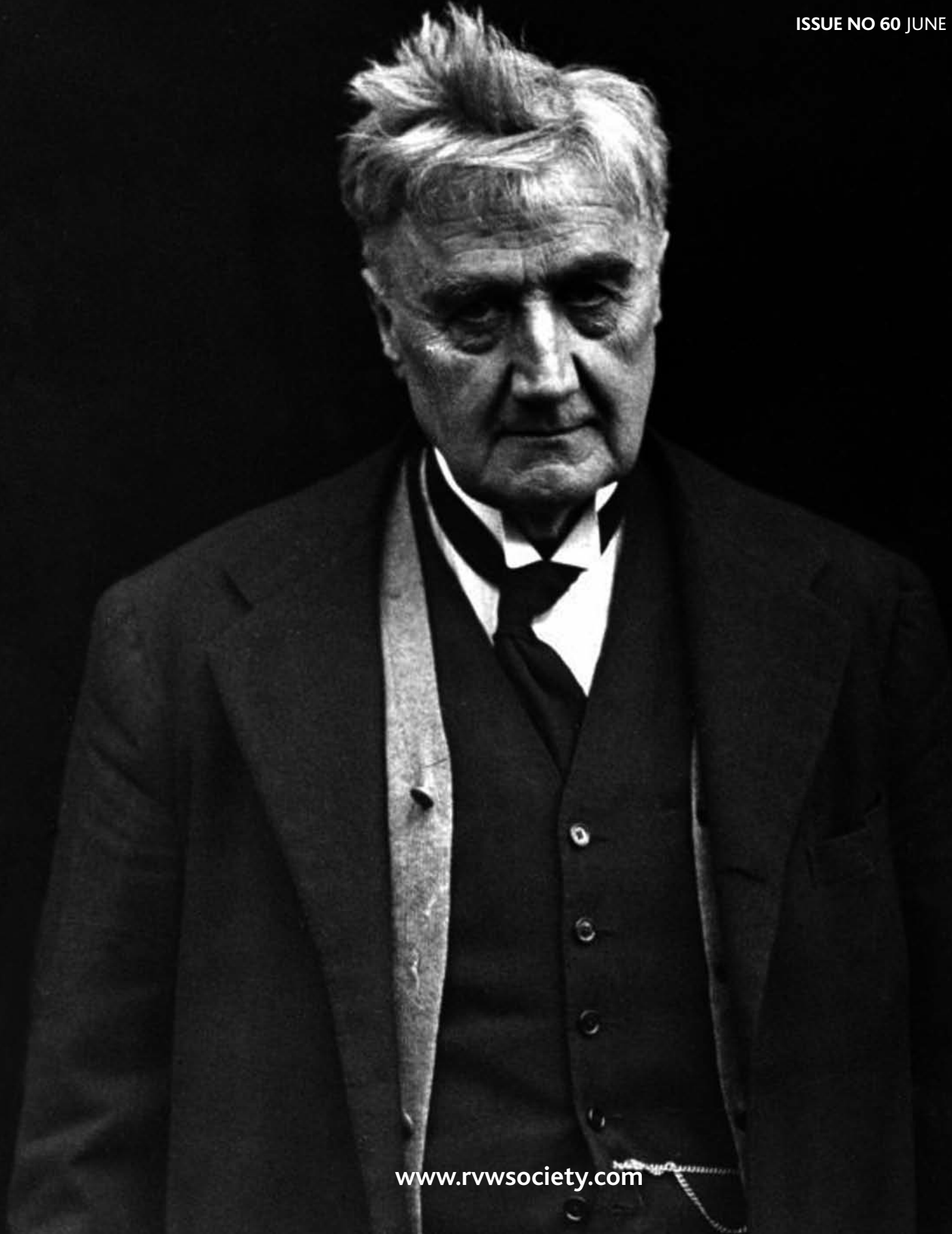


RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS SOCIETY JOURNAL

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

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From the Editor

Simona Pakenham, author of an early and still very useful book about the music of Ralph Vaughan Williams, had family connections near to where I live in Southwest France. I was privileged to meet her on two occasions towards the end of her life, and both times, amongst other fascinating reminiscences, she wanted to make sure I knew just how extraordinarily attractive Vaughan Williams was to women. If he entered a room, she said, every woman's eyes would be on him, and invariably, once ensconced on some sofa or other, he would find himself surrounded by doting admirers. The cover of the last issue of the *Journal* showed Vaughan Williams with a woman who, if one is to interpret her body language correctly, seems fairly smitten. But who is she? Colin Lees, who first brought the picture to our attention, has done some detective work. If I can't quite go along with his final sentence, his arguments are certainly powerfully convincing.

It's a delightful photo, and one that most members won't have seen. The *Journal* has carried many striking images on its cover, but there is something else there too, and because it's there every time, members might miss it. The Society's mission statement is "Widening the knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the music of Ralph Vaughan Williams". I wasn't part of the committee that decided on this particular form of words, but it is succinct and clear, and I like it very much. You can catch up with all the Society's activities each year at the AGM, but of course members come from all parts of the world, meaning that many of you, perhaps most of you, simply can't attend. (Will our first South American member – see the Letters pages – be making the journey in October? It would be nice to think that he could.) This is where the *Journal* comes in. This issue brings you a long article from Allan Atlas about some newly discovered Vaughan Williams letters. They may not reveal anything new about our composer, but

they certainly confirm what we already know, and in a fascinating way. Then many of us are serious record collectors. Who doesn't have Hugh Bean's celebrated performance of *The Lark Ascending* on the shelves? Not only does John France's article shed light on earlier recordings of this favourite work, it also lets us in on that celebrated performance's contemporary critical reception. Both these articles, it's clear, contribute to the fulfilment of the Society's aims. Incidentally, Hugh Bean attended the Society's AGM some years ago, and gave an entertaining talk about working on the Lark. He drew attention to its many difficulties, especially the parallel fifths that Vaughan Williams had liberally dotted in throughout. Jonathan Pearson recorded the meeting and a DVD was made. A copy of it is held at the Dorking Performing Arts Library.

Widening the knowledge of any subject almost inevitably demands the participation of experts. The majority of our members, however, are enthusiasts rather than experts. Now we know the vast wealth of knowledge that an enthusiast can accumulate – unthinking people might call it "trivia" – so just imagine how rich a fund is available when those enthusiasts get together in one place. That place, I suggest to you, is the *Journal*. I wrote all three of the CD reviews for this issue, but any member who prefers one recorded performance of a Vaughan Williams work to another, and can explain why, possesses the critical facility required to give an opinion on a new recording. A review of a CD doesn't have to be long or technical. It mainly needs to say whether you like it or not, and why. That's what your fellow members want to know. Your editor is here to make sure it fits the space available, so I invite you, and not for the first time, to take up your pens. These pages are here for you to fill.

William Hedley

Ralph Vaughan Williams and literature in English

... Wherefore their soul in me, or mine,
Through self-forgetfulness divine,
In them, that song aloft maintains,
To fill the sky and thrill the plains
With showerings drawn from human stores,
As he to silence nearer soars,
Extends the world at wings and dome,
More spacious making more our home,
Till lost on his aërial rings
In light, and then the fancy sings.

George Meredith

Ralph Vaughan Williams and Olin Downes: Newly Uncovered Letters

Allan W. Atlas

Even small scholarly projects have a way of running up debts, and so I begin by acknowledging the generous help that I've received along the way: Glenda Goss and Chuck Barber respectively called my attention to and helped me navigate the Olin Downes Papers; Hugh Cobbe, Alain Frogley, and Nils Neubert came to the rescue when Vaughan Williams's famously difficult handwriting defeated me; LeRoy Van Hoesen, Jr, kindly shared with me the text of a letter that he received from Vaughan Williams in 1955; Peter Horton checked matriculation records at the Royal College of Music; Bridget Carr and Gabryel Smith sent documents from the archives of the New York Philharmonic and Boston Symphony Orchestra, respectively; Shaunta Alvarez and Katie Nash searched through the archives at Elon University; Jan Blodgett did the same at Davidson College; and Rick Fox, guided me through the thicket of online databases.

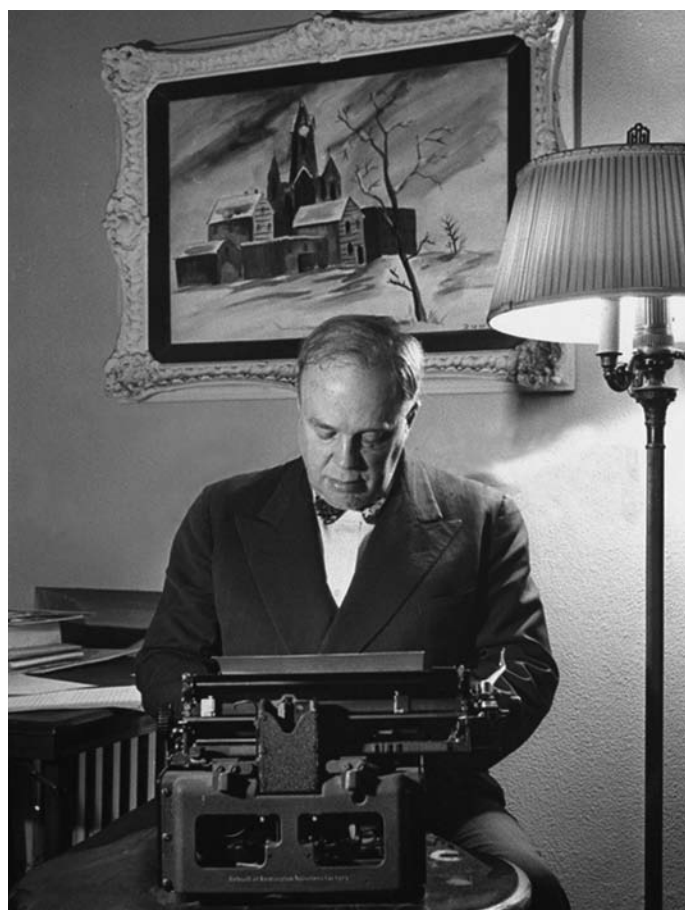
I offer a second round of thanks to Hugh Cobbe for having read through and improved an early draft of the paper. Thanks to the following for permission to include the letters: the Hargrett Rare Book & Manuscript Library, University of Georgia Libraries (Letters 1-12); The Vaughan Williams Charitable Trust (Letters 1-2, 4, 7-9, plus those from Adeline to Ralph Vaughan Williams and from Vaughan Williams to Percy Scholes); Mr LeRoy Van Hoesen, Jr (Letter 13). Finally, heartfelt thanks to Adam Birke, Constance Old, Dominique McCormick, Jeremy West, Julianne Hirsh, María Ordiñana Gil, and Nils Neubert for brightening up the fourteen meetings of a seminar titled "Ralph Vaughan Williams: The "Early Years" (to World War I)" at The Graduate Center of The City University of New York in Fall 2013, thus permitting me to devote my final semester of teaching to music that I love.

It was during the 1920s that Vaughan Williams's music began to take hold in New York. And though his reputation grew mainly on the strength of three powerful works that could speak for themselves – *A London Symphony*, *A Pastoral Symphony*, and the *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* – it was helped along by two of the major figures in the city's musical life: Walter Damrosch and Olin Downes.

Born in Breslau (now Wrocław in Poland), Damrosch (1862-1950) arrived in New York with his family in 1871, succeeded his father Leopold as director of the New York Symphony in 1885, and held the post until that orchestra merged with the New York Philharmonic Society in June 1928 to form the Philharmonic-Symphony Society of New York – or, simply, the New York Philharmonic (Damrosch, Martin). Indeed, during the 1920s, Damrosch used his "bully pulpit" to program Vaughan Williams more often than any other conductor on the New York scene: of the thirteen performances of *London*, *Pastoral*, and *Tallis* that the New York Symphony and the New York Philharmonic presented from December 1920 to April 1927 (that is, prior to their merger), Damrosch conducted seven of them.

The other major figure, and the person upon whom we focus here, was the influential music critic Olin Downes (1886-1955), who, after a lengthy stint with the *Boston Post* from 1906 to 1924, succeeded Richard Aldrich as the chief music critic at *The New York Times* in 1924, which position he held until his death more than thirty years later (I. Downes, Weldy, Mueser, Goss).

What follows deals with the relationship between Vaughan Williams and Downes as seen through an exchange of eight letters between them plus a letter of condolence from Ursula Vaughan Williams to Irene Downes upon Olin's death. In addition, I have included three other letters to or from Downes that concern Vaughan Williams (Letters 10-12). All twelve letters belong to "Series 2—Correspondence" of the vast "Olin Downes Papers" (some 50,000 letters!), which collection is housed at the



Olin Downes

Hargrett Rare Book & Manuscript Library of the University of Georgia (Athens, GA). Letters 1- 8, 10, and 12 reside in Box 63, Folder 19, Letters 6 and 11 in Folder 20 in that box (Réti-Forbes, and <http://hmfa.libs.uga.edu/hmfa/view?docId=ead/ms688.series2-ead.xml> for a skeleton-like inventory). Finally, there is a thirteenth letter, this one in the private collection of Mr. LeRoy Van Hoesen,

Jr, of Hudson, New York, who received it from Vaughan Williams in June 1955.

I present the first nine letters in chronological order, and then begin a new chronological sequence for Letters 10-13. And though I retain Vaughan Williams’s dash-laden punctuation as it appears in the original, I have, for the sake of clarity, sparingly added some punctuation (silently) when there is none at all.

Letter 1. Vaughan Williams (autograph) to Downes

From R. Vaughan Williams,
The White Gates,
Westcott Road,
Dorking.

January 12 [1939]

Dear Mr Downes

This letter introduces to you my friends Mr. & Mrs. Julian Gardiner who are coming to New York

Mr. Gardiner is an accomplished tenor singer and a talented composer — Mrs. Gardiner is also a composer whose work I admire — She writes under the name of Mary Couper —

I am sure you will like them both.

Yours sincerely
R Vaughan Williams

Date: Though Vaughan Williams omitted the year when dating the letter, we will see that it can safely be assigned to 1939.

The Gardiners: Given that Vaughan Williams thinks so highly of the Gardiners, they merit our attention (even at some length), especially since they are otherwise barely present in the Vaughan Williams literature.

Thanks to the records of the Royal College of Music – likely the place where Vaughan Williams and the Gardiners first met – we know that Julian was born on 28 November 1903, Mary in January 1906. Moreover, the records tell us that Julian studied both composition and voice at the College from 1 January 1933 to 23 July 1938 (he also earned a degree from Oxford University), while Mary (still with the name Couper) was there for the academic year 1933-1934, and eventually received a diploma from the Royal Academy of Music. Though Julian did not study with Vaughan Williams, Mary did, and she was a promising enough composer to win both the 1934 Walter Willson Cobbett and Arthur Sullivan Prizes in composition.

The Vaughan Williams-Julian Gardiner relationship would have grown closer in July 1938, when, together with a number of other composers, they collaborated on the music for E.M. Forster’s pageant *England’s Pleasant Land*, which was performed that month at Milton Court, Wescott (KennedyW, 257; Mitchell, 84). And it is surely to this collaboration that Adeline Vaughan Williams refers in an unpublished letter to Ralph postmarked 18 July 1938: “Mary Gardiner writes she has all the music – score & parts – shall she send it to the respective composers?” (from the database of Vaughan Williams letters maintained by Hugh Cobbe). If there

were further contacts in England during the brief period before the Gardiners left for the United States I am not aware of them.

We pick up the Gardiners’ trail on 6 February 1939, when Julian, Mary, and their three year-old daughter Shirley arrived in New York on the *American Merchant*, the passenger list for which cites Julian as a “musician” (*Passenger Lists*).¹ The manifest also notes that the Gardiners had obtained their visas on 2 December 1938, at which time they were residing in Guildford, Surrey. We learn more about the family’s early days in the United States from an entry in the *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940*.² Here an “enumeration” dated 29 April 1939 lists the Gardiners as “lodgers” at 617 West 113th Street (in the shadow of Columbia University on Manhattan’s upper West Side), while Julian in particular is listed as a “singer-church”, with an annual income of \$2,400 (*Census 1940G*); and though the census entry does not identify the specific church at which Julian sang, we know from a later document – *The Burlington (N.C.) Daily Times-News*, 24 September 1940, p. 5 (see below) – that he was tenor soloist at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, which, located at 1047 Amsterdam Avenue, would have been just a few minutes away from the Gardiners’ residence. In fact, I would suggest that perhaps it was Vaughan Williams who helped Julian obtain the position, since he (Vaughan Williams) had established a working relationship with the cathedral no later than 1934, when he wrote music for the dedication (on 11 March 1934) of the so-called “Pilgrim’s Pavement” in its central nave; in fact, Vaughan Williams’s choral music would become one of the pillars of the cathedral choir’s repertory, a tradition that continues even today (Atlas).

The Gardiners did not stay in New York very long. Rather, the family soon headed for Burlington, North Carolina, where both Julian and Mary took up positions in the Music Department at Elon College (now Elon University) for the academic year 1940-1941 (*Bulletin Elon*, p. 7), an appointment that was announced in the *Burlington (N.C.) Daily Times-News* on 24 September 1940 (p. 5). Julian was named “head” of the voice department, while Mary taught both composition and Music Education. For reasons now unknown, however, the Gardiners remained at Elon for only one year, their names failing to appear in any of the school’s subsequent *Bulletins*.³

I can point to two further sightings of Julian: (1) on 29 November 1945, the soprano Janet Fairbank gave a recital in Carnegie Chamber Music Hall (now Weill Recital Hall) in which she included Gardiner’s setting of Thomas Hardy’s poem “Midnight on the Great Western” (*NYT*, 30 November 1945, p. 18) and (2) in 1968, Gardiner published *A Guide to Good Singing and Speech*, probably his signal accomplishment, and one in which he briefly discusses Vaughan Williams’s well-known *Linden Lea* (Gardiner, pp. 154-55, 248).

Finally, my efforts to determine Julian’s or Mary’s date of death have come to naught (their daughter Shirley, three years old in 1939, may still be alive).

Letter 2. Vaughan Williams (autograph and typescript) to Downes (I give the letter after the autograph; superscript letters indicate that the typescript offers a corrupt reading at that point – see Appendix 1).

From R. Vaughan Williams,
The White Gates,
Westcott Road,
Dorking.

[postmark 1940 – see below] →

↓ Dear Mr Downes

(This is for your ears only — not for publication please.)

I have been sent a copy of your very interesting article on program music of December 8th.

There is only one thing I want tell you. You suggest that^a I was partially responsible for the^b appalling "programme" which Albert Coates attached to my "London" symphony.

The story is as follows. When^c Coates first wanted to do the symphony in America,^d he saw that the American public must have a detailed programme or they would not listen to the work — & then his wife had written one. When I saw it I was horrified — but what was I to do?^e I modified the worst parts & let it go (weakly I realize now) imagining^f that it would appear once and never again — But when I found it was being attached^g to several performances I did my best to scotch it. It is not true that I authorized it & then backed out of my own explanation^h — ~~The~~ I want the symphony to express the spirit of London — If my music does not do so, it will not help to say that a certain bit "means" the Thames or Bloomsbury, etc — if it does represent the spirit, then the detail can be left to the hearer's own imagination — The eternal peace which surrounds the turmoil I have tried to express in the music — to some the river may give that — to another not. You know the story of Erik Satieⁱ who told Debussy that in his "de l'aube! à midi sur la mer" he particularly admired the bit at^k 11.35 A.M.

I do not want any "11.35 A.M." interpretations in my music.

Yours sincerely
R Vaughan Williams

P.S. I am sorry to go on being so egotistical but what I hope is that^l people who know London will recognize in my music the same emotion^m which London gives them, and those who do not know London will get an emotionalⁿ picture of what London means to some people. It seems to me that if you plant direction posts all along the line, people will simply be worried^o with wondering which is which & not get the spirit of the music.

