



ALBION RECORDS

Ralph Vaughan Williams DISCOVERIES

Three Nocturnes; A Road All Paved with Stars;
Stricken Peninsula; Four Last Songs

Roderick Williams *baritone*, Jennifer Johnston *mezzo-soprano*
BBC Symphony Orchestra, Martyn Brabbins

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)

Three Nocturnes for Baritone and Orchestra

(numbers I and III orchestrated by Anthony Payne)

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|---|---|------|
| 1 | Nocturne I - Smile O Voluptuous Cool-Breath'd Earth | 3'53 |
| 2 | Nocturne II – Whispers of Heavenly Death | 6'03 |
| 3 | Nocturne III – Out of the Rolling Ocean | 7'52 |

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|---|--|-------|
| 4 | A Road All Paved with Stars - A Symphonic Rhapsody from the Opera The Poisoned Kiss
<i>(arranged by Adrian Williams)</i> | 27'05 |
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| 5 | Stricken Peninsula – An Italian Rhapsody for Orchestra
<i>An Italian Rhapsody for Orchestra (reconstructed from the film by Philip Lane)</i> | 8'15 |
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Four Last Songs for Mezzo-Soprano and Orchestra

(orchestrated by Anthony Payne)

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|---|-----------------------|------|
| 6 | Procris | 2'29 |
| 7 | Tired | 2'12 |
| 8 | Hands, eyes and heart | 1'29 |
| 9 | Menelaus | 5'05 |

Total playing time: 64'23

Roderick Williams, *baritone (tracks 1 – 3)*

Jennifer Johnston, *mezzo-soprano (tracks 6 – 9)*

BBC Symphony Orchestra (Leader Emma McGrath, except for Stephen Bryant in track 4)

Martyn Brabbins, *Conductor*

Three Nocturnes, A Road All Paved with Stars, Stricken Peninsula, Four Last Songs

Introduction

Discoveries offers world-première recordings of works by Ralph Vaughan Williams and an insight into him as a visionary, as a romantic, as a patriot and as a lover. The works presented here span his entire working career, from the *Three Nocturnes* of 1908 to the *Four Last Songs* composed fifty years later. What unites them is that living composers have been involved in realising them in their present form. Three composers, Anthony Payne, Adrian Williams and Philip Lane, combine an understanding of Vaughan Williams's music with a deep love of it, so that the additional writing enhances rather than conceals or modifies RVW's original. We present the works in chronological order.

Three Nocturnes (1908)

Vaughan Williams was introduced to the poetry of the American Civil War poet Walt Whitman at Cambridge in 1892 and confided to Michael Kennedy towards the end of his life that "I've never got over him, I'm glad to say". Edgar Bainton suggested, in 1910, that British music of this period was a reaction against the "materialistic tendencies of the age" and that RVW was drawn to Whitman's broad humanity; he must also have enjoyed the beauty and structural freedom of his poetry. It is clear that the poet and the composer shared a visionary quality. In common with other English composers of that era, he set many Whitman poems beginning with *Two Vocal Duets* in 1904, followed by *Toward the Unknown Region* in 1907 and these *Nocturnes* from 1908. Further important Whitman settings to follow included *A Sea Symphony* (1909) and parts of *Dona Nobis Pacem* (1936).

By 1908, Vaughan Williams had developed considerable technical skill and had composed some memorable music. However, he felt that there was something clumsy about his orchestration. He had already been turned down for lessons by Elgar, and got no further with Delius. He was advised to consider d'Indy, but was finally introduced to the young and relatively unknown Maurice Ravel by a mutual friend, M D Calvocoressi,

and they first met in Paris on 13 December 1907, when the first lesson took place. This period of study was over by 3 March 1908 when Ravel wrote to RVW in London, so it lasted just a few weeks. He later wrote that Ravel enabled him to shed what he called “the heavy contrapuntal teutonic manner”. Ravel introduced him to a harmonic scale or “collection” used by Rimsky-Korsakov, now known as “Octatonic”, and it is possible to discern experimental uses of this in works from 1908 and 1909 such as the *String Quartet in G minor* and *On Wenlock Edge* – but also in many later works including *Flos Campi*, *Job*, *Riders to the Sea*, the *Piano Concerto* and 6th and 8th symphonies.

The *Three Nocturnes* of 1908 represent a transition, with numbers I and III both dated 18 August 1908, but number II dated 11 January 1908. This is early on in the period of study with Ravel, so it is probably the only surviving piece of music by Vaughan Williams that we might reasonably assume that Ravel would have reviewed and discussed with him.

Anthony Payne writes:

The first of my recent Vaughan Williams projects was that of orchestrating the *Four Last Songs*, first performed at a Promenade concert in 2013. I had embarked on it with certain misgivings, as the commission had come at a time when I was immersed in a work of my own and was loath to interrupt it. Ironically, that situation was to repeat itself in the summer of 2014. I had just started work on a large commission for the BBC Proms of 2016, a celebration of my 80th birthday, when I was requested to cast an eye over two *Nocturnes* of 1908, written out in manuscript short score, and clearly intended for baritone and orchestra. How would I feel about repeating what I had done for the *Four Last Songs*? With mixed feelings, I once again switched into VW mode, took a look and was immediately captivated by their substance. My own music would have to wait for a while.

