Lesser-Known or Infrequently-Performed Choral Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams

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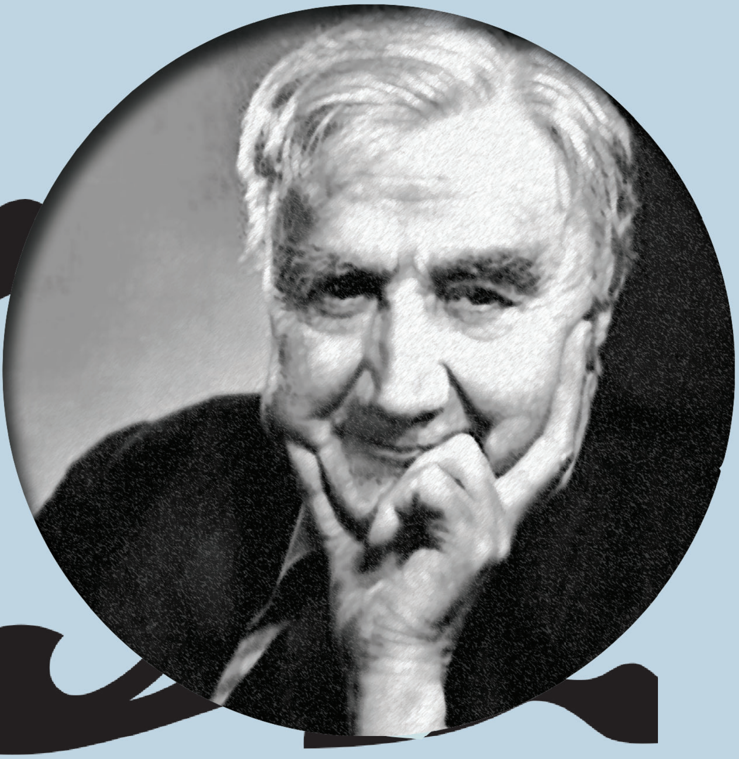
In 2022 the music world has been celebrating the 150th anniversary of the birth of Ralph Vaughan Williams (b. October 12, 1872) with an exploration of his works in various genres. This article will focus on the choral music and those compositions with an integral choral component, specifically a few of the lesser-known or infrequently-performed selections, a cappella or choral-orchestral in design. The latter are available in alternate versions with keyboard or organ accompaniments with or without strings[1] (if engaging a complete instrumental component is an impediment), though the original aural experience created by the composer's imaginatively conceived and carefully wrought orchestration is changed considerably. Our discussion will proceed from the shorter works, accompanied and unaccompanied, to the longer ones with or without instrumental soloist: *Three Choral Hymns; The souls of the righteous; Valiant for Truth* and *A Vision of Aeroplanes* (two motets written for Harold Darke); *Benedicte* and *The Sons of Light* (the former cantata-like, the latter so designated); *Flos Campi* and *The Fantasia on the 'Old 104th' Psalm Tune* (two works featuring virtuoso instrumental soloists, although both have significant choral parts); and *An Oxford Elegy* (utilizing a speaker). Vaughan Williams was involved in choral singing as a composer, conductor, or participant throughout his long life[2] and he knew how to write arresting, challenging, and thrilling essays for amateurs and professionals alike. Fortunately, the scores may be purchased, hired, or obtained through university libraries or interlibrary loan.



A Study of Works

The Three Choral Hymns (1929), for baritone or tenor solo, chorus (SATB), and orchestra (alternatively pianoforte or organ accompaniment), were composed for the Leith Hill Music Festival (Dorking).[3] Each of the movements—"Easter Hymn," "Christmas Hymn," and "Whitsunday Hymn" (in duration about 3.5, 6, and 3.5 minutes, respectively)—introduces words by Myles Coverdale (the second and third were translated from Luther by him) and all are treated similarly. In a D mode, "Easter Hymn" begins and ends with an ecstatic paragraph constructed of overlapping choral entries on an "alleluia" motif (consisting of a descending fourth from D to A—D, C, B♮, A) found frequently in Vaughan Williams's works; it is the composer's instinctive formula for his biggest emotional displays. These decorate the noble unison theme of the first two verses (executed by alto and bass, then soprano and tenor), but are omitted from the harmonized treatment of the third. In F major, "Christmas Hymn" is based on a tranquil "kyrie eleyson [sic]" motif (derived from the interval of a descending third and ascending fourth—F, D, G); in the opening and closing paragraphs, it is subjected to choral imitative entries, varied and elongated, and, thereafter, laces the ensuing cantabile tune for the seven verses. In a C mode, "Whitsunday Hymn" unfolds via a melody (the intervals of a second, third, and fourth predominate) and response pattern: baritone (or tenor) solo and choral response for verses one and two, choral harmonization and solo response for verses three and four, and culminating with an elaborate choral outburst based on the preceding cadential material.

