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## British Sonatas by Hadow, Bell, Linstead and Fiske: Rediscovering a Forgotten Repertory

ClarinetFest® 2000  
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Good morning Ladies and Gentlemen. I would like to begin my paper with a short quote by Oscar W. Street (1869-1923), the amateur clarinetist and pupil of the renowned player George Arthur Clinton (1850-1913).

"After the recent performance of Sir Charles Villiers Stanford's Sonata for pianoforte and clarinet which I have already mentioned, we were treated to some extraordinary effusions in the Press, the tenor of which was that the clarinet is an unsatisfactory instrument for anything in the nature of a solo Sonata, owing (as it was said) to its comparative inflexibility and somewhat monotonous tone-colour".<sup>1</sup>

This statement in 1916 by Street clearly describes the unfavourable British reception of clarinet Sonatas in the early part of the 20th century. This rather negative opinion perhaps resulted from the very limited number of somewhat 'academic' British Sonatas composed for this combination before 1900. Existing Sonatas composed pre-1900 included Alice Mary Smith's Sonata in A major (1870), Charles Swinnerton Heaps Sonata (published 1880) and Ebenezer Prout's Sonata opus 26 (published c.1890).

Colin Lawson states, and I quote: "...there can be no doubt that Brahms's encounter with the clarinet acted as an immense influence and stimulus to later composers of different nationalities and styles".<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Brahms's famed Sonatas, coupled to Mulhfeld's power of performance, must be viewed as strongly contributory elements to a rejuvenated British wind Sonata tradition which began to appear after 1900. Today Sonatas by Sir Donald Francis Tovey (1906), Sir Charles Villiers Stanford (1911) and Sir John Ireland's Phantasy Sonata (1945) are well known and often performed. However, there remains a sizeable 'forgotten' repertory of highly significant British clarinet Sonatas. This paper will briefly present the relatively unknown works of Sir William Henry Hadow (1859-1937), William Henry Bell (1873-1946), George Frederick Linstead (1908-1974) and Roger Fiske (1910-1987).

William Henry Hadow (1859-1937) was one of the pre-eminent scholars of his day. Educated at Malvern College and later Oxford University, he followed a varied career in academia, writing and music. He lectured in classics at Worcester College, Oxford, became Principal at Armstrong College, University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne (1909-1919), and was later appointed vice-chancellor of Sheffield University (1919-1930).

Hadow's is best remembered today for the so-called 'Hadow Report'. This report revolutionised the general education of children over eleven years of age. H.C. Colles states, and I quote: "Through all his varied pursuits, he never lost sight of the music, and his influence on the musical life of this country was possibly even greater than on scholarship".<sup>3</sup> H. J. Foss confirms Colles' assessment of Hadow's impact on the state of British music in 1937, and I quote: "Without the liberalizing influence of Hadow, the musical life of this country could hardly become what it is today ... the most significant in the world. Neither of these statements is exaggerated. Neither of them is written in forgetfulness either of other people's work or other nations' achievements. But Hadow, as one of the most powerful forces for culture in our age, preferred to remain in the background. His academic positions, distinguished though they were, are quite incommensurate with the extent and nature of his personal work".<sup>4</sup> Significantly, Foss may have shown a little too much enthusiasm ... and a good deal of national bias ... in the year of Hadow's death, but his words do communicate the esteem and high regard in which Hadow was generally held.

Hadow's Sonata for clarinet and piano was written in 1897. The surviving manuscript is kept at Worcester College, Oxford. In three movements, *Allegro*, *Maestoso* and *Finale*, it is scored for A clarinet. The Sonata is a warm, lyrical composition, which aimed to satisfy Hadow's highly nationalistic musical aspirations. These

aspirations are clearly voiced in his own writings. In the following text he compares British artistic culture and musical expression to that of the continent, and I quote: "We have our own vision of beauty: a vision of English skies and English woodlands, of Gainsborough and Constable, of Chaucer and Milton. So far as our music can embody and express this ideal so far will it advance, firmly and confidently, along the lines of its great tradition as a living language".<sup>5</sup>

William Henry Bell's Sonata in D minor was composed in Claremont, Cape Town in 1926.<sup>6</sup> Dedicated to his son 'Oliver M. Bell', the autograph manuscript notes that it is scored for 'clarinet (viola) and piano'.<sup>7</sup> Bell studied composition with Sir Charles Villiers Stanford and later became professor of harmony at the Royal Academy of Music.<sup>8</sup> He immigrated to South Africa in 1912.<sup>9</sup> The clarinet Sonata has always been obscure and is almost completely unknown in contemporary clarinet culture.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, it is so overlooked that even the most concise precise of Bell's life and work, the *South African Music Encyclopedia*, does not list this composition.<sup>11</sup>

The Bell Sonata is in four movements: *Allegro moderato*, *Moderato grazioso*, *Adagia* and *Allegro non troppo*. Firmly tonal throughout, the first and fourth movements incorporate 'free-flowing' melodies with regular interplay between instruments and, in the presenter's opinion, these movements account for the most 'inspired' elements within the work. Significantly, the Bell Sonata emphasises a shift away from the melodic dominance of the soloist over accompanist, which was common to works of this genre before 1900. The composition utilises varied rhythmic motives, which are mostly simple in design. However, Bell does choose to employ the unusual metre of 24/8 in the second movement - this being significant because of the bar's 9/8+6/8+9/8 subdivided grouping. The intention is here clearly to divide the bar into three asymmetrical beats. Areas of ritardando and tempo fluctuations appear throughout and considerable dynamic gradation is common. Whilst these elements are not unusual for the period, the fact that they are fastidiously marked into the score does indicate a highly prescriptive approach from the composer.

