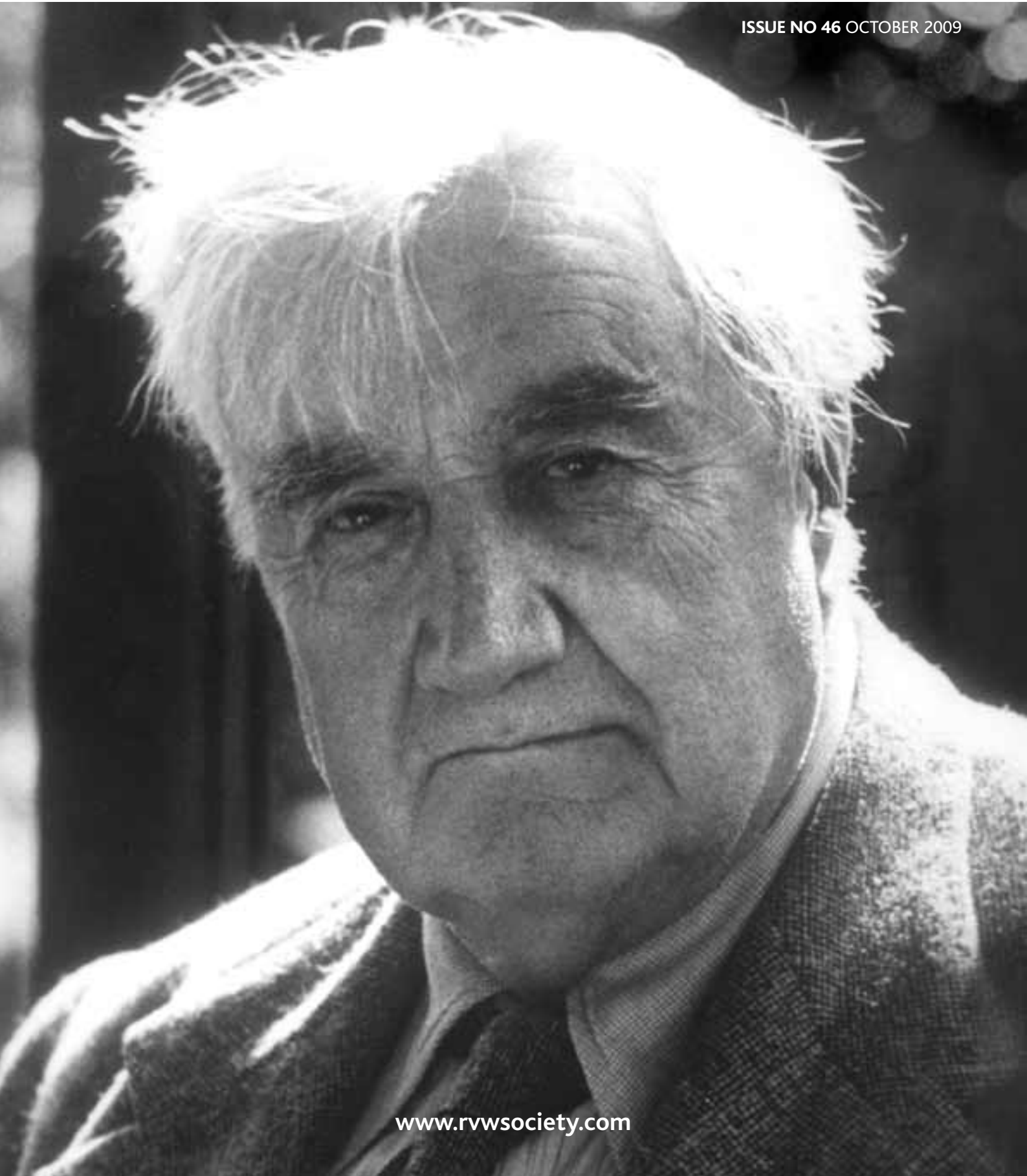


# RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS SOCIETY JOURNAL

WIDENING THE KNOWLEDGE, UNDERSTANDING AND APPRECIATION OF THE MUSIC OF RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

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# From the Editor

William Hedley



Writing on this page last June I warned members that a facelift was on the cards: not for me, of course – I’ve no need of such things – but of the *Journal*. Well, here it is, and I hope you will agree with me that it was time to update the look and feel of the publication, and that the process has been successful. Simplifying the layout of the inside pages is an ongoing process, and the aim is to make them clean, sober and easy on the eye. The outside pages are the work of Tadeusz Kasa, responsible also for the Society’s website, and I’m grateful indeed for his input here. I’m very happy with these changes, but I await your reactions with interest.

I also mentioned some little reorganisation in the way the *Journal* is produced, hoping that this would “allow it to appear at the beginning of the month on the cover.” As it turned out, the cosmetic surgery was more involved than anticipated, and the hoped-for punctuality did not materialise. I’m optimistic for February next.

My third subject last time was the content of the *Journal*, and having invited members to get in touch about this, I was looking forward to your views. Alas, I was to be disappointed, as only seven members replied. Given that the *Journal* is written by the people who read it, I thought more might have wanted to have their say about this, but many interesting points came out of the replies I did receive. The members who contacted me all read the entire *Journal*, or tried to. The more technical articles could be daunting, but those who mentioned this were insistent that these articles should always be included. In fact, they feel that the *Journal* is just the place to publish such articles, and that doing so brings prestige both to the *Journal* and to the Society as a whole. This is encouraging. As a kind of counterweight, there were several requests for more biographical information of an everyday kind: where did Vaughan Williams buy his clothes? How did he spend his day? And members’ personal reaction to the music seems important to you too, with Linda Hayward’s article in the last *Journal* soliciting particular appreciation.

These opinions, limited in number though they were, help me to provide the *Journal* that the Society’s members actually want. There may be sound musicological reasons for publishing a given

article, but a composer society journal so learned and earnest that members can’t find much of interest in it serves little purpose. It’s a question of balance, and I’m constantly monitoring this, so please, do write in with your views.

I was wondering, then, if the idea of a themed *Journal* had not run its course. Perhaps perversely I chose that moment to suggest coming back to a subject, folk song, which, albeit very important, is somewhat omnipresent and has already been covered in previous editions. Was this not a tired idea? Were members not fed up of it? To my surprise, it didn’t turn out that way, as the three distinguished, and very different, submissions, prove. In this edition you will also find an article introducing Vaughan Williams’ piano music, a minor part of his output, and one which has received scant treatment up to now, even in the *Journal*. Then there is Jeremy Dale Roberts’ moving piece *Regeneration*, a slightly adapted version of a talk he gave in November last year at Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge. And I’m happy to include a piece by one of the Society’s newer and younger members, Sean Beirne. Sean is eighteen, and in its original form his article was an essay which helped secure him a place at St. Peter’s College, Oxford, reading music on a Choral Scholarship. We congratulate him for that, and I hope we will agree to grant him a little of the indulgence he requests from members when reading his sometimes quite provocative thoughts.

No simple answer to the question of the themed approach seems to be forthcoming, so let us proceed with a kind of compromise. For the next few issues, or until a better idea presents itself, each issue of the *Journal* will feature a chosen work from the catalogue of the great composer who is our subject. For February 2010, then, I’d like to invite members to submit articles of any kind about one of the rather neglected works in the Vaughan Williams canon, the Eighth Symphony, first performed in Manchester in May 1956. The conductor on that occasion was, of course, “Glorious John”, who, incidentally, was the theme of the very first *Journal* I had the honour of editing, in February 2005.

William Hedley

# Vaughan Williams and the Idea of Folk Song in the Norfolk Rhapsodies

Anthony Newton

The following thoughts about Vaughan Williams and his work with folk song are offered in particular relation to the *Norfolk Rhapsody No. 1*. Bar numbers are included as reference points for any readers who may wish to consult the score. This piece of music and indeed the region of Norfolk are favourites of mine and I hope that some of the ideas here will convey my appreciation of them both.

It is often commented that the English folk revival of the early twentieth century was driven by a belief that with the gradual decay of folk song performance, an art form of “pure” national origin and traditional culture would be lost. Folk music was increasingly associated with rurality in a response to the perpetual growth of urban industrialisation and the commerciality that ensued was blamed for diminishing local traditions. The activity of collecting was intended to preserve the form of folk song, but also to restore culture with elements of what Georgina Boyes has termed the “organic community”<sup>1</sup>. Rural landscape encapsulated a vision by many of “Englishness”, an aspiration of cultural order and a return to an “imagined” form of unchanged land. Landscape, just as with folk song, carries reference to past existences. David Matless suggests: “Landscape... shuttles through temporal processes of history and memory. Judgements over present value work in relation to narratives of past landscape.”<sup>2</sup> As with all change, there is temptation to compare the new with what has been replaced or seek solidarity in that which was known well. The comparison made however, may be like Boyes’ suggestion of the “imagined” or the ideal created from nostalgic features retained in memory. In relation to landscape, Matless observes two responses to this, either as “cultural health” in expressing concern for the natural heritage, or “cultural decline”<sup>3</sup>, expressed by those who wish for an alternative to modernity through reminiscing past landscapes.

Where oral transmission of traditional song exists, much like the natural life of dialect, it produces a developmental process of relay. Each successive rendering may be subject to changes in content, rhythm, scale and mode for example. The acceptance into repertory and practice of a song can be one of communal choice and to an extent perhaps contributes to its recognition of belonging to a particular region. However, the situation of folk song in flux presents many challenges to those who wish to capture it. Committing a version of any folk song to paper creates a record of a musical impression as heard by the listener notating it, but which could only ever be labelled as an idea, not a definition. Whilst recognising the efforts of early twentieth century collectors and theorists, Boyes argues that they were actually seeking to return an impression of an “imagined village” culture; one which bore no date of actuality but contained musical traits some had designated as preferential to representing “Englishness” than those emanating from the newer “popular” styles for such as the music-hall. When discussing the use of folk song, it is important to negotiate this issue and recognise the fragility of its association with identity. Vaughan Williams himself commented: “National music is not necessarily folk song; on the other hand folk song is, by nature, necessarily national.”<sup>4</sup>

The music of Vaughan Williams is frequently associated with the notion of “Englishness” and national landscape. However, Alain Frogley has noted the “selective manipulation” with which these ideas of national character have been treated, for instance, the use of music through the media to associate his compositional sound and style with English landscape<sup>5</sup>. The duality in function of such a term as “Englishness” perhaps runs parallel to the function of collected folk song. David Peters Corbett, Ysanne Holt and Fiona Russell believe that “there is a specifically English landscape and an English concern with, and way of representing that landscape...[and] that there is a unique history of the nation, a particular and resilient national character.”<sup>6</sup> The manipulation Frogley speaks of is perhaps the product of this concern with representing English landscape. Vaughan Williams’ connection with folk song material through his own music, coupled with the proposed “ideals” associated with folk song, was likely to enhance his appeal as a musical ambassador.

Training as a historian would have made Vaughan Williams particularly sensitive to the irretrievable nature of the past and no doubt have enriched his period of active folk song collecting between 1903-13. A. E. F. Dickinson considers folk song to have been “a constant inner voice to Vaughan Williams’s exploration of method...”<sup>7</sup> The composer’s belief in the possibility of a national English style grounded in native art forms, naturally endeared folk song to the cause:

*Our folk-song, like our language, is neither new nor old. They are both of communal, not individual origin – they are both of immemorial antiquity and both means of expression today just as they were 500 years ago. In our native song just as in our native speech the form gradually changes with the changing needs of the community. Our language and our song are like an old tree, continually putting out new leaves.*<sup>8</sup>

During the years of 1905-06 Vaughan Williams composed three *Norfolk Rhapsodies*, of which the Second and Third were later withdrawn by the composer. They are placed among the earliest orchestral works of his compositional output and indeed his embarkation upon the pursuit of folk song collection.

The first *Norfolk Rhapsody* in E minor survived albeit as A. E. F. Dickinson notes, having been “reshaped” to reduce the number of songs quoted from five to three by excluding *A Basket of Eggs* and *Ward the Pirate*.<sup>9</sup> It is useful to remember the importance of the rhapsodic genre to the presentation of existing song. The literary derivation of “rhapsody” from the Greek *rhapsōidiā*, denotes an epic poem or an instalment of an epic recited at one sitting. This can be seen as reflected in the musical use of the term to identify a piece constructed as one extended movement. By virtue of Vaughan Williams’ exploration of the rhapsody as a medium for expressing some of the folk songs he collected in Norfolk, the question of identity might be posed when discussing how he chose to set the melodies within a surrounding quite unlike their origin. Their presentation under the title of Norfolk solidifies only a literal

attachment to the region (being their place of collection), but in turn it distances them from an immediate sense of their evolutionary existence (author to listener to future performer).

In 1906 Vaughan Williams presented for publication fifty-nine of his collected songs in the *Journal of the Folk Song Society*. They are grouped into seven counties: Essex, Norfolk, Sussex, Wiltshire, Yorkshire, Kent, and London. Vaughan Williams was careful to acknowledge that only a small portion of each region (select towns and villages) was subject to his efforts in recording song and that the “fundamental character of folk song” was owed to the fact that the same melody could appear in more than one location with very little variation. All of the songs now associated with the *Norfolk Rhapsodies* (Nos. 1 and 2) appear under the Norfolk entry.<sup>10</sup>

Of greatest importance to the *Norfolk Rhapsodies* was Vaughan Williams’ excursion to the town of King’s Lynn and its surrounding parishes in early 1905. Edgar Samuel’s account written in 1972 for *English Dance and Song*, offers some detail of his visit to the Norfolk region but also recognises how poorly documented this trip has remained.<sup>11</sup> It was between the 9th and 14th of January 1905 that Vaughan Williams collected songs in Lynn. Samuel speculates of the fortuitous venture into the town from the outlying villages of Tilney All Saints, Tilney Saint Lawrence, and Terrington, where he began collecting. The lure back to King’s Lynn and consequent meetings with singers such as the “North End” (fishing quarter) fishermen has been attributed to meeting Reverend Alfred Huddle of St. Nicholas Chapel, to whom Vaughan Williams extends his thanks in prefacing the 1906 collection. In her biography of the composer, Ursula Vaughan Williams recalls of her husband’s memories: “[The songs] came from retired sailors in the Union, from fisherman, from sailors still going to sea, from labourers, from a sexton, and from a sail maker.”<sup>12</sup> At the time of his visit, according to records sourced by Samuel, storms had caused flooding and detained the fishing fleet from leaving the harbour. For Vaughan Williams this was to be an opportunistic weather front.



A Norfolk rhapsody

### *Norfolk Rhapsody No. 1*

*The Captain’s Apprentice* is the first of three songs contained within the *Norfolk Rhapsody*. It is first quoted in full by the viola (from bar 17), and although the subsequent tunes of *A Bold Young Sailor* (bar 60) and *On Board a Ninety-Eight* (bar 98) become later subjects, a sense of its contour is never really lost. On one level, its profile is maintained through imitations of fragmentary phrases taken from

the song and it functions as an intermediary during the transition between *A Bold Young Sailor* and *On Board a Ninety-Eight* (bar 76). *The Captain’s Apprentice* is also the foregoer of closure to the work (bar 190). The pentatonic scale of notes (E-G-A-B-D) on which this folk song is founded, perhaps also contributes to the harmonic direction of the Rhapsody itself.

According to the notes that accompany Vaughan Williams’ collected version of *The Captain’s Apprentice*, it was sung to him by Mr. James Carter at King’s Lynn, Norfolk on 9 January 1905. The narrative concerns a boy from the workhouse who, whilst serving as a ship’s apprentice, is ill-treated to the point of death. Vaughan Williams identified the modality of Aeolian when entering *The Captain’s Apprentice* to the journal, although the absence of a sixth degree in the melody does not allow for complete surety in designating tonality. Aeolian on E (E minor) remained in the *Norfolk Rhapsody*, along with the intervallic and rhythmic construction of the tune which survives as it was first presented in the journal.

The opening *Adagio* of the *Norfolk Rhapsody* consists of a sole *pianissimo* B<sup>a</sup>, muted by the violin (until bar 15). The sustained nature of each string part quietly reflects the aura of stillness that may be experienced in more remote districts of Norfolk. The clarinet offers a rising demisemiquaver group (at bar 11) that provides for the listener a first hearing of the pentatonic set which is to prove vital for the entire work. The viola begins with an arpeggiation of the tonic seventh reminiscent of the clarinet, but develops it further into the first statement of *The Captain’s Apprentice*. Directed to play “freely as if improvising”, the viola’s solo (until bar 35) is accompanied by a relatively sparse texture:

Vaughan Williams, *Norfolk Rhapsody*, bars 17-24 (Viola):



*A Bold Young Sailor* is the second melodic subject (between bars 60-73). Collected on 10 January 1905, the singer is recorded as Mr. Joe Anderson. Vaughan Williams writes: “Messrs. Carter and Anderson, fisherman of King’s Lynn, both of them probably with Norse blood in their veins; since the fishing colony of King’s Lynn are a distinct race and still talk of the rest of the town as ‘foreigners’.”<sup>13</sup> Apart from stressing the possibility of Norse ancestry in these fishermen, it is interesting to read that Vaughan Williams identified them as quite “distinct” or isolated from others’ folk history indicating perhaps that tunes entered their reserve predominantly via external influence. The folk song is again of Aeolian inflection, on E in the journal but set on the relative G in the *Rhapsody*. This alteration of harmonic centre reinforces the idea of a plan drawn from the original pentatonic group, i.e. G of E-G-A-B-D. The song also maintains its own pentatonic set as a transposition of the aforementioned: G-B-C-D-F. The lack of a raised seventh indicates a retained Aeolian leaning, but the chromatic tension between the sixth degree E and its raised naturalisation perhaps suggests a modal mixture with the Dorian scale on G. The passage comes to rest on the flattened dominant (D flat, in bar 71), leading to a return of E minor.

Harmonic tension between F and E minor prepares for a return of *The Captain’s Apprentice*, which is now more fully orchestrated. The approach (in bars 74-75) is constructed of another pentatonic

set: F-A-C-D-E. With the primary region of E returned, the vast textural expansion of inner parts adds greater harmonic definition. A powerfully evocative articulation of the triplet figure that ascends and descends around F is harmonised first by D major (bar 80), then by C major (bar 81). Vaughan Williams offers a moment of diatonic clarity and a point at which this musical depiction of Norfolk is reflected in new light. The repetition of this figure (at bar 83) reasserts the nucleus of E. A descent from E by *cor anglais*, trombone and trumpet fades in dynamic to a pause on D (at bar 85), when the dominant B minor is arrived at. The new harmonic area is contemplated for a moment by the trumpet's entry on D and the timpani's roll of B. This key area forms another structural component as B of the original pentatonic set. As the *Allegro Vivace* begins, above the bass sustained pedal notes of E, *On Board a Ninety-Eight* is introduced (at bar 98).

*On Board a Ninety-Eight* was collected by Vaughan Williams from a Mr. Leatherday in the King's Lynn Union on 9 January 1905. Unlike the preceding songs, this one is formed of the Dorian mode. In the *Rhapsody*, *On Board a Ninety-Eight* forms the fourth, A (Dorian) of the E minor pentatonic group. Vaughan Williams develops this subject in counterpoint with *A Bold Young Sailor* (from bar 154). The two melodies become part of an antecedent-consequent discourse through which the harmony is tracked in a number of fourth-fifth/minor-major relationships before finally returning to E Aeolian minor (bar 190).

