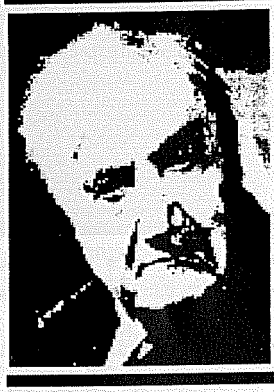


Journal of the RVW Society

No. 14 February 1999

EDITOR

Stephen Connock
(see address below)

In this issue...

CHAIRMAN
Stephen Connock
Willow House, 3 Burywoods,
Bakers Lane,
Colchester, Essex. CO4 5AW
(0836 567413)

TREASURER
John Francis
Lindeyer Francis Ferguson,
North House,
198 High Street,
Tonbridge, Kent, TN9 1BE
(01732 360200)

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

A GARLAND FOR LINDA

The RVW Society is behind a series of fund-raising initiatives for 1999 in an attempt to gain the financial weight to allow us to achieve our objectives. Following the AGM of the Society at Charterhouse School in October last year, Robin Wells, the Director of Music at the School and a Trustee of the RVW Society, has kindly agreed to the Society holding a fund-raising concert in the school Chapel. The date has been fixed for 18 July 1999 and tickets will go on sale in mid-April.

Linda McCartney

To mark the occasion, and to ensure it is a fund-raising success, a major project has been identified. Using the precedent of the 1953 *Garland for the Queen*, Sir Paul McCartney was approached to accept a new *Garland for Linda* as a commemoration of his late wife. We were all saddened by Linda's death in April 1998, and a musical tribute from leading British composers of today seemed highly appropriate. Sir Paul quickly agreed, and to date, eight composers including John Rutter and John Taverner are involved in the Garland, which is for *a capella* chorus. The world première at Charterhouse will be conducted by Richard Hickox and recorded by Chandos for distribution in October 1999.

The Garland Appeal

A world-wide appeal to be known as the Garland Appeal is being set up and managed by a charitable trust with Stephen Connock as Chairman. All proceeds from the concert, CD sales and other activities will go to both cancer research and to British music. In memory of Linda McCartney, the charity Breakthrough Breast Cancer, will be one of the main recipients of funds. The projects under the British music heading have been identified and will include performances of *Sir John in Love* and a recording of *The Poisoned Kiss*. The Down Ampney project will also be a top priority. There is a clear link between music and healing, and the power of music to help the seriously ill can not be over-estimated. The Garland Appeal will develop this link.

Media Partners

There is much work to be undertaken to ensure that the Appeal is a success, and foremost in this activity will be the appointment of media partners both in the UK and in America. *A Garland for Linda* will be announced publicly in April 1999 and considerable media interest is to be expected. Let us all hope we can develop this winning idea so that the causes of British music (especially RVW) and cancer research can be given new momentum. Any member wishing to help in any way, should not hesitate to contact Stephen Connock.

THE FOLK-SONG SOCIETY, RVW, AND THE EARLY RESPONSE OF BRITISH COMPOSERS TO FOLKSONG

by Lewis Foreman

The appearance of the English Folk Dance and Song Society's centennial CD,* A Century of Song, *reminds us how the establishment of the EFDS became a focus for a group of composers who found folk-song a powerful stimulus to a newly emerging æsthetic. Lewis Foreman investigates.

Possibly it was Dvorak in his then very recent *Slavonic Rhapsodies* who was the inspiration for a variety of composers to look to folk-song for inspiration in the 1880s. Various late nineteenth century composers wrote a central European concert music into which national tunes and rhythms were imported. Perhaps the prime example in the UK was Sir Alexander Campbell Mackenzie, whose first two *Scottish Rhapsodies* date from 1880 and certainly include Scottish tunes. Max Bruch tells us that when he wrote his *Scottish Fantasia* (1880) he collected the national songs quoted from local singers in Scotland.[1] In the closing years of the century no treatment of folk-music was more telling than the orchestral music of Edvard Grieg, who influenced composers as varied as Delius, Grainger and Holst.

Perhaps the most successful British composer of the nineties to use folksong in symphonic music was Sir Charles Villiers Stanford. Stanford himself first used an Irish folk-song in an orchestral work in his *Irish Symphony* which dates from 1887. This symphony was enormously popular for many years, yet the strange thing is that it did not really start a vogue for using folk tunes in the concert hall. In fact, seven or eight years later, the appearance of a 'folk-lore' symphony was noted in *Musical News* as something curious, quaint, almost bizarre. This was by William Creser, the organist of the Chapel Royal and composer to Her Majesty's Chapels Royal. 'Dr Creser's new Folk-Lore symphony has just been produced at Bradford for the first time in public. In one sense it is a genuine curiosity, for the whole of the thematic material is based upon English folk-tunes, which have been worked up with all the abstruse musicianship which a Mus. Doc. can display. The theme of the scherzo was provided by an old Wiltshire labourer, and it has probably been handed down from father to son for generations.[2]

At the Norwich Festival of 1902, Stanford's *First Irish Rhapsody* appeared and over the next twenty years became enormously popular. Here he uses various Irish tunes including the *Londonderry Air*. Yet Stanford's music is different in kind to that of Vaughan Williams, Holst and the others of his pupils whose output would soon be informed by the newly collected English folk-songs. This new voice was a function of their treatment and harmonic innovations in the works that were built from them. To compare Percy Grainger's choral arrangement of the *Londonderry Air* with Stanford's underlines how different their philosophies were.

The criticism of Stanford's approach to folk-song was that he placed the tunes within the straight-jacket of his essentially Germanic musical culture. In particular the turning of folk-songs into lieder, with appropriate piano accompaniments was felt by many to emasculate them - perhaps Percy Grainger was one of the first to articulate this view. As late as 1952 he remarked 'The greatest crime against folksong is to "middle-class" it - to sing it with a "white collar" voice production and other townified suggestions.'[3] (Vaughan Williams's folk-song lectures attracted a following for the quality of his live illustrations almost certainly sung in recital style. In 1910, a critic reported "the vocal illustrations given by Mr Stewart Wilson (choral scholar, King's College, Cambridge) accentuated the value and pleasure in no small degree".[4]) Even as late as 1977, Berio remarked in introducing his folk-song arrangements that folk-song with the piano is unacceptable.[5]

There would be an enormous development over the ten or fifteen years after 1895. The reception of Dr Creser's folk-song symphony: condescending, regarded as a curiosity not of fundamental importance, changed to the widespread acceptance and popularity of the folk-song works of Holst and Vaughan Williams. In fact, if we list some of Vaughan Williams's and Holst's first performances we can see that it was several years after folk- songs began to be actively collected on any scale before they began to be heard in the concert hall.

First London Performances of RVW/Holst Folk-Song Pieces		
RVW:	*Norfolk Rhapsody No 1*	*23/8/1906*
Holst:	*Songs of the West*	*11/12/1909*
RVW:	*In the Fen Country*	*22/2/1909*
Holst:	*A Somerset Rhapsody*	*6/4/1910*
RVW:	*Fantasia on English Folk Songs*	*1/9/1910*
RVW:	*Norfolk Rhapsody No 2*	*17/4/1912*
RVW:	*Norfolk Rhapsody No 3*	*17/4/1912*
RVW:	*Fantasia on Christmas Carols*	*4/3/1913*

The public awareness of such an idiom takes us significantly close to, indeed past, the First World War. Once one has realised this chronology, Stanford's orchestral folk-song works, particularly the *First Irish Rhapsody*, first performed in Norwich in October 1902 and at Queen's Hall on 12 March 1903, and the *Second* first heard in Amsterdam in May 1903, at Bournemouth on 26 October 1903 and in London on 15 March 1906, appear as important stepping stones. In fact, of course, the *First Irish Rhapsody* remained enormously popular for many years.

The Folk-Song Society was launched in 1898, with wide support from the leading musicians of the day. Their first general meeting, on 2 February 1899, was hosted by Mrs Beer at 7 Chesterfield Gardens, Mayfair, very much a society address. In fact it was a very middle class gathering, the *Musical Times* recording that the 'large company' included Sir Alexander Mackenzie, Sir Hubert Parry and Edward Elgar. Stanford is not mentioned, so presumably he was not there.

The two leading lights of this initiative were Lucy Broadwood and J A Fuller Maitland, who had published *English County Songs* in 1893.[6] The preface to this milestone collection usefully sets the scene before the field collecting activities of Cecil Sharp, Vaughan Williams and their contemporaries developed in the early 1900s:

'No excuse, such as would be necessary in bringing forward a new collection of

[1] *New Grove* Vol. 3 p 349.

[2] *Musical News* 2 March 1895.

[3] 'Percy Grainger's Notes for the Songs' in *Thirteen Folk-songs* arranged for solo voice and piano by Percy Grainger, Vol. 2. Thames Publishing, 1982, p 63.

[4] 'English Folk-Song' *The Musical Standard* 24 Sept 1910 p 198.

[5] Berio quoted by the announcer before the Radio 3 relay of the performance by Sarah Walker and the BBC Symphony Orchestra from the 1985 Huddersfield Festival.

[6] Broadwood, Lucy E and J A Fuller Maitland: *English County Songs - words and music*, collected and edited by... The Leadenhall Press *et al.*, 1893.

Scottish, Irish, or Welsh traditional songs, need be offered in the present instance, since the number of existing collections of English songs is comparatively small, and those which are of real value are either difficult to procure, or they refer only to one district or county.

'The arrangement here adopted, by which an attempt has been made to represent each county of England by at least one song, may seem an arbitrary one, since the county boundaries cannot be expected to confine the music of each shire to itself; it has, however, been indirectly of great service, since it has stimulated effort in places that at first seemed altogether unpromising, and these have sometimes proved to contain more than the average amount of good material. "We are such an unmusical neighbourhood, you will certainly not find anything in this county," is a remark which has often preceded some of the most interesting discoveries; for, strange as it may appear, the districts in which music is largely cultivated among the poorer classes are not those in which the old tunes are most carefully preserved and handed down. It is perhaps natural, after all, that young people brought up on the Tonic Sol-fa system, with all that it involves in the way of fatuous part-songs and non-alcoholic revelries, should turn up their noses at the long-winded ballads or the roistering ale-house songs beloved of their grandparents.

'In all parts of the country, the difficulty of getting the old-fashioned songs out of the people is steadily on the increase, and those who would undertake the task of collecting them - and a most engaging pursuit it is - should lose no time in setting to work. In almost every district, the editors have heard tantalising rumours of songs that "Old So-and-So used to sing, who died a year or two back," and have had in many cases to spend a considerable time in inducing the people to begin singing. It is true that when once started, the greater number of the singers find a good deal of difficulty in leaving off, for they are not unnaturally pleased to see their old songs appreciated by anybody in these degenerate days. Two extracts may be given from letters by persons who were asked to seek out songs:-

"In my latest enterprise I have sustained defeat; I had no idea that our old men were so stupid. No sooner do they see my paper and pencil than they become dumb; in fact, not only dumb, but sulky; so I have abandoned the pursuit."

As far as the editors are aware, about two-thirds of the contents of the volume have never appeared in print before.'

We know from the researches of Dorothy de Val that Lucy Broadwood 'far from being just a folk-song scholar... was also a true "English renaissance" woman of many parts'. As the daughter of the Broadwood piano firm, de Val has reminded us that 'part of her birthright as a Broadwood was an automatic entrée into the musical establishment. It was particularly owing to the activities of the well-connected Broadwood that the folk-song movement took off, but although she was a pioneering collector, she was in essence an enabler, a gatekeeper, who's vision only needed the appearance of a personality of drive to develop it. This she found in Cecil Sharp and Percy Grainger.'[7]

In the early days it was touch and go whether the Folk-Song Society would survive. That it did so coincides with the emergence of now celebrated names who provided the necessary impetus. Chief among these was Cecil Sharp. Recently, Sharp has had a very mixed press. Yet what is indisputable is that in twenty years in England and the Southern Appalachian Mountains of America he collected nearly 5000 tunes.

There is also the issue of ownership of folk-songs, and certainly any income arising from copyrights or implied copyrights were accumulated by Sharp, not his singers. Fuller Maitland probably reflecting the view of all early collectors in regarding the songs as 'trophies'[8], and by 1922 Sharp 'was earning enough from his publications and lecturing to consider it appropriate to relinquish his Civil List Pension.'[9] It is perhaps this aspect of the enterprise, rather than the class-related issues focussed by several commentators that informs the reservations of this commentator.

However, the obituaries when Sharp died in 1924 were remarkably complimentary, the *Daily Chronicle* for example writing 'These tasks were those of love, for they were not pursued along the paths of material gain. They were carried on out of sheer devotion to the spirit of service and the man was the living embodiment of his mission.'[10]

The centenary of the English Folk Song Society (now EFDSS) this year, provides a suitable context to revisit the rise of interest in folk-song and folk-dance as an inspiration to British composers nearly a hundred years ago. And in the light of recent re-readings[11] to look at the importance of folk-song in the music of Vaughan Williams and his contemporaries, particularly in the years before the First World War.

---

[7] de Val, Dorothy: *Only Connect - Lucy Broadwood and Musical Life in Late 19th-Century London.* Unpublished paper given at the 'Music in Nineteenth-Century Britain' conference, University of Hull, 11 July 1997. I am grateful to Dorothy de Val for making her paper available to me.

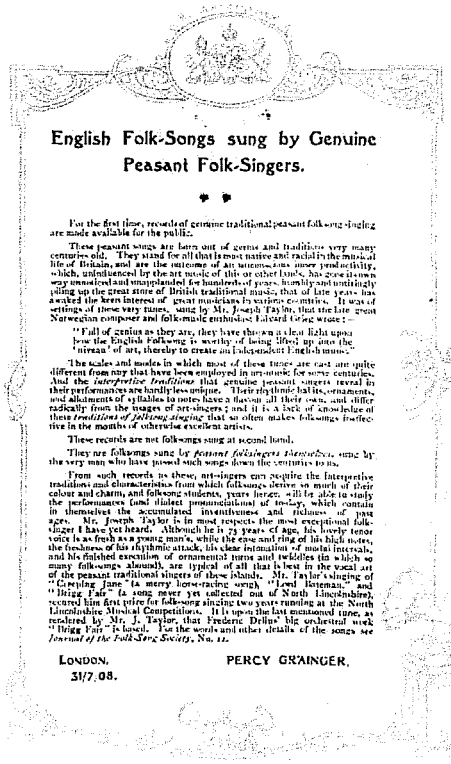
[8] Fuller Maitland, J A: 'The beginning of the Folk-Song Society' *Journal of the Folk-Song Society* Vol. 8 no 7, 1927, pp 46-70.

[9] Boyes, Georgina: *The Imagined Village - culture, ideology and the English Folk Revival.* Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1993, p 50.

[10] 'A Master of Joy - Cecil Sharp's Life Work' *The Daily Chronicle* June 25 1924.

[11] Boyes, Georgina: *The Imagined Village, op cit.* Harker, Dave: *Fakesong - the manufacture of British 'folksong' 1700 to the present day.* Milton Keynes, Open University Press, *1985.* Stradling, Robert and Meirion Hughes: 'Crusading for a National Music' in their *The English Musical Renaissance 1860-1940 Construction and Deconstruction.* Routledge, 1993, pp 135-179.

When it first appeared in 1972, that now elusive LP *Unto Brigg Fair*[12] in which surviving recordings of the folk-singers Percy Grainger encountered in Lincolnshire in 1908 were gathered together, proved a wonderful window on a forgotten age. Of the 21 tracks, 14 were recorded by Joseph Taylor, with five other folk-singers having one or two tracks each. Joseph Taylor's distinctive unaccompanied singing became sufficiently celebrated in his day for the Gramophone Company to invite him into their studio and record him for commercial issue. Seven sides appeared, the company even producing a special promotional leaflet. It was Taylor who, on being taken by Percy Grainger to the first London performance of Delius's *Brigg Fair* at Queen's Hall on 31 March 1908, stood up when 'his' tune appeared and, as Grainger later remembered, joined in from the stalls, 'to the amazement of the audience, who could not fathom how such a countryfied looking old gentleman should know by heart the contents of a modernistic orchestral work'.[13]



English Folk-Songs sung by Genuine Peasant Folk-Singers.

* *

For the first time, records of genuine traditional peasant folk-song singing are made available for the public.

These peasant songs are born out of genius and traditions very many centuries old. They stand for all that is most native and racial in the musical life of Britain, and are the outcome of an unconscious inner productivity, which, uninfluenced by the art music of this or other lands, has gone its own way unnoticed and unpalpated for hundreds of years, humbly and unfailingly piling up the great store of British traditional music, that of late years has awaked the keen interest of great musicians in various countries. It was of settings of these very tunes, sung by Mr. Joseph Taylor, that the late great Norwegian composer and folk-music enthusiast Edvard Grieg wrote:—

"Full of genius as they are, they have thrown a clear light upon how the English Folksong is worthy of being lifted up out of the 'mireau' of art, thereby to create an independent English music."

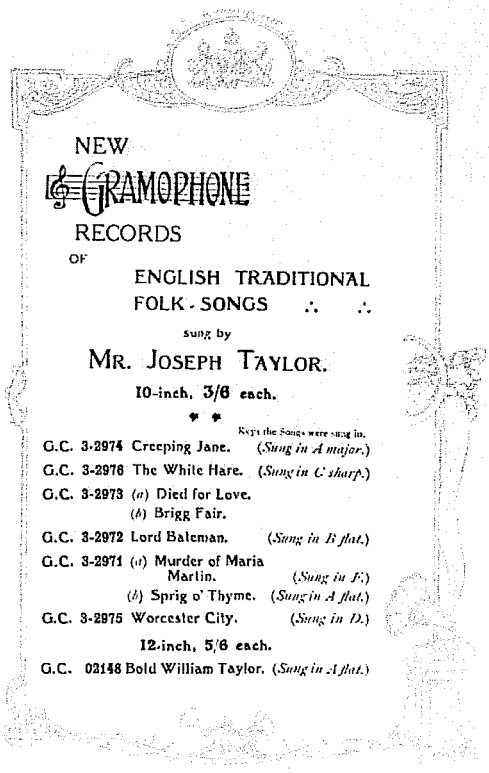
The scales and modes in which most of these tunes are cast are quite different from any that have been employed in art-music for some centuries. And the *interpretive traditions* of that genuine peasant singers reveal to their performances are hardly less unique. Their rhythmic habits, ornaments, and allotments of syllables to notes have a flavour all their own, and differ radically from the usages of art-singers; and it is a lack of knowledge of these *traditions of folksong singing* that so often makes folksongs ineffective in the mouths of otherwise excellent artists.

