

From Ursula, with Love

Recordings of the music of Ralph Vaughan Williams
from the collection of Ursula Vaughan Williams



ALBION RECORDS



Flemish Farm
Organ Preludes

Phantasy Quintet
String Quartet No. 2

The Oxen
Masque of Charterhouse

From Ursula, with Love

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Three extracts from *Suite: The Story of a Flemish Farm*

- | | | |
|---|----------------------|------|
| 1 | Dawn in the Old Barn | 7'18 |
| 2 | The Dead Man's Kit | 4'49 |
| 3 | In the Café | 2'46 |

BBC Scottish Orchestra conducted by Graham Treacher

Phantasy Quintet

(15.36)

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|------|
| 4 | Prelude – <i>Lento ma non troppo</i> | 4'25 |
| 5 | Scherzo – <i>Prestissimo</i> | 3'42 |
| 6 | Alla Sarabanda – <i>Lento</i> | 3'05 |
| 7 | Burlesca – <i>Allegro moderato</i> | 4'24 |

Aeolian Quartet (Sydney Humphreys, Raymond Keenlyside, Margaret Major and Derek Simpson) with Kenneth Essex (second viola)

Extract from *Hodie (This Day)* – A Christmas Cantata

- | | | |
|---|---|------|
| 8 | The Oxen, <i>Andante sostenuto</i> , for baritone and orchestra | 3'28 |
|---|---|------|

John Carol Case (baritone)

Philomusica of London conducted by Donald Cashmore

Three Organ Preludes Founded on Welsh Hymn-Tunes

- | | | |
|----|---------------|------|
| 9 | Bryn Calfaria | 4'05 |
| 10 | Rhosymedre | 5'13 |
| 11 | Hyfrydol | 2'34 |

George Thalben-Ball (organ)

String Quartet No. 2 in A minor. For Jean on her Birthday (20'12)

- | | | |
|----|---------------------------------------|------|
| 12 | Prelude – <i>Allegro appassionato</i> | 4'13 |
| 13 | Romance – <i>Largo</i> | 8'40 |
| 14 | Scherzo – <i>Allegro</i> | 3'32 |
| 15 | Epilogue – <i>Andante sostenuto</i> | 3'47 |

Aeolian Quartet (Sydney Humphreys, Raymond Keenlyside, Margaret Major and Derek Simpson)

Solemn Music for the Masque of Charterhouse (Final Scene)

- | | | |
|----|--------------|------|
| 16 | Solemn Music | 5'02 |
| 17 | Finale | 4'04 |

Chorus and Orchestra of Charterhouse School, William Llewellyn

Total running time **75'08**

Tracks 1 to 7 and 9 to 15 have not previously been commercially issued on record.



Sir George Thalben-Ball

**Music by Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)
from the Collection of Ursula Vaughan Williams (1911-2007)**

1-3 Three extracts from *Suite: The Story of a Flemish Farm*

When Ralph Vaughan Williams wrote his article ‘The Composer in Wartime’ for *The Listener* in the early spring of 1940 he made no reference to music for patriotic wartime films. Indeed, he said: ‘It is certainly, to my mind, one of the glories of the art of music that it can be put to no practical use’. Within a few weeks this view was to change radically. The composer was visited at his home by Muir Mathieson (1911-1975), the conductor and film music specialist, who was Music Director of the Crown Film Unit, along with a number of J. Arthur Rank companies and the Army, Navy and R.A.F. Film Production Units. In 1947, Mathieson recalled the meeting: ‘I found him strangely depressed at his inability to play a fuller part in the war. He felt that the musician had done little to express the spirit and resolve of the British people. At that time he was “doing his bit” by driving a cart around the village and countryside, collecting scrap metal and salvage. I told him the story of *49th Parallel* and tried to show how the cinema could help to achieve those very objects for which he was striving. His enthusiasm was wonderful. He set to work right away – and remember this was the first time he had consented to write for the screen’. The result was a score of deeply expressive music, with a broad and noble melody for the opening credits, which immediately marked Vaughan Williams as a major composer for films.

The success of *49th Parallel* in October 1941 stimulated Vaughan Williams to compose the music for *Coastal Command* and, in the summer of 1942, for a Two Cities film called ***The Flemish Farm***. Based on a true story, the film relates how the remnants of the Belgian Air Force formed a camp in the fields of a Flemish farm. As the invading Nazi Panzer divisions close in, the Air Force officers resolve to bury their Belgian Regimental flag in a shell-case on the farm to keep it out of the hands of the Germans. Escaping with severe losses, the remaining officers decide to retrieve the flag under the noses of the Nazis and return it to the Belgian Air Force now reformed in England. A Squadron Leader, Jean Duclos (played in understated fashion by Clifford Evans), manages to find the flag and then navigate a dangerous 600 mile

escape route, through occupied territory, and into neutral Spain. The flag is reunited with its Belgian Regiment in scenes of patriotic fervour, for the flag ‘is not just a piece of cloth but a symbol of what we stand for’.