The chequered history of the *Nocturnes* is astonishing in itself. These settings of the composer's favourite poet of that time, Walt Whitman, were dated August 1908, and appear to have been composed in direct response to Vaughan Williams's lessons with Ravel, which had begun late in 1907. However, these two settings were only part of the story. They were numbered I and III, and had been donated to the British Library by the

composer's widow, along with a third Nocturne which didn't seem to belong to the set, disqualified by its layout for unaccompanied choir.

Little interest seems to have been shown in this apparently incomplete set, but all that was to change when a further *Nocturne* turned up most unexpectedly in the year 2000. It had been discovered by Martin Lee Browne among the papers of his grandfather, eminent singer and contemporary of Vaughan Williams, Frederic Austin. Here, surely, was the missing *Nocturne no. II*, and it was complete in full score. It was quickly performed and recorded in 2003 under the direction of Richard Hickox, but it was to be ten years before the idea of reuniting all three *Nocturnes* blossomed.

What struck me so forcibly when I first looked over *Nocturnes I* and *III* was that they showed Vaughan Williams discovering the language which would make him one of the great composers of his time. The worlds of the *Pastoral* and *London* symphonies are clearly presaged, as is also, occasionally, that of *Sancta Civitas*. This is not sensed in *Nocturne no. II*, the earliest of the pieces, dated January 1908, which gives us the final glimpse of the composer's earlier language, capable of presenting fine thought, but less characteristic than that of his maturity. In other words, the *Three Nocturnes* illustrate in concentrated form the pathway from gifted composer to visionary genius and, as such, comprise, I think, the most important of Vaughan Williams's early works. They also focus the effect Ravel had on his style and technique, producing, as the composer himself admitted, a new reliance on points of colour to enrich his linear thinking.

A Road All Paved with Stars

The opera *The Poisoned Kiss* has some of the most impassioned and lyrical music that Vaughan Williams ever wrote; Adrian Williams has arranged some of its finest moments into a symphonic rhapsody called *A Road all Paved with Stars*.

The story of *The Poisoned Kiss* has a long pedigree, beginning with a traditional Indian story, some hundreds of years old; this travelled to the West, perhaps as early as the 13th century, and turns up in a number of texts including Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. In 1844 the American writer Nathaniel Hawthorne published a short story

called *Rappaccini's Daughter*, about Giacomo Rappaccini, a medical researcher in medieval Padua who grows a garden of poisonous plants. He brings up his daughter to tend the plants, and she becomes resistant to the poisons, but in the process she herself becomes poisonous to others. In 1888 the British scholar, librarian, biographer and poet Richard Garnett (perhaps most famous for *Where corals lie* in Elgar's *Sea Pictures*) adapted the story still further for *The Poison Maid*, the last of many short stories in his book *Twilight of the Gods*, drawing the conclusion that "the kiss of Love is the remedy for every poison".

In 1927 Vaughan Williams began a collaboration with Evelyn Sharp, a former suffragette and sister of Cecil Sharp. Her libretto for *The Poisoned Kiss* (variously described as an operetta or comic opera) was based on Garnett's *The Poison Maid*, with all the characters now given botanical names. It is a two generation double love story. The older generation comprises an Empress, Persicaria, and a Magician, Dipsacus, whose love was forbidden in their youth; the embittered Magician raises a daughter, Tormentilla; she is fed on poisons and cursed so that the first person she kisses will die. The Empress is unaware of this but as a sensible precaution raises her son, Amaryllus, on antidote – rather a corny joke that works well on the stage! The young people fall in love in Act 1 with the duet *Blue Larkspur in a Garden*, one of RVW's most beautiful tunes. Tormentilla does her best to prevent Amaryllus from kissing her but is won over in Act 2 by his serenade: "Dear love, behold for good or ill how near your lover stands; The night is ours, all sounds are still..." which concludes: "Before us both the way shines clear, for you and me, so near, so dear – A road all paved with stars". The music combines a sense of doom with great passion as the duet "Long have I waited, Tormentilla, thus to enfold you" leads to the poisoned kiss and the collapse of Amaryllus – who happily makes a full recovery in the third and final Act. The gender mix across the cast including minor characters is fairly even, so nearly everybody ends up falling in love with their opposite number and living "happily ever after", including of course the Empress and the Magician.

Dramatically, but not musically, *The Poisoned Kiss* pays homage both to Gilbert and Sullivan and to Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. Musically, the opera contains some of Vaughan Williams's most lyrical music; surely as passionate as any music yet conceived. Adrian Williams has captured this in his symphonic rhapsody.

