart was not alone in this activity as it was in fact a widespread practice amongst British organists well into the early twentieth century, a fact that is supported by the publication by W. T. Best of *Arrangements from the Scores of the Great Masters*, so popular that over one hundred volumes were published between 1862-74.<sup>13</sup> Stanford was inspired by Stewart and his mastery of the organ, and his recital programmes from when he was elected organist at Trinity College, Cambridge, shortly before completing his undergraduate studies confirm that Stanford also took up the practice of performing works from the orchestral repertoire alongside original compositions for the organ.<sup>14</sup>

While the extent to which Stanford encountered the symphonic form in his youth remains questionable, there can be little doubt that the still young composer, during a number

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<sup>13</sup> William Thomas Best, ed., *Arrangements from the Scores of the Great Masters* (London, 1862-74).

<sup>14</sup> It should be noted that for much of the nineteenth century very little original organ music was readily available in published editions and so many organists were forced to seek inspiration from instrumental works.

of study visits to Germany in the early 1870s, initially to Leipzig with Reineke and subsequently to Berlin with Kiel, would have been exposed to a wealth of musical styles and traditions, especially the symphony. Furthermore, before his formal studies in Germany, Stanford would visit Leipzig in 1873 for the Schumann Festival, where the composer records he attended performances of a number of the latter's symphonic works.<sup>15</sup> These works clearly made a great impression on the young Stanford, and his first symphonic essay, composed only a couple of years later, is testament to the impact that his German visits had on his early instrumental style.

### **SYMPHONY NO. 1 IN B FLAT MAJOR (1876)**

Stanford began work on his First Symphony during the Lent Term of 1876, following one of his two study periods with Reineke in Leipzig, in what became an extremely active compositional period. Leipzig in the nineteenth century was a veritable hub of musical activity, drawing aspiring composers and music students from far and wide. As Dibble has noted, in the eighteenth century the Thomasschule had acted as a focal point for much musical activity in the city, and Mendelssohn's Bach revival of the 1840s helped to 'seal Leipzig's status as the Mecca of all Bach devotees.'<sup>16</sup> The city attracted composers including Grieg, Sullivan and Parry to name but a few whose experiences there almost certainly had a profound impact on their own compositional styles. However, Leipzig also succeeded in fostering an attitude of conservatism in relation to musical performance, notably through the agency of the Gewandhaus.<sup>17</sup> Under the direction of Reineke, Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert became canonised to the exclusion of many other composers, notably Wagner and

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<sup>15</sup> Charles Villiers Stanford, *Pages from an Unwritten Diary* (London, 1914), pp. 132-135.

<sup>16</sup> Dibble 2002, p. 60.

<sup>17</sup> George B. Stauffer, "Leipzig", *Grove Music Online: Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press (last accessed April 29, 2013, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/16353>).

Lizst, and even Brahms was greeted with ‘modest enthusiasm’.<sup>18</sup> This performance tradition, coupled with Stanford’s own studies with Reineke almost certainly would have instilled in the still young and impressionable composer a sense of symphonic form and style that was heavily rooted in early-nineteenth-century practice, a tendency that his own early symphonic works appear to affirm.

Alongside the inevitable symphonic influences of the Leipzig school, one other work which stands out, and which has some relevance for the First Symphony, is his set of six waltzes, written for both piano solo and piano duet and which were completed in February of that year. Each a Ländler and possibly written as a musical response to his Viennese visit in 1875, the six dances show an obvious debt to the musical style of the genre as epitomised by composers of the Strauss family, along with others such as Schubert, Hummel, Brahms, and Herzogenberg.<sup>19</sup> Even at this early stage in his career, Stanford’s musical style was showing a propensity for the Austro-Germanic mainstream, a fascination that would verge on obsession for much of his creative life.

Although the early part of 1876 was clearly very active, until this point in his career Stanford had composed relatively little large-scale instrumental music, and certainly little for orchestral forces. This is not to say that he had composed nothing at all, however, in this respect. Amongst his early works we find a Piano Concerto in B flat major, written for a performance in Cambridge in 1873, along with a Violin Concerto of 1875. Two concert overtures also date from this period, one in A minor (1870) and one in B flat major, the date of which is ambiguous as it was not performed until 1877, but is believed to date from this early part of the 1870s.<sup>20</sup> Other than these works, and assorted songs and solo works, very little substantial music can be traced in Stanford’s early output, not even chamber works,

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 62.

<sup>19</sup> Dibble 2002, p. 78.

<sup>20</sup> See Dibble 2002, p. 476.

which would occupy an important position in the composer's later career. This is perhaps unsurprising for a composer who was only in his early 20s and who was still finding his compositional feet, bearing in mind that although Stanford had showed almost prodigious musical talent at an early age, it could by no means be comparable to that of composers such as Mendelssohn who, comparatively, had of course achieved a great deal by the age of 24. However, the call of the Alexandra Palace in 1876 for a competition for 'the best Orchestral Symphonies to be written by British Composers' was too great for the ambitious composer to ignore.

Although, as Dibble has noted, historically Britain at the time has not been viewed as a land of great symphonists,<sup>21</sup> the competition that the Alexandra Palace promoted appears to have inspired a number of young composers, attracting possibly as many as forty-six entries.<sup>22</sup> The competition was judged by violinist Joseph Joachim and composer George Macfarren and the first prize of £20 was awarded to F. W. Davenport for his symphony in D major. The second prize of £5 and the award of a performance of his symphony by the Alexandra Palace Orchestra with the conductor Thomas Weist-Hill was made to Stanford, although there is no record of this performance having taken place, a fact corroborated by the programme for the 1879 performance with the Crystal Palace Orchestra and Augustus Manns, which refers to it being the work's première.<sup>23</sup> There is some question over the fairness and objectivity of the decision as Davenport was both a pupil of Macfarren's and his

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<sup>21</sup> See Jeremy Dibble, 'Parry, Stanford and the pursuit of the British Symphony 1880-1910', *Brio* Spring/Summer 1995, vol. 32 no. 1 pp. 3-19 for a fuller discussion of changing perceptions towards the actual history of the genre.

<sup>22</sup> Forty-six appears to be widely accepted as the number of composers who entered the competition, although A. P. Brown refers to there being some question as to how many actually entered, and the *Musical Times* on 1 May 1876 mentions that 38 symphonies were submitted. However, even the programme for the symphony's first performance refers to there having been forty-six entrants, so it would seem fairly safe to assume this number is accurate.

<sup>23</sup> See Appendix I.

son-in-law, but as Brown has noted ‘it was Stanford who became a significant composer while Davenport became merely a blip in the history of British music.’<sup>24</sup>

The symphony is cast in a four-movement plan with the dance and slow movements reversed in order, a technique that Stanford would employ in several of his symphonies, and with a musical language that appears primarily to be indebted to the symphonic works of Beethoven, Schumann and Mendelssohn. In alluding to such figures Stanford appears to be both engaging with and affirming the significance of the Austro-Germanic symphonic tradition, an act which was an integral part of many composers’ relationships with the symphony in the latter part of the nineteenth century.<sup>25</sup> Works that appear to be especially relevant in the case of Stanford’s B-flat symphony are Beethoven’s Third and Seventh symphonies, along with the majority of Schumann’s symphonies, including the First, Second and Fourth. It is interesting to note that, given that these were the same composers that Brahms himself appears to have turned to for his own symphonic inspiration, it could well be suggested that Stanford’s own symphonies and his style can be seen as evolving alongside those of some of his continental contemporaries, rather than being derived directly from them.

With almost all of Stanford’s symphonies, traditional forms are at the forefront of his compositional process, especially in the outer movements of each work. As a composer who clearly venerated the Austro-Germanic tradition, it is perhaps unsurprising that he should place such weight and emphasis on these two movements which, in the case of so many nineteenth-century works, act as colossal musical pillars supporting their large-scale musical structures. However, while in almost all of the symphonies we see considerable weight placed upon these, and indeed the respective discussions of each work will place similar

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<sup>24</sup> Brown, p. 93.

<sup>25</sup> See James Hepokoski, ‘Sibelius’ in Holoman, D. Kern (ed), *The Nineteenth-Century Symphony* (New York: Schirmer, 1997), pp. 417-421.

significance upon these movements, it is perhaps in the inner movements, even in the earlier works, where we begin to get a greater glimpse of Stanford as an individual musical voice, rather than merely as a derivation of the Austro-Germanic style that he has come to be associated with. As a composer engaging with ‘traditional’ musical forms, much of the following consideration of the formal aspect of each work – it should be noted that this thesis does not attempt to provide substantial and provoking analytical commentary on the symphonies from a formal perspective – will consider the extent to which Stanford either conforms to or departs from the norms of these ‘traditional’ forms. James Hepokoski’s work on sonata deformations will be considered while discussing these works, although it is perhaps worth noting that the extent to which Stanford’s music engages with the level of deformation in the way that Hepokoski identifies in the works of composers including Sibelius, Elgar, and Strauss, for example, is questionable and it is not within the scope of this thesis to engage on that level of analytical discourse.

Stanford’s first movement is essentially cast as a sonata movement placed within an introductory-coda framework. The substantial introduction contains two transitional sections whose primary function appears to be to drive momentum towards the movement proper and the primary subject:



Brown notes that this theme shares a number of qualities with the primary theme from Beethoven’s ‘Eroica’ symphony, although crucially without an equivalent to the C#.<sup>26</sup>



<sup>26</sup> Brown, p. 94.

The gestural similarity between both of these themes is indeed immediately apparent and, what is more, this arpeggiated theme is presented three times in both works, at bars 81, 97 and 144 in Stanford's case. Furthermore, there are also similarities between both works' transitions towards the second subject area, beginning at b. 199 in Stanford's movement. However, it should perhaps at this point be noted that these gestural and structural similarities, whilst very apparent, are extremely subtle, so much so that one wonders to what extent they would be noticed by a listener, and similar parallels could almost certainly be drawn between a number of other works. The extent to which Stanford would have been intimately acquainted with Beethoven's music, especially his symphonies, is unclear, not least in the absence of any primary source material of the composer's to consult. His writings make no mention of being familiar with Beethoven's music and there are no records of any symphonic performances in Cambridge either during Stanford's time as an undergraduate or in the years preceding the First Symphony's composition. However, having said this, records from the Trinity College, Cambridge, archive show that in May and June of 1876 each of Stanford's organ recitals given in the college chapel as part of the regular organ recital series contains a Beethoven transcription.<sup>27</sup> His recital on 1 June 1876 even included the slow movement from Beethoven's Fourth Symphony, so it would seem fair to assume, especially coupled with the fact that he studied extensively in Germany, that Stanford would have had some familiarity with Beethoven's symphonic works, and especially one as iconic as the "Eroica".

Like the first subject, the second-subject material is also presented three times, at bars 219, 231 and 267, before the exposition is drawn to a close from b.295 onwards:

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<sup>27</sup> See Muniments, Trinity College Library, Cambridge, Archive 129/8.



Interestingly, the material for this closing section appears to be derived from the first subject. The autograph manuscript indicates that Stanford had intended to repeat this 300-bar expository section, although, perhaps to his advantage given that many reviews of the first performance felt the symphony was too long as it is, he decided to remove this repeat.

Further comparisons with the *'Eroica'* symphony become apparent in Stanford's development section, the similarity lying primarily in the latter's use of 'expansive sequences' based on the first subject (b. 370 onwards).<sup>28</sup> A dialogic interchange between both subjects leads the development section through both dominant and sub-dominant key areas, arriving at a triumphant statement of the first subject in D major at b. 402, before embarking on another expansive tonal shift towards C major, arriving at b. 446. A final move to F major, arriving at b. 497, presented as the dominant to the tonic key of B-flat major, leads into the recapitulatory section at b. 521.

Stanford's recapitulation presents an interesting formal consideration. There is no escaping Stanford's conservative musical leanings, ones which would become ever more apparent in his later career. However, even in this, his first symphony, and indeed its first movement, there is a possible departure, or deformation, from the symphonic 'norm' that would be expected. Rather than using the recapitulation to restate the material from the

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

exposition with the customary tonal reworkings for the second subject area, Stanford completely recomposes the section. The presentation of the first subject begins with the *fortissimo* version from the exposition, suggesting that the composer has omitted the first two subject statements that we find in the movement's opening section. The composer then introduces an additional developmental section, maybe another nod to Beethoven (?), followed by the exposition's closing material, before moving onto the statement of the second subject (b.728). The movement's final tonal closure, which is preceded by a dominant pedal over which the opening theme is heard, does not come until very close to the end of the movement at b. 851, finishing with a triumphant brass fanfare motif, derived from the first subject, with a gesture which shares a great deal with the corresponding moment in Schumann's *'Rhenish' Symphony*.

The Second Movement of the work is a Scherzo in 3-4 time, and in the tempo of the old German Ländler, or slow waltz, of which Beethoven and Schubert wrote so many examples for the dances of the fair Viennese of the first quarter of this century.<sup>29</sup>

Stanford places the dance movement, a Ländler waltz framing two trios, in second place, a technique that can be observed in symphonic works of Potter and Sterndale Bennett. It is surely more than coincidence that Stanford should choose this particular type of dance, given that he had just been working on a set of six Ländler waltzes. The movement opens in a subdued yet stately fashion with the principal theme of the Ländler section in G minor:



<sup>29</sup> Note from the Crystal Palace performance as part of the venue's Saturday Concerts' series directed by Augustus Manns (See Appendix I). The author is unknown, although the initial [G.] is appended to the note, suggesting that it may have been written by Sir George Grove, especially given that he himself was heavily involved with this concert series.

The material moves from the strings to the winds in an almost conversational manner. A cadence into the tonic major leads into the first of the two trios, a sprightly dance in duple time:



Following a brief restatement of the Ländler section, the second trio, a triple-time section in B-flat major, begins:



The theme for this section shares a great deal in common with that of the opening. A final return to the Ländler leads to a short coda (b. 408) before the movement is brought to a gentle close.

In some ways, this is a very unusual ‘scherzo’ given that it shares few if any of the qualities one might expect of what is ‘usually [a] fast-moving’ dance.<sup>30</sup> One wonders why Stanford chose not to use the ‘Minuet and Trio’ label, given that this is essentially what the movement is. Stylistically, the movement also sits somewhat uncomfortably when we consider that it shares a great deal with the dance music of the early nineteenth century, a fact that is noted in the original programme note that states that ‘The Second Movement of the work is a Scherzo in 3-4 time, and in the tempo of the old German *Ländler*, or slow waltz, of which Beethoven and Schubert wrote so many examples for the dances of the fair Viennese

<sup>30</sup> Tilden A. Russell and Hugh Macdonald, ‘Scherzo’, in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/24827> (accessed August 30, 2012).

of the first quarter of this century.<sup>31</sup> Stanford, intentionally or otherwise, appears to align the style of this movement, and possibly the symphony as a whole, with a sound-world some fifty years old. Whatever his intentions, Stanford's choice of movement and style does pose some issues when considering the work's identity, as Brown has noted:

None of this sounds like an Irish composer writing for a potential London audience, but rather a Czech or German trying to delight listeners in Prague, Vienna, or possibly Berlin.<sup>32</sup>

Although many of the reviews of the first performance were ambivalent or indifferent about this work, almost all of them felt that the slow movement was the most successful of the four. It is unclear why, but Stanford seems to have found in his slow symphonic movements an ability to express himself as an individual with considerably more clarity than in other symphonic movements. He tended to adopt a freer musical form, and perhaps it was this ability to escape from the stricter form constrictions of the outer movements that enabled him to explore his own musical voice more fully. The movement is structured around a series of musical refrains, which seems to hearken to the British choral and organ tradition that Stanford was so familiar with, creating a 'euphonious' movement of great sensitivity and originality.<sup>33</sup> This is the one moment in the whole symphony in which there are no immediately apparent links or references to other composers and their music:

Even in this early symphony, Stanford offers a thoroughly affecting composition almost without any echoes of Beethoven, Mendelssohn, or Schumann, and with none of the awkward moments observed in the opening movement.<sup>34</sup>

The principal theme of the refrain sections, and indeed from which a large amount of the motivic material in this movement is derived, is first heard at the very outset on muted strings:

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<sup>31</sup> Crystal Palace concert programme.

<sup>32</sup> Brown, p. 95.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Brown, p. 96.

**Andante tranquillo** (♩ = 84)

arco, con sordini  
 p  
 arco, con sordini  
 p  
 arco, con sordini  
 p  
 arco  
 p

Stanford subsequently weaves an intricate musical tapestry around this idea, utilising solo cadenzas and references to more intimate chamber scoring, another technique that will become increasingly prevalent in his slow movements, creating a symphonic movement that was almost without parallel at the time. Curiously, the original programme note and press reviews of the work’s première suggest that Irish inflections can be detected in this movement, notably in ‘the omission of the “seventh” and the three concluding slow notes are both Irish peculiarities, reminding us pleasantly of Mr. Stanford’s nationality.’<sup>35</sup> That Stanford should choose to inject a sense of Irish identity in his symphonic works is not, of itself, surprising. As Hepokoski has noted, there was a customary tradition to which non-Germanic symphonists were expected to aspire:

...that of the eclectic “nationalists,” who paid homage to the *Formenlehre* structures and their deformations but illuminated them with melodies, harmonies, and rhythms perceived as “national” or in touch with the “folk.”<sup>36</sup>

Whether or not Stanford is actually engaging with this symphony in the nationalist sense that contemporary reports suggested is questionable, and certainly he is no doing so on the same level as that which can be seen in his Third Symphony, for example. It is, however,

<sup>35</sup> Crystal Palace concert programme.

<sup>36</sup> Hepokoski, ‘Sibelius’, p. 420.

interesting to note that, even in these early symphonic works, Stanford's nationality is an ever-present aspect of their reception, and possibly even their conception.

The finale, like the opening movement, is a sonata structure set within an introduction-coda framework, although in this case the introduction is condensed into eight bars as opposed to the more expansive first movement. The introduction shares a great deal, possibly even too much, with the corresponding passage in Schumann's First Symphony:

### Stanford Symphony no. 1/4, bb.1-12

The image shows a page of a musical score for the first movement of Stanford's Symphony No. 1, measures 1-12. The tempo is marked "Allegro molto" with a quarter note equal to 104 (♩ = 104). The key signature is two flats (B-flat major or D-flat minor) and the time signature is common time (C). The score is arranged in a standard orchestral layout with the following parts from top to bottom: 2 Oboes (2 Ob.), 2 Clarinets in B-flat (2 Cl. in Bb), 2 Bassoons (2 Bsn.), 2 Horns in B-flat Basso (2 Hr. Bb Basso), Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Contrabass (Cb.). The music begins with a dynamic of *ff* (fortissimo) in measures 1-4. In measure 5, there is a first ending bracket labeled "1." leading to a *ff* passage. In measure 6, the dynamic changes to *f* (forte). In measure 7, there is a second ending bracket labeled "2." leading to a *f* passage. The score concludes in measure 12 with a *ff* dynamic. The woodwinds (Ob., Cl., Bsn., Hr.) have rests for most of the first six measures before entering in measure 7. The strings (Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Vc., Cb.) play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes throughout the first six measures.

(continued)

2 Fl. *ff* *f*

2 Ob. *ff* *f*

2 Cl. in Bb *ff* *f*

2 Bsn. *ff* *f*

2 Hr. Bb Basso *f*

2 Tpt in Bb

3 Trom. *f*

Timp. *f*

Vln. I *f*

Vln. II *f*

Vla. *f*

Vc. *f*

Cb. *f*

## Schumann Symphony no. 1/4, bb. 1-6

**Allegro animato e grazioso**  $\text{♩} = 100$  **rit.**

2 Fl.  
2 Ob.  
2 Cl. in Bb  
2 Bsn.  
2 Hn. in F  
2 Hn. in Bb  
2 Tpt. in Bb  
Alt. & Ten. Trom.  
B. Trom.  
Timp.  
Vln. I  
Vln. II  
Vla.  
Vc.  
Cb.

In addition to this, the Finale as a whole would seem to share a great deal with the Schumann movement, which Brown has also noted:

Stanford's [primary subject material] (m.9) also reminds one of Schumann with its full sonorities of the sort found in many of the piano works (e.g. Carnival, Opus 9, Symphonic Etudes, Opus 13). [Stanford's transitional material] (m.60) corresponds to Schumann's First Symphony in its orchestration, while [Stanford's secondary subject material] has one of those quasi-canonic beginnings for which Schumann was also known. Stanford's development begins with an octave sonority sustained by a fermata that immediately recalls the same structural spot in the first and

last movements of Schumann's Symphony No. 4. The Finale concludes with a Schumannesque accelerando (Symphony No. 1/4) and a timpani solo as found at the end of Schumann's Second Symphony.<sup>37</sup>

Following this Schumannesque introduction Stanford presents the first theme, a confident, energetic and rhythmic figure which gives the whole movement a sense of drive and optimism, as well as an air of confidence:



This theme also has a gestural similarity to the opening motif of the scherzo of Mendelssohn's 'Scottish' Symphony, a work Stanford almost certainly would have known given its popularity in Britain. Following an episodic transition we arrive at the entry of the second subject, where text-book-like lyricism contrasts with the first subject similarly to its first-movement counterpart:



Interestingly, this second subject would appear to share some of the melodic contours of the scherzo's opening theme. The development section begins with a transition from F major to B major, arriving at this new and seemingly distant key at b. 162, although the development proper does not begin until b. 174 where the first subject is presented in a fugal

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

manner, reducing later from a four-part to a two-part texture. The section as a whole is subdivided into two halves, each one dealing with different subject material. The second part of the development, which deals with the second-subject material, begins around b. 240, and at this point almost immediately returns to the tonic key of B-flat major (b. 252) sustained over a long dominant pedal, which mutates into the retransition.

As with the first movement, Stanford subtly reworks the recapitulation. He diverges from the formal norm by restating the introductory eight-bar figure, giving more structural weight to a passage that initially seemed to be little more than a musical thrust towards the movement proper. He also truncates the transitional passage and replaces the original closing material with a coda which begins with a false resolution into A-flat major. While not significant deformations from the sonata norm – these are by no means groundbreaking reconsiderations of the form – they hint towards a composer that was at least prepared to experiment a little within the broader symphonic dialectic of the period, something that would become increasingly apparent in later works.

The première of the First Symphony met with what might best be described as a lukewarm reception. Most of the reviewers felt that the work showed great promise for a young composer, but that, at the same time, there was still some way to go before Stanford would become a symphonic composer of note. The reviewer of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, for example, believed the work to be written in a ‘masterly style’ but that the length of the first movement in particular was to its disadvantage. Whilst the reviewer clearly did not find the work to be offensive, his comments were far from gushing forth in praise, and his remarking upon the weather strikes as curious, though he was not the only one to note it.<sup>38</sup> *The Examiner’s* correspondent was similarly interested in the weather that day, which was clearly a fine one, along with confirming that the work ‘bears the impress of marked ability’, and

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<sup>38</sup> *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 11 March 1879.

encouraged the young composer to continue in his symphonic pursuits, even if he too felt the first movement was on the long side.<sup>39</sup> Reviews from the *Musical Times* and *The Times* effectively echoed these sentiments, and full versions of these texts can be referenced in Appendix II of this thesis.<sup>40</sup>

Existing Stanford studies have tended to gloss over the First Symphony in a similar fashion to those of its original critics, acknowledging its qualities and promise, while at the same time recognising that it was the product of a young and still relatively inexperienced composer. Indeed, this is probably a fair assessment of the work and there does appear to be little more to say about it. However, what is most interesting, or perhaps most problematic, for the work is assessing its place within the history of the symphony in the nineteenth century in light of the genre's development up until this point. At a point in history when Beethoven has been dead for some fifty years and the symphony has been the subject of much discussion, it is curious to find a work from a composer who, although British, had spent a not inconsiderable period of time studying in Germany and who surely, as an ardent music-lover, could not have completely overlooked the nature of the symphony at this point. How and why would an Anglo-Irish composer write a symphony in the 1870s that appears, at least superficially, to bypass almost completely the development of the symphony in the nineteenth century, or at least which only questionably engages with the so-called Beethoven problem? Perhaps the explanation for this problem lies in the circumstances that led to the composition of the work – namely that it was written as a competition entry being judged by a leading figure from the Austro-Germanic musical world (Joseph Joachim) and a doyenne of British music, which had had significant Germanic leanings up until this point. This solution has some merits, but this does effectively require us to 'cast off' this work as being little more

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<sup>39</sup> *The Examiner* (London), 15 March 1879.

<sup>40</sup> *The Musical Times*, 1 April 1879 & *The Times*, 12 March 1879

than an attempt by Stanford to achieve a level of fame and recognition for which he was still striving.

In order to appraise the First Symphony more objectively, and indeed to give Stanford the symphonic credit that this early work deserves, we must now turn our attentions to his second attempt at symphonic writing, which the composer commenced work on only a few months following the première of his First.

### **SYMPHONIC DEVELOPMENTS: THE SECOND SYMPHONY AND ‘NEW’ DIRECTIONS?**

Stanford began composition on his new symphony in July 1879, and was almost certainly inspired by the reception of the First Symphony, along with ‘the success of his Piano Quartet, the enlivening sound of Richter’s Beethoven interpretations, and the new wave of enthusiasm for orchestral music in London.’<sup>41</sup> Stanford appears to have worked with great enthusiasm, completing the work on 17 August 1879, after a period of only 6 weeks. However, he subsequently revised large sections of the symphony, including a complete reworking of the first movement in December 1880 and further alterations to the finale in January 1882, alterations that are only too visible in the work’s manuscript now held in the National Library of Ireland.

Like its predecessor, the Second Symphony is cast in a four-movement plan, and has the title ‘Elegiac’ appended. The autograph is prefaced by four stanzas from section seventy of Alfred, Lord Tennyson’s poem ‘In Memoriam’ (1849):

I cannot see the features right,  
When on the gloom I strive to paint  
The face I know; the hues are faint

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<sup>41</sup> Dibble 2002, p. 106.

And mix with hollow masks of night;  
 Cloud-towers by ghostly masons wrought,  
     A gulf that ever shuts and gapes,  
     A hand that points, and palled shapes  
 In shadowy thoroughfares of thought;  
 And crowds that stream from yawning doors,  
     And shoals of pucker'd faces drive;  
     Dark bulks that tumble half alive,  
 And lazy lengths on boundless shores;  
 Till all at once beyond the will  
     I hear a wizard music roll,  
     And thro' a lattice on the soul  
 Looks thy fair face and makes it still.

It has never been clear exactly how these verses relate to the symphony itself, and many theories have been posited:

The relationship of the four verses to Stanford's symphony is not at all clear. Are the four verses individually a reflection of each of the four movements? Or is it a general setting of the mood for the entire symphony? Are there passages in the symphony that correlate with some of these lines? None of these questions have [sic] been pursued nor is there any way of finding an answer.<sup>42</sup>

J. A. Fuller Maitland, in his discussion of this work, suggests that the line 'I cannot see the features right' can be considered to be the 'key to the whole composition', going on to say that 'there are some striking phrases on the brass instruments, which recur at various points in the work, and the last movement, in which the face of the departed friend seems at last to be recognised, is ushered in by an introduction which gathers up the main themes of the preceding movements.'<sup>43</sup> Quite who the 'departed friend' is supposed to be is again unclear. It is possible that the unexpected death of Stanford's father in July 1880 has some bearing on the work, especially when we consider that the composer completely reworked the first movement following this event. However, a letter from Stanford to William Cummings, director of the Royal Philharmonic Society, sent on 17 October 1879 confirms that the

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<sup>42</sup> Brown, p. 100.

<sup>43</sup> J. A. Fuller-Maitland, *The Music of Parry and Stanford*, p. 39.

stanzas from Tennyson's poem were part of the original genesis of the work and not added following the death of Stanford's father:

The symphony is not programme music although it is illustrative of one of the cantos in Tennyson's *In Memoriam*.<sup>44</sup>

In addition to this, Brown poses an alternative or perhaps additional theory as to the work's meaning:

There may be other clues to the meaning of this symphony in D minor in its musical allusions. On March 8, 1877, the Cambridge University Musical Society gave the first English performance of Brahms's Symphony No. 1 in C minor under the direction of Joseph Joachim. While it is difficult to cite passages from the Brahms in Stanford's work, one can note some more general aspects. First is the general tragic mood that both works have in common. The first movement *Allegro appassionato* 6/8 recalls the Brahms in its treatment of the compound meter with cross rhythms. The last movement begins, for example, with a substantial slow introduction and ends with a coda (m. 269) beginning in 6-4 / ♯ and contains a chorale that parallels Brahms's Finale. There are also allusions to several other works: Byron's *Manfred*, and there is also an allusion to Wagner's *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung*.<sup>45</sup>

The Tennyson verse might also be explained by the recent death of Stanford's father. The two men had fallen out following Stanford's decision to marry Jennie Wetton in 1878, a match his father objected to so strongly that he refused to attend the marriage. Although Plunket Greene alleges that the two men were reconciled before John Stanford's unexpected death, perhaps the choice of text with the overall 'tragic' nature of the symphony can be seen as a belated attempt to make amends. Stanford would do something not dissimilar much later in 1918 following the death of Parry.<sup>46</sup>

In common with his First Symphony, the first movement of this work is also a sonata set within an introduction-coda framework, albeit considerably shorter than the equivalent point in its predecessor. Following a brief 13-bar introduction in which Stanford establishes

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<sup>44</sup> RPS. Ms. 364, held in the British Library's Royal Philharmonic Society archive.

<sup>45</sup> Brown, pp. 100-101.

<sup>46</sup> See Dibble 2002, p. 441.

the tragic or melancholic nature of the movement, the arpeggiatic first subject of the *Allegro appassionato* is introduced at b. 14.



A transitional passage (b. 36) leads to lyrical second subject at b. 56.



The close of the exposition comes at b.77 after which the opening section is repeated. In this section, and indeed throughout much of the symphony as a whole, Stanford's treatment of the compound 6/8 meter and its hemiolic equivalent of 3/4 is extremely subtle.<sup>47</sup> In complete contrast to his First Symphony, Stanford creates a tightly-worked sonata exposition in little over 80 bars.

The development falls into three main sections. The first section opens with a reintroduction of material from the introduction itself. At b. 109 the first subject motif is introduced which the composer subsequently treats as a *basso ostinato*, moving upwards in pitch through C (b. 109), C-sharp (b.117), D (b.125), F (b.129), G (b.130), A (b.131), and B (b.132), reaching a *tutti* climax at b.137. The second section commences at b.144 with a development of the exposition's transitional material, itself worked over an ostinato. At b.54 the texture is inverted, the transitional motif becoming more and more prominent, before the first-subject material is reintroduced at b.177 for the close of the second section. The final part of the development begins at b.183, although rather than introducing any new

<sup>47</sup> Brown, p. 101.

developmentary ideas this section acts as a retransition, building towards a climax b.208 before the recapitulation at b.222.

Again, as with the First Symphony, Stanford's treatment of the recapitulation departs slightly from the sonata 'norm'. Rather than a complete restatement of the exposition, with the necessary tonal adjustments in the recapitulation, the final formal section of Stanford's opening movement tightens the original opening even further, condensing each of the subject and transitional areas. The work is drawn to a close in the coda (b.291), again built on an ostinato motif, although a tonally static one as opposed to the modulatory ones employed in the development section. Following a deceptive bass resolution from A to B-flat at b.307, a final ostinato following three *crescendo* peaks and a final orchestral surge brings the first movement to a subdued conclusion.

Unlike that of his First Symphony, Stanford's opening movement is succeeded by the slow movement, marked *Lento espressivo*. He would vary the order of the second and third movements throughout his symphonic output, generally favouring the dance movement as the second, although as Brown has noted, it would have been counterproductive to do thus in this case as 'it would be too close to the compound meter [of the first movement] and would not provide the proper respite from the activity of the first movement.'<sup>48</sup>

Following a two-bar introductory motif in the violins and cellos, the main theme of the slow movement is introduced in the violas, accompanied by the clarinets and bassoons. The theme is then repeated (b.11) this time with a string accompaniment. As the tonality shifts from the tonic of F major towards C major (b.18), Stanford employs a number of wind colours, a technique Stanford would use in a number of his slow movements to great effect, notably in the corresponding movement of his Sixth Symphony. The violas again take the

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<sup>48</sup> Brown, p. 102.

lead in the episode (b.37) followed by the clarinets in a repeat of this section (b. 5).

Stanford's continuing use of solo lines in the retransition gives the movement a chamber-like feel, suggesting the influence of techniques gained whilst composing the Piano Quartet, also in F, which was well received earlier that year. The closing section comprises a complex yet ingenious weaving of a number of solo lines and rhythms, before a gentle coda (b.119) brings the movement to a close, still retaining the chamber ensemble feel of the middle sections. A seemingly distant horn call and tutti pianissimo conclude the *Lento espressivo*, whilst also anticipate the opening of the subsequent Scherzo.

In what would appear to be a motivic extension of the previous movement, the scherzo opens with a rousing horn call, which itself would appear to anticipate a further horn call in the Finale.<sup>49</sup> Stanford's scherzo shows stylistic links with those of Mendelssohn, with an undulating surface, often staccato in nature that varies between dynamic extremes. This is a technique that Stanford would go on to explore in much greater depth in his *Serenade in G*, commissioned in January 1881 for the 1882 Birmingham Festival, and which consists of several scherzo or scherzo-like movements.

The movement is essentially ternary in form, as one might expect from a typical late-Classical or early-Romantic symphonic dance movement. The scherzo section itself employs an abridged sonata plan, with first subject at b.7, transitional passage at b.25 and the second subject at b.35. There then follows a short development section (b.53) before a tutti recapitulation at b.79. The trio follows this succinct scherzo section, opening with lyrical, legato theme at b.95 played in the inner strings over a persistent dotted rhythm in the timpani. In a departure from what one might expect of the *da capo* of the scherzo section, Stanford only repeats the exposition before the coda (b.148). The dotted rhythm ostinato introduced in

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<sup>49</sup> Brown, p. 103.

the trio section persists through the coda section, driving the movement towards its more subdued close.

The opening of the Finale presents one of the most interesting musical allusions in this symphony in its reintroduction of material from each of the preceding movements, seemingly echoing the corresponding passage in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. The first subject of the first movement is recalled (b.2), followed by the principal theme from the Scherzo (b.5) along with material from the trio (b.8), and a further reference to the Scherzo theme at b.18. The exposition begins (b.43) with a chorale-like theme in the horns accompanied by what Brown describes as 'celestial' music in reference to Berlioz's own treatise on orchestration.<sup>50</sup> The theme is then reinforced by the bass line at b.64. Stanford treats a further repeat of the first subject as transitional material, moving through an elaborate modulatory plan towards the second subject area (b.92) in F major.<sup>51</sup> The closing section of the exposition once more recalls the opening ideas from the first movement.

Following the unrepeated exposition, the development opens with a reference to the second subject (b.150) before taking up the first subject/transitional motif from the exposition in the tonic (b.154) which gives the listener the impression that this is in fact the expository repeat one might have expected. However, this impression is quashed by Stanford's expansion of the motif and tonal shift towards G-flat major (b.168). Through another elaborate modulatory exercise, the music moves towards B major (b.187) for its eventual retransition towards the tonic of D minor, arriving at the recapitulation at b.204. Similar to the opening movement, the recapitulatory section of the Finale capitalises on the relationship between the first subject and transitional material to truncate the restatement of the first subject and transition. The treatment of the second subject area is similarly shortened

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

(b.223) with the omission of the closing material from the exposition, instead moving straight to the coda at b.269. Like the introduction to this movement, the coda also recalls earlier themes and motifs, along with a restatement of the chorale-like first subject, which leads to the final cadences of the movement and the symphony.

The Cambridge performance of the D minor Symphony in the Spring of 1882 was, generally speaking, received positively, the reviewer from the *Musical Times* going as far as to say that this was Stanford's most important orchestral work to date,<sup>52</sup> the *Cambridge Review* commenting that it was 'one of the finest pieces of modern music that we have ever heard',<sup>53</sup> and *The Era* declaring it a 'complete success'.<sup>54</sup> Perhaps of most significance is the comment that the work clearly shows that Stanford's symphonic technique had developed dramatically since the composition of the First Symphony.<sup>55</sup> A full account of these reviews can be found in Appendix III. The symphony was also programmed at the 1883 Gloucester Three Choirs Festival, although a critic wrote that it was almost impossible to hear the work thanks to the noise made by latecomers.<sup>56</sup>

## **SYMPHONIC EXPERIMENTS**

Stanford's first two symphonies present themselves as an interesting pair. On the one hand we have the somewhat archaic First Symphony, youthful in vitality yet lacking perhaps in the technical mastery that his later works would demonstrate. On the other we have the Second Symphony which, while not perhaps pushing the boundaries in terms of its still relatively conservative musical language, demonstrates that Stanford did know something about the

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<sup>52</sup> *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, Vol. 23, No. 470 (Apr. 1, 1882), pp. 204-211.

<sup>53</sup> *Cambridge Review* (15 March, 1882), p. LXIV.

<sup>54</sup> *The Era*, Issue 2268 (Saturday, 11 March, 1882).

<sup>55</sup> *Athanaeum*, No. 2837 (11 March, 1882), pp. 324-35.

<sup>56</sup> Percy Scholes, *The Mirror of Music I* (London, 1947), pp. 224-5.

problems facing symphonists in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Beyond this, we have issues of originality to contend with, not least when we consider Brown's observation about the First Symphony that, with 'the kind of borrowing that Stanford commits would be heard by any sophisticated listener as a form of plagiarism',<sup>57</sup> it is questionable to what extent this work could ever occupy a position in the wider history of the symphony.

The nature of the First Symphony might not, at least not entirely, be due to an ignorance of symphonic practice in the nineteenth century. Indeed, it is just possible that it is quite the reverse and that Stanford deliberately crafted a work that would appeal to British musical tastes of the 1870s where the works of Beethoven and his Viennese contemporaries were extremely popular with audiences, notably those at locations such as the Crystal and Alexandra palaces. Indeed, Augustus Manns and George Grove had, somewhat miraculously, secured the international rights to Schumann's symphonies such that they regularly featured on the concert programmes of the Crystal Palace's enormously successful Saturday Concerts. Without wanting to dismiss the work entirely as a competition piece, we cannot ignore the context in which it was composed, and this, therefore, should not necessarily influence our overriding impression of Stanford the symphonist. While none of the contemporary criticism of the work suggests that audiences were as keenly aware of the various references to other composers and their symphonies as Brown is, there are subtle indications of external references being apparent to critics at the time, observations that Stanford was surely aware of. When the reviewer in the *Pall Mall Gazette* declared that the Scherzo was 'worthy of Schubert', can we take this as a compliment or a subtle dig at the composer?<sup>58</sup>

It is in fact very difficult to know what to make of the First Symphony. Aside from Schubert, the obvious references to Beethoven and Schumann notably result in a work in

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<sup>57</sup> Brown, p. 99.

<sup>58</sup> *Pall Mall Gazette*, 11 March 1879.

which Stanford's voice is conspicuous by its absence. However, that aside, it does present an interesting case study in the early nineteenth-century symphony. When we consider the nature of the Second Symphony and its implications, notably that Stanford was aware of at least some of the problems facing symphonic composers of the period, perhaps we can view the First as an attempt to familiarise himself with the form itself before going on to tackle some of its more thorny issues. Given that that the Second Symphony, as will be discussed shortly, demonstrates that Stanford did in fact have a very secure understanding of the nineteenth-century symphonic paradigm, even though composed a number of years earlier, it seems hard to accept that the composer of the First Symphony, who had so enthusiastically immersed himself in European musical culture of the time, was completely unaware of the issues facing his contemporaries.

A further issue that we might productively consider at this stage is the extent to which the First Symphony might contribute to some form of 'British' symphonic school and/or tradition, especially in light of the numerous references to Viennese composers of the first half of the century. The existence of anything that might resemble a 'British' symphonic tradition is a complex issue, not least as many of Stanford's own predecessors had themselves turned to Austro-Germanic models when composing their own works. Examples of composers engaging with the symphonic form can be found as early as the turn of the nineteenth century itself and there exist some fine examples from this period, notably by William Crotch and Samuel Wesley, whose *Symphony in Bb* is a prime example of the level of craftsmanship that British composers had reached at such an early stage. However, even at this historical juncture craftsmanship appears to supersede originality, where composers sought to emulate, or even recreate, the musical styles and practices of others rather than forging their own, with heavy influences from Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven appear to have affected the works of many British composers of the period. Although Wesley's symphony is

a very fine musical work indeed, it is heavily indebted to high Viennese style as expounded by Haydn and Mozart, and indeed the *Symphony in Bb* has a similar gestural language to the former's later symphonies, particularly his 'London' Symphony, number 104. Wesley's symphony does, therefore, appear to set up a compositional precedent that can be traced across the nineteenth century, predominantly through British music in general, but especially when dealing with the symphony, in which composers sought to achieve success in modelling their works on other 'great' composers rather than fashioning a more individual style.

Although this specific work had little direct influence of its own *per se*, given that it appears to have been forgotten until the late twentieth century, this symphonic model and practice can be encountered time and time again. Later composers, including William Sterndale Bennett, Cipriani Potter and George Macfarren, also made significant contributions to what we might loosely term the British symphonic school, and although these are fine musical works that demonstrate a great deal of technical ability, especially given the musical command required to master the large-scale form of a symphony, we continually encounter the concept of craftsmanship rather than inspiration. However, despite this, there is a sense that this has only proved to be an increasing problem as criticism developed into and through the twentieth century. As will be explored in later sections, George Bernard Shaw did take great issue with music that he perceived to be too 'academic' in nature, rather than showing the musical flair that he loved so much in Wagner and which he identified in Elgar. Furthermore, later criticism of nineteenth-century works, especially that of the 1930s and 40s, adopted a more obvious, and perhaps understandable, anti-Germanic perspective in a time of war. Yet during most of the nineteenth century there appears to have been little suggestion that there was something fundamentally wrong in British composers emulating continental models and styles, and indeed that so many British composers were encouraged or even felt compelled to study on the continent would seem to reinforce this positive attitude towards 'foreign' music.

Indeed, some British composers enjoyed moderate or even enthusiastic reception on the continent. Sterndale Bennett was enthusiastically received by Mendelssohn and Schumann and Wagner is known to have conducted at least one of Cipriani Potter's symphonies, and is reported to have commented favourably on this work.<sup>59</sup>

Composers from the midpoint of the century would also go on to make not insignificant contributions to this genre, notably figures such as Arthur Sullivan, although as A. Peter Brown has noted we still know very little about these composers and what impact their works had on the overall development of the genre in Britain:

Still there are many composers active in England that need to be studied to fill in the significant lacunae that remain, such as the efforts of Cowen, Barnett, the Holmes brothers, Prout, Davenport, Cusins, German, and Holst, among others.<sup>60</sup>

Yet despite the occasional international success and the fact that the symphony was certainly 'alive and well' during much of the nineteenth century in Britain, that we know so little about these works suggests that their own life and success was short-lived, assuming that they had one at all. Within this context Stanford's First Symphony, while a half-decent concert work, does little to advance this so-called British symphonic tradition. He follows the practice and model of his forebears producing a work that clearly pleased audiences, while not excessively, yet upon which he failed to stamp any real sense of individuality, save for the occasional flash of originality.

How, then, can we productively assess the First Symphony? While it is tempting simply to cast aside the work as a derivative exercise cobbled together for the sake of a competition, such that it has little independent artistic integrity, to do so seems to be ignoring a work that might still hold some important clues about Stanford and his journey with the

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<sup>59</sup> See Jeremy Dibble, 'Parry, Stanford and the Pursuit of the British Symphonic Tradition', *Brio* vol. 32, no. 1 (1995).

<sup>60</sup> Brown, p. 241.

form. As a symphonic composer, Stanford had to start somewhere. No, his first essay did not have the great impact on the musical world that that of say Brahms did, and nor did it confirm an awareness of and ability to overcome the problem facing symphonists in the same way that the latter's First Symphony did. However, it does mark the beginning of a journey with the form, a journey that would continue either to confirm or at least acknowledge the primacy of the Austro-Germanic centre in the symphonic tradition of the nineteenth century. A journey, too, that would either challenge or maybe even confirm Britain's place on the periphery, not only in terms of symphonic composition but also music more generally, and a journey in which Stanford the Anglo-Irishman would continue to struggle with different factions competing for a place in his artistic output. Finally, and perhaps most importantly for Stanford, while the First Symphony did not meet with great critical acclaim, the musical eyes of Britain firmly fixed themselves on the composer following the première of this work, so while it did not establish him necessarily as the leading composer of his age, it certainly set him up well to claim this title only a few years later.

## **THE SECOND SYMPHONY AND THE BEETHOVENIAN LEGACY**

Where the First Symphony resists engaging with the Beethovenian symphonic paradigm, the Second Symphony, in stark contrast, appears to tackle it head on. As has already been explored, Beethoven left successive generations of symphonic composers with nine different starting points from which they could attempt to continue the tradition through the nineteenth century. However, of all of these, the Ninth Symphony represented the single greatest 'problem' that symphonists had to at least attempt to overcome.

The key issue was never really one of style – few composers attempted to imitate Beethoven directly in this regard – but rather of generic conception. Beethoven's Third to Seventh Symphonies had substantially expanded the boundaries of what a symphony could be, and his Ninth had effectively

redefined the genre. In the wake of such works, a symphony was no longer considered merely a matter of entertainment, but a vehicle of moral, philosophical and even political ideas. And by introducing text and voice into what had been a traditionally instrumental genre, Beethoven had implicitly brought into question the aesthetic superiority of instrumental music over vocal music at a crucial juncture, just when the former was established as a category of equal if not superior rank. Subsequent generations were sharply divided on the implications of the Ninth's finale: Wagner saw it as manifesting the limits of purely instrumental music and thus marking the end of the symphony as a vital genre; other composers were reluctant to imitate the model directly yet uncertain how to extend the genre through purely instrumental means.<sup>61</sup>

Many composers attempted to overcome the challenge that Beethoven's final symphonic work posed. While composers in the Germanic tradition, notably Schumann and Mendelssohn, attempted to grapple with the aesthetic problems laid down by Beethoven, Berlioz, writing in France, tackled these in his programmatic symphonies, notably his *Symphonie Fantastique* (1830) in which he composes what Bonds has described as the 'mirror image' of Beethoven's Ninth.

The finale's 'Dies irae', an implicitly vocal melody, serves as a dark counterpart to Beethoven's 'Ode to Joy' theme, and in Berlioz's 'Dream of a Witches' Sabbath', the forces of evil triumph over the forces of good. The same pattern holds true in Berlioz's next symphony, *Harold en Italie* (1834). Again, the hero is in fact an anti-hero and the soloist, who represents the protagonist of Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, fails to triumph in the end not because he is vanquished, but because he runs away. Berlioz's 'Symphony with Chorus', *Roméo et Juliette* (1839), reserves the crucial scenes of Shakespeare's drama not for the voices, but for the orchestra. The brilliance and originality of Berlioz's orchestration, his fresh approach to the 'cosmic' nature of the genre and his ability to blend music and narrative, both with and without recourse to words, all inspired subsequent composers to seek new approaches to addressing the metaphysical in the realm of the symphony and to extend the spirit of Beethoven's originality without directly imitating him.<sup>62</sup>

It was not until the 1870s when Brahms finally released his much-anticipated First Symphony that a composer operating within the Austro-Germanic tradition produced an instrumental symphony that called into question Wagner's statement that the symphony was dead. Through much of his early career Brahms was seen as the logical successor to Beethoven by many of his peers, although the lack of any symphonies in his early period raised doubts about his ultimate suitability to adopt this position. However, while he would

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<sup>61</sup> Bonds, 'Symphony II: 19<sup>th</sup> Century'.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

not publish his first symphonic attempt until 1877 the composer had probably been working on this from as early as the 1850s. Brahms was acutely aware of the expectations being placed upon him by the musical world around him and the colossal significance of Beethoven's symphonic legacy. The oft-quoted 'you have no idea how someone like me feels when he keeps hearing such a giant [Beethoven] marching behind him' highlights the composer's awareness of the challenges that he had to overcome in order to write a symphony that could stand up to its historical precedent.<sup>63</sup>

As a purely instrumental work, Brahms's First Symphony superficially calls into question once more whether or not the symphony as a genre had a legitimate future in the aftermath of Beethoven's choral finale. However, Brahms clearly was fully aware of the challenge that his forebear had set composers in the nineteenth century and so we cannot judge this work on this level. Instead, we must probe further into the significance of his musical gestures and, upon so doing, we discover that Brahms has, in fact, tackled the problem that had plagued symphonists for almost half a century head on. In his study *After Beethoven: Imperatives of Originality in the Symphony* Bonds has shown that Brahms successfully brings the symphony back into the realms of the absolute while, at the same time, retaining the aesthetic legitimacy that the genre needed so badly in order to retain its integrity.<sup>64</sup> Brahms cleverly references two iconic Beethoven symphonies in his own work and in so doing he shows both where the work has originated and, more importantly, how it has a future beyond the works of his earlier nineteenth-century counterpart.

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<sup>63</sup> Johannes Brahms quoted in Reinhold Brinkmann, *Johannes Brahms, die zweite Symphonie: späte Idylle*, Musik-Konzepte, no.70 (1990; Eng. trans., 1995, as *Late Idyll: the Second Symphony of Johannes Brahms*), p. 138.

<sup>64</sup> Mark Evan Bonds, *After Beethoven: Imperatives of Originality in the Symphony* (Harvard, 1996).

Casting the symphony in C minor Brahms immediately references Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, a work that has for years been held up as the paradigm of absolute music and one in which the ultimate goal of the symphony to overcome itself is played out.

More than any other piece of music, the Fifth Symphony has come to typify the thematic unification, or 'organicism', as the 19th century viewed it, that Beethoven developed to such a high degree in these years.<sup>65</sup>

...the Fifth has always been thought of as the musical projection of Beethoven's resolution 'I will grapple with Fate; it shall not overcome me.' The struggle for victory is symbolized in this symphony by the passing from C minor to major and by the triumphant finale.<sup>66</sup>

In many ways, Beethoven's own comment about fate not overcoming him could easily be applied to Brahms in the case of his First Symphony, especially when we consider the circumstances of its conception. His work is proof indeed that he did overcome the struggle for victory and he did this through the passing from C minor to major in his own triumphant finale, even if the close of his first movement does, to an extent, negate this move by cadencing in the tonic major at that point. While the work as a whole shows Brahms's understanding and acknowledgement of both the significance of Beethoven and the problems that his own work had to overcome, it is in his symphonic finale that Brahms truly demonstrates his ability to forge a 'new' future for the symphonic genre. Unlike Beethoven, Brahms, however, resists the temptation of incorporating poetic and choral forces in this final movement. Instead, he works around this problem, incorporating equivalent features but without the necessity of singers to give voice to his 'new' way.

Brahms employs three principal thematic ideas in his finale, each of which, according to Bonds, is deliberately used both to reference Beethoven's own choral finale and to demonstrate that Brahms's symphony is no less aesthetically legitimate because he chooses to

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<sup>65</sup> Joseph Kerman, et al. 'Beethoven, Ludwig van', in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40026pg15> (accessed July 20, 2012).

<sup>66</sup> Donald J. Grout and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music: Sixth Edition* (W. W. Norton, 2001), p. 528.

