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EDITOR

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Rejoice at new RVW Recordings

Many exciting new recordings are being produced which will introduce some works of RVW that most members will not have heard before. These include *On Christmas Night*, *The First Nowell*, *Willow Wood* and – most importantly – the complete music to *The Wasps*. These recordings have been stimulated by the RVW Society, although none would have been possible without the superb financial help of RVW Ltd. Our warm thanks to the directors, Michael Kennedy, Hugh Cobbe and Adrian Lea.

The Wasps

RVW's music of 1909 was for a staged production of the Aristophanes play in Cambridge. The premiere recording of the complete incidental music, by Mark Elder and the Hallé Orchestra on the Hallé's own label, has a new spoken text by David Pountney. This has been devised to give a dramatic context to the musical numbers as the plot unfolds. The narration has been shortened and tightened. *The Wasps* has much humour and vividness of expression and, of course, wonderful lyrical music. It is an exciting prospect to be able to hear RVW's original creation after almost 100 years, rather than the familiar *Overture* or *Suite*.

Christmas CD

Another fascinating CD will couple *On Christmas Night* with *The First Nowell* and the well-known *Fantasia on Christmas Carols*. *On Christmas Night* is dedicated to Douglas Kennedy and is a Masque from Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*. Carols include *A Virgin most pure*, *On Christmas night* and *As Joseph was a-walking* – all firm favourites.

The First Nowell arose from collaboration between RVW and Simona Pakenham. Roy Douglas prepared the score for publication after RVW's death in 1958. We are all looking forward to having both Simona Pakenham and Roy Douglas at the recording of *The First Nowell* on 5/6 December 2005. The City of London Sinfonia will be conducted by Richard Hickox and the recording is by Chandos.

This is the morning of the sons of light

Naxos has recorded *Willow Wood* for the first time, coupled with *The Sons of Light*. The recording will be launched on the 3rd November 2005. David Lloyd-Jones conducts the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Chorus and Orchestra, with Roderick Williams (Baritone).

The Sons of Light may be more familiar to members from the old Lyrita LP. This Cantata for chorus and orchestra was composed for the Schools' Music Association of Great Britain and first performed at the Royal Albert Hall on 6 May 1951. The text is by Ursula Vaughan Williams and features *The Song of the Zodiac*. Ursula describes the sun, moon and stars as rather mysterious and beautiful and the music reflects this perspective. Riches indeed!

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Vaughan Williams and the British Piano Concerto

by Luke Bromley

Vaughan Williams' *Piano Concerto* is a strange piece. I can remember being puzzled on my first hearing of the work, unable to take in the waywardness and apparent disunity of the musical material. Yet, like many listeners of previous generations, I later became fascinated by the composer's apparent diversion from "normal" practice, both in a general sense and in the context of his own earlier works. Many published accounts demonstrate some degree of uncertainty about what to "make of" the Concerto. Hubert Foss, for example, writes that

*...the Concerto does not 'come off' as the Fourth Symphony does; not every note is compelling of audition, and, as a result, individual points of idiom tend to become enlarged into wilful oddities.*¹

Wilfrid Mellers takes a more accepting view, neatly accounting for Vaughan Williams' more wilful choices as evidence of his essentially "double" nature.² There certainly seems to be a "split personality" in the work, separating the vehemence and brashness of the outer movements from the serenity of the central *Romanza*.

The subject of the following discussion, however, is not the musical character of the Concerto but its "structural" features and their

relationship to a putative British "tradition" in the piano concerto genre.³ Some of the more idiosyncratic elements are of course unusual in any context: for instance, the brevity of the first movement compared to the other two, the unfamiliar textures in the piano part and the elliptical approach to tonal progression (the piece begins in C major and ends in B major).⁴ Yet, however unfamiliar the language of the Concerto, it clearly did not emerge "out of the blue", but resulted from the conscious choices of the composer. These choices were certainly governed by personal habit or "idiolect", and writers such as Kennedy and Mellers have addressed the relationship of the Concerto to Vaughan Williams' earlier works. Another consideration, however, is the presence of "outside" influences on Vaughan Williams' style during the time of its composition.

It is the question of influence that I intend to discuss here. I not only speculate about specific influences on Vaughan Williams but also consider the impact of his Piano Concerto on similar pieces by later composers. Through addressing these concerns I hope to evaluate the contribution of this single work to the British piano concerto "tradition" in a more generic sense. Without further ado, let me provide a selective list of British piano concertos from Vaughan Williams' early years until after his death:

Composer	Work	Completed	First Performed
C. H. H. Parry	Concerto in F sharp major	1878-9	1880
C. V. Stanford	Concerto No. 1 in G major, op. 59	1894	1895
Frederick Delius	Concerto in C minor	1897-1909	1907
William Hurlstone	Concerto in D major	1896	1896
C. V. Stanford	Concerto No. 2 in C minor, op. 126	1911	1915
Herbert Howells	Concerto No. 1 in C minor	?	1912
York Bowen	Concertos Nos. 1-4	?	
Cyril Scott	Concerto No. 1 in C	1914	1915
Arnold Bax	Symphonic Variations	1919	1920
Arthur Somervell	Concerto "The Highland"	1921	
Constant Lambert	Concerto	1924	
Herbert Howells	Concerto No. 2 in C major	1924	1925
Gordon Jacob	Concerto for Piano and Strings	1927	
Gerald Finzi	Grand Fantasia and Toccata	1928	
Josef Holbrooke	Concerto No. 2 "L'orient"	1928	
Kaikhosru Sorabji	Concerto No. 5	1928	
Arnold Bax	Winter Legends	1929	1932
John Foulds	Dynamic Triptych op. 88	1929	
Erik Chisholm	Concerto No. 1 "Piobaireachd"	1930	
John Ireland	Concerto in E flat major	1930	1930
William Alwyn	Concerto No. 1	1930	1931
R. Vaughan Williams	Concerto in C	1931 / 1947	1933 / (1946)
Frank Bridge	Phantasm	1931	
Richard Hall	Concerto op. 19	1931	
Constant Lambert	Concerto for Piano and 9 Insts.	1931	
Christian Darnton	Concerto	1933	1935
Edward Elgar	Concerto op. 90	incomplete	

Composer	Work	Completed	First Performed
Alec Rowley	Concerto No. 1 in D major, op. 49	?	1938
Benjamin Britten	Concerto in D major, op. 13	1938/ 1945	1938/ 1946
Arthur Bliss	Concerto	1938	1939
Alan Rawsthorne	Concerto No. 1	1939	1939
Richard Addinsell	Warsaw Concerto	1941	
Eugene Goossens	Phantasy Concerto	1942	
Richard Arnell	Concerto	1946	
Lennox Berkeley	Concerto in B flat	1947	
Thomas Pitfield	Concerto No. 1	1947	
Christian Darnton	Concertino in C major	1948	1949
William Wordsworth	Concerto op. 28	1948	
Howard Ferguson	Concerto op. 12	1951	1951
Alan Rawsthorne	Concerto No. 2	1951	1951
George Dyson	Concerto Leggiero	1953	
Michael Tippett	Concerto	1955	1956
Edmund Rubbra	Concerto in G, op. 55	1956	1956
William Alwyn	Concerto No. 2	1960	
Robert Simpson	Concerto	1967	1967

The basic material of the Vaughan Williams Piano Concerto was composed between 1926 and 1930, though some readers may be familiar with the two-piano arrangement completed in 1947.^{vi} From the information I have presented here, it seems that although there was an incipient national “tradition” of piano concerto writing in place by 1926, an extraordinary flowering of the genre took place during the late 1920s and 1930s – extraordinary at least from a modern perspective, given that we hear so few performances of any of these pieces.^{vii} Almost all of the important composers of the time – Parry, Elgar, Delius, Howells, Finzi, Britten, Rubbra, Tippett and Simpson as well as Vaughan Williams – wrote at least part of a concerto. Few such works, however, have been considered wholly “characteristic” of their composers, and none has been particularly successful compared to European concertos of the same period. It is to lesser-known figures such as Ireland, Bridge and Bowen that one must look in order to find true British “concerto composers” whose works “fit” stylistically into their overall output.



Three main stylistic “strands” run through the British concerto canon represented in this table. Before 1926, the majority of works were Romantic in language, closely following the nineteenth-century patterns of form and texture familiar from the concertos of Liszt, Saint-Saëns, Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov. Romantic influences are identifiable through arpeggiated piano writing, soloistic virtuosity, and most of all through a dialogical “to-and-fro” between piano and orchestra. Romantic

movements tend to rise smoothly to *tutti* climaxes, though the dramatisation of the soloist/orchestra relationship often makes for sudden dynamic changes outside these climactic passages. A preference for minor over major keys may be another characteristic, inherited particularly from Chopin, Rachmaninov and other composers of East-European background such as Paderewski and Dvorák.

Different aspects of Romanticism influenced different groups of British composers: “Brahmins” Parry and Stanford (and, later, Bliss) looked largely to the “classical” German traditions for inspiration, whereas Delius seems to have chosen a Lisztian basis for his single-movement concerto, bringing it closer in style to those of Holbrooke and Bowen.^{viii} By the 1920s, however, these distinctions had faded somewhat, and it is possible to talk simply of a general Romantic influence. Vaughan Williams largely eschewed nineteenth-century norms in laying out the Concerto, both in terms of form (the first-movement *Toccata* and fugal third movement being obviously uncharacteristic of Romantic practice) and piano texture. As Michael Kennedy comments:

Like Bartók and Hindemith at the same period, he treated the pianoforte...percussively. It is employed in its eighteenth and twentieth-century roles, but not in its discursive, arpeggio-bound nineteenth-century part.^{ix}

Yet there are moments in the work when this percussiveness is tempered by Romantic “warmth”: a particularly clear instance is the climax of the initial *Toccata*, in which a succession of chromatically-moving minor keys marks the passage out from earlier modally-inflected material.^x This climax occurs at the normal point in the movement, about two thirds of the way through, and is reinforced by changes to the texture (a sense of continuity is suddenly achieved) orchestral timbre (highlighting horns and clarinets), and in the layout of the piano part – parallel octaves appear for the first time, and the material becomes melodic.

Yet this earnestly Romantic climax is surrounded by more fragmented, “modernistic” writing, which to some extent undercuts its impact. The same could be said for the rather sentimental waltz which appears as part of the third movement, or indeed the epic, almost Lisztian, fugue preceding the waltz.^{xi} It is as though these examples of Romanticism are marked out as anachronisms by “inverted commas” – this ambiguity between past and present being a hallmark of the neoclassical aesthetic of the early twentieth century.^{xii}

More narrowly defined, of course, neoclassicism exists as a partial return to the gestures and techniques of the eighteenth century in particular. The “back-to-Bach” movement is a feature of Continental music particularly between the wars, and came to Britain during the same period. Holst’s *A Fugal Concerto* (1923) is an early instance of this influence; Vaughan Williams’ decision to include a named fugue within the Concerto (the *Fuga Chromatica* of the third movement) is evidence of a similarly conscious appropriation of Continental fashions. Likewise, the *Toccata* hints at Baroque models, filtered through European contemporaries such as Debussy, Stravinsky and Casella. Other British composers incorporated Baroque genres into works for piano and orchestra: Finzi’s *Grand Fantasia and Toccata* is an obvious example, and the four original movements of Britten’s 1938 concerto were entitled *Toccata*, *Waltz*, *Recitative and Aria* and *March*, mirroring Vaughan Williams’ titles in their juxtaposition of “serious” and “classical” eighteenth century forms with the “light music” traditions of more recent times (though Vaughan Williams disguises his waltz with the archaic title *Alla Tedesca* – “German Dance”).

Vaughan Williams uses stylistic features to suggest a neoclassical impulse too; the “percussive” sonorities mentioned by Kennedy are a feature of twentieth-century piano music in general, but in this case might be argued to mimic the sound of the harpsichord; indeed, the clanging counterpoint throughout the *Toccata* resembles the eighteenth-century *continuo* writing underpinning works like the *Brandenburg Concertos*. Driving rhythms and counterpoint also provide potential for subversive or ironic treatment in line with the “neo-” prefix: the mechanistic repetitions of the opening 7/8 figure represent a possible technique of disruption, while the chaotic polyrhythms at the end of the fugue^{xiii} constitute another. The first of these effects is used by Britten and Rawsthorne, and made the basis of both of William Alwyn’s lively concertos, while peculiar types of complex counterpoint were cultivated also by *avant-gardistes* such as Sorabji and Darnton.^{xiv}

“Neo-” elements are possible also in the sphere of tonality; the normal pattern of triadic harmony and fifth-based “horizontal” progressions is disturbed by Vaughan Williams in his mixing of key-centres a third apart with harmonies based on equal intervals (the whole-tone scale, the diminished seventh and superimposed fourths and fifths). Two harmonic patterns are particularly noteworthy as recurrent features of piano concertos. The first of these consists of notes a third apart built up into extended “towers” of triads: this technique is used by Vaughan Williams in the final cadenza of the third movement. At points in the *Toccata* a different idea is found: a “bitonal” arrangement, with crashing triads moving in dissonant counterpoint with the bass.

Both of these latter harmonic patterns are suited to the piano, fitting easily under the fingers of a pianist (or improvising composer!) groomed in eighteenth - or nineteenth-century repertoire. Yet the full range of harmonic “disruptions” listed above can be found in many concertos by British composers - Ireland, Alwyn and Simpson, among others, use the versatility of the piano/orchestra combination as a vehicle for experimentation with different tonal patterns of these types. Particularly notable is Herbert Howells’ Second Concerto, which caused some controversy at its sole performance in 1925 on account of its perceived “modernism”; this piece seems to take its cue from Stravinsky’s *Petrouchka* and includes many Stravinskian harmonic fingerprints. Vaughan Williams was present at the premiere of the Howells, and this occasion may well have been the inspiration for his own work: the opening themes of both pieces share a tonal basis in a chain of seconds and fourths, imparting to both a glitteringly aggressive quality (Howells’ first movement is marked “Hard and Bright”).^{xv}

The third stylistic “strand” running through British piano concertos is the familiar pastoral language, marked out by slow-moving counterpoint, simple tonal arrangements (often modal or pentatonic) and plain textures. The preference of English composers for string sonorities as an indicator of a pastoral idiom has led to a dearth of truly pastoral piano concertos, though Howard Ferguson’s nostalgic postwar work for piano and strings perhaps counts as an example; some of the short pieces for this

combination on the recent compilation CD *Peacock Pie* (Hyperion CDA67316) (particularly Cyril Rootham’s *Miniature Suite*) suggest a similarly holistic pastoral approach.

Otherwise, the pastoral exists mainly as a central “oasis” in otherwise lively works. Howells, Ireland and Tippett, for example, use their central movements as a retreat from the surrounding complexity and tautness of argument.^{xvi} Similarly Vaughan Williams uses the pastoral style only in a fleeting episode in the second-movement *Romanza* and again at the end of the Finale (though in 1947 the status of these pastoral insertions was changed by the replacement of the original aggressive coda with one in the pastoral spirit). Like the Romantic climax to the *Toccata*, then, the pastoral episodes are treated as though in “inverted commas”, as a musical analogue to the literary invocation of memory by Proust or Matthew Arnold.^{xvii} Pastoral music, with its quiet archaism, lends itself to such interpretations – of a fragile idyll, or of a vision, glimpsed but soon lost.

“Style”, in this case, can refer to more than a set of musical features: as many contemporary musicologists never tire of pointing out, composition involves not only a technical “how” but an underlying “what” – a whole system of aesthetic and ideological values.^{xviii} Thus, it is possible to see the pastoral style of the 1930s as a representation of the healthy outdoor life, respect for rural “traditions”, a non-militant Englishness and perhaps nostalgia for halcyon pre-war days. Likewise, neoclassicism might seem to speak of urban sophistication, internationalism and a revived rationalism, in addition to a certain flippancy of tone. Romantic practice, during the 1920s and 30s, perhaps represents a conservative attitude, even a hankering after Elgar and imperial pomp.

Just how far one might journey with such politically-loaded descriptions is demonstrated through recent accounts of both English and European music during the period Vaughan Williams was writing.^{xix} Yet it is possible, and perhaps often more realistic, to “stop at” a purely aesthetic account. The strange mixture of styles used by Vaughan Williams may thus be rationalised as a mixture of ideas and influences drawn from different sources. Different “levels” of borrowing are also possible: although the major basis of the Piano Concerto seems to be neoclassical, influenced by the concertos of European contemporaries through the particular medium of Howells, it seems likely that these models were themselves enclosed in “inverted commas” – appropriated as a means to rival the younger generation of British “internationalist” composers, rather than out of a simple admiration for the style. Whereas the Romantic and particularly the pastoral interludes seem comparatively “contained”, disrupted by the surrounding material, I suspect that it is in these relatively conservative languages that Vaughan Williams’ preference lay, even while composing the Concerto.

Whereas works from around the turn of the century now seem to rely on the single language of Romanticism, those from the 1920s and 30s in particular display a range of influences; in this sense, Vaughan Williams’ is typical. Indeed, perhaps the single continuous thread running through the British “tradition” of piano concerto writing is a dependence on stylistic borrowing from the Continent. In other words, maybe the concerto genre in Britain existed as a “tradition” only in the ironic sense that there *wasn’t* a real national tradition. This marks it out as distinct from the symphony, song, oratorio or chamber music, which all gained common features, or spawned sub-genres, in an exclusively British context.^{xx}

Yet it is still possible to see a possible “line of influence” passing through the piano concertos of generations of British composers. It seems at least possible, if not extremely likely, that Vaughan Williams’ approach to the genre influenced later composers - if not Ireland and Bliss then at least Alwyn, Rubbra, Rawsthorne and perhaps Simpson. Despite Britten’s scornful description of the “amateurishness and clumsiness of the Williams” (on hearing the Fourth Symphony in 1936), he too seems to have been unable to escape the chain of influence initiated by the concertos of Howells and Vaughan Williams over a decade earlier.^{xxi} So,

though Vaughan Williams' Piano Concerto is a strange piece, it is also a significant piece, at least on a national scale. It shows its composer at the forefront of English music – quick to follow the younger generation in adopting a neoclassical idiom, and one of the earliest British composers to apply a contemporary idiom to this particular genre.

Notes

- i Foss: *Ralph Vaughan Williams* (London: George G. Harrap, 1950), p. 142.
- ii Mellers: *Vaughan Williams and the Vision of Albion* (n.p.: Albion Music, 1997), p. 238ff.
- iii I have recently completed an MPhil research paper on the subject of expression and “meaning” in the Concerto; this is entitled *Disruption and Nostalgia in Vaughan Williams's Piano Concerto* and is available through the Pendlebury Library, Cambridge University.
- iv The B major ending appears in the final version of the Concerto, which was completed in 1947 and published in 1972. For an account of earlier versions, see Duncan Hinnells: “Vaughan Williams's Piano Concerto: The First Seventy Years”, in Lewis Foreman, ed., *Ralph Vaughan Williams in Perspective* (n.p.: Albion, 1997), p. 118-163.
- v I regret not to have been able to find first-performance dates for each work, owing to time constraints and the lack – as far as I am aware – of any collected source of such data.
- vi See Hinnells: *Piano Concerto* for an account of this arrangement.
- vii Many have been recorded, however: many of the earlier works are covered by Hyperion's *Romantic Piano Concerto* series, while the Chandos catalogue contains a large number of the remainder. A trickle of new Naxos recordings is beginning to appear under the aegis of Peter Donohoe's British Piano Concerto Foundation.
- viii This division in allegiance reflects in part the rivalry between the two London music colleges: the College was known for its adherence to the “classic” repertoire, whereas many of the Academy lecturers were more receptive to Liszt and Wagner. See Meirion Hughes and Robert Stradling: *The English Musical Renaissance, 1840-1940: Constructing a National Music*. 2nd edition. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001) or Colin Scott-Sutherland: *Arnold Bax* (London: Dent, 1973).
- ix Kennedy: *The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 262.
- x Section no. 9 in the score.
- xi The first edition, of 1936, treats the fugue and finale as two separate movements. I refer to the three-movement format of the 1972 orchestral score, which follows Vaughan Williams's draft (Add. 50385 in the British Library).

