

**FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS:
SIR CHARLES VILLIERS STANFORD AND HIS STUDENTS
AT THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC AND THEIR ORGAN MUSIC
IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY**

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Honors Bachelor of Music in Applied Music - Organ.

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ABSTRACT

Sir Charles Villiers Stanford trained a generation of composers during his tenure at the Royal College of Music. An accomplished conductor and composer himself, he passed his ideas of harmony, melody, and musical craftsmanship on to his students—or did he? This thesis explores the relationship between Stanford and each of three composers, Frank Bridge, Herbert Howells, and Ralph Vaughan Williams, who studied with him at the RCM.

The method to study these students will be twofold: first, a look at their lives in order to find what factors other than study at the RCM might have influenced their compositional styles, and second, analysis of their organ music for elements of melody, harmony, rhythm, and form, with a particular emphasis on how individual building blocks of the music work together to form a cohesive style.

Musical analysis shows that the three students exhibited a spectrum of deviation from their teacher. Bridge, the most conservative, departed the least from the ideas and teachings of Stanford, followed by Vaughan Williams and, the most different of the three, Howells. However, these composers were influenced by much more than just studying with Stanford, and, although one can make generalizations and conjectures as to their following their teacher's ways, it is impossible to form anything conclusive because of the many personal and musical factors and influences in the composers' lives.

Chapter 1

SIR CHARLES VILLIERS STANFORD

From an early age, Sir Charles Villiers Stanford was surrounded by culture: the son of a prominent Dublin lawyer, his father's friends were intellectually and culturally stimulating, and he lived in a home that was the gathering place for amateur and professional musicians. Such an early introduction to music paved the way for a life devoted to that art, a profession that would make Stanford an important figure in British music and a notable influence on a generation of composers.

1.1 Life and Work: An Overview

In his youth, Stanford proved his proficiency in piano, violin, organ, and, later, composition, which he studied with Robert Stewart, Joseph Robinson and Michael Quarry. From each teacher, he gained valuable, distinct knowledge in the field: Stewart imparted information about organ and church music; Robinson was an excellent conductor, which Stanford would become later in life; and Quarry provided insight into the music of Johann Sebastian Bach, Robert Schumann, and Johannes Brahms. Although all three teachers were formative influences on Stanford, it is early exposure to the German composers—gained primarily through study with Quarry—that explains much of Stanford's compositional style and process.¹

In 1870, after obtaining his father's permission to pursue a career in music, Stanford received an organ scholarship to Queen's College, Cambridge, where he also won a classical scholarship in 1871. He composed songs, canticles, and

instrumental music, and was elected assistant conductor, later to become conductor, of the Cambridge University Musical Society (CUMS).²

In 1873, Stanford moved to Trinity College, where he was appointed organist the next year. As part of an arrangement with the college, he spent the last six months of 1873 and 1874 in Leipzig and studied composition there with Carl Reinecke, who was a respected pianist and who believed in educating his students in Classical and pre-Classical composers, including Bach and Palestrina. His own compositional style was influenced by Felix Mendelssohn and was similar to Robert Schumann's.³

Despite composing several pieces, among which were two choral works and a violin concerto, during this period, Stanford found his time with Reinecke unprofitable. In the last half of 1876, he returned to Germany to study composition in Berlin with Friedrich Kiel, whose tutelage he found much more beneficial. While studying in Berlin, Stanford continued to compose prolifically, and his works, such as the First Symphony and incidental music for *Queen Mary*, became well known in Britain.⁴

Upon his return to Cambridge, he conducted the CUMS in English premieres of Brahms's works, including the *Neue Liebeslieder* waltzes, and in performances of his own compositions, such as the Piano Quintet; he also was a frequent guest pianist for many concerts. In addition to conducting and performing, Stanford was instrumental in bringing prominent artists to Cambridge, both British, such as Charles Hubert Hastings Parry, and European, including Hans Richter. His penchant for attracting guest artists helped bolster the organ recital series at Trinity

College, where he also improved the quality of the chapel choir with performances of his own works, such as *Justorum animae* (1888).⁵

Stanford was appointed professor of music at Cambridge in 1887.