The souls of the righteous (1947), an unaccompanied motet (3.5 minutes in duration) written for the Dedication Service for the Battle of Britain Chapel in Westminster Abbey, sets words from *The Wisdom of Solomon* (chapter 3)[4] and proceeds in a like fashion. Commencing in F♯ minor with a melodic theme sung by a single soprano voice (F♯, C♯, C♯, B, C♯; the intervals of a fifth, second, and third provide the initial melodic material), the work expands with a varied answer by the chorus and with further baritone (or tenor) solos above sustained chords. The harmonic shift from F♯ minor to F minor (m. 10) and the chordal progression—E major, C minor, A major (mm. 15-16)—are characteristic of the composer and highly efficacious. A final eruption of the chorus brings the motet to a victorious conclusion.

Valiant for Truth (1940) and *A Vision of Aeroplanes* (1956) represent two motets premiered by Harold Darke and his St. Michael's Singers of St. Michael's Church, Cornhill, the latter written specifically in celebration of the renowned organist's fortieth anniversary there. *Valiant for Truth*, a motet (5.5 minutes in duration) for mixed chorus unaccompanied (or with organ or pianoforte)[5] represents one of several works on the Christian allegory of John Bunyan that Vaughan Williams composed over the course of his life, commencing in 1906 with incidental music to a play and concluding in 1951 with the opera *The Pilgrim's Progress.* Beginning in a D mode, the work moves vividly through solo-homophonic statements (quasi recitativo)—in paragraphs framing the modes of D, B, G, and D major, before returning to the initial D mode—and imitative entries in an E mode on the text "Death, where is thy sting" and "Grave, where is thy victory?" to the extraordinary final choral trumpet calls (ma marcato, G mode): echoing phrases and pulsating meter on "sounded for him," executed three times in B♭ major, emerging/resolving in G major "on the other side."

> *The Sons of Light* (1950) represents the first endeavor of Vaughan Williams's final compositional phase, and all of the compelling elements of his late style are visible in its pages.

A Vision of Aeroplanes, using words from Ezekiel 1, is a technically demanding motet (10 minutes in duration) that explores horizontally and vertically the interval of the semitone and the simultaneities that are produced through its ubiquitous disposition—Moderato, alla marica, and piu lento—in the fantastic organ fanfares (introduction and interludes) and choral declamation.[6] Though much of the work proceeds with fervor and

zeal, the ending is subdued (save for one final explosive release) in the manner of many Vaughan Williams pieces. A virtuoso organist and professional singers are necessary for this rarely-performed composition.

Benedicite (1929), the composer's non-liturgical setting of the morning prayer (15 minutes in duration), scored for soprano, mixed chorus and orchestra, was written for the Leith Hill Festival, where it received its premier on May 2, 1930, with Margaret Rees (soprano) and the Leith Hill Festival Chorus (Towns Division) and Orchestra conducted by the composer.[7] The compositional-editorial approach he utilized in his hymns, arrangements, and compilations for the *English Hymnal,* unaccompanied or with orchestra, is exemplified in the vocal opening of *Benedicite.* The specified measures are, fundamentally, in two parts, departing from the orthodox four-part harmony of the poorer evensong composers of the era (*vide* vocal score, m. 13 to rehearsal letter A); and where a richer texture is desired thereafter, Vaughan Williams substituted two-part or three-part writing with parallel chords underpinning the melodic lines. The melodic theme is based on a modal scale, with a dominant anywhere between the third and sixth, rather than on one organized diatonically, emphasizing the third and the fifth. Furthermore, it is melismatic-like in orientation and its profile, rhythm, and syllabic grouping, epitomize an irregular construction thereby undermining the conventional four-bar unit. Lastly, the exquisite cadence (three measures before rehearsal letter A) is a consequence of modality and linear treatment, the latter delineated by its unexpected florescence, which imbues the work.

