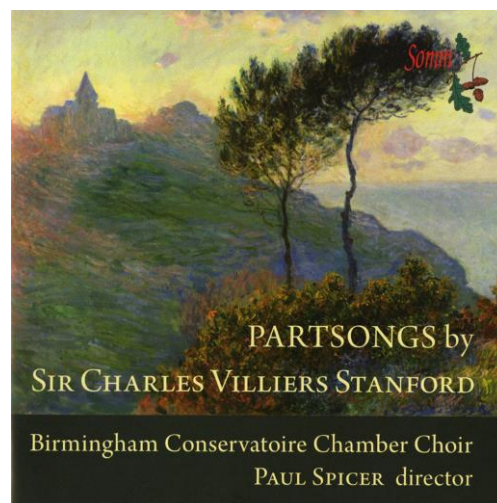


Stanfordian Thoughts
A periodical series of reflections on recorded and unrecorded works by Stanford
by Christopher Howell

8. Part-Songs - Unaccompanied and with piano

The immediate impulse to write this article came from the issue – at last – of a full CD (**SommCD 0128**) dedicated to Stanford's unaccompanied part-songs – 25 of them. The Birmingham Conservatoire Chamber Choir is conducted by Paul Spicer. This is not a review of the Somm CD, however – that has been done thoroughly and excellently for MWI by [John France](#), [Michael Cookson and Nick Barnard](#). Rather, I wish to take the opportunity to survey the subject more generally – what has been done and what remains to be done.



Regarding what has been done, Nick Barnard points out that Somm, on their site, claim nine first recordings and then list ten pieces. Actually, neither “Corydon arise” nor “Diaphenia” should be on their list, so that makes eight first recordings. Not that this makes the new ones any the less welcome, for many are second recordings and the first ones are not always easy to find. A lot of them are scattered across mixed recitals, moreover, so if your primary interest is Stanford, it might take quite a lot of research to find them, and cost quite a lot to buy them, except where single tracks can be purchased for download.

In the LP era Stanford came, if at all, with Parry on the “other side”. Some of the single pieces would be very hard to track down now, but two substantial offerings need mentioning. The first of these is “Stanford’s The ‘Blue Bird’ and other delights”, one of the very first of the many recordings to be conducted by Richard Hickox (Prelude PRS 2506). This came out in 1976. The Stanford side had the complete op.119 part-songs, “The Haven” op.127 no.4 and “Heraclitus” op.110 no.4. There is nothing here that has not been included on the Somm CD but, considering the eminence of the conductor and considering, also, that Penelope Walmsley-Clark takes the soprano solo in “The Blue Bird” and Stephen Varcoe and Paul Hillier are listed among the baritones, its claims are worth examining. The Parry side contained the “Six Modern Lyrics” and two single pieces.



A further seven Stanford part-songs completed a 1978 LP (Argo ZK 58) in which the Louis Halsey Singers under Louis Halsey presented the premiere recording of Parry's “Songs of Farewell”. These exemplary performances have fortunately appeared on CD in several guises, one of which is reviewed [here](#). So far as I know, they remain the only means we have of hearing “Sweet love for me” and “Veneta”.

The sporadic issues on 78s were dominated by the two set down by the legendary Glasgow Orpheus Choir under their conductor Sir Hugh Robertson. These were “Corydon arise” and “The Blue Bird”. They have appeared on

various CD anthologies.



Groups of Stanford part-songs were broadcast from time to time over the years. I happen to have a few, which I shall mention in due course, since they include pieces I could not otherwise hear. Probably several other old tapings are still around.

The sum of available Stanford part-songs is a little greater than you might think, however. For, while British and Irish choirs seem reluctant to volunteer much beyond the odd “Blue Bird”, part-song singing still seems to be going strong in Northern America, in parts of Europe and in several Asian countries. Moreover, nobody taught them at school that Stanford is not worth a penny (or cent, or whatever) and they seem more than ready to regard him as a source of new repertoire. The result is that quite a lot of material is to be found on YouTube. Some performances and recordings are better than others, but they enable us to hear several pieces still unavailable on CD. I shall give an account of them below.

I have fought shy, however, of listening to every “Blue Bird” I could find. This would be worth an article in itself, for “The Blue Bird” has become a viral phenomenon. Famous as it was in its day, its circulation was mainly limited the Great Britain and the Commonwealth countries. Today it has taken Stanford’s name to every corner of the globe and it would be interesting just to map out the places from which a YouTube performance can be heard, almost regardless of the actual quality on offer – though its spell seems virtually indestructible.

But, apart from discussing available and non-available recordings, I would like to give a broader outline of Stanford’s output in this field. This for two reasons.

As most reviewers of the Somm CD have complained, it presents the pieces in higgledy-piggledy order and the opus numbers are not on the track-list. Fortunately Jeremy Dibble, in his notes, has a more scholarly agenda and gives an account of the context as well as providing the opus numbers. Of course, if you buy the CD as a download – which I did – you can assemble the tracks in any order you like.

Another issue is that the worklist in Jeremy Dibble’s study of Stanford is laid out, as far as part-songs are concerned, in a rather reader-unfriendly way – no doubt the publisher’s decision not his – and also mixes together unaccompanied part-songs and part-songs with piano¹. So I hope the following discussion will give a clearer view of the nature and pattern of Stanford’s part-song writing.

UNACCOMPANIED PART-SONGS

The unaccompanied part-song in general

In a review of the Louis Halsey LP, *EMG Monthly Letter*² spoke of these “finely crafted pieces” but concluded: “So much readily conceded, the final effect is of something left aside by history, a musical parallel to the Georgian poets”. This would not be worth quoting forty years later were it not indicative of a deep-rooted feeling that this area of Stanford, in particular, evokes days in the class-

¹ Jeremy Dibble: *Charles Villiers Stanford, man and musician*, Oxford University Press 2002, pp.482-3

² December 1978. The critic, as always, was anonymous.

room, singing of “England’s green and pleasant land” to green and pleasant melodies that even in our youth seemed to belong to another age. It might be significant that this repertoire has greater appeal today, if YouTube is any indication, to people from other nations, who do not have these hang-ups. For, as Robert Walker more usefully observed in his sleeve-note to the Hickox LP, “the ease with which the parts move, the ‘singability’ of the individual voices and the unassuming subtlety in the settings of the words³ produce gems of vocal writing unrivalled in any country. Although in style both composers are Germanic in influence, their German masters produced nothing comparable”. It may be easier to discover this if you have not been bombarded with more disparaging views since your childhood.

The question of Germanic influence was taken up far earlier, by Frederick H. Frost, whose article in Grove I (1879-1889) defined the part-song as follows:

The first requisite of the music is well-defined rhythm, and the second unyielding homophony. The phrases should be scarcely less measured and distinct than those of a Chorale, though of course in style the music may be lively or sedate, gay or pathetic. Tunefulness in the upper part or melody is desirable, and the attention should not be withdrawn by elaborate devices of an imitative or contrapuntal nature in the harmonic substructure. It is obvious that if these principles are to be observed in the composition of a part-song – and any wide divergence from them would invalidate the claim of a piece to the title – it must, as a work of art, be considered as distinctly inferior to either the madrigal or the glee. And it is worthy of surprise and perhaps of regret that while the forms of instrumental composition are constantly showing a tendency to move in the direction of increased elaboration, choral music should exhibit a decided retrogression from the standard attained in the 16th and 17th centuries. It has even been observed by those who regard with some distrust, if not with actual dislike, the immense and ever-increasing influence of Germany in modern musical impulse, that the existing popularity of the part-song, in so far as it is detrimental to the higher forms of vocal music, is one of the baneful products of this Teutonic supremacy.

This is only the beginning of a lengthy and closely-argued article – whether or not we agree with it. The conclusion is that, “When all has been said, the highest qualities of musicianship cannot find fitting exercise in the part-song”.

Frost’s arch-enemy, you might suppose, would have been Mendelssohn, but in fact Mendelssohn’s part-songs are described by him as “fascinating little gems”. Indeed, a perusal of Mendelssohn’s part-songs, followed by a glance through Volume I of Novello’s Part-Song Book (second series), which contains pieces by Benedict, Hatton, G.A. Macfarren and Smart, and is therefore presumably representative, shows that these composers were not quite so narrow in their application of the above rules as we might fear. Nevertheless, that same Stanford who brought symphonic principles to British church music was not likely to let himself be hamstrung in this way. We will probably never know the music of his op.33 part-songs, which were rejected for publication and are missing, but we might wonder if the problem was that they were not part-songs in the publisher’s eyes.

This preamble is necessary, since Stanford’s part-song production of the Victorian years, dominated as it was by the three sets of somewhat madrigalian “Elizabethan Pastorals”, has been criticized as retrograde. Perhaps we should consider his use of this name as actually a bold step, enabling him to renew the part-song by introducing into it the finest principles of the golden age of the English madrigal. This can then be seen as a necessary step towards the creation of the subtly-textured

³ The note actually says “works”, but I assume this is a misprint.

works of the Edwardian and Georgian period, dominated this time by the two sets of Mary Coleridge part-songs.

The need to avoid excessive complication when writing part-songs was nevertheless linked to the fact that the part-song was also a major social phenomenon. Madrigals and glees had been the subject of gentlemanly entertainment. They were sung one voice to a part. The rise of the part-song coincided with the rise of massed amateur singing, assisted by the invention of the tonic-sol-fa system which provided a middle way between reading the music and learning it by heart. The scale of this mass movement becomes obvious when we read Frost's comments on the forces for which the part-song was suitable:

Like the madrigal, but unlike the glee, the number of voices to each part may be multiplied within reasonable limits. But as the chief desideratum is a strict feeling of unity between the performers the best effects can be obtained from a carefully selected and well balanced choir of 150 to 300 voices.

It is evident from Frost's tone that 150 to 300 voices was a practical likelihood and indeed, that there was a serious risk of exceeding this number.

The most highly reputed chorus essaying this repertoire in London was the Magpie Minstrels, later renamed the Magpie Madrigal Singers. It was founded in 1886 by Lionel Benson (1848-1929) and originally consisted of 80 members. As a result of popular demand for entry, it quickly increased to 150⁴. It sang only for charity and was disbanded in 1911. It brought out many of Stanford's part-song sets and Benson and his choir were the dedicatees of op.47 and the third set of "Elizabethan Pastorals".

The numbers involved are worth a thought. If we hold up our hands in horror at the idea of singing Morley or Gibbons with 150 to 300 voices – and presumably most of us do – then should not our HIP-ridden souls equally deplore performances of Stanford with today's typical forces of twelve (as in the Hickox LP) to twenty (as on the Somm CD)? Certainly, to hear "The Blue Bird" in the Royal Albert Hall with the massed voices of 300 singers combining in a whispered pianissimo while the soprano soars above would be an extraordinary experience. But we must be realistic. It is hard enough to persuade twenty people to sing Stanford. If we insist there must be no fewer than 150, we will never hear this music. And in the last resort, the important thing is that the effect is beautiful. Usually it is. Just sometimes, when the music seems less effective, we might wonder if larger forces would help.

Stanford's unaccompanied part-songs

Stanford's unaccompanied part-songs with opus number amount to 73. Unfortunately, this number has to be reduced to 57 since the first six and the last ten are unpublished and missing. Six are arrangements of Irish folk melodies – there are no specifically Irish pieces among the original compositions. One is an alternative version of a piece originally written – but see my comments below – for voice and piano. Four are for male voices only, four exist in versions for female voices only which may – again, see my remarks below – represent their original form. Two are for double chorus. To these are to be added around 33 without opus numbers. "Around" because, in a few cases of pieces I have not seen or heard, it is not quite certain what the music actually consists of. One of these is a very early work that has not survived and ten others are unpublished. One is in six parts. One is an arrangement of a song for voice and piano. Twenty-two are further arrangements of Irish

⁴ Gerald Norris, *Stanford, the Cambridge Jubilee and Tchaikovsky*, David & Charles, 1980, p.382. Not all accounts agree on 1886 as the year of foundation.

folk melodies. Four of the latter, and one original piece, are for male voice choir. This means that Spicer's CD has given us about a third of those available for a mixed choir.

Now let us examine the repertoire in order. My use of the first page of score from one of the part-songs of each group is principally decorative. My comments do not at any time depend on my readers' ability to read these scores. However, if any chorus master in search of repertoire is attracted by what they see and inspired to investigate further, so much the better.

To Chloris

Dibble mentions a part-song setting of Longfellow's "O Gladsome Night", completed in March 1866⁵. Since he does not list it in his catalogue of works, I presume it has not survived. In his liner notes to the Somm CD, Dibble states that Stanford's earliest part-song setting is of Southey's "How beautiful is night", dating from January 1870. We see from the worklist, however, that this is for SSA and piano⁶, so it belongs to the second section of this article. The earliest surviving unaccompanied part-song, therefore, is "**To Chloris**". This setting of a poem by Edmund Waller is presumed to have been written in 1873. It was performed at the Cambridge University Music Society on 27 November 1873⁷, published in that year and issued again in 1893. It is included on the Somm CD.

Stanford's handling of the choir is already completely assured, with several ear-catching moments of imitation and modulation. In many ways, the tone of the mature Stanford is already present. The later Stanford would probably not have repeated the words so freely, since it became his mission to present the text in a clear and linear manner. "To Chloris" must give us cause to wonder if there were not losses as well as gains in his subsequent development. Here he lets his inspiration flow easily and naturally, and if the words are sometimes a peg to hang it on, what matter? The Birmingham choir certainly seem to appreciate the music.

