



Journal of the
RVW
Society

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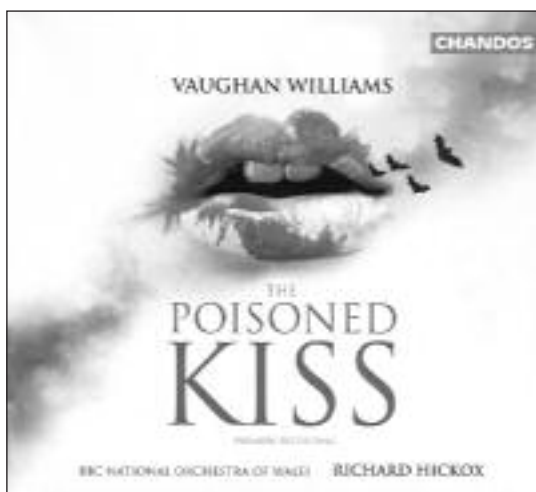
Stephen Connock
(see address below)

'AN EXCELLENT YEAR'

Members of the RVW Society heard much good news at our AGM on Sunday 12 October. As John Francis, Treasurer, put it: 'Once again the Society has had an excellent year – with members' subscriptions and sales of books at record levels'. John was also cautious about the future – it was a novelty to have built up some reserves but we could not relax too much. We were publishing two new books and hoped to sponsor recordings in due course. Having said that, John Francis concluded by confirming that our financial position was healthy.

Success in the year

Stephen Connock had opened the AGM by reporting on notable successes for the Society during the year, including the two-day conference jointly organised with the Elgar Society called *A Special Flame*. With the launch in October of *The Poisoned Kiss*, the Society had also stimulated a world premiere recording of a quite beautiful work. Members who have not heard this wonderful set should hesitate no longer!



With both *There was a time* and a new edition of Ursula Vaughan Williams's poetry being published, the Society continues to launch new projects to support our charitable goals. Long may it continue!

Membership growth

David Betts, our Membership Secretary, confirmed that membership continues to grow and we now had 608 members – an increase of 47 over last year. We need more! Members were urged – as always – to help stimulate membership by approaching their contacts. Regional activities will grow in importance for our members worldwide.

Then let us be merry, cast sorrow aside

As we approach our 10th anniversary in 2004, we have reasons to be proud. We have an excellent group of Trustees – to which we extend a welcome to Emma Marshall and Martin Murray who were elected at the AGM – as well as Regional Chairmen. Our members provide superb support to the Society in general and to the Journal in particular. Hopefully our 10th anniversary will be an opportunity for consolidation and celebration.

Date of next AGM : Sunday 10 October 2004.

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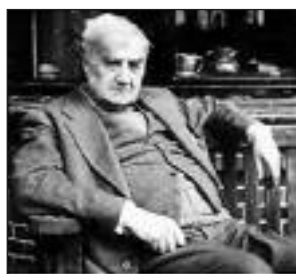
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Vaughan Williams and the Hymnals - a new perspective

by John Bawden

Part 1: A survey

It is now nearly fifty years since Vaughan Williams died, yet the extent and significance of his work on hymnals – and I shall use the word ‘hymnal’ throughout to refer to carol books as well as hymn-books - has still not been fully recognised. While the composer’s use of folk song as a basic element of a new national English music has been well documented, his work on hymnals has received comparatively little attention. It is my contention that, despite his lifelong agnosticism, Vaughan Williams dedicated significant amounts of his time to the editing of a succession of hymnals because they offered an ideal means of propagating his concept of a national music through one of the nation’s most influential cultural institutions, and because he recognised their unique importance as a music of the people. His motivation was therefore primarily cultural and social rather than religious. Furthermore, his continuing identification with a succession of major hymnals contributed significantly towards the projection of his own image as a national composer.



When in 1904 Vaughan Williams accepted the Reverend Percy Dearmer’s invitation to edit the music of *The English Hymnal* he evidently had considerable doubts about the wisdom of taking on such a task, with the consequent suspension of his own composition for the two whole years that would be needed in order to do the job properly. He later remarked ‘I wondered then if I was wasting my time. But I know now that two years of close association with some of the best (as well as some of the worst) tunes in the world was a better musical education than any amount of sonatas and fugues.’¹

The Hymnals

The major publications of which Vaughan Williams was either music editor or joint music editor were *The English Hymnal* (1906), *Songs of Praise* (1925), *The Oxford Book of Carols* (1928) and *Songs of Praise Enlarged* (1931). In addition to these four principal volumes there were some ten lesser collections that were mainly derived from one or other of the parent volumes. Between 1906 and 1954 he wrote some twenty original hymn tunes and arranged nearly one hundred and eighty others, as well as undertaking the considerable task of selecting and editing other tunes from the vast number available. The two main periods of his hymnal editing were from 1904 (when he began work on *EH*) to 1911, and from 1925 to 1936. In varying degrees of intensity, then, the work on hymnals was spread over a total of eighteen years (see Table 1).

Table 1: Hymnals of which Vaughan Williams was music Editor

Year	Title	Editors	Vaughan Williams’ new tunes and arrangements
1906	<i>The English Hymnal</i>	Percy Dearmer; RVW	4 new tunes, 64 new arrangements
1907	<i>The English Hymnal</i> (abridged edition)	Percy Dearmer; RVW	None
1911	<i>Church Songs</i>	S. Baring-Gould; H. Fleetwood Sheppard; RVW	None
1925	<i>Songs of Praise</i>	Percy Dearmer; RVW; Martin Shaw	5 new tunes, 20 new arrangements
1928	<i>The Oxford Book of Carols</i>	Percy Dearmer; RVW; Martin Shaw	4 new tunes, 23 new arrangements
1929	<i>Songs of Praise for Boys & Girls</i>	Percy Dearmer; RVW; Martin Shaw	1 new tune, 6 new arrangements
1930	<i>Hymns for Sunday School Anniversaries and other special occasions</i>	Percy Dearmer; George Briggs; RVW; Martin Shaw	None
1931	<i>Songs of Praise Enlarged</i>	Percy Dearmer; RVW; Martin Shaw	5 new tunes, 8 new arrangements
1932	<i>Songs of Praise for Little Children</i>	Percy Dearmer; George Briggs; RVW; Martin Shaw	None
1933	<i>The English Hymnal revised</i>	Percy Dearmer; RVW	8 new arrangements, and many arrangements imported from <i>SP</i>
1933	<i>Songs of Praise for Children</i>	Percy Dearmer; RVW; Martin Shaw	None
1936	<i>The Daily Service</i>	Percy Dearmer; George Briggs; RVW; Martin Shaw	None
1936	<i>Songs of Praise: The Children’s Church</i>	Percy Dearmer; George Briggs; RVW; Martin Shaw	None
1954	<i>English Traditional Carols</i>	RVW; Martin Shaw	21 carols from <i>OB</i> newly arranged for sopranos and altos in 2,3 & 4 parts

Sources: i) Michael Kennedy: *The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams*; ii) Music Department, Oxford University Press

Note: Successive hymnals reproduced existing material from preceding volumes, therefore only the additional new tunes and arrangements written by Vaughan Williams are indicated here. All of the books contained significant numbers of his tunes.

Vaughan Williams’ decision to edit the music of a series of major hymnals not only signified his long-term commitment to improving the music of what he considered to be a vital part of the English musical heritage; it also presented him with an opportunity to develop his concept of a national music within the context of the hymnal. His vision was of a music that would be ‘the expression of the soul of the nation...a people spiritually bound together by language, environment, history, and common ideals and, above all, a continuity with the past’.²

Having produced the ground-breaking *English Hymnal*, VW might well have been expected to decline other approaches from Percy Dearmer or The Oxford University Press in order to be able to continue working without further interruption on his own compositions. After all, Martin and Geoffrey Shaw, two very able and influential musicians and educators who were both colleagues of Dearmer, were available. Martin was invited to be joint Music Editor of *Songs of Praise*, *The Oxford Book of Carols* and *Songs of Praise Enlarged*, and both brothers made major contributions to the two versions of *Songs of Praise*. Therefore it must have been a conscious choice on Vaughan Williams’ part to continue taking on the responsibility of working on the hymnals himself, despite the priorities of his own composition. He evidently considered the work to be unfinished business, and that the role of the hymnal in assisting in his mission to establish a national music had not come to an end with the publication of *The English Hymnal*.

This is borne out by the developing nature of the hymnal work, as I shall show. It was not simply a question of ‘more of the same’. *The English Hymnal* laid the firm foundations of Vaughan Williams cultural nationalism, *Songs of Praise* was more overtly nationalist in its contents and *The Oxford Book of Carols* brought the principles and disciplines of both books to bear upon the neglected carol repertoire. *Songs of Praise Enlarged* went even further in its wholehearted espousal of an unashamedly English content.

The literature

Surprisingly, none of the existing literature on the composer addresses the full extent and significance of this hymn-related work. It seems either to be ignored by most commentators, or, at best, viewed as little more than a series of isolated, minor episodes punctuating the main events of his life. Any attention that is given to VW’s hymnal work is almost exclusively confined to *The English Hymnal*, and even then very largely in the sole context of its inter-relationship with his folksong collecting.

The early biographical studies written during the composer’s lifetime - Hubert Foss (1950), Percy Young (1953), Frank Howes (1954) and Simona Pakenham (1957) – make no more than a passing reference to the hymnals. Although A.E.F. Dickinson’s 1963 study contains a whole chapter devoted to Hymnody, mostly given over to *The English Hymnal*, with a page or two on *Songs of Praise* and a paragraph on *The Oxford Book of Carols*, it is largely a survey of Vaughan Williams’ sources, his original tunes and arrangements, with an appraisal of the appropriateness of some of the pairings of tunes and words.

The books devoted specifically to hymnody acknowledge Vaughan Williams’ major contribution to twentieth century hymnody, as in the following comment by Erik Routley:

“None of us [hymnologists and hymnal editors] can now claim to be free of some debt to the great work of Vaughan Williams.”³

But more extensive discussion is outside their scope. In his definitive study, *The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, Michael Kennedy devotes twelve pages to *The English Hymnal*, which is a clear indication that he is prepared to treat VW’s work on this hymnal with much greater seriousness than previous commentators. He provides concise but thorough background information, and the folksong sources are carefully documented. He also gives the reader some indication of Vaughan Williams’ editorial policy by listing the musical sources and giving details of the folksongs that he adapted. He mentions the importance that Vaughan Williams ascribed to the congregation’s role *vis à vis* the hymn, and quotes the composer’s revealing statement that the choice of music for the new hymnal was ‘a moral rather than a musical issue’.⁴ The principal hymn-tunes to which Vaughan Williams later made thematic reference in some of his major compositions⁵ are discussed briefly at the end of the section. Kennedy draws attention to the importance of folksong in Vaughan Williams’ editorial policy and relates it to the wider national musical scene.

Kennedy’s seminal work therefore marks a distinct advance in awareness of Vaughan Williams’s work on hymnals. What it does not do, however, is investigate further the radical nature of Vaughan Williams’s editorial policy, or explain why he chose repeatedly to return to the hymn. Neither does Kennedy identify the true extent of this work. *Songs of Praise* receives a brief mention and *The Oxford Book of Carols* an even briefer one. *Songs of Praise Enlarged* is merely cited in passing. Apart from their inclusion in his comprehensive list of VW’s works, there is no mention in the text of the other hymnals with which Vaughan Williams was involved.

In untangling some of the complex issues surrounding the composer’s national image, Alain Frogley says:

At its simplest level, Vaughan Williams’s reputation as a nationalist composer is based on four overlapping elements: his published writings arguing the importance of national roots for musical styles; work as a collector, arranger and editor of native folksongs and hymn-tunes; educational and administrative activity as a teacher, competition adjudicator etc.; and the manifold influence on his music of a variety of English musical, literary, and other kinds of sources, above all folksong, Tudor and Jacobean music, and the English literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, most notably the King James Bible and Shakespeare.⁶

Frogley’s linking of the hymns and folksongs together as if they are inseparable parts of the same process is, however, misleading. Whilst his statement duly recognises the inter-connectivity between the two activities, at the same time it excludes other equally important characteristics of Vaughan Williams’s nationalist exploitation of the hymnal that were completely independent of the folksong. This conflation of two distinct yet inter-related musical genres is a feature common to the writings of most commentators, and may well go some way towards accounting for the neglect of the hymn as a music in its own right.

In his essay in *Vaughan Williams Studies*,⁷ Byron Adams identifies the lifelong admiration and love which Vaughan Williams had for the liturgy and musical traditions of the Church of England, a vital element in understanding the composer’s creative thinking.

Julian Onderdonk’s ‘Ralph Vaughan Williams’s Folksong Collecting’ gives an extensive documentation of the composer’s distinguished family background and its radicalism, providing the most thorough insight yet into the formation of Vaughan Williams’s religious, artistic and political philosophy. And in his introduction to the third chapter Onderdonk succinctly sets out what he sees as the nature of Vaughan Williams’s “nationalism”:

He was attracted to English folksong, Tudor and Jacobean music, 18th and early 19th century Ballad Opera, and

traditional English hymnody not merely because he sought to liberate English music from a stultifying central-European influence, but also because he was actively engaged in constructing and refining an English national identity. ...In these terms, his “nationalism” was fundamentally social and cultural in inspiration, and his compositional interest in identifiably English musical genres and styles but one aspect of a dedication to “Englishness” that was fundamentally political in orientation.⁸

Duncan Hinnells’ thesis, ‘The Making of a National Composer: Vaughan Williams, OUP and the BBC’ is the first writing to draw attention to the many lesser hymnals with which Vaughan Williams was involved. He also identifies the contribution that the hymn-books made towards establishing Vaughan Williams’s musical reputation:

Vaughan Williams was undoubtedly known by generations brought up in this period [i.e. throughout and after the inter-war years] as a composer with strong affiliations with the established church, with folk song, ancient English music, and with the revivalist movement.⁹

Onderdonk’s ‘Hymn tunes from folk songs: Vaughan Williams and English Hymnody’ again discusses the incorporation of national elements into the music of the hymnals, with particular emphasis on folksongs. Like Hinnells, he also recognises the minor hymn-books, but further investigation is beyond the scope of his paper.

Collectively, all of these writings provide new and valuable perspectives on many of the questions surrounding Vaughan Williams’s work on hymnals. However, none of the literature fully addresses the underlying question of why, in seeming contradiction to his religious position, Vaughan Williams chose repeatedly to engage with hymns as editor, composer or arranger. Neither does it recognise the true extent of this area of his work, though Onderdonk and Hinnells go some way towards doing so. Otherwise the four major hymnals are very largely regarded as discrete projects, whilst the ten lesser hymn-books do not figure at all.

Songs of Praise

for

Boys and Girls

*A Hymn-book for Children
and Others*

By

Percy Dearmer

R. Vaughan Williams

Martin Shaw

Oxford University Press
London: Humphrey Milford

Such a unique and extensive body of work deserves much closer attention than it has hitherto attracted. The question therefore arises as to why this facet of the composer's activities has not been investigated more fully. It is only in the last ten years or so that one or two musicologists have started to look more closely at the hymn. Otherwise, examination of his hymnal editing has very largely been confined to his work on *The English Hymnal*, in which it has been considered primarily within the context of his folksong collecting, so that, for example, Kennedy wrote of it in the following terms:

[Hymnal editing] was, in fact, by coming as a tributary from, and corollary to, his folksong collecting, another 'liberating' influence.¹⁰

This limited perspective on the function and importance of the hymn in Vaughan Williams's work arises partly out of the general concentration on *The English Hymnal*, with the consequent marginalisation of the later books that he edited, and partly from the major part played by the folksong arrangements. To some extent this is not surprising. After all, *EH* was the pioneering work, and the folksong arrangements were its most radical feature. As a result, however, undue emphasis has been placed on *The English Hymnal* and the importance of the composer's folksong collecting, at the expense of other editorial procedures and of the later hymnals.

The nature of the changes that Vaughan Williams introduced into *The English Hymnal*, which I shall deal with in some detail in a moment, figure prominently in this process. The folksong arrangements formed a homogenous group that constituted the largest and most immediately recognisable body of music, and their inclusion within the Anglican hymn-book was arguably the boldest of his reforms. The two other principal developments - the importance placed on Tudor and Restoration sources and the rejection of 19th century music - represented a fundamental shift in direction, but were substantial modifications, not novel introductions as the folksong arrangements were. The Tudor and Restoration music did not fall nearly so easily into a recognisable group, and the 19th century music was important for what was omitted rather than what was included. Thus the folksong arrangements became the most visible and identifiable agent of the hymnal revolution. Consequently they were almost bound to dominate early examinations of *The English Hymnal*. A further reason for the folksong collecting and hymnal editing being so firmly connected in most people's minds is the concurrency of the two activities. Vaughan Williams began collecting folksongs in 1903, and by 1913 had collected some 800 of them. The preparation of *The English Hymnal* occupied him for two years, from 1904 until 1906.

By the 1950s Vaughan Williams had become for many people the personification of English music. In the course of his exceptionally long creative life he not only edited several major hymnals, he also regularly turned to the music of the hymn-book as the basis for an arrangement or a short work, of which there are a surprisingly large number spread throughout his working life (see Table 2).

Table 2: Minor Works Based Directly or Indirectly on Hymns

YEAR	WORK	NOTES
1894	VEXILLA REGIS - hymn for soprano solo, chorus, strings, organ	
1912	FANTASIA ON CHRISTMAS CAROLS - baritone solo, chorus, orch	contains 4 main carols and fragments of others
	EVENING HYMN	Purcell, arranged by VW
	AND ALL IN THE MORNING - carol arr. for chorus & small orch	
	THE OLD HUNDREDDTH - organ	for a volume of varied organ accompaniments to A&M tunes
1914	FOUR HYMNS - tenor solo, viola obbligato & piano	Original composition with texts by Jeremy Taylor, Isaac Watts, Richard Crashaw & Robert Bridges
1919	EIGHT TRADITIONAL ENGLISH CAROLS - arranged for voice & piano / unaccompanied chorus	
1920	THREE PRELUDES FOUNDED ON WELSH HYMN-TUNES - organ	
	TWELVE TRADITIONAL CAROLS FROM HEREFORDSHIRE - arrangement for voice & piano	
1921	LORD, THOU HAST BEEN OUR REFUGE - motet for chorus & orch	incorporates the hymn-tune 'O God, our help in ages past'
	FOR ALL THE SAINTS ('Sine Nomine') - arrangement for unison singing / mixed chorus; also other versions	
1929	THE HUNDREDDTH PSALM - chorus & orchestra	text from Psalm 100 and Daye's <i>Psalter</i> (1561)
	THREE CHORAL HYMNS - baritone solo, chorus & orchestra	
1930	HYMN TUNE PRELUDE ON 'SONG 13' BY ORLANDO GIBBONS - piano	tune from <i>EH</i>
1932	CHORALE PRELUDE 'ACH, BLEIB BEI UNS, HERR JESU CHRIST' (J. S. Bach) - freely arranged for piano	
1934	THE PILGRIM PAVEMENT - hymn for soprano solo, chorus & organ	
1935	MY SOUL PRAISE THE LORD - hymn arranged for chorus & unison singing with descant, & organ	
	LITTLE CLOISTER - hymn tune for voices in unison & organ	new tune by VW not incorporated into any hymnal
1936	TWO HYMN-TUNE PRELUDES - small orchestra	based on tunes by Monk and Dykes
1938	ALL HAIL THE POWER - arr. for congregation, choir & orchestra	based on the hymn-tune 'Miles Lane' by W. Shrubsole.
1939	A HYMN OF FREEDOM - unison voices & piano / organ	words by Canon G. W. Briggs
1940	HOUSEHOLD MUSIC: 3 PRELUDES ON WELSH HYMN-TUNES - string quartet and horn ad. lib.	
1941	A CALL TO THE FREE NATIONS - hymn for choral or unison singing	words by Canon G. W. Briggs
1942	THE AIRMAN'S HYMN - unison song with piano / organ	
	NINE CAROLS FOR MALE VOICES - arranged for unaccompanied men's chorus	
1945	TWO CAROLS - arranged for unaccompanied chorus	arrangements of traditional melodies
1948	HYMN FOR ST MARGARET - unison	appears in <i>Hymnal for Scotland</i>
1949	FANTASIA ON THE 'OLD 104 TH ' PSALM TUNE - piano solo, chorus & orchestra	
1952	PRELUDE ON AN OLD CAROL TUNE - small orchestra	the tune is 'On Christmas night the joy-bells ring'
1953	THE 'OLD 100 TH ' PSALM TUNE - arranged for chorus, congregation, orchestra and organ	the tune is 'All people that on earth do dwell'
1955	PRELUDE ON 3 WELSH HYMN-TUNES - brass band	the tunes are not the same as for the organ preludes of 1920
1956	GOD BLESS THE MASTER OF THIS HOUSE - unaccomp. chorus	from the Sussex mummings' carol
1958	THE FIRST NOWELL - Nativity play for soloists, chorus & orchestra	includes 12 carols

Furthermore, phrases from several of the most memorable hymns found their way into his major works (an area of study which is surely overdue for systematic research). In fact, it is no exaggeration to suggest that the music of the hymn-book runs like an ever-present stream through Vaughan Williams's creative life.

Notes

- 1 RVW: 'A Musical Autobiography', quoted in Kennedy *Works*, p.74
- 2 RVW: 'Some conclusions', p.68
- 3 Routley: *The Music of Christian Hymnody*, p.145
- 4 Kennedy: *The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, p.67
- 5 In this connection Kennedy cites MONK'S GATE, DIVES AND LAZARUS, YORK, OLD HUNDREDDTH and Tallis's Third Mode Melody.
- 6 Frogley, p.5
- 7 See particularly Adams pp.99-100
- 8 Onderdonk: 'Ralph Vaughan Williams's Folksong Collecting', p.140
- 9 Hinnells, p.46
- 10 Kennedy: *Works*, p.74
- 11 See Ursula Vaughan Williams: *RVW*, p.66.

