

Practise what you preach: Stanford's German songs

Summary

Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924) had an immense influence on the young composers who were his students at the Royal College of Music in London where he taught from 1883. Unlike many other composers, Stanford committed his views on composition to paper: they are to be found in his book *Musical composition: a short treatise for students* (1911) and in certain chapters (especially "The composition of music") of his book *Interludes, records and reflections* (1922). The application of his strict ideas on composition to his own German songs (all eighteen on texts by Heine), reveals that he generally adheres to his own advice: he practises what he preaches. An analysis of the songs also shows them to be worthy of much wider recognition. With a few exceptions, the meaning of the text is very convincingly and movingly conveyed.

"Practise what you preach": Stanford se Duitse lieder

Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924) het 'n baie groot invloed uitgeoefen op die jong komponiste wat sy studente was aan die Royal College of Music in Londen waar hy vanaf 1883 klas gegee het. In teenstelling met baie ander komponiste het Stanford sy mening oor komposisie op skrif gestel. Dit word gevind in sy boek *Musical composition: a short treatise for students* (1911) en in sommige hoofstukke (veral "The composition of music") van sy boek *Interludes, records and reflections* (1922). Wanneer Stanford se streng idees oor komposisie toegepas word op sy eie 18 Duitse lieder (almal op tekste van Heine) word vasgestel dat hy meesal sy eie advies gevolg het. Hy het uitgevoer wat hy self voorgestel het. 'n Analise van die lieder toon dat hulle op baie meer erkenning geregtig is. Hulle is lieder waarin, op enkele uitsonderings na, die betekenis van die woordteks baie oortuigend en roerend uitgebeeld word.

Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924) holds, for various reasons, a very special position in the ranks of British composers.¹ First, he was an Englishman² who had the opportunity of studying in Germany and benefitting from German musical culture. Secondly, in 1883, at the age of only 31, he became Professor of Composition at the newly created Royal College of Music in London, where he would be in a position to influence young composers for over 40 years. And most important of all: as opposed to many other composers, especially the great composers of songs such as Schubert, Schumann, Brahms and Wolf, he left extensive documents detailing his views on composition. They are the book *Musical composition: a short treatise for students* (1911) and certain chapters (especially “The composition of music”) of his book *Interludes, records and reflections* (1922).

These three factors make Stanford one of the central figures of the so-called English musical Renaissance.

After describing the apparently parlous state of music teaching and music-making in England during the 1870s, Stanford (1914: 142) explains in his book *Pages from an unwritten diary* his reasons for going to Leipzig:

The serious student of composition therefore had both for tuition and experience to betake himself abroad, and the centre which was most attractive was Leipzig; partly from its traditions, partly from the apostolical succession of Englishmen who had gone there, partly from the excellent opportunities it offered of hearing all schools of music both in the theatre and in the concert-room, and from the central position which placed it within easy reach of Berlin, Dresden and Weimar.

Stanford's first visit to Germany took place in 1873, and he travelled to Leipzig for the first time in 1874 to study with teachers attached

- 1 Financial assistance from the Human Sciences Research Council is gratefully acknowledged. The findings and conclusions of this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of this institution.
- 2 Although Stanford was born and bred in Dublin, Ireland, and his compositions include many with Irish titles and melodies, he is generally regarded as British or English.

Van der Mescht/Stanford's German Songs

to the *Conservatorium der Musik zu Leipzig*, founded by Mendelssohn in 1843 (Stanford 1914: 133). In 1875 he visited Leipzig again:

My master in composition was Karl Reinecke [1824-1910], to whom Sterndale Bennett had given me an introduction. Of all the dry musicians I have ever known he was the most desiccated. He had not a good word for any contemporary composer. [...] What progress I made in my first two years in Germany was due rather to the advice of my pianoforte master, Papperitz, a broad-minded, sympathetic teacher. [...] My third winter [1876] I spent partly at Berlin, and partly at Leipzig, studying with Kiel [1821-1885], in whom I found a master at once sympathetic and able. As a teacher of counterpoint, canon and fugue, he was *facile princeps* of his time, but he was no dryasdust musician (Stanford 1914: 156, 157, 164).³

During his visits to Germany the impressionable Stanford made the acquaintance of many illustrious musicians. At the Schumann Festival in Bonn he heard the famous singer Julius Stockhausen (1826-1906). He met Ferdinand Hiller (1811-1885), and in Hiller's house in Cologne he was introduced to Brahms. During his time in Germany he heard Liszt play, and sat next to the deaf Robert Franz (1815-1892) at table. When Joseph Joachim (1831-1907) visited Leipzig, he spent an hour perusing Stanford's compositions. In 1876 Stanford heard the first performance of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* in Bayreuth, where he sat behind Liszt.

At the close of 1877 I ended my *Wander-jahren* [sic] and returned to Cambridge and 'organ-blowing' (Stanford 1914: 133, 148-49, 156, 157, 165, 167).

It is clear that Stanford's visits to Germany brought him into contact with some of the foremost German musicians of his time. These experiences certainly must have had an important influence on his music and specifically on his German songs.

Due to his powerful position at the Royal College of Music from 1883 onwards, Stanford reigned supreme as the composition master of most young English composers until his death in 1924. Among

3 It is important to note that Stanford was never enrolled at the Conservatory in Leipzig. There is no material about him in the archive of the present-day *Hochschule für Musik und Theater* in Leipzig. Nor is there, regrettably, any music by Stanford in the catalogue of the Library of the *Hochschule*.

Acta Academica 2001: 33(1)

them were William Henry Bell, Arthur Benjamin, Arthur Bliss, Frank Bridge, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Henry Walford Davies, Thomas Dunhill, Eugene Goossens, Ivor Gurney, Gustav Holst, Herbert Howells, William Hurlstone, John Ireland, Gordon Jacob, Ernest Moeran and Ralph Vaughan Williams. These composers also made significant contributions to the genre of the English song. Some, in emulation of their master, used texts by Heine, an example being Frank Bridge, who set at least ten of Heine's poems in English translation.

[M]any of Bridge's texts — translations of Heine, famous lyrics by Shelley, Tennyson and Arnold, a smattering of Shakespeare and Herrick — were no doubt suggested by Stanford or at least chosen to meet with his approval [...] (Banfield 1988: 68-9, 426-27).

