

The Memorial Church at Harvard University

Music Notes for March 5, 2023

Sir John Stainer was organist of Magdalen College, Oxford (1860–72), and St. Paul's Cathedral, London (1872–88), before spending the final twelve years of his life as Professor of Music at Oxford University. A combination of Victorian pietism and the growth of Anglo-Catholic theology led to the development of a high musical aesthetic in the church, to which Stainer and others responded with the production of increasingly elaborate and dramatic liturgical music. *The Crucifixion* is Stainer's "Meditation on the Sacred Passion of the Holy Redeemer" and was composed to a text of the Reverend William John Sparrow-Simpson for the church choir of St. Marylebone, London. It gained such widespread fame that within a year it was performed more frequently in England than any other choral work, except *Messiah* and the Mendelssohn oratorios; "God So Loved the World" is the work's elegiac centerpiece.

Harold Darke studied at the Royal College of Music under Stanford, and served in the Royal Air Force. He held the post of organist and choirmaster of St. Michael's, Cornhill (City of London), continuously from 1916 to 1969 with the exception of the years 1941 to 1945 when he stood in at King's College, Cambridge, for Boris Ord, who was enlisted to serve in the second world war. The *Communion Service in E* was written for the choir of King's College and is a simple, elegant, and very singable setting of the Mass ordinary.

Sir Charles Villiers Stanford studied at Cambridge University and also in Leipzig and Berlin, where he was a pupil of Carl Reinecke: while in Germany, he became an ardent devotee of the music of Johannes Brahms, whose influence is strongly heard throughout Stanford's oeuvre. Stanford was later the organist of Trinity College, Cambridge, before moving to London as the first professor of composition at the new Royal College of Music, where his notable students included Gustav Holst, Herbert Howells, and Ralph Vaughan Williams. Long overshadowed by his choral works, Stanford's organ works are also of a very high quality; this morning's postlude is the final work in his Op. 105 collection of preludes and postludes.

The American composer Craig Phillips is well-known for his many choral and organ compositions that have become a regular part of the repertoire of American churches. He has had a long association with All Saints' Church, Beverly Hills, where he has served for many years, formerly as Music Associate and currently as Director of Music. Today's prelude is an expressive, melodious interpretation of the opening verses of Psalm 40: "I waited patiently upon the Lord; he stooped to me and heard my cry...He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God; many shall see, and stand in awe, and put their trust in the Lord."