The Resonance of a Small Voice

The Resonance of a Small Voice: William Walton and the Violin Concerto in England between 1900 and 1940

By

Paolo Petrocelli

CAMBRIDGE SCHOLARS

PUBLISHING

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This book first published 2010

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-4438-1721-X, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-1721-9

To my mother

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Particular thanks to:

Philip Gossett, for having encouraged me to discover the value of musicological research.
Lady Susana Walton, the William Walton Foundation, the Walton Trust for their full and kind availability.
Hans Werner Henze, Salvatore Accardo, James Ehnes, Matthew Jones, Fenella Humphreys for having wanted to enrich this work with their reflections.
Oxford University Press, for permitting the reproduction of copyrighted material.
My friend Jordan De Maio for having translated this book from Italian.
Emiliano Ricciardi for having edited the translation.

My entire family, who have supported my work and studies with affection and wisdom.

PREFACE

This text represents both a study and a historical musicological analysis of Sir William Walton's Violin Concerto, treating the form of the violin concerto, in general, in England as it developed between 1900 and 1940, taking into consideration the works of Charles Villiers Stanford, Edward Elgar, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Frederick Delius, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Arthur Somervell, Arnold Bax and Benjamin Britten.

The study is divided into three parts:

- The Violin Concerto in England between 1900-1920: Stanford[1], Elgar, Coleridge-Taylor, Delius.

- The Violin Concerto in England between 1920 and 1940: Vaughan Williams, Somervell, Bax, Britten.

- William Walton's Violin Concerto

The book opens with a brief description of the form of the Violin Concerto between the 19th and 20th centuries in Europe. This description intends to provide both a familiarity with the base characteristics of this musical form during the period under examination and the beginning of a comparison between different national compositional styles.

Each individual section is introduced with a portrait of the historical musical character in England (during the respective period) and presents, after a biographical exposition of the composers, a formal structural, harmonic and aesthetic analysis (this analysis is embedded within a general discussion of the concertos themselves). In addition one study of the technical and interpretative aspects of the concerto and one reflection on the relationship between composer and performer form part of the analysis.. At the closing of each section a comparative overview is also given.

The first and the second parts are developed, entirely, in relation to the third, which treats, exclusively and with significant depth, Sir William

[1] Concerto D Major Op.74 (1899), last concerto of the 19th century in England.

Walton's Violin Concerto, the work to which the greatest attention is devoted.

The appendix provides various unpublished texts concerning some of the concertos treated (with particular reference to Walton's) that were gathered during research. It is hoped that these will prove useful in enriching and completing a reflection, begun in the book, on the decidedly performative and interpretative aspect of violin music produced by British composers in the first half of the 20th century.

Currently there are no modern texts that approach the violin concertos of this period in an exhaustive way. This text proposes to fill the gap, drawing the attention of scholars, musicologists and musicians to the appeal of this repertoire, composed of works of great artistic value that have been, for too long, unjustly forgotten.

The volume will be useful for university and conservatory students, musicologists, composers, violinists and musicians in general in as much as it treats, in specialized yet accessible language, the aspects of the concerto that are of interest to the author.

The study is enriched by the presence of unpublished documents (letters and essays written by both the composers themselves and by those to whom the concertos were dedicated), that will help to illuminate the myriad cultural and personal circumstances that fed and gave life to these great works.

THE CONCERTO FOR VIOLIN AND ORCHESTRA

Here an analysis of the concerto for violin and orchestra, as the form developed in England between 1900 and 1940, will be presented. In beginning an analysis such as this, musicological in nature, it is useful to make some observations concerning the concerto as a form, in Europe, in the 19th and 20th centuries. Doing so will permit us to evaluate, through a "comparative" lense, both the different national styles that characterize the form and the various compositional approaches that have and continue to influence it.[1]

The classical period that spanned the end of the 1700's and the beginning of the 1800's was a period of intense change. During this period the violin concerto adhered to the principles of the sonata form, which gradually substituted the baroque form of the ritornello. It was also a period in which the presence of the rondo as a third movement and double exposition were definitively affirmed. Cadenzas were standardized and the use of the continuo disappeared. Orchestral accompaniment usually presented itself in a homophonic style, providing a finer tessitura, especially during solos.

Violin melodies became, in great part, *cantabile* and scoring for the instrument's higher registers became more frequent as a result of the perfecting of technique, which opened up new technical possibilities. With the advent of the modern bow in 1780 (developed by Francois Tourte), particular attention was paid to purity of sound and to the realization of sustained sound; moreover, with the introduction of a new type of chinrest the left hand's ability was greatly enhanced. This also allowed for more complex scores.