I admit I have made a few suggestions (besides the obvious Big Ben & the street-songs) which may help people get in the right mood — but then if the music has achieved^p its purpose, they need not be known^q necessary — & if the music has not achieved its purpose then no amount of sign-posts will make it do so.

P.P.S. You would be astonished if you could see how normal^r life appears in England at present. I think your papers give rather sensational^s account of the feeling condition of England — Some dear American friends sent us a packet of food the other day!^t

We are very confident^u though we realize we have a hard row to hoe^v — & we know how we value the help & friendship of you people over the water.

The two versions and date: This is the only letter for which there are two versions, one a Vaughan Williams autograph, the other, an often-corrupt typewritten copy. (Whereas Letter 1 is quite legible, this letter is anything but, and Vaughan Williams no doubt sent the typewritten version because he assumed that Downes — as did the

typist — would have a difficult time reading the original; as the corruptions listed in Appendix 1 seem to indicate, it is unlikely that Vaughan Williams read the typewritten version.)

Though neither version of the letter bears a date, we can safely assign both of them to a six-week period. The Downes article of December 8th to which Vaughan Williams refers — "Composition With a Program: Stories They Tell or Pictures They Paint Are Overlooked in Tendency to be Superior to Descriptive Music" — appeared in *The New York Times* on Sunday, 8 December 1940 (p. 17), thus providing us with a *terminus post quem*. At the other end, we may round off the timeframe on 24 January 1941, the date of the clearly discernible postmark on the envelope in which the typewritten version was mailed. (Both letters were posted in Dorking. Oddly, perhaps, the envelope in which the handwritten letter was sent bears a typewritten address, while that of the typewritten letter has a handwritten address. The year of the postmark on the envelope of the autograph letter is clearly 1940, but I cannot make out the precise date.) In all, the two versions of the letter must date from shortly(?) after 8 December 1940 (the autograph) to 24 January 1941 at the latest (the typewritten version). As to just when and from whom Vaughan Williams obtained a copy of Downes's article I cannot say.

Downes's article: Downes's article is an extended (by journalistic standards) essay about a performance of *A London Symphony* in Carnegie Hall on 21 November 1940 by Serge Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony Orchestra. (Downes had anticipated the views expressed in the December 8th essay in a shorter review in *The New York Times* for 22 November 1940 [p. 29]).

Downes complains in the essay:

The audience could not grasp the significance of the symphony because it did not know what it was about. The reason it did not know what it was about was because it hadn't been told. Vaughan Williams himself, years ago, permitted a full explanation of the "London" symphony to be published, obviously with his endorsement. He then revoked it. In turn the program [booklet] of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, taking the composer at his word, failed, following, no doubt, what it believed to be his wish, to enlighten its readers on the subject. Therefore complete appreciation of the symphony on the part of an uninformed audience went by default.

Downes then contrasts this failing — the lack of program notes that would have enlightened the audience — with a performance of the symphony conducted by Albert Coates for The British Music Society in Queen's Hall, on "Dec. 30, 1920" [*sic*], in which Coates treated the audience to his wife Madelon's detailed, blow-by-blow description of the music. As it happens, Downes is less than accurate on two counts: (1) the program booklet for the Boston Symphony Orchestra concert did include program notes; in fact, it had two sets of notes for the symphony, Vaughan Williams's own program note for a London performance of 1920 (Manning, p. 339) and a complementary note by the critic Percy A. Scholes (*BSO*, pp. 5-6); and (2) though Coates did conduct *A London Symphony* on 30 December 1920, and though he included in the program booklet for that concert the detailed program by his wife that so "horrified" Vaughan Williams (reproduced in Appendix 2), he did so with the New York Symphony at Carnegie Hall.⁴

Vaughan Williams's response: Vaughan Williams's letter to Downes stands as the most extensive statement of his intentions in

connection with the “meaning” of *A London Symphony*. Clearly, he distances himself from Coates’s program: *London* is not a tourist’s guide book to the city. Rather, he intended the music to capture the “spirit” of the city, which word appears three times, always with a bold and decisive underscore. Particularly telling for Vaughan Williams’s attitude to the linking of *London* with the idea of “program music” is the phrase “the detail can be left to the hearer’s own imagination”. I say this because it seems to rub against Vaughan Williams’s intentions as expressed in the two sets of program notes that he himself wrote for the symphony: in the first (1920), “The music is intended to be self-expressive, and must stand or fall as ‘absolute’ music”; in the second (1925) “it is intended to be listened to as ‘absolute’ music” (Manning, pp. 339-40). But can Vaughan Williams have it both ways, especially with the unmistakable allusions to Big Ben (see Frogley, p. 195)? On the other hand, would the Westminster chimes have been as familiar to a New York audience in 1920 as they obviously are today? Is Vaughan Williams suggesting a kind of “absolute” music to which the listener can attach a program born of his or her own imagination? And is a composition to which the listener attaches his or her own program (whether invited to do so or not) any longer “absolute” music, at least for the listener? In the end, the idea of program music – from the occasional literalism of a Richard Strauss tone poem to the “merely” suggestive/evocative *La Mer* by Debussy to the after-the-fact programmatic appropriation of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony (one “meaning” for the Allies, quite another for the Nazis) – is filled with many shades of grey.

“*De l’aube à midi sur la mer*” (“From dawn to midday on the sea”): Here Vaughan Williams is referring to the first movement of Debussy’s well-known *La Mer*; more specifically to the oft-repeated story about Erik Satie’s reaction to the work at its premiere in 1905: “Ah, my dear friend, there’s one particular moment between half past ten and a quarter to eleven that I found stunning” (Orledge, p. 97). As often happens with such stories, the precise hour changes with the (re-)telling.

Madelon Coates: Vaughan Williams begins his narrative with “The story is as follows.” Stories, though, often have two (sometimes more) sides. Here is Madelon Coates’s version of what took place, as told to Percy Scholes in a letter of 28 August 1924:

With regard to the “notes” on the “London” Symphony about which you inquire, these were written by me according to the pictures which Vaughan Williams told us that he had in mind whilst composing. We dug the information out of him (it wanted some digging!) before we left for America the first time in 1920. I have faithfully kept to the pictures as he described them, I only put them into literary form to the best of my ability trying to keep the atmosphere as he created it for me. There is of course quite a lot in the notes that I put in exclusively for Americans who don’t know London & which I should not have written for any concert in England.

Vaughan Williams allowed us to publish the information in America but I think that he does not care for people over here to know all this.

I personally should be immensely flattered if you think these notes of mine worth quoting in a book by Percy Scholes! I think however you had better communicate with Vaughan Williams on the subject as he has some rather peculiar views about this Symphony being listened to simply as music without any accompanying pictures at all. →

↓ Personally I think he is wrong in this as the pictures which he had in mind are so poetic that they seem to give an added interest to the music. I am enclosing you a copy of the notes in case you like to send them to him, *he has never seen them as a matter of fact* [my emphasis].⁵

This is not the place to take sides!

Letter 3. Downes (typescript) to Vaughan Williams

August 23, 1943

Ralph Vaughan Williams, Esq.
White Gates,
Westcott Road,
Dorking, England

Dear Mr. Williams [sic!]:

I learn with great interest from our correspondent, Mr. Bonavia, that your Fifth Symphony was played last July at a Promenade Concert and find with even greater pleasure from Artur Rodzinski, conductor of the New York Philharmonic Symphony Society, that he will give this score its American premiere as soon as he can get the score and the parts this coming season. In fact, I urged upon Dr. Rodzinski the desirability, if the music could be secured soon enough, that he put it on his opening program October 7. However, that is merely a wish of mine, based upon the very great pleasure that I personally have in your music and the further fact that such a gesture of artistic rapprochement between your nation and mine would be a fine thing, especially at this time.

May I say without offense that I am particularly eager to hear this work, because Bonavia mentions that it is a reversion to your earlier style, and I am one of the unregenerates who has not been able perhaps to enter adequately into the essential quality of your Fourth Symphony, or fully to appreciate this work at its ultimate value. From my own standpoint and probable limitations, I can’t feel it to be as profoundly authentic a score as the “London” and the “Pastoral” symphonies, both of which are very near my heart. I suppose it would be too much to ask, not for publication but purely for my own enlightenment, how you feel about the Fourth Symphony in its relation to your other works. In all probability you will answer me that, in the first place, you express what you think in symphonies in those symphonies and gladly leave it to your public and the critics to discern whatever values they may find in them. Nevertheless, I am very curious because when I encounter a score by such a true and eminent artist as yourself, I want to remove my misunderstanding of it if I can possibly do so and if you should ever have the time or the inclination to say a word on the subject, I should greatly appreciate it – while on the other hand there is not the slightest reason why you should take the trouble to answer this, especially at this time in the world, if you are not moved to do so. What I really want you to know is how deeply I and so many others in America value your art and how much it has meant to us and how exceptional, to my mind, is the truly creative place that you have in the literature of contemporaneous music.

With best wishes and hopes for much more music from you in the future, I am

Sincerely yours,
[Olin Downes]
OD/cc

Bonavia: Born in Trieste in 1877, Ferruccio Bonavia settled in England in 1898. After playing violin in the Hallé Orchestra and writing the occasional article about music for *The Manchester Guardian* (“Manchester” dropped in 1959), he became music critic for the *Daily Telegraph* in 1920, and stayed on the job there until his death in London in 1950 (*Baker’s*, vol. 1, p. 387).

What Downes is no doubt referring to is the Bonavia review of the Fifth Symphony – sent from London – that appeared in *The New York Times* on 15 August 1943 (p. X5). In fact, Downes almost quotes Bonavia verbatim, the latter having written: “It is significant that in this symphony Vaughan Williams reverts to his earlier style [. . .]”. Bonavia goes on to praise the symphony: “It may in time be regarded as Vaughan Williams’ best achievement [. . .] the work of a man whose faith is entire and whose courage rises above conventions”.

Rodziński: The Polish-American conductor Artur Rodziński (1892-1958) was named Musical Director of the New York Philharmonic as of the 1943-1944 season; he resigned in February 1947 (in the middle of the season) during the course of a bitter dispute with management (Shanet, pp. 297-305).

As it happens, Rodziński did not open the Philharmonic’s 1943-1944 season with the Fifth Symphony. Rather, he directed its first American performance a year later at a Philharmonic concert on 30 November 1944 (repeated on each of the three following evenings), as part of an all-English program that also included music by Elgar and Walton, as well as *A Solemn Hymn to Victory* by John Woolridge (1919-1958), who, though serving in the RAF at the time, managed to attend the concert at Carnegie Hall.⁶

Needless to say, Downes praised the Fifth Symphony in his own review of the concert:

This is the symphony of a poet, regardless of the throng, who communes with the ideal [...] the symphony is a distinct return to the poetry of Williams’ [*sic*] earlier period, and not a continuation of his excursion, to us, misguided, in the modernism of his Fourth Symphony. Here, in the Fifth, is the modal harmony and the archaic and haunting accents of English folk melody treated with a fine harmonic logic, and all this alembicated and reorganized according to Williams’ unique and very personal genius (NYT, 1 December 1944, p. 28).

Letter 4. Vaughan Williams (typescript) to Downes

The White Gates,
Dorking.
25.9.43.

Dear Mr Downes,

Many thanks for your letter. It is always a pleasure for me to hear from you. You must also forgive me for typing, but I have at this moment a friend staying with me who is kindly typing my letters which makes them legible. I will try and tell you about my F. minor symphony.

I don’t think I like it any more than you do, but that does not mean that I am sorry I wrote it. I somehow had to at the time, for what reason I don’t know; not certainly for the reasons given by some of my kind friends in the press: eg, that it represented the turmoil of Europe at the moment or that I was trying to go one better than the →

↓ mid-Europeans. So far as I can remember, it grew out of two things, one, I had read a verbal description of some modern symphony, by whom I forget, and blaspheming Beethoven, I quoted him and said to myself, “il faut que je compose cela.” Musically I think also it grew from Beethoven, as it was first thought of at the time of the Beethoven centenary, and as I daresay you have noticed the opening chord is identical with the opening chord of the finale of [the last three words added by hand] Beethoven’s 9th. That is all I can tell you about it, and I don’t think I ever wore my art on my sleeve as much as in this letter, so please keep it for your own ears only.

As regards the new symphony, I do not know whether it is a “reversion to my earlier style”, but it is very simple, and therefore I expect it was a great disappointment to those who expected an “F. minor” with knobs [the letter “k” added by hand] on. As regards to getting it to America by October 7th, I imagine that it will be impossible. There are at present only two scores, and one set of parts, and my publishers don’t know how to satisfy the people in England who seem to want to do it.

Yours sincerely
R Vaughan Williams

The Beethoven connection: That the opening sonority of the first movement of the Fourth Symphony, with its half-step dissonance on C/D flat, was modeled after that with which the so-called *Schreckensfanfare* opens the Finale of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony—here on A/B flat—is well known. Vaughan Williams himself attests to it: “I cribbed [...] the opening of my F minor symphony deliberately from the finale of [Beethoven’s] Ninth Symphony [...]” (Vaughan Williams, p. 151).

What is new with respect to the symphony is what this letter tells us about its origins: that ideas for the symphony began to percolate as early as 1927, in conjunction with the Beethoven Centenary, and thus a full four years before the earliest known sketches, which date from late 1931 (KennedyC, p. 150). Certainly, we may speculate that Vaughan Williams heard the London Symphony Orchestra’s performance of the Ninth under Walter Abendroth at the Queen’s Hall in March 1927.

The typist-friend: As Hugh Cobbe has kindly suggested to me (in a communication of 4 November 2013), the typist of this letter – as well as that of Letters 7 and 13 – may well have been Ursula Wood (Ursula Vaughan Williams by the time of Letter 13).

Letters 5 – 8 deal mainly with the American musician James Christian Pfohl, and I give them without intervening comments. A short note about Pfohl follows Letter 8. As for Vaughan Williams’s references to the revisions of *London* (Letter 7): they are well enough known that we can forgo further comments about them here (see KennedyC, pp. 68-71; Lloyd).

Letter 5. Downes (typescript) to Vaughan Williams

August 18, 1953

Dear Mr. Vaughan Williams:

I want to tell you of a really wonderful experience that I had recently at what is called the Transylvania Music Camp in Brevard, North →

↓ Carolina. Brevard is near the Kentucky hill region and is part of the Blue Ridge range where Cecil Sharp made his notable collection of English folk songs on visiting America.

This "Camp" is headed by Mr. James Christian Pfohl, who is an extraordinarily progressive musician and organizer, and has for years been building up music schools in that part of the world, and bids fair, I think, to become one of the most powerful musical forces in the southern part of this country, which has been developing with phenomenal rapidity in music in recent years. For the third time, last week, I made my annual visit to Mr. Pfohl and his Camp, where he has instituted what is to me a very interesting procedure, as one of the events of his annual music festival there. This event consists of a discussion by me of some great symphonic work, with the orchestra illustrating my remarks and quoting themes or passages from such work to my own running commentary, for half the program. After this first half of the program there is an intermission, and afterwards the symphony chosen is played without further comment or any interruption to the performance.

The work we chose thus to elucidate was the "London Symphony". I think you would have been gratified and touched if you had witnessed the response of the audience to its performance. This is a big rustic music shed made of wood, and by no means modern in its architecture or get-up. I don't know the capacity of the shed, but I would say that some 1,500 or perhaps 1,800 people packed it to capacity, and they listened with an earnestness which you may imagine was most gratifying to me in the discussion of the symphony and the illustrations of passages from the score, and at the end of the concert applauded the work to the echo.

And not a small part of this response comes from something even deeper than the immediate delight of a beautiful work of art. Because I have noticed that the songs sung in that region are not at all of the Broadway or jazz variety, and I think the general character of the thematic material of the "London Symphony" may be nearer to them and more heart-warming than they might be to other less sincere and more spoiled audiences, of, for example, this metropolis [New York]. But it was a wonderful sensation to confront that audience, and to listen with them, and to feel the spontaneity and the vibrancy of their response to the music.

The orchestra consists of about thirty-five percent advanced students of the music camp, reinforced to the extent of about sixty-five percent professional players from the Cincinnati and other symphony orchestras, who sit by the young musicians in the orchestra, and undoubtedly stabilize them in performance, while at the same time the boys and girls of that Camp, some of whom I understand are not more than thirteen or fourteen years of age, supply a youthfulness and resiliency in [typed over "of"] performances that are simply wonderful.

Mr. Pfohl led his orchestra with the greatest enthusiasm, and without of course comparing the performance with that of the crack American orchestras, such as those of Philadelphia and Boston, the performance did have a heartiness and a high intelligence, and above all a musical and emotional enthusiasm which was extremely effective. And I may say for myself, that upon returning to the study of the "London Symphony", I was more deeply impressed than ever by the beauty of the whole conception, and the pregnancy of the themes, and, if I may say so, what to me is their masterly treatment. I daresay that you →

↓ yourself when you look back upon certain pages of the symphony, feel as I do whenever I look back at particularly bad articles of years ago, to see how much more effectively they could be re-written. You may feel if you took again the score in hand of the "London Symphony" that you would revise certain places, whatever they may be. I myself have been considerably amused, in reading certain English critics and hearing certain English composers talk, and even recalling certain lines that you have written about yourself, in which you are mentioned as an "amateur". For myself, it has been very advantageous to explore this symphony more closely than I ever have before in preparing my own address, and to realize appalling[ly(?)] how much, how very much, one must know about composition, and what a powerful sincerity and musical motivation there must be to write a symphony as great as that one. I believe this symphony will stand for a very long time, not only for certain distinctions of style and workmanship, but because above all it has in it that breath of the truth, that vision of an artist with that deep feeling which to my mind can only proceed from racial as well as personal sources, which will make us hold this symphony dear for a very long time. I daresay the technician, far more learned than I in the technic of musical composition, including yourself, could point to this or that place, and say, "Why not eliminate that", or "condense that", or "extend that", etc.

But when I think of such issues, I recall the remark of a dear friend of mine, also a music critic, who has now gone to his rest. My friend said to me: "You know, what the critics said about Wagner, about Chopin, Schumann, Beethoven too, finding weaknesses in their music, were usually true — insofar as they went. The only point is that they didn't matter!"

There is only one score of yours which goes deeper with me in enjoyment, than the "London Symphony". That is the "Pastoral Symphony". I have not yet fully absorbed that latter work, partly because it is too rarely played, and too rarely played, I fancy, because not every one in a predominantly urban civilization has gotten into touch with the true music of nature, which you have. But whatever the merits, or relative merits of these works may be, I say to myself when I hear them, always with renewed delight, "They may or may not be perfect, they may or may not be immortal, but they are music, real music, and they kneel at the shrine of immortal beauty. Whatever else they are or are not — doesn't matter!"

I learn from Mr. Pfohl that he intends to go to England in some several weeks. He wants very much to see you, and to present you, I think, with a record of his performance of the "London Symphony". I shall take the liberty of giving him a letter of introduction to you, and know that he would greatly prize the opportunity of calling upon you.

Sincerely yours,
Olin Downes

Mr. Ralph Vaughan Williams
The White Gate [sic],
Dorking, Surrey,
England.

Letter 6. Downes (typescript) to Vaughan Williams

August 26, 1953

Dear Mr. Vaughan Williams:

I would like with this letter to introduce to you a man and musician, whose artistic principles and effective work in the dissemination of his art really remove any necessity of a word of introduction about him at all. I believe I told you in a recent letter [of August 18th] something of Mr. Pfohl's work and personality. Well I stop here, merely saying that it is with great pleasure that I send this little note to you through Mr. Pfohl.

