### **Preface**

Welcome to this collection of new arrangements of short choral pieces by one of the finest British composers of the twentieth century. Born in 1872 in Gloucestershire, Ralph Vaughan Williams attended the Royal College of Music and read history and music at Trinity College, Cambridge. He studied composition with C. Hubert H. Parry and Charles Villiers Stanford, and received further tuition overseas from Max Bruch and Maurice Ravel. After a distinguished career, producing a particularly wide-ranging catalogue of works, Vaughan Williams died on 26 August 1958. His ashes were interred at Westminster Abbey.

Vaughan Williams's various musical activities—from choir master, editor, and folk-song collector to composer and conductor—greatly enhanced British musical life; but they also contributed to a mistaken view that his original composition was in some way parochial, designed for domestic consumption. He believed in the value of music education, and wrote pieces for amateurs and service music for the church; but he also displayed great sensitivity to the twentieth-century human condition, projecting a message of peace and reconciliation in works such as *Dona Nobis Pacem* (1936). Moreover, he wrote works of great artistic integrity and imagination that have stood the test of time, not least for choirs, and for all levels of music making.

Vaughan Williams was inspired by great literature and by a lifelong belief that the voice 'can be made the medium of the best and deepest human emotion' (*Vaughan Williams on Music*, ed. D. Manning, Oxford, 2007). Made up of two volumes and organized into sacred and secular works, the current collection is designed to introduce new generations of choral conductors and choirs to Vaughan Williams, sharing his music's variety and timeless quality. There is a mix of familiar and unfamiliar titles. A second aim was to make the pieces, where necessary, match today's scoring and performance needs, improving accessibility and extending their usefulness in a way that would have appealed to Vaughan Williams. At one extreme the arrangements have new piano parts for unaccompanied sections, for example, to lend support, or contain small judicious cuts. Others are arranged in a friendlier key (taking into account the range, also), or for SATB choir from a unison or treble-voice original—the subject matter and content lending itself equally well to adults. At the other end, pieces were selected for their ongoing appeal and suitability, requiring no more than light editorial amendments. In all cases, the harmony, words, and dynamics are unaltered, and my aim has been to respect the integrity and spirit of the original work.

The following commentary, on individual pieces, specifies the changes, sources, and possible uses in performance.

Finally, I wish to record my thanks to Oxford University Press for assisting my research and allowing access to its extensive catalogue, and to The Vaughan Williams Charitable Trust for its kind support.

### Notes on the pieces

The blessed son of God from the cantata 'Hodie'

Source: 'Two Chorals', OUP, 1954

Suggested programming: Christmas (concert or church)

A piano accompaniment has been added which conforms to the original harmonic structure of the choral parts. A short introduction has been added, and the first verse is now scored for tutti sopranos or an optional solo. The piano pedalling should be modest and appropriate to the harmonic changes.

### No sad thought his soul affright from the cantata 'Hodie'

Source: 'Two Chorals', OUP, 1954

Suggested programming: Christmas (concert or church)

This piece has been lowered by a semitone to C major, making it easier to read, and with a more accessible tenor part. A piano accompaniment has been added which conforms to the original harmonic structure of the choral parts. It was common for composers of music from this period to extend the dynamic range. In this case the markings *pp* and *ppp* may need to be adjusted, depending on the size and capability of the ensemble, to achieve a hushed, intimate sound. The piano pedalling should be modest and appropriate to the harmonic changes.

### A Song of Thanksgiving

Source: 'A Song of Thanksgiving', OUP, 1945

Suggested programming: Concert or church (Thanksgiving, general praise)

This large work has been edited down to the first 125 bars/measures to make it a suitable length for a general anthem of thanksgiving. There is an optional shortened ending after bar/measure 116. The piano pedalling should be modest and appropriate to the harmonic changes.

#### This is the truth

Source: 'This is the truth', OUP, 1954

Suggested programming: Christmas (concert or church)

This unison arrangement has been reworked into a setting for SATB chorus with an optional soloist. The harmony of the SATB parts conforms to the original harmony of the piano part. Some mild figuration has also been added occasionally to the piano part in the first section of the piece. The piano pedalling should be used sparingly so as not to blur the musical lines.

