Musical Conservatism: Victorian Composers and the Philosophy of Precedent

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ABSTRACT

Musical conservatism is a concept that is regularly invoked in both musicological literature and popular discourse, but is almost never defined or explained. The words 'conservative' or 'reactionary' are also often used as derogatory terms to denote insincerity, naivety, or lack of artistic depth. Edward German (1862-1936), Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924), and Edward Elgar (1857-1934), the primary case studies of this thesis, have each been identified – and often self-identified – with both musical conservatism and conservatism more broadly. Each of these composers also acted as a political activist for conservative causes, which they supported through their music and writings. Through an in-depth study of a large volume of primary materials and the discourse surrounding the music of these three composers, this thesis provides an examination of the claim that the music and politics of conservative composers are intrinsically linked because they emerge from the same philosophical foundations. Their writings and music are also analysed through an assessment of their adherence to the first principles of conservatism, newly theorised here as a four-part series of philosophical statements. Conservatism, in this conceptualisation (drawn from the writings of conservative and anticonservative theorists from Burke to Scruton) is to be understood as belief in the primacy of precedent, flawed and imperfectible human nature, the acceptability of inequality, and the importance of the pursuit of beauty in art. It addresses previously unanswered definitional questions on the subject of musical conservatism, its problems as a term, and its intrinsic nature. It also explores the relationship between musical conservatism and the pervading philosophical and political conservatism of late Victorian and Edwardian England.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Sir Charles Villiers Stanford, Sir Edward Elgar, and Sir Edward German each had their own unique style, excelled in different musical forms, and commanded various levels of respect from their contemporaries. What unites them, aside from language and nationality, is that they were all described as conservatives regularly both during their compositional careers and in the years that followed their deaths. While they might have experimented, to various degrees, with the boundaries of traditional forms, they still broadly adhered to them; Peter Manuel claims that 'since 1900, sonata form has been perpetuated only by the most conservative or neoclassicist of serious composers'.[1] Cyril Scott wrote in 1922 that 'reverence for the old, not its dismissal, was a sure sign of decadence'.[2] If these statements are true, Stanford, Elgar, and German were the most stalwart of decadent reactionaries. Each of them has also suffered declines in their reputation, sometimes as a result of their musical conservatism, but occasionally as a result of their philosophical and political views.[3]

England, in the Victorian age, was blessed with an enormous variety and richness of music. From Sir Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900) and his music for comic operas, to the symphonies of composers who are less well known today, such as Sir Frederic Hymen Cowen (1852-1935), or from Sir Alexander Campbell Mackenzie (1847-1935) with his patriotic *Britannia* overture to the string quartets, madrigals, and sacred works of figures such

[1] Peter Manuel, 'Modernity and Musical Structure: Neo-Marxist Perspectives on Song Form and its Successors' in Regula Burckhardt Qureshi (ed.), *Music and Marx: Ideas, Practice, Politics* (London: Routledge, 2002), 45-62 (56).

[2] Such views indicate that the philosophy of precedent did not enjoy ubiquity among composers. Please see: Cyril Scott, quoted in Nicholas Attfield, *Challenging the Modern: Conservative Revolution in German Music, 1918-33* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 94.

[3] It is interesting to note that recent research has sought to indicate that left wing composers of the twentieth century have suffered 'social and cultural marginalisation' since their lifetimes as a result of their anticonservative politics. Please see:
Alice Meriel Robinson, *English Folk under the Red Flag: The Impact of Alan Bush's 'Workers' Music' on 20th Century Britain's Left-Wing Music Scene* (Durham: Durham Theses, 2021), 8.

as Charles Wood (1866-1926), a multiplicity of music was composed and performed in the British Isles throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This is true even without mentioning the three musicians most closely examined in the present study. Before them, composers such as William Sterndale Bennett (1816-1875) and John Hullah (1812-1884) did a great deal to promote the performance of English music at home and abroad, establishing the background that was believed to have been necessary to bring about such a vibrant landscape of musical production.[4] It should be noted that these names are only some of the many composers who have, at least since the twentieth century, been described as conservatives; during their careers, they often found ideological and musical opposition in the form of musicians who believed themselves to be more progressive, or sometimes even radical or revolutionary.

The reputations of these progressive musicians developed as the musical world around them changed; composers thought to be innovative early in their Victorian careers – characters such as Frederick Corder (1852-1932), whose Wagnerism and interest in continental developments often left him in disagreement with Stanford – found themselves out of place later in their lives as fashions changed and it became commonplace for chromaticism to be more extreme.[5] By the early twentieth century, divisions between musical conservatives and anticonservatives were more significantly pronounced. Several factions of actively anticonservative composers emerged, including the various members of the Folk Song Society (founded 1898), which included the composers Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) and Cecil Sharp (1859-1924). Percy Grainger (1882-1961) was also an

[4] Michael Trend, *The Music Makers: The English Musical Renaissance from Elgar to Britten* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1985), 15.

[5] While Frederick Corder was considered to be more progressive than many conservative composers, by the end of his life he was able to find much agreement with them. In a 1918 article titled 'Some Plain Words', he decried the lack of attention given to English composers (including himself), before declaring that 'nothing can save us unless we stick to our national style – the style of Purcell, Arne, Macfarren, and Sullivan'. Please see: F. Corder, 'Some Plain Words', *The Musical Times*, 59/899 (1918), 7-10 (9).

important influence on the folk song movement, as well as being an influential member of the Frankfurt Group, whose anticonservative musicians also included experimental composer Cyril Scott (1879-1970). An abundance of both conservative and anticonservative composers – far more than can be mentioned in this brief and reductive survey – were active in England throughout the Victorian and Edwardian eras. Their legacies, methods, and music varied greatly, and their compositions, words, and actions were often influenced by their political philosophies.

The late Sir Roger Scruton argued that 'being conservative is a distinct way of being human, and in every sphere of life the conservative temperament has staked its claim: in art, music, literature, science and religion'.[6] There is more to the politics of nineteenth and early twentieth century music than nationalism or its influences and offshoots. Politics is often more complicated than a surface-level analysis allows for; the politics of musical expression are no different. While it has been observed that it can be difficult and inadvisable 'to assume that a composer's political beliefs will find a parallel expression in his music', the political philosophy of these composers is important to study because it is a manifestation of their personality and an expression of their vision of the world.[7] There are certainly parallels to be observed between their thought and their musical expression. These observations can help to understand why they wrote music in the way in which they did, as well as what their music meant to them and their audiences in the context of their epoch. What, exactly, the philosophy of conservatism actually is – or, perhaps, *was* – will be argued in the chapters that follow. Musical conservatism can be understood as the application of this philosophy to music. As such, it is often the case that conservative composers were also conservative or

[6] Roger Scruton, *Conservatism: Ideas in Profile* (London, Profile Books, 2017), 1.
[7] Carlo Caballero, 'Patriotism or Nationalism? Fauré and the Great War', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 52/3 (1999), 593-625 (621).

reactionary in their politics; a discussion regarding the relationship between these two aspects of the lives of Victorian composers is yet to have fully taken place in musicology.

It is possible to observe in all eras of the last three centuries that otherwise apolitical or ambivalent people reveal or discover the extremity of their political feeling in turbulent or difficult times; recent discussions of membership of the European Union, for example, might be compared in this regard to the Home Rule crisis or the Dreyfus Affair in France. Greater expansion of suffrage also encouraged more people to involve themselves in politics and afforded artists greater opportunities to attempt to influence discourse. The unprecedented events and changes that took place in late Victorian and Edwardian England shook the foundations of political and cultural debate and, as a result, many musicians became much more overtly political in their output and public image.[8] These political debates have underlying philosophical questions at their heart, however, and many of these disputes share common intrinsic characteristics or principles with musical discourses, whether presented as written notes or written words. As a result, observers and theorists from Adorno to Scruton have detected a relationship between music and politics at multiple levels of analysis.

Constant Lambert, regarding the myriad movements of his day, observed that 'these various musical parties have nothing in common save their faith in the label 'revolutionary' or '*avant-garde*''.[9] In the same way, English musical conservatives of the long nineteenth century seem to share little in common stylistically. Some of them attempted to conserve the music of the recent past, some were perceived to have presented approximations of music of a distant past; some composed music that was advanced even for the time in which they

[8] These changes also affected conservatism and shook the philosophy of precedent. G. K. Chesterton eloquently describes the way in which conservatives of the early twentieth century viewed their forebears as they became increasingly influenced by liberalism; for Chesterton, the modern conservative could be characterised as a 'new Cavalier' who 'despised the old Cavalier even more than he despised the Roundhead'. Please see:
G. K. Chesterton, *G. F. Watts* (London: Duckworth & Co., 1904), 10-11.
[9] Constant Lambert, *Music Ho! A Study of Music in Decline* (London: Faber and Faber, 1937).

lived, and has been considered to be 'modernist' or 'progressive'. What unites them, and allows the term 'conservative' to have meaning, is their philosophies: each of them possesses some variation of a conservative *weltanschauung* that provides the basis of their approaches to so much of their music. This has often been acknowledged in a negative sense, in that some of these composers have been dismissed by their absence in studies of modernism, but a positive, sympathetic account of what they believed has never been written.[10] This negative view of conservatism – that is, an acknowledgement of what musical conservatives are *not* – can be found in many studies of modernism as a series of movements. H. C. Colles provided one such analysis in 1928:

> The music of our contemporaries is "modern" in so far as it has outgrown what is recognised as the predominant point of view of the last century, a point of view which, despite all the acute differences of a generation ago, enveloped alike Wagner, Liszt, Brahms, Cesar Franck and Tchaikovsky, and in which some of the older composers still living, notably Richard Strauss, Edward Elgar and Frederick Delius, are evidently involved. "Yes, I love Brahms, but I fear him," was the remark of one of the most historically minded adherents of Schonberg's school of thought. To him, living in Vienna, Brahms represented a retrogressive influence most likely to deter artists and listeners from following the stony path of modernism.[11]

Here, the importance of Brahms is acknowledged only so far as his works affected the composers who were contemporary with the author, and the word 'outgrown' reveals a belief that what might be described as 'conservative music' was naïve. More recently, Nicholas Attfield has offered a survey of what he describes as 'conservative' music in interwar Germany, which is unique in its attempts to study music in such a way as to prioritise the perspectives of those opposed to modernism.[12] He provides one of the few definitions ever

[10] Jane F. Fulcher comes close to offering an implicit definition of musical conservatism in her monograph on the music and politics of what is known as the 'Dreyfus Affair' in France, and the definition offered here can be mapped onto her documentation of Vincent D'Indy's life and achievements. Her work focusses more on the *political music* of the era, however, rather than the musical philosophy directly. Please see:
Jane F. Fulcher, *French Cultural Politics & Music: From the Dreyfus Affair to the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 6-75.

[11] H. C. Colles, 'Categories', *Music & Letters* 9/4 (1928), 336-40 (336).

[12] Sigried Wiesmann offers a study of 'conservative' music in Vienna under the 'oppressive regime' of continental paragon of conservatism, Klemens von Metternich, but does not attempt a definition of what conservatism, musical or otherwise, actually entails. The parallels between the music and the wider culture are merely hinted at and not explicitly drawn. Please see:
Sigrid Wiesmann, 'Vienna: Bastion of Conservatism' in Alexander Ringer (ed.), *The Early Romantic Era: Between Revolutions: 1789 and 1848* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), 84-108 (84).

offered: 'staunch conservatives, that is, latter-day Romantic purveyors of fully tonal music in dated forms'.[13] Musical conservatism cannot simply be post-romanticism watered down, however, as it is a term that is also used to refer to both modernist and preromantic, classical ideas, forms and languages. In this way it cannot be regarded as a meaningful stylistic descriptor. This is otherwise an adequate starting point for a definition, but it does not take into account the philosophical considerations of these composers; when Attfield does consider conservative philosophy as it manifests in politics, he writes that:

> An apologetic stance might try to nuance and distance, finding fine gradations of 'conservatism' and making claims for their distinction from those of National Socialism. A more damning one, on the other hand, might talk of these figures as preparing the ground for Hitler's regime, or of laying down roots from which Nazism would grow and flourish.[14]

The differences between national socialism and conservatism, particularly as they affect musical thought, will be discussed further in the chapters that follow;[15] it suffices here to quote Paul Attinello: 'Any discussion of such a link [between aesthetic and political conservatism] must, of course, carefully distinguish its concepts and terms: being a conservative, being a fascist and being a Nazi are not the same thing'.[16]

Firstly, an analysis of what constitutes conservative belief must be undertaken. Conservatism has often been caricatured, but has rarely been theorised or explained in musicological literature. Studies of political music often, even when the specific subject is only tangentially related, put the authoritarian regimes of the twentieth century at the centre

[13] This definition is also problematic in that it assumes the wrongness of the claim of conservative composers that they were writing in timeless forms, rather than 'dated' ones. Please see:
Nicholas Attfield, *Challenging the Modern: Conservative Revolution in German Music, 1918-33* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 3.
[14] Attfield, *Challenging the Modern*, 14.
[15] Terms for 'the left' will used interchangeably for the sake of convenience, as the subjects of their differences are not relevant to the musical developments discussed here; if the differences between forms of socialism or liberalism were discussed extensively, it would necessarily make for a more negative definition – that is, excessively describing the things conservatism is not – than would otherwise be the case. The blanket term 'anticonservative' suffices. When socialism is referred to, it is meant in the sense that the author or composer was using to describe or self-identify.
[16] Paul Attinello, 'Pfitzner, *Palestrina*, Nazis, Conservatives: Longing for Utopia', *Journal of Musicological Research*, 15 (1995), 25-53 (32-33).

of their analyses. In an article discussing the politics of music journals in interwar Germany, Joel Sachs attempts to link the often musically conservative stances of journals such as the *ZfM* to the ascendance of national socialism, pointing primarily to the negative vision of modernity that conservatism and national socialism sometimes share. The differences between the two doctrines in their interpretation of the past and its relationship with the future are understated, resulting in an analysis of the relationship between music and politics in the era that would otherwise be considerably more cogent.[17] This is, particularly in the study of music, politics and musical politics that predate these events, a mistake; it is antithetical to attempts to study the past for its own sake and in its own context. It is perhaps inevitable in assessments of the music of Weimar Germany,[18] but traces of this attitude can be observed even in studies of, for example, the Dreyfus Affair, in which conservative musical politics are often evaluated on their degree of proto-fascism.[19] The following study instead puts conservatism at the forefront of its analysis and attempts to uncover the meaning and significance of conservatism in its own terms. To achieve this, it is first necessary to examine some of the principles that form the basis of conservative thought.

The next chapter serves as an introduction to one of the underlying concepts of the present thesis, which is described here as the 'Whig Interpretation' of the history of music, so named after the famous Herbert Butterfield essay of 1931. It is an exploration of politically-charged understandings of music history and conservative responses to the concept of 'progress' in art. Butterfield described a historiographical method that regards history as a means by which to strengthen liberal claims of historical 'progress' and narratives which suggest that the future and past ought to be regarded as a prelude to, or continuation of, the

[17] Joel Sachs, 'Some Aspects of Musical Politics in Pre-Nazi Germany' *Perspectives of New Music*, 9/1 (1970), 74-95 (79-87).
[18] Attfield also provides seemingly unavoidable analysis of this kind. Please see:
Attfield, *Challenging the Modern*, 3-30.
[19] Fulcher, *French Cultural Politics & Music*, 226.

moral assumptions of the present day.[20] This vision of history was prevalent during the lifetimes of the composers studied here, seemingly authenticated by the evolutionary theories emergent in Victorian England. The term has rarely been applied to music historiography. Its implications as an overtly political and philosophical vision of the musical past, which excludes a number of composers for a variety of reasons, mean that it must be regarded as crucial component of an understanding of the musical conservatism of the era.

The third chapter of this thesis presents a four-part theory of the nature of philosophical conservatism, giving detailed evidence from the works of some of its most important adherents and critics. It also serves as a self-contained study of what conservatism *is*, and its possible application to music in theory. Through an analysis which places emphasis on agreement with a series of four statements that are common to all of the most revered conservative thinkers, it reveals a wider definition of conservative thought than has otherwise been accepted, particularly in musicology. Because of this, it is possible to reveal a more insightful description of the meaning of musical conservatism, or *conservatism as music*.

This first exploration of musical conservatism as philosophical theory is followed by four chapters presenting case studies of the most overt exponents of its values in what is known as the 'long nineteenth century'. The first of these case studies is Sir Edward German, a composer whose works have largely been neglected since the Second World War. During his lifetime, however, he constructed a public reputation as one of the foremost composers of late Victorian England. German was overtly conservative in his public image, spoken words and musical output; through his interactions with some of the most important musical and political figures of his day, as well as what is now known as the Performing Rights Society, it is possible to reveal what it meant to be a conservative to the composer and the ways in

[20] Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (New York, W.W. Norton, 1965), 11-17.

which his philosophy and music intersect. The chapter dedicated to his life and works looks at his candid thoughts on conservatism and politics more broadly, before exploring his interactions with oppositional musicians concerning aesthetics. It includes brief analysis of examples of some of his important conservative works and a survey of the ways in which his works and thoughts correspond with important conservative aestheticians such as Burke and Scruton.

The evidence revealing the conservatism of Stanford's life and works is enormous and overwhelming. Charles Villiers Stanford was an astute and perceptive thinker, as well as a prolific writer, in a way that Elgar and German were not. Stanford authored a large number of books and articles on a variety of subjects, many of which reveal his philosophical vision in meticulous detail. They also disclose a number of important socially conservative influences on his work which have hitherto not been examined in detail. Stanford wrote a vast amount of music across a broad array of genres; in addition to some 194 works with opus numbers attached, he composed a large variety of music for pianoforte, many 'light music' songs, and produced multiple volumes of arrangements of folk songs which are often overlooked. For this reason, the study of his life and works has been separated into two chapters. The first expressly demonstrates the ways in which his thought accorded with the four-part theory of philosophical conservatism outlined in the chapter on that subject. It goes on to examine what is described as his 'positive' conceptualisation of conservative music, demonstrated by his outwardly Irish Unionist works. Chapter VI outlines Stanford's relationships with musical and philosophical conservatives and the reflection of this in his artistic and literary output; Stanford was intimately familiar with and even wrote music to accompany or represent the works of some of the most conservative creative figures of the Victorian era. It also details his 'negative' vision of musical modernism, as is encapsulated in his parodies of Straussian musical language and forms.

Chapter VII tackles the discourse surrounding Elgar's life and works, questioning some of the prevailing assumptions about his professed beliefs. This is perhaps the most controversial chapter in this thesis and it presents a number of conflicting perceptions of Elgar's music, politics, and philosophy. It ultimately offers evidence of a musical and philosophical conservatism in his music that has often been overlooked through analysis of his works. Elgar, as a composer whose reputation and enduring popularity have granted him much more prominence than Stanford or German as a vehicle for cultural capital, has been the subject of intense, political debate as to the nature of his philosophy and musical output for over a century. Many different individuals have expressed conflicting visions of the composer and his cultural context. The chapter particularly questions the claims of one prevailing narrative, which contends that Elgar's conservatism was only skin – or tweed – deep; that his conservatism was merely another instrument in the orchestra of his attempts to achieve his aristocratic ambitions. A careful analysis of his use of language and adherence to philosophical conservatism reveals a quite different side of the composer. Elgar's public and private philosophy shares a number of similarities with some of the most vocal exponents of conservatism, whose thoughts are here discussed in the context of the composer's works, words, and deeds.

These case studies are followed by three chapters looking at the expression of conservatism as political music, including attempts to influence public conceptualisations of identity more broadly, in late Victorian and Edwardian England. The first of these examines the place of folk music in the works of both conservative and anticonservative composers, detailing some of the reasons proffered by folk music scholars as to why 'folk' has generally been associated with the political 'left'. The chapter begins by offering a tripartite theory of why folk music was so popular with anticonservative composers at the beginning of the

twentieth century, before exploring the ways in which Stanford, Elgar and German used (or avoided) folk music materials to construct nationalist projections in their music.

Chapter IX is a continuation of this theme; having identified a number of trends in conservative conceptualisations of nationality in music, it looks at how and why musical conservatives sought to construct and reflect what they believed to be English identity, as well as the extent to which musical conservatives were successful in tying their philosophical and political beliefs to these constructions. It begins by assessing what conservatives have identified with in what they perceive to be English national character, drawing on the works of Roger Scruton and Anthony Ludovici to identify what conservatives were hoping to achieve by presenting artistic constructions of Englishness. This is followed by an investigation into what Englishness meant to the three composers; studies of German and Stanford,[21] as composers who were received as having multinational identities, offer interesting insights into how composers constructed a public perception of what conservative English identity meant. Elgar wrote a wide range of music intended to represent, reflect and construct Englishness; these works have received a range of recent politicised criticism which is examined in some detail and compared with contemporary reception of his music and philosophy.

The content of the penultimate chapter concerns the composition and use of monarchical, patriotic, imperialistic, and ceremonial music by conservative composers. It begins by examining claims made by both conservatives and anticonservatives that royal ceremonies do not constitute a *real* tradition. After an assessment of the evidence, an

[21] Stanford's Anglo-Irish heritage is well known and documented, but German, despite his own claim 'I am, of course, as English as I can be', was sometimes believed to be essentially Welsh in his national character on account of his original surname (Jones) and his composition of the *Welsh Rhapsody*. Please see:
Edward German, quoted in J. P. Collins, 'The Standards of English Music: A Talk with Mr. Edward German', *The Bookman*, 60/358 (1921), 186-188 (188).

alternative theorisation of the history of monarchist music is offered, before analysing some of the music – and musical politics – of the coronation ceremonies of 1902 and 1911, during which the music of Elgar, German and Stanford was played. Using as a case study the fascinating story of Stanford's inclusion in the programme of the 1902 coronation service, it also looks at what has been here described as the 'conservatising' process, by which a piece of music deemed relatively progressive at its first performances was welcomed into the canon and deemed unremarkable or conservative in the space of a few decades. The extent to which this conservatisation supports claims made by adherents to the 'Whig interpretation of music history' is also discussed both explicitly and implicitly, tying the preceding chapters together.

The concluding chapter, subtitled 'Beautiful Losers', indicates towards areas that require further research – given the novelty of the subject of this thesis, these are many and varied – and attempts to define musical conservatism more broadly, to the extent that this is possible. It situates musical conservatism in the wider political and cultural context of Victorian and Edwardian England and seeks to identify whether or not any definition can expand further than the specific circumstances that gave rise to these composers and their philosophically aligned continental contemporaries. The achievements of Elgar, Stanford and German as influential cultural figures are revaluated through contextualisation of the composers as conservative thinkers and activists.

This study draws from a wide range of philosophers, theorists, and historians, but perhaps none more so than Roger Scruton, whose works on a broad range of subjects have informed the present thesis to a great extent. His extensive research and deep thinking on the subject of philosophical conservatism – perhaps the primary focus of his life's work – has sometimes been overlooked in academia, and his application of many of these ideas to music in his multiple tomes on the subject have often been dismissed for a variety of reasons. A thorough study of musical conservatism, however, would be remiss to ignore such a depth of

research and he, as perhaps the foremost conservative philosopher of his generation, has a unique perspective that is difficult to find a substitute for within purely scholarly interpretations of music, conservatism, or musical conservatism.

Contrariwise, there exists a number of bodies of work that have not been extensively drawn from in this study where they might have been. Some notable studies of, or by, conservatives, have been omitted or only occasionally referenced largely because their primary focus is on parliamentary politics and governance.[22] Similarly, studies from the disciplines of economics, religious studies, and, perhaps most notably, psychology, have scarcely been utilised herein for a number of reasons. Economic and religious ideas are difficult to align with philosophical conservatism in any meaningful way because, while conservatives often claim that theirs is a timeless attitude that is applicable to the ever-changing fashions and inclinations of any era, it has been possible for prominent, thoughtful, and deep-seeing conservatives to have held or advocated for any number of ideas in these domains, including agnosticism (Scruton), atheism (Ludovici), Free-market economics (Hoppe), or even some form of socialistic economics (Spengler). As such, it is difficult to suggest where or how these disciplines influence or are influenced by conservative philosophy, and it is even more difficult to link them to its musical counterpart.

Psychology is, to begin with, a discipline which was in its infancy during the era discussed in this study. It had very little influence on the formation of philosophical or political conservatism, but it does, however, offer a number of explanations as to how political ideas are formed; social psychologists such as Steven Pinker (*The Blank Slate*) or

[22] Linda Colley's *In Defiance of Oligarchy*, for example, is a very interesting dissertation on the subject of conflicting Whig and Tory parliamentary ideas, but does not bear direct relevance to an explanation of the philosophy of conservatism in Victorian England. A vast number of books of this kind exist, from T. E. Kebbel's *A History of Toryism* (1886) to Edmund Fawcett's *Conservatism: The Fight for a Tradition* (2020). Please see:
Linda Colley, *In Defiance of Oligarchy: The Tory Party 1714-60* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 1.

Jonathan Haidt (*The Righteous Mind*) have written extensively on the idea that political alignments emerge from personality traits that are primarily genetic, for example.[23] These psychologists were deeply influenced by the work of philosophers, however, particularly by Thomas Sowell's *A Conflict of Visions*, and philosophical approaches to this area are more directly applicable to music, as well as being more accessible to those unfamiliar with the psychological literature. Pinker and Haidt's work, for its many virtues, also does not adequately explain a number of phenomena that have taken place historically and feature in these pages, such as why it is that people are able to radically change their minds across their lifetimes (as William Ewart Gladstone, Thomas Sowell, or Peter Hitchens famously did, for example). There is much promising work to be done in the area of political and social psychology as it relates to music, but more studies in this still emerging field will need to be undertaken before a complete discussion can take place; it certainly could serve to build upon the ideas presented here in the future, however.

For conservatives, the study of music is important since, according to Scruton, 'it is precisely because the tradition of Western music still lives that we can gain access through the music of previous generations, to states of mind that we no longer encounter in our daily experience'.[24] Conservatism, in the Burkean sense, is one of these states of mind; it is a vision of the world that, some conservatives believe, no longer exists in the way that would have

[23] Jonathan Haidt's *The Righteous Mind* is, however, problematic in a number of ways, but perhaps the problem most relevant here is that while he describes the various ways in which those on 'the right' measure differently in experiments, he never adequately explains what conservatives believe, while he does explain what entails liberal world views. This is particularly a problem for the present study as his use of the word 'conservative' – his preferred word for the right wing of politics – is located specifically in the modern American context and embedded in its own traditions, which have been quite different from those in England for a number of reasons. His work also assumes that members of either the Republican Party in the United States or the Conservative Party in England are philosophical conservatives; this is, in fact, not always true. Pinker's *The Blank Slate* deals with some of these problems in a better way, drawing directly on Sowell's *A Conflict of Visions*, which offers a superhistorical, international perspective. Please see:
Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion* (New York: Vintage Books, 2013), 180-218.
Steven Pinker, *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 287.
[24] Roger Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 449.

been recognised by its Victorian advocates as a widespread, perhaps even default, set of principles.[25] The tradition – if it may be called one – of musical conservatism grants us access to a philosophical system that is often argued to otherwise be primarily inarticulate.[26] Its articulation in music can be regarded as a portal to an understanding of the beliefs of the people of the past and an escape from the Whig interpretation of history.

[25] Conservative journalist and author, Peter Hitchens, laments this when he writes that 'words which once bound us together are no longer understood when they are spoken, and the subtle invisible chains which bound us to the past, in Burke's compact of the dead, the living and the unborn, have been snapped'. Please see:
Peter Hitchens, *The Abolition of Britain: From Winston Churchill to Theresa May* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 317.
[26] Roger Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism* (Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan, 2001), 1.

CHAPTER II

The Whig Interpretation of Music History

The historiographical concept of the 'Whig interpretation of history', as it applies to music, is of enormous importance to a study of musical conservatism. Scruton argues that this vision of the past has been damaging to the efforts of conservatives to preserve or offer a continuation of traditions and conventions:

> According to this interpretation our recent history has been a story of progress, moving always from ignorance to knowledge, from servitude to emancipation, from conflict to reconciliation and from want to material sufficiency. To belong fully to the British idea, according to the Whig version, is to join the march of progress, and to root out the benighted customs and superstitions that cloud the vision of the future.[1]

Scruton, one of the most important conservative thinkers of the last century, argues that this historiographical methodology contains some truth, but is insufficient. This is, at least in part, because of the exclusion of figures from canonical traditions who represent opposition to what is deemed to be 'progress'. While he was not the first to point out the tendency of historians, artists, and others to prioritise the present in analyses of the past,[2] this idea was central to Herbert Butterfield's famous essay, which offered the best analysis of this theory in general historiography. Butterfield warns that:

> Through this system of immediate reference to the present-day, historical personages can easily and irresistibly be classed into the men who furthered progress and the men who tried to hinder it; so that a handy rule of thumb exists by which the historian can select and reject, and can make his points of emphasis… Real historical understanding is not achieved by the subordination of the past to the present, but rather by our making the past our present and attempting to see life with the eyes of another century than our own. It is not reached by assuming that our own age is the absolute to which Luther and Calvin and their generation are only relative; it is only reached by fully accepting the fact that their generation was as valid as our generation, their issues as momentous as our issues and their day as full and as vital to them as our day is to us.[3]

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[1] Roger Scruton, *Where We Are: The State of Britain Now* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 13-14.
[2] G. K. Chesterton provides an early example of this analysis when he writes that the 'idea of a fundamental alteration in the standard is one of the things that make thought about the past or future simply impossible. The theory of a complete change of standards in human history does not merely deprive us of the pleasure of honouring our fathers; it deprives us even of the more modern and aristocratic pleasure of despising them'. This last comment, as is so often the case with the author, was likely made partly in jest at his critics. Please see: G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (London: John Lane, 1909).
[3] Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (New York, W. W. Norton, 1965), 11-17.

Musical canons, as conceptualised by both Victorian musicians and their successors, are often prime examples of this interpretation of history. John F. Porte, in his 1920 biography of Stanford – to take one example of many – felt compelled to defend both Stanford and Elgar against perceptions that they did not deserve a place in the pantheon of great composers on account of their supposed lack of innovation. Porte argued that while they did not fit neatly into a linear, progressive conceptualisation of music history, their greatness as composers resided 'in the all-powerful fact that they possessed musical genius as well as technical mastery – souls as well as brains, and these are the inseparable qualities that count for the fame that endures whether the composer be classicist or futurist'.[4] The views which authors such as Porte felt driven to deflect regarded the present day as the ultimate culmination of continual musical progress.

These views are analogous to those held by the historians whom Butterfield believed to have placed undue emphasis on the present in accounts of past events, as well as their lack of acknowledgement of the ambiguity of the progress that they championed.[5] Oswald Spengler, in his colossal and controversial magnum opus,[6] *The Decline of the West*, also warns against this phenomenon:

> It is a quite indefensible method of presenting world-history to begin by giving rein to one's own religious, political or social convictions and endowing the sacrosanct three-phase system with tendencies that will bring it exactly to one's own standpoint. This is, in effect, making of some formula – say, the "Age of Reason," … a criterion whereby to judge whole millennia of history. And so we judge that they were ignorant of the "true path," or that they failed to follow it, when the fact is simply that their will and purposes were not the same as ours.[7]

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[4] John F. Porte, *Sir Charles Stanford* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1921), 6.
[5] Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History*, 11.
[6] Spengler's work elicited strong reactions across the musical world. Cecil Forsyth, a former student of Stanford's, for example, ruthlessly and sarcastically mocked the grand narratives of *The Decline of the West* in the form of a musical examination which contains impossible and absurdist questions such as: '13. Explain why the invention of double counterpoint pre-supposes the invention of double entry book-keeping. Where does Ptolemy Euergetes come in in this?', and '19. Using the loud-speaking formula "from Homer to Hadrian," construct half-a-dozen wireless (and, if possible, worthless) connections between any deceased persons whose names you can spell'. Please see:
Cecil Forsyth, 'A Musical Examination-Paper on Spengler's "The Decline of the West"', *The Musical Quarterly*, 14/2 (1928), 155-157 (156).
[7] Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West: Form and Actuality* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927), 20.

It is not a coincidence that Scruton, Butterfield, and Spengler were each frustrated by this phenomenon and were each deeply conservative in their philosophies and politics. One of the traits that separates conservatism from other philosophical traditions is that its adherents tend to interpret a pattern of general decline in every strand of culture.[8] Sir John Glubb, for example, in outlining his theory of the decline of empires, suggested that music and art are inextricably linked to the fate of civilisations, their ascension and decline.[9] Influential music critic and theorist Heinrich Schenker, an 'arch-conservative monarchist' in his politics,[10] likewise implies in his writings that the fate of music – in his view, an art undeniably in terminal decline – is intrinsically linked to degeneration in culture and the ascendance of liberal and socialist ideologies.[11]

Spengler observed that Whig histories were as pervasive in the field of musicology as in any other discipline:

> It is the same picture that we find when we turn to the historians of each special art or science (and those of national economics and philosophy as well). We find:
> "Painting" from the Egyptians (or the cave-men) to the Impressionists, or
> "Music" from Homer to Bayreuth and beyond, or
> "Social Organization" from Lake Dwellings to Socialism, as the case may be, presented as a linear graph which steadily rises in conformity with the values of the (selected) arguments.[12]

Musical conservatives do not follow this vision of the history of their art.[13] While Stanford espoused a theory of the evolution of music, a closer, sympathetic inspection of his writings reveals a view that modernity had not allowed for any genuine 'progress', as he saw it, and as

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[8] Anthony Ludovici, for example, argued that liberalism, broad-mindedness and what might today be described as globalisation have 'invariably heralded incipient weakness and decline'. Please see:
Anthony M. Ludovici, *A Defence of Conservatism: A Further Text-Book for Tories* (London: Faber & Gwyer, 1927), 34-35.
[9] John Glubb, *The Fate of Empires* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1976), 23.
[10] Lee Rothfarb, 'Expedient Mutuality: Schenker and August Halm' in Ian Bent, David Bretherton and William Drabkin (eds.), *Heinrich Schenker: Selected Correspondence*, 256-257 (257).
[11] Heinrich Schenker, *Der Tonwille: Pamphlets in Witness of the Immutable Laws of Music, Offered to a New Generation of Youth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 4-19.
[12] Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, 20.
[13] Spengler goes on to outline a cyclical history of music, in which the great works of the eighteenth century are the zenith, since which the art has been in decline. For Spengler, music as an art is tied intrinsically to the fate of what he describes as the 'Faustian soul', the final product of which was Wagner's *Tristan*. An interpretation of history of this kind is entirely incompatible with either a modernist or Whig reading. Please see:
Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, 282-291.

such music ought to revisit classical models and be written with an understanding of the language of the music of the past.[14] Stanford's musical evolutionism was not a prioritisation of his present, but a prioritisation of what he perceived to be the greatest aspects of music across time; he wrote that he was only in favour of 'progress', a philosophical concept that has been criticised by almost all of the conservative thinkers of the twentieth century, insofar as it 'makes for the enhancement of beauty'.[15] Vincent d'Indy similarly argued that musical progress was a nebulous abstraction; Jane F. Fulcher explains that the French composer's writings reveal a vision of what he describes as 'progression' rather than 'progress' and that all of musical expression must build on the foundations discovered by artistic predecessors.[16]

Stanford's former student, Sir George Dyson – a conservative composer himself – wrote a short history of *The Progress of Music* in 1932.[17] Its contents ought not to be judged by its title, however, as the book is in part a criticism of Whig music history, in which it is argued that 'there is loss as well as gain in all social changes', as well as that modernist movements have created a gulf between contemporary music and contemporary taste.[18] The result, Dyson concludes, is a public that is much more interested in the simplicity and beauty of Bach than the 'shallow cleverness' of modernist composers.[19] Constant Lambert believed that interpretations such as Dyson's and Stanford's were paradoxical in that there was no precedent for the view of musical conservatives:

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[14] Charles Villiers Stanford, *Musical Composition: A Short Treatise for Students* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1911), 76.
[15] Charles Villiers Stanford, 'On Some Recent Tendencies in Composition', *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 47/1 (1920), 39-53 (39).
[16] Jane F. Fulcher, *French Cultural Politics & Music: From the Dreyfus Affair to the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 34.
[17] Dyson (1883-1964) has been described as a Victorian composer as a result of the 'outmoded language' in which he wrote his music; he also explicitly advocated for a musical conservatism that was evidently influenced by Stanford's writing and teaching. Please see:
Paul Spicer, *Sir George Dyson: His Life and Music* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2014), 122-135.
[18] George Dyson, *The Progress of Music* (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), 5.
[19] Ibid., 205-217.

> The idea that music of an earlier age can be better than the music of one's own is an essentially modern attitude. The Elizabethans did not tire of their concerts and go back to the sweet simplicity of Hucbald… Burney's *History of Music* is an astonishing example of the complete satisfaction with its own period so typical of the eighteenth century. To him the earlier composers were only of interest as stepping stones to the glorious and unassailable music of his own day.[20]

This is, in itself, a selective characterisation of the views of the people of the past, but it carries with it a kernel of truth. Conservatism, musical or otherwise, is often believed to be only possible in an environment wherein anticonservatism is prevalent. This is one of the core dialectics of the history of conservative thought of all kinds; its significance is an underlying theme of the chapters that follow.

'The Whig interpretation of music history' is shorthand for a historiography that presents a confluence of selective determinism and a teleological view from the present day, asserting that the historical 'progression' of music is caused by the factors asserted by the interpreter; usually the influence and expression of canonical composers. It is important to recognise that while the 'Whig' descriptor is deliberately burdened with political connotations, this interpretation is not unique to political liberals; Theodor Adorno, for example, described his vision of history as 'music's development toward freedom'.[21] This is not unlike Hegel's famous declaration that 'world history is the progress of the consciousness of freedom'.[22] Even Schenker, although he believed that modernist music was a 'degeneration' of previous forms, argued that the primary value of music written before the eighteenth century was its contribution as precursory influence on the great German works of the musical canon.[23] As a complete and omniscient vision of history is impossible, these deterministic arguments are rarely challenged at a fundamental level in musicology. John

[20] Constant Lambert, *Music Ho! A Study of Music in Decline* (London: Faber and Faber, 1937), 64.
[21] Theodor Adorno, *Philosophy of New Music* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 18.
[22] It is possible to frame this discourse entirely in Hegelian terms; dialectical understandings of history and Whig interpretations are not dissimilar. Some of the political emphasis would be lost, however. Please see: Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 54.
[23] Robert P. Morgan, *Becoming Heinrich Schenker: Music Theory and Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 198-199.

Butt provides one counterargument, however, when he suggests that audiences regularly develop and adopt what he describes as a 'relativity of hearing' when listening to the music of the past as informed by the present. Butt argues that 'we really can hear the revolutionary in Beethoven… we can actually hear unusual, surprising elements within a style *in spite of* our knowledge of later music'.[24] Listeners, Butt argues, are able to adapt their hearing of earlier music in such a way as to ignore the fact that it might sound conservative to musicians today; if this is true, then perhaps it hardly matters whether a given composer influenced any others, even if the objective of listening is to experience the feelings and surprises as the first audiences did. The importance of progressive musical development and the place of a composer in the canon is further limited if the objective of the listener or performer is to instead experience, for example, beauty or religious feeling.

A crude caricature of the Whig interpretation of music history approximates this: there was Palestrina, then Bach, then Mozart, then Beethoven, then romanticism, then modernism and beyond; each composer furthered their art as an aim towards the ultimate understanding of music, (post)modernism.[25] In England, sometimes described by Whig historians (often erroneously and without due consideration of the history of the term) as the *Land ohne Musik*, there was Byrd and Dowland, then Purcell, then Handel, followed by a long dearth of musical talent before Elgar, whose (dubious) progressivism heralded a new era

[24] John Butt, *Playing with History: The Historical Approach to Musical Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 28.
[25] A crude interpretation such as this is usually only to be found in popular literature on music history today. More nuanced versions of this vision appear in academic work, however, which will be referenced in the following chapters. In the popular histories, we see phrases like this continually: 'Scarlatti helped pave the way for the still more radical Sonata experiments of Mozart and Beethoven', or even 'Brahms's symphonies may seem conservative in comparison to those who succeeded him… but Brahms's development of earlier forms and processes would prove influential for a whole generation of modernists'. Please see:
DK, *The Classical Music Book: Big Ideas Simply Explained* (London: Dorling Kindersley, 2018), 91 & 189.

of English musical advancement.[26] Even the strongest advocates of the belief in that infamous German expression would accept that music was performed, imbibed and composed in Georgian and Victorian England – a cursory glance at any encyclopaedia, map of London or ceremonial programme would sufficiently prove this. When Leanne Langley suggests that music historians have often avoided studying nineteenth century England, describing it as 'that dark and weedy patch in the garden of European music', her metaphor still suggests that the botanical space shared between musicians from continental nations is also inhabited by England's composers.[27] What is meant by phrases such as these is surely, at least in part, that England was perceived to be without a musical product that was suitably pioneering, progressive or revolutionary as to be exportable to the European market. The value of a composer, in this view, derives almost exclusively from how successfully they modernised music. The substance of this narrative in practice has rarely been properly investigated. Nor has an exploration of the extent to which it is the case that the figurehead composers in these eras became the normative examples of the states of their art as a result of canonisation and *post hoc* analysis, rather than their more conservative contemporaries who might even have been more common and were very often well-respected in their lifetimes. This is what G. R. Elton articulated when he suggested that Whig history is 'not the legitimate activity of selecting the meaningful; it is the idle activity of forgetting the inconvenient'.[28] So many composers were not a part of what Whig historians perceive to be the continual progressive struggle toward modernity, and their music is rarely described in terms that the musicians

[26] This famous perception was quipped upon by Harry Plunket Greene in his biography of Stanford. Of the composer's early reception in Germany for his opera *The Veiled Prophet* in 1881, Plunket Greene writes that 'the opera came from England where there never had been any music and never would or could be till kingdom come'. Please see:
Harry Plunket Greene, *Charles Villiers Stanford* (London: Edward Arnold, 1935), 186.
[27] Leanne Langley, 'The Musical Press in Nineteenth-Century England' *Notes*, 46/3 (1990), 583-592 (583).
[28] G. R. Elton, *The Practice of History* (London: Sydney University Press, 1967), 62.

would have accepted themselves.[29] Music history is often viewed through a whiggish lens, emphasising that over the course of the past we have progressed towards the omniscient present state of understanding; that the musicians of the past were often backwards, ignorant, or superstitious,[30] or that art music has proceeded towards an ever-growing advancement. Musical conservatives see a very different pattern. While a great deal of recent work on music historiography has begun to rectify this issue, a better understanding of the predominant alternative view – that of musical conservatism – might open new avenues to understanding the history of music in a way that is sympathetic to those who lived in the past.[31]

Butterfield suggests that, at least in the era in which he wrote, there was a 'tendency for all history to veer over into whig history';[32] this certainly includes histories of music. Edward J. Dent argued explicitly in favour of a whiggish interpretation when he suggested that the 'history of music, if we could only be sure that we knew how to interpret it rightly, ought to be one of the most delicate and sensitive records conceivable of the progress of the

[29] Many composers of this kind, including Stanford and German, but also Hummel, Clementi, and myriad others, do not even feature in such historical studies, even if they were popular or well respected in their lifetimes. 'Brahms's place' in canonical music history, for example, has been assured because despite his perceived conservatism, 'he was actually a pathbreaker… He also developed subtle and complex techniques that were of enormous importance to later composers, from Strauss and Mahler through Schoenberg and beyond'. Please see:
J. Peter Burkholder, Donald Jay Grout, and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music* (London: W.W. Norton, 2014), 730.

[30] See, for example, mockery of the assumed belief of medieval musicians in the tritone as *diabolus in musica*. Often, no serious effort is made to verify the prevalence of any such belief, and even less is made to attempt to understand *why* these beliefs were held in terms that would have been understood by its adherents, studied for its own sake rather than to fit a historical narrative or assumption about the people of the past. Please see:
F. J. Smith, 'Some Aspects of the Tritone and the Semitritone in the *Speculum Musicae*: The Non-Emergence of the *Diabolus in Musica*', *Journal of Musicological Research*, 3/1-2 (1979), 63-74 (70-72).

[31] This effort is made more difficult by the use of the word 'conservative' as a term of opprobrium. This is not new, of course; for example, Dame Nellie Melba, the esteemed Australian soprano, said in 1925 'When I come to America, when I sing in Paris, or in Italy, I am overwhelmed with requests to sing works by hitherto unknown composers. None of these requests ever come to me in England. We are conservative to the point of madness'. Please see:
Nellie Melba, quoted in Jeffrey Richards, *Imperialism and Music: Britain 1876-1953* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 479.

[32] Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History*, 4.

human race'.[33] Sir Hubert Parry's evolutionary vision of history and canonisation is perhaps the most famous example of this phenomenon in the study of Victorian musicians. Arnold Whittall, however, regarded Parry as a musical conservative and 'reactionary', using the composer as an example of the observation that 'one particularly surprising aspect of twentieth-century English music is the expression of highly conservative views by those who, politically and philosophically, regard themselves as radicals'.[34] Parry was a politically and philosophically complicated figure who certainly held some conservative positions, despite his professed politics, but cannot be regarded as a musical conservative in part because of his understanding of the history of music.[35]

Parry's histories are unambiguous in their vision of evolutionary progress; his Whig interpretation of music history can be understood as a manifestation of anticonservative philosophical, musical and historical thought.[36] In his description of the advent and formalisation of secular music, for example, Parry argues that:

> Unless they had ventured as they did, and had been as blind as reformers sometimes need to be to immediate consequences, the ultimate building up of the marvellously rich and complicated edifice of modern art could never have been achieved. The conservatives were perfectly right in foreseeing that the methods of the new art would immediately bring the old art to ruin. The reformers were equally right in judging that it was necessary to make that great sacrifice in order that art might obtain a new lease of vitality.[37]

[33] Edward J. Dent, 'The Relation of Music to Human Progress', *The Musical Quarterly*, 14/3 (1928), 307-319 (308).
[34] Arnold Whittall, 'Comrades and Conservatives' *Music & Letters*, 47/1 (1966), 27-33 (27-28).
[35] Ironically, serious interest in Parry's own music has often been dismissed by historians and critics who hold these views; even at the peak of their reputations, Parry, Mackenzie and Stanford's works were declared to be unworthy of study because 'none of them has invented an original style'. Please see:
Henry Davey, *History of English Music* (London: J. Curwen & Sons, 1895), 487.
[36] Parry, in his 1911 article 'The Meaning of Ugliness', argued that ugliness in music was a natural development in the history of the art, and ought to be regarded as 'one of the most beneficent provisions of nature'. For Parry, 'worn-out conventions' are a much greater problem than deficiency of beauty, and so he concluded that 'Art progresses by the elimination of such obstructions; but the great progressive movements always have curious effects which are characteristic and suggestive; and the effect of the breaking up of conventions in recent times is quaintly appropriate'. Please see:
Hubert Parry, 'The Meaning of Ugliness', *The Musical Times*, 52/822 (1911), 507-511 (508-510).
[37] C. Hubert H. Parry, *The Evolution of the Art of Music* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1896), 125-126.

In such an analysis it is the present day and its functions that are central to understanding the past; conservatives are merely adherents to old ways which must be sacrificed to the future of the art. Parry's former student, H. C. Colles, espoused similar ideas in his 1912 work *The Growth of Music*, in which the analogy of movement along the 'highways' and 'byways' of musical progress is made; for Colles, composers who did not conform to the progression of music in the nineteenth century which, in his view, led inevitably towards modernism, ought to be excluded from a general study of music history.[38] Such composers are situated on the byways of music; they are branches of the tree trunk of progress, in the shadow of the canopy of modernity.[39] Parry himself imagined that it is a lack of intelligence, rather than a vision of music and its place that was quite different to his own, that led musicians of the past down the paths they travelled:

> In later times the progress has been more and more rapid, but in early times it was most astonishingly slow. Men allowed some of our most familiar combinations as notes of passage—purely subordinate details—and by their use in that manner they became accustomed to the sound of them; but they were very long in coming to the state of musical intelligence which recognises even a third as a stable and final combination.[40]

Lack of intelligence or maturity is often used to dismiss the ways of thinking observed by the people of the past; Arnold Schoenberg argued, with an implicit whiggish understanding of the history of music, that complicated music is appropriate for modern, mature people:

> It seems to me that the progress in which Brahms was operative should have stimulated composers to write music for adults. Mature people think in complexes, and the higher their intelligence the greater is the number of units with which they are familiar. It is inconceivable that composers should call "serious music" what they write in an obsolete style, with a prolixity not conforming to the contents – repeating three to seven times what is understandable at once. Why should it not be possible in music to say in whole complexes in a condensed form what, in the preceding epochs, had at first to be said several times with slight variations before it could be elaborated?[41]

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[38] H. C. Colles, *The Growth of Music: A Study in Musical History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1978), 339.

[39] It is particularly of interest that Colles did not include his former mentor or any other British musician in his list of composers of the 'highway'; recent historiographies have attempted to situate Parry and Stanford as 'actually crucially important in the progression of, and possibly ultimately represent a culmination of, late nineteenth century musical principles and aesthetics'. Please see:
Edward Luke Anderton Woodhouse, *The Music of Johannes Brahms in Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century England and an Assessment of His Reception and Influence on the Chamber and Orchestral Works of Charles Hubert Hastings Parry and Charles Villiers Stanford* (Durham University: Durham Theses, 2013), 406.

[40] Parry, *The Evolution of the Art of Music*, 87.

[41] Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), 64.

In order to arrive at such a view, Schoenberg assumes that modern listeners have inside them the accumulated progressive experience of the past, combined with the view that music is primarily valuable for its originality or novelty. This is not the way in which conservatives experience music or the way in which conservative musicians relate to their audiences.[42] In the same way that conservative thinkers are often intentionally attempting to recapitulate what they perceive to be eternal truths and rediscover the wisdom of the past, articulated for new generations, there is in conservative music an implicit recognition that individual listeners have not heard every piece of music ever written and that there are musical principles that were true for the people of the past which remain true in the present. In viewing music history through a lens of an acceptance that composers did not have to be ground breaking in order to be valuable, a renewed appreciation of so many forgotten composers might emerge; a new life might be breathed into works that were enormously popular in the past that have been rejected by revisionism,[43] or processes of canonisation of the sort described by William Weber as a blend of 'politics, aesthetics and eulogy'.[44]

This is not to say that the Whig interpretation of music history is always, or even ever, wrong, dishonest, or politically cynical. An understanding of the way in which it has pervaded musicological thought, however, reveals that large parts of what is considered to be

[42] Robert L. Jacobs, writing in 1951, believed that the general public were 'incorrigible conservatives' whose taste it was the duty of progressive musicians to 'correct'. At the core of his argument, however, was an acceptance of their choices because of their reinforcement of the musical canon; through public desire for performances of the leading composers of tonal music, the Whig interpretation of history was, in his view, implicitly fortified. Jacobs also writes that: 'infinitely more deplorable it would be if great music did not spellbind such people, if they could see no more in the greater than the lesser master, in Bach than Telemann, in Beethoven than Cherubini, in Brahms than Bruch-if, in short, the phenomenon complained of were not Conservatism, but an Anarchy levelling out all values'. Please see:
Robert L. Jacobs, 'The Conservatism of the Public', *The Musical Times*, 92/1305 (1951), 506-507.
[43] It is somewhat ironic that canon formation as it exists today can be criticised as a Whig politicisation of history, considering that two of the great conservative thinkers of the nineteenth century, Thomas Carlyle and Matthew Arnold, were some of the strongest advocates of canon formation in their time. Please see:
Colin Eatock, 'The Crystal Palace Concerts: Canon Formation and the English Musical Renaissance' *19th-Century Music*, 34/1 (2010), 87-105 (88).
[44] William Weber, 'Musical Canons' in Paul Watt, Sarah Collins, and Michael Allis (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Music and Intellectual Culture in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 319-342 (337).

neutral or disinterested appraisal of historical events and persons is, in fact, deeply imbued with liberal thinking and as such is just as ideological as any other approach to history, philosophy, politics or music. Conservative thought is characterised by a different *telos*, a different vision of the direction of history which separates them from those sometimes described as Whigs. While the concept of civilisational or cultural decline has only sometimes been explicitly outlined by conservative thinkers, it is often implicit in their philosophy and vision of history. The logical extension of the conviction in precedent – that the past contains within its secrets fragments of collective wisdom which are often of greater value than ephemeral present-day fashions – is, in modernity, that the relatively recent overwhelming changes in the ways in which life is structured may be less valuable than what came before.

What the whiggish musical historian views as progress, with occasional revolutions punctuating the steady progress towards modernity, others often view as entropy, punctuated by periods of rapid decline. These *others* are variously labelled as conservatives, reactionaries and sometimes fascists;[45] they are the opponents of modernism, revolutionism, and progressivism. The differences between conservatives and reactionaries, if one accepts those terms,[46] are not relevant to their application to music. While a composer like Edward German clearly held views that would be described today as reactionary,[47] it is more appropriate to

[45] Many conservative authors, of course, believe that fascism was an entirely left-wing movement; the most convincing of these arguments was made by Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn. Please see:
Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, *Leftism: from de Sade and Marx to Hitler and Marcuse* (New York: Arlington House, 1974), 161-175.
[46] One of the problems in discussing the politics and philosophy of what is known as 'the right' is that there are no universally accepted or defined terms, and both 'conservative' and 'reactionary' are terms that evolved from criticisms of the right emerging from the French Revolution. Implicit in these terms is a criticism of the thought that underpins them; there are no terms which are not disputed.
[47] Brian Rees, *A Musical Peacemaker: The Life and Work of Sir Edward German* (Abbotsbrook: Kensal Press, 1986), 242.

use the term which all three of these composers identified with: conservative.[48] Even if their views do not always align themselves with either what modern practitioners of conservative politics believe or the attributions to conservatism of revisionist political theorists, there was enough uniting their visions to that of the prevailing conservatism of the day to allow them to consciously advocate for the use of the term. Writers such as Thomas Carlyle – an author Stanford seems to have respected – are sometimes described as reactionary or even proto-fascistic, but large swathes of their thought conforms with conservatism and its traditions.[49] Indeed, Carlyle even used a musical metaphor when he offered one of the earliest denunciations of Whig history in mocking the 'Philosophic Historian' for their belief that 'All was inane discord in the Past; brute Force bore rule everywhere; Stupidity, savage Unreason, fitter for Bedlam than for a human World! Whereby indeed it becomes sufficiently natural that the like qualities, in new sleeker habiliments, should continue in our time to rule'.[50] While the thinkers of conservatism and reactionaryism sometimes differ in their proposed solutions, they share in common a set of assumptions that are discussed in detail in the following chapter.

[48] Sarah Collins, writing on the subject of English composers of Cyril Scott's generation, argues that it is difficult to 'justify attributing an overarching disposition of any kind, no matter how intuitively valid it may be, to a collection of historical figures who largely rejected mutual identification'. This is not so much the case with Victorian composers, who as a rule seem to have been much more willing to attach themselves to both political and musical labels. German and Elgar described themselves as conservatives outright, while Stanford, without direct affiliation with the Conservative Party (perhaps as a result of his university positions), publicly, privately and musically signalled his philosophical conservatism in almost everything that he did. It is therefore much more justifiable to attribute the 'overarching disposition' of conservatism to these composers. Please see:
Sarah Collins, 'Practices of Aesthetic Self-Cultivation: British Composer-Critics of the 'Doomed Generation'', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 138/1 (2013), 85-128 (88).

[49] Carlyle, like Stanford, rarely expressed admiration for conservatism or the Conservative Party, but honoured its principles; in *Past and Present*, however, he declares that 'All great Peoples are conservative; slow to believe in novelties; patient of much error in actualities; deeply and forever certain of the greatness that is in Law, in Custom once solemnly established, and now recognised as just and final'. Please see:
Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present* (London: Ward Lock & Co., 1911), 224.

[50] Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 328.

CHAPTER III

The Philosophical Foundations of Musical Conservatism

It is possible that political, musical and philosophical conservatism are intrinsically linked because they are manifestations of a shared philosophical foundation. Roger Scruton opens one of his many texts on conservatism by distinguishing between 'the political philosophy, rather than the political practice'.[1] To separate the two is to suggest that not every deed committed by the Conservative Party has been philosophically conservative in its intentions or effects; indeed, Scruton contends in his seminal work *The Meaning of Conservatism* that 'the Conservative Party has often acted in a way with which a conservative may find little sympathy'.[2] This phenomenon is what has led many theorists to declare that conservatism is fundamentally not an ideology. F. J. C. Hearnshaw implies this when he writes that 'conservatives are as a rule conspicuously unready to state precisely what they believe and why they believe it' and as such there is scant doctrinal literature, therefore 'the best textbook of British conservatism is the constitutional history of England'.[3] Arthur Boutwood similarly stated in 1913 that conservatism was 'a practical attitude, rather than a reasoned creed'.[4] There must, if one accepts this view, be something outside of the sphere of politics that constitutes the foundations of conservatism; this is one of the underlying questions of any study of conservative thought, but particularly of the manifestation of conservatism in culture. As Scruton has suggested, 'Conservatism, as an intellectual and spiritual force, has found expression as much in art, poetry and music as in philosophical discussion'.[5]

[1] Roger Scruton, *Conservatism: Ideas in Profile* (London, Profile Books, 2017), 1.
[2] Roger Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism* (Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan, 2001), 5.
[3] F. J. C. Hearnshaw, *Conservatism in England: An Analytical, Historical, and Political Survey* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1933), 6-8.
[4] Arthur Boutwood, *National Revival: A Restatement of Tory Principles* (London: Hubert Jenkins, 1913), 4.
[5] Scruton, *Conservatism: Ideas in Profile*, 2.

Broadly, conservatism as a philosophy has not been treated with the seriousness that its popularity and tenacity have merited.[6] It can be difficult to discern its underlying assumptions and core beliefs, so far as there are any, in part as a result of the large body of literature published in recent years that explicitly aims to disparage or debunk conservative thinkers and their adherents. Such efforts, often published by prestigious university presses, are sometimes harsh in their criticisms. Some seek to equate conservatism with racism, for example; Robert C. Smith suggests that conservative philosophy 'is and always has been hostile to the aspirations of Africans in America, incompatible with their struggle for freedom and equality'.[7] Conservatism is certainly hostile to visions of equality, but this is usually the result of the underlying assumptions of human nature that underpin the beliefs of its adherents, rather than a specific racial prejudice.[8] Similarly, Ted Honderich, in his extensive criticism of conservatism and its thinkers, argues that Burke, Hearnshaw and Scruton are each fundamentally prejudiced in their thinking. He explains the way in which their philosophies stem from a belief in the virtues of inequality before concluding that 'their accommodation to racial tolerance has been like their accommodation to democracy, which is to say unwilling'.[9] James Garratt takes this same approach in his recent work *Music and Politics: A Critical Introduction,* in which he presents the following quote from Donald Trump, who uses symphonic music as an example of the achievements of occidental cultures:

[6] This is even more applicable to musical conservatism; in their efforts to understand 'the politics of location' as they relate to music, for example, Biddle and Knights make no effort to understand the role of conservatism in this issue, despite conservatism surely being the tradition most associated with the concept of home. The authors mention the doctrine only to describe it as a minority position. Please see:
Ian Biddle and Vanessa Knights, 'Introduction' in Ian Biddle and Vanessa Knights (eds.), *Music, National Identity and the Politics of Location* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 1-18 (8).
[7] Robert C. Smith, *Conservatism and Racism, and Why in America They Are the Same* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2010), 1.
[8] Peter Dorey, *British Conservatism: The Politics and Philosophy of Inequality* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co., 2011), 1-19.
[9] Ted Honderich, *Conservatism: Burke, Nozick, Bush, Blair?* (London: Pluto Press, 2005), 204-210.

> We must work together to confront forces... that threaten over time to undermine these values and to erase the bonds of culture, faith and tradition that make us who we are... The world has never known anything like our community of nations. We write symphonies. We pursue innovation. We celebrate our ancient heroes, embrace our timeless traditions and customs... Those are the priceless ties that bind us together as nations, as allies, and as a civilization. What we have, what we inherited... from our ancestors has never existed to this extent before. And if we fail to preserve it, it will never, ever exist again.[10]

Garratt describes this as 'an example of the kind of casual, unthinking cultural racism that has become pervasive within contemporary US and European politics'.[11] Such interpretations suggest that it is perhaps more relevant than ever to question what a conservative view of music might actually encompass.

An understanding can never be reached by an automatic assumption of guilt or complicity, so it might be useful to offer a sympathetic account of what conservative philosophy entails. At the same time, it is true that many conservative thinkers of the past have been either forgotten or dismissed – by both conservative and anti-conservative writers – on account of the perceived unpalatability of their ideas to modern readers; this is a mistake in studying the past, however, as it cannot be ignored that such authors had influence on and were influenced by the world around them.[12] Their ideas, however disagreeable, mattered to their readers and are as such historically relevant and useful in understanding the depth and breadth of conservative thought. The answer to the question of what (musical) conservatism is must be answered from within its philosophical tradition, as all other traditions of thought operate outside of the epistemological framework which characterises conservatism; as such they can never respond to such questions at anything other than a superficial level. The ideas presented by the thinkers of conservatism are returned to and their application to musical conservatism in the Victorian era is explained in much greater detail in the chapters that

[10] Donald J. Trump, quoted in James Garratt, *Music and Politics: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 176.
[11] Garratt, *Music and Politics: A Critical Introduction*, 177.
[12] Thomas Carlyle and Anthony Ludovici, for example, fall into this category.

follow, but the relevant facets of philosophical conservatism are worth listing and explaining here.

Conservatism has changed across generations, not all of its adherents agree on every aspect of their philosophical understanding, and there are, of course, degrees of conservatism.[13] Samuel P. Huntington even argued that the 'manifestation of conservatism at any one time and place has little connection with its manifestation at any other time and place'.[14] It should be noted that, as a political force, conservatism changed an enormous amount over the course of the lifetimes of Victorian composers. Unforeseen events, consequences of decisions, new policies, wars, and new ideas unravelled what was described as 'conservatism' into a multiplicity of doctrines, which in party politics included large swathes of liberal thought.[15] Likewise, Harold MacMillan's *The Middle Way* (1938), influenced by contemporary events (the Spanish Civil War, as well as the continental rise of fascism and communism), contained ideas that would be quite unpalatable to earlier conservative authors, including arguments in favour of democracy and universal suffrage. By the end of Edward German's life in 1936, the political Conservative Party had changed in policy so often and thoroughly that it is often argued that conservatism is not constituted by eternal or timeless philosophical ideas. A general trend towards the acceptance of the

[13] It is very often remarked that the word 'liberalism' has become detached from its etymological meaning, particularly in America, but it is less widely discussed that the same process has taken place with conservatism over the course of its history; it is also possible that the 'right' of the present day are, in the view of some conservative thinkers, no longer conservative in the sense that the culture and politics of the present are 'largely leftist inspired'. Please see:
Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, *Leftism: from de Sade and Marx to Hitler and Marcuse* (New York: Arlington House, 1974), 377.

[14] Samuel P. Huntington, 'Conservatism as an Ideology', *The American Political Science Review*, 51/2 (1957), 454-473 (468).

[15] Anthony Ludovici believed that the events of the First World War changed conservatism and its adherents immeasurably, to the point where a connection with the beliefs of previous generations felt impossible. In 1921 he declared that 'Not only the beliefs of our grandfathers, but also the convictions of our fathers, seem now old fashioned and no longer seaworthy'. In an attempt to reverse this trend, Ludovici provides of a negative conceptualisation of the primary beliefs of conservatism through criticism of the prevailing liberal and socialist ideas that were gaining traction at the time, including essays on human nature, equality, precedent, and beauty. Please see:
Anthony Ludovici, *The False Assumptions of "Democracy"* (London: Heath Cranton, 1921), ix-41.

following four statements, however, which summarise the aspects of conservative philosophy which appear to be most influential on musical conservatism, can be recognised. This list is not intended to be exhaustive and it is not intended to pass judgement on the merits of this set of beliefs. It is a synthesis of explanations from both conservatives and anticonservatives as to what its fundamental philosophy has entailed across time.[16]

The first of these statements is as follows: 'there is wisdom in appealing to historical precedent, even if it is irrational'. In appealing to the wisdom of past generations, conservatives are looking to history to empirically determine what has worked, and what might work again. It is, as such, a rejection of rationalism as conceptualised by Michael Oakeshott, and manifests itself across politics and culture.[17] It is the facet of conservative philosophy that is expressed most obviously in music, and is often what is meant by a colloquial, conventional use of the word 'conservatism' in a musical context.[18] American composer and arts administrator John Donald Robb provides one such appeal to precedent in his analysis of inter-war musical composition:

> The world was seeking salvation in something new… we had an almost psychopathic emphasis on novelty (which was unfortunately confused with originality) and the slightest similarity between a new work and the work of any previous composer or even the use of any traditional approach was condemned by all those whose voices reached farthest. The result — composers have been composing for composers, critics and conductors and the public has reacted by demanding less of this "modern" music in our concert halls or by turning to popular music — a field in which oddly enough conservatism has prevailed… Now — after this war composers must stop following trends like a group of political opportunists. They must lead people to faith in mankind and in a good future. They must first of all reaffirm their faith in the great traditions of the past thus again reaching a common meeting place with the public.[19]

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[16] Some of the most important authors on this subject are as follows: Burke, de Maistre, Hearnshaw, Oakeshott, Ludovici, Carlyle, Sowell and Scruton. They are each quoted at length in the chapters that follow where their work is most relevant, but all of these thinkers espouse some variation of this quadripartite theory, at least implicitly.

[17] Michael Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays* (Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1991), 168.

[18] An amusing example of the use of 'conservative' in this way emerges from a discussion of musical output in North Korea, in which the author suggests that artists, many of whom have their output dictated by party policy, are stifled in their creativity. Consequently, it is claimed that 'artistic production is conservative and artistic creators self-censor to conform to ideological guidelines'. Please see:
Keith Howard, 'Dancing for the Eternal President', in Annie J. Rendall (ed.), *Music, Power and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2005), 113-132 (126).

[19] John Donald Robb, quoted in Gertrude Norman and Miriam Lubell Shrifte, *Letters of Composers: An Anthology 1603-1945* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), 362-363.

While Robb advocates for an attempt to respond to public demand to mirror the successes which the adherents of 'popular music' had achieved, it is notable that he does not prescribe any particular style, tradition or form. Implicit in Robb's dismay at the musical trends of the recent past is an understanding that musical conservatism is explicitly interwoven with the philosophy of precedent; musical technique is of less significance to the conceptualisation of musical conservatism than political and philosophical approaches.

The concept of tradition, invented or otherwise, will be given a more thorough treatment in the following chapters, but it is important to note here that it makes up only a part of what is to be understood by an acceptance of the first statement. The philosophy of precedent has been criticised for its elusiveness in advocacy for specific public policy or private behaviour; Honderich, for example, criticises Edmund Burke for not specifying what is or is not part of his famous contract between generations and what should or should not be preserved.[20] To argue in this way, however, is to enter into rationality where an explicitly antirational position exists; in the case of the Burkean order, it does not matter specifically what is included in the contract, or that it varies across time or across place. The significant point is that the conservative recognises the importance and acknowledgement of what they believe to be an ancestral inheritance, as well as the inheritance which is incumbent on present generations to provide for the future. It is also not, as is sometimes suggested, the same as an uncritical acceptance of the status quo, or even the *status quo ante*.[21] Indeed, this has been one of the key philosophical debates in conservative thinking since the Second World War; many conservatives believe that the world has changed so drastically from that of the past, that to be 'conservative' in the sense that is informed only by the etymology of the word is to accept modes of being which cannot be acceptable – at least not to a person

[20] Honderich, *Conservatism*, 20.
[21] Thomas Sowell, *Intellectuals and Society* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 102.

who believes in Burke's often discussed extension of the social contract to not only the living, but also the dead and the unborn.[22] This led Scruton to criticise Oakeshott for offering what he believed to be a 'limp definition' of conservative thought,[23] when Oakeshott famously suggested that conservative thinking is 'to prefer the familiar to the unknown, to prefer the tried to the untried… the convenient to the perfect, present laughter to Utopian bliss'.[24]

To Scruton, this allows for the question that is perennially on the mind of the conservative who is unhappy with modernity: 'how, then, can one be a conservative, when there is nothing to conserve but ruins?'.[25] The formulation of the question in this way may even have been an acknowledgement of Julius Evola's book-length answer to this question, *Men Among the Ruins*.[26] Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn provides one answer to problems of this nature in the modern world:

> As a matter of fact, a real conservative, European or American, cannot possibly accept the world he lives in, nor the direction in which this world moves. If we analyze his mind, his views, his ideals, he *is far more of a revolutionary than either the Communist or the uncommitted leftist…* If the change can be evolutionary, by reform rather than by revolution, organically and constitutionally rather than by sheer force, the conservative, will obviously prefer it because he respects the past, his entire historic heritage… The conservative in the free West has to reject not only much of the political order, but also social conditions, artistic trends, cultural institutions, human relations. It is evident that these are all interconnected.[27]

In this understanding of the interconnected nature of politics, philosophy, and art, Kuehnelt-Leddihn highlights the importance of historical precedent to musical conservatism. For some philosophical conservatives, continuation or incremental evolutionary development of artistic trends from antiquity to the present is one way of perpetuating a culture that has a Burkean

[22] Roger Scruton, *How to be a Conservative* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 24.
[23] Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism*, 10.
[24] Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays*, 169.
[25] Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism*, 10.
[26] Julius Evola, *Men Among the Ruins: Postwar Reflections of a Radical Traditionalist* (Rochester: Inner Traditions, 2002).
[27] Kuehnelt-Leddihn, *Leftism*, 402-403.

connection with the generations of the past and future.[28] However, when the culture has diverged too far from what they would describe as tradition or a natural order, many conservatives are, as Kuehnelt-Leddihn suggests, as radical as anticonservatives in their proposed solutions; Evola suggests that:

> Those who, having assumed as reference points the spirit and forms that characterize every authentic and traditional civilization, were able to travel upstream to the origins and see the phases of the unfolding of history, are also aware of the immense effort it would take not only to return, but even to approximate a normal (traditional) social order.[29]

For Evola and other radical conservatives, modernity and modernism are so far removed from what is natural, traditional, and based in precedent that rejection of incremental evolution is necessary. Heinrich Schenker personified this vision in music, declaring that the composers of his day, in disregarding precedent and the traditional order, were doomed to obscurity:

> The present generation is destined to be a tragic clown among generations, and to perish in the disgrace and shame of insufficient cultivation. Obsessed with at all costs keeping up with the very latest thing, and totally concerned that posterity should rate it higher than all preceding generations, it finishes up by utterly failing to recognize, and so subverting, all that is really best and most valuable of achievements up to today.[30]

An artistic movement that captures the reactionary spirit of these thinkers in an authentic way is perhaps yet to be produced, but it is important to note the place of this feeling in the breadth of conservative thought.

Historical precedent is here placed in opposition to rationality because that is the way in which political and philosophical debates on such questions are framed by both conservatives and anti-conservatives; Sir Hubert Parry, a complicated but broadly liberal-

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[28] One inconsistency which is difficult to reconcile is the problem of decline as it relates to precedent in this way; if the soul of humanity is in a state of entropy, it complicates the justification of the premise of precedent. Conservative arguments often rely on the supposition that we are the same as people who have lived before us, but it can be a contradiction to say that we should apply what was successful in the past if people, their culture or their spirit are in decline. Spengler contends with this problem in his arguments concerning what he believes to be the end of Western musical traditions in Wagner and Bruckner; it is why he concludes that truly great art of that order is essentially impossible in the twentieth century. Please see:
Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West: Form and Actuality* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927), 223.
[29] Julius Evola, *Revolt Against the Modern World* (Rochester: Inner Traditions, 1995), 358.
[30] Heinrich Schenker, *Der Tonwille: Pamphlets in Witness of the Immutable Laws of Music, Offered to a New Generation of Youth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 19.

minded composer, suggested that rational exposition of the ideas of many composers would radically change the ways in which they compose:

> For most people, even men of great eminence, are singularly hazy and illogical in their artistic theories till they are brought to the point of putting them in order in writing. Under that ordeal what is unsound commonly betrays itself; and if the writer has any power of self-criticism, and does not lose himself in cloudy rhetoric, he may find out where his pathway is in a wrong direction; while on the other hand, things which are radically true lay hold of the mind more and more strongly and are carried out more steadily to their legitimate conclusions.[31]

This is fundamentally antithetical to conservative thought. What is for Parry an absence of rational, articulated knowledge, is for conservatives broadly an individual expression of collective, inarticulate wisdom. It might be assumed that the kind of anti-rationalism exhibited by conservatives was in accordance with a generally assumed combination of beliefs which accorded with Victorian culture, but this premise cannot be aligned with an understanding of the pervading liberal thought of the era; Sarah Collins has characterised aesthetic liberalism as it relates to music as in conflict with 'convention':

> In sum, the types of liberal discourse that ascribe a pre-eminent function to the aesthetic tend to view individual liberty as the freedom to pursue and cultivate forms of experience and modes of living that accord with individual inclination, as opposed to convention or moral doctrine. Ideally, these modes of living must be able to be rationally justified in the argumentative forum of reasoned public debate… Liberalism conceived in this way proceeds from the notion that ideas are inseparable from the ways in which they are expressed, and are therefore primarily aesthetic.[32]

As such musical conservatism, in its detachment from rationalism, must be understood as a phenomenon that is in opposition to aesthetic liberalism. It should be possible to discern differences in aesthetic expression between composers whose philosophical approaches are fundamentally opposed; precedent and rationalism might be possible to align in theory, but in the dialectics of this era they were rarely aligned in practice.

[31] C. Hubert. H. Parry, *Studies of Great Composers* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1887), 341-342.
[32] Sarah Collins, 'Aesthetic Liberalism' in Sarah Collins (ed.), *Music and Victorian Liberalism: Composing the Liberal Subject* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 1-12 (12).

Réné Guénon, a French traditionalist thinker,[33] expressed the underlying principles of belief in the primacy of precedent most completely; in his 1927 book *The Crisis of the Modern World*, he argues that not only is rationalism replacing wisdom a critical and irreversible mistake,[34] but it will have the opposite of its intended effects:

> But the moderns, knowing nothing higher than reason in the order of intelligence, do not even conceive of the possibility of intellectual intuition, whereas the doctrines of the ancient world and of the Middle Ages, even when they were no more than philosophical in character, and therefore incapable of effectively calling this intuition into play, nevertheless explicitly recognized its existence and its supremacy over all the other faculties. This is why there was no rationalism before Descartes, for rationalism is a specifically modern phenomenon, one that is closely connected with individualism, being nothing other than the negation of any faculty of a supra-individual order. As long as Westerners persist in ignoring or denying intellectual intuition, they can have no tradition in the true sense of the word.[35]

Guénon argues that intellectual intuition is a vital component of the thinking of the people of the past, in eternal opposition to individual rationality, which is, for him, a means of discovering knowledge that constitutes a much lower order of thought. Oakeshott similarly believed that rationalism could only ever be opposed to tradition and that anticonservative thinkers always sought to place ideologies – or 'the supposed substratum of rational truth contained in the tradition' – in their place.[36] The opposite of this view, of course, whether consciously or unconsciously understood, is still fundamentally ideological. James Burnham believed that anti-rationalism was not only philosophically the right approach, but that it is unavoidable and intrinsically linked to the people of the past:

> Human beings are moved by sentiment, passion, intuition and other non-rational impulses at least as much as by reason. Any view of man, history and society that neglects the non-rational impulses and their embodiment in custom, prejudice, tradition and authority, or that conceives of a social order in which the non-rational impulses and their embodiments are wholly subject to abstract reason, is an illusion.[37]

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[33] Perennialist traditionalism as an intellectual movement is sometimes assumed to be a form of cultural relativism, but it is, in fact, the opposite. Not only is its central focus on precedent, but at its core is a belief in absolute values which are integral to everything valuable in any tradition: hierarchy, structure, order, spirituality and homogeneity. As such it may be regarded as at least adjacent to philosophical conservatism as defined here, if not a branch of it.

