

# **Reframing the History of Classical Music in Ireland: 1820-1920**

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## ABSTRACT

### Reframing the History of Classical Music in Ireland 1820-1920

Barra Ó Seaghdha

Ireland's classical music culture was, for long, strikingly underdeveloped, with a paucity, until recently, both of composers of international reputation and of writing (critical or historical) worthy of international attention. Where the historiography of the topic is concerned, activity was minimal until recent times. After some initial efforts to present basic information about musical activity over the centuries, the need to explain and conceptualise the condition of classical music in Ireland grew.

Two writers, Joseph Ryan and Harry White, were to the fore in proposing a theory that has dominated the field since the publication of White's *The Keeper's Recital* (1998). This theory affirms that the rise of nineteenth-century Irish nationalism, both cultural and political, polarised classical music between narrow political demands (music as reinforcement or symbol of the cause) and a cosmopolitan European culture which in Ireland was damaged by its introduction by, and association with, Ascendancy and British power.

The thesis focuses on 1820-1920 as it contests this theory. My research first demonstrates how little concrete historical evidence there is for the theory. Second, it deploys and itself adapts T.C.W. Blanning's properly historicised adaptation of Jürgen Habermas's concept of the public sphere. This becomes a tool for escaping nationalist/cosmopolitan polarities and for exploring the dynamics of Irish middle-class urban culture, and the place of classical music within it, in its relation to society at large. This process leads to innovative readings of important figures in music history, to a new conceptualisation of the increasing divergence between British and Irish musical life, to the opening up of rich comparative perspectives and to the reasons behind the failure of classical music to benefit substantially from the cultural mobilisation seen during the Irish Revival and to play a significant role in projecting national identity.

## INTRODUCTION

The last forty years have been enormously productive where research into Irish history is concerned. From pre-Celtic society to the present day, few areas have not been subjected to new and challenging interpretation. Increasing attention has been paid to areas such as social history (including the history of previously marginal groups), to labour history, to women's history, to emigration, to Irish participation in the British Army and in Empire, to emigration, and to in-depth local studies.

Nonetheless, the public impact of history and historians continues to lie in high politics, in the telling and retelling and counter-telling of national history, the journey towards the formation of the independent Irish state and its history. The old triad of land, nationality and religion still holds sway, however transformed. It is curious that, despite the massive urbanisation of Irish society over the last half-century how little the life of towns and cities figures in surveys of the last century or two or how little effort has been made to explore the particular nature of the middle classes, whether in an internal or in a comparative perspective.

The intensity of debate among contemporary historians of Ireland has its parallel in the literary and cultural field. Numerous critics have interpreted and argued over implicit and explicit notions of national identity or allegiance as mediated through literature, and have proposed competing versions of Irish literary or cultural history. To say that cultural debate runs parallel with historical debate is not to suggest that there is no crossing of lines, that the historians ignore the cultural historians, or vice versa. It is noteworthy, nonetheless, that even such original and broad-ranging works as Joep Leerssen's *Remembrance and Imagination* (1996), Seamus Deane's *Strange Country* (1997) or Declan Kiberd's *Inventing Ireland* (1995) focus largely on the world as seen by writers and intellectuals. The growth of Irish Studies, often with a post-colonial perspective, has only partially affected the dominance of literary intellectuals in the field. Work remains to be done, therefore, in connecting artistic and intellectual culture with culture in the broad sense: the way in which class, education, religion, language and geographical location have shaped the cultural practices and aspirations of Irish people.

That Ireland, a country often associated with music and song, failed to produce either a nationally coloured upsurge in creative activity or a composer to match Dvořák, Janáček, Grieg, Sibelius, Nielsen or Elgar (not to mention Ives or Bartók) has often been remarked on. Not entirely surprisingly, this absence was accompanied by the absence of a tradition of sustained critical attention and by the near-absence of historical writing on the subject. Though there may have been

more low-level discussion or debate on classical music in journals of various kinds than was obvious twenty or thirty years ago, the fact remains that no historical survey of classical music in Ireland, or study of a particular composer or musician, figured among the books that educated and curious general readers about Ireland felt they had to read.

It must also be said that Irish music departments failed for a century to direct their students towards the exploration of long-forgotten works, of individual composers and musicians or of the society in which classical music had failed to flourish. As time went on, pioneering attempts to gather the elements of a coherent history got underway. Meanwhile, the growth of Irish studies in the 1980s, with its strongly literary base in the United States, expanded its attention to the non-literary aspects of Irish culture. It was then, perhaps, that the curious absence of Irish classical music and its culture began to strike those with a belief in its value or who wondered, in the most serious way, why there was so little of it and why so little attention was being paid to what there was. (As it happens, much of value was happening.) Finally, in the 1990s, music departments began to hum with activity and an infrastructure for Irish classical music studies began to be built. One of the main driving forces behind much of this activity was Professor Harry White of University College Dublin. There was still a need, however, for an explanation of the underdevelopment of classical music over several centuries. It may be that, as international connections developed, the question was more urgently felt.

The previous isolation of classical music departments from wider debates within the humanities, combined with the feeling of belonging to an under-valued sector, may have led, however unconsciously, to a certain sense of cultural victimhood that discouraged exploration of uncomfortable aspects of the social history of classical music. Be that as it may, when Harry White, building on Joseph Ryan's researches (1991, 1995), proposed and articulated a theory about Ireland's minimal contribution to the international history of classical music, his emphasis on the suffocating effect of Irish nationalism gained rapid acceptance. Though *The Keeper's Recital* (1998) had an impressive range of reference and announced itself in sophisticated terms, it also had the virtue of underlying simplicity and seeming finality. With whatever subtle variations and concessions to other factors, it suggested – an idea reinforced by the sheer weight of attention it brought to bear on this particular factor – that Irish nationalism (with an emphasis on music's utility to the cause) had been inherently hostile to classical music. The latter had had the misfortune to be historically associated with Ascendancy culture – impeding its dissemination in broader Irish society. This remains the dominant framing of the story of classical music in Ireland.

Serious work has been done in recent years in such areas as the role of nationalism in Irish music history, on matters of identity, and of education. Patrick Zuk (2004) has countered Ryan and White very effectively on the philosophical definition of nationalism and on the role of nationalism in the world of classical music. More recently, and in a very different mode, Benjamin Dwyer has performed a double task in his *Different Voices: Irish Music and Music in Ireland* (2014). He has made available, in the form of substantial interviews, the thinking and experience of an impressive range of Irish composers and has challenged them in a way that is rarely found today in the literary field. In itself this is a reproach to the general neglect of the field in Irish cultural life. Along with this, in an introductory essay of great vigour, he has exposed the bleak home that has been offered to classical music by the Irish state, while also succinctly exposing the logic of power – political and cultural – in the previous centuries of classical music history. In so doing, he also questions the premises on which Ryan and White have operated.

The present thesis had its origins in the belief that both Ryan's thesis and White's underlying approach in the *Keeper's Recital* were defective. To disagree is not difficult and to make articulating disagreement the main thrust of a piece of research has its dangers: it could, for example, very easily lead to the erection of a counter-theory that took its shape from what it criticised. The work presented here has a more constructive goal. If the implicit narrative of the *Keeper's Recital* – the book is not a history as such, as White makes very clear – was structured around a single dominating concept (the polarised understanding mentioned above), there was much ground to explore. If White and those who are in general agreement with him appear to be speaking very much from within the culture and world-view of classical music in Ireland, an interesting challenge presented itself: to set the world of classical music within the broader patterns of cultural, social, political and economic life in Ireland. In other words, to break down the invisible wall between the history of classical music and history as it is practised in other areas and in the process to offer a fuller and more historically grounded explanation of the history of classical music in Ireland.

For the purposes of this thesis, which is not a history of musical forms, the term classical music is used in a broad sense, as befits a study of a music culture that was slow to develop the separation of genres and the strong contrast between elite and popular forms. As David Deutsch writes in his *British Literature and Classical Music: Cultural Contexts: 1870-1945*:

Of course the phrase 'classical music' is itself worth defining in cultural contexts. I use 'classical music' here [...] in its popular sense, which strands of music inclusive of forms such as cantatas, oratorios, symphonies, and opera, from J.S. Bach to Gioachino Rossini to Richard Wagner, whether performed by concert orchestras or brass bands.

Or, in an Irish and British context, it would apply to an aria sung at the piano at home. The logic of this broad definition corresponds to the thinking of the early nineteenth century as outlined here by Derek Carew. Having described the mixed fare offered by various concerts he proceeds:

The catholic concert programmes described above, together with the performance conditions characteristic for the operatic repertory, are a warning against any attempt to apply our present-day compartmentalisation of musical styles: Classical (or art), popular, pop, folk, light Classical, not to mention the divisions that reside within these generalities. These can obscure the fact that such oppositions between 'Classical' and popular or high and low styles carried little weight until the middle of the century and were themselves an indication of the bourgeoisie's ascendancy to a semi-autocratic cultural elite (Carew 2014, p.240).

The point is particularly pertinent as the failure of classical music in Ireland to develop such compartmentalisation and to separate itself from song is a dominant theme in the work of both Joseph Ryan and Harry White. As we shall see, the nineteenth-century Irish urban middle class did not achieve ascendancy of the type mentioned by Carew. In fact, its most impressive achievements lay in the campaigns, mostly involving its Catholic component, to create a polity in which it might achieve ascendancy. And it is the gentle evolution from eighteenth-century patterns rather than a nationalist turn, as it were, that mark the history of classical music in Ireland.

The ultimate weakness of Ryan and White is that they judge Ireland as a country that has failed to achieve in the field of classical music what neighbouring nations have, but fail to analyse the processes by which a socially restricted music culture that, especially after the Union, could be described as weakly British-provincial could attain a strong presence in Irish society and cultural life. Only an initiative from within the Protestant middle class (and there appears to have been none of any substance, except among the minority who became Irish nationalists of some kind) or initiatives coming from the emerging Catholic middle class, from the Catholic Church, from movements for the creation of an active and autonomous Irish cultural sphere, or from the British state could have achieved this. None of these forces did have such a transformative effect. If Ryan and White are effectively criticising Ireland for having failed to move in one leap from British provincialism to an Irish post-national, cosmopolitan embrace of abstract music, our task is the less judgemental and more historically grounded one of discovering and analysing the forces and conditions that shaped the history of classical music in Ireland as it unfolded.

How is this task to be approached? Chapter One surveys key works in the literature. These fall into two categories. The first is the work of the pioneering historians in the field, such as Brian

Boydell (1979 etc.) and Aloys Fleischmann (1952, 1996 etc.), to whom may be added Ita Hogan (1966), who studied under and was research assistant to Fleischmann. These assembled much of the lost history of classical music in Ireland and made it available in useful and uncomplicated form. The second category encompasses the more idea-driven work of Joseph Ryan and Harry White and some associated figures. The task here is to demonstrate the inadequacy of their theoretical framework as a way of accounting for the available knowledge and thus to justify the need for a different framing of the field.

How then should a clear path be found through the thickets of history? There is broad agreement among scholars that the world of classical music in Ireland was at the beginning of the nineteenth century a weak satellite of English classical music, itself weak both in infrastructure and in intellectual or critical culture. By the end of the nineteenth century, England was endowed with much-improved infrastructure, offered well-organised courses at university level and the possibility of a stable professional career to musicians, had leading figures who rivalled their literary equivalents in position and prestige, and was developing a serious critical culture, while both audience behaviour and programming had undergone serious transformation. In contrast, in the period of the Literary Revival, Irish classical music was still deficient in infrastructure, offered limited training and professional openings to musicians, was subordinate to the metropolis and had a weak presence in cultural life and debate. To account for this divergence, this thesis, as outlined in the second chapter, develops an alternative, flexible framing, drawing on a historicised adaptation of Habermas's concept of the public sphere (1988), further adapted in order to account for the particularities of the Irish experience. The third and fourth chapters focus on figures who are seen by Ryan and White as destructive of growth in classical music. The contextualised reading of Thomas Moore opens out onto an exploration of classical music in Ireland as a provincial satellite of Britain. The reading of Davis shows how his vision of a politically independent Ireland called for the creation of a vibrant national culture that would over time have developed a sophisticated middle-class art, both national and cosmopolitan. Classical music would have taken its place within this, alongside the literary and visual arts. Chapter Five looks at the period after the Famine and the collapse of the Davisite, Young Ireland cultural project. It attempts to identify the socio-political and socio-cultural factors that limited change within the world of classical music over the following decades; an examination of styles of leadership and of institutional change, along with a strong British/Irish comparative element, underpin this analysis. Chapter Six reads developments in classical music in the period when, as in Davis's time, an attempt was made to create both a separate Irish polity and a consciously un-provincial, national Irish culture. The dynamics of cultural change are examined in a way that accounts for the de-provincialising, dynamic project that

was the Irish Literary Revival but the near-absence of an Irish musical renaissance. This is explored in terms both of the contrasting British experience and of the situation of classical music in the national cultures that emerged from the declining Hapsburg and Ottoman empires.

This work, in addition to correcting the historical record and encouraging an escape from a particular form of Irish exceptionalism, has much to say on the connection between societal energies and cultural creativity; it also provides a non-judgemental framework for the subsequent evolution of classical music in independent Ireland.

### Directive notes

Since it contains the work of numerous experts, the knowledge bank that is the *Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* is treated as its relevant section authors, and, where applicable, as a single author, *EMIR*.

Chapter Three of the thesis in particular is indebted to an article by Maurice Earls for its contextualisation of the evangelical campaign in Ireland (2006). On cultural institutions and on the culture of the Irish Revival period, conversations with Pat Cooke have been more influential than any particular book.

Some material regarding historical models and European parallels draws on or adapts passages from an essay that appeared in *Ireland, West to East: Irish Cultural Connections with Central and Eastern Europe* (2014). The speed and efficiency with which the editors, Aidan O'Malley and Eve Patten, moved to publication remains a source of wonder

## CHAPTER ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Ia. Historiography: Hogan, Boydell, Fleischmann

If classical music in Ireland is little known, its historiography may be even less so. For the purposes of this thesis, the antiquarian study of pre-conquest music (and of the music of the harpers, insofar as it survives thereafter) is not of direct relevance. Books and essays written in the nineteenth century will be dealt with as aspects of the cultural life of the period in the relevant chapters. The first overview of Irish music up to the late nineteenth century is W.H. Grattan Flood's *A History of Irish Music* (1905). Briefly summarising the entire course of Irish music history and providing some information, quotations and references that might inspire further reading and research, this book too is best read within the context of its time. Where the nineteenth century is concerned, the book is particularly lacking in detail, for reasons outlined by the author himself:

Much as I should like to dwell on the musical doings of the nineteenth century, the time is hardly ripe to form an unprejudiced judgment, and therefore I shall merely touch on the more important composers, namely, Field, Cooke, O'Rourke, Wade, Balfe, Wallace, Osborne, Stewart, Holmes, and Stanford. (Flood 1905, p. 331)

For the first serious study of classical music in Ireland, we must await the publication in 1952 of the edited volume *Music in Ireland*. It might be noted that, in the mini-bibliography attached to the editor's introduction the Cork composer and professor Aloys Fleischmann lists Flood's *History* as 'unreliable' (Fleischmann, 1952: 6)). Though Fleischmann's landmark collection begins with a very brief historical survey and contains other even briefer segments of music history, it is principally a detailed survey and critical analysis of the state of classical music as it was at that specific time. Fleischmann's view of the place of classical music in Irish history and culture is remarkably direct:

*Clash of Traditions - Anglo-Irish Music*. Irish folk music, unlike that of nations whose music followed a normal course of development has never been properly assimilated into a broader tradition of art music, due to the chasm – political, social and religious – which existed for centuries between the spontaneous song in the vernacular [,] which was the natural expression of Irish people, and the purely English tradition of music-making in the towns (1952, p.6)

There are problems with this formulation: few scholars today would confidently refer to 'normal nations', for example; subsequent scholarship on literacy and the printing of song-sheets has

demonstrated that the line between oral and written culture in Ireland cannot be drawn so clearly; the association of the term 'natural' with the culture of the countryside implicitly suggests that the English tradition of the towns is artificial; and the simple polarity involved leaves little room for the poorer Catholics in the towns, whether Irish-speaking or English-speaking. Nonetheless, the directness with which Fleischmann refers to the Englishness of music in the towns is noteworthy. While Fleischmann's lines may again be too strongly drawn, he points to the difficulty of reading the history of classical music in Ireland in isolation from English (or British) music history. For a critical or intellectual culture to develop, one of the requirements must be the gathering and presentation in accessible form of the raw material for discussion, analysis or theorising. This is why dictionaries, textbooks and popular histories proliferate in periods of nation formation. From its tentative beginnings in the eighteenth century, the antiquarian study of native musical traditions developed into a subject of serious and sustained scholarly attention in the nineteenth.

The first evidence that *Music in Ireland* was a foundational statement rather than an isolated gesture came when Ita Hogan became Fleischmann's research student and began the work which would lead to the publication in 1966 of *Anglo-Irish Music 1780-1830*. The extent to which Hogan reproduces and elaborates on her mentor's framework of understanding and terminology can be seen by comparing the following paragraph with Fleischmann's above:

This clash of traditions was another obstacle to the development of art music in Ireland. Owing to the chasm, political, social and religious, which existed between the Anglo-Irish and the native Irish, Irish folk music, which is acknowledged to be the finest and most varied produced by any nation, was not incorporated into the broader medium of art music. In the country districts the natural expression of the people was to be found in the spontaneous song in the vernacular. Music-making in the towns had few points of contact with that of the countryside. It was based on the English pattern and was confined to the church and the theatre (Hogan 1966, pp. xiv-xv)

The points raised above with regard to Fleischmann's paragraph apply here again. Though with a touch of naive national pride, Hogan performs the basic duty of a historian, which is to set the particular phenomenon she is studying within a broader context.

That Hogan's practice is rooted in nineteenth-century positivistic traditions may be seen in the structure of the book. The Introduction lays out a broad framework of understanding, with Chapter 1 focusing on the Anglo-Irish composer under three headings: Environment, Influences, and Status and Working Conditions. With this act of historical placement accomplished, the body of the book gathers information about musical activity in Ireland in such clearly delineated categories as The

Theatre, Concerts, Musical Societies and The Influence of the Folk Music Collections. The eighth chapter, A Survey of Anglo-Irish Music, looks at the music of the period, both imported and composed in Ireland. The narrative in each chapter comprises a clear summary of activity in the area, based on impressive archival research. Thus, the chapter on theatre includes three full-page illustrations and 202 footnotes. This means that even those who might disagree with the terms of Hogan's political narrative can avail of, or interpret to their own ends, the mass of material that was uncovered or consulted in the making of the book.

A number of themes emerge very clearly from Hogan's researches. It is not necessary wholly to share her vocabulary in order to appreciate these. This paragraph concerns the eighteenth century:

The theatre flourished, not as a native product but as an imported commodity, and plays and players were brought over from London. In Dublin, public life revolved around the vice-regal court, and theatrical performances, balls and concerts ensured a continual round of entertainment. As a centre of performance Dublin was one of the most active capitals in Europe, attracting during the first half of the century many of the great masters, such as Handel, Arne, Giordani and Geminiani. Several musical societies came into being, and there was also a large amount of private music-making (*ibid.*, p. xv).

Here we may simply note the restricted social milieu in which classical music was performed, the constant cultural traffic between Dublin and London, and the fact that Dublin was connected not only to London but to continental Europe. If Dublin was a satellite of the metropolis, this was all the more true of smaller Irish cities and towns. While the precise degree of cultural autonomy or cultural distinctiveness attained by the Irish classical music world may be debated, the reality of Ireland's dependence on, or subordination to, London is clear from the level of imports in one direction (Britain and continental Europe to Ireland) and the movement of talent (composers and performers) in the other.

It is well known that the *New Oxford History of Ireland* was slow to reach publication (Smyth, 2004). It was conceived and launched in the early 1960s but several decades would pass before the entire series appeared. The series is unusual in giving substantial coverage to artistic matters. Volume IV contains two chapters by the composer and Trinity College Dublin professor Brian Boydell. The first covers music before 1700, the second music from 1700-1850. Boydell's work is characterised by measured and intelligent use of the sources, and by a desire to ground any necessary speculation in ascertainable fact. Like Fleischmann and Hogan, he writes with respect about the native Irish tradition but, though the second of his two chapters is boldly titled 'Music 1700-1850', clearly it is classical music that interests him. The music of the rural, Irish-speaking

population or that of the poorer inhabitants of the towns and cities scarcely figure. Boydell's interest in Carolan is in this sense not anomalous, Carolan being a musician of the displaced Gaelic elite and – by his social status, talent and musical curiosity – socially acceptable in the homes of a section at least of the newer ruling class. While keeping the broad lines of political power and influence in mind, Boydell is well aware of the way in which military conquest, migration and other forces create interchanges across musical and cultural boundaries. The earlier chapter does not concern us here but one quotation, regarding the audience for secular music in the theatre, reinforces the themes that we have noted in Fleischmann and Hogan:

But the audience that witnessed such performances was restricted to the fashionable society of the metropolis; and it was not until well into the eighteenth century that the Dublin theatres ceased to be a reserved extension of court entertainment. With this background a strong tradition of dramatic taste based on the productions of the London stage was firmly entrenched, and theatrical activity with its associated music was to remain almost wholly divorced from the life of the country as a whole until comparatively recent times (Boydell 1986, pp. 556-57).

Elsewhere, Boydell correctly points out that composers had much in common with playwrights, both professions working towards public performance and being equally dependent on the box-office. In the eighteenth century, music was an integral part of the life of the theatre; if the two fields overlapped, however, music was more expensive and more socially exclusive. Both before and after the Act of Union, the most talented tended to move from Ireland to London: Goldsmith, Sheridan, Congreve, Farquhar, Boucicault, Shaw, Wilde, among the dramatists; Kelly, Field, Moore, Balfe, Wallace, Osborne and Stanford among the musicians.

Boydell's point is reinforced by other contributors. Writing on 'Literature in English, 1691-1800', the historian J.C. Beckett notes the economic considerations that drew writers to England, a factor that increased in importance with the development of a reading public outside the older system of court patronage. His placing of Anglo-Irish literary culture is clear:

The Anglo-Irish had no tradition of a distinct culture. Their schools were modelled on those of England; their university, unlike the universities of Scotland, was closely linked with Oxford and Cambridge; individual scholars and connoisseurs maintained direct links with the Continent, but England was the dominant source of ideas (Beckett 1986, p.428).

The sentence that follows is of particular interest:

Even when, in the eighteenth century, some Anglo-Irish writers turned their attention to Irish

antiquities and Gaelic literature, this was a reflection of current trends in Great Britain rather than a spontaneous seeking after some new departure in Ireland itself (pp. 428-29).

To treat the antiquarian impulse in Ireland as an internal matter would therefore be misguided, a point to which we shall return. Painting and the visual arts were even more closely associated with the life of a small elite, with portraits, landscapes and horse paintings in particular demand. In this area, there was no obvious time-lag or major qualitative difference between Irish and British art. On the other hand, we might note that, as in music, Britain does not play a major role in the story of European art in this period. Anne Crookshank's chapter – almost devoid of social or political content – shows that painters moved between Ireland and Britain, with quite a number spending time in Italy to refine their skills. The British aristocracy's spurning of native painting and music in favour of foreign centres is bound up with the weakness of these arts (outside song and caricature or satire) in Britain for the best part of two centuries.

Brian Boydell is quite realistic about the world he is depicting, and of which to this day he remains the principal chronicler. With minor variations and its own peaks of excitement, the musical life of urban Ireland moved largely in step with its British sister. Among the characteristics they shared were the following: superficial engagement with popular or folk airs; an emphasis on glees (jolly part-singing); deference to foreign composers and players; oratorio for serious occasions; ballad-operas in English (most famously, Gay's *Threepenny Opera*); the undermining of the integrity of individual operas by the interpolation of unconnected popular favourites; a general taste for singing; neglect of chamber and instrumental music; low levels of performance; and unruly audience behaviour.

Neither Hogan nor Boydell suggests a dramatic change at the end of the eighteenth century: the negative consequences of the abolition of the Irish parliament in 1801 – in terms of patronage, career patterns and so on – would take time to work out. In both Britain and Ireland, the same period saw a gradual increase in domestic middle-class music-making, in the number of music teachers and shops and in the number of brass and reed bands. Both Hogan and Boydell register Thomas Moore's popularity but neither sees it as a key factor in impeding or suffocating the development of musical composition in Ireland.

Boydell indulges in very little speculation. His history is largely internal to the music world: his aim is to provide a chronicle of musical life (types of music played; level of music education; publications; musical societies; etc.) in his chosen period; contemporaneous social and political changes are mentioned only in introductory sections or insofar as these events impact directly on music culture; comparison across cultural forms is also minimal. Thus, Boydell, like Hogan,

provides much useful detail for anyone concerned with music history but scarcely ventures into the territory argued over by cultural and intellectual historians in recent decades.

‘Music and society, 1850-1921’, the title of Aloys Fleischmann’s chapter in Vol. VI of the *New History of Ireland*, points to the broader historical aim of the author. (The connection between Fleischmann and Ita Hogan was maintained, as she operated as his research assistant on the project.) While maintaining Boydell’s primary focus on musical activity (the internal history of the music world, as it were), Fleischmann is aware of the way in which musical life is shaped by broader social patterns. Thus, in the mere 23 pages assigned to him, he pays careful attention to the fact that, in the aftermath of the drift back to the countryside or to London of the upper classes after the Union, ‘the rising merchant and middle classes now began to take the lead in cultivating the arts’ (p.500). He notes how the Catholic middle class began to play a more active part in musical life and the continuation of the cultural pattern whereby talented singers, players and composers were frequently drawn to London (pp. 501-02). He is aware of, and respectful towards, the music of the rural majority and also aware of the consequences of the shift from the Irish language to English (the inevitability, for example, that people would turn to new English-language musical forms once they ceased to understand the inherited Irish-language song tradition) (pp. 506-08). He notes the clash between the controlling impulse of the modernising Catholic hierarchy and older popular traditions such as keening. He shows how the expanding post-Emancipation Catholic Church had to import musicians to make up for the dearth of trained organists (p. 502). He pays attention to developments in Belfast, Cork and other smaller urban centres. He recognises the popularity of opera, the growth of military (and brass and reed) bands and their collaboration with other ensembles and orchestras for large-scale public events, and the use of music for political purposes (by both nationalists and Orangemen) (pp. 502-07). He notes the founding and activities of institutions such as the Royal Irish Academy of Music, the Dublin Municipal School of Music and the weak state of musical education generally (pp. 509-10; pp. 513-15). He also notes the growth in activity towards the end of the nineteenth century, some of it associated with nationalist cultural movements (pp. 520-21).

For reasons of space, these and other issues can only be dealt with briefly but, within its limits and limitations, ‘Music and society, 1850-1921’ is exemplary in its detail, clarity and breadth of sympathy. Though Fleischmann is demonstrably pluralist in his musical curiosity and provides rich material for further research and reflection, his primary purpose, as with Hogan and Boydell, is to provide an internal history of the musical world in Ireland. It is noteworthy, however, that, though the complex social and political factors he mentions might suggest that there is no simple or single explanation for the underdevelopment of classical music culture in Ireland, on this matter

Fleischmann offers an uncomplicated reformulation of his 1952 framework:

To the rural Irish, the music of the towns remained identified with a foreign ascendancy and bourgeoisie that had kept them impoverished and underprivileged, and, as such, tended to excite their hostility. This language barrier and the extent of the gulf between the traditional music of the countryside and the art music of the towns largely explain the late development of formal music in Ireland (p. 506).

Though displaying varying degrees of interest in the socio-political context of the world they describe, Hogan, Boydell and Fleischmann are primarily laying down the foundations of Irish musicology and music history by compiling as much information as possible. Questions about historical interpretation do not arise.

### **1b. Recent Historiography: Context for Joseph Ryan's *Nationalism and Music in Ireland***

The years since 1990 have seen remarkable growth in activity: the increasing presence of music in third-level institutions in Ireland; the foundation of the Society for Musicology in Ireland (with its online journal *jsmi*); such publishing initiatives as the Irish Musical Studies and (more recent) Field Day series; the forum for debate offered for a number of years by the bi-monthly *Journal of Music in Ireland*; the increasing attention paid to music in cultural histories, encyclopaedias and essay collections; and the appearance of other monographs and essay collections.

Where recent writing on Irish music history is concerned, Joseph Ryan has made a double contribution. On the one hand, he is the author of a chapter on 'Music in independent Ireland since 1921' in the *New Oxford History of Ireland* and has appeared as an essayist in collections ranging from the IMS series to the Thomas Davis collection on Irish music. On the other hand, through his unpublished PhD thesis on *Nationalism and Music in Ireland* (1991), he has laid the groundwork for a whole school of writers. Most notably, Harry White, the author of *The Keeper's Recital*, the single most influential study of classical music in Irish culture, draws frequently on Ryan's work and explicitly acknowledges his indebtedness to *Nationalism and Music in Ireland*. Though White is wide-ranging in his interests, he and Ryan have always worked on a broadly similar set of underlying assumptions and deploy a common terminology when dealing with Irish cultural history, as will become clear below. For the moment, we shall look at Ryan's work on its own terms.

As a foundational document, *Nationalism and Music in Ireland* deserves particular attention. As will become clear, serious questions, both methodological and historical, will be raised here

regarding this work. In fact, the need to offer an alternative to Ryan's approach as further developed by Harry White, is the main ambition of this thesis.

### **1c. *Nationalism and Music in Ireland: Nationalism***

Ryan's thesis is composed of eight chapters. The two opening chapters of the thesis are largely theoretical and can be examined separately here, for reasons that will become clear. The first investigates theories of nationalism; the second examines the critical role of culture within the sphere of nationalism. Chapter One is, in a sense, a self-contained unit. Seen thus, it offers a thorough if rather unsympathetic survey of nationalism, both as a historical phenomenon that unfolds from the Reformation to the Romantic era and as a concept with which various twentieth-century writers grappled.

While Ryan sets the tone by opening his survey with a somewhat overwrought definition of nationalism from L. Snyder (Ryan 1991, p.3), he eventually adopts Anthony Smith's definition from his *Theories of Nationalism* (1971) as being more useful, allowing as it does for non-political manifestations of the phenomenon. Smith sees nationalism as:

an ideological movement, for the attainment and maintenance of self-government and independence on behalf of a group, some of whose members conceive it to constitute an actual or potential 'nation', like others (Ryan 1991, p. 9).

Ryan then embarks on a detailed outline of what he sees as the three phases of nationalism: the first (rooted in the Reformation and, at least in its English realisation, in the Glorious Revolution) aristocratic, liberal and concerned with religious freedom and individual liberty; the second (realised in the French Revolution) making the people sovereign (but also condoning 'the use of violence in pursuit of its goal' and bequeathing this legacy 'to all ensuing movements'); the third, strongly Romantic but developing in a period of rapid industrialisation, endowing the intelligentsia with a significant cultural role 'in the continual process of adjustment to fast-changing social circumstance' (ibid., p.15).

One might quarrel with certain details here. The particular association of the second phase with violence is one example. After all, the Glorious Revolution began with an invasion of England and led to war, which in Ireland was bloodier and more convulsive than anywhere else in the Kingdoms. The revolution also accelerated the loss of religious and political freedom for the majority of the Irish population (Bartlett 2010, pp. 134-37). A second point is also of relevance to the Irish case: the

association of the Glorious Revolution with liberal thinking must be qualified by the consideration that the internal politics of an imperial power may bear little resemblance to the way in which that power exercises itself in its behaviour towards its enemies or in the subjugation of those who resist imperial expansion (Farwell 1999, pp. 364-71).

The specificity of any political unit when examined in terms of its historical experience, traditions and power-structure, on the one hand, and the sheer diversity of experience that must be registered when one attempts a comparative perspective across a continent, on the other, mean that almost any tidily phased analysis of the political or cultural life of Europe is liable to break down. Ryan's model is heavily based on a certain interpretation of British history, with the result that Ireland almost inevitably is cast as anomalous. Even as it applies to British history, the model is problematic. The idea that a cultural form of nationalism flourished in the nineteenth century should not occlude the fact that Britain engaged in numerous imperial wars in that period, from China to the Crimea. It is not surprising that, having briefly noted how the cultural phase of nationalism in the nineteenth century was soon followed by a period in which England, France, Germany and Italy 'employed the growing national pride to further imperialistic aims,' Ryan brings his survey of the phases of nationalism to an end. Curiously, having formed a basis for discussion of the subject, English or British nationalism scarcely figures in relation to Irish experience in later chapters.

It should be said that Ryan examines and offers measured appreciations of the thinking of many figures not mentioned above; among these could be numbered Hobbes, Milton, Locke, Montesquieu, Kant and Fichte. If Ryan's assessment of these thinkers is itself not examined here, it is because this would only prove useful if the answer to a broader and determining question were positive: has Ryan demonstrated the relevance of nationalism as conceived of by a number of intellectuals to the shaping of the Ireland that is examined in his thesis? The answer to the question is almost disconcerting in its starkness: Ryan has made no case at all. He appears to assume that, because he is dealing with a particular period in history, nationalist thought will manifest itself in roughly the same fashion in Ireland as elsewhere. As his focus is almost entirely on the way in which various thinkers conceived of nationalism, popular historical consciousness as transmitted through oral tradition and song, for example, is not discussed, nor is the process by which philosophies of nationalism might come to animate political or cultural activity considered. (A different perspective will be offered in Chapter Two of the present thesis.) The period with which Ryan is most concerned, 1800-1950, is broadly similar to that investigated in this thesis. Nowhere in Ryan's chapter on nationalism do we learn in what form the thought of Hobbes, Milton, Locke, Herder or any other such figure might have reached Ireland and impacted on the thinking and, where music is concerned, the activities of the population in general or any particular section of it.

Peasant resistance to landlords and official authority had hardly been animated by Lockean thinking. Some consideration of the historical understanding and traditions of the Irish-speaking population would seem to be advisable, but Ryan simply ignores the issue – as if a uniform nationalism, like potato blight, wafted across the sea and settled over the whole island.

#### **1d. *Nationalism and Music in Ireland: Culture***

For much of its length, the second chapter follows a pattern similar to the first. Thus, various definitions of culture are discussed. The concept is tracked through the nineteenth century, from the 'Preface to the Lyrical Ballads' of Wordsworth and Coleridge to the Aesthetic movement. Finally, through a consideration both of Weber's concept of 'Kultur' and of T. S. Eliot's writings on culture, Ryan sets out what he sees as a largely agreed position:

This presents culture as a complex accumulation of the inherited traditions, beliefs, values, and the complete store of knowledge and creative of a given social group, allied to the total of its activities and the shared memories, real or apocryphal, of past glories and sufferings. Moreover, born of this, and in addition to it, is the sense of belonging, which moves the term beyond a substantive into the realm of the abstract. This understanding clearly offers a place to the creative imagination; it also reconciles the dualism between art and reality encountered earlier. The artistic sensibility is here posited as a crucial constituent of culture (Ryan 1991, p. 31).

With its references to past glories and sufferings, this is very much a definition of culture in a national, or nationalist, perspective. The reference to a move from the substantive to the abstract could be seen as a less elegant formulation of Benedict Anderson's concept of an imagined community, in which people who have no direct connection with each other identify, or imagine, themselves as co-members of the broad community of the nation (1983). (Anderson is not among the thinkers on nationalism cited in the thesis.)

Ryan proceeds to discuss Burke's idea of the nation ('a nation is not an idea of only local extent, an individual momentary aggregation: but it is an idea of continuity, which extends in time as well as in numbers and space') and relates this to Herder, with his stress on vernacular traditions and the art of the people (Volk). Unlike some who dismiss Herder as a German supremacist or narrow nationalist, Ryan accepts that he valued all cultures equally, but that his disciples bent and narrowed his thought. Fichte, in his *Addresses to the German Nation (Reden an die deutsche Nation, 1807-8)* is the key figure here. Ryan highlights the stress laid on 'race, tradition, religion, custom, folksong

and folklore, sensibility, etcetera'. As Fichte's aim was to persuade and galvanise rather than to understand, these concepts 'had all to find a simplistic symbolism, much of it spurious' (ibid., p.39). As an example of such simplification in Irish cultural nationalism, Ryan refers to the shamrock, harp and wolfhound. That one of his first specific references to Irish culture should be in relation to the spurious is perhaps an indication of the underlying thrust of Ryan's thinking as it unfolds in the course of the thesis.

More significant than any terminological detail or matter of phrasing is the structuring of the material. Ryan approaches an important issue, the centrality of music in nineteenth-century culture, through some rather supercilious comments by the English music critic Cecil Gray and a 1915 essay, 'On Folksong and Culture', by the Dublin-born composer Charles Villiers Stanford. Soon, we are being offered a broad and largely negative assessment of cultural nationalism as it operated in classical music:

[...] for music to be indentured to such a cause it was necessary for the composer to employ selective devices and to work within a limited range of forms; in short, the creative artist had to be willing to forego complete artistic freedom in order to serve a particular end. [...]; nationalist ideology thrived on a simple and readily understood symbolism, and cultural contributions proved no exception (ibid., p. 44).

The tension between artistic autonomy and the expectations of a community (or authority) cannot be resolved in a formula, but Ryan seems particularly insistent on the idea of the nationalist musical sphere as being 'constrained to a particular time and place with little relevance outside those boundaries.' Against Ryan, it could be argued that pre-Romantic composers were very often almost literally indentured to prince or church and that, despite the specific national or political resonance of certain musical works, it was not at all unusual for composers to cross musical boundaries (Ryan himself offers some examples later in the chapter) or for the public of one country to appreciate the music of another (Blanning pp. 85-91; Dahlhaus *Nationalism and Music in Ireland Nationalism and Music in Ireland* pp. 37-41). Ryan's expectation of full musical autonomy for the sphere of composition may have come close to realisation in certain recent West European contexts but it is unhistorical in the context of a country where classical music was thinly supported and operating without significant infrastructure. Ryan goes a step further:

Furthermore, and this is especially pertinent in the case of Ireland, the cosmopolitan musical instruction offered to European composers was often at variance with the autochthonous tradition which they were now to explore and the presentation of the latter in the clothing of the former was frequently to prove uneasy and occasionally controversial (pp.44-45).

Ryan has investigated theories of nationalism and culture in the abstract but he now seems to be suggesting that the Irish case is exceptional, not only in the failure of classical music to flourish on the island but in the sheer resistance of native or autochthonous Irish culture to cosmopolitan or universal values. The problem here – and in Ryan’s writing in general, it will be argued – is that, before investigating the operation of nationalism and culture within the particular conditions of Irish history, socio-political as well as cultural, Ryan is assigning prime responsibility for Ireland’s underdeveloped classical music culture to the nature of the ‘autochthonous’ culture and to the special intensity of its nationalism. The point is a crucial one as it has enormous consequences for the interpretation of cultural activity throughout the period under examination. It must, therefore, be emphasised that, in the opening chapters of his thesis, Ryan has not applied his discussion of nationalism and culture to the particular realities – social, political and cultural – of life in Ireland in the period under examination. Each theoretical chapter is like a balloon connected by a thin rope to the field of enquiry below. The danger in this procedure is that opinion and unexamined assumptions may replace carefully argued and contextualised analysis.

### **1e. *Nationalism and Music in Ireland: Issues in later chapters***

Even a brief outline of the remaining chapters of *Nationalism and Music in Ireland* suggests that this danger is not avoided, as the organisation enacts a separation between nationalist culture and the cosmopolitan world of classical music that has not been historically argued for or justified. The third chapter ('Our fathers' sons') looks at nationalism in Ireland, at revisionist and pre-revisionist history, and at Thomas Moore, Samuel Ferguson, George Petrie, antiquarianism and cultural nationalism; it underlines the failure to achieve a unified culture. The fourth looks at nationalism in music. The fifth, 'the empirical core of the study', as the author puts it, examines the key figures in the 'alternative' or 'cosmopolitan' tradition in the nineteenth century. The sixth looks at the period of the Literary Revival ('the age of fusion') when the opportunity to fuse nationalist and cosmopolitan traditions failed. The seventh ('racy of the soil') looks at music up to 1950. An assessment, a free discussion of earlier themes, brings the dissertation to a close, the last sentence expressing the wish that classical music in Ireland should escape from the insular and join the broad stream of musical development.

When the logic of Ryan’s argument is examined, even in its broad lines, the case he builds becomes increasingly unpersuasive. Given that Ryan is examining classical music, a social art-form that in Ireland was, originally at least, very closely associated with the Protestant Ascendancy and upper middle class, what is most striking is the failure to provide, first, a historical survey of these

classes in relation to the rest of society and, second, a historical survey of the social practice of music in the lead-in to, and first half-century of, the period surveyed in the thesis. If the intention is to investigate the power of nationalism in the sphere of music, it is difficult to see how this can be done without an examination of the broad context in which nationalism operated. By moving from his theoretical chapters directly to a survey of nationalist culture, and by setting the cultural figures he examines in separate streams, nationalist or alternative/cosmopolitan, Ryan is inverting the process of historical investigation: he is organising the material in accordance with a theory that has not been tested. Though Ryan's ambition is to set classical music in its social and intellectual context, he does so without looking at the structure of power – whether it be the institutionalised sectarian power structure of eighteenth-century Ireland or the broader English/British power structure of which this was a sub-structure. The effect is to make an utterly unequal balance of power a matter of co-existing cultural traditions – and to treat any challenge to British authority as a matter of ungrounded ideological difference.

One aspect of Ryan's analysis is especially problematic. Having avoided any engagement with the sectarian ferocity of the ruling junta in the late eighteenth century, he concentrates on the Patriot movement – an Irish Protestant demand for increased powers driven by the lack of respect shown to them by London, both in the economic and political sphere. This he identifies as a form of nationalism. By analogy with American colonial nationalism, this is an arguable position. However, quite apart from the fact that the movement had already weakened well before 1798, the reaction to that explosive event and its ferocious repression was strong enough to make most Irish Protestants quite sceptical, if not positively fearful, of the possible consequences of Irish autonomy. With the spread of democratic ideas and the beginnings of a demand for Catholic Emancipation, it would be difficult to promote Irish Protestant nationalism and Irish Protestant rights without being drawn into arguments for the extension of democracy to the whole population of Ireland. Ryan consistently ignores the reactionary, anti-democratic, anti-reforming tenor of a substantial section of Protestant society and continues to identify Protestant Ireland almost exclusively with notions of liberalism, progressive thinking and, curiously, constitutional nationalism. The very notion of a unionist nationalism in a two-island United Kingdom context would appear to contradict the definition of nationalism accepted by Ryan in the opening chapter, which links nationalism with the desire for a separate state. No standard history of the last fifty years supports Ryan's interpretation – and indeed his later writings are structured around a less confusing though somewhat crude nationalist/cosmopolitan polarity.

It as if Ryan were unable to countenance the possibility that the primary audience for, or the primary practitioners of, an art form that he sees as European (if not universal), cosmopolitan and

inherently liberal (in some not fully defined sense of the term) might include many who were narrow-minded and sectarian. Ryan's interpretation is clearly problematic when he deals with Stanford (a profoundly unionist lover of Ireland) as a composer of Irish nationalist works. This confuses nationally coloured Scottish, Welsh, English or Irish music (perfectly conceivable within a two-island unionist framework) with the ideology of political separatism. It involves Ryan in further confusion as Stanford spent most of his adult life in England, where he became a pillar of the English renaissance in music, a movement which – disconcertingly – Ryan fails to analyse, perhaps because the cultural nationalism underlying it (or at the very least the effort to overcome the English/British sense of musical inferiority in relation to France, Austria and Germany) would complicate and potentially undermine a thesis that, though it contains sporadic acknowledgement of the flaws in Anglo-Irish or unionist culture, is erected on an opposition between insular Irish nationalism and cosmopolitan values.

The failure to ground the underlying theory of the thesis in historical detail raises further difficulties. To discuss Irish cultural nationalism is one thing; to demonstrate its influence on those who were producing or performing classical music is another. Ryan provides no evidence that the practitioners of classical music were affected as he suggests by the writings of a small number of nationalist literary-political intellectuals. Cultural nationalism itself is also abstracted from its context. The failure to register in any depth or at all the remarkable history of organised popular agitation for various causes – Catholic Emancipation, relief from Tithes, Repeal of the Union, tenant rights, land ownership, Home Rule, independence – and the concomitant failure to register the forces (social and ideological, British and Irish) against which such agitation was directed are what allow Ryan to construct a simplistic narrative in which Irish nationalist rhetoric holds largely unchallenged sway. This simplistic narrative in turn allows Ryan to propose, in his third chapter, a polarised historiography which sets partisan nationalist history-writing against the objectivity and pluralism of modern revisionist history.

Ryan barely acknowledges the British dimension of Irish social and political history or the social psychology involved in reversing imperial stereotyping. Irish nationalist history-writing is not measured against the imperial and unionist histories of the time. Ryan's negative view of pre-revisionist historiography is based on quotations from cultural/intellectual activists rather than historians, thus effectively creating a false polarity when these are contrasted with later professional historians.

## **1f. *Nationalism and Music in Ireland: Musical life***

The chapters that focus on musical life are weakened in similar fashion by the absence of a balanced historical approach. Ryan does not, for example, follow the gradual investment of the urban Catholic middle-class in classical music culture; nor does he consider the consequences of the over-lapping tastes of urban Catholics and Protestants for his polarised presentation of musical life in Ireland. He acknowledges the damage done by the organisation of musical societies and initiatives along separate sectarian lines, as well as the positive disposition of nationalists like Edward Martyn towards classical music, but never fully escapes from the polarising logic that underlies his thinking and his own clear investment in one side. Typically, Ryan is less interested in Pearse, a cultural moderniser, than in Richard Henebry (1903, 1928), an entirely marginal and brilliantly irascible figure, scarcely remembered in the half-century after his death, who provides examples of the Anglophobic thinking with which Ryan identifies Irish cultural nationalism in its separatist form. On similar lines, Ryan suggests that “[a]dherents of the traditional practice spoke like Thomas MacDonagh of ‘the Irish note,’” as if MacDonagh’s *Literature in Ireland* (1916) argued for a naive conservation of inherited cultural forms rather than a new synthesis of native Irish and English-language traditions. (MacDonagh is quite explicit in acknowledging how ‘a freshening breath from without’ that came through the English language would combine with ‘a stirring of national consciousness’ (p.103)). The briefest acquaintance with *The Irish Review* would show what intellectually open and internationalist company MacDonagh kept.

The chapter on what Ryan sees as the alternative, cosmopolitan tradition, announced as the ‘empirical core of the study’ in the introduction, entirely fails to live up to that claim. Not only does Ryan fail to analyse the activities and attitudes of the Irish Protestant middle class – the grouping that, in the polarised society he has sketched, could be expected to be the most active patrons and transmitters of, and activists for, classical music in nineteenth-century Ireland – but he also fails to compare them with the equivalent class in Britain. Ryan does not examine in detail the rules, written or unwritten, by which musical societies and clubs operated. He does not demonstrate that attempts to cultivate classical music were frustrated by the workings of nationalist ideology. He provides no example of a composer with ambitions to artistic autonomy who was impeded by nationalist pressure. He does not explain how the ‘venerable tradition’ and ‘august record’ of Trinity College can be reconciled with the fact that, from 1774 to 1845, after the Duke of Mornington’s tenure in the chair of music, the position was left vacant (Boydell 2013, pp. 683-84), that for much of the period in question the college operated as an examining but not as a teaching institution, and that decades would pass before serious standards were applied in the awarding of degrees. He does not ask why the Irish aristocracy and middle class, in contrast to their British equivalents, failed to

endow the country with any significant infrastructure. There is nothing to suggest that any of this was a result of nationalist pressure; the consequences for the central argument of Ryan's thesis are not considered.

Ryan does not demonstrate that the Catholic middle class – or any other section of society – of the first half of the nineteenth century was turned against music as an autonomous form of art by the weight of Thomas Moore's example. Though the thesis repeatedly stresses nationalist pressure on cosmopolitan art, it scarcely registers the extent to which a leading figure in classical music such as Robert Prescott Stewart was active almost exclusively within the Church of Ireland cathedrals and Trinity College, and wrote music celebrating Trinity and the Crown. The RDS is described as 'unswervingly cosmopolitan' and as seeing 'no need to foster a peculiarly national musical mode' because of its promotion of chamber music towards the end of the nineteenth century, but other aspects of its record go unexamined: the British visitors who compiled the *Report from the Commission on the Department of Science and Art* (1868) had clearly been astonished at the Board's exclusion both of nationalists and of business interests. (The Report and Stewart will be addressed in Chapter Five below.)

Opera, light and otherwise, an area in which Irish composers such as Michael Balfe and William Vincent Wallace were prominent both in Britain and on the Continent, is scarcely mentioned. Its cross-class and cross-creed popularity undermines any simple polarity between insular, ethnocentric nationalists and cosmopolitan admirers of universal musical culture. The same could be said of the penetration of urban Ireland by parlour-song and music hall on largely British lines in Victorian and Edwardian times (Watters & Murtagh 1975; Scott 2001).

Ryan goes on to deal in some fashion with other explanatory factors: the effect of the Act of Union on cultural activity; the consequent emigration of the talented; and the low level of musical literacy, education, opportunity and infrastructure. None of these factors is examined in any detail. Given that Ireland was under British rule, any statements about the nature and consequences of music education in Ireland will be of doubtful validity if they are not related to developments in Britain and if the way in which British policy and decision-making shaped education in Ireland is not detailed. The absence of such contextualisation makes it difficult to assess the claim that 'the debate over what was to [be] taught was itself a factor in delaying the emergence of a comprehensive design'. In similar fashion, the foundation of the Irish Academy of Music (on which the Royal epithet was conferred in 1872) and the later municipal schools of music is not compared with similar institutional development in Britain. The absence of concrete analysis in the social and political spheres facilitates the counter-position of 'a tale of heroic individual endeavour' with a

narrative of insular Irish failure rooted in nationalism.