Part 2: Editing the hymnals

by John Bawden

Background to the emergence of *The English Hymnal*

The great blossoming of English hymnody that took place in the eighteenth century, inspired principally by the poetic genius of Isaac Watts (1674-1748) and Charles Wesley (1707-1788), led to the enormous popularisation of hymn-singing and a huge proliferation of local hymn-books. The overwhelming need for some sort of standardisation led to the publication in 1861 of *Hymns Ancient and Modern*. This volume quickly established itself as a national institution, becoming in effect the unofficial standard hymn-book of the Church of England. But as time went by and revised and expanded editions kept appearing, criticism grew of the continually increasing proportion of third rate material within its pages, which with the 1889 edition had reached alarming proportions.

Amongst the most prominent of A&M's critics was the Reverend Percy Dearmer, Vicar of St. Mary's, Primrose Hill. He and a group of friends had already started meeting together with the intention of producing a words-only supplement to A&M, to be called *English Hymns*. However, it soon became clear that nothing less than a completely new hymn-book was called for.

They set about finding a suitable music editor for *The English Hymnal*, as the new book was to be called. Dearmer consulted Cecil Sharp and Canon Scott Holland, both of whom, independently, came up with the same name - Ralph Vaughan Williams. Cecil Sharp was of course the leading collector of folk-songs and Scott Holland was a Canon of St



Paul's Cathedral. Although both men shared his political views, the choice of Vaughan Williams as editor was a surprising one for two reasons. Firstly, he was at the time little known. There were other musicians who were on the face of it far better qualified and far better known amongst the musical establishment. Secondly, he was an atheist. It says much for the vision of Dearmer's group that VW was nevertheless regarded as the right person for the job. And so began a partnership between Dearmer and Vaughan Williams which was to last some 30 years.

Underlying principles

Vaughan Williams's and Percy Dearmer's work was underpinned by their shared commitment to a revivalist agenda, and a common aim of setting new standards of excellence. Dearmer's Preface to *The English Hymnal* is revealing in its highly subjective language:

The ENGLISH HYMNAL is a collection of the best hymns in the English language...It is an attempt to combine in one volume the worthiest expressions of all that lies within the Christian Creed, from those 'ancient fathers' who were the earliest hymn-writers down to contemporary exponents of modern aspirations and ideals... these ancient hymns... in their Scriptural simplicity and sober dignity represent the deep Christian experience of more than a thousand years... we have attempted to redress those defects in popular hymnody which are deeply felt by thoughtful men; for the best hymns of Christendom are as free as the Bible from the self-centred sentimentalism, the weakness and unreality which mark inferior productions.¹

The emotive language used in this Preface speaks volumes about *The English Hymnal's* avowed agenda. Dearmer's extremely bold claim that the new book was a collection of 'the best hymns in the English language' immediately suggests that the editors were intending it to be regarded as nothing less than a new benchmark of hymnodic excellence. The 'worthiest expressions of those ancient fathers' and the 'contemporary exponents of modern aspirations and ideals' are conjoined in language calculated to invite the reader to regard both the old and the contemporary as manifestations of all that is finest.

But the real crux of Dearmer's message is to be found in the second part of this extract. To the 'ancient hymns' is ascribed 'scriptural simplicity and sober dignity', whilst 'popular hymnody', he implies, is an 'inferior production', associated with the 'defects' of 'self-centred sentimentalism, weakness and unreality'.

There is a striking similarity between this language and that of Vaughan Williams a year or two earlier in a lecture on folksong and religious music. In this, he underlined the universal connection between folk song and the church, seen at its most obvious in the words and music of the Christmas carol, which in England, he said, was being superseded by 'the sentimental effusions of the Barnby school'. He then went on to say:

In this country the old tunes, which had served our forefathers so well, lasted well into the last century. The village band which, with all its shortcomings, was a definite artistic nucleus in the parish, was superseded by a wheezing harmonium played by an incompetent amateur, or in more ambitious churches a new organ was set up... The organist had usually developed his technique at the expense of his musicianship, and his taste was formed on the sickly harmonies of Spohr, overladen with the operatic sensationalism of Gounod; and the church hymns had followed suit...in the original edition [of *Hymns Ancient & Modern*] there appeared a quantity of these exotic and languorous tunes which could be nothing but enervating to those who sang and heard them; and in later editions the element of maudlin sentiment has grown alarmingly until at last the bad has almost driven out the good.

National music should represent the people. Will anyone dare to say that the effusions of the Barnby school represent the English people? Hard-working men and women should be given bracing and stimulating music, not the unhealthy outcome of theatrical and hysterical sentiment.²

As with Dearmer, the language used by Vaughan Williams is heavily laden. The band – no comment is made about the quality of its instruments or its performing capabilities other than a vague reference to 'its shortcomings' - apparently possessed 'a definite artistic nucleus'; on the other hand the 'wheezing harmonium' was played by an 'incompetent amateur'. Those churches ambitious enough to afford an organ would, according to Vaughan Williams, usually find that the organist had sacrificed musicianship in the cause of improved technique.

Vaughan Williams's value judgements about the music itself are even more marked. The 'old' tunes, he tells us, have been superseded by 'exotic and languorous' tunes that are of 'maudlin sentiment'. These hymn-tunes, he maintains, are based on the 'sickly harmonies' of Spohr and the 'operatic sensationalism' of Gounod, and are 'the unhealthy outcome of theatrical and hysterical sentiment', exemplified in 'the effusions of the Barnby school'. The implication is clear – this sort of music, based as it is on inferior foreign models, should no longer be deemed acceptable. To be truly representative of the 'hard-working' English people our national music needed to be 'bracing and stimulating', just like the 'old' tunes of 'our forefathers'.

The opinions expressed here by Vaughan Williams are of crucial importance to our understanding of his cultural nationalism and the place within it of the hymn. He unequivocally links national music to a revivalist agenda, and clearly sees the music of hymnody as an essential part of this national music. This lecture was delivered in 1902, some two years before Dearmer invited Vaughan Williams to edit *The English Hymnal*. It is clear that the underlying philosophies and objectives of Dearmer and Vaughan Williams were remarkably similar, so that when he was proffered the musical editorship of *EH* Vaughan Williams was being presented with a ready-made and ideal platform, both practically and philosophically, on which to base his nationalist musical mission.

Vaughan Williams made it quite plain that wholesale change in the repertoire was not only desirable, but essential. In the Musical Preface to *EH* he went so far as to say that many of the tunes then in current use were 'positively harmful to those who sing and hear them'. The heart of the matter, though, is this statement:

It is indeed a moral rather than a musical issue. No doubt it requires a certain effort to tune oneself to the moral atmosphere implied by a fine melody; and it is far easier to dwell in the miasma of the languishing and sentimental hymn tunes which so often disfigure our services.³

Here, Vaughan Williams firmly asserts his belief that there is an over-riding moral imperative for substantial change. In other words, whilst he holds good musical justifications for change, he is also seeking to lend his reforms added primacy by the invocation of a higher moral authority.

Vaughan Williams clearly saw that his role as Music Editor of *The English Hymnal* was to 'show the way' and to lead the people out of the musical quagmire into which they had fallen. At the same time, reforming the music of the hymnals constituted a fundamental and vital part of his wider mission to establish a new national music for England. The underlying principles and objectives by which this would be achieved were by re-connecting the music of the hymn-book to the cultural roots of England through a commitment to a revivalist agenda and a determined quest for musical excellence.

Editorial policies and practices

In compiling *The English Hymnal*, one of the first decisions facing Vaughan Williams was to resolve the competing musical claims on the hymn territory made by choir and congregation. He couldn't have been more explicit about this:

The music is intended to be essentially congregational in character...Fine melody rather than the exploitation of a trained choir has been the criterion of selection ...The pitch of all the tunes has been fixed as low as possible for the sake of mixed congregations...the choir have their opportunity elsewhere, but in the hymn they must give way to the congregation.⁴

As well as making the pitch of the hymns more suited to the vocal range of the congregation, Vaughan Williams also introduced a much greater variety and interest in the arrangements and accompaniments. There were several hymns with special unison arrangements for one or two of the verses, some with descants, and many more intended entirely for enthusiastic unison singing, with strong, supportive organ parts. Here is one example. It's an old French Church melody, ORIENTIS PARTIBUS, 'Soldiers who are Christ's below'

fore the world con - fest, Thy name, O
in the well - fought fight; Thou in the
no - bly fought of old, And win, with
rise in bright ar - ray: The King of
in the count - less host, Sing - ing to

Je su, be for ev - er blest. Light, Al -
dark ness drear their one true gold.
them, the vic - tor's crown of gold.
glo - ry pas - ses on his way. Ghost.
Fa ther, Son, and Ho - ly

le - lu - ya! Al - le - lu - ya!
Harmony.
A-men.

ORIENTIS PARTIBUS. (77. 77.) **480**
In moderate time ♩ = 144. To be sung in unison. Mediaeval French Melody.

And there were a number of equally stirring arrangements of traditional tunes, which I shall come to shortly. These were strong unison arrangements that congregations could quickly learn. However, in his own great processional hymns, SINE NOMINE and SALVA FESTA DIES, Vaughan Williams really excelled himself. Here's the incomparable SINE NOMINE, which personally I consider to be one of the greatest of all hymn-tunes.

In order to highlight the originality of which VW was capable within the modest framework of the hymn-tune, it is worth looking a little more closely at the tune SALVA FESTA DIES.

SUITABLE FOR USE IN PROCESSION
SINE NOMINE. (10 10. 10. 4.)
In moderate time ♩ = 112. Verses 1, 2, 3, and 7, 8. Bishop W. W. How, 1823-97.

VOICES IN UNISON. R. VAUGHAN-WILLIAMS.

1 For all the Saints who from their la - bours
2 Thou wast their Rock, their Fort - ress, and their
3 O may thy sol diers, faith - ful, true, and
7 But lo! there breaks a yet more glo - rious
8. From earth's wide bounds, from o - cean's far - thest

rest, Who thee by faith be
Might; Thou, Lord, their Cap - tain
bold, Fight as the Saints who
day; The Saints tri - um - phant
coast, Through gates of pearl streams

SALVE FESTA DIES. (Irreg.) 624 (MODERN TUNE)
With vigour ♩ = 112. To be sung in unison. R. VAUGHAN-WILLIAMS, Clerks.

1 Hail thee, Fes - ti - val Day! blest day that art
hal - lowed for ev - er; Day where - in God o'er -
came hell and a - rose from the dead. dead.
Repeat in Chorus.

Verses 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10.
Clerks only.

2 Lo, the fair beau - ty of earth, from the death of the
4 God of all pity and power, let thy word be as -
6* Ill it be - seem - eth that thou, by whose hand all .
8 Mourning they laid thee to rest, who art Au - thor of
10* Out of the pri - son of death thou art res - cu - ing

win - ter a - ris - ing, Ev - ery good gift of the
 sured to the doubt - ing; Light on the third day re
 things are on - com - passed; Cap - tive and bound should re -
 life and cro - a - tion; Tread - ing the path - way of
 num - ber - less cap - tives; Free - ly they tread in the

year turns: now with its Mas - ter re - turns.
 main, deep in the gloom of the rock,
 death, life thou be - stow - edst on man.
 way, whi - ther their Ma - ker has gone.

Verses 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11.
 Clerks only.

3 Ho who was nailed to the Cross is God and the.
 5 Ill dot it seem that thy limbs should ling - er in
 7* Rise now, O Lord, from the grave and cast off the
 9 Show us thy face once more, that the a - ges may
 11*. Je - sus has har - row - ed hell; he has led cap

In low shroud joy ti -
 ler of all things; All things cre - a - ted on
 ly dis - hon - our; Ran - som and price of the
 that en - wrapped thee; Thou art suf - fi - cient for
 in thy bright - ness; Give us the Light of
 ti - vi - ty cap - tive; Dark - ness and cha - os and

earth wor - ship the Ma - ker of all.
 world, veiled from the vi - sion of men.
 us: north - ing with - out thee; ex - iste,
 day, dark - ened on earth at thy death.
 death flee from the face of the light.

REFRAIN AFTER EACH VERSE.

Hail thee, Fes - ti - val Day! blest day that art hal - loved for ev - er;

Day where - in God o'er - came hell and a - rose from the dead. A - men.
 (Small notes optional.)

The musical construction of this tune is unusual. It is in three sections; the first is in G, the second in A minor and the third begins in C. The alternation of these three sections provides a constantly changing harmonic context, ensuring that musical interest is maintained throughout. The rhythmic variety of the melody is further enhanced by the use of a syncopated figure, first heard at the end of the third bar, and a triplet figure used in the third section. These features are thrown into relief by the steady crotchet beats of the 'walking bass', which is itself varied by the subtle introduction of minims in the third section. This innovative use of melodic, harmonic and rhythmic elements shows

Vaughan Williams's total mastery of the medium, and his instinctive understanding of what kind of setting would inspire wholehearted participation by the people. This whole approach to the function of the hymn book was a new departure.

The musical sources listed in Vaughan Williams's musical preface to *EH* provide some idea of the comprehensive range of music that he researched, and from which he made his final selection (see Table 3).

Table 3: Musical Sources Consulted for the English Hymnal

GERMAN	Lutheran chorale tunes from the 16th and 17th centuries Tunes from the 16th and 17th century Catholic song books Tunes of the 18th century, chiefly by Bach and Freylinghausen Modern German tunes German traditional melodies
FRENCH AND SWISS	Tunes from the Genevan Psalters of the 16th century Ecclesiastical melodies from the <i>paroissons</i> of various French uses (chiefly those of Rouen and Angers) French and Swiss traditional melodies
ITALIAN, SPANISH, FLEMISH & DUTCH	Ecclesiastical, traditional, and other melodies from these countries
AMERICAN	Lowell Mason's tunes, certain tunes from <i>Sacred Songs and Solos</i> ³ and a few 'Western melodies' in use in America as hymn tunes
BRITISH	IRISH Irish traditional melodies Tunes by Irish composers
SCOTTISH	Melodies from the Scottish Psalters of the 16th and 17th centuries Melodies from the Scottish tune-books of the 18th and 19th centuries Scottish traditional melodies
WELSH	Archdeacon Pry's Psalter Welsh traditional melodies Tunes by 18 th and 19th century Welsh composers
ENGLISH	Tunes from Day's, Damon's, Este's, Ravenscroft's, and Playford's Psalters of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Tunes by Tallis, Gibbons, Lawes &c., from their own collections Tunes from 18 th century books – especially those by J. Clark and Dr. Croft English carol, and other traditional melodies Tunes by 19 th and 20th century composers ⁶

Source: *The English Hymnal 1906*, pp. xvi-xvii

There was much that *The English Hymnal* shared with its contemporary, *Hymns Ancient & Modern*. However, when the contents of *EH* and *A&M* 1889 (the edition most widely in use at the time) are compared, the remarkable increase in the range of musical period and style contained in *EH* becomes clear (see Table 4).

Table 4: Contents of A&M and EH Compared

	Number of entries in A&M 1889 edition with First Supplement (779 hymns in total)	Number of entries in EH (744 in total, + 23 further hymns in Appendix)
Victorian Composers		
Bamby, J.	15	1 (+2)
Dykes, J. B.	60	10 (+2)
Gauntlett, H. J.	22	7
Goss, J.	5	1
Hopkins, E. J.	11	2
Monk, W. H.	57	9 (+3)
Ouseley, F. A. G.	13	1
Selby, B. L.	10	0
Smart, H.	18	4
Stainer, J.	32	0
Stanford, C. V.	7	0
Steggall, C.	7	2
Wesley, S. S.	20	5
Early Psalters		
Day's Psalter	0	9
Divine Companion	0	5
Genevan Psalter	0	16
French Church Melody	2	27
German Psalters	15	42
Scottish Psalter	7	16
16th to 18th century German		
Bach, J. S.	1	33
Luther, Martin	3	8
Praetorius, M.	0	4
English & Welsh Traditional		
English	0	47
Welsh	0	16
Tudor & Restoration		
Gibbons, O.	7	16
Lawes, H.	0	7
Purcell, H.	0	3
Tallis, T.	6	8
American		
Various	0	6 (+1)

Sources: *A&M 1889*; *EH 1906*.

Note:

- i) In the interests of conciseness Table 3 lists only those entries where there is a distinct difference between the two books. Entries that are broadly comparable are not included.
- ii) Tunes appearing in the *EH* Appendix are shown in brackets.

While *Hymns Ancient and Modern* focussed disproportionately on Victorian composers, including over 270 such hymns, *The English Hymnal* employed only around 50, a remarkable difference. Despite some outstanding exceptions the Victorian repertoire in *A&M* was dominated by a dull, four-square style, typified by this Barnby tune:

Hymn 441. ST. JOSEPH OF THE STODIUM.—7 6 7 6. 7 6 7 6. Sir J. BARNEY.

Here, the almost exclusive use of minim beats in all four parts, and the unadorned repetition of the two semibreves, gives the music an unrelievedly heavy rhythm. The presence of the dotted figure in exactly the same place each time only serves to emphasise this. The stolid harmony consists almost entirely of common chords, and though a brief modulation to D flat at the end of the third line of music brings some harmonic and melodic interest, it then degenerates into weak chromaticism, collapsing onto an unimaginative pedal B flat in the final phrase. This is typical of a very large number of Victorian hymns in *A&M*.

By far the most radical innovation to the music of *The English Hymnal* was Vaughan Williams's introduction of a large number of English and Welsh traditional sources – tunes adapted by him from folksongs – of which there were 63. These folksong adaptations introduced a completely new modal idiom to the hymn-tune, as for example in the superb tune **KINGS LYNN:**

KINGS LYNN. (7 6. 7 6. D.) 562
In moderate time, dignified ♩ = 75. English Traditional Melody.
To be sung in unison.

As well as a new harmonic and melodic style, many of the folksong arrangements brought a new lightness of mood, as for instance in tunes like **RODMELL**, with its unmistakably dance-like character.

RODMELL. (C.M.) 186
In moderate time ♩ = 96. English Traditional Melody.

One folksong - **Monk's Gate** - particularly inspired Vaughan Williams and later provided him with valuable source material for *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

MONKS GATE. (11 11. 12 11.) 402
Brightly ♩ = 112. Adapted from an English Traditional Melody.

The importance of these innovatory folksong adaptations should not be underestimated. Nothing like them had been seen in an English hymn-book before.

A further difference between the two hymnals was the much more extensive use that was made of music from the early psalters. Another

glance at Table 4 shows 115 such hymns in EH as against 24 in A&M. Early German tunes also offer an illuminating comparison; there are only 4 in A&M as compared with EH's 63. The enhanced presence of Bach chorales – 33 of them – is worth noting, and testifies to Vaughan Williams's enormous admiration for his music and its universality.

We can see, then, that *Hymns Ancient and Modern* 1889 was very restricted in its general style, with Victorian composers monopolising its contents, resulting in a very narrow harmonic, melodic and rhythmic idiom. Its musical language relied heavily on the 19th century Germanic tonic-dominant harmonic structure, predominantly realised through a weak, post-Mendelssohn harmonic idiom, with largely unadventurous melodies and plain rhythms.

In contrast, *The English Hymnal* embraced a much more comprehensive range of musical styles, with many more tunes from a wider selection of the early psalters, together with Tudor and Restoration music, and traditional folksong arrangements. Victorian representation was drastically reduced. In EH were now to be found the strong individuality of Purcell, Gibbons and others, the chromaticism of Bach, and the distinctive character of the early French Church melodies. This early music was balanced by the modern idiom of Vaughan Williams and his contemporaries, and the unfamiliar modal harmony of the folksong adaptations. Consequently there was a considerable increase in the variety of harmonic, melodic and rhythmic styles and, very importantly, a wholesale rejection of recent Germanic influences. *The English Hymnal* signified a sea change in the musical language of the hymn-book.

Summary of Vaughan Williams's editorial policy

The principal features of Vaughan Williams's editorial policy may now be summarised:

- The adaptation of a significant number of English folksongs as hymn-tunes
- The revival of many Tudor and Restoration composers
- The rejection of large numbers of second-rate Victorian tunes
- The rejection of almost all foreign composers active later than the 18th century
- The inclusion of exclusively English modern composers

Vaughan Williams was not only seeking to improve the general musical quality of the new hymn-book; it is quite clear that he was deliberately expunging the Victorian bias of A&M, with its associations of recent German musical dominance, and replacing it with music emanating from unequivocally English cultural sources. His editorial practices closely correspond with the underlying currents of the wider English musical renaissance, which sprang from the same influences.

There is a nice summary of this in Hughes and Stradling's *The English Musical Renaissance*:

[*The English Hymnal*] was the first creative contact between the Anglican Church and the English Musical Renaissance.

Vaughan Williams's academic outlook, coupled with his love of Tudor music and his new dedication to folksong, forged the *Hymnal* as an entirely new weapon for national music, to be wielded through the Church on the life of the nation. His inspiration was explicitly ideological, stemming from the conviction that the established Church was a vital pillar of 'Englishness' and that its music should be purged of Victorian sentimentalism and 'bad taste'...We cannot but help that reflect that Vaughan Williams had more of a mind to put Anglicans in touch with the English Musical Renaissance than with the Almighty.⁷

Songs of Praise, The Oxford Book of Carols and Songs of Praise Enlarged

In 1925 *Songs of Praise* was published. Once more, Vaughan Williams and Percy Dearmer collaborated on the project, this time with the added contribution of Martin Shaw, who was engaged as joint music editor. Though its contents drew heavily on *The English Hymnal*, *Songs of*

Praise went even further in its declared intention of providing a national collection, to include English poets and musicians of whatever faith. Its aim was to reach out to an even wider section of the community, and it was particularly aimed at schools and colleges. There were five new tunes by Vaughan Williams and a further twenty new arrangements, mostly folksong adaptations. Here's one of them - CUMNOR.

213

CUMNOR. (7 7. 7 7. 7 7. Irreg.)

R. VAUGHAN WILLIAMS.

In moderate time. Unison.

Vo. 4 & 5.

I. Ser-vants of God, or sons Shall I not call you, be - cause
Not as servants ye knew Your fa - ther's in - ner - most mind,
His who un - will - ing - ly sees One of his lit - tle ones lost.