[34] Réné Guénon, *The Crisis of the Modern World* (Ghent: Sophia Perennis, 2004), 13.

[35] Guénon, *The Crisis of the Modern World*, 41.

[36] Michael Oakeshott, 'Rationalism in Politics' in Jerry Z. Muller (ed.), *Conservatism: An Anthology of Social and Political Thought from David Hume to the Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 292-311 (295).

[37] James Burnham, *Suicide of the West: An Essay on the Meaning and Destiny of Liberalism* (New York: John Day, 1964), 126.

For conservatives, rationality and precedent are difficult to align; it is possible that this is the underlying principle of many of their musical and philosophical claims, particularly regarding modernity and modernism in the twentieth century.[38]

To accept the premise of the importance of precedent, many thinkers have argued that one must necessarily believe this second statement: 'human beings and their activities are, by their nature, flawed and imperfectible'. Because conservatives believe human nature to be unchanging from epoch to epoch, it is possible for them to accept the premise that the events of the past, particularly those which are believed to be the result of human nature, have a great deal to teach us today; this is the underlying assumption of the cyclical conceptualisations of history that are presented by figures such as Spengler and Evola. Christopher Berry suggests that 'Conservatism is more directly a theory of human nature than either liberalism or socialism'; [39] this is only true as far as conservatism assumes this imperfectible nature of the human being in a way that is not always accepted in other political traditions.[40] James Burnham argues that 'liberals' believe that man is 'perfectible in the full sense of being capable of achieving perfection', whereas conservatives believe that 'human nature had a permanent, unchanging essence, and that man is partly corrupt as well as limited in his potential'.[41] This no doubt influenced the argument made by Thomas Sowell in *A Conflict of Visions*, in which he suggests that the left and right, as broad categories, are better

[38] Schoenberg believed that 'Whether one calls oneself conservative or revolutionary' was immaterial in the modern world and that it was not only inevitable but desirable for composers to 'be convinced of the infallibility of one's own fantasy… the desire for a conscious control of the new means and forms will arise in every artist's mind'. A view such as this is incompatible with philosophical conservatism. Please see:
Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), 106.
[39] Christopher Berry, 'Conservatism and Human Nature' in Ian Forbes and Steve Smith (eds.), *Politics and Human Nature* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 53-67 (53).
[40] This question has been complicated in recent years as a result of the decline in popularity of claiming any sort of 'biological essentialism' at all; it is often claimed that Marx himself believed in a kind of *tabula rasa*, but this is mostly untrue. A thorough articulation of these issues can be found here:
Sean Sayers, *Marxism and Human Nature* (London: Routledge, 2003), 149-160.
[41] James Burnham, *Suicide of the West: An Essay on the Meaning and Destiny of Liberalism* (New York: John Day, 1964), 50.

understood as a pair of conflicting visions about the nature of humanity.[42] Ludovici, for example, possessed what Sowell would describe as the 'constrained' or 'tragic' vision of our shared condition, and therefore suggests that public policy ought to be considered with regard to 'the effects of the natural iniquity of man', which, in his view, has been the primary error of Liberal philosophers and politicians who have 'built their house upon the sand of a mistaken view of humanity in the mass'.[43]

These oppositional understandings of human nature are one of the most important underlying factors in the difference between philosophical ideas as they intersect with politics and culture; in music, these philosophies might manifest themselves as a belief that music is perfectible, against a belief that music composition is better conceptualised as a recapitulation of pre-existing ideas. Burke understood human nature to be oppositional to the idealism assumed by the thinkers behind the French Revolution: 'this sort of people are so taken up with their theories about the rights of man, that they have totally forgot his nature'.[44] Christian conservatives claim that this nature is 'touched by original sin', but many secular conservatives understand this metaphorically.[45] Ludovici was an atheist, for example, as well as a thinker who (like Burke, de Maistre, and so many other philosophers of the political 'right') concentrated his ire on Jean-Jaques Rousseau's direct exposition of anticonservative beliefs about the nature of the human condition. Conservatives believe fervently that Rousseau was profoundly wrong; Ludovici claims that Rousseau could only ever be incorrect because his understanding of the concepts of 'Nature, Freedom and Man' were irredeemably flawed. He argues that because of this, 'he perforce drew a picture even more distorted of

[42] Thomas Sowell, *A Conflict of Visions: Ideological Origins of Political Struggles* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), 11-17.
[43] Anthony M. Ludovici, *The Specious Origins of Liberalism: The Genesis of a Delusion* (London: Britons, 1967), 74.
[44] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London: Penguin, 2004), 154.
[45] John Charmley, 'Traditions of Conservative Foreign Policy' in Geoffrey Hicks (ed.), *Conservatism and British Foreign Policy, 1820-1920* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 215-228 (217).

humanity than he had already drawn of Nature, and thus proceeded to his ultimate fatuous conclusion that "Man was born free and everywhere he is in chains"'.[46] Stuart Ball, in his description of the beliefs of the Conservative Party of the nineteenth century, suggests that the conservative understanding of human nature is linked to an anti-rational appreciation of the political and cultural models of the past, where they were successful:

> Conservatives were not optimists in their appreciation of human nature, and considered that the record of history proved that in the mass, humanity's flaws were always more evident than its strengths… they favoured the insights and warnings provided by instinct rather than logic. Where they spoke of the merits of 'common sense', what they meant was the store of experience and custom which had been laid down by many generations, and which should not be disregarded in favour of the theory of one person or the ephemeral fashion of one generation, however convincing or rewarding this might appear on the surface.[47]

This vision of human nature has a bearing on many other facets of conservative belief, and as such ought to not be underestimated in its critical importance to the study of conservatism. Hans-Herman Hoppe, in discarding Oakeshott's aforementioned definition of conservatism, even argues that the conservative vision of human nature and conservatism itself are inseparable: for Hoppe, 'Conservative refers to someone who believes in the existence of a natural order, a natural state of affairs which corresponds to the nature of things: of nature and man'.[48] Part of the reason that the belief in the unchanging and flawed nature of humanity is intrinsically linked to an appreciation of precedent in music is that for the conservative, what is true and not ephemeral in one era is true for all eras; the people who enjoyed or were moved by the music of the past are, in fundamental essence, the same as the people of the present.[49] As such, what is good, true and beautiful in their judgement remains

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[46] Ludovici, *The False Assumptions of "Democracy"*, 17-18.
[47] Stuart Ball, 'The Principles of British Conservatism from Balfour to Heath, c. 1910-75' in Bradley W. Hart and Richard Carr (eds.), *The Foundations of the British Conservative Party* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 13-38 (17-19).
[48] Hans-Hermann Hoppe, *Democracy, the God that Failed: The Economics and Politics of Monarchy, Democracy, and Natural Order* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 2001), 187.
[49] Thomas Carlyle, in his series of lectures on the subject of heroes and hero-worship, declares that the past 'is the possession of the Present; the Past had always something *true*, and is a precious possession. In a different time, in a different place, it is always some other side of our common Human Nature that has been developing itself.' Please see:
Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1840), 47.

the same now. This is the foundation of the often-held conservative belief in universal truth, cultural absolutism and imperishable beauty. The universality, or potential lack thereof, regarding the standards within this framework – that is, whether each individual conservative evaluates the same criterion of beauty in the same way, or if they believe that the same truths are universal – does not actually matter. What is important, at least for the purpose of revealing the nature of philosophical and musical conservatism, is a recognition that such a position is often taken by conservatives, as well as an understanding of why it is intellectually possible for them to do so. Conservative philosophy is internally consistent if nothing else; the assumptions of its adherents make logical sense within their own moral and philosophical structures. The potential for these structures to be criticised or rationalised from outside of their own framework is not necessary to a study of their intrinsic nature.

The conviction that human nature is deeply flawed has a crucial significance for an acceptance of this third statement, which is perhaps the most controversial in the present day: 'inequality and hierarchy are the natural and proper order of things'. Peter Dorey has written a book-length analysis of variations on this statement, in which he contends that, for conservatives, 'inequality is ultimately rooted in human nature itself'.[50] Lord Hugh Cecil (1869-1956) articulated this premise when he suggested that 'the law of the universe, after all, is inequality'.[51] Again Burke contested anticonservative visions of equality in his *Reflections* when he deplored 'that monstrous fiction, which, by inspiring false ideas and vain expectations into men destined to travel in the obscure walk of laborious life, serves only to aggravate and imbitter that real inequality, which it never can remove'.[52] Another of the most

[50] Peter Dorey, *British Conservatism: The Politics and Philosophy of Inequality* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co., 2011), 7.
[51] Lord Hugh Cecil, quoted in Arthur Mejia, 'Lord Hugh Cecil: Religion and Liberty' in J. A. Thompson and Arthur Mejia (eds.), *Edwardian Conservatism: Five Studies in Adaptation* (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1988), 11-40 (36).
[52] Burke, *Reflections*, 124.

revered conservative thinkers, W. H. Mallock, argued that the arts are the best evidence for the truth of these claims when he declared that 'how great the inequality is between the natural powers of men is perhaps most clearly evidenced by the case of art'.[53] Ludovici believed that equality is a watchword for anticonservative belief that has penetrated public discourse in a deep, but disingenuous way:

> Are such clamourers for equality all liars? They are certainly liars, but the majority of them are probably perfectly unconscious liars. From childhood onwards they may have heard the word "Equality" pronounced as if it implied a very certain reality, a very much coveted desideratum. Deep emotions over which they have no control, and concerning which they have even less understanding, are therefore stirred every time they hear the word, or see it written or printed; and thus they live and die earnestly believing that this meaningless principle "Equality," if it could be realised, would be an unqualified boon.[54]

For Ludovici, equality is conceptually meaningless despite its pervasiveness in anticonservative thought. The philosopher goes on to argue that not only is equality not the universalising good that many have professed it to be, but that inequality is a natural, desirable, positive state of affairs:

> It is impossible to conceive of a society at all unless we presuppose among its members the presence of those particularly happy results of inequality which are higher men. Even the lowest forms of gregariousness – the wolf pack and the herd of antelopes – benefit from this kind of inequality by the function that it enables their leaders to perform. For a society implies cohesion, it implies unity of purpose and desire; it also implies a more or less uniform outlook on life. But how are these things possible without higher men? When in the history of the world have these results been achieved without the help of superior beings? But the idea of something superior immediately suggests inequality, and inequality right down to the lowest man; but with this inequality we must as we have seen accept so-called injustices and consequently suffering.[55]

Arguments such as these have become so unfavourable that they are almost never presented in present-day political debate, even by conservatives. Hoppe, however, argued in 2001 that belief in equality and in private property are incompatible: 'private property implies exclusivity, inequality, and difference. And cultural relativism is incompatible with the fundamental – indeed foundational – fact of families and intergenerational kinship relations.

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[53] W. H. Mallock, 'Aristocracy and Evolution: A Study of the Rights, the Origin, and Social Function of the Wealthier Classes (1898)' in Jerry Z. Muller (ed.), *Conservatism: An Anthology of Social and Political Thought from David Hume to the Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 210-221 (216).
[54] Ludovici, *The False Assumptions of "Democracy"*, 65.
[55] Ludovici, *The False Assumptions of "Democracy"*, 118-119.

Families and kinship relations imply cultural absolutism'.[56] Here, again, the Burkean and Scrutonian conceptualisation of a multigenerational contract is evoked; for Hoppe, inequality and 'cultural absolutism' are a necessary part of a conservative vision even in the modern world. Scruton himself opens his final study of broad musical ideas, *Music as an Art*, with an introduction that implores readers to eschew culturally relativistic arguments and extoll the merits of an absolute inequality in musical appreciation.[57] For conservatives, there is an inequality in art that is deeply rooted in human nature.[58]

This dismissal of cultural relativism is the prerequisite for the final statement, perhaps the least universally accepted among conservatives. This is that 'beauty ought to be one of the primary objectives of artistic pursuit'. This is particularly applicable to Victorian musicians, and is part of an argument for the existence of conservatives (of any kind) only in reaction to external forces which are anti-conservative.[59] As Scruton explains, these elements of conservative philosophy are intrinsic to artistic romanticism:

> Philosophers of the Enlightenment saw beauty as a way in which lasting moral and spiritual conceptions acquire sensuous form. And no romantic painter, musician or writer would have denied that beauty was the true subject matter of art. But at some time during the aftermath of modernism, beauty ceased to receive those tributes. Art increasingly aimed to disturb, subvert or transgress moral certainties and it was not beauty but originality – however achieved and at whatever moral cost – that won the prizes. Indeed, there arose a widespread suspicion of beauty, as next in line to *kitsch* – something too sweet and inoffensive to be pursued by the serious modern artist.[60]

It is in this sense that it is possible to argue that any music which pursued beauty, including music containing elements of Wagnerism, was musically conservative in the era of modernist

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[56] Hoppe, *Democracy, the God that Failed*, 217.
[57] Roger Scruton, *Music as an Art* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 2.
[58] Joseph de Maistre offers one of the most succinct demonstrations of these first three statements, especially when he wrote directly in response to Rousseau, who offered a view of human nature, equality, hierarchy and historiography that was oppositional to a conservative vision of these concepts. De Maistre argues, for example, that Rousseau 'abused the word *nature* to a disgusting degree' and that society 'neither is nor can be the result of a pact. Society is the result of a law'. Please see:
Joseph de Maistre, *Against Rousseau: "On the State of Nature" and "On the Sovereignty of the People"* (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 15-38.
[59] Burke's *Reflections*, like De Maistre's most famous works, were reactionary in this sense of the word; likewise, the conservatism of the early twentieth century was 'a systematic response to socialism'. Please see: Scruton, *Conservatism: Ideas in Profile*, 71.
[60] Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism*, 159.

music. Schoenberg observed that adherents of musical conservatism attached the label of beauty exclusively to tonal music:

> The response of a conservative, pitch-oriented person to the new music is predictable and significant. He says that it is "interesting." He never says that such music is "beautiful" or "satisfying" or "meaningful" as he might of music by Beethoven or Bartók. It is always "interesting." The implication is that he finds such music intellectually challenging and stimulating, but that there is another class of music (traditional, pitched music) that is beautiful, satisfying and meaningful in a way that the interesting avant-garde music is not.[61]

The composer fails, however, to observe the overt rejection of the pursuit of beauty by his avant-garde contemporaries; this subject shall be explored further in the chapter concerning Edward German. Schoenberg's choice of examples here is unusual as he appears to group together Bartók and Beethoven as adherents of 'pitched' tonal music. Scruton, however, uses Bartók as an example of the inverse of beauty, writing that some of the composer's music is 'harsh, rebarbative, even ugly', but at the same time succeeds in what it is attempting to achieve. In the view of Scruton, Bartok's 'aesthetic virtues are of a different order from those of Faure's *Pavane,* which aims only to be exquisitely beautiful, and succeeds'. For conservatives, there is a marked difference between the philosophical approaches to aesthetics between composers such as Fauré, Beethoven and Bartók, and an even greater difference between tonal composers and those influenced by Schoenberg and his contemporaries.[62]

It is interesting that Emily Jones suggests that it is only in the period in which artistic modernism and coherent political socialism emerge (in the years 1885 to 1914), that conservatism 'came into being' in the way that it is understood today.[63] It is in these years

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[61] Schoenberg, *Style and Idea*, 46.

[62] Julius Evola, whose thought was greatly influenced by elements of conservatism, described Schoenberg's works (as well as most other 'modern art') as kinds of 'existential testimonies' which were designed to reject beauty and 'undermine any idealism, to deride any principles, to attack institutions, to reduce to mere words ethical values, the just, the noble, and the dignified'. Please see:
Julius Evola, *Ride the Tiger: A Survival Manual for the Aristocrats of the Soul* (Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions, 2003), 157.

[63] Emily Jones, *Edmund Burke and the Invention of Modern Conservatism, 1830-1914: An Intellectual History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 196.

that Burke's works saw a significant increase in their appreciation as political doctrine; T. E. Kebbel's *A History of Toryism* of 1886 makes scarce mention of either socialism or Burke,[64] whereas it is transparent that Hearnshaw's works were deeply influenced by Burke's *Reflections*. In the introduction to his *Conservatism in England*, Hearnshaw also explicitly states what his objectives are when he declares that 'the only practical alternative to socialism is conservatism'.[65] There is a sense in which a philosophy that is explicit in its objective of the pursuit of beauty can only exist in a culture in which there is a widespread philosophy with an opposing objective,[66] in the same way that a conservative philosophy, as it is understood today, can only emerge in a world in which the conservation of the beliefs outlined here were opposed in any existentially threatening way. By 1915, Anthony Ludovici, a conservative philosopher and translator of Nietzsche whose works have often been neglected by twenty-first century historians of conservatism, was able to offer a vision of art which combines the assumptions made in all four of the above statements and also applies them to music:

> Beauty, Art, Will, Conscience and Spiritual Strength to face and to endure even the inevitable pangs and pains of a full life—nay, the very willingness to embrace them, because they are known to have a vital purpose—these are some of the things that can be reared by long tradition and careful discipline alone, and these are some of the things that depend for their existence on the aristocratic rule. For real Beauty is impossible without regular and stable living, lasting over generations; real Art is impossible without surplus health and energy, the outcome of generations of careful storing and garnering of vital forces, and without that direction and purpose which the supreme artist—the tasteful legislator—alone can give to the minor artists, be they painters, architects or musicians, within his realm.[67]

For Ludovici, hierarchical systems are required to provide the cultural context in which beautiful music can flourish. Because of the fallen nature of man, it is necessary for the wisdom of previous generations to temper an otherwise undisciplined and unstable populace.

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[64] T. E. Kebbel, *A History of Toryism* (London: W.H. Allen, 1886), 62.
[65] Hearnshaw, *Conservatism in England*, 4.
[66] Scruton took beauty very seriously and believed that 'without the conscious pursuit of beauty we risk falling into a world of addictive pleasures and routine desecration, a world in which the worthwhileness of human life is no longer clearly perceivable'. The predictive validity of this may be judged by posterity. Please see: Roger Scruton, *Beauty: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 160.
[67] Anthony M. Ludovici, *A Defence of Aristocracy: A Text Book for Tories* (Boston: LeRoy Phillips, 1915), 27-28.

Even art itself must necessarily be hierarchical and governed by the philosophy of precedent, in order to produce the conditions necessary for beauty to prosper.

Conservatives also generally believe in an absolute standard of beauty as part of a rejection of cultural relativism; for them, beauty is not in the eye of the beholder, but in the adherence to transcendent values that remain beautiful across time. This is not to say that there is a limit to styles and musical languages which are capable of producing beauty; in a rare comment on music, Burke suggests that beauty itself is constant but there are infinite means of achieving it:

> I do not here mean to confine music to any one species of notes, or tones, neither is it an art in which I can say I have any great skill. My sole design in this remark is, to settle a consistent idea of beauty. The infinite variety of the affections of the soul will suggest to a good head, a skilful ear, a variety of such sounds, as are fitted to raise them.[68]

To conservatives, beauty is a collective discovery, not an opinion. The substance, consistency or veracity of this claim, or the fact that different thinkers and musicians in different cultures came to mutually exclusive conclusions as to the manifestations of these absolute values is not so relevant as the observation that *pursuit* of this abstract, transcendent beauty is a trait that characterises musical conservatives in this era.

While it is clear that tonality as a means of producing beautiful works was important to many conservative musicians, the pursuit of tonality is not enough to justifiably apply the epithet of conservative to a composer. Stanford alludes to this when he writes of the Wagner-Brahms dichotomy that 'Even Wagner – in those days reckoned as a great heresiarch – has made it clear that in extra-theatrical matters, musical design is an imperative necessity. "When a man loses sight of tonality he is lost," was one of his *dicta*. In absolute music he was with them and of them'.[69] Wagner, of course, changed his musical and political discourse

[68] Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful* (London: Penguin, 2004), 156.
[69] Charles V. Stanford, *Interludes: Records and Reflections* (London: John Murray, 1922), 57.

over the course of his life, but earlier made declarations of his musical anti-conservatism; an 1851 letter to Theodor Uhlig, for example, exhibits his rejection of precedent:

> With this new concept I sever all connection with our present-day theatre and its audience: I make a definite and permanent break with present-day forms… I cannot look for a performance until *after the revolution*; only revolution can bring the artists and audiences to me… I shall reveal to the men of the revolution the significance of their revolution in its noblest sense. *That audience* will understand me, as the present-day public is incapable of doing.[70]

If tonality was the only measure of conservatism, it would be necessary for its definitional boundaries to include such composers as Wagner or Debussy, whose works, while often novel in their harmonic language, almost always exhibit what Boyd Pomeroy describes as 'powerful and familiar resonances from the tonal language of his predecessors'.[71] A practical definition of musical conservatism therefore requires extramusical considerations. Debussy himself was somewhat hostile to the sympathies of conservative musicians; in a 1907 letter to Jacques Durand, he declared: 'I am more and more convinced that music, by its very nature, is something that cannot be poured into a tight, conventional mould… The rest is humbug invented by frigid imbeciles at the expense of the Masters, who almost always wrote nothing but period music!'.[72] Similarly, Theodor Adorno criticises conservatives for their belief that tonality emerges from a natural order:

> They are put forward as if the tonal idiom of the past 350 years were itself given by nature and as if it were an attack on nature to go beyond what has been habitually ground in, whereas, on the contrary, what has been ground in bears witness to social pressure. The second nature of the tonal system is an illusion originating in history.[73]

Adorno's vision of the history of music might usefully be contrasted with the views of Schenker, who believed that:

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[70] Richard Wagner, quoted in Hans Gal, *The Musician's World: Letters of the Great Composers* (Southampton: Camelot Press, 1978), 286.
[71] Boyd Pomeroy, 'Debussy's Tonality: A Formal Perspective' in Simon Trezise (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 155-178 (155).
[72] Claude Debussy, quoted in Hans Gal, *The Musician's World: Letters of the Great Composers* (Southampton: Camelot Press, 1978), 404.
[73] Theodor Adorno, *Philosophy of New Music* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 13.

> The life of tone thrives in consonance and dissonance: Consonance is the sole law of everything harmonic, vertical, and belongs to Nature. Dissonance belongs to voice-leading, the horizontal, and consequently is Art… There are no laws other than consonance and dissonance, nor are there any other fundamental derivations. Dissonance must be understood as purely contingent on consonance and thus the consonance of Nature alone must be understood as the ultimate ground of all artistic possibilities in music and acknowledged at the same time as the ultimate goal of all that strives in passing.[74]

Conservatives might point to phenomena such as the overtone series as evidence of the exaggeration of Adorno's claims, but even where these beliefs are grounded in truth, they are likely to be post-hoc rationalisations; even conservatives themselves usually understand that their belief in a natural order of music, which is a collective discovery and the basis for beauty, can be regarded as an a priori assumption which emerges from agreement with the four statements outlined above.[75]

The ways in which these four statements might manifest themselves in the works of a specific composer is detailed in the following chapters, but they serve to offer an initial working definition of what is meant by philosophical conservatism as it relates to music. One of the problems with defining composers as either modernist or progressive or, indeed, musically conservative, has been that the terms are so ill-defined; to take the assumption that the term 'musical conservative' were to simply mean a composer who apes the stylistic elements that were popular in the past would mean that almost no composers at all would believe themselves to be musical conservatives. The ubiquity of the term means that there is likely to be something more to it; it constitutes an attitude, a vision of the place of music, and is often concomitant with a philosophical or political conservatism. The word is not used to describe a kind of reactionary turning back of a musical clock (as it might be interpreted by whiggish historians) in either scholarly or popular writing, therefore there has to be a more

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[74] Schenker, *Der Tonwille*, 51.

[75] Conservative theorists often argue in this way about their beliefs and the ideologies of anticonservatives; it is the assumption of anti-rationalists that rationalism plays little part in the formation of belief. Sowell has perhaps outlined this most clearly in his theory of the *Conflict of Visions*, in which he argues extensively that beliefs of this nature, on either side, are a 'pre-analytic cognitive act'. Please see:
Thomas Sowell, *A Conflict of Visions: Ideological Origins of Political Struggles* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), 105.

expansive understanding of the term.[76] Part of any thorough comprehension surely requires extramusical interpretation as a part of such definitional analysis, which includes the core tenets of philosophical conservatism as presented above. The following chapters continually return to the themes outlined here and attempt to cast a light where there was previously a shadow in the understanding of musically conservative attitudes, using as examples the composers of some of the most important works of musical conservatism in England: Sir Edward German, Sir Charles Villiers Stanford, and Sir Edward Elgar.

[76] There are remarkably few composers who have ever attempted to reverse the developments of their contemporary musical understanding. It is possible that they could never be canonised (as a result of the general view that their music would be inauthentic as an expression of the time in which they lived) and have their works survive if they ever did. Knowing this, even the most conservative-minded composers (German and Stanford included) seem to utilise a modern framework to express their ideas. Looking at the revival of the harpsichord in the early twentieth century, for example, we see that very little new music was composed for the instrument, especially by its greatest exponents. The text featured on a plaque celebrating the life of harpsichord revivalist Violet Gordon Woodhouse (1871-1948) reveals something of the character of the movement of which she was a part: 'Her playing of the Harpsichord & Clavichord Revealed a forgotten World of Beauty and Imagination'. This plaque may be found in the Church of St. Peter ad Vincula, Folkington, East Sussex.

CHAPTER IV

Sir Edward German: A Student of the Beautiful

Despite his successes with 'serious' symphonic music during his lifetime, Sir Edward German's name has become synonymous with the light music of the era in which he lived.[1] German (1862-1936) was often regarded as a genius by his peers; Sir Arthur Sullivan, for example, said shortly before his death that 'there is only one man to follow me who has genius, and that is Edward German'.[2] His critical reception was similarly strikingly positive for a composer whose reputation has declined so precipitously since his death. In 1900, German was described in newspaper reviews as the most outstanding composer in England.[3] In 1927, a serious effort to campaign for a knighthood for German was mounted by the *Musical Times*, who suggested that 'Mr. German is second to no composer to-day… We doubt if any other English composer has so consistently captured both general and musical public'.[4] Thomas F. Dunhill, for German's obituary in the same publication, eulogised German as, after Elgar, 'entitled to be regarded as our most representative, and certainly as our most accomplished, composer'.[5] Similarly, Sir Henry Wood, who studied composition alongside German under Ebenezer Prout, believed that both his 'light' and 'serious' works had a timeless character that would live forever.[6] William Alwyn, when beginning his compositional career in the early 1920s, was told sincerely that he was capable of becoming

[1] For example, the *Symphonic Suite in D minor ("Leeds")* (1895) was performed at The Proms seventeen times; in 1936, Thomas F. Dunhill described it as 'a creation which deserves to rank with Elgar's 'Enigma' Variations as one of the unquestioned masterpieces of English music.' After the Second World War, it, along with all his lengthier works, was never performed at The Proms again. Please see:
Thomas F. Dunhill, 'Edward German, 1862-1936', *The Musical Times*, 77/1126 (1936), 1073-1077 (1075).
[2] Arthur Sullivan, quoted in William Herbert Scott, *Edward German: An Intimate Biography* (London: Cecil Palmer, 1932), 5.
[3] Brian Rees, *A Musical Peacemaker: The Life and Work of Sir Edward German* (Abbotsbrook: Kensal Press, 1986), 174.
[4] The Musical Times, 'Occasional Notes', *The Musical Times*, 68/1008 (1927), 135-137 (135).
[5] Thomas F. Dunhill, 'Edward German, 1862-1936', *The Musical Times*, 77/1126 (1936), 1073-1077 (1073).
[6] Henry J. Wood, *My Life of Music* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1938), 33.

'a great musician – a Beethoven, a Bach, a Grieg, or even an Edward German'.[7] These views of German's life and work did not survive in public consciousness.

Edward German was not the first well-regarded composer whose music was largely forgotten after his passing, nor will he be the last.[8] The decreased interest in his music, given the esteem in which he was held by so many of his contemporaries – alongside the volume, variety and popularity of his compositions – is an interesting phenomenon worthy of study in itself.[9] In the only book-length biography of German that has been published since the composer's death, Brian Rees argues that German's declining reputation was fundamentally a consequence of the changes in political climate after the Second World War, as by the 1960s the patriotic sentiment embodied in German's music had become less fashionable; in Rees's words, 'the tides of fashion had by then set against it'.[10] In 1962, for example, Martin Cooper penned an article in *The Telegraph* to mark the centenary of German's birth, in which he mocked the composer for evoking the spirit of 'philistine and once prosperous and self-confident upper middle class English life', dismissing his serious works as 'no more than a potpourri in the same light, theatrical vein' as his operatic and incidental music.[11] It is clear from the views of both his admirers and detractors that Edward German has been regarded as thoroughly conservative – musically, socially, and politically – and that this manifests itself throughout his life and works.[12]

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[7] William Alwyn, *Composing in Words* (London: Toccata Press, 2009), 309.
[8] Johann Nepomuk Hummel is a well-known example of this trajectory, but many of German's English contemporaries have suffered the same fate.
[9] This claim can be evidenced by another look at the archive of the BBC Proms; while the BBC are not the arbiters of the taste of the musical public, the fact that his music has been performed just twice since the Second World War is suggestive of a cultural shift. The two performances were the song 'Who Were the Yeomen of England' from *Merrie England* in 2010 and *Three Dances from 'Nell Gwyn'* was presented on the organ in 2013.
[10] Rees, *A Musical Peacemaker*, 294.
[11] Martin Cooper, 'Heigh-ho for Merrie England', *The Telegraph*, 17th February 1962, 11.
[12] In post-war England, German's works were seen as so musically conservative that Frank Howes wrote that German, but not Stanford or Elgar, despite their seniority, belonged 'to the old order, of which Sterndale Bennett had been the leading figure of the previous generation'. Please see:
Frank Howes, *The English Musical Renaissance* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1966), 23-24.

The relationship between musical conservatism and its political counterpart has rarely been explored in musicological literature. However, while his writings must be placed in their historical context, Theodor Adorno noted that the modernist composers of his epoch were almost all politically radical, while inversely, musical conservatives often share a conservative political disposition.[13] Edward German's life and works correlate with this trend.[14] German grew up in Whitchurch, Shropshire, in what Nicholas Mansfield describes as 'an intensely conservative society – where local pride seems to have been more important than class differences'.[15] W. H. Scott, a lifelong friend of German's who wrote the words of several of German's published songs, as well as the libretto to his earliest opera, *The Two Poets* (later *The Rival Poets, or the Love Charm*),[16] described the Shropshire of German's youth as overflowing with 'delectable rusticity' which German later 'translated into the lilting strains of an old English musical idiom'.[17]

By the time German had become a sub-professor at the Royal Academy of Music in the late 1880s, his musical and aesthetic ideas were already taking shape; one of his first students, Theodore Holland,[18] wrote of German that 'he insisted then – as so often afterwards – that music should be 'beautiful melody wedded to beautiful harmony' and we were certainly taught tuneful music'.[19] By the time he had gained a wider public reputation through his incidental music for productions of *Richard III* and *Henry VIII*, German's conservatism

[13] Theodor Adorno, paraphrased in Pamela M. Potter, 'What Is "Nazi Music"?', *The Musical Quarterly*, 88/3 (2005), 428-455 (441).
[14] This was not always true in all eras; the 'socialist realist' music of composers such as Alan Bush was often, in the sense that is usually recognised, musically conservative. Composers in German's time almost all followed the trend, however; see the politics of Bantock, Scott, Grainger, etc.
[15] Nicholas Mansfield, 'Farmworkers and Local Conservatism in South-west Shropshire, 1916-23' in Stuart Ball and Ian Holliday (eds.), *Mass Conservatism: The Conservatives and the Public since the 1880s* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 36-57 (41).
[16] The opera caricatures Wagnerian song contests of the sort found in *Die Meistersinger*, and echoes some stylistic elements of Gilbert and Sullivan operettas. Please see:
Rees, *A Musical Peacemaker*, 44-47.
[17] William Herbert Scott, *Edward German: An Intimate Biography* (London: Cecil Palmer, 1932), 8.
[18] Holland later became a professor at the Royal Academy of Music himself and achieved moderate success with light music of his own.
[19] Theodore Holland, quoted in Rees, *A Musical Peacemaker*, 50-51.

was articulate, if not fully formed. It is notable that Scott's biography makes so many references to his politics; German supplied the bulk of the material for the publication, which perhaps suggests that the composer wanted readers to see that he was unequivocal in his views and inclinations. In 1893, German wrote to an individual described by Scott as 'an ardent politician':

> I am not blindly following one party or the other, but am trying to think and reason for myself. Reforms! Certainly, but let them be made with caution, not hot-headedness. Let us not be eternally damning the rich man. You will not make the poor man richer by making the rich man poorer.[20]

Cautious reform has been central to conservatism since Edmund Burke, who famously wrote that 'to innovate is not to reform. The French revolutionists complained of every thing; they refused to reform any thing; and they left nothing, no nothing at all *unchanged*'.[21] F. J. C. Hearnshaw, in his warnings of the dangers of socialism, similarly argued that 'the revolutionary, as distinct from the reformer, seeks to destroy existing institutions, not to amend them; to slay and not to cure'.[22]

Developments in the early twentieth century led German to become more politically active, as well as explicit and outspoken in his beliefs. Brian Rees suggests that his interest in politics was superficial and simplistic, arguing that 'by temperament he was patriotic and had only a peripheral interest in politics though given to a forceful expression of uncomplicated opinions'.[23] Despite outbursts such as his reaction to the general strike of 1926, after which he exclaimed that 'the TUC leaders ought to swing',[24] this is fundamentally untrue; he presents himself in his writing, interviews, image and music as one of the most

[20] Edward German, quoted in Scott, *Edward German*, 208.
[21] Edmund Burke, 'A Letter to a Noble Lord', in Daniel E. Ritchie (ed.), *Further Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1992), 279-236 (290-291).
[22] F. J. C. Hearnshaw, *Conservatism in England: An Analytical, Historical, and Political Survey* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1933), 25.
[23] Rees, *A Musical Peacemaker*, 194.
[24] Rees, *A Musical Peacemaker*, 241.

unambiguously politically conservative musicians of his era.[25] After the 1931 General Election,[26] for example, German was jubilant:

> What ho the election! The most momentous decision in history! Now I suppose there will be somebody or other who will be putting every possible difficulty in the way of "getting on with it". Never mind, England at heart is conservative and can always rise to a crisis. I have no words to express my feelings about LL-d G-ge but I will say this – he is a dirty damnable despicable thing – in fact a *Traitor*. That's as far as I can get at present. *Anyway, I've done with him forever*. I now see his *real* nature.[27]

German's travels to America provide evidence of a similar articulation of his politics. Travelling on RMS *Lusitania* to New York to oversee a production of his opera *Tom Jones* in 1907, German made lengthy diary entries (given to Scott for publication) detailing discussions with Alexander M. Thompson, one of the librettists for the opera he was due to produce.[28] Thompson was also the co-founder of the socialist weekly newspaper, *The Clarion*, along with Robert Blatchford,[29] who wrote a series of articles for the publication dedicated to Thompson entitled *Merrie England*.[30] The diary entries are quoted at length by Scott:

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[25] Like Elgar, with his military moustache and tweed jacket, German constructed an image of himself that was outwardly conservative. Scott recalls a 'woman writer's estimate' of German, who wrote that 'In appearance Mr. German is trim and business-like. There is no affectation in his manner, and he is as far as it is possible to imagine from the dreamy, long-haired eccentric which we were accustomed to recognize as the ordinary type of artist. His hair-cut is quite the same as though he were a banker or stockbroker… A man of conservative ideas, liking the old better than the new'. Dan Godfrey similarly noticed the unusual way in which he presented himself when he wrote in his memoirs that 'Like his music, he is, himself, very individual in character, a trait which shows even in such minor points as his clothes.' Please see:
Scott, *Edward German*, 126.
Dan Godfrey, *Memories and Music: Thirty-Five Years of Conducting* (London: Hutchinson & Company, 1924), 182.

[26] The Conservative Party, led by Stanley Baldwin, gained an unprecedented 210 seats, but governed in coalition with the other constituent parties of the National Government under Ramsey MacDonald. German described the National Government as 'a silly business – But the ballot is perhaps the best way out of it'. Please see:
Edward German, quoted in Rees, *A Musical Peacemaker*, 242.

[27] German is referring to former Prime Minister David Lloyd George, who the composer had personal grievances against; it had been reported that German often entertained at Lloyd George's weekend house parties, which was both erroneous and deeply offended German. Please see:
Edward German, quoted in Rees, *A Musical Peacemaker*, 242.

[28] Scott, *Edward German*, 117.

[29] G. K. Chesterton, who had a number of disputes with *The Clarion*, half-jokingly described Blatchford as 'the enemy of the human race'. Please see:
G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (London: John Lane, 1909), 51.

[30] These articles were subsequently published as a book of that same name, which sold over two million copies in Britain and America. It was sometimes said that 'for every convert made by *Das Kapital*, there were a hundred made by *Merrie England*'. Gregory Claeys estimates that even this may have been a significant understatement of its impact. Please see:
Gregory Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics: British Critics of Empire, 1850-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 173.

> At lunch Thompson held forth a little on Art : he said that what appealed to the peasant was as artistic as anything that appealed to the enlightened and educated person. I said it did not follow – all depended on what tastes the peasant had. … After lunch Thompson and I went and had our usual smoke and we gradually drifted – through talking of American Millionaires, republics, monarchies, etc. – into the subject of Socialism. Of course he is a well-known Socialist, second only, perhaps, to the High Priest Robert Blatchford, who is his great friend.[31]

German, who was particularly sceptical of the concept of equality, also provided Scott with a series of musings entitled 'The Philosophy of E. G.'; one such note reads: 'The ideal of equality is a hopeless one. Make everybody as happy as possible in their own sphere'.[32] As has already been noted in the previous chapter, Peter Dorey describes the politics of inequality as central to conservatism, noting that it is rooted in a vision of a flawed human nature;[33] this is also the central argument of Thomas Sowell's seminal work, *A Conflict of Visions*.[34] It is interesting to note that W. H. Mallock's description of artistic pursuit as the ultimate attestation of the inherent inequality of human nature was written just nine years prior to German's visit to the United States.[35] German captures this spirit of conservative anti-egalitarianism in his conversation with Thompson:

> Well, he talked at length, and one point he made was that 'Socialism aims at giving everyone an equal opportunity in life.' When people have an opportunity, and fail to make use of it, then, he reckoned, he has no more sympathy with them ; but that every living man should have this opportunity he was convinced. It occurs to me that I missed a point by not asking him : 'If you had a son, would you not use your influence on his behalf?' If he would not, he would be less than human : yet if he did, he would sacrifice his principles![36]

The point must not be overstated, but it is possible that the politics of inequality is key to understanding German's musical conservatism.

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[31] Edward German, quoted in Scott, *Edward German*, 123.
[32] German also supplied what appears to be another criticism of Lloyd George when he suggests that 'Certain beings can make speeches when they can make nothing else'. Please see:
Scott, *Edward German*, 208-9.
[33] Peter Dorey, *British Conservatism: The Politics and Philosophy of Inequality* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co., 2011), 7.
[34] Thomas Sowell, *A Conflict of Visions: Ideological Origins of Political Struggles* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), 133-135.
[35] W. H. Mallock, 'Aristocracy and Evolution: A Study of the Rights, the Origin, and Social Function of the Wealthier Classes (1898)' in Jerry Z. Muller (ed.), *Conservatism: An Anthology of Social and Political Thought from David Hume to the Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 210-221 (216).
[36] Edward German, quoted in Scott, *Edward German*, 124.

In one of the last works of the conservative philosopher and aesthetician, the late Sir Roger Scruton, he begins by extolling the virtues of discernment in music: 'we have to teach them to make discriminations, to recognize that there is both good taste and bad taste in music, that there really are musical values… when music is properly listened to, judgement of some kind is unavoidable'.[37] Music, for conservatives like Scruton, is not all equal in value or merit; there is no room for cultural – or musical – relativism. Edward German felt the same way; at a gathering to celebrate his knighthood, *The Telegraph* reported German's speech:

> While saying that he had the greatest love and respect for some modern music, Sir Edward added that some of it struck him as being most fearfully and wonderfully made – especially the super-ultra-modern (laughter.) While we had in this country some who could write good, light music, we had a veritable army of men and women who wrote light, bad music (Laughter.) "If I had my way," added Sir Edward, "they would all be burned at the stake, or be in another place, equally fiery. (Laughter.) But with time the good would swim and the bad would sink.[38]

This distinction between good and bad light music may have been made in jest, but it was important to German. More important still was his distrust, dislike, and dispirit in response to atonality, jazz and other contemporary musical phenomena. When examining for the Mendelssohn Scholarship in 1927,[39] which was won by Godfrey Sampson,[40] German despaired:

> There was a full assembly and in the end the prize went to a boy called Sampson – he is terrifically modern and I think his work may be buried forthwith. I really can't see what we are coming to!! … Modernity is doing away with all nice feeling and quality does not seem to matter much nowadays … Tonight we are being invaded by airplanes and the noise upstairs is really terrible. Modernity again![41]

An articulation of the contradiction between 'modern' musical languages and the expression of beauty repeatedly features in German's writing and speeches. The composer lamented what he perceived to be a lack of interest in the pursuit of beauty, feeling estranged and isolated by both European and American artistic developments. He felt that this was

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[37] Roger Scruton, *Music as an Art* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 2-3.
[38] The Telegraph, 'Sir Edward German Honoured', *The Telegraph*, 30th March 1928, 12.
[39] The Mendelssohn Scholarship continues to provide scholarships to young composers today, and had previously been awarded to Arthur Sullivan and Frederick Corder.
[40] Sampson (1902-1949), later became Professor of Composition at German's erstwhile employer, the Royal Academy of Music. His works remain obscure. For more information, please see:
Maggie Humphreys and Robert Evans, *Dictionary of Composers for the Church in Great Britain* (London: Mansell, 1997), 299.
[41] Edward German, quoted in Rees, *A Musical Peacemaker*, 200.

damaging his ability to compose: 'I waste quires of paper on sketches and ideas which I do not feel worth developing. I fancy the root of it all is the ultra-modern school of composition; it is a language which E.G. will never acquire'.[42] In 1907, German similarly expressed his dismay at the state of music at home; when an American publication asked for his views on British music, he replied:

> It will come as a surprise to most Americans to learn that there exists to-day in England an active, ambitious school of young composers who are as radical, as revolutionary, as ultra-modern, in a word as un-British, as the most advanced schools of contemporary France and Germany – men who have discarded melody and are at war with tonality and established form.[43]

In a private letter, written in 1911, he put forward this view in a more despairing tone:

> I seem petrified by the modern trend of Art. If you heard some of the ultra-modern works you would understand what I mean. There is a fashion at present, and that fashion is to pretend you enjoy what is incomprehensible. Of course, I ought to be strong enough to disregard it believing as I do that beauty, shapeliness and sanity will prevail in the end. What I begin to feel thankful for is that I have been able to work for thirty years in a more congenial atmosphere.[44]

For German, then, music was not all equal, beauty was the ultimate purpose of music, and he felt alienated by the musical world around him; his conservative values were incompatible with modernity.

This conflict of musical visions, between the conservative and the modernist, is expressed most coherently by the composer and theorist John Foulds.[45] In his monograph on modern trends in music, *Music To-day*, Foulds alludes to Edward German's works several times, although without mentioning him by name. In a section on light music, Foulds condemns composers who seek monetary gain, asserting that 'no man having once struck his flag and capitulated to Mammon, can ever buy back his lost integrity'.[46] Perhaps most

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[42] Edward German, quoted in Alan Hyman, *Sullivan and His Satellites* (London: Chappell, 1978), 211.
[43] Edward German, quoted in Scott, *Edward German*, 146.
[44] Edward German, quoted in Rees, *A Musical Peacemaker*, 173.
[45] Foulds, an English composer who found success in his light music and *World Requiem*, spent much of his life studying Indian music. His book, *Music To-day*, covers a variety of topics, but is fundamentally political; it defends modernist music, rejects musical nationalism and calls for greater public subsidisation of serious music. Please see:
John Foulds, *Music To-day: Its Heritage from the Past, and Legacy to the Future* (London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 1934).
[46] Foulds, *Music To-day*, 132.

tellingly Foulds later explicitly condemns the pursuit of beauty in music, wherein he clearly has German and his contemporaries in mind:

> Beauty, however, is a quality not necessarily present in all live and true music, neither does its application as a criterion narrow down our field of inquiry in any very drastic way. For there is a vast mass of music, especially of songs, dance-music, so-called 'comic'-opera, etc., which, whilst it might, broadly speaking, be designated beautiful, holds little or nothing of the ennobling or elevating.[47]

This is not unlike the view of Bertrand Russell, who in 1916 suggested that education should be forward facing and modernist:

> It should be inspired, not by a regretful hankering after the extinct beauties of Greece and the Renaissance, but by a shining vision of the society that is to be, of the triumphs that thought will achieve in the time to come, and of the ever-widening horizon of man's survey over the universe.[48]

In the most interesting section of the book, however, Foulds presents his thoughts as a conversation between a 'musician of former times' and a 'musician of to-day'. It is possible that the older musician is a representation of Edward German – he certainly offers similar arguments to those advanced by the composer in his letters and speeches. The 'musician of former times', however, is constructed by Foulds to offer hollow, apologetic opinions and simple questions, whereas the 'musician of today' presents three musical quotations and argues, with a vociferous wit and condescending tone, that if only the older musician had a better trained ear, he would be able to understand modern music – and therefore appreciate it.[49] These arguments and their rebuttals were made frequently by composers during German's life. Hubert Parry, in his article 'The Meaning of Ugliness', made a specific connection between the politics and musical politics of these ideas, arguing that 'liberal minds also feel that all progress is made by facing things which are disagreeable and finding out what they really mean, and accepting them if they can be of service. Every advance in Art has been made by accepting something which has been condemned as ugly by recognized

[47] Foulds, *Music To-day*, 190.
[48] Bertrand Russell, *The Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 389.
[49] Theodor Adorno attacked similar caricatures of musically conservative thought when he proclaimed that 'The cultured listeners almost seem to be the worst: those who promptly respond to Schoenberg's music with "I don't understand that"—a statement whose modesty rationalizes rage as connoisseurship'. Please see:
Theodor Adorno, *Philosophy of New Music* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 13.

artistic authorities'.[50] Camille Saint-Saëns, however, regarded this attitude as flawed: 'The dissonance of yesterday, we are also told, will be the consonance of to-morrow; one can grow accustomed to anything. Still, there are such things in life as bad habits, and those who get accustomed to crime, come to an evil end'.[51] The apotheosis of Foulds's constructed argument is as follows; the musician of former times remarks: 'I feel certain that nothing will ever convince me that there is any beauty or real value in [modern music]'.[52] The 'musician of to-day' responds:

> It has often happened in my experience that a discord which seemed at first to be unbearably harsh – seemed indeed to have been flung into the texture as hurtfully as possible, of malice *prepense* – has afterwards proved, when carefully assayed, to be capable of giving real delight to the listener. I will go so far as to say that if you will take the third quotation to your piano and play it over and over until it is reasonably familiar, you will gradually come to recognize (in a greater or lesser degree according to your temperament) its almost hypnotic effect. And if you possess the dual faculty of sympathetic-nervous as well as cerebro-spinal response you will become aware of being gradually yet inexorably urged toward a state of consciousness unlike any you have previously experienced.[53]

Parry similarly argued that 'things are generally ugly only because we do not understand them'.[54] Stanford, however, suggested in 1921 as a response to these kinds of views that 'if we play an ugly passage frequently enough we can often twist our ears into liking it'.[55] Foulds's modernist does not claim that his music is more beautiful than that which has come before him. The difference between the old and the new is one of philosophy; the pursuit of beauty, for the 'musician of to-day', is secondary to the pursuit of what Edmund Burke regarded as the *sublime*.

Burke argued that sublimity was capable of producing greater effects in the beholder, or listener,[56] than beauty; for him the sublime was 'whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the

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[50] Hubert Parry, 'The Meaning of Ugliness', *The Musical Times*, 52/822 (1911), 507-511 (507).
[51] Camille Saint-Saëns, *Outspoken Essays on Music* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1922), 8.
[52] Foulds, *Music To-day*, 38.
[53] Foulds, *Music To-day*, 39.
[54] Parry, 'The Meaning of Ugliness', 508.
[55] Charles Villiers Stanford, 'On Some Recent Tendencies in Composition', *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 47/1 (1920), 39-53 (40).
[56] Burke knew and wrote very little about music, but he was a keen aesthetician. He articulated an early vision of musical conservatism when he argued that 'the beautiful in music will not bear that loudness and strength of sounds, which may be used to raise other passions; nor notes, which are shrill, or harsh'. Please see: Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful* (London: Penguin, 2004), 156.

ideas of pain… whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime*; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling.'[57] These ideas were taken by the composer and Oxford University professor, William Crotch, and applied to music directly in his lectures and writings.[58] Crotch argued, citing Burke, Joshua Reynolds and Uvedale Price, that music 'may be divided into three styles – the sublime, the beautiful and the ornamental – which are sometimes distinct, and sometimes combined'.[59] For Crotch, sublime music 'never descends to any thing small, delicate, light, pretty, playful or comic', which would certainly exclude most of German's music.[60] Crotch foreshadowed, in a sense, the sublime nature of elements of modernist music; he argued that successions of major chords produced beautiful music, characterised by a 'blaze of light', but 'the unintelligible combination of extraneous discords conveys a feeling like that caused by darkness'.[61] German seems to have categorised music in a very similar way, but came to somewhat different conclusions as to the worth of the pursuit of the beautiful or the sublime.[62]

[57] Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful* (London: Penguin, 2004), 86.
[58] Crotch was also the first principal of the Royal Academy of Music between 1822 and 1832; it is therefore entirely plausible that German encountered his philosophy, perhaps even directly through his books. Crotch also taught William Sterndale Bennett, who was Principal of the academy until a few years before German's attendance; Bennett was thought by Charles L. Graves to be a good example of the eschewal of sublimity in music. Bennett's pianoforte works were often heard being played in German's childhood home. Please see:
Charles L. Graves, *Post-Victorian Music* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1911), 127.
Rees, *A Musical Peacemaker*, 10.
[59] William Crotch, *Substance of Several Courses of Lectures on Music: Read in the University of Oxford, and in the Metropolis* (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1831), 32.
[60] Ibid., 32.
[61] Ibid., 34.
[62] Katherine Hambridge has argued that the French Revolution changed attitudes towards the sublime and beautiful in art, suggesting that the 'sense of turmoil, of unstoppable social forces and violence, increased the salience of the category of the sublime in art'. In this analysis, Burke's observations take on a new poignancy. His theories of the sublime and beautiful in art certainly take on a wider significance in light of his *Reflections*. Please see:
Katherine Hambridge, 'Music, Romanticism, and Politics', in Benedict Taylor (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Music and Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 92-109 (93).

The purpose of modernist music, for Foulds, was to produce this overwhelming feeling of the *sublime*, rather than pursuing beauty.[63] Roger Scruton, referring to Schoenberg's *A Survivor from Warsaw*, recognises this when he writes that 'the most meaningful works of recent times have been downright ugly and even offensive in their raw-nerve impact… to call such works beautiful is in a way to diminish and even to trivialize what they are trying to say'.[64] Schoenberg himself believed that the pursuit of beauty in music was both jejune and patronising to the intellects he believed to be concomitant with modern ears, which will 'demand to be told the more remote matters, the more remote consequences of the matters that he has already comprehended. An alert and well-trained mind refuses to listen to baby-talk and requests strongly to be spoken to in a brief and straightforward language'.[65] Peter Warlock, writing under another pseudonym, also quoted Schoenberg as having declared that 'the artist creates not what others will consider beautiful but that which for himself is necessary'.[66] For Schoenberg, beauty was an improper goal for genuine art and its pursuit is condescending to intelligent listeners in modernity. This attitude is oppositional to musical conservatism and the underlying beliefs of its adherents.

The musical examples presented by Foulds are miniature embodiments of the pursuit of sublimity; the 'third quotation' with its 'hypnotic effect' is presented by Foulds as follows:

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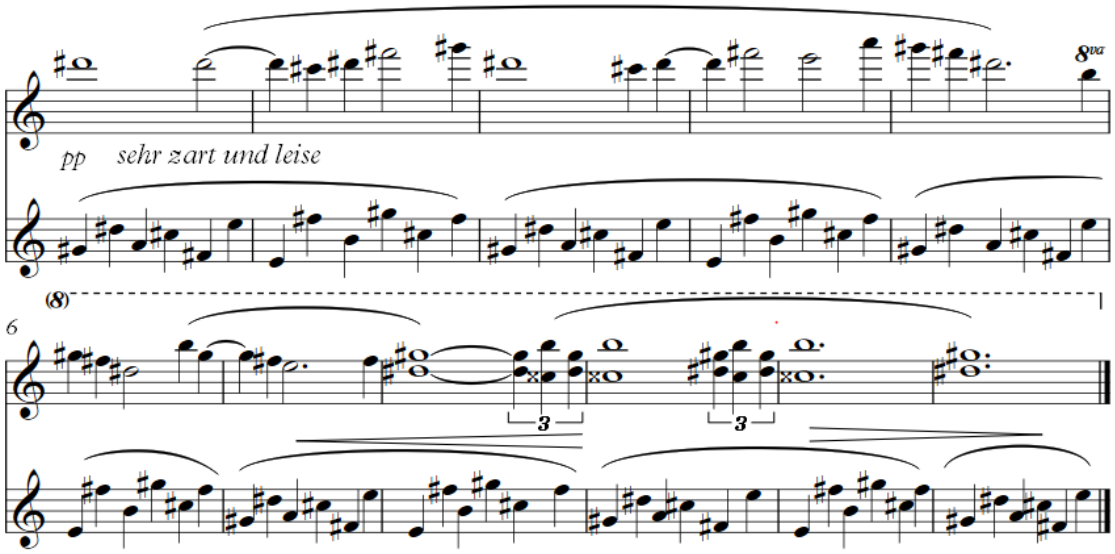
[63] Eduard Hanslick suggests that even when there are differences between composers in their personality or temperament, as much as it might be reflected in their musical output, composers all share in the pursuit of beauty in music: 'That which a sentimental, an ingenious, a graceful, or a sublime composer produces is, above all, *music*, an objective image. Their works differ from one another by unmistakeable characteristics, and each in its complete form will reflect the author's individuality; but all, without exception, were created as independent and purely musical forms of beauty'. This could no longer be held to be true by the end of Edward German's life; it is indicative of the enormous changes in attitudes towards aesthetics that took place in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Please see:
Eduard Hanslick, *The Beautiful in Music: A Contribution to the Revisal of Musical Aesthetics* (London: Novello, 1891), 102-103.
[64] Roger Scruton, *Beauty: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 107.
[65] Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), 56.
[66] Schoenberg, quoted in Barbara C. Larent, 'Contingencies', The Sackbut, 1/9 (1921), 418-420 (420).



Ex. 4.1., *John Foulds's Quotation 3*, (1934), from *Music To-Day*, 34.

The example offers no time signature, although it would, with some adaptation, fit into a 6/4 metre, and no key signature. Despite the two-bar bass ostinato figure, a kind of twisted parody of an Alberti bass pattern, for Foulds's older musician, there is also 'not a single chord which I know and can recognize'.[67] Foulds argues that the music is polytonal and that there is, contrary to the opinion of the old fashioned, a discernible and potent melody; the music does not, however, adhere to 'the old lilting doggerel 'rhythms'', which are designed to appeal to 'the meanest musical intelligence'.[68] Foulds's 'musician of former times' is, unsurprisingly, somewhat convinced by these arguments in the author's mind. He concludes, however, that 'it still remains more comfortable, even if not so stimulating, to listen to the old-fashioned music; and I still wish that composers would say what they have to say in terms which I can understand'.[69]

[67] Foulds, *Music To-day*, 35.
[68] Foulds, *Music To-Day*, 36-37.
[69] Foulds, *Music To-day*, 40.

For Foulds, the musical conservatism of figures such as Edward German was fundamentally a position of ignorance. It is notable, however, that in Scott's biography, under the aforementioned heading of 'The Philosophy of E. G.', German asked:

> What is the strength in music? Is it in sensation – the music that bewilders at first hearing and will not bear the test of time? I rather think strength is in the man who possesses the necessary technique to bewilder and cause sensation but who prefers to exploit the elements of beauty.[70]

German claims that he knew how to produce what Burke might have described as *sublime* music, but chose instead to 'exploit' what is beautiful. This difference, for its adherents on both sides, was clearly one of the key distinctions between musical conservatives and musical modernists. For German, this beauty was rooted in diatonicism, classicism and established melodic forms; in 1907 he lamented the lack of these traits in the music of the day:

> There is far too little attention given to melody. By this I do not mean mere melody, but melody wedded to beautiful harmony, and of course the whole developed on classic lines. I know two young and very clever composers who frankly said that their avowed object is to do away with tonality and form.[71]

German's critics and admirers alike appreciated the adherence to these musical qualities in his works. In a review of the Bournemouth Festival, April 1923, *The Times* wrote that in his music, 'the hearer knows what he is in for, knows that there will be nothing tentative or experimental, nothing beyond his grasp. Everything is deft and charming, and above all, it has a gaiety which chimes well with the spirit of a holiday'.[72] Edward Elgar had a similarly high opinion of German and enjoyed a mutual respect with the younger composer. In response to a letter from German, Elgar, having recently been acknowledged as a Companion of Honour, replied 'No my dear German. No. Not Sir Edward. *You* are the Sir Edward'.[73]

Although it is wise to not always take Elgar's writings at face value, his letters to German reveal a warm friendship between the two composers.[74] A letter written after a

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[70] Edward German, quoted in Scott, *Edward German*, 209.
[71] Edward German, quoted in Scott, *Edward German*, 146.
[72] The Times, 'Elgar and Edward German', *The Times*, April 5th 1923, 8.
[73] Edward Elgar, quoted in Rees, *A Musical Peacemaker*, 228.
[74] This friendship is detailed by Dominic Guyver in the following journal article:
Dominic Guyver, 'Edward Elgar and Edward German: Friendship and Correspondence' in *The Elgar Society Journal*, 4/2 (1985), 15-19 (15-19).

concert of music to celebrate the tercentenary of Shakespeare's death, in 1916, is worth reading in full:

> Your kind note gave me the greatest pleasure. I had no idea you would go to the concert but you would have found me here alone afterwards smoking a pipe and listening to your 6/8 *Henry VIII* with all the exquisite pleasure I have always derived from it. It gave me a real personal thrill to hear of your triumphal appearance at Drury Lane. For the occasion I would have preferred *Hamlet* but with a somewhat holiday audience (it must have been this I gather) the dances were the better choice – only I don't forget your serious works too.[75]

The '6/8 *Henry VIII*' here referred to is *The Shepherds' Dance*, famously presented as part of the extremely successful *Three Dances from Henry VIII*.[76] As the letter was written in the middle of the Great War, it is possible that part of Elgar's admiration for this music was its perceived embodiment of its time, or the values of his youth. In the same way as Elgar's music for *The Starlight Express*, written in the same year as the above letter, German's dances were expressive of childhood innocence, festive celebration and an agrarian past.[77] Despite Michael Oakeshott's well-known definition of conservatism,[78] and Hearnshaw's assertion that the conservative is the person at peace with the status quo,[79] conservatives, politically, socially or musically, often find themselves out of place with a world that has 'progressed' further than they are comfortable with. This was certainly the case for both Elgar and German.[80] Geoffrey Self argues that neither composer was particularly concerned

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[75] Edward Elgar, quoted in Rees, *A Musical Peacemaker*, 189.

[76] The *Three Dances from Henry VIII* were, by far, the most frequently performed English work in the first ten years of The Proms. Please see:
Lawrence Poston, 'Henry Wood, the "Proms", and National Identity in Music, 1895-1904', *Victorian Studies*, 47/3 (2005), 397-426 (412).

[77] Indeed, one army officer wrote to Elgar to thank him for bringing back 'the days that are gone'; so much of German's music, including *Merrie England*, was not so much a celebration of the epoch in which it was set, but of the country of the youth of the composer and librettist. Please see:
Geoffrey Self, *Light Music in Britain since 1870: A Survey* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 56.

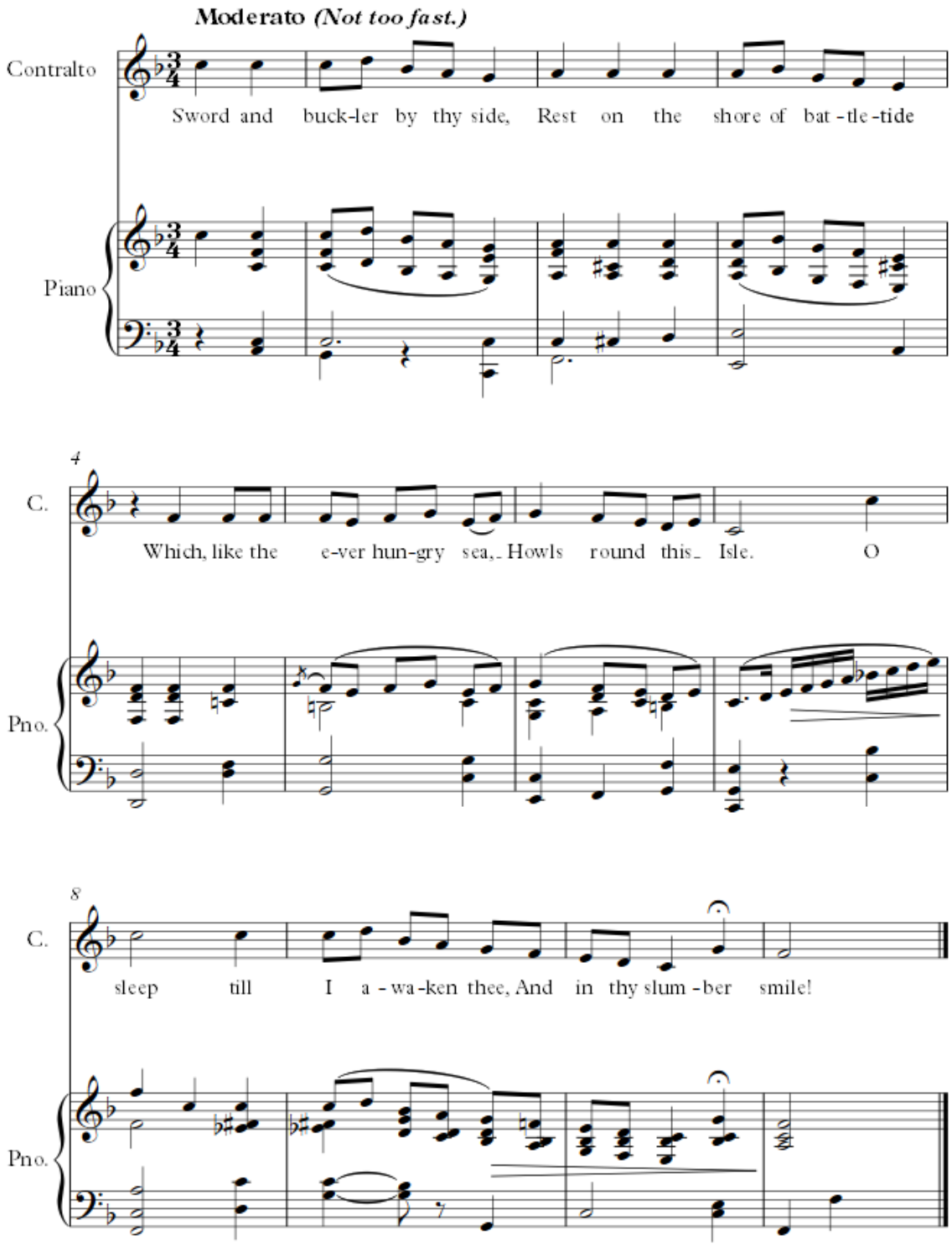
[78] Michael Oakeshott famously defined conservatism as 'to prefer the familiar to the unknown, to prefer the tried to the untried… the convenient to the perfect, present laughter to Utopian bliss'. Please see:
Michael Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays* (Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1991), 169.

[79] Hearnshaw, *Conservatism in England*, 17.

[80] Constant Lambert referenced this kind of conservative escapism (and perhaps German's music directly) when he argued that both revivalism and reactionary attempts to return to a previously existing musical order were unfeasible: 'If the composer imagines that he can treat present-day Surrey with its charabancs, filling stations, hikers, road houses, dainty tea rooms, and loud speakers discoursing cosmopolitan jazz, in the way the Elizabethan composers treated the 'woodes so wilde' he is living in a narrow world of escape, incapable of producing anything more than a pretty period piece'. Please see:
Constant Lambert, *Music Ho! A Study of Music in Decline* (London: Faber and Faber, 1937), 176-179.

about Elizabethan England; they were more disturbed that the rural England of their youth was perceived to be facing disappearance, if it wasn't already ruined: ''*O Peaceful England*', so soon to be lost'.[81]

[81] *O Peaceful England* is a wistful song from German's light opera, *Merrie England*. Please see: Self, *Light Music in Britain*, 53-54.



Ex. 4.2., Excerpt from 'O Peaceful England', (1902), *Merrie England*, Rehearsal mark K.

Self's reference to 'O Peaceful England' as a musical embodiment of German's conservatism is interesting in itself. The song is of the kind described by Foulds as 'made by unreflecting minds, or by lovers of routine for other lovers of routine'.[82] This is an unfair judgement, of course, and reveals Foulds's musical prejudices, but its underlying assumptions are true; the score of *Merrie England* is musically conservative. Rees suggests that 'It seems to bear out Schumann's observation that composing consists of recalling those tunes which exist already'.[83] It is an appeal to the familiar, full of perfect cadences and unambiguous diatonicism. This was, however, the intention of the opera. German later told Scott that he 'was never happier than when composing this music'.[84] 'O Peaceful England', sung by the character of Queen Elizabeth I, articulates a politically conservative vision of peace that has been the subject of political debate for over a century: that the country should be well-armed and ready for war in order to preserve peace.[85] This became an issue of enormous importance towards the end of German's life;[86] Philip Gibbs noted that throughout the first half of the 1930s, rearmament was the topic of conversation at every dinner party.[87] Earlier, in 1919, many conservatives were outraged by the proposals of Lloyd George for universal disarmament. Rudyard Kipling, German's friend and collaborator,[88] was one such conservative, lambasting the policy in his poem 'The Gods of the Copybook Headings', which makes appeals to the philosophy of precedent through the invocation of established

[82] Foulds, *Music To-day*, 40.
[83] Rees, *A Musical Peacemaker*, 114.
[84] Edward German, quoted in Scott, *Edward German*, 90.
[85] Thomas Sowell, *Intellectuals and Society* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 203-240.
[86] Stanley Baldwin knew of Germany's rearmament in 1933, but believed that it was electorally impossible to argue for the rearmament of the British Empire, on account of the intellectual climate of the time: 'I cannot think of anything that would have made the loss of the election from my point of view more certain'. This appalled Winston Churchill. Please see:
Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War, Vol. I: The Gathering Storm* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1983), 216.
[87] Philip Gibbs, *England Speaks* (London: William Heinemann, 1935), 152.
[88] Their most important collaboration was for the production of *The Just So Song Book*, which contained twelve poems taken from Kipling's *Just So Stories* set to music by Edward German, originally published in 1903. The settings are typical of German's style, presenting conservative and playful works intended for children.

axioms to dismantle what the author believed to be the mistakes of modernity.[89] The rearmament issue is perhaps one of the reasons that German considered the Conservative Party to be 'supine' and full of 'apathy'.[90]

Merrie England, according to the librettist Basil Hood's obituary, 'struck a patriotic note that appealed to all classes of the community'.[91] For Self, German and Hood musically embodied 'a particularly sensitive aspect of the English psyche not readily found elsewhere'.[92] Despite its enormous popularity and repeated revivals,[93] the libretto of *Merrie England* has faced criticism since Hood's death; William Boosey wrote that 'there is no doubt that Edward German's delightful scores, *Merrie England* and *Tom Jones,* would have permanently held the stage had the librettos been on an equality with the music.'[94] Similarly, Ralph Vaughan Williams wrote in an amusing letter to Stanford Robinson: 'I recoil with horror from the hack librettist however much he may know about stage business. (Have you ever read in cold blood, the libretto of 'Merrie England'?)'.[95] The opera won over some critics, however, and the work achieved considerable popular success; Self describes the work as 'the most famous post-Sullivan light opera'.[96] Stanley H. Clarke wrote in 1920 that '*Merrie England* alone rises above its contemporaries as Snowdon above the Traeth Mawr'.[97] Rees references 'O Peaceful England' again when he explains the public admiration for the work: '*Merrie England* combined an expression of patriotic fervour with sentimental

[89] The stanza directly concerning rearmament reads as follows:
When the Cambrian measures were forming, They promised perpetual peace. They swore, if we gave them our weapons, that the wars of the tribes would cease. But when we disarmed They sold us and delivered us bound to our foe, And the Gods of the Copybook Headings said: *"Stick to the Devil you know."*
[90] Rees, *A Musical Peacemaker*, 257-8.
[91] The Musical Times, 'Obituary: Basil Hood', *The Musical Times*, 58/895 (1917), 408.
[92] Self, *Light Music in Britain*, 27.
[93] In 1953, over five hundred amateur operatic societies performed *Merrie England* to celebrate the coronation of Her Majesty The Queen. Please see:
Rees, *A Musical Peacemaker*, 116.
[94] William Boosey, *Fifty Years of Music* (London: Ernest Benn, 1931), 51.
[95] Ralph Vaughan Williams, quoted in Hugh Cobbe (ed.), *Letters of Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1895-1958* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 355.
[96] Self, *Light Music in Britain*, 27.
[97] Stanley H. Clarke, 'The Composer and the Public', *The Musical Times*, 61/931 (1920), 601-603 (602).

reminiscence of the time when a smaller England girt in by 'the ever-hungry sea' had been contented in its own island freedoms'.[98] Like so much of the work of both Elgar and German, the opera, despite its lightness and charm, presented a musical articulation of a melancholy conservatism, in a popular and penetrable style.

After German wrote to Elgar in celebration of his seventieth birthday, in 1927, Elgar replied: 'my music cannot give you one hundredth of the pleasure I have had from your music'.[99] The source of Elgar's admiration was not only for their shared (conservative) mourning of a perceived to be lost past, but also for the artistry and beauty of his music.[100] The beauty of the *Henry VIII Dances* is not of the same degree or scale as, for example, Bach's *Mass in B Minor*. But as Scruton argues, so much that is written of aesthetics 'ignores the minimal beauty of an unpretentious street, a nice pair of shoes or a tasteful piece of wrapping paper, as though these things belonged to a different order of value from a church by Bramante or a Shakespeare sonnet'.[101] German's music does not reach the heights of achievement of a Beethoven symphony, but it is triumphant in its celebration of these 'minimal' beauties; the *Shepherds' Dance*, for example, achieves its intended, beautiful, purpose.[102]

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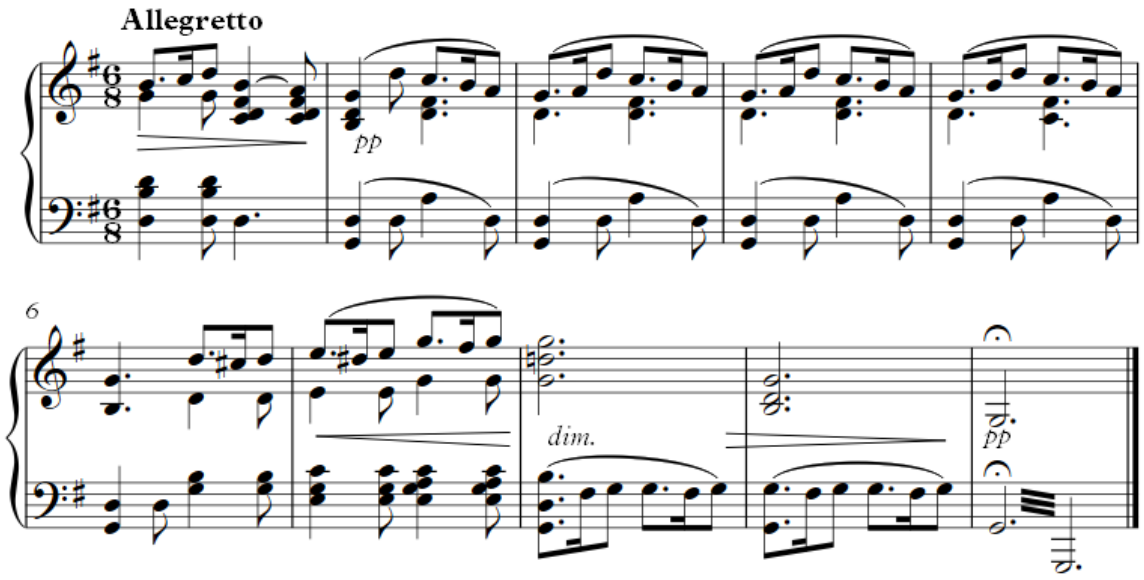
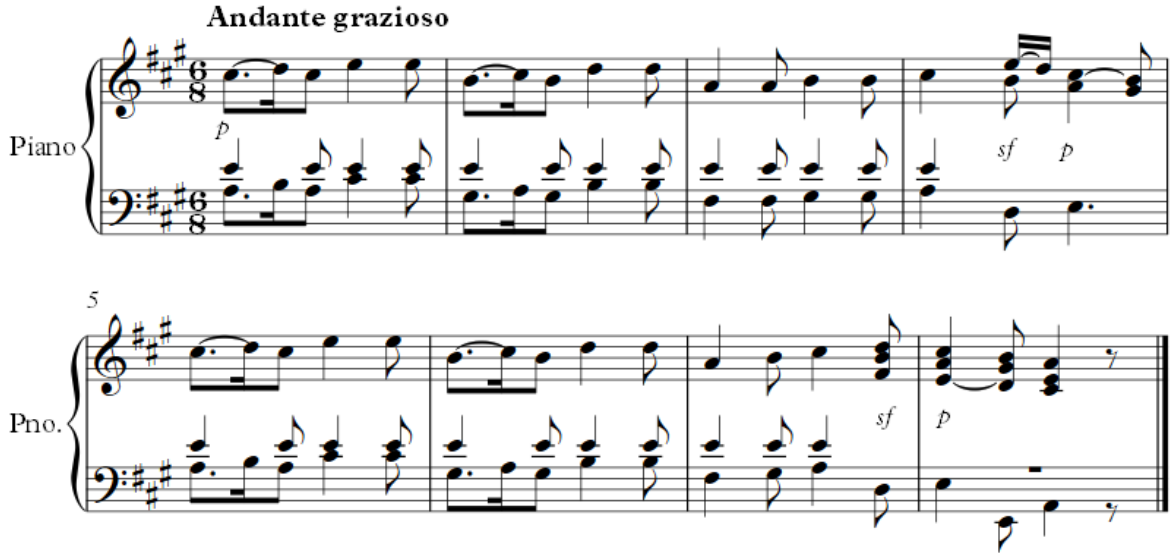
[98] Rees, *A Musical Peacemaker*, 116.
[99] Hyman, *Sullivan and His Satellites*, 212.
[100] W. H. Scott presents a number of anecdotes about German and Elgar, including an amusing episode in which Elgar cures German of lumbago by giving him a pint of champagne. More relevantly, he quotes a 1914 letter from Sir Landon Ronald to German, in which Ronald details the ways in which German's works struck Elgar with their beauty and charm. Elgar, according to Ronald, exclaimed: 'That phrase always brings a lump into my throat; all his music is so much like his own dear self.' Ronald wrote after German's death that 'In his particular way – a smaller way – he was another Edward Elgar'. Please see:
Edward Elgar and Landon Ronald, quoted in Scott, *Edward German*, 215.
Landon Ronald, 'Sir Edward German Dead', *Derby Daily Telegraph* (11th November, 1936), front page.
[101] Scruton, *Beauty*, 10.
[102] Crotch argued along similar lines on the beautiful in music; using Burke and others, he suggested that 'When, therefore, in music the melody is vocal and flowing, the measure symmetrical, the harmony simple and intelligible, and the style of the whole soft, delicate, and sweet, it may with as much propriety be called beautiful, as a small, perfect, Grecian temple, or a landscape of Claude Lorraine'. Please see:
Crotch, *Lectures on Music*, 35.