*Ward the Pirate* and *The Basket of Eggs* are two folk songs which were removed from the *Norfolk Rhapsody No. 1* when the work was later revised. Sung for Vaughan Williams by Mr. Carter on 9 January 1905, *Ward the Pirate* is notated in his manuscript and 1906 collection as bearing no modal inflection. It was presented as a diatonic tune in G major and the setting arranged for the *Folk Songs from the Eastern Counties* volume concurred with this but in D major. *The Basket of Eggs* appeared separately in collaborative work with Annie Webb that was circulated in 1905. Of the three versions presented, the one noted from fisherman Mr. Anderson (also on 9 January 1905) is recorded diatonically in D major. Vaughan Williams' manuscript however, depicts the tonality of G major. There are reasons for identifying a commonality between these songs, and it could be that their diatonicism was ousted in favour of the three modal tunes that remained as subjects in the *Norfolk Rhapsody* and ultimately as Vaughan Williams' representation of folk song in this work. In concluding the proposal of a harmonic structure influenced by the E minor pentatonic set, these songs could well have originally formed a fuller discussion of the seventh degree from this group. Instead, the clearest indication of D as a harmonic sonority is reduced within the appearances of *The Captain's Apprentice* (at bars 80-81 and 202-203).

Closure of the *Norfolk Rhapsody* (from bar 211) reflects almost symmetrically the way in which it opened. A sense of diatonic completeness is perhaps given by the cello and double bass as they emulate the clarinets' VII-v-i cadential descent. As if to answer the very opening dominant pitch of b<sup>a</sup>, the tonic sonority of E minor ebbs away in dynamic to conclude Vaughan Williams' first Norfolk evocation.

### Sketching the symphony: The Second and Third Norfolk Rhapsodies

The *Norfolk Rhapsody No. 1 in E Minor* was premiered in London on the 23 August 1906. The Second and Third were first performed at the Cardiff Festival on 27 September 1907 conducted by the

composer himself. A substantial revision of the First during 1914 led to its premiere in Bournemouth on 21 May 1914, and this work was published in score as it is today under the title of *Norfolk Rhapsody* (Oxford University Press, 1925).

Some information about the *Norfolk Rhapsody No. 3* does remain in the programme written for the two sequels that were performed by the London Symphony Orchestra at Park Hall on 27 September 1907 as part of the Cardiff Triennial Musical Festival.<sup>14</sup> The account by W. A. Morgan of the Third Rhapsody lists the four tunes used: *The Lincolnshire Farmer* (G Aeolian); *John Raeburn* (E Dorian); *Ward the Pirate* (G major); and *The Red Barn* (B Aeolian). It is interesting to note the appearance of *Ward the Pirate* in the *Third Rhapsody* remained as a representative of diatonic folk song. The form is described as a "quick March and Trio", which may have formed the Finale of a Symphony had Vaughan Williams fulfilled his initial idea to combine the works.

*Norfolk Rhapsody No. 2* in D minor was revived in 2002 by conductor Richard Hickox and Stephen Hogger, who was assigned to edit and complete the work. The original manuscript<sup>15</sup> which is now held by the British Library has two missing pages (pp. 15-16). Musically, this loss occurs in the transition between *All on Spurn Point* and *The Saucy Bold Robber* (bars 85-93).

The first song, *Young Henry the Poacher* was recorded on 9 January 1905 from Mr. Joe Anderson who had provided on the same day many other tunes. The mode of Aeolian is indicated and retained in the *Second Rhapsody* although in D minor rather than the original E minor. Upon studying the Norfolk collection presented in 1906 by Vaughan Williams, all but one of the six tunes collected from Mr. Anderson contain a melodic final of E and an Aeolian inflection. This small group poses one other aspect of folk song collection that perhaps requires accounting for when assessing their features: idiosyncratic tendencies of the performer, for example Mr. Anderson's replication of Aeolian on E. It is one factor of many that would have been responsible for formulating Vaughan Williams' impression of Norfolk folk song, and such activity no doubt contributed to early designations of modal associations with particular social groups of performers.

*All on Spurn Point* is the second subject, which is first suggested by the rising fifth fragments set an octave apart in unison by the flutes and violins. Titled only as *Spurn Point* in Vaughan Williams' manuscript, this song was collected on 9 January 1905 from a performance given by an ex-sailor from King's Lynn Workhouse named Mr. Leatherday. The song recounts the loss of a ship and its crew to sea after the vessel became foundered on Spurn Point in East Yorkshire. Intriguingly, this melody adheres to a major tonality (E flat in *Norfolk Rhapsody No. 2*) just as Vaughan Williams first notated it (in D major). As the setting of *Spurn Point* in the *Rhapsody* progresses however, the harmony implies movement toward a return of modality.

A modulation to the minor which follows *All on Spurn Point* is perhaps accountable for the continued belief that the three *Norfolk Rhapsodies* were originally intended by Vaughan Williams to form a 'Norfolk Symphony'. Coupled with a change in tempo to *Allegro*, this faster section of the *Second Rhapsody* resembles a division in character most often subsumed in a separate movement. Indeed this can be likened to a compressed scherzo, with the preceding section of the work representing a slow movement. It is evident that Vaughan Williams rethought his original plan for the songs, but like the *First Rhapsody* in which *On Board a Ninety-Eight* provides

a rhythmically contrastive dance-like section (*Allegro Vivace*), *The Saucy Bold Robber* also functions to differentiate the lyrical outer melodies. Sung by Mr Anderson on 10 January 1905, it evidently made a significant impression on Vaughan Williams as he also chose to set the tune in *Folk Songs from the Eastern Counties*. Like *Young Henry the Poacher*, it is recorded and set in the Aeolian mode. The collected version cited in the journal is set on E (minor) whereas the *Rhapsody* places the song within B minor.

As the Second Rhapsody closes, the interchange of B and A by the first violin and cello in the final bars, acts to suspend the tonality between the relatives of B minor and D major. The Rhapsody finally rests (at b. 211) not in the tonic minor, but tonic major of D. As the strings fade, this unexpected resolve leaves an impression of new beginning.

The *Norfolk Rhapsodies* offer a timeless preservation of the folk melodies they contain. Vaughan Williams' compositional treatment of folk song melody prevails in a developmental use of motivic cells. Variation is given to these motifs through contrasting rhythms, textures and timbres. He affords them new characteristics which may refine our awareness of particular melodic quotations and definition in structural progress. Extension or reduction of the melodies in their orchestral setting does, in some respects continue the evolutionary work that created the songs presented to the composer in King's Lynn in 1905. Inherently, the placement of folk material within another pre-existing genre helps it to acquire new expressive powers in how and to whom they are conveyed.

In appreciating Vaughan Williams' perception of English folk song, harmony is a critical factor. Modality in the *Norfolk Rhapsodies* is at the very fore of tonal discussion. Developmental chromatic undercurrents and moments of bitonal ambiguity create a duality of expression. As exemplified in setting *The Captain's Apprentice* for the *Norfolk Rhapsody*, harmonic tension is built to reach a point of

both diatonic clarity (in D and C major) yet equally, a temporary removal from the prevalent modality which surrounds it. The two states appear juxtaposed in an attempt to assert a harmonic construction that is not entirely reliant upon diatonic language. For the *Norfolk Rhapsody* in particular, the pentatonic melody of *The Captain's Apprentice* is fundamental. The E minor set permeates the work in both foreground melodic content and at a more powerful structural level to invent a state through which all of the songs may be rendered. Vaughan Williams gave to the *Norfolk Rhapsody* something which the Second and Third may have aspired to; a sense of unity – an idea of identity.

## NOTES

- 1 Boyes, Georgina. *The Imagined Village: Culture, Ideology and the English Folk Revival*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993, vii.
- 2 Matless, David. *Landscape and Englishness*. London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 1998, 13.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 16.
- 4 Vaughan Williams, Ralph. *National Music and Other Essays*, 2nd edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987, 62.
- 5 Frogley, Alain, ed. *Vaughan Williams Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, 2.
- 6 Corbett, David Peters and Ysanne Holt and Fiona Russell, eds., *The Geographies of Englishness: Landscape and the National Past 1880-1940*. London: Yale University Press, 2002, xii.
- 7 Dickinson, A. E. F. *Vaughan Williams*. London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1963, 122.
- 8 Vaughan Williams, Ralph. 'British Music', in David Manning, ed., *Vaughan Williams On Music*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, 43.
- 9 Dickinson, A. E. F. *Vaughan Williams*. London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1963, 167. Evidence of this 're-shaping' is provided by the programme note that accompanied the first performance of *Norfolk Rhapsody No. 1*, in which the songs subject to study are listed.
- 10 Vaughan Williams, Ralph. 'Songs Collected from Norfolk'. *Journal of the Folk Song Society* 2/8 (1906), 161-179.
- 11 Samuel, Edgar. 'Vaughan Williams and King's Lynn'. *English Dance and Song* 34/3 (1972), 92-93.
- 12 Vaughan Williams, Ursula. *R.V.W. A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964, 72-3.
- 13 Vaughan Williams, Ralph. 'Preface', *Journal of the Folk Song Society* 2/8 (25 March 1906), 142.
- 14 Morgan, W. A. 'Two Norfolk Rhapsodies: Nos. 2 & 3', in Cardiff Triennial Music Festival. Park Hall, Cardiff: W. M. Lewis, 1907. 16-18.
- 15 Vaughan Williams, Ralph. *Norfolk Rhapsody No. 2. Incomplete Autograph Score*. British Library, Add.ms. 71478, ff. i+19.

# SHORT NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Editing the Ralph Vaughan Williams Society Journal is a privilege and a pleasure, but the time required is not always easy to find in a busy life. Please help by reading and respecting these simple guidelines. All submissions, however presented, are welcome and receive equal attention, but email or disc is preferred. Hard copy, typed or handwritten, requires retyping which takes time and can lead to mistakes.

Please submit your piece as early as possible, especially if it is in hard copy.

Keep the layout simple. Text should be single spaced with a clear line between paragraphs. Margins should be constant throughout the piece.

Illustrations or musical examples must not be incorporated into the text. Please send them separately with a clear indication in the text as to where they should appear.

Try to avoid notes. Supplementary information is better incorporated into the text. If you want to cite sources of information a list of sources at the end is better for the purposes of our Journal than a note after each quote. If notes are inevitable, they should be grouped together at the end of the piece and not at the foot of the page.

Please refer to Vaughan Williams by his name rather than by his initials.

If you are planning a big piece, get in touch first to make sure no one else is preparing something similar. Whether contributing an article, review or a letter, please include your contact details.

# “An individual flowering”:

## Ralph Vaughan Williams’ work in Folklore

Georgina Boyes

“A good folklorist requires to be scientifically accurate, artistically imaginative and humanly sympathetic...” (Ralph Vaughan Williams)

Vaughan Williams’ incisive analysis of the qualities required in a folklorist was written in appreciation of his co-worker on *Twelve Traditional Carols from Herefordshire*, Ella Mary Leather (1876-1928). But they can – with even greater justification – be applied to his own collecting and writing on traditional performance. Innovative, perceptive and humane, his publications and letters vividly demonstrate an approach to theory and feeling for traditional singers and their songs which extend far beyond the orthodoxies of his time.

And although it may be argued that to add ‘folklorist’ to a list of achievements that sets him amongst the major composers of the age is unnecessary, Vaughan Williams’ own continuing involvement in making folk music comprehensible and accessible gives us every reason to highlight this aspect of his life’s work. Whether foregrounded in compositions and arrangements or persisting as an underlying consciousness, English tradition was a significant presence through most of his career. As Michael Kennedy concluded in his authoritative account of Vaughan Williams’ musical development, *The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, “*Sancta Civitas* was a long way from folk song; but if any of his contemporaries thought that the composer had ‘outgrown’ that phase then they failed to understand its importance to him.”

An extensive base of practical observation supports Vaughan Williams’ discussion of English tradition. The scale, variety and sheer vigour of his fieldwork was outstanding. In just under a decade, from December 1903 to September 1913, he collected over eight hundred songs, tunes and carols. And at a time when most collectors defined folk song as an entirely rural phenomenon and concentrated their researches in individual areas to produce material presented as specific to particular counties, Vaughan Williams ranged across the country, noting songs in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Cumberland, Derbyshire, Dorset, Durham, Essex, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Herefordshire, Hertfordshire, Kent, Norfolk, Northumberland, Suffolk, Surrey, Sussex, Wiltshire, Yorkshire (North and South) and “even London”. These experiences led him to conclusions about folk song and its singers that flatly contradicted prevailing theories and which are only now beginning to be fully accepted. His introduction to the publication of his early researches in a 1906 issue of the *Journal of the Folk-Song Society* makes clear that he was already aware of critical differences between his approach and that of other Society members:

*The following collection of folk-tunes differs from most of those hitherto printed in the Folk-Song Journal in that, while former collections have been gathered from one county, the present tunes*

*represent no less than seven...and even London. It is not suggested that the tunes grouped under the counties are their exclusive property – indeed the more wonderful fact elicited from the search for folk-songs is that the same tune may be heard, with hardly any variation, in Norfolk, Sussex or Yorkshire. This proves more than anything the fundamental character of the genuine folk-song. It will be noticed that a large proportion of the tunes in this collection are modal in character – Dorian, Aeolian or Mixolydian. I suggest that the Mixolydian and Dorian tunes are more characteristic of agricultural districts, while Aeolian tunes belong more to towns, and trades such as fishing and cobbling – but this suggestion is merely empirical and founded on very partial evidence.*

This rejection of key features of current theory like “County Songs” and exclusively rural performance was offered without giving the slightest hint of the controversial nature of his proposals. And more was to follow.

For contemporary members of The Folk-Song Society, the “folk” were not merely defined by their isolated, rural location but were also held to have lost any creative ability. Vaughan Williams’ independent observation of singers and their performance convinced him that the reverse was true. As he describes it, Charles Pottipher (1829-1909), who sang *Bushes and Briars* to him on his first day of field collection in 1903, began this process:

*Mr Pottipher made the following remarks about the origin of folk song: “Whenever there was a murder or anything someone would be sure to make a ballad on it.” Asked who made the tunes he said “If you once get the words the Almighty sends you a tune.”*

In fact, the composer later concluded that the tune to *Bushes and Briars* was “largely the personal invention of its singer”. Hearing and talking to a wide range of singers, Vaughan Williams went on to propose that individual artistry underlay many elements of folk song performance: “...we need no longer feel surprised that an unlettered countryman can inherit from his still more unlettered forefathers a melody like *Bushes and Briars* – adding, without doubt, to it something peculiarly his own...” And, responding to suggestions that “the old chap was having you on; I believe he made it up himself”, the composer answered “...it is quite possible that to a large extent he did, and that for that reason it is all the more valuable to me.”

The composer’s positive response to creativity and “the impress of the individual” among the singers he recorded diverges sharply from the actions of fellow collectors. “Having the chantyman’s gift for verse-making,” member of the Folk-Song Society Editorial Board, Anne Gilchrist (1864-1954) noted in 1907, the singer William Bolton had himself supplied words for a hiatus in the narrative between verses one and two in the song *Rounding Cape Horn*. “But as his own verses were less artless than the remainder

of this genuine if doggerel production of some sailor bard, I have,” wrote Gilchrist, “omitted them, in order to maintain its character.” In 1910, England’s major collector, Cecil Sharp (1859-1924) came across a version of the morris dance, *Bean Setting* in Northamptonshire.

He refused to accept it for publication because it had been “invented...some three years ago” and furthermore declared its originator “not a traditional dancer”, although the man had previously been a member of a morris team in Lancashire. This attitude seems to have persisted. In the 1950s, the American collector, Alan Lomax (1915-2002) is reputed to have destroyed songs he’d recorded from an Irish singer when he found out that she had made them up overnight in response to his query the previous day about further material in her repertoire.

Why were Vaughan Williams’ views so far from those shared by the majority of contemporary, and later, collectors? The independence of mind that prompted his responses to the music of Wagner and Brahms obviously found a further expression in his rejection of ready-made solutions to questions about English tradition. But his willingness to take account of singers’ thoughts about their own songs also provided him with an alternative insight into their traditions. The social distance between middle class collectors and the rural labourers and their families whose songs they recorded was not often or easily overcome.

And in the case of other collectors there were additional considerations. Driven by the conviction that folk culture in its entirety was in danger of extinction and his battle to obtain sole leadership of the Folk Revival movement, Cecil Sharp concentrated his efforts on recording the specifics of song and dance, moving rapidly from collection to publication. His colleague, the writer Edward Verrall Lucas (1868-1938), left a lightly fictionalised account of the fraught results in his book, *London Lavender* (1912):

*I took all the opportunities I could of getting Uncle Jonah, the voiceless shepherd in the smock, to talk of old times, but always with the fear of the Director [Sharp] very lively in me. For anecdotage is nothing to him. His purpose in life is to fill blank bars with little magical dots; for this and this only does he scour the coloured counties. All conversation is therefore an interruption, if not a misdemeanour.*

Vaughan Williams, whose field notes show he often recorded singing in one of its important traditional contexts, the pub, had a more relaxed – and possibly more productive – approach:

*I could imagine a much less profitable way of spending a long winter evening than in the parlour of a country inn taking one’s turn at the mug of “four-ale” – (surely the most innocuous of all beverages) – in the rare company of minds imbued with that fine sense which comes from advancing years and a life-long communion with nature – and with the ever-present chance of picking up some rare old ballad or an exquisitely beautiful melody, worthy, within its smaller compass, of a place beside the finest compositions of the greatest composers...*

It remains the case, however, that Vaughan Williams’ potentially significant contribution to folklore studies is still almost entirely unrealised. In his long career, he worked with two of the most widely quoted theorists of English folk song, Cecil Sharp and A.

L. Lloyd (1908-82), but neither appears to have reflected his well-evidenced premises in their writings. For the rest of his contemporaries, respect for his achievements seems to have stilled direct argument, but his ideas seem to have been too far from accepted views to be adopted, or even discussed.

Vaughan Williams’ personality also played a part in the general failure to grasp the importance of his writings. Although his letters show him to have been a clear and fair minded critic of the work of other folklorists, his preferred style in print was to eschew argument, but to keep presenting his theories without pointing out where they differed from the conclusions of others. And his ability to see and represent both sides of an argument, as during the General Strike, could leave readers and friends uncertain of his position.

Ultimately, however, it may have been the knotty subtlety of his writing which defeated readers looking for easy certainties. Key statements could appear contradictory: he proposed that “the art of the folksinger is dead”; but also wrote “the evolution of the folk-song ceased for the time. I believe, however, that this is a purely temporary check, and that the folk-song will live again in new surroundings and under new conditions.” In their context, it is possible to see what he meant by both proposals and that they are not in conflict, but this calls for detailed consideration. Compared with Sharp and Lloyd’s appealing generalities about the anonymous, unaware, marginalised (and mythical) “folk”, Vaughan Williams’ focus on individuals and the complexities of the workings of tradition is hard work.

The failure of specialists within the Folk Revival to recognise the nature and value of Vaughan Williams’ work in folk music has been critical. It allowed other constructions of his career to develop and encouraged crude prejudice to cut off traditional music from other genres. If his fieldwork in workhouses and pubs had been better appreciated, would the travesty of ultra-conventional, Establishment Ralph have emerged? If his setting folk song alongside recommendations that composers also seek inspiration in the singing of football crowds, music-hall choruses, the sound of barrel organs and Salvation Army bands, street pedlars’ cries and “factory girls singing their sentimental songs”, would music and musicology have found a better accommodation with traditional song? It seems we have lost many opportunities for progress and depth of understanding.

Vaughan Williams’ association with folk song has long been controversial – the subject of embarrassed superficialities in seeming advocates and a recurring source of sneers from his detractors. Cowpats and warbling bumpkins fuelled the slurs of the modernists, whilst fleeting references to simplicity and a lost rural past were deployed to cover a lifetime’s appreciation of traditional performance before writers of programme notes and histories of twentieth-century music moved on to detailed consideration of less problematically-inspired, “important” compositions.

One of the many benefits of the renewal of interest in Vaughan Williams’ writing, however, is the opportunity it has also provided for a fresh perspective on the scope and stature of his work in folklore. Championing the creativity of folk singers, the contribution of the individual performer and the contemporaneity of tradition – Vaughan Williams’ analyses put him at the cutting edge of current study and deserve wider appreciation.