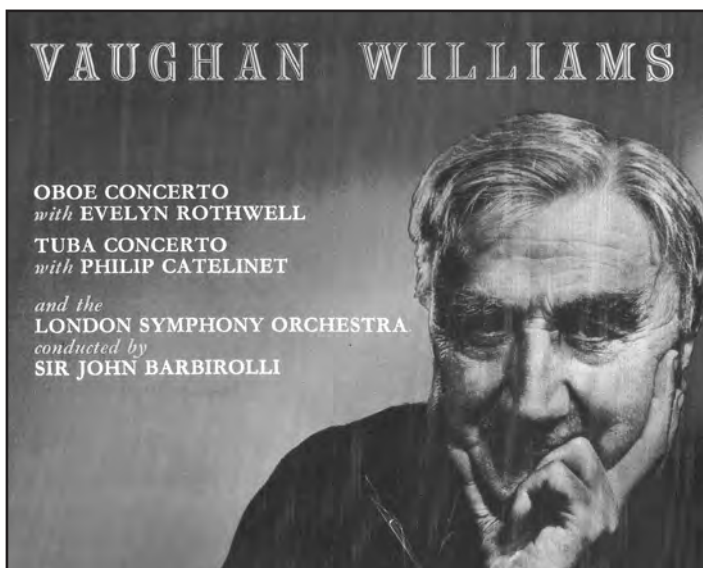
- xii The idea of musical “quotation marks” is nowadays often invoked, an exemplary usage being James Hepokoski: *Sibelius: Symphony No. 5* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). A similar concept is applied to neoclassical repertoire in Joseph N. Straus: *Remaking the Past: Musical Modernism and the Influence of the Tonal Tradition* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990).
- xiii From no. 36 onwards.
- xiv Vaughan Williams claimed the esoteric Italian pianist-composer Busoni as an influence on the Concerto, hence providing a link to Busoni's British followers Sorabji, Erik Chisholm and Bernard van Dieren.
- xv Vaughan Williams led support for Howells, according to one account. Paul Spicer: *Herbert Howells* (Bridgend: Seren, 1998), 80. When Vaughan Williams's own concerto emerged, this admiration became mutual; see Lewis Foreman: *Bax: A Composer and His Times* (Aldershot: Scolar, 1983), p. 249.
- xvi The term “pastoral oasis” has a long literary pedigree, originating with critic Renato Poggioli in *The Oaten Flute: Essays on Pastoral Poetry and the Pastoral Ideal* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975).
- xvii These points are expanded in my essay *Disruption and Nostalgia*.
- xviii This formulation is found in Leonard B. Meyer's book *Style and Music: Theory, History, and Ideology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), p. 7.
- xix For example, see Hughes and Stradling: *The English Musical Renaissance* or Richard Taruskin's article “Back to Whom? Neoclassicism as Ideology”. *19th Century Music* XVI/3, 286-302.
- xx The status of concertos for other instruments is an interesting point – English violin, viola or ‘cello concertos have been more successful than those for piano, whereas pieces for organ and orchestra are very rare.
- xxi Arnold Whittall: “Britten's Version of Pastoral”. In Chris Banks, Arthur Searle and Malcolm Turner (eds.): *Sundry sorts of Music Books: Essays on The British Library Collections* (London: The British Library, 1993), p.365

Luke Bromley has just completed an MPhil dissertation on Vaughan Williams at Cambridge University, following undergraduate study at York. During the coming year, he hopes to begin a career in arts administration while continuing to research and write about music. A long-term ambition is to write a book on the Scottish composer J. B. McEwen. He is happy to receive readers' responses to this article on lukebromley@gmail.com

The TUBA CONCERTO: a player's view



Richard Sandland



It must have been something of a shock.....

“A Tuba Concerto? What, really?

WHY?”

I played tuba in the Fine Arts Brass Ensemble for seventeen years, and in that time occasionally played with major orchestras - Philharmonia, RPO, BBC Scottish Symphony - and performed Vaughan Williams' Tuba Concerto with amateur (but very good) orchestras on many occasions. Now that I'm not playing any more (I now work for the Royal Shakespeare Company music department in Stratford), I am still slightly bemused by the concerto. As a tuba player, you rarely get asked to play anything else - although there *are* other concertos, by Gregson, Jonathan Harvey, Harrison Birtwistle, and other concertante pieces not actually called *concertos*. But in the UK, at least, you are most likely to be asked to play the Vaughan Williams.

Because of this, the piece has become something of a protectorate; “The Sacred Cow”, as John Fletcher once called it. And because of this protection that tuba players offer the piece it is often difficult to regard it with an objective eye or ear. But is it a decent piece in its own right, or just something of an oddity? Search me.

From the player's point of view, it is moderately difficult to play. It's an awkward piece, particularly in the third movement. It was written for the F tuba, in 1954 the standard UK orchestral tuba of choice, whilst these days, many players, due in part to the brass band tradition, but also due to the excellence of the 1970s and 1980s Boosey and Hawkes Sovereign tuba, play it on the E flat. Without getting too technical, this means that the intervals don't quite lie easily on the tuba on which it is most often played. With particular reference to the angular motif of the third movement (F - B natural - G - C), the piece as a whole lies just a bit uneasily.

The first movement was once referred to by John Fletcher as “Falstaff and the Fairies”. It is true that you have the spectacle of this large object dancing with the woodwind; and the identification with good Sir John gives a clue to the feel of the movement - bumbling, good natured, surprising, inventive, and, in the stratospheric cadenza, positively criminal. In the 1980s OUP published an amended edition of the tuba and piano reduction in which there were a three turns around a top A flat - the same note that Ravel wrote as the top end of the tune in *Bydlo*, but he wrote it for the small French tuba in C. In my experience, the first time is OK, the second can be fun, but the third (which is a pause, while the first two are merely fleeting visits) causes concern. He goes this high in *Job*, so he did have “form.” I always felt that the character of this movement is destroyed by playing it too fast – the metronome mark is crotchet = 96 and the movement falls if it is even a notch faster. It should *bumble* along. It seems quite idiomatic for the instrument too – some lovely melodic material in the upper middle register where the tuba sings best. They say that Vaughan Williams was visibly laughing at the first rehearsal, which I’m sure is the mood of the movement – it is by no means a Spike Milligan of a piece, but it is an Oliver Hardy, especially those moments when Babe – usually soaked, or covered in flour, or sitting on a cactus – looks directly at the camera. It feels like something has gone wrong somewhere, but...it doesn’t matter.

I’ve always been suspicious of the second movement, which is described in the piano reduction as “also playable” by cello or bassoon. Julian Lloyd Webber has recorded it. What does this actually mean? Is it just a sales pitch by OUP or does it indicate some original change of use by Vaughan Williams – he must have known that such a gem of a tune just wouldn’t get many outings? There is some revolutionary *arioso* writing here, some florid pastoral weavings that put you in mind of a cello. Perhaps it is only revolutionary for the tuba because it was originally intended for something else – revolutionary by default, if you like. I once had a fearsomely intelligent student called Jeff, at Birmingham Conservatoire, who insisted that one shouldn’t wallow in the movement, that it should be played pretty strictly in tempo and that the notes would speak for themselves – whereas I always thought that this was the tuba player’s greatest chance for *rubato* in the whole repertoire. I told Jeff that if he played it “straight” at an end of year exam, I’d fail him. He did. I did.

This movement above all others shows the greatest quality of the tone of the tuba – it is in the upper middle register again, where the instrument has a sort of noble melancholy that it does very well indeed, and the material is such that were one misguided enough to play it on a cello the character of the instrument would intrude on the character of the music. With the tuba, you’re not pre-loaded with the Elgar Cello Concerto, after all. So go away, scrapers, play your own piece and leave this one to us, who know how it goes...

After the cool blue *Romanza*, the finale is a red riot. Three minutes of flying around the instrument, which must have been something of an eye-opener for the original soloist, Philip Catelinet. It goes high and low, fast and slow – but I always wondered about the quality of the music that made Vaughan Williams mark it “*Alla Tedesca*.” It has never sounded particularly German to me. But it does contain the most unashamedly virtuosic writing in the whole piece, and is a phenomenal technical challenge, especially when played a bit *quicker* than the metronome mark. I never saw much point in hanging around at this point – you’d done the bumble, done the lyric, now lets dash to the end. And, in truth, this overall structure of the concerto works fantastically well. The movements complement each other – which is how it’s supposed to be, I think?

From a distance, the concerto scrubs up well as considerably more than the sum of its parts. And as a vehicle for the instrument, we can only be thankful that it was written at all. But I always have that lingering feeling – I can much more easily appreciate the oboe concerto or the piano concerto than the tuba concerto, because I’m not then listening for element of technique. The tuba itself and my association with it gets in the way of my objectivity. I still can’t really find a way to judge the piece. What do others think?

“ACCURSED WHO BRINGS TO LIGHT OF DAY THE WRITINGS I HAVE CAST AWAY!”

Vaughan Williams’s unfinished Cello Concerto¹

Caireann Shannon

There appear to be very few publications in the entire Vaughan Williams literature that make any reference to the unfinished Cello Concerto. Michael Kennedy remarks on the Concerto in *The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, and its accompanying volume *A Catalogue of the Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams*.² In the former, he comments on a concert which took place on the 19th of November 1956, in the composer’s 84th year, remarking that: “For a concert to mark Casals’s eightieth birthday he would have liked to be able to offer the Cello Concerto with which he was continually ‘tinkering’, but instead he arranged Bach’s *Schmücke dich, O liebe Seele* for cello and strings”.³ In a section at the back of the book entitled ‘Select List of Works’, the Cello Concerto is mentioned under the heading of ‘Uncompleted’. Here Kennedy simply states “Cello Concerto. Sketches 1942-43. Three movements: Rhapsody, Lento, Finale. Intended for Casals”.⁴ In his *Catalogue of the Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams* we are given some more valuable information. Kennedy comments: “Sketches and fair copies of this work seem to date first from 1942-43. It was intended for Casals, and the composer was ‘looking at it again’ from 1953 onwards”.⁵

He continues to outline the three movements, disclosing that “sketches of a scherzo were abandoned”, and giving musical examples of the opening themes of all three movements.

Neil Butterworth’s *Ralph Vaughan Williams: A Guide to Research*, makes two brief references to the work.⁶ Butterworth simply gives the dates for the sketches, outlines the three movements, mentions that the work was intended for Casals, and also gives the British Library catalogue number for the score. It is not entirely clear how the dates for the initial sketching of the work, or indeed Kennedy’s claim that the composer was revisiting the work from 1953 onwards, have been established, as there are no dates written on any of the sketches or fair copies. There is an autograph page complete with RVW’s address in his hand, and on this same page is a note written by Ursula Vaughan Williams, which states “Please do not perform, as this was unfinished and could not give the composer’s intentions correctly. Ursula Vaughan Williams, 7-11-60”. It would be reasonable to surmise that Kennedy’s information comes either directly from the composer himself, or from Ursula Vaughan Williams. As Kennedy is widely regarded as the authority on Vaughan Williams, the information given in subsequent publications can most likely be traced back to him.

As regards familiarity with the Vaughan Williams manuscripts, the expert is unquestionably Roy Douglas, author of *Working with Vaughan Williams*.⁷ From 1941 until the composer’s death in 1958, Douglas worked closely with Vaughan Williams in the preparation for performance and publication of the manuscripts of many of his major works, including the last four symphonies and his opera *The Pilgrims Progress*.

Douglas’s book is invaluable for anyone struggling to deal with a Vaughan Williams manuscript. The composer is widely credited with having had the impediment of an almost completely illegible hand. Unfortunately, this applies not only to his handwriting, but also to his notation. This made, and continues to make, the pursuits of editors, copyists and musicologists acutely difficult. In 1941, when the score for the film *The 49th Parallel* was completed, the copyists of the orchestral parts had extreme difficulty in reading the music.⁸ The first three-hour recording session was taken up almost entirely with the correcting of errors in the parts. Douglas explains that:

This annoyed the film company because it wasted their money... The musical director sent a strong complaint to the copying bureau, with the result that when, in the following year, R.V.W. wrote the music for another film, *Coastal Command*, the offended copyists refused to have

anything to do with the scores. This created a problem for the film company, and eventually it was suggested that perhaps somebody could be found who would 'make the scores more readable'. In June 1942 this task was allotted to me".

SO OF THE WEEK

LOIS PHILLIPS

a pianist, let us say, who delicate finger work, warm subtleties of rhythm, but with strenuous music, then to keep within the scope of but it is unwise, however to essay Chopin's B flat whose first two movements muscularity.

more unwise to play it, as Miss Phillips did at Wigmore Hall on Wednesday of the programme, when the fingers have already done their work. Miss Phillips was evidently not at all unwise to play the sonata because she has Chopin's style, as she showed expressively turned readings of it. In the first half of the programme she revealed a valuable sense of a pleasant touch in Brahms's No. 9, a felicitous sense of style in active singing legato, and concentrated *gerfirtigkeit*. She played an Chopin own, an agreeable, relaxed piece that accorded with her playing. The more outspoken waltzes (which are in a Chopin's style) should have been marked gifts to admiration.

three piano recitals which the church of St. Martin's restoration fund, three contemporary personable of these which was which the music which we have by another actively Bach- of Stravinsky, than Mr. s "The Sea" nist, and its e suited Mr.

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A TUBA CONCERTO

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS'S NEW WORK

The London Symphony Orchestra kept its big jubilee surprise till the last of its four festive concerts at the Festival Hall last night—a new concerto for tuba and orchestra specially written for the jubilee by Vaughan Williams. The composer, who was present in person, received a heart-warming ovation.

Never before in its long, loud, but essentially back-of-the-platform life has the tuba been so honoured. For it was not called into the limelight to be made into an absurd or pathetic figure of fun. Dr. Vaughan Williams treated it with the utmost respect, admitting a touch of good humour, it is true, into the robust, baccaneering thematic substance of the first movement, but in the central Romance writing one of his lovely, flowing, diatonic tunes, and following it up with a forthright, salubrious kind of finale. Cadenzas added to the opportunities for tuba-esque virtuosity in the first and last movements, while in the slow movement the instrument was given the chance to display its sustaining powers.

On the showing of Mr. Philip Catelinet's performance last night the music is by no means child's play—one or two notes evaded even his practised finger and lip. The tone he showed his instrument capable of producing was sufficiently rich and warm to fire any composer's imagination, but he did not suggest that the tuba can do much in the way of varied phrasing or dynamic nuance to repay promotion to solo status.

The other concerto conducted by Sir John Barbirolli in the first half of the programme was Elgar's for violin—played without cuts—by way of a jubilee tribute to this leisurely (dare one write "long-winded" with reference to this work?) composer. The soloist was Mr. Campoli, who maintained a glorious stream of silky tone for nearly 50 minutes, and discovered much, even if not quite all, of the concerto's autumnal eloquence.

After the interval the orchestra made an apt gesture to the Master of the Queen's Music, who appeared in person to conduct his rarely played "Colour" symphony. As the programme-note predicted, the "blue" quasi slow movement impressed both its colour and heraldic associations on the memory the most vividly of the eclectic four. The orchestra responded warmly to Sir Arthur Bliss's trenchant direction, though in the difficult "red" scherzo there were a few stragglers from time to time.

QUESTORS THEATRE, EALING

"A BOLD STROKE FOR A WIFE"

from The Times, June 14th 1954

Douglas's book is full of exceedingly comforting phrases, such as "I was able to make out the signature as R. V-squiggle W-squiggle", and "a fair copy was really an unfair copy".¹⁰ He also makes a number of references to the unfinished Cello Concerto, but before I come to these I would like to take a brief look at the existing sketches and copies of the work.

The Cello Concerto is unfinished in two respects. Sadly, it is not orchestrated, and only exists in a cello and piano reduction. Furthermore, the only movement that is actually fully complete in a fair copy is the first. This completed fair copy only accounts for 19 pages out of a bundle of 119 A3 manuscript pages that comprise the surviving sketches. The other 100 pages contain the unfinished fair copies of the second and third movements, the early sketches of all three movements, the abandoned scherzo sketches mentioned by Kennedy, and a small number of miscellaneous pages that do not appear to relate to the Cello Concerto.

The Rhapsody, as the only completed movement, is obviously of greatest musicological interest. The second movement fair copy, however, has 74 bars; as the slow movement of the Violin Concerto only contains 56 bars, and that of the Bass Tuba Concerto contains 79, it may appear on closer inspection and analysis that the movement was almost complete. The level of incompleteness, however, is obviously related to the form that the completed movement might have taken, and it would be necessary to predict the form to its completion from the evidence, after further investigation of that movement itself, and the slow movements of the other concerti. Examination of the Rhapsody provides interesting comparison with Vaughan Williams other concerti.

The Violin and Oboe Concertos are very much miniaturist works, written only for the soloists and string orchestra. While the Bass Tuba Concerto is scored for a full orchestra, it is a relatively brief and conventionally tonal work, and contains many of the characteristic moments of folksong modality that are such a feature of the Violin and Oboe Concertos. The Piano Concerto, however, presents something of a conundrum. It is not in the miniaturist vein of the other works, it is scored for full orchestra, and more importantly it has a much heavier texture and a much more chromatic tonality than the other concerti. In many respects, it clearly stands apart from the other completed concerti.

The reason I refer to the Piano Concerto, is that it appears that had it been completed and orchestrated, the Cello Concerto would have had much more in common with the Piano Concerto than with the other concerti. It is indisputable that the Cello Concerto would not merely have been scored for string orchestra, as there are a number of points in the piano reduction where there are indications of fuller orchestration. Although it is difficult at times to make out Vaughan Williams's handwriting, there are points where he clearly indicates that he intended at least the use of woodwind and strings in the orchestration.

The main parameter categorising the Cello Concerto with the Piano Concerto is tonality. The concerti for violin, oboe and tuba are very much neo-classical works in terms of form and tonality. Additionally, they all contain typical Vaughan Williams moments of folksong modality. The Piano Concerto, however, is of a somewhat different tonal makeup. Its three movements, *Toccata*, *Romanza* and *Fuga chromatica con Finale alla Tedesca*, are much more tonally ambiguous than the other concerti, and although there are some folksong moments, especially in the first and second movements, these are kept to a minimum.

The Cello Concerto, like the Piano Concerto, is a more chromatic work. Although the Rhapsody begins and ends in D minor, the tonality is generally unstable, and the score is highly chromatic in places. There are quite a number of rapid modulations, to C minor, A minor, A flat major, and D flat major. There is an even greater absence of folksong idiom here than in the Piano Concerto. Despite a few moments of modality and dancelike triplet figurations, this appears to be a work much more in the vein of the Piano Concerto (1931), the Fourth Symphony (1934), and *Riders to the Sea* (1936), all of which certainly fall into the category of Vaughan Williams's more chromatic works, and none of which indulge the English folksong to any great extent.

Another affinity between the Piano and Cello Concerti lies in the style of writing for the soloist. Although the solo parts in the other concertos demand experienced and capable musicians, they are not as technically difficult as the Piano and Cello Concertos. The Piano Concerto was written for Harriet Cohen, and the Cello Concerto for Pablo Casals, but the virtuosity of the soloists for whom these works were written cannot adequately explain their technical complexity, as the violin and oboe concertos were written for Jelly d'Aranyi and Leon Goossens respectively, who were also noted virtuosos. The Piano Concerto was, and still is, regarded as so heavily demanding of the pianist, that in 1946, fifteen years after its first performance, it was rearranged by Joseph Cooper in collaboration with Vaughan Williams for two pianos. The solo writing in the Cello Concerto is also laden with technical difficulties, for example, requiring rapid multiple stopping throughout the Rhapsody.

There is one aspect of the Rhapsody that sets the Cello Concerto apart from all the other concerti, and which would appear to relate to the virtuoso calibre of Pablo Casals. All of the concerti contain cadenzas for the soloists. Most of these are very brief and reasonably undemanding, with the exception of the Piano Concerto, which contains a short cadenza linking the first movement to the second, this movement then beginning with twelve unaccompanied bars for the soloist. Similarly, the *Fuga chromatica* concludes with quite a lengthy cadenza, leading into another solo passage to begin the *Finale alla Tedesca*. After an opening chord of D minor in the Rhapsody, however, the Cello immediately embarks on a lengthy unmetred cadenza. The tempo of this would obviously have been at the discretion the soloist, but even taken quite quickly, it is almost two minutes long. This is by far the longest cadenza in any of the concerti, and none of them begin with a cadenza in such a manner. Although this is a relatively new departure for Vaughan Williams, it is certainly not without precedent. Earlier concerti beginning with cadenzas (both accompanied and unaccompanied) include Beethoven's Emperor Concerto, Mendelssohn's two Piano Concertos, Brahms's 2nd Piano Concerto and his Double Concerto, Saint-Saens 2nd Piano Concerto, and most notably Elgar's Cello Concerto, with which Vaughan Williams was certainly very familiar. Interestingly, although his other concerti do not begin with such cadenzas, *The Lark Ascending*, opens after a few introductory orchestral chords, with a cadenza for the soloist, played at first over sustained string chords, and then progressing unaccompanied.