Soon after the publication of *Songs of Praise*, Vaughan Williams, Dearmer and Shaw began work on a new carol book. The situation with carols was very similar to the one encountered with *The English Hymnal* in 1904. The many books currently available were dominated by mediocre Victorian material. Some contained a few traditional carols that were spurious or mutilated versions of the originals. There was obviously an overwhelming need for a new, comprehensive carol book, based soundly on thorough research and scholarship, just as *The English Hymnal* had been. Editing *The Oxford Book of Carols* therefore required much the same approach as for EH; namely, going back to original and traditional sources, and eliminating the second-rate Victorian hymns.

As with the team's previous productions, no effort was spared in preparing the words and music of *The Oxford Book of Carols*. Dearmer was assisted by a number of distinguished writers, including G.K.Chesterton, Robert Graves, A.A.Milne and Walter de la Mare. Vaughan Williams and Shaw arranged much of the music, which also included carols collected by Cecil Sharp and others, and the modern composers represented included Rutland Boughton, Armstrong Gibbs, Holst, Ireland, Warlock and Rubbra. This combination of prominent national literary and musical figures of the time contributed significantly to the book's identity as an authoritative repository of national Christmas music and to its function in furthering the nationalist agenda. The contents comprised traditional carols from the British Isles and from France, and other carols from mainland Europe and Scandinavia dating from the 17th century or earlier. Once again, traditional sources predominated, foreign sources were all ancient, very few 19th century carols were used, and new carols were all written by English composers. Vaughan Williams himself contributed four original carols and twenty-three arrangements. Not all have remained popular, but here is one that certainly has.

SUSSEX CAROL

Traditional

FIRST TUNE

Ibid.
(R.V.W.)

VERSES 1, 2, & 4
Voices in unison

Harmony, ad lib.

Unison

Harmony, ad lib.

Copyright, 1919, by Stainer & Bell Ltd.

Melody and text from Mrs. Verrall, Monks Gate, Sussex. Other versions in *Journal of the Folk Song Society*, vol. II, p. 127, and Cecil Sharp, *English Folk-Carols*, No. X. Arrangement for unaccompanied singing in *Eight Traditional English Carols* (Vaughan Williams), Stainer & Bell.

The Oxford Book of Carols therefore espoused a purposefully revivalist nationalist policy, which, together with the firm move away from Germanic tonic-dominant harmony and the expansion of musical idiom and style, applied the principles that had been pioneered by *The English Hymnal* to the carol repertoire.

In the meantime *Songs of Praise* had proved to be such an immediate and overwhelming success that, in response to popular demand, *Songs of Praise Enlarged* was published only six years later, in 1931. The same sources were employed, but this time tunes arranged from folksongs and new tunes or arrangements by living composers figured even more prominently. Table 5 shows the extent to which the incorporation of English national music in hymnals had developed from the compilation of *The English Hymnal* in 1906 to the publication of *Songs of Praise Enlarged* in 1931.

Table 5: Comparison of Traditional and Modern Tunes in EH and SPE

	Number of tunes in EH (744 in total, + 23 in Appendix)	Number of tunes in SPE (703 in total, +2 in Appendix)
Traditional		
English	48	43
Irish	1	13
Scottish	0	2
Welsh	3	6
The Shaw brothers		
Shaw, Geoffrey	0	31
Shaw, Martin	0	47
Modern composers		
Bairstow, Edward	0	1
Bax, Arnold	0	1
Bullock, Ernest	0	3
Darke, Harold	0	3
Gibbs, C. Armstrong	0	3
Gray, Alan	0	10
Hadley, Patrick	0	1
Harris, William	0	2
Holst, Gustav	3	11
Howells, Herbert	0	1
Ireland, John	1	2
Ley, Henry	0	5
Nicholson, Sydney	0	3
Slater, Gordon	0	3
Sumsion, Herbert	0	1
Vaughan Williams, Ralph	4	14

Sources: EH 1906; SPE 1931

Notes:

- i) For the purposes of conciseness only the most well-known and most well-represented entries are listed.
- ii) The Shaw brothers, Martin and Geoffrey, have been placed in a section of their own because essentially they belong to both categories. Many of their tunes were either arrangements of folksongs or new tunes written very much in the folksong style through their use of, for instance, modal harmonies.
- iii) SPE included thirty of VW's arrangements, eighteen of which had first appeared in EH.

Unlike EH before it, *Songs of Praise Enlarged* was characterised by the dominance of modern English composers. From those listed here, only 8 hymns appeared in *The English Hymnal* as opposed to 64 in *Songs of Praise Enlarged*. Traditional sources are roughly comparable between the two books. However, when the Shaw brothers' contribution is taken into account (see note ii), the true extent of the difference between the two books is revealed. The total number of traditional and modern sources is 60 for EH and 206 for SPE, or approximately 8% and 29% of their contents respectively. The predominance of these traditional and modern English sources in SPE represented a distinct advance in the continuing propagation of a nationalist musical agenda.

The lesser hymnals

The ten lesser volumes were largely aimed at the younger section of Anglican congregations. Only one new tune was composed by Vaughan Williams for these books - MARATHON appeared for the first time in *Songs of Praise for Boys and Girls* (1929) - but all of them contained a significant number of his arrangements and original tunes, thereby

promoting his name and his musical message amongst the next generation. Here's MARATHON.

con 8va.

(Copyright, 1928, by R. Vaughan Williams.)

In 1933 a revised music edition of *The English Hymnal* was published. It incorporated a significant number of folksong arrangements that had first appeared in *Songs of Praise*. And so a cross-fertilisation took place that further demonstrates the function of the hymnals as discrete yet inter-related agents in the development of a national music.

From this analysis of Vaughan Williams's work on hymnals the progression of his nationalist cultural agenda becomes evident. *The English Hymnal* was the first and most important publication, setting new standards of scholarship and excellence, and introducing a clearly conceived nationalist musical policy. In *Songs of Praise* a more explicitly national identity was pursued, whilst *The Oxford Book of Carols* applied the principles of its two predecessors to the carol repertoire. In *Songs of Praise Enlarged* this policy was carried even further, with traditional and modern English sources accounting for nearly a third of its contents. This liberation from the German-dominated musical style of the 19th century and its replacement by a specifically English idiom linked the hymnals directly with the wider musical renaissance in which Vaughan Williams played such a central role.

Notes

- 1 Dearmer: Preface to EH, p. iii-v
- 2 RVW: 'Religious folk songs' - Oxford University Extension Lecture, Pokesdown Technical School, Boumemouth, (see Kennedy Works, pp.33-34)
- 3 RVW: Preface to EH, p.xi
- 4 *ibid*, pp.x-xii
- 5 A collection edited by Ira Sankey and published in London.
- 6 RVW contributed four new tunes: DOWN AMPNEY (Come down, O love divine) RANDOLPH (God be with you till we meet again) SALVE FESTA DIES (Hail thee, Festival Day) and SINE NOMINE (For all the saints). The other modern composers included were William Bell (2 tunes), Walford Davies (1), Thomas Dunhill (1), Nicholas Gatty (2), A.M.Goodhart (1), Gustav Holst (3), John Ireland (1), Walter Parratt (1) and Arthur Somervell (3).
- 7 Hughes & Stradling, p.81

Part 3: The reception and impact of the hymnals

by John Bawden

One of the most remarkable things about *The English Hymnal*, both editions of *Songs of Praise* and *The Oxford Book of Carols* was the huge degree of popular and commercial success that they all enjoyed. Although the shrewd judgement and promotional strategies of the Oxford University Press¹ played an important part in this achievement, there can be little doubt that the widespread and continuing success of the various publications was primarily due to the scholarship, vision and determination of the editors.

Initial reception of the hymnals

The English Hymnal was viewed as a controversial publication when it first appeared, its Anglo-Catholic tone and startling originality at first appealing almost exclusively to those with high church inclinations. Certain doctrinal objections were raised by a number of clergy, including five bishops; the Bishop of Bristol went so far as to prohibit its use in his diocese. However, the reservations expressed about it gradually subsided, and more and more churches adopted it as it appealed to an ever-widening circle, so that by the twenties and thirties it had gained widespread acceptance, as Duncan Hinnells succinctly describes:

From the hymnal's status as radical, reformist text which appealed only to a specialist minority at the start of the century, *The English Hymnal* became transformed in subsequent decades into an established and seemingly uncontroversial part of the Anglican world.²

The fact that *The English Hymnal* was taken up by cathedrals and high churches meant that from the first it was ideally placed to influence many senior figures within the Church hierarchy, and it therefore achieved an acceptance at the highest level which was a crucial factor in its eventual popularisation. In due course its far-reaching influence was recognised, as for example in A.E.F.Dickinson's article in *The Musical Times* of May 1956, in which he commented:

In the past, churches have fostered the musically intolerable or spineless, either by using a bad book or by cherishing the worst in what they have, instead of bringing out hidden treasures. Today this is no longer a true generalisation; and fifty years after publication it seems undeniable that 'The English Hymnal' has been largely responsible for the improvement.³

The publication of *The Oxford Book of Carols* was greeted with enthusiasm by churches, choirs of all kinds, schools and colleges, for whom there was a pressing need for such a volume. From 1928 until the first appearance of *Carols for Choirs* in 1961, *The Oxford Book of Carols* held sway as the definitive carol collection.

Part of the appeal of *Songs of Praise* and *Songs of Praise Enlarged* lay in the originality and challenging nature of much of their contents. *Songs of Praise Enlarged* was widely adopted by schools all over the country, and - crucially from Vaughan Williams's point of view - used regularly by the

BBC for its religious broadcasts until 1951, when it produced its own *BBC Hymnbook*.

Other than the initial reaction to *The English Hymnal*, the reception of the hymnals was therefore extremely positive. *EH* had revolutionised the whole concept of the hymnal. Its scholarship and artistic integrity set the standard for later hymnals, many of which reprinted hymns from it.⁴ And so, from being seen initially as a revolutionary development it quite quickly became accepted as part of the musical and liturgical establishment. None of the other three principal books attracted the same degree of initial suspicion and hostility. This was largely due to the fundamental change in perceptions brought about by the radical reforms that *EH* had pioneered in 1906. In the case of *The Oxford Book of Carols* it was also due to the fact that it fulfilled a long-felt need. Whereas *EH* had to contend with the incumbent *A&M*, *OBC* encountered no such competition. There were several successful small carol books,⁵ but certainly no definitive collection. The two editions of *Songs of Praise* similarly enjoyed immediate acceptance.

The wider impact of the hymnals

Through the huge commercial success of the hymnals, Vaughan Williams was able to disseminate his concept of a national music across a wide cross-section of society and over a considerable period of time. To begin with, this was through the Anglican community, comprising millions of individuals in this country and overseas. With the advent of *Songs of Praise* the focus shifted to the enormous educational market. From its publication until 1951 *SP* became the BBC's standard hymn-book for its many regular and occasional religious broadcasts. An important consequence of this was that Vaughan Williams's musical objectives and his own standing as a 'national' composer were lent further authority through the BBC's status as the cultural voice of the nation.

The influence of *The Oxford Book of Carols* was more diffuse. Its importance lay in its value as a choir book. As such, it found its way into churches, schools, colleges and choral societies. One particular melody in *OBC* greatly helped to identify Vaughan Williams as the quintessential English composer in the minds of the public. This was *Greensleeves*⁶, an 'authentic' version⁷ of which Vaughan Williams had discovered some years earlier in an obscure sixteenth century publication,⁸ and which in many ways came to epitomise the English pastoral style. Vaughan Williams's image as a national composer became further enhanced through his close association with this tune, principally through its metamorphosis into the *Fantasia on 'Greensleeves'*, for flute, harp and strings,⁹ but also through its many instrumental, vocal and choral arrangements.¹⁰

GREENSLEEVES

1642

Traditional
(M.S.)

Sopranos sing words

1. The old year now a - way is fled, The new year it is
2. The name-day now of Christ we keep, Who for our sins did
3. And now with New Year's gifts each friend Un - to each o - ther

A.T.B. hum

TENOR
BASS

en - ter - ed, Then let us now our sins down-tread, And joy-ful-ly all ap-pear:
of - ten weep; His hands and feet were wound-ed deep, And his bless-ed side with a spear;
they do send: God grant we may all our lives a - mend, And that the truth may ap-pear.

All sing words

Let's mer - ry be this day, And let us now both sport and play:
His head they crowned with thorn, And at him they did laugh and scorn,
Now, like the snake, your skin - Cast off, of e - vil thoughts and sin,

Hang grief, cast care a - way! God send you a hap - py New Year! —
Who for our good was born: God send us a hap - py New Year! —
And so the year be - gin: God send us a hap - py New Year! —

Although the offshoots of *Songs of Praise* contained little or no new material, their importance should not be underestimated. These ten lesser volumes were primarily aimed at children (see Table 1). They were published at regular intervals between the wars, and continued to be used extensively for some years after, thereby guaranteeing that Vaughan Williams's musical agenda maintained its momentum and that his name continued to be circulated at a grass-roots musical level into the next generation and beyond.

Conclusion

Vaughan Williams's determined campaign to establish a genuinely English music was conducted on a number of fronts. The hymnals, though not one of the most obvious instruments of this campaign, were nevertheless a vital part of it. By reforming the music of the hymnal and creating a new national hymn-book in the process, *The English Hymnal*, Vaughan Williams was effectively reforming the people's music of the Established Church, one of the nation's foremost cultural institutions. The same process can be observed in his promotion of *Songs of Praise* as a new national hymn-book for the educational establishment. It was a determined and systematic attempt to institutionalise his concept of a wholly English national music.

That concept sprang from his firmly stated belief that music is 'the expression of the soul of a nation', and that it has the spiritual power to unite people of all classes and backgrounds. In promulgating this vision through the medium of the hymnals, Vaughan Williams was determined to include only music that represented 'the treasure of the humble and the highest expression of the greatest minds',¹¹ and that in this most fundamental of creative activities, which for many people represented one of the few points of contact with any kind of musical heritage, they should be re-connected with the roots of English musical culture by giving them an unequivocally English musical language with which to express themselves. As a result of his musical crusade, ordinary people were regularly exposed to the English folksong heritage and the music of Purcell, Tallis, Gibbons and others - composers who would have been otherwise unknown to the general public at that time. Equally importantly, Vaughan Williams was effecting a liberation from the long period of subservience to German musical styles and a new awareness of modern English composers, not least himself.

What I hope I have shown is that, though distinct and separate publications, collectively the hymnals formed a structured progression in the development of Vaughan Williams's cultural nationalism, initially through the medium of the Church, later, through the educational system as well, and then further reinforced by BBC broadcasts. The solid foundations of a nationalist policy were laid down in *The English Hymnal* and built on by *Songs of Praise*. *The Oxford Book of Carols* used the principles applied to the first two volumes in the production of a definitive carol book. *Songs of Praise Enlarged* developed the nationalist agenda still further, and the 1933 revision of *EH* incorporated some material first published in *Songs of Praise*. There was thus a broadly linked developmental pattern from 1906 through to 1933. Additional momentum was provided by the publication of a number of smaller offshoots of *Songs of Praise*.

This impressive body of hymnal work, covering some thirty years, has not received the close attention it deserves. Those more recent writers and commentators who have looked at it have tended to concentrate on *The English Hymnal*, to the virtual exclusion of the other hymn-books. The relationship between the hymnals and the composer's folksong collecting has dominated critical discussions, and the few writers who have commented in more depth on Vaughan Williams's editorial policies have largely done so in a fragmented way, thereby failing to identify the true

nature and function of those policies, or of their sequential development. None of the literature has looked at all the hymnals as a connected body of work in its own right, or recognised the full extent of its significance to Vaughan Williams's continued promulgation of a nationalist musical agenda and his own image as a national composer. Furthermore, the influence of hymns on the composer's own music, both in the form of significant numbers of short pieces and, at a more subtle level, as thematic, harmonic and textual elements within his large-scale works, has hardly been touched on.

The enormous commercial success of the hymnals both in this country and in English-speaking communities abroad meant that Vaughan Williams was able to disseminate his musical vision across a phenomenally wide geographical and generational spectrum. In the process his own image as a national composer became similarly projected. And so the hymn-book, that apparently most unassuming of musical anthologies, became in Vaughan Williams's hands a powerful reforming tool, with far-reaching consequences for public perceptions of English music and for his own reputation as the quintessential English composer.

Notes

- 1 The two senior figures at OUP who had most to do with the hymnals were Humphrey Milford and Hubert Foss. Foss in particular enjoyed a long and close relationship with RVW.
- 2 Hinnells, p.44
- 3 Dickinson 1956, p.243
- 4 See Dickinson 1963, Appendix A, pp.488-493 for details of the considerable number of other hymnals that reprinted Vaughan Williams's original tunes and arrangements. e.g. *The Cowley Carol Book* (1901, 1902) and *The Westminster Carol Book* (1913).
- 5 Although it was RVW with whom the tune came to be associated, the arrangement in OBC was in fact by Martin Shaw, the joint music editor.
- 7 It appears as a 'cleaned-up' Victorian carol to the words 'What Child is this?' in Bramley & Stainer's *Christmas Carols New and Old* (1877).
- 8 *Greensleeves* appears in RVW's Incidental Music to 'King Richard II', (1913) and then in his opera *Sir John in Love* (1928).
- 9 This arrangement was made by Ralph Greaves in 1934.
- 10 Kennedy's *Catalogue*, pp.152-153, lists 13 of these arrangements some by RVW and some by others.
- 11 RVW: 'Some conclusions', p.72

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ORIENTIS PARTIBUS

KINGS LYNN

[Arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) from 'The English Hymnal' by permission of Oxford University Press]

SINE NOMINE

SALVE FESTA DIES

CUMNOR

[Music by Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) from 'The English Hymnal' by permission of Oxford University Press]

RODMELL

[Coll. & adap. Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) from 'The English Hymnal' by permission of Oxford University Press]

MONKS GATE

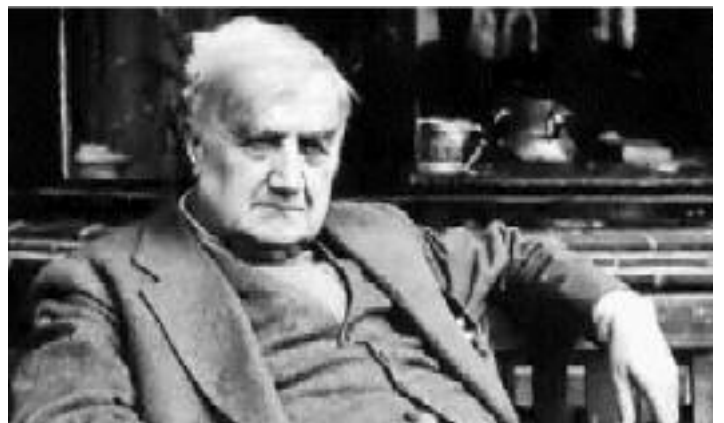
[Coll., adapt. & arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) from 'The English Hymnal' by permission of Oxford University Press]

SUSSEX CAROL

[(c) Oxford University Press from 'The Oxford Book of Carols' by permission of Oxford University Press]

GREENSLEEVES

[(c) Oxford University Press 1928 from 'The Oxford Book of Carols' by permission of Oxford University Press]



Two Obscure Hymn Tunes of Ralph Vaughan Williams

by John Barr

It is well known that Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) was the music editor for *The English Hymnal* (1906) and collaborated in this capacity with Martin Shaw (1875-1958) for *Songs of Praise* (1925) and for its enlarged edition (1931). One of his significant contributions in this capacity was the composition of thirteen hymn tunes which included the well known and loved SINE NOMINE, DOWN AMPNEY, RANDOLPH and KING'S WESTON.¹ These four tunes have found acceptance in a number of various hymnals, and all thirteen are found in *Songs of Praise*, enlarged edition.²

The two obscure hymn tunes by Vaughan Williams were composed later than the above mentioned tunes and are not available in any current published hymnal or collection, though they have been published by Oxford University Press.³ They are listed by Michael Kennedy among the works of Vaughan Williams as:

LITTLE CLOISTER... Hymn tune for voices in unison and organ...
HYMN FOR SAINT MARGARET... 'Praise God for Margaret'...⁴

LITTLE CLOISTER

LITTLE CLOISTER was composed in 1935 for the hymn text, "As the disciples, when thy Son had left them", by the Rev. Percy Dearmer (1876-1936) which appears as number 262 in *Songs of Praise*, enlarged edition (1931).⁵ Dearmer defined his text as, "an attempt to express the religion of the Eucharist in its historical setting; and also to provide a new musical form for a Communion hymn."⁶ The text's meter is specified by Dearmer, "Double Sapphic: [in which] two Sapphic stanzas are combined into one hymn-verse of eight lines."⁷ Because of the unusual length of each verse, as well as the length of their lines, the editors had to supply this text with two different hymn tunes to be sung consecutively with each Double Sapphic stanza. Although these two French church melodies (ROUEN and BAYEUX) are similar in rhythmic pattern and are in closely related keys to each other, there is not sufficient melodic unity to conceal the resulting pastiche.

It becomes clear, therefore, why Vaughan Williams composed one continuous hymn tune to match the length of Dearmer's stanzas. Though LITTLE CLOISTER was composed at least four years later than Dearmer's hymn,⁸ it is not clear why this tune was never included in a later printing of *Songs of Praise* which had undergone sixteen impressions by 1960.⁹ Nevertheless, Dearmer's hymn with Vaughan Williams's tune was published by Oxford University Press in 1935 and presumably was available as a supplement to the hymnal.

The thought in each of Dearmer's eight-line stanzas is organized into two distinct sections, each of which begins with the adverb "as" or "so". LITTLE CLOISTER, in the key of D major, is successful with its binary form in acknowledging the two parts of each stanza, without over-punctuating the end of the first part in m. 15. The A section progresses smoothly from a Phrygian cadence (mm. 14-15) into the B section which quickly moves to G major. While these chords provide harmonic motion, the whole notes of the tune in mm. 14 and 15 provide a melodic and harmonic repose, appropriate to this point of the text. In m. 16, the chromatic modulation to G major matches the progression of thought which takes place at this point. This point of modulation is at the cross-relation between the chords on each side of the double bar between mm. 15 and 16. They key of D major returns in m. 19 by means of a G major pivot chord.

