



Journal of the **RVW** Society

No. 3 July 1995

EDITOR

John Bishop
14 Barlby Road
London W10 6AR

0181-969 3579

Editorial assistant
Emma Marshall

In this issue...

- Some key scores
in the faber list
— page 2
- JOB —
'this enthralling work'
— page 4
- 'The inner and outer
worlds of RVW'
— page 6
- 'How I first came to
RVW's music'
— page 10
- 'RVW and the
nation's heritage'
— page 14

plus news and reviews

CHAIRMAN

Stephen Connock
Willow House
3 Burywoods
Bakers Lane
Colchester CO4 5AW
(01206 842245)

SECRETARY

Robin Barber
The Chantry
Stoney Lane, Stocklinch
Ilminster
Somerset TA19 9JJ
(01460 57819)

The Society is - **Firing on all cylinders!**

The activities listed below clearly indicate that the society is steadily expanding its activities on several fronts:

- INAUGURAL AGM. Enclosed with this *Journal* is the programme for the exciting day of events on September 17 which will incorporate our inaugural AGM. *It is important that you respond quickly because we need to know how many people we are catering for, and can therefore book an appropriate meeting place (likely to be the Guildhall School of Music).*
- PUBLICATIONS. Four publications sponsored by the society are currently in detailed preparation; it is hoped they will be available in the autumn — possibly in time for the AGM. The publications will be available to members at a special price, and available to the general public at a higher price.
The four are:
 - * Complete discography
 - * Selective bibliography
 - * A performer's guide
 - * Alphabetical list of works

Full details in the November issue of the *Journal*.

- SYMPHONY CYCLE. Little could we have guessed when the society was founded last year that in 1995 we would be having performances of the first-ever complete cycle of the nine RVW symphonies. Two cycles in fact, since they will be given in Bournemouth (September 10 and 22, October 1 and 8) as well as at the Barbican (September 17 and 23, October 3 and 9). The orchestra will be the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra with Richard Hickox as conductor. In programme order through the four concerts, the symphonies to be done are 1/7, 6/3, 4/8/5 and 9/2. The Bournemouth concerts are to be broadcast by Radio 3. The society is playing its part in this important venture, with Stephen Connock providing the programme notes for both series. There will also be an RVW exhibition in the Barbican Library from September 25 to October 31.

- RECORDINGS. IMP have recorded three enterprising RVW CDs which should be available shortly and for which Stephen Connock will be supplying the booklet notes. Two of the CDs are choral: one devoted to the hymn tunes and one to the carols. Owain Arwel Hughes conducts a specially formed Welsh choir. The third CD is by Lydia Motdkevitch and includes recorded premieres of piano-and-violin versions of *The Lark Ascending* and of *Romance and Pastorale*.

Some key RVW scores

in Faber list



Drawing used in the 'Hugh the Drover' brochure

New brochure has Michael Kennedy contribution

What they said at the time...

The work is wonderful because it seems to lift one into some unknown region of musical thought and feeling. Throughout its course one is never quite sure whether one is listening to something very old or very new... The voices of the old church musicians... are around one, and yet there is more besides, for their music is enriched with all that modern art has done since. Debussy, too, is somewhere in the picture and it is hard to tell how much of the complete freedom of tonality comes from the new French school and how much from the old English one. But that is just what makes this *Fantasia* so delightful to listen to; it cannot be assigned to a time or a school, but it is full of visions which have haunted the seers of all times. We can recall no piece of pure instrumental music produced at a Three Choirs Festival which has seemed to belong to its surroundings so entirely as does this *Fantasia*. It could never thrive in a modern concert-room, but in the quieter atmosphere of the cathedral the mind falls readily into the reflective attitude necessary for the enjoyment of every unexpected transition from chord to chord...

Fuller Maitland, The Times, September 1910

England has revolted against the material of war... we have been thrown back upon ourselves with the result that heretofore we have been an interpretative nation in matters musical. Now in Vaughan Williams and Holst and Bax we are creating a new school... they are distinct to themselves.

Eric Coates on arriving in New York, in 1923

There exists already at least one really important achievement which owes its existence directly to the influence of folk-song, and that is the supremely beautiful *Pastoral Symphony* of Vaughan Williams. I have an unbounded admiration for this work...
E J Moeran to The Musical Times, March 1931

His music is an atmosphere. It does not woo the impressionable senses; it does satisfy all the moods of pleasure-loving and sinful man. The greatness of it comes from a certain order of our national way of living, independent and natural as a growth out of the earth, refreshed by all the weathers and humours and dispositions of the reserved but romantic English.

Neville Cardus, Illustrated, October 1952

The music publishing world has seen many mergers and take-overs in the last 30 years. As a result, it is often difficult to find out who publishes what. The only major new publisher to emerge in recent times has been Faber, under whose banner a number of RVW works originally published by Curwen have come to rest.

Faber have recently produced an illustrated 8-page brochure devoted to RVW. Michael Kennedy provides some authoritative biographical notes, and there are four 'contemporary comments' which are of sufficient interest to be reproduced here.

As well as the general RVW brochure (copies available from the Faber Promotion Dept at 3 Queen Square, London WC1N 3AU), they have produced a special brochure about *Hugh the Drover*. This follows the recent CD release of the Hyperion recording, and the re-release of the 1978 EMI recording. Faber have hopes that the work will attract more performances, and this is already happening.

Other major RVW works handled by Faber include the *Tallis Fantasia*, *Pastoral Symphony*, *Wasps Suite*, Mass in G minor and *Sancta Civitas*.

SPECIAL OFFER

Faber are pleased to make RVW scores available to members at a special 25% discount.

Send orders to John Bishop at 14 Barlby Road, London W10 6AR. No cash is needed at this stage: you will be invoiced.

Fighting talk!

Donald Mitchell is one of the most level-headed and sophisticated of our music critics. Hobby-horses he certainly has, but he always rides them sensibly and without sensationalism. *Cradles of the New*, recently published by Faber, is a 500-page collection of essays on a wide range of topics, with British music (Malcolm Arnold, Elgar, Delius, Britten) well represented. His challenging RVW piece, written in 1965, concludes with this sentence: 'He was undoubtedly a great — and good — man, a composer of powerful personality and a major voice in our musical culture. But his *art*, I think, though it made history, was also defeated by it, and will, if I have to hazard a guess, prove to be minor'.

Fighting talk indeed for our members at least, but do try and read the piece in full before you explode!

Larry reminisces...

Random listening on Radio 3 recently enabled us to catch Larry Adler reminiscing about RVW's *Romance* for harmonica and orchestra, which was written for him. Adler said he had been unhappy with his contribution to the first two performances. The third was to be at a Prom, with Sargent in charge. The conductor was very helpful, nursing Adler through some counting difficulties, and everyone was pleased at the result. Sargent stage-managed the applause at the end for maximum effect, and then RVW came down from his box to great acclaim. So great acclaim, in fact, that a second performance was given immediately, with RVW sitting listening among the violas.

RVW letters wanted

Do you own a letter from Vaughan Williams or know of one in private hands? If you do, Hugh Cobbe (Music Librarian of the British Library) would very much like to have a copy of it/them. He is currently gathering material for the major official collection of RVW letters to be published in — hopefully — 1997. Hugh has some 1500 letters already, and others continue to emerge.



RVW's visit to the University of California, Santa Barbara in 1954.
Left to right, are Carl Zytowski, RVW, Ursula Vaughan Williams, and John Gillespie

American enthusiast

- A great pleasure earlier this year was to meet an American member, Carl Zytowski, over in London on a visit. Carl, until recently professor in the Department of Music at the University of California, Santa Barbara, is director of The Schubertians, a male-voice group which last year celebrated its 30th anniversary. It has toured widely, including performances at the Aldeburgh Festival. Carl served in

the US Air Force and knows Britain - and English music - well, having been stationed in East Anglia. The group's repertoire, as given in their 30th anniversary celebratory booklet, is enormous, and includes a number of RVW items. Carl made a special male-voice arrangement of the *Serenade to Music*, a work for which he says he has a 'special fondness'.

Andrew Davis came late to RVW...

Andrew Davis was interviewed by Simon Heffer for the *Daily Telegraph* in March, particularly about his views on British music and the series of recordings he has made with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and issued in the British Line series by Teldec. Said Heffer: 'It was emotional engagement, eventually, that led Davis into recording a cycle of the nine Vaughan Williams symphonies, five of which are already available.'

'As a younger man Davis had regarded the symphonies as amateur. "I never took the time and trouble to understand them. He was the major English composer I came to last of all", he says. He developed an early liking for the *London Symphony* but it was the Sixth that "got under my skin

to such an extent that it made me look at the other Vaughan Williams symphonies again". For one who came late to this music, Davis grasped it instinctively; his recording of the Sixth was judged by no less a critic than my colleague Michael Kennedy, the foremost authority on the composer, as the finest available recording of it.'

Research Guide

Readers may not know of 'Ralph Vaughan Williams:

A Guide to Research by Neil Butterworth, published in 1990 in New York by Garland Publishing (ISBN 0.8240.7746.6) It contains a classified list of all the works by the composer, a complete discography up to 1989, a classified bibliography of 546 entries, a list of the composer's own literary writings, and the literary sources on which he drew for his music. The final section, *Personalia*, provides brief biographies of 140 fellow musicians with whom RVW was associated.

Tracking down RVW's music for 'The Mayor of Casterbridge'

Desmond Hawkins is a respected authority on Thomas Hardy and over a number of years at the BBC was responsible for the radio dramatisations of the major novels. None has been recently repeated or made available, in spite of the increase of interest in Hardy.

The Mayor of Casterbridge was an early production (1951) of special interest, due to the fact that the BBC commissioned Ralph Vaughan Williams to write the music. The play was not only repeated in a new production in 1968 but translated for transmission on the Arabic service as late as 1988.

The producer of the 1968 version, Brian Miller, advises that the original music by Vaughan Williams still exists on an Archives disc but '...the recording is of poor quality and the orchestration rather thin to reach the soaring heights of Vaughan Williams'. Due to budgetary constraints it was not possible to re-record the music, therefore other music by Vaughan Williams was used from commercial recordings by Barbirolli and Boult.

Given the current level of interest in Hardy, it must be evident to anyone interested in our cultural heritage that the whole sequence of Mr Hawkins' adaptation of the major novels should be made available, in addition, to his two television programmes on Wessex. There is no sign that this is likely but it is difficult to ascertain what has become of the material.

This does not reflect well upon an organisation which is charged by charter with the responsibilities of a national institution, and it may be necessary for others, more influential or persuasive than the writer, to make representations on these matters.

The Mayor of Casterbridge represents a prime example, not only because of the distinguished pedigree attaching to the 1951 version but because there are no alternative dramatisations which authentically reflect the subject.

The BBC TV version dramatised by Potter reveals lack of attention by both the writer and producer to the original. A more recent version on BBC Radio 4, adapted by Hedges, is probably the one made currently available by BBC Enterprises. The latest version is more faithful to Hardy's story development

than the TV one, but the attempt to provide an authentic musical background by the Mellstock Band introduced anomalies which may originate from Potter.

It is possible that scripts and associated score material from 1951 have been retained by the BBC; there may even be tapes of the 1968 version, but unless specifically requested annually by the producer the policy was to 'wipe' tapes. Mr Miller maintained the record of Hardy productions for which he was responsible, at least for the time he was at the BBC. The fate of the 1951 production is unknown, although the music exists.

The Dorset County Library has bound scripts for both *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and *The Return of the Native* which are extremely revealing.

The music for the 1951 *Casterbridge* only exists in the form of *Prelude on an Old Carol Tune*, held by Oxford Music.

