

VICTORIAN AND MUSICIAN: CHARLES VILLIERS STANFORD'S
SYMPHONIES IN CONTEXT

By

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“From everything, a little remained.”
-- R. E. K.

In loving memory of
John E. “Jack” Shaffer, 1928–2003.

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Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School
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Charles Villiers Stanford (1852–1924), Irish–born English composer, stood along with Hubert Parry, Alexander Mackenzie, and Edward Elgar as the first generation of the new English musical renaissance. These composers sought to elevate the standards of English music and served to pave the way for a distinctly English musical style after nearly two centuries of neglect. As a teacher, Stanford is best remembered as professor of composition at the Royal College of Music; his pupils included such notable composers as Gustav Holst, Ralph Vaughan Williams, and Frank Bridge. He was also an eminent conductor who was instrumental in securing English premieres of several of Brahms's compositions. An active composer himself with a prodigious upbringing, Stanford's best known works included church and choral music. His symphonies, however, are little known and rarely, if ever, performed today.

This thesis, therefore, offers a theoretical exploration of each of Stanford's seven symphonies within historical context. Several of these works, while stylistically

derivative of the contemporary German symphonic tradition, employ unique aspects in terms of subject matter, the very essence of a distinctly Victorian art music. Since Stanford is too often neglected in many historical accounts of the symphony, this study also serves to portray the composer as an important figure in the development of the English symphony.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Sir Charles Villiers Stanford (1852–1924), Irish-born English composer, represents a mere strata of English musical history. After his death and even to the present day, his name is synonymous with English church music. He composed numerous anthems for voices and organ, five Masses, six complete settings of the Anglican church service, and many hymns and carols. However, this seemingly vast array of sacred music comprises only a fraction of his total output. He also composed vast amounts of chamber music, solo piano and organ works, three piano concertos, two violin concertos, six Irish Rhapsodies, and seven virtually unknown symphonies.

In early twentieth-century scholarship, Stanford receives mention among his immediate contemporaries Hubert Parry, Alexander Mackenzie, and Edward Elgar, the first shot fired in the English musical Renaissance. In his own lifetime, Elgar earned increasing international praise as the leading English composer while Stanford, by then associated with Mackenzie and Parry as the “Parry group,” was written off as a dry academic. Indeed, his (Stanford’s) own students at the Royal College of Music, who include such figures as Frank Bridge, Gustav Holst, Ivor Gurney, and Ralph Vaughan Williams, are best known for shedding the Teutonic shackles of English Victorian music. After his death, Stanford’s accomplishments as a composer were forgotten, or at the least swept under the proverbial rug.

One of the most oversimplified statements concerning nineteenth-century English music is that the English symphony echoed the German symphonic traditions of the more conservative Romantics—i.e. Mendelssohn, Schumann, and Brahms—for its adherence to

classical forms, balanced structures, and emotional self-control. Yet, in the postmodern world, the century-old view of the Victorian culture as a collection of prudish, shallow, and reticent individuals can no longer hold ground. Matthew Sweet's *Inventing the Victorians* (2001) states that "suppose that everything we think we know about the Victorians is wrong. That, in the century which has elapsed since 1901, we have misread their culture, their history, their lives—perhaps deliberately, in order to satisfy our sense of ourselves as liberated Moderns."¹ The musicologist Ruth Solie, in light of her discipline's focus on the historic professionals of music (composers, performers, and critics), offers a paradigm shift in that "a culture's musical practices, its attitudes toward music . . . are revealed more by the ubiquitous and everyday conversations of music's users than by the rulings of the experts and professionals, often to the chagrin of the latter."² In following the newly-paved highway of Victorian musical studies, this thesis will focus on the symphonies of Charles Villiers Stanford within the context of his life and surrounding culture, as well as his own belief system as teacher, political thinker, and musician.

Only a few sources since Stanford's death have dealt with his works in a purely objective light. Most important is Jeremy Dibble's definitive biography *Charles Villiers Stanford: Man and Musician* (2001); although, analytical discussion of the music itself takes a back seat to the plethora of biographical detail. Several primary sources were consulted in the preparation of this study: the composer's own texts—*Studies and Memories* (1908), *Musical Composition: A Short Treatise for Students* (1911), *Pages from an Unwritten Diary* (1914), *A History of Music* (1930)—his obituary notices in *The Times*, and several critical accounts of first performances of each of the symphonies. Chapter one comprises a brief survey of Stanford's career, political views, his teaching, and the

¹ Matthew Sweet, *Inventing the Victorians* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001): ix.

² Ruth A. Solie, *Music in Other Words: Victorian Conversations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004): 2.

people in his immediate circles with whom he worked. The second chapter, which is the meat of the study, comprises historical and analytical surveys of each of the seven symphonies. The conclusion provides the author's own view of Stanford the Victorian and Stanford the composer within the broad contexts of English music historiography.

CHAPTER 2 BIOGRAPHICAL OVERVIEW

Born in Dublin on 30 September 1852, Charles Villiers Stanford had a childhood wrought with musical and intellectual enlightenment. His father, John Stanford, was an eminent lawyer and keen amateur bass singer.³ On various occasions, the Stanford household frequented performances from amateur and professional musicians; the violin virtuoso Joseph Joachim even paid occasional visits. The young Charles's early education was rooted in classics and he received his early musical training from three of Dublin's leading musicians: Robert Stewart, Joseph Robinson, and Michael Quarry. The latter instructed Stanford on piano, as he himself was a former pupil of the pianist Ignaz Moscheles.⁴ Stewart also instructed the young Irishman on the piano and, presumably, the organ. He had a reputation as a recitalist through his post as organist at Saint Patrick's Cathedral, a position he held for 50 years, and for his overtly French style of playing.⁵ Robinson conducted the Antient Concert Society for 29 years (1834–1863)⁶ and the Cambridge University Choral Society, to which he had been appointed in 1837. In 1848, the conductor, along with Stanford's father, founded the Irish Academy of

³ From this account and several modern sources, John Stanford sang at a professional level. His son stipulated that the elder Stanford could sing "from high F to low C [and] was one of the finest in quality in style that I have ever heard anywhere" (27). John Stanford did not pursue a profession career as a singer because of practical reasons. Charles Villiers Stanford, *Pages from an Unwritten Diary* (London: Edward Arnold, 1914): 27–29.

⁴ Little is known of Michael Quarry. There are records that he studied in Leipzig and returned to Dublin and took up temporary employment at the Royal Irish Academy of Music, resigning in 1882. Jeremy Dibble, *Charles Villiers Stanford: Man and Musician* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 26.

⁵ Stewart studied in Paris with Lefebure-Wély, the organist at the Madeleine. *Ibid.*, 22–23.

⁶ Robinson founded this organization when he was merely 18 years old. *Ibid.*, 21–22.

Music. Robinson is also noteworthy for bringing Mendelssohn's music to the Emerald Isle, and for his dedication to the musical growth of Ireland.⁷ After his teacher's death in 1898, Charles Stanford provided the following encomium:

To Ireland he was devoted, and no inducements to desert it for a more lucrative and fame-bringing centre of activity ever found favor in his eyes. Such personalities are rare, and their claim to recognition at the hands of posterity is irrefragable. The fact that a career is by choice and conviction circumscribed in extent impels the chronicler all the more to do justice to its merits when the work is closed and the worker silent; especially when those merits are the sort which would have compelled the widest admiration if their professor had so willed it.⁸

Despite his glowing admiration for the Irish conductor, Stanford felt that he had exhausted his musical resources in Dublin by the time he was a teenager.⁹ While his native city contained a wealth of traditional folk song and dance, it lacked "the wealth of chamber and orchestral music which was to be found across the seas."¹⁰ So, in the summer of 1862, the young Irishman journeyed to London to further his musical prospects.

In England, Stanford absorbed the artistic culture that surrounded him. He experienced for the first time the art works of the Pre-Raphaelites, notably Leighton, Millias, and Watts¹¹ In music, he studied composition with Arthur O' Leary and piano with Ernst Pauer. Stanford records that the latter instructed him "principally in Mozart" and that he (Pauer) boasted to be a pupil of Mozart's second son, Wolfgang.¹² The stimulus of his visit and lessons conjoined with his father's connection and interest in all

⁷ Robinson may have sown the seeds of Hibernian folklore into Stanford's young mind, for the soon-to-be composer mentions that his (Robinson's) most valuable work in music lied in his arrangements of Irish folk songs (126). Charles Villiers Stanford, *Studies and Memories* (London: Archibald Constable and Company, 1908): 117–127.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 117–118.

⁹ He also studied violin with R. M. Levy (1811–1899). Dibble, *op. cit.*, 26.

¹⁰ Stanford, *Unwritten Diary*, 21.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹² *Ibid.*, 71.

things musical provided ample room for Stanford's compositional abilities to flower. In the following eight years, he composed church music, several songs, and two orchestral works, a Rondo for cello and orchestra (1869) and a Concert Overture in A minor (1870).

When he was 18 years old, he won his father's consent to pursue music as a career rather than giving into the elder Stanford's "hankering for the Bar."¹³ His father's only condition was that his son receive a general university education first, and then to pursue musical studies abroad. Charles Stanford matriculated to Queen's College, Cambridge on an organ scholarship in 1870.¹⁴ While at Cambridge, Stanford maintained an active musical life. He composed his first Piano Concerto in B flat major (1874), the 2 *Novellettes* for piano (1874), 2 *Magnificat and Nunc dimittis* in F (1872) and E flat (1873) a handful of songs and part songs, and incidental music to Longfellow's play *The Spanish Student* (1871). He was also active as a conductor, assisting the then director of the Cambridge University Music Society, John Larkin Hopkins in 1871, and, subsequently, becoming full conductor of the same institution two years later. In 1873, Stanford moved to Trinity College to fulfill his newly-appointed duties as conductor; concurrently, he was also appointed as organist. As part of the agreement of his position, Stanford was able to study in Germany after his graduation.¹⁵

For six months in 1874 and 1875, Stanford studied in Leipzig on a recommendation by Sterndale Bennett,¹⁶ learning piano from Robert Papperitz and composition from Karl Reinecke, a renowned pianist, composer, conductor, and pedagogue. In the young composer's own words, "Leipzig was the best centre for [a student of composition]," for it had the best orchestra in Germany. "Weimar," states

¹³ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹⁴ He won a classical scholarship the following June.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 120.

¹⁶ While Stanford considered Bennett to be England's leading composer, he was uneasy about studying solely with him due to his lack of sympathy for any contemporary music. There was also little opportunity for composition students to hear their works performed due to poor conductor's and orchestras. *Ibid.*, 156; Dibble, *op. cit.*, 53.

