

The Philharmonic Society of London and its Nineteenth-Century Contribution to the Rehabilitation of British Composers

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For over 200 years, we've been at the heart of music, creating opportunities for musicians to excel, championing the vital role that music plays in all our lives.¹

The creativity of living composers is at the heart of the RPS (Royal Philharmonic Society). We support music through a range of commissions and performances, and a dedicated annual programme widely regarded for having helped many notable composers establish their careers.²

Founding of the Philharmonic Society

In the early years of the 19th century there was considerable musical activity in London. The two visits of Haydn organised by the violinist and impresario Johann Peter Salomon were still vivid in the minds of some members of the musical public. The twelve symphonies that Haydn had produced for these visits set a standard of composition that many wanted to continue. Some of the symphonies of Mozart were also well known and Beethoven's music was just beginning to appear. There were difficulties, however.

- 1 Anon., "About us," Royal Philharmonic Society, consulted April 19th, 2021, www.royalphilharmonicsociety.org.uk.
- 2 Anon., "Nurturing composers," Royal Philharmonic Society, consulted April 19th, 2021, www.royalphilharmonicsociety.org.uk.

George Hogarth described it as “a *period of orchestral destitution*”, saying “*there was not in London any orchestra formed for, and capable of, the performance of what is properly called orchestral music*”.³ There were various amateur societies that existed at a superficial level. One such was known as The Concert of Antient Music⁴ that played only music that was at least twenty years old. It was a very private organisation, certainly operated by amateurs. “*The opera and theatre bands were only employed in playing the weak overtures and thin accompaniments of the Italian and English opera in fashion in these days*” writes Myles B. Foster a century later.⁵ Additionally the performance of chamber music as we know it scarcely existed on a professional level. Outside the field of music it was a turbulent time. The French revolution was fresh in people’s minds and England was in the middle of an industrial revolution of its own, with the associated social consequences.⁶ Yet this mattered little to the upper classes. Here there was, despite the reservations expressed, a body of musical professionals who wanted to make music progress on all fronts. The aims of a professional music society were simple: to improve the standard of performance generally, notably by establishing a high quality orchestra, and to attract from the European continent to England, and London in particular, the best performers and composers and to present them to a limited number of wealthy amateur subscribers. The intention to improve the standard of local English or British musical composition was not an obvious or stated objective, although over the years a small number of composers and conductors made it their business.

After a meeting of a group of musical professionals on 24 January 1813 and another some two weeks later, the Philharmonic Society of London was established. The thirty musicians who signed the declaration came from various branches of the profession: most were instrumental performers, some were singers, a small number were composers and a few were con-

3 George Hogarth, *The Philharmonic Society of London: from its foundation, 1813, to its fiftieth year, 1862* (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1862), 2–3.

4 The obsolete spelling was pretentiously retained, as related by Myles B. Foster, *History of the Philharmonic Society of London 1813–1912* (London: John Lane, 1912), 3–4.

5 Foster, *History* [1912], 3.

6 This point was vividly illustrated by an exhibition in 2020–2021 in the Tate Britain Gallery in London of selected paintings of Joseph William Mallord Turner (1775–1851). Prominent in some of the paintings was the poverty and grime of the times. See: David Blayney Brown, Amy Concannon, and Sam Smiles, eds., *Turner’s Modern World* (London: Tate Gallery, 2020) which includes reproductions of all the exhibited paintings.

ductors and musical administrators.⁷ There was considerable overlapping of their activities in an era in which sharply defined musical specialisation was not common. In addition there were another twenty five associates, mostly instrumentalists, some singers, and two composers. The aim was to create an orchestra and to present eight concerts annually in the period roughly from February/March to May/June.

The Concerts and Continental Visitors

These concerts naturally included orchestral music, normally two symphonies and one or two overtures per concert, a group of chamber pieces for medium-sized ensembles, often with a leading piano part, and various vocal ensemble pieces or solos with orchestral accompaniment. At first solo concertos were excluded with only *concertante* works for three or more soloists being played, but later this rule was altered to include solo concertos. The concerts were divided into two Acts, with a total duration of well over three hours. The actual way in which the orchestral performances were managed seems somewhat strange to us today. The orchestra was directed by the principal first violin known as the *leader*, but was also guided by the *conductor* playing the piano from the full score and inserting any omissions or correcting mistakes, a procedure which must have led to many disagreements. The choice of leader and conductor was normally different for each concert. This arrangement was changed in 1820 with the arrival of Spohr who operated more like a modern conductor.

