

### *Stanfordian Thoughts*

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

#### 16. Stanford and the Mass

In the run-up to the première performance, in 2018, of Stanford's *Via Victrix Mass*, [my colleague John Quinn noted](#) how "it came as a surprise to me a few years ago when I learned of the existence of a Mass setting [that in G, op. 46]". He added, "If the discovery of the Mass in G was a surprise I was even more astonished to learn recently of the existence of another and much later Mass setting by Stanford". Actually, there were at least three "much later" Mass settings by Stanford, but more of that anon. John's point was, "How did it come to be that Stanford, so strongly identified with the music of the Anglican church, composed not just a Mass but a setting, moreover, specifically intended for liturgical use?"

I learned of the existence of Stanford's Mass settings while still at school, in the late 1960s, and was never particularly surprised. I have been wondering off and on, since 2018, whether I should have been or, conversely, whether John should not have been. Probably it depends on the context where you first met Stanford. If you first heard his music in the Anglican church, maybe even singing some of it, as I suspect was John's case, it would seem strange indeed that he wrote a major work for the Roman rite. I spent most of my formative years at a boarding school with a non-denominational Protestant chapel that did for most of us – special provisions were made for Catholics. Stanford did not figure in our chapel repertoire. The stages of my own introduction to his music passed through an early-teens passion for Dvořák, reading in Eric Blom's *Music in England*<sup>1</sup> that Stanford "narrowly missed, one cannot quite tell why, becoming an Irish Dvořák", which sounded good, and the discovery in a second hand bookshop of the Ballade for piano, op. 170, which I duly learnt and played at a school concert. It was the comment of the music teacher of the Ashford Grammar School – "shed new light on Stanford" – that alerted me to the fact that I was actually doing something rather original and pioneering and set me on the course that led to the recordings and articles of the last decade or so.

I soon found a work list in Grove V, and it seemed to me perfectly natural that he had written Masses. Most of my musical heroes had done so, Dvořák included, and it did not occur to me at the time that almost all of them were Catholics, so might have been expected to write Masses. Rather, I supposed that writing a Mass was a vocal equivalent to writing a symphony, and even had a go myself – I soon got bogged down in the *Gloria* and gave up. I mention this because it does seem to me a possibility that, just as Stanford wished to measure himself against the symphonies and string quartets of his musical heroes, so he might have wished to measure himself against their Masses. Furthermore, his outlook was international rather than insular and he may have felt that Latin words could reach a wider audience than English ones. In any case, the Anglican Communion Service is basically the Catholic Mass translated into the vernacular with the *Gloria* shifted to the end.

In article 13 in this series I discussed Stanford's faith, in so far as we know anything about it, concluding that he was open-minded and tolerant towards people who professed beliefs other than the Anglican faith we presume him to have held. Sufficiently so as to have set poetry by Edmond Holmes or Whitman which expresses highly unorthodox creeds.

---

<sup>1</sup> Eric Blom, *Music in England*, Pelican Books, 1942, p. 169.

### Mass in G major, op.46

His first Mass was the result of a commission from the Brompton Oratory. The mind behind this was Thomas Wingham (1846-1893), a composer of some repute in his own day, and not only of religious music. He had studied with Sterndale Bennett at the Royal Academy of Music and his works included four symphonies – no. 3 was choral – and six concert overtures – again, no. 3 was choral – as well as two Masses and a Latin Te Deum. Most of these achieved at least one performance, sometimes in prestigious venues – his *Regina Coeli* Mass was premièred in Antwerp Cathedral in 1876. This must have marked a significant step in his spiritual, as well as musical, progress, for he had converted to Catholicism in the 1870s. He was appointed director of music at the Brompton Oratory in 1882 and from then until his death at the age of forty-seven obtained a notably high standard of performance during the liturgical functions. Stanford worked on the Mass in G from 1891, completing it on 22 October 1892. Wingham, who died on 24 March 1893, was therefore in time to see the score, and it was reportedly his dying wish that the Mass, which Stanford dedicated “in sincere regard” to his memory, should be performed at the earliest possible date<sup>2</sup>. The date chosen was a significant one – 26 May 1893, the day of the Patron Saint of the Oratory, St. Philip Neri.

It is generally felt that to attend a liturgical service for the sole purpose of writing a piece of musical criticism is disrespectful towards the genuine worshippers present. Nevertheless, reports in the *Musical Times* and *Musical News* tell us that it was

*Excellently performed by a large choir and a full orchestra, supplemented by the fine organ, at which Mr. D'Evry ... presided with admirable skill ... The soloists were Master Folkhard and Messrs. Russon, Pearson and Tabb. Mr. Barclay Jones, the musical director of the Oratory<sup>3</sup>, conducted.*

*... The Credo contains much clever contrapuntal writing ... The Sanctus might serve as a model for modern church music, and the Benedictus includes an effective quartet<sup>4</sup>.*

One further performance of the Mass at the Oratory is known to have taken place, in 1895<sup>5</sup>. Other unrecorded ones, not necessarily with full orchestral accompaniment, may have been given. Hudson was told in a letter from Prof. Patrick Russill, Director of Music at Brompton since 1977, that “Orchestral masses were frequent here prior to the Papal Encyclical Motu Proprio of 1903”, but that “Much of the old Victorian music library was burnt in a fire in 1950”<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Obituary in the *Musical Times*, April 1893, p.9, quoted in Frederick Hudson: *A New Catalogue of the Works of Charles Villiers Stanford 1852-1924, Compiled from the Original Sources*, typescript 1994. Held in the Stanford Collection of Newcastle University and accessible here:

[https://www.ncl.ac.uk/webtemplate/libraryassets/external/special-collectionsguide/handlists/stanford\\_charles\\_villiers\\_archive.pdf](https://www.ncl.ac.uk/webtemplate/libraryassets/external/special-collectionsguide/handlists/stanford_charles_villiers_archive.pdf). Retrieved 13.4.2022, A.13.

<sup>3</sup> Wingham's successor, Arthur Barclay Jones (1869-1943) had been a pupil of Wingham and remained musical director of the Oratory until 1935. Around 1900, he changed his name to Arthur Barclay.

<https://atuneadayblogdotcom.wordpress.com/composers/>, retrieved 28.7.2022.

<sup>4</sup> *Musical Times*, July 1893, p. 411, quoted in Hudson, ibid. The report in *Musical News*, 3 June 1893, p. 510 contained many of the same phrases, leading Smith to surmise it was another version of the same account: Smith, Peter John (2008), *The choral music of Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924) and the press c.1875-1925*. Masters thesis, Durham University. Available at Durham E-Theses Online: <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/2542/>, retrieved 19.6.2022, p. 162

<sup>5</sup> *Musical News*, 12 October 1895, reported in Smith, ibid, p.163.

<sup>6</sup> Hudson, ibid, A.13.