Sincerely,
[Olin Downes]

Mr. Ralph Vaughan Williams
The White Gate [as in Letter 5],
Dorking, Surrey,
England.

Letter 7. Vaughan Williams (typescript) to Downes

After September 15th 1953.

10 Hanover Terrace, London N.W. 1.
The White Gates,
Dorking.

August 31st. 1953.

Dear Mr Downes,

Thank you for your most interesting letter [of August 18th]. If you ever print your lecture I should be so glad to have a copy.

As you say there are certain things which I should have done differently now. As I daresay you know, there have been several alterations and revisions since 1914; notably a whole second trio in the scherzo, which was scrapped. References to it come in the coda of the scherzo. They may seem out of place, but they are, like the human appendix, relics of a former useful function. But I do not regret that coda, nor have I yet had cause to regret my appendix, but that may come later. The other big cut was in the coda of the whole [= final?] movement. There have also been, from time to time, several small deletions and re-orchestrations.

I shall be glad to meet Mr Pfohl when he comes to London where we ourselves move in the middle of September, when our address will be as above.

Yours sincerely,
R Vaughan Williams

Letter 8. Vaughan Williams (autograph) to Downes

as from
10 Hanover Terrace
Regents Park
London N.W. 1
[shortly before 15 September 1953] →

Dear Mr Downes

I am so sorry — But Mr Pfohl only telephoned me 24 hours before leaving for Europe — & I happened to be busy all that day (house moving!!) so we missed — I do hope for better luck next time. He has sent me his record of my symphony — which I will play through with pleasure as soon as we are settled in.

Yours sincerely
R Vaughan Williams

The date of Letter 8: We can date Letter 8 only approximately: the phrase “as from” above the Hanover Terrace address indicates that Vaughan Williams had not yet moved into his new home, the target date for the move being September 15th (see Letter 7, above, and a post card to Michael Kennedy dated September 12th in Cobbe, p. 528, No. 618); and that it must date from just a few days prior to the 15th follows from the reference to “house moving”. This fits nicely with Downes’s note on August 18th (Letter 5) that Pfohl would be arriving in London in “several weeks”. Finally, we learn from Vaughan Williams’s letter – as we do not from Downes’s – that Pfohl was continuing on to the Continent.

James Christian Pfohl: Clearly, Pfohl was of greater interest to Downes than he was to Vaughan Williams. Still, we may summarize the most important events in his (Pfohl’s) life. Born in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, in 1912, he joined the Music Department of Davidson College (North Carolina) in 1933, and there founded the Davidson Music School for Boys – in effect, a summer music camp – in 1936. In 1944, he relocated the camp to Brevard, North Carolina, made it co-educational, and renamed it “The Transylvania Music Camp”. The year 1946 marked the inauguration of the Brevard Music Festival, and the camp itself was renamed the Brevard Music Center in 1955, with Pfohl serving as director of both camp and festival until 1964; he died in Jacksonville, Florida, in 1997. Two final points about Pfohl and his camp: (1) one can hear Pfohl and the Transylvania Symphony Orchestra perform the overture to Wagner’s *Rienzi* on the CD titled *The Kennedy White House Concerts* (Museum Music, MM115, 2001); (2) the best-known alumnus of the Brevard Music Center is undoubtedly Keith Lockhart, Music Director of the Boston Pops and currently the Artistic Director (the fourth) of the Brevard Music Center and Festival (*BrevMA*; *BrevMC*).

Letter 9. Ursula Vaughan Williams (autograph) to Irene Downes

From R. Vaughan Williams
10, Hanover Terrace,
Regents Park,
London, N.W. 1.
August 29th 1955

Dear Mrs Downes,

We were both so very sorry to hear this sad news, and this is just a line to say that we are thinking of you so much. We were so glad to have had the chance of meeting you both when we were in New York, and that will always be a happy memory for us.

Condolences: Olin Downes passed away on Monday, 22 August 1955. Obviously, Ralph and Ursula had met Olin and Irene when they (the Vaughan Williamses) passed through New York City during the composer's third and final sojourn in the United States, most likely during the final week of the trip. Vaughan Williams docked in New York City on Sunday, 26 September 1954 (Cobbe, p. 548), and was quickly whisked away to up-state Ithaca for his series of lectures and concerts at Cornell University (*R.V.W.* p. 348). On the other hand, the Vaughan Williamses spent about a week in New York City before sailing for England aboard the Queen Mary on Saturday, December 4th (*R.V.W.*, pp. 356-57; *NYT*, 28 November 1954, p. 34), and this would have provided the two couples with ample opportunity to get together.

Letters 10–12 (to or from Downes) touch upon Vaughan Williams only tangentially.

Letter 10. Downes (typescript) to "Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner"

November 2, 1939

My dear Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner:

A long time ago you sent me a letter of introduction from one of the men and artists whom I admire most in the world — ~~Mr. William Walton~~ [crossed out with pencil], and you said you would like to have a meeting.

At that time you stated you were going to be in New York about three weeks, but you added that you expected in time to become good American citizens — an honor that in the name of my countrymen I deeply appreciate.

If you are in New York, or are going to be in New York, when this letter reaches you, would you very kindly telephone my office at Lackawanna 4-1000 so that we can make an appointment? At the time your letter arrived I was combatting [sic] illness on the one hand and a terrific burden of work, which I could not adequately discharge, on the other — hence this very belated acknowledgment.

I hope I may hear from you.

Sincerely yours,
Olin Downes

Mr. and Mrs. Julian Gardiner
438 West 116th. Street
New York City

"Returned to sender": Downes sent this letter to the Gardiners some nine months after they had arrived in New York, addressing it to 438 West 116th Street. Given that the "enumeration" (of 29 April 1939) in the 1940 census already lists the Gardiners at 617 West 113th Street (see comments about Letter 1), the address was out of date, and the letter was returned to Downes on November 4th, with the words "not here" scribbled on the envelope. (As for the reference to William Walton, though Downes was only fifty-three years old when he wrote this letter, perhaps we might generally attribute the error to that plague fondly known as a "senior moment".)

Letters 11 – 12 present an exchange concerning Vaughan Williams between Downes and Mr LeRoy Van Hoesen, Jr., a Vaughan Williams fan who lived in Hudson, New York, a small village (present-day population just under 7,000) on the east bank of the Hudson River, about 115 miles north of Manhattan's Columbus

Circle (from which point in New York City all official distances from the city are measured).

Letter 11. LeRoy Van Hoesen, Jr. (typescript) to Downes

842 Columbia St.
Hudson, N.Y.
May 27, 1955

Dear Mr. Downes,

Last year I bought the London record album containing the symphonies of Vaughan Williams. It was an extravagance for me but I prize it more than any other recording I have. Shortly after the purchase an article appeared in the Times under your name, devoted to the composer and his music. I clipped the article and have it before me now. I saved it because it is a fine, clear statement of what I had only inarticulately felt myself.

If you are not reluctant to disclose it, I would like to have Mr. Vaughan [sic] Williams' address. I would like very much to write him my thanks for an ineffable experience. No doubt you are always being asked for favors of one kind or another. My reason for asking this one is that your own esteem of the composer may lead you to look favorably on it. A stamped, self addressed envelope is enclosed for your convenience.

Sincerely, yours
LeRoy Van Hoesen Jr.

Letter 12. Downes (typescript) to Van Hoesen

June 2, 1955

Mr. LeRoy Van Hoesen, Jr.
842 Columbia Street
Hudson, New York

Dear Mr. Van Hoesen:

It is a pleasure to read your letter and learn of our mutual approval of the symphonies of Vaughan Williams. I also have the London records of the symphonies and find them admirable. I am glad you liked what I wrote about Vaughan Williams and his music, a theme which has long been an interesting one to me.

I have Mr. Vaughan Williams's address somewhere but can't seem to lay my hands on it, but I am sure that if you send the letter to him addressed care of the Oxford Press of this city and mark it personal, that it will be promptly forwarded to him, and I think he would appreciate hearing from you.

Sincerely yours,
Olin Downes

LeRoy Van Hoesen, Jr.: Though I thought it a long shot, I was determined to try to identify Mr Van Hoesen (pronounced Van Hoosen, as I soon learned). Fortunately, modern technology lived up to its reputation.

The United States census for 1940 contains an entry for one LeRoy Van Hoesen, Jr, then residing with his parents and sister in Ward 5,

enumeration district 11-37, in the town of Hudson, New York; he was thirteen years old at the time, born in 1927 (*Census 1940VH*). I next called up an online Hudson telephone book: there was LeRoy Van Hoesen, Jr., once again, now listed as being eighty-six years old (*HudsonWP*), which age matched perfectly with the date of birth given in the 1940 census. Surely, this had to be the same LeRoy Van Hoesen, Jr, who had exchanged letters with Olin Downes in 1955. In fact it was, and within the hour Mr. Van Hoesen and I were chatting amicably on the phone. He recalled the letters to and from Downes; moreover, he had taken Downes's advice, written to Vaughan Williams, and received a prompt reply, which appears below as Letter 13.

The recordings and the Downes article: If we take Van Hoesen literally, that is, that he bought the cycle of Vaughan Williams symphonies and read the article by Downes "last year," we can identify both the recordings and the article. The recordings would be Adrian Boult's first cycle of the Vaughan Williams symphonies with the London Philharmonic Orchestra (Nos. 1-7, all that existed at the time), recorded in 1952-1953 and issued on Decca in 1954 (Pearson). As for the Downes article, it must be either "Vaughan Williams: Great English Composer Will Visit Here in Fall" (*NYT*, 23 May 1954, p. X7) or "English Visitor: Vaughan Williams, a Guest at Cornell, Speaks and Conducts his own Music Here" (*NYT*, 29 October 1954, p. X7), these being the only two extended articles on Vaughan Williams that Downes wrote that year.

The tactful Mr Downes: I would imagine that Downes could, in fact, "lay [his] hands" on Vaughan Williams's home address with little effort, but that he was being tactful and respectful of the latter's privacy.

Letter 13. Vaughan Williams (typewritten) to Van Hoesen

From R. Vaughan Williams,
10, Hanover Terrace,
Regents Park,
London, N.W. 1.
June 20th 1955

Dear Mr Vanhoesen [*sic*]

I am so glad you wrote. I am not one of those people who pretend to be indifferent to praise, especially [*sic*] when it is embodied in a delightful letter like yours. If my music has made a new friend, I shall be pleased, and perhaps we may meet personally if you ever come to London.

You write about phonograph recordings, besides my Symphonies, you may care to know that *Job*, *Flos Campi* and the *Lark Ascending* have all been recorded in England; also *Wenlock Edge*. If I may give a word of confidential advice, do not have anything to do with the American recordings except the one of *Flos Campi* made by Cornell University.

Yours sincerely,
R Vaughan Williams

Vaughan Williams – gentleman: Obviously, Mr Van Hoesen did not waste time following Downes's advice. He must have written to Vaughan Williams within days of receiving Downes's letter of June 2nd, and we must be impressed not only with the speed with which Vaughan Williams replied but with the gracious expression

of appreciation toward someone whom he did not know but who simply liked his music. (Note that Mr Van Hoesen does not have a copy of the letter that he sent to Vaughan Williams.)

The recordings: Thanks to Jonathan Pearson's masterful catalogue of recordings of Vaughan Williams's music (online at the "resources" link of our society's website), we can identify a number of the recordings that Vaughan Williams recommended to Mr Van Hoesen. Among the English recordings to which he refers: (1) *Job* – there are two recordings by Adrian Boult, one with the BBC Symphony Orchestra (1946), the other with the London Philharmonic Orchestra (1954); (2) *The Lark Ascending* – Malcolm Sargent, David Wise, and the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra (1947), as well as Boult, Jean Pougnet, and the London Philharmonic Orchestra (1952); (3) *On Wenlock Edge* – Peter Pears, Benjamin Britten, and the Zorian Quartet (1945), and George Maran, Ivor Newton, and the London String Quartet (1955).⁷

As for the pre-1955 American recordings that Vaughan Williams wishes Mr Van Hoesen to avoid, the pickings were pretty slim. To consider just the symphonies: No. 1 – Goossens, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra (1941); No. 4 – Stokowski, NBC Symphony Orchestra (1943); No. 5 – Koussevitzky, Boston Symphony Orchestra (1947); and No. 6 – Stokowski, New York Philharmonic (1949).

Finally there is the one American recording of which Vaughan Williams approves: that of *Flos Campi*, recorded by the Concert Hall Chamber Orchestra and the Cornell University A Cappella Chorus, with Francis Tursi, violist, and issued on the Concert Hall Society label (CHS 1151) in 1952 (Hunt, p. 50; *CDS*, p. 7).⁸

In sum: what do these thirteen letters tell us about Vaughan Williams? Surely, we learn something new about the Fourth Symphony (Letter 4): that the genesis of the work stretches back to the Beethoven Centenary in 1927, and, to read between the lines, that the impetus for the symphony may have come specifically from a performance of the Beethoven Ninth that Vaughan Williams likely heard during the course of the celebrations.

Beyond that, two other letters confirm and flesh out things that we already knew about Vaughan Williams. Letter 2 surely stands as the composer's most extended discussion of the programmatic aspects of *A London Symphony* and, perhaps, of his attitude in general toward after-the-fact applications of extra-musical programs or "interpretations" to his symphonies: "I do not want any '11:35 A.M.' interpretations of my music". Moreover, Letter 1, with its introduction of – and kind words about – the Gardiners, underscores Vaughan Williams's readiness to help other musicians, particularly his current and former students, here in the person of Mary (Couper) Gardiner. And how many composers of international stature, we may ask, would have responded to Mr Van Hoesen's letter as graciously as did Vaughan Williams (Letter 13)?

Finally, a note about Downes's end of the exchange: despite the occasional "lackey"-like tone (see Letters 3 and 5), Downes was sincere in his admiration for Vaughan Williams's music, which we can probably say he valued second only to that of Sibelius (about whom he wrote two books – O. Downes^a, O. Downes^b) among composers of that generation. And what he said in private to Vaughan Williams about *London* he did not hesitate to say in public. As he wrote in *The New York Times* on 12 January 1936 (p. X7):

The man who wrote the “London” symphony – we say this with the admission of little more than a speaking acquaintance with him or his habits – is beyond doubt or peradventure an individual of deep and true human sympathies, who contemplates the life about him from the fastness of his own soul, with comprehension and pity, and puts those things into his score.⁹

In all, the letters afford us a glimpse into the relationship between Vaughan Williams and the man who was, at the time, the dean of New York’s music critics. And a glowing and informative relationship it was for both of them.

APPENDIX I

Letter 2, errors in the typescript. Whoever typed Letter 2 had great difficulty with Vaughan Williams’s handwriting and introduced a number of errors into the text; these are listed below, keyed to the superscript markers in our presentation of Letter 2, and thus show what appears in the typescript at the point indicated.

^a how ^b his ^c “When” missing ^d America. He ^e “What was I to do” missing ^f “imagining” missing ^g to have ^h that sentence replaced by “I now give my own explanation” ⁱ Grieksche (for “Erik Satie”) ^j ambe ^k on ^l for ^m emotion to which ⁿ give ^o tranced ^p not achieved ^q “known” correctly omitted ^r sordid ^s “rather sensational” missing ^t punctuation mark is a period ^u confident people ^v “hard row to hoe” originally omitted, then added two lines below.

APPENDIX II

Two programs for *A London Symphony*.

1. Albert Coates: *New York Symphony*, 30 December 1920.

This is the program by Madelon Coates that was included in the program booklet at the first performance of *A London Symphony* in the United States: Carnegie Hall, 30 December 1920, the New York Symphony under Albert Coates. It is this program that “horrified” Vaughan Williams. I give it here after *SSB*, pp. [1-2]; it also appears in Bagar, pp. 779-81; Biancolli, pp. 650-54 (interwoven with Biancolli’s own commentary); and Frankenstein, pp. 638-41 (who fleshes things out with music examples).

The first movement opens at daybreak by the river. Old Father Thames flows calm and silent under the heavy gray dawn, deep and thoughtful, shrouded in mystery. London sleeps, and in the hushed stillness of early morning one hears Big Ben (the Westminster Chimes) solemnly strike the half-hour. Suddenly the scene changes (Allegro). One is on the Strand in the midst of the bustle and turmoil of morning traffic. This is London street life of the early hours – a steady stream of foot passengers hurrying, newspaper boys shouting, messengers whistling, and that most typical sight of London streets, the costermonger (Coster ‘Arry), resplendent in pearl buttons, and shouting some coster song refrain at the top of a raucous voice, returning from Covent Garden Market, seated on his vegetable barrow drawn by the inevitable little donkey.

Then for a few moments one turns off the Strand into one of the quiet little streets that lead down to the river, and suddenly the

noise ceases, shut off as though by magic. We are in the part of London known as the Adelphi. Formerly the haunt of fashionable bucks and dandies about town, now merely old-fashioned houses and shabby old streets, haunted principally by beggars and ragged street urchins.

We return to the Strand and are once again caught up by the bustle and life of London – gay, careless, noisy, with every now and then a touch of something fiercer, something inexorable – as though one felt for a moment the iron hand of the great city – yet, nevertheless, full of that mixture of good humor, animal spirits, and sentimentality that is so characteristic of London.

In the second movement the composer paints us a picture of that region of London which lies between Holborn and the Euston Road, known as Bloomsbury. Dusk is falling. It is the damp and foggy twilight of a late November day. Those who know their London know this region of melancholy streets over which seems to brood an air of shabby gentility – a sad dignity of having seen better days. In the gathering gloom there is something ghostlike. A silence hangs over the neighborhood broken only by the policeman on his beat.

There is tragedy, too, in Bloomsbury, for among the many streets between Holborn and Euston there are alleys of acute poverty and worse.

In front of a “pub,” whose lights flare through the murky twilight, stands an old musician playing a fiddle. His tune is played in the orchestra by the viola. In the distance the “lavender cry” is heard: “Sweet lavender, who’ll buy my sweet lavender?” Up and down the street the cry goes, now nearer, now farther away.

The gloom deepens, and the movement ends with the old musician still playing his pathetic little tune.

In this [the third] movement one must imagine oneself sitting late on a Saturday night on one of the benches of the Temple Embankment (that part of the Thames Embankment lying between the Houses of Parliament and Waterloo Bridge). On our side of the river all is quiet, and in the silence one hears from a distance coming from the other side of the river all the noises of Saturday night in the slums. (The “other” side, the south side of the River Thames, is a vast network of very poor quarters and slums.) On a Saturday night these slums resemble a fair; the streets are lined with barrows, lit up by flaming torches, selling cheap fruit, vegetables, produce of all kinds; the streets and alleys are crowded with people. At street corners coster girls in large feather hats dance their beloved “double-shuffle jig” to the accompaniment of a mouth organ. We seem to hear distant laughter also, every now and then, what sounds like cries of suffering. Suddenly a concertina breaks out above the rest; then we hear a few bars on a hurdy-gurdy organ. All this softened by distance, melted into one vast hum, floats across the river to us as we sit meditating on the Temple Embankment.

The music changes suddenly, and one feels the Thames flowing silent, mysterious, with a touch of tragedy. One of London’s sudden fogs comes down, making Slumland and its noises seem remote. Again, for a few bars, we feel the Thames flowing through the night, and the picture fades into fog and silence.

The last movement deals almost entirely with the crueler aspects of London, the London of the “unemployed” and unfortunate. After the opening bars we hear the “Hunger March” – a ghostly march

of those whom the city grinds and crushes, the great army of those who are cold and hungry and unable to work.

We hear again the noise and bustle of the streets (reminiscences of the first movement), but these now also take on a crueler aspect. There are sharp discords in the music. This is London as seen by the man who is “out and under.” The man “out of a job” who watches the other man go whistling to his work, the man who is starving watching the other man eat – and the cheerful, bustling picture of gay street life becomes distorted, a nightmare seen by the eyes of the suffering.

