

ANNOTATING PERCIVAL KIRBY'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY CONCERNING HIS STUDIES AT THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC IN LONDON, 1910-1913 ¹

Heinrich van der Mescht

Department of Music, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, 0002

Die annotering van Percival Kirby se outobiografie betreffende sy studie by die Royal College of Music in Londen, 1910-1913

In hierdie artikel word Kirby se uitsprake (aangebied in sy outobiografie, *Wits End*) aangevul deur die gebruik van materiaal wat in die argief van die Royal College of Music in Londen beskikbaar is. Kirby (1887-1970) het tussen September 1910 en Desember 1913 daar studeer. Hy was 'n keteltromspeler in die College-orkester onder Charles Villiers Stanford en aan 'n baie groot verskeidenheid komposisies en persone blootgestel. Meer agtergrond word verskaf oor party van sy medestudente wat in *Wits End* genoem word (Aubrey Brain, Leonard Carrodus, James Friskin, Eugene Goossens, Arthur Hedges, Philip Levine, John Snowden en E. Douglas Tayler) en sy onderwysers (Lewis Barrett, Hubert Parry, Frederick J. Read, Stanford en Daniel S. Wood). Kirby het later 'n professor in Musiek aan die Universiteit van die Witwatersrand geword. Hierdeur het hy 'n deurslaggewende rol in die ontwikkeling van sowel klassieke as inheemse musiek in Suid-Afrika gespeel.

Sluutelterm: Lewis Barrett; Aubrey Brain; Leonard Carrodus; James Friskin; Eugene Goossens; Arthur Hedges; Percival Kirby; Philip Levine; Hubert Parry; Frederick J. Read; Royal College of Music; John Snowden; Charles Villiers Stanford; E. Douglas Tayler; Universiteit van die Witwatersrand; Daniel S. Wood.

In this article Kirby's own views (contained in his autobiography, *Wits End*) are expanded by considering material available in the archive of the Royal College of Music in London. Kirby (1887-1970) studied there between September 1910 and December 1913. He participated as timpanist in the College orchestra under Charles

¹ The author would like to acknowledge the help afforded to him by Mr Chris Bornet and Dr Peter Horton of the library and archive of the Royal College of Music in London. This article is based upon work supported by the National Research Foundation. Any opinions, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this article are those of the author and therefore the NRF does not accept any liability in regard thereto.

Villiers Stanford and was exposed to a very wide variety of compositions and persons. More background is offered on some of his fellow students mentioned in *Wits End* (Aubrey Brain, Leonard Carrodus, James Friskin, Eugene Goossens, Arthur Hedges, Philip Levine, John Snowden and E. Douglas Tayler) and his teachers (Lewis Barrett, Hubert Parry, Frederick J. Read, Stanford and Daniel S. Wood). Kirby later became Professor of Music at the University of the Witwatersrand, playing a decisive role in the development of music in South Africa, both classical and indigenous.

Key words: Lewis Barrett; Aubrey Brain; Leonard Carrodus; James Friskin; Eugene Goossens; Arthur Hedges; Percival Kirby; Philip Levine; Hubert Parry; Frederick J. Read; Royal College of Music; John Snowden; Charles Villiers Stanford; E. Douglas Tayler; University of the Witwatersrand; Daniel S. Wood.

Introduction

Percival Robson Kirby (1887-1970) was one of the most influential men in the development of South African music – both classical and indigenous.

Born in Aberdeen, Scotland, on 17 April 1887, “the year of Queen Victoria’s Jubilee,”² Kirby was fortunate in having a music teacher as a father. John Kirby conducted the Aberdeen Madrigal Choir and the Aberdeen Choral Union. Percival had the opportunity of hearing many music concerts, amongst others by the Scottish Orchestra of Glasgow.³ He became a “Pupil-Teacher” at the Middle Public School from 1903, in this way embarking on his teaching career. While receiving his training as a teacher at the Training College for Teachers, he was enrolled as an Arts student at the University of Aberdeen. Here he was the orchestral librarian to Charles Sanford Terry (1864-1936), Professor of History at the University of Aberdeen and an expert on Scottish history and on Bach. The following year Kirby conducted two amateur orchestras, receiving his Master of Arts in 1910. In this year he left for the Royal College of Music (RCM) in London where he stayed until December 1913.⁴

² P. Kirby, *Wits End* (Cape Town, 1967), p. 15.

³ P. Kirby, *Wits End*, pp. 17-18.

⁴ P. Kirby, *Wits End*, p. 367.



Prof Percival Kirby, date unknown

(Photograph: Hepburn and Jeanes, Church Square, Grahamstown)⁵

Although Charles Villiers Stanford wanted him to further his studies at the RCM, Kirby decided in 1913 to apply for the post as Organiser of Musical Education in Natal, South Africa.⁶ He was eminently suited for the position, as he was a university graduate, a trained teacher and a practical musician. In Pietermaritzburg Kirby found his main task to be the training of school music teachers. From 1921 he was appointed Acting Professor of Music at the University College in Johannesburg which was to become the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits). He was subsequently appointed Professor and was associated with Wits for thirty-one years. During this extended period, the extremely versatile Kirby composed many works, conducted all over South

⁵ The photograph forms part of the holdings of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg and is published with the kind permission of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

⁶ J.P. Malan, Kirby, Percival Robson, in J.P. Malan (ed), *South African Music Encyclopedia* 3 (Cape Town, 1984), p.103.

Africa, pursued wide-ranging research on Western and African music, was president of the South African Museums Association, etc., etc. Kirby's publications on South African music started in 1923 and on his tours to tribal areas he amassed a unique collection of music instruments which has been described in *The musical instruments of the native races of South Africa*, published in London in 1934.⁷ Kirby did not only write on African music; his list of publications includes such topics as horn chords, the kettledrums, eighteenth-century cornets, the Afrikaans song *Sarie Marais*, the *Amfiparnaso* by Orazio Vecchi, *Le jeu de Robin et Marion*, and operas by Rossini and Weber.⁸ Kirby received his doctorate from the University of the Witwatersrand in 1931, retiring in 1952. He then moved to Grahamstown where he died in 1970.

Bryer's monograph (1965) supplies a bibliography of Kirby's writings,⁹ and F.J. (Derik) van der Merwe (1977) writes about Kirby's compositions.¹⁰ In the different entries on Kirby in *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* and *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* much is made of Kirby's writings and research (especially into African music).¹¹ Hardly any information is, however, offered about the decisive three years of his studies at the RCM in London between 1910 and 1913.

But Kirby does so himself in his autobiography *Wits End*, published in 1967 when the author was 80 years old (and written about 55 years after the fact). After two introductory chapters ("Early Days" and "Music") about his early life in Aberdeen, he embarks on four chapters concerning his time in London: "More Music", "Sir Charles Villiers Stanford", "Music in London, and an Afternoon to Remember" and "Deputising and Odd-jobbing". Kirby never kept a systematic diary,¹² but he had an extraordinary memory, detailing many specific instances in his autobiography. He could declare with confidence, "Fortunately I have a good memory [...]"¹³

⁷ P. Kirby, *The musical instruments of the native races of South Africa* (London, 1934); J.P. Malan, Kirby, Percival Robson, in J.P. Malan (ed), *South African Music Encyclopedia* 3, pp. 104, 105.

⁸ J.P. Malan, Kirby, Percival Robson, in J.P. Malan (ed), *South African Music Encyclopedia* 3, pp. 105-106.

⁹ V. Bryer, *Professor Percival Robson Kirby M.A., D.Litt., F.R.C.M.: Head of the Department of Music University of the Witwatersrand 1921-1952* (Johannesburg, 1965).

¹⁰ F.J. van der Merwe, *The compositions of P.R. Kirby (1887-1970)*, (MMus dissertation, University of South Africa), Pretoria, 1977.