Meanwhile, the Catholic grapevine got busy and the Mass was a highlight of the Christmas celebrations at St. Patrick's Cathedral, New York. *The World*<sup>7</sup> provided a report:

*The solemn pontifical mass, at 11 o'clock, was attended by at least nine thousand persons. Fifth Avenue and Forty-Ninth and Fiftieth Streets were lined with carriages. The throng was particularly conspicuous by the absence of that brilliant array of dress which is a special feature of the Easter time. Archbishop Corrigan was the celebrant of the mass. The assistant priest was rev. William J.B. Daly and the deacons of honor were the rev. Joseph H. McMahon and the rev. P. Daly. ...*

*The music at this mass was under the direction of William F. Pecher, and the soloists were Miss. Hilke, soprano; Miss Clary, contralto; Mr. Kaiser, tenor; Mr. Steinbuch, basso. They were assisted by a large orchestra, and a chorus of 100 voices. Prior to the mass, Raff's prelude was rendered by the orchestra and organ. C. Villiers Stanford's grand mass, in G major, was then sung. ... Miss Hilke was never in better voice<sup>8</sup>.*

I have not traced any other performance of the Mass at St. Patrick's, New York, but, as with the Brompton Oratory, this does not rule out the possibility that it may have remained in the Cathedral's repertoire, to be performed on less news-worthy occasions, at least until 1903.

Not long after this, on 23 January 1894, Stanford gave the first public performance of the Mass at a concert by the Bach Choir, of which he was conductor from 1885 to 1902. The soloists were the American-born soprano Esther Palliser, the British mezzo Marie Brema, the British tenor William Shakespeare and the American baritone David Bispham. For this occasion, newspapers and their critics, with one exception, were welcome and several left comments. The *Daily Graphic* felt it was "remarkable throughout for loftiness of aim, sincerity of feeling, and scholarly workmanship, which, however, never lapses into mere academicism"<sup>9</sup>. In the *Guardian*, Charles Larcom Graves, a family friend of the Stanfords, found it "a very happy specimen of that union of scholarship and earnest feeling which one looks for in works of this stamp", while noting that it was "essentially as a service Mass and not as a concert Mass that it should be judged", hence the "subdued character" of the Sanctus and the lack of "expected climax" in the Agnus Dei<sup>10</sup>.

The exception was George Bernard Shaw, who was at the time *persona non grata* to the Bach Choir, having subjected them not long before to what he called their "first taste of really stimulating criticism". He learned of the performance by chance, too late to attend, and protested peevishly, "Must I, at this age, come down to studying advertisement columns for concerts like any common mortal?" The Mass nevertheless aroused his curiosity sufficiently to write:

*... to my sincere regret, I missed Stanford's Mass. I am not fond of modern settings of the Mass as a rule; but this particular one, as an example of the artistic catholicity of an Irish Protestant (and if you have never been in Ireland you do not know what Protestantism is), especially interests me.*

<sup>7</sup> *Impressive Masses Celebrated at St. Patrick's Cathedral*, *The World*, 26 December 1893.

<sup>8</sup> The source for this and other information about performances of Stanford's music in New York was a website, "Postcards from Brooklyn", which has long disappeared. It contained an incredible collection of newspaper cuttings regarding the New York area. Given that it was limited to this geographical zone, one cannot help wondering what might emerge from a similarly thorough trawl through the press of other major American cities, particularly those with a strong Irish community.

<sup>9</sup> 25 January 1894, quoted in Smith, *ibid.*, p. 162.

<sup>10</sup> 31 January 1894, quoted in Smith, *ibid.*, p. 162.

*Nothing is more tempting to a keen critic than an opportunity of comparing that religious music into the spirit of which the composer has entered through his dramatic faculty alone, with that which is the immediate expression of his own religious faith. And of such an opportunity I have been deprived ...<sup>11</sup>*

Shaw's curiosity was destined to remain unsatisfied, unless he sneaked into Brompton Oratory in 1895 or bought a score, for no further concert performance of the Mass seem to have been given. In more recent years, it has been revived for liturgical performance at the Oratory and elsewhere<sup>12</sup>, and a recording has been made<sup>13</sup>. As a final attempt to earn wider currency for the work, a version was issued with English words, under the title *Communion Service in G, op. 46*. Viewed as a possible alternative to the settings in B flat and F that were already well established, it had its drawbacks, though it did offer a *Benedictus* and *Agnus Dei*, which they lacked<sup>14</sup>. It is more extended than most Anglican settings and the organ part is ungrateful, being plainly a reduction from the orchestral score, unlike the idiomatic organ writing of the B flat service.

Commentators on the recording have largely noted the intimate scale of the Mass, suited to liturgical rather than concert use. Comparisons have been drawn with Dvořák's D major Mass which, though later orchestrated, was originally intended for private worship with organ accompaniment only. In New York, though, it was described as "Stanford's Grand Mass". Like the Austro-German Masses of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven (the C major), Schubert, Hummel and Weber, it seems able to make its mark both as an intimate piece with small forces and as a grander offering with a large choir and orchestra. John Quinn's review of the recording tells us it uses a choir of thirty-six and an orchestra of forty. This, he says, "reflects pretty accurately what one might expect to hear in a liturgical performance". In a liturgical performance today, certainly. But in Stanford's day? I have been unable to discover the number of singers in the Brompton choir in those years, but the *Musical Times* spoke of a "large choir and a full orchestra" which, especially by Victorian standards, suggests considerably more than thirty-six. Interestingly, the names of the soloists show they used a boy soprano and a male alto, presumably members of the choir, so the logical deduction is that the Brompton choir was an all-male body. In New York, we know from the review that the chorus numbered a hundred and that the soprano and contralto were female, implying that this was a mixed choir. The Bach Choir was certainly a mixed one. We know, too, that by 1887, Stanford had increased the members from 160 to 200<sup>15</sup>. Presumably they were all in attendance at the 1894 performance, joined by four leading opera/oratorio singers of the day. The conclusion has to be that listeners in 1893 and 1894 heard a much more full-blooded work than we get from the chamber forces of the EM recording which uses, moreover, voices drawn from the choir – true in intonation, unfailingly musical, but inevitably homespun in timbre. It is, nevertheless, a heartfelt performance and it would be unreasonable not to be grateful for it, while hoping that a larger-scale alternative might appear one day.

---

<sup>11</sup> G. Bernard Shaw, *Snubbed by the Bach Choir*, *The World*, 31 January 1894, reprinted in *Shaw's Music III*, pp.101-104, quoted in Hudson, *ibid.*, A 13° and Smith, *ibid.*, pp. 162-163.

<sup>12</sup> See Hudson, *ibid.*, A 13a-b.

<sup>13</sup> EMR CD021, Choir of Exeter College, Oxford, Stapledon Sinfonia/George de Voil. See MWI [review by John Quinn](#).

<sup>14</sup> Having originally refused to include *Benedictus* and *Agnus Dei* settings in his Communion Services, Stanford relented in 1909 and 1910, providing settings in F and B flat, without opus numbers and not necessarily, or exclusively, for use with his services in those keys.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.thebachchoir.org.uk/about/past-musical-directors/>

My one query concerns the *Sanctus*, which bears a metronome mark of 72 to the quaver (eighth note). This seems impossibly slow and De Voil oscillates between 56 and 60 to the crotchet (quarter note). This amounts to playing the music at almost double the written speed. Maybe the printers made a mistake, and the intended speed was 72 to the crotchet, not the quaver<sup>16</sup>. On the other hand, if the tempo were to be as slow as realistically possible, the arrival of the *Hosanna* would bring a sense of joyous release that we do not quite get here. This seems to be the sort of interpretative problem to which there can be no one solution, highlighting the drawback of having only one recording to choose from, however good.

### **British composers and the Mass**

Before leaving Wingham and the Oratory première, we might wonder *why* Wingham had so made such an effort to commission a Mass from a composer well-known for his Anglican church music, and why he so strongly wished, on his deathbed, for it to be performed as soon as possible.

