

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS *Live* Vol. 2
Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

ARIADNE 5018

RVW
150BBC Symphony Orchestra & Chorus^a
Boston Symphony Orchestra^b

Sir Adrian Boult

- | | | | |
|---|-------|--|-------|
| [1] Thanksgiving for Victory^a
(A Song of Thanksgiving)
Elsie Suddaby, <i>soprano</i> ; Valentine Dyall, <i>narrator</i>
George Thalben-Ball, <i>organ</i> ; Choir of the Children
of the Thomas Coram Schools | 15:35 | [5] Scene 3: Minuet of the Sons of Job and
their Wives | 4:10 |
| [2] Serenade to Music^a
Isobel Baillie, <i>soprano</i> ; Astra Desmond, <i>contralto</i>
Bradbridge White, <i>tenor</i> ; Harold Williams, <i>baritone</i> | 14:14 | [6] Scene 4: Job's Dream – Dance of Plague,
Pestilence, Famine and Battle | 4:03 |
| Job: A Masque for Dancing^b [46:37] | | [7] Scene 5: Dance of the Three Messengers | 5:15 |
| [3] Scene 1: Introduction –
Pastoral Dance – Satan's Appeal to God –
Saraband of the Sons of God | 10:01 | [8] Scene 6: Dance of Job's Comforters –
Job's Curse – A Vision of Satan | 5:02 |
| [4] Scene 2: Satan's Dance of Triumph | 3:24 | [9] Scene 7: Elihu's Dance of Youth and Beauty –
Pavane of the Sons of the Morning | 5:48 |
| | | [10] Scene 8: Galliard of the Sons of the Morning –
Altar Dance and Heavenly Pavane | 4:59 |
| | | [11] Scene 9: Epilogue | 3:51 |
| | | Total duration: | 76:26 |

Recorded live: BBC broadcast, May 13, 1945 (*Thanksgiving*); September 29, 1946 (*Serenade*); Symphony Hall, Boston Massachusetts on January 26, 1946 (*Job*)

Producing and Audio Restoration: Lani Spahr

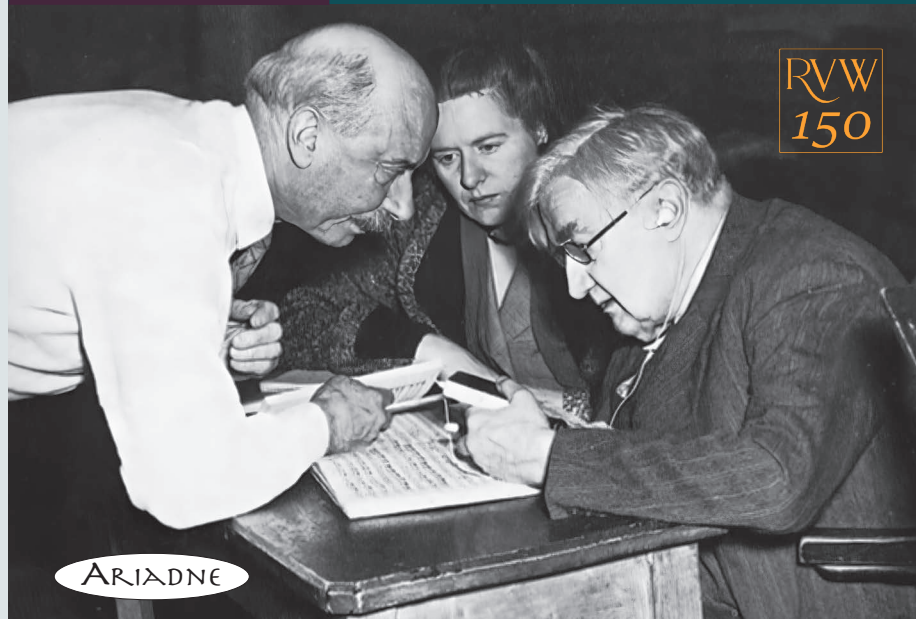
Front cover: Vaughan Williams with Sir Adrian Boult and Ursula Vaughan
Williams (Tully Potter Collection)

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VAUGHAN WILLIAMS *Live*
Vol. 2RVW
150

ARIADNE

Job · Thanksgiving for Victory · Serenade to Music
PERFORMANCES NEWLY MASTEREDBBC Symphony Orchestra & Chorus · Boston Symphony Orchestra
Sir Adrian Boult

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In a career as a composer that lasted 60 years, Ralph Vaughan Williams developed a creative genius that displayed itself in almost every form of the art of music. He is best known today for his symphonies, which have taken his name around the world; but the three works on this disc show him as a composer for a great national occasion, a choral writer for a personal celebration and a master of the orchestra. They also show how his fertile mind could be stimulated by poetry, prose, drama and, in the main work of the three, visual art.

