

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.

John Leavitt
2019

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 you 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

Andante sostenuto ♩ = 100 **OPT. SOLO** *p dolce*

SOPRANO

ALTO

TENOR

BASS

PIANO

p dolce
con Ped.

6

S. son of God on - ly In a crib full poor did lie; With

Duration: c.2 mins

12

our poor flesh and our poor blood Was clothed that ev - er -

18

-last - ing good. Ky - ri - e - lei - son.
Lord - have mer - cy.

24

TUTTI
p dolce

S. — The Lord Christ Je - su, God's son — dear, Was a guest and a

A. *p dolce*
The Lord Christ — Je - su, God's son — dear, Was a guest and a

T. *p dolce*
The Lord Christ Je - su, God's son — dear, Was a guest and a

B. *p dolce*
The Lord Christ — Je - su, God's son — dear, Was a guest and a

p dolce

A Song of Thanksgiving

Song of the Three Holy Children, v. 29–31, 33

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS (1872–1958)

Henry V, Act IV, Scene 8

edited by John Leavitt

1 Chronicles 29: 11

Song of the Three Holy Children, v. 67

Allegro moderato ♩ = 100

SOPRANO SOLO

SOPRANO

ALTO

TENOR

BASS

Allegro moderato ♩ = 100

PIANO

ff

Duration: c.3.5 mins

SOPRANO SOLO (or SOLI)

8 *f*

Bless-ed art thou, O Lord God of our fa - thers; _____

15

_____ and to be praised and ex-alt - ed a - bove all for ev -

20

-er. _____

25

31 (TUTTI) *ff*

S. *ff* And bless-ed is thy glor-ious and ho-ly Name; and to be

A. *ff* And bless-ed is thy glor-ious and ho-ly Name; and to be

T. *ff* And bless-ed is thy glor-ious and ho-ly Name; and to be

B. *ff* And bless-ed is thy glor-ious and ho-ly Name; and to be

37

S. SOLO *f* Bless-ed art

S. praised and glo-ri-fied a-bove all for ev-er.

A. praised and glo-ri-fied a-bove all for ev-er.

T. praised and glo-ri-fied a-bove all for ev-er.

B. praised and glo-ri-fied a-bove all for ev-er.

This is the truth

Trad. English

arr. by RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS (1872–1958)

arr. for SATB choir and piano by John Leavitt

Andante sostenuto ♩ = 120

SOLO (or SOLI*)

mf

SOPRANO SOLO

1. This is the truth_ sent from a - bove, The

SOPRANO ALTO

unis. mf

TENOR BASS

mf

Andante sostenuto ♩ = 120

PIANO

mf

Ped. | con Ped. (sparingly)

4

truth of God,_ the God of love, There - fore don't turn me_

Duration: c.2 mins

* Sopranos sing in the absence of a soloist: either tutti or soli.

7

from your door, But heark-en all both rich and poor.

oo

2. The

10

S.
A.

oo

oo

first thing which I do re-late Is that God did

T.
B.

oo

oo

13

man cre - ate; The next thing which to you I'll tell Wo -

16

- man was made with man to dwell. 3. Thus

unis.

p

19

we were heirs to end - less woes, Till God the Lord did

God rest you merry, gentlemen

Trad. English

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

Allegro moderato ♩ = 80

SOPRANO
ALTO

TENOR
BASS

unis. mf

1. God

Allegro moderato ♩ = 80

PIANO

f *mf*

con Ped. (sparingly)

4

T./B.

rest you mer - ry, gen - tle - men, Let no - thing you dis -
 (4.) Shep - herds at those tid - ings Re - joiced — much in

Duration: c.3 mins

7

- may, Re - mem - ber Christ our Sa - viour was
mind, And left their flocks a - feed - ing In

10

born on Christ - mas Day, To save poor souls from
temp - est, storms of wind, And strait they came to

13

S./A. *unis. f*

T./B. *f*

And it's

Sa - tan's pow'r Which had long time gone a - stray,
Beth - le - hem, The Son of God to find.

16

tid - ings of com - fort and joy, com - fort and

19

joy: And it's tid - ings of com - fort and joy.

S. *p*
A.
2. In
5. Now

p

23

Beth - le - hem in Jew - ry this bless - ed babe was
when they came to Beth - le - hem, Where our sweet Sa - viour

(4)

At the name of Jesus

Caroline M. Noel (1817–77)

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

With vigour (♩ = 92–96)

DESCANT

SOPRANO
ALTO

unis. f

1. At the name of
(Verse 2 tacet)

TENOR
BASS

unis. f

2. At his voice cre -
(Verse 1 tacet)

With vigour (♩ = 92–96)

PIANO

f

5

Je - - sus Ev - 'ry knee shall bow,
- a - - tion Sprang at once to sight,

Duration: c.11.5 mins

8

Ev - 'ry tongue con - fess him King of glo - ry

All the An - gel fa - ces, All the hosts of

11

now; 'Tis the Fa - ther's plea - sure

light, Thrones and do - mi - na - tions,

14

We should call him Lord, Who from the be - gin - ning Was the

Stars up - on their way, All the heav'n - ly or - ders, In their

18

1. | 2.

migh - ty Word.

great ar - - ray.

1. | 2.

dim.

21

S. *p*

A.

3. Hum-bled for a sea - - son, To re - ceive a

T. *p*

B.

p

24

name From the lips of sin - - ners

Let us now praise famous men

Ecclesiasticus 44

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

Andante con moto (♩ = 104–108)

SOPRANO
ALTO

unis. mf

TENOR
BASS

unis. mf

Let us now praise fa-mous men, and our

PIANO

mf

Andante con moto (♩ = 104–108)

5

fa - thers that be - gat us. Such as did bear rule in their

9

king - doms, men re - nown - ed for their power,

f

Duration: c.2 mins

13

Lead - ers of the peo - ple by their coun - sels, and by_ their

17

know - ledge.

unis. p

Such as found out mu - si - cal tunes, and re -

subito p

22

unis. f

All these were ho-noured in their

unis. f

- cit - ed ver - ses in writ - ing:

cresc.