The importance of preserving and making available earlier versions of the Hardy dramatisations is threefold:

- 1) All subsequent versions, TV and radio, have been deficient in one or more respects.

- 2) The quality of writing and production (and in the case of 1951 *Mayor*) of the associated music.

- 3) The need to preserve for future students of the subject both a reference standard and historical source.

It has been pressed upon the writer that the BBC does not consider itself a national sound archive. Its chief present interest in its extensive archive is to use fairly recent material for commercial video/audio sales.

Prior to this, the policy was to sell programme material to foreign and commonwealth radio stations, who may still have copies. The preservation or dissemination of such material is clearly dependent on BBC policy.

It is understood that although the BBC would not make available material on request, even though it has no use for it, it may be more responsive to institutions such as the Thomas Hardy Society or Ralph Vaughan Williams Society.

In compiling these comments I must acknowledge with gratitude the generous assistance of Brian Miller.

David Tolley

News from our Treasurer...

Richard Mason writes:

Thanks indeed to all the founder members of the RVW Society who have not only replied to my letter requesting early settlement of membership fees but who have also shown complete support for all that we are trying to achieve for the music of RVW. It is most gratifying to see that so many of you have written letters of appreciation for the *Journal*, and your timely payments have certainly ensured that we are now on a sound footing for publication of the next issue of the *Journal*.

With such excellent financial support, I am sure that many events and articles will soon be forthcoming which will be of interest to all of us, and I look forward to putting faces to names at the forthcoming AGM in September.

Three points:

- Those members who have not yet renewed their subscription in response to my letter are politely reminded that receipt of *Journal* 3 completes their membership (unless renewed!). The next renewal date will be April 1, 1996.
- Those members who have not received my letter will have their renewal date carried forward, through to April 1 1996. If you are unsure whether this applies to you, please telephone for confirmation 01865 775449 (evenings).
- Many members have requested direct debits to be used in future for renewal of subscriptions. I can confirm that this is being examined at the present time and more details will be announced in the near future. Some members have also requested that new membership rates should be implemented for family members and also for concessionary rates. This is being considered, and an announcement will be made at the AGM.

The recent re-release on CD of *Job — A Masque for Dancing*, on Everest/Vanguard Classics (EVC 9006), adds another performance by Sir Adrian Boult and the LPO to the lengthening catalogue of this enthralling work.

In his soon-to-be published RVW discography, Stephen Connock has identified eight different recordings of this piece and several re-issues, of which Boult was responsible for five. As Boult and RVW worked closely together throughout their careers, and because *Job* was dedicated to Boult, perhaps this is not too surprising. The fact that Boult revisited the work so often, and with three different orchestras, shows his feeling towards the work which is best evidenced in the subtly differing shades and tones he brought to each recording.

The Everest recording, which was the third in the Boult sequence, has coincided with the release of Boult's second recording, originally on Decca, but now on Belart. In a recent review in *Gramophone* (May 1995, p64) Andrew Achenbach describes the second recording as being in many ways more impressive. For reasons I am not too clear about, I don't agree. There is little doubt that the recording on Intaglio (Boult/LPO, INCD 7411, no longer available), taken live at the RVW Centenary Celebration in 1972, has more emotion but this could have been reflected through the highly charged occasion. The anecdotal tale of the look on Boult's face at the end of the performance of *Job* marks this recording as being special, but to me there is a subtle difference in the Everest recording which is difficult, if not impossible, to identify.

Blake scholar

The background to RVW writing this work is well known, but is worth briefly restating. In 1930, RVW was approached by Geoffrey Keynes, who was, arguably, this country's leading scholar of William Blake, to write music to illustrate Keynes' revision of Blake's *Illustrations of the Book of Job* which Keynes and Gwen Raverat were then researching. RVW wrote the piece for orchestra and expected the work to be presented as an orchestral piece. However, Keynes had visions of the work being presented as a ballet, and despite RVW's well-known antagonism to ballet as a form, he described the piece as a 'Masque', using an old musical term which inferred non-balletic movement and more static presentation.

Tony Fuller discusses—

JOB — 'this enthralling work'

The ballet/masque was choreographed by his friend Ninette de Valois and was first performed for the Camargue Society, which Keynes had recently established, in Norwich, with Constant Lambert conducting. Anton Dolin danced the major role of Satan and the photograph of him in Gerald Northrop Moore's outstanding book on RVW seems to capture the whole flavour of the performance.

Masterpiece

As an amateur student of Blake, I believe that RVW has captured the very essence of Blake's wonderful series of prints in this music and that *Job* is actually one of RVW's masterpieces. Where Blake's mysticism and belief shine through his engravings of *Job*, RVW's understanding of Blake shines through in the music.

The first thing that struck me with the Everest recording was the length. Boult takes the piece at a fast rate on all three of his recordings currently available. The length on Everest is 44'09", with the other two Boult records having similar timing (Belart 44'17"/Intaglio 44'03"). These should be compared with Handley's recording, which is 4'10" slower, and Hickox's recording, which is 4'49" slower than Boult/Everest. Boult's recordings have an urgency which brings the dance basis of the piece to the forefront, whereas the modern recordings take a more leisurely pace which reflects the orchestral origin of the piece but which loses some of the *drive* that makes *Job* the work that it is.

I don't know why I like this version so much. I'm not a scientist or technician, so I don't get too hung up on the audiophile/recording information contained in sleeve-notes. To me, the fact that the trombones may be 'too close' - whatever that means - is irrelevant. The same argument applies to the sound of analogue-to-digital transfers.

The music, the sound, the overall presentation either works or it does not. In my opinion this transfer works well and the music sounds good.

The various parts of *Job* are all exceptional pieces of music in their own right and parts of the Everest recording are outstanding. The *Saraband of the Sons of God* is, I believe, one of the most beautiful pieces of music ever written and is played well here. Satan's *Dance of Triumph*, with its more exotic percussion and driving strings, initially gives a sense of threatening proximity which gives way to a feeling that Satan (or evil) will overwhelm *Job* because of the music's seductive brashness and beauty. *The Dance of Job's Comforters* reminds you of Uriah Heep at his obsequious worst; the *Pavane and Galliard of the Sons of the Morning* move one, but it is the interpretation of the *Dance of Youth and Beauty* which recaptures the light, beauty and good and which takes *Job* away from his false friends, comforters and his own self-doubt, with the music turning *Job* back to see his eventual salvation.

Little to choose

Perhaps it doesn't matter which version you have as long as you *have* one. There is little to choose between any of them really, although Boult would seem to have the emotional edge over the more modern conductors, whose interpretations are also excellent. If your budget stretches far enough, buy the Everest record because the other pieces on it (*The Wasps Suite*/Arnold's *Scottish Dances*) make it an excellent buy. If not, the Belart release, coupled with the *Wasps Suite*, is only £4.99 on CD or cassette (whichever the MMC report?). For emotion, get Boult on Intaglio if you can. It may still be available at some record shops, although it is no longer in the catalogue. But for sheer pleasure, I think I'll always come back to Everest.

A musician friend of mine remarked to me recently that he found the contrast between the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies of Ralph Vaughan Williams a surprising, almost startling, thing. After all, he pointed out, the Fifth is chronologically the true 'war symphony', while the Sixth was completed and first performed in the victorious aftermath of the war. Yet the Fifth is, in essence, profoundly tranquil, while the Sixth is anything but, being for many reasons one of the most disturbing musical statements of the 20th century.

Paradox

Yet this very paradox highlights the important relationship between these two great works. Each is a convincing demonstration of different yet complementary aspects of the composer, and this, added to the complex web of expression found in the two symphonies, gives the lie to those who characterise him as a benign, if slightly somnolent, rustic poet.

Ecstasy

What are these contrasting aspects, then, of Vaughan Williams? The Fifth Symphony is a tranquil piece, and concludes in a mood of quiet ecstasy; yet that state of mind is not arrived at as easily as the superficial listener might suppose. All four movements contain passages of anguish and perplexity, where there is a sense of dread and a 'loss of the path'. What makes the work so convincing is the powerful overall sense of unity and direction, so much so that the conclusion of the finale can clearly be heard and felt as the logical outcome of the very opening of the first movement.

The point has been made by a number of writers that Vaughan Williams' musical style is essentially a vocal one. If the ending of the Fifth is hymn-like in character, then the opening of the Sixth is an example of the 'primal scream', plunging the listener immediately into a world of aggression and impending chaos. Deryck Cooke (in *The Language of Music*) perceptively analysed the tonal and rhythmic contradictions that give this opening its impact, and the strife they produce is probably the most distinctive element in the language of this symphony. Here, unlike the Fifth, it is the moments of repose that are the exceptions to the general rule – indeed, they are very few and far between.

Yet, surprisingly, this traumatic opening is clearly predicted in the Fifth, and at the heart, what's more, of its most tranquil movement, the third. The passage I refer to can be found at cue 8-9 in the score.

The inner and outer worlds of RVW: the Fifth & Sixth Symphonies

Though there is not here the same weight of orchestration or extremity of dissonance, both the thematic connection and the sense of anguish are unmistakable, and form a quite specific link between the two works. (There is a striking similarity in the relationship between Mahler's Fourth and Fifth Symphonies, where the opening fanfare of the latter is first heard in a passage in the first movement of the former. However, that is a comparison VW himself might not have been too keen on!).

The Fifth Symphony may be seen, then, as a work that arrives at a profound calm, despite having passed through the Valley of the Shadow of Death (or the Slough of Despond if you prefer), while the Sixth seems to be marooned in that Valley, unable to find an exit. The famous *niente* ending is not really a conclusion of any sort – more a recurring image getting fainter and fainter until it moves beyond our perception.

'Meaning'

Many writers have pondered the 'meaning' of the Sixth Symphony – the entire work, not just its ending. Returning to my opening perspective, it seems a very odd sort of 'Victory' symphony. Of course, VW himself was deliberately quite unhelpful about this. His programme-note for the first performance is almost comically prosaic in style, and he roundly ticked off those who saw it as a description of the outcome of war, so that subsequent commentators have been understandably wary of attempting to 'interpret' the work. In a chapter called 'What is Music?' in his entertaining booklet entitled *The Making of Music* (1955), based on some lectures he gave at Cornell University, the composer puts his views this way:

But it may be asked what does music mean? A lot of nonsense is talked nowadays about the 'meaning' of music. Music indeed has meaning, though it is not one that can be expressed in words. The hearer may, of course, if he chooses, narrow the meaning of music to fit words or visual impressions, as for example in opera. But this particularisation limits the scope of music.

by Gwyn Parry-Jones

There is, naturally, a lot of truth in that, and Vaughan Williams, given the era in which he lived, was aware of the dangers of the worst excesses of the 'Music Appreciation' movement, which tried to reduce all music to stories or pictures.

Yet creative artists should surely be prepared for musicians and music-lovers to wish to discuss their output and listeners' responses to it, provided any interpretations are offered as a pointer to aid a fuller understanding of the work, and not in the patronising spirit of 'this is what the composer is trying to say (poor inarticulate soul that he is!)'.

Vaughan Williams had a strong dissident streak to his character. He detested woolly thinking or intellectual laziness, and had no time at all for the sheep-like pursuit of fads and fashions. (He was, for example, an early critic of the 'authenticity' movement in musical performance.) Though he was in the deepest sense a patriot, a true lover of his country, there must have been much that disgusted and depressed him in the immediate wake of World War Two. Euphoria inevitably soon gave way, in some quarters, to a distasteful triumphalism; many people, on the other hand, Vaughan Williams himself, I believe, included, were painfully aware of the havoc wrought by the hard-won war. They saw lives lost or wasted, families destroyed and, worse still, whole areas of culture and ways of life lost without trace and for ever; the very things, it must have seemed, we had been fighting to protect. What had been the point, and what could possibly replace that which had been lost? (By coincidence, Serge Prokofiev, in Russia, was writing his Sixth Symphony at precisely the same time, and, less guarded than Vaughan Williams, he acknowledged that the subject – matter of his work was this very notion of the horror and destruction of war.)

