

Montgomery Philharmonic 2016 - 17 Our 11th Season – Inspired by...

Concert 2, December 4th, 2016 with the Central Maryland Chorale

Vaughan Williams | Bass

About Ralph Vaughan Williams

Ralph Vaughan Williams was born to an Anglican rector and his wife. He was a great-great-grandson of Josiah Wedgwood, the founder of the pottery dynasty, and also a great-grandnephew of Erasmus Darwin, noted philosopher and the father of Charles Darwin. Although Vaughn's father passed away when he was only 3 years old, he was raised by a nurse who was forward thinking socially and who taught Ralph to be of service to others. Vaughan felt that music should be available to as many people as possible, so he wrote music to be played at all levels of music-making – from the professional to the amateur. He served in the British Army in WWI and the war had a deep effect on his life.

At age 5, Vaughn began piano lessons with his aunt and in this first year of piano study wrote his first piece, *The Robin's Nest*, a four-measure piano solo. After high school at the Charthouse School, he enrolled in the Royal College of Music, where he studied harmony and organ. Vaughn left the Royal College of Music to study music and history for three years at Trinity College, Cambridge. He graduated with a Bachelor of Music degree in 1895 and received a Bachelor of Arts degree the following year. After finishing at Trinity College, Vaughn returned to the Royal College to complete his composition and organ study. When he returned, the composition teacher had changed and Vaughan clashed with his teacher. Professor Stanford wanted him to compose in the style of Brahms and Wagner, but Vaughan had grown more adventurous. He stood up to Stanford and surprisingly Stanford recognized his talent and desire to move forward in composition style.

Interestingly, during Vaughn's second stint at the Royal College of Music, he met someone who would become a lifelong friend, Gustav Holst. This friendship led to their becoming each other's composition critic, resulting in some of most exciting music written in Great Britain during this time. Michael Kennedy characterizes Vaughan Williams' music as a strongly individual blending of the modal harmonies familiar from folk songs, with the French influence of Ravel and Debussy. The basis of his work is melody, with his rhythms, in Kennedy's view, being unobtrusive at times. Vaughan's fans often assert that he was England's greatest 20th-century composer. There is certainly room for other views, but he was without a doubt an extraordinary composer.

- **Born:** October 12, 1872 – Down Ampney, United Kingdom
- **Died:** August 26, 1958 – London, United Kingdom
- **Compositions:** 6 operas; 5 sets of incidental music to plays; 5 ballets; 9 symphonies, various rhapsodies tone poems, and fantasias for orchestra; 13 concerti; 27 major choral works with orchestra; 4 sets of hymn tunes for chorus; 32 works for solo voice and piano including 8 song cycles; 16 chamber works; 10 film scores; 3 radio scores; 8 works for wind band
- **Parents:** Arthur Vaughan Williams, Margaret, *née* Wedgwood Vaughan Williams
- **Spouse:** Ursula Vaughan Williams (m. 1953–1958), Adeline Fisher Vaughan Williams (m. 1897–1951)

Hodie (This Day) (1953–54) – Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)

The Latin phrase, *Hodie, Christus Natus Est* (“Today Christ Is Born”) has long introduced Christmas vespers, and settings of that text have been made by dozens of composers. Vaughan Williams had written a previous Christmas-themed work in 1930, and in late 1953, he mentioned his interest in another such work to Ursula Wood, his then fiancé and a noted poet in her own right. She replied that she had previously experimented with a pastiche of appropriate readings, connected by Gospel passages. Her experiment corresponded well with what Vaughan Williams had in mind and, with some revisions, the work began; Vaughan Williams was 81 years old at the time. Its premiere took place at Worcester in late 1954. Because Vaughan Williams and his new bride, Ursula, were on tour in the United States, they did not get to hear the premiere but, rather, heard *Hodie* on January 19, 1955 in London with Sir Malcolm Sargent conducting. *Hodie* is divided into 16 sections, as described below.

Text and Description for *Hodie* ...

Instrumentation – Three flutes (3rd doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, contra bassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, snare drum, tenor drum, chimes, cymbals, glockenspiel, triangle, celesta, piano, organ, strings

Artifact –

Vaughan Williams photo for New York Philharmonic Program

<http://archives.nyphil.org/index.php/search?search-type=singleFilter&search-text=Vaughan+Williams&doctype=visual#assetId=f4e02c6c-ac8b-47a8-a3ee-e4f745555c4c>



1. Vaughan Williams *Hodie* - Sir David Willcocks, Bach Choir & London Symphony Orchestra

2. Vaughan Williams: *A Sea Symphony* & *Hodie* - Richard Hickox & Philharmonia Orchestra



1. Vaughan Williams: *The Collector's Edition* - 30 CDs

2. R.V.W.: *A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams* (Oxford Lives)

3. Vaughan Williams