



VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

DDD

8.550737

Symphony No. 7 "Sinfonia antartica" Symphony No. 8

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra

Lynda Russell, Soprano • Waynflete Singers

Kees Bakels



Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) Sinfonia antartica (Symphony No.7) • Symphony No.8 in D minor

Ralph Vaughan Williams was born in the Gloucestershire village of Down Ampney in 1872, the son of a clergyman. His ancestry on both his father's and mother's side was of some intellectual distinction. His father was descended from a family eminent in the law, while his maternal grandfather was a Wedgwood and his grandmother a Darwin. On the death of his father in 1875 the family moved to live with his mother's father at Leith Hill Place in Surrey. As a child Vaughan Williams learned the piano and the violin and received a conventional upper middle class education at Charterhouse, after which he delayed entry to Cambridge, preferring instead to study at the Royal College of Music, where his teachers included Hubert Parry and Walter Parratt, later Master of the Queen's Musick, both soon to be knighted. In 1892 he took up his place at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he read History, but took composition lessons from Charles Wood. After graduation in both History and Music, he returned to the Royal College, where he studied composition with Stanford, and, perhaps more significant, became a friend of a fellow-student, Gustav Holst. The friendship with Holst was to prove of great importance in frank exchanges of views on one another's compositions in the years that followed.

In 1897 Vaughan Williams married and took the opportunity to visit Berlin, where he had lessons from Max Bruch and widened his musical experience. In England he turned his attention to the collection of folk-music in various regions of the country, an interest that materially influenced the shape of his musical language. In 1908 he went to Paris to take lessons, particularly in orchestration, from Ravel, and had by now begun to make a reputation for himself as a composer, not least with the first performance in 1910 of his first

symphony, *A Sea Symphony*, setting words by Walt Whitman, and his *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis* in the same year. The even tenor of his life was interrupted by the war, when he enlisted at once in the Royal Army Medical Corps as a private. 1914 was also the year of the *London Symphony* and of his rhapsodic work for violin and orchestra, *The Lark Ascending*. Three years later, after service in Salonica that seemed to him ineffective, he took a commission in the Royal Garrison Artillery and was posted to France. There he was also able to make some use of his abilities as a musician.

After the war Vaughan Williams returned to the Royal College of Music, now as a professor of composition, a position he retained until 1938. In these years he came to occupy a commanding position in the musical life of the country, with a series of compositions that seemed essentially English, the apparent successor of Elgar, although his musical language was markedly different. The war of 1939 brought the challenge of composition for the cinema, with notable scores for *The 49th Parallel* in 1940 and a number of other films, culminating in 1949 in his music for the film *Scott of the Antarctic*, the basis of the seventh of his symphonies. Other works of the last decade of his life included two more symphonies, the opera *The Pilgrim's Progress*, a violin sonata and concertos for harmonica and for tuba, remarkable adventures for an octogenarian. He died in August 1958, four months after the first performance of his last symphony.

In an essay on the subject in 1945 Vaughan Williams praises the discipline involved in writing film-music, recommending it to teachers of composition. His essay contains much common sense on the matter,

although he cannot help looking forward to the possibility of a film that takes its origin from the music itself. His music for *Scott of the Antarctic* was the seventh of his eleven film-scores, if the final *The Vision of William Blake* is to be included, a film that matches Blake's illustrations of the *Book of Job* with Vaughan Williams's *Job: A Masque for Dancing*. The story of Captain Scott's last expedition to the Antarctic, in a vain effort to be the first to reach the South Pole, is well known, with the gallantry of Captain Oates in choosing death rather than hamper the chance of survival of the other members of the expedition, all of whom died. The film was a tribute to the heroism of Scott and his companions. It provided Vaughan Williams with a necessary stimulus to optimism, after the perceived desolation of his *Sixth Symphony*, which some had seen as a 'war symphony'. Scott exemplified admirable qualities of loyalty, courage, firmness of purpose and, indeed, all that seemed best in the human spirit, and the film was in accordance with the then policy of Ealing Studios. It was directed by Charles Frend, with a cast led by John Mills.