When creating *Benedicite,* Vaughan Williams utilized an imaginative design: the anthology cantata initiated by Hubert Parry, one of Vaughan Williams's teachers, in his oeuvre of ethical cantatas.[8] Parry's model was the *concertato* with various instrumental groupings by Gabrieli and Schütz,[9] whereas one can detect the Bach cantata behind *Benedicite* with its similar ritornello energy in the jubilant opening, closing, or cadential episodes and elsewhere serenely pastoral like many of Bach's solo and chorale arias. Its text is a construct of the canticle *Benedicite Omnia Opera* and the poem "Nature's Praise" by John Austin (1613-1669). The *Benedicite Omnia Opera,* or the *Song of the Three Children* as it is called in the Apocrypha, is a part of the Greek addition to the third chapter of the book of Daniel; it is a rhythmical expansion of Psalm 148 and was used as a hymn in the later period of the ancient Jewish Church. Essentially, the *Benedicite* is a great song of praise in which the works of the Lord are summoned to worship Him. Beginning with the heavens and the great phenomena of nature, reaching down to the creatures of earth and working up again to humankind, all life is called to take part in this magnificent chorus of adoration.[10] From a literary perspective, therefore, the interpolated poem by the seventeenth-century poet John Austin, "Nature's Praise," is germane.

Vaughan Williams did not utilize these sources in their entirety, however; he edited and adapted them with the aim of tightening the musical discourse. Hence, *Benedicite* is a through-composed work that may be divided into four large units suggested by the composite text: the first (pp. 1 to 20, *Lento*), an abridgment of lines one through seventeen of the familiar canticle; the second (p. 20, *Lento,* to p. 34), a similar compression of lines eighteen through thirty-two; the third (pp. 34 to 42, rehearsal letter P/5), verses one, seven, and eight of Austin's poem; and the fourth (P/5 to the end) an abbreviated recapitulation consisting of lines one, five, and eighteen from the canticle (*vide* the text prefacing the music in the vocal score).[11]

The Sons of Light (1950) represents the first endeavor of Vaughan Williams's final compositional phase, and all of the compelling elements of his late style are visible in its pages. Commissioned for the Schools Music Association, the piece (in duration 25 minutes) was premiered (May 6, 1951) by over 1,100 young choristers (from 25 counties) and the London Philharmonic Orchestra. Bernard Shore, the superlative viola player who had become one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools, approached Vaughan Williams early in 1950, requesting that he devise a choral-orchestra essay for a massed ensemble of children who, at the first performance, would have the joy of singing with the famous orchestra under the direction of Adrian Boult. Vaughan Williams gladly complied with *The Sons of Light,* a cantata (so designated) for mixed chorus and orchestra.[12] The composer was pleased with the work and, later, included *The Sons of Light,* together with *A Song of Thanksgiving*, the *Fifth Symphony*, and *Flos Campi*, in a special eightieth birthday concert, for which he had chosen the program, given for him by the London County Council in the Festival Hall.

The text supplied by Ursula consists of three poems,[13] the first of which takes as its basis the Greek story of the sun being a chariot driven across the sky by Apollo and his horses; it is about the creation of the world, the light and the darkness that were separated at the beginning of time, the moon that follows the sun across the sky, and the stars that man has named and by which he will live "till Time is done." The subject matter of the second poem is the signs of the Zodiac, representing groups of stars prominent for a month at a time, which divide the year between their twelve houses; each of them—the Ram, the Bull, the Twins, the Crab, the Lion, the Virgin, the Scales, the Scorpion, the Archer, the Goat, the Water Bearer, and the Fishes—is portrayed within a "tale that the Ram begins." The last poem returns to the creation myths, one of which tells "of man's dominion and majesty," and another which explains that there "came winged messengers to be man's speech," for nothing could exist until it was named by him; and, finally, it culminates in rejoicing—"Rejoice, man stands among the sons of light"—for there is a story that on the final morning of creation "all living creatures [took] delight" because the world was at last completed. These beautiful and imaginative poems, adapted freely by Vaughan Williams, provided the three-movement design for the cantata.