I should stop, before I get drawn into too detailed a speculation on the work's meaning, and risk invoking the minatory shade of RVW himself! But I have to say that a comparison of these masterpieces does seem particularly

American member Bill Marsh sends us a press cutting from the February 8 issue of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, reporting a concert given by the Symphony Orchestra of the Curtis Institute of Music. Here are some extracts:

● 'The Curtis Orchestra's quality varies from year to year; after all, student groups are, by definition, transient. There's no arguing, though, that this year's crop is a real winner. Andre Previn, who conducted the group Monday night at the Academy of Music, said at a reception after the concert that if he closed his eyes, he couldn't be sure which orchestra was in front of him. Cleveland? Philadelphia? Chicago? ...

'Such praise is hard to live up to. But Previn's words are hardly hype. The Curtis Orchestra's performance was passionate and, yes, on a professional level. Sure, there were spots that were less than perfect. Were they more numerous than those found in concerts of professional orchestras? Probably not.

'The Curtis Orchestra is looking professional in another way this week: it is making its first recording for a major label, EMI Classics, and will make it with a big producer, Phil Ramone. Today and tomorrow the group will record Vaughan Williams' *Symphony No.5* and *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*, as well as the first recording of Previn's *Reflections*.

'The *Fantasia* (1910) for double string orchestra and string quartet is one of those pieces that makes your heart melt. Previn pulled a golden tone from the group, gently scaling tension and release with generous rubato and clearly defined dynamic contrast. The piece expresses itself in a musical language that can be spoken at times in only the most hushed tones — a characteristic this performance showed appreciation for.

'Vaughan Williams repeated the *Fantasia's* mood many years later when he wrote the *Symphony No.5* (1943), in

(continued from previous page)

helpful, as each strongly illuminates the other. The Fifth Symphony seems a radiant sign-post to the peace of the inner, spiritual world; while the Sixth, which places itself fair and square in the outer world, may be best seen as a dire warning of what can happen when that sign-post is ignored.

Bill Marsh sends a **Letter from Philadelphia**

the third movement. The jaunty rhythms of the second movement are a kind of trademark for the composer and would show up more fully developed a decade later in his *Tuba Concerto*.

'Previn has made himself something of a champion of Vaughan Williams' music, making extensive recordings of the symphonies and other works. Interestingly, his interpretation of the *Symphony No.5* with the Curtis Orchestra is quite different from his BMG recording of the piece with the London Symphony. Previn now seems more confident, his tempos more quixotic and generally faster.'

● In a letter, Bill Marsh comments: 'As for Previn himself, I was never sold on him as a VW interpreter. I don't have all his VW recordings, but I felt he ignored many dynamic markings in the *Sea Symphony*. Not so with the Fifth this time. He shaped and balanced everything beautifully. Especially the phrase-ending of the middle two move-

ments. Nothing was left as a throwaway. Given that they will record the two VW pieces for Angel, preparation must have been even extra special. This is exciting news, for the sessions will be across the Delaware in suburban Collingswood, NJ, in what was a theatre and now is a photographer's studio. The Philadelphia Orchestra discovered this last year and is now making all its recordings there instead of the dreadful gym in Memorial Hall in Fairmount Park,

'It had been a long time since I heard the *Tallis Fantasia* or the Fifth Symphony live. The choral music and church pieces get done a lot here, but not the orchestral works. Any British music by the Philadelphia Orchestra is rare, especially so now that Associate Conductor William Smith died two years ago. He had to fight Ormandy and then Muti to get things programmed, as well as the management, but we did get some good things now and then. A couple of years ago he gave the early version of the *London Symphony* which I had to miss. It was well received.

'For the Curtis concert on a very cold night, with wind-chill well below zero °F and the actual temperature in the teens, there was about 65% of the house filled. Not bad given the icy streets from the first snowstorm of the winter which dumped 9" in the city and 12-16" in the suburbs. I got 13" here.'

We recently obtained a copy of the 1959 RVW commemorative issue of the *Royal College of Music Magazine*, from which we intend to publish extracts in future issues of this journal.

One item particularly caught our eye — a poem by Ursula Vaughan Williams:

Spoken to a Bronze Head

Bronze, where my curious fingers run
matching each muscle and each metal feature
with life's austerer structure of the bone,
each living plane and contour so well known,
you will endure beyond the span of nature,
be as you are now when our lives are done.

On unborn generations you will stare
with the same hollow eyes I touch and see,
look on a world in which no memories share
the living likeness of the face you wear,
keep, in unchanged serenity,
all that time gave him in your guardian care.

His name is yours to keep, so will his glory be,
who are his only, his inheriting son:
and when the hand that writes so ardently
the sound of unknown sound reaches finality,
the music captures, all the work well done,
stand in his place and bravely wear his immortality.

A matter of honours...

Not long ago, BBC Radio 3 ran a series, with some tenuous musical illustrations, illustrating the connection between Ralph Vaughan Williams and the United States; from this and the relative items in the January edition of the *Journal*, it would seem that VW is better appreciated than understood in the USA.

The question raised by Mr Mallery in the *BBC Music Magazine* underlines the need to overcome the lack of knowledge which clearly exists in the USA, especially on the question of VW's deprecation of the kind of 'honours' with which Americans seem obsessively interested.

Michael Kennedy answered this with his usual thoroughness, but it is disturbing that when the 'honours' system here is not held in much repute, and given out to '...every Tom Dick and Harry', to quote Mr Porter, Americans should equate our greatest composers with lesser men.

To do honour to Vaughan Williams is to respect the memory of a man whose nobility was in himself and to see that his great musical achievement receives the recognition it deserves, as any other nation would do.

The contribution of Mr Beechey raised another question: there has been a great deal of interest shown in the journal over the film music. Like all music associated with another art form, some background knowledge seems necessary; Mr Beechey quotes with evident approval the notes to the music suite of *The Loves of Joanna Godden*. His quotation about 'The Burning of the Sheep' is an unfortunate example: anyone who knows the film, or has read Michael Kennedy, will also know that Arthur Alce's sheep were infected with foot-

YOUR LETTERS

We are always pleased to receive contributions for this page

and-mouth disease' not deadly anthrax. There is a great deal of difference between the two, and no confusion is possible from the film.

For those who are unfamiliar, this is an adaptation of the book *Joanna Godden* by Sheila Kaye-Smith, beautifully and authentically filmed in the Romney Marsh, Kent, with a splendid performance by Googie Withers.

The contribution from Pamela Blevins is surprising; I yield to no-one in admiration of Ivor Gurney's double achievement in poetry and music, and have occasionally tidied up his grave, but in comparison with Vaughan Williams, both Gerald Finzi and Ivor Gurney are comparatively minor figures about whom little is known or appreciated, even in this country. If Pamela Blevins can persuade her fellow Americans to 'brush up their Vaughan Williams', her efforts deserve success and may even reflect back here.

David J Tolley
Jenny Compton
Warwickshire

Early works

In Lewis Foreman's article (issue No.1 of the *Journal*) he suggested that certain works are worth a hearing. Is not one difficulty, standing in the way of that

idea, that these works are not published? If this was done — or if the parts are available — I would ask my musical friends to work with me on the Quintet of 1898 and the Piano Quintet of 1903. Incidentally, the list of works gives the arrangements of Purcell's *Evening Hymn* to be with string quartet. In Michael Kennedy's book a string orchestra is listed. Which is correct?

Brian T Sturtridge
Bognor Regis

We are taking up these points with the appropriate authority and will report back — Editor

Menuhin's view

On March 3 a large audience gathered at the Barbican Hall to hear Yehudi Menuhin conduct the RPO (unusually the conductor was seen to be wearing hearing aids). The programme — Elgar's *In the South*, Britten's Violin Concerto and Vaughan Williams' Fifth Symphony — was well appreciated. The interpretation of the RVW Symphony broadly followed the lead given by Handley on his excellent EMI Eminence CD rather than the Menuhin interpretation exemplified by his own CD on Virgin Classics. A much more successful performance was the result.

Ed Bullimore
Haddenham
Aylesbury

Video wanted

Has anyone got a video of the 1994 Proms performance of *Serenade to Music*? If so, I'd very much like to borrow it.

I have videos of *Riders to the Sea* and *Pilgrim's Progress* and would be prepared to lend them to any member interested.

Bill Kearney
7 St Helen's Road
Prescot, Merseyside L34 6HN

Are there any filmed interviews?

Issue No.2 of the *Journal* was quite a bonanza, with the supplement about *Hugh the Drover*. I just received a copy of the opera as a gift, so it couldn't have come at a better time. I also found the article by Jean Lacroix fascinating. I must say that the larger record stores in Paris did have a good selection of British music the last time I was there (1987), but I can well believe that, outside Paris, British records are hard to find. And thank you for the review of

the Belart CD of Boult's 1952 recording of the *London Symphony*. Belart CDs are not widely distributed here, so I've ordered a copy from the UK.

One thing I've wondered about since joining the society last year: are there any film or video interviews with Vaughan Williams? I know about the voice recordings he made to accompany Boult's first complete cycle of his symphonies, but I've never heard of any film or video. It might be a good topic for a feature in the *Journal* if someone in the society has knowledge of the available material.

Frank Beck
New York

Developments at Leith Hill Place

I am writing as a follow-up to my article about Leith Hill Place which you so kindly printed in the last *Journal*.

I wrote that the National Trust have made no effort to acknowledge the fact that LHP was given to them by RVW, and that it is difficult to view.

Well, I visited it a month ago, for the first time in many years, and I am glad to say that there is a new footpath in place. It runs right past the south face of the house, on the slope where RVW used to use a sledge in the winter snow!

Also, the NT have a guide to Leith Hill for sale for a pound on site, which has a small note saying who the house belonged to, although it does not say anything about him being England's greatest ever composer! (or the world's!). Also, I picked up a guide to Dorking, a freebee issued by the local council, which tells of Leith Hill Place as 'home of RVW, the composer, who lived many years in the town and created here with EM Forster and others the annual Leith Hill Festival'. It also shows the White Horse Inn, but fails to mention the lectures RVW gave during World War II!

It is nice to see things looking up, but I still would like to see information boards by the house for all to appreciate the great man!

Kevin Douglas
Bridgend

Leith Hill greetings-cards

Leith Hill Place, the home of RVW from very early on in his life, is one of the subjects of a large and varied number of greeting cards by the artist Bridget Duckenfield. RVW lived in the house from the age of three onwards and inherited it on the death of his brother. He later sold it to the National Trust, realizing that the job of having to run so large and splendid a house and gardens may lead to neglect of his own, far more important, work. Bridget Duckenfield offers an abundant selection of mainly country village scenes, and also specialises in painting houses of some of England's finest composers. Amongst greeting cards depicting village greens, churches and castles, are sets of 'Seven Elgar Houses' and 'Six Gilbert and Sullivan Houses'. Also included is a single painting of 'Cefn Brytalch' — the Welsh home of Peter Warlock's family.

Individual cards cost 75p, and the Elgar/Gilbert and Sullivan sets cost £5 each. All available from:-

B. Duckenfield,
94 Station Avenue,
West Ewell, Epsom,
Surrey, KT19 9UG.

I was interested in Keith Douglas' article on Leith Hill Place in 1944. Being a Trust member I thought I might explore the matter further, as I could find no mention of the house in the National Trust Handbook. Not being sure whom to contact, I wrote to the Director-General, Sir Angus Stirling.