Despite the fact that the chromaticism, lack of reliance on folksong, and difficulty of the solo part set this work apart from the miniaturist compositions that are the concerti for violin, oboe and tuba, there are a number of common characteristics that unite the concerti, especially as regards the opening movements of each. I am currently engaged in a paradigmatic analysis of the Rhapsody, and preliminary investigation suggests that it has a great many structural parallels with the first movements of the other concerti. Not only are these movements similarly constructed in terms of small motivic cells, but they are all loosely based on sonata form. This topic is, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this article.

Finally, I would like to return briefly to Roy Douglas. In *Working with Vaughan Williams*, there is a chapter towards the end of the book entitled Unfinished Works.¹¹ Apart from a very few miscellaneous sketches of minor compositions, Vaughan Williams only left two major unfinished works, the Cello Concerto and an opera, Thomas the Rhymer. Douglas firmly states: "I strongly disapprove of tampering with unfinished works, especially those of Vaughan Williams".¹² Douglas bases this opinion on the assumption that even the fair copies would have gone through further major changes before being performed or published. He says, referring to the piano reduction of the Cello Concerto:

After this, he would have made a rough draft of the full score, probably a second draught of some sections, and at last a fair copy of the complete full score. Each time he wrote out one of these versions he would have made changes; in the note values, the rhythmic patterns, the harmonies, the passage work, and of course the scoring.¹³ Taking this into consideration, Douglas elaborates:

One can only hope that if in the future some well-meaning meddler is tempted to 'orchestrate in the style of the composer' any of the unfinished works of Vaughan Williams, he will pause to consider whether he may possibly be insulting the composer's reputation.¹⁴

Douglas continues by quoting (a little melodramatically) some lines of W. B. Yeats:

Accursed who brings to light of day
The writings I have cast away!
But blessed he who stirs them not
And lets the kind worm take the lot!¹⁵

Ursula Vaughan Williams's note on the autograph score cannot be disputed, there is no doubt that the incomplete status of the Cello Concerto indicates that the composer's intentions cannot be realised. Investigation of this unfinished work has been a fascinating experience, and the compelling conglomeration of elements of style common to all of the concerti, and what are, for Vaughan Williams, new departures in this genre, make it all the more regrettable that it was left unfinished.

Notes

- 1 I would like to acknowledge the generosity of Ursula Vaughan Williams, who kindly agreed to let me obtain a copy of the unfinished and unpublished 'Cello Concerto from the British Library. Permission to this end was arranged by Hugh Cobbe, who has been of enormous assistance, and to whom I am deeply grateful.
- 2 Kennedy, Michael. *The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams, and A Catalogue of the Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1964).
- 3 See Kennedy, Michael. *The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams*. Page 336.
- 4 See Kennedy, Michael. *The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams*. Page 432.
- 5 See Kennedy, Michael. *A Catalogue of the Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams*. P257,258.
- 6 Butterworth, Neil. *Ralph Vaughan Williams: A Guide to Research*. (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1990). References to 'Cello Concerto on pages 30 and 320.
- 7 Douglas, Roy. *Working with Vaughan Williams: the correspondence of Ralph Vaughan Williams and Roy Douglas*. (London: The British Library, 1988)
- 8 See Roy Douglas, page 3.
- 9 See Roy Douglas, page 3.
- 10 See Roy Douglas, page 4.
- 11 See Roy Douglas, Pages 100-101.
- 12 Roy Douglas, page 100.
- 13 Roy Douglas, page 101.
- 14 Roy Douglas, page 100.
- 15 Taken from Roy Douglas, page 100.

The OBOE CONCERTO: First movement themes and motifs

Caireann Shannon

Ralph Vaughan Williams's Oboe Concerto was completed and first performed in 1944. It was written specifically for renowned oboist Leon Goossens, and is scored for string orchestra only. There is little indication to suggest how the Concerto was at first received, and this has led to the assumption that it was met with neither great approval nor disapproval. It was the first major work to be penned after the Fifth Symphony, to which it has been stylistically linked; indeed the finale of the Concerto is based on a discarded scherzo from the Symphony.¹

The work has generated negligible scholarly interest, and the meagre critical commentary it has been afforded is predominantly dismissive. There is, to date, no study on the Concerto in isolation, and it has

received little more than passing mention in general publications on the composer's life and works. Michael Kennedy remarks that it is "not in every sense a very good concerto", and although he commends the writing for the strings, he suggests that only a master of the oboe can make the solo part sound anything other than awkward.² James Day also tempers his criticism with some positive observations, but ultimately discounts the piece, reflecting: "There is rarely any effect of forcefulness, for most of the work is a kind of *mezza-voce* murmur. The orchestra is kept firmly on the leash; for the most part it tends to nod sagely in agreement every time the soloist says anything particularly wise."³

A number of other authors have chosen to ignore the Oboe Concerto completely, while A.E.F Dickinson, in a 1963 general study, is scathing



in his criticism. He claims that the first movement fails to “rise above a certain nimbleness”, dismisses the second as a “plain minuet with a suitably drone-ish musette” and launches a caustic attack on the finale. He launches finally into descriptions of the ‘clear superiority’ of the oboe concertos by Strauss and Rawsthorne, leaving one wondering why he ever chose to write about the piece at all.⁴

In fact, none of these readings draw on any kind of substantial analysis, which is unfortunate, as detailed scrutiny of even the first movement’s formal and thematic structures unearths considerable technical sophistication. Day’s assertion that it is “a deliberately small work, more interesting for its craftsmanship than for its meaning, message or inspiration.”⁵ can be turned against itself: even a cursory examination of that craftsmanship reveals hidden motivic depths and complexities.

The only author who appears to have recognised this, and thereby the only author to tender any manner of analysis, is Frank Howes in his 1954 book *The Music of Ralph Vaughan Williams*.⁶ Howes comments briefly on the tonality of the second and third movements, but bestows more attention on the first, which he analyses thematically. Although, in fairness, a detailed analysis is beyond the scope of his book, (and those of the authors mentioned above), he nevertheless neglects to mention a number of vital motives, mislabels prominent themes, and fails to recognise restatements of others. This is highly regrettable in what is, to date, the only published thematic investigation of the Concerto.

The opening movement, *Rondo Pastorale*, begins in A minor, and while Howes correctly identifies the rondo theme:



he disregards the opening string motif:



which recurs a number of times throughout the movement and forms the basis for the soloist’s closing bars:



Howes labels the rondo theme (a), and in total lists only six themes, all of which he labels using lower case letters:



He groups these into what he terms two major paragraphs, labelled in upper case (A) and (B). His overall scheme for the rondo is therefore ABABA, where paragraph A contains up to four thematic ideas, and B contains only two. Paragraph A contains the first four themes, (a, b, c, d), and B contains the fifth and sixth (e & f). By Howes’s reasoning, therefore, the first statement of paragraph A contains all four thematic ideas, but the second statement of the paragraph contains only theme (a), and the final statement of the paragraph contains only (a) and (c). Thus, Howes’s overall form of the movement is expressed as follows:

A (a + b + c + d) B (e + f) A (a) B (e + f) A (a + c)

Howes’s identification of the predominant themes is correct to a point, but he has gone astray in his description of the overall form of the movement before he even reaches bar twenty. His reading of paragraph A would have us believe that theme (a) progresses directly to theme (b) (which it does), but that this in turn moves directly to theme (c), and then to (d). This is not the case, as there is a restatement of theme (a) by *tutti* strings at bar 13, following theme (b), which is an accompanied cadenza. Theme (c) is introduced at bar 20, which leads, after some contrapuntal treatment in the accompanying strings, to theme (d), underneath which the opening orchestral motif reappears. Before we reach paragraph B, however, there is a return of the rondo theme, theme (a), stated by *tutti* strings, which Howes does not acknowledge. Thus far, in his formal reading of the movement, Howes has omitted the opening orchestral motif and two recurrences of the rondo theme, theme (a).

We move on to paragraph B, where the key signature changes to A major for theme (e) at bar 39, and this new theme is repeated in C major at bar 46. A motif derived from the tail end of theme (e) forms the basis of an orchestral interlude leading to the new key signature of C minor for theme (f). Howes has not referred to either the repeat of theme (e), or the orchestral interlude. Theme (f) is not simply repeated as was theme (e), but is developed while fragments of the descending motif from the end of theme (e) are heard in a cascading quadruple stretto in the strings. There is a brief return to theme (e) at bar 64, and another return to theme (f) at bar 69, both of which pass seemingly unnoticed by Howes, and lead us to the return of the rondo theme for *tutti* strings.

This is the return of Howes’s paragraph A, lasting for only some six bars, with the violins and violas in counterpoint with the ‘cellos and basses. Bar eighty is where paragraph B supposedly recurs, but this is where Howes has made his most glaring error. There is a change of key signature back to A major, which was indeed the original key for theme (e), but what we have at this point is a recapitulation of theme (c), with the opening orchestral motif in the violins, and a motif from theme (a) in the violas. Exactly how Howes could have mistaken this for theme (e) is not clear, but it is quite possible that he simply spotted the return of the A major key signature and assumed that this signalled the return of theme (e). There is a change of key signature back to A minor at bar 87, and a new theme is introduced, theme (g), marked *tranquillo*:



This theme has some traits in common with theme (a), and contains a new chromatic motif, of which extensive use is made for the remainder of the movement. The new theme, which is not detected by Howes, is repeated before another change of key signature at bar 96 to C minor. This was the key used for theme (f), so once again Howes seems simply to have glanced at the three flats and presumed that there was a restatement of that theme. What occurs, however, is a development of the new *tranquillo* theme, with much use being made of the chromatic motif derived from that theme. Howes, therefore, has mislabelled a return of theme (c) and an almost entirely new theme, as themes (e & f), and

consequently has mistaken the entire section to be a restatement of paragraph B.

The first of three cadenzas begins at bar 104, comprising a development of the chromatic motif extracted from the *tranquillo* theme (g), with the opening orchestral motif reappearing in the strings. This leads directly into the second cadenza at bar 110, which is a restatement of theme (b) in its entirety, again featuring the orchestral motif in the strings. The final cadenza begins at bar 114, involving a development of theme (a) over chords of A minor in the strings. The chord is held for a brief return of the *tranquillo* theme at bar 118, and the oboe, completely unaccompanied for two bars, adopts the minims of the opening string motif before the movement concludes on a chord of A minor. The final section therefore consists of three cadenzas based on themes (g, b & a) respectively, before a brief reappearance of theme (g) and the opening string motif bring the movement to a close. It is unclear exactly how Howes mistook this for a straightforward repeat of themes (a & c).

It is clear that Howes's reading of the form of this movement is blatantly incorrect. Even allowing for the fact that it was not his intention to analyse the concerto at a motivic level, the prominence of the motifs he omits indicate that they deserve some mention.

I would like, therefore, to present what I hope is a more correct formal scheme of the *Rondo Pastorale*. My labelling of the themes follows Howes's exactly, with the addition of theme (g), which is presented above. As the rondo theme recurs so frequently, and as a number of the themes are not repeated, there seems little point in presenting the form in subdivisions of paragraphs. The result is as follows:

	A	B(cad.)	A	C	D	A	E	F	E	F	A	C	G	G(cad.)	B(cad.)	A(cad.)	G
Bar	2	10	13	19	29	33	39	54	64	69	74	80	87	104	110	114	118

Howes's motivation in the subdivision of the themes into paragraphs is understandable, as there are clearly at least four separate sections of music. The opening section, with themes (b, c & d) and the various statements of the rondo theme are quite distinct from the section that follows, concerned only with themes (e & f). The next section is comprised of themes (a & c) and also the introduction and development of the new theme (g). The final section, comprised mainly of the three cadenzas, is also quite distinct. In a vague sense, Howes's overall idea of the movement is correct, but his attention to any kind of detail is lacking in the extreme.

The motivic and contrapuntal complexities of this movement, however, suggest that even a correct formal reading is insufficient. The craftsmanship behind this work can only be revealed by examining the music at the level of the myriad small motivic fragments of which its themes are composed. As I have already mentioned, an investigation of the main themes fails to take account of the opening string motif, which importantly forms the basis for the soloists closing notes. Furthermore, the themes themselves are constantly fragmented and used contrapuntally. Such a detailed reading of the movement is, unfortunately, not possible here, but the example below exemplifies how, in just two bars, theme (f) on the oboe is pitted against a motif derived from the end of theme (e) in dense counterpoint:

Motivic analysis illustrates structural intricacies, such as the above, that are beyond anything hinted at in the literature, not solely in this work, but in all the concerti.

The accusations that have been levelled at this work - that it is 'not in every sense a very good concerto', that 'most of the work is a kind of *mezza-voce* murmur' and that the first movement 'fails to rise above a certain nimbleness' - are surely baseless. Day correctly identified this Concerto as a 'deliberately small work', and therein lies its problem; its negative reception arises from its light orchestral scoring and absence of a weighty sonata movement. These aspects combined have resulted in what is a purposely miniaturist composition being unfairly rejected as light-weight and undeserving of analytical attention. The slight exterior masks a thematic and contrapuntal density that demands serious consideration before the work can be properly assessed.

Additionally, the Oboe Concerto fosters other considerations that are beyond this essay. This is clearly a neo-classical work, as are Vaughan Williams's other Concerti, and assessment of its contribution to his works for instrumental soloist and orchestra, and his body of works as a whole, is imperative. The place it occupies in the historical context of British Music, and indeed in the even wider context of the concerto in the twentieth century, add further dimensions of significance. Whether deliberated alone, or in the framework of broader historical reference, it is unequivocally deserving of more than the meagre attention it has thus far been afforded.

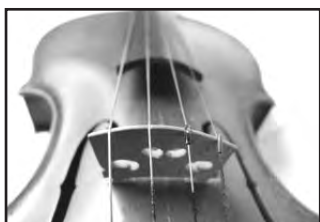
Caireann Shannon currently lives in Dublin with her husband and two young sons. She completed her Bachelor of Music Degree at University College Dublin in 1996, and having taught flute and music theory for a number of years, completed a Research Masters in Ethnomusicology on the subject of Pentecostal Church Music in Britain and Ireland, in 2002. In 2003 she completed an additional Masters in Musicology degree, which included a thesis entitled *The Concerti of Ralph Vaughan Williams: A Re-evaluation*. This resulted in her present occupation, a PhD on the subject of Vaughan Williams's concerti at University College Dublin, where she is also a part-time lecturer. Caireann has been a great admirer of Vaughan Williams's music for some fifteen years, and is the RVW Society Irish Regional Chairperson.

NOTES

- 1 See Michael Kennedy, *The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1964.), pp 285 and 347. See also Wilfrid Mellers, *Vaughan Williams and the Vision of Albion*. (London: Pimlico, 1989), pp. 187-188. See also Frank Howes, *The Music of Ralph Vaughan Williams*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 120.
- 2 See Kennedy, *ibid*, p. 347.
- 3 See James Day, *Vaughan Williams*. (London: J.M Dent & Sons, 1961), p.173.
- 4 See A.E.F Dickinson, *Vaughan Williams*. (London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 1963.), pp. 421-422.
- 5 Day, p. 173.
- 6 Frank Howes, *The Music of Ralph Vaughan Williams*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1954). For a discussion of the Oboe Concerto see pp. 117-120.

Simona Pakenham on . . .

. . . the Violin Concerto



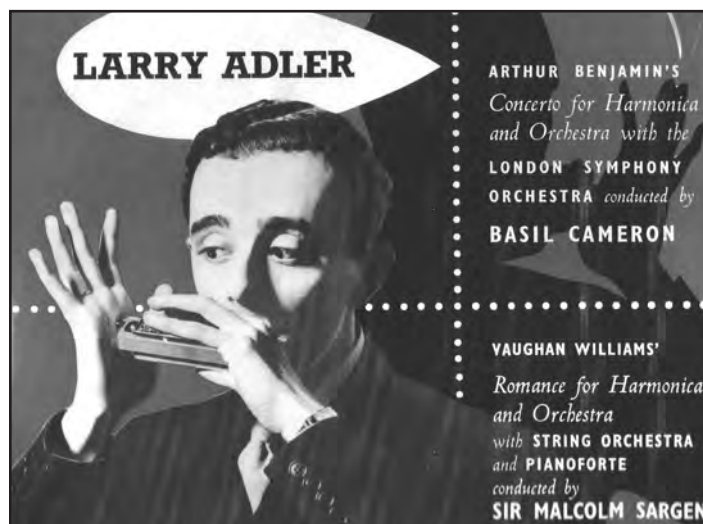
In 1925 Vaughan Williams published two works – *Flos Campi* and the Concerto for Violin and Strings, originally called the *Concerto Accademico*. The title was evidently forbidding. I can find no other explanation for the fact that it is hardly ever played. It seems

miraculous that it contrived to get itself recorded. Vaughan Williams has a habit of trying to withdraw the descriptive titles and quotation with which he instinctively decorates his scores. Invariably, he does this much too late. Who, for instance, if they ever read it, will forget the quotation from *The Pilgrim's Progress* that used to stand above the *Romanza* of the Symphony in D? Our memories are better than he would seem to think, and we are left bewildered sometimes as to his real intentions. Personally I intend to go on calling this concerto "Accademico". I like the name. I grew fond of it under that name. But I admit I am puzzled as to how it got there, and can only ask, with Donald Tovey's analysis – "Why Accademico?" That most worthy of all musical publications, *Grove's Dictionary*, refers to it as "the most un-academic of concertos". If there is anything at all academic in this fresh little work, it is only the efficient fulfilment of its own strict and self-imposed demands. It is a small work, following the pattern of an eighteenth-century concerto, and recalling Bach by its self-sufficiency and the contour of one or two of its tunes; never, though, by its atmosphere, which is out-door and breezy. This is the first work we have encountered yet which is entirely innocent of programmatic suggestions, and it is worth studying, for this fact alone, even if, at a first hearing, it does appear forbidding. Here, if anywhere, Vaughan Williams was writing to please himself alone, and writing with his mind empty of all but musical considerations; his contemplation was for the possibilities of interwoven phrases, not of some outside subject that suggested music to his mind. The score is the neatest and most intricate picture of musical patterns imaginable, beautiful to look at, tidy as a Brandenburg concerto; and this is not always the case with a Vaughan Williams score.

The texture of the music is limpid as a water-colour. The instruments, it is true, are those that play the *Tallis Fantasia*, though differently arranged. It is strange to think that strings alone can produce this clear picture and that dark tapestry. And how differently does Vaughan Williams use his solo violin from most other composers! There is no bravura in this concerto and no show. The concerto as a form has not attracted him very often. In his music the violin preserves a fresh, cool, virginal voice, and the romantic emotion with which most composers endow it he reserves for his viola. He has written nothing to endear himself to the virtuoso violinist.

How to convey the charm of this little concerto? To speak of it truthfully is to confess that it lacks colour, lacks passion and is thin in texture – three large defects to the ears of many a listener. But if I were invited to one of the B.B.C.'s desert islands, accompanied only by a gramophone and eight records, this concerto would be the first music I would choose to pack. I fell in love with it at first hearing and have not found it lose one note of its appeal after an infinite number of repetitions. It is of all the works I know one of the most lasting and companionable.

. . . the harmonica *Romance*



The *Romance* for Harmonica and Strings, written for the astonishing virtuosos of that humble instrument, Larry Adler, was heard (twice) at a Prom in [1952]. It was a good-humoured occasion and everybody was delighted and gave the music a hearty encore. I was as carried away as the rest of the audience at the time and my admiration for the variety of noises the composer and the soloist manage to conjure out of that small but versatile instrument has in no way abated with time. But I have never been able, at later hearings, to recapture the excitement of that first performance, for, when all is said and done, the harmonica is, for most of us, a nauseous instrument, its piercing sickliness of tone delightful only, I should have thought, to that epicure of indiscreet sonority, Monsieur Olivier Messiaen. I have no doubt, however, that the *Romance* will settle down happily as an annual event at the Proms, until Mr. Adler is as advanced in years as Dr. Vaughan Williams. I am afraid it will remain, for me, the one and only among his works that I would prefer, on the whole, not to hear.

From Simona Pakenham, *Ralph Vaughan Williams: A Discovery of his Music*, first published in 1957 and reproduced here by kind permission of the author.

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CONSTANT LAMBERT AND RVW

by Stephen Lloyd



Constant Lambert (1905-1951)

As we mark the centenary of Constant Lambert (born in Fulham, 23 August 1905), Vaughan Williams may not be the first composer who comes to mind in connection with him. But there are at least two strong reasons why their names should be linked.