# Towards a folk song awakening: Vaughan Williams in Bournemouth, 1902

Michael Holyoake

Nearly twenty years ago, I was fascinated to read that Ralph Vaughan Williams visited my home town, Bournemouth, several times in the latter part of 1902 to deliver a series of six lectures on “The History of Folk Song”. The venue still stands and is a short walk from the primary school where an enlightened teacher gave me my first experience of Vaughan Williams’ music, in the form of the “March Past of the Kitchen Utensils” from *The Wasps*. So I was delighted last year to find a display cabinet set up in Bournemouth’s excellent music library to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the great composer’s death; immediately, my interest in the folk song lectures was rekindled and I determined to find out more.

Vaughan Williams was no stranger to Bournemouth in 1902. Two of his early works had already received their first performances by the Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra under the baton of Dan Godfrey, who was developing a strong reputation as a champion of British composers. His memorial plaque describes him as “the greatest friend of the British composer” and Sir Alexander Mackenzie described Bournemouth as “the first place to show any public spirit towards British music.”

On 4 April 1901, Vaughan Williams’ *Serenade for Small Orchestra in A minor* was premiered; under a year later, on 10 March 1902, Dan Godfrey introduced the *Bucolic Suite*, for orchestra, in four movements. In the programme notes, Cuthbert Hawley (whom we shall encounter later) wrote: “The Finale is perhaps the best number in the Suite, and gives evidence of considerable technical powers of orchestration. Taken as a whole this work should be a valuable addition to the repertoire of effective concert music by native composers.” Two years later, on 7 March 1904, the *Symphonic Rhapsody* was included in a programme which featured the cellist May Mukle, who was to become a friend of Vaughan Williams and dedicatee of the beautiful *Six Studies in English Folk Song*. Sadly, the *Symphonic Rhapsody* was unpublished and the manuscript destroyed, for the programme notes are favourable:

*Mr. Vaughan Williams’ music, now tender, now rising to heights of passion, shows the hand of a thorough musician on every page. He does not indulge in the wild and whirling polyphony which looks so interesting on paper, but is often so confused and ineffective in performance, but at the same time he employs the device as a means of building up his musical structure. Above all, the composer has imagination of the power of thematic invention.*

The piece was inspired by a poignant poem by Christina Rossetti, entitled *Echo*. A local critic was less complimentary, describing a sense of “chaos and darkness” which subjected those present to “a severe trial”! Ten years passed before Vaughan Williams’ next visit; on 21 May 1914, the composer himself conducted the first performance of his revised *Norfolk Rhapsody No. 1*. In the same year, speaking of the Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra’s success since the turn of the century, Dan Godfrey declared, “There is hardly a British composer of note who has not appeared as a conductor of his own works. To give a brief idea of the scope of the concerts, it might be mentioned that 135 British composers have contributed 454 separate works. Many of the compositions have obtained at these concerts their first actual performances.”



Dan Godfrey, knighted in 1922 “for valuable services to British music”

Vaughan Williams was therefore entering a conducive musical environment when he was invited to give his folk song lectures at the Pokesdown Science, Art and Technical School, between October and December 1902. A prospectus from the time describes the school as being “established in 1897 with the object of providing in Pokesdown efficient education and instruction in Art and Elementary Science. The present handsome and commodious building was erected in 1898, and is well equipped for teaching the various subjects named in the Syllabus of Instruction.” It was also a convenient venue for the Bournemouth Centre of the Oxford University Extension Movement, under the auspices of which Vaughan Williams was teaching. During the 1870s, Oxford, Cambridge and London Universities all developed extension networks, sending lecturers all over the country to give talks on topics of general interest, often to very large audiences. Under Sir Michael Sadler’s direction in the 1890s, the quantity and scope of the Oxford extension lectures increased enormously. Vaughan Williams may have been new to lecturing but he was already a prolific contributor of articles; no less than eight of his essays appeared in *The Vocalist* during 1902. The first of these, “A School of English Music”, was written, like the lectures, before Vaughan Williams’ folk song “awakening” at Ingrave, Essex on 4 December 1903, when the shepherd Charles Pottipher sang *Bushes and Briars* to a captivated composer who later wrote of that moment, “my education was complete.”

I think herein lies the interest and significance of the Pokesdown lectures, that they took place a year before this epiphanic experience. They contain the thoughts of someone who by his own admission, “knew and loved the few English folk songs which were then available in printed collections, but only believed in them vaguely.” We know that he first encountered English folk songs through Stainer and Bramley’s *Christmas Carols New and Old* and that at

Charterhouse he organised a Welsh concert, drawing on Boosey's *Songs of Wales*. There is also a report of the young Vaughan Williams asking workers on the Leith Hill estate for songs and writing them down as sung, then asking for the same song again and taking note of any difference in the rendering. A highly significant musical development occurred around 1893 when he obtained a copy of the recently published *English County Songs*. There, in Lucy Broadwood and J. A. Fuller Maitland's influential collection, he first encountered the *Dives and Lazarus* tune which remained with him for the rest of his life and even sounded at the beginning of his memorial service. Nevertheless, these lectures pre-date the folk-song collecting which took him all over England in the years after Ingrave. Later and self-deprecatingly, he wrote of the subject of his lectures, "I knew precious little about it and the little knowledge I had was entirely out of books."

POKESDOWN  
SCIENCE, ART, & TECHNICAL SCHOOL.



PROSPECTUS and  
PROGRAMME OF CLASSES.  
1901-2.

A prospectus from the time of the lectures  
(image courtesy of Bournemouth Library)

So we are very fortunate indeed that three local newspapers covered the six lectures and the audiences' reception of them in increasing detail; the report of the final one seems almost verbatim and covered ten times as many column inches in the Bournemouth Guardian as the first! Reading them through, over and over, gives a very real sense of the speaker's voice, his tone and inflection. Two things become apparent quickly: firstly, Vaughan Williams had in fact researched his subject very thoroughly; secondly, to use Michael Kennedy's wonderful description, "Vaughan Williams, at the age of thirty, was riding the hobby-horses which gave him a good gallop all his life." I will now relate each of the six fortnightly lectures on "The History of Folk Song" in turn, using italics from now on to indicate these charming and often entertaining local press reports, which I have conflated but preserved unedited.

**Lecture 1: The Foundations of National Song, Monday 6 October 1902, 3pm**

*The first of a course of six Oxford University Extension Lectures on "The History of the Folk Song", with musical illustrations, was given*

*by Mr. R. Vaughan Williams, B.A., Mus. Doc., of Trinity College, Cambridge, at Pokesdown Technical School on Monday afternoon. There was a good attendance. Judging by the introductory lecture, it promises to be a very interesting course. The Chairman (Rev. P. M. C. Johnstone), in introducing the lecturer, remarked that it was with great pleasure he welcomed a Cambridge man to help forward an Oxford movement. Mr. Vaughan Williams, who was greeted with warm applause, said in his introductory remarks that music could not be understood unless it was heard, as talking was but the dry bones of it, and he would, therefore, in the course of the six lectures, give practical illustrations to his meanings, and to this end several ladies and gentlemen had promised to sing. He then proceeded in an interesting manner to explain the foundations of national song. The song, he said, was the most universal form of music, and every nation and century had its representative songs. Songs were also the natural development of excited speech, and a nation's songs represented its temperament. Songs were usually divided into two classes – the "Folk-Song" (Volslied), which sprung from the people, and the "Art-Song" (Kunstlied), which was a conscious artistic production by an educated composer. That course of lectures dealt with the national, or "Folk-Song", and Mr. Vaughan Williams then proceeded to describe the materials for the same:- (1) Scales – every nation had a scheme of notes on which its melodies were founded, and those schemes were purely arbitrary; the Pentatonic scale, with examples in Scottish music; the Oriental scales; the European, or Heptatonic scale, with its various forms; and the Church modes. (2) Rhythm – rhythm was derived from the dance, with the characteristic rhythms of various nations, and irregular rhythms, and periods of bars. During the afternoon, songs were rendered in a most appreciative manner by Miss Hillier, Miss Moore White and Dr. A. McCall, and at the close, the Chairman heartily thanked Mr. Vaughan Williams for his most interesting lecture.*

**Lecture 2: Design and Expression in National Song, Monday 20 October**

*There was a much larger attendance than at the first lecture, the hall being nearly full. Mr. A.T. George presided. The lecture, which had musical illustrations, dealt with design and expression in national songs. Primitive music was, said the lecturer, the direct expression of emotion. That expression, to be intelligible, must be controlled by design, of which there were three principles – (a) insistence, to impress the memory; (b) variety, to give relief when insistence produced weariness; (c) symmetry, which gave unity by further repetition of the original material when variety had given relief. Those principles were found in the most primitive music, but were only crystallised into a definite scheme in the fully-developed folk-tunes of Europe. Emotional expression in the folk-tune depended on the curves of the melody, the range of its compass, and the arrangement of climaxes. Design and expression react on each other. As illustrations of the lecture the following songs were sung: My love's an Arbutus, Miss Moore White; Das Schwesterlein (Brahms), Mr. A.T. George; Barbara Allen, Miss Moore White; and The Lowlands of Scotland, Mr. A.T. George.*

**Lecture 3: Characteristics of National Song – On the Continent, Monday 3 November**

*There was a very large attendance, a fact which tends to show how the lectures are being appreciated in the district. The lecturer dealt on this occasion with the characteristics of national songs on the Continent, the music of two European nations being taken as examples – the Magyar (Hungarian) and the German. At first sight the Magyar music was the most striking, wild and weird but withal musical in the extreme; but it had no progressive qualities. The German folk-song was much less exciting and more peaceful, but it*

was really of a deeper emotional quality, and contained the germ of all the later developments in music. He explained Magyar characteristics – the eccentric rhythm and accent, the extremes of gaiety and sadness, the scale, and the harmonising of tunes – and also the characteristics of German tunes, including its sobriety and solid qualities, structural subtleties, and the influence of harmony.



Ralph Vaughan Williams as a young man

The musical illustrations which were given during the afternoon were as follows: The Foggy Dew (Stanford), Mrs. Gardner; three Hungarian dance songs (arranged by Korbay): Far and High, Mourning in the Village Dwells, The Tisza Torrents, Mr. George. Mr. Davies (violinist) kindly played A Hungarian Dance which Mr. Pardy accompanied on the piano. The part song, In Stiller Nacht (arranged by J. Brahms) was sung by a number of other ladies and gentlemen, and Dr. Vaughan Williams sang a German song, Wachtlied, arranged by Reimann. The next lecture will be made particularly interesting, as Miss Lucy Broadwood has kindly consented to come down from London to illustrate it by singing from her own collection of old English folk songs, to obtain which she has personally travelled all over the country to unearth them from the villagers, farmers and old inhabitants.

#### Lecture 4: Characteristics of National Songs – In the British Isles, Monday 17 November

This lecture and the remaining two were reported much more extensively. The lectures were clearly becoming very popular – the highest number recorded was one hundred and twelve and on this occasion, there was a crowded attendance. A clue to their success is given by the reporter for the Bournemouth Visitors' Directory: At the fourth lecture on Monday and those which preceded, the remarks of the lecturer were appropriately illustrated by vocal and instrumental music. This is an entirely new idea, and one which enhances the value of the lectures and makes them more intelligible to those who possess only a rudimentary knowledge of music.

The lecture dealt with the characteristics of national songs in the British Isles and was illustrated in a most charming manner by Miss Lucy Broadwood, editor of the English County Songs. This lady kindly made the journey from London on purpose to illustrate the lecture by singing from her own collection of Old English County

and Folk Songs. Dr. Williams (the lecturer) introduced Miss Broadwood, who was heartily received. She entered thoroughly into the spirit of the songs and a prominent feature, in addition to her effective vocalisation, was Dr. Vaughan Williams' accompaniments, which were often improvised and played with exquisite harmony and feeling. He accompanied Miss Broadwood's songs in a truly characteristic manner, suiting the music most admirably to the words.

The lecturer, at the outset, referred to Irish and Scotch songs, and of the latter, Miss Broadwood gave two typical examples in Ca' the Ewes to the Knowes and Adieu, Dundee. Both these songs, said the lecturer, belonged to the earlier period of Scottish music. There were very ancient tunes in Scotland, in Ireland and also in Wales. But in England they did not seem to find any trace left to them – at all events of popular folk music – until the 15th century. However, there were two very interesting tunes which certainly came before that date, though one was not quite certain they were folk songs. One of them belonged to one date, 1240, and the other, known as The Agincourt Song, to the year 1415. It was supposed that there must have been folk songs, but it was not until the time of Henry VIII, or his immediate predecessors, that people began thinking about folk songs or writing them down. It was in the time of Henry VIII, or Elizabeth, that all the tunes were written which were supposed to have given the keynote to what was called the English style at that period. Such tunes as Woodstock Town, The Bailiff's Daughter, and The British Grenadiers all belonged to that period.

It always seemed to the lecturer that those tunes, popular though they were, belonged to the town rather than to the country. The spirit of the country did not seem to breathe through them at all, so far as he could make out. Perhaps it was that fact which accounted for the extraordinary idea that there was no really good folk music in England; that the songs were very nice, jovial songs, very suitable for occasions of harmony, but not of great value. Chappell declared "that English folk music was of a very equable nature, and had no deep feelings of any kind." The lecturer thought the simple explanation of that was – that it was only quite lately that it had been found out what English folk music really was. It was only within the last sixty years that enthusiastic searchers had gone into the country places, and taken down actually from the mouths of the country people, who sang them, those county songs – the songs which they and their forefathers had sung for years, which had never been written down, and never suffered from the contamination of professional musicians. He believed the pioneer was the Rev. James Broadwood, who took down the whole volume of Sussex tunes about the year 1840, and his work had been carried on by a great many followers. That day Miss Broadwood would sing various songs which she had collected. The tunes they would hear were, he believed, the finest English folk music – that music which represented the true English spirit. They would find it had nothing to do with that false joviality, the glorification of over-eating, which was usually supposed to be the characteristic of English folk music. It was by the songs which Miss Broadwood would sing to them that he hoped to prove that English folk music was by no means all roast beef and plum pudding (laughter). The words of these county songs were, almost without exception, as they were sung by the country people.

Sometimes the words were extremely beautiful and sometimes nonsensical, in other cases either characteristic or bombastic, but in all cases they were genuine. Now that was not so with the songs of Scotland or Ireland. Ireland had Moore, and Scotland had Burns to add new words to their national tunes. To a great extent by that means they had become popularised, but those ancient county tunes stood entirely on their own merits. For instance, My Bonnie, Bonnie Boy was a tune which came from Hampshire, and was sung by a

gardener's wife in that county. She used to teach it to her children until her husband once heard her and told her to stop teaching that bosh, and teach them Hymns Ancient and Modern instead (laughter). The next tune – Bristol Town – was very different in character. That tune came from Sussex, and was sung by an old bellringer, who lived near Horsham. He was said to know 400 songs by heart, and took a month to sing them.

The lecturer, having described the origin of other songs on the programme, asked what those county songs suggested to them as to the state of music in England? He need hardly remind them of the general opinion that England was not a musical nation, and that he could but admit that up to the present they had done a great deal to justify that opinion. He knew they had a great many men and women in England who could play and sing and compose very well indeed up to a certain point, but it was just that part of a musician's art which constituted the music itself, where they so often lamentably failed. He wondered if they ever would really become musical? He thought they could look to those county songs and get some comfort. If such songs as those could be composed and sung in England, it must be that there was music somewhere amongst them. It had very likely been crushed by the false ideas and dull respectability of English life, but occasionally it made its way to the front; occasionally a Purcell, a Parry, or an Elgar made their individuality felt, broke through the bonds of propriety, and gave them some really genuine music. Their musicians had to learn to play, sing, and compose for the sake of music, and then, perhaps, they would become a musical nation (applause).

The Rev. P.M.C. Johnstone, Vicar of Southbourne, thanked Miss Broadwood, on behalf of the committee and those present, for having sung to them, and said they were all grateful. He only hoped they had not worked Miss Broadwood too hard. He trusted their interest in folk songs would be deepened. The committee wanted to show in a very small way their gratitude to Miss Broadwood, and for that purpose he would introduce Miss Sherring.

Miss Sherring presented Miss Broadwood with a bouquet composed chiefly of chrysanthemums and maidenhair fern, with orange coloured streamers attached. Miss Broadwood said it was a great pleasure to come there. She had been described as the lady who sang those terribly long songs, so she considered they had been very indulgent to her (laughter and applause). The company then partook of afternoon tea.

The songs which Lucy Broadwood is reported to have sung included *Ca' the ewes to the knowes*, *Adieu, Dundee*, *The Agincourt Song*, *Cold Blows the Wind*, *The Young Servant Man*, *My Bonnie*, *Bonnie Boy*, *Bristol Town*, *The Seeds of Love*, *Henry Martin*, and *The Carter's Health*.

In the light of Vaughan Williams' awakening just over a year later, the scope and clearly expressed views of this lecture are particularly relevant, as is the presence of the guest singer, who had been collecting folk songs herself since the late 1880s. She had already had some influence on Vaughan Williams; he later wrote: "One day, about 1900, Miss Lucy Broadwood asked me to see the songs she had collected in Sussex. Then indeed I saw the flattened cadence in all its glory but still I was a doubting Thomas and I wanted first-hand evidence." In an appreciation two years before her death in 1929, he praised her "brilliant talents as pianist, singer, composer and essayist. Among a stiff-necked generation of unbelievers, she believed in the beauty and vitality of our own national melody." Surely she must have taken the opportunity in Bournemouth to encourage Vaughan Williams to find this "first-hand evidence" for himself.



Lucy Broadwood, who helped form the Folk Song Society in 1898

### Lecture 5: Characteristics of National Songs – Religious Folk Songs, Monday 1 December

Vaughan Williams' passionate views on religious music in general and English hymn tunes in particular were already evident in 1902. This lecture is, as Michael Kennedy states, "indicative of Vaughan Williams' lifelong approach to this subject." They must also have been coloured by his unhappy experience from 1895 to 1897 as organist of St. Barnabas, South Lambeth.

Despite the miserable meteorological conditions which prevailed, there was a good attendance, and the lecture was listened to throughout with great interest. Dr. Vaughan Williams stated that in the previous two lectures they had regarded the folk-song from the point of view of nationality, and had been finding out how language, climate and physical geography affected the music of the people. That afternoon he proposed to talk about religious folk-songs or those songs which centred around church worship, which were, he contended, important enough to be treated separately. Religious folk music was not necessarily a part of church worship, but it was, so to speak, the commentary of the people on what they heard in church. There was a vein of mysticism which ran through all religious folk-music that was strong enough to counteract the national eccentricities of any particular country, and without doubt the most important kind of religious national songs were those connected with Christmas. They found Christmas songs belonging to every country from Wales to Poland, and Dr. Vaughan Williams proceeded to furnish illustrations. As an example of a French Noël, Miss Muriel Hawley sang *Eh! Mon Dieu*, which emanated from an old French Nativity play; whilst Mrs. Heygate Vernon sang the most famous of the German Weihnachtslieder, the beautiful song *Joseph Lieber*, *Joseph Mein*, which was sung in a play which was very popular in Germany in the fourteenth century. Closely connected with the German Christmas songs were the *Marienlieder*, or songs and hymns in honour of the Virgin Mary, which were full of the most intimate and personal sentiment, and Miss Hawley sang a beautiful specimen of a *Marienlied* from Brahms' collection of German folk-songs, *Maria Ging*.

England was, continued the lecturer, by no means behind other countries in her popular Christmas music. Some of the most beautiful English folk tunes were Christmas carols, and it was those carols, among all folk-music, which had the most chance of surviving because they were connected with a great church festival. Such carols

as 'The First Nowell', The Cherry Tree and The Lord at first did Adam make were still sung in the churches at Christmas, although it was true that publishers of church music were doing their best to supersede them by the sentimental effusions of the Barnby School. It rested entirely with those who were responsible for their church music whether those beautiful and venerable tunes should be preserved or whether they should give way to compositions whose chief characteristic was a sham and unhealthy sentimentalism.