Nine Irish Folk-songs

Leaving aside these very early efforts, Stanford's part-song production is bookended by settings of Irish folk melodies. This fact has only recently become known. Neither Hudson, Dibble or Rodmell list the **Nine Irish Folk-songs** for SATB completed in 1882. They had been sitting in a box in Boosey & Hawkes' warehouse for many years, until the publishing house handed them over to the British Library in 1983, together with a wealth of other Stanford material. In the first place they were simply on loan, but they were purchased by the BL in a private sale in 2001. They are now fully catalogued. This means that the work lists in Dibble and Rodmell are now in serious need of updating. The titles of these unpublished settings are:

1. 'Twas pretty to be in Ballinderry (A.P. Graves)
2. Come, rest in this bosom (Thomas Moore)
3. Silence is in our festal halls (Moore)
4. Wreath the bowl (Moore)
5. When she answered me (Graves)
6. She is far from the land (Moore)
7. St. Mary's bells (Graves)
8. Awake, Fianna (Graves)
9. Molly Hewson (Graves)

⁵ Dibble, p.34.

⁶ Dibble, pp.42 and 482.

⁷ Dibble: liner notes to Somm CD.

I have only recently become aware of these and I have not had the opportunity to study them, so I will limit myself to some general remarks.

If Stanford tried to have these published, he did not succeed. However, nothing in the BL catalogue entry suggests that the music is not in a complete and performable form. He must have taken them into account to some extent, since his later Irish folk-song settings for SATB did not return to any of these same melodies.

The folk-songs with words by Alfred Perceval Graves were all included, in voice and piano versions, in *Songs of Old Ireland*. This was published in 1883, so the SATB versions must be considered collateral to the voice and piano ones. Stanford also provided voice and piano versions of those with words by Thomas Moore, but considerably later, in *Moore's Melodies Restored* op. 60, published in 1895. The settings here, therefore, represent his first approach to Moore's Melodies.

Six part-songs, op.33

A set of **Six Part-Songs, op.33** was rejected for publication by Novello in 1889 and the manuscript is missing⁸. According to Porte they were “fairly tuneful and interesting, and are well-written”. Presumably he either heard a performance – though none is known to have taken place – or was shown the manuscript⁹.

Four part-songs, op.47

The **Four Partsongs, op.47**¹⁰ are dated May 1892 (the last) and July 1892 (the first three). They were dedicated to Lionel Benson and the Magpie Minstrels and were published by Novello in 1892. The titles are:

1. Soft, soft wind
2. Sing heigh-ho!
3. Airly Beacon
4. The Knight's Tomb.

The first three are set to poems by Charles Kingsley, the last has a text by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Kingsley was, as we know, an Anglican priest and his professional calling led him to draw a moral where a pure poet might have painted only a scene. The result is that “**Soft, soft wind**” and “**Airly Beacon**”, in particular, stand apart from the rest of Stanford's part-song production, which is basically lyrical, if we understand a lyric as a poetic expression of a single mood. The beautifully tender first verse of “Soft, soft wind” is dramatically varied as we discover that it is actually a plea for compassion by that

outcast of Victorian outcasts, the unmarried mother. This theme returns in “Airly Beacon”. Verdi had set a similarly ghastly tale in “La Seduzione” and perhaps a broader canvas – this applies to the poem itself too – and a more melodramatic touch were needed. Certainly, this piece would need careful

No. 646. NOVELLO'S PART-SONG BOOK.
(SECOND SERIES.)
TO LIONEL BENSON AND THE MAGPIE MINSTRELS.
SOFT, SOFT WIND
A FOUR-PART SONG
THE WORDS WRITTEN BY CHARLES KINGSLEY*
THE MUSIC COMPOSED BY
C. V. STANFORD
(Op. 47, No. 1).
LONDON: NOVELLO AND COMPANY, LIMITED

Adagio.
SOPRANO. Soft, soft wind, from out the sweet south side - ing. Waft thy all - ver
ALTO. Soft, soft wind, from out the sweet south side - ing. Waft thy all - ver
TENOR. Soft, soft wind, from out the sweet south side - ing. Waft thy all - ver
BASS. Soft, soft wind, from out the sweet south side - ing. Waft . . .
PIANO. (For piano - not only.)
p
Adagio.
cloud-webs athwart the sun - mer sea; . . . Their thin threads of
cloud-webs athwart the sun - mer sea; . . . Their thin threads of
cloud-webs athwart the sun - mer sea; . . . Their thin threads of
thy all-verdant-webs - athwart the sun-mer sea; Their thin threads of

* The words are printed by permission of Messrs. Macmillan and Co
Copyright, 1892 by Novello, Ewer and Co.
(3)

⁸ Dibble, p.214.

⁹ Porte, p.39.

¹⁰ Dibble's notes to the Somm CD refer to these as op.45. This is definitely a misprint.

handling and timing if the progression from innocence to disgrace and tragedy is to ring true. “Sing heigh-ho!” could have sounded superficial with its refrain “Young maids must marry” but, coming in between the other two, it acquires a questioning, even ironic air. We might wonder whether this was actually intended, though, since Stanford did not present the three pieces as a cycle. He certainly avoids excessive jollity.

“The Knight’s Tomb” has a degree of Celtic resonance, since the knight is called Sir Arthur O’Kellyn. The harmonic tweak at the end of each of the first two verses is memorable and imaginative while the ending is bold and strong.

This set of part-songs, in which Stanford set poets from his own century, seems to look beyond the “Elizabethan Pastorals” that were to occupy him in this field for the rest of the century, paving the way for the Mary Coleridge settings of many years later. A recording is urgently needed.

Six Elizabethan Pastorals – First Set, op.49

No. 654. NOVELLO'S PART-SONG BOOK. (SECOND SERIES.)
TO SIR WALTER PARRATT.
SIX ELIZABETHAN PASTORALS
SET TO MUSIC FOR CHORUS (S.A.T.B.) UNACCOMPANIED
BY
C. V. STANFORD
(Op. 49.)
No. 5. Damon's Passion.
Soprano: *Andante expression.*
mf Ah trees, why fall your leaves so fast? Ah
Alto: mf Ah trees, why fall your leaves so fast? Ah
Tenor: mf Ah trees, why fall your leaves so fast? Ah
Bass: mf Ah trees, why fall your leaves so fast? Ah
Piano: *Andante expression.*
mf rocks, where are your robes of moss? Ah flocks,
mf rocks, where are your robes of moss? Ah flocks,
mf rocks, where are your robes of moss? Ah flocks,
mf rocks, where are your robes of moss? Ah flocks,
Copyright, 1892, by Novello, Ewer and Co.
(2)

The stimulus for the spate of “Elizabethan Pastorals” that dominated Stanford’s part-song production in the 1890s would seem to have been the publication in 1887 of a modern edition of “England’s Helicon”, a major collection of Elizabethan pastoral poetry that had originally been printed in 1600. Though Stanford obviously had an appreciation of fine poetry, he was not an explorative reader in the Parry cast. When not setting contemporary friends, he was happy to let anthologists choose for him. “England’s Helicon” contains all the poems set by Stanford in his three sets of “Elizabethan Pastorals”, plus a few more he set elsewhere. Moreover, the texts and attributions, when at variance with modern scholarship, are all as found in the 1887 edition of “England’s Helicon”, proving beyond doubt that this was Stanford’s source.

The **Six Elizabethan Pastorals – First Set, op.49** were published by Novello in 1892 and are dated August 1892 on the printed scores. They were dedicated to Walter Parratt. The six numbers, including the quaint subtitles to some of them, are:

1. To his flocks
2. Corydon, arise (Phyllida’s love-call to her Corydon, and his replying)
3. Diaphenia (Damelus’ song to his Diaphenia)
4. Sweet love for me (Damætus’ jig in praise of his love)
5. Damon’s Passion
6. Phœbe (Montanus’ praise of his fair Phœbe)

The poets are not indicated in the score. “To his flocks”, if not written by John Dowland, was certainly set by him. “England’s Helicon” attributes it to “S.E.D.” The author of “Corydon, arise” is unknown. “Diaphenia” is by Henry Constable, “Sweet love for me” is by John Wooton, “Damon’s Passion” is the twelfth of Thomas Lodge’s “Sonnets to Phillis” and “Phœbe” is also by Thomas Lodge – Stanford later

made a very different setting of this poem for voice and piano, op.125 no.3. This time Lodge was acknowledged on the score.

“Corydon, arise” and “Diaphenia” may have been the first Stanford part-songs to appear on record. The former was set down on 13 April 1929 by the Glasgow Orpheus Choir under its founder-conductor Sir Hugh Robertson, the latter was issued in 1930, performed by the Decca Choir conducted by Arnold Goldsborough. There have been several CD reissues of “Corydon”, while “Diaphenia” can be heard at the CHARM site. “Sweet love for me” was included on Louis Halsey’s Argo LP, while Paul Spicer’s Somm CD has the first three of the set. “Corydon” and “Diaphenia” also appear on a CD entitled English Romantic Partsongs, performed by the Vokalensemble Cantico Nuovo Berlin conducted by Christian Bährens. I cannot trace an “official” release of this CD, which we shall encounter several times in this article. The entire content has been on YouTube since 2014 – maybe that counts as “publication” today. “Diaphenia” maintains its primacy as the most popular of this group – versions are also found on YouTube by the Cricket Ensemble and from a concert given by the Fries Jongeren Koor (FJK) in the Fries Museum, Leeuwarden, The Netherlands, on 14 October 2007. The Cricket Ensemble are clearly oriental – see their Facebook – and took part in a choral competition in Vietnam in 2011.

Spicer gives an urgent reading of “**To his flocks**” that seems at variance with the *Larghetto* marking. I feel there is expressive potential not realized here. During the quite considerable rallentandos made at the end of several of the verses, we get a glimpse of the music that is waiting to emerge.

“**Corydon arise**” is marked *Molto moderato ma leggiero*. Spicer takes a steady moderato pace but is not light enough to convey much delight in his task. Bährens is a tad swifter with crisper ensemble, clearer diction and a lighter touch – he has his choir sing a little more staccato. The result is sheer delight. The 1929 Glasgow performance is somewhat perplexing. There is some scooping, particularly from the ladies, that will sound odd to modern ears. This is nothing, though, compared with Robertson’s very free treatment of tempo. He basically takes it very fast indeed, but he has the scene “acted out”, sometimes pushing the tempo further, sometimes drawing almost to a halt. He also makes very long pauses between the verses, so long that I wondered if the music was not going to finish there. Frankly, I found it grotesque, but we have to wonder whether Robertson was “sui generis” or whether this is evidence of a manner of performing such music that was normal, even expected at the time.

The popularity of “**Diaphenia**” is due, doubtless, to its simplicity. Apart from a minimum of imitation in the third and fourth bars of each verse, it is a straightforward homophonic piece, its three stanzas pleasingly but not elaborately varied. This risk, if it is taken too heavily, is that it will sound like a hymn.

No risk of that with the Decca Choir. They sound to be the most numerous of the groups that have offered this piece, but they offer the most madrigal-like version, with minimal legato, sharp accents and wide dynamic contrast. Their tempo is the swiftest of all. This straight-down-the-line performance partly answers the question I raised over Robertson’s “Corydon”. It would seem that “free” and “straight” interpretations coexisted around 1930.

Spicer’s “Diaphenia” is a little slower than Goldsborough’s and more legato. One is conscious of the beats and bar-lines and a suggestion of apathy enters. In their general approach, the Fries and Cricket groups are not dissimilar. The Fries are so poorly recorded as to discourage a second listening. The Cricket sing “High-ho” instead of “Heigh-ho” but otherwise cope with the language

well. The Berlin group offer, once again, the most refined and disciplined singing. Interestingly, they are the slowest of all, but also very light of touch, offering a tender interpretation in contrast to the Decca's boisterous one. This would seem congruous with the words and also with Stanford's metronome mark. Stanford's *Assai allegro* tempo marking, though, points in the direction of the Decca performance. Equal enjoyment, in different ways, is provided by the Decca and the Berlin versions, of which the latter is obviously much better recorded.

Those with an inbuilt objection to part-songs that include "fa-la-la" among their words will run for cover as "**Sweet love for me**" begins (and ends). This offending feature was, moreover, of Stanford's own adding – it is not part of the original poem. Yet Louis Halsey's performance is a marvellous demonstration that this is only a problem if the results are so heavy that you end up hearing every "fa" and every "la". Tossed off as it is here, what we get is essentially a wordless chorus, except that a really wordless chorus – singing, presumably, "ah" or "oh" – would have sung either a dull legato or inserted ugly aspirates to achieve articulation. Instead, the "fa" gets the voice off to a good start, with a small but not explosive accent", while the "las" enable nimble, light articulation. Within its "fa-la-la" bookends, this part-song has a series of nicely varied verses, brought off with a beautifully light touch. A delicious performance of a delicious piece. Incidentally, despite the subtitle, it is not a jig.

"**Damon's Passion**", being a sonnet, has a slightly more extended structure. It is the emotional core of the set and is texturally the most inventive. "**Phœbe**" has a lightly tripping opening but, while "Diaphenia" stays like that all through, "Phœbe" springs several harmonic surprises along the way. The last verse begins by presenting the theme in double-length notes and by the end we have covered rather more ground than we might have expected.

As a general observation, these pieces lean most towards an archaic madrigal style when they are light and swift. A slow piece like "Damon's Passion" does not sound so different from Stanford's settings of his own contemporary poets.