The film was first shown on 12 August 1943 at the Leicester Square Theatre in London and released generally on 6 September 1943. For the soundtrack, Mathieson conducted the London Symphony Orchestra.

Vaughan Williams thought well enough of the score to arrange a seven-movement Suite which he conducted at the first performance in London, a Promenade Concert on 31 July 1945. Three movements from the Suite are included here – in the order in which they were found on an LP in the possession of Ursula Vaughan Williams, which differs from the final order within the Suite. The first extract, ‘Dawn in the Old Barn’ (1) is the most substantial and contains music that is initially pastoral, evocative and tender, with effective use of solos for violin, viola and cello. It underscores the love between another pilot, Fernand Matagne (Philip Friend) and the daughter of the farm owner, Tresha (Jane Baxter). It is these two who were entrusted with burying the Belgian flag. Vaughan Williams’s music also suggests future tragedy, for Matagne is soon to be killed in the Battle of Britain, leaving not just Tresha but a newborn baby. The second extract, ‘The Dead Man’s Kit’ (2), captures in sombre, poignant music the emotion felt by Duclos as he searches through his friend Matagne’s possessions back in England. The composer admitted that music from this film, not used in the final score, influenced his Sixth Symphony, and the desolation of this movement does hint at the later work. The final extract, ‘In the Café’ (3), shows that Vaughan Williams could turn his hand to an easy, popular, musical idiom when he needed to, even if the Nazi presence can still be felt.



Jane Baxter and Clifford Evans

This broadcast performance, featuring the BBC Scottish Orchestra, was conducted by Graham Treacher (1932 to date). He was Principal Conductor for the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra (as it now is) from 1964-67 and conducted many other ensembles such as the Essex Youth Orchestra and the London New Music Singers. His conducting career has lasted well over 60 years and he is an established teacher, composer and arranger, focusing in particular on late Renaissance and Baroque works.

4-7 Phantasy Quintet

The *Phantasy Quintet*, for two violins, two violas and cello, was composed in 1912. The lyrical, mystical style of the music has much in common with the *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* (1910) and the *Five Mystical Songs* (1911). The work was commissioned by the businessman and chamber music enthusiast W.W. Cobbett (1847-1937) alongside a series of chamber music competitions on the theme of ‘Phantasies’ that Cobbett had initiated in 1905. He aimed to support young British composers and to reinvigorate the old English Fancy or Fancie which had thrived from the death of Elizabeth I to around 1670. Works were to be of short duration and performed without a break. Cobbett added that compositions could ‘consist of different sections varying in tempo and metre’. William Hurlstone and Frank Bridge headed the list of prize-winners in 1905; between 1905 and the last competition in 1919, over 40 ‘Phantasy’ works were awarded prizes or directly commissioned by Cobbett. It was a remarkable and enduring contribution to British music.

Vaughan Williams’s *Phantasy Quintet* was first performed in London on 23 March 1914 by the London String Quartet with James Lockyer as second viola. It was dedicated to ‘W.W. Cobbett and the Members of the London String Quartet’; subsequent performances included one at Cobbett’s eightieth birthday party in 1927. The opening of the Prelude (4) for solo viola, in 3/2 time, is magical and the beauty of this moment is sustained with the entry of the violins and the cello in passages very reminiscent of the *Tallis Fantasia*. Scott Goddard, writing in 1930, says that this folk-inspired, upward tending, theme ‘sets the seal on the work, producing a feeling of mournful exaltation which is never wholly absent from the

subsequent movements'. The Scherzo (5) is marked *prestissimo* and features, for contrast, a triple forte passage for the five players. The cello is silent in the short third section (6), a wistful, pastoral *Saraband*, and the other four instruments are muted. The piece concludes with what is, after a slow introduction, essentially a playful jig, called here a *Burlesca* (7). Vaughan Williams described this movement as being 'for the most part, in the form of a *basso ostinato*'. A sudden rhapsodic passage leads to a return of the jig before the solo viola concludes the work, recalling the meditative opening melody in characteristic Vaughan Williams style. No wonder Cobbett was delighted with this contribution to his Phantasy genre.

