

Jeremy Dibble, *Charles Villiers Stanford: Man and Musician*  
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002  
ISBN 0 19 816383 5. xvii+464pp. appendix, bibl., indexes, ill.

Paul Rodmell, *Charles Villiers Stanford*  
Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002  
ISBN 1 85928 198 2. xxi+417pp. appendices, select bibl., indexes, ill.

Reviewed by Ian Burk

It is extraordinary that the names of the two chief early protagonists of the nineteenth-century English musical renaissance, C. Hubert H. Parry (1848–1918) and Charles Villiers Stanford (1852–1924) have been kept mainly alive not in the concert hall but in cathedrals, collegiate choral foundations and churches which preserve the English tradition of choral services. It is perhaps even more extraordinary that in 2002, the year marking the 150th anniversary of Stanford's birth, not one but two detailed accounts of his life and work should appear. That by Paul Rodmell was the first off the rank, and rightly claimed to be the first book devoted to Stanford since Harry Plunket Greene's book with the same title was published in 1935, a mere eleven years after the composer's death.

The revival of interest in English music of the Victorian and Edwardian eras during the past twenty years has helped to heighten awareness of the 'other' Stanford (as Dibble puts it)—his vocal, orchestral, concerto and chamber works. This has been assisted by recordings of many of these works, the symphonies and Irish Rhapsodies, for example, being conducted by that champion of English orchestral music, Vernon Handley.

These are essentially books for the scholar rather than for the general reader. They are not mere biographical narratives. With that in mind, having two books devoted to the same subject appearing within months of each other and reading them in tandem is at the same time instructive, interesting and thought provoking. As one would expect from these two scholars, both books are exceedingly well researched and well written, and the text is enhanced with appropriate and informative footnotes.

Curiously, both books begin with the same quotation from Stanford's *Pages from an Unwritten Diary*. Although similar in approach—both follow the chronology of the composer's life—the two accounts differ in their selection of material relating to biographical details, musical activities and compositions. Dibble, for instance, provides the reader with much fascinating incidental and supplementary detail surrounding certain events, characters with whom Stanford worked or came into contact, and his environs. One often feels immersed and at home in Stanford's world. In that sense his book appears the more thoroughly researched. It is also Dibble who identifies and documents in considerable detail Stanford's early exposure to the Church and to opera as the main musical environments in his early life, suggesting this as the reason for Stanford's later interest in composing in these genres. Rodmell, on the other hand, is more succinct and focussed in presenting his information. His prose is not as dense as that of Dibble, and is often more readable. Although sometimes providing differing

interpretations of facts and drawing differing conclusions, both writers admit the reader as a fellow traveller with Stanford through his life and work.

In both books, Stanford's works are discussed in the context of the biographical chronology. Analytical and stylistic observations of his compositions are often accompanied with appropriate musical illustrations to illuminate the text or to serve as a springboard for discussion. Rodmell's scope is, however, wider than Dibble's, for he provides the reader with a significant section of his book devoted to an appraisal of Stanford as a teacher and as a composer.

These two books complement each other. They are valuable for the differing perspective they provide on the similar information they contain and for the extraordinary amount of incidental material. Both reveal Stanford as a cosmopolitan character in the European musical world, outlining his various connections with musicians and composers and specifically his musical training in Germany. Both acknowledge his considerable effect as a teacher on the development and progress of British composition and music in the first half of the twentieth century.

There are occasional minor errors. Dibble for example refers to Stewart, Stanford's teacher, as occupying 'the three most prestigious ecclesiastical posts in Dublin' (p. 23) having only cited two of these. There is a spelling error in the citation of Berlioz's *Grand traité d'instrumentation et d'orchestration modernes* (p. 26). An accidental is missing from a musical example (p. 95). With reference to the paper which Stanford gave to the Church Congress on 11 October 1899, Dibble implies it was given at the Albert Hall (p. 315). Although the Congress itself was held at the Albert Hall, Stanford delivered his paper in the nave of Westminster Abbey, the session being preceded by a short service at which illustrations of English church composers of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were given by the Abbey Choir, under the direction of Sir Frederick Bridge, the Abbey organist.

Rodmell refers to Mann of Cambridge (p. 151–56) as Augustus instead of Arthur—a small aberration. It is quite clear that Augustus Manns, who appears elsewhere in the text, is not the same person. He also refers to the 'doxology of the Te Deum' (p. 69), the only canticle of the Anglican offices which does not have one. In one entry in the discography (Service in A), Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford is incorrectly cited as Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin.

Both books provide an array of interesting photographs (there are only a few in common), a select bibliography, an index of works relating to the text, and a general index. Rodmell provides a list of works arranged chronologically, whereas Dibble arranges his list according to genre. Strangely, chamber music, organ works, piano works, and part-songs and madrigals appear under orchestral music. This is surely an aberration in copy-editing on the part of OUP. In addition, Rodmell includes a discography of CDs current in the United Kingdom in 2001. He also provides the reader with a useful diagram of Stanford's family tree and a map of the area in Dublin where Stanford grew up.

No doubt these two books will result in an awakening of interest in Stanford's music. Whether this leads to an increased exposure of his music in the concert hall or whether it will continue to be kept alive mainly by cathedral choirs, only time will tell.