



Journal of the **RVW** Society

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'ANTIGLOCKWISE'

ERIC WETHERELL WRITES:

'In my article in the first *RVW Journal* the following sentence appeared: "... and the saying within the corporation (BBC) was that that generation of composers went anticlockwise."

'What I wrote was "antiGlockwise."

Words in high places...

Some of the advantages of being a member of the RVW Society are very visible, like the Selective Discography (the second edition of which is being circulated with this newsletter), the special supplement to this issue which consists of a major essay by Wilfrid Mellers, and the discounts on books/music/CDs (see pages 3 and 12).

But other benefits will be more long-term and at this stage, less visible. Chairman Stephen Connock has in the last few months had discussions 'in high places' in attempts to influence performances and recordings of major RVW works over the next four or five years. It is too soon to report success, or otherwise (although we are quietly optimistic), but we feel members should know such discussions have been, and are continuing to be, had wherever we think our knowledge, contacts and influence may be suitably exercised.

* * *

Some dozen members who had indicated they wished to be involved in aspects of the society's administration met in London on October 29. This gathering gave chairman Stephen Connock and secretary Robin Barber the opportunity to explain how they see the society developing over the next few months. They favour the formation of an 'action team' rather than a committee of the kind – and we have all met examples – where, most of the members don't actually do anything!

A draft constitution has been submitted to the Charity Commissioners. The aim is to hold a full AGM in the summer; at this a more formalised committee structure will be put forward and – hopefully – ratified.

There was wide-ranging discussions at the meeting on a comprehensive agenda, with several people agreeing to take on particular responsibilities – more of these at a later date. Stephen Connock stressed that at all times the society should maintain the highest standards and professionalism in its activities and publications.

The next issue of the *Journal* will be in May, but before that you will be given details of the AGM, which, it is hoped, will take place in conjunction with a concert and/or lecture.

* * *

Meanwhile, we *can* report good news following our discussions with Oxford University Press, RVW's principal publishers. OUP is embarking on a major refurbishment of his scores, starting with the symphonies – of which they publish six. Full details of this programme will emerge in 1995 and will be reported as they become available.

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Record exchange scheme is proposed

The RVW Society is anxious to extend the range of services it provides to its members, and to continue the process we are trying to estimate the support from members for a record exchange scheme. With the advent of CD, many people find that they are replacing their favourite vinyl recordings or cassettes with re-issued and re-mastered CDs. Additionally, CDs themselves have been around long enough for collectors to be getting repeat recordings, and it seems a pity to let members' 'excess stock' gather dust when they may want to exchange their older recordings etc. with other members to fill the gaps in their collection.

Subsequently, a member of the society's steering group, Tony Fuller, has offered to facilitate a record exchange, and it is suggested that initially the exchange programme would work as follows:

- Any vinyl recording, cassette or CD can be exchanged with those of other members on a straightforward one-to-

one basis. Therefore, if you have a vinyl record, cassette or CD to exchange you will get a similar item in return. There are discrepancies between the prices of records or CDs, and to attempt to put a value on each item would be impossible and very time-consuming. The exception would be where someone wishes to exchange records or cassettes for CDs, when there would be an exchange rate of two vinyl/cassettes for one CD.

If you wish to participate in this scheme and clear out some of your old or not-so-old records, get in touch with Tony at:

81 Rosewood Avenue, Elm Park, Hornchurch, Essex, RM12 5LD.

The only charge will be that of postage to cover the cost of forwarding your record on. Your wants lists and a list of what you have available would be useful, so Tony can match the wants and needs of different members.

FULL DISCOGRAPHY ALMOST READY

Now over 50 pages of closely typed information, the full listing of all recordings of Vaughan Williams's music is nearing completion. Stephen Connock, who is compiling the Discography, told the *Journal*: 'It has been a mammoth undertaking. I had seriously underestimated the number of re-issues. For example, Previn's recording of the *Wasps Overture* has been re-issued nine times.'

Now comes the important task of checking the discography. 'RVW members have been incredibly helpful in commenting on my first draft', added Stephen. 'I would especially like to thank Rolf Jordan, David McBrien, Robin Iveson, Emma Marshall, Keith Douglas, Chris Waldren and Tony Fuller for their detailed suggestions. Richard Abram at EMI has also been a major help. I will be circulating a draft copy to the other record companies in January to make sure the information is correct. I also need help from our overseas members, since it is

difficult to track recordings which have never appeared in the UK.

Folk-songs and hymn-tunes have been included, although these are even more difficult to list. Stephen has drawn the line at 'relaxation' re-issues and other such compilations: 'Keeping track of the recordings of *Greensleeves* is difficult enough with around 60 versions to date. If I include relaxation records, there would probably be hundreds of extra *Greensleeves* to list!'

Given the size of the undertaking, the discography will be sold to members at cost (see announcement in our next newsletter) and will be regularly updated. Future editions will, it is hoped, include more information, such as the date and place of recording. This involves, of course, more work. 'One member has offered to add the dates of recordings and I am delighted with this contribution. Any other members keen to help will find me very receptive.'

Offers to Stephen Connock please.

To start the process Tony has duplicate copies of the following symphonies:

Handley: Symphony No 5/*Flos Campi*
EMI Eminence CD EMX 9512

Handley: Symphonies Nos 6/9 EMI
Eminence 5 65455 2 6

The Handley 6/9 is the new recording – duplicated by Xmas presents!

Music library under way

As an extension of the record exchange, the steering committee is anxious to build up a library of RVW's recorded material, especially where the performance is of a little-recorded or performed work, or, even more importantly, where the recording was made 'off-air' and has not been published as a commercial recording.

To help start the collection, any recording forwarded for exchange will be recorded onto cassette and will be held by Tony Fuller so the society can establish a library of recorded work. It must be emphasised that the material held in the library will not be available for hire but may be available on loan if such action does not contravene the copyright laws.

Additionally, if members have any off-air recordings of RVW's work, would they be willing to either make another copy, or lend them to the society so the recording can be copied? If so, please contact Tony Fuller, who will make appropriate arrangements with you.

It is obvious that a great deal of RVW's work is performed, recorded and then kept by individuals. If this material could be made available to other members of the society for reference or to promote the objectives of our work, it would be a major step in our development.

A number of tapes have already been donated to start the library.

Enquiries or comments to Tony Fuller at the above address please.

Vaughan Williams was born a West Countryman, but by the cruellest trick of fate – the death of his father when he was only two – was snatched away from us in the western counties. His mother moved to live with his sister in Leith Hill, Surrey, and there they settled. For the rest of his life VW resided in the home counties and London, or the 'far east' as we like to call it down here in Devon.

It sometimes seems that in recent years the music of VW has also been snatched away from us in the far west. Being so far from London it is not possible to rush up to the Festival Hall or the Albert Hall when a VW concert is announced. Therefore we have to make do with local performances.