In LITTLE CLOISTER, Vaughan Williams maintained the same basic rhythmic pattern illustrated in the French church melodies, but he achieved more melodic unity. Motivic unity can be observed as bracketed: [a] between mm. 1-2 9-10, and 16-17; [b] between mm. 3-4 and 18-19; [c] between mm. 11-12 and 21-22. (See appended hymn tune.)

LITTLE CLOISTER provides a vital, yet reflective melody supported by rich harmonic variety to produce a most fitting complement to Dearmer's text. Since this hymn with its specially composed tune forms an excellent expression of corporate Eucharistic worship, it deserves to be better known.

(a) (b)

1. So may we here who gath - er now in friend - ship
2. So may we here, a comp - a - ny of broth - ers,
3. So may we here, like corn that once was scat - tered

(c)

1. Seek for the Spir - it of those earl - ier Church - es,
2. Make this our love - feast and com - mem - or - a - tion,
3. Ov - er the hill - side, now one bread u - ni - ted,

1. Wel - com - ing him who stands and for an en - trance
2. That in his Spir - it we may have more worth - y
3. Led by the Spir - it, do thy work re - joic - ing,

1. Pat - ient - ly search - es.
2. Par - ti - ci - pa - tion.
3. Lamps filled and light - ed.

ST. MARGARET

ST. MARGARET was composed in January or February, 1948, to a text by Ursula Wood (later Ursula Vaughan Williams, b. 1911), for the *Hymnal for Scotland*, incorporating *The English Hymnal*, where it appears as number 748.¹⁰ Mrs. Vaughan Williams's text tells of St. Margaret (c.1045-1093), queen consort of Malcolm III of Scotland and of her legacy to Scotland's history.¹¹ St. Margaret was canonized by Innocent IV in 1249, and her feast day was eventually fixed on June 10.¹²

The author of the text related the fact that the tune was composed before the text was written. Vaughan Williams told her the tune was written to the meter of Tennyson's poem, *The Charge of the Light Brigade*. As an aid, the composer provided "a beautifully accented and slightly bawdy exposition of the stresses and metre his tune required."¹³

The hymn tune ST. MARGARET possesses a jubilant D major melody supported by richly-textured harmony. The rhythmic treatment of each stanza's short lines is done so as to avoid repeatedly short musical phrases which would merely stop soon after they start. Each of the first three lines is given a two-measure rhythmic pattern which keeps moving.

The fourth line of each quatrain is appropriately punctuated by two dotted half notes. The second quatrain in each stanza, though metrically identical to the first, receives a rhythmic expansion in its first two lines.

This provides a new rhythm before the previous two-bar pattern is resumed once again in line three of the second quatrain. As a result, the phrase structure avoids routine regularity by achieving a variety of phrase lengths: phrase one: 9 mm., phrases two and three: 3 mm. each, and phrase four: 6 mm. In order to achieve this phrase structure in performance, particularly the impression of one phrase for mm. 1 through 9, a brisk tempo is needed.

The melodic structure of ST. MARGARET is predominantly pentatonic. Only in four measures of the melody (mm. 1, 2, 14 and 16) out of the total twenty-one, can there be found the fourth and seventh degrees of the major scale. The rest of the melodic patterns conform to: D, E, F-sharp, A and B. The melodic contour moves up and down the range of an octave, however the high e is reserved for a climax on the penultimate note. This melody in its contour appears similar to the principal theme in the fourth movement of the composer's *Symphony No. 8 in D Minor*, (1953-55) and also similar to the theme in the Epilogue of the composer's Christmas cantata, *Hodie*, (1954).

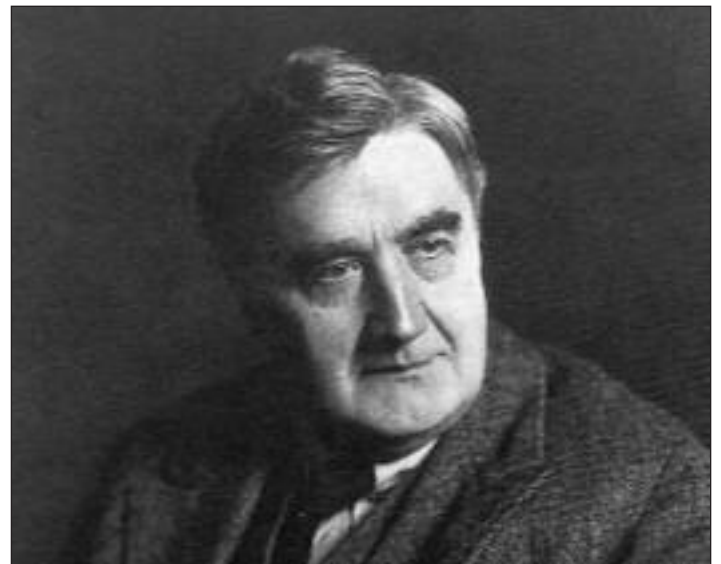
The harmony of ST. MARGARET does not modulate. The only extension beyond diatonic chords occurs with the use of secondary dominants: the V of V in m. 7 and the V of ii in m. 14. The harmony of this tune progresses with an active bass line which moves primarily in contrary motion to the melody.

The use of ST. MARGARET outside of Scotland is, of course, rather impractical due to the subject of the text. There do not appear to be many other texts with the same meter; however, *Songs of Praise*, enlarged edition, does have a text by John Masefield (1878- 1967), "Sing, Men and Angels Sing",¹⁴ which matches the tune beautifully. This text is suitable for Easter and Ascension, thus giving the tune ST. MARGARET a potentially wider practicality.

Unison

Notes

- 1 The others are: SALVE FESTA DIES, CUMNOR, GUILDFORD, MAGDA, OAKLEY, MARATHON, ABINGER, MANTEGNA and WHITE GATES
- 2 *Songs of Praise*, enlarged edition with music: [Words Editor: Percy Dearmer, Music Editors: Ralph Vaughan Williams, Martin Shaw]. London; Oxford University Press, [c1931].
- 3 A photocopy of each hymn tune was kindly made available by Mr. Brian Hill, Oxford University Press, Music Department; New York, N.Y, April 7, 1982.
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- 6 *Songs of Praise Discussed: A handbook to the best known hymns and to others recently introduced.* Compiled by Percy Dearmer, with notes on the music by Archibald Jacob; London, Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press, [1933], p. 153.
- 7 *Ibid.* Sapphic metre is 11 11. 11 5. For further information, see *Songs of Praise Discussed*, p. 15.
- 8 This tune was "composed in 1935 but...not...incorporated into the hymn book." Kennedy, p. 164.
- 9 *Songs of Praise*, enlarged edition, p. ii.
- 10 Kennedy, p. 196. *The Hymnal for Scotland...* is out of print. Letter from Mr. Brian Hill, Oxford University Press, Music Department, New York, April 7, 1982.
- 11 *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Chicago, London, Toronto... *Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., William Benton Publisher* [c 1968], Vol. 14, pp. 860 and 693 contain, respectively, the entries for St. Margaret of Scotland and Malcolm II who defeated and killed Macbeth, King of Scots from 1040-1075. (*Ibid.* p. 496)
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 861.
- 13 Ursula Vaughan Williams, *R.V.W. a Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams*; London, Oxford University Press, [1964], p. 281.
- 14 *Songs of Praise*, enlarged edition. [hymn no. 165]. This article originally appeared in the *Journal of The Hymn Society in the United States of Canada*, THE HYMN 38 - 3 (July 1987), 23 - 27. It is reprinted here with kind permission. The Cloister is printed with kind permission of Oxford University Press. St Margaret is printed with kind permission of Ursula Vaughan Williams.



DETERMINING A CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF RVW'S ORIGINAL HYMN TUNES

by John Barr



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Although Vaughan Williams's original hymn tunes are well documented, a clearly organized list seems to be lacking. Michael Kennedy's, *A Catalogue of the Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, Second Edition is complete in documenting all of the composer's original hymn tunes, but the list on pages 308 and 309 lacks clarity for these reasons: various hymnals which VW edited are included, some folk song adaptations are included, some hymn tunes by others which VW arranged are included, and his original hymn tunes have two entries each listed alphabetically by text and tune name. These are not faults since the purpose of Kennedy's list is NOT to focus exclusively on the original hymn tunes. It is, however, difficult to see in a convenient format just how many original hymn tunes RVW composed. A further difficulty in compiling a list devoted exclusively to RVW's original hymn tunes comes in determining the limits of the genre. An example is FAMOUS MEN, 432 in *Songs of Praise* (1931) which lacks a metrical strophic text. Its genre is identified in this hymnal as a canticle and at its entry in Kennedy's *Catalogue...*, a unison song. The through-composed setting of its text of irregular meter, the music of which is more complex than that sung by the average congregation, clearly places it outside of the hymn tune genre. The list of hymn tunes in the *New Groves*, 1980 and 2001 which rightfully excludes FAMOUS MEN also excludes HYMN FOR ST. MARGARET and *My Soul Praise the Lord*, two tunes which clearly conform to the typical characteristics of the hymn tune genre. RVW himself used the word hymn in various genres. The music for his *Four Hymns for Tenor, Viola and Strings* (1914) are solo songs, while *Three Choral Hymns for Baritone or Tenor, Mixed Choir and Orchestra* (1929) obviously go far beyond the difficulty level of congregational singing. RVW also composed three hymn tunes which conform to the genre while the content of their texts are outside the usual categories of Christian worship. Here then is the resulting list in chronological order followed by some observations which I have found interesting.

for The English Hymnal (1906)

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Down Ampney | Come down, O Love Divine |
| 2. Randolph | God be with you till we meet again |
| 3. Salve festa Dies | Hail Thee, Festival Day |
| 4. Sine Nomine | For all the Saints |

for Songs of Praise (1925)

- | | |
|------------------|---------------------------------|
| 5. Cumnor | Servants of God, or Sons |
| 6. Guildford | England, arise! |
| 7. Magda | Saviour, again to Thy dear name |
| 8. Oakley | The night is come |
| 9. King's Weston | At the name of Jesus |

for Songs of Praise for Boys and Girls (1929)

- | | |
|--------------|---------------------------------|
| 10. Marathon | Servants of the great adventure |
|--------------|---------------------------------|

for Songs of Praise (1931)

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| 11. Abinger | I vow to thee, my country |
| 12. Mantegna | Into the woods my master went |
| 13. White Gates | Fierce raged the tempest |

other miscellaneous hymn tunes

14. My soul Praise the Lord (1935)
15. Little Cloister (1935)
16. A Hymn of Freedom (1939)
17. A Call to the Free Nations (1941)
18. The Airman's Hymn (1942)
19. Hymn for Saint Margaret (1948)

Vaughan Williams composed his original hymn tunes primarily to provide music to texts which had peculiar meters. Another reason was most likely to replace a tune of obviously poor quality. His hymn tunes are all well crafted and very rarely show identical melodic repetition. Information and observations on RVW'S hymn tunes can be found in *Songs of Praise Discussed* (O.U.P., 1933) by Percy Dearmer and Archibald Jacobs. The following paragraphs will provide some of this and other information with some of my own observations on some, but not all of the hymn tunes in the above list.

DOWN AMPNEY is a tune which was composed for the unusual meter, 66.11.D. RVW avoids identical melodic repetition of bars 6-9 by a subtle re-ordering of the pitches in bars 15-18.

RANDOLPH was most likely named after RVW's cousin, Ralph Wedgewood (1874-1956), known to his family as "Randolph". The last melodic phrase is identical to the first as are the words, however RVW gives the second note of the last phrase a slightly different chord (secondary dominant) which provides a refreshing contrast at this point!

SINE NOMINE has a number of melodic motives which Michael Kennedy finds in earlier and later works by the composer. (*The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, 1980; p. 79 and 85). Alain Frogley is the only writer, to my knowledge, who has pointed out that the "Alleluia motive" melodically echoes Elgar's *Alleluia* sung by the Angel in Part 2 of *The Dream of Gerontius*. (Frogley: *Vaughan Williams's Ninth Symphony*, O.U.P. 2001, p. 281, n.56). Elgar's motive b c ba be outlines E minor while VW's outlines G Major. This tune has circulated throughout the world, perhaps, as much as any tune in Christian hymnody. Ursula Vaughan Williams in her book, *R.V.W. a Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams* (OUP 1964) quotes Canon Lancelot Bark's account of one of the tune's excursions about which he told the composer in 1925 as follows:

The second Anglo-Catholic pilgrimage to the Holy Places in 1925 on which I was director of the music, included the Isle of Patmos. The leaders of our pilgrimage, Dr. Hutton, Dean of Winchester, the late Dr. Russell Wakefield, Bishop of Birmingham, and other eminent Churchmen, were eager to make our visit to Patmos the highlight of the tour. For that purpose they requested me to form the pilgrims, over 300 in number, into a vast choir to ascend the hill leading to the monastery, singing Sine Nomine. I spread it out with interludes between the verses, and perhaps more by good luck than good management, the last verse was reached as we entered the quadrangle of the monastery where it rang out and echoed magnificently around the building.

The Abbot, who appeared to be the choir director, was thrilled by it, and asked me through our interpreter, what was the tune. I told him it was a modern tune by our most eminent English composer. He insisted on my giving him a copy of it, for which I was conducted to the Scriptorium and supplied with a vast sheet of vellum and an immense inkpot. I understood that he was going to adapt it to some Antiphon for use in their services. So Sine Nomine reached Patmos in 1925. (U.V.W.: *R.V.W.*, OUP 1964, pp. 159-160)

RVW replied to Canon Bark, writing that probably the next visitor to Patmos would collect his tune as Greek folk song! (U.V.W. p. 160)

The remaining hymn tunes that are best known in the hymnals of which Vaughan Williams was musical editor are those for the three publications of songs of Praise. CUMNOR is a setting of a portion of Matthew Arnold's poem, *Rugby Chapel*. The tune name most likely comes from the Cumnor Hills which were held in fond remembrance by Arnold in his poems, *The Scholar Gypsy* and *Thyrsis* which Vaughan Williams immortalized in his later work, *An Oxford Elegy* (1947-49). GUILDFORD is likely named for a town located south-west of London. KING'S WESTON is named for the home of Philip Napier Miles where RVW spent many happy week-ends. The modality and the contour of this fine melody remind one of plainsong. MARATHON originated in the composer's incidental music for *The Wasps*, a comedy by Aristophanes, where the melody functions as a processional for the chorus in the Parabasis section. ABINGER stretches the hymn tune genre somewhat in that its text is nationalistic in the best sense of the word and its melodic range is wider than most hymn tunes, middle C to treble-top-line F. Sir Cecil Spring-Rice's text, *The Two Fatherlands* appears to have prompted or inspired RVW to name his tune after the country parish of Abinger which includes part of Leith Hill where RVW's ancestral home is located. RVW also composed music, including the anthem, *O How Amiable* (1934) for the Abinger Pagent, collaborating with E.M. Forester. MANTEGNA is one of RVW's most poignant hymn tunes, setting Sidney Lanier's, *The Ballad of the Trees and the Master* to melody and harmony coloured by the Phrygian mode. This tune is named after Andrea Mantegna (1431-1506, the greatest north Italian fresco painter of his time whose painting *Agony in the Garden* is preserved in the museum at Tours. WHITE GATES is a straight forward tune in the Aeolian mode set to a text with another unusual meter, 88.83. The tune is named after RVW's home in Dorking.

My Soul Praise the Lord was cited by Graham Muncy in this journal, No. 25, October, 2002, p. 26 reporting that he discovered the autograph manuscript of this hymn in a bound volume of music manuscripts by various composers. I am grateful for Mr. Muncy's discovery as I had thought that RVW arranged the OLD 104th PSALM TUNE for this text since they appear together in his *Fantasia (quasi variazione) on the Old 104th Psalm Tune* for piano, orch. and mixed chorus (1949). RVW's hymn tune to this text is still available as I was able to obtain a copy through the kindness of Brian Hill of the O.U.P. Music Department in New York.

Of the three war time hymn tunes, it should be mentioned that *A Hymn of Freedom* appeared with both text and tune in this journal, No. 22 October, 2001. Mr. Hill, just mentioned in the above paragraph kindly supplied me with photo copies of this hymn and *A Call to the Free Nations*. I have not seen, however, *The Airman's Hymn*.

This list represents an interesting body of miniature compositions. Close analytical scrutiny to these short works yields to the observer many interesting musical techniques carried out by Vaughan Williams. Manuscript sources appear to be in existence for some but not all of the hymn tunes. Whether interesting observations could be made from manuscript study where possible, is still a question, at least to me at this time. In any case, I am not aware of any great twentieth century composer other than Vaughan Williams who devoted such care and skill to the "humble" hymn tune. The result is that some of Vaughan Williams's hymn tunes are among the very finest in all of Christian hymnody.

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HYMN TUNE DESCANTS

PART 1: 1915~1934

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Under **Descant**, the world's most extensive music dictionary¹ offers only two words: See **DISCANT**. Turning to **Discant** (from *dis* + *cantus*, to "sing apart"), we find "A type of medieval polyphony, characterized by essentially note-against-note, contrary movement between the voices...". There is no mention of hymntune descants, and under **hymn**, we find a wealth of ancient and modern hymntune lore, but again, no mention of hymntune descants. What a surprise, during an era of increasing popularity of descants! Among influential American hymnals, for example, *Hymnal* 1940 contains no descants, whereas *Hymnal* 1982 contains more than thirty,² and current editions of four Canadian hymnals offer more than forty descants each.

The surprise deepens with the realization that the subject is "very English" – Ralph Vaughan Williams himself composed descants – but that the *Oxford English Dictionary*³ has yet to include the hymntune meaning of descant along with its many others.

The history of descants should be better known. The purpose of this two-part article is to trace their emergence in England and spread to the United States and Canada, and to recognize individual descant composers and their contributions.

FAUXBOURDONS

In a chapter entitled "The French Ecclesiastical Melodies," Athelstan Riley⁴ writes, "There is a peculiar kind of *faux-bourdon*⁵ harmony, very simple and yet very effective, which is often employed in France to embellish these ecclesiastical melodies. It consists of a single part above the melody sung by boys' voices, whilst the rest of the choir and the congregation sing the melody in unison. The effect is thrilling; it gives the

curious impression of an ethereal choir joining in the worship below; and those who hear it for the first time often turn and look up at the roof!" Riley continues,⁶ "The French *faux-bourdon* is not really harmony, it is rather the embellishment by discant of unisonal singing and, as such, a device of a very high artistic value." He then gives as an example the tune COELITES PLAUDANT. This same example is reproduced here (Figure 1) from Riley's 1916 collection.⁷ "At the third or fourth verse the *faux-bourdon* part should be added by half a dozen boys' voices, more or less, according to the volume of the unisonal singing."

Riley uses the older spelling *discant* in his 1915 publication, but *descant* in the title of the 1916 collection. Perhaps this change marks Riley's recognition that the part sung by selected boys had, in England if not in France, developed beyond the bounds of *fauxbourdon*.⁸ Riley distinguishes between "four-part *faux-bourdons*" and "two-part *faux-bourdons*." In four-part, the melody, in the tenor, is sung by all except the boys, who sing the upper two parts. "The two-part *faux-bourdons*, or descants, are to be treated somewhat differently." That sentence shows that Riley's meaning of *descant* is, to be precise, the part above the melody in a two-part *faux-bourdon*. Thus, in Figure 1 and all other two-part *faux-bourdons* in the 1916 collection, the designation "F.B." is synonymous with "descant".

Riley cites a "little-known book"⁹ as a source of French four-part *faux-bourdons*. However, all but one of the two-part *faux-bourdons*, or descants, in Riley's 1916 collection appear to have been composed by Englishmen.¹⁰ In the absence of any earlier relevant publication with the words *descant*(s) or *déchant*(s) in its title, it appears that the publishing of hymntune descants originated in England.¹¹

FIGURE 1: J. B. Croft's descant-arrangement of COELITES PLAUDANT. A different harmonization by Ralph Vaughan Williams is found in *The English Hymnal* (no. 242) and later hymnals.

In answer to the question, "Who composed the first hymntune descant?", possibly the answer is John Bonham Croft, whose name appears in Figure 1. Riley writes as follows:¹²

The Rev. J. B. Croft, from 1889 to 1915 Priest-Organist of St. Matthew's, Westminster, to whom we owe a great debt of gratitude for having prominently brought the later music of the French Church before the attention of our clergy and choirmasters in a practical form, has kindly allowed the inclusion of two of his arrangements; others have been specially written for the collection by different composers.

Riley's description indicates that Croft's two descants already existed at the time that Riley asked for others. The description also suggests that Croft may have published his own description of French "two-part *fauxbourdons*." However, the titles of Croft's publications in The British Library catalogue have not led to the discovery of any such publication. This is notable, considering the fact that Croft was well versed in the French melodies of the sort that Vaughan Williams adapted for inclusion in *The English Hymnal*. Although these melodies were printed in plainsong notation in Vaughan Williams's source-material,¹³ they are not authentic plainsong. In fact, their origin was little known during the half-century following Vaughan Williams's work with them. In 1954, Cyril E.

Pocknee¹⁴ was able to trace these melodies to French origins dating from 1666 to 1824. For example, COELITES PLAUDANT appeared in the *Rouen Antiphoner* in 1728. Figure 2 shows this melody as sung in Rouen after 1890. This must be the version used by Vaughan Williams and Croft as a basis for their adaptations. (It seems strange that Pocknee's version differs somewhat from this one.)

FIGURE 2: COELITES PLAUDANT, from *Paroissien Romain, Noté in Plain-Chant, Rouen, 1890*. Kindly provided by the Library of the Community of the Resurrection, Mirfield, West Yorkshire. The title page of is dated July 30, 1900 and signed "J. B. Croft".

No evidence was found that descants for melodies such as that in Figure 2 were ever printed in paroissiens between 1800 and 1914. Moreover, Pocknee, in a section on "the manner in which these melodies were performed," mentions nothing like a descant. Perhaps future searching will enable a confirmation of Riley's assertion that some form of descant was "often employed in France" in 1915. In any case, after 1915, descants were certainly often employed in England!

