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CHARLES VILLIERS STANFORD (1852-1924)

Cello Concerto in D minor (1879-80) (27'36")

- 1 1st movement: *Allegro molto moderato - cadenza* (15'31")
- 2 2nd movement: *Molto adagio* (5'45")
- 3 3rd movement: *Allegretto non troppo* (6'20")

Piano Concerto No. 3 in E flat, Op. 171 (1919) (37'43")
(orchestrated by Geoffrey Bush)

- 4 1st movement: *Allegro moderato* (18'37")
 - 5 2nd movement: *Larghetto - scherzando - adagio - cadenza* (9'25")
 - 6 3rd movement: *Allegro* (9'41")
- (65'23")

Alexander Baillie, cello Malcolm Binns, piano
Royal Philharmonic Orchestra
conducted by
Nicholas Braithwaite

The above individual timings will normally each include two pauses. One before the beginning of each movement or work, and one after the end.

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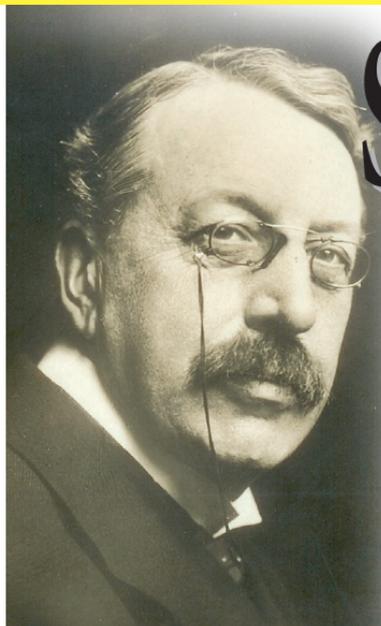
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SIR CHARLES VILLIERS

STANFORD

PIANO CONCERTO NO.3
CELLO CONCERTO



MALCOLM BINNS
ALEXANDER BAILLIE
ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA
NICHOLAS BRAITHWAITE

Charles Villiers Stanford came from a well-heeled professional family in Dublin, the son of a leading Protestant lawyer. Indeed there were lawyers on both sides of the family. This was a cultured world, Stanford's father played the cello and sang; and the leading Dublin intellectuals of the day were constant visitors, providing a brilliant background against which the precocious young Stanford developed. He attended Henry Tilney Bassett's School in Dublin, where classical studies were the focus of teaching, and he learned piano, organ and violin, and studied composition with leading local musicians and with Arthur O'Leary in London.

Stanford composed from his earliest years, and in the early 1860s the young composer's setting of Mary Queen of Scots' *O Domine Jesu*, with cello obbligato, was sung by the celebrated operatic soprano Therese Titiens (1831-77). When he was fourteen his teacher Robert Stewart, Vicar-Choral of St. Patrick's Cathedral, put on his young pupil's *Heroes and Chieftains Brave*, for tenor and male-voice choir. Then there was the familiar mid-Victorian family debate between a musical son and a father who wanted him to continue the family tradition in his own profession. Stanford's father was fairer than many; if his son would attend University and then study music on the Continent, he would support him.

Stanford made a brilliant success at Cambridge, which became the platform and immediate focus of his future career. He was a classical scholar, but winning an organ scholarship at Queen's College in 1870, he launched into a wide variety of energetic musical activities, and then transferred to Trinity where he became organist in 1873. He turned the Cambridge University Music Society from an amateur male-voice group into a full chorus, and he achieved such standards that it became the medium through which generations came to know a wide musical repertoire. First performances in England included a Bach cantata, Brahms' *Alto Rhapsody*, Schumann's Piano Concerto and the third part of *Faust*. When the society, in an orchestral concert on 8 March 1877, secured the first British performance of Brahms' First Symphony - one of the blazing turning points in music - only four months after its première in Karlsruhe, with all the diplomacy this involved in obtaining manuscript score and parts, and with Joachim

I've given to strings and horn; then it breaks off rather like an intermezzo, with a cheeky version of it, which again breaks off and works towards an accompanied cadenza - it's a great mixture." He drew my attention to the "Extraordinarily elaborate accompanied cadenza; it gradually simmers down with the four notes on top, and there we go away into the last movement."