Despite being over age when the Great War started, Vaughan Williams volunteered for the army and saw active service throughout the conflict. The effect of the experience never left him, and would have been at the forefront of his mind when he wrote ***Thanksgiving for Victory***. The performance on this disc is truly historic, being of the work's premiere. It was recorded in the BBC's studios on 5 November 1944, as the Allied armies of the Second World War – which had made rapid progress across France and into the Low Countries after breaking out of Normandy D-Day – were being held up in Belgium having encountered fierce resistance from the Germans. It had been widely expected that the war would be over by Christmas, until the Germans put up a stronger fight.

As it was, Victory in Europe Day was delayed until 8 May 1945 when *Thanksgiving for Victory* was broadcast on the BBC on 13 May. Sir Adrian Boult conducted the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, with the Choir of the Children of the Thomas Coram Schools. The soprano was Elsie Suddaby, the organist George Thalben-Ball and the speaker Valentine Dyall.

The work originated from a discussion the BBC had had with Vaughan Williams in 1943 about composing some music for them to broadcast in thanksgiving once Hitler had been defeated. However, some of the guidelines the corporation set – that the music should reflect all the Allied nations yet be no more than five minutes long – deterred him from accepting the commission. The BBC had a similarly fruitless discussion with William Walton; but eventually some of the restrictions were lifted, and Vaughan Williams agreed to write the work.

It begins with a great fanfare before the soprano enters, shortly followed by the chorus, singing words from the Bible set to an appropriately uplifting orchestration. Settings of Shakespeare and Kipling complete the work, in which the choral singing has the democratic quality with which the composer would be familiar from his direction of choirs at his annual Leith Hill choral festival in Dorking: the effect of the piece is popular rather than pompous; a series of noble tunes inspiring what sounds like the best community singing, the inclusion of children's voices being especially inspired in creating the right tone, and the soprano ending the work not with a blast of triumph, but a more practical imprecation for mourning to end. The work is given here, obviously, in its original form: Vaughan Williams made some minor revisions to it (as he did with many of his 'completed' works) and in 1952 it was renamed *A Song of Thanksgiving*.

Serenade to Music was written by Vaughan Williams in 1938 as a tribute to his friend Sir Henry Wood, the conductor who founded and popularised

the annual Promenade Concerts. It sets words by Shakespeare from Act V Scene I of *The Merchant of Venice*, where there is a discussion about music and the music of the spheres, and was first performed in Wood's Jubilee Concert in the Royal Albert Hall on 5 October that year, marking his half-century as a conductor. The original version had 16 soloists – four sopranos, four contraltos, four tenors, two baritones and two basses – but this was an arrangement the composer realised would be impractical in most concerts. Therefore, he made an orchestral arrangement of the piece and another for orchestra and four soloists – soprano, contralto, tenor and baritone – with a small chorus. This is the version on this disc. This performance of *Serenade to Music* was broadcast live, conducted by Sir Adrian Boult, as part of a concert of English music given by the BBC Symphony Orchestra on 29 September 1946, the opening night of the BBC's Third Programme, which was renamed Radio 3 in 1967. That a work by Vaughan Williams should be chosen for this historic occasion signified how he was at the time, in his 74th year, Britain's greatest living composer.

Vaughan Williams wrote *Job: A Masque for Dancing* in 1927-30, when in his late 50s, on the suggestion of the eminent surgeon and aesthete Geoffrey Keynes, brother of the celebrated economist John Maynard Keynes. The link between the two men was the wood engraver and author Gwen Raverat, who was the composer's cousin and Keynes's sister-in-law. Mrs Raverat was a Darwin by birth and she and Vaughan Williams were both grandchildren of the great anthropologist Charles Darwin, and members of a widespread intellectual dynasty with its roots in Cambridge University. Keynes wished

to make a ballet based on William Blake's illustrated 1826 edition of the *Book of Job*, taken from the Bible; Mrs Raverat would oversee the set designs. Vaughan Williams might have seemed an odd choice for this commission: although nearly a quarter of a century earlier he had edited *The English Hymnal*, and had written two Masses (one as his submission for the Doctor of Music degree at Cambridge in 1901) he was a professed agnostic, and from time to time considered himself an atheist. Perhaps just as difficult was his dislike of ballet: he detested the sight of men and women dancing *en pointe*, which he seems to have found absurd, and made it clear to Keynes when accepting the commission that he would not allow his music to be titled as a ballet. They agreed it would be "a masque for dancing", even though it has no characteristics of a masque at all. But it did appease the composer who could concentrate on creating something he did not find ridiculous: music for dancing based in part on the English folk tradition that he understood so profoundly.