The first movement, "Darkness and Light," commences with a melodic figure (B♭-G-B♭-C-F) that generates the pitch resources for the ensuing music, that is to say the intervals of a third (B♭-G), a second (B♭-C), and a fourth (C-F). Combined vertically these translate immediately into the initial chord of the accompaniment (C♭ to E♭ = a third, E♭ to F = a second, and F to B♭ = a fourth) whose expansion and contraction, linearly via its outer notes (C♭ and B♭), emphasize the interval of the semitone (C♭-B♭ descending, B♭-C♭ ascending) which, exhaustively and richly explored by Vaughan Williams, will pervade the work in its entirety.[14]

Flos Campi (the Vulgate equivalent of "Rose of Sharon") was first performed on October 10, 1925, two days before the fifty-third birthday of the composer. Dedicated to Lionel Tertis, it is a suite (20 minutes) for solo viola, small wordless mixed chorus, and small orchestra in six movements, each of which is headed by a Latin Vulgate quotation, with an English translation, from the *Song of Songs.*[15] From the moment of its premiere, *Flos Campi* has been explored in the Vaughan Williams literature by a number of authors, who attempted to understand and elucidate its meaning, evaluate its compositional features, and debate its place in the canon of the composer. Successive commentators of the work were bewildered by the wordless chorus, the extra-musical quotations, in Latin (without, at first, an English translation), its classification—generically (choral or instrumental essay) and textually (pagan or religious). Already Howes (in 1937) had theorized about the compositional design (evolutionary or organic) when he wrote about the suite: "The actual stuff of the music is a progress from a keyless, rhythmless, arabesque-like melody signifying desire and longing for the beloved (amore langueo)—to a diatonic, rhythmic, almost march-like, theme, worked contrapuntally in canon and imitation expressive of fulfillment (*Pone me ut signaculum super cor tuum,* 'Set me as a seal upon thy heart')" and "[It] is an example of a piece of music that relies for its unity, not on structural devices, but on kinship of themes which grow one out of the other, and on identity of mood."[16] Others pinpointed certain palpable moments in *Flos Campi,* especially the beginning and end.

Several of the commentators addressed the sound qua sound of *Flos Campi,* which they found to be a compelling feature. According to Howes, "[I]t is in fact the most sensual work [Vaughan Williams] has written, and the sensuous beauty of sound is of prime importance."[17] This conviction was echoed by Foss—"*Flos Campi* is an exquisite study in pure sound"[18]—and Kennedy—"Of all the works by Vaughan Williams I think this is the most beautiful considered in terms only of sound."[19] Day preferred to couch his comments about the aesthetic quality of the sound in the context of palette, scoring, and tonality: "Vaughan Williams's harsh, bright orchestral and vocal palette overwhelms the listener by its sheer intensity as well as by the work's sumptuous tonal complexity and am-

bivalent harmony"[20] and "the scoring throughout is beautifully judged, the wordless voices in particular adding a purely human and partly mystical ardor to the music rather than projecting any philosophic or impersonal timelessness, as they do in some other of his works."[21] Similarly Dickinson reflected: "The novel interest is, of course, the intrinsic quality of the viola part, and of voices used as a special reed-chorus in conjunction with solo wood and brass and incidentally a tuneful celesta."[22]

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The significance of *Flos Campi* was recognized by Foss, who considered it "one of [Vaughan Williams's] most original, and most important, expressions,"[23] and Kennedy, who posited a status for the suite as "truly inimitable, a masterpiece."[24] Indeed, in *Flos Campi,* Vaughan Williams reinterpreted the genres (cantata, concerto, and suite are fused, choral expression and verbal communication are separated) and his ingredients (biblical, erotic, oriental, pastoral, and primitive) to create this work *sui generis.*[25]

"*Fantasia (Quasi Variazione) on the 'Old 104th' Psalm Tune*" (1949), for piano solo, chorus, and orchestra was composed for the Gloucester Festival of 1950, with Michael Mullinar as the soloist.[26] It consists of a set of variations (15 minutes) on the imposing and severe tune attributed to Thomas Ravenscroft (c.1582-c.1635), "Disposer Supreme and Judge of the Earth" (assigned the number 178 in *The English Hymnal*), and taken from his psalter, *The Whole Booke of Psalmes* (1621), one of the most important of the English reformation. Vaughan Williams used the text of the Psalm by Sternhold and Hopkins, however, presumably the edition published at Geneva in 1561, instead of the text of *The English Hymnal* version (a translation from the French), which it pre-dated by almost 300 years.