A simple answer would be that Stanford was establishing himself, in Europe as well as in Great Britain, as one of the leading composers of the day. But in that case, why not commission Masses also from Sullivan, Mackenzie, Cowen and Parry? Or indeed from Stainer, a stalwart Anglican church musician who had not long before written an oratorio on the subject of St. Mary Magdalen? Well, if he tried and was repulsed, we would not necessarily know. Conversely, he may have felt it useless to try. But then, in the first case, why did Stanford accept and the others not? And, in the second, why did Wingham suppose Stanford would say yes when the others would not?

Another question might be, why did he make, publicly, the dying wish that the Mass should be performed as soon as possible? After all, the Mass had been commissioned and delivered. It might be reasonably supposed that his successor would perform it, if not at the earliest possible date, then fairly soon, without any special solicitation. The answer to this might be that he had seen the score and knew it was, with two possible exceptions, the finest Mass to have been written by a British composer since renaissance times – not that the competition was awesome<sup>17</sup> – and a match for most European settings in recent years.

One of the two possible exceptions was the Mass in C minor by Arthur Somervell, which was first performed by the Bach Choir under Stanford's baton on 10 March 1891. The review in the *Musical Times*<sup>18</sup> is worth quoting since the questions it raises about the whys and wherefores of a Mass setting by a British composer apply equally to Stanford.

*... inasmuch as it obeys the orthodox traditions in regard to arrangement and general design, it should be extensively used in Catholic churches of all countries. It will be interesting to see whether the new departure (for an English composer) of stepping outside the ordinary round of subjects for sacred music, which of course will to some extent militate against the*

<sup>16</sup> Always assuming that the metronome mark is Stanford's. His music bears metronome marks only rarely – in the entire corpus of his piano music, there is only one such mark. Vocal scores published by Novello usually have metronome marks, raising the possibility that it may have been the publisher's policy to provide them editorially when the composer failed to do so. This is a subject that deserves an essay to itself.

<sup>17</sup> From the pre-Wingham era, the “competition” would seem to come from two Catholic converts, Samuel Webbe (1740-1816), who wrote at least nine, and Samuel Wesley (1766-1837), who wrote at least two, one of them, the *Missa de Spiritu sancto*, dedicated to Pope Pius VI. Stanford expressed interest in performing this latter with the Bach choir but had to desist when faced with Novello's quotation of 67 pounds 7 shillings for the engraving and printing of fifty copies (see Basil Keen, *The Bach Choir: the first hundred years*, Ashgate 2008).

<sup>18</sup> *Musical Times* vol. 32 no. 578, April 1 1891, p. 214.

*popularity of the work among country societies at home, will be compensated by an amount of recognition which could not be gained from the conventional English oratorio.*

The prospect of Somervell's – and by extension Stanford's – Masses achieving regular currency in an international liturgical context is enticing. As we have seen, Stanford's reached New York, at least. Somervell's, despite the “distinctly and unanimously favourable” reception reported by the *Musical Times*, disappeared even more completely than Stanford's. Given its birth as a concert work, it would be interesting to know if it ever achieved a liturgical performance at all.

The other possible exception was the Mass in D by Ethel Smyth. This was premiered at the Royal Albert Hall on 18 January 1893 with a success that recent revivals reveal to have been deserved. It was, however, considered more an expression of High Anglicanism and seems to have enjoyed only concert performances.

Wingham could have heard both of these Masses. If so, he may have been suspicious of their concert-hall orientation and have reflected that Stanford's, which was commissioned for and geared to liturgical use, was in a different category. So one motivation may have been a wish to counter the growing habit of appropriating liturgical texts as free libretti.

### **Stanford and the Church, 1893-1903**

But could he have had another? Stanford was, it is true, thoroughly associated with the Anglican Church and had been organist at Trinity College, Cambridge since 1873. However, he had now resigned this post, and was due to play his last service there on Christmas Day 1892. The production of a Mass for the Roman liturgy early in 1893 could have been invested with enormous symbolic significance. Did Wingham feel the terrain was fertile for a spectacular conversion? Did he see himself as a potential father-confessor in such a process? Wingham died before anything of the sort could happen. Any such hopes may have been illusions anyway. But before we dismiss the idea out of hand, let us look at the pattern of Stanford's religious or semi-religious works from a decade before the Mass to 1903.

- January 1883, If ye then be risen with Christ, Anthem
- August 1884, Prospice, song (text by Browning)
- July 1884, Elegiac Ode op. 21 (text by Whitman)
- 10 February 1885, Three Holy Children, oratorio op. 22 (biblical texts)
- c.1886, The heathen shall fear, anthem (performed 31 January 1886 but missing)
- January-February 1886, Blessed are the dead, Anthem
- May 1886, The Lord is my Shepherd, Anthem
- c.1887, Blessed art Thou, Anthem (performed 13 February 1887 but missing)
- March 1887, O Praise the Lord of Heaven op. 27 (Psalm 150)
- 7 January 1888, The Saints of God, hymn tune
- c.1889, Service in F op. 36
- c.1889, 2 Anthems op. 37
- c.1890, Why seek ye the living among the dead, Anthem (published 1890)
- April 1890, Crossing the Bar, song (text by Tennyson)
- 1 December 1890, Eden, oratorio op.40 (text by Bridges from Milton)
- 1891, Luard, hymn tune, composed for funeral of Dr. Luard, 6 May 1891
- 11 October 1892, Peace, come away, Part-song (words by Tennyson, from In Memoriam)
- 22 October 1892, Mass in G op .46

3 Motets, op. 38 (dedicated to his successor at Trinity, Alan Gray, and the Choir of Trinity College. The first motet, *Justorum animae*, had already been performed on 24 February 1888)

**25 December 1892, last appearance as organist to Trinity College, Cambridge**

14 January 1893, East to West op. 52 (text by Swinburne)

24 March 1893, death of Thomas Wingham

c.1893, Worship, unison song (text by Whittier, pub. 1893)

c. 1893, A Carol (text by Quiller-Couch, pub. 1893)

July 1894, Fantasia and Toccata for organ op. 57

c.1894, Orient – As with gladness men of old, carol (pub. MT 1 December 1894, but Cambridge University Library copy stamped 1893)

1895, Morning and Communion Service op. 12 (joining the Evening Service composed in 1880)

1 September 1896, Requiem op. 63

30 January 1897, Te Deum op. 66 (to Latin text)

July 1897, 6 Elizabethan Pastorals, Set 3 op. 67 (no. 1 is “A Carol for Christmas”)

22 November 1898, Die Wallfahrt nach Kevlaar op. 72 (Song-cycle to text by Heine based on a Marian legend)

1903, 5 Sonnets from the Triumph of Love op. 82 (text by Edmond Holmes with reference to reincarnation)

1903, The Lord of Might op. 83 (first performed 13 May 1903, St. Paul’s Cathedral)

29 June 1903, 6 Preludes for organ, op. 88

**22 November 1903, Papal Encyclical “Motu proprio”**

It can be seen that, with the major exception of the Whitmanesque *Elegiac Ode*, the religious side Stanford’s output from 1883 to 1892 was much as we might expect from a Victorian Protestant composer – anthems, service music, hymns and a couple of oratorios. He marked his departure from Trinity by dedicating the three Latin Motets op. 38 to his successor<sup>19</sup>, though the actual date of these pieces, not published until 1905, is uncertain. Over the next decade, his religious works for a Protestant congregation were few. At Novello’s request, he added a Morning and Communion Service to the Evening Service in A, op. 12, written back in 1880. A few Christmas carols and the unison song *Worship* were not specifically for church use. He did, though, set poetry by two poets with highly unorthodox beliefs, Swinburne and Holmes, as well as Heine’s reworking of an ancient Marian legend. And he succeeded the Mass with two of his finest large-scale choral-orchestral works, the *Requiem* and the Latin *Te Deum*, with the *Stabat Mater* not long to follow. The shorter motet *The Lord of Might*, written for the 249<sup>th</sup> Festival of the Sons of the Clergy and performed in St. Paul’s Cathedral in 1903, looks like a return to visible Protestantism. But 1903 was also the year of Pope Pius X’s encyclical *Motu Proprio*. As Robert James Stove has pointed out<sup>20</sup>, Stanford “followed attentively (far more attentively than most Protestant musicians did, and probably more so than most Catholic musicians) the musical mandates decreed by Pope St Pius X in 1903”.

