Vaughan Williams

A Sea Symphony

ORATORIO CHORUS AND CONCERT ORCHESTRA

Betsy Burleigh, Conductor

Musical Arts Center
Wednesday, November 18, 2015
8:00 p.m.
Oratorio Chorus
Concert Orchestra

Ralph Vaughan Williams

A Sea Symphony

Words from Walt Whitman,
Leaves of Grass

Betsy Burleigh, Conductor
Megan Wilhelm, Soprano
Connor Lidell, Baritone

Musical Arts Center
Wednesday Evening
November Eighteenth
Eight O’Clock
I. A Song for all Seas, all Ships

Chorus
Behold, the sea itself!
And on its limitless heaving breast, the ships;
See! where their white sails, bellying in the wind, speckle the green and blue!
See! the steamers coming and going, steaming in or out of port!
See! dusky and undulating, the long pennants of smoke.
Behold, the sea itself!
And on its limitless heaving breast, the ships.

Baritone
Today a rude brief recitative,
Of ships sailing the Seas, each with its special flag or ship-signal;
Of unnamed heroes in the ships –
Of waves spreading and spreading far as the eye can reach,
Of dashing spray, and the winds piping and blowing.

Chorus
Of dashing spray, and the winds piping and blowing,
Today a rude brief recitative . . .

Baritone & Chorus
And out of these a chant for the sailors of all nations,
Fitful, like a surge.
Of Sea-Captains young or old, and the Mates—and of all intrepid Sailors;
Of the few, very choice, taciturn, whom fate can never surprise nor death dismay,
Pick’d sparingly, without noise by thee, old Ocean—chosen by thee,
Thou Sea, thou that pickest and cullest the race in time, and unitest the nations,
Suckled by thee, old husky Nurse, embodying thee!
Indomitable, untamed as thee.

Soprano & Chorus
Flaunt out, O Sea, your separate flags of nations!
Flaunt out, visible as ever, the various flags and ship-signals!
But do you reserve especially for yourself, and for the soul of man,
  one flag above all the rest,
A spiritual woven Signal for all nations, emblem of man elate above death,
Token of all brave captains, and of all intrepid sailors and mates,
And of all that went down doing their duty;
Reminiscent of them—twined from all intrepid captains, young or old;
Emblem of man elate above death!

Baritone, Chorus & Soprano
A pennant universal, subtly waving, all time, o’er all brave sailors,
One flag, one flag above all the rest,
Behold the sea itself,
And on its limitless heaving breast the ships.
All seas, all ships,
O’er all brave Sailors
One flag above all the rest, for all nations.
Behold the sea itself.

II. On the Beach at Night, Alone

Baritone & Chorus
On the beach at night alone,
As the old mother sways her to and fro, singing her husky song,
As I watch the bright stars shining—I think a thought of the clef of the universes,
and of the future.

A VAST SIMILITUDE interlocks all,
All distances of space however wide,
All distances of time,
All souls, all living bodies, though they be ever so different,
All nations, all identities that have existed or may exist,
All lives and deaths, all of the past, present, future,
This vast similitude spans them, and always has spanned,
And shall forever span them,
And shall compactly hold and enclose them.

III. Scherzo: The Waves

Chorus
After the Sea-Ship—after the whistling winds;
After the white-gray sails taut to their spars and ropes,
Below, a myriad, myriad waves, hastening, lifting up their necks,
Tending in ceaseless flow toward the track of the ship:
Waves of the ocean, bubbling and gurgling, blithely prying,
Waves, undulating waves—
liquid, uneven, emulous waves,
Toward that whirling current,
laughing and buoyant, with curves,
Where the great Vessel, sailing and tacking, displaced the surface;
Larger and smaller waves, in the spread of the ocean, yearnfully flowing;
The wake of the Sea-Ship after she passes—flashing and frolicsome under the sun,
A motley procession, with many a fleck of foam and many fragments,
Following the stately and rapid ship—in the wake following.
IV. The Explorers

Chorus
O vast Rondure, swimming in space!
Covered all over with visible power and beauty!
Alternate light and day, and the teeming, spiritual darkness,
Unspeakable high processions of sun and moon, and countless stars, above,
Below, the manifold grass and waters,
With inscrutable purpose—some hidden, prophetic intention;
Now, first, it seems my thought begins to span thee.