This performance of *Job* was given at Symphony Hall, Boston in the United States of America on 26 January 1946, with Sir Adrian Boult – to whom the composer had dedicated the work – conducting the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Later that year Boult would make the first of his four studio recordings of the piece. The music in this recording, played from the original score, was written for a larger orchestra than a conventional ballet theatre can accommodate.

Vaughan Williams gave the first performance of the work in October 1930 at the Norfolk and Norwich Festival, in the form in which it was written.

When the ballet – or masque – came to be performed the following July by the Vic-Wells Ballet (now the Royal Ballet), in the Cambridge Theatre in London, it was in a reduced orchestration made by Constant Lambert – again something of a paradox, given Lambert’s habit of teasing Vaughan Williams about the unradical nature of his music. However – as this performance makes abundantly clear – there is radicalism and vision in this music. Although it contains passages of exceptional beauty and grandeur that echo both the composer’s connection with English pastoralism and his ability to write orchestral music of a stately nature (as in his *London Symphony*), parts of *Job* have a dark, melancholy tone that had characterised some of his major works since the Great War: notably his *Pastoral Symphony* of 1922 and his 1925 oratorio *Sancta Civitas*. *Job*, with its passages of profound darkness and contemplation, seemed finally to change the template for Vaughan Williams.

When his percussive Piano Concerto of 1933 and the violent Symphony in F Minor (No.4) of 1935 followed, many saw at once that the ground had been laid. The composer had not abandoned pastoralism and the influence of folk-song – these would return in the *Serenade to Music*, discussed above, in 1938, in the *Five Variants of Dives and Lazarus* of 1939 and above all in his D major Symphony (No.5) in 1943 – but he gave his audience notice in *Job* of a vast expansion of his range, thought and language. The work includes, for example, an early use of the saxophone by the composer – although he tried to eschew jazz, it was having an effect on him – which would be heard again, with similarly devilish intent and effect, in the scherzo of his tumultuous

E minor Symphony (No.6) in 1948. As in that symphony, *Job* expresses anger and turbulence, and uses devices such as syncopation and battles between major and minor keys for it to do so.

The composer shaped the ballet in nine scenes, based mainly on the sequence of Blake’s illustrations; most scenes are divided into sections, and each scene is preceded by a quotation from the Bible, thus:

Scene I: **Saraband of the Sons of God:**

“Hast thou considered my servant Job?”

Introduction; Pastoral Dance; Satan’s Appeal to God; Saraband of the Sons of God.

The first scene begins serenely, with Job surrounded by his family and flocks. His children dance, but their enjoyment is interrupted by Satan’s arrival, signalled by a moment of discord as he addresses God: but the saraband indicates God’s soothing intervention. The saraband was a traditional English court dance, and thus ties the music into the English tradition.

Scene II: **Satan’s Dance of Triumph:**

“So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord.”

Satan’s Dance.

Satan mocks God by kneeling before His throne but then sitting on it, while the Hosts of Hell dance.

Scene III: **Minuet of the Sons of Job and Their Wives:**

"There came a great wind and smote the four corners of the house and it fell upon the young men and they are dead."

Minuet of the Sons and Daughters of Job.

Job's children are feasting and dancing; but Satan enters and strikes them dead.

Scene IV: **Job's Dream:**

"In thoughts from the visions of the night... fear came upon me and trembling."

Job's Dream; Dance of Plague, Pestilence, Famine and Battle.

While Job sleeps to the gentle sound of violas, Satan enters, stands by his sleeping figure, invokes visions of the terrors of the earth, and then leads a beastly dance.

Scene V: **Dance of the Three Messengers:**

"There came a messenger."

Dance of the Three Messengers; Job blesses God.

The messengers tell Job that his wealth is destroyed and his children dead. Nevertheless, to some of the most celestial music in the work, Job blesses God for the exercise of His will.

Scene VI: **Dance of Job's Comforters:**

"Behold happy is the man whom God correcteth."

Dance of Job's Comforters; Job's Curse; A Vision of Satan.

Job is approached by three comforters, all wily hypocrites sent by Satan, their unpleasantness indicated by the use of the saxophone to indicate their presence. Job finally breaks and curses God: at which, to his own terror, Satan is revealed sitting on God's throne surrounded by the Hosts from Hell.

