

NAXOS

Sir Charles Villiers
STANFORD

Symphonies Nos. 4 and 7

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra
David Lloyd-Jones



Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924): Symphonies Nos. 4 and 7

Of the British composers to have emerged immediately before Elgar, the most significant are Sir Hubert Parry and Sir Charles Stanford, who laid the ground for a musical renaissance at the end of the nineteenth century. Born into a Dublin legal family on 30th September 1852, Stanford entered Queens' College, Cambridge in 1870. Appointed organist at Trinity College in 1874, he spent much of the next three years studying in Germany. Appointed Professor of Music at Cambridge in 1887, he overhauled the university's music faculty and oversaw the music society's silver jubilee, when honorary doctorates were awarded to such composers as Tchaikovsky and Saint-Saëns. In 1883 he had been made the Professor of Composition at the newly-founded Royal College of Music, where he taught an impressive number of composers including Bridge, Butterworth, Moeran and Vaughan Williams. He had lengthy conducting stints with the Bach Choir and Leeds Philharmonic Society, was awarded numerous honorary doctorates and received a knighthood in 1902. He died, the respected but largely out-of-touch 'grand old man' of British music, in London on 29th March 1924.

Stanford early on established a reputation for choral and church music. His *Evening Services* are a central part of the Anglican liturgy, while his part-songs still remain in the repertoire of choral societies, above all a masterly 1911 setting of Mary Coleridge's *The Bluebird*. Although he had passing success with several of his ten operas, none of them held the stage: a major disappointment for one who vigorously espoused the cause of opera in Britain over much of his career. His orchestral music fared better, being taken up by several leading conductors and soloists of the day, though it was a mark of his declining reputation that many later works remained unpublished and even unperformed at his death.

Central to Stanford's achievement are the seven symphonies covering the greater part of his career.

These are marked by a compositional rigour and also expertise matched only by his older contemporary Parry, while seeming content to remain well within the stylistic orbit of Mendelssohn, Schumann and Brahms: an indication of the retrogressive tendencies that saw him indulge in increasingly bitter polemic during his last years. Yet while he adhered to classical four-movement forms, his often subtle approach to the standard movement formats and resourceful orchestration make his symphonies well worth exploring.

Composed in 1888, the *Fourth Symphony* had its première in Berlin as part of an all-Stanford concert on 14th January 1889. It is cast in four movements, though with an *Intermezzo* (placed second) replacing the expected scherzo and a slow movement of notable range and depth. Over a lively accompaniment, the first movement opens with an animated theme that soon comes to a halt, when a more reflective theme in lower strings and wind takes over. Coming to a climax with brusque chords, it moves into a straightforward reprise of the exposition. The development section opens with questioning woodwind phrases over lower strings, quickly building to an expressive restatement of the second theme and its further presentation in very Brahmsian harmonies. A vigorous transition prepares for the recapitulation, featuring both themes in altered guise, then the coda begins with a stealthy build-up in the orchestra before accelerating to its energetic conclusion. The second movement opens with a wistful theme on clarinet, soon taken up by strings. Violas and cellos have a warmer second theme where harp plays a discreet contribution, after which both themes reappear eloquently on strings. Over throbbing timpani a brief climax is reached, before the clarinet re-enters with the first theme and, after some fleeting recollections of the second, the movement reaches a pensive close. The third movement builds from initially uncertain exchanges in the strings to a confident climax with

brass and timpani to the fore. An atmospheric transition leads to the second theme, initially on upper strings but with woodwind adding important contributions. The central section returns to the initial theme, and a resplendent climax on full orchestra that subsides into a piquant presentation of the second theme on flute and harp, soon returning to upper strings and another opulent climax. The movement's final portion focuses initially on the second theme, heard in autumnal scoring, but the first theme returns to provoke two climaxes separated by its chorale-like presentation on brass and strings, before moving onward to a serene end. The finale opens with a lively first theme of folk-dance character, followed by a flowing but rhythmically-irregular theme that rounds off the exposition. The development takes the first theme through a range of scoring, reaching a climax in a return to the second theme, before an atmospheric transition to the modified recapitulation. This builds to a coda whose synthesis of both themes closes the work in a triumphal apotheosis.

By the time he composed his *Seventh Symphony* in 1911, Stanford had been overtaken by Elgar and a younger generation of composers, many of whom had been his students. In spite of, or even perhaps because of this, his last symphony is the shortest and most classical of the series, evincing a Mendelssohnian lightness decidedly out of step with an era drawn to Strauss, Debussy and even Stravinsky. Over rustling strings, the first movement opens with a lively theme that soon takes on full orchestral guise. The second theme is relaxed, even suave in manner and ends with a brief recall of the initial rustling accompaniment.

Surprisingly, the development proceeds forcefully, drawing mainly on the first theme but turning to its successor for a limpid transition into the recapitulation. Subtly modified, this leads into a coda whose forceful manner recalls that of the development, before effecting a sombre close. Designated as 'in the tempo of a minuet', the second movement's gently undulating first theme is succeeded by one that is more unsettled, its underlying rhythm persisting as the first theme re-emerges. The second theme also has a rather different rhythmic profile on its return, and the movement ends with a brief yet conclusive recall of the first theme. The slow movement opens with a tenderly expressive theme, made the subject of five variations. The first gently extends the theme's rhythmic profile, then the second opens up its expressive range over an ominous underpinning on lower woodwind and strings. The third presents the theme on woodwind and horn, while the fourth consists of ruminations between woodwind and brass over strings. The fifth variation picks up the tempo in livelier exchanges between wind and strings, reaching an animated climax that, after a pause, leads straight into the finale. A confident first theme is followed by a more reflective second with strings to the fore, the first theme then being recalled in a striking decrescendo on brass and strings. The development is brief but resourcefully builds the impetus for a heightened recapitulation. Here the second theme is made the basis of a crescendo into the coda, so concluding the whole symphony in a lively and affirmative manner.