Stanford, “was a much smaller centre, dominated by Liszt and his adherents, with no school save for the pianoforte” Dresden, at the time, “was mainly devoted to opera, and there was no outstanding figure, except Julius Reitz who was getting old. . . .”¹⁷ Stanford’s studies with Reinecke, however, were not to his liking:

Of all the dry musicians I have ever known he (Reinecke) was the most desiccated. He had not a good word for any contemporary composer, even for those of his own kidney. He loathed Wagner, once described Elsa to me as a young woman without brains enough to make out the list of clothes for the wash, sneered at Brahms, and had no enthusiasm of any sort. But he enjoyed himself hugely when he was expounding and writing canons, and had a fairly good idea of teaching them. His composition training had no method about it whatever. He occasionally made an astute criticism and that was all. He never gave a pupil a chance of hearing his own work, the only really valuable means of training, and the better the music, the less he inclined to encourage it. He was in fact the embodiment of the typical “Philister.”¹⁸

His dissatisfaction came to an end one year later when Joachim came to Leipzig and offered to refer the young Irishman to Friedrich Kiel, a composition teacher in Berlin. Under Kiel’s tutelage, Stanford realized that he, in fact, had learned little to nothing from Reinecke. Canon and organic development were key features in Kiel’s teaching,¹⁹ elements that are primary features in Stanford’s symphonic works. Although he busied himself with his lessons, Stanford managed to compose prolifically. A *Violin Concerto in D major* (1875); the part song *To Chloris* (1873); the set of six Heine songs, op. 4 (1874); and two choral works, *The Golden Legend* (1874–1875) and *The Resurrection* (1875) are but a few compositions from this period.

Stanford returned to Cambridge in 1877, after his “Wander-jahren,” to return to his position as director of the Cambridge University Musical Society and part-time

¹⁷ Stanford, *Unwritten Diary*, 143.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 156–157.

¹⁹ According to Stanford, Kiel founded his teaching of counterpoint not upon traditional cantus firmus, but Lutheran chorale tunes. *Ibid.*, 164–165.

“organ–blow[er]”²⁰ He had, by this point, readily established himself as a solid voice in British music. His Piano Suite, op. 2 and Toccata, op. 3 for piano were published two years prior, his First Symphony in B–flat major won second prize at the Alexandra Palace competition of 1876. Indeed, Stanford desired to establish himself as a composer, conductor, and performer. At Cambridge, he conducted several new and unfamiliar masterworks, including Schumann’s *Paradise and the Peri* and Brahms’s *Ein Deutsches Requiem*.²¹ He was also instrumental in securing the English premiere of Brahms’s First Symphony in C minor, under Joachim’s beat.²² Furthermore, Stanford enabled numerous performing artists such as Joachim, Edward Dannreuther, and Hans Richter to come to Cambridge. As a pianist, he performed in the Cambridge University Musical Society’s “Popular Concerts,” which featured chamber music.

As an active force in the development of British music, Stanford became acquainted with the artistic elite of London. In 1879, he met the Victorian poet and fellow Cambridge alumnus Alfred, Lord Tennyson. The composer became aware of Tennyson’s work when he was selected by the poet himself to write incidental music for his play *Queen Mary* in 1875.²³ Stanford subsequently set a number of Tennyson’s poems to song, including, *Is it the Wind of Dawn* (1898), *Jack Tar* (1900), and *Claribel*. The poet, apparently, had a keen ear for how his work should be set to music, for Stanford states the following with humility:

As he expressed it himself, he disliked music which went up when it ought to go down, and went down when it ought to go up. I never knew him wrong in his suggestions on this point. The most vivid instance I can recall

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 165.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 166.

²² The concert took place on 8 March 1877 and besides the symphony included Sterndale Bennett’s overture *The Wood Nymphs*, op. 20; Beethoven’s Violin Concerto, op. 61 (with Joachim as soloist); Brahms’s *A Song of Destiny*, op. 54; two violin solos by J. S. Bach, and Joachim’s own *Elegiac Overture*. *Ibid.*, 173–174.

²³ The music was, to Stanford’s misfortune, never performed, even after the poet pressed the administration of the Lyceum Theatre to reconsider. *Ibid.*, 228–229; Stanford, *Studies and Memories*, 90.

was about a line in the “Revenge”— “Was he devil or man? He was devil for aught they knew.” When I played him my setting, the word “devil” was set to a higher note in the question than it was in the answer; and the penultimate word “they” was unaccented. He at once corrected me, saying that the second word “devil” must be higher and stronger than the first, and the “they” must be marked. He was perfectly right, and I altered it accordingly. It was apparently a small point, but it was this insisting on perfection of detail which made him the most valuable teacher of accurate declamation that it was possible for a composer to learn from.²⁴

Lord Tennyson’s poem *In Memoriam* is the programmatic basis for Stanford’s Second Symphony in D minor (1879).

The 1880’s were stable and productive years for Stanford. In 1883, he joined the faculty of the newly–formed Royal College of Music as professor of composition and conductor of the orchestra. One of his crowning achievements at the institution was the initiation of an opera class. Stanford was particularly enthusiastic about opera, even if, to London audiences, it was nothing more than an exotic affair.²⁵ His own works in the medium stand as testaments to his own lifelong endeavor to install National Opera in England: *The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan* (1881), *Savonarola* (1884), his popular *Shamus O’Brien* (1896), *Much Ado about Nothing* (1901), *The Critic* (1916), and *The Traveling Companion* (1919). The composer was also appointed professor of music at Cambridge in 1887; he held both teaching positions until his death. During the latter part of the decade, two of Stanford’s works, the Third Symphony in F minor (1887), aptly–named the “Irish” for its use of folk songs, and his Fourth Symphony in F major (1888), gained international appeal. Both works received premieres in London and Berlin.

Stanford’s political views during his Cambridge years lead to an ever–increasing awareness of his Irish heritage, an aspect of his persona that crystalized in his manipulation of folk elements in his works. His fear of a major political change,

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 93.

²⁵ Stanford, *Unwritten Diary*, 317.

particularly the fruition of women's suffrage,²⁶ fueled his anxiety over the Irish question, the question of home rule.²⁷ Stanford gave his allegiance to Sir Edward Carson and James Craig of Ulster, who threatened to use armed resistance if necessary. He also signed the Covenant, which was made available for British sympathizers. In light of a heated debate between himself, a protestant and conservative unionist, and Erskine Childers, a hardcore republican, Stanford stuck to his argument that "Ireland does not want Home Rule. The place-hunters want it, but not the people."²⁸ Stanford's musical response to this and subsequent political issues concerning Irish nationalism²⁹ is found in his *Irish Rhapsody* No. 4 (1913), also known as *The Fisherman of Lough Neagh and What He Saw*; the *Ulster March* (1913), and his song settings of the Ulster poet John Stevenson's *Pat MaCarty, His Rhymes* (1910). However, his unionist leanings and career as a leading British musician tainted his nationalistic portraits with an English hue.³⁰

As a teacher, he adhered to the traditional methods. In his 1911 treatise for students, *Musical Composition*, Stanford referred to the string quartet as a decathlon of technical wizardry:

In chamber music it is still less possible to rely on colour as superior to design. It bears the same relation to orchestral treatment that water-colours do to oils. The texture and the mediums are thinner, and flaws of workmanship are all the more obvious. But in music the mastery of the one is essential as the mastery of the other.³¹

²⁶ Dibble, *op. cit.*, 403.

²⁷ The Home Rule Bill was squashed by Parliament in the 1880's; however, the issue did not die then and there. The Third Home Rule Bill was passed in the House of Commons, and despite the fact the it was repeatedly sent back by the Lords, it rose to royal decision in 1914. *Ibid.*, 403.

²⁸ *The Times* (9 April 1914); also quoted in *Ibid.*, 404.

²⁹ Particularly the threat of civil war and "gunrunning" in Howth, Kilcoole, and Ulster.

³⁰ Murphy concludes that Stanford used the Irish elements as entertainment in his nationalistic works, a view commonly held by the contemporary English population, and that he may never be considered a great Irish composer since Irish audiences of the day also viewed his works through the same lens (55). Michael Murphy, "Race, Nation, and Empire in the Irish Music of Sir Charles Villiers Stanford," *Music in Ireland, 1848–1998* (2000): 46–55.

³¹ Charles Villiers Stanford, *Musical Composition: A Short Treatise for Students* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1911), 111.

For Stanford, writing a string quartet or trio is the best training to learn the treatment of strings in an orchestral setting. Students who wish to understand the principles of the string orchestra will, in Stanford's opinion, undoubtedly benefit from exercises for a more intimate instrumental setting. He advocates six points for the student composer of a trio or quartet to follow: 1) the richness of a four-note chord in a string quartet, dependent on the quality and quantity of the overtone series, is desirable to the same chord on the piano; 2) there is little to be gained by unnecessary doubling, 3) it is important to secure contrast with limited material; 4) students should strive for a pure style and avoid placing any ill-fated note into the texture; 5) it is important to strive for complete freedom in the relation of the four instruments to each other, 6) it is important to strive for the equality of parts among all four voices.³² Indeed, these rules could be stretched to fit the larger symphonic form, of which he also held specific views:

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 trains of thought, and any defined programme of a movement given by one listener may be miles apart from one given by another 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.³³

³² *Ibid.*, 111–112.

³³ *Ibid.*, 155, 158.

While it is abundantly clear, as we shall see in the following chapter, that Stanford the symphonist matched sentiment with Stanford the teacher, it is remarkable that two of his students, Gustav Holst and Ralph Vaughan Williams, developed their own musical voice in spite of their master's advice. The latter provided the following statement:

[Stanford] has written some of the most beautiful music that has come from these islands. He realized that all art which is worth while must spring from its own soil. He made an exhaustive study of his own Irish folk music; some of his arrangements, notably those known to British hearers as "The Arbutus Tree" and "Father O' Flynn", are household words Of course in Stanford's enormous output there is bound to be a certain amount of dull music; but, after all, so there is in Beethoven and Bach. At times his very facility led him astray. he could, at will, use the technique of any other composer and often use it better than the original, as in "The Middle Witch", where he beats Delius at his own game. Sometimes he could not resist adding a clever touch which marred the purity of his inspiration, as in the sophisticated repetition of the words "lead the line" at the end of the otherwise beautiful song "Sailing at Dawn." The bright young things of the younger generation do not seem to know much about Stanford, and not having had the advantage of his teaching are inclined to ignore what he did and what he taught. But I believe he will return again. With the next generation the inevitable reaction will set in and Stanford will come into his own.³⁴

Stanford's personal friend and premiere biographer H. Plunket Greene waxed equally optimistic, if not hyperbolic:

[Stanford] loved his pupils. Some of them no doubt turned into ugly ducklings when he thought they were chickens. But the greatest tribute they could pay to him was, that they went away and worked out their own salvation for themselves. That is what a true teacher does. If he had not been a great composer, he would have been the greatest teacher the country has ever known. The whole of our modern school, which probably stands higher than that of any other country at the present moment, is absolutely founded on Stanford.³⁵

³⁴ Ralph Vaughan Williams, "Charles Villiers Stanford," in *National Music and Other Essays* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 195–196.

³⁵ Quoted in T. F. Dunhill, "C. V. Stanford: Some Aspects of His Life and Works," *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 53 (1927–1928): 42–65.