The Aeolian Quartet, here augmented by Kenneth Essex (second viola), was formed in April 1944 and gained much prestige through performances at the International Music Festival in Prague and the International Contemporary Music Festival in London, both in 1946. Prolific in both the recording and broadcasting studios in the 1960s and 1970s, the Quartet was disbanded in 1981.



*The Aeolian Quartet in 1968:
Sydney Humphreys, Raymond
Keenlyside, Margaret Major
and Derek Simpson*

8 The Oxen

'The Oxen' is a deeply expressive setting of the poem by Thomas Hardy which forms part VII of the Christmas Cantata *Hodie (This Day)*. Composed in 1953-54, it was first performed in Worcester Cathedral on 8 September 1954 with the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by a nervous composer. The work is dedicated to Herbert Howells. It was Ursula Vaughan Williams who suggested setting 'The Oxen' in *Hodie*. Surprisingly, Vaughan Williams did not know the poem and his immediate reaction on reading it was 'Oh yes, of course, that's the one!' It is an atmospheric and lyrical setting of the Hardy poem, perfectly fusing words and music.

This recording is taken from a performance of *Hodie* on 16 December 1972 at the final concert of the Vaughan Williams centenary celebrations at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in London.

The City of London Choir (of which Ursula was Patron) and the Philomusica of London were conducted by Donald Cashmore (1926-2013). The baritone soloist was John Carol Case (1923-2012) who, sadly, did not record *Hodie* commercially. He sang Vaughan Williams with a warm even tone, a steady line, sensitivity to the text and an awareness of the importance of clear diction.

Christmas Eve, and twelve of the clock.

"Now they are all on their knees,"

An elder said as we sat in a flock

By the embers in hearth side ease.

We pictured the meek mild creatures where

They dwelt in their strawy pen,

Nor did it occur to one of us there

To doubt they were kneeling then.

So fair a fancy few would weave

In these years! Yet, I feel

If someone said on Christmas Eve,

"Come; see the oxen kneel,

In the lonely barton by yonder coomb

Our childhood used to know,"

I should go with him in the gloom,

Hoping it might be so.

Greater London Council
QUEEN ELIZABETH HALL

Director: John Denton, CBE

Saturday, 16th December, 1972 at 7.45 p.m.

THE VAUGHAN WILLIAMS CENTENARY

FINAL PROGRAMME IN THE SERIES OF FIVE
FANTASIA ON CHRISTMAS CAROLS
CAROLS (original and arranged)
HODIE (Christmas Cantata)

WENDY EATHORNE PHILIP LANGRIDGE JOHN CAROL CASE
soprano tenor baritone

CITY OF LONDON CHOIR

TRINITY BOYS CHOIR
director: David Squibb

PHILOMUSICA OF LONDON

leader: William Armon

Conductor
DONALD CASHMORE

9-11 Three Organ Preludes Founded on Welsh Hymn-Tunes

These organ preludes were written during and just after the First World War, with first sketches being noted while Vaughan Williams was stationed at Saffron Walden in 1915 with the 2/4th London Ambulance. They are dedicated to Alan Gray, the organist who succeeded Stanford at Trinity College, Cambridge, and were first performed by him (from manuscripts) around June 1919 a few months after the composer's return from France. Vaughan Williams was not an ideal student and the composer later said: 'our friendship survived his despair at my playing'. Despite being what Gray described as 'unhandy', Vaughan Williams took an appointment as organist at St Barnabas Church in Lambeth in 1895, a position from which he learned a good deal but relinquished with relief late in 1899.

Despite his feelings, Vaughan Williams wrote a number of successful works for the organ including these three Preludes. The Welsh hymn-tunes the composer adapted were all included in the English Hymnal. The first, *Bryn Calvaria* (or 'Hill of Calvary') (9), to a melody by William Owen (1813-93), is marked *Maestoso* and opens with a statement of the tune's first bars. Rhapsodical writing for the organ follows and the overall effect is of a fantasia on a majestic scale. By contrast the second Prelude, *Rhosymedre* ('Lovely') (10), to a melody by John Edwards (1805-1885), has an easy, flowing lyricism which makes this serene piece a popular choice for weddings and funerals. Finally, *Hyfrydol* ('Cheerful') (11), based on a tune by Rowland Pritchard (1811-1887), is marked *Moderato maestoso* and is characterised by marching rhythms and a truculent polyphony. The virtuosity displayed here rather suggests Vaughan Williams was being typically modest in his description of his poor ability as an organist.

Dr. (later Sir) George Thalben-Ball (1896-1987) was born in Sydney and studied organ and piano at the Royal College of Music. In 1923, he succeeded Walford Davies as organist and director of the Temple Church choir and he continued in this role for almost 60 years. He was also a noted adjudicator, examiner, teacher and composer. On Desert Island Discs on 26 October 1959 he named Vaughan Williams's *A Sea Symphony* as his 'Castaway's Favourite.'

