The Poisoned Kiss to be recorded at last

After years of planning, it is excellent news that The Poisoned Kiss is to be recorded for the first time. Richard Hickox will conduct the BBC National Orchestra of Wales with a star-studded cast, largely derived from the successful Vision of Albion performance at the Barbican, in London, on 26 October 1997. Chandos plan to record the opera from 2 - 7 January 2003 in Brangwyn Hall, Swansea.

Fund-raising
As always with such projects, raising the necessary funds has been vital. The campaign was spearheaded by The Garland Appeal, but it has been the involvement of RVW Ltd that has finally secured the project. Our heartfelt thanks to Ursula Vaughan Williams, Michael Kennedy and the directors of RVW Ltd, whose help has been of the utmost importance. The RVW Society has been asked to provide the liner notes.

Casting
The projected cast for The Poisoned Kiss is as follows:

- Tormentilla: Janice Watson (soprano)
- Amaryllus: Thomas Randle (tenor)
- Angelica: Pamela Helen Stephen (mezzo soprano)
- Gallanthus: Roderick Williams (baritone)
- Hob: John Graham-Hall (tenor)
- Lob: Richard Stuart (baritone)
- 1st Medium: Mark Richardson (bass)
- 2nd Medium: Gail Pearson (soprano)
- 3rd Medium: Helen Williams (mezzo soprano)
- Dipsacus: Neal Davies (bass)
- Empress: Anne Collins (contralto)

Many Thanks
David Betts
Membership Secretary

Sunday 24 November 2002 at 9.00pm
West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge
Ticket prices: £12 / £8 (SCMS members and OAPs) / £4 (students)
Ticket prices (includes a glass of wine after the concert) available from Selwyn College Alumni Office (01223) 741 582

RVW Crossword No.11 by Michael Gainsford

News and Notes

Important Notice for UK Members
Subscribing by Banker’s Standing Order
Dear member
If you have a banker’s standing order arrangement in place for the payment of the UK subscriptions and if it falls due between now and January, this is just a reminder that your bank may need to be told that the new subscription rates are £20 (full) or £12 (concession). I should be most grateful if you could ensure that this is done.

There was a time
This Romanic Extravaganza contains music of remarkable lyricism, including the lovely duet between Amaryllus and Tormentilla Blue larkspur in a garden and Tormentilla’s Act II song There was a time. With many light-hearted interludes, the opera ends with a warm-hearted finale.

Love has conquered! Wrong is righted! Love triumphant! Hearts united!

RVW Crossword No.11

Across
1. Tempo marking of scherzo of Symphony No 4 (7,5)
2. German folk song arranged by RVW in 1903 (5)
3. Plenty of this in Scott of the Antarctic! (3)
4. England, Arie! (9)
5. Appendage at the side of the head (3)
6. RVW wrote an overture to this (juvenile) opera (3)
7. Palestinian city that figures in Winter, of Folk Songs of the Four Seasons of 1949 (9)
8. First note of sol-fa scale (3)
9. If I were one in 1903 (5)
10. RVW’s school (12)

11. RVW wrote music for its pageant (7)
12. Greek prefix indicating ‘few’ (5)
13. RVW wrote a concerto for this in 1944 (4)
14. In this, RVW wrote an article on this type of music (4)
15. Compact or vinyl, many of mine singularly contain RVW work! (4)

16. RVW: A full discography by Stephen Connock (75 pages, 1995) £10.00 plus £2.55
17. RVW: A Bibliography by Graham Muney and Robin Barber £6.00 plus £5.00

Back issues of the Journal are available at £2.00 each.
All cheques should be made out to Albion Music Limited and sent to:
Stephen Connock,
65 Marathon House, 200 Marylebone Road, London, NW1 5PL

Albion Music Limited
Publications available by post:-
The collected poems of Ursula Vaughan Williams £15.00 plus £1.65
Vaughan Williams and the Vision of Albion by Wilfrid Mellers (370 pages; new edition) £15.00 plus £2.55
Vaughan Williams in perspective (edited by Lewis Foreman) £20.00 plus £1.75
Ralph’s People: The Ingraine Secret by Frank Dineen (90 pages) £15.00 plus £1.50
Paradise Remembered by Ursula Vaughan Williams (224 pages) £20.00 plus £1.75
The 125th anniversary set of six cards with watercolour views of VWs houses by Bridget Duckfield (blank for own message) £5.00 plus 50p
Vision of Albion poster, with Blake imagery (a superb memento of 1949) £5.00 plus 50p
The Garland Appeal £5.00 plus 50p

CALL for papers
Next Edition: February 2003
The June 2003 edition of the Journal will concentrate on The Sixth Symphony.

The Songs of Travel
Guest editor: Dr William Adams
• Robert Louis Stevenson: A brief examination of the poet
Page 5
• Elements of form and unity in Songs of Travel
Page 6
• The recordings – A comparative analysis. Page 12
• Symphony No.9 – An introduction and CD review by Robin Barber
Page 14

Answers on Page 17

RVW Crossword No.11 by Michael Gainsford
Personal testimony: How I was drawn to the Songs of Travel by William M. Adams, D.M.A.

It was the Fall of 1988. I was in my first semester as a transfer student at California State University, San Bernardino. We were in rehearsal for a production of the musical The Fantasticks, in which I was singing the role of El Gallo. My voice teacher, Dr. Loren Filbeck, was giving a faculty recital. I was released from rehearsal just in time to catch the last thirty minutes of the recital. Those thirty minutes have had an enormous impact on the rest of my career.

The work which Loren chose to close his recital was Vaughan Williams' Songs of Travel. I was completely unfamiliar with the work. My only exposure to the music of Vaughan Williams had been playing his folk song suites or the fantasies in high school band. Even then I remember always being drawn to the music, they were often my favorite pieces on the program, but my exposure ended there.

I can remember sitting enthralled by the sounds of this song cycle. At my next lesson I inquired about the work and nearly demanded I be allowed to study them. On my Junior Recital I performed The Vagabond, The Roadside Fire and Bright is the Ring of Words. On my Senior Recital, I closed the evening with the entire cycle.

Throughout my career I have returned to these songs time and again. They’ve become “old friends” to me. I sing them on recitals, in auditions, and I routinely teach them to my students. It was only fitting that as I ended my academic career, as a student, I should return to them again. I was amazed that so little had been devoted to these songs. I fear they have been taken for granted by singers and teachers of singing because of their general accessibility to younger voices. It was my feeling that a work needed to be produced analyzing the songs in more detail and providing both singers and teachers of singing a guidebook in how to approach the songs.

Thus, my doctoral treatise at the University of Texas at Austin was Ralph Vaughan Williams’ Songs of Travel: An Historical, Theoretical, and Performance Practice Investigation and Analysis. After discussing my work with Stephen Connock, it was decided that the October 2002 issue of the RVW Journal would devote to these songs. The articles I have submitted are edited from my treatise. I am very grateful to Mr. Connock for the opportunity to share my work with the readership of the Journal and to have this opportunity to introduce myself to my new friends and colleagues in the Ralph Vaughan Williams Society.

A brief history of the Songs of Travel by William M. Adams, D.M.A.

An analysis of the historical information surrounding the creation of the Songs of Travel reveals a complicated and controversial history. This article will begin with a brief historical examination of the genesis of the poetry and conclude with a detailed discussion of the circumstances and events surrounding Vaughan Williams’ composition of the song cycle.

Historical Information about the Poetry

Sing me a song of a lad that is gone,
Say, could that lad be I?
Merry of soul he sailed on a day
Over the sea to Skye.†

Perhaps Stevenson’s most famous entry in the Songs of Travel is the forty-fourth poem in the set, which has become best known as the song Over the sea to Skye. This particular poem (based on a Scottish melody which is now considered the traditional melody for this text) has seen many varied musical incarnations. The whole collection consists of forty-six poems, written during Stevenson’s south sea cruises between 1888 and 1894.

The set of poems was first published in 1895, in the fourteenth volume of The Works. They were later published as a separate volume in September of 1896. Initially, because they were a loose collection of verses, Stevenson suggested to Sidney Colvin, his
RVW's A Pastoral Symphony

Doubtless every single member of the RVW Society is warmly familiar with the theme that is always on everyone's lips: dispelled the myth about Philip Heseltine (aka Peter Warlock) about 'a cow looking over a gate' in relation to Vaughan Williams's A Pastoral Symphony (June 2002 RVW Journal, page 6). But how many are aware of the context in which that alleged remark was made? The quotation comes, in fact, from Cecil Gray's Peter Warlock: A Memoir of Philip Heseltine published in 1934. In full, the relevant passage runs as follows:

"... in June, 1902. It was published again in 1912 but did not appear over. But for those who were there and saw it, it was yet another indictment on the Brit Awards charge sheet. The magazine The Vagabond, which included the poems published by Michael Kennedy, tells how Vaughan Williams, in writing the Epilogue of The London Symphony, had in mind a passage from the last chapter of H.G. Wells's science fiction novel, in which the narrator, George Pondereva, travels out of the Thames in his new ship into the open sea and seems to be passing all England in review.

It is interesting that at the end of Chapter 1 of Book III of the same book, the narrator and his newly-rich uncle 'looked out of the windows upon a procession of Englishmen who were employed'. The sight moves George to his thoughts of 'There, but for the grace of God, go we!' but his uncle 'made that vision the text of a spirited but inconclusive harangue upon Tariff Reform'. It may not be too fanciful to think that Vaughan Williams had this particular passage and image in mind when composing the first part of the fourth movement of the symphony and that, as he wrote of the second movement of the Ninth Symphony, the programme 'got lost on the journey'.

Tono Bungay

Michael Kennedy has told how Vaughan Williams, in writing the Epilogue, took from the first lines of text or title of Tono Bungay. The disc's conductor, Richard Hickox, was abroad, so Ursula would be accepting it on his behalf; and when the moment came she duly shuffled (with great effort) up onto the stage - only to find herself marooned in front of several hundred people, unacknowledged and ignored, with the award-anarchists (who clearly had no idea who Mrs VW was, and probably wasn’t too sure about Mr V either) pressing onto the next item.

An RVW Discovery

A fine new feature this year was to have well known authorities on classical music like, or, Mohamed Fayed, introduce the turns. The Albert Hall erupted into guffaws when Fayed told the audience that Russell Watson was, in his fuggin’ opinion, a superior voice to Pavarotti. A fine new feature this year was to have well known authorities on classical music like, or, Mohamed Fayed, introduce the turns. The Albert Hall erupted into guffaws when Fayed told the audience that Russell Watson was, in his fuggin’ opinion, a superior voice to Pavarotti. The disc’s conductor, Richard Hickox, was abroad, so Ursula would be accepting it on his behalf; and when the moment came she duly shuffled (with great effort) up onto the stage - only to find herself marooned in front of several hundred people, unacknowledged and ignored, with the award-anarchists (who clearly had no idea who Mrs VW was, and probably wasn’t too sure about Mr V either) pressing onto the next item.

This discovery is in no way an earth-shattering event, it just seems to fill in one missing detail in the publication history of a fairly minor RVW composition. However, it is also the work of a major composer and the discovery may be of service to a researcher or student in the future. Not seen by the writer before this publication.

Graham Mancy, Dorking

Robert Rush

Private Eye

The titles of the songs are primarily taken from the first lines of text or titles given by Stevenson. The Vagabond and Youth and Love are the titles given by Stevenson. The Roadside Fire is the composer’s title, taken from the last line of the poem. Whither Must I Wander? is also the composer’s title, taken from the end of the first line of text. All other titles are taken from the beginnings of the poems.

Robert Rush

The titles of the songs are primarily taken from the first lines of text or titles given by Stevenson. The Vagabond and Youth and Love are the titles given by Stevenson. The Roadside Fire is the composer’s title, taken from the last line of the poem. Whither Must I Wander? is also the composer’s title, taken from the end of the first line of text. All other titles are taken from the beginnings of the poems.

Robert Rush

The titles of the songs are primarily taken from the first lines of text or titles given by Stevenson. The Vagabond and Youth and Love are the titles given by Stevenson. The Roadside Fire is the composer’s title, taken from the last line of the poem. Whither Must I Wander? is also the composer’s title, taken from the end of the first line of text. All other titles are taken from the beginnings of the poems.

Robert Rush

The titles of the songs are primarily taken from the first lines of text or titles given by Stevenson. The Vagabond and Youth and Love are the titles given by Stevenson. The Roadside Fire is the composer’s title, taken from the last line of the poem. Whither Must I Wander? is also the composer’s title, taken from the end of the first line of text. All other titles are taken from the beginnings of the poems.

Robert Rush

The titles of the songs are primarily taken from the first lines of text or titles given by Stevenson. The Vagabond and Youth and Love are the titles given by Stevenson. The Roadside Fire is the composer’s title, taken from the last line of the poem. Whither Must I Wander? is also the composer’s title, taken from the end of the first line of text. All other titles are taken from the beginnings of the poems.

Robert Rush

The titles of the songs are primarily taken from the first lines of text or titles given by Stevenson. The Vagabond and Youth and Love are the titles given by Stevenson. The Roadside Fire is the composer’s title, taken from the last line of the poem. Whither Must I Wander? is also the composer’s title, taken from the end of the first line of text. All other titles are taken from the beginnings of the poems.
Society

Journal of the RVW Society

been written in reaction to the death of his first wife Adeline Fisher in 1951. In 1952 Vaughan Williams reached his eightieth birthday. Another possibility is that Vaughan Williams was beginning to sense his own time the cycle received its premier performance there were no publications in existence of the cycle. Even assuming that ... with the publishing company or based on the publishing history of the company, it did not prevent him from including ... with its quotations) on its own or because he had doubts about it. He was letter to William Adams, Austin, Texas, 1951, 47. Michael Kennedy refers to the ninth song as having ... ‘unique’ English sound. However, Catherine Wynn Rogers gave a wonderfully lyrical

The Mayor of Casterbridge

The Roadside Fire

Songs of Travel

Songs of Travel

Three Choirs Festival

I am greatly interested to read John Beech’s letter, with footnote from Michael Kennedy, about RVW’s music for the BBC’s radio dramatisation of Thomas Hardy’s novel The Mayor of Casterbridge. I heard this excellent work when it was broadcast, some three or four years ago perhaps, in a Radio 3 archives-type programme. ... more precisely; and can the officers of the Society please press the BBC to locate and share this hidden treasure?

As a conductor he is not a great technician, but few composers get such satisfactory performances of their own music. Young composers please note: Vaughan Williams is a fine example of how a conductor can create convincing and effective performances of works that are not especially absorbing because he is both as man and musician. But that is the whole point. He has been years building up his great fame. Being where he is can convert the orchestra to the sincerity conviction he has that there is no one else to give the professional music video of a song by RVW.” - ed.)

The Vagabond

Songs of Travel

Three Choirs Festival

I am greatly interested to read John Beech’s letter, with footnote from Michael Kennedy, about RVW’s music for the BBC’s radio dramatisation of Thomas Hardy’s novel The Mayor of Casterbridge. I heard this excellent work when it was broadcast, some three or four years ago perhaps, in a Radio 3 archives-type programme. Presumably it still exists, though it appears not to have been published. Can any of your readers recall this recent broadcast more precisely; and can you tell us about the Society please press the BBC to locate and share this hidden treasure?

Frank McManus

Three Choirs Festival

In answer to Stephen Friar’s letter in the current RVW Journal, I attended a performance of the Academy of St Paul in London, and here acknowledge that the orchestra had a great deal of speculation on the subject. The mystery of the song is intriguing. Given the publication and performance history stated above, there are numerous questions regarding the song which present themselves. The first, of course, is when was it written? If it was written with other songs, by 1904, why was it not performed with the rest of the cycle? Kennedy’s own versions seem to offer contradictory accounts. In A Catalogue of the Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams, Kennedy refers to the work as having been performed as a cycle in 1937—9. In fact, if the ninth song were in existence, the cycle would have been performed in the 1930s. The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams, Kennedy refers to the ninth song as having been “withheld” by Vaughan Williams, although he gives no motive for withholding it. It seems unlikely that Vaughan Williams may have withheld the song because of self-doubt is the only explanation which justifies its exclusion from the premiere concert, especially in light of the inclusion of the Hymn Interlude. However, Kennedy’s suppression is incorrect, then it certainly seems logical to conclude that the ninth song may have been written at a later date, perhaps as late as 1952. In any case, there has been, as yet, no physical evidence to prove or disprove any theory relating to the composition date of the ninth song. Without such other evidences regarding the composition date remain theories.