I have now received a reply from N.G. Stanford, the Managing Agent for the Southern Region of the National Trust. He informs me that the property is let on long lease and not open to the public, which is unusual, as most Trust-tenanted properties can be visited on application to the tenant.

I have written querying this, asking how long the lease is and whether, when the lease expires, it is proposed to open the property to the public. As Keith Douglas points out, apart from any associational, architectural or gardening interest, it has one of the best views in Surrey. I also conjectured whether the property was English Heritage grant-aided or entailed, due to an Inland Revenue death duties settlement, which, if so, implies the likelihood of mandatory public access, although the only known list of such properties is in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Lastly I asked for the name of the tenant so that I, or the society, might make contact with a view to a possible visit. In any case, the tenant should be listed in local Council Tax records. I will keep you informed of progress. Perhaps members might indicate to the editor if they would be interested in a visit if one could be arranged.

Peter Neville
Isleworth

'Salty, but less rice'

Under the heading 'Salty, but less rice', *The Times* critic Gerald Lerner wrote this review on March 24 of a concert which also included *Flos Campi*:

• 'In the rare event of seeing *Riders to the Sea* on the stage, you might wonder how Vaughan Williams could have hoped that it would have any success as an opera. Listening to it in the concert hall, however, where expectations and perceptions are of a different order, you know what inspired him at least to set Synge's play to music.

'The poetry and unity of the language, the elemental exposure of the situation, the unheard sound of the wind, the torment and release of the woman who loses the last of her sons to the sea, all these things stimulated some vivid images in the composer's imagination.

'The most effective aspect of the concert performance of *Riders to the Sea* in City Hall, Newcastle, was the beauty of the musical events after the catastrophe. Richard Hickox drew luminously sonorous playing from the Northern Sinfonia strings in their modal harmonies, and singing movingly free of rhetoric from the Sinfonia Chorus.

'If the composer might have been wiser to leave the wind unheard, rather than attempt to simulate it in the sound of rice (or was it dried lentils?) swishing in a drum, the conductor on this occasion could still have been more tactful by keeping it in the background, where it belongs, rather than making a star performer of the percussionist who manipulates it.

'The true star was Linda Finnie, one of five vocal soloists bravely grappling with Irish accent...'



Bridget Duckenfield's Leith Hill Place drawing

How I first came to RVW's music...

We launch a new series with articles about contrasted members of the Society

I owe it all to National Service...

Although unaware at the beginning, I have known and loved VW's music all my life. As a small boy my mother sang 'Linden Lea', which I thought of as a folksong, I suppose, and at boarding school we sang the Te Deum and raised the chapel roof with 'For all the Saints' without knowing who composed them!

The breakthrough came in 1949, when I was posted to Edinburgh during National Service. To fill the evenings a friend and I decided to catalogue Scottish Command's record library, taking it in turns to choose records to play. I had in my hands Brahms's 2nd Symphony and VW's 5th Symphony and something made me choose the VW. I have never looked back! I bought and played that first 78 rpm Barbirolli/Hallé recording well over 100 times. At last I had instilled the feeling of personal recognition shared by all who love VW's music.

Available books

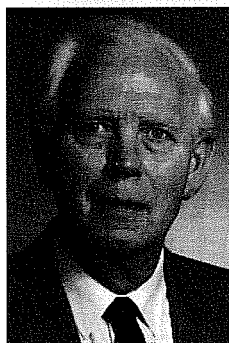
OUP published booklets on the *Early Works* by AEF Dickinson and *Dramatic Works* by Frank Howes. Essays and lectures of HC Colles (Oxford, 1945) whetted the appetite for *A Pastoral Symphony* and *Sir John in Love*, while the chapter on 'The English Musical Renaissance' in *Music and Society* (Dobson 1946) signalled the beginnings of Wilfrid Meller's invaluable contributions which happily still continue, as we know from his analysis of *Hugh the Drover* in the last issue of our *Journal*.

Penguin published *British Music of Our Time* and *The Symphony* but it was only in 1950 that the first RVW biography was published - with hindsight somewhat overwritten - by Hubert Foss, who tantalised with his comments on the *Pastoral Symphony* and Piano Concerto — both seemingly impossible to hear at that time.

Hearing the music

Apart from the Barbirolli 5th Symphony, music available on record included Tallis (Boult), *The Lark Ascending* (David Wise), *Serenade to Music* (Wood) and the *Wasps Overture* (Sargent), so it was a question of spending Saturday mornings in the Gramophone Exchange searching for second-hand, more affordable copies of the deleted *London Symphony* (Henry Wood) and the 4th (VW). I remember

by
**Robin
Iverson**



finding and hiding *Job* (Boult) until six weeks later I had saved 25/- it was still there! Sir Adrian's superb 6th Symphony was issued in 1950.

For a really impecunious article clerk, the BBC concerts, broadcast from its Maida Vale studios, were a godsend. It was then that I first heard Sir Adrian conduct *Sancta Civitas*, *Five Tudor Portraits*, with wonderful Astra Desmond, and *Job*.

Barbirolli and the Hallé Orchestra came regularly to London, bringing with them the 4th, 5th and 6th Symphonies, and it is a real loss that Sir John's fiery, passionate performance of the 4th was never recorded commercially.

The *Sea Symphony* was performed regularly but I had to take the train to Dorking to hear the hauntingly beautiful singing by Elsie Suddaby of *Dona Nobis Pacem* at the Leith Hill Festival.

The difficulty was in hearing the

Pastoral. Paul Beard, leader of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, tried to put me off by saying there wasn't a tune in it(!), while Sir Adrian replied to my pleas but nothing happened. Happily the Festival of Britain in 1951 saw all the then six performed at the Royal Festival Hall. Not knowing when I would hear it again, I listened to Sargent's performance of the *Pastoral*, desperately trying to commit the themes to memory.

Operas

I have been lucky with the operas. On 9th May 1950, *Hugh the Drover* was revived at Sadler's Wells in the composer's presence, with James Johnston as Hugh and Joyce Gartside as Mary. At the end of a superb performance the packed audience's applause was deafening, and on my programme (cost 4d in the gallery!) I noted VW's speech of thanks to the cast. He said, 'Most extraordinary - I never realized it was so good!'

A great moment in my life was to have been at the first performance at Covent Garden of *The Pilgrim's Progress* - Thursday 26th April 1951. I found it an incredibly moving experience and I have always treasured this masterpiece.

Riders to the Sea I first saw at the RCM's Parry Theatre in July 1950. In later years this was part of a double bill with *Hugh* at Sadler's Wells.

It was greatly exciting to discover that *Sir John in Love* was to be given by an amateur company, the Clarion Singers, in the Shire Hall in Stratford-on-Avon. I cycled there from London. There was no orchestral pit and the voices were somewhat drowned but I was able to glory in the verdant lyricism of the music and wonder why the opera was not part of the standard repertory, reflecting, as it does, a real part of English society.

A Poisoned Kiss was not tracked down until much later, first at Fulham Town Hall and later at the Gordon Theatre.

VW performances

I was privileged to hear VW conduct on several occasions. There was a superb *London* with the LSO at the People's Palace and the 5th at a Prom on 11th September, 1950. In 1954 I actually sang in the Chorales, as part of the 'congregation', in St Martin's Church, Dorking, in Bach's *St John Passion*.

(continued on page 11)

Emma is very conscious of the St Paul's legacy

Our youngest member — so far as we know — is Emma Marshall. At 16, and deep in her GCSE exams, she has nevertheless managed to continue listening to plenty of music as she has done her revision!

She has a burgeoning interest — to put it mildly — in RVW and Holst, which in her case arises from the fact that her education for the last five years has been at St Paul's Girls' School, Hammersmith. Both men — and, of course, Herbert Howells — were music directors there in their time. Emma is very conscious of this legacy from some of England's leading composers of the earlier part of the century.

Emma says she first 'fell under the RVW spell' as a result of hearing the Mass in G minor and the *Festival Te Deum* on a CD.

Entranced

She was entranced by the 'Heirs and Rebels' Holst-RVW concert at London's Queen Elizabeth Hall earlier this year (see report elsewhere in this issue), not least because she was able to renew acquaintance with the conductor for the evening, Hilary Davan Wetton, who had himself been music director at St Paul's until recently. His keen interest in British music has played a significant part in Emma's attraction to that repertoire.

Emma says — with refreshing candour — that she doesn't much like 'pop,' which perhaps puts her somewhat apart at school, where her closest friend



is Celia Sadie, daughter of Stanley Sadie (editor of the *New Grove*).

A Grade 7 pianist, aspiring to Grade 8, Emma has recently been introduced to some of the RVW piano music. Your editor made her sightread the 'primo' part — to his equally faltering 'secondo' — of the delightful piano-duet arrangement of RVW's *Rhosymedre* published by Stainer and Bell (strongly recommended if you don't already know it!).

Emma offered to help the Society in any way she could, and is now an editorial assistant on this *Journal*. So she is facing the rigours of proof-reading and the subtleties of layout, as well as the numbing process of envelope-stuffing and stamp-licking.

Dark horse

A polite, quiet girl — something of a dark horse, one may guess, and who is a keen climber and judo exponent — Emma is perhaps to be envied. She has, after all, nearly all the discoveries to make about music, RVW's and others...

John Bishop

Society achieves charitable status

At the first meeting of the society's steering committee, held in October 1994, the committee agreed that it would be beneficial for the organisation to apply for charitable status. This would enable the organisation to attract grants and other funds to support its work, and would ensure that the membership and steering committee were working with agreed legal parameters.

The initial enquiry forms were submitted to the Charity Commission in December 1994, and after some negotiation and revision of the draft constitution, the Charity Commission have agreed to grant charitable status for the society. The six months this process has taken may seem excessive but the steering committee has put a good deal of time and effort into this facet of their work, and the registration has been received at least three months in advance of current CC timetables.

The advantages of charitable registration are many but really give the trustees the ability to look for funds for specific projects which they may want to develop in the future. However, the disadvantages are the amount of administration involved, and to make things easier for the trustees (the previous steering committee), work has been allocated as follows:

Stephen Connock	Chairman
Robin Ivison	Vice-Chairman
Robin Barber	Secretary
	(special responsibility for membership services)
Richard Mason	Treasurer
Tony Fuller	Secretary to the trustees
John Bishop	Journal Editor

If members have any queries about their membership or the general running of the society, please refer to Robin Barber. Any enquiries about the legal/technical side of what we are doing, please refer to Tony Fuller.

(continued from page 10)

Conclusion

My VW concert-going, book-and record-collecting has never concluded! In the 1950s I have special memories of both the 80th and 85th birthday celebration concerts at the Royal Festival Hall, and the sad dignity of the Westminster Abbey Commemoration Service is etched in my memory. His music has a unique place in my mind and in my heart.