In 1917, Geoffrey Shaw, who had composed eleven descants in Riley's 1916 collection, published *The Tenor Tune Book*.¹⁵ The popularity and influence of this book are indicated by reprintings in 1918, 1921 (enlarged), 1924, and 1925, when Shaw published *The Descant Hymn-Tune Book*.¹⁶ In his 1917 Preface, Shaw writes:

The plan is simple: the well-known melody, which we have been accustomed to see in the treble and to hear sung by sopranos and by any others who cared to join in, is transferred to the tenor. This gives us two alternative methods of treatment: (1) The Tenor Tune may be accompanied by three vocal parts (S.A.B.), thus making four-part harmony (preferably unaccompanied); or (2) The Tenor Tune may be sung by all the voices, with the exception of a certain number of trebles, who will sing the descant, or top part, thus making two-part harmony with the canto fermo. In this case the organ will play the four parts as written. The "soloing" of the tenor part will often be effective.

To summarize, in Shaw's plan, methods (1) and (2) match Riley's four-part and two-part *fauxbourdons*. Between 1917 and 1925, it appears that method (1) gave way to the modern hymntune descant, in which the melody is in the soprano part and the descant is scored separately, above the soprano. An enlightening Preface to Geoffrey Shaw's 1925 collection, is written by "H.G.":¹⁷ "Historians differ as to the original and precise meaning of "descant" and its kindred term "*faux-bourdon*." Probably the signification varied with certain countries and composers. To-day, however, a "descant" is generally understood to be a counter-theme sung against the melody of a hymn or song; while the term "*faux-bourdon*" is applied to a harmonized setting (usually in four parts) in which the melody is given to the tenor."

H.G. continues, "Of the two forms, descant seems to be more generally used than *faux-bourdon*, chiefly because it calls for less ample choral means... Descant is by far the easier of the two methods... Descant is also the more effective, as it allows of greater freedom not only in the treble counter-theme, but also in the organ part. In fact, there appears to be no device in choral music that yields so striking a result in return for so little trouble." In 1934, Geoffrey Shaw published another descant collection.¹⁸ By then, the hymntune descant as we know it today, largely through the publications of Geoffrey Shaw, had become firmly established at home and across the Atlantic.

Especially during the decade 1915-1925, the “catching on” of descants in England was closely associated with *The English Hymnal*.¹⁹ Although no descants are found in this famous hymnal itself, many were composed for use with its hymns, including the collections published by A. Riley and G. Shaw, both of whom are well represented in the hymnal. Regarding Riley, for example, the music editor of *The English Hymnal* wrote that he sometimes found a good tune and needed somebody “to write suitable words,” hence “the origin of Athelstan Riley’s fine hymn *Ye Watchers and Ye Holy Ones*...”²⁰

TWO ENGLISH HYMNALS

Ralph Vaughan Williams describes one of the most momentous interviews in the history of hymnology:²¹

It must have been in 1904 that I was sitting in my study in Barton Street, Westminster, when a cab drove up to the door and ‘Mr. Dearmer’ was announced... He went straight to the point and asked me to edit the music of a hymn book. I protested that I knew very little about hymns²² but he explained to me that Cecil Sharp had suggested my name... and the final clench was given when I understood that if I did not do the job it would be offered to a well-known Church musician with whose musical ideas I was much out of sympathy. At this opening interview Dearmer told me that the new book was being sponsored by a committee of eight clerics who were dissatisfied with the new *Hymns Ancient and Modern*... He told me that these eight founders had put down five pounds each for expenses, and that my part of the work would probably take about two months.

I thought it over for twenty-four hours and then decided to accept, but I found the work occupied me two years and that my bill for clerical expenses alone came to about two hundred and fifty pounds. The truth is that I determined to do the work thoroughly, and that, besides being a compendium of all the tunes of worth that were already in use, the book should, in addition, be a thesaurus of all the finest hymn tunes in the world...”

During the two years that Vaughan Williams was working on *The English Hymnal*, he was rapidly becoming a renowned collector and arranger of English folk tunes. Some of the best of these found their way into the hymnal and are now, nearly a century later, treasured around the world. In his *Musical Autobiography*,²³ Vaughan Williams wrote that his “two years of close association with some of the best (as well as some of the worst) tunes in the world was a better musical education than any amount of sonatas and fugues.”

The year 1924 found Vaughan Williams working on a new hymnal, of which he and Martin Shaw were the music editors. “For this Ralph decided that no second-bests and no compromises should go in, and his net was cast even more widely than it had been for the first edition of *The English Hymnal*.”²⁵ *The new hymnal, Songs of Praise*, contains descants composed by Vaughan Williams, two in the first edition, and a third in the second edition, dated 1931. The first two are for the tunes CRÜGER (“Hail to the Lord’s Anointed!”) and EVENTIDE (“Abide with me; fast falls the eventide”). The third is a melismatic descant (Figure 3) to HELMSLEY,²⁶ a tune once described as “probably the greatest musical achievement of Methodism.”²⁷

Between the years 1906 and 1925 of the first editions of hymnals of which Vaughan Williams was music editor, there appeared a particularly influential collection of 150 descants.²⁸ The composer, Alan Gray, had been Vaughan Williams’s organ teacher at Cambridge University.²⁹

The relationship of the two hymnals to the early history of hymntune descants can be summarized as follows. *The English Hymnal* of 1906 greatly promoted the composing and singing of new and musically excellent hymn tunes; the fact that this hymnal did *not* include descants prompted the composing of separate descant collections as early as 1916. Several of these descants (and *fauxbourdons*) were published again in 1925, in *Songs of Praise*. This hymnal is the earliest to contain a substantial number of descants. Among them are five by Geoffrey Shaw,

for MORNING HYMN, WINCHESTER NEW, NUN DANKET, WAREHAM, and WILTSHIRE, along with numerous faburdens³⁰ and original hymntunes, including LANGHAM (“Father eternal, Ruler of creation”).

Geoffrey Shaw’s brother Martin composed fifty-three tunes in *Songs of Praise* (1931), including thirteen faburdens and the enduring tune PURPOSE (“God is working his purpose out”).

Songs of Praise (1931) includes, from Gray’s collection, descants to ten tunes: HEINLEIN, CHRISTCHURCH, OLD 104TH, NEANDER, ABERYSTWYTH, BUCKLEBURY, TANTUM ERGO (WEBBE), MOSCOW, DUKE STREET, and ORIEL.

FIGURE 3. Vaughan Williams’s descant to HELMSLEY, from *Songs of Praise*, 1931, © Oxford University Press. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Vaughan Williams’s accompaniment (slightly altered) of HELMSLEY appears in many hymnals; e.g., *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 1989, no. 718.



FIGURE 4. Ralph Vaughan Williams in 1902, from Michael Kennedy, *Ralph Vaughan Williams*, London: Oxford University Press, 1964. © Oxford University Press. Used by permission. All rights reserved.



FIGURE 5. Athelstan Riley, from *Jo Park, Athelstan Riley: Patron of St. Petroc Minor, Little Petherick, Truro*, 1982.



FIGURE 6. Geoffrey Shaw, from *Martin Shaw, Up to Now*, London: Oxford University Press, 1929. © Oxford University Press. Used by permission. All rights reserved.



FIGURE 7. Alan Gray, from *Cambridgeshire Collection*, Cambridge Central Library. Used by permission.

It is noteworthy that neither of the Shaw brothers, nor Vaughan Williams nor Gray, included a descant with one of his own hymntunes. Gustav Holst, however, composed HILL CREST with a descant, with copyright date 1928 indicated in *Songs of Praise*.

FROM 1926 TO 1934

The descant collections of Geoffrey Shaw and Alan Gray have already been mentioned. Both collections were repeatedly reprinted and are represented in modern hymnals; indeed, possibly Gray's name is listed as the composer for a greater number of descants in hymnals than any other name. Among several other collections published in England before 1934 are those of Thomas Hanforth³¹ (1867-1948), Organist and Master of the Choir, Sheffield Cathedral. By 1934, several collections had also been published in Canada and the United States.

In 1926, Healey Willan (1880-1968) composed a four-part refrain to THE FIRST NOWELL which appears in several modern hymnals.³² The top part is marked Descant, but possibly Willan did not intend it as such.

In 1931, a collection³³ was published in the United States. The composer, Peter Lutkin (1858-1931) was born in Wisconsin of parents born in Denmark. Lutkin was the first Dean of the School of Music at Northwestern University and one of the founders of the American Guild of Organists.

In 1933, Alfred Whitehead (1887-1974) published a collection. Born in Peterborough, England, Whitehead moved to Canada in 1912. He served as organist, choirmaster, and teacher in Truro and Amherst in Nova Scotia, and Sherbrooke and Montreal in Quebec.

CONCLUSION

Descants were used with ancient plainsong. After falling into disuse for centuries, they suddenly and sweepingly appeared in a new form, nowadays called simply "descants" but sometimes called "hymntune descants" in order to distinguish them from the earlier kind. Another way to distinguish between the two is to use the spelling "discants" for the earlier.

In 1915, Athelstan Riley introduced descants into England. Five years later, Alan Gray, introduced his very influential collection³⁵ with this sentence, "An interesting adaptation of the medieval arts of Descant and Faux-Bourdon has been introduced into this country in the last few years." Riley describes, as a basis for the adaptation, a French "two-part faux-bourdon" – a part sung by selected boys above the melody. However, confirmation of this precursor remains to be found.

By 1934, many descant collections had appeared in England, not only for hymns, but also for national songs and for use in schools. In North America, descant-composing and singing was off to a start, and a new generation of composers was coming along.

Notes

- 1 *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, second edition, Stanley Sadie, ed., 29 volumes (London: Macmillan, 2001).
- 2 Hymnals of The Episcopal Church (New York: The Church Hymnal Corporation).
- 3 *The Oxford English Dictionary*, second edition, Stanley Sadie, ed., 20 volumes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).
- 4 Athelstan Riley, *Concerning Hymn Tunes and Sequences* (London: A. R. Mowbray, 1915) 36.
- 5 For details, see the articles on **Fauxbourdon** and **Faburden** in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (note 1).
- 6 Riley (note 4) 37.
- 7 Athelstan Riley, *A Collection of Faux-bourdots and Descants* (London: A. R. Mowbray, 1916) xiv.
- 8 An indication of this is Riley's footnote (p. xii): "The musical critic will notice that the musicians responsible for the *faux-bourdots* in this Collection are not wholly in accord as to how far the strict rules of counterpoint and harmony should be observed. Each has carefully considered the question, and is responsible for his own composition."
- 9 Alfred Delaporte, *Recueil de Faux-bourdots à quatre parties, avec accompagnement d'orgue* (Angers, France, 1874). Delaporte was Maître de Chapelle de la Cathédrale d'Angers.
- 10 The composers' names are as follows: Maurice Frederick Bell, Paul Béral, J. B. Croft, A. Delaporte (adapted), R. S. Edwards, George Gardner, Harvey Grace, W. M. Howitt, H. J. Halton, Geoffrey Shaw, and Royle Shore. Riley identifies several of these in his Introduction, including Monsieur Paul Béral, whose descant to LUCIS CREATOR appears on page 15. It appears that Béral composed the descant specifically for Riley's collection. In any case, there appears to be no independent French development of hymntune descants. One of the composers, Archdeacon George Gardner wrote, in response to a review of Riley's *Collection*, that improved hymn-singing with occasional descants, could "often come to be regarded as the most artistically satisfying part of a service." The review, response, and an editor's note appear in *The Musical Times*, October 1, 1916, p. 456, and November 1, 1916, p. 504.
- 11 The search included the online catalogues of the national libraries of Britain, Canada, France, and the United States.
- 12 Riley (note 7) xiii.
- 13 "Ecclesiastical melodies from the *paroissiens* of various French uses (chiefly those of Rouen and Angers)", as stated in the Preface of *The English Hymnal*. The two melodies to which Croft wrote descants, published in Riley (note 7), are COELITES PLAUDANT and ST. VENANTIUS; Vaughan Williams's harmonizations of these in *The English Hymnal* are numbered 38 and 242.
- 14 Cyril E. Pocknee, *The French Diocesan Hymns and Their Melodies* (London: The Faith Press, 1954). Page 24 shows a chart of sources for twenty-four melodies and the page numbers on which their adaptations appear in *The English Hymnal*.
- 15 Geoffrey Shaw, *The Tenor Tune Book, A collection of Descants Old and New, the former taken from the Old Psalters, the New Settings by Harvey Grace, Rev. H. V. Hughes, Rev. Hugh R. Norton, Geoffrey Shaw, Martin Shaw, and C. A. Becket Williams* (London: The Faith Press, 1917). This may be the earliest descant collection for hymntunes not of French origin. The titular "Descants Old" are essentially four-part *fauxbourdots*, not hymntune descants.
- 16 Geoffrey Shaw, *The Descant Hymn-Tune Book* (London: Novello, 1925).
- 17 Possibly Harvey Grace; see notes 10 and 15.
- 18 Geoffrey Shaw, *Thirty-Six Descants (with accompaniments) For use with the English Hymnal* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934).
- 19 *The English Hymnal* (London: Oxford University Press, 1906). On page xix, Vaughan Williams writes that "He also wishes to acknowledge his indebtedness to the Rev. J. B. Croft, who has kindly placed his great knowledge and experience of French ecclesiastical melodies at his service."
- 20 Ursula Vaughan Williams, R. V. W., *A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964) 71. © Oxford University Press. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
- 21 Quoted from Ursula Vaughan Williams (note 20) 70-71.
- 22 As Robin A. Leaver points out, Vaughan Williams writes rhetorically – he certainly did know about hymns! Leaver's highly recommended essay, "British Hymnody, 1900-1950," appears in Raymond F. Glover, *The Hymnal 1982 Companion*, 4 volumes (New York: The Church Hymnal Corporation, 1990). The essay appears in vol. 1, pages 474-504.
- 23 Printed as Chapter 3 in Hubert Foss, *Ralph Vaughan Williams* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950) 34.
- 24 Ursula Vaughan Williams (note 20) 157.
- 25 *Songs of Praise* (London: Oxford University Press, 1925; enlarged edition, 1931).
- 26 Vaughan Williams calls HELMSLEY "The magnificently solemn tune for which Wesley wrote 'Lo, he comes'" in his contribution, "Some Reminiscences of The English Hymnal," pages 2-6, in *The First Fifty Years: A Brief Account of The English Hymnal from 1906 to 1956* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956). In this essay, Vaughan Williams also writes that "[Athelstan] Riley had a large knowledge of ecclesiastical music, and used to come round often to my house to go through proofs, or suggest new tunes. He arrived on a beautiful white horse which he deputed a young relative of mine, a boy of about ten, to hold while he discussed hymns with me."
- 27 Quoted in Clark Kimberling, "Tunes Lost and Found: HELMSLEY, LEEDS, YORKSHIRE, WEDNESBURY," *The Hymn* 52, no. 2 (April 2001) 25-36.
- 28 Alan Gray, *A Book of Descants* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1926), first published in 1920.
- 29 Alan Gray became organist of Trinity College, Cambridge, 1892, the same year that Vaughan Williams entered Trinity College and began studying organ under Gray. After two years, Gray, with regard to Vaughan Williams's "going in for an organist's career which is his pet idea," writes "He seems to me so hopelessly 'unhandy'." (Quoted in Ursula Vaughan Williams (note 20) p. 41). In his *Musical Autobiography* (Foss, note 26, p. 36), Vaughan Williams writes, "Our friendship survived his despair at my playing..."
- 30 See note 5.
- 31 Thomas William Hanforth, *The Sheffield Cathedral Descants* (York: Banks & Son, 1927, 1932). These collections are available from Banks Music Publications. The two volumes (1927 and 1932) contain a total of thirty-six descants.
- 32 For Willan's refrain, marked Descant, see, for example, *Common Praise* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1998), No. 139.
- 33 Peter Christian Lutkin, *Descants on Familiar Hymns* (Chicago: H. T. FitzSimons, 1931).
- 34 Alfred Ernest Whitehead, *Eighteen Faux-bourdots and Descants for Well-known Hymn Tunes* (New York: Carl Fischer, 1933).
- 35 From the Preface to Gray's collection (note 28).

Memories of RVW

from the 1930s to the 1950s

by John Gordon Clark

In her biography of her husband Ursula Vaughan Williams gives us many details of the deep friendships that he developed over his long life. But beyond those who were really close there was a multitude of others who could claim a more distant, yet very tangible relationship. Some were families who lived near him in the Dorking area, such as my own, and many more were enthusiastic choral singers and amateur instrumentalists. I believe we all regarded him as a friend, a friendship forged through his tireless work in the locality, through the Leith Hill Festival, and through the many issues, such as the Jewish refugees whom he helped find homes and work in the area.

My family's relationship with RVW definitely dated back to the 1920s and perhaps even earlier. As an example of the warmth of his friendship, RVW composed an organ piece for my uncle's marriage in the mid 1930s to Barbara Lawrence, a member of another Surrey family that knew him well. The work was based on her new initials 'BGC.' My mother, who came to England from New Zealand as a bride in 1923, immediately joined two Leith Hill choirs (in different divisions) and sang at Festivals for 30 years or more, thus getting to know RVW through choral singing.

The first time I was conscious of RVW was in the summer of 1938. The occasion was the dress rehearsal of a pageant, *England's Green and Pleasant Land*, written by EM Forster, which was staged in the grounds of Milton Court, between Dorking and Westcott. RVW was responsible for the music. I remember well the excitement of the day, especially for my sister who rode her pony in one of the scenes, but cannot recall a single thing about the story. My main abiding memory was of RVW directing the music. He seemed to me then, aged 9, a rather forbidding and dominating figure.

In 1940, with invasion threatening, my father, then an officer in the Home Guard, was ordered to take charge of volunteers to fill sandbags. It was something of an irony that the venue chosen was the sandpit in the car park behind the Dorking Halls, the scene of so many events connected with the composer. At the appointed time, on a Saturday morning when many could be expected to turn up, just one volunteer appeared. My father watched with concern the approach of RVW, then in his late sixties, and immediately excused him on the grounds of his age, suggesting that he had more important things to do than such menial work. RVW's response was typical. It was to the effect that the situation was so grave that he had no heart for composition, and that all he could offer the country was physical work – which he then insisted on performing for several hours. This attitude was in line with his later efforts, one example of which was going from door to door collecting scrap metal for the war effort. On one occasion he was apparently rebuffed at the front door with the words: 'Tradesmen round at the back!'

In her biography Ursula Vaughan Williams records RVW's efforts to maintain music making in Dorking as the war entered its worst phase in late 1940. He arranged for local and London professionals, together with as many singers from town and village choirs as were available, to prepare for two performances of *The Messiah* around Christmas of that year. I had heard the work nearly two years earlier and had studied the soprano line of the vocal score since. As result my mother asked RVW whether he would allow me to take part. His response was typically brief – just four words: 'Does he know it?' My mother assured him I did. The experience made the deepest impression on me. Here was I, aged 11, in my Eton suit, standing on the steps of the pulpit of St Martin's church in Dorking, singing the sublime music of one great composer under the baton of another. It would be interesting to discover whether any readers of the Journal also sang, or perhaps attended, one of these very moving performances at such a perilous moment in our country's history.

Two years later, in March 1942, RVW mounted the first performances of his abridged version of the *St Matthew Passion*. These too were given in

St Martin's church and my mother was in the choir. I was present at one of these, the first time I had heard the work. I was bowled over by it, the final chorus remaining especially in my mind for months afterwards.

My next contact with RVW was early in 1948. I had left school and was awaiting call-up for National Service. For some reason this was delayed and I was fortunate that the three months grace I was given coincided exactly with the rehearsals and performance of the *St Matthew Passion*, by that time an annual event. RVW was a very strict choral trainer, and I learned more in those months about singing than I had over many years in school choirs. On his arrival, he would first of all shed his muffler, overcoat and jacket, gradually divesting himself of one cardigan after another as the rehearsal went on. More often than not, his opening words, after a benevolently fierce look at us all, were 'turn to page 105'. In our vocal score this meant the brief but fiendishly difficult chorus *He is guilty of death*. After several rather feeble attempts, he would glare round at us and, addressing the ladies of the choir, would ask them to forget their well brought-up background and imagine themselves a mob screaming for blood. The resulting transformation brought a gruff nod of acceptance at their efforts.

Within weeks I was in the Army, though soon in hospital from an accident. I read that RVW's *6th Symphony* was to receive its premiere on the 21st April 1948 and was to be broadcast. Somehow I persuaded my fellow patients to allow me to listen to it on the ward radio. It was an experience of a lifetime and, for me, this work is RVW's finest achievement.

After returning to civilian life in 1950 I became active in the Leith Hill Festival, singing in Mickleham choir under Margery Cullen (then also Secretary to the Festival) and also turning over for the continuo player, Arnold Goldsborough, at Festival concerts. It was at Christmas of that year that I paid my one and only visit to White Gates. My father's Christmas tribute to RVW was a bottle of Cherry Brandy, a drink he much enjoyed, and I accompanied him on this occasion of the annual presentation. My memories of the visit are still crystal clear. We went into his large study, and my first impression was a great number of untidy piles of manuscripts. However, I was soon made very much aware of the still figure of his wife, Adeline, lying on a raised sofa near the window. She was clearly very ill – indeed she died only a few months later. It was the first time I had seen anyone so thin and frail, and I came away feeling sorrowful and shocked. As for RVW himself, he was his usual charming self, and full of graceful thanks for the present.

At this time I was also a member of the Bach Choir, and in one memorable week sang in two of its performances of the *St Matthew Passion* on succeeding Sundays, and in RVW's performance in Dorking on the intervening Saturday. The contrast between Reginald Jaques' classical approach and RVW's dramatic one was enormous. My score still bears the colour-coded expression marks to distinguish between the two interpretations.

