

Edmund Rubbra  
Ralph Vaughan Williams

Deux-Elles

# RUNE OF HOSPITALITY

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## The Songs of Ralph Vaughan Williams and Edmund Rubbra

The importance of folksong collecting and arranging to the development of the distinctive musical language of Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) has long been recognised. The composition of original art songs formed a much smaller part of his career, but one which was not without significance: indeed it was the 1904 cycle *Songs of Travel* which first brought him to the attention of critics and the public. His songs were composed during three distinct periods, all of which are represented on this recording.

'Silent Noon' dates from 1902, and later formed part of the cycle, *The House of Life*. In the choice of poet (D.G. Rossetti), subject matter, and musical language (reminiscent of Schumann), it typifies the nineteenth-century Romantic *Lied*. Above a gently pulsing accompaniment, the singer melliflously serenades his lover, as they enjoy a 'close-companion'd' hour together. Only at the end, with a change from present to past tense, does it become clear that the poet is wistfully reliving a moment from the past. At the point of realisation, the singer is left suspended on a high E flat – mirroring the way in which the scene is indelibly fixed in the poet's memory.

After the song cycles *Songs of Travel* and *On Wenlock Edge* (1908), Vaughan Williams turned his attention to orchestral composition. In the mid 1920s, having completed three symphonies and *The Lark Ascending*, he returned to song. Three cycles – including *Four*

*Poems* (settings of words by Fredegond Shove, the composer's niece) – were premiered at a concert in London's Aeolian Hall in March 1925.

In these, Vaughan Williams experimented with different ways of setting speech inflexions to music. Several features of his mature style were already apparent: in 'The new ghost', modal harmony (combined with gentle arabesques) creates a sense of other-worldliness, as the recently-departed spirit ascends heavenwards. Vaughan Williams also made increasing use of ostinato accompaniments. At the opening of 'Four nights', this enhances the sense of tranquillity. Elsewhere, movement is invoked: the gentle lapping of waves in 'Motion and stillness'; an incessantly-turning wheel in his Schubert-like setting of 'The water mill'. But although they contributed to his stylistic development, Vaughan Williams's 'middle-period' songs found little favour with the contemporary public. Once again, he forsook song-writing, this time for more than a quarter of a century.

The probable catalyst for his final foray into the genre was his marriage, in February 1953, to poet Ursula Wood. Vaughan Williams soon began work on two cycles of her poems. Unfinished at his death, they were grouped together posthumously as *Four Last Songs*. The earliest is 'Menelaus' (1954), whose text and music were written in a single day after Ralph and Ursula had read T.E. Lawrence's translation of *The Odyssey*. In 'Hands, eyes, and heart' and 'Tired', Vaughan Williams recalls the more lyrical style of his early songs, in stark contrast to the modernism of 'Procris', the last of the set to be written. In 'Tired',

the steady tread of oscillating fifths in the piano left hand seems to depict a clock, slowly ticking as 'the minutes passed' – a poignant gesture from a composer then in the twilight of his life.

Vaughan Williams often played works-in-progress to colleagues whose critical judgement he valued: initially to Gustav Holst; and after Holst's death (in 1934) to a group of younger composers, including Edmund Rubbra (1901-1986). The two men, from widely differing backgrounds – Vaughan Williams was born into the Cotswold gentry; Rubbra was the son of a Northampton cobbler – had met through Holst, one of Rubbra's teachers.

Rubbra's earliest published song, *Rosa Mundi* (1921), dates from his student days at the Royal College of Music. It greatly impressed Holst, and Rubbra himself later described it as 'the point of departure for my future development'. Like most of his early songs, it is a spiritual meditation. An arching melody, inspired by plainsong, is supported by two gently rocking violins.

Unusually, Rubbra shuns the piano in several of his early song accompaniments. This is all the more surprising since he was a highly accomplished pianist, earning his living as a pianist and critic until his appointment as a lecturer at Oxford University, in 1947. However, from his youth Rubbra had been fascinated by the 'new sound-world' of the string quartet: the quieter attack and sustained tone of strings (and often harp) were perhaps more suitable for conveying a sense of inner peace.

Rubbra's early vocal writing was characterised by an effortless rhythmic freedom: *The Mystery* (1922) alternates imperceptibly between dupe and triple time. In *Orpheus with his lute* (1923) the same easy flexibility is reminiscent of Elizabethan lute song, an association strengthened by the arpeggiated piano chords. The combination of a fluid vocal line and a static, often modal, accompaniment is also found in two settings of Scottish texts, both concerned with the unnoticed passing of 'Christ in the stranger's guise': *Rune of Hospitality* (1925) and *A Duan of Barra* (1928). In the latter (literally, 'a little song' from the Hebridean Island of Barra), the interplay between the singer and the top line of the accompaniment anticipates Rubbra's later style.

From 1932 onwards, his music becomes far more linear, dominated by rhythm and counterpoint in a neoclassical manner. Voice and piano enter into a more equal partnership, as heard in *Three Psalms* (1946; dedicated to Kathleen Ferrier). The opening 3½-bar prelude is repeated throughout 'Psalm VI', coloured by subtle changes of harmony or dynamics. The ostinato overlaps with, and enhances, the singer's anguished petitions. Chromaticisms and jagged rhythms contribute to a dark musical language, and result in an unusual – yet effective – setting of 'Psalm XXIII'. Although it opens with a brief moment of tenderness, the movement seems more concerned with the perils from which the shepherd is protecting his flock. The assurance of a place 'in the house of the Lord for ever' heralds a new-found confidence, before the energetic setting of 'Psalm CL' provides a resolute conclusion.