The music ends abruptly, and in the short silence that follows one again hears Big Ben chiming from Westminster Tower.

There follows the epilogue, in which we seem to feel the great deep soul of London – London as a whole, vast and unfathomable – and the symphony ends as it began, with the river – Old Father Thames – flowing calm and silent, as he has flowed through the ages, the keeper of many secrets, shrouded in mystery.

2. Percy A. Scholes: Boston Symphony Orchestra, 21 November 1940.

Together with Vaughan Williams’s own program note of 1925 (see comments following Letter 2), Scholes’s description of the symphony appeared in *BSO*, pp. 5-6. These are the program notes that, according to Downes, lacked sufficient detail to explain the symphony to the audience.

- I. The First Movement opens with an Introduction of a very quiet character, the chief theme of which returns at the end of the last movement. There is also here a hint of the Westminster chimes. The opening theme of the First Movement proper is rapid, resolute, loud, heavy, chromatic. A more plaintive, folk-song influenced theme follows, but there is a great deal of vigorous vitality and merriment (even rowdiness) in the movement as a whole. Those who have already heard the Symphony, and who have found this movement at all perplexing, will probably find their perplexities clear up wonderfully on a second hearing, for it is really straightforward stuff. There is a lot of very varied material and plenty of technical ingenuity in this movement (a theme used against itself in augmentation, and so forth), but the main emotional purpose is behind it all.
- II. The Slow Movement comes next, opening “mystically with muted divided strings *pianissimo* and a *cor anglais* solo, and ending equally mystically with a very softly-played and unaccompanied viola solo. As in all the movements, there is a wealth of short themes. [Scholes adds a note about the “Sweet lavender” cries.]
- III. The Third Movement, as will have been noticed before, is a Scherzo with “Nocturne” in brackets after its title; the word will not be misunderstood in any romantic Chopin sense – the night side of London life has more than delicate poesy about it, and there is much varied expression in this movement, from the counterpoint of a fugal exposition to the harmonies of a mouth organ realized or sublimated.
- IV. The Last Movement begins *Andante con moto*, but we quickly arrive at a *Maestoso alla Marcia (quasi lento)*. Again, much subjective matter is used (always brief “motives” or “themes” rather than long “subjects”).

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- BrevMC* *Brevard Music Center*, online at <http://www.brevardmusic.org/about/history>.
- BSO* *Carnegie Hall · New York, Fifty-Fifth Season [. . .] Boston Symphony Orchestra [. . .] Thursday Evening, November 21 [1940-1941] [. . .] with Historical and Descriptive Notes by John N Burk*.
- Bulletin Elon* *The Bulletin of Elon College, Fifty-Second Annual Announcement for 1941-1942 and Catalogue of 1940-41* (Burlington, NC: Elon College, [1940-1941], p. 7. The catalogue is preserved at Elon University, Belk Library Archives and Special Collections; available online at <http://archive.org/stream/bulletinofElon371401elon#page/n7/mode/2up>.
- CDS* *Cornell Daily Sun*, vol. 68/no. 181, 6 June 1952.
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- 18 February 1934 (p. X6), and 22 March 1934 (p. 24). The January 9th program in Washington DC took place at the Roosevelt White House.
- ² The United States Congress stipulates that census records concerning individuals (as opposed to aggregate/demographic information) not be made public for seventy-two years. Thus the last census to be made available in detail is that for 1940, which the National Archives and Records Administration released on 2 April 2012.
- ³ I must qualify "reasons now unknown": Elon University houses various "Presidential papers" that are not available to the public, researchers included. The Gardiners' musical activities beyond the classroom during the one academic year in which they were at Elon can be documented through various issues of the Elon student newspaper, *Maroon and Gold*: 19 October, 2 November, 30 November, 14 December (all 1940); 8 March, 3 May, 17 May (all 1941).
- ⁴ There are reviews of the concert in the New York press on 31 December 1920: *The New York Times*, p. 13, and the *New-York Tribune*, p. 8, among others. The concert to which Downes refers, that of The British Music Society with Coates and the London Symphony Orchestra, took place on May 4th of that year (KennedyC, p. 67).
- ⁵ My thanks to Hugh Cobbe for sharing this letter with me from his data base; there followed an exchange of letters between Scholes and Vaughan Williams, with that from Vaughan Williams to Scholes of 21 September 1924 (containing some unkind words about Madelon Coates) being reproduced in Cobbe, pp. 146-47, No. 147. Hugh Cobbe's data base contains still another letter relevant to Madelon Coates's program, this one addressed to Ray Henderson in New York on 30 March 1923. To pursue the matter further goes beyond the scope of this essay.
- ⁶ There is an amusing story behind the performance of the Woolridge work. Having read through some of Woolridge's music earlier that year, Rodziński offered to play one of Woolridge's works if he (Woolridge) shot down five German aircraft. When Woolridge informed Rodziński that he had done just that, Rodziński was true to his word (NYT, 26 November 1944, p. X5).
- ⁷ Pearson does not list a pre-1955 English recording of *Flos Campi*.
- ⁸ This recording is not listed in Pearson. The same is true of two other Concert Hall recordings with works by Vaughan Williams: *Concerto Accademico*, Zürich Radio Orchestra, Louis Kaufman, violin, CH-F8 (1952), and *Fantasia (quasi Variazioni) on the "Old 104th" Psalm Tune and Three Folksongs [sic]*, Rochester Chamber Orchestra and Cornell University A Cappella Chorus, CHS 1190 (1955); see Hunt, pp. 24, 57.
- ⁹ Should we read the "little more than a speaking acquaintance with him and his habits" as possibly indicating that Downes had already met Vaughan Williams on one of his (Vaughan Williams's) previous trips to the United States, either that in 1923 or that in 1934? ☺

NOTES

¹ Julian had been in New York once before, having toured the eastern United States and Canada with the London Singers (directed by John Goss) in January-March 1934. There are notices for performances in Washington DC, Québec, and New York in *The New York Times*, 9-10 January 1934 (pp. 18 and 24, respectively),



The Reception of Hugh Bean's Recording of *The Lark Ascending*

John France

At the time of writing (April 2014) there are 103 CDs of Ralph Vaughan Williams's *The Lark Ascending* listed in the Arkiv Catalogue¹. These range from the latest Chandos CD with Tasmin Little and the BBC Philharmonic under Sir Andrew Davis, to now "classic" recordings by Nigel Kennedy, Nicola Benedetti and Iona Brown. In the late 1960s the situation was very different: prior to the Boult/Bean record, made in 1967, there had been only a handful of releases of this iconic work.

After a brief survey of the early recorded versions of *The Lark Ascending* and a short biographical note about Hugh Bean, the main substance of this essay is an examination of the "reception history" of his celebrated disc. This concentrates on contemporary comment, though some later appreciation and critique is noted.

Early Recordings

Vaughan Williams began composing *The Lark Ascending* in 1914, though the work's appearance was held up for the duration of the Great War. Its original incarnation was for violin and piano. After some revision, assisted by the work's dedicatee, Marie Hall (1884-1958), it received its first performance on 15 December 1920 at a concert held under the auspices of the Avonmouth and Shirehampton Choral Society at the Shirehampton Public Hall. The following year (14 June 1921) the version for violin and orchestra was heard at a British Musical Society concert at the Queen's Hall with the British Symphony Orchestra under Adrian Boult. The soloist was once again Marie Hall. The *Musical Times*² noted that it was "admirably played" and that the work was "a good example of that strain of meditative introspection in the depicting of which Dr. Vaughan Williams' strength chiefly lies." The concert itself was a feast of British music, featuring Josef Holbrooke's Overture *The Children of Don*, Eugene Goossens's *The Eternal Rhythm*, Cyril Scott's *First Piano Concerto* and Gustav Holst's *The Planets*. All these works are currently available on CD or download. Marie Hall never made a recording of *The Lark Ascending*.

In 1928 Isolde Menges (1893-1976) made what is generally regarded as the first recording³ of *The Lark Ascending* with an unspecified orchestra conducted by Malcolm Sargent (HMV C1622/23). It has recently been transferred to digital media. This "beautifully poetic and idiomatic"⁴ edition was made when the then modern technique of electrical recording was only three years old. It featured Menges' solos which "float seemingly free of any care for the restricted playing time of each 78rpm side."

The next account of *The Lark Ascending* was issued in 1940 and featured the Canadian-born violinist Frederick Grinke (1911-87) and

the Boyd Neel Orchestra. This was recorded on 9 March of that year and was coupled with Vaughan Williams's *Hymn Tune Prelude: Eventide* and was released on Decca X259/260. Michael Kennedy, writing in the Society's *Journal*⁵ has suggested that Grinke's recording of *The Lark* (along with the less popular Violin Concerto) "were ear-openers for a whole generation of listeners in the ... 1940s." William McNaught briefly notes Grinke's "sensitive performance" in *The Musical Times*⁶. W.R. Anderson, reviewing this record for *The Gramophone*⁷, is a little less enthusiastic: he has never been "strongly drawn to [Vaughan Williams's] folk-modality, a little of which goes mostly a long way." However, he recognises that the production of tone by Grinke is "smooth, genial and ample in volume, with as much delicacy as I think is needful." He concludes his review of *The Lark* by suggesting that music such as this "needs a fair volume if the monotony of its idiom is not to give a slight feeling of etiolation." He believes the recording caught this quality "nicely". Vaughan Williams was later to dedicate his *Violin Sonata* to Grinke in 1952.



In 1953 Parlophone issued a record of *The Lark Ascending* (PMB1003) made in the previous October. It was played by the Mauritian-born violinist Jean Pougnet (1907-1968) with the London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Adrian Boult. The work was coupled with the rarely heard *Song of Thanksgiving*. Andrew Porter, writing in *The Gramophone*⁸, felt that this piece had been given "a very beautiful, poetic performance" by Pougnet. He noted that the solo writing calls for "cascades of sound which must sound spontaneous, poured from a full heart and throat." He felt that intimacy is the required aesthetic and that any "suggestion of concert brilliance is out of place." He considered that Pougnet "captures to perfection the requisite tone." A few concerns about noise on the disc that disturbed the "calm atmosphere created" were noted. *The Record Guide* (1955) gives two stars indicating an "excellent performance and recording".

Hugh Bean

Comparatively little has been written about the life and work of Hugh Bean. The greatest attention to him was given in the various obituaries in the national newspapers and musical journals which were published after his death in 2003. An honourable exception to this was the 65th birthday tribute in the September 1994 edition of *The Strad*⁹. There is a short entry in Grove and a detailed account in the *National Biography* as well as the inevitable article on *Wikipedia*.

Hugh Cecil Bean was born on 22 September 1929 in Beckenham, a town lying south-east of London. Initially, he had violin lessons from his father followed by ongoing studies with Albert Sammons

(1886-1957). Aged fourteen, he went on to attend the Royal College of Music (RCM) on a scholarship where he was duly awarded the Principal's and the Queen's prizes for violin. In 1949, Bean began two years of his National Service with the Grenadier Guards during which he led a small string orchestra. With typical army humour, he earned the nickname of "The Cat-Gut Grenadier". After a period of study (1952-3) with André Gertler (1907-1998) at the Brussels Conservatoire on a Boise Foundation travelling award, he formed the Boise Trio with David Parkhouse, piano and Eileen Crawford, cello. This Trio eventually evolved into the Music Group of London.

In 1953 he was appointed professor of violin at the RCM and worked free-lance as an orchestral player. In succeeding years Bean held the post of sub-leader and then leader of the Philharmonia Orchestra, co-leader of the BBC Symphony Orchestra and finally

notable achievements was the performance of Elgar's *Violin Concerto* under Boult at the Three Choirs Festival in 1969. He was later to make an important recording of this work with Charles Groves and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. It remains a classic to this day. His most lasting legacy is the present *The Lark Ascending* with the New Philharmonia Orchestra under Sir Adrian Boult.

Latterly he was president of the Bromley Youth Chamber Orchestra, was involved with the Guildford Philharmonic and led the Orchestra of St Bartholomew's Church at Sydenham. Hugh Bean won the Cobbett Gold Medal for services to chamber music in 1969. The following year he was created a CBE. Apart from the violin desk, he was enthusiastic about model aircraft and steam-powered model locomotives, having a garden railway complete with a miniature version of the "Duchess of Buccleuch", a Stainer Pacific locomotive. He loved to drive this engine, appropriately



The Boise Trio. Hugh Bean is on the left

co-leader of the New Philharmonia Orchestra. He was given the honorary title of Leader Emeritus of the Philharmonia. Bean was in constant demand as a soloist for recitals, chamber music and orchestral concerts, and was frequently on tour in Europe, the Far East, the United States and Canada. Hugh Bean retained his post of Professor of Violin at the RCM for thirty-seven years. Over this time he was hugely successful in encouraging young players. Many of his students went on to play in the great London orchestras, both in the ranks and as leaders.

Hugh Bean married Mary Dorothy Harrow on 16 April 1963. They had one daughter, Fiona.

In 1967 Bean issued Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* with Leopold Stokowski conducting the New Philharmonia Orchestra. Amongst his most

dressed with an engine driver's "grease top" hat. Hugh Bean died on 26 December 2003 aged 74.

Hugh Bean's account of *The Lark Ascending*

In 1967 HMV released an LP of Vaughan Williams's *Sixth Symphony* played by the New Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Sir Adrian Boult. This work was coupled with *The Lark Ascending* with Hugh Bean as the soloist (HMV ASD 2329). This LP was released in the United States as Angel S36469. Writing in the *Musical Times*¹⁰ Hugh Ottoway suggests that *The Lark Ascending* "is beautifully done with exactly the right kind of rapture from Hugh Bean and some lovely woodwind playing." Unfortunately, he is less impressed with Boult's new reading of the symphony: he finds "a relative coolness and detachment; the greatness of the music is

evident but its impact is reduced." He concludes by admitting it is not the definitive version of the symphony he had hoped for.

Noël Goodwin in *Music & Musicians*¹¹ was much more impressed with the *Sixth Symphony*, suggesting that "of all the composer's music this was most in need of an up-to-date performance and recording." These are "both evident in good measure on the new disc." Concerning "the tranquil serenity" of *The Lark Ascending* he notes that it follows on from the "Epilogue" of the Sixth and "communicates a feeling of quiet rapture ... Hugh Bean is an admirable soloist, very properly avoiding the idea of a concerto but suggesting a solitary song against the shimmering stillness."

The most extensive review of the new Boult record was given in the *Gramophone*¹². Trevor Harvey suggests that after the intensity of the *Sixth Symphony*, *The Lark Ascending* "comes like balm, especially in this really beautifully played performance by Hugh Bean." But he goes even further with his praise: "He not only plays it impeccably, he knows *how* it should be played." Interestingly, he also compliments EMI for not giving this work a "concerto balance". He states that the lark sings "in its remoteness, not too remote – exactly right." T.H. was later to make this release one of his "Records of the Year".¹³

The American record review magazine *Billboard*¹⁴ noted that Sir Adrian's "highly intense interpretation is just the cup of tea for the tempestuous, satirical and restless No.6, a work he is thoroughly familiar with." Violinist Hugh Bean performs "*The Lark Ascending* with delicate taste."

Robert Layton in the *Gramophone*¹⁵ remarked in connection with the Scherzo of the *Sixth Symphony* that "Vaughan Williams was often the prisoner of his own highly personal figures of speech ... one feels that the explosive discharge of aggression did not come quite naturally to him", whereas "in works like the *Fifth Symphony* or *The Lark Ascending* of which Sir Adrian and Hugh Bean give a beautifully ruminative performance ... not a hint of a false note is struck." The recording was reissued two years later on HMV ASD 2847, coupled with the *Norfolk Rhapsody No.1*, *Serenade to Music* and *In the Fen Country*.

At this period Hugh Bean was regularly giving performances of *The Lark Ascending* in the concert hall. Three notices from the Promenade Concert held on 29 July 1969 will suffice. Felix Aprahamian writing in the *Sunday Times*¹⁶ noted the "tumultuous ovation" received by Sir Adrian after his recovery from ill health. He was conducting his first concert since his eightieth birthday. Boult played three works, a masterly account of Elgar's *First Symphony*, Alan Bush's *Scherzo* for wind and percussion and Hugh Bean's "exquisite playing of *The Lark Ascending*". The same concert was reviewed by Stephen Walsh in the BBC's house-magazine, *The Listener*¹⁷. He declared that Sir Adrian had given an "idyllic performance with Hugh Bean as solo violinist of Vaughan Williams' *The Lark Ascending*." Edward Greenfield in the *Guardian*¹⁸ wrote that the work, played by Bean, "a delicate, true-toned soloist", was given an account that "convinced one afresh of the natural link between English folk-music and birdsong." Especially noted was Boult's "distinction in *pianissimo* between three ps and four was always meticulous."

Nearly forty years after Hugh Bean had recorded *The Lark*, the reviewer in the *Daily Telegraph*¹⁹ stated that the "classic 1967" recording has "no direct competition." The *Penguin Guide to*

*Bargain Compact Discs*²⁰ commented that "Hugh Bean understands the spirit of *The Lark Ascending* perfectly and his performance is wonderfully serene." Rob Cowan writing in the *Gramophone*²¹ declared that his personal preference for the work was a soloist who was "first among equals" and added that Hugh Bean and Boult "have long provided my benchmark." It is a position with which I wholeheartedly agree.

Finally, in the letters page of December 1996 edition of the *Gramophone*²², long-time contributor Rodney Bashford was ruminating on his love of English pastoral music. He suggested that although some more advanced listeners may wish to seek deathbed solace with their "sequenzas and plink selon plonks", for him he would "be wallowing beside a bank of green willow ... which grows aslant a brook. Or maybe by the wild brooks of Amberley?" He concludes his reverie by trusting that he shall find himself "in Gloucestershire, a babbling of green fields, and ascending alongside that lovely lark with my old friend and Grenadier colleague Hugh Bean's violin in attendance." I could not have expressed it better myself.

DISCOGRAPHY

- 1 Isolde Menges/Malcolm Sargent, (Sides 1-3), with Charles Villiers Stanford: *The Leprechaun's Dance* (Isolde Menges/Eileen Beattie, piano), (Side 4), HMV C1622/23
- 2 Boyd Neel/Frederick Grinke, The Boyd Neel Orchestra, with *Hymn Tune Prelude: Eventide*, Decca X259/260
- 3 Sir Adrian Boult/Jean Pougnet, London Philharmonic Orchestra, with *Song of Thanksgiving*, Parlophone PMB1003
- 4 Sir Adrian Boult/Hugh Bean, New Philharmonia Orchestra, with *Symphony No. 6*, HMV ASD 2329 (USA Angel S36469)
- 5 Sir Adrian Boult/Hugh Bean, New Philharmonia Orchestra/London Philharmonic Orchestra, with *Serenade to Music, In the Fen Country, Norfolk Rhapsody No.1*, HMV ASD 2847
- 6 Hugh Bean's recording of *The Lark Ascending* is also currently available as part of *Sir Adrian Boult, Vaughan Williams: the complete EMI recordings*, EMI Classics 9035672

NOTES

- 1 Arkiv Catalogue, <http://www.arkivmusic.com/classical/main.jsp> (accessed 25/03/14)
- 2 *Musical Times*, July 1 1921, 490
- 3 CHARM, The Research Centre for the History & Analysis of Recorded Music, <http://www.charm.kcl.ac.uk/index.html> (accessed 25/03/14)
- 4 CHARM 2009, Newsletter, 5
- 5 *Ralph Vaughan Williams Society Journal* No.24, June 1982, 5
- 6 *Musical Times*, July 1940, 308
- 7 *Gramophone*, June 1940, 10
- 8 *Gramophone*, October 1953, 153
- 9 *The Strad*, September 1994, 877-880
- 10 *Musical Times*, December 1967, 1125
- 11 *Music and Musicians*, December 1967, 61
- 12 *Gramophone*, October 1967, 211
- 13 *Gramophone*, December 1967, 307
- 14 *Billboard*, 17 February 1968, 68
- 15 *Gramophone*, February 1968, 417
- 16 *Sunday Times*, 3 August 1969
- 17 *The Listener*, 7 August 1969, 195
- 18 *Guardian*, 30 July 1969
- 19 *Daily Telegraph*, 1 July 2006
- 20 *Penguin Guide to Bargain Compact Discs*, 1 Jan 1999, 1052
- 21 *Gramophone*, August 2011, 60
- 22 *Gramophone*, December 1996, 8

The Lady in Question

Colin Lees

Some very engaging images have adorned the covers of recent editions of the Society's *Journal*, including a caricature of Ralph Vaughan Williams done by the young Ronald Searle and a very striking photograph of the composer striding down the garden path at The White Gates. These are images which will be unfamiliar to most Society members and I for one would like to thank those who discover such rare pictures and negotiate with copyright owners for permission to reproduce them for our magazine.