Notes

I Have Trod the Upward and the Downward Slope

Songs of Travel

Michael Kennedy offers the following possibilities, in his letter of April 1971: “The title ‘I Have Trod the Upward and the Downward Slope’ was not published on that program. As it turned out ... with its quotations) on its own or because he had doubts about it. He was written in reaction to the death of his first wife Adeline Fisher in 1951. In 1952 Vaughan Williams reached his eightieth birthday. Another possibility is that Vaughan Williams was beginning to sense his own time the cycle received its premier performance there were no publications in existence of the cycle. Even assuming that ... with the publishing company or based on the publishing history of the company, it did not prevent him from including ... with its quotations) on its own or because he had doubts about it. He was written in reaction to the death of his first wife Adeline Fisher in 1951. In 1952 Vaughan Williams reached his eightieth birthday. Another possibility is that Vaughan Williams was beginning to sense his own time the cycle received its premier performance there were no publications in existence of the cycle. Even assuming that ... with the publishing company or based on the publishing history of the company, it did not prevent him from including ... with its quotations) on its own or because he had doubts about it. He was written in reaction to the death of his first wife Adeline Fisher in 1951. In 1952 Vaughan Williams reached his eightieth birthday. Another possibility is that Vaughan Williams was beginning to sense his own time the cycle received its premier performance there were no publications in existence of the cycle. Even assuming that ... with the publishing company or based on the publishing history of the company, it did not prevent him from including ... with its quotations) on its own or because he had doubts about it. He was written in reaction to the death of his first wife Adeline Fisher in 1951. In 1952 Vaughan Williams reached his eightieth birthday. Another possibility is that Vaughan Williams was beginning to sense his own time the cycle received its premier performance there were no publications in existence of the cycle. Even assuming that ... with the publishing company or based on the publishing history of the company, it did not prevent him from including ... with its quotations) on its own or because he had doubts about it. He was written in reaction to the death of his first wife Adeline Fisher in 1951. In 1952 Vaughan Williams reached his eightieth birthday. Another possibility is that Vaughan Williams was beginning to sense his own
Robert Louis Stevenson:
A brief examination of the poet behind the Songs of Travel

by William M. Adams, D.M.A.

Biographical and Stylistic Information

Robert Louis Stevenson was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, on November 13, 1850. In 1867, Stevenson entered Edinburgh University to pursue a career in civil engineering, after his father. In 1871, however, he abandoned his pursuit of civil engineering and focused his attention toward a career in literature. He worked with the firm WF Skene & Peacock and was admitted to the Scottish bar in 1875. His true interest lay in writing, however, and he began writing essays and short stories. His first essay, Roads, was published in 1873. His first short story, Lodging for the Night, was published in 1877.

In 1876, while in Grèz-sur-Loing, France, Stevenson met and fell in love with an American, Fanny Osbourne, whom he married in San Francisco three years later. Throughout his brief life, Stevenson, his wife, and his stepson, Lloyd Osbourne, traveled extensively in Europe, the United States, and the South Pacific, eventually settling in Samoa.

Stevenson is undoubtedly most remembered for his novels Treasure Island, written in 1883, and The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, written in 1886. He is also known as an author of novels, Stevenson expended much energy in the writing of poetry. His most popular collections are A Child's Garden of Verses, composed in 1885, and Underwoods, dating from 1887. During his cruises in the South Pacific, toward the end of his life, Stevenson wrote forty-six poems which would later be collected and published as the Underwoods, dating composed in 1885, and Verses.

Stevenson is undoubtedly most remembered for his novels Treasure Island, written in 1883, and The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, written in 1886. He is also known as an author of novels, Stevenson expended much energy in the writing of poetry. His most popular collections are A Child's Garden of Verses, composed in 1885, and Underwoods, dating from 1887. During his cruises in the South Pacific, toward the end of his life, Stevenson wrote forty-six poems which would later be collected and published as the Songs of Travel.

Stevenson was involved in the collection of these works, though they were published posthumously.

Robert Louis Stevenson died of apoplexy in 1894 and was buried atop Mount Vaea, in Samoa. He suffered from tuberculosis throughout his life, including tuberculosis. It has been suggested at various times that tuberculosis was in fact, the cause of his death. Frank McLynn, however, believes that the hemorrhage which finally claimed Stevenson was due, instead, to stress and overwork.

Stylistic Influences

On May 13, 1887, Stevenson wrote an article for British Weekly entitled Books “that have Influenced Me.” In this article he attempted to shed some light on the authors, works, and genres which had the most impact on him personally and as an author. Many of the names mentioned are unsurprising. Shakespeare suffered ill health throughout...
THE STORY
There is, indeed, a story in the Songs of Travel created not by Stevenson, in his poetry, but by Vaughan Williams in his ordering of the songs. The main character is the Vagabond introduced in the stage directions of his play. As readers of this journal will know, the Vagabond is already abroad and is relishing in the beauty of nature. The identity of the Vagabond is not clear, but there are clear references to a journey around the world. The music of the Vagabond, as played by Lucy Taylor, is a powerful and emotional representation of the journey. The final song in the cycle is In Dreams. In his dream, the Vagabond is able to commune with and appreciate the splendor of the world around him. The audience then responded enthusiastically with a warm and sustained ovation.

A Fabulous Fift
On the 18th, 19th and 20th of April 2002 The Philadelphia Orchestra under the direction of Guest Conductor Sir Andrew Davis, performed Vaughan Williams’s Symphony No. 5 in D major. This was The Fabulous Philadelphia’s first performance of the 50th. It was a long time coming, and we were looking forward to anticipating the famous Philadelphia strings lush sound soaring on some of RVW’s most glorious melodies was much in mind.

Riders to the Sea
Four performances of a full-bit consisting of Riders to the Sea, by Stravinsky’s Maya (in Russian) and Puccini’s Gianni Schicchi (in Italian), were given by members of the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama in the New Athenaic Theatre, Glasgow, on 30 January and 1 February and in the Edinburgh Festival Theatre on 7 and 9 February. This was, according to the programme printed in the programme and plans and made during the performance, the Vagabond. The Vagabond is willing to share the journey with the young maidens, providing for her all she will need from the elements around her.

The Casually Mated and the Casual Manner in which the Vagabond departed.

In a moment of reflection, the Vagabond looks to the stars that have guided him on the journey and have been his constant companion for his life in his life. He is thinking about his past, his present, and his future. He is making sense of his life, and he is learning to live with the truth.

THE SONGS

1. In the Garden
2. Love is a Big Thing
3. The Charm of Lucy
4. The Longing for the Open
5. Love and Youth
6. For Ever

Boosy & Hawkes

Note: This review is based on the performance of the Vagabond at the Proms 2002, and is not a review of the programme as a whole.

Admirers of VW’s Fourth Symphony are split between those who like the “take no prisoners” approach of the composer’s own famous recording and those who prefer a more measured approach. The performance by the Birmingham Symphony Orchestra at the Promenade Concert on 25 July was designed to appeal more to the latter.

The Birmingham Symphony Orchestra is not one of the more full-bodied, and its brass section was kept under control by conductor Paul Daniel, and not allowed to have too much of a party in the noisy sections. The opening Allego was disciplined, rather than rausch, while the second admission was, as an episode in the BBC’s “Proms at Home” series, relatively fast. The descriptive finale to which concludes this movement was perhaps the highlight of the whole performance, expressively drawn out. The jazzy aspects of the Scherzo were then nicely realised, although Paul Daniel’s restraint resulted in this movement being less rasping than it can be. The Finale was launched with gusto and the contrasting quiet string section was haunting, with an air of nostalgia reminiscent of parts of the London Symphony. The figato epilogue was played with great intensity, leading to the majestic re-entry of the opening of the symphony and the curt, dramatic, sign-off. All the maestro’s efforts were seen in the orchestra, with the Albert Hall about two thirds full. This was not bad, given the uninspired programming with Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony in the programme. The Proms have now presented the first four RVW symphonies over the past two seasons – can we dare hope they will now do the other five?

Martin Murray

A ‘Rave Revival’, or Job at the Proms 2002
Having enjoyed a history of performance at the Proms since being launched by Sir Adrian Boult in 1947, it was good to see Vaughan Williams’ Second Symphony ‘A Sea Dance’ reinstated in the programme. In fact, I have had to wait since the last performance back in 1987, when on that occasion I had my cheque returned to me because the performance was a sell-out!...
are given in the comprehensive booklet. There are details of several of the composers but there is no information on the composers of the songs which were “best songs” in the 2001 English Poetry and Song Society. Composers competitive. This itself has an applied picture of the same river scene in Bath on the non-playing surface.

The song performances were recorded at a live concert in Bath, hence the choice of booklet cover. The performance was given by Stephen Foulkes (baritone) accompanied by Colin Hunt on the piano. There are of course, inevitably, some very good and some not so good as this is a recording of live performance. The CD is recorded at an unusually high level. The piano is reproduced well throughout but the baritone soloist’s voice is reproduced rather rougher than in the studio.

The CD begins with two songs by Holst, Sergeant's Song and Between as now. This is followed by the Spring by Carey in which the words talk of happiness but the melody conveys melancholy. The Mother's Dream by Somervell is a less than truly full of melancholy. The next group is a six song set I said to Love by Finzi which is amongst the most varied in style on this CD.

The succeeding group of five songs are much more recent settings submitted by Lord, Edgar, Bailey and Daubney to the English Poetry and Song Society composers competition in 2001 and again are varied in style because we are presented with the music of 4 different composers.

The CD ends with four settings of Hardy poems by Vaughan Williams, The Spring, Blackmowre Maidens (by the Stour), The Winter's Willows and The Planets.

For me the most musically engaging of the songs are those by the better known composers Vaughan Williams, Finzi and Holst.

Ed Ballmann

Westminster The Legacy - Holst: The Planets, Vaughan Williams, Greensleeves and Tallis Fantasia, conducted by Adrian Boult

DG471 240-2 (71.11) (mid price)

This recording has had its detractors. It ended up as many readers will recall, on the sort of label you could buy in a small supermarket or a holiday camp shop. Notice price for one with a useful note by Michael Gray. The old Music on Record by Peter Gannond (1962) gave it a guarded welcome ‘due to a less than first class effort from the performers’. Well the sound is reasonable, the playing not always. For RVW lovers this is less of a problem. The brass were not on form for Sid Adrian for there are several errors during The Planets, unfortunately when the players are most exposed.

However for the RVW sessions the wind department was banished to the Prater park and we get two interesting performances. The Tallis Fantasia is taken slowly (16.24). The unnamed quartet are very forward in the balance and, at the same time as a consequence of this, more even in the dynamics than their usual performance at the Casa del Teatro. The other piece by RVW, the Te Deum, is a short and relatively simple poem structurally which allowed Vaughan Williams to create a similarly simple setting. The piece lasts about 4 minutes, is great fun, and a real show-stopper.

Incidentally, if there are any Coronation Street addicts in the RVWS (I know of at least two, including me!), John Weaver is the spitting image of Fred Elliott, the Street’s butcher.

The CD’s number is Zaxex Pro Organs CD 7124, and is marketed out here by Prissy Records (£13 inc p&p).

The other record is The St Mary’s Primrose Hill Tradition, Vol 1 and 2, which is a performance of hymns and ecclesiastical music by the choir of that church.

This is the church where the Rev Percy Dearmer was vicar when he approached Vaughan Williams in 1904 to revise the English Hymnal. The hymn-tune writing brothers Godfrey and Martin Shaw were associated with the church, and with assisting Percy Dearmer and Vaughan Williams with the revision of the hymnal. RVW, Dearmer, and Martin Shaw went on to produce The Oxford Book of Carols (1928). Some of these carols are given a 'run through' before publication by the choir at St Mary’s, and I believe the same was true of the new hymn balances and, at the same time as a consequence of this, more even in the dynamics than their usual performance at the Casa del Teatro. The other piece by RVW, the Te Deum, is a short and relatively simple poem structurally which allowed Vaughan Williams to create a similarly simple setting. The piece lasts about 4 minutes, is great fun, and a real show-stopper.

The inclusion of hymns by the Shaws, and RVW, is represented by Monk’s Gate and Sine Nomine. There is also a beautiful rendition of Hallelujah, x66 spiced setting, of other music in the Anglo-Catholic tradition, all very well performed. I particularly recommend the lady soloist, being prepared in this case to forget my preference for boys’ voices in music of this type.

The aforementioned Norman Smith assures me that the rendition of Sine Nomine here is the one that appeared on RVW’s original manuscript, and which differs slightly from the version usually sung, in the length of notes at the end of the last verse.

The CD number is SVMPH 5, and can be obtained from ‘Blueprint Appeal-CD offer’, St Mary’s Church, Ellsworth Road, London NW3 5SJ. Price £12 each plus UK £1.50 postage for up to three CDs.

More information about this church, and its associations with RVW can be found on www.svmph.org.uk

Michael Gaitskell

RVW Hymns

Society members may be interested to hear a couple of recently published RVW associations with RVW hymns.

For all the Saints is an American CD of organ music played by John Weaver on the organ of the University Presbyterian Church, Seattle. As well as works by Bach, Brahms, and Cesar Franck, it contains two of Somervell’s works, a short and relatively simple poem structurally which allowed Vaughan Williams to create a similarly simple setting. The piece lasts about 4 minutes, is great fun, and a real show-stopper.

The other CD contains RVW hymns arranged for a second voice. There are details of several of the hymns and RVW's music, as well as works by Bach, Brahms, and Cesar Franck, it contains two of Somervell's works, a short and relatively simple poem structurally which allowed Vaughan Williams to create a similarly simple setting. The piece lasts about 4 minutes, is great fun, and a real show-stopper.

The epilogue is clearly the death of the Vaughan. This phase of his journey is about to end. He reflects again on the breadth of his experiences and the richness of his life. He comments on happiness but the melody conveys melancholy. He approaches the death of his life he is able to exist, feeling...
Poetically, Youth and Love consists of two stanzas each of five lines following a rondo-like rhyme scheme of ababa. There is only one syllabic alteration between the two stanzas marking their symmetry. Vaughan Williams' genius lies in creating a broad harmonic form. There are two clear sections, separated by texture, melody, and harmony. At the end, there is a brief restatement of the A section, strikingly similar in design to that employed in The Roadside Ride.

In Dreams
In dreams, unhappy, I behold you stand
As heretofore.

The unremembered tokens in your hand
Avail no more.

No more the morning glow, no more the grace,
Endurances, endears.

Cold pain the light of time upon your face
And shows your tears.

He came and went. Perchance you wept a while
And then forgot.

Ah me! but that left you with a smile
Forgets you not.

Whither Must I Wander? could be categorized as a “strophic bar.” The first two stanzas are set identically while the third is altered in the accompaniment to the text. The melody is altered rhythmically to compensate for variations in Stevenson's meter, but is, with one exception, otherwise unchanged. The exception appears in m. 50, with the introduction of an A-natural to melodically accommodate the G minor harmony. There is no clear syllabic pattern in Stevenson's poem. The rhyme scheme of the first stanza is ababcded, while the second and third stanzas follow a scheme of abcbdefe.

Bright is the Ring of Words
Bright is the ring of words
When the right man rings them,
Fair the fall of songs
When the singer sings them.

Still they are carolled and said –
On wings they are carried –
And when the west is red
With the sunset embers,

Low as the singer lies
In the field of heather,
Songs of his fashion bring
Rose and I saw in the night

Unto the sun on open door;
But I go for ever and come again no more.

The Infinite Shining Heavens
The infinite shining heavens
I saw them distant as heaven,
And then forgot.

The Infinite Shining Heavens is structured similarly to In Dreams. A clearly defined break in sections is apparent in m. 32 with what also appears to be a restatement of the opening material. What is particularly interesting in analyzing the structure of this song, however, is the uneven rhyme scheme of the first stanza which is ababcded, while the second and third stanzas follow a scheme of abcbdefe. There is only one clear syllabic alteration between the two stanzas marring their symmetry. Stevenson’s poem, consists of three stanzas of four lines each following a consistent abab rhyme scheme.

The Lake in the Mountains, Six Studies in English Folksong, Phantasy Quintet, Violin Sonata & String Quartet No. 2, Hyperion CDA67313 (full price)

A valuable and enterprising collection of VW chamber works, by the Nash Ensemble containing three of his best with one of his most intimate plus one of his few solo piano works.

The Infinite Shining Heavens is reviewed in my article on the symphony in this journal. By way of a bonus, the CD also includes a charming performance of the disquieting Greensleeves, a perfect “chill-out” to what has gone before.

At bargain price and with over 70 minutes of music this release is a very safe bet, though in my opinion neither of the symphonies would be a first recommendation.

Robin Barber

This is a superb performance of Job. The contrasting elements of RVW’s style are brilliantly realised. The LPO – especially the woodwind – are on excellent form. My only reservation is David Nolan’s performance of the gorgeous ‘Elaine’s Dance of Youth and Beauty’. This seems rather detached, failing to take wing. Having just heard Michael Davis’s melting account at the Proms, this is not as good as I had hoped.

Stephen Connock

Songs of Dorset Song setting of poems by Barnes and by Hardy, nine composers including Vaughan Williams, Stephen Foulkes, Barton, and Colin Hunt, piano. Dunelm Records DH 8136. (47 minutes 43 seconds).

This review is a voyage of discovery. This CD of song settings of poems by Barnes and Thomas Hardy is entitled Songs of Dorset. It includes the works of 9 composers including Vaughan Williams, Holst and Finzi. Some of the works are new to me, indeed some of the composers are also new to me. Hence a comprehensive review is not possible. The CD is produced by Dunelm Records of Glossop which is a record label of which I have had no previous experience.

The CD is excellently packaged with a booklet having a full colour cover showing a winter view along the river in Bath. The texts of all the songs

Page 8

Journal of the RVW Society

Page 21

Journal of the RVW Society
In conclusion it remains only to say that this is a wonderful CD. The fine photograph of ‘Tud’ Handley reminds us of his legacy to British music. Long may it continue.