Newsbriefs

- In the last edition we promised a Naxos release of VW's film music, the first in a projected series of the complete film scores. As members no doubt will be aware, nothing has materialised so far. Upon enquiry, David Denton, managing director of Naxos UK, revealed that the first issue, though already recorded and about which he was enormously enthusiastic, could not be released as they were unable to find anyone with the expertise to provide sleeve-notes on the music. At this point the society was asked for help, with the result that an expert commentary on the music for the first disc was quickly produced by Lewis Foreman. Naxos now inform us that the disc will be released in July. It will include *Prelude to The 49th Parallel*; *Suite - Story of A Flemish Farm*; *Suite - Coastal Command*; and *Three Portraits from The England of Elizabeth*. Members are urged to support this enterprising release, which will be reviewed in the next issue of the *Journal*. Mr Denton promises that if the first release is a success, his company will release recordings of the rest of the RVW film-scores.
- OUP have recently published an 8-page promotion leaflet about the four RVW operas controlled by them.
- Jean Lacroix, a member from Belgium who contributed an article to the second edition of the *Journal*, has written to let us know that RVW's music is to get an airing in Brussels this year. On October 23 the Orchestra Philharmonique de Liege under Jonathan Darling will play the Symphony No 6 as well as Chopin's 1st Piano Concerto and Rossini's overture *La Gazza Ladra*. M. Lacroix would like to know more about the conductor.
- 'Sinfonia Antarctica' in the main RVW work in this year's Three Choirs Festival. It forms part of a concert (August 23) to include the Delius Violin Concerto and a new work from Paul Patterson.
- The Barbican Centre in London has been running a 'British Film Music of the 1940s' series, compiled by film historian Andrew Yondell of the British Film Institute. Included were films with scores by Addinsell, Alwyn, Bax, Bliss, Britten, Brodsky, Easdale, Gray, Ireland, Karas, Rachmaninoff, RVW and Walton. The RVW films were: *Scott of the Antarctic*, *Dim Little Island*, *London Can Take It* and *The Loves of Joanna Godden*.
- The soprano Anne Evans included the four RVW settings of Fredegone Shove poems — *The Watermill* is the best-known of these — in her Wigmore Hall recital on May 4.
- Oxford University Press expect to publish at the end of 1995 a new edition of Michael Kennedy's *A Catalogue of the Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams*. This hardback, price £35, will be a revised edition of the standard catalogue, originally published in 1964 and revised in 1982. It will consist of 340 pages and have numerous music examples. We understand that OUP will be reissuing RVW's *National Music* at the end of this year, as a Clarendon paperback. Still in print from OUP are *The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams* by Michael Kennedy (second edition, paperback £12.95) and *RVW: A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams* by Ursula Vaughan Williams (hardback £30, paperback £14.99).
- The two London concerts marking the 50th anniversary of the Composers Guild of Great Britain each included a work by RVW. At the Wigmore Hall on May 25 the Britten Quartet played the String Quartet No.2. Two days later the Britten Sinfonia, conducted by Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, played the Oboe Concerto, with Nicholas Daniel as the ever-masterful soloist.
- OUP have now published RVW's *Magnificat* for contralto, female chorus and orchestra in a version for contralto, female chorus, solo flute and piano; the flute part can, if necessary, be played by a solo violin. The work is not intended for liturgical use and would make an attractive concert item. Although billed as 'contralto' soloist, the part is really more appropriate for a mezzo-soprano, since a full-out top G is required in more than one place.
- Our EMI contact gives us news of RVW releases in forthcoming months. August will see a 2-CD mid-price release (CMS 5 65123 2) entitled 'Bushes and Briars' containing a substantial selection of RVW choral items, mainly from the 'Springtime of the year' recording of 30 years ago. Early 1996 will see reissues of many well-known RVW recordings, including John Shirley — Quirk's performance of the 'Five Mystical Songs', and 'O Clap your Hands' (CDM 5 65588 2). CDM 5 65589 2 will include Ian Partridge's performances of 'On Wenlock Edge', the 'Ten Blake Songs', the 'Four Hymns' and 'Merciles Beauty'. Scheduled for October this year are new recordings conducted by Bernard Haitinck of the Fifth Symphony, the 'Norfolk Rhapsody', and 'The Lark Ascending'.
- For a series of three concerts given on successive nights by the Britten Sinfonia in May in East Anglia, a special work for chorus and orchestra was commissioned from Eric Wetherell. Entitled *Bushes and Briars*, it used four of the folksongs RVW collected and published in 1907 as *Fifteen Folksongs from the Eastern Counties*. The three venues were Norwich, Snape Maltings, and Thaxted, and different choirs sang on each night. The work, which is now being published by Thames Publishing, proved highly successful with audiences and performers. Mr Wetherell wrote in the first issue of our *Journal* about his encounter with RVW when the former was a student at the RCM.
- We understand that 'RVW 95', a course intended to be run by Reigate Music from July 23 — 30 this year and advertised in the last issue of this *Journal*, is not now taking place.

- Olga Manulkina, a student at the St Petersburg Conservatory of Music, has successfully completed a Ph.D thesis, her subject being *The music of Ralph Vaughan Williams*. She has kindly sent the society a copy; it runs to some 18 pages and is, not surprisingly, entirely in the Russian language. If any member is able to offer translating skills, please contact the secretary, Robin Barber, who will be delighted to forward a copy of the thesis. It may be well worth publishing some or all of it in a future edition of the *Journal*. Ms Manulkina says that her thesis has been well received in Russian academical circles and that there is increasing interest in RVW's music in Russia. She also informs us that there is to be 'A festival' of his music in the 1995-6 season! Full details are promised for a future edition.
 - We are sorry to hear of the death of Alec Hyatt King, aged 83. He was one of the leading British music scholars of his generation and a superb organiser of exhibitions at the British Museum, including that for RVW in 1972.
 - The Barbican have agreed that OUP can mount a 'Pilgrim's Progress' exhibition there during the 1996/7 season. OUP also hope to mount an exhibition on the RVW symphonies, possibly at the British Library.
 - A concert to mark the 75th anniversary of *The Lark Ascending* will be held at 3pm on October 7 at Shirehampton Hall, Station Road, Bristol. The hall was the venue for the first performance of the work, in 1920, in its violin-and-piano version. RVW was present, and was a guest of Dr Napier Miles at Kings Weston House. The October 7 concert, which will also include music by Elgar and Frank Bridge, has been initiated by the Elgar Society, in collaboration with the RVW Society. Tickets (£8) can be obtained from the Ticket Secretary at 29 Callington Road, Brislington, Bristol, BS4 5BZ
 - RVW featured prominently in a seminar, 'Aspects of the British Musical Renaissance III', held at Birmingham University on June 10. The morning session consisted of papers on the Piano Concerto, the *Songs of Travel* and the *Sea Symphony*. We hope to report these in greater detail in a later issue of the *Journal*.
 - Something amiss in the indexing department at CBS records. A recent catalogue lists RVW as conductor of a record of Gershwin! Actually it is singer Sarah Vaughan they should have been listing.
 - The piano-and-violin version of *The Lark Ascending* will be featured by Lydia Mordkovitch in her Wigmore Hall recital on September 4. The programme also includes the Elgar and César Franck sonatas, and works by Part and Respighi. Lydia has recently recorded *The Lark Ascending* — see item elsewhere in this issue.
 - The spring 1995 edition of the Oxford University Press's quarterly *Music Bulletin* includes a news item about the formation of the RVW Society.
 - Boosey and Hawkes have recently published a study score (£14.95) of the tenor-and-orchestra version of *On Wenlock Edge*.
 - This year's centenary season of the Proms manages to include two RVW works: the Sixth Symphony on July 22 (Vernon Handley and - somewhat surprisingly - the BBC Concert Orchestra) and 'The Lark Ascending' on the last night, September 16 (Andrew Davis and the BBC Symphony Orchestra, with violinist Tasmin Little). We note, with a certain wry amusement, the premiere on the last night of a specially commissioned work from Sir Harrison Birtwistle. It's title? Panic.
 - The viola player Frederick Riddle, who died in March, aged 82, will be remembered for his enormous contribution to musical life as orchestral player, soloist and inspirer of many new works. Among his recordings were ones of *Flos Campi* and the Viola Suite.
 - Particularly satisfying performances of RVW's Tallis Fantasia and Fifth Symphony were high-lights of a London Mozart Players concert at Croydon's Fairfield Hall on April 22. The conductor was Owain Arwel Hughes.
-
- The leading publishers involved supply us with details of forthcoming and recent RVW performances. These are too numerous to list complete, but here is a selected list (not including performances mentioned elsewhere in this issue):
 - * *Sea Symphony* (University of Essex Choir; Ealing Choral Society).
 - * Symphony No 4 (Chicago University students; Hallé Orchestra/Nagano; Maribor Symphony Orchestra, Slovenia).
 - * Symphony No.5 (Thuringer Symphony Orchestra/McIntosh; Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra/Bakels; City of Birmingham Orchestra/Rattle; English Heritage Orchestra).
 - * Symphony No.6 (Baltimore Symphony Orchestra/Norrington).
 - * Symphony No.8 (Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra/Bakels).
 - * *Sir John in Love* (Kansas University).
 - * *Hugh the Drover* (Peterborough Opera; York Opera).
 - * Oboe Concerto (Birmingham Ensemble; Helensburgh Orchestral Society; Leeds Grammar School).
 - * Tuba Concerto (Hinode Gakuen Symphony Band, Japan; Jugendsinfonieorchester, Bremen; Kingston University Symphony Orchestra).
 - * Violin Concerto (City of London Sinfonia; Taipei Symphony Orchestra, Japan).
 - * *A Vision of Aeroplanes* (St Michael's Singers, Cornhill, London).
 - * *Serenade to Music* (Queen's University, Belfast; Bergslagens Kammarorkester, Sweden; Berkhamsted School for Girls).
 - * *Dona Nobis Pacem* (Norwich High School for Girls; Milton Keynes City Orchestra; Deutsches Symphonie Orchester, Berlin; Oratorio Society of New York; Woodstock Music Society).
 - * *Concerto Grosso* for strings (Trinity College of Music Junior Department, London).
 - * *Five Variants of Dives and Lazarus* (Heimdal Youth School Orchestra, Norway).
 - * *Benedicite* (Britham Young University Students, USA; Newstead Wood School, Beckenham).
 - * *In Windsor Forest* (Rotterdam).

RVW and the nation's heritage

Aside a quiet lane in Down Ampney, Gloucestershire, is the 13th-century Cotswold church of All Saints, where Vaughan Williams was baptised and where his father is buried; opposite, sheep graze in a parkland meadow of spreading chestnuts stretching away...

A few miles to the east is the birthplace of Richard Jefferies, mystic and prose poet. A little further in the other direction is the birthplace of Gustav Holst, friend of Vaughan Williams, and that of Ivor Gurney, his sometime student, a poet and musician of remarkable talent.

Underlying this pastoral prospect, easily associable with RVW's music, lies a turbulence and sense of unease, which his compositions often also reflect. Time has erased evidence of the old village, removed following the Black Death. In our time, from beyond the parkland in September 1944 airborne men left in a tragic bid to seize a Rhine crossing at Arnhem, designed to shorten the war. As much as any lark ascending which you are likely to hear in this place, should be the trumpet 'cadenza' from the Third Symphony.

Little justice

The association of Vaughan Williams with our cultural heritage has frequently been claimed as deriving from 'folk music' - a general simplification which has done little justice to the measure of the composer's reputation, and which in some quarters developed into unwarranted prejudice and criticism.

It is evident that the Tudor period, widely recognised as a peak in English musical life, was also influential in Vaughan Williams' musical background, exemplified in his early outstanding success, the *Tallis Fantasia*. Less attention has been given to the effect on his work of his friendship with Gustav Holst, not to mention the brilliant 'French Polish' acquired from Ravel.

The major works, on which his achievement should be judged, cannot be attributed specifically to 'folk music'. It seems reasonable to suggest that a synthesis of these sources and influences was developed by Vaughan

Williams into a means of serving his own musical expression and ideas.

VW's large repertoire of minor compositions may appear more directly related to 'folk' sources, although critics, and even some admirers, have not recognised the broad extent of this collection of works which includes not only folk tunes but also carols, hymns, psalms and other music which characterised the life of the nation over a long period.