When on 18 September 1922 Lambert entered the Royal College of Music¹, among his fellow students, soon to become firm friends, were the pianist Angus Morrison; conductor Guy Warrack; a future Principal of the Royal Academy of Music, Thomas Armstrong; and composers Gavin Gordon, Patrick Hadley and Gordon Jacob. Hadley later wrote: 'I knew [Constant] perhaps more intimately than most since the day he arrived (aged 17) at the RCM when we happened to share a lesson with old Ralph.'² The 49-year-old Vaughan Williams was their composition teacher, and many years later in a broadcast talk to mark Vaughan Williams' 75th birthday, Constant looked back on that lesson:

I well remember the trepidation with which I waited outside [Vaughan Williams'] door (oddly enough with Patrick Hadley) for my first lesson with him at the Royal College of Music. My admiration for him was as profound as my knowledge of my own technical shortcomings and I shall never forget the extraordinary kindness with which he listened to the rag-bag of compositions I had produced at school. This was to begin a relationship between pupil and master which lasted for three years and was of the happiest. Vaughan Williams was above all

a psychologist and realised that a strict and suddenly imposed course of theory would have been fatal to a student such as myself at that moment. Instead, he encouraged me to go on composing, at an alarming rate I admit. For at one lesson, such was the time he devoted to detailed criticism, it was discovered that I was seven symphonic poems ahead of him. They were long ago pulped I need hardly say. The technical work was imposed later, of course, but the first few months were the most important to me and I can remember suddenly appreciating his kindly insight when he turned to me and said, 'I don't know if you are like what I was at your age. I thought then that my last work was the best piece of music ever written but that I should never write another. I was wrong both times.'

Two things above all stand out in my memory of those weekly sessions in the somehow gloomy crypt assigned to him by the authorities, a crypt filled with the smoke of his perpetual pipe, and littered with the matchboxes he had stolen from his pupils. First, that he never encouraged his pupils to imitate his own style or mannerisms, and secondly that in the long run he had not only taught you but more important still had taught you to teach yourself.

Being at that time a young student I was naturally attracted first of all by Vaughan Williams' early work. My introduction to his music was hearing his lively but moving Overture 'The Wasps', a work which I subsequently arranged for piano duet³ when I was a pupil of his.⁴

According to Angus Morrison, Vaughan Williams said that the compositions Constant first showed him, written while he was still at school (Christ's Hospital, Sussex), reflected 'the world of the Russian ballet',⁵ and Edward Dent remembered VW enthusiastically telling him about his new pupil:

It was Vaughan Williams who first discovered his marvellous musicianship. . . . He called on me one day at Cambridge glowing with excitement to show me Constant's first attempt at a fugue, written without any previous knowledge of the rules. It was a most unorthodox fugue on a most unorthodox subject, but there could be no doubt that it was the product of an original and highly intelligent mind.⁶

Sir Thomas Armstrong recalled with great affection his friendship with Constant and how they both became associated with Vaughan Williams:

My friendship with Constant Lambert when he was a young man at the Royal College was a very great part of my life at that time. Those who remember Constant as a young man will remember that he was the most wonderful companion, a marvellous musician and a gay enchanting companion whose conversation was like a display of fireworks. I was associated with him a good deal because Vaughan Williams used to use us for trying out his new works and playing them on the piano.⁷ All those who knew Lambert in those days will remember him as the most brilliant and wonderful creature.⁸

While Armstrong became devoted to the music of Vaughan Williams, Constant was not to share his enthusiasm, although he found much to admire in the *Pastoral* Symphony, which he referred to as 'one of the

landmarks in modern English music',⁹ and the Fourth Symphony, which at its first performance he hailed as 'a knock in the eye... all the old mannerisms have gone. The vigour, concision, and intellectual force of this symphony must have taken the composer's greatest admirers by surprise'.¹⁰ In an article he wrote on contemporary English music for a 1929 Henry Wood Promenade Concert programme, he generously held up Vaughan Williams' compositions as 'undoubtedly the finest English works of their generation'.¹¹ He also considered *Flos Campi* 'one of the finest works written in any country since the War'.¹² But, like his fellow composer William Walton, he was not a follower of the folk-song school of English music. Walton, in one of his wittier moments, is reported as saying: 'There's no overwhelming reason why modern English music should chew a straw, wear a smock-frock, and travel by stage-coach. Folk tunes, like peas, bureaucrats, and Chinamen, are all the same.'¹³ Constant held a similar view:

The English folk song, except to a few crusted old farmhands in those rare districts which have escaped mechanization, is nothing more than a very pretty period piece with the same innocent charm as the paintings of George Morland... Even in our day Elgar and Delius have, in their widely different ways, written music that is essentially English without having to dress it up in rustic clothes or adopt pseudo-archaic modes of speech.¹⁴

And there is, too, his much-quoted witticism that contains more than a grain of truth: 'To put it vulgarly, the whole trouble with a folk-song is that once you have played it through there is nothing much you can do except play it over again and play it rather louder.'¹⁵ To him is also attributed the following Clerihew:

The harmony of V. W.
Is not of the kind to trouble you;
Both yokels and driads
Are represented by triads.

VW's use of folk-song and modality in the *Pastoral Symphony* came under attack in Lambert's 'study of music in decline', *Music Ho!* (1934)¹⁶, where, in the section headed 'Nationalism and Democracy', he wrote:

Vaughan Williams, whose style is based on material without classical or international precedent and which, without necessarily being folk-songy in the picturesque way, is intimately connected with the inflections and mood of English folk music, cannot be said to share the freedom from provinciality shown by Elgar and Walton. His appeal is undoubtedly more intense but it is also more limited... We can appreciate Debussy's *Ronde de Printemps* without knowing or liking French landscape, but it is clearly difficult to appreciate either the mood or the form of the *Pastoral Symphony* without being temperamentally attuned to the cool greys and greens, the quietly luxuriant detail, the unemphatic undulation of the English scene.¹⁷

He cited the *Norfolk Rhapsody* as an example of the evocation of a landscape background, but arguing that this sort of expression was incompatible with symphonic writing which should be free of 'the realistic and picturesque' (the latter being much in evidence in *A London Symphony*). Sibelius, he suggested, provided the example for the solution to the symphonic problem that was vexing the composers of the 'twenties and the 'thirties.

But Vaughan Williams was in no doubt of the importance of folk-song in British music and in the year that *Music Ho!* appeared he replied with this broadside, at the same time having a dig at Lambert's staunch defence of jazz:

I know in my own mind that if it had not been for the folk-song movement of twenty-five years ago this young and vital school

represented by such names as Walton, Bliss, Lambert, and Patrick Hadley would not have come into being. They may deny their birthright; but having once drunk deep of the living water no amount of Negroid or 'Baroque' purgatives will enable them to expel it from their system.¹⁸

There is no way of knowing whether folk-song was one of the topics of the friendly disputes that VW and his pupil enjoyed, as mentioned by Hadley:

We used to get amusing accounts of [Constant's] differences of opinion with Vaughan Williams, always very good-natured – they never had a quarrel – but they were constantly arguing over maybe quite small points.¹⁹

But it was a happy relationship, and in the broadcast talk already mentioned Constant summed up his teacher warmly:

The late Charles Ricketts, the famous illustrator and scene designer, once said to me, 'The trouble about teachers is that they always teach what they were taught instead of teaching what they have learnt themselves'. He obviously could not have known Vaughan Williams. For the great quality of Vaughan Williams as teacher was the fact that he never taught in a doctrinaire manner. His teaching or, to put it more accurately, his tactful and kindly advice, was always based on his own hard and genuine practical experience.²⁰

Lambert continued to study with Vaughan Williams until January 1925 when his professor of composition was Vaughan Williams' brother-in-law, Reginald Morris, noted for his teaching of counterpoint. He stayed with Morris for the remainder of his College days.²¹

* *

Lambert made a considerable impression at the Royal College. He stood out because of his appearance – Hadley described him as 'radiantly good-looking' – and he soon distinguished himself as 'a brilliant young musician'.²² When he arrived he was already a very able pianist and an exceptionally good sight-reader, and, according to Michael Tippett who came a year after him, he 'was generally regarded as the whizz-kid'.²³

Ever since he was taken as a young boy to see Diaghilev's *Ballets russes*, Constant's mind was directed more to the theatre than to the concert hall. He had no desire to write symphonies; he was more interested in tone-poems based on a poetic idea. Walton remembered that 'around '23 to '26 he poured forth a steady stream of works such as the boxing ballet, piano concertos, symphonic poems, etc. which unfortunately he later destroyed'.²⁴ Ballet fascinated him and was central to his musical thinking, and it was a ballet, *Adam and Eve*, a *suite dansée* in three scenes with a scenario devised by Angus Morrison, that was to bring Constant unexpected fame when Diaghilev accepted it, changing its title to *Romeo and Juliet*, and performing it in Monte Carlo, Paris, London and on tour in Germany.

Lambert's first orchestral work to be performed at the College (its only performance) was a rhapsody *Green Fire*, conducted on 28 June 1923 by the more senior Gordon Jacob. Its classification as a rhapsody would seem to align it with similarly titled works by Vaughan Williams and Delius, but its impact was very different from the pastoral effusions of those composers. Edmund Rubbra recalled 'the startling effect of his youthful *jeu d'esprit*' while Harold Rutland wrote that 'it was rumoured that Vaughan Williams had expressed himself as startled, and even bewildered, by Constant's trick of writing consecutive sevenths and ninths for trombones'.

Preoccupied as he was with ballets, Constant's earliest surviving attempt was *Prize Fight* (1923-4), a work closer in spirit to music hall or the more outrageous products of Diaghilev's *Ballets russes* than conventional

ballet. Its sub-title, a 'satirical' or 'realistic' ballet in one act, and its flippant subject matter clearly betray the influence of Eric Satie's 'ballet réaliste' *Parade*.²⁵ Constant played *Prize Fight* with Angus to Vaughan Williams at one of his composition lessons. Was it mere coincidence that VW had composed a ballad opera, *Hugh the Drover*, that centred on a boxing match? Although written before the war, it had its first performances at the College in July 1924. If *Hugh the Drover* uses both real and synthetic English folk-tunes, *Prize Fight* has snatches of music hall tunes and prominently quotes a variant of the American civil war song 'When Johnny comes marching home' (one of the boxers was an American). It was not performed in Lambert's lifetime.

Romeo and Juliet brought Constant some fame - not in its own right, nor just because he was the first British composer to have a ballet score accepted by Diaghilev (Lord Berners was the only other person so honoured), but more because of the riot that attended its Paris staging, a riot that rivalled that at the première of *The Rite of Spring*. This time the uproar was not directed by the audience at the music but at the décor by a rent-a-mob bunch of surrealist supporters objecting to the commercial use of their art form.

Lambert left the Royal College to assist at the Monte Carlo première of his *Romeo and Juliet* and straightway had his famous row with Diaghilev when he objected to some of the changes that the impresario had made to the ballet. Even for Diaghilev it was a bold venture, creating a ballet within a ballet and having a troupe of dancers rehearse scenes from the Shakespeare story in a practice room and then be seen to perform them on stage. During the rehearsal it becomes evident that the dancers portraying Romeo and Juliet are in love, and at the end of the 'performance' there is a contemporary touch when the two elope wearing flying gear with goggles.

Following the moderate success of *Romeo and Juliet*, there was a temporary lull in Lambert's career. He had made a name for himself as the reciter *par excellence* of Walton's *Façade*. His jazzy work for chorus, piano and orchestra, *The Rio Grande*, was first performed in a broadcast in February 1928 but it did not achieve its great popularity until Hamilton Harty took it up at a Hallé concert in December 1929, brought it to London the following day and recorded it for the gramophone within a month, with Lambert conducting and Harty at the piano. In the meantime Constant put up with small jobs, accompanying ballet classes, a little conducting, one or two early broadcasts, and even some journalism. His greatest achievement - his contribution to English ballet - was soon to begin.

* *

Had he seized the opportunity, Vaughan Williams - and not Lambert - would have been the first English composer to provide a ballet score for Diaghilev. In March 1913, in an interview for the *Daily Mail*, the Russian impresario spoke of his hopes 'on a future visit to produce an English ballet for which Dr Vaughan Williams is writing music; Mr Gordon Craig will be responsible for the scenery and staging.'²⁶ But at a Savoy luncheon the idea fell through. VW first objected to the story of Cupid and Psyche suggested by Craig (for which Nijinsky said he would dance both Cupid and Psyche) and then he rejected the proposal that he should write the music to which Craig would afterwards fit a story. He insisted, not unreasonably, on being given a scenario before writing the music²⁷. And so the plan came to nothing.

Vaughan Williams' *Job* also nearly came to nothing. On 27 June 1927 Geoffrey Keynes, brother of the economist John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946), had written to Diaghilev, sending him a book of engravings by William Blake whose centenary it happened to be that year, suggesting a ballet on the subject of Job based on the engravings. He had some support from Maynard's wife, Lydia Lopokova, a former member of the *Ballet russes* company, who had already spoken to Diaghilev on the subject. The idea was that Vaughan Williams would write the music while Gwendolen Raverat, Geoffrey's sister-in-law known for her wood engraving, would be responsible for the décor in the style of Blake. Diaghilev, however, showed little interest, rejecting the idea as 'too English'. Vaughan Williams was 'glad on the whole'. As he wrote to

Gwen: 'Can you imagine *Job* sandwiched between *Les Biches* and *Cimarosiana* - and that dreadful pseudo-cultured audience saying to each other "My dear, have you seen God at the Russian Ballet?"'²⁸ Nevertheless, his first sketches for *Job* date from that year, and he continued to work on them over the next three years.

Although *Job* was clearly conceived for the stage, as its subtitle 'A Masque for Dancing' suggests, it was first heard in a concert performance at the Norwich Festival, the composer conducting, on 23 October 1930. The critic Basil Maine later wrote that 'in spite of its coming at the end of a long morning programme, that concert performance was an intense experience'²⁹. Also attending that première was Gustav Holst about whom Vaughan Williams was to write:

I should like to place on record all that he did for me when I wrote *Job*. I should be alarmed to say how many 'Field Days' we spent over it. Then he came to all the orchestral rehearsals, including a special journey to Norwich, and finally, he insisted on the Camargo Society performing it. Thus I owe the life of *Job* to Holst...³⁰

The Camargo Ballet Society, founded in February 1930, was largely the idea of three men: Philip Richardson, editor of *The Dancing Times*, Arnold Haskell, the eminent ballet critic, and the music critic Edwin Evans. Serge Diaghilev had died in August 1929, bringing to an end the *Ballets russes* as he had presented them. This new Society's object was not to take the place of Diaghilev but at first to present occasional programmes of ballet, on Sunday evenings and Monday afternoons. The money would come from Society subscription and donations. An impressive number of important people concerned with the arts gave their support, including composers Holst, Bax, Bliss, Walton, Berkeley, Berners, Lambert, Julius Harrison and Vaughan Williams. Another driving force was Lydia Lopokova whose husband was keeper of the Society's purse. The first Camargo presentation, that included Lambert's *Pomona*, was given at the Cambridge Theatre, London on 19 October 1930, with Lambert conducting the whole programme. 'You are present at the birth of British Ballet,' Lopokova told an enthusiastic audience, and the *Nation and Athenaeum* critic remarked: 'We were able for half an hour to forget that Diaghilev was dead.' The Camargo Society was to make possible the first staging of *Job*, although, in Evans's words, it left the Society 'breathless and cashless'. A few weeks after its Norwich première, Holst wrote to Edwin Evans:

I have looked through the score of V.W.'s *Job* and in my opinion it would have to be entirely re-scored for performance by a small orchestra. I have told him so, and at present I do not know whether he would cue in or follow my suggestion. He begs me to tell you that, if he is told in time, he would supply the fresh score if he thought it necessary, but he must be told as soon as possible if the work is wanted at all. He is only part owner as the inventor of the Ballet has to be consulted also. If the Camargo produced *Job*, VW would prefer them to do it in London first.³¹

Evans in turn wrote to Maynard Keynes:

I have heard from Dr Vaughan Williams, who wishes me to write direct to you about the question of the *Job* ballet. I should, of course, be very glad if the Camargo Society should find it practicable to perform it, either in connection with the Salzburg Festival or otherwise. Dr Vaughan Williams naturally has something to say about the music, and he has a complex about the word 'ballet' for which you would no doubt be willing to substitute 'masque'.³²

Vaughan Williams was insistent on using the word 'masque' and that the work should not be called a ballet:

The only condition as far as I am concerned, and I am sure the mention of it is a mere formality – that I shall be allowed to veto anything in the production which in my mind does not agree with my music... One more stipulation – I want the work called a “Masque” not a “Ballet” which has acquired unfortunate connotations of late years, to me.³³

As regards scaling down the score from symphony orchestra to pit orchestra proportions, he wrote:

I think I had better get the ‘boiling down’ done & risk it – otherwise it might be too late – I think I shall ask Constant Lambert to do it if he is willing – he knows the conditions well – I will of course seek your confidence over all this.³⁴

It says much for RVW’s confidence in Constant Lambert that he entrusted the task to him, who successfully pared down the score chiefly by eliminating the optional instruments and thinning out the brass.³⁵ Maynard Keynes promised an additional £82 towards the cost of the scenery, writing to Edwin Evans: ‘My sister-in-law, Mrs Raverat, who has made the design for the scenes, based upon Blake’s engravings, is willing to do the necessary painting for the stage, provided that she can be given adequate assistance and facilities in a proper studio.’³⁶ The choreography was by Ninette de Valois, and this was not the first Vaughan Williams score that she had used for a ballet. At the Old Vic on 9 May 1929 as a curtain raiser to *Rigoletto* she had presented *The Picnic* using the *Charterhouse Suite*.³⁷

The staging of *Job* presented considerable difficulties as the Camargo Society could only afford one theatre rehearsal with orchestra on the Friday preceding its two performances, especially when the lighting and the staging had to be sorted out at the same time. De Valois remembered that they went through the ballet once with just enough rehearsal time left to do about a third of it again. ‘As far as I was concerned it did not matter which part we did repeat; it was all so bad and needed so much more work. Lambert, it appeared, was applying the same unhappy attitude to the score. We started again from the opening scene and got as far as we could before our time was up. I can remember clutching the rails of the orchestra pit; I did not dare to turn and face my fellow companions of the Camargo Society, for I was so deadly ashamed of the scene of chaos that I had just witnessed.’

Fortunately there had been an onlooker at the rehearsal whose generosity saved the day. Gustav Holst had been so distressed at the lack of rehearsal for his fellow composer’s work that – under stipulation of strict secrecy – he paid for an extra three hours’ rehearsal on the Sunday morning.

Job was presented by the Camargo Society at the Cambridge Theatre, London, on Sunday 5 July 1931, with a second performance the following afternoon. Despite Hubert Foss’s reference³⁸ to it being ‘produced in full panoply, under Constant Lambert’s stick’, Lambert actually conducted his own reduced scoring. Edwin Evans, writing in the *Musical Times*, considered that ‘Constant Lambert’s arrangement for the smaller forces at his disposal was so skilfully done, that in proportion to the dimensions of the theatre it sounded exactly right, and was probably quite as effective as the larger orchestra in the larger building [Norwich Festival]...’³⁹ Lambert modestly described it as ‘a much-reduced orchestral arrangement which cannot be considered more than a postcard reproduction of the original’.⁴⁰ His own ballet *Pomona* was also in the programme and, as an interlude, he also conducted the first performance of his Overture *The Bird-Actors*. The programme opened with *The Jackdaw and the Pigeons*, a ballet based on Aesop, with music by Hugh Bradford, a friend of Lambert’s. The story goes that Geoffrey Keynes and his wife took as a guest one of the Society’s benefactors who, after sitting solemnly through the opening ballet, remarked: ‘Yes, old boy, very interesting. But tell me, which one was Job?’