Stephen Banfield, in his definitive work on English song *Sensibility and English song: Critical studies of the early 20th century* (1988), mentions for example ten Heine poems set to music by Bridge in translated English versions.

Stanford's writings on the art of composition make good (although conservative) reading. According to its prefatory note, the book *Musical composition* (1911) "is to some extent a résumé of the experience of twenty-five years in watching and criticising the efforts of many young men [...]." Stanford was to add another thirteen years to this experience. We are therefore in the exceptional position to have, in book form, Stanford's own ideas about composition, and specifically the composition of songs. Some of his notions are rather severe, for example:

The wisest plan is to keep song writing for an occasional and experimental amusement, and to eschew it as a practice until the power over writing absolute music is assured (Stanford 1911: 34).

Banfield (1988: 3) gives the following, mainly negative, assessment of the standard of songs by English composers before 1900:

A vast and facile productivity is amply evident, and, by comparison with the *Lieder* of Schumann, Brahms and Wolf, the *mélodies* of Bizet, Fauré, Duparc and Debussy, and the songs of Grieg, the overall impression is one of worthlessness. Whole volumes of mid- and late-Victorian songs and ballads by various composers are indistinguishable, showing a uniform lack of musical imagination.

Van der Mescht/Stanford's German Songs

But writing on Stanford, for whom he provides a list of more than 200 songs, Banfield (1988: 513-7, 531) states the following:

Even his earliest songs, the George Eliot and Heine settings, are free of Victorian sentimentality, possessing an assured eclecticism which was no doubt partly a result of his training in Berlin and Leipzig under Kiel and Reinecke.

What then are the characteristics of these Heine settings which make them worthwhile compositions? And does Stanford do in his German songs what he tells his students to do in his writings about the art of composing songs? Or, to put it in another way: does he practise what he preaches, or teaches? And furthermore: do Stanford's chapters contain useful advice for the contemporary song composer? Are his own German songs successful in spite of his warning that "the writing of a good song is one of the most difficult tasks which a composer can undertake" (Stanford 1911: 128-29)?

1. Stanford's settings of poems by Heine

Stanford wrote eighteen German songs in total, all on texts by Heinrich Heine (1797-1856). It is certainly exceptional that he used poems by Heine only; there is no trace of Goethe or Eichendorff, for example.

Banfield (1988: 10) explains Heine's position in this way: "The poet most apposite to Victorian song [...] was not English." He goes on to provide a list of English composers who set Heine's songs, starting with Sterndale Bennett's *Mädchen mit dem rothen Mündchen* and including Ernest Walker, Balfe, Coleridge-Taylor, MacKenzie, Maude Valerie White, Delius, Holst, Gurney, and Bridge. To this list can be added Frederick Cowen, who set "The sea hath its pearls", an adaptation by Longfellow of the Heine poem "Das Meer hat seine Perlen".⁴

Stanford's interest in Heine could have been prompted by his love for the music of Schumann, who set 37 Heine poems to music. Writing about his first visit to Germany, Stanford (1914: 133) states:

⁴ Its number in the British Library in London is H.2506.b (15).

Acta Academica 2001: 33(1)

In the summer of the same year [1873] I went abroad for the first time, and with my friend, Frank McClintock [...], made straight for the Schumann festival at Bonn.

The following poems by Heine were set to music by Stanford:

- 6 Songs: Op 4, composed 1874 (?), published by Stanley Lucas, Weber & Co, possibly in 1876:⁵
 - 1 *Sterne mit den gold'nen Füßchen*
 - 2 *Mit deinen blauen Augen*
 - 3 *Dass du mich liebst*
 - 4 *Frühling*
 - 5 *Ernst ist der Frühling*
 - 6 *Der Schmetterling ist in die Rose verliebt*
- 6 Songs: Op 7, composed 1877 (?), published by Stanley Lucas, Weber & Co, possibly in 1877:⁶
 - 1 *Ich lieb' eine Blume*
 - 2 *Wie des Mondes Abbild zittert*
 - 3 *An die blaue Himmelsdecke*
 - 4 *Der sterbende Almansor*
 - 5 *Ich halte ihr die Augen zu*
 - 6 *Schlummerlied*
- *Tragödie*: Op 14, No 5 from 6 Songs Op 14, composed April 1880, published by Boosey in 1882:
 - 1 *Entflieh mit mir*
 - 2 *Es fiel ein Reif*
 - 3 *Auf ihrem Grab*
- *Die Wallfahrt nach Kevlaar*: Op 72, composed November 1898, published by Boosey in 1899:
 - 1 *Am Fenster stand die Mutter*

5 This possible date of publication was supplied by Jeremy Dibble of the University of Durham.

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Van der Mescht/Stanford's German Songs

- 2 *Die Mutter Gottes zu Kevlaar*
- 3 *Der kranke Sohn und die Mutter.*

When one considers the Heine poems set to music by Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, and Stanford, it is significant that only four were set by both Stanford and one of the great composers. Schubert set only seven Heine poems to music, none of which was also chosen by Stanford. Schubert's Heine songs are *Mein Frieden*, composed probably in 1815, and the six songs from *Schwanengesang* of 1828 (Brown & Sams 1980: 804). Of the 37 Heine poems set to music by Schumann, three (forming the small song cycle *Tragödie* Op 64, No 3 of 1841 or earlier) were set by Stanford in 1880 (Sams 1975: 186). Stanford was obviously careful not to set a poem that had already been set by Schubert or Schumann. Of the six Heine poems set by Brahms, only one, *Es liebt sich so lieblich im Lenze*, was also set to music by Stanford (1874, Op 4, No 4, with the original Heine title *Frühling*). Brahms's well-known setting, from 1877, is Op 71, No 1. It is interesting to note that Stanford's setting predates Brahms's.⁷

2. Manuscript sources of the songs

The manuscript copy of Op 4 is held in the Library of the Royal College of Music in London (MS 4339), while Op 72 can be found in the National Library of Ireland (MS 4829). There are no extant copies of Op 7 or Op 14, No 5.