Although he raised the prestige of the MusB program by requiring residency, his association with Cambridge was not a happy one, and he resigned as organist at Trinity five years later; he stayed at CUMS for an extra year to oversee the group's fiftieth-anniversary celebration, during which some of the most prominent composers of the time, such as Tchaikovsky and Saint-Saëns, received honorary doctorates from the university.⁶

After leaving Cambridge, he was appointed professor of music at the just-established Royal College of Music (RCM) in London. It was here that Frank Bridge, Herbert Howells, and Ralph Vaughan Williams were three of many famous composition students; during his tenure, Stanford also established the opera class and annual opera productions. The latter achievement demonstrates Stanford's commitment to the genre, and, later, after composing several operas to garner varying levels of recognition, he would lobby, albeit unsuccessfully, for a national opera company.⁷

In addition to conducting at the RCM and at CUMS, he also conducted the Bach Choir, the Leeds Philharmonic Society, and the Leeds Triennial Festival. His academic distinctions included honorary degrees from Oxford, Cambridge, Durham, and Leeds. Stanford's life consistently demonstrated a passion for improving the musical lives of institutions, from his strong direction of the CUMS to his positive influence at the RCM; for this, and for his contributions to the musical life of Britain with his composition and conducting, he was knighted in 1902.⁸

1.2 Style, Genre, and Influence

Stanford's compositional style is, without a doubt, diatonic; that is, his harmonic language eschewed chromaticism in favor of staying within the scale of the key, with occasional modulations that, while moving the piece forward and providing musical material, were a far cry from the intense harmonic shifts and devices used by his European contemporaries, like Richard Wagner, whose *Tristan und Isolde* he described in an essay as "crushingly chromatic."⁹

However, despite its diatonicism, Stanford's music had no lack of sophistication, polish, or creativity. His harmonic style was particularly effective in slow pieces, such as the song *Peace, come away*, because it worked in tandem with his lyric style; harmony and melody in these cases expressed musical ideas that were refined and sophisticated, and this combination became a feature of his music and an important component of his compositional style.¹⁰

These melodies often featured elements of Irish folk songs, whose inclusion reflected the loyalty that Stanford, an Irish Tory, had to his culture. He frequently edited and arranged folk songs, and many of his song cycles are based on texts by lesser-known Irish poets. Although these song cycles, along with works for the stage, are rarely performed today and did not gain much critical attention, they point to an important influence in Stanford's musical life and are examples of how his Irish identity permeated his composition.¹¹

Some of Stanford's Irish-based music did, however, earn him considerable recognition; his six Irish Rhapsodies, for example, which he composed between 1901 and 1923, show his creative symphonic mind. His skills as an arranger, orchestrator,

and composer are evident in these pieces, for which he was able effectively to combine all these areas of symphonic thought to create highly successful pieces.¹²

Stanford is best known for his sizable contribution to the body of Anglican liturgical music, especially the Service in B-Flat (1879); he added new dimensions to that music, specifically the thoughts and attitudes that he developed writing symphonies and song cycles. These new ideas, which he used to enhance the morning and evening canticles and communion text, enhanced the familiar with the unfamiliar and added a particular inventiveness to liturgy. The Service in B-Flat, as well as later services in A, G, and C, would influence the next generation of liturgical composers in their style of composing for the Anglican service.¹³

Despite this success, Stanford realized that writing for the Church would have limited appeal—namely, an appeal that would be restricted Britain and not spread internationally. Rather, more widely known and used forms like the symphony, concerto, and opera would, he concluded, help him obtain international recognition; however, he did not completely achieve this goal, a shortcoming that he blamed on the British publishing industry, which he accused of publishing music only for “large profits and quick returns.”¹⁴

His pieces were received very well abroad, with frequent performances of his symphonies, operas, and other works. His “Irish” Symphony No. 3, for example, was performed in many cities in Europe, including Berlin and Hamburg, shortly after its premiere in 1887, and Gustav Mahler chose it for a performance with the New York Philharmonic. In 1889, Stanford had the rare opportunity to conduct a concert in Berlin consisting entirely of his own music, including two new commissions.¹⁵

He constantly advocated Johannes Brahms, whose hallmark lyricism was prized in the German Romantic style, as a model of composition; it is likely that this attitude arose from Stanford's compositional study in Germany. In fact, much of his music displays a lyricism, orchestration, and harmonic language more reminiscent of Mendelssohn, who influenced German composition teachers for the rest of the century and whom Stanford also upheld as a composer to emulate.¹⁶

A well-known and widely respected teacher, Stanford influenced a generation of composers at the Royal College of Music, and English pianist and teacher Harold Samuel called him "the last of the formalists." Indeed, he possessed a particular intolerance for opposing views, musical and political, and severely denounced modern music; this attitude often alienated his pupils, including Ralph Vaughan Williams, and produced "rebellion," the very state that he wished to rectify in music.¹⁷

Although he exerted a great amount of influence at the RCM, his reputation has since been somewhat dismissed for that very reason: his conservatism. Stanford and his students were "constantly at war, not over the matter of technique, but over personal development of novel forms of expression."¹⁸ Moreover, although he pointed to Brahms as the compositional model, some of the pieces that Brahms wrote would never have been conservative enough for Stanford had they been written by a student.