¹¹ E. Blom (ed), Kirby, Percival (Robson), in *Groves Dictionary of Music and Musicians* 4 (London, 1954), pp. 760-761; J. Tyrrell, Kirby, Percival (Robson), in S. Sadie (ed), *The New Grove dictionary of music and musicians* 10 (London, 1980), pp. 71-72; J. Tyrrell, Kirby, Percival (Robson), in S. Sadie (ed), *The New Grove dictionary of music and musicians* 13, 2nd ed (London, 2001), p. 617.

¹² P. Kirby, *Wits End*, p. 11.

¹³ P. Kirby, *Wits End*, p. 48.

Kirby's tremendous influence was certainly determined by the thorough training in and exposure to a wide corpus of music which he received primarily at the Royal College of Music in London. But what are the facts found in the archive of the RCM? The aim of this article is to contrast, juxtapose, expand and verify Kirby's own views (revealed in his autobiography) with the material at the RCM. How accurate was he, and how can his observations be amplified by using information available at the RCM? Special reference will be made to the diverse array of persons he met and the compositions he performed and heard at the RCM.

Kirby's first year of study, 1910/1911

1910 was an exciting year in the musical world. Among other things Mahler's Symphony No. 8 was performed for the first time on 12 September in Munich. *The R.C.M. Magazine* contains a discussion of this event.¹⁴ Debussy's *Le promenoir des deux amants* and *Trois ballades de François Villon* were composed in this year, Puccini's *La fanciulla del west* was première in New York, and Stravinsky's *L'oiseau de feu* was first performed in Paris.¹⁵ In London, Delius's opera *A village Romeo and Juliet* was given for the first time on 22 February, conducted by Thomas Beecham. The year had seen the death of Edward VII on 20 May and that of Florence Nightingale.¹⁶

In 1910, the RCM was still under the directorship of the 62-year-old Hubert Parry (1848-1918) who had succeeded the first Director, Sir George Grove, in 1895.¹⁷ In Parry's "Director's Terminal Report" he stated that there was a total of 395 pupils at the RCM.¹⁸ There were 94 pianists (mostly female), 153 singers (mostly female), 25 organists (mostly male), 88 string players (mostly female), 11 composers (all male), 12 wind players (all male) and 12 juniors (mostly female). In all there were 296 female and 99 male pupils.

According to his enrolment form, Percival Robson Kirby (student No. 3483) was 23 years old and already possessed an MA when he enrolled on 26 September 1910. His home address was 367 Union Street, Aberdeen, Scotland, and in London he

¹⁴ W.H. Kerridge, Gustav Mahler's 8th Symphony, *The R.C.M. Magazine* 7(1), 1910, pp. 23-27.

¹⁵ E. Böhm (et al.), *Kulturspiegel des 20. Jahrhunderts-1900 bis heute* (Stuttgart, 1987), p. 124.

¹⁶ H. Heald (ed), *Chronicle of Britain* (Farnborough, 1992), p. 1038.

¹⁷ J. Dibble, Parry, Sir (Charles) Hubert (Hastings), in S. Sadie (ed), *The New Grove dictionary of music and musicians* 19, 2nd ed (London, 2001), p. 153.

¹⁸ Archive of the Royal College of Music, London (hereafter Archive RCM): C.H.H. Parry, Director's Terminal Report on Midsummer Term, 1910, R.C.M. Minute Book 10, p. 55.

stayed at 48 Cumberland Street, Pimlico. The subjects Kirby studied consisted of an exceptional variety: composition (“Principal”), flute and “drums” (“Extra Principal”), piano (“Second”), analysis and organ (“Extra Second”).

Kirby did not have good remembrances of his entrance exam. His astonishingly detailed description is typical of his minute observation:

I had barely settled into my new quarters when I had to attend a preliminary examination at the Royal College in order to be allocated to appropriate teachers of the various subjects that I proposed to study. My two examiners were a more or less ordinary-looking individual in a greenish lounge suit and a distinguished gentleman in a black frock coat and all the accompanying accoutrements. They first heard me play on the piano a Prelude of Bach and one of the shorter pieces of Debussy [who was still alive at the time], and then asked me to play the flute, my principal instrument. I had come provided with several works, including a Bach sonata. This I had to play solus, as no pianist was present. Then they asked me if I could play at sight, and on my assuring them that I could, one of them placed on the stand a book of violin studies by Kreutzer, opened it, and pointing to one of them said “Play that”. Since I noticed at once that this particular study went down to low G, a fifth lower than the lowest note on the concert flute, I inquired if they expected me to play the study at its original pitch and was asked “Why not?” To this I replied that in that case I should have to get a bass flute. At this they looked at each other rather sheepishly, I thought, but grinned and told me to have a shot at the work which I played quite easily though I naturally had to transpose up an octave those passages that were below the compass of my instrument. Later on I discovered that the one examiner was a violinist and the other a violoncellist.¹⁹

Although this report is amusing, one really wonders whether it can be possible that somebody teaching at the RCM would not know the range of the flute. It is very unlikely, and makes one doubt Kirby’s insight.

Kirby comes across as a forceful character who knew what he wanted. This was partly due to the fact that he was much older than the average first year student. He had problems with his flute teacher:

¹⁹ P. Kirby, *Wits End*, pp. 41-42. Extracts from Kirby’s autobiography are presented here in italics.

I soon found myself allocated to Mr. Herbert Sharpe for piano, and to Mr. Lewis Barrett for flute. At that time nothing was said about composition, which was to be my principal study at the College. Unfortunately I soon discovered that Mr. Barrett, who was then sixty-three years of age, and who had been in his time one of London's leading flute-players, was not only very deaf, but that his sight was failing. Moreover he himself played on an instrument with a totally different system of fingering from the regular "Boehm" models then in use, and, in addition, he seemed to be quite unfamiliar with current flute literature. Because of this the principal flute "scholar", Mr. Arthur Hedges, and I interviewed the Director, Sir Hubert Parry, who was completely taken aback by our complaints, but who eventually decided to appoint an associate teacher in the person of Mr. Daniel S. Wood, then principal flute of the London Symphony Orchestra.²⁰

The flute teachers Lewis Barrett and Daniel S. Wood were both included in the list of "Teaching Staff" of the year ending 30 April 1911, Wood for the first time.²¹ Whether this was really the result of Kirby's efforts one is not sure. The minutes of the meeting of the Executive and Financial Committees of the RCM of 20 October 1910 shed light on the problem:

The Director reported that as regards the teaching of the Flute he was of the opinion that it would not be expedient to leave it much longer in the hands of the present Professor Mr. Barrett, though the excellence of his work in the past deserved warm recognition. The Director was authorized to see Mr. Barrett, with discretion to take such measures as should seem necessary to secure efficient teaching of the flute with as much regard as possible to Mr. Barrett's feelings.²²

In the minutes of the meeting of 26 January 1911 there is a further entry on this saga:

The Director reported the engagement of Mr. D.S. Wood as from the commencement of the present Term, as teacher of the Flute at 10s per hour for Principal Studies, 7/6 per hour for Second Studies. This was approved.²³

²⁰ P. Kirby, *Wits End*, p. 42.

²¹ *RCM Report* (London, 1911), p. 38.

²² Archive RCM: RCM Minute Book 10, p. 68.

²³ Archive RCM: RCM Minute Book 10, p. 80.

Arthur Hedges was a flute “scholar”, as he had won one of the Open Scholarships at the Competition in February 1910.²⁴ He played the flute obbligato in a performance of the song *Charmant Oiseau* by David at a RCM chamber music concert on 16 March 1911, and also in the *Caprice on Danish and Russian Airs, op. 79 for Piano, Flute, Hautboy & Clarinet* by Saint-Saëns.²⁵ On Wednesday 1 November 1911 he performed the Concertino by Chaminade at a chamber music concert,²⁶ and on Friday 13 June 1913 he was one of the soloists in a performance of the Brandenburg Concerto No. 5.²⁷ Hedges was clearly a very successful student. Through his stature he perhaps managed, together with the mature Kirby, to influence the appointment of a better flute teacher at the RCM.