The *Fantasia* is in fact an assemblage of quasi variations scored for pianoforte solo *accompanied* by chorus and orchestra. Howes provides a concise overview. "There are seven variations in all, of which two are for piano alone; in the other five the chorus sings verses 1 and 2 and verses 31, 32, and 33 of Psalm CIV. There is an Introduction in which the piano evolves the tune out of its chief motif of four notes. The theme is then stated by the piano alone in very full, if not very orthodox, harmonies"[27] and, thereafter, the work proceeds variation by variation; in other words: introduction plus theme, variation one (verse one); variation two (piano cadenza); variation three (verse two); variation four (verses three and four); variation five (piano cadenza); variation six (verse five); and variation seven (elements of verse one).

To Dickinson the *Fantasia* falls into three stages—(1) Prelude, Theme, and Two Variations; (2) Three Variations; and (3) Two Variations and Coda (thus implying a tripartite form). The first stage commences in D minor "with the piano trying out phrases" but shifts to F minor for an initial presentation of the theme "in a trenchant multiple texture." The first verse is characterized by "choral polyphony, with piano bravura," followed by "an orchestral verse with choral extensions of each phrase, borrowing text from the first verse."[28]

Dickinson's second stage begins in B modal minor with "a free and extended interlude for piano." A second verse in D minor involves "choral unison in four-time, with the piano harping on the fourth phrase." Thereafter, "a third verse absorbs 'How sundry, O Lord', etc., in fugued entries that do not go beyond the first melodic phrase and may be regarded as a fixation prompting a return to F minor, in which the piano leads the orchestral bass in a massive fourth verse."[29]

Dickinson's third stage is initiated by "another long piano interlude, emulating Busoni in style (or, more nearly, Liapunov's *Variations on a Russian Folk-song*)." This is "sobered down to a choral unison verse in D minor, volubly but simply accompanied." Then "this last verse overflows into a brief phrase of ecstatic polyphony, balancing the first with the fourth phrase in D major and minor, but inevitably … reaching the major for the close."[30]

Vaughan Williams's chamber work (25 minutes) for speaker, small mixed chorus and small orchestra, titled *An Oxford Elegy* (1949), received its first public performance at the Queen's College, Oxford University, on June 19, 1952. The success of the premiere was preceded by, and the result of, the first private performance at The White Gates on November 20, 1949.[31] This was a run-through that the composer arranged to pre-audition the work he had started to sketch two years earlier using portions of *The Scholar-Gipsy* and *Thyrsis,* two long poems by Matthew Arnold. Ursula recounts: "There were a good many discussions about it during the summer [of 1949]. … After using a speaker for his *Thanksgiving for Victory* he thought it would be interesting to try this again, but in a much smaller, almost chamber, work. He cut and re-cut the poems, 'cheating' he said, so that all his favorite lines should be in—and I re-typed the script almost every week."[32] The result was a composite text of 490 lines (250 from *The Scholar-Gipsy* and 240 from *Thyrsis*).

Vaughan Williams outlines the overall structure of *The Scholar-Gipsy,* but only four of the five sections, with a sensuously evocative harmonic language. The music from the commencement of the work to letter M corresponds to the first section of the poem, whereas the music from letter M to five measures after letter S represents the second section, and from that point to three measures after letter T, the third section. The music from three measures after letter T to seven measures after letter V, underscores a fourth section heavily abbreviated (the fifth section is omitted completely by the composer), which is fused immediately and purposively with the beginning of the companion poem, *Thyrsis.*[33]