George Frederick Linstead's imaginative Sonata is an important addition to early 20th-century British repertoire.<sup>12</sup> Its exact date of composition is unknown, but the composer's son, Stephen Linstead, believes it to be sometime between January and March 1932.<sup>13</sup> The clarinetist William Roystone - dates unknown to this presenter - with the composer on the piano performed it for the first time at a John Parr Chamber Concert on 26 March 1932.<sup>14</sup> The Sonata's relative obscurity limited the number of early performances. However, this obscurity does not relate to its origins in Sheffield, which at that time was a mecca for wind performance under John Parr's patronage. Rather the piece's pre-Ireland disjointed melodies and high technical demands place it outside the easily accessible ambience of Parr's concerts and relative general technical ability of clarinetists from the period - many of whom were still employing simple-system instruments.

Linstead lived most of his life in Sheffield and lectured at the University from 1947.<sup>15</sup> His style was highly individualistic. Stephen Linstead writes about his father's approach to composition, and I quote: "he wrote in a variety of styles as the muse took him but always in the most meticulous way, sometimes jocular, sometimes very serious and difficult...he was a very English composer, a countryman at heart, delighting in the glories of the countryside which surrounds Sheffield, and influenced by the English tradition of church music".<sup>16</sup>

The Linstead Sonata is immensely significant to the development of a more exploratory and expressive 20th century clarinet tradition in Britain. Whilst not equalling the heights of 'lyrical artistry' and invention achieved by later native compositions, such as Bax and Ireland, this Sonata did lead the way in two important areas. Firstly, it dramatically increased the technical expectations placed on performers - when compared to pre-1930 Sonatas. A 'new' virtuosity is in evidence in the clarinet score's wide register shifts, which are often transitioned quickly during long, technically demanding semi-quaver passages. The piano score is equally complex with challenging rhythmical interplay between left and right hands, and sections, which leap across the keyboard. Secondly, the Linstead Sonata was the first British composition of its type to be through-composed. It exchanged the tradition of 'breaking' movements for a shorter, 'non-stop' format. Within this one movement structure it incorporates considerable contrast, which is emphasised through tempo change, rubato, ritardando and the use of fermata. Importantly, this 'new' 'formal' structure, which includes a prelude and postlude, is well balanced despite the lack of traditional movement separation.

Roger Fiske (1910-1987) was a musicologist, author and broadcaster.<sup>17</sup> First educated at Wadham College, Oxford, he later studied composition with Herbert Howells at the Royal College of Music. His most significant writings include *English Theatre Music in the Eighteenth Century* (1973), *Beethoven's Last Quartets* (1940) and a popular study of *Chamber Music* (1969).

Fiske's clarinet Sonata was composed in 1941. He wrote one other composition for clarinet and piano: a Sonatina dated 1951. Both these manuscripts, together with all other existing manuscripts of the composer, were left to Richard Platt (Falmouth, Cornwall) on the composer's death. These manuscripts have now been placed at the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

In an undated letter to the presenter - probably late 1998 - Richard Platt compares the Sonata and Sonatina, and I quote: "...they are quite large scale works; the difference in title is more to do with the musical character. The Sonata is the more virtuoso of the two. Fiske studied with Herbert Howells and I think some of that influence shows, in for instance the melodic character of the slow movement and the rhythmic structure of the

Finale. His widow, Elizabeth Fiske, said that Frederick Thurston played it at a 'private performance'. Unfortunately, Fiske kept very quiet about his own compositions when he was alive and I only realised what the Sonata was like after he had died."<sup>18</sup>

Subsequent correspondence between Richard Platt and the presenter provided confirmation that this Sonata was never performed publicly by Thurston. In a letter to this presenter dated 10th April 1999, Platt enclosed a photocopy of a letter to him from Elizabeth Fiske, the composer's widow.<sup>19</sup> In this letter Elizabeth Fiske states, and I quote: "I am sure that there was no formal performance of any sort, though I seem to remember 'Jack' Thurston coming to our rooms in Bedford and discussing the clarinet Sonata while Roger was working on it. I also rather think Thurston once came to our rooms in Putney. After that Jack Thurston became ill and I think things went no further. As far as I know Roger never did anything more about the Sonata, he got busy with other work - whether Roger ever tried to get it published I don't know. I saw Catherine - Elizabeth Fiske's daughter - yesterday, she had clarinet lessons with Thurston's widow Thea King. Catherine says she remembers no reference to any performance of the Sonata and like me she thinks Roger must have put it aside when other things were making him very busy."<sup>20</sup>

Elizabeth Fiske's letter to Richard Platt provides substantive evidence that the Fiske clarinet Sonata was written specifically for Frederick Thurston. More importantly Elizabeth Fiske's correspondence confirms that Thurston never publicly performed this Sonata. After Thurston's death, the Sonata was sidelined and forgotten. It seems that any previous performance was 'private' and probably took the form of a 'trial run' - possibly to finalise technical elements.