Issue No 59 (the current issue as I write) bears yet another photograph, which will almost certainly be new to most readers. It shows Vaughan Williams with a woman at the Arts Theatre in 1936, during the first production of his opera *The Poisoned Kiss*. At the time issue No 59 went to press the identity of the woman was uncertain.

I first came across this picture on the website of Peter Lofts, a Cambridge photographer who collects and restores old photographs of Cambridge and its more eminent inhabitants. Peter Lofts had obtained the photo from the archives of photographers Ramsey and Muspratt who, until the 1970s, occupied a studio in Post Office Terrace, now demolished. However, the caption with the photo did not identify the woman in question.

I posted the picture to the Society's Facebook page, where it attracted a number of very positive comments, as well as curiosity



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about Vaughan Williams's lady companion. A Society member showed the picture to Michael Kennedy who suggested that it was probably Evelyn Sharp, one-time suffragist and sister of the renowned folk song collector Cecil Sharp. Since Miss Sharp had been the librettist of *The Poisoned Kiss*, this seemed a plausible solution to this little mystery and I forgot about the matter.

However, my curiosity about the picture was revived when I found the photo reproduced in a book called *Cambridge Music* by Frida Knight, published in 1980. Mrs Knight identified the woman as Camille Prior, the French wife of a Cambridge academic. Described as "vivacious and charming", Mrs Prior seems to have been at the centre of Cambridge musical life for several decades, collaborating with Dr

Boris Ord on a production of *Dioclesian* and putting on a pageant about British music. She produced many other musical events in Cambridge, including (with Vaughan Williams's cousin, the artist Gwen Raverat) the 1936 premiere of *The Poisoned Kiss*, and was later awarded an MBE for her services to the musical life of the city.

This would have settled the matter, but for one thing. As I read *Cambridge Music* I found several errors of fact in it. Two of the most glaring were that the author claimed that both Orlando Gibbons and Samuel Pepys were born in Cambridge, when in fact they were born in Oxford and London respectively. If she could get basic things like this wrong, could I trust her when she said that the lady in the photo was Camille Prior?



Camille Prior?



Evelyn Sharp

I showed the photo to the English Folk Dance and Song Society in the hope that they could say whether or not the lady in question was Evelyn Sharp but they couldn't help. In the end the mystery was answered very easily. Born in 1869, Miss Sharp would have been sixty-seven years old at the time of the Cambridge production of *The Poisoned Kiss* and it was clear that the woman in the photo was much younger than that. Finally, I stumbled on a photo of Evelyn Sharp taken in 1937 which confirmed that, whoever the woman in the photograph was, it couldn't be the rather elderly looking Evelyn Sharp. So, I can confirm for anyone who's interested that the woman gazing adoringly up at Vaughan Williams in that charming picture is, indeed, Mrs Camille Prior. 🐾

A Century On

Four Hymns for Tenor, Viola and Strings

Simon Coombs

The *Four Hymns* were until lately amongst the least often recorded works by Ralph Vaughan Williams. This was hard to understand, as they are beautiful and well worth exploring. I have followed Michael Kennedy's lead in bringing the work to readers' attention at this stage, as the music was completed in the first half of 1914 and was scheduled for a first performance at the Worcester Three Choirs Festival that year, even though the premiere did not take place until 1920. Worcester had been the setting for the debut of the *Five Mystical Songs* in 1911 – the *Four Hymns* would have been a triumphant follow-up.

In the event, the first performance took place in Cardiff. Steuart Wilson (the work's dedicatee) was the tenor soloist, with Alfred Hobday (viola) and the strings of the London Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Julius Harrison. The London premiere took place in October that year, in the Aeolian Hall, when the composer himself conducted the same soloists and a "Chamber Orchestra". An alternative version, with piano quintet accompaniment, was first performed in 1925.

For the four hymns, Vaughan Williams chose a text from ancient Greece, translated by Robert Bridges, and texts from Bishop Jeremy Taylor, Isaac Watts and Richard Crashaw. Vaughan Williams was extremely widely read, as has been often remarked in the pages of the *Journal*, and this work is powerful evidence of that fact.

The four tenor soloists on the currently available recordings are John Mark Ainsley, Philip Langridge, Andrew Kennedy and Ian Partridge. The last of these gives a lovely performance, which many readers will have already, as it comes from the EMI box of thirty CDs released in 2008. Personally, I tend to discount this as it is the version with only piano accompaniment: without the strings, there is a lack of depth which I find unsatisfactory.



Andrew Kennedy

John Mark Ainsley on Hyperion, Philip Langridge also on EMI and Andrew Kennedy on Albion are all recommendable, and all are in the version with strings. Readers may wish to consider the couplings before deciding which to choose. Ainsley has *Toward The Unknown Region* and *Dona Nobis Pacem* with Judith Howarth and Sir Thomas Allen, Langridge has *On Wenlock Edge*, *Merciless Beauty* and the *String Quartet No 1*, and Kennedy, on the recent Albion release, "The Solent", has three *Songs of Travel* and early and late world premiere recordings of the *Three Impressions for orchestra* and the Incidental Music to *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. This latter recording is a quintessential part of any member's CD collection, and Andrew Kennedy's singing is a match for any of his rivals. It has replaced my previous first choice, John Mark Ainsley, but if the couplings are tempting, this lovely work is worth a second recording! 🐦

Membership News – A new charity and an increase in subscriptions

Some members will recall that we agreed at the last AGM to modernise the Society by reincorporating as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation regulated by the Charity Commission. The new body was registered on 10 April this year, and I am particularly grateful to our Secretary, Martin Murray, for his hard work on finalising the Constitution, which you can consult online. The full name of our new charity is The Ralph Vaughan Williams Society, and its charity number is 1156614.

This means that we currently have two charities – the old one (1994), number 1017175, and the new one, as above. Until 30 September we will continue with the old charity, and from 1 October we shall use the new one. You are automatically a member of the new charity, and you should not notice any difference.

However, 1 October also sees an increase in subscriptions, the first since 2001, so I don't think we've done too badly. It is necessary to keep up with rising costs, especially printing and postage for the *Journal*. Subscriptions due on or after 1 October will increase by

about 25%. We post from the UK, and the higher cost for overseas members is intended only to cover the much higher postage costs. The new rates (all in Sterling, GBP) will be:

	UK	Europe	World
Full Rate	£25	£28	£33
Concessions	£15	£18	£23

If you pay by standing order you may be able to update the amount online, and it would be really kind if you can do this. Otherwise Membership Officer Mark Hammett and I will keep a watchful eye on money coming in, and will chase up arrears. The last increase took about two years to sort out with a much smaller membership, so we're braced for quite a lot of hard work. Your support for the Society – both financial and practical – is very much appreciated.

John Francis
Treasurer

Music You Might Like

Simon Coombs

In the last *Journal*, I promised that the letter G would bring us to the turn of the Russians, and there are four to discuss this time. My own CD collection musters a healthy forty-three composers beginning with G, but Naxos have already recorded 467. Assembling a top ten is not so easy on this occasion, as there are a large number of composers who are worthy of consideration, or at least of an honourable mention.

I should have liked to find a place for the English composers, Sir Edward German, Ivor Gurney and Christopher Gunning, who has moved on from film and television music to symphonies and concertos. Alas, I cannot find room for Umberto Giordano (*Andrea Chenier* and *Fedora*), Ferde Grofé (*The Grand Canyon Suite*), Károly Goldmark (*Rustic Wedding Symphony*), Enrique Granados (*Goyescas*) nor Henryk Górecki (*Symphony of Sorrowful Songs*). Finally, I have had to exclude Hermann Goetz, whose *Piano Concerto No 2* is a real find, and Jakov Gotovac, who will probably be the only Croatian composer in these articles, and who wrote colourful symphonic poems. These two are recorded on the CPO label.

In tenth place is the Spanish composer, **Jesús Guridi**. His *Pyrenean Symphony* is worth exploring, and in particular, the Religiosa movement from his *Ten Basque Melodies* is a thing of great beauty. You will find them both on Naxos (8.557631 and 8.557110).

Batting for Britain is the film composer, **Ron Goodwin**. So much of his music is well known, although not necessarily by name. An example of this is the theme from the 1966 film *The Trap*, starring Oliver Reed. This now does duty as the music which introduces the London Marathon every year. Two CDs will give you a good collection of memorable tunes – Marco Polo 8.223518 and Chandos 10262.

At No. 8 in the list is **George Gershwin**, who is of course best known, and rightly, for his *Rhapsody in Blue*, which I think is better and more significant than some of the purists would allow. *Porgy and Bess*, the *Piano Concerto in F* and *An American In Paris*, and his fine collection of songs do justice to his great melodic gift.

Next is the Australian, **Percy Grainger**, who came to Europe as a young man and befriended Grieg and Delius. He was an inspired arranger of his own and other people's music, and Chandos have done him proud with an extended series of his works, superintended by Society member, Penelope Thwaites. Try the first volume (Chandos 9493) conducted by Richard Hickox and then keep going!

At No. 6 is the first Russian to appear, **Mikhail Glinka**. His opera, *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, is a landmark in European music, and is worth searching out in an early Gergiev recording with Anna Netrebko near the beginning of her career (Decca 4783420). His orchestral music is conveniently collected on Chandos 9861, and includes the *Jota Aragonesa* and *Kamarinskaya*.

Another Russian follows on. **Alexander Grechaninov** wrote five symphonies and some extremely impressive choral music. For those unfamiliar with his gravely beautiful music, I would suggest the Chandos CD 9698, which contains his *Third Symphony* and the *Cantata 'Praise The Lord'*, conducted by Valeri Polyansky.

At No. 4 is the French composer **Charles Gounod**. Best known for his operas, *Faust* and *Roméo et Juliette*, his two symphonies are well worth exploring and his *St Cecilia Mass* contains a beautiful setting of the Sanctus. This is on EMI 7470942, with Barbara Hendricks conducted by Georges Prêtre, while the symphonies are on Naxos 8.557463.

The top three consists of two largely neglected Russians and the famous Norwegian. **Reinhold Glière** was in fact born in Kiev, where he was Professor of Composition at the Conservatoire, before moving to Moscow. His three symphonies are powerful works, richly orchestrated and strongly melodic – they demand to be heard. The *Third Symphony* bears the sub-title, *Il'ya Muromets*, and has recently been released on Naxos (8.573161) in a highly recommendable recording by JoAnn Falletta with the Buffalo Philharmonic. Another piece worth looking out for is the *Suite 'The Bronze Horseman'*, with its famous last movement, *Hymn To The Great City*. The City is St Petersburg, and it is said that Shostakovich refused to go there because he had to hear the Hymn so frequently. Yet another beautiful work is **Glière's Harp Concerto** – this and *The Bronze Horseman* are once again on Chandos discs (9379 and 9094). I should state here that I am not on any retainer from Chandos, but Brian and Ralph Couzens have put us hugely in their debt by their championing of so many composers hitherto ignored by other recording companies.

No such problems with **Edvard Grieg**, whose music has never been neglected, at least not the *Piano Concerto* and *Peer Gynt*! I recommend two other works to those who don't know them. The *Symphonic Dances* are lively and beautiful, and older members might remember the second of the four as the theme music of two BBC serialisations of *The Railway Children* by E. Nesbit, in 1957 and 1968. *Olaf Trygvason* is a work for soloists, chorus and orchestra, consisting of four scenes from what was intended to be a Norwegian National Opera, with a libretto by Bjornstjerne Bjornson – the fourth scene is as good as anything Grieg ever wrote. DG have issued a six-CD set of all Grieg's orchestral works at bargain price which includes these two works and much more besides (DG 4713002), with the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra conducted by Neeme Järvi.

At No 1 is **Alexander Glazunov**, a pupil of Rimsky-Korsakov and originally an admirer of both Liszt and Wagner. His nine symphonies are generally worth getting to know, although not immediately appealing; a number of his other works are much more attractive. His ballets, especially *The Four Seasons*, are agreeable, but the real gem in his output is the incidental music to a mystery play, *The King of the Jews*. Once again, it is Chandos (9467) and Naxos (8.553575) who have recorded this beautiful piece, and it is again the same two who have recorded my other recommendation, *From The Middle Ages*, a suite which includes the gorgeous *Troubadour's Serenade*. The numbers here are Chandos 8804 and Naxos 8.553537. I need hardly add that neither work has ever been played at the Proms.

In the next edition of the *Journal*, the letter H will feature a strong British contingent, with support from Germany, the United States and Venezuela. 🐦

Meet the Team

John Treadway Concert Resources Officer

I owe my lifelong affection for the music of Vaughan Williams to a teacher from my east London grammar school in the early fifties. Discipline was hardly his strong point, but put him in front of a group of eager young thespians and he shone, his authority never questioned. As I finished my rather undistinguished clutch of “O”-levels in 1957, he decided to take the school’s drama group to perform *Hamlet* at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe during the summer holidays. I cannot imagine the logistics of organising this, but he did it. The project was enhanced by having a promising sixth former, one Derek Jacobi, to play the part of Hamlet. (He was two years my senior. There was also a budding pianist, two years below me, by the name of John Lill.)

The venue was the Edinburgh Academy, the alma mater of Robert Louis Stevenson, and I was a member of the backstage team. Bobby cued recorded music to appear at certain moments in the play, and this included some Vaughan Williams. I particularly remember using the wonderful climax of *Job* when Claudius shrieks “Give me some light”, as Hamlet’s cunning play within a play achieves the required result. The following year we went back with *Measure for Measure*, with Jacobi playing the morally compromised Angelo, and more Vaughan Williams, the *Tallis Fantasia* and the *Fifth Symphony*. By then, totally hooked on the composer’s music, sadness came towards the end of the run when I heard he had died. I remember the feeling that came over me, knowing that I would now never have the chance to meet him and to tell him how much his music meant to me.



John Treadway (r) with Michael Kennedy, November 2011

In the intervening years my love of his music has grown, and I despaired as his reputation went into a decline and concerts became rare. A highlight was the last professional performances of *Job* at Covent Garden, in a wonderful production conducted by a very

elderly Boult. I had been recently married and, with a hefty mortgage, money was tight, but we threw financial caution to the wind and went back the following Monday for the final performance. During those barren years, CDs were added to my store of LPs, led by André Previn’s cycle of the symphonies, and this has now become a substantial collection of nearly all the composer’s works.

I lost contact with Bobby as I began my professional life in education, but met up with him again by chance at the Barbican cinema. He was 70, and for the next eighteen years we regularly attended concerts, operas and plays together. When he died in 2011 I was privileged to arrange his funeral. Derek Jacobi sent a moving tribute: “Bobby’s encouragement and enthusiasms had started me on a journey that will always echo with his kindness and deep humanity.” As the curtains closed around his coffin, Vaughan Williams’s wonderful setting of Prospero’s words filled the chapel. His “little life” may be “rounded with a sleep” but its ripples carry on in our hearts.

I joined the Ralph Vaughan Williams Society in 1995. I am a trustee of the Society and have recently been appointed its Concert Resources Officer. It is rewarding to be able to help amateur concert promoters with programming, locating artists, publishers and hiring parts. One recent request came from Australia. I was asked by the National Trust to arrange the programme for the first Leith Hill Place concert in 2013 and the opening one of the 2014 season. This is on Saturday 21 June and features Vaughan Williams’s chamber music alongside that of Bridge and Ravel.

I have also just completed my seventh series of concerts in the lovely setting of St Mary’s Parish Church, Woodbridge, Suffolk, close to where I live. One of its aims is to include English music, and it has provided opportunities for talented string players from the town’s secondary schools to perform Vaughan Williams’s works in public with the Royal College of Music Strings. The other main aim is to provide a concert platform for young professional artists as they start their careers. The 2015 season opens on 9 May with a joint symposium of the Ralph Vaughan Williams and Elgar Societies, the subsequent concert including *On Wenlock Edge* and Elgar’s *Piano Quintet*. There’s more information at www.woodbridgechamberconcerts.org 🐦

Karen Fletcher Publicity Officer

When did music become my greatest passion? Well, I didn’t really have any say in the matter, as I was exposed to it from the start: BBC Radio 3 was usually switched on, and when it wasn’t, there was either a record, a reel-to-reel or cassette tape playing, or speakers being exchanged from room to room and various graphics being “equalised”!

It was in those early years that I remember being affected by “Greensleeves”, *The Lark Ascending*, and, in particular, the *Tallis Fantasia*, as so many of us are. For me, it is Vaughan Williams’s use of modal harmonies that connect with the past, transforming them into something new and of deep personal resonance. It is



Karen Fletcher

easy to take these pieces for granted as a result of today's popularity polls, but we shouldn't lose sight of the fact that someone, somewhere, will be having the same "epiphany", which can be a life-changing experience.

My father took me to concerts from the age of five and I attended my first Mahler concert at thirteen, the *Fourth Symphony*. We didn't know Vaughan Williams's symphonies then, and it was Ken Russell's strange, late-night *South Bank Show* profile of the composer – still controversial today – that sparked our curiosity.

At school, we were fortunate to have a young and enthusiastic Head of Music, with whom we probably had far too *much* fun, as well as a wider circle of area teachers who were prepared to put themselves out to take us on tour, instruct wind bands, recorder groups, choirs and orchestras. Then, when the end of the week came around, there was always Saturday Music School! By the time Head of Music had moved me from oboe to flute, saying it was "the best day's work" he'd ever done, music had become my main concern. Amongst the works we were exposed to was *Dona*

Nobis Pacem, which struck me as being particularly melancholy and beautiful. Sadly, the Head of Music moved on, writing in my report that I was one of the most motivated and sensitive pupils he had ever taught. When it comes to music, nothing has changed.

Many years later, working with our Chairman, Em, at the English Music Festival, gave me a way into the music business I hadn't anticipated. And although I had been a founder member of the Ralph Vaughan Williams Society, the time felt right to put myself forward as Publicity Officer. My work was recommended, and now many societies, trusts, festivals and artists number among my music-related clients.

Archery Promotions and Concert Productions has become an independent music consultancy, focussing on artistic and programme co-ordination, concert management, publicity, media campaigns, launches and event support. Many of these collaborations are supportive of, although by no means exclusive to, British music. As well as the Vaughan Williams Society, I also work with the Delius Society, the John Ireland Trust, and most recently, the British Music Society. I have begun to support emerging artists and am planning several recitals to showcase their talents, and of course there are several Vaughan Williams-related projects, including the Society's series of recitals at Leith Hill Place.

