

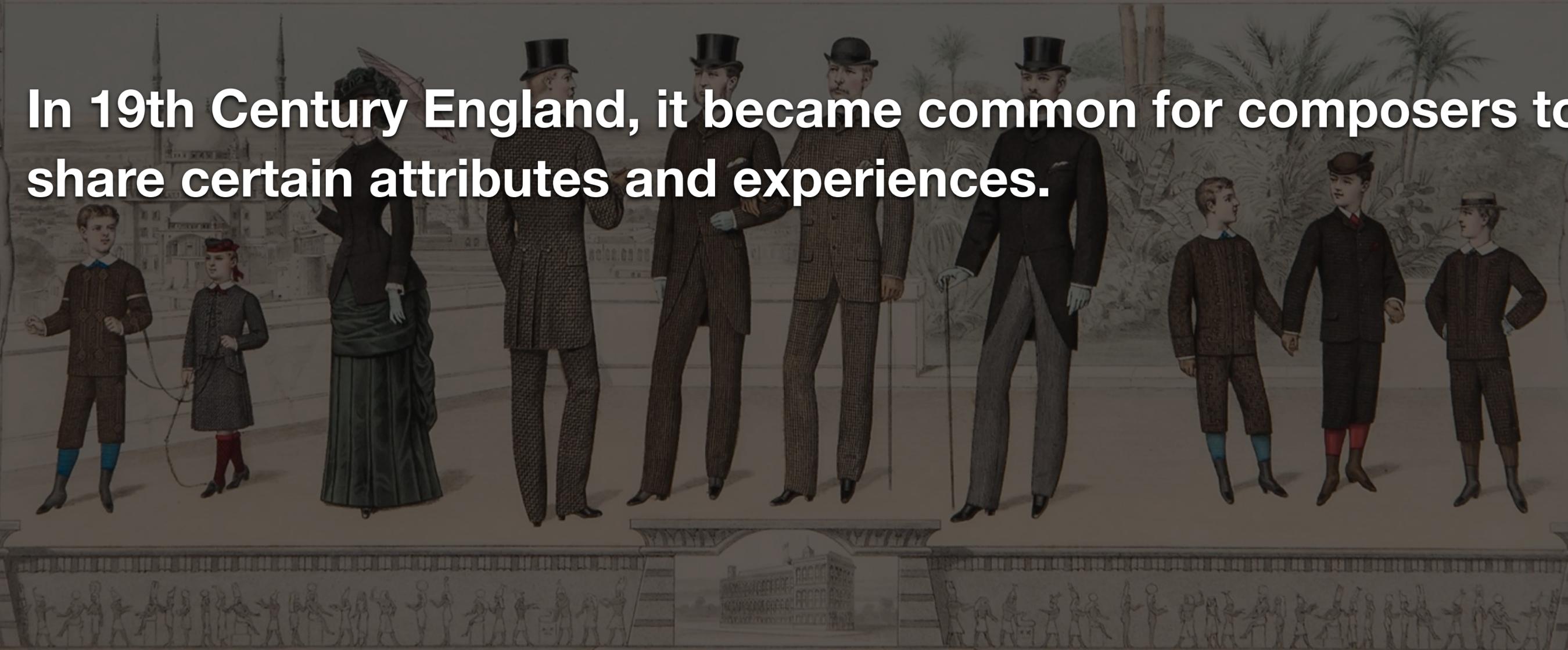
# The British Muse

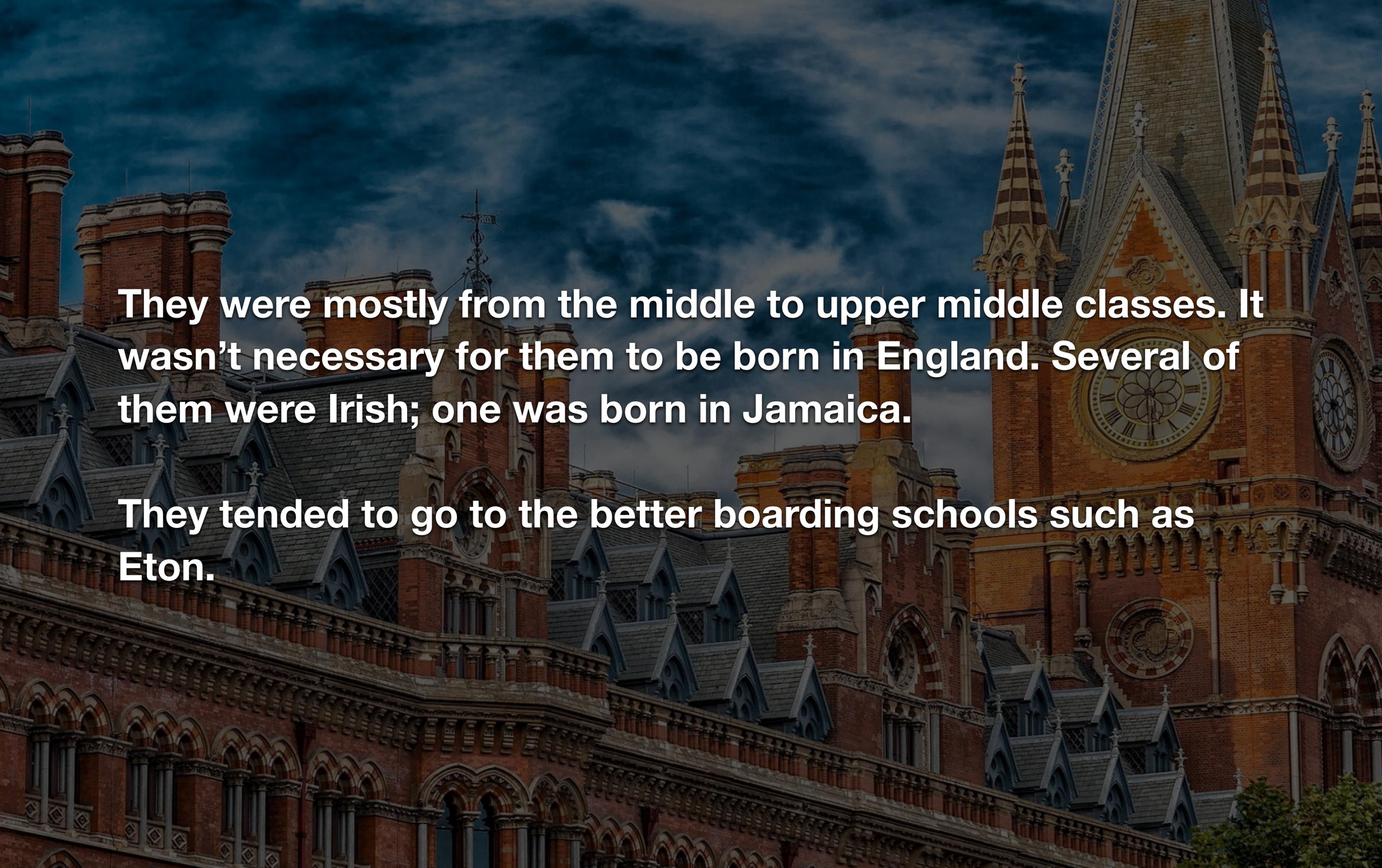
4 - Gentlemen of the Club



## What was *The Club*?

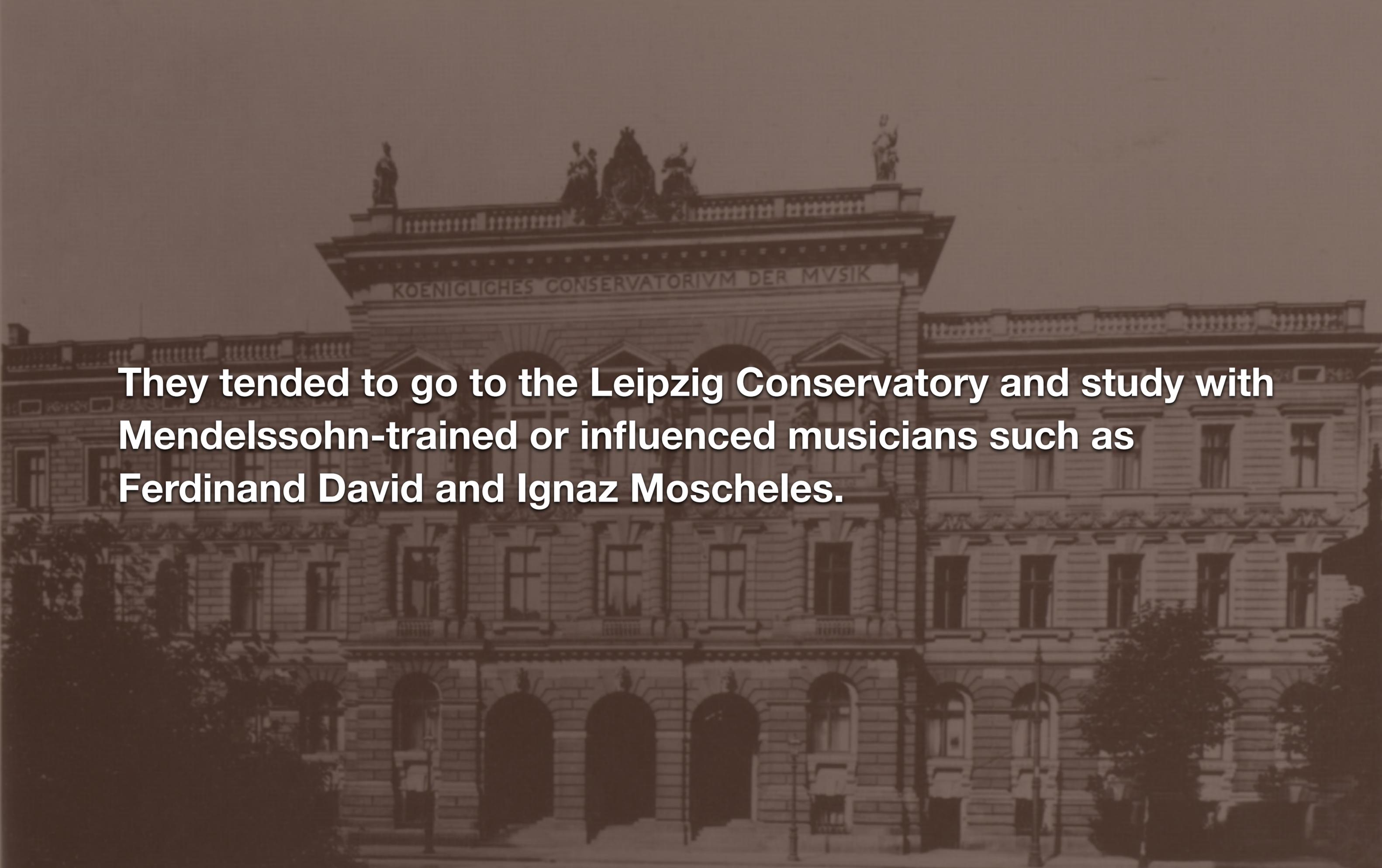
In 19th Century England, it became common for composers to share certain attributes and experiences.