Yet, what Plunket Greene neglected to mention here and in his biography of the composer in 1935³⁶ was that, despite Stanford's excessive duties as conductor in the late–nineteenth and early–twentieth centuries³⁷, Edward Elgar succeeded Stanford and his contemporary and fellow Royal College faculty member Hubert Parry as the most popular English composer. A memorandum in Parry's diary in 1911 states:

C. V. S. (Stanford) wrote to Mackenzie on feeble grounds (!) against Elgar's 2nd. Symphony being given—as it allowed him such a disproportionate amount of time to other composers. He was furious because he did not get an invitation to the Coronation.³⁸

Despite the lack of public attention his music was receiving at this time, Stanford continued to compose until the end of his life. He turned a great deal of his productivity to *gebrauchsmusik* for educational purposes as well as various songs, piano pieces, and organ works for sheer economic reasons. He held fast to his pro–Teutonic Victorian and Edwardian heritage, even when postwar society negated such influence. He composed a few instrumental pieces; however, not one interested a single publisher.³⁹ His Seventh Symphony and last two string quartets were among this last repertoire. In a letter to his friend McEwen on Christmas Day 1923, Stanford discussed his unpopularity in the public eye:

I suppose I am more or less out of date. I see all the youngsters going ahead with stuff which I would not soil my pen and paper with, but my pen and paper appear to be unacceptable to those who publish and has to remain pen and paper.⁴⁰

³⁶ H. Plunket Greene, *Charles Villiers Stanford* (London, 1935).

³⁷ Stanford conducted the Bach choir from 1886–1902, the Leeds Philharmonic Society from 1897–1909, and the Leeds Triennial Festival from 1901–1910.

³⁸ Quoted in Jeremy Dibble, “Parry and Elgar: A New Perspective,” *The Musical Times* 125 (November 1984): 639–643.

³⁹ Dibble, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 449.

⁴⁰ Letter from Stanford to McEwen, 25 December 1923. Quoted in *Ibid.*, 449.

In the decades following Stanford's death, his music, save that for the church, fell into oblivion. Except for a brief call for a Stanford Society in 1952,⁴¹ the postwar world found no room for his pro-Teutonic, Victorian elegance and classical style.

⁴¹ B. E. Lamble, "A Stanford Society?" *The Musical Times* 93/1317 (November 1952), 509.

CHAPTER 3 THE SYMPHONIES

Symphony No. 1 in B flat

In 1875, the Alexandra Palace reopened after it burned down to years prior. In order to attract attention and to regain its former status as a leading concert venue in London, the Palace administration created a contest for a new symphony. The venture failed, but the competition attracted 46 submissions from various aspiring composers. All submissions were judged by Macfarren and Joachim. One of the aspiring composers was the 23-year-old Charles Stanford. Until this time he had merely dabbled in large orchestral forms.⁴² Moreover, the young composer sought to test his compositional skill in the larger international arena of symphonic form. The contest proved to be a valuable opportunity for Stanford, for his work, the Symphony No. 1 in B flat, took the second prize. The first prize was, coincidentally, to Macfarren's pupil and son-in-law Francis Davenport for his Symphony in D minor. The Irishman dedicated the work to the tenor Arthur Duke Coleridge, a friend of the composer's at Cambridge.

Stanford's Symphony in B flat is a mature work and, by far, the most substantial work of his youth. The tempo markings for each of the work's four movements appear as follows: I) Larghetto – Allegro vivace; II) Scherzo in Ländler tempo – Trio 1) Presto–Trio 2) Poco piú lento; III) Andante tranquillo; IV) Finale – Allegro molto.

⁴² He composed two large-scale choral works: *The Golden Legend* for solo voices, chorus, and orchestra in 1874 and *The Resurrection* for chorus, orchestra, and organ in 1875. *The Golden Legend* never received a premiere nor publication. Stanford also composed music for the stage: *The Spanish Student*, incidental music to H. W. Longfellow's play in 1871 and *Queen Mary*, incidental music to a play by Alfred Lord Tennyson in 1876. Stanford's score to *Queen Mary* received a premiere and publication. The composer also wrote a rondo for cello and orchestra in 1869, a concert overture in 1870, a piano concerto in B flat in 1874, and a violin concerto in D in 1875. All of these works, however, remain unpublished.

The first movement opens with an extended introduction whose opening motive is later transformed into the movement's second theme. Soli and solo instrumental writing abound in this movement. For example, the clarinets present the first theme, which is later taken over by the trombones after a series of episodes. In the movement's recapitulation, a solo cello presents the second theme. The triumphant coda features the trumpet section fanfaring the primary theme, though augmented in rhythm. While these features are not unique to the symphonic repertoire, they demonstrate the young Stanford's command of orchestral timbres, an element that is indeed a feature of the composer's later mature symphonies.

The second movement comprises a scherzo and two contrasting trios. While the placement of this form in the second movement is unusual in itself, the scherzo involves a ländler rhythm, an element commonly found in the symphonies of Franz Schubert. The first trio section is cast in duple meter, owing to the scherzo-and-trio movements of the symphonies of Robert Schumann. The second trio section, in triple meter, involves the woodwinds and strings presenting a descending scalar pattern in canon.

Stanford's personal musical fingerprints are found in the third movement. Muted violins and violas provide a hushed quality throughout the piece. The second subject, a haunting melody with strains of sweet melancholy, is presented by the French horns, evoking the style of Irish folk music. A solo violin appears towards the end of the movement in a rubato style, complete with rhapsodic arpeggios and trills akin to an Irish lament. The high-spirited Finale further corroborates Stanford's mastery of the orchestral pallet. Driving repeated notes are key features of the primary subject, which Stanford treats in a canon between strings and brass. The development section includes a fugato based on the main theme, another characteristic of his mature style.

In general, this work "owes much to the strength and optimism of Schumann's *"Rhenish" Symphony.*"⁴³ It is clear, however, that Stanford's First Symphony does not

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 79.

owe its clear, masterful orchestration to that of Schumann's *oeuvre*. The work remains unpublished to this day.⁴⁴

Symphony No. 2 in D minor, "Elegaic"

Stanford began work on his Second Symphony in July 1879 in the wake of his success with the First Piano Quartet in F major, op. 15 and completion of his first opera *The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan*.⁴⁵ The composer was, by this time, also moved by the increasing enthusiasm for orchestral music in London.

Stanford finished the work in October of 1879, but made subsequent revisions of the first movement.⁴⁶ The unexpected death of his father on 17 July 1880 is a possible reason for his choice of the subtitle *Elegaic*. In addition, he prefaced the work with stanza 70 from Tennyson's *In Memoriam*:

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

Much like the melancholic metaphors that comprise the strict eight-syllable format of

⁴⁴ The manuscript is currently located in the Music Library at Northwestern University.

⁴⁵ *The Veiled Prophet* earned its premiere in Hanover in February 1881. Lewis Foreman, liner notes to *Charles Villiers Stanford: The Complete Symphonies* (Chandos 1994).

⁴⁶ The author states that the manuscript for the first movement bears the date 21 December 1880. Dibble, *op. cit.*, 106.

Tennyson's verse, Stanford's "*Elegiac*" Symphony assumes a solemn air. The work is cast in the standard four-movement layout; the first three movements bear romantic character markings: I) Allegro appassionato; II) Lento espressivo; III) Scherzo: Allegro con fuoco; IV) Adagio moderato – Allegro moderato – Allegro molto ma non presto.

Stanford revised the work in 1882 and submitted it to Henry Cummings, director of the Philharmonic Society, upon completion in hopes for a premiere. Cummings, however, did not accept it. The symphony finally earned a premiere on 7 March 1882 in Cambridge at a concert given in honor of Joachim. A critic for *The Musical Times* (1 April 1882) stated that the piece was "by far the most important orchestral work by Mr. Stanford that has hitherto been heard."⁴⁷ The anonymous critic concluded that it contained "an immense advance, both in power of conception and mastery over the technicalities of orchestral treatment."⁴⁸ The symphony was not performed again until September of the following year at a Gloucester Three Choirs Festival concert. Stanford's work commenced the Thursday morning's festivities, which included Gonoud's *The Redemption*, an audience favorite. Charles Hartford Lloyd conducted the work in Stanford's absence. Amidst numerous latecomers to the morning concert,⁴⁹ the critic for *The Musical Times* states that "we like the Lento espressivo, Scherzo, and Adagio better than either the opening Allegro appassionata or the final Allegro" and that "the reminiscence of Beethoven, however, in the Scherzo [was] too obvious to escape notice."⁵⁰

Symphony No. 3 in F minor, "*Irish*", op. 28

⁴⁷ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 123.

⁴⁸ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 123.

⁴⁹ The critic records that the late comers probably did not have "the slightest wish to hear Dr. Stanford's new work." The main attraction for the majority of the audience members was the subsequent performance of Gonoud's work. "The Gloucester Music Festival," *The Musical Times* 24 (October 1883): 543.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 543.

In September of 1886, Stanford and his wife went to Switzerland and northern Italy for a holiday after the Birmingham festival.⁵¹ After a three-week stay, they detoured to Vienna to visit Hans Richter before returning to England. The conductor, who recently received a doctorate from Oxford, was planning to perform Stanford's *Elegiac Ode* in Vienna. Stanford also paid a visit to Brahms, apparently without making an appointment. The composer recalls the following from his visit:

When I next visited Vienna I went to see him . . . thinking that I should surely find him at home at eleven o' clock. But his housekeeper told me that he had just gone to dinner. I was so astonished that I said to her, "In Heaven's name, what time does Brahms eat his breakfast?" "At five," said the dame; "he does all of his work before eleven, and is out the rest of the day." However, I fell in with him later, and sat with him through the rehearsal of Gluck's *Alceste* at the Opera House, over which he waxed enthusiastic.⁵²

English audiences were no stranger to Brahms's music; his C minor Symphony "attracted almost every musician of importance in England"⁵³ and his later symphonies met with enthusiasm in London during the 1880s.⁵⁴ Brahms's Fourth Symphony earned its premiere in Meiningen on 25 October 1885. News of the work's monumental power and musical poetry no doubt fell on English ears. When Richter conducted the English premiere of the work on 10 May 1886, an enthusiastic Stanford began sketching a new symphony, the so-called "Irish" in F minor. Richter took interest in this new project from the composer's pen and commissioned the work for his 1887 concert season.⁵⁵

Stanford completed the work in 1887 and it was quickly published as op. 28, the first of the composer's symphonies to earn a number. The use of Irish folk songs, which is central to this work, was not uncommon in Stanford's *oeuvre*.

⁵¹ Dibble, *op. cit.*, 171.

⁵² Stanford, *Studies and Memories*, 113.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 111.

⁵⁴ Dibble, *op. cit.*, 182.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 171.