Not even these groups together comprise the whole of VW's output: much of our unsurpassed culture in literature,

By David Tolley

drama and poetry has also become associated with him. To this the misapprehension of purely 'folk' sources may be understood only insofar that many subjects are 'rural' in character.

In the past, England has been a nation endowed above all others in the richness and variety of its language and literature. It has thus attracted the attention of foreign composers from Berlioz to Bernstein, but no-one treated such an extensive or significant part of this heritage as did RVW.

This may easily be confirmed from a review of the classified list of works in Michael Kennedy's indispensable study (1), where it is demonstrated that VW has contributed works based upon or inspired by Shakespeare, Milton, Blake, Barnes, Bunyan, Housman, Hardy, and Skelton, among others.

Both *Job*, descriptive of Blake's interpretation of the biblical story, and the allegorical *Pilgrim's Progress* are outstanding major works; having nothing to do with 'bovine husbandry', each is doubly remarkable considering VW's agnosticism. From this high ground of spiritual grandeur, VW could turn with equal facility to the settings either of Hardy's glooms, Housman's despair, then to Skelton's brilliant baudacity. Who else has encompassed such a range?

During the composer's lifetime, recognition of this facility must clearly have been much wider than now. At that period in the media of radio or film, it was a matter of prestige to have VW write incidental music: in 1951, the

BBC specially commissioned music for an outstanding radio dramatisation by Desmond Hawkins of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. Unfortunately it was not used for a repeat production in 1968; this music, like that for *Richard II*, is unavailable to us.

RVW's contribution to the cinema was even more outstanding: his impressive music for *Scott of the Antarctic* was not wasted on that misleading account of the 1911 polar expedition, since it appeared in developed form in the *Sinfonia Antartica*. The music for *49th Parallel* and *Flemish Farm* are well regarded; in *The Loves of Joanna Godden*, a much underrated film, the music fitted perfectly. This was a remarkable achievement since it is well known that only comparatively lately had film scoring risen above an inappropriate droning background noise, usurping dialogue, and much else.

Since the purely 'folk' criticism cannot be sustained, one must look for other grounds on which VW's detractors can diminish him: is it because, leaving aside the Welsh, Scottish and American settings, he is identifiably 'English'? Is it that his sources are essentially 'rural', and thus represented to be either merely 'folky' or 'scenes'? Or is it because his range of themes and subjects represent something that is essentially unrelated to our time?

The latter might be the only legitimate ground: if true, the nation is in a serious cultural position which needs addressing. We live in materialistic times in which the values have traditionally sustained us have become overwhelmed in the apparent triumph of Vanity Fair: '...what is value but Money. What's life but Estate?' (*Pilgrim, Act III, Scene I*).

As in the case of Elizabethan England, between 1939-1945, a time of danger, hardship and future uncertainty, a remarkable resurgence of spiritual expression occurred; this was officially encouraged in order to maintain national morale.

Perfect timing

Among other works, at the height of the war VW presented the magnificent Fifth Symphony, thematically rooted in the idealistic ground of *The Pilgrim's Progress*: peaceful and inspiring, the timing was perfect.

During this period a rising artist, Rowland Hilder, was producing posters rendering symbolic images of an idyllic land to sustain people's belief in what we should protect and value. Vaughan Williams was so moved by one of these

Seaman scores on this budget price CD

- The Tring label, featuring the RPO, has attracted some press attention by virtue of its budget prices — a penny under a fiver. TRP 031 is a thoroughly professional account of several RVW core items: the *English Folk-Song Suite*, *Tallis Fantasia*, *The Lark Ascending*, *Greensleeves Fantasia* and *Wasps* items. Christopher Seaman (I recall him as a red-haired 20-year-old percussionist in London orchestras way back) directs lively performances. Recommended to those who haven't got this repertoire and for whom the pennies have to count.

(Continued from previous page)

as to write to Hilder in congratulation.

What he may not have known is that Hilder had consciously served his time in the Darenth valley, workplace of Samuel Palmer, friend of the mystic William Blake.

The association of all these parts forms a tapestry comprising much of the best material in our national life. Vaughan Williams himself would argue against attaching any 'meaning' to his work, meaning being personal to the hearer; but the creative impulse is often governed by influences unconsciously adopted, unrecognised in motivation.

Throughout his lifetime, in peace and war, at different levels and in a variety of conditions, RVW created music encompassing so much of our cultural life and, consciously or not, represented it to the people. An example is given by Ursula Vaughan Williams in her splendid biography of RVW, describing evocatively how, in 1917, having formed a choir in his unit, he led them to sing on Christmas Eve under the stars, below the slopes of Mount Olympus, old English carols from Hereford and Sussex.

It is a far cry from the boozy revelry of Elinor Rumming to the sober magnificent climax of *Pilgrim*, tolling 'York', but together with the wide array of other works between items, is expressed the best of which our land and people have brought forth.

The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams (OUP)

Revealing obituary tributes from 'The Times'

Some old newspaper cuttings which came our way recently including one from *The Times* containing letters sent to the paper shortly after RVW's death. Readers may be interested in these extracts:

- Peter Stadlen (the music critic):

At the end of 1941 I returned safely (in the phrase of your late Music Critic) 'from travels which I did not seek', i.e. from Australia, where I had been sent for internment. My heart fell when, on arrival at blacked-out Liverpool, my name was called and I was separated from the crowd waiting for disembarkation. I shall never forget my sense of grateful relief when this turned out to be a request from an official who said to me: 'I'm the man at the Home Office who signed your release. When you're in London, do ring up Dr Vaughan Williams - he's tried very hard to get you back to England'.

- The Rev. M.L. Playfoot:

The great words have been written, and now, perhaps, there is room for the smaller talk of the little people.

My first memory of Ralph Vaughan Williams is of seeing him, one slipper and one great long shoe, standing in the street in Dorking. To my question: Could I do anything to help him, he answered: 'Tell me what I came out here to do'. The next year he was in the Army: in the RAMC, and a pretty sight he was. Putties wrinkled to his boots, tunic humped across the broad shoulders, and a naked leg of mutton in his hand. No one seemed to know or to value him in those days. He was always shy of public recognition.

Very soon I was asking for help with music. He never stinted in giving all that he had got to the honest amateur. His letters to me are a priceless collection of kind and generous help to one who was groping towards expression in the most fumbling way in his own language. One — 'You really must avoid consecutive ninths:

I know I do it, but I am getting old, and can't help it'. It is true that his handwriting was not the easiest to read, but the kindness and gentleness was so very well worth the trouble. Once he arrived at a rehearsal with two huge suitcases, which he had carried from the station. One was filled with his own full scores: the other with duplicates for a very young and shy admirer.

His modesty showed in his suggested alterations in the scores that I sent to him. A note in the bass, altered, for the great benefit of the little piece of music, in pencil, with a question mark and the note — 'Do you think this might be better?'. One of his later letters disclosed his dislike of the old instruments. He thought of the viols as inferior fiddles; the recorders were poor substitutes for modern flutes; and the 'Baroque' organ seemed to fill him with fury. He was truly great, for he, unlike the law, cared for the little ones.

- Stanley Godman

May I be allowed to fill a small gap in your obituary notice? Before going to Charterhouse, Vaughan Williams had already taken up the violin at Rottingdean preparatory school, and just before he died, as it happens, he wrote to me about his first teacher, the Irish fiddler, W.M. Quirke: 'He was a fine teacher, and I learned a lot from him'.

The climax of Vaughan Williams's career at Rottingdean was his performance of Raff's *Cavatina* at a school concert. Fifty years later he seized a violin at a Three Choirs Festival and played the *Cavatina* through by heart: 'double stops and all'. In 1892, however, his former Rottingdean master, F.G. Riley, remembered him chiefly for his outstanding proficiency at 'irregular and defective Greek verbs'.

Why 12?

A love for a particular piece of music can lead one down paths of research which ordinarily would exhibit little inducement for one to follow. The case I have in mind arises from my own particularly deep affection for RVW's wonderful setting of A E Housman's *From Far, From Eve and Morning* in the song-cycle *On Wenlock Edge*.

I am a member of a thriving local recorded music society, and on occasion I do my best to proselytise English music in general and RVW's music in particular to a sometimes sceptical membership.

A few weeks ago I gave a presentation to them which consisted solely of RVW's music and included *From Far, From Eve And Morning* in Ian Partridge's surpassingly beautiful performance. Whilst I myself do not spend much time reading poetry per se, I have got to know some texts through the medium of their settings to music, and this is the case with some of Housman's poetry. Because some of my society's membership are of a literary bent, I thought it would be a good idea to briefly discuss this particu-

lar poem before playing the music. So, off I went to the Central Library in Preston, where I found two books devoted to the life and poetry of Housman. Both discussed this particular poem in some detail, because it is considered to be one of its author's best efforts. Now, I do not wish to go into any analysis here. Suffice to say that the wind and its imagery figure prominently in this and other poems by Housman, and he uses it to symbolise man's passage through life.

However, there are a couple of references to the wind in *From Far* which have puzzled me for years and which were not specifically addressed by either commentary; I refer to the phrases 'yon twelve-winded sky' and 'ere to the wind's twelve quarters'.

Why twelve?

The compass is subdivided into 16 segments (N, NNW, NW, WNW, W etc), so what did Housman mean by 'twelve quarters'? I asked an acquaintance who is a fully qualified ship's pilot if he had any idea. He had not, merely pointing out that each sixteenth is referred to in professional parlance as a 'quarter' I mentioned it to a friend who is Head of English at my local sixth-form college. She thought it could be something to do with the 12

months of the year, but also suggested that since Housman was a formidable classical scholar, it might be an obscure reference from ancient Greek or Roman literature. At this point I would have given up, were it not for my former Latin teacher, who as it happens is a member of the same music society as myself. By coincidence, and unknown to me, it turned out that he is an admirer of Housman's poetry and was fired to investigate this particularly abstruse point on my behalf. Thus the mystery was solved, or at least I think it has been solved.

Aristotle - (384-322 BC) wrote a book entitled *Meteorologica* in which he attempted to explain the phenomena of the weather and matters geological. In it he refers to the ancient Greek methods of determining wind direction, which used a basic 12 subdivisions of the circle.

Even earlier than Aristotle, Hesiod (c-700BC), arguably the first personality in Greek literature, also makes a reference to the 12 directions of the wind.

So, the next time you listen to *From Far, From Eve and Morning*, ask yourself whether, in this context, Vaughan Williams himself knew the significance of the number 12.

James Westhead

I first bought a VW symphony on disc in 1970. This, perversely, was his last, the Ninth, which I have continued to regard as one of this century's great symphonies. In 1972, returning from a year spent in Canada, I invested in the boxed set of all nine plus fillers, conducted by Boult. Over the years the pack was comprehensively shuffled. Some discs were damaged, and for variety I replaced them with other versions, albeit sometimes from Boult's earlier Decca series. In some cases I became dissatisfied with Boult's version: a touching Fifth by Aberdeen University Symphony Orchestra, with a magical conclusion to the first movement, inspired me to try Previn, while a memorable live performance of the Sixth by the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra under Berglund in Leeds Town Hall earned their subsequent recording a deserved sale; the arrival on LP of VW's own Fourth necessitated a further purchase; and so on. So by the end of the LP era my boxed set of VW symphonies was a dog's breakfast.