The failure to track actual musical activity in its social context through the nineteenth century also facilitates the elaboration of a folk/high culture polarity that simplifies the complex realities of music as it was lived and debated (as will be seen below in Chapters Three to Six). Ryan underlines the sharpness of the division between these two cultures, points out the happier relationship between folk and high art in Hungary, for example, and suggests that little could be done after the Act of Union as the two types of music were 'increasingly championed as representative of a mode of life' and 'celebrated as much for their consociation as for their intrinsic worth.' The political resonance of Stewart's music in celebration of the monarchy or Trinity College itself is not addressed. As the practice of music and the discourse around it are not followed as they change from decade to decade, the lines of history are blurred.

*Nationalism and Music in Ireland* is an ambitious and wide-ranging work. Unfortunately, it is structured around unexamined and historically flawed assumptions. As a result, it cannot be accepted as a solid or adequate foundation for a school of Irish musicology.

### **1g. *Music in Ireland 1848-1998***

In 1998, the sesquicentenary of the founding of the RIAM, the Thomas Davis lecture series on RTÉ radio was devoted to classical music in Ireland. The title, *Music in Ireland 1848-1998*, claims rather too much territory for itself, as non-classical genres feature only briefly or not at all. The essays were edited by Richard Pine and published, relatively cheaply and accessibly, by the Mercier Press. This was, then, an unusual opportunity for the public to discover a neglected aspect of Irish cultural history. As books by some of the contributors are examined elsewhere in this chapter, only points of special relevance will be noted here.

Though it reprises themes analysed above, Joseph Ryan's talk merits brief mention. As in his essay on 'Nationalism and Irish Music' in *Music and Irish Cultural History* (1995), Ryan persists in treating Irish folk tradition as 'fossilized' rather than threatened. That reference to the past, even to past glory, can be used as a way of creating a momentum towards transformation or revolution is not recognised where Young Ireland and later cultural movements are concerned. Ryan associates classical music with cosmopolitanism and progress, without regard to the fact that the repertoire in Ireland tended towards the conservative and that levels of performance and reviewing did not suggest a self-conscious and critical public. In addition, no specific detail is offered in support of large generalisations such as this:

In as much as there was any coherence of public mood in the wake of the Young Irelanders, it would have been favourable to the principles of distinction [here meaning a distinct Irish identity] and preservation rather than cosmopolitanism and innovation (Ryan, p.100).

Ryan conjectures that Thomas Davis (associated with ‘a narrow political perspective’) would have disapproved of the RIAM’s espousal of a European cultural form, but he seems unaware of the numerous European references in other essays. His language is judgemental regarding any forms of nationalist expression (narrow, insular) but merely descriptive when it comes to social or sectarian exclusivity in the section of society most concerned with classical music.

In his introductory overview, Richard Pine, co-author and co-editor of a book on the RIAM that had not yet appeared, sets out his ambition for the collection:

Above all, perhaps, is the tripartite coincidence of education, performance and creativity during the past one hundred and fifty years, in the emergence of a sense of Ireland as a national entity, capable of political, fiscal and cultural autonomy. Music, both traditional and the so-called classical kind, has played a central role in this emergence (Pine 1998, p.17).

Pine is less focused on failure than Joseph Ryan and Harry White tend to be, recognises the existence of traditional music and, in pursuing his ‘tripartite coincidence’, shows a broad range of reference. At times, he appears over-eager perhaps to re-insert classical music into the national narrative. Thus, he sees traditional and classical music as having failed to communicate and to forge together ‘a sense of national identity,’ and suggests that this failure ‘is a major factor in the poverty of contemporary Irish composition, in contrast with the successes of the Irish Literary Renaissance [...]’ (p.18). This diagnosis is questionable. What exactly were traditional musicians supposed to do in order to facilitate Irish composition? There is no reason to believe that the Hungarian/Transylvanian peasants from whom Bartók collected tunes were participants in a national musical dialogue or sought to encourage him along his creative path. Nor that the peasants from whom Lady Gregory and Yeats collected stories were consulted on the poems and plays that drew on those stories or became theatre-goers.

Pine also marshals some of his historical figures too energetically:

[...] we can see in the work of the major educators in the Academy from 1848 onwards – figures such as Joseph Robinson, Sir Robert [Prescott] Stewart, Michele Esposito and John F. Larchet – not only the creation of a continuing cadre of professional and amateur musicians, but also a sense of purpose in, and commitment to, the new Irish state as it was conceived, achieved and developed (p. 18).

While all these men were indeed concerned to raise the level of musicianship in Ireland, it is inconceivable that the loyal imperialist Stewart would have countenanced his work as steps towards the formation of a new Irish state. Likewise, the suggestion that ‘many of the Academy’s founders, and successive members of the governing body, were associates of Daniel O’Connell and, more particularly, of Thomas Davis and the Young Ireland movement’ (pp. 18-19) is curious in that Davis died in 1845 and O’Connell in 1847. The proto-republican impulse ascribed to the governors seems to coexist with ‘extremely warm relations’ with *The Irish Times*, a committedly unionist paper from its foundation in 1859. Had the IAM truly worked towards Irish autonomy, it is unlikely that it would have become the Royal Irish Academy of Music in 1872. There are other uncertainties in matters of political interpretation: at one point, it is said that the educational system sought to inculcate ‘what has been widely regarded as an alien culture – that of central Europe, promoted by the colonial British government in Ireland’ (p. 18); two pages later, we learn how modest the grant to the RIAM remained. Inculcation seems to have been on a modest scale.

Elsewhere, Pine appears to accept the Ryan/White interpretation of Irish music history: he sees the ‘idea of music as an expression of cultural nationalism’ as focusing on the uses to which Moore’s *Melodies* were put; he sees the stress on the collection of folk music as having inhibited composition; the attempt of the early Feis Ceoil to sponsor new music is mocked (it ‘led to some interesting if not amusing productions, of which the “Irish” symphonies of Esposito, Harty and Stanford are the chief examples’(p. 22)); Thomas Davis is then criticised for himself criticising Balfe for not writing ‘Irish-like music, nor for Ireland’, when it is the creation of some ‘Irish-like’ identity for music that Pine is seeking to foster in a meeting of the classical and traditional music cultures; and when the question of Irishness is raised by Stanford in a letter to Stewart, Pine simplifies the story by failing to note what Irishness – in this case, the national, as opposed to the nationalist, note – might mean where unionist composers are concerned.

Of the talks that deal with the history of music, Michael Murphy’s is the most unusual. As its title, ‘Race, Nation and Empire in the Irish Music of Sir Charles Villiers Stanford’, suggests, it attempts to define the place of an Irish unionist composer in England. Unlike Ryan and White, his consideration of music and nationalism acknowledges the relevance of the English/British musical nationalism that underlay what is called the English musical renaissance, in which Stanford played a significant role. If anything, Murphy is a little schematic in this regard: he portrays the Irish simply as a source of amusement or exoticism for the imperial British; and he focuses on Stanford’s social and cultural condescension, gives him no credit for any other of his organisational or creative achievements and does not acknowledge how seamlessly Stanford’s choral music found a place in the music of the Church of England. Curiously, when Murphy reappears in print a few years later, in

a volume he co-edited with Harry White, it is as a tortuous analyst of Irish nationalism in a vein that suggests recent but complete conversion to the Ryan/White vocabulary and school of interpretation. This contribution was later meticulously analysed by the musicologist Patrick Zuk (2004).

### **1h. Harry White's *The Keeper's Recital*: Approach**

The key work where situating classical music in Irish cultural history is concerned is Harry White's *The Keeper's Recital*, published in 1998 by Cork University Press under the Field Day imprint. Subtitled *Music and Cultural History in Ireland, 1770-1970*, the book does not claim to be a cultural history of music in Ireland. The first sentences of the Preface read as follows:

Although this is the first book to survey the development of musical thought in modern Irish cultural history, *The Keeper's Recital* is not a history of music in Ireland. That would be another day's work. This study does not therefore comprise an unbroken narrative of Irish music between 1770 and 1970. Its purpose rather is to register the function of music as a dynamic agent in the history of Irish ideas during this period' (p. ix).

White goes on to say that he is writing 'in the belief that Ireland's verbally dominated culture had nevertheless depended on music throughout its evolution.' To examine 'the inherent presence' of music in Irish cultural thought and 'its impact on the formation of a notably polarised Irish cultural matrix' is his principal objective. Chronological history does arise, however, as we can see here:

Arising from this objective is an attempt to survey the reception of music in Irish cultural history, and with this in mind the structure of the book does adhere to a (loosely) chronological narrative. It would otherwise be impossible to recognise adequately the development of central concepts of Irish music which determined that reception history which also conditioned the development of music today (p. ix).

In stating that his primary interest lies in bringing to light the hidden presence of music in Irish cultural history and in surveying the reception of music in Irish cultural history, White is – quite legitimately – avoiding the obligation to provide a full survey either of composition or of the social world in which classical music was practised. Instead, he is seeking to highlight the key concepts governing thought about music in Ireland and thus, indirectly, explaining the place of classical music in Irish culture of the present day. If White were working on music in France or Germany, his selective but roughly chronological survey of key concepts would take place in the context of generations of scholarship and theoretical debate. His book would be set alongside cultural histories

that gave classical music a place of importance, historical surveys of the social world of classical music, historical surveys of musical form and studies of individual composers. The ideas White presented would be tested against a bank of existing knowledge and interpretation.

This is not at all the case where writing about classical music in Ireland is concerned. We have already seen the slender body of literature that surveys the history of classical music in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland and we have seen White describe his book as the first survey of musical thought in Ireland. The task of identifying the key concepts in the history of musical thought is therefore unusually challenging. Even if no satisfactory history of classical music in Ireland, or of thought about it, exists, we must assume that, before undertaking his task of selection, White has familiarised himself, first, with the historical background and then with a broad range of the sources, however fragmentary, that would be the raw material of that history of the music that does not yet exist.

Trust in the author of *The Keeper's Recital* is encouraged by the many accomplishments he has to his name: he is Professor of Music at UCD; alone or in partnership with others as the case may be, he has been the initiator of or driving force behind the very impressive Irish Musical Studies series, the *Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* and the Society for Musicology in Ireland; he is a contributor to the authoritative *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* and to Irish cultural and historical encyclopaedias such as Blackwell and Oxford; he is among the distinguished scholars who share their expertise in *Nineteenth-Century Ireland: A Guide to Recent Research* (2005); he has been a keynote speaker at many Irish and international conferences; numerous papers of his have been published in musicological journals; and, as well as a number of edited works, he is the author of *The Progress of Music in Ireland* (2005) and of *Music and the Irish Literary Imagination* (2008). A number of these accomplishments precede the writing of *The Keeper's Recital*; others may have arisen from it. He is, in any case, the dominant, unavoidable and most frequently cited authority on classical music in Irish cultural history today. Where Irish Studies and even post-colonial criticism are concerned, this authority is enhanced by the fact that *The Keeper's Recital* appeared under the Field Day banner, and so with the seeming endorsement of Seamus Deane. Certainly, nobody in the field of classical music or of its history in Ireland today approaches White in the range of his activities and in his constructive energy.

If we return to the Preface, we find White stating that the work is closely bound up with 'those preoccupations which so narrowly determined the growth of the Irish mind in modern history.' He claims that the enforced intimacy between literature and politics in Ireland, a unique and tragic intimacy in Seamus Deane's view, is even greater and more damaging in the case of music. What

White calls 'the emancipation of music' – effectively its liberation from political demands and its development as an autonomous form of artistic expression – was overtaken by three ideologies: first, 'the integrity of sectarian culture'; second, 'the political expression of cultural autonomy'; and third, 'the symbolic force of Celticism' (p. ix). White sometimes deploys a terminology as well as a conceptual apparatus of his own. Thus, the word sectarian as deployed above is, against normal Irish usage, a synonym for partisan, in a political rather than a religious sense. It could be argued that this invites misunderstanding or confusion. The three ideologies referred to above can be broadly periodised: an antiquarian phase in which the impulse to preserve 'helped to establish the currency of a Gaelic culture which otherwise struggled against the tide of linguistic decline'; a phase in which the 'ethnic repertory of music' was transformed into 'the definitive intelligencer of romantic nationalism' in a way that 'wedded it inexorably to verbal communication' (effectively to propagandistic nationalist use); a third phase, corresponding to the Literary Revival, in which music was endowed with so much symbolic force 'as a symbol of Gaelic civilisation' and 'as an image of imaginative regeneration' that 'the cultivation of music itself was attenuated, if not wholly disengaged, by the end of the nineteenth century'(p. x). There is nothing tentative about White's approach: the tone is trenchant and authoritative as he diagnoses the condition of music in Ireland: 'It is the supreme irony of Irish cultural history that music should have shown itself so fertile as a conceptual intelligence even as it languished under the duress of its own polarised condition' (p. x).

Clearly we are dealing with a work very different from those of Hogan, Boydell and Fleischmann which were discussed earlier. In the Introduction, White is quite explicit about his ambition:

If the history of music in Ireland is not to be regarded as an amorphous gathering of disparate events which are remaindered in the wider context of cultural debate, then that history is in urgent need of a conceptual paradigm (p. 2).

We noted earlier that Boydell, Fleischmann and Hogan were largely innocent of historiographical self-questioning. Nonetheless, they all frame their minutely detailed histories within a broad historical framework. White is here creating a space for his own project by implicitly reducing his predecessors to gatherers of amorphous facts, with little or nothing to offer in the 'wider context of cultural debate' (p. x). White's role, then, is as a provider of paradigms that will energise these amorphous facts and offer music history or, more correctly, thought about music the recognition it deserves but has long been denied in cultural history and debate.

The problem with this approach is that the understanding of history implicit in it is both simplistic in setting amorphous fact against animating concept and a denial of that constant dialogue between hypothesis and existing knowledge that is the foundation of historical method. White's approach

offers the creator of paradigms too much unqualified freedom and opens the door to the imposition of arbitrary and untested paradigms on the material of history. A greater or lesser degree of unnecessary distortion is the almost unavoidable result. Thus, when White (as seen above) identifies three ideologies as determining musical thought in Ireland, all are concerned with the symbolic presence of music in Irish culture, in a proto-nationalist or nationalist perspective; classical music as practised in Irish society, whether by musicians or composers, does not figure in this analysis. Instead of engaging in critical dialogue with his predecessors in the field, with their historical paradigms, with the culture of those who practised classical music and with factually grounded social, cultural and intellectual history, White is conjuring up a free space over which his concepts can reign, untroubled by amorphous fact. What this means can be seen when, for each chapter, the governing concept and the degree to which it is historically supported are identified – to the exclusion of incidental detail.

### **1i. *The Keeper's Recital: Chapter-by-chapter Analysis***

The first chapter ('Carolan, Handel and the Dislocation of Music in Eighteenth-century Ireland') singles out two themes for attention: (a) the Dublin premiere of Handel's *Messiah*, in the context of charity performances, as establishing an association in Ascendancy thinking – sadly unsustainable in subsequent years – between sublime music and the public good; (b) early antiquarian writing as establishing an association between what White calls 'the ethnic repertory' and a sense of cultural loss. Regardless of how stimulating some of White's formulations may be, a careful reading of the chapter reveals the following: the entire social world of elite music-making first documented by Boydell disappears from sight; no Irish composers at all are mentioned; and no evidence is adduced to support the interpretation of Handel's cultural influence. The English culture of which Dublin is a satellite scarcely figures.

The second chapter ('History and Romanticism: Bunting, Moore and the Concept of Irish Music in the Nineteenth Century') sees antiquarian research and song collection as being adapted by Moore in order to express romantic national feeling, with such overwhelming success and prestige that the possibility of an autonomous art is suffocated. No evidence is provided of composers feeling this pressure; Moore's enormous popularity in Britain and on the Continent is ignored; the equally low level of musical creativity in Britain at the time is disregarded; the gradual transfer of cultural leadership from the ascendancy to the middle-class is largely ignored; the existence or otherwise of efforts by the Protestant middle-class to organise itself (or, more importantly for the future, to spread the gospel of music to the increasing Catholic urban population) is not explored.

Social, religious and political developments in post-Union Ireland are not examined. Cultural unionism is treated gently; cultural nationalism is seen as destructive and divisive.

The third chapter ('Antiquarianism and Politics: Davis, Petrie, Hyde and the Growth of Music in a Sectarian Culture') presents Davis's ballad-centred and utilitarian idea of music as outweighing Samuel Ferguson's more scholarly (and unionist) approach, the silencing of 'art music' as political debate became polarised, and nationalism as anti-cosmopolitan and anti-European where music is concerned. On slender evidence, Thomas Davis is set up as anti-European; his pragmatic, utilitarian side is not read against British social thought in the same period. Again, an idea about music (one that sets Irish nationalism against art) is elevated above all other influences – and the reader is offered a de-historicised, de-contextualised set of assertions.

The fourth chapter ('Heinrich Beyerung and the Cecilian Movement in Ireland') focuses on the movement that sought to cleanse Catholic church music of expressive, individualistic, romantic or sexualised accretions by returning to the purity of Gregorian and polyphonic chant – a trend reversed in 1903 when, by order of the Vatican, this high-art approach was overthrown in favour of a more popular and sentimental style (hymns such as 'Soul of my Saviour' or 'I'll Sing a Hymn to Mary'), which White sees as converging with the taste of the emerging Irish state. The intense focus on this particular movement is curious in the absence of a historical survey of music in the Church of Ireland (a comparison with the Church of England would be vital) and in the post-Emancipation Catholic Church (which had to create, or import, a musical world almost from nothing).

The fifth chapter ('Music and the Literary Revival') paints the intensity of political debate in the Revival as further blocking the possibility of an autonomous art by definitively tying musical expression to a cause; it also provides some detail on composers such as Robert Prescott Stewart and Charles Villiers Stanford and the context in which they operated. It is striking that it is only in a few pages of the second half of this chapter that the social, ideological and educational world of musicians and composers finally receives some small attention. The near-total exclusion of such material until this point again allows White's conceptualising to proceed without obstruction. The opportunity to engage with the revival of classical composition in England (and its attendant cultural nationalism) is spurned.

The sixth chapter ('Sean Ó Riada and the Crisis of Modernism in Irish Music') takes Ó Riada's move away from 'art music' towards Irish-language culture and traditional music (and indeed his early death) as emblematic of the failure of classical music to develop in Ireland; it also encompasses a partial survey of classical music in independent Ireland. The emblematic deployment of Ó Riada's story once again involves a highly selective engagement with history. No

reflection is offered on the effect on musical life in all its forms of the modernisation and suburbanisation of Irish society in the 1960s, or on the fact that O'Riada's death coincided with the emergence of a generation of young composers with an unprecedented level of intellectual independence and creative persistence (Dwyer, 2014 pp.60-79).

The epilogue, despite some small recognition of change in recent decade, pessimistically accepts the victory of the brilliant Irish musical imagination in literature over the irremediably minor accomplishments of the Irish imagination manifested in actual musical composition – a diagnosis and prognosis that appears to be confirmed by White's later *Music and the Irish Literary Imagination* (2008), which may be where his writing and gift for analysis of individual works find their true subject. Thus, an intellectual project that announces itself as staking a claim on Irish cultural ground for music concludes in an act of near-surrender to literature.

It is because he discards any real engagement, not only with political and social history, but with the history of the music that is his ostensible subject, that White's choice of subject-matter and treatment can be described as a series of arbitrary and hugely questionable interventions. For the first three chapters of the book (for much of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, effectively) the only work by a major contemporary historian that he cites is Roy Foster's *Modern Ireland* (1989). The small number of other historical works cited in the fourth chapter relate to a specific moment in ecclesiastical history and do not modify the overall picture. As mentioned above, it is in the fifth chapter that White refers to social and educational matters, as well as offering some biographical detail on Irish composers. The chapter cites Foster once; otherwise, both in terms of overall interpretation and specific references, White is heavily reliant on Joseph Ryan. White's Preface acknowledges '[his] debt to Joseph Ryan's outstanding dissertation' in relation to this chapter. If we set our earlier analysis of Ryan's handling of history alongside White's very similar procedure and his over-ready acceptance of Ryan's historical interpretation, the picture that emerges is of a shared failure to engage in critical dialogue with the available historical resources. For White's paradigms, projected narrowly and brightly onto the canvas of history, to be accepted, it is necessary to ignore the large areas that are left in darkness.

## CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY

### 2a. Frameworks, paradigms

In moving towards the practicalities of constructing a sound historical approach to the questions investigated in this thesis, the best guidance may come from historians who practise to the highest standards but also demonstrate familiarity with the challenges posed by contemporary critical culture. In her *Historical Theory* (2002), Mary Fulbrook is remarkably fair-minded. While always happy to identify and acknowledge worthwhile notions, even when they come from people with whom she disagrees on fundamental issues, she is both searching and subtle in her engagement with diverse schools of thought. She is open to the idea

that there are a whole variety of possible ‘real’ connections, only some of which will interest us sufficiently for us to explore and seek to reproduce them in any detail. The potential infinity of (real, not imposed) inter-relations also leads to the possibility of several different kinds of historical exploration (Fulbrook 2002, pp. 66-67).

She emphasises that, contrary to Hayden White’s conceptualisation of history, working historians do not pluck an assortment of facts out of the air and ‘emplot’ them (White 1973):

Rather, they pose questions about problematic aspects of the past within pre-existing collective frameworks of assumed knowledge, theories, and moot points or dark spots for further investigation (ibid., p. 67).

She develops the point in a way that speaks directly to what the present thesis attempts to undertake and its approach to existing scholarship:

The key questions here are concerned, then, not so much with the more or less arbitrary individual ‘imposition of narrative’, but rather with possible ways (however imperfect and incapable of definitive conclusion) of attributing degrees of relative causal weighting to different antecedents; ways, within certain paradigms, of trying to ‘disconfirm’ certain accounts on the basis of new evidence or the reconsideration of existing evidence in new ways; and with the limits of collectively agreed means of proceeding in these ways, because of wildly different assumptions across paradigms of enquiry (ibid, p.67).

Fulbrook highlights the endless dialogue with predecessors and contemporaries by which history proceeds – again in a way that is relevant to Ryan/White:

In short, historians work within collective traditions which set certain parameters and puzzles for which they seek solutions. They do not start, as it were, with a blank sheet of paper, looking at a selection of historical ‘debris’ and wondering how to ‘emplot’ this into a coherent story [...].Historians frequently work, whether explicitly or implicitly, within the context of collective ‘controversies’ (ibid, p.67).

Clearly, for Fulbrook, paradigms are a crucial concept. As we shall see, there is a certain elasticity in the terminology employed by historians in this regard: framework of understanding, interpretative framework, paradigm and model are among the terms that may be deployed, almost interchangeably, whether within an individual work, within one historian’s writings, or by like-minded historians who happen to favour different terms. In contemporary cultural debate, the notion of paradigm – more particularly, that of paradigm shift – is associated with the philosopher Thomas Kuhn. In this usage, paradigm refers to the shared world-view and explanatory framework that is so taken for granted by the general community of scholars or scientists that certain fields of enquiry and innovative theories are simply not countenanced. Only a fundamental shift or evolution in understanding allows what was previously excluded or unimaginable to be opened up – as in the shift from Newtonian to post-Einsteinian quantum physics (Kuhn 1962, pp.1-9; pp.43-51).

However significant, the differences between schools of modern scholarly history are not of such a momentous order. Within any field, there will probably be dominant understandings of particular sub-fields (the origins of WW1, for example) which are subject to regular adjustment as a result of new research or theories. Every so often, a radical re-interpretation of the sub-field will be proposed. Though these re-interpretations are not in any sense Kuhnian, terms like paradigm or model continue to be used. In a sense, then, at the level of practice, it would be legitimate to think of a hierarchy of paradigms or models – an explanation of what happened at a particular diplomatic meeting, for example, taking its place within an interpretation of a sequence of meetings and the events surrounding them, with this interpretation in turn taking its place within a broader diplomatic history, and so on to the level of world history.

## **2b. Peter Burke**

Peter Burke is, like Fulbrook, a practising historian. He is of particular interest where this thesis is concerned, first, because of the range of works in which he has situated cultural history within the broader flow of history and, second, because he has reflected throughout his career on the fields of social and cultural history. His *Sociology and History* (1980) is a compact, lucid, bridge-building

exploration of the relationship between those two fields and a thought-provoking analysis of social structures and social change. There is a confluence between his analysis of models in 1980 and Fulbrook's later thinking on the subject. Without in any way suggesting that there are immutable laws of historical development or models that do not vary through space and time, Burke offers a workable definition of the historian's method:

Let us define a 'model' in simple terms as an intellectual construct which simplifies reality in order to emphasise the recurrent, the constant and the typical, which it presents in the form of clusters of traits or attributes (Burke 1980, p. 35).

He suggests that even those historians who consider the simple mention of models as unnecessary theorising are effectively using models every time they refer to such things as the medieval manor, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment. Burke's pragmatism is evident when he discusses quantitative research methods and computer modelling (he was writing in 1980: the technology has changed but the point remains valid): 'We all have to squeeze on occasion, however much we try to construct categories that will do the least violence to the data while enabling conclusions to be reached' (*ibid.*, p. 40). He is equally pragmatic in his approach to earlier debates on the comparative method in history, an issue of obvious relevance to this thesis, the starting point of which is the need for a realistic assessment of Ireland's position in relation to Britain, accompanied by an awareness of the diversity of classical music histories in Europe and further afield.

In one paragraph, having quoted Max Weber's defense of the comparative approach, Burke proceeds as follows:

Traditional historians have often objected to borrowing from sociology on the grounds that the two disciplines have opposite aims. Sociology is concerned with the establishment of general laws, while history is concerned with the particular, the unrepeatable, the unique (Collingwood, 1935; Elton, 1967, pp. 23f; above, p. 18). To this classic objection there is an equally classic answer, given by Max Weber in 1914 to the conservative German historian Max von Below: 'We are absolutely in accord that history should establish what is specific, say, to the medieval city; but this is possible only if we first find what is missing in other cities (ancient, Chinese, Islamic)' quoted in Roth, 1976, p. 307 (*ibid.*, p. 33).

What Burke is voicing here, through Weber, is the belief that comparison is built into historical thinking, even where overt and lengthy comparisons are avoided. Burke usefully develops the point about comparison:

One might say that comparisons are useful primarily because they enable us to see what is

not there. Comparisons are also useful in the search for explanations. To see what varies with what makes it easier to understand the differences between one society and another. It was for this reason that Durkheim called the comparative method a kind of ‘indirect experiment’, without which it would be impossible to move from description to analysis (ibid., p. 33).

Ultimately, the usefulness of comparisons can only be judged by the results achieved. There is no inherent virtue in the process. Burke notes that Weber spent much of his working life ‘in the attempt to define the distinctive characteristics of western civilisation by means of systematic comparisons, notably comparisons between Europe and Asia.’

## **2c. Key notions**

From this exploration of the fundamentals of history writing, among the key notions that emerge are these: that contributions to historical understanding take place within a continuous conversation among the community of historians; that, regardless of whether particular historians openly acknowledge or reflect on the point, a degree of modelling (or, to change terminology, of pattern-seeking or generalisation) is necessarily part of historical practice; and, likewise, that some form of comparative thinking is fundamental to historical thinking.

As this thesis is concerned with the framing of an aspect of Irish history, it will be in constant conversation with cultural, political, social and economic histories. As it is challenging a rather rigid modelling of Irish classical music history, it will have to suggest an alternative and more flexible approach. And as the over-rigid modelling (driven by ideological preconceptions or by the notion of a correct historical pattern from which Ireland deviates) of the current school is maintained by cleaving to the internal, poorly contextualised narrative of one cultural sector in Ireland, a comparative dimension (in the form both of full engagement with the British dimension of elite Irish music culture and of low-key but repeated reference to the diversity of experience in Europe) will be necessary.

## **2d. T.C.W. Blanning**

For any examination of the relationship between culture and society in Western Europe, T.C.W. Blanning’s *The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture: Old Regime Europe 1660-1789* (2002) is of particular interest. In Blanning’s own words, the book ‘is a comparative study of the

development of political culture in Europe from the late seventeenth to the late eighteenth century. Although there is an occasional glance eastwards and southwards, the focus is chiefly on Great Britain, France and the Holy Roman Empire' (Blanning 2002, p. 2). Two of the political cultures on which he focuses are also major centres of classical music, while the story of the third, Great Britain, is of direct relevance to the situation as it develops in Ireland. Blanning does not set out to study the world of classical music in itself, but as a historian with an unusual awareness of the relationship between art and power, he makes frequent reference to music. Blanning lays unusual emphasis on music, he says both because it is often neglected by historians and also because it tells us so much about past societies (p. 4). He makes clear that, for the purposes of this particular book, his concern is with classical music, the music of the elites. This makes sense in light of the connection between certain forms of culture and matters of power and legitimacy: 'A strong ruler is made stronger still by skilful projection of his majesty' (ibid., p. 5). Blanning then quotes Peter Burke on Louis XIV: 'Ritual, art and architecture may all be seen as the instruments of self-assertion, as the continuation of war and diplomacy by other means.'

The central thesis of *The Culture of Power* is as follows:

[...] that during this period [1660-1789] a new cultural space developed, which posed new challenges to regimes and their ruling orders. Alongside the old culture, centred on the courts and the representation of monarchical authority, there emerged a 'public sphere', in which private individuals came together to form a whole greater than the sum of the parts. By exchanging information, ideas, and criticism, these individuals created a cultural actor – the public – which has dominated European culture ever since. Many, if not most, of the cultural phenomena of the modern world derive from the 'long eighteenth century – the periodical, the newspaper, the novel, the journalist, the critic, the public library, the concert, the art exhibition, the public museum, the national theatre, just to list a sample. Of course almost of all these can be found in earlier periods, but it was in the eighteenth century that they came to maturity and fused to trigger what can reasonably be called a cultural revolution. Perhaps most important of all, it was then that 'public opinion' came to be recognized as the ultimate arbiter in matters of taste and politics (ibid., p. 2).

Blanning states that the cultural changes referred to above were both a challenge and an opportunity for those in power. Failure to adjust led to a 'haemorrhage of legitimacy' (ibid., p. 2). This is what happened in France, where '[s]elf-imposed isolation at Versailles anchored the heirs of Louis XIV to a mode of representing kingship which became more moribund with every year that passed' (ibid., p.3). Though with some difficulty, their 'more nimble and better-informed British and

German colleagues proved able to reinvent themselves as the patriot kings or the servants of the state that the new conditions called for' (ibid., p. 3).

Though certain themes touched on above are almost commonplaces of historical writing about the period (as in the contrast between French monarchical rigidity, ultimately fatal to the institution, and the gradual incorporation of the middle classes into the world of power in Britain), Blanning's terminology (representation) and focus (the public sphere) suggest a debt to Jurgen Habermas's early work *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (trans. 1988).

## 2e. Blanning on Habermas

In his introduction (in which he lays out 'the conceptual foundation on which the book is based' (Blanning 2002, p.2), Blanning openly acknowledges that debt but, as will become clear, he is concerned with the way in which such societal change unfolds as a historical process, not with the somewhat inflexible abstraction in which Habermas deals. Effectively, Blanning does not so much translate as critically adapt Habermasian concerns in order to forge tools suitable for the historical task in hand. A further adaptation will be necessary when, for the purposes of this thesis, the focus moves from Blanning's major cultural powers to the particular conditions obtaining in Ireland and non-elite culture is engaged with.

Jurgen Habermas's *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit: Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* was published in 1962. The key term in the French translation, *L'espace public: archéologie de la publicité comme dimension constitutive de la société*, published in 1978, is more spatialised than the original German term: in English-language terms, public space in one case; publicity (if the term had not been appropriated for other use) or public-ness in the other. The English translation that eventually emerged in 1989 again presented Habermas's key term spatially: *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: an Enquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. That, unknown to some of those who write under the banner of Habermas, a deformed translation of the German term 'Öffentlichkeit' has become common currency in modern academia may suggest that the notion of a public sphere has a useful life outside the confines of Habermas's thought, because it helps us to address that sector of socio-political life that encompasses journalism, coffee-house discussion and public debate more generally, among other phenomena.

Blanning makes it clear that Habermas is not writing as a historian:

In presenting his macroscopic perspective of European cultural development, his primary

purpose is to identify and explain what he regards as the malaise of modern culture and to indicate how it might be rectified. He does this by illustrating and explaining the change in the function of culture from the Middle Ages to the present day (Blanning 2002, p.6).

As a member of the Frankfurt School, Habermas followed Adorno and Max Horkheimer in presenting a pessimistic interpretation of the modern 'culture industry'. It may be that, as Blanning says, the desire to effect political change in the present leads to a certain idealisation of the eighteenth-century public sphere. It may be that Habermas also somewhat simplifies the operations of power in the Middle Ages, though Blanning does not dwell on this issue in his summary of Habermas's thinking:

Those who exercised power – monarchs, nobles, prelates – expressed their status in public in a concrete, non-abstract way, through insignia, clothing, gesture, or rhetoric. Power was both exercised and represented (in the sense of 'being made present') directly: 'as long as the prince and the estates of the realm still "are" the land, instead of merely functioning as deputies for it, they are able to "re-present"; they represent their power "before" the people, instead of for the people (ibid., p.8).

Even if Habermas's analysis ignores the messy ways in which power was so frequently contested and overthrown, the notion of 'representational culture' is a useful one. It can be applied to 'the courtly, chivalric court-culture of France and Burgundy in the fifteenth century' (ibid., p. 8). It can also be applied to the absolutism that prevailed at the court of Louis XIV and other even later monarchs; here, the nobility were reduced to the role of reflecting the sovereign's authority.

For Habermas, the eighteenth century is of crucial importance for a number of reasons: royalty tends to retreat into its palaces and risks losing its hold over the populace; prince, Church and nobility break up into their public and private elements; the development of state budgets, of a professional bureaucracy and of professional armies lead to the 'objectivization of the institutions of public power'; Protestantism and tolerance transfer religion to the private sphere; the growth of the middle class and of commodity culture lead to the development of a bourgeois public sphere, characterised by rational argument. As summarised by Blanning, '[t]he bourgeois public sphere can be defined as the medium through which private persons can reason in public' (ibid., p. 8). The most important point about this sphere is that, within it, ideas and arguments are actively communicated, thus creating a public, greater than the sum of the individuals of which it is constituted, and a new form of power that must be addressed or managed by existing authority. Those who make up the public sphere do not demand direct access to the levers of power but their activities and very existence gradually undermine existing authority. In Blanning's words:

With the forces of production on their side, it could only be a matter of time before their concept of the public sphere triumphed completely. Long before political was achieved, however, the bourgeois succeeded in establishing non-political forms of their new public concept. This they did through cultural media which now became accessible to the public – reading societies, lecture halls, theatres, museums, and concerts. What these various spaces had in common was the sovereignty of rational argument which prevailed in them, outranking the claims of status or wealth’ (ibid., p. 8).

The cultural consequences need to be outlined before the historical weaknesses or insufficiencies in Habermas’s vision are addressed. Thus, again as summarised by Blanning:

Culture was transformed from something which is representational into a commodity which could be desired for its own sake. Cultural industrialization had begun. The more that art objects were produced for the market, the more they escaped from the control of the old patrons – the court, the Church, and the nobles. And the more they became accessible to all, the more they lost their aura, their sacramental character (ibid., p.9).

For Habermas, this profound change is particularly clear in the field of music.

Until the end of the eighteenth century, all music was tied to the needs of a representational public, confined to three functions: the representation of power, the propagation of Christianity, and the entertainment of aristocrats. The development of the bourgeois public sphere turned music into a commodity, made music accessible to all who could pay, and liberated the composer and performer from the thralldom of representation (ibid., p.10).

Even where the public sphere lacked (or was not permitted) an active political dimension, cultural debate and activity developed critical faculties and institutions that would eventually feed into politics. Britain moved towards a politicised public sphere before France (where an archaic monarchy impeded bourgeois political activity) or the German-speaking regions (where the barriers between the estates remained rigidly in position and the middle class could only speak to itself, in institutions such as reading clubs). Blanning goes on to highlight the problematic aspects of Habermas's 'grand narrative' from a historical point of view. In the first place, Blanning underlines the vagueness of the German term '*bürgerlich[en]*' generally translated as bourgeois, and suggests that it is never clear whether the bourgeois public sphere has a clear class identity. He points out that the public sphere as it existed in practice contained a high proportion of clergymen and nobles. Nobles were both literate and mobile and were in fact better placed than the burgher class to adapt to the new conditions of life and become bourgeois.

In the second place, he states that Habermas errs in presenting the public sphere as inherently oppositional: in practice, it was 'politically multi-directional' and supporters of the status quo were as active within it as much as any other sector of opinion. Blanning goes further, stating that, '[in] most parts of Europe for most of the time, the relationship between the public sphere and the state was amicable and mutually supportive' (ibid., p. 13). He points out how the state was actively involved in enhancing the public sphere 'in promoting educational reform, expanding the bureaucracy, and enforcing secularization'. In the third place, Blanning paints Habermas's chronological scheme, which proposes a gradual movement from cultural to political critique within the public sphere, as simplistic; he cites the level of political debate in England, for example, in the 1640s and 1650s, and the Frondes in France (1648-53). Having briefly listed some other criticisms – idealisation of eighteenth-century discourse, excessive dependence on the German model, the over-separation between church and state – Blanning nevertheless accepts the pillars of Habermas's argument:

As this book will endeavour to show, once the Marxist residue has been cleared away – the insistence on the 'bourgeois' nature of the public sphere, its allegedly oppositional orientation, and its chronology – what remains provides an illuminating perspective from which to view the political culture of the old regime (ibid., p. 14).

As adherence to Habermas's schema is not the point, a more spatialised understanding (or metaphorisation) of this domain than can be justified by the original German term may legitimately be employed.

## **2f. Geoff Eley**

Effectively, it is Blanning's more historicised understanding of the public sphere that will be taken as both a source of insight and as a suggestive basis for discussion here. His examination of the interaction between politics and culture within three major areas of Western Europe (Britain, France and what was to become Germany) is extremely useful as a model for the integration of cultural analysis with more traditionally political concerns. His attention to developments before as well as within his chosen time-frame (1660-1789) is useful in helping us to avoid generalisations based too exclusively on the history of the last two centuries. Thus, his analysis of national feeling and identity does not confine itself to those nationalist movements that emerged in the late eighteenth or in the nineteenth centuries. His detailed awareness of the separate paths taken by different countries, even within the established powers of Western Europe, helps to undermine any facile opposition

between Ireland and an inadequately differentiated European model (as in the writings of Ryan and White examined in Chapter One). However, in view of his concentration on elite culture within a set of major powers, further modification of his governing ideas will be necessary in order to account for Irish realities.

Though he is not cited by Blanning, the Marxist historian Geoff Eley had elaborated a related critique of Habermas on historical grounds over a decade earlier. In his paper 'Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures: Placing Habermas in the Nineteenth Century' (1989), Eley takes a fresh look at Habermas's thinking. He makes frequent reference to British history, and raises important issues, of which only those relevant to our subject need be listed here: the growth of a middle-class public in the British provinces; the impact of extra-parliamentary activity on the parliamentary arena, as well as the role of 'bridging', "the transmission of printed information in traditional oral forms", as in ballads'; the challenge to the polite discourse of the middle-class public sphere posed by radical Jacobinism and its conscious attempt to create a dynamic and popular alternative; the role of public spectacle; associational action and middle-class patronage in the provinces; the impact of the French Revolution in encouraging peasants and the working class to articulate an 'emancipatory language'; the inadequacy of oppositions such as educated/uneducated and literate/illiterate; the emergence of both a concept of their own 'backwardness' and new national identities in the peasant societies of 'east-central and southern Europe'; the public sphere as a space where 'cultural and ideological negotiation among a variety of publics takes place, rather than the spontaneous and class-specific achievement of the bourgeoisie in some sufficient sense'; the need to pay more attention to the role of the state; the need to recognise the degree to which 'the institutions of the public sphere were founded on sectionalism, exclusiveness, and repression' (ibid., pp. 22-25).

While making frequent reference to British history, and looking also in the direction of south-eastern Europe, Eley does not refer to Ireland, even though (as even a cursory glance at the list above would suggest) some of the issues he raises when either supplementing or challenging Habermas are played out far more dramatically in Ireland than in Britain, with the Irish situation bearing many resemblances to that in south-eastern Europe, as will be argued at greater length in Chapter Six. In a sense, therefore, if Blanning provides both precedent and insight where the examination of culture in a socio-political context is concerned, but in the context of major European powers, Eley's essay indirectly endorses the project of this thesis by highlighting points which, when translated into Irish terms, are central to the historical argument to be outlined in later chapters.

## **2g. Habermas: Implications for study of music in Britain**

In order to understand the situation in Ireland, it is necessary (as was demonstrated in Chapter One) to understand the particular conditions obtaining in Britain but it is equally important not to take the British situation as standard. (Negotiating this fine line is one of the challenges of this thesis.) In fact, the discontinuities of elite music culture in Britain (in contrast with Britain's attainments in literature, for example) underline the danger implicit in such an approach and the need to retain a broader comparative perspective encompassing several national histories. Blanning's *Culture of Power* is extremely useful from this point of view. Lengthy, detailed comparison with a variety of countries across Europe would be beyond the scale and ambitions of this thesis, but the entire study will nonetheless be suffused by an awareness of the diversity of experience outside of Ireland. A historian like Blanning, though himself British, treats British history as one history among many; in contrast to writers like Ryan and White who treat Ireland as deviating from an under-explored and under-analysed norm, Blanning's approach is characterised by curiosity about, and respect for, the particularity of each history.

It was argued in Chapter One that to analyse classical music in Ireland, a satellite of the culture of classical music in Britain, in isolation from the English/British model was to deprive oneself of an essential analytical tool and to risk serious misinterpretation of the culture in question. If the culture of the elites on both islands was so similar in the eighteenth century, why, it might be asked, should a different framework of understanding be needed when it comes to the nineteenth century and later? The answer becomes clear when Irish history is examined in the light of key developments in English/British history – both in the field of music and with regard to broader social patterns. With an unavoidable level of generalisation, we can first attempt to summarise the place of classical music in English history and society over several centuries.

The history of classical music in England from 1600 to 1900 is strikingly discontinuous. It is tempting, and perhaps necessary, to read it in the context of dramatic changes in taste and philosophy at the level of the elite. The creation of the Church of England was motivated at least as much by Henry VIII's desire to escape constraints on his power of decision as by any theological difference. The English Reformation affected the language of church music (the switch to the vernacular corresponding with the same switch where Bible reading was concerned) and brought certain changes in style, but there was less disruption than might be imagined and a favoured Catholic composer could, by showing a degree of discretion, maintain a career (J.L. Smith, 2004). In the age of Elizabeth I, English music – Byrd, Tallis, Gibbon and Dowland are among the most prominent names – stood alongside the best in Europe. The seventeenth century, however,

witnessed two civil wars that pitted against each other, not simply interest groups, but radically differing visions of authority, kingship and the relationship between religion and the social order. A stream of radical Protestantism had scorned the pragmatism of the monarchy; it saw secular culture as a dangerous indulgence and distrusted art even when it was restrained and tightly harnessed to a religious purpose. The tensions between these two tendencies within Protestantism eventually issued in war and the establishment of an anti-monarchical Commonwealth; the new order brought with it, for a time, the closing of the theatres and places of public entertainment. The restoration, the thirty-year interlude between this and the next civil war, brought with it – perhaps in reaction – overt display and theatricality (Strong 2004, pp.262-315).

Cultural forms generally take time both to develop and to die. The disruptions of the seventeenth century did not prevent the emergence of a Purcell (1659-95). In the eighteenth century, however, with the monarchy passing to a House of Hanover that for decades remained strongly Germanic in language and cultural affinity, the already contested continuity of the high English classical music tradition descended into incoherence. This may have been partially disguised by the arrival and long-term residence in England of Handel, who outdid any native-born composer in his ability to compose music for great public and religious occasions. The period was characterised by the wholesale importation both of musicians and of musical fashions and forms, along with a deprecation of native-born talent by the elite, a cult of celebrity and a collapse of critical standards. In the absence of a powerful monarchy, however explained, parliament had a greater role and weight than in France, for example, leading to the relatively free expression of opinion and the development of a lively public culture (journalism, pamphleteering, caricature and debate in coffee houses and public spaces). Literature and journalism – however much individuals choose to put themselves in the service of power – are activities that do not require a great deal of personal capital or investment on the part of the beginner. The political and social workings of English society in the period favoured literature over large-scale musical forms requiring patronage. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, the wars against France were accompanied by restrictions on liberty of speech, by greater repression of dissent and by a more open expression of patriotism (Blanning 2002, pp.266-356).

Thereafter, the previous pattern resumed, even with the gradual rise in the prestige and symbolic presence of the monarchy under Victoria. When Britain's failure to compete with other powers in the field of classical music became an acknowledged embarrassment, there were resources that could eventually lead to a remedying of the situation. These could be briefly listed as follows: the continuing strength of sociable forms of music-making such as the glee (sung by small groups of middle- and upper-class men); the cathedrals and churches that continued to give musical training

of some kind to a substantial number of boys of the same classes; the expansion of the urban middle classes during the second industrial revolution and the growth in cultural infrastructure that accompanied it (museums, galleries, libraries, colleges of music and concert halls, etc.); the opportunities for wealthy entrepreneurs to make their mark socially through municipal government and through patronage of the arts; the increasing popularity of the piano in domestic music-making and as a marker of social position and accomplishment; the relative ease of interaction and co-operation among the principal Protestant denominations, representing the vast majority of the population; the encouragement of participation in cultural activities by the working classes (whether motivated by cultural idealism or by a desire to reduce a perceived threat to the social order); the popularity of brass bands as a form of urban popular culture and the potential bridge to orchestral music (and to a middle-class life-style) they represented; and the level of working-class cultural activity and self-education that came with the spread of literacy (Blake 1997, pp.26-36).

With all due acknowledgement of the existence of groups outside the social consensus, Britain managed – through the gradual incorporation of emerging social classes; through careers in the army, navy and Empire; through the direct or reflected glory of the country’s position as a world super-power, both economic and military; through an extended franchise and the development of a system of national education – to maintain some kind of social, ideological and cultural cohesion through the nineteenth century. These socio-political and cultural factors eventually resulted in the emergence of a disciplined music culture, the training of a corps of trained musicians, the development of a critical culture, the building of respect for native talent in both performance and composition, and – in the late nineteenth century – the flowering of composers known as the English musical renaissance.

## **2h. Implications for Ireland**

If we look at the musical life of the elite in the middle of the eighteenth century in Ireland, without regard to context, there is little to distinguish it from the pattern prevailing in Britain. Handel’s stay in Dublin and the premiere of *Messiah* have a place in the international history of classical music, but it must be remembered that this was a side-effect of a temporary slump in the composer’s musical fortunes in London and that it did not change the overall pattern. Why then is there reason to speak of serious divergence rather than minor variation where the history of music on the two islands is concerned?

Eighteenth-century Dublin had the marks of a capital city – an impressive new city centre; a

parliament and the activity surrounding it; a port and new custom house, and the trade to justify them; courts, prisons and administrative infrastructure; some industry; roads and canals that linked the city to the rest of the island – but it would be simplistic to paint it as a smaller version of London. If it was a capital, it was of a country whose monarch resided on the adjacent island and whose parliament was ultimately subordinate to the parliament at Westminster (as seen in the laws that controlled or curbed Irish trade to the advantage of British competitors) (Dickson 2014, pp.129-34, 139-43, 152-57; Bartlett, p.153). Dublin’s cultural and financial opportunities were not sufficient to retain its greatest talents: writers, playwrights, painters, musicians and composers were again and again drawn to London, which left Ireland – so far as the elite were concerned – in an intermediate condition, somewhere between a province and a colony with a formal political identity of its own. This difference, in itself, would not necessitate a separate framework of understanding: the Irish case could be presented as a minor variation of the British one. The crux of the issue, however, lies not in the musical activity per se, but in the way music finds a place within, first, the public sphere, and second within the surrounding society. Much of the argument of this thesis will centre on the need to take account of the sphere within which classical music was practised in Ireland and then of the society surrounding it, one which diverged enormously from the British pattern during the nineteenth century.