Richard Whitehouse

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra

Founded in 1893 by Sir Dan Godfrey, the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra has had among its Principal Conductors some of the finest musicians in the world, including Rudolf Schwarz, Constantin Silvestri, Sir Charles Groves and Paavo Berglund. More recently Andrew Litton raised the orchestra's standards to new levels, crowning its centenary season with a triumphant début tour of the United States in April 1994, followed by Yakov Kreizberg and débuts at the Musikverein, Vienna, the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, and Carnegie Hall, New York. Marin Alsop took up the position in October 2002 and has already helped raise the profile of the BSO still further including concerts at the Philharmonie, Berlin, and in Madrid, Prague, Bruges and a return trip to Vienna. The name of the orchestra is internationally known through over three hundred recordings, including the award-winning Naxos release of Anthony Payne's sketches for Elgar's *Symphony No. 3* (8.554719) with Paul Daniel, the symphonies of Vaughan Williams with the former Chief Guest Conductor Kees Bakels and Paul Daniel, and recordings of works by Philip Glass, Leonard Bernstein, and John Adams under Marin Alsop for Naxos (8.559031), this last chosen as Editor's Choice in the November 2004 issue of *The Gramophone* magazine. The Naxos BSO/Serebrier Mussorgsky recording (8.557645) reached number two in the top twenty Classical Chart, and was nominated for a Grammy Award in 2006. In addition to its recording and international touring commitments, the BSO is dedicated to providing orchestral music across the South and West of Britain, enhanced by a programme of educational and community projects, and makes regular appearances in major festivals and concert-halls throughout the United Kingdom.

David Lloyd-Jones

David Lloyd-Jones began his professional career in 1959 on the music staff of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, and soon became much in demand as a freelance conductor for orchestral and choral concerts, opera, BBC broadcasts and TV studio opera productions. He has appeared at the Royal Opera House (*Boris Godunov* with both Christoff and Ghaiurov), Welsh National Opera, Scottish Opera and the Wexford, Cheltenham, Edinburgh and Leeds Festivals, and with the major British orchestras. In 1972 he was appointed Assistant Music Director at English National Opera, and during his time there conducted an extensive repertory which included, in addition to all the standard operas, *Die Meistersinger*, *Katya Kabanova*, and the British stage première of Prokofiev's *War and Peace*. In 1978, at the invitation of the Arts Council of Great Britain, he founded a new full-time opera company, Opera North, with its own orchestra, the English Northern Philharmonia, of which he became Artistic Director and Principal Conductor. During his twelve seasons with the company he conducted fifty different new productions, including *The Trojans*, *Prince Igor*, *The Midsummer Marriage* (Tippett), and the British stage première of Strauss's *Daphne*. He also conducted numerous orchestral concerts, including festival appearances in France and Germany. He has made many successful recordings of British and Russian music, and has an extensive career in the concert-hall and opera-house that takes him to leading musical centres throughout Central Europe, Scandinavia, Russia, Israel, Australia, Japan, Canada and the Americas. His highly acclaimed cycle of Bax's Symphonies and tone poems for Naxos was completed in the autumn of 2003. Symphonies Nos. 2 (8.554093), 3 (8.553608), 4 (8.555343) and 5 (8.554509) were Editor's Choice in *The Gramophone* magazine.



8.570285

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Playing Time
70:52

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Of the British composers to have emerged immediately before Elgar, the most significant were Sir Hubert Parry and Sir Charles Stanford. Central to Stanford's achievement are the seven symphonies covering the greater part of his career. Although they remain well within the stylistic orbit of Mendelssohn, Schumann and Brahms, these accomplished works are marked by resourceful and often subtle orchestration. *Symphony No. 4* is an attractive blend of passages of tragic, wistful beauty and jaunty, folk-like melodies, while *Symphony No. 7*, the shortest and most classical of the series, is characterized by a Mendelssohnian lightness. This is Volume 1 of the Naxos cycle of the complete Stanford Symphonies.

Sir Charles Villiers
STANFORD
(1852-1924)

Symphonies • 1

Symphony No. 4 in F major Op. 31 **42:29**

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|---|--------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| ① | I Allegro vivace e giojoso | 11:34 |
| ② | II Intermezzo – Allegro agitato (ma moderato in tempo) | 8:26 |
| ③ | III Andante molto moderato | 13:46 |
| ④ | IV Finale – Allegro non troppo | 8:44 |

Symphony No. 7 in D minor Op. 124 **28:23**

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|---|-----------------------------------------------|------|
| ⑤ | I Allegro | 7:28 |
| ⑥ | II Tempo di minuetto (Allegro molto moderato) | 5:37 |
| ⑦ | III Variations – Andante | 7:48 |
| ⑧ | IV Finale – Allegro giusto | 7:30 |

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra (Leader: Duncan Riddell)
David Lloyd-Jones

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