

# BEHIND THE LINES

THE MUSIC AND COMPOSERS  
OF THE  
FIRST WORLD WAR

RESOURCE PACK:  
VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

[musicbehindthelines.org](http://musicbehindthelines.org)



# RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

## (1872 – 1958)



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## About Behind the Lines

**Behind the Lines** was a year-long programme of free participatory events and resources for all ages to commemorate the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War. The programme was delivered in partnership by Westminster Music Library and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, and supported using public funding by Arts Council England.

### Public Workshops

Beginning in autumn 2013, educational leaders and world-class musicians from the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra led a series of 18 interactive workshops for adults and families (early years and primary age focus). Sessions explored the music and composers of the First World War through these engaging creative composition workshops, targeted at the age group specified, and using the music and resources housed in Westminster Music Library.

### Schools Projects

In addition to the public workshop series, Behind the Lines also worked with six schools in Westminster and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea; two secondaries and four primaries. These six schools participated in 2 day creative composition projects which drew upon the themes of the programme and linked in with the schools own learning programmes – in particular the History, Music and English curriculum.

Additional schools projects can be incorporated in to the Behind the Lines programme between 2014 – 2018, although fundraising will be required. For further information or to discuss fundraising ideas with the project partners please contact [rwalters@westminster.gov.uk](mailto:rwalters@westminster.gov.uk)

### Summer School

The programme culminated with a four day creative summer school for young musicians (Years 6-11) across Westminster and RBKC, to commemorate the outbreak of the First World War and celebrate its music and composers. Participants explored numerous key compositions and composers, drawing upon the resources and works held in the collections at Westminster Music Library, and devised their own new musical compositions in response to these works, supported by the musical expertise of 5 professional musicians and leaders from the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

### Featured Composers

The programme featured key composers, and signposted numerous others, who all lived during The Great War and composed music that was directly inspired by their experiences, including the socio-political climate at the time. Key composers included Elgar, Ravel, Holst and Vaughan Williams, who were each the subject matter for a set of public workshops and a resource pack. However, in addition, the programme explored other key and lesser known composers through thematic explorations such as the integration of poetry in to WW1-inspired composition with Gurney and Bliss, or the works of composers who died during active service such as Butterworth and Farrar.

### Resource Packs

Just like this pack, the other featured composers and themes of the programme each have a Behind the Lines Resource Pack, which are available from Westminster Music Library, online at [www.musicbehindthelines.org](http://www.musicbehindthelines.org) or by request to [education@rpo.co.uk](mailto:education@rpo.co.uk)



## Biography

### Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)

Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians* describes Ralph Vaughan Williams as an 'English composer, teacher, writer and conductor. The most important English composer of his generation, he was a key figure in the 20<sup>th</sup> century revival of British music.'

Vaughan Williams was born in Down Ampney in Gloucestershire on 12 October 1872, although he always considered himself a Londoner (his family having moved to his mother's family home at Leith Hill Place in Surrey on the death of his father in 1875). He subsequently spent most of his life the Dorking area or in London. His father was a clergyman, although in the past his family had been lawyers; his grandfather Sir Edward Vaughan Williams being the first Judge of Common Pleas. His maternal grandparents were Josiah Wedgwood III and Charles Darwin's sister.

He had what could be described as a conventional upper middle class education. From an early age music played an important part in Vaughan Williams's life, he wrote his first composition when he was six, and when he was at Charterhouse School he played violin in the school orchestra. He knew early on that he wanted to be a composer, and in 1890 went to the Royal College of Music to study composition with Hubert Parry. In 1892, he moved on to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he read history and music, while continuing to take lessons both at the RCM and in Cambridge with Charles Wood. He returned to the RCM in 1895 as a pupil of Charles Stanford which was also where he first met Gustav Holst, who would become a great friend over the years, their relationship being mutually supportive.

Vaughan Williams was aware of the struggle he was having in finding a path and style of his own, and recognised that high professional standards were necessary. Therefore, after his marriage to Adeline Fisher in 1897, the couple honeymooned in Berlin where he studied for a short while with Max Bruch. However, he knew equally that following a foreign style or model would not work either, so it was around this time that he developed an interest in English folk music and Elizabethan and Jacobean music. Holst shared this interest, and they would regularly hold what they called 'field days', where they would look critically at each other's music, a practice that continued up until Holst's death in 1934.

Vaughan Williams moved to London in 1898. Around the turn of the century he was writing mainly chamber music and songs, including *Linden Lea*, while his *Songs of Travel* were performed in 1904. Also in that year he became the music editor of a new hymn book, *The English Hymnal*, which was published in 1906. Some of the themes in *The English Hymnal* were set to folk tunes, for it was around this time that he began to systematically collect English folk songs, travelling around Essex, Norfolk, Herefordshire, Surrey and Sussex. When not composing or arranging, he was writing periodical articles, and he contributed to Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*.