Peace, come away

Before writing a further set of Elizabethan Pastorals, Stanford was moved by the death of Tennyson on 6 October 1892 to set the 57th poem from "In Memoriam" – "**Peace, come away**", completing it only five days later. Though published immediately by Novello, it had a fairly low-key existence until recently. Maybe the lack of an opus number gave the idea that it was a lesser affair. It now appears to be creeping into the repertoire, with two YouTube versions to supplement the Somm recording.

Spicer and his group are at their best here, not letting the first part sag and expressing deep but restrained emotion in the second part. I wondered if the staccato at "One set slow bell" was a little overdone, but the wonderful moment "The passing of the sweetest soul That ever look'd with human eyes" is given its full value. Here, Stanford's music is as moving as Tennyson's words – which is saying something.

No doubt Spicer was using a copy of the original Novello score. It may be unfortunate that this piece is currently accessible through ChoralWiki in a computer setting by Stuart McIntosh. The notes seem to be correct, but McIntosh evidently felt that dynamics, expression or even a tempo marking went beyond his call of duty. In a performance given on 30 October 2011, the Fort Dodge Choral Society conducted by Bruce Perry seemingly agree with McIntosh that the music should be sung with no dynamic variation from beginning to end. They also adopt a slow tempo with the result the opening phrases sit side by side without building into a whole.

Whatever text the arteSonado choir of Madrid had accessed for a performance in April 2015, their director has clearly thought about the meaning of the words and music. Their performance compares very favourably with Spicer's. Indeed, I prefer their treatment of "One set slow bell" – separated but not abruptly staccato – and they do not fail to make the final page moving. I will not suggest this is actually superior to the Spicer version, but it is nice to hear Stanford making his mark in the Spanish capital – there is very warm applause at the end, while that in Fort Dodge is only dutiful.

Six Elizabethan Pastorals – Second Set, op.53

The **Six Elizabethan Pastorals – Second Set, op.53** are dated October 1893 on the score and were published by Novello in 1894. They were dedicated to Charles Harford Lloyd. The titles – and subtitles – are:

1. On a Hill (A Pastoral of Phyllis and Corydon)
2. Like desert woods (Thirsis the Shepherd to his Pipe)
3. Praised be Diana (The Shepherd's Praise of his Sacred Diana)
4. Cupid and Rosalind (Rosalind's Madrigal)
5. O Shady Vales (The Solitary Shepherd's Song)
6. The Shepherd Doron's Jig

This time the poets of nos. 4-6 are acknowledged – Thomas Lodge for "Cupid and Rosalind" and "O Shady Vales", while "The Shepherd Doron's Jig" is from Robert Greene's "Arcadia". "On a Hill" is by Nicholas Breton, "Like desert woods" is principally ascribed to Thomas Lodge, though "England's Helicon" gives Edward Dyer and others have Walter Raleigh. "Praised be Diana" is usually attributed to Raleigh, though the author is described as "Unknown" in England's Helicon".

The first three pieces appear on the Somm CD. I have an off-air recording of the complete set minus "Cupid and Rosalind", broadcast on 20 September 1976 by the BBC West of England Singers conducted by Philip Moore. "Cupid and Rosalind" arrives from the orient – a vocal quartet called Laulaula in a 2013 concert given in Tokyo and Kobe and the Taichung New Era Choral in a 2014 concert at the Taichung City Seaport Art Center. Thus I can comment on the whole set, though I do not have scores of the first two.

No. 707. NOVELLO'S PART-SONG BOOK.
(SECOND SERIES.)
TO C. H. LLOYD.
SIX ELIZABETHAN PASTORALS
(SECOND SET)
SET TO MUSIC FOR CHORUS (S.A.T.B.) UNACCOMPANIED
BY
C. V. STANFORD
(Op. 53).
No. 4.—Cupid and Rosalind.
THOMAS LODGE.
(ROSALIND'S MADRIGAL.)
SOPRANO. *Allarghetto scherzando.*
ALTO. *mf*
TENOR. *mf*
BASS. *mf*
PIANO. *For piano (Op. 53) 4-76.* *mp*
Love in my lo-som like a bee Doth suck his sweet; Now with his wings he
plays with me, Now with his feet. With-in mine eyes he makes his nest...
Love in my lo-som like a bee Doth suck his sweet; Now with his wings he
plays with me, Now with his feet. With-in mine eyes he makes his nest...
Love in my lo-som like a bee Doth suck his sweet; Now with his wings he
plays with me, Now with his feet. With-in mine eyes he makes his nest...
Love in my lo-som like a bee Doth suck his sweet; Now with his wings he
plays with me, Now with his feet. With-in mine eyes he makes his nest...
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(2)

"On a Hill" is a pleasantly mellifluous essay with just a touch of passion in the section beginning "Oh fair eyes". Possibly the BBC performance makes a little more than Spicer of that moment, otherwise the two versions are remarkably similar. Both shape the chromatic last verse well.

"Like desert woods" is a moving lament by a rejected lover. The Somm CD is so beautifully shaped that it was surprising to find the BBC performance taking three-quarters of a minute longer, but in fact their version is more moving still, digging a little more into the poet's rhetorical word painting.

“**Praised be Diana**” begins with hymn-like homophony. The second verse has more imitative writing. Then follows a section in three-time, with a return to the original tempo only at the very end. The Somm performance is very nice, but once again the BBC one gets a little more out of the music. It is lighter, less four-square at the beginning. Then, while Spicer gives the three-time section a pleasing flow, Moore’s slower tempo provides more contrast and suggests deeper feeling.

“**Cupid and Rosalind**” is a delicious essay in smiling, laughing grace. The Taichung performance has piano accompaniment – not very present, not even enough to confirm definitely my suspicion that it is actually an electronic keyboard, but enough to annoy. The performance has a nice lilt but remains on a somewhat scholastic level. There is quite a lot of vibrato from the sopranos. A solo quartet is a far cry from Lionel Benson’s 150-strong choir, but the Laulaula are very good singers and give a sprightly performance. The solo voices, with their pure, vibrato-less 16th century manner, emphasize the fact that this is one of the most madrigal-like of the Elizabethan Pastorals and I am happy to have this recording.

“**O Shady Vales**” is in 3/4 and is marked “Lento assai”. Moore’s tempo, in the BBC recording, is a flowing one-in-a-bar. This seems to skate superficially over the surface of music that could be a good deal more expressive. The problem is that, towards the end, there is a section in 4/4 and Stanford indicates that the new crotchet (fourth-note) should equal the previous dotted minim (half-note). Moore observes this and the tempo for this section seems quite slow enough. Indeed, I doubt if singers could be found with lungs able to sustain this 4/4 episode at the tempo that seems appropriate for the 3/4 sections – or listeners prepared to sit it out. If you start slowly, you would have to ignore the marked relationship entirely and continue with the crotchets at about the same speed as before. This should be effective, but it is not what is written. I shall be very interested to hear how another conductor deals with this.

“**The Shepherd Doron’s Jig**” is given a pleasing lilt by Moore and the BBC group. A less insistently staccato approach – at “Such was love”, for example – might have found a little more variety in a piece that finds Stanford in neatly mellifluous form.

Sequels can be risky. Nothing in this second set achieved the popularity of “Corydon Arise” and “Diaphenia” from the first. Yet they can hardly fail to give pleasure, while the powerful “Like desert woods” and the delicious “Cupid and Rosalind” offer a great deal more than that.

Six Elizabethan Pastorals – Third Set, op.67

The **Six Elizabethan Pastorals – Third Set, op.67** were completed in July 1897. By this time, Stanford had made one of his periodical changes of publisher, and they were brought out by Boosey that same year. They were dedicated to Lionel Benson and the Magpie Madrigal Society. This time there was only one fancy subtitle, but the poets were given as below:

1. A Carol for Christmas (Edmund Bolton)
2. The Shepherd’s Anthem (Drayton)
3. Shall we go dance (A report-song in a dream) (Breton)
4. Love in Prayers (Breton)
5. Of Disdainful Daphne (M.N. Howell)
6. Love’s Fire (Dyer)

The attribution of “Of Disdainful Daphne” is as given in the 1887 “England’s Helicon”. “M.N. Howell” was seemingly a misprint for “M.H. Nowell” in the original 1600 printing. It was long ago supposed¹¹ that this was Henry Noel, brother to Sir Andrew Noel, a gentleman pensioner at the court of Queen Elizabeth I.

“A Carol for Christmas” was included by Jeremy Dibble in his anthology “An Edwardian Carol Book” (OUP 2006). Moreover, the sample material at the OUP site includes an anonymous, but excellent, performance of this particular piece. The high tessitura might give some choirmasters pause for thought though if handled expertly – as it is in the sample recording, and no doubt was by Lionel Benson and his choir – it contributes to the radiance of the effect. All the same, this seems to be a case of an attractive and useful Stanford piece rather than an inspired one.

TO LIONEL BENSON AND THE MAGPIE MADRIGAL SOCIETY.
SIX ELIZABETHAN PASTORALS
 (THIRD SET.)
 SET TO MUSIC FOR CHORUS (S.A.T.B.) UNACCOMPANIED
 BY
 C. V. STANFORD
 (Op. 47, No. 2).
 LYRICS BY
 MICHAEL DRAYTON.
 No. 2.—The Shepherd's Anthem.

Andante. $\text{♩} = 90$

Soprano. *p*
 Near to a bank with to-ces set a-bout, Where pret-ty tur-tles

Alto. *p*
 Near to a bank with to-ces set a-bout, Where pret-ty tur-tles

Tenor. *p*
 Near to a-bank with to-ces set a-bout, Where pret-ty tur-tles

Bass. *p*
 Near to a-bank with to-ces set a-bout, Where pret-ty tur-tles

Piano. *p*
 (For practice only.)

Andante.

pp
 join-ing bill to bill, And gen-tle springs steal soft-ly mur-mur-ing out, Wash-

pp
 join-ing bill to bill, And gen-tle springs steal soft-ly mur-mur-ing out, Wash-

pp
 join-ing bill to bill, . . . And gen-tle springs steal soft-ly mur-mur-ing out, Wash-

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 And Steinway Hall, 111-112, West 57th Street, New York.

“The Shepherd’s Anthem” moves between passages in 4/4 and 3/4 with such naturalness that you hardly notice it. At the section “There little love sore wounded lies, His bow and arrows broken”, Stanford divides the choir almost antiphonally between female and male voices, dividing the parts to create a richly sonorous effect. While it would be an exaggeration to say this is an eight-part song in disguise, today’s much smaller groups might run into problems at this point.

Earlier writers on Stanford never singled out “**Shall we go dance**” as either particularly popular or particularly fine, but it seems to have caught on recently, becoming one of the most sung and most travelled of all. This is not surprising, for it is a rare delight when done well and does not sound at all bad – as some of the YouTube performances show – even when it is not done well.

Spicer takes quite a steady tempo but manages a pleasing lilt and is one of the few to observe the tenors’ diminuendo at the end of the second bar. This is

probably the minimum tempo at which the piece will still sound its proper self. A performance given by the Barokk Lépcsőház at the Budapesti Mezőgazdasági Múzeum on 9 June 2013 sounds like a practice tempo even though, after a ragged beginning, a certain lilt is achieved. The Cricket Ensemble – already heard in “Diaphenia” – take about the same tempo and are rather heavy. A performance given on 23 February 2014 by the Kamerkoor Marum in the Koepelkerk van Veenhuizen really does slog.

At the other end of the scale, Louis Halsey took it very fast indeed, probably too fast, though the sheer expertise of his group ensured that it was exhilarating rather than frenetic. In between this and Spicer come the Dutch Quink Vocal Ensemble on an anthology of British works, “Music when soft voices die”, available from Brilliant Classics, and the Vokalensemble Cantico Nuovo Berlin under Christian Bährens, whose work has already been admired in this article. Both are very good, with a marginal preference for the Berlin group, who manage a more distanced effect, reminding us that it is all happening in a dream.

¹¹ Old Plays Vol. II (Containing “Gammer Gurton’s Needle” and others), London 1780, note on p.187.

Hercules MacDonnell (1819-1900) had been a family friend during Stanford's early Dublin years. Since his activities were nearing an end by 1898, one wonders if this was not a piece Stanford had written for him many years earlier. It displays, moreover, the sweet Irish manner of Field and Balfe which Stanford moved away from in his maturity. It would certainly make a melodious addition to the repertoire of any male voice choir.

“Out in the Windy West” was Stanford's contribution to “Choral Songs in Honour of Queen Victoria”, thirteen songs by thirteen British composers compiled by Sir Walter Parratt and A.C. Benson, who provided the words for the Stanford item. Dibble tells us in his study of Stanford that “the piece was first sung at Windsor Castle on 29 May 1900 under Parratt's direction, though the Queen was not present”¹⁵. New information has seemingly come to light, for he tells us in his notes to the Somm CD – which includes it – that it was first performed at Windsor Castle on 21 December 1899. Queen Victoria, whose eightieth birthday was being honoured, was actually born on 24 May 1819. The information accompanying the Toccata recording of all thirteen songs, by the Spiritus Chamber Choir conducted by Aidan Oliver, tells us that “On the morning of the Queen's birthday, 24 May 1899, an ‘aubade’ was arranged in the quadrangle of Windsor Castle and the Queen listened at the window of her breakfast room, while massed choirs performed four of the songs”. It is not stated which four were chosen – perhaps nobody knows.

