Program

O CLAP YOUR HANDS (1920) — Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)

MASS IN G MINOR (1922) — Vaughan Williams

Kyrie
Gloria
Sanctus—Osanna I

Solo quartet
Tami Petty, *soprano*; Rebecca Fogg, *alto*;
Edward C. Hayes, *tenor*; Will Trice, *baritone*

THE CLOUD-CAPPED TOWERS (1951) — Vaughan Williams

from *Three Shakespeare Songs*

TOWARD THE UNKNOWN REGION (1907) — Vaughan Williams

There will be a ten-minute intermission.

DONA NOBIS PACEM (1936) — Vaughan Williams

Tami Petty, *soprano*
Robert Gardner, *baritone*

I. Agnus Dei
II. Beat! beat! drums!
III. Reconciliation
IV. Dirge for two veterans
V. The Angel of Death
VI. O man greatly beloved

In consideration of the performers and fellow audience members, please turn off cellular phones and pagers upon entering the church.

About the Composer

Ralph Vaughan Williams was born several years after the Civil War and died two years before the Beatles were formed. Through seven decades of active composition spanning the reigns of six monarchs, two cataclysmic world wars and dizzying social and technological change, he became the musical heart of an entire nation in a way few composers have before or since. Remaining true to the challenge of an early mentor, Hubert Parry, to "write choral music as befits an Englishman and a democrat," Vaughan Williams devoted his talents in equal measure to the urban concert hall and the rural choral festival, to novel forms of mass media as well as the ageless surroundings of the parish church. His works are at once richly varied and instantly recognizable, unique and yet universal.

Ralph (pronounced "Rafe"—"any other pronunciation used to infuriate him") was born into a family of merchants, clergymen and lawyers—well-off if not well-born. His mother was an heiress to the Wedgwood manufacturing fortune; his great uncle, and a favorite baby sitter, was Charles Darwin. The composer's second wife and biographer, Ursula, ties Ralph's pragmatic worldview to this childhood anecdote: "Ralph once asked his mother," who was a reliably stern Christian, "about *The Origin of Species*, and what it meant. She answered: 'The Bible says that God made the world in six days, Great Uncle Charles thinks it took longer: but we need not worry about it, for it is equally wonderful either way.'"

Vaughan Williams carried this "cheerful agnosticism" forward into his years at Cambridge, where he read history, took music as a mistress (shuttling into London for lessons with Stanford and Parry, among others), encountered the young Bertrand Russell and found a mutual mentor in the philosopher-mathematician A. N. Whitehead. Like so many young Englishmen of the day, he also embraced the works of the American poet Walt Whitman, whose gift of combining "plain statement with mystical yearnings" (in the words of Ralph's musical biographer, Michael Kennedy) opened new vistas for English artists.

It is interesting that a man who probably believed, as Whitehead did, that "religion is what a man does with his own solitude" found his first major national recognition in preparing a new edition of the *English Hymnal*, the 1906 compilation that survives, essentially unaltered, as the central musical source for the Anglican church and all its offshoots. A mediocre organist at best, Vaughan Williams was nevertheless compelled by convention (and a concerned family) to take a living as a parish organist soon after he left college. So loathsome did he find the music of the late Victorian church that he leapt at the chance to revamp the *Hymnal* to include a broader array of recognizable tunes as well as new compositions by modern composers. If the only music an Englishman heard was what he got on Sunday mornings, Vaughan Williams wanted it to be both relevant and beautiful.

As Kennedy writes, "in the music of the Church [Vaughan Williams] recognized

the only continuous musical tradition in English life." But another tradition was coming to light in the first decade of the 20th century even as it was threatening to disappear entirely. Vaughan Williams joined a task force of musicians, headed by Cecil B. Sharp, who in a race against time and industrialization set about collecting the folk-songs of the English countryside—writing down timeless tunes such as "Greensleeves" and a whole legion of Christmas carols before they passed out of the oral tradition. According to Kennedy,