Job was a great success, the *Times* critic commenting that ‘it is in no way derogatory to the music, which perfectly fulfils its part, to say that this is as much Mr Geoffrey Keynes’s, Mrs Raverat’s, and Miss Ninette de Valois’ ballet as the composer’s.’ He went on to praise the transition from

one picture to another: ‘the measure of their achievement is that we were almost always convinced that the movements were the logical continuation of that which is inherent in Blake’s designs.’ But there was no doubting the high spot of the ballet: ‘If one singles out for special praise the superb performance of Mr Anton Dolin as Satan, it is because his was the most spectacular and technically the most exacting part. He always assumed exactly the right postures, and his appearance with the clearly defined muscles was as close to the original as possible. The lighting contributed a great deal towards the effect . . .’. Arnold Haskell concurred: ‘There is one virtuoso role that stands apart from the pattern, dominates it, and makes the masque into a proper ballet – that of Satan. Dolin was Satan, superb in the powerful conception of a part, a Miltonic interpretation of the fallen angel.’⁴¹ An important point made by ballet critic Cyril Beaumont is that ‘*Job* is not a choreographic version of the Biblical story, but of Blake’s personal interpretation of it. Hence not only is the argument different, but the whole action is *symbolic*, not *material*.’⁴²

The same forces gave a third performance of *Job* on 24 July at the New Theatre, Oxford, in a matinée of ballet as part of the ninth annual festival of the International Society for Contemporary Music. Such was its success that it was chosen to open the first full Vic-Wells season of ballet and opera at the Old Vic on 22 September 1931. (Because the Camargo Society was run by subscription, this was regarded as its first *public* performance.) Lambert, recently appointed the Vic-Wells Ballet company’s musical director, once again conducted. Dolin, much in demand elsewhere, was Satan, although, as he described in his autobiography,⁴³ he had to take his curtain call in evening trousers and patent leather shoes, half-dressed in readiness for his appearance in the finale of Jack Buchanan’s musical show *Stand Up and Sing* for which he then had to dash to the Hippodrome. While the *Times* critic thought it hard to depict actual evil in music and that the hypocrisy of Job’s comforters was only apparent on stage, he concluded that ‘if the subtler forms of wickedness elude musical description, the vision of ineffable Goodness and Beauty does not. Vaughan Williams catches up the Biblical vision, so sharply seen by Blake, and translates it into sounds that bind together the several sources of inspiration which by their fusion have created this great work of art.’ Among the ‘Children of God’ was the future choreographer Wendy Toye, while one of Job’s three daughters was Marie Nielsen, a friend of Lambert’s who five years later became Cecil Gray’s second wife. Perhaps in recognition of the expenses involved in such a relatively large undertaking, RVW asked for only a nominal fee. Two further performances followed in October.

Job was soon taken fully into the repertory and given 10 times in the Camargo Society’s four-week season at the Savoy Theatre in June 1932, and it was included when Lilian Baylis’s Vic-Wells company had its first trip abroad – to Denmark – in September. However, it baffled the Danes. ‘To fully understand the text, one must preferably have the Bible at hand’, wrote one reporter. Lilian Baylis commented that ‘*Job* was considered more modern than anything seen in Denmark before.’⁴⁴

When the Vic-Wells autumn 1933 season opened on 26 September, Robert Helpmann took the role of Satan for the first time. ‘Mr Helpmann’s Satan compels not by force (as Mr Dolin’s used to) but by fascination,’⁴⁵ observed the *Times* critic. When in June 1935 the company took it to on tour, a young Margot Fonteyn was among the cast. By October 1935 the Vic-Wells orchestra had been sufficiently enlarged for the original score to be played in the theatre. ‘For the first time Mr Vaughan Williams’ own full score was used instead of Mr. Lambert’s clever reduction’, reported the *Times* critic. And it continued to be used, but even so over ten years later Lambert had to write to that same paper to inform its critic that his reduction was no longer in use:

Your critic in his notice of *Job* at Covent Garden gives the impression that my reduction of Vaughan Williams’ score was in continuous use at Sadler’s Wells and that ballet audiences are now hearing the original full orchestration for the first time. This is not the case. My reduction for an orchestra of fewer than 30 players was a temporary expedient that proved useful to the Camargo Society (who gave the first performance) and later to the Vic-Wells ballet in its early days. The moment the Sadler’s

Wells orchestra became enlarged to symphonic stature my reduction was quite naturally dropped, having fulfilled its purpose. Ballet audiences were able to hear *Job* in its original full orchestration for at least six years before the war.⁴⁶

On 11 November 1936 the Vic-Wells Ballet Company made its first television appearance at Alexandra Palace, performing excerpts from *Job* as an Armistice Day tribute in two 25-minute slots, one in the afternoon and one later that evening.⁴⁷ (The conductor on this occasion was not Lambert who that afternoon had a RCM 'Conductors' Class' and that evening was conducting the BBC Orchestra on the National Programme. Instead it was probably a great friend of Lambert's, Hyam 'Bumps' Greenbaum, conductor of the BBC Television Orchestra.)

Lambert conducted a concert performance of *Job* at least once, on 23 March 1936, as guest conductor of the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. London had first heard the original score on 3 December 1931 at a Queen's Hall Royal Philharmonic Society concert (conducted not by its dedicatee, Adrian Boult, but by Basil Cameron). Lambert reviewed the concert in the *Sunday Referee* and rated *Job* as

the most successful theatrical work produced by a modern English composer, far more so than any opera...Although not so consistent in style as some of his earlier work, *Job* contains many passages that must be reckoned among the finest things Vaughan-Williams has done. The pastoral prelude and finale are altogether admirable and the music for Satan's triumphing dance and the vision he conjures up...has a brutality and virulence that one was hardly prepared for by Vaughan-Williams's earlier work.

This led him into one of his favourite topics, nationalism and English music.

The dramatic intensity and formal coherence of *Job* are all the more refreshing because they are the two qualities that most English composers are prepared to sacrifice or overlook in their obsession with an English mood. The complete gap in the English musical tradition and the absolute subjugation of English music to foreign influences not unnaturally produced a movement of rather exaggerated nationalism and a school of composers who seemed more intent on creating an English atmosphere than a solidly constructed piece of music. How well we know this typically English mood, the orchestration almost smelling of Harris tweed, the thematic landscape shrouded in mist, the brooding lyricism punctuated from time to time with a touch of that rugged heroism with which the Englishman plunges into a cold bath in January. The mood, I admit, is unsympathetic to me personally, but my main objection to this type of music is its lack of any organic form. The texture and style are the same, whether the work is a song or a symphony, and one feels that the composers are not constructing individual works but pouring out a sort of synthetic "Mood-paste" (to use an excellent phrase of Mr Van Dieren's) into receptacles of different shapes and sizes.

Lambert returned to *Job* in his *Sunday Referee* column when Boult conducted the work on 14 February 1934 at a BBC concert. This article provides a good example of Lambert's fondness for bringing other topics into the discussion, especially composers close to his heart like Glinka and Liszt.

Diabolus in Musica

Although it stands the translation from theatre to concert-hall far better than most ballets, Vaughan Williams' *Job* is rarely heard apart from the stage. The absence of the neo-Blake décor and of the fine choreography by Miss de Valois is bound to be felt, but at the same time a concert performance such as that

given at Wednesday's BBC Concert is an excellent opportunity for judging the music qua music, the more so as the full orchestral version is used and several trifling cuts are restored.

There are few modern works which I have heard so many times, and fewer still which seem to me to have such staying power. The composer's style, which at one time threatened to centre round a narrow range of formulas, is here seen at its most flexible.

Although a well-known French critic has described the score of *Job* as 'deplorably eclectic', there is not a page, which could have been written by any other composer. Vaughan Williams has worked through his mannered and self-consciously personal style and regained the breadth of his earlier works, but without the conventionalities that occasionally mar the *Sea* and *London* Symphonies. His style is still essentially modal, but less strictly so than before, and to the sturdy modal basis are added chromatic features of a type that is not to be found in his earlier work.

This can be most clearly seen in the introduction where the chromatic figures on the woodwind cut through the modal structure of the strings, giving us a delicious sense of tonal freedom without destroying our sense of tonal balance.

It is this unusually wide tonal range in *Job* that most interests me, but I notice that most people seem to prefer those sections where the composer recalls the simple blocks of chords and pentatonic figures of his older pieces. Apparently the public are beginning to appreciate his mannerisms just when he himself is leaving them behind.

Most people enjoy the Saraband, Pavan and Galliard in *Job*, but few seem to like the Satan music, where the composer strikes out a new technique (from his point of view). The general opinion seems to be that though queer it is not queer enough. But there is no absolute criterion of queerness; queerness (in music as in life) depends on the degree of normality by which it is surrounded.

At one time that familiar sound, the tritone, was considered by mediaeval theorists to be 'diabolus in musica'. And rightly so, when the ecclesiastical style of the time is taken into consideration. A certain amount of religious belief is a sine qua non for an effective Black Mass and in music a certain amount of established tonality is necessary before a departure from the norm strikes us as being sinister. It does not matter what this norm is.

Gesualdo achieves the sinister by his sudden chromatic progressions, Liszt as often as not by an odd piece of diatonic writing coming in the middle of his usual chromatic style. There is practically no combination of sounds that is intrinsically sinister. Glinka's use of the whole tone scale in *Ruslan and Ludmilla*, when he wishes to depict the wizard Chernomor, must have been frightening at the time and still has its power to astonish. But its power is dependent on the genial diatonic harmonies of the chorus to LeI which precedes it. The whole tone scale used as a continuous normal style (as in Debussy's *Voiles*) is anodyne in the extreme. The harmonic scheme of the middle section in Liszt's first *Mephisto* Waltz strikes us as morbid because of its distortion of the usual nineteenth-century Johann Strauss waltz, but the same harmonic scheme pushed to excess (as in later Scriabin) is quite unsensational. The same is true of our own days.

The extreme harmonic clashes in Bartók's *Amazing Mandarin* are never more than mildly grotesque because of the monotonously discordant nature of the work, whereas the extreme harmonic clashes in Strauss' *Elektra* and *Salome* are disturbing because of the milk and water normality established

by John the Baptist's hymn-tones [sic] and Chrysothemis' valse-tunes. Schönberg's pre-War work suggests a world of changed moral values – his post-War work suggests a world free from all moral values.

But to return to *Job*. The music for Satan taken by itself is hardly comparable to Stravinsky or Bartók as an orchestral thriller, but coming in the middle of the work it hits precisely the right note of grisliness. Vaughan Williams is the most genuinely modal composer there has been since the sixteenth century, and the Satan music is sufficiently unmodal to strike us as thoroughly abnormal.

Like the medieval theorists, Vaughan Williams evidently believes that the tritone is 'diabolus in musica' and has built up Satan's Dance of Triumph over an ostinato based on this interval. The effect is medieval in its naïveté and medieval in its simple horror.

Perhaps, after all, the medieval theorists were right, and the tritone not only was but still is the disturbing and sinister influence in music. Certainly the only thing that connects Vaughan Williams' Mephistophelian studies with those of Liszt is the conscious emphasis of this interval (compare the opening of *Mephisto Waltz* No 2 and the opening of the *Dante* fantasia for piano). After all, though we realise that modern composers have their own conception of God, we do not expect them to 'improve' on the conceptions of Palestrina, Byrd and Vittoria. There is no reason to suppose that the Devil, in spite of his traditional appearance of a man of fashion, has altered in any essential qualities since the Middle Ages.

The performance under Adrian Boult was among the best I have heard. Apart from a dropped stitch on the part of the bass drum, and a slip of the tongue on the part of the saxophone, the detail was excellent and the general outline was firmly present. . . .⁴⁸

In his weekly column for the *Sunday Referee*⁴⁹, Lambert would air many of the views that were expanded in *Music Ho!* When on 10 January 1933 Henry Wood conducted *A London Symphony* at the Winter Proms, he took the opportunity to question the structure of the romantic symphony, in particular the English romantic symphony:

This fine work is a remarkable example of the conflict I touched on last week between the English musical temperament and the principles of symphonic form. The conflict is evident in the title itself before we have heard a note of the music. There is no reason at all why a piece of music should not have a pictorial title, but there are several reasons why a symphony should not.

He went on typically to draw parallels with English painting, and even suggested that 'the capricious and rapid changes of the English climate actually produce a mentality more naturally suited to variation form than to the symphony with its four movements divided like the seasons'. He ended:

I am speaking now mainly of the first movement and the finale, for the lyricism of [the] slow movement and the grey gaiety of the scherzo-nocturne are completely successful and suggest that the whole work might better have been cast into a series of non-symphonic movements like Debussy's *La Mer* or Delius's *North Country Sketches*. The opening of the first movement is splendidly evocative, but the canvas soon become crowded with a multitude of picturesque themes that can no more be successfully marshalled into formation than the traffic of London itself. It would be possible if giving a series of concerts of Modern English Music to include the best and yet not include a single symphony. In fact the more I consider the English musical temperament and the English musical tradition, the more I wonder that English composers should spend so much time struggling with a form so essentially alien to both. To the

Continental or Continentally-minded composer the solution of the symphonic problem lies in a hammering out of a compact and personal version of symphonic form. To the typically English composer the solution lies in not writing symphonies at all.⁵⁰

As already shown, he made much the same comment about the *Pastoral Symphony* in *Music Ho!*: 'It is no exaggeration to say that the creation of a particular type of grey, reflective, English-landscape mood has outweighed the exigencies of symphonic form.'⁵¹ For him, symphonically it was a cul-de-sac, and while he himself could hardly be classified as a typically English composer, he followed his own solution of not writing symphonies.

He approved the cuts that Vaughan Williams made to the *London Symphony*, and when the composer conducted it in a mainly VW Prom on 27 September 1934, he wrote: 'The *London Symphony* has been many times revised since its first performance and on Thursday night two further cuts were made, one at the end of the second movement, and one in the Epilogue. Though the passages cut were among the best in the symphony, intrinsically speaking I think the composer has been wise. The fine slow movement has no hint of a longueur and the Epilogue is more in proportion with the quick section of the finale.'⁵² When he conducted the work himself on 12 June 1936 at the Royal College of Music with the First Orchestra two new cuts were made, one in the slow movement and one in the Epilogue. Vaughan Williams had famously written in his *Musical Autobiography*: 'I was quite unconscious that I had cribbed from *La Mer* in the introduction to my *London Symphony* until Constant Lambert horrified me by calling my attention to it,'⁵³ and Lambert made this observation in his *Music Ho!*: 'The direct, or indirect influence of Debussy is to be found in such outwardly differentiated works as the ballets of Stravinsky and the operas of Schönberg, the *London Symphony* of Vaughan Williams and the *Chinese Symphony* of Van Dieren . . .'⁵⁴

His newspaper column was frequently enlivened by a fearless degree of outspokenness and as a composer he could sometimes set himself open for attack. Reviewing a performance of the *Five Tudor Portraits* in 1937, he suggested that VW was the wrong person to catch the bawdiness of Tudor ale houses. 'Constant Lambert says: Tudor Teas are not the same as Tudor Pubs' ran the headlines. And he continued:

I seem to have enjoyed this work rather less than most of my colleagues... 'Exit the Folk-Song Society' must be the stage directions to any passage in this work... Throughout the *Five Tudor Portraits* one feels the inevitable drawback of the time-lag that exists between poetry and its choral setting. As a result the work seems Tudor in the modernised or tea-house sense of the word. Vaughan Williams' temperament seems to me too elegiac, nostalgic, and individual to interpret the extrovert bawdy directness of that admirable poet Skelton. It is difficult to associate him with the English public-house, except in a remote Housmanish way.⁵⁵

Lambert's *Summer's Last Will and Testament* for baritone, chorus and orchestra, one of his finest works and, like *Job*, subtitled a masque - though not for dancing - was then just over a year old. In the poems of Thomas Nashe and the purely orchestral *Rondo burlesca* 'King Pest' it centres on the plague and drinking in Elizabethan times, and one could easily read the inference that while VW was out of touch with Tudor pubs, Lambert was your man for Elizabethan toping, something that had a ring of truth with his own drinking habits that had been much encouraged through his association with the then late Philip Heseltine.

* *

To tie up the remaining strands that link Lambert with Vaughan Williams, as a conductor in the concert hall and in the broadcasting studio his programmes generally reflected his personal tastes and only rarely did he include a work of Vaughan Williams: the *Concerto Accademico* for the BBC on 11 October 1937, the Fifth Symphony with the Hallé Orchestra

at Manchester and Sheffield in February 1946, *The Wasps Overture* for a broadcast in July 1949. When on 4 February 1944 he conducted the London Symphony Orchestra at the Royal College for some CEMA play-throughs of new works by Humphrey Searle and Norman Del Mar (with Francis Chagrin conducting his own), VW was present as a member of CEMA and the occasion was fully reported. 'Do get this week's "Picture Post";' he wrote to Michael Ayerton, 'it has some photographs of that R.C.M. rehearsal including 3 of V.W. which make Breughel look like Olive Snell⁵⁶ and one of myself, cutting my throat while conducting Humphrey Searle.'⁵⁷

Constant Lambert's finest tribute to his former teacher was the dedication of his *Aubade Héroïque* 'to Ralph Vaughan Williams on his seventieth birthday'. It was included in a broadcast on 12 October 1942 of a number of orchestral tributes, from Alan Bush, Patrick Hadley, Gordon Jacob, Elizabeth Maconchy, Robin Milford and Edmund Rubbra, with Clarence Raybould conducting the London Symphony Orchestra. Gerald Finzi, who could on occasion be sharply critical even of Vaughan Williams, wrote to Howard Ferguson on the same day: 'We went along to the Studio for the concert of tributes. I thought the results: Alan Bush, ghastly; Rubbra, like a bit of his 4th Symphony – I like it; Hadley, rather fussy and uninteresting; Constant Lambert, balls; Maconchy, not worth while but good fun.'⁵⁸

Yet one can say with conviction that Finzi was mistaken: the *Aubade Héroïque* is a fine work and the one example of teacher and pupil in close compositional harmony. It is a deeply evocative pastoral recalling a peaceful moment when the Sadler's Wells Ballet were evacuating Holland in 1940 under the German attack. No folk song, of course.

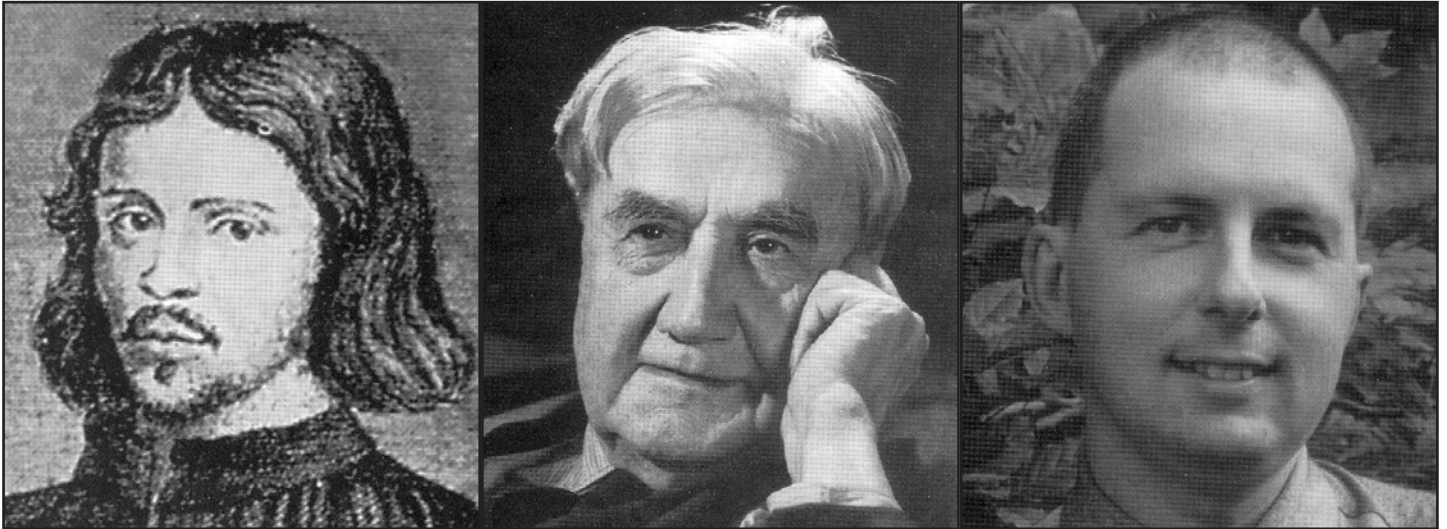
This article is in part extracted from a forthcoming full-scale study of Constant Lambert by Stephen Lloyd.