Down from the gardens of Asia descending,
Adam and Eve appear, then their myriad progeny after them,
Wandering, yearning—with restless explorations,
With questionings, baffled, formless, feverish—with never-happy hearts,
With that sad incessant refrain,
   Wherefore unsatisfied soul?
   Whither O mocking life?
Ah, who shall soothe these feverish children?
Who justify these restless explorations?
Who speak the secret of the impassive Earth?
   Wherefore unsatisfied soul?
   Whither O mocking life?
Yet soul be sure the first intent remains—and shall be carried out;
(Perhaps even now the time has arrived.)
After the seas are all crossed,
After the great captains have accomplished their work,
After the noble inventors,
Finally shall come the Poet, worthy that name,
The true Son of God shall come, singing his songs.

Soprano & Baritone
O we can wait no longer!
We too take ship, O Soul,
Joyous, we too launch out on trackless seas!
Fearless, for unknown shores, on waves of ecstasy to sail,
Amid the wafting winds, (thou pressing me to thee, I thee to me, O Soul),
Caroling free—singing our song of God,
Chanting our chant of pleasant exploration.
O Soul, thou pleasest me—I thee;
Sailing these seas, or on the hills, or walking in the night,
Thoughts, silent thoughts, of Time, and Space, and Death, like water flowing,
Bear me, indeed, as though regions infinite,
Whose air I breathe, whose ripples hear—lave me all over,
Bathe me, O God, in thee—mounting to thee,
I and my soul to range in range of thee.

Soloists & Chorus
O thou transcendent!
Nameless, the fibre and the breath!
Light of the light—shedding forth universes—thou centre of them!

Baritone
Swiftly I shrivel at the thought of God,
At Nature and its wonders, Time and Space and Death,
But that I, turning, call to thee, O Soul, thou actual Me,
And lo! thou gently masterest the orbs,
Thou matest Time, smilest content at Death,
And fillest, swellest full the vastnesses of Space.

Chorus
Greater than stars or suns,
Bounding, O Soul, thou journeyest forth;

Soloists & Chorus
Away, O Soul! Hoist instantly the anchor!
Cut the hawsers—haul out—hake out every sail!
Sail forth! steer for the deep waters only!
Reckless, O Soul, exploring, I with thee, and thou with me;
For we are bound, where mariner has not yet dared to go,
And we will risk the ship, ourselves and all.

O my brave Soul!
O farther, farther sail!
O darling joy, but safe! Are they not all the seas of God?
O farther, farther, farther sail!
Program Notes: Vaughan Williams, Symphony No. 1, *A Sea Symphony*

“This is big stuff—with some impertinences”

– Hubert Parry

Big stuff indeed, especially for a first symphony! Including a chorus in one’s initial excursion into the symphonic genre is at the very least bold, if not impertinent. The libretto deals with the biggest of “stuff”: the unanimity of humankind, our place in the universe and in time, the exhilaration of the now, and the journey of the soul into the unknown. The “big” is also the fourth movement, almost as long as the first three combined. The entire work is expansive. It’s the longest of Vaughan Williams’ nine symphonies, and its size and scope do not seem atypical of a young man with much to say making his first big statement. Other Williams fingerprints (if not impertinences) are the incorporation of actual sea shanties and folk songs, whiffs of Elgar, and melodies reminiscent of English hymns. All of this is quintessentially English, clearly reflecting his statement, “The art of music above all the other arts is the expression of the soul of a nation.”

The text for this choral symphony comes from the poetry of Walt Whitman, lines carefully chosen and assembled by Williams himself. Williams was said to have always carried a copy of Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* in his coat pocket, and his affection for these words is clearly evident. He set Whitman’s poetry in *Toward the Unknown Region* and *Dona nobis pacem* as well in a collection of solo songs. Williams said of this libretto, “I have taken the liberty in repeating the words a good deal.” It’s illuminating to observe how a composer chooses to make these repetitions. Which phrases are used for the subject of a fugue? Are single words obsessively murmured or aggressively hammered out? In this case with over a thousand words of Whitman to digest, as compared to the full text of a requiem mass that has just 454 words, looking at Williams’ repetitions serves to quickly clarify the points he thought were most important. They focus our attention, and when taken as a whole, one sees a very clear arc in the four movements: who we are, where we are, the present, and an optimistic journey into the unknown.

In the first movement, Williams chose to emphasize the following phrases:

*One flag, above all the rest, a spiritual woven signal for all nations,* (by choral counterpoint)
*Token of all that went down doing their duty,* (by choral counterpoint)
*Emblem of man, elate above death, above death,* (by hammered repetitions)

He begins by stressing the universal; something of the spirit supersedes nationality and even death itself. And the sea is the backdrop for it all.