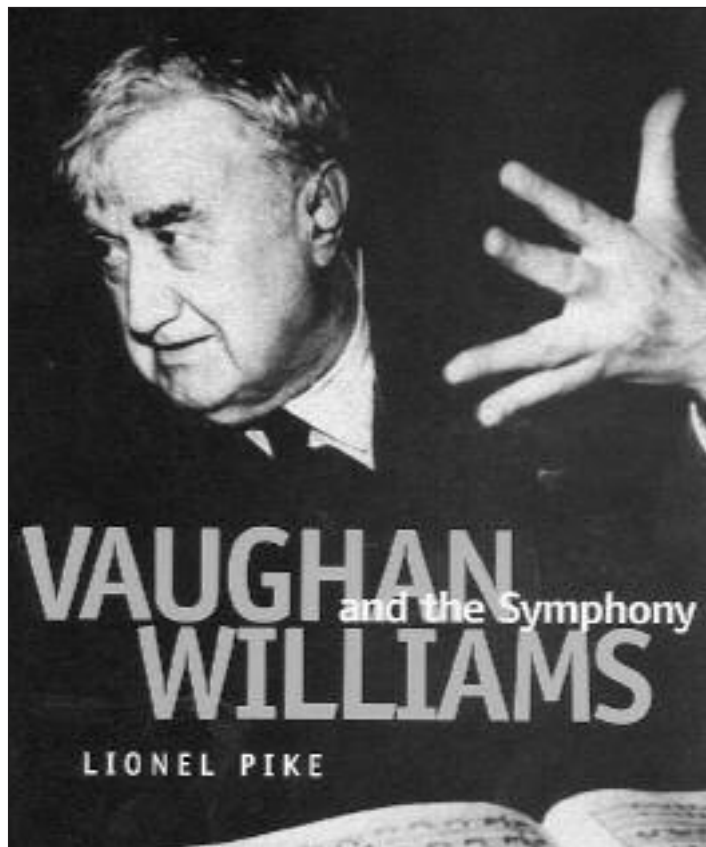
I saw RVW only twice more after moving to London on my marriage in 1956. These were the first London performances of the *8th* and *9th Symphonies*, which my wife and I attended. Our emotions on those occasions were very mixed. On the one hand there was the joy that RVW was still composing magnificent music. On the other great sadness that he was nearing the end of his life.

It has been one of the greatest privileges of my life to have known RVW, even slightly, and even more to have actually sung under his baton. I also have two physical reminders of him that I treasure – an autographed score of the *6th Symphony* and a signed copy of the famous photo of him with his cat.

Book Reviews



Lionel Pike, Vaughan Williams and the Symphony
(Toccata Press, 2003) 352pp, hard back, £45.



This is the second volume in Toccata Press' 'Symphonic Studies' series (the first was about Schubert) and is a welcome addition to the literature on the music which is for many the core of Vaughan Williams's achievement. RVW's cycle has a strong claim to be the finest set of symphonies written by a British composer, and judging by the number of versions available on CD must be one of the most popular. Yet the symphonies remain under-performed in our concert halls and until recently they have received little attention in the way of scholarly studies.

To my knowledge Lionel Pike's new book is only the second full-length study of RVW's symphonies. The first was *The Symphonies of Ralph Vaughan Williams* by Elliott S. Schwarz (1964). Schwarz wrote his pioneering book with the purpose of calling attention to the symphonies as 'worthy of intensive study', a view obviously shared by Lionel Pike. Schwarz also made the important claim that RVW's achievement 'was to bring England back into the mainstream of musical composition. English composers of later generations, such as Walton, Rubbra and Britten, who carried this fusion further, produced the mature works that can only develop in a nation with a symphonic tradition. Vaughan Williams, almost single-handedly, gave England this tradition.' Apart from Schwarz, there has been Hugh Ottaway's short guide to the symphonies (BBC Books 1972, reprinted several times) which is very useful in its own way, and Alain Frogley's recent study of the ninth symphony. Hardly a crowded shelf!

Interesting as Schwarz's book is, Lionel Pike's is in another league altogether, being longer, more detailed, having the advantage of the past 30 years research, and being more sophisticated a discussion. The

'Introduction' argues that the symphonies have been 'seriously misjudged' and attacks the notion that RVW was 'something of a country bumpkin who somehow managed to write three great symphonies – the middle ones – in spite of himself.' (7) Acknowledging the validity of discussing early drafts of the music, Pike declares that his focus is firmly on the finished works, and in particular on the principles of their construction.

In a short 'Preface' Pike lays out some of the basic issues and context for the discussion and appreciation of the symphonies. This section (13-22) is good in its own right, especially for students and listeners wanting to understand some of the theory that underpins RVW's music. It recounts RVW's break with the German tradition, his return to native English sources such as folk music, hymns, and the Tudor and Stuart composers, and provides several pages of explanation of modes, citing examples of their use in the symphonies and in the *Fantasia on a theme by Thomas Tallis*. Pike identifies a pentatonic three-note figure which occurs throughout RVW's music, which he dubs the 'knight's move': 'It is the three-note phrase in which a step is followed by a leap of a third in the same direction, or a leap of a third is followed by a step in the same direction ... for example D-E-G, G-E-D, D-F-G or G-F-D' (14). This phrase is referred to throughout the book. The 'Preface' also touches on sonata form and fugue, concluding with the statement that RVW's preference for Bach over Beethoven affected his music.

Each of the symphonies has its own chapter, with clear sub-divisions covering the individual movements. Of *A Sea Symphony* Pike argues that 'in some instances the musical and literary requirements are at odds' (29) and cleverly reminds us that RVW's famous exchange with George Butterworth about writing a symphony, where RVW replied that he 'never had written a symphony and never intended to' (28), happened after *A Sea Symphony* was completed and performed, suggesting that RVW himself didn't consider it a symphony in the 'proper' sense. Pike finishes this chapter with, 'A conflict between programme music and less illustrative types of writing, such as is evident in *A Sea Symphony*, is found again and again in Vaughan Williams's later symphonies.' (45) He takes this up in chapter 2, in a brief discussion of the programmatic details in *A London Symphony* and Albert Coates' 1920 notes on it.

Pike writes, '*A London Symphony* is an enormous advance technically on the previous one, with a sense of growth and a logic that is much clearer. In addition, the national roots of English folksong are the basis of his style in a much more consistent way; the musical language grows more obviously out of it' (48). But he ends with the observation that 'it falls short of the highest rank, except in its opening movement ... the unifying devices feel rather as if they had been imposed on the work at some stage rather than growing logically with it'. (74-75) From these judgements it is evident that Pike has a well-defined notion of what a symphony should truly be (rather like Robert Simpson in his well-known Pelican book).

Pike writes of the *Pastoral Symphony* that it has 'consistently been undervalued and misunderstood', and quotes Philip Heseltine and Sir Hugh Allen's ignominious comments about it (did a symphony ever draw such inane remarks as these?). Pike sees the symphony as an exploration of the musical possibilities of the interval of a third, treating the idea 'with a searing logic that never loses sight of its central material ... it is the first of his mature symphonies ... There is nothing quite like this symphony in twentieth-century music: it remains utterly fresh and unique.' (105).

The discussion of the *Fourth Symphony* is prefaced by some interesting contextual references to music in the early 1930s and Bax, to whom the

symphony was dedicated, and the discussion of its fourth movement advances the controversial idea that RVW was having sardonic fun with Beethoven's *Fifth*, and develops this into more comments about Beethoven and symphonic logic. When Pike reaches the *Fifth* it is good to see that he entertains the idea that the opening pages of the symphony are C Lydian. It is fascinating that the 'Romanza' contains at its moment of crisis, a few bars before Section 9 in the score, the melodic three-note phrase (Ab-G-E) which opens the *Sixth* and is found in the *Seventh*. Why was Vaughan Williams so enthralled by this motif?

Of course, a study such as this is written by treating the symphonies as a linear sequence. Such a model is understandable given the advances in technique that a composer makes through gaining experience, not to mention the obvious parallel of living through time. The linear sequence easily accrues to itself the idea that the sequence is necessarily toward greater profundity. This is Ottaway's view when he states that the *Sixth* 'not only negated the *Fifth* but supplanted it as a definitive statement.' This is a very questionable assumption and one that has caused the *Fifth* to be under-valued.

Perhaps it is occasionally useful to think about the symphonies with a different metaphor, as the spokes of a wheel in the centre of which is the composer's creativity. This is relevant to the *Fifth* because it seems to me the *Fifth* is easily under-valued by being falsely described as 'serene' and 'tranquil' (nothing serene or tranquil could move us so much), and because its very beauty (and the spiritual vision from which it springs and to which it points) has been seen to be somehow negated or trumped by the *Sixth* and *Seventh* – with the implication that they are more 'mature'. This plays straight to the assumption, dominant for the past 50 years, that conflict in art is necessarily more profound than beauty.

The book is illustrated throughout with musical examples, and plenty of intriguing and entertaining footnote references. Pike does not have a thematic argument to push in the way that Wilfred Mellers had in *Vaughan Williams and the Vision of Albion*, instead concentrating on the symphonies and their musical processes. Even if you read the opening and closing sections on each of the symphonies, and merely dip into the rest of the musical analyses, you will find this a rewarding book. Lionel Pike has made a substantial contribution to our appreciation of Vaughan Williams's symphonic achievement.

Rikky Rooksby

Blyth Voices : Folk songs collected in Southwold

Moving from the London end of Essex to Suffolk in retirement, is hardly entering a musical wilderness. Apart from the vastly increased Aldeburgh output with events now taking place throughout the year, there are also many inviting concert venues arranged in historic buildings and local churches. The down side is that RVW's music is not normally well represented here, partly I believe because of the legacy of Britten, whose perception of the established composers of the early twentieth century was often less than complimentary.

Imagine my delight when I discovered that the East Anglian Traditional Musical Trust had planned a celebration of RVW's visit with George Butterworth to Southwold in 1910. On a wonderfully sunny Saturday evening early in July, the Blyth Voices together with the folk singer Chris Coe, performed some of the songs the composers had collected, to a delighted audience in St Edmund's Hall. As Chris explained, the words of these songs often focus on the harsh and seamy side of life; what she dubbed 'sex and wrecks'. Certainly within this short collection, there is violent death, foiled seduction and a cuckolded husband! Human nature hasn't changed that much. What was once the currency of the folk singer has now become the focus of the soaps and the tabloid press.

To accompany the event, EATMT has produced a delightful book entitled 'Blyth Voices' which contains all the folk songs collected during that October in 1910. The two friends had travelled into the area by train and then took to bicycles to take them on to Southwold. During the two day visit, their attention was drawn to the three Hurr brothers who were fishermen, descended from a large local family going back generations. Theirs was a hard and dangerous life, fishing for herring, sprats and sole

in the treacherous North Sea. Their father, William had by that time already lost two of his sons, when his boat the *Susannah* had been sunk. The fact that RVW was able to meet the brothers at all on this visit, was due to the prevailing sea conditions. Although their small boats ventured no more than a couple of miles offshore, the weather that week meant that a launch from the beach was too dangerous. Fortunately for RVW, the Hurr brothers were able to contribute thirteen songs, including *Lovely Joan*, in fact, more than three quarters of the entire collection.

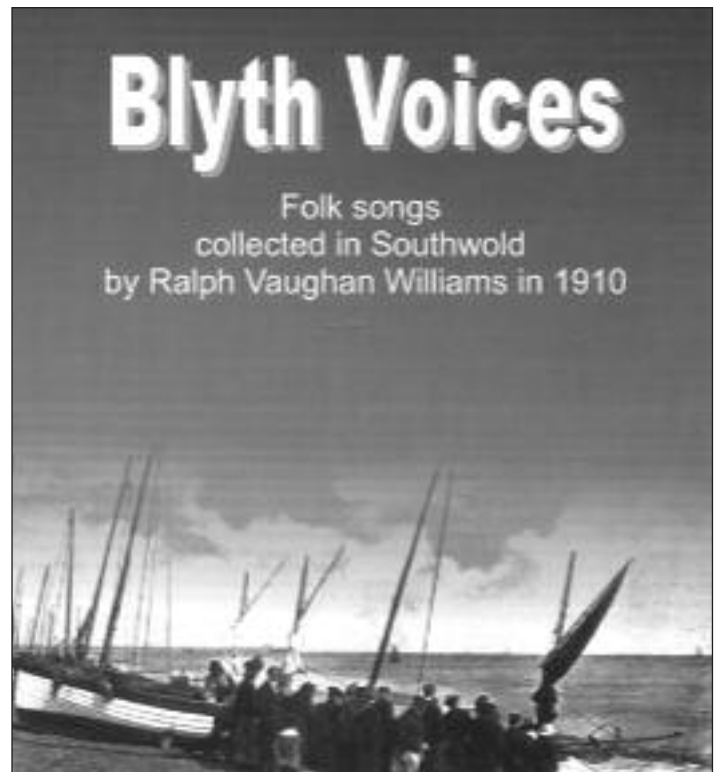
It may come as a surprise to learn that RVW, like other collectors, did not usually note down all the verses to a song, which often extended to over a dozen. Having written down the tune, often a couple of verses then sufficed. Chris Coe and EATMT therefore had to research the popular broadsheets of the day to obtain additional verses.

The book is full of information about the visit, and the singers. It includes the vocal line of the songs, with the full text and information on how it was acquired. There are also some delightful photographs of the Hurrs as well as views of the town as RVW would have seen it. It can be obtained from EATMT at 44, Old Haughley Street, Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 3NX. Tel: 01449 771090. The price is £6 including UK postage and packing and well worth it for what is an unusual and indeed fascinatingly different book about RVW.

John Treadway

Blyth Voices - some further comments

Folk songs collected in Southwold by Ralph Vaughan Williams in 1910. Published by East Anglian Traditional Music Trust (44 Old Haughley Street, Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 3NX) (ISBN 0-9545943-0-4) £6.00



Congratulations to Blyth Valley Voices and all those involved in creating an Exhibition and this booklet describing RVW's and George Butterworth's visit to Southwold in 1910. Fourteen songs are published in full with notes on the visit to Southwold. It is an informative and affectionate account. It seems that bad weather prevented the fishing boats from putting to sea during the visit, such that Vaughan Williams was able to jot down those songs which might otherwise have disappeared.

Well illustrated, this booklet will give much pleasure to those interested in VW's folk song collecting.

Stephen Connock.

Concert Reviews



Mayor of Cambridge's Charity Concert, Cambridge Philharmonic Society, West Road concert hall, Cambridge Saturday 6 December.

The Cambridge Philharmonic Society's concert for the Mayor of Cambridge's charity appeal on 6 December featured *Flos Campi* with the Mayor himself, a paid-up performing member of the Society, singing in the chorus. A welcome development indeed.

The Society's chorus and orchestra were under a guest conductor: Michael Lloyd, who has had wide experience in Germany as well as in this country. He clearly, quickly and deservedly gained the respect - and the applause - of audience, chorus and orchestra alike.

The programme opened with a fine, broad and well-shaped performance of Smetana's *Vltava*. This was notable particularly for some beautifully balanced wood-wind and string playing and a stunning climax as the river finally flows majestically past the legendary Vysehrad rock in Prague.

Flos Campi, so highly characteristic of its Protean composer and so perplexing to early audiences, was most moving. The taxing solo viola part was sensitively performed by Claire Finnemore, whose rapt, warm, intimate tone and complete technical control were matched by some alert and eloquent playing from the orchestra, especially the principal oboe, and some highly evocative, rhythmically flexible singing from the wordless chorus. Their dynamic range was fantastic. I remember a former poet laureate in his undergraduate days referring to a piece of music as 'orgasmic'. *Flos Campi* is certainly that; and the Phil's committed performance under Mr Lloyd interpreted it as such. It is one of RVW's most personal and highly-charged works and one doesn't encounter it all that often 'live'. Ms Finnemore and the Phil deserve full marks for demonstrating such insight into and subtle command of its wide range of moods.

Shostakovich *Five*, after the interval, is a severe technical challenge for any orchestra and Mr Lloyd and the Phil went at it with all guns blazing, paying careful attention to the structure of the music as well as its emotional content. Playing of such blazing intensity and overwhelming power from a non-professional orchestra left one in no doubt (a) of the starkness and irony of the music and (b) of the commitment and sense of style of the orchestra. Even the bleak, remote exposed passages in the upper strings 'told': there was tension as well as clarity and a fine sense of melodic line in the sound, even if the actual tone was sometimes a little strained. As for the more menacing, deliberately vulgar and frenetic passages, they were such as to rouse the audience to a veritable and well-deserved frenzy of applause at the close of a memorable concert.

James Day

Dona Nobis Pacem concert at the Barbican, Monday 3rd November 2003

In a Remembrance Day programme of "War and Peace", Beethoven's *Egmont Overture* opened the concert, providing an element of jubilation and triumphant heroism, and Haydn's *Missa in tempore belli* ensued, with its sense of faith and optimism to perhaps balance the sombre desolation and stark beauty of the main featured work, *Dona Nobis Pacem*. Hilary Davan Wetton was conducting one of his own choirs - the City of London Choir, here celebrating their 40th birthday, and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, at the Barbican. Both the Beethoven and the Haydn were admirably performed, although the choir could have produced a little more power in the Haydn at times. The RPO played expertly in a sympathetic performance of the Vaughan Williams. Lynne

Dawson, soprano, sang expressively, at once capturing the melancholy mood and plight of the *Agnus Dei*. The choir added their forces effectively and dramatically, and the second movement was a chilling evocation of the havoc and disruption of war. *Reconciliation* could have done with a greater feeling of tenderness - unfortunately the scheduled baritone, Roderick Williams, was indisposed, and Ian Caddy stood in, giving a slightly disappointing rendition of his part. He came across as rather lethargic, a little lacking in passion and expression. The *Dirge for Two Veterans* was well-paced and vivid, with some extremely lyrical playing in the string section effectively contrasting the exuberance of the percussion, and the fifth movement was most compelling, with the soaring soprano pleas "dona nobis pacem" breaking in atmospherically. Overall, it was a pleasing performance of this moving and exhilarating work, proficiently conducted by Davan Wetton. Dawson and the COLC, although slightly drowned out by the orchestra on occasion (and the words were not always satisfactorily audible), did their best to convey the ardent and impassioned spirit of the piece, a timeless and universal theme - an anguished entreaty for peace.

Em Marshall

Original version of Vaughan Williams's London Symphony Barbican 4th November 2003

The evening we have all been long waiting for - it is a rare treat indeed to hear a work by a great composer that has been out of the public repertoire for over ninety years, so what a magnificent occasion when that is twinned with the first hearing of the original version of a major English symphony for 85 years! High expectations were most certainly not disappointed, and indeed months of anticipation were well rewarded.

The concert, held in the Barbican on Tuesday 4th November, commenced with Vaughan Williams's *Second Norfolk Rhapsody*. This charming work had only ever received a couple of performances directly after its composition in 1906 and has lain unperformed since, due to the loss of two pages of the manuscript. A reconstruction by Stephen Hogger for a Chandos recording has enabled it to be heard in the concert hall once more. As in his first *Norfolk Rhapsody*, the work is based around folk songs, in this case *Young Henry the Poacher*, *Spurn Point*, and *The Saucy Bold Robber*. The LSO played beautifully under Hickox, creating a tender, lush tone in *Spurn Point* and a lively energy in the concluding *The Saucy Bold Robber*.

Ravel's Piano Concerto ensued, presumably included in the programme on account of his once-coaching of Vaughan Williams, and was the only disappointment in the entire evening. It was shame enough not to have another piece of English music separating rhapsody from symphony, but a slightly dismaying performance alienated the work further from the revelatory Vaughan Williams. Although the LSO and Hickox were still on top form, the soloist Andreas Haefliger's rather pedestrian playing lacked sensitivity and flair and made the work seem even more out of place.

The performance of Vaughan Williams's original version of the *London Symphony* - last heard live in 1918, and finally sanctioned by Ursula for the world to hear once more - was magical, exhilarating and exciting. The version usually performed is the third of Vaughan Williams's revisions and was published as the "official" version in 1936. The original version dates back to 1913 although a letter to Cecil Sharp in 1911 suggests that Vaughan Williams may already have been working on it some time. He appears to have felt that the original work was too programmatic and rambling, and the revisions he made consisted mainly of cutting material to create a more succinct and taut work. Consequently, the original

contains some twenty minutes of extra music, and comes across as more meandering and yet more romantic and enigmatic than the revised version. Although we are now used to symphonies lasting well over an hour, to Vaughan Williams, a work of about 70 minutes would have seemed unusually excessive. One wonders whether Vaughan Williams would have had similar reservations about the length of the symphony had the Mahler canon been better known or more widely performed at that time?

The first movement of the symphony was left unchanged and was performed with exquisite expression. The truly gorgeous second movement, deeply atmospheric, contained a number of changes, primarily oboe, viola and horn solos that were omitted in the revisions as well as an Elizabethan-esque melody that precedes that heart-rending, expansive epic theme in the middle of the movement. These modifications changed the character of whole movement, and therefore had already altered the entire feel of the symphony, giving it greater breadth and almost tranquillising the rest of the work.

The *Scherzo* (Nocturne) contained more music that had been later cut including a B major passage and a second trio. Again the effect of these was to make the piece slightly mellower than the more familiar revised version. The dramatic and desolate fourth movement was well-paced and deeply moving. It is in this final movement that the greatest amount of changes occurred, including significant cuts, one of which was a beguilingly, hauntingly beautiful and sorrowful andantino episode. The *Epilogue* was an apt reflection of the whole symphony - those members of the audience who found the entire work long-winded probably found that the *Epilogue* was over- long and dragged. But for those who (like me!) didn't ever want the work to end, the extended *Epilogue* was the perfect culmination.

The performance was exemplary, not surprisingly so if one considers the fact that the soloists and section leaders in the symphony are all concert soloists in their own right - with Paul Silverthorne, for example, playing the viola solos, and the concerti soloists Tim Hugh and Moray Welsh as the joint leaders of the cello section. Hickox was on fine form and conducted masterly and with obvious understanding of, and deep feeling for, the work.