Kirby is not very complimentary about the “Music Class” presented by “Dr. Read”.

There was one class which all students were obliged to attend weekly throughout three years. This was the “Music Class”, which was presided over by that genial soul, Dr. Read. I, however, only attended twice, for I soon found out that I already had sufficient knowledge of the topics being discussed, though to my classmates they seemed to be completely novel. I therefore went to the Director, and asked if I might be excused attendance at the class. Sir Hubert’s bluff, ruddy countenance seemed to blow up at my unusual request, and he told me that all students had to attend the Music Class. I thereupon asked him if he would test me, and he grinned and told me to come that afternoon and he would give me some sample questions to answer. I turned up at the appointed time, and he handed me three three-hour question papers, one for each grade of the Music Class. I answered the lot in three-quarters of an hour, and, on looking at my work, Parry told me with a smile that I need not attend classes.

*This released me from what would have been an unnecessary burden, and gave me more time for composition. After all, I knew everything of the rudiments which the class was gravely studying, and as for the elementary acoustics with which they struggled, I had covered a great deal more in that line than they were ever likely to learn, for I had, in my Physics course at Aberdeen University, studied, inter alia, Sound, Light and Heat.*²⁸

²⁴ RCM Report (London, 1910), p 17.

²⁵ Anonymous, College Concerts, *The RCM Magazine* 7(2), 1911, p. 62.

²⁶ Anonymous, College Concerts, *The RCM Magazine* 8(1), 1911, p. 21.

²⁷ Anonymous, College Concerts, *The RCM Magazine* 9(3), 1913, p. 100.

²⁸ P. Kirby, *Wits end*, p. 43.

In the official *RCM Report* of Kirby's first year of study, this class is called "Music Class, Rudiments, Dictation, etc".²⁹ There were two teachers, one being "Dr F.J. Read, Mus. Doc. Oxon". Dr. Read (1857-1925) was also on the panel for "Harmony, Counterpoint, Analysis, Etc."³⁰ In spite of Kirby's negative views, Read was regarded as an important enough musician to be included in *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* of 1928.³¹ He subsequently lost this distinction. But in the end Kirby had something good to say about the Music Class:

*If I had any regrets at leaving the class they were due to the fact that, on the two occasions on which I attended it, I was seated behind a most attractive damsel, the nape of whose neck fascinated me. Although I ascertained her name, I never got to know her; but in later years I discovered that she came from South Africa, from a village not very far from where I am writing these memoirs.*³²

After his work at the University of the Witwatersrand came to an end, Kirby retired to Grahamstown and worked there on his autobiography. The "most attractive damsel" could have been the 21-year-old Kathleen Eleanor Adams who had enrolled on the same day as Kirby, 26 September 1910. She was the winner of the scholarship of the University of the Cape of Good Hope, tenable for three years and amounting to £150.³³ Her father, Charles Adams, was a "Stud Breeder" from "Glen Roy, Tarkastad, Cape Colony" (about 300 km by road from Grahamstown), and it was added in pencil "Father on his way to Australia May 1911." In London, the farm girl was staying at 18 Warwick Road, Earls Court. (Her guardian was Thomas B. Loxley of Craig Holme, Wakefield.) Kathleen started off by studying singing as "Principal", but later changed to the piano. Apart from the usual harmony and counterpoint, she also did German, learnt the violin and studied piano accompaniment. When she left on 26 July 1913, she had already passed the ARCM (Associate of the Royal College of Music) in piano solo in April 1913.

So Kirby had a good introduction to South African standards. Other South African students who enrolled on the same day as Kirby were Alice Edith Goch

²⁹ *RCM Report* (London, 1911), p. 39.

³⁰ *RCM Report* (London, 1911), p. 38.

³¹ H.C. Colles (ed), Read, Frederick John, in *Grove's dictionary of music and musicians* 4, 3rd ed (London, 1928), p. 333.

³² P. Kirby, *Wits end*, p. 43.

³³ Archive RCM: *Students' Register No. 9*: 3508.

from St. Andrews Road, Parktown, Johannesburg,³⁴ Hilda Hunter, 19 years old, whose father was a carpenter in Kimberley,³⁵ Doris Coblely who gave her father's occupation as "Natal Civil Service Retired",³⁶ Beatrice Elizabeth (Nancy) Voysey of Ridge Road, Durban,³⁷ and Mabel Georgetta Jardine from "Maritzburg, Natal,

³⁴ Archive RCM *Students' Register No. 9*: 3463. Her father, J.F. Goch, was a "Land Owner", and Alice was staying at 21 Lexham Gardens W. This was written in pencil after another address was rubbed out. Her guardian was "William E. Ayton. Commercial Agent, 'Ellismere', Capel Road, Forest Gate. E", but it was added in pencil "no more to do after Easter Term 1911". Alice was 18 years old when she enrolled on 26 September 1910. She stayed for four years until 24 July 1915, and completed the ARCM in piano teaching in April 1913. She was doing the piano, but also studied the organ and viola. It is stated under "Remarks" that she was ill during the second half of the Easter term of 1914.

³⁵ Archive RCM *Students' Register No. 9*: 3468. Hilda Hunter stayed with her mother, Mrs. E.M. Hunter, at 30 Queens Road, Erith in London. (The first address was 31 Alford Road, Erith.) It could be that Mrs. Hunter came to London with her daughter, or the other possibility is that Mr. Hunter had left London for South Africa on his own. Miss Hunter studied for two years, leaving on 27 July 1912 and having done singing with elocution and German as other subjects.

³⁶ Archive RCM: *Students' Register No. 9*: 3472. Initially her home address as well as that of her father, Mr. W.H. Coblely, was given as 68 Avenue de Rumine, Lausanne, Switzerland, but this was crossed out and for Miss Coblely the address 32 De Vere Gardens, Kensington was written in pencil. Her father's address became c/o Natal Bank, 18 St. Swithins Lane, E.C., which is in the banking district of London. Miss Coblely was 19 years old when she enrolled, and studied for four years until 29 July 1914. When she left the College she had already passed the ARCM in piano teaching in April 1912. Apart from the piano, she had studied singing, piano accompaniment and German. After Mr. Coblely's name at "Name & Address of Guarantor for Fees" is written "I.S.O. M.Inst.C.E.." I.S.O. stands for Imperial Service Order. Further: Member of the Institute of Civil Engineers.

³⁷ Archive RCM: *Students' Register No. 9*: 3481. She was only 16 years old and was staying at 43a Sinclair Road, West Kensington, which was written in pencil. Her father, Aliwal E. Voysey, was an "Auctioneer & Estate Agent etc" of 293 Smith Street in Durban. It appears as though her mother, Mrs. E. Voysey, could initially have stayed with Nancy at 47 St. Mary Abbott's [sic] Terrace in Kensington. Miss Voysey stayed for five terms and left the College on 30 March 1912. She was one of the very few South African students who studied a string instrument; she played the violin with the piano as second instrument.

³⁸ Archive RCM: *Students' Register No. 9*: 3486. On entering, she gave her father's name and London address as John Jardine, Lincoln Hall Hotel, Russell Square. One wonders whether Mr. Jardine had accompanied his 21-year old daughter to London. Under "Father's Profession or Occupation" the abbreviation "Gent" (Gentleman) was entered. At first, Miss Jardine's London address was added in pencil as 132 King Henry's Road, South Hampstead. This was scratched out and replaced with "Standard Bank of S.A. [?] 10 Clements Lane" which is in the banking district of London. Miss Jardine studied singing and piano for two years and passed the ARCM in singing solo in April 1912. She left the College on 27 July of that year.

S.Africa".³⁸ Mabelle Shire of Havering, Duff's Road, Natal enrolled two weeks later, on 12 October 1910.³⁹

The Christmas term of 1910/1911 started with Parry's Address to the students.⁴⁰ Parry made much of the fact that King Edward VII, the Founder of the College, had died. Amongst all his admonitions there is the following:

*It is one of the most delightful things about music that it brings all sorts and conditions of men and women together upon equal terms, and obliterates the tiresome barriers of Class.*⁴¹

Apart from the interesting South African girls, Kirby had many other stimulating fellow students, amongst them George Butterworth (1885-1916), who gave his address as 19 Cheyne Gardens in Chelsea.⁴² Butterworth was studying the organ and piano and was later to become a well-known English composer. He was killed during World War I.