Vaughan Williams and Adeline moved to Cheyne Walk in Chelsea in 1905. In 1907, he found a degree of success with *Toward an Unknown Region*, a choral setting of words by Walt Whitman, but on the whole he was still struggling with composition, so decided further study was necessary, this time with Ravel in Paris. This proved to be successful as he quickly produced his *String Quartet No. 1, On Wenlock Edge* (settings by Housman), and the incidental music to *The Wasps*. He had been working on a choral symphony for several years which he also completed at this time and named *A Sea Symphony*, and which was enthusiastically received at the Leeds Festival in 1910. By now Vaughan Williams had finally been recognised as an important English composer. The *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis* followed quickly and was to become perhaps his best known work. Other works which flowed from his pen at this time were the *Five*



*Mystical Songs*, *A London Symphony*, and sketches for his folk-inspired first opera *Hugh the Drover*. *A London Symphony* was given its first performance in March 1914, and with it Vaughan Williams became the leading British composer of his generation.

For a detailed account of Vaughan Williams's life and work in the war [click here](#)

After the war, Vaughan Williams taught at the Royal College of Music and was now highly respected by a new generation of musicians who called him 'Uncle Ralph'. Among these musicians was Ivor Gurney who had served in France in the war, but due to increasing mental illness, was unable to continue his studies. Using his experience as a choral conductor since 1905, Vaughan Williams was also appointed conductor of the Bach Choir.

During the time that Vaughan Williams was serving in the war, it was impossible for him to write music, but in the immediate aftermath of the conflict he was at his most prolific, composing music in a range of genres. He revised some of the pieces from before the war, notably *A London Symphony*. His friend and composer George Butterworth, who was killed in the Battle of the Somme, had assisted him in the orchestration of the work before war broke out, so on completion of the revision, Vaughan Williams dedicated it to Butterworth's memory. Another revision was the orchestration of *The Lark Ascending* which he had originally written in 1914 for violin and piano.

Along with the *Pastoral Symphony*, other new works from the period immediately following the war include the *Mass in G minor*, *Flos campi* for viola, small chorus and orchestra, the oratorio *Sancta Civitas*, *Concerto Accademico* (for violin and orchestra), *Job: A Masque for Dancing* (inspired by William Blake's illustrations), and a *Piano Concerto*. *Hugh the Drover* was finally completed, as was his second opera *Sir John in Love*, based on Falstaff. He had been fascinated by Bunyan's *The Pilgrims Progress* since 1906, and started writing a one-act opera *The Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains*. The story follows the trials and struggles of Christian, whom Vaughan Williams renamed as Pilgrim to make the story more universal.

In 1935, he received the Order of Merit having previously turned down a knighthood. In the same year he completed his Fourth Symphony, of which the violence of the scoring could not be in greater contrast to his *Pastoral Symphony*, and is more of a premonition of the coming conflict of World War Two. The 1920s and 1930s saw an increasing number works by Vaughan Williams being performed abroad.

Three other events affected Vaughan Williams during this period. Firstly, in 1929, with his wife's increasing poor health, Vaughan Williams and Adeline moved out of London where they had lived since 1905 and settled in Dorking in Surrey. Secondly, in 1934, the death of Edward Elgar left Vaughan Williams as the most prominent English composer, and thirdly, at a more personal level, 1934 was also the year of Gustav Holst's death, which was to leave Vaughan Williams without his close friend, advisor and supporter.

With the rise of fascism and conflict again looming in Europe, Vaughan Williams composed *Dona Nobis Pacem* which was premiered in 1936. In 1939, he served on a local committee and undertook work to settle refugees in the Dorking area who had fled Nazi Germany.

During the Second World War, Vaughan Williams was in charge of the Home Office Committee for the Release of Interned Alien Musicians. Along with Myra Hess, he also helped organise the concerts at the National Gallery, and held other positions which promoted music in wartime. At a local level, he organised recitals in Dorking for displaced people and concerts for servicemen stationed nearby. He handed over a field at the back of his house for allotments and cultivated a patch himself, and he went round collecting material which could be recycled for the war effort. He was concerned that composers and musicians should be 'useful' and that music should have



a spiritual role in the nation at its time of need. To this end, he strongly promoted amateur music-making. Although aware of the negative aspects of propaganda, he saw film as an appropriate medium for encouraging patriotism. The score for the *49<sup>th</sup> Parallel* was to grow from this. 'Patriotism' and 'nationalism' were features of Vaughan Williams's life and music, but he always sought to look outwards rather than inwards.

The Fifth Symphony dates from the war years and was first performed at a Promenade concert on 1943. Using material from *The Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains*, which was now developing into a full length opera, eventually to be called *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the music of the symphony expresses the same calm assurance of Pilgrim in the face of his trials and struggles – a feeling that clearly resonated with the public at a time of peril for the country.

In 1944, he inherited Leith Hill Place, but the responsibilities of running an estate and being a landlord did not fit with his radical values, so he bequeathed the house to the National Trust.

Vaughan Williams remained prolific in composition right up to his death. He wrote four more symphonies, film scores, a second string quartet, several choral works and completed *The Pilgrim's Progress*. The disturbing Sixth Symphony of 1948 achieved great popularity and was spoken of as a 'war symphony', although Vaughan Williams denied this. This work received over a hundred performances around the world in its first two years. *The Pilgrim's Progress*, billed as a 'Morality' rather than an opera, was finally performed at Covent Garden in 1951, but was misunderstood by the critics who thought it was too backward looking and out of step with the more forward looking Festival of Britain.