The *Sinfonia antartica*, in which Vaughan Williams made further use of the music he had written for *Scott of the Antarctic*, was eventually completed in 1953 and dedicated to Ernest Irving, musical director at Ealing Film Studios from 1935 until his death in 1953. It was given its first performance in Manchester on 14th January 1953 by the Hallé Orchestra under Sir John Barbirolli. The work is scored for triple woodwind, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani and a percussion section that includes triangle, cymbals, side-drum, tenor drum, bass drum, gong, bells, glockenspiel, xylophone, vibraphone, wind-machine and celesta, in addition to a harp, piano, organ and strings, with a female chorus and soprano soloist.

Each movement of the symphony is preceded, in the published score, by a quotation, the opening

Andante maestoso with words from Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*:

*To suffer woes which hope thinks infinite,
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night,
To defy power which seems omnipotent,
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent:
This... is to be
Good, great, joyous, beautiful and free,
This is alone life, joy, empire and victory.*

The music that follows makes use of the title-music of the film and four thematic elements, associated in turn with the antarctic wilderness, ice, fog and the unknown. The opening theme is based on an ascending modal scale and aptly suggests the frightening grandeur of the Antarctic. This is followed by a mysterious evocation of the icy wilderness, with harp, piano and xylophone providing a background to the thematic material, then taken up by the soprano soloist and women's voices, wordless and curiously disembodied. The wind-machine is heard, an instrument the inclusion of which in a symphony aroused a measure of contemporary critical hostility, before a fragment of the principal theme leads to an episode that makes icy use of glockenspiel, vibraphone and celesta. Tremolo violins appear, in accompaniment of a motif for flutes, clarinet and cor anglais, the soprano soloist leading then towards a distant trumpet fanfare and the mounting climax and challenge of the final section.

The Scherzo is prefaced by words from *Psalms CIV*:
*There go the ships
and there is that Leviathan
whom thou hast made to take his pastime therein.*

Leviathan duly appears in the movement, whales and penguins evoked in a score that continues to make the fullest use of orchestral colour, used pictorially and providing a contrast to the sombre menace of the first movement.

At the heart of the symphony lies the slow

movement, *Landscape*. Here the superscription is taken from Coleridge's *Hymn before Sunrise, in the Vale of Chamouni*:

*Ye ice falls! Ye that from the mountain's brow
Adown enormous ravines slope amain –
Torrents, methinks, that heard a mighty voice,
And stopped at once amid their maddest plunge!
Motionless torrents! Silent cataracts!*

The frozen stillness of the scene depicted in the music, one of lichen stillness, the eerie wilderness evoked not only by the orchestral colouring, but by the slow-moving melodic material, with its incessant use of the interval of an augmented fourth. Slowly it reaches a climax in the burst of sound from the organ, which had hitherto in the movement been used to accompany with the pedals the bass line.

The *Intermezzo* is introduced by a quotation from John Donne's *The Sun Rising*:

*Love, all alike, no season knows, nor clime,
Nor hours, days, months, which are the rags of time.*

The movement is framed by an oboe melody of warmer feeling, in music that, even so, accompanies tragedy, using some of the material designed for the self-sacrifice of Captain Oates, choosing death rather than delay his companions in their quest for the safety of their base camp.

The *Epilogue* takes its dominant idea from the last journal of Captain Scott:

*I do not regret this journey; we took risks, we knew
we took them, things have come out against us,
therefore we have no cause for complaint.*

The opening of the movement suggests the bravery of Scott and his companions, but it is in the end the icy wilderness that claims victory, heard in the return of the principal theme of the first movement, with the eerily disembodied voices of the women and the sound of the wind blowing over the icy wastes.

Vaughan Williams's first wife, Adeline, had died in

1951, at the age of eighty. In 1953, shortly after the successful launching of the *Sinfonia antartica* in Manchester and in London, he married his second wife, Ursula Wood, the widow of a Royal Artillery officer, who had already provided texts for him and was later to be his biographer. The following year brought the first performance of his *Tuba Concerto* and a series of lectures in Canada and the United States at leading universities. By early 1955 he had completed his *Eighth Symphony*, a work he dedicated to Barbirolli, who conducted the first performance with the Hallé Orchestra in Manchester on 2nd May 1956. Once again Vaughan Williams makes use of a wide range of orchestral colour, with instrumentation that includes double woodwind, pairs of horns and trumpets, three trombones, timpani and a percussion section that finds room for side drum, triangle, cymbals, bass drum, vibraphone, xylophone, glockenspiel, tubular bells and, borrowed from Puccini's *Turandot*, tuned gongs or, in their absence, tam-tam. This is in addition to harps, celesta and strings.