Ex. 4.3., Excerpt from 'Shepherds' Dance', (1892), *Three Dances from Henry VIII*.

In the same way as much of the score for *Merrie England*, the *Shepherds' Dance* is, for its time, particularly conservative in its diatonicism, with a large part of the accompaniment (the left hand of the piano arrangement (ex. 4.3), but played by pizzicato bass and cello in the orchestral version) consisting of a repeated arpeggio on the tonic chord, G Major. Despite occasionally being erroneously associated with the folk song movement, German's dance music has very little, in style, function or form, to do with folk music at all – as will be discussed in a later chapter.[103] The 'Shepherds' Dance' has more in common, rhythmically and melodically, with thematic material from earlier 6/8 music of sonata form: see ex. 4.4.

[103] Julie Sanders, for example, suggests that German's music for Shakespeare plays incorporated 'songs and dances from the folk tradition in the context of the English pastoral movement… in particular the influence of Cecil Sharp and the English folk revival'. This is, of course, not true; for a start, Sharp did not publish any of his findings until more than ten years after German's *Henry VIII* music was composed. Please see:
Julie Sanders, *Shakespeare and Music: Afterlives and Borrowings* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007).



Ex. 4.4., Theme from Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Piano Sonata no. 11 in A Major*, K331, (1783), bb. 1-8.

For some aestheticians, this is exactly what musical conservatism of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries is: an attempt to recapture the beauty of the melodies and forms of music of the past. The postmodernist composer Helmut Lachenmann, in his seminal article 'The 'Beautiful' in Music Today', acknowledges that 'proponents of a demand for Beauty' felt that they had been betrayed by the musical avant-garde of the last hundred years. For Lachenmann, such views were 'so embedded in the complex alliance of (for the most part), conservative ideologies that it was not singled out for attention by the avant-garde composers'.[104] This is an example of the modern use of the word 'conservative' in the attempted denigratory sense; to be 'reactionary' in one's view of the place of beauty in art is automatically assumed to be a negative trait. Lachenmann goes on to argue that:

> Today the call for beauty is more suspect than ever – whether the concept is a pluralism embracing all conceivable types of hedonism, or else a reactionary hangover after false hopes and promises, or just academicism of whatever sort… Once integrated into an overall theory of aesthetics and composition, the concept is no longer suitable for the prophets of popularity, the apostles of nature and tonality, and the fetishists of academicism and tradition.[105]

[104] Helmut Lachenmann, 'The 'Beautiful' in Music Today', *Tempo*, 135 (1980), 20-24 (20).
[105] Lachenmann, 'The 'Beautiful' in Music Today', 22.

The pursuit of beauty, in Lachenmann's vision of music, is tethered to conservatism, traditionalism and tonality; it is remarkable how similar his conceptualisation of beauty and its place is to Edward German's, writing nearly fifty years later and from a markedly oppositional *weltanschauung*.

It is nonetheless notable that Lachenmann identifies the connection to both the past and future for the conservative musician. His denounced 'nostalgia-merchant' – who, by the nature of his profession, must necessarily buy (or produce) and sell – sees the role of the conservative musician to find what is worthwhile in the music of the past (often beauty), to present it and to preserve its traditions for posterity.[106] Scruton puts forward a positive conceptualisation of the role of the conservative composer, writing that he engages in a 'dialogue across generations, in which the dead play as great a part as the living'.[107] Scruton's vision of conservative music as a dialogue between generations of past musicians, preserved for the future, is fundamentally Burkean in its conception. Burke argues that politics is a dialogue between generations of people who share in common the nation, its institutions and its culture; for Burke, 'people will not look forward to posterity, who never look backward to their ancestors'.[108] A conservative composer follows this line of thinking musically, presenting stylistic and cultural connections with the past, modelled in the technical capabilities of the present, and preserved in performance and musical score for the future to find connections with contemporaneous culture. The conservative musician seeks not to offer entirely new conceptions that revolutionise the musical landscape and reject musical heritage, but to find a place in the continuing history of musical ideas; tending to the inheritance bequeathed upon him and strengthening it for posterity. Scruton argues that this is how we access the culture of the past and connect with tradition: 'it is precisely because the tradition

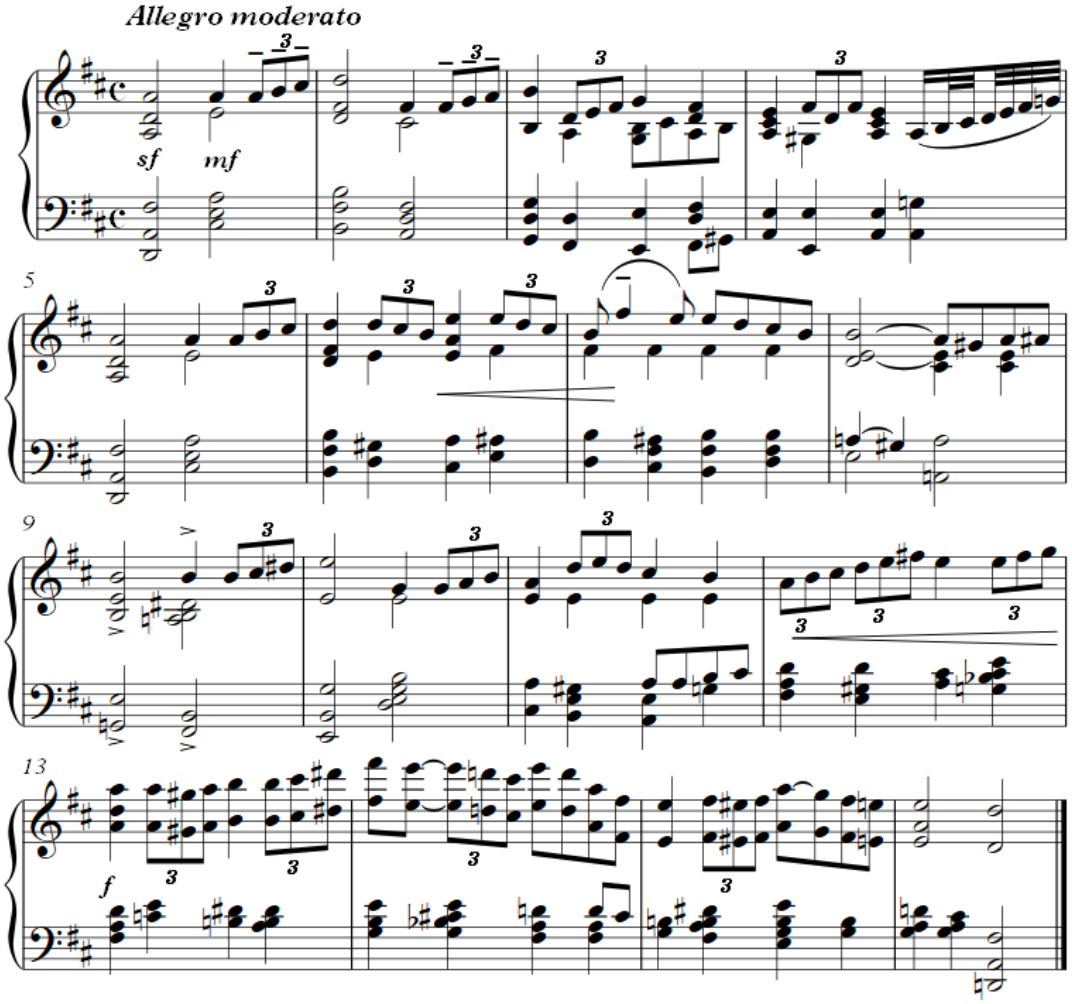
[106] Lachenmann, 'The 'Beautiful' in Music Today', 22.
[107] Roger Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 445.
[108] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London: Penguin, 2004), 119.

of Western music still lives that we can gain access through the music of previous generations, to states of mind that we no longer encounter in our daily experience'.[109] Such ideas are sometimes dismissed as a fallacy of 'common sense', but conservatives, both musical and political, describe 'the store of experience and custom which had been laid down by many generations, and which should not be disregarded in favour of the theory of one person or the ephemeral fashion of one generation'.[110] This is one explanation of why German felt so strongly about the preservation of the musical traditions he perpetuated.

So much of Edward German's music is, in one interpretation, an embodiment of these Burkean conservative values. The most conspicuous example of this is in his *Coronation March and Hymn*. As Rees explains, 'It is significant that when he was invited to compose music for the Coronation of King George V and Queen Mary he did not produce an entirely new work but resuscitated some of the incidental music from *Henry VIII* and developed two of the themes into a *Coronation March and Hymn*'.[111] This might be interpreted as an apathy for monarchy and ceremonial tradition on the part of German, but this is unlikely; he was thrilled to receive a medal in commemoration of the composition from King George V in 1911,[112] and he also composed a number of other works in the tradition of royal ceremonial music – a theme which is to be discussed further in a later chapter.[113] It is more likely that German saw the redevelopment of materials as a musical embodiment of the previously discussed Burkean vision. He took the motifs used for a play about a great (or at least

[109] Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Music*, 449.
[110] Stuart Ball, 'The Principles of British Conservatism from Balfour to Heath, c. 1910-75' in Bradley W. Hart and Richard Carr (eds.), *The Foundations of the British Conservative Party* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 13-38 (19).
[111] Rees, *A Musical Peacemaker*, 173.
[112] Scott, *Edward German*, 154.
[113] Especially his work *In Commemoration*, described by the *Morning Post* as 'a sort of British equivalent of Wagner's *Kaisermarsch*'. Please see:
Jeffrey Richards, *Imperialism and Music: Britain 1876-1953* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 143.

famous) king of the past and reshaped them into a celebration of the king of the present and future; it is a conscious statement of a continued social order.



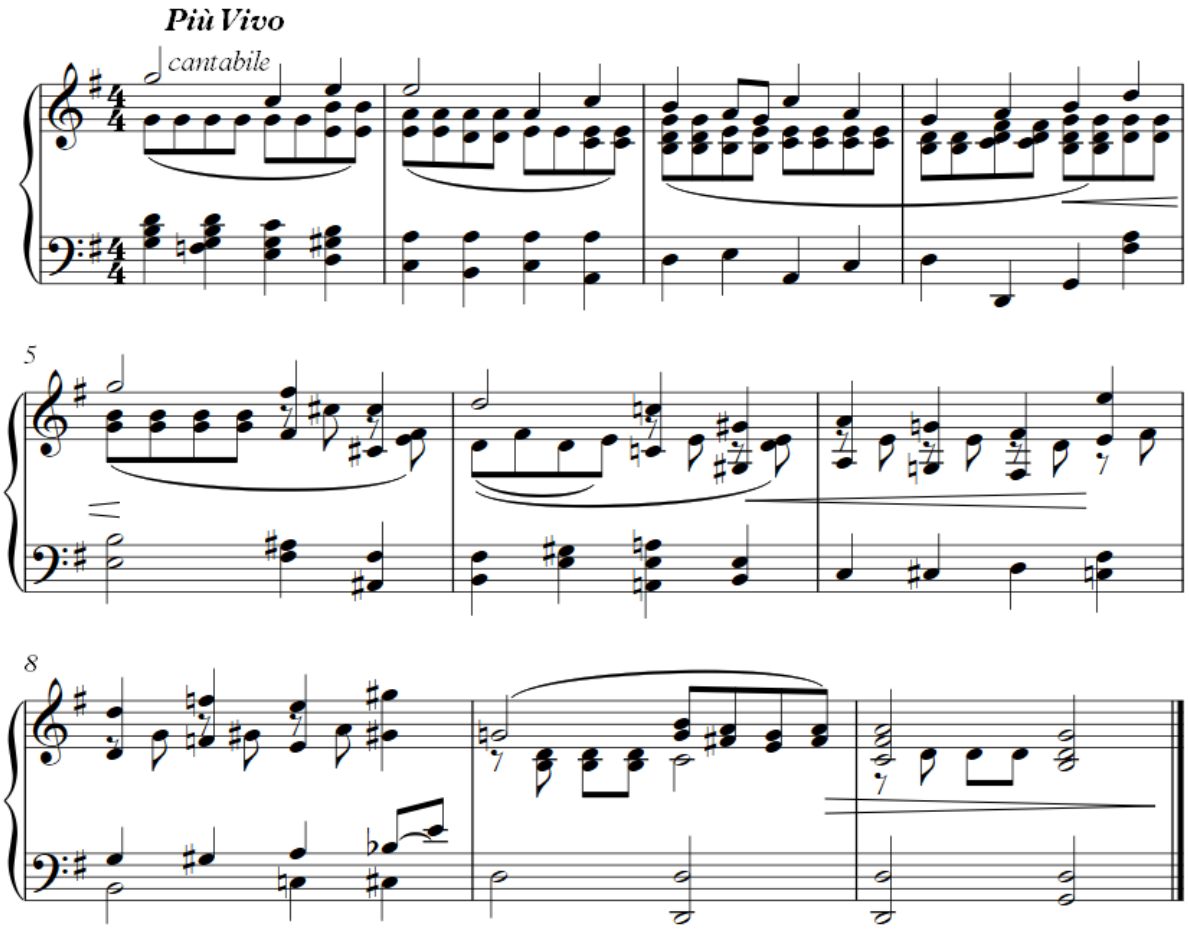
Ex. 4.5., Theme from *Coronation March and Hymn* (1911), also from the *Coronation March* from the music to *Henry VIII* (1897).

The 16-bar theme reproduced above (ex. 4.5) was used in both the incidental music written for Sir Henry Irving's production of *Henry VIII* at the Lyceum in 1892,[114] and in the work

[114] Rees, *A Musical Peacemaker*, 70.

performed at the coronation (and Imperial Durbar) of George V in 1911.[115] Nonetheless, the two pieces develop in different ways. It is notable that the *Coronation March* in *Henry VIII* is not for the titular monarch, but for his ill-fated wife; as Rees notes, however, the use of such material was never taken as a slight on Queen Mary.[116] The earlier work develops into a jovial *scherzo* in G Major, a *cantabile* pastiche of an invented Tudor dance (ex. 4.6), while the *Coronation March and Hymn*, by its nature, develops into *Veni Creator Spiritus*. The seriousness of the later reworking of the theme is an indication of the level of respect that German held for both the monarch and the occasion.

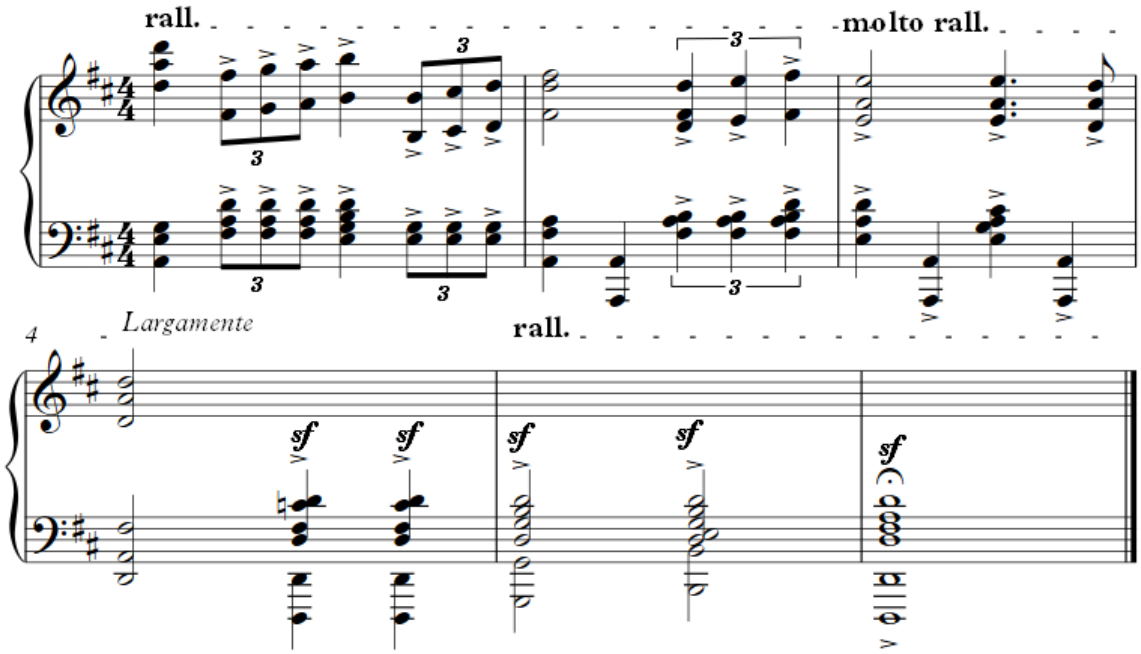
[115] George V liked the *Coronation March and Hymn*, and German kept a programme from a concert of music selected by His Majesty, which included the work. At the Durbar, the march was played while Their Imperial Majesties completed the procession from the Royal Pavilion to their thrones, in front of an enormous audience of assembled princes, military regiments and the general public. The Official Directory for the Durbar suggests that as the Emperor 'returns to the Durbar Shamiana [canopy] in procession', the 'Massed bands will play a March'. This march was Edward German's *Coronation March and Hymn*; it is the only music, other than the National Anthem, that was played during this (enormously important) part of the celebrations. Please see: Official Directory, *Coronation Durbar, Dehli 1911: Official Directory with Maps* (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1911), 44.
[116] Rees, *A Musical Peacemaker*, 173.



Ex. 4.6., Dance movement from the *Coronation March* from the music to *Henry VIII* (1897).

Both works return to the original theme for their finale, in its developed and grandiose form; triumphant, joyous and Elgarian in its Victorian pomp (ex. 4.7). This divergence and reunion with the music of the past is a manifestation of the previously discussed Scrutonian 'dialogue across generations, in which the dead play as great a part as the living'.[117] It is 'is an association between the dead, the living and the unborn'; in this way it is uniquely conservative in its expression, aligned with a conservative vision of the proper, hierarchical order of society.[118]

[117] Roger Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 445.
[118] Roger Scruton, *Conservatism: Ideas in Profile* (London: Profile Books, 2017), 39.



Ex. 4.7., Finale from *Coronation March and Hymn* (1911), also from the *Coronation March* from the music to *Henry VIII* (1897).

Edward German also expressed his conception of the proper order of society in the most directly political movement that involved musicians of his generation: that of the introduction of modern copyright law and the foundation of the Performing Rights Society (PRS). It is notable that some of the leading musical figures urging for copyright legislation at the beginning of the twentieth century were conservatives. Stanford, German and (a somewhat reluctant) Elgar were all on the Acting Committee of the Musical Defence League, with Stanford describing German as one of the 'leading people' involved with the movement.[119] The organisation had a fundamentally political purpose, but that purpose was not specifically conservative, and as such the petition they put forward garnered signatures from conservatives, radicals and liberals, including such varied names as Rudyard Kipling, Basil Hood, Hubert von Herkomer and Arthur Conan Doyle.[120] Indeed, the Bill that became

[119] Jeremy Dibble, *Charles Villiers Stanford: Man and Musician* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 239-241.
[120] Boosey, *Fifty Years of Music*, 118.

The Copyright Law for Music Act 1906 was drafted and introduced by Irish nationalist MP, T. P. O'Connor. William Boosey praised O'Connor for his love of music and assistance with the goals of the Musical Defence League: 'above all he loved championing a cause which had for its incentive the protection of the weak against the strong'.[121] The Bill received the full support of the Liberal government, and passed its third reading in the House of Commons. After the *Copyright Act 1911*, it was one of the few preceding Copyright Acts that was not annulled; as Boosey points out, it meant that piracy of other artworks or books was a civil offence, but the piracy of music was criminal.[122]

German was, somewhat reluctantly but understanding of technological changes, also in support of the activities of the Performing Rights Association in 1914. He wrote in a letter to Boosey:

> I have always held out at all costs for free performance. No one has been stronger on this point than I have. During the past few years however, things have changed – the advent of mechanical instruments has created a new situation and I realise something must be done to cope with it – I shall therefore be happy to join in your movement.[123]

He had reservations about the organisation and its unintended consequences at first, however, and suggested a number of changes to the association's policy, including granting greater power to composers to request fees from conductors, several exemptions from the PRS and an assurance that works could still be freely performed abroad. German's reasoning was musical, rather than financial: 'Broadly speaking the object of composing is that it should be heard, but where there is money value in it, this must of course be adequately protected.'[124] German's fears must have been allayed, as he joined the association, which had become the Performing Rights Society (PRS), in 1915, later serving as a committee member.[125] German continued to be concerned about compensation for composers for the rest of his life; in 1928

[121] Boosey, *Fifty Years of Music*, 119.
[122] Boosey, *Fifty Years of Music,* 121.
[123] Edward German, quoted in Rees, *A Musical Peacemaker*, 252.
[124] Edward German, quoted in Rees, *A Musical Peacemaker*, 253.
[125] Rees, *A Musical Peacemaker*, 253.

he described the Tuppenny Bill, of which Elgar was prominent opponent,[126] as 'so inane and monstrous that it surely cannot pass'.[127] In what was to become his final public address, German wrote the foreword to a book on renumeration for musicians, entitled *Radio and the Composer*.[128] The main section is anonymous; it is possible, however, that German also wrote part of the main component of the book, as there are a number of sections which share stylistic elements with the foreword, as well as information (such as detailed income of composers) that would be much easier for someone in German's position to obtain.[129] The book is fundamentally political, seeking to make changes to the way in which composers receive compensation for their efforts, which it claims are 'seriously threatened'.[130] By the time of the publication of the book, German's reservations about the PRS had entirely dissipated, as he states unequivocally in his foreword that 'the Performing Right Society is most assuredly a great boon and blessing to the whole musical profession'.[131]

Support for the PRS is not inherently conservative as such, but a complete overview of German's politics would not be complete without its mention. The conservative case for the necessity of compensation for the performance, mechanical or otherwise, of a composer's work (other than the loss of income due to extraneous factors detailed in *Radio and the Composer*), stems from the belief in the rights and responsibilities of property ownership. In one of Scruton's final thoughts on conservatism, he suggested (in his typically controversial style) that 'It is only when people have rights of property, and can freely exchange what they own for what they need, that a society of strangers can achieve economic coordination.

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[126] This will be discussed further in the chapter on Elgar's conservatism. Please see:
Edward Elgar, quoted in Lewis Foreman, *From Parry to Britten: British Music in Letters 1900-1945* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1987), 258.
[127] Edward German, quoted in Rees, *A Musical Peacemaker*, 257.
[128] Sir Edward German, *Radio and the Composer: The Economics of Modern Music* (London: Ivor Nicholson & Watson, 1935).
[129] German, *Radio and the Composer*, 22.
[130] Ibid., 29.
[131] Ibid., viii.

Socialists don't in their hearts accept this'.[132] Burke similarly wrote of the necessity of the 'solidity of property',[133] and Ted Honderich, in his partisan and harsh criticism of conservatism, describes property as 'conservatism's principal fetish'.[134] It is perhaps this understanding of property in music, forwarded by composers such as German, that led to a move away from the earlier, nationalistic sense of the ownership of music as, in Jeremy Dibble's words, 'forms of public property, and thereby a means of consolidating a sense of identity'.[135] It is possible that the PRS inadvertently had some part in the decline of this vision of music.

Edward German was a conservative, politically, socially, and musically. His was the kind of conservatism that loved cricket, cycling and fishing,[136] while simultaneously painting the portrait of himself as the retiring recluse; the 'hermit of Maida Vale'.[137] He loved his country and retained the views of, in Scott's words, 'the sane Imperialist'.[138] So much of his work was an attempt to capture in music the perceived pastoral past of cricket matches and community dances, the kind of rural idyll described in Francis Brett Young's *A Portrait of a Village*.[139] His conceptualisation of rural England is of the kind so roundly ridiculed by authors such as Georgina Boyes,[140] but Philip Gibbs argued that this vision was widespread, meaningful and had a basis in reality:

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[132] Roger Scruton, *How to be a Conservative* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 54.
[133] Burke, *Reflections*, 91.
[134] Ted Honderich, *Conservatism: Burke, Nozick, Bush, Blair?* (London: Pluto Press, 2005), 118.
[135] Jeremy Dibble, 'Parry, Stanford and Vaughan Williams: The Creation of Tradition' in Lewis Foreman (ed.), *Vaughan Williams in Perspective: Studies of an English Composer* (Ilminster: Albion, 1998), 25-47 (26).
[136] Guyver, 'Edward Elgar and Edward German', 16.
[137] This is the nickname given to him by his close group of friends, the ACM Club. Please see: Rees, *A Musical Peacemaker*, 206.
[138] Scott, *Edward German*, 208.
[139] Francis Brett Young, *A Portrait of a Village* (London: William Heinemann, 1937), 131-150.
[140] Georgina Boyes, *The Imagined Village: Culture, Ideology & the English Folk Revival* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993).

> There is still a rural England where men and women live simple lives close to the earth in old houses and cottages unchanged, or hardly changed, since their forefathers built them in Tudor times, with thatched roofs, or tiles, and low beams and sunken floors. It is astonishing, really, how beyond the reach of the cities so much of this rural England remains untouched, outwardly, by the horrible paws of the Beast who delights in the destruction of beauty and calls it Progress, gloating when a cinema in cement replaces a row of timbered houses, or when a new estate with raw red roofs invades a woodland where nightingales used to sing, or when a Woolworth's Stores is painted red in the middle of an ancient High Street.[141]

For Gibbs, the destruction of beauty was almost omnipresent by 1935, while rural England provided a bastion, imaginary or otherwise, against anti-conservative forces. German's music, in its appeals to rusticity and the pastoral, was likewise often an attempt to provide an alternative to the atonal, chromatic and similar developments of his time; in a rare interview with *The Bookman* in 1921, he declared that:

> The only music that can live is the music that has the elements of beauty and health in it, and observes some kind of structure and shapeliness. The fact that this has been so often said and disputed does not alter its truth, for true it certainly is… You must put in close application and study of the best models, and you must learn the rules before you break them.[142]

Dan Godfrey predicted success for German in 1924 as a result of his musical conservatism: 'In no sense a modernist, his music will maintain its popularity as long as that of Sullivan'.[143] The way in which he implemented his vision of musical conservatism was different to that of Stanford or Elgar, however. He was active and outspoken in the pursuit of beauty; his musical materials were often explicitly conservative politically;[144] he wrote a number of monarchist and imperialist works of music. Unlike many of his contemporaries, he sought to place his work in the continuous canon of musical ideas, rather than revolutionise the art. He was, as critics of his work so often recognised, a 'student of the beautiful'.[145]

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[141] Gibbs, *England Speaks*, 209.
[142] Edward German, quoted in J. P. Collins, 'The Standards of English Music: A Talk with Mr. Edward German', *The Bookman*, 60/358 (1921), 186-188 (187).
[143] Godfrey, *Memories and Music*, 181.
[144] There are so many more examples of this than have been presented in this chapter. Another collaboration with Captain Basil Hood, for example, *A Princess of Kensington*, is replete with what Rees describes as 'crude jingoism'; it, like *Merrie England*, promotes a strong navy and laments the discord that had emerged over the Irish question. This issue will be discussed at length in the chapter on Stanford's conservatism. Please see: Rees, *A Musical Peacemaker*, 120-121.
[145] Scott, *Edward German*, 199.

CHAPTER V

Sir Charles Villiers Stanford: A Paradigm of the Philosophy of Precedent

Unlike Edward German or Edward Elgar, Sir Charles Villiers Stanford wrote extensively of his thoughts on both the musical and political questions of his day. It is clear from these writings that Stanford was unambiguously conservative in his thought, and his specific objections to musical and political modernity are made explicit and are thoroughly argued against. His deeply felt connection to both Ireland and England, however, meant that his political and philosophical conservatism was of a slightly different order to that of German or Elgar. Likewise, his affiliation with academia – he was, along with Hubert Parry, one of the foremost musical educators of his era – affects his work and perspective in ways that did not impact the outlooks of the other two composers studied here. Despite these caveats, it is possible to say that Stanford is the most widely accepted model of a musical conservative; he is perhaps the most unmistakeably conservative composer whose music still survives in the canon. However, Stanford seems to have been considerably less vocal regarding his support of the Conservative Party itself when compared with Elgar or German. His conservatism more often manifested itself as opposition to the political, social and cultural changes that occurred during his lifetime, such as the developments towards universal suffrage, the questions surrounding his native Ireland, and compulsory state education. This is perhaps as a result of his frustration with what he perceived to be the overt and unwelcome politicisation of music; he lamented that in Ireland, 'music, the favourite art, declined and languished and everything became tainted with politics, wirepulling and discontent'.[1]

As Hughes and Stradling note, 'Stanford was deeply conservative – politically, socially and intellectually'.[2] Although there is an enormous volume of extant primary

[1] Charles Villiers Stanford, *Pages from an Unwritten Diary* (London: Edward Arnold, 1914), 101.
[2] Meirion Hughes and Robert Stradling, *The English Musical Renaissance 1840-1940: Constructing a National Music* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 54.

evidence for Stanford's conservatism, he almost never states a direct affiliation with any political party or philosophical view.[3] The nearest the composer comes to doing so is in a private letter to Sir William Harcourt, the leader of the Liberal Party at the time, in which Stanford asks the politician to 'forgive an old Trinity man, of diametrically opposite politics to yourself, writing to thank you… for your admirable letter in this morning's *Times*'.[4] Stanford's political, philosophical and musical positions can be best evidenced by a return to the four conservative tenets that were elucidated upon in the chapter concerning the philosophy of musical conservatism. The first of these, that 'there is wisdom in appealing to historical precedent, even if it is irrational', underpins all of Stanford's writing on the subject of the composition of music.[5] Indeed, Stanford's dedication in the frontmatter of *Musical Composition* reads as follows: 'in grateful memory of the masters who taught me'.[6]

One example of the composer's vision of precedent is in his conservative historiography of musical form:

> The history of musical form, then, is a history of evolution, and in order to master it, the student must evolve it for himself in miniature on the same lines that it has been evolved through the last three centuries: beginning with short dance forms, and gradually expanding his ideas into longer movements.[7]

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[3] This is unusual; Elgar and German were open and public in their direct political affiliation with the Conservative Party. It is likely that Stanford did not feel it would be appropriate to engage in public politics at the party level as a result of his university positions and responsibilities.

[4] The letter to *The Times* referred to by Stanford was an impressive and lengthy theological argument on the relationship between Anglicanism and Catholicism. Its contents – including appeals to tradition, hierarchy and precedent – are evidence that religious differences do not seem to have had a consistent, meaningful correlation with the political differences of the time. Please see:
W. V. Harcourt, 'The Position of the Bishops', *The Times*, 22nd September, 1898, 6.
Charles Villiers Stanford, letter to William Harcourt, 22nd September 1898, Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, MS. Harcourt 237.

[5] One of the best explorations of this idea is found in Joseph de Maistre's responses to Rousseau, in which he argues that 'It is always necessary to call men back to history, which is the first master in politics, or more exactly the only master'. He provides perhaps the clearest declaration of this belief in any text when he pronounces that the 'first and perhaps sole source of all the evils that we suffer is contempt for the old, or, what amounts to the same thing, contempt for experience'. For conservatives like de Maistre, appeals to the collective wisdom of previous generations are far more persuasive than arguments from what Kant might have described as 'pure reason'. Please see:
Joseph de Maistre, *Against Rousseau: "On the State of Nature" and "On the Sovereignty of the People"* (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 53-134.

[6] Charles Villiers Stanford, *Musical Composition: A Short Treatise for Students* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1911).

[7] Stanford, *Musical Composition*, 76.

Stanford was one of the most vocal exponents of this evolutionary – or perhaps more accurately, *anti-revolutionary* – view of music. Stanford's views were often more nuanced than other theorists of an evolutionary history of music,[8] and frequently the details of his vision seem to contrast with the overarching narrative, which, in any case, never conforms to the Whig interpretation of music history as neatly as that of many of his contemporaries.[9] Stanford summarises his own vision of artistic progress in the following way:

> A new form in music may require study and frequent hearing to understand it, but if it is logical and founded on a thorough knowledge and control of means, time will endorse it. Such modifications grow (like folk-songs in Hungary) and are not made. To have any value at all they must in their nature be children of their fathers.[10]

For Stanford, musical progress results from collective discoveries rather than revolutionary individual acts, but each newly unearthed innovation must remain connected to the past in a meaningful way. Thomas F. Dunhill quotes him as also having said that the proper path for students of music 'maybe sometimes dusty and heavy, but it was made by the experience of our forefathers, who found out the best direction for ensuring our progress'.[11] For Stanford's critics, this was one of his primary limitations. Paul Rodmell summarises these views:

> The anti-Stanford side comprised mainly those British composers and critics who were out of sympathy with Stanford's evolutionary view of music. For those who wished to progress more quickly than his conservatism allowed he became a *bête noire*, a reactionary whose Canute-like approach to the waves of musical progress could only be condemned.[12]

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[8] Stanford's chapters in his and Cecil Forsyth's *A History of Music* are awash with evidence of this. In his assessment of C. P. E. Bach, for example, Stanford suggests that the composer was 'more a carrier of tradition and an experimenter in unfamiliar paths, than a great master. None the less he filled an invaluable role in musical history'. It is not necessary, to Stanford, for a composer to push towards what Whig historians believe to be the inevitable and enlightened present in order to be valuable. Please see:
Charles Villiers Stanford and Cecil Forsyth, *A History of Music* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916), 246.

[9] Stanford's claims of being in favour of progress have been the subject of some scrutiny; Paul Rodmell writes of the passage in Stanford's 'On Some Recent Tendencies in Composition', in which the composer claims that he is 'essentially a Progressist', that 'it initially appears that he was a Liberal in Tory clothing, but the four words 'as I consider it' add more than enough qualification'. Rodmell here recognises Stanford's nuanced view of Whig music history, and his separation from its assumptions and historiography. Please see:
Paul Rodmell, *Charles Villiers Stanford* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 361.

[10] Stanford, *Musical Composition*, 76.

[11] It is worth noting that it is likely that Stanford is drawing on Matthew 7:13, a favourite of conservatives: 'Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat'. Please see:
Charles Villiers Stanford, quoted in Harry Plunket Greene, *Charles Villiers Stanford* (London: Edward Arnold, 1935), 54.

[12] Paul Rodmell, *Charles Villiers Stanford* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 68-9.

This anti-revolutionary view carried into Stanford's personal politics. The composer controversially argued, on the question of women's suffrage, that 'Mrs. [Millicent] Fawcett knows well the importance of precedent in a Constitution such as ours, and she will agree that it is the neglect of this principle which is apt to breed revolutions'.[13] Similarly, the composer was concerned about the rise of socialist ideas as a revolutionary threat as early as 1889, which he believed to be the likely outcome of state education: 'the first effect of education upon the uneducated masses is the development of socialistic and even of revolutionary ideas amongst them'.[14] Stanford's friend and biographer, Harry Plunket Greene, notes that the composer enjoyed his time in Leipzig because of the town's traditions;[15] he experienced Leipzig as a town 'where custom reigned and people lived as their great-grandfathers had lived before them. The curse of speed had not yet stirred their hatreds or calloused their amenities'.[16] For Jeremy Dibble, this conservative understanding of historical precedent manifested itself as Brahmsianism: 'in a musical world excited by the new sounds of Strauss's *Elektra* and *Salome*… Stanford continued to put his faith in the traditional 'values' of Brahmsian absolute music'.[17] The concept of Brahms as a totem of musical conservatism will be discussed in the following chapter.

The second statement, 'human beings and their activities are, by their nature, flawed and imperfectible', is more rarely expressed explicitly by conservatives outside of direct articulations of their philosophy. There are strong indications in Stanford's writing, however,

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[13] Charles Villiers Stanford, 'Women and the Suffrage', *The Times*, 21st July 1910, 9.
[14] Charles Villiers Stanford, *Studies and Memories* (London: A. Constable, 1908), 44.
[15] Paul Berry contends that nineteenth-century Leipzig was a 'musically conservative city' and was an important location for the reception and reputation of Brahms. Please see:
Paul Berry, *Brahms Among Friends: Listening, Performance and the Rhetoric of Allusion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 126.
[16] Greene makes it very clear that Stanford's conservatism had manifested itself at an early age, describing him broadly as 'a die-hard Conservative and rooted in the customs and traditions of his childhood… a pioneer rather than an iconoclast'. On Stanford's attempts to reform the Cambridge University Musical Society, Greene repeats this assertion: 'fortunately the new-comer was no iconoclast. His early training had made him the friend of tradition'. Please see:
Harry Plunket Greene, *Charles Villiers Stanford* (London: Edward Arnold, 1935), 16-54.
[17] Jeremy Dibble, *Charles Villiers Stanford: Man and Musician* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 463.

that this statement was obvious enough to him to not require direct explanation. For example, lamenting the treatment of 'ancient' music, he suggests that 'the rapidly increasing elimination of the works of our old masters from the lists means the destruction of all history and tradition, and the undermining of taste'.[18] For Stanford, then, the removal of access to great works of the past that have implicitly accumulated a collective (good) taste in the public, would result in a musical poverty that is, therefore, the natural state of affairs without such interventions. Stanford believed that the music of the past needed constant restatement in the present in order to secure a continuing canon and regenerate what he perceived to be proper musical appreciation.[19] He lamented that so little old music was being performed for this reason:

> The net result of the record I have studied shows that the proportion of works given is five modern to one ancient. A lamentable history this. As well might we bring up the children of our age upon three-volume novels, providing them with five sensational books for every one of serious or solid value.[20]

At the same time, however, Stanford was deeply critical of the use of great works of music for examination purposes, claiming that:

> Human nature, which, often without knowing it, hates examinations, will tend to dislike and to be revolted at the very specimens of the better music which have to be prepared for it. The very excellence of the music chosen will be in the end the undoing of all taste for that excellence… The laws of supply and demand have made examinations a necessity.[21]

In a similar way, the composer indicated this understanding of human nature as flawed in other seemingly trivial opinions, such as his assertion that Wagner's operas were 'far too long for the enjoyment of average human nature',[22] as well as his views on musical form:

> No art is formless or it is monstrous, just as no face or figure is distorted without being repulsive. It is a law of nature against whose pricks no artist, whether he be painter, sculptor, architect, poet or musician, can kick without damage to his reputation… The laws of evolution apply as rigidly to musical art as they do to nature itself.[23]

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[18] Stanford, *Studies and Memories*, 63.
[19] It is in this that his view of human nature, precedent and Brahmsianism are demonstrably linked; James Friskin, who studied at the RCM with Stanford, suggested that 'Stanford's real resentment against the ultramodern tendencies was the thought that all that the art of music had gained during the past four hundred years was being thrown overboard'. Please see:
James Friskin, paraphrased in Plunket Greene, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 99.
[20] Stanford, *Studies and Memories*, 64.
[21] Charles V. Stanford, *Interludes: Records and Reflections* (London: John Murray, 1922), 8.
[22] Stanford, *Pages from an Unwritten Diary*, 169.
[23] Stanford, *Musical Composition*, 75-76.

In Stanford's view, Western musical forms were discovered, not invented.

Stanford similarly asserted that tonality is rooted in nature rather than rationality, drawing on the hypothesis that what is now known as the overtone or harmonic series serves as evidence for this claim:

> The true scale has for centuries been fixed, some of it (such as the octave being one-half of the whole) by the physical laws of Nature. To divide a string at its half is to obtain (even in the harmonic form) its octave. Similarly, the fifth is pure if the finger on a string is one-third of the length of the gut.[24]

These same arguments are made by conservatives today in contemporary debates which have changed little in the last century. Conservatives believe that Western tonality is not arbitrary, but rather rooted in physics and that there is a natural relationship between the notes of a major scale, as is demonstrated by the fact that the Ionian mode is consonant with the first six notes which appear in the harmonic series. Scruton makes this point most directly:

> There is in fact nothing arbitrary about the diatonic scale or the place of the tonic within it. While there can be other scales, some sounding strange to Western ears, they are in almost every case attempts to divide up the octave, to provide significant points of rest and closure and to preserve, in whatever remembered form, the natural harmonies delivered by the overtone series. The diatonic scale is one of a number of modes derived from medieval church music, and its history is not a history of arbitrary invention but one of gradual discovery. Equal temperament, the circle of fifths, the chromatic scale, modulation, voice-leading, and triadic harmony – all these are discoveries, representing at each stage an advance into a shared tonal space. The result is not the product of precision or design: it is as natural and embedded in our experience as the post and beam in architecture or frying and baking in cookery. If composers are to 'make it new', then they must recognize this natural quality and not defy it, even when venturing into areas where the old discoveries provide no obvious guidance.[25]

The conservative composer and theorist Frederick Ouseley explicated this argument in the greatest detail in his seminal *A Treatise on Harmony* of 1868, in which he argued that our understanding of many of the most important facets of harmonic theory (tonality, intervals, modulation, chords and their inversions) emerge from the discovery of what he describes as 'the primary chord given us by nature'.[26] Ouseley believed that western conceptualisations of consonance, dissonance, the division of the octave, and harmony were derived from natural, scientifically demonstrable phenomena and as such are not arbitrary.[27] Stanford took this to

[24] Stanford, *Interludes*, 58.
[25] Roger Scruton, *Music as an Art* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 87.
[26] F. A. Gore Ouseley, *A Treatise on Harmony* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1868), 14.
[27] Ibid., 14-55.

be self-evidently true and it was an axiomatic component of his own conceptualisation of music theory. These arguments are not unlike those for the existence of a fixed, unchanging human nature, and it is possible that they come from the same philosophical foundations;[28] evidently Stanford did not share the view of human nature espoused by those who possess what Thomas Sowell describes as an 'unconstrained vision',[29] and it is possible to suggest that he would have agreed with James Burnham's conceptual conservative that human nature is imperfectible, limited, partly corrupt, and permanently so.[30]

The third statement, 'inequality and hierarchy are the natural and proper order of things', was acceptable to Stanford.[31] He campaigned against universal education, even praising the attitude of Otto von Bismarck:[32]

> Prince Bismarck was alive at once to the necessity and to the danger of popular and compulsory education. He accompanied his measures of improvement by measures of precaution. Foreseeing that the first contact of education with uncultivated minds would inevitably produce socialistic results, he passed laws for the repression of socialism almost simultaneously with his laws for general compulsory education… I am inclined to think that the systematic development of art is a lever in the hands of education which, if properly applied, will act more powerfully, if less slowly, than any measures of socialistic repression; by raising the standard of refinement it will in time counteract by fair means the dangers born of knowledge.[33]

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[28] It is notable that John Stainer, a Liberal (of a sort) in politics and not as musically conservative as is sometimes assumed, argued in his own contemporary treatise on harmony that western chord structures, music theory and tonality are each 'arbitrary', rationalistic constructions. He believed that arguments which rely on the harmonic series are themselves post-hoc rationalisations and that recent works of music serve as evidence that chromaticism can be just as musical as tonality. Stainer declares that a study of music from different cultures demonstrates that 'all scales are entirely empirical, because nature gives an infinity of sounds between any note and its octave, and poor mortals cannot make use of more than a very limited number of them. I therefore called the scale arbitrary'. Please see:
John Stainer, *Theory of Harmony* (London: Rivingtons, 1872), xiii.

[29] Thomas Sowell, *A Conflict of Visions: Ideological Origins of Political Struggles* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), 11-17.

[30] James Burnham, *Suicide of the West: An Essay on the Meaning and Destiny of Liberalism* (New York: John Day, 1964), 50.

[31] Joseph de Maistre again wrote resolutely on this issue; he argues that hierarchy is inherent to humankind when he proclaims that 'the first man was a king of his children… human association cannot exist without some kind of domination'. Please see:
Joseph de Maistre, *Against Rousseau*, 53.

[32] Bismarck was a controversial figure for adherents to all political persuasions, but from his appointment as Prime Minister of Prussia, he was viewed as 'a reactionary, an enemy of liberalism'. At the time of Stanford's speech, he was Chancellor of the German Empire. Please see:
Lynn Abrams, *Bismarck and the German Empire 1871-1918* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 27.

[33] Stanford, *Studies and Memories*, 44-45.

Stanford also wrote a series of letters to *The Times* regarding women's suffrage, including a letter titled 'Militant Suffragism', in which he questioned the patriotism and sincerity of Millicent Fawcett's views.[34] Earlier, he had written a lengthy letter to *The Times* explaining his opposition to 'allowing competition between the sexes at the Universities and elsewhere'; he suggested instead that a new university be created specifically for women.[35] He concludes the letter by arguing that granting degrees to women sets the metaphorical ball rolling on a slippery slope: 'if the existing Universities are to grant degrees to women, by what logic are they to be denied the further rights of academical citizenship, the tenure of professorships and readerships… I cannot see where the line can justly be drawn'.[36] Similarly, he argued against consulting all citizens over Irish home rule; in response to questions proposed by Sir Joseph West Ridgeway for a referendum, Stanford suggested that a plebiscite was an inadvisable solution, as most people were not capable of formulating an answer to such a complex question:

> Does Sir West propose to print the text of the Bill at the head of this question, or does he assume that every artisan in Great Britain and Ireland has read it or would read it?... does he really expect every agricultural labourer to know the names of these counties, or their position on the map, and to understand proposals which are enigmatic and vague even to the practised politician? This is indeed Referendum ad absurdum.[37]

The clearest articulation of Stanford's belief in a natural and proper order of things can be found in another defence of the status quo regarding Ireland, in which he invokes an example from elsewhere in the British Empire: 'in India we have Mahomedans and Brahmins who would be at each other's throats if the rule were not in trusty hands outside and *above* them. In Ireland we have the same situation in the equally strong antipathies of Christian sects' (emphasis added).[38] It is clear that Stanford believed in inequality and hierarchy as the

[34] Charles V. Stanford, 'Militant Suffragism', *The Times*, 26th February 1913, 10.
[35] A further letter, which enumerates the reasons for his opposition, was published in the newspaper the following year and made the same contentions. Please see:
C. V. Stanford, 'The Proposed Degrees for Women', *The Times*, 18th March, 1897, 8.
[36] C. V. Stanford, 'Women and Cambridge', *The Times*, 5th February 1896, 11.
[37] Charles V. Stanford, 'Referendum ad Absurdum', *The Times*, 23rd March 1914, 5.
[38] Charles V. Stanford, 'The Origins of Home Rule', *The Times*, 9th April 1914, 10.

correct, instinctive order of things, including in music.[39] Indeed, Matthew Rahaim has argued that Stanford's perceived 'evolutionary' vision of the history of music is essentially conservative, rather than whiggish, because it implicitly orders the musical output of different cultures in a hierarchy; Rahaim claims that 'metaphors of progressive evolution have had strong political implications. To say that one's favorite music is "highly evolved" is to say that it is natural, inevitable, and superior to all others'.[40]

Stanford's acceptance of this final statement is – for the most part – far less controversial, but it is possible that it comes, philosophically, from an understanding of the other tenets of conservatism. The statement is, to recall, that 'beauty ought to be one of the primary objectives of artistic pursuit'. Ralph Vaughan Williams articulated an understanding of the relationship between the pursuit of beauty and a connection with the past in his eulogy to Stanford in 1924: 'In Stanford's music the sense of style, the sense of beauty, the feeling of a great tradition is never absent. His music is in the best sense of the word Victorian, that is to say it is the musical counterpart of the art of Tennyson, Watts and Mathew Arnold [sic]'.[41] Stanford himself, towards the end of his life, wrote extensively on the subject of the loss of beauty in music and lamented that 'we are not living in the age of beauty, of nature, or of simplicity, but in the days of extravagance. We had better face this fact and though it is bound to pass as it came… we had better consider what those facts are and where they rebel

[39] For example, Stanford recalls a sketch for which he provided the music in his youth, wherein 'primitive' and 'cannibal' men sing absurd songs with an 'aboriginal flavour'. It is quite clear from this episode that Stanford did not accept a culturally relativistic view of music. Please see:
Stanford, *Pages from an Unwritten Diary*, 118.
[40] Matthew Rahaim, 'What Else Do We Say When We Say "Music Evolves?"', *The World of Music*, 48/3 (2006), 29-41 (34).
[41] It is particularly interesting that Vaughan Williams references Matthew Arnold as a poetic counterpart; Arnold was a liberal, but one who was influential on conservative thought and wrote extensively on the kinds of issues discussed here in *Culture and Anarchy* (1869). Please see:
Ralph Vaughan Williams, quoted in Music & Letters, 'Charles Villiers Stanford: By Some of His Pupils', *Music & Letters*, 5/3 (1924), 193-207 (195).

against beauty, nature and simplicity'.[42] Simplicity and beauty seem to correlate in Stanford's thinking; Cecil Forsyth, in his *A History of Music* (co-authored with Stanford), provides an assessment of Victorian composers that places Stanford at the very height of his profession as a champion of 'purity, clarity, and beauty of expression'.[43] Stanford's views on modernism, aesthetics and complexity affected the teaching of his pupils; Thomas F. Dunhill reminisced that 'his favourite remedy for difficulties was *rests. Take refuge in simplicity*, he would say, as he ran his pencil through a shoal of notes'.[44] Arthur Bliss similarly quotes Stanford as having written on a manuscript of his that 'he who cannot write anything beautiful falls back on the bizarre'.[45]

Stanford himself declared that '"Right and Wrong" are not words in the musical vocabulary and that they ought to be substituted with "Beautiful and Ugly" or "Practical and Unpractical"'.[46] Stanford elucidated on this theme in the conclusion of *Musical Composition*, in which the composer connects his views on aesthetics, hierarchy and politics:

> It is not necessary, in order to depict an ugly character or horrible situation, to illustrate it with ugly music. To do so is the worst side of bad art. Ugly music is bad music. No great painter would paint even a Caliban badly… No composer of inherent nobility will so sacrifice the most noble of the arts. For music stands alone among the arts in one respect, it is incapable without association with words or action of being in itself indecent or obscene… So great can be its power for good or ill that it can make a revolutionary poem egg on a mob to the wildest excesses, or a patriotic one stir a whole nation, even when the literary value of the words is of the poorest.[47]

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[42] Arnold Whittall, in responding to this passage in 1966, espoused what is known as the 'horseshoe theory' of politics when he claimed that Stanford's 'love of Palestrinian euphony and his dislike of complicated modernity make him, however unwittingly, a comrade of the Communists'. More nuanced interpretations of conservatism and its relationship with other political and philosophical positions portray Stanford and his contemporaries in a quite different light, but Whittall's comments must be understood in the context of the time in which they were written; many analyses of the relationship between the music and politics of the past are intended as, at least in part, contributions to contemporary political debates or discussions on the correct place of composers in the canon. Please see:
Charles Villiers Stanford, 'On Some Recent Tendencies in Composition', *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 47/1 (1920), 39-53 (39).
Arnold Whittall, 'Comrades and Conservatives' *Music & Letters*, 47/1 (1966), 27-33.
[43] Forsyth, *A History of Music*, 316.
[44] Thomas F. Dunhill, quoted in Plunket Greene, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 101.
[45] Charles Villiers Stanford, quoted in Arthur Bliss, *As I Remember* (London: Faber & Faber, 1970), 29.
[46] Stanford, *Interludes*, 64.
[47] Stanford, *Musical Composition*, 186-187.

Judgements of this nature, as has been noted elsewhere, were radically opposed to the visions of modernist composers of this era, as well as those of composers such as Parry,[48] who identified a relationship between anticonservative politics, 'ugliness', and his conceptualisation of artistic progress. For Parry, 'liberal minds also feel that all progress is made by facing things which are disagreeable and finding out what they really mean, and accepting them if they can be of service. Every advance in Art has been made by accepting something which has been condemned as ugly'.[49] Peter Warlock, writing under his real name, similarly claimed that 'the theory of a finite and absolute standard of beauty is the supreme obstacle to the progress of musical evolution. Every standard of beauty must necessarily lie in the taste of the individual'.[50] Stanford did not share such opinions. In the course of his consistent advocacy of greater state funding of music,[51] Stanford suggested that one of the advantages of music over other arts was its ability to introduce an 'uncivilised mind' to beauty:

> Happy painters and sculptors! Forgive us, your musical brethren in art, if we envy you a little your monopoly of State support; you are broad-minded enough to know in your souls that we ought to be given our opportunity also to enrich the world with beauty. And you know also that mighty and ennobling as your branch of the family is, it appeals rather to the cultivated eye, and many a semi-civilised and even uncivilised mind which is too primitive to appreciate you can be touched by beauty of sound.[52]

It is clear that Stanford believed that beauty was one of the primary purposes of artistic pursuit; Edward Dent states this unambiguously in his summary of the Irish composer's career:

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[48] Differences in the philosophies of Stanford and Parry manifested themselves even in their youth; Rodmell suggests that the differing reactions to early performances of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* are representative of wider differences in attitudes towards modernism. Please see:
Rodmell, *Charles Villier Stanford*, 49-50.
[49] Hubert Parry, 'The Meaning of Ugliness', *The Musical Times*, 52/822 (1911), 507-511 (507).
[50] Philip Heseltine, 'Some Reflections on Modern Musical Criticism', *Musical Times*, 1st October 1913, 652-4 (653).
[51] While this may seem superficially like an anti-conservative (in economic terms) policy, Stanford consistently argued for it using conservative rhetorical language. He also argued that in the grand scheme of things, the government spent enormous amounts of money on wasteful projects, whereas at least with music it would be a relatively small expenditure for a tangible result. Stanford also advocated for some policies which today would be considered to be fiscally conservative, such as his vision for the future of university scholarships. Please see:
Stanford, *Interludes*, 15.
[52] Stanford, *Studies and Memories*, 15.

> Stanford was the last of the classico-romantic era of the nineteenth century and could never imagine any music that was not composed in that style. A supreme craftsman, his one aim was to pursue pure beauty of sound and perfection of form; despite his 'Irish' enthusiasm he was far more a classic than a romanticist.[53]

It is clear in this passage that Dent believes that, at least for Stanford, the pursuit of beauty, classicism and musical form are interrelated.[54] Dent indicates that Stanford's Irish temperament might imply a distaste for classicism, but Dibble has suggested that Stanford was actually interested in Irish music both for its beauty and for what it could offer as a glaze, or an addition to the palette of classical formulations: 'Stanford's principal interest in Irish melody, which stemmed from an extensive knowledge of its highways and byways, the beauty and richness of the repertoire itself and the colour it could lend to the European musical language he had so thoroughly imbibed'.[55] In his introduction to *Musical Composition,* Stanford himself diagnoses the interrelatedness of musical form, beauty and the canon when he declares that 'composition of music is no more an exact science than the painting of a picture. No rules can be laid down for it, no canons save those of beauty can be applied to it'.[56]

Each of Stanford's writings is littered with appeals to or declarations of an appreciation of beauty; even in his *Pages from an Unwritten Diary*, the composer emphasises how important aesthetics are, stating that he 'shall always prefer beauty of tone to strength of muscle',[57] as well as a lengthy description of why the man he describes as 'the greatest artist of our time', Joseph Joachim, was particularly valuable:

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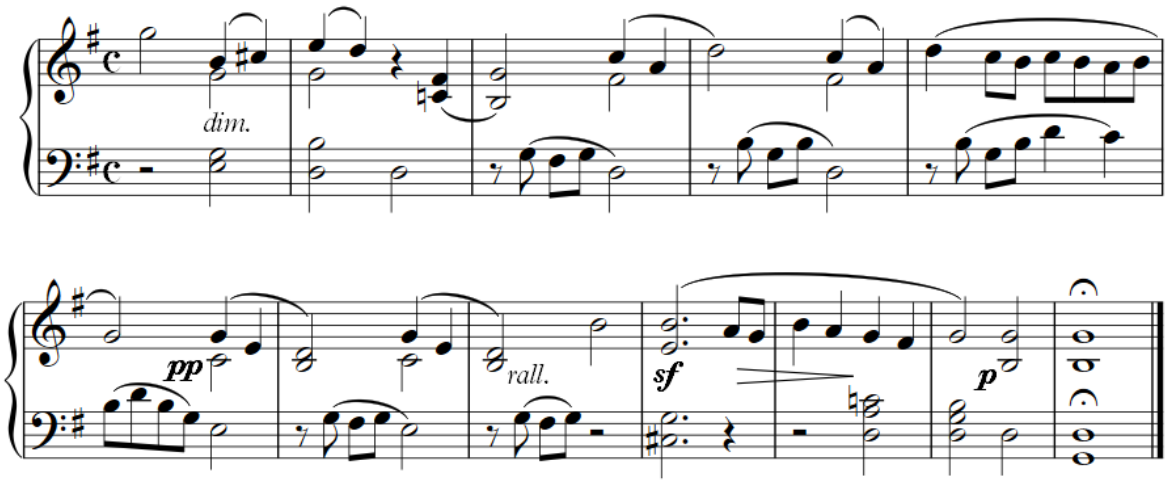
[53] Edward J. Dent, 'Ralph Vaughan Williams', *Musical Times*, 93/1316 (1952), 443-444 (443).
[54] Dent goes on to suggest that what is valuable in Vaughan Williams, which, implicitly, is absent in Stanford, is his focus on the future, modernism and novelty; Dent declares that 'What matters is that from the first beginnings of his career he has always looked towards the future, and that is why in his eightieth year he is no 'ancient monument' but a vital force in modern music'. Please see:
Dent, 'Ralph Vaughan Williams', 443-444.
[55] Dibble, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 128.
[56] Stanford, *Musical Composition*, 1.
[57] Stanford, *Pages from an Unwritten Diary*, 59.

> I can never over-estimate the value of that forty-five years' influence in my life and in my work. It had the double power of giving impulse and controlling it with brake-power. A purist of almost microscopic accuracy, his criticism, even when it seemed to border on the pedantic, kept experiment within the bounds of beauty, and made one weigh and measure all departures from the normal by the standard of artistic merit.[58]

Implicit in this statement is Stanford's foremost criticism of modernism and its consequences: that many of its adherents reject beauty as a primary artistic pursuit. Stanford, unlike other composers who were more instinctive in their pursuit of beauty, offers a rationalisation of its importance in one of his final published texts. In his lecture 'On Some Recent Tendencies in Composition', Stanford argues that the development of the musical canon is always welcome 'provided that it makes for the enhancement of beauty'.[59] He enumerates a series of problems with modernism. For Stanford, if parallel fifths prevail, it will destroy the aesthetic understanding of the past; if the whole-tone scale prevails, it will destroy nature; if overcrowded modulations prevail, it will destroy tonality and the simple beauty of the common chord, alienating the untutored listener; if chromaticism prevails, it will destroy simplicity.[60] Stanford generally wrote music that adhered to this vision, particularly in his educational music for children.[61] His *A Toy Story* offers an insight into the sort of language and techniques the composer wanted to pass on to younger generations: simple chords, old-fashioned left-hand patterns, and undemanding tonality. The work is not unlike Schumann's *Kinderszenen* in its structure, language and didacticism.

[58] Stanford, *Pages from an Unwritten Diary*, 61.
[59] Stanford, 'On Some Recent Tendencies in Composition', 39.
[60] Stanford, 'On Some Recent Tendencies in Composition', 39-44.
[61] This encouragement of beauty was also present in his teaching; Harry Plunket Greene suggests that Stanford's teaching was pioneering in that it eschewed the 'repetition of scales' approach and instead 'encourages the veriest [sic] beginner to look for beauty and phrasing from the start'. This can be best observed in *A Toy Story*. Please see:
Harry Plunket Greene, *Charles Villiers Stanford* (London: Edward Arnold, 1935), 96-97.



Ex. 5.1., Excerpt from 'Not Alone', (1922), *A Toy Story*, bb. 24-36.

The teaching of beauty as absolute is one of the most controversial of Stanford's views and methods in the present day; modern musicians and teachers find it particularly objectionable. Rodmell writes that:

> Stanford's greatest weakness as a teacher was his narrow and immutable definition of beauty. For him beauty was an absolute truth, the tonality in which it was to be expressed being derived, in his view, from the 'pure scale'; there were, consequently, strict limits within which he was directly responsible, and his determination not to redefine his beliefs reinforced the conservative parameters in which British music existed at the turn of the century.[62]

For Rodmell, this is a 'weakness' of Stanford's teaching, but the composer would not have seen it this way, nor would his musically conservative contemporaries. What Rodmell perceives to be limitations placed on his pupils, conservatives would consider to be an encouragement to follow the tried and tested models of the past. Additionally, Stanford's methods did not stop his pupils from exploring modernist ideas.[63] This didactic success despite his absolutism was recognised by Sir George Dyson when he wrote of Stanford that:

[62] Rodmell, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 370.
[63] Edgar Bainton noted this when he wrote: 'Could any music be more dissimilar than that of Hurlstone and Holst, of Goossens, Rutland Boughton, and John Ireland? And this fact in itself is surely the finest tribute to his teaching that he kept his own personality in the background and helped them whether they were conscious of it or not to express themselves, to say clearly what they wanted to say'. Please see:
Edgar Bainton, quoted in Plunket Greene, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 96.

> He was impatient, blunt and frankly hostile to much of what we are pleased to call modernity. To him music was, as it were, a body of truth, and what was not true was false. To deny truth was heresy. To be lukewarm was to betray one's poverty of soul. Yet his technical advice was impeccable… There has certainly been no other teacher of composition in England who has approached Stanford in the number and distinction of his pupils.[64]

The return of diaphony and consecutive fifths was particularly objectionable to Stanford; in describing the music of the past, the composer wrote that:

> Fifths were prohibited because they were ugly and they are as ugly now as they ever have been, and as they ever will be, world without end; because their ugliness most probably depends upon natural phenomena and not upon individual taste… The return of Diaphony is the return of a relic of barbarism; or rather an attempt to advance music upon lines which later genius found to be as impossible for beauty, as it is disagreeable acoustically. If it prevails, good-bye to Beauty.[65]

Stanford here summarises many of his first principles. It is clear that, for the composer, beauty is timeless because human nature is eternally fixed, and therefore studying the (unequally valuable, in that some are barbarous and some are advanced) models of the past is the most reliable way of learning how to compose beautiful music. For Stanford, then, beauty was evidently linked to his other assertions about the history of music and its place in the modern world. It was a means of relating to the composers of the past, a path to canonical greatness, and a civilising force in the world; a method of ennoblement and an escape from the flawed nature of the human condition.[66]

Eric Blom, in attempting to define and describe the extent of modernism in 1923, implies that there is a spiral-like nature to the history of musical progress:

> It is not a question of drawing comparisons between contemporaries. For not only is Bach vastly more modern than Handel, Purcell than Blow, Schumann than Mendelssohn, or Elgar than Stanford, but Scarlatti is more advanced than Brahms, Chopin than Scriabin, and Gesualdo of Venosa than Ravel.[67]

Both Stanford and Brahms are often placed in the canon as musical conservatives, Brahms even being, in the view of Blom, outdated by a composer who was well over a century his

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[64] George Dyson, quoted in Plunket Greene, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 101.
[65] Stanford, 'On Some Recent Tendencies in Composition', 40-41.
[66] Take the following passage from Stanford's *A History of Music*, for example, in which the composer, drawing on 1 Corinthians 13:11, writes of Mozart: 'When one is a child, he speaks as a child; but when one is old, he puts away childish things; or rather, what we once imagined to be childish turns out to be mature. His simplicity of expression is so perfect that it gains with repetition. It is not the simplicity of a superficial or vapid mind, but the natural expression of a highly-trained and deeply sensitive one'. It is likely that Stanford is here commenting on his own contemporaries as much as he is on Mozart. Please see:
Stanford, *A History of Music*, 254.
[67] Eric Blom, 'The Truly Modern in Music', *Music & Letters*, 4/3 (1923), 231-235 (231).

senior.[68] This is, of course, an extreme extension of a whiggish interpretation of music history, but it does serve to illustrate the way in which musically conservative composers such as Brahms, and his stylistic descendants (perhaps including Stanford), were viewed in the modernist era. It is this vision of music history that, in part, allowed Cecil Gray to claim in his *A Survey of Contemporary Music* that Stanford was little more than 'second-hand Brahms';[69] Dyson recalled similar difficulties with the composer's conservative sympathies:

> But in matters more elusive, in questions of personal expression, of poetic or dramatic mood, of all the more modern devices of emphasis or atmosphere, he seemed to some of us to be a bundle of prejudices. His judgments in these things were so impatient, brusque and final… His mature idol had been Brahms. To his pupils it too often seemed that what he wanted from them was Brahms and water… It is said that some of them occasionally concocted a deliberate imitation in order to please.[70]

For Dyson, a musical conservative himself, this is not entirely negative, but Stanford would likely have been frustrated by such a description of his teaching.[71] For many of his students, however, rebellion against Stanford's musical conservatism encouraged them instinctively to seek an alternative; Eugene Goossens wrote:

> Stanford laid most of the blame for the wildness of the young radicals on the pernicious influence of Strauss and Debussy, though secretly he grudgingly admired the more conservative efforts of both composers. He was irritated when I told him of being present at the *Elektra* performance earlier in the year, and that I considered it thrilling and masterful. He said frankly that were I to hear much more of that 'pornographic rubbish' he'd give me up as a lost soul. So when I saw that the premiere of Strauss's *Salome* was announced for the end of the year at Covent Garden, I was all the more determined to go.[72]

Stanford found Strauss particularly distasteful and was open in his criticism of the composer, arguing from a position of both precedent and beauty in his denouncement: 'Strauss set out to conquer the world by force and surprise, when he knew that he was powerless to do so by

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[68] Eric Blom, 'The Truly Modern in Music', 231.
[69] Cecil Gray, *A Survey of Contemporary Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1927), 251.
[70] George Dyson, quoted in Music & Letters, 'Charles Villiers Stanford: By Some of His Pupils', *Music & Letters*, 5/3 (1924), 193-207 (197).
[71] Dyson's biographer, Paul Spicer argues that he was 'a conservative composer' and that 'it was in some ways more courageous of him to write music in an outmoded language in such a period of violent change than to join the bandwagon of the new'. Please see:
Paul Spicer, *Sir George Dyson: His Life and Music* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2014), 122.
[72] Eugene Goosens, quoted in Rodmell, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 367.

charm or beauty'.[73] In some ways, Stanford failed to impart his values, as well as his dislike of Strauss, onto many of his students.[74]

This was not the case for every Stanford student, however, as some less famous musical conservatives studied under the Irishman. Most notably, his compatriot, Charles Wood, and the aforementioned George Dyson were evidently deeply influenced by the thinking of their teacher. Greene describes Wood and Stanford as having been 'alike on politics',[75] and the younger composer had success in similar fields; Wood's obituary in *The Musical Times* praises him for his contributions to choral music and his work as a professor at Cambridge University, as well as declaring that 'as a writer of accompaniments to Irish folk-song Wood again ranks with Stanford – than which no higher praise can be given'.[76] The obituary concludes with an acknowledgement of his conservatism and interest in the music of the past, claiming that 'he had the all-too-rare gift of seeing the human where so many learned folk see only the quaint and archaic'.[77] Dyson was similarly influenced by Stanford in both his musical and literary pursuits; Dyson's *The Progress of Music* develops a number of Stanfordian narratives and is broadly an attack on the Whig interpretation of music history, in which he argues that there are significant elements of music which have declined in the face of modernism. He also contends that the process of canonisation often casts a shadow on important elements of music history: 'From time to time we unearth or rediscover one of these hundreds of forgotten composers, and find to our surprise that the gap between him and his better-known contemporary is not so great as we expected'.[78] In 1924, Dyson also

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[73] Stanford, *Interludes*, 109.
[74] Stanford seems to have taken particular exception to the Straussian form of the symphonic poem; a number of Stanford's students, including Gustav Holst, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Frank Bridge, and George Dyson, each composed symphonic poems of their own. Stanford himself only approached something parallel to the form in his *A Song of Agincourt* for orchestra (op. 168). Please see:
Rodmell, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 317.
[75] Greene, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 97.
[76] The Musical Times, 'Charles Wood', *The Musical Times*, 67/1002 (1926), 696-697 (696).
[77] The Musical Times, 'Charles Wood', 697.
[78] George Dyson, *The Progress of Music* (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), 231.

addressed the Musical Association with a conservative lecture, in which he referenced Stanford and claimed that Brahms and his generation were blessed with a critical reception and wider understanding of the technical details of music which inspired them to achievements that were impossible without it. In the following discussion, Dyson argued that 'our difficulty with contemporary music is that we are inclined to accept it without demanding precise values such as our critical predecessors did'.[79] The address was not unlike Stanford's lecture to the same forum, delivered four years earlier, in both content and controversy.[80]

Along with his position as a pedagogue, Stanford's Irishness and unionist politics were an integral part of his identity and the manifestations of these traits in his works are a window through which it is possible to view the ways in which conservatism can be constructed in music. Hughes and Stradling note some of the unusual aspects of Stanford's character, as a follower of Brahms and an Irish unionist:

> As a conservative he valued Brahmsian traditionalism… Stanford's contradictions in the eyes of his contemporaries were patent – a Brahmsian who wrote mostly 'programme music'; an Irish Anglican who became a pillar of the English Musical Renaissance, while passionately celebrating Irish national music in so much that he wrote.[81]

The seriousness of the divisions over what was known as the 'Irish question' during Stanford's lifetime are not as widely understood today as they might have been if it were not for the First World War, which curtailed much of the escalating tensions that dominated the newspapers for the first half of 1914.[82] These tensions had been incrementally increasing for all of Stanford's adult life, and as a staunch unionist, it seems to have affected his musical output an enormous amount. It is necessary to recognise the significance and gravity of the

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[79] George Dyson, 'Criticism of the Living', *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 50th Session (1924), 47-66 (63).
[80] Charles Villiers Stanford, 'On Some Recent Tendencies in Composition', 39.
[81] Meirion Hughes and Robert Stradling, *The English Musical Renaissance 1840-1940: Constructing a National Music* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 57.
[82] Alan MacLeod, 'The Conservative Party and the Irish Question, c.1885–2010' in Bradley W. Hart and Richard Carr (eds.), *The Foundations of the British Conservative Party* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 84-106 (90).

events surrounding the Home Rule saga. It was ultimately the undoing, in some views, of the parliamentary Liberal Party,[83] as well as coming close to causing civil war in Ireland;[84] Stanford himself believed that this would be the most likely outcome of a vote for Home Rule.[85] Indeed, Rodmell argues that there is some evidence that Stanford was a supporter of the Liberal Party in 1882, but Gladstone's 'conversion to Home Rule' was one of a series of events which led Stanford to become a political conservative. Rodmell suggests that Stanford was disenchanted by the Liberal Party 'principally because he believed that Home Rule in Ireland would pass power to the Catholic majority with few safeguards for his own constituency, the Anglo-Irish enclave in Dublin'.[86]

As Harry Plunket Greene asserted in the opening of his biography of Stanford, it is vital to understand that while the composer was an anglophile and an admirer of Germanicism in music, 'Charles Villiers Stanford was first and foremost an Irishman'.[87] Greene emphasises the overwhelming volume of his unabashedly Irish works:

> He was a musician with a genius for the setting of his country's tunes. And if any should question his 'Irishness' I would ask them if they had ever spoken to him. And if that were not enough I would point to his *Irish Symphony*, his *Six Irish Fantasies for Violin*, his opera *Shamus O'Brien*, his Choral ballad *Phaundrig Crohoore*, his five *Irish Rhapsodies for orchestra*, his *Irish Concerto for violin, violoncello and orchestra*, his four collections of old Irish airs and his own song-cycles… what other music-maker in the world has left so eloquent a testament of nationality?[88]

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[83] Some argue that this was as a result of the merger of Liberal Unionists with Conservatives to form the Conservative and Unionist Party in 1912, but Hearnshaw offered an alternative hypothesis, arguing that there can only ever be two effective political parties: 'the party of order' and 'the party of progress'. Please see:
F. J. C. Hearnshaw, *Conservatism in England: An Analytical, Historical, and Political Survey* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1933), 14.

[84] Much of the literature on this subject is highly partisan as a result of the continued strength of feeling on both sides of the issue. Robert Saunders provides a good summary of the events through a conservative lens, however, and emphasises the unprecedented nature of what took place in the years leading up to The Great War. The complete story cannot be told in detail here, but, as Saunders notes, the Conservatives became 'the only national party in the twentieth century to sponsor a paramilitary army' when they funded a volunteer army of 110000 men, and the Ulster Covenant – a pledge to 'resist Home Rule by all possible means' – was signed by half a million people in Ireland; the British version was signed by over a million, including Stanford and Elgar. Please see:
Robert Saunders, 'Tory Rebels and Tory Democracy: The Ulster Crisis, 1900–14', in Bradley W. Hart and Richard Carr (eds.), *The Foundations of the British Conservative Party* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 65-83 (66-80).

[85] Stanford, 'Referendum ad Absurdum', 5.