With the “Irish” Symphony, Stanford earned an international reputation. It received performances all over England. In Germany, Bülow conducted the work in Hamburg at the Stadttheater on 26 January 1888, and in Berlin a few weeks later.⁵⁶ The success of Stanford’s work earned his Fourth Symphony a place on the Berlin programme the following year. The “Irish” Symphony was chosen for the opening concert of the new Concertgebouw Orchestra in Amsterdam on 3 November 1888, conducted by Willem Kes.⁵⁷ In North America, the work was performed by Walter Damrosch and the New York Symphony Orchestra at Carnegie Hall in November 1907. Richard Aldrich of *The New York Times* provided the following sentiment:

Of this music Stanford’s is the most interesting and a welcome addition to program lists that are apt to become stereotyped. It still retains its freshness and spirit—not that it is very old in years, but music is the least immortal of artistic productions, and some modern symphonies have wrinkled with age in fifteen years. It is not great music nor wholly original in style, but it is charming, of sustained interest and made with such dexterity and skill in the manipulation of its material.⁵⁸

The “*Irish*” Symphony reached the zenith of its North American success with Mahler’s interpretation of the work with the New York Philharmonic in 1910.

In England, Alexander Mackenzie⁵⁹ revived the work for a Philharmonic concert in June 1893, which ignited interest throughout the country. One particular voice, though not especially enthusiastic about Stanford’s work,⁶⁰ was that of George Bernard Shaw, who points out an internal struggle between Stanford the Celt and Stanford the professor.

⁵⁶ Stanford, *Unwritten Diary*, 262.

⁵⁷ Dibble, *op. cit.*, 184.

⁵⁸ Richard Aldrich, “New York Symphony Orchestra, Walter Damrosch, Edward German, Rudolph Ganz,” *The New York Times* (18 November 1907). Also printed in Richard Aldrich, *Concert Life in New York 1902–1923*, ed. by Harold Johnson (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1941), 193–194.

⁵⁹ Mackenzie succeeded Cowen as conductor of the Philharmonic Society.

⁶⁰ In a note in *Pall Magazine* (18 May 1888), the critic claims that “as for Mr. Villiers Stanford’s Irish Symphony, it is only an additional proof that the symphony, as a musical form, is stone dead.” Shaw also extended this sentiment to symphonies of Brahms and Dvorák. Dan Lawrence, *Bernard Shaw: Shaw’s Music: The Complete Musical Criticism in 3 Volumes*, I (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1981), 514–515.

In the words of “corno di basseto,” “when Professor Stanford is genteel, cultured, classic, pious, and experimentally mixolydian, he is dull beyond belief.”⁶¹ In addition, “although in it (*Irish* Symphony) you see the Irish professor trifling in a world of ideas, in a marked contrast to the English professor conscientiously wrestling in a vacuum, yet over and above this national difference, . . . you find certain traces of a talent for composition, which is precisely what the ordinary professor, with all his grammatical and historical accomplishments, utterly lacks.”⁶² Yet, while Shaw’s musical xenophobia pervaded the newspaper columns each week, it is instructive to note that the *Irish* Symphony is Stanford’s first attempt at blending Irish national elements within the context of German symphonic form.

The *Irish* Symphony is cast in the following four–movement layout: I) Allegro moderato; II) Allegro molto vivace; III) Andante con moto; IV) Finale. Allegro moderato con fuoco.

At the head of the score, Stanford inscribes the following motto in Latin:

IPSE FAVE CLEMENS PATRIÆ PATRIAMQUE CANENTI, PHOEBE,
CORONATA QUI CANIS IPSE LYRA

In the English, the motto reads, “Look with favour and mercy on the country and on the country’s bard, Phoebus, who yourself sing with crowned lyre.”⁶³ The first movement, which is cast in sonata form, opens with all strings, except the double bass, in chant–like unison.

Example 1. Symphony No. 3 in F minor, I.

⁶¹ George Bernard Shaw, “Going Fantee,” *The World* (10 May 1893). Also printed in Lawrence, *Bernard Shaw* II, 876.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 877.

⁶³ In Greek mythology, Phoebus means, literary, “radiant one” because of the connection with the sun. The name was used as an epithet of Apollo by the Romans, who hailed him as Phoebus Apollo.



While the phrygian yearnings establish an “ancient” and Celtic sound, subtle chords in the woodwinds and brass punctuate the texture, establishing the characteristic developments of German symphonic form. The transition comprises the opening C–D flat–F motive in both melodic and harmonic enterprises; the music grows out of this motivic germ.

Several scholars have noted that Stanford learned this technique from Brahms, though it is possible that Kiel introduced the idea to him as early as 1876. For this writer, it is obvious to note that at this point, even though it is early in the work, Stanford loses the Irishness that he so richly established in the opening bars. The music’s swaying character between the Irish folk–like melodies and Teutonic–style developmental procedures is undoubtedly what Shaw calls the inevitable conflict between the Celt and Professor.

The second theme emerges in the cello in a diatonic cantabile theme in A flat major, indicating that the Irishman is shining again.

Example 2. Symphony No. 3 in F minor, I.



As the second theme draws to a close, a developmental closing section emerges. The second theme is fragmented and presented in canon in the middle strings; at the same time, the flutes and clarinets perform the fragment in melodic inversion. The horns provide the rhythmic impetus with a series of triplets that outline the subdominant, dominant, and

tonic chords.

Example 3. Symphony No. 3 in F minor, I.



The development section exploits almost entirely the opening motive in various melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic transformations. In the following example, the motive is presented in the bassoons, celli, and double basses while the flutes, clarinets, and upper strings present it in inversion. Stanford once again employs the Brahmsian technique of organic growth, deriving subsequent melodic material from the motivic cell.

Example 4. Symphony No. 3 in F minor, I.

The image displays a full orchestral score for Example 4, spanning multiple staves. The score includes woodwinds (flutes, clarinets, bassoons), strings (violins, violas, cellos, double basses), and brass instruments. The music is characterized by a steady, rhythmic pattern with a dynamic range from *p* (piano) to *ppp* (pianissimo) and *mf* (mezzo-forte). The score is marked with *poco a poco cresc.* and *cresc.* throughout, indicating a gradual increase in volume. The page number 17 is visible in the top right corner.

Stanford also relies on sequential patterns to present the motive in various harmonic

guises throughout the development. The Irish element is, arguably, most reticent in this section of the movement. It is pulled apart, rearranged, and reshaped under the Teutonic knife. Before the development draws to a close, Stanford harkens back to the Irish melody by presenting portions of the restored second theme in the cello in A major. A solo clarinet, oboe and tutti upper strings answer the call.

At the helm of the recapitulation, Stanford rescues the opening folk-like theme for oboes, clarinets, bassoons, and violas. Subsequently, the second theme is presented by a solo clarinet, indicating that Stanford was conscious about spreading the thematic wealth throughout the orchestra; in this case, he provides a timbral balance between the strings at the opening of the movement, and the woodwinds in the concluding section. The opening motive returns in a brief developmental passage at the close of the second theme and, economically, in the bass line throughout the coda. The movement concludes with soft F major chords.

The second movement comprises a Scherzo and Trio in D minor. The opening theme, in 9/8 meter, is reminiscent of an Irish jig. Stanford adds to the ethnic sound by assigning the melody to the violins while the remaining strings provide support with pizzicato chords, providing the melody with a flavor of Irish fiddling.

Example 5. Symphony No. 3 in F minor, II.

The image shows a page of musical notation for five string parts: Violino I, Violino II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contra-Basso. The tempo is marked 'Allegro molto vivace' and the time signature is 9/8. The Violino I part has a dynamic marking of *f* to *p*. The other string parts are marked with *pizz.* (pizzicato) and *p* (piano). The notation shows a rhythmic pattern characteristic of a jig, with the melody primarily in the Violino I part and supporting chords in the other strings.

The scherzo climaxes with the full orchestra exploiting the jig melody, either in whole or

in fragments. The trio section in D major, features a pastoral-style melody in 3/2 meter. Here, the sparse instrumentation of clarinets, bassoons, and third and fourth horns offers a calm moment of departure. The lower strings provide a steady bass line comprising a descending major third, F sharp—D, interchangeably between violas and celli. The lack of prominent middle voices at this juncture adds to the pastoral quality of the music, akin to such treatment in Beethoven's Sixth Symphony.

Example 6. Symphony No. 3 in F minor, II.

The image shows a page of musical notation for Example 6, Symphony No. 3 in F minor, II. The score is in 3/2 time and marked 'Allegretto scherzando'. It features a piano part with a descending major third bass line (F#-D) and a string part with a steady bass line. The score is divided into two systems, each starting with 'Listesso tempo. (♩ = ♩)'. The first system includes a piano part with a descending major third bass line (F#-D) and a string part with a steady bass line. The second system includes a piano part with a descending major third bass line (F#-D) and a string part with a steady bass line. The score is marked 'mf pesante' and 'mf'.

The scherzo returns in D minor in its original guise. To conclude the movement, Stanford

includes a brief, quasi–fanfare in D major.

In his 1921 catalogue of the composer’s works, John F. Porte claims that the third movement is “one of the most poignantly expressive things Stanford ever composed.”⁶⁴

The movement commences with a solo harp outlining a B flat seventh chord, which, according to Fuller–Maitland, is rooted in Irish national music called “Try if it’s in tune.”⁶⁵ The *New York Times* critic Richard Aldrich refers to this passage as “the harp of Erin.”⁶⁶

Example 7. Symphony No. 3 in F minor, III.



The theme emerges in the clarinets and, subsequently, in the flutes melodically inverted.

Example 8. Symphony No. 3 in F minor, III.



As the harp continues its arpeggios, the theme is fragmented into a passing sequence of dotted–rhythm figures in the bassoons, French horns, oboes and upper strings respectively. Stanford briefly abandons this sighing motive to introduce another

⁶⁴ John F. Porte, *Sir Charles Villiers Stanford* (Boston: Longwood Press, 1978), 34.

⁶⁵ J. A. Fuller–Maitland, *The Music of Parry and Stanford: An Essay in Comparative Criticism* (Cambridge: W. Heffer and Sons, 1934), 40.

⁶⁶ Harold Johnson, ed., *op. cit.*, 193.

fragment, which comprises a triplet rhythm. These two motivic cells are presented in sequence, often overlapping, in the strings and woodwinds. The music suddenly shifts to D major, whereupon Stanford includes a quotation of the folk song “Lament of the Sons of Usnacht” in the viola.

Example 9. Symphony No. 3 in F minor, III.



Stanford claims to have borrowed the tune from the folk song manuscripts of Petrie, which the composer edited; however, the tune also bears resemblance to the opening theme to the second movement of Brahms’s Fourth Symphony.

Example 10. Brahms: Symphony No. 4 in E minor, II.



Though he was well aware of this, Stanford claimed that the likeness was merely an accident and that the two symphonies were composed at the same time.⁶⁷ Recent scholarship has shown, however, that Stanford’s slow movement bears the completion date 4 April 1887.⁶⁸ Furthermore, Brahms’s Fourth Symphony made its English premiere almost one year prior. For this writer, it is possible that Stanford transformed the folk song, either consciously or subconsciously, into its Brahmsian doppelganger. For example, Stanford’s initial use of the fragment is not a complete statement of Brahms’s theme in that it encompasses a major third, A–B–C sharp. Brahms’s version consists of a

⁶⁷ Stanford, *Pages from an Unwritten Diary*, 262.