Geoffrey Bush (1986: xv), in the introduction to his selection of 60 Stanford songs for *Musica Britannica*, discusses Stanford's revisions of his songs as revealed by the manuscripts:

[F]or him composition could sometimes be a process of continuous re-thinking. Nor was publication the end of the matter; he seems to have been in the habit of undertaking an extensive revision whenever the second edition of a song was in prospect. Sometimes the emendations are confined to matters of detail [...]; elsewhere they amount to the virtual rewriting of the voice part [...], the accompaniment [...] or, in certain passages, both [...].

7 Stanford's book on Brahms, simply called *Brahms*, appeared in 1912, published by Murdoch in London.

Acta Academica 2001: 33(1)

Although many of Stanford's Heine songs found their first inspiration in Leipzig and Berlin, one could surmise that the final version is the product of a much more mature composer.

3. Characteristics of Stanford's German songs

3.1 Respecting the poet and the poem

Stanford adheres closely to Heine's division of stanzas by providing interludes between them.

His approach towards the repetition of lines and words is, however, more liberal. In MS 4253 in the Library of the Royal College of Music there is a letter from Longfellow (1807-1882), dated 3 October 1875, in which he comments on Stanford's plans to set his "The Golden Legend": "I do not care how much you omit, but I hope you will not find it necessary to change the words in the portions which you do use." This advice is sometimes not heeded by Stanford in his German songs. His admiration for the poet Heine is sometimes compromised, as he repeats a line or a part of a line of the text, thereby actually changing the poem's structure. This happens, for example, in the first printed song, *Sterne mit den gold'nen Füßchen* (Op 4, No 1), where Stanford repeats the last words of the first stanza, "im Schooss der Nacht" in bars 9-10 (see Example 1):

*Sterne mit den gold'nen Füßchen
Wandeln droben bang und sacht,
Daß sie nicht die Erde wecken,
Die da schläft im Schoß der Nacht.*

Van der Mescht/Stanford's German Songs

Example 1: *Sterne mit den gold'nen Füßchen* (Op 4, No 1), bars 1-16

Con moto. (♩ : 70.)

Singstimme.

Sterne mit deu goldnen Füß - chen wandeln dro - ben bang und sacht,
Stars a - bove me golden foot - ed wander on se - rene and light,

Pianoforte.

dass sie nicht die Er - de we - cken, die da schläft - im Schoos der -
That the earth they may not wa - ken, hush'd to slum - ber in the lap of

Nacht, im Schoos der Nacht. Horchend stehn die stummen Wäl - der.
night, the lap of night. All the woods are dumb and lis - ten,

je - des Blatt ein grünes Ohr; und der Berg, wie triu - mend streockt er
ev - ry leaf - let like an ear; and the dream - ing moun - tain stretches

The musical score is presented in four systems. Each system consists of a vocal line (Singstimme) and a piano accompaniment (Pianoforte). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The tempo is marked 'Con moto.' with a quarter note equal to 70 beats per minute. The score includes lyrics in both German and English. The piano part features various dynamics such as *p*, *pp*, and *ppp*. The systems are numbered 4, 5, 9, and 13 on the left, and 4, 8, 12, and 16 on the right, indicating bar numbers.

In this song Stanford also repeats the final line. In the next song, *Mit deinen blauen Augen* (Op 4, No 2), he repeats the penultimate and the final line. This tendency to pick out and repeat what he regarded as most important can also be observed in *Ernst ist der Frühling* (Op 4, No 5), where the words “Ernst ist der Frühling” from the first line and “küß’ ich so gern” from the last line are repeated. The repetition of “Ernst ist der Frühling” is especially significant as the repetition in the vocal line at the end of the stanza (bars 9-10) is presented in the form of a varied fugal answer of the line in bars 1-2:

Example 2: *Ernst ist der Frühling* (Op 4, No 5), bars 1-10

Adagio molto. (Quasi ad lib., ma in tempo.)

Ernst ist der Frühling, sei - ne Träu - me siud
Sad is the spring - time, and its dreaming mys -

trau - rig, je - de Blu - me schaut von Schmerz be - wegt; es heht ge -
terious, ev' - ry flow'r of May is born of toil; e'eu full of

heime Wehmuth in Nachti - gal - lenlaut, ernst ist der Fröh - - ling.
sorrow sings the night - in - gale her lay, Sad is the spring - time.

In spite of the fact that Stanford sometimes manipulates the poet's text, he succeeds in producing a convincing amalgam of the original version and his own vision of the text's possibilities.

Van der Mescht/Stanford's German Songs

3.2 Form

Concerning form, Stanford (1911: 139) writes the following in his *Musical composition* about "Songs in verse form" (or strophic songs):

Some poems lend themselves with ease to this treatment; others require many alterations in the successive verses in order to suit changed accents and different positions of the breaks in the sentence.

There is no strophic song among Stanford's eighteen German songs. What is very noticeable, however, is his propensity for indicating the beginning of a new stanza of a poem by using the same material as at the beginning of the first stanza, thereby implying strophic form, but deviating subsequently — compare Example 1, bars 1-4 and 11-14. In this way Stanford provides both unity and variety. The principle is used to great effect in nearly every one of his German songs. Another excellent example is found in *Mit deinen blauen Augen* (Op 4, No 2). Compare bars 0-6 with bars 11-16 in Examples 3a and 3b:

Example 3a: *Mit deinen blauen Augen* (Op 4, No 2), bars 0-6

Lento espressivo. (♩ = 72.)

Mit dei-nen blau-en Au-gen siehst du mich lieb-lich
On thy blue eyes re-pos-ing, Loew looks my life a-

an, way, Da ward mir so trüumend zu. Sit-ue,
My heart is set a-dreaming,

Example 3b: *Mit deinen blauen Augen* (op 4, No 2), bars 11-16

The musical score for Example 3b consists of two systems. The first system (bars 11-13) shows the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line has lyrics: "Au dei - ne blauen Au - gen, ge - denk - ich al - ler - Ou thy blue eyes for ee - er, a - dream - ing I must". The piano accompaniment features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The second system (bars 14-16) continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line has lyrics: "wärts; ein Meer von blau - en Ge - dan - ken, ein de; de; tide of soft blue fan - cies, a". The piano accompaniment includes dynamic markings such as "cresc." and "f".

Not all songs are in varied strophic form. *Dass du mich liebst* (Op 4, No 3) is through-composed, using an up-and-down contour as a binding factor. This occurs seven times in the voice part or in the right or left hands: in bars 2-3 (right hand, Example 15), 3-4 (voice, Example 15), 11-12, 22-23, 24-25, 26-27 and 27-28. But even in this song the first two lines of the second of the three stanzas use a piano part related to that of the first stanza.