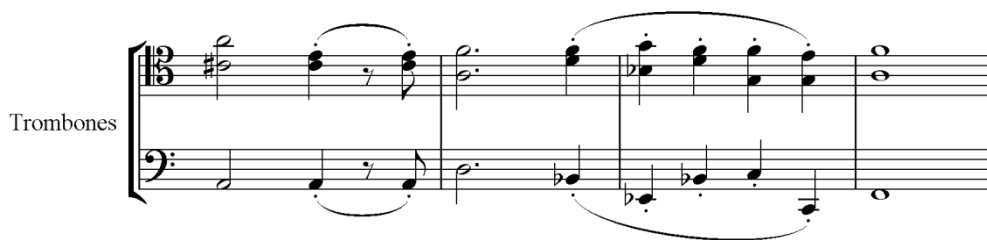
find a future for absolute music, in stark contrast to his contemporary Wagner. The principal theme of the movement, which appears at b. 61, is as follows:



Its melodic contours are very similar indeed to that of Beethoven's own 'Ode to Joy' theme, a similarity that surely cannot be ascribed to coincidence.<sup>67</sup> The main theme is prefaced by two additional motifs which also feature prominently throughout the finale and are as follows. Initially an 'Alphorn' theme introduced at the key change to the tonic major at b. 30:



and a 'chorale' theme first heard at b. 47 and which forms part of the triumphant close of the movement:



The combination of these three themes, according to Bonds, with their allusions directly to Beethoven in the movement's primary theme, references to the pastoral with the

<sup>67</sup> Bonds, *After Beethoven*.

Alphorn theme, and the religious with the Chorale, create the same aesthetic transcendence that Beethoven's own finale does but without the need for human voices and poetic text. In essence, Brahms shows a way in which Beethoven's symphonic 'challenge' can be met within an absolute medium, calling into question Wagner's claim that Beethoven's need for choral forces in his finale demonstrates that absolute music, and especially the symphony, had no place in the modern musical world.

Brown observes that we might read Stanford's Second Symphony as a Victorian response to Brahms's First.<sup>68</sup> Stanford created a work that, in Brown's eyes, was aesthetically similar in nature to Brahms but which achieved these aims in a 'less intense and shorter, but nearly as skilful' fashion.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, Stanford referenced both Brahms and his symphonic 'father' Beethoven in the work, both directly and more generally.

The progress of the cycle from minor to major in a dramatic sense is less characteristic of the two most famous C minor symphonies: Beethoven No. 5 and Brahms No. 1; Stanford, however, uses this device in a less dramatic manner. All these allusions bring to mind concepts that are congruent with the implications of Tennyson's poem: the heroic, the tragic, the celestial, and the progression of dark to light.<sup>70</sup>

While throughout the symphony Stanford makes numerous oblique references to symphonic works of the nineteenth century, most notably but not exclusively those of Beethoven, it is, as with Brahms, in his finale that Stanford demonstrates his acute awareness of the symphonic problems facing composers even in his age and how, maybe with a little guidance from his Germanic contemporaries, he could, nevertheless, fashion this into what was becoming a more individualistic voice.

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<sup>68</sup> Brown, p. 102.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. It is worth noting that there was existing precedent within the 'British' symphonic school of referencing Beethoven. Macfarren, who was Professor of Music at Cambridge at this point, had himself composed seven symphonies, many of which made at least some references to Beethoven, but without the catalyst of Brahms as a reason and/or excuse.

Most significant in Stanford's finale are essentially the same basic elements as those found in Brahms's finale. He uses equivalent Alhorn and Chorale themes, which, if we accept Bonds's reading of the Brahms movement, can surely be read in much the same way as references to both the pastoral and the transcendent. The most significant omission is, of course, the use of a theme that references Beethoven's 'Ode to Joy', although surely even Stanford, who did gain a reputation for plagiarising other composers, would have realised the danger of completely copying Brahms's finale.

So rich was his endowment in the invention of [melodies] that he poured them out lavishly, seldom caring to make sure that they were indeed his own. The curiously numerous instances in which themes of his have been discovered in older works would have laid a lesser man open to a charge of plagiarism; but with him the fitness of some phrase for some particular word or idea often led him to use it without realising that someone else had used it before.<sup>71</sup>

Rather than referencing Beethoven's choral finale through an allusion to the 'Ode to Joy' in the manner that Brahms does, Stanford employs an alternative device which serves a similar purpose, at least to a degree. At the opening of his own finale, Stanford references each of the preceding movements in a fashion similar to Beethoven at the corresponding point in his Ninth Symphony. While this could be ascribed to coincidence, and indeed there is nothing specific to indicate that this was a deliberate act by Stanford to reference Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, surely within the context of the movement and the symphony and its parallels with Brahms's First Symphony, we cannot overlook such an act so easily. While there is a lack of direct reference to the choral aspect of Beethoven's symphony in his finale – a crucial aspect when one considers that it was through referencing this aspect of Beethoven's work that Brahms found a future for the absolute symphony – that Stanford makes such an obvious reference to Beethoven's work at least demonstrates an awareness of its historical significance. From a more individual perspective, in making such references Stanford,

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<sup>71</sup> J. A. Fuller Maitland, 'Stanford, Sir Charles Villiers', *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition* ed. H. C. Colles (London, 1928).

successfully or otherwise, at least attempted to align his symphonic music with the Austro-Germanic mainstream, which, accepting Bonds's understanding of the nineteenth-century symphony, represents an attempt by Stanford to align his work with a more universal symphonic mainstream. Although previous British symphonic composers had written works that showed a deference to the Central European tradition, few if any of Stanford's forebears wrote a work that so obviously acknowledged the real issues facing the symphony in the nineteenth century. Of course, Stanford almost certainly would not, and indeed could not, have written a symphony of this nature had it not been for Brahms's First Symphony. Although I must stress that, like Brown, I view Stanford's Second Symphony as being a response to rather than a copy of Brahms's First, the parallels between the two works are, nevertheless, too significant to overlook. The important fact, as Brown stresses, is that although there are numerous references to other works, Stanford incorporates these into a work that still retains a sense of individuality and uniqueness, rather than falling into the plagiarist's trap.<sup>72</sup> Perhaps more importantly is the notion that Stanford, in this work, created a Victorian counterpart to Brahms's First Symphony and, possibly by extension, created a Victorian counterpart to the Austro-Germanic symphony of the period.<sup>73</sup> For the first time in history, Stanford successfully aligned British music with continental practices but in a manner that did not resort simply to copying either active or former composers. Through the combination of Germanic allusions and more identifiably English/British sentiments of Tennyson's poetry, Stanford created a symphonic language which encompassed the aesthetic essence of the mainstream but which was tempered to respond more directly to local tastes. Furthermore, he began to pave the way for creating a more individual symphonic voice, one that would, a few years later, manifest itself in one of Stanford's most successful works.

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<sup>72</sup> Brown, p. 104.

<sup>73</sup> See Brown p. 102.

## THE NATION IN THE IRISH SYMPHONY (1887)

It is curious that Stanford appears to have made little or no effort to capitalise on the much more enthusiastic reception of his Second attempt at the genre. Brown speculates that the presence of a ‘fair copy, not in the composer’s hand, in the Pendlebury Library in Cambridge’ suggests that ‘Stanford was considering publishing his [Second] symphony and using the copy for the engraver.’<sup>74</sup> Beyond this Stanford appears to have made little more effort to push this work, consigning it, like its predecessor, to the past where it rested for many decades. It would be several years following the première of the Second Symphony that Stanford would once more turn his hand to the symphonic form. Of particular note is the almost total absence of orchestral works between the first performance of the Second Symphony and the composition of the Third. During this period Stanford’s large-scale activities focussed almost entirely on oratorio and opera.

However, while large-scale instrumental forms were mostly absent from Stanford’s compositional activities during the early 1880s, he steadily strengthened his position as a leading figure in British musical circles. Indeed, when we consider that Stanford was still a young man only just in his 30s, this period represents an almost unprecedented peak in his career, one which he would struggle to match in later life. Premières of his operas *The Canterbury Pilgrims* and *Savaranola*, in both Britain and Germany in 1884, established Stanford as a composer of note both in the UK and on the continent, and he continued to receive regular commissions from leading organisations and festivals, notably those at Norwich, Birmingham and Leeds. Other notable works from this period include the *Elegiac Ode*, commissioned for the 1884 Norwich Festival, which enjoyed widespread success in

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<sup>74</sup> Brown, p. 108. Since Brown’s research was conducted this copy has been transferred to the University Library in Cambridge.

Britain along with popularity in Germany. The work, which sets texts by Walt Whitman, has a number of interesting parallels with Brahms's *Das Schicksalslied* (1871), notably the orchestral prelude and postludes which frame the work. Indeed, this whole period of Stanford's musical career appears to represent one in which he developed an increasing interest in Brahms and his music, confirmed in works such as his *Piano Quintet, op.25* completed in March 1886 and dedicated to violinist and close friend Joseph Joachim.

Perhaps of most importance to Stanford's wider career during this period was his invitation from the Prince of Wales to a meeting on 28 February 1882 at St. James's Palace to discuss the establishment of a replacement music college for the then existent National Training School of Music. It was not the first time that a successor to this institution, and a rival for the Royal Academy of Music, had been mooted and, as Dibble notes, the formation of a new music college had 'been the subject of debate for some time for which there were delicate political matters to resolve.'<sup>75</sup> However, with George Grove at the helm of this new move, political momentum had gathered over the few years leading up to this initial meeting, one which would see the official formation of the Royal College of Music. In early 1883 Stanford received his official appointment of Professor of Composition, Orchestration, and Conductor of the Orchestra, along with being a formative member of the first Board of Professors alongside Hubert Parry, Walter Parratt, Frederick Bridge, Ernst Pauer, Henry Deacon, Jenny Lind-Goldschmidt, Franklin Taylor, and Alberto Visetti. The importance of the Royal College, not only within the increasing professionalization of music in the United Kingdom, which had for many years struggled for acceptance as a suitable career for British gentlemen in particular,<sup>76</sup> but as a centre for the English Musical Renaissance has been

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<sup>75</sup> Dibble 2002, p. 132.

<sup>76</sup> See Cyril Ehrlich, *The Music Profession in Britain since the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1985).

recognised for some years now.<sup>77</sup> Placed at the heart of ‘Albertopolis’, the hub of Victorian educational and cultural activities in the latter part of the nineteenth century, the Royal College of Music became the powerhouse of the ever increasing drive and energy of the English Musical Renaissance and placed it and its professors in a position to influence an entire generation of emerging musicians. With the notable exception of Edward Elgar, almost every major British composer from the 1880s well into the twentieth century passed through the doors of the RCM, with the vast majority of them encountering Stanford in some capacity in their time there. While barely 30 when he took up his position, the offer of this Professorship, followed a few years later with his elevation to Professor of Music at the University of Cambridge, officially marked Stanford’s arrival on the British musical scene as one of its leading figures, and set the ground for his rise both at home and overseas.

This rapid rise to international recognition that Stanford would achieve in the closing years of the 1880s was, in no small part, thanks to his next and arguably most successful engagement with the symphonic genre, which took form in his Symphony no. 3 in F minor, op. 28, the ‘Irish’. Why Stanford chose this precise historical moment to approach a form that, hitherto, had only afforded him moderate success in the critical arena is unclear. However, although Stanford had been very active as a composer, notably in the operatic and choral fields, few of these works had met with any great success, and so perhaps he felt that it was time for a new compositional approach. Furthermore, Dibble has observed that that in the years surrounding 1885 ‘new symphonies had been very much “in the air”’ with the British premières of works including Dvořák’s Seventh Symphony, Saint-Saëns’s Third Symphony, and Cowen’s Fourth Symphony, the ‘Welsh’ to name but a few.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> 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 no. 2 (2005), pp. 236–282.

<sup>78</sup> Dibble 2002, pp. 181–2.

Alongside native attempts, of which Stanford and Cowen's symphonies were probably the most significant at the time, the première of Brahms's Fourth and final symphony in 1885 had a colossal impact on the British and continental symphonic scenes. Moreover, it clearly had a great effect on Stanford, who heard of the work's first performance in Meiningen from his close friend, Joseph Joachim:

You should have heard Brahms new Symphony; it went splendidly, the band was heart and soul in it. But also what a work! One continuous passionate strain; the andante divinely sweet and yet original etc., etc. I am quite in love with it.<sup>79</sup>

In his reply to Joachim Stanford conveyed his great desire to hear the work stating that 'I burn to hear the Brahms... I hope we shall in the summer as Richter has promised it.'<sup>80</sup> True to his word, Richter did indeed perform the symphony in London on 10 May 1886, although the critical reception of the work was mixed.<sup>81</sup> Stanford's presence at this performance has not been confirmed, although Dibble has noted that 'we can safely assume that Stanford, as a staunch supporter of Richter's concerts and ardent devotee of Brahms's symphonic works, attended the English premiere of Brahms's [fourth] symphony.'<sup>82</sup> While the circumstances appear to suggest that Brahms's Fourth Symphony acted, at least in part, as a catalyst to spur on the composition of Stanford's Third Symphony, that the latter would choose this work as his starting point seems rather curious when we consider the nature and subsequent critical reception of Brahms's final symphonic offering.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Letter from Joachim to Stanford, 7 February 1886 in *Letters from and to Joseph Joachim* (London, 1914), p. 429.

<sup>80</sup> Letter from Stanford to Joachim, 11 February 1886, quoted in Dibble 2002, p. 182.

<sup>81</sup> See *Daily News*, issue 12,508 (13 May 1886), *The Graphic*, issue 859 (15 May 1886), and *Punch* (22 May 1886), p. 245.

<sup>82</sup> Dibble 2002, p. 184.

<sup>83</sup> Although Brahms's Fourth Symphony almost certainly had a significant impact on Stanford's Third Symphony, it was almost certainly not the only stimulus. The increasing profile of Dvořák and his nationalist symphonies, along with the symphonic works of Parry, for example, must have played a part in this work's conception.

## **BRAHMS'S FOURTH SYMPHONY: A SYMPHONIC FAREWELL?**

Brahms's seemingly tortuous relationship with the symphonic form did not end with the completion of his First in the 1870s. In a way, each of his subsequent symphonic works can be read as a critique of the genre. Reinhold Brinkmann has analysed the Second Symphony as a symphonic idyll, offering a farewell of sorts to the genre, and the Third Symphony, with its opening gesture, can be seen as questioning further the legitimacy of the genre in spite of the affirming statement about the symphony's future made by Brahms's First Symphony.<sup>84</sup>

Brahms's Fourth Symphony, begun in 1884, offers a further, final critique on the symphony through its almost deliberate avoidance of the stereotype *per astra ad astrum* that had dominated symphonic composition since the completion of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. With the exception of the light relief offered by the Scherzo, the entire symphony adopts a tragic nature, offering no glimmer of hope at its conclusion by its avoidance of the tonic major. Indeed, the presence of the uncharacteristically optimistic Scherzo within such a work only serves to heighten the sense of tragedy, offering an almost ironic sense of confidence where it, in fact, does not exist. This combination of almost oppressive tragedy and irony creates, in the eyes of David Brodbeck, a symphony that 'knows no precedent.'<sup>85</sup>

We can read the tragic and violent conclusion to the end of Brahms's Fourth Symphony as a final conclusion to the Beethovenian symphonic legacy. In one fell swoop Brahms successfully inverts the archetypal symphonic plot and, in so doing, signals its final demise, at least in the eyes of the composer.

After all, it was in the First Symphony that Brahms, realizing in an individual and powerful way the plot archetype associated with Beethoven's Fifth and Ninth symphonies, capped his long and strenuous effort to write a work worthy of comparison with those sterling examples. And it was in the Fourth

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<sup>84</sup> See Brinkmann, *Johannes Brahms, die zweite Symphonie* & Walter Frisch, *Brahms: The Four Symphonies* (New York, 1996).

<sup>85</sup> David Brodbeck, 'Brahms,' in *The Nineteenth-Century Symphony* ed. D. Kern Holoman (New York, 1997), p. 254.

Symphony that he achieved something greater still. No longer do the giant's footsteps hover in the background; here Brahms turned the Beethovenian plot archetype on its head, writing an end-accented symphony that 'looked very different' indeed from those of the earlier master. As represented so strikingly in the antithesis to Beethoven's choral finale that occurs at the end of his tragic chaconne, Brahms thus met Schumann's great expectations on the most uncompromising terms imaginable.<sup>86</sup>

What then does one make of a symphonic work that seemingly attempts to start where Brahms seems to have concluded? That Stanford commenced writing on his Third Symphony so soon after hearing the UK première of Brahms's Fourth could be coincidental, but all evidence suggests that this work and the effect that it must surely have had on the composer had a significant impact on the genesis of his latest symphony. It is unclear whether or not Stanford understood the significance of Brahms's final symphony within the context of the symphonic dialectic of the nineteenth century. Indeed, writing in 1915, Stanford stated that 'The German period... ended its prosperity and usefulness with its highest development of opera in Wagner and the climax of symphonic and absolute music in Brahms.'<sup>87</sup> He continued 'The nation must be content... to go to sleep and to wait for its next resurrection of energy, which would come when it had once more absorbed a good and persistent diet of the folk-song which was its backbone',<sup>88</sup> and even adds that 'Brahms could scarcely, as a worker immersed in his own creation, imagine that after him German music would be tired out. He was all his life occupied in keeping it alive and in prime condition. Only the intelligent onlooker could see that he was the last rose of a long summer.'<sup>89</sup> The implication from these statements, albeit made several decades after the completion of the 'Irish' Symphony, is that Stanford at least believed that the Germanic symphony had a future beyond Brahms's Fourth Symphony. Thus, do we take it as read that Stanford failed to understand the significance of the ending of Brahms's Fourth Symphony and, if so, what implications does this have for our

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid, p. 263.

<sup>87</sup> Charles Villiers Stanford, 'Some Thoughts Concerning Folk-song and Nationality', *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (April, 1915), p. 234.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, p. 234-235.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, p. 236.

own understanding of Stanford's work? However we choose to interpret Stanford's potential continuing understanding of the issues that were still clearly a central part of symphonic composition in the 1880s, it is clear that understanding the relationship between Brahms's final symphony, and by extension the relationship of Stanford's work to the still emerging post-Beethovenian symphonic tradition in Europe, is key to our comprehension of this and indeed subsequent symphonic works by the composer.

### **AN IRISH(?) SYMPHONY**

Brahms's Fourth Symphony was not the only significant event that could have had a bearing on both the stimulus to compose a new symphony at this historical juncture, and the nature of the work that would subsequently develop. In April 1886, only months before Stanford began work on the first movement, the then Liberal Prime Minister William Gladstone proposed the Government of Ireland Bill 1886 to Parliament, often known simply as the First Home Rule Bill. One key aspect of the bill included the establishment of a unicameral assembly which would consist of two orders: the first would be made up of one hundred Irish Peers, and the second of either 204 or 206 members. Britain would still maintain overall control of the assembly and, intentionally, it was not called a parliament of any description for fear that people would associate it with the former Irish Parliament that had been abolished by the Act of Union. Although Gladstone was a lifelong advocate of Irish Home Rule of some description, the then Prime Minister had effectively been forced into proposing the Bill at this stage as his agreeing to present it to Parliament was a key factor that enabled him to form an alliance with Charles Stewart Parnell and the Irish Nationalists to form a coalition government in Westminster, one which Gladstone would have been unable to do without their support. Ironically, the Bill would eventually split the Liberal Party, with Parliament

voting 341 votes to 311 votes against the motion on 7 June, in spite of an impassioned speech by Gladstone to garner support. Later that month, on 26 June, Parliament was dissolved following irreparable splits in the Liberal Party.

Curiously, Stanford had actually completed work on the first movement two days before Parliament made its final decision on the matter. However, while the concept of an Irish symphony may already have been in Stanford's mind from the work's outset, the defeat of the Home Rule Bill for an ardent Unionist supporter such as himself was surely encouraging at the very least to his musical endeavours. The threat of instability to the Union as a political construct was clearly one which was met with great uncertainty by the British people and their elected representatives, as Gladstone himself appears to suggest in part of his speech given to the House of Commons before the vote on 7 June:

I wish now to refer to another matter. I hear constantly used the terms Unionists and Separatists. But what I want to know is, who are the Unionists? I want to know who are the Separatists? I see this Bill described in newspapers of great circulation, and elsewhere, as a Separation Bill. Several Gentlemen opposite adopt and make that style of description their own. Speaking of that description, I say that it is the merest slang of vulgar controversy. Do you think this Bill will tend to separation? Well, your arguments, and even your prejudices, are worth of all consideration and respect; but is it a fair and rational mode of conducting a controversy to attach these hard names to measures on which you wish to argue, and on which, I suppose, you desire to convince by argument? Let me illustrate. I go back to the Reform Act of Lord Grey. When that Reform Bill was introduced it was conscientiously and honestly believed by great masses of men, and intelligent men, too, that the Bill absolutely involved the destruction of the Monarchy. The Duke of Wellington propounded a doctrine very much to this effect; but I do not think that any of those Gentlemen, nor the newspapers that supported them, ever descended so low in their choice of weapons as to call the measure "the Monarchy Destruction Bill." Such language is a mere begging of the question. Now, I must make a large demand on your patience and your indulgence – we conscientiously believe that there are Unionists and Disunionists; but that it is our policy that leads to union and yours to separation.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Extract from speech by William Gladstone given on 7 June 1886 in the House of Commons, *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, Series 3 vol. 306* (London, 1886),

## IRISH CULTURAL REVIVAL

The Irish Home Rule Bill was the political manifestation of a much greater cultural movement in Ireland that had gradually gathered momentum throughout much of the nineteenth century, and which was given its greatest catalyst by the events of the great Potato Famine of the mid-point of the century. The movement sought to find new ways of injecting momentum into what was becoming an increasingly tired and laboured effort to establish Ireland as an individual political, social and cultural entity, distinct from its British and Imperial identity. A variety of different approaches were emerging, diversified, or perhaps confused, by the existence of numerous different factions who struggled to agree upon one single way forwards. Attempts at reinvigorating interest in the Irish language, a 'rediscovery' of Ireland's past, and a number of other ways in which it was possible to assert some form of distinctively 'Irish' identity featured at one point or other on the agenda of multiple groups. There was a place for music within this framework, but the nature of Irish society at the time and its opinions on the art-form restricted it considerably to almost one form alone, which was that of song.

Arguably the single most important vehicle for expressing cultural-nationalist sentiment in nineteenth-century Ireland was through the medium of poetry, which, by extension, often involved the projection of these poems through song, even though, as Seamus Deane has noted, from a linguistic point of view this was from a fairly basic level.<sup>91</sup> That aside, however, much of the poetry that found its way into popular Irish culture of the nineteenth century successfully gave a voice to the sentiments felt by many people living in Ireland at the time, and especially those living either during or in the immediate aftermath of the Famine.

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<sup>91</sup> Seamus Deane, 'Poetry & Song', *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing Volume 2* (Field Day Press, 1991), p. 1.

The poetry of this period manifests a series of individual and sometimes group attempts to come to terms with the implications of a doctrine which was understood to provide a solution to the Irish political-cultural problem but which, at the same time, also revealed the profound contradictions which that solution was supposed to overcome. The doctrine stated that there was an organic relationship between language, culture and national destiny. The rediscovery or revival of that relationship was, therefore, a cultural as well as a political project. One fed into the other. All European nationalisms – German, Italian, English, French and others – shared this notion, although with varying degrees of intensity. For it was natural that the so-called satellite cultures – that is, those that were not imperial, as the French or English were – would find the appeal of such a doctrine especially strong. Germany found it irresistible and the Germanic influence on Irish nationalism was important, as Davis, Charles Gavan Duffy and, in a characteristically more oblique way, James Clarence Mangan, all testify.<sup>92</sup>

One of the most important publications of the first half of the century, and which appeared before the onset of the Famine, was the release of *The Spirit of the Nation* in 1842, a collection of ‘Political Songs and Ballads’ that had been published in *The Nation* newspaper, which achieved widespread popularity in Ireland at the time. This publication, which was enormously influential throughout the nineteenth century, was founded by Charles Gavan Duffy, Thomas Osborne Davis and John Blake Dillion, all three of which were members of the Young Ireland movement, and the newspaper effectively operated as the primary propaganda instrument for the group.

*The Nation* provided an important platform for the promotion of Irish cultural nationalism which found strength primarily in artistic means of expression, notably poetry. Although many of the poems that were published in *The Nation* make no attempts to hide their agenda, ironically, the vehicle that this and *The Spirit of the Nation* provided was one which gave poetry ‘popularity by allying itself with music and disengaging itself from any serious attempt to deal with Irish experience outside the conventions imposed by the powerful, if callow, demands of the Young Ireland movement.’<sup>93</sup>

Through the medium of song, music became entrenched within the political efforts of the Young Irelanders and other cultural nationalists of the period. It acted as an extremely

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, p. 4.

powerful vehicle for expressing the sentiments of these various groups, but the knock-on effect was that, although music formed part of this attempt by the Irish to define themselves creatively, it restricted its potential to one of music's most basic levels. This was not music universally conceived, but instead music was being used as a tool to peddle the propaganda of Irish nationalist movements rather than lending a more universally understood voice to the Irish nation. Thus, within Irish society, we can see music functioning 'as an emblem of the literary imagination,'<sup>94</sup> and, more importantly 'it became emblematic of the cultural programme which was Young Ireland's *raison d'être*.'<sup>95</sup> Whilst music, or more accurately song, became an important voice and tool for the nationalist movement, it rendered the art-form sterile in all of its other manifestations as far as its potential to form part of a wider cultural construction of Irish identity is concerned. Davis himself stated that 'it is not needful for a writer of our songs to be a musician' and, as Harry White has remarked, music had to become 'a means to political stimulus rather than an end in itself.'<sup>96</sup>

## **ART-MUSIC IN IRELAND**

Given the status in which music existed in the Irish psyche of the nineteenth century, it is hardly surprising, perhaps, that we find an almost total absence of any serious art-music tradition in Ireland of this period. This absence separates Ireland from almost every other European nation of the time, and especially those that were seeking to define themselves against colonial rule of some description. As White has observed, the lack of this tradition is in no small part thanks to the unique status that music as a cultural object occupied in the Irish mindset, in which music stimulated political thought, as opposed to many other

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<sup>94</sup> Harry White, 'Nationalism, Colonialism and the Cultural Stasis of Music in Ireland' in *Musical Constructions of Nationalism* ed. Harry White and Michael Murphy (Cork University Press, 2001), p. 258.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, p. 263.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*.

comparable countries of the period in which the situation was the exact opposite.<sup>97</sup> Adopting an art-music tradition tied in too closely with concepts of colonialism and oppression, as far as many in Ireland were concerned. This was something that went on in England, the oppressive nation, and if Ireland ever hoped to be able to separate itself from its Imperial identity then it would have to cast off completely anything that tied it to its former identity. William Henry Grattan Flood went as far as to classify art music as being ‘Anglican’ highlighting this sense that classical music was an aspect of Empire that the Irish simply could not engage with.<sup>98</sup>

Furthermore, as a geographically peripheral nation, Ireland was able to avoid interaction with musical developments on the continent for much of its history, and especially when we consider than anything that is likely to have made it to Ireland during much of this period would first have come through England. Whilst it did play host to some notable events in musical history, including the première of Handel’s *Messiah* in 1742, Ireland was essentially a musical backwater in terms of performance and composition. This is not to say that Ireland was completely devoid of anything that might have resembled an art-music tradition, ‘but so vulnerable was this tradition to the claims and counterclaims of nationalism and colonialism, respectively, that it collapsed inwards under the weight of ideological pressure from both sides.’<sup>99</sup>

However, while art-music struggled to establish itself as an independent form in nineteenth-century Ireland, its potential for promoting a nationalist agenda was not entirely overlooked. Two articles, published in *The Nation* in 1850 and which are reproduced in full in Appendix IV, show that its political potential had been realised by members of the Young Ireland movement and, while it clearly never succeeded in forming part of their cultural-

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid, p. 258.

<sup>98</sup> William Henry Grattan Flood, *A History of Irish Music* (Dublin, 1905).

<sup>99</sup> Ibid, p. 259.

nationalist plans, it had not been written off entirely without consideration. Key to the problem in accepting art-music was a lack of musical and literacy education,<sup>100</sup> and a fear that any successes by the Irish in this respect would be appropriated by the English thus continuing to bind Ireland and its cultural identity to the British Imperial machine.<sup>101</sup> The effects of the Famine, in the midst of which these articles were written, were also used as a not unreasonable excuse for the lack of interest in higher forms of art.

The general fading away of the creative power in Music amongst us, is a mournful evidence of our degeneracy, and the strongest proof that slavery has eaten deep into the soul of the country.

Two centuries ago, and no people in Europe possessed so marked a musical organisation as the Irish. There is hardly a nation on the face of the earth which gives fewer signs of vitality or productiveness in melody than we do to-day. This mysterious sterility, blighting the deep springs of song which welled over so abundantly for our forefathers, is so startling and anomalous as our normal taste of famine, whilst teeming harvest annually mock the misery of the people. In her old Music, the history of our country is written ineffaceably – the pastoral simplicity of her primitive people, their haughty scorn of subjugation, their fierce struggles, internal strife, defeats, humiliation, and bitter anguish.<sup>102</sup>

The climate in Ireland in the nineteenth century simply did not lend itself to the creation of art-music, favouring forms of expression not only which spoke more directly to the predominantly illiterate population, but which also gave them a more direct means with which they could voice the anguish that they were experiencing.

The music that gladdened the holy hills of Ireland in our boyhood is silent. Emigration and extermination have hushed even its echoes. Throughout the country, we believe, in this city we know, that the Temperance bands did much mischief in corrupting perverted, vulgarized editions of them on the popular ear.

To revive the old Irish Music, or take it up at the point our forefathers laid it down, is too manifestly impossible, to be cherished in the wildest dreams of the Musical fanatic. No Art is so

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<sup>100</sup> ‘The unnatural divorce between Intellect and Music which exists in Ireland, is a bad symptom in the health of both’ (‘Modern Music and Nations’, *The Nation*, 12 January, 1850).

<sup>101</sup> ‘In vindicating modern Musicians, the name of our country man, Balfe, flows spontaneously from the pen. In Germany, the central heart of instrumentalism, he is at this moment winning the applause of Artists and Princes. They call his compositions specimens of “English Art;” whilst it is the echo of Irish sighs and smiles, caught up by him at his mother’s bosom, which gives its fanciful, graceful stamp to his genius. Mysterious and complicated curse of Saxon rule in Ireland, which not only starves courage out of men’s hearts, but kills genius in their souls! We cannot recall as much as an original air, worth anything, produced here at home, in our day. The first stirrings of Musical capacity drive a man, imperatively, to seek a more genial fosterage than his own land can give. And so we have Balfe, and Osborne, and Catherine Hayes, and host of minor artists, gathering laurels to be woven into a garland for our oppressor’s brows.’ (Ibid).

<sup>102</sup> ‘Music, the Interpreter of Nationality and Literature’, *The Nation*, 2 February 1850.

entirely spontaneous, so rebel to constraint, as this. We may have the old formulas; but the spirit, the fire, the impalpable, subtle, penetrating influence which steals through the being, subdues us to tears, or excites us to laughter, as the whispers of a few rugged and primitive notes reach our ears – this old world magic belonged to a great-hearted, simple, elder time.

Yet we, though degenerate, have passions and hopes – wrongs enough, Heaven knows! to chafe our blood; and love is still left us to lend sunny winds to our imagination. Why, then, have we not a Music to interpret the Ireland of our own day?<sup>103</sup>

It was this fact alone, surely, which separated Ireland so markedly from its continental counterparts of the time. Although all countries under colonial rule suffered at the hands of their oppressors to some degree or another, it is arguable that Ireland suffered greatest, not least as the unique relationship between Ireland and Britain placed the former in a position where it could and should have expected help from its Imperial mother rather than neglect at a time of need.

The events of the potato famine of the late 1840s and early 1850s wiped out a significant percentage of the Irish population and left Ireland devastated. Often referred to simply as ‘The Great Hunger’ or ‘The Great Famine’, it is estimated that the devastation of 1845-1852 killed 20-25% of Irish people; and a great many others emigrated either during the famine or shortly after, often venturing to mainland Britain, the United States and Canada. The famine itself was caused by an infestation of potato blight which destroyed almost all the crops for a number of years, leaving the people of Ireland to deal with a food shortage of national proportions. It would have been on an occasion such as this that the British Imperial machine could have intervened, alleviating the problem and saving many lives, particularly given that there were signs in the early 1840s that the potato crops were becoming increasingly less dependable and that a famine was more than likely imminent. John Mitchel, for example, a member of the Young Ireland movement, raised the issue of the ‘Potato

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

Disease' in *The Nation* in 1844.<sup>104</sup> Significantly, this impending disaster was attributed to the English, as Mitchel also suggests.

The Irish People are expecting famine day by day... and they ascribe it unanimously, not so much to the rule of heaven as to the greedy and cruel policy of England. Be that right or wrong, that is their feeling. They believe that the seasons as they roll are but ministers of England's rapacity; that their starving children cannot sit down to their scanty meal but they see the harpy claw of England in their dish. They behold their own wretched food melting in rottenness off the face of the earth, and they see heavy-laden ships, freighted with the yellow corn their own hands have sown and reaped, spreading all sail for England; they see it and with every grain of that corn goes a heavy curse. Again the people believe—no matter whether truly or falsely—that if they should escape the hunger and the fever their lives are not safe from judges and juries. They do not look upon the law of the land as a terror to evil-doers, and a praise to those who do well; they scowl on it as an engine of foreign rule, ill-omened harbinger of doom.<sup>105</sup>

Following the famine, Mitchel also condemned the English for their actions, this time from afar in America in 1860, holding them almost entirely responsible for the events of 1845-52.

I have called it an artificial famine: that is to say, it was a famine which desolated a rich and fertile island that produced every year abundance and superabundance to sustain all her people and many more. The English, indeed, call the famine a 'dispensation of Providence;' and ascribe it entirely to the blight on potatoes. But potatoes failed in like manner all over Europe; yet there was no famine save in Ireland. The British account of the matter, then, is first, a fraud - second, a blasphemy. The Almighty, indeed, sent the potato blight, but the English created the famine.<sup>106</sup>

Although the British government under Sir Robert Peel did make some effort to alleviate the hunger in Ireland when the famine first became apparent, their efforts simply were not enough to deal with the increasing crisis. The government shipped £100,000 worth of Indian corn from America which was then sold for a penny per pound. However, the first shipment did not arrive in Ireland until February 1846 and, as the corn had not been ground, it was inedible. Furthermore, if the corn was not cooked properly it could lead to digestive problems. When Lord John Russell succeeded Peel as Prime Minister after the latter's defeat

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<sup>104</sup> John Mitchel, *The Nation*, 1 November 1844.

<sup>105</sup> John Mitchel, *The Nation*, 7 March 1846.

<sup>106</sup> John Mitchel, *The Last Conquest of Ireland (Perhaps)* (Dublin, 1861), p. 219.

in the House of Commons, the situation continued to worsen, exacerbating the famine and inflaming Irish nationalist sentiments. The famine itself is often viewed as representing a real turning point for Irish politics. Although until this point there had been a general feeling of resentment towards Britain and the Union, the events of the mid-nineteenth century fuelled many already growing nationalist concerns. Even today the famine is an issue of great contention and debate which divides scholars and historians and which politicians still feel needs to be accounted for.

The Famine was a defining event in the history of Ireland and of Britain. It has left deep scars. That one million people should have died in what was then part of the richest and most powerful nation in the world is something that still causes pain as we reflect on it today. Those who governed in London at the time failed their people through standing by while a crop failure turned into a massive tragedy. We must not forget such a dreadful event.<sup>107</sup>

It is within this context and against this historical background that both articles from *The Nation* can most productively be considered. The significance of the famine as an event in Irish history cannot be underestimated, and it is interesting to note that at least some contemporary commentators felt that it had had an impact not only on society at large but also on artistic creativity. It is perhaps interesting that, subsequent to the events of the famine, there appear to have been no conscious efforts on the part of *The Nation*, or indeed anyone else, to re-establish art music, and indeed the creative arts in general, on the national agenda.

What begins to emerge is a picture of Ireland's cultural state of mind in the middle of the nineteenth century, a country where music played a pivotal role in national propaganda, but only music of a particular type, notably song. There was, it would seem, no place for symphonic music, or indeed any 'higher' forms of music, in the national agenda, despite the fact that some, notably the anonymous correspondent from *The Nation*, lamented the absence

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<sup>107</sup> Tony Blair, from a message by the British Prime Minister sent to Britain's Ambassador to the Republic of Ireland, Veronica Sutherland, and delivered on 31 May 1997 at the Great Irish Famine Event in Cork, cited in Christine Kinealy, *The Great Famine: Impact, Ideology and Rebellion* (Palgrave, 2002), p. 1.

of this tradition from Irish life. With this in mind, the question that immediately comes to mind is what place there was in the Irish musical psyche for an ‘Irish’ symphony. Although Stanford’s work came some thirty-five years subsequent to the end of the famine and its events, opinions appear to have changed very little between then and indeed the end of the century, as a passage by John Millington Synge quoted by Harry White, demonstrates:

So at the opening of the first piece, it was hard not to smile on seeing around the hall the fine-looking women of the Gaelic League chattering in abominable Irish to some of the young clerks and shop assistants who were quite pale with enthusiasm. But it happened that during an interval of *Diarmuid and Grainne*, as was the custom in the theatre, the people in the Gallery began to sing some of the old popular songs. Until that moment, these songs had never been so heard, sung by so many people together in the old, lingering Irish words. The whole auditorium shook. It was as if one could hear in these long-drawn-out notes, with their inexpressible melancholy, the death-rattle of a nation. First one head, then another, was seen to bend over the programme notes. People were crying.

Then the curtain went up. The play restarted in a deeply emotional atmosphere. For an instant, we had glimpsed, hovering in that hall, the soul of a nation.<sup>108</sup>

If music in Ireland was not only defined by song but quite simply was song, there would appear to be no place for music of any other kind, let alone a symphony. Perhaps an opera, one of the most obvious musical forms in which to express nationalism musically, would have appealed given the ability of the genre to reference national agendas more explicitly, but symphonic music, especially that which aspired to the absolute, would not necessarily have had such an obvious and direct appeal to any Irish nationalist movement of the period, and this in spite of the fact that clearly the symphony had not been completely overlooked:

In addition to our plea for “fiddlers.” We desire to show to-day how much our greatest living writer owed to the Divine Art, undisciplined as it was by Science, and to exhibit Beethoven, the sovereign of musicians, by royal right of genius, drawing his inspiration from the poets. He says – “Goethe’s poems exercise a great sway over me, not only by their meaning, but by their rhythm also. It is a language that urges me on to composition that builds up its own lofty standard, containing in itself all the mysteries of harmony and from which melodies evolve spontaneously. I pursue these eagerly, and in my transports I give them every diversity of modulation. I triumph over the musical thought and the shape I give it. I call it Symphony.”<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> John Millington Synge, ‘Le Mouvement Intellectuel Irlandais’, in *L’Européen*, 31 May 1902, quoted in Harry White, ‘Nationalism, Colonialism and the Cultural Stasis of Music in Ireland’, p. 257.

<sup>109</sup> *The Nation*, 2 February 1850.

While we must not dismiss the national potential of the ‘Irish’ Symphony before we have even considered it, we must bear in mind that anything which sought to engage with Irish identity during the nineteenth century from almost any perspective did so cautiously, and this work is by no means exempt from a number of questions and aesthetical problems that arise as a result of its nature and supposed national links.

### **SYMPHONY NO. 3 IN F MINOR, ‘THE IRISH’, OP. 28**

Stanford commenced work on the ‘Irish’ Symphony shortly after the British première of Brahms’s Fourth Symphony, completing the first movement in less than a month. However, other commitments prevented Stanford from completing the work until the following year. In February 1887 he wrote to Richter, whom he hoped would perform the work, stating that ‘I hope to have the symphony ready for you’.<sup>110</sup> The second movement was completed a few days later on 18 February and the final two movements during the Easter Vacation, writing to Richter on 30 April ‘I hope you will be satisfied with it... If not you must leave it out’.<sup>111</sup> It is unclear at what point the concept of making this latest symphony an ‘Irish’ work was introduced. Early in 1887 the *Daily Telegraph* was calling for Cowen to compose an ‘Irish’ symphony to accompany his already popular ‘Welsh’ Symphony (1884).<sup>112</sup> Stanford was naturally keen to publicise the existence of his work as a challenger to this, which no doubt had an impact on his eagerness to have the work performed.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Letter from Stanford to Richter, 14 February 1887, in Dibble 2002, p. 182.

<sup>111</sup> Letter from Stanford to Richter, 30 April 1887, in Dibble 2002, p. 182.

<sup>112</sup> Dibble 2002, p. 182.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

## FIRST MOVEMENT – ALLEGRO MODERATO

For a symphony whose aim, the extent of which will be explored in the ensuing discussion, is to portray Ireland and/or Irish traits musically, Stanford's opening movement 'confirmed unequivocally [his] conviction in the Brahmsian model of organic evolution.'<sup>114</sup> However, as with the slow movement in his First Symphony, we can also see this as chiming with Hepokoski's observation that a composer can both affirm the symphonic mainstream while also injecting a sense of local colour.<sup>115</sup>

Stanford's opening theme pervades the entire movement:

The image shows a musical score for the opening theme of the first movement of Stanford's First Symphony. It consists of two staves. The top staff is for 'Strings + 8vb.' and the bottom staff is for 'Cl. & Bsn.'. The music is in F minor (three flats) and 3/4 time. The opening figure is a melodic cell consisting of the notes C, D-flat, and F, which is developed throughout the movement. The dynamic marking is *pp* (pianissimo).

Stanford treats the opening figure of C – D flat – F as a melodic cell, which is developed and manipulated throughout the movement, most notably in the first subject group, the development, and the coda section. The intentional avoidance of the raised seventh degree of the scale, compounded by this thematic cell, gives the movement an overall modal quality, a quality that pervades the symphonic cycle as a whole and one which could potentially be read from an Irish perspective.<sup>116</sup> The second, more lyrical theme, is initially presented at b. 67 in the cello's rich tenor range:

<sup>114</sup> Ibid, p. 184.

<sup>115</sup> Hepokoski, 'Sibelius', p. 420.

<sup>116</sup> 'Symphony in F Minor... "The Irish"', Programme from Richter Concert, 27 June 1887. See Appendix V for full reproduction.



The original programme note from the première performance of the work refers to this subject as having a ‘peculiar structure, which has been spoken of above as being analogous to the verse scheme of [Tennyson’s] “In Memoriam”.’<sup>117</sup> This is an interesting observation to make given that Stanford’s previous symphony had itself been based on or inspired by verses from the very same poem. Stanford’s close friendship with both Tennyson and his son Hallam, whom Stanford had been a contemporary with at Cambridge, might also explain the association, at least in part. The reintroduction of the melodic cell once more at the conclusion of the section, in a passage described as being ‘of a less strongly pronounced national character,’<sup>118</sup> leads to a first-time repeat section before returning to the opening of the recapitulation. The opening section of this movement displays little of Stanford’s almost masterly ability to manipulate harmony. Whilst Stanford was by no means revolutionary in his use of tonality, many of his works demonstrate an acute ability to shift tonal centres radically with little effort. However, both subject group areas are confined almost entirely to their respective tonal centres, F minor and A-flat major, and other very closely related keys. The overall lack of tonal movement and ambiguity creates a sense of calm and reflection, rather than, perhaps, a movement full of angst and torment. We might almost question whether or not this is an example of Stanford eschewing the typical ‘heroic’ symphonic

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

trajectory, especially for a minor-key symphony, even though the eventual course of the work as a whole could still be seen as an affirmation of the *per aspera ad astra* plot. However, the opening thematic cell of C to D flat certainly creates a sense of foreboding, in a similar way to the first movement of Stanford's Piano Quintet, Op. 34.

Stanford's treatment of the exposition provides an interesting commentary on his engagement with the sonata tradition. Harold Samuel had described the composer as being the last of the formalists,<sup>119</sup> and his two previous symphonies alone, never mind the other catalogue of instrumental music that was growing around this time, had already confirmed the composer's propensity to favour more 'traditional' forms. Indeed, by and large this opening movement appears to be of the variety that Hepokoski would term a type three sonata.<sup>120</sup> The two opening themes are presented independently and contrast with one another in terms of key area and, perhaps to a lesser extent, quality. There is certainly no 'heroic' theme in this opening movement, and both themes have a lyrical, almost song-like nature. Furthermore, although the opening cell can be found throughout much of the exposition section as a musical thread, the extent to which we might read these minor adjustments or reworkings of the 'standard' sonata form as deformations is questionable. Stanford is certainly engaging in some sort of manipulation, but the question is whether or not this has a greater significance. We could view these minor alterations as an attempt to give the Austro-Germanic form a more Hibernian quality, which after all could be one of the purposes of this entire work. On the other hand this could be a further example of Stanford's inability to escape the significant influence of the Austro-Germanic tradition.

The movement's continuation through its remaining rotations affirms the essentially conventional nature of the sonata plan of Stanford's *Allegro moderato*, and notably his

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<sup>119</sup> Harold Samuel in 'Charles Villiers Stanford by some of his pupils', p. 207.

<sup>120</sup> See James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the late Eighteenth-Century Sonata*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

propensity for the Brahmsian model.<sup>121</sup> The original programme from the work's first performance (see Appendix V) details the specifics of the movement's formal features, but there is little in the description, or indeed of the composer's treatment of the movement, that stands out as being notably unusual for this kind of sonata movement. Perhaps the most notable feature of the movement as a whole is its lack of heroism, favouring a more lyrical even subdued nature, even though the semitonal interval from the opening also sets up a sense of foreboding.

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

SECOND MOVEMENT – ALLEGRO MOLTO VIVACE

The image shows a handwritten musical score for the second movement of the 'Irish' Symphony. At the top center, it is labeled 'II' and 'A HOP 28 JIG'. The tempo is marked 'Allegro molto vivace'. A central caricature of a man in a top hat and ruffled coat is drawn over the score. The manuscript includes staves for Flauto, Oboe, Clarinetto, Fagotto, Corni, Trombe, Tromboni, Violini, Violoncelli, and Contrabbassi. The bottom of the page is marked with 'Allegro molto vivace' and the number '50'.

Autograph Manuscript of the 'Irish' Symphony, Second Movement  
Image © British Library Board Add MS 60495

Stanford's second movement is explicitly designed to represent an Irish 'hop jig' dance. With this in mind, the composer's own observations on the genre are interesting to note:

It is not always easy to differentiate between Irish jigs and marches. The character of the music itself is the only safe guide. The jig rhythm is always in a 6/8 rapid tempo, and often infinite, i.e., devoid of any ending, and perpetually repeating itself (like a recurring decimal). The hop-jig is similar to it but in 9/8 time.<sup>122</sup>

In this movement Stanford appears to make a very conscious effort to conjure up the atmosphere associated with this traditional Irish folk-dance. We are told that the opening pause note in the violins 'is characteristic of the mode of performance of such pieces by Irish fiddlers.'<sup>123</sup> Following this pause, the primary subject of this section is presented over a pizzicato accompaniment 'perhaps in imitation of a harp supporting a fiddler.'<sup>124</sup> The theme concludes with the so-called 'Irish' cadence, a three-note repetition of the tonic, although the origins of this term are unclear. Stanford himself would later refer to this feature by name, citing its appearance in works including the first movement of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony.<sup>125</sup> The Richter concert programme note also refers to this aspect, not by name, describing it as 'another determining feature of its nationality.'<sup>126</sup>

**Allegro molto vivace** ♩ = 152

<sup>122</sup> Stanford, 'Some Thoughts concerning Folk-Song and Nationality', pp. 239-40.

<sup>123</sup> Richter concert programme.

<sup>124</sup> Brown, p. 110.

<sup>125</sup> Stanford, 'Some Thoughts concerning Folk-Song and Nationality', p. 238.

<sup>126</sup> Richter concert programme.

The *moto perpetuo* nature of the movement is also surely illustrative of the seamless nature of this Irish dance. However, while superficially it would seem that this is one of the moments that Shaw identifies when Stanford the Professor and Stanford the Celt come to blows with one another?<sup>127</sup> Stanford specifies that the principal difference between an Irish jig and a hop-jig is the metrical division of the bars, two versus three respectively. While the time signature, and indeed the movement's denomination suggest the later, Stanford creates a heightened sense of metrical instability from the outset. Throughout the opening bars it is unclear whether or not the moment is in two or three. Indeed, to an extent neither division is entirely satisfactory, with the general feel of 2 + 1 divisions. What sets out to be a quintessential Irish dance, one which, according to Stanford, is defined by its metrical divisions, and surely stability, comes crashing down at the outset. Of course, there is no reason why Stanford, to an extent similarly to the previous movement, could not rework or even re-conceptualise the hop-jig, but again one wonders whether or not Shaw might have had a point when observing the tensions between Stanford's natural and/or fabricated Irish impulses, and his more conservative musical tendencies. It is also curious that Stanford makes no attempts to introduce folk instrumentation either into this movement as a whole or at least the outer hop-jig sections. Given that the use of 'exotic' instruments was by no means unusual, and indeed he would use the bagpipes in *Shamus O'Brien*, Stanford seems overly keen to keep this traditional dance in a much more refined, bourgeois style, rather than seeking to reflect more accurately the much rawer folk elements of it.

The formal plan of the movement would also appear to affirm Shaw's observations. It is effectively worked as a Scherzo and Trio, the hop-jig performing the function of the former and a second thematic idea (below) forming the basis of the latter.

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<sup>127</sup> Shaw, 'Going Fantee', *The World*, 19 May 1893.



Although this more subdued section appears to be devoid of obvious Irish references, unlike the more obvious surrounding sections, the ‘Irish’ cadence figure appears as an ostinato bass regularly throughout the trio, perhaps providing a ‘national’ thread for the movement.

Superficially Stanford’s hop-jig acts as an interesting Irish interpretation of the traditional symphonic dance movement, and no doubt contemporary audiences would have heard it in this manner as contemporary reviews of the work appear to affirm. However, the apparent ‘Irish’ aspects probably functioned more effectively for non-Irish listeners than those such as Shaw who presumably had a better understanding of the tradition to which Stanford sought to allude. Not only that, but once again Stanford appears to be caught between competing factions. Irish on the one hand, and a more traditional one on the other. However, we should not discount an additional possibility, one which will be explored in more depth later in this chapter, which could be an attempt by Stanford to elevate more traditional folk traditions to a high-art status, one which would inevitably require transformation and reinvention for its new context.

### THIRD MOVEMENT – ANDANTE CON MOTO

After a rhapsodical introduction suggesting the harp of some ancient Irish bard, with brief phrases from the wood-wind instruments in pairs forecasting the theme, the clarinets announce, mostly without accompaniment, the melancholy and romantic air which is the chief subject of the piece.<sup>128</sup>

Andante con moto ♩ = 80

The musical score consists of three systems. The first system shows the Harp part (piano) with a treble clef and a bass clef. The harp part is marked 'p' and includes fingerings 5 and 6. The second system shows the Clarinets part (piano) with a treble clef and a bass clef. The clarinet part is marked 'p' and features a melodic line with a fermata. The third system shows the piano accompaniment with a treble clef and a bass clef. The piano part includes sixteenth-note patterns in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

[In the slow movement] Ireland is evoked through the opening harp passage (a reference to the ancient Irish harping tradition though the B-flat 7 and F9 chords are almost impressionistic in effect) and the D major oboe theme, which represents Irish bagpipes.<sup>129</sup>

Accepting this reading, the entire opening section, until b.26, can be seen as one orchestral ‘warm-up’ routine, before the movement proper commences with the introduction of the primary subject material, a rather unusual example of tonal obliquity in Stanford’s music:

At the beginning comes the *ricercare*/toccata as the balladeer warms up on the harp with four, five, six and seven subdivisions of the quarter note. The warm-up continues in the winds culminating with a cadenza for the flute (an Irish penny whistle?). The introduction begins again and the main section commences.<sup>130</sup>

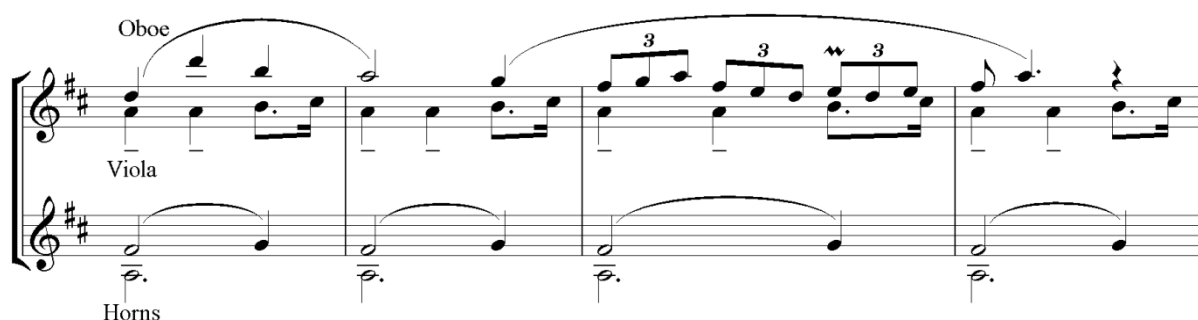
<sup>128</sup> Daniel Gregory Mason, *Short Studies of Great Masterpieces* (New York, 1920), pp. 55-56.