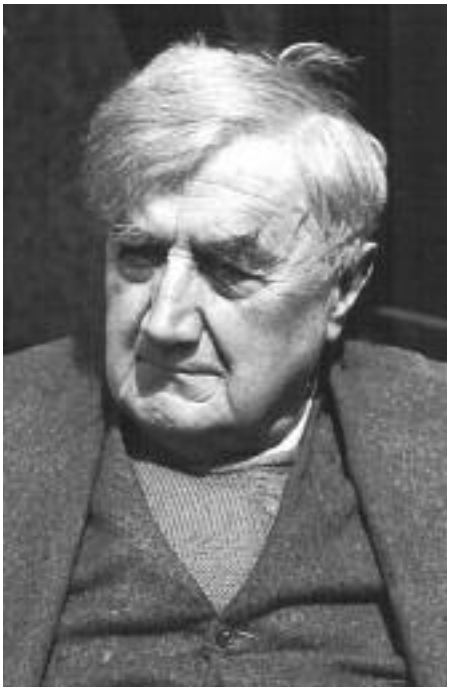
> The collectors were fascinated by their discovery that a large group of English folk songs was constructed in the ancient modes. These had been discarded by musicians as archaic when the major/minor system of scales was evolved, yet in the folk songs the modes, far from sounding archaic, had a vitality which . . . presented to composers greater melodic possibilities.

The modal system that rang in the ears of the folk-song collectors also found fresh expression in a revival of Renaissance music that stands as one of the great developments in all of 20th century music, and choral music in particular. England was and still is at the forefront of this revival, and Vaughan Williams was an early proponent of it. His most famous work, arguably, is a string fantasia on a theme by the Tudor composer Thomas Tallis. His *Mass in G minor*, an *hommage* to the great masses of William Byrd, is one of the most important choral works of the recent age.

Vaughan Williams recognized his profound debt to the traditions that shaped him, and returned the favor through his decades of work with volunteer musicians in the vast, massed choirs of the English choral festivals. Here he grasped music's potential to build the bonds of community. He delighted in working with enthusiastic, arts-minded men and women "whose voices were [often] not equal to their zeal," and from them he drew major life lessons as well as astonishing results. In the words of one of his singers, "he draws out of you what you know isn't there." In his preface to *English Music* (1931), Vaughan Williams argued powerfully that

Vaughan Williams, 1911

> if we want to find the groundwork of our English culture we must look below the surface—not to the grand events chronicled in the newspapers but to the unobtrusive quartet parties which meet week after week to play or sing in their own houses, to the village choral societies whose members trudge miles through rain or snow to work steadily for a concert or competition in some ghastly parish room with a cracked piano and a smelly oil lamp.



Vaughan Williams, 1949

By cultivating his close and affectionate bond with the musical citizenry—every last soprano, alto, tenor and bass among them—Vaughan Williams both ensured himself an audience and helped himself "keep the necessary proportion between the world of facts and the world of dreams." But as concerned as he was with the practical aspects of music, his deeply romantic sensibility and especially his reverence for the poetic texts of Shakespeare, Whitman and the King James Bible ensured that music would always be for him an act of intense and public emotional significance. "Music," he wrote, "will enable you to see past facts to the very essence of things in a way which science cannot do. The arts are the means by which we can look through the magic casements and see what lies beyond." The author of these words, the composer of a work as magical as the late-in-life *Cloud-Capped Towers*, a man who could translate so compellingly (in *Toward the Unknown Region*) the dialogue between a dying man and his own soul, is wrongly cast as a bland populist.

In looks and demeanor, Michael Kennedy describes Vaughan Williams as "a big man, heavy of gait and prone to wearing tweed suits of uncertain fit—once described as 'dressed for stalking the folk song to its home'. . . . He was inspiriting company and always seemed to have an inexhaustible supply of amusing stories about people and events." The composer's comfortable and convivial exterior masked a penetrating wit and a lifelong sense of urgency, however. "His quick and precise manner of speech was very much of the period of his youth. He liked people to hold strong opinions even if he disagreed with them, and he quickly saw through any pretense at omniscience. . . . In his dealings with others, he was thoughtful and lacking in self-interest. He found time for everything, and when I asked him how, he said: 'Only the lazy man has no time.'"

Only a composer as thoroughly intrigued by, engaged in and passionate about humanity might have written a work like the 1936 *Dona Nobis Pacem*. The signature elements of the composer's style are here in abundance—the gorgeous orchestration, the long, asymmetrical phrases, the modal language, the stirring hymn, the voice of Walt Whitman, the expansive musical gesture. But there is also something more: the willingness to care, the daring to express a viewpoint, and the ability to rally the human spirit in times of darkness.

Vaughan Williams knew something of total war, most gruesomely from his experiences in the trenches of France during World War I. At the same time, he was not

naïve enough to think that war was never necessary. Some listeners may wince at the optimistic slant of the *Dona Nobis Pacem*, given the disastrous outcome of the 1930s. But it would be a disservice to view the work as a simplistic prayer for "peace in our time." There is another, more elusive sort of peace that cannot be achieved by postponing or papering over a conflict. In this vision of peace, we mean not just peace in the literal, immediate sense (though we all devoutly wish it), but the peace that comes from knowing that through all of humanity's tortured ages, even from the depths of war and all its carnage, we have an innate capacity for reconciliation, the spine to stand up to tyranny, and an ability to seek out the "new heavens and the new earth" that lie beyond. Armies can be defeated; human beings—soldiers, civilians—cannot. The first step to ending a war is to remember what that kind of peace feels like.

