

HIDDEN GEMS AND FORGOTTEN PEOPLE



DOROTHY PARKE (1904-1990)| Composer

Dorothy Parke was born in County Londonderry on 29 July 1904. She was a piano student of Ambrose Coviello and a composition student of Paul Corder at the Royal Academy of Music in London, after which she returned to Northern Ireland and settled in Belfast. She married Douglas Brown, musician and teacher, and was a gifted and highly-regarded piano teacher in Belfast between 1930 and 1960. Among her pupils were Derek Bell and Norma Burroughs.

She wrote extensively for children, composing many songs and piano pieces that were used in musical competitions. Her compositional style is generally in the tradition of Stanford and simpler Vaughan Williams and Herbert Howells; very approachable but of a rather naïve simplicity and with ingenuous harmonies. Nevertheless, her music is distinctive and always effective; many of her choral and vocal settings in particular, archive a real poignancy and show considerable expressiveness. She did occasionally use a more advanced idiom, as in her choral settings of Chesterton and Stephens.

Dorothy Parke died in Portrush on 5 February 1990.

Acknowledgment: Sarah Burn, *The New Grove Dictionary of Women Composers*