The choice of works provides an interesting and illuminating view of the London musical world. Symphonies by Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven were often performed, while there were some symphonies and overtures by other composers, for example, Pleyel, Clementi, Cherubini, Romberg, Ferdinand Ries, Wöfl, and Bonifacio Asioli. The chamber music and vocal selections varied considerably with music by Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven and numerous works by lesser known composers, mostly from the European mainland. There was a considerable enthusiasm for attracting the leading composers from Austria and German lands and encouraging them to write pieces specially for the Philharmonic Society in London.

The arrival of continental composers was significant. Clementi spent most of his life in England, having arrived in 1815, Cherubini was made an associate and then a member of the Society, Spohr came in 1820 and con-

7 Foster, *History* [1912], 6.

tributed to a large number of first performances in London.⁸ The most famous move in this direction was the approach to Beethoven to compose new music for the Society, including the Symphony No. 9. Large sums of money were paid to Beethoven to encourage him to come to London (which he never did) and to write new works for performance at the concerts (which he did).⁹ Although Beethoven was not as poor as he claimed, he was certainly grateful for the generosity and kindness of the society. The commission for the Ninth Symphony did produce the work which was duly performed in the Society's concerts in 1825, even if it had already been performed in Vienna.¹⁰

Two other composers from Germany featured prominently in the 1820s. Weber came to London in 1826 to conduct his opera *Oberon* at the Covent Garden Theatre and a Philharmonic concert including some of his works to great acclaim and to his great satisfaction on 3 April 1826, but he died two months later. At his funeral Mozart's Requiem was performed. The second composer was Mendelssohn who came in 1829 for the first of numerous visits which included the commission and/or first performances in England of his Symphony No. 4 in A (*Italian*), Symphony No 3 in A minor (*Scottish*) and the Overture *Fingal's Cave*, inspired by the Scottish island of Staffa that he visited. Mendelssohn was treated generously by the society, finding great satisfaction, while returning the favour with outstanding orchestral and other works including overtures. It was certainly one of the most rewarding associations that the Society experienced. Numerous other composers were invited to perform their works in the next decades: Berlioz, Liszt and Wagner were notable visitors.

Cipriani Potter and English Music

Very little from English composers was performed, at least to start with, a situation which is easy to explain. There were not many capable English

8 During the 1820 season Spohr changed the role of the conductor permanently to real direction by removing the piano in performances.

9 The overture *Namensfeier* was probably given its first performance by the Society on 25 March 1816, although it is possible that the overture had been previously performed in Vienna.

10 Details of the Philharmonic's dealings with Beethoven can be found in: Hogarth, *The Philharmonic Society of London*; George Grove, *Beethoven and his Nine Symphonies* (London: Novello and Oxford University Press, 1896); Foster, *History* [1912]; and Nicholas Cook, *Beethoven Symphony No. 9* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

composers, to say nothing of a very negative attitude towards locally composed music. Music by Thomas Attwood, a pupil of Mozart, does not appear in the programmes until 1820, nor any by Henry Bishop, famous for the sentimental song *Home, Sweet Home*, until 1817, nor even by William Shield at all. In fact, the first English composer to have his works performed at the Philharmonic concerts was William Crotch, the Heather Professor of Music at the University of Oxford. A famous quartet from his oratorio *Pal-estine* was sung in the first season and his Symphony in F major played in the second (16 May 1814). This was a modestly inventive work in the normal style of the period, but it bears little comparison with the contemporary Seventh and Eighth Symphonies of Beethoven. Apart from two repeats of the quartet and of a sextet from the same oratorio and a few minor vocal works, there were no more works by Crotch, although he did conduct six concerts.

