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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
Land of our birth

Sources: ‘Land of Our Birth’ for unison and piano, OUP, 1945; ‘A Song of Thanksgiving’, OUP, 1945

Suggested programming: Festival or patriotic concert

This arrangement for SATB chorus and piano has been created from two sources: a version for unison voices and piano, and ‘A Song of Thanksgiving.’ The first three verses draw from the unison version. Verse four then segues into the SATB setting from ‘A Song of Thanksgiving’ before returning to the unison anthem for the final verse. In this verse, this arrangement mirrors the choral parts from ‘A Song of Thanksgiving’ to conform with the unison anthem piano part. The vocal parts in bars 54–7 draw upon both settings of the piece. The piano pedal may be used modestly throughout.
Spring
from ‘Three Children’s Songs’

Frances M. Farrer
(1895–1977)

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS (1872–1958)
arr. John Leavitt

SOPRANO
ALTO

When

TENOR
BASS

Allegretto

PIANO

Allegretto

p

p

p

3

Summer dons her dress of green, And all the land is

oo.

T./B. unis.

Duration: c.2 mins

bathed in sun; Down by the brook the willows lean. And

When Autumn with a

in and out the children run;

Then golden train Steps forth in all her proud array,
The Singers
from ‘Three Children’s Songs’

Frances M. Farrer
(1895–1977)

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS (1872–1958)
arr. John Leavitt

Duration: c.2 min

But what shall we be?
O, we will sing high and

And nothing on earth shall prevent us,
A we will sing low,

fig for your industry, off you may go,
'Tis sing — — — —
An Invitation
from ‘Three Children’s Songs’

Frances M. Farrer
(1895–1977)

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS (1872–1958)
arr. John Leavitt

SOPRANO

Allegro moderato

unis. p

ALTO

Some poor

TENOR

BASS

Allegro moderato

PIANO

p

 fel - lows they live in the town,
Where the chim - neys smoke and the

Duration: c.3 mins

grassturns brown, And there’s ne-ver a morn-ing black-bird to sing

Outside their win-dow to tell them of Spring.
John Dory

English folksong
arr. RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS (1872–1958)
ed. John Leavitt

Allegro moderato
mf cantabile

SOPRANO

ALTO

TENOR

BASS

for rehearsal only

1. As it fell on a holiday,
And upon a holy tide a, John Paris was come,
A little before the gate a, John
ride a a a upon a holy
a little before the

ride a a a upon a holy
a little before the

ride a a a upon a holy
a little before the

Duration: c.3 mins

Do - ry bought him an am - bling nag  To Pa - ris for to
Do - ry was fit - ted, the por - ter was wit - tled  To let him in there -
tide - a, a tide - a a a, To
gate - a, the gate - a a a, To

ride - a, to Pa - ris for to ride - a, to
at - a, to let him in there - at - a, to

Par - is for to ride, to ride - a, to
let him in there - at, there - at - a, to

Par - is for to ride, to ride - a, to
let him in there - at, there - at - a, to
She’s like the swallow

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

Lento non troppo

mp

SOPRANO SOLO

She’s like the swallow that flies so high, She’s like the river that

ne- ver runs dry, She’s like the sun- shine on the lee shore, I

love my love_ and love is no more.

‘Twas

out in the gar-den this fair maid did go, A- pick-ing the beau- ti- ful

looo looo looo looo looo looo looo looo looo looo looo looo looo looo looo looo

Duration: c.2 mins

This song is taken from Folk Songs from Newfoundland, collected and edited by Maud Karpeles.

© Oxford University Press 1934 & 2020
50 She's like the swallow

prim - e - rose; The more she plucked the more she pulled Un -

-til she got her a - per - on full. It's

out of these ros - es she made a bed, A ston - y pil - low

for her head. She lay - down, no word did say, Un -
Greensleeves

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

Andante moderato $q.$ = 48

1. A - las, my love, you do me wrong to (3.) gown was of the grass - y green, thy

Andante moderato $q.$ = 48

cast me off dis - cour - teous - ly, And I have lov - ed sleeves of sa - tin hang - ing by, Which made thee be - our

Duration: c.3 mins

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you so long, delighting in your company.
harvest queen, and yet thou wouldst not love me.

Green sleeves was all my joy,
Green sleeves was my heart of gold,
and

my delight,
Green sleeves was my heart of gold, and
Land of our birth
from ‘A Song of Thanksgiving’

Rudyard Kipling
(1865–1936)

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

Moderato $q = c. 50$

1. Land of our birth, we pledge to thee Our love and toil in the years to be; When we are grown and take our place As men and wo-men with our race.

Duration: c.5 mins

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Father in Heav'n who lov'est all, O help thy children when they call, That they may build from age to age An undefiled heritage.