

English Folk Song Influences on the Vaughan Williams Concerto for Oboe and Strings

by

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ABSTRACT

The Concerto for Oboe and String by Ralph Vaughan Williams is often described as a pastoral work without any consideration for what makes that an accurate description. This paper outlines the connections to English folk song that create what are considered the pastoral qualities in the work.

Vaughan Williams' relationship with English folk song, as collector and arranger, is well-documented, as is his advocacy for their use in compositions. By the time he wrote the Oboe Concerto at the end of his career, folk song elements had completely infused his compositional style. The Oboe Concerto shares many stylistic traits with English folk song. These stylistic elements: mode, melodic structure, form, and rhythm and meter are first analyzed in terms of English folk song, then how these features are utilized in the Oboe Concerto. Another connection to English folk song is in the manner of accompanying the Concerto. Vaughan Williams had firm opinions on how to accompany folk songs and wrote many sample accompaniments, which bear a marked resemblance to the accompaniment for the Oboe Concerto. The same is true for the accompaniment he wrote for a specifically folk song-inspired work, the Six Studies in English Folk Song for Violoncello and Pianoforte. Specific examples from both works are compared to the Concerto accompaniment. Finally, several motives and melodic figures found in folk songs included in the *Penguin Book of English Folk Songs*, which was edited by Vaughan Williams, are also found in the Oboe Concerto.

An understanding of the use of English folk song elements and specific quotes in the Oboe Concerto, as well as the folk song-style treatment in accompaniment provide

concrete evidence of the pastoral quality prevalent in many works of Vaughan Williams. Not only can this support a well-informed and more rewarding performance of the Oboe Concerto, but the same analysis can be applied to many of his other works as well, in addition to the works of a generation of English composers whose style he influenced.

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Introduction

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) was an English composer who was on a mission to form a national style of music that would distinguish England musically for the first time since Purcell. Beginning in the early 1900s, he joined Cecil Sharp and others in the folk song movement and within ten years collected over 800 folk songs. This music of the common folk was where he found inspiration and what he believed should be the basis for his nation's music. As the first significant English composer not only to arrange and orchestrate folk song, but also to assimilate folk song elements into his compositional style, he rapidly changed the sound of a nation.

Vaughan Williams' Concerto for Oboe and Strings was written much later in his career, in 1944, by which time folk song elements had been fully integrated into his compositional style. Not all works have an overtly folksy character, but the Oboe Concerto, with its pastoral movement titles and predominant modal writing, stands out as an excellent example of an amalgamation of English folk song and twentieth-century stylistic traits. Though some work has been done in studying English folk song influences on composers, including Percy Grainger, Gustav Holst, and Ralph Vaughan Williams, these studies have been limited to study of folk song arrangements in particular. No research has yet been done into particular use of folk song elements in the Oboe Concerto.¹

Vaughan Williams has identified several distinguishing traits in English folk song, as has his contemporary, Cecil Sharp. The major elements found in both the

¹Proquest Dissertations and Theses and International Index to Music Periodicals, JSTOR, and RILM databases were consulted, as well as the ASU library catalogue.

Concerto and English folk song are use of modal scales, with accompanying harmonizations, melodic structure, rhythm and meter, and form. This dissertation will elucidate these similarities by using specific folk songs as examples and comparing these to passages in the Concerto.

Vaughan Williams believed that folk songs were best sung a cappella, as originally done, but should an accompaniment be desired, he gave several suggestions as to the best method of accompanying songs without chord progressions. He also wrote accompaniments for several published collections of folk songs, in addition to the obvious cases of his folk song orchestrations. One of these works, the *Six Studies in English Folk Song for Cello*, will be used, in conjunction with a selection of Vaughan Williams' sample piano folk song accompaniments, to demonstrate similarities in the accompaniment of the *Oboe Concerto*. In addition to the previously stated folk song analysis, this paper will culminate with the identification of motives and melodic figures from specific folk songs used in the Concerto.

Chapter 1

Setting the Scene

The Oboe Concerto

Ralph Vaughan Williams began writing his Concerto for Oboe and Strings in 1943, and the work was completed in 1944.² At this time, Vaughan Williams was staying in his childhood home, Leith Hill Place, in Surrey. He was harboring visitors wanting to escape the London bombings and preparing the home to be given to the National Trust. Beyond activities related to these and composing, he spent most of his time gardening, which may have helped to set the tone for the Concerto.³ The Oboe Concerto was inspired by the famous English oboist Léon Goossens, who was responsible for the vast majority of Twentieth Century English music for the oboe through commission or inspiration; the work was also dedicated to him.⁴

Vaughan Williams heard that Goossens was planning to perform the Concerto in the same year that it was completed, and wrote him on 23 May 1944, saying, “I hear from the BBC that they have asked you to play my new concerto at the Proms. I need hardly say I am much pleased at the prospect, if you are also pleased – you had better see it before you make up your mind!”⁵ In the same letter, he invited any suggestions for

²Paul Holmes, *Vaughan Williams: His Life and Times* (London: Omnibus Press, 1997), 100-101.

³Ursula Vaughan Williams, *R.V.W.: A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), 259.

⁴Michael Kennedy, *A Catalogue of the Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams* (London: Oxford University Press, 1982), 186.

⁵Carole Rosen, *The Goossens: A Musical Century* (London: André Deutsch, 1993), 254-55.

making the part more “oboistic.” The Proms referred to the Henry Wood Promenade Concerts, which unfortunately had to be closed early for the year because of the threat of buzz bombs, delaying the premiere of the work.⁶

Goossens still gave the first performance, at the Liverpool Philharmonic Hall on 30 September 1944 with the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Dr. Malcolm Sargent. The first performance in London was the next year, at Wigmore Hall on 4 May 1945, still with Goossens on oboe and accompanied by the Bromley and Chislehurst Orchestra string section, conducted by Marjorie Whyte.⁷ Speaking of the preparation for the London performance, Goossens wrote, “The rehearsal presents a vivid picture in my mind of Vaughan Williams sitting on the platform as solid as a statue, holding an old-fashioned ear trumpet, for all the world like a reincarnation of Beethoven.”⁸ Goossens continued to perform the Concerto throughout his life, including a performance at the age of 75 in 1972 for a concert in honor of Vaughan Williams’ centenary.⁹

Related Works

The work most closely related to the Oboe Concerto in terms of date of composition was the Fifth Symphony, as Vaughan Williams was writing both pieces at the same time. The Concerto is sometimes termed a “satellite” composition of the

⁶Rosen, 254-55.

⁷Kennedy, *Catalogue*, 186.

⁸Rosen, 245.

⁹*Ibid.*, 394.

Symphony because the original Scherzo movement from the Symphony was turned into the Scherzo third movement of the Concerto. Vaughan Williams then wrote a new Scherzo for the Symphony.¹⁰ The fact that a movement from one work could transfer easily into the other indicates that the two are closely related in style.

The Fifth Symphony uses three themes and some subsidiary material from a then-unfinished morality opera called the *Pilgrim's Progress*.¹¹ Therefore it is likely that the Concerto also bears a connection to that work. However, thinking that the Concerto's connection to these works precludes a heavy folk song influence would be erroneous. Vaughan Williams started thinking about the *Pilgrim's Progress* in 1906, while he was actively collecting folk songs, and a large portion of the work was written during the time of his biggest folk song emphasis, in the 1920s and 30s.¹² Considering the religious themes in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, it is not surprising that the Fifth Symphony is also a religious-tinged work, containing quotes from hymns and other sacred material throughout. The peace and calm in the work pleased audiences after Vaughan Williams' very modern Fourth Symphony, and some thought it was his prediction for the end of World War II.¹³

¹⁰Michael Kennedy, *The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams* (London: Oxford Press, 1964), 285.

¹¹Hugh Ottaway and Alain Frogley, "Vaughan Williams, Ralph," in *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/42507> (accessed 2 October 2013).

¹²Kennedy, *Works*, 75.

¹³Elliot Schwartz, *The Symphonies of Ralph Vaughan Williams* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1964), 18-19, 89.

Works Based on English Folk Songs

Vaughan Williams had been composing works specifically based on folk song for decades before he wrote the Oboe Concerto in his seventies. He wrote his famous *English Folk Songs Suite for Military Band* in 1923, but an orchestral full score was published for the first time in 1942, shortly before he began composing his Oboe Concerto. *Six English Folk Songs* for voice and pianoforte was published in 1935 and he wrote piano accompaniments for several volumes of folk songs around the same time.¹⁴ He continued to use specific folk songs as basis for his compositions until his death as well. One of his last works, the *Ten Blake Songs* for tenor voice and oboe, written at Christmastime of 1957, was also based on folk song. The first movement, “Infant Joy,” quotes “The Road to London” in particular.¹⁵ This work connects the oboe to folk song, albeit well after the Concerto’s publication.

Vaughan Williams was also no stranger to the use of folk tunes in composing Concertos. This is seen by his unpublished Cello Concerto, *Fantasia on Sussex Folk Tunes for Cello and Orchestra*, completed in 1929. Five specific folk tunes were used, and this melodic material is extended into newly composed tunes in the rhapsodic work, which was premiered by Pablo Casals in 1930. Though performed several times, Vaughan Williams ultimately retracted the work from publication because he was displeased with his writing for the cello.¹⁶ Clearly, even far after his folk song collection period was over, Vaughan Williams was still deeply influenced by English folk song.

¹⁴Kennedy, *Catalogue*, 103.

¹⁵Kennedy, *Works*, 367.

¹⁶Kennedy, *Catalogue*, 136.

Their tunes and other common characteristics found their way into his compositional style.

The “Pastoral” Oboe Concerto

Books about the music of Vaughan Williams and biographies of the composer always give at least some small reference to the Oboe Concerto. They generally describe it as pastoral, and also often charming, without supporting that assertion with any specifics. That is not to say there were not a few detractors. Dickinson wrote in his biography that “not even Mozart could easily convert me to the idea of a Concerto for so uncompromising a solo-element as one oboe,” though he still admitted masterful writing for the instrument, even when comparing it disparagingly to the Strauss Concerto (1945).¹⁷ However, the published reviews of the Oboe Concerto were favorable on the whole.

When describing the Concerto in his biography, James Day called it “predominantly genial” and “cast in a kind of *mezza-voce* murmur.” He also gave a poetic description of the style of each of the movements and noted that “the orchestra is kept firmly on the leash: for the most part it tends to nod sagely in agreement every time the soloist says anything particularly wise.”¹⁸ The description in Frank Howes’ *The Music of Ralph Vaughan Williams* goes slightly further, with some detailed analysis of the movements. However, he still concludes with the observation, “Here is once more the English landscape with the thoughts and visions which it always elicits from the

¹⁷A.E.F. Dickinson, *Vaughan Williams* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), 422.

¹⁸James Day, *Vaughan Williams* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 232.

composer. The pastoral pipe has done its work.”¹⁹ The pastoral pipe is in reference to his assertion that the oboe can only play three roles: the pastoral, the chattering, and the etching. Léon Goossens made a similar reference to the pastoral with, “This work showed the oboe in all its guises, from piping shepherd to brilliant virtuoso.”²⁰ Michael Kennedy, in his book, *The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, described the first movement of the Concerto as pastoral in mood, surely in reference to its title, “Rondo Pastorale,” but also wrote earlier in the book that “English music to some means an oboe with muted strings as a background.”²¹ All of these references seem to agree that the oboe is a good choice for a pastoral work, and that the Concerto does indeed invoke the English countryside. What is missing thus far from any scholarship, and what this study seeks to demonstrate is that the Concerto’s mood is developed from its connection in melodic writing and many other stylistic elements to English folk song.

Vaughan William’s Relationship with English Folk Song

Vaughan Williams’ relationship to English folk song began when he was just a child and continued through his whole life, though he did not always have the same feelings about the genre. He recalled that his first encounter with English folk song was when he was ten, in the form of Stainer and Bramley’s *Christmas Carols New and Old*, which he considered a poor collection, but still a means of introducing the public to some

¹⁹Frank Howes, *The Music of Ralph Vaughan Williams* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1975), 117.

²⁰Rosen, 245.

²¹Kennedy, *Works*, 5, 347.

beautiful traditional melodies.²² His next serious encounter with English folk song was while he was still a doctoral student, when the “folk song movement,” led by Cecil Sharp, reached the schools. He said that he and his fellow students felt that there was “something to be expressed by us Englishmen, that we had not got to the bottom of it...then Cecil Sharp brought to the notice of his countrymen the extraordinary wealth of beautiful English folk songs, of which we had previously hardly had an inkling.”²³ Before Sharp began to promote and publish folk songs, Vaughan Williams wrote that the English had it “on the best authority that all folk music was either bad or Irish.”²⁴ But when he first heard the songs, instead of their sounding new, he felt as though he had known them all his life.²⁵ He later wrote that “folk songs aren’t merely quaint and old, but something which is beautiful and as vital now as it ever was.”²⁶ By the end of his career, his belief was that “the existence of folk song...is the keystone without which our whole structure of music would fall to the ground.”²⁷

Cecil Sharp may be given most of the credit for bringing the English folk song movement to life, even though the date generally used as the beginning of the folk song revival is 1843. In that year, the Reverend John Broadwood published his collection of

²²David Manning, ed., *Vaughan Williams on Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 251.

²³Ralph Vaughan Williams, *National Music* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), 82.

²⁴Cecil J. Sharp, *English Folk Song: Some Conclusions* (Belmont: Wadsworth Pub. Co. 1965), vii.

²⁵Manning, 252.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 188.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 190.

*Old English Songs as Now Sung by the Peasantry of the Weald of Surrey and Sussex.*²⁸

Rev. Broadwood played the songs that he had collected for his organist, who tried to “clean” them by making them fit into traditional major or minor keys. Broadwood would have none of it, however, declaring, “I *will* have it as my singer sang it.”²⁹ This tendency to correct folk songs displeased early collectors, including Vaughan Williams, who continuously fought against it. The first published collections still changed or removed irregular rhythms, modal cadences (without leading tones), the absence of modulations, and unexpected intervals.³⁰ Despite the best efforts of collectors, however, one trained musician of the time thought it was nonsense to think that an untrained singer could sing in the Dorian mode, when most trained singers didn’t even know what the Dorian mode was.³¹ Though the Reverend Broadwood began the movement, his niece, Lucy Broadwood, had a much more active role as a collector after his death and was one of the founders of the Folk Song Society in 1898. The society still exists today, as the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS), provides an excellent resource for the study of folk song in their library and extensive online catalogue, featuring many of the approximately 7,000 folk songs estimated to have been collected by the Society members over the years.³²

²⁸Kennedy, *Works*, 23-24.

²⁹Day, 25.

³⁰Kennedy, *Works*, 27.

³¹*Ibid.*, 25.

³²English Folk Dance and Song Society, “Home Page,” <http://www.efdss.org/> (accessed 23 September 2013).

In the late 1890s, Vaughan Williams was studying with Max Bruch in Germany and wrote in 1988, in a letter to his cousin, Ralph Wedgewood, saying that he believed in folk tune theory, but not the current method of “sandwiching an occasional national tune” between modern-sounding material. This was something of which he accused Dvořák, in the same letter, which Day believed was in reference to the *New World Symphony*.

Vaughan Williams also said that he was obsessed with the folk song by this time, and “went beserk on the flat seventh and the sharp sixth and the Mixolydian cadence,” which worried his teacher. On at least one occasion, he quoted a Welsh folk tune in one of his assignments before turning it into something original.³³ When he saw Lucy Broadwood’s collection in 1900, he saw the flat seventh in her folk songs in all its glory, but he felt he needed firsthand evidence of folk songs.³⁴ In the same vein, though he was on a mission to find an English national music, he did not believe that one could make music national by just inserting a few folk tunes, and indeed, felt that many composers’ music reflected their countries without having any knowledge of folk tunes.³⁵ Instead, “to get the spirit of his national tunes into his work must be good for a composer if it comes natural to him, in which case it doesn’t matter if what he writes occasionally corresponds with some real ‘folk tune.’”³⁶ Vaughan Williams prided himself on his ability to make a folk song his, and spent the rest of his career urging composers to avoid the first practice he mentioned.

³³Day, 21-22.

³⁴Manning, 252-53.

³⁵R. Vaughan Williams, *National Music*, 74-75.

³⁶Day, 22.

In 1902, Vaughan Williams felt that he had still not come into his own as a composer, and while he loved the few folk songs that he knew, he wrote that he only believed in them vaguely and his faith was not yet active.³⁷ He even questioned how folk song could become the basis for an English school of music when none of the composers came from the peasant class and could authentically claim the music as their own.³⁸ However, he had studied enough existing folk song writings to give a series of lectures on the subject. The series was popular enough to be repeated twice. After giving the lecture at Ingrave, near Brentwood, in Essex, he was invited to tea the next day at the vicarage, where he was introduced to an elderly laborer, Charles Pottipher, who said he would sing Vaughan Williams some of the old songs if he returned the next day. On 4 December 1903, Vaughan Williams took down his first folk song, “Bushes and Briars,” and it was then that his mind was finally put at rest on the subject of folk songs.³⁹ Later, when discussing authenticity of folk songs collected at this point, he said, “If ‘Bushes and Briars’ is a corruption, what must the original have been like?”⁴⁰

Cecil Sharp collected his first folk song in 1903, just three months before Vaughan Williams did his first collections, though the latter was inspired by the former. Sharp was first introduced to folk song in 1899, and did much work to advance its cause before becoming a collector himself. This included giving the Folk Song Society a rebuke

³⁷Manning, 188.

³⁸Alain Frogley, “Constructing Englishness in Music: National Character and the Reception of Ralph Vaughan Williams,” in *Vaughan Williams Studies*, ed. Alain Frogley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 11.

³⁹Day, 23.

⁴⁰Kennedy, *Works*, 27.

for their rather anemic collection results up to that point. Sharp's estimation was that the last generation of folk singers was born around 1840, so it was crucial to collect the songs quickly because the songs in their pure forms would soon die out. He thought the songs of people younger than about sixty were all modern, or showed significant signs of adulteration. Why this break with tradition occurred, he was not sure, whether from industrialization or a change in the outlook and customs of the peasant class, but he was certain it had happened.⁴¹ While he may not have been accurate in his assessment that folk songs ceased to evolve at this point, the pertinent fact is that both he and Vaughan Williams believed that they did.

Folk song singers felt that their songs were intimate possessions which might be ridiculed by outside, educated people, and so their songs were not always readily shared.⁴² Still, Vaughan Williams and other collectors scoured the countryside aided by both phonograph and pencil and paper, seeking to preserve as many songs as possible. Henry Burstow, who sang 420 songs to Lucy Broadwood and Vaughan Williams combined, said that he sang, "such songs as he asked for, all of which he recorded by his phonograph. This was the first time I had seen or heard one of these marvelous machines, and I was amazed beyond expression to hear my own songs thus repeated in my own voice."⁴³ Vaughan Williams remembered a collection experience with Mrs. E. M. Leather of the Herefordshire gipsies by saying, "We stood by the light of a blazing fire...the first

⁴¹Sharp, 150-1.

⁴²Kennedy, *Works*, 26.

⁴³Kennedy, *Catalogue*, 261.

had been specifically lighted to enable us to note down tunes and words in the growing darkness.”⁴⁴

Michael Kennedy wrote that the achievements of folk songs collectors at the turn of the century were a miracle, which had perhaps never received its due acknowledgement from their fellow-countrymen.⁴⁵ Vaughan Williams collected folk songs between 1903 and 1913, and one song each in the years 1922 and 1955.⁴⁶ In total, he gathered 810 songs, trying to avoid Celtic songs for the most part, and completely eschewing the “songs of England,” or those that originated in Elizabethan or Stuart time because those were the songs of the town instead of the country.⁴⁷ While he might have not been entirely successful in his goal to keep away from Celtic music, the important thing is that he believed he did.⁴⁸ His chief collecting years were from 1905 to 1907, and it was during this time period that the mature compositional sound of Vaughan Williams emerged.⁴⁹

“Vaughan Williams is universally acknowledged as a seminal figure in the development of British music and in the history of musical nationalism,” wrote Alain Frogley in his essay on Nationalism in the works of Vaughan Williams.⁵⁰ Beyond the

⁴⁴Kennedy, *Catalogue*, 262.

⁴⁵Kennedy, *Works*, 26.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 262-294.

⁴⁷Kennedy, *Works*, 31.

⁴⁸Frogley, 11.

⁴⁹Kennedy, *Works*, 87.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, xi.

reasons already mentioned, his reputation is founded on his educational and administrative activity, and the influence of English literary and musical sources on his music. Just hearing the name Vaughan Williams, for a musician, brings to mind images of the pastoral and folk song, and his music is deemed to represent essential features of English national character, landscape, and language. And in the same way, aspects of his musical character have helped to mold the perception of what it means to be English.⁵¹

Vaughan Williams believed that beyond training, there was an aspect of music that was inborn in man, and it was from this natural source that folk song came. He said that some people are skeptical that truly beautiful music can come from people who have never seen a piano or taken a theory lesson, but really, our concept of music all comes from what is innate in humankind. He gave an example that the modes that theorists created are really just natural singing patterns, and that instead of being surprised that folk songs are beautiful, we should wonder why they would not be beautiful.⁵² In the same set of essays, he said that “there is in folk songs, the spiritual life-blood of a people because they are cumulative and not from one great poet or artist.”⁵³

When speaking about the use of folk songs in composition, Vaughan Williams said that “sometimes a theme worked for a purpose, and it is not being ‘un-original’ to use it.”⁵⁴ For him in his compositions, these themes could be used in one of two ways –

⁵¹Kennedy, *Works*, 1, 5-6.

⁵²R. Vaughan Williams, *National Music*, 28-30.

⁵³R. Vaughan Williams, *National Music*, 42.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 49.

the pervasive, or the specific.⁵⁵ The specific use is easy to identify as essentially folk song arrangements, and can be seen in the work of other composers from the time, such as Grainger, and even Britten. The pervasive is much more subtle and can be used to describe many works of Vaughan Williams, including the Oboe Concerto, where folk song elements infuse his compositional style in the work. The use of folk themes as the basis for original compositions is the most unique way that Vaughan Williams contributed to the folk song movement and how he most affected the English music of his generation.⁵⁶

Vaughan Williams' attitude toward the use of folk songs in 20th Century compositions might best be summed up in two words: integration and love. Vaughan Williams said that those were the two key words and that "the composer must love the tunes of his own country and they must become an integral part of himself."⁵⁷ In his effort to find his English roots, he turned to the madrigal and Purcell, but most of all to folk song, which was the most decisive influence on the formation of his style.⁵⁸ He said that "in studying the musical development of our own country we must start with its simplest and most undoubtedly genuine manifestation – our own folk songs."⁵⁹ He felt that because they were beautiful and existed, they could be a good groundwork for

⁵⁵Howes, *Music*, 227.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷R. Vaughan Williams, *National Music*, 48.

⁵⁸Frank Howes, "The Influence of Folk Music on Modern English Composition," *Journal of the International Folk Music Council* 5 (1953): 53, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/836153> (accessed 3 October, 2013).

⁵⁹Manning, 45.

composition. Further, he wrote, “If an art is to live it must spring directly from the life and character of the people where it had its origin.”⁶⁰

When Vaughan Williams was born, there was a thriving musical culture in England, but English music was drifting, without a leader of a sense of purpose.⁶¹ During the Victorian Era, there were some English composers who were highly valued at the time, but no one who could stand the test of time or compete in his own time with the likes of Berlioz, Verdi, or Wagner. What is called the English musical renaissance actually began in the 1860s with composers like Arthur Sullivan, who founded what would become the Royal College of Music. Hubert Parry, who Vaughan Williams admired as sounding “peculiarly English,” also contributed to the movement, but there was still a long way to go before Vaughan Williams came on the scene.⁶² On the discussion of creating a National Music, Vaughan Williams wrote,

A musician who wishes to say anything worth saying must first of all express himself – in fact, his music must be the natural utterance of his own natural emotions... In former times, musical England came to grief by trying to be foreign; no less surely shall we now fail through trying to be English. It is useless to invent a style and then model individual utterances on it. The national English style must be modeled on the personal style of English musicians. Until our composers will be content to write the music that they like best, without an ulterior thought, not till then shall we have a true School of English Music.⁶³

⁶⁰Manning, 43.

⁶¹Kennedy, *Works*, 1.

⁶²*Ibid.*, 1-2, 5.

⁶³*Ibid.*, 30.

Because of his treatment of folk song material and the way he incorporated their elements into his style, by the end of World War I, Vaughan Williams had one of the “most distinctive musical personalities of the century.”⁶⁴

Summarizing his thoughts on why folk songs were important Vaughan Williams gave four points: folk songs contained the nucleus of all further development in music, they invariably affected the style of great composers, national music was a sure index to national temperament, and folk song was supremely beautiful.⁶⁵ His use of folk songs and the resulting, characteristically “English” sound that resulted inspired a generation of composers to follow in his footsteps. Though not all of his works contain folk song quotations, or in some cases even influences, folk song qualities infused his compositional style on the whole and rapidly changed the entire sound of a nation. Vaughan Williams succeeded in his quest to bring back an English music that could stand up against the rest of the world.

⁶⁴Ottaway and Frogley.

⁶⁵Kennedy, *Works*, 34.

Chapter 2

Characteristics of English Folk Song and Their Parallels in the Oboe Concerto

Definition of English Folk Song

There have been several attempts to define English folk song, and an understanding of the definition is important in differentiating folk songs from other tunes and for a complete study of the genre. In Donald Attwater's article, "English Folk-song," two contemporary definitions from 1928 were given. The first and prevailing definition of the time, "old English song," is accurate but incomplete. The second, given by Cecil Sharp, "the song created by the common people," gets closer.⁶⁶ In Sharp's own book on English folk song, he gave a definition of the spontaneous utterance by the unlettered classes, or common people (meaning uneducated), whose music was purely natural and instinctive.⁶⁷ Sharp further thought that a contemporary definition from Funk and Wagnall's *Standard Dictionary* was a precise and excellent one, "A song or ballad originating and current among the common people, and illustrating the common life with its interests and enthusiasms as derived from legend or story."⁶⁸

Vaughan Williams also gave a comprehensive, if poetic, definition, "This, then, is the folk song – a spontaneous, unself-conscious, unwritten musical utterance, limited in scope, it is true, but, within its limits, often of supreme beauty, and containing in embryo

⁶⁶Donald Attwater, "English Folk-song," *Music and Letters* 9, no. 2 (April 1928), 129, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/726706> (accessed 29 September 2013).

⁶⁷Sharp, 1-2, 4.

⁶⁸Ibid., 3.

all those principles which are at the basis of the fully developed art of music.”⁶⁹ Further, he said that folk song is “a series of individual variations on a common theme.”⁷⁰ This referred to the principle of handing folk songs down through the generations, where different singers made changes. Thus, in a relatively short period of time, there were widely different versions of the same songs. Hence, what today appear as separate songs but share common phrases or characteristics probably once came from the same parent tune.⁷¹ His statement might also reference the fact that no two singers sing the same song in exactly the same way. There are always slight word or melodic changes; sometimes even the mode or the given title is different from one performer to another, but when compared, the multiple collectors found it to be the same song.⁷²

The term, “folk song” itself was invented by German scientists to describe the songs of the unlettered classes, and was imported when the English felt the need to distinguish the genre from popular song.⁷³ Folk songs originally developed from *cante fables*, which were prose stories interspersed with verses that were sung or chanted by the reciter. Folk songs are never found written down or in sheet music, as they were passed down by oral tradition, which is why collecting them was such an arduous and time-intensive task. Some English musicians believed that the folk song was the remnant of a

⁶⁹Manning, 193.

⁷⁰Kennedy, *Works*, 27.

⁷¹Manning, 195.

⁷²John Cody Birdwell, “The Utilization of Folk Song Elements in Selected Works by Ralph Vaughan Williams with Subsequent Treatment Exemplified in the Wind Band Music of David Stanhope,” (PhD diss., University of North Texas, 1996), 8, <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/docview/54754624/140D0B94B2F4B43057A/1?accountid=4485> (accessed 29 September 2013).

⁷³Sharp, 2.

composition of some skilled musician who travelled to a town and remained popular there after the actual origin had been forgotten. This was because they did not believe that folk song could be the unaided product of an untrained musician. However, this could not be the case because folk song does not match any published songs from the time and is indeed constructed in a completely different way than popular song.⁷⁴

Sharp questioned whether folk songs were first created by an individual or a community. He concluded that both were essential. One person had to start the song and it was then changed slightly by others. As the song lived on, the authorship changed to the community.⁷⁵ Vaughan Williams shared this view, saying, “There is in folk songs, the spiritual life-blood of a people because they are cumulative and not from one great poet or artist.”⁷⁶ To critics who said that only the true original song should count as the authentic folk song, Sharp compared it to trying to call Beethoven’s first sketches his original symphonies. In both instances, the revisions and modifications over the years produced a complete and more beautiful result.⁷⁷ By the time folk songs were collected in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, they had ceased to evolve. This was probably because the tradition was beginning to die out and folk singers were more interested in preserving the traditional tunes than putting their own stamp on them. Vaughan Williams believed that instead of collectors or publishers trying to alter or improve folk songs, they

⁷⁴Sharp, 9.

⁷⁵Ibid., 2, 7-13.

⁷⁶R. Vaughan Williams, *National Music*, 42-43.

⁷⁷Sharp, 17.

should be kept as they were. Further evolution was only possible at the hands of composers, using folk song tunes as the basis for their compositions.⁷⁸

When giving his thoughts on the origin of music, Vaughan Williams wrote that song was speech charged with emotion. He once saw a preacher, who as he began speaking, started to use tones, specifically the notes A, G, and B, with the occasional drops down to E. These are the foundational tones for many folk songs. As people performed stories over time, it stands to reason that they would eventually become song in this manner. The fact that the folk song singer cannot dissociate the words and the music lends more credence to this belief. Conversely, Vaughan Williams believed that primitive singing was supposed to come before speech (so the two are intrinsically related) and that song was the beginning of music, which could also explain why he felt so strongly about folk song as the basis for England's national music.⁷⁹

After taking all of these definitions and origin stories into account, one finds several elements found consistently in English folk song that can be said to define the genre. It is important to note here that whereas the distinction between English vs. British is not crucial when defining many things, when describing folk songs it is necessary, since the English viewed their folk songs as distinct and separate from those of their other brethren in the United Kingdom.⁸⁰ Since folk music is an applied art, as music for music's sake did not develop in the unlettered, rural setting, the basic task of a folk song

⁷⁸Manning, 198.

⁷⁹R. Vaughan Williams, *National Music*, 30-31.

⁸⁰Frogley, 6.

is to tell a story. However exactly folk songs came to be, music has been used throughout history in all parts of the world to aid in memory for the tradition of oral storytelling.

All folk songs are strophic, with a simple tune, usually in four stanzas, repeated for any number of verses.⁸¹ With the repetition of the melody for all the verses, some small melodic changes are expected in each verse, due to the variations in text.⁸² Texts usually come from traditional folk poetry or are versified forms of popular tales, such as Robin Hood, and text setting is generally syllabic, with a few small melismas.⁸³ English folk songs are purely oral and never written down, and also only melodic. There are never any accompanying instruments in English folk song, except when some songs corresponded to dances.⁸⁴ Folk songs are also anonymous, only because they have been passed down for so long no one knows the original author.⁸⁵ To sum up the topic, Vaughan Williams said, “The essence of a good folk-tune is that it does not show its full quality till it has been repeated several times and many people nowadays do not give them the full chance.”⁸⁶

Use of Mode in English Folk Song

Western harmonic or theoretical practices generally have no place in folk song, and neither do their solely major or minor tonalities. All folk songs are modal, and the

⁸¹R. Vaughan Williams, *National Music*, 40.

⁸²Birdwell, 8.

⁸³Ibid., 15-16.

⁸⁴R. Vaughan Williams, *National Music*, 42-43.

⁸⁵Attwater, 129.

⁸⁶R. Vaughan Williams, *National Music*, 43.

most frequently used modes are Dorian, Mixolydian, and Ionian. Ionian mode is the most popular of these, comprising about two thirds of collected folk songs. In fact, the popularity was so great that Ionian modes were prohibited in church music, being deemed the mode of the common man.⁸⁷ Some modes are more popular in particular areas than in others, however. Vaughan Williams wrote in a preface to a folk song collection that Mixolydian and Dorian modes are more characteristic of agricultural districts, while Aeolian tunes came more from towns and tunes about fishing and cobbling. However, he also admitted that his summation was only based on partial evidence.⁸⁸ Folk songs are also sometimes in Aeolian, with rare occurrences of Phrygian or Lydian modes.⁸⁹

The Ionian mode may correspond to the major scale in terms of diatonic intervals, but with regard to melodic treatment, it is quite different, with no concern for resolutions of certain pitches or particular cadential phrase endings.⁹⁰ In the same way, Aeolian is distinct from the minor mode, as you will never see added leading tones in English folk song. Nor are there any form of harmonic or melodic minor variations, which is one noticeable difference between English folk song and other European folk songs. Where these major or minor keys do occasionally occur in published collections, they are

⁸⁷Sharp, 69.

⁸⁸Manning, 181.

⁸⁹William Kimmel, "Vaughan Williams's Melodic Style," *The Musical Quarterly*, 27, No. 4 (October 1941): 493, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/739496> (accessed 6 October 2013).

⁹⁰R. Vaughan Williams, *National Music*, 44.

believed to be modernized by one Vaughan Williams would consider an unscrupulous collector.⁹¹

The white keys on a keyboard create a diatonic scale. Cecil Sharp said that when this group of notes continually referred to one fundamental note, that note became tonic and a mode was born. In order for this to be the case, the tonic must be highlighted and referenced throughout the tune.⁹² All modes are diatonic, and the distinctive character of each comes from the sequence of the intervals, just as in conventional Major and Minor scales. However, instead of viewing the scales as a series of whole and half steps in a linear progression, Sharp viewed each interval in terms of its relationship to tonic.⁹³ He believed that instead of viewing modes as archaic, they could offer a new channel of expression freed from the current restrictions of accepted tonality.⁹⁴ To determine the mode of a folk song, Sharp instructed to use the last note of the song as the root and then look at the second, third, sixth, and seventh notes of the scale specifically.⁹⁵ These directions are occasionally misguided, as there are a few instances where the final note of the tune is not the tonic. These situations will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

Folk songs do not modulate except for very rare circumstances, so it is fair to generalize and say that they almost never modulate. However, they sometimes change

⁹¹Sharp, 68.

⁹²Ibid., 48, 71.

⁹³Ibid., 59.

⁹⁴Ibid., 49, 60.