Coming to the important branch of religious popular music, the Chorale (embracing, in Germany, Luther's Enchiridion, published 1524, consisting of popular tunes arranged, and Catholic hymns with new words and original tunes, chiefly by Crüger; in France, the Huguenot Psalter of Marot and Beza, published 1552, arranged on the same plan as Luther's book, the tunes being arranged chiefly by Goudimel; in England, Ravenscroft's Psalter, published 1621, the words being from Sternhold and Hopkins' version, and the tunes arranged by Tallis, Dowland, etc; and in Italy, the Laudi Spirituali, instituted by St. Philip Neri, about 1560, and sung by Laudisti), Dr. Williams said that if ever there was music invented for the people and sung by the people it was found in the congregational hymn tunes. The Salvation Army made hymn singing an important part of their services. Some of those hymns they had borrowed from the Established Church; some they had, he believed, invented for themselves; and many they had adapted from the popular songs of the moment – keeping, it should be observed, not only the music but also the catchphrase or characteristic words of the original song. In doing that the Salvationists were following a great leader, as the Lutheran hymns also emanate from three sources – (i) adaptations of melodies from the Roman Church; (ii) original tunes; and (iii) adaptations of secular folk-tunes.

The most important chorales from the present point of view were those which were adapted from secular folk-songs, and the lecturer proceeded to trace the origin and development of many of the early and best known hymn tunes, from popular airs, as for example the famous Innsbrück. The Rev. G.D. Shenton gave a rendition of Abschied von Innsbrück (Heinrich Isaak), and a number of ladies and gentlemen contributed three magnificent versions by Bach, who had used it in his settings of the St. Luke and St. Matthew Passion. The history of the Old Hundredth was subsequently illustrated by vocal contributions by Mrs. Heygate Vernon, Il n'ya Celluy (French tune) and the Rev. G.D. Shenton, Tagelied (the old Dutch version), with pianoforte illustrations by the lecturer, of Goudimel's version, Le Jeune's version, and Dowland's version from Ravenscroft's Psalter, in beautiful harmonisation, with the melody in the tenor part.

Dealing with the history of English hymn tunes, Dr. Vaughan Williams said that at the restoration of church singing which had been put a stop to by the Commonwealth, the art of singing had been so far forgotten that it was found necessary to put the tune in the top part, and that custom still survived. A modern audience or congregation, said the lecturer, was so accustomed to the modern perversion of placing the melody in the soprano part, that, in the few churches where the ancient and true use obtained, they failed to realise the correct method, and they could be heard struggling to sing the elaborate soprano harmonies, instead of following the tenor melodies. The tunes, which served their forefathers so well, lasted well on into the last century, but then came a change. The village band, which, with all its shortcomings, was a definite artistic nucleus in the parish, was superseded by a wheezing harmonium, played by an incompetent amateur, or, in more ambitious churches, a new organ was set up (usually unpaid for) with all the modern devices for the propagation of vicious and mechanical sentiment. The organist had usually developed his technique at the expense of his musicianship,

and his taste was formed on the sickly harmonies of Spohr, overlaid with the operatic sensationalism of Gounod; and church hymns had followed suit. The old psalm tunes were usually among the finest tunes in the world, and even the less excellent ones were absolutely suitable for congregational singing, but in 1861 there appeared a compilation called Hymns Ancient and Modern, which gave the death blow to the old system. The original intention of the compilers of those hymns was not wholly bad. Many of the old tunes were preserved, though usually in a mutilated state, and some of the new tunes, such as Wesley's Aurelia, were worthy companions to the old tunes. But even in the original edition there appeared a quantity of those exotic and languorous tunes which could be nothing but enervating to those who sang and heard them; and in later editions the element of maudlin sentiment had grown alarmingly, until at last the bad had almost driven out the good. National music should represent the people. Would anyone, he asked, dare to say that the effusions of the Barnby School represented the English people? They had seen that the people could invent for themselves more beautiful religious folk songs. Hardworking men and women should be given bracing and stimulating music, not the unhealthy outcome of theatrical and hysterical sentiment.

At the close of the lecture, several of the audience stayed to a class which is held at the end of each lecture, and a discussion on the various points raised by the lecturer took place.

The particular target of Vaughan Williams' uncompromising words was Sir Joseph Barnby, organist and choirmaster, who succeeded Gounod in 1872 as conductor of the Royal Albert Hall Choral Society. He wrote two hundred and forty-six hymn tunes, published in 1897 in one volume, including those for *When morning gilds the skies* and *For all the saints*. The latter tune was promptly replaced with his own magnificent *Sine Nomine* when Vaughan Williams edited the English Hymnal. In the 1906 preface to this new collection, Vaughan Williams continued from where his lecture concluded: "It ought no longer to be true anywhere that the most exalted moments of a churchgoer's week are associated with music that would not be tolerated in any place of secular entertainment."

One of the singers at the lecture was clearly moved by the composer's comments and wrote a very supportive "criticism" for the following week's Bournemouth Guardian. Muriel Hawley praised the "remarkably able and lucid" lecture, continuing, "though we may differ from the lecturer on some points, we cannot but admire his sincerity, for he certainly has the courage of his opinions...He made a well deserved attack on the false sentimentalism of many of our modern hymns as compared with the true feeling and dignity of earlier examples. In this condemnation we heartily agree with him, and only wish that those responsible for the selection of religious music in churches and chapels could be made to realise how false and harmful most of the modern hymns are, how personal and selfish in their tone, and, therefore, how utterly out of keeping with the dignified beauty which should be characteristic of true worship." Her father (I'm assuming), Cuthbert Hawley, a local church organist, was the author of the programme notes for the first performance of the *Bucolic Suite* earlier in the year. He took the chair for the sixth and final lecture in the series.

## Lecture 6: The Importance of Folk Song, Monday 15 December

The lecturer had previously dealt with the foundation, design and expression, and characteristics of National songs, and he now dealt with the importance of folk-song. The folk-song was important, he said, to so many classes of people – to the ethnologist who wished to trace the connection between a nation and its music, and to the antiquarian in order to find out the origin of a song, and to track its

development, but first and foremost it was important to the musician. He would suggest four reasons why the folk-song was of supreme importance to the student of music – (i) Folk-songs contained the nucleus of all more developed music; (ii) they invariably affected the styles of great composers; (iii) they were a sure index of national temperament; (iv) folk-songs were supremely beautiful. A folk-song could usually be described as a short phrase, followed by a contrasting phrase, which was again followed by a return to the original phrase.

Enlarging upon these points, Dr. Vaughan Williams remarked that all great composers had been fond of folk-songs, and had introduced them into their compositions from the earliest times. It was quite a recognised plan among the old chorale writers before the seventeenth century – before the time of Palestrina – to found their great choral compositions on some popular tune. That practice gradually became a scandal, for the congregation, recognising one of their popular tunes, used to join in and sing not only the tune, but the original words of the song, and that, as they could imagine, did not tend to make the church services more dignified. Indeed, it had become a perfect disease with critics to say how most of the themes of the great composers were folk-tunes. He did not know in the least if that were true – anyhow, it showed how closely allied popular and so-called classical music were. Purcell had introduced folk-songs into his compositions; Handel had used an old Italian folk-song in his Pastoral Symphony. Bach had also founded many of his beautiful compositions on popular hymn tunes which, though not folk-song in their origin, had become so in their use.

When they came to modern times, they found composers using folk-songs more frequently as a basis of their compositions, because in modern times nationality as a feature in music had become especially marked. Each composer blended his own individuality with that of his nation, and was naturally led to use the folk-songs of his own country as a vehicle for his own personal moods. Thus, Tchaikowsky's Second Symphony was founded on Russian themes, and the theme of the slow movement in his great pianoforte trio was one of his national folk-songs. Brahms' Academic Overture was founded on the songs of the German University students, and as an illustration here Miss Muriel Hawley sang one of Brahms' cradle songs. The lecturer also argued that sometimes a composer deliberately imitated the style of a folk-song. He did not mean by that, that many of Schubert's or Schumann's simpler songs were very much like folk-songs, but what he wanted to give them as an example was of a composer deliberately going out of his way to imitate some old carol or the tunes, perhaps, of some other nation, just as Swinburne and Rossetti had imitated the old-fashioned ballad style. A most delightful instance of that came out of Wagner's splendid comedy-opera Die Meistersinger, where David the apprentice was asked by his master Hans Sachs to sing an old carol dealing with the legendary history of Nuremberg. David accordingly sang one of those delightful little tunes which was an exact reproduction of those Weihnachtslieder and Marienlieder which they heard at the last lecture. The Rev. G. D. Shenton sang David's Song from Die Meistersinger.

Continuing, Dr. Vaughan Williams said that sometimes the sense of nationality appealed so strongly to a composer that without actually using a folk-song, he would colour his whole work with the feeling of the folk-songs of some nation – either his own or that of some nation which for the time being he felt himself in sympathy. For instance, they all knew Mendelssohn's Scottish Symphony. And composers whose sense of their own nationality was very strong, like Dvorak, would introduce, quite unconsciously, the rhythms and melodic curves of their own national music. Another illustration was

given at this junction by Miss Gardner, who sang Grieg's Solveig's Song. They would therefore see, added Dr. Vaughan Williams, that great composers in all times in the history of music had not disdained to use folk-tunes as a means of inspiration. Nor must they accuse them of stealing inasmuch as those great popular tunes were the property of all those who by nationality, friendship or analogous feeling found themselves in sympathy with them. Thus, Schumann used The Marseillaise as his right because he was in sympathy with the call to freedom which it typified. Mendelssohn made the Scottish idiom his own because Scotland appealed to his picturesque temperament, and Glinka, Dvorak and Grieg had the right to incorporate folk-tunes of their own nations into their works because, as members of such nations, they had in a sense helped to make those tunes.

Dealing with the close relationship to national temperament, his third reason for the importance of folk-song, the lecturer said that it was extraordinarily interesting to see the national temperament running through every form of a nation's art – the national life and the national art growing together. That could be seen best in the case of those nations which had recently awakened, musically speaking – those countries where, at the beginning of the last century, there was nothing more than the foreign-made music of pedants and the unsophisticated music of the people, which was practically untouched by the "educated" music of the fashionable classes. Thus, if they read Tolstoy's memoirs they would read how the fashionable music of his youth was Field's Nocturnes. In Bohemia and Scandinavia equally they found at the beginning of the nineteenth century nothing but the merest dry-as-dust imitations of foreign models. But about the second quarter of the last century, there was an artistic awakening in Russia, Bohemia and Scandinavia. Glinka, the Russian composer, led the way, and had been followed in his own country by Borodin, Dargomyzhsky, Tchaikowsky and Glazunow. In Bohemia, a new school was founded by Smetana and continued by Dvorak, and Scandinavia had had her national composer in Grieg.

At this point, Vaughan Williams turns his attention to English music and the reporter changes voice to the first person. One wonders if the lecturer became particularly impassioned here.

When was England going to have her musical awakening and have a phraseology of her own? There was a time when we held our own as musicians with any foreign nation. Our own great composer, Purcell, had struck deep taproots into our folk music, and his music rested on the foundation of the best English spirit, the spirit which shows itself in our beautiful country tunes, but, at present, in England, we seemed to be in the stage of imitation. At one time it was Mendelssohn we imitated, then it was Schumann, then Wagner, then Brahms, and now it was Tchaikowsky. These composers had discovered the fact that the idiom of the people was not incompatible with great and serious forms of music, and that it was not necessary to write in the dull accepted style to be a great musician – in fact, they came back to the old proposition that the folk song was at the base of all music.

An instrumental quartette, Dvorak's Bagatelles, was then played by Mr. W. J. Evans (first violin), Miss Dobson (second violin), Miss Fen ('cello), and Dr. Vaughan Williams (pianoforte).

A very good test of any composer's fitness to represent his country, proceeded the lecturer, was the way in which he harmonised the national tunes of his own country. Folk-songs, of course, were originally sung without any harmony at all – that was, just the melody alone without any accompaniment. But to their ears those tunes did most strongly suggest appropriate harmonies and figures with which they should be accompanied; they felt at once when a

tune was harmonised in the right way or the wrong way, suitably or unsuitably, well or badly. The accompanying and harmonisation of tunes was a task worthy of the greatest musicians, as great skill, great sense of beauty and great inventive power were necessary, but that was not enough. Beethoven had all those, yet his arrangements of Scottish songs were by no means successful, for the musician, great though he might be, must also be in complete sympathy with the national spirit. An illustration of the folk-song, well and badly arranged, was then given by Miss Muriel Hawley in *Du Mein Einzig* as arranged by Brahms and Max Friedlaender.

The lecturer had kept his best reason for the importance of folk-song to the last, namely – their own intrinsic beauty. He would never have thought of lecturing to them on folk-songs or of asking them to listen to them because they were old, or quaint, or interesting. He would not care how many sonatas could be traced to them, or how many great composers had used them, if those country tunes were not in themselves superbly beautiful. It was that beauty which had preserved them. It was their beauty which made them a joy forever. He could hardly dilate any more on the beauty of those tunes, they spoke for themselves much better than he could speak for them. But there was an idea suggested by the imperishable beauty of those tunes – there was no doubt that they were hardly sung at all by the people nowadays, they were only to be heard from some “oldest inhabitant” in an out-of-the-way district. Indeed, that precious legacy had slipped out of the hands of those to whom it belonged by right and passed into the hands of enthusiastic connoisseurs, who collected folk-tunes like old china; and just as the grandfather clocks and oak dressers had gone from the country kitchens and now decorated the drawing rooms at Chelsea, so the only place where they could hear a folk-song sung now was at some “soirée musicale” amongst the elect of Kensington. The people who originally sang folk-songs, now sang music hall songs instead. He (Dr. Vaughan Williams) did not like music hall songs very much, but he would say that, with all their blatant vulgarity, they were infinitely superior to the inane rubbish which was sung in a modern drawing room (laughter), or the music of those people who imagined themselves more genteel and poisoned themselves with the amazing banality of *The Queen of the Earth* or *O dry those tears*. Or, when they imagined themselves more refined still and joined a choral society on the tonic-sol-fa system, the case was even worse, for there they sang through acres of fatuous part-songs which were so watery that it was difficult to say from which of Mendelssohn’s works they were stolen, and they had to imagine that the height of devotional ecstasy was reached in *Gounod’s Redemption* or of tragic intensity in *Mascagni’s Cavalleria*. Indeed, they were in a parlous state! Would the people ever come by their own again? Would they ever return to their folk-songs waiting for them, as beautiful and as new now as they were sixty years ago? The collectors of folk-songs differed from the collectors of old china in this – the connoisseurs in china kept the china locked up in their china cupboards when they were at home, and when they went away they sent it, in a tin box, to the bank. But the collector of folk-songs gave them again to the world – every day some new book of folk-songs was published; some of them were becoming popular through being sung by well-known singers. Would they not, perhaps, once more make their way back to the mouths of the people, who would in full time come again into their precious inheritance which they had lost?

Mr. Cuthbert Hawley, in proposing a vote of thanks to the lecturer, said it was an excellent lecture. The lecturer suitably replied.

We know from the press reports that the lecture series was “most successful” – so much so that on the Tuesday evening following its conclusion, a very enjoyable and well attended “conversazione” was

arranged, at which songs and instrumental pieces were contributed by many of the recitalists at the lectures. Vaughan Williams and Cuthbert Hawley acted as accompanists. A matter of weeks later, early in 1903, Vaughan Williams repeated the series in Gloucester, then again at Brentwood, Essex, at the end of that year. It was at an old people’s tea party following one of the Brentwood lectures, at nearby Ingrave, that the opportunity arose to collect his first folk song, the beautiful *Bushes and Briars*.

Thereafter, alongside collecting, Vaughan Williams continued to develop and express his views on folk song, in writing and in further lectures, notably in 1912, at a Vacation Conference on Musical Education, and in 1932 at Bryn Mawr College, Pennsylvania. The latter were published two years later in the volume *National Music*.

In the closing section of his final lecture at Bournemouth, Vaughan Williams made two heartfelt pleas: firstly, that supremely beautiful folk songs should be given back to the people; secondly, that the accompanying and harmonisation of them should be a task worthy of the greatest musicians. One of the many facets of Vaughan Williams’ genius as a composer is the way he answered both of these himself. One only has to listen to how the rich harmonies in *Five Variants of “Dives and Lazarus”* bring out every nuance of the tune, or to the haunting wordless accompaniments to *This is the truth sent from above* from the *Fantasia on Christmas Carols*, to name but two. We should be very grateful that EMI took the timely opportunity last year to re-release two fine collections of Vaughan Williams’ folk song arrangements, so that we can appreciate them again. On a return visit to Ingrave in 1904, Charles Pottipher told him, “If you can get the words, the Almighty sends you a tune.” It has long seemed to me that the Almighty’s next step was to ask Vaughan Williams to arrange it.

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# The Solo Piano Music of Ralph Vaughan Williams: an Introduction

John Barr

Of all the music by Vaughan Williams, it is his piano pieces which may be the least known among his admirers. Certainly no major article on them has appeared in the *Journal*, but it is this music which would be the most playable for our Society members who are competent amateur pianists. All of this music is published and will be introduced here mostly in chronological order.

*Andante Sostenuto* (1904) was written for Adeline's birthday. She played both the piano and cello at that time. This piece has a rich chordal texture with frequent seventh-chords. Starting in the key of E flat major, the music modulates to G, F, and D flat major before returning to the opening key at the start of the last phrase which ends deceptively on a C major triad. This miniature requires only modest technique, but alert reading.

*Pezzo Ostinato* (1905) contains a short fragment (pezzo) which is obstinately repeated (ostinato) 87½ times. This fragment consists of four notes occupying two inner voices in parallel sixths. An expansive treble melody and bass line surround this fragment in all measures but the first. This piece's three sections are clearly defined by two distinct modes: mixolydian on d, (d to d with f-sharp) for the outer sections, and Aeolian on b (natural minor) in the middle section. These two modes give this piece its distinctive sound and both accommodate the same repeated fragment. The final d-seventh chord would seem very inconclusive as the last chord in a G major piece, but in its actual modal context, its inevitability is clear.

The *Suite of Six Short Pieces* (1920 or earlier) according to Robert Matthew-Walker reflects the style of early English keyboard music that was revived during the first twenty years of the last century. They also seem to reflect, in their use of modality, the composer's interest in English folk song and dance. The *Musical Times* (1922) gives a comprehensive review concluding, "Apart from its charm, the Suite would be valuable material for study in clean, finished playing." The Prelude, exclusively in two voices has a patter-like accompaniment to the right hand melody. The left hand occasionally relieves its secondary role by melodic imitation of the right hand. The elegant Slow Dance has a theme, graceful and arching in its contour. This theme moves from one hand to the other in its three-voice texture. The sprightly Quick Dance is one of the most energetic and demanding movements of this Suite. It seems to have a definite folk dance quality and is rich in modal tunes and melodic figuration. The stately Slow Air moves at a processional pace and is the most expressive of the six pieces. Matthew-Walker comments that this piece "looks back...to the English Tudor masters." The flowing Rondo is actually in three large sections, but the opening theme is repeated alternately with others in one of the usual rondo designs. The final movement, *Pezzo Ostinato*, has no thematic connection to the 1905 piece. Here the repeated theme is longer and skillfully developed rhythmically and modally throughout. The final presto section brings this complex movement to a quiet close. The six movements are carefully designed so that pieces one, three, and six are the most substantial, while two, four and five are either shorter and or simpler in content. The outer

movements are primarily in G major while the inner movements are in closely related keys or modes. This Suite with its dance-like movements of contrasting character is reminiscent of J.S. Bach's keyboard suites and partitas.