—John Maclay

Texts and Background

O CLAP YOUR HANDS (1920) Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)

Composed in the early 1920s, this buoyant anthem is not often heard in its fully orchestrated version. In structure and harmonic language, it is closely related to the Gloria section of the *Mass in G minor*. It has been described as "apt to its purpose of filling a great cathedral with joyous sounds."

O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph.
For the Lord most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth.
God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet.
Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises.
For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises *every man that hath* understanding.
God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness.

—Psalms 47:1–2, 5–8

MASS IN G MINOR (1922) Vaughan Williams

The great musicologist R. R. Terry, who rose to become organist of Westminster Cathedral, led a revival of Renaissance music around the turn of the 20th century whose ramifications continue to this day. Among the key works Terry reintroduced were Palestrina's *Missa Papae Marcelli* and (in 1899) the monumental *Mass for 5 Voices* of William Byrd. Terry sought to establish a modern linkage to the rich heritage of English church music, and in the *Mass in G minor*, he finally found the path-breaking work he had been waiting for. Following the rigor of the old church modes—Dorian, Mixolydian, Aeolian—the *Mass* occupies the common ground of the Tudor liturgy and the English folk-song. It was first presented as a concert piece in Birmingham by Gustav Holst's Whitsuntide Singers, to whom it is dedicated, and later in London, where Terry programmed it for High Mass on Easter 1923.

KYRIE

Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison. Kyrie eleison.	*Lord, have mercy upon us. Christ, have mercy upon us. Lord, have mercy upon us.*

GLORIA

Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis. Laudamus te. Adoramus te. Benedicimus te. Glorificamus te propter magnam gloriam tuam. Domine Deus, rex coelestis, Deus Pater omnipotens. Domine Fili unigenite, Jesu Christe. Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris:

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men. We praise thee. We adore thee. We bless thee. We worship thee on account of thy great glory. Lord God, king of heaven, God the omnipotent father. Lord the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father:

Qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis. Qui tollis peccata mundi, suscipe deprecationem nostram. Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris, miserere nobis.

Who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Who takest away the sins of the world, hear our prayer. Who sittest at the right hand of the Father, have mercy upon us.

Quoniam tu solus sanctus, tu solus Dominus, tu solus altissimus, Jesu Christe. Cum Sancto Spiritu in gloria Dei Patris. Amen.

For thou alone art holy, thou alone art God, thou alone art most high, Jesus Christ. With the Holy Ghost in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

SANCTUS—OSANNA I

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth. Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua. Osanna in excelsis.

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth. Heaven and earth are full of thy glory. Hosanna in the highest.

THE CLOUD-CAPPED TOWERS (1951) Vaughan Williams
from *Three Shakespeare Songs*

This shadowy little gem is the second of *Three Shakespeare Songs* devised as a set of competition pieces for the Federation of Music Festivals in Vaughan Williams's 79th year. On hearing a later performance, he remarked, with some glee, "I thought it was too difficult, but it isn't!" The famous quotation, from Prospero's farewell speech, dates from the same year as the King James Bible. The speech held a special significance for Vaughan Williams, and was associated by him with the Epilogue of his *Sixth Symphony*. For biographer Michael Kennedy, "its simplicity and grave tranquility, more moving and impressive with repeated hearings, make it a perfect little masterpiece. Here is the peace which was sought but not found in the symphony."

Our revels now are ended. These our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
Are melted into air, into thin air.
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself—

Yea, all which it inherit—shall dissolve
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.

—*William Shakespeare* (1564–1616)
The Tempest (Act IV, Scene I)

TOWARD THE UNKNOWN REGION (1907) — Vaughan Williams

This electrifying choral song was written for the 1907 Leeds Choral Festival, right about the time Vaughan Williams completed his editorship of the *English Hymnal*. (One of his original tunes, *Sine nomine*—see hymn 287 in your pew hymnal—is adapted in this work as a triumphal second theme, set to the words "then we burst forth".) The composer dedicated the work to the memory of his close friend and brother-and-law, the historian F. W. Maitland. Although he was an atheist, Vaughan Williams did leave some evidence of his views on the transmigration of the soul. On the flyleaf of his oratorio *Sancta Civitas* was inscribed the following quotation from Socrates' *Phaedo*: "But that these things, or something like them, are true concerning the souls of men and their habitations after death, especially since the soul is shown to be immortal, this seems to me fitting and worth risking to believe. For the risk is honorable, and a man should sing such things in the manner of an incantation to himself."

