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 \( \frac{\text{\textdegree}}{\text{\textdegree}} = 100 \)

OPT. SOLO \( p \) dolce

Andante sostenuto \( \frac{\text{\textdegree}}{\text{\textdegree}} = 100 \)

con Ped.

Duration: c.2 mins

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our poor flesh and our poor blood Was clothed that ever-

last ing good. Ky ri e lei son.

Lord have mer cy.

The blessed son of God
A Song of Thanksgiving

Song of the Three Holy Children, v. 29–31, 33  
Henry V, Act IV, Scene 8  
1 Chronicles 29: 11  
Song of the Three Holy Children, v. 67  

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

Allegro moderato \( \frac{3}{4} = 100 \)

Duration: c.3.5 mins
Blessed art thou, O Lord God of our fathers; and to be praised and exalted above all for ever.
And blessed is thy glorious and holy Name; and to be praised and glorified above all for ever.

Blessed art
This is the truth

1. This is the truth sent from above, The

Andante sostenuto \( \dot{=} 120 \)

SOLO (or SOLI*)

unis. mf

Ped. con Ped. (sparingly)

4

Truth of God, the God of love, Therefore don't turn me_

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

Duration: c.2 mins

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from your door, But hearken all both rich and poor.

2. The

first thing which I do relate Is that God did
This is the truth

man create; The next thing which to you I’ll tell Wo-

Thus

man was made with man to dwell.

3. Thus

we were heirs to endless 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 $\frac{4}{4} = 80$

SOPRANO

Allegro moderato $\frac{4}{4} = 80$

ALTO

TENOR

BASS

PIANO

unis. $mf$

con Ped. (sparingly)

1. God

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

© Oxford University Press 1954 and 2020
God rest you merry, gentlemen

7

-may, Remember Christ our Saviour was
mind, And left their flocks a-feeding In

10

born on Christmas Day, To save poor souls from
tempest, storms of wind, And strait they came to

13

S.A.

T.B.

Satan's pow'r Which had long time gone astray, f
Bethlehem, The Son of God to find.
God rest you merry, gentlemen

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

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

23 Beth - le - hem
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 \( (\frac{\text{d}}{2} = 92–96) \)

1. At the name of

2. At his voice cre-

With vigour \( (\frac{\text{d}}{2} = 92–96) \)

Duration: c.11.5 mins

© Oxford University Press 1925, 1927, and 2020
Ev'ry tongue confess him King of glory

All the Angel faces, All the hosts of

now; 'Tis the Father's pleasure

light, Thrones and dominations,

We should call him Lord, Who from the beginning Was the

Stars upon their way, All the heav'n-ly orders, In their
At the name of Jesus

1. Mighty Word.

2. Great array.

3. Humbled for a season, To receive a name From the lips of sinners.
Let us now praise famous men

Ecclesiasticus 44

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

Andante con moto \( (\dot{q} = 104\text{–}108) \)

SOPRANO

ALTO

TENOR

BASS

PIANO

\[ \text{unis.} \quad \text{mf} \]

Let us now praise famous men, and our fathers that begat us. Such as did bear rule in their kingdoms, men renowned for their power,

\[ \text{unis.} \quad \text{mf} \]

Duration: c.2 mins

Let us now praise famous men

Leaders of the people by their counsels, and by their knowledge.

Such as found out musical tunes, and re-

All these were honoured in their cited verses in writing: