Journal of the RVW Society

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In this issue...

Matthew Best, conductor of the new 'Hugh' recording.

Bowing ourselves in

Successful and influential composer societies do not happen overnight. They must have clear objectives - well-meant general enthusiasm is not enough – and must expect membership to build up steadily rather than dramatically. The word has to get round, the effectiveness of various forms of recruitment has to be tested, and members need to see they are getting something for their money.

No complacency

We are more than happy with the opening phase of the society. There are over 150 paid-up members as we go to press, and there is every sign that the number will reach our first-year target. But complacent we are not. The development of a committee structure, able to pursue and, where possible, to implement our objectives, is very much our present concern. Sharing our enthusiasm is one thing, but being an effective lobbying body and source of advance information is high on the agenda.

Having said our platform piece, we hasten to acknowledge that a society needs a friendly atmosphere and a forum where all may participate. That is what this journal – to be issued three or four times a year – sets out to foster. Obviously we'll be asking leading RVW authorities to contribute – some already have in this issue – but we are keen to encourage articles from the entire membership. Some such material has already appeared and is included in this issue: other articles have been offered, and we look forward to receiving them. Letters are, of course, always welcome, and so are news items about recent or forthcoming RVW performances.

We also want to run 'Wanted' and 'For sale' columns where members may seek missing items from their collections or offer surplus books, records or scores to others. There will, of course, be no charge for these advertisements.

The bibliography and recommended recordings publications circulated with the membership pack will be updated periodically, but meanwhile we are sending you OUP's RVW catalogue. This is not entirely up to date but is nevertheless a comprehensive and practical summary of what can be had currently from RVW's main publisher.

We put this first issue before you with the hope that you will find it stimulating and informative, and enrich further your enjoyment of this much-loved composer's music.

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'Hodie' is a masterpiece...

Vaughan Williams has been well described as a 'Christian agnostic'. His religious beliefs were certainly not orthodox and in his undergraduate days at Cambridge he proclaimed himself an atheist. His views on life after death, or the existence of an immortal soul, were ambivalently expressed in the 1925 oratorio *Sancta Civitas*, his own favourite of his choral works, and rather more nihilistically in the *finale* of the Sixth Symphony. But what do those enigmatic closing chords of the Ninth Symphony tell us?

He would not have considered it strange, hypocritical or perverse that with these views he should have composed such a vast amount of music on religious subjects: not only hymn-tunes which have become part of our heritage, but a communion service, a Mass, a ballet based on the *Book of Job*, several motets and settings of psalms and canticles. He recognised that churchgoing, as a communal activity, was one of the few occasions when many of the congregation heard music (this was before the invention of radio). Therefore he was concerned that it should be good music and it was for that reason that he agreed to edit *The English Hymnal* in 1904, expecting the task to take a few months instead of the two years for which it occupied most of his attention.

Special challenges

The festivals of the Christian calendar, such as Christmas and Easter, offered special challenges. Like Benjamin Britten, Vaughan Williams could enter into the spirit of Christmas and found musical inspiration in the story of the Nativity and in the traditional aspects of the English Christmas. When he was nine or ten he composed sketches for a Nativity scene. But it was over 20 years later, when he was collecting folk-songs, that he discovered how deeply Christmas was ingrained in the national consciousness. He heard Mrs Verrall of Horsham, Sussex, sing *On Christmas Night* to him on 24 May 1904 and he stored it for later use. Another folk-song he had collected earlier, *The Ploughboy's Dream*, he converted into the hymn *O little town of Bethlehem*, his first contribution to the treasury of Christmas music.

MICHAEL KENNEDY SURVEYS RVW's CHRISTMAS MUSIC

His first specific Christmas work was the *Fantasia on Christmas Carols* for baritone solo, chorus and orchestra, composed for the Hereford Festival of 1912. This was one of the several works he wrote at this period - *Hugh the Drover* and *A London Symphony* were others - in which he practiced what he preached in his famous article 'Who Wants the English Composer?' when he wrote: 'Have we not all about us forms of musical expression which we can purify and raise to the level of great art? The composer must . . . make his art an expression of the whole life of the community'. So in this *Fantasia* he took several of the carols he and others collected and set them into a framework that looks deceptively simple but is artfully contrived. His credo with folk-tunes was that they were so beautiful he wanted to share them with others, and the tunes in this work are of special beauty, the Herefordshire carols *This is the truth sent from above*, introduced by a ravishing cello solo, and *There is a fountain*. The chorus is sometimes required to hum, as it does when the baritone takes up *This is the truth*. The sturdy *Come all you worthy gentlemen* has *The First Nowell* as a descant, but the work's emotional epicentre is the baritone's singing of *On Christmas Night*. Christmas bells are heard towards the end but, like so many other Vaughan Williams works, the ending is quiet. 'Happy and beautiful, hearty and mystical', were Frank Howes's adjectives for this music and he chose them well.

Sharing these tunes with others inevitably led to publication of *8 Traditional Carols* and *12 Traditional Carols from Herefordshire* and eventually to joint editorship of *The Oxford Book of Carols* (published in 1928), to which Vaughan Williams contributed over 30 arrangements. But his least-known Christmas work is the masque *On Christmas Night*, an adaptation of Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* which he devised in collaboration with the American choreographer Adolf Bolm. Dickens would scarcely have recognised the scenario, although Scrooge, Marley's Ghost and the Fezziwigs are retained. But the work is an excuse to use the great tunes and some folk-dances such as *Haste to the Wedding* and *Sir Roger de Coverley*. Shepherds and the Three Kings appear and, eventually, Bob Cratchet and Tiny Tim. The last named was very nearly excluded - 'I don't think I could stomach Tiny Tim', the composer wrote. He relented because 'the whole thing is sentimental'.

Worth reviving

The first performance was in Chicago on Boxing Day 1926, by the Bolm Ballet, with an orchestra conducted by Eric Delamarter, who had preceded Vaughan Williams himself in 1921 with an orchestral version of *On Wenlock Edge*. The masque was not performed in England until 1935, when Imogen Holst conducted. The score would be worth reviving. There is a song for the Watchman off-stage reminiscent of a similar magical moment in *Hugh the Drover*.

Vaughan Williams's biggest and greatest Christmas work belongs to his old age, the cantata *Hodie*, or *This Day* as it was originally to be called, but the composer and everybody else preferred the Latin title. He began to think about it in 1952. Ursula Wood, whom he was to marry a year later, said she had once compiled a programme of Christmas poems linked with extracts from the gospels. While she looked for it, he made his own selection and they discovered

they were almost identical. Neither had found anything suitable for the Three Kings, so Ursula was instructed to 'write something'. The resulting scenario was an 'anthology' work of the kind Britten also liked. Among the poets set in *Hodie* are Hardy, Milton, Drummond and Herbert, with a linking narration from the Bible sung by boys' voices.

It seems to me that in this work Vaughan Williams enshrined the spirit of Christmas rather as the service of lessons and carols from King's College, Cambridge, did in its heyday under Boris Ord. I heard the composer conduct the first performance in Worcester Cathedral on 8 September 1954 with the soloists for whom it was written, Nancy Evans, Eric Greene and Gordon Clinton, and I experienced much the same reaction as had Vaughan Williams when he first heard *Dives and Lazarus:* 'I have known this always, only I didn't know it'. In a sense I had known it always, for *Hodie* is a retrospective of Vaughan Williams's style, from the fluent lyricism of *On Wenlock Edge*, revisited so memorably in the setting of Hardy's *The Oxen*, to the cold, glittering Antarcticisms of Drummond's *Bright Portals of the Sky*. With the childlike simplicity of the two chorals, the enchantment of the shepherds' episode, the exhilaration of the March of the Three Kings and the final triumphant Milton ode which complements the jaunty opening 'Hodie' chorus, the work has an emotional unity which overrides any disunity of style. Yet a young and influential critic savaged it as 'grossly under-composed' and wrote of 'downright unacceptable and damaging primitivity'. Damaging? A curious choice of word. Yet it remains true that *Hodie* has not established itself as many of its first listeners thought it would. If music really was engraved on the heart of this nation, we would hear it every Christmas. Admittedly it is difficult, especially for the soloists, but then so is *Messiah*. Unfortunately, too, neither of the recordings made of it has done it anything like full justice. But I remain convinced. It is a masterpiece.