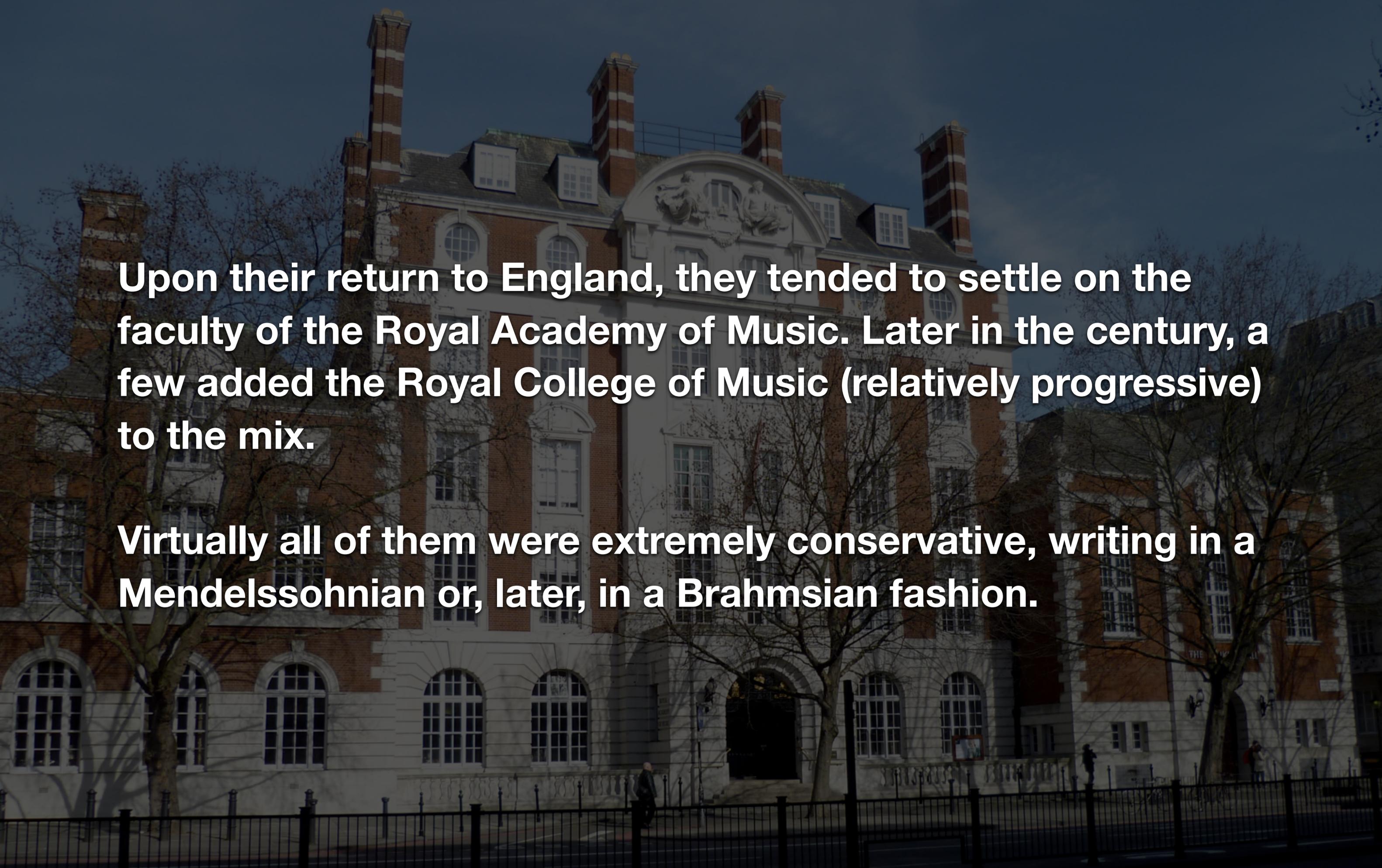


**They were mostly from the middle to upper middle classes. It wasn't necessary for them to be born in England. Several of them were Irish; one was born in Jamaica.**

**They tended to go to the better boarding schools such as Eton.**

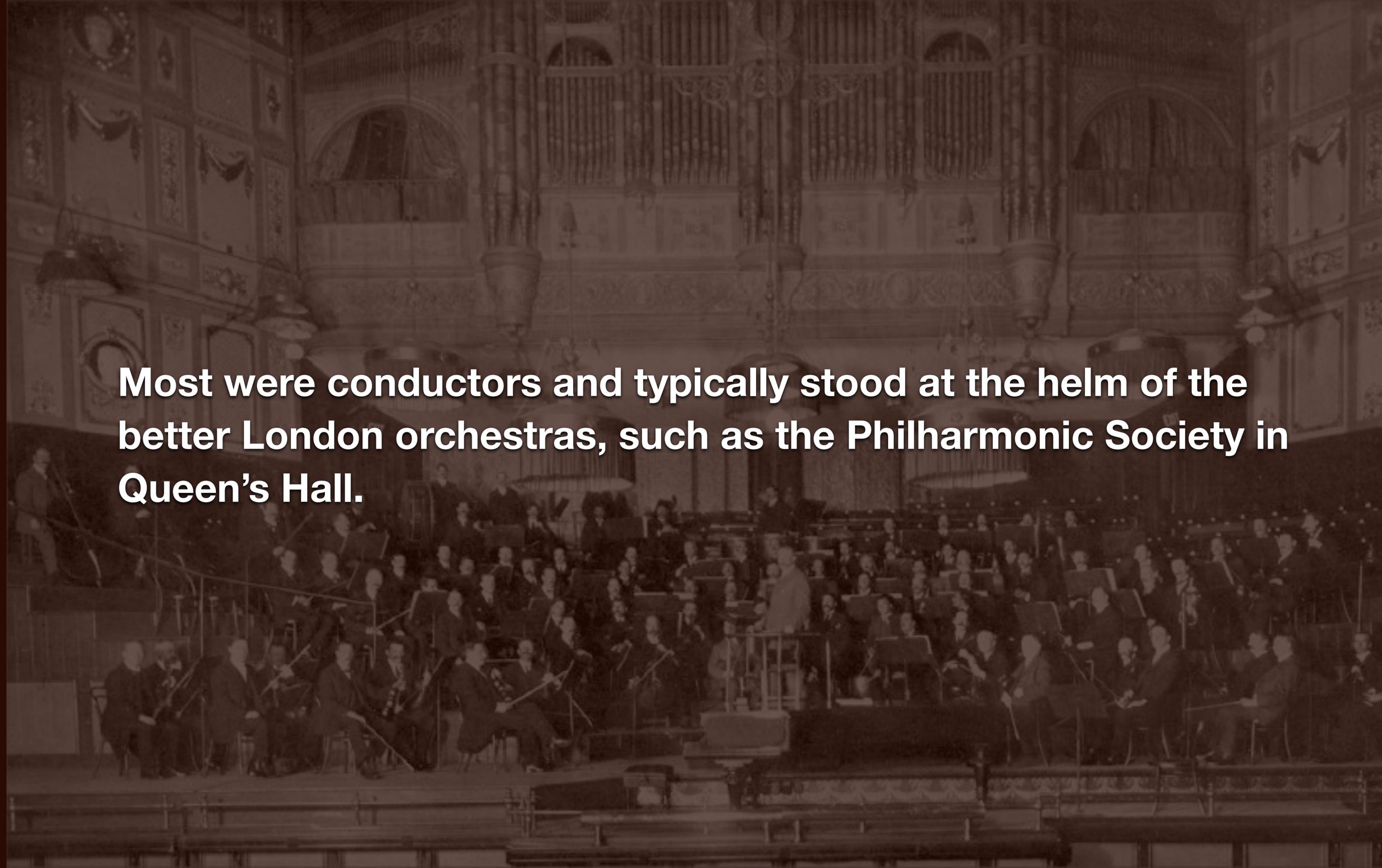


**They tended to go to the Leipzig Conservatory and study with Mendelssohn-trained or influenced musicians such as Ferdinand David and Ignaz Moscheles.**

A large, ornate brick building with multiple chimneys and arched windows, likely a historical institution. The building features a central pedimented entrance with a relief sculpture. The facade is made of red brick with white stone accents around the windows and arches. Several tall, brick chimneys are visible on the roof. The building is surrounded by trees and a black metal fence in the foreground.

**Upon their return to England, they tended to settle on the faculty of the Royal Academy of Music. Later in the century, a few added the Royal College of Music (relatively progressive) to the mix.**

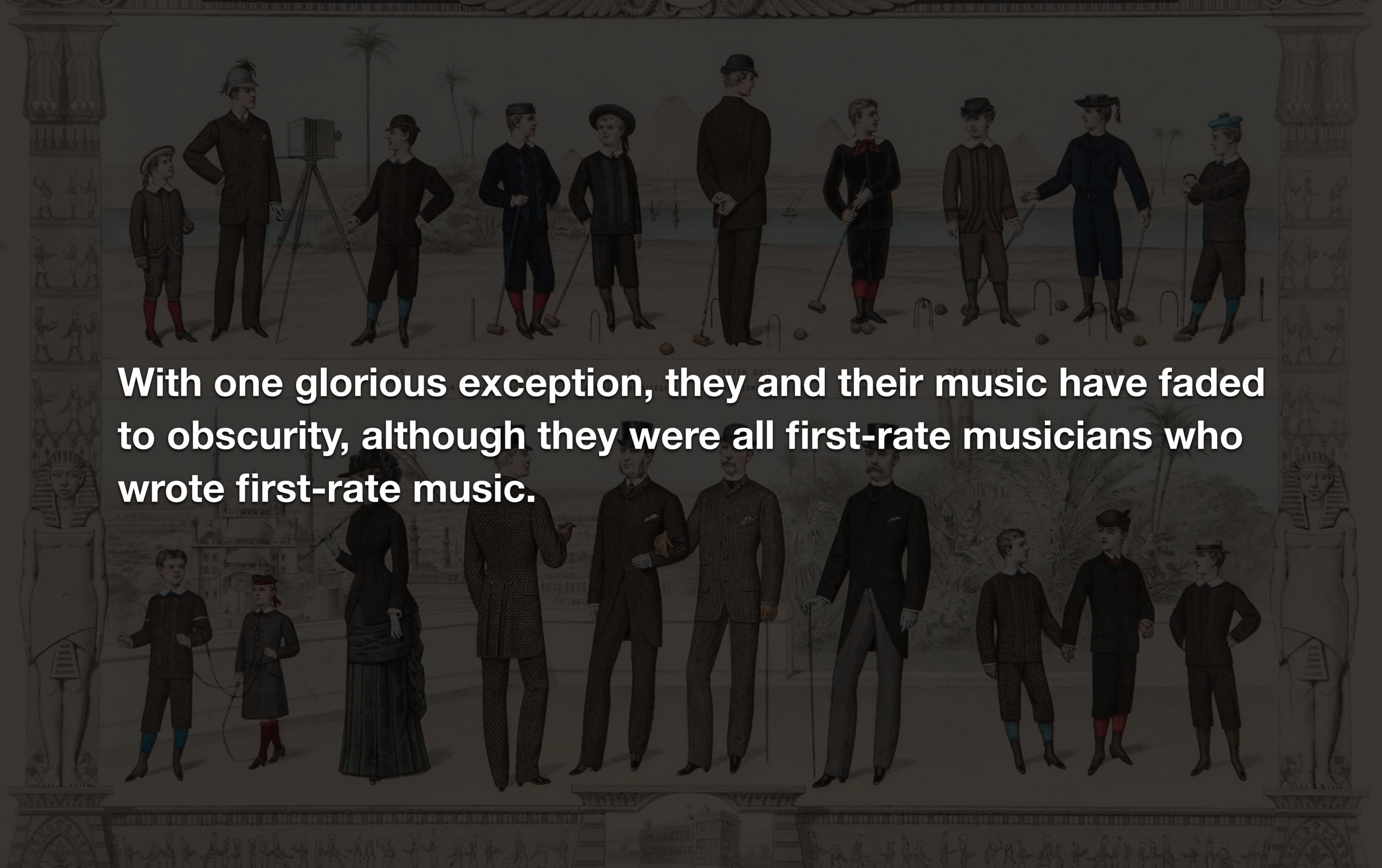
**Virtually all of them were extremely conservative, writing in a Mendelssohnian or, later, in a Brahmsian fashion.**

A historical black and white photograph of a large orchestra performing in a grand hall. The conductor stands at the front, facing the musicians. The hall features ornate architectural details, including arched windows and decorative moldings. The text is overlaid on the image in a bold, white font.

**Most were conductors and typically stood at the helm of the better London orchestras, such as the Philharmonic Society in Queen's Hall.**

A woman in a light blue dress with a lace waistband is presenting a sword to a man in a dark suit. The man is bowing slightly. They are on a red carpet in a grand, ornate room with gold trim and red walls. Other people in formal attire are visible in the background.