Adrian Williams takes up the story:

A Road All Paved with Stars is an orchestral synthesis of the music from Vaughan Williams's opera *The Poisoned Kiss* (1936), the title coming from one of the central arias, in which Amaryllus sings of his love for his sweetheart Tormentilla. The score was jointly commissioned by the Vaughan Williams Charitable Trust and Oxford University Press.

My brief was for a work which would easily fit into the average concert programme, so that the best music from the opera might be introduced to a wider public. The music for the most part sits in 'light opera' territory, although the central second act owes more to grand opera, and contains supremely wonderful music. I knew immediately that I wanted to keep more or less intact the sections leading up to the 'fatal' Kiss, the Kiss itself, and its aftermath; these form the opera's core. Vaughan Williams himself had composed an overture which contains 'orchestra-only' takes on many of the most memorable songs and sections, and I was tempted to use some of these - but he didn't include any of the most glorious Act 2 music. Only once I had decided to begin my piece with that Act 2 material growing gloriously, sunrise-like out of darkness, did the first third or so of *A Road All Paved with Stars* begin to take shape. Part of the brief was to stick as far as possible to the opera's story-line: I largely achieved this, whilst using certain melodic figures such as 'Tormentilla' as leitmotifs. All the while I was aware that I needed to build towards the Kiss climax, and the whole of that central sequence is included.

I was left with the question of how to 'descend' satisfactorily from the passion of the Kiss and the death music, creating a final section which did not seem short-changed. Without a 'happily-ever-after' ending the work could have concluded at that point,

which would have meant omitting all the glorious music from Act 3 including the great finale which Vaughan Williams had included in his overture – but my piece really needed a happy ending! My solution was to move directly from the death music to the finale of Act 3, in an instant jolting the listener out of the sombre mood. The finale music became a framework within which to capture some of Act 3's great moments, notably the Empress's aria 'Love breaks all rules.' Noting that this was in E flat, I could not resist the shift into a restatement of 'Blue larkspur in a garden' in A flat, from Act 1 just before the concluding return of the finale music.

Stricken Peninsula

Vaughan Williams composed the music for eleven films between 1940 and 1956. This began as a wartime patriotic duty, and continued because he enjoyed the stimulus of working to order, often with the need to generate new passages very swiftly; directors enjoyed working with him. While one film famously developed into the Seventh Symphony, *Sinfonia Antartica*, all but one of the others have subsequently been performed and recorded, often as short suites.

Stricken Peninsula is the exception, since the score is lost. It was a 15 minute propaganda film made by the Army Film Unit and the Ministry of Information in 1945 for the Department of Psychological Warfare. It dealt with the privations suffered by the population of Southern Italy following the collapse of government and destruction of much infrastructure towards the end of the war (while fighting continued further North), and reconstruction efforts shared with the Allied Armies.

The film was directed by Paul Fletcher. The music was directed by Muir Matheson, director of London Films, who had initiated RVW into films with *49th Parallel* in 1940. There was a spoken commentary (very much of its time) by William Holt, the son of a Todmorden coal-merchant who became, variously, a deck hand, stunt man, language teacher, newspaper correspondent (during the Spanish Civil War), novelist and BBC broadcaster.

The film survives at the British Film Institute and can be found online. Stephen Connock, on behalf of The Ralph Vaughan Williams Society and Albion Records, commissioned composer Philip Lane to work from an audio copy and reconstruct it from the film. Inevitably, the narration obscures some of the detail, and the task turned out to be hard work. Philip Lane takes up the story:

“Stricken Peninsula was a documentary film made towards the end of WW2 about life and reconstruction in Italy. Totally at odds with what I found to be rather a dull film with matter-of-fact narration is some quite splendid music by RVW.

In trying to make a concert work – I call it ‘An Italian Rhapsody’ – out of so many short cues I was helped by what is really a leitmotif of a rising figure, heard at the start on pizzicato lower strings. This figure is also part of what passes for a Main Theme. The actual tune is just three bars long with the third bar repeated. How one wishes RVW had written the other four bars – or even more!

With this figure as the ‘glue’ I picked other cues that I could actually hear faithfully behind the narration and which I felt could stand on their own without the pictures. These included a plaintive cor anglais melody and probably the only example in the whole RVW oeuvre of an Italian marching street band, suitably bolstered for symphony orchestra.

I politely announce the Main Theme early on in restrained terms, waiting until the end to give it full expansiveness before fading away as the soundtrack does.”

Philip Lane’s eight minute *Italian Rhapsody* is thus more than a joining together of fragments; it is a new work, faithfully incorporating some wonderful tunes by Vaughan Williams, perhaps emphasising the spirit of working together towards reconstruction that characterises the film’s conclusion.