⁶⁸ Dibble, *op. cit.*, 185.

phrygian minor third, E–F–G. However, the not-so-subtle Irishman quotes the fragment again, this time with a solo French horn in F using the phrygian minor third, transposed as F–G flat–A flat, too similar to Brahms’s theme to be a mere coincidence.

Example 11. Symphony No. 3 in F minor, III.



Stanford also develops this motive melodically with the French horns, though not in the same fashion as Brahms did previously.

Example 12. Symphony No. 3 in F minor, III.



Likewise, the climax of the movement involves the “Usnacht”/ Brahms motive projected by the full orchestra.

Example 13. Symphony No. 3 in F minor, III.



In these cases, the motive is intervallically parallel to Brahms’s theme; however, Stanford employs it much more literally, placing it in the fore of the surrounding musical development. As the movement draws to a close, the harp returns as in the beginning.

In the F–minor finale, Stanford also quotes literal folk melodies. The first, which serves as the principal theme of the movement’s sonata form, is “Molly McAlpin” or “Remember the Glories of Brian the Brave”, presented by the violas in a low tessitura.

Example 14. Symphony No. 3 in F minor, IV.



This modal theme is repeated three times with increasingly generous orchestration. As Dibble points out, the opening sonorities of this movement seem to foreshadow the native English sounds of Holst and Vaughan Williams.⁶⁹ The upper strings, bassoons, and first French horn interject the second theme in A flat into the texture which also serves as a catalyst for Stanford’s developmental transitions.

Example 15. Symphony No. 3 in F minor, IV.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*



The third theme, in A major, comprises the folk song “Let Erin Remember the Days of Old,” and is presented in the French horns. The composer interpolates this theme in the center of the development section.

Example 16. Symphony No. 3 in F minor, IV.



It is instructive to illustrate that this movement’s development section evolves from the melodies themselves as a string of defined key areas. Stanford allows the song-like element of the second theme to shine like Phoebus through a subtle rhythmic transformation from eighth notes to triplets. Only with the movement’s primary theme does Stanford utilize sequence patterns and the idea of traditional harmonic instability for development. The full orchestra initiates the recapitulation with a statement of the primary theme. The second and third themes are subsequently restated and the

movement draws to a formal close, complete with hemiola patterns, tutti string tremolos, and cadential repeated chords a la Beethoven.

Stanford undoubtedly won recognition for his “*Irish*” Symphony because of its ability to effectively combine both formal and exotic elements. The work also provided a stimulus for Irish composers who sought to formulate a national musical voice of their own by using folk melodies. The composers Esposito and Harty produced prize winning “*Irish*” symphonies in 1902 and 1904 respectively for the Feis Ceoil in Dublin.⁷⁰ For Stanford the Professor, the music is essentially well crafted and incorporates all elements of Classical–Romantic symphonic tradition. For Stanford the Irishman, the folk melodies offer a unique point of departure and, in several instances, serves to create the *symphonic* content of the work. But for Stanford the Victorian, it is the blending of these two elements that gives the work its unique character.

Symphony No. 4 in F major, op. 31

In the summer months following the premiere of the “*Irish*” Symphony, opera occupied the composer’s mind. His one–act opera *The Miner of Falun* was completed by 1888, though it never received a performance or publication. His incidental music for Sophocles’s play *Oedipus tyrannus* received its premiere in Cambridge at the Theatre Royal on 1 December 1887. Most of the work on Stanford’s Fourth Symphony in F major was completed in Cambridge in June and July of 1888.⁷¹ The manuscript of the finale bears the date 31 July; Stanford, thus, completed the work during a family visit in Dublin.⁷² The composer intended for the work to be premiered in Berlin in January 1889,

⁷⁰ The Feis Ceoil was founded in 1897 by Anne Patterson, in part, to encourage native Irish composers to write works based on Irish folk music. With the success of his “*Irish*” Symphony, Stanford inevitably became the organization’s “poster boy.” *Ibid.*, 185.

⁷¹ Dibble states that work on the symphony may have begun as early as summer of 1887, interrupting his work on *The Miner of Falun*. *Ibid.*, 198.

⁷² The 1880s in Ireland were perilous times. In the early decade, the Phoenix Park murders took place, in which the Chief Secretary, Lord Frederick Cavendish, and his compatriot T. H. Burke were killed. The crime left many established social authorities, including several members of Stanford’s family, feeling uneasy about security. *Ibid.*, 201.

as Bülow had promised. Along with the symphony, Stanford planned to include his song *La Belle Dame sans merci* (1877) to the text of Keats, which he recently orchestrated for a concert at the Royal College of Music. Furthermore, the composer intended for some of his folk song orchestrations and his highly nationalistic work, *Festival Overture* “The Queen of the Seas” in C major to be performed at the concert as well. Although there is no prevailing theory as to why Stanford choose to flood the Berlin concert with overtly Irish works, it is possible to make a conjecture. In light of his previous success with his “*Irish*” Symphony, it is likely that Stanford wanted to continue to feed the German’s appetite for the exotic elements of Irish folk music.

The concert took place in the Grasser Saal der Philharmonie in Berlin on 14 January 1889. The reviews were favorable. The German periodical, *Börsen Courier*, declared the following:

The principal feature of last night’s concert was an unpublished symphony, the latest work of the composer. The subjects, which are well defined, have been worked out with extraordinary skill, and the whole effect of this very remarkable piece of writing is clear and sonorous⁷³

The *Kreuz Zeitung* was even more ecstatic:

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 He never loses the thread, he never helps himself out with mere patchwork, as is the way with so many of “The Modern School” when their inspiration fails them: he never for an instant indulges in commonplace.⁷⁴

The *Berliner Reichsbote* was equally enthusiastic:

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

⁷³ “Professor Stanford in Berlin,” *The Musical Times* 30 (March 1889), 153. In Dibble, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 203, the author also quotes from this review; however, there is a misprint in footnotes 43 and 44, which date the review as March 1888.

⁷⁴ *The Musical Times* 30, 153.

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. . . but last night’s programme sets him in the front rank of the composers of our day The principal work performed was Mr. Stanford’s new symphony in F major. All four parts compel the attention of the hearer to the development of the themes and the gracefulness of the melody, but the first and fourth are especially remarkable for these qualities. Few composers attain such delicacy and transparency of instrumentation.⁷⁵

Obviously for Stanford, these favorable reviews catapulted the composer into an international arena, a position that few English composers attained prior to Stanford’s lifetime.⁷⁶ Britain’s musical powers were “about to come of age”⁷⁷ and the Irish-born Stanford stood at the helm of progress.

Stanford’s original score contained the following inscription: “Thro’ Youth to Strife, Thro’ Death to Life,” followed by a quotation of lines from Part II of Goethe’s *Faust* written on the first page of the score:

Nur der 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.

In English, the text reads:

Liberty only earns itself like life
That daily it must conquer
And so passes, surrounded by danger,
Here childhood, man, and old man their efficient year.⁷⁸

The composer evidently intended the work to fit a programmatic scheme; although, he later crossed out the inscriptions because they may “constrain the work’s musical

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 153–154.

⁷⁶ Of these, William Sterndale Bennett (1816–1875) and Henry Hugo Pierson (Pearson) (1815–1873) achieved notoriety in Leipzig. Stanford’s contemporaries, H. Hubert Parry and Edward Elgar, both achieved international status as composers.

⁷⁷ Dibble, *op. cit.*, 203.

⁷⁸ This quotation comprises lines 11575–11578. Quoted in *Ibid.*, 204; my translation.

rationale.”⁷⁹ The movement titles of the symphony appear as follows: I) *Allegro vivace e gioioso*; II) *Intermezzo – Allegretto agitato (ma moderato in tempo) – Tranquilo ma l’istesso tempo*; III) *Andante molto moderato*; IV) *Finale – Allegro non troppo*. The first movement, in sonata form, begins with a jolly theme in the first violins, which is subsequently subjected to motivic development.

Example 17. Symphony No. 4 in F major, I.

The image shows the beginning of the first movement of Stanford's Symphony No. 4 in F major, I. The score is for the string section, including Violino I, Violino II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contra-Basso. The tempo is marked *Allegro vivace e gioioso*. The music begins with a jolly theme in the first violins, which is subsequently subjected to motivic development. The score includes dynamic markings such as *ppz.* and *f*.

The image shows the second theme in the violas and clarinets. The score is for the string section, including Violino I, Violino II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contra-Basso. The tempo is marked *ppz.* and *f*. The music includes dynamic markings such as *ppz.* and *f*. The score shows a modulation through various keys, including E-flat major, D-flat major, and B minor, before settling in a calm C major.

Stanford continues to exercise his practice of dependent transitions for modulation. In this instance, he drives the music through various foreign keys, including brief stops in E-flat major, D-flat major, and B minor. The second theme arrives in the violas and clarinets as the transition slows to a calm C major.

Example 18. Symphony No. 4 in F major, I.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 204.

The image shows a page of a musical score for Symphony No. 4 in F major, I. The score is written for multiple staves, including vocal parts and instrumental accompaniment. The top staff features a vocal line with the instruction "SOLO" and "mp cantabile". The bottom staff is labeled "Viol. II. viol. Bass". The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like "pp" and "ppp".

This song-like theme is accompanied by a rhythmic antecedent, which the composer uses later as a developmental melodic cell. The clarinets present the following example:

Example 19. Symphony No. 4 in F major, I.

The image shows a short excerpt of a musical score for Example 19. It features a single staff with a clarinet part. The music consists of a series of notes and rests, with a dynamic marking of "cresc." (crescendo) visible. The notation includes various note values and rests, illustrating the rhythmic antecedent mentioned in the text.

It has been suggested that Stanford borrowed this theme from Brahms's *Liebeslieder Walzer*, op. 52.⁸⁰ Although they are not exactly similar in melody, the first piece of the Brahms work, *Rede, Mädchen, allzu liebes*, and Stanford's theme are alike in rhythm and texture. The antecedent motive appears at the helm of the development section in a dovetail fashion, with solo flute, oboe, clarinet, and first horn in each succeeding measure. As in the "Irish" Symphony, Stanford incorporates numerous developmental techniques, such as stacking motives (the ascending quarter-note motive of the primary theme), sequential patterns, and canonic episodes based on thematic material.

Example 20. Symphony No. 4 in F major, I.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

Change G to B \flat

The composer further displays his prowess in exploring foreign keys by exuding the more foreign tonal terrain of D major, E major, and D flat major in the development section. It is likely, then, that Stanford's initial transition foreshadowed the events in the development section. At the height of the musical drama, the full orchestra states the primary theme, initiating the recapitulation.

Example 21. Symphony No. 4 in F major, I.