Now this can be no bad thing: there are advantages to having a variety of approaches to such a monumental corpus. Nevertheless, I decided I wanted a more focussed approach, as it

Peter Warlock and the 'Pastoral'

is possible to listen creatively without allowing a conductor to impose his approach on what one hears. By 1994 a choice of VW cycles was emerging on CD, so I decided to invest in a new set and give away my LPs. I assiduously read reviews, articles and interviews, and finally put my trust in the conductor who produced what I regard as the most revelatory of Elgar symphonic recordings (No 2), Vernon Handley. I have had no cause whatever on musical grounds to regret purchasing this set last Christmas, but even at EMI's reasonable price I think we could have expected better accompanying notes. They are too brief and do not in any way approach the heart of the music. (I have written CD notes, so I write with some feeling).

I was particularly disappointed that the writer perpetuates the myth that Peter Warlock dismissed the *Pastoral* (No 3) - for what it matters,

probably my favourite of the lot - as resembling 'a cow looking over a gate'. Having just finished researching for an article about Warlock and early music, I now find that he never said or wrote any such thing. Reference to Barry Smith's biography of Warlock (Oxford University Press, 1994) reveals Warlock describing the *Pastoral* as 'A truly splendid work (p 115), 'the highest point yet reached by a contemporary Englishman' (p 236) and 'the best English orchestral music of this century' (p 258). The bovine *bon mot* is always taken out of context from what Smith (quoting Cecil Gray) makes clear is an affectionate remark by Warlock about VW's music as a whole: following the quotation on page 115, Warlock continued, 'You know, I've only one thing to say against this composer's music: it is all just a little too much like a cow looking over a gate. Nonetheless, he is a very great composer and the more I hear the more I admire him'.

What sort of a nation are we who have to trot out misrepresentations such as 'Warlock's cow' in preference to the actual praise that Warlock and others really did utter?

Richard Turbet

Gothenburg premiere for Fifth Symphony

At two concerts held in the Gothenburg Concert Hall on May 11 and 12 to commemorate the end of the Second World War, the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra under Neeme Jarvi played a programme consisting of VW's Fifth Symphony, Martinu's *In Memory of Lidice* and Richard Strauss' *Metamorphosen* (a quite ravishing performance).

This performance was the first ever of this particular symphony in Gothenburg and, especially since neither conductor nor orchestra is known for any association with VW's music, has been an event to look forward to. Right from the outset of the Preludio, Jarvi had the work firmly in his grip. The first movement was finely paced and had a flow to it not always evident in recorded performances I have heard. Jarvi also managed to conjure up the noble solemnity of the second subject quite magnificently. For the scherzo he opted for a rather measured tempo,

affording to the movement an uncommon elegance and an almost 'gallic' refinement which, combined with a keen feel for the rhythmically alluring writing in this movement, proved very winning.

The Romanza gave the orchestra's superlative string section an opportunity to show their ability in producing a gloriously sonorous, glowing sound. The effect could have been made even more arresting had Jarvi chosen a slightly slower tempo. As it was, the great tune of the movement lost a little of its serenity and its mysterious quality.

The final passacaglia was as finely judged as the Preludio and with just the right sense of jubilation.

Overall, then, a performance of elegance and refinement, but also with an inborn nobility and dignified joy. Surely this partnership would make an excellent team for a VW cycle on DG. Let's wait and hope.

Henrik Lindahl

Not to be sneezed at...

On April 6 I went to a concert given by the Bournemouth Symphony orchestra in the Great Hall of the University of Exeter.

I don't know why, but when I go to a concert of VW, things rarely seem to go without a hitch. On this occasion the first thing to go wrong was my seat allocation. I was approached by a rather pompous woman, who insisted that I was in her seat. She had a season ticket and always sat in the same place. The matter was eventually resolved as I rushed back to the box office and was given a replacement.

The concert kicked off with a staunch rendition of Elgar's *In The South*. On my original information about the concert it had said that the piece to follow would be Brahms, Piano Concerto No. 2, with the VW 8th Symphony providing an exciting end to proceedings after the interval. Alas, this wasn't to be. The piano remained firmly at the rear of the stage as the orchestra launched with gusto into the VW. Things went well for the most part, until a woman somewhere behind me (I am certainly not sexist, but it just happened to be that way) began to cough in the middle of the Cavatina. Eventually

she had to depart, and made a dash for the exit door at the rear of the hall. Unfortunately, she launched into a throat-clearing barrage of coughing on the stairs outside, and the sound provided by her cavernous concrete surroundings echoed ethereally (well not quite) out into the auditorium, just as the cello solo was bringing this wonderful segment of vintage VW to a close. Now, I know that VW was keen to insert non-singing voices into several of his works to dramatic effect; but this particular voice undoubtedly proved more dramatic than anything VW intentionally produced. All I can say is that if VW was listening from above, he is probably now in the process of writing a concerto for orchestra, cello and female voice coughing on emergency exit steps.

On a more serious note, the BSO's performance was a spirited one under the Assistant Conductor, Nicolae Moldoveanu. The first and last movements were taken at a fast pace, and gave the symphony considerable momentum. The gem, however (and coughing aside), was the third movement, given a warm and sensuous performance by the BSO strings on top form. This augers well for the BSO's current project of recording all VW's symphonies for Naxos.

Rob Furneaux

Concert reviews

Bright idea that didn't quite succeed

The RVW-Holst 'Heirs and Rebels' concert at the Queen Elizabeth Hall on February 26 was a bright idea which didn't quite work out in practice. Perhaps the reason was quite simply that, attractive though all the pieces were, the mood was too 'pastoral'; a touch of red blood would have helped.

Conductor Hilary Davan Wetton was well in command of his forces - the orchestra was the never less than proficient Milton Keynes City Orchestra - but the men of the City of London Choir had some uncertain moments, and the group generally is not quite in the front rank of London's small choirs.

Holst's Op 44 set of songs for women's voices should be heard more often, and his *Lyric Movement* had a persuasive viola soloist in the Japanese player Yiuiko Inone, who also did justice to RVW's *Flos Campi*.

The novelty of the evening was to hear *An Oxford Elegy* with a female narrator - in this case the Classic FM presenter Susannah Simons. She made a very fair impression without erasing memories of, for example, John Westbrook. Doubtless she could build on her performance if the chance comes her way again.

A programme note reminded us that in the preface to the collection of Holst/RVW letters that gave the concert its title, the editors suggested that 'the heirs had come into their inheritance and the rebels had led a revolution of greater importance than they could guess'. Well said!

John Bishop

**We are always
pleased to receive
from members
reviews of
concerts which
include major
RVW works**

**Symphony No 4 in F minor:
BBC Symphony Orchestra
under Ralph Vaughan
Williams; Symphony No 5 in
D: Hallé Orchestra under John
Barbirolli. CDAX 80II**

Here are two justly celebrated VW symphony recordings, effectively rehashed for CD by Michael J Dutton, under the 'coordination' of Edward Bloxham — whatever that means. Vaughan Williams didn't conduct his own music for recordings as much as he might have done, or ought to have been asked to do, but this version of his Fourth Symphony, in the traditionally 'infernal' key of F minor, is fairly well known, and much lauded. Its brisk tempi and unflinchingly savage sonority prove that, even if he wasn't sure whether he 'liked' it, he had no doubt that it was 'what I meant'. Moreover, thus to accept the work's uncompromising anger and violence is not entirely an exercise in Keats' 'negative capability': for the scherzo, and parts of the last movement (especially what Frank Howes characterised as 'some jolly pirate whistling'), come out, in VW's presentation, as comic, even hilarious, as well as scary. The dualities of Vaughan Williams' symphonies, like those of Beethoven, admit to 'other modes of experience that may be possible', and owe their inexhaustible energy to such ironic coexistence. Even this masterly remastering of the original LPs hasn't entirely freed the sound from a boxiness that inhibits mystery in, for instance, the slow D flat coda to the tumultuous first movement. On balance, however, this performance re-emerges as revelatory,

CD reviews

its punch if not pathos enhanced with the thud of the years. It is, of course, an essential item in any VW record library.

So is Barbirolli's version of the fifth of VW's symphonies, recorded with his own orchestra, the Hallé, in 1944, when the war said to have been heralded in the Fourth Symphony was still not spent. Sir John was deeply in tune with Vaughan Williams and his music, and was especially partial to this crucial work in the composer's saga: a piece which only in a superficial sense can be said to mark a return after violence to pastoral placidity. Vaughan Williams' Fifth Symphony, described as being 'in D', in fact never attains plain D major until the epilogue to its concluding passacaglia; and when this finally happens, after so many modal mutations of D major, it effects a truly symphonic resolution of conflict: Vaughan Williams' Bunyanesque *Pilgrim's Progress*, or *Quest*, has been a healing and renewal within the psyche, after the contagion of the world and the flesh, not to mention the devils that harass the composer-hero, as they had assaulted Bunyan's pilgrim. No-one ever handled the transition into the D major epilogue, with its transcendent alleluyas, more sublimely than Sir John; and he is no less responsive to the 'romance' of the slow movement, which

is directly based on material from the Bunyan opera, and is dramatic, even theatrical, in its symphonic concept. The elvish scuttering and scampering at the end of the scherzo is more spectral than any performance I can remember—magically unreal and spooky, so that it's a concatenation of opposites relatable to the more overt ironies of the Fourth. The transference to CD is in this case exemplary.

Wilfrid Mellers

Symphony No 3, A Pastoral Symphony, Symphony No 5 in D major, LPO Sir Adrian Boult. Belart 461 118-2

While sitting in a train one day in 1952, I opened *Gramophone* magazine and I still recall my feelings of incredulous excitement on reading Decca's advertisement for all (the then) six VW symphonies to be recorded by Sir Adrian Boult in the presence of the composer! At last, repeated hearings would enable one to acquire a deep knowledge of *A Pastoral Symphony*, the only one of the canon rarely performed in public.

Not having heard this performance for many years, I returned to it in some trepidation but I need not have worried. Sir Adrian gave the first performance of *A Pastoral Symphony* in 1922 and this superb performance shows how much the work meant to him.

The first movement unfolds with a forward momentum which brings out its underlying strength and which culminates in a moving and passionate climax - no question here of 'A cow looking over a gate!' Interestingly, Boult takes over one-and-a-half minutes less than Previn in his fine version, but Boult's tempo seems absolutely right: there is no sense of haste. Similarly, the *lento moderato* is also kept moving, and the drama, urgency and ultimate sadness of the music is wonderfully distilled. After a truly earthy scherzo, Margaret Richie floats her wordless song before Boult inimitably unfolds the themes, which he builds into a majestic hymn of wonderful poignancy before the work is

Sinfonia Antartica and Symphony No 8 LPO/Boult Belart 461-116-2.

A further most welcome re-issue from Belart. The *Antartica* is thrillingly performed, with the LPO under Boult sounding remarkably alert. There is that same spontaneous quality to the music-making which distinguished their *London Symphony* which I praised in the last *Journal*.

The opening *Prelude* establishes the heroic tone. I can never understand why those opening bars are not as famous as the opening to *Also Sprach Zarathustra*. The wailing soprano and other atmospheric effects come across well on this 40-year-old recording. The sense of menace is superbly conveyed, too, and the organ entry in

the third movement is terrifying.

Comparisons are invidious, since this recording, with Vaughan Williams present, has a special significance. My only overall quibble is with the inclusion of the superscription, here spoke by Sir John Gielgud. Personally, I find it intrusive. Sir John speaks with considerable restraint, reminiscent of John Mills' portrayal of Captain Scott in the film. Barbirolli on his early recording, made soon after the first performance, leaves the superscription to the LP cover, as does Haitink in his monumental reading on EMI.

The coupling is the exuberant Eighth Symphony. Another fine performance. Overall, at £4.99, unmissable.

Stephen Connock

resolved in tenderness.

Sir Adrian had lived with the Fifth Symphony for ten years before he made this recording while at the height of his powers. It is a transcendental performance which brings out both the drama and deep spirituality of this wonderful work.