These records are not folk-songs sung at second hand.

They are folksongs sung by *peasant folksingers themselves*, sung by the very men who have passed such songs down the centuries to us.

From such records as these, art-singers can acquire the interpretive traditions and characteristics from which folksongs derive so much of their colour and charm, and folksong students, years hence, will be able to study the performances (and dialect pronunciations) of to-day, which contain in themselves the accumulated inventiveness and richness of past ages. Mr. Joseph Taylor is in most respects the most exceptional folk-singer I have yet heard. Although he is 75 years of age, his lovely tenor voice is as fresh as a young man's, while the ease and ring of his high notes, the freshness of his rhythmic attack, his clear intonation of modal intervals, and his finished execution of ornamental turns and twiddles (in which so many folksongs abound), are typical of all that is best in the vocal art of the peasant traditional singers of these islands. Mr. Taylor's singing of "Creeping Jane" (a merry horse-racing song), "Lord Bateman," and "Brigg Fair" (a song never yet collected out of North Lincolnshire), secured him first prize for folk-song singing two years running at the North Lincolnshire Musical Competitions. It is upon the last mentioned tune, as rendered by Mr. J. Taylor, that Frederic Delius' big orchestral work "Brigg Fair" is based. For the words and other details of the songs see *Journal of the Folk-Song Society*, No. 11.

LONDON, 31/7.08. PERCY GRAINGER.



NEW GRAMOPHONE RECORDS OF ENGLISH TRADITIONAL FOLK-SONGS ∴ ∴

sung by

MR. JOSEPH TAYLOR.

10-inch, 3/6 each.

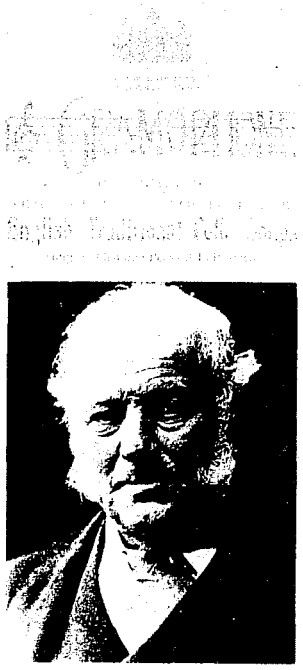
* *

Keys the Songs were sung in.

G.C. 3-2974 Creeping Jane. (*Sung in A major.*)
G.C. 3-2976 The White Hare. (*Sung in C sharp.*)
G.C. 3-2973 (*a*) Died for Love.
(*b*) Brigg Fair.
G.C. 3-2972 Lord Bateman. (*Sung in B flat.*)
G.C. 3-2971 (*a*) Murder of Maria Martin. (*Sung in F.*)
(*b*) Sprig o' Thyme. (*Sung in A flat.*)
G.C. 3-2975 Worcester City. (*Sung in D.*)

12-inch, 5/6 each.

G.C. 02148 Bold William Taylor. (*Sung in A flat.*)



The English Folk Dance and Song Society have recently marked their centenary with a CD anthology of folk-song recordings, *A Century of Song*, including 7 original cylinder recordings from 1907-9, and these, quite simply, are a revelation.[14] Vaughan Williams did not make anything like his young friend Grainger's use of the cylinder phonograph, but he did record a few rolls, and these included women singers, of which three are believed to have been recorded by RVW, are issued here.

Cylinder recordings take a bit of getting used to as the mechanical noise can be high, but the appearance of a woman singer, in fact Mrs Humphrys of Ingrave, Essex, probably recorded by Vaughan Williams himself in 1908, is very striking. The impact is even more unexpected as she sings *Bushes and Briars* that song which proved such a revelation and had such an influence on Vaughan Williams over so many years. Here one can almost revisit Vaughan Williams's sense of discovery in finding so wonderful a tune.

Many accounts of Vaughan Williams treat that day at Ingrave, Essex, on 4 December 1903, when he collected his first folk-song, almost as a transcendental moment. Yet, as Tony Kendall has made clear[15] it was far from Vaughan Williams's first exposure to folk-tunes. The earlier history of folk-song collecting in England is not so well known. Yet the Folk-Song Society was inaugurated in 1898, and held their first general meeting in February 1899 with no less a figure than Sir Hubert Parry making the keynote speech. We know that Vaughan Williams's earlier view of folk-song was sufficiently wide that his first journey to Ingrave was actually to lecture on the subject. To Vaughan Williams then, folk-song was a subject with a Europe-wide agenda, as his lectures demonstrated. It was surely folk-song's transference from a book-based interest to what then seemed to RVW a living art, that gripped him so lastingly.

In fact, folk-song collecting as an active movement had been developing over the previous decades. In the 1890s this interest suddenly developed a momentum that led to the founding of the English Folk-Song Society. In 1954, Vaughan Williams could look back deprecatingly on the very early days to an organisation that 'discussed our traditional melodies over a cup of tea in a dilettante spirit'.[16]

Sir Hubert Parry's speech at the first general meeting of the EFSS tells us a lot about turn-of-the-century class attitudes and assumptions concerning folk-song. It encompassed a romanticised view little

[12] Leader LEA 4050.

[13] From Percy Grainger's programme note for the Hollywood Bowl, August 1928, reproduced in *The Delius Society Journal* No 67 April 1980 p20.

[14] The Topic record company has just issued a 20-CD set of folk-music recorded over many years and given a rave review by Colin Randle - together with the EFDSS CD in *The Daily Telegraph* 31 October 1998 p A8.

[15] Kendall, Tony: 'Through Bushes and Through Briars... Vaughan Williams's earliest folk-song collecting' in *Vaughan Williams in Perspective, studies of an English composer*, edited by Lewis Foreman, Albion Press, 1998 pp 48-68. *A Bicycle Ride with Vaughan Williams* [CD] Stormforce Arts STFC 006CD.

[16] Vaughan Williams, Ralph: Cecil Sharp - an appreciation' in Sharp, Cecil J: *English Folk-Song - some conclusions*. Fourth (revised) edition prepared by Maud Karpeles. Mercury Books, 1965, p vii-viii.

based on the real world. Despite Parry's undoubted good intentions, its patrician viewpoint has been seized on by many more recent commentators, who found it to be unacceptable.[17] Yet it is valuable as an indicator of how the movement was received five years before Vaughan Williams collected a single folk-song, and is worth quoting in full:

SIR HUBERT PARRY ON FOLK-MUSIC

'I think I may premise that this Society is engaged upon a wholesome and seasonable enterprise. For, in these days of high pressure and commercialism and that little smattering of the science of heredity which impels people to think it is hopeless to contend against their bad impulses, because they are bound to inherit the bad qualities of countless shoals of ancestors, the tendency is to become cynical; and the best remedy is to revive a belief in and love of our fellow creatures. And nothing has such a curious way of doing this as the study of folk-music. There is nothing in folk-music common or unclean; and this fact worthy of the serious consideration of some future philosopher. How has the unregenerate public arrived at such a perfect result that in this folk-music there is no sham, no got-up glitter and no vulgarity? But these treasures of humanity are getting rare, for they are written in characters the most evanescent you can imagine, upon the sensitive brain fibres of those who learnt them, and have little idea of their value. Moreover, there an enemy at the door of folk-music which is driving it out - namely, the popular songs of the day - and if we compare the genuine old folk-music with the songs that are driving it out, what an awful abyss appears! The modern popular song reminds me of the outer circumference of our terribly overgrown towns, where the jerry-builder holds sway, and where one sees all around the tawdriness of sham jewellery and shoddy clothes, the dregs of stale fish, and pawn-shops, set off by the flaming gin-palaces at the corners of the streets. All these things suggest to one's mind the boundless regions of sham. It is for the people who live in these unhealthy regions, people who have the most false ideals, who are always scrambling for subsistence, who think that the commonest rowdyism is the highest expression of human emotion; for them popular music is made, and it is made, with a commercial object of snippets of musical slang. This is what will drive out folk-music if we do not save it. The old folk-music is among the purest products of the human mind. It grew in the hearts of the people before they devoted themselves assiduously to the making of quick returns. In the old days they produced music because it pleased them to make it, and because what they made pleased them mightily, and that is the only way in which good music is ever made.

'In this country we have not, until recently, had any idea of concentrating our attention on the collecting of our folk-music, and even now what difficulties beset us! "Some people seem to think that they have but to walk out into the byways and hedges and pick them up; but the collecting of folk-songs really requires the most extraordinary faculty of accurate attention, of accurate retention, of self-criticism, as well as practice, to distinguish what is genuine from what is corrupt or emasculated. We have among the members of the Folk-Song Society several who have already practised the art, and have developed a wonderful gift in that direction. I hope that, with their assistance, we shall preserve much precious folk-music from being lost, and I trust that before long we shall find England more satisfactorily represented by folk-song collections than has hitherto been the case. The rapidity of our commercial development is partly responsible for the fact that England is not yet in possession of any great collection. In the neighbouring countries of Ireland and Scotland town civilisation is not so rife, and in out-of-the-way places old things survive much longer. But it is also partly because English folk-music has not such extremely characteristic intervals as that of Scotland and Ireland that it has not been so successfully recorded. Still, we have no need to be ashamed of it. It is characteristic of the race of the quiet reticence of our country districts of the contented and patient and courageous folk, always ready to meet what chance shall bring with a cheery heart.

'Moreover, it is worth remembering that the great composers of other countries have concentrated themselves upon their folk-music. The true test of style must lie in folk-music, for style is national. True style comes not from the individual, but from crowds of fellow-workers. And folk-music is the outpouring of endless combined souls, who sift and try till they have found the thing that suits their native taste, and leave it to outlast the greatest works of art, the heritage of generations.'[18]

Butterworth dancing a jig at Burford in 1913 (courtesy of the English Folk Dance and Song Society)

Collecting folk-songs was a skilled task, not only in establishing a sympathetic rapport with the singers, but in getting the music and the words down accurately by ear, often from few repetitions. What took the movement forward was the focussing of the interest of a number of talented composers and musicians, together with the obsessional drive of Cecil Sharp. This, with the sheer number of songs that were collected, made the early 1900s so significant a turning point. Vaughan Williams remarked, about Sharp's *Folk Songs from Somerset,*[19] 'such a wealth of beauty... was something we had never dreamed of.' And of course once composers started using folk-song in their music the wider musical public, which until then had been largely apathetic, became involved.

Thus the whole folk-song movement took off, reinforced when the songs began to be

[17] Boyes op *cit.*, pp 26-7.

[18] *Musical Times,* March 1899, pp 168-9.

[19] Sharp, Cecil ed.: *Folk-songs from Somerset.* [Vol. 1] Taunton, The Wessex Press, 1904.

used in school music lessons. Once folk-songs became a regular part of school music for the majority of children, folk-song was largely treated as something pretty and sanitised. Tunes tended to be treated inoffensively, and words were not explored in any detail. Indeed. from my own schooldays music teachers seemed remarkably unfocussed on the possible meaning of often recondite words. Yet the tunes have stayed with me and, more recently, the demise of folk-song in Britain's schools I for one find regrettable. However, although in the early 1900s many folk-singers themselves may have forgotten the meaning of the words they were singing, collectors were not above omitting the words when they were considered too crude or racy, making them unsuitable for wider dissemination to polite society.

Cecil Sharp, Maud and Helen Karpeles and Butterworth dancing Hey Boys Up Go We
(courtesy of the English Folk Dance and Song Society)

We only have to look at Vaughan Williams's early music to find examples which on the face of it seem to post-date his folk-collecting days. For example, was *Linden Lea* really written before RVW encountered folk-song?[20] This should not come as a surprise, for in his *Musical Autobiography* Vaughan Williams remembered how:

'I must have made my first contact with English folk-songs when I was a boy in the 'eighties, through Stainer and Bramley's *Christmas Carols New and Old.* I remember clearly my reaction to the tune of the *Cherry-Tree Carol* which was more than simple admiration for a fine tune, though I did not then naturally realise the implications involved in that sense of intimacy. This sense came upon me more strongly in 1893 when I first discovered *Dives and Lazarus* in *English County Songs.* Here, as before with Wagner, I had that sense of recognition – "here's something which I have known all my life only I didn't know it!".'[21]

Folk-music's adoption as a middle-class rediscovery, particularly between the wars, may well have contributed to the adverse reception it had from a later generation of musicians. Hyperion's recording of the choral ballads of Gustav Holst in 1995[22], reminded me of the more squirm-making aspect of this activity. Even as late as the 1930s it underlined the impact of folk-music, and particularly of the English Folk Dance and Song Society, on the development of British music in the earlier years of the twentieth century. The music of Holst's two choral ballads is glorious, but the scenario that attends them, and the actual libretti are less happy. *The Golden Goose* and *The Morning of the Year* date from 1926 and 1927 respectively and share the same opus number, the latter being the first ever work to be commissioned by the BBC Music Department. This was intended as 'a representation of the mating ordained by Nature to happen in the spring of each year'.[23] As a spectacle it must have represented some of the more embarrassing aspects of well-meaning inter-war reinterpretations of traditional folk dance.

Those who saw Ken Russell's recent television film on folk-song will remember near the beginning that tantalisingly brief clip of George Butterworth and Cecil Sharp folk dancing. At the launch party for Michael Barlow's recent book on Butterworth[24] those Kinora silent films were shown in full - there is much more than was seen in the TV film - and to see the energy with which Butterworth hurled himself around in them underlines his celebrated and quite unexpected remark quoted by Barlow: 'Butterworth claimed to be the only person able to dance the very intricate double caper properly; this was around 1913. The importance Butterworth attached to his skill as a dancer becomes obvious when, in conversation with [Reginald] Lennard, [an Oxford friend and contemporary,] who had spoken of him as a musician. Butterworth protested, "I'm not a musician, I'm a professional dancer."'[25]

It was Percy Grainger who was, perhaps, most successful in sympathising with and articulating the real objective of his folk-singers:

'He always treated his "kings and queens of song" with the utmost respect and human understanding. Of Joseph Taylor, his favourite folk-singer, he wrote: "He is a courteous, genial, typical English countryman, and a perfect artist in the purest possible style of folk-singing". His pen-portraits of the singers could be direct and honest, yet with a measure of common humanity that raised his descriptions to the level of poetic prose. Of George Gouldthorpe he observed: 'His personality, looks, and art are a curious blend of sweetness and grim pathos. Though his face and figure are gaunt and sharp-cornered, and his singing voice was somewhat grating, he yet contrives to breathe a spirit of almost caressing tenderness into all he does, says, or sings; even if a hint of tragic undercurrent be ever present also. A life of drudgery, ending in old age, in want and hardship, has not shorn his manners of a degree of human nobility and dignity, exceptional among English peasants: nor can any situation rob him of his refreshing (unconscious) Lincolnshire independence. His child-like mind, and his unworldly nature, seemingly void of all bitterness, singularly fit him to voice the purity and sweetness of folk-art.'[26]

The young Australian found it easy to identify with his folk-singers. Grainger also wanted his arrangements to be performed with all possible emotion, underlined by the

[20] *Linden Lea* was written in 1901 and first published in the first issue of *The Vocalist* in April 1902.

[21] Vaughan Williams, Ralph: 'A Musical Autobiography' in his *Beethoven's Choral Symphony...* Oxford University Press, 1953, p 150.

[22] Hyperion CDA 66784.

[23] *The Morning of the Year.* Vocal score, Oxford University Press, 1927.

[24] Barlow, Michael: *Whom the Gods Love - The Life and Music of George Butterworth.* Toccata Press, 1997.

[25] Barlow, *op cit.*, p 91.

[26] Tall, David: 'Grainger and Folksong' in Foreman, Lewis, ed.: *The Percy Grainger Companion.* Thames Publishing 1981, p 57.

performance instructions in his solo *British Folk-Music Settings.* For example, the tempo marking for *Early One Morning* is 'Slowly, anguished'. As the well-known baritone David Wilson-Johnson, a hugely successful champion of these songs remarked:

'The problem again is the Lincolnshire dialect and how far one goes in performing it. Is it "Once I had" or "Wunst"? How far do we go in the concert-hall context, when accompanied by a Steinway grand? The performer has to bridge the considerable culture gap between the wastes of Brigg and, say, the Queen Elizabeth Hall... It's difficult to pin down, just what is the essence of this or that particular Grainger song. The answer only comes in performance and with an audience present. That was brought home to me when I was singing in Amsterdam to a Dutch audience, most of whom understood English. They listened so well, far better than many English-speaking audiences, to the actual inflections of the words, and somehow the whole folk-idiom was easier to transmit because it was further removed, I suppose. I felt I was communicating a whole atmosphere, rather than the quirkiness of dialect words.'[27]

In the last year of his life, Vaughan Williams gave a lecture on Parry and Stanford in which he included some of the propositions which later would be held against him:

'I am far from saying that we have all got to write sham folk-songs; neither Parry nor Elgar, so far as I know ever used an actual English folk-song in their work. But we do feel that the same circumstances which produced our beautiful English folk-songs also produced their music, founded as it should be on our own history, our own customs. our own incomparable landscape, even perhaps our undependable weather and our abominable food. The youngest generation of composers profess not to believe in folk-song, but for the last fifty years we have been constantly in touch with it and they can no more help being influenced by it than by their own language.'[28]

He then went on to give some now familiar, though often derided advice to 'learn the elements of your art at home' and 'If you subscribe to that extremely foolish description of music as a universal language, you will find that you have achieved nothing better than a standardised and emasculated cosmopolitanism which will mean nothing to you nor to those whose mannerism you have been aping.'

The effectiveness of the use of folk-song in the music of Vaughan Williams, Holst, Moeran, Percy Grainger and many others is surely not in doubt. Nor is the turning point, the renewal, this represented. We are left with a range of issues to be discussed and re-assessed. Within its immediate period, folk-song contributed significantly to the development of the new music before the First World War. The conjunction of folk-song and its attendant modality, impressionism and the enormous expansion of orchestral palettes composers had new and powerful idiom with which to develop their art. It was not long before simply arranging a folk-song in a soft-focussed orchestral landscape would no longer suffice. Yet there was a second phase after the First World War, centred on the composer E J Moeran, a collector himself, whose first-hand association with folk-song in both Norfolk and Ireland contributed to a highly personal and distinctive art. Moeran was beyond the 'maypole on the green' view of English folk-song yet had seen traditional song and dance still a vital force in rural Ireland. Yet it underlines that remaining question: how far did Vaughan Williams believe what Georgina Boyes has called the 'Imagine Village' to be real, and does it matter anyway?