Darest thou now, O Soul,
Walk out with me toward the Unknown Region,
Where neither ground is for the feet, nor any path to follow?

No map, there, nor guide,
Nor voice sounding, nor touch of human hand,
Nor face with blooming flesh, nor lips, nor eyes, are in that land.

I know it not, O Soul;
Nor dost thou—all is a blank before us;
All waits, undream'd of, in that region—that inaccessible land.

Till, when the ties loosen,
All but the ties eternal, Time and Space,
Nor darkness, gravitation, sense, nor any bounds, bound us.

Then we burst forth—we float,
In Time and Space, O Soul—prepared for them;

Equal, equipt at last—(O joy! O fruit of all!) them to fulfil, O Soul.

—*Walt Whitman* (1819–1892)

World War I decimated a generation of Vaughan Williams's friends and countrymen. *Dona Nobis Pacem* was composed for the Huddersfield Choral Society in 1936, but the central movement ("Dirge for Two Veterans") actually dates from the opening of the prior war, in 1914. The anguished cries that open the work set a scene of pure foreboding, and are a chilling reminder of past wartime suffering. The structure and style of the work was deeply influential, "anticipat[ing] by twenty-five years Britten's method in the *War Requiem* of interpolating English poems into the Latin Mass, in his case Whitman."

I. AGNUS DEI

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,
dona nobis pacem.

Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world,
grant us peace.

Walt Whitman shared with Vaughan Williams not only a firsthand view of the "seething hell" of war but the view that art should be a public act. His monumental Civil War cycles attempted to transfigure an entire nation's response to a conflict where victory could only be achieved through fratricide. In *Specimen Days* (1892), Whitman gives this fascinating account of the war's opening: "News of the attack on Fort Sumter and the flag at Charleston harbor, S. C., was received in New York City late at night (13th April, 1861) and was immediately sent out in extras of the newspapers. I had been to the opera in Fourteenth Street that night, and after the performance was walking down Broadway toward twelve o'clock, on my way to Brooklyn, when I heard in the distance the loud cries of the newsboys, who came presently tearing and yelling up the street, rushing from side to side even more furiously than usual. I bought an extra and cross'd to the Metropolitan Hotel (Niblo's Garden) [at Broadway and Prince Street] where the great lamps were still brightly blazing, and, with a crowd of others, who gathered impromptu, read the news, which was evidently authentic." During a moonlit stroll, right after he rounded the bend in Broadway in front of Grace Church, the poet's life was changed forever.

II. BEAT! BEAT! DRUMS!

Beat! beat! drums! —blow! bugles! blow!
Through the windows—through the doors—burst like a ruthless force,
Into the solemn church, and scatter the congregation,
Into the school where the scholar is studying;
Leave not the bridegroom quiet—no happiness must he have now with his bride,
Nor the peaceful farmer any peace, ploughing his field, or gathering in his grain,
So fierce you whirr and pound you drums—so shrill you bugles blow.

Beat! beat! drums!—Blow! bugles! blow!
Over the traffic of cities—over the rumble of wheels in the streets:

Are beds prepared for sleepers at night in the houses?
No sleepers must sleep in those beds;
No bargainers bargain by day—*no brokers or speculators*—Would they continue?
Would the talkers be talking? would the singer attempt to sing?
Would the lawyer rise in the court to state his case before the judge?
Then rattle quicker, heavier drums—you bugles wilder blow.

Beat! beat! drums!—Blow! bugles! blow!
Make no parley—stop for no expostulation;
Mind not the timid—mind not the weeper or prayer;
Mind not the old man beseeching the young man;
Let not the child's voice be heard, nor the mother's entreaties;
Make even the trestles to shake the dead, where they lie awaiting the hearses,
So strong you thump, O terrible drums—so loud you bugles blow.

—*Walt Whitman*
first published in Drum-Taps (1865)

III. RECONCILIATION

Word over all, beautiful as the sky,
Beautiful that war and all its deeds of carnage must in time be utterly lost,
That the hands of the sisters Death and Night incessantly, softly,
wash again and ever again this soiled world;
For my enemy is dead, a man divine as myself is dead,
I look where he lies white-faced and still in the coffin—I draw near,
Bend down and touch lightly with my lips the white face in the coffin.