Stanford provided much rich, rolling sonority for a six-part choir, free of the tub-thumping of which Benson's verse is unfortunately guilty. So far as I can tell without a score, both Oliver and Spicer do it equally proud. The Toccata recording is reviewed by John France [here](#).

Six Irish Folksongs, op.78

The turn of the century brought forth a spate of Irish-oriented activity from Stanford. “Songs of Erin” op.76 – fifty voice and piano settings of melodies from the Petrie collection frequently displaying great imagination – was followed by “An Irish Idyll” op.77, still his best known Irish song cycle, and the First Irish Rhapsody op.78. He seems to have got into a muddle with his opus numbers – the opera “Much Ado About Nothing” had to be labelled op.76a while *Six Irish Folksongs* had to share op.78 with the Rhapsody. Oddly enough, there is no op.79 – this number had been allocated to a new Irish Rhapsody that he did not complete.

The **Six Irish Folksongs, op.78**, are all from Moore's Melodies. Stanford was inexhaustible when it came to setting Irish tunes and these settings are completely independent of the voice and piano versions in *Moore's Melodies Restored*, op.60. They were published by Boosey in 1901. The titles are:

1. Oh! Breathe not his name
2. What the bee is to the flow'ret
3. At the mid hour of night
4. The Sword of Erin (Avenging and bright)
5. It is not the tear
6. Oh, the sight entrancing

We have to seek well beyond English or Irish shores to hear these. The complete set can be found on YouTube, sung by the Collegium Ancora, a professional body formed in 2016 and, as their Website tells us, “Dedicated to enriching Rhode Island through the choral arts”. The Stanford performances were part of the second concert of their debut season, held on 18-19 February 2017. One can only

¹⁵ Dibble, p.301.

This set, even if not a cycle as such, makes a nicely varied group and Collegium Ancora are to be thanked for letting us hear it in dedicated performances. Quink should be heard in at least the first piece.

God and the Universe, op.97/2

Stanford's "Songs of Faith", op.97, for voice and piano, were published by Boosey in 1908. They consist of two sets of three songs, one to words by Tennyson, the other with words by Whitman. The printed score is dated September 1906 but Rodmell tells us that the MS held at Newcastle is dated 19 December 1906¹⁶. Dibble specifies in his liner notes to the Hyperion recording of two of the songs (CDA67124) that the cycle was composed between May and December 1906. Rather confusingly, Dibble now tells us in the liner notes to the Somm CD of part-songs, and also in those for the Hyperion recording by the Choir of Royal Holloway under Rupert Gough (see [review](#)), that they were completed in 1897. Is this an oversight, or has he discovered an earlier version of the music, or some of it?

This matters, because the version for double chorus of **God and the Universe, op.97/2**, the second of the Tennyson set, was issued by Boosey in 1906 – two years before the publication of the voice and piano cycle. If this latter was written between May and December, the two versions of "God and the Universe" would have to have been written almost contemporaneously to allow for publication of the choral one within the year. Or could the choral piece have been the original, thus providing Stanford with the germ for the voice and piano cycle? Each version is so completely idiomatic for its chosen medium as to make conjectures on internal grounds impossible. Either way, we have a work of great depth and power.

"God and the Universe" is included on the Spicer CD, but it seems to be another of those that are creeping into the repertoire. As well as the Gough/Holloway version, are two American performances can be found on YouTube. One is by the URI Concert Choir. Conductor and date are not given – though the former is well visible on the video. URI is the University of Rhode Island – Rhode Island seems to be a good place for Stanford these days. The other performance was recorded on 9 May 2015 at Saint Olaf Catholic Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota, as part of a "Concert for the Common Good." From Age to Age Choral Ensemble is conducted by Brennan Michaels. Rupert Gough conducts the most expansive, deeply felt performance of all, at the risk, I feel, of letting the music lose its way at times. The other three performances, all shorter by about half a minute, do not differ greatly as to interpretation and I could be happy with any of them. The actual recording quality puts the URI at the bottom of the list. By a very small margin I find the Minneapolis version has better blend than Spicer/Birmingham, allowing small harmonic details to register more clearly, and their very slightly more mobile tempo shapes the structure while losing nothing in depth. If you make a big pause, though, before "O ye heavens", as Spicer and Gough do, then you should make an equal pause after it, since "O ye heavens" is a parenthetical phrase and if you stop before it, but run on after it, you make nonsense of the poetry. The other two performances show that no such pause is needed.

¹⁶ Rodmell, Appendix 1.

Part Songs No. 26. *Price 6d*
1

VALENTINE'S DAY.

CHARLES KINGSLEY. C. V. STANFORD.
Op. 110. No. 1.

Andante leggiero.

Soprano I. *p* Oh! I wish I were a ti-ny brown-y bird from out the south,
Soprano II. *p* Oh! I wish I were a ti-ny brown-y bird from out the south,
Alto I. *p* Oh! I wish I were a ti-ny brown-y bird from out the south,
Alto II. *p* Oh! I wish I were a ti-ny brown-y bird from out the south,
Piano. (For practice only.) *p*

pp Set-tled a-mong the al-der-holts, and twit-ter-ing, twit-ter-ing, twit-ter-ing by the
pp Set-tled a-mong the al-der-holts, and twit-ter-ing by the
pp Set-tled a-mong the al-der-holts, and twit-ter-ing by the
pp Set-tled a-mong the al-der-holts, and twit-ter-ing by the

MADE IN ENGLAND
S.A.B. 533

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They are for SATB, but were also published in a curious version for SSAA female choir. Curious because the harmonic base becomes subtly altered. In “A Dirge”, the lowest note at the end of line 1 is an A not an F (first inversion), while the lowest note at the beginning of the next line is an A not an F (a second inversion not a first). I realize this will be very technical for some readers, but be assured that you would notice the difference well enough if you heard the two versions side by side. There is nothing to suggest that the SSAA version is not Stanford’s own work – no arranger is named – and there is no reason why it should not be effective. The sometimes rootless harmonies create a suspended effect resolved only at the end, where Stanford sometimes finishes on a bare unison when the SATB version has a chord. The SSAA version of “The Fairies”, like the SATB one, was published two years before the others. So, if we allow that the female choir and mixed choir versions of these part-songs are both Stanford’s own, and contemporaneous, might we

wonder which came first? Could Stanford have written the female-only version as a reasonable counterpart to the male choir op.106, only to be told by the publisher that he would have to make a “normal” SATB version if he wanted to sell any copies?

“**Valentine’s Day**” is not a moralizing poem like those of Kingsley that Stanford set in his op.47, though the ending might be found fatuous. A YouTube performance conducted by Ryan Chatterton for a DMA (Doctor of Musical Arts) programme in an unspecified venue – but I find that Chatterton comes from Saratoga Springs – sings it slowly, lovingly and, after its lights, very beautifully. I had always supposed, before hearing this, that the sense of Stanford’s *Andante leggiero* is that the music should move enough for the bird to dip and duck as it sings “its tiny life away in one melodious dream”. I have not changed my mind, but I have to admit it sounds very lovely Chatterton’s way.

“**A Dirge**” is, of course, a slow piece, but, like “Heraclitus”, the abiding impression is of loving, tender memories rather than stricken grief. It is truly beautiful, perhaps no less so than “Heraclitus” itself. It seems to inspire Spicer and his Birmingham to their best effort so far. Not only is it beautifully shaded, even the blend and ensemble are tighter.

“**The Fairies**” has a rather flimsy text by William Allingham, who rarely seems to have written about anything else. Nevertheless, it is musically charming. In 9/8 time, it is a sort of Leprechaun’s Dance for chorus. A little later, Stanford set three more Allingham poems for female choir and small orchestra to make a miniature cantata “Fairy Day”, op.131. A female choir considering “Fairy day” as a concert opener – if only one would – might think of adding the SSAA version of “The Fairies” before proceeding to meatier stuff.

Perhaps it is not necessary to say now that “**Heraclitus**” is one of the gems of the British part-song repertoire. The oldest version I know, made by the Fleet Street Choir in 1941, is striking for the crystalline clarity of the diction. When *tenuto* lines are placed over the notes, they are separated,

though without losing the line. Dynamic gradations are also strong. The tempo is mobile, neither hurried nor dragged.

Stanford's marking is *Andante*. Two versions, those of Hickox and Bahrens, seem to me on the *Allegretto* side. They both counteract it with a lot of nice shading, but the full beauty of the music does not quite emerge because it flows too easily, even urgently at times. Just a little slower is a very nice YouTube version by the Market Harborough Singers conducted in 1982 by Barry Clark. Perhaps it has no special feature to commend it, but it is the sort of honest performance we might have heard the length and breadth of the land when choirs of this sort were a normality – they were already fading by 1982 – and it shows how this music needs no more than that to register. A welcome souvenir.

Spicer arguably heads towards an *Adagio* tempo, but the improved standard of blend and ensemble noted in "A Dirge" is maintained here and the music can take the slower tempo – a fine performance, rather as Barbirolli might have done it.

Slower still are arteSonado of Madrid, previously admired in "Peace, come away". They just about get away with it, though they seem reluctant to sing below *mezzo piano*. Nice to hear Stanford making his mark in Madrid again.

The finest, and most moving, performance, though, seems to me that of Louis Halsey. He takes a tempo midway between Spicer and Hickox and retains something of the clarity of the Fleet Street Choir. The music is therefore poised between threnody and celebration and emerges in its fullest beauty.

Three Part-songs, op.111

For the group of **Three Part-songs, op.111**, Stanford turned to a contemporary female author. Born Mary Clarissa Gillington (1861-1936), May Byron married a very distant relative of the poet Lord Byron. As well as in book form, her poetry was published in newspapers – perhaps Stanford came across these tiny lyrics casually by this means. She also wrote retellings for children of the Peter Pan books (with Barrie's permission), cookery books and a long series of "A Day in the Life of ..." famous artists, writers and, particularly composers. These were done sufficiently neatly to raise doubts as to whether they were pure invention or fictionalized research. Stanford's passing interest in her work did not earn him a place in the series. The three pieces are:

1. A Lover's Ditty
2. The Praise of Spring
3. The Patient Lover

They were published by Curwen in 1908, though there is some doubt as to whether the third, which I have not seen or heard, was actually issued. If this were so, all is not lost, since the manuscript is held in the Newcastle Archive.

60867 CURWEN EDITION 3d.

THE PRAISE OF SPRING.
MAY BYRON. Andante. CHARLES V. STANFORD, Op. 111 No. 2.

Soprano.
1. Now is the sun-ny Spring In ev'ry mea- - dle seen,

Contralto.
1. Now is the sun-ny Spring In ev'ry mea- - dle seen, ev'ry meadow seen,

Tenor.
1. Now is the sun-ny Spring In ev'ry mea- - dle seen, ev'ry meadow seen,

Bass.
1. Now is the sun-ny Spring In ev'ry meadow seen,

PIANO.
(for practice only)

Now birds on wan- ton wing Do fly thro' for - est green; Each lus- ty liv- ing

Now birds on wan- ton wing Do fly thro' for - est green; Each lus- ty liv- ing

Now birds on wan- ton wing Do fly thro' for - est green; Each lus- ty liv- ing

Now birds on wan- ton wing Do fly thro' for - est green; Each lus- ty liv- ing

thing must needs rejoice and sing, Then let us bear our part with a blithe and merry heart,

thing must needs rejoice and sing, Then let us bear our part with a blithe and merry heart,

thing must needs rejoice and sing, Then let us bear our part with a blithe and merry heart,

thing must needs rejoice and sing, Then let us bear our part with a blithe and merry heart,

thing must needs rejoice and sing, Then let us bear our part with a blithe and merry heart,

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Contemporary she may have been, but these seem pastiche “Elizabethan Pastorals”, with a string of “fa-la-las” in the second. “**A Lover’s Ditty**” is included on the Somm CD. It has a sad lilt that might have been better rendered with less legato, expressive though the performance undoubtedly is. “**The Praise of Spring**” has some slightly unsettling modulATORY touches to counter its apparently idyllic mien.

Eight part-songs, op.119

Another female poet with a famous surname was Mary Coleridge (1861-1907). In this case the relationship, though distant, was not an acquired one – she was the great-great-niece of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Rather more significantly for Stanford and his circle, though, she was the daughter of Arthur Duke Coleridge (1830-1913). Though the career of Arthur Duke Coleridge was in law, he was a keen amateur musician who was widely considered a match for most professionals. Cambridge-based at the time of Stanford’s own years there as an undergraduate, he was among the first to sing Stanford songs in public. He was also the founder, in 1865, of the Bach Choir, of which Stanford later became conductor. Mary Elizabeth Coleridge was known in her lifetime as a novelist – Stevenson thought well of “The King with two Faces” – and published poetry only under a pseudonym. Not till a year after her early death, from appendicitis, was a volume of poetry issued under her own name. Her complete poems were published in 1954. Interest in her work has remained circumscribed. Her very short poems usually express pleasing, touching and occasionally disturbing thoughts, expressed neatly but with no special individuality. Alongside these, though, are pieces which have the ring of fairy tales, though not any that we know. Here the message becomes more ambiguous, even uncomfortable. All this may make her seem another Christina Rossetti. Yet, while few have claimed actual greatness for Christina Rossetti, there is a sense of an overall vision, a complete inner world, in Rossetti that does not really emerge with Mary Coleridge.

In a way, though, the incompleteness of these simple poems calls out for completion in music. Seven

The Witch.

MARY E. COLERIDGE.¹ C. V. STANFORD, Op. 119, No. 1.