Scene VII: **Elihu's Dance of Youth and Beauty:**

"Ye are old and I am very young."

Elihu's Dance of Youth and Beauty; Pavane of the Sons of the Morning.

Elihu, who is young and handsome, executes a graceful dance of gentle lyricism that provides one of the most pastoral moments in the work, with light returning after the darkness of Satan. The pavane is another dance form the composer has re-introduced from antiquity.

Scene VIII: **Galliard of the Sons of the Morning:**

"All the Sons of God shouted for joy."

Galliard of the Sons of the Morning; Altar Dance and Heavenly Pavane

Satan returns to claim to God that he has defeated Job, but the Sons of the Morning drive him away and out of Heaven. Job then blesses the altar to the sound of oboes and clarinets. The galliard too is a dance form that dates back to Renaissance times.

Scene IX: **Epilogue:**

“So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning.”

Job is, as at the beginning, surrounded by his family and flocks, having learned humility and wisdom on his journey. He blesses his children and has secured serenity again.

One of the major authorities on Vaughan Williams, the late Michael Kennedy, observed in his catalogue of the composer's works that *Job* “has the stature and cohesion of a symphony”, and that one does not need to see a performance of the dance in order to understand and appreciate the calibre of the music – “the music itself,” Kennedy wrote, “is pictorial enough”. Again, Boult's performance in Boston bears these observations out. When the music was written Keynes approached Sergei Diaghilev to choreograph it, but he refused the commission claiming the music was “too English and too old fashioned”, objections the composer would have taken as the highest compliments. Had he wished to write a continental, contemporary ballet of the sort Diaghilev was used to dealing with, he would have done so. The composer's music, despite the detailed programme, speaks for itself: it portrays the triumph of light over darkness, of good over evil, of the holy over the unholy.

Sir Adrian Boult (1889-1983) was one of the greatest British conductors of the 20th century, in a career that lasted over 60 years, and one of the leading champions of the composers of the English musical renaissance. On his visit to Massachusetts in January and February 1946 Boult performed a number



Ralph Vaughan Williams, Professor Wallace Woodworth and Sir Adrian Boult, 31 July, 1956.
Photograph from the Collection of Ursula Vaughan Williams, courtesy of Stephen Connock.

of works by British composers in Boston and on a tour of other New England towns. These includes Holst's *Planets* twice, Walton's *Scapino* twice, Purcell's *Trumpet Tune and Air*, Elgar's *Enigma Variations* and Ireland's *A Forgotten Rite* eight times each, and *Job* three times.

He achieved international fame and recognition for his talent. He had an especially strong relationship with Vaughan Williams, whom he met before the Great War: he gave the first performances of the composer's *Pastoral*, Fourth and Sixth symphonies, took his music around the world (as in the Boston performance on this disc) and recorded all the composer's symphonies (most more than once), major orchestral and choral works. Boult secured fame in 1918 by giving the first performance of Holst's *Planets* Suite, and made landmark recordings of works by Elgar, Parry, Moeran and other leading British composers. But he was equally at home in the European repertoire, directing music for Diaghilev's ballet company in the 1920s.

His main achievement was founding and acting as chief conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra from 1930 to 1950. He did not retire until 1978.

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THANKSGIVING FOR VICTORY (A SONG OF THANKSGIVING)

Blessed art thou,
O Lord God of our fathers;
And be praised and exalted
above all for ever.

And blessed is thy glorious and holy Name;
And be praised and glorified above all for ever

Blessed art thou in the temple of thy holy glory;
And to be praised and exalted above all for ever.

Blessed art thou on the glorious throne of thy kingdom;
And to be praised and glorified above all for ever.

Song of the Three Holy Children: vv29-31, 33

O God, Thy arm was here,
And not to us, but to thy arm alone ascribe we all.
Take it, God, for it is none but thine.

William Shakespeare: Henry V, I, viii

Thine, O Lord, is the greatness
And the power and the glory,
Thine is the victory. And the majesty;

for all that is in heaven and earth is thine.
Thine is the Kingdom, O Lord,
and thou art exalted as head above all.

I Chronicles 29, v 11

O give thanks unto the Lord
because he is gracious;
for his mercy endureth for ever.

Song of the Three Holy Children: v 67

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
Because the lord hath anointed me to proclaim
liberty to the captives
and the opening of the prison to them that are bound,
to comfort all that mourn;
To give them beauty for ashes,
The oil of Joy for mourning,
The garment of praise
for the spirit of heaviness.