We are left face-to-face with RVW's source material on the EFDSS recording: a CD for every lover of English music, and a telling reminder of that spark which ignited a glorious musical fire.

Lewis Foreman

Sharp's Morris team at Burford; Butterworth is second on the right (courtesy of the English Folk Dance and Song Society)

Ralph, 1885

[27] David Wilson-Johnson: 'Grainger's Songs' in Lewis Foreman, *op cit.*, p 133.

[28] Vaughan Williams, Ralph and Gustav Holst: *Heirs and Rebels - letters written to each other and occasional writings on music.* Edited by Ursula Vaughan Williams and Imogen Holst. Oxford University Press, 1959, p 99.

Whatever Next; A few eclectic choices

by Mark Asquith

A popular feature of the classical music world at present is the business of recommending to the novice collector, as the *Penguin Guide* is so fond of calling them, music that has sufficient similarities to the base piece to broaden their interests. Personally I doubt whether many RVW Society members are novices, noviciates, or even probationers but few of us have so wide a grasp of music that nothing is a surprise or completely unknown. As I was walking my dog this morning, a fellow villager suggested that having lived in Liverpool I would be well aquatinted with Czech music bearing in mind the nationality of the RLPO's recent chief conductors and their patriotic line in programming. However I have never heard a note of Martinů and almost no Suk and I have visited the Tatra Mountains with Nowak but once. RVW, having been granted the distinction of an 'Essential' and a 'World of' is familiar by name to a broad mass of lovers if only by name, if only through *Lark* or *Tallis*. Unfortunately it is problematical that names in the British Music canon that are familiar to RVW Society members are totally unknown to many lovers of classical music, indeed it is all too likely. For example, there is currently only one available recording of Bax's *Fifth* and *Sixth Symphonies*, one recording of the Moeran and Finzi 'cello concertos compared let's say to at least 10 outings for Nielsen's *Clarinet Concerto* and 4 complete cycles of the Martinů symphonies. Once we slip below even the thin level of familiarity enjoyed by Bax, Moeran and Finzi we reach an area extremely poorly served but I would suggest of substantial interest to RVW members who have not already encountered some of these composers and their work.

I have tried to relate each RVW symphony and several orchestral pieces to another selection in the British œuvre with particular emphasis on those works less widespread in terms of recordings and broadcasts.

Symphony No. 1 - A Sea Symphony

Some readers may have encountered Stephen Watson's *Captain O My Captain* (Guild) a half hour long cantata which has more than a Whitman text to ally it with the RVW epic albeit being written around 70 years later. Personally I found this work to stand closer to Stanford's *Songs of the Sea* and *Songs of the Fleet* (1904) which are themselves almost contemporaneous with the *Sea Symphony* and available in a recording by Del Mar with Benjamin Luxon (EMI). These songs may sound seriously dated in many respects and indeed I recall them driving two customers out of the old Circle Records in Liverpool. Nonetheless if you have never heard them and you love the *Sea Symphony*, then they are well worth purchasing. I would however suggest, and it does not have a nautical theme at all, that Herbert Howells's *Hymnus Paradisi* (1938) is a work for chorus and orchestra that makes an excellent progression from *Sea Symphony* although the religious text draws a correspondingly less exhibitant response from the composer (Carlton BBC and Chandos). A recent arrival and not a symphony at all but very definitely symphonic and nautical in its conception is Phillip Sainton's music for the 1956 film *Moby Dick* (Marco Polo). This is episodic as one would expect from a movie score but contains some fine music through its 61 minute duration that is full of maritime imagery.

Symphony No.2 - A London Symphony

We know RVW did not like his *London Symphony* perceived as programme music but a rich evocation of Edwardian London it undoubtedly is. I do not believe that Hubert Parry drew a great deal on the sights and sounds of Victorian Cambridge but his *Symphony No. 2 The Cambridge* (1882-3) (Naxos or Chandos) is a rich piece concerned with the *experience* of being an undergraduate. It does reveal rather too much of Parry's admiration for Brahms and perhaps the first movement could lead the unaware to believe it is Brahms. We must remember that von Karajan disregarded Elgar on the basis that if one was going to conduct Brahms one may as well conduct the original. Whatever we think of that, I imagine not much, the especially attractive second movement of *The Cambridge*, evokes of the long vacation in late Victorian England in that era when the essential rural core of the country was entering its decline at the expense of industrialisation. In the *London Symphony* there exists a similar wistfulness about a less mechanistic experience.

Edward German's *Norwich Symphony (No.2)* (Marco Polo) is an underrated work from that Edwardian era but I found that there is a lightness that cannot be sustained by the material employed. It gives more enjoyment taken a movement at a time.

I imagine that one could not get further in a great legion of aspects from Edwardian London to the west coast of Scotland but I would recommend Sir Granville Bantock's *Celtic Symphony* (Hyperion) as a work with similarities of atmosphere and tone painting. There exists the same sense of both gas lit subfusc and the airy vitality found in the scherzo of the *London Symphony*. Michael Hurd suggests that it is closer to the *Tallis Fantasia* but there is a greater use of orchestral colour, for example the symphony employs six harps which are used to dazzling effect in the final section. Of course, the two core symphonic images are unrelated for Bantock's conception is by definition lurking in the Celtic twilight and was written as late as 1940.

Symphony No.3 - Pastoral Symphony

The joke here has always been that RVW drew on the French landscape whilst Debussy's *La Mer* and *Gigues* came from his time in England. Alan Rawsthorne's *Pastoral Symphony (No.3)* (1959) (Lyrita) is echt English in every sense and it employs a soloist in the final movement to sing a setting of a pastoral Elizabethan text by the Earl of Surrey. It is, like so much of that composers output ruggedly crafted but with distinctive thematic ideas. The third movement is a rollicking Country Dance which precedes the rapt setting of the text. This is a very fine work that encapsulates a sort of qualified upbeat side to the pessimism that emerged out of the 'movement' poets and the reassessments that took place in that era of post-war austerity. Armstrong Gibbs established his quiet reputation with a series of songs but his two symphonies are both worthwhile. The *Westmorland (No.3* - there is no No. 1 still in existence) (1944) (Marco Polo) was a BBC commission and it has a gorgeous tune in the first movement which carries the evocative heading *I will lift up mine eyes*. The third movement, *Weathers* is less interesting but the fourth movement *The Lake* is a fine tone picture. It is typical of the service to tonal English music that this work was played once in 1945 and again in 1956. Cyril Rootham's *Symphony No.1* (1932) can only be found on LP (Lyrita SRCS 103) and was completed shortly before his death at the age of 62. It is a fine symphony that leans very, very firmly towards RVW. Overlong perhaps, the symphony has memorable tunes in the first two movements that are developed in long sections. This is certainly a work rooted in the English pastoral tradition and has an original identity even if as I suggested, Rootham knew the work of his contemporaries rather too well. Rutland Boughton's fame lasts in his eccentric lifestyle and that high point of cod Celtic

romanticism *The Immortal Hour*. His *3rd Symphony* (Hyperion and Carlton, BBC) (1937) has a quite memorable final movement; and has occasionally, though not for some considerable time, made inroads into concert programmes. It has a grand outdoor sweep at times with passages in the second movement that convey a sense of that very thirties' conception, Deep England.

The film and television composer Wilfred Josephs wrote his *5th Symphony (Pastoral)* in 1971 and it was recorded as recently as 1983 by Unicorn Kanchana though it has so far not reached CD. The *Penguin Guide* felt it to be too sombre but I would suggest there is an intimation of what Bernard Jacobson calls the 'mystical associations of the country' in his sleeve note. Indeed, the same writer suggests that RVW was more concerned with the 'earthiness' of the country rather than the Beethovian mutability Josephs invests his work. I would not agree with this but I would counsel members to seek this work out if they have not already done so.

Symphony No.4

This craggy work has a force few British symphonies have ever matched. Grace Williams was of course a pupil of RVW and her *Symphony No. 2* (1955) (Lyrita) is a hard driven work that Malcolm Boyd in his original sleeve note suggested owed something to RVW's *4th* in its aggression. A forty minute work, this is well worth exploring for the contrasting passages of pastoral content and sombre exclamation. The third movement is especially reminiscent of the opening of her teacher's *4th Symphony*. Entering the American sphere briefly, Carl Ruggles' *Sun Treader* (1931-2) (DG) is an exceptionally effective and dramatic orchestral poem lasting 16 minutes that contains much the same emotional energy as the *4th Symphony*.

William Wordsworth's *Symphony No.2* (Lyrita) (1947-8) is a work about disaffection by a composer severely disaffected by war and caught in that fraught position of being by conviction a pacifist. Its agitated second movement and the fragmented themes that pervade throughout, relay the same idea of brooding anger RVW approaches. The third movement is run through with world weariness whilst there is an impertinence in the finale that reminds one of the later Shostakovitch symphonies. In fact, Wordsworth's *Symphony* was rejected by the BBC and also Barbirolli at the Hallé although it won first prize at the 1950 Edinburgh Festival.

Symphony No.5

Music journalists are capable of labelling just as much as any other hack. Martha Argerich is always 'mercurial', Alfred Brendel conveys Spock-like 'logic' and Jeno Jando is invariably 'indefatigable'. So too the *Fifth Symphony* is frequently 'ethereal'. Much British music is ethereal but it inhabits the choral or tone poem genres. There are very few symphonies that sustain a sense of the mystical. Bantock's *Pagan Symphony* (Carlton, BBC) (1923-8) was not performed until March 1936 and lacks symphonic unity but it is in parts an arcane work though the central section includes much colourful brass writing and is followed by some distinctly Brucknerian passages. Rubbra's *5th Symphony* (1947-8) (Chandos or EMI) close to being a contemporary with RVW's *Fifth Symphony* and to my mind occupies the same sound world in a way no other work matches any of his other symphonies. To explore this point I would suggested trying the 3rd movement marked *grave*. To return to labels, Rubbra is a most 'spiritual' composer and the close link between the RVW *Fifth* and *The Pilgrim's Progress* invests that work with a deep sense of personal spirituality. It is worth recalling that Rubbra had just converted to the Roman Catholic Faith when he wrote his *Fifth Symphony*. The rhythmic momentum inherent in Rubbra's *Fifth* expresses in the same covert sense of inevitability and realisation located in RVW's work.

Moving into another era altogether, Harrison Birtwistle's opera suite *Gawain's Journey* is not, I imagine, a piece of music that many members of the RVW Society would naturally put into their CD players. Notwithstanding any feeling that Birtwistle's music is without melodic content, *Gawain's Journey* has the same organic quality, implicit in the title, that is found in the *Fifth Symphony*. Norman Lebrecht refers to the 'sumptuous orchestral texture' and to the 'ethereal soprano duets' of the opera which are characterised in the suite.

Symphony No.6

The post-war catharsis embedded in this symphony may lead the listener to several works wrought in the same period. Rawsthorne's *Symphony No. 1* (Lyrita) (1950) contains a greater sense of stringency and does not have the same message of exhausted resolution. It is nonetheless a fine symphony. Rubbra is enjoying a small renascence and I would suggest that his *Symphony No. 4* (1940-2) (Lyrita or Chandos) in the wonderful first movement enters a world of anxiety that reaches inexorable release in the splendid carillons of brass that occur towards its end.

That unflagging Symphonist, Havergal Brian, wrote his *Symphony No. 7* (EMI) in 1948. This forty minute work begins with a rippling brass fanfare but by the finale has travelled into a grimmer landscape. The symphony makes significant use of rhythmic drumming which pull one into a feeling of humanity marching. In Honegger's superb *3rd Symphony Liturgique* (1946) (DG) we are clear that we have been through a war, buried the dead and prayed for our salvation but with Brian, the outcome is ambivalent though the message is portrayed in a powerful theme unlike his spiky short symphonies.

Peter Racine Fricker's *2nd Symphony* is out of the catalogue along with almost all of his once important output. Those able to find the LP (HMV 20 Series) will happen on a fine work written in 1951 to a commission by the Liverpool Philharmonic Society as a contribution to the Festival of Britain. This was long before Fricker's migration to California. It is a symphony, atonal in method, but cogent and with a strong emotional thrust born out of the same post-war mood as RVW's *Sixth*. It is not as explosive in terms of theme or sweep but it ought to be re-recorded.

Symphony No.7 - Sinfonia Antartica

The number of symphonies calling for wind machine are quite limited but symphonies that explore mankind's battle against the diurnal forces of nature are less exclusive. The New Zealander, Douglas Lilburn was another pupil of RVW and a correspondent until the great man's death. His *Second Symphony* (Continuum) (1951) is a portrait of New Zealand through its landscape including in the fourth movement the cry of a Wellington newsboy. However, this work has much more in common with the *Sinfonia Antartica* than with the *London Symphony* including, quite importantly, the time of its composition related to the *Antartica* and the period of Polar Exploration.

Many readers will be familiar with E. J. Moeran's magnificent *Symphony in Gm* (Chandos (mid-price) or Dutton) (1937-8) with its sprawling windswept landscapes but those who have not encountered it will be well advised to.

Symphony No.8

The attractive first movement of Wordsworth's *3rd Symphony* (Lyrita) (1953) occupies the same jaunty territory as RVW's *8th* although it has a more cynical feeling. There appears to me to be a recognition in the *8th Symphony* that the events of the world were turning away from the past, that a juncture had been reached. Liverpool born John McCabe's *Symphony No.1 Elegy* (1965) appeared on a Pye Virtuoso LP in 1967 but has not been seen since. This is a delicate 20 minute work with an interesting central section contrasting brass and percussion. John Joubert's *Sinfonietta* (BMS) was written in 1962 and has concertante parts for 'cello, 2

(continued on page 16)

Record Reviews

***Sinfonia Antartica*, Margaret Ritchie, Hallé Choir and Hallé Orchestra: Sir John Barbirolli; *Oboe Concerto*, Evelyn Rothwell; *Tuba Concerto*, Philip Catelinet; *The Wasps; Fantasia on 'Greensleeves'; Five Variants on Dives and Lazarus*; (with Edward Elgar: *Introduction and Allegro; Serenade in E Minor* and *Cockaigne Overture*. Sir John Barbirolli)**
EMI CMS 5665432 MONO

Barbirolli's recording of the *Sinfonia Antartica* was made six months after he premièred the work on 14 January 1953 - RVW spoke of it being the finest first performance he had in over fifty years - so this recording is as close as we can get to what was heard in the Free Trade Hall that evening. No wonder Vaughan Williams was delighted for this is a majestic account, vital and truly dramatic. The *Prelude* opens with a grand, solemn statement of the *andante maestoso* theme - the *leitmotif* - and thereafter the tension never slackens and Barbirolli obviously relished every challenge of this formidable score. The Antarctic wastes are clearly laid before us in the opening movement; there is humour and lightness in the *scherzo*; the 'Landscape' movement achieves the perfect combination of awe and terror inspired by the desolate glaciers, mountains and plains of the Polar regions; the mood is lightened by the *Intermezzo* which is followed by a powerful account of the *Epilogue* with its heroic march and concludes with the tragic return of the opening of the *Prelude* and the final picture of implacable nature - ice, blizzards and Polar winds.

This is a blazing account of a work which alone of Vaughan Williams's symphonies needs to be performed with conviction if it is not to appear episodic and the mono sound of this 45 year-old recording does not diminish its impact. This double CD set containing fine performances of the *Oboe* and *Tuba Concertos* and *The Wasps Overture* and a resplendent account of the *Five Variants of Dives and Lazarus* should not be missed. This reissue is rounded off with Barbirolli's fourth recording of Elgar's *Introduction and Allegro*, a work which he revered, the *Serenade* and his magnificent account of the *Cockaigne Overture* which has rarely been equalled.

K D Mitchell
Chiselhurst

Sinfonia Antartica* and *Symphony No. 8
Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra
Lynda Russell (Soprano) / Kees Bakels
Naxos 8.550737

Although Bakels' 1996 Naxos recording is full of good things and benefits from its digital sound, the sum of its parts do not quite achieve a satisfactory whole, which is a pity as the Bournemouth orchestra play excellently and the off-stage voices are beautifully placed. However, whilst the performance may not quite be as intense as Barbirolli's, there is still much to enjoy here in Bakels' on-going cycle of the symphonies. The performance of the *Eighth Symphony* shows him at his best as a VW interpreter; it is a lively and loving interpretation especially in the expressive *Cavatina* and the perky, joyous *Toccata*. The CD concludes with a reading of the five Movement superscriptions for the *Sinfonia Antartica* which, though not to be recited during a performance, do preface each movement in the score. Their inclusion is to be applauded and at bargain price this CD is well worth investigating, particularly for the *Eighth Symphony*.

K D Mitchell
Chiselhurst

Symphony No. 5 in D Major, Symphony No. 9 in E Minor
Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra: Kees Bakels
Naxos 8.550738

These two symphonies are not usually coupled on CD but as both owe their inspiration, at least in part, to literary sources, namely Bunyan and Hardy, it is good to hear them together.

Bakels has the true measure of the *Fifth Symphony* and captures its mood of radiant rapture, particularly in the opening *Preludio*. The *Passacaglia* is most successful, with a brisk sense of onward momentum leading to a grand climax of the opening D Major horn call and concluding with calm coda full of solace. The *Romanza* is finely done but in places does not quite have the intensity which others have found in this movement but this in no way detracts from the overall achievement.

The recording of the *Ninth Symphony* is splendid. It has a solemn, brooding quality and has a true Hardyian spirit which was behind the impetus for the piece. The first movement sweeps along and is followed by the restless andante with its truly 'barbaric' episodes. The Scherzo is given an excellent brittle performance and finale, the clinching summary of VW's symphonies and his composing career, could not be better. There are good accompanying notes which take full account of recent researches. (There is one small error – Boult's recording on 26 August 1958 was with the LPO and not the BBC SO.) This recording is highly recommended and at bargain price it should not be missed.

K D Mitchell
Chiselhurst

Vaughan Williams: *A Cotswold Romance, Death of Tintagiles*
Rosa Mannion, Thomas Randle, Matthew Brook, London Philharmonic Choir, London Symphony Orchestra, Richard Hickox
Chandos CHAN 9646

Forty years after his death, the Vaughan Williams operas remain deplorably neglected by our major opera companies, but that sad fact tells us nothing about the quality of the works themselves. Such thoughts are appropriate to any consideration of the cantata *A Cotswold Romance* (1951), which VW compiled in 1951, in collaboration with Maurice Jacobson, from his first opera, *Hugh the Drover*. The opera had been written many years before, between 1910 and 1914, and first performed in 1924 under Malcolm Sargent with the British National Opera Company. But in his later years VW's thoughts were still with the work, and his revisions were not completed until 1956. Clearly the idea behind *A Cotswold Romance* was to bring the music to a wider public.