**They were all eventually knighted.**



**With one glorious exception, they and their music have faded to obscurity, although they were all first-rate musicians who wrote first-rate music.**



# **William Sterndale Bennett: Symphony in G Minor, Op. 43: I**

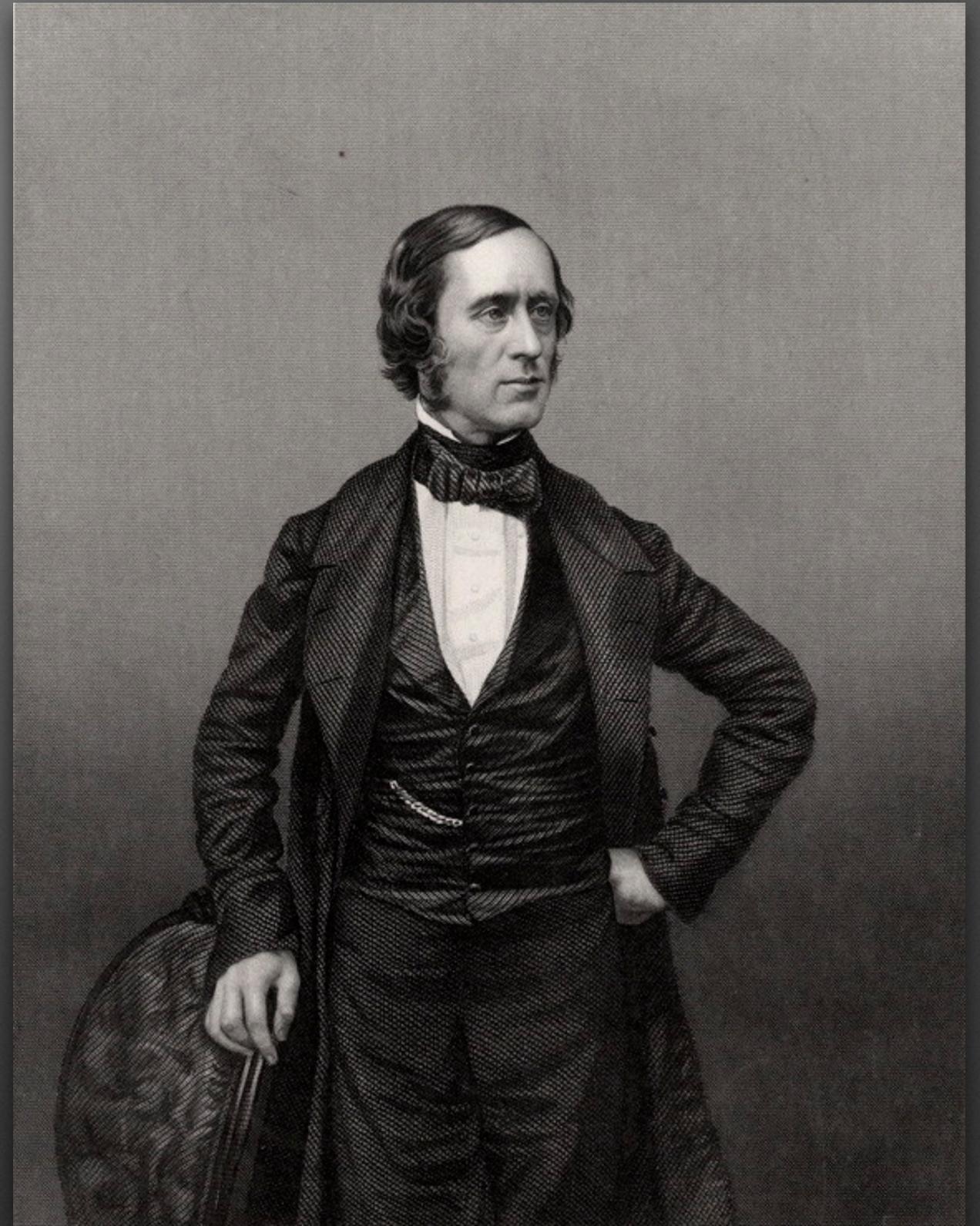
Nikolaus Braithwaite / London Philharmonic Orchestra

William Sterndale Bennett (1816–1875) belongs to the same early Romantic generation as Mendelssohn, Schumann, Liszt, and Chopin.

His early gifts were significant enough that he was admitted to the Royal Academy of Music when he was just 10 years old; he stayed there for a full decade.

In the mid-1830s he travelled to Europe and became close friends with both Mendelssohn and Robert Schumann.

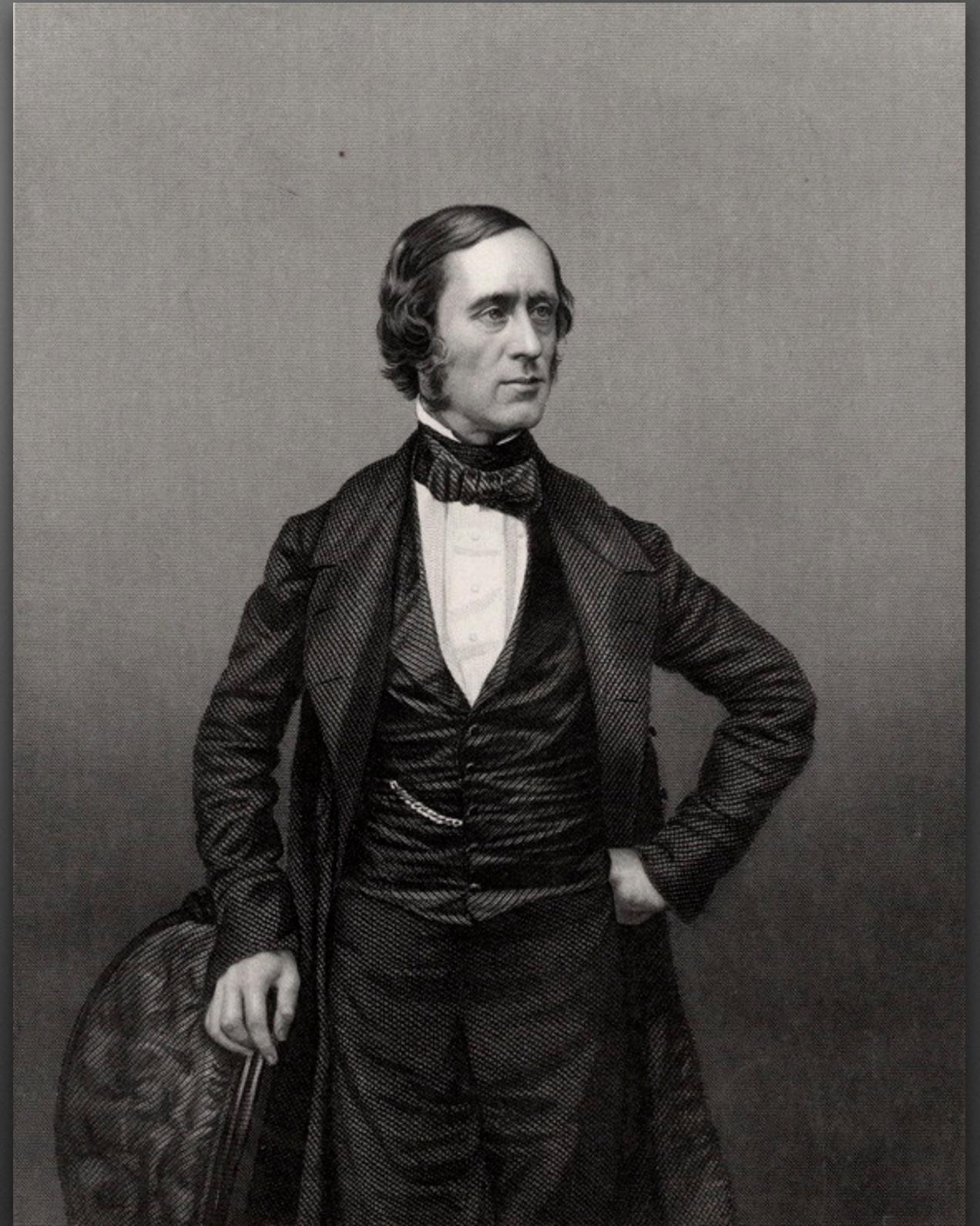
Schumann in particular promoted his compositions —but Bennett privately felt that Schumann's own works were rather too eccentric for comfort.



After his return from Europe he became a professor at the Royal Academy of Music, and the rest of his long career was mostly devoted to teaching and, eventually, administration.

He became the Principal (i.e., President) of the Royal Academy of Music and saved the institution from falling into terminal decline.

He was a force in the Philharmonic Society concerts, in the education of young musicians, and in English musical life altogether.

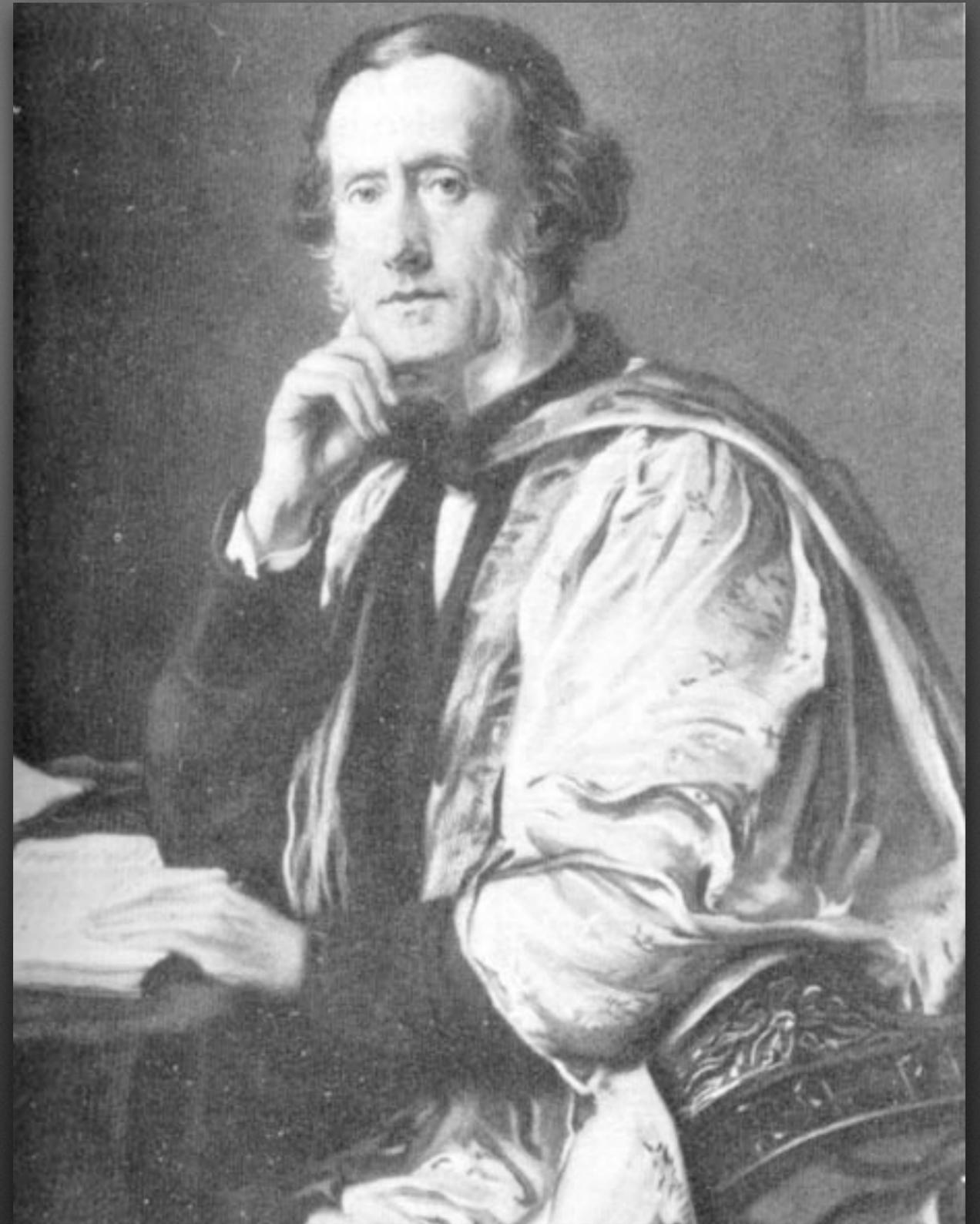


By the time of his death in 1875 he was beyond a shadow of a doubt the Grand Old Man of English music.