The list of students on the College Register on 30 April 1911⁴³ shows that there were 14 students officially from South Africa: Kathleen E. Adams (singing, Tarkastad), Muriel F.M. Butterworth (piano, Durban), Eileen Fuller (violin, Kimberley), Alice E. Goch (piano, Johannesburg), Grace Hadlow* (piano, Senekal), Mabel G. Jardine (singing, Pietermaritzburg), Edna H. Marcus (singing, Durban), Eleanor G. Metcalf

³⁹ Archive RCM: *Students' Register No. 9*: 3510. The 21-year old Mabelle's father, Mr. J.E. Shire, was in the mining business. She was staying at 1 Pleydell Avenue in Stamford Brook in London and was studying singing, together with Italian and elocution. On 18 December 1912 Miss Shire left the College.

⁴⁰ C.H.H. Parry, Director's Address (Christmas Term, 1910), *The RCM Magazine*, 7(1), 1910, pp 13-18. Parry's Director's addresses were paragons of inspiring talks in which he discussed many valuable aspects of a young person's present and future career. An example can be found in his address of the Easter Term of 1911. See C.H.H. Parry, Director's Address, *The RCM Magazine* 7(2), 1911, p. 48: *If you merely concern yourselves with the letter, and do not find out the spirit which the letter spells, you are condemned to be little better than lay figures. You cannot teach people what you yourselves do not understand, and you cannot convince people of what you play unless you really understand it, and understanding in your case is feeling the genuine Music in what you have to deal with.* See also C.H.H. Parry, Director's Address, *The RCM Magazine* 7(2), 1911, p. 51: *If the College has any drawback, it is that everyone who is taking advantage of its inestimable facilities for learning is being what is called specialized. And specialization has the effect of limiting the range of the judgement. Judgement is the power of discerning the true proportionate relation of the facts or factors of any situation which presents itself. It is the hardest thing to come by in the world, and the most valuable.*

⁴¹ C.H.H. Parry, Director's Address (Christmas Term, 1910), *The RCM Magazine* 7(1), 1910, pp. 14-15.

⁴² Archive RCM: *Students' Register No. 9*: 3476.

⁴³ *RCM Report* (London, 1911), pp. 40-46.

(piano, Cradock), Jenny Sonnenberg (singing, Cape Town), Martinus van der Bent (piano, Worcester), Beatrice E. Voysey (violin, Durban), Alice M.T. Waters (piano, “Temberland, S.A.”; this should be Engcobo, Tembuland), and Beatrice A. Woollacott and Olive M. Woollacott (both piano, Sea Point). Those marked with an asterisk (*) in the RCM list had already attained the ARCM.

Being a very sociable person, Kirby would most likely have joined the RCM Union, which had their sixth annual meeting on Thursday 12 January 1911. The Union gave one concert during the term. It took place in Kensington Town Hall, and included in the programme were *Three Songs of Travel* by Vaughan Williams: “The Vagabond”, “Bright is the ring of words” and “The Open Road”.⁴⁴ It was sung by Robert Chignell, and the pianist was James Friskin.⁴⁵

One of Kirby’s great advantages was that he had such a diversity of experiences at the RCM that he was in a very good position to teach these aspects to his South African students later. In his Director’s Address after Kirby’s enrolment in 1910, Parry had said the following:

A serious experience can be a very serviceable thing. It gives a man a distaste for things trivial and frivolous, and helps him to distinguish between things that are really enjoyable, even in times of seriousness, and the silly, roystering [sic], unprofitable foolishness which betokens semi-idiocy. People who are capable of being serious enjoy life much more than those who are not, as you may judge from the profound boredom which often afflicts most of those who try to spend their lives in amusing themselves.

*The man gets the most out of life whose nature is capable of taking in the widest range of experiences.*⁴⁶

One of the aspects of “the widest range of experiences” was the many concerts Kirby took part in.

The series of student concerts for 1910/1911

It is astounding to see how many of the students who performed in the four chamber music and two symphonic concerts during the first (“Christmas”) term of 1910/1911

⁴⁴ The nine *Songs of Travel* were rather new, completed in 1904. A. Frogley, Vaughan Williams, Ralph, in S. Sadie (ed), *The New Grove dictionary of music and musicians* 26, 2nd ed (London, 2001), p. 359.

⁴⁵ M. Scott and B Darnell, The R.C.M. Union, *The RCM Magazine* 7(2), 1911, p. 58.

⁴⁶ C.H.H. Parry, Director’s Address (Christmas Term, 1910), *The RCM Magazine* 7(1), 1910, p. 18.

are mentioned in Kirby's autobiography. It is clear that only the very best students would perform at these concerts and that Kirby knew them well.

At the chamber music concert of 3 November 1910 Kirby would have heard the 17-year-old violinist Eugene Goossens (1893-1962) playing the second violin part of the String Quartet by Ravel. (At that stage Ravel was 35 years old. The quartet had been composed in 1902-1903.) On 16 November the two violinists changed round and Goossens now took the first violin part in Beethoven's String Quartet Op. 18 No. 1.⁴⁷ Over his nine terms of study, Kirby would often hear Goossens performing in chamber music concerts. The multitalented Goossens won the Director's Prize for an essay entitled "In Belgium" which he offered on the competition topic "Summer Holidays".⁴⁸

Kirby tells an amusing story about Leonard Carrodus who performed as second violinist in Brahms's Quartet in A minor Op. 51 No. 2 on 8 December 1910 and took the second violin part in Dvořák's Piano Quintet in the same programme. He later often performed at the chamber music concerts.

One of the items on the programme was Saint-Saens' [sic] "Le Rouet d'Omphale". At that time there was at one of the back desks of the first violins a young "rip" with the cherubic face and curly golden hair of a typical angel, but with the temperament and diabolical ingenuity of a fiend. His name was Leonard Carrodus. Now, Saint-Saens' symphonic poem, which is in A major, ends with three high notes played one after the other by the violins. The first of these, C sharp, is sounded softly by the first violins, then the next, E, by the seconds, and, finally, the last note of the work, the A in alt, by the firsts, these last two notes being in harmonics, totally unaccompanied. During several rehearsals, young Carrodus would wait until Stanford brought down his baton for the final note, and simultaneously with it, as if by accident, he would pluck his open D string. At the final rehearsal Carrodus did it again, and Stanford, roused to fury shouted out that if anything like that happened that evening, he would fling his stick at the offender.

The evening came, and the symphonic poem was begun. The performance was perfect in every way, but the audience, many members of which had been "put wise" to what had been going on at the rehearsals, was on the alert. Young Carrodus, however, behaved himself this time as we all knew he would. The first notes, the C sharp and the E, were given out with the greatest of

⁴⁷ Anonymous, College Concerts, *The RCM Magazine*, 7(1), 1910, pp 27, 28.

⁴⁸ E. Goossens, The Director's Prizes: 'In Belgium', *The RCM Magazine*, 8(1), 1911, pp 31-33.