Much more significant was the appearance of the young and talented Cipriani Potter,¹¹ son of the viola player and founder member of the society, R. H. Potter.¹² The younger Potter had studied with Crotch in Oxford and was a member of the Harmonic Society there, before moving to London to become an associate of the Philharmonic Society. When he reached the age of 21, he then became a member. Here he thrived as composer, pianist, and conductor, and was one of the most performed English composers in the Philharmonic concerts of the earlier 19th century.¹³ In 1816 his Overture in E minor and the Septet for piano, flute and strings were composed for and played by the society. From 1826 to 1872 there were nine performances of his symphonies¹⁴ and four performances of his Overture *Cymbeline* between

11 His full name was Philip Cipriani Hambly Potter (1792–1871).

12 Richard Huddleston Potter (1755–1821) was apparently also an organist and flautist. See: Philip H. Peter and Julian Rushton, “Potter,” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol. 20, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillian, 2001), 221; and Philip H. Peter, “Potter,” *The Grove Dictionary of Musical Instruments*, vol. 4, ed. Laurence Libin (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 154. See also: William Waterhouse, “Potter,” in *The New Langwill Index* (London: Tony Bingham, 1993), 308.

13 The works performed in the Philharmonic’s concerts and their dates up to and including 1912 are fully listed in Myles B. Foster’s *History* (1912).

14 The Symphonies of Potter are confusingly numbered, by date and/or by key. One performance was given of No. 1 in G minor of 1819 performed on 29 May 1826, conducted by the composer, and two of the second in G minor of 1832 (also called No. 6) (the performance of 28 May 1855 conducted by Wagner), two of the A minor symphony (now apparently lost), three of a D major symphony, and one of another D major symphony. Both G minor symphonies have been published in modern editions,

1837 and 1871. With his reportedly superb piano technique, he was able to play the solo part in eleven Philharmonic concerts, including a number of Mozart's concertos, notably those in D minor K466 and C minor K491, and Beethoven's First, Third and Fourth Concertos. He conducted the society's orchestra in 32 concerts between 1820 and 1844. At the same time he was also from its founding in 1822 the chief piano tutor at the Royal Academy of Music. In 1832 he became the principal of the Academy on the resignation of William Crotch,¹⁵ a post Potter held with distinction until his retirement in 1859. It is no exaggeration to say that Potter transformed orchestral music in London, by his compositions, his conducting and his teaching. How much he did for the standing of contemporary British composers is not so clear, but other composers were now able to build on these foundations.

Crotch, Potter, John Fane and the Academy of Music

The connection between William Crotch, Cipriani Potter and the Academy of Music¹⁶ leads us to an important amateur in the development of musical composition in 19th-century England. John Fane (1784–1859), a career military man, soldier and later a politician and diplomat, who was also musically trained, was normally known by his courtesy title Lord Burghersh and in 1841 inherited the further title of the 11th Earl of Westmorland. There is no evidence of Lord Burghersh's presence in the Philharmonic Society until the concert on 26 May 1817, when a manuscript Symphony of his was the first item in the same programme as none other than Beethoven's Fifth

No. 1 (edited by Bert Hagels): Cipriani Potter, *Symphonie Nr. 1 in g-moll* [*Symphony No. 1 in G minor*], ed. Bert Hagels (Berlin: Ries & Erler, 2019), and No. 2 (or No. 6) of 1832 (edited by Julian Rushton): Cipriani Potter, *Symphony* [No. 2] *in G minor*, ed. Julian Rushton (London: Musica Britannica and Stainer & Bell, 2001).

- 15 The circumstances of Crotch's departure from the post of principal of the Academy are surrounded in some mystery. The exact reason is given by Jonathan Rennert (Jonathan Rennert, *William Crotch (1775–1847): Composer, Artist, Teacher* (Lavenham: Terence Dalton, 1975), 68–9): "The reason for this hurried departure was apparently that Dr Crotch had inadvertently rewarded one of the girls for a particularly brilliant harmony exercise, by giving her a kiss. At that very moment, Mrs Iliff, the Academy's governess, had happened to enter the room, and not being accustomed to seeing her girls embraced by their professors, had at once submitted an agitated report to the Committee. This body, entirely misunderstanding her account of the affair, and perhaps looking for an excuse to rid themselves of Crotch, passed that damning resolution which forced him to resign."
- 16 It appears to have been called the Royal Academy of Music from the beginning, having royal patronage from King George IV, although it received its royal charter only in 1830.