In his 1955 setting of *Two Sonnets* by William Alabaster (one of the lesser-known metaphysical poets, and sometime chaplain to James I), Rubbra uses the interplay between voice and obbligato viola to heighten the intensity. In the haunting meditation, 'Upon the crucifix', he exploits the full range of the viola's tonal palette to great effect.

The two songs of *Ave Maria, gratia plena* (published in 1953) encapsulate many of the differences between Rubbra's youthful and mature styles. *O my dear Hert* was composed in 1922, its original piano accompaniment being rescored for string quartet in 1952. The flowing melody and simple, almost hypnotic accompaniment (particularly the pulsing cello pedal) contrast with the more intricate, contrapuntal texture of *O excellent Virgin Princess* (1952).

Rubbra's first large-scale work for solo piano, the *Eight Preludes*, was premiered by the composer himself at the 1966 Cheltenham Festival. Its astringent style is reminiscent of the piano writing in the *Three Psalms*. Rubbra described how all eight 'spring from the melodic idea with which No. 1 begins' (the rising four-note scale). However, each prelude is self-contained, with its own distinctive character – from the gentle mysticism of No. 2 to the savage intensity of No. 8. Such variety ensures that the complete set explores the full gamut of both the instrument's tone colours and the performer's technique.

Keri Dexter

## Les Chants de Ralph Vaughan Williams et d'Edmund Rubbra

L'importance de recueillir et d'arranger des chants folkloriques pour le développement de la langue musicale propre à Vaughan Williams n'est plus à prouver. La composition de chants artistiques originaux représente une importance moindre dans sa carrière, sans pour autant être insignifiante : C'est en effet grâce au cycle de 1904 des *Songs of Travel* qu'il attirera l'attention des critiques et du public. Il composa ses chants pendant trois périodes différentes, toutes présentes sur cet enregistrement.

« Silent Noon » date de 1902 et fit par la suite partie du cycle *The House of Life*. De par le choix du poète (D.G. Rossetti), du sujet et de la langue musicale (une réminiscence de Schumann), « Silent Noon » est caractéristique du *Lied* romantique du dix-neuvième siècle. Sur un accompagnement légèrement rythmé, le chanteur donne une mélodieuse sérénade à sa bien-aimée, tandis que tous deux savourent une heure entre « compagnons intimes ». Ce n'est qu'à la fin, par un passage du présent au passé, qu'il devient clair que le poète revit avec nostalgie un moment du passé. Au moment où l'on en prend conscience, la voix du chanteur se voit suspendue sur un mi bémol aigu, qui reflète la marque indélébile laissée par cette scène dans la mémoire du poète.

Après le cycle intitulé *Songs of Travel* et *On Wenlock Edge* (1908), Vaughan Williams se tourna vers la composition pour orchestre. Au milieu des années 1920, ayant achevé trois symphonies et *The Lark Ascending*, il retourna au chant. La première de trois cycles, dont *Four Poems* (Paroles de Fredogond

Shove, la nièce du compositeur), eut lieu au cours d'un concert donné au Aeolian Hall de Londres en mars 1925.

Dans ceux-ci, Vaughan Williams s'essaya aux différentes façons de mettre des inflexions parlées en musique. Plusieurs traits de son style arrivés à maturité y figurent déjà : dans « The New Ghost », l'harmonie modale (conjuguée à de douces arabesques) crée un sentiment de détachement du monde lorsque l'esprit du tout nouveau défunt monte au Ciel. Vaughan Williams eut également recours, et ce de plus en plus, aux accompagnements ostinato. Pour l'ouverture de « Four Nights », le sentiment de quiétude en ressort grand. Ailleurs, on invoque le mouvement : le doux clapotis des vagues dans

« Motion and Stillness » ; une roue tournant sans cesse dans son arrangement à la Schubert de « The Water Mill ». Mais bien qu'ils contribuent au développement de son style, les chants de « demi-période » de Vaughan Williams ne trouvèrent qu'un accueil mitigé de la part du public de son temps. Une fois encore, il délaissa l'écriture de chants pour cette fois-ci plus d'un quart de siècle.

Ce qui a probablement provoqué sa dernière incursion dans ce genre fut son mariage, en février 1953, avec la poétesse Ursula Wood. Vaughan Williams

commença bientôt à travailler sur deux cycles de poèmes écrits par sa femme. Laissés inachevés à sa mort, ils furent regroupés à titre posthume sous le titre *Four Last Songs*. Le plus ancien est « Menelaus » (1954), dont le texte et la musique furent écrits après la lecture par Ralph et Ursula de la traduction de T.E. Lawrence de *L'Odyssée*. Dans « Hands, Eyes and Heart » et « Tired », Vaughan Williams rappelle le style plus lyrique de ses premiers chants, tout à l'opposé du modernisme de « Procris » qui fut le dernier à être écrit. Dans « Tired », la cadence régulière des quintes balancées par la main gauche du pianiste semble marquer le lent tic-tac d'une horloge « à mesure que passent les minutes » ; geste poignant du compositeur alors au crépuscule de sa vie.