The text setting in the second movement is more direct, with little repetition beyond simple call and response (or statement and reinforcement) between the baritone and the chorus. Here, the absence of words in the last third of the movement (the musical return) is the notable factor—the wondrous ‘similitude’ of time, space, and the universe is something that only music alone can describe fully.

The third movement is the perfect palate cleanser between the speechless end of the second movement and the massive final movement. Many writers say the third movement is the only movement that is literal as opposed to metaphorical or metaphysical. I believe the third movement is in itself another metaphor. The literal and bracing description of waves following the wake of a sailing ship brings us from the second movement’s deep contemplation into the present; I see this as a metaphor for the here and the now. At the
end of the movement Williams repeats the following phrase: “A motley procession . . . in the wake following, following, following . . . following!” When considered in a context that includes the final movement, a larger scheme appears.

Movement Four starts with an amazing contemplation of the stars above (the universe). That sense of wonder is the starting point from which to describe humankind’s search for meaning. At the end of the movement, Williams again incorporates text reiteration to encourage the Soul: “Sail forth! O my brave soul! O farther, farther, farther sail!” The third movement therefore provides perspective—we are the “motley procession,” following the Soul as it sails forth bravely on its voyage to explore unknown wonders.

Of course, we are not here this evening for the words alone. The *Sea Symphony* is thrilling music to perform and to hear live, and its strength lies in Williams’ setting of these words.

The musical painting of the sea is vivid; the huge crash of a great wave at the opening and the bubbling, churning water in the third movement spring immediately to mind. Like the ocean, the music—and the tempo—constantly ebbs and flows. Extremes of volume and rhythmic activity take us from the windless glassy waters (being “in irons,” as sailors would say) to the pounding of breakers on a sea wall. The orchestration—rich, colorful, and multifaceted—is the driving factor in the creation of this sense of the sea. One hears the influence of Ravel, with whom Williams studied during the composition of this work. (Ravel said Williams “is my only pupil who does not write my music.”)

The very opening of the symphony provides three musical threads that are woven through the entire work—the brass fanfare, the shocking harmonic third relationship between the chorus’s first word, “Behold,” and the concluding phrase “the Sea itself,” and the long flowing melody after the first crashing wave. (The harmonic “motto” most frequently moves from a minor chord built on the flattened sixth scale degree to the major chord built on the tonic.)

The role of the soloists evolves over the course of the symphony. In the first movement, the baritone is reminiscent of a swashbuckling sailor, and the soprano is reminiscent of the figurehead on the prow of the ship. In the second movement, the baritone sings contemplatively of his place in the universe, and in the fourth movement, they sing an impassioned duet, giving voice to both the speaker and the soul, “O we can wait no longer, We too take ship, O Soul!”

The sound of the chorus alone, without orchestra, is used with great effect as a way to highlight significant statements, be they grand or whispered. The rich ending of the first movement is a truly impressionistic cloud of sound built from 11 choral and soloist parts, all singing their own lines of music and words. This choral texture is decades ahead of its time. The very last statement of the third movement, “Following!,” is exhilarating and an echo of the “Gloria” of Beethoven’s *Missa solemnis*). The haunting use of women’s voices in the last movement, “Wherefore dissatisfied soul? Whither, O mocking Life?,” is yet another striking moment.

These are but a few of the amazing moments in a work where Williams not only paints the sea, but captures the vast, archetypal concepts it represents and the emotional responses it evokes. Those of us who have spent time by the ocean know its profound effect on our psyches. Williams has captured this effect, wondrously bringing it from the seashore into the concert hall.

– Betsy Burleigh
Betsy Burleigh, chair of the Choral Conducting Department at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music since the fall of 2013, served as music director of the Mendelssohn Choir of Pittsburgh from 2006 to 2015. She led the Mendelssohn in performances of Brahms’ Requiem, Bach’s B-Minor Mass, Rachmaninoff’s Vespers, and Mozart’s Great Mass in C Minor and prepared the choir for numerous performances with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra (PSO). As a guest conductor, Burleigh has led the PSO, Rhode Island Philharmonic, Akron Symphony, and Canton Symphony. Theater engagements have included music direction at Opera Cleveland and the Cleveland Public Theater. She will be preparing the Tanglewood Festival Chorus for a performance with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and music director Andris Nelsons in March 2016. Acclaimed for her oratorio conducting, Burleigh’s 2012 Chorus pro Musica performance of Haydn’s Creation was praised in The Boston Globe as an “expansive, poetic reading” and in The Boston Phoenix as “a stirring and elegant, lilting and expansive performance.” Her 2010 rendition of Orff’s Carmina Burana was praised as being both “nuanced” and “hair-raising” by The Boston Musical Intelligencer. She won the 2000 Northern Ohio Live Achievement Award for best classical/opera performance for Ulmann’s Der Kaiser von Atlantis with the Cleveland Public Theatre and conducted the Cleveland Orchestra Chorus on an Emmy Award-winning concert for the 9/11 Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund. (Photo by Roger Mastroianni)