Stove quotes Stanford’s comments on the subject as they appeared in his autobiographical *Pages from an Unwritten Diary*<sup>21</sup>. Before discussing these, I would like to look at a paper presented by Stanford at the Church Congress in London in 1899 – four years before *Motu proprio* – and

<sup>19</sup> So it is usually assumed. I discuss below the possibility that the dedication may have been made in 1905, when the pieces were published.

<sup>20</sup> Robert James Stove: “*You would pluck out the heart of my mystery*”: *Discoveries and Paradoxes in Stanford-Related Research*, British Music, the Journal of the British Music Society, Vol. 43, 2021, pp. 4-5.

<sup>21</sup> Stanford, *Pages from an Unwritten Diary*, Edward Arnold, 1914, pp. 307 et seq.

subsequently reprinted in *Studies and Memories*<sup>22</sup>. The Congress was reported in some detail in the *Musical Times*<sup>23</sup>, which began by noting that

*It cannot be said that so important feature in the services of the Church as the music of the sanctuary has received undue attention at these ecclesiastical gatherings. ... papers on Church music have been read at only nineteen out of the thirty-seven previous meetings.*

Amends were made in 1899, beginning with an address by the Bishop of London who, though “he owned to the possession of a very imperfect ear”, was “very anxious that the old traditions of Anglican Church Music should always be continuously preserved” and “rather regretted the tendency on great occasions to select almost habitually foreign music”. Parry followed with a paper entitled *The Essentials of Church Music*. Sir George Martin’s paper on *The Training of Choirmasters* was read in his “unavoidable absence” by a Precentor, after which A. Madeley Richardson offered a contribution on *Voice Production in Choir Training* and Canon Rhodes Bristow concluded with a discourse on *Ancient Plain Song*.

Stanford’s paper, which followed that by Parry, was actually “a deviation from the printed programme” and it became clear in due course that he had an axe to grind: “Judging from the applause that was unstintingly meted out to him, the Professor scored his best points – if not his counterpoints – by his references to the thorny question of Organist vs. Precentor”<sup>24</sup>.

*I was for many years an organist. I venture, therefore, to recount, as shortly as possible, my own experiences. When I entered upon my duties, I found that the choice of all the music was made by the precentor. To this choice I was expected to sign my name with his. But when I found that I had practically no voice either in insertion or elimination, I declined to append my name to a list of music with the selection of which I had nothing to do. For many years, although the university to which I had the honour to belong had thought me worthy in knowledge and experience of being elected to their Professorship of Music, in my own College Chapel I was absolutely powerless to control or direct the choice of works which were to influence the tastes of hundreds of students. Surely such a policy is mischievous. Needless to say the result of it was that many generations of young Englishmen left their college without knowing the greatest and best of the works of the English Cathedral School ... I have heard Purcell termed dull, Gibbons dry, and known their finest anthems obliterated from the lists after one hearing, because they were not (to use the ready terms of the day) sufficiently “bright and attractive”; terms for which I venture to substitute “superficial and hysterical”<sup>25</sup>.*

Here, evidently, was the real reason for Stanford’s departure from Trinity College. The official reason was the need, with his new professorship at the Royal College of Music, his conductorship of the Bach Choir and his burgeoning career generally, to base himself in London. He nevertheless remained professor of music at Cambridge University for the rest of his life so would likely have hung on to the Trinity College appointment had it not become meaningless. The wonder is that he resisted for so long.

---

<sup>22</sup> Stanford, *Studies and Memories*, Archibald Constable, 1908, pp. 61 et seq.

<sup>23</sup> *Musical Times* vol.40 no.681, November 1 1899, pp. 739 et seq.

<sup>24</sup> The original title of the paper was *The Choice of Music in Choir Schools*, MT, ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Stanford, *Studies*, ibid.

Stanford's comments were not limited to his personal grudges. Though he habitually referred to "the Church" meaning, in his present company, "the Anglican Church", he was ready to look beyond it to a wider Christian context.

*Cathedral music in England has a great history. We have to thank the cathedrals for keeping alive, in artistically dark times, much of the half-buried talent of this country. They were the nurseries of such men as Tallis, Byrd, Gibbons, Farrant, and, greatest of all, of Henry Purcell. ... their works were English to the backbone ... They have an atmosphere about them which affects every man who, from his childhood, has known an English cathedral. In this respect they occupy the same position in the English Church that Heinrich Schütz and the Bachs did in the Lutheran, and Palestrina and his contemporaries in the Roman.*

*At the present time, in the Roman Church, we find all the signs pointing in the direction of the renaissance of Palestrina and his school in connection with its services, and a general feeling to encourage the writing of sacred music on their lines. In the Lutheran Church the influence of Bach has never been superseded; it is as great now as it ever was, and even growing in influence. In the English alone do we find our own great masters being more and more systematically neglected ...*

Before taking his leave, he had another point to make about repertoire:

*Take, for instance, the adaptation of the Masses of Haydn, Mozart or Schubert to the English Communion Service. No one admires them more than I do, but what treatment has to be meted out to them? A Mass, as written for the Roman ritual, is a thought-out and balanced piece of work, not merely scraps of movements, which may be played in any order, but as homogeneous as any sonata or symphony. What would be thought if a conductor, in order to present the Eroica Symphony of Beethoven to an English audience, cut out three-fourths of the first movement and played the second movement at the end as a finale? Yet this is what is done with any adapted Mass in our English services. The Kyrie (for which there is no place), is cut down and mutilated for words to which it only partially applies, and the Gloria, written to follow immediately after the Kyrie, is perforce removed from its place, and sung at the end of a work which was conceived to finish with the *Dona nobis pacem*. This vandalism is being perpetrated somewhere every Sunday ...*

You would think, from these words, that Stanford was unaware that his own Mass in G had been published in such a form and for such a purpose. We must wonder if this was a choice wished upon him by a greedy publisher.

Returning to the subject in 1914, in *Pages*<sup>26</sup>, Stanford chose to dedicate considerable space to developments in the Roman Catholic Church, more than a decade after the Papal encyclical had decreed the supremacy of polyphony and banned the use of instruments other than the organ from the church.