The strolling players of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra are partly funded by Devon County Council, and thus make the trip west to play for us at Plymouth and Exeter several times a year. Occasionally in recent years their programme has included the music of VW. But it is a long way on the coach from Bournemouth to Devon, and perhaps understandably such concerts do not always find the orchestra on top form.

Last year I travelled to Exeter to hear the BSO play the Third Symphony. It wasn't the best of performances. Also, rushing up from the west I arrived late, and got to the hall in the middle of the preceding overture. As I waited on the steps outside, a suited trombonist appeared, waiting to go on to augment the orchestra for the symphony. I commented; 'Are you going to play the next tune?.' He looked at me as if I was a Philistine, not realising the context of my remark, and moved up the steps away from me as if I was suffering from something contagious.

The symphony was given a rather pedestrian performance on that

Rob Furneaux gives a view from the Far West

occasion, the 'low light' being the soprano, who, from the hesitant start to her solo in the last movement, seemed as if she'd forgotten the words. A rather remarkable thing to do in a work with such a diminutive libretto!

Only a few weeks ago I was very much looking forward to attending a concert at Warleigh House near the little village of Tamerton Foliot outside Plymouth. In it, Sarah Connelly was to sing songs by VW and also others with the words by UVW – what a treat!

In the event, Sarah Connelly had to 'duck out' as she was invited at short notice to sing with the Concertgebouw Orchestra in Amsterdam. Understandably, Tamerton Foliot is not quite as important musically speaking as Amsterdam.

On another occasion I travelled into Plymouth to hear a rendition of the *Sea Symphony*. This was played by the Plymouth Symphony Orchestra: a gallant band of amateur players and singers who have the dedication to rush home from the office, grab a sandwich, and go and rehearse for several hours in a draughty hall.

The symphony was played in 'The Guildhall' – a building re-constructed after the blitz, and decorated with so much blue and white plaster work that it has been likened to sitting inside a

hollowed-out Christmas cake.

The concert went well on the whole, with the choir singing their hearts out, especially in the final movement.

Unfortunately the performance was slightly marred by the conductor's directions. He had obviously told the choir that he would gesture for them to rise 'as one' when they were about to sing. This he forgot, and there were several occasions when the choir were part standing and part sitting; and to make matters worse, as soon as one section saw another were still sitting they resumed their seats – just in time to see their colleagues rising to their feet. A friend of mine commented that any review of the concert should have included the words, 'the choir were going up and down as regularly as a whore's draws'.

Even when things go really well with a VW symphony there can be draw-backs. Plymouth now has a new concert hall, The Pavilions – it's a little like an aircraft hanger, but adequate. The BSO visited it recently and played No.2. It was a stunning, impressive, and in parts an electrifying performance, particularly when the great crash of the gong in the last movement echoed massively around the hall.

After the concert I bumped into an old friend of mine and said: 'Well, what did you think of the concert?'

'The Elgar Cello Concerto was great,' he said.

'What about the Vaughan Williams symphony?'

'Oh, too noisy and far too mixed up.'

I'm afraid he is an example of the great bulk of the British public who've not yet crossed the Rubicon. And in the West of England things are even worse – I shudder to think how many times in recent years the BSO has had to trot out the *1812 Overture*.

I fervently hope that the setting up of the VW Society is the first step on the long road towards making the British public believe that in VW we have a composer on our doorstep who is truly of world class and who, moreover, is capable on his day of knocking the likes of Tchaikovsky into a cocked hat.

SPECIAL PRICES ON EMI RECORDINGS OF THE MUSIC OF VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

For Society members who purchase their recordings by mail order, The Music Group is pleased to offer the following prices on EMI recordings of the music of Vaughan Williams:

Full price (catalogue code CDC or CDS) £9.99 per CD

Midprice (catalogue codes CDM, CMS, CDH) £6.99 per CD

We will also be pleased to offer our full service of more than 300 classical labels, all at rebated prices. To order, simply write, telephone or fax your requirements to:

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Telephone/fax 0788 510 693

The Music Group is open from 0915 to 1715 Mondays to Fridays, with answerphone at all other times. Payment may be by cheque, credit card (Visa, Access) or postal order. Full pricelist available on request.

To be a French speaker and love the music of RVW: a contradiction?

French-speaking music-lovers (limited here to France and Belgium) have always displayed a lack of appreciation of the world of English music. This is regrettable but it should be freely admitted. Any attempt at explanation becomes bogged down in a long and difficult analysis, and such is not my purpose. One should, however, examine the evidence.

If Purcell and Britten have found favour, the former among lovers of Baroque music, the latter with so-called contemporary music fanatics, most of the island's composers are, even for the serious music-lover, just names which evoke no musical recollection.

Mentioning Stanford, Parry, Finzi, Ferguson or Alwyn does not make people prick up their ears. Citing Walton, Tippett or Arnold (wasn't it he who composed the music for *Bridge over the River Kwai*?) leads to a raised eyebrow. Only Elgar and Vaughan Williams can pride themselves on waking up the record-lover. But even then I, familiar as I am with the works of Elgar, hear myself saying he composed *Pomp and Circumstance* (and what else, if you please?), and kick myself. As for VW, one vaguely recalls some pleasant music to which one would be hard put to give a title, apart of course from *Greensleeves*, heard as part of a broad programme intended to appeal to the man in the street.

This lack of interest is the consequence of the French mentality, which has always considered that British music is reserved for the English, and that the English are the first to prevent 'continental' music reaching their own sphere. This is the same, going further afield, for Scandinavian composers (similarly, largely unappreciated) intend their music only to be heard by fellow Scandinavians.

I am not afraid to admit it, that to be a French-speaking music enthusiast and to like the music of VW is almost a contradiction. Why? That is what I shall endeavour to explain.

The occasional music listener is lost before he starts. I am speaking of those

who from time to time fill in a few hours of leisure time. As the name of VW means nothing to them, they won't even consider buying anything other than a popular selection. No point in going on.

The traditional music-lover, the one who goes into the record shop to discover music and explore new

by **JEAN LACROIX**

material, also risks losing out in this way. First he will find a basic music shop and in all good faith will be led to a profusion of the traditional classics. Only by luck will he chance upon something other than that he was searching for. As the record retailers stock little English music, he may come across an isolated recording of a Vaughan Williams symphony, probably *A Sea Symphony* or *Antarctica*, give it the once over and put it back on the shelf, unless someone gives him some advice, at least to listen to it.