NOTE

- 1 It is worth pointing out that Lambert did not enter the Royal College of Music with a composition scholarship, as stated by Richard Shead and Andrew Motion in their Lambert biographies. He did not gain a composition scholarship until 1924. Equally, he had not gone there on a piano scholarship, as later stated by Walton.
- 2 Letter, 19 January 1952, from Patrick Hadley to Hubert Foss, in the collection of his daughter, Mrs Diana Sparkes.
- 3 BL 63544. Ralph Vaughan Williams *The Wasps*, Aristophanic suite, in an arrangement for piano duet by Constant Lambert; 1925. *Autograph* of Lambert. Published London: Curwen, 1926. Presented by Mrs Ursula Vaughan Williams, 7 March 1985. Paper; ff. 26. 370 x 274mm.
- 4 'Vaughan Williams as a teacher', Lambert's contribution to BBC *Music Magazine* edition on Vaughan Williams' 75th birthday. Home Service 7.15 – 7.45 p.m. 12 October 1947. Script in BBC Archives. Lambert used two music examples, both from *The Wasps Overture* (Columbia DX1088): 'the cheeky and bucolic opening tune' and what he called 'perhaps the most typically romantic English tune ever written – a tune which in its simple way seems to summon up the whole of the gently undulating English countryside'.
- 5 Angus Morrison, draft typescript forming part of his projected biography of Lambert, RCM Library, presented to the RCM by Mrs Elizabeth Panourgias, Angus Morrison's daughter.
- 6 Edward Dent (source not acknowledged) in Richard Shead, *Constant Lambert*, p.20.
- 7 Possibly in connection with the arrangements for piano that Lambert made of Vaughan Williams' *Concerto Accademico* (OUP 1927), *Fantasia on Sussex Folk Tunes* (piano score, mostly in the hand of Lambert, 1929. BL57471, ff. 42-56) and *The Wasps* (see footnote 3).
- 8 Sir Thomas Armstrong in *Desert Island Discs*, BBC Radio 4, 16/21 July 1989.
- 9 *Music Ho!*, Faber & Faber 1934, Second Edition 1936, p.104.
- 10 *Sunday Referee*, 14 April 1935.
- 11 'Contemporary English Music', 24 August 1929 Promenade Concert programme.
- 12 *Sunday Referee*, 7 January 1934.
- 13 Interview with Charles Stuart, *The Yorkshire Observer*, 21 December 1942, p.2.
- 14 *Music Ho!*, p.120.
- 15 *ibid.*, p.114.
- 16 *Music Ho!*, Faber and Faber 1934, is probably the liveliest, most challenging and most entertaining study of music in the 20s and the 30s ever written, covering topics as diverse as Stravinsky, Satie, nationalism, jazz, the growth of broadcast and recorded music, and the symphony and Sibelius.
- 17 *Music Ho!*, pp. 104 & 105. It matters little here whether it was an English or a French landscape that provided the 'Pastoral' element to the Symphony.
- 18 Ralph Vaughan Williams, 'The Evolution of the Folk-Song', in *National Music and other essays*, OUP 1934; Oxford Paperbacks 1963, p.47.

- 19 In *Constant Lambert Remembered*, 25 June 1966, BBC Third Network.
- 20 Constant Lambert 'Vaughan Williams as a teacher', BBC, 12 October 1947. Lambert's account of VW as a teacher can be compared with those of other pupils, Elizabeth Maconchy, Michael Mullinar, Jasper Rooper and Ina Boyle, in 'Working for her own Salvation': Vaughan Williams as teacher of Elizabeth Maconchy, Grace Williams and Ina Boyle' by Jennifer Doctor, in *Ralph Vaughan Williams in Perspective*, ed. Lewis Foreman, Albion Press for the Vaughan Williams Society 1998.
- 21 Richard Shead, *op. cit.*, p.37, states that Lambert studied with George Dyson, but the Royal College of Music records only show Vaughan Williams and R. O. Morris as his composition professors. If he did study with Dyson, it could only have been for a lesson or two, perhaps during an absence of his official teacher and not long enough for the fact to be recorded.
- 22 Harold Rutland, *Recollections of Constant Lambert*, 6pp. typescript, 13 May 1952.
- 23 Michael Tippett, *Those Twentieth Century Blues, An Autobiography*, Hutchinson 1991, p.16.
- 24 William Walton, typescript, n.d. Fortunately two of the works mentioned *did* survive, the boxing ballet (*Prize Fight*) and the early piano concerto (1924; reconstructed 1988).
- 25 The first English staging of *Parade* was given by Diaghilev on 14 November 1919 at the Empire Theatre. The young Walton saw that production.
- 26 *Daily Mail*, 8 March 1913. See Richard Buckle, *Diaghilev*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1979, p.245.
- 27 Ursula Vaughan Williams, *R. V. W. A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, OUP 1964, pp.93-4.
- 28 Michael Kennedy, *The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, OUP 1964, p.202.
- 29 Basil Maine, 'The Score', in *Footnotes to the Ballet assembled by Caryl Brahms: A book for Balletomanes*, Lovat Dickson 1936, pp.150-1.
- 30 Ralph Vaughan Williams, 'A Musical Autobiography (1950)', in *National Music and Other Essays*, Oxford Paperbacks 1963, p.194.
- 31 Letter, Gustav Holst to Ralph Vaughan Williams, 3 December 1930, BL Add. 59814 ff.1 38.
- 32 Letter, Edwin Evans to John Maynard Keynes, 16 December 1930, *ibid.*
- 33 Letter, Ralph Vaughan Williams to Edwin Evans, n.d. 'Sunday', *ibid.*
- 34 Letter, Ralph Vaughan Williams to Edwin Evans, n.d., *ibid.*
- 35 Lambert's reduced scoring of *Job* called for an orchestra of: 2 flutes (+ piccolo), oboe, 2 clarinets, E flat saxophone (played by 2nd clarinet), 2 horns, 2 trumpets, trombone, timpani, percussion (3 players: cymbals, bass drum, xylophone, glockenspiel, tam-tam) harp, strings. This version omits: bass flute, 2nd oboe (opt.), cor anglais, 3rd clarinet (opt.), bass clarinet (opt.), 2 bassoons, double bassoon (opt.), 3rd & 4th horns, 3rd trumpet (opt.), 2nd & 3rd trombone, tuba, side drum, triangle, 2nd harp (opt.) and organ (opt.).
- 36 Letter, 13 February 1931, John Maynard Keynes to Edwin Evans, BL *ibid.*
- 37 This ballet underwent changes of choreography and of title, being alternatively called *The Satyr* (at Cambridge on 17 February 1930) and *The Faun* (at Bournemouth on 29 December 1930). When the Vic-Wells company presented its first full programme of ballet at the Old Vic on 5 May 1931, it included *The Faun*, with Lambert conducting 'with his keen sense of the rhythm required by dance music' (*The Times*, 6 May 1931). This ballet should not be confused with an earlier one, also called *The Faun* and choreographed by de Valois at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin in 1928 to music by Harold White.
- 38 H Foss, *Ralph Vaughan Williams*, Harrap 1950, p.184.
- 39 *Musical Times*, August 1931, p.745.
- 40 *Sunday Referee*, 6 December 1931.
- 41 Arnold Haskell, *Balletomania*, Gollancz 1934, revised Penguin Books 1979, p.171.
- 42 Cyril W Beaumont, *Sadler's Well Ballet: A detailed account of Works in the Permanent Repertory with Critical Notes*, Beaumont, printed by Wyman & Sons 1946, p.102.
- 43 *Anton Dolin: Autobiography*, Oldbourne Book Co. 1960, p.54.
- 44 Mary Clarke, *The Sadler's Wells Ballet: A History and an Appreciation*, A & C Black 1955, p.81.
- 45 *The Times*, 15 October 1936.
- 46 Letter from Lambert to *The Times*, 22 May 1946, from Midland Hotel, Manchester, published in the issue of 26 May.
- 47 The first public high-definition television broadcast had been given as recently as 26 August that year.
- 48 *Sunday Referee*, 18 February 1934.
- 49 He wrote for the *Sunday Referee* from November 1931 until March 1938. His other main regular critical post was for the *Nation and Athanaeum* (that became *The New Statesman and Nation*) from April 1931 until February 1935.
- 50 *Sunday Referee*, 10 January 1933.
- 51 *Music Ho!*, p.103
- 52 *Sunday Referee*, 30 September 1934.
- 53 Foss, *Ralph Vaughan Williams*, p.32 and *National Music and other essays*, Oxford Paperbacks 1963, p.118.
- 54 *Music Ho!*, p.24.
- 55 *Sunday Referee*, 31 March 1937.
- 56 A portrait painter born before 1898.
- 57 Letter, 27 February 1944. The issue of *Picture Post* on 26 February 1944, pp.14-16, included an article, 'A Chance for New Music to be Heard' by Martin Chisholm, with three photos of Vaughan Williams, 2 of Chagrin, 1 of Lambert conducting the Searle in short sleeves and cigarette in mouth, 1 of Edwin Evans, and others.
- 58 *Letters of Gerald Finzi and Howard Ferguson*, ed. Howard Ferguson and Michael Hurd, Boydell Press 2001, p.232

New RVW-Based Piece from Australia



News reaches us of a prestigious musical work based on music by Vaughan Williams. Australian composer Paul Stanhope was born in 1969 and studied both in Australia and at the Guildhall School in London. His *Fantasia on a theme by Vaughan Williams* received its Australian premier in Sydney on July 27 2005. The Sydney Symphony Orchestra was conducted by Balázs Kocsár and two further performances were given in the same week.

Stanhope has won a number of prizes in composition competitions, and his Vaughan Williams-based work was awarded first place in the Toru Takemitsu Composition Award in Japan in 2004. The title of the work will have obvious resonance for members, but although his picture appears above along with Paul Stanhope and RVW there is no Tallis connection here. The theme on which Stanhope based his piece is *Down Ampney*, and the composer has said of it: "Apart from being a beautiful tune in itself, it struck me as having certain resonances at the time the piece was being written, and the sort of message was to me that it was a calling down of our higher selves, and the idea of examining ourselves, during a time when Australia and America and a lot of other countries in the world were getting themselves into a pretty beastly conflict in Iraq, and that seemed to be the real starting point for me, for that piece .

There's always a political and moral background to all our lives, but I was trying to make this more a personal statement than necessarily looking to geopolitics. It was more about looking to the divine within ourselves, and the search for that, and that was the starting point, anyway...Vaughan Williams himself was, I believe, agnostic, but was capable of writing some of the most fantastic and deeply spiritual sacred music, and so I was drawn to that dichotomy as well, in VW's music.

The piece, which is scored for full orchestra, is in six sections entitled *Fanfares, Lugubrious, Percussive, Photo Negative – Chorales with Walking Bass, Fanfares Reprise* and *Hymn*. "In the final section of the work," the composer writes, "announced by the sounding of bells, the hymn tune is heard in a simple modal harmonisation, emerging out of the explosion that precedes it. In its last statement, the music strives heavenwards with high woodwinds, strings and metal percussion...The opening line of *Down Ampney* is "Come down, O love divine." I interpreted this appeal to a divine love as a calling to our higher selves; a notion that is, I hope, ultimately humanising and uplifting.

Let us hope other orchestras outside Australia will lose no time in programming this work.

RVW, Email and the Internet

Those members who have communicated their email address to the Society will have received notification of this year's AGM by that means. Email is a cheap and convenient way of communicating and the Society invites members to pass their email address on to the Secretary, David Betts, whose contact details are to be found on the front page. All information pertaining to members is of course held in strict confidence and is used only by the Society.

This seems a good opportunity to remind members of the existence of the RVW Society website. Type "Vaughan Williams" into the best known internet search engine and our site is the first result to come up. It is a high quality site with features far too numerous to mention here. Members are urged to see for themselves.

www.rvwsociety.com



Letters

We are always pleased to receive contributions for this page

One that got away...

I read with interest Michael Kennedy's comments in the Feb 2005 issue of the RVW Journal as to why the British do not join societies. I am a man who is passionate about the music and life of RVW. I fell in love with "Fantasia on a theme of Thomas Tallis" as a teenager. Here was music that touched the heart of a man not just his mind! Since those days I cannot get enough of RVW's music, I attend as many concerts as I can, I scour record shops for recordings I may have missed, perhaps I might be labelled as obsessive! Yet the Journal arrives on my doormat, I eagerly open it and more often than not I am confronted with articles beyond my comprehension! I have this confession to make: despite my surname I cannot read a note of music! Please, we need articles that are comprehensible to mere mortals like myself! I sometimes feel that I have joined a society that I am only allowed to peer around the door into, an exclusive club that I am not really part of!

Clive Elgar, Norfolk.

Another...

I am one of those whose thoughts on RVW and religion were erased by the problem with Windows; and grateful that my first attempt was lost. The trouble is that I can't write about the spirituality of Vaughan Williams without seeing my own reflected in his music. That said, at least I'll try to be brief. I see RVW's work as part of a larger cultural development bypassing the materialistic outlook of the early 20th century. Frazer's *Golden Bough*, tracing the similarity of myths and rituals among unconnected peoples; Carl Jung's psychology of the collective unconscious; and Vaughan Williams's musical nationalism all encouraged the study and expression of human subjectivity – while materialists were fleeing in the opposite direction, trying to reduce and minimise everything in sight to fit their theories. No doubt, life on the Continent after the Great War required a light touch. The work of Frazer and Jung suggested a skepticism about religion of its own. As a scientist trying to be objective, Jung could write about "the God-Image in the human psyche"; while admitting that "whenever someone makes a psychological statement, the psyche is only talking about itself." This struggle with one's own limitations has seemed to me the essence of Vaughan Williams's *Fantasia on the Old 104th* – an anthem for agnostics. The materialist project, to convince us that human experience is nothing but an interaction of chemistry and sub-atomic particles, met its match in the late 1960s. Psychedelic or "consciousness expanding" drugs, by focusing attention on the miracle of consciousness, highlighted materialism's greatest weakness. Another result (among many) was an explosion of music, capable of being popular and serious at the same time, at least to those familiar with the terrain being described. The self-appointed minimalist and atonal "waves of the future" in music, to whom the accomplishments of RVW had been irrelevant, never knew what hit them.

George Ihlefeldt, Carmel, California

Honouring Handley

Michael Kennedy is a most distinguished writer and broadcaster, and I have always enjoyed his books and talks, particularly those on Vaughan Williams, Elgar and Barbirolli. His analyses of Vaughan Williams's works in particular are totally convincing and illuminating, and the best I have come across in the context of a study of a composer's life and works. It was therefore with great disappointment and incomprehension that, on reading his speech at the Society's tenth anniversary celebrations, he made no mention of the contribution of Vernon Handley in his listing of conductors past and present who have promoted the cause of Vaughan Williams. Not only has Handley recorded all the symphonies, but his versions are always discussed as amongst the best, and for some the very best. But Kennedy's main concern is the performance of Vaughan

Williams's orchestral works in live concert, as well as those by other British composers – he highlights Bax as an example. His argument is also full of figures. Well, can anyone name a living conductor who has given as many concert performances, at home and abroad, of Vaughan Williams's major works (not to mention Bax, Moeran and others) over a period of nearly fifty years? A few months ago, despite having just been released from hospital, to which he subsequently returned, he directed, so I am informed, a fine performance of the *Sea Symphony* in the Royal Festival Hall. In April he conducted, according to Georg Burgstaller, a marvellous performance of *Job* in Liverpool. And one week later, as I can testify, he conducted a wonderful performance of the *F Minor Symphony* in Belfast.

Finally, I'm glad that in its tenth year, the RVW Society has seen fit to award honours to distinguished scholars and conductors. I was at Gloucester for the presentation to Richard Hickox, which was fully justified. But I hope the Society will soon do the honourable thing and similarly acknowledge Handley for his passionate commitment to our cause with his wonderful concert performances and recordings.

Tony Williams, Dublin

Religion

In his famous letter to Swaffham Primary School in 1958 at the close of his life, Vaughan Williams wrote that "music will enable you to see past facts to the very essence of things...look through magic casements and see what lies beyond." The New Testament Epistle to the Hebrews assures its readers that "Ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." And an old Lakeland song runs "The Mardale hills are glorious, the Mardale hills are grand. if you climb the hills of Mardale, boys, you'll see the promised land."

The common factor in these and other human experiences is that of ascent and arrival, question and pilgrimage; and I point out that probably the very last words that Vaughan Williams set to music, in his Christmas piece *The First Nowell*, were "To seek for a king was their intent, and to follow the star wherever it went." I wonder whether those words provide an epitaph for our beloved composer, whose star took him through dark and difficult places – "to the brink of black nihilism" writes Byron Adams, with whom I can't quite concur that "there is no faith, no hope, no love" at the conclusion of the *Seventh Symphony*. Wilfrid Mellers' marvellous book points out that the final sighs of the women's chorus are earthed on G, "a tonic of sorts; the triumphal G major triad with which the prelude had concluded is not totally forgotten. Man lives to fight another day: or at least if Scott did not, Vaughan Williams did...the music of his last years does not deny the death of the heart, though it tells us that miracles may still happen."

As for Christian Agnostics, Archbishop Michael Ramsay (Canterbury, 1961-1974) called himself one. It all depends what you mean by "Christian" and "agnostic", as Dr. Joad would have said. Was Brahms one? asks Byron Adams. Certainly there is a "chilly wind" (Swafford biography) is the *Schicksalslied* etc., and Brahms called himself a "severely melancholic person"; but (pace Adams) this is compatible with Christian belief in a world that is both demi-paradise and vale of tears. The devout Dvorák said that "Brahms believed in nothing", but his *Requiem* is so impressive that matters can't be left at that. The writer Arthur Abell reported Brahms as saying in Autumn 1896, shortly before his death, that "all true inspiration comes from God. There is no great composer who has ever been an atheist, and there never will be." This, if credible, should settle the matter; but Abell stated that his book *Talks with Great Composers* was embargoed by Brahms till half a century after he had died, and then it was published in 1955 or so by the Psychic Book Club of London, an eccentric route which failed to reach concerned musicians in general. But Santeri Levas, Sibelius' live-in secretary, draws on it, however, besides quoting the Finn as claiming that "Music is on a higher plane than anything else in this world...It is brought to life by means of the Logos, the divine in art."

It appears that Brahms had kept doors within him closed because of his defensive reticence, yet did open them to Abell and Joachim. The *Requiem* said what he wanted to say, in widely acceptable words.

Frank McManus, Todmorden.

more...

During a music course I attend I have written essays on Ralph Vaughan Williams and I have questioned in some of my writings his claimed agnosticism. I offer a few thoughts.

In her book *RVW – A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, Ursula Vaughan Williams writes on Ralph's sentiments after watching the Oberammergau Passion Play of 1890: "This visit made him realise how little religion meant to him." My response was were are told how *little* religion meant to him. Therefore we can assume that it still meant *something*. He was after all only eighteen.

The religious output of Vaughan Williams does not reflect that statement. Michael Kennedy's *The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, Second Edition lists twenty-three compositions under CHURCH MUSIC (Motets, Anthems etc., excluding hymns and major works for chorus and full orchestra). Under CHORUS AND ORCHESTRA (and/or Solo Singers) there are at least seventeen devotional works. The list of hymn tunes is also considerable. All this is an impressive achievement for an agnostic. In addition, consider his grasp of the Holy Bible. For example: the exquisite short anthem composed for the Communion within the Coronation Service for Queen Elizabeth II taken from Psalm 34, verse 8, *O taste and see*. All this represents a profound knowledge of the content of devotional and sacred material. From knowledge at this level comes recognition and possible acceptance.

Moreover, reflect on Vaughan Williams' work on revising *Hymns Ancient and Modern*. Percy Dearmer told him in 1904 that the task would last about two months. One year and ten months later he completed the work. Published in 1906, the new *English Hymnal* was the finest of its kind. Is this a suggestion of submitting to Christianity and religion despite its being denied?

In conclusion, it must not be forgotten that his father died before Ralph was three years old. Had his father lived and become a guiding force in his upbringing, would the adult Vaughan Williams have become a Christian, given that Arthur Vaughan Williams was a clergyman?

E. Anne Webb, Ealing

more...

Further to my letter on being a member of the RVW Society. I received the June 2005 Journal with eager anticipation, it contained articles on RVW and religion, a subject that had always fascinated me. By the time I read the first contribution I was wilting. Had I learned anything? Not much. Next I am treated to the writer's views on modern church music! Then, as if it could get any worse a treatise on Pantheism. It may come as a surprise to the contributors but I am not interested in their views on today's church music, I am interested in RVW his life and music. Neither do I feel that the RVW Journal is forum for promoting Pantheism. A quick look on the web tells me he is already promoting these views elsewhere. Please can we confine are articles to RVW, his life and music and not use the journal as a platform to express our own prejudices and beliefs!

Clive Elgar, Norfolk.