From the second half of the 19th century, on the basis of typically Romantic expressions and idioms, new changes were brought to the concerto form. The form of the ritornello was definitively abandoned for the sonata and cyclic form, with a notable formal expansion of the first

[1] Arnaldo Bonaventura Storia del violino, dei violinisti e della musica per violino, Ed.Lampi di Stampa; Robin Stowell The Cambridge Companion to the Violin, Cambridge University Press; Mark Katz The Violin: A Research and Information Guide, Routledge; Michael Thomas Roeder A history of the concerto Amadeus Press.

movement, especially in the final codas. The use of the double exposition was also abandoned. The slow second movement, initially tied to the finale and conceived as its introduction, became an automous movement.

The finale, incorporating national elements, could utilize folk melodies and dance rhythms and present itself in *scherzo* form. The cadenzas were, by then, an integral part of the concerto form and often were composed by the authors themselves. The solo, now increasingly characterized by virtuosity, often accompanied the tutti - one could say that the lyrical possibilities of the violin were emphasized. During the first Romantic period orchestral interventions were reduced to a minimum while the second half of the century favored a symphonic use of the orchestra.

Scores in general, which preferred minor keys, provided for the presence of chromaticism and modulations in distant tones by means both of rhythmic designs that were growing more complex and by the frequent use of syncopation and changes in tempo. Violin technique went further in its utilization of effects, such as harmonics, false harmonics, the left-handed pizzicato and through bow strokes such as the spiccato, the ricochet and the picchettato.

The wide repertoire of concertos for violin and orchestra produced in the 19th century is constituted of works coming from three different groups of composers. The first of these is represented by those musicians who were strongly tied to the traditional form of the classical period. This form saw its maximum expression in the violin concertos of Louis Spohr (1784-1859) and Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847). In particular Mendelssohn's Concerto for Violin and Orchestra Op. 64, composed between 1838 and 1844, surely one of the most fascinating works of the entire repertoire for violin, embodies through its “cantabilità” the pureness of its themes, the energy and the virtuosity of the solo part, and the emotional sensibility of the Romantic artist.

The German composer, even if tied to the three movement form of the classic concerto, introduced the idea of unity, calling for a performance with pauses between one movement and another and so tending towards a “cyclic” form.

The second group is represented by composer-violinists such as Niccolò Paganini (1784-1840), Charles de Beriot (1802-1870), Henryk Wieniawski (1835-1880), Henry Vieuxtemps (1828-1901), whose scores appeared totally at the service of virtuosity as being the maximum expression of the violin's technical possibilities.

The second half of the 19th century is a period historically associated with great political and social change and with the affirmation and the growth of the principles of nationalism. And so this period gave birth to

the “nationalist” musical schools. The third group of composers to write concertos for violin is constituted of exponents of these schools: Pyotr Il’yich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893), Antonin Dvorak (1841-1904), Robert Schumann (1810-1856), Edouard Lalo (1823-1892), Joseph Joachim (1831-1907), Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) Max Bruch (1834-1920), Camille Saint Saens (1835-1921), each inspired by the musical culture of his respective homeland.

For example the strong national character of Tchaikovsky's 1878 concerto, one of the first Russian concertos for violin, is a consequence not only of the presence of a traditional Russian dance (called the Trepak) as the third movement but also of the presence of themes and melodies from popular folk tradition. Tchaikovsky dedicated the concerto to Leopold Auer, one of the 19th century's major violin instructors. The practice of dedicating a violin concerto to a particular performer would become a widespread custom through the course of the 1900's. This is a subject that will be elaborated on later.

Written in the same year, 1878, Johaness Brahms' concerto for violin in D major op. 77 is among the most representative concertos of the Romantic period. In three movements, dedicated to Joseph Joachim, it was defined by Wieniawski “unplayable” and Pablo de Sarasate refused to perform it. The score for the solo instrument is technically complex and provides for the frequent use of double strings, rapid scales and arpeggios as well as numerous rhythmic variations.

After having briefly reconstructed the evolution of the concerto for violin and orchestra between the 1700's and 1800's we now want to consider the development and changes the form underwent during the course of the 20th century, presenting the realities of this form that are contemporaneous with the *British* form, this study's primary subject.

The 1900's were, for musical composition, a period of intense linguistic, stylistic and formal change, both in symphonic and instrumental compositions.