Connor Lidell, 23, is a first-year master’s student at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music studying vocal performance with Andreas Poulimenos. From Arlington, Texas, Lidell has been seen in multiple shows on the IU Opera Theater stage, most recently, as Basilio in The Barber of Seville. In fall 2014, he sang the role of Taddeo in The Italian Girl in Algiers. The previous spring, he was seen as Dick Deadeye in H.M.S. Pinafore. He made his debut on the IU stage in his sophomore year as Masetto in Mozart’s Don Giovanni. He has been involved with many student organizations focusing on the production of new opera. He premiered the role of Charlie in Chappell Kingsland’s Intoxication: America’s Love Affair with Oil, produced by New Voices Opera, an IU Student Organization. He premiered a one-man concert opera by IU composer Patricia Wallinga called Tarrare. He has coached with and worked with Gary Arvin, Sylvia McNair, Ed Bak, Roger Vignoles, Chris Crans, and others. He has sung under the batons of Arthur Fagen, Z. Randall Stroope, David Effron, and Marzio Conti, to name a few. He has been directed by Candace Evans, Chris Alexander, James Marvel, Michael Shell, and others during the past five years. In addition to musical accomplishment, he is a 4.0 GPA honors student and an IU Founder’s Scholar.

Megan Wilhelm, soprano, is in her second year of the Master of Music program at Indiana University. At IU, she has performed as the soprano soloist in Benjamin Britten’s War Requiem as well as in the world premiere of A Vietnamese Requiem by P. Q. Phan. She was recently a young artist at SongFest. During her undergraduate studies at the University of Houston, she performed the role of Second Lady in The Magic Flute and was a member and section leader of the internationally renowned Moores School Concert Chorale. From 2013 to 2014, Wilhelm performed in the Houston Grand Opera Chorus and was a frequent soloist in the Zachow Consort and Players. She has also been a young artist for the CoOperative program and has performed with Le Chiavi di Bel Canto and Dolora Zajick’s Institute for Young Dramatic Voices. She is currently studying with Timothy Noble.
Oratorio Chorus

Soprano I
Amy Burgar
Katie Burk
Tiffany Choe
Carolyln Craig
Euijean Ashley Chung
Taylor Del Vecchio
Alyssa Dessoye
Emma Donahue
Kara Duval-Fowler
Anna Ginther
Elise Hurwitz
Caroline Jamsa
Geuna Kim
Ji-Hye Kim
Virginia Mims
Kellie Motter
Sedera Rasamimanana
Bridget Ravenscraft
Anne Rumzis
Skye Singleton
Syntha Steiman
Madeline Stern
Brooke Vance
Maya Vansuch
Savanna Webber
Yin Yue

Soprano II
Ivanna Barrientos
Peri Bernstein
Mallorie Bromer
Joanna Burke
Michaela Calzaretta
Sarah Castaldi
Madeline Coffey
Anna Gatdula
Gabrielle Gaudreault
Vanessa Gehring
Annika Grismer
Brianna Holt
Olivia Huntley
Kat Jones
Katelyn Kozinski
Anna Kozlekiewicz
Emily Lehman
Qi Li
Xiao Li
Leah Martin
Rachel Mikol
Marissa Reynolds
Keely Schmerber
Amanda Sesler
Sarah Seyfried
Anisha Srinwasan

Soprano II (cont.)
Nell Vandevelde
Natalie Weinberg
Amy Wooster
Juyeon Yoo
Leeza Yorke

Alto I
Agnes Barroll
Tiffany Bowen
Nicole Bracken
Ashly Brown
Jennifer Burri
Diana Chou
Yuanshuai Cui
Kayla Eldridge
Grace Fillip
Marianthi Hatzis
Rebekah Howell
Han Na Jang
Katy Jellison
Dasol Kim
Erin Kingseed
Amy Lidell
Xuan Li
Natalie Lunts
Lingwen Luo
Mandy Lyons
Annika Mauss
Phyllis Pan
Wendy Park
Amanda Perera
Shayna Plotnik
Kelsey Randall
Mary Sinclair
Jenna Stewart
Elizabeth Stoner
Joelle Tucker
Kate Urbanowski
Emily Vickers
Janet Wang
Lauren Wilson
Jessica Wolf