Emerging from the concert enthralled by the original version, I was slightly surprised to encounter so much controversy and conflict of feeling towards the symphony. Admittedly it is a more digressive, possibly even discursive work in comparison to the revised version, yet what it lacks in concision it makes up for in sheer beauty and mysterious allure. It is a more peaceful, wistful and all-encompassing piece, when one suddenly comes across huge vistas and is unrushed in simply enjoying the spectacularly unfolding themes. Yet a number of people found it far too sprawling and periphrastic. Because one is waiting so long for the climaxes in the original version, one doesn't get the tremendous drive and cogency of the revised. The build-ups are lost and tranquillised as there is a greater delay, and when the climaxes do appear they are not as focused as in the revised. Consequently the symphony lacks the urgency that an audience would usually expect from Vaughan Williams's 2nd and some found this, along with the fact that the new material breaks up in their minds the way the symphony develops, slightly disconcerting. Furthermore, for those who know the symphony well but are perhaps not deeply and intimately involved with the music, the additions are a bit of a distraction. Personally, however, I found it wonderful to have the extra music and to be allowed to wallow in the additional enchantments that the original version so abundantly offers.

I think that Hickox summed this up for me well when, catching a few words with him post-concert, he commented, "I don't think I'll be able to go back to the other version now!" He was maybe in jest but it was an apocalyptic performance for me, and rather than detracting from my idea of Vaughan Williams's *London Symphony*, it transformed it into an even greater piece than I previously considered it to be.

Em Marshall

Nash Ensemble "Those Blue Remembered Hills" 15th November 2003

I had been tipped off about the excellence of the Nash Ensemble's "Those blue remembered Hills" series of early twentieth century English chamber music at the Wigmore Hall, the first concert of which I had unfortunately missed. The second one on Saturday 15th November proved the discernment of my informer's judgement and made me vow not to miss any more! The concert opened with Delius' *Second Violin Sonata*, perhaps better known in the arrangement Lionel Tertis made of it for the viola. Played expertly by Marianne Thorsen (violin) and Ian Brown (piano), this was a fairly muscular, though reserved and cool, professional performance, lacking some of the insight and warmth of other performances, but, one could argue, not necessarily any the worse off for it.

Five songs for tenor and string quartet by Peter Warlock followed, with Mark Padmore. Such settings of songs to string quartet accompaniment is rare in Warlock's output, the vast majority of Warlock songs being for voice and piano. Less common still are songs originally composed for string quartet, as in the case of the first piece, as opposed to later arrangements for string quartet of earlier songs for voice and piano, as in the other four songs. It is therefore fairly infrequently that one hears these string quartet settings, and is a fascinating experience.

Once again, these were excellently performed. Immediately evident in the first song, *My Lady is a Pretty One* is the fact that the same genius that Warlock demonstrates in the harmonies and astounding brilliance of his piano accompaniments is also present in the aptitude of the settings for string quartet. The virtuosic playing of the individual instruments, however, resulted in Padmore being just slightly drowned out. *The Fairest May* was taken slowly and sedately, voice and quartet blending nicely, and with a lovely flourish for the viola at the end. In *My Little Sweet Darling*, Padmore and the Nash brought out the inherent tenderness of the song beautifully. *Sleep*, however, was a little on the fast side, and consequently the poignancies and accents of the piece were not allowed to fully emerge. Greater emphasis was needed on the focal words of the song, and a greater sense of plight in the last line would have been appropriate. *A Sad Song*, similarly, would have benefited from greater investments of feeling and emotion. In general, the string quartet sound has the effect of softening the accompaniment, usually heard in harsher chords of the piano alone. It also seems to move the songs away from the echoes and influences of renaissance music with which Warlock was fascinated and often drew upon and invoked.

The Vaughan Williams *String Quartet in C minor* concluded the first half. The first public performance of any work by Vaughan Williams is something of a rarity, and this was no exception, especially coming so swift on the heels of the first performances of Vaughan Williams's *Second Norfolk Rhapsody* and original version of the *London Symphony* for over 85 years only a week or two before. Written when the composer was 26 in 1898, the String Quartet was performed just once at the Oxford and Cambridge Musical Club in 1904 before Vaughan Williams withdrew it, along with a number of other earlier works that he was clearly dissatisfied with. Although Vaughan Williams had not yet found his characteristic voice, these early works are nonetheless full of satisfying and charming music. The String Quartet is a well-constructed and assured piece, particularly in the fugato passages in the last movement. The impressive first movement is characterful, strong and incisive. The young Vaughan Williams's technique is here shown to be very capable, even though his own style has not yet been discovered. However, we find more recognisable Vaughan Williams's sounds in the second movement, with its wistful, plaintive and lyrical air. The third movement opens with a stately gavotte, simply stated, which is interrupted by an explosive fugal passage before returning to the courtly dance. The fourth movement is a skilfully written set of sharply contrasting variations. An engaging, concise and gratifying work, Vaughan Williams was surely being very harsh on himself indeed to withdraw it from the public's pleasure!

The second half commenced with Bax's *Concerto for Flute, Oboe, Harp and String Quartet*, a direct transcription made by the composer of his *Sonata for Flute and Harp* written eight years earlier. This is a truly

gorgeous and beautifully blended piece, with echoes of Holst and Vaughan Williams. The combination of instruments works exceptionally well, and furthermore, sounds quite natural despite being a transcription. The performance was exemplary, and it was most rewarding to see a group of performers who are well known as soloists in their own right gel together so well in an ensemble.

The final work was Vaughan Williams's *On Wenlock Edge*. Again, an excellent performance, commencing with a well-communicated *On Wenlock Edge*, Padmore providing a lovely tone and good inflexions at crucial points, although he was slightly drowned out by the quartet and piano in the first couple of verses. *From far, from eve and morning* was sung with feeling and impeccable annunciation, yet I was slightly disappointed with *Is my team ploughing?* Although Padmore did make a contrast between the living man and the dead, it was not as prominent as would perhaps be desirable - he would have done well to make the ghost fainter and thinner still, and to give the friend a bit more power. He captured the desperation of the fifth verse well, but did not sound particularly "thin and pine", and did not quite bring across the chill and poignancy of the final stanza. *Oh, when I was in love with you* could have done with a lighter and cheerier air yet was still admirably performed. *Bredon Hill* was extremely effectively sung, and very well paced, and to conclude, *Clun* was atmospheric and deeply moving.

On the whole, it was a masterful (and incidentally, one might note, sell-out) concert; all the pieces receiving accomplished performances, and with a good mix of familiar and unknown works. One wishes the Nash Ensemble the very best in their excellent work of thus promoting these too-seldom performed gems of English Chamber music.

Em Marshall

**A Concert for the Diary . . .
VW's Ninth comes to Salisbury**

When the Salisbury Symphony Orchestra performs VW's great *Ninth Symphony* on 20 November 2004 in the City Hall it will be a first for the orchestra and indeed for Salisbury. Which is curious really because the work, in its original form, had many associations with the City. RVW himself is known to have walked on the plain and visited our magnificent Cathedral.

According to Hugh Ottaway in his *BBC Guide to the nine Vaughan Williams Symphonies*, the first movement was initially sketched out as a *Wessex Prelude* and the last as *Landscape* while "Salisbury Plain, Stonehenge and Hardy's *Tess* had some part in it." But although in its final form, it is a true symphony not a tone poem, Ottaway argues that "these first intentions are reflected in the tone and substance of the Ninth". He sees the symphony as VW in his "most Hardy-like frame of mind".

The performance will be in the hands of David Halls, a conductor who has known all nine Vaughan Williams's symphonies since he was 13 years old! In recent years David, who is also the Cathedral's organist, has conducted the *Sea Symphony* and the *London Symphony* with the SSO and still treasures a copy of the original Boult recording.

Many of the orchestra's members are professional musicians and the Leader, Joan Schmeising, has performed the *Mendelsohn Concerto* to a packed audience in the City. Since it was founded in 1917 with Elgar as its first President, the orchestra has given prominence to English music of the Twentieth Century including an early performance of the unfinished Elgar *Third Symphony* in the presence of the composer Anthony Payne who completed it.

Last year David Halls conducted a performance of Britten's *Noyes Fludde* in which nine local schools took part (nearly 400 children) and so impressed the BBC (who are doing a documentary on Britten in April) that they recorded the whole performance for BBC 4. This too is expected to be broadcast in April. Part of a Government grant helped fund the cost of the performance which packed the cathedral three nights running.

Salisbury is still essentially a medieval city, but nowadays has a strong artistic community. It not only supports a full-sized symphony orchestra and a 140-strong choir (also conducted by David Halls), but enjoys the skills of two chamber orchestras, two string quartets and several smaller choirs and ensembles. Members of the RVW Society can expect a warm welcome when they make the journey to the city which VW knew so well.

Roland Freeman

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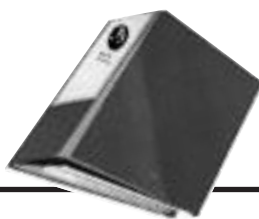
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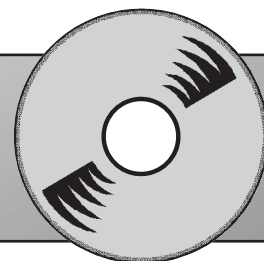
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 - 4. *OM*
 - 5. *Si*
 - 6. *Call*
 - 7. *Call*
 - 8. *Hugh Evans*
 - 9. *NT*
 - 10. *US*
 - 11. *US*
 - 12. *Echo*
 - 13. *And all*
 - 14. *Elwes*
 - 15. *GH*
 - 16. *SM (Stephen Massingberd)*
- Across:**
- 1. *Charterhouse*
 - 2. *Niobe*
 - 3. *Tennyson*
 - 4. *Echo*
 - 5. *Thomas Tallis*
 - 6. *Magoa*

CD Reviews



Holst, Vaughan Williams and Britten
Manhattan School of Music Opera Theater, Manhattan Chamber Sinfonia, Glen Barton Cortese conductor, Jessica Miller – Savitri, Kyu Won Han – Death, Simon O'Neill – Satyavan. Phoenix label PHCD 145 (Full price)

It was a pleasant surprise to be introduced to a new recording of Holst's *Savitri*, and delightful to see some Vaughan Williams on the same CD! Completely unfamiliar names were a further surprise, but did not necessarily bode badly – after all, the more people who promote this music, the better! In actual fact, however, my slight apprehension at discovering that the performers were the completely unknown Manhattan School of Music Chamber Sinfonia and Opera Theatre (sorry – Theater) was borne out. Glen Barton Cortese – principal conductor of the aforementioned *Sinfonia* (about which there was no further information in the sleeve notes) – conducts, and in *Savitri* Jessica Miller plays Savitri, Kyu Won Han is Death and Simon O'Neill is Satyavan in a rendition that could most positively be described as an admirable attempt.

It is admittedly a well-nigh impossible task to compete successfully with the two brilliant recordings of that masterpiece that are currently available – the 1983 Hyperion recording under Richard Hickox and the 1965 Imogen Holst recording. However, in comparison this version, recorded in America in 2000, is regrettably dismal. Death's opening proclamation – perhaps the most thrilling, terrifying and intense opening to any opera – is not electrifying, as Stephen Varcoe makes it in the Hyperion recording. Rather it is rough, hurried, and sounds somehow vaguely imprecise. Kyu Won Han – a Korean baritone – has a fairly harsh voice; his words are not particularly clear and have a feeling of inaccuracy about them. He lacks the solemnity and the sombre power that is necessary for Death. Whereas Varcoe's Death – esoteric-sounding, terrifically powerful, and with beautifully precise annunciation – sends shivers down one's spine, Kyu Won Han creates tension in the listener in case he wobbles off the note. He does not make use of the profound dramatic pauses that both Varcoe and Hemseley (1965 recording) employ; he does not lay deep, compelling emphasis on the word "Death" in the opening bars of the piece as they do, and when talking later with Savitri, he sounds almost mechanical and has no presence whatsoever. Varcoe's deep, tuneful, vibrant Death can change from being abstruse, mystical, and foreboding to being serene and tranquil – almost quiet towards the end of the work; a transformation which Kyu Won Han cannot effect – his Death is very consistent and invariable.

Jessica Miller is similarly disappointing – her voice is too breathy and light, and lacks the maturity and ardour of both Baker (1965) and Palmer (1983). Like Death, she also rushes her lines (this recording is 5 or 6 minutes faster than the other two), and (horror of horrors) a recognisable American accent does come through. Again, important words are not given enough urgency or weight, nor is she moving in the deeply romantic bits. Palmer is a bit brighter than Baker's grave and deep (almost subdued) but very effectively frightened Savitri, and although Palmer perhaps does not convey completely the tremendous fear that is due to one facing an apparition of Death, yet she does bring out infinite tenderness when calling Satyavan's name. Miller, throughout the recording, does not imply any great affection – for example, in the poignant and impassioned "I am with thee, / My arms are round thee; Thy thoughts are mine / My spirit dwells with thee" and "Like to a babe in his mother's robe / Thou are enshrouded in my love", Miller gives little hint of emotion, but hurries through automatically. On a more positive note, however, Miller does reflect the fear of Savitri in the opening section fairly well, and she has a powerful voice, so that the lines "Ah! Death the just one / Whose word ruleth all / Grant me a boon" are among her best. She is perhaps slightly too powerful – Palmer's "Welcome Lord! / Thou

are called the Just One" is evocatively peaceful and still, whereas Miller does not create any mood of calmness.

Satyavan, Simon O'Neill, is a New Zealand tenor, and again is a far cry from Tear (1965) and Langridge (1983). Whereas Tear sounds young and joyful, strong and virile, and Langridge's Satyavan, whilst heavier and possibly not as attractive as Tear's, is still excellent, Simon O'Neill is whining and nasal, with no real feeling. When Langridge especially is most touching in his loving "But thou are pale and trembling: / What ails thee?". O'Neill puts no passion into that significant line at all. Although his words are fairly clear, he, too, seems to have picked up something of an accent, elongating and nasalizing vowels, and he has a habit which becomes increasingly infuriating of aspirating the "wh" in words such as "who" and "what" – fairly prevalent words in this libretto! His voice also has a slightly harsh and rough, almost crass quality to it. He would perhaps be better suited to less sensitive roles, or to ones requiring a bigger voice – Italian opera, maybe, rather than the delicate balance of an English chamber opera. He reflects Miller and Kyu Won Han in having little changes in emotional intensity, mood or power throughout the piece.

The orchestra and chorus, on the other hand, play quite well and produce a pleasing tone, although the balance between chorus/orchestra and soloists could be adjusted to allow less conflict between the two – whereas in the Hyperion recording in particular, the orchestra and chorus unobtrusively support the singers, in this recording they are too loud and blatant. The Hyperion and Decca recordings present a unified sound as the soloists, chorus and orchestra come together smoothly and discreetly – here they almost battle and therefore do not do justice to the score. But the fact that I could listen to this recording dry-eyed (a first for me listening to any recording/performance of *Savitri*!) is condemnation in itself.

Dismayed by the *Savitri*, the Vaughan Williams came as quite a relief – this is a fairly accomplished and gratifying performance of *The Lark Ascending*. Korean violinist Ik-Hwan Bae produces an agreeable sound, with well-articulated trills and far more feeling and emotion than all the soloists put together managed to muster for the Holst. Although perhaps not as evocative as one would have liked, and he does not "soar" quite enough for my liking, Ik-Hwan Bae is still well-poised, accurate and reasonably sensitive with a lyrical air. There is a far better balance between orchestra and soloist than in the Holst, and together they produce a full and fairly rich sound, although both soloist and orchestra could have made more effective use of changes in dynamics. Slightly on the fast side at 14.55, on the whole, it is a pleasingly lilting, and surprisingly poetic endeavour.

Britten's *Sinfonietta Op. 1* completes the disc. As with all the pieces on this CD, this was taken at swifter pace than average. The Manhattan Chamber Sinfonia play this inventive and concise piece well – they bring out both its charm and energy effectively, and perform it dynamically and with vivacious rhythmical drive. The lively opening is persuasively portrayed in a vibrant rendition, and the more romantic, lush second movement (strangely enough entitled "Variations" on this CD, instead of its usual Andante Lento) is played tenderly and with feeling. This movement is not as smooth or gentle as it could be, and rather lacks the haunting quality of some of the other recordings of this piece (the 1997 Britten Sinfonia / Daniel Harding one, for instance), yet the pastoral mood is well conveyed. The dark and almost dim sound of the players suits the Tarantella, and this almost dulled tone does not seem to detract from the piece. The lyrical but powerful *Sinfonietta* is accurately played throughout, with emotion and understanding, yet I still feel that it would have benefited from a bit more fire breathed into it.

The appearance of the disc itself reflects the slightly amateur feel of the performances on it – with adequate and comprehensible – if not particularly erudite or comprehensive – sleeve notes, and a just slightly unprofessional looking cover/back. We are spoilt in our wonderful wealth of Chandos/Hyperion recordings of English music, and one wonders why the Manhattan School of Music chose to record these particular pieces, which they perform without any obvious merit – competently enough in the case of the Vaughan Williams and Britten but rather disappointingly so for the Holst – and why they did not rather chose less demanding, or less well-known and already brilliantly recorded pieces instead?

Em Marshall

Hymn Tunes



Come down, O Love Divine, O Taste and See, We've been awhile, Te Deum, Wither's Rocking Hymn, For All the Saints, Valiant-for-Truth, Prayer to the Father of Heaven, Three Choral Hymns, Sanctus (Communion Service in G minor), Festival Te Deum. Choirs of Worcester Cathedral and Westminster Abbey, Christopher Robinson, Douglas Guest on Chandos CHAN 6550 (medium priced)

These Chandos recordings first appeared in 1974 and are most sensitive to RVW's hymn and carol settings. *We've been a while a wandering* is delightful. *Wither's Rocking Hymn* is also quite lovely and those members who do not know this carol should make immediate amends by purchasing this disc. It is one of Vaughan Williams's most beautiful original carols. *For All the Saints* is suitably rousing, although *Valiant-for-Truth*, written on the death of the composer's friend Dorothy Longman, does not make the impression it could.

Overall, a strong recommendation.

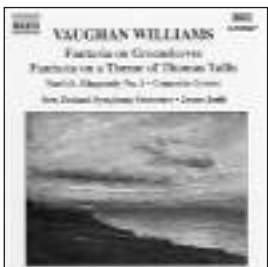
Stephen Connock



English Oboe Concertos Oboe Concerto, Ruth Bolister (oboe), Elgar Chamber Orchestra, Stephen Bell with Jacob Concerto No. 1 for oboe and strings, Elgar Soliloquy, Holst A Fugal Concerto, Goossens Concerto en un Mouvement, on ASV CD DCA 1173 (full priced)

Those of you with a penchant for the plaintive and pastoral sounds of the oboe in English music of the 20th century, this recital is for you! The highlight is Gordon Jacob's *Concerto* of 1934. This is a reworking of the *Oboe Quartet* he composed for Evelyn Rothwell. Sturdy outer movements frame a delightful *Andante con moto* slow movement that is dreamy and lyrical – a work that deserves to be much better known. RVW's *Oboe Concerto* has those same dreamy passages, only more so. It is a gorgeous work. Ruth Bolister is equal to the technical demands although this version does not quite capture that visionary quality which characterises the best recordings.

Stephen Connock



Orchestral favourites Fantasia on Greensleeves, Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis, Norfolk Rhapsody No. 1, In the Fen Country, Concerto Grosso. New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, James Judd on Naxos 8.555867 (£4.99)

The front sleeve of this new Naxos

recording leads with *Greensleeves* and omits to mention *In the Fen Country*. This is understandable marketing and it is to be hoped that listeners new to VW will go beyond *Greensleeves* or *Tallis* to explore the beautiful lesser known works on this recording. Unfortunately, the performance of some of the rarer works is disappointing. For example, members will recall that wonderfully rich and expansive opening Interlude for the *Concerto Grosso* in the early recording on HMV conducted by Norman Del Mar (ASD 2351). This was a revelation. James Judd and his New Zealand forces are not in the same league and as a result the *Concerto Grosso* makes little impact. *In the Fen Country* and the *Norfolk Rhapsody No. 1* fare a little better whilst lacking the atmosphere of the best recordings. *The Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* is the most successful work here yet the magic of Barbirolli is missing.

A useful compendium for those discovering Vaughan Williams.

Stephen Connock

Songs of Travel



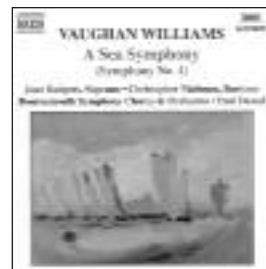
Christopher Maltman (baritone) Roger Vignoles (piano) on Hyperion CDA 67378, with Somervell *A Broken Arc*, W Denis Browne *Three Songs*, Butterworth *Six Songs from A Shropshire Lad*, *Breton Hill* and other songs (full price)

Having purchased this disc for the *Songs of Travel*, I have been most impressed by Arthur Somervell's cycle *A Broken Arc*.

Members may know Somervell from John Carol Case's pioneering recording of *Maud*. *A Broken Arc*, published in 1923, opens with songs of genuine ardour and, in Andrew Burn's words, an ecstatic quality. With superb singing from Christopher Maltman, this cycle is a major discovery. The inclusion of W Denis Browne's most beautiful song – *To Gratiana dancing and singing* and other songs by Butterworth add to the attraction of this Hyperion disc. As to the *Songs of Travel*, Maltman's intelligence and beauty of tone are again in evidence. However, overall other versions linger in the memory – notably Robert Tear or Bryn Terfel. Overall, a strongly recommended CD.

Stephen Connock

A Sea Symphony



Joan Rodgers (soprano), Christopher Maltman (baritone), Bournemouth Symphony Chorus & Orchestra, Paul Daniel on Naxos 8.557059 (£4.99)

At super bargain price, perhaps I should not be too critical of this new recording of *A Sea Symphony*. After all, we have excellent soloists – Christopher Maltman in particular continues to impress with fine diction, a

warm round tone and exemplary VW style. Paul Daniel has also secured notable success in the English 20th century repertoire; his *Walton 1*, whilst not quite the equal of Previn, is a fine recording. So what is the problem? Paul Daniel adopts broad tempi throughout and the first movement, for example, fails to take wing. Even the spine-tingling opening remains earth-bound. 'On the beach at night, alone' lacks that sense of awe that characterises the front runners in this marvellous work. More seriously, the opening of the fourth movement continues in the conductor's measured tread and the wonderfully expansive *largamente* episode again fails to exert its normal sway since it is rather understated here. The Naxos recording finally takes off when the soloists enter in the final movement. 'Bathe me, O God, in thee' is moving and Paul Daniel's consistent approach to the work reaps dividends in these evocative closing pages.