His students included Hubert Parry and Charles Villiers Stanford—the leaders of the later Victorian age of English music.

He was a staunch musical conservative, an ardent follower of the Mendelssohnian style, a bit suspicious of Schumann, and had absolutely no interest in (or patience with) the modernism of Richard Wagner.

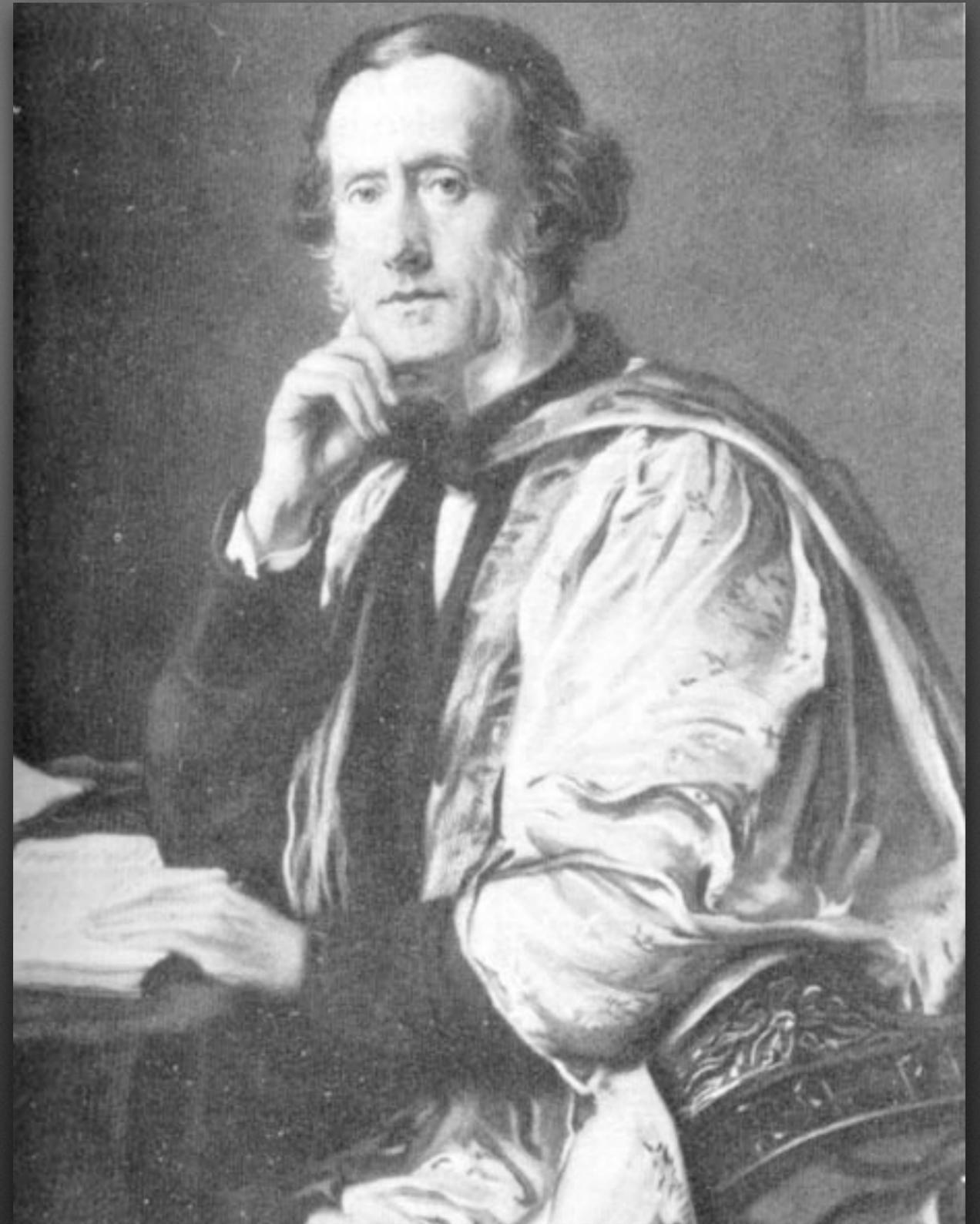
Due to his heavy teaching and administrative schedule, he never grew much as a composer after the 1840s.



The G Minor Symphony, from the 1860s, represents Bennett's conservatism. It could be a minor Mendelssohn work, although it does not display the formal brilliance characteristic of so many of Mendelssohn's large-scale compositions.

Instead, the first movement follows classical sonata-form almost slavishly, like an illustration from a textbook on form. The seams between sections are clear. The phrasing is foursquare, although featuring some routine expansions.

It's a well-crafted movement, expertly orchestrated, and makes excellent use of its materials, deriving some of the transitional themes from earlier materials, and featuring a brief and effective coda.



**His sense of form was so strong, and his refined nature so abhorred any mere seeking after effect, that his music sometimes gives the impression of being produced under restraint. He seldom, if ever, gave rein to his unbridled fancy; everything is justly proportioned, clearly defined, and kept within the limits which the conscientiousness of his self-criticism would not let him overstep. It is this which makes him, as has been said, so peculiarly a musician's composer: the broad effects and bold contrasts which an uneducated public admires are absent; it takes an educated audience to appreciate to the full the exquisitely refined and delicate nature of his genius.**

**—W. B. Squire, 1860**

# Exposition



# Development



# Recapitulation



# Exposition



# Development



# Recapitulation





# Arthur Sullivan: "Irish" Symphony in E Major

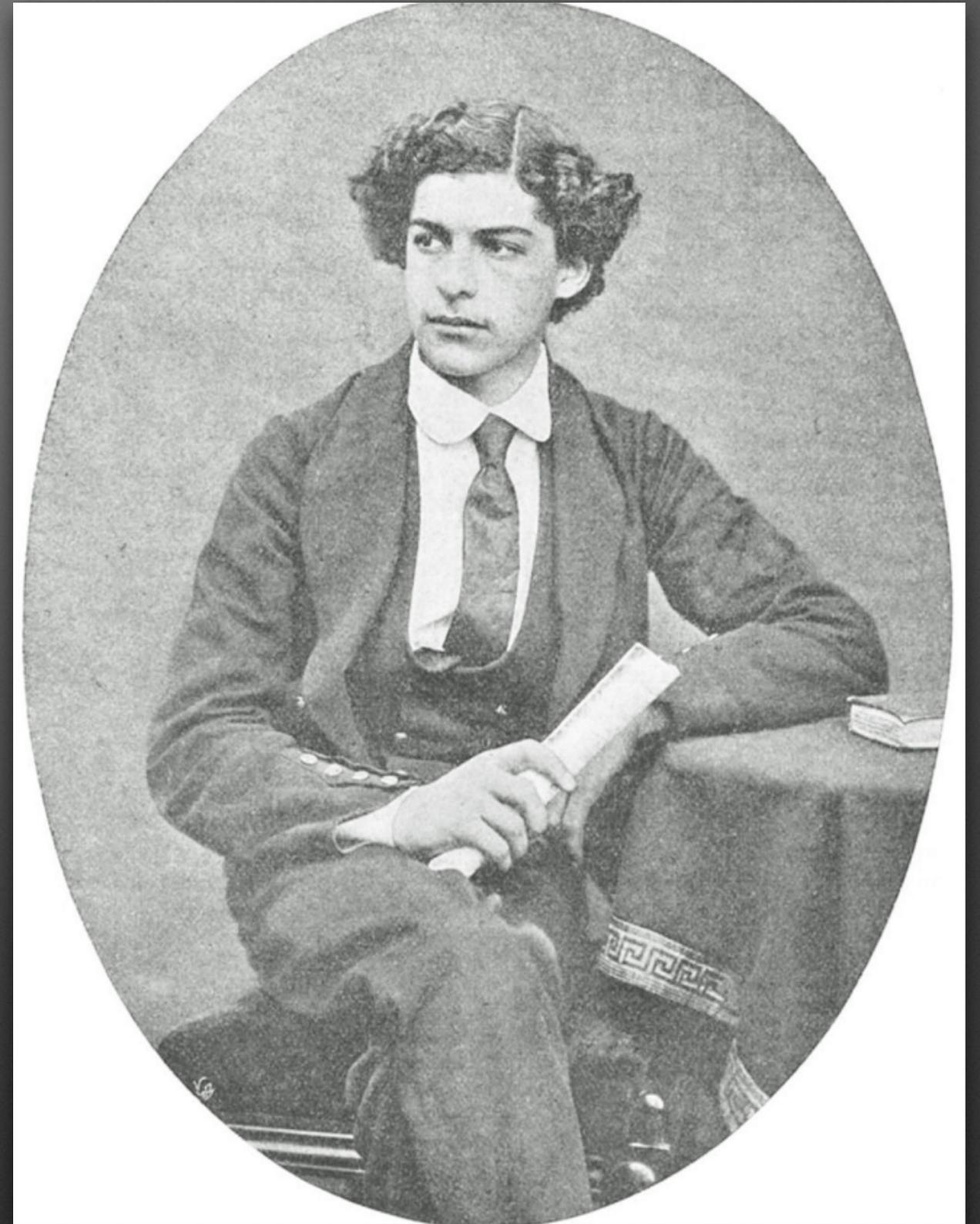
Vernon Handley / Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra

Irish-born Arthur Sullivan was first trained at the Royal Academy, but he was sent to the Leipzig Conservatory of Music at the age of 14, although by the time he got there Mendelssohn had already passed on.

His school chum in Leipzig was none other than Edvard Grieg, and the two young musicians had diametrically opposed opinions of the Leipzig Conservatory that had been founded by Mendelssohn.

Grieg hated it.

Sullivan loved it.



In 1866, upon his return from Leipzig, Sullivan premiered his new “Irish” symphony at London’s Crystal Palace.

As it turned out, the “Irish” was the only symphony he ever wrote.