'God bless the master'

In the last years of his life, when RVW lived in Hanover Terrace, he assembled groups of friends to sing madrigals in the drawing-room. At Christmas they sang carols - 'the real English carols', he insisted, 'no *Good King Wenceslas*'. The moment everyone will remember was when one of the Wassail Songs he had collected was reached and his guests, with heartfelt expression, could sing: 'God bless the master of this house'.

'A career in music with the works of Vaughan Williams woven through it in this way has been a privilege to live.'

A few years ago I produced a programme for Radio 3 called *Berlioz: Traveller, Raconteur.* I was taken to task by *The Listener* critic for giving no inkling of the composer's creative process, the intentional avoidance of which I thought had been clearly signposted in the title. Similarly here you will find no profundities, but simply a record of the pleasure which that most English of composers has given to a practising musician throughout his working life.

I must have played the hymn-tune *Sine Nomine* (For all the saints) scores of times at school, never noticing the name of the composer, but I do remember playing in the *English Folk Song Suite* and being mesmerised by the loving detail of the second movement, *My Bonny Boy.* The beauty of the modulations, the modal harmony and the gentle return to the main tune were eye-openers and ear-benders to someone still immersed in the study of traditional harmony. At about the same time a friend played me the recording of the Fourth Symphony (the original 78s conducted by the composer), and it was with some astonishment that I realised that the two composers were one and the same. I already knew about B-A-C-H, but if B-A-H-B seemed a little perverse all was forgiven when we reached the tumultuous final pages.

Barbirolli's recording of the Fifth Symphony came out at the end of the war, and this was a piece I studied carefully with a score which bears the date 28th May, 1946. Little did I imagine then that only two years later, in my final year at Oxford, I would be privileged to sit in on the rehearsal (I must have gatecrashed with a confidence I couldn't muster now) of the second public performance of the Sixth Symphony. This took place at Oxford in the Sheldonian Theatre, and according to Michael Kennedy's *The Works of Vaughan Williams* the date was 11th May, 1948. Boult was the conductor, and there, only yards from me, sprawled across several empty seats, sat Vaughan Williams. He was 76 years of age, but in spite of his stoop simply towered over everything in both personality and physique.

I well remember the extraordinary impact of the double bass pizzicatos that support the brass figures on page 5 of the score. I instinctively looked across at the tympani, only to find they were tacet, and I still marvel at the sure-footed technique which VW himself would have been the last to claim. He describes somewhere how, as a young man, he would sit for hours chewing his pencil wondering what notes to give to the second clarinet. Howells told me once that VW was almost scared in later life by his new-found facility.

Michael Kennedy's book prints VW's own programme note for the work. I have the programme of the Oxford performance somewhere, but the combination of a distant attic, natural laziness and no idea where it would be anyway has ensured its safety.

ERIC WETHERELL pays tribute

My memory of that occasion however is of smiling broadly at the statement regarding one of the themes '... and I found this theme at the back of a drawer.' It seems to be unaccountably absent from the Kennedy version. It is known that VW made alterations to some of the scoring after hearing it. There seem also to have been two printed versions of the score. Mine carries the date 8th September, 1948, but when I bought the first recording I found the performance to be full of extra brass phrases that were not notated in my score. By pencilling in these additions I had the advantage of two versions in one. All the scores I have seen since have these additions in print.

I had never before seen a professional orchestra rehearse. The combination in the playing of relaxed ease, concentration, and total technical mastery was a revelation. So was the moment when, in a quite passage, Boult half turned in the composer's direction and shouted over the music, 'That alright, Ralph?' Back came the reply, 'Bit slow, Adrian.'

Later, at the RCM, though I wanted to be a conductor I was reluctant to join the conducting class. I somehow felt that to learn without an orchestra was like learning to skate without ice. Two pianists would play the work as a piano duet for the unfortunate student conductor, who consequently gained no experience of the problem of ensemble and balance when 60 musicians play 25 separate musical lines, not to mention the psychological ploys involved.

At about this time I had the pleasure of playing in a now neglected work - *Riders to the Sea* - at a Morley College performance conducted with wonderful sensitivity by Walter Goehr. I had also been lucky enough to have played in another rarity - *Flos Campi* - at Oxford, when I think the viola soloist was Jean Stewart.

At the RCM I got my conducting experience with an unofficial orchestra run by the Students' Union. I decided to do the Fifth Symphony of VW and, as the concert date approached, one of the staff suggested I invite the composer. I laughed and said it was out of the question that he would want to hear us, but I was given the address and sent him an invitation. It was an unofficial occasion, an hour-long lunchtime concert, and I should have known better than to put the College into such an awkward and compromising position. To my great surprise he answered in that wonderful and inimitable scrawl -

'Thank you very much for your invitation - I hope very much to be

present - but my other commitments are not (quite?) fixed yet. I will be there by 1.0 (sic) pm. . .'

Not only did he reply, he turned up. When I met him in the College entrance hall afterwards he said some complimentary things, and to be in his presence - not because of his fame, but because of his aura - was an experience I will not forget. A thick shock of grey hair, a black overcoat that reached down to his ankles (it was December), a face at once kindly and interested, but eyes that missed nothing - these were only the beginning. In spite of the stoop, he still dwarfed me physically, and I felt I was in the presence of someone very special.

I was also very naive and quite unaware of what I had stirred up. Howells, one of my professors, appeared as if from nowhere muttering 'Why weren't we told about this?' About a week later I had a letter from the Registrar, Hugo Anson, informing me that as the College considered I was now fit to take my place in the musical profession they had added my name to the leaving list at the end of the year. I had been there three terms and I would leave after five.

There is no way of knowing whether the two incidents were connected, but their estimate of me must have been accurate as I landed a job in the horn section of the LPO, and will always be grateful to the College, and indirectly to Vaughan Williams, for giving my career what could be described as a kick start.

About eighteen months later I had to give up horn-playing for medical reasons and considered applying for the post of Assistant Conductor with the Yorkshire Symphony Orchestra, now defunct. I wrote to VW for a reference, reminding him that I had not studied conducting officially and that such a post would therefore give me valuable training. Here is his typed reply -

'On the one occasion on which I heard you conduct I realised that you had the makings of a competent conductor and evidently knew your music very well'.

Advantage

'The fact that you had not attended any conducting classes I think is, on the whole, an advantage as I cannot see that they do any good. Practical experience is the only way to learn.'

It was reassuring to find that he shared my distaste for the conducting classes of the time, and I spent my convalescence brushing up my piano technique. Amongst other things I found an opportunity to learn and rehearse the *Introduction and Fugue* for two pianos.

His reputation for film music rests almost entirely on *Scott of the Antarctic.* Its subsequent elevation to the status of symphony has somehow rescued him in the eyes of a public which still sees something meretricious about involvement in the film world. He was adamant that the best training a young composer could have was to submit himself to the discipline of the 'one minute, twenty-three-and-a-half seconds' cue, and the dramatic perception of his music for the modest 1947 film *The Loves of Joanna Godden* deserves to be acknowledged, together with the suite drawn from the 1956 documentary *The England of Elizabeth.*

Much later, when I was established in the musical profession, I took every opportunity to bring the works of VW to the attention of the public. There was a long period at the BBC when such music was considered to occupy a backwater, and the saying within the corporation was that that generation of composers went anti-clockwise.

I have had the opportunity to conduct the other work which made such an impression on me, the Sixth Symphony, with orchestras both professional and amateur, introducing it in the 'seventies for the first time, I believe, to the Dublin RTE Orchestra,

On the centenary of his birth I managed to persuade HTV - on the grounds that VW was born in Gloucestershire - to do a commemorative programme. Larry Adler played the *Harmonica Rhapsody*, Raymond Cohen the Violin Concerto, a representative selection of vocal music and a clip from *The Loves of Joanna Godden* were included. I didn't tell the company until afterwards that VW had moved away from Down Ampney before he was three.

I once shared a flight with an experienced orchestral harpist and took the opportunity to discuss the repertoire. I asked her whether Ravel's harp parts were as hard as they looked. 'Oh, no,' she replied, 'they are quite manageable. But do you know who's the worst?' I made several guesses before she told me that Vaughan Williams seemed to have little idea how the fingers could and could not stretch in chordal passages. Even so, it is not difficult to accept our loved ones, warts and all.

A career in music with the works of Vaughan Williams woven through it in this way has been a privilege to live. I still feel my Anglo-Saxon bones tingle at the sound, and, luckily, those to whom that sound is anathema will not read these pages. It takes time for the tag 'old-fashioned' to disappear, and when it finally does, true worth wins hands down.

Concert Review

Magnificent singing by Bryn Terfel at Wigmore Hall recital

Bryn Terfel has already won the admiration of RVW Society members with his recordings of *Dona Nobis Pacem* and *Sancta Civitas* (EMI). His first London recital at the Wigmore Hall, on 11th May, included the *Songs of Travel*, with pianist Malcolm Martineau.

The programme notes referred to 'R.V. Williams', omitted to mention the poet and, sad to relate, revealed that only five of the cycle were to be performed: *The Vagabond, Let Beauty Awake, The Roadside Fire, Whither must I wander?* and *Bright is the ring of words.* This selection does not follow the publisher's sub-division into Books 1 and 2, and lacks the unity provided by the inclusion of *I have trod the upward and the downward slope*, which quotes themes from the earlier songs in a most moving way.

Ravishing

All musings on this subject were swept away at the concert by the magnificence of Bryn Terfel's singing. He was at his most robust in the open-air qualities of *The Vagabond*, his powerful bass-baritone seemingly filling the Wigmore Hall and reaching out beyond to Bond Street. *Let Beauty Awake* was ravishing, his singing of *Let her awake to the kiss of a tender friend* sustained great tenderness. His sensitivity to the words was also revealed in *Whither must I wander?* especially in *Spring shall come, come again...* . Indeed, his bar-by-bar characterisation was remarkable throughout the five songs. I was enthralled, hearing songs I know well as if for the first time. Let us hope he records the complete cycle, giving everyone the opportunity to experience a great singer in wonderful music.

Stephen Connock

Roy Douglas on the –

'Unforgettable and infinitely precious experience of working with RVW'

From 1947 until his death in 1958 I was closely associated with Ralph Vaughan Williams and his music, helping him to prepare most of his later works for performance and publication, including the last four symphonies and the morality 'The Pilgrim's Progress'. During the last years of our friendly co-operation I received over 70 letters from RVW, many of them revealing some fascinating sidelights on the character of the composer: his extraordinary vitality and liveliness of mind, even at an advanced age, his wry sense of humour, and his unfailing thoughtfulness for other people; they also show his constant concern with small details in the balance and texture of his scoring.

Vaughan Williams's handwriting was usually extremely difficult to read, and his musical manuscript was equally illegible, if not more so. He was ruefully aware that his musical writing was far from easy to decipher, and used to joke about it himself; for instance, in 1951 he wrote to me concerning *Sinfonia Antarctica:* 'I have a rough full score and a short score which is in my best handwriting, which you know. I think it is legible although not pretty'.

Part of my job was to discover the correct interpretation of his manuscripts, and then to produce accurate copies of his full orchestral scores for the hire library of Oxford University Press.

Foolish

The first important Vaughan Williams work I dealt with was his Symphony in E minor, now known as No 6. In February 1947 I received a letter from RVW which began: 'I have been foolish enough to write another symphony. Could you undertake to vet and then copy the score?' 'Copy the score' was a somewhat inappropriate description of what I was being asked to do, as I soon discovered. It was the seemingly harmless little word 'vet' which indicated the true nature of the task which lay before me; and, as the years passed, my work on RVW's scores became increasingly complex.

He wrote his scores in ink, apparently very quickly, and many unintentional discrepancies found their way on to the pages.

This article has been adapted by the author from passages in his book 'Working with Vaughan Williams', published in 1988 by the British Library, who retain all copyrights.

All such small errors I would have to detect and rectify; this is what he refers to in his letters as 'vetting' a score, or 'washing its face'. Later I would check and correct the manuscript copies of the orchestral parts; another very important job was to deal with the numerous alterations in scoring and dynamics which he frequently made after early rehearsals, and sometimes after a first or subsequent performance. Eventually, when the score was engraved for publication, I would have to correct the proofs.

The fertility of his musical imagination was truly amazing: once he began composing a new work the music just poured from him in such abundance that his pen could scarcely write fast enough to get it down on paper. This was, of course, part of the reason for his indecipherable handwriting; though the fact that he was naturally left-handed may well have contributed to his 'cacography', as he called it.

I have always found it difficult to choose the exact word to describe my position in relation to Vaughan Williams: copyist is very inadequate; editor too pretentious; collaborator inaccurate; amanuensis is nearer. At one time I coined the phrase 'musical midhusband', as my job was to assist the composer in bringing his creations into the world of music.

Mistaken notion

Unfortunately, in the 1950s a foolish rumour began to spread among some musicians, hinting that I had actually *orchestrated* much of RVW's later music. Even in the 1990s I find that music-lovers occasionally entertain this mistaken notion; so, while I am still around (I am now in my 87th year), I must strongly emphasise that any such absurd suggestion is totally untrue.

Much of the work I undertook for RVW was exhausting, mentally and physically - even, I must candidly confess, infuriating at times - but I was always completely happy to do all I could to help him in every way, because he was not only a great composer but also a man who inspired affection. Many years ago I described my work with Vaughan Williams as 'a labour of love in the sincerest meaning of both of those over-worked words'.

Enriched

On reflection, I think we must be very glad that he wrote so fast and so illegibly; had he written more slowly we would almost certainly have had fewer works by RVW to give us lasting pleasure. And, from an entirely personal point of view, had his handwriting been easier to read, he might never have discovered that I could be helpful to him; I would not have eventually enjoyed his friendship; and my musical life would never have been enriched by the unforgettable and infinitely precious experience of working with Vaughan Williams.

Colin Peters recalls RVW's words:

Film music: every composer should be taught the art

The use of music in motion pictures can be traced back to the days of Ancient Greece, when it accompanied the dramas of that period. Also, throughout history music has been used to set the scene and create the moods in plays.

Enhancing

Today, film composers use music for the same reasons. Even in the 'silent era' music was used to accompany films, usually classical bits that bore no connection with what the audience was watching. Over the years producers and directors came to realise that music specially written for films could enhance their works and make them more enjoyable for the audiences.

Thus a band of European composers arrived in Hollywood, some via the film studios of England. Names like Miklos Rozsa, Franz Waxman and Erich Korngold wrote scores for many films, some of which are today regarded as 'classics' and are often performed in orchestral concerts. Also, classical composers have been enlisted to write for this special genre. The first in England was Edward German, with his score for the 1911 film *Henry VIII.* Later, in 1936, Arthur Bliss wrote a superb score for the film *Things to Come:* this music, incidentally, was the first film score to be issued on records. Other famous English composers to write music for films were Malcolm Arnold, William Alwyn, William Walton, and of course, Ralph Vaughan Williams.

Between 1940 and 1957 he wrote scores for 11 films, the most famous of which was *Scott of the Antarctic.* He was inspired by the story of this film, which resulted in what was, I feel, the finest score ever written for any film. Over the following four years he used many of the film's themes and gave us *Sinfonia Antartica.* In doing this, he did what many film's composers would perhaps like to do but do not have the time or opportunity. This results in what today is released on CD as a 'motion picture soundtrack'. It more often than not consists of main title, many of the themes and an end-title. Nevertheless, this is still a film score.

Excellent discipline

Vaughan Williams said writing film scores was an excellent discipline and every aspiring composer should be taught the art. Of the 11 films he scored, very few have found their way onto CD, and I feel the only way we shall hear the music is if a television company should ever decide to screen the film, or perhaps we can urge a record company to record the scores.

As I mentioned above, between 1948 and 1952, probably due to his great affinity for the subject, Vaughan Williams turned a fine film score into a great symphony, although I suspect many people do not regard it as a symphony. I refer, of course, to *Sinfonia Antartica.* It created a vast amount of comment after its first performance, and still does today. What's in a name? It is surely the end result that matters, how the music affects the listener. I feel he wrote his finest music in this symphony. I list to the left of this column the films he scored, together with dates and CD issues I have found. I urge you all to listen to this side of a great composer's talent, for it contains some very fine music indeed.

Finest?

I will always hold the opinion that Ralph Vaughan Williams, as composer of classical and film music, wrote great music. I hope it gives you as much pleasure as it gives me, as I really do think it is among the finest music ever written.

THE FILM SCORES OF RVW

	1940.	*49th Parallel*	42126-2. NPO-Bernard Herrmann
	1942.	*Coastal Command*	FILMCD713. PO-Kenneth Alwyn
	1943.	*The People's Land*	Not issued
	1943.	*Flemish Farm*	Not issued
	1944.	*The Stricken Peninsular*	Not issued
	1946.	*The Loves of Joanna Godden*	Not issued
[+]	1948.	*Scott of the Antartic*	828844-2. PO-Ernest Irving.
	1949.	*Dim Little Island*	Not issued.
	1950.	*Bitter Springs*	Not issued.
	1955.	*The England of Elizabeth*	GD 90506. LSO-André Previn.
	1957.	*The Vision of William Blake*	Not issued
		[Ten Blake Songs not all used in the film]	

[+] Highly recommended; this CD contains some excellent British film music of the 1940s and 1950s.

'Hugh' on CD at last

Stephen Connock compares two CD versions of this full romantic ballad opera

The neglect of Vaughan Williams operas on CD has been shameful. It is therefore a major cause of celebration that the complete *Hugh the Drover* has appeared on CD for the first time. The EMI recording (CMS 224-2) is a re-issue of the 1979 box set conducted by Sir Charles Groves, with Robert Tear as Hugh and Sheila Armstrong as Mary. Hyperion - in a bold move for the company - has issued a new recording conducted by Matthew Best, with Bonaventura Bottone as Hugh and Rebecca Evans as Mary - (CDA 66901/2). The Pearl CD of the original 1924 production conducted by Malcolm Sargent is currently available (GEMM CD 9468). Despite being abridged and of primitive sound quality, it is invaluable for the inspirational singing of Tudor Davies in the role of Hugh.

Composed in the period 1911-14, *Hugh the Drover* contains music of remarkable power and expressiveness. Whether in the great and passionate love duet of Act 1, or the beautiful moment of repose in the stocks in Act 2, or the emotional passages at the end of the opera when Hugh and Mary leave together for *the road again, the blessed sun and the rain*, the music is of a very high quality. There is throughout that easy lyricism and open-air feel found in early RVW. A number of strophic songs in the opera remind us of *The Vagabond* from the *Songs of Travel*. The opera quotes the same street cry as the slow movement of *A London Symphony - Will you buy my sweet primroses?* The composer was working on the symphony as he wrote *Hugh the Drover*.

Libretto criticised

The libretto by Harold Child has received considerable criticism, and it is clear from RVW's letters to Child that the composer significantly influenced the story-line to the good. Right up to 1956, Vaughan Williams was revising the libretto and score. However, the words did allow Vaughan Williams to write much lovely music. Lines such as *All the scented night breathes of music and of loving* (for Hugh) or - *In the night - time I have heard you calling, calling* (for Mary) are perfectly matched by the highly expressive music Vaughan Williams poured on them. Perhaps it is time to reassess the Child libretto.

Both these complete recordings rightly treat the music straight, without parody or self-consciousness. Both contain first-class soloists. Yet there are clear differences of approach recognisable from the choice of lead singers. Robert Tear and Sheila Armstrong are thoroughly familiar with Vaughan Williams' idiom. She has excellent recordings of the *Sea Symphony* and *Dona Nobis Pacem* to her credit. He has *On Wenlock Edge* and the *Songs of Travel*. Bonaventura Bottone comes fresh to the part, arriving via Lensky in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, from Kurt Weill's *Street Scene*, and from (at the Royal Festival Hall recently) the tenor solo in Orff's *Carmina Burana*. Rebecca Evans also has a background in opera, although RVW Society members may recall her Radio 3 broadcast of *Hodie* with Bryn Terfel.

Matthew Best has clearly thought long and hard about the opera, and deliberately sought the extra emotional range and immediacy which these soloists bring. It is indeed a dynamic, vital and expressive performance. Charles Groves' interpretation is not lacking in punch or lyricism either. This conductor in RVW could be bland, but not here. The RPO and Ambrosian Singers are in splendid form. Robert Tear as Hugh also calls to mind the passion and nobility evident in Tudor Davies's recording from 1924.

It is, however, Matthew Best who draws a more universal interpretation from his Corydon forces. In his recordings the parallel with Puccini is inescapable. Michael Kennedy has pointed to the Puccinian warmth of the music in *Hugh the Drover*. Even the arrival of the soldiers is common to both operas, although in *Hugh the Drover* they have a dramatic role rather than a purely theatrical one. Knowing of Sir Thomas Beecham's magic in Puccini, how I would have loved to have been present at those Beecham performances of *Hugh the Drover* in 1933.

The contrast between the two recordings can be assessed at the beginning of Act 1. There is in Matthew Best's hands a most vivid characterisation of the crowd scenes, with a tremendous response from the excellent Corydon Singers. The Showman of Karl Morgan Daymond is over-characterised for my taste. Richard Van Allen (Constable), Alan Opie (John), Robert Poulton (Sergeant) and particularly Sarah Walker (Aunt Jane) are superb throughout. Sarah Walker's handling of *Life must be full of care...* is very moving. She finds significantly more emotional depth here than did Helen Watts on the EMI version. In the supporting roles, Hyperion clearly have the edge The prize fight is certainly exciting, too, in Matthew Best's hands. The onset of dawn early in Act 2 is beautifully handled by the Corydon Orchestra.

What then of Hugh and Mary? Sheila Armstrong on EMI sings with a purity of tone and line that are admirable. She also suggests a vulnerable, trapped individual and can float a phrase beautifully. This works wonderfully in, for example, *Alone I would be as the wind and as free...* in Act 1. Elsewhere, the interpretation can be too chaste, too careful. Rebecca Evans is more freely expressive. In particular, she can suggest great tenderness, as in *I have dreamed your arms around me twinning, twinning*, or passion, as in *Ah no! you shall not fight him, O my heart*. Robert Tear on EMI does sing the role of Hugh with ardour and in fine style. I have long admired his singing of *Alone and friendless, on this foreign ground* – one of the most moving passages in all Vaughan Williams. At last, we

can also dispense with that maddening side-break on the LP set. The *Song of the Road* is also excellent in Robert Tear's version. Bonaventura Bottone sings this beautifully, too, without quite removing memories of earlier versions. RVW Society members will recall the marvellous recording by James Johnstone (EMI HQM 1228). Bonaventura Bottone is, however, capable of more dramatic intensity than Robert Tear as in, for example, his cry *You lie! You lie! I love my country* on being accused of being a French spy.

Both Rebecca Evans and Bonaventura Bottone excel in the big duets, especially *Oh, the sky shall be our roof, and my arms your fire* from Act 2.

Best of all is the Hyperion of the Act 2 scene in the stocks. This is incredibly delicately played and sung. Rebecca Evans whispers *I am come to set you free.* This is a revelatory scene which reflects to the credit of all concerned. It perfectly captures RVW's concept of that 'magical stillness' heard on that summer night so long before. What power and beauty his score contains! Hopefully, the time has come for this work to receive the universal acclaim for which it is due.

To sum up, if you had to buy only one version, the Hyperion is the one to have. Preferably, buy both!

'FANTASTIC TEAM SPIRIT'

Stephen Connock meets Matthew Best, Bonaventura Bottone and Rebecca Evans to discuss the new Hyperion recording of 'Hugh the Drover'.

Matthew Best has already established his credentials in Vaughan Williams through a series of excellent recordings for Hyperion. He knew the vocal score of 'Hugh the Drover' and when approached by Ted Perry of Hyperion jumped at the chance to record the opera. 'I thought about the casting at length. I wanted young, talented singers with operatic experience. They needed to be able to colour their roles to provide a sense of immediacy and presence.' His choice of Bonaventura Bottone as Hugh and Rebecca Evans as Mary fulfiled these criteria. Neither had studied 'Hugh the Drover' before. As Bonaventura Bottone put it: 'Matthew Best asked us to bring our operatic style to the music. He wanted it to be accessible, without any hint of pastiche. The music has a tremendous range of emotions - elation, fear of the unknown, a sense of personal loss - which we needed to characterise with a mixture of intensity and naturalness'. For Rebecca Evans, learning and performing the role of Mary was a pleasure throughout. 'This is the richest and most beautiful music Vaughan Williams ever wrote' she says with great conviction. 'There are moments of intense lyricism, and the music deepens as the characters develop. The harmonies are wonderful. This is real tingle factor music'.

Refreshing

The emphasis from all three principals is on sincerity. 'In an age of hard-edged sophistication and cynicism, the immediacy and certainty of Hugh and Mary's love is refreshing', says Bonaventura Bottone. Matthew Best believes in the breadth of the music. 'This story translates to any culture. It has an expressiveness and emotional range which are universal' For all, it was also great fun to do. 'We had a fantastic team-spirit', says Rebecca Evans. 'The music came off the page as if in a live performance'. Would these performers be interested in a live performance of the opera if the Society could promote? A resounding 'yes' from all concerned!