<sup>129</sup> Paul Rodmell, *Charles Villiers Stanford* (Ashgate, 2002), p. 127.

<sup>130</sup> Brown, p. 111.



Rhapsodic in nature, the movement passes through a number of sections and moods, in a seemingly free-form structure, perhaps again reflective of the improvisatory nature of the musical culture that it seeks to evoke. A modulation to D major (b. 66), demonstrating Stanford's propensity for using the mediant as a second-key area, introduces a new theme, which the composer alleged was based on the folk song 'The Lament of the Songs of Usnach'.



Immediately apparent is the similarity of this theme, here shown in the Viola, to the opening motif of the corresponding movement in Brahms's Fourth Symphony. Stanford, in his autobiography, would later claim that the similarity of these two motifs was purely coincidental as the two separate symphonies had been composed simultaneously.<sup>131</sup> However, the dates of Stanford's manuscript would suggest otherwise, as this movement was not completed until Easter 1887.<sup>132</sup> Although there is no denying that the melodic shape is identical, the function of the motif in the two movements is very different, and perhaps we should view this as a close resemblance rather than a case of outright plagiarism on

<sup>131</sup> Charles Villiers Stanford, *Pages from an Unwritten Diary* (London, 1914), p. 262.

<sup>132</sup> Dibble 2002, p. 182.

Stanford's part. The movement continues in a strophic fashion, alternating between melodic ideas which are continually developed and manipulated, building towards a climactic statement of the lament theme, before gradually 'winding down' through a return to the opening *ricercare* idea. John F. Porte described this movement as 'one of the most poignantly expressive things Stanford ever composed. The whole of the movement is music of the soul. It throbs throughout with deep emotion that grows in places to a heart-shaking sadness.'<sup>133</sup>

While Porte probably over-exaggerates the nature of Stanford's slow movement, at least to the extent that I would disagree that either the movement or indeed the symphony as a whole are sad, at least not in the way that later works were, there is no denying that this is a highly emotive, even personal musical moment. Indeed, it is Stanford's slow symphonic movements that we get closest to finding a more individual musical voice. Even in the First Symphony, it was the slow movement which was not only the most successful but also the most original, and this is a pattern that can be observed across Stanford's symphonic output.

This slow movement is by far the most expressive section of the Third Symphony. To an extent this is hardly surprising, given that this kind of movement lends itself most readily to emotive expression. However, there is more to the *Andante con moto* than just a standard sense of reflection that one might expect from a nineteenth-century symphony. Part of the success of Stanford's clearly personal expressivity is as a result of his adoption of a much freer formal structure. Indeed, the movement is essentially cast in a free, rhapsodic form, in which his expressive impulses guide the musical direction, rather than his apparent adherence to more traditional forms in the work's other movements. This is a pattern that can be observed across many of his symphonies, culminating in his Seventh Symphony, so much of which can be viewed from this formal perspective. Furthermore, it is this adoption of a rhapsodic form that would contribute significantly to the expressive qualities and capacities

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<sup>133</sup> John F. Porte, *Sir Charles V. Stanford* (London, 1921), pp. 34-35

of the Irish Rhapsodies. This is not to question the composer's ability to handle large-scale forms, nor to dispute Dunhill's observations (see above), but rather to acknowledge that Stanford appears to have been able to carve a more individual path when he managed to escape from the conventions and traditions that otherwise appear to govern and direct so much of his music.

#### **FOURTH MOVEMENT – ALLEGRO MODERATO, MA CON FUOCO**

The exact nature of the form of Stanford's closing movement has been the subject of debate. The programme note for the performance claims that the finale is 'couched in rondo-sonata form', confirmed by Porte and by Shaw.<sup>134</sup> However, Brown believes that the movement is in 'full-fledged sonata form without the expository repeat.'<sup>135</sup> The reality may well be that Stanford chose to adopt a sonata structure which he more freely interpreted to enable him to incorporate the various elements of this symphonic finale in a coherent fashion.

Without exaggerating its significance, Stanford's final movement of this symphony represents a very important milestone in the composer's creative output. The exploration of Ireland within his music would form a central part of Stanford's work, especially in later years, encompassing almost every genre and evoking the Emerald Isle in a number of ways. One of the most effective ways in which Stanford engaged with his homeland musically was through the incorporation of folk-song in his music. In some instances, this simply involved setting pre-existing songs and texts to new arrangements, while in others he wove strands from various melodies into instrumental works. Stanford had written and arranged a few Irish songs and melodies by this point in his career, but the finale of the 'Irish' Symphony, which incorporates two Irish folk melodies, is the first instance in which he did so in such a

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<sup>134</sup> Richter concert programme.

<sup>135</sup> Brown, p. 113.

dramatic and effective setting, and one which would have a profound influence upon later works.

The first of the two melodies used is 'Remember the Glories of Brien the Brave', also known as 'Molly McAlpin':

Re - mem - ber the glo - ries of Bri - en the brave, Tho' the days of the he - ro are o'er; Tho' -  
lost to Mo - no - nia, and cold\_ in the grave, He re - turns. to Kin - ko - ra no more. That\_  
star\_ of the foed which so of - ten hath pour'd Its beam on the bat - tle hath set; But e -  
nough of the glo - ry re - mains on each sword, To light\_ us to vic - to - ry yet.

This melody is initially presented three times, initially in fragmentary form, secondly *piano* in full (b. 15), and finally a complete statement for full orchestra (b. 32). These various thematic statements lead to a transitionary section (b. 61), derived from the folk melody, leading to a second subject of Stanford's own creation:

The image shows a musical score for a second subject in F-sharp minor. It consists of two staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat), indicating F-sharp minor. The melody is characterized by a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together, with a prominent descending line. The second staff continues the melodic development with similar rhythmic patterns and phrasing.

Following an extended codetta section in which the two opening themes are intertwined, a sudden shift upwards to F-sharp minor signals the opening of the development section, one in which Stanford would continue to exploit the semi-tone tension from the opening movement.

One aspect that questions the formalistic aspect of this movement is the introduction of a third theme shortly into the development section. This new motif is based on a second folk-song, ‘Let Erin Remember the Days of Old’, or ‘The Little Red Fox’.

The image shows a musical score for a folk-song in F minor, 3/4 time. It consists of four staves of music with lyrics underneath. The lyrics are: "Let E - rin re-mem - ber the days of old, Ere her faith - less sons be - trayed her; When Ma - la - chi wore the co - lar of gold, Which he won from her proud in - va - der, When her kings, with stan - dards of green un fur'l'd Let the Red-Branch Knights to dan - ger; Ere the em - 'rald gem of the west - ern world Was set in the crown of a stran - ger." The music is written in a single melodic line on a treble clef staff.

The way in which this theme operates within the movement as a whole is not dissimilar in nature to Brahms’s use of a chorale-like motif in his *Academic Festival Overture* (1880), a work which Stanford knew well. Stanford’s theme is initially presented, in full, in the trumpets, *pianissimo*, under an inverted E pedal in the violins and flutes, although this is but a brief allusion to the theme that would later form a much more important part of the movement’s thematic unfolding. Shaw would criticise Stanford for ‘mechanically’ forcing these folk tunes into the more formal sonata form.<sup>136</sup> Without wishing to dismiss Shaw’s observations entirely, Stanford’s decision to depart from and/or manipulate the sonata norms can be seen as a further act of affirming the symphonic tradition but from the position of the ‘other’, again in a fashion not dissimilar to that Hepokoski identifies in Sibelius’ works.<sup>137</sup>

The home key of F minor is re-established at b. 222 and the recapitulation itself begins at b. 230. However, rather than the first subject being presented three times as it was

<sup>136</sup> See review reproduced in Appendix VI.

<sup>137</sup> See Hepokoski, ‘Sibelius’, p. 420.

in the exposition, here we find it presented only once for full orchestra, as per the third statement in the opening section, a similar technique used by Stanford at the corresponding point of his Second Symphony. Stanford's second subject is presented in the submediant of D-flat major, after which this section is repeated as per its corresponding expository section. The D-flat is then treated enharmonically to act as a C-sharp, facilitating a modulation to the tonic major of F major. A build in activity and harmonic tension leads to a sudden stagnation in surface activity (b. 311) where 'Let Erin Remember' is stated once more, again for brass, although this time for horns and trombones *forte*. However, unlike its previous statement, the folk song is divided by interjections for full orchestra, thematically derived from 'Remember the Glories'. The full orchestra joins the brass for a *tutti* statement of the closing phrases of 'Let Erin Remember' before an extended coda leads to a triumphant and stirring conclusion where 'the music transcends these [national] quotations regardless of the listener's location.'<sup>138</sup>

Stanford's Third Symphony presents us with an interesting commentary on his relationship with the symphonic genre. Much of the work appears to affirm the Austro-Germanic tradition to which it essentially aspires in its overall adherence to symphonic practices and norms of the period, notably in the general form of the outer movements and its progress from the minor to the major mode across the work. Furthermore, if we accept that non-Germanic composers approaching the genre would inevitably have to manipulate some of the conventions and norms to provide a more localised flavour to their music, as Hepokoski has suggested, then, again, the small deviations that Stanford makes from these norms are easy to explain. However, we should also consider this work within the wider setting of Stanford's symphonic practice, especially the two works that preceded it. In both of these we find a tendency for manipulation of the outer movements, whilst using the inner ones to find a more individual voice. In essence, Stanford uses the symphonic model to affirm both the tradition and to place himself within that tradition, while at the same time subtly massaging its conventions to

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<sup>138</sup> Brown, p. 113.

find his own place and own identity within that tradition. This interpretation and reading of Stanford's symphonic practice, one which I believe can also be seen in later symphonic works, challenges the received reading of Stanford and his instrumental music that many musicologists have come to accept unquestioningly and would suggest that even within these works, which are still highly derivative in parts, we can find a more unique Stanfordian voice.

### **THE 'IRISH' SYMPHONY: A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE**

The 'Irish' Symphony was an instant success, and was the first of a handful of works that exposed Stanford to a level of international recognition that few British composers had hitherto enjoyed. Available in score, published by Novello, and with leading champions including Hans Richter, who conducted the work's première, Hans von Bülow, Mengelberg, Kes, and even Mahler, the symphony became embedded in the performance canon until at least the outbreak of World War I.

That Stanford chose to title this work the 'Irish' need not, of itself, imply that the symphony has any greater national significance than that on which the surface level operates. Namely, this is a work, in the tradition of Mendelssohn's 'Scottish' and 'Italian' symphonies and Cowen's 'Welsh' and 'Scandinavian' symphonies, for example, whose primary purpose is to provide a musical illustration and/or reference to a nation, or geographical area in the case of Cowen's 'Scandinavian', by way of stereotypical devices and associations. Stanford uses the various musical constructions outlined earlier in this chapter to create a musical sound-world in which Irish references find a habitable space.

In his discussion on the symphony, James Hepokoski defines a number of different types of symphonies that can be found in the nineteenth-century repertoire, each of which

operate on various aesthetic levels. Of these, he describes one as being ‘nationalistic’

symphonies:

These were works which made a *primary* appeal to national pride, national ownership and a privileged access of understanding possessed by a clearly identifiable regional audience. Crucial here was the invitation to hear the work as capturing an ethnic/national/political essence – as a symphony preceded by a national adjective, ‘Russian’, ‘Swedish’, ‘Czech’, and so on. This feature alone guaranteed a contextual framing of the music along extra-musical lines, regardless of the degree of supplementary programmaticism in which the piece might be engaged. Strengthened forms of this appeal relied on ‘national’ turns in the music – melodic, rhythmic (dance-based), textural, harmonic or modal quirks that called attention to themselves as standing out from normative Austro- Germanic practice. These aspects of musical difference need not have been uniquely indigenous to the region in question: it sufficed that audiences and critics were willing to hear them in this way and that the composer encouraged them to do so.<sup>139</sup>

Within this framework, we can accept that Stanford’s work operates on an ‘Irish’ level, not least when we consider Hepokoski’s statement that, for a work to have national associations, it was but necessary that a composer state and/or claim such an intention, and that audiences be willing to accept their existence. A number of contemporary sources confirm that this work, from a Hepokoskian reading, was both conceived as ‘Irish’ by its composer and received as being ‘Irish’ by audiences at the time.<sup>140</sup> The programme from the symphony’s 1887 première opens with the following:

Among the principal traits of Irish national music which Dr. Stanford has utilised, in order to impart a ‘local colour’ and a distinctive national character to his work, may be enumerated:- (1) The admission (in two instances) of existing national airs, and a general reproduction of the national style. This latter has been attained by the employment, in the structure of his melodies, of scales or modes not generally used in modern music, and which, if not identical with, are nearly akin to some of the old Greek or s-called Ecclesiastical Modes, especially the Æolian and Mixolydian. The first, second and fourth movements are written in what theorists would call the ‘Æolian mode transposed,’ *i.e.*, a scale having semi-tones between its second and third, and fifth and sixth degrees. The slow movement is in the ‘Mixolydian mode transposed,’ having its semi-tones between the third and fourth, and sixth and seventh degrees. (2) The frequent avoidance of semi-tonic intervals, which imparts to both melody and harmony a still more antique and pentatonic flavour. (3) The adoption of a scheme of melody peculiar to the structure of many old Irish tunes. This consists of four strains of equal length, of which the first is coincident with the fourth, and the third is a slightly varied repetition of the second. It has its analogy in the verse-scheme of Tennyson’s ‘In Memoriam,’ in which the first line of each stanza rhymes with the fourth, and the second with the third. (4) The substitution of a Hop-jig, a national dance, for the

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<sup>139</sup> James Hepokoski, ‘Beethoven Reception: The Symphonic Tradition’, *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Music* ed. Jim Samson (Cambridge, 2001), p. 439.

<sup>140</sup> See Appendix V, Appendix VI and Appendix VII.

more usual Scherzo; the imitation of the rhythm of an old Irish harp prelude, 'Try if it's in tune,' and the introduction of the 'Lament of the sons of Usnach.'<sup>141</sup>

With the exception of the incorporation of Irish folk melodies and the substitution of a Hop-Jig in place of the Scherzo, the remainder of these apparent 'Irish' traits are rather vague when considered objectively. When we consider that Stanford had little by way of tradition upon which to build when it came to Irish art-music (see above discussion on Art-Music in Ireland, p.71), surely Stanford was actually defining and creating his own Irish tradition, rather than transplanting into this specific work? Writing in 1912, Samuel Swift comments that it is surprising 'how little music of a symphonic character has been built upon the abundant folk songs of Erin.'<sup>142</sup> However, that aspect aside, audiences accepted that the work was 'Irish'. The *Musical Times* described the work as being 'Irish to the core',<sup>143</sup> and correspondent of *The Times* appears to have shared the sentiments of the writer of the work's first programme in declaring that the symphony's 'Irish' nature was inherent rather than imposed:

Mr. Stanford has denominated his symphony the "Irish," and in a Latin motto prefixed to the score calls upon Phoebus for help in his patriotic endeavour of doing justice to the melodies of his native land. Even without this indication the most casual listener would observe that the rhythm and the type of melody prevailing throughout belong to the Green Island.<sup>144</sup>

The question, of course, is, if we accept that there was little if anything by way of pre-existing reference points, what would audiences have used as their guide in assessing to what extent this work was 'Irish'? Surely it could only be in the presence of the Hop-Jig dance and the folk melodies, assuming that the latter were recognised. Editions of Thomas Moore's melodies, from which both of those employed by Stanford were taken, had been in circulation

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<sup>141</sup> Richter concert programme.

<sup>142</sup> Samuel Swift, 'The Irish Symphony', *Symphony Society Bulletin*, Vol. V no. VIII, March 12 1912. It is possible that Swift was unaware that both Harty and Esposito had themselves composed 'Irish' symphonies by this point.

<sup>143</sup> *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, Vol. 29, no. 539 (1 January 1888), pp. 21-22.

<sup>144</sup> 'Mr. Stanford's New Symphony', *The Times*, 1 July 1887

for much of the nineteenth century, although the extent to which these would have been widely known in English circles at this point is unknown, especially when we consider that it would be almost a decade before Stanford released *The Irish Melodies of Thomas Moore, the original airs restored Op. 60* in 1895. Thus, the insistence by *The Times* that the very nature of the music itself was resonant with Irish flavour seems somewhat curious, and surely must have been influenced by the original programme indication. Reviews of the work in the New York Philharmonic's *Symphony Society Bulletin* (see Appendix VII) show that, even decades later, the 'Irish' Symphony was still accepted as an 'Irish' work.

What is perhaps most curious about all of the contemporary reviews of the work is that, although they are happy to accept its Irish qualities, not one seems to read anything further into their significance, and this is in spite of the increasing political turmoil that surrounded Ireland both at the time of the work's conception, right through to Irish independence being declared only a couple of years before Stanford's death. Not even the New York reviews question Stanford's motivation for writing the work, nor how it might subsequently be interpreted in light of the increasing political tensions, and this is in spite of the fact that Stanford was fairly vocal about his opinions on the matter. It is, of course, possible that Stanford's political beliefs were not so widely known on the other side of the Atlantic and where the full extent of the Irish situation might not have been appreciated, but even then it seems curious that no speculation whatsoever was entered into as to the reasons behind the work's Irish denomination.

## WHOSE IRELAND?

In order to consider the deeper implications of the ‘Irish’ Symphony we must first make certain assumptions and/or acceptances. Firstly, we must accept that the ‘Irish’ Symphony can be read as an ‘Irish’ work of sorts. Secondly, we must also accept, or at least be prepared to entertain the possibility, that the presence of the various musical gestures that lend the work its ‘Irish’ nature *might* have greater significance than just giving the work a novelty appeal. The question that now poses itself is that if these features do have a greater purpose, then what was that purpose and how can we begin to link it together with Stanford as an individual?

Assessing the work, however, on this level presents us with two problems. Firstly, the ‘Irish’ Symphony appears to make no profound political statements. Aside from the last movement, the preceding three movements are all concerned with creating an Irish musical landscape, rather than linking the work in with any deeper political or other significance. Secondly, Stanford as an individual had a questionable relationship with his homeland, so much so that the extent to which he could be considered as Irish, and therefore his ability to ‘speak’ for Ireland, is uncertain. Although Howells stated that ‘Stanford belonged to Ireland’,<sup>145</sup> he also noted that ‘If he spoke of Ireland it was in such wise as to make him appear an embittered political son of a country he by then loved only in that part which moved to the tune of Edward Carson and James Craig: so that I could not feel the gentler antecedents of his love for Dublin.’<sup>146</sup> Arnold Bax, on the other hand, stated that ‘Stanford was not Irish enough’,<sup>147</sup> believing that Stanford had never been a part of Ireland as a result of his Anglo-Irish heritage. Thus Stanford stands divided; although born and bred in Dublin, his links with the Ascendancy and his abandonment of Ireland leave him in a state of

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<sup>145</sup> Howells 1952-53, p. 20.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid, p. 21.

<sup>147</sup> Bax, *Farewell, my youth*, p. 27.

nationalist limbo, a fact that was only compounded further by his entrenchment in the English establishment through his connections in Cambridge and London. Furthermore, a staunch opponent of Home Rule, and allegedly a signatory of the Ulster Covenant, Stanford aligned himself throughout his life with the Union and all that it stood for, a position that placed him in direct opposition to many Irish nationalists of the time. However, should these features bar Stanford's claims not only to Irish identity but also his ability to speak as an Irishman on aspects affecting his homeland?

### **THE NECESSITY OF EXILE**

Although Stanford's political opinions on the Irish situation in the nineteenth century posed a real problem for his reception as an Irishman, arguably his non-residence in the country he claimed as his own presents one of the most substantial barriers for us today in assessing to what extent we can firstly consider him as an 'Irish' composer and, secondly, the extent to which his music can be viewed within some form of Irish nationalist construction. For many decades now critics and scholars have failed to overcome this problem. Howells, in 1952, commented that it was perfectly normal for Stanford, like many of his fellow Irishmen, to have left Ireland to pursue an artistic career.<sup>148</sup> Indeed, he appears to suggest that there was, even then, a general feeling that Stanford had 'abandoned' his homeland, something Howells was keen to correct:

Stanford quitted Dublin while yet in his teens: seemingly turned his back upon the country of his birth before he had grown to maturity under its shaping influence. But not all the waters of Cam or Thames or Oder or Rhine could dilute the Irish blood in his veins. To the end, his innermost mind and secret heart were on the fringe of Loughareema and in the glens of Antrim.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Howells 1952-53, p. 19.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid. It should be noted that Stanford did make regular visits to Ireland until around 1892 when the flu epidemic wiped out most of his surviving relatives. See Dibble 2002, pp. 234-5.

Possibly without realising it, in his defence of Stanford's Irish position, Howells touches on one of the most fundamental problems in dealing with Stanford and his Irish identity. Namely, given that Stanford spent so little of his life in Ireland, in spite of the fact that his formative years were spent in Dublin, it is questionable as to how much of the country rubbed off on the composer, and especially when we consider that he would, for the most part, have been at an age when surely he could not have appreciated the full scope of issues affecting Irish society in the mid-nineteenth century. Although Stanford discusses his childhood in Ireland at some length in *Pages from an unwritten diary*, he does so in a very non-specific way, dwelling much more so on individual characters that he met with a general overview of music in Dublin at the time, rather than (and this is with decades of political hindsight) commenting on the state of the country at the time and the opinions of its people. Perhaps Stanford, even in his latter years, still failed to grasp the harsh realities that his fellow countrymen faced, both when writing in the early twentieth century and also as a child in the 1850s and 1860s.<sup>150</sup>

However, while Stanford's departure from Ireland and his apparent lack of immersion in Irish culture both as a child and throughout his life pose a problem, similarly Stanford, as Howells alludes to, had to leave Ireland if he wanted to achieve the musical success that he was afforded through his affiliations with various English establishments. Speaking at an address in October 2010 to the Stanford Society, Harry White developed this idea further, identifying the need to recognise the 'necessity of exile' in Stanford's life and works.<sup>151</sup> According to White, when examining the works of other (Anglo-)Irish artists, many of which also left Ireland at an early stage in their professional lives, their absence from Ireland seldom, if ever, poses a problem when considering their national status. Artists including

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<sup>150</sup> See Stanford, *Pages from an unwritten diary*, pp. 1-102.

<sup>151</sup> Harry White, "'A City of Glaring Contrasts': Reclaiming Charles Villiers Stanford", an address at the 2010 gathering of the Stanford Society (unpublished).

Thomas Moore, Oscar Wilde, and George Bernard Shaw all, like Stanford, ‘abandoned’ their homeland in the pursuit of successful careers on the British mainland. However, unlike Stanford, their self-imposed state of exile appears to create no real issues for critics in assessing their works in light of the Irish situation of their respective times. Considering that all three of these artists engaged with Ireland through their works at some point, it is surprising that this notion of geographical distance seldom, if ever, poses a problem. So why then, asks White, does it do so when considering the works of Stanford, which also, like the ‘Irish’ Symphony, seek to engage with Ireland from a creative perspective at a time when Ireland was experiencing significant political and social turmoil? For White, Stanford’s geographical isolation from Ireland should not be a problem when assessing either the composer or his music. During almost all of Stanford’s lifetime, Ireland was not a political and national entity of its own, being assumed within the Union. With this in mind, that Stanford spent most of his time living in other cities within the construction of the Union should not be an issue. It would have been no different had Stanford been born in Cambridge and then moved to London, although the majority of Irish nationalists in the nineteenth century are unlikely to have agreed with this logic. However, even though Stanford remained physically removed from his homeland and the country that he attempted to engage with regularly during his life, as far as the composer was concerned he did not abandon Ireland and his emotional and artistic commitment to the country. For Stanford, Ireland and the Union were inseparable entities, and surely any objective assessment of Stanford and his works has to take on board the composer’s perspective and opinions. White argues that we must accept that Stanford’s exile from his homeland was a central part of his creative process and also is fundamental in understanding the composer and his works, and especially those with Irish connections. We need to move on from this received historical opinion that has occupied Stanford scholarship for the last century and accept that his self-imposed exile does

not, necessarily, negate his claims for Irish legitimacy, even if those claims come from within his complicated Anglo-Irish socio-political background.

### **STANFORD THE ULSTERMAN?**

If we accept that Stanford and his music could be considered to be representative of Ireland in some shape or form, it is now necessary to assess the nature of this Irish identity. Of course, this aspect changes throughout the course of the composer's life and in his various 'Irish' works. With this in mind, the following discussion will focus solely on the 'Irish' Symphony itself and other connected works that can help us to understand more fully the significance of this work within an Irish framework. However, as the symphony and its circumstances do not immediately suggest anything about the work within this context, we must widen our scope somewhat considering later works in the composer's body of music.

Throughout the course of his life and as a result of Stanford's political stance on the Irish situation, he became increasingly aligned with the political cause of the Ulster region. This was probably, in part, due to his own Protestant heritage and that it was this region of Ireland in which the Unionist supporters had their strongest following, although its political isolation was not crystallised until several decades after the composition of the 'Irish' Symphony. When, in 1911, Parliament abolished the House of Lords' ability to veto bills placed before it, the prospects of success for the Home Rule movement increased substantially, and were finally secured with the success of the 1914 Home Rule Bill. Unionist sensibilities increased dramatically in the years separating these two key political developments, leading to the drafting and circulating of two iconic documents: the Ulster Covenant and the Ulster Declaration. Signed by over 500,000 Irish citizens, these two documents, the former for men and the latter for women, gave voice to the political concerns

of Unionists, and may even have acted as a call to arms, sanctioning almost any means necessary to maintain the strength of the Union. In addition to the main Covenant and Declaration, it is believed that numerous other copies circulated amongst Irish communities throughout the world, and so the actual number who either signed or subscribed to the sentiments contained within both could have been significantly higher. So emotive were they, that it has been reported that some even signed with their own blood.<sup>152</sup>

### **Covenant**

Being convinced in our consciences that Home Rule would be disastrous to the material well-being of Ulster as well as of the whole of Ireland, subversive of our civil and religious freedom, destructive of our citizenship, and perilous to the unity of the Empire, we, whose names are underwritten, men of Ulster, loyal subjects of His Gracious Majesty King George V., humbly relying on the God whom our fathers in days of stress and trial confidently trusted, do hereby pledge ourselves in solemn Covenant, throughout this our time of threatened calamity, to stand by one another in defending, for ourselves and our children, our cherished position of equal citizenship in the United Kingdom, and in using all means which may be found necessary to defeat the present conspiracy to set up a Home Rule Parliament in Ireland. And in the event of such a Parliament being forced upon us, we further solemnly and mutually pledge ourselves to refuse to recognize its authority. In sure confidence that God will defend the right, we hereto subscribe our names. And further, we individually declare that we have not already signed this Covenant.

### **Declaration**

We, whose names are underwritten, women of Ulster, and loyal subjects of our gracious King, being firmly persuaded that Home Rule would be disastrous to our Country, desire to associate ourselves with the men of Ulster in their uncompromising opposition to the Home Rule Bill now before Parliament, whereby it is proposed to drive Ulster out of her cherished place in the Constitution of the United Kingdom, and to place her under the domination and control of a Parliament in Ireland. Praying that from this calamity God will save Ireland, we here to subscribe our names.

The documents also inspired Rudyard Kipling's poem 'Ulster 1912' (see Appendix VIII).

Stanford himself is believed to have added his name to the Covenant as, although his signature does not appear on the original document, it seems plausible that he would have had

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<sup>152</sup> Kevin Kenny, 'Ireland and the British Empire: An Introduction', *Ireland and the British Empire* ed. Kevin Kenny (Oxford 2006).

access to one of the several that no doubt circulated London at the time.<sup>153</sup> Many of Stanford's later 'Irish' works show an increasing sympathy for the Ulster region and its cause, notably in his Irish Rhapsodies, several of which take their musical material from folk songs associated with the northern region. Of all of these, his *Fourth Irish Rhapsody*, composed in November 1913, most obviously links itself with this political movement. First performed under the direction of Mengelberg in Amsterdam in February 1914, and subsequently at the Queen's Hall, London, under the same conductor, it is subtitled 'The Fisherman of Lough Neagh and what he saw', or more familiarly as just the 'Ulster Rhapsody'. The title calls to mind a stanza from a Thomas Moore poem:

On Lough Neagh's banks as the fisherman strays  
In the clear cold eve declining  
He sees the round towers of other days  
In the waters 'neath him shining  
Thus shall memory often in dreams sublime  
Catch a glimpse of the days that are over  
Thus sighing, look through the waves of time  
For the long-faded glories they cover.

The legend of Lough Neagh, in Irish folklore, says that the lough had originally been a fountain that suddenly overflowed, flooding the entire region, similar to Plato's Atlantis. It was said that on a clear day it was possible to catch a glimpse of great palaces and spires from Ireland's mystical past, from a time when giants roamed the land and fairies and other mythological creatures inhabited the great sunken city that lay beneath the waters. The fisherman of the poem is the modern-day observer peering back into Ireland's glorious and triumphant past. This poem and association, however, becomes even more interesting for Stanford himself when we consider its first stanza:

Let Erin remember the days of old  
Ere her faithless sons betrayed her  
When Malachi wore the collar of gold  
That he won from the proud invader

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<sup>153</sup> Dibble 2002, p. 104.

When her kings with standards of green unfurled  
Led the Red Branch Knights to danger  
Ere the emerald gem of the Western World  
Was set in the crown of a stranger.

Although there are no apparent musical links, it is curious that Stanford would return to this specific song, given that 'Let Erin Remember' brings the 'Irish' Symphony to its triumphant close. It is almost as if the Fourth Rhapsody, at least from an aesthetic point of view, picks up where the symphony left off.<sup>154</sup>

The composer's choice of reference for these two works through the use of a shared poem is curious, given that they could be read as lines celebrating Ireland's independent past rather than its current present as part of the Union. Not only this poem, but the other song used in the 'Irish' Symphony also appears to dwell upon similar sentiments:

Remember the glories of Brien the Brave,  
Though the days of the hero are o'er;  
Though lost to Mononia, and cold in the grave,  
He returns to Kinkora no more!  
That star of the field, which so often has pour'd  
Its beam on the battle, is set;  
But enough of its glory remains on each sword  
To light us to victory yet!

Mononia! when nature embellish'd the tint  
Of thy fields and thy mountains so fair,  
Did she ever intend that a tyrant should print  
The footstep of slavery there?  
No, Freedom! whose smile we shall never resign,  
Go, tell our invaders, the Danes,  
'Tis sweeter to bleed for an age at thy shrine,  
Than to sleep but a moment in chains!

Forget not our wounded companions who stood  
In the day of distress by our side;  
While the moss of the valley grew red with their blood,  
They stirr'd not, but conquer'd and died!  
That sun which now blesses our arms with his light,  
Saw them fall upon Ossory's plain!  
Oh, let him not blush, when he leaves us to-night,  
To find that they fell there in vain!

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<sup>154</sup> Stanford would also use this tune in his 1903 *Welcome March* composed for the visit of Edward VII to Ireland that year.

The Rhapsody, however, is significantly less ambiguous in its political associations, with explicit references to the Ulster region, immediately linking it with Unionist sensibilities when we consider its historical context. In addition to the Lough Neagh reference, Stanford prefaces the work with lines by Thomas Moore, taken from his poem *The Minstrel Boy*, believed to have been written in memory of close friends and acquaintances that had perished in the 1798 Irish Rebellion:

“Land of song!” Said the warrior bard,  
“Tho’ all the world betrays thee,  
One sword at least thy rights shall guard,  
One faithful harp shall praise thee!”

Stanford emotively inscribed the phrase ‘Dark and true and tender is the North’ at the very end of the autograph score, words taken from Tennyson’s 1847 poem *The Princess*. The rhapsody, like all of the six, was based on a number of folk tunes, and Stanford, it would seem, deliberately selected those from the Ulster region. The central thematic material for the rhapsody is based on an Ulster tune taken from no.112 of the Petrie Collection which Stanford himself described as one ‘of strong rhythm, and fiery character.’<sup>155</sup> Other material is drawn from the air ‘I will raise my sail black, mistfully in the morning’ and the Donegal tune ‘The Death of General Wolf’. Contemporary reception of the work indicates that the political sentiments contained in the Rhapsody were easily discerned:

Sir Charles Stanford’s Rhapsody, a neat miniature score of which is published by photocopy from the manuscript by Messrs. Stainer and Bell, is called “The Fisherman of Lough Neagh and what he saw.” What did he see? Some people will say that he saw a political pamphlet on the Ulster question. Certainly were we to try to put into words the programme which the combination of folk tunes, mostly from the North, and the quotations from Moore and Tennyson written in the score suggest, the result would read very like a political pamphlet, perhaps another “solution.”<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Taken from Stanford’s programme note on the work, reproduced in Dibble 2002, p. 408.

<sup>156</sup> *The Times*, 20 February 1914.

Whilst the Rhapsody does not, itself, have any immediate bearing on the Irish Symphony, the intertextual link provided by 'Let Erin Remember' suggests that the two works can be considered together within a common framework. Where the 'Irish' Symphony is more ambiguous in its potential for being politically charged, perhaps the openness of the Fourth Rhapsody sheds light on Stanford's agenda in respect of the earlier work. Stanford's political opinions appear to have undergone little or no transformation during his lifetime and so perhaps the significance of 'Let Erin Remember' was exactly the same for him in 1887 as it was in 1914, the only difference was that the world around him had changed. Howells commented that:

He played his Fourth Irish Rhapsody to me in a spirit, compounded of nostalgia and political sorrow, that seemed to shut off the easier, happier mood of the earlier Rhapsodies. The Irishman I chiefly knew in him then was the man who – almost with heart's blood, and with equal anger and sorrow – wrote at the end of that most moving Fourth Rhapsody the phrase 'and dark and true and tender is the North.'<sup>157</sup>

It seems that Stanford the man had only changed in that the stark shift in circumstances for the Irish situation had altered his originally optimistic outlook on Ireland and its relationship with the Union. With this in mind, the link between these two works, separated by almost thirty years, opens up the possibility that we can view the 'Irish' Symphony as providing an alternative critique on the state of the Union, in much the same way that its later partner work does. Where the Fourth Rhapsody laments at the breakdown of the Union, perhaps the 'Irish' Symphony celebrates the Union, and Ireland's position within it.

How, though, can we interpret the Union itself within this work – a work that outwardly exhibits Irish musical tendencies through association couched in an essentially Austro-Germanic musical framework? After all, as Bonds has commented, the nineteenth-century symphony was, to all intents and purposes, an essentially German genre, not only by

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<sup>157</sup> Howells 1952-53, p. 21.

virtue of its main exponents, but also in the very essence of the symphonic form itself.<sup>158</sup> However, it is perhaps Stanford's propensity for adopting a more 'universal' Central-European musical style that actually gives the work some sense of artistic integrity, at least when contextualised, and again requires us to leap forwards to a much later period in his life.

In 1915 Stanford composed an essay for the *American Musical Quarterly* entitled 'Some thoughts concerning folk-song and nationality.' The discussion itself is perhaps best described as being very much of its time and presents a unique and almost eccentric perspective on the origins of folk-song and the state of music at the turn of the century. However, beyond this, there are some useful observations that are pertinent to the 'Irish' Symphony. The discussion is initially placed within the framework of an extensive anecdote of a visit by Stanford to Leipzig in 1908. In this reminiscence, he describes a meeting with an unnamed local gentleman who was, in the composer's estimation, not unlike W. E. Henley. The two men discuss a number of topics, covering literature, politics, the state of modern society, and music. Stanford tells us that, according to this unnamed man, the German period of musical development 'ended its prosperity and usefulness with its highest development of opera in Wagner and the climax of symphonic and absolute music in Brahms. It then exhausted itself and had nothing more to say.'<sup>159</sup> He goes on to say that 'the nation must be content... to go to sleep and to wait for its next resurrection of energy, which would come when it had once more absorbed a good and persistent diet of the folksong which was its backbone.'<sup>160</sup> When we then consider the proximity of Stanford's Third Symphony to the composition of Brahms's Fourth and final symphony and the fact that the former's finale does engage with folk-song, what we are left with is the possibility that Stanford is deliberately setting his work up as representing the way forwards for the genre in a post-

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<sup>158</sup> Bonds, 'Symphony II: 19<sup>th</sup> Century'.

<sup>159</sup> Stanford 1915, p. 234-5.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

Brahmsian symphonic world. Or at least that does appear to be how we could read this, remembering of course that the Third Symphony is the only one in Stanford's output that makes any obvious effort to incorporate folk music of some form. This also brings us back to our earlier discussion on the nature of Brahms's final symphonic offering. Surely such an apocalyptic work, in symphonic terms, can only mark the end of a journey rather than a beginning, and if Stanford thought otherwise what does this suggest about him and his perspective on the genre at the close of the nineteenth century?

### **A SYMPHONIC FULCRUM?**

It would appear that the Irish Symphony presents us with something of a paradox, primarily due to the work's somewhat schizophrenic identity. On the one hand Stanford is setting the symphony up as a national essay, a pastoral, nostalgic portrait of sorts of his by now estranged homeland. However, on the other hand, the work was written primarily for an English (establishment) audience, geared towards their own musical propensity for symphonies from the Austro-Germanic mainstream, and notably those of Mendelssohn and Schumann, both extremely popular with contemporary audiences, and also Brahms, whose music seems to have been met with a little more ambivalence, especially the Fourth Symphony. The reason for this struggle stems back to the observations already made by Harry White and Seamus Deane, notably that there was essentially no place for an 'Irish' symphony within the cultural context of late nineteenth-century Ireland. The work stands torn between the factions calling out for a more artistic expression of Irish sentiment through music, as exemplified in the two articles from *The Nation* (see Appendix IV) and the more politically-charged rejection of any form of expression that came with imperialistic overtones, of which art-music was often considered to be one such form. In adopting the

musical language of the Austro-Germanic mainstream and adding an Irish flavour, it is difficult to see why this work would not find a place within the Irish cultural revival of the time. Indeed, the notion of looking to Germany for inspiration would continue to be a theme in Irish nationalist thought as exemplified by the following illustration from James McGuire's *What Could Germany do for Ireland* (1916), although it should be noted that Germany would have naturally presented itself as a possible ally for Ireland during the First World War when Irish nationalist sentiments ran high.



## **HOW TO SETTLE THE IRISH QUESTION**

In November 1917 George Bernard Shaw published a series of articles in the *Daily Express* entitled 'How to settle the Irish Question' in which he presents a series of three 'solutions' to

the problem as he perceived it.<sup>161</sup> Whilst Shaw does not really provide any reasonable solution to the continually escalating political problems in Ireland at the time, one thing he does propose is that Ireland's future lies in its continuing membership of the Union. Given his own Anglo-Irish background perhaps this notion should not come as any great surprise, although in reading the articles it is hard to work out exactly which side of any political divide Shaw sees himself on. One interesting notion that arises from his articles, and which the *Daily Express* comments on separately, is that Ireland would only be free to express itself in the environment of universality provided by the Union and the Empire. Whilst Stanford and Shaw as individuals often adopted radically opposing political viewpoints, this notion of Irish expression through a more universal framework might have applications to Stanford's music, and in particular, the 'Irish' Symphony.

If the Union offered to Ireland, through a form of universality, the opportunity for true freedom of expression, then perhaps similarly the symphony as a genre offered to Stanford, and therefore to Ireland, a similar form of expression through a musical universality. Again returning to Bonds, if we accept that the nineteenth-century symphony as a genre was concerned with a monumental, community-building agenda, then it can be seen as a universal of sorts, although with the complication that it did effectively operate within an Austro-Germanic context and framework. Notwithstanding this, however, that does not necessarily preclude other nations making a valid contribution to this musical discourse. Putting aside the aesthetic problems that Stanford's 'Irish' Symphony exhibits – notably its questionable engagement with contemporary symphonic practice as opposed to a, by then, more archaic form, his use of 'Irish' aspects, both through pictorial association and pre-established tradition in the form of folk music – Stanford, for the first time, places Ireland as a nation in the nineteenth-century symphonic trajectory. In the same way that he had previously done

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<sup>161</sup> See *Daily Express* 27-29 November 1917.

with his Second Symphony, creating, in Brown's terms, a Victorian equivalent of Brahms's First Symphony, which arguably did acknowledge the symphonic paradigm of its time, Stanford now placed the Union itself at the centre of this discourse. He perhaps did not see the symphony itself as making a bold political statement, even though it would not require too much of a stretch of the imagination to conclude this given the political overtones that the folk music in the finale contains, but instead Stanford perhaps saw himself as a 'cultural nationalist' making a positive contribution to Ireland's cultural heritage, elevating what he saw as basic folk music to the level of the symphony within the nineteenth-century European tradition. Arguably, by incorporating song, the prime form of self-expression in nineteenth-century Ireland, into the symphony he offered to Ireland for the first time a way in which folk traditions, national agendas and high art could coexist. He cast aside the opinions of those such as Flood who saw art music as being specifically Anglican and instead offered the possibility that the incorporation of song in a symphony could provide Ireland with its own form of musical art. However, what Stanford perhaps failed to consider was that for the Irish the song was the medium through which the political sentiments contained within the associated poetry were communicated. By disentangling the song from its respective text, Stanford negated its expressivity and perhaps this is why the work, and the subsequent Irish Rhapsodies, each of which arguably takes its model from the finale of the Irish Symphony, failed to succeed in Ireland, only really gaining popularity in countries where the Irish aspects were more likely seen as a form of exoticism rather than representing a political reality or ideology.

Ireland was, in fact, an abiding powerful nostalgia in him. In that nostalgia lay the source of a certain disunity, a species of strife, a set of opposed inclinations and predilections. These irreconcilable elements were sharpened and magnified by the successive formative influences under which he developed in the Anglo-German-Cantabrian years immediately following his early voluntary exile from his native land.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Howells 1952-53 p. 19.

Howells's observation as to the role that Ireland played in Stanford's life would seem to be very apt in the case of the 'Irish' Symphony, even though the comment was clearly made with the composer's entire life in mind, and especially later developments in the Irish Question. The extent to which the 'Irish' Symphony demonstrates the level of nostalgia outlined in Howells's address is perhaps questionable, although there is no denying that the first three movements are nostalgically charged, and even the finale, when the folk texts are taken into account, has a nostalgic element. Whether or not this level of nostalgia is similar to that outlined by Brinkmann in his study of Brahms's Second Symphony is perhaps less clear, especially as there is not the same sense of questioning the symphony itself as a genre that Brinkmann observes in Brahms's work. Indeed, from an aesthetic point of view it is questionable as to whether or not the 'Irish' Symphony represents any meaningful development of the symphonic trajectory after Brahms's First Symphony.

Instead, we might see the 'Irish' Symphony as representing the emergence of a musical nostalgia that would occupy Stanford for the remainder of his musical career. This work, after all, is the first of many Irish works that the composer would create, and certainly inspired the Irish Rhapsodies, which are themselves emotionally charged and arguably a great deal more nostalgic than the symphony, despite Howells's observation that the earlier ones had an air of optimism about them. Optimism the first few may well have, but this optimism hides an arguably much more sinister and even militant element, one that will be examined in greater detail in subsequent chapters of this thesis.

It may never be possible to resolve fully the 'Irish Problem' for Stanford. Even though music does not necessarily lend itself to specific national traits and characteristics, there is no denying that his music somehow manages to embody a spirit of nationalism and pride, despite the fact that with Stanford there is no clear definition of what his true

nationality was. Irish by birth he certainly was, but he died the quintessential Victorian English gentleman and represented a social minority. Faced with this dichotomy, we have to be able to reckon with Stanford's music based on this apparent dual identity. Despite this, Stanford, it would seem, was trying to inject into his music a sense of Irish culture and pride.

In his arrangements of Irish folksong he found the means to acknowledge his Irish blood. In his Irish rhapsodies he fought again for Ireland, but against all odds.<sup>163</sup>

It transpires that the Ireland in Stanford's music is not the Ireland of his youth, nor of the nineteenth century, but instead it would appear to be a fictitious, dream-like Ireland, one that can only exist in Stanford's mind, and more importantly in the mind of a person that 'had first lived there and then left'.<sup>164</sup> Stanford was part of another Ireland, one that was itself distant and removed from the harsh and violent realities of its late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century existence. Perhaps, therefore, it is only fitting that it is this other Ireland that we find in Stanford's music, one that can only exist in 'dreams sublime' where Stanford the 'Fisherman of Lough Neagh' can 'catch a glimpse of the days that are over'.

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<sup>163</sup> Howells 1952-53, pp. 29-30.

<sup>164</sup> Scott Goddard, 'Charles Villiers Stanford', *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 5th ed., ed. Eric Blom (London, 1954-1961), vol. vii.

## **SYMPHONIES 5 & 6: A CRITICAL TURNING POINT?**

Now firmly established as a symphonic composer of international repute, Stanford's career as a composer of serious instrumental music should have been set to continue to rise both in Britain and overseas. With performances of the 'Irish' Symphony being heard across much of Western Europe and in the United States, Stanford found himself in prime position to establish himself on the international music scene. Following the success of the 'Irish' Symphony's performances under Hans von Bülow, Stanford was commissioned by the Berlin Philharmonic to compose a new symphony which was programmed to be premiered at an all-Stanford concert under the direction of the composer in 1889. This was an 'unprecedented event for a British composer',<sup>1</sup> placing Stanford alongside some of Europe's leading instrumental composers of the period. Stanford's Fourth Symphony, completed in July 1888, was, like its predecessor, also favourably received. An article from the *Kreuz Zeitung*, reproduced in the *Musical Times* following the British première of the work, commented that 'The compositions of Dr Villiers Stanford have taken us altogether by surprise. We did not expect such mature work from a man who has not yet left his youth behind him and there is real ground for astonishment in his powerful handling of larger forms and masses... His work is masterly.'<sup>2</sup> The *Berliner Reichsbote* was reported as being equally enthusiastic, stating that:

It is seldom indeed that an Englishman is energetic enough to free himself – as Mr. Stanford has happily succeeded in doing – from national idiosyncrasies and the love of peculiarity for the sake of a more refined ideal and the wider development of his artistic personality. We already had proof of this when the composer made his debut in the Hall of the Philharmonic Society a year ago with the 'Irish' Symphony, produced under the direction of Dr. Hans von Bülow; but last night's programme sets him in the front rank of the composers of our own day.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Meirion Hughes & Robert Stradling, *The English Musical Renaissance 1840-1940: Constructing a national music. Second Edition* (Manchester University Press, 2001), p. 127.

<sup>2</sup> 'Professor Stanford in Berlin', *The Musical Times*, 1 March 1889, p. 153.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

However, while the work was clearly received enthusiastically by its German audience, its subsequent reception has been marred by what, even for Stanford, was an overt celebration of Teutonic principles:

Stanford's symphony was, in everything except the explicit sense, an act of homage to Brahms, whose style, harmony and instrumentation is palpable in almost every bar. At several points in the score, the music trembles on the brink of actual metamorphosis into one or other of Brahms's symphonies. Even those Berliners who attended mainly in order to hear Joachim would have been gratified by the programme's content. They heard nothing that was not familiar from their own environment. The British composer was no threat.<sup>4</sup>

There is no denying that this work, perhaps more so than many of Stanford's other symphonic works, confirms the composer's commitment to the Austro-Germanic style.

Dibble has observed that 'the first and last movements of the symphony exhibit that quintessential amalgam of Brahmsian thoroughness tempered by Mendelssohnian felicity' and that much of the work appears to draw inspiration from these two composers.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, one wonders whether or not Stanford's prefacing of the original score with a précis of lines from Part II of Goethe's *Faust* was another attempt to appeal to his Germanic audience.<sup>6</sup> This is not, however, to say that the work is completely devoid of any originality or innovation on Stanford's part. While the outer movements certainly do affirm Stanford's commitment to Austro-Germanic symphonic models, a great deal more originality and expressivity can be found in the inner ones, and a more sensitive reading of the work calls into serious question the usefulness and even validity of the observation by Hughes and Stradling.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Hughes & Stradling, p. 127.

<sup>5</sup> Dibble 2002, pp. 204-5.

<sup>6</sup> Nur den verdient sich Freiheit wie das Leben,/ Der täglich sie erobern muss./ Und so verbringt, umrungen von Gefahr,/ Hier Kindheit, Mann und Greis sein tüchtig Jahr (*Only he deserves freedom and life,/ Who has to strive for them daily./ And so, surrounded by danger, strives, Through childhood, manhood and old age*). The original preface read 'Thro' Youth to Strife, Thro' Death to Life' and which was translated as 'Durch Jugendfreude sum wilden Streben; Durch Todesringen zum wahren Leben!'

<sup>7</sup> Dibble 2002, pp. 204-5.

For the Intermezzo, Stanford lifts material from the Entre'acte from Acts I and II of his incidental music to *Oedipus Tyrannus* composed in August 1887 for a stage production of a translation of Sophocles' drama by A. W. Verrall in Cambridge later that year. Like the outer movements, it is hard to escape the sense of a Brahmsian shadow in the Intermezzo, especially '[t]he Phrygian-inflected harmony, the rhythmic conflict of duplet against triplet, and the sparse scoring for clarinets, viola, and pizzicato bass'.<sup>8</sup> However, Dibble has noted that, beyond this, the work escapes its Germanic influences, notably in the movement's trio section whose 'simple diatonicism' shows 'a much more 'English' affinity'.<sup>9</sup>

Stanford was also especially pleased with his third movement, a fact that he communicated to Joachim in a letter of 20 July 1888 in which the composer stated 'I dare say you will be amused at the new symphony... I have written a recitative for the whole band in the slow movement which is an amusing experiment.'<sup>10</sup> This experimentalism represents part of an emerging trend in Stanford's instrumental composition of the time, with similar examples of the composer combining seemingly 'old' and 'new' elements in works including his Suite for Violin, Op. 32 (1888), and which he had also experimented with in his youth, such as in his Suite for Piano, Op. 2 (1875).<sup>11</sup>

In the slow movement, Stanford composed a forty-two bar introduction which functions as a 'dramatic scena for orchestra full of operatic rhetoric both in the emulation of 'vocal' lines and familiar styles of 'secco' and 'stromentato' accompaniment.'<sup>12</sup> This in turn functions as a preface to the movement-proper, a stately funeral march in which aspects of the introductory figures continually colour the seemingly dramatic unfolding of the otherwise instrumental music. Stanford was by no means the first composer to introduce the operatic

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<sup>8</sup> Dibble 2002, p. 205.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Dibble 2002, p. 205.

<sup>11</sup> See Dibble 2002, p. 205.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

into instrumental genres. Mozart, for example, frequently used operatic topics in his instrumental works, notably his piano concertos, where aria-like themes and melodies instantly conjure up images of the opera house. However, it is significant that Stanford, a composer who was preoccupied with operatic forms for much of his creative life and continually sought recognition in the theatre should utilise this opportunity to introduce the vocal and dramatic into his symphonic music, and especially when one considers the audience for which the symphony was originally composed.