Stanford subsequently includes a surprise by placing the first statement of the second

theme in A major. An additional surprise is featured in the coda as the second theme gradually accelerates to a one-beat-per-bar tempo in the style of a Viennese waltz. The movement concludes in this manner.

The title of the second movement, in itself, has Brahmsian overtones. Stanford utilizes material from the Entr'acte of his incidental music to *Oedipus tyrannus*. The main theme, according to Dibble, is identical to its counterpart. The clarinet presents the theme in the following example:

Example 22. Symphony No. 4 in F major, II.

II.
INTERMEZZO.

Allegretto agitato (ma moderato in tempo)

Flauti.

Oboi.

Clarineti in A. *SOLI.*

Fagotti.

Trombe I & II in F.

Trombe III & IV in C.

Corni in A, D, A \flat .

Arpa.

Violino I. *con sordini*

Violino II. *con sordini*

Viola.

Violoncello. *pizz.*

Contrabbasso.

Stanford's initial sparse scoring for the theme eventually gives way to series of developing variations and hemiola techniques. The texture is thickest in the upper register of the orchestral pallet; flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons (in tenor clef), and upper strings form a dense cloud of phrygian-flavored melody over a pizzicato bass line. As Dibble

points out, this technique is not particularly Brahmsian as it is a specifically English sound.⁸¹

Example 23. Symphony No. 4 in F major, II.

The second theme of the Intermezzo falls in a distinctly English style; in this instance, the strings perform a hymn-like theme in which the first violin and cello move, predominantly, in contrary thirds. Furthermore, this theme bears no resemblance to Stanford's *Oedipus* score. The primary theme returns to close the movement.

In a letter to Joachim, Stanford stated the following:

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 205.

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.⁸²

As the most extended movement in the work, the composer with a theme, which he treats fugally.

Example 24. Symphony No. 4 in F major, III.

Cornii III & IV in D.
 Trombe in D.
 Tromboni Alto & Tenor.
 Trombone Bass.
 Timpani in E.D.A.
 Arpa.
 Violino I.
 Violino II.

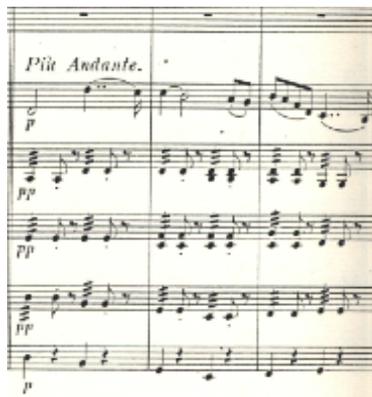
Andante molto moderato.
senza sordini
pialto espress quasi recit.

⁸² Letter from Stanford to Joachim, 20 July 1888. Quoted in *Ibid.*



Following the introduction is a funeral march in D minor stated solely in the first violin. The melody is full of operatic nuance—i.e. the gradual rise and fall of melodic range and accented passing tones and appoggiaturas on strong beats. The lower strings formulate an agitated accompaniment in a march style while the woodwinds highlight the harmonic scheme with soft chords.

Example 25. Symphony No. 4 in F major, III.



The ebb and flow of operatic rhetoric and contrasts of key between the tonic (D minor) and its parallel major fill the remainder of the movement. Near the end, the lower horns and trumpet, both in D, sound an augmented version of the primary theme of the finale.

Example 26. Symphony No. 4 in F major, III.



The finale, in sonata-rondo form, is a formidable apotheosis to the symphony in which virtue triumphs. Stanford's careful attention to contrasting keys is displayed once and for all as he pits the tonic F major against sudden shifts to D-flat major, A-flat major, and G-flat major throughout the movement. However, the main theme, a jocular diatonic theme in the tonic key, acts as a ritornello and serves to bring the combatant tonicizations back to common ground. This example demonstrates the movement's main theme in the strings.

Example 27. Symphony No. 4 in F major, IV.



The second theme, in C major, comprises ascending and descending arpeggios

which, in turn, are fragmented and transformed into driving eighth-note rhythms. The full orchestra provides punctuated chords to accompany the thematic transformation. The development section treats the primary theme to fragmentation, inversion, and canon between strings, woodwinds, and brass. Stanford interrupts the motivic interplay with a string of orchestral fanfares in foreign keys. The primary theme/ ritornello returns in the tonic, though it is slightly altered in rhythm from eighth notes to quarter-note triplets.

Example 28. Symphony No. 4 in F major, IV.

The second theme returns in D flat and, upon completion, a Beethovenian coda enters, in which Stanford's use of contrapuntal textures are juxtaposed to a fragment of the primary theme. It is never stated again in its entirety. An orchestral fanfare brings the movement, and the symphony, to a close in F major.

The work received praise for its first and fourth movements, clear examples of Stanford's ability to manipulate high-German symphonic virtues. The symphony did not, however, receive as much international attention as did the "*Irish*." The innovative

features of this work, though not revolutionary, showcase specific “Stanfordian” features within a symphony that otherwise possesses the melodic character and clarity of Mendelssohn’s *oeuvre*. It is also worth noting that, despite his last minute editing, the literary inscriptions provide the music with a narrative element. The four words, “Youth, Strife, Death, Life”, and Goethe’s excerpt fit well with the dramatic and developmental aspects of the music.

Symphony No. 5 in D major, op. 56, “L’Allegro ed il Pensieroso”

In the years following the Fourth Symphony, Stanford filled his creative time with various large and small-scale works. He penned an oratorio, *Eden*, in 1891 for solo voices, chorus, and orchestra; a *Mass in G* for similar forces in 1893; and an ode for chorus and orchestra, *East to West*, the same year. For the stage, the composer provided incidental music for Alfred, Lord Tennyson’s play *Becket* and a lyric drama *Lorenza* in 1893; the latter never received performance or publication. Stanford was also busy writing chamber music. His first two string quartets, in G major and A minor respectively, were completed in 1891. The *6 Irish Fantasies*, op. 54 for violin and piano appeared two years later, indicating the composer’s continued interest in the Celtic *milieu*.

Stanford was, by this time, reaping the fame of his “*Irish*” Symphony. Encouraged by his success and the increasing stimulation of orchestral music in London,⁸³ Stanford returned to the symphonic genre once again to compose his Fifth Symphony in D major. The work was composed in late May and June of 1894, along with other creations. The composer was working on two smaller works simultaneously, the unpublished Concert Pieces for piano and the Fantasia and Toccata for organ. John Milton’s 1645 poem *L’Allegro ed Il Penseroso* was Stanford’s ultimate point of departure in writing the symphony. Stanford, clearly intending for the work to illustrate

⁸³ Tchaikovsky’s “*Pathetique*” Symphony was performed at the Philharmonic Society. *Ibid.*, 260.

Milton's poem,⁸⁴ appended select quotations to the beginning of each movement in the score and subtitled the symphony the same as Milton's opus.⁸⁵

The tempo indications for each movement appears as follows: I) Allegro moderato; II) Allegro grazioso; III) Andante molto tranquillo; IV) Allegro molto.

The first movement's literary incipit comprises two excerpts from the first part of Milton's poem, *L'Allegro*:

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;⁸⁶

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.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ In the programme at the first performance, Stanford inscribed that the symphony was indeed "intended to illustrate the poem of John Milton." See *Ibid*.

⁸⁵ Stanford spells the subtitle *L'Allegro ed il Pensieroso* in the score.

⁸⁶ Lines 1–13.

⁸⁷ Lines 25–38.

The first lines of the poem ring in tune with the symphony's introduction, a stately fanfare in D minor which eventually resolves to the tonic major. Although it is food for subsequent development, the introductory motive returns frequently throughout the movement's sonata form to provide congenial unity.

Example 29. Symphony No. 5 in D major, I.

Allegro moderato. I.

Allegro moderato.

The first theme is presented in the clarinet in A and first bassoon; four measures later, it is answered by oboes and third and lower horns a fifth higher. The theme, in turn, is passed around the ensemble in fragments and in dovetail fashion.

Example 30. Symphony No. 5 in D major, I.



Similar in character and melodic contour is the second theme, presented in the dominant key.

Example 31. Symphony No. 5 in D major, I.

 A complex musical score for Symphony No. 5 in D major, I. The score is in 2/4 time and features multiple instruments. The instruments shown are Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Fag.), Violin (Viol.), Viola (Vcl.), Cello (Cello), and Double Bass (Cb.). The score is marked with a piano (p) dynamic and includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings like *f* *div.* and *piu. p*.

The accompanying music to both themes adds a flippant, running character, which seems to be an appropriate, if not literal, fit to the opening lines of the second excerpt of the poem. The movement, as a whole, pits, in Milton's words, "Melancholy" against "Mirth"; however, it is the latter of the two virtues that reigns supreme in the end.

The second-movement Scherzo and Trio is a pasturale of sorts that echoes the following passages from *L'Allegro*:

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.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Lines 53–56.

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.⁸⁹

Sometimes with secure delight
The upland hamlets will invite,
When the merry bells ring round,
And the joeund 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,⁹⁰

These delights if thou canst give,
Mirth, with thee I mean to live.⁹¹

The opening combination of G and D in the bassoons and cellos creates a rustic atmosphere upon which the French horns, in thirds, sound a hunting call. Clarinets, flutes, and strings in turn answer the horns.

Example 32. Symphony No. 5 in D major, II.

⁸⁹ Lines 63–68.

⁹⁰ Lines 91–102.

⁹¹ Lines 151–152.

The occasional scotch-snap rhythm in the bass line, in 6/8 meter, eventually gives way to the duple-meter Trio, where the violins drive the music with a continuous stream of sixteenth notes. In following Milton's text, the Trio is indicative of the peasant's merrymaking. The Trio theme, in E-flat major, is an irregular, five-bar-phrase that is subsequently presented in canons at the unison and fifth.

Example 33. Symphony No. 5 in D major, II.

To round out the pastoral scheme, the Scherzo returns and reaches its dynamic potential through full ensemble orchestration. Stanford appends a brief coda which is reminiscent of the celebratory Trio; however, this time, the festivities are viewed from a distance as the orchestration wanes considerably and the movement comes to a soft close.

Example 34. Symphony No. 5 in D major, II.

Milton's *Il Perserose* appends the remaining movements. Pensive and full of melancholy, the third movement, in B-flat major, is the heart and soul of the work; in fact, it is the most lyrical movement in any of Stanford's symphonies for its song-like melodies, expressive use of instrumental ranges, and dramatic pauses. Stanford uses the following excerpts as a backdrop for the movement's tone-poem euphoria:

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;⁹²

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:⁹³

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 deign a song
 In her sweetest saddest plight,⁹⁴

—Sweet bird, that shunn'st the noise of folly,
 Most musical, most melancholy!
 Thee, chautress, oft the woods among
 I woo, to hear thy even-song;
 And missing thee, I walk unseen
 On the dry smooth shaven green,

⁹² Lines 11–16.

⁹³ Lines 31–40.

⁹⁴ Lines 51–57.

To behold the wandering Moon
Riding near her highest noon,⁹⁵

The hymn-like opening theme is the catalyst for the composer's subtle variations, namely augmentation, which pervade the movement.