Mark Aquilith

Vaughan Williams: Sinfonia Antartica / Alison Hargan (soprano), Ian Tracey (organ), Serenade to Music, Partita for double string orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Choir, Orchestra, Vernon Handley, EMI Classics for Pleasure 7243 575313 2 0 (Budget price)

When listening to Handley’s recording of the Sinfonia Antartica I first thought: what a down-throating, down-cadencing performance. But a second run-through revealed an interesting and thought-out programme of this symphony, highly dramatic like the film Scott of the Antarctic itself, whose music was to serve as a basis for VW’s Seventy Seventh Symphony. The Prelude opens with noble and at the same time tragic grandeur foreshadowing the lyricism to come. One does really feel the cold physically, but Alison Hargan’s ofmivo is a little bit too cold, slightly harsh and frosty. Maybe it’s the way it has to be. Musical tension more and more increases till the climax of the symphony, when the organ has its impressive appearance in the third movement (Landscape). The symphony ends with the same dignified grandeur of the opening movement, coming and going like a snowdrift. The Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra plays marvellously, forging up the same range of dynamic extremes as in the London Symphony. Again, Vernon Handley is very faithful to the score.

I have trod the upward and the downward slope; I have endured and done in days before; I have longed for all, and bid farewell to hope; And I have lived and loved, and closed the door.

I have had every moment of my life; Although I knew it well, I still was right. I have had every moment of my life; I have seen, I have known, and I have felt. I have had every moment of my life; I have known, and I have felt, and I have seen.

I have trod the upward and the downward slope; I have endured and done in days before; I have longed for all, and bid farewell to hope; And I have lived and loved, and closed the door.

The final song in the cycle is through-composed. Stevenson’s poem consists of one stanza of four lines alternating eleven and ten syllables each. The rhyme scheme is abab in the “Motivic and Thematic Elements” section of this chapter, this song will be discussed more in detail to illuminate the material Vaughan Williams uses to unify the cycle.

Table 1: Motivic and Thematic Material

The two motifs from The Vagabond are immediately recognizable in the opening measures of the symphony. The central character of the poem is a “vagabond walker” and therefore the “Vagabond” motif is very appropriate. This is not to say that The Vagabond is Vaughan Williams’s only inspiration for the symphony. There are other sources, such as the opening theme from Handel’s Israel in Egypt and the second theme from Schubert’s Symphony No. 5. However, The Vagabond is the most obvious source and it is clear that this is Vaughan Williams’s primary inspiration for the symphony.

The themes and motifs drawn from four of the songs and utilized in two others: Youth and Love and I Have Trod the Upward and the Downward Slope. Each of these songs will be discussed in detail by analyzing the appearances of the various thematic and motivic elements. Only Let Beauty Awake, In Dreams, and The Infinite Shining Heaven share no unifying material within.

Table 1: Motivic and Thematic Material

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme/Motif</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Bright is the Ring of Words” Main Theme</td>
<td>The Vagabond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Whither” Introductory Motif</td>
<td>The Vagabond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Roadside Fire” Main Theme</td>
<td>The Vagabond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Roadside Fire” Closing Motif</td>
<td>The Vagabond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Vagabond” Walking Motif</td>
<td>The Vagabond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Vagabond” Fanfare Motif</td>
<td>The Vagabond</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Symphony No.6 in E minor/Symphony No. 9 in E minor/ Fantasia on Greensleeves/Royal Liverpool PO / Vernon Handley Classics for Pleasure 7243 575313 2 0 (Budget price)

Vernon Handley’s account of these two dark E minor symphonies was originally issued on the EMI Eminence label in 1994 as part of his cycle with the RLPO and I reviewed it in the very first edition of this journal. It has now been rereleased on the CFP label and the sound benefits from a little too great a distance between orchestra and soloist during the passage of short solo runs over low string figures.

I have trod the upward and the downward slope; I have endured and done in days before; I have longed for all, and bid farewell to hope; And I have lived and loved, and closed the door.

Mark Aquilith

Vaughan Williams: Sinfonia Antartica / Alison Hargan (soprano), Ian Tracey (organ), Serenade to Music, Partita for double string orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Choir, Orchestra, Vernon Handley, EMI Classics for Pleasure 7243 575313 2 0 (Budget price)

When listening to Handley’s recording of the Sinfonia Antartica I first thought: what a down-throating, down-cadencing performance. But a second run-through revealed an interesting and thought-out programme of this symphony, highly dramatic like the film Scott of the Antarctic itself, whose music was to serve as a basis for VW’s Seventy Seventh Symphony. The Prelude opens with noble and at the same time tragic grandeur foreshadowing the lyricism to come. One does really feel the cold physically, but Alison Hargan’s ofmivo is a little bit too cold, slightly harsh and frosty. Maybe it’s the way it has to be. Musical tension more and more increases till the climax of the symphony, when the organ has its impressive appearance in the third movement (Landscape). The symphony ends with the same dignified grandeur of the opening movement, coming and going like a snowdrift. The Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra plays marvellously, forging up the same range of dynamic extremes as in the London Symphony. Again, Vernon Handley is very faithful to the score.

I suggested that the dynamics were beautifully managed in the Symphony. The viola solo then against the chorus, then with the oboe in the same class. There is always the possibility that the first movement is a little too cold, slightly harsh and frosty. Maybe it’s the way it has to be. Musical tension more and more increases till the climax of the symphony, when the organ has its impressive appearance in the third movement (Landscape). The symphony ends with the same dignified grandeur of the opening movement, coming and going like a snowdrift. The Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra plays marvellously, forging up the same range of dynamic extremes as in the London Symphony. Again, Vernon Handley is very faithful to the score.

I have trod the upward and the downward slope; I have endured and done in days before; I have longed for all, and bid farewell to hope; And I have lived and loved, and closed the door.

The final song in the cycle is through-composed. Stevenson’s poem consists of one stanza of four lines alternating eleven and ten syllables each. The rhyme scheme is abab in the “Motivic and Thematic Elements” section of this chapter, this song will be discussed more in detail to illuminate the material Vaughan Williams uses to unify the cycle.

Table 1: Motivic and Thematic Material

The two motifs from The Vagabond are immediately recognizable in the opening measures of the symphony. The central character of the poem is a “vagabond walker” and therefore the “Vagabond” motif is very appropriate. This is not to say that The Vagabond is Vaughan Williams’s only inspiration for the symphony. There are other sources, such as the opening theme from Handel’s Israel in Egypt and the second theme from Schubert’s Symphony No. 5. However, The Vagabond is the most obvious source and it is clear that this is Vaughan Williams’s primary inspiration for the symphony.

The themes and motifs drawn from four of the songs and utilized in two others: Youth and Love and I Have Trod the Upward and the Downward Slope. Each of these songs will be discussed in detail by analyzing the appearances of the various thematic and motivic elements. Only Let Beauty Awake, In Dreams, and The Infinite Shining Heaven share no unifying material within.

Table 1: Motivic and Thematic Material

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme/Motif</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Bright is the Ring of Words” Main Theme</td>
<td>The Vagabond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Whither” Introductory Motif</td>
<td>The Vagabond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Roadside Fire” Main Theme</td>
<td>The Vagabond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Roadside Fire” Closing Motif</td>
<td>The Vagabond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Vagabond” Walking Motif</td>
<td>The Vagabond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Vagabond” Fanfare Motif</td>
<td>The Vagabond</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Symphony No.6 in E minor/Symphony No. 9 in E minor/ Fantasia on Greensleeves/Royal Liverpool PO / Vernon Handley Classics for Pleasure 7243 575313 2 0 (Budget price)

Vernon Handley’s account of these two dark E minor symphonies was originally issued on the EMI Eminence label in 1994 as part of his cycle with the RLPO and I reviewed it in the very first edition of this journal. It has now been rereleased on the CFP label and the sound benefits from a little too great a distance between orchestra and soloist during the passage of short solo runs over low string figures.
Example 3: Sine Nomine
While the similarity in shape of the tunes is undeniable, there are obvious differences. The theme from Bright is the Ring of Words begins on the tonic, descending down the major scale one degree before leaping to the tonic again and then picking up the remainder of the opening four notes of the “Sine Nomine” tune. The instances in Toward the Unknown Regions and “Love’s Last Gift” are more direct quotes of the “Sine Nomine” tunes. 

Thematic and Motivic Elements in “Youth and Love”
In two separate instances, Vaughan Williams evokes the Vagabond’s Fanfare Motif (see Ex 4).

Example 4: “Vagabond” Fanfare Motif in “Youth and Love”
The first of these, in mm. 12, may only be present to symbolize the nature of the Vagabond in the line “Passing for ever, he fares.” The second use of the Fanfare Motif, however, in mm. 39, seems to be more directly related to the action of the poem. It could be interpreted as a call to the Vagabond that it is time to move on and continue the journey, thus ending the relationship with the young maiden. Its placement, immediately before the text “He to his nobler fate Fares,” seems to support that contention.

The material from The Roadside Fire is also used in Youth and Love. Beginning in mm. 45, there is what Dickinson refers to as a “vulgarized” treatment of the main theme.

Example 5: “The Roadside Fire” Main Theme in “Youth and Love”
The introduction of this material comes at a moment in the poem when the Vagabond is beginning to depart: “Cries but a wayward word to her at the garden gate.” It is not the expression of this material that suggests the nature of The Roadside Fire, but may serve a larger purpose in the scope of the cycle. As evidenced in the following songs, the end of this relationship is not an easy thing for the Vagabond. The harsh treatment of this theme may well be a means of exhibiting musically an open, emotional wound. What Dickinson refers to as “vulgar” and which he admits was an “uncomfortable sensation” may have been executed by careful design on Vaughan Williams’s part.

Vaughan Williams further quotes The Roadside Fire with a statement of the closing material. This passage in The Roadside Fire seems to be used as a means of setting the mood from the more passionate evocations of the B section. It is used similarly here, calming from the emotional outburst of mm. 45 before the final departure.

Example 6: “The Roadside Fire” Closing Material in “Youth and Love” and “Youth and Love” Walking Motif Material in “I Have Trod the Upward and the Downward Slope”
The epilogue consists of almost no original material. Of the twenty-five measures of music in the epilogue, eighteen are directly contributed to material from previous songs. The first of these, of course, is the Fanfare Motif used in both the first and third measures of the epilogue. The augmentation of the motif, coupled with the descending bass line, belies the age and perhaps failing health of the Vagabond.

Thematic and Motivic Elements in “I Have Trod the Upward and the Downward Slope”
Under the text “And I have lived and loved, and closed the door,” Vaughan Williams sets the thematic material from Whither Must I Wander? This setting is particularly interesting because of its transposition to major from its original minor.

Example 7: “The Roadside Fire” Fanfare Motif in “I Have Trod the Upward and the Downward Slope”
By setting this material in major, Vaughan Williams seems to be reinforcing the notion that the Vagabond is at peace with himself and with his fate.

As the final note in the vocal line is released, the piano begins a brief postlude which quotes Vaughan Williams’s music is rarely pessimistic, and here he seems to be saying that in spite of complaining that life is unrewarding, the Vagabond will still go on and win his crown. The slow atmosphere of profound sadness and contemplation is not abandoned for this message though, and this is a kind of miracle. Vernon Handley leaves us wanting, at the end, to continue this contemplation. It is a magnificent performance.

The reading of the Fourth Symphony is marvellous too, although less revelatory. I miss some of the vehemence and anger to be found elsewhere, and the hugely wide-ranging second subject of the first movement seems lacking in passion, with the articulation both of the melody itself and the accompanying chords strangely literal and unconvincing. The slow movement goes better but the scherzo and finale seems slightly out of force, particularly when compared to performances by composers such as those by Stokowski – who manages to make the second subject of the finale both menacing and jaunty at the same time! Bernstein and, inevitably, the composer himself.

Comparing my old pressing on EMI with this new one I can hear no difference in the sound, which is in any case of superb quality. A lovely performance of the English Folk Song Suite in Gordon Jacob’s orchestration has been added, making this very inexpensive disc an obvious purchase for anyone who doesn’t already have these performances.

Vehemence there is in plenty in Richard Hickox’s new recording of the Fourth. The symphony opens with a terrific bang and at a terrific pace. Only the composer’s own performance takes less time over the whole work. As well as excellent introductory notes by Michael Kennedy, the booklet manages to persuade us that Vaughan Williams was working with a wider definition of victory than the conventional one; A Song of Pity, Peace and Love, and A Song of the New Age – “O cease! must hate and death return?... The world is weary of the past...” The performance of these songs is most convicing and moving.

As well as excellent introductory notes by Michael Kennedy, the booklet manages to persuade us that Vaughan Williams was working with a wider definition of victory than the conventional one; A Song of Pity, Peace and Love, and A Song of the New Age – “O cease! must hate and death return?... The world is weary of the past...” The performance of these songs is most convincing and moving.

The terrific performance of the Fourth Symphony makes this a desirable issue, and the Mass adds to its attractions. With the Choral Songs, which seem not to be otherwise recorded, the disc becomes an essential purchase for RVW enthusiasts.
Handley's 1998 recordings of the VW symphonies over the last 13 years. In the very recent past they were boxed up under the EMI Emancipation label; now they are out again as Classics for Pleasure at £4.99 each. Members will no doubt be familiar with them all, but they are worth re-hearing and reconsidering from time to time. I suppose that in this day and age we should be glad that they are still continuously available, whatever the packaging, because collectively they are one of the better sets.

That said, there are limitations, and in that A Sea Symphony is no exception. At times in this recording the slow passages feel ponderous rather than conveying the almost chilling driven awe which, say, the 1968 Boult performance exudes. The opening Rehe?!d, the sea itself and: On the beach at night, alone are cases in point, whereas we can wait no longer does achieve that lift. Secondly, the recording balance is erratic and often does the soloists, particularly William Shimell, no favours. Any percussive edge he may have is sometimes unnecessarily lost in the overall sound. Today, a rude brief recitative has the bite one expects, but A pennant universal is washed away at times.

This is a pity because the two finest aspects of the recording are the overall orchestral sound and the sheer enthusiasm of the chorus. The brass and percussion cut through brilliantly in their rhythmic and exposed moments. The choir, trained by Ian Tracey, has a clarity of diction rare in such large forces combined with a restrained lightness, which displays their true skill.

If you wanted to start a VW library of modern recordings on a budget, you could do a lot worse than buy the 8 Handley CDs.

Roger Eastman

A Sea Symphony
Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus

Recorded in 1992 and previously released in 1993 Vernon Handley's interpretations of both the London Symphony and the Symphony No. 8 in D minor are stirring and absolutely convincing. Now these fine recordings are available on a welcome CD reissued by "Classics for Pleasure". And what's more, it is indeed! If there is anybody who still wants to listen to the "old" revised version of the London Symphony after

In discussing the "Sine Nomine" tune, Kennedy states that it is used as a "key-motive for expressing jubilation throughout Vaughan Williams's life." It seems appropriate then, that Vaughan Williams would choose such a theme as the key-motive of the nobility and legacy of the Vagabond through music, and as Kennedy asserts, also of joy, to close the cycle. It seems unlikely that Vaughan Williams in any way intended for this to be a maudlin, unhappy setting. Rather, it is a fitting epitaph to a Vagabond who "lived and loved" (author's italics). The last thing the listener hears is the walking motif, signifying the final departure of the Vagabond; to where is up to the listener. It can easily be interpreted as the death of the Vagabond, or as Kennedy describes it, as the Vagabond "tramping … off into the blue." Perhaps they are one and the same.

NOTES
4 Stevenson, 245–6.
5 Banfield, 84.
8 Kennedy, Works 80. 18 Ibid., 81.
9 Banfield, 520.
11 Dickinson, 152.
12 Ibid.
13 Kennedy, Works, 85.
14 Ibid., 81.

Bibliography


Discography


The Recordings: A comparative analysis of the nine extant recordings of the Songs of Travel

by William M. Adams, D.M.A.

Introduction

There are, at present, nine complete recordings of the Songs of Travel in circulation. Six of these recordings are by baritones (Bryn Terfel, Thomas Allen, Benjamin Luxon, David Aler, Gerald Finley, and John Shirley-Quirk), two by tenors (Anthony Rolfe Johnson and Robert Tear) and one by a bass (Shlomo Gerheim). Only Thomas Allen’s recording is with orchestra, the rest use piano accompaniment.

Analyzing recordings can be problematic. How does the listener determine the size of the voice? Modern recording techniques make comparison difficult. Every care has been taken to be as objective and fair in the analyses of the singers based on the author’s own experience as a performer and teacher of singing.

Thomas Allen – the orchestral recording

Thomas Allen’s recording with full orchestra, under the direction of Simon Rattle, is worth inclusion in any serious collection of recordings of the cycle if for no other reason than it is the only recording with orchestra in existence. Allen’s performance is intelligent and sensitive to the nuances of the cycle within the limitations of the orchestrated version. The character of the cycle is changed significantly, with orchestration.

It lacks the intimacy of the original version for piano.

Roy Douglas did, in my opinion, an excellent job imitating Vaughan Williams’s masterminds of orchestration. There isn’t an appreciable difference between the six songs orchestrated by Douglas and the original three orchestrations of Vaughan Williams. One important consideration in favor of the orchestral version is that Vaughan Williams had a larger timbral palette with which he could create sonorities. Anyone who has ever listened to Vaughan Williams’s orchestral music (especially the Fantasias and the Fifth and Ninth Symphonies) must recognize his superior skill as an orchestrator. Thus, hearing these “new” colors, when you’re used to the piano version, is striking. This is particularly of note with the performance of the eighth song Bright is the Ring of Words. Allen presents it in the original key of D major, not the more “traditional” published version for piano down a whole tone in C major.

The effect of the higher key is striking. The transition from Whither Must I Wander? is not only one of pitch level (whole tone, ascending) but also of mode (minor to major). Only David Aler’s recording, which will be discussed later, also presents the original key map.