This short presentation has intended to provide an initial introduction to the Hadow, Bell, Linstead and Fiske Sonatas. It is this presenter's hope that in the coming years many performers might consider adding these substantial and exciting 'lost' works to their repertoire lists. To this end I have worked closely with Michael Bryant's Rosewood publications in preparing new editions of these Sonatas. These editions will be available to order by the end of September this year.

In closing I would like to play some short extracts from a few of the Sonatas I have presented this morning.

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<sup>1</sup>. Street, 'The Clarinet and its Music' (1916), *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*, p.113

<sup>2</sup>. Lawson, *Brahms Clarinet Quintet* (1998), p 87

<sup>3</sup>. Colles, 'William Henry Hadow', *The Musical Times* (May 1937), p 405

<sup>4</sup>. Foss. 'William Henry Hadow', *Music and Literature*, (1937), p. 237

<sup>5</sup>. Hadow, *English Music* (London, 1931), p. 174.

<sup>6</sup>. The manuscript of this Sonata is held at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. The author is grateful to the University librarian Lesley Hart, and Peter Bell a family relative in Britain, for giving their permission to publish this work. Released in 2000 by Rosewood publications in conjunction with this author.

<sup>7</sup>. These facts were obtained from a South African dissertation in Afrikaans on Bell. H.H. van der Spuy, *W.H. Bell: Enkele Aspekte van sy Loopban en sy Invloed op die Suid-Afrikaanse Musieklewe* (translated: 'Some Aspects on his Career and his Influence on South African Music Life') (January 1970), M-Mus degree, Port Elizabeth University, p.407.

<sup>8</sup>. He held this position from 1903 to 1912. 'William Henry Bell - An Interim Sketch and Worklist', *British Music* Vol. 11 (1989), p.20.

<sup>9</sup>. Bell was initially principal of the South African Music College, Cape Town (from late 1912). When this institution merged with the newly established University of Cape Town, he became the first professor of music there. He is also remembered today for helping to form the Cape Town Symphony Orchestra and the 'Little Theatre' (established at University of Cape Town in 1930). Bell retired in 1935. *Catalogue of Music and Manuscripts by W.H. Bell* (no date), compiled by L.E. Taylor, University of Cape Town (no. 11917.de. 11).

<sup>10</sup>. Bell wrote predominantly vocal music. However, he is known to have written three other Sonatas: Sonata for violin opus 11 (1897), Sonata for violin in D major (1918) and Sonata for cello in A minor (1927). He also wrote two Operas, five Symphonies and a viola Concerto.

<sup>11</sup>. *South African. Music Encyclopaedia* Vol. 1 (1979), ed. Jacques Malan, pp.152-58

<sup>12</sup>. Published in 2000 in conjunction with Rosewood publications and this author.

<sup>13</sup>. The Sonata comes towards the end of a bound set of manuscript scores dated 1928 to 1941. It is possible that it was in fact completed in late 1931. This cannot be substantiated. Personal correspondence between Stephen Linstead and the author (5 May 1999).

<sup>14</sup>. A copy of this programme was obtained through personal correspondence with Michael Bryant.

<sup>15</sup>. Linstead was appointed music critic of the Sheffield Morning Telegraph in 1940. As a pianist he was one of the most frequent contributors to John Parr's monthly chamber music concerts at Victoria Hall, Sheffield (1930-1957). *Who's Who in Music* (1962), 4th edition, p.129.

<sup>16</sup>. Other chamber music includes a violin sonata, two string quartets and a sextet and quintet for wind. He also wrote two works for brass band, piano solos, songs, an opera and ballet. 'George F. Linstead, a short biography and repertoire list'. Obtained through personal correspondence with Stephen Linstead.

<sup>17</sup>. Fiske was very involved in making classical music more accessible to children. He joined the British

Broadcasting Corporation as their 'schools music broadcasts' organiser in 1939. He also wrote a number of significant educational books. For example, *Listening to Music -A Guide to Enjoyment* (Harrap & Co., 1952).

18. Personal correspondence between the author and Richard Platt, 3 Stratton Place, Falmouth, Cornwall, TR11 2ST.

19. Photocopy of personal correspondence between Elizabeth Fiske and Richard Platt.

20. Letter from Elizabeth Fiske, 209 Millans Court, Ambleside, Cumbria, LA22 9BW, dated 5th April 1999.