Hugh the Drover has received two recordings, both of them very good, conducted by Meredith Davies and Matthew Best. The cantata complements these by presenting some of the music in the form of an introductory selection. The arrangement reduces the cast to two (occasionally three) solo voices with chorus, the latter gaining a stronger and more prominent profile than before. On its own terms the work proves particularly enjoyable, packed full of memorable tunes, and containing a full range of expression.

In some ways, on disc at any rate, *A Cotswold Romance is* rather like a recording of operatic highlights, with all the strengths and weaknesses such a description implies. The opening section contains a stirring rendition of that wonderful tune, *Men of Cotsall*, and hearing this performance immediately revived memories of the frustration I always feel at the music's mannered, trivialised delivery in the Matthew Best version, surely that otherwise excellent recording's weakest moment.

Richard Hickox, whose dedication to the VW cause is second to none, directs a particularly vivid performance of the *Romance*, and he receives some splendid support from his assembled forces. Rosa Mannion and Thomas Randle, on whom so much depends, prove to be pleasing soloists, while the recording has admirable clarity, though the perspective tends to lack depth at climaxes.

The sound, like the music itself, is wonderfully atmospheric in the incidental music, *Death of Tintagiles*, which VW composed in 1913 for a production of Maeterlinck's play. The story concerns the tragic fate of a child, and the musical style is suitably dark and sensitive. This neglected work is well worth hearing, for it has a brooding, evocative intensity of expression.

Although neither the *Romance* nor the incidental music can be classed as major works, these are notable additions to the catalogue, and the performances could hardly be better.

Terry Barfoot
Portsmouth

Concert Reviews

"The sea giveth and the sea taketh away"
The Dutch première of Ralph Vaughan Williams's opera *Riders to the Sea*

24 September saw the Dutch première of RVW's opera *Riders to the Sea*, an opera in one act based on the play written in 1904 by John Millington Synge. RVW wrote this heavy-going work between 1925 and 1932, and it was first performed on 30 November 1937 at The Royal College of Music in London (Kennedy). However, the Dutch had to wait for this opera until last September, nearly 61 years after its British première. *Riders to the Sea* was staged in the Zeeland harbour Breskens as the finale to the annual Zeeland Nazomer Festival. The theme of this year's festival was 'The sea in music'. A perfect opportunity to introduce this short but intensely emotional opera to the Dutch audience.

Riders to the Sea was staged by the Zeeuws, Philharmonisch Koor directed by Jeroen Lopes Cardozo. Soloists were Carolyn Watkinson (Maurya), Hieke Meppelink (Cathleen), Renate Arends (Nora) and Peter Arink (Bartley). George Pehlivanian conducted the Residentie Orkest, which played warmly throughout despite the unusual ambience.

The opera was staged in a huge old boathouse, an unusual but very appropriate location. Half of this boathouse was filled with tribunes for the audience facing the enormous boathouse doors, the other half for the members of the orchestra - cramped together - and a beach scene. The opera proper was staged above the orchestra on a catwalk. This sober setting allowed the audience to fully focus on the singers, without being overly distracted by a sumptuous setting. Handsome booklets containing full programme notes and the libretto in English with Dutch translation were handed out. The libretto was sung in English, but the singers were dressed in traditional Zeeland costume. For the scene with Bartley and the ghostly appearance of Michael on horseback, Zeeland draft horses were used. During the performance the boathouse doors opposite the tribunes glided open a number of times, for instance when the horses drove out to the market. This gave the audience a spectacular view over the harbour. Above the door opening hose pipes spewed out water simulating heavy rainfall, which added an extra dimension to the drama

Prior to the opera the orchestra played Britten's *Four Sea Interludes* from *Peter Grimes*. While the orchestra played the main characters of the opera and the members of the chorus walked very, very slowly - with worrying expressions - on the 'beach' and on the catwalk. It acted as a perfect overture to the opera, which followed promptly without an interval.

As you can imagine, members of the audience expecting a lightweight afternoon's music were in for a surprise. In the end, even yours truly could not hold back his tears, he was not the only one; the ultimate compliment for the performers, who were called back a number of times by an enthusiastic audience. A memorable performance!

Peter de Bode
Pijnacker, Holland

On Wenlock Edge
Paul Agnew, Susan Tomes,
Allegri String Quartet
Turner Sims Concert Hall, Southampton
Thursday 26th November

Performances of *On Wenlock Edge* in the original chamber music version will always be special occasions, since the required ensemble is so particular. While it may be true that the combination of voice with piano and string quartet became favoured by other composers, for example Gurney, there is hardly a large and established repertoire at hand from which artists and promoters can draw. Imagination is therefore required at the planning stage, and it was certainly in evidence here. The VW piece came before the interval, preceded by Haydn's *Quartet*, opus 54 no. 2, while the concert concluded with the Dvorak *Piano Quintet*. This certainly made a most attractive and effective programme, bringing out the nature of each composer's personality.

As a performance, *On Wenlock Edge* fared much better than the Haydn *Quartet*, whose ensemble lacked richness of tone in climaxes. Susan Tomes is a seasoned and sensitive chamber music player, and her experience in matters of teamwork and balance proved crucial. Paul Agnew, an 'operatic-sounding' tenor, brought great dramatic commitment to his part. And why not? The opening song, the 'title number', communicated a richness and intensity which carried over into the rest of the performance. The atmospheric nature of many of the accompaniments was splendidly captured, so too the charming naïvety of the quasi-folk song, *When I was in love with you*. But a performance will ultimately be judged by the larger, more complex, numbers, such as the potent tone-poem *Bredon Hill*. If in the final analysis there was room for more interpretative subtlety, that was because such is the nature of the piece. In other words, the best performance must always be the next one.

Terry Barfoot
Portsmouth

RVW Remembered

A 'DRY RUN' FOR THE *OXFORD BOOK OF CAROLS.*

The following account of an encounter with Vaughan Williams may be of interest. It was related to me by a near neighbour and acquaintance, Norman Smith, who is now 78 years of age, and who used to live in London.

At the age of 7, in April 1927, Norman Smith joined the choir of St Mary the Virgin, Primrose Hill, London NW3. This large church is sited at the junction of King Henry's Road, and Elsworthy Road, not far from Chalk Farm tube station. Norman was a probationer for three months, during which time he earned the princely sum of seven shillings and sixpence a quarter, later rising to the dizzy heights of fifteen shillings a quarter. During the probation period, new entrants to the choir were expected to reach a satisfactory proficiency in sight reading before being accepted as full choir members. This bears out Norman's statement that choir standards were high. It was also, he says, a happy choir. Results were achieved by kindness.

The high standards are, perhaps understandable. The choirmaster was none other than Geoffrey Shaw, who lived nearby. He had succeeded Martin Shaw in this post in 1924. The organist was Dr John Henry (Jack) Arnold. Geoffrey Shaw and Arnold alternated conducting and organist duties; and on some occasions when Geoffrey Shaw was unable to attend, his brother Martin stood in to play the organ. Both Shaws used to give organ recitals after evensong. Norman recollects that Martin did not charge for this service! Martin Shaw was, of course, co-editor (music) with RVW, of the *Oxford Book of Carols,* and contributed seven new tunes, and one hundred and eleven arrangements to that publication. Geoffrey Shaw contributed one new tune and sixteen arrangements/harmonisations. As a further coincidence, (if indeed that is what it was), Dr Percy Dearmer, who persuaded RVW to edit the *English Hymnal* in 1904, and who was another co-editor of the *Oxford Book of Carols,* was one time vicar of this self-same church, before going on to higher things. Incidentally, the aforementioned Dr Jack Arnold was editor of plainsong for the 1933 Revision of the *English Hymnal.*

In 1927 the choir of St Mary the Virgin comprised sixteen choirboys, two contraltos (one lady), two tenors and two basses. The male contralto was Patrick Harvey, who later became organist at the Church of Ireland Cathedral of Armagh. Choir practice was held on three nights a week; the boys on Mondays and Wednesdays (6 to 7:30pm), the whole choir on Fridays (6:30 to 9pm). Practice was held in a large vestry, to piano accompaniment.

It was at a Friday choir practice in the autumn of 1927 that Geoffrey Shaw's brother Martin appeared at the church with a large gentleman dressed in an old tweed suit. He was introduced as the composer Dr R Vaughan Williams. He and Martin Shaw were there to put the finishing touches to a book of carols, and to find out how an 'average' parish church choir could cope with sight reading the tunes. The choir had had no prior warning of this visit, (at least the choirboys hadn't!).

Norman Smith

Duplicated manuscripts of the parts of various carols were distributed to choir members, and, with the piano accompaniment played by Geoffrey Shaw, the choir ran through several arrangements. Vaughan Williams and Martin Shaw sat together listening and discussing the performance in whispers. From time to time RVW stopped the choir to ask for modifications of tempo, or to clarify expression marks etc. His demeanour, recalls Norman Smith, was at all times 'very gracious'.

Norman cannot remember all the carols that the choir ran through, not too surprising in that it was over seventy years ago! But two of them were Peter Warlock's setting of *Adam lay ybounden* (OBC No. 180), and Vaughan Williams's own *Wither's Rocking Hymn* (OBC No. 185).

At the end of a presumably satisfactory two and a half hours session, their illustrious visitor requested the choir to sing Tchaikovsky's *The crown of roses* (which became the final carol, No. 197, in the *Oxford Book*), 'just for pleasure.' I do not think that any of the choir had heard this carol before, but RVW assured them that 'they would enjoy it.' According to Norman Smith, they did. Incidentally, the *Oxford Book* records that this particular tune, from the composer's *Chansons pour la jeunesse,* (1883) was chosen for the 'theme' in Arensky's *Variations on a theme by Tchaikovsky.*

The *Oxford Book of Carols* was published the following year, in 1928. There cannot be many persons left now who, like Norman Smith, know of the contribution made by a London parish church choir to the final form of this publication.

Norman's voice broke when he was thirteen, and he left the choir for good. Just one member of the 1927 choir was left by 1942, when he revisited the church after moving house. Geoffrey Shaw remained choirmaster of St Mary the Virgin until about 1930, when a new incumbent arrived. Norman recollects that choral standards dropped somewhat with his departure.

Note. The above information was related to me by Norman Smith, in his house in Burbage, on successive Thursdays, November 26th, and December 3rd, 1998. I have known Norman for fifteen years or so. Indeed, it was as long ago as 1983 that I thought he told me that as a boy he was in a choir conducted by RVW. I must have misheard him and had assumed that it must have been at a Leith Hill event or something similar, as part of a massed choir of schoolchildren, and thought little more of it. It wasn't until a month ago that I learnt that it was something much *more significant nothing less than a final dress rehearsal for the* Oxford Book of Carols.

M J Gainsford
Burbage, Leics.

and also...

by Frank Dineen

95 YEARS after his first visit to Ingrave in 1903, and 40 years after his death in 1958, Brentwood Countryside Management Services, a department of Brentwood Borough Council, held a **Vaughan Williams Commemoration Walk** during the Heritage Weekend Sunday 13 September.

Over 70 people walked a circular route over two-and-a-half miles of Ingrave and Herongate roads and through local farmland. There were ten stops at each of which a folk song was sung and a scene enacted telling the story of the local events from 1875 that led to RVW's first coming to Brentwood in 1903, the highlights of life in the villages and some of the local characters. The good times and the hardships of life on the land were described, and the walk ended with the story of RVW's final commemorative visit at the age of 82 in 1955.

The walk began and ended at Ingrave Hall, where on arrival, walkers were greeted with the typical folk sound of accordionist Paul McCann and fiddler Jeff Giddings. The first stop was Heatleys, formerly the Rectory; then on to Mrs Humphreys' and Charles Potiphar's cottages; the Heatley graves; and the former Cricketers Inn. Once again, Ralph Vaughan Williams met Charles Potiphar outside his home in the lane off Middle Road, Ingrave and listened spellbound to *Bushes and Briars*.

Outside the former rectory, Georgiana [Locksie] Heatley, youngest daughter of the 83 year-old Rector, the Rev. Henry Davis Heatley, and RVW, explained their attitudes to folksongs and Emma Turner, the Rectory maid, sang *In Jesse's City*. At Mrs Humphreys' old home, Emma sang *Silvery, Silvery*. Near the Heatley graves in St Nicholas's Churchyard, the choral ensemble sang Hymn 597 [Herongate] *It is a world most wonderful*, from *The English Hymnal* (1906 revision by RVW), to the tune of *In Jessie's City*.

At the former Cricketers Inn, Jim Bloomfield sang *John Barleycorn*, originally collected by RVW from another singer at the same pub in 1904. At the corner of a field beyond the reservoir there was a discussion of the condition of farm-workers at the turn of the century and 15 year-old Rob Johnston sang *The Farmer's Boy* with everyone joining in the chorus.

Before he sang his next song, *A Nutting We Will Go*, at the corner of Nutgrove Field, Jim Bloomfield warned RVW it was not suitable for the ladies, so he would sing it quietly. The song was originally collected from Jim Bloomfield by RVW at the Cricketers in February, 1904. On the same day, RVW also collected *Spencer the Rover*, sung again by Charles Potiphar at the ninth stop at Highfield Wood.

At the final scene at Ingrave Hall, the sad last years of Kate Bryan were remembered along with the success of her Montpelier House School for Girls, where RVW had first lectured in Brentwood. The school was taken over by Essex County Council in 1913 to become the Brentwood County High School for Girls.

Like the walk, the story made a complete circle, beginning with the governors of Brentwood School refusing to admit girls in 1875, and ending with RVW remembering his last visit to Brentwood School in 1955 to talk to the assembled boys of his folk song collecting days over 50 years earlier. The choral ensemble concluded the event with a hymn with a tune from the first Broadwood collection of peasant songs from 1843 and a choral rendition of *Bushes and Briars*.

The cast was drawn from volunteers from local dramatic societies and is listed in order of appearance:

Kate Bryan:	Vivien Heffernan
Locksie: [Georgiana] Heatley	Lesley Curtis
RVW:	Jon Rainbird
Emma Turner: Rectory maid	Sue Cubbins
Mrs Humphreys:	Maureen Cooke
Charles Potiphar:	Maurice Steddon
Joseph Ablin: [landlord of the Cricketers]	Peter Cooke
Jim Bloomfield:	Cllr. Peter Billinge
Samuel Male: [landlord of The Green Man]	Mike Stock
Rob Johnston:	Adrian Bennett
Choral interludes:	An ensemble from local choral groups comprising of Mike and Janet Hewitt, Ruth Huxtable, Philip Shepherd, Maurice Steddon, Mike and Kath Stock and an unnamed lady.

The script for the walk was created by Jacqueline Bier and based on research in Frank Dineen's unpublished book, *Ralph's People - The Ingrave Secret*, and other sources.

The idea for the Vaughan Williams Commemoration Walk, was developed from already existing animated walks in the countryside following discussions between Stephen Plumb, Manager, Brentwood Countryside Management Services; his Assistant, Sharon Glover; and Brentwood Borough Councillor Peter Billinge. The Walk was put together in a series of meetings beginning at the Brentwood Theatre, then moving to The Green Man, Herongate, for the programming and rehearsals.

After almost a century of silent forgetting, the Walk was a lively commemoration of the visits of RVW and a worthy tribute honouring the memory those local people, most of humble circumstances, who responded so generously to the young RVW's need to find a still living tradition of English music in which he could earth his creative aspirations. The sincerity and dedication of those who acted out the various scenes and the good humour of the walkers willing the event to succeed made the day a joyous and memorable occasion that most will want to repeat. I am sure RVW would be proud of them all.

Frank Dineen
Ingrave

Locksie, RVW, Kate Bryan and Emma Turner, **RVW Walk,** ***Ingrave, 13-9-98***

Appearance and Reality: A Survey of RVW CD Covers

by Roger Juneau

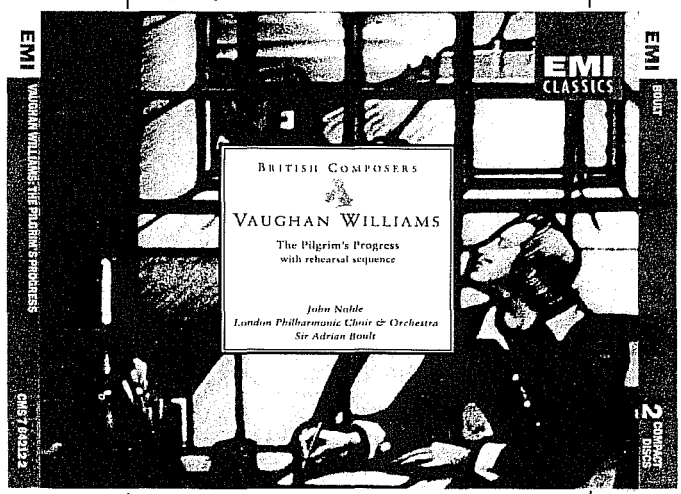
It's a truism (alas, little heeded) that you can't judge a book by its cover; what you can do is judge the cover by the book – or, in the case of the present article, comment on the CD cover with knowledge of the RVW music therein.

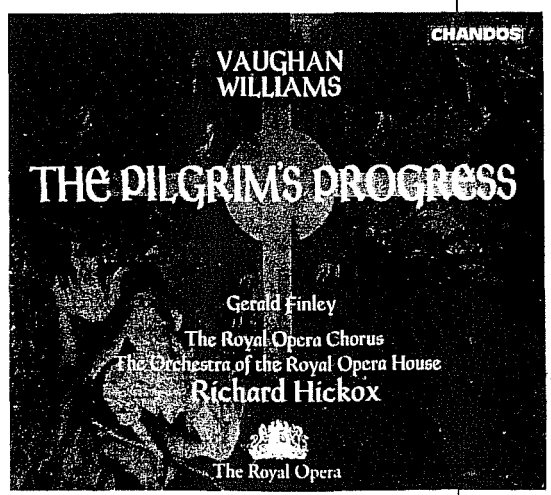
A few months ago I nearly choked on my Grape Nuts when a Radio 3 broadcaster, referring in passing to the *Tallis Fantasia*, used the single characterising word, "pastoralism". This irked me. Obviously, VW made use of pastoral devices in some music such as the *Phantasy Quintet* and the *Oboe Concerto*; but the *Tallis Fantasia* is different: austerely ecclesiastical and architectural and charged with a sort of historical sublime. But no: Pastoralism. Thus Radio 3. No wonder CD covers sometimes give the wrong signals, particularly at the cheaper and more popular end of the market which is crucial to the extension of VW's reputation.

