

English music in the 20th century



Sir Alexander Mackenzie (1847–1935)

Sir Alexander Campbell Mackenzie was widely recognized as the greatest Scottish composer of his day. As a youth he went to Germany to study at the Saunderhausen Conservatory (1857-62), winning the King's Scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music in 1862. In 1865 he returned to his native Edinburgh, where he spent 14 years as violinist, teacher, and choir conductor. In 1879 he went to Florence and devoted himself to composition, until 1888 when he was appointed principal of the Royal Academy of Music, a post he held until 1924. He was knighted in 1895.

Sir Charles Villiers Stanford (1852 - 1924)

Born and raised in Dublin, Stanford was the only son of a prosperous Protestant lawyer. His genius for classical musical forms gained him admission to Cambridge University at the age of 18 where he quickly established a commanding reputation, and was appointed organist of Trinity College while still an undergraduate. Afterward he went to Germany to study composition with Carl Reinecke in Leipzig, and later with Friedrich Kiel in Berlin. He went on to compose in almost every music form including seven symphonies; ten operas; fifteen concertante works; chamber, piano, and organ pieces; and over thirty large-scale choral works. His voluminous sacred music continues to be the foundation of the Anglican tradition.



Sir Hubert Parry (1848–1918)

While still at Eton, Parry earned the Oxford bachelor of music degree, subsequently entering Exeter College at Oxford. His marriage to Maude Herbert, sister of his school chum George Herbert, 13th Earl of Pembroke, forced him to seek nonmusical work with Lloyd's register in London while establishing himself as a composer, but it was while working in London that he met and allied himself with teacher and pianist Edward Dannreuther, who was a great influence on the young man, arranging for private performances of much of Parry's early chamber music, and introducing him to the music of Wagner by procuring for Parry tickets for the second ever performance at Bayreuth of the *Ring*.

Parry made his mark at the many choral society festivals throughout England, with 1880's *Scenes from Shelley's Prometheus Bound*, *Blest Pair of Sirens* (1887; to words of Milton), a setting of Milton's *L'allegro ed il penseroso* (1890), the oratorio *Job* (1892; considered by some to be his masterpiece of the 1890s), and the sublime *Invocation to Music*, with words by Robert Bridges (1895). In these works, Parry came up with a tangible English style, all the more noteworthy for its originality and wit.

Toward the end of his life, Parry was honoured with knighthood and a baronetcy, as well as the genuine affection of the many composers who had benefited from his prescient and understanding way with helping his students find their own voices. In 1908, a breakdown of health forced Parry to retire from his administrative posts, but instead of causing a cessation creative activity, this crisis actually brought about what is frequently described as his 'Indian summer,' in which some of his very finest music was written.