*The movement that started a short time ago at the Vatican for the better presentation of sixteenth-century music, for the revival and study of Palestrina and others of the polyphonic vocal school, and for the expunging of irrelevant and unsuitable music, came none too soon. ... It was a one-sided policy which left more recent music and orchestral accompaniments wholly out of account, and swept or endeavoured to sweep all later work, good or bad*

---

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., pp. 308 et seq.

together, into the dust-heap. From a preservative point of view it was invaluable; as a preventive it will probably act more slowly. The spirit in Italy which sees no incongruity in a performance of Rossini's Tarantella "Già la Luna" played as an outgoing voluntary after Benediction (an experience which I had in Como), will be difficult to discipline. Even more recently at the English home of the monks of Solesmes, famed for their printing of early Church music, I was startled to hear the organist burst out into the lively march from Bizet's "L'Arlesienne" in the middle of vespers:- an Etty Venus in the centre of a group of Bellini Madonnas. ...<sup>27</sup> The drastic attitude of the Roman purifiers is therefore the more comprehensible from the glaring abuses with which they have to deal near home, and it is not surprising that they should rush to the opposite extreme in exclusiveness. The banning of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven [and, he might have added, his own Mass in G] is a sorry proof of the danger of too much zeal.

So Stanford, around 1892, disgruntled with the state of music in his own Church, may have been at least considering whether his spiritual home might have been elsewhere. He may equally have been guided by pure opportunism. His big success in the Anglican Church, the Service in B flat, dated back to 1879 and nothing he had written more recently had been as widely adopted<sup>28</sup>. Maybe the Roman Church would offer new opportunities? If he had any such thoughts, the *Motu proprio* must have put a wet blanket on them and it is interesting that not long after, and until the end of his life, he produced a steady stream of music for the Anglican Church.

#### **Post *motu proprio***

Yet his interest in providing music for the Roman liturgy did not entirely cease. It is interesting that he revived his interest in the Three Latin Motets op. 38 shortly after the *Motu proprio* – they were published by Boosey in 1905. Since these pieces are today among the most loved items in the Anglican repertoire, it is important to remember that this was not, and could not, always be so. The performance of Tye's *Laudate Nomen Domini* at Canterbury Cathedral on 26 October 1912 was the first recorded instance of an anthem being sung in Latin there since the Reformation<sup>29</sup>. Things seem to have been a little less strict at Trinity College, since *Justorum animae* was sung there on 24 February 1888 and *Beati omnes* (either *Beati quorum via* misnamed or another lost piece) on 1 February 1890<sup>30</sup>. All the same, Novello evidently felt there was no demand for Latin church music. "Don't forget to send my Latin introits back if you don't want to publish them," Stanford wrote to

<sup>27</sup> In my essay in this series, *Songs of Faith. What Faith?* I remarked that we do not even know whether Stanford regularly attended Church since leaving Trinity. This passage shows that he attended a Roman Catholic Church on at least two occasions. We may putatively date the Como experience to September 1889, when he was Alfredo Piatti's guest at his villa on Lake Como (and composed his second Cello Sonata). It may, of course, have been an act of pure courtesy to accompany his hosts to Mass on Sunday morning. In any case, if he wished to attend an Anglican service, even today he would not find one nearer than Milan. The Solesmes Monks established Quarr Abbey on the Isle of Wight during their period of exile from France (1901-1922). Stanford would likely have visited the Isle of Wight as the guest of Hallam Tennyson, who remained in his father's old home in Freshwater until his death in 1928. Stanford's attendance at the Abbey may have amounted to no more than curiosity.

<sup>28</sup> The F major Service of c.1889 has never enjoyed great popularity. The anthem *The Lord is my Shepherd* is much loved now, but took some time to achieve this position.

<sup>29</sup> Christian Marc de Livet, *An Idealist Touched by Practicality": The Work and Influence of Richard Runciman Terry (1864-1938)*, PhD thesis submitted to Canterbury Christ Church University, 2018, p. x, <https://repository.canterbury.ac.uk/item/8qq10/-an-idealist-touched-by-practicality-the-work-and-influence-of-richard-runciman-terry-1864-1938>, retrieved 8.8.2022

<sup>30</sup> Dibble., ibid., p. 192.

Novello's Alfred Littleton. "I have no other scores, and we use them pretty frequently"<sup>31</sup>. "Pretty frequently" seems an elastic interpretation of the two isolated dates just mentioned. A tradition going back to Edmund Fellowes has it that they were "written specially as 'Grace' anthems to be sung in Hall on 'Gaudy' days at Trinity College, Cambridge"<sup>32</sup>. Dibble points out that the term "Gaudy Days" is "particular to Oxford and not Cambridge", but he notes that the choir's duty included the singing of grace in hall<sup>33</sup> so, if they were sung "pretty frequently", it was probably here rather than in the Chapel. But could they interest Roman Catholic churches? They contained nothing to offend the dictates of the *motu proprio*<sup>34</sup>.

### A Cappella Masses

All the same, well over a decade was to pass before Stanford wrote again for the Roman liturgy. Catalogues of his music from Porte onwards<sup>35</sup> list two late unaccompanied Masses, opp. 169 and 176. These are unpublished, believed unperformed and the manuscripts are missing. In 1964, Frederick Hudson was alerted to – and duly reported in the *Musical Times*<sup>36</sup> – a paragraph from a book by Hilda Andrews<sup>37</sup>:

*In those war years there was a stream of masses and motets from such men as ... Sir Charles Stanford, whose A Capella [sic!] Mass for eight voices, specially written for performance at Westminster, was heard in Holy Week of 1920.*

Hudson continued:

*None of Stanford's known Masses (Opp. 46, 169, 173, 176) fits this description, so an enquiry was made to the Administrator. This was passed on to Mr. Colin Mawby who replied: "The music list for 1920 certainly states that Stanford for eight voices was sung on April 4<sup>th</sup> (Easter Day). There are no copies or scores in our library, and I am afraid that I can find no further reference to the Mass". A direct inquiry was then made to Miss Andrews through the kind offices of the Oxford Press, but no reply has been received up to the present. Until this is confirmed or denied, there remains the possibility of an otherwise unknown a cappella Mass for eight voices by Stanford of c 1920.*

But why do "none of Stanford's known Masses ... fit this description"? It is true that Hudson lists opp. 169 and 176 for "4 vv. a cappella", but he also says that "no published literature (including that of the present writer) sheds further light from John F. Porte's catalogue to the present day"<sup>38</sup>. But Porte never said they were for "4 vv. a cappella"! He describes them only as "a capella [sic!]", which may mean anything from an unlikely two voices to a Tallis-style forty or even more. So, if Porte is our only source of information about these Masses, where did the idea come from that they were for four voices? It looks as if a default assumption was made that "a cappella" means "four voices

<sup>31</sup> Letter dated 25 November 1891, quoted in Dibble, *ibid.*, p. 192.

<sup>32</sup> Edmund H. Fellowes: *English Cathedral Music from Edward VI to Edward VII*, Methuen, 1941, p. 244.

<sup>33</sup> Dibble, *ibid.*, p. 192.

<sup>34</sup> If Stanford thought this, it was a long shot, but a search among the many performances on YouTube more than a century later, shows that *Justorum animae*, in particular, has been taken up by several Roman Catholic choirs around the world, even as far afield as Buenos Aires.

<sup>35</sup> John F. Porte: *Sir Charles V. Stanford*, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1921, pp. 132 and 136.

<sup>36</sup> Frederick Hudson, *C.V. Stanford: Nova Bibliographica II*, MT October 1964, p. 738.

<sup>37</sup> Hilda Andrews, *Westminster Retrospect. A Memoir of Sir Richard Terry*, OUP 1948, p. 132

<sup>38</sup> Hudson, *ibid.* B. 20.

unaccompanied”, the Masses were entered into the catalogue with this description, and it was then forgotten that “four voices” was a deduction not a fact<sup>39</sup>.