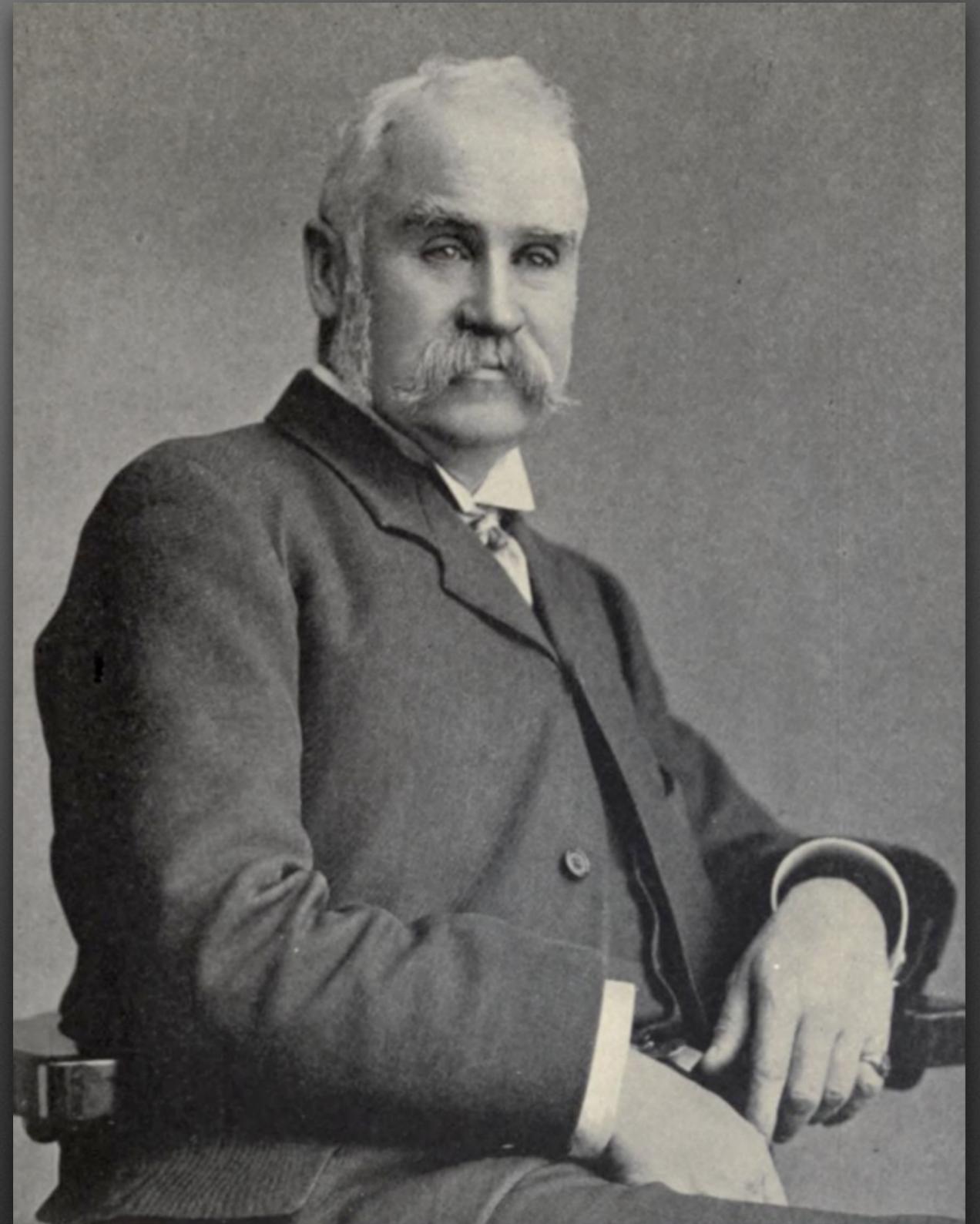




In 1875 impresario Richard d'Oyly Carte teamed Sullivan up with William Schwenk Gilbert.

Their first play together was a one-act called *Trial by Jury*. It was a surprise hit and ran for over 300 performances in its first few seasons.

He also wrote a song, *The Lost Chord*, which was a best-seller and has become something of an anthem for the later Victorian age.



The partnership with Gilbert soon resulted in *The Sorcerer*, but it was their third outing—*H.M.S. Pinafore*—that catapulted both men to fame and riches, with a worldwide success.

*The Pirates of Penzance* followed; another international smash hit.

D'Oyly Carte built a new theater—the Savoy—to house the Gilbert & Sullivan operas.

*Iolanthe* proved to be another fine success.



But Sullivan was restless. While *Princess Ida* was a respectable success, Sullivan was concerned that he —and Gilbert—were simply repeating themselves, an opinion also held by some of London’s most influential critics.

“ I should like to set a story of human interest & probability where the humorous words would come in a humorous (not serious) situation, & where, if the situation were a tender or dramatic one the words would be of similar character.”



Fortunately, Gilbert rose to the challenge with an altogether new idea, a play that didn't repeat the various contrivances of *Princess Ida* and *The Sorcerer*.

It was a thinly-disguised satire on English society that sheathed its barbs by being set in a comic-book version of Japan.

It's called *The Mikado* and it's easily one of the most wonderful pieces of musical theater ever written.



# THE MIKADO



## Gilbert & Sullivan: The Mikado, from Act I

D'Oyly Carte Opera Company  
Isidore Godfrey / City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra  
Filmed 1966





# Charles Villiers Stanford: Symphony No. 3 "Irish": II

Vernon Handley / Ulster Orchestra

Charles Villiers Stanford (1852–1924) was, like Arthur Sullivan, Irish. Like Sullivan, he was educated at the Leipzig Conservatory and in Germany.

Unlike Sullivan, he was born into a well-to-do family and eventually wound up teaching in the Royal Academy of Music. He was always at least as much academic as a working composer and performer.

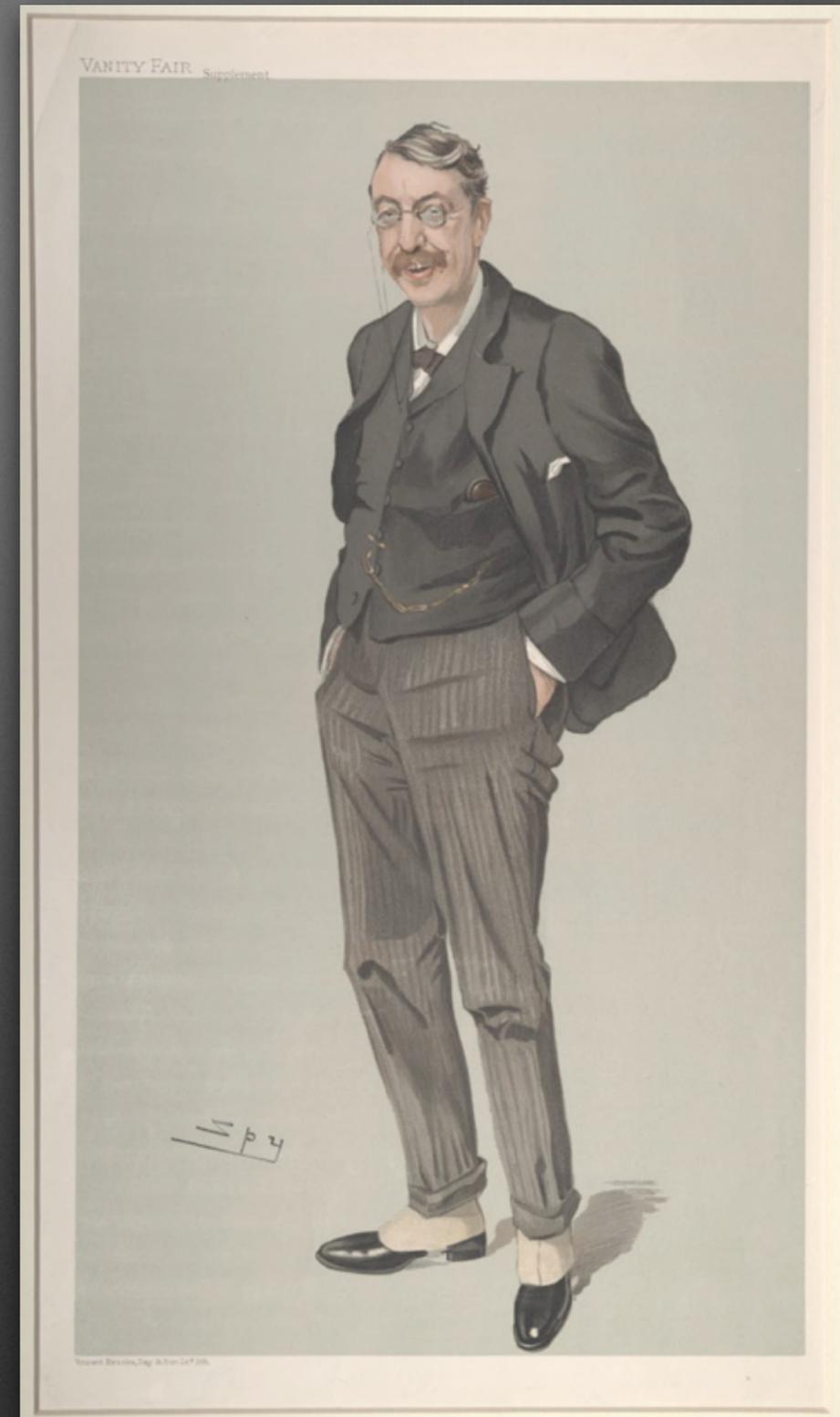
Like Bennett (who was his teacher), he was an indefatigable teacher who trained many of the next generation of composers: in his case, Ralph Vaughan Williams and Gustav Holst, among others.

He was notoriously difficult as a teacher—blunt to the point of rudeness, scathing in his criticisms.



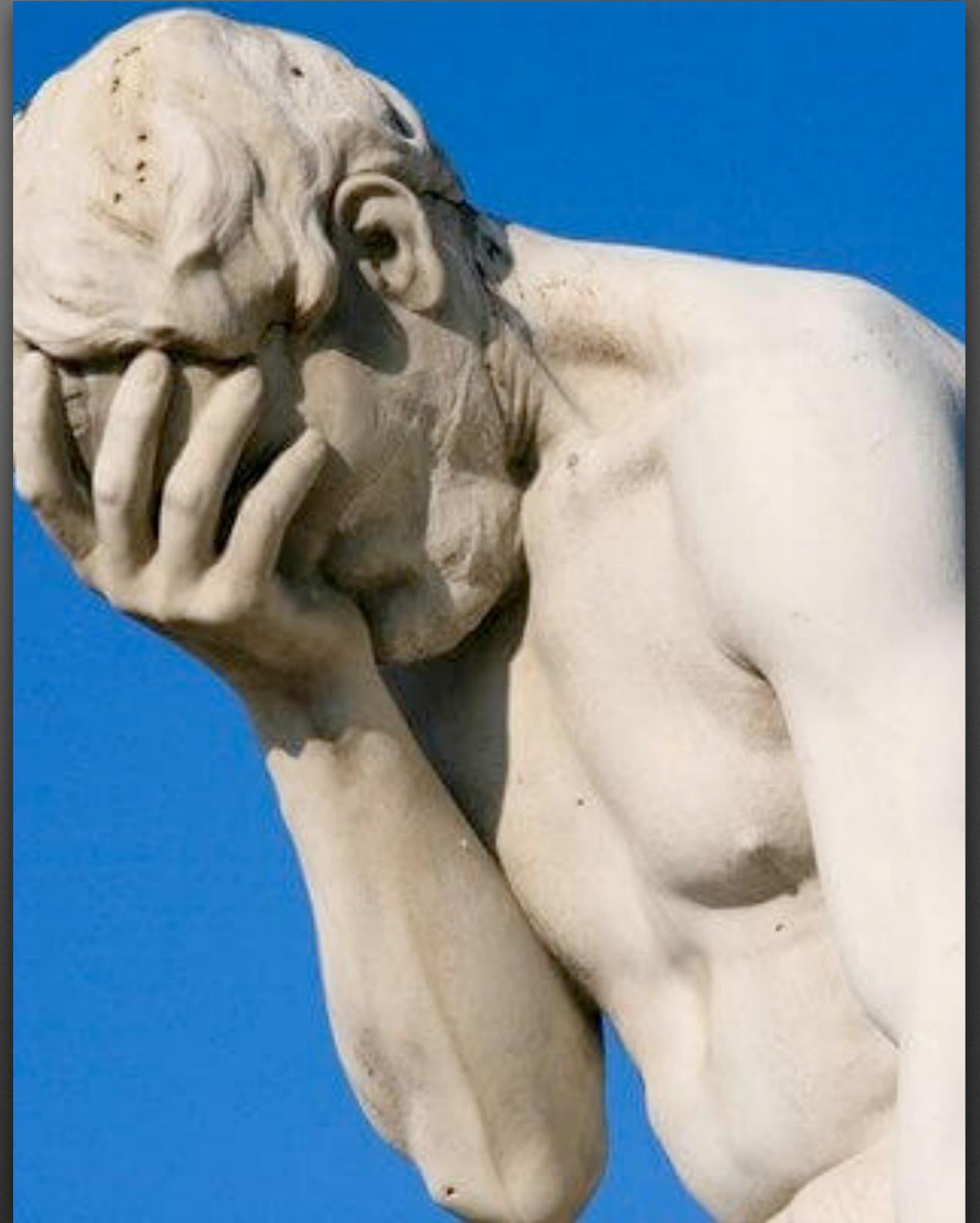
"Corner any Stanford pupil you like, and ask him to confess the sins he most hated being discovered in by his master. He will tell you 'slovenliness' and 'vulgarity.' When these went into the teacher's room they came out, badly damaged. Against compromise with dubious material or workmanship Stanford stubbornly set his face."