An die blaue Himmelsdecke (Op 7, No 3) is the closest Stanford comes to creating a strophic song. It is only in the 11th bar of the 20-bar second stanza that the music deviates from that of the first stanza.

3.3 Writing for the voice

In Plunket Greene's (1935: 202-17) book *Charles Villiers Stanford*, a full chapter is devoted to Stanford's songs by the author, who was the main interpreter of those songs. No mention is made of Stanford's German songs, though.

After an exceptionally profound introduction on the value of the interpreter in determining the worth of a musical composition, Greene poses the question, "Does the writer of the songs know the

Van der Mescht/Stanford's German Songs

instrument for which he is writing?" Greene (1935: 203, 204) then answers his own question:

I say unreservedly, in the light of a pretty wide acquaintance with the anthology of song, that in his knowledge of the handling of the voice he stands higher than any writer since Schubert.

These are very complimentary words, and an analysis of Stanford's German songs proves that Stanford pays convincing attention to the needs of the voice. What is more, very few errors in declamation can be found in Stanford's settings.

In his *Interludes, records and reflections* Stanford (1922: 63) contrasts composers' attitudes to orchestral instruments and the voice:

Composers are at pains to know the scope and quality of orchestral instruments, but take no trouble to investigate the limitation and the capabilities of a far more subtle instrument, the human voice.

It can clearly be seen in his German songs that Stanford certainly heeded his own advice: "Make the vocal music 'practical' and it will sound well; make it 'impractical' and every one, including the singer will suffer" (Stanford 1922: 64). The examples offered in this article illustrate Stanford's practical application of the natural abilities of the voice.

3.4 The relationship between the voice and the piano

Stanford's views on the relationship between voice and piano can be regarded as somewhat conservative. In 1911 he stated that:

... [t]he accompaniment of a song should be only a comment on its meaning. It should be suggestive of its colour and atmosphere without being obtrusive. Its elaboration should be as an undercurrent, and should be felt rather than heard. Its simplicity should never give an idea of being studied. The moment an accompaniment distracts the attention from the poem and the singer, it is overstepping the line and spoiling the balance (Stanford 1911:135-36).

And in 1922 he wrote:

The accompaniment, that is everything which includes the bass, should be in most cases texture and suggestiveness, and not fixed detail of sufficient importance to interfere with the voice. Over-elaboration will kill the main theme, or at best, quarrel with it in a way sufficient to hide its purport. Support is what is needed, and support only. Accompaniment is only a secondary matter, however

Acta Academica 2001: 33(1)

important it may be (Stanford 1922: 65).

Stanford admits, though: “In a few songs the main idea is in the accompaniment and the comment in the voice.” He gives Schubert’s *Der Leiermann* as an example.

These extracts could give the impression that Stanford regarded the piano part (he calls it “the accompaniment”) as of inferior status or importance. But this is certainly not the case when the songs are analysed. Greene (1935: 212-13), as an interpreter of Stanford’s songs, feels quite rightly that

... the voice and the accompaniment do not paint the picture by turns. There are no alternating patches of colour; they do it together.

Stanford’s occasional negative comments on the accompaniment would appear to be aimed at students who try to put too much material into their piano parts.

3.5 Unison between voice and piano

Surprisingly enough, Stanford, like Schumann, one of his models, quite often uses unison, or octaves, between voice and piano, in spite of the fact that he advised the following in his *Musical composition*:

Avoid [...] making the accompaniment play the same successive notes in unison with the voice. [...] to double the melody is to fog it. The accompaniment is a distinct part in itself, and to mix it up with the vocal part means loss of power and range to itself. [...] The accompaniment, therefore, must allow for elasticity (Stanford 1911: 142).

An instance of octaves between voice and piano occurs in the first four bars of *Ich lieb’ eine Blume* (Op 7, No 1), see Example 4.

Here the left hand emphasises the vocal part in bars 1-2. This is significant because the vocal line contains a motive which acts as a binding factor throughout the song. Very few of the 33 bars lack traces of this motive. Four bars from the end of the song, the motive’s initial upward leap is extended to an octave at the words “so bang’ und wehe”. In bars 3 - 4.1 there is unison between the right hand and the voice. As can be seen in bars 4.4 - 7.1 this motive is also used in canon between the left hand and the voice. One is reminded of

Van der Mescht/Stanford's German Songs

Stanford's advice on clarity (1911: 36): "Make your chief melodic phrase clear, even by repetition, so that the ear may grasp what you are driving at." This motive certainly has a clear contour, which resonates with Stanford's (1911: 39) comments on Schubert's *An die Musik*: "The chief characteristic of this tune is the frequent fall of a sixth, which gives the unity of idea [...]."

Example 4: *Ich lieb' eine Blume* (Op 7, No 1), bars 0-14

Quasi Allegretto. (♩ = 144.)

Voice. *mf* *pp*
 Ich lieb' ei - ne Blu - me, doch weiss ich nicht wel - che, das macht mir
 My love is a flow - er, but I do not know her, ah! well - a -

Piano. *mf* *pp* 3

4 *cresc.* *f*
 Schmerz. Ich schau' in - al - le Blu - men - kel - che und such' ein
 day. I ask of - ev - ry cha - tied flow - er a heart for

9 *f* 11
 Herz.
 eye.

12 *pp* 14
 Es duf - ten die Blu - men im A - bend - schei - ne.
 The o - dours a - rise in the ee - ning splen - dour.

3.6 Introductions

The first thing that strikes one on performing the songs is that more than half of them have no introduction at all. Of the eighteen songs only eight have introductions: Op 4, No 4; Op 4, No 5; Op 4, No 6 (all very short); Op 7, No 2 (four bars, foreshadowing the voice entry); Op 7, No 6 (providing the accompanimental figure); Op 72, No 1 (a more extended four-bar introduction, depicting, march-like, the “Pilgrimage to Kevlaar”); Op 72, No 2 (two bars providing the accompanimental figure), and Op 72, No 3.