Belart's reissues of distinguished recordings are good value but they have bland covers: pallid reproductions of details from old landscapes. *Job* and *The Wasps* are represented by a footbridge across a pretty stream; *Symphonies 3* and *5* have a harvest scene: these hardly correspond to my experience of the music. Worst of all, *Symphonies 4* and *6* are given a tranquil stream with cattle in a meadow: the "Dairylea" look might be apt for a cheese spread ad, but never here. Other feeble covers are encountered frequently in chain stores that have little space for classical CDs, usually selections of popular pieces with chocolate box covers: a Constable, perhaps, a complete large canvas reduced to 3 or 4 inches and badly printed; or a photograph of a green and sunny landscape without mystery. Or Nigel Kennedy's *Lark Ascending* with a British bulldog, which relates neither to the VW nor to the accompanying Elgar concerto. A joke? What a lark!

Perception of this great music is thus stereotyped. Words like "pastoral" and "modal" are used lazily or patronisingly. Pictures are restrictive or misleading visual clichés. Much of the music has rural associations, of course, and, if we must analyse, "Rural" could be a headword with various branches subsumed: Rustic, Idyllic, Pastoral, Mystical, etc. And that is merely one aspect of the œuvre; other headwords could be Urban, War, Erotic, Religious, Humorous and so on (there is, of course, no need for these words). We are discussing a world-class achievement, protean music that expresses the heights and depths of twentieth century experience. This is what the CD covers are intended to represent.

If the whole range of VW recorded music is considered, there is certainly variety in the cover designs. In the case of stage, vocal and choral works, more or less apt images are indicated by the titles. I will discuss only *The Pilgrim's Progress* music. The EMI set has a stained glass depiction of Bunyan writing his dream vision in his cell, a glimpse of the material world visible through his barred window. The new Chandos set has an extraordinary stylised picture of great intensity showing a cross, and beneath the crossbar, on either side, are identical images of Pilgrim beneath his burden of sin; each image is luridly coloured and polarised in the manner of Andy Warhol's mechanised iconography. The picture of Bunyan in prison successfully projects the author at a key moment in his own pilgrimage; the Chandos cover powerfully evokes the entire allegorical drama. Now for the shorter versions. The Hyperion *Bunyan Sequence* has a beautiful sunset view of a river, and beyond it towers suggestive of the glory awaiting Pilgrim – fine. The Hyperion *Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains* is even better: a rapt landscape by Palmer, in which shepherds, their sheep safe, rest under the stars gazing contemplatively across a river at a lighted tower aloft. The environs of the Celestial City are bodied forth.





The symphonies need special attention, being of central importance and mostly abstract; even the named ones resonate beyond their epithets. We know that VW felt strong antipathy towards explicit interpretations of certain works, but many listeners experience particular emotions and they are aware of biographical and historical facts, all of which lead towards extra-musical interpretations. These, naturally, are reflected in cover illustrations. The idea of indeterminacy is useful here: as with semi-abstract painters like Graham Sutherland and Terry Frost, so in music there can be interpretation here and there and up to a point; beyond that point it does not make sense and maybe an alternative notion comes into play.

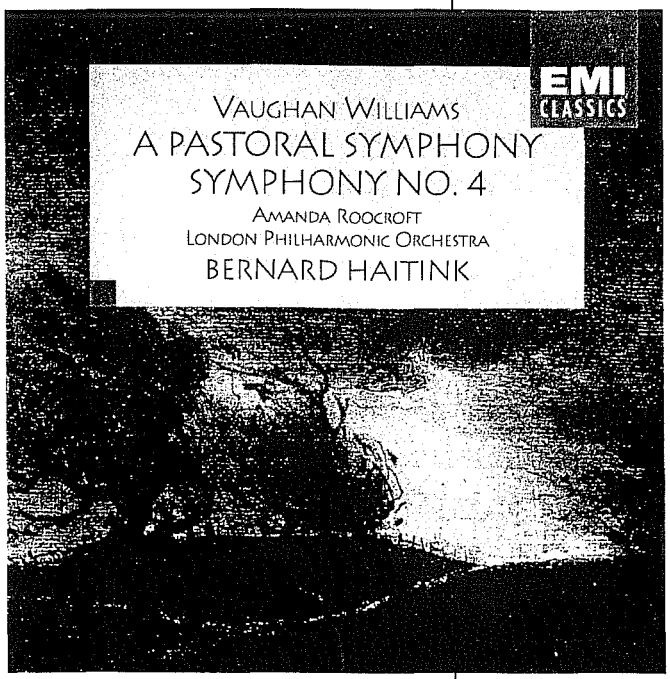
There are no covers, yet, of this type, but there is a pot pourri of imagery, some of it crass like Belart's *Fourth* and *Sixth*. An excellent way round the problem is demonstrated by the RCA Slatkin cycle: the symphonies are in chronological order with covers bearing splendid contemporary photographs of the composer. That the *Fifth* and *Sixth* are on the same disc is not a problem, these contrasting works being covered by a photograph of VW aged about seventy. Any dichotomy between the *Pastoral* and *Fourth* is overcome by a photograph of VW in his fifties.

Symphony cycles can be uniformly presented yet uneven in image quality. The Previn set has commissioned paintings, all vague landscapes. The cover for the *Third* and *Fourth* is insipid, its blue and yellow wash inappropriate for the *Fourth* and lacking the intensity needed for the *Pastoral*. The *Sixth* and *Ninth*, however,

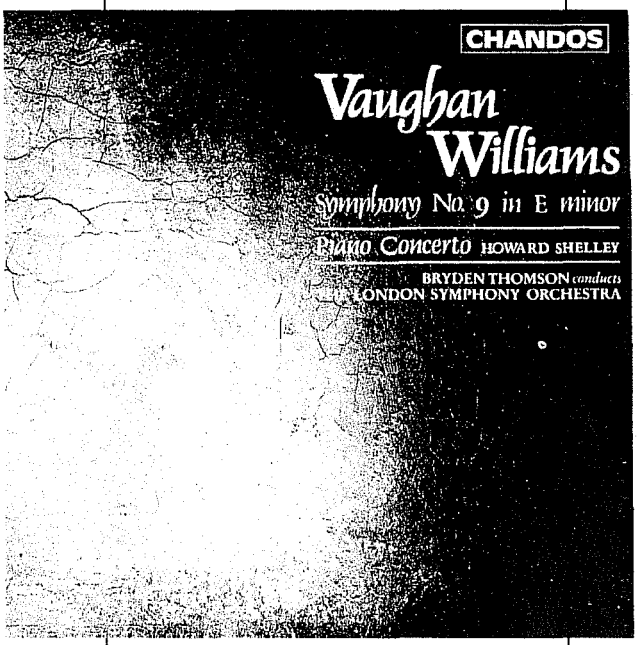
have a suggested landscape in austere black and white, conveying a dark, brooding atmosphere.

Generally better are the Chandos covers, all with sharply reproduced details of paintings by Turner - like VW, a visionary artist. These admittedly have the disadvantage that with nine CDs a certain homogenisation detracts from the heterogeneity of the music. But there is some striking success. The detail for the *Ninth* is evocative; even the cracks in the paint suggest age and endurance as a vaguely figureheaded ship emerges from an intensely bright glow and sails into a tawny darkness. This complements the *Ninth Symphony*, particularly the ending, and is more affecting than, say, the Constable view of Stonehenge or the Boult LP cover of c.1970. To be sure, Hardy's Stonehenge is linked with the genesis of the work but, as with other Constable pictures, the eye is restricted to a particular time and place, whereas Turner liberates the mind. The Chandos *Fourth* has a magnificent Turner deluge: an apt correlative. But why is the *Sixth* so tame? - the tower seen across a windy beach doesn't begin to address the restless savagery and desolation of the music. The *Fifth* has shipwrecked humanity being saved by the Almighty from the engulfing storm: agony and ecstasy are here, but the MS quotation from Bunyan and the music itself warrant present security and only an echo of past or distant evil.

The Haitink (EMI) recordings have wisely not attempted pictorial uniformity. The *Sea Symphony's* breezy seascape is preferable to the Chandos Turner, whose hurricane turns a scherzo into a melodrama. The Haitink *3* and *4* is very fine: a charcoal drawing of a dark, windswept knoll with trees swaying under doomsday clouds. This covers the war memories in a rural setting of the *Pastoral* and the overt tempestuousness of *No. 4*. The lovely watercolour of a country lane that adorns Haitink's *Fifth* would seem to lack the visionary dimension, but the way it is printed – as if seen through a veil – gives it more relevance.

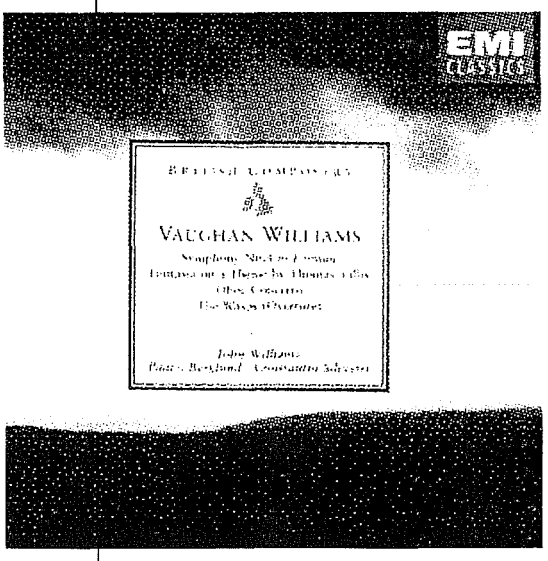


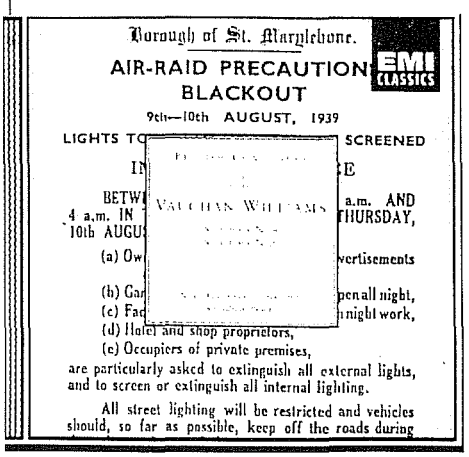
The EMI British Composers *No. 4* is excellent: a monochrome photograph composed in three bands like a horizontal tricolour: brooding, tattered clouds above a cold white sky, above a black hill. That provides an interesting image for the *Tallis Fantasia*, also on the disc. The British Composers *Sea Symphony* is oddly effective: it simply shows several lines of Whitman's verse printed in undulations and in a disorientating perspective that plays upon the vision with a suggestion of queasiness. The British Composers covers generally are attractive, thoughtful and recherché. A facsimile London air-raid blackout document for *4* and *6*; for *Sinfonia Antartica*, a watercolour of "Discovery" and penguins by E A Wilson, overlaid with the MS of Wilson's diary entry describing penguins; but the display of advertising for symphonies *8* and *9* is quirky.



The new Norrington recordings have a strong uniform design (so far) with "RVW" in large, stylish lettering and a striking colour photograph of a landscape. A large information panel covers much of the upper part of each picture but is placed asymmetrically and overlaps the margin above and to one side, giving the impression that it is a lid about to come down and obliterate the rest of the picture. *Symphonies 3* and *5* have a view of a low hilltop seen beyond a gently rising field and beneath a cornflower blue sky: no vision here, nor menace, nor elegy. *Nos. 4* and *6* are better served: a livid sky a above a poppy field.

The title of *Sinfonia Antartica* would seem to make the choice of cover easy, but it was perhaps too easy for some companies. EMI's Haitink recording has a painting of the explorers on skis crossing a snowy scene, but there's no sense of the limits of endurance (they might be en route to my local hill after a brief snowfall). The fine Telarc photograph from within a cave of ice is little better. Belart shows a watercolour of the distant camp surrounded by the Antarctic waste: better still, Chandos's





Turner detail is a white ship sailing away into a blank white seascape: effective, and suggesting, too, the coupled work, *Towards the Unknown Region*. The Naxos cover is savage: a painting of an appalling ice-scape. I would like to suggest two excellent images. Caspar David Friederich's painting, *Sea of Ice* is one. The ice fields have been crushed together and shards have been thrust up into irregular pinnacles resembling World War I howitzers; the vastness is weirdly illuminated and, surprisingly, claustrophobic; despite the presence of a crushed hull, the scene is utterly unhuman. Another idea is to use a photograph. I have seen a tremendous still from the Scott film showing a cliff of ice.

Mindful of the many covers I have no space for or have not seen, I move on finally to miscellaneous matters. There seems to be no cover that does justice to the *Tallis Fantasia*. One that would fit is that used for Hyperion's *Mass in G Minor*: a painting of a distant cathedral spot-lit by a shaft of sunlight that pierces a rift in dark, turbulent clouds. A numinous quality here would complement a similar quality in the music.

Short works like *Tallis* have often to share a cover with several other works and are likely to be ignored in the choice of picture. One lovely exception is Hyperion's cover for *Serenade to Music, Flos Campi, Five Mystical Songs* and *Fantasia on Christmas Carols*. Danby's *Scene from 'A Merchant of Venice'* covers the entire front page of the booklet to draw the eye into the moonlit palace garden at Belmont with Lorenzo and Jessica. The shadowy stillness is perfect for the lovers' platonic dialogue. *Flos Campi's* erotic orientalism is accommodated with the help of the silhouetted cypresses and the distant classical portico, which could easily be in the Near East. The exotic wonder of the scene corresponds to Herbert's esoteric mysticism and, for the *Carol Fantasia*, there is even a suggestion of the first Christmas in an eastern province of the Roman Empire.

We are fortunate that so many recordings of VW's music are available with their opportunities for different kinds of covers. In a still-burgeoning market, I would like to see more emphasis on the modernity of VW in his time as a composer (c.1900-1958). Plenty of photographs exist: portraits, press photographs, snapshots and these could be incorporated into colourful designs influenced by contemporary abstract painting (for example, see certain CDs of Hindemith, Bartók and Shostakovitch). For VW was a major European as well as an English composer. And if specifically English scenes are needed, why not landscapes by artists such as VW's younger contemporaries like Sutherland, Ivor Hitchens and Paul Nash?

Roger Juneau
Repton, Derbyshire

(continued from page 9)

horns, 2 bassoons and especially 2 oboes. The lively first movement has much the same grasp of Bartok's transformation of folk patterns though in this case resembling more the *Divertimento* rather than the *Concerto for Orchestra*. Richard Rodney Bennett responded to a BT commission with the colourful *Partita for Orchestra* (1995). This can be found in a fine recording in a BBC Music Magazine. This light and winning piece sustains repeated playing.

Symphony No.9

Hugh Ottway in his book on the RVW symphonies has drawn attention to the Wessex connections inherent in the composition of this final symphony which invest it with a profoundly English character. I find the Arthur Bliss's pre-war *A Colour Symphony* similar in mood particularly in the opening movement *Purple*. This work is now widely available and obviously in many readers' collections (Nimbus, Naxos, EMI nla, Hyperion). However, the same composer's *Meditations on a Theme of John Blow* (1954) (BBC/Carlton, Argo nla) is less common, and although it is not as symphonic in development as the *Colour Symphony* there exists within its 8 sections confirmation of the composer's deep understanding of the English melodic tradition.

I have always regarded Malcolm Arnold's *Symphony No.2* (Conifer, EMI) as a close colleague to the *9th* as indeed is the same composer's own bitter-sweet *7th Symphony* (Conifer) (1974).

Returning finally to the Arcadian Voice of Howard Hanson, readers will be aware that he is invariably allied stylistically with Sibelius. However, his *6th Symphony* is tighter in realisation than his earlier symphonies though it follows a smooth tonal course interrupted by a short, gritty Nielsenesque second movement. Being another work of relatively old age, Hanson was 71 when he completed it, it is another work born of long musical experience.

Mark Asquith
Shropshire

(Editor's note: Members are invited to write to the Editor with their own suggestions in relation to each VW symphony).

Vaughan Williams and folk-song – Part 2

The relation between folk-song and other elements in his comprehensive style

by Elsie Payne

Elsie Payne's excellent article on the relation between folk-song and other elements in VW's style first appeared in *The Music Review* in May 1954. Part 1 was included in the October 1998 issue of the Journal.

Of all the influences that have borne upon Vaughan Williams's musical language, that of folk-song has been the most fundamentally as well as the most obviously powerful, and all the rest has, perforce, been made subservient to it. But other models, particularly French Impressionism, and early vocal polyphonic styles, have had a supplementary influence. Vaughan Williams cannot rightly be called a derivative composer; had he been so, he would probably have followed one rather than many influences, and with a greater consistency than, in fact, he has done. But he is a more intuitive composer than some, and he has clung spontaneously to all those details of idiom and method that he has found vital to his own musical thought. Moreover, once he has assimilated any adopted style, he has not discarded it, however much he may have had to readjust.

He first became conversant with French Impressionism through his study with Ravel at the beginning of the century; and at once the subject matter of impressionistic music and its elusive atmosphere and orchestral colouring appealed to him. Vaughan Williams, for all his faith in the common things of life, has always been drawn towards fantastic subjects and escapist settings. (Even folk-song of course, paints an idyllic and lyrical, often an exaggerated picture of life.) Whereas Debussy went mainly to mediæval legend for his ideas, and Ravel to fairy story, Vaughan Williams chose more reflective subjects, such as were suggested by contemplative folk songs, Walt Whitman's, Bunyan's and Biblical texts, to produce his other-worldly, mystical expression. But the works of all three composers are alike in that they are removed in atmosphere from the pedestrian world of here and now.

The effect of his study with Ravel was most obviously and immediately operative upon his orchestration, particularly in the production of light, shimmering and translucent effects, many of them harp *arpeggii*,[45] and in the separation of his orchestral colours into distinct groups, each attached to its own equally distinct thematic and textural material.[46] It is another aspect of French Impressionism, however, which has had a more important impact upon the working out of the details of Vaughan Williams's textural style — namely the blocking out of melody in consecutive chords or triads, to produce the parallel chordal streams which also play such an important part in the music of Debussy and Ravel. In his adaptation of this musical idiom, the influence of Impressionism has verged upon that of pre-sixteenth century vocal polyphony and hence has become a singularly important aspect of his musical expression.