Edmund Rubbra (1901-1986)



Vaughan Williams jouait souvent ses compositions en cours de réalisation à des collègues dont le jugement critique lui était cher : tout d'abord à Gustav Holst, puis, après la mort de celui-ci en 1934, à un groupe de compositeurs plus jeunes dont Edmund Rubbra faisait partie. Les deux hommes, issus de milieux très différents (La petite noblesse de Cotswold pour Vaughan Williams, alors que Rubbra était le fils d'un cordonnier de Northampton), s'étaient rencontrés grâce à Holst, l'un des professeurs de Rubbra.

Le premier chant de Rubbra à être publié, *Rosa Mundi* (1921), remonte à sa vie d'étudiant au Royal College of Music. Holst en fut très impressionné, et Rubbra lui-même le décrit plus tard comme « Le point de départ de son épanouissement à venir ». Comme la plupart de ses premiers chants, il s'agit d'une méditation spirituelle. Une mélodie en voûte, inspirée d'un plain-chant, que supportent les douces oscillations de deux violons.

Chose inhabituelle, Rubbra évite le piano dans plusieurs des accompagnements de ses premiers chants, ce qui est d'autant plus surprenant qu'il était un pianiste accompli, gagnant sa vie comme pianiste et critique avant de se voir attribuer une chaire de professeur à l'Université d'Oxford en 1947. Cependant, Rubbra avait été fasciné, depuis sa jeunesse, par « le nouveau monde-son » des quatuors à cordes : l'attaque plus douce et la tonalité contenue des cordes (et souvent de la harpe) convenaient probablement mieux au sentiment de paix intérieure qu'il voulait communiquer.

Les premières œuvres chantées de Rubbra se caractérisaient par une liberté rythmique aisée : *The*

*Mystery* (1922) alterne imperceptiblement entre les mesures à deux et trois temps. Dans *Orpheus With His Lute* (1923), la même flexibilité facile rappelle les chants accompagnés au luth de la période élisabéthaine, association renforcée par les arpèges du piano. On retrouve également la combinaison d'une ligne vocale fluide et de l'accompagnement statique, souvent modal, dans deux mises en musique de textes écossais tous deux axés sur le passage subtil de « Jésus déguisé en étranger » : *Rime of Hospitality* (1925) et *A Duan of Barra* (1928). Dans le dernier, dont le titre signifie littéralement « une petite chanson » de l'île Barra dans les Hébrides, l'interaction entre le chanteur et l'accompagnement en haut de portée anticipe le style que Rubbra adoptera par la suite.

A partir de 1932, sa musique devint beaucoup plus linéaire, dominée par le rythme et le contrepoint à la manière néoclassique. Le rapport entre la voix et le piano s'équilibra, comme dans *Three Psalms* (1946) qu'il dédia à Kathleen Ferrier. La mesure à 3½ du prélude d'ouverture se répète tout au long de « Psalm VI », coloré par les changements subtiles d'harmonies et de dynamiques. L'ostinato chevauche et réhausse les suppliques angoissées du chanteur. Chromatismes et rythmes irréguliers contribuent à une langue musicale sombre et conduisent à un arrangement peu ordinaire, mais néanmoins efficace, de « Psalm XXIII ». Bien qu'il s'ouvre sur un bref moment de tendresse, ce mouvement semble s'intéresser davantage aux périls contre lesquels le berger protège son troupeau. La certitude d'une place « dans la demeure du Seigneur pour l'éternité » annonce l'émergence d'une confiance toute nouvelle, avant que l'arrangement plein d'énergie de « Psalm CL » ne lui fournisse une ferme conclusion.

Dans son arrangement de 1955 de *Two Sonnets* de William Alabaster (Un poète métaphysique méconnu, pour un temps aumônier de James I), Rubbra utilise l'interaction entre la voix et l'alto obligato pour en augmenter l'intensité. Dans la méditation obsédante de « Upon the Crucifix », il sait tirer avantage de toute la palette de tonalités de l'alto.

Les deux chants de *Ave Maria, Gratia Plena* (publiés en 1953) incarnent plusieurs des différences entre le style du jeune Rubbra et celui de l'homme mûr. *O My Deir Hert* fut composé en 1922, l'accompagnement original au piano ayant été réadapté pour un quartet à cordes en 1952. La mélodie fluide et le simple, et presque envoûtant, accompagnement (en particulier celui de la vibrante basse continue du violoncelle) contrastent avec la structure plus élaborée et en contrepoint de *O Excellent Princess* (1952).

Le premier solo pour piano important de Rubbra, *Eight Preludes*, fut joué pour la première fois par le compositeur lui-même au Cheltenham Festival en 1966. Son style sévère rappelle la composition pour piano de *Three Psalms*. D'après Rubbra, les huit préludes « découlent de l'idée mélancolique par laquelle commence le N° 1 » (la gamme de notes ascendantes). Cependant, chaque prélude est indépendant et possède un caractère propre, allant du doux mysticisme du N° 2 à l'intensité sauvage du N° 8. C'est cette variété qui garantit que toute la gamme de tonalités de l'instrument et la technique de l'interprète sont explorés.