This is quite different from Stanford’s models Schubert, Schumann and Brahms who generally use longer introductions to set the atmosphere. In spite of Stanford’s veneration of Schubert and his use of Schubert’s songs as models in his *Musical composition* (1911), he does not follow Schubert’s example and use atmosphere-creating introductions. Later, Stanford (1922: 64) would write:

Composers sometimes forget that notes upon the voice have no machinery, such as a key-note, to start them. Most singers have to get their notes by hearing what others do.

It seems as though Stanford came to this insight only after he had written his Heine songs. Not only do the songs without introductions provide the musicians with a daunting task (how to give the singer his note in an artistically convincing way), but the omission of an introduction also “deprives” the pianist of the opportunity of setting the atmosphere. The lack of interesting introductions is one of the weaker traits of Stanford’s German songs.

3.7 Interludes

Stanford (1911: 136) had strong views on interludes:

When an intervening passage for the pianoforte alone occurs, it should never be so long as to interrupt the run of the poem or to break its continuity of idea. For this reason a break in the middle of a verse should generally be very short, while one between the verses can usually be longer.

He adds, apologetically, that such an interlude “must never be so accentuated as to call undue attention to itself”. It is clear that the

Van der Mescht/Stanford's German Songs

interludes in the Stanford German songs may be expected to be rather brief.

In *Sterne mit den gold'nen Füßchen*, the first song from Op 4, the longest performance by the piano without the “supervision” of the voice is only 1 and 2/3 bars in *con moto*. Interludes are generally longer in the Op 7 set, where the piano is granted a greater opportunity to comment on the proceedings. Stanford's (1911: 89) advice to young composers remains clear: “Do not write irrelevant passages (which are padding), however pleasing or brilliant”.

Near the middle of *Auf ihrem Grab*, the final song from *Tragödie*, Op 14, No 5, the interlude (bars 9 - 10.1 in Example 5b) is used to refer to the beginning of the first song, *Entflieh mit mir*, and specifically to the words “Entflieh mit mir und sei mein Weib” (bars 2.4.2 - 4 in Example 5a), the words precipitating the tragedy of the story.

Example 5a: *Entflieh mit mir* (first song of Op 14, No 5), bars 1-4

ALLEGRO APPASSIONATO. (♩ = 136)

VOICE. Come Ent-

PIANO. *p* *cres.* *cen.* *do.*

flee with me and be my bride, This heart of
 flieh mit mir, und sei mein Weib, und rob' an

Acta Academica 2001: 33(1)

Example 5b: *Auf ibrem Grab* (third song of Op 14, No 5), bars 9-10

The image shows a musical score for the third song of Op 14, No 5, 'Auf ibrem Grab'. It consists of two staves: a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in G major and 3/4 time, starting with a piano (pp) dynamic. The lyrics are: 'The breath of the breeze 'gins to Die Win...de sie we...ben so'. The piano accompaniment is marked 'ppp legatissimo.' and includes a 'con Ped.' instruction. The score is numbered 9 and 10.

Although Stanford's economical use of material is commendable, he could certainly have made more use of the piano in interludes (and also in introductions) to comment further on the poem's underlying meaning.

3.8 Postludes

Because of Stanford's bias towards the voice as the important partner in art songs, he also ends most songs in short space once the singer has completed the vocal part. Of the twelve songs in Op 4 and Op 7 only seven have a postlude, all rather short, and none boasting a flourish such as in some songs by Stanford's contemporary, Hugo Wolf (*Er ist's*, 1888).

In *Sterne mit den gold'nen Füßchen* (Op 4, No 1) Stanford introduces and repeats a new rhythmic figure (consisting of a dotted eighth and a sixteenth note) in the postlude (bar 32 in Example 6). The figure had only occurred in the voice part near the end, in bars 27 and 29. This is possibly done to emphasise the rhythm of the final significant word "Nachtigall":

Van der Mescht/Stanford's German Songs

Example 6: *Sterne mit den gold'nen Füßchen* (Op 4, No 1), bars 26-34

26 29

30 34

The postlude of *Dass du mich liebst* (Op 4, No 3) is longer and restates a recurring motive found in bars 1.2 - 3. A new figure is introduced in the postlude of *Frühling* (Op 4, No 4), whereas in *Wie des Mondes Abbild zittert* (Op 7, No 2) reference is made in the postlude to a melody found in the introduction and at the entry of the voice. A similar reference to the beginning (where voice and piano move in unison) is found in *Der sterbende Almansor* (Op 7, No 4), while in *Ich halte dir die Augen zu* (Op 7, No 5) the postlude uses a contour in triplets, similar to that of the interludes. In *Schlummerlied* (Op 7, No 6) the accompanimental figure is continued, ending with long chords.

Although they are often very short, it is clear that Stanford's postludes practise what he preaches: "gather up your threads at the end" (Stanford 1911: 36).

3.9 Accompanimental figures

It is surprising that Stanford does not, like his idol Schubert, make extensive use of recurring accompanimental figures in all his songs. Some songs nevertheless illustrate his talent for inventing descriptive accompanimental figures.

Acta Academica 2001: 33(1)

Frühling (Op 4, No 4), for example, has a constant flowing figure in 6/8, suggesting the waves (“Die Wellen”) in sections 1 and 3:

Example 7: *Frühling* (Op 4, No 4), bars 1-7

The image shows a musical score for Example 7, bars 1-7 of 'Frühling'. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system (bars 1-3) features a vocal line with lyrics: 'Die Wel - len bliu - ken und flie - ssen da - hin, / The wave - lets rip - ple and smile to the shore,' and a piano accompaniment with a constant flowing figure in 6/8 time. The second system (bars 4-7) features a vocal line with lyrics: 'es liebt - sich so lieb - lich im Len - / Love dwells - in the May's love - ly bow -' and a piano accompaniment with a similar flowing figure. The tempo is marked 'Allegretto. (♩ : 96.)' and the dynamics range from *mf* to *pp*.

As a contrast, the second section is changed to 2/4 and, with jerkiness achieved by the distribution of parts between the hands, reminds one of Wolf's *Der Gärtner* (1888), where a person on horseback is also described:

Example 8: *Frühling* (Op 4, No 4), bars 30-34

The image shows a musical score for Example 8, bars 30-34 of 'Frühling'. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system (bars 30-34) features a vocal line with lyrics: 'ze. Ein Rei - ter rei - tet den Fluss ent - lang, / ers. A knight comes cheeri - ly ri - ding by.' and a piano accompaniment with a distinctive accompanimental figure in 2/4 time. The tempo is marked 'Vivace. (♩ : 100.)' and the dynamics range from *p* to *staccato*.