Stanford consistently showed a lifelong passion for music through his performing, composing, conducting, and teaching, and his influence was widespread in English and European music. Despite his closed-mindedness, he earned a great deal

of praise for his contributions to sacred and secular music, and his compositional style, though perceived as old fashioned, would shape a generation of composers.

NOTES

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<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/26549> (accessed November 10, 2010), 1.
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Chapter 2

STUDYING STANFORD: OPUS 101, NUMBER 6

2.1 Analytical Method

The method used to analyze music here will be twofold: first, the properties that constitute musical language—melody and counterpoint; harmony; rhythm; and form—will be examined individually for their own characteristics. Second, the manner in which those four aspects of music work together will be discussed in depth to solidify preliminary observations and to draw conclusions about the compositional style in which the music is written.

Melody and counterpoint will be used together to refer to the “horizontal” lines, that is, the advancement of music through the crafting of melodic ideas, whether they are in the intended primary voice (melody) or in the other voices, intended to work with the melody to form a particular texture (counterpoint). Conversely, harmony will be analyzed in the sense of the “vertical” ideas in the music—for example, when melody and counterpoint together outline or imply a subdominant chord. The analysis of rhythm refers not only simply to the note values but also to the rhythmicity of a piece, to include such elements as accents, phrasing, and syncopation. Finally, the process by which music unfolds, through different sections, variations, and themes, will constitute the study of form.

Although the method of analyzing how things work together rather than how they work separately might give a disjointed or disorganized appearance, nothing

in music can exist in a vacuum, and it is thus necessary to provide a holistic analysis. However, great care has been taken to ensure logical connections between elements.

2.2. Analysis of Op. 101, No. 6

Measures one through seven contain an original melody that presents itself throughout the piece. It is for the most part diatonic, with the only non-chord tone appearing in the third measure, a B-natural acting as a chromatic lower neighbor tone to C. The basic outline of the first part of the melody—an ascending perfect fourth and subsequent scalar motion—appears four times, the third and fourth instances being variations on the first and second, respectively; the third iteration is the one that includes the chromatic neighbor tone, which is a diatonic neighbor tone the first time, and the fourth is a whole-step higher than the second.¹

In this section of the original melody, the counterpoint that has the same rhythm as the melody (which is equivalent to a tenor line) is in tenths for the first and third instances and in sixths for the second and fourth. In all four cases, it fills in notes of a chord, which the alto and bass lines complete, by providing the root of the IV chords and the fifth of the V and V⁷ chords. This parallelism is, in general, aesthetically pleasing because it uses consonant intervals: a tenth is a third plus an octave, and a sixth is an inverted third.²

The chords that this scalar motion outlines are, in order, IV-I-IV-ii. The perfect fourth creates chords of I⁶, V, I⁶, and V⁷/ii, which, according to rules of part writing and theory, each lead progressively, that is, down a fifth, to the chords that follow them. The alto voice reinforces this progression by containing four two-note, across-the-bar groups, the first and third of which comprise tied E-flats to work in both IV and I and the second and fourth of which both have the leading tone and the tonic

of the chord on the first beat of the measure (I and ii, respectively). In the second and fourth instances of the melodic idea, the bass line provides the root of the chord, but it is silent for the first and third instances, allowing the chords to be spelled with the three upper voices alone.³

Rhythmically, this beginning section is straightforward: two of the voices, the soprano and tenor, have the same rhythm—continuous eighth notes. The alto voice, as described above, has a quarter note on the third beat of a measure and a half note on the first beat of the next measure, repeated four times; the first and third instances are tied E-flats. The bass line has eighth notes, which are more accurately described as written-out, half-value quarter notes. The presence of these bass notes in only two places points to an accent on the I and ii chords and shapes the cadences of this melody.⁴