If we look first at the public sphere in the eighteenth century, the divergence is already unmistakable. Thus, it might be thought that there is a parallel between the development of the public sphere in Britain and the activity (debate, pamphleteering, journalism; voluntary association and political organisation; parades and meetings) surrounding the growth of the Patriot Party in Ireland in the period between the American and the French revolutions (Dickson 2014, pp. 201-04). However, this movement quickly fell apart under the pressure of events in the wider world and through government pressures and enticements (Foster 1989, pp. 249-51; 257-58). We could mention the greater assertion of state authority following the French revolution, the growth of more radical opinion that eventually led to the 1798 rebellion of the United Irishmen and the ferocious repression that preceded and followed it. However, a very important factor was the realisation that in one important regard the analogy between the Protestant Patriots of Ireland and their brothers in the United States was unsustainable: if social and political leaders in America were able to operate without regard to the lives and interests of the indigenous and slave populations and to create sufficient socio-political consensus to found a new polity, the situation facing their Irish equivalents was quite different. In Ireland, neither the reactionary Protestant elite nor those with more liberal and separatist inclinations (on American lines) could afford to ignore the huge mass of the population. These were of a different religion; many of them spoke a different language; and even

their merchant and professional elite was rigorously excluded from the political system. Even if this Catholic elite could be incorporated within the system, any activation of the rural masses posed a potentially existential threat to all sectors of the Protestant elite. The Irish Protestant elite needed the protection of the British state, regardless of how aggravating British treatment of Ireland was. The logic of free expression and Protestant nationalism came up against the logic of self-preservation in a society based on religious privilege and on the exclusion of Catholics (Foster 1989, pp.257-58). A sustained commitment to Enlightenment values in Ireland, if applied in the political sphere, could not but lead to the subversion of an official order based on systematic injustice. Ultimately, this is why radical thought in Ireland led to the 1798 revolution, an extraordinary event in a British context. The agitation, discussion and publishing that characterised the United Irishmen can be seen as an effort to build a separate social and public sphere that would replace the existing order.

It is useful sometimes to step back from the day-to-day, month-to-month drama of high politics, or from the minutiae of the struggle for land reform, and to look at events with a more detached eye. If we do this regarding developments in Ireland in the nineteenth century, what emerges is, first, the instability that always threatens the socio-political order and, second, the gulf between Irish society and British society.

These are some of the factors that point to that gulf. A non-sectarian (in theory if not always in practice) cross-class movement developed that sought the overthrow of the state in Ireland. There was large-scale violence in the 1798 Rising and extreme violence, applied with something approaching gusto, in the way it was repressed. There was the raw political calculation behind the abolition of the Irish Parliament (which could be termed the attempted provincialisation of Ireland) and the Act of Union (Bartlett 2010, pp.206-27). Catholic Emancipation was not granted and an accentuated, religiously based politics ensued. A reduction in the franchise accompanied the eventual granting of Emancipation. Catholic peasants were taxed in order to pay for the church of the elite; social warfare preceded its abolition (Pašeta 2003, pp.22-25). Unofficial power was exercised by the Whiteboys and others in a system that ignored the wishes of the peasantry and the landless. Dozens of Coercion Acts were needed to stamp (British) order on the countryside throughout the century (Strauss 1951, p.146). The political consequences of the delay in incorporating the Catholic bourgeoisie within the system resulted in the Catholic middle class allying itself with the peasantry rather than with its Protestant equivalent. Ireland witnessed a campaign (unprecedented in Europe) of peaceful mass agitation for the abolition of Repeal; the state's dismissal of this was, in effect, an invitation to choose between acquiescence and violence. Another non-sectarian movement, Young Ireland, developed that sought the overthrow of the British state in Ireland (even if it was more successful in its intellectual and cultural influence than

its militant actions) (Pašeta, pp.29-31). And a famine removed a quarter of the population and initiated a dramatic and almost continuous population decline over the decades that followed; seen in other terms, Ireland had half the population of England in 1800 but only one sixteenth in 1900 (Pašeta, 34-39).

Divergence between Britain and Ireland continued. Language shift occurred on a dramatic scale. Ireland failed to industrialise on British lines and it retained its inferior economic status as an agriculturally based dependency of Britain and the Empire. The development of Fenianism and the rising of 1867 was followed by the (in British terms) extraordinary alliance between (ex-)Fenians, the peasant/tenant agitation of the Land League and the Home Rule Party. The British state had to overthrow the sacred principle of private property where the Irish land-owning class was concerned, in the greater cause of defusing Irish separatism and maintaining the Union (Strauss, pp.197-200). British elites were deaf to the wishes of the Irish majority in both the Home Rule and Sinn Féin periods. A powerful and at certain points seditious alliance was formed between British political, church and military elites and Ulster unionism, at a time when unionism was declaring its intention to use violence to prevent the implementation of majority rule on the island of Ireland, even within a British framework. Finally, there was the (relative) success of separatist nationalism in a period when the population was only half of its pre-Famine level and when Britain was at its height as a world power.

The state of affairs sketched above is certainly not reconcilable with the notion of the gentle unfolding, within a broad social consensus of a public sphere devoted to the rational exploration of the public good. In this regard, the Irish case more than confirms the critiques of Habermas by historians such as Eley and Blanning. It is impossible to deal adequately with the public sphere in Ireland without seeing it, as we saw Eley do above, as a space where different visions of society and the political order vie for supremacy. For the existence of a single public sphere, a level of social cohesion – even if is based on a shared dream or a lie: equal access for all; membership at some level in nation or empire – is required. Clearly, much of what was important in Ireland happened outside the middle-class public sphere and much political activity was aimed at forcing the attention of London towards Irish matters. In Ireland, apart from the short-lived Young Ireland movement and the later cultural revival around the turn of the twentieth century, energy was not so much directed at changing conditions on the ground in Ireland as at forcing Britain to allow the creation of a political entity in which a new culture might develop. The difference between working for change within a given and relatively settled public sphere and working for the creation of a future public sphere must have enormous implications for culture.

## 2i. Vincent Morley's critique

The historian Vincent Morley, in his *Ó Chéitinn go Raiftearaí* (2011), dismisses the usefulness of the notion of a public sphere at all in relation to Ireland – or in history writing of any kind. We have already adopted a more historicised version of the idea (via Blanning and Eley) but an engagement with Morley's critique will help us to unlock an aspect of the Irish story that is largely hidden to historians and theorists who concern themselves with the internal history of the public sphere – and so will help to clarify the reasons for the methodology espoused in this thesis.

Morley's book begins with a powerful attack on the historical vision (or blindness) underlying *Hidden Ireland, Public Sphere* (2002), a brief study by the cultural historian and theorist Joep Leerssen, author also of two renowned and ground-breaking studies, *Mere Irish and Fíor-Ghael* (1996) and *Remembrance and Imagination* (1996). Crucially, what Morley does is to offer an explanation for the continuity over centuries of a political tradition among the peasantry that did not depend on Habermas's bourgeois public sphere – based on the printed word and on urban middle-class social spaces such as the club and the coffee house – but on oral transmission (song, poetry, story, history) or on the translation into oral form of the manuscripts that continued to be copied and transmitted in the Irish-language world well into the nineteenth century, long after print had become the dominant mode in English-language and urban society. There was therefore a class of intellectual in the Irish countryside that probably never experienced either coffee or coffee houses but that was the guardian of historical and cultural memory for those who feature as uncultured illiterates in English-language histories and cultural analysis. It is because Joep Leerssen replicates Habermas's focus on print culture and the middle class in explaining Irish nationalist culture in the nineteenth century, and because he identifies antiquarian researchers who had no contact with the peasantry as the prime transmitters of historical tradition, that Morley so strongly contests his approach. This quotation from Leerssen suggests what is at stake:

Whatever elite there was, was local or in exile. There were no printers, no booksellers. Gaelic Ireland was atomized into many separate small-scale communities without the wherewithal to form a society, without the joint continuum of a public sphere (Leerssen, quoted in Morley (2011), p.11).

Within Leerssen's understanding of culture, there is no means of sustaining a common culture in the absence of the printed word and the culture surrounding it. His peasantry, therefore, are almost blank in cultural terms – and deprived of all agency and political flexibility. What Morley also demonstrates is that the combined oral and manuscript culture of Gaelic Ireland demonstrates its living adaptability as the dream of a return of the Stuart monarchy yields to a more republican and

not so entirely Catholic-centred vision of Anglo-Irish history after the French Revolution and 1798. Morley goes on to ask:

[...]: más féidir amhrán polaitiúil a chanadh cois teallaigh do bhaill an teaghlaigh, nó ag oíche airneáin agus na comharsana bailithe isteach, nó os comhair lucht ragairne i dtigh tábhairne, nó do mheitheal lá fómhair, nó don saol Fódalach 'i lár an aonaigh' (sa chiall litriúil den nath sin) – cá bhfuil teorainneacha an 'spáis phoiblí' le tarraingt? (Morley, p. 15)

[...]: if it is possible to sing a political song by the hearth for a household, or during an evening's entertainment when the neighbours gather in, or in front of revellers in a public house, or for a band of reapers in autumn, or for [the whole community] 'in the middle of the fair' (in the literal meaning of that expression) – where are the borders of the public sphere?]

Having made some points that echo Eley and Blanning, Morley considers any invocation of the public sphere an ideological construct simplistically imposed on a complex historical reality and therefore wishes to see the concept – and in fact theories of any kind – entirely discarded by historians:

'Dá laghad muiníne a chuireann an staraí i dteoiricí is ea is fearr é, mar cuireann an teoiric púicín air: cúngaíonn sí raon a shamhlaíochta agus díríonn sí a intinn i dtreoanna áirithe' (p.16)

[‘The less faith a historian puts in theories the better, because the theory blinkers him: it narrows the range of his imagination and directs his attention in particular directions.’]

In saying this, Morley is – and here we could refer back to the positions of Burke and Fulbrook outlined earlier in this chapter – in danger of simplifying the dialectic between verifiable fact and (flexible) modelling that underlies historical thinking. His own book is animated by a powerful idea (and by a passion to correct the historical record) – though, of course, his command of and respect for the sources that he prizes so much are clearly displayed throughout.

It is possible to accept Morley's explanation of the continuity of a national history among the common people, to accept his criticism of historians and cultural analysts who pronounce upon the culture of the populace without knowing the language and traditions through which they expressed themselves, to accept his revaluation of oral culture (and his understanding of the complex interaction between oral culture, scribal/manuscript culture and print), but not to follow him in his interpretation and dismissal of the concept of a public sphere. In saying that the existence of political ideas and memory in a social field outside the standard definition of the public sphere

invalidates the whole concept, he is in danger of misreading the notion – though his critique does point towards a problem inherent in the term as frequently used: to speak of the public sphere, without qualification, is to suggest that what is outside that sphere is not public. This may lead to the misapprehension that politics in the modern era happens only within the (largely middle-class) public sphere. Morley is quite right to point out that this is not the case – and the point is valid beyond the Irish case. The term public sphere risks dissolving into generalised meaninglessness if it is not brought to bear on a specific social sector that arose in the early modern period and that was bound up with literacy, modern communications and a swelling, urban, (largely) middle-class population and its forms of sociability and cultural expression. However, to imagine that in describing activity within the public sphere one has defined the socio-political or cultural reality of an entire society is to be seriously misguided.

In Ireland, power could be exercised from London with little concern for Irish middle-class opinion, and the urban middle class was massively outweighed by the rural populace. Even on the basis of the brief survey of nineteenth-century Irish history earlier in this chapter, it would appear that the actions of the Irish peasantry – or fears among others of what an activated, non-consenting Irish peasantry might do – constitute one of the principal motors of change in Irish life. Leerssen does not suggest a mechanism by which the elite notions on which he focuses would reach and energise the peasantry. By explaining how historical memory was transmitted orally at the level of the Irish-speaking peasantry, Morley makes it clear that the peasantry were not simply passive receptacles who first received a history from above and were then activated by this vision (ultimately by the intellectual transmitters of that vision). Instead, the peasantry already had a historical memory, and a political vision. The motor of change was already functioning but it would undergo modification (not a miraculous birth) as newer political ideas (such as non-sectarian republicanism, electoral democracy, Repeal, the Land League and Home Rule) were encountered and assimilated. Morley's point about cultural transmission helps us to explain why, in a country that suffered the catastrophe of famine and the shocking levels of emigration that followed, waves of popular action (increasingly converging or allied with parliamentary agitation) arose again and again. It is hard to imagine that a newly implanted and barely rooted nationalist vision would have had such resilience under the circumstances. The broader point is that the dynamic of Irish history – cultural or political – cannot be grasped if we remain within the (bourgeois/middle class) public sphere. We shall see that this applies to classical music, wedded by its social nature to the public sphere, as much as to other cultural forms.

If Leerssen were a special case, the attention devoted to him here would be disproportionate, but the issues raised by Morley have far-reaching implications. Joseph Ryan's thesis, as seen in

Chapter One, espouses the notion of what could be called trickle-down nationalism, though his discussion and historical tracking of this phenomenon centres on thinkers who do not deal with Ireland and, in addition, ceases abruptly with the year 1800. The process by which Herderian philosophy would reach an Irish-speaking – or even an English-speaking – peasant in Tipperary and turn him into an anti-cosmopolitan nationalist is not explained.

## **2j. Implications for the study of classical music**

It is here that the study of classical music as practised has much to offer Irish cultural history. If the starting-point of this thesis is to address the misinterpretation of an important aspect of the history of classical music in Ireland, its broader task is to offer a more generous and flexible framework of understanding by demonstrating how economic, political, social, ideological and religious factors shape or limit the space in which this particular cultural activity is practised. This approach is not deterministic – claiming, for example, that in these particular conditions a particular (low) level of creativity is inevitable. Rather, the intention is to draw attention to what is explainable, to examine historical process over time, to undermine ungrounded speculation and to demonstrate that, in cultural as in other forms of history, Ireland is not a bizarre anomaly (or a deviant from an assumed international cultural norm) but a space in which a particular set of forces make certain outcomes more likely. This study will also draw attention to the cultural life of Irish towns and cities, and open up a neglected perspective on Ireland's situation in the world.

Music in general is a social art (even if modern technology allows for a more individual pattern of creation and consumption). The world of classical music in Ireland offers certain advantages and possibilities where a limited study of this nature is concerned. Classical music is an international art, and so it encourages (or should encourage) a broad-ranging comparative perspective. It arrived in Ireland through the coloniser and long retained an umbilical relationship with Britain, so its history offers insight into the cultural interaction between the two islands. It was (and sometimes is) bound up with power and ceremonial, whether state or ecclesiastical or both, and so it throws indirect light on power. With its ill-defined boundaries, it may engage with both popular song and with folk traditions, touching on other aspects of power and identity. It requires a certain economic investment of practitioners (training/education costs, uniform or clothing, instruments) and audiences (clothing, tickets) and so throws light on the interaction between everyday economics and culture. It gathers people – performers and audiences alike – in public and regulated spaces and so can reveal much regarding social and class attitudes, ideologies, political affiliations, contradictions and aspirations. It does this all the more interestingly and revealingly as it does not generally

demand the overt statement of opinion, and so it offers a window on ideology in unthinking action. As a learned and transmitted skill, it offers a window on the strength or weakness of the desire on the part of the state or of practitioners to enlarge the audience for culture, both laterally and temporally.

It is because the social world of classical music in early nineteenth-century Ireland was a very narrow one – a matter of a few clubs and societies, a handful of composers, a small literature, a few institutions – that it is possible to track its evolution over several generations in one interdisciplinary study. Ryan and White both deal with the eighteenth century as a prelude to the nineteenth, when, as they see it, nationalism developed as a destructive force and suffocated the potential for classical music to develop – with consequences that resonate into the present. Thus, the crucial period for any counter-statement to Ryan/White is the century, roughly, from the rise of O’Connell to the creation of an independent state. This has the advantage of removing us from the dramas of a time-frame imposed by military and political history – the United Irishmen, 1798, the Act of Union – and encouraging a close look at the period when the post-Union order was beginning to take shape. As emerges in some fashion from Chapter One and as will be seen in Chapter Three, classical music had a weak presence in the social and cultural sphere in early nineteenth-century Ireland. But in Chapter One we have already noted Ireland’s status as a satellite of a weak British musical culture and the fact that classical music figures more as an unambitious form of sociability than as a demanding art form.

Having argued for the usefulness of a perspective drawn from Habermas and modified by Blanning and Eley, we can approach nineteenth-century Irish history in terms of a contested public sphere set amid the patterns and dynamics of Irish society. Social leadership in the cities and towns, and ownership, as it were, of classical music culture at the beginning of the nineteenth-century fell to the Protestant middle class – or, more precisely, the upper middle class. That classical music had a weak presence in the social and cultural sphere in early nineteenth-century Ireland is uncontested. That this was an undistinguished period in English musical history is equally uncontested. Less than a century later, England had much improved infrastructure in many of its major cities, professional orchestras were operating at a level to rival those in Germany, composers and leaders of musical institutions were respected members of society, the music was a subject of animated debate among intellectuals, and a musical renaissance was under way that resonated at the level of the state and of the cultural identity of the country. In Ireland, around 1900, Ryan and White would hold that classical music was receiving a death blow from the national movement; this thesis will propose a different view, paying attention to initiatives and debates of the period, but not contesting the narrowness of opportunity offered to ambitious musicians and composers or the feebleness of

classical music both organisationally and as a voice in the debates about and imaginings of a culture for the Ireland that was coming into being.

The divergence between Ireland and Britain therefore requires explanation. The Ryan/White theory, as we saw in Chapter One, assumes that this divergence is ascribable to a potent form of nationalism reacting against the foreignness and unfortunate colonial associations of classical music. In our terms, however, the challenge is to examine how classical music figured within the middle-class cultural sphere and to account for the failure of this culture to develop substantial infrastructure, widely held aspirations to higher standards of musicianship, a developed interest in abstract music and a presence in national debate and self-image.

Instead of assuming that a single ideological factor explains all, we must ask what it was that prevented a particular music culture from developing as it did in England, the culture of which Ireland was then a satellite, and thus eventually approaching the western European norm. We need to establish whether the prime bearers of the music conceived of it as a significant cultural force. We need to establish whether they undertook sustained efforts to disseminate this cultural form. In other words, we need to define the nature of the cultural leadership that was offered from within the middle-class sphere. If the evidence suggests, for example, that the prime bearers of classical music, a highly socialised art form, were primarily interested in addressing their fellows and had no larger project, this must surely be a consideration in accounting for the failure of classical music to develop in the manner just outlined. In the absence of, as it were, musical evangelism from within, we need to see whether there was indeed a potentially sterilising nationalist influence that made such initiatives appear pointless. We must ask whether there were factors in the structure of Irish society that contributed to the weak presence of classical music in Irish culture.

For a weak cultural form associated with a restricted social grouping to become a strong cultural force, some dynamic or musically evangelical force would have been needed. This is why it is necessary to look, not only at nationalism (not, in any case, an all-encompassing and undifferentiated force) but at other forces dynamic enough to potentially disseminate classical music more broadly. One might look to the state (operating through education, subsidy or patronage), to the emergent Catholic middle class, to the Church of Ireland and other Protestant denominations, to the Catholic Church as it sought to re-establish itself in Irish public life, to what might loosely be called the national movement (largely identifiable with the Catholic voice in politics), and in particular to movements towards cultural separatism. Given that Ireland was largely, if not entirely, incorporated into the United Kingdom, restricting analysis to internal Irish forces and institutions would be misguided.

Some further factors would need to be considered. Actors in British middle-class cultural life might have different social origins, different visions of the good society and of where art stood within it, but this was within a broad consensus as to the political unit in which they lived. In Ireland, two members of the middle class, with very similar careers and life-styles, might have quite different views as to the nature and future of the polity they inhabited (at an abstract or symbolic level) and so also of the sphere that they addressed or in which their culture was practised. In the cultural sphere, crucially, they might see themselves as acting within or addressing (a) a two-island British/Irish public sphere, or (b) the minor (perhaps neglected) partner in a two-island public sphere (this self-positioning could encompass both mild nationalism and unionism), or (c) as living in what they felt was not yet but should be an autonomous Irish public sphere (meaning that, regardless of matters of quality or the ultimate sought) their activity was inherently dynamic and forward-directed. Such self-positioning would unavoidably affect the way in which they operated.

This is why it will prove necessary to pay attention not only to the particular world that was addressed but also to the vigour with which the actors expressed themselves. Were they seeking simply to maintain the culture of their own social world, or to energise (and perhaps extend) their public, or indeed to pursue a transformative project for an entire society? Cultural leadership is therefore going to be an important consideration, whether at state, class or an individual level. If the evidence suggested that the prime bearers of classical music, a highly socialised art form, were primarily interested in addressing their fellows and had no larger project, this had surely to be a consideration in examining the failure of classical music to become central to Irish public culture and self-imagining in art.

But how is a cultural practice to be articulated within a contested and discontinuous socio-political order? Crucially, our cultural history must address a great absentee in *Hidden Ireland, Public Sphere* (Leerssen 2001), the question of power. Leerssen is an often brilliant analyst of Irish nationalist discourse and imagery, but – in a pattern that should be considered extraordinary but is not, because it is so common – Britain and British power, and unionism, are scarcely mentioned. As a result, nationalist culture, appearing to operate by its own laws and processes, independent of power, comes across as an irrational syndrome afflicting a political community. While it is perfectly possible to study the internal or formal history of an art form, any attempt to account for developments in a sphere such as nationalism or nationalist culture must acknowledge the way in which these are woven into an active political world, of which the central feature is the struggle for ascendancy between competing forces. Here, we may again invoke Blanning's example. In *The Power of Culture* (2002), he distinguishes between developments in France and in Britain. In crude summary, he points out how the weakness of the Hanoverians created space for both the extension

of parliamentary power and the development of an active public sphere – but one in which classical music (central to English culture and to the public life of the state in the Elizabethan period) lost its prestige with the middle class by its association with a monarchy that failed over several generations to value or sponsor English music. In France, on the other hand, an increasingly unpopular monarchy exercised state power to repress dissent, which resulted in an under-development of the public sphere, while large-scale music remained closely associated with the monarchy and state. This contrast between two European powers should encourage us to consider the way in which the exercise of power influences access to, the size and scale of, and the level of activity within, the public sphere. However, in a study of this kind we must not lose our central focus on the world of classical music. How is this to be done? One economical solution to this question lies in noting and availing of convergences between the areas of music and power, where authority, space, projection, activity, energy (or volume) and audience are concerned. Blanning was first introduced here in relation to the representation of power in the medieval and early modern periods. He referred to the way in which music and ceremonial were used to project princely power and to assert the legitimacy of that power to the audience.

We have already referred several times to the eighteenth century, the period when classical music flourished, as a form of sociability at least, among the elite in Irish society. If we look at Ireland before the Union in terms of power and audience, we quickly bring into focus characteristics of Irish society that are extremely pertinent to our task. The state in Ireland projects itself as pure authority towards the Catholic masses. The role of the latter is to passively accept what is dictated to them; they have no voice (quite apart from the fact that so many of them do not speak the language of the state) and their interests are of no concern except insofar as they impede the designs of power. The willingness to enforce this silencing may be seen in the brutal severity with which the United Irishmen were repressed. The Catholic merchant and middle classes are, in the later decades of the century, allowed to enrich themselves, but they must not raise their voice politically. They may share many social spaces with their Protestant equivalents but they must not articulate and project their own interests and aspirations. Such gentle protest as they make is in the hushed voice of the Catholic Committee; their secretary and public voice, the non-Catholic Wolfe Tone, is soon exasperated by this indirection and chooses a more active role in the world of revolution.

The Act of Union frees the Catholic merchants (who have benefited enormously from the war economy – as in contracts for the supply of food to the army) and middle classes from the overbearing (and potentially lethal) power of the Dublin regime. Their expectation is that they will now be free to articulate their interests like their Protestant fellows, in Ireland and Britain. Catholic Emancipation, giving Catholics the right to a voice within the two-island state, the United Kingdom

of Great Britain and Ireland, is promised. The historic opportunity to incorporate the emerging Catholic middle classes is lost when Emancipation is delayed for decades, resulting in this confident, ambitious and expanding Catholic sector organising itself, in alliance with the peasantry and under Daniel O’Connell’s leadership to make their voice heard by the British state. Interestingly, the success of this campaign (of symbolic interest to the peasantry, who have little to gain directly from it) is accompanied by a reduction in the franchise: the un-voicing of some of the better-off peasants. The great campaign for Repeal – with its use of marches, brass bands and gathering of hundreds of thousands of people – is a remarkable attempt to make the aspirations of Catholic Ireland heard in the faraway capital of London. London decides that this voice – unaccompanied by the threat of violence – can be ignored (this was, after all, the logic of creating the two-island state). In a British democracy that must see increasing democracy in Ireland as a threat, the Irish voice, however loud, need not be heard. The death of O’Connell and the Famine rather reduce the urgency of the question posed. Nationalist Ireland will be condemned to several decades of unheard reiteration of its aspirations. Neither Young Ireland nor the Fenians fundamentally trouble the state, though Gladstone begins to listen. The question will be asked again, with more dangerous force, under Parnell’s leadership, when the peasantry or tenantry, now organised as the Land League, combine forces with the Fenians and Home Rulers, in a strategy that manipulates the state parliamentary system while also applying pressure on home ground.

If we look in similar terms at the aftermath of the Union from the point of view of Protestant Ireland, the story is quite different. The Act of Union gradually draws the aristocracy and upper class towards London: it is the capital, where money, glamour and the prime marriage market for the young can be found. Ireland may hold capital in the form of wealth-producing land but it is in effect, for this class, a province of the United Kingdom. This ruling class has not endowed Ireland with a musical infrastructure or intellectual dynamism that might be a resource in the century to come. For a while yet, the land-owning class, with its web of connections and interests shared with the British elite, will be able to cry loudly and successfully to protect its interests but social and political leadership begins to pass to the Protestant middle class. It will be argued here that the nature and self-positioning of this class is a crucial factor in the weakness of classical music culture in Ireland.

Even though the nineteenth century sees the growth of impressive suburbs around Dublin, the Protestant middle-class seeks security in the Union. It does not have a dynamic project. It is conservative in the literal sense: large-scale change is seen as a threat. The growth of democracy, the growth of the Catholic middle class, the removal of obstacles to Catholic participation in public life, the removal of the compulsory Tithe for Catholics, municipal reform, O’Connell’s organisation

of the masses, the eventual disestablishment of the Church of Ireland: all these threaten the social leadership of the Protestant community. There is therefore no dynamic or expansive force or vision for change animating the Protestant world within Ireland. (This does not of course exclude a sense of investment in the greater British world.) Maintenance of position, both personal and political, is the order of the day. In the absence of industrialisation and of new money on the British model, means that a quiet provincialism, well managed, is the positive horizon. Even if it does not exclude a commitment to civic and agricultural improvement, this is (in broad terms) the strategy of the majority who are not drawn to the quite contrary – non-sectarian, de-provincialising and dynamising – vision of, for example, Thomas Davis, or of Yeats in a later one (Strauss 1951, pp.47-106; 133-69; Earls 2006)).

Where music is concerned, there is little, therefore, to encourage infrastructural development, initiatives directed towards the education in classical music of the emerging Catholic middle class or the opening up of existing musical clubs and societies with a clear Protestant identity. Any movement in that direction is also affected by the fact that the pre-Union aristocratic order has bequeathed such an enfeebled model of cultural leadership to its middle-class successor. Effectively, the Protestant middle class is committed to a provincial, non-expansionist cultural identity; it does not seek to project an authoritative or galvanising cultural identity beyond its existing audience. Before the Famine, there is a sharp contrast between the raised voice of the optimistic, expanding Catholic middle class and its more hushed Protestant equivalent – activated only by the need to argue against change. (The sudden strident call for repression on the last page of R.M. Martin's closely argued and statistic-laden *Ireland before and after the Union with Great Britain* is a fascinating example (Martin 1848, p. 394).) After the Famine, the temporary loss of political energy after the failure of Repeal and the damage to business ambitions wrought by the famine and the depopulation that followed mean that the urban Catholic middle class tends to converge with its Protestant equivalent: its confident expansionism curbed, it too devotes itself to achieving and maintaining position and to the pursuit of respectability. The growth of the Catholic Church, and the network of educational and other institutional developments it sponsors, offers a significant outlet, but for reasons that will be noted, its highly disciplined project entails limited commitment to innovation in architecture, the visual arts or music. Decades will pass before a new dynamic project promises artistic transformation by escaping the British provincialism of the prime carriers of classical music in Ireland and asserting the need for Ireland to form its own culture and to find and assert its own voice. This is the context – necessarily simplified here – in which the story of classical music in Ireland will be explored over the following chapters.

## CHAPTER THREE: MOORE IN THE CONTEXT OF HIS DAY

### 3a. Introduction

The idea that Thomas Moore's popularity was a major obstacle to the development of classical music in Ireland was brought forward by Joseph Ryan in his dissertation and then given wider currency by Harry White in *The Keeper's Recital*. We saw in Chapter One that Harry White adduces no concrete evidence to support this claim. We are not offered a letter, a reported exclamation of frustration, a passage in an article or history of music in Ireland, or an initiative in a cosmopolitan mode that was frustrated by the weight of Moore-inspired nationalist expectations or demands. Since then, White has not deviated from this line.

In what is perhaps his finest book, *Music and the Literary Imagination* (2008), White draws on his profound appreciation both of individual musical works and of literature to show in fascinating detail the operations of the musical imagination in the poetry, fiction and plays of some of Ireland's most famous writers. Though most of the writings examined belong to the twentieth century, White underlines the vital role he had assigned Thomas Moore in *The Keeper's Recital* by devoting the opening chapter of *MLI* to him. While the chapter is insightful in many regards, and touches new notes, its framing of Irish cultural history is consistent with that of *The Keeper's Recital*. A brief extract will demonstrate the point. White quotes from a letter that Moore wrote to John Stevenson (the Irish composer responsible for the piano accompaniments to most of the *Melodies*) in 1807:

Our National Music has never been properly collected, and while the composers of the Continent have enriched their operas and sonatas with melodies borrowed from Ireland ... we have left these treasures to a great degree unclaimed and fugitive. But we are come, I hope, to a better period both of politics and music; and how much they are connected, in Ireland at least, appears too plainly in the tone of sorrow and depression which characterises most of our early songs (Dowden 1964, pp.116-117; White 2008, p. 44).

Moore was here reflecting the Europe-wide antiquarian concern with the collection as opposed to the living performance of folk music, was commenting on the fact that Irish composers were leaving it to foreigners to do for Irish folk melodies what was becoming common practice across Europe, was being optimistic about the political outlook (he believed the Whigs could be trusted to work towards righting Irish wrongs), and was commenting to a respectable, recently knighted composer about the way in which a tragic history had given a sorrowful inflection to Irish songs and airs. This is not at all what White sees:

This immediate identification of music with politics was to prove emblematic for Moore's collection as a whole. It is not simply that Moore's encounter with Irish folk music was so intimately bound up with insurgency and the mortal danger in which this placed his friends: it is also that Moore's romantic projection of sources (which were themselves entirely innocent of political meaning) was a deliberate and strategic invention that rapidly acquired symbolic and conventional status (White 2008, p. 44).

White sees Moore's work as closely bound up with insurgency and as projecting a developed, separatist romantic nationalism. White's vocabulary implicitly criminalises Moore: the original sources are 'innocent', his treatment of them 'a deliberate and strategic invention'. For White, these factors reinforce the notion of Moore as almost single-handedly diverting the course of Irish classical music history from the European cosmopolitan model. In addition, by using the work of the music collectors for nationalist purposes, Moore is held responsible for diverting musical thinking in Ireland from its objective basis – or at least from its aspiration to objectivity. It is as if Irish musicology were being attacked *in utero*.

This thesis proposes a different approach to the interpretation of music in Irish cultural history. Rather than again argue at length with White over detail, this chapter will (a) suggest that identification of the Melodies with insurgency is misplaced, (b) consolidate this point by looking at other works of Moore's with a strong political dimension, demonstrating that the adult Moore is concerned to address and influence English thinking, (c) argue for the need to place Moore's music in the context of musical taste and practice in both England and Ireland, (d) identify his ambivalent relationship with O'Connell's mobilisation of the masses as well as the middle class and (e) note how Moore's music finds a place within the culture of contemporary liberal unionism as well as within that of the Catholic Church as it moves towards becoming a semi-autonomous domain within the state and (f) and also note how Moore's suggestiveness and intimacy of address mean that he remains available as a cultural resource for a British-based unionist like Stanford.

### **3b. Moore: Early decades**

Our examination of Moore will be in two parts: first, a brief survey of the life and career, paying particular attention to the public that he addressed in a sampling of his broadly political writings and to the political logic that underlay them; then, an examination of the *Melodies*, similarly identifying the public that they addressed and casting light on the operation of what might be called the British/Irish cultural sphere in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Moore has been the subject of numerous essays and studies, and of several biographies, Ronan Kelly's *Bard of Erin: The Life of Thomas Moore* (2008) being the most recent, while also being comprehensive, judicious and perceptive. Only selected aspects of his life concern us here. Born in Dublin in 1779, the son of a grocer, Moore grew up in the years of ferment preceding the United Irishmen's rising and its suppression. Though a Catholic, he studied at Trinity College. He was, briefly, on the fringes of a group with revolutionary leanings. At the age of seventeen, he was the author of an anonymous, heatedly anti-government article. However, on the pleading of his parents, he stepped back from any commitment – a move endorsed by Robert Emmett, who may also have recognised that Moore's openness and affability were ill-suited to conspiratorial politics (Kelly 2008, pp. 53-66).

Moore moved to London in 1801. There, Irish connections of a liberal rather than revolutionary bent, notably Lord Moira, opened doors for him, while his amiability, eloquence and his singing (to his own light but suggestive piano accompaniment) meant that he would for decades remain a highly sought-after guest. Some of his early poetic works and translations were mildly shocking to certain tastes but soon, to a degree that puzzles modern critics, he was being treated as an equal by Byron and other major writers of his day. As we saw in Chapter One, the move from Ireland to London by those of outstanding talent and ambition was entirely unexceptional in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Moore sought and delighted in success in society, but a clear political logic underlies his social affinities. Lord Moira, for example, was a progressive Whig, who favoured and sought Catholic Emancipation, though he would later prove a disappointment to Moore and his circle (*ibid.*, pp.74-75). Had Moore aimed only for social success, he would not have insisted on writing in favour of Catholic rights, attacking the Prince of Wales and the Tories (who cordially hated him in return) or writing books that sharply challenged mainstream British views of Ireland's history.

To look at Moore's entire output is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, an examination of three works specifically relating to Irish society and history should cast light on Moore's primary audience, how he addressed it and the understanding of Ireland implicit in each. This should also help us to conceptualise the broader cultural world in which Moore operated, with clear implications for an understanding of how Moore's *Melodies* figure in that world. The three works selected are *A Letter to the Roman Catholics of Dublin* (1810), *The Memoirs of Captain Rock* (1824) and *The Life and Death of Lord Edward Fitzgerald* (1875). The choice of works with an Irish political dimension is deliberate and will prove significant.

### 3c. Moore and the Veto

Moore, who married a Protestant and allowed his children to be raised as Protestants, does not appear to have been particularly pious, but insistence that Catholics should be granted full citizenship and respect is the nearest to an unchanging principle that one can identify in his life and work. Moore played a minor role – perhaps this is why Kelly (2008) ignores it – in the so-called Veto Controversy, a key development in religio-political life between the Act of Union and Catholic Emancipation. The Veto was a mechanism whereby the state could reject, for its own reasons, candidates for promotion to the Hierarchy. The Irish Catholic bishops had indicated acceptance of the Veto in 1799, a few years after the British state (worried that Catholic seminarians would be influenced by revolutionary ideas on the Continent) had approved the foundation and grant-aiding of Maynooth College. A decade later, with the Penal Laws a not-so-distant memory, with the state and the Catholic Church having recently found common ground against revolutionary and atheistic French influence, and with the Catholic middle classes barely raising their political voice, it was expected in Britain that the Catholic Church in Ireland would endorse the Veto. The bishops had indeed again signalled acceptance. However, vigorous controversy broke out, with the emerging leadership of the Catholic Committee, including the young Daniel O'Connell, questioning the thinking of Church leaders and the previous generation's deferential leadership. The episode has been analysed in great detail by Brendan Clifford (1985), is ignored by Roy Foster (1988) and neatly summarised by Bartlett: 'In the outcry over the veto, the Irish Catholic nation found its voice for the first time [...]'(2010, p.257). This was a sign, first, that the failure to grant Emancipation as promised at the time of the Act of Union had been sorely resented by Catholics and, second, that an increasingly confident and expanding Catholic middle class was shifting from deference to self-assertion – to the surprise both of Church leaders and of the British government. The political consequences have been recognized; the cultural consequences less so.

It is significant that Moore, no longer living in Ireland, wrote in favour of the Veto: he was optimistic that Catholic rights would be recognised by the British state and thought that confrontation would be counter-productive, as well as damaging the possibility of developing a non-sectarian political world. He trusted that the problem would be dealt with when the Whigs next formed a government. At one point, he sounded a distinctly condescending note, suggesting that the laity should leave such matters to their superiors (Clifford 1985, p. 42). The voice is far from that of an egalitarian revolutionary.

Recognising the roots of Catholic distrust, he wrote:

All these feelings were as natural and just, as the causes that produced them, were monstrous and iniquitous. *But those causes exist no longer; a tyranny, which disgraced alike the inflictors and the sufferers, has gradually given way before the light of liberality and conviction,* and its last, slow, lingering vestige is about, I trust, to vanish forever; but, surely, it is worse than absurdity to expect, that [...] Protestants should throw away the last fragment of the penal sword, while the Papal stiletto is still in the hands of the Catholics – it is folly to expect, and insult to ask it! [italics for emphasis] (Moore 1810, pp. 17-18).

Like Grattan, Moore was asking Catholics to reassure Protestants that the lifting of legal constraints would not lead to serious disturbance of the political order. The concluding sentence of the *Letter* is quite striking:

The bigots of both sects are equally detestable, but if I were compelled to choose between them, I should certainly prefer those, who have the Constitution on their side (ibid., pp. 36-37).

Moore was here firmly placing the Veto question in a two-island framework and fully accepting the post-Union constitutional order.

Whatever his youthful beliefs, and whatever his admiration for the idealism of the heroes of 1798, the adult Moore nowhere explicitly espoused separatist republicanism like that of the United Irishmen. The horrors of 1798 (and the tragic destinies of Lord Edward Fitzgerald and, later, Robert Emmet) may have led him, first, to agree with those Catholics who saw the Act of Union as providing an escape from the virulent and violent bigotry of the Dublin government and, second, to distrust politics based on popular revolution (Kelly 2008, p. 117).

Where Moore is concerned, the Veto controversy places him where he would be for the coming decades – seeking and expecting recognition by England both of the right of Catholics to full participation in public life and of the historical wrongs done to Irish Catholics. That some of his expectations overlapped with those of separatists or more accommodating nationalism does not mean that Moore can be identified as a separatist or even an O’Connellite. At the same time, what is striking about Moore is that he resisted the easy option of assimilating completely to English liberalism, and continued to express a liberal Catholic and Irish perspective within the British public sphere. It is important to recognise the position from which he addressed his primary audience. His *Letter on the Veto* was indeed addressed to Irish readers but it asked them to behave in a manner that would not alienate those within (in today’s terminology) the British establishment who could be

induced to support the granting of Catholic rights. As it happened, perhaps because Moore was not yet famous, his letter does not appear to have been much noticed.

### **3d. *Captain Rock***

By the time he published *The Memoirs of Captain Rock*, in 1824, Moore was a major figure in literary life in London (and further afield) – with the ninth of his ten books of *Irish Melodies* coming out later that year. *Captain Rock* was a response to the agrarian violence in Tipperary and elsewhere. A rare journey into the Irish countryside in 1823 had provided Moore with some background in the subject. The violence reported with horror in the London press seemed to confirm stereotypes of the Irish as primitive, violent and unreliable people. Thus, at a time when Daniel O'Connell was vigorously articulating the perspective of the Catholic middle class, events in Ireland could be interpreted in London as confirming the irrationality, the violence and thus the political untrustworthiness of the Irish masses.

The narrative thread of *Captain Rock* is simple. A rather reluctant and naive English missionary comes to Ireland to convert the peasantry to Protestantism and British civilisation. He shares a coach with a talkative and flamboyantly dressed character, whom he meets again, in more frightening circumstances, when stopping over with a friend in the Tipperary countryside. Instead of harming the visitor, Captain Rock (as he turns out to be) hands over a thick manuscript – a historically well-informed and extremely learned apologia for Irish rebellion and resistance, pegged to a thin thread of family history. This demonstrates that the survival of the rebellious Rock dynasty has been built on the popular resentment created by generations of British misrule. Seeing the missionary as a man of good intentions, the Captain hopes that the persuasive effect of the memoirs will lead him to return to England and help to persuade the British ruling class to tackle Irish wrongs. The missionary, with a degree of relief, though also with a sense of his own inadequacy to the task, takes the Captain's advice. Thus, it is as editor of the *Memoirs* that he appears in Moore's fiction.

The fictional framing of *Captain Rock* points to the primary audience's being British. . Though the missionary is a bumbling do-gooder, he is the vehicle by which English understanding of the Irish question may be reversed. His task is to help the English to realise that their problem lies, not in the violent proclivities of a primitive Irish peasantry, but in their own misrule of Ireland. Instead of an alienatingly bloody and incoherent, centuries-long spectacle, *Captain Rock* offers a compressed Irish history, complete with an easily grasped key to understanding: the idea of a cycle of misrule

and violent reaction operating across the centuries. It also offers the key to breaking that cycle: a few simple reforms – Catholic Emancipation (p.173-75), for example, and the abolition of the tithe (p.187) – will ensure a harmonious future for Ireland and for the United Kingdom as a whole.

### **3e. *Life and Death of Lord Edward Fitzgerald***

People express a little alarm about my *Life and Death of Lord Edward*, and I get hints from all sides that it would be prudent to defer its publishing; but I shall not mind them (Lady Morgan 1862, p. 317).

So read the postscript to a letter from Moore to Lady Morgan shortly before the publication of a very different kind of book, the *Life of Lord Edward Fitzgerald*. Moore did not bow to the pressure. Was this a rare assertion of underlying republican faith by a man who chose to sell his principles for a career in the heart of the British establishment? To set the question in these terms is again to misinterpret Moore and his self-positioning within the post-Union public sphere. It is also to miss the thread of consistency and principle in Moore's life and writing. By writing about Fitzgerald, Moore was maintaining his admiration for and personal loyalty to his idealistic contemporaries who had given their lives to the Irish cause (however defined). This is of a piece with Moore's insistence that full participation in civic life should be open to Catholics and that the historic wrongs done to Ireland should be recognised. As we have seen concerning *Captain Rock*, it was on this basis that Moore saw the path towards Irish/British harmony. At a personal level, too, it was as if maintaining this line was the point of honour which allowed him to pursue his English career, including his taste for high society, with good conscience.

Fitzgerald's letters and journals, from which Moore quoted so copiously, portrayed a man of sensitivity, intelligence and broad human sympathies whose qualities would, in a properly governed country, have made him a normal leader rather than a revolutionary. It is noteworthy that neither the ideology of the United Irish movement nor the ferocious violence witnessed in the Rising and its repression figured prominently. Thus, while recognising Irish difference from England and challenging narrow political values, *Lord Edward* offered British readers a carefully laid out path to understanding Ireland. Effectively, Moore gently made Lord Edward's choice of revolution (a word liable to inspire horror in England in the aftermath of the French Revolution) understandable by showing it as a decent and generous man's response to the unbearable conditions of the day:

At a later period, indeed, it is well known that even Mr Fox himself [...] found himself driven, in his despair of Reform, so near that edge where Revolution begins, that there is no

saying how far short of the daring aims of Lord Edward even this great constitutional Whig leader, in the warmth of his generous zeal, have ventured (Moore 1875, p. 78).

Moore also commented – and this was a lesson he would have learnt from the Veto controversy – on the shift in Catholic leadership away from the deferential remains of the old aristocracy. It moved, he wrote, into

the hands of commercial men of intelligence and spirit, whose position in society gave them an insight into the growing demands of the country, and placed their minds, as it were, in contact with those popular influences and sympathies from which the proud seclusion in which they lived had insulated the former managers of their cause (ibid., p. 95).

Far from promoting rebellion, Moore was – on lines entirely consistent with *Captain Rock* – delivering lesson after lesson to his British readership on how revolution, violence and the sundering of the body politic could be avoided by wise government, by generosity and by attention to 'popular influences and sympathies'.

### **3f. Moore's *Melodies***

We have now established that, in his prose writings, Thomas Moore's presentation of Ireland, and of the Anglo-Irish relationship, was directed towards creating conditions in which insurgency would not arise. We have also established that the works produced at the height of his career were rhetorically directed towards persuading English readers of the mutual benefit of treating Ireland liberally. We must now look at the *Melodies*, in their content, their implied audience and their place within political and cultural history.

The first volume of Moore's *Melodies* appeared in 1808. The idea came from the publishers, the Power brothers, rather than from Moore. This was not, then, a personal project. It was a task that appealed to Moore on a personal level, initially at least, but it was also a business opportunity for a writer badly in need of an income (Kelly 2008, p.153). The airs were generally sourced in collections of Irish airs such as Edward Bunting's; they were then adapted to suit Moore's subject-matter, taste, vocal range and intended audience. The piano arrangements of the initial volumes were by Sir John Stevenson, the leading Dublin composer of the day. The covers of the volumes presented what were to become staples of Irish nationalist iconography for a century and more (round towers, shamrocks and long-haired female harpists). As underlined by Tom Dunne, however, in an essay on 'Chivalry, the Harp and National Identity', similar images, part of a wave of

medievalism, were to be found in England, Wales and Scotland and predated the organised modern-style nationalist movements of the nineteenth century (Tom Dunne 2008, p. 41). This suggests that Moore, once again, was operating within acceptable British norms and tastes.

Crudely summarised, the contents of these first twelve melodies were as follows: (i) a plea to be remembered in later years by a departing lover; (ii) an evocation of the glories of Brian Boru; (iii) a suggestion that there will always be a tear in Erin's eye till all her 'tints unite, and form in heaven's sight one arch of peace'; (iv) like the dew on the grass on his grave, our silent tears will keep the memory of an unnamed hero green (the reference is to Robert Emmett); (v) an assurance of undying loyalty to a cause (presumably Emmett's to Ireland and relating to the previous song); (vi) an invocation of the now silent harp that once made proud music at Tara; (vii) a plea to a woman not to depart as the moon is about to cast the perfect light for love; (viii) a toast to love in youth and to friendship in age; (ix) an Irish maid says that her exiled lover, a minstrel, will always embody the Ireland from which he must flee; (x) an evocation of Irish moral purity in ancient times; (xi) the dark memories that may flow beneath superficial happiness; (xii) and the beauty of the Vale of Avoca.

Again and again, we meet variations on (and combinations of) tears, weeping, smiles, gleams, hearts, eyes, Erin, harps, sorrow and remembrance. The tendency is encapsulated in the brief 'Erin, the Tear and the Smile'. If, from among the thirty-five words of the first verse, the articles, prepositions and possessives are removed, we are left with the following: Erin, tear, smile, eyes, blend, rainbow, hangs, skies, saddening, pleasure, beam, suns, gleam, weep and rise. The imperative is deployed in five of the twelve opening sentences but it is a plea rather than a call to action: (i) Go, but remember me; (ii) remember; (iv) breathe not; (vii) fly not yet; (viii) think not. Glory is in the past, and Ireland appears under the poetic and archaic term Erin. The two melodies that evoke very recent revolutionary events contain no names, dates or other explicit detail, and, far from being calls to action, focus on the way in which the dead hero will be remembered. Not only does the first song not name Emmet (in accordance with the wish expressed in his speech from the dock), it asks that he should 'sleep in the shade'. No book of *Melodies* contained a concentration of militaristic material: as in the first, sweet melancholy predominated. The formula was highly successful and further volumes were issued in rapid succession (1808, 1808, 1810, 1811, 1813, 1815). Thereafter, the intervals stretched to three years, but with a gap of a decade between the ninth and the tenth. It would seem that producing the *Melodies* had become a burden (Kelly 2008, p.403)

Volume 9, published in 1824, the same year as *Captain Rock*, is even more politically innocuous. In the whole volume, there is hardly a line that could be seen as inciting nationalist ardour.

The *Melodies* were the vehicle on which Moore rode to fame. The publication and distribution of the *Melodies* was an important aspect of that fame, but Moore's personal performance of the *Melodies* created the public sensation that led others further afield to seek to replicate the experience in their homes and halls. Whatever the political and historical logic that underlay his choice of material, it is worth remembering that he was a performer, adept at making virtues of his qualities and limitations, and choosing material that suited his own voice. As contemporary accounts confirm, the voice was light and sensitive, and perfectly suited to the intimate spaces in which he performed.

One contemporary account, by an N. P. Willis, shows just how artful (or theatrical) a performer Moore was, and how perfectly able to play to the sensibility of the age. On this account too, Moore's own style at the piano was far lighter and more suggestive than Stevenson's published arrangements:

We all sat around the piano, and after two or three songs of Lady Blessington's choice, he rambled over the keys awhile, and sang 'When first I met thee', with a pathos that beggars description. When the last word had faltered out, he rose and took Lady Blessington's hand, said good night, and was gone before a word was uttered. For a full minute after he had closed the door, no one spoke (Kelly 2008, pp. 169-70).

In the *Melodies*, Moore was writing songs, not poems; he seems generally to have started from an existing air, whether one found in Bunting's collections or elsewhere. The words were not written for prolonged private scrutiny but to be half-seized as part of a musical experience in performance. Though Moore was born after Wordsworth and Coleridge, his *Melodies* had no affinity with those far less popular artists' excavation of individual experience; instead, the *Melodies* appealed to the popular taste of the day, which derived from an earlier generation's pre-Romantic discovery of sentiment and the picturesque. Thomas Gray's 'Elegy in a Country Churchyard' is a prime British example. Gray was also a pioneer in producing politically safe, literary, English-language Celticism with his 'The Bard, A Pindaric Ode' (1757), replete with Welsh medievalism, a harp-playing bard and an ultimately pro-Union political message. MacPherson's *Ossian* (a pretended translation of a Scottish Gaelic epic) was also a major international success.