Bonaventura Bottone (Hugh) and Rebecca Evans (Mary) with members of the Corydon Singers during the new Hyperion recording.

The unknown RVW – a matter for debate

LEWIS FOREMAN puts the case for some exploration

The progress of our appreciation of the big names of twentieth-century music generally appears to have passed through a number of stages. Firstly, there is a (usually fairly long) process to establish the music and have all the major works played. Then, once the music is known, recorded and performed fairly frequently, there is the bringing forward of lesser-known works, but those still part of the oeuvre that the composer regarded as part of his accepted output. Then we reach a more problematic area, which traditionally has caused composers' families and representatives considerable problems. This is the investigation of the works unperformed in the composer's lifetime, withdrawn works and fragmentary or uncompleted scores. Yet ultimately most do get performed, all are interesting, occasionally an unknown masterpiece is found. I cannot think of one composer whose standing has not benefitted from this process.

Vindicated

Over the last 30 years we have seen some tremendous achievements by musicologists working towards performing editions of otherwise unperformable scores. Deryck Cooke's performing edition of Mahler's Tenth Symphony and Friedrich Cerha's completion of Berg's *Lulu* are but two obvious ones, both taking a long time in convincing the immediate family that the proposition of performing was a sound one, but fully vindicated once performance had been achieved.

A more hard-fought case is Sibelius, where we can see the two extremes - the original version of the Violin Concerto, now revealed as a rewarding work in its own right, on the one hand, and the original version of the Fifth Symphony, a failure. Our knowledge of both powerfully reinforces Sibelius's stature.

When we turn to British music the benefits have been even more interesting. The systematic revival and performance of the large number of withheld and unknown works by Sir Arnold Bax has clearly demonstrated that he actually achieved mastery of the impressionistic orchestra ten years earlier than had been generally documented from his published output. The zeitgeist is a powerful continuum, and it is strange how the perspective can appear differently at different times. In the case of Bax,not only was there a significant number of withheld works of high quality , but also there was a time when Bax himself was persuaded to make cuts in his First Symphony, quite clearly to modern ears to the detriment of the work. How could so brilliant a composer as Bax, a distinguished musician with such a fine ear, have been so insecure that he was persuaded to such decisions? Because he did so, are we in any way denigrating his status because we are playing works that did not receive his imprimative: of course not - quite the opposite.

The case for Howells is even more dramatic, Howells being revealed as a significant British orchestral composer of the period up to the Second World War by the revival since his death of orchestral music unplayed or suppressed in his lifetime.

The performances of unknown Britten barely needs mention: revising his unknown works has become a significant industry which has materially enhanced Britten's reputation and stature and given us some lovely music.

At the time of the Holst Centenary I wanted to programme Holst's early *Cotswold Symphony* and was sharply rebuked by Imogen Holst. Then, perhaps, Holst's regular works were not sufficiently securely established for an immature work to be heard. Yet the appearance of Lyrita's wonderful CD of early Holst (Lyrita SRCD 209) refutes any worries that the hearing of early scores might dilute or damage our appreciation of the main output. Certainly in the case of Holst I challenge anyone to show that this deeper understanding of his achievement has done anything to suborn our championship of his mature works, and the music is delightful - different certainly, variously derivative - but still wonderful. Holst appears by far the greater figure because we have widened our knowledge of him. Certainly no composer of stature can be damaged by a better appreciation of all he wrote, his failures as well as his successes.

Now this is a particularly interesting area in the case of Vaughan Williams, whose catalogue must now include more unknown works and versions than any other major composer. There has been generally been a climate to discourage explorers outside the accepted repertoire of RVW's music, but now that the major - and many minor - works are so well known, is it tenable? Are there any clues that might enable us to divine whether it would be a worthwhile exercise. Well, certainly the 1920s version of *A London Symphony* is one, and the recent CD reissue of Goossens' 1941 recording of this version is strong evidence in favour, I believe. (Try it, and make up your own mind.) The passages in question are not particularly extensive but, for example, in the second movement, after some 7½ minutes, comes those six bars lamented by Bernard Herrmann, who felt they were 'one of the miraculous moments in music', going on to say 'It will always be an enigma to me why these bars were removed'. In the last movement (track 9 at 2' 05") come some two minutes that were cut in the later version and this surely was a mistake; as Michael Kennedy says, 'the T-W section of the epilogue was cut from 32 bars to 8 by a total jettisoning of all the augmentation and canon of the motto theme, leaving only the *Lento* theme to be followed rather abruptly by the final *tranquillo* section' - as if our film of the land gradually fading jerks to a sudden

change in perspective owing to a clumsy edit.

Something special

The Vaughan Williams centenary in 1972 was really the starting point for the present high level of interest in VW, and at that time I was fortunate in having access to a set of parts of the 1920 version of *A London Symphony* which was performed at London's St John's, Smith Square, by Leslie Head and the Kensington Symphony Orchestra. I guess it *could* have been novelty value that has caused it to remain in my memory as something special , but the reissue of Goossens's performance has confirmed it. There is no good reason why we should not enjoy both versions and it highlights the most intriguing question of all: the *original* version of *A London Symphony*. Now here the obvious way forward is for Michael Kennedy to introduce a Radio Three feature on the versions, and the differences between them, to be followed by a performance of the complete original score. As next year is British Music Year on Radio Three, this is surely a good time for such a project . We would all then be able to follow the development of the symphony and make up our own minds. In fact what we actually need is a BBC performance of every surviving note RVW ever wrote (spaced over a year or two) in chronological order. What a great figure would emerge from such an immersion, great for his failures as well as his successes. What a project for the Vaughan Williams Society to aspire to!

Unsurpassed

In the case of Vaughan Williams we are especially fortunate in having Michael Kennedy's exhaustive and still unsurpassed catalogue - the pioneer catalogue of a British composer and still the best. From this we can see that there is a range of unheard Vaughan Williams pieces that we surely need to consider, and I hope it might be an appropriate objective for the Vaughan Williams Society to develop a forum in which these scores can be performed and evaluated.

A trawl through Kennedy's catalogue (see box right) reveals a number of matters for consideration.

Serenade

Some years ago now the new England Chamber Orchestra, conducted by James Sinclair, performed the *Serenade* of 1898 in the USA and so I am able to comment on it after a hearing. Here we have a very early work of RVW, and it is not surprising if it does not have the mature RVW ring throughout, but it is a remarkable unity. Never-the-less, the Prelude's opening cello cantilena could well be by the mature composer, modally inflected music written six years before RVW's official discovery of folksong. Indeed, the horn-writing and the ubiquitous triplets in the line all foreshadow the later composer. The folksong idiom of the following Scherzo, particularly at the opening, is also recognisably RVW (Kennedy prints the horn tune), while many passing felicities, particularly the trumpet twiddles, are deliciously memorable. It also has that great merit of knowing when to stop. The Intermezzo and Trio perhaps achieves least, but for its day it must have seemed forward-looking and to us the falling pizzicato bass line is strongly reminiscent of his friend Gustav Holst, but almost certainly was inspired by Stanford's then very recent *Requiem*. Vaughan Williams actually dropped that movement and substituted a much longer Romance, which James Sinclair also played. It opens with a wistful clarinet over gently chugging strings, but the way the strings take up the line is pure RVW, even if the melodic line itself is not yet fully characteristic. The appearance of the oboe second subject and the strings' following entry sees RVW finding his mature voice, and is a glorious moment. He only clumsily sustains it, but its freshness and the ensuing string line and climax reinforced by the horns is spine-tingling. This is music that needs no apology - it should be on CD, now. The movement ends with a lovely bit of Stanford. The Finale alternates a clumping dance (what envigorating horn counterpoint!) with a slower meliflous clarinet and echoing wind. The five movements last 27 minutes and put Vaughan Williams' early development in a totally new perspective, and I must say it is most enjoyable. If the other unknown music is only as good (I am sure much of it is far better), then our assessment of Vaughan Williams' development will take a new perspective, while we will add some lovely unknown music to our repertoire.

'Coastal Command'

I guess I should briefly also mention the film music, most of which is available one way or the other. My special favourite has long been *Coastal Command* - don't miss the recording by the Philharmonia and Kenneth Alwyn (Silva Screen FILMCD 072). But all the film music repays attention.