Tempo giusto. 4-126.

SOPRANO:
ALTO:
TENOR:
BASS:
PIANO.
For grand piano only.

I have walk'd a great while o-ver the snow, And I am not tall and strong, My clothes are wet, and my teeth are set, And the way was hard and long. I have

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of Mary Coleridge’s poems were set for voice and piano by Parry as the ninth volume of his English Lyrics – the only one to concentrate upon a single poet other than Shakespeare. These were published in 1909. Stanford soon followed, with a total of sixteen part-songs. The most celebrated remains the **Eight Part-songs, op.119**, which contain “The Blue Bird”. They were recorded complete on LP by Hickox and now we have a second complete recording from Spicer.

Given the friendship and professional relationship that existed between Stanford and Arthur Duke Coleridge, it seems impossible that Stanford did not know Mary Coleridge fairly well. Nonetheless, nothing that I can trace has been written about this. Was his reception of her poetry, and therefore his setting of it, coloured by a knowledge of her personality? Did he know she was writing poetry before the posthumous 1908 publication? Did he have some key to the interpretation of her stranger fancies, such as “The Witch”, “Veneta” or “Wilderspin”?

This question is worth asking, since he begins, or at any rate placed first, one of these stranger fancies. In “**The Witch**”, a woman presents herself at an unknown person’s door as a tragic, exhausted wanderer, begging to be let in. In the second part, the narrator allows her in. The flame of his hearth fire “sank and died ... It never was lit again”. It is typical of Mary Coleridge’s art. All sorts of interpretations are possible, yet the suspicion remains that we are trying to be clever over something really very simple.

Hickox’ and Spicer’s performances are very different. A difference of a minute (Hickox 2:24, Spicer 3.23) is extraordinary in such a tiny piece. Stanford’s marking is *Tempo giusto* with a metronome mark of 126 to the crotchet/quarter-note. Hickox is pretty close, urgent and wheedling in the first part, dramatic in the second with the final page memorably handled, suddenly very beautiful in the last line. I have tried to see the point of Spicer’s *Andante* interpretation, but can only find it spiritless.

“**Farewell, my joy**” is not the valedictory piece the opening words imply, rather, it is an appeal for ecstatic but unattainable joy. It is marked *Allegretto espressivo* and with two beats to the bar. Hickox seems to me to capture perfectly a mood poised between dejection and rapture. Spicer is marginally faster with more generic expression. It fails to move in the same way, and he inserts an unmarked, and gratuitously sentimental, slowing down at the end. A performance by the Madison Chamber Choir given on 22 November 2013 in Covenant Presbyterian Church, Madison, Wisconsin, is closer to Hickox in concept, if lacking the latter’s detailed expression.

As I stated at the beginning, any attempt to track down the viral, migratory phenomenon that “**The Blue Bird**” has become will be kept for a separate study. I shall limit myself here to comparing Hickox and Spicer with two historical recordings.

A first point to be made about this piece is that, though it is invariably done with a soprano solo, this is not what Stanford asked for. The score has all the sopranos on the upper line, with the altos divided throughout to create a four-part texture below, the sopranos floating above. Unless my ears deceive me, the two earlier recordings do this. The Fleet Street Choir, recorded in 1941, shape the music very nicely, but I would not say more than that. The recording by the Glasgow Orpheus Choir under Sir Hugh Robertson is, like Robertson’s “Corydon, Arise”, *sui generis*. No delicate impressionism here. He does not attempt a hushed pianissimo – this may be the fault of the recording, but the singing itself seems full-toned – and builds to an impassioned climax. Masterly choral conductor that he was, he has the colours within the texture ever changing. It is fascinating and involving, but Stanford’s dynamic markings suggest that it is not what he had in mind.

Hickox will have any right-thinking person spellbound. The performance is very slow but with remarkable control over blend and dynamics. Penelope Walmsley-Clark sings the soprano part exquisitely. The only price to pay is that very few words can be detected – indeed, only those over which Stanford has put staccato dots. The staccato dots are in combination with slurs, so how staccato should they be? For most conductors, hardly at all. Hickox seems to interpret the marking as meaning that here, and only here, the words should rise above the surface. His performance argues his case convincingly.

Spicer is just slightly more mobile, slightly less hushed, but you get more words if that matters. Several commentators, on MWI and elsewhere, have queried his very staccato interpretation of the staccato markings – seemingly ignoring the accompanying slurs. This did not disturb me at the beginning, it did a little at the end. Natalie Hyde is very good on the soprano part. Alone of these four versions, the final “blue” seems cut off, instead of fading into the distance. If this fading could be

managed with 1940s technology, it should have been possible on a modern CD. This performance is more than good enough for the music to cast its spell, but Hickox is not challenged.

“**The Train**” offers a bemused glance at then-modern technology. Hickox seems a little polite here. Spicer, though a tad slower, enters more into the spirit of it. Both make the final “Where are you time and space?” into a celebratory statement. I have heard it taken full tilt, less legato, and made to sound ironic, but this was a very long time ago. Perhaps I am imagining things, but I still think such an interpretation might be tried.

The ironies of “**The Inkbottle**” are put across by Hickox with a swift, darting tempo and sharp, malicious characterization. By comparison, Spicer’s choir sounds dutiful, even bored.

Hickox, on the other hand, despatches “**The Swallow**” too briskly and efficiently for my taste. Spicer, with a lazily undulating movement, sounds much more caring. A live performance on YouTube by a group called Renaissance, given on 8 September 2017, though a little ragged here and there, perhaps captures even better the sense of a calm summer’s day with the swallow floating above. It seems right to point out, though, that Stanford’s metronome mark is close to Hickox’s tempo. Maybe he just wished to warn against dragging.

Long ago I spent a camping holiday not far from Chillingham, Northumberland, and I could not get Stanford’s part-song “**Chillingham**,” out of my head the whole time. It somehow expressed perfectly the high but gentle hillscape. Hickox seems to me to miss this gentleness. Spicer is more loving, but Halsey shows what they have both missed – the long line as well as the detailed word-painting. A performance on YouTube by “Ocarina Owl Project” introduces the music with an unmistakable American accent. They then sing the first verse twice over, with the recording quality worsening all the time. They appear to be on the point of starting the second verse at last when the sound breaks off. A pity, because they seem to be responding sensitively to the music.

“**My Heart in Thine**” runs the risk of sticky sentimentality. Stanford has marked it *Larghetto teneramente*, but has also put the fairly flowing metronome mark of 92 to the quaver/eighth note. He has, after all, written it in 6/8 time, which implies a sense of two-in-a-bar, even if the conductor does beat six. In spite of the title, the first verse begins “My hand in thine”, and we should surely have the feeling of a loving couple walking out together. Hickox seems to be doing exactly what is written, yet it is not very involving. Spicer is considerably slower. Theoretically, I would say that, if Stanford had wanted this, he would have written the music with double note values in 3/4. Yet I have to say that Spicer does it with such evident deep feeling that it comes off and does just about avoid sticky sentimentality.

Eight part-songs, op.127

In a letter dated 29 August 1911, Stanford wrote to Plunket Greene:

As I have not fished much I have perpetrated 8 more (and I think better) Mary Coleridge part-songs)¹⁸.

Greene adds in brackets “these included the famous ‘Blue Bird’,” but the word “more” and the date show that Stanford referred to op.127 – op.119 was completed in April 1910 while op.127 is dated August 1911 on the published scores. We know, then, that Stanford himself believed this second set

¹⁸ Greene, p.241.

of Coleridge settings to be superior. His letter was written during a fishing holiday in Altnaharra, near Loch Navor in Sutherland, Scotland. The titles of the **Eight Part-songs, op.127** are:

1. Plighted
2. Veneta
3. When Mary thro' the garden went
4. The Haven
5. The Guest
6. Larghetto
7. Wilderspin
8. To a Tree

This remains the least accessible of all Stanford's part-song sets and I am unable at present to comment on two of them, though of course photocopies can be obtained from the Newcastle Archive. The masterpiece among them must surely be "The Haven", though the only one to achieve a certain currency is "When Mary through the garden went".

Choral Library No 63. Price 6s

* Words by M. E. COLERIDGE. Music by C. V. STANFORD. Op. 127. No 1.

Andante molto teneramente.

SOPRANO
ALTO
TENOR
BASS.

Who - ther I live, or who - ther I die, What - ev - er the world.
Who - ther I live, or who - ther I die, What - ev - er the world.
Who - ther I live, or who - ther I die, What - ev - er the world.
Who - ther I live, or who - ther I die, What - ev - er the world.

PIANO.
For practice only.

Andante molto teneramente.

I see, I shall come to you by - and - by,
I see, I shall come to you by - and - by,
I see, I shall come to you by - and - by,
I see, I shall come to you by - and - by,

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"**Plighted**" – "Whether I live or whether I die" – is the only occasion where Stanford's choice of poems crossed with that of Parry. The extraordinarily wide-leaping vocal line of Parry's voice and piano version has been much commented upon. Stanford does not challenge his singers in the same way, and yet, after a gentle opening, there is boldness too. This piece is an interesting corroboration of my remarks on the tempo of "My Heart in Thine". This time, Stanford writes in 3/4 not 6/8, and the music seems to want to go at about the tempo Spicer chooses for the other piece. Perhaps he should have chosen this one instead.

"**Veneta**", though evidently inspired by the idea of Venice, seems to look ahead to a timeless future in which the city is submerged beneath the sea. With simple but masterly strokes, Stanford captures a sense of elegiac, disembodied wonder as the waters wash around the once-great, now-deserted city. Louis Halsey's recording – the only one as far as I know –

beautifully realizes Stanford's tone-painting.

When I performed a group of these part-songs long ago in my university days, one of my choices was "**When Mary through the garden went**". I had been entranced by the beautiful opening, and I wished to hear the powerful chromatic harmonies of the last two verses in action. Those were days when anything suggestive of Victorianism was automatically lampooned. My fellow-students told me the downward chromatic shift that introduces the last page was "nauseating", and at the actual performance, to an informal student audience though a few professors came along, including Kenneth Leighton, they were so busy sniggering that they went off pitch. Professor Leighton said to me afterwards, "I particularly liked the part-songs, but they have to be well sung".

Oddly enough, this part-song was nearly the first to get onto disc. The Glasgow Orpheus Choir under Sir Hugh Robertson set it down on 10 and 11 April 1926 – the latter at a live concert – but neither was passed for issue. In recent years, people have learnt to hear Stanford's chromatics without sniggering, and this part-song seems to be among the most widely sung, with ten versions currently on YouTube. There was at least one LP version¹⁹ and it is also on the Spicer CD. Given its religious content – it describes Mary seeking Christ in the garden after the stone has rolled away from the tomb, and being found by Him – it has also been adopted as an anthem.

Perhaps, though, the ABRHS (Acton-Boxborough Regional High School, Massachusetts, USA) Madrigal Singers conducted by Jennifer Moss at a Summer Concert in 2014, had some such hang-ups as my Edinburgh contemporaries. They were evidently unable or unwilling to face up to Stanford's chromatic agitation in the last verse. So, having sung the first three quite nicely – apart from some excessive and obtrusive staccatos – they sang the first verse again and then cut to the final bars, which sound tacked on. A pity. All the other versions I have heard are complete.

No doubt about the religious vocation of a performance sung as an anthem sung during the 9:30 AM Mass on April 23, 2017 at the Cathedral of the Assumption in Louisville, Kentucky. It was evidently recorded well back in the cathedral, the music emerging through various coughs, shuffles, squeaky pews and the like. They sing it slowly, reverently and very beautifully.

A performance on 21 May 2016 by the Colombine Chorale at Colorado Denver is preceded by a singularly flat reading of the poem. The performance is appreciative and efficient without unleashing any great magic from the pages.

A beautifully paced and sensitive performance comes from the Temple University Concert Choir conducted by Ryan Mullaney. Mullaney obtained a degree in conducting at Temple University, Philadelphia – presumably this performance was part of his practical training. I hope he will not forget Stanford as he moves on.

Staying with American choirs but also moving to Europe, on 15 March 2009 the Lawrentians, from Lawrenceville School (New Jersey), included this piece in a programme in the Kungsholm Church, Stockholm. The church has a very long reverberation and the recording seems to have been made by a member of the audience sitting well back. The chromatics of the last verse are confused and this surely proves that Stanford did not have ecclesiastical use in mind – he did not write this way in his actual church music. The result is more than anything a souvenir of the event, but the Swedish public heard the work in a good performance.

The Coro DeCanter, under its conductor Eduardo Notrica, has its performing base around the Rome area. Somewhat curiously, they list “When Mary” and “The Blue Bird” among their Christmas repertoire – it can sometimes be an advantage if the audience does not know the language you are singing. On 18 December 2012, in the very swimmy acoustic of the Chiesa di San Bonaventura, Frascati (Rome), they gave a creditable if somewhat slow performance of “When Mary”. Unlike some other groups, they are not afraid to make the last verse sound dramatic.

Moving to Germany, the already admired Vokalensemble Cantico Nuovo Berlin under Christian Bährens paint the first two verses with wonderful freshness, you can almost see the little grasses lightly stirring. But they also deliver the rising emotion of the later verses.

¹⁹ The Abbey Singers: Songs for All Seasons ATR/ST/2180, issued in 1977. I have not heard this.

Another German group, Klangfarben Giessen, comes from a much more provincial background – Giessen is a small town about 30 miles north of Frankfurt-am-Main. They nevertheless sing very well, if with slightly less refinement of blend and nuance than the Berlin choir. Though they paint the earlier stages with broader touches, they are finely passionate in the last verse.

