

A silhouette of a suspension bridge against a sunset sky. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright glow and lens flare. A single star is visible in the sky. The bridge's cables and towers are dark against the light sky.

# London Philharmonic Orchestra

## VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

### SYMPHONY NO. 4

### SYMPHONY NO. 8

RYAN WIGGLESWORTH *conductor*

VLADIMIR JUROWSKI *conductor*

LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

## VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

### SYMPHONY NO. 4 IN F MINOR

'I don't know whether I like it, but it's what I meant', was Vaughan Williams's verdict on his Fourth Symphony. So what was the composer's meaning? The dissonance and abrasive orchestration, and the sense of elemental rage and desolation, took many by surprise at the premiere in 1935. One friend, R. G. Longman, wrote to the composer in some perplexity. Why was there 'no beauty' in the work? Was it because the music reflected the unease and political upheaval in continental Europe in the mid-1930s? Vaughan Williams's reply contrasts intriguingly with his remarks quoted above:

'... when you say you do not think my F mi[nor] symph. beautiful my answer must be that I do think it beautiful – not that I did not mean it to be beautiful because it reflects unbeautiful times – because we know that beauty can come from unbeautiful things ... I wrote it not as a definite picture of anything external – e.g. the state of Europe – but simply because it occurred to me like this ...' But Vaughan Williams also dropped hints that the idea for the Symphony came to him after reading an article in *The Times*. Almost certainly he was referring to a review by the critic H. C. Colles about trends in modern symphonic writing:

'They all rely on the same order of stimuli. The hearer is prodded into activity by dissonance, soothed by sentiment,

overwhelmed by the power of a battering climax. The appeal is primarily sensuous, even though the composer makes play with formal processes of thematic development, such as fugato, basso ostinato or variations ...'

Somewhere along the line, this seems to have reminded Vaughan Williams of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, similarly full of 'battering climaxes' and 'soothing sentiment' as well as exhaustive thematic development. The uneasy transitional *crescendo* from *Scherzo* into *Finale* in Vaughan Williams's Fourth Symphony is unmistakably a tribute to the equivalent passage in Beethoven's Fifth. But the ending of the Vaughan Williams is very different from the humanistic optimism driven home at the end of the Beethoven – so different that one may wonder if there isn't an element of biting irony: what place for optimism in such 'unbeautiful times'?

The Fourth Symphony opens with an onslaught from the full orchestra: grinding dissonances, harsh colours, rhythms either driving forward or sidestepping abruptly. The second theme (massed strings) is more lyrical, but the accompanying wind chords are irregular, halting, clashing with the flow of the strings' melody. This morphs into a fast, strutting march tune. Eventually the movement heaves itself up for one last cathartic climax, then the ghost of the march

## VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

### SYMPHONY NO. 8 IN D MINOR

tune returns on icy muted strings, leading to an eerily still ending.

Next, rising chordal figures on muted brass and woodwind set in motion a walking bass line on *pizzicato* cellos and basses. Much of this *Andante moderato* is restlessly, nervously searching, with some of the most acerbic harmonies in the entire Symphony. Even the ending (low flute and hushed muted trombones) is disquietingly unresolved.

The *Scherzo* is all demonic humour, its leading motifs tugging against the beat one moment then flying off vertiginously the next. Galumphing tuba and bassoons lead off the Trio section, but the *Scherzo* soon cuts back in again, leading to the long, Beethoven-inspired *crescendo* transition mentioned above. If there is triumphalism in the Finale it is crude, strutting, ominous. Mid-way through there is a reminder of the eerie stillness that ended the first movement; but the ominous march music returns, precipitating the *Epilogo Fugato*, at once rigidly formal and mercilessly violent. It culminates in a ferociously compressed return of the Symphony's opening. Then with a deadening thud, the Symphony is over.

© Stephen Johnson

Vaughan Williams began writing his Eighth Symphony in 1953, and completed it in the summer of 1955, three years before his death at the age of 85. It is dedicated to Sir John Barbirolli ('glorious John', the composer called him in a handwritten inscription on the score), who gave the first performances with his Hallé Orchestra in Manchester and London in May 1956.