Alongside composition, Vaughan Williams was able to juggle his musical activities which were practical, educational, administrative and advisory. He now ran the Leith Hill Festival which had been founded by his sister, Margaret, in 1905, and where he conducted the Bach Passions each year.

In 1951, his wife Adeline died at the age of 80 having been an invalid for many years. Two years later, he married Ursula Wood whom he had known since 1938. The couple left Dorking where he had been living since 1929 and moved to London. Finding the cultural life in London attractive, he was again bursting in energy despite now being in his 80s. His health was good, although he was experiencing increasing deafness which has been put down to the long term effects from the noise of shelling when he was a gunner in the First World War. He took foreign holidays and toured the USA where he lectured and conducted his music, and was warmly welcomed wherever he went.

His next symphony, *Sinfonia Antartica*, was composed from material he had written for the film *Scott of the Antarctic* and was first performed in 1953. Vaughan Williams developed an interest in unusual instrumentation in his later years, producing a *Tuba Concerto*, a *Romance for Harmonica String Orchestra and Piano*, and two more symphonies which made use of percussion (Eighth Symphony), and saxophones, flugelhorn and percussion (Ninth Symphony).

In March 1958, Vaughan Williams conducted the two Bach Passions at the Leith Hill Festival for the final time. On 26 August 1958, he was due to attend a recording session of his Ninth Symphony with Adrian Boult, but died peacefully during the night. He was 85 and had remained busy to the end – composing, attending performances, travelling and advising on recordings. With his death, there was a great sense of personal loss in the country, as he had become an institution who had reached the hearts of many people. His funeral took place at Westminster Abbey where his ashes are interred.

Vaughan Williams believed that to reach a universal audience a composer must first find acceptance at home making use of native resources. Both he and Holst stressed the view that tradition should underpin music, and felt that the experimental artistic developments after the



First World War, and the responses to the conflict, were often confused. They both believed experimenting was good, but that it needed firm grounding.

Vaughan Williams was inspired by folk song and English Tudor music, but the influences of Ravel are also to be found in his work. His music is lyrical and melodic but he clearly inhabits the 20<sup>th</sup> century; it expresses nobility, integrity and at times has visionary qualities. He had a strong social conscience and believed that music was for people and for all situations, however humble, hence his engagement in a range of musical activities, and his embracing of popular traditions. Although he strove to create a 'national' musical style, Vaughan Williams was no narrow nationalist, but was internationalist in outlook and favoured federalism in Europe and beyond as a way of preventing conflict. Politically, Vaughan Williams was a socialist who came from a nineteenth century Radical and Liberal tradition. He had a deep-rooted compassion for the underprivileged, but was suspicious of extremes. In his early life he was an atheist, but later drifted towards agnosticism. He was never a Christian, but had a deep sense of history and tradition, and thus shared the common aspirations of men and women.

## Ralph Vaughan Williams – Life and Work during the War

By the time the First World War broke out in 1914, Vaughan Williams was already receiving great critical acclaim and public recognition, particularly after the first performances of the *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis* and his *London Symphony*. But musical life in Britain was to be shattered. His interest in English folk song, folk dance and Elizabethan music was central to his idea of creating a style of 'national music', but this had to be put aside as the nation itself was now in danger.

Although aged 41 and over military age, Vaughan Williams nevertheless enlisted, feeling a sense of duty to be involved in the war effort. This caused some surprise and distress to many of his friends and colleagues. In August 1914, he joined the Special Constabulary and by the end of the month had been made a sergeant.

On New Year's Eve in 1914, he joined the 2/4<sup>th</sup> London Field Ambulance, part of the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) Territorial Force. Despite his position in society as a respected composer, and being upper middle class, he chose the rank of Private so as not to gain preferential treatment. The training was particularly hard, initially taking place in the Home Counties, and then on Salisbury Plain. During this time he still managed to gather groups of singers together to perform informal concerts.

In June 1916, his unit was sent to France where he served as a wagon orderly. He was posted at Ecoivres near Vimy Ridge. The work involved back-breaking labour and dangerous journeys at night through mud and rain bringing back injured soldiers from the trenches. Providing this humanitarian aid to the troops was very much in keeping with his ideals, and he conducted his efforts with great bravery.

Later in 1916, he moved to the Salonika front in Greece but had little to do, so he left the RAMC in 1917 and returned to England where he trained for a commission as a second lieutenant in the Royal Garrison Artillery. He was sent to France in 1918 where he was initially in charge of transport and musical recreation, but was later trained as a gunner and saw action on the Somme in the final stages of the war.

In the course of his war service, he met people across all social classes, and made many lasting friendships which continued long after the conflict – something which may not have happened were it not for the war. After the armistice he was made Director of Music for the First Army of the British Expeditionary Force where he was in charge of education and musical activities among



demobilised troops. With great enthusiasm he organised amateur music-making among the troops, something he had done informally throughout his army career.

Vaughan Williams told Holst before going to France that he thought the climate for music would be better in England after the war because shortages and social changes might mean that no-one would be able to afford expensive performers, thus opening up music making to a greater number of people. However, he changed his mind in 1917 when only three out of the seven members of his group who joined up at the beginning of the war were left.