The unidentified Renaissance group – but the other items on this YouTube channel all have a Northern Irish origin – begins tentatively and has not the refinement to paint the early stages as tenderly as the Berlin performance. But they gain confidence and, like the Giessen choir, rise to the passion of the later stages. The pause they insert before “These also stood and wept for him” is not in the score but it is effective.

The Tilia Ensemble is a mixed choir from Tokyo. They are less legato than the others in the first two verses, but the result is not unattractive and Mary is, after all, walking in the garden. So they may have a point. They are perhaps more effective than anybody in the last verse. They begin softly, slightly below tempo, then have the chromatic outburst break in really dramatically. Since their third verse was also fairly passionate, the overall shape comes across strongly.

And so to Spicer and the Somm CD, and it is one of his best. No special pleading, but also no fussy phrasing either. The music speaks strongly for itself. Honours seem to be even, though in different ways, between Spicer, Bährens and the Tilia Ensemble.

If op.119 has its defining moment in “The Blue Bird”, one masterpiece towers over op.127 – “**The Haven**”. Though less well known, it has certainly astonished all the commentators I have seen on the Spicer CD. Just as, in “The Blue Bird”, time stands still while the scene imperceptibly transforms into a vision of blue, so here, the long-held, immobile chords open up an infinite expanse of grey. Only towards the end is there a fleeting glimpse of human warmth and tenderness, as the poet alludes to “The blue we know the little harebell by”. Mary Coleridge ends here, with a hint of hidden beauty. It was Stanford’s inspiration to engulf the scene once more in unremitting grey, ending on a bare fifth, resonating over the bass’s low E. In an interesting case of *Zeitgeist*, Sibelius’s Fourth Symphony had been written about a year before this.

Hickox is spellbinding. The tempo is daringly slow, the singers holding their line with scarcely more than a thread of tone. Spicer is not far behind. The tempo is almost as slow and he allows the tone to fill out here and there, the bleak chords rolling out in the longer acoustic. Stanford actually marked this in 2/2 not 4/4 and Bährens’ Berlin singers take him at his word, showing that the piece can maintain its bleakness at a more mobile tempo. Perhaps Stanford’s marking stemmed from a fear that his contemporary choirs, more attuned to the quaintly picturesque than to visions of infinity, would have been more likely to take it into their repertoire if the latter aspect was played down. In truth, the piece has found few takers over the years, Hickox’ brave effort notwithstanding. Its time will surely come. Meanwhile, of these three excellent performances, the Hickox remains unequalled.

I am unable to comment on the next piece, “**The Guest**”. Back in the 1970s, at the University concert I referred to above, I included “**Larghetto**” and “**Wilderspin**” in my group. I think I would still have tried to find a place for them on a CD of 25, though Spicer implicitly thinks otherwise. “Larghetto” is full of intimate, almost Elgarian, wistfulness, while “Wilderspin” offers Stanford scope for some extremely imaginative textures. This, like “The Witch”, is another of Coleridge’s inverted/perverted fairy-tale allegories of incompatibility, the tale of a mysterious weaver whose spell is broken to the detriment of the person who breaks it. Stanford fills the air with weaving noises. The set ends with the other piece unknown to me – “**To a Tree**”.

Given my incomplete knowledge, it is difficult to assess op.127 overall. Like op.119, it certainly contains at least one outright masterpiece, while several of the others show a willingness to extend texturally the potentialities of the part-song form – perhaps this why Stanford himself felt them an advance on the previous set.

To
The Bristol Madrigal Society.

ON TIME.
Choral Song.

Poem by JOHN MILTON. Set to music by C. V. STANFORD. Op. 142.

Moderato. (♩ = about 82.)

Chorus I:
Soprano. Fly, fly, fly, en-vi-ous Time, en-vi-ous Time, en-vi-ous Time.
Alto. Fly, fly, fly, en-vi-ous Time, en-vi-ous Time, en-vi-ous Time.
Tenor. Fly, fly, fly, en-vi-ous Time, en-vi-ous Time, en-vi-ous Time.
Bass. Fly, fly, fly, en-vi-ous Time, en-vi-ous Time, en-vi-ous Time.

Chorus II:
Soprano. Fly, fly, fly, en-vi-ous Time, en-vi-ous Time, en-vi-ous Time.
Alto. Fly, fly, fly, en-vi-ous Time, en-vi-ous Time, en-vi-ous Time.
Tenor. Fly, fly, fly, en-vi-ous Time, en-vi-ous Time, en-vi-ous Time.
Bass. Fly, fly, fly, en-vi-ous Time, en-vi-ous Time, en-vi-ous Time.

Piano accompaniment:
Moderato.
Piano accompaniment for rehearsal only.

On Time, op.142

Though the op.127 part-songs were defined as for SATB, Stanford was making an increasing habit of dividing the parts to enrich the texture. It would be an exaggeration to describe them as eight-part pieces in disguise, but it is not surprising if the process led to the composition of a part-song for double chorus. The layout on the page implies that he wanted an antiphonal effect. **On Time, op.142**, dated May 1914 on the score, is also *sui generis* in its use of a classic literary text – Milton's "Ode on Time". If the result is closer than usual to Parry, it is nevertheless a powerfully effective piece. It was dedicated to the Bristol Madrigal Society and performed by them on 14 January 1915.

"On Time" was included in the Hyperion CD, already alluded to, by the Choir of Royal Holloway conducted by Rupert Gough. It is also included on Spicer's Somm CD. I prefer Spicer simply because his choir layout, or the recording, or both, enable us to hear better the

antiphonal effects, the first choir on the left, the second on the right. In terms of interpretation, both are excellent. However, Gough accelerates unnecessarily in the final triplets where Spicer holds steady, another reason for preferring the Somm recording. "On Time" has also been recorded by Tenebrae, conducted by Nigel Short. See reviews by [Simon Thompson](#) and [John Quinn](#).

Ten Part-songs, op.156

The war and early post-war years seem to have stimulated in Stanford a new interest in unaccompanied choral music, religious and secular. Ushered in, perhaps, by the Three Motets, op.135, which include a lengthy eight-part piece on "Ye Holy Angels Bright", "On Time" was followed by the Magnificat in B flat, op.164, Ten part-songs op.156, two Masses opp.169 and op.176 and, seemingly, a further Mass performed in Westminster Cathedral on Easter Tuesday 1920. A productive period composition-wise, then, but less so when it came to getting it performed or published. The Masses opp.169 and 176 remained unperformed, as far as is known, and the manuscripts of all three Masses have disappeared. The same fate has engulfed the **Ten Part-songs, op.156** – we do not even know the titles or the poems set.

Without opus number – after 1900

Between 1900 and the end of his life, Stanford issued various single part-songs. A little more ambitiously, he set a further twelve Irish melodies to supplement those of op.78. The original works, listed with poet, composition date (when known), publisher and publication date were:

The Angler's Song (Chalkhill), May 1911, Year Book Press
 Off for the Cruise (The Coast of Cornwall) (F.G. Watts), Stainer and Bell 1913
 A Carol of Bells (L.N. Parker), arr. for SATB, Enoch 1919
 An Acrostic Ode (C.E. Stredwyck), ATTB, c.1920, in manuscript (not Stanford's)
 The Valley (MacGill), Year Book Press 1922
 The Morris Dance (trad), Cramer 1923.

"Off for the Cruise" was written for Horatio Parker's "Progressive Music Course", while "A Carol of Bells" was an arrangement of a song written for voice and piano on Christmas day 1915 and published by Enoch the following year. In its original form, this song is relatively well known. I have not seen the SATB version and I can comment directly on only two of these pieces.

The poem of "An Acrostic Ode" spells out "City Glee Club". This institution, founded in 1669, is said to be the oldest musical club in London. The ode would seem a minor addition to Stanford's war-inspired works, since it is a salute to "Comrades of yore, beyond the mists of time". After dwelling on "memories of golden hours" it admits the beginning of a new age – "Changed voices sing your madrigal and glee". "Changed voices" that honour those that went before: "Brothers our homage and so fare ye well". Whatever the poet intended, Stanford makes his own clear linkage to those fallen in war by setting the final "fare ye well" to the "Lead the line" phrase from "Songs of the Fleet". An occasional work, but one that might be useful to male-voice choirs in need of a commemorative piece.

"The Morris Dance" is harmonically unenterprising but is nevertheless best seen as a form of impressionism. Almost disjointed snatches of Morris Dance-like melodic figures come and go, single words sometimes supplying an ostinato while the other voices continue their own way. It should be fun to sing, and two performances have appeared on YouTube. The Green Mountain College Cantorion of Poultney, Vermont, on 4 December 2010, conducted by James P. Cassarino, are recorded at such a low level, and with such high tape hiss, that you may not even notice at first that the music has started. Go here only if you have the patience to download it and do a bit of restoration work. The more so when the Plassenburg-Singkreis Kulmbach – Kulmbach is a small town in Bavaria – are respectably recorded in a concert from September 2011. Unfortunately, this group was disbanded that same year for lack of new singers to replace those leaving. They sing with a nice lilt but I must say the Green Mountain version, if you can cope with the recording, has more zip. Closer to a Rodeo than a Morris Dance, maybe, but they make an engagingly cute little piece out of it.

The Morris Dance.

Words Traditional. Music by Charles V. Stanford

Allegro. $\text{♩} = 120$.

SUPRANO.
ALTO.
TENOR.
BASS.

Hot who comes
Come, lasses, come, come quickly, come, lasses, come, come quickly!

here with bag - pi - ping and drumming! O! The Morris'tis I
Come, lasses, come, come quick - ly! Come, lasses, come, come quick - ly,

see, The Morris dance a - com - ing. Come quickly,
come, lasses, come, come quick - ly! Come, lasses, come, come quick - ly!

ff
Come, lasses, come, come quick - ly! See, how trim they dance

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 TONIC SOLFA, may be had separately. Price 2d

alteration is followed by quite a few choral directors. I see that Oxford University Press have issued this part-song in an edition edited by John Rutter, which presumably incorporates his dynamic changes. The original Curwen edition is available from Boosey & Hawkes and I do hope anybody considering the piece will give it preference.

Felicitas, on a 2010 CD entitled “My Spirit Sang All Day”, are clearly using Rutter, hence the pianissimo end. Granted this, their performance, light and buoyant, yields little to Rutter’s own.

The King’s Singers take a mere 39 seconds, a tempo that nearly becomes a gabble even in their expert hands. They are among the few to observe the fortissimo pay-off at the end – though not at the end of the first verse.

The Smoky Valley High School Madrigals conducted by Britney English, at a Messiah Mosaic Concert in Presser Hall, Bethany College, on 13 April 2014, are well up to tempo, even running ahead a little towards the end. Like Rutter, they end with a pianissimo pay-off.

The John Laing Singers, now renamed Musicata, of Hamilton, Canada, are light and fleet, with a pianissimo pay-off.

A lively version, without tricks but with little dynamic variation, comes from the District Music Fremont Chorale.

The Princeton University Summer Singers, on 7 July 2015, are almighty fast, with Rutter dynamics. A student’ “fun” performance.

The USC (University of South California) Recital Choir under Ryan Chatterton declaredly use the Rutter edition, so we know what to expect from the dynamics. Chatterton inserts a very long pause before the final “Away”, a strange end to a performance that had been rather too well-behaved up till then.

If you are tired of listening from the audience’s seats and wonder what a choir sounds like from inside, you might try the Davis Chamber Choir – I suspect one of the tenors had a recorder right by him. Up so close, you inevitably hear imprecisions, but it is lively enough with a fortissimo ending. This choir operates in the University of California and this is from their winter 2013 concert. The same choir can be heard rather more comfortably recorded at a spring 2013 concert. The performances are very similar.

The Crosby Capriol Singers, under Richard Pomfret at a summer concert of 12 July 2015 in St. Michael’s Church Hall, Crosby, are a fraction on the slow side – they have a church acoustic to contend with – but are still lively enough. A pianissimo pay-off.

ENC A Cappella Alumni, live in Jordan Hall, New England Conservatory, Boston, Massachusetts, in 2011, are a tad slower still – about the slowest tempo at which the song will still reasonably work. Another pianissimo pay-off.

The Willebrordenensemble under. Elena Berdnikova, at the Voorronde Nederlands Koor Festival, Koorplein Zeeland on 25 February 2012 are also lively enough at a fairly steady tempo. Like The King’s Singers, they observe the fortissimo pay-off at the end but change it to pianissimo in the middle.

The NDSU (North Dakota State University) Concert Choir under its conductor Jo Ann Miller has undertaken several European tours. They sing well, but I presume their best work is to be found elsewhere. Their very slow tempo suggests they have mistaken the piece for an elegant Elizabethan morsel rather than a rip-roaring Irish hop-jig. They avoid the pianissimo pay-off in the sense that they make no dynamic variation anywhere at all.

The timing of 2.21 for the Kapelkwartet – just one to a part – in Hilversum on 15 May 2011 arouses curiosity. They begin very slowly, and when they come to the first “Away”, they repeat it a semitone higher, then off they go with the verse again at the new pitch, and a bit faster. Then, when they reach “Away” for the next time, they do the same again ... and again. Just as I was wondering if I was going to be chained for the rest of my life to this upwardly spiralling, ever accelerating interpretation, they decided it was time to stop, with a pianissimo pay-off, having reached a good tempo and a pitch a major third above that written. Quite a clever idea but, since the melody itself is universal property, why not make a complete arrangement themselves along these lines, rather than drag Stanford into it?