The Moore who emerges from the examination of his adult life, political writings and *Melodies* in this chapter was concerned to restore Ireland's self-respect, to persuade Britain of the need to treat Ireland with respect, but not to mobilise the Irish populace against British rule. Moore's politics was not nationalist in the modern sense. Of course, to those who detested any positive statement either of Irishness, Catholicism or even Whiggery, Moore's work and opinions were an outrage.

### 3g The *Melodies* in the public sphere

If the *Melodies* offered soulfulness without self-exposure, it was their lack of strong individuality and their very cloudiness that allowed a wide range of listeners to project their own emotions, and aspirations onto them. This was (as it would be today) the basis for popular, international success – and that meant that the *Melodies* could be welcomed in the heart of the British power structure, in countries from France to Russia, and of course in nationalist, Whig (liberal Unionist) and, to a degree, even in strongly unionist Ireland. A passage in William Cooke Taylor's *Reminiscences of Daniel O'Connell* illustrates the point. Taylor, a liberal-Unionist landowner from Youghal, became a prominent writer and propagandist in London. Criticising O'Connell's unnecessary 'introduction of theological controversy into political discussions' and his 'continued abuse of the English people,' Taylor proceeded:

There was a rapid growth of opinion in favour of Catholic emancipation, produced mainly by Moore's melodies, which O'Connell checked, if he did not destroy. Emancipation was more popular in England from 1813 to 1819, than from the latter year to 1829. Moore's songs had brought the wrongs of Ireland within the range of female sympathy; lords might vote against emancipation in the senate, but ladies reversed their decision in the drawing-room. There was not a piano in the empire which did not refute the anti-Catholic sermons of grave divines, and overthrow the legal arguments of antiquated chancellors (Taylor 2004, p. 36).

Even if we allow for a degree of exaggeration here, there are points worth noting. First, Moore's primary audience is the metropolitan elite, more female than male. Second, Moore's sweetness is portrayed as politically persuasive and effective. And third, it is possible for an Irish unionist writing in 1847 – in other words, during the Famine and after the years of agitation for Repeal – to refer to Moore as Ireland's "purest patriot".

The political persuasiveness of the *Melodies* had already been acknowledged – and denounced – in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* by William Maginn (like Prout, a London-based Cork Tory who detested Moore) in the period of which Taylor wrote:

The most active person in turning away the eyes of the English public from the real state of affairs in Ireland, has been, unquestionably, Mr Thomas Moore. Young ladies and old women sucked in from his pretty songs, not merely matter for prurient imaginings, but a delicate sensitiveness about the wrongs of Erin (Maginn 1824, p. 594).

Earlier again, in the 'Advertisement to the Third Number', Moore's publisher, Power, had expressed his pride in supporting a work

which, from the spirit of nationality it breathes, will do more, he is convinced, towards liberalizing the feelings of society, and producing that brotherhood of sentiment which it is so much our interest to cherish, than could ever be effected by the arguments of wise, but uninteresting, politicians (pp. 205-206).

The emphasis is on gentle and indirect persuasion.

Taylor's indulgence towards the *Melodies* was no aberration among unionists. Stevenson (as will be seen below) was a member of the reactionary Beefsteak Club. The history of the new editions of the *Melodies* tells its own story. In the 1860s, it was not an Irish nationalist eager to drum up separatist feeling who set about creating a new set of arrangements suited to the domestic music-maker, but the English-based, internationally renowned, Irish-born composer Michael Balfe (whose own songs and operas articulated only a politically anodyne, picturesque version of Ireland). In 1879, pillars of the Protestant musical establishment like Joseph Robinson played an important role in a major concert celebrating the centenary of Moore's birth (McHale 2009) Likewise, in the aftermath of the Home Rule crises of the 1880s, it was the more clearly and, in his later years, stridently unionist Irish-born composer Stanford who set himself the task of producing what he saw as more authentic arrangements of the *Melodies*. In fact, half of Ireland's representation in Stanford's *National Song Book* (1903) (a book for schools featuring songs from each of the four component sections of the United Kingdom) was drawn from Moore. Moore's non-nationalist appeal lives on to this day: as part of a medley representing the component countries of the Union, 'The Minstrel Boy' is played by the British Army at the annual Remembrance Sunday ceremony in London.

### **3h. Moore, mobilisation, music**

In light of the above, it would seem that the common identification of Moore himself with O'Connellite politics needs re-appraisal. As we have seen, Moore seemed to believe that non-sectarian, enlightened government from London offered the least troublesome road to coexistence for the two islands. His wish for an end to misrule in Ireland did not imply a commitment to radical democracy, in either an Irish or a British context. There is a consonance between the way in which the songs work by nuance and suggestion and Moore's class affiliations – and a consonance between Moore's class affiliation and the element of distaste that colours his attitude to O'Connell.

Moore loved adulation – though the acclaim he received once when recognised in a Dublin theatre was almost too much for him – and was flattered to be invited to stand for parliament (Kelly 2008, pp. 476-77). Such moments underlined what he meant to the Irish public, but (personal relations with O'Connell aside) Moore would hardly have been suited to the cut and thrust of active politics. His whole style, as man and writer, was based on intimate address, not on the public drama and swagger (and from Moore's point of view, the vulgarity) of O'Connell's speech-making and rousing of public feeling.

That there was a large element of theatrical display to O'Connell's public appearances almost goes without saying – politicians had to reach and impress a large audience, and flags, bands and national symbols of various kinds were a part of this. A casual anecdote about a meeting in Tralee in December 1842, from the posthumously published journal of J. O'Neill Daunt, an associate of O'Connell's, offers insight into the Liberator's practical approach to such matters, and perhaps to art in general:

The crowd was addressed in Irish by O'Connell, who, with other orators, occupied a platform that had been erected adjoining the hotel. The platform was graced by the presence of a harper, fantastically dressed, who, with frozen fingers, twanged ancient Irish tunes during the intervals between the speeches. The poor creature was perched at a corner exposed to the influence of the icy blast, and his blue face and stiffened hands bore witness to his suffering (O'Neill Daunt, p. 23).

One of O'Connell's daughters was so concerned that she asked Tom Steele, O'Connell's fervent supporter and organiser of the theatricals, to take care of the unfortunate artist. Steele replied that he had taken care of the 'bard'. Asked what he had done, he replied:

'I have made him immortal,' replied Tom. 'By virtue of my office of Head Pacificator of Ireland, I have constituted him O'Connell's Chief Musician.' 'And I have given him half-a-crown,' said O'Connell, with a good-humoured laugh, probably thinking that the pecuniary donation was at least as useful to the starving recipient as the historical immortality conferred on him by Tom...(ibid., pp. 23-24).

We may assume that O'Connell's uncharacteristic use of Irish was equally pragmatic – it was a matter of communicating with a crowd in a region with a high percentage of Irish speakers, many of them mono-lingual.

Neither Moore nor O'Connell can be reduced to a formula. Both men saw freedom in terms of essentially middle-class rights; neither presented any substantial proposals for radical social reform;

both insisted on Catholic Emancipation as the key to a better future for Ireland; both thought power belonged most happily in the hands of a benevolent elite; neither wanted any major curbs on the rights of property. Is the difference between the two men simply a matter of personal style? If we read them within a purely Irish nationalist framework, this might appear to be the case, with Moore as the gentle yearning voice of a vigorous political movement led by O'Connell. However, the difference between them is more fundamental than this: it lies in their attitude to the mobilisation of a national (Irish) public sphere. O'Connell sought it; Moore did not. O'Connell believed that concessions had to be wrested from England; Moore believed in persuasion. O'Connell mobilised the Irish populace in order to pressurise England to concede Emancipation and Repeal; Moore addressed the educated British public in the expectation that it could be brought to behave justly. Thus, though Moore wrote as an Irishman, he was speaking from within, and addressing, the British public sphere. It is therefore a serious distortion to read the *Melodies* exclusively within an Irish framework, and even more so to see them as identifiable with separatist Irish nationalism and pitched against British power.

### **3i. The *Melodies*, the nationalist public and the Catholic Church**

As with Moore's relationship with O'Connell and nationalist politics, a nuanced and contextualised approach is also required when it comes to the Catholic Church. An expanding English-speaking Irish public needed a musical expression of its as yet unshaped identity and its undefined aspirations. In memorable form, and within the vocal range of the non-professional domestic singer, the *Melodies* conferred artistic dignity on a history of defeat while pointing to no defined future or programme of action. But a dignified past could give hope of a dignified future at a time when, for the Catholic middle class, optimism and a degree of political self-assertion appeared justified. However precarious life remained for landless labourers and cottiers, for the middle class the early decades of the nineteenth century saw victory in the Veto controversy, Catholic Emancipation (symbolic recognition but also the signal for a massive building programme), expanded participation in professional careers and trade, fuller participation in the political process, and a new style of leadership under Daniel O'Connell, who discarded deference and systematically challenged British power.

Musical and literary works do not belong to their authors once they are released into the world. Moore the individual became almost irrelevant to the needs of various strains of Irish national life. Moore did not control the diffusion and political symbolism or use of his own work and there is a sense in which the Irish public, and indeed the Catholic Church in Ireland, both adopted Moore for

their own purposes, to which the details of Moore's life and work were in many ways irrelevant – or in certain regards best passed over. Moore, a writer who practised a wide variety of genres (from the erotic poem, through satire and polemic, to the theological essay) became identified almost exclusively with his *Melodies*. As we shall see in the next chapter, the mobilised Ireland sought by Thomas Davis would require a less aspirational and more militant art – as would the national movement, towards the end of the nineteenth century, as it sought to define the particular lines on which an autonomous Irish culture or polity would be organised.

The *Melodies* were also compatible with the aims of the post-Emancipation Catholic Church in Ireland. Though the leading bishops (such as the extremely accommodating Murray and the more overtly nationalist McHale) represented diverse strands of Catholic culture that would be worked into a tighter and more controlled pattern by Cullen after the Famine), they were united in seeing a greater role for the Catholic Church in public life and in seeking to create a respectable, educated, socially disciplined and pious public. Moore's *Melodies* were entirely compatible with this project. Moore the individual was in certain regards (as in some of his early translations and verses, and his marriage to a Protestant) potentially embarrassing. He was certainly more liberal and tolerant of human failings than any ecclesiastic could be in public (as in his friendship with the scandalous Byron). He was willing to battle for the validity of Catholic participation in public life and institutions, but he did not observe church discipline in his daily life. All this was almost irrelevant if the *Melodies* provided material that embodied the social values of the post-Emancipation Catholic Church. The *Melodies* were accessible to and performable by ordinary people, were polite in diction, were un-scandalous in content, were a genteel development of more popular material, and expressed national feeling in a way that brought people together but that did not challenge state structures.

The assimilation of Moore to the Catholic project can already be seen at work in the *Dublin Review* in 1840. The writer said that Ireland was proud of the *Melodies*, that their influence on 'the higher circles of English society' in gaining Catholic Emancipation was only part of the story, and that 'the sphere of their greatest popularity' was not 'the saloon and drawing-room' but 'among the peasantry, the scorned, the oppressed' (p.435). His prose then took rhetorical flight:

But, perhaps, among no other class are the melodies so popular as among the generous, the laborious, the simple-minded clergy of Ireland. They who, above all, witnessed and felt for the miserable condition of the people; they whose minds had been cultivated and refined, without being corrupted by the education they received; they who, being versed in the ancient history of their country, knew all that she had once been and all that she had since

become, could not fail to sympathize, in a special manner, in language and music which, like those of the *Melodies*, so faithfully expressed the alternate feelings of pride for the past, of sorrow and indignation for the present, of hope and daring for the future (*Dublin Review*, p. 436).

The implied danger of corruption through education is noteworthy here, and the sense that the clergy were entirely at one with the people. However, before the passage can be endorsed as a prime example of separatist Catholic nationalism, the following passage from the same paragraph must be noted:

[...] and we know moreover that, next after Gregory XVI, Queen Victoria, and Daniel O'Connell, there is not a greater favourite on earth with that venerated order than Thomas Moore [...] (ibid., p. 436).

The enthusiasm for Moore, for Catholicism, for O'Connell and Repeal, and for recognition of Irish history, is perfectly compatible with veneration – the choice of word is striking in itself – of Queen Victoria.

It is at this point that we see the discreet erasing of Moore the poet in favour of the Moore of the *Melodies*:

Of the rest of Mr Moore's Poems we shall say nothing. Our observations upon the principal of them, *Lalla Rookh*, *The Loves of the Angels*, &c., would swell this article to an immoderate length: but we have other, and far stronger, reasons for stopping here; and these we must leave to our readers to guess (ibid, p. 448).

It appears that the *Melodies* encapsulated the religious, social and political values prized by the clergy so perfectly that they could not be sacrificed; on the other hand, preserving their high position in the hearts of the people and of the clergy would necessitate the setting aside of the erotic and perhaps some of the satirical Moore.

### **3j. The British context**

To read Moore principally within a context of Irish insurgency, Irish nationalism or Irish Catholicism viewed through an exclusively nationalist lens is therefore to restrict our understanding of how he shaped his work and career, and how the *Melodies'* appeal went far beyond the

Anglophone nationalist public. It also occludes the way in which Moore and his music fits into British cultural patterns. Thus, in Derek B. Scott's *The Singing Bourgeois: Songs of the Victorian Drawing Room and Parlour* (2001), we see that Moore takes his place, almost innocuously, and certainly with no whiff of political threat, alongside some predecessors and contemporaries, both English (Charles Dibdin (1745-1814); Thomas Haynes Bayly (1797-1839)) and Scottish (Robert Burns (1759-96)). In this passage, Scott situates Burns and Moore in a British context:

As happened with Burns, the cultural significance of Moore was later endorsed by the adoption of one of his songs as a national anthem: 'Let Erin Remember' remained Ireland's anthem until separation in 1921. These anthems illustrate classic hegemonic compromise: some acknowledgement of autonomy is demanded by Scotland and Ireland, yet their independence is recognized only in the context of a romantic and shadowy past (Scott 2001, p. 25).

Scott rightly recognises that a number of songs carry a potentially more subversive message: 'But onward! the green banner rearing,/Go, flesh ev'ry sword to the hilt;/ On our side is VIRTUE and ERIN,/ On theirs is the SAXON and GUILT.' These bloodthirsty lines from 'The Valley Lay Smiling Before Me' – set, tactfully (as Scott has it), in the time of Henry 11 – could be taken as alluding to 1798, but such moments are not sufficient to eject Moore from a section headed 'The cultivation of refined "folk" airs' in a chapter entitled 'The Foundations of the Drawing-room Genre' (Scott, pp.1-44).

Recognition, where appropriate, of the British dimension of Irish culture does not entail the erasing of difference or any vision of uniformity. The benefits of a two-island perspective are demonstrated by the rich readings in John Kerrigan's *Archipelagic English: Literature, History, and Politics 1603-1707*. In the epilogue, Kerrigan analyses Walter Scott in a way that resonates strongly with Moore as he has been depicted in this chapter. Kerrigan understands political ambivalence and the way in which the historical moment and the nature and demands of a particular work may lead a writer to express or imply positions that do not fall neatly into a single pattern. Kerrigan quotes Scott's 'General Preface' (1829) to *Waverley* where the novelist wrote that he had hoped to do for Scotland what Maria Edgeworth had done for Ireland:

– something which might introduce her natives to those of the sister kingdom [England], in a more favourable light than they had been placed hitherto, and tend to procure sympathy for their virtues and indulgence for their foibles (Kerrigan 2008, p. 381).

The almost obsequious tone here is not Moore's but the desire to draw sympathetic attention from the metropolis is very similar.

Issues of class are interwoven with the subtleties of the national question. Derek B. Scott underlines the intimate, middle-class appeal of the *Melodies*:

The imagined loss of love and friendship was a cosy emotion to wallow in while encircled by family intimacy in the drawing room; in fact, it could only reinforce the pleasure of family ties in the comfortable knowledge that one did not inhabit this bleak world alone. It thus promoted the 'Victorian values' of friendship and family (Scott 2001, p. 28).

Moore himself openly addressed the issue of class in the 'Letter to The Marchioness Dowager of Donegal Prefixed to the Third Number' of the *Melodies* where he underlines (excessively so, perhaps) his distance from the uncontrolled emotion of the populace. In the following passage, while quietly warning of the danger of not redressing wrongs and even taking pleasure in irritating those who feared the political implications of his music, Moore nonetheless strongly identified with the 'wise', 'the rich and the educated':

I beg of these respected persons to believe, that there is no one who deprecates more sincerely than I do, any appeal to *the passions of an ignorant and angry multitude*; but that it is not through *that gross and inflammable region of society*, a work of this nature could ever have been intended to circulate. *It looks much higher* for its audience and readers — it is found *upon the piano-fortes of the rich and the educated* — *of those who can afford to have their national zeal a little stimulated, without exciting much dread of the excesses into which it may hurry them*; and of many whose nerves may be, now and then, alarmed with advantage, as much more is to be gained by their fears, than could ever be expected from their justice [italics added for emphasis] (p. 217).

At the same time, Moore does not claim to be harmless and apolitical; though distancing himself from the dangers of popular excesses, he allows a hint of danger to hover over the work he offers the educated. To adjudicate on the precise degree of ambivalence involved is probably impossible but, given the thread of consistency identified in this chapter, to treat Moore's entire career as calculated and self-serving would appear unjust. In the passage above, the issue of nationality is clearly subordinate to that of class – and Moore is signalling that he and the piano-owning class that is his primary audience and market can play harmlessly and sophisticatedly with ideas (even seemingly dangerous political ones) in a way that the 'multitude' cannot. No particular statement of Moore's can of course be taken as absolutely capturing his thinking. He could, like any historical

actor, modify his position over time, exaggerate a point for tactical reasons and be drawn simultaneously in different directions.

It was in Britain, where he lived most of his adult life, however, that Moore's principal market lay and the piano was gradually becoming a marker not just of the wealthy but of the middle classes – and of those who aspired to, or wished to some degree to partake of or to imitate the externals of, sophistication. Cyril Ehrlich suggests that an element of 'discreet trade' was possible for a gentleman like Sir George Smart (Ehrlich p.40). Similarly, moving upwards from the lowly position of composer/player to that of a leading name in the piano trade benefited Muzio Clementi socially:

He was becoming a gentleman - that is, someone not a hireling, who could handle money without having to handle goods. In fact, he could now take a patronizing position towards other musicians: he persuaded his greatly gifted disciple John Field, now about eighteen, to act as a salesman and demonstrator in his warerooms (Loesser, Piano p.262)

Like many before him, Field had made the standard move to London before Moore, but the economic and social logic of the move is clear, as outlined by Ehrlich. The notion that 'social aptitude' might positively enhance a career is certainly applicable to Moore – even if we recognize that the later decades of his career were largely devoted to prose:

For those bourgeois ambitions there was also the matter of social aptitude and adjustment [...]. Few occupations offered so many opportunities to cross frontiers of wealth and class which were closed to most people: entering rich households to play and teach, sometimes mingling with the company or even achieving a degree of intimacy with one's betters (Ehrlich p.31)

If we have identified the diplomacy and intimacy with which Moore addressed the British reading public, his personal charm and gift for intimacy, as well as his ability to provide and perform a musical product that caught the taste and aspirations of his age, allowed him to move uncomplicatedly in the very highest regions of society without concealing the fact that he was the son of a grocer – or without struggling to subsist (through whatever mixture of teaching and playing) like many musicians.

What is striking is the consonance between Moore's politics, his appeal across class and national barriers, the suitability of his music and his instrument of choice piano to the emerging middle-class tastes of the nineteenth century, and the poetic imprecision of his *Melodies*. In a period where the

separation of song from instrumental music and the more general development of boundaries between genres had yet to occur, Moore, far from being an obstacle to the development of classical music, or a figure to be read primarily through the lens of insurgency, was the embodiment of the musical values and tastes of the period. In his *Piano Roles: A New History of the Piano*, James Parakilas highlights the fluid boundaries between genres:

What singers sang when they appeared in concerts varied tremendously, but prominent in most programs were opera arias and ensembles, usually with piano accompaniment, and if the singers alternated these arias with songs written for voice with piano, the songs themselves might well alternate between material we would consider serious and that which we would deem sentimental - "Home, Sweet Home" next to "Der Erlkönig"(p.166).

If this was true in Britain, it applied even more in Ireland, where classical music was slow to move towards the purely instrumental.

### **3k. The Irish musical context**

At this point, it may be useful to step back from Moore and to set out the general state of classical music in Ireland, and to examine the cultural and social context in which it was practised, in a way that identifies how the Irish experience both resembled and differed from the British (or perhaps in this context the English) one.

In Moore, Ireland produced a composer of songs that have, to some extent, remained in the popular repertoire even after the radical shift in popular music culture in the 1960s. That the emphasis on song was not inherently tied to nationalism is clear, first, in the fact that the sentimental and comic hits of Victorian and Edwardian Britain were also popular in Dublin (they are famously ever-present in the weave of conversation in Joyce's *Ulysses*) and, second, in the growing popularity of opera and light opera in urban Ireland. Opera as presented in Britain and Ireland around the turn of the nineteenth century was itself closely bound up with song:

The most "popular" type of opera towards the close of the century was a light sentimental comedy which contained a mixture of original music, favourite tunes from other operas, and traditional airs (Scott 2001, pp. 6-7).

What Scott writes of Britain applies also to Ireland. This kind of entertainment had developed in opposition to the taste of the eighteenth-century aristocracy:

There was still a noticeable class division in the audience for opera: the aristocracy, on one side, showed contempt for the English opera, while the middle class, on the other, felt suspicious of the foreign variety (particularly on moral and religious grounds) (*ibid.*, p. 16).

The socio-religious politics may have played out somewhat differently in Ireland but, where career, genre, repertoire and behaviour in the theatre were concerned, Britain and Ireland can generally be read as a single field. Imported operas were liable to be translated, adapted, cut and to be interrupted by interpolations of entirely extraneous material. There was not, then, a clear demarcation between opera and drawing-room song: operas were prized for the songs that could be extracted from them for drawing-room or concert use. In describing opera of this time, the composer chosen as representative by Scott is Michael Balfe (1808-70), an Irish composer – with another, William Vincent Wallace (1812-65), also meriting attention. As in the eighteenth century, talent was drawn to London – or in the case of Wallace (a fantasist and speculator whose wanderings were sometimes driven by the wish to shrug off encumbering family or debts) to Australia and South and North America as well. If no British opera of the period is a staple of the international repertoire today, these composers live in occasional performances and recordings, and principally in songs extracted from their operas: Wallace's 'Scenes That Are Brightest' from *Maritana*, for example, or Balfe's 'The Dream' ('I dreamt that I dwelt in marble halls...') from *The Bohemian Girl*. The limitations of Balfe and Wallace are the limitations of music in Britain at that time. In Ernest Walker's words:

But it is all artistically dead beyond the very faintest hope of resurrection; and we need not feel any cause for lament. Balfe, however, was the best of his particular type (Walker 1923, pp. 270-71).

The relative success of these two composers in their genre suggests that no specifically Irish compositional malady demands diagnosis.

In addition to producing operatic composers on typically British lines, Ireland resembled Britain in other ways. Regarding early Victorian music, Ernest Walker writes: 'There was a great dearth of instrumental music at this period [...]' (Walker 1923, p. 277). A similar dearth of instrumental music prevailed in Ireland. John Field (1782-1837) might be adduced as a counter-example but he left Ireland for Britain at the age of ten and spent much of his career as composer and performer in Russia. William Vincent Wallace, William Forde and Alexander Osborne also produced chamber music while based in London or further afield (Klein 2013, p.189). Orchestral music scarcely figured in Ireland until the late nineteenth century (*Ibid.*, p.793). Klein's survey suggests that little needs to be altered in the picture painted almost half a century ago by Ita Hogan in Ch. 8 of her *Anglo-Irish Music 1780-1830* (pp. 123-64).

### 31. Musical societies, class and Trinity

In her *EMIR* entry on 'Dublin music societies', Hogan (now writing as Beausang) herself offers an impressively long list (though, as she writes, 'choral societies far outnumbered orchestral societies' (p. 712)) but it is the nature of the small number of societies active in the early decades of the nineteenth century that concern us for the moment.

Paul Rodmell's article 'The Society of Ancient Concerts, Dublin, 1834-64' (Rodmell, 2007, pp. 211-33) is illuminating in this regard. Rodmell points out that many of the music societies

performed the same music and drew their membership and audiences from the same social group, Dublin's Anglican middle and upper classes; to compound this, most societies permitted only men to be members (p. 212).

The latter point can almost be taken for granted, in Dublin as in any musical centre in Western Europe of the day. Rodmell mentions other restricting factors: membership came about through recommendations from existing members; professionals and amateurs (gentlemen) were clearly distinguished; and '[t]ickets were on public sale only exceptionally, so societies were not only able to control the social make-up of their membership but also of their audiences [...]' (ibid., p. 213). The Antients was no exception: 'its membership was founded upon and, so far as can be deduced, drawn from the Anglo-Irish middle and upper classes' (ibid., p. 213). In a telling demonstration of the extra-musical importance of musical events, the first newspaper account of an Ancients concert provided no detail on either the programme or the performance but listed 57 individuals who attended (ibid., p. 214). A continuity with eighteenth-century patterns may be seen in the fact that the society's breakthrough came in a charity performance socially ratified by the presence of the Lord Lieutenant (p. 215). With the Antients having grown from the earlier Sons of Handel, and both societies dominated by the Robinson family, the programme was rather backward-looking: spanning the Elizabethans and Haydn, it was heavily dominated by Handel, with whose 'God save the Queen' it concluded.

Rodmell's analysis is confirmed and amplified by Catherine Ferris's dissertation, which provides detailed analysis of musical activity in Dublin as covered by newspapers from 1840 to 1844, and tracks the frequently overlapping membership of musical societies (Ferris 2011, pp. 213-14). The following passage captures the class and religious profile of musical activity in Dublin:

These class identities allow a hierarchical structure of music societies to emerge: the Hibernian Catch Club, Anacreontic Society and University Choral Society were the domain of the aristocracy; the upper middle classes and professional aristocracy were represented by the Philharmonic Society, Antient Concerts Society, Societa Armonica, University Church Music Society, Metropolitan Choral Society, Amateur Harmonic Society and Dublin Concordant Society; and the lower middle- and working-class societies were the Dublin Sacred Harmonic Society, Dublin Harmonic Society and Tradesmen's Harmonic Society (ibid., p. 212).

Of the last category, two drew on the substantial Protestant – in this case, Presbyterian – working class population. This period witnessed the beginnings of the (relative) democratisation of classical music culture (and its extension into Catholic middle-class society) but, in many regards, classical music remained predominantly a leisure activity for the Protestant upper-middle class and aristocracy. In this regard, Brian Boydell rightly warns against assuming a rapid transition to middle-class dominance immediately after the Union (1986, p.606)

Though Ferris usefully undermines any broad-brush characterisation of entire segments of society, the writing she unearths does not display any serious intellectual engagement where music is concerned. It is worth underlining that, in this regard, the nineteenth century simply maintained the pattern of musical life in the eighteenth century, the supposed golden age of classical music in Ireland. If Trinity College can boast of the professorship held by the Earl of Mornington (1735-81), it is noteworthy that the position was entirely honorary and held by him only from 1764 to 1774. It then lapsed until 1845, when the undistinguished John Smith (Nearby 2013, pp.938-39) was appointed. Thus, Trinity did nothing to build an intellectual culture for music and so to provide a potential dynamic centre from which to evangelise for it.

### **3m. *Dublin University Magazine* and the absence of critical engagement with music**

Had there been a cosmopolitan, forward-looking, non-nationalist musical intelligentsia in Dublin, one would expect it to have manifested itself in the liveliest intellectual and cultural organ of the day, the *Dublin University Magazine (DUM)*, founded in 1833. Examination of the magazine in its early years reveals, first, that contemporary music scarcely interested those involved and, second, that insofar as it did, it was in a provincial British context. Music features in the second of the 'Familiar Epistles from London', presented as letters from an Irishman long resident in London to his aunt. The writer recalls the beauties of Dublin and its environs, hopes '[n]ow that Dublin has got

a Magazine of its own' that these 'localities' will not be neglected, and then announces: 'But it is ours – ours here in London, to enjoy the gorgeous splendour, and the finished excellence of art' (*D.U.M.*, p. 709). He describes a number of Italian opera singers, but goes on to say that he has 'so much of national feeling' about him that he derives

more genuine hearty satisfaction, more *solid enjoyment*, if I may thus express myself, from a good, plain English song [...] than from any other kind of vocal music (*ibid.*, p. 710, June, Vol. I)

The national feeling referred to was English (a term sometimes loosely interchangeable with British). In the review section of the same month, *New Music* (so titled) made a rare appearance (*ibid.*, p. 738). Seven separate items were covered in less than a page: a song ('My Harp o'er which so oft I've hung. In imitation of an Irish Melody) by W.S. Conran; a ballad by Samuel Lover; three further songs; a march arranged for piano; and 'Weber's celebrated Concert Stück. As performed by William S. Conran; and published by him at 63, Grafton-Street.' The heavy preponderance of positive terms – amongst others: charming, pleasing, gracefully imagined, highly pleasing, masterly, very well worked up, in every way worthy of its composer – sets the page somewhere nearer simple advertisement than criticism.

Elsewhere, in what at first appears to be a Normandy travelogue, the third in a series (*Hints from High Places*) of imaginary conversations or encounters with writers and artists of earlier generations takes a curious musical turn as the narrator comes to the cathedral in Rouen. There, he witnesses a sinister and bewildering choral performance before eventually finding himself sole witness to an extraordinary performance on the organ by a nameless German who, it transpires, knows something of Ireland.

Your airs, so admirably *aristocratized* by my old acquaintance, Sir John Stevenson, proved that you were essentially a musical people, and a perfection in church arrangements, such as I know he and others have attained, was only what I should have expected. I doubt whether Stevenson would have been so successful in these, if he had not so thoroughly understood the native music of his country (*DUM*, Jan 1834, p. 56).

The cultural implications of the term 'aristocratized' hardly need elaboration. The lines above might almost be seen as an attempted bringing-together of his Anglican church music with native musical tradition – thus paralleling the eighteenth-century Anglo-Irish antiquarian enterprise analysed in Clare O'Halloran's *Golden Ages and Barbarous Nations* (2004). The narrator of the story brings the musician (whose initials are WM and who calls himself Mr Müller) to Dublin, where, at a musical

soirée, performers chat and joke, tuning takes an age, the audience gradually loses interest as a Mozart symphony is performed and reverts to conversation, and a young man with a great interest in hunting pointedly draws out his irritation at the heavy musical component of the soirée. The German visitor deplores the absence in Dublin of a proper appreciation of the conditions in which music is best performed and heard. He invites his host to Germany, where he will see how these things are done properly. Though the passage is fictional – the narrator has fallen asleep and dreamt an encounter with Mozart (WM) – the incidental details, the implied critique and the implied primacy of German music ring true. However, no properly critical writing on such lines appeared in the *DUM* in these years, though (along with some fervently unionist and anti-Catholic writing) the magazine displayed an impressive range of content, national and international.

Indeed, the November 1834 issue featured an article on 'The Horrors of Harmony'. This was (in intention) a humorous attack, again from a London-based correspondent, not only on the ubiquity of music in modern life but on music in general. The writer attacked the hurdygurdy, Madam Pasta, Paganini, popular songs such as 'Home Sweet Home', 'the whole singing, scraping, blowing, thumping, bellowing fraternity, called the musical world' (p. 543), barrel-organs and ballad-singers, and every other manifestation of music. In its whimsical way, the piece underlines how, in the field of English-language song, Britain and Ireland formed a single market.

The first serious article on music in the *DUM* appeared in July 1833. Titled 'The music of Scotland', it was antiquarian in approach, detailing what was known of Scottish musical traditions up to the early eighteenth century, along with a study of the bagpipes. Several references were made to Irish sources and to musical antiquaries such as Joseph Walker. The antiquarian focus of this and many other *DUM* articles (and of course Samuel Ferguson's fascinating and politically complex four-part review of Hardiman's *Irish Minstrelsy*) underlines the need to examine continuities as well as discontinuities in the cultural landscape after the 1798 Rebellion and the Act of Union. The key point is that, in an unsettled and disputed polity (all the more so in a colonial context) there will be at least an implicit political dimension to any cultural activity. If elements in the ruling/colonial class had already sought to connect themselves with Irish history and traditions (from the musical to the religious), it is entirely reductive to portray the early nineteenth century as a period when an eruption of nationalism sabotaged the potential for musical culture to develop on liberal, cosmopolitan lines. This is not the picture that emerges from Cyril Ehrlich's study of the music profession in Britain. There he shows shifts in cultural activity and draws a parallel between Dublin and Bath, cities which declined in social and cultural importance after 1800. In Bath (as in Dublin), the gradual increase in the musical public, or in those with a basic knowledge of an instrument, did not betoken a rising curve of musical achievement:

Trade would improve, but not music, though the number of musicians working in Bath increased during the nineteenth century. An 1819 directory lists thirty-six, including traders; by 1826 the total had risen to fifty-eight. But there are no distinguished names, and far more teachers than performers. Bath was becoming 'sedate and dull', its musical establishment narrowly provincial (Ehrlich 1985, p. 25).

Thus, he contrasts Norwich with Dublin:

But apart from its eighteenth-century prominence followed by decline Dublin had little in common with Norwich, and even less with any major centre of music. The general level was mediocre and provincial, despite occasional, sometimes extended, visits by notable musicians [...]' (ibid.)

Ireland was of course part of the same circuit as Britain for celebrities such as Paganini. And if the bestowal of a knighthood on the English musician George Smart could raise his social status (ibid. p.40), the same might be said of John Stevenson, one of Moore's musical collaborators, whose Irish knighthood facilitated a career in London – following the established pattern.

It would appear from our overview of the subject that classical (and domestic middle-class) music in Ireland in the first half of the nineteenth century can be seen as a weak variation on the general British pattern, that it was rooted in the Protestant upper-middle class and that it failed to develop a critical culture. Before we consider the issue of cultural leadership, one other factor must be mentioned.

### **3n. Music and the Catholic Church**

Given that, in eighteenth-century Ireland, power was exercised (with whatever variation and moderation over time) on the basis of religio-political identity, and that Catholicism was forced out of the public domain and only developed anything approaching a vocal leadership towards the end of the century, the place and state of music in urban Catholic culture in the early 1800s must be addressed – as it has not been in the existing literature – as we try to understand the course of classical music in Ireland. Here again, and remembering that the Penal Code applied to English Catholics as to Irish, comparison with developments in Britain may be useful. In the entry on 'The Roman Catholic Church' in *The Mirror of Music 1844-1944* we read:

Up to the passing of that Act (1829) [Catholic Emancipation] Romanist worship had in the main been carried on in chapels retiringly placed in back streets so as to avoid undue public

observation – since they were merely tacitly tolerated, not openly permitted. The one exception to this had been the chapels of the embassies of Catholic countries, and these chapels, therefore, took on a public importance that they afterwards lost. They employed fine musicians and their music was a made a feature of their worship (Scholes 1947, p. 565).

English Catholics could feel a connection with Byrd, one of the great composers of the Elizabethan period, but Catholics in the capital at least had available to them an experience of Catholic musical tradition on which to build in some fashion after Emancipation. In Dublin, there was not only no elite tradition on which to draw and no cohort of young men with a choral training, but there was little or no experience of church music. Only those with a continental education or the means to travel would have had any exposure to it. It almost goes without saying that the increasing number of largely rural seminarians in Maynooth had no background in choral music or in classical music in general. In addition, the Maynooth authorities were less concerned with developing artistic skills than with turning out a regiment of priests to reclaim the territory the Church had lost in the seventeenth century. Even if they had had musical development as a goal, another factor comes into play. Here we may again draw on the *Mirror of Music*:

Unfortunately, during the late eighteenth century and a great part of the nineteenth Roman Catholic Church music (not merely in Britain but all over Europe) was passing through a bad phase (*ibid.*, p.565).

This mattered little in France, Spain or Portugal where an infrastructure already existed. What it meant for Catholicism in Ireland, we must assume, was that, at the very moment when an organisational and architectural infrastructure was to be developed, there was almost no artistic tradition or expertise on which to draw and, in the field of music even more than in that of architecture, there was no positive model on which to build.

### **3o. Cultural leadership**

A Catholic merchant class had developed (quietly but effectively) in the late eighteenth century and had profited greatly from supplying the British Army (and market) during the Napoleonic wars. Being largely excluded from high positions in politics, the army and the administration, Catholic talent was drawn to commerce. If the failure to incorporate this class into the British political system immediately after the Union was a major failure of the British state, with serious consequences for the subsequent course of Irish history, we might ask whether there was not also a

failure, or at least a significant absence of, cultural leadership, with consequences of a less immediately visible kind for the history of Irish culture.

As the new Catholic middle class (with its new money, to put the matter crudely, and its new-found confidence) entered the public world, it did not by any means encounter a dynamic, tolerant and outward-turned social elite with a wish to assimilate the newcomers, culturally and otherwise. That the overlap between culture and politics might be – unthinkingly perhaps – off-putting to Catholic newcomers may be seen in the case of the Beef-steak Club. In the entry on 'Catch and glee clubs' in *EMIR*, we read:

The Beefsteak Club, founded by Thomas Sheridan of SMOCK ALLEY THEATRE in 1753, lasted for nearly a hundred years but was more politically than musically based. It was attended by the aristocracy and professional musicians including Sir JOHN STEVENSON, who wrote many of the catches and glees popular in all the clubs (Murphy, E. 2013, p. 171).

As well as Stevenson, musicians such as Jonathan Blewitt and W.S. Conran were members (Beausang 2013, pp. 101 & 235) and in the entry for the Irish Harmonic Club – a private glee club instituted 'for the promotion of good-fellowship and harmony' – we learn that it 'briefly outshone' the Beefsteak Club. In the *Legal and Political Sketches, Vol 1* of Richard Sheil (1855), one of the more brilliant of O'Connell's allies, the Beefsteak Club appears in a manner that illuminates the rather bland reference to politics above:

The love of music was the ostensible object of the association, but the rites of Apollo were speedily blended with the adoration of a more exhilarating god. These fanatics in music soon exhibited an enthusiasm of a very opposite [sic] kind:- as was natural in Ireland, the professors of harmony became the propagators of discord. [...] A few years ago the political feelings of the club were manifested in rather a remarkable way. A nobleman [...] proposed from the chair of this society, in the midst of one of its boisterous orgies [...], a toast. It ran to this effect-"The Pope in the pillory, pelted by the Devil with the heads of priests," together with other concomitants, which I shall not soil the paper by indicting (Sheil 1855, p. 401).

Sheil also mentioned that the Lord Chancellor was 'a zealous and conspicuous member' and dwells lengthily on an episode in which, at a time of high sectarian tension, the club had 'rapturously cheered' a toast that implicitly condemned Lord Wellesley (himself not an unqualified enthusiast for Catholic rights in the administration). Even if Sheil had his own political reasons for denouncing the club, the casual bigotry he described in an institution to which the musical and social elite belonged must be included in any comprehensive study of musical culture.

In this chapter, there is space only to evoke briefly the way in which Catholics and Protestants in nineteenth-century Irish society could both share certain social spaces and activities (including, after it became less rigidly associated with reactionary unionism, the vice-regal lodge and – where marriage, employment, political affiliation, reading matter and many private social activities were concerned – lived quite separate lives. The foundation of the (R)IAM is one example of co-operation across the religio-political divide but, as evidenced in a substantial number of articles in the *DUM*, strong opposition to the reduction of Protestant power and the mobilisation of the Catholic population were also common. For a period, there was a dream that, through the mass conversion of Catholics (including the Irish-speaking peasantry), the threat to Protestant hegemony might be defused. This was a major element in the waves of evangelical activity that animated the country from the 1820s to the 1850s. In Chapter Two, we discussed the way in which both power itself and the projection of music as part of the celebration of power were bound up with the social history of classical music in Europe. In Ireland, the removal of the Irish Parliament with the passing of the Act of Union necessarily affected the symbolic location of power and its projection into broader society. The vice-regal lodge would not compete with a full parliament (even a religiously exclusive one that was subordinate to Westminster). Thus, though the early decades of the nineteenth century witnessed an expansion both of the population in general and of the middle class, it also saw the removal of a significant apparatus of power from the capital. The gradual decline of Dublin's Georgian northside, and the descent of much of it into a slum, is so well known as not to need elaboration here. The process was accompanied by a movement by the professional and business classes away from the city centre.

The process has been described by Matthew Potter in his *The Municipal Revolution in Ireland: A Handbook of Urban Government in Ireland since 1800*:

Nineteenth-century Dublin experienced major suburbanization, largely due to the flight of the upper and middle classes from the city centre [...] [Changes in the local government system] had the dual effect of leaving most of the suburbs outside the jurisdiction of the corporation and accelerating the flight of the Protestant middle classes from the city centre to escape the Catholic hegemony established in civic affairs after 1841, a trend reinforced by what was perceived to be the corporation's ineffectiveness, incompetence and addiction to political grandstanding (Potter 2011, p. 89).

The upper middle-classes created suburbs or townships in which they could lead life on their own terms, with satisfactory facilities and amenities (running water, sewage, town halls, and so on), but this meant that much of the old city centre was increasingly taken over by the working class and the

destitute. In symbolic terms, where societal leadership is concerned, this represented a de-energising retreat.

A passage in Gustave de Beaumont's *Ireland* captures the particular (or dual) nature of Irish middle-class life:

But when the industrial and liberal professions became equally accessible to Protestants and Catholics, the scene changed, and presented two different aspects of which we must not lose sight. When the professions were filled by Protestants, these professions continued to furnish their tribute to the Protestant aristocracy, with which they allied themselves the more closely, as they found their enemies, the Catholics, becoming their rivals in industry, when they became free citizens. On the contrary, when occupied by Catholics, they stood aloof from the aristocracy, from which they were separated both by political interest and religious passion. So that from the same social element there issued as it were two streams running in opposite directions, one of which flowed into the aristocracy, with which it mingled and disappeared; whilst the other held its own proper course, and maintained itself between the people from which it issued, and the aristocracy with which it could not be blended. The second is the real source of the middle class in Ireland; it is that which, when there was no middle class in Ireland, contained its germs, and laboured for their development (de Beaumont 2006, p. 246).

De Beaumont's analysis points to the appropriateness of reading Irish cultural life in terms of social dynamics and resistance to change rather than reducing the story to a matter of an ideology (nationalism) and its obstruction of progress towards a supposed international norm.

The position of the Irish elite was increasingly different from that of its British equivalent. It was, or became, – to the extent that generalisation is possible – less dynamic, more defensive, more inclined to stay on its own social territory and less interested in, or capable of, commanding an entire society. Effectively, this meant that provincialisation became the trade-off for the security offered by the absorption of Ireland into a two-island United Kingdom. That this shift in self-definition and social positioning would not have cultural consequences is almost unimaginable. Though this will become more visible in Chapter Five, it is safe to assume that, where music was concerned, provincialisation meant that there would be no major drive to create institutions such as opera houses, to found orchestras, or to seek to emulate the cultural display and actual achievement of Europe's major musical centres – its capital cities in particular. Though some cultural initiatives would take place, and though developments in the British state automatically entailed change in

Ireland, the emerging Catholic middle class was not therefore offered a cultural model with the power to attract and energise, or a level of achievement to emulate.

## CHAPTER FOUR: THOMAS DAVIS AND THE ATTEMPTED TRANSFORMATION OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE

### 4a. Introduction to Davis's life and work

In the first chapter of this thesis, and again briefly at the beginning of Chapter Three, we saw how, in the Ryan/White thesis, Thomas Davis is presented as reinforcing the damage done to Ireland's potential growth as a centre of musical cosmopolitanism by the suffocating presence of Thomas Moore. We have shown how inadequately this analysis addresses both Moore and the Ireland of his period. We are now in a position to look at Thomas Davis's thinking about music and to see if – though largely concerned with creating a popular expression of the Irish nation in formation, as he saw it – it can be seen as confirming the opposition between nationalist culture and the development of a cosmopolitan art such as classical music. Thomas Davis (1814-1845) the activist emerged onto the public scene just as Thomas Moore declined in body and mind: the timeliness almost invites over-tidy interpretation: a transition from a sensitive and relatively open form of musical nationalism to something ideologically narrower and artistically coarser, a transition reflecting a corresponding shift in Irish political culture. No-one has argued that Davis was a finer musician and song-writer than Moore. No-one would cite him as a great thinker on art. His reputation never spread to the Continent, he inspired very little music, and it is in brief quotations rather than as part of the popular repertoire that such former nationalist staples as 'A Nation Once Again' and 'The West's Asleep' survive today. As with our earlier examination of Moore, a contextualised reading of his cultural writings may prove more fruitful than generalisations based on a few quotations plucked from an essay or two on musical topics.

A Protestant who grew up in Co Cork, Davis studied at Trinity, without greatly distinguishing himself, and (after travel in England and perhaps further afield, as well as study of French and German and a wide range of reading) was called to the Irish bar in 1838. He became active in the College Historical Society, moved from Benthamite laissez-faire attitudes to more socially aware and romantic thinking, and became a supporter of Repeal. Along with the liberal Catholics Charles Gavan Duffy and John Blake Dillon, he was at the forefront of a lively group of idealistic young thinkers who began to write and agitate for a reformed, non-sectarian and independent Ireland. These Young Irelanders, as they came to be called, were in a sense the avantgarde of Repeal, but would before too long break painfully with O'Connell on matters of education and religion. Some were already on their way to militant positions; a number would be imprisoned or exiled after the

disastrous 1848 rebellion. Three years before, however, having inspired many and won the respect even of ideological opponents, Davis had died of a fever.

#### **4b. Davis and his early audience**

Let us look at where Davis situated himself, how he constructed his understanding of Ireland, what audience he addressed, and how he addressed them. Like Moore, he was concerned to give Ireland a sense of its own dignity and of its potential. Like Moore, he wrote songs for a popular Anglophone public. Like Moore, he wrote to shape public opinion. In many regards, however, he was very different from Moore – in the primary audience that he addressed, in the urgency of that address, and of course in the nature of his analysis of Ireland's ills.

Davis's first major public statement is significant on all three counts. In its revised and published form, this speech to the members of Trinity College's Historical Society was titled 'The Young Irishman of the Middle Classes'. Announcing from the outset that he is about to challenge his audience, he appeals to their sense of fairness in asking to be given a hearing and to their idealism as they prepare to go out into the world. Davis focuses on Trinity's place as the educational centre of the elite at a time when education (and government funding) was becoming more democratic:

The college in which you and your father were *educated*, from whose offices seven-eighths of the Irish people are excluded by religion, from whose porch many, not disqualified by religion, are repelled by the comparative dearness, the reputed bigotry, and pervading dullness of the consecrated spot – that institution seems no longer to monopolise the education funds of Ireland (Davis 1914, p. 8).

Not content with this formulation, Davis phrases the point even more dramatically:

Trinity College seems to have lost the office for which it was so long and so well paid – of preventing the education of the Irish (*ibid.*, p. 8).

Davis speaks openly of class and leadership, of how the time of the middle class is coming: 'Prepare for that time. If you would rule your countrymen you must be greater than they' (*ibid.*, pp. 8-9). In other words, in future, national leadership will have to be earned.

It is of course possible to depict Davis as seeking to retrain the existing ruling class so that it will not have to cede its leadership in the democratic age. To acknowledge that Davis does not totally shed his class attachment is not, unless one is treating history as a theatre of moral or ideological

perfection, to expose his whole project as invalid. Davis's democratic impulse is, in any case, profound. He has clearly given thought to the socio-political consequences of popular education – in the form of the recently created National Schools. It is not just the Catholic middle class which is going to play a national role:

I tell you, gentlemen of Trinity College, the peasant boys will soon put to the proof your title to lead them, and the only title likely to be acknowledged in the people-court is [...] 'mind' (ibid., pp. 8-9).

The term 'people-court' clearly implies popular sovereignty. For the moment, however, Davis is intent on pointing out to his audience just how much their own educational home needs reform. His approach is characteristically constructive. He sees training in 'metaphysical and moral philosophy' as necessary for those trying to find a way through 'the thicket of subjects and authors which surround them in modern society' (ibid., p. 12). Abstract knowledge needs to be balanced with experimental science (of a kind the university is not providing). Far from condemning a cosmopolitan interest in Continental languages and history, Davis recommends that those attracted to them rather than to the Classics should follow their impulse:

The varieties of feeling, interest, and opportunity make these differences, and a preference for the study of the modern continental nations is fostered and vindicated by the greater analogy of the peoples of these islands to them, than to the men of old Greece or old Italy (ibid, p. 17).

At the same time (and here Davis's thinking casts light on his attitude to music), Davis suggests that the student will benefit little from literary study 'till he learns to think and feel'. Education needs to be grounded in ordinary experience: the student 'learns [thinking and feeling] easiest from world or home life, refined and invigorated by his native literature' (ibid., p. 17). For the Trinity public, this is English-language literature. Davis characteristically recommends a plain style over an elaborate one.

Measured against the expressed ideal (if not always quite the practice) of Irish and Western European historians in general since World War 11, Davis's didactic and hero-centred history leaves a lot to be desired, and it is not difficult to find quotations that appear to indict Davis:

History wellread is a series of pictures of great men and great scenes and great acts. It impresses the principles and despair, the hopes and powers of the Titans of our race (ibid., p. 30).