The keen person is in danger of losing his goal. He has a wide musical knowledge, a good collection of records and is open-minded about new discoveries. What does he do? He reads articles on music which he has bought from specialist book-shops, but these do not have sections purely for English composers, quite simply because there are none in the French language. If he really has an enquiring mind he will enjoy the little book by Henry de Rouville called *English Music* in the popular series 'Que Sais-je' published by Presses Universitaires de France (Paris 1986); or a more detailed study, but full of mistakes and with questionable opinions (did the author really listen to the music of the composers about whom he writes?), *The History of English Music* by Gerard Gefen (Fayard 1992), obtainable only by special order. These give a comprehensive but limited view, but at least they exist. If he wants a detailed study of any individual English musician he need not bother – they do not exist in French. Opportunities for

listening to the works in live performances are rare, especially if it is the music of Vaughan Williams that appeals to him.

Concerts? Unless I am mistaken, I have no recollection of any Vaughan Williams being played in Brussels for a very long time. This raises many questions. A violinist friend from Armenia, who has played in Moscow under Gennadi Rozhdestvenski, told me that all the symphonies of Vaughan Williams has been played by the Moscow Philharmonic during the 'eighties. What an example for our short-sighted concert organisers.

Records? I know from experience one has to be vigilant and on the ball when a new recording comes out. One is frequently disappointed. Complete recordings of Vaughan Williams by Previn, Haitink, Thomson or Slatkin disappear as soon as they are on the shelves. It is pure luck to chance upon an isolated copy. For example, the series 'British Composers' released by EMI is sparingly distributed in Belgium, usually only to be found in major department stores such as FNAC in Brussels. I have been able to obtain, thanks to the sales staff there, all the recordings from the series that I wanted, including the VW symphonies by Boult which are as rare as gold dust in the capital's shops. Having seen my enthusiasm and by dint of my persuasive powers, a charming sales-lady decided to ask me to provide a reference list of the works I judged worth systematically stocking here, at least one copy of each, on the shelves at FNAC.

Thanks to her foresight other music-lovers will now be able to explore the fabulous and passionate world of Vaughan Williams's music. Needless to say, the small, independent record shops will not take the risk of regularly stocking up, for fear of not finding a buyer.

There is a possible explanation for the phenomenon that I have just described. But for that one must look to the world of French musical criticism and the specialist reviews. This would need another article, for it is an enormous topic to be rigorously examined.

(translated from the original).

RVW is **sadly ignored at** **Leith Hill Place**

Leith Hill Place today stands in beautiful Surrey countryside to the south west of Dorking. It is owned by the National Trust, who were given it by RVW in 1944. It is a place of great significance in the life of RVW. Not only did he inherit it, but he was brought up there from the age of three. The house itself was built in about 1600 on earlier foundations, on the southern slopes of Leith Hill, and commands stunning views as far south as Chanctonbury Ring on the South Downs.

It was brought by RVW's maternal grandfather Josiah Wedgewood, married to Caroline Darwin, in 1857. By this time the house had been added to by different owners, and was big enough to have been used as a school. RVW's mother Margaret was old enough to enjoy the house, gardens and countryside. Josiah Wedgewood planted rhododendrons and azaleas in the countryside between Leith Hill Place and the closest house, Tanhurst, to the west.

It was at Tanhurst that RVW's family had lived for a number of years. His father, Arthur, was brought up there, and he continued to regularly visit home during his years at university and afterwards when a curate in Salisbury and Alverstoke in Hampshire. So it was no surprise to either family when Arthur and Margaret became engaged in 1867. They were married at the nearby Coldharbour Church in February 1868.

Hervey, the first of three children, was born at Leith Hill Place, Margaret and Ralph were born at Down Ampney in Gloucestershire.

After Arthur's premature death in 1875, Margaret brought her three children back from Gloucestershire to her family home. And there Ralph was brought up. His was a happy childhood, brought up in the lovely countryside, with plenty of areas to play. The house had a number of fine paintings in it, which gave him an early appreciation of art as well as music. His mother was a kind woman, but she taught all her children respect and kindness to all other people, whatever their position –

something which stayed with Ralph all his life. She also encouraged his early interest in music by having an organ erected in the hall of the house, for his private use. At the age of ten he was sent to a preparatory school at Rottingdean in Sussex and in 1887 he was sent to join Hervey at Charterhouse school. In 1890

by Keith Douglas

he chose to go to the Royal College of Music instead of staying on at Charterhouse before going up to Trinity College, Cambridge. During this period he was still a frequent visitor to Leith Hill Place, and would sometimes walk there from London while at RCM – no mean feat.

His mother Margaret stayed on at Leith Hill Place and then when she died in November 1937, aged 95, Hervey, the oldest child, inherited it.

Sadly, Hervey was to die only seven years later, in 1944, and despite Ralph imploring him not to, he left the house to him. Ralph by this time had brought WhiteGates at Dorking and he did not wish to live at Leith Hill Place.

He explained to Ursula Wood (later his wife): 'If I had to decide what trees had to be cut, what vegetables planted, what cows sold, I should lose all pleasure in the place – and if I ran it properly I would have no time for my own work'.

So the house was offered to the National Trust and after a lot of negotiation they took it over, and in their hands it remains today, along with much of the countryside in that area of Surrey.

During the early 1980s I studied at Guildford; the Leith Hill area was one of my favourite areas for walking (there are fabulous views from Leith Hill tower), and I often peered over the wall at Leith Hill Place. But this was before I had discovered RVW, and so the significance it was to have for me later was not at that time apparent.

I now live in Wales and have not recently made the pilgrimage to Leith Hill Place, but I cannot help but feel that the present owners could make some effort to acknowledge the significance of the house in the life of one of our greatest composers. To the uninitiated there is nothing to show that he ever lived there. It would be nice if the National Trust could be persuaded to erect some information boards close to the house.

Elgar is very well catered for in Worcestershire, but the great RVW seems to be sadly ignored in Surrey, where he spent much of his life. Would not a Vaughan Williams trail, taking in Leith Hill Place, Tanhurst, the site of the WhiteGates and other places of interest, be welcome to RVW devotees?

Perhaps the society can talk to the Trust and local tourist board to investigate the possibilities.

A photographic rarity



A rarity is this photograph, supplied by Lewis Foreman, of RVW and Ursula on the steps of St. Martin's Church, Epsom, in 1946 or 1947.

You write...

A neglected masterpiece?

I wonder how many members of this society like me eagerly await the publication of the 'Proms' brochure every year to discover whether a piece of rarely heard VW will be given a long-overdue airing at the coming summer's season of concerts? I am often disappointed.

How long is it going to be before I hear my first *Pastoral Symphony* (at the age of 24, I have heard all the others at least once), *Sancta Civitas* or *Flos Campi*? With the *Pastoral*, wonderful as it is, there is the often-told explanation that by its very nature – undemonstrative and largely 'quiet' – it is unattractive to the majority of concert-goers – a feeble excuse, in any case, for what is arguably the best symphony of the lot! What is equally as mystifying is the neglect, in the concert hall, of the Piano Concerto.

As a companion piece to *Job* and a prelude to the 4th Symphony, it was written at a pivotal stage in VW's career and yet it is not acknowledged as these other pieces are.