The Tenors

Most of the recordings are of the cycle by tenors. The obvious reason why tenors might avoid this work is a lack of a strong baritone voice. Vaughan Williams himself, in the introduction to the songs, notes that tenors should only be performed by baritones in keeping with Vaughan Williams’s original concept. The timbre of a baritone instrument is as much a part of the cycle, I think, as any of the harmonies or the texts themselves. Nonetheless, the two recordings by Robert Tear and Anthony Rolfe Johnson are noteworthy.

Anthony Rolfe Johnson lacks the power of Tear but more than makes up for it with an absolutely splendid lyricism that is truly unparalleled in any of the recordings of the cycle. Of particular note are his readings of Let Beauty Awake, Youth and Love and The Infinite Shining Heavens. He may lack a slight lack of power on the stronger songs, the only other criticism which might be leveled against Rolfe Johnson’s recording is the diction. Of all the recordings, his seems to be the most contrived, over-emphasizing the rolled “r.”

Neither recording really delivers a “complete” picture of the Songs of Travel, but for the serious collector, both recordings should be included.

The Loneliness of the Bass

Shlomo Gerheim’s recording is, perhaps, the most problematic of the nine.

His voice is very dark and thick, lacking the flexibility or subtlety needed for the more lyrical songs and lacking the vibrance of tone necessary for the stronger pieces. His choice of keys is also distressing. All of the songs were transposed down at least a whole tone to accommodate his bass voice. The result is a very dark reading of the cycle. The piano accompaniment in The Vagabond, for example, becomes muddled and heavy in B-flat minor and lacks the sparkle normally associated with Vaughan Williams’s writings for the instrument.

There also appears to be something of a language barrier in Gerheim’s interpretation from some aspect of the Requiem Mass. In this work Hanson’s rich contrapuntal writing with its spine-tingling suspensions reaches its apogee. The Fourth isn’t however without its moments of restlessness and tension with a fiery 3rd movt and powerful and often pungent writing in part of the finale.

Hanson’s later works are far more compact and often favour single movement forms. The Fifth Symphony, Symphony in C Minor, is the shortest of the set. Inspired by the events of the first Easter it plays for only 15 mins and is cast in a tightly constructed single movement. The Sixth Symphony of 1967 was composed for the 125th anniversary of the New York Philharmonic. It is one of Hanson’s most fascinating and varied scores. A one-movement work, it is divided into six contrasting sections all based on a simple three-note idea. The choral and orchestral Seventh Symphony, Symphony of Travel 1977, Hanson’s last work in the medium, seems to belong to a very different world. RVW is a Sinfonia Romantica, a very different world of sound and conception.

All seven symphonies are available on Delos in excellent performances, by Gerard Schwarz and the Seattle Symphony Orchestra. The composers own performances of the first four symphonies (the Fourth is taken much faster than the Delos recordings) and all are available on Delos. All RVW recordings of the Requiem Mass is a discussion, inspired by some aspects of the Requiem Mass. It is not Hanson’s most contrapuntal work with its spine-tingling suspensions it reaches its apogee. The Fourth isn’t however without its moments of restlessness and tension with a fiery 3rd movt and powerful and often pungent writing in part of the finale.

Hanson’s later works are far more compact and often favour single movement forms. The Fifth Symphony, Symphony in C Minor, is the shortest of the set. Inspired by the events of the first Easter it plays for only 15 mins and is cast in a tightly constructed single movement. The Sixth Symphony of 1967 was composed for the 125th anniversary of the New York Philharmonic. It is one of Hanson’s most fascinating and varied scores. A one-movement work, it is divided into six contrasting sections all based on a simple three-note idea.

The choral and orchestral Seventh Symphony, Symphony of Travel 1977, Hanson’s last work in the medium, seems to belong to a very different world. RVW is a Sinfonia Romantica, a very different world of sound and conception. All seven symphonies are available on Delos in excellent performances, by Gerard Schwarz and the Seattle Symphony Orchestra. The composers own performances of the first four symphonies (the Fourth is taken much faster than the Delos recordings) and all are available on Delos.
A symphony that I believe will one day be ranked among its creator's finest works.

He голос воспевающий в оркестре и который редко когда исчезает из нашего сознания. В этом отношении его творчество необычайно богато.

The point of this article has been to offer the opinions of one aficionado of the Songs of Travel. My opinions are based not only on my artistic sensibilities, but also on my experience as a professional operatic baritone and teacher of singing. Still, rather than end this article with a judgment on Terfel's interpretations, that surely confirms now Michael Kennedy's shrewd prophesy of this score: "If one considers this stylistic trait to be appropriate, then Terfel's recording may, indeed, be too rich."

As he descends to the low A-flat, he employs a brittle almost sparingly. Terfel brings the full weight and energy of his voice to bear on these songs, and his account was significantly more declamatory. Luxon's instrument has proved itself to be quite comfortable on the operatic stage for years and his French-Russian heritage is apparent in the darker vowels he employs. He has shown great empathy for VW's music, recorded a widely acclaimed cycle with the Philharmonia. In contrast, Shirley-Quirk's reading of the songs is strong and clear, with attention to detail and without any noteworthy extravagances of characterization. Perhaps the only detractor in his recording, except for his slight lisp, is the limited tone of the recording owing to the technology available in the recording industry in 1960.

As mentioned earlier, Terfel's recording offers the original tonal map of the cycle. The reason for his choice is fairly clear when one listens to his voice. He is a very light, lyric baritone without much extension into the lower register. It is entirely possible that the higher key for Bright is the Ring of Words was chosen as much to avoid singing a low A-flat as it is the pastiche of the Ring of Words, which is the theme of the finale. Luxon's recording is also quite lyrical but is not without strength in the more declamatory songs. Luxon's instrument has proved itself to be quite comfortable on the operatic stage and his French-Russian heritage is apparent in the darker vowels he employs. He has shown great empathy for VW's music, recorded a widely acclaimed cycle with the Philharmonia. In contrast, Shirley-Quirk's reading of the songs is strong and clear, with attention to detail and without any noteworthy extravagances of characterization. Perhaps the only detractor in his recording, except for his slight lisp, is the limited tone of the recording owing to the technology available in the recording industry in 1960.

As mentioned earlier, Terfel's recording offers the original tonal map of the cycle. The reason for his choice is fairly clear when one listens to his voice. He is a very light, lyric baritone without much extension into the lower register. It is entirely possible that the higher key for Bright is the pastiche of the Ring of Words was chosen as much to avoid singing a low A-flat as it is the Ring of Words was chosen as much to avoid singing a low A-flat as it is the Ring of Words was chosen as much to avoid singing a low A-flat as it is the pastiche of the Ring of Words, which is the theme of the finale. Luxon's recording is also quite lyrical but is not without strength in the more declamatory songs. Luxon's instrument has proved itself to be quite comfortable on the operatic stage and his French-Russian heritage is apparent in the darker vowels he employs. He has shown great empathy for VW's music, recorded a widely acclaimed cycle with the Philharmonia. In contrast, Shirley-Quirk's reading of the songs is strong and clear, with attention to detail and without any noteworthy extravagances of characterization. Perhaps the only detractor in his recording, except for his slight lisp, is the limited tone of the recording owing to the technology available in the recording industry in 1960.
Symphony No. 9 in E minor: An Introduction and CD Review.
by Robin Barber

It is the work, not of a tired old man, but a very experienced one.

James Day

V Vaughan Williams, eschewing sentimentiality, for the last timesummons up those reserves which, for want of a better word, must be
called visionary. (Michael Kennedy) ...

...at once heroic and contemplative, defiant and wistfully absorbed, andlargely visionary in tone. (Hugh Ottaway)

V Vaughan Williams’s Ninth Symphony is, in my view, one of his greatest
works, a towering masterpiece that has been misunderstood andneglected since its first performance in 1958. Despite this, there are
now nine recordings on CD of the symphony, all of which are currently
available. In my presentation of the complete RVW symphony cycle projectand perhaps some conductors have tended to turn their
attention to the Ninth in the end of their surveys. To some it
must have been unfaithful territory, and perhaps some interpretations
have lacked a full understanding of the profound beauty of this work.
To
date this as the recording studio has not been matched in the
concert hall. In over twenty five years I have been privileged to have
attended only three live performances, hopefully this will change. There
is undoubtedly a suppressed programme within this symphony. The
landscape around Salisbury and Thomas Hardy’s tragic novel Tess of the
D’Urbervilles clearly had an influence on the genius of this work.

Notably the second movement. Alain Frogley’s recently published book
gives an exhaustive and compellingly argued case for a programme
and I would commend to anyone who wishes to know more of the
origins of the composer’s last symphonic essay. Conscious and no doubt
irritated by the debate as to the dedication of the symphony, the
composer, in his detailed commentary for the first performance of the symphony, was
at pains to deny any programme. Referring to the second movement (Andante Sostenuto),
“It is quite true that this movement started off with no programme, but it got lost on the journey - so now, oh, we never mention it – and the music must be left to speak for itself - whatever that may mean”. I believe Vaughan Williams was being deliberately coy about the inspiration behind the music and the same problems that for a long time bedevilled composition of symphonies generally, had already been in
choice of the seemingly abstract, Eminent symphony 

For me, this deep philosphical music explore two contradictory and at times conflitcting layers of meaning. Most strikingly, the
costvivid, musical atmosphere, that of the psyche, the soul and present
consciousness. All of us have our experiences of our personal lives
whether be it religious, erotic or financial and they perplex us daily. Secondly there is a vast, pantheistic, placid and physical world.

The Symphony is scored in four movements: I. Moderato maestosa

It was composed between 1956-7 and requires a large orchestra, with the
addition of three saxophones, deep bells and a flugelhorn, which gives
the music a slightly strange and unearthly atmosphere to much of the
movement. (Hugh Ottaway)

The movement is scored in four movements:

I. Moderate maestoso

This movement was originally sub-titled Wives Prelude which perhaps alludes
to the original Hardy influence on the symphony, though the
composer is very clear that the title of the Symphony was playing organ music from Bach’s St Matthew Passion. To this listener, the
opening Eminor choruses conjure up a vast, cloud-covered, landscape,
breathes in sunlight that are so typical of the landscapes of Salisbury Plain, but there the allusion ends. The mysterious, foroboding atmosphere gives way to passages of altering tensity and tenderness with a trio of golden-sounding saxophones to the fore. Throughout the
conquering is dense with frequent modulations of key. The

The Symphony is scored in four movements:

I. Moderate maestoso

II. Andante sostenuto

This is a slow movement of an RVW symphony; surely we can expect
calm and serenity? Alas not and it would not be appropriate. The
words “Andante” and “Sostenuto” are clearly inscribed on parts of earlier
manuscripts of this score, I don’t wish to give them the same significance of
say, Mahler’s often anguished annotations to the score of his Ninth and
Tenth symphonies. But this movement clearly demonstrated, vital to our understanding of this music. The movement opens with a reflective theme on flugelhorn, then taken
on the oboe and then both. The movement builds from the slow
movement to the mighty. See Symphony, echoes of which can be heard in the slow slow
movement of that work. On the beach alone at night. The tempo Cary is
shaped by the sudden introduction of an angry, snarly march theme
that is not easy on the ear. This grim music was apparently inspired by the
legend of the ghostly drummer of Salisbury Plain. There then follows a
mighty, slow and deep. This move is a strikingly reminiscent of the
cavatina from the Eighth Symphony, but it doesn’t come to

IV. Andante tranquillo

Originally sub-titled Landscape, this concluding movement is XV’s final testament and in my view a great musical utterance, representing
what the composer, referring to the ESC scene at the end of his

Sir Adrian Boult’s first recording of the Ninth was with Everest and was the
declaration of intentions on 36 minutes, but my OUP gives 30 minutes and we will never know which the composer may have eventually intended to have lived the work. According to Sir Adrian Boult’s autobiography, My Own Trumpet (1995), after listening to a
recording of the première he told RVW that the ending of the symphony
was too abrupt and suggested that thirty to forty bars should be added at the
end. The composer agreed to consider this and in the meantime gave
Boult permission to play the symphony as he wished. A few days later
he conducted the first recording. What is striking from this survey is the

CD Review

There is confusion about the ideal timing of the symphony. Michael
Kennedy (The Guardian) gives a duration of about 36 minutes, but my OUP

gives 30 minutes and we will never know which the composer may have

the score comes across as a darker, more contemplative work. To
quote Richard Adams, “there is a wonderfully foreboding
delusion for the first performance of the symphony, was at pains to deny any programme. Referring to the second movement, (Andante Sostenuto), “it is quite true that this movement started off with no programme, but it got lost on the journey - so now, oh, we never mention it – and the music must be left to speak for itself - whatever that may mean”.

I believe Vaughan Williams was being deliberately coy about the inspiration behind the music and the same problems that for a long time bedevilled composition of symphonies generally, had already been in
choice of the seemingly abstract, Eminent symphony 

For me, this deep philosphical music explore two contradictory and at times conflitcting layers of meaning. Most strikingly, the
costvivid, musical atmosphere, that of the psyche, the soul and present
consciousness. All of us have our experiences of our personal lives
whether be it religious, erotic or financial and they perplex us daily. Secondly there is a vast, pantheistic, placid and physical world.

The Symphony is scored in four movements: I. Moderato maestosa

It was composed between 1956-7 and requires a large orchestra, with the
addition of three saxophones, deep bells and a flugelhorn, which gives
the music a slightly strange and unearthly atmosphere to much of the
movement. (Hugh Ottaway)

The movement is scored in four movements:

I. Moderate maestoso

II. Andante sostenuto

This is a slow movement of an RVW symphony; surely we can expect
calm and serenity? Alas not and it would not be appropriate. The
words “Andante” and “Sostenuto” are clearly inscribed on parts of earlier
manuscripts of this score, I don’t wish to give them the same significance of
say, Mahler’s often anguished annotations to the score of his Ninth and
Tenth symphonies. But this movement clearly demonstrated, vital to our understanding of this music. The movement opens with a reflective theme on flugelhorn, then taken
on the oboe and then both. The movement builds from the slow
movement to the mighty. See Symphony, echoes of which can be heard in the slow slow
movement of that work. On the beach alone at night. The tempo Cary is
shaped by the sudden introduction of an angry, snarly march theme
that is not easy on the ear. This grim music was apparently inspired by the
legend of the ghostly drummer of Salisbury Plain. There then follows a
mighty, slow and deep. This move is a strikingly reminiscent of the
cavatina from the Eighth Symphony, but it doesn’t come to

IV. Andante tranquillo

Originally sub-titled Landscape, this concluding movement is XV’s final testament and in my view a great musical utterance, representing
what the composer, referring to the ESC scene at the end of his

Sir Adrian Boult’s first recording of the Ninth was with Everest and was the
declaration of intentions on 36 minutes, but my OUP gives 30 minutes and we will never know which the composer may have eventually intended to have lived the work. According to Sir Adrian Boult’s autobiography, My Own Trumpet (1995), after listening to a
recording of the première he told RVW that the ending of the symphony
was too abrupt and suggested that thirty to forty bars should be added at the
end. The composer agreed to consider this and in the meantime gave
Boult permission to play the symphony as he wished. A few days later
he conducted the first recording. What is striking from this survey is the

CD Review

There is confusion about the ideal timing of the symphony. Michael
Kennedy (The Guardian) gives a duration of about 36 minutes, but my OUP

gives 30 minutes and we will never know which the composer may have
Symphony No. 9 in E minor
An Introduction and CD Review.

by Robin Barber

It is the work, not of a tired old man, but very much a piece of the music of a very experienced one.

Vaughaun Williams, describing the Fifth Symphony

It was composed between 1956–7 and requires a large orchestra, with the addition of three saxophones, deep bells and a flugelhorn, which gives the music a particularly grandiose sound. The movement is a complete symphony cycle project and perhaps some conductors have tended to turn their attention to the Ninth at the end of their surveys. To sum it up, Vaughan Williams has not been unfamiliar territory, and perhaps some interpretations have lacked a full understanding of the profound beauty of this work. To date this as the recording studio has not been matched in the concert hall. In over twenty-five years I have been privileged to have attended only three live performances, hopefully this will change. There is undoubtedly a suppressed programme within this symphony. The landscape around Salisbury and Thomas Hardy’s tragic novel Tess of the D’Urbervilles clearly had an impact on the genesis of this work, notably the second movement. Alain Fingel’s recently published book gives an exhaustive and compellingly argued case for such a programme and I would commend it to anyone who wishes to know more of the origins of the composer’s last symphonic essay. Conscious and no doubt intended, the debt to the Proms in the suite of early metres, particularly the Fourth and the other E minor Sinfonia, the composer, in his detailed commentary for the first performance of the symphony, was at pains to deny any programme. Referring to the accommodation (Andante Sostuto) “it is quite true that this movement started off with a programme, but it got lost on the journey - so now, oh, we never mind it - and the music must be left to speak for itself - whatever that may mean”.

I believe Vaughan Williams was being deliberately coy about the inspiration behind the music and the same problems that for a long time bedevilled compositional programmes. A programme has clearly been echoed in the reception of this seemingly abstract, E minor symphony. For me, this deeply philosophical music explores two contradictory and at times conflicting landscapes that shape all of our lives. Firstly, then the neurotic and the physical world, be it the drama of a landscape, the sea or the cosmos, underpinning. This is what Jung called the collected landscape. The Symphony is scored in four movements:

I. Moderato maestoso

This movement was originally sub-titled Waverley Prelude which perhaps alludes to the original Hardy influence on the symphony, though the composer himself made that very clear. The theme seemed to have been playing organ music from Bach’s St Matthew Passion. To this listener, the opening E minor chords conjure up a vast cloud-covered landscape, pierced by shafts of sunlight that are so typical of the uplands of Salisbury Plain, but there the allusion ends. The mysterious, forbidding atmosphere gives way to passages of alternating tensity and tenderness with a trio of golden-hued saxophones to the fore. Throughout the scoring is dense with frequent modulations of key. The conflict is partially relieved by a quintessentially E minor violin solo, reminiscent of the performance of that work.