Wie des Mondes Abbild zittert (Op 7, No 2) has the same ABA form as *Frühling*, with a distinctive accompanimental figure for each section. In *Der Schmetterling ist in die Rose verliebt* (Op 4, No 6) the constant flow of semiquavers which only stops at the words “ich weiss nicht” (I don't know) in bar 36 is possibly inspired by the line “Der

Van der Mescht/Stanford's German Songs

Schmetterling [...] / umflattert sie tausendmal" (The butterfly encircles the rose a thousand times).

The *Schlummerlied* (Op 7, No 6), strangely enough, is in a bright D major, and has repeated D's and A's in the left hand and flowing semiquavers in the right hand, a curious companion to Schubert's *Gretchen am Spinnrade*, which is in D minor:

Example 9: *Schlummerlied* (Op 7, No 6), bars 1-3

Andante tranquillo. (♩ = 92)

Püppchen klein,
Bairn my ain.

In *Die Wallfabrt nach Kevlaar* (Op 72), which consists of three connected songs, the use of accompanimental figures is much more extensive. The processional figure of the introduction is employed as a binding motive and also occurs near the end of the third song. In the second song, *Die Mutter Gottes zu Kevlaar*, a bar-long figure is used extensively in the long first section, and especially at the words "Der Sohn nahm seufzend das Wachsherz, / Ging seufzend zum Heiligen Bild" the sighing motive ("Seufzer") is heard to great effect:

Example 10a: *Die Mutter Gottes zu Kevlaar* (Op 72, No 2), bars 0-3

Allegretto semplice.

Die Mut - ter - Got - tes zu
The Vir - gin - Mo - ther at

Example 10b: *Die Mutter Gottes zu Kevlaar* (Op 72, No 2), bars 55-65

Schmerz? Der Sohn nahm seuf-zend das Wachsherz,
smard? He took with sigh-ing the wax-heart,

Ging seuf-zend zum Hei-li-gen-Bild; Die
With sighs to the shrine he prest; The

The three falling notes of the motive in Example 10 are inverted at the beginning of the third song (bars 2 and 4), indicating a possible reversal of fortunes, but in the postlude, with the son tragically dead, the motive reverts to its original falling form:

Example 11a: *Der kranke Sohn und die Mutter* (Op 72, No 3), bars 1-5

Andante. *pp*

Der kran-ke
The ail-ing

Van der Mescht/Stanford's German Songs

Example 11b: *Der kranke Sohn und die Mutter* (Op 72, No 3), bars 89-92



In these examples from *Die Wallfahrt nach Kevlaar* Stanford's ideas about "the complex treatment of melodies" are exemplified:

Whether the composer writes or chooses his theme he must bear in mind three essentials: firstly, that it should contain sufficient material to vary; secondly, that it should have at least one striking feature; thirdly, that it should be simple (Stanford 1911: 53).

3.10 Developing a melody

The vocal parts of Stanford's settings of the Heine songs are certainly not simple. They reveal many convincing features with regard to the development of melodies.

The first three bars of *Sterne mit den gold'nen Füßchen* (Op 4, No 1) illustrate Stanford's use of variation of a motive (cf Example 1, bars 1 - 3). Stanford (1911: 36) summed up Sachs's advice to Stolzing (in Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, Act 3) on developing a melody :

Balance your phrases so that they at once contrast with and supplement each other. [...] Make your chief melodic phrase clear, even by repetition, so that the ear may grasp what you are driving at.

Scrutiny of the manuscript of this song reveals that Stanford changed the rhythm of the voice part in the first three bars. He wrote the following in *Interludes, records and reflections*:

Melody is the first essential element of invention, but it is not the only one. Rhythm, and the power of producing rhythm, is the next essential element (Stanford 1922: 52).

In the final version of the song the first beat of each bar gradually gathers momentum: initially consisting of two, then three, and then

Acta Academica 2001: 33(1)

four notes. The “striking feature” here is the rising triad, which proves to be “sufficient material to vary” (Stanford 1911: 53). In bar 3 the right hand of the piano part, which previously moved in unison with the voice, imitates the vocal line. And in bar 7 a further variation is introduced with the figure starting in the voice only on the second beat (as opposed to bars 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 where it came on the first beat) and at the same time rhythmically imitating the piano’s right hand (a reversal of the situation in bar 3). Here Stanford (1911: 47) has been following his own advice: “Do not necessarily be satisfied with the form in which it first presents itself, but work at the details while preserving the balance.” Stanford also seems to have attended closely to the advice of his teacher Friedrich Kiel, who told him to use “Entwicklung [development], Entwicklung, immer Entwicklung!” (Stanford 1914: 165).

By repeating the words “im Schooss der Nacht” in bars 9 - 10, Stanford arrives at a phrase consisting of ten bars. In his *Musical composition* he states:

In order to gain complete control over metrical phrasing, it is well to experiment in phrases of three, five, six and seven bars, and to invent melodies which although expressed in these less common sentences, yet, owing to their rhythmical proportion, completely satisfy the ear (Stanford 1911: 29).

What Stanford produces here in *Sterne mit den gold'nen Füßchen* is one of these completely satisfying instances.

3.11 Melismas

In the extract from *Sterne mit den gold'nen Füßchen* (Op 4, No 1) in Example 1, Stanford makes ample use of melismas (compare bars 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 15, 16). He has strong views on this subject:

It is well to avoid writing several notes to one syllable except when the melody demands them, or when they are made a special feature of rhythmical detail (Stanford 1911: 138).

It is clear that Stanford’s policy on the use of melismas is similar to that of Brahms, but opposed to that of Wolf, in whose work melismas are seldom found, and then only to enhance the meaning of the words and not “when the melody demands them”.

3.12 Word-tone relationship

Stanford (1911: 129) wrote the following in his *Musical composition*:

the poetry to which [a song] is set is (or should be) the chief consideration, and [...] the music should be co-ordinate or subordinate to it without ever being superordinate. The first step in song writing, therefore, is to grasp the rhythm and the principles of poetry [...].