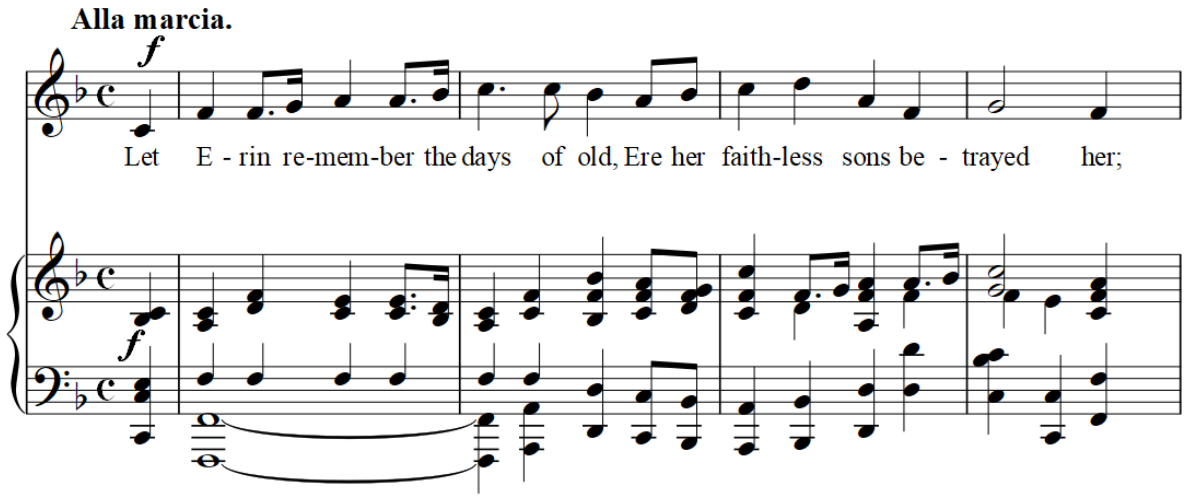
[86] Rodmell, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 131.

[87] Greene, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 1.

[88] Greene, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 182.

Of all of these works intended to evoke Irish identity, Stanford's *Irish Rhapsody No. 4 in A minor* was received as the most directly political music which the Irishman composed.[89] This has been interpreted in both the text and context of the work; Christopher Scheer contends that 'there is a sense of fervour in this music that points to a statement of belief' and that the rhapsody is a 'personal and impassioned political statement'.[90] These implicitly stated beliefs are unambiguously conservative and unionist. Stanford ensured that the work, finalised in November of 1913, was musically and politically positioned in Ulster by utilising folk music fragments which were perceived to be from what is now known as Northern Ireland, as well as a reference in the subtitle – 'The Fisherman of Loch Neagh and what he saw' – to an important geographically Ulsterian location. The subtitle is more than this, however, as it is a reference to a poem by Irish writer and lyricist Thomas Moore, 'Let Erin Remember the Days of Old'.[91] Stanford knew and liked the work as it was included it in his own collection of *The Irish Melodies of Thomas Moore* (1895), as well as the 'Irish' *Symphony No. 3* (1887) and his Elgarian *A Welcome March*, dedicated to King Edward VII for his visit to Ireland in 1903.[92]

[89] It is arguable that Stanford's opera *Shamus O'Brien* could take this place; the work has a complicated history, but as O'Connell notes, 'the opera's theme of Irish rebellion became so sensitive after the 1912 Home Rule Bill that Stanford forbade further performances'. Please see:
O'Connell, 'Stanford and the Gods of Modern Music', 42.
[90] Christopher Scheer, 'For the Sake of the Union: The Nation in Stanford's Fourth *Irish Rhapsody*' in *Europe, Empire and Spectacle in Nineteenth-Century British Music* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 159-170 (162-170).
[91] The second stanza of the poem reads as follows: 'On Lough Neagh's bank as the fisherman strays, When the clear, cold eve's declining, He sees the round towers of other days, In the wave beneath him shining! Thus shall memory often, in dreams sublime, Catch a glimpse of the days that are over; Thus, sighing, look thro' the waves of time For the long faded glories they cover!'. There is a conservative, nostalgic, reactionary Irish spirit to the poem which clearly appealed to Stanford. Please see:
Thomas Moore, *Irish Melodies* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1867), 20.
[92] Charles Villiers Stanford, *The Irish Melodies of Thomas Moore: The Original Airs Restored and Arranged for the Voice* (London: Boosey & Co., 1895), 36-38.



Ex. 5.2., Excerpt from 'Let Erin Remember the Days of Old', (1895), *The Irish Melodies of Thomas Moore*, bb. 5-9.

Dibble argues that these choices were intended to 'express his support for the northern cause'.[93] The review of the rhapsody in *The Times* offers a number of insights into the reception of the work and the climate in which it was performed; it begins by asking what the fisherman might have witnessed:

> What did he see? Some people will say that he saw a political pamphlet on the Ulster question. Certainly were we to try to put into words the programme which the combination of folktunes, mostly from the North, and the quotations from Moore and Tennyson written in the score suggest, the result would read very like a political pamphlet, perhaps another "solution". But Sir Charles Stanford has just avoided putting it into words; he has put it into music, which is better, and we prefer to leave it there. He has taken a beautiful and visionary melody from Petrie's collection, contrasted it with a march tune found in Ulster, and bound the two together with a solemn tune known as "The Death of General Wolfe," but of older origin. Perhaps we may feel that the constructive arrangement is a little too conscious, or perhaps after "Ein Heldenleebn" [sic] one was inclined to tire of the pictorial view of music, but there can be no doubt of the restrained beauty of the slow introduction, of the nobility of the "Wolfe" tune soaring on the trumpets, of the stern energy of the march episode and the poetry of the reflections upon the Fisherman's song just before the emphatic coda. All these serve to justify his use of the line "Dark and true and tender is the North." The work was warmly received, and Sir Charles was called to the platform.[94]

The anonymous reviewer was fairly even-handed in their approach to a concert in which Strauss's tone poem preceded a work so antithetical to it as Stanford's. The review highlights a number of conservative traits in Stanford's work, both political and musical: the Tennyson

[93] Dibble, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 408.
[94] The Times, 'Sir C. V. Stanford's New "Irish Rhapsody."', *The Times*, 20th February 1914, 8.

quotation and the use of other unionist symbolism is paired with music which is intended to be beautiful and noble in its expression.[95]

Stanford's own private performances of the rhapsody were received in a similar way; Herbert Howells, in his centenary address on the Irish composer's life and works, recalled Stanford's own depiction of the work:

> If he spoke of Ireland it was in such wise as to make him appear an embittered political son of a country he by then loved only in that part which so moved to the tune of Edward Carson and James Craig: so that I could not feel the gentler antecedents of his love for Dublin. He played his *Fourth Irish Rhapsody* to me in a spirit, compounded of nostalgia and political sorrow, that seemed to shut off the easier, happier mood of the earlier *Rhapsodies*. The Irishman I chiefly knew in him then was the man who – almost with heart's blood, and with equal anger and sorrow – wrote at the end of that most moving *Fourth Rhapsody* the phrase 'and dark and true and tender is the North'.[96]

For Stanford, then, the *'Ulster' Rhapsody* was clearly a work which expressed a deeply held political and philosophical feeling, which he articulated using musically conservative language and devices, as well as the Irish folk tunes which were, as Dibble notes, 'integral to his musical character and compositional outlook'.[97] Scheer, in his thorough dissection of the rhapsody, highlights the use of the song 'The Death of General Wolfe' in particular:

> The second folksong, 'The Death of General Wolfe', has a longer documented history. It began as a song in the American colonies, but Stanford uses a tune collected by Petrie. The text recalls the tale of the Irishman James Wolfe, a general in the British army, whose death at the moment of victory at the Battle of Quebec is commemorated by a statue that stands outside the former Royal Observatory in Greenwich. The song celebrates an Irishman who attained glory and died for Britain, and his actions celebrate one important Irishman's part in British Imperial history. Despite the connotations of victory, the song itself is imbued with a sense of loss and martyrdom ushered in by the opening line: 'The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power and all that beauty, all that wealth ere gave await alike the inevitable hour – the paths of glory lead but to the grave'.[98]

Stanford's choices of songs in the work, as Scheer indicates, reveal a deeper political sentiment than is expressed on the surface. His inclusion of 'The Death of General Wolfe' and its contextual setting in the rhapsody express a direct link between his positive vision for

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[95] Dibble asserts that Stanford's Irish works were each 'imbued with a genuine fear of witnessing the disappearance, through rapid social and political change, of the world he had once known'. This nostalgic conservatism was most openly expressed in his rhapsodies, which Dibble believes 'meant a great deal to him emotionally'. Please see:
Dibble, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 330.

[96] Herbert Howells, 'Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924): An Address at His Centenary', *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*, 79th Sess. (1952-1953), 19-31 (21).

[97] Dibble, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 129.

[98] Scheer, 'For the Sake of the Union', 163.

both music and politics; it is one of the most direct assertions of intertwined musical and political conservatism ever to have been composed.[99]

Stanford's conservative philosophy was articulate, well understood, and an influence on everything he touched. It is clear from studies of Stanford's life and works that conservatism, both of music and of the mind, does not preclude either relatively radical views, or novel visions of the potential of music to express a range of ideas. There can be little doubt that Stanford eschewed large swathes of Straussian modernism or that his objections were philosophically and politically informed. This is demonstrable in what has is described in the following chapter as his negative vision; his conceptualisation of what conservative music is not or should not be. His *positive* vision of music, however, reveals another side of his works and character, as well as that of musical conservatism; his interest in portraying Irish identity through use of folk songs and rhapsodic forms show that conservatism does not automatically preclude contemporaneity, or even elements of modernism that are compatible with the four conservative statements outlined in this thesis. This is demonstrable in studies of his use of form, as well as the harmonic and melodic expression of his ideas. Likewise, Stanford's life and beliefs reveal that conservatism does not prevent a composer from holding views that can be considered to be quite radical in their context; a number of his views were extremely conservative even for their time, but he also was a Burkean reformer in his attitude to the development of musical pedagogy and the artistic social structures which he believed had stagnated by his lifetime.[100] Stanford believed in the primacy of beauty, excellence, and the craft of musical composition. He was the

[99] It is interesting to note that Stanford did not include the song in his *The National Song Book*; it would seem to fit the sentiment and implications of that publication – that is, the highlighted relationship between the music of the nations which made up the United Kingdom at that time – particularly well. The collection, as its title page indicates, was suggested by the Board of Education under Arthur Balfour's Conservative government in 1905. Please see:
Charles Villiers Stanford, *The National Song Book* (London: Boosey & Co., 1906).
[100] Rodmell, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 349-373.

composer of a number of great works which deserve recognition not only for their artistic excellence and intelligence of construction, but for the clarity of their expressions of a conservative attitude that has often been inarticulate.

CHAPTER VI

Sir Charles Villiers Stanford: Conservative Heritage and the 'Apostles of Humbug'

There are a number of musical and philosophical conservatives who appear to have been an influence on Stanford. Unlike German or Elgar, Stanford shared his perceptions of the people he admired in great detail. His writings reveal a thoughtful and considered conservatism, with a deeply-held respect for his musically conservative forebears and contemporaries. His involvement in social circles which included some of the most actively conservative artists, poets, thinkers, and writers seems to have influenced his thought at a fundamental level; Alfred, Lord Tennyson, G. F. Watts, and Thomas Carlyle, in particular, seem to have been significant in the formation of his philosophy. In biographies of the composer, as well as his own writings, three key musically conservative figures also stand out as having had an impact on Stanford's thought and composition. The philosophies and music of William Sterndale Bennett, Joseph Joachim, and Johannes Brahms each seem to have affected the Irishman profoundly. The extent to which any one of them guided his conservatism is difficult to evidence, but Stanford's interactions with the leading composers and thinkers of contemporaneous older generations are worth investigating nonetheless.

Stanford was an ardent admirer of Sir William Sterndale Bennett (1816-1875). To mark Bennett's centenary in 1916, Stanford composed a lengthy and carefully written essay on the older composer, in which he seeks to resituate Bennett in the canon as a 'great artist' and 'noble-minded character' whose place of rest near Purcell's tomb was thoroughly earned.[1] In all of Stanford's writings concerning Bennett – he mentions the older composer in many of his most important essays – the Irishman's anti-revolutionary, anti-Whig interpretation of music history is presented with clarity. While Stanford accepts that novel or unique compositional methods were difficult to find in early Victorian England, he seeks to

[1] Charles V. Stanford, *Interludes: Records and Reflections* (London: John Murray, 1922), 209.

place Bennett in the canon without ever making any judgements regarding any progressive qualities in the older composer's works; he does, however, make claims about Bennett's conservatism.[2] Stanford believed that:

> The lot of the music student in this country at the present day is a much smoother one than that of his predecessors of forty years ago. There were then practically no schools for composition in England; the leading composer, Sterndale Bennett, was driven to teaching the pianoforte, and was, from his nature and surroundings, wholly out of sympathy with any modern music since that of his close friend, Mendelssohn.[3]

Elsewhere, Stanford declares that Bennett's conservatism extended into a frustration with the early modernism that began to emerge at the end of his life; Stanford claims that Bennett 'had the deepest contempt for the undignified work of which he lived long enough to see the beginnings. If he had studied the recent records of our cathedral choirs, he would probably have despaired'.[4] The Irish composer compares Bennett favourably with Mendelssohn and Brahms, directly situating Bennett between them in the canon and excusing the stylistic elements in Bennett's writing which were thought to have become unfashionable:

> Passage writing for the pianoforte had before their time become mainly a medium for display, irrespective of any intrinsic merit or relevancy. To this snare even Mendelssohn, the then leader of musical fashion, had fallen a victim. With Bennett it became part and parcel of the musical idea and a natural development from it, a system which Brahms carried out with unvarying force throughout his life. Bennett's harmonic scheme was diatonic, but he was exceptionally chromatic in passage writing; another point of similarity. Finally he was very prone to *arpeggio* writing, as in "The Fountain," a form of ornament to which the German master was equally partial.[5]

Stanford also implies that it is modern life, technology and culture that has led to a lack of appreciation for Bennett's style:

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[2] Thomas F. Dunhill began his address to the musical association on Stanford's life and works with an implicit comparison to Bennett, in which he notes that the English composer's early works often 'showed a feeling for beauty in melody and form that has not been surpassed by any British composer since his day'. In a similar way, Stanford's friend and collaborator, Charles L. Graves, suggested that beauty over sublimity was an important characteristic of Bennett's musical philosophy: 'Bennett was no slavish imitator; the core of his work was his own, and his great exemplar was not Mendelssohn, but Mozart. His music was neither sublime nor poignant; the stream of his inspiration had not the depths or the foaming cataracts of a mighty river, but in its limpid and refreshing purity it reflected the good and gentle spirit from which it sprang'. Please see:
Thomas F. Dunhill, 'Charles Villiers Stanford: Some Aspects of His Work and Influence' *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 53rd Sess. (1926-1927), 41-65 (41).
Charles L. Graves, *Post-Victorian Music* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1911), 127.
[3] Charles Villiers Stanford, *Pages from an Unwritten Diary* (London: Edward Arnold, 1914), 138.
[4] Charles Villiers Stanford, *Studies and Memories* (London: A. Constable, 1908), 63.
[5] Stanford, *Interludes*, 164.

> To an audience on the prowl for startling effects and for new sensations, such music as Bennett's cannot appeal: but to those who like to sit still, and can forget temporarily the rush of trains, motors, telegrams and telephones, it will convey the soothing charm which was part and parcel of the man himself.[6]

Stanford never describes musical expression of this kind as outmoded or artificial, but instead emphasises Bennett's sincerity and describes him as 'masterly'.[7] For Stanford, Bennett was 'a composer rightly valued at his true worth by Schumann and by Mendelssohn, and whose compositions have been too much passed by in recent and more rapid blood-and-thunder days'.[8]

Before they had met, Stanford knew Bennett through his father, John Stanford, who shared a mutual friend with Bennett, Wyndham Goold, the Liberal Member of Parliament for Limerick from 1850 until his death in 1854.[9] Goold's friendship with Bennett was used by the composer's biographer and son, J. R. Sterndale Bennett, as evidence for the composer's Liberal views, despite their political arguments;[10] it is notable, however, that his biography also makes it clear that the composer was inhabited by a 'conservative spirit'.[11] Hector Berlioz described the English musical establishment, in which William Sterndale Bennett was deeply embedded as a teacher, conductor and founding president of the Bach Society, in an 1855 letter to Franz Liszt: 'There is a musical feeling at the bottom of these English

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[6] Charles Villiers Stanford, 'William Sterndale Bennett: 1816-1875', *The Musical Quarterly*, 2/4 (1916), 628-657 (632).
[7] Stanford, 'William Sterndale Bennett, 632.
[8] Charles Villiers Stanford, 'Some Thoughts concerning Folk-Song and Nationality', *The Musical Quarterly*, 1/2 (1915), 232-245 (242).
[9] Stanford, 'William Sterndale Bennett', 628.
[10] Little evidence of William Sterndale Bennett's politics survives today, but it is possible to infer a wide range of stances from his biography, which indicates that Bennett sympathised with conservatives, liberals, and even radicals. Investigation of the details of J. R. Sterndale Bennett's account of his father's politics reveals a different picture to the one painted, so it is difficult to assess the validity of any of the claims made about evidence which no longer survives. In one passage, for example, Bennett claims that his father's 'concern for politics was shown in later life, though not by a declared adherence to any particular party. On one occasion he went the length of becoming an electioneering agent in Liberal as against Radical interests. He put off his pupils, and volunteered to conduct Colonel Romilly, a candidate for Marylebone'. The political details of this incident seem quite extraordinary today; Romilly was, in fact, a Radical candidate who was the M. P. for Canterbury between 1850 and 1852, thanks to an election in which he ran unopposed. He then ran as one of two candidates, both Radical, in the Marylebone constituency in 1859. He lost the election on this occasion. Bennett's biography lacks accuracy, and a thorough, critical biography is yet to have been written. Please see: J. R. Sterndale Bennett, *The Life of William Sterndale Bennett* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907), 432-435.
[11] Bennett, *The Life of William Sterndale Bennett*, 445.

organizations, but it is a conservative feeling, religious above all, and anti-passionate'.[12] Similarly, on the subject of Bennett's appointment as conductor of 'the Philharmonic', Arthur O'Leary suggested in 1882 that Bennett's 'influence favoured that conservative tinge which had been always one of the society's distinguishing characteristics'.[13] Stanford revered Bennett from an early age, and learned to play all of his *Preludes and Lessons* (op.33) from memory as a child.[14] Stanford's father also attempted to rekindle his own acquaintanceship with Bennett several times during the younger composer's youth.[15] As Rodmell points out, however, Bennett did not formally teach Charles Villiers Stanford directly: 'it seems certain that [Stanford] received no musical instruction when he was a student; had he done so he would almost certainly have referred to his teacher(s) in his autobiography, especially had he received tuition from Sterndale Bennett, for whom he had some admiration'.[16] It is clear, however, that Stanford held Bennett in high regard and was influenced by the older composer's works and musical philosophy.[17]

Stanford's biographical article on Bennett attempts to rectify a number of elements of appreciation of the older composer which the Irishman believed to be unjustified.[18] Some of these perceived injustices took place during the older composer's lifetime. Stanford

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[12] Hector Berlioz, quoted in Gertrude Norman and Miriam Lubell Shrifte, *Letters of Composers: An Anthology 1603-1945* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), 129.
[13] Arthur O'Leary, 'Sir William Sterndale Bennett: A Brief Review of His Life and Works', *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 8th Sess. (1881-1882), 123-145 (130).
[14] Stanford, 'William Sterndale Bennett', 629.
[15] Stanford tells an amusing anecdote about his father and Bennett, claiming that John Stanford had 'rather shocked the serious Sterndale Bennett by performing Punch and Judy over the door with his fingers clothed in napkins, and introduced a Mozartian ghost to the music of the *Commendatore*'. Please see:
Charles Villiers Stanford, *Studies and Memories* (London: A. Constable, 1908), 122.
[16] Paul Rodmell, *Charles Villiers Stanford* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 41.
[17] Jeremy Dibble argues that Stanford was 'the driving force behind the concept of an English National Opera subsidized by the state'; it is possible that Stanford also inherited this idea from Bennett, who vigorously lobbied for greater state funding for music in general. Please see:
Jeremy Dibble, *Charles Villiers Stanford: Man and Musician* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 463.
William Sterndale Bennett, *Lectures on Musical Life* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006).
[18] Gustav Holst provides one example of the view of Bennett as dry and outmoded when he wrote in a somewhat sarcastic 1903 letter to Ralph Vaughan Williams that 'there is also the theory that one should get rich first and then compose. When I was a child, my father told me that Sterndale Bennett worked out that theory during his life very satisfactorily. When I was older, I heard Sterndale Bennett's music…'. Please see:
Gustav Holst, quoted in Hans Gal, *The Musician's World: Letters of the Great Composers* (Southampton: Camelot Press, 1978), 419.

concludes his article by making a wider political point regarding Victorian England and the pervasive liberalism; in 1869 (under Gladstone), the Italian-born conductor and composer, Michael Costa, was knighted:

> It was characteristic of early Victorian England, overrun by the foreigner and oblivious of the native, that the first State recognition of music of the day was a knighthood bestowed upon the very man, whose hostility (Corsican in its vendetta) to Bennett had been so long a scandal in the artistic life of the day, Michael Costa. It was not until two years later (in 1871) that public opinion forced those in high places to give him the honour which he ought to have been the first to receive.[19]

It is clear in Stanford's accounts of Bennett's life and works that he held the older composer in the highest regard, and respected his achievements not only as a university official and teacher, but as a composer and cultural influence. When viewed in its context, it is also possible that Stanford's biographical article was, in part, an attempt to shift the views of those who regarded Bennett as either a musical and philosophical Victorian liberal, as presented in his son's biography, or an ancient, dry composer whose scores deserved the layer of dust they had accumulated.

Another musically conservative influence on Stanford's life and works was the violinist and composer Joseph Joachim. The first public concert Stanford ever attended featured Joachim as a leading performer. The two found an affinity when they met; Stanford wrote that when they were introduced, 'he was in an instant as much a boy as I, and a friendship began which lasted unbroken till his death'.[20] Soon after, Joachim wrote a letter to Friedrich Kiel recommending Stanford as a student and introduced the two conservative musicians.[21] Henry Joachim, writing in 1933, described Joseph Joachim as possessing a musical outlook that, while containing many 'great qualities', was 'narrow and conservative; and though a contemporary of Beethoven, he was unable to plumb the depth of the latter's art,

[19] Stanford, 'William Sterndale Bennett', 657.
[20] Unbroken friendships were not always guaranteed with Stanford; he had strained relationships with a number of his contemporaries, including Elgar and Bridge, as well as with many university officials. Please see: Stanford, *Pages from an Unwritten Diary*, 61.
[21] Rodmell, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 26-50.

contenting himself rather to remain within the boundary set by Mozart'.[22] Joachim has largely retained a reputation for artistic conservatism through to the present day. Stephen Downes has argued that in understanding the conservatism of the age in which he lived and worked, we can accept the special place he held in the minds of his contemporaries; Downes suggests that in this context, 'we can identify why Joachim's relationship to Victorian culture was so important: by turns he was for them keeper of the Classics, heroic servant of artistic ideals, and purveyor of exquisite examples of the finer forms of the sentimental'.[23] Stanford and Joachim also shared an enthusiasm for conservative pedagogy; the *Königlich Akademischen Hochschule für ausübende Tonkunst* in Berlin, of which Joachim was the founding director, became, under the violinist's instruction, 'known for its rigid musical conservatism'.[24] Stanford admired Joachim's achievements at the *Hochschule*.[25]

Stanford and Joachim held a number of political values in common. Stanford wrote about these extensively, particularly Joachim's opinion on the so-called 'Irish question'. Like Stanford and many of his contemporaries, Joachim did not support the Conservative Party directly, but seems to have been, at least in part, a philosophical conservative. Stanford describes him as 'a strong politician – in Germany a National Liberal, in England a Liberal Unionist' and was pleased that Joachim seemed to have a respect for Joseph Chamberlain, as well as that his 'keenness at the time of the Home-rule Bill in 1886 could not have been

[22] Henry Joachim, 'Joseph Joachim: First Violinist of a Modern Art', *The Musical Times*, 74/1087 (1933), 797-799.
[23] Stephen Downes, 'Sentimentalism, Joseph Joachim and the English', *19th Century Music*, 42/2 (2018), 123-154 (154).
[24] Robert Whitehouse Eshbach, 'Introduction: The Creative Worlds of Joseph Joachim' in Valerie Woodring Goertzen and Robert Whitehouse Eshbach (eds.), *The Creative Worlds of Joseph Joachim* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2021), 1-14 (6).
[25] Stanford, *Pages from an Unwritten Diary*, 142.

exceeded by the most patriotic Britisher'.[26] Stanford presents a lengthy quote from a letter sent by Joachim to the violinist's wife, in which he argued that Ireland and its inhabitants were deeply hierarchical in their proclivities and as such appreciated their relationship with England more than had been portrayed internationally:

> But the republican Fenianism is imported from America, and has no future in the green island, which seems to be essentially feudal (in its tendencies), likes to admire pomp, and would be glad to be close friends with its aristocracy, if they were tender to its idiosyncrasies, and also showed consideration and love for the people. Of excitement and rebellion I saw no sign. It seems much worse from a distance than at close quarters.[27]

Joachim and Stanford's shared vision of the future of Ireland is particularly interesting in light of Joachim's own musical and political pursuits. What Stanford meant when he described Joachim as a 'National Liberal' in Germany was that, like himself, Joachim was actively facilitating his own unionist project in his native land. In the same way that Stanford supported conservative unionism through his music and publications, Joachim was actively involved in projects intended to build national narratives; Robert Riggs argues that in 'cultivating the great heritage of German music, [Joseph Joachim] aspired to nurture the public's sense of national identity and thereby contribute to the bonding of newly united Germany'.[28] In music, Stanford similarly saw in Joachim the spirit of conservative, anti-

[26] Stanford also claims that Joachim vocally supported the British Empire during the Boer War. Joseph Chamberlain was an enormously important, controversial figure in late Victorian politics. He began as a Liberal, but was a leading figure in the splitting of the party and the formation of the Liberal Unionists. To some, he became an icon of radical conservative politics, but to others, such as Lord Hugh Cecil, he was an 'alien immigrant' to the Conservative party. Cecil loathed Joseph Chamberlain for his perceived materialism and apparent lack of interest in 'the lasting verities of civilisation'. These opposing visions of the future of the Conservatives have been the source of some of the largest internal divisions in the party since the merge with the Liberal Unionists in 1912, which Joseph Chamberlain took part in facilitating. He was also the father of Conservative Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain. Please see:
Stanford, *Studies and Memories*, 131-132.
Arthur Mejia, 'Lord Hugh Cecil: Religion and Liberty' in J. A. Thompson and Arthur Mejia (eds.), *Edwardian Conservatism: Five Studies in Adaptation* (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1988), 11-40 (27).
[27] Joseph Joachim, quoted in Stanford, *Pages from an Unwritten Diary*, 100-101.
[28] Robert Riggs, '"Das Quartett-Spiel ist doch wohl mein eigentliches Fach": Joseph Joachim and the String Quartet' in Valerie Woodring Goertzen and Robert Whitehouse Eshbach (eds.), *The Creative Worlds of Joseph Joachim* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2021), 145-162 (158-159).

revolutionary 'progressism' that he ascribed to himself;[29] he presents Joachim as a believer in incremental improvement, beauty, and craftsmanship:

> He did not conceal his dislike of the latest developments of German music, not, however, without studying and listening to all its products; but his main indictment of it rested upon two allegations, which may be denied, but which the test of time alone will disprove – rough and unfinished workmanship, and lack of genuine spontaneous invention… For these views some have denied him a place amongst the progressists and the pioneers. Who are they who would deny the name of pioneer to the man who, before they were born, won the battle in Europe for Schubert and Schumann, for Dvorák and for Brahms? Pioneer he was, but he made sure of his base before he sallied out into new and unknown paths.[30]

For Stanford, these traits were what allowed him to appeal 'to the healthy, and the few detractors he had (and they were not of this country) will be found amongst the worshippers of excitement and the apostles of humbug'.[31]

Stanford believed that one of Joachim's primary virtues was his steadfast allegiance to Brahms; the Irish composer believed that Brahms's popularity in England came about in part as a result of 'Joachim's unceasing and loyal efforts to win for Brahms an abiding place in this country. Never had a composer a more trusty friend'.[32] Stanford wrote, in an 1896 private letter to Joachim, that 'it was most interesting to meet Brahms, though – shall I dare say it – I have no affinity for him! A big brain I know, and a small heart I think. Somehow I felt he had none of the divine sympathy which we meet with in our best beloved J[oseph] J[oachim]'.[33] Rodmell suggests that this is particularly interesting in light of the fact that Brahms was, for Stanford, 'the composer whom he had idolised most consistently through his adult life'.[34] His public recollection of the meeting, however, tells a quite different story:

> His chance came; he offered Richter a cigar, and was then handing the box to me, when he snatched it back with a curt, 'You are English, you don't smoke!' To which I replied, with an impertinence which it required some courage to assume, 'I beg pardon, the English not only smoke, but they even compose music sometimes,' making a simultaneous dash after the retreating cigar-box. For one moment he looked at me like a dangerous mastiff, and then burst out laughing. The ice was broken and never froze again.[35]

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[29] Charles Villiers Stanford, 'On Some Recent Tendencies in Composition', *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 47/1 (1920), 39-53 (39).
[30] Stanford, *Studies and Memories*, 134.
[31] Stanford, *Studies and Memories*, 128.
[32] Stanford, *Pages from an Unwritten Diary*, 176.
[33] Stanford, quoted in Rodmell, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 183.
[34] Rodmell, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 183.
[35] Stanford, *Studies and Memories*, 112.

Stanford goes on to relate other anecdotes regarding his several meetings with Brahms which were also congenial; perhaps the Irish composer decided to alter his account of the first meeting as a result of these events, or perhaps he changed his own perceptions as a result of establishing a better relationship with the composer later on.

As with Joachim, Stanford did not only see Brahms as a musical 'idol',[36] but also as a source of philosophical wisdom; he recalls at length a lamentation from the older composer given to a mutual friend:

> Speaking to an intimate friend of his and mine, not long before his death, Brahms was lamenting the musical prospects of his own country. He looked round and saw nothing. The schools of composition were so hidebound that they were turning out two classes of as widely different characteristics as Conservatives and Anarchists; both coming from the same primary cause, red-tape teaching.[37] Those who succumbed becoming Philistines, those who kicked against the pricks becoming Revolutionaries. Between them both healthy progress was being hopelessly manacled… Brahms could scarcely, as a worker immersed in his own creation, imagine that after him German music would be tired out. He was all his life occupied in keeping it alive and in prime condition. Only the intelligent onlooker could see that he was the last rose of a long summer. The rose-tree is not dead, far from it, but hibernating and must be patient in the process. Plenty of winter and spring weeds will spring up in the meantime: but it need not hurry, and a premature effort to put forth leaves or buds might be nipped by a cold blast.[38]

This is a deeply conservative philosophical statement. Stanford, in writing this passage, dismisses a number of his German contemporaries as 'weeds' and 'tired out' for their modernism and disinterest in a continuation with the canonical tradition,[39] which he describes as 'healthy progress'; he makes some of the same complaints about the German music teaching of the previous generation that his own students made about him,[40] and notes the

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[36] George Dyson, quoted in Music & Letters, 'Charles Villiers Stanford: By Some of His Pupils', 197.
[37] It is widely believed that the phrase 'red-tape' as used in this way was coined by Thomas Carlyle, a reactionary thinker whose works have been almost entirely forgotten in the present day, but whose thinking was popular in the nineteenth century. Stanford quotes Carlyle several times in his writing, as is discussed later in this chapter.
[38] Charles Villiers Stanford, 'Some Thoughts concerning Folk-Song and Nationality', *The Musical Quarterly*, 1/2 (1915), 232-245.
[39] It would be easy to assume that some of the composer's views were borne of some sort of national or cultural prejudice, but Stanford's outlook – as well as his personal multinational experience and identity – was considerably more international than many of his contemporaries. He was fluent in multiple European languages and was in regular contact with many of the great continental composers of the nineteenth century.
[40] George Dyson related a pair of amusing political anecdotes in Stanford's obituary which betray some of these quibbles: 'I remember a good many of his characteristic explosions. I happened once to bring into his room a book or a paper in which he came upon a photograph of Gladstone. He leapt at it. "Look at his face, my boy! Sinister, sinister in every line. Ugh!" Thus Stanford the Orangeman. Another day I heard part of a lesson given to a student who has since become famous. "Blank," he said, "your music comes from hell. From hell, my boy; H E double L." Thus Stanford the purist'. Please see:
Dyson, quoted in 'Charles Villiers Stanford: By Some of His Pupils', 196.

musical and political divisions that had already begun to take hold of music by the end of Brahms's life. Stanford admired Brahms deeply even as a young man, having persuaded Cambridge University to confer an honorary degree onto him in 1877 as well as persuading the senior composer to travel to England to receive the award and conduct the English premiere of his *Symphony No. 1 in C minor*.[41] In Stanford's miniature biography of Brahms, the Irishman employs the philosophy of precedent in a direct way, revealing the conservative side of his admiration for the older composer; he even sets out an 'educational family tree' which traces Brahms's 'descent' from the masters of the past through a series of teacher-pupil relationships back to Bach and Mozart.[42] There is perhaps no clearer application of the philosophy of precedent in Stanford's writings.

Stanford believed that Brahms was 'much more far-sighted a politician… than many of his professionally diplomatic contemporaries'.[43] Despite significant efforts in recent years to claim Brahms as a liberal and, as has already been discussed, to justify his place in the canon as a major influence on 'progressive' composers such as Schoenberg, Brahmsianism is still often perceived as a musically conservative trait.[44] Schoenberg himself, despite his often-cited claims that Brahms was in fact a progressive, believed that Brahms and Wagner were, even after the radical musical developments which had taken place by the middle of the twentieth century, totemic symbols of 'traditional' and 'progressive' musical philosophy.[45] Dibble explains, however, that the Brahms-Wagner debates of the nineteenth century were

[41] Brahms actually later refused to come to England as a result of frustrations with the organisers of the Crystal Palace concerts. Please see:
Greene, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 69-70.
[42] Charles Villiers Stanford, *Brahms: The Mayfair Biographies* (London: Murdoch, Murdoch & Co., 1912), 14.
[43] Stanford, *Studies and Memories*, 116.
[44] Margaret Notley, for example, has argued that despite Brahms's admiration for Bismarck, Brahms's affinity for intellectualism and academicism, as well as his distaste for Catholicism, make him more of a Liberal than has previously been accepted. Please see:
Margaret Notley, 'Brahms as Liberal: Genre, Style, and Politics in Late Nineteenth-Century Vienna', *19th-Century Music*, 17/2 (1993), 107-123 (109-120).
[45] Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), 56.

situated in a much wider philosophical and musical context, and that the seeming irreconcilability of the methods and visions of the two composers carried much less weight outside of German-speaking cultures. For Dibble, there existed on the continent a 'polemical bifurcation among the so-called 'conservatives' and 'progressivists' in Austro-German musical circles in which promoters of the overture – Brahms and Joachim – and the symphonic poem – Liszt and Wagner – became evermore irreconcilable', but this was considerably less prevalent in England.[46] Stanford himself believed this to be true:

> Brahms' music had long been more deeply appreciated and universally accepted in England than in Germany, owing probably in a measure to the fact that we had no serious battle-ground of Wagnerian and anti-Wagnerian parties; the performance of this symphony set an imperishable keystone on his fame among Britons.[47]

Conservatism and progressivism have sometimes been synonymous with anti-Wagnerism and appreciation of his works, but this idea appears to have had less significant cultural influence in England; German, Elgar and Stanford were each influenced by Wagner to a greater or lesser degree. The continental divisions certainly affected Stanford, however, who evidently saw the merits of both Wagner and Brahms despite his personal and musical association with the latter composer.[48]

Edward Woodhouse, in an unpublished thesis, has written extensively on the subject of the musical relationship between Brahms and Stanford. He explains that while it is often stated in analyses that Stanford's works are Brahmsian or influenced by Brahms, limited effort is made to evidence such claims.[49] Brahms's influence on Stanford is undisputed, but a

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[46] Jeremy Dibble, 'Narrative and Formal Plasticity in the British Symphonic Poem, 1850-1950', in Michael Allis and Paul Watt (eds.), *The Symphonic Poem in Britain, 1850-1950* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2020), 15-54 (17).
[47] Stanford, *Studies and Memories*, 111.
[48] Stanford wrote of Humperdinck that 'He is a disciple of Wagner, it is true, but of the best in Wagner; the Wagner that knew and appreciated Palestrina… the Wagner of the "Siegfried Idyll," of the "Meistersinger" and of "Parsifal," not the Wagner of unbridled excitement and sensuality'. Please see:
Stanford, *Interludes*, 112-113.
[49] Edward Luke Anderton Woodhouse, *The Music of Johannes Brahms in Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century England and an Assessment of His Reception and Influence on the Chamber and Orchestral Works of Charles Hubert Hastings Parry and Charles Villiers Stanford* (Durham: Durham Theses, 2013), 170-174.

number of variations exist in claims as to what his Brahmsianism actually entails. For Dibble, Stanford's style developed between 1879 and the composition of the Elegiac Symphony (1882) in such a way as to be more Brahmsian: 'Since then Stanford's adherence to Brahmsian principles of organicism and classical architecture had strengthened and his appetite for Brahms's music had grown exponentially'.[50] Woodhouse claims that it is Stanford's choices of relative key (often modulating to the submediant, 'a very Brahmsian relative key'), as well as his 'Brahmsian habit of incorporating thematic material into parts which upon first inspection appear to only be acting as accompanimental or rhythmic devices'.[51] It is notable that in Brahms scholarship, it is often these elements of his music which mark him as a 'conservative' composer; David Brodbeck, for example, argues that Brahms's attitude towards tonality, his choice of chord progressions, key changes, and classical forms are what make his *Third Symphony* a work which could 'scarcely be more conservative'.[52]

It is Brahms's *Fourth Symphony*, however, which Stanford seems to have internalised most completely. A number of authors have noted the similarities between Stanford's *Symphony No. 3 in F minor, 'Irish'* and Brahms's *Fourth Symphony*. While there is some debate as to whether Stanford was actually familiar with Brahms's *Fourth Symphony*, the two works share a number of features. Woodhouse notes that the 'intense and sophisticated variation' in the first movement of Stanford's work is particularly Brahmsian, as well as thematic development of the work as a whole.[53] Kevin O'Connell is far more critical of Stanford:

[50] Dibble, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 124.
[51] Woodhouse, *The Music of Johannes Brahms*, 374-386.
[52] David Brodbeck, 'Brahms, the Third Symphony, and the New German School' in Walter Frisch and Kevin C. Karnes (eds.), *Brahms and his World* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009), 95-116 (102).
[53] Woodhouse, *The Music of Johannes Brahms*, 351-352.

> This argument in favour of development, a strength of Stanford's theory, may have been a weakness in his practice, amounting sometimes to a kind of hypochondria. The slow movement of the 'Irish' Symphony illustrates this point. The movement opens with the bardic spareness of a solo harp against which a clarinet theme unfolds. This spareness is striking in the heavily upholstered world of late romantic orchestration. It is then as if Stanford becomes nervous of the music's very strength and sets in motion the rope-and-pulley mechanisms of development. The movement builds to a fanfare climax - specifically, the climax of the slow movement of Brahms's Fourth Symphony. The effect of the blatant citation is fatal, as if Blücher and his Prussians had ridden on at Waterloo only to turn their guns on the British… Too often in the 'Irish' Symphony *Durchführung* becomes a kind of sonic equivalent of the Protestant work ethic. In the more relaxed and lyrical Clarinet Concerto his gift shines better. Perhaps the Irishman in him responded more to the conversational mode of the concerto form than to the abstract rigours of the symphony.[54]

O'Connell believes that the problems he perceives in the *'Irish' Symphony* come from Stanford's identity, character, and philosophy, as well as that the work is a 'blatant' citation of Brahms's similar symphony.[55] Woodhouse has demonstrated the similarities of 'thematic process' in the two works, particularly in their opening movements, but O'Connell suggests that it is in the slow movement that the influence is most 'fatal'.[56] Both analysts accept that the similarities are undeniable and the influence is unmistakable. Dunhill believed that Stanford's Brahmsianism was rooted in the philosophy of precedent, concluding that 'The great masters of the past were again his guides, philosophers, and friends. He owed a good deal to Schubert and Schumann, and a good deal more to Brahms. He was evidently bent on writing not for his own day, but for all days'.[57] The Brahmsian qualities of Stanford's music are an integral characteristic of his musical conservatism.

In addition to the positive vision of a conservative musical order espoused by Stanford through his Brahmsianism, as well as his overtly Irish works, he was perhaps the most consistent and outspoken advocate of a negative vision of modernism in both his writing

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[54] Kevin O'Connell, 'Stanford and the Gods of Modern Music', *The Musical Times*, 146/1890 (2005), 33-44 (40-41).
[55] It is interesting to note in this context that Stanford dedicated *Songs of Old Ireland* to Brahms, who was 'delighted with the arrangements'. Please see:
Dibble, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 127.
[56] Woodhouse, *The Music of Johannes Brahms*, 346-352.
[57] Thomas F. Dunhill, 'Charles Villiers Stanford: Some Aspects of His Work and Influence' *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 53rd Sess. (1926-1927), 41-65 (51).

and his music.[58] Stanford argued vociferously against modern developments and took personal objection to the figure of Richard Strauss, who seems to have represented everything wrong with modernism and modernity in the view of the Irish composer. Stanford's objections to Strauss and modernism were profoundly conservative in their character:

> The modern developments of German music since the death of Wagner and of Brahms throw a light, if a lurid one, upon the trend of German character. The anti-militarist and peace-loving nations outside, more especially in England, have, with the exception of a few men of deeper insight and more intimate knowledge, treated these specimens of art-production as if they were hardy and mature growths from a sound parent stem. They have failed to see that they are but suckers, taking on the appearance of the old tree, but sapping its life at the root. The essence of German militarism has been reliance upon numbers, rapidity of concentration, perfection of machinery, repression of individual initiative, and in action the attack in close formation of which this repression is the necessary corollary. In their recent music, all these elements can be clearly traced. Richard Strauss is the counterpart of Bernhardi and the General Staff. He relies increasingly upon the numbers of his executants, upon the technical facility of his players, upon the additions and improvements to musical instruments, upon the subordination of invention to effect, upon the massing of sounds and the superabundance of colour to conceal inherent poverty.[59]

The primary problem with modern musical developments, for Stanford (a wartime bias notwithstanding), is that they do not adhere to the principles set forth by musical antecedents; they only appear in their guises, rather than follow in their footsteps. Any trace of musical conservatism in Strauss and his followers – that is, an appeal to precedent and conservative values – was merely a façade.[60] O'Connell is correct, however, to suggest that Stanford's frustrations with Strauss were more than musical:

> Stanford's puritanical distaste for the music of Richard Strauss is as much moral as musical… But further, the ethical degeneracy that clearly for Stanford underlay the aesthetic excess is denounced with terrible ferocity. The War provoked Stanford into stating his musical credo in its most extreme form, and it is unsurprisingly as much an ethical as an aesthetic one.[61]

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[58] Thomas F. Dunhill describes the strength of feeling underlying Stanford's antimodernist tastes, claiming that Stanford was driven by a 'fierce loathing' when discussing modernist composers; Stanford particularly disliked 'the men who dealt in harmonies which did not conform to the older standards of relationship between discords and concords, and who sought to extend the boundaries of music at the expense, as he felt, of clear intentions and recognisable form'. Please see:
Thomas F. Dunhill, 'Charles Villiers Stanford: Some Aspects of His Work and Influence' *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 53rd Sess. (1926-1927), 41-65 (59).

[59] Stanford, *Interludes*, 108-109.

[60] Stanford was also angered by Strauss's open dismissal of Brahms, which the Irishman must have felt personally. Stanford believed that Strauss 'threw Brahms, for whom he had apparently all the admiration of a would-be follower, overboard; even characterising in a never-to-be-forgotten gibe a work of his own, which bore that mark, as "nearly as bad as Brahms"'. Please see:
Stanford, *Interludes*, 109.

[61] O'Connell, 'Stanford and the Gods of Modern Music', 34-41.

It is possible that Stanford objected to modernism and its adherents on a philosophical level and rationalised these objections as aesthetic judgements. O'Connell offers a tripartite summary of Stanford's objections, arguing that extraneous influences, reliance on what he describes as 'colour' as opposed to structure, and modernist musical language – namely overuse of chromatics and the whole tone scale – were the principal problems rehearsed by the Irish composer.[62]

Stanford presented his negative vision of modernism in his own compositions much more openly than his conservative contemporaries, by offering a number of parodies and pastiches of the methods and composers he had a distaste for. Edgar Bainton, who had studied composition with Stanford, noted the existence of – and reason for – some of these parodies in 1924:

> He always feared lest his pupils might "lose their heads." In a recent conversation with the writer, Sir Charles indeed expressed the opinion that most of them had "gone too far," that they had carried their modernity beyond the limits of good sense… On the occasion of my last visit to him he showed me some parodies which he had written upon several modern composers. It is to be hoped that eventually his executors will permit their publication.[63]

It is unclear whether this music was newly composed and remains unpublished, or works which Bainton had not heard before. Stanford had earlier written a series of *Nonsense Rhymes*, which Greene believed to have been lost, but were later published in 1960.[64] The title page of the autograph manuscript score, currently held at the Piermont Morgan Library in New York, reads as follows: 'Nonsense Rhymes by Edward Lear, set to music (ostensibly) by Karel Drofnatski, Edited (with notes) by C. V. Stanford, Preface by C. L. Graves'.[65]

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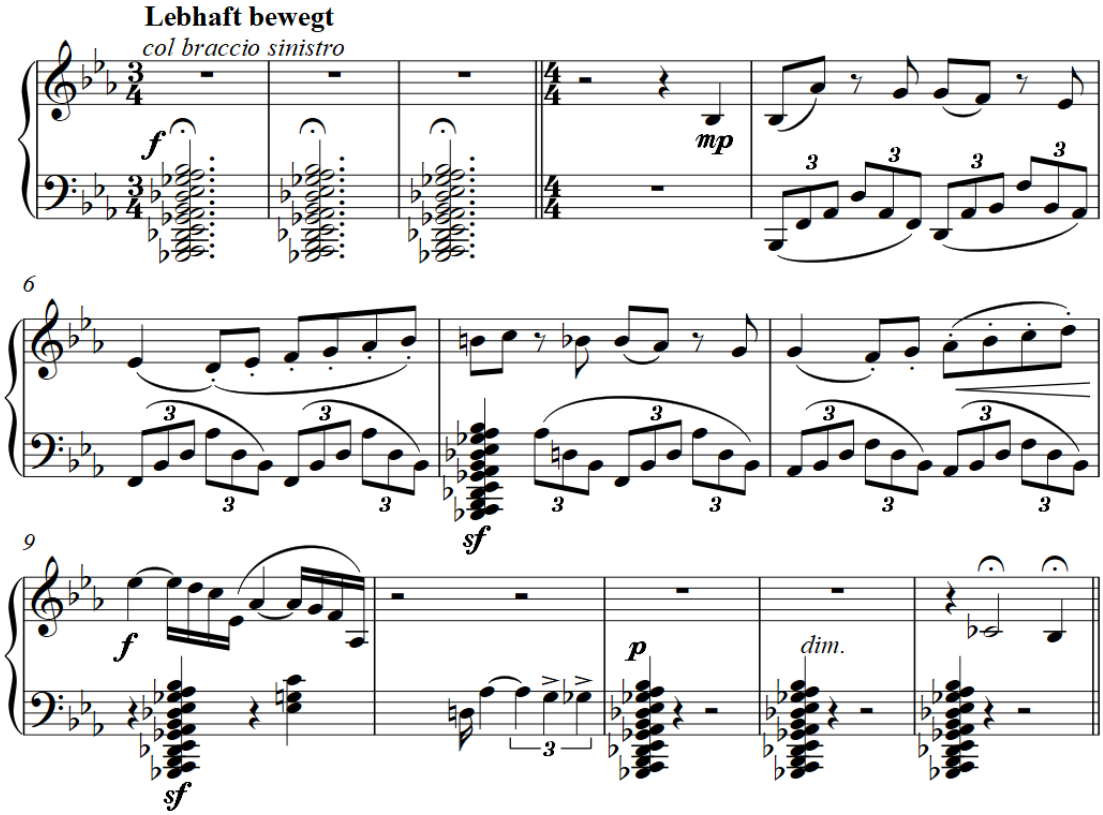
[62] O'Connell, 'Stanford and the Gods of Modern Music', 35.
[63] Edgar L. Bainton, quoted in Music & Letters, 'Charles Villiers Stanford: By Some of His Pupils', *Music & Letters*, 5/3 (1924), 193-207 (200-201).
[64] Greene reminisces about the musical jokes Stanford included in personal performances of these works, including use of a comical falsetto voice and caricatures of various composers. Please see:
Greene, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 245.
[65] The preface does not appear to be extant. Charles Larcom Graves is an obscure figure today, but was known for his parodies, amusing poems, articles in *The Spectator*, music criticism and literature, including writing the original poem which became Stanford's *Ode to Discord*, and a satire of H. G. Wells, *The War of the Wenuses: Translated from the Artesian of H.G. Pozzuoli*. His *The Spectator* articles included a number of fierce criticisms of Richard Strauss and other modernists, which were collected and published in the following book: Charles L. Graves, *Post-Victorian Music* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1911).

Drofnatski, of course, is (ik)Stanford, written backwards. Both the music – to which spurious opus numbers are appended – and the written comments parody, in part, modern composers, trends, and culture; Dibble notes that the first rhyme (Op. 365) is marked 'Allegro griegoso' and 'comically mimics *Peer Gynt*'.[66]



Ex. 6.1., Excerpt from 'Gongdichtung', *Nonsense Rhymes*, bb. 6-18.

Stanford's satire of modernism is most obvious in the music accompanying *Gongdichtung* (Op. 377). The title is, of course, a pun on the German word for what is usually described in English as a 'tone poem', *Tondichtung*. The comments attached to the parody provide some insight into his negative opinion of the practices of Germanic composers of the time:

> This olla-podrida fairly puzzled us, but after infinite trouble we arrived at a possible solution of the composer's intentions. He evidently wished to immortalize himself, and in so doing he drew largely, if unconsciously, upon the tone-poems of others. It is interesting to see that he at moments recognised the fact, and attempted to obliterate his plagiarisms by the use of the gong. His free use of the Bavarian language betrays somewhat the source of his ideas. His apotheosis of the murdered Tamtam-player suggests also a Teutonic or Teudominant Walhalla, for which he had some difficulty in finding the key.[67]

[66] Dibble, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 430.
[67] Charles Villiers Stanford, *Nonsense Rhymes*, autograph manuscript.

Stanford's amusing instruction *col braccio sinistro* (with the left arm), combined with these notes, alert the player to the sort of harmony the composer is mocking. Stanford's comments on the music for *The Aquiline Snub*, a setting of Lear's 'There was an Old Man with a Nose', accompanied by pastiche of Bach, offer an insight into a darker side of Stanford's sense of humour:

> A little careful reasoning soon enabled us to identify the real author of this touching Arioso. The owner of the nose (obviously a long one, though not too long) was a remarkable man. The musical style was that of a remarkable man; that remarkable man had a long nose; *ergo* the remarkable man must be John Sebastian Bach. Bach's residence in Leipzig, the Thomas School, was but a stone's throw from the quarter known as the Brühl, which was mainly peopled by Jews. The song is evidently a musical expression of strong protest, addressed to some friend who had offended Sebastian's strong Anti-Semite views by suggesting that his nose was of the length and type so familiar in the adjoining street.[68]

Some of the humour is of a more subtle nature, however, including the renaming of Lear's limerick 'There was an Old Person of Philae' to *Nileinsamkeit* (Op. 374), a play on words of the Egyptian river and the German tradition of *Waldeinsamkeit*.[69] Stanford makes an extended but revealing musical joke in his appended comments:

> The composer informs us that the form of this song is modelled upon one which was recently deciphered from some papyri by Professor Flinders Petrie, while he was excavating the tomb of Brahmeses II. The title however betrayed its true origin, and confirmed us in our suspicions that the Gospodin is as wily if not as dubious as the hero of the poem. The excellent secret service of this country discovered that the composition was purloined in the eighties from Carlgasse N° 4 in Vienna (now pulled down), out of a basket which was usually placed under the writing table in the inner study. The matter has now been placed in the hands of Messrs Simrock, the publishers, and the Austrian Polizei.[70]

Stanford is dryly criticising a contemporary culture in which Brahms (Brahmeses II), who had passed away nearly twenty years before Stanford is thought to have written these comments,[71] is treated in the same way as a Pharaoh whose ways are so ancient as to be alien to modern observers. The music makes reference to Brahms's *Symphony No. 4*, which

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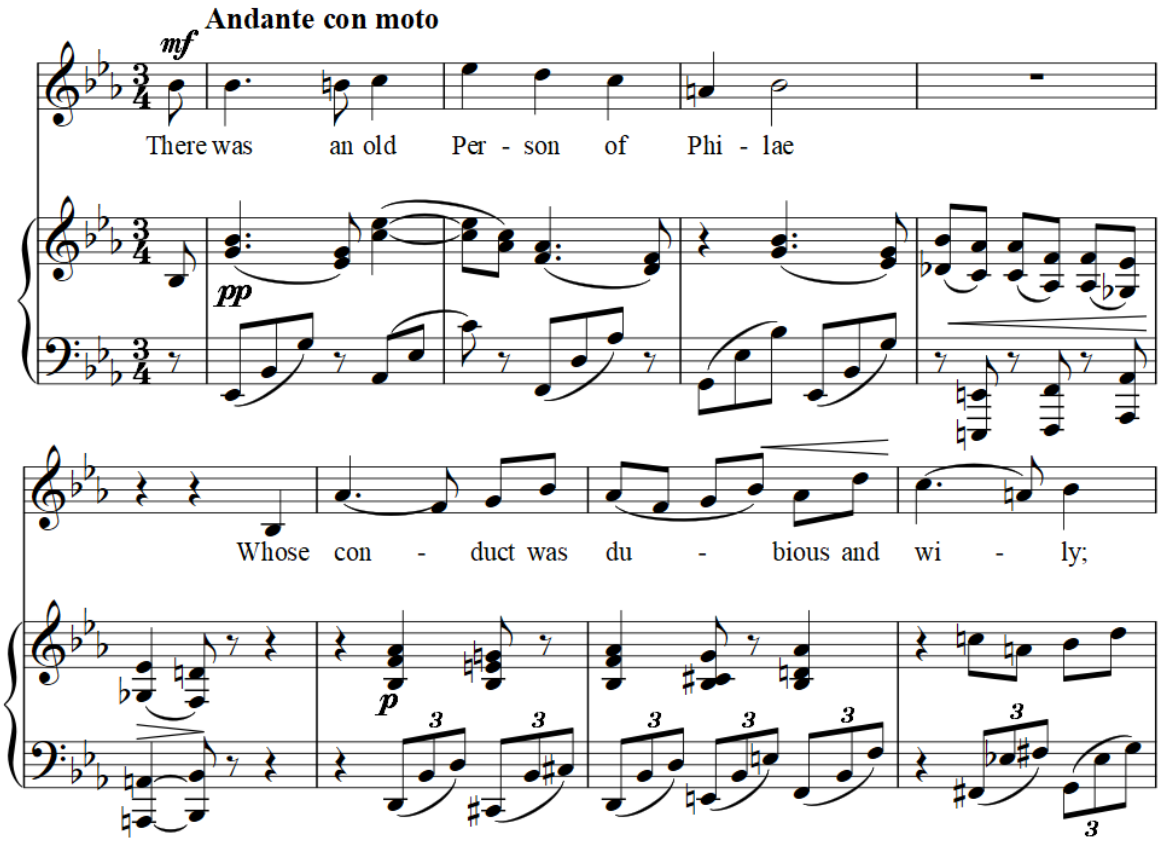
[68] Charles Villiers Stanford, *Nonsense Rhymes*, autograph manuscript.
[69] *Waldeinsamkeit* loosely translates as 'forest loneliness', and Stanford is making a pun relating to the plight of the protagonist of the poem, 'Whose conduct was scroobious and wily; He rushed up a palm, when the weather was calm, and observed all the ruins of Philae'. Philae is an island in the Nile.
[70] Charles Villiers Stanford, *Nonsense Rhymes*, autograph manuscript.
[71] Dibble believes that Stanford's letters reveal that he attempted to have the works published 'in or around 1916'. Please see:
Dibble, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 430.

Stanford humorously suggests is ‘now pulled down’.



Ex. 6.2., Excerpt from ‘Nileinsamkeit’, *Nonsense Rhymes*, bb. 6-14.

Stanford provided a much more direct parody of modernism and its adherents in his 1909 *Ode to Discord* (Hop. 1).[72] The *Daily Mail* described the work as ‘a broadside delivered against Richard Strauss and his followers’.[73] The *Ode*, marketed as a ‘Chimerical Bombination in Four Bursts’, was plainly and openly directed as a mocking criticism of the works of Strauss and similar composers, which, as Greene notes, ‘were then the last word in modernity’.[74] Dibble claims that the work was ‘quickly ignored as the reactionary cry of a composer who refused to move with the times’.[75] This is, for the most part, an accurate

[72] Charles L. Graves, the writer of the poem that inspired the work, wrote an article two years prior to the first performance of the *Ode to Discord* in *The Spectator* entitled ‘Comedy in Music’, in which he called for greater efforts to satirise modernist trends in music. Please see:
Graves, *Post-Victorian Music*, 273-279.
[73] Daily Mail, ‘Musical Broadside: Sir C. Stanford’s “Ode to Discord.”’, *Daily Mail*, 10th June 1909, 3.
[74] Greene, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 244.
[75] Dibble, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 382.

assessment, but contemporary reviews were broadly positive; *The Times*, for example, believed that while the work was too well-written to parody modern music effectively, it would be likely to positively influence the direction of modernism:

> The simultaneous playing of the notes G and A flat, together with the appalling effect of a similar kind at the end are, like the direction "Nobilmente" in another place, special satires on individual composers; but as a whole the work, as we have already hinted, is deficient in the pure unqualified ugliness and dulness [sic] of most of the new music. It is perfectly clear that such a *jeu d'espirit* could give offence to no reasonable being; it is also very probable that it will help the cause of what is best in the new music by clearing away much of the cant that is habitually talked about it.[76]

The Illustrated London News offered an even more encouraging review, believing that the work would be significantly more of a success than it was:

> Suffice it that the "Ode to Discord" stands out as quite the most amusing piece of work that the concert-platform has heard in our time, and that the New Symphony Orchestra, under Mr. Landon Ronald, assisted by Mr. Mason's choir with Miss Gleeson White and Mr. Plunket Greene as soloists, gave it the best interpretation possible. Doubtless the Ode will be very popular on our concert-platforms for a long time to come.[77]

At the time of Stanford's death, the *Ode to Discord* was still remembered fondly by those sympathetic to the Irishman's views; the obituarist in *The Musical Times* reminded readers of the work as an example of Stanford's humour, commenting that 'In fact, the *Ode* is good evidence in support of a remark Stanford made to the writer at about this time: 'Anybody can write in the extreme modern style,' he said. 'It's largely a matter of having enough spare time to write lots of notes''.[78] Greene, in his 1935 biography, also remembered the work (which he was a performer of) fondly: 'as a satire on modernity in music the *Ode* is ludicrously inadequate to-day, but it was great fun in those peaceful times when cacophony was just showing its head above ground'.[79]

Although the work was rarely performed, it appears that it was only after Stanford's passing that consensus shifted on the nature and quality of the music. In a 1934 article on comedic music, Eva Mary Grew believed that 'critics, rather unkindly, said of this work that

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[76] The Times, 'Music: New Symphony Orchestra', *The Times*, 10th June 1909, 12.
[77] The Illustrated London News, 'Music', *The Illustrated London News*, June 19th 1909, 900.
[78] The Musical Times, 'Walter Parratt, February 10, 1841 - March 27, 1924, and Charles Villiers Stanford, September 30, 1852 - March 29, 1924', *The Musical Times*, 65/975 (1924), 401-403 (403).
[79] Greene, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 244.

it was the best music Stanford had done',[80] and the composer's son, Guy Stanford, was frustrated that the work had been revived over his father's more serious but similarly neglected music:

> Why dig up the *Ode to Discord* which has long since been of no particular interest and spend so much time and money when the same could have been so much more worthwhile on something else. It was once given over here not so many years ago and fell completely flat. It wasn't particularly funny nor particularly ugly.[81]

It remains that Charles Villiers Stanford himself felt that the work was worth the time and money – which, given the comically oversized orchestra, was presumably not insignificant – invested in it.[82] The changing reception of the work over time reveals a great deal about social, musical and cultural shifts that had taken place in the intervening years; Rodmell accurately summarises the paradoxical relationship between the music and politics of conservative parody:

> Stanford was defeated by the problem faced by any conservative wishing to satirise radicalism: it can only be achieved by outdoing the radical, and the product is anathema to the conservative, since it is even more offensive than that which is satirised. Just five years later it would have seemed pale indeed to any musician familiar with Stravinsky and Schoenberg.[83]

It is interesting that seven years later, when Stanford sought to publish his *Nonsense Rhymes*, he did not include a parody of these two composers.

The music itself projects Stanford's musical and political conservatism in various ways. Dibble explains that the *Ode* features 'a chorus of Anarchs, Chromatic Brigands, Doublesharpers, Contrapunters, Syncopated Suffragetti (Stanford was wholly against women's suffrage), Demonic Shakers ('Trilli del Diavolo'), and Burbling Banshees'.[84] Musical and cultural modernity are here mocked simultaneously. Stanford and Graves

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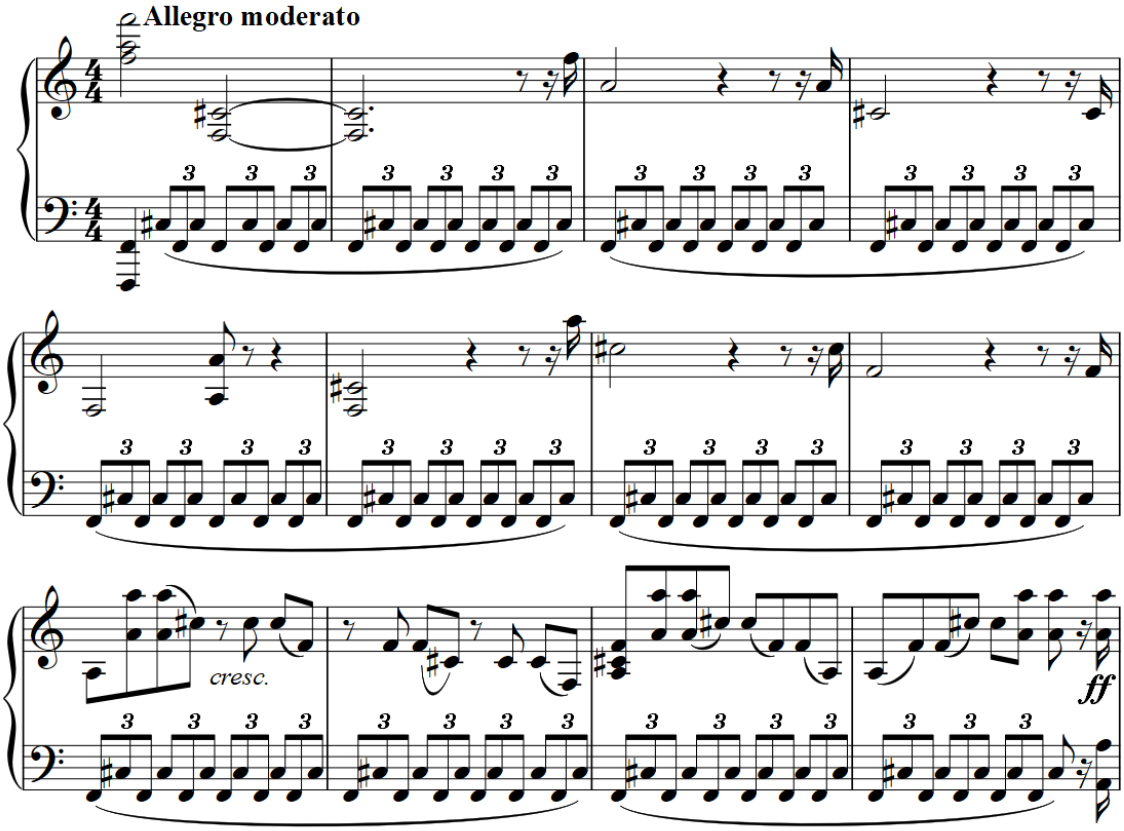
[80] Eva Mary Grew, 'Humour in Music', *The Musical Times*, 75/1092 (1934), 128-129 (128).
[81] Guy Stanford, quoted in Dibble, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 382.
[82] A review of the first performance of the work in the *Daily Mirror* focussed on the comedy of the instrumentation, noting that ''the orchestra "on this suspicious occasion" (as the programme put it) comprised a hydrophone, a tamburone bombastico, a real jamboon, and a contrabass macaroon'. Please see:
Daily Mirror, 'Menagerie of Music: Dreadnought Drum Dominant in Concert of Strange Noises at Queen's Hall', *Daily Mirror*, 10th June 1909, 4.
[83] Rodmell, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 260.
[84] Dibble, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 381.

provide a sarcastic analysis of the work at the front of the published score, in which, in a mood similar to the comments appended to the *Nonsense Rhymes*, the author and composer reveal the intended subjects of their satire. In the dissection of the second 'burst', Stanford remarks sardonically on the use of the whole tone scale,[85] modern harmonic progressions, and implicitly appeals to the philosophy of precedent:

> The violin passages obviously suggest the Soprano screwing herself up to let loose the Dogs of Din. At the words 'Bestir ye' they are heard growling in the bass, and when addressed as 'minions of the Goddess new' a scale of whole tones (the organ tuner's scale) wells up from the depths of the double basses to the heights of the Violins. A passage of repeated augmented fifths, accompanying a short figure, typifying the commendable disrespect for the past upon which the Chromatic Fiends so justly pride themselves, (note the unpleasant similarity to a hackneyed symphony by a *passé* old master).[86]

Stanford here links his philosophy with his musical expression explicitly. For Stanford, experimentation with alternative musical methods and languages, rather than building incrementally on what has been achieved by the people of the past, is disrespectful to the '*passé*' masters of previous generations. The 'hackneyed symphony' in question is Beethoven's Ninth, which is presented, as Dibble notes, 'using augmented triads to poke fun at the younger generation's infatuation with the new modernism'.[87]

[85] Stanford later remarked on his satire of the whole tone scale here, and was evidently still bemused by its use: 'I tried the whole tone scale in the "Ode to Discord," and found that in one which proceeded from G to G and A, the C# had to be tied to Db in its progress, and the double basses actually could be seen to change the note at the tie'. Please see:
Stanford, 'On Some Recent Tendencies in Composition', 41.
[86] Charles Villiers Stanford and Charles L. Graves, *Ode to Discord: A Chimerical Bombination in Four Bursts* (London: Boosey & Co., 1909), Burst the Second.
[87] Dibble, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 381.

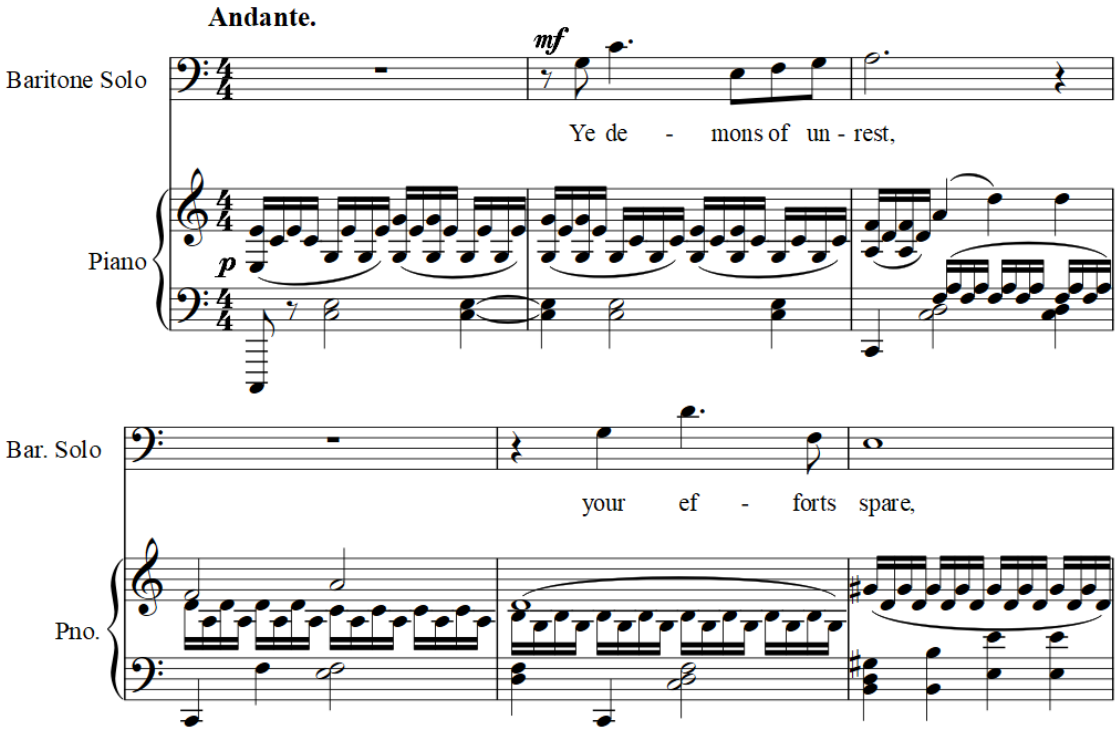


Ex. 6.3., Excerpt from 'Burst the Second', *Ode to Discord*, Rehearsal mark 8.

The analyses contain an abundance of similar remarks; in their description of the opening bars of the third 'burst', Stanford and Graves declare that:

> The forces of Discord are for the moment exhausted, which is not, on the whole, to be wondered at; and the Baritone [originally Harry Plunkett Greene], the Repentant Anarch, by whom the composer evidently intends to personify an out-of-date admirer of the exploded Melos, begins a diatonic exposition of his antiquated tastes.[88]

[88] Stanford and Graves, *Ode to Discord*, Burst the Third.



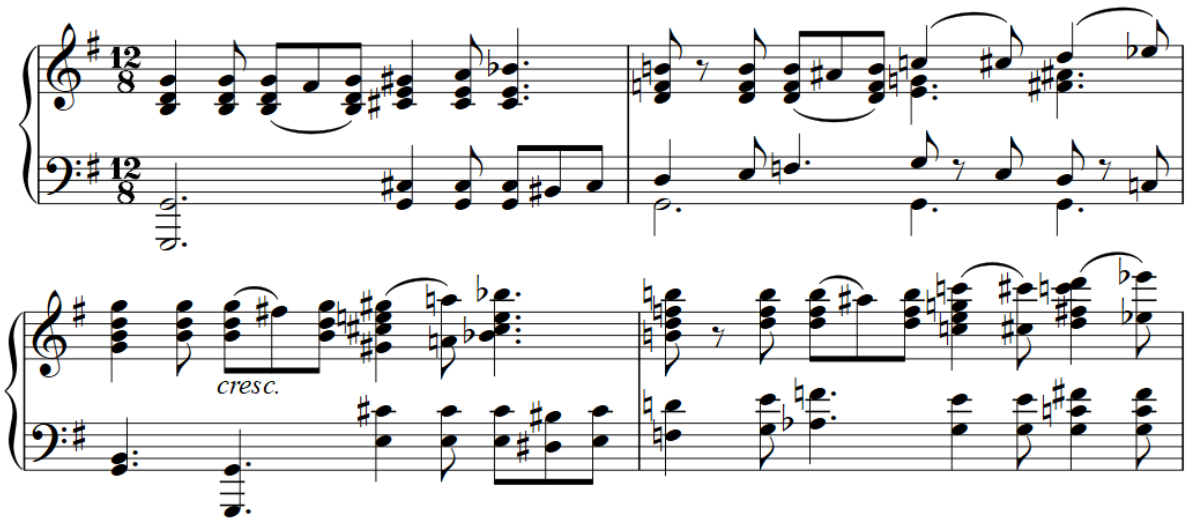
Ex. 6.4., Excerpt from 'Burst the Third', *Ode to Discord*, Rehearsal mark 16.

Stanford uses a number of devices, motifs and chord sequences typically associated with the composers of the past (including quotation of Schubert's 'An Die Musik') in this 'burst' in order to represent 'out-of-date' composers whom Stanford and Graves sarcastically describe as 'so primeval that it may be said to be redolent of Eden'.[89] The analysis of 'Burst the Fourth' offers a commentary on the fate of diatonicism of the kind exposited in the previous 'burst':

> The Trumpets are also just expressing their determination to put off their return until the Diatonic Daylight, when the Goddess once more comes to the rescue of the affrighted Anarchs, and with a *fortissimo* 'Hence, loathed melody,' and a shout of reprobation from its Chorus, the last vestige of its Tonality departs.[90]

The 'last vestige' of tonality is, as many contemporary reviewers acknowledged, ironically less chromatic than much of the experimental music even of the time in which it was written.

[89] Stanford and Graves, *Ode to Discord*, Burst the Third.
[90] Ibid., Burst the Fourth.



Ex. 6.5., Excerpt from 'Burst the Fourth', *Ode to Discord*, Rehearsal mark 34.

The Times review of the premiere of *Ode to Discord* comments on this fourth section with a similar criticism to the one made by Rodmell nearly a century later, noting that 'the "Chromatic Brigands" have a midnight orgy, in a fugue built on a perversion of "We won't go home till morning," a fugue which is hardly a parody, since it is technically much better and so much more effective than the weak fugal efforts of the new school'.[91] The work concludes by recapitulating the themes of the opening bursts, before, in Dibble's words, 'the affirmation of 'Hence loathéd Melody', as if to stress the need for modernism to play itself out and for sanity to be restored'.[92]

Stanford's antimodernist philosophy was influenced by some of the most important conservative thinkers of his day. In addition to his musically conservative influences, including Brahms, Joachim and Sterndale Bennett, his thought was shaped by a number of philosophers and conservative artists in a way that it is difficult to evidence in Elgar or German. He set the works of some of these individuals to music; none more so than Alfred,

[91] The Times, 'Music: New Symphony Orchestra', *The Times*, 10th June 1909, 12.
[92] Dibble, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 382.