He was demobilised in February 1919, and like many who had fought or experienced the war first hand, he very rarely talked about it. However, he must have seen many harrowing sights which would have left deep psychological scars. He had also lost friends killed or incapacitated. Physically, it is thought that his deafness later in life may have been due to the long term effects from the noise of shelling when he was a gunner.

Vaughan Williams's main work influenced by his war experience is the *Pastoral Symphony*, along with his 'oratorio' *Sancta Civitas*. (For details [click here](#))



## Chronology of key dates and World War One connections

- 1872 Born in Down Ampney, Gloucestershire on 12 October
- 1875 His father dies – the family moves to Leith Hill Place in Surrey
- 1878 Begins music lessons with his aunt and writes his first composition
- 1879 Begins violin lessons
- 1883–86 Attends Field House School, Rottingdean in Sussex
- 1887–90 Attends Charterhouse School, Godalming in Surrey – plays violin in his Piano Trio (now lost) in 1888
- 1890–02 Attends Royal College of Music where he studies with Hubert Parry
- 1892–95 Moves to Trinity College, Cambridge, to read music and history where he takes lessons from Charles Wood, but continues lessons with Parry at the RCM
- 1895 Returns to the RCM to study with Charles Stanford
- Meets Gustav Holst – the two become close friends and share an interest in English folk music
- 1897 Marries Adeline Fisher – takes honeymoon in Berlin where he studies with Max Bruch
- 1898 Moves to London
- 1902 Writes *Linden Lea* – his first published music
- 1903 Starts collecting folk songs
- 1904 Becomes editor of *The English Hymnal*
- Contributes to Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*
- 1905 Helps found the Leith Hill Music Festival and is Principal Conductor, a post which he holds until 1953
- Settles at Cheyne Walk in Chelsea where he lives until 1929
- 1906 *The English Hymnal* is published
- 1907 Composes *Toward an Unknown Region*
- Studies with Ravel in Paris
- 1909 Writes *String Quartet No. 1, On Wenlock Edge* and the incidental music to *The Wasps*
- 1910 Gains recognition after successful first performances of *A Sea Symphony* and the *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis*
- 1911 Starts work on his opera *Hugh the Drover, Five Mystical Songs* and *A London Symphony*
- 1914 *A London Symphony* is given its first performance in March



- Outbreak of war on 4 August
- Joins the Special Constabulary in August
- Joins the 2/4<sup>th</sup> London Field Ambulance, part of the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) Territorial Force, on New Year's Eve
- 1915 Manages to gather groups of singers together for informal music-making while training in England
- 1916 Sent to France as a wagon orderly in June
- Unit moves to the Salonika front later in the year
- 1917 Leaves RAMC and returns to England for training with the Royal Garrison Artillery – gains a commission as a second lieutenant
- 1918 Sent to France and is in charge of transport and musical recreation
- Trains as a gunner and sees action on the Somme towards the end of the war
- Is made Director of Music for the First Army of the British Expeditionary Force after the armistice, being responsible for education and musical activities among demobilised troops
- 1919 Demobilises in February
- Begins teaching at the Royal College of Music
- 1920 Revised version of *A London Symphony* performed in May
- 1921 Appointed conductor of the Bach Choir
- 1922 *A Pastoral Symphony* completed and first performed
- Mass in G minor* completed
- Starts work on *The Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains* which later becomes *The Pilgrim's Progress*
- Makes first visit to America
- 1924 *Hugh the Drover* given first performance
- 1925 Composes *Concerto Accademico* for violin and orchestra and *Flos campi* for viola, small chorus, and orchestra
- 1926 *Sancta Civitas* completed and first performed during the General Strike
- 1929 Moves to Dorking
- Second opera *Sir John in Love* completed
- 1930 *Job: A Masque for Dancing* completed
- 1932 Makes second visit to America
- 1934 Death of Elgar leaves Vaughan Williams as England's most prominent composer and the death of Holst leaves him without his close friend and supporter



- 1935      Receives the Order of Merit having earlier turned down a knighthood  
 Completes his *Symphony No. 4*
- 1936      *Dona Nobis Pacem* first performed
- 1938      Meets Ursula Wood
- 1939–45   Serves on and is actively involved with the Dorking Committee for Refugees from Nazi Oppression  
 Outbreak of the Second World War – assists Myra Hess with the organisation of the National Gallery concerts  
 Appointed Chair of the Home Office Committee for the Release of Interned Alien Musicians  
 Is involved in the promotion of music in wartime, especially amateur music-making  
 Organises recitals for displaced people and concerts for servicemen stationed near Dorking  
 Hands over a patch of land at the back of his house for cultivation and collects materials to be recycled for the war effort  
 Composes music for the film *49<sup>th</sup> Parallel*  
 Conducts his *Symphony No. 5* at the Proms in 1943  
 Inherits Leith Hill Place but bequeaths it to the National Trust
- 1948      Completes *Symphony No. 6* and writes music for the film *Scott of the Antarctic*
- 1951      *The Pilgrim's Progress* performed at Covent Garden  
 Adeline dies after being an invalid for many years
- 1953      Marries Ursula Wood and moves back to London  
 First performance of *Sinfonia Antartica* using music from the film *Scott of the Antarctic*
- 1954–58   Continues to be musically active composing, teaching and advising – writes two further symphonies, a *Tuba Concerto* and a *Romance for Harmonica String Orchestra and Piano*  
 Takes foreign holidays and makes a third and final tour of America
- 1958      Dies peacefully at home on 26 August – his funeral takes place at Westminster Abbey where his ashes are interred



## Featured Compositions

For links to audio versions of these featured compositions, [click here](#).