This Stanford certainly achieves. There are many examples of the close attention he gives to the musical interpretation of the words. The extended periods he spent in Germany unquestionably provided him with a keen understanding of the nuances of the German language.

In *Dass du mich liebst* (Op 4, No 3) the words “ich stieg wohl auf die Berge” in bars 10 - 11 are set in an obvious rising line, and on “jubelte” Stanford uses an exulting figure (consisting of a dotted eighth, sixteenth, and eighth notes) for the only time in the song. The mention of the sun which goes down “gross und schön” inspires Stanford to construct a sweeping rising-and-falling final phrase in bars 21.4 - 26:

Example 12: *Dass du mich liebst* (Op 4, No 3), bars 17-29

The musical score for Example 12 shows two systems of music. The first system, covering bars 17 to 20, includes a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line has lyrics in German and English: "Mein Herz ist wie die Sonne, so flam-mend an zu-gang. / My heart with fierce e-motion burns like the sun a-sea." The piano accompaniment features a "cresc." marking. The second system, covering bars 21 to 24, also includes a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line has lyrics: "seh, und in ein Meer von Lie-be ver-sinkt es. / love, And with full beau-ty sink-ing rests in a". The piano accompaniment includes "dim." and "p" markings.

The image shows a musical score for piano and voice. The vocal line is in the upper staff, and the piano accompaniment is in the lower staff. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The vocal line has lyrics: "gross und schön. (R. H. B.)" and "sea of love." The piano part has a "pp" dynamic marking. Bar numbers 25 and 29 are indicated.

In *Frühling* (Op 4, No 4) the only note on the word “fern” in bars 44-45 is specifically indicated *p* after four bars indicated *f*. It is accompanied by a falling chromatic line in the right hand, illustrating how the rider trots off leaving the poor “Schäferin” (shepherdess) behind. Her consequent weeping is expressed by means of a long note on “weint” in bar 54, with an accent added for poignancy.

The word “Schmerz” (pain) in bar 5 of *Ernst ist der Frühling* (Op 4, No 5) in Example 2 is approached by an extraordinary upward leap of an octave, and “bebt” (shivers) in bar 6 receives exclusive treatment through the use of accents on four subsequent syllables in the vocal part in bar 7: “ge-hei-me Weh-muth” (secret sorrow).

In Stanford’s German songs long notes are not often found at the beginning or in the middle of phrases. However, in *Ich lieb’ eine Blume* (Op 7, No 1), the first syllable of “süssen Gesang” in bar 27 is given a long note although it is located in the middle of the phrase. This draws specific attention to some important words for all song composers. The word “sicher” in bar 18 of *Wie des Mondes Abbild zittert* (Op 7, No 2) sets off a series of notes of equal value (as opposed to the variety of the beginning of the song) as the moon glides smoothly through the heavenly skies:

Van der Mescht/Stanford's German Songs

Example 13: *Wie des Mondes Abbild zittert* (Op 7, No 2), bars 13-21

gen, und er sel - ber still und
en, and her - self all calm and

si - cher wan - delt an dem Him - mels -
stete - ly pas - ses o'er the arch of

3.13 Rests

A very important aspect of Stanford's style is his convincing use of rests in the vocal line. He wrote the following about this topic:

The usefulness of rests is one of the essentials of composition. A piece of music has to breathe like a human being; the rests are the breathing place. [...] Rests and pauses are the best friends of the composer, [the] performer and the listener (Stanford 1911: 9, 171).

But Stanford does not use rests as breathing places alone. On the contrary, his use of rests often specifically illuminates the meaning of Heine's words. One may, for example, adduce *Mit deinen blauen Augen* (Op 4, No 2), where the words are "Mit deinen blauen Augen siehst du mich lieblich an, Da ward mir so träumend zu Sinne, [Rest] dass ich [Rest] nicht sprechen kann":

Example 14: *Mit deinen blauen Augen* (Op 4, No 2), bars 7-10

The image shows a musical score for Example 14, bars 7-10 of 'Mit deinen blauen Augen' (Op 4, No 2). The score is in G major and 3/4 time. The vocal line (treble clef) has lyrics: 'dass ich nicht spre-chen kann. / I have no word to say.' The piano accompaniment (bass clef) features a melodic line with triplets and a bass line with chords. The dynamic marking is *pp*. Bar numbers 7 and 10 are indicated at the start and end of the excerpt.

An extraordinary example is found at the beginning of *Dass du mich liebst* (Op 4, No 3). As though overcome by emotion at the realisation of the beloved's devotion, the singer has to stammer (bar 2) before mentioning himself:

Example 15: *Dass du mich liebst* (Op 4, No 3), bars 1-4

The image shows a musical score for Example 15, bars 1-4 of 'Dass du mich liebst' (Op 4, No 3). The score is in G major and 3/4 time. The tempo is *Moderato* (♩ = 80) and the dynamic is *p*. The vocal line (treble clef) has lyrics: 'Dass du mich liebst, dass wusst' ich, / Thou art my love, I knew it, / ich hatt' es längst ent-deckt; / I guess'd it long a-go;'. The piano accompaniment (bass clef) features a melodic line with chords. The dynamic marking is *p*. Bar numbers 1 and 4 are indicated at the start and end of the excerpt.

Here Stanford's use of rests is much more enterprising than that of Schubert, Schumann or Brahms. The final bars of *Wie des Mondes Abbild zittert* (Op 7, No 2) also demonstrate Stanford's dramatic use of rests. At the words "und mein eignes Herz erschüttert" in bars 43 - 50 Stanford writes an exceptionally long note on "Herz" followed by silence in both voice and piano, a tentative long chord, and the devastating last word.