The chapter of “original” interpretations continues with the otherwise unidentified “Chamber Singers” – though most of the items on this YouTube channel seem to come from Illinois. They sing it through slowly and all stamp the ground on the fifth bar of the tune each time round. Having reached the end, they sing it all again, stamping included, as fast as they can, or even a little faster, since things get decidedly ragged. Their final touch is to separate widely the final phrases. The pay-off is fortissimo in the sense that the whole performance is fortissimo anyway. As a final touch, they attribute the arrangement to John Rutter not to Stanford.

From the 2012 Winter Concert of Millburn High School, New Jersey, director Rodrigo Vega drives pretty fast – it’s a students’ “fun” performance more than anything – and goes faster still towards the end. He inserts long pauses between the final phrases – but at least the pay-off is fortissimo.

Another slightly oddball version comes from the University of Maastricht Choir in 2010. They sing it all twice over, with Rutter dynamics. First slow and joyless, then so fast they can scarcely hold on.

Seventeen versions, and I have sampled a few more, including a zippy ride from a Turkish choir. Was it worth it? I was drawn on by the hope that somewhere, a version would exist that combines the highest standards of excellence – diction, ensemble – with a lively but not break-neck tempo and use of Stanford’s original score, with its fortissimo pay-offs, rather than Rutter’s altered version. Perhaps one does somewhere, but I have not found it. Changed dynamics apart, Rutter’s recording seems to remain the best.

The SATB picture is completed by **On Music**, published in 1924 by the Year Book Press. The words are by Thomas Moore and this is the title of the poem which begins “When through life unblest we rove”. It is included in Moore’s *Melodies* so I am assuming – but only assuming since I have not seen it – that this is an arrangement of the traditional melody rather than an original composition.

“On Music” is not listed in Dibble, but he does list a set of **Four Irish Folksongs for male voice** (ATTB) which had not previously appeared in Stanford catalogues. The titles are:

1. Battle Hymn
2. One Sunday after Mass

3. The Royal Hunt
4. St. Mary's Bells

The words are by A.P. Graves and voice and piano arrangements of all four had appeared in "Songs of Old Ireland". The male voice arrangements were published in 1928 by Boosey. Though Stanford's stock had been falling even in his last years, he was still a "useful" supplier of attractive smaller pieces, and a trickle of posthumously published anthems and songs continued into the 1930s.

This, then, is the total of Stanford's part-songs for unaccompanied chorus. While my account of them is not quite complete, it should be evident that there is still much to be explored. Spicer's Somm CD is of course to be welcomed for its scrupulously prepared performances. Our relief that there is now a full CD of this music should not blind us, however, to the fact that alternative performances, where they exist, often seem preferable. A reissue of the Hickox LP is highly desirable – the Halsey performances have been on CD on and off. The other objection is to Spicer's cherry-picking selection, which rather precludes a follow-up from this source. The YouTube performances I have discussed suggest that there is greater interest in this repertoire abroad than at home. I wonder if the next CD will come from Northern Europe or Northern America?

PART-SONGS WITH PIANO

The context

Anyone who thinks I have dedicated too much space to a discussion of YouTube performances or recordings long unavailable can heave a sigh of relief. To the best of my knowledge, none of the music in the present section has ever been recorded. I know almost all the pieces but, since my intentions are not academic-analytical, I shall make only a general survey of the available repertoire, in the hope that it might arouse the interest of suitable choral groups.

But which choral groups? The unaccompanied part-songs reflected, as we have seen, a particular social phenomenon, the proliferation of amateur choral singing, frequently of a very high standard. In the post-war years, with the rise of co-education, this SATB repertoire entered the reach of schools with enterprising music departments. In Stanford's day schools, strictly unisex and often divided almost equally between "juniors" and "seniors", needed another sort of repertoire. The two-part and three-part songs with piano accompaniment therefore reflect another social phenomenon – the rise of musical education in schools.

Stanford was intimately bound up with this phenomenon from the start. In around 1884²⁰, the National Society's Depository published a Song-book for Schools. Being a graduated collection of sixty-four songs, in one, two, and three parts, adapted for the use of children. The music arranged and harmonised by C. V. Stanford. In 1908, the same institution issued Patriotic Songs for Schools. A Collection of Songs in One, Two, and Three Parts, adapted for the use of Children, and taken almost entirely from the "Song-Book for Schools." The music arranged and harmonised by Sir C. V. Stanford. By this time, moreover, in 1906, Boosey had issued The National Song Book, a complete collection of the folk-songs, carols and rounds suggested by the Board of Education (1905), edited and arranged for the use of schools by Charles Villiers Stanford.

Stanford stated his views on musical education on several occasions. His 1889 lecture "Music in Elementary Schools" was reprinted in "Studies and Memories"²¹. In around 1909²² he collaborated

²⁰ The year of its deposit in the BL.

²¹ Stanford: *Studies and Memories*, Archibald Constable, London, 1908, pp.43 et seq.

with Sir Walter Parratt in “Class Singing for Schools”, to which he contributed a preface. Stanford had also been a close friend, since boyhood, of Edmond Holmes, who became chief inspector for elementary schools in 1905. Holmes was compelled to resign in 1911 as a result of his increasingly controversial educational theories, not to speak of his views on reincarnation, the “higher pantheism” and so on. In recent years, Holmes’s educational theories have been re-examined and he is seen as a precursor of educational systems that reject teaching by rote in favour of developing the child’s imagination. To what extent Stanford’s own views were coloured by those of his friend is not a matter I have ever seen discussed in print. It could be a fascinating research project. Perhaps we should remember, also, Stanford’s contributions – “Off for the Cruise” and “Lullaby” – to the “Progressive Music Course” of Horatio Parker, who was essaying a similar educational programme in America.

Returning to the immediate matter of music that might be worth singing, none of the volumes mentioned contain original music by Stanford. I know only the “National Song Book”, which contains very simple arrangements indeed, and I presume that the primary interest of this material is historical and sociological. Up until 1900, the practical result of Stanford’s educational theories in terms of actual compositions amounted only to a small number of songs for unison singing. Beginning in 1901, he produced a steady stream of songs in two or three parts with piano accompaniment. With one exception, he never attributed opus numbers to these pieces. Apart from that exception, op.138, the songs all came out separately, but they tended to come out in batches, three or four at a time the same year and with consecutive publishers’ catalogue numbers. It seems convenient, then, to map out the repertoire by treating these batches as “sets”.

The first difficulty for us today is that musical education in the schools, at least in the United Kingdom, has not, in recent years, built upon the foundations laid by Stanford and his like. Mixed-sex classes, organizational structures other than the old 11-plus, unlamented perhaps except for this side-product, mean that part-songs of this kind would scarcely fit in with whatever music is still being managed. This may not be so everywhere. A video on YouTube of a group of Swedish schoolgirls in pretty uniforms singing Stanford’s “Fairy Night”²³ suggests that many of the songs I am about to discuss could find a warm welcome in Northern Europe.

If not schools, what about adults? Generally, amateur choirs are mixed groups. Specifically female choirs could certainly look at some of these pieces – only a few have texts too obviously aimed at children. Otherwise, maybe the best hope for the survival of this repertoire is as soprano/mezzo-soprano duets and trios, though some would seem to lend themselves more than others to performance by solo voices.

70579. CURWEN EDITION. 61.

A ROVER SHANTY.

A. CONAN DOYLE. C. V. STANFORD.

Allegro. ♩ = 139.

Soprano. *mf*

Contralto. *mf*

PIANO. *mf*

1. A tra-der sailed from
2. The tra-der he had a

Step-ney Town, A tra-der sailed from
daugh-ter fair. The tra-der he had a

1. Wake her up! Shake her up! Try her with the main-sail!
2. Wake her up! Shake her up! Try her with the fore-sail!

Step-ney Town With a keg full of gold and a vel-vet gown: Ho, the bul-ly ro-ver
daugh-ter fair, She had gold in her ears, and gold in her hair: All for bul-ly ro-ver

©1905 London: J. Curwen & Sons Ltd, 24, Berners St., W.

²² The year of its deposit in the BL.

²³ The last movement of “Fairy Day” op.131, a work not discussed here because it is really accompanied by a small orchestra, though performance with piano is possible.

Two-part songs with piano

The set of **Four Two-part Songs** published by Curwen in 1901 are perhaps the most problematic for us today. The poems are by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and were included in his 1898 volume “Songs of Action”, though most had appeared earlier in newspapers or magazines. The titles are;

1. A Ballad of the Ranks
2. The Frontier Line
3. The Old Gray Fox
4. A Rover Shanty

For most people, Conan Doyle is synonymous with Sherlock Holmes and nothing else. In fact, he kept up a steady stream of verse clearly under the spell – in manner and matter – of Kipling. The first two are patriotic-military pieces, the third is a racy account of a fox hunt while the last is a jolly tale of abduction and murder on the high seas – but all is well, for in the end “It’s up and it’s over to Stornoway Bay ... Where the liquor is good and the lasses are gay”.

The odd thing is that all this is marked to be sung by sopranos and contraltos. In their day, I suppose they would have been sung by boys at public schools with unbroken voices, boys whose ambition in life was to become a huntin’, shootin’ and fishin’ squire like the *pater*, with a little bit of soldiering for Queen and country thrown in to while away their early manhood. Only the freebooting, lawless sentiments of “A Rover Shanty” might still strike a chord today. Perhaps this went for Stanford too since, while the others are well-turned, this is a bluff, exhilarating and above all memorable piece in his best “Songs of the Sea” manner. It could live again as a tenor and bass chorus/duet, even if this is not what Stanford intended.

Fortunately, the remaining two-part and three-part songs create no serious text issues. Indeed, the

Christopher Howell
71037 CURWEN EDITION. 17 July 1924. 4d.

THE LARK'S GRAVE.

WESTWOOD. C. V. STANFORD.

Andante. ♩. 96.

Soprano I. We'll plant a corn-flow'r

Soprano II.

PIANO.

on his grave And a grain of the beard-ed bar-ley, And a

lit-tle blue-bell to ring his knell And eye-bright blos-soming ear-ly;

lit-tle blue-bell to ring his knell And eye-bright blos-soming ear-ly;

London: J. Curwen & Sons, Ltd., 24 Berners St., W. I. CURWEN
Copyright, U. S. A. 1906 by J. Curwen & Sons, Ltd.

interesting thing, when we compare them with the texts chosen for the unaccompanied part-songs, is that we find no specifically Irish texts, though two of the poets were Irish, precious few “Elizabethan Pastorals” and a concentration on solid literary names – “English Lyrics”, as Parry might have called them. The choice, it is true, is oriented towards approved content for children, but most adults will not get too uppity if asked to sing Blake, Herrick, Shelley, Keats, Wordsworth, Scott or Tennyson. If solo performance is being considered, the most suitable singer for the second part would be a mezzo without too much of a contralto timbre.

A set of **Three Two-part Songs** was issued by Curwen in 1906. The titles and poets are:

1. The Lark’s Grave (Thomas Westwood)
2. A March Landscape (Wordsworth)
3. This is the way (anon. [George Cooper?])

To judge from the number of copies that turn up in second-hand shops, “The Lark’s Grave” must have been very widely sung at one time. It is a touching piece, especially the first two verses in the minor key. Thomas Westwood (1814-1888) is a little remembered poet who was a noted authority on angling. “A March Landscape” – “The cock is crowing, the stream is flowing” – expresses contented well-being and the voices entwine beautifully. The poet of “This is the way” is given on the score as anonymous, but in McGuffey’s Third Eclectic Reader²⁴ and at least one other source on internet, the poem is attributed to the American George Cooper (1840-1927). There is some picturesque tone painting in the piano part but the words to this piece, with their “little birdie” last verse, are more child-oriented in a dated way.

In 1907, Curwen brought out a further set of **Four Two-part Songs**:

1. Cradle Song (Blake)
2. A Laughing Song (Blake)
3. Robin Redbreast (Allingham)
4. The Echoing Green (Blake).

The odd man out here is obviously William Allingham, forsaking his usual fairies in favour of “Robin Redbreast”, if that is an improvement. The music is not without charm, but the childish words are of their time in a way that Blake’s visions of innocence, even at their simplest, never are. Of the last, Sydney Grew wrote:

“The Echoing Green is a poetic idyll ... the music ... is exquisitely un-self-conscious; few musicians could have successfully attempted the piece, and perhaps none but Stanford could have so beautifully created the scene and the mood of the middle stanza ... It is music of this kind that makes musicians of children. A composer could scarcely have higher eulogy than the praise that he creates poetic imagination in the very young.”²⁵

Grew is right to stress Stanford’s un-self-consciousness when writing this type of music – music that could well operate in an inverse sense and make – momentarily – children of adults who sing it. These three Blake settings are well worth consideration as a group.

Stanford’s one set with opus number was published, again by Curwen, in 1914: **Six Two-part Songs, op.138**.

1. A Welcome Song (Herrick)
2. To Music (Herrick)
3. Autumn (Shelley)
4. The Chase (William Rowley)

71082. CURWEN EDITION 6d.

THE ECHOING GREEN. *Op. 138*
WILLIAM BLAKE, (1757-1827).
C. V. STANFORD.

Allegretto vivace.

1st Voice. *mf*
The

2nd Voice.

Piano. *p*

mf
sun doth a - rise, The mer - ry bells ring,
And makes hap - py the skies; To
cresc.
The sky - lark and thrush, The birds of the bush, Sing
wel - come the spring; The sky - lark and thrush, The birds of the
poco cresc.