Sir John in Love

I am grateful to the Journal (June 2005, p.11, Colin Lees' "RWV: What Might Have Been") for alerting me to the ENO's projected production of *Sir John in Love* next spring (according to the company's website, premiere performance is scheduled for 2 March 2006). It is especially for leads like this that I subscribe to the Journal: I am not a musician nor an expert but simply an amateur of music who life has been enriched by exposure to creations like RVW's that make this world a better place to live. (Indeed it was open reel tapes of works like the *London Symphony* that converted me to the cause of RVW and helped enable me to keep my sanity during service in Vietnam some 35 years ago.) The educational function of the Journal offers much to a person like me who does not have easy access to a library with large holdings of music books.

Having only once seen this beautiful, life-affirming and merry work on stage – respectably performed by the Bronx Opera in 1988 at the Hunter College Playhouse in New York City – I am excited at the prospect of

experiencing the piece brought to life by a major company and will make any effort to travel to the UK (for the first time since 1989) to attend a performance.

I am wondering if the Society might, in an informal kind of way, designate and advertise via the Journal one of the performances of *Sir John in Love* for RVW Society members to attend and somehow identify themselves to one another. Some kind of group presence for the organization during the intermission perhaps? Or an outing to a pub afterwards?

As I write, this all seems a little hare-brained: but what I'm aiming for is the idea that the Society could gain some visibility by associating itself with the rare and significant event that the revival of *Sir John* will in fact be.

Obviously, I oughtn't close this note without expressing my appreciation to the people who have undertaken to form and perpetuate the RVW Society. I am sure that this mission has required a lot of work, most of which, I fear (having had a little direct experience with such organizations), has been under-compensated – certainly monetarily and probably emotionally as well – but I hope that events like the upcoming production of the opera will be a source of satisfaction to those who have done much to carry forward the Vaughan Williams banner.

Tim Webster, New York

Violin Concerto

Thirty years ago, when I was a young doctor in the Royal Navy, I was in the grip of my initial obsession with Vaughan Williams' music. I was desperate to share this revelation and was driving my wife and friends up the wall. My job at the time was as a dockyard medical officer at Devonport Dockyard, an occupation of unbelievable tedium. Out of the blue, I was offered the job of Principal Medical Officer to HMS Hermes while it was doing sea trials. For ten days, I would be the head of the medical department of one of the navy's greatest ships. I boarded the aircraft carrier with my trusty reel-to-reel tape recorder and tapes of RVW. I had just discovered the *Violin Concerto* and had fallen in love with its beautiful slow movement. As I was listening one evening, there was a knock at my cabin door. It was another young officer and I prepared myself for a complaint about the noise. But no. What's that music? he asked. It is wonderful, so beautiful. I gave him all the details and I had my first convert! I am still waiting for a second. After leaving the ship, I never saw him again and wonder if he is a member of the society.

The version I had was the Supraphon version with Nora Grumlikova and the Prague Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Peter Maag. It remains my favourite version. The outer movements have marvellous rhythmic bite and the grave poetry of the slow movement is realised beautifully. Although it has a passionate climax, it is cooler than, say, the Cavatina of the 8th symphony, and it is this slightly understated lyricism that is one of its charms. This is not neo-classical music, as the concerto is often described, although the fast movements would fit the bill, if you must stick labels on things. Artists should give it the interpretive attention it deserves.

Gavin Bullock, Winchester

RVW by the Seaside

I live in Essex and, a few days ago, my daughter discovered something unexpected in the Summer School prospectus of Southend-on-Sea Adult Community College – a one-day course entitled "Ralph Vaughan Williams – A Life in Symphonies". The description read, "Vaughan Williams' cycle of symphonies represents one of the most significant artistic statements of the 20th Century. This course samples each one and seeks to confirm the status of the cycle as a whole."

I signed up, half expecting the course to be cancelled for lack of interest, but any doubts were quickly dispelled. Nearly twenty people attended and the tutor, Andy Rothwell, turned out to be extremely well informed. He presented a cogent, balanced and perceptive appraisal of Vaughan

Williams's symphonic output in chronological order with reference to other major works, both by Vaughan Williams and other composers, and also to other relevant examples from painting and literature. He established the historical context of each work and illustrated the discussion with numerous well-chosen excerpts from the symphonies themselves. Not everybody was familiar with the complete cycle and No 8 in particular (which, because of its brevity, Andy was able to play in its entirety) proved to be a revelation to many.

I've since discovered that a number of other interesting courses are planned and I've already pencilled myself in for 2 hours a week for 15 weeks on the "Music of the British Isles" which starts in January. For this the prospectus says, "Britain was once infamously called 'The Land without Music'. This course hopes to debunk this theory once and for all by featuring a chronicle of the rich heritage of British music from the Renaissance to the present day."

I'm looking forward to that!

Oliver Chadwick, Leigh-on-Sea

The London Symphony: 1913 v 1936

I'm wondering if members attended, or heard on the radio, the recent Prom performance of the *London Symphony* (1913)? I bought the Hickox/LSO CD in 2002; found it interesting, though the long quietnesses didn't suit my impaired hearing; played it from time to time; and put a small label on the case, "N.B. Band 5, from 7.00 to 9.00 mins." (The *Andantino* which the Chairman highlighted in his notes accompanying the CD).

I'm wondering whether others found the Prom performance even better than that on the disc – or was it just the luck of my mood?

On the whole I'll be content to enjoy "1913" as a stage towards "1936", but I found the last movement fiercer in its climaxes – with even panic before the *Andantino* which brought my 77 year-old heart into my mouth, and awe in the ultimate climax which follows. Some critics have, as you know, alleged that the middle of the last movement is the "weak spot" of "1936" – Hugh Ottoway in his *BBC Music Guide to VW Symphonies* claims that "the change to the *allegro*...sounds forced, as does the strenuous busyness... as soon as the march returns, the touch is sure again" – so should not RVW have been charged with criminal damage in dropping the *Andantino*? Can he not somehow be dragged back to re-work the middle? Or dare Mr Hickox or someone try just replacing the middle, using the "1913" 4th movement in lieu of 36 up to and including the Westminster Chimes?

In addition to its haunting beauty, the *Andantino* enhances the climax which follows after the very effective return of the "March" theme.

Frank McManus, Todmorden

Those top tens...

In an article in one of last year's journal's you may recall (wishful thinking?) I wrote concerning the hundred greatest Britons. I concluded on a lighter note with my top ten list of composers. Subsequently I received a response from another RVW Society member, John Eldon, including not only his list of top ten composers but other top tens including an RVW top ten. He went further to suggest surveying members as to their preferences regarding different aspect of music and compiling the results for general interest and possible use in future events such as concerts and festivals.

To that end I've decided to set the ball rolling by asking members to write in with their top ten RVW works.

Now, I realise that the task of actually deciding upon a top ten is difficult. Should the symphonies be given preference over the choral works? Should the minor works remain minor and not be included? Personally I would find the choice between the symphonies very difficult; each has a unique character and atmosphere. For me, nos 6, 9, 5 and the full sized 1 are of equal merit, but after considerable thought I would choose the ninth with its eerie atmospheric opening and spine tingling waves of

sound at the conclusion as my ultimate choice. As for other works, some pieces which rarely reach the concert hall would find their way into my top choices, such as the *Oxford Elegy*, *49th Parallel* and the *Piano Concerto*.

In conclusion I'd say that although an RVW top ten may seem trivial at first glance, I have found in considering mine that such a task focuses the mind upon what elements in his music make RVW's works really "great" – for great they certainly are.

To set you musing here's John Eldon's Top Eight:

Fifth Symphony and *Sinfonia Antartica*

Tallis Fantasia, *An Oxford Elegy*, *Dona Nobis Pacem*, *Old 100th*, *The Lake in the Mountains*.

So, if you can spare the time, please send your top ten to me at robfurieux@hotmail.com or send your choices on a postcard (with somewhere picturesque on the other side!) to me at:

6, Trevethan Park, Bere Ferrers, Yelverton, Devon PL20 7JW.

In due course I'll compile the results and reveal what in the members' opinion is RVW's top ten culminating in what we think is his greatest work!

Rob Furneaux, Devon

FROM THE EDITOR

Editing the Ralph Vaughan Williams Society Journal is certainly a huge responsibility, but it is also a great pleasure and an even greater privilege. One of the great joys which comes with the job is being able to choose the theme for each issue. The whole question of Vaughan Williams and religious belief is one which has intrigued me for many years, and one which I believe to be central, perhaps the key issue to an understanding of this astonishing composer. I was impressed by the weighty articles which appeared and have been equally impressed by the thoughts and opinions of those members who have contacted me in response to them. But why were so many of you unwilling to have your views published in the Journal?

I think lovers of Vaughan Williams' music will always be divided on this subject, which turns on the extent to which we believe what the composer himself said. One of the frustrating things about editing the Journal is that one should not use it as a platform for airing one's own views, so let me be content to say that perhaps the wisest words on the subject, in my opinion at least, are contained in Frank McManus's letter above. He writes: "The devout Dvorák said that "Brahms believed in nothing", but his Requiem is so impressive that matters can't be left at that."

Members will remember – many may even sympathise with – my computer problems outlined in the last issue. I'm happy to announce that these are now resolved, at least for the moment, and even happier that the first two items to appear on the Letters pages are those which were lost but now are found!

Your thoughts on Walt Whitman and Vaughan Williams' lifelong enthusiasm for the poet are requested for the February 2006 Journal. After that we are turning our attention to the symphony which Michael Kennedy, in the most recent edition of his Vaughan Williams biography, has come to think of as the most original of the nine, the Pastoral. I think there is enough in that wonderful work to fill the whole Journal several times over.

William Hedley

AN AMATEUR PREMIERE

John Pearce, Associate Conductor of the New Tyneside Orchestra, previews an adventurously programmed Spring Concert, Saturday March 18th 2006

Which piece of English music is being described here?

“ *The symphony is the diametric opposite of everything that the composer’s public image leads one to believe. It is also one of his greatest works and one of the finest symphonies the twentieth century has produced; properly played, it can be overwhelming in performance. It must be heard in the flesh; loudspeakers tame the huge, elemental forces it unleashes into shadows of themselves. It embraces chaos, disorder, unreason, of the kind Vaughan Williams confronted in his Fourth and Sixth symphonies. It therefore makes not the least attempt to be ingratiating.*” (*Philharmonic Concerto, The Life and Music of Sir Malcolm Arnold*, Piers Burton Page, Methuen 1994.)

The chances are that even readers of this journal, who almost by definition are interested in 20th century English music, would need to think long and hard before choosing the right composer – Malcolm Arnold – and the right symphony – the 7th. Although Arnold’s music is nowadays better represented in CD catalogues than many other British composers, and although his music is now enjoying a wider and growing acceptance, professional performances of his music remain relative rarities. In 2001, the BBC went some way towards mitigating years of neglect (some have called it active hostility both to the man and his music) by mounting a handsome, week long birthday festival which included performances of all his symphonies, but since then there has been little more to report.

Arnold’s symphonies represent the core of his achievement; a musical autobiography beginning in 1949, when the 28 year-old composer conducted Symphony No. 1 at the Cheltenham Festival, and drawing to a close thirty seven years on when he completed the 9th, following a six year period during which severe mental illness had prevented him from composing at all. Establishment attitudes to Arnold are epitomised by the fact that it was only after a further six year wait, and the persistent lobbying of the late Charles Groves, that this symphony was given its world premiere under Groves’ direction at an afternoon concert in Manchester in 1992.

The 7th Symphony belongs to the Irish phase of Arnold’s life, a period characterised by increasingly erratic behaviour fuelled in part by dazzling alcoholic excess, partly by loneliness following the ending of his second marriage, and culminating in a serious suicide attempt and hospitalisation. Little of this personal chaos shows through technically in the finished product, a tightly organised and perfectly proportioned piece of music without a wasted note or a redundant paragraph. Arnold himself described it as a *loose musical portrait of his three children, Katherine, Robert and Edward* although it is only in the finale that a direct musical reference makes this at all clear. Edward, Arnold’s youngest son, was diagnosed as autistic in the early seventies, and his love of the music of *The Chieftains* is characterised in a brief “Irish” episode.

To my ears the symphony reflects Arnold’s own personality (insofar as I understand it from my reading of various biographies) as much as it portrays his family. The volcanic mood-swings, the frenetic and well-lubricated socialising, the bleakness and pain of mental illness, the anger and the self-loathing of a man who finds it impossible to love himself realistically - these are all vividly and tellingly realised in music of gripping narrative power.

In forty-five years of concert-going, admittedly *in partibus infidelium* on the banks of the Tyne, I have never heard a live performance of any

Arnold symphony. As conductor for twenty years of the North Tyneside Youth Orchestra I programmed as much Arnold as a very competent young orchestra could handle – both of the *Little Suites*, the wonderful *Guitar Concerto* (an unforgettable evening in the company of Australian musician Craig Ogden) and the *Double Violin Concerto* (one of Arnold’s authentic masterpieces). It was not until 2004, however, when I was appointed Associate Conductor of the New Tyneside Orchestra, that I saw an opportunity to rehearse and direct musically credible performances of some of Arnold’s larger scale works, and his *Symphony no 7, opus 113* will form the central item in a weekend of music-making by the **New Tyneside Orchestra** to take place on Saturday and Sunday March 18th and 19th 2006 in the concert hall of the King’s School, Tynemouth, Tyne and Wear.

The symphony will be the climax of the Saturday evening concert, and will, so far as I can determine, be a world première in terms of amateur performance. An adventurous spirit also informs the rest of the programme: Gershwin’s *Cuban Overture*, Copland’s *Four Dance Episodes from Rodeo*, Gordon Jacob’s arrangement of the Vaughan Williams *English Folk Song Suite*, as well as one real curiosity, a piece for narrator and orchestra called *Tom Sawyer’s Saturday* by John Dankworth. The story relates how Tom Sawyer not only gulled his credulous friends into whitewashing his Aunt Polly’s fence (which she has made him do on his holiday Saturday as a punishment for dirtying his best clothes) but also got them to pay him for allowing them to do his work for him. Dankworth’s setting is inventive and appealingly jazzy, and contains a number of musical jokes which are (unusually) both original and funny.

Tom Sawyer’s Saturday will also form part of the second concert presented by **New Tyneside Orchestra** that weekend – a children’s concert to raise money for a children’s charity. It will be framed by a repeat of the *Cuban Overture*, *Hoe Down* from the *Four Dance Episodes*, the *Folk Song Suite*, a suite of film music from *The Sting*, and another English rarity, the *Light Music for Strings* by Alan Rawsthorne. Since narrative music always goes down well with children, we have also included Saint Saens’ *Danse Macabre* featuring a young violinist from Tynemouth, Rachel Stroud, making her debut with the orchestra.

Writing this article has made me realise anew one of the advantages which amateur performers have over professional orchestras, which is that the amateurs are generally speaking less beholden to accountants when it comes to programming. Amateur orchestras tend to be supported by what a friend of mine calls “owners and trainers” often irrespective of what is on the programme; and, additionally, the players themselves enjoy the luxury of being able to believe in what they are doing – something which a conductor has the chance of selling to them as part of the rehearsal period.

All of this makes me hope that some of my fellow RVW Society members may find the time next March to take a weekend off in the National Park of Northumberland, hear the amateur premiere of an English masterpiece, and enjoy the kind of adventurous programme which for many professional orchestras would be vetoed by the imperatives of the box office.

Anyone wishing to know more should log on to New Tyneside Orchestra’s website: www.newtyneorch.org.uk or email: heljon@blueyonder.co.uk if you prefer to contact me directly.

Concert Reviews



RVW's Music in Aberdeen

It may not be recognised, outside the City of Aberdeen and the surrounding area, how much excellent music-making, of many varied types, goes on in the north-east of Scotland. For example, readers of this Journal will be interested to learn that in the past year alone performances, professional and amateur, have been given in Aberdeen of Vaughan Williams's Fifth Symphony, the Oboe Concerto, and the *Sea Symphony*. On 21 May 2005, a concert given in St Machar's Cathedral, Old Aberdeen by the Aberdeen Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Gareth John, and the Simpson Singers, directed by Moira Hunter, included two further works by Vaughan Williams.

The concert was held in celebration of the 500th anniversary of the birth of Thomas Tallis and three anthems by Tallis were splendidly sung in the course of the evening. However, the first item on the programme was the third of the nine psalm tunes written by Tallis in 1567 for Archbishop Parker's Psalter, sung to the words *Why fumth in flight the Gentiles spite, in fury raging stout?* This is, of course, the sublime tune which Vaughan Williams took as the starting point for his *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* and it was this work, in a most moving interpretation, that immediately followed.

The acoustics of this fine mediaeval building are perfect and appear to make music glow (if audible glowing is possible) with no hint of messy reverberation. In the *Fantasia* the tracery of the writing for solo quartet stood out in precise detail, the resonant chords of the full string forces were overwhelmingly majestic, yet the soft, echoing chords were able to make their full magical effect. It was a noble account of a profound work.

The other Vaughan Williams work was *The Lark Ascending* in an outstandingly beautiful performance by the soloist, Cheryl Crockett. Technically immaculate, the interpretation was one of remarkable sensitivity. For this writer the work had previously been only a very beautiful rhapsody, characterised by pyrotechnic virtuosity on the part of the soloist, and while admittedly reminiscent of the song and flight of a skylark, yet only incidentally and – dare one say? – almost superficially so. On this occasion *The Lark Ascending* was revealed not merely as a piece of music but a living tone painting. The wonderful acoustic of the Cathedral seemed to enfold the listener in the music rather than dissipate the sound or blur it. The bird's singing, dipping, swooping, rising and final fading from sight were audible, and almost visible. The musical genre suddenly seemed to be that of what one is told is Chinese or Japanese music, something much more immediate than, say, a Debussy Prelude. Cheryl Crockett's playing embodied a non-human happiness (a contradiction in terms, but an appropriate one) and it is impossible to imagine the rapt ending being more miraculously breath-taking. It was not so much a performance as a profound revelation and, judging by the applause for the soloist at the end, not only for this writer.

The concert – yet another feather in the cap of these amateur music-makers of faultlessly professional standard – also included the *St Paul's Suite* by Holst and the folksong-based *Suite for Strings* by John Rutter.

J.M.Y. Simpson

James Gilchrist at the Lichfield Festival

Two nights before I had the pleasure of hearing Gilchrist as the crowning glory (or possibly saving grace) of Woodstock Choral Society's performance of Finzi's glorious *Intimations of Immortality*, I saw him at the Lichfield Festival giving a recital of English solo song including Warlock's *Curlew*, Vaughan Williams' *On Wenlock Edge*, and other Warlock and Gurney songs. The setting was the resonant Lady Chapel of Lichfield Cathedral – gratifyingly packed.

The Goldner String Quartet – an Australian group, but well known to

British audiences following their frequent festival and Wigmore Hall appearances – opened the concert with Goossens' *Phantasy Quartet*. They gave a warm, sensitive, lush and lyrical performance of this utterly delightful and quintessentially English work.

Warlock's haunting *Curlew* ensued. From the very first note, Gilchrist showed an excellent understanding of the work, setting the sombre mood perfectly and instantaneously in a deeply atmospheric, vivacious and intense rendition. My only criticisms were that Gilchrist was possibly a little too lyrical, and consequently not quite plaintive, ghostly or chilling enough, and that the spoken "The boughs have withered because I have told them my dream" at the end of *I Cried when the Moon* needed to be a little starker.

This line was almost too musical, dreamy and "pretty", as Gilchrist put notes to the words rather than invested them with the terrifying harshness of an almost whispered speech. The ending of the work was wonderful, the words "The banners of East and West" etc. deeply impassioned and heart-felt. The Goldner String Quartet was also excellent in this, along with Gareth Hulse on cor anglais and Michael Cox on the flute. On the whole, this was one of the best live performances of *Curlew* I've had the fortune to hear.

A selection of Warlock and Gurney songs followed, with Anna Tilbrook as accompanist, commencing with Warlock's version of *Sleep*. I felt that this needed a little more anguish, but was pleased with the way Gilchrist brought out the nuances – his excellent dramatisation of the word "little" in little joy", for instance.

Gilchrist's outstanding stage presence and interaction with the audience really came to the fore in the following two songs. In Gurney's *Bread and cherries* we could visibly see, in him, the excitement of the boys buying cherries, and he also brought Warlock's *Rest Sweet Nymphs* vividly to life with his brilliant communication, and his lovely, pleasantly dreamy, tone.

Gilchrist then brought fire and fervour to *The Folly of being comforted* by Ivor Gurney, and enhanced a charming version of Warlock's *Cradle Song* by prefacing it with a brief comment about how delighted he was to be singing that rare item – a lullaby for the male voice. He clearly relished the song, giving a beautifully lilting and tender performance. He took Warlock's ensuing *Take oh take those lips away* very slowly indeed, but the pace worked well, and didn't detract.