The *Hymn Tune Prelude on "Song 13"* (Orlando Gibbons) (1928) was dedicated to Harriet Cohen who championed modern English piano music and whose playing Vaughan Williams admired. In May of 1994 I had the good fortune to look at the manuscript of this composition while in the Manuscript Room in The British Library. Looking for the dedication at the top of the first page, where it appears on the publication, I found nothing. Looking through the manuscript I came to the back page where at the bottom the composer's hand-written note said, "To Harriet Cohen (but only if she likes it, if not return to me and delete her name. I shan't be huffy) from R. Vaughan Williams." The dedication remained and Miss Cohen gave the first performance on 14 January, 1930 at Wigmore Hall. In a letter to her he said, "Play it not too quick; and calm, with sub-conscious emotion." Gibbons' tune was set in George Wither's hymnal to a metrical paraphrase of the Song of Solomon, "O, my love, how comely now and how beautiful thou art." The entire text is set under the quoted melody in Vaughan Williams' piano setting which occupies the middle staff of a three-stave system. Original four-voice counterpoint "lovingly" surrounds Gibbons' tune. The opening and concluding measures are the same. This piece takes considerable pianistic refinement to balance the various lines and bring out the quoted tune.

*Six Teaching Pieces*, (1934) were composed for the Oxford Piano Series edited by A. Forbes Milne to span three books comprising grades C, D, E, and F. Since this series went out of print these pieces were collected for publication in 1984. The Two-Part Invention in G, the easiest, has its two voices note against note with some melodic and rhythmic independence. The Two-Part Invention in E flat involves imitation at the octave with independent articulation! *Valse Lente* and *Nocturne* are charming, homophonic miniatures which enable the student to cultivate a "singing" style. The Canon consists of three voices imitated at the octave with their entries one measure apart. Finally the Two-Part Invention in F, the most difficult, features an imitative motive which may remind one of Bach's F Major Invention (no. 8). There are frequent key changes and shifting meters. These pieces make attractive music with a variety of pedagogical values for the piano student perhaps in the early intermediate level.

*A Winter Piece (for Genia)* has the appended note, "with love from Uncle Ralph. New Year's Day, 1943." Mrs. Hornstein and her husband served with Vaughan Williams on the Dorking Refugee Committee. This quiet piece never rises above *piano* and conveys a somber mood perhaps reflecting a wartime winter. The piece's key of A minor is treated subtly and shifts to the minor keys of C and F and at times slips from A minor to A flat minor. The bass and treble registers of the piano are isolated in four-voice chords at times while the middle section contrasts with two-voice texture.

The technical demands here are modest but the complex chromaticism requires very careful reading! This piece reflects the pensive chromaticism in the composer's symphonic and choral works written particularly during the 1940s.

*The Lake in the Mountains* (1947) is an atmospheric piece taken from an episode from the film *49th Parallel*, which traces six stranded Nazis on the run across the continent in Canada trying to elude the national authorities. This particular episode occurs late in the film when the three remaining fugitives arrive in Western Canada at a town near Three Sisters Mountain. They join a large crowd in the town which is observing the annual Indian Day. (The entire Canadian population had been aware of Nazi fugitives at large for some days.) During this observation, the Canadian police announce to the large crowd that three Nazis are among them and describe their appearance. One of them is caught and the other two escape to a nearby mountain lake which provides the scene for this music. The entire piece, played as a piano solo in the film "underlines" the seclusion and intimacy of this scene. Kennedy's listing of this piece under 1947 can only mean its appearance as a separate publication because the piano solo had to have been composed with the entire film score during 1940-41 as stated earlier in his Catalogue.

This piece is episodic and descriptive. The succession of phrases and sections are off-set by contrasting keys: section A, measures 1-18, D flat Lydian and B flat major; section B, measures 19-26, G-flat minor; section C measures 27-42, B flat major; section D, measures 43-67, F-sharp minor and D minor. These keys, juxtaposed in third relation seem to mingle the images of the lake, the mountains, and the local Indian culture. In section A "mountainous" arpeggios lead into "liquid" chords followed by a pentatonic Indian-like theme. Section B with its left hand semiquaver passages and right hand quaver two against three rhythms seem vividly descriptive of the lake's current, ripples, and eddies. Section C continues the two against three rhythm seeming to portray the gentle lapping of waves while returning to the pentatonic theme. Section D presents new wave-like figuration accompanying a new Indian-like theme which brings this rather impressionistic piece to a quiet close.

As a postscript to this article, there is a transcription by Vaughan Williams that should be acknowledged. In 1932 he joined other British composers in contributing "A Bach Book for Harriet Cohen" in honour of her artistry as a Bach pianist. Vaughan Williams' work resulted in a richly textured piano transcription of Bach's accompanied chorale (no. 3) from Cantata 6, *Bleib bei uns*,

*denn es will Abend werden*. Bach had transcribed this movement as a chorale prelude for organ in a well-suited trio texture similar to his original version. Vaughan Williams' amplified harmonic texture, however, lends itself to the modern concert grand piano in the nineteenth century Romantic tradition. Matthew-Walker has observed "The work, of some six or seven minutes' duration, is a masterpiece out of all proportion to the length." Vaughan Williams preceded this *Choral Prelude* with the *Choral* in which the harmony consists of seven to eight voices with sonority doubling. Matthew-Walker claims "This...is one of the most remarkable examples of 'recomposition' in the history of music."

Having described Vaughan Williams' solo works for piano we can see that they all are well suited to each of their purposes. Each piece is beautifully written for its intended use, be it for a young student, an adult amateur, or a concert artist. Matthew-Walker has said that because of Vaughan Williams' major achievements, his piano music has been underrated, overlooking especially the masterful *The Lake in the Mountains* and the *Choral and Choral Prelude on "Bleib bei uns..."* with the *Hymn Tune Prelude* and the *Suite* "just below this exceptional standard."

All but the three recently published piano pieces have been recorded by Peter Jacobs. This recording admirably documents the significance of these minor works by Ralph Vaughan Williams.

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# Regeneration

Jeremy Dale Roberts

A memory of my schooldays: Marlborough College, 1947 – exploring the college chapel one day as a new boy, and being confronted in the ambulatory by what seemed to be an imposing catafalque. It was made of a beautiful blond wood, quite austere: it still appeared almost new. But when I looked closer and started nosing about, it revealed itself as a gigantic filing cabinet. The drawers came out smoothly, and were filled, packed with cards. On each was a name, together with a small photograph; dates were provided, along with details – the school house, the rugby team, and so on. But it was the stare that arrested me, the same stare: candid, unfledged. It was as though I were looking at myself. This was the Roll of Honour: the Old Boys who had given their lives in the Great War. It looked like hundreds of them.

I've taken the title of my talk from the remarkable trilogy of novels of the same name by Pat Barker, in which Siegfried Sassoon appears, one of the patients of the maverick psychologist, W. H. R. Rivers who, at Craiglockhart near Edinburgh, endeavoured to put people together again after they had been broken, so they could be returned once more to active service.

The term “regeneration” refers here to the repair of damaged tissue, nervous as well as physiological. Nobody came out of that conflict without damage. They all had to deal with it, as best they could: instinctively, stubbornly, with whatever reserves remained intact. As Ivor Gurney put it in one of his letters to Marion Scott – (and I shall be drawing from these letters as “tropes” throughout this talk) – “War brings greater self-control – or breakdown. You also must have mastery of yourself, or perish. And whether the pain be one of complaining nerves or of waiting on age-long nights of cold and wet to pass, it is all the same...” The issue is, what do you do – if you are lucky enough to be alive – when you get back? Well, in a sense, Gurney, like so many others, never did get back: the redoubts and trenches of Crucifix Corner, like the water-meadows of Maisemore, remained his terrain inescapably, a night-walker in his broken mind for ever. Vaughan Williams – older, maturer, more stable, did manage to “pick up the pieces”. But let nobody be in any doubt that he had a vile war like everybody else.

He had volunteered promptly, along with Butterworth, R. O. Morris and other friends, within days of war being declared. Lacking the proper qualifications, they joined the ranks; and Ralph found himself first in the Special Constabulary, where he swiftly rose to the rank of sergeant, then in the R. A. M. C., a step downward – Pte. R. V. Williams. Here, due to his “flat feet” he was appointed a “waggon orderly”; but for the time being there were no wagons and no horses. Instead, bound by the inexorable logic of the British Army, he was required to go on endless route marches, and of course “square-bashing” (parades), and a bit of medical training too. Eventually, on 22 June 1915, they disembarked for Le Havre, and from there moved on to Écoivres, in the lea of the hill on which stood the little village and ruined towers of Mont St. Éloi.

He described his situation in a letter to Holst: “I wish I could write you an interesting letter – but one is hardly allowed to say anything. However I am very well and enjoy my work – all parades and such things cease. I am ‘waggon orderly’ and go up the line every night to bring back wounded and sick in a motor ambulance – all this

takes place at night except an occasional day journey for urgent cases.”

This sanguine report belies the constant danger he and his comrades had to undergo – “up the line” – again and again. It also conveys nothing of the horror to which they were exposed. Photographs of Vaughan Williams, sometimes alongside his indispensable mate, Harry Steggles, tell a different story: those eyes had seen terrible things. After going through many months of this, the unit was transferred south to Salonica; but Vaughan Williams then elected to return to Blighty in order to be commissioned as a lieutenant in the Royal Garrison Artillery before re-embarking for France in March 1918 in time for the big German attack.

“The war has brought me strange jobs – can you imagine me in charge of 200 horses!! That’s my job at present, I was dumped down into it straight away, and before I had time to find out which were horses and which were waggons I found myself in the middle of a retreat – as a matter of fact we had a very easy time over this – only one horse killed – so we were lucky.”

Anyone who has read Michael Morpurgo or seen *War Horse* at the National Theatre will realize that this was a far from “cushy” posting, and if anything more harrowing and dangerous than what he had been through before. So how did this evidently sensitive man, already in his early forties when war began, keep “mastery of himself”, as Gurney put it?

We can’t presume to say. He scarcely ever talked about the war, then or later; and his letters home, unlike Gurney’s, which are frequently introspective and self-analytical, give us no clue. Certainly music helped: the resort to familiar activities – bringing the men together to sing, organising choirs, bashing out accompaniments to sentimental ballads, parlour music – provided some sustenance. And occasionally maybe some kind of transcendental grace or proof, like the famous carol-singing on Christmas Eve of 1916, when he was still in Salonika. As Ursula describes it in her book, “...snow-capped Olympus, the clear night, the stars, and Ralph’s choir singing carols from Hereford and Sussex with passionate nostalgia...No one who was there ever forgot.” Eventually his skill and value in this kind of work was recognized, when he was made Director of Music, First Army B. E. F. (1919).

Besides making music and organising music, on a deeper level the streams of his creative consciousness continued to flow, though not so instantly productively as Gurney’s, who managed to complete at least two songs while he was in the trenches, and whose poetic gifts were first unlocked under that duress. For Vaughan Williams the experience – or rather a particular moment – ultimately resulted in one of his most ambiguous works, the *Pastoral Symphony*, which reflects the same paradox found in many of Edward Thomas’s poems: the apprehension of a pristine natural beauty – landscape, wide skies, birdsong – on the very edge of Hell. As he said in a letter to Ursula much later, “It’s really war-time music – a great deal of it incubated when I used to go up night after night with the ambulance waggon at Écoivres and we went up a steep hill and there was a wonderful Corot-like landscape in the sunset – it’s not really lambkins frisking at all as most people take for granted.”

It is awesome that anyone should have been able to retrieve such idyllic beauty from the “war to end all as wars”. There is no overt glimpse here of the violence and carnage depicted so unflinchingly in the “war poetry” of Owen, Sassoon, and indeed Gurney.

Whether a composer can – or should – depict such extremes of physical reality in his music was a matter already debated in the trenches. Ivor Gurney, writing in 1916: “...I wonder whether any up-to-date fool will try to depict a strafe in music. The shattering crash of heavy shrapnel. The belly-disturbing crunch of 5.9 Crumps and trench mortars. The shrill clatter of rifle grenades and the wail of nosecaps flying loose...All nonsense about the rhythm of war! Dr. [Walford] Davies has said that the noise of the guns etc. etc. But then, it is only what one expects him to say...There are better things to treat though, and among them are sunsets such as the last.”

The noise and horror of mechanized modern warfare had already been musically prefigured in Holst’s *Mars*, actually fully sketched in May 1914, though I have always felt that this music conveys more an implacable *moral* brutality, a negative “auto-destruct” like Ravel’s *La Valse* or *Bolero*, rather than a depiction of war. But it was only in 1936, eighteen years after the Armistice, and on the threshold of another war, that Vaughan Williams could bring himself to recall in music – re-enter – the appalling “sound-world” of 1914–18. Even here, in his setting of lines from Whitman’s *Drum Taps* – the second movement of *Dona Nobis Pacem* – for all its astonishing pre-empting of Britten’s *Dies Irae*, there is not so much a resort to mere tone-painting, illustration, which can only fall short. Instead we are confronted by a terrifying psychological insight into the chaotic insanity of war; its mindless exultation; the sense of panic passing from voice to voice; the din; and most of all, the lack of foundation or tonal stability, like the shifting of tectonic plates: “the centre cannot hold.”

Who knows what it costs a man, an artist, to recapitulate such searing experience, to compose and orchestrate – “stylize” – trauma of this magnitude? According to Ursula, Ralph used sometimes to wake up screaming in the night, from nightmares of the War. When I heard of that – in the recent anniversary programme on Radio 4 – I was put in mind again of Pat Barker’s *Regeneration*: the hospital in Edinburgh, in the wards of which, for the patients passing through, nightmare was endemic, inescapable.

One faculty for dealing with all this, recognized at the time as typical in such patients, came to be defined as “disassociation”: a sometimes involuntary strategy for blanking out impossibly painful experiences and their resultant memories. Perhaps we can see this “disassociation” at work in the ecstatic outpourings of the *Pastoral Symphony*. Likewise in his letters and poems, Gurney constantly “escapes” from present harsh reality – the trenches of Normandy, the mud and wires of No Man’s Land – to the cherished countryside of his beloved Gloucestershire. The title of his first published collection of poems, *Severn and Somme*, says it all: an intensely imagined repatriation.

*15 July 1917...Last night there was a pure colourless October Sunlight, and I could smell apples in the Minsterworth orchards and feel for a moment that soon we should go in and company with Bach, to talk of books and things of peace. How later I should go swiftly under the night towards Orion, home; there to smoke and read myself sleepy, and not go upstairs this side of consciousness.*

For all of them there was something entranced, even synaesthetic, exalted in those moments of reprieve. For Vaughan Williams, the Corot landscape remains intact, indestructible, like Matthew

Arnold’s “signal elm” later on; also, transcendental, universal in a Whitman sort of way. We can recognize in the gently oscillating, floating figures from the opening of the *Pastoral Symphony* a profound image of healing and rest: an echo of the “husky nurse”, “endlessly rocking”. Another example of the same musical image, composed around the same time, would be the Sanctus from his *Mass in G minor*.

When he was finally demobbed, in January 1919, Vaughan Williams was more fortunate than most in that he had a mass of unfinished business lying around, as well as fresh responsibilities. Let’s have a look at his agenda. He had been promptly recruited, along with Holst, to teach composition at the Royal College of Music. But before term began he still had time to recuperate in Norfolk with Adeline, where he set out to revise a number of those works upon which his pre-war reputation had been built: the *Sea Symphony*, *London Symphony*, *Tallis Fantasia*, *Toward the Unknown Region*. What better way to sharpen his pencil?

Besides these, other works, hitherto unperformed, required attention: the ballad-opera *Hugh the Drover*, composed long before (1907–10), but only performed in 1924; the *Four Hymns* for Tenor, viola and strings, originally scheduled for the Three Choirs Festival of 1914. (We are reminded of the deferred performance of Finzi’s *Dies Natalis* in 1939.) And then the work he did on *The Lark Ascending* – self-evidently a pre-war piece, and one of his most avowedly “Georgian” in its unclouded serenity: its revision – apt word – appears to me to represent a conscious effort at recovery. In revising it and preparing it for performance in 1920, it is almost as though he were erasing, blanking out, the intervening years. Continuity; “business as usual”; the resumption of the daily task. (He had also taken on the direction of the Bach Choir and the Handel Society...)

And then there were the new projects, which display not only new stylistic features – in colour, harmony, and suppleness of rhythm and phrase-structure – but also a consistency in their expression, a sort of quietism. This has much to do with his reading. His interest in John Bunyan was re-awakened; and for the time being the rhetoric (and idealism) of Whitman was replaced by the more sober, concentrated diction of the old English poets. *Merciless Beauty*, three Chaucer settings for high voice and string trio; and *The Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains*, the “pastoral episode founded upon *The Pilgrim’s Progress*” both appear to open a new page: striking in a composer just turning fifty. The kinship that he sought with George Herbert and others, already prefigured in the *Four Hymns*, chimed with his deep absorption in Tudor church music, so much of which was currently being brought to light in the collections edited by E. H. Fellowes, and through the work of Richard Terry at Westminster Cathedral.

This was borne out in the *Mass*, originally intended for Gustav Holst with his Whitsuntide Singers at Thaxted, in which he returns to the perpendicular symmetries and tensile polyphonies of the *Tallis Fantasia*, also written for a double choir – of strings with soloists. A Mass, in Latin, composed by an agnostic: nevertheless an affirmation; also a discipline. Probably the first new music he composed after all those years of silence: it stands, like the white tower of Gloucester Cathedral for Gurney, as a pledge of stability and permanence. Think of the *Agnus Dei*, with its “*dona nobis pacem*”: no clamorous outcry as in the later work, but a contained prayer for peace.

All this industry and professional activity enabled Vaughan

Williams to move forward, facilitated the process of healing, so that eventually he was able – in a coded fashion – to grieve.

He had foreseen his plight in a letter of 1916: “I sometimes dread coming back to normal life with so many gaps – especially of course George Butterworth... Out of those 7 who joined up together in August, 1914 only 3 are left.” Others followed. Strikingly – though not surprisingly – Vaughan Williams refrained from giving vent to memorial tributes: no “Morning Heroes”, no “World Requiems”. Instead, a more internal, contemplative strain of grieving. Roger Norrington’s reading of the *Pastoral Symphony* – one of the most eloquent ever recorded – is of what he calls “actually an epitaph for the First World War. And it’s desperately, desperately sad, laying this ghastly war to rest.” And indeed, beneath the passing shadows and shifting lights of this music there is a sombreness, and from time to time a wringing of hands.

Much later too, in 1936, the note of mourning is sounded again, in both cases dignified by an attitude of resignation and acceptance: *Reconciliation* from *Dona Nobis Pacem*, the setting of Whitman’s song of love and pity, *Word over all*, in which the young enemy soldier is embraced as a brother after death. Even more piercingly, in *Riders to the Sea*, the keening of the islanders, and Maurya’s lament for all those sons who never came back, gives voice to a grief shared by a whole generation. And lastly the *Oxford Elegy*, for speaker, chorus and orchestra, to me one of Vaughan Williams’ most deeply felt works, for all its oddity. It has a complex history. As early as 1901 he was contemplating writing an opera, based on Matthew Arnold’s poems, *The Scholar Gypsy* and its pendant *Thyrsis*, and he toyed with the idea throughout his life. Taken up again in 1947, after the firestorm of the Sixth Symphony, it marked a return to the same high-Victorian elegiac tradition as Meredith’s *Lark Ascending*. The first poem recounts the mythic tale of the poor Oxford scholar who “dropped out”, as we would say, and took to wandering with the gypsies and mysteriously disappeared. *Thyrsis*, the sequel, written twenty years later, was inscribed to the memory of Arthur Hugh Clough, a fellow student of Arnold’s and poet, who similarly failed to live up to promise and died young.