It has generally been averred that Vaughan Williams adopted the methods of Tudor vocal polyphony in his contrapuntal work, especially in the *Fantasia on a Theme by Tallis* and the *Mass in G Minor*. And certainly, in his consideration of past methods, he tended to ignore the music of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, especially the German music of that period, and to explore rather the resources of English music before its decline in the Baroque era. True it is also that, in some of the most general and obvious respects, he took his direction from Tudor church music and the Elizabethan madrigal;[47] for instance, in his use of non-modulating contrapuntal textures, flexible rhythms, and in his practice of alternating contrapuntal sections with passages which are primarily harmonic in interest, the parts moving note against note. Some of his earlier and slighter works, moreover (such as his part-song, *Love is a Sickness*, 1913, and some of the four-part arrangements of English folk songs) do follow Tudor methods in broad principle; while his madrigal, *Come away Death* (1918) is typically Elizabethan in style. But in other and more essential aspects of style his music follows pre-sixteenth century choral styles rather than the more highly polished ones of Tudor and Elizabethan times. Just as he has explored the sources of folk-song for his melodic ideas, so he has spontaneously penetrated to the beginnings of the polyphonic evolution (*circa* the ninth to the fifteenth century) for textural inspiration. This pre-sixteenth century polyphony, being in its crude state, is essentially melodic in conception. It is based on plainsong and therefore, thematically, it has much in common with that part of Vaughan Williams's music which is based on his favourite folk-song idioms;[48] it is modal and, at any rate in the very early stages of its development, practically free from harmonic implication. It was natural therefore, that Vaughan Williams, in evolving a contrapuntal style which would have a primary regard for the melodic value of his favourite folk-song types, should subconsciously follow some of the particular methods of this early polyphony which was motivated by similar material and intention.

His music differs from that of the sixteenth century in several important respects. In the first place, Tudor polyphony is more diatonic in feeling. By the sixteenth century the major-minor diatonic system had pretty well supplanted the use of modes (though modes survived in some works, for example, in the anthems of Weelkes), and cadential harmonic progressions had become established. Vaughan Williams's contrapuntal work, on the contrary, is mainly modal, his harmony definitely subservient to his melodic outlines. His modal counterpoint is not even similar in structure to that of modal Tudor music, his modes being often far more abruptly changed, and the tonal centres changed as well as, or instead of the modal ones. In Tudor music, major thirds, sixths and sevenths are sometimes to be found alternately with minor thirds, sixths and sevenths, following the rules of *musica ficta* (as in Byrd's *Ave Verum Corpus*, Ex. 11), and this creates a certain feeling of modal ambiguity.

---

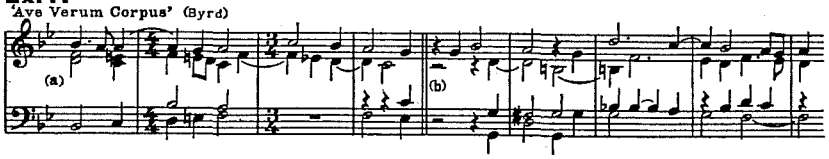
[45] E.g. the end of *On Wenlock Edge*, no. 3, and the bell representations in no. 5; the *London Symphony*, page 66 of miniature score and the beginning of the *Epilogue*; the fourth movement of the *Pastoral Symphony* (PP. 93-8 of miniature score); *Sancta Civitas* (P. 36 etc.).

[46] The opening of the *Pastoral Symphony* is an example of such a separation of musical detail and colour.

[47] Most of this music had only been made accessible for study (by Dr. Edmund Fellowes) in the early part of this century.

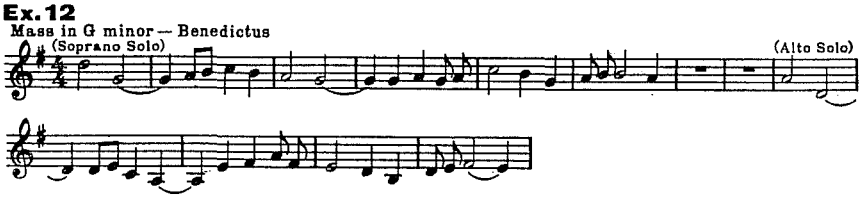
[48] *Viz.* those folk tunes which probably had a plainsong connection, and the episodic forms of tunes like *Bushes and Briars*, *Dives and Lazarus*, etc.

Ex.11
'Ave Verum Corpus' (Byrd)



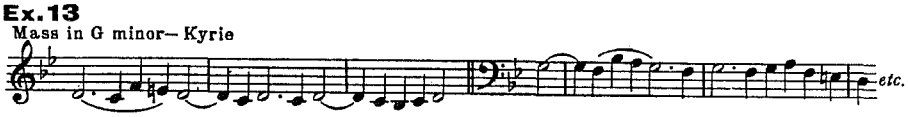
But Vaughan Williams's ambiguities are far more extensive and significant, and are produced in completely different ways. In the *Benedictus* of the *Mass in G Minor*, for instance (Ex. 12), he creates a modal ambiguity by shifting a fragment from one tetrachord to another without altering the tonality of the whole, thus changing the intervals of the fragment itself and hence its mode.

Ex.12
Mass in G minor — Benedictus



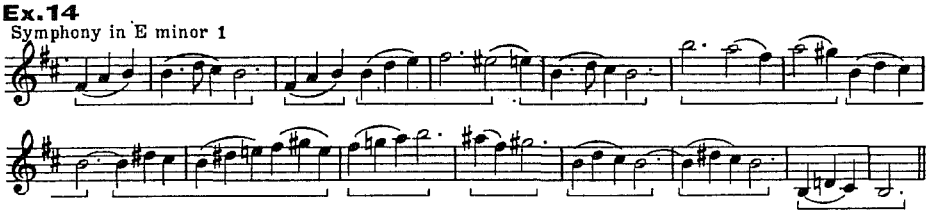
And in the *Kyrie* (Ex. 13) he produces an ambiguity of key by shifting a fragment complete, without upsetting its intervals or mode, hence temporarily changing the tonal centre of the passage.

Ex.13
Mass in G minor— Kyrie



Such ambiguity is, in each case, the result of melodic extension or discussion. In later work, he creates an ambiguity of mode or tonality in the melody itself. In the B minor tune from the *Sixth Symphony*, for instance (Ex. 14), alternate major and minor thirds, sixths and sevenths are introduced (including the sharp leading note to the dominant), not, however, as chromatic notes or as parts of a mixed or complex mode, but as the result of adding together, in mosaic fashion, a series of melodic fragments, each in its own particular mode.

Ex.14
Symphony in E minor 1



Secondly, and mainly as a result of the growing sensitivity to diatonicism, the counterpoint of sixteenth century English music, especially that of the religious music,[49] is already such that the whole is more vital than the parts which form it. It is a comprehensive texture; composed, it is true, of individual, horizontal threads, but appealing to the ear in combination. In Vaughan Williams's music, the melodic thread is itself the epitome of the counterpoint. Imitations or counter-themes refocus or discuss the initial thread in such a way as neither to submerge nor sublimate it. These two types of counterpoint demand slightly different manners of approach and aural judgement. In Tudor music one listens to the separate parts in relationship; in Vaughan Williams's music one appreciates the separate parts for their own sake, though aware of the relationship which exists between them by virtue of their proximity. Where his counterpoint is made up of homogeneous themes or imitations, there is at least a structural relationship between them. But often his melodic threads are heterogeneous with one another (one melody against another, or tuneful melody against rhapsody, and so on), and in combination, produce dissonances and ambiguities which are far more extreme than those which result from the occasional false relations in Tudor counterpoint; yet they are often easier on the ear, in so far as these heterogeneous threads are intentionally and intrinsically individual, and not, as in Tudor counterpoint, intended as parts of a mainly consonant whole.

Differences between Tudor and Vaughan Williams's styles extend, thirdly, to the structures of the parts which have a note against note rhythm, and which alternate with the purely contrapuntal parts. In Tudor music these parts are harmonically propagated, and are really chord progressions. In Vaughan Williams's music they are more frequently streams of parallel triads, which follow a melodic line rather than a harmonic system. In his use of such chordal methods, Vaughan Williams was probably most directly inspired (as has already been suggested) by French Impressionism; but in following these impressionistic styles, he actually adopted pre-sixteenth century choral styles, namely the methods of early *organum*,[50] the English sixth chord style,[51] and *faux bourdon*.[52] At first he used the style, as Debussy and Ravel did, somewhat indiscriminately, and mainly to create textural and atmospheric effects. Debussy often (though by no means always) used the whole-tone scale in such passages, but Ravel and Vaughan Williams used it very little. Instead, they made a more frequent use of pentatonic and gapped modes. All three, however, on occasion, used the orthodox major and minor scales, blocking out their major or

[49] And still more the music of Palestrina, Vittoria and Lassus, contemporary with English music of the sixteenth century.

[50] The first attempt at contrapuntal writing (ninth to tenth centuries), whereby a *cantus firmus* is accompanied above and/or below by parallel or approximately parallel fourths or fifths.

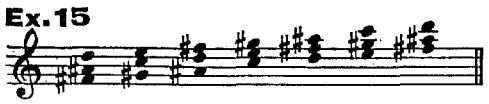
[51] An extension of *organum* (*circa* thirteenth century), according to which a *cantus firmus* in the lower parts is accompanied by parallel parts above, to form chords of the sixth.

[52] Probably a French variant of the sixth chord style which grew up in the early fifteenth century, in which the *cantus firmus* is in the treble part, and the 6/3 chords follow below to form a textural rather than a contrapuntal idiom.

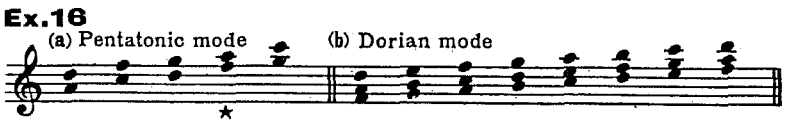
minor melodies in 5/3 or 6/3 triads, sometimes also in 6/4 chords, secondary sevenths, ninths and so on. The modern complex chords produced their more striking effects; the archaic scales and bare intervals, their austerer and elusive impressions.

The idiom of parallel chordal writing is primarily of textural importance; and the *consensus* of sound which is produced by such parallels is more vital in atmospheric expression than the character of the theme which is used. Nevertheless, a subtle distinction can be drawn between that which depends mainly on the chord which is used to produce the parallel stream, and that which depends on the melody and the way in which the lower parallel threads are related to the upper theme. The first has mainly a vertical interest, the latter a horizontal or contrapuntal one. With Debussy, parallel writing had chiefly a chordal implication, melody being a somewhat arbitrary arrangement of the notes of the scale out of which the pivot chord was fashioned. But with Ravel, and even more with Vaughan Williams, it came to have a greater melodic significance. Even in *On Wenlock Edge* (the first song of the cycle) which marks the first appearance of the style in Vaughan Williams's music, textural colouring is the result of the manner in which the melodies are varied and related to one another (the particular character of this passage dependent upon the fact that the lowest thread of the three-part parallel passage is a whole-tone instead of a pentatonic melody like the other two). And in the *Fantasia on a Theme by Tallis*,[53] the parallel writing is still more vitally melodic in importance, and may be thought of as melody reinforced by two or three identical threads, instead of texture in its own right. As such, it has *organum* character.

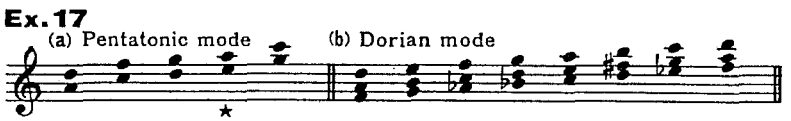
When chordal streams are used with a purely textural intention (as they are by Debussy and, often, fifteenth century *faux bourdon*), the choice of scale and chord are of paramount importance. But when (as in *organum* and the English sixth-chord style) their function is a more melodic one, then the way in which the lower threads of the stream run in relation to the melody is of equal or greater importance. If the whole-tone scale is used to produce both the melody and the chord, the parallel melodies come out to be identical with one another in all except pitch (as in Ex. 15).



But when a five-, six- or seven-note mode is used, the parallel threads may run either true to tonality, in which case they will be only approximately parallel with one another and different in mode (as with the pentatonic mode and the dorian mode in Ex. 16) — or else true to

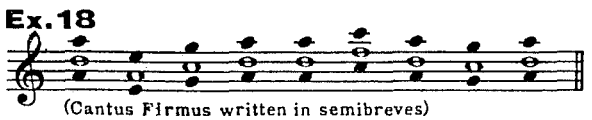


melody and mode, in which case they will be exactly parallel and identical with one another, but will set up an ambiguous textural tonality (as in Ex. 17).

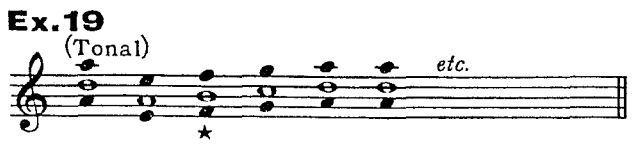


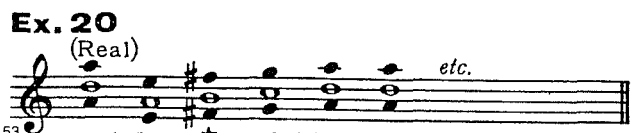
These two methods of parallel writing are comparable to the respective tonal and real methods of dealing with subject and answer in fugal counterpoint. The terms "tonal" and "real" may thus be used to distinguish them.

As far as extant examples of early polyphony can be dated and types thus classified chronologically, it would seem that *organum* (the *cantus firmus* of which was based on simple plainchant and generally gapped in mode) started as an exactly parallel structure; and with such melody, based on a five- or a six-note mode (as in Ex. 18), the choice between tonal and real treatment would probably not arise.



In any case, at that time (*circa* the ninth and tenth centuries), musical interest was entirely melodic, so that the ear would demand a strict preservation of melody and mode regardless of the total effect produced by such parallel writing. But as *canti firmi* were elaborated and made fully modal, the alternative arose (as indicated in Exs. 19 and 20);

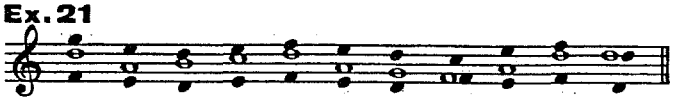




[53] At the end of page 1, *etc.*, of miniature score.

and as the ear became more used to and interested in complexities of sound — that is, with the dawning of the harmonic sense — the subsidiary parts were most often adjusted so as to fit into a tonal system (as in Ex. 19). This meant that the parts no longer adhered individually to the initial mode; also that the parallels were no longer exactly parallel. Out of the tonal behaviour of consecutive fourths and fifths, however, arose the bogey of the tritone or the diminished fifth (marked * in Ex. 19). Parts were therefore further adapted to avoid these dissonances (as in Ex. 21); and so, gradually, melodic lines lost their parallel structures altogether and became distinct contrapuntal threads.

Ex. 21



The parallel types of counterpoint, however, recurred from time to time in somewhat different forms, notably in the English sixth-chord style and in *faux bourdon*. But by the end of the fifteenth century, the system of tonality (though still a modal tonality) was sufficiently established to dictate a diatonic or tonal, in preference to a real treatment of parallel lines.

Ravel and Debussy, for the most part, used tonal systems, as in *faux bourdon*, when writing with scales other than the whole-tone. But Vaughan Williams has used both methods. The fact that he has used so many pentatonic patterns and melody with plainsong character has led him to write in early *organum* style as well as impressionistic ones, and to extend the real treatment of melody to that which is not pentatonic or modal.[54] By using both tonal and real methods, and by mixing and making further personal adaptations, he has extended the atmospheric potentialities and subtleties of this parallel textural writing. Sometimes the parallels are merely an alternative to harmony, and the system used is therefore a diatonic one, as in *The Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains*,[55] where a parallel chordal stream, composed of flute, cor anglais and viola threads, is played (first as 6/3 then as 6/4 triads) as an accompaniment to the second shepherd's theme ("and He laid down His life for them"). The melodic threads are only approximately parallel to one another, and the positions of the triads are such that the total effect is concordant. Where, however (as on page 11 of the same work), parallel chords are used with a more independent textural rôle, they are fashioned so as to produce a consistent textural pattern, even if this involves a confused tonal system. The meandering thirds in the upper string parts constitute the important feature of this texture, and they are changed to fourths only in one or two instances; but the positions of the triads are inevitably mixed.

In the Alleluias of *Sancta Civitas*,[56] the melodies run tonally, but Vaughan Williams has here chosen to use the flat sixth with the sharp seventh of the minor scale, in order to produce an augmented second in the lower line, and a dissonant total textural effect. A similar effect is again produced, though by different means, in the opening of the *Romance for harmonica and string orchestra* (1952). The augmented second appears here also in one of the melodic threads (this time in the inner of the three parts), but, being a much later work, it has a bitonal propagation. All these are instances (and there are many others)[57] of textural effect produced by tonal or complex tonal systems. Sometimes he has used mixed systems of parallel writing. One part of a parallel texture perhaps runs contrary to the others (as in the opening of *The Lark Ascending*), or the four parts run in two contrary pairs (as in the *Agnus Dei* of the *Mass in G Minor*[58] and in the last movement of the *Sixth Symphony*[59]); or tonal and real methods are alternated, as in the *Gloria* of the *Mass in G Minor* where 5/3 triads are used with tonal movement for the words "have mercy upon us", and 6/3 triads with real movement for the words "receive our prayer". By such means a slight gradation of intensity of feeling is effected.

It is probably in his most elusive — whether mystical or escapist — expression that real parallel constructions are most deliberately and significantly used, as, for example, in the *Fantasia on a Theme by Tallis*,[60] the part of the *Gloria* of the *Mass* just referred to, the beginning of *Flos Campi* (1925), the horn theme in the first movement of the *Sixth Symphony*,[61] the *Oxford Elegy* (1952),[62] and so on. In such expression, it is not generally the main theme which is thus treated; or if it is, the treatment forms only one aspect of its presentation. In the *Fantasia on a Theme by Tallis*, for instance, parallel contrapuntal treatment is used as an alternative to imitative discussion — one part only of the contemplative event; in *Flos Campi*, only one thread of a contrapuntal whole is thus blocked out; while in the *Sixth Symphony*,[63] the *Mass in G Minor*, the *Oxford Elegy*, and indeed in most instances, the blocked-out theme is an interpolated fragment, one which adds event or denotes a change in the melodic discussion. With its note against note rhythm, it provides a contrast to the rest of the counterpoint which is formed of overlapping and prose-rhythmic phrases. In the first movement of the *Sixth Symphony* the fragment, which is a striking one, appears heterogeneously with other material and provides events of some dimension; while the contrary fifths in the last movement of the *Symphony* constitute, as it were, a pause in the contemplative experience.