In my experience neither of these performances has ever been surpassed on record. The engineers have performed miracles with the mono record, which is now warm and rounded, apart from slightly thin string tone at some climaxes. This CD is a must in any VW collection and a snip at £4.99.

Robin Ivison

'Sea Symphony'

Andrew Davis

BBC Symphony Orchestra and
Symphony Chorus
Teldec

Vaughan Williams' first symphony took years to compose, from 1903 through to 1907. Premiered at the Leeds Festival in 1910, it made his name as a powerful new voice in English music. *The Sea Symphony* is an ambitious work for baritone and soprano soloists, full mixed choir and large orchestra, setting various texts of the American poet Walt Whitman in four movements, broadly following the pattern of classical symphonic design. An expository *allegro* movement declaims the general theme 'Behold the sea itself!'. A nocturnal slow movement for baritone solo and choir, suggestive of the lapping waves viewed by starlight, is entitled 'At night, on the beach alone'. The third movement is a lively scherzo for choir, *Follow the sea - ship, follow the whistling wind*, full of breathless gusts and wild storms. The finale acts as a general epilogue, with a visionary ambit to reach forward in mystical and spirited exploration, *Set sail for the deeper waters*. The work moves from moments of spiritual exultation to times of quiet reflection through each movement.

At first glance this would all suggest a grand late-Victorian oratorio format, very familiar from the late works of Parry and Stanford that would have been known to Vaughan Williams. But in no manner is this the last outpouring of that noble school: this work is more dynamic, and as volatile in mood as the sea it attempts to portray. Though there are indeed moments that suggest the Elgar of *The Dream of Gerontius* (RVW himself is on record as saying that he must have cribbed from *The Dream*, probably at the moments he thought that he was being most original: a characteristically

modest statement), plus the odd touch of Ravel in the orchestration too, the work as a whole is undoubtedly original in tone and deeply felt in content. A good performance should leave one feeling elated and enriched. This performance in fact made me realise for the first time that there are some passages that seem to echo *Parsifal*; moments such as *Unspeakable high processions of sun and moon and countless stars above* in the finale sound as if an English *Tristan* is playing, so this work has many discernable influences, not surprising in a first symphony. The work as a whole though is vintage, masterly Vaughan Williams.

What then should we expect of this proverbial 'good performance' and does Andrew Davis provide it?

The basic rules are adherence to the note and spirit of the score, a spiritual understanding of the impetus that the soloists in particular need to bring forward, plus a transparently clear recorded sound for the large orchestra and for the chorus: all this must be included.

The opening bars, with their dramatic call and trumpet fanfares, at first had me worried: there is an (over) dramatic pause after the word 'behold' that is not marked in the score. This is a solitary lapse in fidelity to the score, though, for through the rest of the recording I could not spot any other discrepancy. The tempi as a whole are spot on, and movement-for-movement the recording is within seconds in its timing to the Previn recording of many years earlier. On the ear, there are many moments where the feeling is of a swifter, but not overs, pulse. The opening of the finale seems to move more quickly, but at no great loss in terms of atmosphere or sheer beauty. The soloists are very much a matter of taste. I prefer Heather Harper in the Previn as soprano soloist, to the voice of Amanda Roocroft, though she sings with vigour and charm. The new baritone, Thomas Hampson, has a darker voice than John Shirley - Quirk, and I think this more muscular tone is entirely apt for the seafaring context.

If there is a major plus for this recording to my ears, then it would be the greatly improved clarity of the recording in favour of the BBC Symphony Chorus. The inner tenor lines are much clearer, and the bass lines in particular are now audible, where they appear slightly muddled in the classic Boulton recording. A distinct plus, this. For a complete set I would still recommend the Boulton or the Previn, but if you are after a single-disc, fully-digital *Sea Symphony*, this would certainly be a worthy recommendation.

Teldec appear to have been tardy in releasing this recording to the shops, but

examination of the booklet reveals that the recording is dedicated to the memory of Christopher Palmer, and perhaps this is the reason for the delay. Certainly Palmer (who died January 1995) will be sorely missed in the world of music, and not just by RVW fans. This excellent performance is a fitting tribute to the high standards of musical achievement that he always exemplified.

Richard Mason

'The Pilgrim's Progress'— a new version

Amongst the vast catalogue of works produced by RVW over many years, is one work that can truly said to be of seminal importance: *The Pilgrim's Progress*: in this, echoes of music from *Job*, the *Sinfonia Antarctica* and *Symphony 5* all find expression in a different context. Neither can we easily dismiss a work that the composer chose to work upon for around 30 years of his long life.

Most people probably associate RVW with Bunyan through his famous hymn-tune composed for *The English Hymnal* in 1906: *He Who Would Valiant Be*. Later, in 1922, a choral, pastoral episode, *The Shepherd of the Delectable Mountains*, appeared, which eventually became incorporated into the final scene of the *Progress* proper. In 1940 RVW set the words of *Valiant for Truth* as a motet, following this with incidental music for a BBC radio production of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. The opera itself finally saw the light of day in a premiere at Covent Garden in 1951. This was not, however, an unqualified success, and the work has languished somewhat since then, both in the recording catalogues and on the stage.

For many years the only really authentic recording available has been the EMI/Sir Adrian Boult performance, with a sterling cast including John Noble (noble of voice and interpretation) in the lead role. Recently this has been re-issued by EMI, partnered with a studio rehearsal sequence with Sir Adrian.

There is a newcomer available now in the form of a live recording of the Royal Northern College of Music production staged in 1992, which received glowing reviews. The reasons for these are obvious upon hearing the CD: there is a palpable sense of enthusiasm and delight in the work from all involved. The cast is excellently lead by Wyn Griffiths (Bunyan), Richard Whitehouse (Pilgrim) and John Neale (Evangelist).

Continued on back page

The instrumental performances, too are excellent - just savour the viola solo at the Delectable Mountains scene, for example. Choral ensembles also seem a little clearer to me than on the Boult recording, and in particular the Vanity Fair episode bustles along with great flair and pace. Another bonus of a live recording is that many of the stage repeats in the score are opened out, enabling us to bask in the beauty of the Symphony 5 music a little longer. It is good also to have clear programme-notes from Ursula Vaughan Williams as part of the package.

Drawbacks then?

After close familiarity with John Noble's and other performance over many years, it may take a little while to become accustomed to new, and obviously younger, voices. Their enthusiasm is compelling, however; no longer does this version seem to be a series of static tableau, and the emotional involvement of the Morality (as RVW termed the work) is made clearer. The main qualifier is simply that this recording will not be easy to find in the record stores as it originates directly from the RNCM (124 Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9RD); the CD number is RNCM PP1. There is still room in the catalogue for a fully modern, fully digital, closer micro-phoned recording. In the meantime, I cannot urge you strongly enough to seek out this visionary performance of a neglected masterpiece.

Richard Mason

Vaughan Williams: Symphony No.9 in E minor / Malcolm Arnold: Symphony No.3* LPO/Boult/* the composer. Everest EVC 9001.

It is good to have this premiere 1958 recording of the 9th Symphony restored to the catalogue in an excellent digital remastering. As Sir Adrian reminds us in a short spoken introduction, the recording sessions began just seven hours after the composer's death.

According to Roy Douglas, Boult was anxious that his interpretation took five minutes longer than that of Sir Malcolm Sargent, who, of course, gave the first performance of the work some four months before this recording. I think it is now accepted that Sargent never had the measure of this complex and noble score and rushed certain passages which he apparently found lacking in interest. The timing of this recording (34'.34") is just half a minute longer than Boult's later recording (1970), also with the LPO, on EMI Classics.

My review of the Vernon Handley version in the last edition of the *Journal* has the timings of all the other recordings available; only Previn's interpretation on RCA is longer (by some three minutes!)

This is a rugged performance conveying a sense of oppression and at times harshness that is evident throughout the score. I particularly liked the sound of the saxophones, which, together with the flugelhorn, give the work its very distinctive colouring. However, I did not find it as convincing a performance as Boult's later one, which is better played, more taught but nevertheless allows the pellucid textures and expansive string writing to be more fully appreciated. Importantly, the visionary E major finale has a much greater impact, particularly in those three great surges of sound that end the symphony and which, for me, will always conjure the composer's final gaze into the unknown.

As with *A Pastoral Symphony*, this is a work with an atmosphere that needs a very sympathetic conductor to realise its full musical and spiritual qualities. No one could doubt Boult's credentials as a

VW interpreter but I feel this 1958 reading just misses some of the elusive poetry of this last masterpiece. Although Boult's 1970 version is finer, I still turn to the Previn/LSO account as the most satisfying recording available. Perhaps Bernard Haitink or Andrew Davis will eventually produce a recording that will challenge this view.

The Arnold 3rd Symphony is not one I know well but this clearly is an authoritative performance and, as with the VW, the sound is excellent. The music is highly characteristic, though, as I often find with this composer's music, brilliantly scored but episodic. There are echoes of Prokofiev and Walton but mainly the score is dominated by the unmistakable woodwind and brass writing. There is a thrilling finale which rounds this commendable disc off nicely.

Robin Barber

REVIEWS IN BRIEF

IMP have launched an extensive series called 'BBC Radio Classics' which offers somewhat miscellaneous collections of broadcast performances - some of them legendary. BBC RD 9107, brings together Ravel's *Rapsodie Espanole*, Kemperer's *Merry Waltz* (!), Brahms's Fourth Symphony and RVW's *Tallis Fantasia*. The binding factor is Leopold Stokowski, who recorded these items with the New Philharmonia in 1974, in the Royal Albert Hall.

BBC RD 9111 is an even odder mix, since Elgar's Cello Concerto finds itself with Britten's *Young Person's Guide* and Purcell's *Abdelazar Suite*. The RVW item is a Groves/BBC Symphony Orchestra performance of *In the Fen Country* in 1969, again recorded at the Royal Albert Hall, presumably at a Prom.

BBC RD 9119 contains another performance of the *Tallis Fantasia* - a Boult/New Philharmonia 1972 performance in Cheltenham Town Hall. The booklet's front cover suggests we are getting three works but in fact we get six, including Walter Leigh's fetching *Concertino* for harpsichord and strings and the Finzi *Clarinet Concerto*. Four conductors and five orchestras are involved in this disc. Quite what slot in the crowded marketplace this series aims to fill is less than clear.

Vanguard Classics have plundered

their 1960s archive to bring forth the 'Alfred Deller Edition' with some dozen CDs in which that charismatic figure was at the helm, either as soloist or as leader of the Deller Consort. The latter sound a little homely by comparison with today's sometimes over-slick ensembles, but this collection of RVW folk-songs, some unaccompanied and some sung by AD to Desmond Dupre's lute accompaniment, brings us many favourites, including the *Lover's Ghost*, *The Turtle Dove*, *Bushes and Briars*, *My Boy Billy* and *Greensleeves*. The record number is 08 9101 71.

The booklet cover of Philips' new RVW collection is, as with one of the BBC radio classics mentioned above, misleading. It names three works but we actually get six - one of which is a real rarity. This is the late (1957) *Variations* written as a test-piece for the National Brass Band championships and subsequently orchestrated by Gordon Jacob. It is well worth its place among the more familiar items: *Tallis Fantasia*, *In the Fen Country*, *Norfolk Rhapsody*, *Dives and Lazarus* and *The Wasps Overture*. This 1993 recording (442 427-3) has the ever-reliable Neville Marriner/Academy of St.Martin-in-the-Fields team - and authoritative notes from Michael Kennedy. The two East Anglian items continue to offer me particular pleasure.

John Bishop