The second section of the melody is ascending, repeating scalar motion leading to a final cadence. Although the DO-RE-MI figure occurs three times, it occurs at three different places in the measure: the first beat, the third beat, and the second beat. It also appears with two different rhythms, the first two times in eighth notes and the last time in quarter notes, which signify a written-out *ritardando*.⁵

Counterpoint in these three measures, while achieving the same purpose of filling in the notes of chords, is somewhat more complex than in the first four measures. The tenor line, for example, is not in strict parallel motion with the soprano line; rather, it descends, beginning with A-flat (in the pickup) and ending with D. The alto line, too, is not as clear cut, moving down with the tenor line in some instances and leaping up in others to support the harmony. One interesting contrapuntal moment occurs in the second half of the second beat of measure five, when both the

alto and tenor lines move in parallel sixths to create two simultaneous suspensions, 6-5 and 8-7, to the V6/5 chord. The bass line also descends to the cadence instead of leaping, with a brief moment for a chromatic lower neighbor tone in measure five, which forms the basis of the V6/5 chord and which tonicizes C minor.⁶

This descending bass line plays a role in all the chords of this melodic strain, and, if this phrase is considered in terms of C minor rather than E-flat major, the DO-TE-LE-SO motion is an important road to the half-cadence at measure seven; in fact, this figure is common in bass lines of minor keys as a way to set up a V chord.⁷

The rhythm of the bass line here, as in the first section of the melody, is mostly shortened quarter notes, written as eighth notes, with half-notes before and at the cadence. The elongated notes closer to the cadence indicate that something different is happening, perhaps that the line is coming to an end; sure enough, the LE-SO is very clearly at the end of this section, and the listener is drawn to the cadence.⁸

That cadence is slightly unexpected, or at least unsatisfying: a section that begins in E-flat major with a I⁶ chord is hardly supposed to end with a V/vi. However, throughout the first seven measures of the piece, the harmonies are such that the end chord becomes part of the progression and not just a red herring. The beginning E-flat major feel changes when the bass line helps to tonicize C minor—going to the relative minor is a common device—and then there is a cadence in the newly tonicized key of C minor using another common device of a descending bass line. The cadence also introduces the first chord of the hymn tune, “St. Columba,” on which this prelude is based.⁹

Indeed, the next section of the piece has the first phrase of that tune as its melody; however, the harmony is different from that in most hymnals. Most notably, it begins in this piece in C minor, while it usually begins in E-flat major (the current section will still be considered as one in the latter key); this harmony, however, is logical given the half-cadence in C minor at the end of the previous section. The rest of the melody is harmonized more typically: I-V-IV⁶-I⁶/4-V⁷-I.¹⁰

The counterpoint is, like the first part of the original melody, aesthetically pleasing in that it relies primarily on parallel thirds. A descending tenor line, which acts as the bass, smoothly brings the harmony to I⁶ from vi, and then it ascends to facilitate V and IV⁶ chords before going back down to create a cadence. The alto line is a third above until the cadence, when it surrounds the third scale degree of the V chord.¹¹

After the hymn fragment, the original melody appears again, this time with a few changes: in the first part, the tenor D-flat to create a V⁶/5/IV in measure thirteen, the soprano D-flat as an upper neighbor tone to the C in measure fourteen, and the B-natural as a lower neighbor tone to the C in the same measure. The bass line is also more active, with octave E-flats at first and with a note for every change in harmony. In the second part, the DO-RE-MI figure only appears twice, without the rhythmically written-out *ritardando*; the cadence, however, is the same.¹²

The rest of the piece continues in much the same fashion, except for the modulation starting in measure thirty-one, following the hymn tune. A V⁷/IV chord leads to IV—A-flat major—and an added G flat facilitates motion to a D-flat major chord. The material in D-flat major, however, is short lived, and it soon weaves its way back to the original key by way of a C major chord, which is V/ii in E-flat major.

The piece ends with the final phrase of the hymn tune and a final statement of the original melodic material.¹³

NOTES

1. Charles Stanford, *Six Short Preludes and Postludes, Set 1, Op. 101* (Boca Raton, Fla.: Masters Music Publications, Inc.), 14.
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Chapter 3

LIVES, CAREERS, AND STYLES OF THE STUDENTS

3.1 Frank Bridge

Frank Bridge was born in Brighton, England, in 1879, and he distinguished himself musically at an early age with a scholarship, granted in 1899, to study at the Royal College of Music. There, he took lessons in violin—although he was primarily a violist—and, for four years, in composition with Sir Charles Villiers Stanford. As a violist, he played in the Joachim Quartet and the English String Quartet and gained a reputation as an excellent chamber music player. He also established himself as a conductor, directing operas, appearing with the London Symphony Orchestra, and conducting his own pieces in the United States.¹