As far as I can make out, the *Oxford Elegy* is the only work in which Vaughan Williams – so often held to be a prophet – looks back. It is a pre-lapsarian paradise that he evokes, not unlike the opening pages of *Job*: sun-drenched, drowsy; literally pastoral, with its shepherds and “wattled cotes”: pre-industrial, pre-war. The underlying tug of regret and nostalgia is unmistakable. And later on it bursts forth in repeated cries of grief for lost companions: not

just the one friend, maybe his *confrère* Holst, whose quiet processional is echoed here, but for all those of his youth as well, Cambridge, the Gatty’s, Butterworth, Dennis Browne and the others. Maybe too, Adeline, as she had been all those years before, and for whom he arranged a private first performance in the living room at The White Gates, spoken by Stuart Wilson, himself a veteran of 1914-18, with tears streaming down his face, according to Ursula.

When I was first asked to give a talk about Vaughan Williams I had not long finished Pat Barker’s novel. It was inevitable that my mind should be coloured by that reading. I still have around me ghosts of all those I had known before who had themselves been affected by the First World War: the masters at my prep-school in the 1940s who had not been called up – one had a limp, one had hideous facial disfigurement, one had been gassed and couldn’t breathe properly – all casualties as very young men. I remembered visiting the Star and Garter home in Richmond as a boy, a huge kind of hydro on the hill, filled with middle-aged wrecks, lying around in corridors. I thought of Vaughan Williams as he must have been during that war, this big man in his forties, dutiful, doing more than his bit, probably a bit clumsy, shambolic in appearance, kept in place by Harry Steggle. At one point I thought the best, and most penetrating, way of presenting a picture would be simply to read Whitman’s *The Wound Dresser* – Vaughan Williams must have known that poem, and I wonder if it wasn’t one of the triggers for his volunteering to join the R. A. M. C – with the *Pastoral Symphony* as a backdrop.

I’d like to end with another quotation from Ivor Gurney, from his letter of 15 December 1916, written to Marion Scott from the front:

*After all, my friend, it is better to live a grey life in mud and danger, so long as one uses it – as I trust I am doing – as a means to an end. Someday all this experience may be crystallized and glorified in me; and men shall learn by chance fragments in a string quartet or a symphony, what thoughts haunted the minds of men who watched the darkness grimly in desolate places. Who learnt by the denial how full and wide a thing Joy may be, forming dreams of noble lives when nothing noble but their own nobility (and that seemed tiny and of little worth) was to be seen. Who kept ever the memory of their home and friends to strengthen them, and walked in pleasant places in faithful dreams. And how one man longed to be worthy to celebrate them in music and verse worthy of the high theme, but did not bargain with God, since it is best to accept one’s Fate when that is clearly seen.*



# Vaughan Williams, the Messiah of British Society and the Danger of Relativism for Music

Sean Beirne

It is in the first chapter of Allen Bloom's *Closing of the American Mind* that we see the author's disapproval of the common school of thought adopted by the majority of his students, that is relativism. He argues that his students, the intellectual elite of America, come to higher education from a variety of backgrounds, beliefs and opinions. "Some are religious, some are atheists; some are to the left some to the right." However this difference in opinion, that is only natural to a liberal democracy as that of America, is unified by one unfortunate common belief; a belief in relativism. Relativism for Bloom's students has moved from a theoretical, philosophical discussion about truth to a moral assertion, one that must exist in order to have a free society.

The majority, in the West at least, would of course agree that diversity creates a positive society with a variety of opinions and interests that will often disagree or conflict with one another. This is attractive and should be promoted at all cost. Relativism, though recognising this difference in opinion, however concludes that in a free society no opinion should be challenged, for each opinion is equally true, relative to those who believe it. Any who try to challenge another's opinion are condemned for causing offence and trying to force their opinions on others. The sad irony of relativism is that though its purpose is to promote a free society, its effect is the destruction of that free society through its disruption of plurality.

Plurality, for the purpose of this essay, is the permitting of free debate where people of conflicting opinion, whether it be towards a certain religion, political ideology or world view, will use reasoned argument to support their position in debate with others. Through such a process they will reach a conclusion as to which opinion is true and which is false, which has credibility and which has none. This process, so essential to plurality, has been eradicated by relativism for it asserts that no opinion has more credibility than another for all opinion is given credibility for the very reason that someone believes it to be true. This lack of plurality has therefore created a society that is not free, for opinions are not expressed. They are not expressed because their expression is prohibited by the adopted convention of relativism. The relativism in our society is not only a threat to freedom but also a poison to the critique and analysis of the arts, and in particular, music.

Music is by far the most predominant of all the arts in society, with almost everyone owning an mp3 player of some kind and a large audio collection coupled with defiant opinions on the music they listen to. It is generally accepted as also having great power, especially in the young of a nation, to act as an individual's self-expression or to give that individual his identity. Music, therefore, and justly so, is seen as a precious possession by the majority of

people and one that is essential to their well being. Because of this precious nature any attack on another's preference in music is met with an instantaneous defence based not on reasoned argument using an analysis of the music or the aesthetic it produces but rather one relying on the comforting assumption that all forms of music are as good and worthwhile as each other. Music, according to the common relativist, has different value or purpose for different individuals and therefore there is no debate to be had as to which genre is superior. This approach therefore makes no attempt to grade music on its aesthetic value or musical merit but rather submits to the conclusion that no genre of music is better than the other. This relativism in the critique of music breeds statements, as so often can be heard in Britain, such as "The Arctic Monkeys are just as good as any of those classical composers that you listen to. I happen to like their music just as you happen to like your genre of music. Who are you to say that one is better than the other?" Such statements demonstrate that the majority of the British people believe that music is either to be free from criticism or that it should only be judged according to how successfully it fulfils a purpose to the listener. The criterion of judgment of course is therefore relative to each individual.

It is imperative, for successful music critique, that we first disregard relativism as the dominant school of thought in Britain by asserting that some forms of music are more advanced and sophisticated in their construction and aesthetic than others. Many, and rightly so, suggest that the superior and more sophisticated music lies within the classical genre. It is perfectly acceptable to disagree with this however, but if one disagrees one must give reasons for disagreeing and not merely rely on the comforting defence of relativism.

When one is forced to use such imprecise and vague terms such as classical music one can fall into the trap of categorising over 1500 years of Western music into the one genre, and in doing so assume that all of the music is the same. However if one looks to the etymology of the word "classical" one finds that it comes from the Latin "Classicus", a word used by the Romans to describe something of higher status, being or worth. Therefore "classical" does seem to be a fair description of such music for indeed it is of a higher being and worth than its modern replacement. It is indeed a higher music.

If such a debate, free from relativism, were to arise amongst the people then could we not be confident that the superior music (of the classical genre) would be victorious and would subsequently win status as the worthwhile alternative to its modern counterpart? In its victory many people will be exposed to and enriched by its aesthetic, adopting a new, more satisfying and furthering approach to experiencing music. This process of discussion and critique of

music has indeed been eradicated amongst the majority of the British population by the poison of relativism. Relativism has allowed modern popular music to rise from the ashes of classical music, without check. This is an unforgivable sin that taints the Relativists' hands, for not only has it prevented many from being exposed to the treasures of classical music that are, in themselves, things to be desired, but also, through the eradication of classical music from the majority, has eradicated the exposure of the desirable influence that classical music could have had on their character. This is something, as will be explained later, that needs to be rectified if we are to see an improvement in the society we now live in.

Classical music unlike its modern replacement requires a skill and mentality, woven into one's character, before one can understand and therefore appreciate it. This positive strengthening of one's character achieved through the process of listening, understanding and appreciating classical music will indeed raise society from the ashes it has found itself engulfed by. It is the extinction of such skill and mentality and therefore positive character that has had negative effects on our British society.

Let us start by defining character. Herbert Spencer defines a human's character as "the inherent complex of attributes that determines an individual's moral and ethical actions and reactions." An individual, then, through his education and experiences throughout life, will form a subconscious underlying set of principles woven into his nature that will inform moral and ethical decisions. If the character is formed from a good education and valuable experiences then it will contain desirable principles that in turn will create a desirable individual. If a society is constructed from these desirable individuals then of course the society itself can be labelled as desirable. Therefore when one looks to the problem of society one must first look for the undesirable character formed by the negative implications of a poor education or life experience.

British Society today consists of individuals, chained with fetters, who live their lives in preconceived boxes, lacking the ability to think or to be exposed to experiences outside their entrapment. This is a terribly disheartening prospect and one that will constrain society as long as it remains in existence. A boxed society, sealed by the astringent tape of relativism, causes the majority of individuals to form shallow, ill-informed and therefore undesirable characters that seek simple and obvious pleasures, shying away from anything that requires deeper understanding. Anything that requires an appreciation of value, beauty or expression seems today to be redundant and worthless. This way of things is contagious and unless radically addressed will continue to infect and spoil society eternally. The tape of relativism must be cut and the prisoners of the box freed if we are to solve this crippling crisis. It is this crisis has caused the death of classical music.

This, of course, is not at all surprising, for classical music's common replacement is somewhat well suited to the society it appeals to not only in its predictability and deliberate lack of variety but also in the aesthetic it aims to produce. It is easy, lazy music that gives the imprisoned individuals of this society the comforting delusion of experiencing true emotion without any effort on their part. Modern popular song to emotion is like a Mars Bar to energy: it gives a short, temporary burst – normally three and half minutes – of a short term, ineffective emotion, nothing more than dull commercial fad. This lackadaisical approach to music is well matched by and indicative of the society that caused it. As Plato

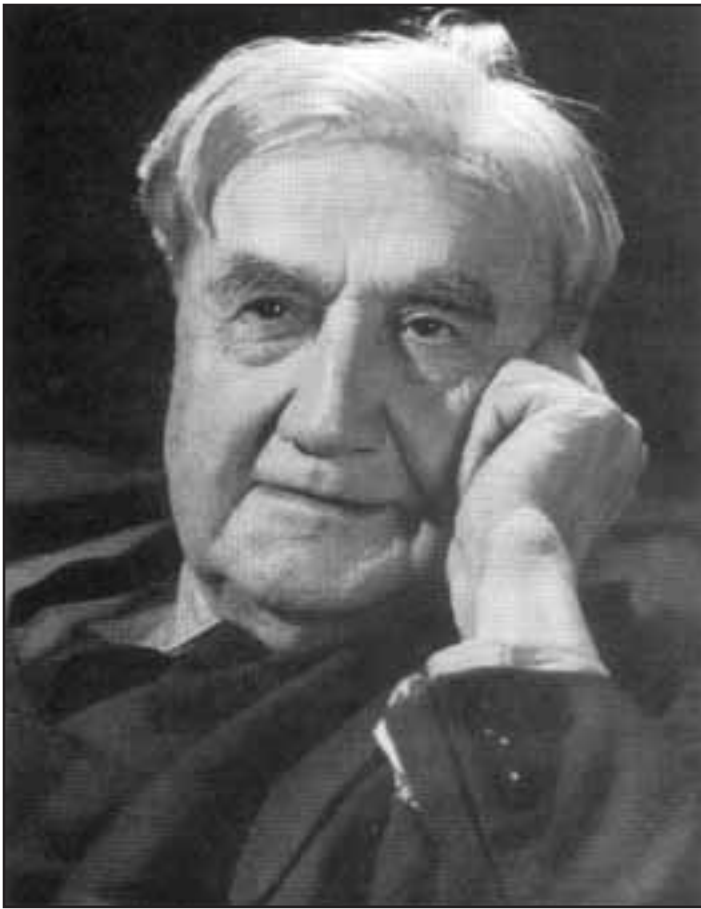
said in *The Republic*, "In order to take the spiritual temperature of an individual or society, one must mark the music." If one marks the music of our society one can only be horrified.

All is not lost for there is a solution, and that is the sharpest of knives to tear the relativist's tape. That knife is of course is classical music. Unlike its "modern" alternative, "classical" music requires more advanced and sophisticated listening skills in order for the music to have value for the individual. It has a certain depth to its aesthetic that requires a person to experience the music rather than listen to it. The depth in aesthetic allows the listener to be directly transported and gain access to the greatest possible treasure that is undiluted, true emotions. These emotions are themselves so pure that one can only suppose them to be natural and bare, the brightest of colours and the richest of sounds, like a glorious pigment colouring the dark depths of our souls. True emotion is Plato's "perfect triangle" but exists, however, not exclusively in concepts that are unachievable in practice and completely unobtainable but rather exist in the soul completely accessible via the path of classical music.

The experience of the true emotion ought to be the sole desire of those listening to music. It is the ultimate destination, the greatest treasure and the purpose for music itself. Only the music from the classical genre will allow for this destination to be reached, and therefore it is the only music with any purpose or worth.

If this new character were ever realised, through the experience of classical music, amongst the people, individuals would be freed from their entrapment in the monotony and hollow quests of everyday life to something more pure, celestial and worthwhile. This in turn would radically improve society, giving it more meaning, depth and purpose. This new, non-entrapped, society is made up of individuals who, through the destruction of relativism, enjoy philosophy, rational debate and the ability to be exposed to ideas and new experiences, thus gaining a worthwhile purpose rather than their current mundane and unsatisfying one. With such individuals society can only improve and develop, with a new inspired youth with a high class of character who value their place and purpose in society. This way of things is of course far more attractive and perfectly achievable with the use of classical music. Classical music then is essential to improve society and return it to its former glory.

An individual, when freed from his entrapment, will, through the path of classical music, start his long ascent out of the cave in which he now realises he exists. Every step he takes toward the sun will be accompanied by a discovery of a new piece, composer, style and genre that will develop his ear for quality and meaning in the music he listens to. As he rises higher and higher toward the sun he will look back and see his fellow prisoners being fooled by the deception of the forged emotion in their lesser music and instantly will feel sure that his ascent, however difficult, is absolutely necessary. Would he not also feel pity for his fellow prisoners, however, and descend back inside the cave to try and convince them not only that their music is a deception but also that there is so much more on offer? If he did such a thing would not the prisoners, trapped inside the fetters of relativism, view such efforts as offensive, pompous and unnecessary? Our descendent will be cast out and hated by his peers, friends and indeed by society. How can the prisoners of the cave ever be freed if they will not listen to such arguments?



The British Messiah?

For this Utopian society to become a reality classical music must be introduced to the people to provide them with access to true emotion. The question therefore arises, in a nation so submerged in relativism that it has lost a common sense of identity and purpose, what music of the classical genre is suited to this mission to save British society. Who is our Messiah?

There are of course many competitors, for most of the music bracketed into classical music has the depth that allows the listener to experience true emotion. However, our British Messiah requires an extra dimension, one that must rekindle our patriotism and subsequently offer this land the identity and purpose it so deserves for its contribution to the world throughout history. Only then will the Messiah's message have radical impact across the land.

Under such criteria the Messiah is of course the father of British music post Purcell, Ralph Vaughan Williams. The reason for this is not only due to his music being, if understood and not trivialised, the most effective transporter to the experience of true emotion, but also because his music is so unique a description of what it means to be British that it re-illuminates the very definition of "Britishness" itself.

Vaughan Williams is often credited with producing music with the aesthetic of jingoistic nationalism that reminds us of "cricket and tweed", of Earl Grey and scones at teatime. This is a grave misunderstanding of Vaughan Williams' music and can only serve to degrade the power and passion of his writing. Vaughan Williams did, of course, produce music for this purpose, but it is vital to recognise that he went much further than this in his description of Britain. The emotion thus produced is far more overwhelming than its common perception suggests.

His music is unique. It not only describes the character of British

society, nor does it solely depict the emotions of a British citizen pondering upon the beauty of their home land (as seen in Elgar's closest attempt at "Britishness", the *Enigma Variations*). Rather, it describes a metaphysical personality or aura that somehow is pre-existent to the development of British society. It is a personality that has its home in the rock and pasture of Britain, and is unaffected by the society living in it, a personality that is the birthplace of all we now bracket under British character. This metaphysical pre-existent British personality is raw and earthy yet serene, as if created especially for Britain. It is this character that naturally dwells in the depths of our British souls alongside true emotion waiting to be found. It is through the music of Vaughan Williams that we find these two beautiful treasures. Vaughan Williams' ability to transport the audience to the experience of true emotion in addition to illuminating the British character and identity is why this iconic British composer deserves the epitaph of Britain's greatest composer, if not of the world.

There are, of course, a vast number of works that demonstrate this composer's genius and it is an unenviable task to identify the best example. But perhaps it is the *Pastoral Symphony*, tainted by the composer's experiences in the French battlefields, that is deliberately unsettling in its depiction of an unrecognisable British countryside with no reference to those features or elements one expects a landscape to have. It takes the listener somewhere dark and disturbing, yet leaves them with a sense of being changed, having experienced that British metaphysical aura somewhere unknown, within the dying pastoral land. It is one of Vaughan Williams' greatest symphonies and will, if all is right with the world, be viewed with awe and amazement for as long as it is performed.

However for the purposes of this essay there is one example that seems to be a perfect fit, and that is the *Romanza* of the Fifth Symphony of 1943. This work was written for a British people battered by the effects of war and living in constant fear for their own lives and the safety of their loved ones. It was a Britain, however, that was, as Churchill put it, "as united as ever before", confronting the horrors of war together. It seems therefore appropriate to identify this symphony as our example of music to save our British society, for it was this movement that helped to unite and motivate the deflated people of Britain by transporting them to a kinder place.

There is no slow movement quite like this one. From the very opening six bars where the juxtaposed triads spanning three octaves, (C major, A major, G minor, A major,) are heard in the strings giving the aesthetic, similar to that of the *Tallis Fantasia*, of complete tranquillity, serenity and simplicity that leaves the listener transported to a place not of this world where there is no record of time, order or materialism, but rather something purer and indescribable by language. This instantly teaches us that there exists a higher existence free from the materialism of today and that in fact this higher existence is far more worthwhile and satisfying. The opening uses the seemingly infinite string chorus, so characteristic of Vaughan Williams, to become a portal through which the listener can enter the atmosphere and the world of this *Romanza*. In bar 7 the transported audience hears, from the distance, the main motif of the movement played by the solo cor anglais. This tune is devastating in impact, full of the sorrow and grief of war, yet through its lyrical nature it seems confident in the hope that the despair will cease. The piece moves to the Aeolian Mode, and in doing so produces a raw and earthy feel, as the string section takes over from the cor anglais with the tune played by the

second violins in bars 13 to 18 before passing to the first violins in bar 20. This second violin motif emphasises the sinister interval of a fourth and is accompanied by a rich, polyphonic string accompaniment, thus again achieving that unique Vaughan Williams string timbre that so effectively transfers emotion to the audience. This passage, subsiding at bar 28, brings a contrast to the vast openness and space of the somewhat static opening, its clearer sense of movement seeming to move towards a climax. The emotional tension established at the beginning of the movement is increased.

The accompaniment, through its contrapuntal nature, seems to create a united front of warm harmony that offers comfort within the sorrowful desperation of the piece. The passage is interrupted in bar 29 with a rhythmic variant of the opening triads played once again by the strings. This paves the way for the woodwind passage beginning at bar 32 that offers some respite from the thick, highly charged aesthetic so that the listener is not overwhelmed. Then we are transported back to the timeless atmosphere of the opening by the reintroduction of the opening triads, given now to the woodwind. Thus the journey to the true emotion continues. It is in bar 43 that we hear the devastating cor anglais melody rescored for unison strings to gain increased impact. This leads into the climactic passage of the exposition that features an expanded version of the former passage (bars 12-28) with the addition of wind and horn parts. Through this added texture the emotional tension is increased to saturation point until it is finally released through two climaxes. The crescendo in bar 52 leads to a great

eruption of emotional energy at bar 61, and it is there, in the release of such sustained gathering of emotional tension, that the audience can, through the musical climax, be transported to that glorious treasure: true emotion.

The emotion conveyed here is hugely powerful, close to sorrow and despair, yet remaining wonderfully serene and beautiful. The experience is clear and vivid, yet indescribable through language. It is only accessible through music. The audience is made to feel the emotion felt in Britain at the time of war, and we can't help but understand the powerful impact this movement must have had on a battered British people. It is this experience that will have a positive effect on their character.