—*Walt Whitman*
first published in When Lilacs Last in the Door-yard Bloom'd (1865),
later in Drum-Taps

IV. DIRGE FOR TWO VETERANS

The last sunbeam
Lightly falls from the finished Sabbath,
On the pavement here, and there beyond it is looking
Down a new-made double grave.

Lo, the moon ascending,
Up from the east the silvery round moon,
Beautiful over the house-tops, ghastly, phantom moon,
Immense and silent moon.

I see a sad procession,
And I hear the sound of coming full-keyed bugles,
All the channels of the city streets they're flooding
As with voices and with tears.

I hear the great drums pounding,
And the small drums steady whirring,
And every blow of the great convulsive drums
Strikes me through and through.

For the son is brought with the father,
In the foremost ranks of the fierce assault they fell,
Two veterans, son and father, dropped together,
And the double grave awaits them.

Now nearer blow the bugles,
And the drums strike more convulsive,
And the daylight o'er the pavement quite has faded,
And the strong dead-march enwraps me.

In the eastern sky up-buoying,
The sorrowful vast phantom moves illumined,
'Tis some mother's large transparent face,
In heaven brighter growing.

O strong dead-march you please me!
O moon immense with your silvery face you soothe me!
O my soldiers twain! O my veterans passing to burial!
What I have I also give you.

The moon gives you light,
And the bugles and the drums give you music,
And my heart, O my soldiers, my veterans,
My heart gives you love.

—*Walt Whitman*
first published in When Lilacs Last in the Door-yard Bloom'd (1865),
later in Drum-Taps

Vaughan Williams "claimed he was the only man ever to set to music words spoken in the House of Commons." For his maiden speech, he chose lines from the Quaker MP John Bright, one of the foremost progressives in nineteenth-century Britain. He opposed British aid to the slave-owning Confederacy during the U.S. Civil War, argued for reform of the Poor Laws and Britain's rotten electoral system, advocated for Indian independence after the 1857 Sepoy uprising, and throughout his career denounced war —especially optional war—as the creature of a "tax-eating class" of politicians. Bright spoke these words on the floor of the House on February 23, 1855 in rejoinder to Britain's entry into the Crimean War. On hearing them, the silver-tongued orator Benjamin Disraeli wrote, "I would give all that I ever had to have delivered that speech."

V. THE ANGEL OF DEATH

The Angel of Death has been abroad throughout the land; you may almost hear the beating of his wings. There is no one as of old … to sprinkle with blood the lintel and the two side-posts of our doors, that he may spare and pass on.

—John Bright (1811–1889)

Dona nobis pacem.

We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and behold trouble! The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan; the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones; for they are come, and have devoured the land . . . and those that dwell therein . . .

The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved . . .
Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

—Jeremiah 8:15–22

Adapting biblical poetry as only he could, Vaughan Williams closes the work with images of reunification, renewal and hope—the calm after the storm. The composer follows the baritone soloist's beneficent words with a groundswell of four themes, rising up first from the basses and cellos, then violas, second violins, first violins. The choir takes up each theme in turn, starting with the basses ("Nation shall not lift up a sword against nation"), then the tenors ("And none shall make them afraid"), altos ("Mercy and truth are met together") and finally sopranos ("Truth shall spring out of the earth"), as the listener is literally lifted up out of the depths of war and despair. The gathered voices erupt in acclamation as the orchestra dons its most celebratory colors; festive instruments held in reserve until this moment—chimes, tambourine, triangle, glockenspiel—join in the fun. The music drives to an inspiring climax on the words "good-will toward men." The opening supplication for peace is granted in a prayerful valediction from the soprano soloist and a cappella chorus. In Vaughan Williams's hands, the language of music is made every bit as eloquent as the poetic texts that inspired him.

VI. O MAN GREATLY BELOVED

O man greatly beloved, fear not, peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong.

—Daniel 10:19

The glory of this latter house shall be greater than the former . . . and in this place will I give peace.

—Haggai 2:9

Nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.
And none shall make them afraid, neither shall the sword go through their land.
Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.
Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven.
Open to me the gates of righteousness, I will go into them.
Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled;
and let them hear and say, it is the truth.
And it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues.
And they shall come and see my glory. And I will set a sign among them,
and they shall declare my glory among the nations.
For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me,
so shall your seed and your name remain for ever.

—Adapted from Micah 4:3, Leviticus 26:6,
Psalms 85:10 and 118:19, Isaiah 43:9
and 56:18–22, Luke 2:14

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace,
good-will toward men.

Dona nobis pacem.
Grant us peace.