In his early years of composition, Bridge's style was much like Stanford's: traditional form, dense harmony, and a wide range of expression. The essence of his musical language at this time is found in the chamber music he wrote, such as his Phantasie Quartet in F Minor and First String Quartet, even though he had not yet discovered as individual a voice as that which he developed later in life. His penchant for form is also evident in his single-movement works, such as his "Phantasie" Piano Quartet of 1910, which deliver the spirit and contrast of traditional four-movement works in a single movement. The Phantasie Piano Quartet, for example, has *Andante* sections that surround an *Allegro* that includes a slow middle section; this four-movement, symmetrical form was common in his early works. In some of his

chamber music from this period, such as the Second String Quartet, elements of what might be considered later Bridge appear, namely increased chromaticism; however, these less conservative devices still fit within the solidly Romantic framework of traditional form and harmony.²

Although he displayed a marked devotion to chamber music, Bridge also wrote orchestral music early in his career, and the piece *Summer* seems to mark the culmination of this early period. In *Summer*, Bridge combines his expressive maturity with his understanding of form and harmony, and the traditional techniques that he mastered while studying with Stanford become the vehicle for his musical poetry. It was also during this period that Bridge composed the set *Three Pieces for Organ*, one of which, *Adagio in E*, will be analyzed later.³

A staunch pacifist, Bridge must have been affected by the violence in World War I, for his postwar music lacks the conservatism and easygoing nature of his earlier Romantic works. His Piano Sonata, for example, is quite dissonant with a bitonality that signals a change in Bridge's personality and compositional style. Indeed, as he wrote music before World War I to please audiences and to adhere to conventions, he wrote music after World War I to move his musical language forward, becoming more flexible in form and rhythm to accommodate his new style.⁴

No matter which compositional devices or tools he used, Frank Bridge always composed to reach the height of his expression, and his works represent a progression not only of musical knowledge and language but also of personality. His studies with Stanford allowed him to express his maturity and personality in terms of Romantic conventions, and analysis of *Adagio in E* will reveal the way in which Bridge added his own poetic expression to what he learned.⁵

3.2 Herbert Howells

Herbert Howells intended to be a composer from a very young age, and, the youngest of six children, he showed considerable musical talent. After studying at Gloucester Cathedral, at age twenty, he won a scholarship to study composition with Sir Charles Villiers Stanford at the Royal College of Music. There, he developed close relationships both with Sir Charles Hubert Hastings Parry, who was a professor at the RCM and a renowned English composer and historian, and with Stanford. In fact, Howell's studies with Stanford were so important that Stanford called him his "son in music."⁶

From 1917 to 1920, Howells was quite ill and could not teach or perform; however, he was still able to compose, and he produced a number of works during these few years, which were probably the most prolific of his life. In 1935, he suffered an incredible tragedy in the loss of his nine-year-old son, Michael, to polio, an event that greatly affected his compositional style and mood for the rest of his life.⁷

Howells's general style is a mixture of English components—modal counterpoint from the Tudor era, the memories of his home of Gloucestershire, and a love for English literature and rich harmonies, more French than English in their makeup. His early chamber works, such as the Piano Quartet, show that his music was lyrical and poetic, strongly driven by melody. In the early 1920's, he produced a couple of pieces, such as the choral work *Sine nomine* (1922), but his pieces were not well received, and he did not compose substantially until 1935.⁸

The death of Howells's son in that year had a profound effect on the composer, so much of an effect that he could not even complete the cello concerto on which he was working at the time. Arguably, all the music he wrote after that tragedy was in some way influenced by it; for example, the slow movement of his Concerto

for Strings (1938) is considered an elegy for his son. To help overcome his grief, he composed *Hymnus paradisi* for soloists, chorus, and orchestra, the first performance of which did not take place until 1950, twelve years after it had been completed. The elegiac musical language that Howells used, such as soft dissonance and intricate texture, found its way into many of his secular and sacred compositions later in life.⁹

In the world of sacred music, Howells had a lifelong admiration for cathedral architecture, and many of his works were composed for particular spaces. He composed St. Paul's Service, for instance, to take advantage of the fine acoustical properties of that cathedral, and he combined his love for good acoustics with his love for choral music in crafting that piece.¹⁰