The work opens with music for orchestra and wordless chorus that exudes the chromatic exoticism of that earlier and daring work of 1925, *Flos campi.* In point of fact, the music that initiates the work contains several motifs upon which it is entirely constructed. Emerging from the quiescent opening measures (6/8 and *Lento*), the first motif (a) consists of two phrases, rhythmically asymmetrical, each made up of an embellished descending major sixth followed by a descending minor second and an ascending minor third (that is, A-G-A-C-B-D and G-F-G-B♭-A-C). The second motif (b) features three statements of an ascending perfect fourth succeeded by an ascending minor second and a descending minor second (D-G-A♭-G, D-G-A♭-G, and G-C-D♭-C). Introduced by the chorus, the third motif (c) is identified by its repetition of a single note, A, reached initially by an ascending minor third and major second (D-F-G-A) and followed by a descending minor second and augmented second (G♯-F-A) or an ascending minor third and descending minor second (C-B-A). While the repetition of the single note and of the sinuous chromatic structure of the third motif (c) contributes to the languorously intoxicating effect of the composition, all three motifs are characterized by their propensity for elaboration, fragmentation or variation, as they are concatenated in the music throughout the work.

An integral distillation of thought is embodied in a single simultaneity, D-flat minor in second inversion (three after letter T) (vocal score, page 16; study score, page 38), against which the narrator articulates without pause lines 141, 171 and 180. It is here that Vaughan Williams fuses the end of his reading of *The Scholar-Gipsy* with the beginning of *Thyrsis*, a compositional solution that reflects the creation of the two poems. Arnold composed the latter poem—which is about his loss of creative power—fifteen years after the former, and although "they employ the same locale and are written in the same stanza and the same pastoral mode," writes Culler, they are different. *The Scholar-Gipsy* "is primarily a Romantic dream-vision which creates an ideal figure who lives outside of time" (that is, the Scholar-Gipsy), "whereas [*Thyrsis*] "is an elegy about a human [being] who lived in time and was thereby destroyed" (that is, Arnold's friend, Arthur Clough).[34] Both poems are about the contest between permanence and change: the alteration of the image of the Scholar-Gipsy in the former, the impermanence of place and persons in the latter.

To illuminate his interpretation of the first poem and the transition to the second, Vaughan Williams

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subjects the fourth motif (d)—introduced earlier in the second stanza for the dream-vision of the poet (vocal score, page 12)—to a process of transformation in the long paragraph for chorus and orchestra (from four after letter T to seven after letter V) wherein the conflation of the two poems occurs. Whereas before the fourth motif (*d*) appeared in a D-minor mode, now it is presented in a C-sharp minor mode (an enharmonic re-spelling of the single simultaneity, D-flat minor); before the fourth motif was essayed briefly by a solo instrument, now it unfolds in a protracted, gravely beautiful, polyphonic and imitative rendition for wordless chorus and orchestra; before the fourth motif was associated with the beginning of the dream, now it is recalled to represent a place revisited. The music continues ravishingly to the conclusion of the work.

These are but a few of the lesser-known or infrequently-performed choral works of Vaughan Williams, though others could be cited and discussed. Accessible for study or performance, the scores reveal a composer who employed an idiosyncratically-modern harmonic vocabulary within a mode of expression that is comprehensible, imaginative, and thrilling, as well as the high artistic standards that he applied to each compositional utterance in his oeuvre. CJ

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NOTES

[1] Vaughan Williams had a lifelong affection for amateur choirs and, thus, provided or authorized alternate versions of his works for them to present. Roy Douglas, *Working with Vaughan Williams* (The British Library, 1988), 7.

[2] As a student in the 1890s, Vaughan Williams conducted a small choral society, and in his position, as organist at St. Barnabas Church (South London) from 1895, he was responsible for the pedagogical instruction of the choir, and also founded a small choral society. When the Leith Hill Festival was created in 1905, Vaughan Williams conducted the Festival Choirs. From 1903 he had been a member of the Bach Choir and in 1921 he became its conductor.

[3] Michael Kennedy, *A Catalogue of the Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams,* second edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 126. The reader is referred to the published score (Oxford University Press, 1941).

[4] Ibid., 179.

[5] Ibid., 168.

[6] Ibid., 228.