Made in England London: J. Curwen & Sons Ltd., 24 Berners St., W.1
New York: G. Schirmer Inc., Sole Agents for U.S.A. CURWEN

²⁴ Van Antwerp, Bragg & Co., 1879

²⁵ Sydney Grew: *Our favourite Musicians, from Stanford to Holbrooke*, T.N. Foulis, Edinburgh and London, 1922, p.48.

5. Meg Merrilies (Keats)
6. Oh! Sweet Content (Thomas Dekker)

There seems no particular qualitative reason why these have an opus number and the others do not, or any suggestion that this is a kind of definitive statement on the two-part song. The only thing that can be said is that, though not a cycle, Stanford has clearly given thought to providing a varied and listenable sequence, as he did with all his sets of songs and part-songs.

Some catalogues have listed these as songs for “two sopranos”. Solo sopranos seeking repertoire will have noted that they were published on typical ottavo-size choral sheets and in a series dedicated to choral repertoire. Furthermore, the first three and the last are labelled soprano and contralto, while the other two simply say 1st voice and 2nd voice. In terms of range, Stanford seems to have in mind girls’ groups or groups of boys with unbroken voices, too young to be defined as soprano, mezzo or contralto but simply divided into those who can sail up to G and those who had better stop at E flat. Neither voice is sent below middle C. A pair of solo singers will therefore find them rather unchallenging, but might well consider them anyway, since they are delightful music. Particularly pleasing is the way the voices wrap around each other in “To Music” and the tender poetry of “Oh! Sweet Content”, while in “Autumn”, Stanford shows his skill in landscape painting once more. The Rowley and Dekker poems are theoretically “Elizabethan Lyrics”, but Stanford does not treat them differently from the others.

Also in 1914, Stanford revised an earlier work that had evidently gone out of print: **A Child’s Garland of Songs, op.30**. The original edition, published by Longmans in 1892, deserves an article to itself. It is a remarkable case of artistic collaboration. Robert Louis Stevenson wrote a new poem specially to stand as the preface to this selection from “A Child’s Garland of Verse” and an unknown artist provided numerous illustrations that capture the period wonderfully. The only thing they do not specify is whether they are for solo or unison performance.

The 1914 edition is certainly for choral use and Stanford ironed out several irregular touches that would not trouble a solo singer, but which might cause a group to trip up. Their significance here is that three of the pieces now became two-part songs. These are:

2. Pirate Story
7. Marching Song
9. My Ship and Me

The songs are all a delight. The changes made in 1914 were small but I have to say I prefer Stanford’s first thoughts.

71418. CURWEN EDITION 7d.

pl 54

Christopher Howell
To Music. 15th August 1780.
 TO BECALM HIS FEVER.
 R. HERRICK. C. V. STANFORD.
 TWO-PART SONG. Op. 118. No. 2.

Andante con moto.

SOPRANO. and melt me

CONTRALTO. Charm me a - sleep, and melt me

PIANO.

so With thy de - li - cious num - bers;
 so With thy de - li - cious num - bers;

That be - ing rav - ish'd, hence I go A -
 That be - ing rav - ish'd, hence I go A -

Copyright, 1914, by J. Curwen & Sons Ltd.
 Made in England London: J. Curwen & Sons Ltd., 24 Berners St., W.
 New York: G. Schirmer Inc., Sole Agents for U.S.A. CURWEN

A further set of **Three Two-part Songs** was published by Edward Arnold in 1918.

1. The Haymakers' Roundelay (Anon)
2. The Rose upon my Balcony (Thackeray)
3. Claribel (Tennyson)

“The Haymakers' Roundelay” is another of those that turn up often in second hand lists. It certainly deserved whatever popularity it had, for it is a delightful “Elizabethan Pastoral”. The anonymity of the poem is actually open to doubt. It appears in “The Battle of Hexham”, a musical comedy by George Colman the Younger (1732-1794), produced in 1789, which may have been based on a lost Jacobean play of the same title by Barnabe Barnes. It is possible that the songs inserted in the play were traditional in any case.

“The Rose upon my Balcony” has grateful, almost operatic lines that might actually benefit from the sort of expressive freedom solo singers could bring to it. “Claribel” captures Tennyson’s claustrophobic melancholy well. This is unlikely to appeal to children so this, too, may work better with two solo singers.

A number of single pieces also came out during this period. Most were published by the Year Book Press. This publishing house dealt with both poetry and music. Its editor, at least as far as music was concerned, was Martin Akerman (1871-1938), who guided its fortunes from 1907 to 1934. He was Music Master at Eton, so he evidently had a good idea of what would appeal to the public school market. Stanford’s contributions to the series were:

- The Shepherd’s Sirena (Drayton), 1909
- My Land (T.A. Davis), 1911
- Sailing Song (Eliza Cook), 1917
- Flittermice (Joan Rundall), 1922

A consistent feature of Year Book Press vocal publications – not just those by Stanford – is the choice of quite rare poetry, implying a certain input by Akerman himself. In the case of Joan Rundall (1891-1937), Year Book Press had issued three volumes of her poetry – “Songs of the Grey Country” (1916), “Peatsmoke” (1919) and, for children, “Not Naughty Now” (c.1919). The possibility that musical settings by a famous composer might draw attention to a young author they wished to promote could hardly have escaped Akerman. Rundall began her career as a poet of the Scottish Lowlands. Later she moved to Canada, spent time in the Far East and, under her married name of Rigsby, published free English renditions of Korean poetry. I wonder if Stanford’s agreeably fluent setting of **Flittermice** helped her cause.

No 104. Price 4s

SINGING CLASS MUSIC - EDWARD ARNOLD'S SERIES
EDITED BY
THOMAS F. DUNHILL.
Published by EDWARD ARNOLD, 41 & 43, Maddox Street, London, W.1.

THE HAYMAKERS' ROUNDELAY
TWO-PART SONG
MUSIC BY
C. V. STANFORD.
Words ANON (Old English)

Allegro con brio.

1st VOICE: *Key Eb. 1.* Drift-ed snow no

2nd VOICE: *Key Eb. 1.* Drift-ed snow no

PIANO: *Allegro con brio.*

more is seen, Merry Spring comes clad in
Blus-ter-ing Win-ter pass-es by Mer-ry Spring comes

Copyright, 1918, by Edward Arnold.

No. 25. *ho 4* 1 *Christopher Howell Autumn 1939* PRICE [4d.]

The Year Book Press Series of Unison and Part-Songs.
 Edited by MARTIN AKERMAN.
 (H. F. W. DUNE & SON The Year Book Press Ltd., 31, Museum Street, London, W.C. 1.)

THE SHEPHERD'S SIRENA.
 TWO-Voice SONG.
 The Music by
 C. V. STANFORD.
 The Words by M. DRAYTON (1563-1631).

Copyright, 1939, by The Year Book Press.
 PRINTED IN ENGLAND.

The nearest to a household name here is Michael Drayton, a typical “Elizabethan Pastoral” text. **The Shepherd’s Sirena** is a further piece that often turns up second-hand. It is attractively melodious, the voices entwining in a way that must be enjoyable to sing. Unusually, the Elizabethan spelling has not been modernized. Akerman’s influence, perhaps?

Thomas Osborne Davis (1814-1845) was a slightly odd choice of poet for the home-ruler Stanford, for Davis was a fervent Irish nationalist and a moving spirit of the Young Ireland movement. The actual words of **My Land**, though, taken out of context, could refer to anybody’s love of his native country. Eliza Cook (1818-1889) had a considerable reputation in her day and is still to be found in more comprehensive anthologies. **Sailing Song** completes a quartet of songs that testify to Stanford’s practically unfailing ability to provide apt, attractive and above all *musical* music even when the texts are not of the finest.

Lullaby, Stanford’s contribution to Horatio Parker’s “Progressive Music Course”, was set to a poem by the American Frank Dempster Sherman (1860-1916), probably at Parker’s suggestion. Stanford wrote a good many attractive lullabies. This one is perhaps more attractive musically than the Blake “Cradle Song” referred to above, but is placed at disadvantage by the fey words. It was published in the UK by Stainer and Bell in 1913.

The establishment of the Music department of the Oxford University Press in 1921 meant they were just in time to include a few late Stanford pieces in their catalogue. His two-part contribution was **Virtue**, a setting of the poem by George Herbert. The opening is memorable, the voices entwining coolly and exquisitely, and the climax is well managed. This is not one of Herbert’s specifically religious poems, but his view of virtue of well in line with any Biblical selection that might be made on the subject, so this piece might well find useful life as an anthem. The simple piano part should transfer easily to the organ, and the last verse might actually benefit from its new dress.

Three-part songs with piano

Publishers’ catalogues in general suggest that three-part songs were a much smaller market, and Stanford wrote very few.

LULLABY.
 Children’s Song for Two Voices.

Poem by FRANK DEMPSTER SHERMAN. Set to music by CHARLES VILLIERS STANFORD.

Written for Professor Horatio Parker’s “Progressive Music Course”
 Copyright, MCMXIII, by Stainer & Bell Ltd., 58, Bazaar Street, London, W.1. S. & P. 1355

Earliest is **How beautiful is night**, an unpublished trio²⁶ written in 1870 to a text by Southey. Otherwise, Stanford's three-part songs are all very late pieces, all but one published by the Year Book Press.

The exception is **The Peaceful Western Wind**, with words by Thomas Campion, published in 1923 by Oxford University Press. This is in Georgian rather than Elizabethan Pastoral vein, melliflously pleasing.

One of the Year Book Press publications has the curious feature that it is described as "unaccompanied: piano part ad lib". This is **On Windy Way** (1917), another Joan Rundall setting. This presents a problem similar to that of the SSAA versions of the op.110 part-songs. The harmony apparently lacks its base, with even the end of each verse finishing on a first inversion, though the piece closes with a proper triad. This looks odd. Perhaps, as I suggested when discussing op.110, the impression of something suspended and resolved only at the end proves effective in performance. The piano part, with its busy arpeggios, radically transforms the nature of the piece, which does not seem entirely satisfactory either way.

Two three-part songs published by YBP in 1922 are unknown to me. These are **The Border Harp** (W.H. Ogilvie) and **Blow, winds, blow** (Anon). This leaves three pieces of which the accompaniment is described as for "piano or two violins". Though not published contemporaneously, the unusual instrumentation suggests they should be seen as a set:

Allen-a-Dale (Walter Scott), 1922

Shadow Dancers (W.H. Ogilvie), 1922

Lady May (Henry Chappell), 1924

The image shows a page of a musical score for 'Shadow Dancers'. At the top, it is identified as 'No. 207' from 'The Year Book Press Series of Unison and Part-Songs', edited by Martin Akerman. The music is by Charles Villiers Stanford, and the words are by Will H. Ogilvie. The score is for Soprano I, Soprano II, Alto, and two Violins. The tempo is 'Allegro moderato' and the mood is 'REV D.'. The lyrics are: 'When the swallows dipping low and the clouds above the wheat You can see the shadow dancers as they pass—'. The score includes vocal lines and piano accompaniment for the two violins.

Stanford was drawn to four poems by the romantic Scottish-Australian Will H. Ogilvie (1869-1963) in his last years – as well as these trios, there were two settings for solo voice and piano. Henry Chappell was presumably Henry Lang Chappell (1874-1937), the "Bath Railway Poet". The text set here seems more like an "Elizabethan Pastoral", but this is not inconsistent with some examples of Chappell's work visible on the internet.

Obviously, the curiosity here lies in the instrumentation. Although the piano is named as an alternative, the writing is not in the least pianistic. We can only wonder who the pieces were intended for, since the violin parts, though far from virtuosic, are not for beginners either. Yet the Year Book Press also published pieces for this combination by Percy Buck and Charles Wood, so there must have been some sort of perceived market.

By far the most interesting is **Shadow Dancers**. Here the second violin plays a darting dotted rhythm while the first plays pizzicato chords and the voices sing in quite independent rhythms. Texturally and rhythmically, if not harmonically, Stanford seems to be trying a

²⁶ The manuscript is in the National Library of Ireland.

brand of impressionism of his own. **Allen-a-Dale** and **Lady May** are much more straightforward. For the sake of “Shadow Dancers”, the set is worth the attention of anybody able to muster up the combination of a female choir and two violins.

A discussion of Stanford’s educational music should rightly include his songs for unison voices and piano. This will have to be the subject of a separate article, not least because the dividing line between solo songs and unison songs is blurred at times. Another work that might have been included here is Stanford’s one work for vocal quartet and piano, a cycle of nine songs from Tennyson’s “The Princess”, op.68. These, however, are specifically not for choral use – apart from “Our Enemies are fall’n”, which was issued separately as a piece for chorus and orchestra. So, with the quibble that vocal quartets are not the same thing as part-songs, I will leave these for separate treatment, too.

It should be evident that the two-part and three-part songs discussed here are too good to be shunted aside for ever. The disintegration of the educational context for which they were written is obviously a drawback – though a suitable educational context seems still to exist in several Northern European countries. Adult female choirs or vocal duettists/trios will find them extremely pleasing. Taken a few at a time, the fact that they were written with children in mind is not obvious, except in a very few cases, such as “Robin Redbreast” or the Sherman “Lullaby”. As a whole, they might seem emotionally and technically unchallenging in a way that is not true of the works Stanford wrote for adults, but then there is no need, except on a much needed CD, to perform more than a few at a time.

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