One of the first violin concertos of the 20th century is the neo-Romantic Concerto in D minor op. 47 by Jean Sibelius (1865-1957), composed in 1903 and revised in 1905. Virtuosity and melodies evoking a northern atmosphere intertwine: “in an important orchestral score and dazzling soloistic part.”[2] In the first movement, an *Allegro* in sonata form, the development section was substituted by an extended cadenza that begins above a timpani roll, in place of the classic use of arpeggios that was characteristic of 18th century concertos.

[2] J.Herbage The Concerto, Ralph Hill

The second movement, an adagio in the form of a romanza opens with the orchestra, which introduces a *cantabile* and dramatic violin melody, accompanied in the first part by dissonant brass.

The last movement, in rondò form, is structured on a theme from the clear rhythmic design announced by the timpani and the low strings, which the soloist develops while displaying his virtuosity, with variations on double strings, split octaves, harmonics and trills.

Other concertos that we can define as neo-Romantic are: the Concerto in A minor, op. 82 (1904) by Alexander Glazunov (1865-1932), notable for its dazzling style and its organization in a unitary structure that connects the three movements and the cadenza; the Concerto, op. 33 by the Dane Carl Nielsen (1865-1931), written in 1911; and Erich Wolfgang Korngold's (1897-1957) Concerto in D major, op. 35, composed in 1945, dedicated to Alma Mahler and performed for the first time in 1947 by Jascha Heifetz.

The neo-Romantic Concerto in A major, op. 101 by Max Reger (1873-1915) was composed in 1908. With “his strongly chromatic language, [Reger] significantly pushed the limits of tonality.” The piece influenced the composer Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951) and the Second Viennese School, which developed in Vienna between 1903 and 1925 and was constituted of a group of composers led by Schoenberg and his students Anton Webern (1883-1945) and Alban Berg (1885-1935). Leaving behind a post-Romantic compositional style for atonal, chromatic expressionism, the Second Viennese School came to the serial, dodecaphonic technique of Schoenberg. The Violin Concerto, op. 36 by Schoenberg (1936), was written in America during his “voluntary exile” from Nazi Germany. Schoenberg wrote of his work: “I am pleased to add another 'unplayable' work to the repertoire.” The concerto, in which the dodecaphonic technique is applied, is in the traditional 3 movement form. The part for violin is extremely complex, to the extent that a celebrated violinist of the day said to the composer “To perform it you will have to wait for a violinist who has 6 fingers.” Schoenberg answered “I cannot wait.” And so the first performance of the concerto took place December 6th, 1940, with Louis Krasner playing violin and with the Philadelphia Orchestra, conducted by Leopold Stokowski, accompanying. Louis Krasner was the violinist who commissioned Alban Berg's Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in 1935.

In those years Berg was working on his *Lulu* and suffered the death of an intimate friend, Mano Gropius (Alma Mahler's and Walter Gropius's daughter). The event convinced him to work on the concerto, giving it the character of a Requiem and dedicating it to “The memory of an angel.”

The concerto is constituted of 2 parts, each of which is in turn divided into 2 sections, which "form an emotional unity."[3]

The first part, the more static of the two, opens with an Andante *sognante* in sonata form, with an arpeggio of the violin's four open strings, G, D, A, E, followed by an Allegretto, a dance with two trios, the first a waltz and the the second a landler, a traditional Cainthian dance.

The second part, which sharply contrasts with the first, opens with an Allegro "that concludes with a climax that is terrifying in its effect," followed by a calm Adagio based on the chorus "Es ist genung" by J.S. Bach. Berg's score utilizes the dodecaphonic technique and employs, serially, the chromatic scale, favoring a detailed and complex treatment of the orchestral interventions, or in opposition to or sustaining the soloist. Here the soloist experiments with elements of virtuosity such as octaves, harmonics, arpeggios on 4 strings and left-handed pizzicatos.

Igor Stravinsky's Violin Concerto in D major, composed in 1931 for the violinist Samuel Dushkin, is considered one of the greatest examples of the neo-classic style. This style, developed between the two world wars, is characterized by a return to balanced and clearly distinguishable thematic structures that utilize tonality and modality to reproduce the tonal system of the baroque style concerto and the First Viennese School of Mozart and Haydn.

The titles of the movements, Toccata, Ria, Capriccio, all indicate a clear intent on the part of the composer to recover the baroque concerto style. Stravinsky himself underlined the affinity between the finale of his concerto and Bach's Concerto for Two Violins (his favorite violin concerto), in particular "in the soloist's duet with a violin from the orchestra." The orchestration of the concerto is in a chamber, and not symphonic style, as is the case with most of the concertos of the 19th century. No cadenzas are present as virtuosity was not one of Stravinsky's interests, "Virtuosity in and of itself occupies very little of my concerto and I believe the technical difficulty of the piece to be relatively modest."