Lord Tennyson,[93] whose intellectual and personal relationship with the composer has been documented diligently by Michael Allis.[94] While Allis focusses on the politics of the Irish Home Rule crisis, as well as Tennyson and Stanford's shared belief in Unionism – Allis asserts that Stanford's inclusion of Tennyson's words 'dark and true and tender is the north' at the end of the *Fourth Rhapsody* was 'an overt commentary on the political situation in Ireland' – the wider political similarities are not commented upon; neither musical nor political conservatism is mentioned explicitly in the context of either of the men.[95] Allis, in some ways, understates the importance of both his own research and of the composer's relationship with Tennyson; Stanford is the only Victorian composer who regularly cites and promotes the works of reactionary thinkers in both his writing and his music.[96] Stanford composed a total of nineteen works with what Allis describes as 'Tennysonian associations', including the setting of many Tennyson poems to music, perhaps most notably a conservative veneration of a conservative hero, in the form of the *Ode to Wellington*.[97]

Stanford also set words written by the man described as Tennyson's 'political mentor', Thomas Carlyle.[98] Stanford's 'The Sower's Song' was an arrangement of a Carlyle poem of the same name, but is not mentioned in any of his biographies. The song, seemingly entirely independently of Stanford, found its way into the folk song canon, as is documented

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[93] Conservative poets did not always appreciate the musical settings of their works. A. E. Housman, who is known to have enjoyed the writings of W. H. Mallock and Matthew Arnold, wrote the poem that became Ralph Vaughan Williams's *On Wenlock Edge*. Michael Trend explains that Housman was seen to be 'as though in an extremity of controlling pain or anger' upon hearing Vaughan Williams's setting. Please see:
Michael Trend, *The Music Makers: The English Musical Renaissance from Elgar to Britten* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1985), 7-15.

[94] Michael Allis, *British Music and Literary Context: Artistic Connections in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2012), 63-132.

[95] Allis does note that Stanford's position on Home Rule 'mirrored Tennyson's', but believes that Stanford's level of understanding of the political resonances of Tennyson's works is unclear. Please see:
Allis, *British Music and Literary Context*, 87-100.

[96] Robert Preyer, in his article on Tennyson's politics, has argued that 'Tennyson's political and social attitudes in the 1830's closely resembled those which obtained among the country gentry in the times of the French Revolution'. Please see:
Robert Preyer, 'Alfred Tennyson: The Poetry and Politics of Conservative Vision', *Victorian Studies* 9/4 (1966), 325-352 (327).

[97] Allis, *British Music and Literary Context*, 64.

[98] Preyer, 'Alfred Tennyson', 331.

in Alfred Williams's published collection, *Folk-Songs of the Upper Thames*, in which Carlyle is not mentioned; instead, Williams describes it as 'a superior piece, not heard out of North Wiltshire. Words of Mrs. Mackie, Lechlade'.[99] This seems to have happened quite apart from Stanford's interest in the poem, and therefore would most likely have had a different tune (not provided by Williams) as Stanford's work was not published until 1927, while Williams undertook his collecting in this area between 1914 and 1918 and published his collection in 1923.[100] Carlyle wrote the poem in 1831, but it appears in many editions of his collected works, as well as Victorian poetry anthologies.[101] Walt Whitman, a poet favoured by Vaughan Williams, believed Tennyson and Carlyle to be 'a reactionary force in the face of democratic progress', declaring them to be enemies of the politics of the future:

> The course of progressive politics (democracy) is so certain and resistless, not only in America but in Europe, that we can well afford the warning calls, threats, checks, neutralizings, in imaginative literature, or any department, of such deep-sounding and high-soaring voices as Carlyle's and Tennyson's. Nay, the blindness, excesses, of the prevalent tendency—the dangers of the urgent trends of our times—in my opinion, need such voices almost more than any. I should, too, call it a signal instance of democratic humanity's luck that it has such enemies to contend with—so candid, so fervid, so heroic.[102]

Carlyle was an exceptionally popular author, historian and rhetorician whose fame faded quickly over the course of the twentieth century, during which scholars and politicians attempted to link his thought to the fascist movements which gained traction long after his death in 1881. In 1945, J. Salwyn Schapiro claimed that 'Carlyle's political and social views were those that are today recognized as being distinctively fascist'.[103]

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[99] Alfred Williams, *Folk-Songs of the Upper Thames: With an Essay on Folk-Song Activity in the Upper Thames Neighbourhood* (London: Duckworth & Co., 1923), 141.
[100] The song has, despite its obvious lack of 'folk' origins, even had a Roud number assigned to it based on its inclusion in Williams's collection: Roud 1264.
[101] It is possible that Stanford found the poem in such a way, although the date of the composition of his setting is unknown. See, for example:
Thomas Carlyle, quoted in Arthur Thomas Quiller-Couch, *The Oxford Book of Victorian Verse* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1922), 37-38.
[102] Walt Whitman, quoted in Harold Bloom, *Alfred, Lord Tennyson*, (New York: Infobase, 2010), 85-86.
[103] J. Salwyn Schapiro, 'Thomas Carlyle, Prophet of Fascism', *The Journal of Modern History*, 17/2 (1945), 97-115 (110).

Stanford, however, believed that Carlyle ought to be judged by his works, rather than personal beliefs, in the same way that the art and artist are often separated in appreciation of Wagner or Byron:

> The publication of the Wagner-Liszt correspondence is likely, unfortunately, to revive for a brief space the consideration of the great man's least attractive side; but it will become year by year more impossible to judge of *Tristan* or *Parsifal* by the light of Wagner's human weaknesses in daily life. We have ceased to apply such judgment to Byron, in spite of the efforts of some ghouls, or even to Carlyle.[104]

Stanford makes numerous other references to Carlyle, his ideology and ideas, some of which the composer clearly had some sympathy with. Stanford knew Carlyle through a number of his other friends,[105] including Arthur Duke Coleridge, the grand-nephew of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who became the subject of an amusing anecdote of Stanford's regarding Carlyle's biography of Friedrich II:

> He once complained to me somewhat bitterly of the attitude of Carlyle to J. S. Bach, knowing that Bach on an historical occasion had visited Frederick the Great, who received him with great honour, he went to Carlyle, who had omitted all reference to this incident in his Life, only to find that Carlyle knew it all and the dates thereof, but had not put it in because "he had no room for fiddlers.".[106]

Stanford repeated this anecdote in his *A History of Music*, in which Stanford and his cowriter, Cecil Forsyth, offer numerous references to and quotations from Carlyle.[107] One of Carlyle's few discussions of music is taken from perhaps his most famous political publication, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History*, and quoted at length: 'All inmost things, we may say, are melodious; naturally utter themselves in Song… All deep things are Song. It seems somehow the very central essence of us. Song; as if all the rest of us were but wrappages and hills'.[108]

Stanford and Forsyth also misquote Carlyle later in *A History of Music*, regarding Gounod: 'Later in life he betook himself to oratorio writing, and produced (with much

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[104] Stanford, *Studies and Memories*, 36.
[105] Of course, it is possible that Stanford discussed Carlyle's ideas with Tennyson, with whom he had a warm relationship, but this is not documented in either Allis's or Greene's account of their friendship. Please see: Greene, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 246-250.
[106] Stanford, *Interludes*, 156.
[107] Charles Villiers Stanford and Cecil Forsyth, *A History of Music* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916), 239.
[108] Carlyle, quoted in Stanford and Forsyth, *A History of Music*, 200.

trumpeting) two works, the Redemption and Mors et Vita, both of them (to quote Carlyle) "poor husks of things,"'.[109] Stanford was evidently fond of the quote as it appears again in his 1905 article 'The Music of the Nineteenth Century', in which he applies the uncited characterisation of 'poor Husks of things' to the music of Franz Liszt; Stanford here explains what he means by the quotation as works which 'do not deserve the number of pages devoted to them'.[110] While Stanford misremembered the quote, the sentiment is accurately retained from the (fairly obscure) original passage from Carlyle's 21-volume *History of Friedrich II of Prussia*, which gives the reader a fairly representative sample of the character and distinctive style of its author:

> Of Friedrich's childhood, there is not, after all our reading, much that it would interest the English public to hear tell of. Perhaps not much of knowable that deserves anywhere to be known. Books on it, expressly handling it, and Books on Friedrich Wilhelm's Court and History, of which it is always a main element, are not wanting: but they are mainly of the sad sort which, with pain and difficulty, teach us nothing, Books done by pedants and tenebrific persons, under the name of men; dwelling not on things, but, at endless length, on the outer husks of things: of unparalleled confusion, too; — not so much as an Index granted you; to the poor half-peck of cinders, hidden in these wagon-loads of ashes, no sieve allowed! Books tending really to fill the mind with mere dust-whirlwinds, — if the mind did not straightway blow them out again; which it does. Of these let us say nothing. Seldom had so curious a Phenomenon worse treatment from the Dryasdust, species.[111]

Stanford and Carlyle had a number of things in common, including an admiration for Bismarck, described by Carlyle as 'a magnanimous, noble and deep-seeing man',[112] as well as a dislike of philosophies of equality, which Carlyle regarded as foolish and the result of a century of compounded mistakes.[113]

There are a number of facets of Carlyle's thought which likely appealed to Stanford. His treatment of the 'Irish Question' in *Chartism* provided a sympathetic right-wing approach to the problems of the governance of the country, which concluded that Ireland ought to be ruled in a more 'wise and loving manner' in order to raise its populace out of the

[109] Stanford and Forsyth, *A History of Music*, 279.
[110] Stanford, *Studies and Memories*, 205.
[111] Thomas Carlyle, *History of Friedrich II of Prussia, Called Frederick the Great, Vol. 1* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1894), 271.
[112] Carlyle, quoted in Schapiro, 'Thomas Carlyle', 108.
[113] Thomas Carlyle, *The Essential Thomas Carlyle* (London: Anarch Books, 2021), 285-6.

'degradation' they had suffered.[114] His *Past and Present* offers a criticism of liberal laissez-faire economics, describing it as a system which leads inevitably to deracination, a loss of localist community, and a gain of what he coined as 'nomadism',[115] using arguments not so different to those offered by Stanford on the subject of national opera.[116] Carlyle also made observations which likely challenged Stanford's positions; one of his few other mentions of music, found in *Signs of the Times*, shares Stanford's dry, sarcastic humour: 'In defect of Raphaels, and Angelos, and Mozarts, we have Royal Academies of Painting, Sculpture, Music; whereby the languishing spirits of Art may be strengthened, as by the more generous diet of a Public Kitchen'.[117] Carlyle was less a reactionary thinker and more a purveyor of *applied* reactionary thought; he does not espouse a conservative message so much as assume a conservative mantle, and apply its ideas to philosophical problems. In this way he and Stanford are very much alike.

Carlyle famously proclaimed that 'The History of the world is but the Biography of great men'.[118] Such a statement, however, assumes that historians make fair and accurate judgements on the greatness of individuals and their deeds. It is in an understanding of a Carlylean vision of history that it is possible to understand how Stanford could simultaneously hold his positions as a conservative and yet write on what he believed to be the evolution of musical form and language. Carlyle believed that the primary characteristic

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[114] Carlyle, *The Essential Thomas Carlyle*, 43-46.
[115] Carlyle believed that nomadism would be the undoing of civilisation: 'the civilised man lives not in wheeled houses. He builds stone castles, plants lands, makes lifelong marriage-contracts; - has long-dated hundred-fold possessions, not to be valued in the money market; has pedigrees, libraries, law-codes; has memories and hopes, even for this Earth, that reach over thousands of years. Lifelong marriage-contracts: how much preferable were year-long or month long – to the nomad or ape!' Please see:
Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present* (London: Ward Lock & Co., 1911), 377.
[116] Both Stanford and Edward German were part of a committee that presented a memorial to the London County Council in 1898 requesting the authority's support for the foundation of a national opera house. The supporting signatories for the paper were headed by a number of conservative (or liberal-conservative) politicians and thinkers, including Joseph Chamberlain, G. F. Watts, and the husband of Elgar's good friend Alice 'Windflower' Stuart Wortley, the conservative politician Charles Stuart-Wortley. Please see:
Paul Rodmell, *Opera in the British Isles, 1875-1918* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 199.
[117] Carlyle, *The Essential Thomas Carlyle*, 6.
[118] Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* (London: James Fraser, 1841), 47.

of the hero in history is that he does not carry with him a trace of irony or cynicism; the historian used a musical analogy to describe the type of character he designated as 'the hero as poet', offering Dante and Shakespeare as his predominant examples:

> The Greeks fabled of Sphere-Harmonies: it was the feeling they had of the inner structure of Nature; that the soul of all her voices and utterances was perfect music. Poetry, therefore, we will call *musical Thought*. The Poet is he who thinks in that manner. At bottom, it turns still on power of intellect; it is a man's sincerity and depth of vision that makes him a Poet. See deep enough, and you see musically; the heart of Nature *being* everywhere music, if you can only reach it.[119]

It is perhaps in this combination of the philosophy of precedent and belief in the importance of sincerity that the parallels between Stanford and Carlyle appear most apparent. Carlyle goes on to connect these two positions directly when he declares that 'A man can believe, and make his own, in the most genuine way, what he has received from another; – and with boundless gratitude to that other! The merit of *originality* is not novelty; it is sincerity'.[120] Stanford also believed this unapologetically. Sincerity was at the heart of his lifelong appreciation of Brahms:

> But I shall never forget the amazing effect which was produced upon me by hearing the variations on a theme of Handel, or how much of my small pocket-money I spent in buying as many of his works as I could get. I knew nothing of the Schumann article, nor anything about him save his music, and the grip it took of me at fifteen has never relaxed since. Nothing that was not inherently sincere could possibly remain so lifelong a possession of any musician.[121]

Stanford believed that sincerity of expression was one of the most important virtues for composers. This was one of his frustrations with his modernist contemporaries; in his controversial article on new musical trends, he declared that 'We cannot do better than write as we sincerely feel, which means that we are trying to attain beauty, nature and simplicity, and not for effect, which will lead into unhealthy extravagance. If we cannot attain to the former, we can at least eschew the "bizarre."'.[122]

Carlyle argues that originality in its sincerest form derives from an application of the philosophy of precedent, using Samuel Johnson as an exemplar: 'the essence of originality is

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[119] Carlyle, *On Heroes*, 135.
[120] Carlyle, *On Heroes*, 203.
[121] Stanford, *Studies and Memories*, 108.
[122] Stanford, 'On Some Recent Tendencies in Composition', 46.

not that it be *new*: Johnson believed altogether in the old; he found the old opinions credible for him, fit for him; and in a right heroic manner lived under them'.[123] This is an important and misunderstood facet of conservative thought; O'Connell argues, regarding Stanford's *Musical Composition*, that 'The reader is struck at every turn by the individuality of Stanford's approach, an approach ill-served by the deadening epithet 'conservative''.[124] Stanford is, as O'Connell indicates, not conservative in the sense that he is aping the didactic methods of the existing order, but he is conservative in that he applies the philosophy of conservatism to all that he does. Through an advocation of humility – an acceptance of the flawed nature of all students – at the feet of previous great musicians, he encourages a deep and thorough study of the music of the past for its own sake, seeks beauty and sincerity in the work of his pupils, and discourages a relativistic approach. Stanford offers a Carlylean interpretation of originality in this way:

> Efforts after premature originality will always bring mannerism in their train, and no quality in music is so ephemeral, so annoying and so irritating. It turns a philosopher into a faddist, a poet into a rhyme-jingler. A beginner must not think about originality. If he has it in his nature, it will come out as surely as the world goes round the sun. It must not be forced, or it will be insincere.[125]

The concept of sincerity seems to have been particularly important to conservative composers of this era, even in the composition of music which might be dismissed as inadequately serious to be sincere; Edward German, in his denunciation of composers of what he described as 'light, bad music', put sincerity at the heart of his argument against their efforts: 'They are all insincere, they are all ill-equipped – indeed, they are not equipped at all and they poison the very atmosphere of healthy English music'.[126] Elgar likewise declared that English music will only be accepted if it is 'sincere, honest, healthy and well written'.[127] Sincerity seems to have had a central – although not exclusive or unique – importance to musical conservatives;

[123] Carlyle, *On Heroes*, 290.
[124] O'Connell, 'Stanford and the Gods of Modern Music', 38.
[125] Stanford, *Musical Composition*, 189.
[126] Edward German, quoted in Brian Rees, *A Musical Peacemaker: The Life and Work of Sir Edward German* (Abbotsbrook: Kensal Press, 1986), 222.
[127] Edward Elgar, *A Future for English Music and Other Lectures* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1968), 41.

despite his dry humour and parodies, Stanford was a Victorian composer who embodied sincerity perhaps more than any other.

There is one final thinker in the pantheon of Stanford's conservative influences. Three of Carlyle's portraits were painted by a man who had read his works and embodied his artistic message,[128] one of the most significant visual artists in Victorian England, George Frederic Watts.[129] Watts was a portraitist and sculptor with whom Stanford found enough sympathy to dedicate his *Symphony No. 6*: 'In Memoriam G. F. Watts'. Stanford mentions Watts several times in his writings but fails to express the specifics of what fascinated him about the artist; in *Pages from an Unwritten Diary*, for example, the composer explains that he first became acquainted with Watts's works at an 1862 London art exhibition (when Stanford was just nine years old), as well as that many of the musicians Stanford knew shared his admiration for the artist.[130] Watts's artistic output was overtly political. David A. Stewart argues that Watts and Carlyle shared a vision of political achievement through art and that for both 'painter and writer every allusion, rhythm, cadence, metaphor, and evocative image is crucial, for each served higher political ends'.[131] Watts believed that all art shared these higher purposes and that 'we shall find, upon examination, that all art which has been really and permanently successful has been the exponent of some great principle of mind or matter – the illustration of some great truth – the translations of some paragraph out of the book of nature'.[132]

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[128] Watts also painted a famous portrait of Joseph Joachim, as well as some seven portraits (and sculpted a large statue) of Tennyson. Stanford confirms in his writing that he knew Watts personally through Joachim, who was a close friend of the painter and involved in the same social circles. It is interesting to note that Watts painted a number of other important conservative thinkers, including Matthew Arnold, but also figures such as Gerald Balfour, the politician and brother of Conservative Prime Minister Arthur Balfour. Please see:
Stanford, *Studies and Memories*, 131.
[129] David A. Stewart, 'Reality, Artifice, and the Politics of Evolution: Watts and Carlyle in the Earnest Age' *Victorian Poetry*, 33/3/4 (1995), 476-498 (478).
[130] Stanford, *Pages from an Unwritten Diary*, 70, 237, & 276.
[131] Stewart, Reality, Artifice, and the Politics of Evolution', 476.
[132] G. F. Watts, quoted in Ronald Chapman, *The Laurel and the Thorn: A Study of G. F. Watts* (London: Faber and Faber, 1945), 167.

Stephen Downes describes Stanford's symphony as 'an elegy to a waning artistic style and age, but one couched in exquisite and seductively beautiful form'. Around the time of the first performance of the work, Downes contends, Watts was rapidly becoming 'a figure whose reputation was in steep decline. Bloomsbury modernists dismissed him as absurd and irrelevant'.[133] Stanford chose to compose a work that, in opposition to the zeitgeist, embodied the artistic philosophy of G. F. Watts, whose vision was perhaps best articulated by G. K. Chesterton, in his biography of the Victorian artist:

> There is nothing there but the eternal things, clay and fire and the sea, and motherhood and the dead. We cannot imagine the rose or the lion of England; the keys or the tiara of Rome; the red cap of Liberty or the crescent of Islam in a picture by Watts; we cannot imagine the Cross itself. And in light and broken phrases, carelessly and humbly expressed, as I have said, the painter has admitted that this great omission was observed on principle. Its object is that the pictures may be intelligible if they survive the whole modern order.

Like Elgar and German, Watts, as Chesterton observes, was much better able to express his conservatism in art than in words. In the writings and letters of the artist, however, it is possible to interpret an advocation of the four conservative, Stanfordian principles outlined in the previous chapter.

Watts encouraged students to study 'the great Italian masters' because he believed that the aspiring artist could gain from them the 'means of expressing his ideas much sooner than he could possibly find them out for himself'.[134] *The Wounded Heron*, for Chesterton, was evidence of a profound, anti-Rousseauian, conservative understanding of human nature: 'It is, as I have said, a thing painted clearly with a humanitarian object… it depicts the helplessness of life under the cruelty of the inanimate violence; it depicts the pathos of dying and the greater pathos of living'.[135] Watts's philosophy had much less room for hierarchy and inequality, but his perception of the Boer War is notable; the artist suggests that the Boers are uncivilised and that:

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[133] Downes, 'Sentimentalism, Joseph Joachim and the English', 153.
[134] G. F. Watts, quoted in Chapman, *The Laurel and the Thorn*, 171.
[135] Chesterton, *G. F. Watts*, 28.

> The matter assumes an aspect of greater importance than our supremacy… History repeats itself, nations rise and fall, and we cannot hope to escape that law; but perhaps in the development amongst our neighbours all round of so fierce a dislike to ourselves, injurious to their own national character, history may discover our greatest crime. We now have a grand opportunity of proving ourselves worthy of respect, if we cannot be loved.[136]

Watts's nationalism and unionism may also have been at the root of Stanford's respect;[137] Watts, like Carlyle, believed that liberal economic ideas were damaging far more fundamental societal layers: 'The worship of Mammon, so universal in this age, has gone far to destroy our character as a noble people, and will, I believe, undermine the very existence of the nation'.[138] Watts was also certainly a fervent believer in the pursuit of beauty; in a letter to Lord Elch, one of the commissioners of the Royal Academy, Watts declared that 'it is a melancholy fact that hardly a single object amongst those that surround us has any pretension to real beauty… I believe love of beauty to be inherent in the human mind, it follows that there must be some unfortunate influence at work'.[139] Watts's adherence to these four first-principles is what makes it possible to say that he is a conservative artist; David A. Stewart believes that:

> Watts and Carlyle were social conservatives, arguing the dangers of new social theories, while anticipating postmodern theorists… For Watts and Carlyle, the road to progress was conservative. Watts and Carlyle developed a rhetoric that extolled social evolution, but their commitment to awe before artificial hierarchies served to dampen social change. All their talk of social evolution, in fact, amounted to a desperate plea for an alternative to social revolution.[140]

This is not unlike Stanford's evolutionary, anti-revolutionary, anti-Whig vision of the history of music.

Reviews of the *Sixth Symphony*, intended to enshrine in music the values and philosophy of Watts, were mixed. The *Illustrated London News* focussed on Stanford's conservative influences:

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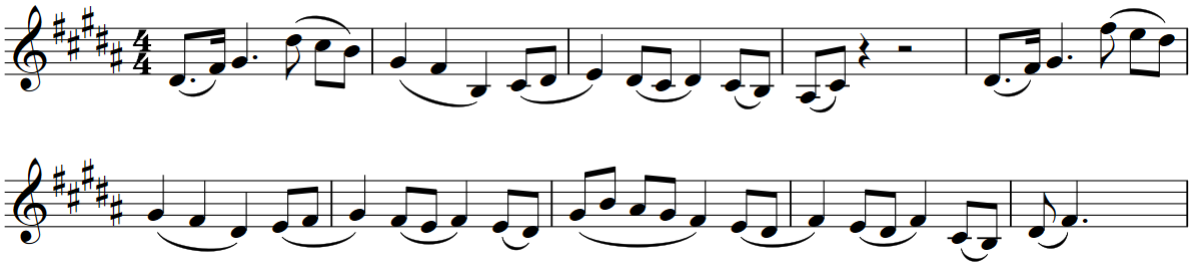
[136] G. F. Watts, 'Mr Watts on the War', *The Times*, 22nd December 1899, 5.
[137] Watts also painted *The Irish Famine*, which, like Carlyle's words, offered an artistic representation of sympathy for the Irish people from the political right. Please see:
Stewart, Reality, Artifice, and the Politics of Evolution', 487.
[138] G. F. Watts, 'To the Editor of "The Daily Telegraph"', *The Daily Telegraph*, 10th June 1891, 8.
[139] Watts, quoted in Chapman, *The Laurel and the Thorn*, 170.
[140] David A. Stewart, 'Reality, Artifice, and the Politics of Evolution: Watts and Carlyle in the Earnest Age' *Victorian Poetry*, 33/3/4 (1995), 476-498 (484-492).

> Sir Charles Villiers Stanford is a composer who has been influenced to a considerable extent by the classical masters, and while his work reflects from time to time the methods of Tschaikowsky [sic] and other men who were his contemporaries, it is with Brahms that he seems to find the closest affinity. He does not startle or surprise his audience… the character of the various strains has been influenced, not only by the nature and aims of the late artist, but by certain of his master-works.[141]

The article gives the symphony itself a mixed review, suggesting that while it is technically accomplished, it does not have the capacity to inspire. It admonishes Stanford for a work that attempts to be both absolute and programme music simultaneously,[142] which, in their view, was a mistake, but believes that the work successfully captures Watts's lofty ideals in the thematic materials: 'in the finale the themes that are said to stand for Love and Death are welded together in a fashion that only the most skilled contrapuntist could have effected, and the peroration of the final movement is a thing of no small beauty'.[143]

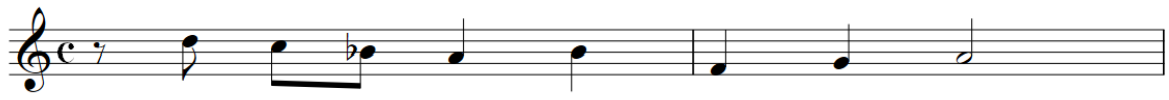


Ex. 6.5., 'Love' theme, *Symphony No. 6,* taken from the second movement, as written in Rodmell, *Charles Villiers Stanford,* 247.

The Times offered a far more unambiguously favourable review of the work, believing each aspect of its construction to be directly influenced by Watts's artistic vision:

[141] The Illustrated London News, 'Music', *The Illustrated London News*, 128/3484 (27th January, 1906), 31.
[142] Watts passionately believed that art should refrain from abstraction and instead be political, or 'brought to bear like an Armstrong gun against our mammon worship especially'. Stanford's work is evocative of Watts's philosophy in this way. Please see:
Watts, quoted in Stewart, 'Reality, Artifice, and the Politics of Evolution', 476.
[143] The Illustrated London News, 'Music', 31.

> That enjoyment must be very great, wherever worthy hearers are found; for the symphony is not only masterly in construction, infinitely dextrous in treatment, and earnest in artistic aim, but it has genuine inspiration, and the strongly imaginative work of the painter is worthily reflected in the music it has suggested. At a first hearing the individuality of the theme, which is obviously to be identified with Death and the gracious, solemn beauty of the slow movement are what most arrest attention; this latter, in which a cor anglaise has a very important part, is of unforgettable charm, and its long-drawn phrases recall the kind of ample dignity which the painter loved to put into his female figures. The scherzo may or may not have been inspired by the charming picture of a cupid angling, called "Good Luck to your Fishing!" but as pure music it is of deliciously winsome quality; in the finale we are evidently to be reminded of some of the equestrian work of Watts, whether the statue "Physical Energy" or of the imaginative series of the Horses of the Apocalypse we cannot say. The descending scale of the "Death" theme and the noble vigour of the main subject of the movement make the latter theory the more attractive.[144]



Ex. 6.6., 'Death' theme, *Symphony No. 6*, taken from the second movement, as written in Rodmell, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 247.

Rodmell believes that the way in which Stanford interweaves these 'love' and 'death' themes is extremely important to an understanding of the work and its relationship to Watts's ideas.[145] The way in which the themes reoccur throughout the four movements and reshape the music around them is, as Rodmell suggests, Elgarian in its construction, even though Stanford's 'chameleon-like' work predates Elgar's *First Symphony*, the conservative significance of which is discussed in the following chapter.[146] Rodmell points out that Watts's *Love and Death*, as well as his *Love and Life*, were a significant influence on Stanford's *Sixth Symphony*, and that a programme to the work can be deduced from an understanding of these paintings and their relationship to the thematic material presented in the music. Richard A. Kaye describes Watts's *Love and Death* as a painting in which 'Death tramples the wild roses in its path while leaving the dove near its feet undisturbed. For Watts,

[144] The Times, 'Concerts', *The Times*, 19th January 1906, 8.
[145] Chapman argues that while Watts sought to become 'not only the Michelangelo of his age, but the moral adviser as well', his ideas were 'ordinary', and therefore unworthy of serious investigation. Watts's ideas were built on the philosophy of precedent, but they are interesting when viewed in their conservative context rather than in search of novelty. Please see:
Ronald Chapman, *The Laurel and the Thorn*, 148.
[146] Rodmell, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 379.

death need not be, aesthetically, a negative, and although it conquers Love it also seems to be consuming or merging with it in a visually arresting *liebestod*'.[147] Watts himself believed the work to represent 'the progress of the inevitable but not terrible Death, who partially but not completely overshadows Love'.[148] In Stanford's treatment of the concept of *Liebestod*, he invokes the conservative spirit in Wagnerism; that is, the element of Wagner in which a 'tragic' understanding of the human condition is pervasive.[149] It is possible to view the *Sixth Symphony* as a conservative confluence of both Brahms and Wagner in this way, and representative of what Stanford appreciated in both supposedly oppositional composers. It is perhaps fitting that Stanford's 'Peace, come away' (1892), a part song taken from Tennyson's *In Memoriam*,[150] was written 5 days after the poet's passing and was played at the Memorial Service for Watts in 1904.[151]

Stanford was, as Greene described him, 'a die-hard Irish Conservative'.[152] Many aspects of his life and works were driven by what Dibble terms his 'right-wing philosophy'.[153] His methods of teaching, composition, direct political activism, writing, and interactions with his contemporaries were each unmistakably touched by his conservatism and the philosophy of precedent. His reputation as a composer has, as seems to be the fate of

[147] Richard A. Kaye, 'Decadence in Painting' in Alex Murray (ed.), *Decadence: A Literary History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 234-253 (239-240).
[148] Watts, quoted in Kaye, 'Decadence in Painting', 240.
[149] Thomas Sowell, *A Conflict of Visions: Ideological Origins of Political Struggles* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), 11-50.
[150] Watts idolised Tennyson and believed him to be a heroic figure in the Carlylean sense; Chapman explains that when the two Victorians met, 'Watts found him ideally monumental both in thought and appearance and would follow alongside him in unashamed hero-worship… To his joy Watts found Tennyson's views coincided exactly with his own'. Stanford's interests in Watts, Carlyle, and Tennyson are not a coincidence and cannot be regarded as separate phenomenon. It is possible that Stanford wanted to be regarded as their musical counterpart, given how much of their work he referred to and how many of their conservative values he embodied. His relationship with them and position in their social circles is perhaps indicative of music's place in wider Victorian culture; this is a subject worthy of further investigation. Please see:
Chapman, *The Laurel and the Thorn*, 75.
[151] Allis, *British Music and Literary Context*, 120-121.
[152] Greene, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 77.
[153] Dibble, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 133.

all musical conservatives, declined since his lifetime; Rodmell concedes one of the problems of the Whig interpretation of music history when he acknowledges that:

> In academic assessment which places greatest emphasis on difference, originality and innovation, Stanford comes out particularly badly… while such works as the Mass in G, Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Symphonies, *Stabet Mater* and Nonet, to name but a few, may not show evidence of radical innovation or have changed the course of Western art music, they are still rewarding to hear and great in accomplishment.[154]

For conservatives, however, the traits which Stanford personified can be viewed positively. Dunhill, in describing the composer's seventh and final symphony, declares that it was 'a clever concession to modern requirements, but he did not concede a particle of classical convictions. He dearly loved the sport of riding over difficulties without sacrificing his principles'.[155] Dibble concludes that while Stanford was a Victorian in his politics, 'the best of his musical utterances have, like those of Parry, transcended Victorianism, possessing the power and eloquence to speak with a fresh, undated voice, and a clarity unmatched in his generation and that of his pupils'.[156] Likewise, Stanford was clearly a conservative who 'sat at the feet of the great men with true reverence',[157] but was a composer whose clarity of vision transcends conservatism; it would be difficult to honestly describe the best of his music as the kind of desiccated, 'academic' work which is usually attached to the word 'conservative' when used in a derogatory context. Stanford's musical conservatism was perhaps the most ardent of his generation; as Dunhill put it, Stanford 'clung to the orthodox forms with extraordinary tenacity. In music, as in politics, he was unreservedly, passionately conservative'.[158]

[154] Rodmell, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 408-416.
[155] Dunhill, quoted in Greene, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 225.
[156] Dibble, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 464.
[157] Greene, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 46.
[158] Dunhill, 'Charles Villiers Stanford', 49.

CHAPTER VII

Sir Edward Elgar's Conservatism: A Modernist Under a Veneer of Tweed?

There has been an enormous amount of discussion and disagreement in Elgar scholarship regarding the strength and nature of his political views. Julian Onderdonk suggests that competing images of composers, particularly politically active ones, are constructed by critics and scholars as an expression of their own beliefs.[1] In a similar way, Aidan Thomson dismisses the differences of opinion regarding Elgar's works during his lifetime, which 'were not ideologically neutral', as a reflection of 'partisan political positions within contemporary cultural debate'.[2] Discourse on the nature of his life and works continues to be informed by external cultural factors in the present day. All sides agree on one, seemingly trivial, point, however: that Elgar, like Edward German, deliberately projected an image of conservatism through his appearance. Siegfried Sassoon once referred to Elgar as the 'composer who masquerades as a retired army officer of the conservative club type'.[3] Merion Hughes and Robert Stradling similarly suggest that Elgar, with the help of his wife, constructed his image, complete with military moustache and immaculate dress, to communicate his conservatism and desire to climb social hierarchies;[4] indeed, Rosa Burley once said (probably in jest) that he 'always tried to avoid carrying a violin case about with him for fear of looking like a musician'.[5]

It has been intimated by several prominent Elgar scholars that this is the depth of profundity that his conservatism reached. Byron Adams, for example, argues that the

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[1] Julian Onderdonk, 'The Composer and Society: Family, Politics, Nation' in Alain Frogley and Aidan J. Thomson (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Vaughan Williams* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 9-28 (9).
[2] Aidan Thomson, 'Elgar in German Criticism' in Daniel M. Grimley and Julian Rushton (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Elgar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 204-213 (213).
[3] Siegfried Sassoon, *Diaries 1920-1922* (London: Faber and Faber, 1981), 169.
[4] Meirion Hughes and Robert Stradling, *The English Musical Renaissance 1840-1940: Constructing a National Music* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 60.
[5] Rosa Burley, quoted in Meirion Hughes, 'The Duc D'Elgar': Making a Composer Gentleman' in Christopher Norris (ed.), *Music and the Politics of Culture* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1989), 41-69 (42-45).

composer hid behind the 'façade of his conservatism'.[6] Elgar's 'Ruskinian progressivism', a description which would certainly have displeased Elgar,[7] 'had little to do with the Tory politics worn like an expensive tweed suit'.[8] J. P. E. Harper-Scott, who suggests that 'although usually laughable, right-of-centre naivety is hardly evil',[9] uses the same metaphor when he describes Elgar's supposed veneer of imperialism, dedicating a subsection of his seminal work *Edward Elgar, Modernist* to the idea of 'Elgar the progressive'.[10] He argues that the fact that Elgar never wrote a masterpiece on an imperial subject (although it is surely possible that he came closer than any other composer) 'further supports the view that his imperialism was only tweed-deep'.[11] Harper-Scott liked the analogy; he later describes Elgar's 'alleged conservatism',[12] as well as explaining the way in which his conservative imperialism diminished after the death of his wife,[13] suggesting that it 'was only ever tweed-

[6] Byron Adams, 'Elgar and the Persistence of Memory' in Byron Adams (ed.) *Edward Elgar and His World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 59-95 (72).
[7] Although Elgar quotes Ruskin at the end of the score for *The Dream of Gerontius*, Leon Botstein has argued that there is 'much in Ruskin with which Elgar would not have sympathized, notably his social radicalism'; this is surely to put it mildly. Lawrence Goldman writes that a Ruskinian political party 'might approximate to the kind of Labour Party which actually did emerge in the years after 1906'. Elgar despised the Labour party and all that it stood for. Matthew Riley has also noted that Hubert Parry, a political liberal, was greatly influenced by John Ruskin's arguments on morality in art. Please see:
Leon Botstein, 'Transcending the Enigmas of Biography: The Cultural Context of Elgar's Career' in Byron Adams (ed.) *Edward Elgar and His World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 365-408 (383).
Lawrence Goldman, 'Ruskin, Oxford, and the British Labour Movement, 1880-1914' in Dinah Birch (ed.), *Ruskin and the Dawn of the Modern* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 57-86 (84).
Matthew Riley, 'Style, Character and Revelation in Parry's Fourth Symphony' in Sarah Collins (ed.), *Music and Victorian Liberalism: Composing the Liberal Subject* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 129-150 (129).
[8] Adams, 'Elgar and the Persistence of Memory', 72-75.
[9] J.P.E. Harper-Scott, *Edward Elgar, Modernist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 33.
[10] Harper-Scott, *Edward Elgar, Modernist*, 10-27.
[11] Harper-Scott, *Edward Elgar, Modernist*, 18.
[12] Harper-Scott, *Edward Elgar, Modernist*, 182.
[13] The premise that Elgar's belief in imperialism declined later in his life is disputed; public perception of his views, at least, did not seem to change much. Leonard Castle did not indicate an understanding of any change in Elgar's projected philosophy when criticising the political facet of canonisation in 1934; Castle argues that 'no greater disservice to art could be imagined than that of allowing personal views to stand in the way of creative work. If this were the rule, then Elgar would have to stand or fall by the Catholicism and Imperialism of his ideas, and not by the merit of the music in which they are often contained'. It should also be noted that Elgar wrote his *Empire March* in 1924, some four years after the death of his wife. Please see:
Leonard Castle, 'Neglect of Rutland Boughton's Music: Is the Cause Political?', *The Musical Times*, 75/1096 (1934), 539-540 (540).

deep anyway'.[14] For Harper-Scott, 'had he married his near-exact contemporary Emmeline Pankhurst instead of Alice Roberts, Elgar might have adopted revolutionary ideas in a similarly shallow manner'.[15] More recently, Harper-Scott has written critiques of music historiography which might suggest that his own works ought to be understood in their political and cultural context: the author argues that 'All history-writing emerges from a particular political situation and is a contribution to political discourse… Therefore we must write history which, while emanating from a leftist political viewpoint, does not miscarry as propaganda'.[16]

Bernard Porter likewise argues that Elgar's conservatism was a matter of habit:

> We know that by 1885 (when he was 28) he was a Tory, but that is not necessarily saying much. In a letter of October that year he recounted joining in the electioneering in Birmingham, and helping to unseat the incumbent Radical; but the main focus of the letter is his dog Scap, who we are told 'wore his colours like a man'. The Conservative allegiance stuck, but there is never any sign - as there was in the case of Kipling - that any sophisticated thought went into it.[17]

Porter fails to acknowledge the probability that Elgar, as a composer, expressed the depth and profundity of his conservatism in his music, rather than his words. As Matthew Riley has observed, Elgar's 'conservatism (artistic and political) … helped confine him to the fringes of music history textbooks and concert programs'.[18] It is possible that academics have attempted to turn perceptions of Elgar's winter three-piece tweed suit into a light summer jacket for this reason.[19] Christopher Chowrimootoo has criticised this attempt by musicologists at 'redeeming putatively conservative or populist composers as "modernists"' in British music,

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[14] J. P. E. Harper-Scott, 'Elgar's Deconstruction of the Belle Époque: Interlace Structures and the Second Symphony' in J. P. E. Harper-Scott and Julian Rushton (eds.), *Elgar Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 172-219 (179).
[15] J. P. E. Harper-Scott, 'Elgar's Deconstruction', 178.
[16] J. P. E. Harper-Scott, 'How We Got Out of Music History, and How We Can Get Back into It' in Michael J. Kelly and Arthur Rose, *Theories of History: History Read across the Humanities* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 37-60 (48).
[17] Bernard Porter, 'Edward Elgar and Empire', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 29/1 (2001), 1-34 (5).
[18] Matthew Riley, 'Elgar the Escapist?' in Byron Adams (ed.) *Edward Elgar and His World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 39-58 (54).
[19] Belief in Elgar as a secret progressivist is not entirely new; Donald Mitchell, writing in 1957, described Elgar's politics as 'self-imposed', as well as lamenting that his conservatism prevented him from exploring musically modernist idioms. Please see:
Donald Mitchell, 'Some Thoughts on Elgar (1857-1934)', *Music & Letters*, 38/2 (1957), 113-123 (121).

in order to assert their (whiggish) historical relevance.[20] Politics are often, consciously and unconsciously, projected onto historical figures rather than reconstructed out of extant evidence. Richard Taruskin, for example, has argued that there exists in musical appreciation 'a Bach of the Right and a Bach of the Left'; conservative and anticonservative studies of both Bach and Elgar often consist partly of imagined constructions or idealisations of the composers.[21]

Elgar, contrary to this vision of his secretly progressive political stance, was a vehement conservative.[22] This can be evidenced by his reactions to the political events of his time, as preserved in his private letters. McGuire suggests that Elgar's politics, as well as his political music, 'reflected the great optimism of the Edwardian Era'.[23] In the 1906 general election, however, the Conservative Party was led by Arthur Balfour into one of the most complete electoral defeats in its history, which included Balfour being the only Prime Minister of the twentieth century to lose his own seat in the House of Commons.[24] The Elgars had entertained the Conservative MP for Hereford, John Stanhope Arkwright, the day after the election campaign had begun in January 1906.[25] The composer was evidently frustrated by this defeat, as he wrote to Frank Schuster to inform him that he was 'a disappointing *toad*

[20] Christopher Chowrimootoo, *Middlebrow Modernism* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018), 6.
[21] Richard Taruskin, 'Back to Whom? Neoclassicism as Ideology', *19th-Century Music*, 16/3 (1993), 286-302 (297).
[22] Hughes, 'The Duc D'Elgar', 52.
[23] Charles Edward McGuire, 'Functional Music: Imperialism, the Great War, and Elgar as Popular Composer' in Daniel M. Grimley and Julian Rushton (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Elgar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 214-224 (215-217).
[24] The reasons underlying the loss seem trivial in light of the events that followed (that is, the Home Rule crisis, the Great War and the rise of socialist politics), but Green suggests that Balfour's lack of commitment to either free or protectionist trade policy meant that his party lost votes from both sides. Eccleshall similarly argues that the Conservative Party was at its most divided since the repeal of the Corn Laws. Please see:
E. H. H. Green, *Ideologies of Conservatism: Conservative Political Ideas in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 18.
Robert Eccleshall, *English Conservatism Since the Restoration: An Introduction and Anthology* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 125.
[25] The Elgars corresponded with Arkwright several other times, including to work with him to protest against the Home Rule Bill in 1914. Please see:
Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 485 & 664.

and a radical',[26] before seemingly becoming considerably more motivated in his political activism.[27] For Jerrold Northrop Moore, the loss damaged conservatism forever, but it had some benefit for Elgar: 'it could focus sensitive conservative thought on the very themes of retrospection already resounding through Edward's music for the most private of creative reasons'.[28] He had previously refused the position of Mayor of Hereford in 1905,[29] but considered standing as a Conservative Party candidate for MP in 1908. After a complicated series of events that led to a local by-election, Elgar indicated in a private letter that he wanted to put his name forward 'if they have no man ready' and that he would like to try to stand if it was possible.[30] For the 1910 election, Elgar claimed (in his typically self-defeating style) that he was to give up 'writing any more so-called music' and instead spend at least a month campaigning for the Conservative Party.[31] Margaret Deneke notes an amusing anecdote in her biography of the composer Ernest Walker, when Elgar invited the latter to dinner at his home:

> After dinner Walker was taken to the study, a room that held a valuable heraldic library, works on chemistry, and no sign of music except one upright piano: Elgar said if he had been able to live a completely independent life he would have liked to be an M. P. Innocently Walker asked for which party: 'Conservative, of course' Elgar snapped out.[32]

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[26] Edward Elgar, *Letters of Edward Elgar and Other Writings* (London: G. Bles, 1956), 167.
[27] Elgar was likely also frustrated by the parliamentary demographic changes that had taken place during his lifetime; Anthony Ludovici notes that the hierarchical structures and norms that were present in Elgar's youth had deteriorated significantly by 1906. The author argues that 'The fact that, whereas in 1860, 108 of the total Members of Parliaments, were the sons of peers, or heirs to peerages, only 33 belonged to the class in 1906, is typical of the times. It is thus that politics, the most honourable and most difficult of sciences, has been relegated to quill-drivers, adventurers, and agitators of all sorts, whose personal interest it is to mislead rather than to lead, and who, even if they honestly wished to lead, are hardly equipped to do so with any hope of good results'. For Ludovici, and perhaps for Elgar, the decline of the hierarchical, aristocratic parliamentary system of the past was a sign of the decaying natural order of things. Please see:
Anthony M. Ludovici, *A Defence of Conservatism: A Further Text-Book for Tories* (London: Faber & Gwyer, 1927), 34-35.
[28] Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 486.
[29] Percy M. Young and Edward Elgar, *A Future for English Music and Other Lectures* (London: Dobson Books, 1968), 75.
[30] Edward Elgar, quoted in Merion Hughes, 'The Duc D'Elgar', 53.
[31] Edward Elgar, *Windflower Letters: Correspondence with Alice Caroline Stuart Wortley and Her Family* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 32.
[32] Margaret Deneke, *Ernest Walker* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951), 110.

These private letters and interactions suggest a more instinctive political feeling than has been allowed for by some historians.

Political parties saw in Elgar's music an opportunity to promote their causes through utilisation of the cultural capital his music had acquired. When asked about the performance of his *Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1 In D* for political purposes, he wrote in a letter to his publisher 'all right about Lady Rodd & the conservatives – don't let any blasted labour rogues or liberals use the tune!'.[33] Elgar found the Labour Party particularly distasteful, however; when Ramsey MacDonald was elected to membership of the Athenaeum, a club of which Stanford was also a member,[34] Elgar resigned.[35] Likewise, when the 'Tuppenny Bill',[36] as it was known, was introduced by W. M. Adamson, a Labour MP, Elgar publicly declared that it would result in 'the extinction of creative musical art in this country and the ruin of the majority of native composers'.[37] Many musicians opposed the legislation as they believed that it would have reduced performing royalties for composers. Elgar's opposition, however, was perhaps put the most forcefully of them all. As discussed in previous chapters, opposition to measures of this kind is, in part, rooted in conservative politics and philosophy.[38]

Elgar's conservatism, both political and social, was clearly more strongly and consistently held than some scholars have believed. He was not, as is suggested by Brian

[33] Michael Kennedy, 'Elgar the Edwardian' in Raymond Monk (ed.), *Elgar Studies* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1990), 107-117 (112).
[34] Indeed, Stanford and Parry put Elgar's name forward to be considered for membership. Please see:
Paul Rodmell, *Charles Villiers Stanford* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 239-240.
[35] Botstein, 'Transcending the Enigmas of Biography', 382.
[36] Brian Rees, *A Musical Peacemaker: The Life and Work of Sir Edward German* (Abbotsbrook: Kensal Press, 1986), 258.
[37] Edward Elgar, in Lewis Foreman (ed.), *From Parry to Britten: British Music in Letters, 1900-1945* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1987), 138.
[38] Edward German also had a large hand in opposition to the bill; Lewis Foreman claims that 'the measure was finally defeated when Edward German pointed out how small his income from *Merry England* [sic] would have been under it'. Please see:
Foreman, *From Parry to Britten*, 138.

Trowell, covertly a 'progressive' conservative,[39] if there even can be such a person.[40] His conservatism lasted throughout his life, long after the passing of his wife, and permeated both his personality and his music. Strauss famously described Elgar as the 'first English progressivist',[41] but Elgar's own views, as well as his revealed preferences, sometimes suggest a different picture; Daniel M. Grimley suggests that his chamber music, for example, 'sometimes seemed conservative or backward-looking'.[42] Theodor Adorno believed that Elgar's music perpetuated forms and languages which were, to Adorno, outmoded and outworn:

> While these composers seek refuge in the tried-and-true and claim to be weary of what the argot of incomprehension calls "experimentation," they unconsciously deliver themselves up to what they most dread: anarchy. The quest for an age past not only fails to indicate the way home but forfeits all consistency; the arbitrary conservation of the obsolete compromises what it wants to conserve, and with a bad conscience it obdurately opposes whatever is new… Twenty years ago Edward Elgar's trumped-up fame seemed to be a local phenomenon, and Jean Sibelius's fame an exceptional instance of critical ignorance. Today phenomena of such *niveau*, even if they are also sometimes more liberal in the use of dissonance, have become the norm. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, great music has broken away from social functionality of any kind.[43]

The subtext of this quote is deeply political; Adorno was profoundly aware of the connection between philosophical and musical conservatism and sought to connect the two using negative anti-conservative rhetoric. The overarching assumption remains, however, that Elgar was a conservative and his music did not make enough use of dissonance or new methods to

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[39] Brian Trowell, 'Elgar's use of Literature', in Raymond Monk (ed.), *Edward Elgar: Music and Literature* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1993), 182-326 (198).

[40] It is unlikely that musicologists mean to suggest that Elgar subscribed to the Whig view of history, that we are, or should be, progressing towards ever greater enlightenment; more likely that they see Elgar's conservatism as less strongly held than others. Many of the most influential conservative intellectuals have been opposed to such descriptions. Roger Scruton, for example, describes 'progressives' as those whose empty materialism 'threatens to turn us away from our true spiritual inheritance'. Thomas Sowell argues that the idea of a progressive is inherently nonsensical anyway. For Sowell, people who call themselves 'progressive', suggest that they are for beneficial changes, or progress. But conservatives are also advocates of changes they believe to be beneficial; 'In other words, everybody is a "progressive" by their own lights'. To describe Elgar in such a way is to suggest that conservatives are not usually in favour of 'progress'; this is an inaccurate way of conceptualising both musical and political conservatism. Please see:
Roger Scruton, *Conservatism: Ideas in Profile* (London, Profile Books, 2017), 85.
Thomas Sowell, *Intellectuals and Society* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 101.

[41] Richard Strauss, quoted in Jeremy Dibble, 'Elgar and His British Contemporaries' in in Daniel M. Grimley and Julian Rushton (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Elgar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 15-23 (21).

[42] Daniel M. Grimley, 'A Smiling with a Sigh': The Chamber Music and Works for Strings' in Daniel M. Grimley and Julian Rushton (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Elgar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 120-138 (120).

[43] Theodor Adorno, *Philosophy of New Music* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 10-11.

be worthy of fame or canonisation. Christopher Mark offers a similar – if somewhat more sympathetic – analysis when he argues that 'by the standards of much twentieth-century composition, Elgar's style advanced little. He was a conservative all his life. But his final, partial vision demonstrates no less than the dangers of valuation according to a progressive yardstick'.[44] The same views were also advanced during Elgar's lifetime. C. H. Phillips, for example, suggested that contemporary music could be divided into two schools of composers: 'the more Conservative men, like Elgar, who stuck to the old rules, but enlarged them to their utmost; and the more extreme like Schornberg [sic], who throw tradition aside'.[45] Botstein argues that in the context of the developments of the twentieth century, 'Elgar wrote music that was clearly conservative in style… Elgar remained committed to the rhetorical tradition of expressiveness that came under intense critical scrutiny by modernists'.[46] It is possible that Strauss's toast of Elgar's music was not to celebrate his 'progressivism' as conceptualised by historians today, but to acknowledge his contribution to the continued, developing traditions of tonality and form. For Botstein, both composers were Brahmsian (so often used as a by-word for musical conservatism) in their acknowledgement of 'the weight of history' and their 'awe for the traditions of composition'.[47] Elgar himself argued that he and his fellow composers should take a philosophically conservative position regarding modernism: 'I think we may consider ourselves to be conservators of what is the necessary basis of music'.[48]

Matthew Riley suggests that Elgar's tastes in literature 'rarely if ever strayed from the conservative mainstream… and he had no evident interest in philosophical speculation'.[49]

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[44] Christopher Mark, 'The Later Orchestral Music' in Daniel M. Grimley and Julian Rushton (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Elgar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 154-170 (168).
[45] C. H. Phillips, quoted in Hull Daily Mail, 'Modernism in Art', *Hull Daily Mail*, 26th March 1926, 15.
[46] Botstein, 'Transcending the Enigmas of Biography', 367.
[47] Botstein, 'Transcending the Enigmas of Biography', 367.
[48] Edward Elgar, quoted in Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 664.
[49] Matthew Riley, *British Music and Modernism, 1895-1960* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 34.

Conservatism *is* philosophical speculation, however, and Elgar's music is so often a manifestation of this philosophy.[50] For James Hepokoski, the symphonies are Elgar at his most explicitly conservative:

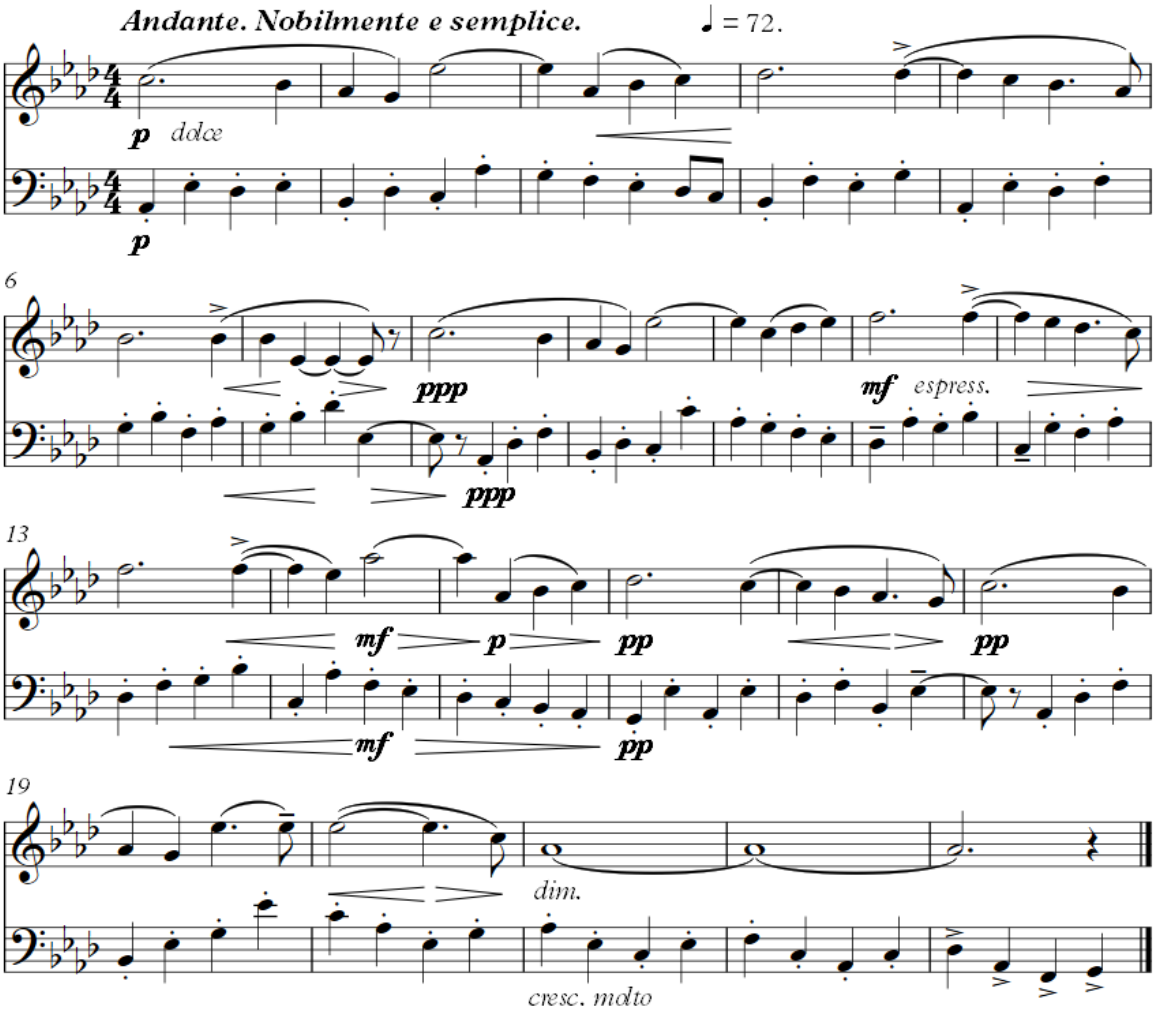
> The two Elgar symphonies survey the composer's general world vision. That vision ranges widely, from the expansive or boisterous to the desperately conflicted and, further, to the fully interior, intimate and private. But it is touched throughout by a melancholy awareness of the dreamlike quality and transitoriness of things.[51]

Sowell describes conservative worldviews as fundamentally 'a tragic vision of the human condition'; this is exhibited so often in Elgar's music, but perhaps most articulately in the symphonies.[52] For Diana McVeagh, it is what characterises Elgar's *Symphony No. 1 in A♭ major*:

> In Elgar the contrasts are between states of mind. Themes act out their dramatic potentials. For instance, the calm processional melody which opens the First Symphony, the 'motto theme' of the whole work, is scarcely drawn on thematically, it returns like a presence or a vision, and changes the course of what it touches.[53]

The tragic, heroic, *nobilmente* theme of the symphony returns, largely unchanged and without development, several times over the course of the four movements.

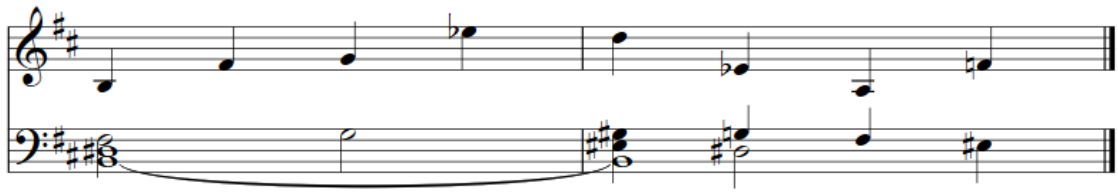
[50] Critics of the theory of Elgar as conservative are correct to point out that Elgar's political positions do not emerge from rational or 'philosophical' thought; for Elgar and many other conservatives, conservatism is an antirational position that emanates from an acceptance of the four tenets of conservatism identified in the third chapter of this thesis.
[51] Hepokoski, quoted in Christopher Mark, 'The Later Orchestral Music' in Daniel M. Grimley and Julian Rushton (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Elgar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 154-170 (168).
[52] Thomas Sowell, *A Conflict of Visions: Ideological Origins of Political Struggles* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), 27.
[53] Diana McVeagh, 'Edward Elgar' in Diana McVeagh (ed.), *The New Grove Twentieth Century English Masters* (London: Norton, 1986), 1-50 (40).



Ex. 7.1., Opening theme from Edward Elgar's *Symphony No. 1 in A♭ major*, Op. 55, (1908), bb. 3-25.

It is stated solemnly as the opening of the first movement, then it is repeated by the orchestra *fortissimo*, before fading into silence, only for new music to emerge, considerably more chromatic in its melody and modernist in its harmony. The development section of the movement introduces the following theme, described by *The Musical Times* as 'an arpeggio figure of uncertain tonality and sinister import':[54]

[54] The Musical Times, 'Sir Edward Elgar's Symphony', *The Musical Times*, 49/790 (1908), 778-780 (779).



Ex. 7.2., theme from the development section of the first movement of Edward Elgar's *Symphony No. 1 in A♭ major*, Op. 55, (1908), Rehearsal Mark 24.

The work wrestles with the theme's ambiguity and instability until it is overcome by the *nobilmente* strength of character of the opening diatonic passage. Melodically unchanged, but each time more intricately decorated and triumphant, the principal theme returns multiple times before the finale, again overwhelming the chromaticism and complexities of whatever music it has passed through. As Frank Howes explains, 'he did not simply reproduce his tune at the octave, above or below, Puccini-fashion, but underlined the constituent notes, one or two at a time or even singly, with different instruments, a kind of *Klangfarbenmelodie*'.[55] It is both an exposition of the tragedy of the human condition and a musical attempt to demonstrate how the old order of things might emerge, unblemished, through any tribulation. This is perhaps what Kennedy suggests when he describes the work as 'often happy and boisterous, but just as often withdrawn and lonely'.[56]

Elgar described the symphony as 'a composer's outlook on life',[57] as well as declaring that 'there is no programme beyond a wide experience of human life'; this is only partly true, and as so often in the study of Elgar's life and works, there are layers to his thought, as expressed in both his music and his writings.[58] The programme of the work was alluded to in a 1908 review in *The Musical Times*, which perceptively suggests, after describing the symphony's 'likeness to the classical model' and 'conventional pattern', that 'in a sense, it is

[55] Frank Howes, *The English Musical Renaissance* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1966), 185.
[56] Kennedy, 'Elgar the Edwardian', 112.
[57] Edward Elgar, quoted in Diana McVeagh, *Elgar the Music Maker* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007), 94.
[58] Edward Elgar, quoted in Jeffrey Richards, *Imperialism and Music: Britain 1876-1953* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 46.

the composer's private diary, it is written in a cypher to which every hearer possesses a key in his own experience'.[59] The outlook embodied in the music is inherently conservative. Benjamin Britten, in his 'passionately political' (so often used in academia as a by-word for anticonservative) youth,[60] amusingly wrote in 1935: 'I swear that only in Imperialist England could such a work be tolerated'.[61] Harper-Scott describes the musical language and form of the symphony as 'very old-fashioned' and 'atavistically diatonic for 1908'.[62] Elgar himself told Alice Stuart Wortley that 'the first movement is bold & vigorous'; Diana McVeagh argues that it is remarkable that Elgar described the movement in this way, because he neglected to mention that it is also 'remarkably conservative'.[63] For Elgar, this musical conservatism had a philosophical message, and an extramusical, political, purpose that he perhaps would not admit publicly; he wrote that 'the opening theme is intended to be simple &, in intention, noble & elevating ... the sort of ideal call - in the sense of persuasion, not coercion or command - & something above every day & sordid things'.[64] Harper-Scott comes closest to finding an analogy for the programme of the music when he compares the symphony to J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. The comparison is so successful because both works contain the elements of the heroic narrative favoured by conservative artists.[65] Tolkien, who described his classic fantasy as 'a fundamentally

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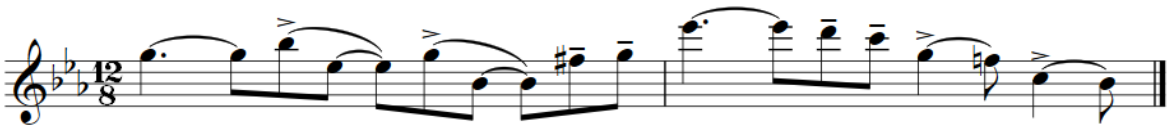
[59] The Musical Times, 'Sir Edward Elgar's Symphony', *The Musical Times*, 49/790 (1908), 778-780 (778).
[60] It is easy to overlook that so many of the leading composers of the generations that followed Elgar were passionate socialists; as Paul Harrington has noted, Vaughan Williams, Holst, Tippett and Britten, among many others, were politically engaged anticonservatives. Please see:
Paul Harrington, 'Holst and Vaughan Williams: Radical Pastoral' in Christopher Norris (ed.), *Music and the Politics of Culture* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1989), 106-127 (108).
[61] Benjamin Britten, quoted in Harper-Scott, *Edward Elgar, Modernist*, 183.
[62] J. P. E. Harper-Scott, ''A Nice Sub-Acid Feeling': Schenker, Heidegger and Elgar's First Symphony', *Music Analysis*, 24/3 (2005), 349-382 (356).
[63] Diana McVeagh, *Elgar the Music Maker*, 174.
[64] Edward Elgar, quoted in Harper-Scott, 'A Nice Sub-Acid Feeling', 356.
[65] This heroism is somewhat different to the often-discussed Beethovenian narrative of many other symphonies; Tolkien himself explained that *The Lord of the Rings* 'is cast in terms of a good side, and a bad side, beauty against ruthless ugliness, tyranny against kingship, moderated freedom with consent against compulsion that has long lost any object save mere power, and so on; but both sides in some degree, *conservative or destructive*, want a measure of control' (emphasis added). The work is not only fundamentally religious, but fundamentally conservative in its outlook. Please see:
J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien* (London: Harper Collins, 2006), 178-179.

religious and Catholic work',[66] wrote noble tragedies about home, tradition, heroism and a willpower to resist the perceived degeneracy of the world around its protagonists. Elgar expressed these motifs in his first symphony. The 'simple' theme, and its development (or lack thereof), was, for Elgar, the best means of expressing conservative philosophy musically; the 'ideal call' of the theme expresses a conservative vision of the proper order of society and of home, using musically conservative language and forms.

There is a dualism in both of the completed Elgar symphonies that has been noted by a variety of musicologists and Elgarians. The *Symphony No. 2 in E♭ Major* has produced more confidently asserted extramusical claims, however, as the score itself contains a number of explicit associations made by the composer.[67] These claims often have in common a perception of a conservative dualism that Paul Attinello has argued to be central to philosophically conservative music:

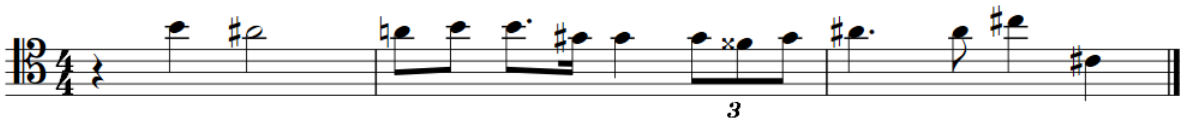
> …the endless desire to go back, to recreate a world where things are safe, is perpetually frustrated by the realization that things were never safe, that nostalgia was the human condition from the first moment of consciousness (or, in Christian terms, from the moment of the Fall).[68]

Harper-Scott sees this playing out in the dual themes of the 'Spirit of Delight' and 'Spirit of Decay'.



Ex. 7.3., 'Spirit of Delight' theme from the first movement of Edward Elgar's *Symphony No. 2 in E♭ major*, Op. 63, (1911), bb. 2-3.

[66] Tolkien, *Letters*, 172.
[67] At the end of the score, Elgar offers two place names (Venice-Tintagel). The work is also dedicated to the late monarch and there is a quotation from Shelley's *Rarely, Rarely Comest Thou* written on the first page. Please see:
Harper-Scott, 'Elgar's Deconstruction', 172.
[68] Paul Attinello, 'Pfitzner, *Palestrina*, Nazis, Conservatives: Longing for Utopia', *Journal of Musicological Research*, 15 (1995), 25-53 (48).



Ex. 7.4., 'Spirit of Decay' theme from Edward Elgar's *Symphony No. 2 in E♭ major*, Op. 63, (1911), as written in Harper-Scott, 'Elgar's Deconstruction', 187.

Harper-Scott suggests that these themes are the keys to an understanding of the symphony. He writes that 'its narrative, insofar as we can grasp it, will be played out on the thematic, tonal, and timbral levels'.[69] The most obvious difference between these themes is their diatonicism and chromaticism; the tonality of the 'spirit of delight' theme is much more straight-forward than the 'spirit of decay' and its developments. Harper-Scott sees the F# in the opening theme as 'the first seed of the Spirit of Decay'; it is this chromaticism that represents the descent from the 'Spirit of Delight'. For Harper-Scott, 'that seed gradually enables a morbid outgrowth to develop (as it were) on the face of the Spirit of Delight'.[70] The motives of the *Second Symphony* offer another example of a dualism; prosperity in diatonicism and spiritual decay in chromaticism.

Similarly, Roger Scruton argues that the first subject of the first movement is a celebration of the past, imperial glory and a nobility of spirit, whereas the second subject portrays a 'tenderness and longing'.[71] A number of likeminded interpretations exist; as Harper-Scott writes, in the second symphony 'the delight of the exposition section can be considered a kind of Elgarian arcadia (he was too politically conservative to countenance utopia)'.[72] Again the work has fundamentally political undertones:

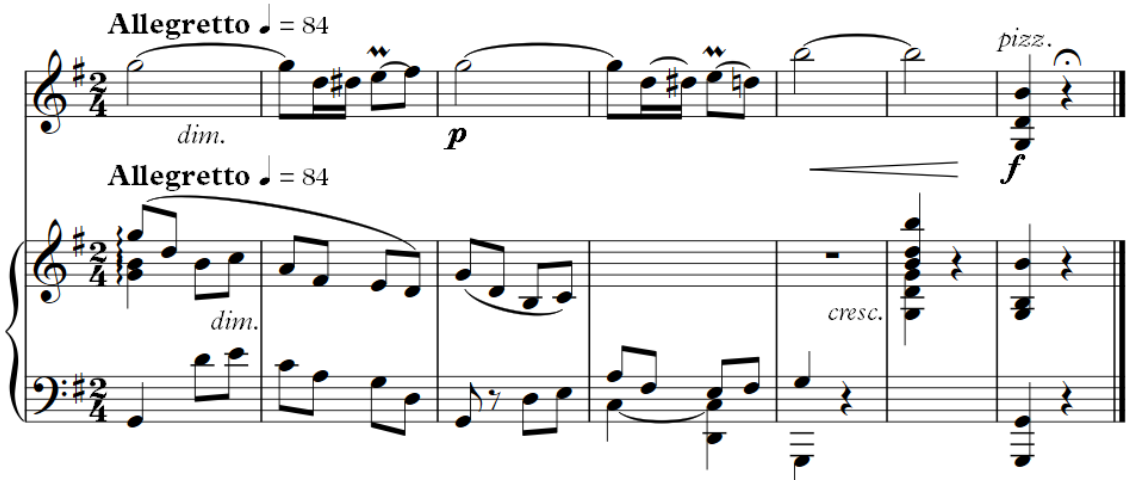
> It is natural that in this historical moment a conservatively minded composer should look back fondly on a recent past he had loved, and regard both the politically convulsive present and the coming future with vague but consuming unease. The gentle nostalgia of the bulk of the finale and the sunset glory of its Delight-infused coda have always suggested this most obvious of readings to listeners and commentators. However much they are nuanced, interpretations must boil down somehow to this general theme, or risk seeming irrelevant to experience of the music.[73]

[69] Harper-Scott, 'Elgar's Deconstruction', 196.
[70] Ibid., 194.
[71] Roger Scruton, *Music as an Art* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 61-62.
[72] Harper-Scott, 'Elgar's Deconstruction', 191.
[73] Harper-Scott, 'Elgar's Deconstruction', 215.

Moore similarly argues that the symphony is a reflection of the tension in the Empire, as well as the composer himself, resulting from the Home Rule crisis and conservative defeats in the general elections of 1906 and 1910: 'the growing tension in the country would find its reflection in Edward's Symphony'.[74] Harper-Scott recognises the link between these extramusical associations and the conservatism of the musical materials: 'diatonicism, for Elgar, may point to security, to the past, even to a prelapsarian Eden, but it points with the knowledge that there is no real hope in dreams or idealisation'.[75] In both symphonies the conservative diatonicism of the first themes can be recognised as an idealisation of the past, of the world before the Fall of Man, of a rejection of modernity and degeneration. The choice of musical language and expression is directly related to its extramusical interpretation; they come from the same philosophical source.

This dualism can again be found in what Frank Howes dismissed as Elgar's 'lollipops'.[76] Like Edward German, Elgar put forward some of his most conservative music in his lighter compositions. One interpretation of the twin works *Chanson de Nuit* and *Chanson De Matin*, for example, is that they are an explicit exhibition of the conservative dualism already alluded to. One, with its charming melody, repeated use of upper mordents and perfect cadences, represents the material gains and hope for the future that is embodied in the theme of the *Symphony No. 1*.

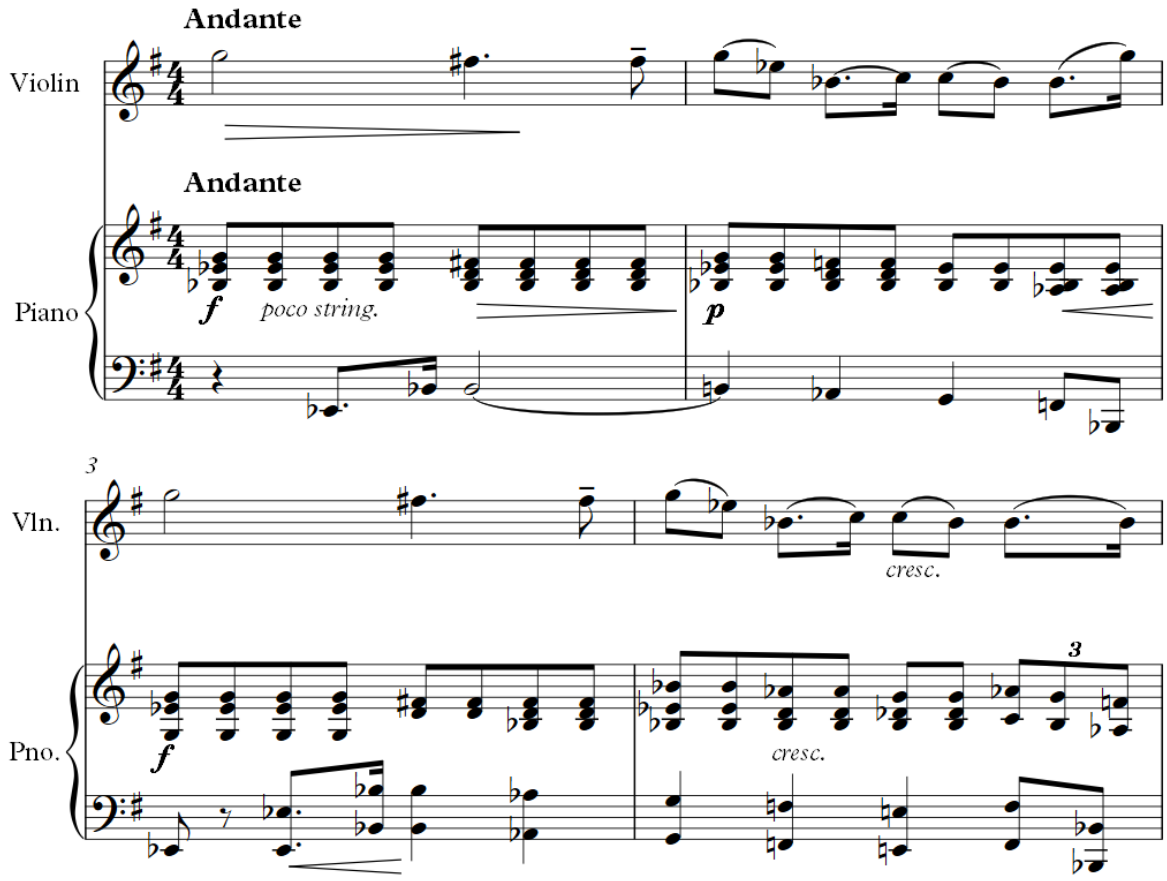
[74] Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 596-597.
[75] J.P.E. Harper-Scott, 'Elgar's Unwumbling: The Theatre Music' in Daniel M. Grimley and Julian Rushton (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Elgar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 171-183 (177).
[76] Howes, *The English Musical Renaissance*, 165.



Ex. 7.5., closing bars of *Chanson de Matin*, Op. 15 No.2, (1890).

The other, intense and dark in its expression, makes persistent use of diminished chords, as well as chromatic movement leading to key changes; the recapitulation of the theme is, as McVeagh points out, made 'at the wrong pitch', before returning to the home key of G major.[77] It is possible that this is Elgar's musical representation of the spiritual poverty and grief for lost times that has been, for conservatives, concomitant with modernity.

[77] McVeagh, *Elgar the Music Maker*, 39.