One more important aspect of Vaughan Williams's textural writing should be mentioned here, inasmuch as it conspires towards his essentially melodic style, namely his use of the pedal point. The pedal has been a common device in polyphonic writing from the time of the early evolution of counterpoint. Probably owing something to the drum or drone accompaniments in certain types of folk dance, it came to serve as a definite and solid tonal foundation in polyphonic writing generally after contrapuntal excursions into other keys. Vaughan Williams has used his pedals with the same essential intention of providing a solid foundation in parts which might otherwise seem insecure. Because of his tendency, especially in contemplative writing, to write with and maintain a certain degree of tonal or modal ambiguity, he has not always used the pedal to provide a straightforward tonal solidarity. But he has always accepted the need for some focal point or pivot of interest — a temporary or arbitrary final, even if not a true key-note — and he has used his pedals to impress that

[54] In the opening of the first movement of the *London Symphony*, for instance, after the Introduction, 6/3 chords accompany a chromatic theme with real movement.
[55] Page 4 of vocal score.
[56] Page 3 of vocal score, and again later.
[57] Including the beginning of *On Wenlock Edge* mentioned above.
[58] Page 19 of score.
[59] Page 149 of score.
[60] The end of page 1, *etc.*, of miniature score.
[61] Page 7 of score.
[62] Page 14 of vocal score.
[63] Page 148, *etc.*, of score.

focal point. They occur particularly in writing which has very little texture, hence solidarity, against the sparse imitative counterpoint of Job's Dream,[64] for instance, and in many of his *niente* endings; also in *Is my team ploughing?* from *On Wenlock Edge*, the opening of the *Fantasia on Christmas Carols* and of *The Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains*. Each of the last-mentioned tunes is constructed out of the *Bushes and Briars* formula, and each is accompanied by a pedal which gives an elusive foundation, suitable to its context. He has also used the device of a pedal in very complex contrapuntal and dissonant writing, in this case a dissonant pedal, which has the effect of disintegrating the complex synthesis, and of reducing the whole to its parts (as in *Sancta Civitas*, page 21 of score). Vaughan Williams has thus used his pedals with various tonal inferences. Moreover, he has not always put his pedals in the bass part; sometimes they are inverted pedals (as in the end of the *Oxford Elegy*, page 37 onwards); sometimes figures instead of a single note (as in *Sancta Civitas*, page 2, and the rhythmic timpani and brass motive in the second movement of the *Sixth Symphony*). And sometimes his melodic constructions themselves possess an implied pedal. Such melodies are often unaccompanied, or accompanied by a heterogeneous texture, and therefore have to impress their own tonality or focal point of interest. The solo voice theme from the *Pastoral Symphony* is an important example of such melody, but they are frequently to be found in Vaughan Williams's writing (the tune, for instance, of *Is my team ploughing?* from *On Wenlock Edge* and the oboe theme in the beginning of *Flos Campi*), and they are always of a similar, semi-rhapsodic, semi-contemplative character.

The foregoing analysis of the melodic and textural origins of Vaughan Williams's style, and of his intuitive methods of assimilating them, shows, above all, that his most characteristic and contemplative expression is a fundamentally melodic one. The separate constituents of his style are all dependent upon melodic ideas, and these are largely, if not always directly or recognisably inspired by folk-song. And his textures are formed, in the main, by the discussion or reiteration of the melodic idea in contrapuntal language. Divergencies from the contrapuntal idiom occur, of course — divergencies such as the occasional *arpeggii*, chords or *ostinati* which add colour to the contrapuntal parts,[65] or again, the jubilant passages which sometimes come as climax to eventful contemplation, and which consist of note against note textures.[66] But these appear either, as in the first case, as background and extraneous to contemplation, or, as in the second, as a supplement to contemplation. The purely contemplative experience is expressed solely in contrapuntal terms.

Since melody is the epitome of Vaughan Williams's whole expression, and since melody is, for the most part, inspired by folk-song, it follows that the whole must be basically inspired by folk-song too. Folk-song suffuses his large-scale work, though many of the details of his textures and forms have been partially directed by other models, and though all has been ultimately modified by his own individuality and musical insight. The resulting expression is inevitably one of melodic integrity. Contrapuntal imitations emphasise melody instead of submerging it by textural synthesis; homogeneous counter-themes form descants to, or variants of, the main idea; heterogeneous contrapuntal themes retain their melodic character regardless of their contiguity;[67] parallel chordal passages, though possessing a textural function, have yet a primarily melodic or horizontal focus; and pedals, austere supporters of melody, often take the place of full diatonic texture.

All form is "melody writ large", as Donald Tovey says in his book, *Musical Textures*; this is outstandingly true of Vaughan Williams's music. His melodies are not necessarily the same as, or as simple as those of folk-song, his forms by no means straightforward enlargements; for Vaughan Williams is a modern composer and very much of his age. But his complexities, far from being a veneer, are the inevitable response of an individual twentieth century mind to unsophisticated beauty. And to enjoy Vaughan Williams is truly to be brought into intimate contact with the most elemental facets of music.

Elsie Payne

From *The Music Review*, Vol. 15, May 1954.

---

1 + 1 = 1000

If each member of the RVW Society attracted just one new member, we would quickly expand to over 1000 members. This would be of enormous help in funding the Journal and the other activities involved in the day-to-day running of the Society. A Membership form is included in this edition of the Journal. Thanks for your help.

---

[64] Scene IV of *Job*.

[65] E.g. in the first movement of the *London Symphony* (p. 66 of miniature score) and the beginning of the *Epilogue*; the fourth movement of the *Pastoral Symphony* (pp. 93-8 etc.).

[66] E.g. in *Dona Nobis Pacem* (1936) starting on page 50 of vocal score; *Sons of Light* (p. 43 of vocal score) etc.

[67] *Cf.* Rubbra's counterpoints, which are often equally discordant, but which are fashioned and allied together deliberately, to form their particular discordancies. Vaughan Williams's are discordant merely in so far as the separate melodies are independent of one another.

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS and KING'S LYNN

by Edgar Samuel

English Dance and Song.
Vol. XXXIV No. 3. Autumn 1972

Storms had flooded the allotments by the gasworks and kept the King's Lynn fishing fleet in harbour. King Edward VII and George, Prince of Wales were at nearby Sandringham. Newcastle United were top of the Football League and the Russians were fast losing the war against Japan. It was pantomime season. *Dick Whittington* gave way to *Cinderella* on Monday, 9th January, 1905, the day that Vaughan Williams collected his first folk song in the Norfolk town of King's Lynn.

In January, 1905, Vaughan Williams was 32 and had been collecting folk songs for just over a year. This January week in King's Lynn was one of the most rewarding and formative periods in Vaughan Williams's life. Apart from the wealth of folk songs that he saved, the impact of the visit on Vaughan Williams's own music was to endure beyond the *Norfolk Rhapsodies* into his major symphonic works (e.g. *A Sea Symphony*, *A Pastoral Symphony*) and influenced even his music of the 1940s and 1950s (*Symphonies No. 5* and *6*, *The Pilgrim's Progress*). Although the King's Lynn visit was one of the most important episodes in Vaughan Williams's life it is poorly documented. Whereas his two great contemporary collectors, Cecil Sharp and Percy Grainger, wrote a great deal about their collecting, Vaughan Williams is almost silent. For the researcher the source material is extremely limited. There is the evidence of Vaughan Williams's own note books. They tell us where Vaughan Williams was from day to day and the names of the singers from whom he got the songs with possibly the age and occupation of the singer too. But virtually nothing more apart from a rare remark and in the section of the note books covering this King's Lynn visit (Book III, page 140 onwards) there is not even this. In addition to the note books there are numerous editorial remarks concerning his songs by Vaughan Williams in the journal of the Folk Song Society and some of these comments apply to the King's Lynn songs. There is a third source in the *King's Lynn Advertiser* for 24th July, 1952, reporting remarks made by Vaughan Williams in a lecture at the King's Lynn Festival about his visit in January, 1905. Finally there is the enigmatic photograph of two fishermen and a clergyman which could provide an additional important link with this period.

Why Vaughan Williams went to King's Lynn and the circumstances that led to the remarkable collection is not known. Michael Kennedy in his scholarly biography while listing all the songs collected has only this to say of the King's Lynn visit: "Two January days at King's Lynn in 1905 were magnificently productive." Ursula Vaughan Williams in her companion biography tells us only a little more, recounting the story of how Vaughan Williams was mistaken by the landlady of his 'small commercial hotel' for the owner of a troupe of performing dogs, a story that one can imagine gave Vaughan Williams himself pleasure in telling! Mrs. Vaughan Williams told me that she thought her husband went by chance to King's Lynn to see what he could get. There are however facts that argue against this. The chief of these being that the so called 'King's Lynn visit' did not start in King's Lynn at all but in Tilney All Saints, a small village about four miles to the west of King's Lynn. I do not believe that a busy man like Vaughan Williams would have travelled from London to King's Lynn, a journey of about three hours and then out to Tilney All Saints on the chance of getting songs unless he had been invited. There are facts to support this view.

On October 4th, 1904, Vaughan Williams had written an illuminating letter to the newspaper, *The Morning Post* which appealed to any who knew of old folk songs to contact Miss Lucy Broadwood, the Honorary Secretary of the Folk Song Society. Then Vaughan Williams added:

> "...or if any one knows of traditional songs but does not feel able to note them down correctly I myself should be happy whenever possible to come and note down the songs from the mouths of the singers."

Vaughan Williams's Scrapbook of broadsheets in the Library at Cecil Sharp House contains letters from several people who wished him to note songs but I doubt whether he kept all the letters he received. I conjecture that soon after his letter appeared in *The Morning Post*, Vaughan Williams received a letter from somebody at Tilney All Saints telling him of Mr. Whitby, the sexton of All Saints, who had a capful of songs. The person most likely to have written to Vaughan Williams was the Reverend John Henry Newnum, then about sixty years of age, formally of Pembroke College, Cambridge, and now incumbent of Tilney All Saints and Tilney Saint Lawrence, the two livings being in the patronage of Pembroke College, Cambridge. For Vaughan Williams collected songs both in Tilney All Saints and in Tilney Saint Lawrence and I do not believe that it was just chance that made him collect in the two Newnum parishes and none of the others.

So Vaughan Williams gets the invitation from the Rev. Newnum, replies and the first weekend after the new year is agreed upon. On Friday, 6th January, 1905, he takes the train from London to King's Lynn and then a cab to Tilney. There, on Saturday, 7th January, he collects eight songs from Mr. Whitby and five songs and dances from Mr. Stephen Poll, of Tilney St. Lawrence. The next day, Sunday, he gets seven more songs from Mr. Whitby, one of them *The Red Barn*, a beautiful *Dives and Lazarus* variant. Vaughan Williams could of course have travelled up on the Saturday so it seems certain that he spent at least one night in Tilney probably as a guest of Mr. and Mrs. Newnum. Presumably he intended returning home to London on the Sunday evening or the Monday morning after a week-end well spent having collected twenty tunes in all. No one would call this a week-end entirely wasted, yet at the lecture in King's Lynn on 23rd July, 1952, Vaughan Williams is reported in the local press as follows: "...two years later (1905) he visited King's Lynn. First he went to outlying villages, Terrington and Tilney, but found very little there. He returned to Lynn where he met a clergyman who was intimate with the North End fishermen. They both went to hear them sing and said V.W., 'I reaped a rich reward there.'"

It is understandable that in Vaughan Williams's memory the 61 songs collected in King's Lynn between 9th and 14th January (the formidable list includes *The Captain's Apprentice*, *Ward the Pirate*, *The Blacksmith*, *On Board a 98*, *Van Dieman's Land*, *The Bold Princess Royal*, *Erin's Lovely Home* and *A Bold Young Sailor*) should have overshadowed those collected in Tilney on 7th and 8th. He is reported as saying that he went to Terrington and Tilney. Presumably he meant Terrington St. John and not Terrington St. Clement since Terrington St. John is an adjacent parish to Tilney All Saints. What is certain is that if he reached the area on 7th January he certainly didn't have enough time to investigate all the villages to the west of King's Lynn in just that weekend. Collecting the songs he got must have taken the best part of his time in Tilney St. Lawrence and Tilney All Saints over that weekend. Did he arrive earlier than 6th or 7th January? This would have given him time to search the Terringtons and perhaps even as far afield as Walpole St. Peter and Walpole St. Andrew and thus dilute the achievements of Tilney. This alternative is very unlikely. Even though he may have

found "very little there" I am sure that he would have found something and the note books would have reported his find.

What is certain is that he returned to King's Lynn from Tilney All Saints either on the Sunday afternoon, or on the Monday morning. At this point, probably through the introduction from Rev. Newnum, he met "a clergyman who was intimate with the North End fishermen." Who the clergyman was we cannot be certain, but it seems probable that it was the clergyman in the photograph already mentioned. The photograph shows us a clergyman of about 40, and one fisherman seated, and another fisherman standing. Both fishermen appear to be "about 70". The clergyman has been photographed with only two fishermen, and I believe that they would have been the ones he knew the best, and it would have been to them that the clergyman took Vaughan Williams first.

Now the first two singers from whom Vaughan Williams records that he got songs in King's Lynn were Mr. Carter and Mr. Anderson, both fishermen, "aged about 70." Mrs. E. M. Fisher, Anderson's grand-daughter, has identified the seated fisherman in the photograph as her grand-father, and the standing fisherman as Mr. Carter. (For this information I am indebted to Mike Herring of Peterborough). If Mrs. Fisher is not mistaken we are a little nearer to an identification of the clergyman. But some doubt has been cast on Mrs. Fisher's recognition. Sophia Mottram, curator of the King's Lynn Museum, has informed me that another resident of King's Lynn, Mr. Goodson, who is now 100, says that the two in the photograph are his own brother, Mr. Sykes Goodson, and his friend, Mr. Norris. I think however Mr. Goodson is mistaken, for unless the photograph was connected with the songs it would scarcely have been in Vaughan Williams's possession.

If the fishermen are Carter and Anderson then the clergyman could be Alfred Huddle, curate of St. Nicholas Chapel, the church in the fishing area, The North End. He was 38 in 1905 and was, like Vaughan Williams, a Cambridge man. He was curate of St. Nicholas Chapel for 6 years, between 1901 and 1907, which would have given him time to get to know the fishermen but would have meant that those alive today would not remember him. Huddle left King's Lynn to be Vicar of Fakenham, Norfolk. A photograph taken of him there could prove him to be the same man as in the Vaughan Williams photograph. Vaughan Williams's clergy-man certainly deserves recognition for the vital part he played in the folk song revival.

The meeting between the clergyman and Vaughan Williams was one of the most fortunate in Vaughan Williams's life, for it meant that Vaughan Williams stayed in King's Lynn and collected both from the North End fishermen and from the old people in the King's Lynn Union (St. James's Workhouse), yet the whole week was dominated by fortune. That he reached Tilney, that he got to King's Lynn rather than continuing his work in the villages to the west, that he met his clergyman, that the storm kept Carter and Anderson at home, and that Vaughan Williams's next engagement (Leeds 19th-21st January) was not a week earlier, all these were happenings of great fortune. If the songs that he got in King's Lynn are a miracle of melody, so too is it a miracle that he was able to collect them.

Edgar Samuel

(reprinted with kind permission of* English Dance and Song*).

Who's who in the photo (see page 24)

Ralph Vaughan Williams

Vaughan Williams's King's Lynn clergyman was in fact the Rev. Alfred Huddle since Vaughan Williams acknowledged his help in the foreword to No. 8 of the Journal (1906). (I only realised this when I did a talk for B.B.C. Norwich last month). I cannot understand why the photograph has appeared so many times in connection with Vaughan Williams folk song collecting without the three being named - i.e. (from left to right) Anderson, Carter, Huddle. Three friends of the Folk Song Society, indeed!! Perhaps you could print this fact in your next number so that Alfred Huddle can have the recognition he deserves.

Edgar Samuel
Bergsgatan, 62, Sweden.

(Mr. Samuel also takes issue with the chords provided for the song, The Captain's Apprentice. *He suggests that the song is better unaccompanied, but if there must be chords then they must be used sparingly so that the freedom of the melody is not chained).*

English Dance and Song.
Vol. XXXIV No. 4 Winter 1972

James Carter, Fisherman of King's Lynn

The man who sang *The Captain's Apprentice* to Vaughan Williams

by Elizabeth James (Deputy Curator, The Lynn Museum)

English Dance and Song.
Vol. XXXIX No. 1. Spring 1977

In 1972, an article by Edgar Samuel appeared in *English Dance and Song*, describing Vaughan Williams's important visit to King's Lynn in January, 1905, collecting folksongs. The composer there met, apparently by chance, a clergyman who was acquainted with the North End fishermen, and they both went to hear them sing. In less than a week, he had collected sixty-one songs, including the memorable *Captain's Apprentice*, which he firmly believed to refer to a local incident, and the local St. James Workhouse, and whose dramatic tune haunted him long after. In his article, the writer regretted the lack of detail recorded about the singers of the songs and I hope that this article will do something to fill in the gap, with a description of the man referred to by Vaughan Williams as "Mr. Carter." He and "Mr. Anderson" were the first two fishermen the collector and the clergyman went to hear. Mr. Carter sang *The Captain's Apprentice*, *The Deeds of Napoleon*, *The Golden Glove*, *Ward the Pirate*, *The Blacksmith*, *As I was A-Walking*, and *The Dragoon and the Lady*, while Mr. Anderson sang another twelve songs.

Earlier this year (1976), while researching an exhibition on local folk music for one of Lynn's two museums, I was put in touch with one of Mr. Carter's grand-daughters. Through her, Mrs. Bailey, I later met her mother (his daughter Mrs. Tilson), his adopted daughter (Mrs. Westfield), and his son's daughter (Mrs. Reid). Over tea at Mrs. Reid's, we amassed a wealth of information about James Carter and life in the North End.

He died around 1915, aged about eighty, which would make him about seventy when Vaughan Williams met him in 1905, and born around 1835-40. He grew up a fisherman of the North End or fishing quarter of Lynn, presumably born there. He had five children, Bill, Tom (Mrs. Reid's father), Eddie, Lizzie (Mrs. Tilson, now 91) and Jim, and an adopted daughter Lottie (Mrs. Westfield).