Composed in Switzerland in 1939 during the composer's exile from Nazi Germany, Paul Hindemith's Concerto for Violin and Orchestra is an expression of anxiety brought about by the outbreak of World War II.

In 1939, in Switzerland, another composer was at work on a violin concerto, Samuel Barber (1910-1981). Barber's Violin Concerto op. 14 is in 3 movements: the first movement, Allegro, opens with a solo violin, *cantabile*, without any accompaniment. The entire movement seems to have a character more akin to a sonata than a concerto. In the second

[3] M.Carner The Concerto, Ralph Hill

movement an introduction by a solo oboe gives way to the violin who takes up a rhapsodic theme, followed in turn by the movement's close and the eventual reappearance of the oboe. The Presto in moto finale is the movement of soloistic virtuosity.

Still another piece belonging to the year 1939 is the Violin Concerto in A minor by Ernest Bloch (1880-1959), dedicated to Joseph Szigeti.

In Italy the repertoire for violin was enriched by Ferrucio Buson's (1866-1924) Violin Concerto in D major, op. 35, written in 1899 and Ottorino Respighi's (1879-1936) Gregorian Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in 1921. The structure of the latter is based on the introduction of thematic fragments from the middle ages into violin music.

The 1900's were, for eastern Europe and Russia, a moment for recognizing identity and for working at refining compositional capacity.

The Hungarian Bela Bartok (1881-1945) wrote two concertos for violin. The Concerto No. 1, composed 1907-1908 is dedicated to the violinist Stefi Geyer and was published posthumously in 1956. The concerto is structured in 2 movements, Andante sostenuto and Allegro giocoso. The Concerto No. 2, composed between 1937 and 1938 and dedicated to the Hungarian violinist Zoltan Szekely is based on the verbunkos, a 17th century Hungarian dance and musical genre. The concerto is in three movements: Allegro, Andante, Allegro. The first of these, Allegro non troppo, is in the sonata form in the key of B minor; the second, Andante tranquillo, is in the theme-and-variation form (6 variations) in the key of G major. The last movement, Allegro molto, in sonata and cyclic form, presents variants on the opening movement's material.

The Pole Karol Szymanowski (1882-1937) composed the Violin Concerto No. 1, op. 35 in 1916 and the Violin Concerto op. 61 in 1933. While the Concerto No. 1 was written in his impressionist phase the Concerto No. 2 was inspired by the traditional music of Poland's Tatra region.

Composers like Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953), Aram Khachaturian (1903-1978), Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975) contributed to the creation of a wider violin concerto repertoire in Russia.

Prokofiev's Concerto No. 1 in D major, Op. 19, written between 1916 and 1917 is in three movements (Andantino, Scherzo and Moderato), in cyclic form and utilizes reduced orchestration. The Concerto No. 2 in G minor, Op. 63, composed in 1935, in 3 movements (Allegro, Andante, Allegro) opens with a simple melody, based on traditional Russian music, that is treated in the first two movements. The finale develops a rondo theme that invokes a Hispanic atmosphere. Prokofiev wrote “The number

of places in which I wrote this concerto demonstrates the nomadic existence that I am forced to live. The principle theme of the first movement was written in Paris, the second movement's theme was written in Voronezh (Russia), the orchestration was finished in Baku and the concerto's premier took place in Madrid"

Khachaturian, who composed the Violin Concerto in D minor, op. 46 in 1945, wrote: "when in 1940 I began to conceive the concerto my head was full of the sound of Oistrakh's violin," to whom he dedicated the work. The concerto is in three movements (Allegro con fermezza, Andante Sostenuto and Allegro vivace) and is characterized by the employment of elements of Russian character, such as the presence of particular rhythmic patterns and melodic designs that exhibit intense emotional and expressive energy.

Dmitri Shostakovich also dedicated two violin concertos to David Oistrakh. Concerto No. 1 in A minor, op. 77, composed between 1947 and 1948, is in four movements (Nocturne, Scherzo, Passacaglia, Burlesque) with the presence of a cadenza connecting the last two and which calls for an extensive orchestra.

Concerto No. 2 in C# minor, op. 129, written in 1967 as the last of Shostakovich's concertos, is in 3 movements (a Moderato in sonata form, an Adagio subdivided into three parts with a central cadenza and an Allegro finale in rondo form).