Symphony. This symphony of Burghersh was described thus: “*First performance in England; presented to this Society*,”¹⁷ being identified by Nicholas Temperley as the Symphony No. 1 in G.¹⁸ It follows the only other early English symphony performed at the early Philharmonic concerts, William Crotch’s Symphony in F major in 1814.¹⁹

At the same time Lord Burghersh was planning moves to found the Royal Academy of Music. One of his associates, T. F. Walmisley, submitted a plan that attempted to incorporate the Philharmonic Society within its operations,²⁰ but in the end, it was Burghersh’s scheme for an independent Academy that was adopted by the amateur organising committee. In 1822 Burghersh appointed Crotch as principal, but ensured that he was in control of the Academy himself when it was founded and opened for students in early 1823. To add to the difficulties he was resident in Florence at the start of the Academy’s life and in 1841 was appointed ambassador to the court of Prussia in Berlin. In 1830 under the new Royal Charter Lord Burghersh was appointed chairman of what was now the Royal Academy of Music, a position he held for the rest of his life. In the years from 1832 until 1859 when Cipriani Potter was the principal of the Royal Academy, it seems that Burghersh was constantly interfering with its work and, judging by the lack of performances of his music, that he was also out of favour with the Philharmonic. Potter had a foot in both camps, as both regular conductor and occasional soloist in piano concertos, he was a major influence in the programmes of the Philharmonic, in addition to being the principal and the leading professor at the Academy. He felt the need to steer the public and his students away from the Italian music that Burghersh was almost exclusively advocating. It was a clear case of an amateur trying to direct the professionals. At the same time, however, Lord Burghersh’s considerable abilities at fundraising were to ensure that the Academy would survive financially. He made repeated attempts, mostly successful, to influ-

17 Foster, *History* [1912], 32.

18 Nicholas Temperley, “Burghersh, Lord,” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol. 4, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 2001), 617. In 1834 Lord Burghersh requested the return of the score and parts from the Philharmonic Society, because there had been no repeat performances, a possible indication of some difficulties between the Society and Lord Burghersh, and of the quality of the work. Piano reductions of four of his symphonies published in Berlin can be found in the British Library.

19 Foster, *History* [1912], 16.

20 See: William Wahab Cazalet, *The History of the Royal Academy of Music* (London: Bosworth and Rudall, Rose & Carte, 1854), 8–12.

ence rich patrons, members of the Government and royalty to help to support the finances of the institution. Potter retired from the Academy in 1859 and Burghersh, now the Earl of Westmorland, died in the same year, leading to financial difficulties for the Academy.

The Philharmonic and British music

In order to gauge the effect that the work of the Philharmonic Society was having on the development of the native composition (mostly English), it is useful to give some details of the performances of the music presented. It should be made clear that the most important works are symphonies, orchestral concert overtures and solo concertos. In addition, there were vocal ensembles from operas, oratorios and cantatas, and in the earlier years chamber music, mostly for larger ensembles. The Philharmonic concerts were conducted by a group of prominent musicians, mostly pianists, on a rotational basis. Muzio Clementi, now permanently resident in England, at first shared with John B. Cramer, but George Smart and three composer-pianists, Thomas Attwood, Henry Bishop and Ferdinand Ries,²¹ joined the group later. A pertinent comment comes from George Hogarth about a composer and occasional conductor, Charles Griffin, who

*distinguished himself by several works of great merit, but (as has been the case with many English musicians) his attention was diverted from composition to the labours of what is in this country a more advantageous branch of his profession.*²²

Significantly in 1822 Cipriani Potter entered the rotation. Recently installed as the first and leading professor of piano at the Royal Academy of Music he conducted his first concert on 25 March 1822 and at the next concert on 15 April 1822 played the piano part in Beethoven's First Piano Concerto.

In the years up to 1832 there were some performances of British symphonies, for example, those by Crotch, Burghersh, Berger, Clementi, On-

21 George Hogarth (Hogarth, *The Philharmonic Society of London*, 13), wrote somewhat scathingly about Ries: "This composer's fame has not been so durable as it at first promised to be. He [Ries] was a great pianist, and his voluminous works have every good quality, save that of originality, the only quality which confers permanent vitality."