Although the Fourth Symphony met with general approval from its initial audiences both in Germany and in Britain, like most of its predecessors, it failed to establish itself within the repertoire, and this was in spite of being made available by Novello in both full score and in piano duet version. For whatever reasons, it seemingly failed to captivate audiences in the way that the 'Irish' Symphony had previously. The work also represents a blip in Stanford's symphonic development, seemingly ignoring the progress made in both the Second and Third symphonies, once more returning to a musical and aesthetic style that harkens back to earlier models. Perhaps even his use of Goethe's *Faust* might be a reference to Beethoven who himself used the poet's work in several compositions, or more generally as an icon of mainstream Germanic thought.

## **CHANGING TIMES**

Where the 1880s represented the zenith of compositional achievement for Stanford, the 1890s marked the beginning of a long and gradual decline in public standing for the composer, with his popularity dropping dramatically in the early years of the twentieth century. This is not to say that the latter part of his life was without success. Indeed, some of his greatest achievements date from this later period, including the famed celebrations of the Cambridge

University Musical Society in 1893 where leading figures from the musical world, including Saint-Saëns, Boïto, Bruch, and Tchaikovsky, descended on the university city for a gala celebration. However, while not totally devoid of achievements, nothing could sustain, nor even equal the meteoric rise to fame that Stanford had enjoyed at a relatively early stage of his professional career.

By now Stanford's symphonic works probably did not represent the most significant part of his compositional career. Although the 'Irish' Symphony had placed him before international audiences in ways achieved by none of his previous compositions, each work was, at least from a populist point of view, a relative failure. However, continuing interest in the 'Irish' Symphony, including a rise in the work's popularity in Ireland itself, demonstrated that Stanford could perhaps still find success in this generic field.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, the British appetite for symphonic music was showing no signs of waning, perhaps confirmed by the overwhelming success that works such as Tchaikovsky's 'Pathétique' Symphony met with at its UK première in 1894 under the direction of Mackenzie with the Philharmonic Society:

The interest of the [Philharmonic Society] concert centred in the first performance in England of a new symphony by the late Peter Tchaikovsky, who only last season conducted a work of his own at one of the concerts given by the society. The symphony is in B minor; it counts as the sixth of the author's works in this kind, and, by curious coincidence, is styled "Pathetic," a title merited not only by the circumstances of the composer's sad death soon after its production, but by its general style, as well as the unusually grave character of its finale, called "lamentoso." In the matter of form, the first movement presents some deviations from the accepted traditions of the structure, though these are in some degree merely superficial, the general outline conforming to the recognized type with some closeness. Its seven divisions do not stand for so many subsections of the first allegro, but are mainly due to the fact that the beautiful second subject is conceived in a slower tempo than the first. The movement is of very remarkable beauty and interest. The second movement is a most favourable specimen of an experiment that has not always been successful, for it is in quintuple time; the test of such things is whether they sound right, or whether they are felt as halting or imperfect. This movement is completely satisfactory in this particular, and its beautifully graceful character could not fail to charm the hearers. The original and characteristic scherzo and the strangely sombre closing movement are worthy of their companions, and the symphony, on the whole, is among the late composer's finest works. It was very finely played under Dr. Mackenzie's direction and was received with the utmost enthusiasm.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Dibble 2002, p. 260.

<sup>14</sup> *The Times*, 1 March 1894.

Whether or not Stanford attended this performance is unknown, although as a close friend of Mackenzie and always keen to stay in favour with the Philharmonic Society, it would seem unlikely that Stanford would have missed such an occasion unless it was unavoidable. Either way, it seems safe to assume that Stanford would have at least been familiar with the work and surely knew of its popularity, factors that almost certainly had a hand in the composer's decision, once more, to try his hand at a fifth symphonic essay.<sup>15</sup>

Composed in the spring of 1894 and dedicated to 'The Philharmonic Society and its conductor, Sir A. C. Mackenzie', perhaps a further indicator of Stanford's awareness of Tchaikovsky's work, the Fifth Symphony represented a marked shift in Stanford's symphonic agenda. Brown states that the work was written in response to a commission from the Philharmonic Society, remarking on its peculiarity given that the Society had shown little interest in Stanford's other symphonic works, with the exception of the 'Irish' Symphony. However, there appears to be no record of this in the Philharmonic Society's archive in the British Library, and as neither Dibble nor Rodmell make any mention of this, perhaps Brown misinterpreted the dedication.<sup>16</sup>

The symphony, like many of its forebears, dates from a period in Stanford's creative life when he was otherwise mostly preoccupied with smaller works. With the exception of his oratorio *Eden*, first performed in 1891 at the Birmingham festival and set to a text by Poet Laureate Robert Bridges inspired by Milton's *Paradise Lost*, almost all the other works separating the Fourth and Fifth symphonies are either chamber works or other small-scale compositions. A Piano Trio and Cello Sonata of 1889, two String Quartets of 1891, a suite of Six Irish Fantasies for Violin and Piano (1893), music for a production of Tennyson's *Beckett* at the Lyceum Theatre, and a handful of liturgical works and those for solo voice are the main

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<sup>15</sup> Dibble 2002, p. 260.

<sup>16</sup> Brown, p. 126.

features of his compositional career in these intervening years. As was now commonplace amongst his works, many of these demonstrate Stanford's commitment to the Austro-Germanic style, and make the shift in focus that we see in the Fifth Symphony seem all the more unusual within this broader compositional context.

In his programme note for the work, Stanford states that 'this Symphony, which was completed in June, 1894, is intended to illustrate the poem of John Milton; the passages which suggested the various movements of the work are printed below.'<sup>17</sup> The poetry to which Stanford is referring is Milton's pair *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, both believed to have been completed in 1631. Stanford was by no means the first composer to recognise the potential for contrast and development that the two poems offer, with their respective depictions of a happy and a thoughtful man. Parry himself had composed *L'Allegro ed Il Pensieroso* [sic] only a few years earlier in 1890, and Handel had also utilised this poetic combination.

Each movement is prefaced by selected lines from one of the two poems. The first two movements utilise excerpts from *L'Allegro* and the second two from *Il Penseroso*, thus dividing the symphony into two thematic halves. However, the exact relationship between the verses and the various accompanying movements is unclear as, beyond the composer's comment (above) there is no indication as to how to interpret their presence. This ambiguity is not dissimilar from that encountered when dealing with the Second Symphony and its relationship with Tennyson's text. There are, as will be discussed in the following analysis, ways in which the lines can be used to understand the musical unfolding in a quasi-programmatic way. However, remembering how keen that Stanford was to stress that his

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<sup>17</sup> See Appendix IX.

former poetic symphony was not programmatic and his opinions on programme music as expressed in 1911, one cannot help but question the purpose of this textual association.<sup>18</sup>

Music may be divided into two classes – absolute music, when the art speaks for itself by sound alone, and descriptive music, when it illustrates words or drama. There has always been a tendency, which in recent times has grown into a cult, to allow the second class to trespass upon the first. This type is necessarily a hybrid, but it has grown to such proportions that it requires the fullest consideration in any treatise dealing with composition. There can be no question that music which speaks for itself is not only the purest, but also the most all-embracing form of the art. Being intangible and indefinable, it suggests to different minds different trains of thought, and any defined programme of a movement given by one listener may be miles apart from one given by another. For example, Grove's picturesque conception of the finale of Schubert's Symphony in C, as an illustration of the ride of Phaëthon, may be entirely antipathetic to a listener of different mood and temperament. To abolish this indefinable element in music is to detract from its universal appeal, and to impose limitations upon what is inherently illimitable. Tennyson's brilliant dictum that "Poetry is like shot-silk with many glancing colours; every reader must find his own interpretation according to his ability, and according to his sympathy with the poet," applies in every particular to music also. That certain impressions and certain poems or dramatic ideas do actually suggest musical ideas and forms to a composer is undoubted; but so much vaster is the art with which he deals than any part which he has in it himself, that his own ideas may develop thousands of others in the minds of those who listen to his work. This is the secret truth of Beethoven's axiom that, though he always worked to a picture, he never said what that picture was. He did tell once or twice, but never with success. The "Rondo on the Lost Penny" was a joke, the "Battle of Vittoria" was a failure. His most realistic picture was the Pastoral Symphony but he was careful to stereotype its underlying principle on the front page, and to warn the hearer that it was only "an expression of impressions." Although that work has been often quoted as the parent of modern programme-music, it is nothing whatever of the kind. Its atmosphere is unmistakable, even if it had never been christened "Pastorale," or its movements labelled with the central idea of each picture they represent. It applies to any country, any landscape, any river, any storm, any merry-making – in a word, it is universal in its appeal; while more recent picture-works rely upon a would-be exact definition of person, place and action. The forefathers of the present programme-music are not the classical masters such as Haydn and Beethoven, but such now-forgotten scribes as Steibelt (*Admiral Duncan's Victory*), Kotzwara (*The Battle of Prague*), and, *mirabile dictum*, Dussek (*The Sufferings of the Queen of France*). From this somewhat obscure stock descended the first notable men who sowed in this debateable ground, Berlioz and Liszt. Realism was the ground principle of it, and as realism advanced, idealism retreated. Sundry composers of the highest idealistic aims occasionally played with the fascinating siren, such as Spohr, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Sterndale Bennett, but none of them allowed realism to do more than peep in on rare occasions. If the braying of the ass is reproduced in Mendelssohn's *Midsummer Night's Dream* overture, it must not be forgotten that the work was written for the theatre, where the acting of the play would explain it. The concert-overtures of the same composer are labelled with the names of the persons and things which suggested them, but they are the very reverse of realistic, and would be equally satisfying as pure music without any title at all. The attractiveness of writing programme-music, such as symphonic poems and the like, lies in the comparative freedom from set form and difficult development of ideas which it holds out to the beginner. It is easier to write than absolute music, just as so-called free counterpoint is easier than strict. It imports the more unshackled type of stage-music into the domain of concert music. It suggests the broad and easy path of inventing whole series of themes instead of the narrow and laborious path of developing a few. But the beginner who firsts chooses the easy way will rarely be able to retrace his steps or to face the difficulties of the narrow one. It is only the master of all kinds of form who can

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<sup>18</sup> 'The symphony is not programme music although it is illustrative of one of the cantos in Tennyson's *In Memoriam*.' RPS. Ms. 364, held in the British Library's Royal Philharmonic Society archive.

make it subservient to his ends; he only can effectively dictate his orders to his subordinates, who is their superior in experience and in knowledge.

Programme-music, then, is the incursion of music proper into the realms of the drama. How far can it carry its invasion without being itself destroyed? Only so far as it is intelligible to the ear, without help from any other organ. There are no words or scenic adjuncts to assist it. It must not rely on a title (which may be torn off) or an analysis in a book of words (which may go out of print) for an explanation of the drift of the drama. It must tell a clear story to any musical listener who does not happen to have seen the name or to have a shilling to buy a programme. If it succeeds under such conditions, it is a work of art; if it does not, it is a work of artificiality. In a word, it must appeal, after all, as absolute music.<sup>19</sup>

That Stanford would later go on to dismiss programmatic music in such a fashion does not, of itself, mean that prior to this he was not at least interested in exploring its potential. It is also curious that the majority of Stanford's symphonies written by this point had used some form of extra-musical reference, whether poetic, in the case of the Second and Fourth, or national in the case of the Third. At all times Stanford seems keen to stress that these works are illustrative rather than programmatic, although it would be interesting to know how the composer felt these two differed in their musical applications.

The poetic divide between *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* provides the symphony with a distinct structural and thematic divide, in part characterised by the difference in overarching theme of the two Milton works. The first half is essentially characterised by mirth, and the second by melancholy, although this nature of melancholy is not in the more traumatic nineteenth-century sense that we might more commonly seek in such works, but the Ancient Greek notion of reflectiveness, or pensiveness even as the title of the poem might suggest. Thus while the Fifth Symphony is cast as a four-movement work, to an extent we can also view it as a work of two parts.

The first movement, *Allegro moderato*, is prefaced by the following two passages of lines from *L'Allegro*, the first lines 1-13 and the second lines 25-38:

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<sup>19</sup> Charles Villiers Stanford, *Musical Composition: A Short Treatise for Students* (London, 1911), pp. 155-8.

Hence, loathed Melancholy,  
 Of Cerberus and blackest midnight born  
 In Stygian cave forlorn  
 ‘Mongst horrid shapes, and shrieks and sighs unholy  
 Find out some uncouth cell.  
 When brooding Darkness spreads his jealous wings,  
 And the night–raven sings;  
 There under ebon shades and low–browed rocks,  
 As ragged as thy locks  
 In dark Cimmerian desert even dwell.  
 But come thou Goddess fair and free,  
 In heaven yclept Euphrosyne,  
 And by man, heart easing Mirth;

Haste thee, Nymph, and bring with thee  
 Jest, and youthful jollity,  
 Quips and cranks and wanton wiles,  
 Nods and Becks and wreathed smiles,  
 Such as hang on Hebe’s cheek,  
 And love to live in dimple sleek;  
 Sport that wrinkled care derides,  
 And Laughter holding both his sides,  
 Come and trip it as you go,  
 On the light fantastic toe;  
 And in thy right hand lead with thee  
 The mountain–nymph, sweet liberty;  
 And if I give thee honour due,  
 Mirth, admit me of thy crew.

Setting aside, for the time being, the questionable relationship between the text and the music, Brown has proposed that we might link the two together in the following way:<sup>20</sup>

<i>Stanford</i>	<i>Milton</i>			
b.1	Line 1	Allegro moderato	D minor	<i>Introduction</i> <i>1<sup>st</sup> Introductory Theme</i>
b.10	Line 4			
b.22	Line 7	Piú lento		<i>2<sup>nd</sup> Introductory Theme</i>
b.30	Line 11	Tempo 1	D major	
b.39	Line 25			<i>Exposition</i> <i>1<sup>st</sup> Subject Material</i>
b.66	Line 32			
b.72	Line 33		A major	<i>2<sup>nd</sup> Subject Material</i>
b.82	Line 38			

<sup>20</sup> Reproduced from Brown, p. 129.

Paul Rodmell has also provided an extensive illustration of how the text and music for the whole symphony can be linked together in this manner, even to the extent of identifying leitmotivic constructions used for representing various lines and/or emotions throughout the work.<sup>21</sup>

Quite how far we want to extend this programmatic reading remains open to question. It is true that the movement's agitated opening in the tonic minor would fit with the sentiments of the first few lines, and that the subsequent musical contrast with the start of the exposition at b. 39 in the tonic major parallels the poetic shift in mood. Furthermore, it would not take too great a stretch of the imagination to understand the general nature of the movement proper following the introduction as an almost Bacchian-like portrayal of mirth. However, conversely, one might understand the relationship between the text and the music as the former acting as a literary tool to inspire a more general mood and sentiment that the composer then 'translated' into musical form, and this might chime more closely with Stanford's concept of 'illustration' as opposed to 'programmaticism'. It is interesting that Stanford's own programme note to the symphony, reproduced in full in Appendix IX, makes no explicit reference to the text beyond quoting the various lines utilised. Perhaps he felt no need to comment on the literary connection with the music, and we must of course be careful not to read too much significance into an absence that could be explained by a whole host of different factors. Yet it does give us pause to consider the relationship between text and music bearing in mind Stanford's own opinions on programmaticism, although discussed, and his apparent lack of critical engagement with the poetry in a period where extensive and often elaborate programme notes were often very common.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> See Rodmell, pp. 222-7.

<sup>22</sup> See Christina Bashford, 'Not Just "G.": Towards a History of the Programme Note', in *George Grove, Music and Victorian Culture*, ed. Michael Musgrave (London, 2003).

Stanford chose the following set of lines from *L'Allegro* to preface his second movement:

Oft listening how the hounds and horn  
Cheerly rouse the slumbering morn,  
From the side of some hoar hill,  
Through the high wood echoing shrill.<sup>23</sup>

While the ploughmen, near at hand,  
Whistles o'er the furrow'd land,  
And the milkmaid singeth blithe,  
And the mower whets his scythe,  
And every shepherd tells his tale  
Under the hawthorn in the dale.<sup>24</sup>

Sometimes with secure delight  
The upland hamlets will invite,  
When the merry bells ring round,  
And the jocund rebecks sound  
To many a youth and marry a maid,  
Dancing in the chequer'd shade;  
And young and old come forth to play  
On a sun-shine holy-day,  
Till the live-long day-light fail:  
Then to the spicy nut-brown ale,  
With stories told of many a feat,  
How Faery Mab the junkets eat;<sup>25</sup>

These delights if thou canst give,  
Mirth, with thee I mean to live.<sup>26</sup>

As with the first movement, it is possible to identify aspects of this *Allegretto grazioso* that appear to provide musical equivalents of the poetic imagery. The movement's opening horn call can surely only be viewed in this manner, along with the heavy use of woodwind colouring to create a musical pastoral landscape, features that have much in common with Beethoven's Sixth Symphony and the third movement of Berlioz's *Symphonie*

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<sup>23</sup> Lines 53-6.

<sup>24</sup> Lines 63-8.

<sup>25</sup> Lines 91-102.

<sup>26</sup> Lines 151-2.

*Fantastique*. Following an ABA plan, we could read the second movement in the following manner:<sup>27</sup>

<i>Stanford</i>		<i>Milton</i>			
b.1	<b>A</b>	Lines 53-56	Allegretto grazioso 6/8	G major	
b.14		Lines 63-64			
b.30		Line 65			G → D
b.53		Line 66			G → D
b.95		Line 67			G
b.116	<b>B</b>	Lines 91-94	Piú mosso 2/4 (Quasi Presto)	E-flat major	
b.163		Line 96			

Stanford's A section is then recapitulated at b. 196, followed by a 2/4 *prestissimo* conclusion (b. 296).

While the Milton text goes some way towards explaining Stanford's choice of pastoral mood for this second, dance movement, it is also somewhat curious that he should choose this character of movement. As noted above, there are immediate parallels to be drawn both with Beethoven and Berlioz, yet, as with earlier symphonies by the composer, Stanford, once more, appears to be delving far into the nineteenth-century past for inspiration. What is more, however, is also the potential decentralisation of his hitherto interest/obsession with the Austro-Germanic models. Although there is no avoiding the iconic nature of Beethoven's own pastoral symphony, a work whose character might be seen to echo the Bacchian nature of Milton's verse, we also cannot avoid the significance of Berlioz's 'rethinking' of the Beethovenian pastoral symphonic model, to the extent that we might question whether or not Stanford is expanding upon his symphonic influences, something that will be expanded upon in due course.

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<sup>27</sup> Reproduced from Brown, p. 129.

Stanford's expansive third movement, *Andante molto tranquillo*, marks the beginning of the second section of what appears to be a more end-weighted symphony than some of his previous ones, utilising the following lines from *Il Penseroso*:

But hail, thou goddess sage and holy,  
Hail, divinest Melancholy!  
Whose saintly visage is too bright  
To hit the sense of human sight,  
And therefore to our weaker view  
O'erlaid with black, staid Wisdom's hue;<sup>28</sup>

Come, pensive nun, devout and pure,  
Sober, steadfast, and demure,  
All in a robe of darkest grain  
Flowing with majestic train,  
And sable stole of cypress lawn  
Over thy decent shoulders drawn:  
Come, but keep thy wonted state,  
With even step, and musing gait,  
And looks commercing with the skies,  
Thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes:<sup>29</sup>

But first, and chiefest, with thee bring  
Him that yon soars on golden wing  
Guiding the fiery-wheeléd throne,  
The cherub Contemplation;  
And the mute Silence hist along,  
'Less Philomel will daign a song  
In her sweetest saddest plight,<sup>30</sup>

–Sweet bird, that shunn'st the noise of folly,  
Most musical, most melancholy!  
Thee, chauntress, oft the woods among  
I woo, to hear thy even-song;  
And missing thee, I walk unseen  
On the dry smooth shaven green,  
To behold the wandering Moon  
Riding near her highest noon.<sup>31</sup>

The overall textual progression can be traced in the music of this almost Brahmsian movement. However, while it is possible to find parallels between the text and its musical equivalent, caution should be exercised as to the level to which we interpret this when we

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<sup>28</sup> Lines 11-16.

<sup>29</sup> Lines 31-40.

<sup>30</sup> Lines 51-7.

<sup>31</sup> Lines 61-8.

bear in mind that there is no specific indication that we should interpret the music in this manner. Furthermore, while it is the case that the text and music do make sense when aligned, they do so no less when separate.

The inflective nature of the introductory passage to this sonata-form movement, commencing on a first inversion of the dominant chord and moving inwards in contrary motion, marks the shift in focus towards melancholy, possibly also representing the call to the wise sage, himself an allegory of the reflective nature of Milton's verse and this second-half of Stanford's symphony. The primary subject, enriched through the use of the G-string sonorities, might account for the remaining lines of the first passage. Following a very brief two-bar transition (bb. 23-4) the second subject is presented, although it is done so in the tonic. A melody in the clarinets and bassoons is presented over an arpeggiated string accompaniment, perhaps depicting the dark-robed nun and her flowing train (lines 31-4). The wind melody is carried over into the violins and flutes reaching a peak on a high C perhaps conveying, whilst not specifically articulated in the text, a sense of prayers rising to the heavens, or similarly it might reflect the contemplations of the cherubs soaring in the skies (lines 51-4).

A more impassioned development section opens at b. 53. The use of the flute and clarinet to imitate birdsong is used throughout this section, although it is at this point in the music that the relationship with the text becomes more ambiguous. As with the first movement, the majority of parallels with Milton's verse can be seen in the exposition. The recapitulation (b. 95) presents material from the exposition almost entirely in diminution. The closing section, with its echoes of the close of the second movement of Brahms's Third

Symphony (1883) combines dark brass sonorities with ‘celestial strings’, thus superimposing the two poetic ideas of this movement, melancholy and heavenly light, against one another.<sup>32</sup>

Unlike the slow movements in Stanford’s previous two symphonies, and indeed as will be the case with the Sixth, formally the slow movement of the Fifth Symphony is much more structured, following a sonata plan. Given that Stanford appears to have been experimenting increasingly with freer forms, something that culminates in his Seventh and final symphony, and especially when we consider that this work is ostensibly guided by Milton’s verse which could easily resist the more formal constraints of a sonata plan, it is curious that Stanford has not continued his use of free-form in this slow movement. This is not to say that his slow movement lacks the expressivity and sensitivity of equivalent movements in his other works. Indeed, quite contrary to this, the slow movement here is by far the most expressive moment in the symphony and, save for its Brahmsian overtones, contributes significantly towards the much more original nature of this work as a whole. Furthermore, while this individual movement might not be as formally free as some of its other symphonic counterparts, the symphony as a whole, notably its cyclic nature, still hints towards Stanford’s experimentation with freer musical forms and structures. Indeed, in this slow movement the composer first recalls the work’s opening movement (b.69) and the coda anticipates the finale. The framing effectively positions the movement within a wider trajectory in the work as a whole. Furthermore, Stanford’s use of form here, with a tightened recapitulation, is similar in nature to the sonata movements of earlier works, notably the First and Second symphonies. Where those works were supported by the outer movements, here Stanford places more emphasis on the second half of the symphony through his use of form, and a use of form that he had hitherto favoured in the outer sections.

Stanford’s finale, *Allegro molto*, uses the following closing lines from *Il Penseroso*:

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<sup>32</sup> Brown, pp. 131-2.

Oft, on a plat of rising ground  
I hear the far-off curfew sound  
Over some wide-water'd shore,  
Swinging slow with sullen roar.<sup>33</sup>

Sometime let gorgeous Tragedy  
In scepter'd pall come sweeping by  
Presenting Thebes, or Pelops line,  
Or the tale of Troy divine;<sup>34</sup>

And, as I wake, sweet music breathe  
Above, about, or underneath,  
Sent by some spirit to mortals good,  
Or the unseen Genius of the wood.  
But let my due feet never fail  
To walk the studious cloister's pale,  
And love the high-embow'd roof,  
With antique pillars massy proof,  
And storied windows richly dight  
Casting a dim religious light:  
There let the pealing organ blow  
To the full-voiced quire below  
In service high and anthem clear,  
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,  
Dissolve me into ecstasies,  
And bring all Heaven before mine eyes.<sup>35</sup>

Of all the four movements, Stanford's finale is the hardest with which to draw parallels between the text and the musical unfolding. Aside from the introduction of the optional organ part at b.459 and the music's dissolution at the close, it is almost impossible to draw any clear links with Milton's lines. This is not to say that Stanford's finale is totally devoid of reference to the accompanying text, but rather it is much harder to draw the more obvious or at least plausible links that can be seen in earlier movements.

Brown sees this movement as being cast in sonata form with an introduction and coda, the former of which is anticipated in the conclusion of the preceding movement. Following this logic one finds the development section at b.199 and the recapitulation at

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<sup>33</sup> Lines 73-6.

<sup>34</sup> Lines 97-100.

<sup>35</sup> Lines 151-166.

b.279 with the coda at b.539.<sup>36</sup> It is true that the movement can be read in this way, and indeed Stanford's own account of the movement would also suggest a similar formal reading.<sup>37</sup> Whether or not the movement can be shoe-horned into a sonata plan is probably of less importance. What is much more interesting is the continuation in this symphony of an emerging pattern of formal experimentation that is becoming increasingly prominent in Stanford's symphonic writing. Brown himself observes that throughout the recapitulation Stanford introduces new and otherwise unexpected ideas, and the composer himself acknowledges that the movement, especially in the development section and lead into the recapitulation, follows the form of a 'free fantasia'.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, the only aspect of the recapitulation that remains relatively intact is the second subject.

While formally we can chart this movement within a broad interpretation of sonata form, the main thrust of this movement is not self-contained to its own musical unfolding, but instead forms part of the larger, cyclic architecture of both the symphony as a whole, but especially the second half. The extensive coda, founded on the movement's primary subject, provides an extensive build up to the movement's ecstatic climax, at which point the opening statement from the preceding movement is heard, but in a radically altered context. Rather than the inward-moving, reflective mood that was experienced at the outset of the third movement, here the same musical outline, marks a final musical and emotional release – arguably the culmination of the symphony and *Il Penseroso*, surely reflective of the final two lines of Milton's verse. Curiously, however, Stanford appears to have fused together two very different poetic images in this final presentation, as the vision of heaven – the build towards this final climactic moment – appears to precede the dissolution of ecstasies, assuming that we take the final trumpet solo followed by the subdued orchestral ending as being illustrative

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<sup>36</sup> See Brown p. 132.

<sup>37</sup> See Appendix IX.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

of this. Again, to an extent exactly how these lines relate to this extraordinary conclusion is largely unimportant, as we could too easily try to make the poetic depiction and music fit with one another more than the composer originally intended. It is, once more, Stanford's increasingly experimental treatment of the formal plan of the movement, the symphonic half of *Il Penseroso* and the work as a whole that is much more interesting and revealing. A work that is cyclic as a whole, and which also utilises more internalised aspects of cyclicism, represents a real shift for the composer, and his more innovative treatment of the recapitulation section appears to foreshadow the even more radical adjustments that he would make use of in his final two symphonies, notably the Seventh.

The symphony received its première at the Philharmonic Society under Stanford's direction at the Queen's Hall on 20 March 1895 in a programme that also included Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto and works by Beethoven, Cherubini and Chopin. The work was, on the whole, well received, with the *Athenaeum* declaring that it surpassed even the success of the 'beautiful "Irish" Symphony',<sup>39</sup> sentiments that were echoed by the correspondent for *The Times*.<sup>40</sup> The *Musical Times* was perhaps a little more reserved in its opinion that the full extent of the work might only become apparent upon closer scrutiny.<sup>41</sup>

Despite the view that the work would benefit from repeated hearings, this is one of a only a handful of performances of the Fifth Symphony recorded during Stanford's lifetime. Unlike the previous two symphonies, which had both been published by Novello shortly after their respective premières, the Fifth Symphony was not published until 1923 when it was released by Stainer & Bell, published under the auspices of the Carnegie Collection of British Music for the advancement of music in the British Isles, who evaluated the symphony as 'A work written in 1894 of remarkable freshness and individuality. It should be enjoyed not only

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<sup>39</sup> *Athenaeum* No. 3517 (March 23, 1895), pp.385-6. See Appendix X.

<sup>40</sup> *The Times*, 21 March 1895 *The Times*, 21 March 1895.

<sup>41</sup> *Musical Times* (1 April, 1895), p. 233.

for its intrinsic merits but because it represents a phase of British music of which the composer was a pioneer.’

As a whole Stanford’s Fifth Symphony is his most expansive symphonic work and is arguably one of few large-scale instrumental works in which external influences are considerably more difficult to discern. There are, of course, hints of Brahms and other members of the Austro-Germanic school, but beyond that any additional apparent derivations are superficial at best. Ironically, however, whilst this does on the one hand seem to present us with one of the first glimpses of a truly Stanfordian symphonic style, this symphony appears to avoid the supposed Irish tendencies that pervaded to one extent or another the previous symphonies. Paul Rodmell has noted that, as a result of this, the symphony lacks the stylistic individuality and distinction that his earlier works can be said to possess.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, the Fifth Symphony stands as milestone in Stanford’s symphonic development, even though it represents a point on the gradual decline in the importance of the symphony for the composer. Its scale is impressive, but so too are the various new and interesting concepts and ideas that Stanford incorporates into the musical discourse.

For example, this is the first symphony in which Stanford fully engages with the cyclic principle of composition, reusing themes and ideas throughout the course of the four-movement plan.

...the extra-musical aspects of this piece are unlike Symphony No. 4’s relationship to its motto in that Stanford writes something more than a series of characteristic pieces; he actually paints some of the images put forth in Milton’s lines: the brooding of the very beginning, the imitation of laughter, the hunt, the Queen Mab-like atmosphere, another song of the nightingale, and at the end of the piece the addition of the organ to the orchestra. These events and others will be cited as each movement is observed from the extra-musical and structural viewpoints.

Apart from the unity offered by the program, thematic material also recurs in various movements, making Stanford’s Fifth his most cyclically conceived symphony to date. Though the second movement seems immune to any reminiscences of previous thematic material, the Andante third movement recalls the first movement within its middle section (m.69), its coda anticipates the beginning of the Finale, and the end of the Finale recalls the beginning of the third movement. Thus, as

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<sup>42</sup> Rodmell, p. 179.

appropriate, “il pensieroso” is given the most careful thematic consideration. If the programmatic aspect unifies two juxtaposed pairs, the tonal scheme, as expected, provides cyclic coherence with the first and last movements in the same key and the two central movements in the subdominant and the relative major of its minor (G/B-flat).<sup>43</sup>

While the second movement appears to stand somewhat thematically isolated from the remaining three, these other movements all share common material at some stage. Of course, this level of cyclicism is by no means comparable to that of works such as Franck’s *Symphony in D minor* (1888), a work that Stanford may well have known, or Saint-Saëns’ epic *Symphony no. 3 in C minor* (1886), another very popular work which Stanford surely knew given that Saint-Saëns had been one of the figures celebrated at the Cambridge University Music Society jubilee celebrations the previous year. Brown has noted that the presence of the organ in Stanford’s symphony provides an interesting parallel with Saint-Saëns’ work, although the level of importance of the organ in these two works is so radically different that the similarity is surely nothing more than coincidental, coupled with the fact that the organ part in Stanford’s work, technically, is optional.<sup>44</sup> Stanford’s cyclicism is also incomparable to Berlioz’s *idée fixe* from the *Symphonie Fantastique*, although the more apparent parallels with this and other of Berlioz’s symphonic works is something more noteworthy. What these features appear to suggest is a more conscious engagement with the Franco-Belgian symphonic school rather than the Austro-Germanic one that had been Stanford’s favoured model to date. This is an aspect that Rohan Stewart-MacDonald has explored in his examination of the use of the cyclic principle in the sonata movements of Stanford and Parry.<sup>45</sup> Stewart-MacDonald posits that the presence of the cyclic principle, particularly in Stanford’s last three symphonies, suggests that the Franco-Belgian symphonic style was of much greater importance to both Stanford and Parry than has hitherto been

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<sup>43</sup> Brown, p. 128.

<sup>44</sup> Brown, p. 132.

<sup>45</sup> Rohan Stewart-MacDonald, ‘The Treatment of the Sonata Principle and the Cultivation of ‘Cyclic’ Processes in the Symphonies of Sir Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924),’ *Ad Parnassum*, vol. 6, no. 12 (October 2008), pp. 69-144.

acknowledged. Certainly its presence in the Fifth Symphony, coupled with the other musical links to French composers would appear to suggest that Gallic influences have certainly played their part in this work, setting it apart from previous ones, notably the Fourth Symphony which has been criticised for its almost unashamed use of the Brahmsian style.<sup>46</sup>

However, it would seem that there is yet more to the Fifth Symphony. Although these features do mark the work out as representing a radical departure from Stanford's previous symphonic works and styles, in addition, the parallels with Tchaikovsky, in both this and his subsequent Sixth Symphony, are equally significant, if not more so, and so it is to this much later work that we must first turn before we can fully assess the importance of the two.

### **‘IN HONOUR OF THE LIFE-WORK OF A GREAT ARTIST’: STANFORD, WATTS AND THE SIXTH**

Stanford's Sixth Symphonic essay was written 'in honour of the life-work of a great artist: George Frederic Watts,' who had died the previous year. Watts had been an iconic figure in Victorian society and a prominent member of the symbolist movement in art. Many of his works were enormously popular at the time, including those such as *Hope* and *Love and Life*, the latter of which, as will be seen, has a link with Stanford's own symphony. A notable portrait painter, Watts painted many of the leading figures of the day, including those from business, politics, and the arts. These included Edward Burne-Jones, Joseph Joachim, Tennyson, and Charles Hallé, many of which were close friends and associates of Stanford.

What then of Watts the artist? He is an isolated figure in English painting: a master of no group. Overpraised by his friends and savaged by his critics, he stands alone, though buttressed by his high principles and his desire to elevate art from the morass of triviality into which he found it sunk at the beginning of his career. Even his most ardent admirers must admit that the quality of his work is uneven. No one could paint, as he did, for seventy-five years without sometimes failing to reach the

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<sup>46</sup> See Hughes & Stradling, p. 127.

high standards he set himself. It is, however, his unevenness, his desire to advance the idea of art and his willingness to risk failure that makes him so much more interesting than so many of his contemporaries who settled for a life of comfortable and lucrative mediocrity.<sup>47</sup>

Stanford had been a great admirer of the painter, and it is interesting to note how many of Jefferies' observations of the artist could be applied to Stanford himself. Vaughan Williams even declared the composer to be 'the musical counterpart of the art of Tennyson, Watts, and Matthew Arnold.'<sup>48</sup> The Sixth Symphony was not the first work by Stanford written in memory of an iconic English figure. His *Requiem* of 1896, for example, had been dedicated to Lord Leighton, himself a painter and sculptor like Watts.

While the programmatic relationship of the music to its poetry in the Fifth Symphony remains ambiguous, the extent to which the Sixth Symphony can be read along programmatic lines is even more obscure. As with almost all of his previous quasi-programmatic symphonies, the composer insisted that this work remained rooted in the realms of the absolute, even though he would concede that it had been inspired by four works by Watts: the paintings *Love and Life*, *Love and Death*, and *Good luck to your fishing*, and the great statue in Kensington Gardens *Physical Energy*.<sup>49</sup> Fuller-Maitland would confirm this in his own discussion of the work:

The music seems to represent four phases of the painter's art, and there is a Death theme that is easily recognisable; the slow movement has a very important part for *cor anglais* (is this representative of Love?) and the scherzo struck one hearer as suggesting the charming picture "Good luck to your fishing," while the finale might be taken as the musical picture of the equestrian statue in Kensington Gardens ["Physical Energy"].<sup>50</sup>

As with its predecessor, Stanford makes a more conscious effort to incorporate cyclic compositional practices in the Sixth Symphony, although 'how strongly the cyclic concept

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<sup>47</sup> Richard Jefferies, 'Foreword' in *G. F. Watts: The Last Great Victorian*, Veronica Franklin Gould (Yale University Press, 2004), p. xi.

<sup>48</sup> Charles Villiers Stanford by some of his pupils, p. 195.

<sup>49</sup> Dibble 2002, p. 362, and Rodmell 2002, p. 246.

<sup>50</sup> John Alexander Fuller-Maitland, *The music of Parry and Stanford, an essay in comparative criticism* (Cambridge, 1934), p.47.





While Stanford's autograph score does not appear to affix these thematic labels, the programme not for the work's first performance refers to them by these names, suggesting that the composer was at least aware of them at some point in the work's conception.

The remainder of the movement – from the development section onwards – is occupied with a struggle between these various thematic ideals. Unsurprisingly, we find Stanford, once more, employing a sonata plan for the movement, with a recapitulation that Brown describes as being almost 'Classical' in nature.<sup>54</sup> The first subject is presented without change, and the first half of the original transition is removed, moving straight into the anticipatory section of the second subject (b. 303). This subject is significantly expanded and the original codetta is removed altogether. It is unclear from Brown's commentary, however, how we should interpret this observation. Stanford's recapitulation is far from text-book given the fairly substantial alterations made to the original recapitulation, namely in the expansion of the second subject area, once more departing from the 'norm' in this concluding section. The final closing passage, in-keeping with the movement as a whole, is a struggle of sorts between the 'Life' and 'Death' motives, with a strong and rousing cadence (b. 397-8) articulating the coda, itself a sequence of definite tonic cadences.

The opening of Stanford's Sixth Symphony presents us with a compositional dichotomy: on the one hand it affirms the composer's essentially conservative musical

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<sup>54</sup> Brown, p. 137.

tendencies, favouring what might cautiously be described as a traditional adherence to sonata principles, perhaps with some minor deformations, but certainly nothing significant to suggest that the composer was questioning the legitimacy or relevance of the form in a now twentieth-century setting. On the other hand, it does still represent a point of departure for the composer. Brown has noted that it is curious that a movement cast in compound-time eschews any obvious references to Brahmsian hemiolas that one might have expected such an ardent supporter of the composer to utilise, nor does it appear to make a nod to either iconic symphonic movements such the opening movement's of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony or Mendelssohn's Fourth, the result of which is a few symphonic movement with virtually no 'foreign' aspects.<sup>55</sup>

[The slow movement] is of unforgettable charm, and its long-drawn phrases recall the kind of ample dignity which the painter [Watts] loved to put into his female figures.<sup>56</sup>

Stanford's slow movement is by far the most expressive moment in the Sixth Symphony, and is also where the composer's individual voice can most clearly be heard, continuing a trend that can be observed in earlier symphonic works. The whole movement is founded upon the opening 'love' theme, initially heard on the Cor Anglais, almost uncomfortably reminiscent of the equivalent point in Dvořák's Ninth Symphony (1893), a work Stanford himself knew, having introduced it to the Leeds Philharmonic Society in the 1897-98 season.



While there is nothing to suggest that the theme is derived from folk sources, the melodic shape shares much in common with the Irish folk song with which Stanford was so

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> *The Times*, 19 January 1906.

intimately equated, especially the upward leaps that punctuate it and the motif's closing tag's relation to the Irish cadence.<sup>57</sup> It is curious that none of the reviewers of the work's performance remarked upon this, especially when one considers that they were only too keen to find Irish inflections in earlier works.

Stanford's slow movement continues the trend that has been observed in similar symphonic movements of adopting a freer formal plan. Brown analyses the movement formally and harmonically thus, suggesting that it is cast in a rounded binary form of sorts, in spite of describing it as 'free ternary form'.<sup>58</sup>

	<b>A</b>			<b>B</b>				retrans.	<b>A</b>	
<i>a</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>k</i>	<i>Aa</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>b</i>		<i>a</i>	<i>k</i>
B maj	-----	-----	-----	V/C	F	V/D	B-flat	→	B maj	
m.1	27	36	48	58	76	84	95	111	124	147

However, the movement could just as easily be viewed from a more rhapsodic perspective, which would link it in more closely with Stanford's wider orchestral tendencies of the period, notably his Irish Rhapsodies, a link made all the more strong when we consider the slow movement's melodic quality.

While the 'love' theme dominates Stanford's slow movement, a darker undertone permeates this section, as it does with much of the symphony. The composer appears to eschew explicit reference to the 'death' theme heard in the work's opening movement, although one should take note of Brown's earlier observation that the cyclic nature of this symphony hinges upon the extent to which we consider one theme to be connected to another.<sup>59</sup> At the opening of the movement's second and more turbulent section Stanford transforms the 'love' theme into a darker melodic motif, condensing the intervals such that

<sup>57</sup> Brown, p. 141.

<sup>58</sup> Brown, p. 139.

<sup>59</sup> See Brown, p. 134.

the theme appears to turn more inwardly upon itself. He also introduces a downward figure which dominates the whole central section of this movement, and it is this that we might link with the 'death' motif. As with the first movement, a struggle now ensues between the 'love' and 'death' themes. However, where in the first movement we see a valiant, almost chivalric battle between the two melodic ideas, here we find an impassioned duet. The treatment of these contrasting ideas is not at all dissimilar from that found in Stanford's to-date existing Irish Rhapsodies, and even foreshadows the more emotional ones that would follow, even if this movement avoids reaching the expressive extremes that a work such as the Fourth Irish Rhapsody would some ten years later.

Although emotionally charged throughout and highly emotive, Stanford's slow movement also possesses a more reflective, even inflective, quality. At various points in the movement's central section the texture suddenly dissolves right down to small chamber groupings. References to both themes adopt an extremely touching quality where the musical texture almost turns in upon itself. These moments are arguably the most expressive points in the symphony. We could choose to read these allegorically as moments where the more individual voices of the solo instruments, perhaps the composer himself, can be heard more clearly. Indeed, this natural propensity for chamber textures would be something that would come to occupy the composer more and more, such as in his Second Piano Concerto (1911), and his Seventh Symphony, where the presence of such moments can be read as an indicator of melancholic tendencies.<sup>60</sup>

The compound meter of the Scherzo reintroduces the energy of the first movement to the symphonic unfolding. Stanford juxtaposes a descending bass figure, perhaps another reference to the 'death' theme, against an inversion of the first movement's 'life' theme, before the movement's theme proper is introduced, which features in both the scherzo and

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<sup>60</sup> See Chapter 4 for a fuller discussion of these.

trio sections of the movement. As with both previous movements, any suggestion of optimism is still undercut with continual interjections from the 'death' theme. Along with the motivic unity provided by these continual references to the 'life' and 'death' themes, this fluctuation between optimistic and more angst sections provides an additional linking thread throughout the whole symphony.

The brevity of the scherzo movement is something worth remarking upon. At little over three minutes' in length in performance, it represents a tiny portion of the overall symphonic work. While there are no hard and fast rules about symphonic proportions, and certainly not in the opening years of the twentieth century, for an ardent formalist like Stanford with heavy Classical leanings, it is curious that he opted for such a short dance movement. Indeed, the movement acts as much as a link passage with the finale, heightened by the through-composed joining section with the last movement. Perhaps we might read this as Stanford more freely interpreting the symphonic genre in later life, and this might also explain the move towards the shorter, more compressed symphony we will find almost a decade later in the Seventh Symphony. Of course, symphonies with different numbers of movements of differing lengths were nothing new, so there is no suggestion here that Stanford was making a ground-breaking statement in composing the Sixth Symphony in this manner. Rather that it might at least help to move us away from the notion that Stanford was an arch-conservative to the letter who never even showed signs of moving away from symphonic norms.

Following a transitional section based on materials from the Scherzo, the finale opens at b.35 with the introduction of a strong 'heroic'<sup>61</sup> theme.

Perhaps the most notable aspect of this Finale's material is its *Pomp and Circumstance March* idiom which manifested itself in Parry's and many of Elgar's works and spread to Stanford, Walton, and

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<sup>61</sup> Dibble 2002, p. 363.

many others. It became an emblem of English national music throughout the world, characterized by a boisterous pesante first section and a lyric Trio scored initially for quiet strings in their darker range, often with horns doubling the melody followed by a *tutti forte* repetition. Stanford only incorporates the boisterous pesante portion of the style.<sup>62</sup>

I would disagree with Brown's explicit observations about the quality of Stanford's finale, as well as the implication that there might be something of the national about this symphonic essay. The strong trio section that Brown identifies as a crucial element of this so-called march idiom is fundamental to its nature and so surely its absence robs this movement of any links with the works of Elgar, Parry et al identified in his commentary. Furthermore, I would query the extent to which there are any genuine similarities with this style of work. The main theme may well have heroic qualities, but it is a far cry from the almost hymn-like nature of so many of the Pomp and Circumstance themes and works that fall into this genre, and I do not genuinely believe that there is even the slightest hint of the jingoistic in this finale. While the work was dedicated to an iconic English figure, there is nothing to suggest that Stanford was attempting to make a profound national statement with this work. It is curious, as will be explored in due course, that Stanford would make a more conscious effort to align his work with more identifiably English figures, much in the same way that he arguably did in the Miltonian associations of his Fifth Symphony, but that need not be interpreted as anything beyond that. Furthermore, Stanford's symphonic finale is still much more concerned with the interplay between life, love and death that continues to be spun out in this last movement. The heroic theme itself appears to be derived from fragments initially heard in the linking section of the first movement's exposition, and the references to life, love and death are themselves self-explanatory.

Perhaps of most interest in this movement, and indeed an unusual twist to the symphonic plot, is the work's conclusion. The triumphalism and heroicism of the movement

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<sup>62</sup> Brown, p. 145.

dissolves into a subdued and extensive coda marked 'solenelle' where the 'love' theme is once more presented and which dominates the work's close. Perhaps here we see an equivalent deformation from the *per aspera ad astra* plot that Hepokoski observes in Sibelius' First Symphony.<sup>63</sup> There are still references to the 'death' theme but here it is very much love that triumphs, if triumph is the correct term to use, as the impassioned yet subdued close suggests more a sense of lingering than victory. For a work so heavily infused with the energy and excitement that dominates so much of the symphony, it is curious that Stanford should chose to end in a more subdued fashion, one not dissimilar in quality to the conclusion of his Fifth Symphony. Furthermore, the presence of love above the more heroic life motif presents an interesting subversion of the 'typical' heroic symphonic plot that some of the composer's earlier symphonies affirmed, and which we already know were intimately familiar to Stanford. It is this shift of emphasis away from the outer movements towards the inner, more expressive moments of his symphonies in which Stanford arguably makes a much more individual statement, both in terms of his relationship with the symphony itself but also his music more generally.

The symphony received its première under Stanford's direction with the recently formed London Symphony Orchestra at the Queen's Hall on 18 January 1906, and was generally well received.<sup>64</sup> Perhaps of most interest is that almost all of the reviewers accepted that, in spite of the programmatic references, the work could still be considered to be more absolute than otherwise.

The arts of painting and music have features in common, and frequently terms belonging to the former are employed in describing the latter. Again, the symphonic poem has largely taken the place of the old symphony, and the form is as a rule determined by the poetic basis, and in some cases by a written programme. Sir Charles Stanford keeps to the old title and to the usual symphonic form.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Hepokoski, 'Sibelius', p. 421.

<sup>64</sup> See Appendix XI.

<sup>65</sup> *The Athenaeum*, no. 4083 (27 January 1906), p. 114.

The only other performance recorded of the *Sixth Symphony* was at Bournemouth in 1907, the work remaining unpublished and in manuscript form alone. Brown reports that two copies of this are also believed to have been held by Messrs. Stainer & Bell, but if this is the case then it would appear that the work made it no further.<sup>66</sup>

## **A CRITICAL TURN?**

These two later symphonies, separated in conception by about a decade, present a new direction for Stanford and his relationship with the symphony. While these two works explore aspects of symphonic composition that his earlier works appear to have avoided, most notably the use of cyclic techniques, perhaps of most significance is their almost complete avoidance of Irish references, aside from the notably ‘Irish’ quality of the Sixth Symphony’s slow movement, and especially during a period of increased tensions in the so-called Irish Question. Indeed, it is curious that, Stanford not only avoids reference to his Irish heritage in these two works, but also appears to make a much more obvious association with more identifiably English topic matters through the connection with Milton and Watts. This is not to say that the works should be considered as ‘English’ symphonies from a nationalistic perspective. Rather that they unexpectedly eschew Irish identity at a time when not only might we expect Stanford, as a frequent commentator on the situation, to wish to make a statement, but especially when some of his other works from the period do so. The increasing popularity of the ‘Irish’ Symphony in Stanford’s homeland surely would have offered the composer an opportunity to capitalise on this increasing profile as an ‘Irish’ composer, as opposed to an Imperialistic British one.

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<sup>66</sup> Brown, p. 147.

Over the course of the ten years that separate the Fifth and Sixth symphonies Stanford's career continued to develop with a number of notable successes. Works from this period include his *Requiem* (1896) written in memory of Lord Leighton, his still popular *Songs of the Sea* (1904), operas *Christopher Patch* (1897, unperformed) and *Much Ado About Nothing* (1900), the *Violin Concerto in D major* (1899), *Clarinet Concerto in A minor* (1902), plus additional chamber music, including a String Quartet (1897), a Piano Trio (1899) and two String Quintets both composed in 1903.

In addition to these, however, are four further substantial works from the period, all of which once again link in with the ever problematic 'Irish Question'. These are his first two *Irish Rhapsodies* (1902 and 1903), the *Concert Variations upon an English Theme 'Down among the Dead Men'* (1897-8), and his comic opera *Shamus O'Brien* (1895).

First performed at the Opéra-Comique in London on 2 March 1896 *Shamus O'Brien* was by far Stanford's most successful operatic works, enjoying an eighty-two successive night performance stretch following this première.<sup>67</sup> Following the final performance on 23 May, the 'Shamus O'Brien Opera Company Ltd' organised a tour of the work including stagings in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Newcastle, Southport, Manchester, Bradford, Hull, Preston, Blackpool, Belfast, Limerick, Waterford, Cork and Dublin. The company then took the work to New York where it opened on Broadway on 5 January 1897 with over fifty performances, before returning to England for performances at Southampton, Brighton, Croydon, Hanley, Harrogate, Southport (again), Cheltenham, Gloucester, Cardiff and Plymouth.

The opera was based on Le Fanu's poem of the same title and was composed at a time when 'the appetite for things Irish in Britain, America, and Australia... had reached its

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<sup>67</sup> See Appendix XII for précis and review.

apogee.’<sup>68</sup>The plot is centred around the aftermath of the 1798 uprising in Ireland, events of which led to the passing of the 1801 Act of Union, an odd topic, perhaps, for a comic opera, especially given its timing. Indeed, Axel Klein has remarked that it is unlikely that Stanford would have written an opera that attempts to create a comic situation out of a tragic historical event had he himself been living in Ireland at the time.<sup>69</sup> However, the work was also a great success in Ireland in spite of the subject and its timing, so perhaps the potential significance of the political sentiments contained in the opera were lost on audiences of the time. The character of Shamus ‘represents very much the English view of the Irish – and a truly stage-Irish one – which probably did not differ greatly from Stanford’s own view.’<sup>70</sup> This comic, often stupid individual, portrays very much what we might imagine the Victorian view of the Irish to be. However, interestingly, to an extent Shamus is a character who almost succeeds in fooling the English soldiers who themselves are the victims of much mockery. One could easily read Shamus as being a republican, separatist work, deriving laughter at the expense of the English, a reading that Stanford himself must have been aware of when, in 1912, he banned all performances of the work, a restriction that remained in place for the rest of his life. What this illustrates is just how strong Stanford’s views were on the Irish situation, that he would censure the one opera that had brought him significant income.

The *Concert Variations on an English Theme* were composed following the successful première of Shamus in late 1897 and early 1898. The series of twelve continuous variations are based on the English folksong ‘Down among the dead men’ which Stanford probably found in William Chappel’s *Popular Music of the Olden Time*. The words were

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<sup>68</sup> Dibble 2002, p. 275.

<sup>69</sup> Axel Klein, ‘Stage-Irish, or the National Irish Opera, 1780-1925,’ *Opera Quarterly*, vol. 21, no. 1 (Winter, 2005), p. 47.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.* It should be born in mind that the ‘stage Irish’ notion is how we no perceive the dialectic with the benefit of a century of hindsight, and this literary construction was both widespread and enormously popular at the time.

composed by John Dyer (1700-58) and may refer to Queen Anne, although the exact date of composition is unknown.