Davis was not writing in a void: this was the age of English historians and public intellectuals such as Carlyle and Macaulay, who also used the essay and poetry to paint heroic pictures for the British public (Kenyon 1983, pp. 68-88, pp. 97-108). Davis speaks of the benefit of participation in group activities and debates on historical topics in a way that shows awareness of what the historical imagination is and of the dangers of being locked into the assumptions of one's own society. When a student argues from a position not his own or speaks in favour of a popular figure or policy, the benefit will not accrue merely to that individual:

In his eagerness to persuade he becomes more sensitive of the times of which he speaks than could the solitary student, and we half follow him to the scene over which his spirit stalks (ibid., p. 31).

Addressing the young generation at Trinity College and asking them to connect to their own society, Davis makes one strong statement – 'With rare exceptions *national history* does dramatic justice, alien history is the inspiration of a traitor' – and then footnotes it:

I mean the histories of a country, by hostile strangers. They should be refuted, and then forgotten. Such are most histories of Ireland, and yet Irishmen neglect the original documents, and such are compilations like Carey's *Vindicaea*; and they sin not by omission only – too many of them *receive* and *propagate* on Irish affairs “quicquid Anglia mendax in historia audet” [that which deceitful England inserts] (ibid., p. 30).

Here, as elsewhere, Davis was trying to construct a basis for a counter-history to the imperial British history that prevailed at that time.

It is noteworthy that he can imagine Roman history read against the imperial grain, from the point of view of the cultures over which Rome held sway. This sympathy extends to the Saxons and to any historical moment in which the impulse to freedom or human betterment surfaces:

Who can discuss the nature of each revolution which reformed England, convulsed France, and liberated America, without becoming a wiser man? who can speculate on their destinies, and not warm with hope? (ibid., p. 34).

Davis is not seeking to displace other histories. He wants young Irishmen (Davis is of his period in his unthinking acceptance of agency as a male prerogative) to discover, explore and respect their own. And here, we must remember, he is addressing students of a university entirely disconnected from the surrounding society.

Davis lays special emphasis on "the diffusion of civic zeal" (ibid., p. 45). Modern civilization, he says,

has tended to free man from the dominion of an armed minority, who stupified and worked the human race as if they were so many machines which they had made, and could make, and had no reason to abstain from abusing, save the prudence of perpetuating them (ibid., p. 45).

For Davis, history is moving towards the enactment of freedom and justice for all ('This step has been taken in some countries, and seems likely to be taken in all'), but maintaining progress demands vigilance:

But on the shore of democracy is a monstrous danger; [...] – the violence and forwardness of selfish men, regardful only of physical comfort, ready to sacrifice to it all sentiments – the generous, the pious, the just (victims to their order), till general corruption, anarchy, despotism, and moral darkness shall rebarbarise the earth (ibid., p. 45).

This passage can be read as reflecting the anxiety of Davis's own class about its position when faced with the threat of a Catholic majority. It can also be read as part of a never-ending debate about citizenship and individual rights that began in the Ancient Greek city states. We might also consider the rhetorical structuring of the 'Address': this vision of danger immediately precedes, and prepares the ground for, its positive climax.

Davis states that few men are in a position to act on multiple nations or on a world scale but that, beyond the realm of private virtue, a 'sphere of *influence* belongs to every man and every nation'. It is, then, to public participation in (translated into our terminology) a nascent Irish public sphere that Davis calls his audience:

BUT, GENTLEMEN, YOU HAVE A COUNTRY. The people among whom we were born, with whom we live, for whom, if our minds are in health, we have most sympathy, are those over whom we have power-- power to make them wise, great, good. [...] Reason points out our native land as the field for our exertions (ibid., p. 46).

It is in this context (and not as an isolated statement) that the end of the paragraph is to be understood:

[...]; *our* country— : the cosmopolite is unnatural, base – I would fain say impossible. To act on a world is for those *above* it, not *of* it. *Patriotism is human philanthropy* (ibid., p. 46).

Davis's cosmopolite is not someone who is interested in foreign countries, cultures and art; he is someone who has no interest in his own. That an anxiety about belonging (arising from his father's death when Davis was an infant and of his mixed English-Welsh and indeed Cromwellian ancestry) may infuse Davis's thinking does not render it incoherent. Davis is not setting Ireland above other nations; he is saying that those born there are under a moral obligation to work for its betterment. The point is vital when we come to analyse Davis's thinking – not always fully developed – on culture and on music in particular. To a degree, this will demand the application of Davis's earlier maxim that '[a]nalogy is the first law of thought' (ibid., p. 36). To say that there was an underlying consistency of approach is not to say that Davis's thought was entirely coherent or devoid of contradiction – he was, after all, a young writer, often working to deadlines, who discovered what he thought as he wrote; he was one of a group of activists improvising responses to British policy and to the manoeuvrings of Daniel O'Connell; and as a central participant in the discussions and interchanges of Young Ireland, he was open to influences and arguments that could lead him to modify or recast his opinions.

#### **4c. Towards the *Nation***

Let us follow him briefly as he works his way towards becoming the inspirational figure behind the *Nation*. In the very early 1840s, Davis was writing in *The Citizen*, a liberal nationalist journal of a rather gentlemanly tone, as can be seen from the first article of the first issue:

While in every state of Europe or America, where general railways have not yet been established, men are accustomed daily to ask each other– How soon shall we have them? in Ireland alone, the saddening doubt is still occasionally uttered – shall we *ever* have them? (*The Citizen* 1839, p. 3).

The third volume carried the third instalment of 'Extension of the Franchise', articles on manufacturing education, episodes in 1798, the native music of Ireland, and the history of the linen trade but also fireside ramblings (about taking snuff), gentle poems and meditations. Nothing here suggests that the journal was responding urgently to the problems facing Ireland. While it is important not to allow knowledge that the Famine was about to devastate the country to colour interpretation of the decade preceding it, the fact is that, like de Beaumont, most visitors to Ireland in those years were appalled by the levels of poverty, and by the absence of good governance and of a viable path to prosperity.

One of the better known of Davis's contributions to the *Citizen* is 'Udalism and Feudalism', which argues for land to be seen ultimately as a national resource but worked by small-scale farmer-proprietors. The essay is more urgently written than many contributions to the *Citizen*. By its numerous references to other European countries (Norway is singled out for special attention) and to Francophone historians and economists, by its search for useful models for Ireland, it demonstrates that comparative thinking is at the core of Davis's practice. He is not anti-cosmopolitan in the sense of being interested only in his own country, but his cosmopolitanism is driven by the search for ways of constructing a new Ireland.

#### **4d. Sismondi**

The influence on Davis of the French romantic-nationalist historian Augustin Thierry, who wrote sympathetically of the nations oppressed by empire, has been acknowledged by Helen F. Mulvey, author of a fine biographical study of Thomas Davis, and by Richard Davis, analyst of the Young Irelanders (Mulvey 2003; Davis 1987). However, there is at least as much reason to dwell on another writer mentioned by Davis but whom neither examines: J.C.L. Simonde de Sismondi, the Swiss writer on economics and society. His writings help to situate and illuminate Davis's own social vision. Sismondi's style appealed to Davis as much as his ideas; he refers to the *History of the French* as "a work accurate, graphic, and profound" – qualities he aspired to in his best work. There is a danger of misreading Davis's social and cultural thinking if we set up a simple polarity between an Irish, backward-looking, nationalist anti-modernisation and modern industrial society as it took shape elsewhere in Europe in the nineteenth century. The French-speaking intellectual world (Thierry most notably) was curious about the political experiment conducted by O'Connell in Ireland; it was also struck by the fact that to Britain, the economic powerhouse of industrialisation, was attached a roofless, neglected, mal-administered annexe called Ireland. France, Switzerland and Italy (where Sismondi had family connections) did not undergo as radical a transformation as Britain did. In his *Études sur l'économie politique* (1837), a reworking in book form of earlier studies, instead of seeing Britain as the model to follow, Sismondi highlights the condition of the Scottish highlands and of Ireland (a substantial essay is devoted to each) and argues for the benefits of a society where small-scale business and trade restrain the pursuit of individual gain and sustain human community and happiness.

The general approach is announced in the introduction:

Les capitalistes sont aux aguets pour découvrir les moyens de concentrer de la même manière toutes les industries, de supprimer partout les métiers, pour faire place à des ateliers;

[Capitalists are eager to discover the means to bring all industries together in the same way, and to suppress handicrafts in favour of manufacture.]

Each of these tradesmen and artisans had

un petit capital, il était maître; tout le travail au contraire des grandes entreprises est fait par des gens à gage, des prolétaires (Sismondi 1837, p. 29).

[a little capital, he was a master; all the work in largescale manufacturing, on the other hand, is done by wage workers, proletarians]

Sismondi favours an economic system that takes morality and human happiness into account. Mass industrialisation affects the family: domestic activities, from weaving to breadmaking, will be rendered superfluous by large-scale industrialisation. The result will be to reduce the day-to-day connection, care and affection that bind families together and to reduce the activity and the moral authority of the housewife.

As the ideologues of systematic selfishness congratulate themselves, a new phenomenon manifests itself: pauperism, the condition of wage-earners when the system, having induced them to shed their small plots of land, their trades and independent skills, has no use for them and leaves them in a state of destructive idleness.

Sismondi's summary of his own approach could just as easily apply to Davis:

Notre but en effet est de déterminer quelle doit être la règle de la société quant à ses intérêts matériels, quant à sa subsistance; mais au lieu de la chercher dans des notions abstraites sur la valeur ou le prix réel, nous n'apprécierons la richesse elle-même que dans son rapport avec le bonheur et la dignité morale de l'homme (Sismondi 1837, p. 120).

[Our aim is in fact to determine how society should regulate itself regarding its material interests, its subsistence: but instead of seeking this in abstract notions about value or real price, we shall appreciate wealth itself only in relation to the goodness and moral dignity of man]

Sismondi's search for a moral foundation to social reform would have resonated with the young Davis. In addition, Sismondi's somewhat idealised Switzerland offered a potentially realisable model for a primarily rural society like Ireland's (ibid., pp. 118-19).

One further aspect of Sismondi's thinking may be of relevance here: though he wishes to see most of the land in the hands of sturdy peasant-proprietors, and though he foresees measures to prevent greater concentration of land-ownership and capital, Sismondi sees a role for the rich:

Les riches peuvent être considérés comme les consommateurs plutôt que les producteurs des richesses intellectuelles. Sans eux il n'y aurait plus de demande pour les progrès des arts, des lettres et de la science au-delà d'une utilité immédiate: tout ce qu'il y a dans le développement de l'homme de transcendant serait abandonné (ibid., p. 120).

[The rich can be considered as consumers rather than as producers of intellectual riches. Without them, there would be no longer be any demand for progress in the arts, letters and science beyond immediate utility: everything transcendent in the development of mankind would be abandoned.]

The nation needs the cultivation of the arts and sciences. Otherwise, 'elle serait hors d'état de cultiver suffisamment les sciences sociales pour savoir garder son propre bonheur.' [it would not be in a position to cultivate the social sciences sufficiently to ensure its own happiness.] In other words, the nation needs a disinterested intellectual class to ensure that it does not forget the logic of its own happiness. In Sismondi's Switzerland, this happiness is something to be maintained; in Davis's Ireland, it is something that remains to be constructed. The gathering of all Irish energies into a national project of regeneration is the only solution.

#### **4e. A broadening public**

If the *Address (The Young Irishman of the Classes)* had been an appeal to the young Irish elite to become the kind of ruling class worthy of the role, there was little evidence that this would happen. Davis's writings of the 1840s addressed a wider public; his task as he now saw it was to supply models of action and thought that would inspire the emergent nation. In Ireland, the National Schools, though an improvement on what went before, were not national: 'Fancy a National School which teaches the children no more of the state and history of Ireland than of Belgium or Japan' (Davis 1914, p. 91). Self-education (the title of the essay from which the above sentence is taken) – making of oneself a model citizen of the nation-to-be – then became an obligation. Davis acclaimed

Robert Kane's *The Industrial Resources of Ireland* (1844) because it supplied evidence that Ireland could survive on its own. In 'Ireland's People', he wrote that, with an aristocracy and a gentry that acted against the interests of the nation, the people themselves were the greatest national resource. In the 'Valuation of Ireland' (pp. 179-191), he asked that Ireland should be properly surveyed – so that it would know itself. In 'Irish Scenery' (pp. 192-196) and in 'Foreign Travel' (pp. 207-213), he suggested that the wealthier Irish with a taste for travel should on occasion explore (and know) their own country and that, when abroad, they should investigate the many places associated with Irish history. In 'Popular Education' (pp. 202-206) and in 'Repeal Reading Rooms' (pp. 220-224), he concerned himself with the diffusion of knowledge. If the official schools needed to be politically neutral, they should not neglect spreading knowledge of Ireland but the task of shaping knowledge for the national cause would then devolve to organisations like the Repeal Association:

We have before now alluded to the value of the Repeal Association in educating the people by its reports, its speeches and its organisation; but it possesses a still greater and as yet almost unused power, in the Repeal Reading Rooms. There are now 300 of these rooms – why not 3,000? (Davis 1914, p. 206).

The prospect of proliferating knowledge excited Davis. He proposed that the Repeal Association should set up committees so that there would be a Reading Room in every parish:

No plan ever devised would so quickly give intelligence, vigour and strength to a parish, as possession of some one room, on whose walls and shelves and tables the Repeal treasury or private zeal had crowded maps, books, prints, models and specimens, telling of the men and the deeds, the scenery, resources, and arts of Ireland (p. 206).

#### **4f. Davis and the arts**

We are now in a position to appreciate Davis's approach to the arts. For the moment let us set aside the few isolated quotations about music that are used to present Davis as anti-European, as anti-cosmopolitan and as an obstacle to the free development of classical music. Just as Davis was an educator through journalism rather than an economist, engineer, farmer, architect or politician, he was likewise no great expert on the arts. Believing that art, like other activities, needed to be grounded in the traditions and experience of the nation, he set about creating the conditions for such a national art in Ireland.

Hence the opening of 'Hints for Irish Historical Paintings':

National art is conversant with national subjects. We have Irish artists, but no Irish, no national art. This ought not to continue; it is injurious to the artists, and disgraceful to the country (Davis 1914, p. 112).

He announced a tentative list of historical subjects drawn up by a friend, and invited contributions. The historical paintings he conjured up were Irish in subject-matter but otherwise reflected the conventions of the day – the kind of art to be found in provincial museums in Britain and France to this day:

For any good painting, the marked figures must be few, the action obvious, the costume, arms, architecture, postures, historically exact, and the manners, appearance, and rank of the characters, strictly studied and observed. The grouping and drawing require great truth and vigour (ibid., p. 112).

Observation, truth to history, focus and vigour were the qualities he sought. Where contemporary life is concerned, Davis's ideas were on exactly the same lines:

A similar set of subjects illustrating social life could be got from the Poor Report, Carleton's, Banim's, or Griffin's Stories, or better still, from observation (ibid., p.112).

In the absence of any other school of artistic thought, of any avantgarde, Davis's conventional tastes are no more blameworthy (and no more of an obstacle to artistic development) than those of his middle-class neighbours of whatever political colouring. In his essay on national art, Davis amplified his ideas and, in one key regard, developed them. 'Art is a regenerator as well as a copyist,' thus connecting artistic with national energy (ibid., p. 120). Describing art as creative and ennobling, he saw the creation of great works of art as highly desirable for a nation, and inheriting such art as 'next best'; however, 'the lowest stage of all is neither to possess nor to create them' (ibid., p. 120). Thus, his aim was not to drag down an existing autonomous art but, in a near-vacuum, to build the foundations for what he saw as a dynamic national art.

Davis singled out James Barry and Samuel Forde as great artists produced by Ireland, and then mentioned such living artists as Maclise, Hogan and Mulready. Within a British provincial framework, the success of these artists in the metropolis would be all that mattered and there would be no need to urge a specifically Irish art into being. This was not, of course, Davis's view:

But their works were seldom done for Ireland, and are rarely known in it. Our portrait and landscape Painters paint foreign men and scenes: and, at all events, the Irish people do not see, possess, nor receive knowledge from their works (ibid., p. 122).

Davis wished to 'collect into, and make known, and publish in Ireland' the best works of art by Irish artists, to educate young students by providing a system of art schools across the country.

That this did not involve the rejection of European art traditions is clear from Davis's enthusiasm for the collection of casts – copies of classic Greek masterpieces – that had been acquired for the Cork School of Art. He mentioned it in 'National Art' and amplified the point in a separate essay, 'National Art – A Gallery of Casts,' in which he praised an initiative to provide a similar collection for Dublin. Though aware of the danger of 'a traditionary mediocrity' (ibid., p. 120) (born of an excessive reliance on the model), and in favour of the artist 'beginning with nature and his own suggestions (p. 121),' Davis wanted inspirational examples of the greatest art to be publicly available. He deplored the absence of public galleries in Ireland and wished the Art Union (an existing and, in the nature of things, largely unionist body) to adopt a more active role – as the Repeal Association was doing:

The Repeal Association, too, in offering prizes for pictures and sculptures of Irish historical subjects has taken its proper place as the patron of nationality in art' (ibid. p. 123).

That Davis was not seeking direct control of art production for his own political associates or for the Repeal Association can be seen in the mention of the unionist Carleton above, among the writers who might inspire artists, and in the way he reached out to non-Repealers in the concluding sentence of 'National Art':

If those who are not Repealers will treat the Association's design kindly and candidly, and if the Repealers will act in art upon principles of justice and conciliation, we shall not only advance national art, but gain another field of common exertion (ibid., p. 123).

The great streetscape of eighteenth-century Dublin was built in an essentially British style. In the 1840s, Davis and others were looking forward to the emergence of a more specifically Irish architectural style. Had Davis's dreams been carried into practice, the result might have been an Irish version of the Arts and Crafts Movement as it emerged in England in the following decades under the leadership of William Morris. This rejected industrialised society and its mass-produced design. Instead, it attempted to create a modern art grounded in the vision, craft and work of the individual and was taken up, with national and regional variation, in countries as diverse as Holland, Hungary, Finland and Russia (Blakesley 2006). The Yeats sisters' Cuala Press and the Túr Gloine, an influential stained glass workshop, were Irish contributions to the movement (Coxhead 1968). Behind it, as behind Davis's thinking, was not so much a wish to return to the past as an attempt – by drawing both on inherited traditions and crafts and on the individual creativity of

artists, designers and architects – to counter the depersonalised internationalism that large-scale industrialisation seemed to promise.

#### **4g. National or international perspectives?**

The possibility cannot be excluded that Davis evinced a deeply insular, anti-European prejudice in one field – that of music – while, as we have seen, showing himself intensely curious about European culture in others. In fact, Thomas Davis comes across as being similar in culture to, and having a similar orientation towards sculpture and the visual arts as, the literary and artistic figures chronicled in *Wit and Wine: Literary & Artistic Cork in the Early Nineteenth Century* by Davis and Mary Coakley in (1985). Many of these were to move to London – as was the case with Maginn and Prout, whom we encountered in Chapter Three. Having seen the broader pattern of Davis's thinking, however, we are in a better position to evaluate the issue. In his essay on 'Self-education', Davis saw the National Schools as 'a vast improvement on anything hitherto in this country,' but not without faults:

The maps, drawing, and musical instruments, museums, and scientific apparatus, which should be in every school, are mostly wanting altogether (Davis 1914, p. 94).

Music takes its place among other matters, as it does when Davis identifies what must be done to remedy such deficiencies:

Until the *National* Schools fall under national control, the people must take diligent care to procure books on the history, men, language, music, and manners of Ireland for their children (ibid., p. 94).

Music is one of many areas in which the schools 'are not *national*' and do not teach 'anything peculiarly Irish.' The Irish language is of course one of the most important of these matters 'peculiarly Irish' and is subsequently singled out for extended treatment. The first instalment of Davis's thoughts on 'Our National Language' is an uncompromising statement of Herderian nationalism:

The language, which grows up with a people, is conformed to their organs, descriptive of their climate, constitution, and manners, mingled inseparably with their history and their soil, fitted beyond any other language to express their prevalent thoughts in the most natural and efficient way (ibid., p. 97).

Rather excitably disparaging the English language in the process, he asked if it was befitting in a Celt

to abandon this wild liquid speech for the mongrel of a hundred breeds called English, which, powerful though it be, creaks and bangs about the Celt who tries to use it? (ibid., p. 98).

Clearly, Davis was not writing against other cultures; in fact, he mentioned over a dozen, from Norway to India. 'A people without a language of its own,' he affirmed, 'is only half a nation' (ibid., p. 98). By analogy, a national music would also be rooted in the musical language of the people.

In the second instalment, Davis (presumably reacting to criticism) expanded on the hint of compromise in the penultimate paragraph of the first ('even should the effort [...] fail'), and allowed that, realistically, English would remain the first language of those reared in that language. Nonetheless, everyone, he argued, should learn the Irish language, as it was a key to understanding Irish history, poetry, place-names – and music:

All the names of our airs and songs are Irish, and we every day are as puzzled and ingeniously wrong about them as the man who, when asked for the air, "I am asleep, and don't waken me," called it "Tommy M'Cullagh made boots for me" (ibid., p. 102).

Curiously (perhaps reflecting his own theoretical rather than practical engagement with the Irish language), Davis did not supply the name of the song ('Táim[se] im' chodladh is ná dúistear mé') without which this cross-lingual play on words made little sense. Davis went on to suggest (ibid., p. 105) that if 'the people of the upper classes should have their children taught the language', this would encourage a reversal of current fashions among the middle classes, who 'think it a sign of vulgarity to speak Irish'. In this section of the essay, music was one of a number of accomplishments that would be best experienced through the Irish language. Davis hoped to preserve the Irish language where it was strong, to encourage (through the upper classes) the development of a 'modern Irish literature', and to create newspapers that would inform the Irish-speaking population about current affairs without recourse to English. In countries – he cited examples from South America to Turkey – where minority languages were proportionally far less significant than in Ireland, such newspapers existed. Where the majority language was the medium of commerce, these minorities 'cherish the other as the vehicle of history, the wings of song, the soil of their genius, and a mark of nationality.' (p. 107) If Davis allowed a separation between symbolic nationality and the demands of ordinary life where minority languages lacked weight of numbers, he was not arguing for such a division but pointing out that the needs of the Irish-speaking, or rather

Irish-reading, public were not being met and demanded attention. Here, Davis was not seeking to preserve a static or backward-looking culture but, in light of the communications revolution that was then unfolding, to create the conditions for an active modern Irish-language public culture adequate to the situation. An Ireland with a large Irish-speaking population and with proper cultural leadership and infrastructure would surely develop a modern music (though rooted in tradition) corresponding to the 'modern Irish literature' mentioned above and to the specifically Irish visual art that, as we have seen, Davis foresaw.

#### **4h. Davis and music**

Why Davis had more to say about the visual arts than about musical composition will be addressed below, but first we must look at his actual writings on, and other references to, music. Davis's essay on 'Irish Music and Poetry' (Davis 1914, pp. 160-163) would not pass muster in a musicological journal today. It was, like much else that he wrote, a contribution to the cultural confidence-building that was part of his broader national project. The Irish music referred to in the title was not all music played in Ireland but what would today be called traditional music, along with classical and drawing-room music deriving from it. Davis's opening words were here particularly confident: 'No enemy speaks slightingly of Irish Music, and no friend need fear to boast of it. It is without a rival' (p. 160). This was one area where Davis's revaluation of the Irish past could expect little opposition. Davis lavished praise on every form of Irish music: its 'antique war-tunes' crashed on the ear 'like the warriors of a hundred glens meeting'; its lamentations made 'man's marrow quiver'; its marches were alternately stately and splendid; its 'jigs and planxties' were the best dancing tunes in the world; other songs and airs conveyed the essence of historical experience (penal days or the Wild Geese) or of love (ibid., p. 160).

What follows (and one phrase in particular) has been used to claim that Davis was positively antagonistic towards classical music:

Varied and noble as our music is, the English speaking people in Ireland have been gradually losing their knowledge of it, and a number of foreign tunes – paltry scented things from Italy, lively trifles from Scotland, and German opera cries – are heard in our concerts, and, what is worse, from our Temperance bands (ibid., pp. 160-61).

Is this a denunciation of the whole Western tradition of classical music or indeed of all non-Irish music? If so, we must ask why an intellectual whose essays are replete with positive references to thinkers and artists of many nations would become an insular bigot only where music is concerned?

As it happens, Davis elsewhere explained in detail why the Scottish ballad tradition was clearly superior to the Irish (ibid., p. 265). More significantly, a careful reading shows that Davis – who was in the process, as he saw it, of mobilising a new national public – was principally concerned, not with the music of the elite, but with popular taste. The reference above is to the hotchpotch of old favourites, opera hits and fashionable sentimental hits that constituted much of the popular music of the period, both in Ireland and in England. The reference to Temperance Bands confirms Davis's concern with the broad public. Davis, as we have already seen, wished to construct a disciplined, energised, clean-living national public. Temperance Societies and Bands were one of the means to this end. (Davis's essay 'Self-education' began, he said, as a response to a request for advice from Temperance Societies (ibid., p.90)). Davis was horrified at the idea that Temperance Bands should loosen their discipline and purpose by giving ground to sentimentality and self-indulgence.

Davis proceeded in a way that might again be interpreted as an attack on classical music:

Yet we never doubted that "The Sight Entrancing," or "The Memory of the Dead" would satisfy even the most spoiled of our fashionables better than anything Balfe or Rossini ever wrote; and, as it is, "Tow-row-row" is better than *potteen* to the teetotallers, wearied with overtures and insulted by "British Grenadiers" and "Rule Britannia" (ibid., p. 91).

Here Davis was expressing optimism that fashions were moving from lighter fare to the deeper feeling of Moore's "The Sight Entrancing" (based on 'Planxty Sudley') and the recently penned rousing nationalist anthem also known as 'Who fears to speak of '98?' The Irish melody 'Tow-row-row' would also trump operatic overtures and songs with a British militaristic colouring. (Comic writing was not Davis's forte: there may have been intended humour in the fact that 'The British Grenadiers' contains a repeated drumlike 'tow-row-row'.) Writing as he was about song, Davis was here criticising the hits extracted from Rossini and Balfe rather than opera as a genre. Thus, further demonstrating his concern with the efficient diffusion of knowledge and culture, Davis proceeded to Moore and then to political song:

A reprint of Moore's Melodies on lower keys, and at *much* lower prices, would probably restore the sentimental music of Ireland to its natural supremacy (ibid., p. 161).

Lowering the keys would bring the songs within reach of untrained voices while lowering the price would extend their popularity beyond the drawing-room. Davis considered most Irish political song 'too desponding or weak to content a people marching to independence as if they had never been slaves' (p. 161). This is what explained the 'popularity and immense circulation of the *Spirit of the*

*Nation*, the cheap compendium of ballads and songs by the writers of the *Nation*. It was precisely to fill this gap in Irish song, and not because of any musical vocation, that Davis had set himself to turning out ballads. (He also, refreshingly, admitted that some of what *The Nation* initially published was 'positive trash' (ibid., p.162).) Davis, like Moore, was extremely pragmatic regarding the use of older airs. Some of the *Nation's* songs 'were written to, and some freely combined with, old and suitable airs' (ibid., p. 162). Where there were no existing models (or 'antetypes'), '[n]ew music was, therefore, to be sought for them.' Crucially, then, Davis looked forward, in a manner that demonstrated the consistency of his views on music with the rest of his thinking:

We hoped they would be the means of calling out and making known a contemporary music fresh with the spirit of the time, and rooted in the country (ibid., p. 162).

Striking a note that would be taken up by Hyde, another cosmopolitan who has been mischaracterised, he was suggesting that a school of Irish music would not develop from an incoherent mishmash of frivolous imports but from an engagement with the traditions and contemporary needs of the country. This was not an attack on other countries' musical traditions; it was an attempt to endow Ireland with what other western-European countries had. The nineteenth century witnessed the emergence in numerous countries of avowedly national composition on a large scale. The following paragraph places Davis fully in that school of thought:

Since Carolan's death there has been no addition to the store. Not that we were without composers, but those we have do not compose Irish-like music, nor for Ireland. Their rewards are from a foreign public – their fame, we fear, will suffer from alienage. Balfe is very sweet, and Rooke very emphatic, but not one passion or association in Ireland's heart would answer for their songs (ibid., p. 162).

Balfe had left Ireland in youth and made a highly successful career for himself on the continent as well as in London. Though a few songs drawn from his operas remain popular to this day, he neither drew on Irish traditions nor concerned himself particularly with the state of music in Ireland.

In a later essay, on 'Popular Education', Davis again read music within a broader cultural context and deplored the disconnection between the lived experience of Irish people and the world as presented to them in the education system:

Our antiquarians may rescue treasures from the depths of time, and our painters may depict how Ireland's mountains tower, or her ruins moulder, or her people live – our musicians may revive those strains wherein love, mirth, or glory are sung with angels' voices; but they are never given to the student of our National Schools, though little German airs, and English

daubs and the lore of every other land are put within his reach whenever it is possible to do so. And, worst of all, he learns no Irish history [...] (ibid., pp. 204-205).

This passage echoed the passage referring to 'paltry scented things' that we examined earlier. That English daubs were denigrated even more than German airs and international lore does not suggest an animus against classical music per se. If we set aside the colourful journalistic phrasing, the analysis of the educational system here differs little from matters as analysed comprehensively by Marie McCarthy in her *Passing it on* (McCarthy 1999, pp. 13-71).

Davis's essay on 'A Ballad History of Ireland' must be mentioned briefly. The ballads he referred to were primarily consciously crafted literary ballads, most often without musical accompaniment. Thus, Davis drew lessons from the practice of the English poets Southey, Coleridge and Macaulay, amongst others. These ballads were poems with a moral purpose that could be memorised in childhood but might enrich a whole lifetime, setting up 'in our souls the memory of great men, who shall then be as models and judges of our actions' (Davis 1914, p. 240). History too was to be respected: 'To pervert history – to violate nature to make a fine clatter, has been the aim in too many of the ballads sent to us' (ibid., p. 244). He urged writers to steep themselves in 'original journals, letters, state papers, statutes, and contemporary fictions, and narratives, as much as possible.' They should also know the landscape intimately (ibid., pp. 247-248).

#### **4i. Aesthetic 'force' and reaching an audience**

Davis's analysis of ballad meters and other technical matters is outside our subject here, but two points from the essay can be highlighted: Davis's concern with reaching an audience and his idea of 'force'. Looking back into history, Davis wrote: 'the minstrel sang them [ballads] to his harp or screamed them in recitative. Thus they reached further [...]' (ibid. p. 241). Translating this basic form of transmission to the modern age, Davis stated: 'Printing so multiplies copies of ballads, and intercourse is so general, that there is less need of this adaptation to music now' (ibid., p. 241). The last paragraph of the essay encapsulated Davis's (limited, it must be said) aesthetic values. 'Structure, Truth and Colouring' he mentioned as the focus of the essay thus far, before continuing:

but there is something more needed to raise a ballad above the beautiful – it must have Force. Strong passions, daring invention, vivid sympathy for great acts – these are the result of one's whole life and nature (ibid., p. 248).

This notion of force could be described as a personal vision of the world projected vividly to an audience by art. It is the artistic equivalent, therefore, of Davis's notion of good political writing. It must be remembered, however, that Davis's writing career was a matter of five years or so, during which he was churning out advice and plans on economic, social, political and cultural topics while also reacting to the rapidly changing political scene. These were the years when O'Connell conducted his monster meetings for Repeal, was faced down by a government that calculated that he would never unleash the threat of violence implicit in his mass mobilisation, and became more concerned with maintaining his weakening authority (including his grip on allies such as Davis) than with constructive long-term strategies and alliances. As Davis died suddenly at a young age, we do not know in what direction his thought might have developed. In his productive years, he was at the helm of the *Nation* (a publication that was orally transmitted as well as read in the Reading Rooms referred to earlier), and was concerned with what he saw as the needs of the broad national public that he was both serving and creating. His thinking on the arts, as examined in this chapter in the context of his broader social and national philosophy, nowhere involves a rejection of elite or cosmopolitan middle-class art. (A prejudice against England, not entirely surprising in someone who was seeking to throw off English power in Ireland, can sometimes erupt or descend into silliness, but it does not imply a rejection of the world outside Ireland – nor does it stop Davis from expressing admiration for certain English poets, writers, orators and politicians.) In fact, Davis openly supported, as we have seen, the idea that the populace needed both the guidance of unselfish, middle-class intellectuals and forms of art that differed from those of the leisured or intellectual middle-class. In this chapter, we have been concerned with situating, elucidating and drawing out the implications of Davis's thinking rather than with denouncing it.

#### **4j. 'Irish Songs': past and future**

Davis's two-part essay 'Irish Songs' confirms these observations. Where song was concerned, Davis set Ireland far above England, Italy and Spain, equal to Germany, and below Scotland (Davis 1914, pp. 264-65). He was impressed by Béranger, the French song-writer, for his ability to express 'every popular thought and passion' (ibid., p. 265). He was dismissive of current fashions ('the cabbage and artificial flowers called harps and Shamrocks and Minstrels') but politically non-partisan in identifying the authors of the best songs. Thus, he included 'Father Prout' or the Rev. Francis Mahony, the London-based Cork Tory who, in his 'The Rogueries of Tom Moore' had ingeniously, and venomously, attempted to undermine Moore's reputation (Mahony 1881, pp. 131-162). Having again showed his anti-English prejudice – 'England's songs are the worst in the world'; 'English

robbery of Irish literature is quite as marked as Irish wealth' (Davis 1914, p. 266) – he went on to discuss Moore. His own interpretation of Moore was relatively balanced:

It may be said that Moore is lyrical enough for Ireland. We might show that though he is perfect in his expression of the softer feelings, and unrivalled even by Burns in many of his gay songs, yet, that he is often deficient in vehemence, does not speak the sterner passions, spoils some of his finest songs by pretty images, is too refined and subtle in his dialect, and too negligent of narrative; but to prove these assertions would take too great space, and perhaps lead someone to think we wished to run down Moore (ibid., p. 269)

Davis conferred high praise on Moore but it is clear that he thought Moore lacked the 'force' of which we spoke above and the ability to dominate popular taste. As it happened, Moore's penetration of all sections of Anglophone society in Ireland continued after his death, though his national songs were supplemented by the often more vehement fare of the *Nation* writers and their successors.

Davis's comments on Irish-language songs are interesting, though entirely dependent on the translations and commentary of others. In the first part of the essay, he mentioned briefly that they were 'too despairing' (ibid., p. 269). We can see in Davis's amplification of this point that he was no antiquarian concerned primarily with the preservation of the culture of earlier generations for its own sake; instead, he was ruthless in identifying the elements that needed to be either discarded or improved in building the national song that was his priority. This was the context for one of his most quoted statements on music: 'There are great gaps in Irish song to be filled' (ibid., p. 270). Of the eighteenth-century songs of the people, he wrote:

[...] their structure is irregular, their grief slavish and despairing, their joy reckless and bombastic, their religion bitter and sectarian, their politics Jacobite, and concealed by extravagant and tiresome allegory (ibid., p. 271).

Davis's concern with a national audience led him to criticise Gaelic poetry for its clannishness: 'There is one want, however, in *all* the Irish songs – it is of strictly national lyrics. They are national in form and colour, but clannish in opinion' (ibid., p. 272). Davis was, therefore, seeking regularity, clarity of style, disciplined emotion and a non-sectarian, positive, national spirit.

#### **4k. Music, class and culture**

Davis's thinking on class and culture was quite explicit. The flaws of Irish-language song were as nothing compared to those of poor English speakers:

the poor who are limited (and, therefore [,] in some sort barbarised) to English alone, have only the coarsest ballads, wherein an occasional thought of frolic, or wrath, or misery, is utterly unable to redeem the mass of threadbare jests, ribaldry, mock sentiment from the heathen mythology, low thoughts, and barbarous misuse of the meters and rhymes of the language (ibid., p. 270).

The adjectives deployed here betray disapproval verging on disgust towards the culture of the Anglicised poor, who, with their failures of taste as well as linguistic control, fell almost irredeemably below Davis's standards – so much so that they were again deprecated in the second section of the essay. There it was stated that, along with some possible touches of beauty, these street ballads would be found to contain 'bombast, or slander, or coarseness, united in all cases with false rhythm, false rhyme, conceited imagery, black paper, and blotted printing' (ibid., p. 273). Deficiencies in taste (and even the technique of reproduction) were described in such a way as to suggest concomitant moral deficiencies. It was to provide a better class of material, as it were, that Davis devoted the closing pages of the essay to reflections on the production of new songs (ibid., pp. 275-77).

One statement of Davis's has drawn opprobrium as typifying his low opinion of music:

It is not needful for a writer of our songs to be a musician, though he will certainly gain much accuracy, and save much labour to others and himself by being so (ibid., p. 274).

Davis was a writer addressing 'the verse-writers of Ireland' (p. 270) who might, like himself, be spurred to try their hand at writing song lyrics. Given that Schubert and numerous other composers set poems written by non-musicians to music, there is nothing inherently shocking in this idea. Davis clearly stated that being a musician was an advantage. The unnecessary labour referred to can only have been the process of reworking the text under guidance from someone musically knowledgeable. It was precisely to avoid the crude feeling and form that poorly informed writers might produce that Davis recommended using airs from the 'great heritage in the national music' (ibid., pp. 274). He strongly recommended prolonged immersion in the airs before writing, so that their individual character would be understood (ibid., p. 275), a further advantage being 'the variety of meters thus gained, and the naturally greater variety of thought and expression thus suggested'. Clearly, Davis was not at all indifferent to the quality of the work, or entirely focused on the

ideological content of the text, a point underlined by the technical instructions he dispensed regarding meter and rhyme (ibid., pp. 275-77).

Davis was here writing about national song; he was not seeking to displace existing elite art with crude nationalist song propaganda but, as he saw it, to displace existing low-quality song in favour of a song that would be both more national and of a higher quality. A passage towards the end of a later essay, "The Library of Ireland", confirms this view. There Davis stated that, with the exception of *The Spirit of the Nation*,

the popular ballads and songs are the faded finery of the West End, the foul parodies of St Giles's, the drunken rigmaroles of the black Helots – or, as they are touchingly classed in the streets, “sentimental, comic and nigger songs” (ibid., p. 354).

To see Davis's dismissal of such material (the terminology is entirely of its period) as an attack on classical music is misguided. When he expressed his hope that 'every second lad in Ireland' would be seen with 'a volume of honest, noble Irish ballads,' his reference points were 'a lowland Burns or a French Beranger'. These were his reference point too in 'Irish Songs' (mentioned in the previous section) where his assessment of Moore's art also referred to class:

He is immeasurably our greatest poet, and the greatest lyricist, except Burns and Beranger, that ever lived; but he has not given songs to the middle and poor classes of Irish (ibid., p. 269).

Davis could appreciate the beauty of Moore's writing but his own concern was with what, in his view, the Irish public needed as a matter of urgency.

What, then, can be gleaned of Davis's attitude to the art of the middle class? A little caution is necessary here. Davis saw a significant section at least of the middle class as part of the national public along with the 'poor classes'. There was a smaller section, composed of the learned, the leisured and cultivated, and the intellectual avantgarde, whose tastes were more refined. Davis clearly set Moore in this class. In the same paragraph, Davis offers a striking observation, to which we shall have good reason to return: 'The middle classes are forced to put up with snatches from those above and below them, and have less music than either' (ibid., p. 270). In Chapter Three, we saw how little thinking about music figured in the *DUM*, the intellectual voice of the Protestant middle class in Ireland. In the second section of the essay, Davis differentiated between the needs of the populace and those of the learned. While older Irish-language song needed to be pruned and

adapted for the contemporary world, this 'need not prevent complete editions of these songs [the originals] in learned books; but such books are for libraries, not cabins' (ibid., pp. 271-72). Here we might recall Sismondi's idea that a civic-minded elite was necessary if art was to progress. The last sentence of the penultimate paragraph of 'Irish Songs' sets out Davis's expectations for the songs of the elite:

In songs for the wealthier classes, great subtlety, remoter allusion, less obvious idiom and construction, will be tolerable, though in all cases we think simplicity and heartiness needful to the perfect success of a song (ibid., p. 278).

Refutation of the idea that Davis was an enemy to sophisticated, cosmopolitan art can be found in a letter to him from his unionist friend, the artist Sir Frederick Burton, as quoted by Charles Gavan Duffy. It is clear from the text that it is Burton who has to advise Davis to curb his dreams of great art and to adopt a more pragmatic approach to the building of a national culture:

" How to answer your question regarding the nationalising of art," he [Burton] wrote, " I hardly know, but I fear certain hundreds of pounds will never produce either art or nationality. Indeed the measure of success the Parliamentary Committee have attained in their praiseworthy endeavours in England is a sufficient commentary upon such a mode of attempting the end sought. You should give Ireland first a decided national school of poetry that is song and the other phases will soon show themselves. This I must allow is being done but the effect is not complete. You know that this mode is the only possible one as well as I do, but you have lurking hopes that things can be forced (Gavan Duffy 1896, p.155)

Thus, Burton is quite explicit in asking for patience when it comes to the realisation of the dream of a national Irish art of the highest quality (precisely the kind that Ryan and White see Davis as undermining). A higher art will eventually develop from a simpler foundation: 'Ah, my dear friend, free, spiritual, high-aiming art cannot be forced' (ibid.). Burton believes that a confluence of positive forces is needed for the creation of great art, and thinks that England too falls below the mark:

When England can unveil such a sun, when Ireland can rub her eyes clear of short-sighted, mean, and petty, and too often selfish, ends, then shall the irresistible influence, the welcomed law of art, proceed also from them as from new centres (ibid.).

Davis's goal was to create a nation in which all classes were united around a set of core values. Working in a deeply divided society, he concentrated on the most practical means to bring this

about. Song was one of these. It was to fill a great gap that he himself began to write what he saw as national songs – and, to the extent that songs like 'A Nation Once Again' and 'The West's Awake' were part of the canon of nationalist song for a century thereafter, he succeeded. Davis wrote as if a national transformation was imminent. His task was to shape the public life or public sphere of the nation-to-be. He died without knowing that Famine was imminent, without seeing the death of O'Connell and the collapse of his political and cultural project, and without seeing the humiliating disintegration of Young Ireland.

The result was that a young man's urgently written and energetically addressed prescriptions for constructing a new Ireland became another set of aspirational texts to be reiterated over generations. In this sense, Davis was condemned to becoming an energetic variation on the Moore of the *Melodies*. The social transformation that would also have transformed the world of music never happened. The next chapter will look at an Ireland transformed by Famine and at the untransformed world of music.

## CHAPTER FIVE: *Away from the Storm*

### **5a. Introduction**

This thesis has paid particular attention to the dynamics of social and cultural life, to leadership, to audience and to the energy or otherwise with which audiences (both artistic and political) are addressed. In Chapters Three and Four, we saw that there was no strong musical/intellectual culture in pre-Famine Ireland which might have been undermined by musical nationalism. We saw that to present Moore and Davis as a mild and a more fervent advocate of musical nationalism, and to see them together as impediments to the growth of a cosmopolitan classical music culture in Ireland, would be a gross simplification of their roles in music history and indeed of the very different ways in which they envisaged the future of their country.

This chapter deals with a four-decade period (1850-90) in which, despite initiatives like the foundation of the Irish Academy of Music, there was again no radical transformation in the culture of classical music in Ireland. In many regards, the musical world explored in Chapter Three remained in place but the ambition of this chapter is to dwell on, and account for, a period of cultural inaction or near-stasis. It is always tempting to move quickly forward to periods of excitement but it will become clear that the Revival period and its limited achievements in classical music cannot be understood outside of the context of the preceding forty years. A vital consideration here is the fact that during this very period the ground was laid for the English Musical Renaissance. To understand why nothing on a similar scale happened in Ireland, we must again, and to a greater extent than in Chapter Three, step outside the internal history of classical music in Ireland and look at the underlying structure of Irish society and see how this was inimical to cultural and musical transformation; comparison with Britain, and an examination of a meeting between a new line in official British thinking on cultural matters and the leadership of cultural institutions in Ireland, will help us to work towards a deeper understanding of the absence of cultural and musical dynamism in this period.

### **5b. Broad socio-cultural trends**

In relation to classical music, certain issues regarding language shift, class and location are little modified by the Famine. Ireland remained an overwhelmingly rural society, even if the proportion of utterly impoverished peasants or landless labourers, many of them Irish-speaking, was much

reduced by death and emigration. Classical music was not going to be an active cultural force for the majority of the peasantry in any case. Nor is there any reason to suppose that replacing the existing musical culture of the Irish-speaking population with the rudiments of classical music would have enhanced their lives, given that their music was intimately linked with their language, their collective experience and their social memory.

Rapid language-shift in the decades before and after the Famine means that matters are more complex where the English-speaking population is concerned (Ó Cuiv 1985, pp.383-87). Those who were shedding a language and its inbuilt, informal critical culture would almost by that very fact have laid themselves open to new cultural forms and influences. Something had to fill the gap where one generation of a family failed or refused to pass on their songs and lore in Irish to the next. It is unlikely that they would have had sufficient control of register and vocabulary in English to have undertaken a minimalist translation process. Where was the mechanism for, or missionary effort towards, the transmission of classical music to the English-speaking rural population? Socially, politically and economically, such an evangelical drive towards the dissemination of classical music was almost unimaginable in the conditions of the day, as reflected in Chapter Three. Given that the existing classical music culture was largely confined to the middle and upper-middle classes and to the landed gentry and aristocracy, given that these classes had little interest in music beyond its role as a pleasant leisure-time activity, there was no active source from which musical evangelism might proceed.

In almost entirely English-speaking urban Ireland, there was a greater possibility of assimilating some elements of classical music than elsewhere. Even in the absence of a major initiative to inculcate the rudiments at least of classical music, the gently expanding English-language working class was going to encounter and sometimes develop a taste for, not just ballads (political, sporting, romantic or otherwise) but popular song, light opera and operatic highlights, just as their British counterparts did. Except where an extraordinary young talent was fortunate enough to be recognised and educated appropriately, the operatic side of this variegated repertoire was almost unavoidably a culture of appreciation rather than one of participation or creation. The Catholic middle class, now forming a larger percentage of the general population, had the means to educate itself in classical music, but the existing largely Protestant music culture offered no dynamic model on which to build. The expectation that an educated young lady would show some basic accomplishment on the piano was shared by the Protestant and Catholic middle classes. In addition – as in the fields of theatre, literature and the visual arts – the metropolis continued to draw to itself much of the finest or, where the two did not coincide, the most ambitious talent. Arthur O’Leary and Arthur O’Sullivan made the journey ‘from Kerry to the heart of Victorian England’, as the

subtitle of Bob Fitzsimons' study indicates (2008). In this regard, nineteenth-century Ireland largely replicated the eighteenth-century pattern. Nothing of what is depicted here is intended to obscure the way in which classical music underwent gradual change or the way that Irish musicians replicated some of the spectacular musical events often associated with industrial exhibitions in Britain and elsewhere, that were characteristic of industrial Britain (Fleischmann 1989, pp. 500-52).

### **5c. Social dynamics**

For dramatic change to have occurred in the condition of classical music in Ireland, some combination of new dynamic factors would have been needed. As suggested in Chapter Four, success for a national movement on Davisite lines would not have led to the suffocation of classical music by nationalist balladry: it was in the logic of Davis's thinking that, in the context of a mobilised national movement, the middle class and gentry (whatever their new and less denominationally biased make-up) would develop appropriate artistic forms. In a less revolutionary context, large-scale redesign of musical life at the political or administrative level – a radical reform of musical education, for example, at a UK level – might have effected a change. Strong leadership on the part of one or more people with the ability to reach out to and stimulate the public might also have helped to trigger a surge in activity. And dramatic social change – something like the industrial revolution in Britain, with a rapid change in the rural/urban balance – would almost inevitably have entailed changes in, and challenges for, cultural activity, including music. No dramatic initiative or cultural revolution occurred, however.

Given that the Famine had a drastic effect on the fundamentals of Irish society, why should so little change have occurred in post-Famine culture in the area we are studying? To answer this question, we must, first, again think of Irish society in relation to the dynamic and conservative forces at work and, second, see how the elements we identify as significant operated in particular institutions and contexts. Until the Famine, it was possible for those of an optimistic disposition to see Ireland as suffering from serious social problems but as capable of catching up on wealthier and more industrialised and urbanised Britain. For Thomas Moore, for example, as we saw in Chapter Two, a benevolent British administration, aware of the counterproductive effect of misgovernance and able to overcome anti-Catholic prejudice, could bring about the dissolution of conflict in Ireland. In retrospect, it is hard to see how such a happy outcome was considered achievable: the fertility rate and the sheer numbers of people attempting to eke a living in some fashion from the limited amount of land available for rent were creating pressures that were not going to be alleviated by a corresponding growth in industrial employment. Though there were of course, as

revealed in startling detail by Krisztina Fenyő, areas in Scotland, for example, that were as impoverished and as subject to prejudice or even to racist contempt as Ireland (Fenyő 2000), the industrial advance of Britain as a whole had, on balance, a negative effect within the Irish rural economy.