⁹⁵Ibid., 70.

mode in the middle of a tune, without changing tonic, which is distinct from the large amount of songs that start with modal ambiguity but are later clarified. Songs are also sometimes sung in different modes depending on the person singing the tune.⁹⁶ The choice of mode in a folk melody was perceived to have an effect on the color, shape, and general character of the song, similar to the affects of key choices in the Baroque era.⁹⁷ It is also important to note that folk songs sometimes contain accidentals for passing tones, but these do not determine or alter the mode. A common example of this is flattening the third in Mixolydian melodies.⁹⁸ Purely pentatonic folk song melodies are rare, but some tunes using seven notes are considered pentatonic by scholars, with the extra two notes used as passing or neighbor tones that do not change the scale.⁹⁹

The use of modes is common to church music as well as folk song. However, Vaughan Williams found it a shame that the system of modes was often referred to as ecclesiastical because it gave some people the impression that modal music, and hence folk songs, were derived from the music of the church. He believed that it was only necessary to look at such tunes as “The Cobbler” or “I’m Seventeen Come Sunday” to be convinced that folk tunes and church music had no more in common than use of the modal system. He went as far as to say, “The folk-song and the plain-song are both purely melodic. That is the sum of their similarity.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶Sharp, 72-73, 106.

⁹⁷Birdwell, 10.

⁹⁸Sharp, 86.

⁹⁹Kimmel, 493.

¹⁰⁰Manning, 193.

In his works, Vaughan Williams merged common practice tonality of the 20th Century with modal scales, creating seamless melodies. His use of modes may be partly attributed to his interest in early church music and plainsong, but his use of modalities is more connected to folk song elements than to chant, and the Gregorian style is seen mainly in works with text.¹⁰¹ The modes he most often used in his compositions were Dorian, Mixolydian, and Aeolian.¹⁰² He frequently switched modes within a work, so that it is rare to find examples of extended use of one specific mode.¹⁰³ The Oboe Concerto is an example of a piece which frequently switches modes. When he used what are identified as pentatonic melodies, these were usually Aeolian scales without the second and sixth, or Ionian scales without the fourth and seventh. His melodies sometimes also only have four or six notes, or five notes that don't fit the definition of a pentatonic scale and these all suggest a modal background as well.¹⁰⁴ The opening melody of the first movement of the Oboe Concerto is an example of the use of a six-note melody that still clearly belongs to the Dorian mode. As Vaughan Williams grew older, he increasingly experimented with atonality and twelve-tone scales, though evidence of this is not seen in the Oboe Concerto. He also began using "exotic" scales, such as the whole tone scales, but examples were rarely found.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Kimmel, 491-92.

¹⁰² Ottaway and Frogley.

¹⁰³ Kimmel, 494.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 494-95.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 497.

Use of Mode in the Oboe Concerto

Despite his unfavorable opinions of the Concerto as a whole, Vaughan Williams biographer Dickinson was the only one writing about the work to give reference to modes in his analysis. Though he still described the first two movements as starting in a minor key, he credited the Dorian mode for the thematic material, and even allowed the third movement to start in E Dorian, which is accurate.¹⁰⁶ The misconception that the work is in A Minor, as most of the printed literature and some lists of works suggest, is understandable, given that the predominance of Western tonal practices would lead to a cursory assessment of A harmonic Minor. However, with a clear understanding of modal scales, especially regarding their influence on Vaughan Williams' melodic writing, the first movement certainly begins in A Dorian. This is seen by the consistent use of F#, and when the G is introduced, seen earlier in the accompaniment than in the oboe part, it is also consistently natural. The movement cycles through many keys and undergoes a few mode changes as well, before coming back to A Dorian for the extended cadence that finishes off the movement.

The first movement is titled "Rondo Pastorale" and in keeping with the form suggested by the title, there are frequent returns to A Dorian interspersed in the other thematic sections. The first modulation is to a section in G Ionian at the key change after **A**,¹⁰⁷ which modulates to G Dorian four measures before the return to A Dorian at **B**. The next section beginning at **C** is in F# Aeolian, followed by a modulation to C Ionian. Instead of a return to A Dorian here, the next section at **D** begins in C Dorian, before

¹⁰⁶Dickinson, 421.

¹⁰⁷Letters in bold represent rehearsal letters in the Oboe Concerto.

eventually going back to A Dorian at **E**. The next section, at **F**, is in A Ionian, followed by a modulatory section with a C tonic, alternating between Lydian and Dorian modes, and finishing with C Dorian before the final return to A Dorian with the cadenza at **H**. It is once again important to mention that the words Aeolian and Ionian here cannot be interchanged with major and minor, as the treatment, both melodically and with the supporting harmony are modally based, with no chord progressions or modifications that would be found in conventional Western theory.

The second movement, entitled “Minuet and Musette,” also begins and ends in the same key, as the title suggests, which in this case is C Dorian. The first Minuet section modulates several times, but the final Minuet portion stays in C Dorian the whole time, similar to a recapitulation. After establishing the theme, the opening Minuet goes through some rapid key changes to E Aeolian, D Aeolian, and briefly back to C Dorian at **B**, before switching modes with the removal of the A[♯] accidentals to Aeolian, which sets up the Musette. The Musette begins with two oboe iterations of the theme in both the key of C and D Aeolian. The supporting harmony, however, is very fluid and doesn’t settle on any tonality or mode. The rest of the Musette is a development-like portion of constant modulations setting up the return of the Minuet material at **F**.