Four Last Songs

Procris; Tired; Hands, Eyes and Heart; Menelaus (Menelaus on the beach at Pharos)

Ralph Vaughan Williams met the poet Ursula Wood in 1938. They had corresponded with a view to her writing a libretto, but they fell in love at their first meeting. There were to be many collaborations, beginning with the masque *The Bridal Day* (1938, based on a poem by Spenser). A number of subsequent works were based on her poetry, including *The Sons of Light* (1950) and *Sun, Moon, Stars and Man* (1950) and she contributed verses to the opera *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1951). Ralph and Ursula married in January 1953, and RVW soon afterwards set her poem *Silence and Music* as part of *A Garland for the Queen*. In 1954 she contributed some words to the Christmas Cantata *Hodie*. Finally, Ursula contributed the text for the unfinished opera *Thomas the Rhymer*.

Of the *Four Last Songs*, only one (*Menelaus*) was performed during the composer's lifetime. They were written between 1954 and 1958, with *Tired* being composed in just one day in 1956. They might be considered as Ralph's last gift to Ursula.

Ursula had begun writing at the age of ten. Her first published collection appeared in 1941 under the title *No Other Choice*. Further collections were published in 1943 and 1948. She also wrote four novels, three of which have been published.



Whilst Ursula Vaughan Williams does not belong to any school of poetry, the influence of certain poets can be detected in her poetry, notably Yeats, who she discovered in 1925-6, and Thomas Hardy. Her poetry has been set by more than 30 composers, one of whom said: "There is a beauty to it". It is very sensitive. She can capture moods and ideas in a few words or lines. Above all, the words are evocative, and stimulate a musical response."

Anthony Payne writes:

“When Vaughan Williams died, he left four songs for voice and piano, to words by his wife Ursula, which were evidently intended for inclusion in a pair of contrasting cycles. The first song to be composed, *Menelaus*, dates from 1954, and was premièred separately that year. *Tired* and *Hands, Eyes and Heart* followed in 1956, and *Procris* in 1958, but these were not publicly performed until after the composer’s death. It was only in 1960 that all four songs were published as a set, and premièred under the title *Four Last Songs*.

If this grouping seems a little like a marriage of convenience, this is not to say that it lacks coherence. The opening and closing songs are both on Classical subjects and draw upon the magically ambivalent language of the composer’s Seventh and Ninth symphonies, where the fateful and the desolate are tempered by hope, and vice versa. The sound world of those two symphonic masterpieces was ever at the back of my mind as I attempted to reimagine the songs’ accompaniments. The two central songs belong to a rather different world and suggest that the composer was recalling over many decades the lyricism that had characterised the *Songs of Travel* and even *Linden Lea*, his very first published work. *Tired* and *Hands, Eyes and Heart* are, in fact, the most intimate and tender of love songs, although their innocence is braced by the experience of old age to form a subtle link with the outer songs. I took the composer’s splendid orchestration of three of his *Songs of Travel* as my model here (how did we ever come to believe him amateurish in his treatment of the orchestra?).

As a passionate admirer of Vaughan Williams for as long as I can recall, I was deeply touched to be involved so closely with the very essence of his thought for, although by no means weighty in their content, the *Four Last Songs* deal in their modest way with a number of the preoccupations that make Vaughan Williams one of the most profound of 20th-century masters.”

The *Four Last Songs* were first performed as a cycle by Pamela Bowden (contralto) with Ernest Lush on the piano, and broadcast on the Home Service on 3 August 1960. Some subsequent performances have substituted a baritone for the contralto, and there is a recording by a counter-tenor.

The first performance in Anthony Payne's orchestration was at a Promenade concert on 4 September 2013, sung by Jennifer Johnston (mezzo-soprano) with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Osmo Vänskä. We are delighted that Jennifer Johnston was available to record the work for us on this occasion. She recalls earlier performances:

"I was asked to sing the *Four Last Songs* at the launch of a volume of poetry by Ursula Vaughan Williams at the Royal College of Music and it coincided with her 93rd birthday in March 2004. She had never heard the complete set live, having found some of them in RVW's desk after his death, so was very moved to hear them.



There is no comparable experience to walking out on to the platform of the Royal Albert Hall packed to the rafters, as the lone soloist about to deliver a world première from memory; it has a thrill and a terror all of its own. The commission from Anthony Payne came about as a result of a conversation I had with Adam Gatehouse, at that time in charge of the BBC New Generation Programme, about the *Four Last Songs* and my performance for Ursula. I featured them in a recital with piano on Radio 3, and we agreed they would suit orchestration. The BBC supported the project, and it was wonderful that they brought on board such a master as Anthony Payne to orchestrate the songs; it was a great honour for me to present the première of them at the Proms."

Photographs of Ursula Vaughan Williams and Jennifer Johnston at the Royal College of Music on 2 March 2004 on this and the preceding page by Ray Cooper

Three Nocturnes

By Walt Whitman

Nocturne I – Smile O Voluptuous Cool-Breath'd Earth

From "Song of Myself"

Smile O voluptuous cool-breath'd earth!
Earth of the slumbering and liquid trees!
Earth of departed sunset — earth of the
 mountains misty-topt!
Earth of the vitreous pour of the full moon just
 tinged with blue!
Earth of shine and dark mottling the tide of the river!
Earth of the limpid gray of clouds brighter and
 clearer for my sake!
Far-swooping elbow'd earth — rich apple-
 blossom'd earth!
Smile, for your lover comes.