Let us look briefly at how the Famine affected the forces that we focused on in Chapter Four. O'Connell was the great mobiliser of Catholic Ireland for a quarter of a century or so, but O'Connell and the Repeal movement had already been fatally wounded on the eve of the Famine. O'Connell may have created a political machine that was observed with interest on the Continent, but that machine was dependent on his charismatic presence and he did not create a structure that would outlive himself. His son John and other close associates offered nothing like the same leadership in the post-Famine period. As a wounded and weakening leader after the Clontarf humiliation, O'Connell had in any case narrowed his political style and, becoming defensive, turning on those who questioned him in any way. In forcing a rupture with Young Ireland on the issue of non-denominational education, his thinking was short-term and opportunistic (Ó Tuathaigh pp. 184-98). The result was that what could broadly be termed the intellectual and artistic wing of the Repeal movement was seriously weakened – instead of appearing to be auxiliary to the Repeal movement, it was presented as having betrayed the great leader. With Davis already dead, with O'Connell dying in mid-Famine, with Young Ireland deprived of a direct connection to the O'Connellite mass of the population, and with the failure of the hopelessly mistimed and inadequately organised rebellion of 1848, the only group with a dynamic vision of the arts in society would wield little direct influence in post-Famine Ireland.

The horrors of the 1845-50 period, accentuated by ideological blindness, by anti-Irish prejudice, and by brutal mechanisms such as the Gregory Clause (which forced the poorest to give up their land as a condition of receiving aid) and the workhouses that broke up family units, would of course leave a legacy of anger and distrust, at home and abroad (ibid. 203-18). The songs and memoirs of the Young Irelanders, along with the feeling that they had at least tried to do something, provided a symbolic outlet for a relatively de-activated nationalist public. But the task of constructing a new culture across the whole of society, as envisioned by Davis, was no longer vigorously pursued. Realistically, the five pre-Famine years when Davis was both finding himself as a thinker and attempting to energise and unify the society in which he found himself were not enough to build a momentum that would survive his own death, the political difficulties of his associates and the effects of the Famine. Though innovative in terms of communication, Young Ireland died before it could even attempt to translate its project into action or erect an organisational base for a future culture. Instead, the ballads and poems that Davis and his fellow-writers had churned out as urgent

first steps were left as carriers of political aspirations and feelings that were no longer felt to be imminently realisable. In one of the ironies of history, the musical work of Davis, who had respectfully criticised Moore's writings for their vagueness and merely aspirational quality, was itself posthumously to play a similar role to Moore's. When the Fenians became active, they expressed an aspiration to separatism like that of the more revolutionary wing of Young Ireland but the movement did not produce a cultural leader like Davis or a program for cultural activity preceding independence.

#### **5d. The middle class**

The position of the Catholic middle class in the aftermath of the Famine is an intriguing one. Their position earlier in the century is rather harshly but usefully summarised by the Austrian Marxist historian E. Strauss:

It was sheer necessity which forced the respectable leaders of the Irish middle class into an alliance with the sporadic and inarticulate, but infinitely more dynamic, movement of the peasant masses. In spite of their contemptuous repugnance towards these dangerous allies, they had to establish at least a temporary understanding with them, because the British government and the Anglo-Irish aristocracy were completely indifferent to the pious wishes, exhortations and protests of the middle class politicians, while they were backed by nothing more substantial than appeals to fair play and the spirit of the British constitution (Strauss 1951, p. 68).

The material benefits of Catholic Emancipation, as in the opening up of the professions, went more to the middle-class than to the peasantry whose mobilisation had eventually won that Emancipation. Though the Napoleonic wars had been a boon for Irish agricultural exports, and also for Catholic merchants, the rockier economic climate thereafter would not have discouraged the Catholic middle class from their optimism. Concessions had been won, and their great leader O'Connell was promising a new order after Repeal in which they could look forward to being the leadership class. The failure of the Repeal agitation, the death of O'Connell, the Famine itself and the receding expectation of a Catholic-dominated Irish domain within the overall system of the United Kingdom had a number of effects on the broad culture of the urban Catholic middle class. As this is the class that should have offered the greatest possibility for the expansion of classical music within society, it is important to reflect on these – particularly as cultural position has not featured strongly in analysis of Irish music history.

The Catholic middle class immediately after the Famine was facing into a period when the great hopes of the O'Connell period were fading. Regardless of how their ideology itself or their style is judged, the principal figures active around the *Nation* had written with urgency, as if change were both necessary and realisable in the short term. In the absence of such belief, and of a political system in which they could exercise any real power (local government was limited in scope and still dominated by the Protestant elite), the Catholic leaders were, for a time, condemned to the endless restatement of their aspirations – turning much political life into an arena of rhetorical flourish disconnected from action. In itself undynamic, this position was a poor base for dynamic cultural activity or innovation. This would change of course after a few decades as political energies regathered and Parnell at Westminster (with Davitt and the Land League applying pressure at home) showed ruthlessness and imagination in forcing Irish issues and demands on the attention of Parliament. Outside of its effect on the rural population, this was almost exclusively a political movement directed at influencing London.

Another de-dynamising factor has not received proper consideration in cultural analysis: the removal of a quarter of the population through death and emigration during the Famine and the subsequent depletion of the population through large-scale emigration. Taken together with the absence of an industrial revolution in all but one corner of Ireland, this shrinking population obviously translated into a shrinking consumer base. Whatever the chances had been of the emergence of an expanding and expansionist middle class, these were much reduced by the effects of the Famine: business did not undergo dramatic transformation, and often took the form of supplying agricultural needs, trading in agricultural goods, and supplying consumer goods to a more monetized rural economy and to the gently expanding urban population (as seen below). This level of social change was unlikely to spur radical initiative in the arts. Societal culture did not offer an obvious base for artistic culture – and the culture of classical music in Ireland was already limited, socially enclosed and subordinate to a weak British centre. As we shall see below, urban expansion was a major factor in the development of classical music in England in this period.

## **5e. The Catholic Church: A dynamic force**

When it came to maintaining pre-Famine energy and commitment, the institutional Catholic Church emerged largely unscathed – this despite the elimination of over a quarter of its base in five years and the massive erosion of that base through emigration over the following half-century (Guinnane 1997). Emancipation had permitted and triggered a programme of church- and other building that would transform Irish townscapes. Drumcondra in Dublin and Thurles in Tipperary are just two

examples of institutional presence and projection. The impetus of Emancipation, the determination to reverse the state-led suppression of the institutional Catholic Church (followed as it was by a long phase in which a minimal presence was accepted), the effort to counter the evangelical movement in the Protestant churches, and the desire of the Vatican to bring Irish Catholicism under its control – all these factors fed into the devotional revolution that would transform Irish Catholicism. The absence of a Concordat regulating the choice of bishops, and the fact that in Vatican terms Ireland was a satellite of the Catholic Church in England (which had its own issues and had little knowledge of Ireland) meant that the Catholic bishops in Ireland, as a group and as individuals, had had an unusual level of autonomy in the early decades of the century.

As a transnational, trans-generational enterprise with a mission to re-implant itself in Ireland, the Catholic Church was not invested, as popular politics had been, in one leader. O'Connell's sheer dynamism and charisma – and the fact that his goals (Emancipation, the abolition of the Tithe) were in any case in the broad interests of the Catholic Church or of its adherents – meant that he had had significant freedom of manoeuvre. That O'Connell, in his late years, had embraced the Church position on education and moved away from the liberal line on the separation between the religious and secular may have been welcomed, but the Catholic bishops of that period had themselves not been shaped into a centrally controlled force. In 1849 Paul Cullen, who had spent years as Rector of the Irish College in Rome and who had absorbed Vatican thinking, was installed as head of the Catholic Church in Ireland – as Archbishop of Armagh, then of Dublin, and finally in 1866 as cardinal. Cullen set to work immediately – holding a synod in Thurles in 1850, for example. His aims were to counter Protestant evangelicalism, to convert the bishoprics from a set of autonomous domains into subordinate sections of a united and univocal organisation, to demand that Catholic pupils should be educated in Catholic-controlled schools, to channel Catholic beliefs and practices into the approved and disciplined forms, to increase the number of priests to the point where no area would be undermanned, and to continue the building programme that had begun on Emancipation.

The extension of parish missions was an important part of this process and can even be seen as truly missionary – under the umbrella term Catholic, it can be argued, the goal was to bring about the conversion of the people from one form of Catholicism to another. The figures show that the Catholic Church was a dynamic and expanding force within Irish society in the post-Famine period. In a chapter devoted to the parish missions, Emmet Larkin's detailing of the ratio of priests to people highlights the intensity of the process:

In little more than a decade, the Catholic population was reduced by a third, while the number of priests was increased by a fifth, as the ratio of priests to people improved from

about one in 2,600 on the eve of the Famine to one in 1,500 by 1860. In each succeeding decade after 1860, the Catholic population continued to decline and the number of priests to increase, until by 1900 the priest to people ratio was one to less than 900 (E. Larkin 2002, p. 199).

If we take into account the fact that the Irish church was also involved in missionary work abroad, and in servicing Irish emigrant communities, and that a network of convents, convent schools and other institutions was also built up, it becomes clear that this was one institution that was growing in strength and providing a variety of career outlets for Catholics above a basic level of education. The institutions in question also provided employment for lay teachers and for lay service staff. In the absence of other strong organisations and institutions in which to take pride, the Church provided an example of dramatic Catholic achievement.

Cullen's goals were not nationalist in themselves, though Catholic nationalists would have supported them. Like the Vatican, he would have been happy with mildly expressed patriotism as a cohesive force in society, but so long as the Church was free to operate and to express itself publically, it did not greatly matter if the polity in question was the two-island UK, a semi-autonomous Ireland within the UK or (though this did not then appear practicable) an independent Ireland. From the point of view of the Catholic middle class, the Church was also an engine of respectability through its preaching of personal (and by extension social) discipline, its dislike of secret societies and agrarian violence, and its major involvement in education. Where respectability and social discipline were concerned, and whatever their motivations or their differences on the control of education, the British state and the Catholic leadership converged.

How did the Catholic Church's massive project of implantation affect the presence of classical music in Irish society? If the effect appears rather modest, it is important again to come to a measured assessment of the factors involved. Conquest and colonisation, followed by the Penal Laws and Protestant Ascendancy, meant that there was on Irish soil neither a prominent Catholic hierarchy nor a network of major churches and cathedrals capable of projecting symbolic power and becoming a focus for artists and musicians. Thus, the nineteenth-century church in Ireland was cut off from older pre-Reformation traditions, and lacked a cadre of trained and knowledgeable musicians. The popular devotional music that survived – much of it in the Irish language and musically close to secular song tradition – was therefore disconnected from, and not adaptable to, the formal liturgical music of the church (Lawrence 2013 & Daly, K.A. 2013 in *EMIR* pp.173-178). Given that most Irish priests were of a farming background, not many of the priests to emerge from Maynooth would have had significant exposure to classical music. Even if sympathetic to the

presence of music in church, they would not generally have been in a position to supply leadership in the area. In addition, as the church embarked on its urgent project of expansion, it is not surprising that its priorities were more practical than aesthetic. Only in 1888 was music made a formal subject of study in Maynooth, with the arrival of Heinrich Beyer as professor of church chant and organ. (Boydell 2013, p.640). It was not only at this higher level that talent was imported. The essential need was for organists and the importation of German and Belgian musicians was the order of the day (Collins 2007; Deacy 2005). Alongside this imported talent, native involvement grew along with the growth of the Catholic middle classes, with John William Glover leading the way where both education and the practice of choral music were concerned (Collins 2013, p. 435). A combination of the above influences led to an increasing presence of music in Catholic churches into the twentieth century. Significant as this was, it does not alter the fact that there was not a substantial human base and inherited tradition on which to build at the time of the Revival. Once again, also, the reasons are structural and historical rather than a matter of nationalist antipathy to international art forms. While the institutional growth of the Catholic Church gave rise to a wide variety of devotional literature, as well as the poetry and fiction that figured in an intellectual journal such as the *Irish Monthly*, Cullen's emphasis on discipline and the similar discipline imposed in Maynooth mean that though this cultural material served its public, very little of it has retained its interest for later generations. There is a certain parallel here with the world of music of the day, where sociability prevailed over artistic ambition or achievement.

A further factor may have played a part. Internationally, the nineteenth century witnessed a degree of aesthetic confusion and of potentially disruptive changes in official policy during the nineteenth century – with the claims of plain chant and Renaissance polyphony for a time having to compete with other forms such as, in T.E. Muir's words, "the Classical Viennese and grand modern styles" of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Gounod. Muir's analysis of the English scene also points to the fact that the development of congregational hymn singing in the late nineteenth century was not a specifically Irish phenomenon (Muir 2013, pp.11-12). In a period when the foundations of a musical culture were being laid, greater coherence around a particular style might, however, have been made matters easier. Moving forward to a slightly later period, it might be added that Edward Martyn, an important figure in the Revival generally, was an enthusiast for Palestrina (as well as for traditional Irish singing and for Wagner) and gave financial support to the Palestrina Choir (Nolan 2013, pp.630-31). Stephen Gwynn's chapter on music in his biography of Martyn is largely a collage of Martyn's own writings but it testifies to the intensity (sometimes eccentric) and breadth of Martyn's enthusiasm for music (1930). Martyn's friend Robert Elliot's *Art and Ireland* denounces the stylistic incoherence, lack of taste and reliance on cheap imported materials and statuary in Irish

Catholic churches. The parallels with the world of music points to the usefulness of stepping outside the music sector in trying to account for patterns of development in Irish music. Some of these articles had first appeared in D.P. Moran's *Leader* – but this nationalist and Catholic editor welcomed the clash of opinion. The key point, however, is that high levels of organisation and achievement cannot be expected of a musical culture that, for historical reasons, was concerned with laying foundations and was without an inherited tradition.

## **5f. Protestant retrenchment**

Though nurturing a somewhat different vision of the Irish future, Catholic respectability had, on the surface at least, little to distinguish it from its longer-established Protestant counterpart – but, as landownership, the professions and business were all dominated by Protestants (sometimes positively excluding Catholics), the journey to respectability could be arduous for Catholics: 'A telling statistic of the time is that there were more Catholics in state employment, following the introduction of competitive examination for entry into the civil service, than there were in the private sector' (Coakley, p. 144). The need or wish to reach a position of respectability would call for more dynamism than the inherited or more easily bestowed respectability of its Protestant counterpart, a point that reinforces Beaumont's observation that was quoted in Chapter Three. There would of course have been many more aspiring to respectability than achieved it – and the gap between desire and achievement exposed one to mockery of the type scattered throughout the anonymous *Recollections of Dublin Castle and of Dublin Society*, which will be returned to later in this chapter.

The political life of middle- and upper-class Protestant Ireland had been largely devoted to preventing rather than creating change. It resisted (this is of course a broad generalisation) Catholic Emancipation, the abolition of the Tithe, the extension of the franchise, the reform of local government, Repeal, Disestablishment – anything in fact that endangered its own dominant position within society or that risked opening the door to power for the Catholic majority. The ambitious project that it did initiate, the attempt to convert the Catholic masses to evangelical Protestantism, did not achieve sufficient momentum to affect the political balance within the country and may unintentionally have handed a weapon against ecumenical coexistence to the more uncompromising elements in the Catholic hierarchy. Evangelicalism did not die with the Famine but, in its political dimension, as opposed to its commitment to saving souls, it carried little weight or prospect of success. The greatest mobilisation of Protestant Ireland would come late in the nineteenth century with the cross-class and (unavoidably) Ulster-centred resistance to the threat of Home Rule. Once

again, however, this was a movement against change.

As the musical life of middle-class Protestant Ireland, and its relationship with developments outside its own sphere, is a thread that runs through this entire thesis, it does not require separate elaboration here.

### **5g. Employment outlets and the deployment of capital**

The limited change in urban post-Famine Irish society may be sampled through Slater's directory (1846). In Galway, in 1846, 102 people come under the heading of 'Nobility, Gentry and Clergy'. There were fewer than twelve entries listed for agents of various kinds, attorneys (11), barristers (3), surveyors (4) and hotels (3). Enterprises that could be seen as producers were few in number – among them were distillers (2), printers (3), saddlers and harness makers (4), watch & clock makers (2), tanners (1), rope makers (6) tinplate workers and braziers (2) and bakers (13, or a baker's dozen) – and mostly connected with agriculture. 38 men worked in two shambles (or slaughterhouses), with four butcher's premises listed. Along with a number of milliners, apothecaries, and other specialised shops, there were grocers (29), linen drapers (20), merchants (21), provision dealers (13) and public houses (30) – to the last of which could be added nine spirit dealers and two wine and spirit merchants. Public buildings took up less than half a page.

Having risen to 23,695 in the 1851 census, the population of Galway town was recorded as a mere 16,967 in the 1861 census. In Slater's directory for 1870, the entries for nobility, gentry and clergy had fallen by a fifth. Merchants had increased by two, grocers had risen from 29 to 56, provision dealers had doubled (27), and though there was now only a single distiller, there were nine wine and spirit merchants and a vastly increased number of drink outlets (from 30 to 74). These changes all point to an increasingly monetised but still heavily agriculturally based economy. There is another growth sector, however. Twenty-one names appear under the heading Queen's College, architects and builders have doubled to six, but the most significant change is the enhanced presence of, or new listing for, cess collectors, stamp distributors, the RIC, the coastguard, the town gaol, bridewells and keepers, the county infirmary, the district lunatic asylum, the fever hospital, the poor law union (workhouse), harbour commissioners, the Royal Galway Institution, the custom house, the inland revenue, registrars of births, deaths and marriages, and so on. In other words, the nineteenth-century administrative state was expanding its activities – and the employment opportunities it offered. The trends are confirmed by the 1880 Directory, with significant expansion of administrative and educational positions, and further substantial increases in provision dealers

(40 from 27) and drink outlets (98 from 74). Galway, the main town (could it really be called a city, with a population of 15,000?) of Connacht, is a more extreme case than Cork or Dublin but indicative nonetheless. A smaller market town in Connacht, Elphin, showed a decrease in population but an increase in shops and public houses, encapsulating the combined effect of emigration and modernisation.

Overall, what we see is a matter of incremental change, with a low level of industrial manufacturing and no obvious concentration of new wealth from which patronage or musical infrastructure might derive.

## **5h. British/Irish divergence**

Taking a broad view, we can say that though Ireland underwent certain technological, administrative and infrastructural changes characteristic of the same period in Britain, the largely de-energised and de-energising state of post-Famine Ireland, together with the absence of that challenge to accepted cultural patterns posed by urban expansion and the growth of (from the point of view of political and cultural elites) a potentially threatening working class, must be taken into account in any attempt to explain the increasing divergence between cultural developments in Britain and in Ireland. To assert the existence of this divergence is not enough; it must be demonstrated in concrete detail. After a brief look at some basic facts regarding population, we shall look at urbanisation and middle-class culture (music in particular) in Britain. Remembering that in Chapter One the absence of a comparative British dimension to the Ryan/White thesis was identified as one of its main flaws, we shall see how the engine of change for classical music in Britain was missing in Ireland and how the result was to leave Ireland even more of a minor satellite of British music than it already was. This will be demonstrated in three principal ways. The first is through three books – a book of recollections that casts a sideways light on the history of music and biographies of the operatic composer William Balfe and of Robert Prescott Stewart, a composer, organist and Professor of Music in Trinity College. The second involves an exploration of the philosophy of the Irish Academy of Music in its early decades (in effect a counter-reading of Richard Pine's history). The third involves a reading of a massive official report that reveals a clash of cultures between official British thinking on education and culture (flawed but democratising) and the thinking of the leaders of Irish cultural institution, with their focus on maintaining gentlemanly control of existing institutions rather than on catering to the public.

The importance of the decline in population in Ireland has already been referred to. A table in Eric

J. Evans's *The Forging of the Modern State: Early Industrial Britain 1783-1870* offers a useful perspective on the matter. In 1781, when Dublin had some claim to be the second city of the Empire and (in Brian Boydell's view) was in its musical heyday, England's population was just over seven million; Ireland's just over four. In relative terms, then, Ireland was a serious counterweight to Britain, though this was not enough to reduce seriously the power of the metropolis to draw talent to itself. In 1801, when the Act of Union came into effect, the English population was 8,319,000; the Irish population 5,216,000. While the English population rose impressively to 14,782,000 in 1841, the Irish population was keeping pace and came to 8,175,000. By 1871, England had reached 21,370,000 while Ireland had fallen to a mere 5,413,000 and was set in a pattern of continuing decline. Growth in England was not even. The percentage increased by the decade in the North-west from 1811 to 1871 was startling: 20.72, 23.89, 23.86, 21.21, 19.29, 16.79 and 14.53. The less industrialised South-west grew substantially over a number of decades but the numbers tapered off somewhat from 1851 on: 13.78, 16.89, 14.79, 11.40, 5.70, 3.83, and 4.71. It was, as we shall see below, in precisely the expanding industrial centres mentioned above that the greatest change in English music culture occurred (Ehrlich pp. 61-62).

Asa Briggs' *Victorian Cities* (1963) and Tristram Hunt's *Building Jerusalem: The Rise and Fall of the Victorian City* (2005) both survey urban culture. Hunt shows how the figures above worked out in particular cities:

Between 1800 and 1841, Sheffield more than doubled its population, from 45,000 to 111,000 on the back of the manufacture of cutlery and then iron and steel production. During the same period, Bradford's successful woollen and worsted industries saw it grow by ten per cent a year from a population of 13,000 to over 104,000 (Hunt 2005, p. 18).

What this meant is outlined here:

Forced out of the countryside by the enclosures and the decline of labour-intensive agriculture, and lured by the higher wages offered by mill-work and manufacturing, tens of thousands of rural migrants flooded to the industrialising cities. According to the most recent estimate, at least forty per cent of the demographic growth of urban Britain in the nineteenth century can be attributed to arrivals from rural areas. In almost all the fast-expanding towns of Victorian Britain, the migrant communities outnumbered the indigenous. By the mid-century, in cities like Bradford and Glasgow more than seventy-five per cent of the population aged over twenty years old had been born elsewhere (ibid., pp. 18-19).

Even the briefest reflection will suggest something of the challenge these changes posed where

infrastructure, housing, public health, education, political control and other issues were concerned – and this is without entering into the alternately exhilarating and horrifying consequences of this urban revolution. (This was not of course a total revolution: outside of these industrial centres there were towns that changed little more than Irish towns did.) Hunt's study is perhaps a little effusive in its discovery of the Victorian city. Briggs's work remains valuable for its cooler and more detailed appreciation of nineteenth-century civic culture.

For our purposes, one of the most important points to emerge is the leadership role of the middle classes in these expanding cities. Briggs is well aware of the human suffering behind the statistics on growth, but rejects as simplistic the idea of cities as 'mere manheaps':

They were never mere collections of individuals, some weak, some strong. They had large numbers of voluntary organizations, covering a far wider range of specialized interests than was possible either in the village or the small town. They were more free of aristocratic 'influence'. They allowed room for greater independence and greater organization of the 'lower ranks of society' than did smaller places: by the end of the century, both independence and greater organization were being reflected in new policies and in genuine transfers of power (Briggs 1963, p. 24).

The challenge posed by the expanding industrial city meant that doing nothing and merely preventing new leadership from emerging was not a sufficient policy. Fierce battles were fought over change. In a chapter on Leeds (*ibid.*, pp.139-183), Briggs focuses on the plans for a town hall. Some wanted it as an expression of pride in the new world they were building. Utilitarians treated this as an extravagance and the building of the largely ornamental tower was especially contentious. Others argued – as in the building of the Sydney Opera House or the Guggenheim in Bilbao in more recent times – that a landmark building would in itself have a galvanising effect on society and bring in visitors and investment. A townhall was also a way of asserting superiority over a rival city – Bradford in this case. The detail in the new mayor of Bradford's speech on the opening of that city's hall is indicative:

We are eleven feet wider than the hall at Birmingham, and about as much longer. We are exactly the same width as Exeter Hall, London, with greater length, a loftier ceiling and a much better arrangement of the audience (*ibid.*, p. 155).

This might seem a rather philistine statement but the existence of such infrastructure encouraged cultural activity. A taste for large-scale musical events went along with the contemporary trend for major commercial exhibitions (the Crystal Palace in London being the first and most famous). The

festival on the opening of the Leeds town hall began with Mendelsohn's *Elijah* and concluded with Handel's *Messiah*. In keeping with the great occasion, these were the two musical blockbusters, as it were, of the Victorian era – each also choral and elevating in tone. It was in Birmingham, the city that was to provide the political base of Joseph Chamberlain, the voice of political Nonconformism, that the 'civic gospel' was most fully and consciously elaborated, though it took time to break down the existing power structure. Briggs identifies four factors that worked positively in this direction: the fact that there was a wide occupational range; the large number of small enterprises; the number of skilled workers; and the degree of social mobility (ibid., p. 186). Robert William Dale, both a pastor and a major figure in the development of the city, described the morale-boosting effect in high-flown prose:

Sometimes an adventurous orator would excite his audience by dwelling on the glories of Florence, and of the other cities of Italy in the Middle Ages, and suggest that Birmingham too might become the home of a noble literature and art (ibid., p. 206).

## **5i. Ireland and the making of an English musical renaissance**

How can these British developments help to cast light on culture in post-Famine Ireland? If we concentrate on structural matters rather than individuals, the following points are pertinent. The fact that the industrial centres of provincial Britain were effectively new entities, requiring new management structures and new thinking, meant that there was an open space in which Nonconformists (who, like Catholics, though to a lesser degree, had suffered discrimination from the state) could make their way in society. In Ireland, outside of the Belfast region, Dissenters were a small minority of the population and were (however spasmodically or protractedly) on a political journey towards solidarity against nationalism, and so, effectively, into a defensive mode of thinking. This, and the fact that the workers who came into industrial Belfast brought with them the sectarian conflict rife in rural Ulster, meant that though Belfast could look like a British city it did not always attain or work towards comparable artistic initiative (Black 2006).

In Dublin, the Catholic middle class, or those aspiring to that position, were entering a city which was not undergoing rapid expansion and which was led by a Protestant elite fearful of losing its authority and un-enthused by the idea of democratising municipal politics. It was also no longer the capital city (with a parliament and the attendant culture of display) it had been in the eighteenth century. In a context of limited opportunities for social advancement, and in the absence of an entrepreneurial surge, those with access to privilege were not inclined to welcome newcomers – all

the more so as the gap (religious, ideological, political) between Catholicism and Anglicanism was greater than that between it and other Protestant sects.

It is striking how often classical music figures in Briggs's study of Victorian cities (1963). This was not a period of great achievement in British composition – quite the contrary, in fact – but if we bring together the history of nineteenth-century British civic culture and key points in corresponding histories of music, we may gain another useful perspective on developments in Ireland. The emergence of an individual talent can never be predicted but a musical renaissance – a broader cultural phenomenon – is unlikely to emerge from unprepared ground, in the form of a sizable cohort of skilled players and a sense of collective purpose. This is what emerges from examination of the second half of the nineteenth century in England.

Following the Great Exhibition of 1851, Manchester organised (with encouragement from the Prince Consort) a major exhibition of art from private collections. Briggs recounts that the Queen and several members of the royal family visited it, as did 1,300,000 others. 'A cultural by-product of the Exhibition', as Briggs calls it, was the formation of an orchestra under the recently arrived conductor Charles Hallé. This was the first step in a forty-year relationship that put Manchester on the musical map and won Halle a knighthood. Hallé was one of many imported talents that played an important role in transforming English musical life. A key figure in the later sections of John Edward Cox's *Musical Recollections of the Last Half-Century* (1872) is Michael Costa, who, after some efforts by the old guard to block his appointment, became the conductor of the Philharmonic Society in London, and began the task of improving the rehearsal process and orchestral discipline. The cultural shift in Britain from casual and noisy audience behaviour (common not only in opera but in all forms of classical music) to the near-sacralisation of the form can be seen in one of Cox's reflections on Elijah (though he had suggested that 'educated musicians' found the composer's St Paul a finer work):

One remarkable feature of this oratorio – the holiness of its tone – seized at once upon the Birmingham audience, and has been increased on every occasion of its being repeated either in London or the provinces; but perhaps never was it more so than when I heard it within the massive walls of the cathedral of Worcester, at the autumn Musical Festival of 1854 (Cox 1872, pp. 184-85).

Cox also shows a concern for the creative process and engagement of the composer-artist:

Throughout the whole of the grand part of the prophet, [...] there is a strength of grasp and a freshness of imagination which indicates how absorbed Mendelssohn had been with his

subject, and attests his willing assent and happy resort to all those rules and conditions which help to bring about the highest and most literal rules and conditions both of art and science (ibid., p. 185).

This high conception of the artist would have been almost unimaginable over the previous century and a half, when a composer was entirely at the beck and call of theatre managers, and mangling of the work as composed was routine. In the chapter titled 'The Transition' in his *English Music in the XIXth Century* (1902), J.A. Fuller Maitland, an intimate of many of the major figures in music, was very clear on how the musical renaissance came about:

It is not the advent of remarkable individuals that makes a renaissance so much as the general condition of the time; as we have seen in the case of a good many of the earlier composers, their natural gifts were stunted, their characters warped, or their opportunities for development minimised, by the inartistic atmosphere in which they were compelled to live. [...] and it is not my contention that all the masters of the renaissance had greater natural gifts than those who went before them, but that they grew up in conditions far more favourable to their musical well-being (pp. 125-26).

Fuller Maitland identifies a change in the average person's attitude to music as crucial. It had been 'almost an unmentionable disgrace' for a male child to show a serious interest in music. A girl with 'a shapely arm' would have been encouraged to take up the harp, while piano duets were almost compulsory (regardless of ability) if two sisters were near each other in age (ibid., p. 127). The aristocracy displayed and promoted foreign musicians almost as trophies and generally ignored English musicians. In a comment that reinforces the interpretation of Davis offered in Chapter Four of this thesis, the author continues: 'The people at large had little or no opportunity for hearing any but the most miserable performances of organ-grinders and German bands' (p. 128). All this is contrasted (somewhat exaggeratedly, doubtless) with performances in Fuller Maitland's own time, 'with their thousands of eager, silent listeners' (p. 129). Even so, the fact that the word renaissance is used, and the phenomenon greeted with relief or acclaim, should not be taken as meaning that a total transformation was effected in all sectors in the later decades of the nineteenth century. There was enough happening to encourage young composers but, as Eric Blom points out in his *Music in England* (1942), there was little dramatic change in music-making in the home, or in music in schools and churches (p. 166). And with all allowance made for the way Shaw relished describing musical disasters, there can be little doubt that he did not need to invent the endless examples in his collected musical writings (Shaw 1981).

At this point we can again turn to Ireland. We have already discussed some of the implications of

the absence of a culturally dynamic post-Famine urban middle class. Just as improvements in transportation and services, and growth in the retail sector, could not change the fact that Ireland was stuck in a state of economic dependency, with little role beyond feeding the British urban population, some minor changes in the organisation of classical music cannot mask the absence of a real dynamic for change. It could be argued, in fact, that it was by continuing in the patterns of the previous century that the classical music world of post-Famine Ireland diverged increasingly from its British equivalent.

One thing that did not change at all was the status of Irish composers in relation to the metropolis. William Alexander Barrett's *Balfe: His Life and Work*, published in 1882, twelve years after the composer's death, reflects the fluidity of the boundary between Ireland and England in this domain. The book opens with an analysis of the poor state of music in 'this country' (England) at the beginning of the nineteenth century (*ibid.*, p. 1). The fact that 'the herald of the dawn' (*ibid.*, p. 12) of change in English music came from Dublin is treated matter-of-factly, with the emphasis on the pain felt by the mother on this painful separation from her young son rather than any question of foreignness or exile (p. 31). Barrett refers to Balfe's visit 'to his native land' but as he would to describe a Scot in the same situation (*ibid.*, p. 127). (Barrett also mentions that, during a touring performance of Balfe's *Diadeste* the following year, those in the pit of the Limerick theatre had to use their umbrellas as the roof was in such poor condition (*ibid.*, p. 128).) In the opening paragraph of Ch. XIV, Barrett notes that 'Balfe was the first, and until the present day, the only English composer who was invited to write for the French stage [...]' (*ibid.*, p. 162). Irish composers became seamlessly English. French or Italian musicians retained their foreignness: in fact, it was an asset, as being a foreigner conferred prestige and it was common in both Britain and Ireland for musicians to adopt foreign-sounding names.

On p. 213, Barrett describes a crowded theatre in Vienna and the double astonishment of the audience: Balfe was 'the only English composer the Germans had ever seen' and he was a young man rather than the veteran they had expected. Later Barrett quotes a review by J. W. Davison of Balfe's trio for violin, cello and piano; it refers to 'our late valued countryman, Michael William Balfe' (*ibid.*, p. 262). Balfe was buried in Kensal Green cemetery. An attempt soon afterwards to have a tablet in his memory placed in Westminster Abbey failed (despite the backing of the Duke of Edinburgh) but a statue was placed in the vestibule of Drury Lane Theatre in 1874 (*ibid.*, pp. 271-280). The ceremony was attended by many of the most prominent figures in English music, with the speaker commenting that 'this was the first time a statue had been raised to any native musical composer in England' (*ibid.*, p. 281). This accords with Meirion Hughes's reference to both journalists and an increasing section of the social elite vigorously supporting 'the idea of promoting

and projecting English music [...]’ (p. 5)

Some years later, and with a new dean at Westminster, a further effort was made to commemorate Balfe there, with an even more impressive list of signatures. The language of the statement sent to the dean is significant, as in this sentence:

Balfe was the first British Composer to elevate the English Lyric Drama to a high position in this country; so was he also the first native subject who was able to compete on the Continent with foreign Composers, and produce in France, Germany, Italy and Spain, the works of a British Musician (ibid., p. 289, italics in original).

Balfe is seen as a British composer and a national composer in that sense: 'His melodies have not only cheered every homestead in Britain, but have become so popular that they may be called National' (ibid.). He is described as the equivalent of Dickens in terms of popularity 'in the Colonies and in the United States'. The writers appear eager to use Balfe to raise the standing of English/British music: thus, Balfe becomes 'the Champion of English Musical Art, not only at home, but abroad.' Balfe's special role was 'to support the dignity of English Dramatic Composition on the Continent [...]'. Balfe will also have a role in the future:

[...] and it will be through his genius and that of such as follow him, that our countrymen will, sooner or later, be compelled to relinquish the prevalent prejudice against English Musical capability (ibid.).

The desire to raise the status of music in English/British culture is underlined in another paragraph:

As there now exists a disposition to foster native talent and to encourage it to its full development, it seems to be both right and proper that future generations should be able to note with pride, that English genius was not unmarked and unregarded by those living in the present time (ibid., p. 290).

The level of support for the initiative is underlined when an initial statement specifies that the petition was signed by:

[...]Professors of Music in the Universities, by eminent Conductors, heads of Musical Educational establishments, and by a majority of the Organists of the Cathedrals in the United Kingdom (ibid.).

Just as Balfe himself lived uncomplicatedly on the Continent or in England, with no sense of anguish about his identity as an Irish-born English/British composer, the leading figures in British

music of his day saw him in a similar light and were happy to use his reputation in the cause of English/British music, without worrying too much about the precise definition or application of these terms. As we saw in Chapter Three for an earlier period, where classical was concerned, Ireland was a subsidiary section or satellite of the British cultural sphere and the greater talents, where they did not travel further, tended to pursue their careers in the metropolis, thus doing little for active musical culture in Ireland.

### **5j. Robert Prescott Stewart and British provincialism in Ireland**

The principal figure in musical life in Dublin after the Famine was Robert Prescott Stewart (1825-1894). Unlike Balfe and Stanford, he never moved away from Dublin, a city whose musical life he dominated for most of his adult life. He became organist of Christchurch Cathedral at the age of nineteen (and of St Patrick's too some years later). He became Professor of Music at Trinity College at the age of thirty-six. From 1869, he was professor of piano, organ, harmony, composition – and later of chamber music too – at the RIAM. He was renowned as an organ-player, is said to have been a wonderful improviser, and was more active than his predecessor at Trinity in attempting to raise academic standards, in giving public lectures, and in composing and conducting. His status with the broad musical public may be seen in some works intended for such an audience. He does not feature in Fuller Maitland's study (1902), in the second edition of Walker's *A History of Music in England* (1923) (in the Preface to which the author makes clear how elastic his interpretation of the words England or English is) (p. iii), or in Eric Blom's *Music in England* (1942) (in the preface to which the author states that he has taken account of the 'Scottish and Irish influences which affected musical Europe, though generally in a literary way[...]' (p. viii). He merits a very brief entry in the 1947 edition of the *Oxford Companion to Music*, where eleven words are devoted to his work as a composer: 'His most successful works are choral, and they include many glees.' It is possible that this posthumous obscurity was aggravated by the very fact that he remained in Ireland and spent little time in London, where reputations were made or solidified. On the other hand, no selection of his work has been issued in either Ireland or England, and his work as a composer has not been championed by any ensemble or orchestra. He receives more substantial coverage in *EMIR*, but almost all the citations from the last 75 years are from Irish writers.

Lisa Parker, author of the *EMIR* entry, wrote her dissertation on Stewart and contributed an article on him to the volume on *Nineteenth Century Music in Ireland* in the Maynooth series. We are dealing, then, with an important figure in classical music in Ireland but little-known beyond Ireland. What is of interest here is the space in which Stewart operated, the audience he addressed, how he

positioned himself within Irish and British musical life, and how he was seen by others.

Parker's concluding statement on Stewart in *EMIR* is positive, though not effusive:

Stewart made a significant contribution to Ireland's musical life, and his versatility as an all-round musician ensured the development and cultivation of Irish art music in the latter half of the nineteenth century (Parker 2013, pp. 961-963).

The statement is accurate as far as it goes, but does not comment on the restricted social world in which Stewart worked. Harry White, though somewhat tortuously, acknowledges the boundaries of Stewart's world. Pairing Stewart with Joseph Robinson, another very active musician, he writes:

Both men ensured the passage of music in Dublin from the sporadic recreation of a landed nobility to the preoccupation of a wider constituency, namely, the university and the middle classes of the Church of Ireland (White 1998, p. 101).

Thus phrased, Stewart's circumscribed world appears as a happy enlargement of the earlier aristocratic order – as if Robinson and Stewart actively worked to broaden the base of classical music. When Dublin had its own parliament and an aristocracy at least semi-attached to it, the social leadership of classical music would have been in the hands of the aristocracy, but this does not mean that the players were aristocratic or that the middle class did not participate. Thus, the post-Union waning of aristocratic presence, initiative and patronage meant that the resident second rank of musical leadership, the upper middle class, who were not in a position to move from island to island with the social season, came to the fore. This cannot really be treated as an accomplishment in itself.

What emerges from Vignoles' biography of Stewart (1898), from Parker's dissertation and article, and from Stewart's writings and lectures could be summed up as follows. Stewart was a talented and versatile musician and a learned man. He was very much at home in Dublin and was slow even to visit England as a young man. Subsequently, annual visits to Germany became a way of staying in touch with contemporary developments (he went from disliking Wagner to becoming a keen enthusiast) and with international standards of performance. As an Irish patriot in a unionist mode, he was eager to do justice to Irish-born composers (and also eager to verify the accuracy of the available sources), took an interest in the writings of O'Curry on pre-conquest music in Ireland, composed for the institutions to which he was attached (a Tercentenary Ode for Trinity College) as well as for his own pleasure, deplored the low levels of music appreciation and patronage in Ireland, showed no active interest in a public broader than that of the almost entirely Protestant institutions he served, and disapproved of Parnell and agitation for Home Rule. Though in the manner of a

well-trained gentleman, he may have enjoyed or found amusement in occasional interaction with other elements in Irish society, he seems to have led a life largely untouched by those outside his immediate social circuit. As Professor of Music at Trinity, he hoped to increase public appreciation of classical music (and contributed articles on music to the press). However, his very popular lectures were delivered in the afternoon within Trinity College. Thus, they were directed at middle-class women and at male members of the social elite who could be free on a weekday afternoon – and whose social territory included Trinity College. Overall, then, we may say that Stewart attempted to increase activity and raise standards within a public little different from that analysed in Chapter Three. On the other hand, Stewart did not seek to address and activate the broad Irish public, even within the capital, in the cause of classical music. There is nothing to suggest that Irish nationalism penetrated his creative core and negatively affected his creativity.

Lisa Parker conscientiously and usefully reports Stewart's activities and writings in her dissertation, but does not offer a broad critical reading of the work or career. Her essay in *Music in Nineteenth Century Ireland* (2007) recognises the conventional Victorianism in his thinking on class, on music as a morally improving force, and on Empire and inferior races. This last point opens out onto a discussion of orientalism (unusual in this context) but this is treated simply as a common phenomenon in Britain and Ireland at that time.

We saw in Chapter One that White's governing ideas are insufficiently grounded in the available historical knowledge – and that they therefore reflect too much the unquestioned working assumptions of the writer and the absence of a broad historical framework. We have largely avoided returning to point-by-point argument with White, but the approach adopted in this chapter points to why White's pages on the post-Famine period are particularly problematic: it is because the material he is examining cannot be squeezed into the conceptual framework he is employing. White registers the weakness of classical music culture in nineteenth-century Ireland (mentioning 'atrophy' and music's 'torpid condition' (White 1998, p. 98)). He speaks of Irish art music relapsing 'into a strange provincialism, incapable of any artistic ferment.' If music relapsed, it must be from a height (but none is demonstrated), and if Dublin is provincial, it is so in relation to London. This renders all the more curious White's failure, either in the *Keeper's Recital* or elsewhere, to engage in any depth with the British dimension.

The analysis of the particular conditions prevailing in Dublin when compared with other cities presented in this and other chapters renders White's 'strange provincialism' less strange and more open to explanation. White briefly raises the question whether Irish art music might be best 'seen as the expression of local colour within the broader terms of British music' and devotes half a sentence

to 'the wider malaise of British music' in this period. We have suggested that, both musically and otherwise, middle-class Irish life cannot be understood without engaging with the British experience. Having referred to 'the question of art music as an impoverished force in Ireland throughout the nineteenth century and especially after the Famine on p. 98 of the Keeper's Recital, White casts figures such as Robinson and Stewart in a heroic light, and describes them on p. 99 as representatives of a 'slender thread of commitment' that was vital 'to the more widespread regeneration of music after the Famine.' Widespread regeneration simply cannot be reconciled with the previous statement. On p. 100, White states that the nineteenth-century English composer 'became intelligible to his public not as an independent artist but as a mouthpiece for the Establishment understanding of music'. Apart from being too broad a generalisation, this could lead us to ask why British musical ideology and practice (including British musical nationalism) has not been examined in the Keeper's Recital – particularly so if Stewart, the main figure in Dublin musical life, can be presented as a typical British composer (frequently writing for the Established church, and for state and public occasions especially meaningful for unionist Ireland). It would then be reasonable to explore Ireland as a cultural satellite of English music and to see how the particular conditions pertaining in Ireland, and in provincial Dublin, as it were, inflect the British pattern. White does not follow through on these lines of enquiry but instead loads his terminology in favour of unionist musical culture. Thus, references to nationalism are notably negative or hostile – 'shibboleth', 'the oppressive claims of ethnicity' and 'the implacable existence of the Irish air' all appear on p. 115 – whereas the tone deployed in relation to Stewart and his social world is determinedly positive: on p. 101 alone, we encounter a 'sense of provincial duty to a united, imperial concept of music', a 'full-blooded, late Victorian musician' and someone 'intensely committed'.

A similar unresolved tension arises on the following page, where it is stated that '[i]f anything hindered the development of a secure base for art music in Ireland it was the impoverished condition of music literacy and of music education in general throughout the country' (p. 102). If this is true, the focus of the entire book has been misplaced and the ideas outlined in earlier chapters are fatally compromised by the failure to engage with the educational deficiencies (and ideology) of the British state in Ireland. White again does not follow through on the issue and rapidly switches to an accusatory tone. However, this is directed not at the state but at Ireland, a country which under the Act of Union was not permitted the political institutions and tools to effect educational reform: 'in a country which loudly proclaimed the inestimable resource of its corpus of folk music, the subject itself [musical instruction] was all but ignored' (p. 102). Given that wealth, social prestige and access to the powerful in London were predominantly in the hands of the Protestant elite before

and, to a lesser degree perhaps, after the Famine, it would be logical for White to specifically examine the educational ideology and practice of this section of society. A belief in the high quality of Irish folk music was by no means confined to strenuous nationalists, as can be seen in the tradition of musical antiquarianism pioneered by Joseph Walker (1786) and Charlotte Brooke (1789). Without reflecting on such matters, White states that neglect of musical instruction 'was significantly redeemed by the institution of the Irish (afterwards Royal Irish) Academy of Music in 1848' (p. 102). The use of the word redeem could be seen as pointing to over-investment in a moralising narrative centred on a struggle towards the musical light.

### **5k. Perspectives on classical music in Ireland**

In the remainder of this chapter, we shall look very briefly at White's treatment of the RIAM and then at Richard Pine's attempt to dissolve the polarities of the Ryan/White theory and provide historical ground for constructing a narrative of unionist-nationalist co-operation in the cause of the advancement of classical music. This will lead to an analysis of the *Report from the Commission on the Department of Science and Art* (1868).

We noted in Chapter One Joseph Ryan's description of the story of classical music in nineteenth-century Ireland as one of heroic individual endeavour. The strained solemnity of Ryan and White's vocabulary and (as we shall see) Pine's more conciliatory but also heroic language could cause us to lose sight of the far from solemn way in which classical music could sometimes be woven into the fabric of elite life in Ireland in this period. The hotch-potch of random reminiscences to be found in the *Recollections of Dublin Castle & of Dublin Society By A Native* (1902) – published anonymously but ascribed to Percy Fitzgerald in the NLI catalogue – offers a useful counterweight to solemnity, while also offering the kind of detail that escapes solemn undertakings such as Vignole's biography of Stewart.

The 'Native' is repelled by some of the behaviour around Dublin Castle. He describes Lord Carlisle throwing cakes from a balcony at children from the Liberties. He comments:

This humiliating scene went on for a long time. All in authority really believed that the way to treat the lower Irish was to approach them much as Captain Cook did the savages, with glass beads, &c. (p. 62).

He sees little better in the lack of self-respect demonstrated by some who sought to ingratiate themselves with the vice-regal set:

Oh! the corrupting influence of this so-called “court” – the cringing, abject, reverential tone it engenders in the souls of those who were before independent – it spreads over them like a cankering rust (p. 68).

The mix of colonial and provincial elements comes across elsewhere too:

Neither was there the least scruple as to abusing contemptuously all things Irish in presence of, and to, the Irish ladies and gentlemen. Everything was “so Irish,” “so thoroughly Irish” (p. 72).

The impression of a city on the slide is reinforced by a passage such as this, where he talks of returning to Dublin from London:

Nothing could give an idea of the contrast – dirt and decay everywhere, railway porters in rags, houses lying unrepaired for years, hall doors and windows awry. It was a common thing to see grass growing on hall door steps (p. 212).

The picture of musical life that emerges is a mixed one. He mentions a band that played at house parties. It was led by a Hanlon, who played 'with wonderful spirit and precision' (p. 40), but was eventually supplanted by Liddell, 'another musician of extraordinary merit, who rose from the smallest beginnings' (p. 42). Joseph Robinson lacks the heroic aura that attends him in other accounts:

He was but an ordinary teaching musician, but was much inflated by self-importance. By an odd delusion, he seemed to be always conveying that his real reputation was in London, where the name “Joseph Robinson,” his works and composition, were household words. He talked airily of all the great guns – Mendelssohn, Costa, e tutti quanti (p. 276).

One of the author's observations casts an interesting light on Ita Beausang's list of Dublin music societies, some of them rather short-lived:

Our “Joe” [Robinson] was so superior to local merit, which he was incessantly depreciating, that he could not help sacrificing what were his own most serious interests to support his theory. In this way he contrived to extinguish various languishing societies, though it must be said that they would probably have extinguished themselves ere long (p. 277).

The jealousies among musical factions and between amateurs and professionals are all evoked:

There was nothing local that was of much value – everything was “made in England.” The two cathedrals were the bed-rock or basis of the music; but they were altogether equipped

with foreign elements. Incredible as it may seem, it was impossible in a large city of 300,000 inhabitants to find trained voices. They were regularly imported, the basses, tenors, and those extraordinary freaks of nature, the counter-tenors; and even at the cathedral of Armagh the service was carried on by an English colony (p. 273).

Audience behaviour ('riotous or disorderly pantomimic proceedings' (p. 284)) at the opera is presented acerbically:

At one season it was the diva of the moment – Piccolomini or Titiens or Patti, or whoever it might be – who was victimised, frantically roared at and acclaimed, having to submit, to their great disgust, to being dragged home every night to the hotel, then having to come out on the balcony and make a speech (pp. 284-85).

This audience participation, as it were, along with singing by audience members during the intervals, is said to have been 'got up' (or set up) with the co-operation of managers, and of course it caught the attention of the newspapers. The author points out the contrast between such behaviour and the absence of support for serious music societies. He asks himself why

in a city that so ostentatiously claimed to be musical, there should have been no middle class, as there is in all the large English towns, workers, shopkeepers, and others, who would devote some of their time to music (p. 279)

Being a sketch-writer rather than an analyst, he ascribes it simply to 'ignorance and lack of taste. He writes warmly, however, of Stewart and his accomplishments, and seems to have been a friend of Vignoles, Stewart's biography. His observations are those of a detached insider, not of a disaffected outsider. Some music-making of high quality would appear to have occurred in private settings, among 'a small coterie of enthusiasts' (p. 280).