In the middle song of *Tragödie* and in the dramatic ballade *Die Wablfahrt nach Kevlaar* much use is made of telling rests. The second song of the little drama *Tragödie* starts with the voice on its own, declaiming "Es fiel ein Reif in der Frühlingsnacht". In the opening song of *Die Wablfahrt nach Kevlaar*, after long phrases by the narrator and the mother, the demented son answers in short, fragmented phrases, indicating his suffering:

Van der Mescht/Stanford's German Songs

Example 16: *Am Fenster stand die Mutter* (Op 72, No 1), bars 14-22

14 *p* "Ich bin so krank, O Mut-ter, Dass ich nicht hör' und
"I am in pain, my mo-ther, I scarce can hear or

16

17 seh; Ich denk' an das tod - te Gret - chen, Da *p*
see; I think on my dead be - lov - ed, My

19

20 thut das Herz mir weh." "Steh' *f*
heart aches sore in me." "A -

22

Another touching example of the use of rests comes at the words, "Die Mutter Gottes heilt dir Dein krankes Herze [Rest] ganz" in bar 31 of the same song. As the story unfolds, "The mother took a wax-light [One bar rest in voice and piano] And out of it form'd a heart". When the mother tells the son to take the heart to the Virgin Mother, there is first a general silence before he moves. And when Mary visits the sleeping son, she "legte ihre Hand Ganz leise auf sein Herze, Und lächelste mild [Rests in voice and piano] und schwand".

Stanford's impressive use of rests illustrates his sensitivity to the meaning and demands of the poet's texts.

3.14 Developing material

In his *Musical composition*, Stanford (1911: 4-5) states the following:

All the music which has survived the ravages of time has been inherently logical, it states its premises and evolves its conclusions.

Der sterbende Almansor (Op 7, No 4) is a case in point. The song begins with three falling notes starting on E-flat. (The first phrase in bars 1-4 has a falling curve over one-and-a-half octaves, illustrating the words “Auf die schlafende Zuleima fallen Thänen, glühend heisse”). In the second stanza the long phrase is repeated initially, but the rest of the stanza follows a different, though similar, path (typical of Stanford’s variation technique). The third stanza (Example 17) commences with the three falling notes, this time beginning one step higher on F with the exclamation “Ach!” (bar 27). The final downward phrase in bar 39 starts on “Blut”, again one step higher and, as opposed to the other two stanzas, containing an exceptionally long note and a downward leap over an octave. This phrase is therefore accorded special treatment. One is reminded of Stanford’s (1911: 38) advice:

All good themes are in curves, and tend towards one striking moment which forms the culminating point of the melody. It need not necessarily be a climax in height: it need only be the outstanding main feature of the whole melody. It must come in the right place, neither too early nor too late.

Example 17: *Der sterbende Almansor* (Op 7, No 4), bars 27-47

The musical score for Example 17 consists of two systems of staves. The first system covers bars 27 to 31. It features a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (bass clef). The vocal line begins with the dynamic marking *f con fuoco*. The lyrics in German are: "Ach! der Schmerz ist stumm ge - lu - ren, oh - ne". The English translation is: "Ah! alas an - guish dumb be - god - len, from his". The piano accompaniment starts with *f* and includes a *cresc.* marking. The second system covers bars 32 to 36. The vocal line continues with the lyrics: "Zu - ge in dem Mu - de, hat nur Thrä - nen, hat nur". The English translation is: "mouth no word or - sound - ed, on - ly tear - drops, on - ly". The piano accompaniment includes a *p* marking and a *cresc.* marking.

Van der Mescht/Stanford's German Songs

The image shows a musical score for a German song. It consists of two systems of music. The first system has a vocal line on top and a piano accompaniment below. The vocal line starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic and a melisma. The piano accompaniment starts at measure 37 and ends at measure 41. The second system also has a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line starts at measure 42 and ends at measure 47. The piano accompaniment starts at measure 42 and ends at measure 47. The lyrics are in German and English.

Blut, Blut ans tie fer
 red, red drops round him

To - des - wun - de!
 dead - ly wound - ed!

Ich halte ihr die Augen zu (Op 7, No 5) is an example of Stanford's concise use of material. The opening melody (Example 18a), starting with a rising scale and ending with melismas in faster notes in bar 4, provides two motives, the second possibly indicating "küß". The flourish in the jocular interlude (bars 5 - 6) presents new material in triplets. These three motives are later closely knit, ending in the voice with a higher version of the first motive in bars 26.2.2 - 29 (Example 18b), a rhythmically augmented version of the melisma figure (bars 30 - 31) and a postlude starting with the triplet-motive (bar 32). This procedure illustrates the logic of Stanford's composition technique.

Example 18a: *Ich halte ihr die Augen zu* (Op 7, No 5), bars 0-6

Adagio. (♩. 92.)

Ich hal - te ihr die Au - gen zu und küß:
I seal thy lips with kis - ses three and hold

3

4

3

6

Example 18b: *Ich halte ihr die Augen zu* (Op 7, No 5), bars 26-34

Grund: ich hal - te ihr die Au - gen zu und küß:
I know; and still I give her kis - ses three and

26

29

30

34

In his sermon-like manner Stanford (1911: 89-90) summed up the concise treatment of material in the following words:

Oak leaves do not grow on beeches. Your composition must be like a tree, consistent of character from the roots below the ground to

Van der Mescht/Stanford's German Songs

the top-most branches, and clothed with foliage which is at once homogenous to itself and to the tree from which it springs.

4 Conclusions

In the previous paragraphs examples were given of Stanford's talent for setting words to music, as revealed in his eighteen German songs. By referring to his writings on composition, it was established that he alludes to many aspects of the composition of songs which can fruitfully be considered by the song composer of the twenty-first century. In his chapter on "The composition of music" Stanford (1922: 50) declared his philosophy of the art of composition:

Like all other arts, [music] relies upon two faculties which are inherent to its value — invention and technique. Without invention there is no music at all; without technique to control the invention, there can be no well-ordered music. Without a horse no vehicle will move; unless the horse is bitted, bridled and reined, the danger of movement will be too great, and the course of the movement will be as erratic as it is uncontrolled.

These words are typical of Stanford's comparisons in his advice on composition. Of course, nowadays in daily life (and perhaps also in contemporary composition) a vehicle can be moved without a horse. Stanford's German songs, though, stick closely to their creator's advice: they are not erratic and they are certainly not uncontrolled.

An analysis of Stanford's eighteen settings of Heine's poems reveals without any doubt a hoard of treasures for the lover of the German art song. With a few exceptions these songs are worthy of inclusion in a song recital. They show conviction in their setting and form a group of songs which has been undeservedly neglected.

We may draw the conclusion that, to a great extent, Stanford practises in his German songs what he preaches in his writings on composition, specifically his *Musical composition* of 1911 and his *Interludes, records and reflections* of 1922.

Acta Academica 2001: 33(1)

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