Nocturne II – Whispers of Heavenly Death

WHISPERS of heavenly death, murmur'd I hear;
Labial gossip of night—sibilant chorals;
Footsteps gently ascending—mystical breezes,
 wafted soft and low;
Ripples of unseen rivers—tides of a current,
 flowing, forever flowing;
(Or is it [the] plashing of tears? the measureless waters
of human tears?)
I see, just see, skyward, great cloud-masses;
Mournfully, slowly they roll, silently swelling
 and mixing;

With, at times, a half-dimm'd, sadden'd, far-off star,
Appearing and disappearing.

(Some parturition, rather – some solemn,
immortal birth:

On the frontiers, to eyes invisible *,
Some Soul is passing over.)

* *Whitman wrote 'impenetrable'*

Nocturne III – Out of the Rolling Ocean

Out of the rolling ocean the crowd came a drop
 gently to me,
Whispering, I love you, before long I die,
I have travel'd a long way merely to look on you,
 to touch you,
For I could not die till I once look'd on you,
For I fear'd I might afterward lose you.

Now we have met, we have look'd, we are safe,
Return in peace to the ocean my love,
I too am part of that ocean, my love, we are not
 so much separated,
Behold the great rindure, the cohesion of all,
 how perfect!

But as for me, for you, the irresistible sea is to
 separate us,
As for an hour carrying us diverse, yet cannot
 carry us diverse forever;
Be not impatient – a little while * – know you I
salute the air, the ocean and the land,
Every day at sundown for your dear sake, my love.

* *Whitman wrote 'space'*

Four Last Songs

By Ursula Vaughan Williams

1 Procris

First published in 'Fall of Leaf' (1943)

Procris is lying at the waterside,
the yellow flowers show spring, the grass is green,
before a gentle wind the thin trees lean
towards the rushes, the rushes to the tide.
She will not see the green spring turn to summer, summer
go in a long golden dusk towards the snow,
With eyes so lit by love that everything
burned, flowed, grew, blossomed, moved on foot or wing
with the guessed rhythm of eternity.
All her hope and will
flowed from her unavailing
and she knew darkness, as her eyes know now
shut to the daylight, and despair prevailing
she saw no way to go.

2 Tired

First published in 'Fall of Leaf' (1943)

Sleep, and I'll be as another sleeper
holding you in my arms, glad that you lie
so near at last.
This sheltering midnight is our meeting place,
no passion or despair or hope divide
me from your side.
I shall remember firelight on your sleeping face,
I shall remember shadows growing deeper
as the fire fell to ashes and the minutes passed.

3 Hands, Eyes and Heart

First published in 'Fall of Leaf' (1943); this is the seventh and final stanza of 'Prologue'.

Hands, give him all the measure of my love
surer than any word.
Eyes, be deep pools of truth, where he may see
a thought more whole than constancy.
Heart, in his keeping, be at rest and live
as music and silence meet, and both are heard.

4 Menelaus

First published in 'Silence and Music' (1959)

You will come home, not to the home you knew
that your thought remembers, going from rose to rose
along the terraces and staying to gaze at the vines
and reeds and iris beside the lake
in the morning haze.

Forgetting the place you are in when the cold sea winds
go crying like gulls on the beach where the horned sea
poppies grow.

Homesick wanderer, you will come home
to a home more ancient, waiting your return:
sea frets the steps that lie green under waves
and swallows nest below lintel and eaves;
there lamps are kindled for you, they will burn
till you come, however late you come,
till the west wind's sheltering wing
folds round your sail and brings you to land.

Stretch out your hand, murmuring, lapping sea and the
lamps and the welcome wait to draw you home to rest.
You shall come home and love shall fold you in joy
and lay your heart on her breast.

*All of these poems can be found in The complete poems
of Ursula Vaughan Williams and a short story – Fall of Leaf,
Albion Music Ltd, 2003.*

Martyn Brabbins

British conductor Martyn Brabbins is known for his affinity with music of the late 19th/early 20th centuries, to which he brings a Romantic sensibility, unerring sense of pace and an extraordinary ear for detail. He has conducted hundreds of world premières by leading international composers, has championed British music at home and abroad, and has made over 120 recordings.

After studying composition in London and then conducting with Ilya Musin in Leningrad, he won first prize at the 1988 Leeds Conductors' Competition. Since then he has become a frequent guest with leading orchestras across the globe, and has held a succession of titles, notably Associate Principal Conductor of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra 1994–2005, Principal Guest of the Royal Flemish Philharmonic 2009–2015 and Chief Conductor of the Nagoya Philharmonic 2012–2016 – remaining closely associated with all three.