Keri Dexter  
(traduction Florence Grammond)

## Die Lieder von Ralph Vaughan Williams und Edmund Rubbra

Die Bedeutung des Sammelns und Arrangierens von Volksliedern für die Entwicklung der unverwechselbaren musikalischen Sprache Ralph Vaughan Williams' ist längst erkannt worden. Zwar nahm das Komponieren eigener Kunstlieder den weitaus kleineren, doch einen nicht unbedeutenden Teil seiner Karriere ein. Bereits mit seinem Zyklus *Songs of Travel* von 1904 zog er die Aufmerksamkeit der Kritiker und des Publikums auf sich. Er komponierte seine Lieder während dreier verschiedener Phasen, von denen jede auf dieser Aufnahme vertreten ist.

„Silent Noon“ datiert von 1902 und bildete später einen Teil des Zyklus *The House of Life*. In der Wahl des Dichters (D.G. Rossetti), des Themas und der musikalischen Sprache (die an Schumann erinnert), verkörpert es das romantische Lied des 19. Jahrhunderts. Über einer sanft pulsierenden Begleitung singt der Sänger seiner Geliebten ein klangvolles Liebeslied, während sie eine Stunde „in trauter Zweisamkeit“ miteinander verbringen. Erst am Ende wird durch den Wechsel vom Präsens in die Vergangenheitsform deutlich, dass es sich hier um eine vom Dichter wehmütig noch einmal durchlebte Episode aus der Vergangenheit handelt. Als ihn die plötzliche Erkenntnis trifft, verhält der Sänger auf einem hohen E<sup>b</sup> – auf diese Weise die Unauslöschlichkeit darstellend, mit der die Szene in der Erinnerung des Dichters haften geblieben ist.

Nach den Liederzyklen *Songs of Travel* und *On Wenlock Edge* (1908) wandte Vaughan Williams seine Aufmerksamkeit der Orchesterkomposition

zu. Mitte der zwanziger Jahre, nachdem er drei Sinfonien und *The Lark Ascending* vollendet hatte, kehrte er zum Lied zurück. Drei Zyklen – darunter *Four Poems* (Textunterlegung von Fredegond Shove, der Nichte des Komponisten) – wurden im März 1925 anlässlich eines Konzerts in der Londoner Aeolian Hall uraufgeführt.

In diesen Zyklen experimentierte Vaughan Williams mit verschiedenen Wegen, Veränderungen des sprachlichen Tonfalls in Musik umzusetzen. Hier wurden bereits einige Züge seines reifen Stils erkennbar: So wird in „The new ghost“ mittels modaler Harmonien (kombiniert mit sanften Arabesken) eine Atmosphäre der Jenseitigkeit geschaffen, wenn der kürzlich verstorbene Geist zum Himmel auffährt. Außerdem verwendete Vaughan Williams vermehrt Ostinatobegleitungen. Zu Beginn von „Four Nights“ wird auf diese Weise das Gefühl des Friedens erhöht. An anderer Stelle wird Bewegung evoziert: das sanfte Plätschern der Wellen in „Motion and stillness“ oder ein sich unablässig drehendes Rad in der an Schubert erinnernden Vertonung von „The water mill“. Doch obwohl sie zu seiner stilistischen Entwicklung beitrugen, fanden Vaughan Williams' Lieder der „mittleren Periode“ wenig Anklang beim zeitgenössischen Publikum. Noch einmal wandte er sich vom Liederschreiben ab, diesmal für mehr als ein Vierteljahrhundert.

Den Anstoß für seinen letzten Ausflug in das Genre gab wohl seine Heirat mit der Dichterin Ursula Wood im Februar 1953. Vaughan Williams begann bald darauf die Arbeit an zwei Zyklen zu ihren Gedichten. Bei seinem Tod unvollendet geblieben, wurden sie postum unter dem Titel *Four Last Songs* zusammengestellt. Das früheste unter ihnen ist „Menelaus“ (1964), dessen Text und Musik an einem einzigen Tag geschrieben wurden, nachdem Ralph und Ursula T.E. Lawrence's Übersetzung der *Odyssee* gelesen hatten. In „Hands, eyes, and heart“ greift Vaughan Williams auf den lyrischeren Stil seiner frühen Lieder zurück, wodurch sie in

starkem Kontrast zum Modernismus – „Procris“, dem zuletzt geschriebenen Lied der Reihe, stehen. In „Tired“ scheint das stete Voranschreiten schwingender Fünftelnoten in der linken Hand des Klaviers eine Uhr darzustellen, die langsam tickt, während „die Minuten vergingen“ – die schmerzliche Geste eines Komponisten, der sich zu dieser Zeit bereits im Herbst seines Lebens befand.

Vaughan Williams spielte die Werke, an denen er arbeitete, oft einem Kollegen vor, dessen kritisches Urteil er schätzte: Anfangs war dies Gustav Holst, und nach Holsts Tod (1934) war es eine Gruppe junger Komponisten, zu denen Edmund Rubbra gehörte. Die beiden Männer, deren Herkunft unterschiedlicher kaum sein konnte – Vaughan Williams entstammte dem Landadel der Cotswolds, während Rubbra der Sohn eines Northamptoner Schusters war – hatten sich durch Holst kennengelernt, der einer der Lehrer Rubbras war.