Composing was all but impossible during the war, but in the immediate aftermath of the conflict, Vaughan Williams was at his most prolific, writing new music and revising earlier pieces. A *Pastoral Symphony* was his main 'war' work which was followed by *Sancta Civitas*. Since Vaughan Williams did not talk explicitly about his war experiences, it is not always easy to piece together how this might have influenced him musically, but the music that followed the war certainly will have in some way been influenced by his experiences.

Being agnostic, Vaughan Williams did not directly seek solace in religion, but along with *Sancta Civitas*, he wrote his *Mass in G minor* and he continued work on *The Pilgrim's Progress*. The *Mass in G minor* was inspired by the composer's continuing interest in English Tudor music, while *The Pilgrim's Progress*, his opera based on Bunyan, follows the lead character's trials and struggles. It was through the familiar texts that have been handed down through tradition that Vaughan Williams sought to find an expression of reality.

Vaughan Williams's friend Gustav Holst, who wrote his *Hymn of Jesus* in response to the war, was also agnostic. Neither of these composers matched the popularity of Elgar during the war years. Elgar was nominally a Christian, although through his life he had his increasing doubts about religion. It is interesting to note though, that it is Vaughan Williams and Holst who seemed more able to express a commitment to the nation in the post-war period through the use of religious texts which were both familiar and timeless.

### A Pastoral Symphony

#### Background to the composition

After the war, there was no obvious change in Vaughan Williams's style or obvious protest, but instead a more intense inwardness. The work where this is most evident is his *Pastoral Symphony* composed between 1916 and 1921. Given his general reticence about explaining the meaning of his works, and his occasional annoyance at those who sometimes try to attach a meaning or programme, Vaughan Williams was quite explicit about this symphony, although not until 1938, when he explained the inspiration behind the work in a letter to Ursula Wood. It is a highly personal response to the horrors he witnessed. The title does not refer to some rural English idyll which was the initial thinking of the critics who first heard it in 1922. According to Vaughan Williams, the title refers to the landscape of the trenches, where as a wagon orderly, he brought back wounded and dying soldiers. Vaughan Williams described it thus '...I used to go up night after night with the ambulance wagon at Ecoivres and we went up a steep hill and there was a wonderful Corot-like landscape in the sunset.'

The work is elegiac, tranquil and contemplative in nature; a meditation on a lost generation as well as a celebration of the return of peace. The sense of peace is one that follows exhaustion and desolation, and the work embodies a hope that the nation might be healed and made whole again. It includes a poignant and melancholy natural trumpet cadenza in the second movement which is reminiscent of the Last Post, the inspiration for which was a bugler he had heard while on military service. The finale features a haunting wordless solo for soprano voice which slowly fades into silence. It has been suggested that this may represent a lament for the war dead.



## Musical breakdown

- Key: 1<sup>st</sup> movement – Largely modal with no key signature  
2<sup>nd</sup> movement – No key signature  
3<sup>rd</sup> movement – G minor/G major  
4<sup>th</sup> movement – Various
- Structure: 4 movements
- Tempo: 1<sup>st</sup> movement – Molto Moderato, crotchet = 80  
2<sup>nd</sup> movement – Lento Moderato, crotchet = 70  
3<sup>rd</sup> movement – Moderato Pesante, crotchet = 80  
4<sup>th</sup> movement – Lento, crotchet = 6

## How the piece relates to WWI

*The piano reduction illustrative examples for this section were sourced from the following books:*

*Frank Howes – The Music of Ralph Vaughan Williams*

*Elliott S. Schwarz – The Symphonies of Ralph Vaughan Williams*

*Hugh Ottaway – Vaughan Williams Symphonies*

1. The first movement opens with a weaving modal motif in the woodwinds which is set against a chordal/triadic theme (main theme) in harp and strings, also modal (pentatonic/mixolydian) - outlining the interval of a fifth. The modal feel here suggests pastoral scenes and the harmony created by 2 or 3 melodies moving against each other with their own associated chord creates an ambiguous tonality which may be suggestive of the notion of 'Death in Arcadia', reflecting the battlefields of Northern France.

## *Opening bars of the first movement*

**Molto moderato**

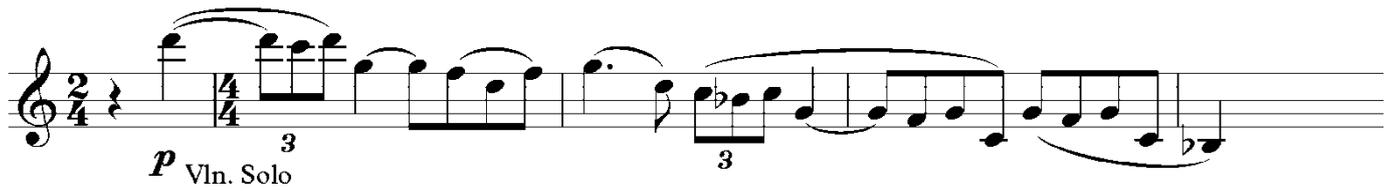
W.W.