22 Ibid., 14.

slow²³ and Potter (No. 1 in G minor). In the period from 1832 to 1844 when Potter was involved on a regular basis as conductor, English symphonies performed were by Onslow and Potter (three symphonies, No. 2 (or No.6) in G minor, a second in A minor twice and another in D). By the time of the last performance conducted by Potter in 1844, it was decided that there should be a permanent conductor. The dull and uninspiring composer and conductor Henry Bishop, surprisingly appointed for the whole 1845 season, managed only three concerts,²⁴ and was replaced in the following season by the dynamic disciplinarian Michael Costa for 71 concerts from 1846 to 1854, a move which put the Philharmonic on a sound footing again, but which did something to enhance the position of English composers. Costa apparently was a difficult man with whom to work. The most notorious event was the dispute between Costa and the outstanding pianist and composer, William Sterndale Bennett (1816–1875), involving gossip about Costa playing part of one of Bennett's works (the Overture *Parisina*) too slowly.²⁵ Consequently there was only one work by Bennett performed at the Philharmonic between 1848 and 1856. The few English works under Costa were by the revered Cipriani Potter and Charles Lucas (Potter's successor as principal at the Royal Academy), the young George Macfarren, the French resident George Onslow and a few of Bennett's works performed before the dispute arose. The following single season with Richard Wagner at the helm (1855) was not a great success nor was it a failure. It included single works by Potter (his Symphony No 2 in G minor), Onslow, Macfarren (*Chevvy Chase Overture*) and Charles Lucas's Third Symphony (conducted by the composer not Wagner). It appeared that British music was beginning to make some headway.

William Sterndale Bennett and William Cusins

With the 1856 season Bennett was elected conductor, but showed great reluctance to promote his own works, as his son relates:

- 23 George or Georges Onslow (1784–1853) was an English-born composer who worked mainly in France. Two of his symphonies were performed by the Philharmonic Society (one on two occasions), both billed as premieres and dedicated to the society, but previously performed in Paris.
- 24 The remaining five concerts of the 1845 season were conducted by the extremely reliable Ignaz Moscheles who remained in London until tempted back to the city of Leipzig in 1846.
- 25 The details were given in great detail by Bennett's son, J. R. Sterndale Bennett, in *The Life of William Sterndale Bennett* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907; London: Travis & Emery, R/2010), 189–201.

*Bennett, throughout the time that he held the conductorship, frequently asked the Directors not to introduce compositions of his own [...]. For one thing, the works of other British composers were seldom placed upon the programmes, and he would not like, whilst he was Conductor, to have a prominence given to his music if his fellow countrymen did not share the honours.*²⁶

In fact, contrary to his protestations, during the time of Bennett's conductorship (1856–1866), there were seventeen performances of his works, the Piano Concerto No. 1 (once), No. 2 (once), No. 3 (twice), No. 4 (three times), the Caprice in E, *The Naiads Overture* (twice), *The Wood Nymphs Overture* (once), *Paradise and the Peri* (four times), and the Symphony in G minor (twice), a very rich harvest indeed. Apart from Piano Concerto No. 1, all the other concertos were played by a talented young lady called Arabella Goddard who was married to the controversial music critic J. W. Davison, a very prominent supporter of new British works. The only other English works conducted by Bennett in his eleven years as the director of the Philharmonic were two overtures by his teacher Cipriani Potter, *Ajax and Achilles* and *Cymbeline*. The progress of British music had slowed down.

The situation was about to change dramatically. After withdrawing from the conductorship of the Philharmonic Society, Bennett spent the years from 1866 until his death in 1875 as principal of the Royal Academy of Music, rescuing it from financial disaster and probable closure. That he was successful was due to his patient and persistently positive actions.²⁷ He was succeeded as the Philharmonic's conductor from 1867 to 1883 by the reportedly dull and uninspiring William Cusins for some 134 concerts. Yet the numbers of British works performed increased significantly. Cusins was wedded to the traditional classics of his predecessors, for example, conducting all the Beethoven symphonies on numerous occasions, programming many works by the English favourite Mendelssohn and welcoming many distinguished soloists from the continent, for example, Clara Schumann, Joseph Joachim and Charles Hallé. At the same time he increased almost surreptitiously the numbers of British works. Not only did he pay tribute to his predecessor, William Sterndale Bennett, with repeat performances of his Piano Concertos, the Symphony in G minor (three times) and various overtures, but he also featured a number of works by the talented George Macfarren, inexplicably ignored by the Philharmonic for