We presume that these 1961 recordings were made on the Temple's 1924 Harrison and Harrison organ (from Glen Tanar Castle, Aberdeenshire), but we cannot be certain.

12-15 String Quartet No. 2 in A minor. For Jean on her Birthday

Vaughan Williams's quartet was first performed on 12 October 1944 by the Menges String Quartet, which included the viola player Jean Stewart (1914-2002). She was the work's dedicatee, with the score being marked 'For Jean on her Birthday'. Jean was close friends with Ralph and Ursula. She told me the background to this second quartet in an interview on 20 September 1996: 'I went down to Dorking and said to him "I do wish to goodness that you would write another quartet". I loved the first one...He didn't say anything at the time and I didn't expect anything. I knew there was something cooking because Ursula got very excited but she wouldn't tell me what it was. Then the score arrived which was marvellous. I thought: "this is bloody difficult!" It is really hard, especially for the viola – you really have to work on it...I didn't know he was dedicating it to me until my birthday [17 February] when the first two movements were presented to me as a gift. This was wonderful'.

The work was composed in 1942-44 and is very much a product of the Second World War. Vaughan Williams was deeply involved in supporting refugees from Nazi persecution in Central Europe, joining the Dorking and District Committee for Refugees on 15 December 1938. Here he heard first hand reports about the harrowing assaults on Jewish and other 'undesirables' in Germany and East European territories. Vaughan Williams took on the Vice-Chairman role in July 1940 and then Chairman in December 1944. He could often be found at Bloomsbury House in London which housed the Jewish Refugee Committee, always looking for ways to help refugees whose plight was often unbearable. Although fears of invasion had lessened by 1941, the death toll from bombing raids was dreadful – on 10 May 1941 alone, 1,500 were killed in London.

In this difficult context, it is hardly surprising that the String Quartet No. 2 is a subtle, sometimes austere and often troubled work, far removed from the relative tranquillity of the String Quartet No. 1 in G minor (1908). The opening Prelude (12) is marked *Allegro appassionato* and the viola has the first dramatic statement of the main theme presented alongside a slightly less gloomy second subject. The restless mood continues throughout this movement. The following Romance (13) offers little reprieve. It was described by

Michael Kennedy as ‘a bleak, comfortless *Largo*, sombre in texture and material with superb imitative writing for each instrument’. The strings are directed to play *senza vibrato*. The cumulative effect of this long movement is moving in a concentrated, understated way. The Scherzo (14) opens with a theme which had its origins in the film *49th Parallel*. Played by the unmuted viola, this is followed by much atmospheric writing, marked *tremolando*, as the restlessness of the first movement returns. The Epilogue (15) is subtitled ‘Greetings from Joan to Jean’, a reference to a tender melody culled from an aborted film about Joan of Arc. A certain peacefulness, even serenity, is attained, but the troubled, turbulent mood of the first three movements is not lightly dispelled. This second string quartet is vital to a thorough understanding of Vaughan Williams’s deeply-felt reaction to the Second World War, feelings which would find their ultimate expression in the Sixth Symphony of 1947.



Jean Stewart in 1939.

16-17 Solemn Music for the Masque of Charterhouse (Final Scene)

This music was composed in 1950 and first performed in the school on 12 July 1950. As a distinguished former pupil of Charterhouse, from January 1887 to July 1890, Vaughan Williams was invited to give a concert of his own works just before the outbreak of the Second World War and returned again in June 1940 to open the new Music School. He enjoyed such visits and retained vivid memories, not always happy ones, of his time at the School. Subsequently, he was asked to compose music for the *Charterhouse Masque* of 1950 and agreed subject to the condition that the school song *Carmen Carthusianum* was included to feature performers and audience together.



The Solemn Music (16) includes fragments of the *Carmen* song as well as the tune by Edward Rendall, a Master of the School, used in the ‘Prologue’ to the *Masque*, first performed in 1911. Vaughan Williams’s new final scene is played when all those who have taken part in the *Masque* come in and take their places. The setting includes Rendall’s ‘De Profundis’, taken from the music accompanying the eviction of the Monks at the dissolution of the monasteries in 1535/36, from the original Prologue. The memorable and superbly orchestrated Finale (17) makes stirring use of the *Carmen Carthusianum* to a tune originally written by William Horsley, organist at Charterhouse from 1838-1858. The Latin words by H.W. Phillott were partly rewritten by the School Headmaster, Dr Haig Brown, in 1873, adding references to Thomas Sutton (1532-1611), the Founder of the School.