While Stewart attempted to raise standards in his own social class, others, including associates of his, may have been happy to appreciate the best music within an even more restricted circle – and the idea that appearing on the professional stage was ungentlemanly or unladylike still held sway. As we shall see in the next chapter, this was a cultural feature that Stanford would vigorously attempt to overturn, but in England. The wife of Hector Macdonnell, an Academy founder, was one of these private performers:

Mrs Macdonnell had a superb voice, and could sing anything in the prima donna's repertoire. We had constant recitals of entire operas [...], with full chorus, all well trained, and conducted by "Joe" Robinson. Many of these recitals were given in Mrs G—'s tiny house, to

which the admiring Lord Carlisle was invariably delighted to come with all his staff [...] (pp. 281-82).

All in all, these *Recollections* are entirely compatible with Fleischmann's account of Irish musical life in the period. One brief comment arising from the behaviour of Irish opera audiences (the same would apply to the reception of instrumental virtuosi) is suggestive:

Where, it was asked – in Manchester, Birmingham, or any English town – would you find such Italian enthusiasm? Which was the truth (p. 285).

As seen earlier in this chapter, the upsurge in institutional activity and the raising of performance standards were part of a process of change in nineteenth-century England. In Ireland, the life of the cities and towns (other than Belfast) did not change in the same fashion. It is not entirely surprising, then, that audience behaviour and the general patterns of musical life also changed little. If Irish musical life became anomalous in the context of the United Kingdom, it was not that Ireland suffered from some strange musical defect but that the forces that worked for change in Britain (and, most importantly, the development of a new self-confident middle class, with significant autonomy in relation to the aristocracy and gentry) were absent in Ireland. The behaviour that disgusts the 'Native' author of the *Recollections* would have been completely normal fifty or a hundred years earlier in any British city.

## **51. The (Royal) Irish Academy of Music**

This analysis still leaves the door open for the heroic interpretation, even if the Native's *Recollections* might induce some scepticism. A major factor that has escaped analysis in Irish music history, and that tends to undermine the heroic interpretation, is the way in which leadership or power (such as it was) was exercised within cultural institutions, including the RIAM. Before examining the *Report of the Commission*, it may be useful at this point to note how the Academy is treated in current historiography. Harry White calls its founding in several respects 'the most crucial event with regard to music and Irish cultural history in the immediate aftermath of the Famine', bringing together leading figures in music, addressing the question of education, and identifying music 'as a constituent factor in Irish urban culture' (White 1998, p. 103). White acknowledges the issue of class, but in terms that soften its impact and implications in both a British and an Irish context:

At first glance it would seem that the Royal Irish Academy of Music, expressly intended 'for

the children of respectable parents', simply reflected the mid-Victorian tendency to impose a coherent academic agenda upon the hitherto uncertain process of music education. In part it did (p. 103).

White's particularly sympathetic treatment of musical institutions and those associated with them is fully evidenced in his terming overt class discrimination a 'coherent academic agenda'. Where Ireland in particular is concerned, he sees the RIAM as unfortunate to be operating in a country with low 'musical awareness' and in which 'art music remained the preoccupation of a small minority.' Furthermore, it 'could not hope to resolve the pervasive anomalies which continued to attend music in Ireland'. These 'pervasive anomalies' – by which he means that, for example, the existence of a population uneducated in classical music, with a strong musical tradition of its own, one unrecognised by the state's education system – could equally be interpreted as cultural continuities, anomalies being dependent on an assumed norm. In addition, there is no evidence that the music-making of the peasantry, and the thoughts of political intellectuals about it, weighed on the minds of the practitioners and followers of classical music in urban Ireland or that it appeared to them to explain the low standards of musical organisation and performance in Irish towns and cities. As we have seen, it was the lack of support from his own limited social world that exasperated Stewart, for example.

Richard Pine is the main chronicler of the Academy, having co-edited *To Talent Alone, The Royal Academy of Irish Music 1848-1998* and written large sections of it. Certain aspects of Pine's interpretation are problematic but it is important to state at the outset that Pine does not in any way conceal or otherwise obfuscate information that lends itself to a different interpretation. Pine is also the editor of *Music in Ireland 1848-1998*, a collection of Thomas Davis lectures. His own contribution, an overview of the whole period, also mentions the Academy; the need to encapsulate his themes for a broad audience means that ideas underlying the Academy volume are stated more firmly. Like White, Pine is pained by the state of classical music in Ireland and also largely endorses the White/Ryan theory, which posits a disastrous breach between Irish nationalism (with its attachment to 'the ethnic repertoire') and classical music (associated with the Ascendancy). In his eagerness to heal this breach, however, Pine's commentary sometimes over-interprets developments that he sees as pointing to the possibility of reconciliation. He suggests that the 'stand-off' between the two traditions has damaged both and led to the poverty of contemporary Irish composition (Pine 1998a, p. 18).

The distorting effect of Pine's search for reconciliation may be seen here:

[...] we can see in the work of the major educators in the Academy from 1848 onwards –

figures such as Joseph Robinson, Sir Robert Stewart, Michele Esposito and John F. Larchet – not only the creation of a cadre of professional and amateur musicians, but also a sense of purpose in, and commitment to, the new Irish state as it was conceived, achieved and developed (ibid., p. 18).

Everything we know about Stewart (or Robinson) suggests that, though he was an Irish patriot in a unionist vein, and happy to participate in the growth of Irish cultural institutions, commitment to an Irish-state-to-be was the furthest thing from his mind as he did so. In keeping with this nationalisation of Stewart, Pine has a tendency to seize on the word 'national' as if its use implied a commitment to the idea of a separate Irish state. The word was used entirely unproblematically in nineteenth-century Britain and Ireland by people who were strongly anti-nationalist. Stanford's *National Songbook* for English, Welsh, Scottish and Irish students is a typical enough in this regard and will be addressed in Chapter Six. Pine also makes too much of connections between Young Irelanders or ex-Young Irelanders and those involved in the Academy:

Behind the scenes, the administration of the Academy shared this sense of commitment [see previous quotation]. Many of the Academy's founders, and successive members of the governing body, were associates of Daniel O'Connell and, more particularly, of Thomas Davis and the Young Ireland movement (ibid., pp. 18-19).

Davis died before the Famine, before the Young Ireland split with O'Connell, and before the radicalised minority of Young Ireland attempted revolution in 1848. Davis's constructive intentions and sweetness of character were almost universally recognised. As a Trinity graduate and a journalist in the tiny world of Dublin's middle class, Davis would have been known to people of all political persuasions. There was also a gulf – social, ideological and stylistic – between Davis's close collaborator Charles Gavan Duffy (who went on to play a prominent and utterly respectable role in Australian politics) and a radical like John Mitchell.

In any case, though Samuel Pigott and William Elliott Hudson had nationalist connections (Hudson's brother was the guiding spirit of the *Citizen*), the chief movers behind the Academy were drawn from the most securely respectable section of society. They included some leading figures in music but also an astonishing array of barristers and other well-connected legal figures – detailed by Pine in *To Talent Alone* (pp. 38-41). When referring in the same volume to the attendance of the Lord Lieutenant and his wife at a benefit concert for the Academy (something that points to its comfortable relationship with political authority), Pine writes that this 'marked the opening of an ambivalent relationship with the British government in Ireland' (p.47). This might seem to be a reinforcement of the idea of the Academy as an institution of the Irish state-to-be, but effectively it

refers to the fact that the government never gave the Academy as much money as it wanted and sometimes put pressure on it.

Like White, Pine seeks the most positive interpretation of those active in classical music. Regarding the overwhelmingly Protestant make-up of the original committee, he writes:

The easy connection between them (they lived mostly within a stone's throw of each other in the Merrion-Fitzwilliam axis of Dublin's residential squares) also suggests the same kind of social and cultural empathy that supported the impetus of the literary revival forty years later (Pine & Acton, 1998, p. 41).

Likewise, when commenting on the rule that 'Candidates for admission must be recommended by a Subscriber,' he adds that 'this was normal for the time' and quickly assimilates it to the philosophy of the Academy's sister institution in England (p. 42). He invokes another interpretation, 'that of benevolence', and 'a "Protestant crusade" in educational terms' (p.42). A kind of proleptic Home Rule thinking is incongruously ascribed to Sir Robert Kane: his writing on Irish resources 'was a process of mapping strengths indigenous to Ireland and therefore suitable for a policy of self-reliance.' He asks whether the founding of the Academy was 'merely an attempt to bolster a sagging Ascendancy hegemony, with its adherence to European upper-class culture.' The material in this chapter suggests that this question, seen as central by writers as diverse as Harry White and Marie McCarthy, has deflected attention from other important aspects of Irish music culture. Pine accepts the common view of Davis as an enemy of classical music and contrasts this with 'the pragmatism of the early Academy', which defused sectarianism by concentrating on skills.

In a key passage for the next section of this chapter, Pine points to the advantages for the Academy of being, on the one hand, underfunded, but, on the other hand, relatively autonomous.

Moreover, the absence of control meant that the idea that music could be taught for utilitarian purposes alone did not arise, but it is probably a disadvantage that the associated question of educating 'artisans' was not raised earlier than the debate in the late eighteenth-eighties, which led to the creation of the Municipal School of Music under the RIAM. On the other hand, the Academy had from the outset a governing body giving detailed and direct instruction to its appointed officers, and thus evolving a *modus operandi* that was singularly lacking in the operations of the art college (*ibid.*, p. 51).

As we shall see, the question of class, of 'artisans' in particular, is connected, in ways that are not fully explored by Pine, with the matter of grants, and, in a much broader sense, with a clash between Irish cultural leadership and evolving British policy. It might be added that though, on its

own, the Academy was never going to transform the world of classical music in Ireland, but such institutions could combine with other influences to accelerate change. In the nineteenth century, the Academy's contribution to a general dissemination of musical culture was very limited. In this it resembled its London sister, which failed for decades to move beyond the low standards and self-indulgence it started out with. This failure was one of the reasons why a new institution, the Royal College of Music, was founded in 1883, as the dynamic Stanford and others lost patience (Ehrlich 1985, pp.104-11).

### **5m. The *Report* and cultural leadership**

The 1868 *Report from the Commission on the Science and Art Department in Ireland* evaluated the administrative functioning of Irish institutions such as the RDS and the RIA. This report followed on the *Report of the Treasury Commission* of 1862 and the *Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons on Scientific Institutions in Dublin* of 1864. The first of these had proposed giving a central and controlling role to the RDS. The second (more reflective of thinking at South Kensington) went in a very different direction and recommended stripping the RDS of many of its educational functions, particularly where these overlapped with other institutions. The Commission quoted from the 1864 Select Committee on a matter that was central to its own approach: it had stated that 'the technical and scientific instruction given in Dublin at the expense of the State should not be entrusted to a body of private gentlemen' but rather 'to a public scientific institution as in London' (*Report* 1868, p.vi). The organisational logic and philosophy of the 1868 report has been looked at on occasion, from the perspective of a particular sector (archaeology and the museum sector, for example, by Elizabeth Croke (2000, pp. 108-15)). However, the report is also a largely untapped source of insight into the leadership style and tradition of Irish cultural institutions, and into the way they conceived of their relationship with broader society. In the report itself and in the Minutes of Evidence, we discover a clash of cultures – not primarily that between unionism and nationalism (there was in fact an inclusive approach on the issue) but that between the democratising, professionalising and rule-driven approach of the Commission (activated by a concern to cater for the expanding middle- and working-class populations of industrial Britain) and the more change-resistant, class-bound, provincial, amateur, rule-bending mode of operation predominating among the non-entrepreneurial gentlemen largely controlling Irish institutional life. This is not to posit a contrast between a progressive and a regressive public culture. The leading figures in the Commission had great difficulty in battling institutional resistance in Britain.

The Commission included Captain Donnelly, an important official in South Kensington, and T.H. Huxley, a prominent and forthright scientist, educator, writer, agnostic and (in areas such as evolution) controversialist. The Commission's initial brief had been to decide how to create a separate department for Science and Art in Ireland, but after its first meeting the Commission requested that the advisability of creating such a department should itself be open to question (Report 1868, p. ii). This was allowed and, contrary to prior expectation in Ireland, witnesses were questioned on far more than their ideas of how the putative department might be run. The report itself is a mere 39 pages long; the hundreds of pages of the accompanying minutes of evidence are fascinating in a different way, as they show the interaction and tensions between various interests and philosophies.

Certain themes recur in the Commission's comments on individual institutions. The RHA received some praise but its art school had not proved itself superior to that of the RDS. Some problems were considered unavoidable and Dublin's provincial status was not glossed over:

As regards the exhibitions of the Academy, Dublin must naturally suffer, from the fact of being one of the secondary capitals of the kingdom, far below London in respect of wealth and population. (ibid., p. xvii)

The difference between a state institution and a small group pursuing its own interests was emphasised:

There can be no justification for the state providing for the exhibition and sale of works of a special body of artists simply as such. This is a private object, and should be self-supporting' (ibid., p. xvii).

The National Gallery was dependent on state funding and, considering its limited collection, had not properly availed of the long-term loan system that operated successfully at South Kensington and Edinburgh. The Queen's Institute, founded in 1861, offered 'gentlewomen of limited means' training and the opportunity to 'obtain their livelihood' (p. xix). It was highly successful in gaining employment for students who had receiving training in areas such as telegraphy, commerce, painting photographs or operating sewing machines. A small fee was to be paid but a number of students received free instruction. In the words of the report: 'These latter are admitted upon the recommendation of members who by their subscription or donation are qualified to give such nominations' (p. xx). In other words, the recipients were chosen on the basis of personal acquaintance by other members of the social elite. However admirable the intentions and success of the Institute, it was a private charity and the commission could not justify giving it state aid.

In the light of these cases, the absence of state funding for the Irish Academy of Music becomes something other than a matter of official British utilitarianism failing to appreciate the value of Ireland's aspirations to high art, and the issue lurking in Richard Pine's diplomatic reference to educating artisans above comes to the fore. The report proper devotes very little space to the IAM (we shall return to the witness statements below) but outlines its limited range of subjects (vocal music, pianoforte, violin, violincello, and wind instruments) and its curious fee structure: £8 per annum for female students (£6 for juniors); £4 for men. What lies behind this structure (as revealed in the minutes of evidence) is that the Academy had first sought to take on only male students (hoping to remedy the shortage of trained professional musicians in Ireland) but the numbers had not come up to expectation. In fact, the real demand for classes came from young women seeking to become music teachers or governesses. (A similar English pattern is noted by Ehrlich (p.52).) The demand was so high that higher fees were justified while the prices for males remained low as an enticement. In catering for this market, however, as a matter of financial survival, the Academy had had to set aside classes of a more technical nature or its ambition to offer 'more ample instruction' to those on its books (*Report*, p.280). The classes not on offer were listed in the report and included 'harmony, composition, elocution, languages, reading and singing at sight' (p. xxii).

These are precisely the classes that would distinguish a national academy from a regular school of music. There is a restraint to the Commission's recommendations regarding the Academy:

That we consider an Academy of Music to be well worthy of State support. Pending, however, the organization of a complete system of musical education, and a well-considered scheme of scholarships for supporting promising students and perfecting their education, we do not feel ourselves in a position to make a specific recommendation as to how the State subsidies should be distributed, but would desire to leave this for the consideration of the Lord President of the Council (p. xxxviii).

The coolness of tone here is interesting. In stating that 'an' Academy of Music would be worthy of support, the Commission seems to be hinting that the Academy as currently constituted was not performing its proper function. Though the Minutes show that the Director, Francis Brady, had some proposals to broaden the social base of the Academy, the Commission appears to have had doubts about the Academy's capacity to effect the necessary changes. While it may be that the Academy was caught in a vicious funding circle – it would not receive funding until it reformed its procedures; it did not have the resources to reform because of lack of funding – its failure to change may be seen, first, in the fact that its funding remained very low and, second, in the need to found a separate institution, the Dublin Municipal School of Music, in 1890 to cater to the needs of the

broader population. (This will be referred to in Chapter Six).

The failure to appreciate official guidelines on funding or the demarcation line between public and private was even clearer in another case, that of the proposed Royal Irish Institute. In 1862, a group of wealthy individuals set up the Dublin Exhibition Palace and Winter Garden Company, with a view to organising a major exhibition (this happened in 1865) and to bringing Irish cultural and educational institutions together on a large site on and behind Earlsfort Terrace. The share capital of £50,000 was fully subscribed but the Exhibition was not a financial success and the project ended up with debts of £42,000. The gentlemen in question then asked the government to acquire the site for the 'Royal Irish Institute on Science and Art' that they projected. As quoted by the Commission, the memo drawn up by the gentlemen in question should be 'under the control or management of a board of resident gentlemen', or a 'Royal Commission of Irishmen', who would be directly 'in communication with the Irish Government [ie, Dublin Castle] and responsible to Parliament' (p. xxii) They saw their initiative as an Irish equivalent of South Kensington and they had support across the political and religious divides in Ireland. Essentially, the government was to rescue them financially but to maintain this self-appointed section of the Irish social elite in control.

Having interviewed 'every gentleman who has tendered himself on behalf of the project', and those in the institutions potentially involved, the Commission devoted over seven of its thirty-nine pages to spelling out, first, the difference between this initiative and the Science and Art institution in London and, second, the exact rules governing state funding. A key element was immediately stated:

The constitution of the Department of Science and Art in England in no way answers to the idea set forth in the prospectuses of the promoters of this project. It is neither wholly nor partially administered by a board of private gentlemen, but is one branch of the Education Department under the Minister in charge of education [...] (p. xxiii).

The basis for state funding was best expressed in the 'General Resumé' that followed the pages of detailed analysis. It clearly derived from the need to respond to the challenge of industrial society:

And it is on the artisan or industrial classes that both art and science classes must primarily depend, as far as State grants are concerned. The parliamentary grants for science and art instruction are voted wholly and specifically to aid the instruction of these classes. Though the establishment of science schools or art schools does incidentally benefit the middle classes, and though it is to the large fees paid by them that the art teacher largely looks for support, no direct payment can be made on account of their instruction (p. xxxii).

As Dublin had undergone no social change of this type, neither these particular gentlemen nor the section of society of which they were representative had had much reason to think seriously about the cultural and educational needs of those less privileged than themselves. Earlier in this chapter, it was suggested that classical music culture in Ireland remained largely unchanged from what it had been in the eighteenth century (though with the upper middle class playing a greater leadership role). Here, and elsewhere in the Commission's *Report* we see that the leaders of cultural institutions were also operating in a pattern that had suffered only minimal modification during the nineteenth century.

Miss Corlett, Secretary of the Queen's Institute, expected her students 'to be gentlewomen', would not take 'the daughters of servants or labourers', or (in a question about her definition of respectability) 'the daughter of a man who kept a public house' (p. 352). She felt that the school would lose its support if it were opened to other classes and had to provide night classes (p. 355). She was determined not to provide night classes under any circumstances: '[...] of course we could not sanction such a thing as young ladies attending a night school in Dublin' (p. 319). The danger to the students was the main reason she offered when the subject was returned to, and she stated that the Institute 'would not accept the highest grant that could be offered to us' under the prevailing rules (p. 357). She was confident that, if an Irish Science and Art Department were in place, 'we would have sufficient influence to have our case [for funding] considered, and that the difficulty would be got over' (p. 357).

Of particular interest in relation to this chapter and to the thesis more generally is the evidence of Mr Kerr, who was associated with the Queen's Institute. As a confident and even opinionated businessman, his evidence was refreshingly direct. He was entirely critical of the RDS: 'The Royal Dublin Society is what I call a worn-out establishment, in a great measure, with all due respect.' He said that he had been elected a member, without having been asked, in 1853 but had left: 'I consider that they have not gone with the wants of the times (p. 296). A friend of his, he stated, could never get the RDS to do anything constructive 'for the good of the manufacturing interest of the city or country.' His next point was more tangible:

On the committee of the Royal Dublin Society, called the Art Manufactures Committee, last year, there was not a single manufacturer elected, not a Fry or a Pim, or anyone else of that kind; they were all either barristers or other professional men; and there was only one artist, Mr. Joseph Kirk (ibid.).

The Frys and Pims being Quaker families, this was not an anti-Catholic prejudice: it reflected the backward-looking nature of the RDS, its wish to preserve its own privileges and traditions, and its

lack of receptivity to social change or even to the advisability of incorporating the manufacturing interest. Kerr (who in this was going beyond what Mr Brady of the IAM had stated, after some initial reluctance (p. 286)) was equally direct about the unionist (and even the Protestant) bias of the RDS. Almost all witnesses had denied that religious differences mattered in the contemporary RDS but Kerr, speaking 'as a conservative and a Protestant' was unequivocal on the point: 'It represents the Protestant feeling decidedly.' He pointed out to a questioner that it was not open to liberals or Catholics simply to join and take the organisation in a different direction: 'Pardon me; you must be proposed and seconded.' As with the music societies mentioned in Chapter Three, the normal club-style rules were not necessarily consciously sectarian, but as the nineteenth century went on, as the democratising trend strengthened and as Catholics began to enter society and the professions in greater numbers, these social mechanisms were increasingly perceived as exclusionary. Kerr believed that there was prejudice on both sides and that negative perception was a factor in the way liberals 'would not join the society [the RDS] because they consider it would be useless to do so' (p. 300). In order to forestall cliquishness, Kerr proposed that the members of the committee of the proposed Irish Institute should be elected on a district basis. Kerr was also direct in pointing out the difficulty of applying British rules to particular Irish situations. When asked about the possible establishment of an art school in Belleek, he pointed that the area was so desolate that there was hardly a building in which to house workers. Art schools would normally involve state aid on top of local initiative. In this case, 'the locality consists of one proprietor' who was unlikely to fund a building (p. 305) as the instruction of artisans would not benefit him: 'No, he is merely lord of the manor; he derives only a profit from the felspar.' As a businessman, Kerr was not enthused by the suggestion that the proprietors of the works could themselves fund a school.

An important point that emerges from the report is that both unionists and nationalists felt that London was ill-informed about Irish realities. Those aspiring to Irish autonomy within the UK or to independence might wish to see a new Irish leadership emerge; others saw the Irish Institute or a separate Irish Arts and Science Department as a way of maintaining established ways against the interference of English bureaucrats and their new thinking. Interestingly, while Francis Brady was happy to co-operate with any new Irish institution or Department, he was anxious that the Irish system should be carefully harmonised with London so that the best Irish students would be able to benefit from prizes 'in a competition with students from all other parts of the empire' (p.288). The same applied to scholarships (p. 289). This was a realistic assessment in view of the restricted opportunities for professional musicians in Ireland and was one of the factors that led the Commission to argue for Ireland's continuing integration into the imperial system:

The less outlet there is for talent in Ireland the greater, in our opinion, is the reason for

retaining the present imperial system [...] It affords an Imperial competition; success in it – and we see that Irish students are successful – not only carries far greater weight and prestige than in any simply Irish, but it opens to the successful student a far wider field.’ (*Report 1868*, p. xxxii)

The last of the general points made in the report justified Ireland's maintaining its status within the UK as a way of bypassing sectarianism in education. The phrasing in the report was a little more grandiose and, whatever its basis in truth, was unlikely to have persuaded those whose testimony had unwittingly influenced this conclusion:

In conclusion, we may say that the opinions of many of us have been on the question of a separate department have not been uninfluenced by the consideration, that so long as the instruction in science and art in Ireland forms part of a great system spreading over the whole kingdom, it will probably continue, as it has commenced, unhampered by the political and sectarian differences which unhappily too readily obtain on all questions of education at the present time’ (*ibid.*, p. xxxiv).

This statement presents the UK framework as a way of transcending sectarian difference within Ireland. There may be a logic to the argument in this particular case and in this sphere but it would be a mistake to fall into a new polarised framework (retrograde sectarian Ireland vs secular progressive Britain) in seeking an adequate account of Irish cultural history in this cultural sector. It is, rather, a case of dramatic social change necessitating an institutional response. Thomas Huxley's influence within the committee had already been noted and the final report can be aligned with the line of questioning he adopted (focusing on the nuts and bolts of institutional power, on institutional overlap, and on thinking and behaviour that clashed with the educational ideals that he espoused). Henry Cole, Secretary of the Department of Science and Art and head of South Kensington, was among the first to be questioned by the Commission. A full analysis of his bluntly expressed views would be outside the remit of this thesis, but they run on similar lines to Huxley's and may well have influenced the latter. However, his remarks on institutions are worth noting. Thus, in his view, the RDS's premises at least were improving ('tidy instead of seedy beyond measure' (p. 115)), the RHA had low standards and refused to co-operate with other institutions (p. 117), the RIA had made no progress in the previous three years (for an institution of such importance, it was 'in a shabby and discreditable condition' (p. 118)), the National Gallery was in need of rotating loans from London in order to fill out its collection, and schools of art in Ireland were doing better than might be expected. Though claiming to have little official connection with music, he volunteered unofficial opinions on music, citing and agreeing with Disraeli's recently expressed view that 'music was an

object worthy of national culture' (p. 124). Cole's opinions do not square with Richard Pine's depiction of him as a narrow-minded utilitarian. He was rather vague (deliberately or provocatively so, perhaps) about the Irish Academy of Music ('There is in Dublin, I believe, an Academy of Music; I think it calls itself the Royal Academy of Music' (p. 124)) but felt that if a national (UK) 'training school for teaching music' were created (Cole does not appear to have been especially impressed by the existing Academy in London either), it should have a branch in Dublin, to make up for the difficulty of access to the metropolis. Such a school should not depend on fees and should be fully supported by the state:

The object of a training school is to find out those persons that have musical aptitude, who may be the poorest of the poor, and to train them for the good of the community (p. 124).

In a self-supporting system, 'you are besieged by people who think they have got these gifts' but what was needed in Ireland was a fully funded branch in Dublin that would identify and cultivate ('as far as means would admit') all musical talent. Dublin should 'steer clear of the pretension' that it could have an independent institution on the same scale as London. There was not enough music of quality happening in Dublin – with one week of Italian opera compared with months in London – to justify an Irish national academy (pp. 124-25).

More generally, Cole, who had long experience of institutional frustration in England (Ehrlich, pp. 80-88)) advocated ruthless action if necessary to overcome institutional rivalries 'for the credit of Ireland and for the benefit of the Irish people' (p.125). He had already made similar comments about the RHA – and about the impossibility of retaining artistic talent in Ireland. Yet again, the eighteenth-century pattern we noted in Chapter One is maintained:

It is of no use kicking against the pricks in respect of Irish art. If an Irishman becomes an eminent man like Mulready, Maclise, or Foley [all Irish artists who made successful careers in London], or any other such men, he must be allowed to go where he pleases. You cannot keep him in a small place with 300,000 people who don't spend much money in the purchase of such things (p. 117).

From a metropolitan point of view, this is a realistic assessment of provincial Dublin. But Cole was no ordinary metropolitan, and went beyond the pattern of introducing reform in Ireland only as an expedient to dampen down unrest. Moving unexpectedly (and unasked) from institutional detail to the bigger picture, he took the opportunity 'to state [his] faith about what is called justice to Ireland in the question of promoting museums and teaching science and art' (p. 119). He gave reasons for treating Dublin better than cities of greater population in Britain: 'The first is, that I feel Great

Britain owes every possible compensation to Ireland for the years of tyranny and injustice to which Ireland has been subjected' (p. 120). His introduction of politics was objected to by the Rev. Dr Haughton of TCD. Cole quoted a cabinet minister, Sir Stafford Northcote, in justification of his opinion and confirmed that another injustice lay in the discouragement of Irish industry in the past. The room was then cleared before the commission decided to resume questioning on the issue (in practice, resuming Cole's statement of opinion).

Cole went on to say that Ireland was a special case and that geographical factors (physical separation) should also count in treating Ireland with 'great liberality'. At the same time, there should be 'no waste and no jobbery'. Cole's testimony demonstrates the need to step outside an internal, sectoral point of view when dealing with the history of classical music and of cultural institutions in Ireland – and in Britain itself, as brilliantly outlined in Bruce Robertson's 'The South Kensington Museum in context: an alternative history'(2004). In a way that resonates strongly with the approach taken in this thesis, and that can be extended to the tendency to read nineteenth-century Ireland in a single-island post-independence perspective, Robertson also warns against reading institutional history 'teleologically and typologically' (p.1). His article is a useful reminder both of the British government's 'overriding interest in the nineteenth century in education from childhood through adulthood, from the arts to the sciences' (p. 10) but also of how the history is one of improvisation as well as principle, and of pressure and counter-pressure, in the context of a hotchpotch of inherited institutions.

## **5n. Themes restated**

Much of this chapter has focused on the internal world of classical music in Ireland, but we have also seen how, for many within that world, Ireland was part of a larger British cultural world. We have seen Balfe take his place uncomplicatedly in the British musical world. We have seen how Robert Prescott Stewart lived the life of a British provincial though with an element of resentment when Britain failed to recognise the merits of Irish composers. We have seen how little the non-middle-class urban population figured in the active life or ambitions of those involved in cultural institutions. We have seen how little this sector of Irish musical life was touched by the forces that were leading to major change in Britain and how the absence of a dramatically enlarging, and semi-autonomous urban middle-class sphere, spurred into activity by the need to cater for a large working-class population, must be seen as a factor in the absence of major infrastructural and organisational initiative among those most associated with the culture of classical music. We have seen how little evidence there is to support an over-arching heroic perspective on those who

practised or taught classical music (though this does not in any way detract from the excellence or dedication shown by some). We have seen how one Irish cultural initiative with cross-denominational support failed because, having failed to analyse their model of leadership in relation to British official thinking, they were unable to articulate a strong case to a group of British policy makers and thinkers who were reacting to the challenge of urban change in Britain.

Thus, though incremental change took place, continuity with the taste, social attitudes and weak leadership of the early decades of the century marked the period. No project of transformation was undertaken, and the British-provincial industry of a Robert Prescott Stewart did not seek to animate and expand the musical life of his class by connecting it with any larger dynamic. Here, however, we must step back again. If the educational reform promoted by Cole, Donnelly and Huxley was a response to urban change and the challenge of an enlarging working or artisan class, it had little or nothing to say about the mass of Irish people who did not live in towns and cities. But neither was this mass of people of concern to Stewart or Brady or other leading figures, Protestant or Catholic, within the world of classical music in Ireland. Neither the Irish social and cultural elite nor the British state made any evangelising effort for classical music among the broader population. Except insofar as dance forms and songs filtered through to them, this population was largely untouched by classical music. In this context, it does not make sense to interpret music history in terms of hostility between the proponents of classical music and the social world in which traditional music lived. Nothing in the diverse sources we have examined supports the idea that the weakness of classical music can be ascribed to nationalist hostility to the form. Instead, we have to imagine different sectors of society, and different cultural sectors, operating on their own terms and within their own social and political frameworks. A minority of the middle or upper-middle classes might take an interest in Irish music and traditions, but this was largely in an antiquarian context. Likewise, British ballads and popular song filtered into urban musical life, especially as communications improved, and as more and more Irish people spoke English.

During this period of relative torpidity for classical music, Fenianism had developed, broken into rebellion and been defeated. The British state had had to pay attention to Ireland. The Church of Ireland was disestablished. A Home Rule party began to grow. It would soon develop tactical discipline in Westminster and at home enter into an informal alliance with the remnants of Fenianism and with the Land League. As if a generation had been necessary to make some recovery from the trauma of famine (along with the collapse of Repeal and the death of O'Connell), mobilisation was occurring across rural and urban Ireland, and a larger, formally educated Catholic lower middle class was emerging and thinking about the future. Such mobilisation, where it moved towards reshaping or revolutionising political structures and identities, would force questions on

every sector of society, and on every cultural sub-world. It is impossible to understand what happens to classical music in the Revival period without first taking into account the factors examined in this chapter, factors that left classical music with a thin base and no significant platform from which to project itself into the future that was to be fought over in the coming decades.

## CHAPTER SIX: MUSIC IN THE IRISH REVIVAL

### 6a. Introduction

In this chapter, developments in classical music will be interpreted but the task of reaching a calm assessment of the Irish context will be furthered by the introduction of a strong comparative element. With an initial focus on Yeats and Stanford, less as personalities than as figures that crystallise cultural patterns, literary activity and achievement will be compared with the far lower level of activity in classical music. This will lead to a consideration of the English musical renaissance and how issues of organisation and leadership cast light on the Irish musical world. Though classical music culture in Ireland was a satellite of the British variety, the latter does not in any way present a European norm. In addition, comparison between Ireland and its western European neighbours, many of them major European powers, needs to be tempered by awareness of the political, socio-economic and cultural factors that make comparison with eastern or south-eastern Europe a more useful avenue of exploration. It is in some of these countries that national composers of international stature emerged in a way that did not occur in Ireland. The variety of ways in which the relationship between classical music and national feeling or full-scale nationalism was posed in many such countries may lead to a calmer historical appraisal of the issue as it is posed in the Irish context.

### 6b. Yeats, leadership and the Revival

One approach to the divergent histories of literature and classical music in the Revival period lies in the career trajectories of Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924), the most important Irish-born composer of his day, and William Butler Yeats (1865-1939), the leading Irish-born literary figure of his day – though his mid- to late career would coincide with the full span of James Joyce's. Both Stanford and Yeats were born into established middle-class Protestant families; both showed great talent at a young age; both were leaders. However, merely to set the name of Charles Villiers Stanford alongside that of William Butler Yeats is to draw attention to an imbalance in Irish cultural history: the Irish Literary Revival is part of the general history of modern literature in the English language, while there is simply no corresponding phenomenon in the history of classical music. In Ireland, Yeats's name appears in general as well as in literary histories, while Stanford goes almost unmentioned and is known only to specialists. Yeats could be seen as literary god-father to the steady stream of Irish writers who have distinguished themselves in the novel, drama and poetry

since 1900, while notable Irish composers were, until the 1990s perhaps, few and far between. They have not in any case tended to situate themselves as descendants of, or rebels against, Stanford or any other predecessor. In Chapter One, we saw how reflection on the failure of Ireland, a country much associated with music and song to produce either a nationally coloured upsurge in creative activity or a composer to match Dvořák, Janáček, Grieg, Sibelius, Nielsen or Elgar (not to mention Ives or Bartók) led Joseph Ryan to undertake his thesis and Harry White to produce the *Keeper's Recital*. We saw that, under the apparatus of scholarship, there lurked a sense that this was a cultural crime, a crime against one of Europe's most remarkable cultural forms. We also saw that, though other factors did not go unmentioned, Irish nationalism was treated as the prime suspect. That this analysis was based on an insufficiently tested a priori hypothesis was made clear. The analysis undertaken in earlier chapters of this thesis enable us to approach the Revival period in less partisan and polarising terms. No analysis of course can make the emergence of a given individual genius predictable, even from a set of seemingly conducive circumstances but the examination of individual careers can help us to see the cultural forces at work and the frameworks in which the major figures operated. With the almost simultaneous publications of biographies by Paul Rodmell (2002) and Jeremy Dibble (2002) and the never-ending stream of studies and biographies of Yeats, the day-to-day life of both artists is now well documented.

Like numerous writers, playwrights, painters, musicians and composers before him, and like such near-contemporaries as Oscar Wilde and Shaw, the young Stanford followed the standard Anglo-Irish pattern and moved to England, the land of opportunity. That opportunity might be artistic or financial or both. For Stanford, money was secondary although, as both an accomplished musician/composer and a member of a distinguished family of professionals, he felt entitled to a position of authority and respect in the profession of his choice. By moving to England, he was implicitly confirming Ireland's provincial role in relation to the metropolis.

This is the cultural pattern that Yeats worked to reverse (while simultaneously taking full advantage of his own foothold in London). Sensing that a new Ireland was emerging, he decided to align his own creative energies with the national movement that was attempting to pull Ireland out of its condition of stagnation. Through reviewing, the formation of public opinion through journalism, personal charisma or persuasiveness (his pointing Synge towards rural Ireland rather than Paris, for example) and involvement in theatre (initiatives that would lead to the foundation of the Abbey Theatre), as well as through the inspirational effect of his own poetry and plays, Yeats was central to the process of inculcating a belief among young literary intellectuals that Ireland had the potential to become a centre of creative activity and to forge its own value system. Yeats himself saw Ireland's industrial under-development and heavily rural population base as an

opportunity to take a stand against unspiritual, money-seeking, middle-class, urban values. The peasants would be preserved from crude urban popular culture and would form the foundation for a new national culture – in which, as it happened, people like Yeats himself and his devoted patron and co-labourer in the field Lady Gregory would play a major role. Yeats's life has been analysed at some length by Terence Brown (1999) but his class background and his leadership within the context of the Revival have been pithily analysed by Vivian Mercier, who suggests that 'what marks the break with colonial literature is the suppression of a mediating character' - the character in fiction who explains the colonised people to the mother country (Mercier 1989). Yeats worked to undo English-language Ireland's position as a second-hand provincial or provincial/colonial British culture. That he actually spent a lot of time in England and benefited from his position in the London literary world, or that the finances of the Abbey Theatre made touring Britain or the United States a necessity, does not diminish the point. Nor does the fact that Yeats's dream was a political fantasy: it was most unlikely that either the Catholic middle class, who wanted a solid future for themselves and their children in the emerging political dispensation, or the peasantry – now becoming small farmers as they got a grip on their homesteads – were going to cleave to spiritual values under the benign leadership of even the finer elements of the old ruling class. Of course, a section of the Catholic literary intelligentsia also dreamed of creating an Irish culture out of a positive revaluation of the conditions created by Ireland's socio-economic and its marginalised and subservient position within the British state. Ultimately, by making a creative and self-energising leap from a British to an Irish framework, and by his extraordinary ability both to energise others and to reshape his own art in the face of personal disaster, political change and advancing age, Yeats set himself at the centre of the culture of his day and of modern Irish literature, a position from which he has never been ejected.

### **6c. Stanford: The Irish context**

Charles Villiers Stanford was born into a middle-class Dublin Protestant family in 1852. He showed an early aptitude for music and was already having compositions performed as a teenager. Prominent musicians regularly visited the family home and Robert Prescott Stewart was his organ teacher. Stanford grew up in the period of musical torpidity described in Chapter Five, a fact that must have coloured the way in which he would choose to deploy his talents. His father, himself a fine amateur musician, reflected the culture of the day in insisting that the young Stanford should not specialise in music at university level. Stanford went to Cambridge where, in addition to organ-playing, he involved himself in multiple musical activities and quickly drew the attention of his

elders. Once qualified, he made the standard musical pilgrimage to Germany, studying there for a period before returning to England. There Stanford built up a career as a university teacher, as a conductor and as a composer of everything from comic opera to chamber and church music. Fuelled by self-belief and sharp intelligence, he became, along with Hubert Parry, one of the pillars of what is known as the English musical renaissance. He taught many of the leading figures of the next generation, often retaining their affection and gratitude, despite a manner that could be extremely blunt (Norris 1980, pp. 544-52).

Unlike Yeats, Stanford was not much given to autobiographical musings or to self-revelation where his feelings as an adult were concerned, but in his *Pages from an Unwritten Diary* (1914) he was happy to dwell on the Dublin in which he grew up. The opening page echoes the analysis of Dublin presented in earlier chapters, with the middle-class elite retreating from the city centre (barring outposts such as Merrion Square, Trinity College and the Cathedrals):

Dublin, as I woke to it, was a city of glaring contrasts. Grandeur and squalour lived next door to each other, squalour sometimes under the roof of grandeur. Society, “The Quality” as the Irishman calls it, had deserted its centre and made its home in the outskirts [...] (Stanford 1914, p. 1).

Stanford is also forthright on sectarian division in Dublin:

The division line between the two religions was indelibly marked; great exceptions only accentuating the rule. But in spite of an antagonism which was only too naturally intensified by close contact, I was seldom if ever conscious of personal intolerance (ibid., p. 3).

Stanford proceeds to describe the divisions within Protestantism. The need to establish distance from Catholicism and its delight in ritual display led many to proclaim strongly Low Church principles and to protest at anything that smacked of pleasure in music, such as bringing choir and organ together – though Stanford suggests that some who protested in their local church 'inwardly preferred a Cathedral service' and even attended St Patrick's for that purpose. (The musical ethos of the Irish Protestant churches has gone unexamined by Ryan and White.) Stanford also suggests that the Oxford movement (a High-Church intellectual movement in Anglicanism that eventually joined the Catholic Church) created further division, even in his own family.

When Stanford specifically addresses music, in the second chapter, a number of points emerge. First, there is no sense of pressure from antiquarianism or native musical traditions. Stanford (as elsewhere) refers to Ireland's 'unequaled wealth of Folk-song and Dance' (p. 17). He writes warmly of the musicality and learning of Petrie and Bunting, and is sharply critical of Moore's lack of

respect for the original melodies he adapted for the Melodies (p. 18). Stanford himself produced an edition of the Melodies in which, according to his lights, he created more authentic versions and corrected his (or Stevenson's) 'wrong and wholly un-Irish scales' (p. 20). Second, Stanford underlines the absence of chamber and orchestral music in Dublin as a factor in causing so many musicians (composers included) to go overseas (p. 21). Stanford is dismissive of the compositional talents of Stewart's predecessor in Trinity (he 'perpetrated an oratorio' (p. 22)) but, despite fondness for the man and his talents, a clear-eyed evaluation of Stewart's own musical life in Dublin must have played a part in Stanford's decision to base himself in England:

It was hard, even for one gifted with so brilliant a brain, to live in a circle of half-baked musicians without being affected by their standards and still harder to occupy a position in which he had no rival to excel or learn from. He left his mark, however, on the 'melancholy island', which was responsible both for his witty and versatile gifts and for the lack of opportunity to give value and effect to them (*ibid.*, pp. 50-51).

Stanford could not face compromising his high standards in the stagnant musical culture of Dublin. (It must again be pointed out that Ryan and White do not test their own theories against the detailed testimony of a key figure in classical music, both for Ireland and for Britain.) Given that he was writing in the years when, from his point of view, the threat of Home Rule hung over Ireland, Stanford never falls into a simplistic, politically driven denunciation of the Irish music world.

He does, however, convey his political feelings in a way that again points to the need for a broad British/Irish perspective when dealing with middle-class culture in nineteenth-century Ireland. For Stanford, Dublin's glory (the kind embodied in his own family, one might say) was already fading when he left in 1870. He hesitates between two explanations – 'increased facilities for travelling' and 'tinkering legislation'. Given the date, this may well be a reference to Disestablishment (a sacrifice imposed on Irish Protestantism by the state in order to defuse Catholic/nationalist unrest), but Stanford provides a partisan but relatively subtle analysis through the opinions of his eldest aunt, Kate Henn – 'a person of the broadest views and sympathies, and one of the first pioneers of the higher education of women in Ireland' (p. 99). In her view, four factors were at play. First, Maynooth-educated parish priests with no foreign experience were imposing their narrow views on Irish country people. Disestablishment had a similar narrowing effect on the Protestant parson. Land legislation 'expatriated the landlord'. Together these deprived rural Ireland of 'vivifying or elevating influence.' The fourth factor, surprisingly perhaps, was Dublin Castle – in other words, the failure to introduce full union in 1801 and the maintaining of an institution that turned 'the representation of Royalty' into 'a mere mouthpiece of Party' (aggravated by the appointment of

people with no knowledge of or sympathy for Ireland). Stanford calls his aunt's views the 'the acme of common sense' and, in words that imply a connection between broad social structure and culture, concludes: 'and I could see the results of the policy she disapproved acting slowly on every interest, practical and artistic, in Dublin' (p. 99). Stanford endorses the opinions expressed in a letter from his friend the German violinist Joachim to his wife: that 'England has much on her conscience'; that Fenianism was an ideology imported from America and would not take root; and that the Irish people admired pomp and would respond positively to an aristocracy that showed 'consideration and love for the people' (pp. 100-101). The benevolent almost colonial condescension expressed here also emerges in a comment by Stanford on the Fenians:

The Fenian rising at this time caused a certain amount of mild excitement in Dublin circles. We knew the race too well to expect anything so serious as barricades, and the native love of a scrimmage with the "Polis" was the most we had to dread (p. 93).

Effectively, Stanford shared the attitudes that emerged in our examination of cultural leaders in the 1868 report. These attitudes were normal in the context of the time but they are relevant to any study of the limited diffusion and cultural resonance of classical music in Ireland.

#### **6d. Stanford: Class and leadership in England**

Stanford's thinking emerged in even stronger light in his contribution to a series of six lectures organised by the London School Board in 1889-90. Before presenting his positive recommendations for the proper organisation of music teaching for the masses he issued a warning:

My proposition is this; that the first effect of education upon the uneducated masses is the development of socialistic and even of revolutionary ideas amongst them (Stanford 1908, p. 30).

While recognising that Bismarckian methods were rather too stern to be imitated in England, Stanford was understanding towards the German Chancellor's course of action: 'he passed laws for the repression of socialism almost simultaneously with his laws for general compulsory education' (p. 31). Stanford recommended a gentler approach for England: evil was to be avoided 'by increasing the influence of the good' (p. 31). Exposure to art was one of the finest methods of increasing the public good, and as the most wide-reaching art, music was also the most powerfully benevolent forces available in countering ideological evil (pp. 31-32).

The evidence suggests therefore that, though Stanford's move to England was primarily motivated by his desire for full development of his talents, the composer would have been ill-suited to carrying out a program of popular evangelism for classical music in Ireland, where a less constrained enthusiasm, at the very least, would have been needed to reach the rural masses untouched by classical music. Moreover, as we have already seen in Chapter Five, there was no context of constructive leadership in which he might have operated. How, then, did Stanford become one of the main pillars of the English musical renaissance and what does this tell us about the state of classical music in Ireland? (The present analysis is not an argument for the inherent value of a conversion to classical music but an assessment of the task and the conditions necessary to effecting it within the conditions of the day – an assessment that Ryan and White have nowhere provided.) In England, as we saw in Chapter Five, several major cities were positively encouraging the diffusion of classical music through infrastructural and organisational developments. In addition, awareness had grown, first, of the gap between the state of classical music and that of other arts such as literature and painting, and, second, of the low state of classical music in England compared with other western European powers. This awareness had already driven attempts to raise standards of performance, to raise awareness of the riches of orchestral and chamber music, and to form a cadre of trained musicians.

Much of what is now standard analysis of the state of classical music in England was already clear at the time. Cox's *Recollections* were quoted in Chapters Three and Five in support of the idea that standards rose in England as the century went on. *English Music in the XIXth Century*, a survey of the field by the critic and writer J. A. Fuller Maitland, was published in 1902. In two sections, it treats of musical life before (1801-1850) and during (1851-1900) the renaissance. (Most modern writers would see the renaissance as beginning twenty years later, when Stanford and his fellows entered the world of music.) From the conclusion to the second chapter ('The Palmy Days of the Opera'), we can draw this point: that the continuing popularity of imported foreign-language opera created 'the severance of the operatic stage from anything that could make for the interests of English art in any form'(Fuller Maitland 1902, p. 55). Even if some of Balfe's English-language works were a step towards reversing this trend (and being based in England, he had little specific effect on Irish composition), the severance identified by Fuller Maitland was equally marked in Ireland, if not more so. The third chapter, 'Foreign Dominations', showed how a country that had prized its own great composers at one time (from the great Elizabethan composers to the death of Purcell) had got into the habit of 'esteeming all foreigners superior to ourselves in music' (p. 56), disrespected its own musical talent, and turned to 'slavish imitation' of foreign composers – as in the generations-long obsession with Handel, which gradually ceded ground to Mendelssohn (pp. 56-

71). In the next chapter, Maitland worried that the increase in general musical activity might lead musicians to move away from the choral tradition, one of the few domains that in which England boasted a continuous tradition; at the same time, the juxtaposition of older and contemporary styles was leading to artistic incoherence in church music (pp. 100-1). Maitland goes on to show the gradual growth in respect for the musical profession, the raising of performance standards and the growth of scholarship ('The Transition', pp. 123-39). This is followed by institutional growth – everything from the musical aspect of the Great Exhibition of 1851 and provincial choral festivals to the building of halls and the founding or proper organisation of music schools and academies (pp. 140-164).

What this means is that when a dynamic figure like Stanford entered the world of music, the leadership required of him was not, as it would have been in Ireland, the complete transformation and expansion of a low-level musical scene, but the education and organisation of the best talents that were emerging from an already energised musical scene. This is clear from Stanford's activities as described in Maitland's chapter on the leaders of the Renaissance. In a first phase, almost on arrival at Cambridge, Stanford transformed the Cambridge University Musical Society into one of the most prominent choirs in Britain. Then major contemporary works were given their first English performances. Connections were made with eminent English and continental composers through the granting of honorary degrees. In addition, by his programming of works by his young contemporaries as well his own, Stanford helped to forge the idea that a strong English school was finally emerging (pp. 191-193). That Stanford's leadership did not require him to move outside elite circles is further evidenced by his later activities as Professor of Composition at the Royal College of Music and Professor of Music at Cambridge. It was these positions that gave him a formative influence on the next generation of composers. Stanford's forthrightness and combativeness, not to mention the usual difficulties and jealousies of academic life, meant that he suffered some frustration and disappointment but he was where he had aspired to be when leaving Dublin: in a position of authority and respectability that brought him into contact only with the present and future musical and social elite.

When thinking about leadership, we must also consider another factor that distinguishes nineteenth-century Ireland from England. The England to which Stanford moved and in which he operated at the highest level of his profession was the heart of a global empire and the nerve centre of international finance and trade. In everything from engineering to poetry and fiction, it could feel a sense of pride and achievement. Its failure to reach a comparable level in the internationally prestigious art of classical music became a source of embarrassment. This was mentioned by Fuller Maitland at the end of his first chapter (p. 35) and the title – 'Foreign Dominations' – of the third

chapter underlines it. Significantly, Fuller Maitland was exercised by the level of specifically German domination of English music and, at the end of the same chapter, seemed eager to suggest that German standards were now declining. The book was published at a time when a united Germany was flexing its muscles and challenging Britain's naval and trading supremacy. There was therefore a broad societal investment in seeing Britain throw off its reputation as the land without music and taking its place among the musical nations of the world.