*Rosa Mundi* (1921), das erste von Rubbra veröffentlichte Lied, stammt aus seinen Studententagen am Royal College of Music. Es machte großen Eindruck auf Holst, und Rubbra selbst bezeichnete es als „den Ausgangspunkt meiner späteren Entwicklung“. Wie die meisten seiner frühen Lieder ist es eine spirituelle Meditation. Eine bogenförmige Melodie, inspiriert vom Gregorianischen Gesang, wird untermalt von zwei sich sanft wiegenden Violinen.

Eigenartigerweise meidet Rubbra das Klavier in einigen seiner frühen Liederbegleitungen. Dies ist um so wunderlicher, als er selbst ein ausgezeichneter Pianist war und bis zu seiner Anstellung als Dozent an der Universität Oxford im Jahre 1947 seinen Lebensunterhalt als Pianist und Musikkritiker verdiente. Doch seit seiner Jugend war Rubbra von der „neuartigen Klangwelt“ des Streichquartetts fasziniert gewesen: Der leisere Einsatz und der anhaltende Klang der Saiten (oft der Harfe) waren vielleicht geeigneter, um ein Gefühl des inneren Friedens zu vermitteln.

Rubbras frühe Vokalkompositionen zeichneten sich durch eine unangestrengt rhythmische Freiheit aus: *The Mystery* (1922) wechselt unmerklich zwischen dem Zweier- und dem Dreiertakt. In *Orpheus with his lute* (1923) erinnert die gleiche ungezwungene Flexibilität an das Lautenlied aus der Zeit Elisabeths I., ein Eindruck, der durch die arpeggiert gespielten Klavierstränge noch verstärkt wird. Die Kombination einer fließenden Gesangslinie mit einer statischen, oft modalen Begleitung findet sich auch in zwei Vertonungen von schottischen Texten, in denen es jeweils um das unbemerkte Vorübergehen von „Christ in the stranger's guise“ geht: *Rune of Hospitality* (1925) und *A Duan of Barra* (1928). Letzteres (wörtlich „ein kleines Lied“ von der Hebrideninsel Barra) nimmt in seinem Wechselspiel zwischen dem Sänger und der Oberlinie der Begleitung bereits Rubbras späteren Stil vorweg.

Von 1932 an wird seine Musik weitaus linearer und ist auf neoklassische Weise von Rhythmus und Kontrapunkt dominiert. Stimme und Klavier greifen gleichberechtigter ineinander, wie man in *Three Psalms* (1946; Kathleen Ferrier vereinnahmt) hören kann. „Psalm VI“ beginnt mit einem 3/2 Takte langen Präludium, das sich den ganzen Satz hindurch wiederholt, ausgeschmückt durch dezente Wechsel in Harmonie und Dynamik. Das Ostinato verleiht den angstvollen Bitten des Sängers besonderen Nachdruck, indem es sich mit ihnen überschneidet. In „Psalm XXIII“ tragen Chromatiken und eckige Rhythmen zur dunklen Färbung der musikalischen Sprache bei; das Ergebnis ist eine ungewöhnliche, aber wirkungsvolle Vertonung des bekanntesten Psalms. Obwohl mit einem kurzen Moment der Zärtlichkeit einsetzend, scheint der Satz sich mehr mit den Gefahren zu befassen, vor denen der Hirte seine Herde beschützt. Und schließlich kündigt die Zusicherung eines Platzes „in the house of the Lord for ever“ von einer neu gefundenen Zuversicht, bevor die energische Vertonung von „Psalm CL“ einen resoluten Schlusspunkt setzt.

In seiner von 1955 stammenden Vertonung der *Two Sonnets* von William Alabaster (eines der weniger bekannten metaphysischen Dichter, der für eine Weile Kaplan James' I war) benutzt Rubbra das Wechselspiel zwischen Stimme und Viola obligato, um eine größere Intensität zu erzeugen. In der eindringlichen Meditation „Upon the crucifix“ schöpft er die gesamte Klangpalette der Viola äußerst wirkungsvoll aus.

In den beiden Liedern des *Ave Maria, gratia plena* (1953 veröffentlicht) treten viele stilistische Unterschiede zwischen dem jungen und dem reifen Rubbra deutlich hervor. *O my dear Hert* wurde 1922 komponiert, doch die ursprüngliche Klavierbegleitung wurde 1952 für das Streichquartett uminstrumentiert. Die fließende Melodie und die schlichte, eine beinahe hypnotische Kraft ausstrahlende Begleitung (besonders der pulsierende Pedalton des Cellos) kontrastieren mit der komplizierteren kontrapunktischen Struktur von *O Excellent Princess* (1952).

Rubbras erstes groß angelegtes Solowerk für Klavier, *Eight Preludes*, wurde 1966 auf dem Cheltenham Festival vom Komponisten selbst uraufgeführt. Der adstringierende Stil erinnert an die Klavierkompositionen von *Three Psalms*. Rubbra erläuterte, wie alle acht Präludien „der gleichen melodischen Idee entspringen, mit der Nr. 1 beginnt“ (der aufsteigenden Tonleiter aus vier Tönen). Doch ist jedes Präludium in sich geschlossen und besitzt einen eigenen, unverwechselbaren Charakter – vom sanften Mystizismus von Nr.2 bis zur wilden Intensität von Nr.8. Mittels dieser Vielfalt wird nicht nur der ganze Stimmumfang des Instrumentes ausgeschöpft, sondern auch dem Interpreten Gelegenheit gegeben, sein technische Können voll zur Geltung zu bringen.