Here's a health to the Queen and a lasting peace,  
To faction an end, to wealth increase;  
Come, let us drink it while we have breath,  
For there's no drinking after death,  
And he that will this health deny,

*Down among the dead men,  
Down among the dead men,  
Down, down, down, down,  
Down among the dead men let him lie.*

Let charming Beauty's health go round,  
In whom celestial joys are found;  
And may confusion still pursue,  
The senseless woman hating crew,  
And they that woman's health deny;

May love and wine their joys maintain,  
And their united pleasures reign;  
While smiling plenty crowns the land,  
We'll sing the joys that both afford:  
And they that won't with us comply.

Aside from the use of an English folk tune in *Shamus O'Brien*, a Cromwellian march 'The Glory of the West,' this is probably the only work, and certainly the most substantial, in which Stanford utilises English folk music as opposed to that of his native Ireland. This choice, whilst it might seem purely coincidental, comes at an interesting time, placed almost equidistant between two symphonic works both of which have much more discernibly English links than they do Irish. Indeed, the sentiment contained in the verses for 'Down among the dead men' appears to be one advocating loyalty to the crown – which we might take as a direct reference to the Union itself, represented by the crown. Interestingly, in the library of the Royal College of Music is a large stained-glass window, surrounding which are a number of arms and symbols. One of these is a harp with a crown on top and the Latin motto *quis separabit* (who will separate us), now the motto of the Royal Dragoon Guards, the Order of St. Patrick, the Royal Ulster Rifles, the Irish Guards, and the North Irish Horse.

Today it also forms part of the crest of Northern Ireland, and had been used as the motto for various regiments within the British Army prior to Irish separation in 1924. Although the reasons for including this symbol in the window are unclear, Liam Mac Cóil has suggested that its presence may well be due to Stanford's intervention.<sup>71</sup>

Stanford's first two Irish Rhapsodies, from an eventual set of six, composed in the opening years of the twentieth century in 1902 and 1903 respectively, are probably the most important orchestral works to date from this period that were not symphonies in the strict sense. The works draw upon Irish folk song for thematic material which is then incorporated into a symphonic structure, and present an interesting alternative form in which Stanford could articulate both Irish and symphonic tendencies, as epitomised in the finale of his own 'Irish' Symphony, but freed from the stricter constraints of the symphonic form itself. As well as being the year in which he first presented the Irish Rhapsody form to the musical world, 1902 was also the year in which Stanford was, once again, invited to judge the composition prize for the year's Feis Ceoil celebrations. In the summer of 1901 the committee had announced that a competition for the composition of an 'Irish Symphony' would form part of the following year's festival in an attempt to align itself with a more distinctly 'Irish' school of composition. Given that a performance of Stanford's own symphonic offering to the nation had been scheduled for March 1902, under the direction of Richter as part of the Hallé Orchestra's tour to Dublin, he was the logical choice to adjudicate such a competition and might even indicate that the composer was becoming increasingly incorporated into Ireland's cultural circles of the time. The winner of the competition was the Italian-born Michelle Esposito, then professor of piano studies at the Royal Irish Academy of Music and founder of the Dublin Orchestral Society. With a further resurgence of interest in

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<sup>71</sup> Liam Mac Cóil, *An Chláirseach agus an Choróin: Seacht gCeolsiansa Stanford: Leathanaigh as Dianlann Impriseanaíoch bunaithe ar Scheacht Siansa Charles Villiers Stanford móide Aguisín faoi Lúreach Phádraig Saint Patrick's Breastplate* (Leabhar Breac, 2010).

the 'Irish' Symphony it is perhaps unsurprising that Stanford would return to this work for compositional inspiration but it was the 'union of folk song and symphony' of which Stanford was the undisputed 'author' rather than the symphonic form that he would turn towards.<sup>72</sup>

The *First Irish Rhapsody* was completed in March of 1902 in response to a commission from the Norwich Festival for a short orchestral work.<sup>73</sup> The work was dedicated to Hans Richter and was premièred at the festival in October of that year under the direction of the composer. It proved to be an instant success, with Stanford being invited to conduct the work only four days later in Birmingham with the Hallé Orchestra, in a concert that also included his Fifth Symphony, and several other performances were also recorded in the months that followed.<sup>74</sup> Shortly after, in early 1903, Stanford learned that Richard Strauss was due to conduct the rhapsody in Berlin.

As with the finale of his 'Irish' Symphony, the *First Irish Rhapsody* utilises two contrasting Irish folk tunes in what is essentially the framework of a sonata-form movement, albeit somewhat freer given the rhapsodic nature. The melodies employed are the battle-song 'Leatherbags Donnell' and the lyrical 'Emer's Farewell to Cuchullin,' more commonly known as the *Londonderry Air*. Stanford himself had previously arranged both of these tunes in his *Songs of Erin* (1901) and *Songs of Old Ireland* (1882) respectively. Stanford almost certainly chose these two songs in part due to their obvious melodic contrasts, coupled with the popularity of the *Londonderry Air*. Indeed, this latter tune, whilst not iconic in the sense that it is today, was still readily available to musicians through the number of versions in print at the time. It was not until Fred Weatherly set the words *Danny Boy* to the tune in 1912, subsequently published by Boosey & Co. the following year, that the *Londonderry Air*

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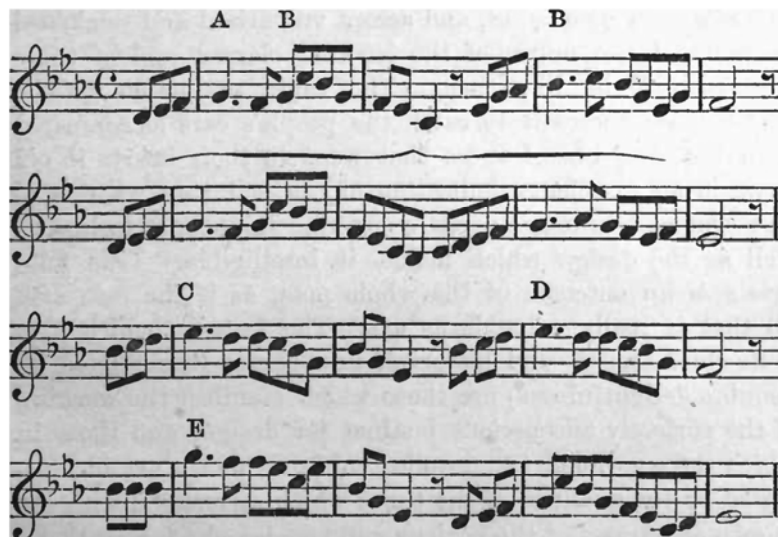
<sup>72</sup> Dibble 2002, p. 343.

<sup>73</sup> Dibble 2002, p. 344.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

began to enjoy the iconic association with Ireland that it has today. Nevertheless, as the following extract from Parry's *The Art of Music* demonstrates, this specific tune was not only well-known in musical circles, but it was considered to be one of the finest examples of Irish folk song in existence.

Irish folk-music – probably the most human, most varied, most poetical, and most imaginative in the world – is particularly rich in tunes which imply considerably sympathetic sensitiveness; and the Anglo-Scotch border folk-music is not far behind. In many tunes of these districts the very design itself seems to be the outcome of the sensibility of the human creature. The cumulation of crises rising higher and higher is essentially an emotional method of design. The rise and fall and rise again is the process of uttering an expressive cry, and the relaxation of tension during which the human creature is gathering itself together for a still more expressive cry. The Murcian tune is good in this respect, but as a simple emotional type the following Irish tune is one of the most perfect in existence: <sup>75</sup>



While the work undoubtedly owes its existence, in part, to the renewed interest in the 'Irish' Symphony, the work also coincides with a much more obvious personal shift towards the Irish agenda, as already suggested by works such as *Shamus O'Brien*, and when we consider the nature of the texts that accompany the respective folk tunes used this association becomes all the more apparent:

**The Alarm** (Leatherbags Donnell)

<sup>75</sup> Charles Hubert Hasting Parry, *The Evolution of the Art of Music* (London, 1896), p. 79.

Hurry down, hurry down, hurry down ever,  
From the wrack-ridden mountain and yellow, rushing river!  
Stern horsemen and footmen with spear, axe and quiver,  
Oh, hurry down, hurry down, your land to deliver!  
Haste, oh, haste! for in cruel might clustering,  
Far and near the fierce Nordman is mustering;  
Haste, oh, haste! or the daughters ye cherish,  
The bride of your bosom shall far more than perish!

Lo! how he toils down that narrow pass yonder,  
Ensnared by his spoils and oppressed by his plunder!  
Flash on him, crash on him, God's fire and thunder!  
And scatter and shatter his fell ranks asunder!  
Oh, smite the wolf, ere he slinks from the slaughter!  
Oh, rend the shark, ere he wins to deep water!  
Pursue and hew him to pieces by the haven,  
And feast with his red flesh the exulting sea raven!

#### **Emer's Farewell to Cuchullin**

O might a maid confess her secret longing  
To one who deeply loves but may not speak!  
Alas! I had not hidden to thy wronging  
A bleeding heart beneath a smiling cheek;  
I had not stemmed my bitter tears from starting,  
And thou hadst learned my bosom's dear distress,  
And half the pain, the cruel pain of parting.  
Had passed, Cuchullin, in thy fond caress.

But go! Connacia's hostile trumpets call thee,  
Thy chariot mount and ride the ridge of war,  
And prove whatever feat of arms befall thee,  
The hope and pride of Emer of Lismore;  
Ah, then return, my hero, girt with glory,  
To knit my virgin heart so near to thine,  
That all who seek thy name in Erin's story  
Shall find its loving letters linked with mine.

The latter text was written by Alfred Graves at the request of Stanford:

Then Stanford, impressed by the heroic character of the [Londonderry] air, asked me for words to match it, and I wrote 'Emer's Farewell', which held the field till Mr Weatherly came along with his plaintive words, which he thought an eminently 'plaintive' air required.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> *The Sunday Times*, 26 August 1928.

Whilst the texts themselves appear nowhere in relation to the tunes, the various folk song arrangements made by Stanford were widely circulated by this time and so it is likely that their literary associations would have been known by many audience members who would have heard the rhapsody in performance. Furthermore, if we accept that there was a significance, primarily contained in the textual associations of those employed in the ‘Irish’ Symphony, it seems reasonable to assume that a similar process of association is at play in this work. Indeed, as will be explored in the next chapter, this significance would only increase further as the political situation in Ireland reached its climax shortly before the outbreak of the First World War.

Significant in the texts are the images of war and battle coupled with those of longing and melancholy. When compared with the musical nature of the finale of the ‘Irish’ Symphony, significant in the *First Irish Rhapsody*, and indeed as is similarly the case with subsequent ones, is the presence of militaristic musical overtones. This work is not simply a rhapsody, but verges on transforming into a call to arms or even a war march. The inclusion of drums and crash cymbals, neither of which was present in the ‘Irish’ Symphony, transforms the rhapsody from the almost passive celebration of Irish identity that can be found in the lyrical symphony into a much more impassioned, even violent musical depiction of a very different kind of Irish identity.

The *Second Irish Rhapsody* was completed, only a few months after its predecessor’s successful première, in February 1903 and was first performed by the Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra under the direction of Mengelberg in May that year, and subsequently as part of the Richard Strauss Festival in London in June. Stanford had also worked on another rhapsody, which was to have been the *Second Irish Rhapsody*, given an opus number of 79 but which was never completed. The rhapsody that subsequently took

shape is subtitled ‘The Lament for the Son of Ossian’ and bears the following inscription taken from James MacPherson’s poem *Berrathon*:

Strike the harp, and raise the song: be near, with all your wings, ye winds. Bear the mournful sound away to Fingal’s airy hall. Bear it to Fingal’s hall, that he may hear the voice of his son: the voice of him that praised the mighty.

It too draws on a number of folk songs, in this case three, for thematic material including ‘The Lament for Owen Roe O’Neill’, arranged by Stanford in *Songs of Old Ireland* and which he also orchestrated in 1892, the caoine ‘The Falling Star’, found in *Songs of Erin*, and ‘Awake Fianna’, from *Songs of Old Ireland*. The work is generally melancholic in nature, evoking the images of the death of Ossian’s son, Oscar, and his subsequent call for vengeance, once more raising the question of programmatic intent as with the Fifth Symphony.<sup>77</sup> Formally the work is considerably freer than the first, as Stanford himself admitted in a letter to Mengelberg in 1903.<sup>78</sup>

#### **The Lament for Owen Roe O’Neill**

Oh! Black breaks the morrow in tempest and gloom,  
When we bear to our sorrow O’Neill to the tomb.  
Whilst with wailing and weeping the long, long train  
Comes woefully sweeping o’er Uladh’s<sup>79</sup> dark plain.

‘Twas not reaving their cattle, you fell, Owen Roe,  
Or in red, raging battle, your face to the foe.  
But the black snake of treason they sent, O’Neill,  
To pierce you with poison since you scoffed at their steel.

Oh! Leader God-gifted, oh! arm stern of stroke,  
That well-night had lifted from our shoulders the yoke,  
Your death-bell is ringing our doom, our doom,  
For with you we are bringing our hopes to the tomb.

#### **The Falling Star**

On my heaven he flashed, as the meteor star  
Out of night will flame from afar.  
Ah, how could I escape his spell?  
Deep, deep into my heart he fell.  
Ochone!

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<sup>77</sup> Dibble 2002, p. 345.

<sup>78</sup> See Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ulster.

I believed the stars that burn above  
Shone less true than his eyes of love.  
All their lamps beam on and on,  
But, my falling star, thou art gone.  
Ochone!

And a new love claims my fealty now,  
Scant of speech and stern of brow.  
Until death I own his claim.  
Sorry is my new love's name.  
Ochone!

**Awake Fianna!**

Awake, awake, Fianna,  
For through the shadows see,  
Great Oscar is hosting hither  
Beneath the red Rowan tree.  
And as we march to meet him,  
The minstrels together raise,  
On joyful harp and tympan  
The mighty Oscar's praise.

For height and might of stature,  
A giant he stands rock fast,  
And yet his foot for fleeness  
Outrunneth the Autumn blast.  
His eyes are earnest azure,  
His laughter a peal of pearls.  
The coolun round his shoulders,  
A rain of ruddy curls.

Behold, behold, his chariot  
Is bursting amid the foe!  
Oh hark! his dread spear hurtles;  
Their leader in blood lies low.  
A bar of bards is Oscar,  
The moulder of mellow words,  
A minstrel true is Oscar  
Among the chiming chords.

As with its predecessor, immediately apparent is the imagery of war, coupled with violence and the call of fighting for a noble cause. The work also contains more explicit references to the north of Ireland, especially the Ulster region, a sentiment that reached its compositional fruition in the later *Fourth Irish Rhapsody*. These images of war and violence, coupled once more with depictions of the same in the musical discourse, are surely significant for Stanford when we consider the continually unfolding political realities in

Ireland at the time. Whilst it would still be a few more years before these feelings finally broke through Stanford's persona and music what we witness in these two works is an increasing focus, and a very personal one, on the so-called Irish 'question'.

What we see from this examination is that, rather than abandoning the Irish agenda in his music, Stanford had instead begun to shift it from the symphony into other works, notably the *Irish Rhapsody* which would emerge as one of the most important instrumental genres in Stanford's late period of composition, and the song cycle which also occupied a central position in his creative output.<sup>80</sup> Why Stanford felt that the symphony was not the place for exploring the Irish Question is unclear. However, perhaps he felt that by incorporating this volatile political ideology into the more universal medium of the symphony he ran the risk of undermining the artistic integrity of the symphonic genre. Whilst the Irish Question was very much present in British politics when the 'Irish' Symphony was composed in the 1880s, Stanford almost certainly saw no real threat in the Irish uprising of the time. For him there was no need to impress a more obvious Irish agenda upon his audience, and instead he used Irish associations to add local colour and flavour to an otherwise more universal work, in much the same way that Mendelssohn had done in his *Scottish* and *Italian* symphonies. Now, however, Irish politics was an increasingly thorny issue, that divided British politics and Irish society. Perhaps it no longer had a place in a genre which essentially celebrated community building.

Performed by a large number of players on a diverse range of instruments and projected to large gathering of listeners, the symphony [in the nineteenth century] came to be seen as the most monumental of all instrumental genres. The all-embracing tone of the symphony was understood to represent the emotions or ideas not merely of the individual composer but of an entire community, be it a city, a state, or the whole of humanity.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> *Irish Idyll*, op. 77 (1901), *Cushendall*, op. 118 (1910), *A Fire of Turf*, op. 139 (1913), *Six Songs from the Glens of Antrim*, op. 174 (1920).

<sup>81</sup> Bonds, 'Symphony II: 19<sup>th</sup> Century'.

What Ireland wanted at the time was a disentanglement from Britain, the Union, the Empire, and all that they stood for, or effectively a destruction of community, not a celebration thereof. Whilst Stanford did not support this notion, perhaps he at least recognised that such a divisive political agenda did not have a place in the ‘European’ symphonic tradition to which he and his works aspired. Thus, in the same way that these two symphonies demonstrate a new sense of direction for the genre in Stanford’s instrumental output, at the same time they also hint towards a turn away from the symphony altogether. As events in Ireland continued to build throughout the first decade of the twentieth century, Stanford’s musical-political agenda began to crystallise as he approached his final symphonic essay.

## **A MELANCHOLIC (NEO-)CLASSICIST? STANFORD, THE SEVENTH AND THE IRISH RHAPSODIES**

In contrast with the 1880s and 1890s when Stanford had enjoyed widespread fame in the UK, Europe and North America as one of Britain's foremost composers, the dawn of the twentieth century ushered in a new era, one in which he witnessed a steady decline in popularity and an increasing artistic isolation as a result of his arch-conservative opinions on music. Later contemporaries, notably Elgar, and many of his earlier pupils, including Vaughan Williams and Holst, were now enjoying a meteoric rise to fame, eclipsing the achievements of their elder forebear. With this decline in popularity, Stanford increasingly relied on whatever commissions and royalties that he could lay his hands on and, as such, we see in his later years a predominance of smaller-scale genres of music. The years that separated the composition of Stanford's Sixth and his Seventh and final symphony are no exception in this respect. His efforts were primarily concerned with songs, chamber music, and liturgical works, with the exception of his 1907 setting of the *Stabat Mater*.

Written in response to a commission from the Philharmonic Society for their centenary celebrations in 1912, Stanford's Seventh and final symphony presents itself as a curious and unique work when positioned within the context of later nineteenth- and early twentieth-century symphonic developments. In an era where the symphony had fragmented into a genre of multiplicities, and where composers were experimenting with ever-increasing size, scale and content, Stanford's twenty-five minute, classically-oriented work seems totally out of place within this much more modern musical world. His musical conservatism appears to have been pushed to its utter limits, completely eschewing continental, and even native, developments in musical language, apparently oblivious to the experiments of composers including Debussy, Ravel, Mahler, Strauss, and Schoenberg to name but a few. In spite of the

fact that Stanford was certainly aware of many of these musical trends, he appears to have deliberately isolated himself from much of the musical world around him in many of his later works, not only, but certainly notably, in this one.<sup>1</sup> Dibble has noted that Stanford possessed an ‘entrenched dislike of [Richard] Strauss and Debussy,’<sup>2</sup> and that he continued to put his faith in the traditional ‘values’ of Brahmsian ‘absolute music’.<sup>3</sup> Upon hearing Strauss’s *Sinfonia Domestica* in 1905 Stanford remarked that he ‘came out with no more impression than going through a smelly tunnel in a railway.’<sup>4</sup>

Stanford worked on the Seventh Symphony with the speed and enthusiasm of composition that he was often accustomed to, completing the work on 6 February 1911, although it would be another year before the work received its première at the Philharmonic Society celebrations on 22 February 1912. Of all of Stanford’s symphonies it is probably the most experimental in terms of form, an aspect that has caused some debate about the work’s overall structure. In spite of the fact that the original score and reviews of the original performance (see Appendix XIII) stating that the symphony is cast in three movements with a sub-divided third, both Paul Rodmell and Brown have tried to analyse the work from the more standard four-movement perspective.<sup>5</sup>

One thing that is instantly notable about this symphony is its length. When compared with symphonic trends of the period, a symphony of Classical proportions seems almost anachronistic to early-twentieth-century instrumental music. However, Stanford was reported to have been delighted with the fact that he had ‘successfully’ compressed the entire symphonic argument into a work lasting little more than twenty-five minutes in performance. Thomas Dunhill recalled that Stanford was ‘more particularly pleased with the fact that in the

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<sup>1</sup> See Stanford, *Musical Composition* (1911).

<sup>2</sup> Dibble 2002, p. 381.

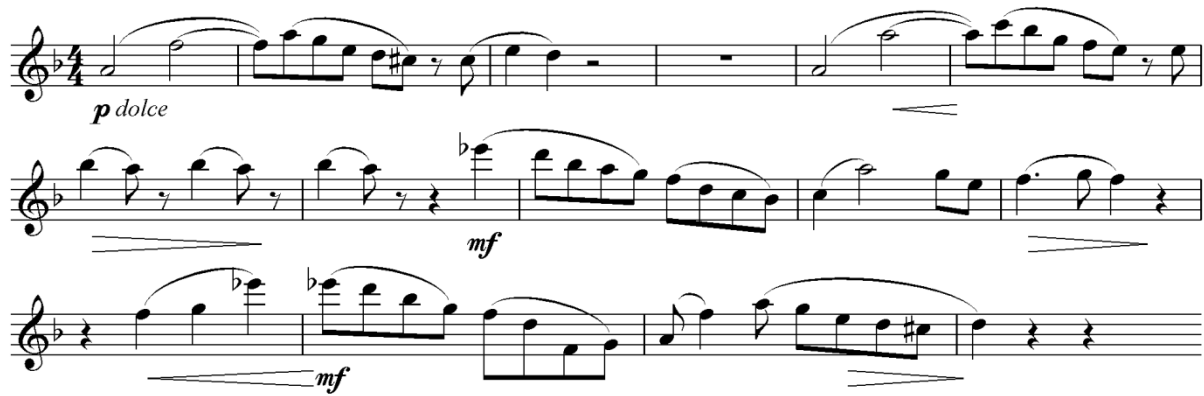
<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 396.

<sup>4</sup> Letter from Stanford to Plunket Greene, 30 September 1905, quoted in Dibble 2002, p. 347.

<sup>5</sup> Rodmell 2002, p. 269.

seventh, and last, he succeeded in writing a full-blown Symphony which took less than twenty-five minutes to perform! It was a clever concession to modern requirements, but he did not concede a particle of his classical convictions.’<sup>6</sup>

The first movement, marked *Allegro*, opens immediately without introduction save for a two-bar fragment that appears intermittently throughout in the strings. The principal theme of the movement is a long, lyrical, almost song-like phrase, which as Rodmell notes, coupled with the accompanying figure, immediately conjures up associations with the instrumental works of Mendelssohn and Schubert, notably the latter’s ‘Unfinished’ Symphony (1822):<sup>7</sup>

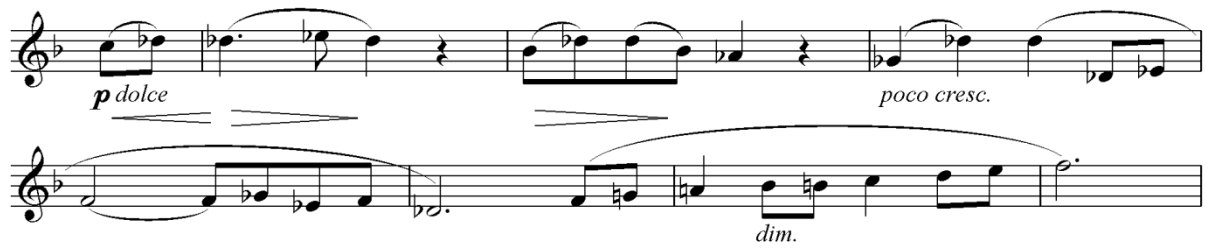


Resonances of Mozart’s instrumental music can also be detected in the movement, with particular similarities to the G Minor Symphony, no. 40, as remarked by press accounts of the première (see Appendix XIII). Following the opening, a brief transition of an ‘aggressive character with a Brahmsian touch,’<sup>8</sup> and which will feature prominently in the development, leads to the presentation of the secondary subject in the mediant minor of F minor:

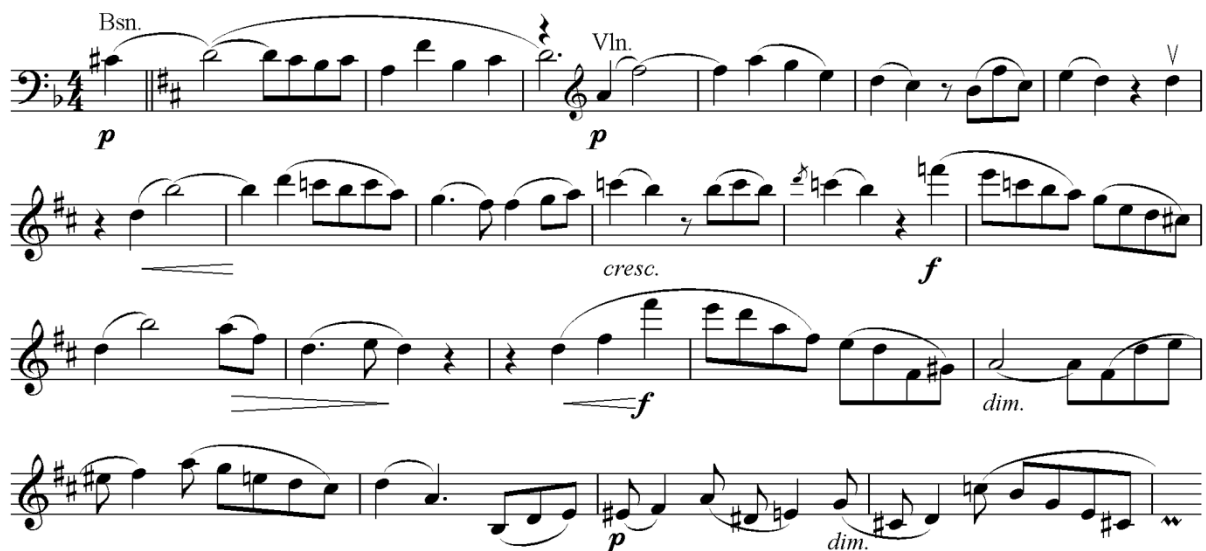
<sup>6</sup> Thomas Dunhill, ‘Charles Villiers Stanford: Some Aspects of his Work and Influence,’ *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 53<sup>rd</sup> Session (1926-1927), p. 50.

<sup>7</sup> Rodmell 2002, p. 269.

<sup>8</sup> Brown, p. 148.



Stanford's development opens with material derived from the expository transition, seemingly eschewing explicit references to either of the exposition's primary subjects. Instead, oblique, varied hints are made at small fragments that can be derived from the movement's 'main' thematic material. Stanford's decision to treat his musical material in this more unconventional manner is continued in his recapitulation. At the section's outset Stanford presents what at first glance appears to be a new theme in the tonic major, an unusual move for a composer that had been dubbed 'the last of the formalists',<sup>9</sup> and when we consider that there are very few instances in his other symphonies where he has made much of an effort to depart from 'conventional' formal treatments of sonata movements:



However, upon closer examination it is clear that this 'new' subject shares a lot in common with the movement's opening theme in terms of overall melodic shape and quality.

<sup>9</sup> Harold Samuel, 'Charles Villiers Stanford by Some of His Pupils,' *Music & Letters*, vol. 5, no. 3 (July 1924), p. 207.

One trend that has emerged in earlier Stanford symphonies is an increasing trend towards the use of variation techniques, a trend that would in turn lead to an interest and increasing use of freer musical structures, notably in the Irish Rhapsodies. As will be discussed shortly, a good portion of the Seventh Symphony not only makes use of variation techniques, but is in fact uses variation form heavily. While Stanford avoids the use of variation form in his opening movement for understandable reasons, maybe we can read this ‘new’ topic, and indeed his more unconventional thematic treatment of the movement as a whole as creating a thread of variation references and forms throughout the symphony itself.

Stanford’s opening movement presents a fascinating critique of early-twentieth-century symphonic practice. Hepokoski has noted that:

In the complex discourse network in which the modern European symphony was involved in the decades around 1900 there were no neutral materials. Within any new work, every musical gesture, every combination of timbres, every traditional or unusual structure, every programmatic or aesthetic intention inevitably evoked resonances and comparisons with a now reified, culturally politicized, and largely Germanic canon.<sup>10</sup>

This movement presents us with a sonata structure, and of course the backdrop appears to be to present the world with a ‘traditional’ symphony, set within an almost Classical framework. Yet at the same time, the movement is highly charged through its frequent sonata deformations. The choice of ‘alternative’ key for the second subject, the unusual development, and the seeming absence or significant reworking of the first subject in the recapitulation, all contribute to a movement that is highly charged and which, almost ironically, calls into question the very tradition that so many of Stanford’s symphonic works seemingly affirm.

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<sup>10</sup> James Hepokoski, ‘Elgar’ in Holoman, D. Kern (ed), *The Nineteenth-Century Symphony* (New York: Schirmer, 1997), p. 327.

Seemingly cast as a Minuet and Trio, although again with some degree of question, Stanford's second movement, like its predecessor, appears to resist strict formal structure, being more freely manipulated and interpreted by its composer than we might expect of Stanford the arch-conservative. The movement combines early nineteenth-century practice with a more Brahmsian orchestral colour in its opening stately minuet theme. A modulation to the tonic minor at b. 46 marks the beginning of what might be considered the Trio section, if we attempt to force this work into more conventional models. However, rather than presenting new material, as might be expected for this 'characteristically' contrasting section, instead Stanford reuses material from the original waltz motif.

How we view the formal plan of the symphony from this point onwards becomes even less clear. Stanford labels the last section of the work 'III – Variations & Finale', suggesting that the symphony is effectively cast in three movements, with a sub-divided third. Running the last two movements together in this fashion was by no means something new for the composer, who had utilised a similar technique in his Sixth Symphony at the corresponding point. However, the distinction between these two works is that he composed the final two sections as distinct movements with a segue, rather than 'one' with a structural point of arrival, and certainly linking, even uniting, the last half of the symphony with the use of variations was something radically new for Stanford. Indeed, the use of variations in a symphonic context was something never before employed by the composer, and it is curious that in this, his last work, some two thirds of the symphony is occupied with this form.

The Andante consists of a theme [shown below] and five variations. Compared to the previous movement, these variations are less tightly controlled and less likely to have a single figuration throughout a given variation... Notice that the theme and fifth variation are strophic and the first variation is nearly so. Variations 2, 3, and 4 are much expanded with 2 and 3 between themselves very nearly strophic. Thus a symmetrical shape informs these variations with the theme and last strophic variation framing the middle variations of expanded non-strophic structures.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Brown, p. 151.



The final section, or fourth movement, opens with a triumphant choral-like presentation of the variation theme for full brass and wind. As with previous sections, it can, and has, been viewed in a number of ways. We can see this as being a single, extensive final variation of the theme presented in the previous section, although it does follow a self-contained sonata plan of its own, expanding this single variation's scale considerably. A transition (b. 156) leads to a secondary motif (b. 176), the material of which appears to be derived from the principal variation theme, suggesting a monothematic sonata movement of sorts. A very short development section of only eighteen bars in length leads to the recapitulation, although not of the variation theme but of the first subject of the first movement, providing not only a cyclic link with this opening and the symphony, but also fulfilling, possibly, the formal gap left by the lack of restatement of this subject at the corresponding point of the first movement.

Brown has also demonstrated that, in addition to this, the entire set of Variations and Finale can, as a whole, be read as a sonata movement:

One can also project upon this movement aspects of sonata form. The Theme and Variation 1, which remain in the tonic, and the *P*; the tonal instability of Variation 2 is a kind of *T*; Variation 3 beginning in the subdominant and marked *tranquillo* is almost an embodiment of *S*, and Variations 4 and 5 and the latter variation's continuation are a development section, although less of a development than found in Variation 2. Perhaps the beginning of the Finale in D major based on the theme could be heard as a recapitulation, even though it appears in the new tonic as a structural downbeat.<sup>12</sup>

However we choose to read this last movement, like the opening, it too poses some interesting symphonic questions and challenges to the otherwise reified institution that the genre represents. The choice of the ambiguous number of movements, and the structure

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<sup>12</sup> Brown, p. 151.

contained within this ‘finale’ section – variations plus a hybrid sonata plan which itself acts as one of the variations – represents an additional twist in Stanford’s interpretation of the genre within an early-twentieth-century context. Furthermore, Stanford’s choice of deformation is once again combined with, on the other hand, a more strict adherence to other symphonic traditions. While this section has questioned the extent of the optimism contained in the movement, we still find a minor key symphony charting the more traditional journey from darkness to light through the move from D minor to D major, even while the heroicism often associated with such a symphonic trajectory is, for the most part, absent. It is this questioning of one’s own tradition that will be explored shortly in considering how we might attempt to read the significance of Stanford’s gestures.

## **VARIATION STRUCTURE**

Although Brown might have a point when he remarks upon the uncharacteristic presence of a high quantity of variation structures in Stanford’s Seventh Symphony, a wider glance at both the composer’s output of this general period, along with prevailing trends in composition at this point in history, would suggest that not only is their presence the complete reverse, but that they also represent a much more significant development in Stanford’s own output, one which can be traced through his entire symphonic output.

Countless examples of large-scale variation forms can be found in the output of leading British composers of the turn of the twentieth century. One of the most iconic variation works was, of course, Elgar’s *Enigma Variations*, a work Stanford knew well, having conducted them both at the Royal College of Music and in Leeds.<sup>13</sup> Another substantial British work from this period was Parry’s *Symphonic Variations* of 1897, a work

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<sup>13</sup> Dibble 2002, p. 312.

which may well have influenced Elgar's, and which again Stanford would have known given that it featured on the Bach Choir programme in 1898 along with Stanford's setting of the Requiem Mass. These are of course but two examples, along with those such as Delius's *Appalachia: Variations on a Slave Song* (1903), of a tendency among leading British composers of the turn of the century to experiment with large-scale symphonic variations, not to mention works such as Brahms's *Variations on a theme of Haydn* (1873) with which Stanford would also have been familiar. Stanford himself had also engaged with variations on a large scale, in the same period, notably his *Concert Variations on Down Among the Dead Men* (1897-8, see previous chapter). However, for reasons unknown, he had yet to develop the technique in a symphonic rather than concertante setting. To an extent, it is surprising that it took Stanford so long to experiment with variations in the manner in which we can see him doing in the Seventh Symphony.

The use of variation forms within Stanford's own musical output was becoming increasingly prominent at this point. As well as the Seventh Symphony, other contemporaneous examples can be found in works such as the Magnificat from the Service in C Major, op. 115 (1909) where the opening statement is continually reworked around a series of structural breaks. Variations would feature increasingly in later works, for example in the second movement of his *Sonata Celtica*, op. 153 (1918), and his unperformed *Variations for Violin*, op. 180 (1921).

Stanford's use of variations can also be interpreted within the context of a wider move towards the use of free form, a trend that can be charted throughout his symphonic music. Particularly noticeable in the slow movements of his symphonies, the trend can be remarked at least as early as the third movement of his 'Irish' Symphony, for example, where the rhapsodic strands can be read from this free-form perspective. The slow movement of the Sixth Symphony shows a further example of the use of free form within this symphonic

structure, and the Irish Rhapsodies themselves can also be analysed in a similar manner. In short, although the use of strict ‘variation’ forms is absent from Stanford’s symphonic works, the presence of variation-like forms is all too noticeable, so much so that it is surprising that Brown appears to have overlooked these. Stanford’s engagement with variations at this pivotal moment in his compositional life, a moment where we can chart a very clear change in aesthetic and focus in the composer’s final decade and where he slips more and more into obscurity, marks a point where we see the composer retreating into a more individualistic existence. Indeed, this is a much more general move which this last symphony represents. It is the point at which Stanford bids farewell to the musical ‘mainstream’, a gradual move which can be observed across his symphonic journey, and which will be dealt with in greater depth in the conclusion of this thesis.

The Seventh Symphony received its première performance on 22 February 1912 at the Philharmonic Society under Stanford’s direction. The work’s reception presents a curious combination of opinions. When one considers the overwhelming success that Elgar’s First Symphony had enjoyed only a few years earlier, and that surely, at least to an extent, Stanford’s latest work must have been a reaction against the enormity of the former’s work, it is surprising that a number of reviewers praised Stanford for his economy of scale.<sup>14</sup> The correspondent for *The Times* commented that the work ‘is short, containing only three

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<sup>14</sup> Following its première in Manchester under Richter on 3 December 1908 and its London première in early 1909, Elgar’s symphony received performances in New York, Vienna, Leipzig, St. Petersburg, and across the UK within weeks. *The Musical Times* reported that ‘To state that Elgar’s Symphony has achieved immediate and phenomenal success is the bare truth’ (‘Elgar’s Symphony’, *Musical Times*, Vol. 50, No. 792 (Feb. 1, 1909), p. 102) and *The Observer* that ‘It is doubtful whether any symphonic work has aroused so great an interest since Tchaikowsky’s “Pathétique”’ (‘Opera in New York: Popularity of “Salome” and Elgar’s new Symphony’, *The Observer*, 14 February 1909, p. 5.).

There are curious parallels between Stanford’s Seventh Symphony and Elgar’s Second Symphony, the latter work of which was premièred between the completion and first performance of Stanford’s work. It has not been possible to ascertain whether or not Stanford attended the première of Elgar’s symphony in May 1911, but as the two works were, for the most part, conceived alongside one another and that Stanford appears not to have made any alterations to his work before its performance, it can only be concluded that this parallel, while interesting, appears to be coincidental.

movements, and that in itself is a feature of distinction at the present time'<sup>15</sup> and *The Musical Times* noted that 'so simple and straightforward a composition was hardly expected in these times, when a new orchestral work is so often a melancholy psychological problem'.<sup>16</sup> The reviewer from *The Observer*, however, was more critical of the work, stating that Stanford had 'once again endeavoured to dam the stream of modernity' and that the 'not entirely unexpected feature was that the symphony is *not* a modern work'.<sup>17</sup> Unlike its immediate forebears, the work enjoyed something of a life beyond its première, receiving performances in Bournemouth, Boston, Cambridge, and London, and was also made available in printed score by Stainer & Bell in the same year.

### **STANFORD'S 'LATE' (?) STYLE**

As a composer, Stanford's music reached a plateau fairly early on in his career, probably at some point in the mid-1880s. Perhaps as a result of his extraordinary ability for producing music at an unbelievable rate, one almost unparalleled by any of his contemporaries, Stanford quickly found a musical style and voice that suited musical and expressive desires. Much like Saint-Saëns in France, it is hard to trace specific 'periods' within the composer's creative life, in the way that one might do with many other composers throughout history. This is not to say that there is no sense of development or progress through Stanford's musical life, rather, that his works do not fall into distinct compositional periods that we can label 'early', 'middle', 'late', etc.

However, from a personal point of view, Stanford's life certainly does fall into more distinct periods. Dibble has grouped Stanford's creative life into 'Formative Years',

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<sup>15</sup> *The Times*, 23 February 1912.

<sup>16</sup> 'Philharmonic Society,' *The Musical Times*, Vol. 53, No. 830 (Apr. 1, 1912), p. 257.

<sup>17</sup> *The Observer*, 25 February, 1912 (see Appendix XIII).

‘Recognition’, ‘The New Generation’, and ‘War and Decline’, labels that accurately account for the various different personal stages that the composer experienced during his life. If we wished to distil further the composer’s life into three periods (early, middle, and late perhaps) then we might choose 1852-1880 as early, 1880-1900 as middle, and 1900-1924 as late, remembering that these are very general borders. The important thing to note, from a symphonic perspective, is that the First and the genesis of most of the Second fall into an early phase of development; that the ‘Irish’ Symphony surely represents a mature, middle stage in the composer’s symphonic life, paired with the Fourth and Fifth; and that the Sixth, to an extent, and certainly the Seventh, fall into a latter period of the composer’s life with the symphony.

Stanford’s later life was marred by unhappiness and an increasing isolation from the musical and political worlds around him. Throughout the twentieth century and until his death, Stanford witnessed a steady decline in the popularity of his music and, although knighted in 1902, this was surely more in recognition of the musical achievements of his life until that point rather than an acknowledgement of his continuing standing as one of Britain’s leading composers. Indeed, Stanford was, in a somewhat unfortunate sequence of events, initially omitted from the coronation service of Edward VII, and it was only after a series of negotiations that the composer’s setting of the Te Deum from the setting in B flat was included, with the addition of an eight-bar introduction and a full scoring of the work.<sup>18</sup>

In this period of increasing artistic and political isolation, Stanford appears to have crystallised his stance on a variety of related matters, as is espoused in many of his works and writings from this latter part of his life. Until the outbreak of war, Stanford voiced many of his objections to the state of music during the twentieth century, and on political matters, notably those related to Ireland. In an address to the Musical Association a few years after the

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<sup>18</sup> See Dibble 2002, pp. 338-9.

composition of his final symphony, Stanford lambasted the state of music as he saw it in the early twentieth century:

Music springs of two essential elements – Rhythm and Melody. Without rhythm melody is usually vapid. Without melody rhythm is barbaric. The best is of both. Melody is harder to write than a complicated score, for it is both natural and simple; it is written, as all things should be, straight along; and a complicated score is not. Melody is essential to all work if it is to be of value. I was once rebuked for not getting the “melodic line” into one of my pupils, and my reply was that only God and himself could put it there. I fear that melody is nowadays *anathema*. Why? Not because it has been there and is rejected, but because it has never been there at all. No one, who has ever written a good melody, rejects it. He may improve upon it, but he will not turn his back upon it... One of the most curious and inexplicable signs of our times has been the hero-worship of the disciples of so-called modernity for Mozart; of all the composers of the past they have chosen the very one who represents the complete antithesis of all their theories. He is always clear, always simple in all his work. He writes plenty of notes but never a note too much, or in the wrong place. He is a master of all technique, but a great master of concealing it. He is before all things the great economist, reaching all his effects by the slightest possible means. This admiration for him cannot but be on the lines of an absolute opposition to his principles. *Lucus a non lucendo*. His quickest movements are so perfect in detail, that they could be played at any speed without showing a flaw. Nowadays a clumsy progression is excused on the ground of the rapidity with which it passes. He fitted his mosaics to the hundredth part of an inch. Now they are hammered together whether they fit or not, and are even chipped to make them combine. If work is done as it is now, in heaven’s name let it be done without invoking the patronage of the cleanest composer the world ever saw.<sup>19</sup>

These opinions were clearly well-known in Stanford circles even when the Seventh Symphony was composed, as was evidenced by the comments by *The Observer* when noting that the work’s nature came as no great surprise,<sup>20</sup> and as was subsequently confirmed by some of his pupils:

He had a horror of “modern ugliness” and used to spend hours showing me how impossible it was to play the whole-tone scale on any pure-scale instrument such as the fiddle or trombone. There was a story of how he himself had tried it on the double-basses in an early burlesque work called “Ode to Discord” and he had had to cut it out.<sup>21</sup>

It is true that in his later years he looked askance upon the tendencies of the most modern schools of composition, but when I learnt from him he was fully abreast of the times, even, I think, almost prophetically ahead of them, for he put his finger upon the now palpable weaknesses of Tschaiḱowsky and Richard Strauss when everybody was raving about the nobility and perfection of all their works.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Charles Villiers Stanford, ‘On Some Recent Tendencies in Composition,’ *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 47<sup>th</sup> Session (1920-21), pp. 44-45.

<sup>20</sup> *The Observer*, 25 February, 1912.

<sup>21</sup> L. H. Heward, ‘Charles Villiers Stanford by Some of His Pupils,’ *Music & Letters*, vol. 5, no. 3 (July 1924), p. 202.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas F. Dunhill, *Ibid.*, p. 206.

As a result of this increased sense of isolation, Stanford's musical style stagnated almost to a point of regression. For him it was the only way in which he could reinforce a sense of security and stability in a world that was constantly changing. Thus it would seem that the essence of Stanford's late style, and indeed a trait that can be observed throughout his compositional career, is an adherence to the Classical musical practices, notably with regard to structure and form, which the composer had valued so highly throughout his career. However, while Stanford's music in this last symphony, and indeed many of his later works, imbue a sense of musical conservatism that isolated the composer from the contemporary musical world around him, this is not to say that his music was old and stale, without a sense of novelty or freshness that some of his earlier works had embodied. One aspect of this final symphony that has been touched upon briefly by existing scholars, notably Brown and Rodmell, expands upon not only the apparently 'Classical' nature of the work, but also whether or not this Classicism has greater significance. Rather than being Classicism, to what extent might the Seventh Symphony be viewed as a neo-classical work?

Arnold Whittall, writing in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* defines neo-Classicism as a 'movement of style in the works of certain 20th-century composers, who, particularly during the period between the two world wars, revived the balanced forms and clearly perceptible thematic processes of earlier styles to replace what were, to them, the increasingly exaggerated gestures and formlessness of late Romanticism.'<sup>23</sup> He goes on to say that 'Since a neo-classicist is more likely to employ some kind of extended tonality, modality or even atonality than to reproduce the hierarchically structured tonal system of true

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<sup>23</sup> Arnold Whittall, 'Neo-Classicism,' *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/19723> (accessed February 4, 2011). See also: Scott Messing, *Neoclassicism in music: from the genesis of the concept through the Schoenberg/Stravinsky polemic* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Research Press, 1988); Martha Hyde, 'Neoclassic and Anachronistic Impulses in Twentieth-Century Music', *Music Theory Spectrum*, xviii (1996), pp. 200–35; Carolyn Abbate, *In Search of Opera* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

(Viennese) Classicism, the prefix ‘neo-’ often carries the implication of parody, or distortion, of truly Classical traits.<sup>24</sup> Neo-Classicism as a movement is generally associated with composers active in the inter-War years, notably Stravinsky to whom the term was first applied in 1923, although works such as Prokofiev’s *Symphony no. 1*, the ‘Classical’ (1917), or Satie’s *Sonatine bureaucratique* (1917) with its use of music by Clementi, have both been viewed as precursors to this movement.<sup>25</sup> What of course is of significance is that there have, thus far, it would seem, been no attempts to place the origins of this anti-Romantic, and indeed anti-Expressionist, movement as early as 1911-12, and certainly it is not the kind of compositional technique that one would immediately associate with a ‘conservative’ composer such as Stanford. However, in spite of this generally accepted definition of neo-Classicism, both Rodmell and Brown have observed that this symphony exhibits aspects of this later movement, acknowledging that it is somewhat before its time.

So what, then, in this work, if anything, suggests neo-Classicism, however loosely we might interpret the term? Brown notes the following in relation to the second movement:

Stanford’s second movement *Tempo di Minuetto* (*Allegretto molto moderato*) comes close to a neo-Classical idiom in its restraint (e.g., the trombones are *tacet* and the dynamics never exceed *forte*). However, its harmonic language and chromaticism make it a piece of its time.<sup>26</sup>

Rodmell also notes, in relation to the work as a whole, that ‘as the First Piano Concerto is the antithesis to the heroic and virtuosic Romantic concerto, so this symphony refutes the expansiveness of the period – neoclassicism almost before it was invented.’<sup>27</sup> Certainly Brown’s observation rings true with the essence of the neo-Classical movement – namely a work of music that exhibits older compositional trends but whose overall musical style is distinctively a product of its own time. However, that being said, it is not clear exactly

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Brown, p. 148.

<sup>27</sup> Rodmell 2002, p. 268.

what Brown means when he states that the harmonic and chromatic language, in this case of the second movement, ‘make it a piece of its time.’<sup>28</sup> If anything, Stanford’s harmonic language is relatively unchanged from that which can be seen in any number of his compositions stretching right the way back to some of his earlier works. Certainly the movement, and the symphony as a whole, demonstrate Stanford’s ability to move freely between key areas, often seemingly effortlessly at times, but all of these are done within the bounds of essentially functional, diatonicism. However, Stanford’s use of functional harmony is specifically not of its time within a wider European context. When compared with almost any major composer operating on the continent, Stanford’s musical style seems outdated, archaic and almost, one might say, uninspired. This, of course, is unsurprising given the composer’s opinions on music of the early twentieth century (see above).

The real question at the heart of this apparent neo-Classical issue is in identifying Stanford’s agenda for the work. Neo-Classicism as a movement was, according to Whittall, conceived as a means of casting aside the various compositional trends from the Romantic and post-Romantic eras. It was a movement concerned with reinvigorating an interest in past musical styles, but fused with an unmistakably modernist twist. It offered a way of casting aside the perceived hollowness in expansive Romantic and post-Romantic styles, as epitomised by composers such as Mahler and Strauss, but also including the Impressionist and Expressionists of the early twentieth century. Of course, on this basis, Stanford’s work, while Classical, resists the neo-Classical identity that Rodmell and Brown hint at. However, having said that, if we accept that the agenda hiding beneath the surface of the work was to reconfirm that there was still a place for the style of music presented in the Seventh Symphony in the early twentieth century, then, in a way, Stanford does try to reinvigorate an interest in the Classical style, but only so far as all of his music does and had done throughout

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<sup>28</sup> Brown, p. 148.

his career. Even his First Symphony, composed in 1876, was notably regressive in its overall outlook, even archaic, one might say, exhibiting the same Classical stylistic qualities of the last symphony, but in a less controlled and less economic fashion. Thus perhaps we can see the last symphony as being a final plea on behalf of the composer to the musical world, demonstrating, as the reviewer of *The Observer* puts it, ‘how music ought to be written.’ Clearly, of the three reviews, two reviewers, one of which was Stanford’s close, personal friend Henry Plunket Greene, writing in *The Times*, held similar opinions to Stanford when it came to the perceived excesses of the early twentieth century. However, what is also notable is the apparent lack of awareness of alternative strands of composition in the period. The focus of the implied criticism of the music of the time that is inherent both in the symphony itself and its accompanying reviews appears to be directed more at the post-Wagnerian style of composition popular in the Austro-Germanic field at the time as epitomised by Richard Strauss who Stanford frequently lambasted both with friends and colleagues, as well as being recorded in various texts by Stanford. He is also reported to have commented on some of Debussy’s music,<sup>29</sup> but otherwise opinions on other compositional developments of the time, of which surely Stanford must have been aware, are somewhat noticeable in their absence. Whilst it is possible that Stanford was unaware of the development of the twelve-tone technique, which became known to the world in 1923, the year before the composer’s death, it seems hard to accept that Stanford was at least unaware of the music of the likes of Schoenberg, Berg, Bartok, and Webern, if not familiar with it in some way. Of course, it would seem fair to assume that Stanford would not necessarily have gone out of his way to familiarise himself with such repertory, but that does not mean that he would be totally unaware of its existence.

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<sup>29</sup> L. H. Heward, ‘Charles Villiers Stanford by Some of His Pupils,’ p. 202.

The concept that this last symphony was an attempt by Stanford to cling onto the musical values that he had held so dearly throughout his life is one that has already been proposed by Brown:

As he became older, Stanford felt more detached from the music of his day and as a composer felt himself to be an outsider. One could view his Symphony No. 7 as an effort to both experiment and to display the advantages of a conservative musical stance in the early-twentieth-century symphony. Though the Seventh possesses simplicity and an economy of means, Stanford's requirements for the music he approved of, perhaps the solution he found here, was not totally satisfying to him as a composer. Stanford was to live for another thirteen years; he composed no more symphonies even though he remained active in other genres and as a teacher and conductor. In his later years, Stanford's Victorian optimism was broken by the devastation of the first great European war, a devastation magnified by his happy past associations with German musicians and institutions. The symphony as a genre was by this time one that almost always ended on a note of optimism and triumph; after the war Stanford may have felt that such a positive affect was no longer justified. His orchestral efforts were then directed toward concerted and "Irish"-based works.<sup>30</sup>

## STANFORD AND THE MELANCHOLIC

Brown's final comments about Stanford's relation with the symphony and the wider musical world – namely those of disconnection and effectively clinging on to a bygone musical style – give rise to further considerations relating to the Seventh Symphony, and indeed to Stanford's musical output more broadly of the period. If we view Stanford from this perspective, can we begin to read this work as a melancholically charged one, one which, perhaps, serves as a final farewell of sorts to the genre. While the reasons for Stanford's abandonment of the symphony following the completion of this work remain unclear at this point, the work's inward-looking and reflective nature, as espoused both in its overall musical style and its formal construction, lends itself to a melancholic reading.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Brown, p. 156.