Vaughan Williams in 1890

Laeti laudate Dominum,
Fontem perennem boni,
Recolentes Fundatoris
Memoriam Suttoni.

Omnes laudate Dominum,
Vos, quibus singularia
Suttonus dona praebit,
Et domum et bursaria.

Senes, laudate Dominum,
Reddatis et honorem
Suttono, quibus requies
Paratur post laborem.

Pueri, laudate Dominum,
Quoscunque hic instituit
Suttonus bonis literis
Et pietate imbuit.

Ergo laudate Dominum,
Omnes Carthusiani,
Puerique rus amantes
Et senes oppidani.

Laeti laudate Dominum,
Surgat e choro sonus:

**O floreat aeternum
Carthusiana domus**

} *bis*

Praise the Lord joyfully,
Source of perennial good.
Recalling the memory
Of our founder, Sutton.

Everybody praise the Lord,
You have all, every one of you,
Benefitted from Sutton's bounty;
And your home and bursary.

Old men, praise the Lord,
And give your honour
To Sutton, who rests
Contented after his labour.

Boys, praise the Lord.
Imbue as much as you can
Of good learning and piety
From Sutton's foundation.

Therefore praise the Lord,
All Carthusians,
Boys and lovers of the country,
Old men and town dwellers.

Praise the Lord joyfully,
Rise up from the choir a roar:
O thrive forever
Our Carthusian home.

In this recording from Charterhouse, the Choir and Orchestra of Charterhouse School are conducted by William Llewellyn (1925-2023). He was Assistant Music Master at Charterhouse from 1950 before being appointed Director of Music in 1965. He became the School's Second Master in 1984 having opened the Vaughan Williams Music School the year before.

© Notes by Stephen Connock, Vice-President, RVW Society

Details of the Recordings

Ursula Vaughan Williams gave these recordings to Stephen Connock, then Chairman of the RVW Society, in 1996 to be issued by the Society on what became Albion Records. She donated other recordings which have already been issued on Albion, including *Pilgrim's Journey* (ALBCD009) and *Five Tudor Portraits* (ALBCD014).

Recording or broadcast dates for the items on this disc are as follows:

Extracts from <i>Suite: The Story of a Flemish Farm</i>	15 April 1965
Phantasy Quintet	15 April 1965
'The Oxen' from <i>Hodie</i>	16 December 1972
Three Organ Preludes Founded on Welsh Hymn-Tunes	8 December 1961
String Quartet No. 2 in A minor	20 October 1966
Solemn Music for the Masque of Charterhouse	March 1972

Some of these recordings derive from broadcasts; most are of high quality. Two of Ursula's records, however, presented difficulties to the restorers: 'The Oxen' and the *Masque of Charterhouse*. The latter disc, taken from an overloaded tape of the event (the only recording of this music), exhibits deficiencies impossible to completely mitigate. It is felt that their provenance and historic value justify their release.

Production credits

Ursula's records were transcribed by Pete Reynolds of Reynolds Mastering and finalised for this album by Ronald Games

Producer: Stephen Connock

Executive production and booklet design: John Francis

Proof reading: Martin Murray and Andrew Slater

Cover image: Ralph and Ursula in 1957, from the collection given by Ursula to Stephen Connock, colourised for this booklet. The picture of Jean Stewart is from the same source. Thanks to Catherine Ingram Smith, Archivist at Charterhouse School, for the school's own English translation of *Carmen Carthusianum*.

About the Ralph Vaughan Williams Society

President:	Martyn Brabbins
Vice-Presidents:	Stephen Connock MBE Hugh Cobbe OBE Roderick Williams OBE
Chairman:	John Francis
Membership Secretary:	David Aston



The Ralph Vaughan Williams Society is a registered charity with more than 1,000 members worldwide. It has been dedicated, since its formation in 1994, to widening the knowledge, understanding and appreciation of Ralph Vaughan Williams. The Society's Journal is published three times a year, and regular interviews and discussions are posted on YouTube. Members are kept informed by email and through social media.



rvwsociety.com

About Albion Records

Directors:	John Francis (Chairman), Malcolm Riley
Web-Masters:	Tadeusz Kasa and Andrew Slater



ALBION RECORDS

Albion Records is the Society's recording label and is devoted to recordings of works by Vaughan Williams. More than 60 recordings have been released, including rarely heard works and many world premieres. Two albums were nominated for a Grammy award, and many have appeared in the UK's classical chart.

rvwsociety.com/albion-records

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WILLIAMS SOCIETY

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understanding and appreciation of
the life and music of
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