*clarity and delicacy, but as Stanford was about to bring down his stick for the final note a fly settled in one of his nostrils and he sneezed con tutta forza.*⁴⁹

It is unlikely that Carrodus was playing at one of the back desks, as Kirby writes. He was one of the leading violinists as can be deduced from his appearances at the chamber music concerts. Parry included a special good-bye to Carrodus in his Director's Address of 6 May 1912.⁵⁰

The violinist Philip Levine was another of the fine musicians with whom Kirby associated. Levine won the Dove Prize of £13⁵¹ and was a regular performer at the chamber music concerts. He played a Beethoven Sonata for Piano and Violin on 16 November 1910 and was the first violin in the Dvořák Quintet in which Carrodus played the second violin.⁵² Levine was the soloist in a performance of Dvořák's Violin Concerto on 23 March 1911.⁵³ But he was also a composer: At the chamber music concert on Thursday 30 November 1911 Levine's *Novelletten for String Quartet* had its first performance. Goossens and Thomas Peatfield together with Cedric Sharpe were the other musicians.⁵⁴ On Thursday 16 November 1911 Goossens, Carrodus, Peatfield and John Snowden played Debussy's Quartet in G minor Op. 10 (1893) at the chamber music concert.⁵⁵ This is significant as Debussy (1862-1918) was still alive. Levine was also specially mentioned by Parry in his Director's Address of 6 May 1912 when he had to bid farewell to a number of prominent RCM students. He said good-bye to Levine "who has been so long the trusty leader of the Orchestra, and the hero of many distinguished performances in the College Concerts of all sorts".⁵⁶

Kirby recounts in detail what happened at his audition for the RCM orchestra, after Stanford had read the letter of introduction written by Terry:

When I arrived at the Hall on the fateful afternoon, I found that a timpanist had already been requisitioned in the person of one James Friskin,⁵⁷ about

⁴⁹ P. Kirby, *Wits end*, p. 52; Anonymous, College Concerts, *The RCM Magazine* 7(1), 1910, p. 28.

⁵⁰ C.H.H. Parry, Director's Address, *The RCM Magazine* 8(3), 1912, p. 80.

⁵¹ Anonymous, The Term's Awards, *The RCM Magazine* 7(1), 1910, p. 30.

⁵² Anonymous, College Concerts, *The RCM Magazine* 7(1), 1910, p. 28.

⁵³ Anonymous, College Concerts, *The RCM Magazine* 7(2), 1911, p. 62.

⁵⁴ Anonymous, College Concerts. *The RCM Magazine* 8(1), 1911, p. 21.

⁵⁵ Anonymous, College Concerts. *The RCM Magazine* 8(1), 1911, p. 21.

⁵⁶ C.H.H. Parry, Director's Address, *The RCM Magazine* 8(3), 1912, pp. 78-79.

⁵⁷ It was reported in *The RCM Magazine* that Friskin had given a performance of Bach's *Goldberg Variations* at the Steinway Hall in London. See Anonymous, The Royal Collegian Abroad, *The RCM Magazine* 8(3), 1912, p. 27. Friskin (1886-1967) was one of the leading pianists at the RCM. He settled in the USA in 1914 and became a piano professor at the famous Juilliard School of Music in New York. His book *Music for the piano* (with Irwin Freundlich) was first published in 1954 and became a very popular reference work.

whom I knew nothing whatever, although it was obvious to me that he was a brother Scot. Friskin had previously acted as the College timpanist, and Stanford had apparently sent for him to “Stand by” in case I proved to be a “dud”. However, I took my place before the set of three drums, excellent instruments made by Henry Potter and Co., and opened the cover containing the timpani parts. Judge my surprise and horror when I saw that the first work to be rehearsed was Elgar’s “Enigma” Variations, which I had once heard played in Aberdeen by the London Symphonic Orchestra under Nikisch, but of which I had never seen either the score or the drum part.

Stanford, staring at me across the orchestra with an evil grin on his even then wrinkled face, raised his baton and began the work, which I, of course, had to read by sight. Although I must have been as nervous as a kitten, I got through the ordeal with, I believe, a considerable measure of success, not even blenching at the fearsome “Troyte” variation. At the conclusion, Stanford grinned again at me, this time quite amicably, and announced that we would now tackle the symphony – Glazounoff’s No. 5 in B flat – another quite searching test for a timpanist.⁵⁸

The “*Enigma*” Variations were not played at the student concerts of Kirby’s first year of study, but the symphony was on the programme for 11 November 1910 which also contained “Far greater in his lowly state” by Gounod, the Piano Concerto No. 5 by Beethoven, the “Mad Bess” scene by Purcell (orchestrated by Stanford) and the Rhapsody No. 2 for Orchestra by Liszt.⁵⁹

As the timpanist of the College Orchestra, Kirby took part in the performance of a great variety of works. These programmes are of interest because they show the diversity that had to be presented at an institution of training where the leading students had to be given the opportunity to perform with the orchestra as soloists. Therefore there was a number of soloists each time. In addition, the programme reflects the current trend of the time to include as many contemporary works as possible. In the first programme, for example, there were three soloists and a work by Glazounov (1865-1936), a composer who was then still alive. The other orchestral concerts of Kirby’s first academic year included works by the following living composers: Bruch (1838-1920), Liadoff (1855-1914), Rachmaninoff (1873-1943), Saint-Saëns (1835-1921), Johann Strauss II (1866-1939) and the Englishman Tovey (1875-1940). All these concerts were conducted by Stanford:

⁵⁸ P. Kirby, *Wits end*, p. 64.

⁵⁹ Anonymous, College Concerts, *The RCM Magazine* 7(1), 1910, p. 27.

13 December 1910 Dvořák: *Symphonic Variations*; **Liadov**:⁶⁰ Tone-Picture *Baba-Jaga*; Mozart: “Ch’io mi scordi di te”; Brahms: Concerto for Violin; Wagner: *Huldigungs-marsch*.⁶¹

21 February 1911 Saint-Saëns: Symphonic poem *Le Rouet d’Omphale*; Tovey: Concerto for Piano and Orchestra in A major; Mozart: “Dalla sua pace”; Brahms: Symphony No. 1.⁶²

23 March 1911 Weber: Overture to *Der Freischütz*; Bruch: Scene “Ave Maria”; Dvořák: Concerto for Violin in A minor Op. 53 (Philip Levine); Verdi: Scene “Willow Song and Prayer”; Franck: Symphony in D minor.⁶³

Thursday 8 June 1911 Cherubini: Overture “Anacreon”; Schumann: *Concertstück* for four horns; Brahms: *Alto Rhapsody*; Rachmaninoff: Symphony in E minor (1906-1907).⁶⁴

Tuesday 25 July 1911 Dvořák: Symphony No. 4; Wagner: “Lohengrin’s Narration”; Joachim: Variations for Violin and Orchestra (Eugene Goossens); Verdi: “Ritorna vincitor” from *Aida*; Johann Strauss II: Ballet Music from *Ritter Pásmán* (“First performance in England”).⁶⁵

As official timpanist of the RCM orchestra Kirby would also have participated in the college opera performances conducted by Stanford in His Majesty’s Theatre. The first was *Genoveva* by Schumann on 18 November 1910.⁶⁶ The inclusion of Schumann (born in 1810) illustrates the RCM’s tradition of celebrating important anniversaries.

A great milestone was reached on 23 March 1911 when the 500th student concert of the RCM was held.⁶⁷ Public performance by students was always regarded as of great importance by the RCM. At these concerts the best students would appear and inspire (or frighten) the other students. Kirby was exposed during his studies to a very wide diversity of pieces and performers of a very high calibre.

An event of great magnitude was the coronation of King George V on 23 June 1911. This was reflected in the Editorial of *The R.C.M. Magazine*.⁶⁸

⁶⁰ “Liadov” is the spelling used in the extract.

⁶¹ Anonymous, College Concerts, *The RCM Magazine* 7(1), 1910, p. 28.

⁶² Anonymous, College Concerts, *The RCM Magazine* 7(2), 1911, p. 61.

⁶³ Anonymous, College Concerts, *The RCM Magazine* 7(2), 1911, p. 62.

⁶⁴ Anonymous, College Concerts, *The RCM Magazine* 7(3), 1911, p. 92.

⁶⁵ Anonymous, College Concerts, *The RCM Magazine* 7(3), 1911, p. 93.

⁶⁶ Anonymous, *Genoveva* (Schumann), *The RCM Magazine* 7(1), 1910, pp. 28-29.

⁶⁷ C. Aveling, Five hundred concerts, *The RCM Magazine* 7(2), 1911, p. 52.