[7] It was presented subsequently at the Southwark Cathedral (London) on 21 February 1931, with Joan Elwes (soprano), a Special Choir and members of the London Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Edgar T. Cook, and later at Queen's Hall (London) in July 1931—where it was labeled a masterpiece by a critic as eminent as Eric Blom (1888-1959)—for the International Festival for Contemporary Music (IFCM), with the National Chorus and the British Broadcasting Corporation Orchestra conducted by Adrian Boult. These initial performances were important indeed in

establishing its successful cachet. Compiled from Frank Howes, *The Later Works of R. Vaughan Williams* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1937); Michael Kennedy, *A Catalogue of the Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams,* rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 125; Michael Kennedy, *The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 225-226; Charles Edward McGuire, "'An Englishman and a democrat': Vaughan Williams, large choral works, and the British festival tradition," in *The Cambridge Companion to Vaughan Williams,* eds. Alain Frogley and Aidan J. Thomson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 121; Percy M. Young, *Vaughan Williams* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1953), 67; and Percy M. Young, *A History of British Music* (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1967), 549-550.

[8] The series of "ethical cantatas" occupied Parry from 1902 until 1908, the set of six being *War and Peace* (Symphonic Ode [3 April 1903, Royal Choral Society, Albert Hall]), *Voces Clamantium* (Motet [10 September 1903, Hereford Festival]), *The Love That Casteth Out Fear* (Sinfonia Sacra [7 September 1904, Gloucester Festival]), *The Soul's Ransom* (Sinfonia Sacra [12 September 1906, Hereford Festival]), *The Vision of Life* (A Symphonic Poem [26 September 1907, Cardiff Festival]), and *Beyond These Voices There Is Peace* (Motet [9 September 1908, Worcester Festival]). All six are scored for soprano, baritone, chorus and orchestra, with the exception of *The Love That Casteth Out Fear,* where Parry substitutes a contralto for the soprano. In duration, all but one last between 45 and 75 minutes approximately; Voces Clamantium is under 30 minutes. Parry penned the free-verse text for *War and Peace* and for *The Vision of Life*; for the others, he grouped texts from the Bible with some original lines of his own to devise the narratives.

[9] At the end of the nineteenth century, Parry attempted to create a new choral-orchestral form from seventeeth-century models, which resulted in the aforementioned. Indeed, two of these—*The Love that Casteth out Fear* (1904) and *The Soul's Ransom* (1906)—are both styled "Sinfonia Sacra." As Jeremy Dibble writes: "This description clearly relates to the vocal and instrumental forms—the *Symphoniae Sacrae*—of…Baroque composers such as Giovanni Gabrieli, and more significantly his German pupil, Heinrich Schütz. Aware of the links between Schütz' spontaneous vocal structures and the symphonic choral works of later centuries (most notably those of Brahms such as the *Requiem* and *Gesang der Parzen*), Parry felt the desire to assimilate the devotional solemnity of this style of vocal music into his own choral meditations." Jeremy Dibble, C. *Hubert H. Parry: His Life and Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 397.

[10] H. L. Hubbard, *Benedicite: A Devotional Commentary on the Song of the Three Children* (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co. Ltd., 1924), 3 and 11.

[11] The reader is referred to the published scores, vocal (Oxford University Press, 1929) and full (Oxford University Press, 1970).

[12] Michael Kennedy, *A Catalogue of the Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams,* rev. ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1982), 202: "THE SONS OF LIGHT. A Cantata for mixed chorus (SATB) and orchestra. Composed in 1950. Poem by Ursula Wood (Ursula Vaughan Williams). 'In the musical setting of this poem the composer has, with the leave of the author, made a few verbal alterations.' I. Darkness and Light. *Allegro maestoso—allegro alla Marcia—tranquillo—allegro moderato.* II. The Song of the Zodiac. *Allegretto pesante.* III. The Messengers of Speech. *Maestoso—maestoso alla marcia…*"

[13] Ursula Vaughan Williams, *R.V.W.: A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), 308-309.

[14] Please consult the vocal score: Ralph Vaughan Williams, *The Sons of Light,* A Cantata for Chorus and Orchestra, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957), ii-v.

[15] Kennedy, Catalogue, p. 105. See, as well, chapter seven in Michael Kennedy, *The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams* (Oxford, 1964), and chapter nine in Ursula Vaughan Williams, *R.V.W.: A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams* (Oxford, 1964). *Flos campi* is properly indexed in the "instrumental soloist with orchestra" category, as is *Fantasia* (subsequently discussed).