### **6e. Stanford and the national in a British context**

The need to think about the British dimension has been a recurring motif of this thesis. To see Stanford and his peers only through the lens of Irish nationalism, of the negative pressure exerted by the 'ethnic repertory', and even of colonialism in Ireland (presented less as a force emanating from England than as an identifying characteristic of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy), is to deprive oneself of a vital analytical tool. Thus, the polarisation inherent in the Ryan/White theory is undermined by another aspect of Stanford's educational program and by its adoption across the United Kingdom. In the constructive section of the lecture in which Stanford expressed his fear of universal education, he answered his own question as to the music that should be taught in the schools (under the strict supervision of a panel of experts (p. 39)): 'Without doubt, national music, folk-music – the music which from the earliest times has grown up amongst the people' (p. 40). Using the term folk music in an elastic fashion (he allowed for other music to become folk music over generations, through assimilation), Stanford argued for its importance – not as a tortured response to Irish conditions but as an underlying element in many national musical cultures. In Germany and Italy, 'with their vast treasures of folk-music, and their grand list of masters of composition,' he suggested, 'the nationality has become so rooted and individualized that national music has had sure ground to grow upon' (p. 41). In other words, the interaction between folk music and the national consciousness of the composer (not necessarily state-based: the term Germanic or Austro-German could just as well apply in this context, for example) was relaxed and spontaneous in its workings. Stanford did not allude to any specific challenges in the Irish context. This is the case too with other lectures of his and indeed with much of his life as a musician, teacher and administrator.

Stanford's ideas were put into practice in *The National Song Book* – as its subtitle states, 'a complete collection of the folk-songs, carols, and rounds, suggested by the Board of Education (1905)'. This gathered English, Scottish, Irish and Welsh songs (edited and arranged by Stanford) and was widely used in schools across the United Kingdom. The presence in it of Thomas Moore is

noteworthy. Of the Irish material, 28 of the songs are arrangements of poems by Moore; most of the others are by A.P. Graves; and one is adapted from Davis. As late as 1908, therefore, Stanford's musical unionism was entirely compatible with respect for Moore as poet and did not entirely exclude Davis. In fact, the deeply 'unionist' 'Fourth Rhapsody' takes its subtitle from Moore's 'Fisherman of Lough Neagh and What He Saw'), further undermining the role foisted on Moore in the Ryan/White thesis. It would have been possible for Stanford to choose texts by Moore for the *Song Book* that did not lend themselves to a nationalist reading. Instead, Stanford's second selection is 'Oh! Breathe not his Name', his third 'Remember the Glories of Brien the Brave' and his fifth 'The Minstrel Boy'. Could this be a concession to specifically Irish political realities or pressures? It would seem not. Among the Scottish songs are some praising William Wallace ('Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled [...] (p. 87)) and Prince Charlie ('Wha wadna fecht for Charlie? Wha wadna draw the sword? (p. 91)). The Welsh songs include 'Men of Harlech' ('Shall the Saxon army shake you,/Smite, pursue and overtake you? Men of Harlech, God shall make you/Victors, blow for blow!) and 'Forth to the Battle'. Within certain limits, United Kingdom or British identity was reconcilable with invocation of the military traditions or myths of the component sub-nations. Whether our aim is to understand Stanford or broader patterns within musical life before 1920, it is clear that a solely Irish framework of interpretation is likely to lead to misinterpretation.

Treating Stanford as marginalised or permanently wounded or conflicted by his Irishness is a peculiarly insular approach to adopt and one that fails to address the cultural patterns of the day where people of his class, political affinities and cultural background are concerned. George Bernard Shaw's comment about the conflict in the Irish Symphony between 'Stanford the Celt' and 'Stanford the Professor' should not blind us to the breadth of Stanford's compositional range and to the coherence and quality of some of his chamber music (as recognised by Shaw in other less-quoted reviews), of his continuing presence in the Anglican liturgy and of the equally uninterrupted presence of the 'Bluebird' in the choral repertoire. Given that the reputation of his contemporary, rival and co-worker in the cause of music in England Hubert Parry also underwent an eclipse following the rise of Elgar, there is no reason to ascribe Stanford's relative eclipse to his Irishness. As Stanford pursued his career in England, the idea that his fall from glory is a result of Irish political prejudice is equally misplaced. There was in any case no taboo against his work in independent Ireland. His opera *Shamus O'Brien* was included in the musical programme of the Tailteann festival in 1924, for example (O'Neill 1952). There was again no sign of exclusion when he featured in choral concerts at Cork City Hall in April 1945 and 1946. Irish-language work featured prominently in both concerts but the 1946 concert also featured Parry and Warlock (Cork School of Music 1945; CSM 1946). Even as thought-provoking and deeply sympathetic a treatment

of Stanford as Liam MacCóil's *An Chláirseach agus an Choróin* [the harp and the crown] (2010) does not escape from the polarised framework encapsulated in its title.

#### 6f. Classical music among the Revivalists

Our examination of Stanford has cast light on how, for most of his career, Ireland for him continued to be a subsidiary part of a two-island British cultural and political sphere. What of classical music in Ireland in this period – and particularly among the Revivalists? According to the Ryan/White theory, the intensification of national feeling and activity aimed at creating an autonomous Irish cultural sphere should result in increasing hostility to classical music.

We may speak of the foundation of the Academy as a significant moment in music history but it was not accompanied by, or part of, any broad-reaching project of musical evangelism and does not appear to have produced any significant contribution to intellectual history. Nor did the music-loving Irish middle classes activate themselves to provide a national infrastructure for music. The class identity of the RIAM was such that it had no interest in catering to the thousand or so members of amateur bands in the Dublin area. In his *A Musical Journey 1890-1993: From Municipal School of Music to Dublin Institute of Technology*, Jim Cooke quotes the spokesman for a deputation to the Corporation in 1888:

Academy of Music has all through studiously ignored this class. What the council has done is this: they have kept up a wind instrument class... for such pupils as could attend from 10a.m. to twelve noon – hours during which no working man could attend (Cooke 1994, p. 5).

When pressure grew to cater for such players (following the thinking already evident in the 1868 report examined in Chapter Five), the Academy proved willing to play a supervisory role in the running of a separate institution. Though poorly funded and housed, the Municipal School of Music provided a much-needed educational service for the city. Nonetheless, the class demarcation and absence of inclusive thinking on the part of the musical elite is patent.

It is possible, therefore, to see the relative liveliness of debate on music of various kinds in the post-1890 period as progress on the preceding decades. There is a sense in which, musically and otherwise, the period can be seen as reactivating the Davisite project. Arthur Griffith's friend and fellow-journalist William Rooney thought along these lines. Before his death at a young age, he was building on Davis's example in the field of culture. A few sentences in Rooney's essay on Anglo-

Irish literature are pertinent to the discussion earlier in this chapter of national movements in the emerging nations of Europe:

With the idea that the truest and best Irish literature must seek expression in the Irish language there will be found but few to differ; on the sentiment that anything else is unnecessary and un-National there will not be quite the same unanimity. Whether Finland, or Poland, or Bohemia, or any other country, has or has not a National literature, except in its own language, is not the question, when the relative difference between these countries and Ireland is considered (1909, p. 212).

Like Griffith himself, Rooney was quite aware of the European context. In music as in literature, he was eager to identify achievements that could sustain a new national art. In his essay on 'Our Songs and Songsters', he was Davisite in his fondness for long lists, but he was also quite generous in his range of reference. He mentioned composers such as Thomas Cooke and Lord Mornington (p. 192); praised Moore ('the king of Irish lyrists, modern criticism to the contrary notwithstanding') (p. 194) and Balfe (mentioning his almost limitless tide of melody' (p. 197); expressed no reservations about Stanford ('the excellence of whose work is beyond question' (p. 200)); suggested that John Werner Glover's work should be given due recognition by the Irish public; and made passing reference to Verdi and Gounod.

This musical pluralism was also a feature of the second edition (1908) of the *Irish Year Book/Leabhar na hEireann*, supervised and introduced by Arthur Griffith, the founder of Sinn Féin. It contained an article on Irish music by Richard Henebry (a characteristic mix of learning, enthusiasm and strong opinion by a figure whose irascibility and unorthodox opinions estranged him from his fellow-scholars in many domains, as his friend W.F.P Stockley recounts (1933)), a list of Irish musical instruments by W. H. Grattan Flood and an essay on 'The Modern Aspect of Irish Music' by the composer Robert O'Dwyer. If Henebry was dismissive of the idea of a "National School" of composers (he ascribed it to 'persons of decadent instincts and defective education'), this was precisely the kind of issue discussed at greater length by O'Dwyer – and with a judicious appreciation both of the efforts and of the failings of the Feis Ceoil and the Oireachtas where choral composition was concerned, for example. O'Dwyer concluded by hoping for less talk about music by the unknowledgeable and concluded with an exhortation:

[...] in a word, an organised and determined effort must be made to lift music out of the hands of disputants and mathematicians, and make it a part of twentieth century life (p. 248).

We also know that Griffith attended classical music concerts. (Van Hoek 1943). O'Dwyer's comment on talk was a response to the endless debate around issues of authenticity and originality that characterised the activities of the Oireachtas and the Feis Ceoil. The brief and unsatisfactory relationship between the Feis Ceoil and Stanford can be read as emblematic of the divide between Irish Ireland's wish to promote the local and Stanford's wish for music of an international standard. This simplifies a complex moment. It should be noted that the Feis committee invited Stanford to preside over the inaugural event (in itself a signal of relative open-mindedness), that the very fact of commissioning new works was in stark contrast to the general failure of musical society in Ireland to encourage composition, that Stanford's take-it-or-leave-it presentation of his ambitious plan was almost bound to be read as condescending, that the idea of giving the Irish public a lesson in high standards by importing the Hallé orchestra for the keynote concerts could have been managed more sensitively and was in any case (as White and others acknowledge) going to be very expensive. It is arguable that an admirable eagerness to transform the Irish scene at one go led to unnecessary drama, whereas a more patient approach might have been more productive.

This episode by no means marked the conclusion of debate on classical music and its relationship with the national movement or with traditional music. This remained a live question in *An Claidheamh Soluis*, with discussion of related issues appearing regularly in the *Journal of the Ivernian Society*, for example, for many years. These matters have been outlined or discussed by Ó Súilleabháin in *Scéal an Oireachtais*, by Marie MacCarthy in her *Passing it on* (1999), by Mary Stakelum in her essay on 'Music education and the Celtic Revival' (2004) and by Martin Dowling in his *Traditional Music and Irish Society* (2014) and elsewhere. Whatever the variations in tone and in interpretation to be found among these commentators, close examination does not support the notion that the period witnessed continuing polarisation between Ascendancy-connected classical music and insular nationalism. Opinionated or naive statements can be seized on but it is clear that, partly at least owing to the nature of the educational system and the poverty of earlier debate, everyone from proponents of what is now called *sean nós* to relatively modernist composers felt that the world had not been listening to them. What is incontrovertible is that discussion of music was now becoming normal in the newly energised domain of cultural debate. Had there been a serious intellectual culture onto which the new issues of the Revival period might have been grafted, the general level of debate might have been more sophisticated. Melodramatic over-interpretation of particular statements or episodes can be avoided by setting them within longer-term perspectives.

As it was, in organising music festivals and competitions, decisions had to be reached quickly on matters of great theoretical consequence: whether choral singing and harmonising were legitimate

in Irish music, whether urban amateurs of Irish-language song should imitate Connemara farmers or sing from within their own urban class identity, and whether the concern of the Gaelic movement should be with preserving the remains of rural tradition or advancing towards new forms of art. In 1906, one young critic wrote as follows:

Thus it comes that the only arts which have survived to us from Ireland's past are peasant arts; just as the only Irish speech which is living today is a peasant speech. And those who would build a great national art – an art capable of expressing the soul of the whole nation peasant and non-peasant – must do even as we propose to do with regard to the language: they must take what the peasants have to give and develop it (Ó Súilleabháin 1984, p. 109)

While expressing the hope that traditional song and story-telling would live on in the countryside, Patrick Pearse went on to hope that 'an art culture distinctively Irish will grow up in the land' and suggested that artists (he referred specifically to singers and reciters but the point can clearly be generalised) 'impregnated with an Irish spirit [...] need not be afraid of modern culture.' Pearse's poetry in both languages was in a modern idiom; and his sometimes fervent invocation of the past was part of a project to create a new Ireland, of which classical music in an Irish idiom would be a part. His expectation that a modern, middle-class, urban art would come into being is consistent with Davis's thinking.

The slide of the great powers of Europe towards what became the Great War, the arming of the Ulster Volunteers and of the Irish Volunteers and Irish Citizens Army and other factors led to an intensification of debate. Events forced choices on people who had previously been able to contemplate or discuss multiple directions. None of this, however, means that the thinking of the artistic leaders among those who would participate in the 1916 Rising could be seen as enemies of cosmopolitan art. The pressures of the period could lead to what today seem extraordinary juxtapositions. The September-November 1914 issue of *The Irish Review* featured both a Manifesto to the Irish Volunteers and an article on 'Futurist Poetry' (referring, not to Marinetti's movement, but to the trend towards free verse). An advertisement for Saint Enda's College suggests an approach that, while of its time in certain regards, was forward-looking, cosmopolitan and imaginative:

Apart from its Irish standpoint, St. Enda's is distinguished from other secondary schools for boys by the appeal which its courses make to the imagination of its pupils, by its broad literary programme, its objection to cramming, its *viva voce* teaching of modern language, and its homelike domestic arrangements which are in charge of ladies (advertisement: no page number).

Other strains of avantgarde thinking, more sceptical towards nationalism and more systematically secular, could be found in the journal *Dana*, where Frederick Ryan and John Eglinton were leading voices.

There are other ways in which a polarised nationalist/cosmopolitan framing of the period is inadequate where classical music is concerned. Matters of class and generation must be included. At a very simple level, the increasing numbers receiving secondary-level education and the wish of convent schools in particular to produce refined young Catholic ladies meant that access to classical music was extending to classes previously untouched by it. The opening pages of Mary Colum's autobiography, *Life and the Dream* (1947), portrays an intelligent but socially awkward country girl arriving at boarding school and almost immediately discovering a love both of literature and of classical music: 'One felt a little as if one had died and passed into a new world [...]' (p. 1). On her first day, she found herself listening from the doorway of the recreation hall to the music played by a nun who did not realise she had an audience. The inspirational revelation lives on, though the mode of teaching piano in the convent was almost calculated to create a hatred for the music (p. 19). In Colum's case, awareness of classical music did not lead to a rejection of the music of the countryside in which she grew up but to a newly conscious appreciation of it (pp. 57-59). Not all were so open to artistic experience in all its variety or so free of class snobbery, but this is a widening stream within Catholic middle-class culture.

Like Thomas Davis before him, Douglas Hyde, the founder of the Gaelic League, has been presented as anti-art, anti-cosmopolitan, narrowly nationalist and motivated by hatred of all things English. In his polemic on 'The Necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland ' (Hyde 1892; O Conaire 1986), Hyde was saying that it was illogical to engage in loud political denunciation of England while imitating the worst of English fashions, reading habits and musical tastes. Increased self-respect would create the conditions for a mature or equal relationship with England. Hyde was widely travelled, spoke several languages, was married to an Englishwoman and happily collaborated with Michele Esposito, the Italian teacher/composer who was at the centre of musical life in Dublin for decades. One could legitimately identify in Hyde an element of the country gentleman who values peasant tradition but looks down on emergent urban popular culture. It was not classical music that he feared but the further erosion of native traditions by the spread of urban popular culture, English and otherwise: 'the German band and the barrel organ', and 'now English music-hall ballads and Scotch songs' (O Conaire 1986, p. 167). On such matters of taste, he and Stanford stood on common ground.

In 1906-07, a London-based Irish clergyman, a frequent musical collaborator of Percy French's, embarked on a musical tour of Ireland. The diary of this tour, *Dr Collisson in and on Ireland* (1909), amplified by short essays on religion, music, Home Rule and the Gaelic League, is revealing in ways intended and unintended by its author, W. A. Houston Collisson. As he concentrated on small venues and towns, his observations cast an interesting light on audience behaviour and tastes. His musical taste was Edwardian and of his class. To his surprise, having never encountered overt opposition before, he was challenged and criticised several times for the content of his show. The issue was not his taste in classical music, or his amusing pastiches of various composers' styles, but the class condescension implicit (or perceived to be so) in 'Wait for a while now Mary' and other songs on which Collisson had collaborated with Percy French (pp. 16-17). Though, on the whole, gentry, the clergy of various denominations and more popular audiences reacted positively, Collisson was attacked in advance for his 'mawkish and maudlin exhibition' by a priest involved in the Gaelic League in Dungarvan (p. 15). When he scheduled a concert in the Military Barracks in Fermoy, '[t]he town wouldn't come; the county didn't' and the military had a previous engagement (p. 21). He was appalled by anti-Catholic bigotry in Bandon and completely overcame initial nationalist distrust in Kinsale (pp. 26-29). In Birr, Percy French songs gave rise to hissing from a small section of the audience, followed by a walk-out at a later stage. As a self-proclaimed Home Ruler, Houston was baffled. He had every sympathy with the movement 'for the revival of Irish Art, Music and Literature [...]' (p. 36) and could not understand how the songs he favoured could be assimilated to the notion of the Stage Irishman. This he considered 'an awful creation'. He also objected to the 'vulgar inanities' presented as Irish in music halls (p. 37). Collisson was shocked but also curiously impressed by the 'vigour and vehemence' (p. 39) of a long review article that appeared in the local newspaper.

The writer denounced the 'vulgar insipidity' of the performance, the attitudes and clothing of the fashionable 'smart set' that made up most of the audience, and the 'inane' Music Hall wording of the songs. The entertainment had, however, pleased the 'Castle satellites and shoneens' of Birr – very much the language of D.P. Moran. Moran's *Leader*, however, was one of the few outlets at the time where vigorous criticism of the artistic taste of the contemporary Catholic Church was welcome, some of Robert Elliott's articles being published subsequently in book form (1974). Once again, however, the episode does not lend itself to an Anglo-Irish/nativist, classical/traditional polarity. The author found Collisson's 'Irish Suite in E Minor' acceptable but it 'did not in its execution show the great musical talent which we expected.' It was not the presence of classical music that offended him – in fact he displayed awareness of classical technique – but the cultural attitudes embodied in the performance.

The author was also unhappy that a clergyman should serve up so many 'slipshod songs of love in public'. The need to prove that Irish people were disciplined and respectable enough to rule their own country meant that individual activists felt that they should embody the desired moral qualities – and propagate them. In a key passage, the writer described the giggles and smirks of the 'garrison' audience and the increasing hostility of 'the Irishmen' when Collisson launched into 'Donegan's Daughter':

The day is gone when we pay our money to go and hear our Nationality insulted, and our method of speaking the tongue of the alien ridiculed (p. 41).

Tenant rights, ownership of land, local democracy (the local government reforms of 1898), a demand for Home Rule that had to be listened to: these had been won but underlying a range of organisations and activities was the assertion of self-respect and a refusal of condescension:

We are a nation now, not of crawling, hat-raising sycophants, but men and women who are reviving our industries and our Mother Tongue (p. 41).

This might be expressed crudely but for this generation of young activists condescension was not confined to the old ruling class but could also be found among Home Rulers.

## **6g. Ireland: Comparative perspectives**

For reasons that have been analysed and reiterated throughout this thesis, it should now be clear why, at the turn of the twentieth century, classical music culture in Ireland was so underdeveloped in relation to London and to other urban centres in Britain. It would of course be an error too to imagine that the entire fabric of musical life in England had been transformed. Shaw's skewering of routine or appalling musical events is only one indication that this was not the case (Shaw 1981). In the terms of the day, Dublin was on a par with musically dozing provincial British urban centres.

That a large portion of Ireland would soon form a separate political entity does not change the fact that for most of those active in the classical music world in Ireland, the country (a) was and should remain part of an integrated United Kingdom or (b) was insecurely a part of the United Kingdom, attachment to which was in its best interests, or (c) was on its way to becoming a semi-autonomous region of the United Kingdom and needed perhaps to demonstrate its worthiness for that role. Where performance of music or attendance at music events was concerned, these sub-groupings were not socially incompatible. The public aspects of middle-class life in Ireland necessarily involved polite coexistence with those of different views. Some unionists might have wished

Ireland to have the artistic amenities afforded Londoners or inhabitants of the major cities and some Home Rulers might have wished, for different reasons, to see an active intellectual and cultural life in Dublin, but neither position demanded anything more than cultural gradualism. In other words, mainstream middle-class unionists and nationalists might have had common ground in wishing for greater musical activity but neither demanded a cultural revolution.

It was in roughly the same period that composers with a strong national attachment came to the fore across Europe, from the Nordic countries to central and eastern Europe. According to the Ryan/White theory, nationalist mobilisation in Ireland reinforced the existing alienation of classical music from the centre of Irish culture. The notion that the weak position of classical music in Ireland can be ascribed to its rejection by nationalism has been seriously undermined in earlier chapters of this thesis. We have also seen how comparative analysis at a societal level enables us to better understand the relatively weak state of classical music in nineteenth-century Ireland relative to Britain. Given that nationalism did not prove inimical to classical music in many nations that emerged from the weakening of the Hapsburg and Ottoman empires and given the danger of locking ourselves into an Anglo-centric perspective, further insight into the condition of classical music in Ireland may be gleaned by setting Ireland in a broader European perspective. Chapters Three and Five showed that the historical development of a socially-based cultural practice like classical music could not be analysed without fully registering its place within the broader context of Irish society and without paying close attention to the way in which classical music was practised and propagated by the middle classes. Without such a grounding, comparative excursions may prove of little value.

It is almost pointless to compare Ireland with a country like France, its musical culture evolving – regardless of war and revolution – in the context of centuries of sovereignty, more or less stable boundaries and middle-class confidence. Beyond registering stark difference, comparison with an imperial centre like Austria will likewise be of limited use. To look at the area that was to become modern Germany is to realise that the existence of a politically incoherent constellation of courts and princedoms may have encouraged the growth of multiple musical centres, with an infrastructural and professional competitiveness working towards a musical flowering. In that regard, comparison with Ireland is again likely to lead to little more than the registering of difference.

As the historiography of classical music in Ireland has suffered from a failure to engage in depth with the work of social and cultural historians, excursions into comparative analysis are almost unavoidably going to suffer in like fashion. Comparative analysis is not in any case a deeply rooted

practice and is perhaps best interpreted as driven by the – in itself very welcome – increasing participation of Irish musicologists in international conferences. It risks being little more than a recasting in a foreign accent of the idea that Irish nationalism was especially resistant to cosmopolitan culture, or was especially literary or propagandistic in approach.

#### **6h. Eastward journeys?**

Can engagement with the outer reaches of the Habsburg Empire or with South-Eastern Europe be fruitful? The reality of life for much of the populace (and the mode of governance and economic order under which they lived) points in this direction. Joseph Cowen, the Newcastle maverick who showed sustained interest in both areas, proposed the parallel in 1881: '[i]f Europe has her Eastern, England has her Irish question' Joseph Cowen (1909, p. 105). More recently, Norman Davies has made a similar point:

[m]any historians have identified a 'western core' and a backward periphery in the east. This is extremely misleading. I have no doubt that the industrial core of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Europe was located in a section of north-western Europe. But what is quite false is to suggest that the whole of the west was advanced while the whole of the east was backward. One has only to look, for example, at the most advanced state of the nineteenth century, the United Kingdom, to see that Ireland was every bit as backward as parts of Eastern Europe. It is a simple fact that the most rapid industrial advancement and the most catastrophic famine of the age both occurred in the United Kingdom. By the same token, certain parts of Eastern Europe, the industrial oases of Silesia, Łódź or the Donbass, saw impressive development (Davies 2007, p. 16).

Such a perspective helps to remove us from the well-worn grooves of political and cultural debate. The second chapter of Gale Stokes's *Three Eras of Political Change in Eastern Europe* (1996) is titled 'Dependency and the Rise of Nationalism in Southeast Europe'. He opens by proposing an approach that draws on three schools of thought: first, parallel interpretation (looking for similarities at the level of individual countries between the nationalism that developed in the Ottoman territories and the nationalism that developed in Western Europe); second, diffusion theory (tracing how the ideas of the German Romantic Enlightenment spread into Eastern Europe); and third, structural explanations (seeing nationalism as 'only one aspect of large social and economic changes that occurred over long periods of time and in several places') (1996, p. 23). The approach of this thesis can be aligned more fully with the third of Stokes's schools of thought. When he writes

of the late development of the nation state, of the region's dependency towards empire, of the increasing desire among the people to emulate the achievements of the established powers of Europe, the parallels with Ireland are striking (p. 35). There is of course no point-for-point correspondence between Ireland and Southeast Europe. However, Stokes' analysis may help us to step back from concern with a particular art-form and to view, in a colder, longer-term, structural perspective, Ireland's close association with Britain (and eventual incorporation into the United Kingdom) and its nearness to the great powers of Western Europe.

We are in a better position to understand the Irish musical world, and the careers of individual Irish composers such as Stewart and Stanford are better understood, if we take into account the multiple layering of imperial/colonial, national and provincial identities, of social worlds and aspirations, that can occur on a given territory. Dublin could be a dozing provincial capital for some in the world of music, the capital city of a component nation of the United Kingdom for some, the capital city of a separate nation in formation for others. There is nothing surprising in such dual or multiple realities for anyone familiar with the last two centuries of political and cultural life from the Baltic to Bulgaria. A quarter of a century ago, historians of music might have been asking themselves about the paucity of Yugoslav composers of the first rank. Today, Serbians, Croatians, Slovenians and others will most likely be reading music history from within their separate national frameworks. Indeed, reflection on the paucity of great or at least internationally recognised composers in these countries (not to mention Bulgaria, Moldavia, Slovakia or Latvia) over much of the last two centuries could mitigate that sense of Irish exceptionalism which leads to misreadings of cultural history.

## **6i. The Czech example**

Present-centredness and lack of attention to historical detail may give rise to other misreadings. The Irish/Czech comparison can be deployed in order to underline Ireland's low standing in classical music, as in an essay of Harry White's in the *Progress of Music in Ireland* (2005, pp.68-86). But context is everything. We have seen that Stanford worked in England on an already rooted musical culture; in Ireland he would have needed to work from the ground up. To present Ireland as equivalent to the Hungary and Czechoslovakia that emerged from the break-up of the Hapsburg Empire is tempting but there are significant differences. Prague may indeed have been subordinate to Vienna for many years but it was one of a constellation of urban centres within the Empire that were German-speaking and culturally part of the dominant musical culture of Europe. This meant that there was an existing cultural base to be taken over or redirected by the nationalist movement

of the nineteenth century. Language-centred nationalism led the way for the later flowering of musical nationalism (the Hungarian case will be looked at below). In addition, the Czech lands were quite different socio-economically from Ireland, as emerges from this passage in Ivan Berend's *History Derailed* (2003):

The Czech lands, politically and administratively subordinated provinces of Austria without any kind of cultural or political autonomy, flourished economically and culturally. The Czech provinces achieved by far the highest level of economic advancement in Central and Eastern Europe. Rapid and successful industrialization, social modernization, and the highest literacy rate in the region made the Czech lands more similar to the West than any other part of it. In other words, Bohemia and Moravia profited a great deal from being a hereditary province of the Hapsburg empire and as a consequence enjoyed an equal status with Austria proper (p. 104).

Instead of an impoverished economic dependency like Ireland, we are dealing with a vibrant and expanding economy – and with a correspondingly confident nationalist middle class, which was pragmatic enough to make moderate demands. This is the world that O'Connell dreamed of for Ireland but which he never realised, that was probably not realisable in any case and that was rendered utterly unrealisable by the Famine and the socio-economic world that emerged from it. Something similar might be imagined in an Ireland where Thomas Davis had not died and neither famine nor the failure of 1848 had occurred. The contrast with the less dynamic reality of middle-class cultural life in post-Famine Ireland, as seen in Chapter Five, is clear and must be taken into account when developments in the classical music of the Revival period are being assessed in themselves or in relation to the Czech situation.

## **6j. Hungary and Bartók**

In correspondence with Seóirse Bodley in 1957, the Irish Times music critic Charles Acton wrote, 'We await an Irish Bartok' (Cox 2010, p.25). The absence of an Irish Bartók is a notion that has hovered over debate about classical music in Ireland since then. For our purposes, the Hungarian comparison can be approached as another key to understanding Ireland rather than as an occasion for lamentation. The dynamic in Hungary only partially resembles the Czech case that was examined above, though both countries were part of the Hapsburg Empire. In nineteenth-century Hungary, an unproductive rural gentry managed to represent itself as the voice of patriotism. The peasants on whose labour they lived were left completely outside the political process for most of

the century. As in much of eastern Europe, the weakness of central authority gave encouragement to a language-centred nationalist movement, but while a section of the intelligentsia favoured an inclusive sense of Hungarianness, the Hungarian nationalist movement in general (to its own long-term detriment) failed to deal realistically or respectfully with the large proportion of the population that spoke other languages. In Berend's words again:

The Hungarian liberal nationalists offered a broad range of human and personal liberties, but exhibited a biased assimilationist, state-nationalistic view and denied the existence of any nation in Hungary but the Hungarians (2003, p. 113).

Not surprisingly, the Serbs, Croats, Romanians and Slovaks who lived in Hungary preferred to ally themselves (if only tactically) with the Hapsburgs. The result was a very divided and complex middle class, divided on linguistic and political lines. There was a strong anti-urban cast to Hungarian nationalism, accentuated by the fact that there was (as in Prague) a strong German-language presence in Budapest. Many of Hungary's Jewish population were also to be found there. Budapest was where Jewish intellectuals, musicians and music lovers could feel free to play a significant role in the largely German-language musical world of Budapest. The gentry, on the other hand, followed by much of the middle class, adopted so-called gypsy music as the national music and showed little interest in the lives, welfare or music of the peasantry.

In her *Béla Bartók and Turn-of-the-Century Budapest*, Judit Frigyesi (1998) describes how '[t]he Jewish question, the question of modern art, of social progress, and of urbanization were intertwined' and how there was a 'battle for Budapest' between schools of thought that could be broadly identified as urbanites and villagers (p. 81). It would be wrong to see this as a simple conflict between nationalists and cosmopolitans. Those who moved to Budapest – Bartók included – did not necessarily shed their previous history and upbringing; though within a spectrum of attitudes, avantgarde activity in Budapest was frequently coloured by an intense, though inclusive, form of nationalism.

It was as part of, or with the support of, a small but intensely active cultural scene that Bartók pursued his artistic investigations. Curiously, Bartók's intense interest in the music of the peasantry in all its diversity (and he by no means confined himself to Hungarian-speaking regions) was perceived as an attack on the romantic nationalist gypsy idiom espoused by more conservative and ruralist nationalists. His engagement with folk music does not lend itself to tidy formulation: his compositional style underwent numerous mutations and, however much his own sense of authenticity was bound up with his study of folk music, his approach does not seem to have become a directly usable resource for later composers, though his creative example and international

reputation could be seen as an inspiration to later generations. Though it might seem so in the glow of later national pride, or in the shorthand of musical debate in Ireland, it was not as part of a happy national dialogue between the urban middle class and the peasantry that Bartók emerged as a major composer:

Rarely did a 'national composer' meet with such hostility and unfair criticism as Bartók did from the official cultural establishment in Hungary. But nowhere else in Europe could he find such an enthusiastic, almost fanatically devoted and supportive audience as the one that surrounded him in Budapest (Frigyesi 1998, p. 88).

It would seem that Bartók's emergence was a matter of individual talent and ambition (including the ambition to prove that someone of rural Hungarian background could outdo the existing European avant-garde) having the chance to develop in a hothouse world that was – in a way that marks Bartók out as exceptional in this regard too – only weakly connected with the surrounding rural society. The Hungarian avantgarde composer was part of a cultural ferment but, unlike his Irish musical contemporaries, he was able to draw on the infrastructure and skills of a long-standing classical music culture. The point is reflected even at a personal level: Bartók's mother – the primary influence on his growth as a musician – was a native German-speaker who had to learn Hungarian. Soon enough, virulent, fascistic anti-cosmopolitanism would be directed at the composer and his like (Hooker, L. 2001, pp. 7-23).

### **6k. Further perspectives**

There is never a guarantee that great personal talent will emerge from certain conditions. Had a Joyce not appeared a generation after Yeats, it is unlikely that the absence of such a starkly modernist figure would have been lamented by cultural observers. Likewise, the appearance of a Bartók alongside Kodaly cannot be seen as the inevitable result of the conditions of the day. Joyce, believing that he would not find a hothouse, so to speak, in Dublin to encourage his growth, created his own on continental Europe.

In the perspective offered by Gale Stokes, it is not to parts of the urban constellation of the Hapsburg Empire that most of nineteenth-century Ireland can be compared but to the eastern lands of that empire and of the Balkans – regions that, not coincidentally perhaps, did not play a prominent role in the history of classical music over the last century – though a curious mixture of depopulation and land agitation meant that living standards rose towards the end of the century. There is not space here to map the fascinating variations from country to country, or language to

language, that accompanied the growth of nationalist movements in the region. Some led to the formation of new states; some were resurrections of older powers; and some are now largely forgotten. What cannot be denied – regardless of how one judges the results or the fate of minorities or other issues – is the socio-cultural dynamic involved, a broad societal dynamic that was in itself energising for artists. In an age of intense political debate and of clashing visions of the future – often in the context of economic underdevelopment by the standards of the powers to the west – it was very often the poets and writers who came to the fore – a major theme of Berend's study (2003). The emergence of a national composer was not fore-written.

One part of the typical pattern is described by Joshua A. Fishman:

The growth of nationalism is, to a large extent, marked by the *occupation (or reoccupation)* of the city by hitherto largely rural ethnocultural groups and by their *utilization of the city* as a device for their own ethnocultural unity, authenticity, and modernity (1972, p. 18).

Here again, the Irish case presents particular complexities. As in eastern Europe, antiquarianism, romanticism and literary/linguistic nationalism form part of the picture. As we saw in Chapter Four, however, Davisite Young Ireland, the nearest equivalent to such romanticism, was very dependent on its attachment to O'Connell's political machine and, as an active force in transforming the public sphere, was relatively short lived. It was also an almost totally English-speaking movement. In addition, the equivalent of the reoccupation of the city by the Czech or Hungarian languages was not accomplished in the Revival period, though for a time the Gaelic League was so dynamic that the realisation of its goal might have seemed realisable to many of the young generation. The Irish nationalist intelligentsia was therefore not in the position of creating a middle-class nationalist culture and a standardised language for the mass of the population in a non-imperial language; it was creating a national culture that, after the initial surge of activism of the Gaelic League, was primarily articulated in the language of the coloniser.

It is hardly surprising that, in the books, journals and small magazines of the 1890-1914 period, numerous responses to this situation were articulated and that numerous visions of the future competed for attention. The level of intellectual exchange was remarkable. Aspiring Irish writers could draw sustenance, according to taste and knowledge, from access to a continuous history of achievement in the English literary tradition, from the prominence of Irish-born writers within English-language literature, from the interrupted Young Ireland project of creating a separate Irish literature, from Irish-language literature and song (however broken the tradition) and, not least, from the accumulating body of translation from the Irish, which could, as in the case of Douglas Hyde, be both scholarly and innovative in idiom. In addition, at a basic economic level, writing

could be undertaken by anyone with a pen and paper, and the intense activity and the plethora of outlets was in itself encouraging. We have already seen how and why classical music was not an integrated part of the culture of the ordinary Irish person, particularly in the countryside. The existence of a gap between the culture and music of the rural population and what was taught in the state education system for much of the nineteenth century music is uncontested. The urban population had more casual access to non-traditional music, whether this took the form of military bands, brass bands, opera of various kinds, or more formal concerts, as noted by Fleischmann (1986). In Dublin more than elsewhere, music hall on English lines could be added to the politer forms of parlour song that prevailed in both Britain and Ireland (Watters and Murtagh 1975). It is possible to lament the failure of classical music in Ireland to reach the levels attained by literature and drama but, as demonstrated in earlier chapters and again in the period under consideration here, it is simply misguided to paint Irish nationalism as actively and inherently inimical to classical music. It is realistic to assume that most of those who had been little exposed to classical music as they grew up did not hugely concern themselves with it during this period. With the benefit of our analysis of Irish conditions over the previous century, of a recognition of the essentially British-provincial nature of classical music as practised even in Dublin, and of a recognition of the conditions conducive to fruitful relationships between classical music and nationalism further afield, we are in a position to come to a calmer appreciation of what happened in this period.

A simple nationalist/cosmopolitan polarisation fails to account for a complex history. The absence of initiative or of a project for musical evangelism among the prime carriers of classical music has been a recurring motif in this thesis. The fact that so few people received a technical grounding in classical music – by reason of class and location primarily – is hardly irrelevant. The mismatch between the culture of rural Ireland and the music sponsored by the state during much of the nineteenth century (examined at length by Marie McCarthy (1999)) is undeniable and we have seen that the only major project of the British state to disseminate classical music was directed towards the urban artisan of the industrial cities of Britain. We have seen the historical reasons for the weakness of classical music in the Catholic Church. We have seen that the cultural nationalism of the main ideologue of Young Ireland has been misinterpreted where music is concerned and that the collapse of Young Ireland and of O’Connell’s Repeal movement meant that, instead of – for better or worse – building a culture on the ground, a frustrated national movement had to re-organise and seek again to attain the goal (whether autonomy or something more) repeatedly voiced by the majority of the population. In this regard, it was not nationalist action or prejudice that was inimical to classical music as the fact that the struggle to be heard at state level, or to achieve a less precarious existence, meant that Irish nationalism was not given the opportunity to express itself in

the framework it desired and that, not unnaturally, classical music was not a priority. When a confluence of cultural and political movements gripped the imagination of the young around the turn of the century, and creating an energised, autonomous political and cultural sphere for the envisioned nation-to-be became the modus operandi among intellectuals and cultural activists, there had only been stirrings of change. It was Michele Esposito, a foreign musician, who did more than anybody both in terms of purely musical activity on the ground and to the national project (Dibble 2010). The level of drive towards the creation of an ambitious and critical classical music world in this period of mobilisation could be said to be consistent with its weak and socially restricted presence, with its failure to seek to disseminate itself and capture the interest of a broader population, with its failure to attach itself successfully to any movement for change, and with the failure of other forces (state, church, the challenge of urban transformation) to create the conditions in which it might strengthen. In the absence of such transformation, once the upheavals of 1912-1923, died down, the base for a strong presence in the Irish state that did emerge was narrow.

## CONCLUSION

If there is one thing that writers on classical music in Ireland agree on, it is that infrastructurally, symbolically (in the public life of the Irish state), intellectually (as a respected stream within Irish cultural and academic life) and historiographically, classical music's position has been on the margins. Implicit in this judgement is the idea that Ireland has fallen below the norm set by its neighbours in western Europe. It is entirely to be expected that those whose lives are devoted in some fashion to the music, or who identify deeply with it, should approach the historical condition of classical music in Ireland, until very recent times at least, as a flaw in Irish cultural life. Not surprisingly, this creates the temptation to blame rather than to explain.

As we saw in Chapter One, the writings of Joseph Ryan and Harry White – the voices that, directly or indirectly, most shape current understanding of the field – are suffused with the language of blame. If this were merely a matter of style, the matter would be of minor significance. In this case, however, the language of blame is an indicator of a whole orientation towards the history of classical music in Ireland. Effectively, a polarised and polarising explanatory formula – what is referred to here as the Ryan/White theory – is projected onto the entire field. Though the theory acknowledges the unfortunate early association of classical music with the English colonial enterprise, when it comes to explaining the relative underdevelopment of the music in Ireland the emphasis in practice has always been on the debilitating effect of Irish nationalism.

The attraction of this theory lies in its very tidiness, in its pitting of an admirable but weak art against an overwhelmingly strong ideological force, and in the fact that it can be applied, with minor adjustments, to centuries of history, from the seventeenth century to the present. Distrust of such attractive simplicity, and of the too-easy comfort it could give to a musical community that has often felt itself embattled, spurred much of the thinking in the present thesis. A reading of the historiography, of biographies, autobiographies, journals, reviews and general and cultural histories, began to suggest that, indeed, the untidy shape of Irish music history could not be forced into the confines of the Ryan/White theory. If the ideas of Ryan and White had encouraged exploration of the field, there were many challenges involved in attempting to construct an alternative framing of the history of classical music in Ireland.

One part was relatively straightforward: examination of key figures in the Ryan/White narrative would, to a greater or lesser extent, confirm or undermine the validity of the theory. The need to trace developments over several generations was a given when it came to interpreting an enduring sub-culture. But it was also vital not to be drawn into a simple reversal of the sympathies underlying the Ryan/White theory by presenting nationalist figures in the history as admirable and their

unionist counterparts as blameworthy. The approach adopted in this thesis was in fact an attempt to step back from such readings and to make available a framework of understanding that would allow or encourage dispassionate appraisal.

The analysis in Chapter One of the historiography, and in particular of Ryan and White's contributions, can be seen as an attempt to clear the ground; the more theoretical aspect of the methodological material in Chapter Two is an attempt to step away from the passions of debate and to create a tool by use of which the history might be approached as from a distance, with a view to understanding the particularities of the Irish experience. The historiography of Irish classical music is so thin that numerous approaches lie open. A history of Irish composers has never been undertaken. Neither has a history of composition as such. A detailed social history of classical music in Ireland remains to be written, as does a history of the British/Irish relationship as enacted in the cultural form of classical music. Comparative histories can be imagined: Ireland and the former English colonies, from Australia and India to the United States; Ireland and the national music cultures that emerged from the break-up of the Hapsburg and Ottoman empires; and so on. To repeat the argument of Chapter Two would be superfluous, but what follows is an attempt to lay out its contribution to understanding of the periods examined in the later, more historical chapters of the thesis and, potentially, to future explorations of the field.

One of the great gaps in the Ryan/White theory is its occlusion of the question of class. Instead of presenting classical music as the victim of an unsympathetic ideology, this thesis suggests that we should think about the class who were the prime bearers of classical music culture in Ireland. We are not free to see a particular ideology as the prime shaping factor in this aspect of cultural history if we do not first examine why classical music, particularly in its more abstract or 'emancipated' aspects, was slow to develop in that culture, slow to build an infrastructure, slow to take initiative in disseminating itself more widely, slow to develop a critical literature, and slow to detach itself from a dependent or satellite relationship with the metropolis.

The Habermasian notion of the middle-class public sphere has been used in many ways. It could have been used more conventionally here, in exploring the musical aspect of the growth of an autonomous, more commercialised middle-class culture from the eighteenth century into the nineteenth. This would seem to better suit the English case, where, despite the particularities of English music history (most importantly, the near-disintegration of one of the great European music cultures after Purcell), the growing power and reach of the middle class, and the study of music within that growth, can be traced without great difficulty. With whatever political coloration, it is also possible to trace the inter-relationship between classes over time, and again the musical aspect

of that history. The way in which the professional elite in classical music worked their way into the public life of the state, and into the national pastoral myth, from the late nineteenth century into the twentieth, is a fascinating and perhaps contentious aspect of this story.

Given that the Irish story is one of under-achievement, of a failure to evolve on similar lines, to project itself strongly into national consciousness and debate, and to create an appropriate infrastructure, it was important to find a way of registering the activities and (where these might occur) the initiatives of the prime bearers of the music – while also registering to some degree the political, social, ideological, economic and cultural forces that might have discouraged a transformation in musical life. To this end, it seemed more pertinent to concentrate on the representational or projective aspect of the public sphere. What audience were actors in musical life addressing? How seriously did they practise this culture and did they seek to disseminate it, within their own class (broadly defined) or within society at large? How could the borders of their social and cultural life be defined and did the polity in which they saw themselves as acting influence the nature and intensity of their activities? The explorations of such questions encourage us to see the world as it appears to the actors within it (whatever their national or cultural affinities and stances) before assessing their place within the larger scheme of things. To claim this as an achievement should not be necessary but the critical content of Chapter One suggests that it is.

These are large questions and, as the title of this thesis suggests, the aim is to propose a way of reading, interpreting and further exploring the field. The dominance of the Ryan/White theory, with its claim to have found a definitive key with which to unlock centuries of history, may in itself be a discouragement to historical thinking. The ideas in the present thesis, however, though they attack large questions, are brought into constant dialogue with the untidy detail of events, personalities and forms of expression. What contributions has this thesis made to the field?

One of these lies in its insistence on recognising and analysing historical continuities and patterns. Instead of judging Ireland an anomaly because of its failure to conform to an external norm, it is historically more valid and practicable to analyse how and why, in the field of classical music, Ireland's satellite status in relation to Britain persisted for so long and how it necessarily weakened the nature and level of activity within Ireland. The suggestion that provincialisation must be thought of, not just as an economic and social factor in post-Union Ireland, but as a way of understanding the low level of musical initiative in Protestant Ireland is another. To this may be joined the demonstration that, where classical music is concerned, the British/Irish relationship is not a tragic condition but a context to be negotiated or challenged as circumstances and personal ambitions demand.

These notions, when brought to bear on major figures in classical music in or departing from Ireland, lead to innovative readings. Thomas Moore's place in both British and Irish cultural and musical history is illuminated, one that points to the need for a more differentiated understanding of national feeling and active nationalism in cultural life. Thomas Davis, too, emerges as a more complex thinker on art and music than is often allowed. These individual studies point to the inadequacy of a polarised nationalist/cosmopolitan framing of the history of music in Ireland, one which mis-categorises Moore and Davis, and assigns to both a destructive role that is not supported by the evidence.

Significant re-interpretations of figures of a unionist background are also offered. Robert Prescott Stewart is not presented as embattled hero, but his industry and activity are recognised while his position as what might be called a civic-minded British-provincial unionist is related to the socio-cultural context. Readings of Stanford have suffered from an inappropriate and unhistorical insistence that he must be either Irish or British – and that, if he is not fully one or the other, this must be a disabling and unhappy condition. This thesis respects his self-positioning while at the same time noting the personal and ideological factors that led him to choose self-development and leadership in a more congenial context than that offered by the Dublin that he remembered with some fondness.

When we seek to understand the febleness of classical music culture in Ireland and the febleness of the efforts to animate that culture within the middle-class public sphere, it is useful, we suggest, to explore and register, as suggested above, matters of intended audience, intensity of address and commitment to change – with an awareness of how conditions in the world outside the weak public sphere may influence or even constrain activity within it. We must also recognise that the most intense and internationally innovative political drama enacted in nineteenth-century Ireland lay in political movements that (under the leadership of O'Connell and later of Parnell), united a substantial section of the Irish middle class with the rural masses with a view to forcing London to grant autonomy to Ireland. In the case of Parnell, this was also accompanied by agitation aimed at transforming the rights and living conditions of the rural population. Neither of these movements involved a program of cultural activity within the middle-class cultural sphere, though such a program began to emerge shortly before the collapse of the Repeal movement.

What this thesis suggests is that we must pay heed to how, when not energised into activity and a certain evangelising commitment, a weak cultural form such as classical music is unlikely to move towards radical change. As the state did not provide the momentum lacking within, and as the Protestant middle class (outside north-east Ulster at least) was gradually losing its leadership role

within Irish society, the momentum for change was most likely to come from a national movement. We have seen that the Davisite Young Ireland movement was aborted before it could bring about substantial change in the middle-class sphere. Nor was there any pressure, as there was in industrial England, from the emergence of a large urban working class. We have suggested that this is why, despite the political and social dramas happening in other sectors of society, so little of substance happened to drive classical music culture in Ireland towards radical change.

The result was that when, towards the 1890s, a new generation of young nationalists (of various class backgrounds but with a higher level of education and ambition than their predecessors) instituted a program of cultural activity and organisation that prefigured or could be seen as building towards an autonomous, non-provincial, national public sphere for Ireland, the knowledge base and cohort of potential activists was too small to have a significant impact at a time when Irish culture was being reshaped. Here too this thesis may have made a contribution to comparative thinking, as the presence of a musically educated cohort and of a wealthy and confident bourgeoisie is an important difference between Ireland and cities such as Prague and Budapest where musical nationalism found expression in classical music.

If there is an element of the speculative to this analysis, it may be tested by the light it casts on subsequent music history. As the period of cultural activism represented by the Revival was too short to build anything approaching a broad surge of interest in classical music, it is hardly surprising that the Free State period saw a return to undramatic evolution, all the more so as urban life also underwent little change. Though more attention was paid to abstract music on radio and in concerts, musical life showed remarkable continuity with the nineteenth-century pattern of Italian opera, light opera such as Gilbert and Sullivan, semi-classical popular song and classical arrangements of traditional material.

Regarding classical music, great change might be expected of the 1960s and later, as the Irish urban middle class grew and as the communications revolution offered easier access to developments abroad. Unfortunately for classical music, this change coincided with the explosion of youth culture and an international folk movement that earned Irish traditional music new-found interest and respect. This surge, along with the gentle collapse of interest among the young in the songs of Percy French or in light music generally, deprived classical music of another engine for growth and left it in a still-marginal position, though with some potential for growth. The momentum to drive it into the centre of public life was, however, again lacking.

The thinness of the historiography and the poverty of historical thinking in the sphere of classical music was a stimulus to the work undertaken in this thesis. As to the balance achieved between demonstrable contribution and fruitful speculation, others must decide but my hope is to have offered both and to stimulate further reflection and research.

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