Keri Dexter  
(Übersetzt von Cornelia Schnelle)

## FOUR LAST SONGS

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS  
POEMS BY URSULA VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

### PROCRIS

Procris is lying at the waterside,  
the yellow flowers show spring, the grass is green,  
before a gentle wind the thin trees lean  
toward 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.

From *Fall of leaf* (1943)

### TIRED

Sleep, and I'll be still as another sleeper  
holding you in my arms, glad that you lie  
so near at last.  
This sheltering mid-night 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.

From *Fall of leaf* (1943)

### HANDS, EYES, AND HEART

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.

Part of 'Prologue', from *No other choice* (1941)

### MENELAUS

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 where the cold seawinds 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.

'Menelaus on the Beach at Pharos'  
from *Silence & Music* (1959)

## TWO SONNETS BY WILLIAM ALABASTER Op. 87

EDMUND RUBBRA Viola David Le Page

### UPON THE CRUCIFIX

Now I have found thee I will evermore  
Embrace this standard where thou sits above,  
Feede greedie eyes, and from hence never rove;  
Sucke hungrie soule of this eternall store;  
Issue my hart from thie two leaved dore,  
And lett my lippes from kissinge not remove.  
O thatt I weare transformed into love,  
And as a plant might springe upon this flower,  
Like wand'ring Ivy or sweete honie suckle:  
How would I with my twine about it buckle,  
And kisse his feete with my ambitious boughes,

And clyme along upon his sacred brest,  
And make a garland for his wounded broes:  
Lord soe I am, if heare my thoughts may rest.

### ON THE REED OF OUR LORD'S PASSION

Long tyme hath Christ (long tyme I must confesse)

Held me a hollowe Reede within his hande,  
That merited in Hell to make a brande  
Had not his grace supplied mine emptines.  
Of time with languor and newfangleness  
Had I bene borne away like sifted sande,  
When Sinn and Sathan gott the upper hande,  
But that his stedfast mercie did mee besse.  
Still let mee growe upon that livinge lande,  
Within that wounde which iron did impresse,  
And made a springe of bloud flowe from thie hand:  
Then will I gather sapp, and rise, and stand  
That all that see this wonder maye expresse  
Upon this grounde how well growes barrennes.

## FOUR POEMS BY FREDERICK SHOVE

From *Dreams and Journeys* (1918)

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

### MOTION AND STILLNESS

The seashells lie as cold as death  
Under the sea;  
The clouds move in a wasted wreath  
Eternally;  
The cows sleep on the tranquil slopes  
Above the bay;  
The ships like evanescent hopes  
Vanish away.

### FOUR NIGHTS

O when I shut my eyes in spring  
A choir of heaven's swans I see,—  
They sail on lakes of blue, or sing  
Or shelter in a willow tree:  
They sing of peace in heart and mind  
Such as on earth you may not find.  
When I lie down in summer-time

I still can hear the scythes that smite  
The ripened flowers in their prime,  
And still can see the meadows white.  
In summer-time my rest is small,  
If any rest I find at all.

In autumn, when my eyes I close  
I see the yellow stars ablaze  
Among the tangled winds that rose  
At sunset in a circled maze;  
Like armoured knights, they ride the skies  
And prick the closed lids of my eyes.

But when in winter-time I sleep  
I nothing see, nor nothing hear;  
The angels in my spirit keep  
A silent watch and, being there,  
They cause my soul to lie as dead—  
A stream enchanted in her bed.

### THE NEW GHOST

And he cast it down, down, on the green grass,  
Over the young crocuses, where the dew was,  
He cast the garment of his flesh that was full of death,  
And like a sword his spirit showed out of the cold sheath.

He went a pace or two, he went to meet his Lord,  
And, as I said, his spirit looked like a clean sword,  
And seeing him the naked trees began shivering,  
And all the birds cried out aloud as it were late spring.

And the Lord came on, He came down, and saw  
That a soul was waiting there for Him, one without flaw,  
And they embraced in the churchyard where the robins play,  
And the daffodils hang down their heads, as they burn away.

The Lord held his head fast, and you could see  
That He kissed the unsheathed ghost that was gone free—  
As a hot sun, on a March day, kisses the cold ground;  
And the spirit answered, for he knew well that his peace was found.

The spirit trembled, and sprang up at the Lord's word—  
As on a wild April day, springs a small bird—  
So the ghost's feet lifting him up, he kissed the Lord's cheek,  
And for the greatness of their love neither of them could speak.

But the Lord went then, to show him the way,  
Over the young crocuses, under the green may  
That was not quite in flower yet – to a far distant land;  
And the ghost followed, like a naked cloud holding the sun's  
hand.

#### THE WATER MILL

There is a mill, an ancient one,  
Brown with rain, and dry with sun,  
The miller's house is joined with it  
And in July the swallows flit  
To and fro, in and out,  
Round the windows, all about;  
The mill wheel whirrs and the waters roar  
Out of the dark arch by the door,  
The willows toss their silver heads,  
And the phloxes in the garden beds  
Turn red, turn gray,  
With the time of day,

And smell sweet in the rain, then die away.