This experience can become the norm in our society if the majority were introduced to such music as Vaughan Williams' Fifth Symphony, rather than rely on the current music that in no way touches upon the same sophistication or depth of emotion. It is this music that has the depth, serenity and unique Britishness necessary to rescue individuals from entrapment sealed by relativism and allow them to experience the treasure of true emotion so essential to the salvation of the British Society.

The conversion of the people so tied into their comforting box sealed tightly with the tape of relativism will be a near impossible task and one met with great reluctance. However with Vaughan Williams as our Messiah it might just be possible.

Society member Stephen Bennetts, from Penzance in Cornwall, has sent in these photographs. He writes:

I hope you may be interested in the attached photographs, which were given to me a couple of years ago. They show Vaughan Williams and Arnold Foster at a production of *Old King Cole* at St. Albans in 1937.

The young lady with Vaughan Williams is Betty Arnold, still

alive at ninety-two. She gave me the photographs, and thought members of the Society might like to have sight of them. There is a similar photograph, taken seconds before or after, on page 48 of Albion's *There was a time...*

[Betty Arnold is seen in the photograph on the left. The right hand photograph shows the composer with June Jones, choreographer, and Arnold Foster, conductor of the production of *Old King Cole*.]



St. Albans -  
1935

Arnold Foster, June Jones, Vaughan Williams

## Karen Fletcher, the Society's Publicity Officer, writes:

I hope that you have been receiving emails from me during the year with news and information about Vaughan Williams-related events and media. Email means that we can communicate at short notice about anything we think may be of interest to you, and reduces the cost of postage for the Society. I hope in this way that we can add value to your membership. If you have not heard from me we either do not have an email address for you, or the one we have is incorrect or out-of-date. If you are interested in obtaining an email account, your local library should be able to help you set one up easily.

### Vaughan Williams on TV and radio

The BBC featured *The Lark Ascending* on *The One Show* recently, when Giles Brandreth visited Down Ampney and interviewed Stephen Johnson about the work, while Nicola Benedetti played a few bars. An extract from the *Pastoral Symphony* was also included, accompanied by footage from the Great War.

Vaughan Williams was also featured on the BBC's *Songs of Praise*, amongst other English composers, when the theme was composers who had been influenced by folk song.

BBC Radio 4's exploration of the *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis* featured in a programme called *Soul Music*: "How the piece has brought solace and hope in times of tragedy, and changed the course of some people's lives". Michael Kennedy and Em Marshall were amongst the contributors and did an excellent job of communicating the power and meaning of this work.

### Latest publications

OUP have published a study score of Vaughan Williams' Symphony No. 5, having published the newly engraved full score last year. The symphony is on the "A"-level syllabus. (<http://ukcatalogue.oup.com/product/9780193368248.do?keyword=9780193368248&so>)

The Vaughan Williams Charitable Trust has authorized the

publication of the hitherto unpublished incidental music written by Vaughan Williams for the pageant based on *The Pilgrim's Progress*. This music contains seeds of the later opera of the same name. *Scenes Adapted from Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress* contains the complete script and extant musical numbers from the 1907 and 1908 productions in London. This publication is edited for modern readers and performers. The script is restored and clarified, and includes detailed music cues. The score draws on several primary sources, and existing gaps are filled with additional music selections and fabrications in the Appendix. In the preface, Nathaniel Lew explains the sources and editorial decisions leading to this publication, all of which makes for both a scholarly and practical work. It is published by Prometheus Editions in New Zealand and available through United Music Publishers. (<http://www.promethean-editions.com/php/NewsDetail.php?ID=135>)

### Looking ahead

I was lucky enough to sit in on part of the Naxos recording for *Dona Nobis Pacem* and *Sancta Civitas* with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and Winchester Cathedral Choir conducted by David Hill, at the Lighthouse in Poole recently. This exciting CD is scheduled for release in April next year. Together with the recording of the *Piano Concerto* with Ashley Wass, due out in November as a Naxos "Disc of the Month" and featuring the Society's advertisement, it will help to raise awareness of these unjustly neglected works.

Also, in 2010, we can look forward to commemorating the first performances of the *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis* and the *Sea Symphony*.

If you are involved in a performance of either of these works, do let us know so that we can flag it up on the Concerts section of the RVW website (<http://www.rvwsociety.com/concerts.html>).

We hope that a members' event will be incorporated into the next Three Choirs Festival, probably on 10 August, so do add this date to your diary.

## ALBION MUSIC & ALBION RECORDS

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The Complete Poems + Fall of Leaf (Ursula Vaughan Williams)	£20-00 + £3-80
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RVW: A Bibliography (Graham Muncy & Robin Barber)	£6-00 + 55p

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# Letters

## THE GLOCK YEARS

British music composed in the hundred years from 1850 will only become truly accepted when the generation of musicians at the BBC who were educated during the William Glock years and for several thereafter, move on. Why? Because it was around that time from about 1959 onwards that it became fashionable to sneer at the music of Stanford, Parry, Elgar and their immediate successors as representing an old, outworn imperialism. This was brought home to me with some force a few days ago when a BBC discussion taking place in the interval at the Moeran/Finzi/Elgar Prom mentioned that the late Sir Edward Downes adored and conducted Elgar's Second Symphony, but would not conduct the First because he disapproved of its "Imperial tub-thumping style" (or words to that effect).

This sort of attitude is, thankfully, far less apparent these days, but it certainly lingers. Looking at the 2009 Proms prospectus there are a fair number of British composers of that period represented, but they cannot be said to be a regularly occurring presence, year after year, with their output being thoroughly explored. No Bax, no Rubbra, no Walton, no Alwyn, no Holbrooke, a tiny pinch of Vaughan Williams, one work by Moeran, one work by Finzi and a sprinkling by Delius and Holst (no doubt because it is seventy-five years since they both died, but I bet that there will be precious little by them next year.)

Why not programme Vaughan Williams' vocal, choral and orchestral works year on year – I'm sure that *Sancta Civitas*, *Dona Nobis Pacem*, *Flos Campi* and so on could take the strain? Bax's symphonies are a colossal resource to be plumbed and Finzi's Cello Concerto should be part of every British cellist's repertoire. Parry and Stanford can well stand up to being explored, especially Parry's later symphonies and Elgar's Biblical oratorios contain some truly glorious music in which I, an agnostic, revel.

I could go on, having a large bee in my headgear, but I suppose that it is too much to expect that a British festival, subsidised by British taxes, should pander to those of us who would like to see and hear composers of the British musical renaissance much better represented on a regular, recurring basis.

*Edward J. Westhead,  
Penwortham,  
Lancashire.*

## THE LARK

In the June issue Allan W. Atlas bemoans the infrequent presentation of the *Lark* at concerts, despite its popularity on the radio and on CD. However, I do not think the cost of employing a top soloist for a short work like this can really be a factor in its absence from concert programmes. I think it was the late Hugh Bean (whose *Lark* is still the best) who, at a Ralph Vaughan Williams Society A.G.M. some years ago, stated that is not a difficult piece for a competent violinist to play, and that any orchestral leader worth his or her salt could perform it in public if called upon to do so.

However I share the Chairman's views on the over-exposure of *The Lark Ascending* on Classic FM. I know at least one person who has been turned off this work permanently because he has heard it so often there. Although I sometimes listen to Classic FM, especially the so-called *Full Works* presentation in the late evening when Radio 3 has abandoned all things musical, I am frequently reduced to at

worst despair, and at best hilarity, at some of their efforts. A few weeks ago I settled down to listen to *Sinfonia Antartica* "played in full" as proudly announced by Natalie Wheen. Imagine my extreme annoyance when, at midnight, the performance was terminated without the final movement. And there was no explanation at all.

But there are lighter moments. Whilst on holiday last week I heard on my car radio one of their announcers pontificating about a French composer with the name Gabriel Pea Urn. At least when Radio 3 announcers make a slip (my wife heard *The Flagic Mute* once) it is a genuine one. I get the distinct impression that the Classic FM staff know next to nothing about classical music.

*Michael J. Gainsford  
Burbage,  
Leicestershire, U.K.*

## RALPH'S ATTIC

May I be permitted to add just a little to Graham Muncy's review in the June issue of the *Journal* of the new Dutton CD *From Vaughan Williams' Attic*?

In my view this version of the *Serenade to Music* is head and shoulders above all the others currently available (or indeed likely to become available in the future). Not only do we hear the soloists for whom the work was composed, but Dutton have done absolute wonders with the sound quality. This particular recording has been released before, but on previous CDs has always shown its age. The new Dutton CD is worth purchasing for this piece alone.

As to *Flourish for a Coronation*, this too is an ear-opener in more ways than one. Sadly the text is not included with the CD, but if one makes the effort to discover the words from the King James Version and one of several web sites devoted to Chaucer, one realises that all the fanfares and noise fit the nature of the text perfectly. Incidentally part of the text is almost the same as that set by Handel in *Zadok the Priest*, but with all reference to Zadok, Nathan and Solomon excised by Vaughan Williams.

Interestingly, in the last movement the composer calls for the words to be spoken by the choir at one stage, echoing Holst's *Hymn of Jesus*, composed twenty years previously. Is it too much to imagine that Vaughan Williams intended this as a tribute to his old friend?

One wonders just how many times this piece has been performed since its composition. Opportunities are few, and the number of brass instruments required probably make the cost of performance prohibitive. I doubt if we will ever hear a modern recording, unless an enterprising conductor sticks it in as a fill-up to one of the Berlioz works employing vast forces.

Incidentally, unless the title of this piece has changed since its first performance, Dutton have the name wrong. The CD has *A Flourish for the Coronation*. Michael Kennedy's *Catalogue* has *Flourish for a Coronation*, which appears more appropriate.

*Michael J. Gainsford,  
Burbage,  
Leicestershire, U.K.*

## COUNTY BOUNDARIES

In his article about RVW and the 1911 Census (Issue 45) Robin Barber states: "As in the 1901 census Vaughan Williams gives Down Ampney as in Wiltshire and not Gloucestershire." He adds: "I wonder if there was a boundary change later in the century?" I personally think that most unlikely.

In an earlier report (Issue 37) Robin Barber reproduced a section of the 1901 Census return for Vaughan Williams' earlier residence at 10, Barton Street. This too showed Down Ampney as being in Wiltshire. The border between the two counties comes very close indeed to Down Ampney, but there is no doubt in my mind that the village of Vaughan Williams' birth is in my county.

The question remains, why did he record it as being Wiltshire? In my follow up letter to Robin Barber's 2006 report I mention that the census returns for Down Ampney for 1851, 1861 and 1871, as confirmed by my later research, disclosed that the village has always been in Gloucestershire. However, when I obtained a copy of the composer's birth certificate recently I was surprised to discover in the caption to the document that the birth was recorded in the sub-district of Fairford in the counties of Gloucester and Wilts.

Perhaps Vaughan Williams had occasion to bespeak a birth certificate

and noticed the reference to inter alia Wilts. In the handwritten section of the certificate, however, Down Ampney is in Gloucestershire. I frankly doubt, therefore, whether the real truth of this small mystery will ever be uncovered.

*Reg Hargrave,  
Upton St. Leonards,  
Gloucestershire, U.K.*

## VAUGHAN WILLIAMS IN SPACE

In this year of celebrating the fortieth anniversary of the first moon landing, I have re-read Andrew Smith's fascinating book *Moondust*, which chronicles the lives of the Apollo astronauts.

Chapter eight reveals that Rusty Schweickart, who tested the Lunar Module on the Apollo 9 mission, took a cassette of Vaughan Williams' *Hodie* on the mission as part of his personal "luggage".

Would *Toward the Unknown Region* have been more appropriate, maybe?

*Rod Lewis,  
Hertford,  
Hertfordshire, U.K.*

# Concert Reviews

## A Glasgow Sea Symphony

One of the themes of the 2008-9 concert season of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra has been pieces of music inspired by the sea, logically culminating in a performance of *A Sea Symphony* in the Royal Glasgow Concert Hall on 8 May 2009. The conductor, the orchestra's French Music Director Stéphane Denève, who, in chatting to the audience at the start of the concert, revealed that in studying the score – this was the first time that he had performed the work – he had fallen in love with it. He also detected a strong influence of Ravel in the work, something audience members greeted with good-humoured disbelief! The first half of the evening consisted of just the Prelude and Liebestod, from Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, in a reasonably good performance, although it seemed empty without hearing *Isolde* during the closing bars.

After the interval, the orchestra gave a solid and robust performance of the *Sea Symphony*. It seemed that Denève's unfamiliarity with the piece was no disadvantage, and if anything allowed a fresh approach to the music. Indeed one thing which he consistently achieves is to make you notice parts of a piece, however familiar, that you've never noticed before. So it was that in the opening movement of the *Sea Symphony* he brought out more of the undulating woodwind harmonies (a sign of the Ravel influence?) which are often hidden among the cut and thrust of the main themes.

The orchestra gave a consistently spirited performance, responding well to their Music Director. The soloists, Sir Thomas Allen and Emma Bell were also equal to the task, Allen demonstrating his experienced understanding of phrasing and intonation of the part, particularly in the contemplative second movement, although his voice appeared below strength at times. Emma Bell had a clear, resonant tone, without being too strident.

Surprisingly the chorus fared less well. While technically fine, apart from some sibilance, they seemed lacking in spirit, even in the third movement where they would have been expected to shine, and at times seemed detached from the orchestra and soloists. However, in the final movement, all the forces united together under well-paced direction to bring the work to a fine conclusion.

*James Curran*

## An unlikely duo play Vaughan Williams

Vaughan Williams' *Concerto for Two Pianos in C Major* was on the program for the August 1 2009 concert at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark, New Jersey. The concert featured the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra under the direction of John Axelrod, with pianists Lang Lang and Herbie Hancock. Vaughan Williams was in good company: the program started with the overture to *The Marriage of Figaro* followed by both soloists entering the stage and performing Vaughan Williams' concerto. After the concerto, the orchestra exited the stage leaving the soloists to perform Ravel's *Mother Goose* for the piano with four hands. After an intermission, the orchestra returned to the stage to perform "Mambo" from Bernstein's *West Side Story* where the audience was invited to shout out "Mambo!" at different points during the piece. The conductor was pleasantly surprised by the enthusiasm of the New Jersey audience. The orchestra then left the stage again and Lang Lang came out to perform a solo piece. He then invited Hancock back on stage to improvise while he performed a traditional Chinese folk tune. After this Hancock was left alone to perform a medley of several of his famous jazz tunes. Interestingly, after Hancock began his solo, I noticed that Lang had quietly come back onto the stage and was observing from the shadows of the percussion section. Lang seemed to make a conscious effort not to be noticed and while I don't know what his true motivation was, wouldn't it be nice to think that

perhaps the twenty-seven year-old rising superstar still felt he had something to learn from the sixty-nine year-old jazz legend? The orchestra returned at the end of Hancock's solo and both pianists concluded the scheduled program with Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*. For an encore, the pianists performed some improvisations together on the rhapsody without orchestra.

Regarding the Vaughan Williams piece, I have to admit that I assumed that Lang Lang would be technically up to the task, but how would Herbie Hancock handle the piece, which is known to be so demanding? Any worries I had were put to rest after the first few bars and I feel foolish now even being in doubt considering how many outstanding jazz musicians have successfully crossed the line into classical music now and then. Good musicianship is not limited to any particular style though it can sometimes be challenging for artists to jump from one style to another. Hancock was clearly at home with the song-like harmonies in the second movement and the end of the third and it was during these points of the concerto that I realized that the piece really does have some crossover appeal. I know that "crossover" is a dirty word, but the concerto fit perfectly into this particular concert, which was essentially a classical concert with heavy jazz and popular influences. I'm sure that there are more popular piano works that could have easily fit into the program and probably also have a jazzier feel, but that the artists chose Vaughan Williams is an encouraging sign of the composer's increasing popularity. Indeed, it's been a good year so far for Vaughan Williams in the New York area, with the *Sea Symphony* being performed by the St. Cecilia Chorus & Orchestra at Carnegie Hall in the spring and now this concert with the NJSO. We need more performances of his work, but I'm hopeful for the future considering that these concerts were well attended even though they featured less well-known pieces.

Matthew Andaloro

### A commemorative *Lark*

A performance of *The Lark Ascending* took place at Bristol's Shirehampton Public Hall on Wednesday 26 August 2009, commemorating the first performance of the work in the same venue in 1920. The Guest of Honour was the Chairman of the Ralph Vaughan Williams Society, Em Marshall. The day's events began in the morning with speeches by Marian Guy and Gil Osman, both Trustees of the hall, and by the Deputy Lord Mayor. There then followed the unveiling of a brass plaque, placed on the main entrance doors to the hall, by Em Marshall, who spoke about how much Vaughan Williams' music had meant to her from childhood. An expupil of St. Paul's Girls' School – so appropriate that Holst's *St. Paul's Suite* was to feature in the evening concert! – she was a founder member of the Ralph Vaughan Williams Society, of which she is now Chairman, as well as Founder and Director of the English Music Festival. Her speech was accompanied by fierce gusts of wind suggesting that the composer's spirit was nearby! Happily the rain held off though. The concert itself took place in the evening to a full house of nearly two hundred people. Proceedings began with a brief introduction by Marian Guy and Gil Osman. Gil then introduced Roger Huckle, the founder and leader of the Emerald Ensemble, Bristol's professional chamber ensemble. Although Roger introduced each work, excellent programme notes were also available.

For those unfamiliar with the hall, it is in the traditional Edwardian barrel shape with a small stage and proscenium arch, at the opposite end of which is a small gallery seating about seventy-five people. Its total capacity is about two hundred. The small string orchestra

consisted of five violins, two violas, two cellos and a double bass – plus a piano for the *Lark* – and was placed on the stage. This unfortunately had the effect of boxing in the sound to an extent and there was a definite loss of resonance. Placing the performers in the hall itself might have produced a better result. The concert began with Peter Warlock's *Capriol Suite*, which was well played and enthusiastically received by the audience. Applause generally followed each movement throughout the evening. There then followed two of what Roger Huckle described as Elgar's salon music pieces, *Chanson de Matin* and *Salut d'amour*. These were played in arrangements for solo violin and string orchestra and were delightful, with Roger Huckle obviously using this opportunity as a warm up for the *Lark Ascending* in the second half! A more substantial Elgar work followed, the *Serenade for Strings*. Again, this was very sensitively played, especially the slow movement which made a deep impression. The first half ended with a rousing performance of Gustav Holst's ever popular *St. Paul's Suite*, the last movement being particularly effective and bringing the first half to a rousing conclusion. Since the first item in the second half of the programme was *The Lark Ascending*, Em Marshall was invited to give a brief introduction to the work and its quintessential evocation of the English landscape. It is perhaps appropriate to say a few words about how the first performance of *The Lark* came to be played in Shirehampton Hall in the first place. The Squire of nearby Kings Weston House was Philip Napier Miles, who was a gifted musician and composer and became a generous patron of music. (Indeed, he donated the land on which Shirehampton Hall was built). Many musicians were entertained at the House, including a very young Malcolm Sargent, his protégé Miss Marie Hall and, of course, Ralph Vaughan Williams. Vaughan Williams and Marie Hall stayed at Kings Weston in 1920 and it was there that a transcription of *The Lark Ascending*, for violin and piano, was made. This was the version played by Marie Hall and Geoffrey Mendham at the first performance at Shirehampton. By a happy coincidence a distant relative of Miss Hall was also able to attend both the unveiling of the commemorative plaque and the concert in the evening.



Em Marshall unveils the commemorative plaque

*The Lark Ascending* was given not in the violin and piano transcription mentioned above, but the usual orchestral version with the piano ably taking on the brass and woodwind parts. In fact this version seemed an ideal "half way house" and the audience were enthralled by a very creditable performance. Again, though, the effect would have been enhanced by a warmer and more radiant acoustic. Paying suitable attention to music written beyond these shores, the Emerald continued with a performance of Mozart's *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*, duly followed by two well deserved encores, a Brahms *Hungarian March* and three of Bartók's *Romanian Dances*. In general the *rapport* of the Emerald ensemble was very good with the 'cellos and double bass performing particularly well throughout the evening. This was a truly excellent evening's entertainment which was thoroughly enjoyed by the capacity audience.