Harp, Cellos, Basses



- There is a new theme in bar 9 on solo violin which again has pastoral modal connotations (Mixolydian). This could also represent the picturesque countryside in which Vaughan Williams and other soldiers found themselves fighting.

*Solo violin part from bar 9*



- The cadential figure at bar 25 in the woodwind moves from Bb minor to G major using triads. This unusual harmonic movement creates a sense of unease.

*Cadential figure, bar 25*



- The second movement opens with quiet F minor held strings against a horn theme which predominates the movement and is related to a Cor Anglais theme at bar 28 of the 1<sup>st</sup> movement. The strings begin to move in an undulating way before rising in 3rds and 6ths and the combined effect in the opening bars creates a sinister, bleak atmosphere.

*Opening Horn motif, 2<sup>nd</sup> movement with string notes indicated*



*Violin 1 part from bar 8*



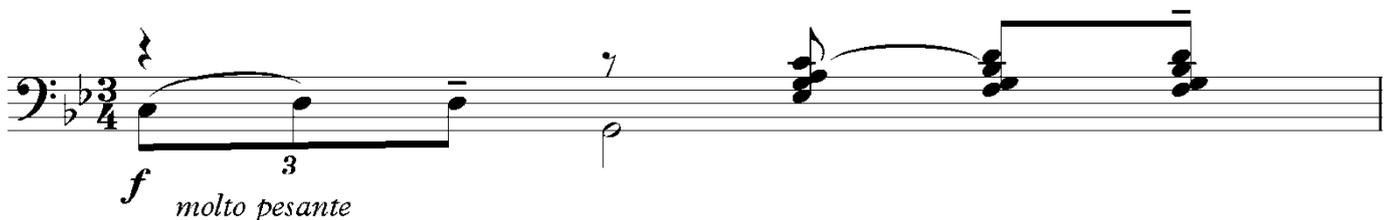
5. A fanfare is played by natural trumpet against strings from bars 67-75, used for the true intonation of the B Flat and D against equal temperament in the strings. Vaughan Williams compares this section to an experience during the war hearing a camp horn player 'missing the octave' and playing a seventh instead.

*Natural Trumpet motif from bar 67*



6. In contrast to the hazy modal pastoral feel of the opening 2 movements, the third has a strong sense of tonality and form with contrasting G minor and G major sections. The main G minor theme is bold and forceful with strings answered by low brass and woodwinds, giving a militaristic feel.

*Opening bar of movement 3*



7. The main G major theme, marked *brillante* and *ff*, is equally forceful but, being in a major key, perhaps represents the sense of allied pride in WWI.



8. The final movement opens with a solo wordless soprano (or tenor) line which is then orchestrated and developed throughout the movement. This doleful sung opening melody gives a humanist edge to the movement, perhaps alluding to the human tragedy of war.

*Opening wordless sung motif, movement 4*



# Sancta Civitas (The Holy City)

## Background to the composition

In expressing his feelings on the war, Vaughan Williams tried to leave room for hope rather than just dwelling on the horrors of the conflict.

*Sancta Civitas* is an oratorio which was composed between 1923 and 1925 and explores the struggle between good and evil, and humankind's destructive nature and our separation or dislocation from each other and the natural order. The work was inspired by Bach's Passions which Vaughan Williams conducted regularly with the Bach Choir, having become their chief conductor in 1921. He was drawn to the drama of the Passion story, but wanted to extend it beyond the crucifixion to Christ's ultimate triumph, but in a more agnostic way. Describing himself as a 'cheerful agnostic', the composer was nevertheless steeped in the Anglican tradition, and he believed that texts were powerful symbols which audiences would understand.

He saw the work as a pilgrimage of humankind from suffering to triumph over adversity, and there is a clear outcome of victory for the righteous. *Sancta Civitas* uses texts from the *Book of Revelation* with additions from Taverner's Bible, and the score is prefaced by a quotation from Plato's *Phaedo* where Socrates, before his execution, meditates on the immortality of the soul. The work deals with the question of life after death, and by including words by Plato, Vaughan Williams seeks to broaden its reach beyond the purely Christian to the universal.

*Sancta Civitas* was first performed in Oxford on 7 May 1926 in the middle of the General Strike. The performance took place in a refined environment far removed from the grinding poverty experienced by the working class which had led to the strike, and this was difficult for Vaughan Williams with his radical background and political views. He keenly felt the disappointment that the much hoped for reforms after the war had not materialised; the kind of world envisaged by *Santa Civitas* was still far off.



## Musical breakdown

- Key: Various
- Tempo: Initially Lento, crotchet = 76. Tempo changes throughout and markings are 'approximate'.

## How the piece relates to WWI

1. The opening orchestral passage is very quiet and lightly scored for winds and strings, perhaps suggesting a mysterious and desolate landscape.

### Opening bars

**Lento** ♩ = 76 (*The tempo marks are approximate. The pace must be free and elastic throughout*)

Musical score for the opening bars, featuring Flutes and Cello & Bass. The score is in 4/4 time and begins with a *ppp* dynamic marking. The Flutes part is written in treble clef, and the Cello & Bass part is written in bass clef. The key signature is one sharp (F#).