The miller's cat is a tabby, she  
Is as lean as a healthy cat can be,  
She plays in the loft, where the sunbeams stroke  
The sacks' fat backs, and beetles choke  
In the floury dust. The wheel goes round  
And the miller's wife sleeps fast and sound.

There is a clock inside the house,  
Very tall and very bright,  
It strikes the hour when shadows drowse,  
Or showers make the windows white;  
Loud and sweet, in rain and sun,  
The clock strikes, and the work is done.  
The miller's wife and his eldest girl  
Clean and cook, while the mill wheels whirl.  
The children take their meat to school,  
And at dusk they play by the twilight pool;  
Bare-foot, bare-head,  
Till the day is dead,

And their mother calls them in to bed.  
The supper stands on the clean-scrubbed board,  
And the miller drinks like a thirsty lord;

The young men come for his daughter's sake,  
But she never knows which one to take:  
She drives her needle, and pins her stuff,  
While the moon shines gold, and the lamp shines buff.

#### THE MYSTERY

EDMUND RUBBRA

Op. 4, No. 1  
RALPH HODGSON

He came and took me by the hand  
Up to a red rose tree,  
He kept His meaning to Himself  
But gave a rose to me.

I did not pray Him to lay bare  
The mystery to me,  
Enough the rose was Heaven to smell  
And His own face to see.

#### ROSA MUNDI

EDMUND RUBBRA

Op. 2  
RACHEL ANNAND TAYLOR

Viols Alison Dods, David Le Page

The Rose of the World hangs high on a thorny Tree.  
Whoso would gather must harrow his hands and feet.  
But oh! it is sweet.

The leaves that drop like blood from the thorny Tree.  
Redden the roads of the earth from East to West.  
They lie on my breast.

O Rose, O Rose of the World, bow down to me,  
Who can cleave no more, so pierced are my hands and  
feet.

For oh! Thou art sweet.

#### AVE MARIA GRATIA PLENA

EDMUND RUBBRA

*The Caractacus Quartet*

O MY DEIR HERT  
O, my deir hert, young Jesus sweat,  
Prepare thy credidil in my spreit,  
And I sall rock thee in my hert  
And never mair from thee depart.  
But I sall praise thee evermoir  
With sangis sweet unto thy gloir;  
The knees of my hert sall I bow,  
And sing that richt Balulalow

Op. 5  
ANON

#### O EXCELLENT VIRGIN PRINCESS

Op. 77  
FRANÇOIS VILLON  
trans. D.G. Rossetti

O excellent Virgin Princess! thou didst bear  
King Jesus, the most excellent comforter,  
Who even of this our weakness craved a share,  
And for our sake stooped to us from on high,  
Offering to death His young life sweet and fair.

Such as He is, Our Lord, I Him declare,  
And in this faith I choose to live and die.

from 'His Mother's Service to Our Lady'

#### SILENT NOON

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

D. G. ROSSETTI  
*The House of Life, Sonnet XIX*

Your hands lie open in the long fresh grass,—  
The finger-points look through like rosy blooms:  
Your eyes smile peace. The pasture gleams and glooms  
'Neath billowing skies that scatter and amass.  
All round our nest, far as the eye can pass,  
Are golden kingcup fields with silver edge  
Where the cow-parsley skirts the hawthorn-hedge.  
Tis visible silence, still as the hourglass.

Deep in the sun-search'd growths the dragon-fly  
Hangs like a blue thread loosen'd from the sky:—

So this wing'd hour is dropt to us from above.  
Oh! clasp we to our hearts, for deathless dower,  
This close-companion'd inarticulate hour  
When twofold silence was the song of love.

#### ORPHEUS WITH HIS LUTE

EDMUND RUBBRA

Op. 8, No. 2  
ATTRIB. JOHN FLETCHER

*The Life of King Henry VIII, Act III.*

Orpheus with his lute made trees  
And the mountain tops that freeze,  
Bow themselves, when he did sing:  
To his music, plants, and flowers  
Ever sprung; as sun and showers  
There had made a lasting spring.

Everything that heard him play,  
E'en the billows of the sea,  
Hung their heads and then lay by.  
In sweet music is such art,  
Killing care and grief of heart  
Fall asleep, or, hearing, die.

#### RUNE OF HOSPITALITY

EDMUND RUBBRA

Op. 15  
TRAD.  
Trans. from Gaelic by Kenneth MacLeod

I saw a stanger yestreen;  
I put food in the eating place,  
Drink in the drinking place,  
Music in the list'ning place;  
And, in the sacred name of the Triune,  
He blessed myself and my house,  
My cattle and my dear ones.  
And the lark said in her song,  
Often, often, often  
Goes the Christ in the stranger's guise,  
Often, [often, often]  
Goes the Christ in the stranger's guise.

## A DUAN OF BARRA

EDMUND RUBBRA

MURDOCH MACLEAN

Op. 20

Trim the cruise's failing light,  
The Son of God shall pass to-night,  
*Shall pass at midnight dreary,  
The Son of Mary, weary.*

Lift the sneck and wooden bar  
And leave the stranger's door ajar,  
*Lest He may tarry lowly  
The Son of Mary, Holy.*

Sweep the hearth and pile the peat  
And set the board with bread and meat,  
*The Son of God may take it,  
The Son of Mary brake it.*

## THREE PSALMS

EDMUND RUBBRA

Op. 61

### PSALM VI

O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, Neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.