That being so, there seems no reason why the Westminster Mass should not be either op. 169 or op. 176, but which? On the presumption that Stanford’s opus numbers follow a chronological sequence (in general, they do), and basing ourselves on works with known completion dates, op. 169 should come somewhere between June 1919 (op. 167) and September 1919 (op. 172), while op. 176 should come between December 1919 (op. 173) and November 1920 (op. 177), probably closer to the latter. This makes it plausible that the Mass performed at Westminster was op. 169, and that it had sufficient success for Stanford immediately to provide another, which instead was not performed.

Friendship as much as interest in the Roman rite may have prompted the Westminster Mass. Sir Richard Runciman Terry, Master of Music at Westminster Cathedral from 1901 to 1924, had been a pupil of Stanford, not, for once, at the RCM but at Cambridge University. Andrews tells us that

*Stanford never lost this interest in Terry. Twenty years after this he was sending his composition pupils to hear unaccompanied polyphony sung at Westminster Cathedral, where this young Cambridge undergraduate had become a master of his craft, an authority to be reckoned with, a choirmaster for whose special performance Stanford wrote his only a capella [sic!] Mass<sup>40</sup>.*

*Stanford, from the Royal College of Music, regarded Westminster as an inexhaustible spring of pure polyphony. Sending his young composition students there to hear it for themselves, he would impress upon them that Palestrina and the great English polyphonists were theirs for the price of a twopenny bus fare from College to Cathedral. “Palestrina for tuppence” he would remind them in his Irish way ...<sup>41</sup>*

Terry’s commission was part of a campaign to enrich the repertoire of modern Mass settings. By no means all the composers were Roman Catholics; the most celebrated commission was Vaughan Williams’s Mass in G minor. Nor did established Roman Catholic composers always respond. An attempt to obtain a Mass from Elgar in 1919 was rebuffed. His faith was evidently going through a difficult period, for he replied “that he could not undertake such a work unless in complete accord with the philosophy of the text”<sup>42</sup>.

---

<sup>39</sup> This goes back far beyond Hudson’s 1994 catalogue. Already in *A Revised and Extended Catalogue of the Works of Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924)*, The Music Review, vol. 37, 1976, p. 112, the Masses were described as for “4 v. a cappella”. This in itself was a revision of a catalogue Hudson had published in The Music Review, vol. 25, 1964, in connection with his preparation of the Stanford article in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. That, in its turn, began as an updating of the list in Grove V, which seems to have derived from Porte. At the time of writing, I do not have access to Grove III, IV and V. My recollection is that Grove V described these Masses as for four voices unaccompanied. It is true that, the further back we go in time, the more possible it becomes that Grove author had access to some direct information, but on the strength of what is known, Porte’s “a capella” was at some stage transmuted into “4 voices a cappella” without any declared authority.

<sup>40</sup> Andrews, *ibid.*, p. 8. If Andrews had opened Porte, she would have known that this was not Stanford’s only a cappella Mass, but the comment perhaps confirms that it was the only one sung at Westminster.

<sup>41</sup><sup>42</sup> Andrews, *ibid.*, pp. 132-133.

<sup>42</sup> Trevor Beeson, *In Tuneful Accord: The Church Musicians*, SCM Press, 2009, p. 59.

In line with the tendency not to review liturgical services as if they were concerts, no account of the Westminster Stanford performance has come to light<sup>43</sup>. We can only note that the Masses came at a time when the composer was showing increasing interest in the potential of the unaccompanied choir. This may be traced from the Three Motets op. 135 (1913), of which the first in particular is far more extensive and elaborate than any of the Latin Motets op. 38, through the Ode *On Time* op. 142 (1914) and the Latin Magnificat op. 164 (1918). Possibly, the lost 10 Part-songs op. 156 take their place in this pattern. Logically, the Masses should be the culmination of this phase, but it looks as if we shall never know. Regarding the fate of the Westminster Mass, the fact that George Malcolm, early in his tenure as one of Terry's successors, and others after him, made a "literal bonfire" of manuscripts deemed not worth keeping<sup>44</sup>, does not sound hopeful.

### **Mass *Via Victrix* op. 173**

Between the two unaccompanied Masses, Stanford wrote another, this time on the largest scale for soli, chorus and orchestra. The *Mass Via Victrix 1914-1918*, op. 173, was not the result of any commission and is surely too extended for liturgical use. It was completed on 14 December 1919 and continues Stanford's reaction to the recent war, both celebrating victory and remembering the enormous human cost. The choice of a Latin text may have been intended to make the message as universal as possible. It was issued in vocal score, with a separate offprint of the *Gloria*, but no complete performance is known until the recent première. For a long time it was supposed that none of it had been performed at all, though I myself had evidence that the *Gloria* at least had had an outing somewhere<sup>45</sup>, since the cover of my copy of the vocal score (see illustration) is spattered with rehearsal dates written in pencil by the previous owner. They rehearsed it, *ergo* they performed it. Smith's thesis brought to light a performance of the *Gloria*, conducted by Stanford himself, at a special concert on 15 June 1920 at Trinity College, Cambridge, honouring the Chancellor and former Prime Minister Arthur Balfour<sup>46</sup>. The soloists were Agnes Nichols, Dilys Jones, Gervase Elwes and Harry Plunket Greene. I presume my vocal score was among those used at this performance.

The numerous discussions of the *Via Victrix* Mass, on the internet and elsewhere, relating to the performance and subsequent recording of this Mass, invariably state that the *Gloria* was performed at the 1920 concert with only organ accompaniment. Many quote no authority, some cite Jeremy Dibble, who edited the score for the performance and has written about it on various occasions. In a guest contribution to Jessica Duchen's blog, he stated: "The performance of the 'Gloria' may have had an auspicious audience, but it was only with organ"<sup>47</sup>. He does not cite his evidence, but presumably depended on Smith's thesis, which was written under his professorship at Durham. I have to admit I am startled that he finds the existing accounts so conclusive as to state, not that it "may have been" only with organ, but that it "was". To my mind, the evidence points the other way.