⁶⁸ Anonymous [Henry Colles], Editorial, *The RCM Magazine* 7(3), 1911, pp. 75-77.

The years 1911/1912 and 1912/1913

With two orchestral concerts per term Kirby could have participated in 20 RCM concerts in total. The multifariousness of pieces was extraordinary. (See the appendix.) All concerts were conducted by Stanford. Kirby tells the following story as an illustration of Stanford's attitude towards the orchestra:

[I]t must be remembered that Stanford would never tolerate "back-chat" from any member of the orchestra, whatever provocation there might have been to cause it.

One such incident, which might have had serious consequences, occurred when young Aubrey Brain, that future Prince of Horn Players, who had just returned from the 1912 American Tour of the London Symphony Orchestra, was playing the famous solo at the end of the first movement of Brahms's Symphony No. 2 in D. His particular rendering of it did not please old "Charlie", who stopped the orchestra, and, stepping down to the piano, played the passage as he wished it to sound (and which, incidentally, was the way he had heard Brahms play it). On this young Brain called out: "Sir Charles, Nikisch doesn't do it like that". We all waited for the inevitable explosion, but, strangely enough, it did not come. Instead, Stanford's lip curled, and in a pitying voice he said to Brain: "Me bhoy, Nikisch isn't God Almighty".⁶⁹

In the concert of 8 June 1911, Aubrey Brain played in the Schumann *Concertstück* for four horns. Kirby would most probably have been in the audience when Brain together with Eugene Goossens played in Brahms's Trio for Piano, Violin and Horn Op. 40 on Wednesday 19 July 1911.⁷⁰ Brain was the horn player in a performance of Herzogenberg's Trio in D major Op. 61 for Piano, Oboe and Horn in the chamber music concert of Thursday 8 February 1912.⁷¹ In his Director's Address of 5 May 1913, Parry remarked about Brain:

His feats as a horn player in the College Concerts and elsewhere have been sufficient to make us regard him as the finest horn player we have ever had amongst us; one whose capacities are almost unlimited, and whose spirit is

⁶⁹ P. Kirby, *Wits end*, p. 50.

⁷⁰ Anonymous, College Concerts, *The RCM Magazine* 7(3), 1911, p. 93.

⁷¹ Anonymous, College Concerts, *The RCM Magazine* 8(2), 1912, p. 55.

*such that the more hideously and uncannily difficult a passage is, the better he likes it.*⁷²

But Aubrey Brain did not always attend the orchestral rehearsals. A typed copy of the Minutes of a Meeting of the Board of Professors on 16 January 1912 states:

The Board considered the following cases of Scholars [holders of grants] who had committed breaches of rules by absenting themselves from orchestral fixtures without leave.

*Aubrey H. Brain. [...] The Board was of opinion that the Executive Committee should be advised to reduce the renewal of two years granted in October of last year to one year, with the understanding that the full renewal would be allowed if the Scholar's conduct proves satisfactory in the intervening time.*⁷³

This “special case of actual insubordination” is explained by saying, “outside engagements prevent regular attendance at various useful classes, which ought to be continuous if they are to have any effect.”⁷⁴ It is clear: Brain was so sought after as a horn player that he found it difficult to attend his classes at the RCM.

Other operas (apart from *Genoveva* by Schumann) that Kirby would have participated in were *The Water Carrier* by Cherubini on 21 November 1911,⁷⁵ *Colomba* by Alexander Mackenzie on 9 December 1912,⁷⁶ and *Falstaff* by Verdi on 28 November 1913.⁷⁷ The inclusion of an opera by Mackenzie (1847-1935) is significant as he was still the director of the vying Royal Academy of Music, a post he assumed in 1888.⁷⁸ The production of the opera could have been decided upon in order to strengthen ties between the two institutions.

On 10 July 1913 Kirby performed for the first time at a Chamber Music Concert in the RCM. He played with Arthur Hedges (who, together with Kirby, had tried to usurp the flute teacher Barrett) and Henry Nisbet in a Trio for Flutes in E minor Op. 86, No. 1 by Kuhlau.⁷⁹ By that time he had already passed his ARCM in Composition.

⁷² C.H.H. Parry, Director's Address, *The RCM Magazine* 9(3), 1913, p. 79.

⁷³ Archive RCM: RCM Minute Book 10, p. 159.

⁷⁴ Archive RCM: RCM Minute Book 10, p. 161.

⁷⁵ Anonymous, The Opera, *The RCM Magazine* 8(1), 1911, pp. 22-23.

⁷⁶ Anonymous, The Opera, *The RCM Magazine* 9(1), 1912, pp. 22-25.

⁷⁷ Anonymous, The Opera, *The RCM Magazine* 10(1), 1913, pp. 14-17.

⁷⁸ D.J. Barker, Mackenzie, Sir Alexander Campbell, in S. Sadie (ed), *The New Grove dictionary of music and musicians* 15, 2nd ed (London, 2001), p. 500.

⁷⁹ Anonymous, College Concerts, *The RCM Magazine* 9(3), 1913, p. 101.

Some other fellow students

It is clear that the persons mentioned by Kirby in his autobiography were some of the foremost and most active performers at the RCM.

On Thursday 13 July 1911 John Snowden played the cello in a chamber music concert in a performance of the Quartet in G major Op. 18 No. 2 by Beethoven.⁸⁰ He had also performed on Thursday 15 June 1911 with the viola player Thomas Peatfield in Dvořák's Quartet in F Op. 96.⁸¹ On Wednesday 19 July 1911 the two were engaged in a performance of a Haydn String Quartet in G major.⁸² Kirby has a special story to tell about Snowden:

In Room 51 [Stanford's room], however, many extraordinary things took place, in some of which I played a small part. One afternoon, when I was having my weekly lesson with Stanford, we heard the sound of a cello playing a doleful tune along the corridor. Now this was a thing that was absolutely taboo when Stanford was teaching, so he sent me along to see who the transgressor was, and to tell him to stop playing. I went, and on my return "Charlie" said: "Well, who was it?" I replied: "John Snowden, Sir." "And what was he playing?" "He was trying over a new piece by Walford Davies [1869-1941], called "A Solemn Melody'." At this Stanford snorted, and remarked: "What that young man needs is six months in the Venusberg – stop him writing solemn melodies".⁸³

Kirby explains what happened to E. Douglas Tayler who played the cymbals:

At one of the first orchestral concerts in which I performed at College, Liszt's Second Hungarian Rhapsody [...] was on the programme. At the concert everything went extremely well until the very end of the work, when the cymbal player, the late E. Douglas Tayler, lost his nerve or his place or both, and, having missed the last three chords, came in alone with an almighty smash after everyone had finished, and in his embarrassment at having treated the audience to the unexpected solo, dropped both cymbals, which rolled serenely across the platform, bumping down the raised "steps" and into the auditorium.

⁸⁰ Anonymous, College Concerts, *The RCM Magazine* 7(3), 1911, p. 93.

⁸¹ Anonymous, College Concerts, *The RCM Magazine* 7(3), 1911, p. 92.

⁸² Anonymous, College Concerts, *The RCM Magazine* 7(3), 1911, p. 93.

⁸³ P. Kirby, *Wits end*, pp. 52-53.

*Any remarks that Stanford may have been tempted to make were completely drowned by the delightful chuckles of the audience.*⁸⁴

On Thursday 9 November 1911 the RCM Orchestra under Stanford gave the first performance of Tayler's Orchestral Fantasy *Uncle Remus*.⁸⁵ Tayler won the Arthur Sullivan Prize for Composition in 1911.⁸⁶ The versatile Tayler was also a writer, as can be seen in his humorous essay "Musica Ficta (Not a disquisition on Antient Church Musick)".⁸⁷ In the first edition of the 1912/1913 academic year, *The R.C.M. Magazine* published two of his writings: an essay called "The Silence of Pan" and a poem, "The Night-Wanderer".⁸⁸ The *RCM Report* of 1913 mentioned that "Mr. E Douglas Tayler" had been appointed as "Organist and Choir Master at the Cathedral at Grahamstown, South Africa".⁸⁹ (Tayler is not included in the *South African Music Encyclopedia*.)