Some days find me stressed and overworked, others, on cloud nine! And does music still feature on a personal level? Well, music is often a release from daily challenges, and I'm still *discovering* music, even after all this time. John Adams, Thomas Adès, Tippett, Britten, Szymanowski, Martinů, Roussel...for me there are no boundaries in music, nor should there be. It's a way of tapping into every emotion, from Copland's Piano Concerto, and Barber's for violin, Prokofiev's War Sonatas, *Century Rolls*, *Al Largo*, *Diversions*, *Symphonic Dances*, to the great symphonies of Walton, Mahler, Sibelius and Vaughan Williams, film and ballet music. What a rich and varied treat!

If I disappear for a few days, it's probably to Cornwall to indulge my bohemian side in that county's heady artistic heritage. The rugged coast calls to me in its wild way, and on a perfect day with the smell of the sea salt and a crab sandwich, cream tea and great view, there's nothing better.

Next year is the 150th anniversary of the birth of Sibelius. It would be great to take part in those celebrations, in Finland perhaps. 🐦

Vaughan Williams on...BBC Radio 3

We have been called the land without music ... Are we then unmusical? The authorities used to think so, and drove music underground, like the proceedings of a secret society. Music as a revelation and as an education was frowned upon, and was only to be used as an accompaniment to conversation ... However, in the last fifty years there has been a great change ... We are gradually realising that music is not just a tickling of the ear, but an expression of a vision through magic casements of the eternal verities. More and more people are demanding that their musical needs shall be satisfied. The answer came ten years ago, a direction and guide to all this ferment, to satisfy those aspirations that lie beyond daily life, in the Third Programme.

Vaughan Williams on Music (ed. David Manning), page 119

Leith Hill Place

Concert recital programme 2014

The National Trust in association with
the Ralph Vaughan Williams Society

On behalf of the Society, Karen Fletcher and John Treadway, in association with the National Trust, are delighted to announce the second series of summer concerts at Leith Hill Place, Ralph Vaughan Williams's childhood home.



Saturday 21 June, 6.30pm

RVW AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

Tickets: £18.00

The Fournier Trio: Chiao-Ying Chang, piano;
Sulki Yu, violin;
Pei-Jee Ng, cello

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS: *Six Studies in English Folk Song* (original version for cello and piano)

BRIDGE: *Miniatures for Piano Trio*, Set 2

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS: *The Lark Ascending* (original version for violin and piano)

RAVEL: *Pavane pour une Infante défunte*, "Menuet" from *Le Tombeau de Couperin*; *Piano Trio*

This concert explores music written by Vaughan Williams and Ravel just before they enlisted in the army in 1914. Both served in the ranks, Vaughan Williams as a medical orderly on the Somme, Ravel as a lorry driver behind the lines. Vaughan Williams was 42 and Ravel 39. Ravel had tremendous trouble completing his magnificent *Piano Trio* before joining up, and although Vaughan Williams completed *The Lark Ascending* in 1914, he delayed publishing it, and revised it further after the end of the war. Frank Bridge studied alongside Vaughan Williams and Holst under Stanford at the Royal College of Music. He was a lifelong pacifist. These charming miniatures for piano trio were conceived as a set of pieces increasing in difficulty for each player.



The Fournier Trio

The Fournier Trio

This London-based group was formed in 2009 and is rapidly emerging as one of our leading young piano trios. Winners of the second prize and audience prize at the Trondheim International Chamber Music Competition in 2011, they have since gained the Parkhouse Award, which gives them three concerts in major London venues. Previously they were selected for the "New

Masters on Tour” which culminated in a recital in the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam.

During the 2012 season they appeared at the Bath, Chichester and Newbury Festivals and in 2013 gave concerts in Singapore, Hong Kong and Australia.

They were Leverhulme fellows whilst studying at the Royal Academy of Music and are currently Artists in Residence at Wolfson College, Oxford. They have participated in master classes with Martin Lovett, Susan Tomes, Leif Ove Andsnes and Ralph Kirshbaum.

They are passionate about contemporary music and worked with Sir Peter Maxwell Davies on a performance of his *Piano Trio*. Other collaborations have been with the British composers Timothy Salter and Hugh Wood. The Trio plans to record a debut album to include Timothy Salter’s *Piano Trio*, alongside works by Fauré and Ravel, for USK Records.

Saturday 28 June, 6.30pm
VAUGHAN WILLIAMS AND RAVEL

Tickets: £18.00

Midori Komachi, violin;
Simon Callaghan, piano

RAVEL: *Violin Sonata in A*

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS: *Two Pieces for Violin and Piano* (1923); *The Lark Ascending* (original version for violin and piano)

RAVEL: *Tzigane*

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS: *Six Studies in English Folk Song* (arranged for violin and piano)

RAVEL: *Violin Sonata*



Midori Komachi



Simon Callaghan

A wonderful programme of works by Vaughan Williams and his one-time teacher, Ravel, from emerging violinist Midori Komachi who has recently released her debut album, “Colours of the Heart”, with pianist Simon Callaghan.

In this programme, Midori and Simon perform perennial showpieces, including audience favourites *The Lark Ascending* and *Tzigane*, with a rare opportunity to hear the one-movement sonata that Ravel composed in 1897 but which was only published after his death. The programme ends with his jazz-inspired late Sonata, described by Simon as “near-perfection”. Vaughan Williams’s *Romance* and *Pastoral*, as well as the folk song *Studies*, find the composer at his most pastoral and beautiful.

Saturday 5 July, 6.30pm
GALA CONCERT: MUSIC AND POETRY OF THE GREAT WAR

Tickets: £22.00

Roderick Williams, baritone;
Gary Matthewman, piano;
John Greening, reader



Roderick Williams



John Greening



Gary Matthewman

A special programme to commemorate the anniversary of the First World War. Please contact the Publicity Officer for the full programme. Further information will also be provided in future Society publicity emails.

Roderick Williams is internationally renowned for his performances both in opera and on the concert platform. He is a featured artist in the 2014 BBC Proms and will take part in the Last Night. He is particularly recognised for his interpretations of English song, so our gala concert provides a wonderful opportunity to experience this exceptional artist in an intimate setting.

John Greening is an award-winning poet with a wide appreciation of music. His latest book, *To the War Poets* (Carcanet), sends dispatches across the decades, addressing the poets directly. He is currently editing a new edition of Edmund Blunden’s war writings for Oxford University Press. 🍷

We recommend you purchase tickets in advance from the website, where full details of all the Trust’s concerts can be found:
www.nationaltrust.org.uk/leith-hill
Any unsold tickets will be available on the door.
Please ask if you need guidance on travel arrangements to Leith Hill Place. There are many lovely walks in the area, or simply enjoy the view from the grounds, bring a picnic or take tea and cake in the house.
Leith Hill Place, Leith Hill Lane, near Coldharbour village, Dorking, Surrey RH5 6LY.
Tel. 01306 711 685, email LHP@nationaltrust.org.uk

Letters

LETTER FROM CÓRDOBA

It is a real honor and privilege to be part of the Ralph Vaughan Williams Society at last! It was something I've dreamed of for several years now. I must admit I was delighted to learn I am the first member from South America too, so you can notice how far the influence of Vaughan Williams goes.

I was kindly asked to talk briefly about myself: I was born and raised in the city of Córdoba, Argentina, the country's second in size and importance but far behind the capital, Buenos Aires. I'm about to get my degree in architecture, a career I always wanted to study as a child. I am passionate about history, geography, arts and a huge fan of cinema (specially Sci-Fi and Horror).



My love for classical music began as a teenager, listening to my father's discs, a fairly conservative repertoire I must say. Beethoven, Tchaikovsky and Mozart, among others, were the entrance door to the wide world of classical music. Curiosity led me to obtain some magazines containing CDs with brief musical excerpts from commercial recordings. In one of them I heard Vaughan Williams for the first time, his "Romanza" from the *Fifth Symphony* in a version by André Previn. Frankly, I could not believe my ears and I must have repeated the track more than ten times in a row! I just fell in love completely, Thus began my passion for the life and work of our dear Uncle Ralph, a devotion that after sixteen years does not seem to stop.

Over the years I have specialized in contemporary music, symphonic mainly, owning a rather large catalog by hundreds of composers from around the world. I particularly enjoy British symphonic music, which produced an unusual number of high quality composers in the last couple of centuries: Holst, Moeran, Bax, Howells, Dyson, Arnold, Bate and Bliss, to name a few.

I am hoping to share a little more about my musical tastes with you and learn from your wise comments and opinions. Music is definitely a never ending adventure that brings nothing else than joy to our lives!

Gabriel Pretto
Córdoba, Argentina

MUSIC YOU MIGHT LIKE

In his article in the last *Journal*, Simon Coombs lists some seven composers whose names begin with the letter E, but I believe he has missed some others that could justifiably have been mentioned.

German-born Hanns Eisler (1898-1962) was a student of Schoenberg. An anti-Nazi and strongly pro-Communist, he went to the United States but returned to Europe in 1948. He wrote music for a number of films as well as two operas. His left-wing works include cantatas, choral ballads and proletarian songs.

Swiss-born Max Ettinger (1874-1951) is another composer of some stature. He wrote five operas and three oratorios as well as a string quartet.

As to the F list, what of Eric Fenby? He may have been Delius's amanuensis for the last six years of the latter's life but he did write some of his own music, the most famous being his overture *Rossini on Ilkla Moor!*

Cecil Bloom
Leeds, UK

VW AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

I thought members might like to know that the live 1988-89 Rozhdestvensky/USSR cycle of Vaughan Williams symphonies has recently materialised in a 6-CD Melodiya set. By the time the *Journal* is published it should have already surfaced in Japan, and its distributors say it will appear in the UK in June. It will be of historic significance, since it's the first complete cycle of the Vaughan Williams Nine to appear on CD played by a non-British orchestra. Rozhdestvensky won't of course give us carbon copies of Boult or Barbirolli, which I think is all to the good, and it will be interesting to hear Vaughan Williams with a Russian accent!

Edward Johnson
London, UK

RANDOM THOUGHTS

I thoroughly enjoyed issue 59, which featured, on the front cover, yet another marvellous, previously unseen photo of the composer, with his arm characteristically around his female companion!

I also wanted to thank Charles McAllister for his very thoughtful response to my negative comments about *Serenade to Music* in the previous issue. As soon as I read Charles's letter I fished out both of the recordings he recommended (Wood on Dutton and Best on Hyperion) and enjoyed these performances much more than usual. It may be that my failure to appreciate the work is because when I first discovered Vaughan Williams's music (in about 1971 as a 16/17 year old) I tended to find it much easier to

appreciate orchestral rather than vocal music. Having said that I still find something slightly cloying about the work, but that is probably more a reflection on my own cynicism!

I also have been enjoying the discussions relating to the different versions of *A London Symphony*. As a great believer in the “middle way” I would like to put in a plea of support for the 1920 version. In my opinion Vaughan Williams went a revision too far, and in the 1936 version jettisoned the most moving part of the symphony (just before the Epilogue) and also a section of the second movement, which Bernard Herrmann described as being amongst the most poetic moments in the entire work. These were both retained in the 1920 revision, and amazingly a recording exists of a very fine performance given by Sir Eugene Goossens with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra in February 1941, presumably as a tribute to the beleaguered city during the Blitz. The CD can still be found on a Biddulph CD (WHL 016) under the title “British Music from America”. I attended the concert at the Barbican when Richard Hickox conducted the 1913 version, and after the concert I queued up to ask him to sign my programme. In a brief conversation with me he agreed that Vaughan Williams had excised the best bit of the symphony!

There is another fascinating wartime recorded performance of the symphony from the USA which includes some music that Vaughan Williams never composed in the first place! This is a 1945 recording by the NBC Symphony Orchestra under Dmitri Mitropoulos. I was greatly enjoying this moving performance of the 1936 version, despite the limitations of the recording quality, when, right at the very end of the work something quite extraordinary and unexpected happened – the chimes of Big Ben are back again! No doubt Vaughan Williams would have been furious (as he would have been by the American radio announcer mispronunciation of his first name), but I have to say that in its wartime tribute to London context, I found it rather moving. Actually it was recorded just after the war (9 December 1945) and can be found coupled with Sargent’s equally controversial premiere recording of the *Symphony No 9* (2nd April 1958) on a Pristine Audio CD (PASC 234) or as a download. It is one of the most extraordinary Vaughan Williams CDs available.

There is a precedent to Mitropoulos’s addition to the score in a recording of Walton’s *Belshazzar’s Feast* by Robert Shaw in which an additional shout from the chorus right at the end retrospectively ruins an otherwise excellent performance (I understand that the end had to be re-recorded).

Then I was thinking it was about time that Vaughan Williams’s cat Foxy (who does indeed look remarkably like a fox) made a contribution to the *Journal* and was therefore delighted that he had finally made his mark, with the help of his owner, in the charming image on page 28.

Simon Coombs was rather dismissive of Englund and Foulds in his interesting “Music You Might Like”. I would especially recommend Englund’s *First* and *Second* symphonies, both of which have a strong feeling of nature about them which may appeal to admirers of Vaughan Williams. His *Great Wall of China* Suite is very enjoyable too.

Foulds I regard as an unjustly neglected major figure who would be much better known had he not died prematurely, whilst living away in India. I was fortunate to attend a live performance of *A*

World Requiem at the Albert Hall some years ago – it was recorded on Chandos – and whilst Foulds’s score may not be as powerful and dramatic as *Dona Nobis Pacem*, for example, it is just as deeply felt and I was very moved to hear it live. The *Three Mantras* and *Dynamic Tryptich* (coupled with Vaughan Williams’s *Piano Concerto* on Lyrita) are compelling and memorable works, and his *April, England* is a fine tone poem. And unlike Simon, I believe that Freitas Branco’s *Fourth Symphony* is his masterpiece – a great Naxos release.

Jeffrey Davis

East Sussex, UK

MORE THOUGHTS ON LONDON

I do feel that the “London Symphony Timeline” in the last issue should have included the date of the first modern concert performance of the original version: 4th November 2003 at the Barbican Hall with the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Richard Hickox. I remember the occasion well, not only because of the symphony but because the concert also included the first performance of a reconstructed version of the *2nd Norfolk Rhapsody*. I was surprised to discover that I was sitting in the same row as Ursula Vaughan Williams, who had obviously given the concert performances her agreement. I also noticed afterwards that composer Anthony Payne was sitting nearby so I ventured to ask him whether he agreed with me that the description of the last movement in the programme was not quite accurate. He said that he never read programme notes so I didn’t get very far with that! I had not heard the complete version of the symphony previously and so it was fascinating, but I do still feel now that the composer was right to remove the central interlude in that last movement and to curtail the return of the music from the very opening of the work. The Epilogue gives the impression of sailing away from the city, in which case to then bring back so much material that seems to depict it again confuses me at least. On the other hand the extended versions of the middle movements are wonderful, so I’m rather torn between them, but tending to agree with the need for the revisions for most concert performances.

Robert Allan

Edgbaston, UK

A NEGLECTED WORK

“To Record or Not to Record?” I read the article with interest, and it set me thinking about Vaughan Williams’s music that has been recorded in the past and then seemingly fallen by the wayside. The one work that comes immediately to mind is *Benedicite*. To say there was a dearth of recordings would be an understatement. I am aware of only two. The better recording by far is on EMI Classics with Heather Harper and the Bach Choir with the London Symphony Orchestra, a recording that dates from 1968. The Argo recording with Lynda Russell and the Choir of Winchester Cathedral with Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra is a poor recording that produces a very woolly sound. This recording dates from 1991. I have not listened to the recording on “The Collector’s Edition” boxed set. There is very little information to be gleaned about the recordings and I feel loath to part with my money to find out, as customer reviews on Amazon are less than complimentary about the quality of many of the recordings!

Benedicite is a work that I love, though I only became acquainted with it after buying the EMI Classics disc for the *Five Tudor Portraits*. I was immediately smitten. It is not a work that sounds religious, more like a celebration. It opens with an orchestral introduction followed by a lively entrance by the chorus. The middle section is quieter and mellow, returning then to the robustness of the opening. The soprano is captivating and brings a sense of other-worldliness. This I believe to be one of Vaughan Williams's finest choral works. Where did he get his text from? Not as some might imagine from the Bible but from the Apocrypha (the books not included in the Protestant Bible) from "The Song of the Three Holy Children" in the Book of Azariah, and from a poem by John Austin *Hark my soul, how everything*. The most unlikely of sources!

So why is *Benedicite* so neglected? Why only two recordings? Why no performances? Does anyone have the answers to these questions?

Clive Elgar
Norfolk, UK

RVWITCHFINDER

This past December, while home for the holidays, I had occasion to visit Salem, Massachusetts, a town I lived in briefly as a boy. For those of you not familiar, it is an enchanting historic New England port town notorious for its witch trials of the 1690s. Arthur Miller's famous 1953 play *The Crucible* helped to embed the tragic events in the collective conscious, and the witch lore of Salem has been attracting tourists ever since.

As a child I visited the Salem Witch Museum, a spooky converted church of the 1800s, which contains life-sized figures that depict the story of the 1692 trials. The whole experience begins in a darkened sanctuary with the illumination of a large red disk on the floor that lists the names of the nineteen victims of the trials. This is soon followed by the appearance of a ram-like figure of Satan in silhouette with glowing red eyes. As a boy, I was swept up with excitement, and the presentation successfully worked its magic on me. Upon my recent visit as an adult, I found the whole Witch Museum experience a bit underwhelming, however, save for the soundtrack. During the narration that accompanies the visual experience, there was an eerie and dramatic score that emerged with a wordless chorus, solo soprano, and a very active wind machine. My ears instantly perked up, both in delight and concern, when I realized that the music I was hearing was Vaughan Williams's *Seventh! Sinfonia Antartica* is now the musical backdrop for images of voodoo, jail cells, and men being crushed by stones!

While I have not been able to confirm my discovery, I am confident the assertion is correct. If it is not actually Vaughan Williams's original work being used, it is at least a blatant copy of that wonderfully unique orchestration. In hindsight, this little episode is probably more amusing than criminal. However, I can't help but wish that Vaughan Williams could get credit for his music, which adds so much color, mystery, and drama to an otherwise static experience.

Marcus DeLoach
Houston, Texas, USA

GOODBYE HAYLEY

The music of Ralph Vaughan Williams is cropping up in the most unlikely of places these days. We've had it accompanying a sex session in the play *1984*, and now ... in Coronation Street. Poor Hayley Cropper slipped away from this life in the arms of husband Roy to the familiar strains of, I think, *The Lark Ascending*. These moments take one by such surprise! The programme caused much controversy as Hayley had decided to end her suffering from cancer by an act of voluntary euthanasia. It was a touching scene, much enhanced by very beautiful music.

Bob Rush
London, UK

NOT MANY PEOPLE KNOW THAT

Following on from my letter a couple of *Journals* ago giving the astounding news that Vaughan Williams is still alive at the age of 141 (according to Katie Derham at the Proms last year) I am now in a position to reveal even more revelatory facts about the great man's life.

You may recall the cover of the last *Journal* was dominated by a photograph depicting Vaughan Williams with a petite lady beside him. Alongside the picture was the note: "Vaughan Williams at the Cambridge Arts Theatre ... the identity of his companion is thought to be either ... Evelyn Sharp or ... Lettice Ramsey". Well, I can reveal that in my opinion it may well have been Esma Cannon. You may remember her as the dotty little actress who appeared in some of the early "Carry On" films. (She had notable roles in *Carry On Cruising*, and *Carry On Cabby*.)



Esma Cannon

Why is she standing beside Vaughan Williams, you might well ask. Well, unbeknownst to those who consider themselves Vaughan Williams connoisseurs and believe they know the entirety of his life history, I can reveal that he did in fact screen test for a part in the proposed "Carry On" film devoted to the subject of classical music. The plot revolved around a hapless conductor and his attempts to have his "windmill" style of conducting adopted by the musical establishment. As a firm advocate of the "windmill" style, Vaughan Williams was obviously keen to be involved.