At a scholarly level the concerto is considered – and I strongly believe accurately – as a masterpiece. In spite of the problems surrounding the work, Prof. Wilfrid Mellers in his book *VW and the Vision of Albion* states: 'The Piano Concerto now sounds like one of its composer's greatest works', and composers such as Bartok were said to be very impressed. These 'problems', both in terms of its lengthy gestation period and revisions and technical difficulty (not 'rewarding the player with many passages that are effective in the usual pianistic sense' and in consequence 'it has over the years found only a few advocates' – Max Harrison, in his notes to the 1991 Chandos, Howard Shelley recording) still don't convince me as to why the piece is so neglected.

I may be doing such advocates as there are (Howard Shelley in particular) a disservice with my criticism by virtue of the fact that as a relative youngster I only have the past 4-5 years to go by. I would, however, be very grateful to any

society members more learned and experienced than myself to either shed light on why this apparent neglect is occurring in the first place or tell me when they have actually heard a live performance of this intensely dramatic and beautiful work.

David Bartram,
Basildon, Essex.

Embarrassingly feeble...

I have much enjoyed reading the first issue of the Journal, especially the article by Eric Wetherell – a delightful and rather touching collection of personal memories of the man and his music.

Regarding the proposed resurrection of early works by RVW, in 1958-59 I spent some time, with Michael Kennedy, in examining the MS scores of many of these, and found them embarrassingly feeble: themes usually commonplace, harmonies mostly lacking in originality, and construction sometimes verging on the clumsy: hardly a vestige of anything characteristic of the composer we know and love. I feel strongly that it would be unkind to RVW, and possibly damaging to his reputation, to revive works which he himself had obviously decided to consign to oblivion because of their amateurishness.

I will certainly think about providing you with a follow-up article on the subject, which would also include some strong words about the regrettable suggestion of 'completing' the Cello Concerto and *Thomas the Rhymer*.

Roy Douglas
Tunbridge Wells

Greetings from the USA

I am most interested in learning more about the formation of the RVW Society. Although I live in the United States, I am very much involved in promoting British music and writing about British composers. I founded the

Finzi Society of America in 1983 to create greater awareness of his music and also to serve as a resource centre for individuals interested in learning more about his life. This has been a very rewarding endeavour which has led me down many exciting paths. In recent years, I have focused my attention on Ivor Gurney and have published articles about him in various British journals.

My appreciation of Vaughan Williams goes back many years, so I am delighted to learn about the formation of a society. I am willing to assist in any way I can, despite the fact that some 3,000 miles separate us. I would certainly be happy to enclose information about the RVW Society in my mailings to my Finzi Society members. Also, I am a public relations/advertising consultant and you are welcome to call on me to develop promotional materials, press releases, advertisements and brochures.

Pamela Blevins
13902 Waverley Creek Court,
Chantilly, VA 22021 USA

The Society will certainly be taking up Pamela's offer – Editor

The Anvil recommended

At the meeting on 29th October (see page 1 – Ed.) one of the things I agreed to do was to keep an eye open for any RVW performances which may be of interest to RVW Society members.

I have just received notification of a concert at The Anvil in Basingstoke, Hampshire, which will include performance of *The Lark Ascending*.

The concert takes place on Saturday August 19, 1995, the orchestra is the National Youth Chamber Orchestra, and the soloist/conductor is Iona Brown. The programme also features short pieces by Rossini and Gorecki, as well as *Variations on a theme of Frank Bridge* by Britten and Mendelssohn's *'Italian' Symphony*.

The Anvil box office telephone number is 01256 844244. For those who don't know The Anvil, it is a relatively new concert venue in the centre of Basingstoke, less than 5 minutes' walk from the railway station. I am a regular visitor there and can recommend it to any others who are within travelling distance but who have not yet tried it.

Chris Waldren
Bulford, Salisbury

USA digest...

Many congratulations on an interesting and informative first issue of the Journal. The material I have received so far from the new society has been very useful, and I look forward to more of the fruits of membership.

I want to offer a couple of addenda to your articles and Stephen Connock's discography, and I'm hoping one letter can cover both. First, following from Colin Peters's article, you may be interested to know that the suite from the film *The Loves of Joanna Godden* is currently available on CD, at least on this side of the Atlantic. It is the longest track by far on a compilation called, inappropriately, 'Themes by Hollywood's Great Composers, Vol II', released by Sony Music in 1993 (AK 57136), with a note that most of the tracks are courtesy of Tuner Entertainment, Inc., which owns the MGM film library. Beyond the AAD indicator, there is, unfortunately, nothing on the other side of the jewel case to suggest that these recordings are mostly original soundtracks dating back to the 1930s, and therefore of poor quality and mainly monophonic.

The RVW work is not the soundtrack, however, but the suite arranged by Ernest Irving and conducted and recorded by him in early 1947. The ten movements are those listed in the entry in Michael Kennedy's book, but because the suite is played continuously, the divisions between the movements are not very clear. (Distinct premonitions of the *Scott of the Antarctic* music can be heard, including wordless female voices and the penguin theme hatching up prematurely as a bass tuba motif.) To make up for the inadequate cover, the booklet is well-written and generous, and mentions that RVW had problems with the 'Burning of the Sheep' movement because his 'training at the Royal College of Music and 45 years of subsequent work gave him little guide in writing music to underscore an outbreak of anthrax.'

Michael Kennedy's article on Christmas Music did not mention *The First Nowell*, music for a nativity play that was either composed or arranged from traditional sources, and completed by Roy Douglas after RVW's death. An abridged version, called a 'concert version', was released by the Musical Heritage Society (MHS 3262) on an LP in 1979, based on a recording of the

complete play made in 1973.

I know Mr Connock's discography was selective (although his judgements were faultless), but I wonder if you've come across a recording on the Stradivari Classics label (bargain price) of RVW orchestral music (SCD 8011) including the rare *Charterhouse Suite*, which as you know (and the booklet-writer doesn't) is the string-orchestrated version of the *Six Short Pieces* for piano. The rest of this CD comprises rather pedestrian digital versions of *The Lark Ascending*, the *Tallis Fantasia*, and the *Concerto Accademico* by the Israel Philharmonic, but the Suite is given a charming performance by the Israel Chamber Orchestra. Although the release date is 1989, the Suite is an analogue recording, which suggests an earlier provenance.

I'm sure there have been innumerable occasions when you've found RVW recordings filed under 'Composers W' in the record store bins. There's something about that lack of a hyphen that makes people think Vaughan is a first name. (Not as bad, though, as the time I found an LP entitled 'Fauré Requiem' filed under 'Composers R.')