However, through time, the form of the concerto for violin and orchestra has been conceived of and defined in different ways. The history of violin scores is today a clear testimony to this continual and complex transformation. Surely it is a transformation determined by factors equally as complex, such as the birth of the modern luthier, the perfecting of instrumental techniques, the spread of certain stylistic and compositional currents, the affirmation of virtuosity and of the figure of the soloist, the diffusion of the public concert and the dedication of a work to a particular performer or composer.

It is hoped that this brief historical account of the violin concerto in the classical, Romantic and modern periods can favor, in the course of this study, the identification of those elements of affinity or resemblance, or to the contrary, of originality and singularity, that characterize and distinguish the violin concertos produced by 20th century British composers from those of their contemporaries.

CHRONOLOGY

A chronology is provided so as to condense and define the temporal sequence of the concertos referred to in this book. Those that here are of primary interest are evidenced in bold:

1844	Mendelssohn
1878	Tchaikovsky, Brahms
1899	**Stanford**, Busoni
1904	Glazunov
1905	Sibelius
1908	Bartok, Reger
1910	**Elgar**
1911	Nielsen
1912	**Coleridge-Taylor**
1916	**Delius**, Szymanowski
1917	Prokofiev
1921	Respighi
1925	**Vaughan Williams**
1930	**Somervell**
1931	Stravinsky
1933	Szymanowski

1935	Berg, Prokofiev
1936	Schoenberg
1938	**Bax**, Bartok
1939	**Walton**, **Britten**, Hindemith, Barber, Bloch
1945	Khachaturian
1948	Shostakovich

PART I

Introduction

The introduction to the first part of this book proposes, after relating a reflection by an early 20th German thinker, a historical snapshot of music in England between the 1700's and the 1800's, useful for defining the cultural realities of England and the artistic tendencies of the British composers who precede those treated at length in this book.

In 1914 the German writer and thinker Oskar Adolf Hermann Schmitz published, in Monaco, his "Das Land Ohne Music" ("The Land Without Music"), a piece in which he forcefully asserts the artistic and musical incapacity of the English composers and the general incapacity of all of Great Britain, after Henry Purcell, to make significant contributions to European musical culture.

If we want to fully comprehend the conclusions of Schmitz's analysis and the reasons behind the spread of the phrase "land without music," we must sift through certain historical events in Great Britain during the 18th and 19th centuries.

Both the evolution and aesthetic of music in Great Britain during the 18th century were greatly influenced by the presence, for more than 45 years, of the German Georg Friedrich Händel. Händel had arrived in 1710 and "his melodrama *Rinaldo*, performed in London the following year, established Italian opera."[1]

Several scholars suggest that the natural evolution of British music was altered, if not blocked, after the death of Purcell in 1695, by the presence of Händel, "It is pointless to speculate on what would have been the future of English music without the influence of Händel. Certainly the genius of Purcell would not have seen immediate continuation but his music was admired by many and could have produced splendid fruit had it been permitted to develop freely."[2]

Contemporaneous to Händel's Italian melodrama was the Ballad Opera (or semi-opera), which countered, during the first half of the 1700's, as a new comical/theatrical genre composed both of song and dialogue. The

[1] Edward Lockspeiser, *Dizionario della Musica e dei Musicisti,* UTET pp.391.
[2] ibidem.

first representative production was the *Beggar's Opera*, using John Gay's libretto and with music inspired by traditional melodies of the day.

The spread and popularity of the ballad operas, the formation of a taste for folkloric elements, with the consequent development of a vast repertoire of songs and glees that were almost exclusively vocal, the absence of national figures able to contribute to the renewal of a musical identity characterized by a strong referral to Purcell, all seem to have determined, from the second half of the 1700's, a gradual decline of classical musical art, operatic or instrumental, in England.

Moreover the presence of numerous foreign musicians, such as Francesco Geminiani and Johan Christian Bach in the 1700's and Muzio Clementi and Felix Mendelssohn in the early 1800's, living on British soil, eclipsed the modest work of a few English composers such as William Shield, Charles Dibdin and William Boyce) rendering them inhabitants of a "land without music."

This period of difficulty, of incapacity, of cultural/musical crisis was gradually overcome beginning in 1837, a year that signaled England's shift towards Victorianism. In this year, the efforts of a number of British composers such as John Field (inventor of the "notturno" as a piano form), William Sterndale Bennet (remembered for his 1843 opera *The Bohemian Girl*) and Arthur Sullivan (author of the famous operettas, the *Savoy Operas*) a new national musical identity slowly began to take shape.