The music moves into the finale without a break. "The last movement is one of those 6/8s that is divided into 3/4 as well as 6/8. There is a slow introduction - then we get this broad melody given by the piano, then it's repeated - then we get the change in tempo - we get a sort of light staccato variation on it - though the theme is still present at the main tempo - it sounds rather like a Brahmsian intermezzo. One of the episodes towards the end you get the return of the slow movement way of treating that motif."

LEWIS FOREMAN

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Cover: Photograph of the composer from the Lewis Foreman collection.
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Other works by CHARLES VILLIERS STANFORD available on Lyrita:
*Irish Rhapsody No. 4**, *Funeral March 'The Martyrdom' from Becket***,
Piano Concerto No. 2
*Malcolm Binns, London Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra**
conducted by *Nicholas Braithwaite, Sir Adrian Boult***SRCD.219

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later closing movements in Irish dance rhythms, reminds us that Dvorák's *Slavonic Dances* had then only just appeared and were all the rage.

Forty years pass, and in the aftermath of the First World War, we find a cranky, bitter, financially-straitened Stanford producing a torrent of new music, though much of it was rejected by publisher after publisher, and not smiled on by performing organisations. But he was an honoured figure who, once dead, would achieve burial in Westminster Abbey next to Purcell. But he was left high and dry in his final years by the advance of history and the rapid development of musical idioms in the early twentieth century. Stanford's tragedy at the last was to be a man out of his time.

Stanford's Second Piano Concerto in C minor (of 1911) had been a considerable hit when first played in London, by the young Benno Moiseiwitsch, in April 1919. But although he had just completed his new concerto, Stanford appears to have been unable to seize the opportunity and have his Third Concerto played, and it remained unperformed. Stanford was remarkably industrious and it seems unlikely he would have left it in two-piano score, but no full score has been traced and so for this recording the composer Geoffrey Bush, long a champion and student of Stanford's music, and editor of his songs for *Musica Britannica*, prepared an orchestration. Geoffrey Bush died on 24 February 1998; less than two weeks before he had discussed his orchestration with the present writer, and his remarks quoted here were made then. "It is a completely finished work" remarked Dr. Bush "and as soon as you orchestrate and hear it, it sounds very complete; a score for performance. I shall be most satisfied if people feel this is what Stanford would have done. It's not a question of whether I wanted [any given instrument] or not. I think you can fairly say it's Stanford speaking."

Geoffrey Bush pointed up the way the movements are unified by the recurrence of a four-note motif from the first movement. "The last four notes have a sort of unifying effect - it is precisely those playing in the bass with which the slow movement begins, and later on chordal passages are built over the top of it. And in the finale it reappears as one of the episodes."

"The part of it that worried me slightly, when I first knew it, was the slow movement, which is a very curious structure. It begins with a broad melody, which

conducting - all musical England looked up, and many of them travelled to Cambridge for it. Stanford was thus supremely well qualified for the appointments that followed - conductor of the Bach Choir in 1885, Professor of Music at Cambridge in 1887 and director of the Leeds Festival from 1901. He was knighted in 1902.

During 1874-76 he had spent half of each year in Germany, studying composition, at first with Reinecke at Leipzig, later with Friedrich Kiel in Berlin, whose *Requiem* he also introduced to England. Kiel exemplified a style which we would now loosely describe as "Brahmsian" and it may be from him that Stanford acquired some of those elements of his style commonly attributed to Kiel's more famous contemporary. In fact Stanford took the opportunity to travel around musical Germany, meeting Brahms and Joachim among others, and being present at the opening of Wagner's Festival Theatre in Bayreuth.

Although he was almost entirely Germanic in his training, Stanford soon realised the necessity of establishing an independent "British School" and worked tirelessly for it, in 1887 promoting a performance of representative works. Thereafter he was zealous in the championship of British music, including works by his pupils at the Royal College of Music, though he was rigorous in his assessment of what he saw as quality, and in the twentieth century became unhappy at contemporary developments.

In 1883 Stanford was appointed Professor of Composition at the newly-founded Royal College of Music, a post he held for 40 years. Here he had an unprecedented influence on several generations of British composers, and established what was long regarded as his lasting memorial: his teaching.