—Herbert Howells



“Stanford's teaching seemed to be without method or plan. His criticism consisted for the most part of "I like it, my boy," or "It's damned ugly, my boy" (the latter in most cases). In this, perhaps, lay its value. For in spite of his conservatism, and he was intensely and passionately conservative in music as in politics, his amazingly comprehensive knowledge of musical literature of all nations and ages made one feel that his opinions, however irritating, had weight.”

—Edgar Braunton



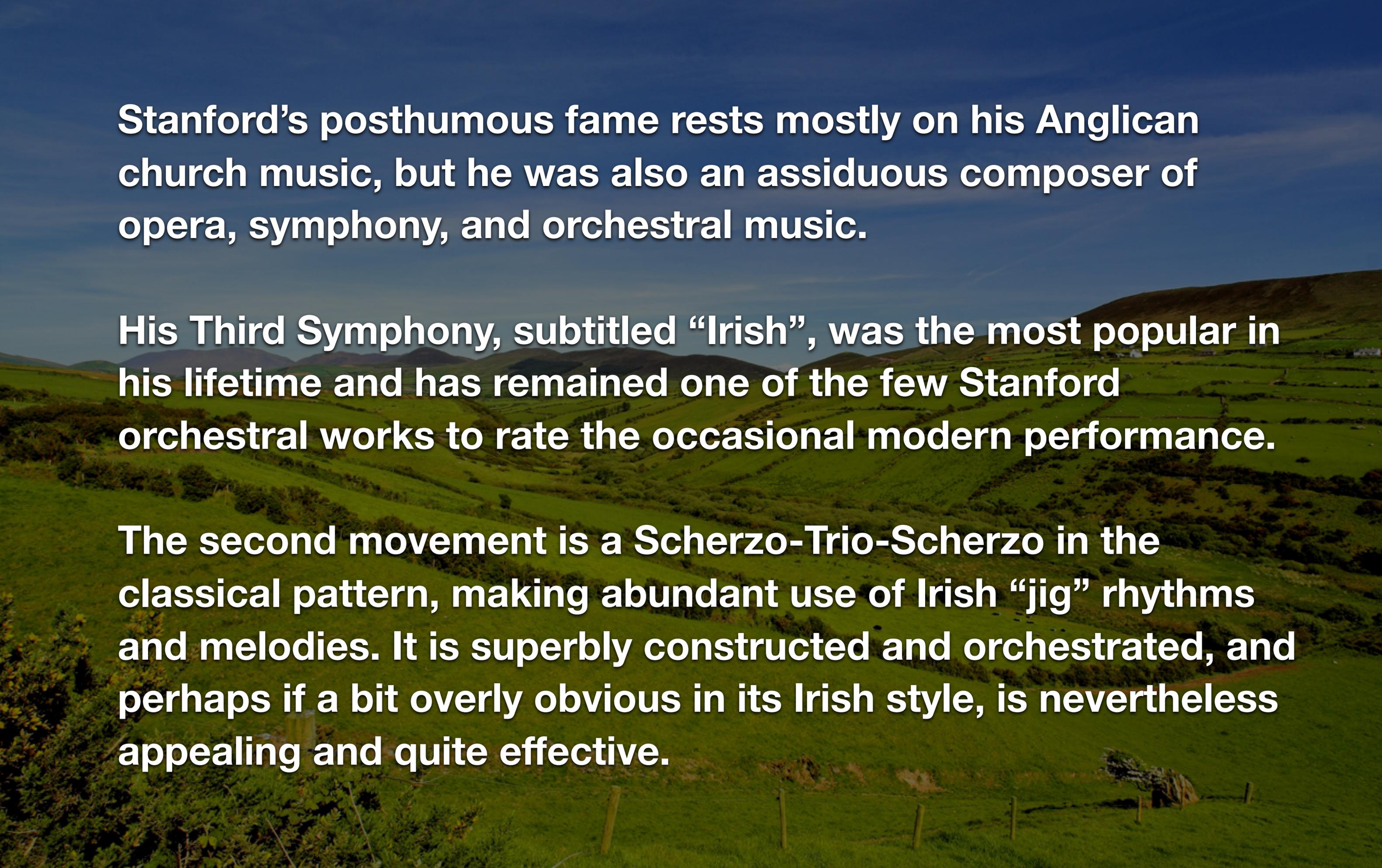
It was Stanford's destiny to be outshone by not only several of his contemporaries:

Hubert Parry  
Edward Elgar

But in particular a number of his own students:

Ralph Vaughan Williams  
Gustav Holst  
Adrian Boult (in conducting)



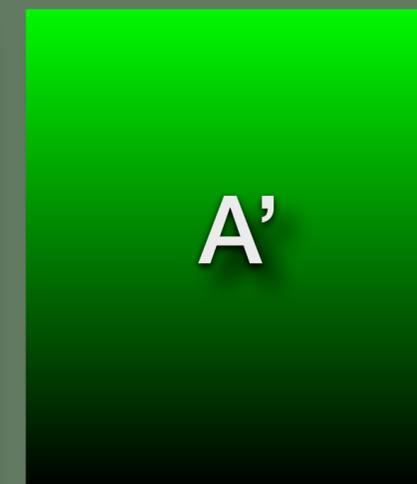
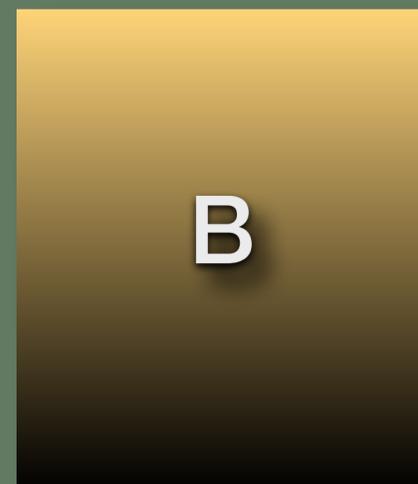
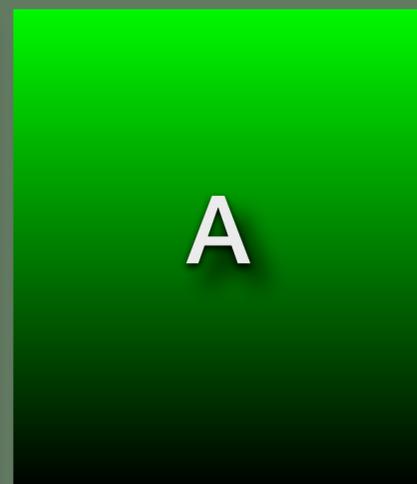
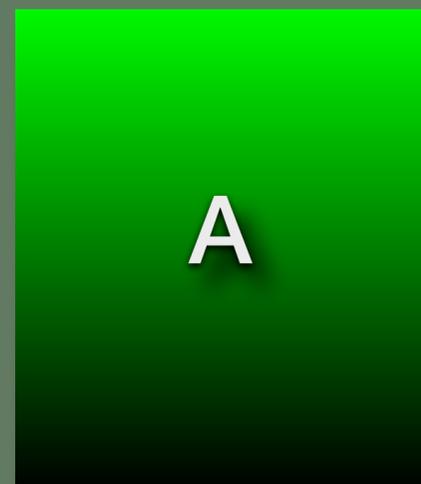
A scenic view of rolling green hills under a blue sky with light clouds. The hills are covered in lush green grass and some small trees. The sky is a clear, bright blue with a few wispy white clouds. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and natural.

**Stanford's posthumous fame rests mostly on his Anglican church music, but he was also an assiduous composer of opera, symphony, and orchestral music.**

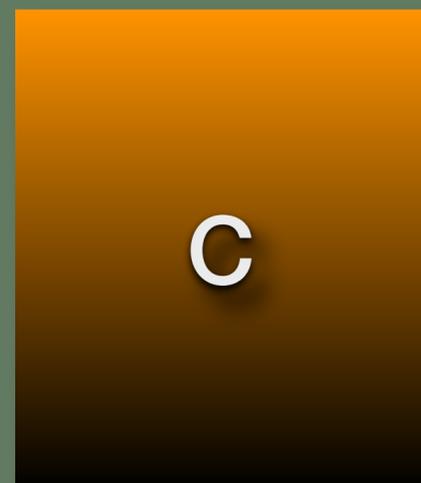
**His Third Symphony, subtitled "Irish", was the most popular in his lifetime and has remained one of the few Stanford orchestral works to rate the occasional modern performance.**

**The second movement is a Scherzo-Trio-Scherzo in the classical pattern, making abundant use of Irish "jig" rhythms and melodies. It is superbly constructed and orchestrated, and perhaps if a bit overly obvious in its Irish style, is nevertheless appealing and quite effective.**

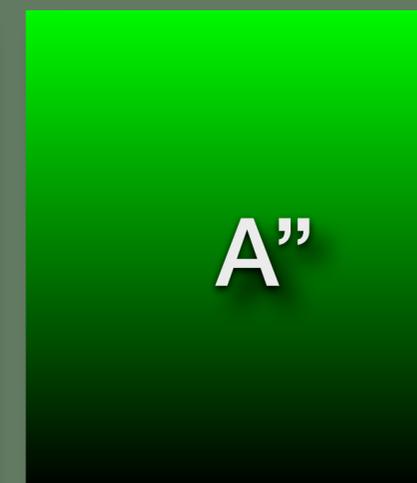
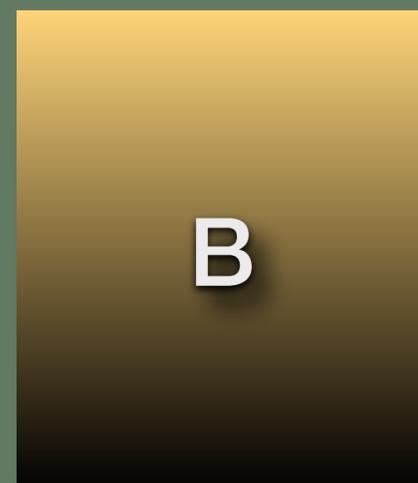
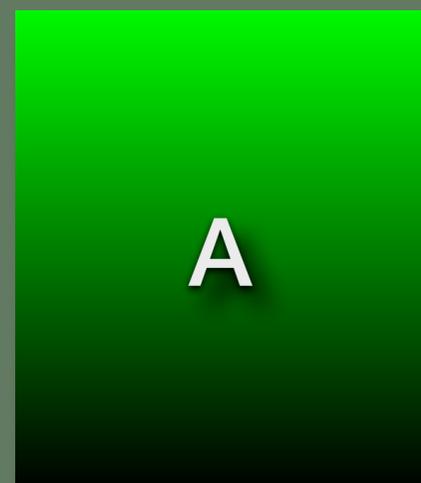
Scherzo



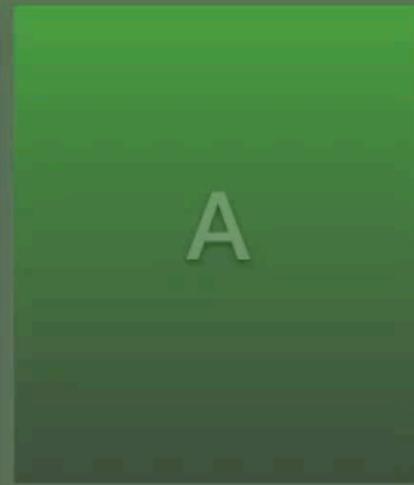
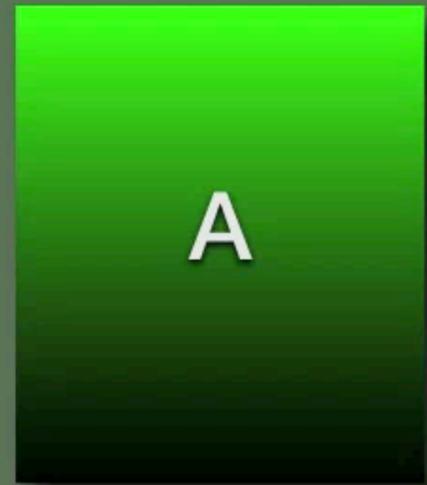
Trio