### O taste and see, a setting of Psalm 34: 8

Source: 'O Taste and See', OUP, 1953

Suggested programming: Church (Wedding, All Saints, 23rd Sunday after Pentecost)

This piece was written and first performed for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. The only change applies to the *colla parte* piano part from bar/measure 13 to the end, where it is indicated that the piano may optionally double the voices, either for support or colour. If the piano is used, it should be played *secco*.

### God rest vou merry, gentlemen

Source: 'God Rest You Merry', for SA chorus and piano, OUP, 1954, renewed in the USA, 1982 Suggested programming: Christmas (concert or church)

This piece was originally arranged by Vaughan Williams for SA voices and piano. Here, it has been rearranged for SATB voices and piano. The new vocal parts conform to the original harmonic structure. The piano pedalling for this arrangement should be used sparingly so as not to blur the musical lines.

#### O how amiable

Source: 'O how amiable', OUP, 1940

Suggested programming: Church dedication, or other festivals

Some slight adjustments have been made to the organ part to adapt it for the piano, including octave displacements, added octaves, and deleted octaves. Vaughan Williams marked much of the original organ part with slurs, which suggests a *legato* feel. If the piano pedal is used at all, then it should be used sparingly and for colour.

#### He that is down need fear no fall

Source: 'He that is down need fear no fall', Oxford Choral Songs (unison and piano), OUP, 1950 Suggested programming: Concert or funeral

This unison anthem has been reworked into a setting for SATB choir with an optional soloist. The harmony of the SATB parts conforms to the original harmony of the piano part. If the piano pedal is used at all, then it should be used sparingly, without blurring the musical lines.

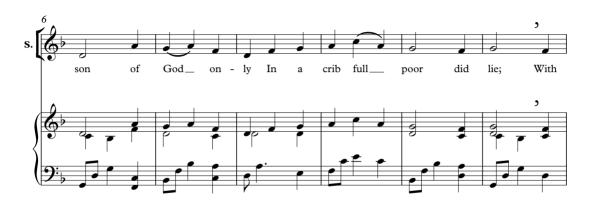
# The blessed son of God

# from the cantata 'Hodie'

Miles Coverdale (1487–1569), after Martin Luther

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS (1872–1958) piano arranged by John Leavitt





Duration: c.2 mins



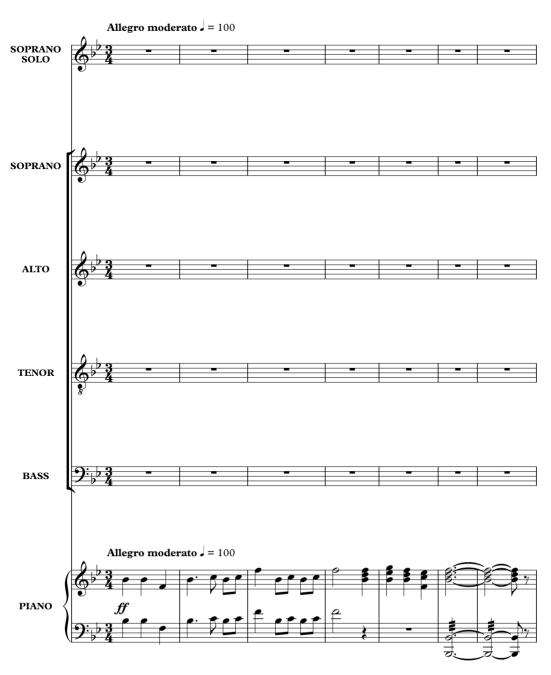
# A Song of Thanksgiving

Song of the Three Holy Children, v. 29–31, 33 *Henry V*, Act IV, Scene 8

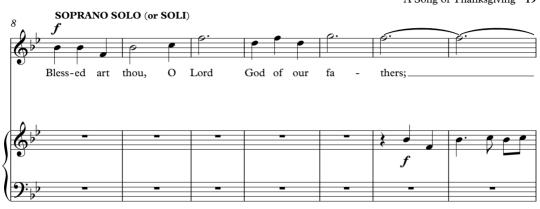
RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS (1872–1958) edited by John Leavitt