1897	String Quartet in C minor
1898	*Serenade in A*
	Quintet
1899	*The Garden of Proserpine*
	Mass for SATB soli, mixed double choir and orchestra
1900	*Buccolic Suite*
1902	*Fantasia for Piano and Orchestra*
1903	*Willow Wood*
	The Solent
	Piano Quintet in C minor
1906	*The Steerman* (aborted from *A Sea Symphony*)
1907	*Norfolk Rhapsody No 2*
1908	*Three Nocturnes*
1911-14	Incidental music to Greek Plays - *Iphigenia in Tauris/The Bacchae/Electra*

From here the works worth a hearing are less substantial, and many of them are published:

1912	Purcell: *Evening Hymn*, arr voice and string quartet
1929	*Three Choral Hymns*
	Three Children's Songs
1934	*The Pilgrim Pavement*
1935	*My Soul Praise the Lord*
1936	*Nothing is here for tears*
1938	*England's pleasant land*
1940	*Six Choral Songs to be sung in time of war*
1941	*England My England*
1941	*A Call to the Free Nations*
1949	*Folk Songs of the Four Seasons*
1950	*The Mayor of Casterbridge (Prelude on an Old Carol Tune)*

Finally, there are two fragmentary scores that would require great tact and sympathy but surely need at least some assessment:

Unfinished: Cello Concerto

Unorchestrated: *Thomas the Rhymer* (opera).

continued from previous page

There are some alternatives that don't work. The replacement of the soprano vocalise in the *Pastoral Symphony* by a clarinet is a mistake, an instant dispeller of magic, though it was necessary to hear it to find out. But what of the cantatas from the operas? *In Windsor Forest* is such a delight, and comparatively frequently recorded, but I don't think I have ever heard *A Cotswold Romance* or *Pilgrim's Journey*. Ted Perry of Hyperion Records tells me he hoped to include deleted and alternative passages as an appendix on his new recording of *Hugh the Drover*, particularly extra music from the beginning of Act II, but he was not allowed to do so. The CD is such a flexible medium, allowing non essential material to be tracked at the end, and inserted by the listener if they wish, that this strikes me as somewhat strange, and also distracts from the impact of Hyperion's new recording. I can only say that if it had been a composer on whom I advise (such as a Bax) I would have leapt at such an opportunity.

Suffolk Folksongs

Other successful revivals have included the overture *Henry V*, Gordon Jacob's orchestration of the *Variations for Brass Band*, and the *Fantasia on Suffolk Folksongs*. The last, a delightful work revived on CD by Julian Lloyd Webber, was earlier another item which, not so long ago, OUP would not allow for performance. I applaud their subsequent decision to let it be recorded, and while it is not a great work, it is an enjoyable one and adds to the span of our knowledge of RVW. There was no advantage in keeping it from us.

One of the concerts first responsible for getting me interested in RVW was given by Dr William Cole at The People's Palace, Mile End Road, in the early 1960s. It was a long and awkward journey for me, and the hall was practically empty, but the music was inspiring and included Vaughan Williams' *Six Songs to be Sung in Time of War*, the only time I have heard it, though I acquired the vocal score. It is a problematical work, not only for its subject matter but because it is written for unison voices and orchestra. Nevertheless, it underlines that there is actually a considerable body of unknown published works by RVW worthy of revival, particularly on CD, and the Hyperion VW series is to be congratulated for mining this vein. Of the items I have listed, many of the later ones fall into this category.

However, the early works that remain unheard, from the early chamber works and the *Serenade* discussed above, *The Garden of Proserpine* of 1899 to the *Three Nocturnes* of 1908, do surely deserve serious consideration. Again, a wonderful BBC workshop programme on VW could be put together, and would allow us to explore this legacy without any commitment to further performances unless all felt the music justified it. Our appreciation of a great composer could only benefit from it.

John Bishop welcomes three song volumes

NOT 'COMPLETE' BUT VERY WELCOME!

'RVW's important contributions to the repertory of English song have often been underestimated by commentators and performers', writes American Byron Adams in the booklet included with the recently issued Koch CD 'Silent Noon' containing 26 RVW songs (of which more anon). Most of us would agree that the 80 solo songs - yes, there are that many - are a considerable achievement, and we can regret that only a mere dozen or so get any kind of a regular airing.

I was naturally pleased to encounter the three volumes published in 1993 by OUP which have on the front cover the legend 'Vaughan Williams - Collected Songs'. They are not that, however; they are not even the collected songs issued by that publishing house. Nevertheless, they are welcome.

Volume I contains the three straightforward Shakespeare settings of 1926; three Whitman settings from the previous year; *Greensleeves*, complete with II verses; and the little-sung *Four Last Songs*, with words by Ursula Vaughan Williams. All the song are for medium voice - nothing about F sharp.

Volume 2, also for medium voice, has the four Fredegond Shove songs, only two of which - *The New Ghost* and *The Watermill* - are familiar to most of us; *See the chariot at hand*, an attractive work in 9/8 that includes that lovely poem 'Have you seen but a white lily grow?; a 1952 setting of *In the Spring*, a poem by the Dorset dialect poet William Barnes (he of *Linden Lea*); and the more familiar setting of Lord Vaux's *How can the tree but wither?*

Volume 3 consists of seven songs derived from *Pilgrim's Progress* - 'derived' because in all cases they are concert versions varying to some degree from those in the opera. In three cases there have been downward transpositions to make them comfortable for the medium voice.

A woodcut by the composer's cousin, Gwen Raverat, graces the cover of all three volumes.

● Ruth Golden is an American soprano who has shown a marked predelection for English music, having already released CDs devoted to Warlock and Delius. She has a full, professional voice and strong projection generally - though perhaps a shade more vibrato than I like. In 1993 came her Koch CD entitled *Silent Noon* - with 26 RVW songs, including some rarities. We get the four Shove settings, the *Four Last Songs*, and the whole of the *Along the Field* set for voice and violin, with words by AE Housman. It is well worth having these last, austere as they are. Byron Adams, in his notes, points out that the three Rossetti sonnet settings included, although normally sung by a man, were originally sung by a women, Edith Clegg. Adams says of *Silent Noon* that 'there is no more moving expression of post-coital rapture in all of English song'. Sensuous, yes, but post-coital? A well-varied and generally satisfying disc.

RECORD REVIEWS

Stephen Connock writes about three of the many new recordings of RVW works

A LONDON SYMPHONY

Kees Bakels, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, on Naxos 8.550734 (bargain price, with The Wasps Overture).

The news that Naxos are to record the complete RVW symphonies is very welcome, not least because it will bring these works into wider circulation through the bargain price and widespread availability. I purchased this CD in my local video shop, who stock all the Naxos recordings. Hopefully, a new audience will experience this symphony, which is 'crowded with ideas and tunes and incidents' (Hubert Foss). It was also surely right to start the cycle with *A London Symphony* since it is probably the most approachable of the symphonies. Who could fail to be moved by the lovely Lento? As George Butterworth said:

The slow movement is an idyll of grey skies and secluded by-ways – an aspect of London quite as familiar as any other; the feeling of the music is remote and mystical, and its very characteristic beauty is not of a kind which is possible to describe in words.

What of this performance? It is vigorous rather than poetic, straightforward in interpretation, but never uninteresting. It may lack the sensitivity of Previn (BMG/RCA GD 90501), the symphonic strength of Haitink (EMI CDC 49394-2) or the sheer authenticity of Barbirolli (EMI CDM7 64197 - 2) but it is fresh and idiomatic. Kees Bakels seems more at one with the *poco animato* music of the first movement or the dance rhythms in the 6/8 time of the third movement. The opening bars and the Epilogue lack the poetry which other conductors have found (notably Previn and Boult). The march in the Finale is not as poignant as it can be, although, again, I find it convincing enough. The Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra play well throughout. Coupled with a straight-forward account of *The Wasps Overture*, at £4.99 it is a version which can be safely recommended, even if there are more impressive versions at medium price.

ROMANCE FOR VIOLA & PIANO

Paul Coletti (viola) and Leslie Howard (piano) on Hyperion CDA66687 (full price - coupled with viola music by Clarke, Grainger, Bax, Bridge).