David Green

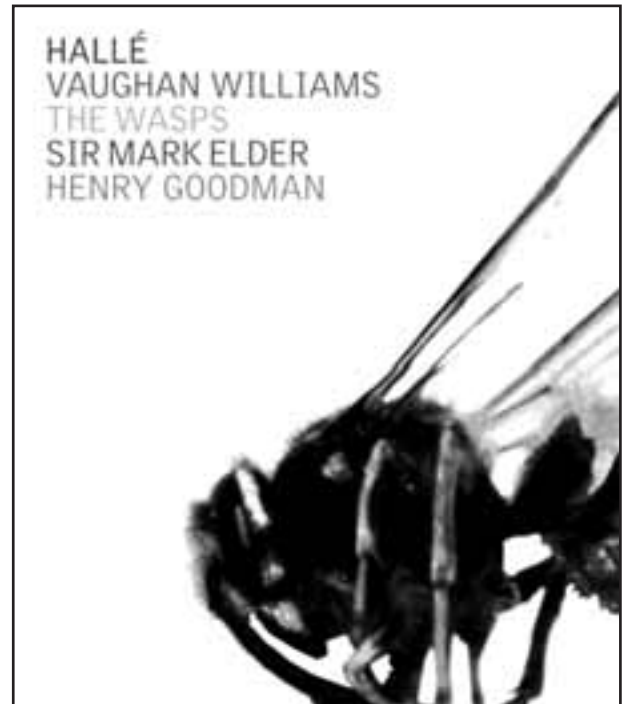
# A Century On

Simon Coombs

Under this title, the *Journal* will be publishing brief accounts of the works of Vaughan Williams as they reach the centenaries of their first performances. Three important pieces were first heard during November 1909. Two of them, the *String Quartet No. 1* and *On Wenlock Edge* were introduced in the last edition of the *Journal*. We now continue with *The Wasps*.

The Greek Play Committee of Cambridge University commissioned Vaughan Williams to write incidental music for Aristophanes' comedy. He wrote the music in the first half of 1909 and orchestrated it between September and November 1909. The first performance took place at the New Theatre, Cambridge on 26 November 1909, conducted by Dr. Charles Wood, with Steuart Wilson and Denis Browne among the cast. The composer subsequently prepared a five-movement suite from the music and himself conducted the first performance on 23 July 1912 at the Queen's Hall, with King George V and Queen Mary in the audience.

Those who want a recording of the complete score can now turn to the Hallé Orchestra on its own label, though not everyone will enjoy the contemporary re-writing of the play which accompanies it. In the Suite, the late Vernon Handley conducts the London Philharmonic Orchestra on EMI, while the Overture comes from Previn (RCA), Bakels (Naxos), and Barbirolli (EMI), the first two coupled with the revised version of the *London Symphony*.



## CD Reviews

As announced in the last *Journal*, a fifth Albion Records CD, *Folk Songs of the Four Seasons*, was released on 27 July. It seemed a good time to take stock of this increasingly rich recorded collection by seeking out independent opinion. The following reviews first appeared in *International Record Review* and are reproduced here with their kind permission.

### **THE SKY SHALL BE OUR ROOF**

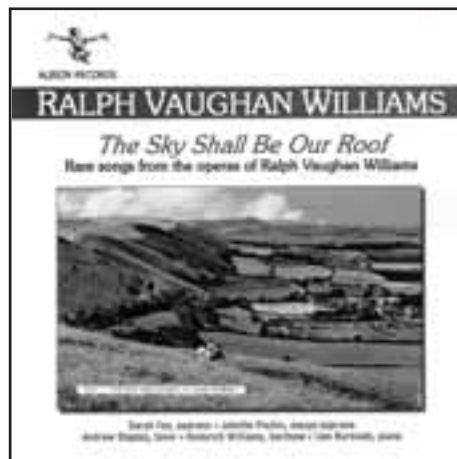
Rare songs from the operas of Ralph Vaughan Williams

Sarah Fox (soprano); Juliette Pochin (mezzo); Andrew Staples (tenor); Roderick Williams (baritone); Iain Burnside (piano)

**ALBION RECORDS ALB001**

Vaughan Williams' first opera, *Hugh the Drover*, was premièred in 1924, the same year in which he adapted for voice and piano the ten selections that open this disc. Here was one of very few composers ever to create an opera in which boxing was a crucial element (Hugh boxes John the

Butcher in order to win the hand of his beloved Mary). It was important to him, too, to incorporate folk song; he took great pains to find authentic examples and eventually referred to Hugh as a "ballad opera".



The Showman's song, *Cold blows the wind on Cotsall*, starts the proceedings in the clear, well-articulated singing of baritone

Roderick Williams, who also excels in the same character's *The Devil and Bonyparty*. Aunt Jane sings *Life must be full of care* to Mary, her niece; mezzo-soprano Juliette Pochin sings this sensitively but with rather too youthful a timbre. The hero's ravishing ballad, *Sweet little linnet*, displays Andrew Staples' classic light English tenor, enhanced by exquisite diction. *Hugh's Song of the Road* needs significantly more robust tone than Staples offers. The same is true of both Staples and soprano Sarah Fox in the lush, genuinely romantic Mary/Hugh duet, *Ah! Love, I've found you* – one capitulates to the music nevertheless. Hugh's two other ballads are merely pleasant, and Fox's voice doesn't fill out Mary's lovely *Here on my throne*. Vaughan Williams' music seems to lose direction in the second Mary/Hugh duet, the final excerpt.

The composer himself prepared the libretto for *Sir John in Love* (1929), drawing on *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and other Shakespeare plays. It is, however, Ben Jonson's poem *See the Chariot at hand* that

provides the text for Fenton's song to Anne; Staples does it full justice in some of Vaughan Williams' most inspired music for tenor. Pochin doesn't really consider context in her fine singing of *Greensleeves* (that melancholy tune is sung when Mistress Ford is exercising her charms on Falstaff.)

*The Pilgrim's Progress* was premiered in 1951, with these piano-accompanied versions of seven excerpts adapted by the composer the following year. Most difficult, because most intimate, is *Watchful's Song*, where Williams' tone is remarkably pure in the *a cappella* passages. The versatile baritone moves easily to the assertive, stirring *Song of the Pilgrims*. His diction – miraculous in *The Song of Vanity Fair* (text by Ursula Vaughan Williams) – compensates for less-than-ringing *forte* passages in *The Pilgrim's Psalm*. Concluding the disc are two brief numbers sung by Fox, with the enchanting *Woodcutter's Song* a special pleasure.

The accompanist, Iain Burnside, supports his singers with the utmost care. The well-recorded disc certainly inspires one to return to the complete operas, all available on glorious recordings. In the current catalogue there is a single choice for *Hugh the Drover* (Matthew Best on Hyperion) and two for *Sir John in Love* (Meredith Davies on EMI and Richard Hickox on Chandos), while for *The Pilgrim's Progress* both Adrian Boult on EMI and Hickox on Chandos can be equally recommended.

I heartily thank the Ralph Vaughan Williams Society, which has inaugurated its own label, Albion Records, with this rewarding release.

Roger Pines

### KISSING HER HAIR

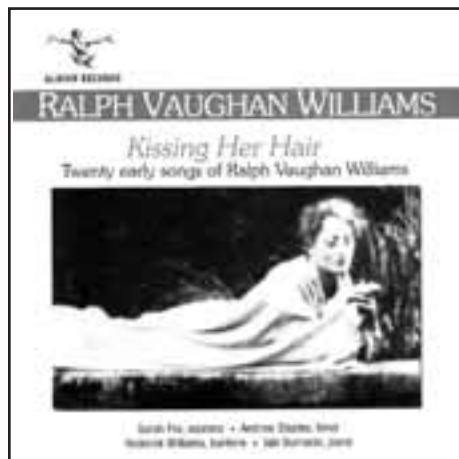
Twenty early songs of Ralph Vaughan Williams

Sarah Fox (soprano); Andrew Staples (tenor); Roderick Williams (baritone); Iain Burnside (piano)

ALBION RECORDS ALB002

"I thought I knew quite a lot about Vaughan Williams but I realized when I got involved in this project that I've just touched the surface." Thus said Roderick Williams on BBC Radio 3's *In Tune* when two songs from this album were played. One was *Rondel*, an unpublished piece to words by Swinburne. That is one of the twenty "early" songs recorded on this CD from

Albion, the label of the Ralph Vaughan Williams Society. "Early" is the adjective on the booklet's front cover, but although seventeen of the songs were written between 1895 and 1907, the three Whitman poems were set in 1925.



It may be that some of these compositions are receiving their initial recording. Others, like *Linden Lea* and *Orpheus with his Lute*, have not been neglected. With the running time of this CD at just under an hour, it is a pity that more pieces were not included, but a wide variety of songs can be heard, from mock folk songs to serious and sad settings, well performed and recorded. Three poems by William Barnes are in the Dorset dialect and sung thus instead of in standard English. How authentic Williams' assumed accent is I cannot say. He makes a marked contrast of emphasis and colour for the final stanza of *Linden Lea*, a song that I never tire of hearing, and how delightfully gentle and touching is *The Winter's Willow*, in which a young man waxes lyrical about his beloved Liddy, with Williams' singing and Iain Burnside's playing so right, evoking the picture of rural love.

Also tenderly interpreted is the aforementioned *Rondel*, from which comes the disc's title, while with soft sweetness baritone and pianist respond winningly to *The Sky above the roof*. How effectively are the words "dying, dying, dying" tapered by Williams at the close of each verse of Tennyson's *The splendour falls*. It's a fine song. Another Tennyson setting is *Tears, idle tears*, the longest piece (6'25"). Funereal chords in the piano's lower reaches reflect such lines as "when unto dying eyes" and the recurrent "the days that are no more", and the baritone brings a darker hue to his tone to mirror the words.

*Orpheus with his Lute* was dismissed by Trevor Hold in his book *Parry to Finzi* (Boydell Press, 2002) as "a disappointment.

With its strains of the Victorian parlour-song and Sullivan, it could be by any competent late 19th century songwriter." In his booklet note, Stephen Connock quotes Frank Howes' description of the song as "fresh as a dewdrop and delightful". I side with Howes. It has an Elizabethan affinity reminiscent of Hahn's backward glances. Sarah Fox and Burnside bring a lightness of touch that is appropriate. In *When I am dead, my dearest* her top notes are on the thin side. Andrew Staples has even less to do than Fox. He sings his one solo, *Claribel*, attractively with his light tenor but seems recorded at a lower level than the others. The sound, though, is clear in all pieces. Some of these recordings were made in the Henry Wood Hall; the rest were captured in Potton Hall in Suffolk, but we are not told which. It does not really matter.

This is an enjoyable disc, with Williams bringing subtle distinctions of tone and inflexion and Burnside responding with expertise and experience. The unmentioned songs provide much pleasure too.

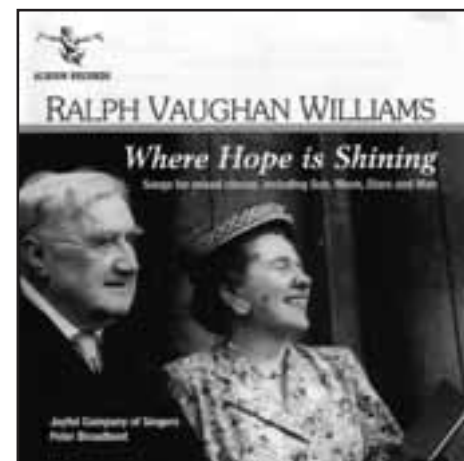
John T. Hughes

### WHERE HOPE IS SHINING

Songs for Mixed Chorus

Ørjan Hartveit (baritone); Joyful Company of Singers/Peter Broadbent with Alistair Young (piano)

ALBION RECORDS ALBCD006



Hot on the heels of the excellent collection of Vaughan Williams *a cappella* choral works recorded on Delphian by Laudibus, conducted by Mike Brewer, to which I gave an enthusiastic welcome just a few months ago, comes another similar offering from another top British choir. The present anthology is not that similar: there is actually very little overlap. Where Laudibus made the centrepiece of its issue a mesmerizing performance of the *Mass in G*

*minor*, Peter Broadbent and his Joyful Company of Singers have a different focus. Under the auspices of the Ralph Vaughan Williams Society, which is behind the Albion label and whose former chairman Stephen Connock is both executive producer and (expert) annotator of the present disc, the choir has chosen instead to avoid the obvious and to explore instead some of the dustier corners of RVW's output.

So: twenty-three tracks, none longer than four minutes, most though not all unaccompanied, here arranged chronologically, and all well executed, if recorded a fraction distantly in a spacious church. The texts, fortunately, are reproduced in full in the booklet (English only). The first track is a Shakespeare sonnet set for six voices in 1895 or 1896; the last four tracks are a short choral sequence with piano derived from the cantata *The Sons of Light*, written to words by the composer's second wife Ursula. It was published in 1954 just four years before the composer's death: it sounds just a little dutiful.

Although there are no lost masterpieces rediscovered here, it includes a few surprises. There is no great originality in the earliest tracks: *Echo's Lament for Narcissus*, a setting of Ben Jonson from the same period as the Shakespeare sonnet, sounds as if it could be by someone like Pearsall! *Fain would I change that note* from ten years later is more typical, though it is interesting that it comes from just the time when RVW was so self-dissatisfied that he booked himself in for lessons with Ravel. *Mannin Veen* offers more of a jolt: the title may just be familiar from the tone-poem of the same name by Haydn Wood, but the present setting of a traditional Manx

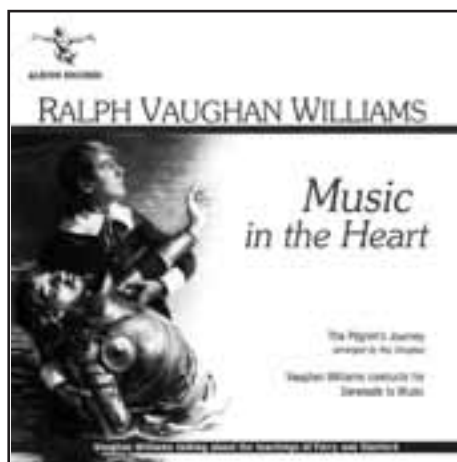
melody is sung here in Manx dialect (and not "dialogue" as the notes would have it): how authentically, I would not care to speculate! It is in fact the several folk song settings on offer that linger most in the mind: lovely versions of *Loch Lomond* and *Alister McAlpine's Lament*, for example. Best of all is a version of *The Mermaid* from 1921. This stands out as having a piano accompaniment, and being set as a solo with choral refrains: the baritone Ørjan Hartveit is definitely a name to look out for, once the RVW anniversary is done and dusted.

Piers Burton-Page

### MUSIC IN THE HEART

A Commemorative Album marking the 50th anniversary of the death of Ralph Vaughan Williams on 26 August 1958

ALBION RECORDS ALBCD009 (two CDs)



Opera is the starting-point for *Music in the Heart*, a CD commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of Vaughan Williams' death.

*The Pilgrim's Journey* is a cantata which Christopher Morris and Roy Douglas derived from *The Pilgrim's Progress*. First performed in 1963, the cantata is here in a 1965 concert in Brooklyn, given with Eric Gritton's organ arrangement. The recording is serviceable. Often the organ is prominent and sometimes overpowers the soloists and chorus. A sudden chordal blast may make you jump, as at the opening of *Vanity Fair*. Louis Bové is the soprano. Despite the male Christian name, it must be a woman who is singing, for in the reverberant acoustic the voice seems too big to be a boy's. That reverberation makes it difficult to distinguish the choir's words. Tenor Clifford Scott has the range and sings sturdily. The lyric baritone of John Peck sits well on his lines. The CD opens with VW's *Serenade to Music*, with the composer conducting the Liverpool Philharmonic at the Festival Hall in 1951. Thirteen years after its first performance, eleven of the original soloists take part. Ena Mitchell replaces Eva Turner; Gladys Ripley succeeds Margaret Balfour. The lower-voiced men are all present, but only Heddle Nash remains of the tenors, the newcomers being William Herbert, Richard Lewis and Stephen Manton. What a lovely work it is. The recording is congested and microphones poorly placed, so the singers are too far back, some closer than others: Robert Easton as against Harold Williams, for example. Norman Allin is rather dry-toned, but this was four days after his sixty-seventh birthday. A bonus disc carries a talk by VW on Parry and Stanford and a tiny excerpt from his funeral service. Lovers of VW's music need this disc despite my reservations.

John T. Hughes

## INTERNATIONAL RECORD REVIEW

FOR THE SERIOUS CLASSICAL COLLECTOR

We will be pleased to supply a free sample copy of our monthly magazine to members of the RVW Society

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## From the Chairman

Welcome to your new-look *Journal*! Our editor, William Hedley, has been working closely with our website designer, Tadeusz Kasa, to “update” this publication, and I hope that you will be as delighted with it as I am! As always, comments are very welcome, but I hope you will agree that this marks a turning point in the professionalism of our organisation and the *Journal* – our “public face”.

It may no longer be a centenary year, but 2009 has seen the high profile of Vaughan Williams’ music kept up. He has maintained a high presence in the media, with a BBC1 *One Show* programme on *The Lark Ascending*, a Radio 4 *Soul Music* programme about the *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis*, and continued features on Radio 3. I was deeply honoured to be invited to unveil a plaque at Shirehampton Hall in Bristol back in August (which also led to a spot on Radio Bristol!), where *The Lark Ascending* received its premiere, with Marie Hall as the soloist, in 1920. The plaque unveiling and speeches took place during the day, and in the evening we were treated to a commemorative performance of the work, along with pieces by Elgar, Holst and Warlock with the Emerald Ensemble, and their leader, Roger Huckle, playing the solo. It was a most moving and memorable performance of this enduringly popular work. Although I sometimes fear lest this work become too hackneyed through constant Classic FM airings, those worries melt away every time I hear it. Its appeal, I think, is mainly in its visual vividness: with both the cry and flight of the lark so graphically depicted, one can almost see the bird spiralling ever higher into the sky above the lush green rolling hills. (Vaughan Williams himself described it as “an English landscape transcribed into musical terms.”) Yet it also combines literature – George Meredith’s lovely poem, and great nostalgia, as if the terror of the loss of England’s men, countryside, culture and ways that abounded before and during the war was focused in this work, accounting for some of the nostalgia, yearning, poignancy and wistfulness found in it. And during that performance, what struck me particularly was the timelessness of the piece, and how fresh and beautiful it sounded, even ninety years after it was first written. That, surely, is the mark of a great composer!

Meanwhile, the trustees of the Society have been busy trying to think of other ways to continue promoting interest in and awareness of the great man and his music. If you have any brilliant ideas or suggestions about how we can keep Vaughan Williams in the public eye, please do drop me an email or letter and let me know.

I am personally keen to develop the social side of the Society further. I firmly believe that the *Journal*, of which we are very proud, is alone worth the membership of this Society, yet I feel strongly that opportunities for members to meet and mix and enjoy Vaughan Williams’ music should be an important aspect too. To this end, I have arranged a concert in conjunction with the Oxford and Cambridge Club, at 71 Pall Mall in London. It is an exclusive event, open only to members of the Society, the Club itself and Friends of the English Music Festival. Entry is by pre-booked ticket only (and includes wine and canapés). Oxford Liedertafel – whom those of you who attended the English Music Festival this year might recall for their hauntingly beautiful concert in Radley Chapel – will be singing part-songs by Vaughan Williams and his circle. The concert will take place on Monday 30 November, and I do hope as many of you as possible will be able to join us for what promises to be a very special event. Members are invited to contact me if they want any further information.

*Em Marshall*

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