Hubert Parry (active in the field of choral music) and Sir Charles Stanford, whose Concerto for Violin and Orchestra will be analyzed later, were among the protagonists of the English musical renaissance, coming about during the late Victorian years of the 1890's, when "The development of democratic institutions would exercise great influence on musical activity, at first on the social spare and then on the tendencies and style of the composers that had until that period been lacking in original musical creations."[3]

1878 saw the foundation of organizations reminiscent of the 1700's (such as the "People's Concert Society") whose role it was to render classical music accessible to all social classes, faciliting the expansion of music in England up through society's elite. These organizations nevertheless favored the diffusion of those foreign composers on whom the British composers were modeling their own compositions. Among those paying little attention to these tendencies was Sir Edward Elgar, "undoubtedly the composer of this period in which the national spirit was

[3] ivi, pp.392.

fully expressed,"[4] who, like Charles Stanford and Frederick Delius, the last of the renaissance generation of composers, will be treated in depth in the following chapters.

The English musical *renaissance*, a term first used in September of 1882 by the Daily Telegraph's Joseph Bennet[5], represented an artistic moment characterized by incredible vigor. It was a moment that, in turn, allowed Great Britain to propose a new national style to the rest of Europe and affirm itself as an active and productive musical reality.

Having briefly related the historical/musical trends in Great Britain during the period between Purcell and Elgar it is now appropriate to consider Schmitz's piece, and in particular the expression "the land without music."

Great Britain endured this cultural and musical crisis during the 18th century because, as we have mentioned, the lack of national composers able to fill the artistic vacuum left by Henry Purcell, the popularity of genres such as the ballad opera, and the presence on British soil of some of the most respected foreign musicians of the era made possible an absence of a national musical style. This trend conspired with a decline in instrumental and operatic music and the emergence of a constant need, particularly pronounced in England, to import the musical models and realities that were developing at the time in Germany, France and Italy.

And so "the land without music" appeared an inappropriate definition for Great Britain later, during the

Victorian period, when composers like Sullivan, Stanford and Parry were able to give life to a new national musical identity and bring about that phase of British music that took on the title "The English Renaissance"

It is true that Schmitz's thesis, which propose that the death of Purcell rendered English music incapable of evolving , was written in 1914 at a time when the "English Renaissance" had not reached full maturity. However we can conclude that Schmitz either ignored or simply did not comprehend the phenomenon. Also the reasons for the use of the expression, "the land without music" seems rooted in an attitude of open anti-English polemic, inspired by strong nationalist sentiment. This was a sentiment adopted by some German critics and scholars who were nevertheless blind to the artistic authenticity of the new British composers.

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[4] ibidem.

[5] Merion Hughes, *The English Musical Renaissance and the Press 1850-1914: Watchmen of Music*, Ashgate 2002.

This study's treatment of the violin concerto in England between 1900 and 1940, will be preceded by some considerations regarding the last concerto composed in Britain before the turn of the 20th century, Charles Stanford's 1899 concerto.

Charles Villiers Stanford

Born on September 30th, 1852, in Dublin, to John James Stanford (a lawyer and non professional musician), Charles Villiers Stanford began studying violin, piano and organ and was introduced to composition by the most respected Irish musicians of the day (among them Robert Stewart, Joseph Robinson and Michael Quarry).

In 1862 Stanford went to London to study composition under with Arthur O'Leary, under whom he studied

composition. In 1870 Stanford won a fellowship to study at Queen's College of Cambridge, which he would then leave in 1873 for Trinity College (where he was nominated "official organist" and director of the Cambridge University Music Society). Following the advice of the celebrated violinist and composer, Joachim, with whom Stanford had been in contact in 1860 while in Dublin, Stanford went to Germany between 1874 and 1867 to study with Friedrich Kiel. He then returned to London and concluded his academic studies at Oxford, in 1883. That same year he became a professor of composition and of orchestral direction at the Royal College of Music in London (among his pupils there were Frank Bridge, Coleridge-Taylor and Vaughan Williams). From 1888 onward he taught at Cambridge University.

During those years Stanford affirmed his stature as one of the great figures of the renaissance generation of English composers, producing a vast series of choral and orchestral works for various festivals. The two oratorios *The Three Holy Children* (1885) and *Eden* (1891), *Requiem* (1897), *Stabat Mater* (1907) the choral overture *Ave atque vale* (1909), *Songs of the Sea* (1904) and *Songs of the Fleet* (1910) are among some of his notable works.