But it's not just the shop assistants who seem to have trouble with this. The recording

of viola pieces reviewed in your first edition includes the first names of all the other composers represented – Benjamin Britten, Percy Grainger, Arnold Bax, etc. – but RVW appears as simply Vaughan Williams, in the contents lists and in the notes. Hyperion really should know better. Perhaps you could have a corner of the Journal for sightings of the more egregious failures to put the R in RVW.

Finally, a minor observation that I'd like to pass on concerning the Eighth Symphony. The four-note motif that sets up the theme for the first movement is exactly one fifth lower than the four-note opening of a hymn-tune by Gustav Holst. The tune is called *Valliant Hearts*, which is number 293 in *Songs of Praise*, and the words are a commemoration of the dead. RVW called his movement 'seven variations in search of a theme,' but I wonder if he was being deliberately Enigmatic here, and could there be some friends pictured within? I seriously doubt that I'm the first person to notice this, but I've never seen it mentioned in any analysis of the symphonies, and it's very nice at last to have a forum where I can raise the question.

Looking forward to the next edition.

Alan Beechey, New York

Plea for 'The Poisoned Kiss'

May I echo James Westhead's fervent wish to see a recording made of *The Poisoned Kiss*, a delightful work which sheds a new light on the composer. It is the one major work of his that remains uncommitted to disc. I believe its last performance was a semi-professional production on the stage in the early '70's.

All members were sent the OUP pamphlet of music in print, which was tantalizing in that it contained items not even mentioned in Lewis Foreman's admirable article. (Mr Foreman is quite right in saying that of all the great composers, VW tops the list in non-performed works, both printed and in MS.) Whatever has happened to *Story of a Flemish Farm*, *Three Preludes on Welsh Hymn-Tunes* for small orchestra, *On Christmas Night* – discussed by Mr Kennedy, and all that other film music mentioned in another article? I wonder if anyone has performed *Flourish for a Coronation* since Beecham did it in 1937? I hope the society will try to get works such as these performed and provide a list of his earlier compositions – non-OUP.

A perfect medium for these and other works would be Radio 3, but the BBC still doesn't seem particularly interested in VW, though things are gradually improving. I was hoping to find a Radio 3 presenter or producer on the members list, but I don't think there's one there. Can anyone remember when the BBC last did a VW opera? I cannot. Then we had a 2-hour concert of VW on his birthday evening – Classic FM, of course!

But we have to be patient and I've great hopes of British Music Year, 1995. It is good news that foreign conductors are either continuing to fly the flag such as Haitink (and Rozhdestvenski) or are we new to the cause, like Bakels and Jarvi. America has always served VW well, and I think that the greatest goal the society could aim at is to get Sir Simon Rattle to take on the symphonies. He's a real communicator and ambassador for music all over the world. After his Sibelius and Nielsen, VW would seem a natural for him.

John Butler,
Sydenham, London.

'A London Symphony'

The first Boult recording of the *London Symphony* is quite special. Made in 1952 with the composer present, it has an authenticity and sense of excitement which reminds us that Boult conducted the first performance of the revised score in March 1918. Thirty-four years later, Sir Adrian was conducting the orchestra of which he had recently been appointed principal conductor. The orchestra had its difficulties in 1952, not least the culmination of problems associated with Thomas Russell, the general manager who was to be dismissed in August 1952. Funding uncertainties were dominant. Listening to the superb playing of the LPO on this reissue, the players were certainly not letting political or financial matters affect them.

RVW remained very fond of this symphony, and Boult's performances over the decades consistently revealed the beauties of the score. What also struck me is both the strength as well as the poignancy and wistfulness of the music in Boult's reading. The influence of Elgar on this work was acknowledged by the composer: the Elgar of the *Cockaigne Overture* to be sure, but also the Elgar of the *Introduction and Allegro* or the First Symphony is there too.

Compelling

The first movement is shaped well. At the beginning, the muted strings are highly atmospheric and the bringing to life of the city is paced carefully. The second subject, *cantabile*, and the folk-influenced passages for wind, harp and triangle which follow, and the section for string octet and harp which forms the emotional core of the movement, have a yearning quality which is most compelling. This episode always reminds me of the central part of *The Banks of Green Willow*. (The symphony was, of course, dedicated to George Butterworth.) Throughout, there is such urgency and alertness that the music is consistently brought to life. There is a lyrical handling of the material, too, which seems just right. The coda is excitingly played and the movement ends brilliantly.

Sir Adrian Boult, London Philharmonic Orchestra, on Belart 461 008 2 (bargain price, with *Partita for double string orchestra*)

Sir John Barbirolli, Halle Orchestra, on EMI CDM5 65109 2 (medium price, with Ireland's *London Overture*)

Andrew Davis, BBC Symphony Orchestra, on Teldec 4509 - 90858 2 (full price, with *Symphony No.8*)

These qualities are repeated in subsequent movements. The lovely *lento* – 'Bloomsbury Square on a November afternoon' – is most poignant, strings near the opening full of passion. If the horn solos have not quite the exquisite beauty of Previn's fine recording (BMG/RCA GD 90503), the rapt passages for solo viola, the lavender-seller's cry and subsequent climax are superb. The third movement is most characterful, with gutsy, jaunty playing from the LPO. The streets are genuinely crowded, and the lights flare brilliantly. The impassioned opening of the last movement is followed by a very solemn and grand march-tune, with the Holst-inspired bassline cleanly delineated. The central *Allegro* returns to the bustle of the first movement, and the ensuing climax is powerfully wrought. A marvellous performance!

Against this, Barbirolli's second recording of the symphony is a major disappointment. This reading was set down on July 11th and 13th, 1967, again with the Hallé Orchestra, during a period when his interpretations showed considerable expansiveness but less spontaneity than before. This may have suited, say, Strauss's *Metamorphosen*, but not the *London Symphony*. Compared to Barbirolli's earlier recording (now on EMI CDM 7 64197 2), it lacks the excitement, tautness and sense of live music – which makes that 1957 version so very special.

Andrew Davis has given us a number of excellent recordings of VW, especially the Sixth Symphony, which I recommend in the Select Discography.

However, this new recording of the *London Symphony* fails, in my judgement, to take wing. It is a polished, rather too sophisticated, view for me, softening the hustle and bustle of the city. The G-major introduction sets the tone: refined, but the build-up lacks urgency. Bernard Shore once wrote that out of this introduction was born the brooding spirit of the whole work. He described the mysteriousness of the teeming life of the city and the immensity of the place. I do not sense this implicit force in Davis's reading.

Throughout there are beautiful moments, including the genuinely muted strings at the beginning of the slow movement and the serene closing pages of the *Epilogue*. But the 'flaring lights' seem rather dim and the crowded streets somewhat thinned. A London without much atmosphere – in recession, perhaps? Returning to the earlier Boult recording confirmed the anonymity of this interpretation, finely played but lacking the raw energy necessary to VW's conception of London in 1910.