His extensive discography ranges from Romantic to Contemporary repertoire. He won the Gramophone Award for Birtwistle's *Mask of Orpheus* with the BBC Symphony, the Cannes Opera Award for Korngold's *Die Kathrin* with the BBC Concert Orchestra, and the Grand Prix du Disque in the 2013 opera category for his recording of Jonathan Harvey's *Wagner Dream*. Brabbins is an inspirational force in British music, and has contributed significantly over the years, conducting almost all the major UK orchestras and appearing at the major British festivals on many occasions. He was Artistic Director of the Cheltenham International Festival of Music 2005–2007, and is currently Music Director to the Huddersfield Choral Society with whom he has had a long association.

He is a leading advocate of British composers across the globe, and an inspiration to young conductors in his annual course at the St Magnus Festival on Orkney and in his position at Visiting Professor of Conducting at the Royal College of Music. In 2012 he conducted ENO's production of Vaughan Williams's *The Pilgrim's Progress* at the Coliseum, London.



photo: Benjamin Ealovega

Roderick Williams *baritone*

Roderick Williams encompasses a wide repertoire, from baroque to contemporary music, in the opera house, on the concert platform and in recital. He enjoys relationships with all the major UK opera houses and is particularly associated with the baritone roles of Mozart. He has also sung world premières of operas by, among others, David Sawer, Sally Beamish, Michael van der Aa, Robert Saxton and Alexander Knaifel.



photo by Benjamin Ealovega

Roderick Williams sings concert repertoire with all the BBC orchestras, and many other ensembles including the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, the Philharmonia, London Sinfonietta, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, the Hallé, Britten Sinfonia, Bournemouth Symphony, Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. He has worked with the Berlin Philharmonic, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Russian National Orchestra, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Ensemble Orchestral de Paris, Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome and Bach Collegium Japan, Tonkünstler Orchester, Cincinnati Symphony,

Music of the Baroque Chicago, Virginia Arts Festival, San Francisco Symphony, Utah Symphony, amongst others. His many festival appearances include the BBC Proms (including the Last Night in 2014), Edinburgh, Cheltenham, Aldeburgh and Melbourne.

He is an accomplished recital artist who can be heard at venues and festivals including Wigmore Hall, Kings Place, LSO St Luke's, the Perth Concert Hall, Oxford Lieder Festival, London Song Festival and the Musikverein, Vienna.

Roderick Williams is also a composer and has had works premiered at the Wigmore and Barbican Halls, the Purcell Room and live on national radio. In April 2016 he was Artistic Director of Leeds Lieder and in May 2016 won the RPS Singer award. His numerous recordings include two of Albion Records' earlier albums: ALB001 *The Sky shall be our Roof* and ALBCD002 *Kissing her Hair*.

Jennifer Johnston *mezzo-soprano*

The dramatic mezzo-soprano was named by both *BBC Music Magazine* and the *Observer* as 'a rising star', and the *Financial Times* as the 'Face to Watch in Opera'. A former BBC New Generation Artist, she is a graduate of Cambridge University and the Royal College of Music, and is the recipient of numerous awards. She has

appeared in opera at the Teatro alla Scala, Salzburg Festival, Bayerische Staatsoper, Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, Opéra de Lille, Beijing Festival, Baltic Sea Festival, Scottish Opera and Opera North. Her roles include Fricka, Waltraute, Second Norn, Wellgunde, Mrs Grose, Leda, Gaia, Lady de Hautdesert, Jocasta, Hedwige, Lucretia, Margret, Dido, Hänsel, Mrs Noye, Third Lady, Mrs Herring, Mrs Sedley, Giovanna Seymour and Agrippina.



photo: Gisela Schenker

She has performed with many of the world's greatest orchestras in repertoire spanning the centuries, from Bach's *St Matthew Passion* with the Dallas Symphony and Hong Kong Philharmonic orchestras, both under Jaap Van Zweden, Mahler's Third Symphony under Franz Welser-Möst and the Cleveland Orchestra, Schumann's *Faustszenen* with the Leipzig Gewandhausorchester and Wiener Symphoniker orchestras under Daniel Harding, as Jocaste in Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex* under Sir John Eliot Gardiner with the Berlin Philharmonic and London Symphony orchestras (released as an LSO Live disc), and Adès's *Totentanz* under Thomas Adès with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. She made her solo recital debut at the Wigmore Hall broadcast live on BBC Radio 3.

Jennifer Johnston is also singing on Albion Records' album *Purer than Pearl* – a recital of songs and duets by Vaughan Williams to be released in October 2016.

The BBC Symphony Orchestra

Sakari Oramo *Chief Conductor* **Semyon Bychkov, Günter Wand** *Conducting Chair*
Jiří Bělohlávek, Sir Andrew Davis *Conductors Laureate*
Brett Dean *Artist in Association* **Paul Hughes** *General Manager*

The BBC Symphony Orchestra has played a central role at the heart of British musical life since it was founded in 1930. It provides the backbone of the BBC Proms, performing around a dozen concerts in the festival each year including the First and Last Nights. It performs an annual season of concerts at the Barbican, where it is Associate Orchestra.