Of the seven symphonies that he composed between 1876 and 1911, the third, called "Irish," found the greatest international success and so assisted in solidifying British musical culture in Europe at the end of the 19th century, The definitive recognition of the artistic value of Stanford's music came about in January of 1899 when, accepting an invitation by the violinist Joachim and pianist Hans von Bulow, the Irish composer attended a concert in Berlin dedicated exclusively to his works. Among those performed were the Festival Overture *Queen of the Seas, Symphony No.4*

in F major Op.31 and the *Suite for Violin and Orchestra Op. 32*, written specifically for the event in Berlin and dedicated to Joseph Joachim.

Stanford, "as is made clear by his letters and writings, believed that international recognition was only to be achieved through more universal forms of music such as the symphony, the concerto, the quartet and the opera." [6]Nevertheless it's important to make note of British editors' refusal to publish many of his works that did not fit into category of "large profit and quick returns."[7]

The repertoire that Stanford constructed during his prolific artistic life included the Violin Concerto, treated in the following pages, two piano concertos, part songs, such as *The Bluebird (*1910, using Mary Coleridge's text), music for theater, oratorios, canticles, anthems and theatrical works; "nevertheless in Great Britain his works wouldn't have success, above all because of the deplorable conditions in which they were performed, along with the public's errant conviction concerning the inadequacy of English for musical theater."[8]

A distinctive mark of Stanford's compositional approach, initially influenced by the music of Brahms and Mendelssohn, is the diatonism of harmonic language, in explicit contraposition to Wagnerian chromatism, combined with the lyricism of Irish folk which particularly inspired the composer. His "6 Irish Rhapsodies," composed between 1901 and 1923 is a testament to his affection for Irish folk.

Stanford died on March 29, 1924, in London. His grave in Westminster, which lies next to that of Henry Purcell, represents Great Britain's recognition of his artistic contributions and cultural importance, both as a composer and teacher, in reviving British music. As well, thanks to a new national style, the privileged burial recognizes Stanford's pivotal role in the "renaissance," a period that moved Britain towards a renovated identity, finally able of affirming itself among the various cultural/musical realities of the late 19th century.

Despite his pivotal role in the "English renaissance" Stanford's cultural and artistic output does not appear principally regulated by the composer's desire to push towards something new or original (the modern). Rather it seems that his primary interest was to gradually lead the evolution of a British musical sensibility still tied solely to Purcell towards models consistent with Romanticism and European musical formalism.

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[6] Jeremy Dibble, *The New Groove of Music and Musicians,* pp.280.
[7] Charles Stanford, "Music and the War" da *Quarterly Review*, 1915.
[8] Judith Blezzard (trad. Roberto Long), *Dizionario della Musica e dei Musicisti UTET*, pp.432.

Harold Samuel, among the first pianists of the 20th century to dedicate himself exclusively to the performance of works by J,S. Bach, remembered Stanford as "the last of the formalists."[9]

"His intolerance of opposing points of view, his prejudices (both political and musical), his cynicism and his refusal to buckle to the pressures of modern music, created tensions among those he taught. Dyson affirmed "in a certain sense the true rebellion (against Stanford) was the most obvious of all the fruits that his method could give."[10]

The rebellion of which George Dyson (British composer born in 1883) spoke refers to that which Otto Karolyi defined as the "second renaissance"[11] or what can be thought of as a new phase of extraordinary productivity for British music set in motion during the final years of the 19th century by Sir Edward Elgar, Frederick Delius, Arnold Bax and John Ireland. This new phase encompassed, during the first half of the 20th century, multiple compositional currents such as "English pastoral," (Cecili Sharp, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Gustav Holst, George Butterworth); the modernists (Arthur Bliss, William Walton, Constant Lambert); the crypto-modernists (Frank Bridge); the Celtic mystics (Rutland Boughton, E. J. Moeran); and finally the musical poetics of Michael Tippet and Benjamin Britten.

A study of some of these composer's violin concertos will allow us to better understand the complexity and multiform character of the British musical reality of the early 1900's, defined by Elgar "an egotism of several"[12]

Violin Concerto in D Major OP.74

Stanford occupied himself with the composing of the Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 74 in the fall of 1899, dedicating the work "to my friend, E.F.Arbòs," a Spanish violinist and pupil of both Vieuxtemps and Joachim.