Isaiah 61: vv 1-3

Go through, go through the gates,
Prepare ye the way of the people;
Cast up, cast up the high way;
Gather out the stones.
Lift up a standard for the people.
Behold, the Lord hath proclaimed
unto the ends of the world,

Say ye, "Behold thy salvation cometh!
Behold, his reward is with him
and his work before him."

And they shall call them the holy people,
the redeemed of the Lord.
And thou shall be called "Sought out",
a city not forsaken.

Isaiah 62: vv 10-12

And they shall build the old wastes,
they shall raise up the former desolations,
and they shall repair the waste cities,
The desolations of many generations.

Isaiah 61: v 4

Violence shall be no more in thy land,
Wasting nor destruction within thy borders;
But thou shalt call thy walls Salvation,
and thy gates Praise.

Isaiah 60: v 18

Land of our birth, we pledge to thee
Our love and toil in the years to be;
When we are grown and take our place
As men and women with our race.
Father in Heaven who lovest all,
O help thy children when they call.
That they may build from age to age
An undefiled heritage.

Teach us the strength that cannot seek,
By deed, or thought, to hurt the weak;
That, under thee, we may possess
Man's strength to comfort man's distress.

Teach us delight in simple things,
The mirth that has no bitter springs;
Forgiveness free of evil done,
And love to all men 'neath the sun.

Land of our birth, our faith, our pride,
For whose dear sake our fathers died;
O Motherland, we pledge to thee,
Head, heart and hand through the years to be.

Rudyard Kipling
(from *Puck of Pook's Hill*)

The Lord shall be thine everlasting light,
and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.

Isaiah 60: v 20

A SERENADE TO MUSIC

*How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!
Here will we sit and let the sounds of music
Creep in our ears: soft stillness and the night
Become the touches of sweet harmony.*

Look how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold:

There's not the smallest orb that thou behold'st
But in his motion like an angel sings,

Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins;
Such harmony is in immortal souls;

But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.

Come, ho! and wake Diana with a hymn!
With sweetest touches pierce your mistress' ear,
And draw her home with music.

I am never merry when I hear sweet music.

The reason is, your spirits are attentive –

The man that hath no music in himself,
Nor is not mov'd with concord of sweet sounds,
Is fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils;

The motions of his spirit are dull as night
And his affections dark as Erebus:
Let no such man be trusted.

Music! hark!
It is your music of the house.

Methinks it sounds much sweeter than by day.

Silence bestows that virtue on it

How many things by season season'd are
To their right praise and true perfection!

Peace, ho! the moon sleeps with Endymion
And would not be awak'd.

*Soft stillness and the night
Become the touches of sweet harmony.*

William Shakespeare: The Merchant of Venice, V

LANI SPAHR – audio restoration engineer, producer and annotator – has garnered critical praise from *Gramophone* (“There are historic releases that make the grade because they are just that – ‘historic’ – and there are releases that make history because they are musically overwhelming. This set is both.”), BBC Radio 3, *BBC Music Magazine*, *Fanfare*, *The Sunday Times*, *MusicWeb International*, *Diapason*, *Classical Source*, *International Record Review* and many others.

In 2016, BBC Radio 3 presented an hour-long documentary about his stereo reconstructions for *Elgar Remastered* (SOMMCD 261-4). His work can be heard on SOMM Recordings, Music & Arts, West Hill Radio Archives, Naxos, Boston Records and Oboe Classics, and he has worked for Sony/France on historic restorations of the recordings of George Szell. In 2020, he was awarded an Honorary Membership of the Elgar Society for his work on the recorded legacy of Sir Edward Elgar.



Formerly a leading performer on period oboes in the US, he was a member of Boston Baroque and the Handel & Haydn Society Orchestra of Boston. In addition, he has appeared with many of North America's leading period instrument orchestras, including Tafelmusik, Philharmonia Baroque, Tempesta di Mare, Apollo's Fire, Washington Bach Consort, the American Classical Orchestra, Boston Early Music Festival Orchestra, Mercury Baroque and many others.

Also a modern oboist, he was the principal oboist of the Colorado Springs Symphony Orchestra, the Colorado Opera Festival, the American Chamber Winds, the Maine Chamber Ensemble and made his European solo debut in 1999 playing John McCabe's Oboe Concerto with the Hitchin Symphony Orchestra in England.

He has served on the faculties of Colorado College, Phillips Exeter Academy (New Hampshire) and the University of New Hampshire Chamber Music Institute. He has toured throughout North America, Europe and the Far East on period and modern oboes and has recorded for Telarc, Linn, Koch, Naxos, Vox, Music Masters, L'Oiseau Lyre and Musica Omnia.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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