Example 35. Symphony No. 5 in D major, III.

The image displays two musical excerpts. The top excerpt shows a woodwind section with six staves. The first two staves are marked 'pizz.' (pizzicato). The bottom excerpt shows a piano accompaniment with four staves, featuring dynamic markings such as *p*, *pp*, and *ppp*.

Stanford also bases variations on the second theme, a mere fragment of a melody presented by soli violas.

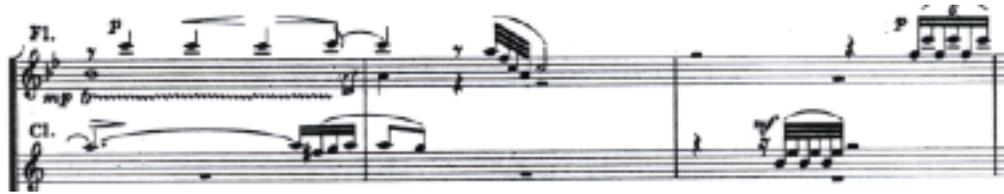
Example 36. Symphony No. 5 in D major, III.

The image shows a single musical staff with a melody. The dynamic marking is *p* *apressa*.

To evoke further pastorale images, solo clarinet and flute provide the flippant, chirping birdsong of the nightingale (Philomel).

⁹⁵ Lines 61–68.

Example 37. Symphony No. 5 in D major, III.



The true genius of the work, however, is the ebb and flow of these elements within the orchestral timbre; the constant shift between thick and thin orchestration provides, above all, the emotional *denuément* of the movement.

The final movement, an aptly named “big-boned sonata rondo,”⁹⁶ portrays the remaining lines of Milton’s poem. The following excerpts resonate throughout the music, providing a haunting apotheosis to both the symphony and poetic imagery:

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:⁹⁷

Sometime let gorgeous Tragedy
In scepter’d pall come sweeping by
Presenting Thebes, or Pelops’ line,
Or the tale of Troy divine;⁹⁸
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-enbowéd 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,

⁹⁶ Dibble, *op. cit.*, 261.

⁹⁷ Lines 73–76.

⁹⁸ Lines 97–100

As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
 Dissolve me into ecstasies,
 And bring all Heaven before mine eyes.⁹⁹

Following the opening horn calls, the first violins and viola present the D–minor rondo theme over pesante chords in lower winds and strings.

Example 38. Symphony No. 5 in D major, IV.

A cantabile second theme in the relative major invokes Milton's reference to the all-encompassing sweet music; the violas initially state the theme before it is carried above, around, and underneath the texture by flutes and tutti first violins.

Example 39. Symphony No. 5 in D major, IV.

⁹⁹ Lines 151–166.

The development encapsulates Stanford's usual schooled techniques; however, the crux of its purpose is to illustrate the poem's third stanza. With the second theme as the primary tool, the development section comprises the ebb and flow of thick and thin orchestral textures to, once again, symbolize the divine sweet music. The recapitulation begins with a restatement of the second theme in the tonic major. Before the return of the main theme, Stanford inserts a transitional passage for the organ which, along with the horns and flutes, evoke the poetic anthem of Milton's verse. The third movement's somber theme returns in an ethereal adagio to conclude the work.

Example 40. Symphony No. 5 in D major, IV.

The Philharmonic Society premiered the Fifth Symphony on 20 March 1895 at Queen's Hall. Stanford himself conducted the work and Walter Alcock performed the integral organ part.¹⁰⁰ Reviews, overall, were favorable, although foreknowledge of the work's elements appeared to be a necessity:

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 . . . "*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 skillful as well as picturesque

¹⁰⁰ Dibble, *op. cit.*, 262.

treatment Our feeling is that the symphony will largely improve upon acquaintance and take its place among Mr. Stanford's best works.¹⁰¹

The composer dedicated the work to the Philharmonic Society and its then conductor, Sir Alexander Mackenzie, and it earned further performances in Manchester and Berlin in December of the same year. However, due to a lack of public interest, the symphony was not published until 1923 by Carnegie Trust; thus, the score was revised and Stanford's original dedication was removed.¹⁰²

The Fifth Symphony stands as Stanford's most expressive symphonic works, reaching a Mahleresque level of pageantry. Yet, it should not be dismissed as cheap romanticism. Stanford's use of the John Milton poem ought to satisfy, in part, the nationalist urges of contemporary criticism; however, it is abundantly clear that, through selection, the chosen excerpts bend towards a distinctly romantic persona. It is this writer's opinion that the work, more so than the prior symphonies, places Stanford as a master of dramatic musical form, where themes and orchestration meld perfectly with the programmatic *oeuvre*. The work, as the critic states, deserves to be heard again; however, since the composer's death, only silence resounds from a library shelf.

Symphony No. 6 in E flat major, op. 94

Stanford's next symphony came ten years after his mild success with the Fifth Symphony. He was, however, no stranger to orchestral writing at the time, completing two of the six *Irish Rhapsodies*, piano, violin, and clarinet concertos, and a set of variations on an English theme "Down among the dead men." Like his 1896–1897 *Requiem* in memory of the artist Lord Leighton, the Sixth Symphony was written as a memorial to artist and sculptor George Frederick Watts (1817–1904). The composer was a great admirer of Watt's works for his "ability to capture timelessness and and

¹⁰¹ "Philharmonic Society," *Musical Times* 36 (April 1895), 233.

¹⁰² Dibble, *op. cit.*, 262.

transcendent actuality”¹⁰³ in a time when political change and new scientific discoveries were all the rage. Stanford composed the work in May and June of 1905. The movement titles consist of the following: I) Allegro con brio; II) Adagio e molto espressivo; III) Scherzo and Trio (Presto); IV) Moderato e Maestoso.

The newly formed London Symphony Orchestra, under Stanford’s baton, gave the work’s premiere on 18 January 1906 to favorable reviews:

. . . 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 or 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,” the knowledge more or less of the latter is indispensable. In the case of the symphony under notice such knowledge, however, is decidedly interesting.¹⁰⁴

The work received a second performance one year later at Bournemouth,¹⁰⁵ but then quickly fell into oblivion. In February 1923, however, the work was brought back for a concert in Guilford by the Guilford Symphony Orchestra under direction of Claude Powell. The composer’s fourth *Irish Rhapsody* (1913) and *Sea Songs* (1904) made the program as well.¹⁰⁶ The Sixth Symphony suffered an even greater fate than the Fifth; although it received positive reviews, it failed to gain subsequent performances at home and abroad. It seems that as Stanford’s symphonic persona sought further artistic depths within a traditional style, the less it appealed to audiences who craved the revolutionary sounds of post–Wagner Europe. The same fate struck Stanford’s Serenade (Nonet) of 1905¹⁰⁷ and his fourth string quartet of 1906. As of this writing, these works and the

¹⁰³ Dibble, *op. cit.*, 362.

¹⁰⁴ “London Symphony Orchestra: Sir Charles Villiers Stanford’s New Symphony,” *The Musical Times* 47 (February 1906), 121.

¹⁰⁵ Lewis Foreman, *op. cit.*, 12.

¹⁰⁶ Dibble, *op. cit.*, 456.

¹⁰⁷ The Serenade was premiered at Aeolian Hall on 25 January 1906 and, though it earned the critic’s favor, it failed to attract a publisher’s attention; even the virtuoso Joachim intervened to obtain attention in Germany to no avail. See *Ibid.*, 364.

Sixth Symphony remain unpublished.

Symphony No. 7 in D minor, op. 124

After his Sixth Symphony, Stanford's compositional output for orchestra waned considerably. Between the years 1906 and 1912, he produced only two works for military band, the Installation March in E flat (1908) and *Three Military Marches* (1908), which remain unpublished, and two orchestral works, his Second Piano Concerto in C minor (1911) and his Seventh Symphony in D minor (1911). The composer, however, filled this lacuna with a plethora of new songs, chamber works, and sacred works as well as incidental music to Lord Binyon's *Attila the Hun* (1907).

Written in response to a commission for the centenary celebration of the Philharmonic Society in 1912,¹⁰⁸ Stanford's Seventh Symphony stands as an essay in brevity, a monument to succinct, concentrated symphonic form at a time when the large-scale orchestral monuments of Mahler and Elgar were all the rage. However, Stanford's newfound symphonic concision was not intended as a personal statement; the request of the commissioners asserted that the work was to last merely 20 minutes.¹⁰⁹ The Seventh Symphony unites the four movements of traditional symphonic form into a compressed time span without reverting to oversimplified compositional procedures. The tempo markings of each movement, which are also indicative of a simpler style, appear as follows: I) Allegro; II) Tempo di Minuetto; III) Variations and Finale: Andante–Allegro giusto–Poco piú lento–Allegro maestoso (alla breve).

The first movement, cast into a conventional sonata form, comprises two simple and equally-phrased themes. Tutti first violins initiate the first over soft tremolo strings that do no more than outline the D minor harmony. As a simple two-measure theme, it is

¹⁰⁸ Works by other native composers received premieres: Ronald, Hervey, Mackenzie, Davies, Dunhill, Macpherson, and Parry. *Ibid.*, 397; Cyril Erlich, *First Philharmonic: A History of the Royal Philharmonic Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 186.

¹⁰⁹ The same held true for Parry's *Symphonic Fantasia "1912"*, which was his contribution to the festival. Dibble, *op. cit.*, 397.

subsequently answered in the woodwinds in a series of developing variations soon after its presentation. It is already apparent that the composer wastes no time with the work's basic features.

Example 41. Symphony No. 7 in D minor, I.

The second theme, a folk-like melody, originates in D flat, the flat submediant of F major. By continuing with his technique, the composer brings the theme home to the tonic in six measures.

Example 42. Symphony No. 7 in D minor, I.

Clear, concise melodies and phrasing are the key features of this theme, elements Stanford exploits in the ensuing development section. A variation of the first theme, stated by the bassoon, initiates the recapitulation in D major. Only the second theme reappears in its original guise, moving swiftly from B flat major to D minor. A substantial coda, complete with further motivic development and brief fluctuations between D major and its parallel minor, brings the movement to conclusion. Stanford's control of thematic material and their seemingly continuous variation provides the movement with a steady flow; all elements, including the sections of the form itself, blend together, leaving their unique attributes behind.

The second movement blends minuet and trio, scherzo, and theme and variation forms into a single unit. The principal theme, a stately minuet in B flat major, is initially performed by the strings. Woodwind figures provide color to the waxing and waning of the melodic line.

Example 43. Symphony No. 7 in D minor, II.

Tempo di Minuetto. (Allegretto molto moderato)

Flauti.
Oboi.
Clarinetti in B.
Fagotti.
Corni in F.
Trombe in F.
Tympani.

Tempo di Minuetto. (Allegretto molto moderato.)

Violini I.
Violini II.
Viola.
Celli.
Bassi.