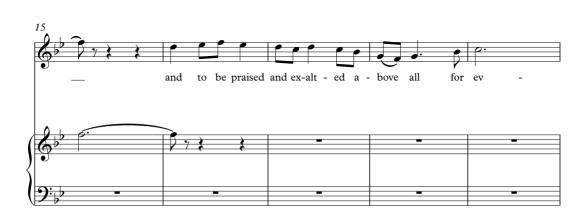
1 Chronicles 29: 11

Song of the Three Holy Children, v. 67



Duration: c.3.5 mins







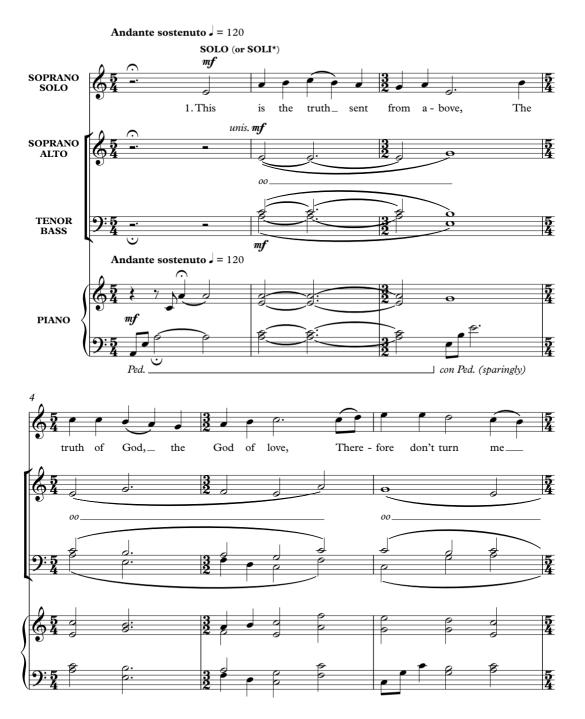




# This is the truth

Trad. English

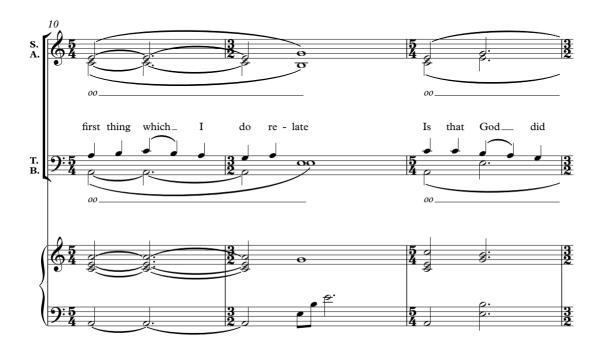
arr. by RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS (1872–1958) arr. for SATB choir and piano by John Leavitt



Duration: c.2 mins

<sup>\*</sup> Sopranos sing in the absence of a soloist: either tutti or soli.



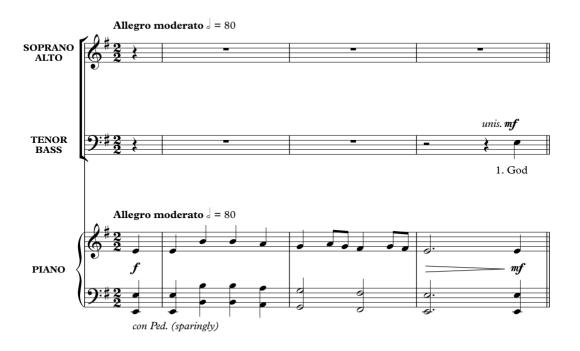




# God rest you merry, gentlemen

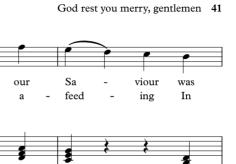
Trad. English

arr. RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS (1872–1958) arr. for SATB choir by John Leavitt





Duration: c.3 mins





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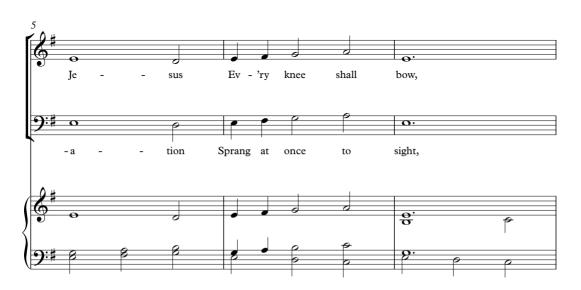


## At the name of Jesus

Caroline M. Noel (1817-77)

Tune: 'KING'S WESTON' RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS (1872–1958) arranged by John Leavitt





Duration: c.11.5 mins





## Let us now praise famous men

Ecclesiasticus 44

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS (1872–1958) arranged for SATB choir by John Leavitt



Duration: c.2 mins

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