Stanford's seven symphonies span his career before the Great War, and the *Irish Symphony*, his third, first heard in 1887 gave him an international reputation, later reinforced by the *First Irish Rhapsody* at about the time of Elgar's *Pomp and Circumstance* marches. In February 1911, in two of his last concerts in New York, Mahler programmed the *Irish Symphony*. Stanford wrote many choral works, and *The Revenge*, first heard in 1886, revitalised - with Parry's *Blest Pair of Sirens* the following year - British choral music, and it quickly became very popular. Its

success lasted for some fifty years, not being completely forgotten until after the Second World War. A succession of popular choral works were interspersed with more elaborate extended scores, crowned, in 1897 by his *Requiem* at the Birmingham Festival, and in 1907 by the *Stabat Mater* at Leeds.

There were also ten operas - it was perhaps Stanford's chief disappointment that none of them became established, despite seven of them being produced, and one - *Shamus O'Brien* -enjoying several popular runs. Finally a huge number of songs, piano and organ music, and his extensive church music. This constitutes a large output, which for many years only survived in familiar church music and a few songs.

It is difficult from the standpoint of the twenty-first century to appreciate Stanford's impact over a century before, when these works were new. Stanford's achievement was very considerable, yet by 1940 so all-encompassing was the reaction against him that Colles in the fourth edition of *Grove* was reduced to lamenting that the "time was not yet ripe for a thorough re-evaluation of his music" - perhaps secretly fearing that this music was, in fact, dead. It took another fifty years for a proper re-evaluation to begin.

Stanford published four concertos, two for piano, and one each for violin and clarinet. To these we should add his Suite in D, Op. 32, for violin and orchestra of 1889, and the *Down Among the Dead Men* variations for piano and orchestra. There was also his third and sixth Irish rhapsodies, which required solo cello and solo violin respectively, and at the end of his life came the *Ballata and Ballabile*, Op. 160, for cello and orchestra, and the *Irish Concertino*, Op. 161, for violin, cello and orchestra, but neither progressed beyond first performances.

However Stanford left us another five concertos, none of which have previously been heard, as well as the late *Concert Piece* for organ and orchestra. These framed his career, being written at an interval of some forty or fifty years. They include three early concertos, respectively for piano (1873), violin (1875) and cello, of which the cello concerto is recorded here. At the very end of his life we find an unperformed set of Variations for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 180, plus a Second Violin Concerto and the Third Piano Concerto. The Third Piano Concerto, of 1919,

survives in a two-piano score which the composer Geoffrey Bush (1921-1998) has orchestrated specially for this recording.

In the summer of 1869, before he went to Cambridge, Stanford had written a "Rondo pour Violon Cello (avec accompagniments d'Orchestre)". Later, while he was studying with Kiel in Berlin, Stanford had met the cellist Robert Hausmann, soon to be celebrated. In fact, of course, to Stanford, Hausmann was an equal, as they were almost exactly the same age. Stanford may have met him when the cellist was appointed second teacher at the Berlin Hochschule in the mid-1870s, and doubtless attended Hausmann's London debut in April 1877. In 1879 Hausmann replaced William Müller in the Joachim Quartet, and it would have been perfectly natural for Stanford to ask his friend to look over the sketch of his new concerto, as he put it "for improvement", and Hausmann suggested changes which were incorporated in the final version that Stanford dated 29 August 1880.

The slow movement was performed in Cambridge with piano accompaniment soon after it was composed, but there was no orchestral performance. Whether a cello concerto *per se* was not smiled on; whether Stanford had doubts about the music; or whether Hausmann his soloist was not available for some reason, it remained unperformed, and later Stanford quietly suppressed it with his other early orchestral works, once his career had taken off with choral music and the *Irish Symphony*.

In listening to the Cello Concerto, the composer that comes to mind is Dvorák, and certainly, in terms of sound, it bears comparison with Dvorák's early Cello Concerto in A minor. It underlines how, at that time, Stanford was to all intents and purposes a pan-German composer with a regional accent, though that accent was not yet Irish. Yet there is much personality in this work and Stanford concentrates almost exclusively on the singing line, providing an accompaniment in which the orchestra never threatens to overwhelm the soloist. Stanford left no first movement cadenza, and for this performance our soloist, Alexander Baillie, has composed one that ranges widely over Stanford's thematic material. The slow movement is simple, perhaps "ballad" would be a suitable title, but beautifully written for the soloist, while the dancing 2/4 finale, a precursor of Stanford's many

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BAILLIE / BINNS
RPO / BRAITHWAITE

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