Ex. 7.6., Example of chromaticism and change in *Chanson de Nuit*, Op. 15 No.1, (1890).

Despite his affection for German and his own success with 'light' musical forms, it is important to recognise that Elgar did distinguish between the importance of 'light' and 'serious' music and his light music was conservative in a different way. Matthew Riley, for example, argues that the abrupt tonal shifts in *The Starlight Express* coincide 'with a call for a return to the dreams and enchantment of childhood'.[78] Geoffrey Self notes that one officer wrote to Elgar from The Western Front to tell him, having listened to a recording of the music some twelve times, 'that it brought back 'the days that are gone' and that it helped him 'through the "Ivory Gate" that leads to Fairyland, or Heaven, whatever one likes to call it'.[79] Grimley and Rushton suggest that this vision of Elgar's music 'as a nostalgic return to a lost

[78] Riley, 'Elgar the Escapist', 48.
[79] Geoffrey Self, *Light Music in Britain since 1870: A Survey* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 56.

rural Golden Age' should be considered to be a 'conservative reinterpretation',[80] but it is clear that these feelings were evoked in some listeners from their first performances and recordings.[81] As Scruton has lamented, one of the most common criticisms of conservatism is that it is often 'a translation into the language of politics of the yearning for childhood that lies deep in us all'. There is a grain of truth in such evaluations, and this truth is expressed in much of Elgar's light music.[82]

The lighter works have variously been rejected as 'coexisting embarrassingly alongside the great works',[83] or, in the case of *The Crown of India*, for example, as 'a tool for manipulating popular consciousness'.[84] A consensus emerged from opinions about these contrasts with Elgar's serious works in the years after the decline of the composer's popularity, known as the 'two Elgars' theory. Composer and critic Cecil Gray, who once mused that Elgar's *In the South* represented 'Italy seen through the eyes of a specially conducted cook's tourist',[85] established this distinction in his 1924 *A Survey of Contemporary Music*, in which he distinguished between the respectable composer of symphonies and oratorios, and what he describes as 'the self-appointed Musician laureate of the British Empire'.[86] For Gray, 'one is a musician of merit; the other is only a barbarian'.[87] Frank Howes developed the 'two Elgars' theory, using the phrase in the title of his 1935 *Music and Letters* article, presenting the output of 'lesser' works as unrelated to his masterpieces.[88] For

[80] Daniel M. Grimley and Julian Rushton, 'Introduction' in Daniel M. Grimley and Julian Rushton (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Elgar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1-14 (13).
[81] Similar beliefs persist today; Scruton wistfully claims that 'Without the countryside and all that it means there would be no Coleridge or Wordsworth, no Jane Austen, no Brontë sisters, no Walter Scott, no George Eliot or Thomas Hardy, no Elgar, Vaughan Williams or Ivor Gurney, no Constable, Crome or Turner'. Please see: Roger Scruton, *Where We Are: The State of Britain Now* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 43.
[82] Roger Scruton, *Conservatism: Ideas in Profile* (London: Profile Books, 2017), 80.
[83] Howes, *The English Musical Renaissance*, 165.
[84] Nalini Ghuman, *Resonances of the Raj: India in the English Musical Imagination, 1897-1947* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 59.
[85] Cecil Gray, quoted in Richards, *Imperialism and Music*, 74.
[86] Cecil Gray, *A Survey of Contemporary Music* (London: Oxford University Press: 1924), 78-9.
[87] Gray, *A Survey of Contemporary Music*, 79.
[88] Frank Howes, 'The Two Elgars', *Music and Letters*, 16 (1935), 26–9.

Corissa Gould, the theory is fundamentally a political intervention in the same way as the vision of Elgar cloaked in tweed; Gould suggests that:

> The implications of this dual view of Elgar stretch beyond his compositions themselves and into the politics and ideology underpinning them… There was a general reluctance to accept that Elgar could have supported imperial policies in any way, the aim being to make him more palatable to late twentieth-century sensibilities.[89]

The subject of Elgar's imperialism will be discussed in a later chapter, but the point can be made in a similar way for Elgar's conservatism.

These political revaluations of Elgar's views often rely on an argument that suggests that if Elgar felt as strongly about his beliefs as his public behaviour indicated, he would have articulated his vision in more thoughtful ways.[90] Many historians and philosophers of conservatism have pointed out, however, that this would be a rare thing for a conservative to do; anti-intellectualism, anti-rationalism and an appreciation of inarticulate, inherited wisdom and knowledge (sometimes bundled together as 'common sense') are often considered to be integral to conservatism.[91] Another politically complicated Catholic conservative of the era, G. K. Chesterton, said: 'I have always been more inclined to believe the ruck of hard-working people than to believe that special and troublesome literary class to which I belong… religion is abnormally right and rationalism abnormally wrong'.[92] Hearnshaw alluded to these beliefs when he wrote that 'Conservatism is a spirit, an attitude, a temper, and not a set of dogmas';[93] it is also what J. S. Mill meant when he famously declared that the Conservative Party was

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[89] Corissa Gould, ''An Inoffensive Thing': Edward Elgar, *The Crown of India* and Empire' in Martin Clayton and Bennett Zon (eds.), *Music and Orientalism in the British Empire, 1780s-1940s* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 147-164 (148).
[90] Harper-Scott, *Edward Elgar, Modernist*, 18.
[91] Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn argues that antirationalist and anti-intellectual attitudes came to be a part of philosophical conservatism through Martin Luther, via Protestantism more broadly. Its specific manifestation in Victorian England, he suggests, is a manifestation of the commercial and military connections of the Conservative Party since its inception. Please see:
Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, *Leftism: from de Sade and Marx to Hitler and Marcuse* (New York: Arlington House, 1974), 256 & 385.
[92] G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (London: John Lane, 1909), 84-85.
[93] F. J. C. Hearnshaw, *Conservatism in England: An Analytical, Historical, and Political Survey* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1933), 22.

'the stupid party'.[94] Joseph de Maistre expressed this antirationalist sentiment in response to Rousseau:

> Human reason, or what is called philosophy, is as useless for the happiness of states as for that of individuals, that all great institutions have their origins and their conservation elsewhere, and that when human reason is mingled with such institutions, it only perverts or destroys them.[95]

De Maistre believed that rationalism and philosophy, by the time he wrote his *Considerations on France*, had 'corroded the sentiment that united men', and it was therefore possible to say that 'there are no longer any moral bonds'.[96] More recently, Scruton has argued that 'Conservatives, who see value in prejudice and danger in abstract thought, have extemporized, expressing their beliefs in vague and conciliatory language'.[97]

While such exceptions as Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who called for a 'clerisy' of intellectuals and academics intended to 'resist undue freedom and cultural levelling in mass democracy',[98] many conservative intellectuals (perhaps paradoxically) have agreed that intellectualism and academicism are at the heart of the development of many problems.[99] Edmund Burke, for example, lamented in his *Reflections* that 'the age of chivalry is gone – that of sophisters, economists, and calculators, has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever.'[100] Similarly, Thomas Carlyle derided the proposition of an introduction of an elected 'aristocracy of talent', made up of intellectuals and businessmen, to

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[94] J. S. Mill, quoted in E. H. H. Green, *Ideologies of Conservatism: Conservative Political Ideas in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 2.
[95] Joseph de Maistre, *Against Rousseau: "On the State of Nature" and "On the Sovereignty of the People"* (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 82.
[96] Joseph De Maistre, *Considerations on France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 47.
[97] Roger Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism* (Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan, 2001), 2.
[98] Edmund Fawcett, *Conservatism: The Fight for a Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 451.
[99] It is interesting that the philosopher who perhaps straddles the line between conservative traditionalism and a sort of fascism more than any other, Julius Evola, bemoaned the intellectualism of modernist music in 1961. It is notable that his assessment of the state of music is entirely negative, and does not provide a vision of what music should be: 'intellectualization, in which the cerebral element prevails, with an interest focused on harmony, often leading to a technical radicalism to the detriment of immediacy and sentiment ("human contents"), resulting in abstract rhythmic-harmonic constructs that often seem to be ends in themselves. The extreme case of this is recent twelve-tone music and strict serialism'. Please see:
Julius Evola, *Ride the Tiger: A Survival Manual for the Aristocrats of the Soul* (Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions, 2003), 159.
[100] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London: Penguin, 2004), 170.

take the place of hereditary aristocracy.[101] George Orwell described these attitudes as fundamentally English in character; in *The Lion and the Unicorn*, he argues that 'as Europeans go, the English are not intellectual. They have a horror of abstract thought, they feel no need for any philosophy or systematic "world-view"'.[102] Orwell was surely describing the conservative strains of English rural cultural life and the empirical view of the world that was inherent to it; it would be difficult to argue that the 'bourgeois' socialists criticised by Orwell in *The Road to Wigan Pier*, for example, shared the anti-intellectualism of the kind of people he was describing.[103] This is perhaps part of what Constant Lambert meant when he described Elgar as 'the last serious composer to be in touch with the great public'.[104]

Michael Oakeshott articulated these feelings most completely in his essay *Rationalism and Politics*, in which he argued that 'the Rationalist aims to begin by getting rid of inherited nescience and then to fill the blank nothingness of an open mind with the items of certain knowledge which he abstracts from his personal experience, and which he believes to be approved by the common "reason" of mankind'.[105] Burke recognised that these vacuums were often left unfilled as early as 1756, criticising rationalist iconoclasts in his first ever published work: 'whilst they oppose every System, are wisely careful never to set up any of their own'.[106] More recently, conservative academic Thomas Sowell has argued at length that so many of the tragedies of the twentieth century were caused by intellectuals and their

[101] Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present* (London: Ward Lock & Co., 1911), 38-47.
[102] George Orwell, *The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius* (London: Penguin Random House, 2018), 6.
[103] George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier* (London: Penguin Books, 1986), 212.
[104] Constant Lambert, *Music Ho! A Study of Music in Decline* (London: Faber and Faber, 1937), 273.
[105] Michael Oakeshott, 'Rationalism in Politics' in Jerry Z. Muller (ed.), *Conservatism: An Anthology of Social and Political Thought from David Hume to the Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 292-312 (311).
[106] Edmund Burke, 'Preface to A Vindication of Natural Society' in David Womersley (ed.), *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful* (London: Penguin, 2004), 1-48 (6).

followers, providing a useful definition of the intellectual as someone whose end product is *ideas*, rather than tangible goods or services.[107]

Sowell also includes a short explication of the conservative, anti-intellectual argument against musical modernism, of the sort advocated by Edward German:

> Some intellectuals' downplaying of objective reality and enduring criteria extends beyond social, scientific, or economic phenomena into art, music, and philosophy. The one over-riding consistency across all these disparate venues is the self-exaltation of the intellectuals. Unlike great cultural achievements of the past, such as magnificent cathedrals, which were intended to inspire kings and peasants alike, the hallmark of self-consciously "modern" art and music is its inaccessibility to the masses and often even its deliberate offensiveness to, or mockery of, the masses.[108]

German was similarly frustrated by the perceived academicism of some in the musical establishment, suggesting in a letter to his sister, Rachel, that 'Nature seems to have a mould for turning out these dry-as-dust old doctors, who meet every year, read papers and decide whether in the future crotchets shall have their stems turned upward or downward'.[109] Elgar, who stated in his inaugural Birmingham University lecture that he was 'not one of those who are continually wondering what the intelligent foreigner thinks of him',[110] shared parts of this anti-academic and anti-intellectual view of music. Andrew Blake argues that autodidacticism and 'self-made man' constructions were used by the composer to distinguish himself from the supposed academicism of his older contemporaries, including Stanford,[111] but also Parry, Sullivan, and others whose names were widely associated with the academic and intellectual institutions they established or worked with.[112] Similarly, Botstein suggests that Elgar's lack of connections and academic training offer a window to an understanding of his life and

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[107] Sowell, *Intellectuals and Society*, 283.
[108] Sowell, *Intellectuals and Society*, 317.
[109] 'Dryasdust' was a fictional character invented by Sir Walter Scott and popularised by reactionary philosopher Thomas Carlyle. Please see:
Edward German, quoted in Rees, *A Musical Peacemaker*, 182.
[110] Elgar, *A Future for English Music*, 35.
[111] It ought to be noted, however, that Stanford indulged in this kind of narrative creation about his own public persona; Kevin O'Connell argues, for example, that 'Stanford's identification with Brahms is also that of the self-made provincial. The provincial artist, bays cocked askew on his sunburnt brow, arrives in the Capital bearing the gospel of craft-and-graft'. Please see:
Kevin O'Connell, 'Stanford and the Gods of Modern Music', *The Musical Times*, 146/1890 (2005), 33-44 (43).
[112] Andrew Blake, *The Land Without Music: Music, Culture and Society in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 38.

works, which makes him distinguishable from Parry and Stanford in particular.[113] Elgar was outspoken in his distaste for Stanford's perceived academicism. In 1908, he wrote in an amusing letter to Frank Schuster that 'all professors, except Parry, neglect to wash'.[114] He failed to support Stanford and Parry in examining at the universities, which Hughes and Stradling describe as being due to his 'dim appreciation of the duties which recognition enjoined'.[115] Elgar veiled his criticisms of Stanford thinly in his lectures; he rebuked composers of rhapsodies and declared his dismay at the lack of originality and foreign influences of his contemporaries.[116] As Jeremy Dibble has noted, these lectures 'wounded Stanford very deeply'.[117] It seems to have been, in part, Stanford's perceived academicism that Elgar took issue with; one of the most controversial arguments in his lectures was that English music should have 'something broad, noble, chivalrous, healthy and above all, an out-of-door spirit. To arrive at this it will be necessary to throw over all imitation'.[118] Elgar made such statements in both his words and music in order to escape association with academicism and intellectualism.[119]

Brian Newbould has written a trilogy of articles on the subject of Elgar's academicism. These essays detail Elgar's varied musical influences, especially the textbooks from which he learned the foundations of writing music. Newbould takes at face value the

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[113] Botstein, 'Transcending the Enigmas of Biography', 373.
[114] Elgar, *Letters of Edward Elgar*, 185.
[115] Meirion Hughes and Robert Stradling, *The English Musical Renaissance 1840-1940: Constructing a National Music* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 64.
[116] Elgar, *A Future for English Music*, 22-64.
[117] Jeremy Dibble, *Charles Villiers Stanford: Man and Musician* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 372.
[118] Elgar, *A Future for English Music*, 57.
[119] Conservatives do not hold an exclusive claim to anti-academicism, so it is worth investigating some of the differences between Elgar's anti-academicism and some of his contemporaries, including Frederick Delius, whose opposition to existing systems of musical education seems to have come from a different place. Like Elgar, however, Delius appears to have presented his anti-academicism more as a statement of ideology than a description of his compositional process or influences. Elgar once wrote to Delius with a typically overmodest tone: 'my music will not interest you, Delius: you are too much of a poet for a workman like me!'. This was presumably intended as a partially a joke, but perhaps highlights some of the difference in attitude to anti-intellectualism between Elgar and Delius. Please see:
Jeremy Dibble, *The Music of Frederick Delius: Style, Form and Ethos* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2021), 475-481.

assertions made throughout Elgar's life that he was self-taught; while they were no doubt largely true, they are a deliberate projection of his anti-academicism. Elgar declared in his 1904 *Strand Magazine* interview that he was 'self-taught in the matter of harmony, counterpoint, form, and, in short, the whole of the "mystery" of music'.[120] Such knowledge does not come entirely from within, however, and Newbould explicates the various ways in which he learned aspects of music from textbooks, which were written by both academics and composers.

Elgar explicitly recommended monographs by Professor Ebenezer Prout, such as his *Instrumentation* (1878) and *Harmony: Its Theory and Practice* (1889).[121] Among Prout's many and varied achievements was that he taught harmony and counterpoint to Edward German.[122] Elgar's success as an autodidact lies not his rejection of academicism, but in his embrace of it; he was an academic composer in the sense that his knowledge was gained from theorists and composers of the past, stored in books that they wrote. As such his anti-academicism, instinctively conservative as it likely was, might be seen as a rejection of the content of academia during the time in which he lived, rather than academicism as such; Elgar, for example, lamented that theoretical textbooks taught 'building, not architecture'.[123] The most interesting section of Newbould's articles argues that Elgar was, despite his protestations, academic in his use of old fashioned musical devices and languages;[124]

[120] Edward Elgar, quoted in Rudolph de Cordova, 'Illustrated Interviews: LXXXI – Dr Edward Elgar', *Strand Magazine*, 25 (May 1904), 538-9.
[121] Brian Newbould, 'Elgar and Academicism 1: The Untutored Genius', *The Musical Times*, 146/1891 (Summer 2005), 71-84 (72-82).
[122] William Herbert Scott, *Edward German: An Intimate Biography* (London: Cecil Palmer, 1932), 18.
[123] Edward Elgar, quoted in Oliver Chandler, 'Diatonic Illusions and Chromatic Waterwheels: Edward Elgar's Concept of Tonality', *Journal of the Society for Musicology in Ireland*, 15 (2020), 3-29 (7).
[124] As with conservatism, there is some confusion in the use of the words 'intellectualism' and 'academicism'; they are sometimes used to mean support of the institutional representatives of academies and universities, but sometimes meant to denote book-learning and old-fashioned practices. The two are intrinsically linked, but it is important not to fall into a kind of motte-and-bailey fallacy when discussing their implications.

Newbould cites Elgar's use of the fugue as primary among these, but his arguments could equally be applied to his use of, for example, the tierce de Picardie (more on this later).[125]

In opposition to many other Elgar scholars, who suggest variously that Elgar was a 'neo-Wagnerian',[126] or that Wagner was 'the single most influential composer' on Elgar,[127] Newbould also suggests that 'he evidently regarded Mozart and Beethoven as the best models for study'.[128] It is possible that Elgar, as a conservative, looked at the history of music, took what he regarded to be the best of each of the great composers of the past and attempted to preserve their ideas using the latest musical developments. While many of his works are at least in part musically conservative in the sense used by most scholars, many of his works contained elements of early musical modernism. Edward Campbell describes the philosophy driving modernists:

> Inherent within musical modernism is the conviction that music is not a static phenomenon defined by timeless truths and classical principles, but rather something which is intrinsically historical and developmental. While belief in musical progress or in the principle of innovation is not new or unique to modernism, such values are particularly important within modernist aesthetic stances… Slower, more progressive transformation, it seems, is more often the normal means whereby a given aesthetic movement, compositional technique, musical system, style or genre is replaced by another.[129]

This statement of values, inverted, might serve as a workable definition of musical conservatism. For Elgar, there were timeless truths in the classical principles and languages; while he saw musical progression as important, it is clear that he regarded it as necessary to build on the old models of, for example, the oratorio, but expand their possibilities and touch their boundaries, without breaking through them. While Elgar was innovative, he was not radical; he did not seek to change the rules of the game, but to play with the best musical technology available. His was a view of progression in musical history that perceived it to be,

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[125] Brian Newbould, 'Elgar and Academicism 3: Devices and Contrivances', *The Musical Times*, 146/1893 (2005), 29-44 (37).
[126] Aidan Thomson, 'Elgar and Chivalry', *19th-Century Music*, 28/3 (2005), 254-275 (274).
[127] Peter Dennison, 'Elgar's Musical Apprenticeship', in Raymond Monk (ed.) *Elgar Studies* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1990), 1-34 (9).
[128] Brian Newbould, 'Elgar and Academicism 1', 74.
[129] Edward Campbell, *Boulez, Music and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 37.

as has been described in a very different context by Kerry McCarthy, 'spiral rather than linear'.[130]

The modernist elements, as far as they can be described as such in Elgar's music, can be difficult to pin down. This is because they are so often lying beneath the surface; Oliver Chandler describes Elgar's diatonicism in the *Violin Sonata in E minor* as an illusion, using Schenkerian analyses to show the modernism at the substructural level of Elgar's works.[131] Despite part of the purpose of Schenkerian analysis being to demonstrate the primary structural commonalities between canonical tonal music as a whole, Harper-Scott has argued along similar lines throughout his writings on Elgar; the essence of his argument is that conceptualisations of modernism should also include those previously thought of as late romantic composers like Debussy, Strauss and Elgar.[132] This is what McGuire describes as Elgar's 'chameleonic modernism'; it is there, hidden in plain sight.[133] The fact remains, however, that at the surface level – the level at which the music is played and, crucially, *heard* – his works are usually outwardly diatonic and conservative in their language. Debussy and Satie might fit into Harper-Scott's expansionist definition of modernism; their repeated use of extended chords, for example, reveals a vision of beauty different enough from earlier music to constitute something quite separate. Elgar's music, however, was much closer to a continuation of the music of the past, and he does not fit neatly into any one of the abundant 'isms' applied to early modernist composers.[134] Botstein provided one of the first rebuttals to the perception of Elgar as modernist: 'Despite recent efforts to construe Elgar as a modernist

[130] Kerry McCarthy, 'A Late Anthem by Tallis', *Early Music*, xliv/2 (2016), 191-195 (195).
[131] Oliver Chandler, 'Diatonic Illusions and Chromatic Waterwheels' 3.
[132] Harper-Scott, *Edward Elgar: Modernist*, 1.
[133] Charles Edward McGuire, 'Edward Elgar: "Modern" or "Modernist?": Construction of an Aesthetic Identity in the British Music Press, 1895-1934', *The Musical Quarterly*, 91/1/2 (2008), 8-38 (29).
[134] John F. Porte observed that Stanford and Elgar shared a number of characteristics, including a conservative aesthetic vision; he claims that 'the creative spirit of Stanford in its maturity has much that is akin to Elgar. There is the same loftiness of purpose, the deep sense of the beautiful, the desire for self-expression, the aspect of strength of character and the peculiar tenacity and patience of true genius'. Please see:
John F. Porte, *Sir Charles Stanford* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1921), 3.

innovator, he remained within the framework of the ideas, conflicts, forms, and vocabulary of the late nineteenth century'.[135] It is also notable that composers in subsequent generations – usually self-described modernists – so often defined their music in opposition to that of Elgar's.

Ralph Dunstan made an early attempt to define what a 'modernist' composer might be in 1919, in which he argued that the modernist composers have 'broken away, to a lesser or greater extent, from the classical traditions and conventions of musical composition, and have developed their music on novel or unusual lines of melody, harmony and form'.[136] He goes on to list what McGuire describes as 'a laundry list of modernist features', including the use of new forms, new or unusual scales, discords and polytonality.[137] Dunstan suggests that the key difference between modernists and conservatives is the frequency of the use of these techniques; it is stating the obvious to say that Elgar employed them rarely for a composer of his time. The conclusion of the article lists the composers who are the 'foremost representatives of the futurist and modernist School', including Strauss, Debussy and Satie, as well as Elgar's compatriots, Bantock, Delius, and Cyril Scott.[138] Elgar's name is not mentioned.

It is much easier to locate the conservative components of Elgar's style. It is rarely mentioned in biographies and analyses of his works, but Elgar used the melodic and harmonic device known as the 'tierce de Picardie' perhaps more often, and in more serious works, than any other composer of his era. While the gesture is suggested in other (relatively) contemporary large scale works, such as Anton Bruckner's *Symphony No. 3 in D Minor*,[139] it

[135] Botstein, 'Transcending the Enigmas of Biography', 367.
[136] R. Dunstan, '"Futurist" and "Modernist" Composers', *The Musical Herald,* 857 (1919), 268.
[137] Charles Edward McGuire, 'Edward Elgar: "Modern" or "Modernist?": Construction of an Aesthetic Identity in the British Music Press, 1895-1934', *The Musical Quarterly*, 91/1/2 (2008), 8-38 (16).
[138] Dunstan, '"Futurist" and "Modernist" Composers', 268.
[139] Julian Horton, *Bruckner's Symphonies: Analysis, Reception and Cultural Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 52.

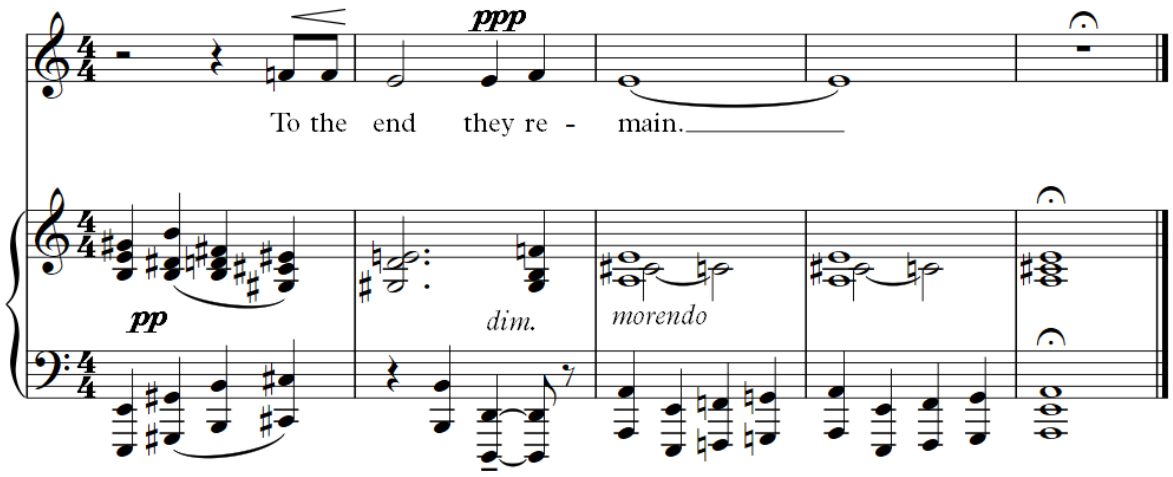
is especially surprising for a composer so often labelled as a modernist to desire to utilise the cadence so often; *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music* suggests that the device had fallen out of fashion by the end of the eighteenth century.[140] Elgar's most well-known use of the tierce de Picardie is at the end of the theme of his *Variations*; [141] Julian Rushton notes that 'Elgar proudly labelled the tierce de Picardie in the sketch and it adumbrates a series of minor—major steps throughout the composition'.[142] For Julian Littlewood, however, there is an enigma in the use of the device itself: 'it is a theme of suggestion, implication and mystery; the querulous 'upward intonation' of its concluding tierce de picardie [sic] leaves the audience anxious for an 'answer''.[143] This is, of course, not the way in which the effect of the device was viewed in the past; in its original context it was viewed as an unambiguous resolution in a way that Elgar's theme is not. Chandler, on noting his use of the effect, asks 'Are such gestures genuinely functional or are they mere vestiges of a system which cannot be made to sound natural, whole, or inevitable any longer?'.[144] Any thorough answer to such questions must surely include a discussion of the extent and nature the composer's musical and philosophical conservatism; the Picardy third is not only a musically conservative gesture, but it is used in some of his most explicitly philosophically conservative works.

Robin Holloway, in explaining the 'curious' way in which the choral work *King Olaf* concludes, notes the ambiguity of the finale:

[140] Michael Kennedy and Joyce Bourne, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 737.
[141] Clive McClelland, 'Shadows of the Evening: New Light on Elgar's 'Dark Saying'', *The Musical Times*, 148/1901 (2007), 43-48 (48).
[142] Julian Rushton, *Elgar: 'Enigma' Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 84.
[143] Julian Littlewood, *The Variations of Johannes Brahms* (London: Plumbago Books, 2004), 20.
[144] Oliver Chandler, 'A Diminished-Seventh *Bassbrechung*: Tonal Ambiguity and the Prolongation of Function in Elgar's String Quartet, 1st Movement', *Gamut*, 9 (2020), 1-29 (7).

> Sad and withdrawn as Tennyson's Passing of Arthur, it undercuts for sure any suspicion that the preceding uplift, with all its glowing conviction of the certainty of renewal, is complacent or bland. The very last two bars extend the ambiguity: they close on a tierce de Picardie for chorus and orchestra; then the voices diminuendo to nothing, then the major third is drained away from the instruments, leaving only a wide-spaced long sustained bare fifth.[145]

The strange use of the cadence at the end of one of his earliest large-scale choral works would not be particularly remarkable if it did not appear again at the conclusion of some of his mature works; the third movement of *The Spirit of England*, 'For the Fallen', for example, uses the device in a similar way.



Ex. 7.7., A 'modernist' take on the tierce de Picardie? *The Spirit of England*, Op. 80, (1917).

The cadence perhaps means more in Elgar's music than mere musical archaicism or academicism; the works in which it is used suggest that, for Elgar, the tierce de Picardie was, like the recurring theme of the *First Symphony*, representative of a triumph of the past over tragedy in modernity. It might be pointed out, however, that one such use of the device does not fit this narrative, that of first movement of the work of absolute music, the *String Quartet in E minor*, which Edward Elgar described as moving in a 'phantom-like way'.[146] Lady Elgar's view of the work tells us something of the composer's understanding of its programme, as far as there is one; she suggests that the work is 'most fiery & sweeps along

[145] Robin Holloway, 'The Early Choral Works', in Daniel M. Grimley and Julian Rushton (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Elgar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 63-80 (75).
[146] Edward Elgar, *Edward Elgar: Letters of a Lifetime* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 457.

like Galloping of Squadrons'.[147] Chandler argues that the Picardy third has a special, conservative significance for Elgar here: 'The unmotivated and seemingly archaic switch to the movement's only major-mode tonic at its end – an allusion to the Baroque Tierce di Picardie – suggests that such resolutions are possible now only in a past that is quite different both from Elgar's 1918 present and from our own time'.[148] The fiery phantom of the work is extinguished by the use of the device so inextricably associated with the music of the past. It is possible to see the tierce de Picardie as being resurrected in each of these works, in order to enact the resolution of and ascension from the problems of the present, musical or otherwise.[149]

It would be a mistake to suggest that Elgar's conservatism was entirely a negative rejection of the more disagreeable elements of modernity and modernism; some of Elgar's works offer a relatively positive assertion of conservatism. In his assessment of Elgar's concert overture *Cockaigne (In London Town)*, Aidan J. Thomson gives one of the more balanced and reasoned accounts of Elgar's political and philosophical thought. Unlike the vision of Elgar disguised in tweed, Thomson offers an interpretation, evidenced by his music, that puts Elgar into a subset of conservatism that was popular and consistent with the politics of the era in which he grew up. Specifically, Thomson, citing Moore, argues that Elgar was a Disraelian 'one-nation' conservative; a term that has been revived in the politics of the present day.[150] Disraelian politics was distinct from the kind of Burkean conservatism that might, at first glance, seem to have been universal in the Conservative party of the nineteenth

[147] Caroline Alice Elgar, quoted in McVeagh, *Elgar the Music Maker*, 177.
[148] Chandler, 'A Diminished-Seventh *Bassbrechung*', 7.
[149] The term 'tierce de Picardie' was supposedly first explained by one of the most anticonservative thinkers in history, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in his *Dictionnaire De Musique*; while he describes the cadence as something of a musical joke, even he notes its significance in sacred music. Elgar may have known its associations from his extensive book-learning. Please see:
Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Dictionnaire De Musique* (Amsterdam: M. M. Rey, 1768), 320.
[150] Aidan J. Thomson, 'Elgar and the City: The "Cockaigne" Overture and Contributions of Modernity', *The Musical Quarterly*, 96/2 (2013), 219-262 (227).

century; for example, Benjamin Disraeli actively attempted to influence the opinion of the general public in a way that would have been alien to Burke.[151] Applying labels to figures who were more comfortable in articulating their views through their music rather than their words is usually flawed.[152] However, arguing for the Disraelian conservatism of Elgar makes sense in that it accounts for some of the elements of Elgar's philosophy that are often viewed as distasteful today; Disraeli declared in 1872 that the Tory Party 'has three great objects … to maintain the institutions of the country… to uphold the Empire of England… and to elevate the condition of the people'.[153] Stuart Ball suggests that these remained the core tenets of conservatism until the dissolution of the empire and that it served as an 'essential summary of their objectives'.[154]

The view of Elgar as a Disraelian 'one-nation' conservative allows for both his imperialism and his compassion; it explains his interest in writing both *The Crown of India* and *Cockaigne*. While it is likely a simplification, it is a label that works in a way that assumptions of his political naïveté or tweed-deep pretensions do not. Thomson argues that 'Disraeli's conception is one that best describes the traditional view of Cockaigne. London is treated neither as a centre of commerce nor as a vehicle for consumerism, for that would emphasize a liberal modernity that ran counter to a socially conservative one-nation consensus'.[155] There are implications in Thomson's analysis that do not align with the view

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[151] Noël O'Sullivan, *Conservatism* (London: J. M. Dent, 1983), 101.
[152] One problem of this theory is that Disraelian politics means different things to different people. Many socialist commentators have argued that, on account of Disraeli's position as an outsider and, as George Bernard Shaw argues, 'a champion of the proletariat', he marked a move away from the high Toryism of the past. In one sense, then, Thomson's attempt to associate him with Elgar can be viewed as another attempt to dilute the composer's views. Please see:
Bernard Shaw, *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to: Socialism, Capitalism, Sovietism and Fascism* (London: Alma Classics, 2014), 225.
[153] Benjamin Disraeli, quoted in Ted Honderich, *Conservatism: Burke, Nozick, Bush, Blair?* (London: Pluto Press, 2005), 179.
[154] Stuart Ball, 'The Principles of British Conservatism from Balfour to Heath, c. 1910-75' in Bradley W. Hart and Richard Carr (eds.), *The Foundations of the British Conservative Party* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 13-38 (36).
[155] Thomson, 'Elgar and the City', 228.

of Elgar as 'one-nation' Tory, however, particularly when he suggests that the overture presents an 'objectified picture postcard of Edwardian London: the institutional heart of both nation and empire, subverted by neither racial diversity nor commerce'.[156] Elgar was not known for his writings about race as it is conceptualised today; he did, however, remark on ethnicity in the context of defending *Caractacus*, when he proclaimed: 'I knew you would laugh at my librettist's patriotism (and mine) – never mind: England for the English is all I say – hands off! There's nothing apologetic about me'.[157] There is something of this view in his *Cockaigne* overture; Elgar himself suggested that 'It calls up to my mind all the good humour, jollity, and something deeper in the way of English good fellowship (as it were) abiding still in our capital'.[158] The characters presented in the overture are reflective of the kind of conservative view of English identity found in the breadth of Edward German's music; McVeagh describes the depiction of 'a pair of lovers' who wistfully 'sing a yearning *dolce*', as well as 'a cocky street urchin',[159] but as Thomson notes:

> There are representations of Edwardian London's spiritual and temporal establishments (St. Paul's Cathedral and Big Ben, respectively), but the largest picture is of a military band on parade, while the remainder conjure up images of either the suburban (a golfer) or "Olde Englande": jousters, archers, and the Elizabethan-looking timber-fronted shops of High Holborn.[160]

Cockaigne reveals Elgar's understanding of the world as he wished it to be, as both a Burkean union of the people of the past, present and future, and a Disraelian union of the elite – either by birth or by temperament – and the people Thomson describes as the 'working

[156] Thomson, 'Elgar and the City', 229.
[157] Edward Elgar, quoted in Merion Hughes, 'The Duc D'Elgar', 55.
[158] Edward Elgar, quoted in Diana McVeagh, *Edward Elgar: His Life and Music* (London: J.M Dent & Sons, 1955), 34.
[159] Diana McVeagh, *Edward Elgar: His Life and Music*, 143-144.
[160] Thomson, 'Elgar and the City', 227.

classes'.[161] This vision of Elgar is imperfect and incomplete, but it offers an understanding of his philosophy that accounts for most of its facets, and his often-espoused political views.[162]

Elgarians have frequently sought to find a philosophical figure with whom Elgar's thought, musical and otherwise, might be identified. Ruskin, Schenker, Tolkien, Kipling, Disraeli and Heidegger have been offered,[163] to which Burke has been added above, but it might be said that Oswald Spengler provides a contemporaneous conservative worthy of consideration. While parts of Spengler's ideology and style would likely have repulsed Elgar, some of the central premises of his magnum opus, *The Decline of the West*, offer a lens through which an understanding of the composer in a new light might be achieved. Despite the author's renowned over-intellectualisation, for example, Spengler's thought was pervaded by a deeply held anti-academicism; on the subject of artistic education, he claimed that 'one thing is quite certain, that to-day every single art-school could be shut down without art being affected in the slightest'.[164] Spengler also devoted large sections of his work to music and its decline. It becomes clear, when taking into account the breadth of Elgar's life and works, that a belief in a broad decline was present in his thinking. To take a superficially trivial example, W. H. Reed recalls the ways in which Elgar was frustrated by modern performances of older music; when the composer heard a medley of different works, Reed claims that Elgar:

> …was really angry about it, and said it would not matter so much if they made their potpourris from the jazz tunes and the lighter music, but to drag the classics into such company and make them ridiculous was to corrupt the taste of the young and degrade the world's musical heritage… Elgar was furious, spluttering, as he fled back to the car, "Don't they want to hear any piece played through properly; or can no one nowadays listen to more than a few bars of anything without getting bored?".[165]

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[161] Thomson, 'Elgar and the City', 228.
[162] It is interesting to note, in this context, that Shaw wrote of the work that 'the material of the overture is purely classical… it is classical music as Beethoven's Les Adieux sonata is classical music… he does not appear in music as an experimenter and explorer, like Scriabin and Schönberg. He took music where Beethoven left it, and where Schumann and Brahms found it'. For Shaw, *Cockaigne* was a deeply conservative work. Please see: George Bernard Shaw, 'Sir Edward Elgar', *Music & Letters*, 1/1 (1920), 7-11 (8).
[163] Harper-Scott, ''A Nice Sub-Acid Feeling': Schenker, Heidegger and Elgar's First Symphony', 356.
[164] Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West: Form and Actuality* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927), 293-294.
[165] William H. Reed, *Elgar as I Knew Him* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 82.

While it is important not to overstate the point, Spengler shared in this vision of the relationship between music and modernity; for Spengler, the true essence of the music of Bach, for example, is unavailable to the vast majority people in the modern world as they experience that music in a way which is utterly alien to the culture in which its first audiences understood it.[166] As such the fragmentary performances represent a decline from the spirit presented by Spengler as the 'Faustian soul'; both Spengler and Elgar offer an admonishment of a culture which would to listen to 'Air on a G String' instead of the complete orchestral suite, or Purcell's famous 'Rondeau', but never *Dido and Aeneas*.

Integral to Spengler's theories regarding the history of art is the concept that portraiture and its connection to music has been central to Western culture. For Spengler, what he terms 'Faustian' culture began its ascendence when the primary means of artistic expression moved from sculpture to portrait:

> The Statue is rooted in the ground, Music (and the Western portrait *is* music, soul woven of colour-tones) invades and pervades space without limit. The fresco-painting is tied to the wall, trained on it, but the oil-painting, the "picture" on canvas or board or other table, is free from limitations of place. The Apollinian form-language reveals only the become, the Faustian shows above all a becoming. It is for this reason that child-portraits and family groups are amongst the finest and most intimately right achievements of the Western art… In the oil-painting age that followed the end of the Renaissance, the depth of an artist can be accurately measured by the content of his portraits. To this rule there is hardly an exception. All forms in the picture (whether single, or in scenes, groups or masses) are fundamentally felt as portraits; whether they are meant to be so or not is immaterial, for the individual painter has no choice in the matter. Nothing is more instructive than to observe how under the hands of a real Faustian man even the Act transforms itself into a portrait study.[167]

Spengler's theories are dense, complex, and multifaceted, but importantly, he makes a link between the place of cultural 'becoming' and portrait-music. Spengler believed that any work by 'a real Faustian man' would become a portrait of a sort, consciously or unconsciously. Elgar is arguably the composer with whom portraiture in music might most easily be associated; outside of the symphonies, many of his most well-regarded works might be interpreted as portraits or character studies. His *Enigma Variations*, which Dibble explains as

[166] Spengler, *The Decline of the West: Form and Actuality*, 284.
[167] Spengler, *The Decline of the West: Form and Actuality*, 266-270.

a series of 'character portraits', are the most obvious example of this.[168] Elgar himself characterised the work in this way, writing that he had 'in the Variations sketched 'portraits of my friends''.[169] Similarly, McVeagh describes *Falstaff* as 'a ripe and genial portrait of a big-spirited man'.[170] Less obviously, however, *In the South*, *Cockaigne*, and the oratorios might each be categorised, despite their surface level themes, as portrait-music or a series of character studies. Elgar's composition of musical portraiture, interpreted through a Spenglerian analysis, is another example of his interest in canonisation and connection with the great artists of the past.

Other continental figures have admired Elgar in different ways; such views of Elgar's hidden progressivism and modernism as have been presented here have existed since the composer's rise to international prominence. Italian critic and composer Francesco Balilla Pratella, for example, extracted from Elgar's anti-academicism a message that was clearly antithetical to the Englishman's beliefs. In his *Manifesto dei Musicisti Futuristi* (Manifesto of the Futurist Musicians), first distributed in 1910, he attacked the 'vegetating schools, conservatories and academies' more directly than Elgar ever did. For Pratella, these institutions stifled creativity and progressivism; he argued that the 'masters and professors, illustrious deficients, perpetuate traditionalism and combat any effort to widen the musical field'.[171] He saw in Elgar an ally in his pursuit of their destruction:

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[168] Jeremy Dibble, 'Fantasy and Hybridization in the British Variation Tradition' in Jeremy Dibble and Bennett Zon (eds.), *Nineteenth-Century British Music Studies Vol. 2* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2002), 235-250 (237).
[169] Edward Elgar, quoted in Percy M. Young, 'Friends Pictured Within' in Raymond Monk (ed.), *Elgar Studies* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1990), 81-106 (81).
[170] Diana McVeagh, 'Edward Elgar' in Diana McVeagh (ed.), *The New Grove Twentieth Century English Masters* (London: Norton, 1986), 1-50 (42).
[171] Pratella's work is discussed at length by Caroline Potter in the context of Erik Satie's musical and political progressivism. Please see:
Caroline Potter, *Erik Satie: A Parisian Composer and his World* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2016), 51.

> In England, Edward Elgar is cooperating with our efforts to destroy the past by pitting his will to amplify classical symphonic forms, seeking richer ways of thematic development and multiform variations on a single theme. Moreover, he directs his energy not merely to the exuberant variety of the instruments, but to the variety of their combinational effects, which is in keeping with our complex sensibility.[172]

Elgar was, of course, not attempting to 'destroy the past', but the fact that such impressions have consistently been extrapolated from his music serve to demonstrate the intricate web of Elgar's influences, as well as the divergent and complicated nature of his character and works. Elgar was both a modernist and conservative at different times, in different contexts and to different people; perhaps he was a modernist when he wrote the *Enigma Variations*, but his methods and style were perceived to have become outmoded and conservative by the time of his death; perhaps he reveals the inadequacy of such descriptions through his music and its criticism; perhaps, as some critics during his lifetime argued, he straddled the 'dichotomous position of being simultaneously "Romantic" and "Modern."'.[173]

The Musical Herald made this observation, of the dialectic inherent in Elgar, in 1912:

> Elgar is one of these. He is by practice both a conservative and a modernist, a setter-up of old idols and an iconoclast. He is an exclusive, but still reveals himself with the child-like unreserve of the most spiritually harassed Russian. It is by the product of his hours of complete self-revelation that he stands as a great figure in the world of men to-day.[174]

It is likely that these debates will never be settled. We know, nonetheless, that Elgar declared in his inaugural Birmingham lecture that:

> Things that are old are not necessarily old-fashioned. Bach is old but will never be old-fashioned… it is one of the saddening things to consider that the parasite has always existed by the side of the original and has frequently been accepted as being as great as, if not greater than, the giant upon whose genius he has lived.[175]

This vision of musical history, as a confluence of a pseudo-modernist view of stylistic progression and originality with a veneration of the giants of the past, is at the heart of debate and confusion about Elgar's place in musical historiography. Elgar's supposed lack of philosophical thought and his desire to climb the hierarchical structures of the world in which

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[172] Francesco Balilla Pratella, *Manifesto dei Musicisti Futuristi* (Milan: Governing Group of the Futurist Movement, 1910).
[173] McGuire, 'Edward Elgar: "Modern" or "Modernist"?', 13.
[174] The Musical Herald, 'Sir Edward Elgar', *The Musical Herald*, 773 (1912), 230-234 (231).
[175] Elgar, *A Future for English Music*, 39.

he lived have been offered as examples of his deficient conservative principles, but the opposite is true; Elgar's anti-intellectualism and belief in the meritocratic nature of hierarchy actually serve as evidence of his conservatism and constrained vision. As Newbould concludes, 'if he was a conservative composer - and one so indebted to models such as Mozart, Schumann and Brahms may fairly be called that - he was none the less innovative in everything he wrote'.[176] It is certain, however, that he was both outwardly and inwardly a philosophical and political conservative, and that this influenced his musical output. Many of his works are, at least in part, also musically conservative in their recapitulation of classical forms and language, and Elgar articulated, in a way that his actively modernist contemporaries never did, a Burkean belief in the importance and significance of placing himself in a continuing canon of composers. There is, however, an element of performativity in Elgar's conservatism, in that it was more outwardly projected than inwardly philosophised or articulated, but this does not mean that it was any less sincere; Stanford may have understood the meaning of conservatism deeply enough to articulate its ideals without ever invoking its name, but Elgar's conservatism, like German's, seems to have been instinctual in the same way that political feeling is for the majority of people.[177] This does not make it any less interesting, valid, or true to his private character. Perhaps he sometimes wore his tweed lightly, but he wore it in full knowledge and appreciation of what it meant.

[176] Brian Newbould, 'Elgar and Academicism 2: Practice Beyond Theory', *The Musical Times*, 146/1892 (Autumn 2005), 25-41 (29).
[177] This is another way in which Stanford was similar to, or perhaps influenced by, Watts and Carlyle, who also almost never discussed party politics or what conservatism meant, but instead espoused and embodied its values indirectly.

CHAPTER VIII

The Place of Folk Music in Musical Conservatism

Famously, Elgar made claims about his position as the composer who could 'write the folk tunes of this country'.[1] He also made the declaration, 'I am folk music';[2] this attitude is, of course, oppositional to that of a number of Elgar's younger English contemporaries, including Percy Grainger, Cecil Sharp, and, perhaps most famously, Ralph Vaughan Williams. Folksong, for Vaughan Williams, was to be regarded as representative of the 'spiritual life-blood of a people'.[3] In addition to using folk music materials in many of his most successful works, he presented his folk music ideology in *National Music* and elsewhere.[4] He wrote extensively on the importance of music that he believed was written and produced in an organic way from 'unlettered' people who lived 'in a homogeneous community'.[5] The disparity in the views of Elgar and Vaughan Williams, in a short, oversimplistic way, serves to demonstrate one of the key differences between musical conservatives and anticonservatives in the era in which Elgar lived; for Michael Trend, 'nothing marks more clearly the difference between him and Vaughan Williams'.[6] Constant Lambert locates the differences between Elgar and Vaughan Williams in precedent, folk music and parochialism, suggesting that the younger composer is one 'whose style is based on material without classical or international precedent and … is intimately connected with

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[1] Edward Elgar, quoted in Diana McVeagh, 'Elgar and Falstaff' in Raymond Monk (ed.) *Elgar Studies* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1990), 134-140 (138).
[2] Edward Elgar, quoted in Percy M. Young, 'Friends Pictured Within' in Raymond Monk (ed.), *Elgar Studies* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1990), 81-106 (81).
[3] Ralph Vaughan Williams, quoted in Julian Onderdonk, 'Vaughan Williams and the Modes', *Folk Music Journal*, 7/5 (1999), 609-626 (620).
[4] Vaughan Williams had a great deal of respect and admiration for Elgar, but lamented that he was a composer 'whose music reflects their own country, but who had no knowledge of their own folk music'. It is clear that Elgar and German made it difficult to suggest that 'national music' could only come from building on folk tunes. This subject will be discussed further in the next chapter. Please see:
Ralph Vaughan Williams, *National Music and Other Essays* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 41.
[5] Ralph Vaughan Williams, quoted in David Manning, *Vaughan Williams on Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 45.
[6] Michael Trend, *The Music Makers: The English Musical Renaissance from Elgar to Britten* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1985), 31.

the inflections and mood of English folk music, cannot be said to share the freedom from provinciality shown by Elgar'.[7] Graham Freeman similarly argues that English folk music was one of the most divisive issues of the era and became a point of friction between many of the greatest composers in England.[8]

There are political undertones to this divergence of opinion that are fundamental to understanding the differences between composers' levels of interest in folk music and the revivalism that surrounds it, as well as the musical landscape of the epoch more generally. Vaughan Williams admitted in a 1952 letter to Rutland Boughton that he had almost always voted for left-wing parties: 'ever since I had a vote I have voted either Radical or Labour except once'.[9] He also suggested that he had been politically engaged since his time at Cambridge University in 1893, where he and his peers 'read the Fabian tracts, and, in opposition to the majority of undergraduates, became socialists'.[10] While the manifestation of Vaughan Williams's politics in his music was sometimes more subtle than some of his contemporaries, it was clear to Lambert, for example, that his active anticonservatism sometimes overshadowed his musical output. In Lambert's view, musicians and composers whose minds were more engaged with 'political destruction than with musical construction may seem hardly worthy of the name; but we must remember that the same attitude, intensely sublimated, is to be found in the work of such undoubtedly important figures as Bartók and Vaughan Williams'.[11] Percy Grainger's musical and political views were similarly intertwined; Edvard Grieg exalted Grainger in a 1907 diary entry:

[7] Constant Lambert, *Music Ho! A Study of Music in Decline* (London: Faber and Faber, 1937), 151.
[8] Graham Freeman, ''It Wants All the Creases Ironing Out': Percy Grainger, the Folk Song Society, and the Ideology of the Archive', *Music & Letters*, 92/3 (2011), 410-436 (411).
[9] Vaughan Williams, quoted in Paul Harrington, 'Holst and Vaughan Williams: Radical Pastoral' in Christopher Norris (ed.), *Music and the Politics of Culture* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1989), 106-127 (124).
[10] Ibid., 108.
[11] Lambert, *Music Ho! A Study of Music in Decline*, 149-150.

> What an artist, what a man! What an idealist, what a child and, at the same time, what a big and developed look at life. A future socialist of the clearest water. His folk song activity is of the greatest importance as it combines musical supremacy, ability in comparative linguistic science, historical and poetical view, and a tremendous enthusiasm for the task of collecting.[12]

While Bithell and Hill have argued that folk revivalism has 'been employed for both left-wing and right-wing purposes',[13] it is notable that many of the most successful and passionate advocates of folk music have been anticonservatives.[14] It might first be useful to offer a tripartite theory of why this is in order to understand the opposition to the use of folk music from conservative musicians, particularly when the German genesis of the term folksong (*Volkslied*),[15] supposedly came from the writings of Johann Gottfried von Herder, who was such an important thinker in the development of continental conservatism.[16]

Folk music scholarship offers a variety of explanations as to why so many of the key figures in the folk music revivals of the twentieth century were politically active anticonservatives.[17] These accounts may be grouped into three overlapping theories. The first theory suggests that folk music possesses, or is perceived to possess, socialist qualities that

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[12] Edvard Grieg, quoted in Malcolm Gillies and David Pear, *Portrait of Percy Grainger* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2002), 51.

[13] Caroline Bithell and Juniper Hill, 'An Introduction to Music Revival as Concept, Cultural Process, and Medium of Change' in Caroline Bithell and Juniper Hill (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Music Revival* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 3-42 (11).

[14] This phenomenon is cross-cultural and applies to all of the most notable folk revivals of the twentieth century. For example, Ailie Munro has placed socialist activism at the centre of folk music in Scotland and French folk revivalist Gilles Servat was 'clearly inspired by Marxism', but perhaps most explicit of all was Alan Lomax, who was a key figure in mid-twentieth century folk music across the world, but most active in Italy and America. In his essay 'The Folk Song of Italy', he claims that 'a veritable cultural revolution' will take place as a result of the recognition of the 'wonder and variety and richness of their living folk song tradition'. Please see: Ailie Munro, *The Democratic Muse: Folk Music Revival in Scotland* (Aberdeen: Scottish Cultural Press, 1997), 9-10.
Sharif Gemie, 'Roots, rock, Breizh: music and the politics of nationhood in contemporary Brittany', *Nations and Nationalism,* 11/1 (2005), 103-120 (109).
Alan Lomax, 'The Folk Song of Italy', Ronald D. Cohen (ed.), *Alan Lomax: Selected Writings 1934-1997* (London: Routledge, 2003), 129-131 (129).

[15] This is disputed; some authors believe that the English term 'folksong' was coined independently of Germanic influence by William Axon in his *Folk Song and Folk-Speech of Lancashire*, circa 1875. Please see: Steve Roud, *Folk Song in England* (London, Faber and Faber, 2017), 45.

[16] Klaus Epstein, *The Genesis of German Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 38-74.

[17] Oswald Spengler offered an alternative explanation to any offered here when observed that the notion of 'revival' in art only ever exists as a part of a pattern of rapidly changing artistic fashions, and believed revivalism to be an integral part of cultural decline. Revivalism is also a key component in the list of factors inherent to decline of civilisations detailed in the tables appended to the second volume of his thesis. Please see: Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West: Perspectives of World-History* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1928), 314.

are inherent to its production. Ernest Newman, for example, was an early critic of the folk-song movements because he opposed them on philosophical grounds; he believed that the spirit that motivated adherents of folk ideology were participating in a Rousseauean 'revival of the eighteenth-century theory of the divine rightness of the noble savage and the corruption of civilization'.[18] Folk music is so often posited as being in opposition to art music; in the definition offered by the International Folk Music Council in 1954, the 'communal authorship' of the music is highlighted and it is suggested that the key difference from other genres is that it is 'music that has been submitted to the process of oral transmission'.[19] It is, in their view, distinct from art music in this way, and no doubt draws on Vaughan Williams's earlier suggestion that a folk musician can only be 'unlettered (this is not the same as illiterate), un-travelled; he must live among those to whom his expression would be intelligible'.[20] Viewed in this way, it is easy to draw comparison with common anticonservative beliefs; it is one of the key claims of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* that bourgeois culture should be viewed as antithetical to that of working people,[21] and that workers share more in common with other labourers around the world than they do with the bourgeoisie that a conservative might assume would share in their national culture.[22] In the same way, some folk music scholars and activists have suggested that folk music possesses more attributes in common with other *proletarian* music from around the world than it does with the *bourgeois* art music of any given nation.[23] It is likely that a conservative would see

[18] Ernest Newman, 'The Folk-Song Fallacy', *English Review*, 11 (1912), 255-268 (263).
[19] Maud Karpeles, 'Definition of Folk Music', *Journal of the International Folk Music Council*, 7 (1955), 6-7 (6-7).
[20] Ralph Vaughan Williams, quoted in David Manning, *Vaughan Williams on Music*, 45.
[21] Another renowned socialist composer, Granville Bantock, edited and published a work that provides further evidence for this view of folksong as an arm of international socialism. There can be little doubt that part of the motivation of *One Hundred Folksongs of All Nations* was to invoke notions of the commonalities between men of different cultures through folksong. Please see:
Granville Bantock, *One Hundred Folksongs of All Nations* (Philadelphia: Oliver Ditson, 1911).
[22] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (London: Penguin, 2002) 234-245.
[23] Karpeles, 'Definition of Folk Music', 6-7.

commonalities in religion, language and nationality as of greater importance than economic status and relations.

Vaughan Williams, in this vein, described folk-song as 'the bond of union where all our musical tastes can meet'.[24] This view of folk music is sometimes surprising to conservatives, who might sympathise with the effort to preserve 'traditional' musical activity. John Street describes 'the heart of English folk music' as, in its essence, a 'tension between conservatism and radicalism'.[25] Simon Frith has also identified that one of the commonalities between folk and art music is its interest in the philosophy of precedent, arguing that 'the folk world, like the classical world, in preserving its ideals puts a central emphasis on tradition'.[26] Conservatives do not have a monopoly on tradition, however. It is notable that scholars of folk music, who, as Bohlman notes, rarely lack 'ideological leanings' themselves,[27] have argued that celebration of folk music, with its emphasis on the aspects of musical tradition that encourage communal authorship and group participation, is 'itself a protest against musical passivity, spectacle and commodity'.[28] In this sense folk music has been, in its own small way, a reaction against commodification, and perceived to be inherently socialistic in its attitudes.

Bithell and Hill claim that folk music activism has usually been directed by powerful and passionate individuals who are predominantly interested in the extramusical elements of its traditions, the 'projected values and partly imagined lifestyles they associate with it'.[29] It is interesting, therefore, that Cecil Sharp similarly suggested that it is this anonymous

[24] Vaughan Williams, *National Music*, 39.
[25] John Street, *Music and Politics* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012), 153.
[26] Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1996), 40.
[27] Philip V. Bohlman, *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), xix.
[28] Niall MacKinnon, *The British Folk Scene: Musical Performance and Social Identity* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1993), 135.
[29] Bithell and Hill, 'An Introduction to Music Revival', 10-14.

communal authorship that is key to understanding folksong, defining it as 'the song created by the common people'.[30] It is possible that this perceived inherent relationship with 'the people', a phrase which is so often used as an anticonservative rhetorical device, is what encourages musicians who are inclined towards sympathy with socialist ideas to pursue folk music.[31] Sharp, who was described by T. S. Eliot as 'a confirmed – and I must say dangerous – radical',[32] was one of the earliest advocates of this rhetoric, concluding in his *English Folk Song: Some Conclusions* that he wished for 'the people' to 'enter into the full possession of their musical heritage'.[33] Similarly, Niall MacKinnon argues that the anti-elitist elements that are perceived to be inherent to folk music offer a political commentary on art music, suggesting that 'emphasis upon vernacular musical creation is itself a powerful ideological and political statement'.[34] Dave Harker, whose assessment of the work of early folk revivalists is explicitly political, uses this same rhetoric when he describes folk music as 'property of the people'.[35] Likewise, John Blacking was unambiguous about his vision of an inherently Marxist art when concluding an article on folk music:

> Karl Marx looked forward to a society in which 'the artist' as a special category of person would be redundant, and in which all men and women could cultivate their artistic capabilities, so that the distinction between producer and consumer of art would abolish itself and Art and Life would become one.[36]

While Blacking is perhaps the most explicit in his writing, many folk music scholars argue along similar lines. Frith, for example, emphasises the collectivism perceived to be inherent to folk music when he argues that it 'comments on shared social problems' and 'articulates

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[30] Cecil Sharp, *English Folk Song: Some Conclusions* (London: Novello, 1936), 3.
[31] Heinrich Schenker admonishes the use of the abstraction of 'the people' in this way; it is seen by some conservatives as a specifically anticonservative political construction. Please see:
Heinrich Schenker, *Der Tonwille: Pamphlets in Witness of the Immutable Laws of Music, Offered to a New Generation of Youth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 8.
[32] T. S. Eliot, 'The Ballet', *The Criterion*, 3/11 (April 1925), 441-443 (442).
[33] Cecil Sharp, *English Folk Song: Some Conclusions* (London: Novello, 1936), 141.
[34] MacKinnon, *The British Folk Scene*, 135.
[35] Dave Harker, *Fakesong: The Manufacture of British "Folksong" 1700 to the Present* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1985), 229.
[36] John Blacking, 'Making Artistic Popular Music: The Goal of True Folk', Popular Music, 1 (1981), 6-14 (14).

communal values'.[37] It is possible that the values which have been attributed to folk music are what attracted Vaughan Williams, Grainger, Sharp and others to collecting and using it to build art music and didactic materials. This offers one explanation of why Elgar found it so distasteful, but it does not offer a complete understanding of the politicisation of folk music.

The second theory suggests that socialist activists found appropriation of folk music useful to achieve their political aims. Harker has been one of the primary advocates of this theory,[38] suggesting that figures such as Sharp and Vaughan Williams used folk music in a politically motivated manner in order to 'impose onto working-class people what was 'good' for them'.[39] In the same way, Matthew Gelbart sees the history of folk music as a series of expropriations by what he describes as '"counter-cultural" elements of society as a political tool'.[40] It is also one of the underlying premises of Georgina Boyes's *The Imagined Village*; that Sharp and his contemporaries saw in folk music an opportunity to forward their political ideas through didactic folk music materials.[41] Perhaps because of its perceived inherent socialist qualities, it became possible to use folksong as a both a weapon and a shield with which to deflect conservative criticism through an incorporation of what was perceived to be an authentic, legitimating musical tradition. Spengler, whose writing was contemporary with the first movement of folk revivalism, suggests that artistic renaissance is a feature of the entropy of civilisations, that revivals herald the end of art and culture, rather than a beginning:

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[37] Simon Frith, ''The Magic that can Set You Free': The Ideology of Folk and the Myth of the Rock Community', *Popular Music*, 1 (1981), 159-168 (159).
[38] It is worth noting that Harker's ideas have been controversial and often disputed. Please see:
David E. Gregory, 'Fakesong in an Imagined Village? A Critique of the Harker-Boyes Thesis', *Canadian Folk Music*, 43/3 (2009), 18-26 (25-26).
[39] Harker, *Fakesong*, 171.
[40] Matthew Gelbart, *The Invention of "Folk Music" and "Art Music": Emerging Categories from Ossian to Wagner* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 6.
[41] Georgina Boyes, *The Imagined Village: Culture, Ideology, and the English Folk Revival* (Leeds: No Masters Co-operative, 2010), 20-35.

> Even to-day we are still taught that the Renaissance was a rebirth of the Classical. And the conclusion was drawn that it is possible and right to take up arts that are found weak or even dead (in this respect the present is a veritable battle-field) and set them going again by conscious reformation program or forced "revival". And yet it is precisely in this problem of the end, the impressively sudden end, of a great art – the end of the Attic drama in Euripides, of Florentine sculpture with Michelangelo, of instrumental music in Liszt, Wagner and Bruckner – that the organic character of these arts is most evident. If we look closely enough we shall have no difficulty in convincing ourselves that no *one* art of any greatness has ever been "reborn".[42]

For Spengler, the living tradition of instrumental music ended with Bruckner, leaving the present as a cemetery of the arts; attempts to revive music were always, therefore, inorganic necromancy. Spengler's conservative vision of the history of music, although an extreme example, offers an alternative explanation of conservative disinterest in revival; it is possible that the Victorian musical conservatives instinctively saw in folk music revivalism an artificial, politically motivated attempt to undermine the philosophy of precedent for political gain.[43]

This is the basis for the third theory of left-wing political interest in folk music: that the perceived music of the past was useful as a source of legitimacy. Eric Hobsbawm's well-known thesis of the 'invented tradition' provides the underlying assumptions of this theory; for Hobsbawm, attempting to revive the cultural pursuits of previous generations offers 'any desired change (or resistance to innovation) the sanction of precedent, social continuity and natural law as expressed in history'.[44] Réné Guénon predated Hobsbawm in recognition of this pattern of false traditions from a conservative position:

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[42] Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West: Form and Actuality* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927), 223.
[43] Some musical anticonservatives viewed the movement in a similar way; Constant Lambert, referring to Béla Bartók's *Piano Sonata* (1926), argues that the inauthenticity of the use of folk material in modernist music was becoming increasingly apparent: 'it is obvious that the less consonant harmony becomes, the more artificial is the effect provided by the introduction of folk-type material'. Please see:
Lambert, *Music Ho! A Study of Music in Decline*, 176.
[44] Eric Hobsbawm, 'Introduction: Inventing Traditions' in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 2.

> Unfortunately, such 'traditionalism' is not the same as the real traditional outlook, for it may be no more than a tendency, a more or less vague aspiration presupposing no real knowledge; and it is unfortunately true that, in the mental confusion of our times, this aspiration usually gives rise to fantastic and imaginary conceptions devoid of any serious foundation. Finding no authentic tradition on which to ground themselves, those affected by this aspiration go so far as to imagine pseudo-traditions that have never existed and that are as lacking in principles as that for which they are to be substituted; the whole modern confusion is reflected in these attempts, and whatever may be the intentions of their authors, their only result is to add still more to the general disequilibrium.[45]

For Guénon, attachment to invented 'pseudo-traditions' is an affliction of modernity, but it is clear that 'authentic' traditions have existed for the author and that they may be yet rediscovered; tradition itself is useful and important, but attachment to modern (re)inventions that attempt to replace legitimate cultural connection with the people of the past for the sake of an *arrière-pensée* is unacceptable. Guénon argues that what he describes as 'Celtism' may be regarded as one such contrivance, with all its corresponding cultural signifiers.[46] Theodor Adorno also criticised the mythos of folk music in this way, suggesting that 'the ideology of the old, old folk song' has been used by activists to legitimise their musical and political advocacy, which for Adorno 'serves only the purpose of making this music appear something reverent and near to the community of the people'.[47]

Some composers had other reasons for their interest in the legitimisation of folk music, with their own visions of its place as a supplement to musical composition. Bartók believed that the opportunity to draw on precedent was one of the primary virtues of folk music, arguing that 'Every artist has the right to sink roots in the art of the past. It is not only his right, but also his duty. Why should we then not have the right to regard folk-art as such a rooting ground?'.[48] David E. Schneider has argued that part of Bartók's motivation was to 'replace' the artistic conservatism that was accepted in his native Hungary with a vision of musical modernism supported by a legitimising folk character: 'For Bartók, as for the

[45] Réné Guénon, *The Crisis of the Modern World* (Ghent: Sophia Perennis, 2004), 24.
[46] Guénon, *Crisis of the Modern World*, 26-28.
[47] Theodor Adorno, *Current of Music: Elements of a Radio Theory* (Cambridge: Polity, 2009), 474-475.
[48] Béla Bartók, quoted in Martha M. Hyde, 'Neoclassic and Anachronistic Impulses in Twentieth-Century Music', *Music Theory Spectrum*, 18/2 (1996), 200-235 (214).

relatively small number of propagators of his music during his lifetime, the authenticity of his peasant sources served to justify both the aesthetic value of his modernist style and his claim that he was writing national music'.[49] Stanford similarly found that the precedential claims of folk music were useful to demonstrate his own theories on the nature of musical progress, referring directly to the work of Bartók and Kodály:

> A new form in music may require study and frequent hearing to understand it, but if it is logical and founded on a thorough knowledge and control of means, time will endorse it. Such modifications grow (like folk-songs in Hungary) and are not made. To have any value at all they must in their nature be children of their fathers. The laws of evolution apply as rigidly to musical art as they do to nature itself.[50]

Stanford believed that folk music was valuable, at least in part, because it was possible for it to be assimilated into his own tradition, and that its apparent organic emergence was supportive of his theories of anti-revolutionary music history as well as the nonarbitrary development of musical form and language. This constitutes a quite separate purpose to that of his contemporaries.

Sir Hubert Parry, who was, according to his daughter, 'a Radical, with a very strong bias against conservatism', attempted this kind of legitimising narrative of folk music in his Inaugural Address to the Folk Song Society at the very end of the nineteenth century.[51] Parry compared folk music, which Vic Gammon defined as 'the popular music of the past',[52] with the kind of music-hall songs that he perceived to be distasteful; for Parry, there was 'no sham, no got-up glitter, and no vulgarity' in folksong.[53] Parry also attempted legitimising rhetoric through the use of socialistic language in his address, claiming that 'style comes not from the individual but from the products of crowds of fellow workers';[54] an observation echoed by

[49] David E. Schneider, *Bartók, Hungary, and the Renewal of Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 6.
[50] Charles Villiers Stanford, *Musical Composition: A Short Treatise for Students* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1911), 76.
[51] Dorothea Ponsonby, 'Hubert Parry', *The Musical Times*, 97/1359 (1956), 263.
[52] Vic Gammon, 'An Introduction to Folk', in John Morrish, (ed.), *The Folk Handbook* (New York: Backbeat Books, 2007), 6-22 (6).
[53] Hubert Parry, 'Inaugural Address', *Journal of the Folk-Song Society* 1/1 (1899), 1-3 (1).
[54] Hubert Parry, 'Inaugural Address', *Journal of the Folk-Song Society* 1/1 (1899), 1-3 (1-3).

Sharp,[55] who later argued that 'folk music is the product of a race and reflects feelings and tastes that are communal rather than personal'.[56] Ross Cole argues that anticonservatives found in folk music a means of criticising individualism and elements of conservatism through the politics inherent to the (perhaps imagined) creation of music by a community; Sharp and others saw 'the ideal of communal creation as a way to criticize the present'.[57] These visions of folk were an artefact of both an ideological view of the musical tradition and of an interest in perpetuating a validating narrative; Harker argues that Parry's address was ostensibly Marxist in its vision, suggesting that it was devised to admonish those who were interested in popular music, offering an 'anti-commercial and superficially anti-materialist perspective'.[58] Michael Brocken explains this view of tradition, which might seem paradoxical to an observer with conservative sympathies:

> Tradition is often perceived as revolutionary. A tradition can be perceived to be older than the immediate past; hence the endorsement of tradition always implies a rejection of that immediate past in the interests of something uncontaminated, original. Such rejection is always experienced as revolutionary, an overturning of the values of an immediate past which has outlived its usefulness.[59]

Rejection of the immediate past is certainly not always experienced as revolutionary, of course, and many conservatives, musical or philosophical, would automatically reject this

[55] Sharp's political views have been the subject of scrutiny in recent research. Ross Cole believes that Sharp's beliefs were essentially fascistic in nature: 'Sharp's gatekeeping activities worked to erase the very traditions he was safeguarding – transforming the vernacular practices he found into circumscribed artifacts untethered from their original histories of meaning and use, repurposed for the sake of forging a new national socialist consciousness'. The evidence for this is disputable, but political commentary of this kind is part of the reason that the word 'anticonservative' is used here. It is also important to note that, as Cole points out himself, Sharp was a part of the Fabian Society, whose aims were entrenched in opposition to both conservatism and fascism. Please see:
Ross Cole, *The Folk: Music, Modernity, and the Political Imagination* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2021), 147-155.
[56] Cecil Sharp, quoted in Vaughan Williams, *National Music*, 32.
[57] Cole, *The Folk*, 100.
[58] Dave Harker, *Fakesong*, 171.
[59] Michael Brocken, *The British Folk Revival 1944-2002* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 43.

notion.[60] It illustrates the point that Hobsbawm was trying to make, however, and it offers an explanation of why it is that musicians who were so openly anticonservative in their politics and philosophy were interested in perpetuation of what they perceived to be traditional music, despite their rejection (and attempted subversion) of most other traditions and institutions. It also partially explains the hostility to folk music traditions from Elgar and German given that their visions of society and culture are oppositional to those of anticonservative composers.

One of the problems with creating explicitly political art is that it tends to become outdated very quickly. It is why conservatives such as Roger Scruton find Peter Sellars's productions of opera and oratorio so frustrating and degrading, for example; for Scruton, they subtract from the transcendent nature of the works they present by attaching an ephemeral setting to an attempt to articulate imperishable truths.[61] Conservatives believe that because of the perceived transitory nature of socialist politics – that is, that its goals develop as they aim towards ever greater levels of equality, described by Hearnshaw as the 'watchword' of socialism – its representation in art is believed to be particularly susceptible to the winds of change.[62] George Bernard Shaw's play *On the Rocks: A Political Comedy* is one famous example of this phenomenon; while most conservatives today would likely agree with at least the underlying assumptions of Hearnshaw's *Conservatism in England*,[63] published in the same year as the aforementioned play (1933), many socialists today would find it difficult to claim common ground with its contemporary progressive literature, such as Shaw's own *The*

[60] This suggestion inevitably alludes to another problem with the Whig interpretation of music history; the Brahms-Wagner debate and its consequences allowed alternative approaches to post-Wagnerian tonality, including an inclusion of folk music language and forms, to be claimed as revolutionary art. Martha M. Hyde argues that folk music offered an opportunity to envision 'an alternative to the immediate, and western European, past-that is, to the "ultra-chromaticism of the Wagner-Strauss period" which grew, not from deeply rooted popular tradition, but in the hothouse of Romantic individuality'. Please see:
Martha M. Hyde, 'Neoclassic and Anachronistic Impulses in Twentieth-Century Music', *Music Theory Spectrum*, 18/2 (1996), 200-235 (214).
[61] Roger Scruton, *Music as an Art* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 187-190.
[62] F. J. C. Hearnshaw, *Conservatism in England: An Analytical, Historical, and Political Survey* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1933), 306.
[63] F. J. C. Hearnshaw, *Conservatism in England: An Analytical, Historical, and Political Survey* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1933).

Intelligent Woman's Guide, published five years earlier.[64] A musical example of this can be found in Parry; Bennett Zon notes that while the composer was an egalitarian, he was a man of his time, and his opinions 'may seem to us today ethically indefensible'.[65] Parry, for example, suggests in *The Evolution of the Art of Music* that musicians from other cultures 'hardly ever succeed in making orderly and well-balanced tunes, but either express themselves in a kind of vague wail or how, which is on the border between music and informal expression of feeling'.[66] The legitimising force of folk music was one way of transcending topicality and a seemingly timeless alternative to the artistic and political trends of the early twentieth century. For conservative composers, the search for legitimacy in popular music of the past was, at least in the sense argued here, not necessary; for them, their music was an attempt to place themselves in a developing, living tradition and to find legitimacy therein. It is perhaps for the inverse of the reasons that anticonservatives are attracted to folk music, as outlined above, that musical conservatives in England were outspoken in their opposition to its use.