Like Frank Bridge, Howells used composition as a means of expression, finding a voice for his deep sorrow after the tragedy of his son's death. In addition to this particular event, his life had diverse influences that caused him to stray from the strict formal, melodic, and harmonic devices embraced by Stanford and to gravitate toward modal melodies, French harmonies, and a texture that wove the elements of his emotional style.¹¹

3.3 Ralph Vaughan Williams

For someone who described his own technique as "amateurish" and whom others described as "foolish," Ralph Vaughan Williams did pretty well. Musically focused early in life, with skills in violin, piano, and organ, he studied at the Royal College of Music and at Trinity College, Cambridge. Like Howells, he counted among his composition teachers Sir Charles Villiers Stanford and Sir Charles Hubert Hastings Parry.¹²

Although keen to compose, Vaughan Williams made progress slowly: another of his teachers, Dr. Charles Wood, did not think that he would ever become a composer. Despite others' low expectations, he saw the need to attain the highest level of musical excellence and, after receiving degrees at Trinity College, Cambridge, returned to study at the Royal College of Music and continued his studies abroad with Max Bruch and Maurice Ravel.¹³

Vaughan Williams believed that his creativity would not come mainly from foreign ideas, such as German counterpoint or French harmony, but from a rediscovery of what it means to be an English composer. As such, he spent a considerable amount of time and effort traveling to different places and gathering folk songs; during his life, he collected over eight hundred tunes, most of which he obtained before 1910. He also adapted more than forty of these songs for use as tunes in *The English Hymnal* (1906), for which he served as music editor and which has been the standard hymnal in the Church of England for over a century.¹⁴

As Vaughan Williams discarded foreign ideas in favor of organically English ones, he eschewed the chromaticism that many of his contemporaries used. Instead of building tension through intense chromatic harmonies, he did so using triads and common chords; although such chords stood out in a world of chromaticism, added chord tones, and atonality, they were composed with the same amount of intensity as their chromatic counterparts.¹⁵

The chords' sound stirred in the listeners of that era a sense of wonder and emotion because that effect was so different from the compositional style of other composers at the time. However, diatonicism did not completely replace non-diatonic devices, nor did it limit the scope of Vaughan Williams' musical language; instead, it

incorporated those devices and made use of them in the context of diatonic motion and modality.¹⁶

Vaughan Williams also used new melodic ideas to evoke emotion—restless, improvisatory-sounding melodies that, though they seem not to lead anywhere, can be expanded or compressed in any manner while still retaining their nature. This organic type of melody was probably due to the English folk-song influence on the composer, and it became the goal of the music. That is, the qualities of the melody pervaded the entire piece, and a clear melody was often the culmination.¹⁷

Ralph Vaughan Williams sought to innovate, not to re-invent; the musical world he saw was not flawed but in need of a more organic, native-born alternative. His compositional style keeps many of the values of Romantic music, such as orientation toward a goal and a buildup of tension, while fulfilling them with new devices and sonorities.¹⁸

NOTES

1. Anthony Payne et al, "Bridge, Frank," *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*,
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15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

Chapter 4

STUDYING THE STUDENTS

4.1 Frank Bridge: *Adagio in E Major*

The beginning of Bridge's 1905 organ work, *Adagio in E Major*, unfolds carefully and precisely: first, one hears a single voice, which plays the chromatic, mostly step-wise melody. Then, separately, the alto and soprano voices answer to create a fugal texture, even with regard to their tonal centers—dominant, then tonic—until, finally, the pedal comes enters in the tonic to complete the exposition. A dominant pedal point marks the end of the section while the upper voices form various spellings of the supertonic chord, building up to the dominant seventh chord in the last measure of this cadential passage.¹

As the melody presents itself, Bridge's harmonies are decidedly more chromatic than Stanford's, partly because the melody itself is so chromatic. For example, in the third beat of measure seven, the upper voice has a G natural, which is not diatonic to E major; the lower voice, which previously had a C sharp to form a minor third with the E at the start of beat two, now moves chromatically down to a B, which forms a minor sixth with the G natural and a major third with the subsequent D sharp. As the D sharp changes to a D natural, the lower voice descends chromatically again to form a consonant interval—another minor sixth—with the upper voice. Compared to how Stanford used chromatic notes, that is, as leading tones or subdominant scale degrees to a newly tonicized key (as with the G flat in measure

thirty-five of the prelude on “St. Columba”), Bridge wrote more extensive chromatic counterpoint as a means to facilitate desired harmonies.²