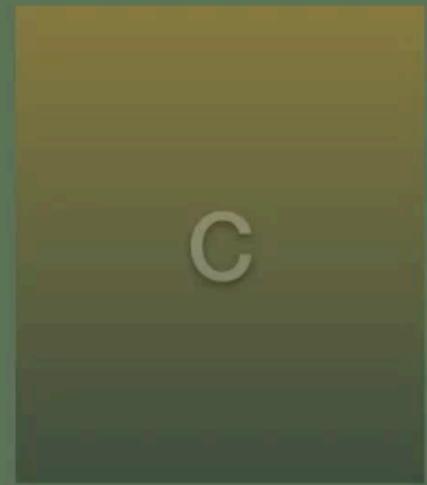
Scherzo



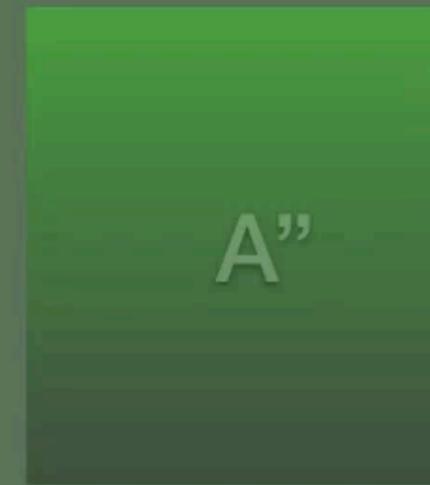
Scherzo



Trio



Scherzo





# Frederic Hymen Cowen: Indian Rhapsody

Adrian Leaper / Czechoslovak State Orchestra

Frederic Hymen Cowen (1852-1935) was born in Jamaica and taken to England at the age of 4.

His education followed the standard rules of the Gentlemen of the Club: Leipzig Conservatory, then Berlin, then back to England where he held a number of important positions including the podium of the London Philharmonic Society, succeeding Sir Arthur Sullivan. He was also the conductor of the Liverpool Philharmonic.

He was eventually knighted and awarded an honorary doctorate from Cambridge.



A busy and influential conductor and composer, he has been all but forgotten today.

His compositions tend to be lightweight, generally highly entertaining and filled with interesting orchestral effects.

The *Indian Rhapsody* of 1903 portrays life in India, although its overall style could be suggestive of many other locales as well.

It's probably best to think of it as a late-Romantic essay in undifferentiated exoticism: well orchestrated and fun to listen to.

We'll hear the second half of the *Rhapsody*, accompanied by 19th-century (mostly) paintings of India.







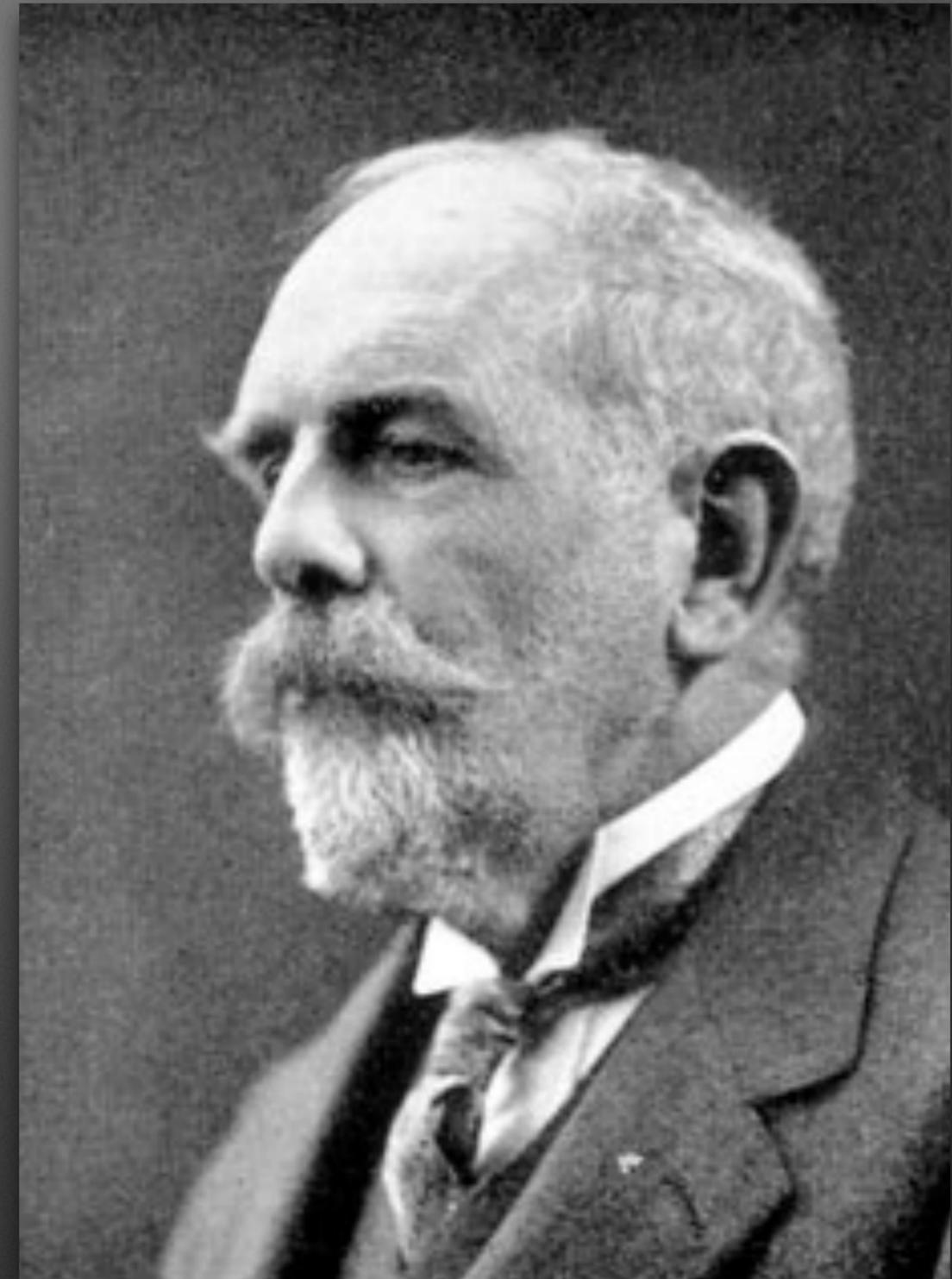
# Arthur Somervell: In Summer-time on Bredon

Christopher Maltman, Baritone / Graham Johnson, Piano

Arthur Somervell (1863–1937) was another composer who spent most of his career as a highly-regarded teacher. His trajectory was par for Gentlemen of the Club: son of a well-to-do manufacturer, he graduated from Cambridge in 1883, went on to further study in Berlin, then settled back in England as a professor at the Royal College of Music.

He is best remembered as a composer of gentle English song, a great deal of it with a spiritual quality. His gift was lyrical rather than interpretive—i.e., he would set a poem to exquisitely melodic music without paying too close of attention to the ultimate meaning of the poem.

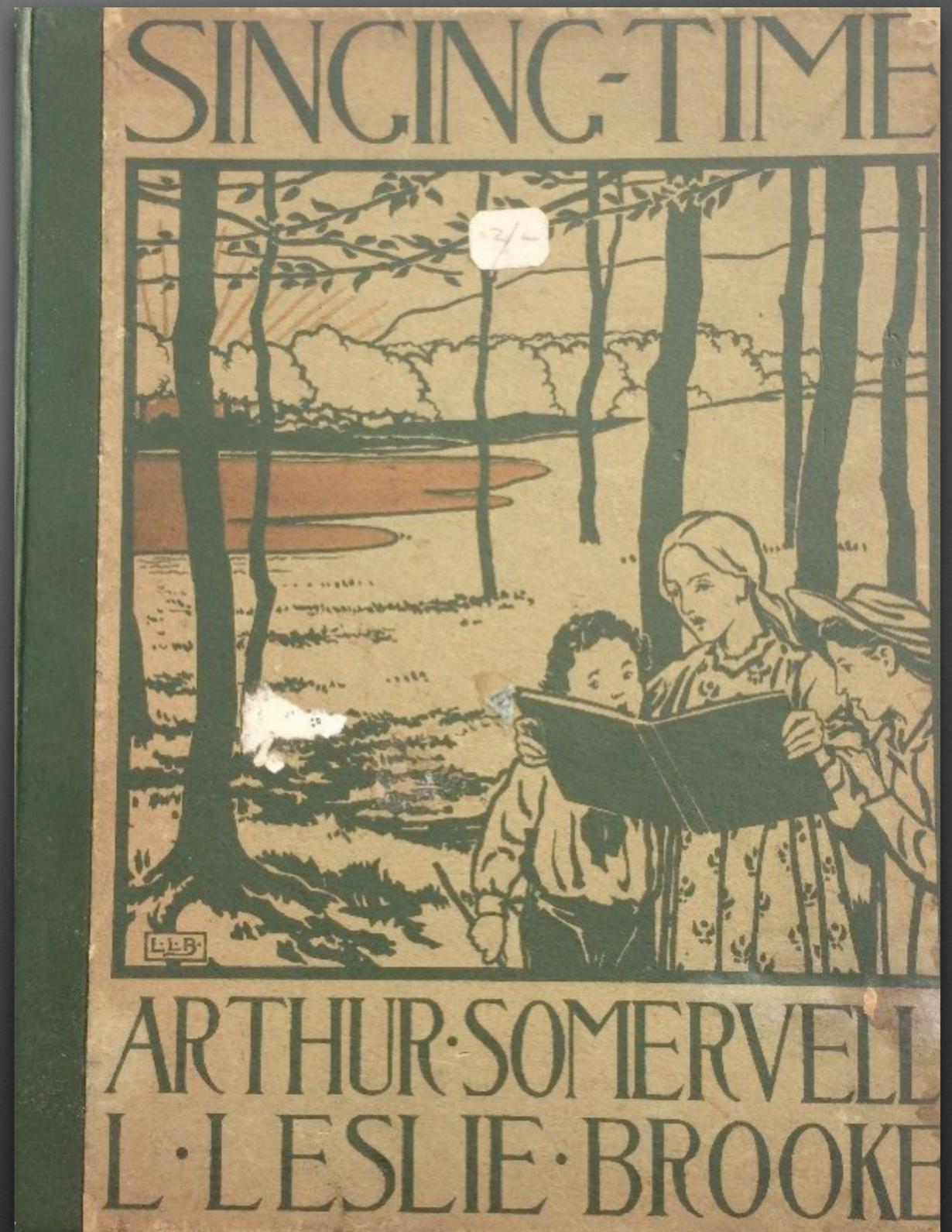
He was knighted in 1929.



Somervell's setting of Housman's *In Summer-time on Brendon* is a splendid example of both his fine lyricism and also his tendency not to look far beyond the surface of a poem.

Somervell's setting does acknowledge the overall meaning of the text, but only lightly, masking the regretful and melancholy nature of Housman's haunting imagery.

In a few weeks we'll hear a setting by Ralph Vaughan Williams that plumbs the depths of the text with a passionate insight that was utterly beyond Somervell's polished gentility.



In summer-time on Bredon  
The Bells they sound so clear;  
Round both the shires they ring them,  
In steeples far and near,  
A happy noise to hear.

Here of a Sunday morning  
My love and I would lie,  
And see the coloured counties,  
And hear the larks so high  
About us in the sky.

The bells would ring to call her  
In valleys miles away,  
'Come all to church, good people;  
Good people, come and pray.'  
But here my love would stay.

And I would turn and answer  
Among the springing thyme,  
'O peal upon our wedding,  
And we will hear the chime,  
And come to church in time.'

But when the snows at Christmas  
On Bredon top were strown,  
My love rose up so early  
And stole out unbeknown,  
And went to church alone.