The *Symphony No.8 in D minor* starts with a movement described in its title as *Fantasia (Variazioni senza Tema)*, or, as the composer put it, seven variations in search of a theme. It is possible to hear in the over-all structure that of traditional sonata-form, with the third variation, marked *Andante sostenuto*, providing the second subject and perhaps the fourth and fifth an equivalent of the development, to be followed by the counterpart of a recapitulation in the final variations. The theme, which never appears, is heard in fragmentary form and at the outset with the colourful resources of vibraphone and celesta, as plucked strings accompany interjections from the trumpet and French horn, before the entry of the flute with a more extended melody. The second variation bursts in, to be followed by the contrasting solemnity of the hymn-like third. The oboe introduces the fourth variation, followed by the

clarinet, and the fifth is an E minor *Andante non troppo*. The brass announce the sixth variation, marked *Allegro vivace*, to be followed by a variation that recalls the third derivative of the missing theme. There is a concluding *coda* and a brief postscript, as the woodwind recall fragments of the opening.

The second movement, *Scherzo alla Marcia* is scored only for wind instruments. It provides a lively contrast, a fair share of activity for the bassoons and a 6/8 *trio* section marked *Andante*, after which contrapuntal use is made of the returning *scherzo*. The *Cavatina*, for strings, offers a slow movement in

E minor, with an intense cello melody at the start. There is secondary material, chordal and hymn-like in character, followed by a violin solo with figuration in characteristically pentatonic outline, a lark ascending and descending to introduce again the principal theme.

The symphony ends with a noisy *Toccata* that makes lively use of tuned percussion, at times seeming to owe more to *Turandot* than just the gongs. The form is that of a *rondo*, somewhat modified, but contrasting episodes, coloured by their instrumentation, are introduced in a cheerful and triumphant conclusion.

This recording of Sinfonia antartica includes the quotations that preface each movement in the published score, read by David Timson. Although not intended to be recited during a performance of the work, listeners wishing to hear the quotations as headings to the relevant movements should programme their CD player in the following track order: 10; 1; 11; 2; 12; 3; 13; 4; 14; 5. For further instructions, refer to your CD player manual.

This digital recording was made and edited using 20bit technology. It was subsequently dithered down to 16bit using the Apogee UV22 algorithm, which retains the benefits of 20bit resolution. 20bit recordings are sonically superior to those in 16bit owing to the increase in the signal-to-noise ratio which is inherent in a higher bit-rate recording. This enhanced quality is evident to the listener with an increase in dynamic range capability and a recorded sound which captures more detail within the musical texture.

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra

The Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra was founded on 22nd May 1893 by Dan Godfrey, the son of a Victorian band-master. At first it was known as the Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra and provided music for one of the most prosperous resorts on the South coast of England. Dan Godfrey served as principal conductor for the next forty years and established one of the most famous orchestras in Great Britain. Since then the orchestra has worked under a succession of distinguished Principal Conductors, the most recent being Sir Charles Groves. Constantin Silvestri, Paavo Berglund and Rudolf Barshai. In September 1988 the

American conductor Andrew Litton was appointed Principal Conductor, with Kees Bakels as Principal Guest Conductor. In 1993 the orchestra celebrated its centenary, and during the ensuing year undertook its first tour of the USA. The visit consolidated a touring history which has included Russia, Hong Kong, Spain, France, Switzerland, Finland, Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Poland. The Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra has recorded for a number of labels, with highly acclaimed interpretations of the complete Tchaikovsky *Symphonies* and the complete cycle of Vaughan Williams *Symphonies* for Naxos.

Lynda Russell

The English soprano Lynda Russell was born in Birmingham and studied at the Royal College of Music in London, in Paris and in Vienna. Her many prizes and awards include the Kathleen Ferrier Memorial Scholarship. She has sung in many of the leading opera-houses of the world. At home she has appeared at Glyndebourne, with Opera North, Opera Northern Ireland and the English National Opera, with the last of

these at the Metropolitan Opera in New York. She has appeared widely in oratorio and in concert performances, including a BBC television recording of Handel's *Messiah* with Harry Christophers and The Sixteen and a televised performance of the *German Requiem* of Brahms for BBC Wales. Other engagements have taken her to the major cities of Europe as a concert and recital singer.