Musical score for the Oboe part, starting at bar 7. The score is in 4/4 time and begins with a *ppp* dynamic marking. The Oboe part is written in treble clef, and the Cello & Bass part is written in bass clef. The key signature is one sharp (F#). A box with the number '1' is placed above the first measure of the Oboe part.



2. At figure 4, after the first choral passage, a distant trumpet enters against distant upper voices. The trumpet once again invokes a spirit of the camp horn player, but the sacred choral text perhaps suggests the promise of a righteous victory.

Figure 4

**4** (Allegro moderato ♩ = 126)  
*f*

S. Al-le - lu - ia; Sal - va - tion and glo - ry,  
A. Al-le - lu - ia; Sal - va - tion and glo - ry,

Distant trumpet  
*f*

**4** (Allegro moderato ♩ = 126)  
*pp*

**5** (Lento)

Choir  
ho - nour and power un - to the Lord our  
ho - nour and power un - to the Lord our

Pno.  
*pp* legato *cresc.*



3. The large central section of *Sancta Civitas* deals with the fall of the ancient city of Babylon as told in the Book of Revelation, where the armies of heaven descend to defeat the city of Babylon which was associated with materialism, greed and other worldly evils. The armies of heaven are represented by the White Horse and the Lord as 'King of Kings'. It is hard not to see the use of this scripture as relating to Vaughan Williams' experiences of the war, either as supposed good defeating supposed evil (i.e. the allies defeating the central powers) or as a hope that the end of the war marked a defeat for materialism and greed and a chance for a more peaceful and just society.

*The Revelation of the White Horse, figure 16*

**16** + 4

TUTTI (SEMI-CHORUS with FULL CHORUS)

SOPRANO *f*  
And be - hold a white horse;

ALTO *f*  
And be - hold a white horse;

TENOR *f*  
And be - hold a white horse;

BASS *f*  
And be - hold a white horse;

Piano **16**



'King of Kings and Lord of Lords', 1 bar after figure 29

**Largamente**  
*fff*

SOPRANO  
'King of Kings and Lord of

ALTO  
'King of Kings and Lord of

TENOR  
'King of Kings and Lord of

BASS  
'King of Kings and Lord of

**Largamente**  
*ff*  
Side drum  
*p* *fff*

Piano

7 **1**

Lords'.

Lords'.

Lords'.

Lords'.

Lords'.

**1**  
*fff* Brass



The slaying of the Babylonians, 5 bars after figure 36

Baritone Solo

37 *Meno mosso*  $\text{♩} = 120$

*f* and were slain, with the sword of him that sat up - on the horse:

SOPRANO

*f* and were slain, \_\_\_\_\_

ALTO

*f* and were slain, \_\_\_\_\_

TENOR

*f* and were slain, \_\_\_\_\_

BASS

*f* and were slain, \_\_\_\_\_

Piano

37 *Meno mosso*  $\text{♩} = 120$

*p*

Ralph Vaughan Williams



The Fall of Babylon, figure 39

39

*p* *3*  
S. Ba-by- lon\_ the great is fall- en, is fa - - en. \_

*p* *3*  
SEMI-CHORUS Bab-by- lon the great is fall- en, is fall - - en.

*p* *3*  
A. Bab-by- lon\_ the great is fall- en, is fall - - en. \_

*p* *3*  
Bab-by- lon\_ is fall- en, is fall - - en. \_

Piano

The musical score is for a piece titled "The Fall of Babylon, figure 39". It features four vocal parts and a piano accompaniment. The vocal parts are Soprano (S.), Semi-Chorus, Alto (A.), and a lower vocal part. The piano part is for the Piano. The score is in 2/2 time, with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The tempo is marked *p* (piano). The Soprano part begins with a triplet of eighth notes. The lyrics are: "Ba-by- lon\_ the great is fall- en, is fa - - en. \_". The Semi-Chorus part has the lyrics: "Bab-by- lon the great is fall- en, is fall - - en.". The Alto part has the lyrics: "Bab-by- lon\_ the great is fall- en, is fall - - en. \_". The lower vocal part has the lyrics: "Bab-by- lon\_ is fall- en, is fall - - en. \_". The piano accompaniment features a steady bass line with chords and a melodic line in the right hand.



4. The final section, also from the Book of Revelation, concerns the City of God, perhaps representing the new world many hoped to see after the war.