The BBC SO has a strong commitment to 20th-century and contemporary music, with recent performances including commissions and premières from Richard Ayres, Brett Dean, Unsuk Chin, Andrew Norman, George Benjamin and Anna Clyne.

The BBC Symphony Orchestra performs throughout the world and works regularly with its Chief Conductor Sakari Oramo, Semyon Bychkov, who holds the Günter Wand Conducting Chair, and Conductors Laureate Sir Andrew Davis and Jiří Bělohlávek. Brett Dean is the Orchestra's Artist in Association.

The BBC Symphony Orchestra regularly performs with the BBC Symphony Chorus and together they won the 2015 Gramophone Best Choral Disc award for their recording of Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*.

Central to the Orchestra's life are studio recordings for BBC Radio 3 at its Maida Vale home, some of which are free for the public to attend and the BBC SO also performs throughout the world. The vast majority of concerts are broadcast on BBC Radio 3, streamed online and available for 30 days after broadcast via BBC iPlayer. You can also download BBC programmes onto your mobile or tablet via the BBC iPlayer Radio app.

The BBC SO is committed to innovative education work and ongoing projects include the BBC's *Ten Pieces*, BBC SO Journey through Music scheme, which introduces families to classical music with pre-concert workshops and discounted tickets, and the BBC SO Family Orchestra and Chorus.

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Anthony Payne

Born in London in 1936, Anthony Payne began to compose whilst still at school and went on to read music at Durham University. On leaving University he began a career as a freelance musicologist, journalist and lecturer, producing authoritative studies of Schoenberg and Bridge. In the mid-60s, however, he began to compose his *Phoenix Mass*, in which he at last discovered a personal language. Since then, Payne's reputation has grown steadily with each new work. He has received commissions from many important soloists and organisations; in July 1990 the orchestral work *Time's Arrow* was given its world première in a BBC Promenade Concert by the BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Andrew Davis. His orchestral work *A Hidden Music* (1992) for strings and single winds was commissioned by the London Festival Orchestra for its annual Cathedral Classics Festival and premiered in June 1992 at Westminster Cathedral. More recently, he has written the autobiographical Orchestral Variations – *The Seeds Long Hidden* for the English Chamber Orchestra and *Empty Landscape* – *The Heart's Ease* for the Nash Ensemble. His completion of 'an elaboration on the sketches of Elgar's 3rd Symphony', was been hailed by critics as a significant musical event. Payne's chamber works – especially *A Day in the Life of a Mayfly* which he composed for The Fires of London Ensemble – are more frequently performed in his own country and abroad than is generally the fate of contemporary music. His vocal and choral settings also reveal both the breadth of his literary knowledge and his exceptional sensitivity to language. Having earned his living for a time as a music journalist, his writings are respected as stylish and authoritative and his easy articulation makes him a popular and frequent broadcaster.



Roderick Williams with Anthony Payne at the recording session

Adrian Williams

Described by Yehudi Menuhin as a 'master of intricate patterns and forms' Adrian Williams was born in Hertfordshire and showed precocious talent at the piano as a young child. He began composing at the age of eleven, his early promise resulting in consultations with Lennox Berkeley followed by composition and piano studies at the Royal College of Music where his teachers included Bernard Stevens, Alan Ridout and John Lill. At the RCM he was awarded a Leverhulme scholarship and the coveted Menuhin Prize for Composition.

Following a period as Composer in Residence at Charterhouse School his music evolved a tougher harmonic language: more adventurous in its range and scope but retaining an underlying melodic vein.

During the eighties a move to the Welsh Borders saw Williams find his spiritual home, along with the peace of mind and creative impetus for many of his most vital works. In 1983 Williams founded the Presteigne Festival, which maintains a strong commitment to contemporary music. In 2016 the festival is presenting a number of the composer's most important works to mark his 60th birthday.

Adrian Williams has forged a successful and continuing career in music for film and television, whilst his absorption of influences as diverse as English song and elements of jazz and minimalism has seen his catalogue of major works grow to demonstrate a richly compelling creative voice. Recent scores include *Maelienydd* (2008) for Chamber Orchestra and the *String Quartet no 4*, premièred to acclaim at the 2009 Presteigne Festival. The *Cello Concerto* (2009) marks the culmination of Adrian Williams's long standing relationship with Raphael Wallfisch, an ardent champion of the composer's works for cello who also gave the first performance of his *Spring Requiem* in 1993. His most recent major work is a choral and orchestral work: *The Idea of Peace* (2013) celebrating the 300th anniversary of the Treaty of Utrecht for the City of London Festival and the Vrede van Utrecht festival in Holland.



photo: Xueqin Yang

Philip Lane

Philip Lane was born in Cheltenham in 1950 and read Music at Birmingham University. As a composer and arranger he is virtually self-taught, apart from gentle encouragement from 'heroes' Bernard Herrmann and Richard Rodney Bennett.