II. Andante sostenuto

This is a slow movement of an RVW symphony; surely we can expect calm and serenity? Alas not, and it would not be appropriate. The words “Andante” and “Sostenuto” are clearly inscribed on parts of earlier manuscripts of this score. I don’t wish to give them the same significance of say, Mahler’s often anguished annotations to the score of his Ninth and I believe that they are to be read in context. Each of the movements clearly demonstrated, vital to our understanding of this music. The movement opens with a reflective theme on flugelhorn, taken and developed by a theme that is slowly and majestically detached. The second part of the mighty Sea Symphony, echoes of which can be heard in the quiet last movement of that work. Once the audience are there, all too temporarily as is often the case. The parallel structures of this movement is not as evident as the opening. Its message is that no easy on the ear. This grim march was apparently inspired by the legend of the ghostly drummer of Salisbury Plain. There then follows a much gentler and at times, night-time music. No way is this to be in the category of the Andante Sostuto. “it is quite true that this movement started off with a programme, but it got lost on the journey - so now, oh, we never mind it - and the music must be left to speak for itself - whatever that may mean”.

The Symphony is scored in four movements: I. Moderato maestoso, II. Andante sostenuto, III. Allegro pesante and IV. Andante tranquillo. These movements are prominent throughout this movement and unifying one element. There are parallels with the corresponding movement of the Ninth Symphony, but also of Holst’s Phaëthon. This structure at times, night-time music gives way to passages of a programme. Does this music represent Tennyson’s ungentle struggle against death and does it represent her expression? is it just a dream, much in the same sense as Berlioz’s Symphonie Fantastique?

III. Scherzo: Allegro pesante

The saxophones, xylophone and celeste are prominent throughout this movement and unifying one element. There are parallels with the symphony “andante” movement and unifying one element. They are the most important to resolve this movement and unifying one element. The opening slide of the opening of the last movement.

IV. Andante tranquillo

Originally sub-titled Landscape, this concluding movement is RVW’s final testament and in my view a great musical utterance, representing what the composer wanted to achieve in his music and his own life. In the serene calm of Salisbury Cathedral, a spire reaching skywards to the unknown. In between is music of both great turbulence and nostalgia, the meaning of which can not but nevertheless challenge the listener and makes it a great work of art.

It was composed between 1956-7 and requires a large orchestra, with the addition of three saxophones, deep bells and a flugelhorn, which gives the music a particularly grandiose sound. The movement is a complete symphony cycle project and perhaps some conductors have tended to turn their attention to the Ninth at the end of their surveys. To sum it up, Vaughan Williams has not been unfamiliar territory, and perhaps some interpretations have lacked a full understanding of the profound beauty of this work. To date this as the recording studio has not been matched in the concert hall. In over twenty-five years I have been privileged to have attended only three live performances, hopefully this will change. There is undoubtedly a suppressed programme within this symphony. The landscape around Salisbury and Thomas Hardy’s tragic novel Tess of the D’Urbervilles clearly had an impact on the genesis of this work, notably the second movement. Alain Fingel’s recently published book gives an exhaustive and compellingly argued case for such a programme and I would commend it to anyone who wishes to know more of the origins of the composer’s last symphonic essay. Conscious and no doubt intended, the debt to the Proms in the suite of early metres, particularly the Fourth and the other E minor Sinfonia, the composer, in his detailed commentary for the first performance of the symphony, was at pains to deny any programme. Referring to the accommodation (Andante Sostuto) “it is quite true that this movement started off with a programme, but it got lost on the journey - so now, oh, we never mind it - and the music must be left to speak for itself - whatever that may mean”.

I believe Vaughan Williams was being deliberately coy about the inspiration behind the music and the same problems that for a long time bedevilled compositional programmes. A programme has clearly been echoed in the reception of this seemingly abstract, E minor symphony. For me, this deeply philosophical music explores two contradictory and at times conflicting landscapes that shape all of our lives. Firstly, then the neurotic and the physical world, be it the drama of a landscape, the sea or the cosmos, underpinning. This is what Jung called the collected landscape. The Symphony is scored in four movements:

I. Moderato maestoso

This movement was originally sub-titled Waverley Prelude which perhaps alludes to the original Hardy influence on the symphony, though the composer himself made that very clear. The theme seemed to have been playing organ music from Bach’s St Matthew Passion. To this listener, the opening E minor chords conjure up a vast cloud-covered landscape, pierced by shafts of sunlight that are so typical of the uplands of Salisbury Plain, but there the allusion ends. The mysterious, forbidding atmosphere gives way to passages of alternating tensity and tenderness with a trio of golden-hued saxophones to the fore. Throughout the scoring is dense with frequent modulations of key. The conflict is partially relieved by a quintessentially E minor violin solo, reminiscent of the performance of that work.

II. Andante sostenuto

This is a slow movement of an RVW symphony; surely we can expect calm and serenity? Alas not, and it would not be appropriate. The words “Andante” and “Sostenuto” are clearly inscribed on parts of earlier manuscripts of this score. I don’t wish to give them the same significance of say, Mahler’s often anguished annotations to the score of his Ninth and I believe that they are to be read in context. Each of the movements clearly demonstrated, vital to our understanding of this music. The movement opens with a reflective theme on flugelhorn, taken and developed by a theme that is slowly and majestically detached. The second part of the mighty Sea Symphony, echoes of which can be heard in the quiet last movement of that work. Once the audience are there, all too temporarily as is often the case. The parallel structures of this movement is not as evident as the opening. Its message is that no easy on the ear. This grim march was apparently inspired by the legend of the ghostly drummer of Salisbury Plain. There then follows a much gentler and at times, night-time music. No way is this to be in the category of the Andante Sostuto. “it is quite true that this movement started off with a programme, but it got lost on the journey - so now, oh, we never mind it - and the music must be left to speak for itself - whatever that may mean”.

The Symphony is scored in four movements: I. Moderato maestoso, II. Andante sostenuto, III. Allegro pesante and IV. Andante tranquillo. These movements are prominent throughout this movement and unifying one element. There are parallels with the corresponding movement of the Ninth Symphony, but also of Holst’s Phaëthon. This structure at times, night-time music gives way to passages of a programme. Does this music represent Tennyson’s ungentle struggle against death and does it represent her expression? is it just a dream, much in the same sense as Berlioz’s Symphonie Fantastique?

III. Scherzo: Allegro pesante

The saxophones, xylophone and celeste are prominent throughout this movement and unifying one element. There are parallels with the symphony “andante” movement and unifying one element. They are the most important to resolve this movement and unifying one element. The opening slide of the opening of the last movement.

IV. Andante tranquillo

Originally sub-titled Landscape, this concluding movement is RVW’s final testament and in my view a great musical utterance, representing what the composer wanted to achieve in his music and his own life. In the serene calm of Salisbury Cathedral, a spire reaching skywards to the unknown. In between is music of both great turbulence and nostalgia, the meaning of which can not but nevertheless challenge the listener and makes it a great work of art.
Vernon Handley’s account was released commercially on EMI in 1994 as part of his cycle with the RLPO and I reviewed it in the very first edition of this Journal. This record has now recently been reissued on the CFP label with, I think, a better sound quality. I have little to add to my previous remarks. This is a deeply committed and powerful performance; the visionary ending is realized to great effect. As he descends to the low A-flat, he employs a brittle almost harsh straight tone that seems out of character especially against Vaughan-Williams’s lush harmonies and piano setting.

Sir Andrew Davis’s cycle of the symphonies with the BBC Symphony Orchestra on TelDEC has a mixed reception and his interpretations vary in insight, with several of his readings a disappointment. As he wrote of his Sixth Symphony, “It is a very disappointing Pastoral; but the Ninth is given a good performance with committed playing by the orchestra.” His Sixth Symphony is a bit recessed, so it pays to have the volume up. The flute is magnificent, the beauty of its playing throughout giving an air of remoteness and mystery. Davis is particularly successful in the two inner movements. By contrast, his slow movement (slower even than Previn) in the andante sostenuto can on occasions prove the passages of subtle string and solo violin writing in sharp contrast to the brutal march theme. Conversely, the scherzo is taken briskly, the clear acoustic allowing the solo violin and xylophone to the fore before the movement dissolves away with the drum tap. The finale is very well played but ultimately lacks that elusive visionary quality, though the ending is very moving.

Leonard Slaterkin, one of a number of distinguished American conductors who have shown great empathy for Vaughan Williams, has recorded the complete cycle twice, on Decca and on London. Decca’s recording was highly acclaimed by the Philadelphia. Many would argue that overall, in terms of recording quality, orchestral playing and interpretation, it is the finest currently available. The Nether has received a good but not outstanding performance; the music is played straight, with tempi on the brisk side throughout. I am not convinced he has penetrating the depths of this enigmatic music, the hairs on this listener’s neck certainly remain unutilized as the final chord dies away. One interesting point, David Mason, the flagbearer for the world premiere is also the soloist in this performance.

I reviewed Bernard Hattink’s interpretation of every symphony on EMI in the Society’s journal last year. Subsequent listening to it, if anything, deepened my admiration for this superbly recorded and played disc. He brings to the interpretation a number of provocative observations and, confirming the opinion of the noted, and perhaps in this repertoire, surprisingly empathetic music critic, Neville Cardus. In a review of the new Manchester Symphony Orchestra recording of the Ninth Symphony, Cardus wrote, “I am not without a certain suspicion as to the whole Manchester Symphony Orchestra. This is a very beautiful playing, but for that great soloist.” This is a deeply committed and powerful performance; the visionary ending is realized to great effect. As he descends to the low A-flat, he employs a brittle almost harsh straight tone that seems out of character especially against Vaughan-Williams’s lush harmonies and piano setting.

Terfel’s recording of the symphony on EMI in the Society’s journal last year. Subsequent listening to it, if anything, deepened my admiration for this superbly recorded and played disc. He brings to the interpretation a number of provocative observations and, confirming the opinion of the noted, and perhaps in this repertoire, surprisingly empathetic music critic, Neville Cardus. In a review of the new Manchester Symphony Orchestra recording of the Ninth Symphony, Cardus wrote, “I am not without a certain suspicion as to the whole Manchester Symphony Orchestra. This is a very beautiful playing, but for that great soloist.”

Bryn Terfel’s recording has come under fire from critics for being overly lyrical. It is certain the richest of the nine recordings in its interpretation, but I’m not convinced that this is a weakness – or necessarily a strength. There seems to be a predisposition against romanticism and emotionalism in the reading of British art music. If one considers the stylistic trait to be appropriate, then Terfel’s recording may, indeed, be true.

Terfel brings the full weight and color of his instrument to bear on the music and he is rarely better; his voice remains a confectionary delight; his tone is lovely and his diction is excellent. He demonstrates a remarkable agility and flexibility for the more lyrical passages. Nonetheless, there are moments in the more lyrical pieces where his technique shows signs of wear. Interestingly, there are choices that he makes with his timbre which could be considered questionable. Of particular note is his reading of the line, “And when the west is red with the sunset embers” in Bright is the Ring of Words. As he descends to the low A-flat, he employs a brittle almost harsh straight tone that seems out of character especially against Vaughan Williams’s lush harmonies and piano setting.

The Roadside Fire

The point of this article has been to offer the opinions of one aficionado of the Songs of Travel. My opinions are based not only on my artistic sensibilities, but also on my experience as a professional operatic baritone and teacher of singing. Still, rather than事を残すか…ことなどは多情な運命に出ることが多い。もし、私はそんな偏見を残すとしたら、それは無分別で、あるいは狭隘な偏見であることを理解していただきたく思います。

The Song of the Vagabond

The point of this article has been to offer the opinions of one aficionado of the Songs of Travel. My opinions are based not only on my artistic sensibilities, but also on my experience as a professional operatic baritone and teacher of singing. Still, rather than…

Conclusions

The point of this article has been to offer the opinions of one aficionado of the Songs of Travel. My opinions are based not only on my artistic sensibilities, but also on my experience as a professional operatic baritone and teacher of singing. Still, rather than...
The Recordings:

The recordings of the Songs of Travel were made in 1922, 1958 and 1964. The performances were conducted by Howard Hanson (1896-1981) and are among the most notable of his career. Hanson was a lifelong admirer of Roger Sessions and his compositions, and the Songs of Travel were composed in 1935. The Songs of Travel are divided into two cycles: the first cycle is composed of 24 songs, and the second cycle is composed of 12 songs. The second cycle is divided into two parts: the first part contains 6 songs, and the second part contains 6 songs. The Songs of Travel are known for their intricate contrapuntal writing and their use of modal harmonies.
Handley’s 1998 recordings of the VW symphonies span the first 23 years of his career. He and the BBC Symphony Orchestra produced a series of recordings for the Virgin Classics label. It begins with his first symphony which is a work full of different characters and moods. The first movement is a study in contrasts, from the opening movement’s slow and majestic introduction to the brisk and rhythmically active central section. The finale, however, is a concise and energetic coda that quickly brings the symphony to a close. Handley’s conducting is characterized by a strong sense of dramatic urgency, and he has a clear understanding of the work’s structural and thematic organization.

The second symphony, A Sea Symphony, is a work that reflects Handley’s interest in the sea and its symbolism. The opening movement introduces the sea as a powerful and mysterious force, and the following movements explore its various aspects, from the calm and tranquil to the violent and tempestuous. Handley’s interpretation is characterized by a strong sense of drama and emotion, and he perfectly captures the work’s kaleidoscopic nature.

Handley’s third symphony, Pastoral Symphony, is a work that reflects his interest in the pastoral and the countryside. The opening movement is a study in the pastoral idiom, with its simple and repetitive rhythms and the use of the oboe to create a sense of pastoral serenity. The following movements explore the different aspects of the pastoral, from the peaceful and rural to the more active and energetic. Handley’s interpretation is characterized by a strong sense of drama and emotion, and he perfectly captures the work’s kaleidoscopic nature.

Handley’s fourth symphony, London Symphony, is a work that reflects his interest in the capital city. The opening movement is a study in the urban idiom, with its fast and frenetic rhythms and the use of the trumpet to create a sense of urban excitement. The following movements explore the different aspects of the city, from the bustling and busy to the more quiet and reflective. Handley’s interpretation is characterized by a strong sense of drama and emotion, and he perfectly captures the work’s kaleidoscopic nature.

Handley’s fifth symphony, Symphony No. 5, is a work that reflects his interest in the sea and its symbolism. The opening movement introduces the sea as a powerful and mysterious force, and the following movements explore its various aspects, from the calm and tranquil to the violent and tempestuous. Handley’s interpretation is characterized by a strong sense of drama and emotion, and he perfectly captures the work’s kaleidoscopic nature.

Handley’s sixth symphony, A Sea Symphony, is a work that reflects Handley’s interest in the sea and its symbolism. The opening movement introduces the sea as a powerful and mysterious force, and the following movements explore its various aspects, from the calm and tranquil to the violent and tempestuous. Handley’s interpretation is characterized by a strong sense of drama and emotion, and he perfectly captures the work’s kaleidoscopic nature.

Handley’s seventh symphony, Pastoral Symphony, is a work that reflects his interest in the pastoral and the countryside. The opening movement is a study in the pastoral idiom, with its simple and repetitive rhythms and the use of the oboe to create a sense of pastoral serenity. The following movements explore the different aspects of the pastoral, from the peaceful and rural to the more active and energetic. Handley’s interpretation is characterized by a strong sense of drama and emotion, and he perfectly captures the work’s kaleidoscopic nature.

Handley’s eighth symphony, London Symphony, is a work that reflects his interest in the capital city. The opening movement is a study in the urban idiom, with its fast and frenetic rhythms and the use of the trumpet to create a sense of urban excitement. The following movements explore the different aspects of the city, from the bustling and busy to the more quiet and reflective. Handley’s interpretation is characterized by a strong sense of drama and emotion, and he perfectly captures the work’s kaleidoscopic nature.

Handley’s ninth symphony, Symphony No. 9, is a work that reflects his interest in the sea and its symbolism. The opening movement introduces the sea as a powerful and mysterious force, and the following movements explore its various aspects, from the calm and tranquil to the violent and tempestuous. Handley’s interpretation is characterized by a strong sense of drama and emotion, and he perfectly captures the work’s kaleidoscopic nature.

Handley’s tenth symphony, Symphony No. 10, is a work that reflects his interest in the sea and its symbolism. The opening movement introduces the sea as a powerful and mysterious force, and the following movements explore its various aspects, from the calm and tranquil to the violent and tempestuous. Handley’s interpretation is characterized by a strong sense of drama and emotion, and he perfectly captures the work’s kaleidoscopic nature.

Handley’s eleventh symphony, Symphony No. 11, is a work that reflects his interest in the sea and its symbolism. The opening movement introduces the sea as a powerful and mysterious force, and the following movements explore its various aspects, from the calm and tranquil to the violent and tempestuous. Handley’s interpretation is characterized by a strong sense of drama and emotion, and he perfectly captures the work’s kaleidoscopic nature.