There is an article for the RVW Society Journal waiting to be written on 'Vaughan Williams and the viola'. I think immediately of *Flos Campi* or the *Four Hymns* for tenor, viola and piano, or the Quartet in A minor, written for Jean Stewart and composed with the viola at the centre of the string quartet. Until this Hyperion recording, I would not have mentioned the *Romance* for viola and piano. First performed in 1962, members will spend many happy hours trying to guess the date of composition. It begins gently enough to reflect the title of *Romance*, but soon reveals itself as a more substantial piece, with an impassioned central climax. 1934, alongside the suite for viola written for Lionel Tertis? Anyway, it's a well-wrought composition, certainly worth reviving. The performance here is first-class in every way.

What also makes this an attractive CD is the viola music of Rebecca Clarke and Percy Grainger. Clarke's sonata is a large-scale work which will appeal to RVW admirers. Her *Morpheus* strikes me as a quality piece which deserves to be better known. Grainger's *Sussex Mummers' Christmas Carol* is a lovely arrangement.

A CELEBRATION OF CHARIS

In Windsor Forest; Toward the Unknown Region; Norfolk Rhapsody No.1; Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis; Five Variants of 'Dives and Lazarus'.
Bournemouth Symphony Chorus and Bournemouth Sinfonietta, City of Birmingham Symphony Chorus and Orchestra, Norman Del Mar, on EMI CDM 5 65131 2 (medium price).

In the absence from the CD catalogue of *Sir John in Love*, EMI have at least reissued Norman Del Mar's recording of *In Windsor Forest*. The cantata is in five movements, and contains in the Wedding Chorus a setting of part of Ben Jonson's *A Celebration of Charis*. The poem is entitled 'Her Triumph' and is surely one of the finest lyrics written by Ben Jonson, or anyone else before or since. It also receives from Vaughan Williams a radiant melody fully in keeping with the beauty of the poetry. As the only CD of this music that I am aware of, RVW Society members should not hesitate.

The other music on this CD has generally received more memorable performances elsewhere. *Toward the Unknown Region* has its dramatic moments, but lacks mysticism. *Norfolk Rhapsody No.1* is a gorgeous piece but here lacks poetry. I prefer Leonard Slatkin (coupled with his *London Symphony* on RCA 09026 61193 2). The *Tallis Fantasia* and the *Dives and Lazarus* variations have received more memorable performances elsewhere, as stated in the selective discography circulated to members.

Despite these reservations, there is that poem of Ben Jonson which includes:

Have you seen but a white lily grow,
Before rude hands have touched it?
Have you marked but the fall o'the
snow
Before the soil hath smutch'd it?
Have you felt the wool o'the beaver
Or swan's down ever?
Or have smelt o'the bud o' the brier?
Or the nard in the fire?
Or have tasted the bag of the bee?
O so white! O so soft! O so sweet
is she!

Three RVW piano pieces published for first time

Adeline Vaughan Williams (Nee Fisher) and her elder sister, Florence Maitland, were the most musical members of their family. Florence played the violin, Adeline the piano and, when needed, the cello. When in 1893, Tchaikovsky came to Cambridge to receive an honours degree (in company with Boito, Max Bruch and Saint-Saens), he stayed with Florence and her husband, Frederic Maitland, Professor of the Laws of England, at The Lodge, Downing College. Adeline, not yet married, was also a guest in the house, and the sisters pinned roses to Tchaikovsky's button-hole for the ceremony, which took place in May Week. A grand dinner followed, at which most musicians in Cambridge were present, including Ralph Vaughan Williams, who was an undergraduate at Trinity College. He had paid £1 for his ticket.

'Rough Music'

Adeline's cello was called upon for many occasions, whether for scratch quartets, Ralph being the viola player, or 'Rough Music' - their name for music arranged for any available players of any instruments. But the piano was her real pleasure, and RVW composed two short piano pieces as birthday presents in 1904 and 1905 respectively, whilst he was living at 13 Cheyne Walk, Chelsea.

Genia Hornstein and her husband were Russians who had gone to Germany as refugees from the Revolution. When Hitler's Germany became intolerable, they moved to England and settled in Dorking. Genia sang in The Leith Hill Musical Festival concerts and the *St Matthew Passion*, and she became secretary of the Dorking Bach Choir. All the concerts were conducted by Ralph Vaughan Williams, and she became a great friend of his and Adeline, and was made a gift of another short piano work, *Winter Piece*, early in 1943.

Adeline's birthday was on 18th July, Genia's on 2nd February, and these *Birthday Gifts* are now published by Stainer & Bell for the first time, costing £2.50.

You write...

That first version of 'A London Symphony'

I have just noted in the June issue of 'Gramophone' that you are starting a Vaughan Williams Society and though, at this distance (Australia), I am not so much interested in joining as in suggesting at least one project that might appeal to you, I've enclosed international reply coupons as I am very interested in what you are planning.

Let me say that RVW's music is regularly played here. The Queensland Symphony Orchestra (which is the main one in Brisbane) has done several of the symphonies in recent years, including a fine performance of the Fourth conducted by a German conductor, Werner Andreas Albert, who was Chief Conductor for many years. And the orchestra's first subscription concert this year (conducted by Yan Pascal Tortelier) included *Flos Campi*. The Queensland Youth Symphony Orchestra will play *A London Symphony* next month, and as they have 95 players, I hope it will be impressive.

The project I mentioned above concerns *A London Symphony*. I have always been an admirer of the score but in the back of my mind I have felt for many years that it seemed even more fascinating when I first heard it as a student in the late' forties. Then I read a comment by Bernard Herrmann that VW had cut out some of the most magical pages in a series of revisions in 1918, 1920 and just before 1936. No doubt concert promoters wanted a score that could fit neatly into the second half of the concert. As the original lasted 55-60 minutes, it might, in the thirties, have seemed too long. As we now live in the age of Mahler and Bruckner and the compact disc, I doubt whether 60 minutes would worry any orchestra or record company in 1994.

Nevertheless, the 'authorised' score is still the 1936 one, which is so severely cut that (to my ear) some passages change gear too abruptly. My memories of a more complete version were recently confirmed when the Biddulph Company in London issued a CD called 'British Music from America' containing the 1941 Goossens / Cincinnati Orchestra recording which, although not the original score, was at least the fuller 1920 version. This was my first recording of the work (on 78s). Goossens came to Australia after the war and I think he may have performed the earlier version with the Sydney Symphony but I cannot be certain of this.

The notes to the Biddulph CD (WHL 016) set out the full story and end with the tantalising comment: 'Lovers of VW's *A London Symphony* can only ponder on the fact that the original reconstructed score is still in the British Museum, and wonder what other intriguing mysteries it might contain!' I am not impressed by the arguments that the composer's last version is the one that should be played. Bruckner had this problem and his Third Symphony is really much more interesting in the original version than in the reduced final version. My view is that if there are riches in the original VW score, let's hear them!

Mrs Vaughan Williams might not agree, but I wonder if it has been raised with her? I wrote to Alain Frogley of Lancaster University last year about this problem (since he had been broadcasting on the BBC about VW) and he thought that only the 1936 score could now be used. Vernon Handley had just recorded this version and as he was in Brisbane conducting a little later, I had hoped to raise the problem with him but, alas, he was not well and there was no time to talk. Another English conductor who is adventurous is Richard Hickox, who is in Brisbane this week to conduct the Philharmonic Orchestra. I'll try to see him after rehearsal to ask him if he is interested. As far as I know, he has not recorded any of the symphonies of VW, though he did an impressive performance of *Job* with the Bournemouth Orchestra.

If your society can do anything to bring that original score of *A London Symphony* to life, I think the musical world will applaud you. Meanwhile, I look forward to hearing your reaction.

Yours sincerely,
D J Munro

PS: I've just met Richard Hickox. He's very interested. He will do a complete VW cycle in the Barbican in 1995 or 1996.

EMI NEWS AND COMMENT

May I add a few comments and corrections regarding the EMI recordings cited in Stephen Connock's recent Selective RVW Discography?

Sir John Barbirolli's 1957 Nixa recording of the *London Symphony* is in fact in stereo. More important, members will be pleased to know that his 1960s versions for EMI of that work and the Fifth Symphony will have appeared on mid-price CD in the British Composers series by the end of this year (CDM 5 65109 2 and 65110 2 respectively). Next year, the LP *The Spring Time of the Year* will appear in a 2-CD set of folksongs and partsongs.