[16] Howes, *The Later Works of R. Vaughan Williams,* pp. 8 and 10.

[17] Howes, p. 7. Howes continues: "He has therefore scored it for an orchestra in which every instrument retains its individual flavor to the utmost. One each of the wind makes an ensemble in which the individual flavors are never submerged in the ordinary orchestral tutti. There is a representative battery of the more exotic

instruments—A harp, celesta, triangle, cymbals, drum and tabor. And even more immediate in its direct appeal to the senses is the wordless chorus of twenty to twenty-six voices."

[18] Foss, 158.

[19] Kennedy, *The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams,* 211–212. Kennedy wrote, as well, that the suite was "a sensuous work from [the] composer's pen, the product of a new interest in sonorities combined with a mood expressive of the mingled sexual-mystical ecstasy, derived from physical passion, which the Song of Solomon also exemplifies," 191.

[20] Day, 228. He wrote also: "it is expressed with an intensity that may well have sounded distinctly un-English to the work's first listeners," 228.

[21] Ibid, 229. Furthermore, "the voices, however, are treated as part of the instrumental coloring; and though the chorus part is prominent, it projects, reflects, and stands over and against the ravishing concertante part for the solo viola," 228.

[22] Dickinson, *Vaughan Williams,* 234–35.

[23] Foss, 157. He goes on to write: "[the work] has a strange concatenation of qualities: universal yet personal in speech, unappealing, it is endearing in its beauty; personal in the extreme, it is remote; intimate, it stands in a lone philosophic attitude of thought."

[24] Kennedy, *The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams,* 213.

[25] Stephen Town, *An Imperishable Heritage: British Choral Music from Parry to Dyson* (Ashgate, 2012), 301.

[26] Kennedy, *Catalogue,* 187.

[27] Frank Howes, *The Music of Ralph Vaughan Williams* (Oxford University Press, 1954), 181-182. He describes the work thusly: "In the first variation to the first verse of the Psalm," occurring from rehearsal letter A to C, "the choir has a version of the tune ornamented with little four-note flourishes over simple harmonies in quaver motion, while the piano plays an even more highly ornamented version of the tune and the orchestra a much simpler harmonization." The second variation accordingly follows from C to D where "for piano alone the writing is varied freely from line to line of the tune, beginning with the romantic type of arpeggio in the left hand, going on to parallel sixths, thence to ornamental triplets in the right hand and so on in a free, quasi-improvisatory manner." He continues: "In the third variation," from D to E, "the chorus sings the tune in unison while the piano continues the same sort of writing though with fatter chords." The fourth variation, from E to F, "is a fugato for voice without piano, until it too is given an entry in heavy double octaves." Variation five, from F to G, "is in the style of a cadenza for piano alone." Then: "In variation six," from G to H, "the voices are again in unison while the orchestra carries the harmonies and the piano, with hands encompassing the extremes of the keyboard, plasters it all with great chords." Finally, from letter H to the end is the seventh and last variation; here "the voices sing flowing counterpoint which is largely doubled by the orchestra, and the piano silenced . . . until the final paean." (p. 182)

[28] A. E. F. Dickinson, *Vaughan Williams* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), 427.

[29] Dickinson, 427.

[30] Ibid., 427.

[31] The Tudor Singers and their conductor Harry Stubbs gave the first private performance. Hugh Cobbe, *Letters of Ralph Vaughan Williams 1895–1958* (Oxford, 2008), 428, n. 4. Kennedy qualifies this by indicating the participants as Steuart Wilson (speaker), the Tudor Singers, Schwiller String Quartet and Michael Mullinar (pianoforte), conducted by RVW. Kennedy, *A Catalogue of the Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams,* Second Edition (Oxford, 1996), 187.

[32] Ursula Vaughan Williams, *R.V.W.: A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams* (Oxford, 1964), 292.

[33] The reader is referred to the vocal score and to the orchestral study score published by Oxford University Press in 1952 and 1982, respectively.

[34] See A. Dwight Culler, *Imaginative Reason: The Poetry of Matthew Arnold* (Yale University Press, 1966), Chapter Eight: The Use of Elegy, 250.