Handley’s twelfth symphony, Symphony No. 12, is a work that reflects his interest in the sea and its symbolism. The opening movement introduces the sea as a powerful and mysterious force, and the following movements explore its various aspects, from the calm and tranquil to the violent and tempestuous. Handley’s interpretation is characterized by a strong sense of drama and emotion, and he perfectly captures the work’s kaleidoscopic nature.

Handley’s thirteenth symphony, Symphony No. 13, is a work that reflects his interest in the sea and its symbolism. The opening movement introduces the sea as a powerful and mysterious force, and the following movements explore its various aspects, from the calm and tranquil to the violent and tempestuous. Handley’s interpretation is characterized by a strong sense of drama and emotion, and he perfectly captures the work’s kaleidoscopic nature.

Handley’s fourteenth symphony, Symphony No. 14, is a work that reflects his interest in the sea and its symbolism. The opening movement introduces the sea as a powerful and mysterious force, and the following movements explore its various aspects, from the calm and tranquil to the violent and tempestuous. Handley’s interpretation is characterized by a strong sense of drama and emotion, and he perfectly captures the work’s kaleidoscopic nature.

Handley’s fifteenth symphony, Symphony No. 15, is a work that reflects his interest in the sea and its symbolism. The opening movement introduces the sea as a powerful and mysterious force, and the following movements explore its various aspects, from the calm and tranquil to the violent and tempestuous. Handley’s interpretation is characterized by a strong sense of drama and emotion, and he perfectly captures the work’s kaleidoscopic nature.

Handley’s sixteenth symphony, Symphony No. 16, is a work that reflects his interest in the sea and its symbolism. The opening movement introduces the sea as a powerful and mysterious force, and the following movements explore its various aspects, from the calm and tranquil to the violent and tempestuous. Handley’s interpretation is characterized by a strong sense of drama and emotion, and he perfectly captures the work’s kaleidoscopic nature.

Handley’s seventeenth symphony, Symphony No. 17, is a work that reflects his interest in the sea and its symbolism. The opening movement introduces the sea as a powerful and mysterious force, and the following movements explore its various aspects, from the calm and tranquil to the violent and tempestuous. Handley’s interpretation is characterized by a strong sense of drama and emotion, and he perfectly captures the work’s kaleidoscopic nature.

Handley’s eighteenth symphony, Symphony No. 18, is a work that reflects his interest in the sea and its symbolism. The opening movement introduces the sea as a powerful and mysterious force, and the following movements explore its various aspects, from the calm and tranquil to the violent and tempestuous. Handley’s interpretation is characterized by a strong sense of drama and emotion, and he perfectly captures the work’s kaleidoscopic nature.

Handley’s nineteenth symphony, Symphony No. 19, is a work that reflects his interest in the sea and its symbolism. The opening movement introduces the sea as a powerful and mysterious force, and the following movements explore its various aspects, from the calm and tranquil to the violent and tempestuous. Handley’s interpretation is characterized by a strong sense of drama and emotion, and he perfectly captures the work’s kaleidoscopic nature.

Handley’s twentieth symphony, Symphony No. 20, is a work that reflects his interest in the sea and its symbolism. The opening movement introduces the sea as a powerful and mysterious force, and the following movements explore its various aspects, from the calm and tranquil to the violent and tempestuous. Handley’s interpretation is characterized by a strong sense of drama and emotion, and he perfectly captures the work’s kaleidoscopic nature.

Handley’s twenty-first symphony, Symphony No. 21, is a work that reflects his interest in the sea and its symbolism. The opening movement introduces the sea as a powerful and mysterious force, and the following movements explore its various aspects, from the calm and tranquil to the violent and tempestuous. Handley’s interpretation is characterized by a strong sense of drama and emotion, and he perfectly captures the work’s kaleidoscopic nature.

Handley’s twenty-second symphony, Symphony No. 22, is a work that reflects his interest in the sea and its symbolism. The opening movement introduces the sea as a powerful and mysterious force, and the following movements explore its various aspects, from the calm and tranquil to the violent and tempestuous. Handley’s interpretation is characterized by a strong sense of drama and emotion, and he perfectly captures the work’s kaleidoscopic nature.

Handley’s twenty-third symphony, Symphony No. 23, is a work that reflects his interest in the sea and its symbolism. The opening movement introduces the sea as a powerful and mysterious force, and the following movements explore its various aspects, from the calm and tranquil to the violent and tempestuous. Handley’s interpretation is characterized by a strong sense of drama and emotion, and he perfectly captures the work’s kaleidoscopic nature.

Handley’s twenty-fourth symphony, Symphony No. 24, is a work that reflects his interest in the sea and its symbolism. The opening movement introduces the sea as a powerful and mysterious force, and the following movements explore its various aspects, from the calm and tranquil to the violent and tempestuous. Handley’s interpretation is characterized by a strong sense of drama and emotion, and he perfectly captures the work’s kaleidoscopic nature.

Handley’s twenty-fifth symphony, Symphony No. 25, is a work that reflects his interest in the sea and its symbolism. The opening movement introduces the sea as a powerful and mysterious force, and the following movements explore its various aspects, from the calm and tranquil to the violent and tempestuous. Handley’s interpretation is characterized by a strong sense of drama and emotion, and he perfectly captures the work’s kaleidoscopic nature.

Handley’s twenty-sixth symphony, Symphony No. 26, is a work that reflects his interest in the sea and its symbolism. The opening movement introduces the sea as a powerful and mysterious force, and the following movements explore its various aspects, from the calm and tranquil to the violent and tempestuous. Handley’s interpretation is characterized by a strong sense of drama and emotion, and he perfectly captures the work’s kaleidoscopic nature.
The epilogue consists of almost no original material. Of the twenty-five measures of music in the epilogue, eighteen can be directly attributed to material from previous songs. The first of these, of course, is the Fanfare Motif used in both the first and third measures of the epilogue. The augmentation of the motif, coupled with the descending bass line, belies the age and perhaps failing health of the Vagabond.

The Roadside Fire

Vaughan Williams further quotes 22 of the cycle. As evidenced in the following songs, the end of this relationship is not an easy thing for the Vagabond. And which head mints was an “uncomfortable sensation” may have been executed by careful design on Vaughan Williams’s part.

The introduction of this material comes at a moment in the poem when the Vagabond is at peace with himself and with his fate. By setting this material in major, Vaughan Williams seems to be reinforcing the notion that the Vagabond is at peace with himself and with his fate.

As the final note in the vocal line is released, the piano begins a brief postlude which quotes as the final note in the vocal line is released, the piano begins a brief postlude which quotes

The reading of the Fourth Symphony is marvellous too, perhaps less revelatory. I miss some of the vehemence and anger to be found elsewhere, and the hugely wide-ranging second subject of the first movement seems lacking in passion, with the articulation both of the melody itself and the accompanying chords strangely literal and unconvincing. The slow movement goes better but the scherzo and finale seem strangely separate and unconnected. The atmosphere of profound sadness and contemplation is not abandoned for this message through, and this is a kind of miracle. Vernon Handley leaves us wanting, at the end, to continue this contemplation. It is a magnificent performance.

The piece was commissioned by the BBC for the 1940 Proms but not performed until the end of the year because the season was cancelled. The choir sings in unison to words selected from St. John’s Gospel. The work is a celebration of the agony of the cross. The piece was commissioned by the BBC for the 1940 Proms but not performed until the end of the year because the season was cancelled. The choir sings in unison to words selected from St. John’s Gospel. The work is a celebration of the agony of the cross.

The terrific performance of the Fourth Symphony makes this a desirable issue, and the Mass adds to its attractions. With the Choral Songs, which seem not to be otherwise recorded, the disc becomes an essential purchase for RVW enthusiasts.

Handley leads us to the movement’s climax in a way that seems very much like triumph. The triumph of what, over what? … of miracle. Vernon Handley leaves us wanting, at the end, to continue this contemplation. It is a magnificent performance.

The terrific performance of the Fourth Symphony makes this a desirable issue, and the Mass adds to its attractions. With the Choral Songs, which seem not to be otherwise recorded, the disc becomes an essential purchase for RVW enthusiasts.
One of the problems with a symphony that proceeds, not always but sometimes, is that one runs the risk of the audience becoming restless. Vaughan Williams was anyone’s guess as to where he wanted to take us. The new Hickox recording is something of a luxury item. I believe the sound is superior, it usually is with Chandos, but the interpretation is equally opulent. Handley has in my opinion a better grasp of the symphony.

Flor Campi is a work that has been less frequently recorded. The Primrose/Bohm version has a rich viola tone but on the EMI transfer a certain amount of it is lost, which is unfortunate. With Primrose it is a concerted work without a solo part, and which works on a large scale. Christopher Balmer remains part of the whole. I particularly like the start of the piece with its viola solo in a warm acoustic. The whole work allows the soloist to weaver into the overall texture. This is true of the initial choral passage. It is within the overall sound space and not particularly well heard. It is a work that makes us believe. There is a recording of the Parrita by Sir Adrian Boult and the London Philharmonic Orchestra made in 1956 and re-released some years ago on “Double Decca” (together with other orchestral works) on tape. Handley’s recording offers a further benefit coming from all parts of the symphony orchestra. Maybe with this re-issue this rather underplayed work will capture the hearts of all who should know their RVW.

I suggested that the dynamics were beautifully managed in the Symphony. The viola solo then takes on the chorus, then with the other instruments in the same class. There is always the possibility that the solo instrument, Solomonicus will break out from the hush. It can also sound clouded. Christopher Balmer enjoyed the build up to the choral crescendo at the start of Revertere revertere Solomanticum which I found to be smooth and mysterious. I suppose one misses Poppo’s tone but this is a fine reading. This is a magical gentle diminuendo in the middle of the final section that allows the soloist to enter and the final choral/strings harmony were for me high points in a favourite version of Flor Campi.

I have also felt that Evelyn Rockett’s playing of the Oboe Concerto emphasised the staccato in the solo part. It is in addition, a very slow interpretation, taking around two minutes longer than Small. Even Roger Wiinfield with the Northern Sinfonia is brisker and this has struck me as sluggish. Much more to my taste is Celia Nicklin with ASM! This has similarities with Neil Black and the DG recording with Daniel Barenboim. Jonathan Small is also a ‘creamy’ sound on a different scale. James and this was not recorded of course until 4 years later, rather in front of the orchestra. The delightful minuet works best for me. The breezy opening of the third movement is light and airy but I felt there was a little too great a distance between orchestra and soloist during the passage of short solo runs over low string figures.

In conclusion it remains only to say that this is a wonderful CD. The fine photograph of ‘Tud’ Handley reminds us of his legacy to British music. Long may it continue.

Mark Aquilith

Vaughan Williams: Sinfonia Antonia / Alison Hargan (soprano)

Jan Tracey (organ), Serenade to Music, Partita for double string orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Choir, Orchestra, Vernon Handley, EMI Classics for Pleasure 7243 5 75313 2 0 (Budget price)

Example 1: “Bright is the Ring of Words” c/c’ Form Material.

The poem itself is divided into two stanzas of eight lines each. The rhyme scheme is inconsistent, the first stanza being abcbde, while the second is abab.

I have Trod the Upward and the Downward Slope
I have trod the upward and the downward slope;
I have endured and done in days before;
I have longed for all, but everfar to hope;
And I have lived and loved, and closed the door.

The final song in the cycle is through-composed. Stevenson’s poem consists of one stanza of four lines alternating eleven and ten syllables each. The rhyme scheme is abab. In the “Motivic and Thematic Elements” section of this chapter, this song will be discussed more detail to illuminate the material Vaughan Williams uses to unify the cycle.

MOTIVIC AND THEMATIC ELEMENTS

In addition to dramatic elements and a cohesive story line, Vaughan Williams also employs various themes and motifs to unify the cycle musically. Table 1 depicts each of these themes and motifs.

The themes and motifs are drawn from four of the songs and utilized in two others: Youth and Love and I Have Trod the Upward and the Downward Slope. Each of these songs will be discussed in detail analyzing the appearances of the various thematic and motivic elements. Only Let Beauty Awake, In Dreams, and The Infinite Shining Heaven have no unifying material within.

Table 1: Motivic and Thematic Material

The two motifs from The Vagabond are immediately recognizable in the opening measures of the song. Mark Kennedy refers to the “minstrel accompaniment” as a kind of “leitmotif for the cycle.” The walking motif, as it will be referred to in this text, symbolizes by its constant motion the continuing journey of the Vagabond. The fantasy motif, however, symbolizes the aspects of nobility and bravado which were discussed in the article analyzing the story created by Vaughan Williams. Because of the nature of the poem, it may be argued that the themes in The Roadside Fire are intended to evoke feelings of new love or the idealism of youth. Also due to the nature of the poetry, it may be argued that the material drawn from Whitier Must I Wander? is intended to remind the listener of the weariness of the traveler and the more mature, perhaps even jaded, man he becomes.

According to Kennedy, Vaughan Williams was especially drawn to texts and musical material associated with music and musicians and set them with great care and compassion. This section of the chapter, this song will be discussed more detail to illuminate the material Vaughan Williams uses to unify the cycle.

The Vagabond

Example 2: “Whither” Main Theme

...a little too great a distance between orchestra and soloist during the passage of short solo runs over low string figures.

The final song in the cycle is through-composed. Stevenson’s poem consists of one stanza of four lines alternating eleven and ten syllables each. The rhyme scheme is abab. In the “Motivic and Thematic Elements” section of this chapter, this song will be discussed more detail to illuminate the material Vaughan Williams uses to unify the cycle.

MOTIVIC AND THEMATIC ELEMENTS

In addition to dramatic elements and a cohesive story line, Vaughan Williams also employs various themes and motifs to unify the cycle musically. Table 1 depicts each of these themes and motifs.

The themes and motifs are drawn from four of the songs and utilized in two others: Youth and Love and I Have Trod the Upward and the Downward Slope. Each of these songs will be discussed in detail analyzing the appearances of the various thematic and motivic elements. Only Let Beauty Awake, In Dreams, and The Infinite Shining Heaven have no unifying material within.

Table 1: Motivic and Thematic Material

The two motifs from The Vagabond are immediately recognizable in the opening measures of the song. Mark Kennedy refers to the “minstrel accompaniment” as a kind of “leitmotif for the cycle.” The walking motif, as it will be referred to in this text, symbolizes by its constant motion the continuing journey of the Vagabond. The fantasy motif, however, symbolizes the aspects of nobility and bravado which were discussed in the article analyzing the story created by Vaughan Williams. Because of the nature of the poem, it may be argued that the themes in The Roadside Fire are intended to evoke feelings of new love or the idealism of youth. Also due to the nature of the poetry, it may be argued that the material drawn from Whitier Must I Wander? is intended to remind the listener of the weariness of the traveler and the more mature, perhaps even jaded, man he becomes.

According to Kennedy, Vaughan Williams was especially drawn to texts and musical material associated with music and musicians and set them with great care and compassion. This section of the chapter, this song will be discussed more detail to illuminate the material Vaughan Williams uses to unify the cycle.

The Vagabond

Example 2: “Whither” Main Theme

...a little too great a distance between orchestra and soloist during the passage of short solo runs over low string figures.

The final song in the cycle is through-composed. Stevenson’s poem consists of one stanza of four lines alternating eleven and ten syllables each. The rhyme scheme is abab. In the “Motivic and Thematic Elements” section of this chapter, this song will be discussed more detail to illuminate the material Vaughan Williams uses to unify the cycle.

MOTIVIC AND THEMATIC ELEMENTS

In addition to dramatic elements and a cohesive story line, Vaughan Williams also employs various themes and motifs to unify the cycle musically. Table 1 depicts each of these themes and motifs.

The themes and motifs are drawn from four of the songs and utilized in two others: Youth and Love and I Have Trod the Upward and the Downward Slope. Each of these songs will be discussed in detail analyzing the appearances of the various thematic and motivic elements. Only Let Beauty Awake, In Dreams, and The Infinite Shining Heaven have no unifying material within.
Poetically, Youth and Love consists of two stanzas each of five lines following a rondó-like rhyme scheme of abaab. There is only one syllabic alternation between the two stanzas mirroring their symmetry. Vaughan Williams, with such a brevity, creates a broad farm sound. There are two clear sections, separated by texture, melody, and harmony. At the end, there is a brief restatement of the A section, strikingly similar in design to that employed in The Roadside Fire.

In Dreams
In dreams, unhappy, I behold you stand
As heretofore.
The unremembered tokens in your hand
Aval no more.
No more the morning glow, no more the grace,
Endurances, endears.
Cold blows the light of time upon your face
And shows your tears.
He came and went. Perchance you wept a while
And then forgot.
Ah me! but that left you with a smile
Forgets you not.

In Dreams is, in essence, through-composed, according to Dickinson. While this may be technically accurate, the statement itself overemphasizes the formal elements present. The song can be divided into two parts, not necessarily equal in size. There is a clear division between sections at m. 25. The next section begins exactly as the beginning, implying an A’ section. After a mere seven measures, the second material is introduced, similar to the first section only in its chromaticism. Stevenson’s poem, consists of three stanzas of four lines each following a consistent abab rhyme scheme.

The Infinite Shining Heavens
The infinite shining heavens
In dreams I saw in the night
Uncountable angel stars
Showering sorrow and light.
I saw them distant as heaven,
Dumb and shining and dead,
And the idle stars of the night
Were dearer to me than bread.

Night after night in my sorrow
The stars [stood] over the sea,
Tell me! I looked in the disk
And a star has broken down to me!