More spontaneity

Finally, mention should be made of Andrew Davis's new recording of the Eighth Symphony, which is generously coupled with the *London*. Here, there is significantly more spontaneity. We have now the energy and expressiveness which Davis eschews in the earlier symphony. The achievement of the composer in creating an original and truly symphonic masterpiece is reconfirmed.

Stephen Connock

We wish to
extend our list
of CD reviewers.
If interested, be
in touch with
the editor.

CD reviews

Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis / Greensleeves

Eugene Ormandy, Philadelphia Orchestra, on RCA Classics 74321 - 17905 2 (bargain price, with Holst *The Planets*)

I have long admired Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra. Their recordings of, say, Mahler 10 or Rachmaninov 1 are superb. It is the quality of the string-playing which always amazes me – just listen to the CD reissue of the last movement of the Mahler 10 for example.

This quality is apparent in this 1970s recording of the *Tallis Fantasia*. Initially, I was won over. What fabulous sonorities! What hushed string-playing! Gradually, like too many mince pies and cream at Christmas, it all became too much of a good thing. This work is much more than an exercise in lush string sound. Still, at £3.99, it is hard to resist – the price is not much more than a dozen mince pies! *The Planets* makes an agreeable filler.

Stephen Connock

Romanza for cello and orchestra

Julian Lloyd Webber (cello), Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Sir Neville Marriner, on Philips 442 530-2 (full price, with music by Elgar, Delius, Grainger, Ireland, Walford Davies, Holst and Scott)

A first recording of a Vaughan Williams work is always of interest. Here we have the version by the composer of the slow movement of the Tuba Concerto arranged for cello and orchestra. The original dates from 1954, and showed that the tuba could sustain an unexpectedly lyrical tone in the slow movement. For me, however, it is even finer in this cello arrangement. As Lyndon Jenkins points out in the notes with the CD, VW adjusts the orchestration to accommodate the difference in range of the stringed instrument.

The beauty of this movement is superbly realised in this performance.

Julian Lloyd Webber has already shown his affinity with Vaughan Williams with a premiere recording of the *Fantasia on Sussex Folk Tunes* (RCA/BMG RL 70800). The *andante sostenuto* melody is shaped with real feeling for the *cantabile* line, and the orchestral accompaniment is most sensitively played.

There are other delights on this CD, too, including Holt's marvellous *Invocation* and Elgar's *Romance in D minor*. Strongly recommended.

Vaughan Williams was, as members will recall, working on a Cello Concerto at his death in 1958. This skilful arrangement for cello and orchestra of the *Romanza* serves to remind us what we have missed in that unfinished concerto.

Stephen Connock

Symphonies No 6 in E Minor / No 9 in E Minor

Vernon Handley / Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. EMI Eminence EMX 2230

The coupling of these two symphonies, which share the dark, E-minor key, makes an apt conclusion to Vernon Handley's well-received cycle of the nine symphonies with the RLPO. They mark the beginning and end of VW's last creative phase. Following the serene Fifth Symphony, he moved to a world of new orchestral sonorities, exploring unusual instrumentation and, at times, disturbing states of mind, none more so than in these two scores, which have much more in common than just their key.

Initial reaction could not have been more different. The 6th (1948) was immediately hailed as a masterpiece and taken up by orchestras all over the world, achieving 100 performances within two years of its premiere. The 9th (1958), by contrast, appeared to baffle all but few early critics and has since suffered severe neglect. However, now that a generation has passed it is, as Michael Kennedy predicted, slowly coming to be regarded as one of the composer's greatest works.

So what of this new recording from one of VW's greatest living interpreters?

The 6th is very well recorded and generally a fine version, but perhaps there could have been more venom and menace. I also found it a bit too relaxed at times; take, for instance, the second subject of the first movement ('*A Family at War*' theme). Gentle, 'lapping' introductory chords gradually swell into that big, broad theme so typical of what has been called 'Oceanic VW'. Undoubtedly tingle-factor music, but not, I fear in this recording. You will have to try Bryden Thompson (Chandos) or Andrew Davis (Teldec) to appreciate the full sweep of this famous passage. Similarly, to my mind the jazzy syncopations of the third movement are not as effectively realised as in the Previn (RCA) version. The playing of the eerie finale is, however, very successful in conveying a sense of purposeless drift into oblivion (as with the 9th, the ending fades a *niente*).

The 9th Symphony has yet to be given full justice in a recording. Handley, as one would expect, directs a sympathetic performance, well played and with excellent sound. It is certainly a superior version to Bryden Thompson's rushed account on Chandos but to my mind does not displace the versions by two American conductors, Andre Previn and Leonard Slatkin (both RCA). To succeed with this symphony it needs to be played with a degree of expansiveness, emphasising its associations with the Wessex landscape round Stonehenge and kinship with the defiant mood of Thomas Hardy's *Tess*. Here, Previn is particularly successful and there is at times in his recordings a sense of the numinous, reminiscent of Bruckner. A glance at the timings of the various recordings of this work is salutary: Previn 37:50, Slatkin 33.57, Handley 32.13, Thompson 30.59.

If you want these two symphonies on one CD, I have no hesitation in recommending the Previn version on RCA, with, in my view, the best currently available 9th and an exciting 6th, marred only perhaps by the slow finale. Individually, by far the best version of the 6th is the Andrew Davis version on Teldec with couplings that make it one of the most attractive VW CDs available.

Robin Barber

It was an imaginative piece of programme-planning to juxtapose Ravel's *Mother Goose Suite* alongside Vaughan Williams's Fifth Symphony in this London Philharmonic Orchestra concert at the Royal Festival Hall on December 15. Having taken lessons from Ravel in 1907-08, the younger composer's influence is clearly heard in *On Wenlock Edge* but beyond this is totally assimilated into VW's musical language. By the time Vaughan Williams started his Fifth Symphony in 1940, Ravel had been dead for three years.

Bernard Haitink is a conductor we don't normally associate with Ravel, yet here he brought this magical music to life, help by lovely solo work from the LPO. The final Apotheosis was especially radiant.

Just as your chairman was contemplating the formation of a Ravel Society, the opening *Preludio* of the VW Fifth Symphony began, with Haitink adopting a measured tempo. The wonderful E major second subject was impressive, but I reflected that Previn and Handley have moved me more at this point. The scherzo, similarly, I admired but no more.

All this changed with that *ppp* opening of the *Romanza*. There was an intensity and expressiveness which was extraordinary. Haitink's interpretation stayed on this exalted level until the serenity of the final coda. Quite simply, it was the best performance of the two final movements I have ever heard, with Haitink finding depths in the music which elude most conductors.

Speaking to Bob St. John Wright, chairman of the LPO and one of the players, after the concert, he agreed it was a wonderful performance. 'The opening bars of the *Romanza* set the scene for the movement overall', he said. 'Bernard Haitink then paced the music superbly, letting the orchestra have considerable expressive freedom. He trusted the orchestra, and we responded'.