Two of the 15 Open Scholarships were awarded to composers at the Competition held in February 1912: Herbert Howells and Arthur Benjamin.⁹⁰ One can be sure that Kirby met these young men. Howells (1892-1983) would duly come to South Africa in 1921 as an examiner for the Royal Schools of Music, and would compose *Two Afrikaans Songs* on poems by Jan F.E. Celliers in 1929.⁹¹ The group of scholarship holders also included René Caprara (1888-1977) who was the only clarinettist to receive the scholarship. In 1936 he became the first Director-General of the South African Broadcasting Corporation in Johannesburg, a position he occupied until 1949.⁹² He was then living in the same city as Kirby.

Parry and Stanford

Kirby was very fortunate in having the opportunity of being exposed to the great minds of Parry and Stanford.

Parry often included rather broad-minded views in his Director's Addresses. In

⁸⁴ P. Kirby, *Wits end*, pp. 51-52.

⁸⁵ Anonymous, College Concerts, *The RCM Magazine* 8(1), 1911, p. 21.

⁸⁶ Anonymous, The Term's Awards, *The RCM Magazine* 7(2), 1911, p. 72.

⁸⁷ D. Tayler, Musica Ficta (Not a disquisition on Antient Church Musick), *The RCM Magazine* 7(1), 1910, pp. 33-38.

⁸⁸ D. Tayler, The silence of Pan, *The RCM Magazine* 9(1), 1912, pp. 25-28; The Night-Wanderer, *The RCM Magazine* 9(1), 1912, p. 28.

⁸⁹ *RCM Report* (London, 1912), p. 7.

⁹⁰ *RCM Report* (London, 1912), p. 15.

⁹¹ H. Howells, *Two Afrikaans songs*, edited by H. van der Mescht (Pretoria, 1999).

⁹² J.P. Malan, Caprara, René Silvio, in J.P. Malan (ed), *South African Music Encyclopedia* 1 (Cape Town, 1979), p. 255.

his speech of 6 May 1912, most probably heard by Kirby, he had much to say to the RCM students about the difference between convention and tradition:

*The difference really is that traditions are alive and conventions are dead. [...] If you want to be thoroughly alive and to make life worth living you must question things which appear to be mere conventions; if you do not they will choke you.*⁹³

It seems as though Kirby was one of those who heeded these words. As head of the School of Music at the University of the Witwatersrand he could later employ the example he found in Parry.

Kirby's composition teacher was Charles Villiers Stanford whose *Musical Composition* was published in 1911 by Macmillan and Stainer & Bell while Kirby was one of his students. This book was reviewed in *The R.C.M. Magazine* by T.F.D., that is Thomas F. Dunhill (1877-1946), a former Stanford student and lecturer in harmony and counterpoint at the RCM.⁹⁴

As composition teacher and conductor Stanford must have made a decisive impression on Kirby. Kirby writes:

*[W]hile I was experimenting with the timpani in the College Hall, and had succeeded in isolating certain harmonics on the instruments, Sir Charles happened to come in and caught me at it. After quizzing me about what I was doing, he said to me: "Why don't ye write a book about the drums?" [...] But I did not write my book on the drums until 1930 [...]. I had not forgotten the part Stanford had played in the matter, for I dedicated it to him in these words: "To the memory of the late Sir Charles Villiers Stanford, who first suggested that I should write this book; 'I'll fondle him with a club'."*⁹⁵

Kirby's achievements at the RCM

Kirby received a number of bursaries and prizes. At the end of the Midsummer term of 1911 he was awarded one of the Council Exhibitions of £9.⁹⁶ There were two granted for Composition, three for Singing and three for Violin. This award (£8) was again

⁹³ C.H.H. Parry, Director's Address, *The RCM Magazine* 8(3), 1912, pp. 81, 82.

⁹⁴ T.F.D. [Thomas F. Dunhill], *Musical Composition: An appreciation of Sir Charles Villiers Stanford's new Book*, *The R.C.M. Magazine* 8(2), 1912, pp. 58-60.

⁹⁵ P. Kirby, *Wits end*, p. 53.

⁹⁶ Anonymous, The Term's Awards, *The RCM Magazine* 7(3), 1911, p. 108.

given to him in the next year.⁹⁷ Kirby also won the Manns Memorial Prize of £4 10s during the 1912/1913 academic year.⁹⁸ The Arthur Sullivan Prize for Composition of £5 was awarded to Kirby in the academic year ending in April 1913.⁹⁹ These bursaries and prizes clearly indicate the high esteem in which Kirby was held.

In April 1913 Kirby sat for the examination to become an Associate of the Royal College of Music (ARCM) in Composition, “a branch in which it was then rarely awarded”.¹⁰⁰ The “Report of the Council to the Corporation (July, 1913)” states that there were 447 candidates for the ARCM, of whom only 194 passed.¹⁰¹ There were successful candidates for Theory (1), Composition (1=Kirby), Pianoforte Solo Performance (16), Pianoforte Teaching (114), Singing Solo Performance (26), Singing Teaching (13), Organ (8), Violin (12) and Violoncello (3). At a supplementary examination in September 1913, 42 of 76 candidates passed. About his examination in Composition Kirby writes the following:

*The examination was in three parts. For the first I had to submit original compositions of my own for various media, both vocal and instrumental. For the second I had to sit a six-hour-long written examination in the technique of composition, without the aid of an instrument. And for the third I had to undergo a severe viva voce test, for which no syllabus had been prescribed. My examiners were Sir Hubert Parry, Sir Charles Stanford and Dr. Charles Wood.*¹⁰²

Kirby left the College on 17 December 1913, according to his enrolment form. His appointment in South Africa was mentioned in the “Report of the Council to the Corporation”: “The number of appointments obtained by College pupils during the year was again very large, foreign and colonial posts being even more conspicuous

⁹⁷ Anonymous, The Term’s Awards, *The RCM Magazine* 8(3), 1912, p. 105.

⁹⁸ Anonymous, The Term’s Awards, *The RCM Magazine* 9(1), 1912, p. 36.

⁹⁹ *RCM Report* (London, 1913), p. 18. The Scholarship had an impressive array of winners: Frank Bridge (1901), Sidney Smith (1902), Haydn Wood (1903), George Dyson (1904), James Friskin (1905), Ernest Farrar (1906), Frank Tapp (1907), Eric Gritton (1908), Harold Darke (1909), John Greenwood (1910), Edward D. Tayler (1911) and Joseph Taffs (1912). See *RCM Report* (London, 1913), p. 35. Herbert Howells received the Prize in 1914. See *RCM Report* (London, 1914), p. 33.

¹⁰⁰ P. Kirby, *Wits end*, p. 7. Kirby is quite right. There were two successful candidates in 1907, none in 1908, none in 1909, one in 1910, one in 1911, none in 1912, and two in 1914. See *RCM Report* (London, 1907), p. 10; *RCM Report* (London, 1908), p. 10; *RCM Report* (London, 1909), p. 12; *RCM Report* (London, 1910), p. 12; *RCM Report* (London, 1911), p. 12; *RCM Report* (London, 1912), p. 15; *RCM Report* (London, 1914), p. 9.

¹⁰¹ *RCM Report* (London, 1913), p. 10.

¹⁰² P. Kirby, *Wits end*, p. 74.

than usual, Mr. Percival Kirby being made Organising Instructor of Vocal Music in Natal and South Africa, under the Board of Education [...].”¹⁰³

Conclusion

In Warrack’s *Royal College of Music: the first eighty-five years 1883-1968* the following is written: “Another Exhibitioner of this time who achieved great fame in the music of South Africa was Percival R. Kirby, Timpanist, Flautist, Conductor, Scholar, Author and Wit (among other things).”¹⁰⁴ This extract shows Kirby’s status amongst the RCM alumni. Moreover, it enumerates the aspects of his versatility, most of which he attained and expanded at the Royal College of Music in London.