I had attended Gilchrist's English solo song recital at the Wigmore in May earlier this year, where he had programmed both versions of *Sleep* almost right next to each other (with only *Rest Sweet Nymphs* inbetween). I felt that this was rather unfair on the lesser of the two songs (no, I'm not saying which I think it is!), and was therefore pleased to see them here at opposite ends of the individual songs section. At his Wigmore song recital, Gilchrist had been musically perfect but just slightly lacking in emotion, and the contrast in this Lichfield Festival recital was startling. This was particularly noticeable in Gurney's *Sleep*, which had been too controlled for my liking at the Wigmore. Here, less exact and precise musically, it was more raw and emotional as a tormented Gilchrist poured out his soul. "O let my joys" was absolutely harrowing as he let rip so much that – most atypically – he almost lost control. It was absolutely wonderful to see an artist so caught up in, surely, one of the greatest songs ever written.

Vaughan Williams' *On Wenlock Edge* was also tremendously powerful. In his wild and dramatic performance of the opening, eponymous, song, Gilchrist created such an incredible sense of the power of the wind that it was almost as if the whole cathedral was being buffeted by a gale. Then, with *From Far, from Eve and Morning*, the wind suddenly dispersed as we reached an amazing sense of stillness, calm and peace –exceptionally beautifully sung.

He provided an excellent juxtaposition between the living man and dead in *Is my Team Ploughing*, although more by dynamics rather than by ghostly tone contrasting hale. His interpretation of the final line “Never ask me whose” was brilliant, as he sang the line with fierce defiance. I have heard and seen singers deliver that final comment with a range of emotions - fear, shame, embarrassment, anger - but never defiance, and it works, oh so well!

Oh when I was in love with you perhaps needed a greater sense of fun in the first verse, but *Bredon Hill* was brilliantly effective. Gilchrist created a beautiful sense of contentment in the opening verses, which made it all the more chilling when disasters strikes. His telling of the disaster was tremendously stark, bleak and dark – heart-breakingly so, which led to a deeply moving “O noisy bells be dumb”.

The concert finished with a gorgeously dreamy rendition of *Clun*. It was, all in all, a spectacular recital, well worth the long slog up from London, as I think he performed these songs as well as I’ve ever heard them performed – certainly with better characterisation than I’ve encountered before. It is fantastic to see him championing English music, and communicating it so well to receptive audiences.

Em Marshall

Proms Round-Up

At last a decent amount of English music at the Proms! It would appear that the lobbying of Nicholas Kenyon by British music fans has finally paid off (thank you, Simon Heffer!) Let us hope that Mr. Kenyon noted the packed auditorium for these concerts and realises the tremendous demand for these wonderful works.

The Festival opened in splendid style with *A Child of Our Time* performed on the opening night, followed by Sullivan’s *HMS Pinafore* on the second, and Purcell’s *The Fairy Queen* on the third. The Sullivan was conducted by Sir Charles Mackerras and included the overture from *The Yeomen of the Guard*, as well as Mackerras’ own sparkling Sullivan arrangement, *Pineapple Poll*, a collection of tunes primarily drawn from the less well-known operettas. The BBC Concert Orchestra was on top form, and a gratifying, if rather emotional, presentation followed the interval when Peter Maxwell Davies handed over the first ever Queen’s Medal for Music award to Mackerras.

The Purcell, with Paul McCreech conducting the Gabrieli Consort and Players, was equally well-performed, with an especially amusing and brilliant performance from Jonathan Best and excellent singing from all soloists.

RVW was pleasingly well represented this year (although still not as much as some of us would like!), with some outstanding performances. On July 19th Richard Hickox gave the third performance in recent times of the original version of the *London Symphony*. I had been fortunate enough to be present at the first Barbican performance in November 2003, and didn’t believe then that it could get any better. I was wrong. I must admit to being something of a fan of the original version. I *know* it waffles a bit, I *know* it is long-winded and rambling – but it contains such gorgeous music (that ravishing Andantino episode!) that I find the omissions in the revised version a great shame. I am of a similar mind to the Chairman, who tells me that he cannot now listen to the revised version. I had the pleasure of his company at the Proms concert, and completely agree with his summary that the performance was “perfect”. Hickox has clearly got the work under his skin. The symphony was well-paced – exciting but not rushed, passionate, profound and gripping. I cannot imagine that it could be better performed. The symphony was in the second half of a programme that also included Britten’s *Quatre Chansons Françaises*, with Susan Gritton as soprano soloist – a remarkable work for a fourteen year-old, and that night given a sympathetic performance.

Vaughan Williams’ first and sixth symphonies were also given an airing this year. The sea is one of the themes of this year’s Proms, and the *Sea Symphony* was played only a few days after the *London*, with Gerard

Schwarz conducting the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and Choir, and Janice Watson and Dwayne Croft as soloists. Again, the performance was exemplary, full of vitality. However, as one friend, a well-respected baritone, remarked to me, it seems a shame that they didn’t get a British baritone to sing the solo – someone, perhaps, who has the work more “in his blood” than the American Croft who, although good enough, did not have either the power to fill the hall, nor the conviction to convey the spirit of the work to its full.

The *Tallis Fantasia* featured as one of a number of British works in a concert on August 8th. Martyn Brabbins conducted the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, who stood for the *Tallis* – a nice touch, I felt. The performance was vibrant, rich and luscious, and the quartet’s playing was remarkably sweet-toned. It might perhaps have been more effective to have had a greater separation between the groups of players to increase the distancing effect, but it nonetheless worked well, and I could not fault the performance. It was followed by an unexceptional performance by Steven Osborne (with score) of Tippett’s Piano Concerto. Holst’s *Planets* comprised the second half. I must admit to having been rather disappointed by this. Brabbins is said to have modelled his performance on Holst’s own (Pearl – a CD I highly recommend). Although Brabbins did roughly follow Holst’s tempi, his lack of phrasing was *not* after Holst’s example. Despite the fact that *Mars* was vigorous and propelling, it somehow lacked the exhilaration that it should command. *Venus* was tender, *Jupiter* noble without being overly sentimental, *Saturn* suitably menacing and *Uranus* lively and well-driven. Yet, particularly in comparison with Hickox at the Proms in 2003 or at the RFH in the autumn of last year, the work lacked spirit. I cannot comment on the ensuing performance of Colin Matthews’ *Pluto* as I was not there to witness it, having very manifestly and blatantly marched out at the regrettably truncated end of *Neptune* – the women’s voices not even being allowed to die away before Brabbins started on the impostor piece. I cannot think of a more preposterous outrage than this. How, for example, would one feel if a new friend of Elgar’s was discovered and a composer wrote a Variation for him, and not content with having it a separate work “modelled” on the *Enigma*, decided to tag it onto the end of *EDU* without a break, curtailing the last notes of *EDU* to run into it more easily? I cannot comprehend how this piece has been so readily accepted by the British public.

Sir Colin Davis was the conductor for Vaughan Williams’ Sixth Symphony, with an orchestra comprised of students from the Juilliard School and the Royal Academy of Music. Davis captured the power and drive brilliantly in the opening Allegro, his second movement was stark, chilling, full of menace and intensity, with a most amazingly unrelenting climax, and the Scherzo was fierce and wild. Unfortunately, the Epilogue was utterly ruined by the audience’s appalling behaviour – an acute exacerbation of chronic bronchitis seemed to have afflicted them, as they coughed away, constantly, completely unrestrained. I saw not one handkerchief out to muffle the sound, and wondered if this was a deliberate attack on the movement as one cougher started up violently as soon as another had finished with the result that barely a phrase was free of this intrusion.

Elgar got a reasonable look-in this year as well, with *The Dream of Gerontius*, his First Symphony and *Enigma* being performed within a fortnight. There were other English works too, including Samuel Coleridge-Taylor’s Violin Concerto, Rawsthorne’s Piano Concerto. No. 2 played by Howard Shelley and Britten’s *Four Sea Interludes* from *Peter Grimes*. Even English song composers were not forgotten in Thomas Allen’s Cadogan Hall recital – the first of the Proms chamber music concerts.

Altogether, I have been pretty impressed by this year’s Proms in comparison to the parsimonious attitude to English music of previous years. The range of English music has been surprisingly broad and the performances have, as a general rule, been excellent. Whatever the reason for this change of heart it is only to be welcomed.

Em Marshall

John Jayberd

is Alive and Well in Diss!

BURGATE SINGERS

Skelton Festival 2004

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS
Diss Corn Hall 4 December 2004

BURGATE SINGERS & Orchestra

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS
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The Lark Ascending & *Serenade to Music*

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During the year of 2004, my hometown of Diss celebrated the 500th anniversary of the arrival here of John Skelton as the Rector of the Church of St. Mary the Virgin.

Thirty-five varied event were arranged throughout the year: Tudor banquets, exhibitions, demonstrations, plays (*The Magnificence*) and poetry readings including one by the Poet Laureate, Andrew Motion.

The high point of these events was a concert of music by Vaughan Williams: *The Lark Ascending* and *Serenade to Music* centred around, of course, *Five Tudor Portraits*.

The Burgate Singers – a local choir of great repute – and soloists, very ably supported by the Gala Orchestra, gave the concert at Diss Corn Hall on Saturday, December 4.

The performance of Jayberd was as lively and rumbustious as Skelton's verse and Vaughan Williams' music! It is amazing to note that this was the first time Jayberd had been performed in his old parish of Diss!

Five Tudor Portraits was written for and first performed at the Norwich Festival on September 26 1936, and it has taken sixty-eight years to travel the twenty-five miles to Diss. I doubt that a further sixty-eight years will pass before it is heard here again, such was the great success of its belated homecoming.

Leonard Evans

From The Sunday Times, October 6 1957

spotted by Jeffrey Davis

THE LONDON SYMPHONIST AT 85



FEW musicians – few men, indeed, in any walk of life – are so universally loved and revered as Dr. Ralph Vaughan Williams, O.M., who on Saturday next, October 12, celebrates his eighty-fifth birthday.

For many years Dr. Vaughan Williams was to be found mostly in Surrey, for his home was in Dorking and he enjoyed the society of such learned, witty and unusual neighbours as Mr. E. M. Forster, Sir Ralph Wedgwood and R. C. Trevelyan. Many of his most important works were written in his bungalow, "White Gates," and he was a regular and welcome contributor to local music-making.

After his marriage, in 1953, to Mrs. Ursula Wood, he and his wife, with whom he is seen above, moved to London; and now he is often to be seen listening with unabated interest to other men's

music whenever something new or unfamiliar is to be heard. The man who volunteered for the R.A.M.C. in 1914 at the age of forty-two has a sense of national duty not always found among creative artists; himself a Gloucestershire man, and the son of a country parson, he has a deep love of the English countryside which shines out as much in his music as in the gift of 470 acres in the Surrey Highlands which he made to the National Trust in 1944.

He has kept into old age the curiosity, the massive common sense and the flair for fun which have long been associated with his unique and mountainous frame; and the kindly and straightforward affection which he bestows upon his friends has been returned a thousandfold by those who, knowing only the music, yet feel that they know and love the man.

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Englishness in Music

A talk by Lewis Foreman

Members will want to make a note that on March 18 2006 Lewis Foreman will be giving a talk on the subject of *Englishness in Music*. This is a joint event with The Elgar Society and will take place at 2.15pm at the Methodist Church in Westbury-on-Trym, near Bristol. Further details will appear with the February Journal.

Crossword Solutions:

ACROSS:
1. Ah, Sunflower, 5. This Day, 6. Mass,
8. Proud Nancy, 12. Queen's Hall, 14. Bryn,
15. D'Aranyi, 17. A Poison Tree.

DOWN:
1. Antiphon, 2. Sailor, 3. Nid, 4. Rest, 7. Snows, 9. Dives,
10. Verline, 11. Banner, 13. Aria, 16. Run.

Book Review



Gerald Finzi: His Life and Music, Diana McVeagh
The Boydell Press, £25.00 / \$49.95, Reviewed by Rolf Jordan



Diana McVeagh's biography of Gerald Finzi has an almost legendary status among aficionados of English music. First suggested by Finzi's widow Joy shortly after his death (Finzi had enjoyed her book on Elgar), rumours of its preparation have been circulating from as far back as 1978, when it was mentioned on the back of a Lyrita LP of Finzi's orchestral music. Intriguingly, Vaughan Williams had put forward Simona Pakenham as Finzi's first biographer just as long ago, so delighted was he with her study of him (which still remains one of the most stimulating RVW books almost fifty

years on). In fact, the first full biography appeared in 1997, a long and thoroughly objective study by Stephen Banfield, commissioned by the Finzi Trust and published by Faber. It was closely followed by John Dressler's *Gerald Finzi: a Bio-Bibliography* (Greenwood Press), and 2001 saw the Boydell Press issue *Letters of Gerald Finzi and Howard Ferguson*, edited by the latter (putting the seal on his life's work) and Michael Hurd. The Finzi reader has been kept busy, but excited rumours of this book hovered behind them all, as McVeagh has been a key advocate over the years, with her Finzi entries in *Grove* and *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, and many authoritative talks and liner notes. Despite missing the marketing opportunity of Finzi's centenary celebrations in 2001 (after all, the Banfield book was still new), the book is now out in time to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of his death next year. It is sad, though, to note how close in time those significant dates actually are.

Much has been said on the tragedy in Finzi's life – indeed, it seems to be the favoured angle of many a liner and programme note writer – of the deaths of his father, three brothers and beloved teacher Ernest Farrar before he was twenty; the spell in a sanatorium in his twenties; the diagnosis of Hodgkin's Disease (a form of leukaemia) that brought about his early death. Poor Gerald, living life under a cloud. Even the standard-issue portraits bear this view out: he hated being photographed and tended to hide grimly behind his pipe when trapped. McVeagh, however, refreshingly underplays any morbidity, and keeps the biographical sections clear of pathos, reminding us that Finzi actually had thirty years of largely untroubled life, and reveals him to be a happy man for much of the time.

Following that undeniably traumatic youth, Finzi was allowed to indulge his comforting vision of becoming a pastoral composer via a move to rural Gloucestershire with his distracted mother, and he soon cultivated friendships (he was very persistent) with various artistic personalities. Soon, he was writing works in clear RVW/Butterworth homage, such as the *Severn Rhapsody* and his 'war requiem' *Requiem da Camera*. The young Finzi is shown as self-absorbed, serious, and not averse to hero-worship; he claimed himself as first to make the pilgrimage to Vaughan Williams's birthplace at Down Ampney in 1921. Within a few years, not undue to Finzi's doggedness, the two men became great friends (see *Vaughan Williams in Perspective* pp.203/*RVW Society Journal* No. 10). McVeagh doesn't shy away from showing this determined side of Finzi's character, that sense of youthful idealism (the ungenerous might call it pretentiousness) he never really lost. He was always prone to what his

son Christopher calls 'Dad's fads', which not only extended to saving rare apples, but neglected composers and poets. His early life decisions seem to have been encouraged by passages in books, which were another major passion: his literary collection alone eventually stretched to 4,000 volumes.

The intensity partially relaxed after his marriage to Joyce Black in 1933. A true kindred spirit who took the 'art game' as seriously as he did, Joy's terse journal entries (woven throughout McVeagh's narrative), surprisingly portray her as the more distant character of the two. Their purpose-built house, Church Farm, at Ashmansworth, near Newbury in Berkshire practically became a centre for the arts, with house guests of all ages and disciplines. Vaughan Williams and Edmund Blunden worked there, younger artists and musicians were encouraged; Gerald set about composing his largest works; Joy her portrait drawings.

A remarkable sense of atmosphere pervades this book, with the World War Two section particularly evocative; there's a tangible sense of dread after the retreat from Dunkirk in 1940. Finzi feared the worst possible outcome of the Nazi war so much (he had long ignored his Jewish heritage) that he had a hiding place built into Church Farm, and we find him writing his 'musical will' entitled 'Absalom's Place', before leaving for his wartime job in London and telling Joy "To think that I, who wrote *Proud Songsters*, *Dies natalis*, *Farewell to Arms*, am to become a Principal in the Foreign Shipping relations department of the Ministry of War Transport. How fantastic – how unbelievably fantastic."

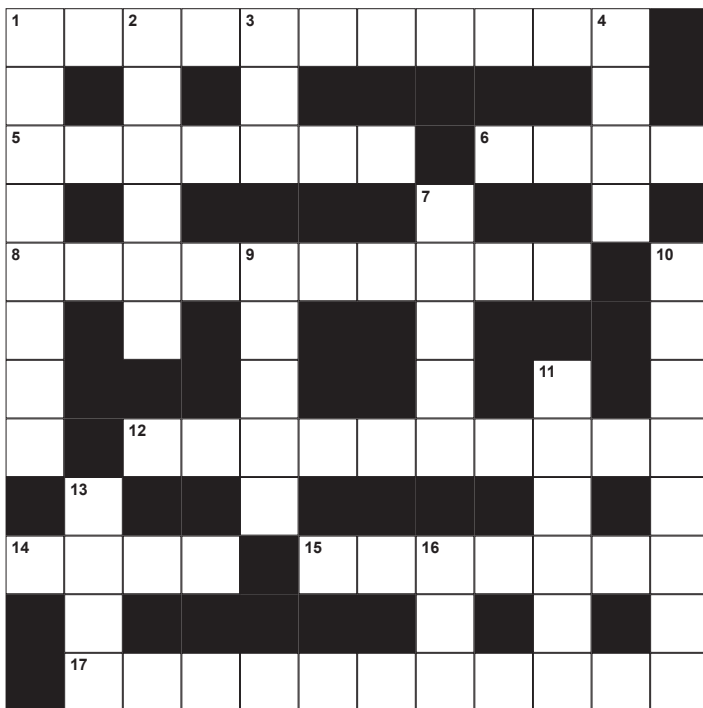
The ironic story of how Finzi contracted the virus that killed him whilst showing Vaughan Williams the top of Chosen Hill is well-known, yet so skilfully is the story told that it still comes as something as a shock: there could have been so much more.

Diana McVeagh's magnum opus has certainly been worth the wait. She has written a lively book that stands up with Simona Pakenham's *Ralph Vaughan Williams* in its mixture of passionate (yet unclouded) devotion and insight. One is immediately drawn closer to the music through McVeagh's finely distilled analysis, and it's impossible not to seek out recordings of the Cello Concerto, *Dies natalis*, the songs (the mighty 'Channel Firing' for instance) once more with gratitude.

The pictures chosen by McVeagh are indicative of her approach to her subject. Starting with the sweetest ever picture of a composer, moving through intimate family snaps to the last month of his life, they are an enjoyable selection, and positive proof that Finzi was indeed capable of smiling. There's also a remarkable picture of Joy, looking the absolute epitome of Pre-Raphaelite beauty, taken by Gerald. There's a late group photograph of a last gathering at the Three Choirs Festival, a real 'who's who': Joy, as ever lowering her height so as not to tower above her husband; Vaughan Williams sitting magisterially surrounded by 'honorary nieces'.

Readers of Stephen Banfield's oddly caustic biography may have come to wonder whether they actually like Finzi as a person, but I found McVeagh ultimately portrays a far more sympathetic character, with her most moving observation appearing on the very last page. That is not to say the two biographies are incompatible; they are a perfect pair read side-by-side and cross-referenced, and a more academic reader will always find Banfield's in-depth musicological analysis invaluable. But of the two books, this is unquestionably destined to be the standard biography of Gerald Finzi.

RVW Crossword No. 20 by Michael Gainsford



Across

1. 7/10 of the Blake Songs (2, 9)
5. Alternative title of Hodie (4, 3)
6. RVW's was in G minor (4)
8. Haughty girl appears in volume 1 of Folk Songs of Newfoundland (5, 5)
12. Site of first performance of Symphony No 4, later victim of the blitz (6, 4)
14. Calfaria or Mawr (4)
15. Second name(s) of seemingly wobbly soloist who gave first performance of the violin concerto (1, 6)
17. 2/10 of the Blake Songs (1, 6, 4)

Down

1. 'Let all the world' (8)
2. In the north, or dark-eyed (6)
3. Nest of French Partridge? (3)
4. Five part song of 1902 (4)
7. Strown over Bredon Hill at Christmas (5)
9. Rich man looks as if he's going for a swim, but comes to a bad end (5)
10. He wrote the words set in The Sky above the Roof (8)
11. Elgar wrote a piece about St George's (6)
13. Operatic song (4)
16. Rabbit urged to do this in WWII song (3)

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RVW and Whitman

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