The Symphony is the most modest and divertimento-like of Vaughan Williams's nine, surely reflecting the happiness of his second marriage, to the poet Ursula Wood, in his last years. But it shows him still experimenting with orchestral colouring, adding to the standard orchestra a pair of harps, celesta, vibraphone, xylophone and glockenspiel, as well as three tuned gongs 'as used in Puccini's *Turandot*' – late addition to the score after a visit to the opera. It also shows him ready, as throughout his career, to devise new formal schemes and procedures to fit his expressive purposes. And it is certainly not without its deeper moments.

The opening *Fantasia* is subtitled 'variations without a theme'. This is an intriguing way of describing a sequence of seven episodes in different tempi all including variants of three basic ideas: the pair of interlocking rising fourths played by the trumpet at the very opening, the following flute melody in jig time, and the descending string figure

which bursts out a little later. As Vaughan Williams was at pains to point out, though, this free-flowing movement could also be analysed in terms of traditional sonata form, with the magically scored opening *Moderato* freely recapitulated as the lively sixth section, and the solemn third section as the seventh, which broadens to the climax of the movement before dying down to a quiet coda.

The second movement is a *Scherzo* for the wind instruments alone, in march time with a gentler trio section and a much truncated reprise; the writing recalls Vaughan Williams's earlier music for wind band, but with a Shostakovich-like edge. This is complemented by a *Cavatina* for strings alone, continuing the long line of Vaughan Williams's string works which began with the *Tallis Fantasia*, but with shifting harmonies that belong more to the uneasy world of the Sixth Symphony. There are two main themes, the first in long flowing lines and the second in hymn-like harmony, which are reprised in compressed form after a middle section with a glowing climax.

The final *Toccata* has a striding main theme that seems to belong to the same world as Vaughan Williams's operatic *magnum opus*, the Bunyan 'morality' *The Pilgrim's Progress*. The movement's D major tonality is coloured by modal inflections, and challenged by excursions into darker flat

keys. Even the apparently jubilant coda, with its exuberant percussion colouring, finally comes to rest not on a major chord but on bare octave Ds.

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## RYAN WIGGLESWORTH *conductor*



© Benjamin Ealovega

Ryan Wigglesworth has established himself as one of the foremost composer-conductors of his generation. He was recently announced as the next Principal Guest Conductor of the Hallé orchestra from September 2015. He is currently Composer in Residence at English National Opera and holds the Daniel R.

Lewis Composer Fellowship with The Cleveland Orchestra. As a conductor he is much sought-after in repertoire ranging from the Baroque to the present day.

Operatic engagements include Harrison Birtwistle's *The Minotaur* for the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden; and Detlev Glanert's *Caligula*, Bizet's *Carmen* and Mozart's *Così fan tutte* for English National Opera. His concert engagements include performances with the London Philharmonic, BBC Symphony, BBC Scottish Symphony, Philharmonia, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic and Scottish Chamber orchestras; Birmingham Contemporary Music Group; the Chamber Orchestra of Europe; the Residentie Orchestra (The Hague); the Netherlands Chamber Orchestra; the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin; the

Hallé (with whom he conducted the UK premiere of his Violin Concerto with Barnabás Keleman); and the Tapiola Sinfonietta.

He has performed at the BBC Proms with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales and Britten Sinfonia, as well as at the Aldeburgh Festival in 2012 with Oliver Knussen's *Where the Wild Things Are* and *Higglety Pigglety Pop!* in celebration of the composer's 60th birthday and again in 2014 with the world premiere of his own work *Echo and Narcissus*.

He has appeared as soloist/director in Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 9 with Royal Northern Sinfonia, the Ulster Orchestra, the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra.

Born in Yorkshire, Ryan Wigglesworth studied at New College, Oxford and the Guildhall School of Music & Drama. Between 2007–09 he was a Lecturer at Cambridge University, where he was also a Fellow of Corpus Christi College.

## VLADIMIR JUROWSKI *conductor*

© Chris Christodoulou



One of today's most sought-after conductors, acclaimed worldwide for his incisive musicianship and adventurous artistic commitment, Vladimir Jurowski was born in Moscow in 1972 and studied at the Music Academies of Dresden and Berlin. In 1995 he made his international debut at the Wexford Festival conducting

Rimsky-Korsakov's *May Night*, and the same year saw his debut at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, with *Nabucco*.