The film was to be called *Carry On Malcolm Sargent*. The cast was to include Charles Hawtrey playing the part of Gustav Holst (the resemblance is uncanny) and Kenneth Connor playing Benjamin Britten. Most of the action was to have taken place in the Royal Albert Hall (played by Hattie Jacques). But the film was not to be. The plug was abandoned when Sir Malcolm Sargent pulled out at the last minute having been offered a part as a penguin in *Scott of the Antarctic*.

What might have been!

Rob Furneaux
Cornwall, UK

Concert Reviews

DUBLIN'S FAIR CITY

On 17 January Dublin concertgoers were offered a feast of English music. This does not happen at all often as the main concert organiser, RTÉ, believes that English music does not sell in Ireland. That is prejudiced piffle in my view, perhaps a residual reflection of former conflicts between Britain and Ireland. At any rate there was a good audience for the National Symphony Orchestra's concert of Vaughan Williams's *Wasps Overture*, Walton's *Cello Concerto*, with soloist Guy Johnston, and *A London Symphony*. The conductor was John Wilson, who was recently appointed as Principal Conductor of the RTÉ Concert Orchestra. With that orchestra he can indulge his taste for film music and musicals to his heart's content, but he clearly aims also to secure opportunities in Dublin to perform British classical music of the twentieth century, which I suspect constitutes his deepest love in music. With the National Symphony Orchestra two years ago he conducted a wonderful performance of the *Sinfonia Antartica*, and in this concert too his love and mastery of Vaughan Williams's idiom were in great evidence.

In a pre-concert interview John Wilson dismissed the questioner's rather absurd query as to whether he thought of wasps when conducting the opening bars of Vaughan Williams's gorgeous overture. Be that as it may I don't think I have ever heard so distinct a buzzing as in this performance! And subsequently the rest of the work unfolded in all its bustle and joy, with the big tune – how glorious it is! – most beautifully phrased and articulated by the NSO strings in particular. It must be said that the quality of this orchestra's playing can be uneven and varies from conductor to conductor. John Wilson managed to bring the best out of them and they sounded a superb ensemble on the day. The Walton *Cello Concerto* is a lovely work, and this performance, with Guy Johnston a radiant soloist and John Wilson a most sympathetic accompanist, was all I could have wanted.

Wilson directed a passionate performance of the *London Symphony*, full of drive and high spirits, the *con fuoco* passage in the last movement, for example, as exciting as I have ever heard it, propelled ever onwards with unstoppable momentum. Yet Wilson also allowed the more reflective and expressive episodes, such as the lovely *tranquillo* section in the first movement and the impassioned *largamente* passages in the second movement, to develop into full bloom, unhurried and expansive. The *scherzo* third movement sparkled, whilst in the *cantabile* section of the trio the cellos exuded radiance and joy. In the last movement the epilogue emerged magically, in calmness and serenity, out of the clamorous menace and turmoil of the preceding march in its final terrifying sequences. In fact, every section of the music was characterised convincingly and in the context of the symphony's evolving structure. And, with reference to a recent debate in the *Journal*, I was persuaded once again about the structural soundness of the last movement in its final revision. Wilson coaxed some wonderful playing from string and woodwind

soloists. A particular star of the evening was the harpist, Andreja Mališ, whose beautiful contributions could always be heard, due to the composer's transparent orchestral textures and the fine balance of sound achieved by the conductor.

It was fascinating to listen to John Wilson in the pre-concert interview, partly because of his distinctive Geordie accent and occasional use of colourful language. But above all it was interesting to hear his comments on British music. It was clear that he regards Vaughan Williams as our greatest composer, "head and shoulders above Britten", as he put it, though he admires and likes to perform Britten's music. He is delighted to have the opportunity of conducting all Vaughan Williams's symphonies this year with different orchestras. Elgar was often mentioned but not ranked by Wilson in relation to the other two.

After the concert myself and two friends, on a high from the music, made our way to the conductor's room to express our thanks and admiration. All three of us are not only lovers of Vaughan Williams and Elgar among other British composers, but we are also especially keen on the music of Arnold Bax. We knew that Wilson has conducted this composer's music, so we asked him if he could programme some Bax in his Dublin concerts, perhaps *The Garden of Fand* to start with. The manager of the RTÉ Concert Orchestra was also present in the room, and though Wilson was enthusiastic about our suggestion, the orchestral manager looked distinctly unimpressed!

Tony Williams

THE PLACE TO BE

The place to have been for Vaughan Williams performances during January and February 2014 was Birmingham! Two of our most dynamic British conductors, John Wilson and Andrew Manze, treated audiences to a feast of musical treasures directing the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra in Symphony Hall – a real lift to the gloom during our dour British winter.

In an afternoon concert on 22 January, John Wilson directed an all-English programme – John Ireland's jaunty *London Overture*, Walton's *Cello Concerto* (with Paul Watkins) and Vaughan Williams's *A London Symphony*. John Wilson always brings his special flair and personality to this (and other) music while Paul Watkins brought out the lyrical lines of the Walton.

A London Symphony received a characterful and sympathetic performance, which demonstrated Wilson's empathy with Vaughan Williams. Having experienced a previous Wilson performance of this work about a year ago with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, the Birmingham performance didn't quite ignite with the burning passion that I picked up in the

Philharmonic Hall, but none the less, this conductor can be relied on to reveal the inner detail as well as the architecture and onward flow of this symphony, a work that shows Vaughan Williams in his full maturity and a master of orchestral writing. Wilson's view of this symphony lifts it well beyond a collection of London scenes, delving into the dark shadows, unease, anxiety and even terror that this remarkable work encapsulates, together with the elevations of the commonplace into the realms of "High Art".

Further riches were on offer a mere fortnight later. On Wednesday 5 February, another fervent Vaughan Williams advocate, Andrew Manze, directed the "Ultimate Vaughan Williams" concert, again with the CBSO in Symphony Hall. Andrew has already distinguished himself as a Vaughan Williams conductor to be reckoned with: his symphony cycle with the BBC Scottish and the legendary three-symphony Prom a couple of years ago are definitely "colours nailed to the mast".

A very lucky group of Society members was treated to a short pre-concert presentation in which Andrew shared his Vaughan Williams enthusiasms and answered questions. The first half of the concert, given to a very well-filled hall, consisted of a delightfully judged and dynamic *Wasps Overture*, a thoughtful performance of *The Lark Ascending*, with the rightly understated solo played by the CBSO Leader, Laurence Jackson, and concluding with a noble and beautifully paced *Tallis Fantasia*.

Andrew mentioned at his talk that the performance of *Job* after the interval would be his first as a conductor. It turned out to be as fine a performance as could be wished – committed and beautifully judged orchestral playing and a reading of the score that for me, highlighted its dance elements without losing the narrative. In *Job* one starts to glimpse some of Vaughan Williams's anger in the dissonant, Satanic climaxes (a trait to emerge more fully in the *Fourth Symphony* of a few years later of course) and the feeling of unease permeated the whole performance. The contrasting lyrical dances were again very well judged and convincing in their innocence with splendid instrumental solos – the mockingly insincere saxophone as false comforter and the achingly beautiful solo violin (again, Laurence Jackson) in *Elihu's Dance of Youth and Beauty*.

To many in the audience – including the smart "suits" who must have been there in corporate packages from the conference centre – this concert must have provided an introduction to the music of Vaughan Williams. Of course, *Job* was in itself a new experience for many who are familiar with the other and better-known works. But what an introduction!

Graham Muncy

THE PLACE TO BE (2)

The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra's Vaughan Williams concert on 5 February 2014 was a memorable occasion for those in a packed Symphony Hall and for the many listening to the live Radio 3 broadcast. For members of the Vaughan Williams Society it was even more special, as a reception had been arranged before the concert at which Andrew Manze gave a talk about the origins of his enthusiasm for Vaughan Williams and details about the works in question. Known originally as an early music specialist, Andrew Manze is now one of the most

respected of advocates for Vaughan Williams. His performance of the *Fourth, Fifth* and *Sixth Symphonies* at the Proms in 2012 was a landmark event.

Andrew Manze had been given *carte blanche* by Symphony Hall to choose the programme and he could not have selected a quartet of works better to show the range and variety of Vaughan Williams's achievements: the *Overture to "The Wasps"*, the *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*, *The Lark Ascending* and, to conclude, arguably Vaughan Williams's most impressive orchestral work, *Job: A Masque for Dancing*. Manze was conducting this work for the first time, not that the assurance and control he showed betrayed that fact.

The four works revealed many cross-references to other Vaughan Williams works. The memorable *grave e molto adagio* tune in the *Wasps* has echoes of that most noble opening to the final movement of the *Sea Symphony*, "O vast Rondure, swimming in space." The *Tallis Fantasia* has pre-echoes of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, as does *The Lark Ascending* of the *Pastoral Symphony*. *Job*, with its distinctive use of saxophone and percussion, particularly in Manze's spiky and distinctive performance, seemed a forerunner of both the *Eighth* and *Ninth* symphonies.

The Wasps is an ideal opener for virtually any concert, not just a Vaughan Williams one. Its origin is in the incidental music Vaughan Williams composed for the Cambridge University's production of Aristophanes's play in 1909. Manze brought out so well the vivid contrast between the vibrant opening of the proactive wasps and then the noble, grave tune emerging from a solo horn.

The *Tallis Fantasia* at its first performance in 1910 in Gloucester Cathedral, whose architecture inspired the work, famously affected Ivor Gurney and Herbert Howells so much that they walked the streets of Gloucester afterwards, unable to sleep. So much of the heart of Vaughan Williams lies in this great work, not least his organisational skill in scoring the work for two string orchestras and a string quartet. The contributions of Nicole Wilson on violin and Eduardo Vassallo on cello in the quartet contributed much to the mellow fruitfulness of the performance.

With *The Lark Ascending*, Classic FM territory, the audience was on known territory and they were treated to a radiant solo performance from violinist Laurence Jackson. The work, inspired by George Meredith's evocative poem, was originally composed in 1914 for violin and piano. Only after the war did he orchestrate it to produce the version we now know, with its implicit tribute to his great friend George Butterworth, who had been killed on the Somme in 1916. Indeed few works evoke so much that prelapsarian era of Edwardian England than *The Lark Ascending* and Butterworth's orchestral *Idyll, A Shropshire Lad*. The prolonged silence after the last notes died away in Manze's performance was tribute indeed to the effect that the work had made.

Diaghilev said that *Job* was "too English", a curious comment. Would we criticise Stravinsky's great ballet scores for being too Russian? "I am English", wrote D. H. Lawrence, "and my Englishness is my very vision." How true this also is of Vaughan Williams, though in his case with the assimilation of continental influences, notably from Ravel, who approvingly observed that Vaughan Williams was "the only one of my pupils who does not write my music." Laurence Jackson rejoined the orchestra for a rapt performance of *Job*, particularly in his long solo for "Elihu's

Dance of Youth and Beauty”, leading to the Sons of the Morning dancing before God’s throne. Again one admired so much the contrasts that Manze brought out between such lyrical passages and the violence – a pre-echo of the *Fourth Symphony* – in the battle in Scene iv and the terrifying entry of the organ in Scene vi, “Happy is the man whom God correcteth”. Julian Wilkins was most impressive in this brief, but unforgettable intervention. *Job* emerged as a true symphonic work, and one drawing together so many of Vaughan Williams’s characteristics.

Job was dedicated to Adrian Boult, who always regarded the work as one of Vaughan Williams’s greatest achievements and it was a work he liked to schedule in concerts abroad, from America to Vienna. He chose it as the main work in his centenary Vaughan Williams concert at the Festival Hall on 12 October 1972, a performance now available on a memorable DVD. Strangely, *Job* is not played all that often compared with the symphonies and hopefully Manze’s impassioned advocacy of the piece will redress that balance.

A generation ago such a Vaughan Williams concert as this one would have been considered too risky a proposition commercially. Fortunately, such days are over. Andrew Manze told the members of the Society that the promoters at Symphony Hall had been gratified by the ticket sales, which far exceeded their rather cautious expectations. We must look forward to more such Manze programmes. *Sinfonia Antartica* followed by the *Sea Symphony* would be an enticing prospect.

D. R. Thorpe

THE PLACE TO BE (3)

On 23 March I, along with my wife and Mike Wilson (all RVWS members), attended a concert given at the Elgar Concert Hall at the University of Birmingham. This is a splendid small concert hall which was about *three quarters* full for the event. Most vacancies were in the front stalls which did not have such a good view of proceedings.

The concert was given by the Birmingham University Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Andrew Kirkman. This is a full-sized orchestra of over sixty members, made up of students of the University, with just three guest performers. The standard is impressively high.

After possibly the longest tuning-up session I have ever heard, the concert commenced with a new work, *Edgbaston in the Rain*. Although this may sound like a lament from the Warwickshire County Cricket Club, it is actually a depiction of a journey down the Bristol Road to Selly Oak, passing the University itself, in changeable weather, including a period of thunder. The composer Simeon Liley graduated from the University in 2013. Only about seven minutes long, the piece is inventive and approachable, although it at times (according to the programme) employs serial methods. The composer was called to the stage for prolonged applause.

The next item was Elgar’s *Cello Concerto*, the soloist being Joshua Rohde. He is currently studying for an MA in choral conducting at the university, having already obtained degrees in both cello performance and civil engineering at Boston

University, USA. An interesting combination! It was a creditable performance by both soloist and orchestra, the slow movement being most moving. Although I know this music well, it struck me as odd that I noticed for the very first time in the final movement a passage which brought to mind John Barry’s music for the film *Zulu*! It must be a coincidence.

Perhaps so as not to put too much strain on an amateur orchestra, performance time was rather slow, thirty-one minutes instead of the more usual twenty-eight or twenty-nine. But without checking this with my watch I would not have noticed. The performance conveyed all of Elgar’s sense of despair following the First World War, and the end of his own Edwardian era.

After the interval we were treated to a rare performance of Vaughan Williams’s *Eighth Symphony*. This does not appear to be performed live very often, possibly because of the array of ‘phones and ‘spiels called for. Because of this it seems to be discounted by even Vaughan Williams lovers. This is big mistake. Possibly it is easier for a university with a strong music department to present it. They must possess a large store of varied and exotic instruments, yet I cannot recall seeing either the tubular bells or the tuned gongs which the composer desired if available.

I last heard this work live in Liverpool twenty-two years ago. It is an inventive and imaginative work, which gives the different orchestral sections opportunities to shine on their own. The performance was admirable. The violin solo in the “Cavatina” (by the orchestra’s leader, Anthea Ma) was beautiful, an echo of the *Lark* and Elihu’s dance in *Job*. If possible the brass and woodwind in the third movement were even better; and everyone had a fine time in the final movement when the three percussionists (all female) joined in. Again the performance was leisurely – thirty-two minutes, but it lost little because of this.

I don’t know how many in the audience had heard the piece before. Those who hadn’t had an enjoyable ear-opener, and all showed their appreciation with loud and prolonged applause.

This was a most enjoyable concert indeed. Vaughan Williams would have been proud of an amateur performance of such quality, despite the absence of tubular bells, and all for only £8 a head (£3 for students). Also, starting at 6 pm we were all back home by 9 pm that evening. Well done Birmingham University!

Michael J Gainsford

A CAPITOLE CONCERT

I was born in Wigan, roughly equidistant from Manchester and Liverpool. My earliest concert memories, then, are of an hour’s journey to hear the Hallé or the Liverpool Phil. It now takes me about the same time to get to Toulouse, where in the agreeable surroundings of the Halle aux Grains, I can hear the orchestra whose name is a cumbersome Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse. The orchestra was virtually rebuilt by Michel Plasson who remained faithful to the ensemble for 35 years. The current Music Director is Tughan Sokhiev, a brilliant conductor who has recently been appointed as the new Musical Director of the Bolshoi, a post which he is said to be intending to maintain alongside his post in Toulouse, plus – he’s a very modern maestro – the Musical Directorship of the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin.

Sokhiev was not on the podium on the evening of Saturday 26 April, having vacated it for the young English conductor – whom I admit I had never heard of – Nicholas Collon. If English conductors are a rare breed here, and all-English programmes even rarer, Vaughan Williams symphonies are like hen’s teeth.

The programme opened with the “Sea Interludes” from Britten’s *Peter Grimes*, conventional programming and well played. They are magnificent in the opera, but I’ve never really thought they worked that well as a concert piece. Then came the same composer’s *Violin Concerto*, a relatively early work – Britten was only 26 – and first performed in Barcelona, conducted by Sir John Barbirolli. This is not the easiest of Britten’s works to take in, even for enthusiasts of the composer, but the performance here was a revelation. The young Norwegian violinist, Vilde Frang, was quite magnificent. With the score on a music stand in front of her, she gave her all to this brooding, sombre work. Technically she was impeccable, but we expect that nowadays. What was even more remarkable was her penetrating view of a work that is still not all that frequently performed. She clearly believes in it, and communicated her belief to the audience. It was a spell-binding performance.

If anybody had asked me which work to choose to introduce Vaughan Williams’s symphonies to a Toulouse audience, I should have chosen the *London*, or the *Fifth*, or, well, almost any one

other than the one that *was* chosen, the *Sixth*. The work is obviously a stunning masterpiece, but many, perhaps even most of the audience will have been Vaughan Williams virgins, and the *Sixth* is neither the easiest way in, nor the one to give the best overall impression of the composer’s music. Nonetheless, the long final movement, almost as shorn of relief as it is meant to be, had a remarkable effect on the audience. They seemed to be holding their collective breath. What an extraordinary work, though! I’ve never really known what to make of it – four totally different movements, played without a break, that somehow add up to a coherent whole. Three people I knew were in the audience, and they told me later that they had enjoyed the whole programme enormously, and that they had listened to the Vaughan Williams relatively untroubled. Had the work made the right impression, then? Who knows? The performance was excellent, the orchestra apparently at ease with the composer’s idiom. If one had to find fault I would say that they weren’t quite into the “meaning” of the third movement, whose saxophone solo, though well played, wasn’t quite oily enough. The winds, too, found it difficult to play totally without expression in one or two places in the finale. But it was gratifying to see a French orchestra apply itself to music that so rarely graces these shores. A pleasure, too, to witness the orchestra’s applause for the conductor at the end, though their earlier applause for Vilde Frang had been even more enthusiastic!

William Hedley

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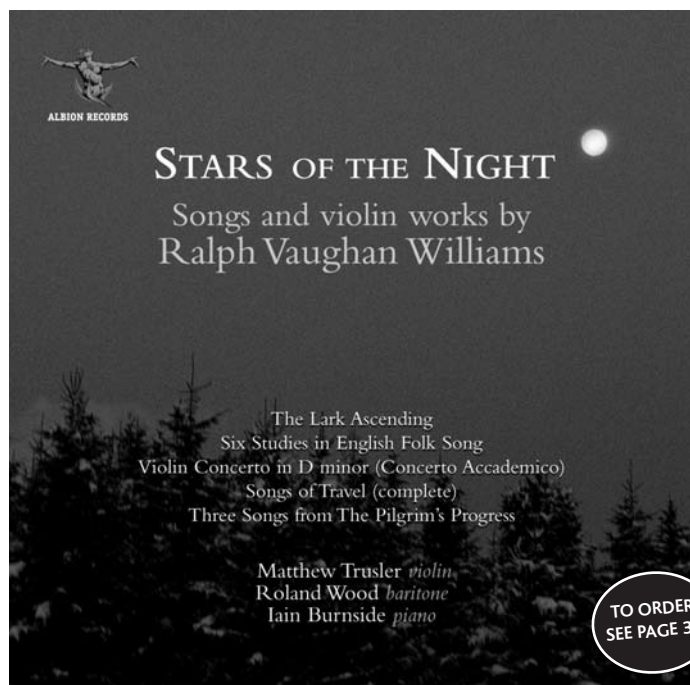
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Stars of the Night

Stephen Connock introduces Albion's latest CD.