Edward German's apparent utilisation of folk song materials has not yet been the subject of the scrutiny it requires. Of the few authors who have written about German's works, many have made assumptions about the inspirations behind his compositions that do not stand up to investigation. Julie Sanders argues that Cecil Sharp's folk music publications were particularly influential on Edward German's works, for example.[67] This cannot be true,

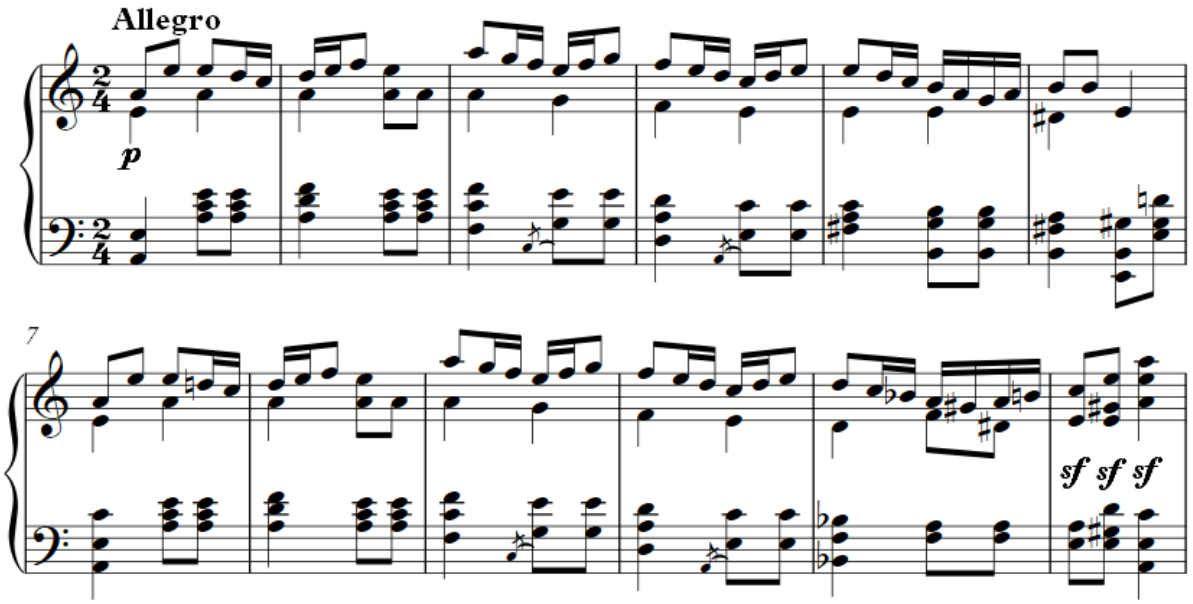
[64] Shaw's work is complicated and multi-layered, so to dismiss it as an artifact of the politics of its time is unfair. Nonetheless, it remains the case that it contains a number of passages that would be almost universally perceived to be beyond the pale today. For example, Shaw argues that 'Socialism means equality of income or nothing, and that under Socialism you would not be allowed to be poor. You would be forcibly fed, clothed, lodged, taught and employed whether you liked it or not. If it were discovered that you had not character and industry enough to be worth all this trouble, you might possibly be executed in a kindly manner; but whilst you were permitted to live you would have to live well'. Please see:
Bernard Shaw, *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to: Socialism, Capitalism, Sovietism and Fascism* (London: Alma Classics, 2014), 522.
[65] Bennett Zon, 'Liberalism and Victorian Musical Sympathy' in Sarah Collins (ed.), *Music and Victorian Liberalism: Composing the Liberal Subject* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 180-200 (197).
[66] Hubert Parry, *The Evolution of the Art of Music* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 8.
[67] Julie Sanders, *Shakespeare and Music: Afterlives and Borrowings* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 189.

not least because the incidental music written by German for productions of Shakespeare plays – some of his most popular and folk-dance adjacent works – predates Sharp's writing and activism by several years.[68] This assumption is not new, however, as German's most recent biographer, Brian Rees, criticises *The Pall Mall Gazette* for suggesting in 1902 that 'Sullivan's place seemed to be vacant no more… He has drunk deep at the fount of English folk music… and his music is permeated with the characteristics of our national songs'.[69] Rees makes this mistaken assumption himself, however, when he later argues that parts of *Tom Jones* are 'in the well-worn tradition of English folk songs'.[70] Like Elgar,[71] who Freeman notes 'had little time at all for folk music',[72] and omitted the role of folksong in his lectures on the future of English music,[73] German was much more interested in writing his own melodies, drawing more on his learning at the Royal Academy of Music and from the art music composers of the past than on presumed music of 'the people'.

When writing the music for *Henry VIII*, arguably German's most successful work, Henry Irving approached German to suggest some 'old airs' that could be used to develop musical materials for the play. W. H. Scott makes it unequivocally clear that 'German had no intention of adapting folk tunes for this purpose'.[74] The composer wrote in reply to Irving that 'if you will have confidence in me I will give you music that will have the necessary touches of old English style and be in keeping with the play. I am naturally desirous that such music shall be my own'.[75] German succeeded in composing incidental music for *Henry VIII* that

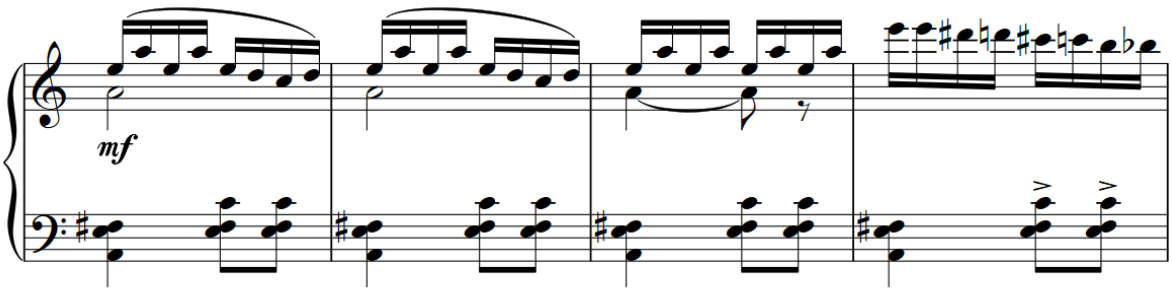
[68] Sharp, *English Folk Song*, 1.
[69] *The Pall Mall Gazette*, quoted in Rees, *A Musical Peacemaker*, 117.
[70] Rees, *A Musical Peacemaker*, 131.
[71] Elgar amusingly declared in a speech given to celebrate German's knighthood – after praising his fellow composer for his pursuit of beauty and creativity – that 'folk songs are all very well… for those who cannot invent their own tunes'. Please see:
Edward Elgar, quoted in Rees, *A Musical Peacemaker*, 219.
[72] Freeman, 'It Wants All the Creases Ironing Out', 410.
[73] Edward Elgar, *A Future for English Music and Other Lectures* (London: Dobson Books, 1968), 57.
[74] Scott, *Edward German*, 57.
[75] Edward German, quoted in Scott, *Edward German*, 57.

was believed to be appropriate and in keeping with the themes of the play without borrowing tunes from traditional dances. Perhaps the most famous extract from the play and German's most commercially successful dance tune, the 'Morris Dance' from the *Three Dances from Henry VIII*, does not follow any of the common structures, form, harmony or use of modality found in 'traditional' Morris dances. It does not attempt to ape the style or content of contemporary or historical folk-dance forms.



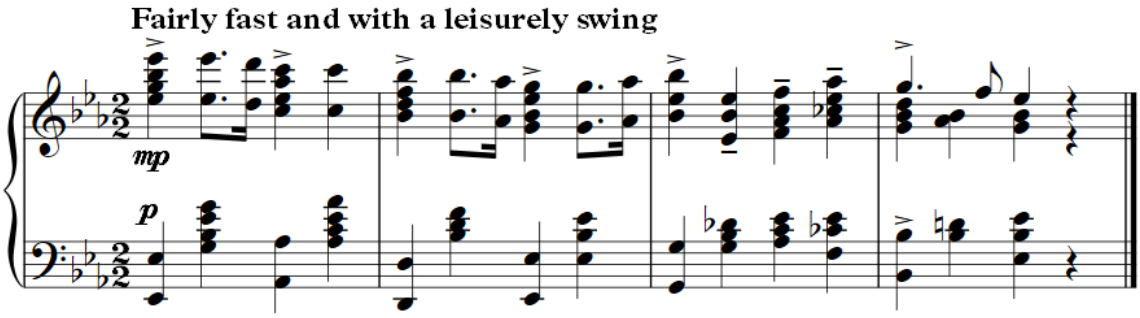
Ex. 8.1., Excerpt from Edward German's 'Morris Dance', (1892), *Three Dances from Henry VIII*.

It instead is an effort to capture their spirit in his own style; after the introduction, which modulates into the home key of A minor, the six-bar theme is played twice before a twelve-bar 'b' section, which concludes with a descending chromatic scale, followed by a recapitulation of the six-bar theme. None of this is typical of any English dance music, which is almost universally characterised by four or eight-bar repeated sections, but the chromaticism is distinctly out of character for either 'traditional' dance music or the style of Tudor dances.



Ex. 8.2., Excerpt, including descending chromatic scale, from Edward German's 'Morris Dance', (1892), *Three Dances from Henry VIII*.

Perhaps John Street was correct when he argued, in a quite different context, that 'folk provides a home for political sentiments in ways that dance music does not', but it might be useful to compare German's dances to the works of the folk song collector and arranger, Percy Grainger.[76]

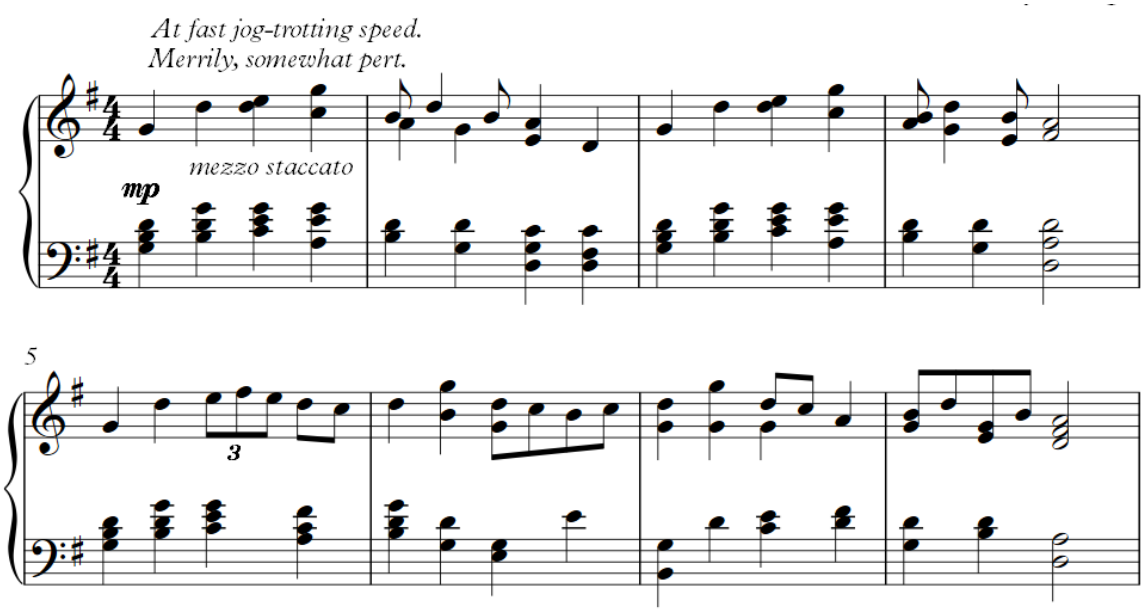


Ex. 8.3., Opening of Percy Grainger's arrangement of 'Country Gardens', (1918).

Cyril Scott described Grainger as 'imbued with the idea of making a sensation in the world, and entirely revolutionising music'.[77] For Bob van der Linden, Scott and Grainger, as members of the 'Frankfurt Group', were instrumental in a departure from the 'conservative British musical establishment', and an escape from the musical conservatism of composers of previous generations.[78] Michael Trend suggests that Grainger's musical departures are rooted

[76] Street, *Music and Politics*, 56-57.
[77] Cyril Scott, quoted in Gillies and Pear, *Portrait of Percy Grainger*, 25.
[78] Bob van der Linden, *Music and Empire in Britain and India: Identity, Internationalism and Cross-Cultural Communication* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), 33-52.

in folk music; through his understanding of 'freer and more variable' rhythms and harmonies, it was possible for him to combine the musical materials he derived from collection and study of folksong into novel artistic expression.[79] The differences between German's idealistic vision of the character of old English dances and an understanding perceived to be more informed and rationalised can be seen in a comparison with Grainger's *Mock Morris*.



Ex. 8.4., Opening of Percy Grainger's *Mock Morris*, (1910).

Grainger's work could be considered, at first glance, to be musically conservative in the sense usually meant when analysing music. It is clear, however, that his music is never conservative in its intent; it is, like Vaughan Williams's works, an attempt to break with traditions of composing and offer something new to art music. Its diatonicism and supposedly ancient musical forms offer a kind of 'sanction of precedent'; they are an attempted legitimisation of the underlying politics of the music and its creation.[80] Grainger acknowledges that his work is unrelated to traditional music in its form or presentation,

[79] Michael Trend, *The Music Makers: The English Musical Renaissance from Elgar to Britten* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1985), 151.
[80] Eric Hobsbawm, 'Introduction: Inventing Traditions', 2.

however, writing that 'No folk-music tune-stuffs are used herein. The rhythmic cast of the piece is Morris-like, but neither the build of the tunes nor the general lay-out of the form keeps to the Morris dance shape'.[81] It is notable that Grainger declares this openly where German does not; it is clear that the source materials he used for inspiration for the music were meaningful to him and it was important that an impression was not formed by the player of the piece that it was representative of traditional dance music. There is something tangibly different between collection and inspiration from supposed 'genuine' or 'authentic' folk materials, and the invention of tunes that might sound like them.

Elgar initially joined the Folk Song Society at its inception, but never spent any time collecting folk songs, and never used any English folk materials in his works.[82] W. H. Reed suggests that his opposition to its use was fundamentally philosophical: 'He would not rave about folk-tunes. I don't think he ever made use of one in his works. He held that the business of a composer is to compose, not to copy'.[83] Elgar himself also famously remarked in his lectures that it would be 'necessary to throw over all imitation' in order to create the future for English music that he desired; it might be intimated that he meant both imitation of foreign models and imitation of folk music.[84] In this sense, Vaughan Williams was correct when he suggested that Elgar – who, according to the younger composer, 'knows and cares little about English folk-song' – had a distaste for using folk music as the basis for thematic material in art music that was based on 'moral rather than aesthetic grounds'.[85] Elgar did use folk materials from other nations in some of his less well known works, however, including his 1915 tribute to Poland, *Polonia*, which McGuire describes as 'a small symphonic prelude

[81] Percy Grainger, *Mock Morris For Piano, Popular Version* (London: Schott & Co., 1913).
[82] Frederic Keel, 'The Folk Song Society 1898-1948', *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society*, 5/3 (1948), 111-126 (112).
[83] William H. Reed, *Elgar as I Knew Him* (Oxford: Oxford Paperbacks, 1989), 87.
[84] Elgar, *A Future for English Music*, 57.
[85] Vaughan Williams, *National Music*, 26-41.

that uses folk – and art – music quotations from Polish national themes'.[86] It is notable that Reed implies that the composer was uncomfortable when writing the work; for Reed, it would not have been written outside the extreme circumstances of the war and it did not fit with his 'own noble, natural style'.[87] As Jeremy Crump has noted, 'Elgar used Polish folk material in *Polonia* and a Welsh hymn tune in the *Introduction and Allegro*, but there are no examples of his incorporating English folk songs into his music'.[88] Indeed, Elgar offers what appears to be a good-humoured jibe at the use of folksong materials in his song *The River*, which the composer claims is paraphrased from an Eastern European folk-song by Pietro D'Alba – a pseudonym he used for himself.[89] Elgar made it clear that his distaste for folk music was linked to the problems of modern music and other arts, as *The Times* reported in 1928:

> Sir Edward Elgar, who responded for music, said he was very sorry that instead of inventing our own tunes we were going back to the old folksongs, which were very fine in themselves, and trying to build from them. There were people who pulled down old castles and built houses from them and sometimes pigsties, but there was the satisfaction of knowing that there was an inspector of nuisances. People could take folk-songs and make modern music with them, but there was no inspector of nuisances who looked after that sort of thing… The original work which was being done now was somewhat ugly. In literature, the drama and music there were somewhat low depths… They knew since the world began that when they reached a low level the rebound had been correspondingly high, so he looked forward to the future with satisfaction. Judging from the low depths to which we had reached, the next spring would be uncommonly high.[90]

These declarations are perhaps the most explicit rejection of the folksong consensus that had been established by composers in this period. For Elgar, it is clear that there is an equivalence between the use of folk materials to create art and the misdirected modernism of composers whom he viewed to have been creating original music, but at a 'low level'. Elgar believed

[86] Charles Edward McGuire, 'Functional Music: Imperialism, the Great War, and Elgar as Popular Composer' in Daniel M. Grimley and Julian Rushton (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Elgar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 214-224 (215-217).
[87] William H. Reed, *Elgar as I Knew Him* (Oxford: Oxford Paperbacks, 1989), 55.
[88] Jeremy Crump, 'The Identity of English Music: The Reception of Elgar 1898-1935' in Robert Colls and Philip Dodd (eds.), *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1920* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 189-217 (206).
[89] Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 561.
[90] Edward Elgar, paraphrased in The Times, 'The Prince on Playgoing', *The Times* (February 1st, 1928), 16.

that in order to escape the 'depths' descended to in modern music, there must be an element of musical conservatism and that this did not include a place for folk music.

Stanford did not share in this distaste for folk music in general. Harry Plunket Greene, in his biography of the Irish composer, suggests that Parry and Stanford were similar insofar as they were both 'family men first and the rest nowhere; but here the likeness ended'.[91] Indeed, Greene argues that each composer respected the other's judgement on musical matters, but the perennial rifts between them 'were invariably 'political''.[92] Stanford's musical interest in folk music was also tangibly different to that of Parry, Vaughan Williams, and others, as is demonstrated by an anecdote offered by the younger composer:

> By this time I was thoroughly obsessed by the folk song. I went berserk on the flat seventh and the sharp sixth and the Mixolydian cadence. My revered master, Stanford, one of the greatest teachers, was much worried by my flattened leading notes. He declared, if I remember right, that the flat seventh was purely theoretical and was in practice always corrected by 'musica ficta'.[93]

Stanford was, nonetheless, much more interested in folk music as the basis for larger compositions than other musical conservatives. Jeremy Dibble suggests that this was partly a commercial decision on Stanford's part, as he recognised the 'considerable marketplace in Britain and the rest of the English-speaking world for arrangements of folk melody'.[94] There is more to Stanford's interest in folk music than its material worth, however. It is notable that Stanford felt comfortable with the use of Irish folk elements, either traditional or invented,[95] but did not use English folksong as inspiration for his *Songs of the Sea*, for example.[96] Stanford did compose his little-known *Concert Variations upon an English Theme* (Op.71) using the melody to the supposed folk song 'Down Among the Dead Men' as its thematic

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[91] Harry Plunket Greene, *Charles Villiers Stanford* (London: Edward Arnold, 1935), 119.
[92] Ibid., 120.
[93] Vaughan Williams, quoted in David Manning, *Vaughan Williams on Music*, 252.
[94] Jeremy Dibble, *Charles Villiers Stanford: Man and Musician* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 128.
[95] Stanford utilised the kind of imagined folk song elements that German did in his works for stage in his own operas; Eric Saylor points out that in *Shamus O'Brien* (1896), for example, the composer 'imitated the general style of folksong in part or in full'. Please see:
Eric Saylor, 'Dramatic Applications of Folksong in Vaughan Williams's Operas Hugh the Drover and Sir John in Love', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 134/1 (2009), 37-83 (40).
[96] Jeremy Dibble, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 358.

basis, but it is notable that the origin of the tune is disputed, and has been attributed to Purcell.[97] Eric Saylor has compared the reception of Stanford's choral music with Vaughan Williams's, suggesting that responses to their works, as well as the works themselves, were at least in part politically motivated:

> Conventional wisdom suggests that Stanford, a senior establishment figure whose musical idiom seems tailor-made for the relatively conservative aesthetic sensibilities of the provincial choral festival, should have received a much more enthusiastic reception than his junior colleague, whose 'modern' musical and literary inclinations were noted (not always enthusiastically) in several critical corners… Audiences at the Leeds Festival of 1910, then, would have been primed to respond to both the *Songs of the Fleet* and the *Sea Symphony* not just as musical events, but as political statements about the significance of the sea in British culture – and Stanford's patriotic tribute seems far more attuned to the Edwardian *Zeitgeist* than Vaughan Williams's idealistic vision of international brotherhood and solidarity. How the composers attempted to communicate those visions in their music reveals a great deal about Stanford and Vaughan Williams's own conceptions of Britain as a nation, and may help explain why the critical response to both works defied expectations.[98]

Their opposing conceptualisations of English and British identity are marked in these works; it is notable, then, that neither composer uses folk song as the basis for their compositions.[99] This is perhaps part of the explanation of why, despite a disagreement with the political messages of the work, Stanford supported Vaughan Williams after the premiere of his *Sea Symphony*. Saylor suggests that this is surprising on account of Stanford's political and aesthetic sympathies: 'As a Dublin-born Tory and vociferous Unionist who was equally conservative in his musical views, it is safe to assume that Stanford would have had little sympathy for either Whitman's quasi-mystical utopianism or Vaughan Williams's sensual

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[97] As is so often the case with Stanford, his choice of material is political; the song is overtly monarchist in its message. The tune was certainly believed by some to be Purcell's composition around the time of Stanford's work; James Duff Brown, in his *Characteristic Songs and Dances of All Nations*, notes that the tune is likely Purcell's, with words by Robert Dyer (presumably a mistake; the lyrics are attributed elsewhere to the Welsh poet John Dyer). The song held associations with Purcell in public consciousness; *The Church of England Quarterly Review*, for example, referred to the song in an analogy, attributing it uncritically to Purcell in 1846. Please see:
James Duff Brown, *Characteristic Songs and Dances of All Nations* (London: Bayley & Ferguson, 1901), 11.
John Frere, 'The Doctrine of the Imposition of Hands', *The Church of England Quarterly Review*, XXIX (1846), 107-129 (128).

[98] Eric Saylor, 'Political Visions, National Identities, and the Sea Itself: Stanford and Vaughan Williams in 1910' in Eric Saylor and Christopher M. Scheer, *The Sea in the British Musical Imagination* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2015), 205-224 (206-208).

[99] Dibble notes a similar attitude towards folk music and national feeling in Stanford's setting of Tennyson's *The Revenge*, which was intended to represent British (unionist) identity and celebrate Queen Victoria's reign. The work was a response to the escalating tensions regarding Home Rule in Ireland. Dibble describes the work as an 'attempt to ape the phraseology and cadence of traditional song'. Please see:
Jeremy Dibble, *Charles Villiers Stanford: Man and Musician* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 178-179.

grandiosity'.[100] It is possible that Stanford's conceptualisation of the utility of folk music provides part of the answer to questions arising from such problems.

Stanford wrote extensively on folk music. He summarises these thoughts in his treatise *Musical Composition*; for the composer:

> The regulators of work are a pure taste and a deep sense of nobility. Folk-songs are a treasure-house of both… They make for simplicity, for beauty, and for sincerity; and no composer who has grounded his early tastes upon them will lightly play with the fire of sensuality or vulgarity against which they are standing protest. It is the old fight between idealism and materialism; and when music ceases to be ideal, it will abrogate its chief duty, the refinement and elevation of public taste.[101]

For Stanford, then, the purpose of folk music is quite different to the one envisioned by Vaughan Williams and others. The older composer develops his thoughts on folk music in his article 'Some Thoughts Concerning Folk-Song and Nationality', in which he divides folk music into three ethnographic types: 'the Keltic, the Slavonic and the Germanic'.[102] For Stanford, English music is a political amalgamation of German and Celtic influences; he argues that 'The essentially English folk-song has a certain affinity with the Germanic, although much of it, for geographical and political reasons, has become permeated with Keltic influence'.[103] He goes on to suggest that English music was 'unsophisticated, not prone to sentimentalism or romanticism… . The Thames has no rapids and no falls; it winds along under its woods in a gentle stream, never dry and never halting; it is the type of the spirit of English folk-music'.[104] He also implies that there is something antithetical to English identity in folk music, suggesting that 'the fine old hymn-tunes' were a better representation of Englishness than folk music, perhaps as a result of the Puritan era, during which these works 'were so engrafted in the English people that it was not possible to extirpate them'.[105]

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[100] Stanford certainly would have found it difficult to accept Whitman's politics, but he was one of the first to set Whitman's poetry to music in his 1884 *Elegaic Ode*. Please see:
Saylor, 'Political Visions', 216.
[101] Charles Villiers Stanford, *Musical Composition: A Short Treatise for Students* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1911), 187.
[102] Charles Villiers Stanford, 'Some Thoughts Concerning Folk-Song and Nationality', *The Musical Quarterly*, 1/2 (1915), 232-245 (237).
[103] Ibid., 237.
[104] Ibid., 241-242.
[105] Stanford, 'Some Thoughts Concerning Folk-Song', 242.

Stanford still saw the potential in folk music as a political weapon for his own ends, however, and believed that folksong and national identity were intrinsically linked; the composer declared that 'Nations have to grow old with a folk-music of centuries behind them before they express themselves in unmistakable terms of their own nationality'.[106] In his published arrangements of folk songs, such as *The National Song Book*, Stanford's nationalist vison of the purpose of folk music becomes apparent; Christopher Scheer notes that:

> By requiring that students learn folksongs of each constituent nation, Stanford was reinforcing the British identity of the students. He codified this plan of education in 1906, when he edited a *National Song Book* for use in elementary schools that drew upon the folksongs of all four nationalities in the United Kingdom. Thus, Stanford saw Irish folksongs not as a manifestation of Irish nationality, but rather as an affirmation of Ireland as an integral part of the United Kingdom.[107]

Stanford, like his politically opposed younger contemporaries, saw the utility of folk song as a political tool and used his position to attempt to influence public perceptions through the employment of folk music, for unionist and conservative rather than internationalist and anticonservative purposes. This has largely been overlooked in the folk music literature and conceptualisations of revivalism that have been outlined above.

Edward German did also use supposed folk-song materials in one of his major works. It is worth noting that this work was not intended to portray musical Englishness, however, in the way that his *Coronation March and Hymn* or *Merrie England* were. German used folk materials directly in his *Welsh Rhapsody*, but never in his works intended to represent English identity or culture.[108] The rhapsody is an interesting example of the use of folk music materials, and perhaps indicates German's disinterest in them more than would appear at first glance. For Rees, 'The *Welsh Rhapsody* is something much grander than a mere setting of folk songs. Though the four movements are linked, each is distinct in character'.[109]

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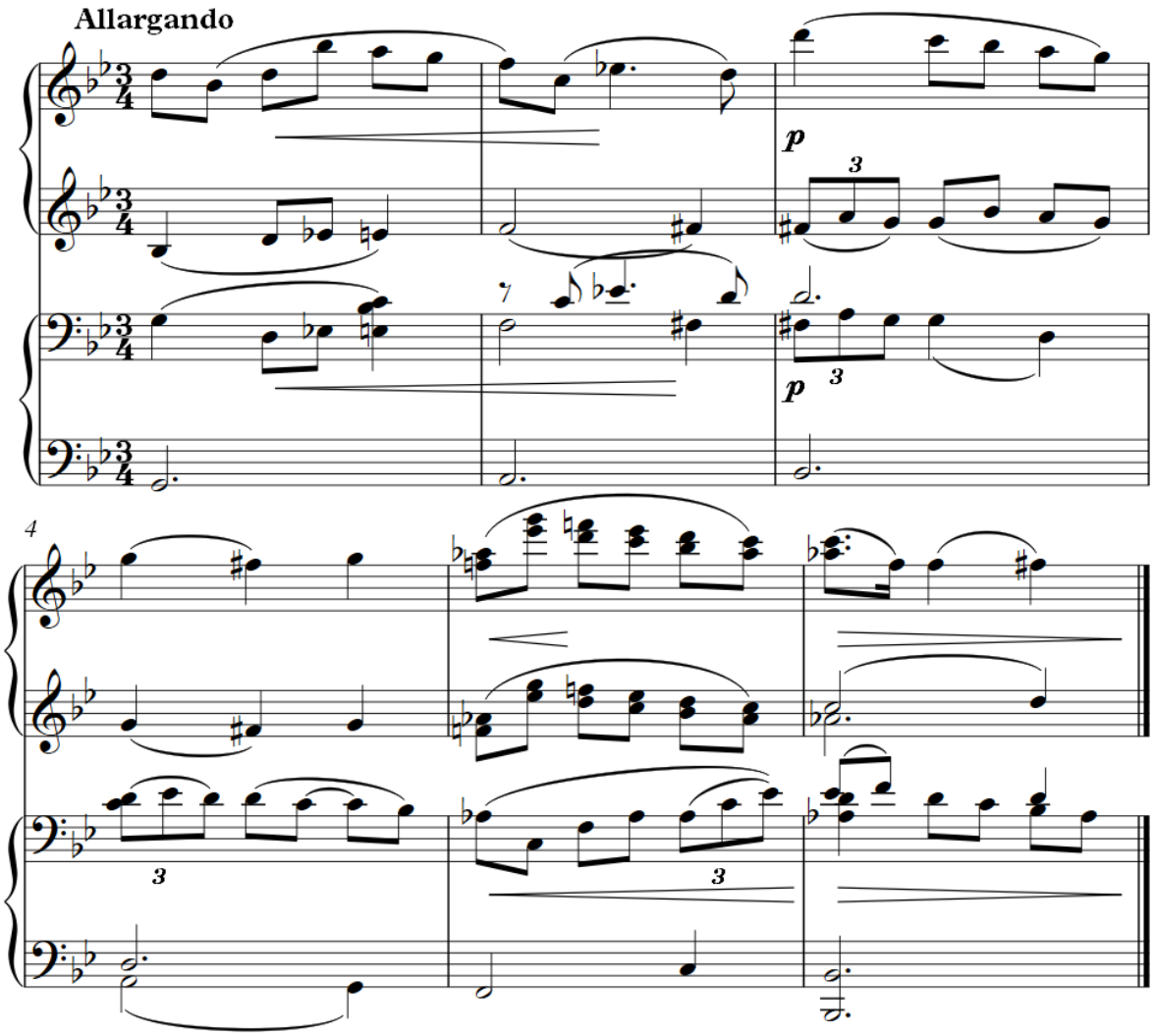
[106] Charles V. Stanford, *Interludes: Records and Reflections* (London: John Murray, 1922), 106.
[107] Christopher Scheer, 'For the Sake of the Union: The Nation in Stanford's Fourth *Irish Rhapsody*' in Rachel Cowgill and Julian Rushton (eds.), *Europe, Empire and Spectacle in Nineteenth-Century British Music* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 159-170 (161).
[108] Rees, *A Musical Peacemaker*, 123.
[109] Ibid., 123.



Ex. 8.5., Excerpt, presenting the theme from the song 'David of the White Rock', from Edward German's *Welsh Rhapsody* (1904), Rehearsal Mark 27.

At a time when Grainger and Vaughan Williams were conducting fieldwork to discover and collect alleged 'authentic' folk songs and dances in order to inform their compositions, German, with the help of 'his friend Mr. Sackville Evans', instead perused 'two portly volumes of Welsh Folk songs' in order to find the material for the work.[110] While deconstruction of the mythos of Welsh folk music – of the kind that has been applied by scholars to English music – has yet to be undertaken, the status of 'folk song' of the themes

[110] Scott, *Edward German*, 113.

chosen by German would be disputed by folk musicians and scholars today.[111] The problems of authenticity in folk music are a continued subject of contention and require their own multiple volume studies, but it is worth mentioning that 'David of the White Rock', for example, which forms the basis of the slow movement of German's work, has dubious status.[112] Neither Scott nor Rees speculate as to which books German and Sackville Evans studied, but it is most likely that they used John Thomas's *Welsh Melodies, with Welsh and English Poetry, vols. 1 & 2*, which featured arrangements of both 'traditional' Welsh songs (often with new English words by Thomas Oliphant) and tunes which hitherto had no Welsh words; these were provided by John Jones (known as Talhaiarn).[113] Folk song scholarship and practices were not well documented by the time that German composed his work in 1904, but it remains notable that the work did not conform to the later practices of collecting, developing and presenting folk materials. This did not matter to the composer, or for that matter, his audience. The work was exceptionally well received at Welsh performances; one reporter claimed that 'when the last bar had been played there was an outburst of applause that has never been equalled in the Park Hall'.[114] The choice of presenting the musical ideas in the form of a rhapsody is in itself interesting; Elgar, of course, famously declared that rhapsodies were distinctly un-English by their nature.[115] German's *March Rhapsody on Original Themes*, a reworking of his self-described 'English Fantasia',[116] *In Commemoration*, originally written for the Diamond Jubilee celebrations in 1897, did not use any folk song materials and as such marks a clear separation in the view of the composer between English and Welsh musical identities.[117] Ernest Newman humorously suggested that 'during the

[111] Phyllis Kinney, *Welsh Traditional Music* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011), 141.
[112] Scott, *Edward German*, 114.
[113] John Thomas, *Welsh Melodies, with Welsh and English Poetry* (London: Lamborn Cock, 1862).
[114] Scott, *Edward German*, 114.
[115] Elgar, *A Future for English Music*, 51.
[116] Edward German, quoted in Rees, *A Musical Peacemaker*, 101.
[117] Rees, *A Musical Peacemaker*, 99-100.

composition of his famous Welsh Rhapsody Mr. Edward German ate nothing but Welsh rarebits, drank nothing but Welsh ale and slept with a copy of 'Wild Wales' under his pillow'.[118] This was obviously meant in jest, but it indicates a genuine delineation of Welsh identity that was evoked in listeners to performances of the work. Dan Godfrey even believed it to be an expression of the composer's own identity: 'born on the border of Wales, he has contributed real national music in his Welsh Rhapsody'.[119] German was capable of eliciting nationalistic responses to his music through the use of folk song, then, but chose only to do so in his music intended to represent Welsh identity, not in his ostensibly English works.

It may be mere coincidence, but it remains true that these three conservative composers rarely used English folksong materials in their compositions, while their politically opposed contemporaries so often did, in order to represent a kind of English musical identity that was distinct from that of the past. Constant Lambert comments on what he perceives to be the 'artificiality' of modernist English folk music compositions:

> To the technical disadvantages inherent in the use of folk song as musical material, that we have already examined, is added the depressing fact that English folk songs have for the average twentieth-century Englishman none of the evocative significance that the folk songs of Russia had for the average nineteenth-century Russian… Folk songs in England are not a vigorous living tradition, as they were in Russia… The English folk song, except to a few crusted old farmhands in those rare districts which have escaped mechanization, is nothing more than a very pretty period piece with the same innocent charm as the paintings of George Morland. The particular type of self-conscious Englishry practised by the folk-song composers is in itself curiously un-English… The Elizabethans, and Purcell after them, drew what they could from their Italian contemporaries without in any way submerging their own personalities. Even in our day Elgar and Delius have, in their widely different ways, written music that is essentially English in feeling without having to dress itself up in rustic clothes or adopt pseudo-archaic modes of speech.[120]

It appears that there may be something about English folk music that is often perceived to be somehow distinct from the kind of Englishness conservative composers wished to portray in their music; that the use of folk materials was more appropriate for the music of other nations, or that there was something else that better represented England musically. For

[118] Ernest Newman, quoted in Scott, *Edward German*, 112.
[119] Dan Godfrey, *Memories and Music: Thirty-Five Years of Conducting* (London: Hutchinson & Company, 1924), 136.
[120] Lambert, *Music Ho! A Study of Music in Decline*, 173.

Lambert, at least, this is as a result of the nature of revival of tradition; folk music cannot serve in England the function it does in Russia – or indeed, for Stanford in Ireland – as it is not perceived to be a living tradition and therefore does not carry the same nationalistic weight that it does in other nations. This is perhaps the essence of the politics of the use of folk music materials in the compositions of English Victorian composers.[121] The differences between the visions of Englishness and their relationship with folk-song between conservative and anticonservative musicians might be dismissed as correlation without causation, but there are dialectics inherent to the musical politics of the era that warrant further investigation. A deeper understanding of different composers' relationships with folk music may provide the basis for a more complete understanding of musical nationalism and perceptions of English identity as a politicising force in broader culture.

[121] It is also notable that perceptions exist that English folk-song is valuable for its 'folk' poetry, rather than musical content, especially when compared to the folk music of other nations. This is implicit in a quote from May Morris, William Morris's daughter, on her father's taste in music: 'The music that never failed to reach his heart… was the music of the people – from the times when they were fortunate enough to have music in them; the English folk-songs, the Irish, the French, the Scandinavian airs'. There are a number of potential explanations for the phenomena outlined in this chapter, including an analysis of what different people found valuable in folk musical materials. Please see:
May Morris, quoted in Cole, *The Folk*, 85.

CHAPTER IX

In Search of English Music: National Identity and Conservatism

It has been established that conservative composers in this era were, in general, actively opposed to the use of folk music materials in compositions intended to represent English identity. Elgar, German, and even Stanford, have each been described as embodying English identity in their works, but the Englishness they sought to preserve in music was of a different order than that of their politically opposed contemporaries. Broader competing narratives of English history that have emerged and have been popularised since the Second World War make it difficult to ascertain what Englishness might have ever meant to Victorian and Edwardian people. Victorian England was, of course, culturally very different to England today or even after 1918; Thomas Dunhill outlines a fragment of what was widely perceived to have been a conservative culture which already seemed quite alien in 1927:

> The English musician of Victorian times is depicted as a highly respectable being whose bounds of thought never extended much beyond blameless four-part writing of the hymn-tune order, who regarded Mendelssohn's "Elijah" as the last word in musical perfection, who disliked being stirred very deeply, and who was opposed to all progressive ideas.[1]

Dunhill suggests that this assumed image of Victorian England is unjust, politically 'one-sided', and that a sympathetic account of the music of that era might offer a more accurate reconstruction of its culture.[2]

In the same year, however, Anthony Ludovici offered an observation of English culture which suggests that not so much had changed in the intervening years after all:

> And there is perhaps no country more fond of stability than England. Indeed, so intense in England is the attachment to what is known and established, that it is perhaps the only country in Europe where it is still possible to cause people to titter and laugh in the open street by talking a strange language fluently in their presence, or by wearing peculiar clothes.[3]

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[1] Thomas F. Dunhill, 'Charles Villiers Stanford: Some Aspects of His Work and Influence' *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 53rd Sess. (1926 - 1927), 41-65 (41).
[2] Ibid., 41-42.
[3] Anthony M. Ludovici, *A Defence of Conservatism: A Further Text-Book for Tories* (London: Faber & Gwyer, 1927), 2.

For Ludovici, then, there were elements of Englishness which were unchanging across time, such as cultural conservatism and a kind of localist collectivism. Philip Gibbs, however, in his fascinating journalistic account of the habitual conversations of English people in 1935, *England Speaks*, similarly argues that Englishness was fundamentally unchanged for centuries but was primarily liberal and individualistic in its cultural politics:

> I listened to the voices of the crowd during these days of jubilation. England is inarticulate, it is said, but standing among these people I heard them speak, and they haven't changed much since Shakespeare knew them in the taverns of Eastcheap and in the pit of his Globe theatre… these modern accidentals have not yet touched the innermost core of English character, which is still shy of combination, except in small groups, not easily inclined to make friends with the next-door neighbours, and firmly defensive of individual rights… mass production, mass propaganda, mass standardisation, have not yet ironed out our individualism, nor brought us all to the same dead level of mediocrity.[4]

Both Ludovici and Gibbs offer an account of English identity and culture which they perceive to have been consistent across time, yet they differ in the details; even in this miniature account of perceptions of English identity, it is clear that there are political differences inherent in assumptions about the temperament of English people. It is more likely to be challenged today that national characteristics have ever even existed; Grimley and Rushton, regarding Elgar, point out that there has been a great deal of recent discussion as to 'whether there is anything inherently English about his music at all'.[5] In a sense, this is not the most pertinent question to ask; it might be more fruitful to question why composers in this era *pursued* an art that was representative of what they perceived to be 'Englishness', and whether that pursuit led conservative composers to different conclusions about the nature of musical English identity than their anticonservative contemporaries. It is first useful to revisit the idea that there is something unique to anglophone conservatism, which arose out of reactions to historical revolutions.

[4] Philip Gibbs, *England Speaks* (London: William Heinemann, 1935), 13-70.
[5] Daniel M. Grimley and Julian Rushton, 'Introduction' in Daniel M. Grimley and Julian Rushton (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Elgar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1-14 (1).

Roger Scruton argues that conservatism as a label arose in response to the Glorious Revolution, developing further as a reaction to the American and French Revolutions. For Scruton, this is why the epithet 'conservative' has (at least to some people) positive connotations in English speaking countries, whereas in continental politics it has been 'more often a term of abuse'.[6] It might be possible, then, that this is part of the reason that conservative composers were considered to be representative of a kind of musical English identity, and that these composers had a different conceptualisation of Englishness to their anticonservative counterparts. It has been argued extensively in scholarship that the search for national identity in music was a consequence of the politics of the time in which these composers lived, but the political differences between different composers has not yet been fully explored.[7] Scruton suggests that national identity and its concomitant ideologies, particularly on what is known as the political 'right', are found not only in the explicit writings that explore these ideas, but implicitly in the texts and subtexts of the artistic pursuits of the people who follow them:

> Those who wish to fully understand what was at stake in the Austrian discussion of spontaneous order should not look only at the writings of Hayek and his school. Just as relevant, in their way, are the symphonies of Mahler, the poems of Rilke, and the operas of Hofmannsthal and Strauss.[8]

By this same token, the 'Englishness' of English conservatism can be seen to be represented by musical conservatives; this is, at least, what many critics, composers, and commentators have believed in the past.

Edward German was widely regarded as representative of English identity through his music, even if each time this is argued it is claimed for a different reason.[9] The *Musical*

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[6] Roger Scruton, *Conservatism: Ideas in Profile* (London: Profile Books, 2017), 1.
[7] Sarah Collins, 'Anti-Intellectualism and the Rhetoric of 'National Character' in Music: The Vulgarity of Over-Refinement', in Jeremy Dibble and Julian Horton (eds.), *British Musical Criticism and Intellectual Thought, 1850-1950* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2018), 199-234 (203-214).
[8] Roger Scruton, *Conservatism: Ideas in Profile*, 2.
[9] *The Musical Times* declared as early as 1887 that 'Mr. German will develop into a composer worthy to rank with those who are already at work in the formation of a genuine English school'. Please see:
The Musical Times, 'Royal Academy of Music', *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, 28/534 (1887), 483.

Times and Singing Class Circular argued in 1897 that German's works captured the essence of English identity at the time of their performance:

> The dances are characterised by that perfect sympathy with the old English merry-making spirit which forms so distinctive a trait of Mr. German's music, and which it is manifest powerfully appeals to the majority of English audiences to-day. Too great praise can scarcely be rendered for the thoroughly artistic manner in which the music is rendered.[10]

This view of German was widely held, not least by his contemporaries; German's friend from his time studying at the Royal Academy of Music, Ethel Boyce, wrote to the composer to celebrate his knighthood:

> You have for many years deserved whatever honour England could give you as a composer and now at last, the honour is yours. It is delightful to think (and of this I am always sure!) that your music will continue long after you and I have gone. It is so musical, so direct and so *truly* English![11]

Henry Geehl similarly suggests that it is German's simplicity and directness that constitutes his English musical identity:

> A composer whose music will ever enjoy popularity in his native land, Edward German must take his place among those essentially English musicians who from the Elizabethan times of Byrd and the later days of Purcell have given us music that by its fresh melodiousness, spirited rhythms and simplicity of expression, enshrines the spirit of England in sound.[12]

For Geehl, then, German's Englishness is also delineated by his presumed relationship with the great English composers of the past; that his musical conservatism, in that he repurposed stylistic elements of Byrd and Purcell, makes his music more representative of English identity. Implicit in Geehl's eulogy is a Burkean argument that the continuity of expression with great musicians of the past is, essentially, a better articulation of Englishness than the utilisation of extant folk music materials. German's biographer, W. H. Scott, repeatedly reminds his readers that German's works are 'thoroughly English',[13] offering the following explanation for this phenomenon:

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[10] The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular, 'Mr. Edward German's Music to "As You Like It"', *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, 38/647 (1897), 26.
[11] Ethel Boyce, quoted in Brian Rees, *A Musical Peacemaker: The Life and Work of Sir Edward German* (Abbotsbrook: Kensal Press, 1986), 218.
[12] Henry Geehl, *Edward German: Six Popular Pieces of Moderate Difficulty* (London: Edwin Ashdown, 1938), Introduction.
[13] William Herbert Scott, *Edward German: An Intimate Biography* (London: Cecil Palmer, 1932), 6.

> That he should be so unmistakably English is perfectly intelligible when one remembers his deep-rooted attachment to the homeland, his innate affection for its natural beauties, old customs, and historic associations, and especially his love of homely pleasure and rustic quietude which still allow a keen relish for the *joie de vivre*.[14]

Again, here, another explanation of the nature of German's Englishness is offered, that he is a purveyor of the pastoral and the historic, and that this permeates his music. For Scott, it is rusticity and agrarianism that are characteristic of English identity, despite German having spent the majority of his life in London, so much so that he acquired the nickname 'The Hermit of Maida Vale'.[15]

The *Daily Graphic* suggested, perhaps paradoxically, that Edward German's music was simultaneously unique to him and unmistakably 'English to the backbone':

> The real strength of Mr. German's music lies in the fact that it is a revelation of unmistakably original individuality. Mr. German is a man with a style of his own, and this style is more radically England than Sullivan's ever was… In many of the songs the melodic curves recall the quaint grace of the past, and this suggestion, combined with the richness of modern harmony and orchestration, make up a sum total of singular charm.[16]

Arnold Bax made similar claims about German in a private letter to the composer in 1928, wherein he declared his admiration for the composer's 'sincere, original and very English music… you were writing truly native stuff at a time when even Elgar was struggling out of foreign toils. We all have a genuine affection for your work, and honour your example'.[17] German's music, then, is at the same time unique and special, the product of the music of the past, and a representation of a collective English identity. The *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* made the same argument in 1901:

> Because England is not considered a musical nation no one should conclude that the English are unmusical… the English tone-poet Edward German is the most worthy disciple of Sullivan. While nearly all of his important works bear the unmistakable stamp of English music, most of them also bear witness to the inspired talent of the musician, and what strikes one above all is their originality.[18]

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[14] Scott, *Edward German*, 201.
[15] Rees, *A Musical Peacemaker*, 195.
[16] The Daily Graphic, quoted in Scott, *Edward German*, 94.
[17] Arnold Bax, letter to Edward German (22nd October 1928), Edward German Archive.
[18] Neue Zeitschrift für Musik, quoted in Scott, *Edward German*, 201.

The problems inherent to these arguments were noted by German's contemporaries and critics. Edwin Evans notably neglected German in his series of articles documenting some of the important British composers of his time, but in his essay on Ralph Vaughan Williams, he asks some of the more interesting questions regarding English musical identity in this period:

> Music is primarily the expression of an individual. It expresses a race only in the degree in which its creator is typical of that race… Moreover, the interpretation in music of mere English externals is quite another matter. In his very small manner, Edward German accomplished it fairly well; and who would claim to detect anything in common between Edward German and Vaughan Williams? The fact is that the Englishman tends to express himself outwardly in conventions, and it is these that a composer like German seizes upon, whilst Vaughan Williams expresses the Englishman within him.[19]

Vaughan Williams himself was also aware of these problems, and saw German as an obstacle in his own theses on the nature of what English music is or should be.[20] In a 1916 letter replying to questions from fellow composer and founder of the Purcell Operatic Society, Martin Shaw, Vaughan Williams noted the difficulties of identification of purportedly English music:

> Then how about the composers whose work is distinctively English - E. German for example - & how about Holbrooke a lot of whose stuff (the 5^{tet} & Queen Mab) c^{d} have been written by nobody but an Englishman - & if it comes to that we must recognize that such things as Elgar P. & C. no2 - much as I dislike it is recognizably English - also a good deal of Parry & Stanford… Also we have to recognize that it is not English music that is neglected but the particular kind of English music which we admire. The music of P. Robens, Ivor Novello etc is essentially English music of a kind and only appreciated by the English - & how about the music-hall songs?[21]

Vaughan Williams suggests that while German, Stanford and Elgar were each capable of manifesting English identity in their music, they were not representatives of the music that the younger composer admired and wished to propagate; it is possible that there are also political undertones to the question of what musical Englishness is which are present in this letter.

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[19] Edwin Evans, 'Modern British Composers: X. Ralph Vaughan Williams (Concluded)', *The Musical Times*, 61/928 (1920), 371-374 (371-2).

[20] Vaughan Williams's works have also been compared to those of Stanford in a similar vein; Eric Saylor suggests that the two composers 'capture in miniature one of the more potent political conflicts of the day, as imperialism vied with socialism for the hearts and minds of British citizens'. Please see:
Eric Saylor, 'Political Visions, National Identities, and the Sea Itself: Stanford and Vaughan Williams in 1910' in Eric Saylor and Christopher M. Scheer, *The Sea in the British Musical Imagination* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2015), 205-224 (221).

[21] Ralph Vaughan Williams, 'Letter from Ralph Vaughan Williams to Martin Shaw', *The Letters of Ralph Vaughan Williams* (Spring 1916), <http://vaughanwilliams.uk/letter/vwl4299> [accessed 03 May 2021].

Questions regarding the nature of English musical identity have never been satisfactorily answered, and yet so many composers and critics across the twentieth century regarded German as undeniably representative of Englishness. German knew this, and used it to his advantage in his interviews; when speaking to *The Bookman* in 1921, he took the opportunity to denounce modern music, before declaring:

> Only I would say, keep the standard high… I am not thinking of machine-made stuff as we have always with us, but music which comes from originality, and is not above giving pleasure of a permanent kind. There is nothing contrary to tradition in doctrine like this… Further, it is the only vein in which to judge the best music of other ages and other lands. I, for one, can never forget what we owe to Germany, and to France and Italy… It is a good augury for native music that we have a taste so catholic as to value the best from other countries, and to be resurrecting the fine forgotten music of our own work written before the Puritan era. In this sense art knows no nationality, but I am, of course, as English as I can be, and as regards English music of the future I am a confirmed optimist.[22]

For German, all of the elements described by his contemporaries and critics that constituted the Englishness of his art were important, but the ultimate factor was his attempted continuation of the music of the past, both of English composers and foreign models. It was the pursuit of Englishness that made him a distinctively English composer in his own self-perception, as well as in the eyes of his contemporaries and critics; by seeking to secure past English music, recapitulate the best of it in the present and preserve its essence for the future, he is, in the way he presents himself in this interview, the embodiment of the Burkean 'dialogue across generations, in which the dead play as great a part as the living'.[23]

Edward J. Dent, after declaring his scepticism on the subject of 'musical patriotism', suggests that the Englishness of German's work comes not from appropriation of the stylistic elements of dance music of the past, but claims that 'more definitely English are his reminiscences of Stanford and Parry in the serious episodes of his work'.[24] For Dent,

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[22] Edward German, quoted in J. P. Collins, 'The Standards of English Music: A Talk with Mr. Edward German', *The Bookman*, 60/358 (1921), 186-188 (187-188).
[23] Roger Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 445.
[24] Edward J. Dent, 'The Musical Interpretation of Shakespeare on the Modern Stage', *The Musical Quarterly*, 2/4 (1916), 523-537 (527).

Stanford's music was inherently English, then, despite the composer being Irish by birth.[25] Likewise, Harry Plunkett Greene believed that 'when he dealt with England on the sea he was as English as Tennyson'.[26] Stanford himself certainly viewed Englishness as a part of his personal and musical identity. He viewed nationhood more broadly as integral to an understanding of music, writing that 'the days of a nation in the world of music which obeys it will always be long on the earth'.[27] Stanford, who was often present at gatherings during which the famous poet would recite his own works,[28] was thought of as very capable of capturing the spirit of Englishness in music by Alfred, Lord Tennyson's social circle. The Irishman's setting of *The Revenge* (Op. 24) caused Tennyson and Stanford's close mutual friend, Joseph Joachim, to reveal to Stanford that 'he always had great hankerings after setting "The Revenge," but that he repressed them because he felt that it could only be tackled in the true English spirit by a Britisher'.[29] Emily, Lady Tennyson also requested to have the melody she had composed for her husband's patriotic poem 'Hands all Round' arranged for pianoforte accompaniment by Stanford. The composer purportedly perplexed Lord Tennyson because he had amusingly claimed that it was impossible to set the word 'cosmopolite' to music, so it was decided that the words would be altered to be sung as 'he best will serve the race of men, Who loves his native country best'.[30]

In his foreword to Dan Godfrey's memoirs, Stanford writes on behalf of English musicians:

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[25] These beliefs prevailed despite Stanford's perceived Germanicism; Rodmell suggests that Stanford was influenced by Britain's political and cultural (perhaps even perceived racial) ties to Germany, and sought the approval of German musicians and institutions. Stanford wished for an English school of music to emerge from German tradition; Rodmell writes that Stanford 'emphasised this inheritance to his students'. Please see: Paul Rodmell, *Charles Villiers Stanford* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 368-369.
[26] Harry Plunket Greene, *Charles Villiers Stanford* (London: Edward Arnold, 1935), 87.
[27] Charles Villiers Stanford, 'Some Thoughts concerning Folk-Song and Nationality', *The Musical Quarterly*, 1/2 (1915), 232-245 (245).
[28] Charles Stanford, 'Music, Tennyson, and Joachim' in Hallam, Lord Tennyson (ed.), *Tennyson and His Friends* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1911), 272-279 (274-276).
[29] Stanford, 'Music, Tennyson, and Joachim', 274.
[30] Hallam, Lord Tennyson, *Tennyson and His Friends*, 481-482.

> You have put your hands to the plough, and you have never turned back, even in the most troublous [sic] times and circumstances. For this the composers of England, and the citizens of a country which has for centuries been more accustomed to vocal than to orchestral music, have to thank you.[31]

Stanford's English identity was often taken for granted by foreign observers; in her survey of contemporary music, Anne Faulkner Oberndorfer lists German and Stanford as 'talented English musicians'.[32] Florence May, in a letter to *The Times* in 1917, claims that Brahms, during a 'gloomy discourse' on the future of music, turned to his pupil and biographer and declared that 'you in England have nothing to complain of, you have Stanford'.[33] Stanford himself wrote to Hans Richter in 1882 that Carl Rosa 'has let me down over my opera… I rather expected it because I'm an Englishman!'.[34] It is notable that Stanford (even if this was meant in jest) thought it was more likely that any prejudice against him in Germany would be on account of his Englishness, rather than his Irish birth.[35] In England, Joseph Bennett, music critic for the *Daily Telegraph*, declared Stanford to have been one of a number of composers who were tasked with the duty to 'conserve everything distinctly English [and] reject modern and unproven theories'.[36] For Bennett, conservatism and the fate of English identity were intertwined, and Stanford's music was at the centre of the conflict with modernism and modernisation. More recently, Scruton has also projected this image of Stanford the Englishman in his seminal work *England: An Elegy*, in which he suggests that Parry,

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[31] Charles Villiers Stanford, in Dan Godfrey, *Memories and Music: Thirty-Five Years of Conducting* (London: Hutchinson & Company, 1924), vii.
[32] Anne Faulkner Oberndorfer, *What We Hear in Music* (Camden, NJ: Victor Talking Machine Company, 1928), 176.
[33] Florence May, 'The Ideals of Brahms', *The Times*, 5th September, 1917, 9.
[34] Charles Villiers Stanford, quoted in Jeremy Dibble, *Charles Villiers Stanford: Man and Musician* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 117.
[35] German distaste for English music has been well documented, not only in the Victorian era as the so-called *Land ohne Musik* (a term which has a number of problems for scholars, and was itself partly wartime propaganda), but, of course, during and after the Great War. Schenker was particularly vicious in his criticisms of English music and its place in wider culture; in 1921, he declared that 'England and true culture are as inimical as venality and probity. There is nothing more loathsome, nothing more nauseating, than the Englishman who, his prey safely in his lair, changes his tune and protests allegiance to humanity, culture, and religion… what a miserable toad the Englishman is!'. Please see:
Heinrich Schenker, *Der Tonwille: Pamphlets in Witness of the Immutable Laws of Music, Offered to a New Generation of Youth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 13-14.
[36] Joseph Bennett, quoted in Meirion Hughes, *The English Musical Renaissance and the Press 1850-1914: Watchmen of Music* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 172.

Stanford, Elgar and their younger contemporaries were integral to the 'very language of English Romanticism'.[37]

Stanford also believed that English national character was captured by William Sterndale Bennett in a more representative way than any other composer of the early Victorian era. Stanford argued that Bennett's conservative, reserved nature was a reflection of a deep English national feeling; in his assessment of the character of folk songs of different nations, Stanford declares that:

> The English take a kind of pride in concealing their feelings and emotions, and this is reflected in their folk-song. The Thames has no rapids and no falls; it winds along under its woods in a gentle stream, never dry and never halting; it is the type of the spirit of English folk-music. There are on the one hand no surprises, on the other no lack of picturesqueness of a quiet and calm sort: but England is as remote from Keltic fire and agony, as the Thames is from the Spey.[38]

Stanford recalls this passage himself in his article concerning the life and works of William Sterndale Bennett; the Irish composer believed that 'Bennett was a typical specimen of this English characteristic. He was a poet, but of the school of Wordsworth rather than of Byron and Shelley'.[39] Here, Stanford reveals his attempts to construct an image of English national character as both artistically and personally conservative, as well as reminding his readers that Englishness is better represented by Bennett's works than by what might have been described by his contemporaries as 'genuine' folk song.

Presumably referencing the supposed Welsh heritage of German and the Irish heritage of Stanford, the *Civil and Military Gazette* claimed in 1900 that 'unlike Sullivan, Stanford, German, and Taylor, Mr Elgar is absolutely English, and has already been claimed as the greatest Anglo-Saxon composer since Purcell'.[40] Elgar's name, to some, has remained

[37] Roger Scruton, *England: An Elegy* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2000), 108.
[38] Charles Villiers Stanford, 'Some Thoughts concerning Folk-Song and Nationality', *The Musical Quarterly*, 1/2 (1915), 232-245 (242).
[39] Charles Villiers Stanford, 'William Sterndale Bennett: 1816-1875', *The Musical Quarterly*, 2/4 (1916), 628-657 (631).
[40] Meirion Hughes, *The English Musical Renaissance and the Press 1850-1914: Watchmen of Music* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 172.

synonymous with Englishness since the time that this claim was made; T. S. Eliot's famous description of English culture is but one example of this association:

> Taking now the point of view of identification, the reader must remind himself, as the author has constantly to do, of how much is here embraced by the term culture. It includes all the characteristic activities and interests of a people: Derby Day, Henley Regatta, Cowes, the twelfth of August, a cup final, the dog races, the pin table, the dart board, Wensleydale cheese, boiled cabbage cut into sections, beetroot in vinegar, nineteenth century Gothic churches and the music of Elgar.[41]

Jeremy Crump has written extensively on the subject of Elgar's relationship with English identity in music. He argues that reception of the identity of his works changed with the political winds of the time in which he lived, and several times again in the years since his death.[42] This is likely to be true, but it is clear that there has always been at least a small contingent of Elgarians who associate his music with an Englishness. This is surely, in part, to do with the use of his music in ceremonies and conservative institutions, including royal occasions and by the Conservative Party itself.[43] Associations between Elgar's music and English identity that have formed since the Second World War also have conservative elements to them; in 1968, in his seminal *Portrait of Elgar*, Michael Kennedy declared that Elgar's works were 'the funeral march of a civilisation, of a spiritual and artistic life that was decaying'.[44] The idea that Elgar's music was representative of a past that is gone is not only a conservative projection onto the music, but was something Elgar fostered and encouraged himself; the composer told an interviewer in 1905 that:

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[41] T. S. Eliot, *Christianity and Culture: The Idea of a Christian Society and Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (London: Harcourt Brace, 1976), 103-4.
[42] Jeremy Crump, 'The Identity of English Music: The Reception of Elgar 1898-1935' in Colls, Robert and Dodd, Philip, *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1920* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 189-217.
[43] The Conservative Party even commissioned a phonograph recording in 1928, through Columbia Records, which featured a parody of the song 'Sonny Boy' sung by Topliss Green, with the lyrics changed to 'Stanley Boy', in praise of the contemporary Conservative Party leader Stanley Baldwin. On the 'B-side' was, of course, Elgar's 'Land of Hope and Glory', sung by Gladys Palmer.
[44] Michael Kennedy, *Portrait of Elgar* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 151.

> We Englishmen have in our naval and military history, in our religious struggles and traditions, in our national temper and qualities, in our literary and social achievements, and in our legends and tales, sufficient material to inspire and hearten the weakest and most cold-blooded of men. It is impossible for us Englishmen to do great work and have a school of music of our own, until we embody in it our national characteristics.[45]

In every sentence of this quotation there is both a conservative attitude and deliberate association of his music with English identity.[46] With the composer's encouragement, this mythos pervaded the press during Elgar's pre-war career; Meirion Hughes paraphrases attitudes to his music in public perceptions when he suggests that 'Elgar had become the 'flagship' of English music, as potent an emblem of British greatness and security as the greatest battleship of the Royal Navy'.[47]

Elgar similarly attempted to attach his music to idealisations of English countryside. Despite his declaration that English music should be free of imitation, he said to W. H. Reed that he should play music 'like something we hear down by the river',[48] elaborating on this in a letter to Sidney Colvin: 'I am still at heart the dreamy child who used to be found in the reeds by Severn side with a sheet of paper trying to fix the sounds and longing for something very great'.[49] These associations stuck. In 1935, Eric Fenby suggested that when wandering the countryside, he would never hum any music other than 'some exquisite passage from Elgar'.[50] Diana McVeagh, in 1955, similarly suggested that parts of the Second Symphony

[45] Edward Elgar, quoted in Leon Botstein, 'Transcending the Enigmas of Biography: The Cultural Context of Elgar's Career' in Byron Adams (ed.) *Edward Elgar and His World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 365-408 (381).
[46] The religious element of this quote is particularly interesting, given Elgar's background. Hector Berlioz believed that conservatism and religiosity were inseparable from English music; in an 1855 letter to Franz Liszt, he observed that 'There is a musical feeling at the bottom of these English organizations, but it is a conservative feeling, religious above all, and anti-passionate.' Please see:
Hector Berlioz, quoted in Gertrude Norman and Miriam Lubell Shrifte, *Letters of Composers: An Anthology 1603-1945* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), 129.
[47] Meirion Hughes, 'The Duc D'Elgar': Making a Composer Gentleman' in Christopher Norris (ed.), *Music and the Politics of Culture* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1989), 41-69 (52).
[48] William H. Reed, *Elgar as I Knew Him* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 140-141.
[49] Edward Elgar, quoted in Matthew Riley, 'Rustling Reeds and Lofty Pines: Elgar and the Music of Nature', *19th Century Music*, 26/2 (2002), 155-177 (157).
[50] Eric Fenby, quoted in Crump, 'The Identity of English Music', 206.

'breathe the scent of Severnside to those know it'.[51] For Matthew Riley, these links are tenuous, but prevalent:

> Whereas with a composer such as Vaughan Williams it is easy to point to rural signifiers in the scores – the melodic contours of folk song, for instance, or a solo violin imitating the song and flight of a lark – it has in practice proved much trickier to make a link between Elgar's personal attachment to nature and the actual fabric of his music. Yet today, British radio and television producers are more likely to reach for Elgar than any other composer when they wish to evoke a comforting vision of the English countryside.[52]

Christopher Norris recognises these ideas as a 'pervasive mythology built up around figures like Elgar… whose music is felt to represent some quality of 'Englishness' that defies analysis but somehow informs every note of their work'.[53] As Riley has noted, claims that Elgar's works are an evocation of the Worcestershire countryside, including such claims by the composer himself, are ideological in nature.[54] Crump argues that while there is nothing inherent to Elgar's music that evokes the English countryside when viewed abstractly, through the deliberate associations constructed by composers he influenced, like Bax and Vaughan Williams – who famously wrote one of the most popular pieces of imitative music,[55] *The Lark Ascending* – Elgar's works garnered comparisons to rural England by proxy.[56] Perhaps this is why Jean Sibelius wrote his tribute to the composer in nationalistic terms:

> Elgar always appeared to me to be the personification of the true English character in music. I am a sincere admirer of his genius. He was a noble personality and a born aristocrat, which is so typical of English artists. Everybody realises his importance in modern music, and I deeply regret the great loss which music, especially English music, has suffered through his death.[57]

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[51] Diana McVeagh, *Edward Elgar: His Life and Music* (London: J. M. Dent and Son, 1955), 166.
[52] Matthew Riley, 'Rustling Reeds and Lofty Pines: Elgar and the Music of Nature', *19th Century Music*, 26/2 (2002), 155-177 (155).
[53] Christopher Norris, 'Introduction' in Christopher Norris (ed.), *Music and the Politics of Culture* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1989), 7-14 (12).
[54] Riley, 'Rustling Reeds and Lofty Pines', 156.
[55] Ironically, *The Lark Ascending* is so often seen as an allegory for other things; Lewis Foreman describes the work as 'another metaphor for man's spirit', for example. Please see:
Lewis Foreman, 'Restless Explorations: Articulating Many Visions' in Lewis Foreman (ed.), *Vaughan Williams in Perspective* (Ilminster: Albion, 1998), 1-24 (20).
[56] Crump, 'The Identity of English Music', 206.
[57] Jean Sibelius, quoted in The Musical Times, 'Tribute and Commentary', *The Musical Times*, 75/1094 (1934), 320-322 (322).

This ‘true English character’ in Elgar’s music is difficult to pin down, however, and seems to be extramusical. Constant Lambert believed that the difference between Vaughan Williams and Elgar was in the younger composer’s provincialism:

> Elgar’s music is as national in its way as the music of Vaughan Williams but, by using material that in type can be related back to the nineteenth-century German composers, Elgar avoids any suspicion of provincial dialect, even though his national flavour is sufficiently strong to repel certain countries – France in particular.[58]

While the modernism of Elgar’s works has been disputed in an earlier chapter, it is notable that, as Grimley and Rushton have argued, ‘for all its continental modernist characteristics, Elgar’s music nevertheless remains closely linked with ideas of Englishness, Empire and the English landscape’.[59] As such, there must be something outside of the music that contributes to its Englishness. The most obvious place to start, then, is in his overtly English choral works.

John Foulds’s criticisms of musical conservatives like Edward German have been discussed extensively in a previous chapter, but he was more conspicuous in his criticisms of Edward Elgar and perceptions of his English identity. He concluded that those ‘who dote sentimentally upon the ‘English’-ness of Elgar’s idiom must not at the same time blame him for using it in praise of England. They cannot have it and not have it’.[60] Elgar did use his position as a successful composer to praise England and Englishness, as is reflected in many of his works. While Harper-Scott suggests that none of his major works were imperialistic as such, which might suggest that he did not feel as passionately about the subject as he might have portrayed, he did write a number of works intended to represent English identity.[61] Gould similarly suggests that until recently, ‘Almost all considerations of the available evidence concluded Elgar wrote imperialist works only in order to align himself with the

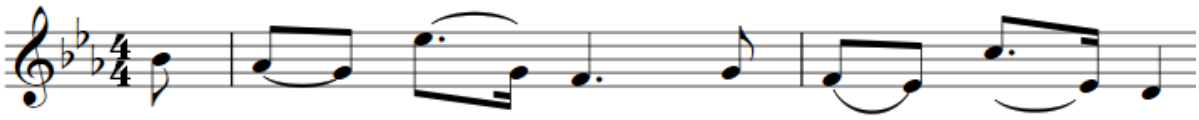
[58] Constant Lambert, *Music Ho! A Study of Music in Decline* (London: Faber and Faber, 1937), 150.
[59] Grimley and Rushton, ‘Introduction’, 11.
[60] John Foulds, *Music To-day: Its Heritage from the Past, and Legacy to the Future* (London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 1934), 235.
[61] J. P. E. Harper-Scott, *Edward Elgar, Modernist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 18.

prevailing attitudes and political beliefs, and not to reflect any personal complicity'.[62] These authors make a plausible case when viewed in the abstract and in light of Elgar's supposed desire to project an image of conservative Englishness; Ludovici, for example, believed that conservatism, imperialism, and English identity were intrinsically linked, arguing that 'As a means of national expansion, allowing for the preservation of national identity, the Empire is essentially the creation of a conscious or unconscious Conservatism in politics'.[63]

Aside from the music for ceremonial occasions, Elgar wrote two choral works explicitly exploring the nature of English identity; *The Banner of St. George*, and *Caractacus*. Elgar first felt uncertain about the subject of *Caractacus* during its composition, considering instead to portray a series of orchestral portraits of the protagonists of the historical mythos of ancient England: King Canute, Caractacus, and others.[64] This did not materialise, but it is interesting that Elgar pushed Edward German to write a work on Canute several times, perhaps regarding German's vision of musical Englishness as more appropriate for the subject.[65] Eventually Elgar decided to write the cantata, dedicated to Queen Victoria, involving what Moore describes as 'the biggest structures his music had yet essayed'.[66] The work involves the extensive use of the *leitmotif*, including one figure which characterises Britain or England; it is clear that Elgar used the two words interchangeably when referencing the work, as is evidenced by his defence of *Caractacus*: 'I knew you would laugh at my librettist's patriotism (and mine) – never mind: England for the English is all I say –

[62] Corissa Gould, ''An Inoffensive Thing': Edward Elgar, *The Crown of India* and Empire' in Martin Clayton and Bennett Zon (eds.), *Music and Orientalism in the British Empire, 1780s-1940s* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 147-164 (148).
[63] Ludovici, *A Defence of Conservatism*, 259.
[64] Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 229.
[65] This eventually resulted in Edward German's *Theme and Six Diversions*. Please see:
Rees, *A Musical Peacemaker*, 195.
[66] Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 231.

hands off! There's nothing apologetic about me'.[67] It might be possible to suggest that this attitude is manifested in his choice of theme.



Ex. 9.1., 'Britain' theme from Edward Elgar's *Caractacus*, Op. 35, (1898).

Elgar wrote to musically conservative *Daily Telegraph* critic, Joseph Bennett, of what he had intended for *Caractacus* and felt that he could only achieve elsewhere:

> I hope some day to do a great work – a sort of national thing that my fellow Englishmen might take to themselves and love – not a too modest ambition! I was going to write to *you* to ask if 'S. Augustine' might form the basis of such a work…?[68]

English identity was clearly important for Elgar, then, and its representation in music was one of his primary goals as a composer at this time.[69] It is interesting that he turned to Joseph Bennett for advice on a work on Saint Augustine;[70] two years before Elgar wrote *Caractacus*, Bennett wrote in *The Daily Telegraph* on Stanford's *Shamus O'Brien*:

> Nationality in art is our safeguard from the cosmopolitan culture which would make all art as unattractive and narrow as cosmopolitan society. Let us, then, have Irish operas, Scottish operas, Welsh operas, as well as English – anything racy of the soil, instinct with the ideas and emotions of the people expressed through their own verbal and tonal speech.[71]

Elgar wrote his first compositions that were 'unambiguously imperialistic' shortly after this article;[72] it is likely that both Elgar and Bennett were influenced by each other, as well as the

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[67] Edward Elgar, quoted in Hughes, 'The Duc D'Elgar', 55.
[68] Edward Elgar, quoted in Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 234.
[69] This view might be further evidenced by the small amount of money Elgar earned for such a large-scale work; his publishers paid just £100 for the copyright. Elgar complained in a letter to August Jaeger that he had 'written Caractacus, earning thro' it 15s/-d *a week* while doing it & that's all'. To put this into context, Edward German Earned £300 for the composition of his incidental music to *Henry VIII*, which took just a few months to compose. Please see:
Edward Elgar, quoted in Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life*, 246.
[70] It is important to note that Elgar was considering writing about St. Augustine of Canterbury, not the more famous St. Augustine of Hippo. Augustine of Canterbury became the first Archbishop of Canterbury after leading attempts to convert King Æthelberht of Kent and other pagan Saxons in England to Christianity.
[71] Joseph Bennett, 'Shamus O'Brien', *The Daily Telegraph*, 3rd March 1896, 5.
[72] It is also worth remembering that the work was composed shortly after the Diamond Jubilee; it seems that patriotic fervour accumulated during this time for a variety of reasons.

changing world around them.[73] Elgar later declared in his lectures that 'English criticism should be – honest fearless and reasonable… I instance Mr. Bennett as the patriarch and head of the profession'.[74]

One of the most popular conservative journalists of the present day, Peter Hitchens, wrote over a century later in *The Abolition of Britain* of the loss of unifying, collective national narratives:

> The lore of our tribe, the stories of our ancestors, the memories which our parents held in common, have simply ceased to be. Thirty or forty years ago, we might all have known the stories of Alfred and the cakes, of Canute and the waves, of Caractacus and Boadicea, Hereward the Wake and Thomas à Becket.[75]

For Hitchens, then, the stories of both Canute and Caractacus were integral to an understanding of the collective English identity of the past. In this context, *Caractacus* has a much greater thematic significance than is generally recognised today.[76] The critical response to the first performance of the work was overwhelmingly positive; one contemporary review suggested that 'Mr Elgar has not inaptly been dubbed 'the Rudyard Kipling of the musicians''.[77] By the time Frank Howes wrote his history of *The English Musical Renaissance*, however, he was able to suggest that the work was no longer worthy of performance for political reasons; for Howes, the 'epilogue is something of an embarrassment to a work which would otherwise go on to the stage'.[78]

More recently, *Caractacus* and Elgar's vision have been reinterpreted again by scholars of his work. Jeffrey Richards notes that the work 'celebrates the beauties of the

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[73] Bernard Porter, 'Edward Elgar and Empire', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 29/1 (2001), 1-34 (7).
[74] Edward Elgar, *A Future for English Music and Other Lectures* (London: Dobson Books, 1968), 181.
[75] Peter Hitchens, *The Abolition of Britain: From Winston Churchill to Theresa May* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 62.
[76] This disconnection with the past was already in its infancy by the end of Elgar's life; Constant Lambert wrote in 1937 that 'the aggressive Edwardian prosperity that lends so comfortable a background to Elgar's finales is now as strange to us as the England that produced *Greensleeves* and *The Woodes so wilde*'. Please see: Constant Lambert, *Music Ho!*, 283.
[77] *The Court Journal*, quoted in Moore, *A Creative Life*, 243.
[78] Frank Howes, *The English Musical Renaissance* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1966), 170.

English countryside', before suggesting that the 'two Elgars' theory, as discussed in a previous chapter, 'is essentially bogus'.[79] Richards suggests that:

> Elgar was equally inspired by the English countryside, by the idea of Empire, by martial glory and by patriotism. They cannot be separated out in any way that makes sense of Elgar's genius… Elgar's vision of Empire was clearly set out at the end of *Caractacus*: it is a vision of justice, peace, freedom and equality, of the *pax Britannica* and of the fulfilment by Britain of its trusteeship mission, to see the countries in its charge brought safely and in due course to independence – a far from ignoble dream.[80]

Richards was reacting against the anti-imperialist pessimism of scholars like Howes and Kennedy, who see the plot of the work as incongruous with its message. While Richards recognises that interpreters of the previous generation were both politically influenced and attempting to influence the politics of musical understanding in their own time, he does not see the same endeavours in himself. The idea that *Caractacus* is a work that envisions a world of equality or peace is fanciful at best, but likely an attempt to make the work congruent with the politics – and musical politics – of the twenty-first century. The libretto of the work explicitly suggests the opposite: a hierarchical, conservative future which offers a vision of war not unlike that of German and Hood's *Merrie England* in the lines 'Britons, alert! And fear not, But gird your loins for fight'. Similarly, the declaration 'Of equal law to all men, And hold it to the death; For all the world shall learn it' does not suggest an all-encompassing vision of equality as it is conceptualised today, but is, in itself, a rejection of cultural relativism and a statement of the supremacy of English common law.[81]

Richards's defences did not convince the most recent Elgar scholars, whose criticisms of the work have been harsher as a reflection of the politics of the present day. They have

[79] Jeffrey Richards, *Imperialism and Music: Britain 1876-1953* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 49.
[80] Ibid., 49-51.
[81] It is also worth noting that while he no doubt exerted a great deal of personal influence over the libretto, Elgar did not write it himself; it was written by Harry Arbuthnot Acworth, who was influenced by a number of sources including his own experiences in India, but it is notable that the tone of the libretto bears close resemblance to W. Stewart Ross's poem, 'Caractacus the Briton'. Please see:
W. Stewart Ross, *Lays of Romance and Chivalry* (London: W. Stewart & Co., 1881), 1-4.

criticised Richards as complicit in the imperialism of *Caractacus*; Nalini Ghuman suggests that Richards attempted to:

> Exculpate imperialism from its principal driving force – profit… imperialism's oldest alibi – the civilising mission – is invoked, along with the pillars of arguments that were constructed to support the colonial enterprise… which have been laid bare by a generation of postcolonial scholars.[82]

Ghuman goes on to question the ethics of listening to Elgar uncritically: 'how ethical is it to entitle musicians and music lovers 'by virtue of their artistic commitment' to practise 'moral indifference'—indifference, here, to colonial history, and particularly to the Raj and its impact on Britain itself?'.[83] While Ghuman is writing specifically about *The Crown of India* here, her criticisms would likely be perceived to be just as applicable to the extramusical aspects of *Caractacus* by contemporary scholars. Laura Upperton does exactly this; she suggests that recognition of both imperialism and orientalism is integral to a thorough understanding of the work:

> *Caractacus* has always been pushed to the side – the annoying younger sibling with embarrassing opinions, who will not go away. It is only when we start to interpret these 'pert opinions' of Elgar's that they start to allude to something rather different: namely, that Elgar's interest in the Imperialist agenda can also be interpreted as interest in an Orientalist agenda.[84]

A cynical conservative commentator might suggest that Elgar's vision of English identity, realising the heroic myths of the past in music, has been re-interpreted by recent scholars in a deliberate attempt to associate Englishness with the worst aspects of imperialism and orientalism. This would, at best, be an exaggeration, but the cyclical changes in academic approach to tackling the problems of the intersection of Elgar's perceived Englishness and his conservative imperialism serve to demonstrate the musical, political and cultural importance of Elgar's works, as well as his place as a barometer of the position of English identity.