He has written for most genres and all his orchestral music is commercially recorded. These are often written in the style of British Light Music, being largely tonal and featuring lush orchestrations. Compositions include a number of works themed around the Christmas season – the three *Wassail Dances*, *Overture on French Carols* and *Three Christmas Pictures*. In December 2009 he was commissioned by the Boston Pops Orchestra to write their annual Holiday Pops work, *The Christmas Story*, which received 38 performances.

In 2007 Lane composed a setting of *The Night before Christmas* for narrator and orchestra, the commercial recording of which featured Stephen Fry as the narrator. A particular penchant for animation films resulted in his writing music for several TV series including the classic *Captain Pugwash*. In the 1990s he began an ongoing career as record producer (with well over 100 orchestral discs to his credit) and reconstructor of classic film scores, with more than 100 titles covered so far. In 2009 he became the first British-based composer to be commissioned to write a substantial work for the Boston Pops.



Philip Lane with Martyn Brabbins (right) at the recording session



ALBION RECORDS

Production credits:

Executive producer: Stephen Connock MBE

Booklet notes: John Francis with additional contributions from artists and composers and extracts from Stephen Connock's preface to *The Complete Poems of Ursula Vaughan Williams*

BBC Producer: Ann McKay

BBC Engineers: Simon Hancock (track 4); Neil Pemberton (all other tracks)

Mastering: Deborah Spanton, K & A Productions

Recorded at Maida Vale Studios on 12 & 13 January 2015 (*A Road all Paved with Stars*) and on 12 & 13 October 2015 (all other works)

Produced in association with BBC Radio 3 and the BBC Symphony Orchestra

Cover image: NGC 2174 (the Monkey Head Nebula), within the constellation Orion, about 6,400 light-years away. Cropped image adapted from Hubble Heritage data by www.moonrocksastro.com

With special thanks

This recording was supported by the Vaughan Williams Charitable Trust and by David and Daphne Trimble, Mrs J M Gattens, Michael and Barbara Gainsford, Alison Oliphant, Jamie and Julia Korner, Tom Render, Simon Coombs, Neil Bettridge, Robert Field, Julia and Roger Juneau, Seumas Simpson, John and Sharon Francis, The Bevis Foundation, Martin Murray, Richard Hall, Alan Gillmor, Benjamin Nossiter and Astrid Jurisch-Nossiter, Philip Robson, Philippe Rosset, Len Evans, Radley and Sandra Smith, Christopher Seller, Andrew Seddon, Kevin Mitchell and Michael Greenwald.



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About Albion Records

Chairman: John Francis FCA

Director: Mark Hammett

Fulfilment: Mark and Sue Hammett

A & R Manager: Charles Padley

Since its formation in 1994, The Ralph Vaughan Williams Society – a registered charity with around 1,000 members worldwide – has sought to raise the profile of the composer through publications, seminars and sponsorship of recordings. The Society's successes include the publication of Ursula Vaughan Williams's autobiography and the sponsorship of significant performances, especially of the operas. The Society has been closely involved with important premières including *A Cambridge Mass*, *Willow Wood*, and *The Garden of Proserpine*.

The Society's recording label, Albion Records, was formed in 2007 and is devoted to recordings of works by Vaughan Williams. Each recording contains at least one world première recording, and these abound among the many rare and beautiful songs to be found on our early recordings, *The Sky Shall Be Our Roof* and *Kissing Her Hair*. *Music in the Heart* includes Vaughan Williams conducting his *Serenade to Music*. *The Garden of Proserpine*, an early work, spent five weeks in The Specialist Classical Chart in 2011 and also reached the Classic FM Top Forty. In 2013, *The Solent* reached No. 4 in the Specialist Classical Chart and remained in the top twenty for many weeks. This record was also nominated for a Grammy Award for 2015 in the Best Classical Compendium category.

Recent releases include: *Fair Child of Beauty* which includes *The Bridal Day*, the first recording of RVW's beautiful masque from 1938; *Bursts of Acclamation* – RVW's organ music and transcriptions played by David Briggs, Editor's Choice in *Gramophone* December 2015; and *Heirs and Rebels* – remastered 78 rpm recordings of works by Holst and Vaughan Williams, welcomed by Paul Driver in *The Sunday Times* and by Simon Heffer in the *Telegraph*. We shall also be releasing *Purer than Pearl* in 2016 – a lovely disc of songs and duets with the first recording of several early works.

For further information visit:
www.rvwsociety.com



The Ralph Vaughan Williams Society

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Vice Presidents
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ALBION RECORDS

Ralph Vaughan Williams DISCOVERIES

- | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------|-------|
| 1-3 | Three Nocturnes | 17'48 |
| 4 | A Road All Paved with Stars | 27'05 |
| 5 | Stricken Peninsula | 8'15 |
| 6-9 | Four Last Songs | 11'15 |

Total playing time: 64'23

Produced in association with:

Roderick Williams *baritone (tracks 1-3)*
Jennifer Johnston *mezzo-soprano (tracks 6-9)*
BBC Symphony Orchestra (*leader Emma McGrath,*
except for Stephen Bryant in track 4)
Martyn Brabbins *conductor*

BBC
RADIO



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