Two violin works of contrasting style and popularity are included in the latest release from Albion Records. *The Lark Ascending*, often rated as Vaughan Williams's best loved work, is here given in the rare version by the composer for violin and piano. Originally performed by Marie Hall in 1920, before the orchestral version, it is played by the acclaimed British violinist Matthew Trusler with Iain Burnside at the piano. The only other recording of this arrangement is the hard-to-find Carlton Classics CD with Lydia Mordkovich. Hers is a more emotional interpretation, with Lydia feeling, as she put it at the recording, that the Lark would die shortly after its majestic flight. Matthew Trusler is lighter in mood, letting the cadenzas soar effortlessly. Iain Burnside brings his usual sensitivity to the accompaniment.

accompanied by Iain Burnside. Members may have discovered this work in the old Saga recording by the late John Shirley-Quirk. His style and artistry made this an unforgettable interpretation but Roland Wood brings his own character and exemplary diction to these moving songs. Finally, we have included Roland Wood in three songs from *The Pilgrim's Progress*, enabling us to recall his noble interpretation of both Pilgrim and John Bunyan from English National Opera's 2012 performances of the complete *Morality*.



ABOVE: Top to bottom.
Matthew Trusler, Iain Burnside, Roland Wood

The contrast between *The Lark Ascending* of 1914 and Vaughan Williams's *Concerto Accademico* of 1925 is remarkable. The concerto was arranged by Constant Lambert for violin and piano, and here receives its world premiere recording in this version. It shares with other works of the mid-1920s, such as *Along the field* (1927), a more detached, economical style owing much to Holst as well as reflecting Vaughan Williams's wartime experiences on the eastern slopes of Vimy Ridge. The *Concerto Accademico* is closer in spirit to Bach than to folk song. The title may not have helped the popularity of the work – even Vaughan Williams dropped it for a performance by Yehudi Menuhin in 1952. Members unfamiliar with this work may find the violin and piano arrangement an ideal introduction.

The violin and piano part of Albion's new CD is completed by the beautiful *Six Studies in English Folk Song*.

Alongside these arrangements, the recording also features baritone Roland Wood in the complete *Songs of Travel*, again

Stars of the Night is released on 2 June. The title is taken from a line in the sixth of the *Songs of Travel* – "The Infinite Shining Heavens". 🌙

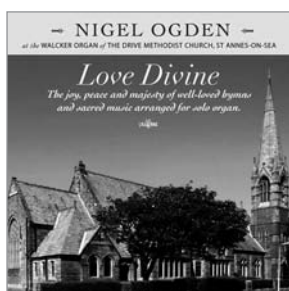
CD Reviews

Love Divine

“Well-loved hymns and sacred music”
played on the Walcker organ of The Drive
Methodist Church, St Annes-on-Sea.

Nigel Ogden, organ

GRASMERE GRCD 138



This is a disc for organ lovers, and especially for those who are also churchgoers, or who have, at the very least, happy memories of hymn singing in church or at school. Among the twenty-one tracks, Vaughan Williams is represented by *Down Ampney* (“Come down, O Love Divine”) and *Sine Nomine* (“For all the saints”), both of which were among my favourites when playing for school assembly what seems like a whole lifetime ago. Another was “My Song is Love Unknown”, to the tune *Love Unknown* by John Ireland. Have you ever noticed how similar the beginning of this tune is to the beginning of *Down Ampney*? The rhythm is identical, and the notes, allowing for the fact that the tunes are in different keys, are the same, with only the order changed. Ireland’s tune has a wonderful, wandering quality to it, and the altered note at “O who am I/That for my sake”, is exquisite.

Many listeners will find personal favourites here. There is “Alleluia! Sing to Jesus” (*Hyfrydol*), “Praise my soul, the King of Heaven” (*Praise My Soul*) and “Jesus, good above all other” (*Quem Pastores Laudavere*). It was also a pleasure to reencounter the glorious double suspension at the words “With his own blood he bought her” in “The Church’s one foundation” sung to Wesley’s tune *Aurelia*. I reserve a final mention for *Thornbury*, another great favourite, which we sang to the words “O Jesus, I have promised” but which appears here as “Thy Hand, O God, has guided”.

As well as all these there are a number of

hymns that will probably be more familiar to those within the Methodist tradition. There are also a few short pieces that are not hymns at all, but sacred pieces arranged for organ. The hymns are played pretty much in the way they would be when accompanying congregational hymn singing, whose final verse harmonic variations are more or less successful, depending on taste.

The organ is a distinguished instrument and sounds magnificent. It is very well recorded. Nigel Ogden, well-known to organ lovers, plays splendidly. The booklet includes full details of the pieces, alongside a short essay by Richard Golding that provides a jolly introduction to the programme. Another essay gives the history of the instrument, inaugurated in 1894, and with a series of maintenance invoices over subsequent years that will surely strike fear into anybody contemplating the purchase of such an instrument!

William Hedley

Vaughan Williams: *Symphony No. 8*

with Ravel: *Piano Concerto in G major*;
d’Indy: *Symphony on a French Mountain Song*

Nicole Henriot-Schweitzer, piano; Boston
Symphony Orchestra/Charles Munch

PRISTINE AUDIO PASC 368



I was probably about thirteen, at home in Wigan, lying on the living room floor listening to the Third Programme and probably turning the pages of the latest *Beano*. Then a new piece started, a modern piece, launched by an extraordinary noise that sounded like somebody cracking a whip. No more reading after that, as I was completely taken over by Ravel’s *Piano Concerto in G major*; indeed, as the movement hurtled towards its extraordinarily exciting close I was probably standing up.

This was the work that first opened my ears to the wonder of “modern” music, and that sense of wonder has never left me since. The concerto is played on this disc by a French pianist I had never heard of, accompanied by one of the most eminent of all French conductors, with the most French-sounding American orchestra of the time. It’s a fabulous performance, speeds quite sober in places, but exciting nonetheless, and with a deeply moving cor anglais solo in the slow movement. I don’t much like the idea that recordings made after I was born – all these performances were recorded in 1958 – can qualify as “historic”, and as a general rule I’m not a “historic recording” fan, but I was amazed at the quality of the sound in this instance. Nobody would be fooled into thinking it was a modern digital recording, but such details as “brushed” cymbals come over with startling clarity, giving the recorded sound a particular atmosphere that more recent recordings don’t always have.

I’ve never much cared for d’Indy’s *Symphony on a French Mountain Song*, and am surprised to read that Vaughan Williams had considered d’Indy as another possible teacher when seeking his “French polish”. The music seems pretty distant from Vaughan Williams’s sensibility, and I can’t think he would have been much in sympathy with it. Still, perhaps he knew more of d’Indy’s music than I do. All the same, I’m glad he chose Ravel. If you like the piece I think you’ll like the performance, as Nicole Henriot-Schweitzer, Munch and the Boston Symphony Orchestra go at it for all it’s worth.

The main interest of the disc for Society members is, of course, the symphony, and I can confidently state that the disc is worth buying for that performance alone. It was recorded live at the Tanglewood Festival on 2 August 1958, and this is a transfer of the radio broadcast. We thus hear the announcer mispronouncing Vaughan Williams’s first name twice, once before the performance and once after it. Including the applause was, I think, a good idea, as it shows what a rousing reception the piece had. I should have cut the announcer, though, especially after the performance. Others will feel it adds atmosphere and period charm. There is a certain amount of coughing and wheezing from the audience in the early moments

of the symphony, but either their health improves or they are entranced by the music, as this subsides to a considerable extent quite quickly. The important thing, however, is the performance, and that is absolutely superb. I don't know if Munch conducted the work later in his career – he died suddenly, shortly after taking over at the head of the newly created Orchestre de Paris in 1988 – or indeed if he conducted any other Vaughan Williams works. In any event, he really had the measure of this one. The first movement has a wonderfully searching quality about it, as the composer's description of five variations in search of a theme has rarely sounded quite so apt. The scherzo is perfectly paced, with stunning playing from the Boston Symphony Orchestra winds, and Munch brings out the inherent melancholy in a beautifully paced and played reading of the Cavatina. The finale brings the house down.

The sound is remarkably fine for its age, and my memory of broadcast concerts on the wireless, even in the early sixties, makes me wonder how Andrew Rose of Pristine has managed to secure sound as rich and full as this. There are moments of distortion, in the finale in particular, with all the spiels and phones, and the timpani can be a mite thunderous at other times, but the sound is more than good enough to ensure comfortable repeated listening. The CD timings as printed are a bit awry, but that shouldn't stop this becoming one your favourite versions of the *Eighth*.

William Hedley

Vaughan Williams: Mass in G minor
with Walton: *Belshazzar's Feast*; J S Bach:
Christ lag in Todes Banden
John Cameron, baritone; Roger Wagner
Chorale, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra/
Roger Wagner
PRISTINE AUDIO PACO 071



What a strange character William Walton was! So precocious a talent when young, so apparently indolent and unproductive once ensconced on his island in the Bay of

Naples. Michael Kennedy's book *Portrait of Walton* goes some way to explaining this strange phenomenon, but mysteries remain. Thank goodness for the early works, the three marvellous string concertos, the *First Symphony*, *Façade*, and, of course, *Belshazzar's Feast*.

I have to be honest and say that the main interest of this disc for me was the Walton, one of my favourite works since my youth. The performance here is simply sensational. It was recorded at EMI's Abbey Road studios in September 1960 but issued thereafter only in the USA. I have not heard the original LP, but Andrew Rose has clearly worked wonders with it once again. The sound is not only full, immediate and dramatic, but surprisingly analytical. I think many will hear details they haven't heard before, particularly, perhaps, in the choral writing.

Roger Wagner (1914-1992) was a French-born American choral conductor. His view of *Belshazzar's Feast* is a bit relentless, especially if you have decided to spare your neighbours by listening on headphones. Many find the work itself relentless, but there are passages of repose, and it is here that I think we might have hoped for a little more really quiet singing and playing. It's a minor point, however, and you'll have to search hard to find a more exciting performance than this one, or one where the choral singing is quite so compellingly distinguished. What a pleasure, too, to hear a real, dark bass-baritone in the solo role. John Cameron is just marvellous. The orchestral playing is sensational. I don't know who the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra trumpeters were in 1960, but their playing here is of the utmost virtuosity. And the percussionist who plays the anvil deserves a medal! To return to Wagner, there are inevitably minor points of interpretation that surprise the listener, but the only place I really take issue with him is at the very end, the final flourish, which I find crude and which seems to go against the composer's admittedly slightly ambiguous markings.

The Bach and Vaughan Williams performances also date from 1960, but were recorded in Hollywood. The sound is inferior, especially in the Bach, but acceptable, especially to those who collect historical recorded performances. The performance of the Bach is disfigured by the conductor's curious decision, even allowing for the times, to have all the solo parts sung by the choir. The choral basses cope

manfully with Versus 6 toward the end of the work, but even so they sound elephantine to ears accustomed to contemporary performance practice. Each vocal passage is subjected to a huge *rallentando* at the end, which is then followed by another a couple of bars later at the end of the orchestral postlude, another sign of the times. The choir is reduced in number, but this is a mixed blessing as some voices stick out and, especially in the alto section, one or two of them might better have remained hidden. I don't think many readers will gain much pleasure from this performance.

The Vaughan Williams is another matter. The recorded sound is not a patch on the Walton, but it is better than the Bach and is, in any event, perfectly listenable. A feature of the times is the almost gleeful use of stereo, with the two choirs widely separated from each other. Those accustomed to the King's College performance, and for whom no other approach will do, are advised to treat this reading with caution. It is much freer, more overtly passionate than Willcocks, the Renaissance polyphony perfume much reduced. So in the Gloria, for example, Wagner is very free with tempo, speeding up and slowing down in places not always authorised by the score. The feel of the piece is thus altered, and you couldn't really say subtly. The choir sings very well, and if soloists' voices might divide opinion, I found them very satisfying. Wagner and his choir make a better shot at the long *diminuendo* on the miraculous final page than Hickox does on his Chandos reading, though I'm still waiting for the choral conductor who succeeds in making the final chord a real triple *piano*. A slightly startling feature of this performance, at least until you get used to it, is the fact that Wagner has taken the composer at his word – in the score – and uses an instrumental accompaniment. Vaughan Williams, ever practical in encouraging performances of his works, includes an organ part in the score, which "may be used if it is not found practicable to sing the Mass entirely *a capella*." In this case it is the bass line that is reinforced, but only at certain points. I suppose it is the organ pedal that does this, but the texture is so clear and the note so lacking the habitual fuzziness of organ bass notes that it could almost be a small cello/double bass section. It is discreet, however, and does not interfere with the enjoyment of what is a fine but very individual performance, and one that all Vaughan Williams enthusiasts should get to know.

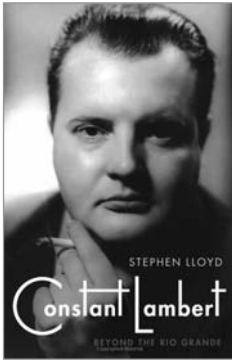
William Hedley

Book Review

Constant Lambert – Beyond The Rio Grande

Stephen Lloyd

Boydell & Brewer, 2014, £45



After the plethora of Britten centenary books comes a biography which is no less welcome, although it is nine years late for the centennial commemoration of Constant Lambert. The life and works of this giant of the English musical world in the first half of the last century have been covered before, but not in such detail nor in such style as in Stephen Lloyd's splendid magnum opus.

This is a big book. It runs to nearly 600 pages, including a comprehensive bibliography and thirteen appendices. These cover Lambert's compositions, his recordings, radio broadcasts, newspaper articles, the concerts he conducted and, most importantly, the ballets which he wrote, arranged, inspired and conducted. There is even an account of the parallels between himself and the character Hugh Moreland in *A Dance to the Music of Time* by his close friend, Anthony Powell.

Two thirds of the book is devoted to a continuous chronology of his short but hugely productive life. This draws extensively on his letters, those of his many friends and colleagues in the world of ballet and beyond, and his own journalism, which became increasingly important to him as a source of income. There are also many examples of his marvellous sense of humour, including his irreverent poetry and the "naughty" postcards that he sent to his friends.

After a fairly unhappy childhood, with a largely absentee father and his schooling at Christ's Hospital marred by illness, he showed precocious ability in music and

entered the Royal College of Music in 1922, aged just seventeen. His first teacher was Ralph Vaughan Williams, and theirs was to be a friendship based on mutual respect. Lambert made a two-piano arrangement of the *Wasps Overture* while still a student, and Vaughan Williams turned to him in 1931 for a scaled down orchestration of *Job* at its first performance as a ballet. In 1942, on the occasion of Vaughan Williams's seventieth birthday, Lambert dedicated to him his *Aubade héroïque*.

Lambert had entered the world of ballet after a meeting with the Russian impresario, Serge Diaghilev, in 1925. He had previously written a score entitled *Adam and Eve*, which, renamed *Romeo and Juliet*, became the first English ballet to be danced by the Ballets Russes. His friendship with William Walton led to his meeting the Sitwells, thus beginning a long association with *Façade* as its narrator. In 1928, the first performance of *The Rio Grande*, with a text by Sacheverell Sitwell, brought him to the attention of a much wider audience. It proved to be extremely popular, achieving sixteen Proms performances between 1930 and 1951.

Journalism and broadcasting were important sources of income, and conducting a wide range of new and established composers' works in concert became increasingly significant in that respect. His own compositions were relatively few in number, as he was too busy with a multiplicity of other duties, especially in the ballet company which came to be the Sadler's Wells. The book gives a vivid picture of the exhausting schedule of work and travel which he maintained right to the last. His stamina was immense, fuelled by his vast enthusiasm for everything to which he turned his hand, but his constitution was undermined progressively by his smoking and drinking, and ultimately by the undiagnosed diabetes which eventually killed him two days short of his forty-sixth birthday.

The author treats with great sensitivity Lambert's difficulties with his two marriages and with alcohol. His affair with Margot Fonteyn and his association with Philip Heseltine and the Eynsford set are touched on without any hint of salaciousness. Far more attention, rightly, is given to the almost unanimous view of all those who

knew him, worked with him and loved him, that he was a genius, a multi-faceted talent and the most delightfully agreeable of companions.

This is a serious book, a weighty book, and does ample justice to its subject. One is left in no doubt of Lambert's importance as a colossus of English music, especially the English ballet in its formative years after the First World War. Without wanting to be too critical, I should make two observations. While the detail of Lambert's social and working life is immense, his compositions are given a fairly cursory examination. There are musical examples for some works but not for others, and the development of his style is not discussed. Much of his music is imbued with the rhythms and spiky orchestration of Les Six, especially Milhaud, but a comparison of two of his ballets, *Pomona* (1927) and *Tiresias* (1951), is instructive. Both are conveniently available on a single Hyperion CD (CDA 67049).

Readers of the *Journal* will perhaps remember my concern that important books like this should be thoroughly proofread. This one starts well, but after 200 pages or so, typing and spelling errors start to creep in. Try the first full paragraph on page 406 for a particularly chaotic example of typesetting, and don't be too put off by *La Giocanda* (page 330), Lambert's own error quoted in a letter, but missing the "[sic]" that would have made this clear – and *Daphnis and Cloe* (page 580).

Nevertheless, I strongly recommend this book to all who share my fascination for a long-lost era when giants walked the earth. Such legendary figures as Dame Ninette de Valois, Sir Frederick Ashton, and Sir Robert Helpmann from the world of ballet, Cecil Gray and Hubert Foss, Christopher Wood and Michael Ayrton, Anthony Powell and Tom Driberg MP, forgotten composers such as Bernard van Dieren and Denis ApIvor, all are brought vividly to life. Readers of the *Journal* may also wish to know that there are eighty-seven references to Vaughan Williams and his music in the index. If Constant Lambert himself is now a somewhat obscure figure to many, this book should bring him into a much clearer focus.

Simon Coombs

From the Chairman

Recent issues of the *Journal* have contained much discussion regarding the different versions of the *London Symphony*, and it is good to see members actively discussing and debating this. My personal view, for what it's worth, is that whilst I consider the final version a "better" symphony – tauter, leaner, more economical – I was bowled over by the extensive glowing beauty of the "new" music at Hickox's performance of the original version some years ago. So I couldn't support Graham Muncy more when he says that we should cherish both versions.

This of course reminds me of the importance of live music making and concert attending, once again been brought home to me by the occasion of the very recent English Music Festival. (I was delighted, incidentally, at the number of Society members who were able to attend.) One of the highlights of the Festival was hearing the strains of *Five Variants of "Dives and Lazarus"* resonating through Dorchester Abbey – that wonderful, unmistakable soundworld. I do hope that all those who attended the Festival enjoyed their time with us, and will be moved to return again next year!

On a lighter note, I must leap to my own defence in response to the intimation by my Vice-Chairman in the previous issue of the *Journal* regarding my predilection for unusual names for those in my care. After all, what could be more normal than having a cat named Quilter, after Roger? Or two ducks named, respectively, Cordelia and Desdemona (Cymbeline, alas, never made it to adulthood)? Then there are the dogs, Krishna and Æthelwulf, not to mention, from my younger days, the white rats Pergolesi, Palestrina, Purcell, Vivaldi, Scarlatti and Corelli. Nevertheless, I will permit Simon the sigh of relief he perchance emitted on the announcement of the birth of Tristan who, incidentally, is thriving and has already established himself as a music lover. No doubt full membership of the Society to proclaim his admiration of the great Ralph Vaughan Williams will follow shortly...

Em Marshall-Luck



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