The first variation, in D flat major, comprises a rigid, staccato ostinato pattern in triple meter accompanying a series of sweeping eighth notes in the upper strings. What evolves is a continuous hemiola pattern between the two elements.

Example 44. Symphony No. 7 in D minor, II.

Flauti.
Cl.
Fag.
Cor. III.

The minuet theme returns in the third variation as a quick, scherzo-like entity in 6/8 meter. The next two variations allude to a formidable trio section, yet, stand alone for their unique content. The first comprises the interchangeable use of both slow, cantabile variation featuring clarinet and bassoon and a fast, sweeping, high-tessitura variation for the strings.

Example 45. Symphony No. 7 in D minor, II.

The musical score for Example 45 is presented in two systems. The first system features woodwinds and strings. The woodwinds (flute, oboe, clarinet, and bassoon) play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The strings play a similar pattern. The second system shows the piano accompaniment, with the right hand playing a melodic line and the left hand playing a rhythmic pattern. The score includes dynamic markings such as 'ff', 'fforc.', 'p', 'ff', 'mf', and 'fforc.'.

The second involves a sprightly, yet delicate affair in duple meter comprised of running sixteenth notes in both upper woodwinds and strings.

Example 46. Symphony No. 7 in D minor, II.

The musical score for Example 46 is presented in two systems. The first system features woodwinds and strings. The woodwinds (flute, oboe, clarinet, and bassoon) play a rhythmic pattern of sixteenth notes. The strings play a similar pattern. The second system shows the piano accompaniment, with the right hand playing a melodic line and the left hand playing a rhythmic pattern. The score includes dynamic markings such as 'pp', 'ppp', and 'pp'.

Rounding out the minuet's allusion is the fifth variation, which is simply a restatement of the second, scherzo-like variation. Stanford appends a succinct coda, the final testament of the closing measures of the original minuet theme, to close the movement.

The final movement is actually a combination of two smaller movements, akin to Tchaikovsky's Third Orchestral Suite and Piano Trio in A minor. The first half of the movement is a set of open-ended variations in F major, in which an andante theme, stated at the movement's onset serves as the material for the mold.

Example 47. Symphony No. 7 in D minor, III.

The image shows a musical score for five parts: Violini I, Violini II, Violoncelli, Celli, and Bassi. The tempo is marked 'Andante.' and the dynamics are 'p' (piano) and 'pizzicando'. The music shows a steady stream of eighth notes in the violins, with other instruments following in turn.

The first variation comprises a contraction of the theme into a steady stream of eighth notes in the violins. Subsequently, clarinets, cellos, and basses follow with the new melody in turn. The second variation derives its make up from the theme's stepwise, descending major third, A–G–F, which is transposed as F–E flat–D flat. Sheer sonority of harmony is the crux of this variation as the motive is sounded and held fast. The only rhythm present derives from the occasional upward arpeggios in the cellos and bassoons, an inverted cascade over the stationary winds and brass.

Example 48. Symphony No. 7 in D minor, III.

The image shows a musical score for five parts: Violini I, Violini II, Violoncelli, Celli, and Bassi. The music shows a steady stream of eighth notes in the violins, with other instruments following in turn.

The third and fourth variations, together, form an appropriate slow movement to the work. Indeed, this section consists of the composer's most emotional music in the entire symphony. A solo clarinet, marked *dolce*, begins the tranquil set over swaying triplet accompaniment in the viola and cello. A flute also shares the theme before the fourth variation emerges in G-flat major. Much of the variation features the brass section. At the onset, chords in the trombones offer a backdrop for the string and woodwind arpeggios. The full brass section culminates with a rising motivic sequence, which crescendos into a powerful, yet simply orchestrated climax, marking the *denuement* of the movement's opening.

Example 49. Symphony No. 7 in D minor, III.

The fifth variation is the most extended of the entire set, which comprises a rising motive that develops organically into subsequent melodic material. A solo oboe states the first incarnation of the motive in F-sharp minor.

Example 50. Symphony No. 7 in D minor, III.

The latter part of the variation serves as a transition from the neapolitan minor to the finale's D major. The remainder of the movement falls into a loose sonata form. The primary theme, which is derived from the opening theme of the movement, assumes a martial air and is boldly stated by the woodwinds and brass.

Example 51. Symphony No. 7 in D minor, III.

The image shows a page of musical notation for a woodwind section. At the top, it is labeled 'Finale. Allegro giusto.' and '70'. The score consists of two systems of staves. The first system has four staves, and the second system has three staves. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and dynamic markings, characteristic of a full orchestral score.

An extended transition gives way to the second theme in A major, which shares its likeness with the melody of the movement's third variation.

Example 52. Symphony No. 7 in D minor, III.

The image shows a page of musical notation for a piano. It is marked 'dim.' and 'p'. The score consists of two systems of staves. The first system has two staves, and the second system has two staves. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and dynamic markings, characteristic of a piano score.

The development section features the primary theme from the first movement, stated in full as if the composer were trying to rekindle an old memory.

Example 53. Symphony No. 7 in D minor, III.



This idea is then suppressed by the finale's primary theme, presented in dovetail sequence by each instrument. The apparent lack of actual "development" in the development section may seem puzzling at the first hearing; however, this writer conjectures that, in light of Stanford's dominion over continuous development as a technique, he simply did not need to repeat his methods at this point. The development section, therefore, serves as an unambiguous reminder of where the music has been, and where it shall inevitably return. It is no surprise, then, that the recapitulation only harbors the full return of the second theme, in D major, and an extended developmental coda, complete with frequent shifts of mode (C flat, D flat, G flat, A) and obsessive attention to the motive of the finale's primary theme. The work concludes with a simple perfect-authentic cadence, a formidable apotheosis to the economy, fluidity, and dexterity of the entire work.

The composer conducted the premiere at Queen's Hall on 22 February 1912. As usual, the review was positive and Stanford was recalled numerous times during the applause.¹¹⁰ An anonymous critic for *The Musical Times* proclaimed that:

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. . . as the Symphony is practicable for ordinary resources it will no doubt often be heard. . . .¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ "Philharmonic Society," *The Musical Times* 53 (1 April 1912), 257.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 257.

The critic was right, for Elgar conducted the work in a London Symphony Orchestra concert at Cambridge. The Beecham Symphony Orchestra, under direction of Thomas Beecham, performed the work at Queen's Hall in June of the following year. Dan Godfrey admired the work and had it performed at Bournemouth in May 1914. The Seventh Symphony was published in 1912 by Stainer and Bell, which made it readily accessible both at home and abroad.¹¹² Indeed, an American premiere of the symphony almost took place. Horatio Parker of Yale University took interest in the work and suggested it to Carl Muck, then conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. A concert was staged for the summer of 1915. Stanford planned to come to the United States to conduct his symphony and receive an honorary doctorate from Yale University, a degree voted to him in 1903. However, the composer's travel plans were dashed due to the developments of World War I and he never went through with an alternate plan.¹¹³

The Seventh Symphony marked Stanford's biggest commercial success with the symphonic form since his "*Irish*" Symphony, although it is relatively forgotten today. Like no other symphony, this work displays Stanford's skill as a masterful craftsman, a musical architect of the first order. There is nothing pedantic or commonplace about its elements or methods. In light of his contemporaries' compositions, notably the impressionist hues of Debussy and Ravel, the primitive Stravinsky, and the intricate tone-poet Strauss, Stanford appears to be of a different time, a Victorian musician caught within the proverbial lost world of modernism. While his contemporaries stood before the dawn of Neoclassicism, Stanford stood firmly in conventional classicism, rooted in the traditional values of balance, clarity, and formal unity.

¹¹² Dibble, *op. cit.*, 398.

¹¹³ Stanford and his wife bought tickets aboard the *Lusitania* for 15 May; however, a German Uboat sunk the ship eight days before its departure. *Ibid.*, 423–424.

CHAPTER 4 CONCLUSION

The symphonies of Charles Villiers Stanford, when viewed chronologically, do not exhibit any sort of stylistic evolution. In following the German symphonic tradition, he exploits the inner essence of each theme in terms of development and orchestration, and achieves formal clarity in each of the symphonies. Any programmatic or emotional content is intimately tied to the dramatic ebb and flow of the themes in his symphonic mold. In light of his success, or lack thereof, with these works, Stanford was obviously conscious of the artistic demands as well as the tastes of the concert-going audiences in his day.

The first two symphonies, the longest of his symphonic *oeuvre*, achieved little success outside of England. With his “*Irish*” Symphony, however, Stanford struck gold by not only hitting the political vein of Home Rule, an important topic in 1880’s Britain, but also by appealing to the Germanic and general Victorian love for exoticism. His subsequent *Irish Rhapsodies* as well as the chamber music and songs that incorporate Irish elements are testaments of this sociopolitical pressure. The next three symphonies (nos. 4–6) mark the decline in his popularity as a symphonist, even though, out of all the works for the symphonic medium, these stand as his most programmatic. They are, without doubt, the most progressive symphonies of Stanford’s output and serve to destroy the notion that Stanford’s symphonies are little more than Brahms and water. Although the Seventh Symphony is by no means his greatest success, it captured enough attention to attract a publisher for its concise and symmetrical form of Mozartian classicism.

Overall, Stanford's symphonies are monuments to his own vision of what a symphony is and should be, the vision of Victorian art music. He is to Victorian music what Tennyson is to Victorian poetry and what Watts is to Victorian painting, artists that successfully combine both emotional content and formal and intellectual design. Although past criticism has placed Stanford on a back burner along with Parry as modest forebearers of the new English renaissance, recent research has begun to shed new light onto the dark corners of his past. Whether or not he will take his place on the pantheon of great symphonists of the nineteenth century has yet to be determined; however, he has, is, and will be exalted as one of the greatest British symphonists of the pre-modern era.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Aaron Keebaugh, originally from Martinsburg, Pennsylvania, attended Bridgewater College, Bridgewater, Virginia from 1996 until 2000. While there, he was active as a trumpeter in the college's symphonic and jazz bands, a bass singer with the concert and oratorio choirs, the assistant director and, later, director of the Screamin' Eagles Pep Band, student conductor for the Symphonic Band and Concert Choir, and music arranger for various ensembles. After earning a B.A. in music education, Mr. Keebaugh moved to Altoona, Pennsylvania, to teach band and chorus at Bishop Guilfoyle High School. Aside from his teaching duties, he worked as a freelance trumpet player, private trumpet teacher, and music arranger for various high school bands in the Central Pennsylvania and Shenandoah Valley areas. In 2002, Mr. Keebaugh entered to the University of Florida to pursue master's and Ph.D. degrees in musicology. As a graduate student, he has presented papers at the Society for Ethnomusicology national conference in Miami, Florida, and the College Music Society Southern Chapter conference in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. His article "Idiomatic Tendencies in Selected Keyboard Works by Thomas Tallis" was published in the sixth volume of *British Postgraduate Musicology* (2004). In the spring of 2004, Mr. Keebaugh was awarded the University of Florida's J. Wayne Reitz Presidential Fellowship to pursue the Ph.D. in musicology.