---

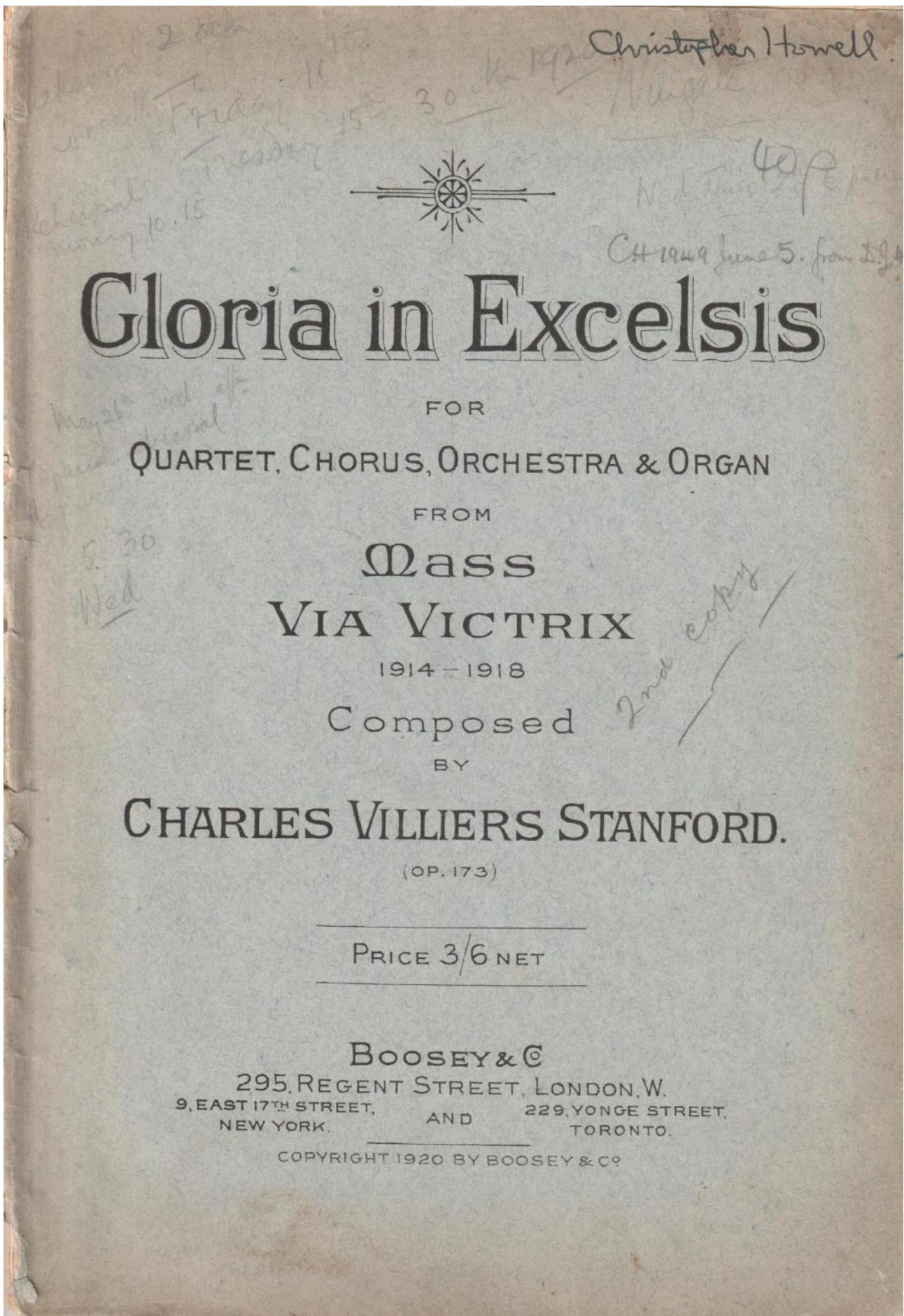
<sup>43</sup> MT for the following month is silent.

<sup>44</sup> De Livet, *ibid.*, pp. 106 and 235.

<sup>45</sup> And said so in October 2003, [http://www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2003/oct03/Stanford\\_errors.htm](http://www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2003/oct03/Stanford_errors.htm), paragraph 3.4

<sup>46</sup> Smith, *ibid.*, pp. 246-247.

<sup>47</sup> [https://jessicamusic.blogspot.com/2018/10/finding-stanford-road-to-victory\\_18.html](https://jessicamusic.blogspot.com/2018/10/finding-stanford-road-to-victory_18.html), retrieved 9 August 2022.



Smith has traced four press reports of the concert, some of them sadly sketchy. The most detailed is in the *Cambridge Chronicle*<sup>48</sup>, where we learn that the opening item, Rootham's *Processional*, was played by the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by the composer. The same paper noted that "the effect of the orchestra and chorus in the various combined works was magnificent, and especially was this noticeable in 'Blest Pair of Sirens', conducted by Sir Charles Stanford".

So an orchestra was evidently present. It has been suggested that the *Cambridge Chronicle* report is not conclusive because the other press comments do not mention the orchestra – the *Cambridge Daily News*<sup>49</sup> even refers to "a special organ and vocal recital" while the *Cambridge Review*<sup>50</sup> and the *Musical Times*<sup>51</sup> make no reference either way. There have, of course, been famous cases where a music critic has been caught with his trousers down after writing a review of a concert that was cancelled at the last moment, or of which the programme was changed on the night. Generally, though, critics given to reviewing *in absentia* avoid tell-tale details in their comments. For example, the correspondent of the *Musical Times*, having begun, "In recognition of the musical bent of the new Chancellor, Mr. Balfour, a special recital was given at King's College Chapel on Tuesday, June 15, the programme consisting very largely of works by Cambridge composers, who also conducted them", simply lists the music played and the soloists. This, if we are looking for a culprit, could have been written on the strength of a programme note without ever leaving London. It seems unlikely that an absent critic would claim the presence of a full symphony orchestra from a city 49 miles distant (63 by road) when any of the attending worthies might have noticed there was none. We will take it, therefore, that the LSO played at the concert.

The next objection is that, though the *Cambridge Chronicle* praises Stanford's conducting of *Blest Pair* with orchestra and chorus, it does not specifically state that the orchestra also played for the *Gloria*. It does, however, refer to "various combined works". How many combined works does "various" mean? Four or five? Surely more than two or three. So let us look at the programme, as listed in the *Musical Times*, and the forces logically employed.

Rootham: Processional – orchestra (the *Cambridge Chronicle* is definite about this)

The National Anthem, "arranged by the Professor" (presumably Stanford, who retained his Cambridge professorship till his death and made an arrangement of the National Anthem with orchestral accompaniment, published in 1897 and republished with revisions in 1901)

Purcell: Soul of the World (from "Hail! Bright Cecilia". Chorus and orchestra, though only organ accompaniment would not be too serious in this case)

Charles Wood: Expectans expectavi (chorus and organ, though it could conceivably have been orchestrated for the occasion)

Alan Gray: Dixit Dominus (a motet for 8-part chorus, unaccompanied)

Vaughan Williams: Let all the world (no. 5 of 5 Mystical Songs) (various versions exist, the most likely in the context would be that for chorus and orchestra)

Stanford: Gloria from Mass Via Victrix (chorus and ??)

Parry: Blest Pair of Sirens (chorus and orchestra, conducted by Stanford, as testified by the *Cambridge Chronicle*)

E.W. Naylor: Overture in D (presumably orchestra)

---

<sup>48</sup> 16 June 1920, quoted in Smith, *ibid.*, pp. 246-247.

<sup>49</sup> 16 June 1920, quoted in Smith, *ibid.*, pp. 246-247.

<sup>50</sup> 18 June 1920, referred to in Smith, *ibid.*, p.247.

<sup>51</sup> 1 July 1920, referred to in Smith, *ibid.*, p.247.

So, if we raise doubts about the presence of the orchestra in the Stanford, and given that the Wood was almost certainly accompanied by organ and the Gray was unaccompanied, that leaves Purcell, Vaughan Williams and Parry as “combined works”. “Various combined works” surely implies a little more than that.

At this point, you may be wondering why anyone should suppose the orchestra did not play for the *Gloria*. The orchestra was sitting there, and Stanford was not the man to leave them idle. The full score had been completed in good time, on 19 September 1919<sup>52</sup>. The front page of the vocal score assured purchasers that “the full score and band parts may be obtained from the publishers”. No such full score and band parts have come down to us, but there is no reason to suppose that Boosey’s copyists would not have supplied them if required. Smith, however, states that “it cannot even be certain if Stanford orchestrated any part of it”, adding later that it is “possible that, even if Stanford never orchestrated the other movements of the *Via Victrix* mass, the *Gloria* was so treated for this special performance”<sup>53</sup>. Why did Smith believe that Stanford may not have orchestrated the Mass?