<sup>31</sup> See Rodmell 2002, pp. 268-71.

How then might we define and subsequently interpret the melancholy in this symphony? Among its various definitions, the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines melancholy as:

- a) Sadness, dejection, esp. of a pensive nature; gloominess; pensiveness or introspection; an inclination or tendency to this.
- b) A cause of sadness; an annoyance, anxiety, or vexation.
- c) A mood, state, or episode of sadness, dejection, or introspection.
- d) Tender, sentimental, or reflective sadness; sadness giving rise to or considered as a subject for poetry, sentimental reflection, etc., or as a source of aesthetic pleasure.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, if applying to music one might look for musical constructions and/or aesthetic issues that convey one or more of the above ideas. Amongst these features, anxiety, and especially the anxiety of influence is something that has been associated with music. In his extensive discussion of Brahms's Second Symphony, Reinhold Brinkmann dwells on the notion of this anxiety of influence, first raised by Harold Bloom in his consideration of poetic influences, as, according to the latter, this form of anxiety is a 'variety of melancholy.'<sup>33</sup> Bound up with this anxiety is a 'reflection on the history of one's own art, a confirming of tradition and a questioning of it – nuanced, frequently broken and mediated.'<sup>34</sup> Certainly Brahms's first two symphonies can be viewed as operating within this dialectic. The First Symphony effectively acknowledges the existence of the Beethovenian symphonic tradition, and indeed the treatment of the finale of this symphony both acknowledges and detaches itself from that tradition. Chrysander, quoted in Brinkmann, saw 'the art-historical significance of Brahms's *First Symphony* as lying from this angle, in a compositional-cum-aesthetic problem: "how to create a counterpart to the last section of the Ninth Symphony which would achieve the same effect in nature and intensity, without resorting to song."<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> 'Melancholy, n.1,' *Oxford English Dictionary*, Third edition (Oxford, July 2010); online version November 2010. <<http://www.oed.com:80/Entry/116007>>; accessed 07 February 2011.

<sup>33</sup> Brinkmann, p. 46.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, p. 33.

Brahms's First Symphony, thus, is a kind of 'musical essay on this tradition.'<sup>36</sup> Brinkmann continues:

By re-interpreting, by emphatically "misreading" the Beethovenian symphonic "plot", Brahms was clearing and paving the way for his own symphonic idiom. Thus the *Second Symphony*, after the *First Symphony*'s act of liberation begins at the point where the latter ended: with, as it were, the undisguised nature-metaphor; the symphony firmly formulates what the First gained as a result and was pointing the way to. And yet it is only apparently free; the nature-melos of its beginning still has the Beethovenian background attached to it. So with Brahms there is no triumphant self-confirmation.<sup>37</sup>

Although superficially optimistic, Brahms's Second Symphony is primarily concerned with aspects of introversion, where the 'internalized spaces are taken up by chamber music or musical lyricism',<sup>38</sup> and idyll.

The process of civilization defines the flight into nature as an idyll, at the same time revitalizing and questioning the promise of happiness. It is true that the idyll presents the form in which the "dream of the great unity" is perceived, and where "social harmony and nature's immediate presence" might come together in a higher synthesis – in a nutshell, the imagined promise of a harmony between man and life, prefigured in the work of art. "But it will prove to be the case that this idyllic fulfilment can only be achieved at the cost of a separation: one must turn one's back on cities and city-dwellers."<sup>39</sup>

Of course, accepting the notion that the seemingly 'cheerful' surface hides a darker, and perhaps even more sinister character is easier with Brahms when we consider his so-called 'confession' regarding the work. In a letter of 1877 he states:

I would have to confess that I am, by the way, a severely melancholic person, that black wings are constantly flapping above us, and that in my output – perhaps not entirely by chance – the symphony is followed by a little essay about the great "Why." If you don't know the (motet) [*Warum*, op. 74] I will send it to you. It casts the required shadow on the serene symphony and perhaps accounts for those timpani and trombones.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid, p. 44.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, p. 46.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, p. 140.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, p. 142.

<sup>40</sup> Letter from Brahms quoted in David Broadbeck, 'Brahms,' *The Nineteenth-Century Symphony* ed. D. Kern Holoman (New York, 1997), p. 238.

Turning now to Stanford's symphony, we can begin to observe the same qualities that Brinkmann identifies in Brahms's work.<sup>41</sup> However, the problem arises when we consider that Stanford left no 'confession' regarding his final symphonic work in the manner that Brahms did. Indeed, when we consider Dunhill's comments that Stanford was delighted with the work, perhaps we should question the extent to which this work, which becomes increasingly optimistic as it progresses, represents the level of psychological depth that Brahms's Second Symphony does.<sup>42</sup>

The first factor that we find present in Stanford's work is that of referencing an older tradition. Brinkmann observes 'reflection on the history of one's own art, a confirming of tradition and a questioning of it – nuanced, frequently broken and mediated.'<sup>43</sup> The extent to which this applies in Stanford's case is a matter of opinion, notably the level of nuance and broken mediation, but its reflective nature is certainly less ambiguous. The conservative nature of the musical language lends itself well to the notion that Stanford was somehow using the work to dwell on the musical past. It is, by its very nature, a reflective endeavour in the way in which the work reflects both Classical practice and Stanford's own, highly conservative musical tendencies. Perhaps it is even a conscious reflection of his own symphonic output, spanning some forty years, although the lack of direct or more explicit references to earlier works would question the strength of such an assertion. Indeed, the work itself is, in many ways, radically different from all six symphonies that came before it, especially in terms of form and structure. This might be one way of interpreting the sense of nuance and brokenness in the work. He is not so much questioning symphonic practice as a whole, but perhaps his own symphonic tendencies of the past.

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<sup>41</sup> It is important to point out at this stage that this reading is not designed to suggest that Brahms's Second symphony acted as a form of inspiration for Stanford's Seventh Symphony. Rather, that Brinkmann's approach can be adapted to decode the significance of Stanford's own nostalgic symphony.

<sup>42</sup> See Dunhill, 'Charles Villiers Stanford: Some Aspects of his Work and Influence,' p. 50.

<sup>43</sup> Brinkmann, p. 4.

And yet it [Brahms's *Second Symphony*] is only apparently free; the nature-melos of its beginning still has the Beethovenian background attached to it. So with Brahms there is no triumphant self-confirmation.<sup>44</sup>

As with Brahms's *Second Symphony*, Stanford's *Seventh* is also attached to past models and practices, although possibly not directly Beethoven in the case of this final work. Whilst it certainly exhibits Beethovenian traits, these are mediated through the works of other composers, notably Mendelssohn and Schubert, with Brahms also present. If Brinkmann finds no 'triumphant self-confirmation' in Brahms's symphony, then surely the same can be extended to Stanford's own symphonic work, even his own seemingly triumphant, yet possibly hollow, finale. This constant (self)referencing of the past through this symphony suggests a continuing sense of anxiety over the past. When contextualised in Stanford's own life at the time, such an anxiety is hardly surprising. As a composer he was increasingly isolated in the musical world. His music no longer spoke the same language as that of his contemporaries, and even that of many of his pupils, and so, whilst there appears to be no sense that Stanford questioned his own artistic position, at least in a public sense, subconsciously, and maybe even consciously, Stanford surely must have become increasingly concerned about his musical standpoint. As a composer who, certainly in his youth, made a concerted effort to keep abreast of musical styles, developments, and trends on an international level, it seems fair to assume that he was aware of the state of music in Europe, and certainly his writings on the subject confirm some level of awareness of contemporary styles.

In the art of music internalized spaces are taken up by chamber music or musical lyricism.<sup>45</sup>

One thing that is certainly conspicuous in its absence from this symphony, and especially for Stanford, is the lack of 'chamber' sections in the work. Throughout his life,

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid, p. 46.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, p. 140.

Stanford demonstrated an affinity for chamber music, and indeed the slow movement of his Sixth Symphony is a prime example of how the composer managed to integrate chamber groups into a larger instrumental structure. The same compositional process can be observed in a number of his orchestral works, including his Second Piano Concerto, composed the same year as this very symphony. The opening of the third movement with its solo cello line superimposed against the full strings might be viewed as a chamber-like section, but that is the only superficial reference in the symphony to chamber music. However, having said this, the work as a whole could indeed be classified as a ‘chamber’ symphony given its length and scale. Whilst not quite as intimate as many Classical symphonies that would easily be, and indeed were performed in a chamber context, the overall musical language and structure would lend itself well to such a setting.

Returning to the *Oxford English Dictionary’s* definition of melancholy, one further aspect presents itself for consideration in respect of the Seventh Symphony, notably that of ‘vexation’, ‘annoyance’, and ‘dejection’. Stanford’s work is not, overall, a violent or vexatious work. However, Brown notes that there is an ‘aggressive’ aspect to the first movement, notably the transitional material first heard in the exposition linking the first and second subjects and which later features prominently in the development.<sup>46</sup> Accepting the nature of this music, and its melancholic potential, the referencing of the opening movement in the finale, albeit the first subject rather than this more aggressive material, potentially undermines the otherwise optimistic finale. In a way, this is Brinkmann’s notion of reflecting ‘on the history of one’s own art, a confirming of tradition and a questioning of it – nuanced, frequently broken and mediated’,<sup>47</sup> but all in the space of one work.

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<sup>46</sup> Brown, p. 148.

<sup>47</sup> Brinkmann, p. 4.

At this point I would like to return to the closing statement of Brown's conclusion on the Seventh Symphony:

In his later years, Stanford's Victorian optimism was broken by the devastation of the first great European war, a devastation magnified by his happy past associations with German musicians and institutions. The symphony as a genre was by this time one that almost always ended on a note of optimism and triumph; after the war Stanford may have felt that such a positive affect was no longer justified. His orchestral efforts were then directed toward concerted and "Irish"-based works.<sup>48</sup>

Whilst the First World War undoubtedly had a profound effect on Stanford, and indeed he was greatly saddened by the losses and long-term physical and psychological problems that many of his own students suffered, the extent to which this conflict had a direct impact on his symphonic agenda is questionable. If this is Stanford's final attempt at trying to convince the contemporary musical world that a more conservative stance was the way forward then surely its apparent inability to do so would also have played a significant part in the composer's decision not to compose any further symphonies. Furthermore, although there may well have been no place for the symphony in post-war, post-Victorian Britain as far as Stanford was concerned, a work that consciously avoids the more obvious positive outpourings of some of his earlier symphonies, save for the last movement, could be said to have already begun that process of aesthetic questioning, again reinforcing the Brinkmannian reading of this work as a melancholic idyll.

However, if we now turn to the years immediately following the composition of Stanford's final symphony, the sudden expansion of 'Irish' works, especially those of a symphonic nature if not of a symphonic genre, poses an alternative reading to Stanford's final thoughts on the symphony as a genre.

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<sup>48</sup> Brown, p. 156.

## THE RISE OF THE IRISH RHAPSODY

Although the Irish Rhapsody was nothing new by the time the second decade of the twentieth century arrived, following the composition of his final symphony, this genre would occupy an increasingly important position in Stanford's orchestral music in the closing years of his life. Stanford would compose a further fifteen orchestral works following the Seventh Symphony, of which four were Irish Rhapsodies, the last being the final orchestral piece he would compose. Of the remaining works, seven were either concertos or concertante works, and several have Irish links of some description.

1913 was a year in which the 'Irish Question' once more appears to have occupied Stanford's mind.

The rash of Irish-inspired works in the latter part of 1913 (*A Fire of Turf*, Op. 139, *A Sheaf of Songs from Leinster*, Op. 140 and the third and fourth Irish Rhapsodies (Opp. 137 and 141 respectively)) reflected Stanford's concerns about Home Rule for Ireland. Home Rule had last been attempted by Gladstone in 1893; the Conservative administrations of Salisbury and Balfour opposed it and Campbell-Bannerman's Liberal government, elected in 1906, had been apathetic. This changed after the General Election of 1910; the Liberals had become actively pro-Home Rule once again and needed the support of the Nationalists and/or Labour to get their programme through parliament. Accordingly a Home Rule bill was introduced in April 1912 and had a good chance of becoming law, since the newly passed Parliament Act prevented the Lords from scuppering the bill as they had previously. For Stanford this prospect was horrifying. He had always opposed Home Rule and now the situation was exacerbated by Ulster Protestants who, under Sir Edward Carson, actively campaigned for the exclusion of at least four north-eastern counties from Home Rule. The issue rumbled on until the outbreak of war in both parliament and Ireland, causing Stanford considerable anger and anxiety.<sup>49</sup>

As with their predecessors, the two Irish Rhapsodies that emerged from 1913 followed the same basic musical plan of incorporating a selection of Irish folk tunes into a rhapsodic musical structure. Although the pursuit of Irish composition had occupied Stanford ever since the completion of the 'Irish' Symphony in the 1880s, the significance of these two works, and indeed the accompanying Irish songs, cannot be overlooked in light of the political unfoldings of the period. Among the two 'Irish' song cycles composed in this year,

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<sup>49</sup> Rodmell, p. 281.

the concluding number of *A Sheaf of Songs from Leinster* gives some indication, perhaps, of the composer's mindset:

In London here the streets are grey, and grey the sky above;  
I wish I were in Ireland to see the skies I love –  
Pearl cloud, buff cloud, the colour of a dove.

All day I travel English streets, but in my dreams I tread  
The far Glencullen road, and see the soft sky overhead.  
Grey clouds, white clouds, the wind has shepherded.

At night the London lamps shine bright, but what are they to me?  
I've seen the moonlight in Glendhu, the stars above Glenchree –  
The lamps of Heav'n give light enough for me.

The city in the winter-time put on a shroud of smoke,  
But the sky above the Three rock was blue as Mary's cloak,  
Ruffled like doves' wings when the wind awoke.

I dream I see the Wicklow hills by evening sunlight kissed,  
An' ev'ry glen and valley there brimful of radiant mist –  
The jewelled sky topaz and amethyst.

I woke to see the London streets, the sombre sky above,  
God's blessing on the far-off roads, and on the skies I love –  
Pearl feather, grey feather, wings of a dove.

Although, as noted by Rodmell, there appears to be something of an emotional detachment from the text in Stanford's musical setting of the poem, the sentiments contained in Winifred Letts' account of the Irish-born exile in London is surely of immense significance for Stanford.<sup>50</sup> It is with this emotional state in mind that we can consider the two radically differing Irish Rhapsodies composed in 1913. The Third Irish Rhapsody, Op. 137, composed in 1913 and completed on 18 June, takes the form of a concertante for cello. Dibble has remarked that this work is 'essentially an extended song form for the cello with a jig as conclusion.'<sup>51</sup> As with its predecessors, its primary thematic material is derived from a selection of Irish melodies including the air 'The Fairy Queen' (which appears in *Moore's Melodies Restored* (Stanford, 1895) as 'Before the Battle'), 'The Munster Cloak', and 'The Black Rogue', which appears as no. 1265 in the Petrie Collection as 'Brigid of the fair hair',

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<sup>50</sup> Rodmell, p.283.

<sup>51</sup> Dibble 2002, p. 407.

and which is used as the basis of the contrasting jig section at the conclusion of the work, ‘though without the characteristic flattened sevenths.’<sup>52</sup> Given the political situation of the time that surely played a part in Stanford’s decision to reinvigorate a genre that had lain neglected for around ten years by now, the overall quality of the work is decidedly optimistic, even though it retains the militaristic overtones of earlier rhapsodies in places. Curiously, the work was never published and the first confirmed performance of the piece did not come until 1987 when it was performed in Belfast by the Ulster Orchestra for a recording.<sup>53</sup>

In stark emotional contrast, the Fourth Irish Rhapsody, completed in November of the same year and first performed in Amsterdam under the direction of Mengelberg in early 1914, presents a radically different perspective of the ‘Irish’ problem as perceived by Stanford.<sup>54</sup> The melodies employed in this work, widely regarded as one of Stanford’s most expressive orchestral pieces, are loaded with political overtones and imbue the rhapsody, through their associations, with an intense feeling of melancholy and even abandonment. The evocative farewell to Ireland conveyed in ‘I will raise my sail’ echoes the sentiments of Letts’s own adieu, especially in the closing verses:

In the wan, mistful morning to ocean’s wild gales  
Afar from her scorning I loose my black sails;  
For my kiss was scarce cold on her cheek when she turned  
And my love for the gold of a renegade spurned.

Under cloud chill and pallid, while hollow winds moan,  
Lies alas! Our green-valleyed, purple-peaked Innishowen;  
For as if my sad case she were sharing today,  
All her glory and grace she hides weeping away.

Farewell, Lake of Shadows! Buncrana, farewell  
To your thymy sea meadows, your fern-fluttering dell!  
Adieu, Donegal! O’er the waters death wan,  
Under Heaven’s heavy pall, like ghost I am gone.

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Rodmell, p. 283.

<sup>54</sup> See ‘Chapter 2: The Nation in the Irish Symphony’ for a fuller discussion of this work.

Stanford himself was already familiar with this text, having set it himself, along with fellow Anglo-Irishman Alfred Perceval Graves, in their 1910 collection *Songs of Erin*. The text of the other tune used, ‘The Death of General Wolfe’, reads as follows:

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power  
And all that beauty, all that wealth ere gave  
Await alike the inevitable hour –  
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

Thus great Wolfe sighed,  
While on muffle oar  
We darkling crossed St. Laurence’ whispering tide  
For the foeman’s unguarded shore.

Then, one by one, far up the fearful steep  
We toiled and toiled through all the live long night;  
Till on the Frenchmen startled out of sleep  
We flashed in long drawn phalanx from the height.

Enraged Montcalm  
Bade his host advance –  
And on the frowning heights of Abraham  
Closed the champions of England and France.

Oh, fierce we fought until a fatal ball  
Found Wolfe’s brave bosom through the battle smoke.  
Then charged the Scots with fiery slogan call  
And backward reeled the French and broke.

“See! Sir, they run!”  
“Who?” he faintly cried.  
“The French”. “Now God be praised, our arms have won!”  
And contented he turned and died.

The text for this latter song originated in North America, although Stanford himself set it to a tune believed to be of Donegal origin that Petrie had notated. The story concerns the Irish General, James Wolfe, who died at the victorious Battle of Quebec. His statue stands outside the former Royal Observatory in Greenwich. Although, like its accompanying folksong, this tale too is tinged with sadness and melancholy, the notion of an Irishman fighting for the Imperial cause is surely of enormous significance for Stanford. The composer, like many others of similar origin, saw Ireland, and all of its cultural and political history, as being inextricably bound up with that of the United Kingdom as a uniting whole rather than as a separate entity. As Christopher Scheer has noted, this extends to folksong in

particular, giving the choice of melodies and associations employed by Stanford even greater significance.

Stanford used Irish folksong in his music, but, in the spirit of Unionist leader Edward Carson, as an affirmation of the ideals of unionism that he, because of his Irish birth, could evoke in defence of the idea of 'Great Britain'. This contrasts with the advocates of Irish independence who heard Irish folksong as a potent symbol of Ireland's cultural uniqueness. Stanford's writings about folksong and its uses in education further demonstrate his wish to bond the constituent nations together culturally. In 1890 Stanford delivered a lecture to the managers of the London Board of Schools, offering advice on how to improve the method and standing of music education; it was published shortly afterwards, and Stanford included it in his book *Studies and Memories* in 1908. Though declaring himself 'in no sense of the word a pessimist', he opened his lecture with 'a belief which is certainly borne out by the actions of responsible and far-seeing statesmen', that 'the first effect of education upon the uneducated masses is the development of socialistic and even of revolutionary ideas amongst them'. As a countermeasure to this 'unsavoury fact', he went on to describe systematic teaching of folksongs as a way of increasing musical taste, advocating that children that learn the folksongs of all four of the nationalities of the British Isles, starting with their native folksongs. 'It would', he advised, 'be important to select the order in which the stranger folk music should be presented to each section'. By requiring that students learn folksongs of each constituent nation, Stanford was reinforcing the British identity of the students. He codified this plan of education in 1906, when he edited a *National Song Book* for use in elementary schools that drew upon the folksongs of all four nationalities in the United Kingdom. Thus, Stanford saw Irish folksongs not as a manifestation of Irish nationality, but rather as an affirmation of Ireland as an integral part of the United Kingdom.<sup>55</sup>

As Scheer has also noted, the melodies that Stanford employed in his Fourth Irish Rhapsody were likely to have been well known in musical circles of the time given the wide circulation of the various song collections that Stanford himself had arranged and had published. With this in mind, it seems fair to assume that not only the melodies but also their associations would have been clear to those who heard the work.

Thus it would seem that the period of 1913-14 marked a significant watershed for Stanford, the symphony and his relationship with Ireland; a period so emotionally charged that it erupted publically when Stanford entered into an exchange of letters in *The Times* which is reproduced here:

Sir, - We are losing sight of ground principles and facts in the play of party rapiers.

What is wanted is not exclusions, or temporizations, or Referendums, but the dropping of the Home Rule Bill. It was a bone of contention flung into a rapidly recuperating country by a Government which

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<sup>55</sup> Christopher Scheer, 'For the Sake of the Union: The Nation in Stanford's Fourth *Irish Rhapsody*', *Europe, Empire, and Spectacle in Nineteenth-Century British Music* ed. Rachel Cowgill and Julian Rushton (Ashgate: 2006), pp. 160-161.

could not stand alone without the support of the so-called Nationalist Party. In order to ensure that party's support they entered into a compact to pass the bill by fair means or foul. Faust was in the grip of Mephistopheles. He is afraid to ask the moments to tarry, because that means his instant destruction. There is no denial of this compact; if it did not exist, the position of the Government in being able to deny it (on oath) would be so materially strengthened that they would have no hesitation in so denying it.

The fact is that Ireland does not want Home Rule. The place-hunters want it, but not the people. The farmers who had purchased their land dread it; therefore Mr. Horace Plunkett was jettisoned. The priests are sitting on the stile, afraid to desert the place-hunters, who may make or mar them if they win. The dreamers and the schemers are the only Irish supporters of the Bill. If it were dropped tomorrow, there would be a sigh of relief from the Giant's Causeway to Valentia.

People clamour for an alternative policy. It has been there ever since Wyndham's Act. The alternative is consistent and accelerated land purchase. If this were carried through, Home Rule would be as dead as mutton in a decade. The dreamers do not believe this, hence their tactical quibbling and vapourings about "settlements by consent." The schemers know it, hence their hostility.

In India we have Mahomedans and Brahmins who would be at each other's throats if the rule were not in trusty hands outside and above them. In Ireland we have the same situation in the equally strong antipathies of Christian sects. We could not exclude Mahomedans from Indian Home Rule, any more than we can exclude Protestants from Irish Home Rule. To exclude a section of them in the north would be a gross and cowardly desertion of those in the south, who are in smaller numbers and in greater danger.

The only course is to drop it. To drop it requires the courage of the big statesman. We may say that we have no big statesmen now, but the politician who has the courage to do this thing will *ipso facto* prove himself a big statesman.

And if there is a compact, what matter? The law of England provides that a contract is not enforceable in the face of impossibilities. The impossibilities are patent to us all. "It would destroy the reputation of its author," men will say. Granted. But would a repudiation be less venial where the Irish Party is concerned than where the Army is concerned? And is a reputation resting on the quicksand of undiscovered sins worth having? Would not "making a clean breast of it" go far to rehabilitate the victim of the lapse, and even provide him with a saving clause in future history?

The true feeling of Ireland was voiced this week by an Irish railway porter from Limerick, a Nationalist and a Roman Catholic, who said to me: - "What are they doing with us at all? Why can't they leave us alone?"<sup>56</sup>

Stanford was by no means the only person to proffer forth his opinions on the Irish situation at the time, and issues of *The Times* from this entire period are full of letters discussing the predicament. Of those submitted to the newspaper following Stanford's letter a response by Erskine Childers was particularly quick in rebutting the composer's opinions:

Sir, - "Federal Unionists," says Mr. Bernard Holland, "see some inconvenience but no insuperable difficulty" in carving up Ireland into two provinces; and he rolls up his sleeves, whets his knife, and prepares with solemn gusto for the operation. He forgets to fulfil one formality: to ask the patient's

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<sup>56</sup> Charles Villiers Stanford, 'The Origins Of Home Rule. Why The Compact Was Made. Letters On The Crisis' *The Times*, 9 April 1914.

permission. This was the point I wrote about. Mr. Holland ignores it. Where are the Federal Unionists – of the two-province persuasion – in Ireland? Home Rule is an old, a terribly old, question. In one form or another it is nearly seven centuries old. Ulster was colonized by Protestants three centuries ago. The colonists have been Nationalist and Unionist by turns, but never from beginning to end, down to the present moment, when the last of three Home Rule Bills in the last of three Sessions under the Parliament Act is within a few weeks of being passed into law, has a single Irishman in or out of Ulster said a single positive word in favour of the partition of Ireland.

Since Sir Edward Carson in 1912 supported an exclusion amendment, not on its merits, but avowedly as a means of wrecking the Bill, no one in Ireland has attempted to work out the facts and consequences of exclusion, or even to contemplate its enactment, in terms of actual reality. I commend to Mr. Holland's notice the letter following his own in your issue of yesterday, from the secretary of the Irish Unionist Alliance, Dublin, saying that "for the whole of Unionist Ireland there is one accepted leader, Sir E. Carson, just as there is one policy of unswerving opposition to the Bill before Parliament."

That is the situation and Home Rulers will welcome Sir Charles Stanford's delightfully old-fashioned restatement of it in your issue of to-day, a statement which all of us who have lived much in Ireland have been accustomed to hear from Unionists since our earliest childhood – namely, that nobody in Ireland but "place-hunters" with the "courage" to drop the whole policy (why does it require courage?" will be adored throughout the length and breadth of a grateful Ireland. We should feel that there was something queer and abnormal about the Irish national movement if these hoary maxims of "big" statecraft were not still proclaimed, knowing as we do that they have done duty in the case of every national movement the world has ever seen and have made epitaphs for more coercionist statesmen than one cares to remember.

Has Sir Charles Stanford read a weekly paper called the *Irish Volunteer*?<sup>57</sup>

True to form, Stanford could not resist in replying to Childers' attack on him:

Sir, - Mr. Childers is right. I should be no upholder of the exclusion of Ulster if that step involves the sacrifice of the Unionists of the rest of Ireland. Therefore I am for the exclusion of Ireland from the Home Rule Bill. If Mr. Childers has never known that the acknowledgement of a blunder requires courage, I congratulate him upon his possession either of a self-conscious infallibility or of a super-human equability.

I admit that my statement was old-fashioned, as old-fashioned as the agitation for repeal; even as old-fashioned as the Ten Commandments, the eighth and tenth of which so many so-called Nationalists have forgotten to keep, half averting their eyes while their obscurer admirers broke the sixth. Tammany is also becoming old-fashioned, but is it not the grown-up child of the Irish parents who begat the Dublin Corporation? Does Mr. Childers wish to bring over full-blown Tammany also in the train of returning Irish-Americans? He will. Big statesmen are also, I fear, as old-fashioned, or rather out-of-date, as political truthfulness itself.

I have not read the "Irish Volunteer," but I have read what is far more convincing and tragic, spontaneous letters from Unionists in the South and West of Ireland, which prove up to the hilt that unshackled Ireland does not want Home Rule. *Erant fortes ante Agamemnon*, old-fashioned no doubt. But the opponents of repeal were not the less big men, nor was their judgement less sound, because

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<sup>57</sup> Erskine Childers, 'The Partition of Ireland', *The Times*, 11 April 1914.

they wore blue coats with brass buttons. They held that the Home Rule question was in its essence a land question. They were right then, as they are right now.<sup>58</sup>

Stanford's opinions on the Irish matter were by no means new. Biographical studies by Dibble and Rodmell, combined with numerous anecdotal reports by many of Stanford's friends and pupils, confirm that throughout his life Stanford remained a committed supporter of the Union, vehemently opposed to anything that might give Ireland any form of autonomy from Great Britain. However, the political developments clearly activated Stanford's own firm beliefs in the state of the Union and, as the above correspondence suggests, he made a much more concerted effort to articulate his views in the public arena at this time. As such, can we, therefore, see the Irish Rhapsodies as a body of works, and especially those dating from 1913 onwards, as being a musical articulation of Stanford's political sentiments?

On the face of it, accepting that these works are effectively the 'political pamphlet[s]' that *The Times* refers to,<sup>59</sup> does not seem to require too much of a stretch of the imagination. Acknowledging Stanford's political opinions and the ways in which these intersect with his belief that folksong embodies a sense of Unionistic community building,<sup>60</sup> the rhapsodies not only stand as a testament to Stanford's views on the state of Britain and Ireland in the early-twentieth century, but might even represent an impassioned call to arms. The nostalgia and melancholy contained in each rhapsody, in some cases more than others, is always combined with the military, often conveyed in the use of drums, crash cymbals, and fanfare calls, also imbues each work with a sense of violence, much more so than the apparent 'aggressive' tendencies of the Seventh Symphony's first movement. The fact that, as Dibble has noted, the Fourth Irish Rhapsody was written in the wake of his setting of the unison song 'Ulster' for the Ulster Defence League, suggests that the presence of war-like aspects in the music, which

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<sup>58</sup> Charles Villiers Stanford, 'Arguments against Home Rule', *The Times*, 13 April 1914.

<sup>59</sup> *The Times*, 20 February 1914.

<sup>60</sup> See Christopher Scheer, 'For the Sake of the Union', pp. 160-161.

can even be found in the earlier rhapsodies of the beginning of the century, are by no means coincidental. Indeed, even in his final Irish Rhapsody, composed in 1922, Stanford used an Ulster march as the basis of one of his themes, the ‘Ribbonman’s march’, no. 993 from the Petrie Collection, ‘no doubt deliberate, for the Unionists in the six counties had prevailed in their insistence to remain part of the United Kingdom, and Stanford’s support for them had been unstinting.’<sup>61</sup>

Whilst it is clear that the Irish Rhapsodies as a body of works enabled Stanford to focus his attentions more directly, and almost unashamedly, on promoting the Irish agenda as perceived from his standpoint, how the Seventh Symphony relates to this is still unclear. Brown’s observation that in post-war Britain the optimistic overtones of the symphonic genre no longer rang true may well be valid, but the presence of the Irish Rhapsodies, two-thirds of which predate the conflict, suggest that if Brown’s suggestion does account for the absence of the symphony in the composer’s later life, it must only do so in part. Stanford may well have ‘accepted political change [in Ireland] with equanimity’,<sup>62</sup> no longer making any public statements on the situation in Ireland after the conclusion of war in 1918, when he also composed his Fifth Irish Rhapsody. However, this body of works, combined with an ever present fascination with ‘Irish’ compositions in the closing decade of the composer’s life, suggest that rather than articulating his political opinions in a verbal form, he did so in the more abstract and removed language of music.

Of course, this, in itself, still fails to explain what the significance of the musical discourse in the Seventh Symphony is. Why is this last symphony tinged with nostalgia and melancholy when it, albeit only slightly, predates Stanford’s move into the more agitated realms of Irish politics? There are no obvious references to anything Irish in the work, and so

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<sup>61</sup> Dibble, 2002, p. 452.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, p. 453.

surely we must not attempt to read the symphony from an Irish political standpoint as to do so requires far too much conjecture with no substantiating evidence. To all intents and purposes, this final symphony is more concerned with the musical realities of 1911 as perceived by Stanford rather than the political ones. Thus, while the Irish Rhapsodies combine nostalgia for an Ireland of the past, even though the reality is that the Ireland of Stanford's music probably never really existed, at least not in the manner in which he appears to conceive, with an almost belligerent refusal to capitulate to contemporary political developments, the Seventh Symphony comes across as a much more passive, even resigned acceptance of the musical status quo of the early-twentieth century. Even though the finale has a sense of triumph about it, the return to the lyrical, emotionally charged first theme of the opening movement undermines the otherwise apparently, although potentially hollow, celebratory ending. In the same way that, as Brinkmann has outlined, the superficial optimism of Brahms's Second Symphony is continually undermined by a subtext that almost questions the very legitimacy of the symphony, so too perhaps does Stanford's final symphonic work, even though the aesthetic agenda might have been different.<sup>63</sup> Although there is little or no evidence to suggest that Stanford himself suffered from an artistic lack of confidence, perhaps this work suggests that his music, like Brahms's, 'was marked by self-doubt and sceptical questioning, and in the symphony of all genres'.<sup>64</sup> There is no denying that the composer clearly felt disheartened in the modern era of the twentieth century in which he found himself, but the extent to which he then questioned his own artistic perspective is more ambiguous. If anything, the evidence that does survive, as epitomised in the anecdotal 'Charles Villiers Stanford by some of his pupils',<sup>65</sup> suggests that Stanford maintained his opinions confidently in spite of modernist developments in music, and the various lectures and publications from the period already cited also confirm this.

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<sup>63</sup> See Brinkmann.

<sup>64</sup> Brinkmann, p. 2.

<sup>65</sup> 'Charles Villiers Stanford by Some of His Pupils,' *Music & Letters*, vol. 5, no. 3 (July 1924), pp. 193-207.

Therefore, does this mean that there is something hollow about the nostalgia and melancholy themselves in Stanford's symphony? Perhaps we can never know. However, the picture that is emerging is one of a deeply saddened composer, confused and disappointed with the world in which he found himself. Stanford's place in the musical world, a place that had at one stage propelled him to a level of international acclaim that virtually no other British composer before him had enjoyed, was now under serious question. Thus, if the symphony as a genre represented, for Stanford, the musical mainstream, perhaps his turning away and/or rejection of it marks the composer's final withdrawal into total musical isolation. Although it remains questionable as to just how aware Stanford was of the aesthetic problems that surrounded the symphony as a genre in the closing years of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century, what he did appear to realise is that the genre was part of a much larger musical dialectic in Europe at the time. In engaging with the symphony, consciously or not, Stanford engaged with centuries of musical tradition and heritage, and more specifically made a conscious engagement with the Austro-Germanic lineage in his deliberate links with Beethoven, both directly and through his referencing of Schubert, Schumann, Mendelssohn and Brahms, all of which had themselves referenced that same trajectory, confirmed even more so in this last work in its deliberately arcane musical language. Thus, in 'rejecting' the symphony, as Stanford would subsequently do, can we see Stanford turning his back on the musical mainstream that the symphony itself represents?

As he became older, Stanford felt more detached from the music of his day and as a composer felt himself to be an outsider.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Brown, p. 156.

# **CONCLUSION**

## **LIKE A GHOST I AM GONE: STANFORD AND THE SYMPHONY**

This thesis set out with a task of attempting to assess Stanford's personal and/or national identity as revealed, or potentially obscured, through the medium of his symphonic works. The aim was not to assess specifically whether or not Stanford is or was Irish, or indeed whether or not his works objectively succeed in constructing a Hibernian soundworld that had contemporary currency amongst audiences and critics of his time. However, that being said, perhaps a more nuanced and subtle reading of Stanford's works, both symphonic and more generally, can help us as twenty-first-century musicologists come to a closer understanding of this composer, whose true place within the socio-political world that he inhabited continues to be shrouded in mystery.

This conclusion will essentially fall into three main sections, each designed to address specific aspects of Stanford's forty-year journey with the symphonic form. Firstly, it will consider his relationship with the genre, assessing how successfully he mastered the symphony and what his engagement with it says about his broader understanding of wider issues facing composers towards the end of the nineteenth century and into the early part of the twentieth century. It will also consider whether or not the nature of Stanford's engagement with the form and the style of the works produced might offer some explanation as to the general lack of success that the majority of his seven works enjoyed, and why even today they resist incorporation into our ever-diversifying performance canon.

Secondly, we will consider what the works, individually and corporately, suggest about Stanford the individual, considering the aspects of national identity that have formed the

backbone of this discussion, but also questioning what they can tell us more generally about Stanford the man, Stanford the musician, and Stanford the ‘quintessential’(?) nineteenth-century Anglo-Irishman.

Finally, this section will ask where we go from here, recognising that there is still much to be done in the field of Stanford scholarship. This thesis does not profess to offer the last word in a more contemporary consideration of Stanford’s symphonic music, nor does it claim to have finally and successfully located Axel Klein’s multicultural academic locos, one in which Stanford, the man and his music, can once and for all be the subject of a more objective musicological consideration.

## **BEYOND BEETHOVEN?**

Stanford, like Schubert, subscribed to the widely held view in the nineteenth century ‘that to succeed as a composer - both commercially and artistically – one had to write good operas and symphonies.’<sup>1</sup> In engaging with the symphonic form in a post-Beethovenian world, consciously or otherwise, Stanford engaged with a musical genre that was fraught with ideological problems which composers even of that period knew they had to overcome. While we might argue that modern musicology has exaggerated the scale of the aesthetic baggage that accompanied the symphonic form in the nineteenth century, composers operating within the Austro-Germanic tradition were compelled to confront the apparent challenge laid down for future generations by Beethoven in his nine symphonies.

Contemporary evidence already assessed in this thesis, notably that of Schumann and his immediate circle of critics, unequivocally demonstrates that composers of the first half of the

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<sup>1</sup> L. Michael Griffel, ‘Schubert’s orchestral music: "strivings after the highest in art"’, *Cambridge Companion to Schubert* ed. Christopher H. Gibbs (Cambridge, 1997), p. 193. See also Jeremy Dibble, ‘Stanford, Sir Charles Villiers’, *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/26549> (accessed August 25, 2012).

nineteenth century were aware of the problems that they faced as post-Beethovenian symphonists, and case studies such as Brahms show that even later in the century the issue was far from resolved.

Of course Stanford, as an Anglo-Irish composer operating on the margins of that tradition might be spared from the problems facing his continental contemporaries. Although Bonds asserts that the symphony in this period was essentially an Austro-Germanic genre, Stanford already had a wealth of native symphonies from which he could draw inspiration.<sup>2</sup> However, while Stanford may indeed have looked to composers such as Potter, Macfarren, Sullivan, and a whole host of other British composers, we know that it was the leading figures from the Austro-Germanic tradition that he idolised so much. Mendelssohn, Schumann, Schubert, Brahms, and even Beethoven, clearly had a significant impact on the composer, not only in his formative years but also much later in his life. Stanford was immersed in Austro-Germanic musical culture when his compositional style and technique was still forming, through his studies in Berlin and Leipzig, and his attendance at significant events such as the Schumann Festival in the 1870s. With this in mind, it is impossible to disentangle Stanford from his continental symphonic associations, and so it is vital that we assess his contribution to the genre in light of his musical links with the Austro-Germanic tradition to which he, along with several of his other British contemporaries, aspired. Up until now most Stanford scholarship has kept the composer and his music within the relative safety of British music studies.

Although there is an increasing tendency in musical scholarship today to move away from the automatic assumption that music, over time, went through a continual state of development, the symphony presents further problems more specific to itself, requiring us to

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<sup>2</sup> See Bonds 'Symphony II: 19<sup>th</sup> Century' and Dibble 'Parry, Stanford and the Pursuit of the British Symphonic Tradition'.

consider notions of progress and development more carefully. Beethoven's symphonies presented subsequent composers with a musical paradigm that they clearly felt compelled to confront head on. The extent to which composers succeeded in this respect is still the subject of much discussion, and it is not within the scope of this thesis to consider whether or not the symphony as a more general construct had a life beyond Beethoven. What, however, is important for this discussion is how Stanford's symphonies link in with the wider European symphonic dialectic that we can observe unfolding during the nineteenth century.

Stanford's symphonies not only show a stylistic debt to his continental contemporaries and recent forebears throughout the forty years or so in which he engaged with the form, but they also demonstrate some level of understanding of the nature of the symphony during this period and some attempts to deal with the many aesthetic issues that composers were facing. His Second Symphony, for example, proves that he understood the significance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and that he found a way of presenting a musical springboard from which later works could depart. Although it is clear that he had followed the same basic symphonic plot that Brahms had done in his own First Symphony, crucially Stanford still succeeded in making the Second Symphony his own. He crafted the music in such a way as to provide a British equivalent of Brahms's First Symphony. Thus, arguably, for the first time, he brought the British symphonic tradition, if one existed, directly into contact with the Austro-Germanic trajectory. It is at this critical point, still relatively early in his symphonic life, that Stanford placed his works in this historical tradition, and it is for this reason that considering his works in light of the Beethovenian symphonic afterlife is unavoidable.

However, although Stanford's move in the early 1880s to bring his works into this larger symphonic world verged on the revolutionary, it is from this point onwards that Stanford's engagement with the form becomes increasingly questionable, as the extent to

which his works show any real sign of ‘development’ is debatable. Where Brahms set his First Symphony up as a demonstration of the absolute future of the symphony, subsequently questioning the tradition and eventually turning it upside down, Stanford’s works seem to chart a very different journey from what was effectively the same starting point. His ‘Irish’ Symphony, while again a critical point for Stanford as an individual, and indeed for Anglo-Irish music, already marks a musical U-turn for the composer’s symphonic output. The symphony seemingly tries so hard to distance itself from the Austro-Germanic tradition in its attempt to construct an Irish soundscape, but, as we have seen, the very nature of the work continues to bind it to the European school. The composer’s fascination with Brahms’s music is evident, as an Austro-Germanic undercurrent permeates the more nationalistic elements of the work. Furthermore, the nature of the finale leaves the work no further in development than Brahms’s First and Stanford’s own Second symphonies, and might even have skipped back further than that. Like Brahms’s First Symphony, Stanford’s ‘Irish’ finale seems to construct another ‘absolute’ post-Beethoven symphonic solution. The problem is, from the point of development, this is no longer necessary. Brahms has already done it, Stanford has already provided his own version of this, and so it is unclear how this finale represents the next logical step. Although Stanford would later suggest that the symphony in Germany could not move forwards until it embraced its own folk heritage, surely the incorporation of folk material into an otherwise Brahmsian symphonic finale is not enough to represent the next ‘logical’ state of development for the genre. Of further significance for this work, and especially within the context of Victorian England, is Mendelssohn’s own ‘Scottish’ Symphony, a work that was enormously popular with audiences in Britain at the time. Although Mendelssohn did not incorporate any folk material into his work, and also surely cannot have had any underlying Celtic political agenda to promote in the same way that Stanford might have done, the shift in the finale of his work towards a triumphant, chorale-

based ending has direct parallels with Stanford's own work, and would have been the only major Celtic forebear to the Irishman's symphony. If Stanford is not only still stuck on the same 'solution' that Brahms offered to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, but was also turning to a work written much earlier in the century, still only about a decade into Stanford's journey with the symphonic form we find the composer almost ignoring symphonic trends in the Austro-Germanic tradition. Stanford could, arguably, pick and choose how he wished to approach the genre given that he was not weighed down with the same historical baggage as his Germanic contemporaries. However, Stanford also made a conscious decision to engage with this tradition, one which Schumann had claimed was the property of the German people, and so any attempts by Stanford to back out at this point could either suggest that he did not want to involve himself in the more profound aspects of symphonic writing, or that he simply did not possess the ability to do so.

In one way or another each of Stanford's subsequent symphonies still appear to be searching for responses to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony rather than finding a new way forwards. His Fourth, Fifth and Sixth symphonies in their extra-musical associations, through mottos, poetic, and artistic associations respectively, each appears to be trying to find a way to match Beethoven's iconic mixture of voice, poetry and symphony, but within the abstract form of absolute music. Remembering how little Stanford thought of programmatic music, even if we might conclude that these are at least semi-programmatic in nature, perhaps we should at least give him the benefit of the doubt in these situations and allow him the possibility that they are 'absolute' works that come with something extra.

Stanford's last symphony presents a more complicated situation when considering whether or not it can be seen to represent some form of 'progress'. The nature of the symphony can only be deliberate. We know that Stanford detested the state of music in Europe in the early twentieth century and that the Seventh Symphony, in the words of the

reviewer from *The Observer*, 'must be regarded as a composer's expression of what music ought to be.'<sup>3</sup> He was reacting against the ever increasing scale and scope of symphonic music at the time, and was almost certainly reacting against Elgar's First Symphony.

Although the commission from the Philharmonic Society was not for a symphony per se, rather an orchestral work of around 25 minutes in length, Stanford was surely making a very definite and deliberate statement in delivering a symphony for this significant musical event. Curiously, Parry himself wrote a symphonic work of around the same length for his own contribution to the Philharmonic Society centenary.

While the Seventh Symphony was, arguably, deliberately regressive in nature, is it not curious that, once again, we find a chorale-based finale? Is this yet another example of Stanford's inability to move beyond a musical threshold that was crossed some thirty years earlier? I do not wish to write Stanford's significant contribution to the symphonic form off completely, nor to suggest that there is no merit or worth in any of his works. I still firmly believe and maintain that these are works of enormous significance for the composer, a significance that, thus far, has not fully been appreciated and which will be dealt with shortly. What, however, I would like to demonstrate is that we do need to consider all aspects of his symphonic output, and in so doing, we have to consider the wider implications that these works have within the history of the European symphony. Furthermore, maybe Stanford himself was aware of the stagnation of his symphonic works, and it is this inability for man and genre to interact successfully that perhaps signalled the eventual end of his symphonic journey. Why did a genre that provided him with unrivalled success fail to follow through in later life?

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<sup>3</sup> *The Observer*, 25 February, 1912.

## **SYMPHONIC CROSS-PURPOSES: PUBLIC VS. PERSONAL**

Hepokoski has summarised that the symphony in the nineteenth century had to negotiate conflicting ideologies in its turbulent journey.<sup>4</sup> On the one hand, it was a monumental genre that represented nineteenth-century values of community, nation, and state building, representing and appealing to a wide spectrum of people. On the other, however, it was a very personal statement by one individual, who controlled the work, both when alive and for years later through an increasing value of the work as a construct.<sup>5</sup>

Performed by a large number of players on a diverse range of instruments and projected to a large gathering of listeners, the symphony came to be seen as the most monumental of all instrumental genres. The all-embracing tone of the symphony was understood to represent the emotions or ideas not merely of the individual composer but of an entire community, be it a city, a state, or the whole of humanity.<sup>6</sup>

Stanford's symphonic works tell a very personal story on a very public level. Having already examined the potential significance of the individual works' musical gestures and how these were received by critics at the time, I would now like to focus this part of the discussion in asking what Stanford's relationship with the symphony as a whole can tell us about the individual himself.

It is probably fair to say that Stanford never fully conquered the symphonic form. He did not, like Beethoven, create a paradox for future composers in creating works that were so immensely iconic that they could not be ignored by subsequent generations. He did not, like Brahms, find his own unique way of forging a future for the symphony, before then critiquing and questioning its legitimacy, finally crushing the genre once and for all consigning the absolute symphony to history. Unlike Mahler, Stanford resisted the temptation of allowing its

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<sup>4</sup> See Hepokoski p. 429.

<sup>5</sup> See Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> Bonds, 'Symphony II: 19<sup>th</sup> Century'.

musical bounds continually to expand, and unlike Sibelius and Nielsen he failed to create a more distinctly regional sound-world for his works.

Stanford continually bound his symphonic works to the Austro-Germanic tradition, one which went unquestioned in British society in the 1870s and 1880s. However, political developments in the 1890s and into the twentieth century opened the Austro-Germanic musical style up for question and even criticism in an increasingly patriotic British society. More crucially, this was the first time in the history of the Empire that a very real threat to Britain's global supremacy was presented. Suddenly, and perhaps almost without warning, Stanford's symphonic style found itself very much lost. Not only did it fail to keep pace with musical experimentalism and developments, but from a more national perspective, it resisted a more definably British identity, in spite of Stanford's efforts to find ways of linking his works with his homeland. Maybe this would explain the more curious associations in his Fifth and Sixth symphonies, not specifically as an attempt to create a British style in music, but at least to provide his works with a more tangible national identity.

While Stanford perhaps struggled to inject his symphonic works with a level of individuality that some of his continental contemporaries had, it is this failure that is most telling, and perhaps explains more accurately his gradual move away from the genre. His failure to capitalise on the 'Irish' Symphony, for me, represents the greatest shortfall in the composer's symphonic output. He came so close to finding himself in the symphony, only to turn his back on it. Perhaps the need to succeed in Germany pressed too hard upon Stanford, resulting in the homage to Brahms that we find in his Fourth Symphony. This abandoning of the potential for creating something individual within the realms of the symphony was an irreversible decision. However, while I believe this turning point represents the moment at which Stanford began to move away from the symphony itself, it was also the moment at which he accepted the possibility that the symphonic principle still retained the power to

convey something truly personal. This goes some way towards explaining the emergence and subsequent expansion of the Irish Rhapsody in place of the more restrictive symphony.

Stanford's relationship with the symphony can be read allegorically for two important aspects of his life. Firstly it represents his relationship with the musical world. We know that Stanford valued the symphonic form, like so many of his contemporaries who concerned themselves with the exploration of instrumental genres in the latter part of the nineteenth century. It was imperative that he succeeded in overcoming these challenges in order to prove himself as a composer of worth on an international level, explaining why he devoted so much of his time working on symphonies, operas, concertos, etc., in order to achieve the international recognition that he so desperately sought. However, as he failed to keep pace with changing fashions in music, especially in later life, Stanford became increasingly isolated from the musical community, both at home and abroad. His music simply could not stack up against the much more forward-looking creations of his contemporaries, students, and newly emerging composers, pushing him further and further into the background of musical society relatively early on in his career. Indeed, the last twenty to thirty years of his life, almost half of his professional career, witnessed this gradual but steady move towards neglect. Stanford struggled continually with this, alienating the already irascible composer to the extent that he simply could not come to terms with the musical world that surrounded him. While Brown may be correct in his assumption that in post-War Britain there was no place for the symphony, this clearly was not the case for many of Stanford's younger contemporaries and pupils, notably Vaughan Williams, who continually pursued the genre, even if it was in a radically different form from that of their elder mentor. Stanford's Seventh Symphony is the point where the composer showed his final hand to the wider musical world. Stanford effectively said to the musical world 'this is how I think it should be and that is all I have to say on the matter'. Although the Irish Rhapsody was nothing new by this point, it had

presented itself to the composer as a new alternative to symphonic writing. It is surely significant that, only a matter of years after completing his Seventh Symphony, his Fourth Irish Rhapsody, one of the composer's most emotive and heartfelt works, linked back to his 'Irish' Symphony. At this point Stanford reconnected with himself. He had already found the form of expression in the Irish Rhapsody that he increasingly craved in later life, and now turned it to an extraordinary level. Stanford found the means of expressing himself once and for all, and, more importantly, he found the means of expressing what was most important to him – the exploration of himself as expressed through his Irish identity. The symphony failed to offer Stanford this means of expression, for whatever reason, forcing him to find an alternative way of articulating the beliefs and values about art and life that he felt profoundly in his later life. It is surely significant that the Irish rhapsodies from the last decade of his life, a decade in which he refrained from making any significant comment on the political situation in Ireland, are his most emotive works. In these late orchestral pieces we also see a new side of Stanford, one in which eruptions of almost uncontrollable violence can be seen in his music. A facet of composition that appears to be very much lacking from the earlier works of this man, it is curious that here, like in the later works of Schubert, this tendency to violence becomes all the more noticeable. Hugh MacDonald has examined the importance and significance of violent outbursts in the works of Schubert, and perhaps here in Stanford we can witness a similar phenomenon.<sup>7</sup> The later Irish rhapsodies do not suggest that Stanford had at last found a musical locus where he could be happy and content, but they did provide him with a medium through which he could express all that he had left to say, both musically and politically. They represent the man that died in 1924, not entirely heartbroken, but certainly disillusioned by the world around him. In his later career Stanford epitomised the Romantic construction of the lone figure wandering in pursuit of his artistic dreams and

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<sup>7</sup> See Hugh MacDonald, 'Schubert's Volcanic Temper', *Musical Times*, vol. 119, no. 1629 (Nov. 1978), pp. 949-952.

ideologies.<sup>8</sup> The symphony represents Stanford's lifelong attempts to construct a musical world in which he and his ideals could coexist. Unfortunately, in the same way that the Irish situation in nineteenth-century Britain provided an unending string of conflicting problems and ideologies, so too did the symphony. Perhaps it is the very nature of the Irish problem that meant that the symphony as a form could never provide a platform for this emerging nation-state, and certainly struggled to provide a platform for Stanford's own take on Irishness.