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[82] Nalini Ghuman, *Resonances of the Raj: India in the English Musical Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 90-91.
[83] Ibid., 91.
[84] Laura Upperton, 'Patriotic Vigour or Voice of the Orient? Re-reading Elgar's *Caractacus*' in Martin Clayton and Bennett Zon (eds.), *Music and Orientalism in the British Empire, 1780-1940s* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 165-188 (166).

Upperton, drawing on Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism*, makes an extensive argument about what she perceives to be orientalism in *Caractacus,* suggesting that druidism is used as an allegory for Hinduism in the work:

> It seems for Elgar that Orientalism was a tool for communication and representation: the Druids are musically represented from a wholly British point of view, rather than the Orient being allowed to speak for itself. Essentially, *Caractacus* is not about what the East has to say, but the qualities and traits Elgar perceived as being Eastern at that time. These ideas tell us a great deal about the country as a whole, as well as Elgar's political and musical persuasions… The Druids are presented in a consistently negative light… All of these signifiers would have been easily identifiable to a contemporary audience as Elgar's Othering and perhaps Orientalizing of the Druids.[85]

There is limited evidence for this being the interpretation of contemporary audiences. Initial reviews were more interested in the conservative attitude and perceived Englishness of the work; *The Musical Times* noted that Elgar 'has a liking for subjects far removed in point of time' as well as that the work is rooted in 'history and tradition',[86] while *The Sunday Times* concentrated its efforts on detailing the Wagnerism of the work and its extensive use of the *leitmotif*.[87] *The Telegraph* likewise highlighted the inspiration from 'history and tradition', before describing the work musically, as a unity of 'older ways of music' and the 'modern' Wagnerian method; the author expressly assures the reader of its relative musical conservatism, however, suggesting that 'one feels that the composer has intentionally avoided certain severities of style which might have detracted from the dramatic value of his work'.[88] The same author presented his further reflections on the work in the newspaper the next day, concluding that the work 'does honour at once to Mr. Elgar and to the native art for which he strives so bravely'.[89] There is almost no mention of the role of the druids in the work at all in these reviews and no suggestion of their orientalism. The fact that the historical-mythical story of Caractacus would have been very familiar to contemporary audiences has been

[85] Upperton, 'Patriotic Vigour or Voice of the Orient', 168-169.
[86] J. Bennett, 'Some Leeds Novelties', *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular,* 39/668 (1898), 663-664 (663).
[87] H. K., 'Music and Musicians: The Leeds Festival', *The Sunday Times*, 9th October 1898, 6.
[88] Special Correspondent, 'Leeds Musical Festival: The New Works', *The Daily Telegraph,* 5th October 1898, 10.
[89] Special Correspondent, 'Leeds Musical Festival', *The Daily Telegraph,* 6th October 1898, 8.

overlooked in more recent interpretations; it seems that audiences saw the cantata not as an imperial, orientalist project, but instead as a work of Englishness, conservatism and historicism.

The Englishness of English music has been a difficult trait to identify, if it exists at all. It is clear that these composers sought its creation and preservation, however, and it manifested itself in more ways than have been addressed here. Elgar declared in his lectures that he and his contemporaries 'had inherited an art which has had no hold on the affections of our own people, and is held in no respect abroad'.[90] By 1910, however, Conservative Party politician William Johnson Galloway, who had ceased campaigning for political conservatism and was instead writing in endorsement of national music, was able to proclaim that 'the mass of the public no longer looks on native musicians with suspicion'.[91] From the nineteenth century to the present day, perceptions of the Englishness, or lack thereof, in English art has been tethered to the politics of individuals and of the wider culture; it was a conservative attitude that sparked the creation of much of the music associated with English identity, and the changing direction of political winds has shaped discourses surrounding them since their inception. As Jeremy Crump has noted, while perceptions of the Englishness of composers like Elgar has, in various ways, been interrogated and supplanted by the supposed authenticity of music that is expanded from fragments of folk music, 'Elgar's role as a composer of ceremonial music remained unchallenged'.[92] It is perhaps in their ceremonial and monarchist music that musically conservative composers have been most explicitly political, as well as most actively conservative and nationalistic.

[90] Elgar, *A Future for English Music*, 35.
[91] W. J. Galloway, *Musical England* (New York: The John Lane Co., 1910), 7.
[92] Crump, 'The Identity of English Music', 204.

CHAPTER X

The 'Invented Tradition' of Royal Ceremonial Music: The Conservatising Process and Monarchism

English identity, for conservatives, is rooted not in the eternal characteristics of a people, but in their culture and institutions. The monarchy is ultimate among these institutions, and its celebration in music can be seen as a representation of core conservative ideals. In this era, the works composed for royal ceremonies were also almost always conservative in style and language. While belief in monarchical ideals is not necessarily a requisite for conservatives more broadly, it is an integral part of the spirit of English conservative thought;[1] Edmund Burke was an early expositor of an explicitly conservative monarchism:

> No experience has taught us, that in any other course or method than that of an *hereditary crown*, our liberties can be regularly perpetuated and preserved sacred as our *hereditary right*… The people of England will not ape the fashions they have never tried; nor go back to those which they have found mischievous on trial. They look upon the legal hereditary succession of their crown as among their rights, not as among their wrongs; as a benefit, not as a grievance; as a security for their liberty, not as a badge of servitude. They look on the frame of their commonwealth, *such as it stands*, to be of inestimable value; and they conceive the undisturbed succession of the crown to be a pledge of the stability and perpetuity of all the other members of our constitution.[2]

For Burke, it is the hereditary nature of the crown that is its strength; it is representative of the inherited aspects of culture and law:

> Have these gentlemen never heard, in the whole circle of the worlds of theory and practice, of any thing between the despotism of the monarch and the despotism of the multitude? Have they never heard of a monarchy directed by laws, controlled and balanced by the great hereditary wealth and hereditary dignity of a nation; and both again controlled by a judicious check from the reason and feeling of the people at large acting by a suitable and permanent organ?[3]

Similarly, de Maistre argued that monarchy was the most legitimate form of government because it is intuitive and natural: 'One can say in general that all men are born for monarchy… Monarchical government is so natural that, without realizing it, men identify it

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[1] Whigs and early liberals were likewise monarchists of a sort, of course, but as Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn argues, their monarchism came from a different underlying philosophical understanding of the proper order of society. For them, the monarch was *primus inter pares*, and as such their vision of monarchy does not share the underlying acceptance of inequality and hereditary right advocated by Burke. Please see:
Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, *Leftism: from de Sade and Marx to Hitler and Marcuse* (New York: Arlington House, 1974), 184-185.

[2] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London: Penguin, 2004), 109-111.

[3] Ibid., 227.

with sovereignty; they seem to be tacitly agreed that there is no true *sovereign* wherever there is no king'.[4] Anthony Ludovici also contended that aristocracy, conservatism and monarchism were 'naturally united' because 'esoteric Conservatism is the preservation of the national identity throughout the processes of change'.[5]

Philip Gibbs, in documenting and commenting on reactions to the Wallis Simpson crisis, believed that the 'craftsmen, mechanics and labourers' of England were incapable of escaping from 'the feudal ideas of their forefathers, nor from the mystical idea of kingship in the old tradition'.[6] Gibbs was fascinated by the spectacle of coronation, jubilee and other royal ceremony. He articulated a modern, yet Burkean conceptualisation of ceremonial traditions which he believed was intuitively shared by the conservative multitude:

> What did it mean, that pageant and ritual we had come to see? Had it any meaning more than a pantomime in a modern world? Was it more than a masquerade of olden times? Yes, more than that. All English history was in it – something of the spirit and faith of a people who from this rain-soaked island went out in ships across the seas, and built new nations, carrying with them their speech, their ideas of liberty, their traditional character. That day from those new nations of the Commonwealth thousands of guests had come to do homage to the King who was theirs as well as ours. The Past called to the Present with a message – if one could hear it – for the unknown future.[7]

Scruton, more recently, has echoed this vision. Had Burke lived to see the effects of universal suffrage, he would no doubt have agreed with Scruton's emphasis on the merits of the anti-democratic nature of monarchy:

> Monarchs are, in a very real sense, the voice of history, and the very accidental way in which they gain office emphasizes the grounds of their legitimacy, in the history of a people, a place and a culture. This is not to say that monarchs cannot be mad, irrational, self-interested or unwise. It is to say, rather, that they owe their authority and their influence precisely to the fact that they speak for something *other* than the present desires of present voters, something vital to the continuity and community which the act of voting assumes.[8]

The important emphasis for Scruton is the continuity with history that a celebration of monarchism provides. For this reason, the composition of royal ceremonial music, which

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[4] Joseph de Maistre, *Against Rousseau: "On the State of Nature" and "On the Sovereignty of the People"* (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 119.
[5] Anthony M. Ludovici, *A Defence of Conservatism: A Further Text-Book for Tories* (London: Faber & Gwyer, 1927), 21.
[6] Philip Gibbs, *Ordeal in England: England Speaks Again* (London, William Heinemann, 1937), 102.
[7] Ibid., 397.
[8] Roger Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism* (Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan, 2001), 49.

German, Stanford, and Elgar took great part in, seems incongruous with historical conservatism for any follower of the Hobsbawmian theories of the invention of tradition.[9] David Cannadine argues that Elgar's monarchist works were an 'invented tradition' in this manner, but this is, on further philosophical and historical inspection, only partly true.[10]

Eric Hobsbawm posited that there have been three categories of tradition, which intersect with each other:

> a) Those establishing or symbolizing social cohesion or the membership of groups, real or artificial communities, b) those establishing or legitimizing institutions, status or relations of authority, and c) those whose main purpose was socialization, the inculcation of beliefs, value systems and conventions of behaviour.[11]

Monarchist or royal ceremonial music is a tradition that arguably achieves all three of these aims, although the extent to which this is its purpose is debateable. Cannadine contends that Elgar's works were the first in this invented tradition that were artistically important:

> It was Elgar whose compositions raised ceremonial music from mere trivial ephemera to works of art in their own right… Such works, which reflected Elgar's genuine love of colour, pageantry, precision and splendour, provided the ideal martial, musical background to the great royal ceremonies… even though the real tenderness of his music was often forgotten in the expansive brashness of the words fitted to his tunes, his marches and melodies nevertheless established themselves as the indispensable accompaniment of all great royal occasions – and have since so remained.[12]

Of course, this does not offer a complete picture of the tradition of royal ceremony or English musical history. Thomas Arne's 'Rule, Britannia!',[13] for example, has been a part of such ceremonies (and was supposedly said by Wagner to 'represent the character of the English nation'),[14] and Handel's ever-popular 'Zadok the Priest' has been played at every coronation of an English monarch since George II.[15] Indeed, the earliest extant record of a coronation

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[9] Eric Hobsbawm, 'Introduction: Inventing Traditions' in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 2.
[10] David Cannadine, 'The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the 'Invention of Tradition', c. 1820-1977', in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 101-164 (136-7).
[11] Hobsbawm, 'The Invention of Tradition', 9.
[12] Cannadine, 'The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual', 136-7.
[13] Matthias Range, *Music and Ceremonial at British Coronations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 204.
[14] Charles Villiers Stanford, 'Some Thoughts concerning Folk-Song and Nationality', *The Musical Quarterly*, 1/2 (1915), 232-245 (241).
[15] Range, *Music and Ceremonial at British Coronations*, 22.

service in England, that of King Edgar the Peaceful, who was coronated in 973,[16] shows that *Unxerunt Salomonem* was sung – the words of which are taken from the same biblical passage as Handel's 'Zadok the Priest'.[17] Patriotic songs more broadly were also not invented by Elgar; Scruton gives the example of Purcell's setting of John Dryden's poem 'Fairest Isle' as an early example of a patriotic song in the English language.[18] Elgar's functional orchestral music for ceremonial occasions might be seen as an extension of these traditions, merged with some of the continental musical developments of the nineteenth century.

The tradition of composition of new music for royal ceremonial events was neither new nor revived in Elgar's *Imperial March*, as is Cannadine's suggestion.[19] Thomas Attwood, for example, composed new music to be performed at each of the three coronations that were planned during his lifetime – those of King George IV, King William IV, and Queen Victoria – although he died before the last coronation anthem was completed.[20] Victoria's coronation was, of course, the last for over sixty years. As such, many of the traditions that had survived the cultural changes up to that time in British history did not survive her reign, but many of the musical traditions did; if anything, a comparison of the music performed at the coronations of Victoria and of Edward VII shows that the musical tradition was expanded, rather than invented.[21] When Elgar received the sobriquet of 'musical Kipling' after writing the 1897 *Imperial March* and especially the 1902 *Coronation Ode*, he

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[16] Ian Bradley, *God Save the Queen: The Spiritual Heart of the Monarchy* (London: Continuum, 2012), 97.
[17] Specifically, this is I Kings 1:38-40, in which Zadok anoints King Solomon. Ian Bradley claims that the words were chanted in one form or another at every coronation since King Edgar, but Matthias Range suggests that there may have been a gap. Either way, the practice is very old and predates Handel by at least seven hundred years. Please see:
Bradley, *God Save the Queen*, 1.
Range, *Music and Ceremonial at British Coronations*, 22.
[18] Roger Scruton, *Understanding Music: Philosophy and Interpretation* (London: Continuum, 2009), 111.
[19] Cannadine, 'The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual', 136.
[20] Henry Davey, *History of English Music* (London: J. Curwen & Sons, 1895), 435.
[21] Much more music was played at the coronation of Edward VII, with many more works having been composed or arranged specifically for the latter coronation. Please see:
David Wright, 'Sir Frederick Bridge and the Musical Furtherance of the 1902 Imperial Project' in Rachel Cowgill and Julian Rushton (eds.), *Europe, Empire and Spectacle in Nineteenth Century British Music* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 115-130 (129).

was not inventing a tradition, but continuing a custom that had only been quieted by the long life and success of the erstwhile monarch.[22] Sir Frederick Bridge, who selected the music for the 1902 coronation, complained about the problem of rediscovering the traditions of coronation music:

> It was no small embarrassment that there had been no Coronation for upwards of sixty years, and it was impossible to find anyone who had attended the Coronation of Queen Victoria who was competent to give useful information concerning the music employed on that occasion. Curiously enough there were two members of the choir who had actually sung at the Coronation of Queen Victoria, and one of them also had sung at the Coronation of William IV., but they were very young choristers then, and could really tell me nothing of value.[23]

A complete analysis of the history of ceremonial music in England is not possible here, but it is clear that conservative historians would find disagreement with Cannadine's assertions that these musical traditions were not as old as is sometimes assumed.

It is possible to offer an alternative theory: that the monarchist and imperialist music of Elgar and German gained popularity, and therefore propagated the continuation of their composition, for similar reasons to the patriotic songs of the mid-eighteenth century. Scruton argues that it was political and philosophical changes in wider culture that originally facilitated the emergence of widespread popular monarchist songs:

> The first genuinely popular example of such an anthem in modern times — the English National Anthem, to the words 'God Save the King' — began life as one among many popular responses to the 'knavish tricks' of the Jacobites, and acquired its status as a ceremonial anthem only by dint of customary usage. Meanwhile, with the emergence of national loyalties under the impact of Enlightenment conceptions of the state, the need was felt elsewhere for some similar communal song, whereby the populace could rehearse its obedience and its collective will to endure.[24]

It is clear, when framed in this manner, that there is an element of an early conservatism to the popularisation of these eighteenth-century patriotic songs; that they are a response to challenges to an existing order in a changing world in which the monarch is symbolic of both hierarchy and the bonds between inhabitants of a shared place. In Scruton's words, there is 'a

[22] Meirion Hughes and Robert Stradling, *The English Musical Renaissance 1840-1940: Constructing a National Music* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 65.
[23] Sir Frederick Bridge, *A Westminster Pilgrim: Being a Record of Service in Church, Cathedral and Abbey, College, University and Concert-Room, with a Few Notes on Sport* (London: Novello, 1919), 180.
[24] Scruton, *Understanding Music*, 111.

sense of the monarch as a symbol of nationhood, as an incarnation of the historical entity of which the English are a part'.[25] It is possible that some of the same themes inspired a rekindling of the embers of patriotic music at the end of the nineteenth century. While, as Jeffrey Richards has noted, Arthur 'Sullivan was a conservative (with a small c), a monarchist and a patriot at a time when patriotism also embraced Empire',[26] the cynicism of hierarchy that permeated many of his collaborator's libretti might have provided one inspiration for a reactionary monarchist musical movement.[27] However, Scruton suggests that their efforts had, and were intended to have, exactly the opposite effect: 'Gilbert and Sullivan exemplify a general feature of the *fin-de-siecle* culture of England: that it mocked what was serious, and also affirmed it as serious'.[28] It is more likely, however, that the Diamond Jubilee provided a timely reminder – in the view of contemporary conservatives – of the merits of English identity, monarchism, and empire at a time when dissidents and anticonservatives sought to undermine them through both culture and politics.[29]

To suggest, then, that Elgar 'created the British ceremonial idiom in music' is to exaggerate.[30] Scruton argues that royal ceremonies were chosen by authors like Cannadine in order to denounce wider and more important traditions:

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[25] Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism*, 29.
[26] Jeffrey Richards, *Imperialism and Music: Britain 1876-1953* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 21.
[27] This is not to say that W. S. Gilbert did not have a sophisticated understanding of politics; Hearnshaw also used an amusing quote from *Iolanthe* to demonstrate what was later theorised by Thomas Sowell in *A Conflict of Visions*, that: 'I often think it's comical, How nature always does contrive, That every boy and every gal, That's born into this world alive, Is either a little liberal, Or else a little conserva-tive'. Please see:
F. J. C. Hearnshaw, *Conservatism in England: An Analytical, Historical, and Political Survey* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1933), 10-14.
[28] Roger Scruton, *England: An Elegy* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2000), 225.
[29] The Home Rule question constantly lingered in the political air of the world from the late Victorian era until shortly after the First World War, but the rise of socialism more broadly also advanced republican causes at home and abroad during this time. Andrzej Olechnowicz suggests that was primarily caused by Victoria's retreat from public life after the death of her husband. Please see:
Andrzej Olechnowicz, *The Monarchy and the British Nation, 1780 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 190.
[30] Richards, *Imperialism and Music*, 63.

> Modern liberals tend to scoff at the idea of tradition. All traditions, they tell us, are 'invented', implying that they can therefore be undone. This looks plausible only if you take the trivial examples: Scottish country dancing, Highland dress, the Coronation ceremony, Christmas cards, and whatever else comes with a 'heritage' label.[31]

The sort of traditionalism which may be preserved on a commemorative plate or printed on a biscuit tin is not what is truly valued by traditionalists; they are merely the commodification of a much more profound attachment to a place and a set of values. Scruton suggests that traditions are easier to defend when they are not mere ceremony:

> A real tradition is not an invention; it is the unintended *by-product* of invention, which also makes invention possible. Our musical tradition is one astounding example of this. No single person created it. Each contributor built on previous achievements, discovering problems and solving them through the steady expansion of the common syntax. Notation developed side by side with harmony and counterpoint. No single person could ever have discovered the knowledge of the human ear and the human heart which these practices contain, any more than a single person could discover a language. The example shows what a tradition really is: not a custom or a ritual but a form of social knowledge.[32]

For the same reasons Scruton outlines, the musical elements of royal ceremonies are not an invented tradition. They have evolved alongside musical developments across the ages since at least the time of Edgar the Peaceful; whatever one thinks of his arguments in defence of tradition, they apply in the same way to royal ceremonial music. It is interesting, when viewed in this context, to recognise that the composers of some of the most important pieces of music in this body of work were musical and philosophical conservatives. Anticonservative composers did write ceremonial music, however; while Vaughan Williams did later offer his own setting of the *Te Deum* for ceremonial purposes, Range argues that this was a result of 'the reality of an impending war', rather than a projection of the composer's political beliefs.[33] By contrast, Elgar's ceremonial music was, in the view of Grimley and Rushton, a manifestation of his 'long-held Conservative monarchist views'.[34]

A look at the selection of music performed at the coronations of 1902 and 1911, helpfully appended to Range's *Music and Ceremonial at British Coronations*, shows that

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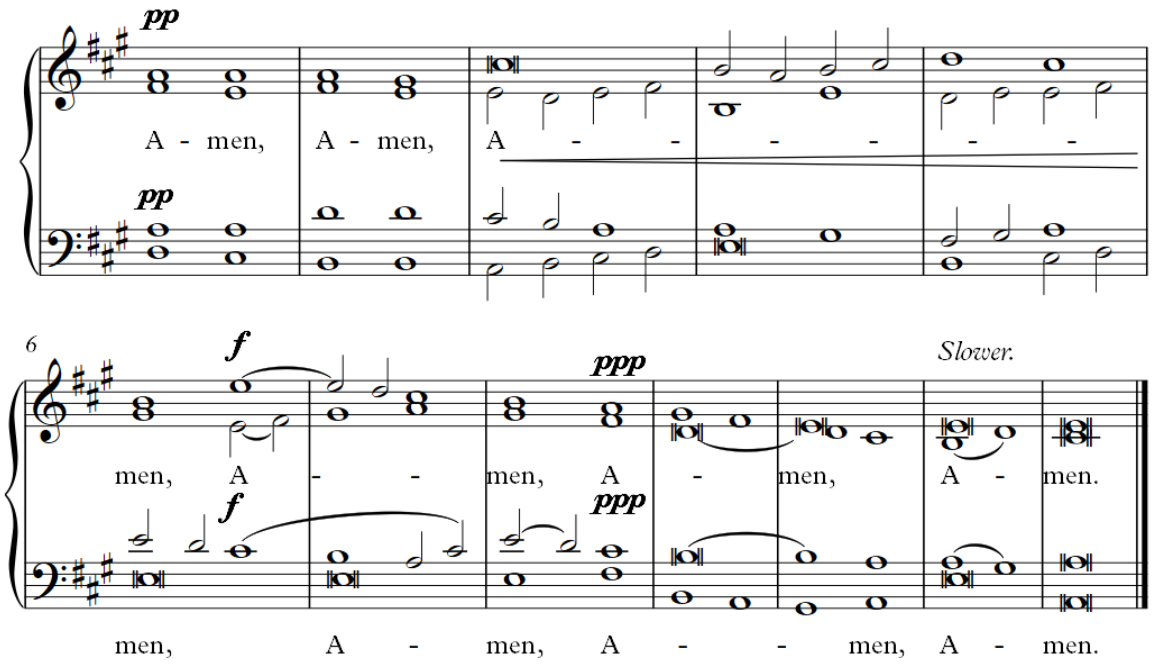
[31] Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism*, 31.
[32] Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism*, 31.
[33] Ibid., 246.
[34] Daniel M. Grimley and Julian Rushton, 'Introduction' in Daniel M. Grimley and Julian Rushton (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Elgar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1-14 (12).

other than Elgar, the works of a large variety of composers were featured prominently.[35] One particularly well represented composer is Sir John Stainer, who is described by his biographer Jeremy Dibble as 'distinctively 'English'' in style and both 'conservative and liberal' in his politics.[36] Stainer's *Gloria* and *Sanctus*, orchestrated by the organist at St. Paul's Cathedral, Sir George Clement Martin, were played at the 1902 coronation, alongside his 'Sevenfold Amen' (originally written for *A Choir-Book of the Office of Holy Communion*),[37] which was also performed at the coronation of King George V and Queen Mary in 1911.[38]



Ex. 10.2., 'Sevenfold Amen' from John Stainer's accompaniment to *The Consecration*, (1874), from *A Choir-Book of the Office of Holy Communion*, 21.

Dibble describes Stainer's music as possessing the qualities of a kind of 'expedient' conservatism, but one that also contained 'elements of the 'sublime''.[39] Stainer's works, in a similar way to Elgar's, seem to have been treated as both musically conservative and modern

[35] The list is a very helpful overview, but is actually incomplete. Range omits German's *Coronation March and Hymn*, for example. The significance of this work was discussed in the chapter on German's music. Please see: Range, *Music and Ceremonial at British Coronations*, 285-288.
[36] Jeremy Dibble, *John Stainer: A Life in Music* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), 312.
[37] John Stainer, *A Choir-Book of the Office of Holy Communion* (London: Novello, 1874), 21.
[38] Range, *Music and Ceremonial at British Coronations*, 288.
[39] Dibble, *John Stainer*, 53.

in their harmonic style by his contemporaries.[40] Dibble summarises his legacy as one that is perceived in hindsight to be conservative, but reformatory:

> This fascinating chemistry of the traditional and progressive was equally reflected in the fusion of styles which Stainer embraced. He was, as a composer of church music, instinctively a Classicist, profoundly influenced by the models of Goss and Attwood, who looked to Mozart as a guiding star. This is evident in the finely honed structures, the regular periodicity of his phraseology (at times a potential weakness, especially in his handling of the fugal process) and the roots of his melodic gift. Yet Stainer was no slave to his Classical heritage, and he unequivocally rejected the regressive views of his mentor Ouseley and the aesthetic *dicta* of Crotch.[41]

Much of this description might equally be applied to another prominently featured composer in the music of the 1902 and 1911 coronations, Charles Villiers Stanford.[42]

At King Edward VII's coronation, Stanford's *Te Deum* was performed during the procession into St. Edward's Chapel, while his *Gloria* was sung during the second part of the Communion Service at the coronation of King George V. Initially, however, there was some confusion surrounding the part that Stanford was to play in the music for the coronation in 1902. This resulted from Stanford's disagreements with the organiser of the music for the coronation,[43] Frederick Bridge, as is recalled in Hubert Parry's diary:

> Some time ago Stanford made up his quarrel with Bridge obviously because he foresaw if he didn't he might get left out of the Coronation Service – and he was naturally rather [sad] when he found he had been left out all the same… Stanford instantly began volubly to explain that he did not wish any music of his to be performed but only that the King should know that he had not refused to write anything for the coronation, but that he considered Bridge (under remonstrance) had offered him as the only thing available, namely a fanfare, was altogether too lean and inadequate.[44]

The king himself was unhappy with this situation, but it was agreed after some deliberation that the *Te Deum* would be filled by Stanford's setting of 1879, to which he added an eight-bar introduction and orchestrated especially for the coronation ceremony.[45]

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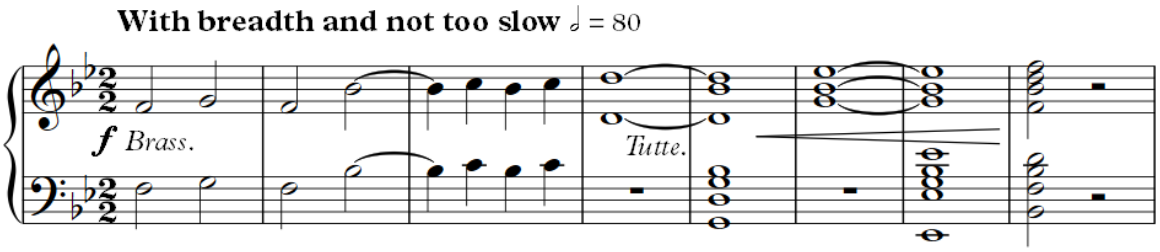
[40] Dibble notes that an 'ultra-conservative critic' from *The Orchestra* having deplored Stainer's style was representative of 'insidious, indeed secular modernisms'. Please see:
Dibble, *John Stainer*, 53.
[41] Dibble, *John Stainer*, 313.
[42] Stanford, as has been discussed, was considerably more conservative in his politics. Stainer was even selected by the Liberal Party to be a candidate for Member of Parliament after his retirement from his professorship in 1899. He did not live to see the following election, however. Please see:
Dibble, *John Stainer*, 298-299.
[43] It is interesting that Bridge mentions nothing of this controversy in his account of the coronation.
[44] Hubert Parry, quoted Jeremy Dibble, *Charles Villiers Stanford: Man and Musician* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 338.
[45] Dibble, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 339.



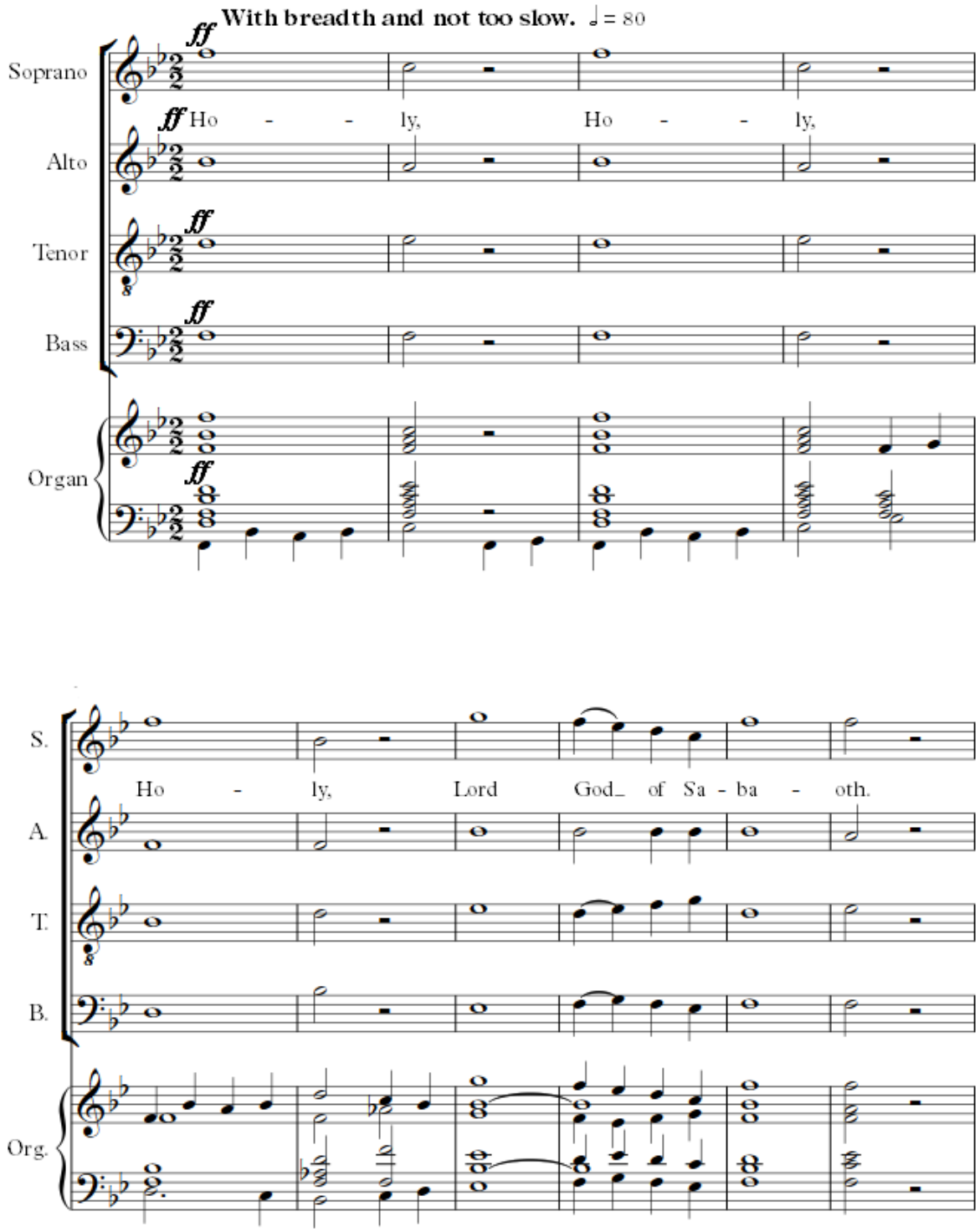
Ex. 10.2., Introduction to 'Te Deum laudamus' from Charles Villiers Stanford's *The Morning and Evening Service in B flat* (1879).

Paul Rodmell describes Stanford's Service in B flat, from which the *Te Deum* for the coronation was taken, as 'his most significant contribution to the Anglican rite', on account of its 'formal innovations'.[46] Rodmell suggests that it is a break from the conservatism of past music for services:

> The Service aspires to a cyclic unity previously unattempted, and achieved this by the application of instrumental forms. Earlier composers had been prevented from this – assuming that they entertained the idea – by the conservatism of the clergy and of congregations, who placed the communication of the words at the pinnacle of their aesthetic; the use of any cyclic form, and the setting of different texts to recapitulated music, had represented a desecration of this ideal. Stanford, it seems, shrugged his shoulders at this attitude and went straight ahead.[47]

These are strong words, intended to evoke the feelings of those who belonged to the previous generations to Stanford, because of the recapitulation of music that was 'a procedure typical in instrumental forms but hitherto unheard of in the Anglican rite'.[48] It is interesting that Rodmell implies that the work is unconservative in this way; Dibble argues that the work was a development that came from a confluence of Wagner and the existing traditions of Anglican service, writing that 'Stanford was attempting to create, within the Anglican environment, a form of ecclesiastical *Gesamtkunstwerk* in which the elements of time, architectural space, liturgy, music, and words coalesced to form an artistic entity greater than the sum of its parts'.[49] As Rodmell acknowledges, 'the Service in B flat is not, of course, all revolution', and that it is a 'finely judged use of convention and innovation'.[50]

[46] Paul Rodmell, *Charles Villiers Stanford* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 68-9.
[47] Rodmell, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 69.
[48] Rodmell, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 69.
[49] Dibble, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 103.
[50] Rodmell, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 70.



Ex. 10.3., Theme from 'Te Deum laudamus' from Charles Villiers Stanford's *The Morning and Evening Service in B flat* (1879).

It is possible that the Service is not revolutionary at all, but rather a stepwise evolution on previous forms.[51] The organ part, for example, is integral to the musical structure in a way that in earlier settings it was not; Dibble suggests that the 'quasi-orchestral character' of the organ accompaniment was a result of the technology available to Stanford, as the work 'exploited the resources of the more romantic instrument at Trinity'.[52] It is difficult to describe this as a revolutionary development; as Rodmell concedes, the organ's 'subservient role had been eroded by S. S. Wesley and Walmisley' already.[53] Nicholas Temperley argues that its departure from the settings of the past is not in its musical structure, but in its feeling; on listening to the Service, he suggested that:

> The result, as most often with Stanford, is a thoroughly satisfying artistic experience, but one that is perhaps lacking in deeply felt religious impulse. Never does he, like Wesley, cast aside all principles of musical structure to respond directly to the imperative demands of the text. And this, in religious music, makes him the lesser man of the two.[54]

By 1935, the changes Stanford had made seemed unremarkable to retrospective observers, perhaps due to the genuinely revolutionary musical movements that had taken place in the intervening years. Sir Edward Bairstow was able to suggest that Stanford was 'soaked in our own traditions and knew the work of his predecessors. Therefore his Services in B flat, A, G and C are far and away the most perfect and satisfying settings since Tudor times'.[55] For Bairstow, they are a conservative evolutionary development, resulting from the fact that Stanford was 'the only composer of front rank to compose Services since Gibbons',[56] and argues that the introduction of a kind of ternary or sonata form into the music was a solution,

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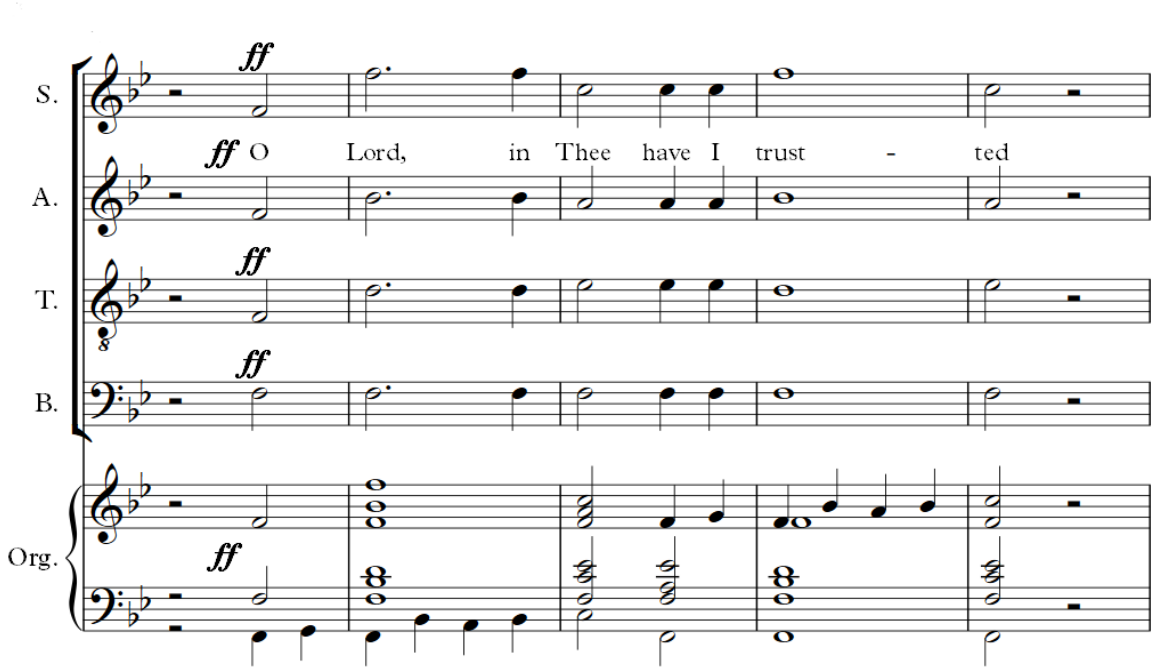
[51] De Maistre believed that revolution in favour of the political 'right' was contrary to their values, even in the face of the results of the French Revolution; his solutions meant that 'the restoration of the monarchy, what they call the counter-revolution, will not be a *contrary revolution*, but the *contrary of revolution*'. He also stressed that 'hereditary succession in a monarchy is something so precious that every other consideration must give way before it'. Please see:
Joseph de Maistre, *Considerations on France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 105.
[52] Dibble, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 103.
[53] Rodmell, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 70.
[54] Nicholas Temperley, *Music in Britain: The Romantic Age, 1800-1914* (London: Athlone Press, 1981), 205.
[55] Sir Edward Bairstow, in Harry Plunket Greene, *Charles Villiers Stanford* (London: Edward Arnold, 1935), 219.
[56] Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625), not the long-limbed primates. Please see:
Bairstow, in Greene, *Charles Villiers Stanford* (London: Edward Arnold, 1935), 219.

rather than a revolution: 'The Service in B flat was the first to solve the question of musical form as applied to the canticles'.[57] Perhaps this is another manifestation of a whiggish interpretation of music history, but it remains the fact that to Bairstow, the development in the use of the organ and changes to musical form seemed to be obvious and a natural progression. Thomas Dunhill, speaking in retrospect on Stanford's life and works in 1927, believed that 'no religious music is better loved in these Isles than the early "Stanford in Bb" which is known in all "Quires and places where they sing" and is never absent from any Anglican Cathedral service-list for many days at a stretch'.[58] Writing on this kind of praise of the *Service in B Flat*, Rodmell suggests that it is ironic that:

> Stanford is praised for fully imposing the coherence of formal thematic and recapitulatory structures on an Anglican ethos still founded on pre-Baroque episodic form, but that the vehicle by which he achieved this was a German classical model, diluting rather than concentrating the distinctiveness of British music.[59]



Ex. 10.4., Recapitulation of the theme at the conclusion of 'Te Deum laudamus' from Charles Villiers Stanford's *The Morning and Evening Service in B flat* (1879).

[57] Bairstow, in Greene, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 220.
[58] Thomas F. Dunhill, 'Charles Villiers Stanford: Some Aspects of His Work and Influence' *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 53rd Sess. (1926 - 1927), 41-65 (52).
[59] Rodmell, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 415.

In this sense Stanford's *inventions* are not unlike Elgar's, in that they are a nexus of English heritage, Wagnerism, and other continental musical developments. The tradition of writing music for services has a great deal of overlap with the royal ceremonial tradition, not only in that some of the same music is used for both purposes. Composers for both practices necessarily accept a fundamentally conservative vision of the purpose of the performance of their music, that it is a sacred symbol of continuity with the past; the music might have developed in line with technological and musical discoveries, but the same words are sung with the same substance and precepts that have been concomitant with the development of liturgical traditions.

It is clear that Stanford was particularly keen to have his music represented in the coronation ceremony. Parry continued in his aforementioned diary entry on the episode that 'it was perfectly transparent that his eagerness to get into the Coronation Service was so great that he would stop at nothing to get in'.[60] While the placement of his *Te Deum* in the programme of music for the coronation was at the eleventh hour, it might have represented for listeners the convergence of tradition, through its association with Anglicanism and the *Te Deum* performances at previous coronations, but also of innovation, of the spirit of both the Victorian era and the new century.[61] What is most interesting, however, is how little it was commented on at all; the works of music chosen to represent both Stanford and Stainer seemed like such obvious choices that *The Musical Times* was able to declare, after lengthy descriptions of the other works to be performed at the coronation, that:

[60] Parry, quoted in Rodmell, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 221.
[61] It seems quite strange in hindsight, given its popularity, that Stanford's Te Deum was overlooked in the first place; the original choice for the setting was composed by (now largely forgotten) Victorian composer and nephew of Sir George Smart, Henry Smart. The initial (incomplete) programme for the coronation was published in *The Times*. Please see:
The Times, 'The New Coronation Service', *The Times*, 5th May 1902, 5.

> The Te Deum will be the well-known setting in the key of B flat by Professor Villiers Stanford, who has recently scored it for full orchestra… The Sanctus and Gloria from the Service in A and the Sevenfold Amen, by the late Sir John Stainer, are so familiar as not to call for special comment, except that these settings will not be unworthy of the great occasion.[62]

In the selections made for this coronation, it is possible to observe the *process* by which music becomes conservative. The works of both Stanford and Stainer began their journeys as, in relative terms, unprecedented developments in their disciplines; indeed, Dibble suggests that the musical progress made by the introduction of cyclic forms in Stanford's Service 'cannot be overemphasized' and that the Wagnerian influences of the work were an 'inspiration quite new to the context of service writing'.[63] The works were quickly canonised, however, and regularly performed.[64] They took on new meaning and changed their disciplines through an addition to tradition, in the manner that conservatives of similar disposition to Harold MacMillan took to be the natural order of the development of culture and society.[65] This process had already completed its progress by the turn of the century, so much so that their place in what could be argued to be the most important musical event of the first decade of the twentieth century – it would likely have been regarded in this way by contemporary conservatives – was deemed unremarkable, as though their inclusion was entirely predestined.[66]

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[62] The Musical Times, 'Notes on the Coronation Music', *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, 43/712 (1902), 387-388 (387-388).
[63] Dibble, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, 103-104.
[64] Ibid., 104.
[65] Later to become leader of the Conservative Party and Prime Minister, MacMillan wrote in his seminal thesis of conservatism *The Middle Way* that culture should be regarded 'as an inheritance of the past and a precursor of the future; as a changing and developing structure which must of necessity be modified and adapted to new circumstances'. Please see:
Harold MacMillan, *The Middle Way: A Study of the Problem of Economic and Social Progress in a Free and Democratic Society* (London: Random House, 1938), 109.
[66] Jonathan White suggests, perhaps unduly, that Stanford was originally left out of the 1902 coronation ceremony because his music had already 'begun the gradual slip into musical oblivion'. White's view that Stanford's music at this time was characterised by an 'increasingly outdated compositional view', an opinion not unique to the author, is surely one of the most obvious manifestations of a whiggish interpretation of musical history. Please see:
Jonathan White, 'In Matters of Art Friendship Should Not Count': Stanford and Howells' in Philip A. Cooke and David Moore (eds.), *The Music of Herbert Howells* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2013), 10-21 (13).

Not all music composed for the coronation was written by conservatives, musical or otherwise, of course.[67] But it remains that the coronation was a legitimising vehicle for musicians and a recognition of their place in the canon.[68] It also served as a marker of the canonising process of musical conservatism; when asked to select the music for the coronation, Bridge, who makes no mention of the trouble with Stanford, was instructed to find music that was conservative, in its commonly used musical sense:

> The Bishop of Winchester was good enough to inform me upon certain points which I should bear in mind when selecting the music. One was brevity. Further, no anthem was to be sung except "when something was going on," so as to avoid prolonging the service. And the Te Deum, Creed, &c., were to be simple, short, and dignified.[69]

While traditions were greatly expanded upon for the twentieth century coronations, they were not 'invented', at least not in the way that is implied by Hobsbawmian theorists. The strength of the royal ceremonial traditions, for all their faults, lies in their genuine derivation from the ceremonies of the past. Despite even Scruton's dismissal of them,[70] the music of royal ceremonies is a real tradition that has adapted with time, acknowledging both the needs of the modern world and a continuity with the heritage bequeathed unto musicians from the

[67] It is interesting that, presented with the problem of fitting the proclamations of 'Vivat Rex Edwardus' and 'Vivat Regina Alexandra' into the service, Parry used his experience with folk music to merge the 'Vivats' with his anthem *I was Glad*; Bridge writes that 'Sir Hubert Parry most cleverly fitted in the "Vivats" to a sort of folk-song with an orchestral symphony between the first and second parts of the anthem, before the verse beginning "O pray for the peace of Jerusalem." It was a real stroke of genius, though I may perhaps claim a little credit for having suggested this arrangement'. Please see:
Bridge, A Westminster Pilgrim, 183.

[68] The conservatising process took a quite different form for other musicians of the modernist era. This process, in some ways, might be regarded as an artefact of Whig history; as music 'progresses', so it is assumed, musicians who once seemed radical appear to be conservative or old-fashioned. This is why it is necessary to consider the intent, or the underlying philosophy of composers, otherwise judgement become clouded by historical revisionism and our own perspective from the present day. This is one of the primary criticisms made against what has been described here as the Whig interpretation of music history. R. D. Welch observed this phenomenon and believed it to be entirely natural and inevitable: 'And then, after a few short years, Debussy becomes our familiar, fireside friend. He appears without apology on conservative concert programmes; his name becomes a symbol for the delicate and imaginative and suggestive in all modern art… But while this process has been going on, we have been confronted by new and more merciless modernists'. This process, however, is not universal in the way that some adherents of Whig history have claimed. It is possible that Stanford and Debussy both became 'conservatised' despite the elements of so-called progressivism in their music because of shared underlying values, including the pursuit of beauty. Please see:
R. D. Welch, 'The Assault on Modernism in Music', *The Musical Quarterly*, 7/3 (1921), 408-417 (408).

[69] Frederick Bridge, *A Westminster Pilgrim*, 179.

[70] Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism*, 31.

composers of past generations.[71] In this sense, coronation ceremonial music is the embodiment of the Burkean ideals that have been the central pillar of conservative thought. It is, for this reason, an ideal artistic outlet for both musical and political conservatives as an expression of their identity.[72]

[71] Heinrich Schenker believed for this reason that composers from nations which did not have a long cultural history were incapable of producing truly great art, declaring that 'America's vast population has never had a monarchy to consolidate her as a nation proper. Groping through the vale of ignorance, driven on by greed, propelled forward by the profit-motive as if by a million hurtling Niagara Falls, she will never attain the intellectual and moral ascendancy needed to contribute to the higher goals of mankind'. Please see:
Heinrich Schenker, *Der Tonwille: Pamphlets in Witness of the Immutable Laws of Music, Offered to a New Generation of Youth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 15.

[72] Openly and outwardly conservative historian David Starkey, in a book cowritten with Katie Greening, *Music and Monarchy*, emphasises the role Queen Victoria and Prince Albert played in the strengthening of the English musical establishment during their reign. It is possible that the admiration showed by conservative musicians for royalty was, in part, because of the money, time and institutional power invested in music by the ruling monarch and her family. Starkey, as so many conservative writers do, concludes his work with a lament for what he believes has been lost in the last century: 'The idea, alive and well in 1953, that monarchy has a sacred role and power, is gone – I think beyond repair. Now the sacred monarchy survives only in its music. But there, at least, it remains eternally, magnificently alive'. Please see:
David Starkey and Katie Greening, *Music and Monarchy: A History of Britain in Four Movements* (Oxford: BBC Books, 2013), 299-352.

CHAPTER XI

Conclusion: Beautiful Losers

In English music during the long nineteenth century, at least, there existed a link between philosophical and musical conservatism which manifested itself in the musical output of conservative composers. In their rejection of the English folk music collecting and repurposing movement, their pursuit of English identity, and celebration of monarchism, musical conservatives in this era created art that rejected the anticonservative and modernist developments of the time in which they lived. Herbert Antcliffe declared in 1920 that 'the political history of England, from the earliest days down to the present time, has had a close affinity with its music'.[1] The reverse seems also to be true; music is often informed by political debates and events of the time in which it is composed and musicians often have significant philosophical disputes which manifest themselves in musical differences. This is not a new observation. Cecil Gray argued in 1936 that there existed a powerful analogy 'between atonalism in music and communism in the political world', for example.[2] Conservatism, however, is very often conspicuous by its absence in discussions of a relationship between music and philosophy or politics. What is newly presented herein is that there is a clear link between conservatism and its musical counterpart and that the first principles, so called, of adherents of musical conservatism and philosophical conservatism are often the same. Musical conservatives in the late nineteenth century were certainly deeply involved in both the politics and musical politics of their time. Significant evidence exists to suggest that these composers believed that their musical and political efforts to enact their conservative vision were a part of a wider effort to resist modernism and modernity wherever it appeared.

[1] Herbert Antcliffe, 'British History and British Music' *The Musical Times*, 61/929 (1920), 474-477.
[2] Cecil Gray, *Predicaments, or Music and the Future: An Essay in Constructive Criticism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), 182.

There are two seemingly competing definitional conceptualisations of musical conservatism which emerge from the implications of this research. The first idea is that musical conservatism constitutes an artistic movement hitherto broadly unrecognised in music categorisation, which splintered from the English musical renaissance as a reaction against musical modernism. The second is that musical conservatism is an attitude to composition which emerges from conservative philosophy, and is applicable across time to many composers in different eras. This might be conceptualised as being *conservatism as music*. Both of these narratives appear to be at least partly true, but the latter is supported by a broader base of evidence. It is possible, given the research presented here, that musical conservatism can only exist in the face of musical modernism; this naturally presents a series of problems as a conclusion, however, as it suggests that everything pre-modernist is not conservative.[3] This is particularly objectionable as there is a criticism that is inherent in the language used to describe the ideas; all of the terms that come from the French Revolution (conservative, reactionary, 'the right'), carry a criticism of the concepts within the words themselves.[4] It is more accurate, on the basis of the ideas explored in the previous chapters, to theorise that musical conservatism is a philosophical view that derives from the kinds of

[3] Indeed, this is a problem with approaches to music history which make assumptions about the nature of 'progress'. Sigrid Wiesmann argues that musical conservatism has not been an attractive subject for scholars as a result of present-day conceptualisations of historical advancements; Wiesmann writes that 'cultural life under a conservative regime like that of Prince Metternich holds few attractions for a generation that takes 'progress' for granted'. Please see:
Sigrid Wiesmann, 'Vienna: Bastion of Conservatism' in Alexander Ringer (ed.), *The Early Romantic Era: Between Revolutions: 1789 and 1848* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), 84-108 (106).

[4] This is why some of the more extreme thinkers, such as Julius Evola, suggest the epithet 'counter-revolutionary', but Kuehnelt-Leddihn recognised that even this had significant negative connotations. Please see:
Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, *Leftism: from de Sade and Marx to Hitler and Marcuse* (New York: Arlington House, 1974), 178.

beliefs advanced by Burke and de Maistre.[5] It is intrinsically linked to philosophical conservatism. While there are a number of ways in which academics, scholars and historians use the word 'conservative' to describe music or musicians, this is the underlying theme; a complete understanding of each of the variations on what is meant by this word require an explanation of philosophical conservatism, as has been outlined here. There is also an extent to which musical conservatism as a hitherto neglected artistic movement, so far as it can be described as one, is confined only to the musicians studied here and some of their contemporaries; perhaps it could only exist as a philosophical reaction to modernism conducted by composers with what are often described as Victorian sensibilities. The philosophical methodologies of conservatism are, however, believed to be superhistorical by its adherents; as such they could not be confined to a few generations of composers with a shared background. The spirit of conservatism is fundamental to so much of music history, beneath the whiggish surface facade often presented, in composers of all political influences from Cherubini to Sibelius.[6] Conservatism, conceptualised in this way, is less an artistic movement and more a philosophy which has underpinned a breadth of music across time, to greater or lesser extents and in relation to the ever-shifting Overton window.

The novelty of the research presented here means that there are numerous ways in which these ideas can be developed. Approaches that incorporate thoughts from various other fields could prove to be beneficial in resolving some of the apparent tensions within musical

[5] This is not to say that one has to read Burke in order to be a conservative. Conservatism as a philosophy appears to come instinctually to some people; there is some debate about this, but political beliefs seem to derive from genetic personality traits. This is only to say that Burke and de Maistre articulated the conservative position clearly at an early date, although Aristotle and Hobbes, among others, offered a number of similar insights that had a great influence on what later became conservative philosophy. Please see, for example: Alan S. Gerber, Gregory A. Huber, David Doherty, and Conor M. Dowling, 'The Big Five Personality Traits in the Political Arena, *Annual Review of Political Science*, 14/1 (2011), 265-287 (271-277).

[6] Sibelius seems to have, like Elgar, held conflicted ideological sympathies: Tomi Mäkelä argues that 'Sibelius did not hold to the modernist attitude. Nor was he an anti-modernist. Both in private and professional life he was, rather, a conservative with a utopian, sometimes even revolutionary imagination'. Please see: Tomi Mäkelä, 'The Wings of a Butterfly: Sibelius and the Problems of Musical Modernity' in Daniel M. Grimley (ed.), *Jean Sibelius and His World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 89-124 (94).

conservatism; social psychology, religious studies, and anthropology, for example, each have methodologies and perspectives that have not been utilised extensively here. A superficial inspection of some of the most pertinent examples of the musical conservatism of Elgar, German, and Stanford has also been offered in the preceding chapters, but an in-depth analysis of their music with the intention of revealing the specificities of their conservative approaches would certainly yield illuminating results. Much discussion has taken place on the subject of what is modernist in Elgar's music, but the opposite approach – an analysis of what is conservative in Stanford or Elgar – would be an original means of unearthing new ways to understand these composers as well as their oppositional contemporaries. By defining elements of their style that could be considered to be conservative not only in their philosophy, but in their practice, an advanced analytical understanding of why conservative musical ideas were sometimes original, but not considered to be innovative – or the specific ways in which their opposition to modernist approaches manifested itself – could be brought to light in an interesting way.

This analysis would not necessarily have to be applied to Elgar, Stanford, and German; so many other composers have been considered to be conservatives both contemporaneously and in other times or places. From Luigi Cherubini, to Johann Nepomuk Hummel, to Samuel Barber,[7] a diversity of composers applied themselves to music in ways similar to those outlined in this thesis, and were sometimes informed by philosophically conservative ideas in the same ways that Stanford was. It would be more straightforward to apply the methods outlined here to other eras in which politics were similarly divisive, however, and when a greater number of people were enfranchised by wider suffrage. Vincent

[7] The 'conservative critic' Henry Pleasants described Samuel Barber as the 'ablest of what might be called the right wing of American composers'. Please see:
Henry Pleasants, quoted in Barbara B. Heyman, *Samuel Barber: The Composer and His Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 196.

D'Indy and his contemporaries on the French 'right', for this reason, would be excellent candidates for a study of this kind, as would the efforts of conservatives like George Dyson during and after the Second World War. Many composers and eras of music could be studied in a novel way using the template offered by the work presented here.

Each of the three key composers of Victorian musical conservatism – German, Stanford, and Elgar – were influenced by the four statements identified earlier, both in their life and their works.[8] Their beliefs in the application of the study of historical precedent, the imperfectible nature of man, hierarchical inequality, and the pursuit of beauty, pervade their works, writings and letters. While this has been made explicit with Stanford, these themes are regularly implicit in the studies of Elgar and German presented in the chapters dedicated to their lives and works. The statements offer the beginnings of a cross-cultural method of studying the extent of the conservatism of the individuals and movements in music history that is applicable across time. In such an analysis, adherence to classical models of tonality and form are no longer necessary prerequisites for musical conservatism; in the present day, for example, a composer such as Sir James MacMillan might fit the requirements for this conceptualisation of musical conservatism,[9] despite his utilisation of postmodern techniques, unusual forms, and modernist tonalities.[10]

Robert C. Ehle, in a rare attempt at a definition of musical conservatism, argued that tonality and conservatism were intrinsically linked, and that if the leading composers of past

[8] Each of these composers, to a greater or lesser extent, were also influenced by liberal thought; each of them held ideas that deviated from a dogmatic and absolute conservative vision. This does not, however, disqualify them as musical or philosophical conservatives; it should be remembered that some of the most influential and widely respected conservative philosophers, including Matthew Arnold and even Edmund Burke, were believed to be liberals of a sort in their lifetimes. Today it can be difficult to distinguish between liberals and self-professed conservatives because many liberal ideas are held almost universally; this is why it has been necessary to attempt to define conservatism using a system of *revealed preferences* or essential principles. On the universality of liberal ideas, please see:
James Burnham, *Suicide of the West: An Essay on the Meaning and Destiny of Liberalism* (New York: John Day, 1964), 41-44.

[9] It would also allow for the term to be applied to Roger Scruton's short career as a composer.

[10] Dominic Peter Wells, *James MacMillan: Retrospective Modernist* (Durham University: Durham Theses, 2012), 34.

generations had utilised modernist techniques and methods, conservatives would feel differently:

> I feel that it is clear that the basis for musical conservatism is to be found in the experiences people have had with traditional music of the highest quality. In other words, people reflect on their experiences with the music of Bach, Beethoven, Ravel, Stravinsky, etc., and they say that it is the pitch organization of the music of these composers that has been most meaningful to them and they are loth to give it up.[11]

Definitions of this kind, however, ignore what Constant Lambert describes as the 'pseudo-political significance' with which each of the artistic movements of the early twentieth century were invested.[12] Musical conservatism, like other approaches to and visions of music, necessarily requires an extramusical explanation. Lambert believed that the formulation of styles and techniques in musical composition has always required a cultural or philosophical basis, declaring that:

> The essential falsity of modern attempts to revive the delicious formality of the Mozartian period of opera lies in the fact that the whole framework of society, whose relation to the individual symbolizes the cadences and codas that gently restrain the flow of Mozart's passionate line, is crumbling away if not already completely desiccated… The people who, in effect, say to the modern composer 'Why don't you stop making those beastly noises and write lovely tunes and pleasant harmonies like those in *Figaro, Tristan* and *Boris*, etc.', may not realize that even were a modern composer sufficiently endowed with invention and technique he is totally lacking in the artistic faith, conscious or unconscious, that these phases of thought provided.[13]

For Lambert, it is difficult for composers to be anything other than conduits for the zeitgeist of their epoch and political and cultural changes have made tonality and the pursuit of beauty almost impossible in the modern world. Some conservatives would certainly find such a conceptualisation of the place of the composer objectionable, but Julius Evola arrives at essentially the same conclusion from a very different place when he argues that a conservative order can no longer exist because the condition of modernity is unprecedented: 'Man, like never before, has lost every possibility of contact with metaphysical reality and with everything that is before and behind him.'.[14] If this is true – many conservatives believe

[11] Robert C. Ehle, 'Conservative Music Theory', *American Music Teacher*, 31/2 (1981), 45-46 (45).
[12] Constant Lambert, *Music Ho! A Study of Music in Decline* (London: Faber and Faber, 1937), 144.
[13] Lambert, *Music Ho! A Study of Music in Decline*, 179-180.
[14] Julius Evola, *Revolt Against the Modern World* (Rochester: Inner Traditions, 1995), 359.

it to be – the Burkean contract between generations may be irreparably torn, and as such conservatism as it has been outlined in the past cannot exist in the present day as a sincere mode of expression.

Ted Honderich notes that 'conservatism has not often tried to sum itself up in an orderly and explicit way'.[15] This applies doubly to its musical counterpart. The four statements that have been presented in previous chapters offer the beginnings of an understanding of the philosophy of musical conservatism. The significance afforded by conservatives to historical precedent, often in the place of abstract rationality, is the underlying philosophical component of the recapitulation of stylistic elements of the past which constitute what is usually meant in the casual use of the term 'musically conservative'. Theirs is an empiricism that seeks to understand the past for its own sake, but also to reveal and rediscover the eternal truths that they believe it can teach. It is, as such, quite different to a whiggish understanding, which presents the past as a series of events that led to the enlightened progress of the present day.[16] This, in turn, is informed by a belief in human nature as flawed, imperfectible, and limited in its potential. By accepting this belief, conservatives view the collective wisdom of the great composers of the past as, in effect, something of a *miracle*, and a level of achievement that would be impossible through the rational capability of one individual. This is the underlying assumption of Scruton's description of the musical canon outlined in the previous chapter.[17]

Music itself is, for Scruton, one of the best examples of a conservative vision of the proper and natural development of a tradition. It requires a collective effort that includes the people of the past and future; German, Stanford and Elgar also seemed each to have at least some implicit sense of this. Conservatives, in their acceptance of inequality, also see in music

[15] Ted Honderich, *Conservatism: Burke, Nozick, Bush, Blair?* (London: Pluto Press, 2005), 3.
[16] Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (New York, W.W. Norton, 1965), 101.
[17] Roger Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism* (Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan, 2001), 31.

a series of hierarchies that they believe to be the proper order of its structure. This is what frustrated Edward German in the 'light, bad music' of his day,[18] what motivated Stanford to promote art music as a civilising force,[19] and Elgar to disdain the 'People's Concerts', which he described as 'a collection of frivolous and squalid music which we ourselves would avoid like a plague'.[20] This rejection of cultural relativism determines the final tenet of musical conservatism: a pursuit of the beautiful in music. Each of the composers studied here sought to achieve beautiful music to a greater or lesser extent. An understanding of Victorian aesthetics is of primary importance to a complete apprehension of their works, as well as their legacy; the pursuit of beauty in music did not survive them in many canonical composers.[21] It is perhaps for these reasons that, as Colin Eatock has noted, what is known as the 'English Musical Renaissance' has been dismissed by some as 'meagre, reactionary and undistinguished'.[22]

It is widely perceived that one of the key objectives of cultural reactionaries is, metaphorically, to stop the clock or to turn back time.[23] Simultaneously, however, the most successful arguments for the things they wish to preserve or revive derive from an appeal to historical precedent. This becomes paradoxical, however, when they recognise that there is almost no historical precedent in the West for halting the whiggish 'progression' through history, except perhaps on a small number of (highly contentious) occasions: for example,[24]

[18] The Telegraph, 'Sir Edward German Honoured', *The Telegraph*, 30th March 1928, 12.
[19] Charles Villiers Stanford, *Studies and Memories* (London: A. Constable, 1908), 15.
[20] Edward Elgar, *A Future for English Music and Other Lectures* (London: Dobson Books, 1968), 211.
[21] Of course, pursuing beauty is not unique to conservatives. Vaughan Williams, for example, sought the composition of beautiful music, but many of Stanford's other students did not.
[22] Colin Eatock, 'The Crystal Palace Concerts: Canon Formation and the English Musical Renaissance' *19th-Century Music*, 34/1 (2010), 87-105 (91).
[23] Ted Honderich, *Conservatism: Burke, Nozick, Bush, Blair?* (London: Pluto Press, 2005), 8.
[24] The fall of the Soviet Union may be put forward as an objection to the conceptualisation of history described by Tolkien as 'the long defeat', but the ending of the Cold War has often been regarded by conservatives as a victory for liberalism, despite the roles played by conservative thinkers, activists and politicians. It is too soon to be able to judge its consequences properly, but it certainly cannot be said that it has resulted in greater proliferation of conservative ideas.

the Spanish Civil War and the various restorations of monarchies.[25] For each of these events the cost, materially, spiritually, and artistically, was enormous. Conservatives know this. The paradox for musical, philosophical and political conservatives is that a successful opposition to what they believe to be the evils of modernity necessarily requires a break with precedent; what has been tried before self-evidently has not worked. The concept of turning back time or returning to a previous state of affairs has been politically contested; the aphorism that one cannot turn the clock back has been used by anticonservatives as a metaphor for the inescapability of 'progress' in politics and culture. Philip Gibbs argues that the pursuit of beauty is lost to the past in this way:

> One can't put beauty back when once it has been blotted out. One can't – I admit – put back the clock or stop the motor traffic which surges along the by-passes and the country lanes. One can't abandon the industrialisation of England or check the breaking up of old estates belonging to a system which is out of date.[26]

For Gibbs, either it is impossible or not worth the material cost to turn back time and return to a previous order; G. K. Chesterton has argued that this is a nonsensical metaphor:

> If I am to discuss what is wrong, one of the first things that are wrong is this: the deep and silent modern assumption that past things have become impossible. There is one metaphor of which the moderns are very fond; they are always saying, "You can't put the clock back." The simple and obvious answer is "You can." A clock, being a piece of human construction, can be restored by the human finger to any figure or hour. In the same way society, being a piece of human construction, can be reconstructed upon any plan that has ever existed… There is another proverb, "As you have made your bed, so you must lie on it"; which again is simply a lie. If I have made my bed uncomfortable, please God I will make it again. We could restore the Heptarchy or the stage coaches if we chose. It might take some time to do, and it might be very inadvisable to do it; but certainly it is not impossible as bringing back last Friday is impossible.[27]

In the same way, arguments surrounding the inevitability of continued progress in modernist music do not work for conservatives; systems of music, being broadly human constructions,

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[25] It is highly contested (by Catholic conservatives particularly, as well as monarchists who wanted a restoration as the outcome of the Spanish Civil War, such as the Carlists) as to whether these events were really victories for 'the right'; discussions of this kind merit separate book-length studies of their own. Metternich's efforts in the nineteenth century, for example, were also often subverted by other interested parties. It should be noted that within seven years of Franco's death, the Spanish Socialist Worker's Party (PSOE) achieved a majority in the Spanish parliament. This serves to demonstrate further, however, how little long term political success conservative ideas and action have had. It is notable that, as Eva Moreda Rodriguez explains, many musical research initiatives and performances in Francoist Spain were 'based to one extent or another on professional and scholarly commonalities that were, in crucial ways, informed or influenced by political beliefs'. Please see: Eva Moreda Rodríguez, 'Early Music in Francoist Spain' *Music & Letters*, 96/2 (2015), 209-227 (227).
[26] Philip Gibbs, *England Speaks* (London: William Heinemann, 1935), 210.
[27] G. K. Chesterton, *What's Wrong with the World* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007), 24.

can be returned to or abstained from. The clock literally and metaphorically can be put back – indeed, this is, unlike in 1910 when Chesterton made this argument, now common practice in England every October. The prevalence of the argument that returning to previous systems is impossible, despite this, shows just how infrequently the clock has been turned back in modern musical and political history.

In short, conservatives have almost never *won*; they have never achieved any of their stated goals in the long term, either in politics or culture. An observation of this kind, however, is not the same as an acceptance of the Whig interpretation of history. This understanding of public policy in the last two centuries might likewise be applied to music; it is what was meant by Samuel T. Francis when he described conservatives as 'beautiful losers', that 'the right' conceded on every fundamental domestic issue that it contested in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[28] An understanding of this view, which might be referred to as the conservative interpretation of history, is the undercurrent of conservative arts and musical conservatism particularly. Conservatives see in music, as they do in all facets of culture, a general pattern of decline; a long series of defeats and incremental separation with what they believe to be good, true and beautiful. Theirs is the music of tragic transience. In this context, the achievements of musical conservatives in England are all the more remarkable.[29]

There are numerous ways, however, in which these composers differed both musically and philosophically, despite their shared values as conservatives. Stanford, Elgar and German differed most in their attitudes towards intellectualism. The definition of

[28] Francis applied these arguments to American history, but they apply equally to British politics since at least the foundation of the Conservative Party. Please see:
Samuel T. Francis, *Beautiful Losers: Essays on the Failure of American Conservatism* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1994), 222.

[29] Jane F. Fulcher argues that this is why the French political right were attracted to music as a means of political expression; Vincent D'Indy and others believed music to be 'inherently immune to conventional rational Republican critique'. This is another example of anti-rationalism in conservative thought. Please see:
Jane F. Fulcher, *French Cultural Politics & Music: From the Dreyfus Affair to the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 7.

intellectuals as people whose end product is ideas, as Sowell argued, is most useful here.[30] Stanford was a composer whose intellectualism or academicism pervaded his writing and music; his final two symphonies are evidence of an extraordinarily philosophical mind at work. German and Elgar's conservatism is much more instinctive than this; their music is that of an accepted and thoughtful conservatism but it is not philosophical in the way that Stanford's is; Stanford's music is consciously conservative, and it is clear that he understood his own conservatism at a stratum greater than the instinctual, political level at which all philosophy, but especially conservative philosophy, is so often espoused. This is perhaps the root of the musical and ideological differences between the composers. One thing that connects these three artists, however, is their public perception as conservatives and the concomitant posthumous decline in their reputations.

In viewing music history through a lens of an acceptance that composers did not have to be ground breaking in order to be valuable, conservatives believe that a renewed appreciation of so many neglected composers might emerge; a new life might be breathed into works that were enormously popular in the past which have been rejected by whiggish revisionism.[31] As Herbert Butterfield writes, 'The fervour of the Whig historian very often comes from what is really the transference into the past of an enthusiasm for something in the present… But the true historical fervour is the love of the past for the sake of the past'.[32] A conservative view of music history might be to accept or criticise the music of the past for its own sake and the qualities intrinsic to its composition, not for the features which are

[30] Thomas Sowell, *Intellectuals and Society* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 283.
[31] Whig history has been criticised a great deal recently from a very different perspective, which comes to quite different conclusions. Margaret E. Walker, for example, argues that this version of music history is a result of 'white supremacy'; for Walker, imperialism and the canon are intrinsically linked: 'the familiar historical narrative and its canon of composers and "masterworks" were developed through the mid-nineteenth century and disseminated during its last decades, a period which also saw… colonial occupation and empire. Only after firmly placing Western art music history in this historiographic context will it be possible to return productively to questions of why and how to decolonize'. Please see:
Margaret E. Walker, 'Towards a Decolonized Music History Curriculum', *Journal of Music History Pedagogy* 10/1 (2020): 1–19 (5-18).
[32] Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History*, 96.

perceived to have led to progression into the music of the future. If musical conservatism is giving a voice to the dead of Burke's pact, then it does so in a way that avoids the difficulties that would otherwise be concomitant with efforts to return to a culture of the past. At least, in the conservative interpretation, their voices might be conserved artistically, even in an iconoclastic age; their traditions might live on through the artistic pursuits of those who remain among what they perceive to be the ruins of civilisation.[33]

There is a 'left' and 'right' in music insofar as there are composers, musicians and institutions that desire the conservation and continuation of hierarchy, absolutism and traditionalism, as well as people and institutions desirous of an order that is quite different to the one which they have inherited.[34] They are conservatives and anticonservatives. German, Stanford and Elgar each belonged to the former category, even if the lines between them were sometimes blurred; in binary categorisations of this kind, they almost always are. This does not mean that the distinctions have no value. In recognising composers as conservative, given some sympathy, it is possible to achieve a greater understanding of the philosophical foundations of their art in terms that they understood, agreed to, and often applied to themselves. Each of the composers studied here achieved an enormous amount in the fields in which they worked; on merit alone, a study of the philosophy that motivated so much of their work ought to be worthwhile. There is more to it than this, however; conservatives often believe that there exists an entire separate canon of composers whose works have been unduly neglected as a direct consequence of adherence to the Whig interpretation of music history, and their compositions often possess a degree of beauty and artistic merit that has

[33] Roger Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism* (Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan, 2001), 10.
[34] Evidence and argument in the present thesis has been categorised in a binary way, but there were composers who fit somewhere in between; they might be regarded as centrists of music. In England, Gustav Holst sometimes regarded himself in this way, but Fulcher argues that composers such as Debussy actively sought to position themselves 'between the two poles of the French musical world — those who wished to recreate or return to the past, building carefully upon it, and the young iconoclasts'. Please see:
Fulcher, *French Cultural Politics & Music*, 189.

been overlooked for their perceived lack of influence on their contemporaries or posterity. It is clear that the decisions conservative musicians make are driven by a different set of ideological assumptions to their oppositional counterparts; conservatives are far less often interested in canonisation through novelty, pushing the boundaries of musical thought, or the processes of perceived immortalisation through 'progress' mocked so thoroughly by Stanford in his settings of Lear's *Nonsense Rhymes*.[35] Conservative composers' works were not as 'adventurous', 'daring', or 'revolutionary' as those composed by some of their peers, and often there is a good reason that they remain unappreciated. Conservatives, however, believe that they ought to remain unappreciated only if their artistic merit is lacking, not because their perceived influence on the present day, or modernism, or subsequent generations of composers was insufficient. Many of the works of German, Stanford and Elgar are abundant with artistic merit – and many are still appreciated – but some of their contemporaries and ideological counterparts who lived in different times or places are not. Their works are also often genuine expressions of the zeitgeist of their eras that allow the listener to feel a connection to the past, real or imagined, or to access 'states of mind that we no longer encounter in our daily experience'.[36] Sometimes this glimpse at the faces of the people of the past will reveal a beautiful bygone visage, but sometimes it might unveil the haggard countenance of an unwanted, forgotten and unpleasant antecedent. Only through study of the music of the past *for its own sake*, conservatives believe, can such a judgement be made.[37]

[35] Charles Villiers Stanford, *Nonsense Rhymes*, autograph manuscript.
[36] Roger Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 449.
[37] Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History*, 96.

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