Often, as in Stanford’s music, those harmonies are created by parallel thirds and sixths. The first and second beats of the twelfth measure have descending chromatic lines in the alto and tenor voices, separated by a minor third and ending on the third beat with a tenor suspension. Similarly, in the last halves of measures sixteen and seventeen, the descending alto and tenor lines are in parallel sixths, like the original melodic material in the Stanford prelude.³

The second section, when both hands move to the great, begins with the melody in the right hand, later doubled by the left; in fact, briefly, all the right-hand notes are doubled at the lower octave in the left hand, and in these few measures, too, parallel thirds and sixths figure prominently as a contrapuntal device.⁴

Bridge accomplishes the modulation in this section not by overtly taking advantage of the circle of fifths, as Stanford does, but by means of a common tone. In general, the third scale degree of the old key becomes the fourth scale degree of the dominant of the new key in an appoggiatura to the third scale degree of the dominant of the new key; the dominant then resolves to the new tonic. For example, in measure twenty-six, the G sharp in the second beat is the third scale degree of E major, but, in the third beat, the bass becomes E flat, and the G sharp is spelled as an A flat, signifying its relationship to the new key as the fourth scale degree of the dominant. The bass leads to the formation of a first-inversion A-flat major chord, and the modulation repeats.⁵

The next section pits regular time against double time: the top voice states the theme in the original time, while the tenor voice has sixteenth notes—the first

sixteenth notes of the piece—and the bass notes are halves and quarters, with only one instance of eighth notes. This section is full of accents in the form of all voices having the same rhythm, as in the third and fourth beats of measure thirty and the first two beats of measure thirty-one.⁶

True to an arched form, the piece winds down as it has been up, first with similar modulations and a decrescendo, then with quiet statements of the theme on softer manuals. Parallel sixths, as seen in measure forty-seven, and the parallel thirds in measure forty-eight recall the counterpoint from earlier in the piece, and it ends with a nonstandard cadence—natural mediant to tonic.⁷

4.2 Herbert Howells: *Preludio “Sine Nomine”*

Rather than centering around or fitting into a particular key signature or diatonic scale, this piece begins with a single note, a C sharp, from which every line evolves and with which every line ends. The idea of building a piece or a scale around a particular note recalls modal composition, since each mode stems from one note of a scale. As such, in the first three measures, the upper and lower voices both begin with C sharp, and both lines lead downward, to end an octave lower than where they started. Once they end, the pedal speaks, also with a descending line to end one octave lower. This pattern continues until measure twelve, when the pedal line ascends surprisingly to surround the F sharp with its neighbor tones, then play an F-sharp pedal point while the upper voices tonicize F-sharp major.⁸

Although this is melodically quite different from Stanford—the Howells melody is less clear cut since it is not divided into neat, two- or four-bar phrases—there can be recognized elements of Stanford’s counterpoint in Howells, namely, with the parallel sixths (in three voices) in measures twelve through fourteen. The eighth-

and quarter-note parallel sixths here form the background for the slower melody in the top voice. In Howells, then, the counterpoint provides a noticeable contrast to the melody, and it often tends to grow upwards out of one note, as in measures twenty-one through twenty-three. Both melody and counterpoint build to an F sharp, in three octaves and then diminish to an F sharp in two octaves before a rest, in preparation for the next section.⁹

A key change to B major marks the beginning of this next section, which consists of a series of lush, three- or four-voice chords, creating sonorities rather than chord progressions. The addition of the A sharp better facilitates hints of F-sharp major, which appears multiple times in this section. The pedal line retains the qualities of the first section of the piece by centering around F sharp and is arguably more melodic than the upper voices. The chords in the right and left hands are a mixture of first-inversion supertonic and root-position subdominant, the latter of which is flavored with a major seventh or a major ninth.¹⁰

As the piece accomplishes a crescendo, it continues to offer mostly chords in the upper voices with a melodic line in the pedal, with a pedal point of G sharp occurring twice. The second pedal point, in measure fifty-one, leads to an F sharp in measure fifty-three, while the upper voices provide many of the same harmonies they did in the beginning of this section. A solo voice moves downward while the upper voices provide, in the key of F-sharp major, a subtonic chord, until the cadential moment—when the G sharp goes down to an F sharp, the solo line ends at F sharp, and the upper voices play an F-sharp major chord. Curiously, the coda ends, as does Bridge's *Adagio in E Major*, with a natural III chord moving to the tonic.¹¹