At just £4.99, members can perhaps afford to purchase this disc for its glimpses of glory and fine soloists.

Stephen Connock

Letters

We are always pleased to receive contributions for this page

Goon Show

Are there any other Goon Show fanatics in the RVW Society? Although I have almost a complete set of cassettes of broadcasts from 1955 to 1960, I tuned into BBC Radio 7 on Monday December 15th to hear a broadcast of 'Operation Christmas Duff', a special overseas broadcast from December 1956. (Incidentally this was not, to my mind, one of their better efforts).

But, to get to the point of this letter, the episode concludes with Major Bloodnok and Neddy Seagoon trudging across the Antarctic wastes bearing a giant Christmas pudding to the British Antarctic Station. And they trudge to an extract from RVW's 'Scott' music, presumably arranged by bandleader Wally Stott, played by what I think was the BBC Dance Orchestra. Just a few bars, but I wonder if RVW got his royalties!

Incidentally, the starving Bloodnok ends up eating the pudding from the inside.

There is at least one more RVW connection with BBC comedy shows. During the nineteen forties, Gordon Jacob occasionally did orchestral arrangements for 'ITMA'. Jacob was, of course, a friend and pupil of RVW. He wrote a set of variations on the 'big tune' from *Job*.

Michael Gainsford

Unknown RVW writing

The year 2003 saw the centenaries of Cecil Sharp and Ralph Vaughan Williams collecting their first folk songs. Cecil Sharp collected *The Seeds of Love* from John England in Hambridge, Somerset on 22nd August 1903 and RVW collected *Bushes and Briars* from Charles Potiphar in Ingrave, Essex on 4th December 1903.

When Cecil Sharp died on 23rd June 1924 RVW wrote the following appreciation, which he began with a quotation from John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*. It was published in the November 1924 issue of the 'E.F.D.S. News', the magazine of the English Folk Dance Society.

THE LATE CECIL J SHARP

"Now *Christiana*, if need was, could play upon the *Vial*, and her Daughter *Mercy* upon the *Lute* : so, since they were so merry disposed, she played them a Lesson, and *Ready-to-hault* would Dance. So he took *Despondencie's* Daughter, named *Much-afraid*, by the Hand, and to Dancing they went in the Road. True, he could not Dance without one Crutch in his Hand, but I promise you, he footed it well; also the Girl was to be commended, for she answered the Musick handsomely."

BUNYAN : *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Part II.

CECIL SHARP discovered our national heritage of song and dance,* and he determined that it should not remain locked up in libraries or buried in the archives of learned societies, but that what belonged to the people should be restored to the people.

I trace the beginnings of the wonderful musical renaissance in England of the last twenty years to the folk-song and dance movement inaugurated by Cecil Sharp. It was folk-song which aroused in many thousands of people a musical consciousness of which they were entirely unaware – the musical instinct was there but it was dormant. The "average man" suddenly discovered that here was beautiful music which he could not only enjoy and appreciate, but in which he could himself join.

Is it not the same with the dancing? I believe it is true that what gave Sharp most pleasure in his schools and classes was not the finished

performances of the experts, but the often ungainly efforts of those who by age or other causes were prevented from ever being good dancers, but, nevertheless, had found in the folk-dance a spiritual exaltation which they had found nowhere else. –

R. VAUGHAN WILLIAMS.

* I am quite aware that a few people had discovered a few folk-songs before Sharp came into the field, nevertheless the above statement remains absolutely true.

Michael Goatcher
Thaxted, Essex

Echoes of Elgar

I read with great pleasure (as always with these two scholars) the essays by Byron Adams and Michael Kennedy on Vaughan Williams and Elgar in the October 2003 issue. It might be helpful for those interested in the topic to mention here two further possible echoes of Elgar in Vaughan Williams; I discuss these connections in my book *Vaughan Williams's Ninth Symphony* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 278-81, but given the high price of books from academic presses, which places them beyond the reach of most public libraries (let alone individuals), I will summarize them very briefly here. First, I suggest that the theme which dominates the second half of the finale of RVW's *Ninth*, first heard at fig. 16 of the published score, is a near-quotation, conscious or unconscious, of the motif normally labelled 'The Spirit of the Lord' in *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom* (the motif accompanies part of the first chorus entry in the former work); the case for making the connection between the two themes is strongest not so much at their initial appearances, but rather in their deployment in the climactic concluding sections of the *Ninth Symphony* and *The Apostles* respectively. (There are several reasons for which this particular passage from Elgar is in fact highly apposite to Vaughan Williams's programmatic concerns in the symphony, but I will have to leave those curious about the matter to follow it up in the book.) Second, I suggest that the 'Alleluia' phrase of RVW's *Sine Nomine* clearly echoes, albeit in major rather than minor mode, the 'Alleluia' sung by the Angel in Part 2 of *The Dream of Gerontius* (pp. 60-62 in the Novello vocal score); this seems more likely than the *Ninth Symphony* theme to have been an unconscious 'crib', to use RVW's term but of course one never knows . . .

Alain Frogley
University of Connecticut, USA

Premiere of Sinfonia Antartica

The 50th anniversary of my joining the Royal Air Force was in August 2003 and while surfing the Internet looking for events of 1953, I came across the RVW Society web site. I found it extremely interesting because my Music Teacher at Salford Grammar School, Dr Llifon Hughes-Jones, had studied with RVW and hardly ever stopped talking about him! He instilled in me a lifelong interest in RVW's music. In those days gramophone records were very few and far between and almost entirely 78s so Dr Hughes-Jones had to do most of his teaching "at the piano".

I had listened to the Premiere of *Sinfonia Antartica* on the "wireless" and been present for the second performance the following night in the Free Trade Hall. I was surprised to see that your website gave the date of the Premiere as 14 June 1953 (since corrected). I knew that date was wrong so I dug out my schoolboy diaries. You may find these two verbatim extracts of interest:

Wednesday 14 January 1953

Tonight in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, the Hallé Orchestra conducted by Sir John Barbirolli gave the World Premiere of Vaughan Williams's 7th Symphony, *Sinfonia Antartica*. Margaret Ritchie was the soloist with the Hallé Choir. Mother and I listened to it on the wireless and I thoroughly enjoyed it. The many wonderful effects: vibraphone; wind machine; and organ, were really beautiful and I am looking forward more than ever to tomorrow when I am going to the Free Trade Hall to hear the symphony again.

Thursday 15 January 1953

This evening I went to the Free Trade Hall to see the Hallé Orchestra. The first part of the concert consisted of Rossini's *Semiramide Overture*, the Intermezzo from *Fennimore and Gerda* by Delius and Haydn's *6th Symphony*. The second half was devoted to Sinfonia Antartica; this was again being broadcast on the BBC Third Programme. You have to see this to realise what a wonderful work it is. Margaret Ritchie was the soloist with the Hallé Choir. In the interval I saw Michael Altman and he had a spare 15 shilling ticket in the Grand Circle so I joined him for the second half and was amazed to find that we were seated just three or four rows directly behind RVW himself. The concert started at 7.00 pm and finished at 8.40 pm though it was nearer 8.50 when Vaughan Williams had finished taking his bows. I got home about 9.20 pm; nothing unusual happened during the rest of the day.

I have just renewed contact with school friend Michael Altman for the first time in 50 years – by email of course!

In December 1954, by then a wireless fitter in the RAF, I was posted to RAF Gangodawila, a remote signals unit in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and with my new found wealth I bought a rather primitive record player and my very first LP – *Sinfonia Antartica* conducted by Boult. There was a very irritating side break 61/2 minutes into the 3rd movement which completely spoilt the build up to the organ entry. Even now, 50 years on, I know exactly where that side break occurred and when listening on the radio or to modern recordings I find my ears are still mentally expecting it.

Tony Cunnane
www.redsaway.co.uk

Dash it all ...

It looks to me as if gremlins or printers' devils have got at that article of mine about Vaughan Williams and the May Day pageant-scene at the Crystal Palace in the last issue. They've eaten almost all the dashes I put into it, which makes several of its sentences pretty opaque. Anyone needing clarification of what I was trying to say can find me at roger.savage@ed.ac.uk; but it would be worthwhile here, I think, to set out RVW's diatribe against 'Merrie Englandism' correctly, since it had its dashes eaten too (and also had a bit of my own prose included in it as if it were RVW's). Here's what he rather bullishly said in 1907 when Cecil Sharp inadvertently waved that particular red rag at him: 'I suppose I'm prejudiced but I lose all self-control when I see the expression 'Merrie England' (at all events why not 'Merry'?) it seems to me to be connected with Ruskinianism and 'Home industries' and all the worst kind of obscurantism if the folksong has nothing to say to us *as we are now* without a sham return to an imaginary (probably quite illusory) arcadia of several centuries ago if the folksong means this then I would burn all the collections I could lay hands on and their singers with them please forgive this spenetic outburst but that particular expression ... [links folksong] with the worst of its hangers on and camp-followers Amen.' *That's* telling 'em!

Roger Savage

Poisoned Kiss

I have just spent an evening listening to the *Poisoned Kiss*. I cannot begin to congratulate enough the RVW Society, Ursula and everyone else involved in making this happen. It is a fantastic recording and in acts 2 and 3 in particular the music and words have a spellbinding effect. You can almost see VW chuckling to himself through the sheer enjoyment of writing music of such lyricism and beauty. In *Hugh, Sir John* and now the *Kiss* we have three wonderful lyrical operas that provide many arias and choruses that should be enjoyed by (if they were allowed) for example, listeners to Classic FM, who would think that they were listening to an "English" Puccini and wondering why on earth this music does not appear on the latest Roberto Alagna or Andrea Bocelli album.

Many thanks again to everyone concerned.

Andrew Whisker

Opera recordings

It would be of great interest to know what relative success recordings of the RVW operas are having. In a letter received two or three years ago from the late and much lamented Ted Perry, I was saddened to read that the splendid recording of *Hugh the Drover* had not been a commercial success. (If ever an opera ought to be popular, surely it is *Hugh*!) I think that Society members might be very interested to know what kind of commercial success ventures such as the early chamber music or *Poisoned Kiss* are enjoying. Would it, for example, be enough to encourage Chandos or Hyperion to look at the early orchestral music?

A further topic of great interest to me and presumably to other members lies in the unfinished scores left by VW at his death. Is there enough in *Thomas the Rhymer*, for example, to make it even vaguely possible that (given permission of course) someone might do an "Anthony Payne" on the sketches? If not, would there be at least scope for an in-depth discussion of the sketches by some suitably qualified person in the pages of a future *Journal*?

Which leads me to a final thought. Knowing of VW's great (and very right!) admiration for the music of Stanford, is there anyone who might be qualified to trace what influences (if any) the operas of Stanford had on those of VW, and who could present his conclusions in the *Journal*? The operas of VW, as we all know, are pretty scandalously neglected, but those of Stanford are a completely closed book to almost everyone. To judge from the snatches I have heard over the years, Stanford's operas could be one of the worst examples yet remaining in the body of unjustly forgotten music.

I am very sorry that geographical constraints prevent me from being other than a passive member of the Society. I particularly regret my (normally very contented) self-exile in foreign parts when I read each year of the imaginative programmes organized for the day of the AGM. You may be interested to know that, if frequency of programming on the Spanish Classical radio channel is any guide, RVW appears to be pretty popular in Spain. Pieces like *Tallis* or *The Lark Ascending* appear in the schedules with great regularity, but less obviously popular works come up frequently, too. (Never yet one of the operas, though, or not to my knowledge.)

R James Tayler
Malaga, Spain

Elgar and beauty

I read Michael Kennedy's article 'Elgar and Vaughan Williams: An Overview' with interest and enjoyment, but I was surprised by a particular quote in Mr Kennedy's paper. This came from Vaughan Williams himself, an extract from his essay 'What We Have Learnt from Elgar' that "a sense of something familiar – the intimate and personal beauty of our own fields and lanes" is portrayed in Elgar's music.

Beauty is not an emotion I would generally discern in Elgar's music, with the exceptions of an exquisite little song 'My love dwelt in a Northern land' and 'Serenade for Strings'. I may be guilty of ignorance in admitting to feeling his compositions are at times somewhat heavy and impersonal.

My knowledge of Vaughan Williams's music outweighs that of Elgar's, but I perceive Sir Edward to be a scales-only man, except for some modal presence in his Violin Concerto, *Serenade for Strings*, and in certain passages from *The Dream of Gerontius*, so I understand. Conversely, Vaughan Williams skilfully combines today's scale with yesterday's mode and pentatonic scale in many of his compositions, resulting not only in a cavalcade of sound but a canvas awash with colour. These diverse methods of writing music tint his melodies with shades of green, brown and gold evoking fields and lanes, not to mention his musical brush strokes depicting sea and sky.

Vaughan Williams saw in Elgar's compositions the beauty of fields and lanes. Did he see in his own music the grainy browns and soft greens of undulating fields over which insects hum and birds sing, intercepted by

hedge-bound lanes embellished with grasses and herbs, and sprinkled with a myriad of wild flowers?

Vaughan Williams in a battered hat, waxed jacket and wellies? Absolutely. Elgar? Maybe.

E Anne Webb
London

20th century symphonies

Thank you, Gavin Bullock, for your reaction to my letter about 20th century symphonies. Yes, I should have added Elgar and Walton (at least for his first). Also Rachmaninov for his second. Mention of Elgar and my gratitude to Anthony Payne for his work on the 3rd symphony, causes me again to wish to hear in my lifetime a tentative completion of **Thomas the Rhymer**, the *Cello Concerto* and any other late RVW that are still inaccessible to music lovers.

Tony Noakes
Western Australia

Celebrations in Essex

To celebrate the centenary of the first visit of Ralph Vaughan Williams which started in 1903, the Essex Record Office in Chelmsford organised an exhibition. On show was a bicycle similar to one which he would have ridden as well as the original recording machine. There were also copies of the electoral register regarding Charles Potiphar and the Heatley sisters for 1901 who lived in the village of Ingrave. There were photographs of Billericay Workhouse and relevant places as well as a complete list of the songs collected and the singers together with the dates he heard them during 1903 to 1906.

It was a fascinating display with audio and video recording to enhance the story.

Mrs J Taylor
Billericay, Essex

Future events

The revival in interest in RVW over the last decade or two is most welcome. I am particularly pleased that local musicians are advancing the cause. The Slaithwaite Orchestra will perform *Job* in Huddersfield Town Hall on 3rd April 2004 (details from P & E Pearson, 01484 663967); and the Todmorden Orchestra in our Town Hall here is to present *The Wasps* overture and the *2nd Symphony* (along with Beethoven's *5th Piano Concerto*) at 7.30 pm on 13th March 2004. Tickets £7 (concessions £5) at the door if desired ring Tourist Office 01706 818181 to check availability. I'll be glad to meet any RVW Society members who ask for me in the downstairs tea-room during the interval. I hope some will support our excellent orchestra, which will also give the *English Folk Song Suite* at its "Prom" on 26th June 2004.

Finally a Northern Clerihew:
"Edvard Grieg
Was no stranger to intrigue;
He wrote Finlandia under the alias
Of Jan Sibelius."

Frank McManus
Todmorden

Locomotive Names

Further to John Clark's letter in issue 28, it is true that writers did much better than musicians in the locomotive naming stakes, I can think of only one example other than that mentioned, London & North Western Railway 'Prince of Wales' class, No. 5633, *Sir W.S. Gilbert*. With reference to Vaughan Williams, covert railway anoraks amongst your membership may also be aware that Great Western Railway 'Bulldog' class, No. 3454, was *Skylark* and Southern Railway 'Schools' class, No. 30903, *Charterhouse*.

Mike Cooper
N. Yorkshire

Three Choirs Memories

Like many others, I enjoyed taking part in the Hereford quiz to identify on archive film personalities attending the Three Choirs Festival between 1947 and 1961.

One name missing from the official list was that of Bertram B Benas, CBE, a Liverpool barrister and a celebrated writing for the *Jewish Chronicle*. He can be clearly seen on film, a diminutive figure in traditional lawyer's dress, including a wing collar.

He attached particular value to the Three Choirs' performing tradition of Elgar's music, the style of which derived from the composer himself. In his book, *Elgar As I Knew Him*, W H Reed quotes from a letter Mr Benas addressed to Elgar's daughter, Carice, on her father's scholarship in Hebrew music and on his sympathy with the Jewish community and its liturgy.

Mr Benas wrote for the *Jewish Chronicle* an article entitled 'Some Jewish Musical Contacts of the late Sir Edward Elgar.'

Many of us are members both of the RVW Society and the Elgar Society and it is pleasing that Stephen Connock's researches have produced material showing interpreters of composers who brought great prestige to the Three Choirs Festival in the 20th century.

Kenneth Burge
Taunton, Somerset.

The Poisoned Kiss

I wonder if any readers of the *RVWS Journal* had the misfortune to hear 'CD Review' on BBC Radio 3 on December 20th? In his review of recent opera recordings, Roger Parker was decidedly less than complimentary to the premiere recording of *The Poisoned Kiss*. After playing a brief extract from the first entry of the *Hobgoblins* he said that if the listener could not recognise the composer, well: 'It was our own Ralph Vaughan Williams trying to write yet another opera' This appeared to me to be implying that RVW's operatic attempts were all failures. *Riders to the Sea* at the very least, ranks with the best.

No mention was made that *Poisoned Kiss* is not an opera at all. RVW called it, no doubt after due consideration, a 'Romantic Extravaganza', which is just what it is; not a fully blown opera set up to be demolished by some po-faced critic. Parker did offer some qualified praise to some of the 'slower items' in the work, and we got an extract from the *Blue Larkspur* duet to illustrate this point. The plot was damned as being out-of-date twenties dialogue wedded to (something like) sub *Lord of the Rings* sorcery; ie a silly plot. He ought to try reading the librettos of *Turandot* or *Iolanthe* some time. RVW did not have a monopoly of ludicrous plots. Most of the operatic oeuvre is based on such, and many foreign libretti sound ridiculous in straight translation. And *Poisoned Kiss* does not even pretend to be an opera.

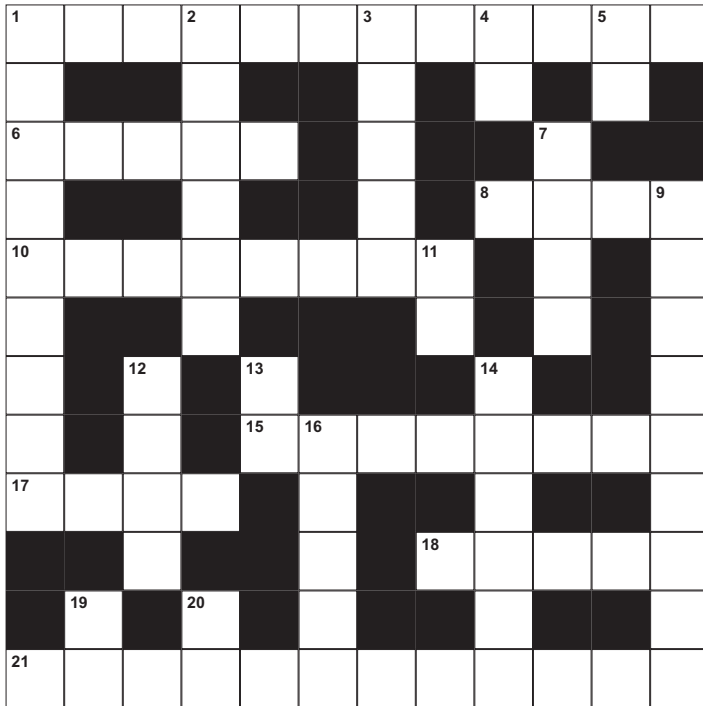
Of course it would be stretching loyalty to RVW to place the 'Extravaganza' above a work like *Turandot*, even if the former does have more good tunes(!)

I recently played it through to an audience of three friends (not noted as RVW addicts) and the reaction was overwhelmingly favourable. Perhaps I should say that the one that was most impressed was an 82 year old retired doctor, so perhaps Parker's jibe about twenties dialogue had a germ of truth. All three thought it was great fun.

Parker did have the grace to state that 'You'll either love it or loathe it', making it quite clear that he was amongst the loathers. I, and I hope a majority of listeners with a modicum of a sense of fun and an appreciation for lovely tunes, will be amongst the lovers.

Michael Gainsford
Burbage, Leics

RVW Crossword No. 15 by Michael Gainsford



Answers on Page 26

Next Edition: June 2004

49th Parallel

The deadline for contributions
is 10th April 2004

Across

1. RVW was here from 1887 to 1890. (12)
6. Mythical Greek who turned to stone whilst bewailing the loss of her children. (5)
8. Composer venerated by RVW. (4)
10. Wrote the words of *The Splendour Falls, set in 1905*. (8)
15. Shakespeare provided the words of this to music in 1938. (8)
17. As 12 down (4)
18. Hymn 37 ('Saviour, again to Thy dear name'). (5)
21. His *Why Fumeth in Fight* became the basis of a Fantasia. (6, 6)

Down

1. Hugh ran off with his daughter. (9)
2. *The ***** Nest*, RVW's first composition. (6)
3. A-B-A-C-A-D-A musical form. (5)
4. Letters after RVW's name since 1935. (1,1)
5. French or Italian key of B. (2)
7. The fourth of the *Mystical Songs*. (4)
9. Welsh parson from *Sir John in Love*. (4, 5)
11. Present owners of Leith Hill Place. (1,1)
12. Her lament was set as an (unpublished) madrigal, in 1897. (4)
13. RVW went there to lecture at Bryn Mawr. (1,1)
14. ****** in the Morning (On Christmas Day)*. (3,3)
16. Gervase who gave the first performance of *On Wenlock Edge*. (5)
19. Initials of RVW's great friend (minus the television?). (1,1)
20. Initials of the cello player in the pianoforte trio given at Charterhouse in 1888. (1,1)

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