Vladimir Jurowski was appointed Principal Guest Conductor of the London Philharmonic Orchestra in 2003, becoming the Orchestra's Principal Conductor in September 2007. He also holds the titles of Principal Artist of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and Artistic Director of the Russian State Academic Symphony Orchestra. He has previously held the positions of First Kapellmeister of the Komische Oper Berlin (1997–2001), Principal Guest Conductor of the Teatro Comunale di Bologna (2000–03), Principal Guest Conductor of the Russian National Orchestra (2005–09), and Music Director of Glyndebourne Festival Opera (2001–13).

Vladimir Jurowski is a regular guest with many leading orchestras in both Europe and North America, including the Berlin, Vienna and St Petersburg Philharmonic orchestras; the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra; The Philadelphia Orchestra; the Boston, San Francisco, Chicago and Bavarian Radio symphony orchestras; and the Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich, Leipzig Gewandhausorchester, Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Staatskapelle Dresden and Chamber Orchestra of Europe.

His opera engagements have included *Rigoletto*, *Jenůfa*, *The Queen of Spades*, *Hansel and Gretel* and *Die Frau ohne Schatten* at the Metropolitan Opera, New York; *Parsifal* and *Wozzeck* at Welsh National Opera; *War and Peace* at the Opéra national de Paris; *Eugene Onegin* at the Teatro alla Scala, Milan; *Ruslan and Ludmila* at the Bolshoi Theatre; *Iolanta* and *Der Teufel von Loudon* at the Dresden Semperoper; and numerous operas at Glyndebourne including *Otello*, *Macbeth*, *Falstaff*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, *Don Giovanni*, *The Cunning Little Vixen*, Peter Eötvös's *Love and Other Demons*, and *Ariadne auf Naxos*.

# LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

The London Philharmonic Orchestra is known as one of the world's great orchestras with a reputation secured by its performances in the concert hall and opera house, its many award-winning recordings, its trail-blazing international tours and its pioneering education work. Distinguished conductors who have held positions with the Orchestra since its foundation in 1932 by Sir Thomas Beecham include Sir Adrian Boult, Sir John Pritchard, Bernard Haitink, Sir Georg Solti, Klaus Tennstedt, Franz Welser-Möst and Kurt Masur. Vladimir Jurowski was appointed the Orchestra's Principal Guest Conductor in March 2003 and became Principal Conductor in September 2007. The London Philharmonic Orchestra has been Resident Symphony Orchestra at Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall since 1992 and there it presents its main series of concerts between September and May each year. In summer, the

Orchestra moves to Sussex where it has been Resident at Glyndebourne Festival Opera for 50 years. The Orchestra also performs at venues around the UK and has made numerous tours to America, Europe and Japan, and visited India, Hong Kong, China, South Korea, Australia, South Africa and Abu Dhabi.

The London Philharmonic Orchestra made its first recordings on 10 October 1932, just three days after its first public performance. It has recorded and broadcast regularly ever since, and in 2005 established its own record label. These recordings are taken mainly from live concerts given by conductors including LPO Principal Conductors from Beecham and Boult, through Haitink, Solti and Tennstedt, to Masur and Jurowski.

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**RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS (1872–1958)**

**30:54**    **Symphony No. 4 in F minor**

- 01    8:00    Allegro
- 02    9:37    Andante moderato
- 03    5:04    Scherzo: Allegro molto
- 04    8:13    Finale con Epilogo Fugato: Allegro molto

**RYAN WIGGLESWORTH** *conductor*

**Vesselin Gellef** *leader*

**28:35**    **Symphony No. 8 in D minor**

- 05    11:15    Fantasia (Variazioni senza Tema)
- 06    3:32    Scherzo alla Marcia (per stromenti a fiato)
- 07    8:53    Cavatina (per stromenti ad arco): Lento espressivo
- 08    4:55    Toccata: Moderato maestoso

**VLADIMIR JUROWSKI** *conductor*

**Pieter Schoeman** *leader*

**LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA**

*Recorded live at* **SOUTHBANK CENTRE'S ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL, London**