4.3 Ralph Vaughan Williams: “Rhosymedre”

This piece, based on a Welsh hymn tune, begins similarly to Stanford’s prelude on “St. Columba” with original melodic material. For this piece, in keeping with his style of melodic writing, Vaughan Williams wrote a stepwise, wide-ranging line, ascending and descending to form contour and phrasing but not a definite sense of creating tension. The melody itself is actually a sequence, going around the circle of fifths supported by the left hand and pedal voices.¹²

Parallel sixths are an important contrapuntal device in these first few measures, with most of the melody supported by a countermelody a sixth below. Like Stanford’s bass line, this pedal line has rhythmic values equal to half a beat—in this particular time signature, the beat is the eighth note, and many pedal notes are quarter notes. Such a technique helps to accent strong beats, and, in this piece, pickup notes appear often.¹³

The next section includes the hymn tune in the tenor voice, with the other voices playing harmonies. The harmonic language of this piece is diatonic, with secondary dominants being the most adventurous harmonic devices. The hymn tune, therefore, generally is harmonized by supertonic, submediant, subdominant, dominant, and tonic chords, as seen in measures ten and eleven. Parallel sixths continue to abound in the counterpoint in this section, and parallel thirds, such as those in measure nineteen, also begin to appear.¹⁴

The melody is restated next in the soprano and on a bigger registration, with Great diapasons instead of soft Swell stops. Although the counterpoint is nearly the same as the previous section, the harmonization is slightly different with the addition of secondary dominants, as in measures twenty-nine and thirty-four. A

transition back to the original melodic material and a decrescendo, accomplished both by registration changes and by the closing of the swell box, end the piece.¹⁵

NOTES

1. Frank Bridge, *Adagio in E Major, Three Pieces for Organ* (Boca Raton, Fla.: Masters Music Publications, Inc.), 8-11.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Herbert Howells, *Preludio "Sine Nomine," Six Pieces for Organ* (London: Novello & Company Limited, 1953), 1-4.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ralph Vaughan Williams, "Rhosymedre," *Three Preludes Founded on Welsh Hymn Tunes* (Boca Raton, Fla.: Masters Music Publications, Inc.), 6-9.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS

In their compositional styles, all of Sir Charles Villiers Stanford's students exhibited attitudes and characteristics of their teacher. Most broadly, the style of counterpoint was much the same across the board, with parallel thirds and sixths pervading the realm of countermelodies and lines. Even the chromaticism of Herbert Howells and the organic desire of Ralph Vaughan Williams cannot avoid counterpoint similar to Stanford's.

Harmonically, the most radical composer is Herbert Howells, with a modality and chromaticism unparalleled by the other students in terms of the organ music analyzed. Frank Bridge is a little more conservative, often using diatonic harmonies, but, as one sees in *Adagio in E Major*, chromatic melody necessitates at least some chromaticism in harmony. Ralph Vaughan Williams is by far the least daring of all the students in terms of his harmonic language, using exclusively diatonic chords, albeit with the addition of a major seventh or a ninth occasionally.

Nonetheless, accurate conclusions cannot be drawn from the comparison of these organ works because it is unequal. Take, for example, the natures of the pieces in general: two are hymn preludes and two are free compositions. The hymn preludes, of course, will employ a different process from that exhibited by the free compositions because they must take into account a *cantus firmus* and because they need to be written so as to be acceptable in a religious setting (often, for a piece to be acceptable in such an environment, it must be more conservative than usual).

The pieces are also not exactly representative of the composers, especially in the case of Vaughan Williams and Bridge. It has been documented that Vaughan Williams did not like playing organ or composing for it, and the organ piece analyzed here is vastly different—namely, less harmonically and melodically interesting—from his other instrumental or choral works. Frank Bridge, too, wrote differently later in life, and *Adagio in E Major* is not a work by the mature Bridge, affected by the personal tragedy of World War II and having found the height of his expression.

Even for the similarities to Stanford as found in the organ works, it is impossible to say whether the composers drew ideas, such as parallel sixths in counterpoint, from Stanford, or whether those were so much a part of the musical vocabulary of the time that the composers would have written them anyway.

Certainly, a more extensive study of the music of Stanford and his students is in order, perhaps with choral music instead of organ music. Most of the composers studied here were more prolific with choral music than organ music, and, as such, there is less of a possibility that works studied will be outliers and more of a chance that they will be truly representative of compositional styles and techniques.

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