The Infinite Shining Heavens is structured similarly to In Dreams. A clearly defined break is sections in apparent m. 32 with what also appears to be a restatement of the opening material. In this case, however, Vaughan Williams introduces new material even earlier, just four measures after the vocal entrance. Again, Absalom’s poem is structurally in three stanzas of four lines with an uneven rhyme scheme of abcd.

Whither Must I Wander?
Home no more home to me, whither must I wander?
Hunger my driver, I go where I must.
Cold blows the wind, in a Augustus hill and heather,
Thick drives the rain, and my roof is in the dust.
Loved of wise men was the shade of my roof-tree.

The true word of welcome was spoken in the door—
Dear days of old, with the faces in the firelight,
Kind folks of old, you come again no more.

Home was home then, my dear, full of kindly faces,
Home was home then, my dear, happy for the child.
Fire and the windows bright glimmered on the moord;
Song, tuneful song, built a palace in the wild.

Now, when day dawns on the brow of the moord,
Lone stands the house, and the chimney-stone is cold.
Lone let it stand, now the friends are all departed.
The kind hearts, the true hearts, that loved the place of old.

Spring shall come, come again, calling up the moorfolk, Spring shall bring the sun and rain, bring the bees and flowers; Red shall the heather bloom over hill and valley,
Soft flow the stream through the even-flowing hours; Fair the day shine as it shone on my childhood.

The difference between the b and f sections is primarily harmonic. The voice is in an augmentation of the material from m. 15, beginning in the piano accompaniment and mirrored in the vocal line two beats later, and extending through m. 18 (see Ex. 1).

The playing of the coda finale is very successful in conveying a sense of purposeless drift into oblivion before the movement eventually fades to silence.

The Ninth is reviewed in my article on the symphony in this journal.

Whither Must I Wander? could be categorized as a “strophic bar.” The first two stanzas are set identically while the third is altered in the accompaniment to paint the text. The melody is altered rhythmically to compensate for variations in Stevenson’s meter, but is, with one exception, otherwise unchanged. The exception appears in m. 50, with the introduction of an A-natural to melodically accommodate the G minor harmony. There is no clear syllabic pattern in Stevenson’s poem.

The rhyme scheme of the first stanza is ababcded, while the second and third stanzas follow a scheme of abchehe.

Bright is the Ring of Words
Bright is the ring of words
When the sun man rings them,
Fair the fall of songs
When the singer sings them.
Still they are carolled and said –
On wings they are carried –
After the singer is dead –
And the maker buried.

Low as the singer lies
In the field of heather,
Songs of his fashion bring
Rose and I saw in the night.

Bright is the Ring of Words follows the format of In Dreams and The Infinite Shining Heavens with a more transparent restatement of the opening material in m. 20. What is particularly interesting in analyzing the structure of this song, however, is the subsequent material. The overall structure of the song, while easily divisible into two major sections, can also be divided into three subsections. The form of the piece becomes:

Movement 1

The Lake in the Mountains

A valuable and enterprising collection of VW chamber works, by the Nash Ensemble containing three of his best with one of his most intimate plus one of his few solo piano works.

Few will be disappointed by the standard of performance here, which with just a couple of exceptions is generally very good indeed.

To take the best first, the masterly Second Quartet, to my mind VW’s finest chamber work. Here the Hyperion disc has step opposition from the Award winning Maggini Quartet’s performance on Naxos.

The performance on Hyperion by the violonists Marianne Thorsen and Elizabeth Wexler, the viola Lawrence Power and cellist Paul Watkins, is as good as and in a beautifully paced and formed form. The minor sections are even finer. The same can be said of the last movement which the performers pull off most movingly. I would have welcomed more of the tautous, nervous energy that the Music Group of London brings to the 1st movement and the uninned viola in the 3rd movement as it tunes forwardly balanced.

In the Phantasy Quintet the above players are joined by viola player Louise Williams and again the disc has still competition from the Maggini with Garfield Jackson and the Music Group of London. Generally the Nash Ensemble’s performance is, especially in the faster sections crisp and very good indeed, the exception being the Lento-Alla Turandot section which is played in a slightly cool manner and cannot match the exquisite playing of the Maggini. Overall too for many the Nash’s performance will not quite displace the special performance of Music Group of London.

There is a slight problem with the recording quality in the works with piano, with a seasonal lack of focus in the mid-range resulting in an overall sound not as crisp and clear as I would have expected from the Hyperion engineers. The Violin Sonata of 1934 (not 1952 as stated on the booklet) is one of VW’s most fascinating and underrated works and is a particularly difficult one to bring off. The performance here by Marianne Thorsen and Ian Brown. The Theme & Variations last movement is particularly successful here. The 1st movement the particularly hard nut to crack and the performers here do pretty well but I still feel that they haven’t quite grasped the overall shape of this elusive symphony. In the central Scherzo, the performers take RVW’s morny troppo too much to heart and the performance lacks the energy and bite of the performance of Lydia Mordkovitch and Julian Milford on IMP Music. Although the Hyperion’s performance of the outer movements is much better than that on IMP and certainly more so than in the pioneering recording of the Menuhins.

The Lake in the Mountains, Six Studies in English Folksong, Phantasy Quintet, Violin Sonata & String Quartet No. 2, Hyperion CDA67313 (full price)

The Lake in the Mountains, Six Studies in English Folksong, Phantasy Quintet, Violin Sonata & String Quartet No. 2, Hyperion CDA67313 (full price)

This is a superb performance of the Job. The contrasting elements of RVW’s style are brilliantly realised. The LPO – especially the woodwind – are on excellent form. My only reservation is David Nolan’s performance of the gorgeous ‘Elichin’s Dance of Youth and Beauty’. This seems rather detached, failing to take wing. Having just heard Michael Davis’s melting account at the Proms, with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, under Andrew Davis, the prosaic quality of this recording is even more noticeable. A pity, as otherwise this is a highly recommended version.

The Lake in the Mountains is reviewed in my article on the symphony in this journal.

Songs of Dorset Song settings of poems by Barnes and by Hardy, nine composers including Vaughan Williams, Stephen Foulkes, Barton, and Colin Hunt, piano. Dunelm Records DH 0386. (47 minutes 43 seconds).

This review is a voyage of discovery. This CD of song settings of poems of Wordsworth, Barnes and Thomas Hardy is entitled Songs of Dorset. It includes the works of 9 composers including Vaughan Williams, Holst and Finzi. Some of the works are new to me, indeed some of the composers are also new to me. Hence a comprehensive and detailed review is not possible. The CD is produced by Dunelm Records of Glossop which is a record label of which I have had no previous experience.

The CD is excellently packaged with a booklet having a full colour cover showing a winter view along the river in Bath. The texts of all the songs...
This recording has had its detractors. It ended up as many readers will recall, on the sort of label you could buy in a small supermarket or a holiday camp shop. Noticeable omissions are ‘Dornach’ by Michael Gaisford, with a useful note by Michael Gray. The old Music on Record by Peter Gammond (1962) gave it a guarded ‘welcome’ due to a less than first-class effort from the orchestra and singers. The performers were a - in fact six set I said to Love by Finzi which is amongst the most varied in style on this CD.

The succeeding group of five songs are much more recent settings submitted by Lord, Edgar, Bailey and Dabney to the English Poetry and Song Society composers competition in 2001 and again are varied in style because we are presented with the music of 4 different composers.

The CD ends with four settings of Hardy poems by Vaughan Williams, in the English Blackmore Maidens (by the Stour), The Winter’s Willow and The Sailor’s Return.

For me the most musically engaging of the songs are those by the better known composers Vaughan Williams, Finzi and Holst.

Ed Ballantine

Westminster The Legacy - Holst: The Planets, Vaughan Williams: Greensleeves and Tallis Fantasia, conducted by Adrian Boult

DG471 240-2 (71.11) (mid price)

This recording has had its detractors. It ended up as many readers will recall, on the sort of label you could buy in a small supermarket or a holiday camp shop. Noticeable omissions are ‘Dornach’ by Michael Gaisford, with a useful note by Michael Gray. The old Music on Record by Peter Gammond (1962) gave it a guarded ‘welcome’ due to a less than first-class effort from the orchestra and singers. The performers were a - in fact six set I said to Love by Finzi which is amongst the most varied in style on this CD.

The succeeding group of five songs are much more recent settings submitted by Lord, Edgar, Bailey and Dabney to the English Poetry and Song Society composers competition in 2001 and again are varied in style because we are presented with the music of 4 different composers.

The CD ends with four settings of Hardy poems by Vaughan Williams, in the English Blackmore Maidens (by the Stour), The Winter’s Willow and The Sailor’s Return.

For me the most musically engaging of the songs are those by the better known composers Vaughan Williams, Finzi and Holst.

Ed Ballantine

English Brass for Music (Ireland: Downland Suite, The Holy Boy, Sergeant’s Song)

English Hymnals

The Planets

The Vagabond

Variations on Sine Nomine

Tallis Fantasia
The definition of “Song Cycle” is broad. It is a “composite form of vocal music consisting of a group of individually complete songs” for either solo or groups of voices. Further it “relates a series of events, or of impressions, or simply may be … unified by mood.” Early books on Vaughan Williams in his poetry, but by Vaughan Williams in his ordering of the songs. The main character is the Vagabond introduced in the first song. In this poem, the first of the poetic set as well, the Vagabond is ready to begin his journey. This is a young man, full of enthusiasm to leave the nest and strike out on his own. He challenges Nature and Fate to only provide a road and sky and he will be able to make do with whatever else he finds, eating broad he dips in nature, the grass. There is a profound sense of bravado in the Vagabond’s character. This type of characterization may have appealed to Vaughan Williams in his quest for a national musical identity in pre-war England.

In the second song of the cycle, the Vagabond is already abroad and is not without a sense of disillusionment. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Images of the poem are clear references to a sunrise and sunset. The beauty of nature as it appears in both day and night is enough to move the Vagabond emotionally. There are no complications to his existence; he is able to commune with and appreciate the splendor of the world around him.

By the third song of the cycle, however, there is another character prior to the discovery of the ninth song. The ninth song, as will be illustrated later in this text, provides the most obvious source of cohesion and unity in the entire cycle.

Nonetheless, a case can be made that Songs of Travel was conceived as a song cycle from the beginning. Accordingly, the intent of this article is to focus on the various elements that unify the nine songs into a cohesive cycle that reveal the cyclical elements of Vaughan Williams’s design. The texts and the story they relate will be addressed first. Then the narrative will focus on motivic and thematic elements which contribute to the overall design of Songs of Travel.

**Ralph Vaughan Williams**

**Songs of Travel**

*new complete edition 1960 for low voice* (pupil key)

1. *The Vagabond*
2. *The Green-Hunt’s Bane*
3. *The Bottomless Pit*
4. *Youth and Love*
5. *In Dreams*
6. *The London Ringing Mizen*
7. *Window over a Ruined House*
8. *Elegy to a Broke Wing*
9. *Here Ends the Uproar and the Promenade Song* (op. 59, pt. 2)

**Boaz & Hakow**

_Leader_ Peter Baker, _vocal soloist_ John Spencer, _Piano_ Liza Walker, _The York*
Robert Louis Stevenson:
A brief examination of the poet behind the Songs of Travel
by William M. Adams, D.M.A.

Biographical and Stylistic Information

Biographical Sketch
Robert Louis Stevenson was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, on November 13, 1850. In 1867, Stevenson entered Edinburgh University to pursue a career in civil engineering, after his father. In 1871, however, he abandoned his pursuit of civil engineering and focused his attention toward a career in literature. He worked with the firm WF Skene & Peacock and was admitted to the Scottish bar in 1875. His true interest lay in writing, however, and he began writing essays and short stories. His first essay, Roads, was published in 1873. His first short story, Lodging for the Night, was published in 1877.

This is life and death, joy and despair viewed from another era, as heaven and hell are juxtaposed in some kind of three-dimensional primeval reality, every bit as original, arresting and imaginative as Stravinsky’s ‘Rite’.

It is not necessary to have a religious leaning in order to tap into this unique work, nor does one need an understanding or preference for ballet (it is not), or indeed the whole of the Albert Hall should have been covered (not to mention VW’s music)…

Robert Louis Stevenson was involved in the collection of these works, though they were published posthumously.

Robert Louis Stevenson died of apoplexy in 1894 and was buried atop Mount Vaea, in Samoa. He suffered ill health throughout his life, including tuberculosis. It has been suggested at various times that tuberculosis was, in fact, the cause of his death. Ivan McLynn, however, believes that the hemorhage which finally claimed Stevenson was due, instead, to stress and overwork.

STYLISTIC INFLUENCES

On May 13, 1877, Stevenson wrote an article for British Weekly entitled Books “that have Influenced Me.” In this he attempted to shed some light on the authors, works, and genres which had the most impact on him personally and as an author. Many of the names he mentions are significant. Shakespeare suffered ill health throughout his life, as did Whittow, Wordsworth, Hardy, and Hugo. Stevenson commented that “the most influential books and the traits in which the influence are works of fiction.” Baldwin goes on to suggest that Stevenson is “truly tipping his hat to works of integration.”

Stevenson makes an interesting reference to a specific character and work of fiction which he found particularly engrossing: “Perhaps my dearest and best friend, outside of Shakespeare is D’Artagnan – the old D’Artagnan of the Vieux de Bragelonne. I know not a more human soul, nor, in his way, a finer; I shall be very sorry for the man who is so much of a pedant in morals that he cannot learn from the Captain of Musketeers.” This seems to be of particular interest when “examing the character of The Vagabond.

It is interesting to note that despite Stevenson’s success as an author, he was not widely accepted as a poet. Despite the successes of Underwoods and A Child’s Garden of Verses, he was often considered a second-rate poet. Sidney Colvin wrote of him, “It is one of the mysteries of literature that Louis’s hand, unenthusiastic, prosaic, dougled verse, should be waverering in verse.” Furthering the notion that Stevenson’s poetry was not well received was a letter in 1875 in which he wrote regarding his poetry that “I am an event; the whole of the Albert Hall should have been covered (not to mention VW’s music)…”

Stevenson has a familiar ballad in praise of the Op reef, saying that all he asks is Heven in the form of a poetry that he can dip into running water is enough for him to stand up for ever. One would at first sight, picking up that poem without knowing who Stevenson was, say that it was the only fit person to judge whether that poem was good or bad. But that tramp called in to bear witness would say in his own way that was the most malicious and wicked poem ever written, contemporaneous with a shoddy idealism the misery of a life of which Stevenson can have had no experience. He would speak with horror of the condition called Brokenness: after two or three months of unrelieved bread-and-butter, the stomach revolts and even the smell of a gaker’s shop is enough to make the man vomit.” A cup of hot tea to a tramp after innumerable cups of cold water - the Gospel creedmen loses its force here - is the greatest gift that can be given. But the poem is not written for tramps, it is written by an invalid with an overpowering desire for freedom and a hatred of the dietary delicacies that his condition demands, to be read by invalids in a similar case. It is a good poem but with evident limitations.”

This seems to be an overly-simplistic analysis of the poem. Few would agree that it is a prerequisite of Art to be realistic. Provided there is a level at which the reader, or listener, can identify with the protagonist, the Art will be effective.

Janet Adam Smith offers an explanation for the nature of these poems, and indeed all of Stevenson’s poetry, that may point directly to the appeal these poems may have had to the young and to Vaughan Williams and countless other readers.

We enjoy Stevenson’s poetry when we are young and full of emotion about situations that we have not yet experienced in real life. Some of his lyrics perfectly catch the moods of youth – the actual moods and the wished for fantasies. The verses of Youth and Longing – in with our romances longing for adventure and noble renunciation. Blues and the wind today moves us to tears for a lost home and a lost youth when our own childhood is only just round the corner. Under the wide and starry skies satisfies our aspirations for beauty and heroic death. The witty, the conversational, the narrative poems are slid over in our search for lines that crystallise our own airy, turbulent moods.

It seems logical that a man who took with works of imagination and characters such as d’Artagnan would write novels and poetry that also offer up idealistic characters and situations through which we, as readers, find our own success and escape. Exceptist philosophy in art, either literature or music, or any other art form can imagine, are nothing new. Works of art help us discover who we are, and are viewed as substandard of or a lesser quality to those that demand of their audience a reality. They are the dreams of their own lives. The Songs of Travel will probably never reach the same elevated status in critical discourse as the works of Goethe or Shakespeare. Still, Stevenson’s poetry should not be dismissed out of hand as amateurish or because of a perceived lack of realism in the situations found within.
Journal of theRVW Society

A Modern Proposal
It’s time for RVW to break into videopage... As far as I can tell (from California) none of his music is available on film. Imagine lavish new productions of Old King Cole and The Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains, together about 90 minutes long, on sale throughout the civilized world.

Aside from the personal promise one would derive from running out and buying such a DVD or VOD, consider what a formidable tool for the dissemination of RVW’s music this would be!

Forgive me a few generalizations on local popular culture: the more the music is enjoyed, the more the repertoire is enjoyed. Young composers please note: Vaughan Williams is a fine example of how a composer, especially a conductor – great and sincere though he was – is not always convinced that his own work, as he came off the rostrum: Well, if that’s modern music – I don’t like it!"

Here is another example. A query arouse about a certain note and a player asked him if B flat was correct. Vaughan Williams searched the score blinked at it, and with a rueful smile remarked: “Well, it looks wrong, and it sounds wrong – but it’s right!”