The interpretation was recorded at the BBC Maida Vale studios on 18-19 December, hopefully for 1995 release. It should be a recording to cherish.

Stephen Connock

MIXED SUCCESS WITH 'HODIE'

Hodie is a difficult work to bring off successfully in a concert. The diverse range of styles can sound incongruous, despite the unifying element provided

Concert reviews

by the narration. The cantata requires a passionate belief from the players that it is one of VW's greatest works; it needs to be performed at Christmas to create the right atmosphere; and it needs top-quality singing - especially from the three soloists. This performance by the Britten-Pears Orchestra and Chamber Choir conducted by Stuart Bedford at Snape on December 18, seemed to meet only one of these criteria - it was performed near Christmas. The three soloists - Susan Gritton (soprano), Nicholas Sears (tenor) and Peter Savidge (baritone) - were all stretched vocally. The chorus sang with energy, but were too often ragged and simply lacked numbers for the choral episodes. The boys of Wenaston School sang well, but those in the back row poked each other when they were not singing. Boys do this sort of thing, but preferably not when Vaughan Williams's glorious music is unfolding around them!

There were moments to relish: the woodwind and string-playing in the delightful setting of Hardy's *The Oxen*, the bouncy, joyous singing of Milton's *Ring out ye crystal spheres*. Overall, however, the performance sent me back to David Willcocks' EMI recording (CDM 7 69872 2). Listening to Janet Baker in the gorgeous *Lullaby* and to Richard Lewis in *Bright portals of the sky* reminded me of how it should be done.

Stephen Connock

LUMINOUS 'FIFTH' IN LIVERPOOL CATHEDRAL

In October, Raymond Leppard conducted RVW's Fifth Symphony at Liverpool and Preston, in a programme that also included the *Three Hymn-Tune Preludes* of 1920 and Elgar's Cello Concerto.

Liverpool cathedral has been the RLPO's temporary home during the refurbishment of their hall, and the current season reflects the difficulties in programming such a venue. The Cello Concerto was an example of what can go wrong: Raphael Wallfisch's sensitive playing was often drowned out uncomfortably by the rest of the orchestra. I hope he

had better luck at Preston Guildhall.

Any such worries about the Fifth Symphony were thankfully eased in a soaring opening, the towering sandstone interior of the cathedral providing a most atmospheric backdrop to the music. The string parts were played with obvious care throughout, and the sonorous acoustic added much warmth, never sounding syrupy, as it sometimes did during the opening *Hymn-Tune Preludes*.

I will never forget the absolute hush which fell during the first moments of the *Romanza*, which was perfectly played, and overwhelmingly beautiful in the surroundings. RVW's thoughts were never clearer, the alleluias hanging in the air for a long time after the final applause died.

Vernon Handley will conduct the *Tallis Fantasia* at the same venue in May: it should prove to be a very special occasion.

Rolf Jordan

MARTIN HILL SCORES IN 'WENLOCK EDGE'

The Cambridge Elgar Festival (November 6-26) was subtitled 'A celebration of British music'. This was amply demonstrated through performances of such rarely heard music as Holst's *Savitri* and through chamber music by Delius and Bridge. Thankfully, there was much Vaughan Williams, including *Flos Campi*, *In the Fen Country*, *The Prelude to 49th Parallel*, and the Oboe and Violin Concertos.

One highlight of the Festival was a performance by the Coull Quartet with Martyn Hill (tenor) and Anthony Goldstone (piano) of *On Wenlock Edge*, and with David Curtis of the Coull Quartet joining the tenor and pianist in the *Four Hymns* of 1914.

Listening to these fine performances in the superb acoustics of Trinity College Chapel, I wondered again why performances were so rare. *The Four Hymns* may not be as rewarding as, say, the *Five Mystical Songs*, but they contain much glorious music.

Written surprisingly a full ten years before *Flos Campi*, they contain in the emphasis on the viola and voice that haunting beauty so typical of VW in ecstatic mood. The G minor *lento* of *Come Lord, Come Lord*, the third of the *Hymns*, or the declamatory *Lord! Come Away!* deserve to be known and revered the world over.

Martyn Hill showed his understanding of Vaughan Williams's style in these works. Singing from a photocopy of the score (he told me Boosey and Hawkes seemed unaware they even published it!), his full, rounded tone and clarity of diction were admirable.

Such understanding was again in evidence in *On Wenlock Edge*. Martyn Hill has recorded this work with the Coull Quartet (Hyperion A 66013) and their empathy with the music showed. Wilfrid Mellers has called the second song, *From Far, From eve and morning*, a small miracle, crucial to the Vaughan Williams experience. Martyn Hill carried the emotional thrust of the line, *Now, for a breath I tarry*, wonderfully. Hearing *Bredon Hill* in a chapel underlined the poignancy of the words and the music. Anthony Goldstone's funereal tolling bell on the piano was matched in sombreness by the Coull Quartet's accompaniment as the singer tells us of what happened when *the snows at Christmas on Bredon top were strown*.

After this, the gentleness of *Clun* came as a great relief, with Martyn Hill lightening his voice in those restrained opening and closing stanzas.

A sizeable audience gave an enthusiastic reception to these works, reinforcing the question: why are they are so seldom performed?

Stephen Connock

'SHEPHERDS' EXERTS ITS MAGIC

The *Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains* was performed as part of the Clerkenwell Music Series in the Church of Our Most Holy Redeemer, London, in November. Directed by Ursula Vaughan Williams, and with the New London Orchestra conducted by Ronald Corp, this was a rare opportunity to see a staged performance of RVW's short operatic episode.

Composed in 1922, the work shares with the *Pastoral Symphony* (1921) a contemplative lyricism, and

with *Flos Campi* (1925) a chaste beauty and freshness. It is quintessential Vaughan Williams, reappearing largely unchanged in Act 4 of *The Pilgrim's Progress* as late as 1951. Wilfrid Mellers refers to this work as capturing perhaps more than any other RVW's English Eden. It evokes a Palmer landscape – corn-stocked dell, immense moon, nibbling sheep and balmy air.

In this production, Pilgrim emerged from the audience to the welcome of the Shepherds. He was one of us – every man – open-necked shirt, Levis, jacket casually held over his right shoulder. The singing (Philip Blake-Jones, Paulo da Silva and Charles Gibbs as the Shepherds and Lawrence Wallington as Pilgrim) had the right balance between fervour and wonder. The small orchestra revealed the beauty of the writing, particularly for solo viola in the *sensa misura* passages at the beginning.