## STANFORD AND MULTICULTURALISM

At the outset of this thesis the challenge to seek out Axel Klein's multicultural environment was taken up in an attempt to address the problems surrounding Stanford's symphonic output, especially in light of the conflicting identity of these works. These seven works which, contrary to Brown's statement, do occupy a central position in the composer's output, embody a whole host of different traits and characteristics, resulting in a symphonic body that, like the symphony itself, cannot be classified as a 'unitary activity' that we can 'collapse into a crisp, linear narrative.'<sup>9</sup> Stanford's symphonic history, like that of the genre, is a messy one, in which the composer attempted to grapple with the supreme instrumental form available to his generation of composers. By placing Stanford the man and the social and political tensions of his time at the heart of this discussion it is hoped that we can reveal much more about the significance of his symphonic output and that we can move towards a greater understanding and appreciation of them. Brown has already stated that many of these works could easily find a way into our modern performance canon, and perhaps a more objective recognition of the significance of Stanford's achievements in this field would facilitate this.

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<sup>8</sup> See Susan Wollenberg, 'Schubert and the Dream', *Studi Musicali* 1980, no. 1, pp. 135-150.

<sup>9</sup> Hepokoski, 'Beethoven Reception', p. 424.

Stanford's relationship with the symphony was by no means a universally successful one, but by the same token this could be said of many composers of the era who also tackled this monumental musical form. Stanford's journey with the symphony is no less important than that of any other composer of the time, and it is only through more detailed study of these works that we can begin to (re)position them in the history of the symphony in Western music. If anything, Stanford's relationship with the form demonstrates the problems that composers across Europe were facing in an era when music sought to express so much through relatively restricted means. Stanford's symphonies prove that even in Britain the realities of the symphonic crisis of the period were just as prominent, and even more so when combined with the composer's Anglo-Irish perspective. The symphony had lost its potency and force in this respect, and while some might argue that the problems lay with the composer rather than the form, perhaps in this post-Beethovenian and increasingly pessimistic world, the symphony no longer offered the same resonance that it had a century before Stanford penned his final work.

Key to understanding Stanford's music is, of course, understanding Stanford. In the absence of diaries and sufficient reliable source material, so much of what we know about the composer can only be a matter of informed speculation. There is still so much about his identity that we need to understand, and perhaps a more nuanced examination of his Irish works would reveal more about this man. What, however, is clear is that, in a world in which Stanford the Irishman felt lost, his instrumental music gave him a sanctuary to which he could retreat, one in which he could 'exist in dreams sublime' and 'catch a glimpse of the days that are over'.

Farewell, Lake of Shadows! Buncrana, farewell  
To your thymy sea meadows, your fern-fluttering dell!  
Adieu, Donegall o'er the waters death wan,  
Under Heaven's heavy pall, like a ghost I am gone.

# APPENDIX I

## EXTRACT FROM THE PROGRAMME FROM THE SIXTEENTH SATURDAY CONCERT AT THE CRYSTAL PALACE, 8TH MARCH 1879, COURTESY OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC.

(Crystal Palace Saturday Concerts: Box 8 – 34A)

### Note

Concert programmes from the nineteenth century were considerably more detailed than those one might expect to find for performances today. The following programme is one of a series that appears in these appendices, and provides valuable insight into how the works they cover were viewed at the time and, more importantly, it is interesting to consider what audiences at the time were being told about new works that they were hearing.<sup>1</sup>

This programme note comes from the Royal College of Music's collection of performance history material from the first performance of the First Symphony at the Crystal Palace. Written by 'G' [George Grove] it provides detailed analytical commentary on the work with numerous musical examples.

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<sup>1</sup> For a fuller discussion of programme notes in Victorian culture see Christina Bashford 'Not just "G.": Towards a History of the Programme Note', *George Grove, Music and Victorian Culture*, ed. by M. Musgrave (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 115-42.

## SYMPHONY IN B FLAT (MS.) . . . C. Villiers Stanford.

*(First time of performance.)*

Larghetto : Allegro vivace—B flat.  
 Scherzo in Ländler tempo—G minor.  
 Trio 1. Presto.  
 Trio 2. Poco più lento.  
 Andante tranquillo—E flat.  
 Finale : Allegro molto—B flat.

Mr. Stanford fills the post of Organist of Trinity College, Cambridge, and is Conductor of the University Musical Society. He was specially commissioned by Mr. Tennyson to write the songs and entr'actes for the play of "Queen Mary," when that drama was put on the stage at the Lyceum Theatre. An Overture of his—written for the Gloucester Festival—was played at the Saturday Concert of November 17th, 1877. Mr. Stanford has published a Psalm (the 46th) for Solos, Chorus, and Orchestra, a Pianoforte Trio, a Sonata for Piano and Violin, and many songs.

The Symphony which is produced to-day was written to compete for the prizes offered by the proprietors of the Alexandra Palace in 1876. In answer to the invitation no less than forty-six Symphonies were sent in anonymously; the judges were Herr Joachim and Professor Macfarren, and they awarded the second prize to the work now before us. The first prize was gained by Mr. G. E. Davenport.

The Symphony opens with a passage in the Violas and Violoncellos—



soon joined by the Violins, and then by a portion of the Wind, in which the Horn is heard to intone a short *motif*:



VILLIERS STANFORD'S SYMPHONY IN B FLAT. 479

speedily answered by the Flute, and soon spreading, in a slightly altered form, throughout the rest of the Orchestra. This proves to be a prediction of the principal theme of the *Allegro*, which enters in the Clarinet in the following jocund, almost pastoral, style

No. 3.



over an accompaniment of quavers in the Strings. An episode in the Flutes and Clarinets, above a substratum of Trombones, follows :—



leading by a very pretty little passage

No. 5. Violins



to the second subject proper of the movement, a theme in good contrast with the preceding, which turns out on acquaintance to be

an old friend with a new face—a modification of the phrase which opened the introductory *Larghetto* (No. 1). Here it is :—

No. 6.

Violins

Cor.

Bass

Fag.

After running its course in the Violas, it is taken up by the Oboes. A second episode begins in the Violins :

No. 7.

Violins

The working out employs all the materials previously brought into the field with more than one interesting and ingenious modification, which we gladly would quote if our space admitted of it. The fabric of the work is fine and close, and the rhythms and intervals of one or other of the themes are hardly ever absent from the Orchestra. The reprise of the principal subject is made in a very unmistakable manner—not in the Clarinets, as it was originally given out—but in the Trombones, while a *fortissimo* chord of B flat is held by the whole of the rest of the Band. The second subject (No. 6), returns in its place as a Violoncello solo, for which it is well fitted.

For the Coda the time changes to *maestoso*, and this part of the movement contains a new feature in the recurrence of a previous theme in the form which musicians name "Augmentation"—that is



the second a little slower—

No. 12.

Clar.

Celli

Musical score for No. 12, featuring Clarinet and Cello parts. The Clarinet part is in the upper staff, and the Cello part is in the lower staff. Both parts are in a key with one flat (B-flat) and a 2/4 time signature. The Clarinet part starts with a series of chords, followed by a melodic line. The Cello part provides a rhythmic accompaniment with chords.

each nicely contrasted with the *Ländler* and with each other.

The slow movement, an *Andante tranquillo*, has the Violins and Violas muted throughout. The principal theme is in two strains,

No. 13.

Violins *con sord.*

Viol.

Clar.

*cres.*

*dim.*

*cres.*

*dim.*

*pp*

*pp*

Musical score for No. 13, featuring Violins, Violins con sord., Violins, and Clarinet parts. The score is in a key with one flat (B-flat) and a 2/4 time signature. It consists of three staves. The first staff is for Violins con sord., the second for Violins, and the third for Clarinet. The music includes dynamic markings such as *cres.*, *dim.*, and *pp*.

separated by a little scale in the Clarinets. A change of theme is indicated by the first Horns,

No. 14.

Cor.

Musical score for No. 14, featuring Cor Anglais part. The score is in a key with one flat (B-flat) and a 2/4 time signature. It consists of a single staff for the Cor Anglais. The music includes a melodic line with some rests.

where the omission of the "seventh" and the three concluding slow notes are both Irish peculiarities, reminding us pleasantly of Mr. Stanford's nationality. Shortly after the entrance of the new theme the key changes from flats to sharps, and the new melody is heard in

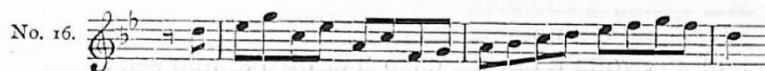
the Fiddles, with a slight increase of pace, and makes another appearance in the Horns, this time in long notes. After this intermezzo, the original subject is led back to by a cadenza in the Clarinets, and is then sung as a quartet by the Clarinets and Bassoons, and other wood-wind instruments, with an arpeggio accompaniment of the lightest texture in the Strings. A short passage for the solo Violin has an excellent effect here, and the movement ends with what may truly be called a "dying fall."

The Finale, *Allegro molto*, returns to the key of B flat. No one can reproach this movement for not starting with a spirited and rhythmical theme. After eight bars introduction, ending on an appetizing suspension, it begins its busy course as follows :

No. 15. *Tutti*



and this course it pursues with unflagging spirit, till through an episodic figure—

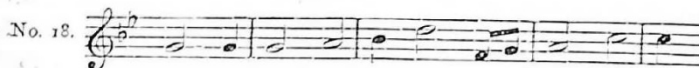


we arrive at the second chief subject :



which is equally busy with its predecessors. A second episode, in the

Brass, is heard very shortly before the conclusion of the first half of the *Allegro* :



and afterwards serves to start the working out. This latter portion is distinguished by a *fugato*, founded on the theme quoted as No. 15, which begins in the Violoncellos, and is taken up in succession by the Violas and Violins, and then spreads to the Wind. Of the episode last quoted (No. 18) an excellent use is made in the wind-up of the movement, where—the pace and the tone continually increasing—it is heard in the three Trombones in imitation, the Bass gradually rising in semitones through the scale to an effective climax. [G.]

SCENA AND ARIA . . . . . *Mozart.*

MISS EMMA THURSBY.

*Recit.*

Mia speranza adorata !  
 Ah troppo è a noi l'ira del ciel funesta !  
 L'ultima volta è questa, ch'io ti stringo al mio seno !  
 Anima mia, si più non ti vedrò,  
 Deh ! tu l'assisti, tu per me la consola  
 Addio, Zemira, ricordati di me !  
 Senti che vedo ? tu piangi, O mio tesor.  
 Oh quanto accresce quel pianto il mio martir !  
 Chi prova mai stato peggior del mio.  
 Addio per sempre, amata sposa, addio !

*Rondo.*

Ah non sai, qual pensa sia  
 Il doverti oh dio lasciar,  
 Ma quel pianto, anima mia !  
 Fa più grave, il mio penar.  
 Deh ! mi lascia, oh fier tormento !  
 Cara sposa ! Ah ! ch'io mi sento  
 Per l'affanno il cor mancar.

## APPENDIX II

### SYMPHONY NO. 1 IN B FLAT MAJOR REVIEWS

#### Note

The following are a selection of press reviews of the first performance of the First Symphony. This, like other sections within these appendices, is not designed to provide a complete overview of all reviews of the performance. Rather, it is to give the reader a fuller impression of different reactions to this symphony, and other works in later appendices, and to provide more complete references to those contained in the main body of the thesis.

#### *Pall Mall Gazette*, 11 March 1879

Fine weather and a new symphony by a justly esteemed English composer attracted on Saturday a large audience to the Crystal Palace. Mr. Villiers Stanford, organist of Trinity College, Cambridge, and conductor of the University Musical Society, was already known to the London public by several pieces of incidental music composed for Mr. Tennyson's "Queen Mary," and performed as entr'actes when that drama was produced at the Lyceum Theatre. An overture too, from his pen – written for the Gloucester Festival – was presented to the public of the Crystal Palace Concerts towards the end of 1877. Mr. Stanford has published a psalm for solos, chorus, and orchestra, a pianoforte trio, a sonata for piano and violin and many songs. The symphony performed on Saturday, when it was executed for the first time in public, was written with a view to the prize offered three years ago by the proprietors of the Alexandra Palace. No fewer than forty-six symphonies were sent in anonymously. The judges were Herr Joachim and Mr. MacFarren; and, while the first prize was gained by Mr. Davenport (who, it will be remembered, produced an overture at one of Mdme. Viard-Louis's recent concerts), the second was adjudged to Mr. Villiers Stanford for the work brought out on Saturday. Mr. Stanford's symphony is written throughout in a masterly style. It abounds in melodies – for which reason the principal theme of the opening larghetto need not have been repeated quite so often; and it is exceedingly long – which suggests the question whether much of the introductory matter in the same movement might not with advantage have been compressed. The larghetto is followed by a scherzo in slow waltz time, which, but that Schubert in his own graceful and tender stands alone, might be declared "worthy of Schubert." The third movement is an andante, in which the two principal themes, especially a very beautiful one for the horns, are full of expression; and the work is brought to a conclusion by a spirited and highly rhythmical allegro.

#### *The Examiner* (London), 15 March 1879

A glorious day and a new symphony. Such were the inducements that lured amateurs to Sydenham on Saturday; and of the two we should say that the lovely weather formed the greater attraction. This without disparaging for a moment the aesthetic tastes of the Crystal Palace audience, which is artistic if it be anything. But sunshine has been very rare of late, and nowhere is one more grateful for its soothing rays than under the glass of the Sydenham building. Would that we could speak of the concert-room with an equal amount of appreciation. There, unfortunately, sunshine is excluded by the aid of a *velarium*, which perhaps improves the acoustics of the room, but still gives one the benefit of an intense degree of heat together with a kind of *chiaroscuro* that is by no means agreeable for the hours of sitting. Luckily the atmosphere on Saturday afternoon was of temperate warmth, and we were able to listen in comfort to Mr. Stanford's symphony. The work is not new, although this was its first performance. It was written for the Alexandra Palace symphony competition of 1876, and gained the second prize. Mr. C. Villiers Stanford is already not unknown as a composer of classical music, and he worthily fills the post of organist of Trinity College, Cambridge, and conductor of the University Musical Society. His symphony bears the impress of marked ability, and we should imagine the judges (Herr Joachim and Dr. Macfarren) had some difficulty in deciding whether this or Mr. Davenport's composition – the ultimate prize-winner – should bear off the palm. The latter is more learned, but it is infinitely more dry than Mr. Stanford's work, which, the first excepted, does not lack either melody or interest. The opening allegro is diffuse and laboured, despite the pleasing character of the themes; and it seems as though Mr. Stanford had been impelled beyond his depth by the importance of his task. The scherzo is a much more taking section, but it is a great deal too long. Not until we come to the slow movement do we find the composer at his best, and here he is very successful. The Irish character of the music is one of the most noticeable features in this portion of the symphony, the themes of which are both graceful and charming. The finale is composed of light materials most effectively scored and well worked out; it is the best of the quick movements, and leaves the hearer with an excellent impression of the work as a whole. It was magnificently played by the orchestra, Mr. Manns conducting in his usual style, and the cordial applause which the performance elicited may well encourage Mr. Stanford to further efforts in the same direction. We are far from overwhelmed with such things as symphonies by native composers; and it, as is probably, this was written hurriedly to be in time for the competition the young Cambridge musician, with plenty of time at his disposal, and the benefit of increased experience, should do far better at a second attempt.

***The Musical Times*, 1 April 1879**

The novelty at the concert on the 8th [March 1879] was the production of Mr. C. Villiers Stanford's Symphony in B flat. This work gained the second of the two prizes offered about three years since at the Alexandra Palace, when the first prize was carried off by Mr. F. W. Davenport. We are by no means disposed to rank the present among Mr. Stanford's most successful efforts; indeed we consider both his "Forty-sixth Psalm" and his "Festival Overture," written for Gloucester, far superior to it. That the work shows the hand of a trained musician need hardly be said; but the ideas are in parts too trivial for symphony

treatment; and there is a tendency to diffuseness which impairs the effect that the work might otherwise produce. The finale we consider the most successful movement; and it is only fair to Mr. Stanford to say that the orchestra is throughout treated skilfully, and sometimes with great felicity.

***The Times*, 12 March 1879**

The production of a new symphony by an English composer is an event sufficiently important and sufficiently rare to account at least partly for the large audience attracted by last Saturday's concert at the Crystal Palace. The author of the work we are speaking of is Mr. C. Villiers Stanford, organist of Trinity College, Cambridge, and conductor of the University Musical Society, in both which capacities he has done much to spread the taste for good music, classic and modern. He is also favourably known as the author of an overture written for the Gloucester Festival, a psalm for soli, chorus, and orchestra, and numerous pieces of chamber music. The symphony in B flat performed last Saturday is the young composer's first essay in the highest field of instrumental art, and ought to be judge as a tentative effort rather than as the matured work of an experienced master. From this point of view we are able to look upon Mr. Stanford's compositions in a favourable light. He possesses at least one quality – highly promising in a young, and still more in an English composer – boldness. The exclusive admiration of Mendelssohn, which has been the chief impediment to all original development of music in this country, is not exemplified by this work. More modern and more “advanced” models are distinctly discernible. The second movement, for instance, shows the influence of what we have frequently described as Brahms's “Viennese” manner, being, indeed, fashioned after the Ländler,” an Austrian dance. But still more apparent are modern influences in Mr. Stanford's instrumentation, especially in his lavish, sometimes absolutely reckless, employment of the brass throughout the movements, not excepting even the gentle and tranquil andante. So far, however, we have little fault to find with the composer, who, on the contrary, deserves praise for the independence and catholicity of his taste. It is with regard to formal grasp and conscience that his workmanship is chiefly deficient. Hence the diffuseness and vagueness of conception, for instance, in the first movement, which – as, in some measure, the whole symphony – would be improved by an extensive and merciless use of the pruning knife. Even the larghetto which introduces the first allegro, and to some extent anticipates its materials, is impaired by too great length. The first theme of the allegro, which consists, with slight exceptions, of the intervals of the chord of B flat and appears at first in the clarinet, is of a graceful, almost pastoral, character, and this character is imparted to the whole movement, not, however, without the introduction of more serious elements. The second theme, for example, already familiar from the larghetto, but appearing here in F, is intense in character, and the development of the materials occasionally leads to a fine climax of passion. But it is also in this development that the want of grasp already referred to is chiefly noticed. We pass backwards and forwards between the *fortissimo* of the trombones and the *piano* of the softer wood wind instruments without any perceptible plan or logical sequence, and the general impression is accordingly vague and uncertain. The second movement, as we said before, assumes the form of a slow dance in 3-4

time, the suggestion for which, an English, or, more strictly speaking, an Iris, composer, might have found nearer home than in a remote Austrian province. The theme itself, however, is pretty and piquant, and the two trios – especially the second, containing a charming *obbligato* passage for the clarinet – are well contrasted with the dance tune. The resumption of the “Ländler” after the second interlude and its gradual dying away in a soft *pianissimo* also are worthy of praise. In the second theme of the andante which ensues we find some of the national colouring vainly looked for in the scherzo. The omission of the seventh and the three concluding minims are, as the author of the analytical programme well reminds us, distinctly Irish peculiarities. The same theme gives occasion for some skilful contrapuntal writing, and a sympathetic tone of quiet feeling is sustained throughout the movement. The instrumentation also is satisfactory, although the effect of the muted strings is apt to appear somewhat monotonous. To make up for this subdued feeling Mr. Stanford commences his *finale* with a rhythmical phrase of a very marked character, consisting of four successive quavers, followed by a crotchet. The effect, we confess, is anything but refined, and in spite of the more elevated character of the second subject and a clever fugato, continual reference to the first theme prevent the movement from rising to the level of its predecessors. Finally, we may say that Mr. Stanford’s symphony, which was carefully played and favourably received, although not a masterpiece, shows promise of no common order and causes us to look forward to his further works with much interest.

## APPENDIX III

### SYMPHONY NO. 2 IN D MINOR, 'ELEGIAC' REVIEWS

*The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, Vol. 23, No. 470 (Apr. 1, 1882), pp. 204- 211

At the Concert given by this energetic Society [The Cambridge University Musical Society] on Tuesday, the 7th ult., in honour of Herr Joachim's visit to the University, several orchestral works of great interest were performed. Beethoven's "Coriolanus" Overture was followed by Brahms's Concerto for violin and orchestra, Herr Joachim playing the solo part in a magnificent manner, and introducing in the first movement his own immensely difficult cadenza, which is conceived in a style so nearly akin to that of the whole composition that it will ultimately, no doubt, be accepted on all hands as an integral part of the Concerto, without which any performance of the work would be considered imperfect. The effect of the exquisitely beautiful slow movement was considerably marred at its outset by a grievous mistake on the part of the second bassoon, which instrument had to sustain the bass of the harmony, as the first delivery of the subject is allotted to the wood-wind. The last movement was given with great spirit, and the whole was very well received. Wagner's "Siegfried Idyl [sic]" came next in order – a work which, since its introduction into this country by Herr Richter, has won its way into considerable favour by the charm of its naïve innocence and sunny happiness. The first part of the programme concluded with Herr Joachim's theme and variations for violin and orchestra, a serious and thoughtful piece full of care and ingenuity of workmanship, and of considerable beauty, calculated, too, to display the composer's characteristics of style to the greatest advantage.

The second part of the Concert consisted solely of a new work by Mr. C. Villiers Stanford. The title "Elegiac Symphony" is accounted for by the fact that the lines in Tennyson's "In Memoriam" which begin, "I cannot see the features right," are appended to the work by way of motto. Yet the new Symphony in no way deserves the now somewhat opprobrious name of programme-music, for realism of representation is neither intended nor attempted; merely the general feeling of the short poem being reflected in the musical composition. We may perhaps be permitted to see in the first three movements the variety of conflicting images that at first distract the poet's memory, and ultimately give place to the true presentment of the "fair face" of the departed friend, this last being figured forth in the final movement of the work, which is full of a serene calmness and solemnity. The first movement has for its first subject an impetuous theme in 6-8 time, given out by the strings, in marked contrast to which is a phrase that is heard on the brass instruments several times in the course of the movement, one of a number of phrases set in the same way, and of the same solemn kind, that appear at intervals throughout the whole Symphony, giving it a peculiarly grave character. The slow movement is well worked out on a suave and flowing theme

of great beauty. The Scherzo is full of spirit and energy, and contains a noticeable rhythmic figure on the drums, which is persistently adhered to even through the trio, but the Scherzo stops immediately after the phrase has been heard. The Allegro of the last movement is ushered in by a long and elaborate introduction, based for the most part upon reminiscences of the three earlier movements, and having a somewhat turbulent and unsatisfied character. A broad phrase for the trumpets immediately precedes the very unpretentious entry of the first subject proper, which is given out by the flute alone against sustained tremolo passages in the violins. By this method of treatment the most important subject of the movement is hardly given due prominence. This, however, is but a slight defect in an earnest and noble composition. Both the principal themes of the finale are calm and serene in character, but in other respects are in contrast to one another; the coda, *presto*, in 6-8 time, is very energetic and original, and the whole is brought to a solemn and most impressive conclusion by the last of the phrases we have mentioned before, a short choral-like strain of great beauty. The whole Symphony is by far the most important orchestral work by Mr. Stanford that has hitherto been heard. Comparison with his opera "The Veiled Prophet," a selection from which was lately given at the Crystal Palace, would be entirely out of place, for that work is of course written for the stage, not for the concert-room; but as compared with Mr. Stanford's first Symphony, performed at the Crystal Palace in 1879, the "Elegiac Symphony" shows an immense advance, both in power of conception and in mastery over the technicalities of orchestral treatment. The orchestra was ably conducted by Mr. Stanford, and led by Mr. Burnett and Herr Richard Gompertz, the latter being the regular leader of the Society's orchestra.

***Cambridge Review* (15 March, 1882), p. LXIV**

The concert ended with Mr. Stanford's "Elegiac" symphony (MS.) in D minor, based on some well-known lines from Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, "I cannot see the features right." The symphony opens with a wild and passionate melody which is most expressively treated by the strings; this movement as well as the *lento espressivo* was most vociferously applauded. The *scherzo* was the favourite; in this movement the trombones are used with great effect, notably at the conclusion, when there is a sort of *chorale* played by the brass instruments alone. We must really congratulate Mr. Stanford on the great success of this concert and must still more congratulate the society of Mr. Stanford's producing for its first performance of what is in our opinion one of the finest pieces of modern music we have ever heard. An unusually demonstrative audience showed its appreciation of Mr. Stanford's merits by calling for him no less than three times. We need hardly add that Mr. Stanford conducted the programme throughout with his usual felicity and completed the success of the best concert, in the opinion of all, ever given here.

***Athanaeum*, No. 2837 (11 March, 1882), pp. 324-35**

Three years ago a Symphony in B flat by Mr. Villiers Stanford was performed at the Crystal Palace, and those who were present on that occasion and who also heard the new Symphony in D minor on Tuesday, will agree with us that the progress made by the composer is really surprising. The later work, which was written in the summer of 1880, is, if we may be pardoned the expression, a head and shoulders taller than its companion. The ideas are more dignified, and the treatment altogether broader, freer, and more in the style of a master. Still, extraneous influence is not altogether absent, Beethoven being the composer who seems to have been most prominently in Mr. Stanford's mind. Thus, near the close of the first movement (a movement remarkable for vigorous, scholarly writing, and also for its attractive second subject) there is a passage recalling one in the corresponding portion of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. In the charmingly melodious *lento espressivo* in F the influence of the Bonn master is absent; but in the *scherzo* another reminiscence of number nine occurs, and also on from the Piano and Cello Sonata in A. The *finale* in the tonic major is elaborate, and its merits cannot be accurately gauged from one hearing. But here, as in all the movements, the themes are developed with great skill, and the orchestration is exceedingly rich and varied. In short, the symphony is not only a clever but an interesting work, and it should find a place in one of the multitudinous orchestral concerts in London which are to be given this season.

***The Era*, Issue 2268 (Saturday, 11 March, 1882)**

The 172d concert of the Cambridge University Musical Society was held at the Guildhall on Tuesday, and the presence of Dr. Joachim, and the first performance of a symphony by Mr. Stanford, the conductor of this society, called "Elegiac," sufficed to attract a very large and distinguished audience. Joachim played the solo in Brahms' Concerto in D for violin and orchestra, Op. 77, and also theme and variations for orchestra by himself. In both he had a great reception. Mr. Stanford's symphony met with complete success on its first performance. The ideas and emotions which the music is intended to reflect are those embodied in the well-known lines "I cannot see the features right," &c., of the Laureate's "In Memoriam." The composer was called forward and heartily applauded.

## APPENDIX IV

### EXTRACTS FROM *THE NATION*

#### Note

These are two articles, reproduced in full, from the nationalist publication *The Nation* which were first printed in 1850. Given the significance of the newspaper as a vehicle of nationalist propaganda at the time for a political faction that was not overly interested in the power of music, they provide a fascinating insight into how opinions differed in the mid-nineteenth century as to how music could and might be used within an Irish nationalist framework. The choice of language and imagery is highly evocative, especially when placed within the context of the potato famine of the time.

#### **‘Modern Music and Nations’, *The Nation*, 12 January, 1850**

“Music of moderns is simply the science of doing what is very difficult. Hence a fiddler’s head is too often as empty as his fiddle.” – *Nation*, Jan 5<sup>th</sup>.

We perceive with considerable chagrin that, somehow, in the hurry of going to press, the above sweeping libel crept into our last number. As it appeared in the “Answers to Correspondents” the peculiar corner where peculiarly the genuine opinions of a journal are to be found, we feel the more impatient to disavow all sympathy with such barbarous criticism.

Amongst the majority of Irish literary men, it is mortifying to admit, there is a lamentable barrenness of musical perception. Beyond its melodic sweetness, many otherwise highly gifted persons have no understanding of, or sympathy with this divine Art.

To them, Beethoven, the Shakspeare [sic] of the world of tones, reveals nothing of spiritual beauty, though his works overflow with sublimest inspiration. They listen perplexed to the angel-voices which discourse audibly in his symphonies. No mortal eloquence has ever equalled the flashing thought which he there utters by instrumentation. The brilliancy of the violins, their clear, sustained argument, the pertinent significance of reply, the calm grandeur and profound heart-touching expression of the violoncellos. Do not these spirit-voices bear to us a message from on high, of the divine mystery which lies within and around us?

The unnatural divorce between Intellect and Music which exists in Ireland, is a bad symptom in the health of both.

It was not so with the kingly Goethe, who cherished music, and himself sang and played on the harpsichord. Of Beethoven, Goethe writes with becoming humility, or perhaps it would be more correct to say, appreciation :- “As to his being taught by me, that would be a sacrilege indeed, for surely his genius enlightens him, and will often dart flashes of brightness around him whilst we are groping in the dark, scarcely sensible of the approaching dawn;”

nor did the great-hearted humorist, Richter, whose improvising on his pianoforte was to the full as suggestive of droll conceits and unearthly visions as the written developments of his genial nature were full of tears and laughter, disdain to cultivate an art, from which he borrowed his happiest images; nor did Hoffman, who, though a musician by profession, and esteemed as a composer in Germany, is only known to us by his terrible and fascinating tales, in which imagination walks on the bounds of madness.

In Germany, in France, in Italy, the national tendencies, aspirations, passions, and even mannerisms, are as broadly impressed upon their Music as upon their literature. The dreamy mysticism, and the severe earnest spirituality of modern Germany, are as faithfully interpreted by Weber and Mendelssohn, as by Goethe and Schiller.

In Paris, in our day, Meyerbeer has succeeded in infusing soul and spirituality into French music, but it is after many violent contortions and convulsive throes. His religious aspirations have the same romantic tinge, his mysticism the same sensual tendencies, as George Sands' literature. It is German genius Frenchified. As somebody said, writing to the authoress of *Lelia* – "I am aware, Madam, that it is the fashion to-day, to infuse into everything a little religion."

From the absence of any scientific knowledge of Music, men with us are apt, when betrayed into the folly of writing on the subject, to enunciate, in the sincerity of profound ignorance, startling dogmas – such as the notable specimen we have quoted from our own pages.

The uneducated eye, brought for the first time into a Gallery of Art, will probably gaze with extreme [d]elight on some rude production of the chisel, or on a coarsely painted picture, whose effects are broad and exaggerated, whilst it will carelessly pass over the *chef d'œuvre* of a Guido, as colourless and insipid. In Painting and Sculpture the taste is slowly and gradually formed by observation and study; because the eye must be carefully disciplined before it appreciates excellence.

The ear still more imperatively demands culture; and it is just as rational for a man deficient in musical knowledge and training to attempt to judge of the Art, as it would be for one who had never mastered the grammar of the German tongue to take up a book written in that language and criticise its style.

Because we possess a precious legacy from distant forefathers, of characteristic National Melodies, which speak in sobs and wailing cries and wild laughter their still un-avenged wrongs; we, who have never added one phrase to them, give ourselves the air of connoisseurs, and shake our heads with the mimic of fastidiousness of genius. We might as well assert for ourselves the learning and holiness which made of Ireland centuries ago "the Land of Saints." Notwithstanding the self-complacent panegyrics with which we worry the world's ears, exclaiming that the Irish public are as musical! such admirable critics! the truth is, that in any high or discriminating appreciation of this much-abused Art, we are far behind the age – in some sort, only in the first rudiments of a musical education. To tickle the popular ear, extravagant contrasts of tones, exaggerated sentiments or voluptuous cadences, are all that are needed. Music, in its highest form, "as a kind of inarticulate, unfathomable

speech, which leads us to the edge of the Infinite, and lets us for a moment gaze into that!" such as Beethoven's, such as our lately lost Mendelssohn is merely to this multitude "the science of doing what is difficult."

"I confess," says Carlyle, "I have no notion of a truly great man that could not be all sorts of men. A Hero, Prophet, King, Priest, or what you will, according to the kind of world he finds himself born into."

Mendelssohn was the truest Hero-soul given to our generation. Had his Musical Thought been developed in words rather than in tones, doubtless we would all have eagerly pressed forward to worship the wondrous beauty and power that dwelt in him. But though he speak an unknown tongue, let us listen in reverence, and even to our dull sense, his deep, clear, heavenly voice will reveal, glimpses of the infinite.

An Artist of this spiritual type is rarely given. One who can exclaim, with the sublime consciousness of Beethoven – "I know that God is nearer to me, than to my brothers in the Art. I hold converse with him, and fear him not; for I have always known and understood him. Nor do I fear for my works: no evil can befall them; and whosoever shall understand them, he shall be freed from all such misery as burthens [sic] mankind."

In vindicating modern Musicians, the name of our country man, Balfe, flows spontaneously from the pen. In Germany, the central heart of instrumentalism, he is at this moment winning the applause of Artists and Princes. They call his compositions specimens of "English Art;" whilst it is the echo of Irish sighs and smiles, caught up by him at his mother's bosom, which gives its fanciful, graceful stamp to his genius.

Mysterious and complicated curse of Saxon rule in Ireland, which not only starves courage out of men's hearts, but kills genius in their souls! We cannot recall as much as an original air, worth anything, produced here at home, in our day. The first stirrings of Musical capacity drive a man, imperatively, to seek a more genial fosterage than his own land can give. And so we have Balfe, and Osborne, and Catherine Hayes, and host of minor artists, gathering laurels to be woven into a garland for our oppressor's brows.

What a tempting subject is this enchanted, brilliant Artist Life which opens before us, as we remember we have some words still to say in defence of the "fiddlers, whose heads are as empty as their fiddles!"

What thoughtful faces rise before us to rebuke the slander!

Berlioz, musician and writer of the romantic school, who has subjugated Paris alternately by his brilliant Music, and fascinating criticisms on Art.

And Liszt, the wit and thinker, whose exquisite contributions to literature created as great a "furore" as his demonic playing of Weber's "Concert Stuck."

And poor Chopin, the gem of Artists, whose delicate, ethereal genius whispered to our souls like a Guardian Angel, whilst the frail bonds of clay were daily loosening which held to earth his beautiful spirit.

And Thalberg, supreme as pianist, and supreme as man of sound sense and judgement. And... But here we must stop to-day, feeling so thoroughly interested in our subject, that we shall certainly very soon return to it.

**‘Music, the Interpreter of Nationality and Literature’, *The Nation*, 2 February 1850**

The general fading away of the creative power in Music amongst us, is a mournful evidence of our degeneracy, and the strongest proof that slavery has eaten deep into the soul of the country.

Two centuries ago, and no people in Europe possessed so marked a musical organisation as the Irish. There is hardly a nation on the face of the earth which gives fewer signs of vitality or productiveness in melody than we do to-day. This mysterious sterility, blighting the deep springs of song which welled over so abundantly for our forefathers, is so startling and anomalous as our normal taste of famine, whilst teeming harvest annually mock the misery of the people. In her old Music, the history of our country is written ineffaceably – the pastoral simplicity of her primitive people, their haughty scorn of subjugation, their fierce struggles, internal strife, defeats, humiliation, and bitter anguish.

All these conflicting passions and sentiments were intensely felt and grandly idealised by our old minstrels.

Without the aid of modern science, and by a structure and rhythm, pronounced by some to be elaborate and learned, by others simple and barbarous, they contrived to pour forth with passionate truth all that the lyrical dreams of our time aspires to express by its manifold appliances.

For more than a century there have been no genuine original airs invented in Ireland, but amongst our rural population the old versions of cherished tunes were, until recently, religiously preserved. Thirty years ago, and perhaps later, one or two singers, at least, were to be found in every district, endowed with the subtle musical perception and poetic spirit needed to interpret faithfully these “songs of sorrow.”

“Mother dear, don’t sing that song again; it makes me sorrowful,” whispered a little child, with broken voice, and eyes charged with tears. Here was the true poetic and musical temperament.

This child was CARLETON, whose mother, as we learn from himself, was one of the most gifted and, perhaps, one of the latest of these depositories of musical traditions. It was her inspired voice, which, breathing with exquisite pathos those wild and spiritual strains into the

impressionable soul of her boy, first ushered his sensitive spirit to the portal of the intellectual world; for “Music is the link between intellectual and sensual life,” and Melody gives a sensible existence to the vague poetry of our thoughts.

It was in the electrical soil of Music, then, that our great creative genius first took hold and thrived. From the old Irish songs that gushed in pure harmony from his mother’s bosom, his spirit gathered dew and warmth. From such healthful culture his genius grew up vigorously, ripened into thought, and at length broke forth in those true, yet poetic pictures of peasant-life, which, after delighting and instructing his contemporaries, will soon, in the transition state of our country, be inestimably precious as the warm-breathing traditions of an irrecoverable Past.

In a late number of *The Nation*, we had occasion, in vindicating Musicians, to remark that an unnatural divorce exists at present in Ireland between Literature and Music, which must inevitably recoil, with withering effect, on both. In our limited space we could but faintly indicate that, in countries more advanced in civilisation, the sister Arts are found mutually assisting and interpreting each other.

In addition to our plea for “fiddlers.” We desire to show to-day how much our greatest living writer owed to the Divine Art, undisciplined as it was by Science, and to exhibit Beethoven, the sovereign of musicians, by royal right of genius, drawing his inspiration from the poets. He says – “Goethe’s poems exercise a great sway over me, not only by their meaning, but by their rhythm also. It is a language that urges me on to composition that builds up its own lofty standard, containing in itself all the mysteries of harmony and from which melodies evolve spontaneously. I pursue these eagerly, and in my transports I give them every diversity of modulation. I triumph over the musical thought and the shape I give it. I call it Symphony.”

The music that gladdened the holy hills of Ireland in our boyhood is silent. Emigration and extermination have hushed even its echoes. Throughout the country, we believe, in this city we know, that the Temperance bands did much mischief in corrupting perverted, vulgarized editions of them on the popular ear.

To revive the old Irish Music, or take it up at the point our forefathers laid it down, is too manifestly impossible, to be cherished in the wildest dreams of the Musical fanatic. No Art is so entirely spontaneous, so rebel to constraint, as this. We may have the old formulas; but the spirit, the fire, the impalpable, subtle, penetrating influence which steals through the being, subdues us to tears, or excites us to laughter, as the whispers of a few rugged and primitive notes reach our ears – this old world magic belonged to a great-hearted, simple, elder time.

Yet we, though degenerate, have passions and hopes – wrongs enough, Heaven knows! to chafe our blood; and love is still left us to lend sunny winds to our imagination. Why, then, have we not a Music to interpret the Ireland of our own day?

Partly from want of culture, but principally because the social misery of our people has frozen the tide of song in their hearts, Music, as we have said, is the link between the sensual

and intellectual Life, and draws its nourishment from both. The constant pressure of sordid cares for the body kills it at the root.

A slave surrounded with luxury will sing, and the expression of his content will be sensual, joyous, voluptuous; such as Italian Music.

A slave, such as our fathers were, proud, discontent, morbid, but still a man, and accessible to all the sweet charities of life, will pour forth to the Heavens his reproaches and his griefs, in utterances “most musical, most melancholy.” But the slave starved by law, driven to break all ties of home and kindred, and to herd with his fellows in the poor-house! – Does not silence, dark ominous silence, become his animal, and grovelling life.

Music all over Europe has been wedding itself with Science, and has acquired a world-wide reputation, as “the most beautiful of the Arts,” even whilst the last echoes of our old Harpers have wailed to us a mournful farewell.

Two questions arise now, which as we desire fully to discuss, we must defer to another day – whether in an improved condition of the peasantry it might not be possible to foster a new National Music, and why independent of the depressing influence of their condition, the efforts for this purpose, hitherto made through the National Schools and Musical Societies, have utterly failed.

For ourselves, we do not believe that Ireland, once the “Queen of Song,” with a people so full of sensibility, is alone to be deaf to an Art, “which can paint every shadow of sentiment, every phase of passion, and in which the description of the scenes of nature find,” as in Beethoven’s pastoral symphonies, “colours and ideal lines, neither exact nor minute, it is true, but which are only the more vaguely and deliciously poetic.”

## APPENDIX V

### COPY OF THE ORIGINAL PROGRAMME OF THE PREMIERE OF THE 'IRISH' SYMPHONY, 27 JUNE 1887, COURTESY OF THE CENTRE FOR PERFORMANCE HISTORY, THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC.

SYMPHONY in F minor ... "The Irish" (MS.)

*C. V. Stanford.*

(First performance.)

- I. Allegro moderato.
- II. Allegro molto vivace.
- III. Andante con moto.
- IV. Finale. Allegro vivace.

The four movements, of which this symphony consists, are dated respectively (at the close of each in the manuscript score): June 5, 1886; February 18, April 4, and April 30, 1887. Its composition, which must thus have occupied its author's thoughts, more or less, for the greater part of a year, cannot therefore be said to have been carried out in a hurried manner.

In place of a dedication it bears the following motto :—

"Ipse fave clemens patriæ, patriamque canenti,  
Phœbe, coronatâ qui canis ipse lyrâ!"

Among the principal traits of Irish national music which Dr. Stanford has utilised, in order to impart a "local colour" and a distinctive national character to his work, may be enumerated :—(1) The admission (in two instances) of existing national airs, and a general reproduction of the national style. This latter has been attained by the employment, in the structure of his melodies, of scales or

modes not generally used in modern music, and which, if not identical with, are nearly akin to some of the old Greek or so-called Ecclesiastical Modes, especially the Æolian and Mixolydian. The first, second, and fourth movements are written in what theorists would call the "Æolian mode transposed," *i.e.*, a scale having semi-tones between its second and third, and fifth and sixth degrees. The slow movement is in the "Mixolydian mode transposed," having its semi-tones between the third and fourth, and sixth and seventh degrees. (2) The frequent avoidance of semi-tonic intervals, which imparts to both melody and harmony a still more antique and pentatonic flavour. (3) The adoption of a scheme of melody peculiar to the structure of many old Irish tunes. This consists of four strains of equal length, of which the first is coincident with the fourth, and the third is a slightly varied repetition of the second. It has its analogy in the verse-scheme of Tennyson's "In Memoriam," in which the first line of each stanza rhymes with the fourth, and the second with the third. (4.) The substitution of a Hop-jig, a national dance, for the more usual Scherzo; the imitation of the rhythm of an old Irish harp prelude, "Try if it's in tune," and the introduction of the "Lament of the sons of Usnach." These are matters of detail which, it is hoped, will be made clear in the following analysis.

I.—The first movement (*Allegro moderato*), without any preamble, opens at once with the principal subject, given out (in two octaves) by all the Strings, except Double-Basses, and unaccompanied:—

No. 1. Strings.



2 C 2

After having been joined, at the seventh bar, by the Clarinet and Bassoons, in a modulatory passage, this is repeated a fifth higher by the Violins and Violas, against a sustained accompaniment on the part of the lower Wood-Wind and Horns. A short intermediary passage, commencing :—

No. 2. Strings.

Horn.

Bassi.

—then leads to a repetition of the “first” subject, which is now presented (*forte*) in a more ornate form, and more fully scored. Its development at length, followed by a transitional passage, brings us to the “second” subject, the melody of which we quote in full, not only for its own sake, but also in illustration of its peculiar structure, which has been spoken of above as being analagous to the verse scheme of “In Memoriam” :—

No. 3. Cello.



It gives way to a long series of passages in "imitation" and in "inversion by contrary motion," of which the first may serve as an example:—

No. 4.

Vln. Fl. p &c.

The carrying out of this device, which is accompanied almost throughout by the Horns in triplets, is complemented by a short episodic theme, of a less strongly pronounced national character:—

No. 5.

Str. & Wood-W. Trb.

Cl. & Bssn. 8.

Trb.

This serves to prepare the way, in the first instance, for a repetition of the entire first section of the movement, and in the second, for the entry of the "working-out" section.

At the commencement of the working out" section, the first three notes of Ex. 2 are employed on different degrees of the scale as a kind of "ground-bass," on which fragments of the "first" subject, especially its second and third bars, or variants of them are superimposed. This idea disposed of, the initial phrase of the "first" subject jostles against others of its component parts with all the freedom that the art of "thematic development" admits. Similar attention is subsequently bestowed upon the "second" subject (No. 3), and its complementary passages "in imitation" and "in inversion by contrary motion."

The "recapitulation" section is far more a matter of further development than of slavish repetition. The "first" subject, which enters on a "dominant pedal," is at first assigned to Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, and Violas, with a new counter-subject superimposed by the Flutes and Violins. Much novelty of treatment of both subjects now enter into the scheme, and the "second" subject, which before was given to the 'Cellos, is now assigned to the Clarinet; similarly with the complementary passages "in imitation" and "inversion," those which before were sustained by the Wind are now allotted to the Strings, and *vice versa*. In the course of the peroration, the "second" subject is reverted to, but the opening phrase of the "first" subject brings the movement to a close in the major key.

II.—The second movement (*Allegro molto vivace*), which takes the form of a Hop-jig, opens with the following theme:—

No. 6. — Vln.

The long sustained note of its commencement is characteristic of the mode of performance of such pieces by Irish fiddlers. Another determining feature of its nationality is the cadence in the last bar of the above. For like reasons attention should also be drawn to the three heavy chords of dotted crotchets in the first and fourth bars of an alternative strain, commencing:—

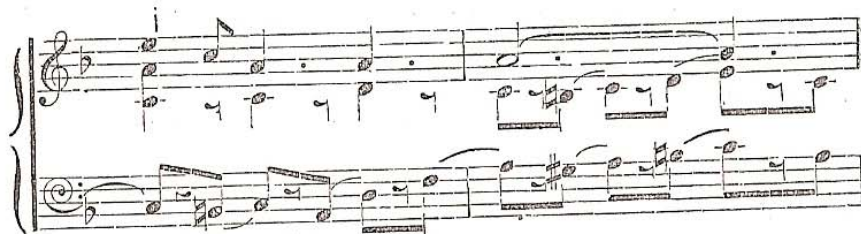
No. 7. Wind. Vln. & Vla. 8.

Bassi stacc.

Wind. : Vln. : Vla.

—and merging into a second subject, which may be thus sketched :—

No. 8.

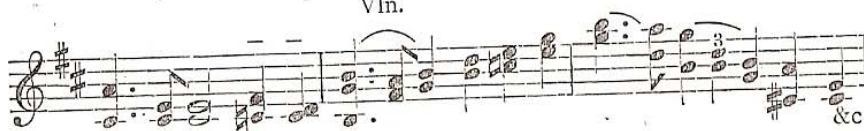


Here too the cadence is peculiar, but it is one which is common to other countries which have derived much of their national style of music from Eastern sources. The quotation of the above themes, as the ground work of the "Hop-jig," will be sufficient without further analytical details, to enable the listener to follow it with ease, if it be borne in mind that it is interrupted by a "Trio," based upon the following theme:—

No. 9. Cl. *mf pesante.*



Vln.



After this the Hop-jig is repeated and complemented with a Coda, which brings the movement to a close in the major key, the Drum having the last note all to itself.

III.—The slow movement (*Andante con moto*) commences with a Harp prelude, in imitation of one familiar to Irish harpists under the title of "Try if it's in tune," and from time to time interrupted by fragments of the principal subject of the movement, and by a Flute cadenza. Passing over these as subsidiary matters which speak for themselves,

it seems sufficient to quote the principal subject, as it appears on being introduced in its entirety:—

No. 10. Clar.



The discussion of this, without coming to a full close, is followed, with a change of key to D major, by the introduction of the "Lament of the Sons of Usnach." This consists of neither more nor less than the following short phrase of four notes, repeated over and over again:—

No. 11.



Dr. Stanford has utilised this "Lament" in a very ingenious manner as a kind of "ground" (but never in the bass), upon which to superimpose a series of plaintive melodic passages. We quote the first in full as a sample of his mode of pro-

cedure at this point. The "Lament," it will be seen, is here sustained as an inner part by the Violas:—

Oboe.  
No. 12.

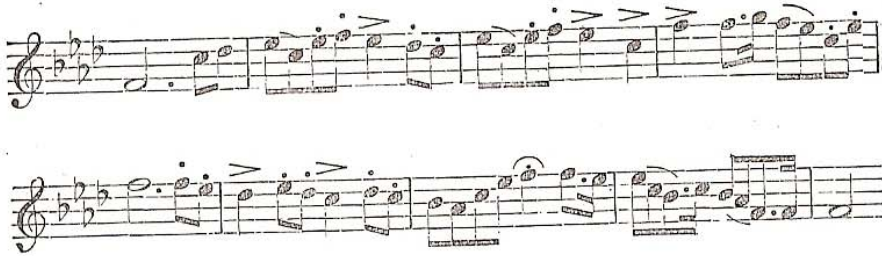
Viola.  
*p*

Horns.

What follows may be defined as a further development of the previous material, viz., the Harp prelude, the principal subject (No. 10), and the "Lament" with its counter-subjects.

IV.—The Finale (*Allegro vivace*), which is couched in rondo-sonata form, has two old Irish airs for its principal subjects, viz., "Remember the glories of Brian the Brave," and "Let Erin remember the days of old." It opens, in a key foreign to its signature, with an exposition of the first of these tunes, in a fragmentary manner and in company with other independent matter. It will be best, therefore, to quote this tune as it appears in its entirety; but with the proviso that, for the sake of keeping up a sense of continuity, it is never brought to a tonic full close:—

No. 13.



The development of this at length is followed by a passage of transition, leading to a second subject:—

No. 14. Violin & Horn.

*mf sonore.*  
Violin.

*pizz.*  
Bassi.

*tr*

After having been taken up and repeated by the Wood-Wind and Horns, against an accompaniment by the Strings, consisting for the most part of a chain of shakes, this too is complemented by a *codetta*, in the course of which there is a prefigurement (by the Horns) of a third subject, but in so disguised a shape as to be scarcely recognisable. This *codetta*, in satisfaction of one of the requirements of rondo-form, leads to a repetition of, or, more strictly speaking, a brief allusion to, the first principal subject (No. 13), soon to be

followed by a varied version of the second subject (No. 14). A short transitional passage, by which this is supplemented, then brings us to the third principal subject of the movement. It consists of the fine old Irish folk-song, "Let Erin remember the days of old," given out by three Trumpets, and surrounded by a harmonic accompaniment on the part of the Strings:—

No. 15. 3 Trmpts. *sostenuto ma non legato*.

From this point onwards we are occupied with the recapitulation and further development of the principal subjects; and in conclusion, the folk-song, "Let Erin remember the days of old," now transposed to F major, and more fully scored than before, forms a fitting climax to a Symphony of which Ireland may fairly be proud, and to whose composer Tacitus's words, "Civicam coronam apud Britanniam meritis," seem singularly applicable.