Have mercy upon me, O Lord; for I am weak; O Lord, heal me; for my bones are vexed.

My soul is also sore vexed: But thou, O Lord, how long? Return, O Lord, deliver my soul: Oh save me for thy mercies' sake.

For in death there is no remembrance of thee: In the grave who shall give thee thanks?

I am weary with my groaning; All the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with tears.

Mine eye is consumed with grief; It waxeth old because of all my enemies.

Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; For the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping.

The Lord hath heard my supplication; The Lord will receive my prayer.

Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed: Let them return and be ashamed suddenly.

### PSALM XXIII

The Lord is my shepherd: I shall not want.  
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul; He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me: Thy rod and staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies: Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

### PSALM CL

Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary: Praise Him in the firmament of his power.

Praise Him for his mighty acts: Praise Him according to his excellent greatness.

Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet: Praise Him with the psaltery and harp.

Praise Him with the timbrel and dance: Praise Him with stringed instruments and organs.

Praise Him upon the loud cymbals: Praise Him upon the high sounding cymbals.

Let ev'ry thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord.

## EIGHT PRÉLUDES

EDMUND RUBBRA

Op. 131

I. Lento: ma con moto e con molto rubato

II. Moderato

III. Allegretto semplice

IV. Andante moderato e rubato

V. Allegretto quasi scherzando e capriccioso

VI. Grave e profondo

VII. Allegretto grazioso

VIII. Lento, e con forza



David Mason was born in Wigan and studied at the Royal Northern College of Music with Gordon Green. Other teachers have included Sir William Glock and Charles Rosen. He has since led a career of unusual diversity. He has played throughout Europe as soloist, accompanist and chamber musician as well as directing several well-established groups both in concert performances and in award-winning recordings. In parallel to his performing career he is established as one of London's leading singing teachers. He has also written for the New Oxford Companion to Music, the Cambridge Companion to Singing, television and music journals.

## The Caractacus Quartet

Christopher George (violin), Alison Dods (violin),  
David Le Page (viola / violin), Matthew Sharp (cello)

Mark Chambers entered the Royal Northern College of Music in 1988, studying under Richard Hill, Michael Chance and attending workshops with James Bowman. He graduated in 1992 and was awarded the John Mcleod prize for male singers. He now studies in London with David Mason focusing on solo oratorio and operatic roles and with a special interest in C20th English song. He enjoys performing a wide range of music at concerts and recitals and has an ever-growing list of recordings to his name.



FOUR LAST SONGS ..... *Vaughan Williams*

- 1 **Procris** (2'37")
- 2 **Tired** (2'22")
- 3 **Hands, Eyes, and Heart** (1'31")
- 4 **Menelaus** (4'43")

TWO SONNETS BY WILLIAM ALABASTER ..... *Rubbra*

- 5 **Upon the Crucifix** (4'04")
- 6 **On the Reed of our Lord's Passion** (4'09")

- 7 **Prelude 1** (2'48") ..... *Rubbra*
- 8 **Prelude 2** (2'48") ..... *Rubbra*

FOUR POEMS BY FREDERICK SHOVE .. *Vaughan Williams*

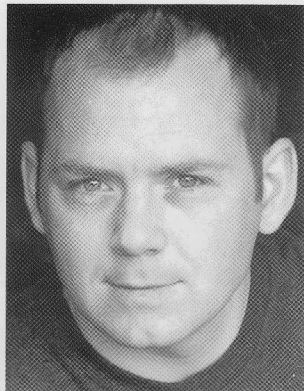
- 9 **Motion and Stillness** (1'41")
- 10 **Four Nights** (3'39")
- 11 **The New Ghost** (4'50")
- 12 **The Water Mill** (3'23")
- 13 **Prelude 3** (0'52") ..... *Rubbra*
- 14 **Prelude 4** (2'27") ..... *Rubbra*

- 15 **The Mystery** (0'53") ..... *Rubbra*

- 16 **Rosa Mundi** (2'27") ..... *Rubbra*

AVE MARIA GRATIA PLENA ..... *Rubbra*

- 17 **O my dear Hert** (1'45")
- 18 **O excellent Virgin Princess** (1'55")
- 19 **Prelude 5** (2'04") ..... *Rubbra*
- 20 **Prelude 6** (4'12") ..... *Rubbra*
- 21 **Silent Noon** (4'35") ..... *Vaughan Williams*
- 22 **Orpheus with his lute** (1'42") ..... *Rubbra*
- 23 **Rune of Hospitality** (1'43") ..... *Rubbra*



Mark Chambers

- 24 **A Duan of Barra** (1'46") .... *Rubbra*

- 25 **Prelude 7** (1'40") ..... *Rubbra*

- 26 **Prelude 8** (1'27") ..... *Rubbra*

THREE PSALMS ..... *Rubbra*

- 27 **O Lord, rebuke me not** (4'47")

- 28 **The Lord is my shepherd** (2'58")

- 29 **Praise ye the Lord** (1'26")

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