Pace the remark on p10, Eileen Croxford's account of the *Six Studies in English Folk-Song* is available - on the Music Group of London CD of VW's chamber music reviewed on the facing page (CDM 5 65100 2). Likewise, Willcocks's version of *Dives and Lazarus* is in fact still with us, coupled with the *Five Tudor Portraits* on the CD reviewed on p12; and Boult's *Serenade to Music* is not available in a 7-CD set, but may be had on the CD reviewed on p7.

Hugh the Drover is of course now reissued (CMS 5 65224 2), and it is hoped that *Sir John in Love* will follow in due course. *In Windsor Forest* is also now at mid-price, on an all-Vaughan Williams CD conducted by the late Norman Del Mar, coupled with *Toward the Unknown Region* and orchestral works (CDM 5 65131 2). Del Mar's recording of the *Wasps* Suite has also now reappeared at mid-price,in a anthology of orchestral music by VW, Holst Delius and Elgar (CDM 5 65130 2).

Among a few items now deleted are Menuhin's account of the *Concerto Accademico*, *Hodie* under Willocks (though the coupling, the *Fantasia on Christmas Carols*, is still available on CDM 7 64131 2), and *Old King Cole* (Hickox). The last of these may reappear in British Composers, while it is certainly intended to return Ian Partridge's account of *On Wenlock Edge* to the catalogue before too long.

Richard Abrams
EMI Records Ltd.

Stephen Connock thanks Mr Abrams for his comments, and also thanks those members who have written to him direct. A revised edition of the select Discography will be issued in September; a full Discography is in active preparation.

A lively letters column is the lifeblood of any society journal. We look forward to yours!

HOW I GOT SMITTEN...

I have been listening to classical music for some 22 years now, having been first smitten whilst at university, reading mathematics. My initial contact with English music was probably via the *Pomp and Circumstance Marches*, but I well remember my first acquaintance with RVW's music - it was on an RCA Victrola LP of Morton Gould and his orchestra playing *Greensleeves* (the reason for the purchase!) and the *Tallis Fantasia*. I played the LP on my little portable record player and enjoyed *Greensleeves* very much, but when the Fantasia started I am afraid my attention drifted somewhat until, that is, the central climax, when I rose from my seat, re-positioned the tone arm and listened again, in earnest this time!

I was hooked. Successive visits to the university record library rapidly exhausted their limited stock of RVW LPs and I started to spend my meagre grant on purchases of those pieces which the library did not stock. In those days (1972-73) the range of available recordings was limited, and my tastes had not really developed beyond obviously orchestral tunefulness. As the years have gone by, though, my tastes and pocket and the range of recordings all expanded in tandem, and I am now in the happy position of having recordings on CD of all the currently available RVW works in one performance or another.

However, one yearns for fresh worlds to conquer, so to speak, and I await EMI's RVW re-issues and new recordings of unrecorded works with impatience.

My own particular desire is for a recording of *The Poisoned Kiss*. I wrote to Chandos two or three years ago asking about the possibility of a recording and received a moderately encouraging reply, but nothing has materialised as yet. I live in hope!

I am irritated by the lack of interest shown by the programme planners in the less obvious repertoire of English music from the period, say, 1870-1950. How often does one see the Elgar Cello Concerto programmed, season after season, when an occasional occurrence of the Finzi piece would be much appreciated by most listeners?

I am a former chairman of a very active local recorded music society, whose members, by and large, are unknowledgeable about, or dislike, English music. I often try to proselytise on its behalf, and sometimes succeed; but some of my friends and colleagues are contemptuous of the 'cow-pat school' and I am frequently at the receiving end of jokes about my musical tastes in this respect.

I grin (or grimace) and bear it, and occasionally I play a piece which results in members of my audience enthusing. This recently happened when I played the new Hyperion recording of RVW's Psalm 50, *Lord Thou Hast Been Our Refuge* (Thomas Allen + chorus and orchestra), a wonderful thing of great beauty and passion.

It is on occasions like that when I feel justified in my belief that music lovers in my country will one day appreciate British composers in general, and RVW in particular, as much as they appreciate those from foreign lands.

It is good to see the establishment of an RVW Society. May it succeed in its stated aims and prosper in its membership.

James Westhead

Newsbriefs

- **Alain Frogley, formerly of the Department of Music of Lancaster University and the presenter of Radio 3 programmes earlier this year about RVW's American connection, is taking up a post at the University of Connecticut in September. He is currently involved in preparing two books about RVW: a study of the sketches for the Ninth Symphony, and a book of essays by British and American scholars.**

- Hugh Cobbe, of the British Library, is preparing for publication an edition of RVW's letters.

- **The oboist Nicholas Daniel continues to show his enthusiasm for RVW's Oboe Concerto. He gave a sparkling performance of it at this year's Aldeburgh Festival in a concert which also included a Britten work newly arranged for oboe and orchestra.**

- In March this year, Ursula Vaughan Williams donated the autograph manuscript of the *Sinfonia Antarctica* to the British Library. After the work's first London performance, in 1953, the composer presented the score to Ernest Irving, who in turn presented it to the Philharmonic Society. It was from the Society that Mrs Vaughan Williams purchased the score.

- **A Swedish member, Henrick Lindahl, tells in that in two concerts next May in the Gothenburg Concert Hall, RVW's Fifth Symphony will be played by the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra under Neeme Jarvi. The concerts are marking the end of the Second World War.**

- Two papers on RVW were included in 'Aspects of the British Musical Renaissance', a study day held at Birmingham University on June 11. Andrew Herbert, of the university, spoke on 'Vaughan Williams and the intellectual aristocracy', and Alain Frogley (Lancaster University) on 'Vaughan Williams research: where next?' We understand the papers delivered that day - Parry, Bridge, Goossens and Elgar were among the other composers featured - are to be published.

- **Bernard Haitink continues his study of the Vaughan Williams Symphonies, moving on to the 5th in D major with two important concert performances:**

  Thursday 15th December, Royal Festival Hall, London, 7.30 pm
  (programme also includes **Berlioz, Overture *Benvenuto Cellini* and Ravel's *Ma Mere L'Oye*).**

  Friday 16th December, Symphony Hall, Birmingham, 7.30 pm,
  a repeat of the above programme.

- Roger Lewis, Classical Director of EMI, has written to inform us that Bernard Haitink and the LPO will record the Fifth Symphony coupled with *The Lark Ascending* (solo-violinist, Sarah Chang). The recording will take place in December after the concert performances listed above.

- Members will not need to be reminded that Haitink is working his way steadily through the symphonies. Clearly each one is only being committed to disc after careful study and live performance. The three symphonies released so far have had much critical acclaim, two of them winning the 'Gramophone' orchestral recording of the year award. (1986, No7, *Sinfonia Antarctica*, and 1990, No1, *A Sea Symphony*).

- **David Denton, Managing Director of Naxos (UK), informs us that the following releases are planned, all performed by the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra under Kees Bakels:**

  - No 3, A Pastoral Symphony / No.6 in E Minor, for release in September 1994.

  - No 1, A Sea Symphony, for release in Spring 1995.

  - Symphonies Nos 4 and 5 in late 1995 (the 4th is recorded already).

  Mr Denton says his company has 'ambitious plans' for further RVW releases.

- Alan Frank, who has died recently aged 83, was one of the best liked figures in the world of music-publishing in the 30 years after the Second World War. From 1954 to 1975 he was head of the music department of the Oxford University Press, succeeding Hubert Foss. For the six years before that he had been music editor, in which capacity he was responsible for the publication of all the later works of Vaughan Williams and Walton. He was a staunch friend to both as well as a business associate. Walton wrote to him in 1974: 'What else am I supposed to be writing? I've forgotten so you might try and remember for me.' He was assiduous in attending rehearsals and first performances of his composers' new works, and was quick to spot rising talent. His insights into what a composer needed in the way of support were reinforced by his marriage to one – Phyllis Tate – in 1935.

- **Kent Nagano and the Halle Orchestra gave a fine performance of 'Sinfonia Antartica' in the Prom on August 5, which was a tribute to Sir John Barbirolli.**
  The Fifth Symphony fared equally well in the August 10 performance, which was a tribute to Sir Malcolm Sargent. Vernon Handley conducted the BBC Symphony Orchestra.

- Sir Peter Maxwell Davies continues to show his interest in VW. He will be conducting the *Tallis Fantasia* at the Festival Hall in November.

- **Willard White, with the BBC Philharmonic, conducted by Malcolm Goldring, will perform the 'Five Mystical Songs' in a Midland Festival Chorus concert on October 9 at the Arts Centre, University of Warwick.**

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