Tenor I
Edward Atkinson
Alex Baker
Alex Berko
Nathan Blair
Bille Bruley
Martin Carroll
Nicolas Chuaqui
Andrew Downs
Dylan Fixmer
Connor Hakes
Greg McClelland
Paul Mortilla
Nicholas Quardokus
Benjamin Rardin

Tenor II
Ryan Brunkhurst
Anthony Coniglio
Jared Griffin
Alex Hallenbeck
Spencer Haynes
Davis Johnson
Stephen Johnson
June Young Will Kim
Jordan Lenchitz
Isaak Liu
Kevin Masters
Moses Mayabillo
Dan Miller
Eddie Mony
Francisco Ortega
Brian Pawlak
Nikolai Peek
Charles Snell
Trent Takaki
Joseph Vaz
Phillip West

Bass I
William Berg
Quentin Beverly
Philip Borsellino

Bass I (cont.)
Clifton Boyd
Jonathan Bryan
John Buchanan
David Fraley
Miles Friday
Matthew Gerhardt
Emile Huvé
Jianan Andy Huang
Jeffrey Israel
Slade LaCounte
Marc Levesque
Caleb Lewis
Connor Lidell
Ji Lu
Luka Marinkovic
James Maverick
Teofil Munteanu
John Nothaft
Conor O’Leary
Charlie Oh
Christopher Poovey
Corey Rubin
Eric Smesrud
Arthur Tang
Robert Welch

Bass II
James Adams
Steven Berlanga
Dalong Ding
Lucas Fletcher
Oliver Hopkins
Michael Hyatt
Michael Kim-Sheng
Nara Lee
David McNeil
Justin Parish
Matthew Recio
Johann Reed
Chris Seefeldt
Oliver Shou
Michael Wade

Choral Set-Up
Steven Berlanga
Michaella Calzaretta
Gabrielle Gaudreault
Han Na Jang
Jaeun Kim
Caleb Lewis
James Maverick
David McNeil
Charles Snell
Michael Wade
Concert Orchestra

Violin I
Isaac Allen
Esther Roestan
Camille Poon
Hannah Price
Junshi Yang
Soo yeon Wang
Henry Allison
Yung Yu Lin
Ella Loman
Julia Son
Joshelle Conley
Andy Peng
Lara Madden

Violin II
Yu Hong Sun
Yiu Ting Chik
Michael Romans
Marissa Weston
Abigail Peterson
Ye Rin Hong
Rose Brown
Nathan Bomans
Miranda Bernard
Arman Nasrinpay
Magdalena Yoder

Viola
Kurt Tseng
Evan Robinson
Caleb Wong
Mark Hatlestad
Elias Latto
Erik Thorstensen
Evan Uebelacker
Jiwon Lee
Mohammad Abu Ramadan
Marta Perrine
Heri Shin

Cello
Brady Anderson
Graham Cullen

Cello (cont.)
Elizabeth Lee
Krystian Chiu
Chris Cho
Sarah Han
Benjamin Koch
Kara Cheng
Alexander Wagner
Luke Acerra
Eliza Bracken
Yun Ju Lee
Wei Ting Chang
Guillaume Machiels

Bass
Brian McAnally
Dylan Stroud
Sharif Ibrahim
Emily Krajewski
Emory Daniel
Benjamin Vennard
Mallory Vennard

Flute
Karen Baumgartner
June Kim
Karena Crutchfield, Piccolo

Oboe
Shane Werts
Stella Sharpe
Rebecca McGuire, English Horn

Clarinet
Amy Humberd
Laura Chalmers
Collin Lewis, E-Flat
Randall Chapman, Bass

Bassoon
Saehee Kim
Leo Mohlke
Jarin Thiem, Contra

Horn
Kurtis Henderson
Steven Munson
Lacey Waggener
Collin Findlay
Olivia Martinez

Trumpet
Jens Jacobsen
Melanie Gold
Malcolm Shier

Trombone
Lucas O’Fee
Ethan Zawisza
Justin Chiang, Bass

Tuba
Serghei Bolun

Timpani
David Miller

Percussion
Keegan Sheehy
Emilie Mitchell
Victoria Nelson
Michael Metz

Harp
Emmanuel Padilla Holguín
Melanie Mashner

Orchestra Manager
Mark Hatlestad

Orchestra Set-Up
Mark Hatlestad
Sharif Ibrahim
Mohammad Abu Ramadan
Esther Roestan

Librarian
Sara Fruehe