Figure 64

**64** Adagio ♩ = 50

SOPRANO

ALTO

TENOR

BASS

Piano

Vln solo

*ppp*

3

Cello & Bass

**65** TUTTI (SEMI-CHORUS with FULL CHORUS)

*ppp parlando*

3

And I saw a new heav'n and a new earth: for the

*ppp parlando*

3

And I saw a new heav'n and a new earth: for the

*ppp parlando*

3

And I saw a new heav'n and a new earth: for the

*ppp parlando*

3

And I saw a new heav'n and a new earth: for the

*ppp parlando*

3

3

3

3



## Vaughan Williams: Further Reference

### Vaughan Williams Related Books, Scores & Audio

Type	Title	Author	Location
Book	The Cambridge Companion to Vaughan Williams	Ed. Alain Frogley and Aidan J. Thomson	Music Library
	Vaughan Williams: His Life and Times	Paul Holmes	Music Library
	Ralph Vaughan Williams: a pictorial biography	John E. Lunn and Ursula Vaughan Williams	Music Library
	Vaughan Williams and the Vision of Albion	Wilfred Mellors	Music Library
	The Letters of Ralph Vaughan Williams 1895–1958	Ed. Hugh Cobbe	Music Library
	The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams	Michael Kennedy	Music Library
	The Music of Ralph Vaughan Williams	Frank Howes	Music Library
	The Symphonies of Ralph Vaughan Williams	Elliott S. Schwartz	Music Library
	Vaughan Williams Symphonies	Hugh Ottaway	Music Library
	British Music and Modernism, 1895-1960	Ed. Matthew Riley	Music Library
Scores/ Sheet Music	A Pastoral Symphony, Miniature Score	Ralph Vaughan Williams	Music Library
	Sancta Civitas, Vocal Score	Ralph Vaughan Williams	Music Library
Audio	A Pastoral Symphony	Ralph Vaughan Williams	Shops/Rentals. On <a href="#">YouTube</a> . On <a href="#">Spotify</a> .
	Sancta Civitas	Ralph Vaughan Williams	Shops/Rentals. On <a href="#">YouTube</a> . On <a href="#">Spotify</a> .

## Vaughan Williams Related Periodicals

Title of Periodical/Journal	Volume and Page	Date	Article Title	Location in WML
Music and Letters	Vol. 3, no. 2 p. 122	April 1922	Vaughan Williams's Pastoral Symphony by Herbert Howells	Periodicals Room
Music Review	Vol. 52, no. 3 p. 203	August 1991	Modal and Thematic Coherence in Vaughan Williams's Pastoral Symphony by Michael Vaillancourt	Periodicals Room

## Vaughan Williams Related Websites

Title	Description	URL
The Ralph Vaughan Williams Society	A society dedicated to widening the understanding and appreciation of the life and music of Vaughan Williams	<a href="http://www.rvwsociety.com/">www.rvwsociety.com/</a>
Grove Music Online	Leading online resource for music research (free access for members of Westminster Libraries)	<a href="http://www.westminster.gov.uk/services/libraries/247/exclusives/#music">www.westminster.gov.uk/services/libraries/247/exclusives/#music</a>
Oxford Dictionary of National Biography	Concise, up-to-date biographies of men and women who have shaped British history and culture (free access for members of Westminster Libraries)	<a href="http://www.westminster.gov.uk/services/libraries/247/exclusives/#biography">www.westminster.gov.uk/services/libraries/247/exclusives/#biography</a>

## WW1 Centenary: Websites & Links

### Websites

Title	Description	URL
Behind the Lines	The website of this Behind the Lines programme, containing useful information about the resources available, workshops taking place, as well as information and media documenting the year-long project run in partnership by Westminster Music Library and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.	<a href="http://www.musicbehindthelines.org">www.musicbehindthelines.org</a>
Centenary News	News and information about the 2014-2018 First World War Centenary. The website contains news items, videos, details of events, educational resources, and links to articles and blogs. The site also includes a summary of organisations who are involved with the study of the First World War, or who are planning Centenary events.	<a href="http://www.centenarynews.com">www.centenarynews.com</a>
1914.org	1914.org is a website which highlights centenary events and resources from across the globe, and includes the <a href="#">First World War Centenary Partnership</a> : a network of over 1,000 local, regional, national and international cultural and educational organisations led by IWM (Imperial War Museums).	<a href="http://www.1914.org">www.1914.org</a>
War Memorials Trust	War Memorials Trust is the national charity dedicated to the protection and conservation of war memorials in the UK. The website has lots of useful resources and information about war memorials, in particular some excellent teacher packs and lesson plans to help build a greater understanding of our war memorial heritage.	<a href="http://www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org">www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org</a>
In Memoriam 2014	In Memoriam 2014 is a national War Memorials Trust (see entry above) project which will, with the assistance of local communities and groups, locate, log, maintain then protect the nation's war memorials in time for Remembrance Day 2014	<a href="http://www.inmemoriam2014.org">www.inmemoriam2014.org</a>

Imperial War Museum	The Imperial War Museum's website. The information on this website tells you about the permanent displays, the archives, special exhibitions, forthcoming events, education programmes, corporate hospitality and shopping facilities at all 5 IWM museums.	<a href="http://www.iwm.org.uk">www.iwm.org.uk</a>
Commonwealth War Graves Commission	This organisation commemorates the 1,700,000 men and women of the Commonwealth forces who died in the two world wars and maintains cemeteries, burial sites and memorials of all sizes. The website has useful learning resources and search facilities (memorial sites, Registers of war dead).	<a href="http://www.cwgc.org/">www.cwgc.org/</a>
Department for Culture, Media and Sport	The government is working alongside partners, on a series of national remembrance events, an extensive cultural programme and educational schemes. Information can be found on this website.	<a href="http://www.gov.uk/government/topic-al-events/first-world-war-centenary">www.gov.uk/government/topic-al-events/first-world-war-centenary</a>