Hudson’s catalogue refers clearly to an “Autograph full score dated 14 Dec. 1919, London, BL Loan 84, No. 36.<sup>54</sup>” More than thirty years earlier, Hudson had reported, among “Autograph MSS in possession of Messrs Boosey & Hawkes (London)”, “*Missa Via Victrix*, for chorus and orchestra, unbound separate movement in full score, signed and dated Dec. 14, 1919”<sup>55</sup>. Yet Smith chose to disregard Hudson’s entries. The only possible reason is that a large collection of manuscripts, once in the possession of Boosey & Hawkes and including op. 173, was in limbo at the time Smith wrote. The collection had been deposited with the British Library on loan in 1983 (Hudson evidently knew this). It was purchased by private treaty in 2001 so, now that it was officially part of their collection, it was duly catalogued by the BL and made available to researchers. Smith presented his thesis in 2008, but the BL’s work of cataloguing may have taken some time. One can only assume that Smith, attempting to view the score, had been unable to locate it and supposed Hudson’s entries to have been erroneous. Nevertheless Smith, even while believing that no full score existed, admitted the possibility that Stanford may have orchestrated the movement for the occasion. To my mind, the preponderance of evidence points to the *Gloria* having been performed in full orchestral panoply. Those who disagree must surely allow that it is preferable to state that the 1920 performance “may” have been accompanied by organ only, rather than that it “was”.

Another point that emerges from Hudson’s and BL’s entries is that the *Gloria* was written first, completed in Malvern on 19 September 1919. The *Kyrie* followed on 29 November and the entire Mass was finished in London on 14 December. So could Stanford have started by writing an independent *Gloria* as his contribution to the 1920 concert, and then felt inspired to compose an entire Mass around it? Might he even have hoped that the 1920 concert would find space for the complete work?

<sup>52</sup> See entry for British Library holding

[https://searcharchives.bl.uk/primo\\_library/libweb/action/display.do?tabs=detailsTab&ct=display&fn=search&doc=IAMS040-001946810&indx=5&reclids=IAMS040-001946810&reclidxs=4&elementId=4&renderMode=poppedOut&displayMode=full&frbrVersion=&frbg=&&vl\(1UI0\)=contains&dscnt=0&vid=IAMS\\_VU2&srt=rank&tab=local&Submit=Search&vl\(freeText0\)=%22IAMS036-001946797%22%20OR%20%22036-001946797%22&dum=true&vl\(2126785UI0\)=toc&dstmp=1660064947390](https://searcharchives.bl.uk/primo_library/libweb/action/display.do?tabs=detailsTab&ct=display&fn=search&doc=IAMS040-001946810&indx=5&reclids=IAMS040-001946810&reclidxs=4&elementId=4&renderMode=poppedOut&displayMode=full&frbrVersion=&frbg=&&vl(1UI0)=contains&dscnt=0&vid=IAMS_VU2&srt=rank&tab=local&Submit=Search&vl(freeText0)=%22IAMS036-001946797%22%20OR%20%22036-001946797%22&dum=true&vl(2126785UI0)=toc&dstmp=1660064947390), retrieved 9 August 2022.

<sup>53</sup> Smith, ibid., pp. 246-247.

<sup>54</sup> Hudson, ibid., A 30.

<sup>55</sup> Hudson, C.V. Stanford, *Nova Bibliographica*, MT October 1963, p. 729.

One other point of interest is that the BBC première of the Mass on 27 October 2018 was also not the first performance of the *Kyrie*, which was sung at the Wessex Festival on 10 August 2018 by the Orlando Singers – with organ accompaniment. They did not announce it as a first performance and it probably never occurred to them that a work published in 1920 would not have been sung when it was new. This also raises the possibility that, since the vocal score was always available, there may indeed have been performances by local choral societies, at least of single movements, with piano or organ accompaniment. These would be difficult to trace. None of this renders any the less remarkable the achievement of Dibble, Partington and the BBC, who edited, conducted and programmed the work at long last, and of Lyrita, which issued it on CD<sup>56</sup>.

Stanford in his last years still had his supporters, but a letter from Hamilton Harty to Gustav Behrens, a member of the Hallé Orchestra's Board of Directors, states realistically what they were up against:

*Miss Baguley has told me that a guarantor – Mr Murray – enquires why the Mass of Stanford has not been included in our scheme of concerts during the Hallé season, and as I have not only a great regard for Sir Charles Stanford, but also a wish to meet the views and wishes of our guarantors as far as possible, I am writing to explain that it is purely financial reasons which make the inclusion of the work in question difficult and unwise. ... my musical sympathies are altogether with those who wish for the performance of such works as the Mass of Stanford ... the policy we pursue is one that I hope will eventually place us in the position of being able to produce many such works<sup>57</sup>.*

When I first studied the vocal score of the *Via Victrix* Mass, back in the 1970s, my concern was that it depended, far more than Stanford's previous works of this kind, on sheer effects. For example, "et homo" (p. 71) is simply a massive swelling on a sudden chord of C major. "Et expect resurrectionem", too, relies on choral weight for its effect. The quotation of the "Paradisi Gloria" theme from the *Stabat Mater*, dominating the "Benedictus" but already hinted, most poetically, at "passus et sepultus est" (p. 78), looked unconvincing on paper, as it did to Paul Rodmell, who thought it "almost like a commercial for the earlier work"<sup>58</sup>. If these things come off, I thought, the work might yet prove a masterpiece. The risk was that they might fall flat. Having now heard the work, I can say that Stanford was proved right all along. The effects work. Is it a masterpiece? It certainly sounds like one. It is that word "sounds" that gives me pause for thought. It is all so deliberately imposing, though many passages, particularly the entire final "Agnus Dei", should not fail to move. Rather as certain cathedrals, by the vastness of their empty spaces, inspire admiration and awe while others invite our love, I have the idea that, in a world where Stanford was performed as often as he deserves, the *Via Victrix* would come round less often than the G major Mass, the Requiem, the *Stabat Mater* and probably the Latin Te Deum, all of which combine grandeur with a glowing spontaneity. Further hearings may yet prove me wrong – and, at the time of writing, I have only seen the Latin Te Deum in vocal score, though a recording has been scheduled. What can be said is that Stanford gave each of his large-scale works on a Latin text a character of its own – none is a rewrite of the other.

**Christopher Howell © 2022**

---

<sup>56</sup> See MWI reviews by [Paul Corfield Godfrey](#) and [John Quinn](#).

<sup>57</sup> 7 August 1922, quoted in Jeremy Dibble, *Hamilton Harty: Musical Polymath*, Boydell Press, 2013, p. 170.

<sup>58</sup> Paul Rodmell: *Charles Villiers Stanford*, Ashgate, 2002, p. 318.

**Previous articles**

1. [Phaudrig Crohoore: An Irish Ballad for chorus and orchestra, op.62](#)
2. [Chamber Music with Strings](#)
3. [The Second Violin Concerto: Did the full score ever exist?](#)
4. [Irish Rhapsody no. 5](#)
5. [Smaller Orchestra Works](#)
6. [Fairy Day](#)
7. [Not-quite-concertos](#)
8. [Partsongs](#)
9. [Stanford's most-played work](#)
10. [A Child's Garland of Songs op.30](#)
11. [God and the Universe: which version came first?](#)
12. [To the Soul. Did Stanford or Vaughan Williams get there first?](#)
13. [Songs of Faith](#)
14. [Songs of a Roving Celt](#)
15. [Patriotic Songs](#)