When the new Eastern Channel, which changed the course of the Ouse between Lynn and the sea, was opened in 1853, James Carter was the first man down it in a boat, when the water gushed through.

(continued overleaf)

"They said it was suicide," said Mrs. Reid, whose husband's grandfather was connected with the building of it. Her grandfather was only a young man then, of course and his son told his children the story of grandfather's escapade, which fortunately he survived.

As a North Ender, he would have been part of a very close community. The fishing quarter around the Fleet where the fishing boats sheltered was once on the northern tip of the town and it led nowhere beyond. As a result, outsiders rarely had occasion to go there. People still remember that once a man from the rest of Lynn was as one from across the country when walking through the North End, to be scrutinised carefully from the doorways. Pilot Street, close by St. Nicholas Chapel was the main way in up to North End Yard, North Street, etc. The coming of the road to the northern Lynn by-pass has split the North End in half, and destroyed the atmosphere and layout of Pilot Street. So many families were intermarried that there were lots of people with the same name; perhaps this was one reason for the fishermen's universal nicknames. James Carter was nicknamed "Duggie".

Singing was a regular part of the fishermen's lives. They sang while they were working and they sang while they weren't, largely in a North End pub called the Tilden Smith. They were still singing there in quite recent years, until the decreasing numbers of fishermen gave up in the face of competition from the younger element's preference for canned music. The Tilden Smith itself closed a while back; it has now been restored as a pub and the name changed to The Retreat. There must be many pubs with that name, but there can't have been many Tilden Smiths. It was probably named after a boat that was calling at Lynn in the 1860s, itself in turn named after its owner, and stood at one time by a bridge over the Fisher Fleet. In the late 1880s this section was filled in and the bridge vanished, but the area is still sometimes called "The bridge". The pub, also called "the blockhouse", is reputed to be built on piles.

To return to James Carter, one thing I have been able to do is to settle the question of who is who on an old photograph of two fishermen and a clergyman, which was in Vaughan Williams's possession. Edgar Samuel's guess that they are the clergyman who took Vaughan Williams to the fishermen, and the two fishermen they visited first is correct. His identification of them as the Reverend Huddle, curate of St. Nicholas Chapel, James Carter and Joe Anderson is also correct. I showed the photograph to Mrs. Tilson and Mrs. Bailey. Mrs. Bailey immediately pointed to the standing fisherman and said "There's grandfather with his pipe!" Her mother produced a framed enlargement of the head and shoulders of her father from the same picture, which she has since kindly given to the museum, and also identified the seated fisherman as Mr. Anderson. She did not remember the clergyman, but Mrs. Westfield settled him, without seeing the photograph. "I remember," she said, quite out of the blue, "that in these olden days" (early 1900s), "he got to going to church; he got in with a Reverend Huddle, I think the parson's name was. I can picture him now, he was only a little man. And Mr. Joe Anderson, he was another fisherman, and him and Mr. Carter, they got so they used to go to church, and in the finish they were confirmed." Reading between the lines, it must have been a very warm friendship that sprung up between the two old fishermen and the young curate. And so, when apparently he fell into conversation with Vaughan Williams, and learned of his interest in folk songs, he took him straight to his two friends, who did the rest.

Messrs. Anderson, Carter and Huddle (see letter, page 23)

By this time, Mr. Carter was a widower, living with Lottie, both before and after she was married, just up the street from his son's family. He gave up fishing as he grew older, and worked on the docks. Mrs. Westfield "never knew him with anything but a blue jersey and a peaked cap. "Where's my ganzy, Lottie?" he used to say. Always a peaked cap and a pair of blue trousers." The cap and ganzy and his habitual clay pipe appear in the photograph. Mrs. Reid remembers her grandfather as tall and thin and very kind.

And did they remember his singing, I asked. Strangely enough, the song that has stuck in Mrs. Westfield's mind is *The Captain's Apprentice*. "Is that where the boy came from the workhouse?" asked Mrs. Reid, and Mrs. Westfield went on, "I remember they were cruel to this boy, and in the finish they lashed him to the rigging, and after he had been up there so long, he came down and they threw water over him." She and Mrs. Tilson also recall his singing *The Dark-Eyed Sailor* regularly, which seems to have been popular with East Anglian seamen. Mrs. Reid remembers her grandfather singing at evenings when the family were all together, especially on Sundays. Sometimes there would be singing and music until the youngsters went to bed, and then the grown-ups would play cards or some other quieter pastime.

Our last picture of him is at home with Lottie and her two babies during an air raid in 1915. On his advice they sheltered on the stairs, she nursing one child and he the other. Obviously still a fisherman at heart, he comforted the frightened children with the assurance, "That's only the Germans; they're dropping cockle-shells!" He died soon after, quite unaware that, as a result of singing a few of his songs to a young enthusiast ten years before, the local museum would be treasuring his picture sixty years later.

Elizabeth James
Deputy Curator, the Lynn Museum

(Articles reprinted with kind permission of **English Dance and Song***).*

Lewis Foreman has for many years explored the music of the earlier twentieth century, producing, among others, books on Percy Grainger, Havergal Brian and Edmund Rubbra, as Well as the standard biography of Sir Arnold Bax. His pioneering anthology of British composers' letters, From Parry to Britten, has become a cornerstone of the literature of British music. He is known for his articles, reviews, concert and CD programme notes, and occasional broadcast talks. As the Music Trustee of the Sir Arnold Bax Trust he was the guiding hand behind the Chandos CDs of Bax's music. For many years a leading librarian he is now a full time writer and was recently elected Honorary Senior Research Fellow in the University ot Birmingham.

In this fascinating volume, Lewis Foreman has assembled an expert team to explore varied facets of the life and music of Ralph Vaughan Williams, increasing our understanding of the man and his times, and illuminating the music.

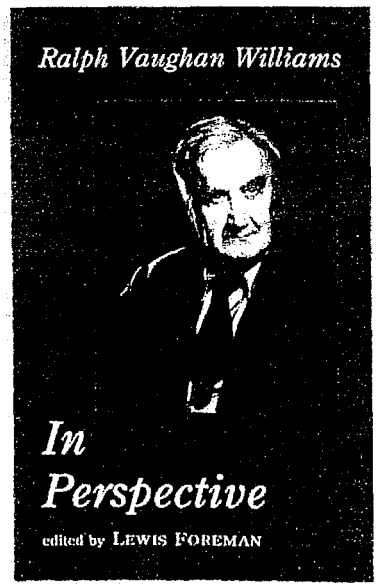
These studies were first presented at the Vaughan Williams Seminar held at Reigate Surniner Music in 1996, and have been fully revised for their publication here. Topics covered include both the evolution of British music in general, and the dissemination and reception of Vaughan Williams's music in particular. Vaughan Williams's Sea, London and his Fifth symphonies are given detailed treatment Other special topics include folk song collecting in Essex, Vaughan Williams's use of modality, his Piano Concerto, the role of his publisher, and his film music. In his discussion of the genesis of A Sea Symphony Andrew Herbert reproduces the short-score sketch of "The Steersman" once intended by Vaughan Williams to be a movement of A Sea Symphony, and published here for the first time.

Vaughan Williams's role as friend and teacher is illuminated by Jenny Doctor's study of his women pupils and Professor Stephen Banfield's account of his friendship with Gerald Finzi.

Ralph Vaughan Williams

In Perspective

EDITED BY LEWIS FOREMAN



Contributors:

Jeremy Dibble
Reader in Music and chairman of the Board of Studies in Music, Durham University.

Andrew Herbert
A post-graduate tutor in music at the University of Birmingham, recently completed his Doctoral thesis on Vaughan Williams.

Stephen Lloyd
Writer, long-time editor of the Deilus Society Journal and author of Sir Dan Godfrey champion of British Composers.

Anthony Payne
Composer and Critic, recently celebrated for his performing edition of Elgar's Third Symphony.

Duncan Hinnells
Conductor, historian of Oxford University Press Music Department and Doctoral researcher in the University of Oxford.

Tony Kendall
As the "Essex man" has made a succession of well received folksong CDs.

John Huntley
Well-known film lecturer and expert on British Archive film; he writes from first-hand knowledge, his first book, British Film Music, appearing in 1947.

Jenny Doctor
Musicologist, Britten Library in Aldeburgh.

Stephen Banfield
Elgar Professor of Music in the Univerity of Birmingham.

Price £20 *(plus £1.75 p&p)*

YOUR LETTERS

We are always pleased to receive contributions for this page

RVW in Perspective

What a superb book Lewis Foreman has given us in *Ralph Vaughan Williams In Perspective*. I found the chapters from this group of contributors excellent. This book is both highly enjoyable and instructive. I learnt much from this book and have been greatly encouraged to listen anew to Vaughan Williams's wonderful scores, having known the music for over thirty years.

Some contributors are familiar and some are not. It was particularly enjoyable to read Stephen Lloyd on the *London Symphony*, whilst Duncan Hinnells' chapter on the *Piano Concerto* was fascinating and revealing. Each of the 10 chapters is valuable for anyone interested in the best of English music in this century.

The book raises a number of fascinating cultural questions about VW's place in English 20th century music, and what drove him to compose. Surely this book will cause his reputation to rise even higher. One can imagine that more research into the music will be stimulated by this book. I look forward to the publication of VW's letters, which is mentioned in this book.

I think all lovers of the music of Vaughan Williams should treasure this book and recognise that its appearance is a major achievement for the RVW Society and Albion Music Limited. Congratulations!

Perhaps Albion Music Limited could now consider reissuing *Heirs & Rebels*, which is an interesting part of the VW bibliography, if this is possible, after making such a promising start to its publishing life.

Paul Chennell
London

Ursula on children

Gerald Finzi was not thought of, by Ralph, as an heir. He considered him as a friend. On the subject of children, Ralph was very glad Adeline did not bear a child. He did not want one, at all, and he did not like them after they had been playing around for about an hour!

Ursula Vaughan Williams
London

AGM

Firstly, may I say how much I enjoyed the AGM at Charterhouse School, together with the trip around leafy Surrey in the vintage Green Line bus. And what superb weather we had for the event. I cannot remember ever enjoying an AGM as much. Usually they are deadly boring. I look forward to next year's event, although you will be hard put to find such a memorable venue. But how about the hall at Leith Hill Place? We could all bring our own candles and deck chairs... (only joking).

The news of the forthcoming recordings was most encouraging, and the Society's efforts in bringing this about are much appreciated by me, if not by your correspondent A M Cutbush in his rather churlish letter in the October *Journal*. Would it be possible to have a regular update of scheduled recordings in future issues of the *Journal?*

Also, hearing what is perhaps the only recording ever of the music for the *Masque of Charterhouse* was an unexpected bonus and helped round off a most memorable day.

I am afraid this is a bit of a mishmash of a letter. I would have liked to have said something about RVW and Hardy, especially as I share his love for this author, and in particular, *Tess;* but I cannot think of anything to write. But perhaps I could put in a word for RVW's friend Gerald Finzi. I found much of Hardy's poems rather difficult to understand until I heard Finzi's settings, which bring out the inner meaning with great clarity.

Finally, may I, through these columns, thank the member who so kindly took my photo seated at the very table where the *Fifth Symphony* was composed. In my excitement I quite forgot my manners and omitted to do the same for him. I hope he will please accept my sincere apologies.

Michael Gainsford
Burbage, Leics.

Blake's Cradle Song

Following my talk with Norman Smith about the 'dry run' for the *Oxford Book of Carols*, in 1927, I lent him my copy of the Carlton Classics CD of RVW carols (IMP 30367 01212).

His comments on *Blake's Cradle Song* as recorded on that CD may be of interest. Norman is quite sure that Vaughan Williams intended it to be played more slowly, and softer, than it is taken by Owain Arwel Hughes.

The tempo marking in the *Oxford Book* is 'andantino'. My copy of *Grove* (a venerable 1952 edition!) says that 'andantino' is a diminutive of 'andante', and was originally intended to mean 'not so fast as andante'. *Grove* goes on to state that 'most modern composers' think it means 'quicker than andante'.

Whilst I accept that the whole business of tempo markings is fraught with problems, it does seem in this case that VW's intentions may have been misinterpreted by a 'modern' conductor!

Incidentally, the start of *Blake's Cradle Song* is marked *p*.

Michael Gainsford
Burbage, Leics.

AGM in 1999

This is to provide members with advance notice that the 1999 AGM will be held again at Charterhouse School on Sunday 10th October at 3:30 p.m. We are thinking about events and speakers, and may run the coach tour again if there is sufficient interest. Views to the Chairman please.

Full details will be sent to members in the late summer.

A Postscript to the Folk Songs in RVW's *Six Studies in English Folksong*

IV Lento (*She Borrowed Some of her Mother's Gold*)

The above title is actually derived from variants of a line in the many versions of the ballad, *The Outlandish Knight* published as No. 4 in Francis James Child's, the *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, i-v (Boston 1882-98/R1957).[1] Also known as *Lady Isabel and the Elf Knight, May Colvin, An Outlandish Rover, The Highway Robber*, and *The Old Beau*, it is likely that this ballad comes from a folk-tale about an evil water-spirit who changes into a knight to marry a girl with the purpose of abducting her to his watery home.[2] Various versions of the folk song text make it clear that the knight intends to drown the girl, but instead, she outwits his plan and drowns him.[3]

The title, provided by Frank Howes, and Michael Kennedy in his *Catalogue...* 2nd ed., for IV Lento of the *Six Studies...* can be seen in its context by quoting the first two verses of the ballad.

> 'An outlandish knight from the north land came,
> And he came wooing of me;
> And he told me he'd take me to that northern land,
> And there he would marry me.'
>
> 'Well go and get some of your father's gold,
> And some of your mother's fee,
> And two of the very best stable steeds,
> Where there stand thirty and three.'[4]

Another version of the ballad comes close to the title for IV Lento in a different way.

> 'She fetched him some of her mother's gold
> And some of her father's fee
> And two of the best nags out of the stable
> Where there stood thirty and three.'[5]

The exact wording of the Lento title does not seem to turn up!

The folk melody of RVW's IV Lento as sung by Mr Hilton can be found in three folk song collections.[6] A comparison of the Lento composition with the Hilton version of the folk melody shows that RVW set it in a straightforward manner for the most part. One deviation involves a pitch alteration in measure 9 of the cello part on the last quaver likely to avoid a pitch repetition. The final four notes of the folk melody are avoided by RVW and replaced by his own inventiveness to provide an interlude half way through the Lento and to provide a more poetic ending to this movement. With reference to Julian Onderdonk's essay cited earlier, this movement idealises its folk melody more than any of the other pieces in the *Six Studies*.

John Barr
Bridgewater, VA, USA

[1] Cited in child ballad: the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* Ed. by Stanley Sadie (London: MacMillian Publishers Ltd. 1980) vol. 4, 230.
I am grateful to Mr Julian Onderdonk and Mr Malcolm Taylor, Librarian of the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library who both provided me with the ballad title and the references to the books which contain the texts and the tune quotation which Mr Hilton sang to RVW.

[2] R Vaughan Williams and A L Lloyd, *Penguin book of English Folk Songs* (Harmondsworth: Penguin books 1959) 120 [Thanks to Mr Onderdonk].

[3] *Ibid.* 80-81
Other versions of this text are in Bertrand Harris Bronson, *The Traditional tunes of the Child Ballads with their texts, according to the extant records of Great Britain and America* (Princeton, New Jersey Princeton University Press 1959) vol. 1. [(Thanks to Mr Taylor for this latter reference].

[4] RVW and A L Lloyd, *Penguin Book of English Folk Songs*, 80.

[5] Bronson, *The Traditional Tunes of the Child Ballads...* vol. 1, 51.

[6] RVW and A L Lloyd, *Penguin Book of English Folk Songs*, 80; Bronson, *The Traditional Tunes of the Child Ballads...*, 55; *Journal of the Folk Song Society*, vol, 4 No. 2, 1910, 123.

Three Choirs Festival, *1950*
RVW with Richard Latham, Jean Stewart and Ursula Wood

VW and the Three Choirs Festival

In response to requests from members, the RVW Society will convene an illustrated talk at this year's *Three Choirs Festival* to be held at Worcester.

The talk, provisionally entitled *RVW and the Three Choirs Festival*, will be given by Lewis Foreman on Thursday 26th of August 1999, at 11.00 a.m. It will take place in The Abbott's Kitchen in the Old Palace, Deansway, Worcester, adjacent to the Cathedral.

Facilities will be available for light refreshments before and after the talk, at reasonable cost.

Tickets at £4.00 each will be obtainable through the Festival Ticket Office or at the door once booking for the overall Festival begins.

Members might also like to note for their diary that *Benedicite* will be performed in the Cathedral on 23rd August, and the *Fifth Symphony* on the evening of 25th August.

News and Notes

- Michael Gainsford writes to inform us that Priory Records have recorded VW's *Village Service* and this will be released in late 1999. The work is performed by the choir of St. George's, Windsor under Jonathan Rees-Williams.

- Michael Nelson tells us that on 27 March in Huddersfield Town Hall, the Slaithwaite Philharmonic Orchestra under Adrian Smith will perform *The Wasps Overture* and *A London Symphony*. On 23 May, the Leeds Symphony Orchestra, conductor Martin Binks, will include the *Eighth Symphony* in a programme which finishes with the *Enigma Variations*.

- R J Hoole has received a letter from EMI confirming that the John Westbrook version of *An Oxford Elegy* will be re-issued this year. Excellent news.

- Ron Bleach tells us that *A Sea Symphony* will be performed on 13 March at 7:30 p.m. at the University of Bristol (Victoria Room). Details from 0117 954 5032.

Must have...

- Michael Goatcher (51, Newbiggen Street, Thaxted, Dunmow, Essex CM6 2QS) asks whether anyone can help with recordings of Clive Carey singing folk song arrangements on two Columbia 78s (DB 335 and DB 477) and with the English Singers on HMV E 308, E 309 and E 315.

Willing to swop...

- Linda Hayward of 34 Lancaster House, Lancaster Road, Dover, Kent, CT17 9BB, has the Hubert Foss study of RVW and the composer conducting *Dona Nobis Pacem* both surplus. (Pearl GEMM CD 9342).

Call for Papers!

The October 1999 issue of the RVW Society Journal will focus on VW and the First World War. Any member wishing to contribute to any aspect of this subject should contact the Editor. The deadline is August 20th, 1999.

Next Edition: June 1999

VW and Thomas Hardy

Typesetting by Miles DTP