The first performance took place on March 7th, 1901 with Arbòs and the Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra, directed by Stanford himself. The work was not received particularly well by critics and Stanford had to wait for performances by the virtuoso Fritz Kreisler, October 7th, 1904 at the Leeds Festival and by the American violinist Achille Rivarde (teacher at the Royal College of Music) in the summer of 1905 at the Philharmonic

[9] Jeremy Dibble, *The New Groove of Music and Musicians*, pp.280.
[10] ibidem.
[11] Otto Karolyi, *Modern British Music*, pp.15.
[12] From Michael White, "So Mighty, So Unmusical: How Britannia Found Its Voice", *The New York Times*, February 2007.

Society before he could witness full appreciation of his work's artistic value.

Considered by Hubert Parry, a composer belonging to the generation of the English renaissance, to be one of Stanford's most significant works, the concerto "was unable to get itself into the canon of the most popular violin concertos"[13] and the full score, after Stanford's death, was not published for 10 years, rendering it "virtually unknown"[14]. In 2004 Breitkopf and Härtel published an adaptation for violin and piano.

First movement, *Allegro:* the fineness of the winds' figurations and of the strings' pizzicatos, which both characterize the refined and soft orchestral tessitura of the exposition's opening measures and introduce the soloist's theme (first played in the key of D major and then immediately presented in minor) brings about the first *tutti*, modulating to the relative minor key of B. "Stanford seems to strongly prefer the Mendelssohnian form of the "divided" sonata scheme rather than the more classic fusion of ritornello and sonata typical of Brahms[15]. A lyrical revival of the solo follows, one in which a fragment in 3/2 time is played only on the 4th string, interposed with various *tutti* passages..

The development section opens with an energetic tutti of 60 measures (keeping with the classical tradition). It is followed by an episode of extended lyricism by the soloist that will again bring about an orchestral recapitulation where a new presentation of the principle theme of the exposition alternates with soloistic sections of great technical complexity, between lyricism and virtuosity. This moves towards a finale, in *crescendo*, of octaves and double-stopped chords, which then concludes with a perfect cadence n the movement's original key.

Second movement, *Canzona – Andante*: in the form of a three part *canzone*, the second movement opens with the exposition by the clarinets and trombones of a descending pattern, in G minor, of 6 notes, on which Stanford based the material of the entire movement.

Here the solo part characterized by great melodic intensity. In the first section this is expressed by the dark timbres of the G string.

The central section presents, moving to the key of E flat major, the diatonic approach typical of Stanford's compositional practice. The last section of the movement, in returning to the opening key of G minor, has

[13] Jeremy Dibble, *The Romantic Violin Concerto 2*, booklet CD. Hyperion 2000.
[14] ibidem.
[15] ibidem.

the soloist performing a cadenza, which is then followed by a conclusion of dreaming G major arpeggios.

Third movement, *Allegro Moderato*: a moment of the maximum expression of the technical possibilities of the violin, the third movement sees the orchestra and soloist dedicated to revisiting, in a movement constantly modulating between the keys of D major and B minor, a rondo theme. The atmosphere of a traditional dance was suggested by Stanford himself with his direction on the score: “Gaelic air.”

Stanford's score appears heavily inspired by the great violin concertos in D major by Beethoven, Brahms and Tchaikovsky. The key of D major is a common choice by composers who are aware of the possibilities for extreme virtuosity and technical brilliance that the key offers the performer.

The Concerto for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 61 by Ludwig van Beethoven (1806) saw its definitive affirmation within the wide repertoire of violin concertos only in the 1840's, thanks to the work of philological and musicological recovery carried out by Mendelssohn and the performances of Joseph Joachim, long held to be the best interpreter of Beethoven's piece.

Stanford, who we remember as being strongly tied to the German violinist, seems in his concerto to want to renew that elegant majesty of Beethoven's work, distinguished by the absolute balance between lyricism and virtuosity. Particular melodic patterns, such as that of the last two measures of the first movement's finale seem to be true and are references to prop references to Beethoven's concerto.

Johannes Brahms dedicated his 1878 work, the Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in D major, Op. 77, to Joseph Joachim who advised the composer in the scoring of the soloistic part and so determined some of the strictly technical performative aspects; later we will have the opportunity to consider, in greater depth, this phenomenon of the cooperation between composer and performer that was so widespread in the 1900's.

The concerto, beyond exemplifying a high level of technical complexity, appears determined by a desire to strike a balance between lyricism, virtuosity and symphonic character, a quality exhibited by the work of Beethoven who Stanford, so near to Brahms’ Romantic feeling, wanted to emulate.

In the initial historical compendium we already touched briefly on the Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in D Major, Op. 35 by Pyotre Ilyich