C. A. B.

## APPENDIX VI

### 'IRISH' SYMPHONY REVIEWS

#### 'Mr. Stanford's New Symphony', *The Times*, 1 July 1887

The last Richter concert, the eighth of the series, served to remind us that even a jubilee series must have an end. The Philharmonic Society closed its campaign on Saturday with a concert to which a galaxy of talents, including Madame Albani, Madame Kevada, Mr. Lloyd, and Josef Hofman, the boy pianist, had attracted a cast audience; one more Richter concert and the season, as far as orchestral music is concerned, will be a thing of the past, although our three operas will continue their struggle for existence a little while longer. Mr. Stanford's new symphony, played under Herr Richter's leadership, is the third English work of that class which the great conductor has introduced to a London audience in the course of one month, and, like its predecessors, may be accepted as another and conclusive proof, if it were needed, that our native school is progressing with rapid strides and in various directions. Mr. Stanford has denominated his symphony the "Irish," and in a Latin motto prefixed to the score calls upon Phoebus for help in his patriotic endeavour of doing justice to the melodies of his native land. Even without this indication the most casual listener would observe that the rhythm and the type of melody prevailing throughout belong to the Green Island. On the subject of national music, which plays so important a part in modern art, much may be said. Various composers have applied various methods of giving local colour to their work; Liszt in his Hungarian rhapsodies copies the melodies of the people; Dvorak avoids doing so, but imitates the peculiarities of Bohemian fiddlers and popular minstrels instead. Mr. Stanford combines both these methods. There are a good many Irish melodies actually embodied in his music, and in addition to this he introduces the peculiar tonalities and scales which are in many respects akin to the Greek modes and offer welcome material to the ethnological students bent upon demonstrating the affinity between Celtic and Eastern races. The result is an extremely pleasing and in many respects remarkable work, which was acclaimed with enthusiasm by audience, and will no doubt materially enhance its composer's reputation. The first movement, *allegro moderato*, is essentially of a flowing, one might almost say lyrical, character. Here melodiousness of a high type is combined with scholarship and ingenuity of device, and the instrumentation adds considerably to the effect of the materials presented, the entire symphony, indeed, marking in this respect a considerable advance upon Mr. Stanford's previous efforts. The second movement, which takes the place of the *scherzo*, is cast in the form of a so-called hop-jig, and in accordance with that name is full of life and bustle, the suave melody of the trio bringing welcome relief. But the gem of the symphony is undoubtedly the slow movement, the dreamy melancholy of which conveys an intense poetic impression. Here the local colour is laid on with the hand of a master. A prelude for the harp in combination with the flute leads to a beautiful "lament," the melody of which is all the more remarkable for its broad development,

because it springs from the simple germ of only four notes. The final *allegro* is the least flowing and the most laboured of the four movements, although here the composer embodies two old Irish melodies – a fact which should give pause to those who think that it is easier to borrow a tune and treat it artistically than to invent one. A masterly performance was an almost forgone conclusion in the circumstances, Herr Richter never conducting with more care and energy than where the production of an English work is concerned.

***The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, Vol. 29, no. 539 (1 January 1888), pp. 21-22**

The third concert of the season, given on the 15<sup>th</sup> ult., had a mixed programme, comprising three works very far removed from each other in character. Of these, one – Mendelssohn's Psalm 114 – has long ranked among the classics of sacred music, and needs no further discussion. Another – J. F. Barnett's "Ancient Mariner" – represents a type of Cantata in the Mendelssohn school, which was much in vogue twenty years ago; while the third – Stanford's "Irish" Symphony – illustrates the present strong tendency towards the utilisation of national melodic forms for purposes of high class music. The Concert, therefore, had no ordinary interest for intelligent amateurs, many of whom attended it. Professor Stanford's Symphony was taken first of the three, and enjoyed the benefit of a good performance under the composer's direction. So much has been said of late in this and other journals regarding the increased attention paid to national characteristics in music, that we shall not now trouble the reader with renewed discussion of that very interesting topic. But we may express gratification that a leading British musician has given a practical proof of the importance it assumes in his view, and that his national Symphony has so far won frank and undoubted success. By the way, the two best symphonies of the young English school are both based upon local characteristics. We refer, of course, to the "Scandinavian" of Mr. Cowen and that at present under notice. The fact has a significance not to be overlooked or put aside. Professor Stanford was greatly favoured by the decided character and powerful charm of Irish melody. Indeed, he found the most potent of all musical forces ready to his hand, and he cannot be blamed if, in addition to inventing themes, Irish in form and spirit, he adopted two examples that have long been traditional in his native land. These occur in the *Finale*, where amateurs delightedly recognise "Remember the glories of Brian the brave" and the grand strains of "Let Erin remember the days of old." The second movement, or *Scherzo*, is Irish to the core, thanks to the hop-jig tune forming its principal feature; while the slow movement derives its character from a harp prelude, and the reiteration of a single short phrase known as the "Lament of the sons of Usnach." As for the opening *Allegro*, the scale largely employed serves, in conjunction with other devices, to make that movement scarcely less national than its companions. Professor Stanford, it is clear from the foregoing, has not carried out his idea in a half-hearted way. The Symphony is distinctly what it pretends to be, and for all its shaping

and elaboration according to classic models, cannot be regarded as other than it is. We need scarcely add that it abounds in thematic beauty, or that the composer has worked up his charming materials to excellent purpose, adding to melodic interest that which arises from skilful development and tasteful colouring. We make bold to predict unusual favour for the “Irish” Symphony; encouraged thereto by the enthusiasm it created in St. James’s Hall, where all seemed pleased with it.<sup>2</sup>

**G. B. Shaw, ‘The Second Richter Concert this season’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 15 May 1888**

The first matter that excited remark at the second Richter concert last night was the fact that the great conductor had grown visibly stouter in the course of the week. Creditable as this is to British hospitality, it is impossible to contemplate without alarm the probability of the phenomenon continuing progressively through the whole series of nine concerts. The orchestra distinguished itself by a magnificent performance of the prelude and death song from “Tristan;” but in the Walkyrie Ride the brass was clumsy, and, if the truth be told, phrased in the style of a second rate military band. Miss Pauline Cramer heroically attempted the closing scene of the *Götterdämmerung*, and came off, if not quite victorious, yet with great credit. As for Mr. Villiers Stanford’s Irish symphony, it is only an additional proof that the symphony, as a musical form, is stone dead. Some such structure that Liszt used in his symphonic poems would have admirably suited Mr. Stanford’s fantasia on Irish airs. The effect of mechanically forcing it into a symphony form has been to make it diffuse and pedantic. Since Bach’s death, the rule as to fugue has been, “First learn to write one, and then don’t.” It is time, and has been ever since Beethoven’s death, to extend the rule to the symphony.

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<sup>2</sup> The *Musical Times* appear to have missed the symphony’s première under Richter, reviewing this performance at one of the Novello Oratorio concerts instead.

## APPENDIX VII

### *SYMPHONY SOCIETY BULLETIN* RECEPTION OF 'IRISH' SYMPHONY

#### Note

The following articles are taken from the *Symphony Society Bulletin*, the publication of a New York musical organisation that would eventually form part of the now New York Philharmonic. Stanford's orchestral music became very popular in the United States, and there are at least a dozen or so performance of the Irish Symphony alone recorded in New York from the work's composition until at least the second decade of the twentieth century, including a performance conducted by Mahler. These extensive discussions of the work, taken from separate performances, provide an interesting take on the symphony from a non-European perspective, even though American society was, of course, heavily influenced by European ideology. What is perhaps most interesting is considering the Irish aspects in New York, a city that acted as the gateway for mass Irish immigration to the United States and where surely Irish opinions of all varieties were widespread.

#### **Samuel Swift, 'The Irish Symphony', *Symphony Society Bulletin*, Vol. V no. VIII, March 12 1912**

The presence of this "Irish" symphony of an Irish composer, Sir Charles Villiers Stanford, on this Saint Patrick's Day program, reminds one how little music of a symphonic character has been built upon the abundant folk songs of Erin. There are few composers of real accomplishment who are Irish – one of them has long been a New Yorker, his name is Victor Herbert – and their product has not been distinguished, except in special instances, by a markedly Celtic strain. Furthermore, hardly any foreign composer of importance has utilized Irish melody for substantial orchestral structures. German and Russian composers have written music confessedly inspired by Spanish tunes and musical color, Frenchmen and their Northern neighbors have crossed the Alps into Italy or the Mediterranean to North America, for their themes. Nearly every European race and nationality has been exploited, musically, by aliens, but Ireland, whose sons have not less than their share surely, of readiness to meet the rest of the world half way, and whose songs are sung over a range of territory upon which "the sun never sets," has been singularly overlooked by the makers of symphonies, rhapsodies and symphonic poems. Edward MacDowell, for example, went back in his "Keltic" sonata to the ancient Gaelic legends for his inspiration, but of what the world knows of Irish music, meaning melodies in the familiar mould, there is no trace in his composition.

Doubtless there is some reasons deeper than mere accident; perhaps, as Mr. Huneker once remarked, these Irish folk melodies are not "cerebral." Yet the descent of Irish

music from the days of the great harp players, seven hundred and more years ago, is traced in a line free from the bar sinister. There is the very genius of expressive song, breathing now joy, now melancholy, in the airs that stand for what is Irish,

Stanford, though he has lived in England since he was twenty (and that is now forty years ago), is deeply imbued with the spirit of his native country. To that, his "Irish" symphony testified here as long ago as 1888, while in a lighter but delectable vein, and even more obviously of Erin, was his "Shamus O'Brien," which for a brief period glorified comic opera on Broadway into a thing of genuine and delightful art. Born in Dublin in 1852, Stanford was already a skilful musician when he entered Cambridge University, where he soon became an organist and leader of a chorus, and where he accomplished such stimulating deeds as bringing out for the first time in England Brahms' first symphony, the third part of Schumann's "Faust," and other works of influence. Church music, choral compositions, arrangements for voices or in the smaller forms, of Irish folk song; operas, orchestral pieces, chamber music have since occupied his time and proved his energy and his authentic talent.

The "Irish" symphony was written as the twenty-eighth numbered work on Stanford's list. Its first production was in London, June 27, 1887, at the hands of Dr. Hans Richter. On January 28, 1888, it was conducted, as a novelty, by Mr. Walter Damrosch, at a concert of the Symphony Society, in the Metropolitan Opera House. It made an agreeable impression then, and it has done likewise at its subsequent repetitions. As a token of the composer's heartfelt patriotism, there stands at the head of the published score a Latin sentence, in which he invokes the aid of Phoebus in his effort to do justice to the melodies of his native land: "Ipse fave Clemens patriae patriamque canenti, Phoebe, coronate qui canis ipse lyra."

When the symphony was first performed here, Mr. H. E. Krehbiel wrote of it:

"It is called by the composer an 'Irish Symphony,' and Irish it is in its melodic material and its spirit. The spirit of Irish music is the spirit of Irish history. Its glories are the glories of the past, and when Mr. Stanford, a true Irishman, came to construct his symphony, he seems to have had this thought in his mind. The most successful movement is the *Andante con moto*, which is a lovely and most effective lament. After this in merit comes the second movement, *Allegro molto vivace*, a jig, which fills most admirably the place of the *Scherzo*, and has a sweet, original melody for its trio. In the finale Mr. Stanford has utilized two Irish melodies, 'Remember the glories of Brian the brave,' and 'Let him [sic] remember the days of old,' both surcharged with melancholy in spite of their effort to be energetic and militant."

**Daniel Gregory Mason, "Irish" Symphony, opus 28, Stanford', *Symphony Society Bulletin*, Vol. X no. VIII, January 19<sup>th</sup> 1917**

The Irish Symphony of Sir Charles Villiers Stanford, who has, perhaps, done more for the music of his native land than any other one was, through his collection of Irish Folk-songs, his opera "Shamus O'Brien," his "Irish Rhapsodies" for orchestra, and, above all, this symphony, was first produced at a Richter concert in London in 1887.

The first theme of the first movement begins softly, in all the strings in unison, its first four notes forming a sort of "motto" which recurs more than once during the course of the work. Curious intervals suggesting the old modes that prefigured our modern scales occur in it giving it something both of wildness and of melancholy. Sombre chords of low clarinets, bassoons, and horns, and soft drum rolls confirm the mood of mystery, until a large crescendo leads to a restatement of the theme, this time fortissimo, begun by the brass and wind and continued impetuously by strings. The contrasting melody enters presently in the 'cellos, a tune of graceful rising and falling outlines, somewhat in the Mendelssohnian vein. It is taken up by the violins, with fluent counter-phrases in flute and clarinet, and after a brief climax subsides to another moment of Mendelssohnian sweetness and calm, a short codetta before the themes begin to be worked out. The development begins over a persistent figure of three rising notes in bass (leaving the accented beat of each measure silent) which will be recognized as a variant of the "motto." The first theme is the matter under discussion up to the climax, when the second theme, marked "appassionato" supervenes and is elaborated in turn. As fragments of it are re-echoed from instrument to instrument it takes on an air of mystery and expectancy. Over a long, soft C sharp in the strings, trumpets and trombones lingeringly recall a lengthened version of it, until, with a lapse of the whole mass of tone down to C, the first theme returns quietly in woodwind and violas, initiating the section of recapitulation. It is an imaginative, impressive passage. This time the second theme is at first sung by the clarinet, and later by strings and wind in counterplay, as before. A short coda is based on the persistent bass figure of three notes, now inverted so that it falls instead of rising. The "motto", in a slower, more stately version, is proclaimed several times by the brass. The very end is quiet.

The scherzo starts out with a rollicking Irish jig-tune in the violins, a peculiar feature of good humor in which is the preliminary long-held note, before the onslaught begins, such as is sometimes heard to the word "Oh" in the drinking songs and the like. The tune is one of those in 9-8 time which the composer in his "Thoughts Concerning Folksong and Nationality", contributed to the Musical Quarterly for April, 1915, describes as "hop-jigs" (the ordinary being in 6-8). In this article he points out that the commonest Irish cadence is "a three-fold reiteration of the key-note", used by Beethoven in the first theme of his Seventh Symphony, written while he was occupied with Irish, Scottish and English airs. This cadence is not only used here, but repeated insistently by the violins – we can almost hear the dancers clap their hands and snap their heels – and then lengthened out in the woodwind into a new motive which bears

the brunt of the working out. It is treated with much wit, soon giving rise to a complete tune in trumpets and horns, against a high trill of violins.

An example of the loving art and careful attention to detail with which the whole symphony is fashioned is found in the abbreviated version of this same figure reduced to two notes of plucked strings, which accompanies the start of the appealing melody for clarinets, horns and bassoons forming the Trio. The original figure of four notes is also heard, during portions of this section, from all parts of the strings and even from the kettle-drums. The scherzo theme returns, is somewhat more developed than at first, and at the end is combined with the main motive from the first movement.

The third movement commences with introductory harmonies, in rhapsodic style, for harp alone. Two clarinets then announce the main theme, an elegiac pensive melody, such as we can imagine half declaimed by the old Irish bards.

With the change to D major an oboe solo brings forward a second melody, while the violas outline a persistently reiterated figure taken, the composer tells us, from one of the Irish folk-songs, "The Lament of the Sons of Usnach." This figure, especially in the minor form in which it is sounded later by the horns, recalls a similar ostinato in the slow movement of Brahms's Fourth Symphony (though it is here used by Stanford in an entirely original way). This leads back to the first theme, now accompanied by a graceful embroidery of the violins, and somewhat elaborated. Soft trombones recalling the second theme, initiate a more agitated section in which it, too, is developed. This culminates in the return of the persistent figure in the full orchestra, in an impressive outburst. As this dies away the elegiac theme is heard once more, this time from the violins. A silence; and now a single horn sounds the persistent figure mysteriously, as from a distance. The oboe outlines once more, plaintively, the second theme, in a minor, answered by the flute in major, over still softer horn calls, all accompanied by the swaying chords of the harp. It is a lovely passage. The movement ends with the same harp passage with which it began.

The finale is a spirited piece built on three themes, two of which are folk-songs: the first theme is, "Remember the Glories of Brian the Brave", and the hymn-like melody used in the peroration is "Let Erin Remember the Days of Old." The broad melody for the G strings of the violins ("second theme") is original.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mason would expand his thoughts on the Irish Symphony in a chapter dedicated to it in his *Short Studies of Great Masterpieces* published in New York in 1918 making similar observations in an expanded format.

## APPENDIX VIII

### 'ULSTER 1912' BY RUDYARD KIPLING

Their webs shall not become garments,  
neither shall they cover themselves with their works:  
their works are works of iniquity  
and the act of violence is in their hands (Isaiah lix. 6)

The dark eleventh hour  
Draws on and sees us sold  
To every evil power  
We fought against of old.  
Rebellion, rapine, hate,  
Oppression, wrong and greed  
Are loosed to rule our fate,  
By England's act and deed.

The Faith in which we stand,  
The laws we made and guard,  
Our honour, lives, and land  
Are given for reward  
To Murder done by night,  
To Treason taught by day,  
To folly, sloth, and spite,  
And we are thrust away.

The blood our fathers spilt,  
Our love, our toils, our pains,  
Are counted us for guilt,  
And only bind our chains.  
Before an Empire's eyes  
The traitor claims his price.  
What need of further lies?  
We are the sacrifice.

We asked no more than leave  
To reap where we had sown,  
Through good and ill to cleave  
To our own flag and throne.  
Now England's shot and steel  
Beneath that flag must show  
How loyal hearts should kneel

To England's oldest foe.

We know the war prepared  
On every peaceful home,  
We know the hells declared  
For such as serve not Rome—  
The terror, threats, and bread  
In market, hearth, and field—  
We know, when all is said.  
We perish if we yield.

Believe, we dare not boast,  
Believe, we dare not fear  
We stand to pay the cost  
In all that men hold dear.  
What answer from the North?  
One Law, one Land, one Throne  
If England drive us forth  
We shall not fall alone!

# APPENDIX IX

## SYMPHONY NO. 5 PROGRAMME

Bodleian Library, University of Oxford (Mus. 318 d.30)

### Note

The following programme is taken from a performance of Stanford's Fifth Symphony by the London Symphony Orchestra held in the F. Gilbert Webb collection in the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford. However, while not from the work's première it is a complete reproduction of the programme from the symphony's first performance at the Queen's Hall with the Philharmonic Society. The note is by the composer himself with annotations in hand by F. Gilbert Webb.

**Symphony No. 5, in D major (Op. 56) (MS.),**  
"L'Allegro ed il Pensieroso" - **C. V. Stanford (1852)**

Organ - MR. F. ALCOCK.

- Or delightful  
pastorale* →
1. Allegro moderato. *beginning over with viva & melody*
  2. Allegretto grazioso. *a very fine & noble*
  3. Andante molto tranquillo. *beautiful movement*
  4. Allegro molto.

This Symphony, which was completed in June, 1894, and is dedicated "to the Philharmonic Society of London and its Conductor, Sir A. C. Mackenzie," is intended to illustrate the poem of John Milton; the passages which suggested the various movements of the work are printed below. The scoring is for the usual full orchestra with three trombones, but with the addition of an *ad libitum* organ part at the close of the last movement.

1. *Allegro moderato*—D major, 4-4.

"Hence, loathed Melancholy,  
Of Cerberus and blackest midnight born  
In Stygian cave forlorn,  
'Mongst horrid shapes, and shrieks, and sighs unholy,  
Find out some uncouth cell,  
Where brooding Darkness spreads his jealous wings,  
And the night-raven sings;  
There, under ebon shades and low-browed rocks,  
As rugged as thy locks,  
In dark Cimmerian desert ever dwell.

But come, thou Goddess fair and free,  
In heaven yclept Euphrosyne,  
And by men, heart-easing Mirth.

Delightfully  
gay theme  
No 4  
No 5

“Haste thee, Nymph, and bring with thee  
Jest and youthful Jollity,  
Quips and Cranks, and wanton Wiles,  
Nods and Becks, and wreathèd Smiles,  
Such as hang on Hebe’s cheek,  
And love to live in dimple sleek ;  
Sport that wrinkled Care derides,  
And Laughter, holding both his sides.  
Come, and trip it, as you go,  
On the light fantastic toe ;  
And in thy right hand lead with thee  
The mountain-nymph, sweet Liberty ;  
And if I give thee honour due,  
Mirth, admit me of thy crew.”

The movement opens with an Introduction in the minor on  
(the following) subject—



which afterwards, in a major dress, becomes the first subject  
of the *Allegro*. It is answered by a short phrase on the  
trombones— *and*



Upon these two themes and a short *Adagio* which interrupts  
its course—



the opening is constructed. The key then changes to the major, and the first section, which is not repeated, is founded on the following themes :

First subject—



and its second part—



First subsidiary subject on a rhythmical figure for the strings—



Second subject—



*Codetta* of the first part—



The development section opens with an allusion to the Introduction (Nos. 2 and 3), and modulates to a climax in C major. The principal themes employed are No. 6 and No. 7. The latter, in "augmentation," is given to the violoncellos—



with a figure in the wood-wind founded on the latter part of No. 6.

At the close of the development No. 8 appears (also in doubled time) on the oboe. The first section is then repeated with many modifications of key and length. The *Coda* begins (*Più lento*) with a short allusion to the Introduction (No. 3), soon giving place to a *Più vivace* founded on No. 6, and the movement closes with two phrases of the first subject—No. 5 and No. 4.

2. *Allegretto grazioso*—G major, 6·8—alternating with  
*Quasi-Presto*, 2-4.

“Oft listening how the hounds and horn  
Cheerly rouse the slumbering morn,  
From the side of some hoar hill,  
Thro’ the high wood echoing shrill :

“While the ploughman near at hand  
Whistles o’er the furrowed land,  
And the milkmaid singeth blithe,  
And the mower whets his scythe,  
And every shepherd tells his tale  
Under the hawthorn in the dale.

“Sometimes, with secure delight,  
The upland hamlets will invite,  
When the merry bells ring round,  
And jocund rebecks sound  
To many a youth and many a maid  
Dancing in the chequered shade,  
And young and old come forth to play  
On a sunshine holiday,  
Till the livelong daylight fail :  
Then to the spicy nut-brown ale,  
With stories told of many a feat,  
How Faëry Mab the junkets eat.

“These delights if thou canst give,  
Mirth, with thee I mean to live.”

This movement is in the form of a *Scherzo* and *Trio*. It opens with a passage for horns on a pedal bass—



which recurs at intervals throughout. The first subject is given to the clarinets—



and ends with a refrain—



which is also frequently heard. The second subject is in the same key over a rhythmical figure in the strings—

No. 13.

Upon these themes and combinations of them the whole of this pastoral is founded.

The *Trio* is a much quicker movement, in duple time, on the following theme—



introduced by a descending scale of the violins, and supported throughout by a running passage of semiquavers. It leads without break to the return of the *Scherzo* in a shortened and modified form. The short *Coda* is again *Quasi-Presto*, and consists of fragments of the scales and subject of the *Trio* (No. 14).

3. *Andante molto tranquillo*—B flat, 4-4.

“But, hail! thou Goddess sage and holy!  
Hail, divinest Melancholy!  
Whose saintly visage is too bright  
To hit the sense of human sight,  
And therefore to our weaker view  
O'erlaid with black, staid Wisdom's hue.

“Come, pensive Nun, devout and pure,  
Sober, steadfast, and demure,  
All in a robe of darkest grain,  
Flowing with majestic train,  
And sable stole of cypress lawn  
Over thy decent shoulders drawn.  
Come; but keep thy wonted state,  
With even step and musing gait,  
And looks, commencing with the skies,  
Thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes:

“But, first and chiefest, with thee bring  
Him that yon soars on golden wing,  
Guiding the fiery-wheelèd throne,  
The Cherub Contemplation.  
And the mute Silence hist along,  
'Less Philomel will deign a song  
In her sweetest saddest plight.

“Sweet bird, that shunn'st the noise of folly,  
Most musical, most melancholy!  
Thee, chauntress, oft the woods among,  
I woo, to hear thy evensong;  
And missing thee, I walk unseen  
On the dry smooth-shaven green,  
To behold the wandering moon,  
Riding near her highest noon.”

The movement begins with an introductory phrase for strings, which recurs both here and in the *Finale*—



Leading to the first subject—



First subsidiary subject (on an *arpeggio* figure for the lower strings)—



This is related to the phrase (No. 3) in the Introduction of the first movement; the last two bars and the phrase (No. 15) form the ground-work of the modulation to the second subject, which is as follows—



accompanied by a gentle figure on the violins and solo-passages for the wood-wind. This leads to a climax on a phrase of the Introduction of the first movement, and the *Codetta* of the first part is a reminiscence of that of the first movement also (No. 8). A short modulation leads to the repetition of the first subject, with various modifications, and the movement closes with the same *Codetta* and the opening bars of No. 16.

4. *Allegro molto*—D minor, 3-4.

“Oft, on a plat of rising ground,  
I hear the far-off curfew sound,  
Over some wide-watered shore,

Swinging slow with sullen roar :

“ Sometime let gorgeous Tragedy  
In sceptred pall come sweeping by,  
Presenting Thebes or Pelops’ line,  
Or the fate of Troy divine.

“ And, as I wake, sweet Music, breathe  
Above, about, or underneath,  
Sent by some Spirit to mortals good,  
Or the unseen Genius of the wood.  
But let my due feet never fail  
To walk the studious cloisters pale,  
And love the high embowèd roof,  
With antique pillars massy-proof,  
And storied windows, richly dight,  
Casting a dim religious light.  
Then let the pealing organ blow,  
To the full-voiced choir below,  
In service high and anthems clear,  
As may with sweetness, thro’ mine ear,  
Dissolve me into ecstasies,  
And bring all Heaven before mine eyes.”

After a few deep chords and a *pizzicato* figure in the  
basses—



(which pervades the movement), the first subject is heard as  
follows—

No. 20.

*Final*

This is repeated with a running accompaniment for the strings.  
The episode is founded on the first bars of No. 20—



The first subsidiary theme, which becomes of great importance  
as the movement proceeds, is as follows—



The second subject is in F major—



The *Codetta* is on the subject No. 22 in a “diminished” form—



The middle section is on the following new subject for the  
horns above the *pizzicato* figure in the basses (No. 19)—



A climax is developed out of this material, culminating in the  
return of the first subject (No. 20), given to the wind with  
string chords. The second subject (No. 23) is then worked in

combination with the first subsidiary theme (No. 22), after the manner of a "free fantasia," which in this movement succeeds instead of preceding the return of the first subject. The second subject follows in the tonic major, followed by the phrase No. 24, as in the first section of the movement. The *Coda* begins as the middle section did, with the phrase (No. 25) over the *pizzicato* figure, and at this point the organ enters—a part which, however, can if necessary be assigned to the wind instruments. The first subject again occurs in the climax to the *Coda*, which afterwards changes to 2-2 time, and has its culminating point in the phrase (No. 15) which introduced the slow movement. After a pause in G minor, the concluding passage grows out of a single note (A) given by the trumpet, and spreads into a polyphonic close for the full orchestra.

C. V. S.

This work was performed in public for the first time at a concert of the Philharmonic Society given on March 20th, 1895, the Composer himself conducting.

*A fine work. - Extremely melodious  
& full of beauty & significance.*



# APPENDIX X

## SYMPHONY NO. 5 REVIEWS

### *Athanaeum* No. 3517 (March 23, 1895), pp.385-6

It would not be fair or reasonable to offer dogmatic opinion on such an ambitious and elaborate work as Prof. Villiers Stanford's new symphony "L'Allegro ed il Pensieroso," which was produced by the Philharmonic Society on Wednesday evening, after a first hearing; but if initial impressions must be trusted, the composer has surpassed all his previous efforts in this direction, not excluding the beautiful "Irish" Symphony. Of course, Prof. Stanford has taken Milton's poem as his source of inspiration, but there are no grounds of comparison between his symphony and the choral settings of Handel and Dr. Hubert Parry. The first movement, after a grave introduction, is appropriately bright and genial, and the second is delightfully pastoral. The slow movement, illustrative of the lines commencing "But hail" thou goddess sage and holy," is the most difficult to grasp on first acquaintance. The *finale*, with a happy introduction of the organ towards the close, is at once fresh and impressive. So much for the present on a work which most certainly does honour to its composer and to British musical art generally.

### *Musical Times* (1 April, 1895), p. 233

Professor Stanford's new Symphony is not a thing to be judged off-hand, and while, so to speak, it is flying past the observer. Besides, it would be a poor compliment to speak with an air of authority after one glance at a work upon which an eminent musician has exhausted the resources of his art. "L'Allegro ed il Pensieroso" must be heard again and studied on paper, if haply that is possible, before such an attitude can safely be assumed by critics unless, indeed, they wish to pass as mere recorders of impressions. But, while reserving definite opinions regarding the Symphony as a whole, we may say that a large part of it appealed to one's sense of satisfaction, by the charm and propriety of the themes, and their skilful as well as picturesque treatment. Everywhere could be seen the deft hand of the practised musician, going straight to the point and working out results with ease and certainty. Our feeling is that the Symphony will largely improve upon acquaintance and take its place among Mr. Stanford's best works.

### *The Times*, 21 March 1895

The most important feature of last night's concert was the first performance of a new symphony in D minor (op. 56) by Professor Stanford, dedicated to the Philharmonic Society and its conductor. For the subject of this, the composer's fifth work of the kind, he has taken Milton's "L'Allegro" and "Il Pensieroso," a couple of poems which do not at first sight appear

very suitable for symphonic illustration, unless indeed their order were inverted, or their contents mingled by some such expedient as that to which Handel's librettist had recourse. Such difficulties as that, for example, as ending in sombre tones a work setting out in all gaiety, have been most successfully overcome, and not the slightest want of harmony is felt in passing from the first two movements to the last. The opening lines, "Hence, loathed Melancholy," give the suggestion of the grave and massive introduction, and the themes of the first allegro are delightfully gay, while their treatment is always interesting and effective. A realistic burst of laughter in the brass instruments is hardly needed to add to the merriment of the movement, but it undoubtedly gives an extra point and makes for effect. The second movement, occupying the place of scherzo, is suggested by the pictures of pastoral life, and the hunting horns, the "jocund rebeck," and even the homely chanticleer are heard in succession; a trio in two-four time is treated imitatively throughout, and contrasts well with the scherzo itself. The second division of the work leaves us in no doubt as to its intention; the long-drawn melodies of the andante, a very beautiful movement in B flat, pain the charms of melancholy in glowing colours; this movement, like the first, is in no sense a piece of programme music, the illustrative function of the art being reserved for the *finale*, which opens impressively with a suggestion of the "far-off curfew," continues with a passage of great dignity though in rapid tempo, apparently meant to be taken with reference to "gorgeous Tragedy," and at the climax of the movement the organ is introduced with excellent effect. The main theme of the *finale* has remarkable notability of character, and exactly fits the subject; yet the sections is not lacking in energy of fire. An impressive passage spreading through the whole orchestra from a single trumpet-note brings to a fine close a work of striking originality of conception and masterly treatment. It produced a powerful effect upon the audience, and the composer, who conducted his work in person, was recalled and warmly applauded. It should be added that the analysis of the new work, signed with Mr. Stanford's initials, contained all that was wanted-viz., extracts from the poem and a brief summary of the musical material.

## APPENDIX XI

### SYMPHONY NO. 6 REVIEWS

**London Symphony Orchestra,' *The Musical Times*, vol. 47, no. 756 (1 February 1906), p. 121**

The programme of the fourth concert at Queen's Hall on January 18 included Sir Charles Stanford's new Symphony in E flat (Op. 94), written 'in honour of the life-work of a great artist, George Frederick Watts'; and it was performed for the first time under the direction of the composer. According to the analyst the work has no programme, and should be listened to simply as music. The composer, however, mentally worked to Watts' fine piece of sculpture called 'Physical energy,' and to his two pictures, 'Love and Life,' and 'Love and Death'; but so clear is the form of the various movements, so straightforward the developments of the thematic material, that the work may be fully appreciated quite apart from the source of sources whence the composer sought inspiration. There are many modern works in which the form is so absolutely determined by what is known as the 'poetic basis,' that knowledge more or less of the latter is indispensable. In the case of the symphony under notice such knowledge, however, is decidedly interesting. In the opening *Allegro* the syncopations of the principal theme seem to betoken rugged strength, a salient quality of the great painter's personality, while the phrase for trombones which follows the melodious second theme is naturally associated with Death. The slow movement is based on a flowing theme, the *Scherzo* is full of rhythmical life, while the *Finale* – if not perhaps the strongest of the four movements – has many points of interest. Throughout the work the scoring is admirable. At the close of the performance Sir Charles was recalled several times to the platform.

***The Athenaeum*, no. 4083 (27 January 1906), p. 114**

Sir Charles V. Stanford's new Symphony in E flat, "in honour of the life work of a great artist: George Frederick Watts," was performed for the first time, at the fourth London Symphony Concert at Queen's Hall, on the 18<sup>th</sup> inst., under the direction of the composer. The arts of painting and music have features in common, and frequently terms belonging to the former are employed in describing the latter. Again, the symphonic poem has largely taken the place of the old symphony, and the form is as a rule determined by the poetic basis, and in some cases by a written programme. Sir Charles Stanford keeps to the old title and to the usual symphonic form. The analyst states that his work has no programme – that it should be listened to simply as music. There is certainly no written programme for the public, but the composer had one in his mind whilst at work, or rather a series of programmes, notably two pictures, 'Love and Life' and 'Love and Death' by the artist in whose honour the work has been written. That is the right, the highest kind of programme music. There is no harm, however, in trying to trace the influence of those pictures on the general character of the music; there is no doubt, for instance, that the phrase played by the tragic trombones in the

first movement typifies Death the composer, however, offers a symphony, and not the modern substitute for it.

One thing strikes us particularly in the music: the absence of anything sensational or extravagant. Much modern music produces an immediate effect by means of strange rhythms, strong colouring, and striking contrasts; yet when one comes to study the scores the actual musical substance often proves to be very slight. In the symphony under notice all the interest created is produced by natural, not artificial means. The workmanship is sound, and there is organic development; the orchestral colouring, too, is of the best. We must frankly say that the impression produced on us was not strong, because, in spite of all the skill displayed, the thematic material of the first and last movements did not strike us as very original; but possibly familiarity with the work might modify our opinion. We listen again and again to the symphonies of the classical masters, and we find that each fresh hearing seems to reveal new and unexpected beauties. With our native composers years may – do, in fact, in many cases – elapse before a second hearing of their works is granted. How, then, can they be properly appreciated, properly judged? The slow movement of Sir Charles's symphony seems to us the most poetical, and the Scherzo the most piquant. The performance was good, though the composer did not display quite his usual firmness and energy.

### ***The Times, 19 January 1906***

The fourth concert of the London Symphony Orchestra, given yesterday afternoon in the Queen's Hall, was a special success, as the players were full of their triumphs last week in Paris. Sir C. V. Stanford was the conductor, and the central attraction of the programme was a new symphony by him, No. 6 in E flat, inscribed "In honour of the life work of a great artist." It is an open secret that the great artist whose work suggested the musical composition was G. F. Watts; and although the composer is naturally averse from being numbered among writers of "programme music," it is quite clear that the four movements are representative of the four different aspects of Watts's art. But Beethoven's motto, "Mehr Ausdruck der Empfindung als Mahleren," has been duly kept in mind, and there is no childish reproduction of details, and no catalogue of representative themes is necessary for the hearer's enjoyment. That enjoyment must be very great, wherever worthy hearers are found; for the symphony is not only masterly in construction, infinitely dextrous in treatment, and earnest in artistic aim, but it has genuine inspiration, and the strongly imaginative work of the painter is worthily reflected in the music it has suggested. At a first hearing the individuality of theme, which is obviously to be identified with Death and the gracious, solemn beauty movement are what most arrest attention this latter, in which a cor anglais has a very important part, is of unforgettable charm, and its long-drawn phrases recall the kind of ample dignity which the painter loved to put into his female figures. The scherzo may or may not have been inspired by the charming picture of a cupid angling, called "good Luck to your Fishing!" but as pure music it is of deliciously winsome quality; in the finale we are evidently to be reminded of some of the equestrian work of Watts, whether of the statue "Physical Energy" or of the imaginative series of the Horse of the Apocalypse we cannot say. The descending scale of the

“Death” theme and the noble vigour of the main subject of the movement make the latter theory the more attractive. The themes labelled “Love” and “Death” appear together near the end, and the broad energy of the movement finds a splendid climax in a peaceful and most dignified coda.

## APPENDIX XII

### SHAMUS O'BRIEN PRÉCIS AND REVIEW

#### Note

*Shamus O'Brien* was, by far, Stanford's most successful operatic work and is, of course, enormously important when considering any aspect of the composer's Irish identity given its subject matter and his later decision to censure the work. The following substantial article from *The Times*, reproduced in full, provides a full breakdown of the opera's plot with details of characters, as well as a review of a performance in March 1896. It is reproduced here to provide those readers unfamiliar with the opera and its reception with an overview of its main features where it would not otherwise have been appropriate to include these in the main body of the thesis.

#### **'Opera Comique Theatre,' *The Times*, 3 March 1896**

Now that the lighter forms of comic opera have for the most part become merged in dreary imitations of the music-halls, it is not unlikely that the public interest may revive in *opera comique* of the higher class – that form, in fact, that has given almost as many masterpieces to musical art as have been cast in the severer types of dramatic music. It remains to be seen whether the class of entertainment provided at the theatre which bears its name will prove attractive to the general public, but, if it do not, it will certainly not be the fault of either of the book or the music of *Shamus O'Brien*, the “romantic comic opera” produced last night with every prospect of success.

The touching ballad by J. Sheridan Le Fanu, printed in his brother's reminiscences, has been made the groundwork of a two-act libretto by Mr. G. H. Jessop, set to music by Professor Stanford, than whom no one living possesses more fully the secret of adapting the characteristics of Irish music to the recognized forms of artistic structure. The gallant rebel inducted with every domestic virtue, his tearful, anxious wife, her irrepressibly jocund sister, and her sometime lover turned informer out of revenge – these are easily recognized as types that have done duty as the puppets of many a melodrama; but they are differentiated from their predecessors on the stage by many signs of vitality, not the least of which is that the old plan of dividing one thrilling “situation” from another by means of comic scenes is quite discarded. While there are here no low comedians who are responsible for the “relief,” each of the characters is represented as possessing a sense of the humorous as well as the pathetic side of things. The sources of laughter and the tears are never far apart; but in the Celtic nature they are surely nearer together than in any other race, and which might be felt as incongruity in a conventional English piece is not only natural in this “story of Ireland 100 years ago,” but actually gives it a rare and most welcome air of veracity. The workmanship of the libretto is admirable, the dialogue being direct, concise, and natural, yet brimming over with genuine Irish humour, while the lyrics have plenty of point and charm, as well as feeling

for rhythmic variety. At the opening of the first act news is brought by no less celebrated a person than Father O'Flynn in person that there is a price on the head of Shamus O'Brien for the part he bore in the recently-quelled rebellion. Hering that the soldiers are coming after the outlaw, Nora, his wife, puts a basket on the roof of her cottage as a signal to the villagers to rally round him if necessary. By hastily assuming the disguise of the "village nateral," or idiot, Shamus not only gets clear of the house that is being searched, but induces the soldiers to take him as guide to the whereabouts of Shamus himself. He lands them in a neighbouring bog, whence they are brought back by Mike Murphy, Nora's rejected lover who has bargained with the Captain for the reward offered by the Government. Shamus, who has returned in time to foot it in a reel got up to celebrate his escape, is taken effectually at the close of the act. During his absence the wife's misgivings, aroused by her having heard the warning banshee on two successive occasions, are turned to absolute despair by the third repetition of the dismal sound. Her sister, Kitty, has attracted the English captain, and they manage to obtain the favour of an interview with the prisoner in the barrack square and to be present at the very summary proceedings at the close of which he is condemned to be hanged. On the way to execution the pathetic situation in the ballad is introduced; in the middle of a defiant "last speech" Shamus catches sight of Nora and his child, and breaks down utterly. After a touching scene of farewell he makes his confession to Father O'Flynn, who, acting on a sudden impulse of humanity, cuts the cords and sets him free. The soldiers fire a volley at the escaped rebel, but only succeed in bringing down the traitor Mike, who has tried to stop Shamus. The curtain falls as the rebel is heard singing a snatch of a song occurring in the first act, with the refrain, now taken up jeeringly by the villagers, "Oh, boys, listen to Shamus!"

The characteristics of Irish music have been so assimilated by the composer that, although he has only used two actual traditional tunes, many of the themes in the work might easily pass for genuine treasures of national song. The two tunes used are the popular "Father O'Flynn" and an English march of the Cromwellian period, known as "The Glory of the West." The former appears at the beginning of the overture, at the head of a number of themes taken from different parts of the opera, for in this matter of structure the traditions of *opera comique* are as strictly adhered to as they are elsewhere. That the theme of the Irish tune already mentioned is freely alluded to when the kindly priest is to the fore will readily be imagined, and his song with chorus in praise of Shamus makes a capital opening number, words and music being both taking and appropriate. A half-sentimental, half-humorous song for the light-hearted Kitty, "Where is the man that is coming to marry me?" has a lovely tune, used afterwards as an *entr'acte*; and her coquettish little duet with the Captain is delightfully piquant. Shamus's vigorous and defiant song, "I've sharpened the sword for the sake of Ould Erin," reappears with excellent effect in the final scene, and the little song and ensemble in which the neighbours are called to help is a spirited and original number, leading into what is likely to be the most popular thing in the opera, the song with the refrain, "Listen to Shamus," before referred to. The treatment of the refrain, at first sung by Nora alone, afterwards by quartet and chorus, is ingenious and in the highest degree effective. The arrival of the soldiers and the outlaw's impersonation of the idiot make a very effective scene. Shamus insists on going through a long catalogue of places where he will not be found, and after he has taken the soldiers off, the villagers, who are of course in the secret, proceed to celebrate the escape

by a carouse. The drinking song, with its curious haunting rhythm, is followed by Nora's description, to the priest alone, of the weird cry of the banshee that she has twice heard. The gloom of this fine number, a mezzo-soprano solo, is of course heightened by all the merry music that has gone before, which soon is resumed when a jig is started to the accompaniment of the Irish bagpipe – an instrument of which the sweet, soft tones are in strange contrast to the screechings of the Scottish variety. Shamus's return and the spirited reel in which he takes part are again interrupted by Nora's forebodings, and this time the banshee's weird wailings are actually heard, giving grim significance to the re-entry of the soldiers and the capture of Shamus. The first of the two scenes into which the second act is divided contains, as its prominent musical numbers, a love song for the Captain, a good deal less characteristic than what has preceded it; an admirable duet between the Captain and Mike; a most effective song for the latter, "Ochone, when I used to be young"; a charming ensemble for the girls, who force their way into the barrack square; a dainty little duet, "A cautious 'if,'" for Kitty and the Captain; and a terzetto in which the priest urges a worldly-wise policy in the words "follow the jumping of the cat." All these prepare the way for the most serious number of the work, the farewell duet for the husband and wife, which, expressive and well written as it is, will not be the portion most easily remembered. Nora's wild interruption of the trial and the encouraging cries of the village folk are the only remaining musical numbers of the scene, for the trial proceedings are conducted with laudable brevity and in spoken dialogue with slight musical accompaniment. The second scene of the act has more elaborate recitatives, and conforms more nearly than the rest to serious opera. Nora's piteous accents as she takes her place by the village cross make, indeed, no slight demands upon the histrionic powers of the artist. With the roll of the side-drum is combined, most skilfully and impressively, the wailing "keen" of the chorus, and this is mistaken by Nora for another manifestation of the foreboding spirit. The procession, with the condemned man standing in the rough cart, makes a scene of the most touching kind, and the climax, where, as before noticed, Shamus breaks down at the sight of his wife and child, is admirably treated in the music. The *dénouement* passes with little except the resumption of the refrain before referred to.

By one of those fortunate accidents which have made the fortune of so many dramatic enterprises, the principal part and the singer to who it is intrusted suit one another to absolute perfection. Mr. Denis O'Sullivan is an ideal representative of the handsome, defiant rebel; in the first and last scenes he is quite irresistible, and throughout his capital stage presence and fine voice do him good service. He makes the most of the scene in disguise, and that he has a slight tendency to be a little melodramatic in style is scarcely a defect in a part like this. Mr. Joseph O'Mara, as Mike, proves that he is not merely a capital tenor singer, but an excellent artist; he completely realizes the hopeless meanness of the part, but, whether by the sympathetic timbre of his voice or by the way he gives the humorous passages of the part, he manages to enlist the sympathy, not merely the admiration, of the audience. His duet with the captain was encored; it is sure to be one of the hits of the piece. Mr. W. H. Stephens, as the captain, acts with suitable stiffness, and sings in good style; and Mr. Magrath is an excellent Father O'Flynn, though he has not quite the joviality of disposition we are led to expect both from the song and his part in the opera. Miss Kirkby Lunn enacts the trying part of Nora very

cleverly, and with a grasp of the character that is surprising in an artist of so little experience, this being her first appearance since she ceased to be a student. Considerable command of pathetic expression is revealed, and the music is sung most artistically. Miss Maggie Davies acts and sings with great spirit and no little charm as Kitty, and she and Mr. Stephens were compelled to repeat part of their pretty duet. A chorus of quite exceptional excellence has been engaged, and the beautiful instrumentation, which is a matter of course in works by the Irish master, was done justice to last night under his own direction, though the wood wind was a little weak occasionally. For the subsequent nights of the season the valuable services of Mr. Henry J. Wood as conductor have been secured. The reception of the work was most enthusiastic, and, after many calls for performers, the librettist, and the composer, Sir Augustus Harris made a short speech. It was no doubt a bold experiment to trust the fortunes of so important a work to a band of singers hardly any of whom could have been said to have established themselves as popular favourites; but the plan which succeeded at the beginning of the long series of what were afterwards called the Savoy operas, at this same theatre, proves again successful, and, as far as it is possible to predict, a real success is in store for the new work. An interesting story, told in dialogue that is bright and to the point, and music which, while it delights the musician by its refinement, contains nothing that can seem abstruse to persons of ordinary intelligence, should be enough to attract the attention of the public for some time to come, to say nothing of the general excellence of the mounting and stage management, for the latter of which Mr. Richard Temple is responsible.

## APPENDIX XIII

### SYMPHONY NO. 7 REVIEWS

#### *The Times*, 23 February 1912

The first of the new works written for the centenary celebrations of the Philharmonic Society, a Symphony (No. 7, in D minor) by Sir Charles Stanford, was brought forward at Queen's Hall last night and conducted by the composer. It is short, containing only three movements, and that in itself is a feature of distinction at the present time, when symphonic form shows a tendency to expand in bulk with each new example, so that the prosecution of a new Symphony is apt to cripple the whole of the rest of a concert programme. As in length so in other respects – the musical material used, its handling, in the orchestral texture – a certain moderation is characteristic of the whole design. A less experienced composer would have compressed too much into the space and crowded his score, or embarked upon themes which he could not justify within his own limits; but in Sir Charles Stanford's score there is neither waste space nor overcrowding; the whole is planned with masterly control of such resources as he uses.

The first *allegro* begins without any preamble with an accompaniment figure for strings above which the gracefully flowing principal melody is placed. The method is obviously that of Mozart's G minor Symphony, but the melody is quite fresh, as is also the plaintive second subject given to the oboe, and the extraordinarily deft weaving of this slender material, the crisp ending coming just at the moment when an elaborate *coda* would be tedious, holds one entranced and leaves one refreshed. The second movement is an equally unpretentious minute with trio, and as the trio is built on a variation of the minuet theme and every repetition of that theme has some further rhythmic variation, the total result comes very near to a free variation form. This is the only apparent weakness in the plan of the Symphony, for the last movement is actually a set of variations on a melody, and the two taken together give rather too much of this particular species of development. At the risk of seeming to hoist Sir Charles Stanford with his own petard, we would suggest that the middle movement might have been more simply carried out, with considerable gain in contrast of expression. The *andante* melody of the *finale* brings a series of exceedingly interesting variations, of which No. 3 for clarinet above a triplet figure for strings is peculiarly gracious, and No. 4, led by the trombones, gives a touch of real nobility to the scheme. It ends with a free fantasia upon the melody (*allegro giusto*), thus combining the feeling of a slow movement and a final quick one. In the course of the *Allegro* the theme of the first movement has a place and helps to give unity to the whole design.

While it is quite evident that Sir Charles Stanford has in this Symphony set a conscious limit upon his means, the work cannot be passed by as an academic essay in an old style. He has said what he wanted to say and produced a beautiful result, and while there is nothing new in

its technique there is nothing stale or secondhand in its feeling. It rings perfectly true, and it was evidently enjoyed by the audience, who recalled the composer many times at the end.

**‘Philharmonic Society,’ *The Musical Times*, Vol. 53, No. 830 (Apr. 1, 1912), p. 257**

A new Symphony (No. 7, in D minor) by Sir Charles Stanford, was the most interesting feature of the concert given on February 22. In some respects the character of the Symphony was a surprise because so simple and straightforward a composition was hardly expected in these times, when a new orchestral work is so often a melancholy psychological problem. Whilst listening to Sir Charles Stanford's music one could imagine Mozart benignly approving. The Symphony is in three movements. The first Allegro is a joyous outpouring easy to follow. The second movement – a Minuet and Trio – is in a kind of variation form, and the Finale is also based on variations. As the Symphony is practicable for ordinary resources it will no doubt be often heard. The composer conducted, and was recalled many times. The remainder of the concert consisted of Schumann's Pianoforte concerto, admirably played by Mr. Buhlig, and Miss Wilna sang some capital new songs by Mr. Landon Ronald, who conducted the concert.

***The Observer*, 25 February, 1912**

Sir Charles Villiers Stanford has once again endeavoured to dam the stream of modernity, which is, according to his lights, the curse of contemporary musical production. His Seventh Symphony must be regarded as a composer's expression of what music ought to be. This, of course, is a very difficult matter at the present moment and discretion when one is walking blindfolded is always the better part of valour. It is necessary to keep to well-trodden and well-fenced paths for the sake of complete security. Whether a representative teacher should indulge in these methods of retaining his equilibrium is entirely a matter of opinion, although one is inclined to suspect an endeavour to teach the new generation to toddle when it has already learned to run.

Let us look at the matter from another point of view. Is the scope of music entirely exhausted? Are its boundaries indisputably defined? Has the last word been spoken; and if so, who uttered it? The modern composer is working under the impression that the language of music is capable of a fuller expression, that the vocabulary of his predecessors was extremely limited, that it is his business to extend and expand it, and that he can do all this without interference with the laws of art, which are as permanent as those of astronomy.

Sir Charles Stanford's new work, played at the Philharmonic Society's concert on Thursday evening, was written, according to the programme book, in February, 1911, "and for a modern work has some unexpected features. In the first place it dispenses with all extra instruments; there is not even a tuba. Secondly, it plays for twenty-five minutes, and thus corresponds in length to the Mozart symphonies." The not entirely unexpected feature was that the symphony is *not* a modern work, not because the tuba was absent or because it

occupied only twenty-five minutes. We can grant Sir Charles an immaculate control of form; in fact, the feature of the work was the extremely clever way in which the not too significant melodie [sic] line of the *Minuette* was subjected to all kinds of rhythmical variation, and the insignificant theme of the Finale subjected to the same treatment. The workmanship was in every respect masterly, and if the basic material, melodia and harmonic, had not been so insidiously healthy in its exaggeration of the vitality of the past, the symphony might have had some moments of distinction.

A test of the weakness was that the phrases absolutely refused to be remembered. Wagner long ago discovered the difficulty of writing a new melody on a diatonic scale. In many instances he conceived intertwining and chromatically associated harmonies which provided him with his outline of original melody. The model is one which few modern composers have refused to accept, and it is to the developed sensitiveness of the ear in its full appreciation of harmonic progression, as distinct from scale progression, that we owe everything of note and of probable permanence in modern composition. In his endeavour to return to simplicity, Sir Charles positively declines to be even as daring in his harmonies as Schubert was, nearly a hundred years ago, in some of his early songs. It was only in the second variation of the Finale that a little colour was thrown into the work by certain modulations independent of the tonic and dominant harmonies, with their off-shoots, of nearly related keys.

The orchestration was adequate, rather too much, however, being made of the trick of tossing short phrases carelessly from woodwind to strings or vice versa, and the final Coda was quite Rossinian in its instrumental vitality. The composer conducted his own work.

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