As a conductor he is not a great technician, but few composers get such satisfactory performances of their own music. Young composers please note: Vaughan Williams is a fine example of how a composer, especially a conductor – great and sincere though he was – is not always convinced that his own work, as he came off the rostrum: Well, if that’s modern music – I don’t like it!”

In 1938, Bernard Shore wrote: “The head of all our English music – Vaughan Williams – is a delight to any English orchestra. Something has already been said of a certain humility often seen in his music, and the complete understanding of the minds of the players. His stick is clear enough for his needs, and though he may not give the impression of effortless ease in his movements and gestures, he stands firmly on his feet and has a great and sincere though he was – is not always convinced that his own work, as he came off the rostrum: Well, if that’s modern music – I don’t like it!”

Bernard Shore also wrote a book entitled Sixteen Symphonies (1945), in which he gives a study of some of the greatest orchestral and choral works of RVW and his composers. The works range from Haydn to Walton and include with music examples, A London Symphony.

Both books were published by Longmans Green and can sometimes be found in second-hand bookshops. If one can get hold of them, both books are a joy to read from cover to cover.

Karen-Lisa Fletcher

Bernard Shore

After reading Michael Kennedy’s excellent article in the June edition of the Journal and the paragraph concerning RVW as a conductor, I thought Shore might be inspired to write another letter about Bullet. Bernard Shore’s tribute to the composer, including his book about Bullet. The Orchard Speaks. Bernard Shore was the Principal Viola in the BBC Symphony Orchestra 1930-40 and had ‘front line experience of Vaughan Williams’ baton.”

As the book is out of print and the copyright has reverted to the Author’s estate, I quote from the chapter on Modern Music and here acknowledge the source.

John Beech, a well-known tenor, sang the role of Jack the Giant Killer in ‘The Mayor of Casterbridge’ and was probably the best-known tenor in Britain. A London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sir Malcolm Sargent in 1938 included both RVW’s SUITE No. 1 and a performance of his work, which was considered to be one of the best of the season. The programme included RVW’s SONGS OF TRAVEL, a setting of Stevenson’s poems, which was considered to be one of the best of the season. The programme included RVW’s SONGS OF TRAVEL, a setting of Stevenson’s poems, which was considered to be one of the best of the season. The programme included RVW’s SONGS OF TRAVEL, a setting of Stevenson’s poems, which was considered to be one of the best of the season. The programme included RVW’s SONGS OF TRAVEL, a setting of Stevenson’s poems, which was considered to be one of the best of the season.

Notes


5 Ibid., 1.

6 Ibid., 3.

7 Ibid., 5.

8 Ibid., 15.

9 Ibid., 14.

10 Ibid., 1.


12 Smith, 247.

13 Smith, 247.

14 Ibid., 246.


16 Kennedy letter to Adams.

17 Ibid.


19 Kennedy, Catalogue, 26.

20 Ibid.

21 Banfield, 321.

22 Kennedy to Adams.
This discovery is no way an earth-shattering event, it just seems to fill in one missing detail in the publication history of a fairly minor RVW composition. However, it is also the work of a major composer and the discovery may be of service to a researcher or student in the future.

"Not seen by the writer before this publication.

Graham Mancy, Doverk

Music & Musicians
The first Clinicad Brit Awards were the teary shambles everyone has come to expect as “honoured” guest paid £250 a head to watch not terribly distinguished instrumentalists mime their own records.

A fine new feature this year was to have well known authorities on classical music like, or, Mohamed Fayed, introduce the tunes. The Albert Hall erupted into guttural when Fayed told the audience that Russell Watson was, in his fuggin’ opinion, a superior voice to Pavarotti.

But the evening sank to an all-time low with disgraceful humour. One commentator mentioned Boosey & Hawkes, the general composer Ralph Vaughan Williams is now in its 90s and frail, but she remains an icon of RVW. When the Brit Awards had invited her to come on the platform to receive the prize for the Best Orchestral Disc, which went to a Chands recording of her husband’s 2nd Symphony.

The disc’s conductor, Richard Hickox, was abroad, so Ursula would be accepting it on his behalf, and when the moment came the duff shuffled (with great effort) up onto the stage - only to find herself marooned in front of several hundred people, unacknowledged and ignored, with the awards anachronists (who clearly had no idea who Ms VW was, and probably wasn’t too sure about Mr WV either) pressed onto the next item.

It was horribly embarrassing and was aggravated when the stage staff tried to push Pato Churchill out of the public eye and down the backstage steps: a manoeuvre her 92-year-old legs could not and would not accomplish.

For the sake of the TV coverage the incident was patched over. But for those who were there and saw it, it was yet another indictment on the Brit Awards charge sheet.

Editor’s reply to Robert Rush
Thank you for your letter of 7/June enclosing the article from Private Eye about the Brit Awards. I was grateful to you for sending this to me as I had not seen it. All the details in the article are correct. I know this because it was I who accompanied Ursula up all those steps on the 2nd stage, only to have to turn round and come all the way back again. This was deeply embarrassing for both of us. Ursula was more forgiving than I, as she was presented with a bunch of flowers by the organisers. The Brit Awards people were suitably apologetic but it was a deeply humiliating experience.

Robert Rush

These songs were essentially “worthless” compared with the musical output of the major song composers of the late nineteenth century. While the publications of 1902 mentioned above could be mentioned that the basic style of these songs was homogenized, lacking any real individuality from composer to composer. The basic subject matter was generally pastoral and agricultural. While there were things published after 1902, there was an overall paucity in the period.”

The word “the” is omitted from Vaughan Williams’s setting. The music he composed was based on the text of Stevenson’s original, except for the passages dealing with the world “the” (in the last line of the poem) and the word “are” (in the second line of the final stanza, Stevenson’s text reads “The stars are thick as...”).

It is interesting that at the end of Chapter 1 of Book III of the same book, the editor (Dr. Howard Cale) has not included the passage dealing with the word “the” in Vaughan Williams’s setting.

This discovery is in no way an earth-shattering event, it just seems to fill in one missing detail in the publication history of a fairly minor RVW composition. However, it is also the work of a major composer and the discovery may be of service to a researcher or student in the future.

The Infinite Shining Heavens

The manuscript, in one of RVW’s neater hands, contains 39 bars plus an anonymous hymn prompted Vaughan Williams to Whither Must I Wander?.

It is also interesting that in the second volume of RVW’s catalogue of his works, the manuscripts, which were the subject of the漩涡, are included as being composed of RVW. It is also interesting that in the second volume of RVW’s catalogue of his works, the manuscripts, which were the subject of the漩涡, are included as belonging to the RVW Society.

Robert Rush

Two of the songs were first published in 1934. In full, the relevant passage runs as follows:

Doubtless every single member of the RVW Society is keenly aware with the seemingly disparaging remark by Philip Heseltine (aka Peter Warlock) about ‘a cow looking over a gate’ in relation to Vaughan William’s A Pastoral Symphony (June 2002 RVW Journal, page 6). But how many are aware of the context in which that alliterated remark was made? The quotation comes, in fact, from Cecil Gray’s Peter Warlock: A Memoir of Philip Heseltine published in 1934. In full, the relevant passage runs as follows:

This is not to say that all the songs by British composers are worthless. There are exceptions, such as Ralph Vaughan Williams’s music for the Brit Awards. However, it does seem to suggest that the musical output of the British composers is not as valuable as that of their contemporaries in other countries.

At no time does Vaughan Williams further stray from Stevenson’s text. Every poem is used exactly as Stevenson wrote it.

The Infinite Shining Heavens

Michael Kennedy has told how Vaughan Williams, in writing the Epilogue of The London Symphony, had made in a passage from the last chapter of H.G. Wells’s novel The War of the Worlds, the last line of the poem.

It may be argued that, after the death of Henry Purcell in 1695, there was a long “dry” period in England in the field of song. For example, the output of English composers of the same era leaves an “overall impression … of worthlessness.”...
It was the Fall of 1988. I was in my first semester as a transfer student at California State University San Bernardino. We were in rehearsal for a production of the musical The Fantasticks, in which I was singing the role of El Gallo. My voice teacher, Dr. Loren Filbeck, was giving a faculty recital. I was released from rehearsal just in time to catch the last thirty minutes of the recital. Those thirty minutes have had an enormous impact on the rest of my career.

The work which Loren chose to close his recital was Vaughan Williams Songs of Travel. I was completely unfamiliar with the work. My only exposure to the music of Vaughan Williams had been playing his folk song suites or the fantasias in high school band. Even then I remember always being drawn to the music, they were often my favorite pieces on the program, but my exposure ended there.

I can remember sitting enthralled by the sounds of this song cycle. At my next lesson I inquired about the work and nearly demanded I be allowed to study them. On my Junior Recital I performed The Vagabond, The Roadside Fire and Bright is the Ring of Words. On my Senior Recital, I closed the evening with the entire cycle.

Throughout my career I have returned to these songs time and again. They’ve become “old friends” to me. I sing them on recitals, in auditions, and I routinely teach them to my students. It was only fitting that as I ended my academic career, as a student, I should return to them again. I was amazed that so little had been devoted to these songs. I fear they have been taken for granted by singers and teachers of singing because of their general accessibility to younger voices. It was my feeling that a work needed to be produced analyzing the songs in more detail and providing both singers and teachers of singing a guidebook in how to approach the songs.

Thus, my doctoral treatise at the University of Texas at Austin was Ralph Vaughan Williams’s Songs of Travel: An Historical, Theoretical, and Performance Practice Investigation and Analysis. After discussing my work with Stephen Connock, it was decided that the October 2002 issue of the RVW Journal would be devoted to these songs. The articles I have submitted are edited from my treatise. I am very grateful to Mr. Connock for the opportunity to share my work with the readership of the Journal and to have this opportunity to introduce myself to my new friends and colleagues in the Ralph Vaughan Williams Society.

A brief history of the Songs of Travel

by William M. Adams, D.M.A.

An analysis of the historical information surrounding the creation of the Songs of Travel reveals a complicated and controversial history. This article will begin with a brief historical examination of the genesis of the poetry and conclude with a detailed discussion of the circumstances and events surrounding Vaughan Williams’s composition of the song cycle.

Historical Information about the Poetry

Sing me a song of a lad that is gone,
Say, could that lad be I?
Merry of soul he sailed on a day
Over the sea to Skye.\(^1\)

Perhaps Stevenson’s most famous entry in the Songs of Travel is the forty-fourth poem in the set, which has become best known as the song Over the sea to Skye. This particular poem (based on a Scottish melody which is now considered the traditional melody for this text) has seen many varied musical incarnations. The whole collection consists of forty-six poems, written during Stevenson’s south sea cruises between 1888 and 1894.

The set of poems was first published in 1895, in the fourteenth volume of many varied musical incarnations. The whole collection consists of forty-six poems, written during Stevenson’s south sea cruises between 1888 and 1894.

The Elgar Society and the RVW Society are proud to announce a joint two-day International Symposium, at the British Library in London, on 29 March and 30 March 2003. Titled A Special Flame: The Music of Elgar and Vaughan Williams, the Symposium will consist of lectures, discussion and recitals, as well as an evening concert of chamber music by Elgar and Vaughan Williams. With well-known speakers from the UK and America, this Symposium will examine Elgar’s and Vaughan Williams’s music and the social background which shaped their remarkable creativity. It promises to be a memorable weekend of study, discussion and exploration.

The programme is as follows:

**Saturday 29th March 2003**

09.30 Coffee

10.25 Welcome by Stephen Connock, Chairman for Day 1.

10.30 Key note address: Elgar and Vaughan Williams: A 21st Century Celebration by Michael Kennedy

11.15 ‘It looks all wrong, but sounds all right’: The Social Background to the Life and Music of Elgar and Vaughan Williams by Andrew Neill

12.00 Dreamers of Dreams: Elgar’s and Vaughan Williams’s songs by Clare-Louise Lucas (mezzo-soprano) and Jonathan Darnborough (piano)

13.00 Lunch

13.45 Elgar and Vaughan Williams: Their Musical Legacy by David Owen Norris

14.30 What have we learnt from Elgar?: Vaughan Williams and the ambivalence of inheritance by Byron Adams

15.15 Tea

15.30 Stanford, Elgar and Vaughan Williams by Michael Pope

16.15 “My Dear Elgar”: The Letters of Elgar and Vaughan Williams by Hugh Cobbe

17.00 End of Day One

17.30 Refreshments, including wine, served in the Foyer

18.30 Evening concert in the Auditorium of the British Library.

- **Vaughan Williams**: Phantasy Quintet
- **Elgar**: String Quartet in E Minor

Interval (10 minutes)

- **Vaughan Williams**: On Wenlock Edge
- **Elgar**: Piano Quintet

Soloists from the Royal College of Music (to be agreed)

11.30 Coffee

11.45 There was a time: An exploration of Vaughan Williams’s opera The Poisoned Kiss by Stephen Connock

12.30 Lunch in the company of Ursula Vaughan Williams and Evelyn Barbirolli (to be confirmed)

13.30 Immortal Inf!: Elgar’s Crown of India by Professor Robert Anderson

14.15 Panel discussion

15.15 Chairman’s concluding remarks

15.30 Symposium ends

The fee for the Symposium will be £70.00, which includes all sessions, teas, coffee, pre-concert wine and buffet and a ticket to the concert itself. Lunch on both days is available at an additional cost in the British Library. Attendance on Saturday only will be £40.00 and Sunday only £35.00. Please note delegates are responsible for arranging their accommodation for the Saturday night.

A booking form is included in the Journal.
The Poisoned Kiss to be recorded at last

After years of planning, it is excellent news that The Poisoned Kiss is to be recorded for the first time. Richard Hickox will conduct the BBC National Orchestra of Wales with a star-studded cast, largely derived from the successful Vision of Albion performance at the Barbican, in London, on 26 October 1997. Chandos plan to record the opera from 2 - 7 January 2003 in Brangwyn Hall, Swansea.

Fund-raising

As always with such projects, raising the necessary funds has been vital. The campaign was spearheaded by The Garland Appeal, but it has been the involvement of RVW Ltd that has finally secured the project. Our heartfelt thanks to Ursula Vaughan Williams, Michael Kennedy and the directors of RVW Ltd, whose help has been of the utmost importance. The RVW Society has been asked to provide the liner notes.

Casting

The projected cast for The Poisoned Kiss is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Cast Member</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amaryllus</td>
<td>Thomas Randle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angelica</td>
<td>Pamela Helen Stephen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallanthus</td>
<td>Roderick Williams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hob</td>
<td>John Graham-Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gob</td>
<td>Richard Stuart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Medium</td>
<td>Gail Pearson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Medium</td>
<td>Helen Williams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Medium</td>
<td>Claire Bradshaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disques</td>
<td>Neal Davies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empress</td>
<td>Anne Collins</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many Thanks

David Betts
Membership Secretary

Sunday 24 November 2002 at 9.00pm
West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge
Ticket prices: £12/£8 (SCMS members and OAPs) / £4 (students)
Ticket prices (includes a glass of wine after the concert) available from Selwyn College Alumni Office (01223) 741 582

Selwyn College Chapel Choir and Selwyn College Orchestra

Great St Mary’s Girls’ Chamber Choir
Rachel Santesso (soprano)
Andrew Tortise (tenor)
Edmund Connolly (baritone)

Sarah MacDonald, conductor

News and Notes

Important Notice for UK Members

Subscribing by Banker’s Standing Order

If you have a banker’s standing order arrangement in place for the payment of the UK subscriptions and if it falls due between now and January, this is just a reminder that your bank may need to be told that the new subscription rates are £20 (full) or £12 (concession). Should be most grateful if you could ensure that this is done.

Many Thanks

David Betts
Membership Secretary

Sunday 24 November 2002 at 9.00pm
West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge
Ticket prices: £12/£8 (SCMS members and OAPs) / £4 (students)
Ticket prices (includes a glass of wine after the concert) available from Selwyn College Alumni Office (01223) 741 582

Selwyn College Chapel Choir and Selwyn College Orchestra

Great St Mary’s Girls’ Chamber Choir
Rachel Santesso (soprano)
Andrew Tortise (tenor)
Edmund Connolly (baritone)
Sarah MacDonald, conductor

Next Edition: February 2003
The Poisoned Kiss

The June 2003 edition of the Journal will concentrate on The Sixth Symphony.

Call for papers

The deadline for contributions is 20th December 2002

Support from RVW

Publication of The Poisoned Kiss as No.25 of the RVW Journal.

370 pages (hardback)

£15.00 plus £1.65

RVW Crossword No.11 by Michael Gainsford

Answers on Page 17

In this issue...

The Songs of Travel
Guest editor: Dr William Adams

- Robert Louis Stevenson
  A brief examination of the poet
  Page 5

- Elements of form and unity in Song of Travel
  Page 9

- The recordings – A comparative analysis
  Page 12

- Symphony No.9 – An Introduction and CD review by Robin Barber
  Page 14

And more . . .

CHAIRMAN
Stephen Connock MBE
65 Marathon House, 200 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5PL
Tel: 01728 454820
Fax: 01728 454873
cynthia.cooper@dial.pipex.com

TREASURER
John Francis
Lindleyen Francis Ferguson, North House, 198 High Street, Tethoven, Kent, TN9 1BE
Tel: 01732 602020
john@lffuk.co.uk

SECRETARY
Dr. David Betts
Tudor Cottage
30, Tivoli Road
Brighton
East Sussex
BN1 5HH
Tel: 01273 601118
d.s.betts@sussex.ac.uk

Charity No. 1017175