26 Ibid. [1907], 247.

27 Ibid., 369–75.

many years. The veteran Cipriani Potter who died in 1871 was celebrated with performances of two symphonies and an overture. Other British composers, whose names are now largely forgotten, included the careful Julius Benedict and the bold romantic symphonist Frederic Cliffe whose music is now staging a revival. The appearance of excellent orchestral works by Arthur Sullivan were often overshadowed by his brilliant operettas composed mostly to librettos by the equally talented W. S. Gilbert. On the serious side, though, Sullivan's Symphony in E major and Cello Concerto (both were performed at the Philharmonic concerts) are still very impressive 150 years later. This is the period that British music had begun to regain its stature and was clearly the time that British composers would begin to thrive. In his statistical summary of the two decades, 1863–1872 and 1873–1882, Foster in his *History* counted over twice as many British works performed in the second decade.²⁸

All was not well, however. The Philharmonic Society consisted of a small number of wealthy amateur subscribers, but did not increase its membership substantially partly because it was using small and often unsuitable halls, notably The Argyll Rooms and Hanover Rooms which could accommodate only a few hundred members of the audience. A warning came in 1868 from the society's conductor, William Cusins:

The Society's conductor pointed out how the Crystal Palace²⁹ concerts, under Mr August Manns, were competing with the Philharmonic and warned the Directors that they must engage a larger hall, and must advertise in a more imposing manner, or they would be fairly elbowed off by their rivals.³⁰

This problem was not solved until the 1893 opening of the new purpose-built Queen's Hall in Central London which the Philharmonic used from 28 February 1894.

28 Foster, *History* [1912], 336, 389. The numbers are respectively 31 and 66.

29 The Crystal Palace was a huge construction, mostly of glass, designed for the Great Exhibition of 1851 and located in Hyde Park in central London. It was only a temporary structure, but to keep it the building was removed to a site in Sydenham in South London being reassembled and extended for a grand opening in 1854. It was not used for musical events to start with, but its size proved excellent for large-scale concerts with popular appeal. It remained for over 80 years until it was destroyed by fire in 1936. See: Michael Musgrave, *The Musical Life of the Crystal Palace* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995).

30 Foster, *History* [1912], 298.

Parry and Stanford and others

The finances had lurched from crisis to crisis, often in tandem with problems caused by the ad hoc administration. In the 1880s the Society was rescued artistically and financially by the Director Francesco Berger,³¹ who adopted a totally professional and up-to-date approach to the society's administration. Once the Society had recovered from these near disasters the scene was set for two composers to build on this now firm foundation. On 30 June 1880, Hubert Parry's charming and innocent song, *It was a Lover and his Lass*, was sung at a Philharmonic concert by Antoinette Sterling accompanied (presumably) by Cusins, and more strikingly on 23 March 1882, Charles Villiers Stanford's the Overture to the opera *The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan* was played. The appearance of these two composers at the Philharmonic's concerts was unobtrusive, but it was the beginning of a rich and fertile association with the Society. There were numerous changes in the next twenty years, but the appearance of new works by British composers was now frequent and welcomed.

With the retirement of William Cusins, the conductorship was taken over in 1884 by a varied but very capable group which included George Mount, Stanford, Antonín Dvořák and for the final two concerts the composer and excellent conductor Frederic Cowen. Arthur Sullivan conducted most of the concerts in the years 1885–1887, with Cowen returning for 1888–1892. The Scottish composer, conductor and academic Alexander Mackenzie was appointed director from 1893 to 1899, and then Cowen returned until 1908 from when the famous Henry J. Wood (the founder of the London Proms in the Queen's Hall) took over much of the work. It appears that Sullivan and Cowen did the most to promote British music.

By 1880 the renaissance of British music was well under way, although as we can see, there had been considerable progress in the previous fifty years. In the years 1880–1890, the performance at concerts of the Philharmonic Society of significant new British orchestral works, especially symphonies, became common. The *Sinfonietta* and Fourth and Fifth Symphonies of Frederic Cowen, the Symphony in C minor by Frederic Cliffe, and numerous orchestral works by Sullivan, Macfarren and Mackenzie were performed at the Society's concerts. But probably the most important development was the emergence of Parry and Stanford as the leaders of the

31 Cyril Ehrlich, *First Philharmonic: A History of the Royal Philharmonic Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 132–57, the chapter entitled "Francesco Berger and Recovery."

new music. The first performance in 1889 of Parry's Symphony No. 3 ("The English") indicates this well. With the successful performance of his choral *Blest Pair of Sirens* in St James's Hall in London (conducted by Stanford) in 1887 and his oratorio *Judith* in Birmingham in 1888, much was expected of this symphony and the public were not disappointed.