There are four pieces under Kirby’s name in the library of his alma mater in London. One is an arrangement for timpani and piano of the original for six timpani and orchestra by Julius Tausch (1827-1895). It was published by Hinrichsen. Secondly, Kirby edited the overture to *Le Siège de Corinth* by Rossini (published by Eulenburg). Kirby also edited pieces by John Stanley (1712-1786): his Solo in D minor Op. 1 No. 1 and Solo in G minor Op. 1 No. 2, “edited and the pianoforte accompaniment arranged from the figured bass”.

The decisive influence Kirby exerted on South African music would clearly have been determined by his stimulating study period at the Royal College of Music in London. Material in the archive of the RCM contributes to our understanding of this exciting period and expands Kirby’s autobiography, which is one of only a few by South African musicians, another being *The good die young* by the pianist Elsie Hall.¹⁰⁵

Percival Kirby was elected a Fellow of the Royal College of Music in 1924,¹⁰⁶ hereby granting him the highest honour the RCM can award.

¹⁰⁴ G. Warrack, *Royal College of Music: the first eighty-five years 1883-1968*, two unpublished volumes (Copy in the Library of the Royal College of Music, London, no date), p. 93.

¹⁰⁵ E. Hall, *The good die young* (Cape Town, 1969).

¹⁰⁶ J.P. Malan, Kirby, Percival Robson, in J.P. Malan (ed), *South African Music Encyclopedia* 3 (Cape Town, 1984), p. 104.

Appendix: Orchestral Concerts and Operas that Kirby would have participated in during his second and third year of study at the RCM, 1911/1912 and 1912/1913

Thursday 9 November 1911 Tchaikovski: Concerto for Violin and Orchestra; Wagner: “Lohengrin’s Farewell”; E. Douglas Tayler: Orchestral Fantasy *Uncle Remus*; Brahms: Symphony No. 2.¹⁰⁷

Thursday 14 December 1911 Bach: Overture (Suite) in D major “(For Strings, 2 Hautboys, 3 Trumpets, and Drums)”; Grieg: Piano Concerto; Beethoven: Symphony No. 9.¹⁰⁸

Thursday 15 February 1912 Brahms: Violin Concerto (soloist: Levine); Debussy: *Nocturnes* for orchestra: “Nuages”, “Fêtes”; Coleridge-Taylor: *Hiawatha’s Vision*; Beethoven Symphony No. 5.¹⁰⁹

Thursday 19 March 1912 Rossini: Overture to *William Tell*; Purcell: Scene “Ye twice ten hundred deities”; Saint-Saëns: Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in B minor Op. 61; Bach: Cantata “Now shall the grace”; Brahms: Symphony No. 4.¹¹⁰

Thursday 20 June 1912 **Weber: Overture to *Oberon*; Lalo: Concerto for Violin *Symphonie Espagnole*; Tchaikovski: “Air des adieux” from *Jeanne d’Arc*; Eugene Goossens: *Variations for orchestra on a Chinese theme* “(First performance)”, “(Conducted by the Composer)”; Liszt: *Hungarian Fantasia* for Piano and Orchestra; Dukas: *L’apprenti Sorcier*.¹¹¹**

Friday 19 July 1912 Schumann: Symphony No. 4; Bruch: *Romance* in A minor (soloist: Eugene Goossens); Bruch: Scena “Ave Maria”; Arthur Somerville: *Symphonic Variations for Piano and Orchestra*; Johann Strauss: Dances for Orchestra: *Polka Vergnügungszug* Op. 281, *Waltz Johannis-Käferin*.¹¹²

Friday 15 November 1912 Wolf-Ferrari: Overture to *Suzanne’s Secret*; D’Albert: Concerto in C major for cello (soloist: John Snowden); Glazounov: *Finnish Fantasia for orchestra* (first performance in England); Three Welsh Folk Songs arranged by Arthur Somervell; Berlioz: *Symphonie Fantastique*.¹¹³

Friday 13 December 1912 Mozart: “Prague” Symphony; Bach: “Ach, bleibe doch” from *Lobet Gott in seinen Reichen*; Liszt: Piano Concerto in E flat; Liszt: Song “Loreley”; Vaughan Williams: *The Wasps*, conducted by the composer: Overture, Entr’acte, March, Entr’acte, Ballet and Final Tableau.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁷ Anonymous, College Concerts, *The RCM Magazine* 8(1), 1911, p. 21.

¹⁰⁸ Anonymous, College Concerts, *The RCM Magazine* 8(1), 1911, p. 21.

¹⁰⁹ Anonymous, College Concerts, *The RCM Magazine* 8(2), 1912, p. 56.

¹¹⁰ Anonymous, College Concerts, *The RCM Magazine* 8(2), 1912, p. 56.

¹¹¹ Anonymous, College Concerts, *The RCM Magazine* 8(3), 1912, p. 91.

¹¹² Anonymous, College Concerts, *The RCM Magazine* 8(3), 1912, p. 91.

¹¹³ Anonymous, College Concerts, *The RCM Magazine* 9(1), 1912, p. 21.

¹¹⁴ Anonymous, College Concerts, *The RCM Magazine* 9(1), 1912, p. 21.

Thursday 20 February 1913 Joachim: Overture *Zu einem Gozzi'schen Lustspiel*; Saint-Saëns: Cello Concerto in A minor; Glazounov: Introduction and dance [from?] *Salome*; Weber: Scene "Durch die Wälder"; Dvořák: Symphony No. 5 ("New World").¹¹⁵

Thursday 18 March 1913 Brahms: Tragic overture; Verdi [1813]: "Stabat Mater" and "Laudi alla Vergine"; Mozart: Horn Concerto in E flat K. 417 (soloist: Aubrey Brain); Sekles: *Little Suite* Op. 21, "(An impression of Hoffmann)", "(First performance in England); Weber: Overture to *Euryanthe*.¹¹⁶

Friday 13 June 1913 Mackenzie: Ballade for Orchestra *La Belle Dame sans Merci*; Bach: Brandenburg Concerto No. 5 (soloist: Arthur Hedges); Rachmaninov: Symphony in E minor Op. 27; Chabrier: *Rhapsody for Orchestra*.¹¹⁷

Tuesday 22 July 1913 Somervell: Symphony in D minor "Thalassa"; Massenet: "Pleurez, mes yeux" from *Le Cid*; J. Alan Taffs (also soloist): first performance of his Concerto for Piano and Orchestra in E minor; Verdi: "Patria mia" from *Aida*; [Three orchestral pieces:] Sibelius: *Valse triste*; Johann Strauss: Waltz *Lava-Ströme*; Schubert: *March militaire* in D major Op. 51.¹¹⁸

Wednesday 5 November 1913 Mozart: Overture to *The Magic Flute*; Lalo: Concerto for Violin in F major Op. 20; Charles Wood: *The Ballad of Dundee* for Bass Solo, Chorus and Orchestra (conducted by the composer); Schumann: Symphony No. 2.¹¹⁹

Friday 12 December 1913 Strauss: *Don Juan*; Wagner: "Elizabeth's Greeting" from *Tannhäuser*; Mendelssohn, Violin Concerto; Rossini: "Largo al factotum" from *Il barbiere di Siviglia*; Brahms: Symphony No. 2.¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ Anonymous, College Concerts, *The RCM Magazine* 9(2), 1913, p. 55.

¹¹⁶ Anonymous, College Concerts, *The RCM Magazine* 9(2), 1913, p. 55.

¹¹⁷ Anonymous, College Concerts, *The RCM Magazine* 9(3), 1913, p. 100.

¹¹⁸ Anonymous, College Concerts, *The RCM Magazine* 9(3), 1913, p. 101.

¹¹⁹ Anonymous, College Concerts, *The RCM Magazine* 10(1), 1913, p. 17.

¹²⁰ Anonymous, College Concerts, *The RCM Magazine* 10(1), 1913, p. 18.