They toll'd the one bell only,  
Groom there was none to see,  
The mourners follow'd after,  
And so to church went she,  
And would not wait for me.

The bells they sound on Bredon,  
And still the steeples hum.  
'Come all to church, good people,'  
Oh, noisy bells, be dumb;  
I hear you, I will come.



# Hubert Parry: Symphony No. 2 “Cambridge”: I

Matthias Bamert / London Philharmonic

# About Hubert Parry

- Educated at Eton, then at Exeter College in Oxford where he studied law and modern history. (Unliked most English composers, he did not study in Leipzig or Berlin.)
- Worked at Lloyds of London as an underwriter.
- Married Maude Herbert, sister of the 13th Earl of Pembroke.
- A plan to study with Brahms fell through, but he left Lloyds to become a full-time composer and enjoyed a long and successful career at the forefront of English music.
- Became a professor at both Cambridge and the Royal College of Music, and was an editor and contributor to *Grove's Dictionary of Music*, still the reference English-language music encyclopaedia.

When I think of the stodginess, the meanness, the backslumminess of most music of my younger days, the total absence of taste for orchestral music, the pedantic complacency of many representative musicians, the slur which was implied in decent society by the term “musical man”; when I compare this with what we have now—the advance and expansion of young musicians, the splendid orchestral performances, the widening of taste, the genuine warmth of musical perception—I do feel that there is something singularly happy in the reign of such a Queen as ours has been.

*Address to the students of the Royal College of Music*

# Parry's Symphonies

- Symphony No. 1 in G Major (1882)
- Symphony No. 2 in F Major (The Cambridge) (1883/1887)
- Symphony No. 3 in C Major (The English) (1889)
- Symphony No. 4 in E Minor (1889/1910)
- Symphony No. 5 in B Minor (*Sinfonia fantasia*) (1912)

# About Symphony No. 2

- Written in 1883 but extensively revised in 1887.
- Originally for the Cambridge Musical Society; rousing success there, and more so for the 1887 revision.
- Opens with an extended *Andante sostenuto*; once the *Allegro* proper begins, the first movement glows with Parry's high-voltage lyrical gift.
- We'll hear the Exposition of the first movement.

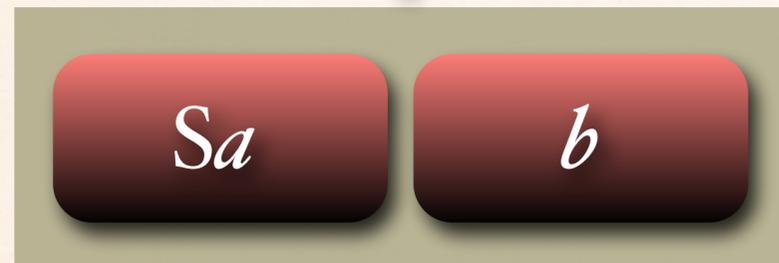
Primary



Transition 1



Secondary



Transition 2



Closing



## Primary

**$Pa$**

$a'$

## Transition 1

$1Ta$

$b$

## Secondary

$Sa$

$b$

## Transition 2

$2Ta$

$b$

## Closing

$Ka$

$b$

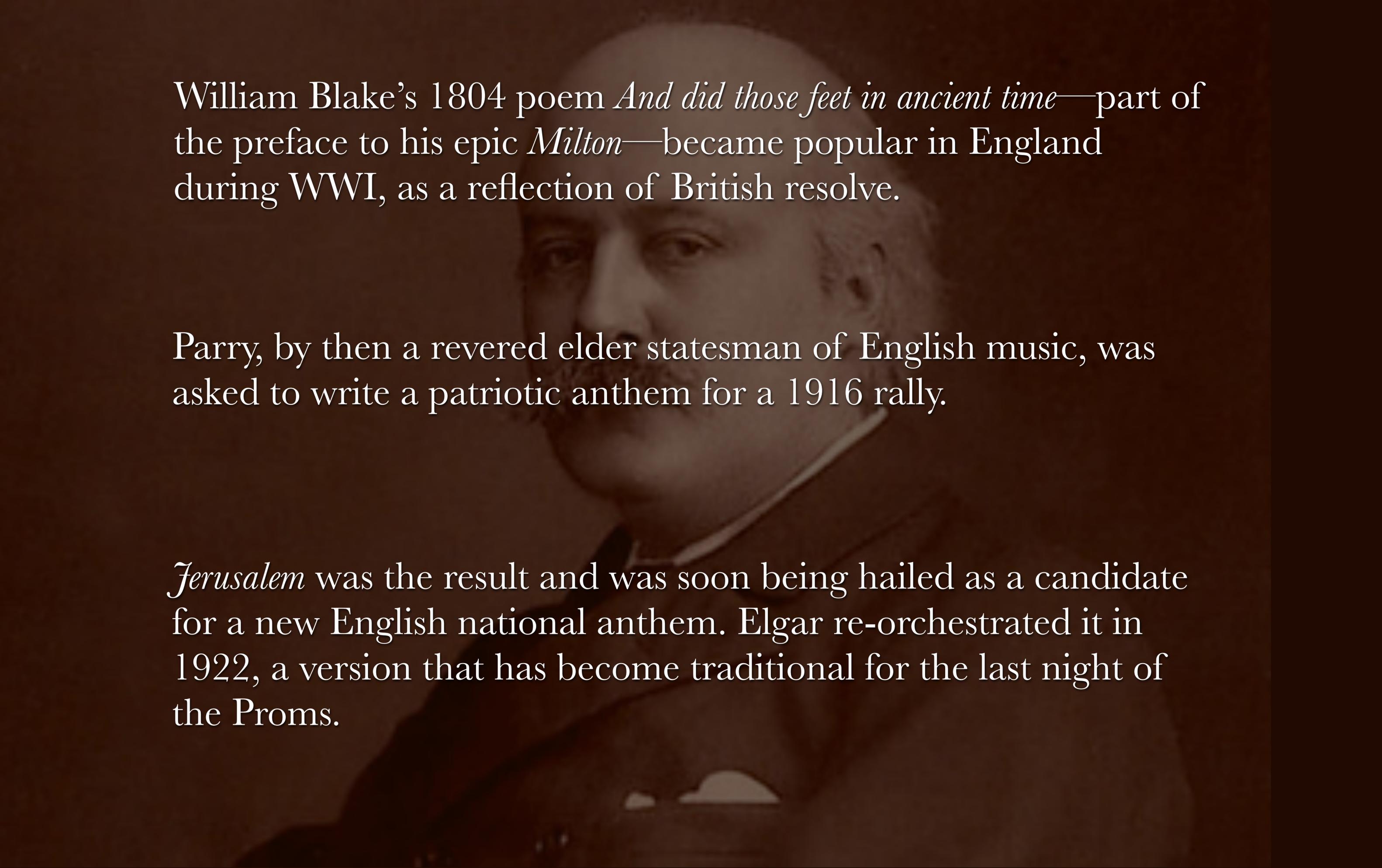
The qualities which Parry espoused—honesty, integrity, generosity of spirit and above all creativity and caritas—have always been the preserve of an enlightened minority.

*Bernard Benoliel*



# Parry: Jerusalem

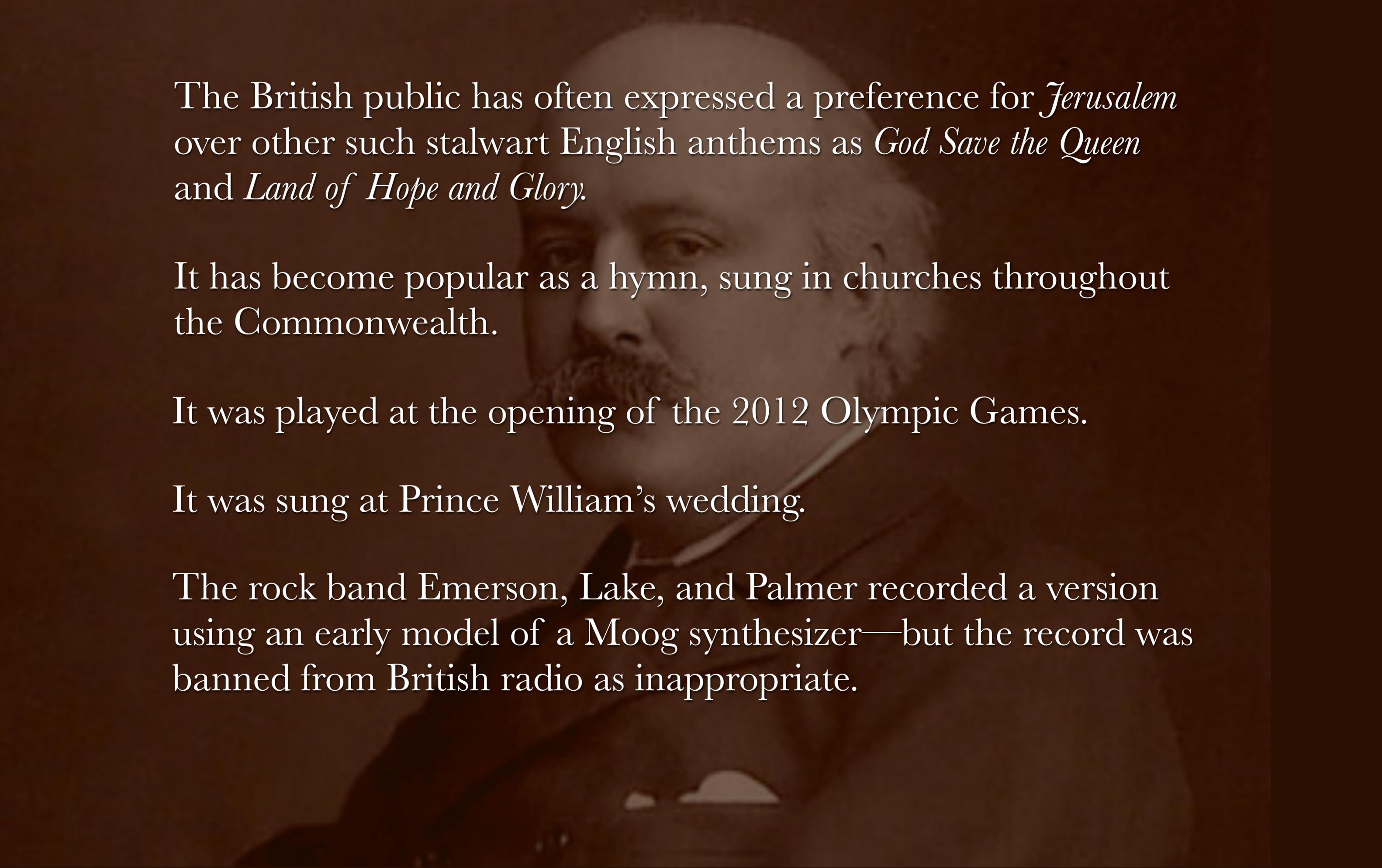
Andrew Litton / Bournemouth Symphony / Westminster Cathedral Choir

A faint, sepia-toned portrait of Edward Elgar is visible in the background of the slide. He is shown from the chest up, wearing a dark suit, a white shirt, and a dark tie. He has a mustache and is looking slightly to the right of the camera.

William Blake's 1804 poem *And did those feet in ancient time*—part of the preface to his epic *Milton*—became popular in England during WWI, as a reflection of British resolve.

Parry, by then a revered elder statesman of English music, was asked to write a patriotic anthem for a 1916 rally.

*Jerusalem* was the result and was soon being hailed as a candidate for a new English national anthem. Elgar re-orchestrated it in 1922, a version that has become traditional for the last night of the Proms.



The British public has often expressed a preference for *Jerusalem* over other such stalwart English anthems as *God Save the Queen* and *Land of Hope and Glory*.

It has become popular as a hymn, sung in churches throughout the Commonwealth.

It was played at the opening of the 2012 Olympic Games.

It was sung at Prince William's wedding.

The rock band Emerson, Lake, and Palmer recorded a version using an early model of a Moog synthesizer—but the record was banned from British radio as inappropriate.