Stanford's Third and Fifth Symphonies, performed in 1893 and 1895 respectively, added to the impressive range of new British music, while the arrival of the music of Edward Elgar in London in the early years of the 20th century, especially the impressive *Enigma Variations* in 1908 and the outstanding Symphony No. 1 in A flat major, conducted at a Philharmonic concert by no less than Arthur Nikisch in 1909 and then by the composer himself in 1910.³² It was hardly surprising that the word "Royal" was added to the society's name on its centenary in 1913, to become the Royal Philharmonic Society, the name by which it is known today.

The Development of the British Musical Renaissance

The activities of the Philharmonic Society cannot really be said solely to dictate or reflect musical taste in England. There were other societies and groups in the earlier part of the 19th century, but they were not especially influential. Certainly in the earlier part of the 19th century the Society and particular the amateurs, rather than the professional performers, were able to influence the choice of music to be performed. There were conflicting aims involved here, however, as there was great enthusiasm for attracting famous composers and performers from the European continent and a lack of desire to promote the interests of British composers. An additional problem was the fact that those native composers with the ability to produce impressive new works were being drawn in a number of other directions. In the first instance they were performers, particularly pianists, who had the ability to play solo parts in concertos, as well as to direct performances which involved performing works by Beethoven, Spohr, Mendelssohn

32 In fact, it had already received its first performance in Manchester on 3 December 1908, conducted by Hans Richter and then four days later in London again conducted by Richter. It achieved nearly one hundred performances in the first year, and in 1909 and 1910 performances all over Europe (Diana McVeagh, *Edward Elgar: His Life and Music* (London: Dent, 1955), 50). There had been great expectation in advance of its first appearance, something indicated in the article by H. C. Colles, a leading critic and musicologist, editor of two editions of the *Grove Dictionary of Music*: H. C. Colles, "Sir Edward Elgar's Symphony," *The Musical Times* 49, no. 790 (1908): 778–80, <https://doi.org/10.2307/907822>.

and others rather than their own music. Another difficulty was the demand for leading musicians to take on heavy teaching commitments in the Royal Academy of Music, as well as in a number of cases difficult administrative roles in the Academy. Undoubtedly, for example, the talents of Cipriani Potter were spread very thinly over a number of activities. Despite the high quality of his music, he was more easily satisfied with performing the solo piano part in concertos by Mozart and Beethoven and preparing performing editions of Mozart's piano music than facing the indifference encountered in promoting his own music. Nevertheless, his music was highly regarded and was regularly performed by other musicians. William Sterndale Bennett had the best of both worlds, at first playing the solo part in his own piano concertos and then conducting them with soloists who were undoubtedly keen to use them as a vehicle for their own reputations. His difficulty, as also in the case of Cipriani Potter was the demands of the Academy, of which he was also principal. Potter managed to guide the institution as principal successfully until his retirement and the death of Lord Burghersh, but Bennett was forced to abandon his conducting activities altogether to come to the rescue of the Academy in the nine years before his death. The situation was changing, however, so when the conductors who could really influence the situation appeared, notably Sullivan, Stanford, Cowen, Mackenzie and Henry Wood, the newcomers among the composers, Hubert Parry and Charles Villiers Stanford, were able to present their new symphonies and other orchestral works with relative ease. The time was now right for the crowning genius of the British music renaissance to appear, Edward Elgar, whose outstanding orchestral masterpieces, especially the *Enigma Variations* and the two Symphonies,³³ were able to make their powerful effect. In recognition of the Society's centenary and its achievement, in 1913 it was given the title Royal Philharmonic Society.

33 The sketches for a Third Symphony were elaborated in the 1990s by the composer and Elgar specialist Anthony Payne (1936–2021) as a completed symphony, first performed in London in 1997. See: Anthony Payne, *Elgar's Third Symphony: The Story of the Reconstruction* (London: Faber, 1998) and the published score: Edward Elgar, *Symphony No. 3: The Sketches for Symphony No. 3 elaborated by Anthony Payne*, full score (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1998).

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