Waynflete Singers

The Waynflete Singers are one of England's foremost choirs. Directed by David Hill, they give three concerts annually in Winchester Cathedral, usually together with the Cathedral Choir and professional orchestras and soloists. They have performed at the Cheltenham Festival, the London Promenade Concerts and in St Paul's Cathedral, and have broadcast for the

BBC, with three 1993 and 1984 Christmas concert televised. The choir has made a number of acclaimed recordings, with one selected as the Gramophone Choral CD of the year in 1994, followed in 1996 by the Grammy Award for Best Choral Recording, in a collaboration with the Bournemouth Symphony Chorus and Orchestra.

Kees Bakels

Kees Bakels was born in Amsterdam, beginning his musical career as a violinist. He studied conducting at the Amsterdam Conservatory and at the Academy Chigiana in Siena. During his studies he became Assistant Conductor of the Amsterdam Philharmonic Orchestra and subsequently held the position of Associate Conductor with that orchestra. At the same time he became Principal Guest Conductor of the Netherlands Chamber Orchestra, which he has directed in festivals in Finland, Belgium and Spain. Kees Bakels has conducted all the major Dutch orchestras, as well as orchestras in Europe and Russia. He has also directed many concerts with the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra and in 1985 conducted his first London Promenade concert with the National Youth Orchestra

of Great Britain. From the beginning of his career, Kees Bakels has concentrated as much on opera as on the symphonic repertoire and has conducted English National Opera productions of *Aida* and *Fidelio* and productions by the Welsh National Opera of *La Bohème* and *Die Zauberflöte*. He has also specialised in the performance of lesser known operas by Mascagni and Leoncavallo and earlier works by Verdi in the concert-hall, broadcasting studio and opera-house. He became Principal Guest Conductor of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra in September 1988. In 1998 he was appointed Music Director Designate of the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra, with an inaugural concert under his direction in August 1998 in the new Petronas Hall in Kuala Lumpur.



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STEREO

Ralph
VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

(1872-1958)

Sinfonia antartica & Symphony No. 8
Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra • Kees Bakels

DDD

Playing
Time
71:27

Sinfonia antartica (Symphony No. 7) (40:38)

Lynda Russell, Soprano • Wayne Flete Singers
Christopher Dowie, Organ

- 1 Prelude: Andante maestoso – Lento – Poco animato – Più mosso – Tranquillo – Andante moderato con moto – Largamente 9:50
- 2 Scherzo: Moderato 5:31
- 3 Landscape: Lento – 10:59
- 4 Intermezzo: Andante sostenuto – Allegretto – Pesante – Tempo primo tranquillo 6:12
- 5 Epilogue: Alla marcia, moderato (non troppo allegro) – Andante maestoso 7:56

Symphony No. 8 in D minor (28:41)

- 6 Fantasia (Variazioni senza Tema): Moderato – Presto – Andante sostenuto – Allegretto – Andante non troppo – Allegro vivace – Andante sostenuto – Largamente – Tempo primo ma tranquillo 10:51
- 7 Scherzo alla Marcia (per stromenti a fiato): Allegro alla marcia – Andante – Tempo primo 3:47

- 8 Cavatina (per stromenti ad arco): Lento espressivo 8:45
- 9 Toccata: Moderato maestoso 5:02

Movement superscriptions for
Sinfonia antartica (1:10)

read by David Timson

- 10 Prelude: "To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite"
Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822)
Prometheus Unbound 0:34
- 11 Scherzo: "There go the ships"
Book of Common Prayer, Psalm 104 0:09
- 12 Landscape: "Ye Ice falls!"
Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) *Hymn before Sunrise, in the Vale of Chamouni* 0:22
- 13 Intermezzo: "Love, all alike,"
John Donne (1571-1631) *The Sun Rising* 0:13
- 14 Epilogue: "I do not regret this journey;"
Captain Robert Falcon Scott (1868-1912)
Message to the Public 0:16

Recorded in Wessex Hall, Poole Arts Centre, Poole, Dorset
on 6th and 7th September, 1996.

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Post-production: Nerys Richards and Andrew Walton

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Cover Painting: Glacial sea; Greenlanders hunting
by François-August Biard (AKG, Berlin)

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