

**London Organ Forum  
November 2<sup>nd</sup> 2013  
Temple Church, London EC4  
Parry & Stanford – Different Worlds, Different Aspirations**



Photo by Morwenna Brett

In a full day of music, talks and discussion, Jeremy Dibble, Andrew McCrae and David Goode drew a compelling picture of these two men and their music. Parry and Stanford are too often mentioned in the same breath, and although they have much in common, there was a lot that separated them, particularly in the latter parts of their lives.

Both were organists, of course. Stanford, censured by the college authorities for “athletic playing” in services at Trinity Cambridge where he was a student, nevertheless was given permission to go off for long stretches of time to study in Germany. He spoke French and German well and became very much an internationalist, to the extent that in 1889 a concert entirely of his music was given in Berlin. Parry, in contrast, was much more of a homebird.

Both men moved away from the Mendelssohnian style of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century towards a more complex symphonic world under the influence of Brahms, Dvorak and Wagner. Parry and Stanford both attended the first performance of Wagner’s *Ring* in 1856, and it made a deep impression.

Parry assimilated the Wagnerian style more readily than Stanford – his *Prometheus Unbound* (1880) was dubbed “*The English Ring*” by Bernard Shaw, though his attempt at a true opera *Guinevere* came to nothing. It suffered from an appalling librettist, and was deemed unperformable. Jeremy Dibble played an extract for us that he had reconstructed and orchestrated from the remaining material, demonstrating its highly Wagnerian, seamless style.

Stanford in contrast wrote several operas that were very successful. He always had to work for a living – conducting, playing the organ, teaching – and he produced a lot of music for the great soloists of the time, perhaps with an eye to royalties. Royalties dried up during WW1, and this could be why he wrote a lot of anthems and organ music, as these would sell best. Stanford remained a man of the faith all his life - Parry by contrast had rejected a lot of conventional religion by the 1880s, and his music for the church tends to be “occasion” pieces (eg *I was glad*) rather than liturgical.

Although Stanford and Parry supported each other early in their careers, by the 1890s their paths began to digress. Parry was developing a different sense of mission than Stanford, based on education and the improving effects of music in society. He was very involved with the College of Organists (he died in harness as President), and was the unanimous choice as head of the Royal College of Music when Grove retired, beating Stanford for the post.

Resentments over posts and honours continued in their later lives. (Parry had a stipend at the Royal College, Stanford was always paid by the hour, and this rankled.) Parry died in 1918 a month before the Armistice, saddened at seeing his students killed, maimed or changed by the War. Stanford wanted his job at the Royal College, but was too old by then. He was finally offered the honour of a doctorate in Ireland in 1922, but with bullets flying, he was unable to receive it.

There was not a peep of *I was glad* all day – in addition to extracts from orchestral and chamber writing played for us by Jeremy, we heard the organ music of Stanford and Parry played by David Goode and students in a workshop and recital, on the newly restored Harrison & Harrison organ. On a practical level David Goode advised that there's often a huge amount of phrasing to attend to in both Stanford and Parry's music – different between the two hands. Parry's metronome markings are fast – he was quite an energetic, sporty character. Stanford's music feels like “professional organ music” said David – which perhaps reflects the ambition and vanity of the man. Parry's by contrast is less self-conscious.

In a final round up, Jeremy, Andrew and David were asked why they thought the fine orchestral music in particular was not part of the accepted repertoire. We don't look after our own composers, said Jeremy, and Elgar has eclipsed these two names. Jeremy also suggested as organists we are slightly guilty of only playing the minor works, and not really getting to grips with the larger pieces. Fortunately there is a massive increase in available recordings – there are two sets available now of the Stanford symphonies. And he also recommended all the four Stanford Evening Services in orchestral form, recently released on CD by the King's Consort (which also includes some Parry.)

Recommended recordings:

**A Parry Collection**

The Hill Organ of Eton College Chapel  
David Goode (Regent Records)

**I WAS GLAD Sacred Music of Stanford and Parry**

(in the orchestral arrangements)

The King's Consort, Robert King, Carolyn Sampson, Catrin Finch, David Wilson-Johnson (Vivat)

*Morwenna Brett*

## Visit to Haberdashers' Aske's 19<sup>th</sup> October



Photo by Morwenna Brett

On a damp morning in October about a dozen EDOA members assembled in the car park of Haberdashers' Aske's Boys' School waiting to be taken to the school's two pipe organs: the recently acquired two manual Walcker in the Seldon Hall and the four manual Father Willis in the Bourne Hall. Specifications of these can be seen on the school's website:

<http://habsboys.org.uk/departments/music/>.

The morning was divided into informal playing time on the two organs, with a coffee break, and then a guided playing session on the Walcker organ, led by Roger Carter, who is a teacher at the school as well as an EDOA member.

The Walcker organ was built in 1965 and has tracker action and includes among its eleven stops a sesquialtera, a mixture and a quint as well as an 8-foot pedal trumpet. It was acquired from the Emmaus Centre in West Wickham in the summer of 2013. Members played works by J S Bach, Stanley and Hook, which were suited to the organ's neo-baroque style. The high point of this session was the performance by Roger Carter and Terence Atkins of the Adagio for Musical Clock by Beethoven WoO 33/1 in an arrangement for organ duet.

The 4-manual Father Willis organ in the Bourne Hall is totally different. Built in 1897 for Hove Town Hall, with tubular-pneumatic action, the organ was acquired by the school in 1961 despite much local opposition in Hove. However, the move actually saved the organ for posterity as Hove Town Hall was destroyed by fire in 1966. Members had been encouraged to bring some 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century music to play on this organ, and works of Boëllmann, Frank Bridge, Britten, César Franck, Mulet and Stanford and were played. The organ has some superb rich tones but after more than half a century it needs some restoration; it was off-putting when playing to find odd notes not sounding.

The morning ended with a guided playing session back on the Walcker organ. We heard Scheidt's *Da Jesus an dem Kreuze stund*, Scheidemann's *Vater Unser*, Portman's *Verse for the Double Organ* and J S Bach's *Prelude in C BWV 545*. As usual Roger was able to give succinct advice on registration and technique (try using the 2-foot stop and play two octaves down; stroke the keys, do not release them with a vertical movement; energy should come from the ankle not the leg).

This was a very worthwhile event combining the opportunity to try two very different but interesting organs with a learning experience. Thanks to Roger Carter for arranging this and for his expertise.

*Rosemary Knight*