The Messenger (James Oxley) and the Voice of a Bird (Charlotte Rylatt) contributed well to the increasingly ecstatic climax of the opera. With limited means at her disposal, Ursula Vaughan Williams captured brilliantly Pilgrim and the Messenger crossing the deep waters to reach the Celestial City. Making use of lighting through a white gauze across the stage, the illusion of the journey's end was most movingly created. After the Alleluias, the bells and the trumpets, we returned to the *sensa misura* of the opening. A wonderful experience, adding fresh urgency to the RVW Society's vision of *Pilgrim's Progress* receiving a staged performance in London in 1997.

Stephen Connock

Next issue
Review of a
new CD of
VW's film
music, also
new symphony
recordings.

Why not a 'K' for RVW?

Readers may not have seen this correspondence in recent issues of the BBC Music Magazine:

I have a question that has been puzzling me for some time. Why was Ralph Vaughan Williams never awarded a 'K'? Birtwistle, Elgar, Maxwell Davies, Tippett and Walton were all knighted in this century. Britten even became Baron Britten of Aldeburgh. Surely Vaughan Williams left a musical legacy equalled only by Britten and Elgar and excelled by none. Did he do something that really irritated the monarch or the leaders of the Conservative or the Labour parties?

Joe Mallery, Seattle, WA, USA

The following month came this reply:

COMPOSERS OF MERIT

The answer to Joe Mallery of Seattle is that Vaughan Williams on more than one occasion refused the offer of a knighthood. He and his friend Gustav Holst subscribed to a Liberal-radical order of thinking which deemed titles of artists inappropriate unless they were doctorates earned from universities. However, in 1935, although not without some misgivings, he accepted appointment to the Order of Merit. This is the most exclusive of British honours. It is limited to 24 members and is awarded by the sovereign. Benjamin Britten also refused a knighthood, but he was appointed Companion of Honour in 1953 and OM in 1965.

Somewhat surprisingly he accepted a life peerage in the last months of his life. It is almost certain that both Vaughan Williams and Britten refused the offer of the post of Master of the King/Queen's Music.

Michael Kennedy, Sale, Cheshire.

Newsbriefs

- 'Heirs and Rebels' is the title given to an enticing concert at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, South Bank, on February 26. This Vaughan Williams – Holst programme is to be conducted by Hilary Davan Wetton, with the Milton Keynes City Orchestra and the City of London Choir. The RVW items are 'Flos Campi', and 'An Oxford Elegy' with Classic FM presenter Susannah Simons as narrator – perhaps the first time a woman has taken this role.

- Announced for publication by Scholar Press in December 1995 is *Vaughan Williams: A Source Book*, by Alison McFarland, who is a lecturer in music at the University of California. Scholar say the book will provide 'invaluable and detailed information and represents extensive research over a number of years'. It is to include a chronology of his life and works, and details of his manuscripts and recordings.

- 'RVW 95' is the title of a course to be run by Reigate Summer Music from July 23 - 30 this year. Artistic director Leslie Olive describes it as a 'celebration of great music in the Surrey Hills, 1995 theme composer Vaughan Williams'. There are to be eight major concerts, plus recitals and lectures, an advanced choral course, international youth orchestra, and full children's programme. Details from Reigate Summer Music, Freepost, Redhill RH1 4ZA (0737 823231).

- Every two months the Music Promotion Department of OUP issues a list of performances round the world of major works under their imprint. RVW features prominently, and in a wide variety of venues. Some examples in the period November 1994 to February 1995 are: *Dona Nobis Pacem* (Bromley and Brecon); *Serenade to Music* and *In Windsor Forest* (Clerkenwell Festival); *In Windsor Forest* (Rotterdam); *Symphony No 6* (Boston, USA; Gera, Germany; also Birmingham), *Tuba Concerto* (Mayenne, France; Maastricht, Holland; City University, London; Cardiff University; Chinese University of Hong Kong; *Flos Campi* (Cambridge); *Violin Concerto* (Cambridge, and Eindhoven, The Netherlands); *Symphony No 5* (Dorset Philharmonic Society and Hartford, USA); *Job* (Marlborough,

Bromley, and Indianapolis, USA); *Five Tudor Portraits* (Osaka, Japan and Twickenham); *Viola Concerto* (Harrow); *Hodie* (Taunton, and Basle, Switzerland); *Symphony No 4* (Macon, USA); *Oboe Concerto* (Auvergne), *The Lark Ascending* (Monte Carlo), *Riders to the Sea* (Lemmens, The Netherlands), *Symphony No7* (Villingen, Germany).

- Readers will be aware that 1995 is BBC Radio Three's 'Fairest Isle' British Music Year, with publication of a special book and CDs and a comprehensive and appetising year-long programme of broadcasts and public concerts. RVW is well represented, not least by a complete cycle of the symphonies, to be given by Richard Hickox and the Bournemouth Orchestra, both in Bournemouth and at the Barbican in London.

- Naxos are to record RVW's film music complete, with the first disc becoming available in February 1995. Naxos expect to release *A Sea Symphony*, in the series conducted by Kees Bakels, with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, in spring 1995.

- The Composers' Guild of Great Britain, of which RVW was the first president, is currently celebrating the 50th anniversary of its foundation. Focal point of the celebration is a concert to be given at St John's, Smith Square, on May 27, when Sir Peter Maxwell Davies will conduct the Britten Sinfonia in an all-British programme. Included will be RVW's *Oboe Concerto*, with Nicholas Daniel as soloist.

- The 1995 Three Choirs Festival will be at Gloucester, and will include performances of RVW's *Five Mystical Songs* (August 22), *Sinfonia Antarctica* (August 23), and part-songs (August 26). A fringe event at – Higham Parish Church on August 21 will include the RVW String Quartet.

- Scores of all RVW's works (as listed in the catalogue recently circulated) by OUP, his principal publisher, are available to society members at a 10% discount. This also applies to the books published by OUP about the composer. Send your requirements to Richard Mason, 144 Campbell Road, Florence Park, Oxford OX4 3NT. No money should be sent: the music/books will be despatched to you with an invoice.

- Member John Butler (14 Wells Park Court, Taylors Lane, London SE26 6QP) writes:

Scott of the Antarctic: does anyone have the two Top Rank 78s of excerpts from the film score? The nos. are FM 43 and 44 and perhaps someone has transferred them to a cassette? The contents are listed in AEF Dickinson's book on the composer and contains music that's not in the *Sinfonia*.

N.B. On the Scott CD listed in the previous RVW Society Journal (page 7), there's only 7 minutes of VW!

- On November 12 the BBC Radio 3 series *Building a Library* considered RVW's *Fourth Symphony*. Edward Greenfield analysed all currently available recordings, his final recommendation being the version by Andre Previn and the LSO, a 1969 recordings on a mid-price RCA disc (RCA SB6860) coupled with a fine performance of No 3, *A Pastoral Symphony* (which is recommended in the society's discography), so all-in-all a highly commendable disc. The composer's own urgent recording with the BBCSO was also highly praised; a release of a newly re-engineered version by Dutton Labs of this historic recording will be available this January.

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