The use of a Scherzo as a final movement for the Concerto is an unusual choice, especially since Scherzos traditionally replaced the Minuet and Trio movement, which is the form of the second movement of the Concerto. The form of this Scherzo is a Scherzo section with two themes alternating with two slower Trios and a Coda immediately following the second Trio. The third movement completes the pattern of modes by also

beginning in E Dorian, again characterized by consistent use of C#s through **A**. Here the mode switches to Aeolian with the turn to C#s, but maintains the E tonic. There is a modulatory passage from **B** to **D**, with the key signature and beginning of the section suggesting F Ionian. The options for the key at **D** would normally be D Major or B Minor, however, in terms of the highlighted pitches of E and B, along with the lack of accidentals, the section has switched back to E Dorian. The key change after **E** goes to Bb Aeolian, followed by a shift after **F** to C Dorian, which modulates rapidly over the next seven measures to an arrival at E Ionian at the next key change, setting off a new thematic section. The key remains until the next printed key change after **K**, which goes to the neutral key signature of no sharps or flats, but an attempt to label the section in either C Major or A Minor would be misguided, for this section is constantly modulating and is the most chromatic part of the work, which lasts until **M**. **M** is in Bb Ionian, with remnants of the chromaticism from the previous section as it winds down to the first Trio at the Doppio più lento.

The first Trio begins in B Aeolian, but when the oboe enters at **O**, the key has shifted to C Aeolian. The accompaniment in B Aeolian is then repeated with oboe solo added on top in the same key, as is the C Aeolian section. **P** switches to G Aeolian with the accompaniment mirroring that of the start of the Trio, which modulates by **Q** to B Dorian and is the first return of a stable modal key since **K**. This changes to C Aeolian at **R**, which leads back to the return to the Scherzo portion with an orchestral interlude featuring the themes from **B** in the same key. The key change after **S** with the oboe

entrance is in A Aeolian, which switches at **T** to E \flat Dorian, though it retains the same key signature.

The next key change after **T** goes to G Ionian to lead into the second Trio at the Lento, and the entire Trio remains in G Ionian. The virtuosic oboe part in the Presto retains the G as tonic, but is not modal, instead playing with different versions of half- and whole-steps around tonic and dominant. The work ultimately ends in G Ionian. Speaking in terms of non-modal theory, G is the relative Major of E Minor, and E is the Dominant of A, which is a way of relating the tonality of the work. Still, in addition to the inaccuracy of using minor to describe the key of the work, I believe attributing one defining key to the Concerto is misleading, considering the key scheme of the work on the whole. The use of modal melodies, as well as the accompanying harmonies, and absence of a single key-defining chord progression in the work speak volumes on the impact of modes on Vaughan Williams' writing style.

Melodic Structure in English Folk Song

Vaughan Williams wrote that folks songs are limited both “lengthwise and breadthwise.”¹⁰⁸ They are limited lengthwise by the extent of the stanza or dance to which the melody can be applied, and breadthwise by the fact that they are purely melodic. He also remarked that needing to compress one's musical imagination into a tune of about sixteen bars and perhaps repeat that tune sixteen times created a tune of a different character.¹⁰⁹ One that he believed was stronger and more beautiful than others.

¹⁰⁸Manning, 192.

¹⁰⁹Ibid.

Folk songs often do not start on tonic or establish it for a few bars because there is never a pause between verses and all folk songs end on tonic. The few exceptions to the rule of ending on tonic are in the case of a “circular tune,” where the last line is only given on the last verse as an add-on (and in which case the last line does, in fact, end on tonic), an Aeolian air that ends on the third scale degree, implying an Ionian mode at the close, and an Ionian tune that has a false Mixolydian ending.¹¹⁰ In these latter two uncommon cases, the ear should be able to determine the proper mode even with the deceptive ending. The final tonic is usually approached by a descending line, but occasionally that line descends all the way to the seventh and then back up to the tonic.¹¹¹

In English folk song there are no chord progressions, so cadences are the points where the melody comes to rest, typically with a longer note, at the end of a phrase. The main cadence is the end of the tune and the cadences that precede it are called middle cadences or mid-cadences. The seventh scale degree is prominently featured in many modal melodies, and often phrases cadence on the seventh, but it is much more common for mid-cadences fall on the third or sixth.¹¹² Another characteristic involving the flattened seventh is a rise from tonic up to the seventh by way of the fifth.¹¹³ Because of the absence of a leading tone in all folk songs, there are an increased number of possible positions for intermediate cadences, and the melodic scope based on modal scales is thus

¹¹⁰Sharp, 74, 81.

¹¹¹Kimmel, 493.

¹¹²Sharp, 82-83.

¹¹³Ibid., 103.

enlarged by this freedom.¹¹⁴ A large number of folk songs are also remarkable for their large range, with large intervals, including frequent octave leaps, as well as leaps of sevenths and other intervals which may be considered uncomfortable by modern singers, and the “boldness and vigour of their melodic curves.”¹¹⁵

When there is a larger interval, it is usually first approached by a step in the same direction of the interval, from what Sharp considered the first note of the interval. In other words, intervals between fundamental tones are first approached by a passing tone, which is uncommon in art song.¹¹⁶ Skips from tonic to the fifth were often filled by four diatonic notes of equal value.¹¹⁷ Folk singers used some ornamentation in their melodies, including slides, mordents, trills, and appoggiaturas to add a personal touch and highlight important words or parts of the phrase. However, English folk singers were very conservative in their approach, preferring their melodies to be as pure as possible.¹¹⁸

There are several common melodic patterns, or motives, that are found in folk song. These motives are particularly found at the beginning and ends of melodies. The scale degrees highlighted in each of them are the first, fourth, and fifth. It is the manner of filling in the intervals that gives each figure its distinctive character.¹¹⁹ Cecil Sharp gave folk song examples of some melodies highlighting these scale degrees, as well as

¹¹⁴Manning, 193.

¹¹⁵Sharp, 101-2.

¹¹⁶Ibid., 105.

¹¹⁷Ibid., 104.

¹¹⁸Birdwell, 13-14.

¹¹⁹Kimmel, 493.

demonstrating some other melodic characteristics. These examples have been included in Appendix A.¹²⁰

Melodic Structure in the Oboe Concerto

Vaughan Williams typically wrote melody-based works, where the rest of the piece is built from the melody and the melody is the single most important feature. He used the same approach in harmonizing folk songs, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3.¹²¹ He felt that in the best accompaniments, the tune was what was important and the accompaniment fell into the background. He knew that his accompaniments sometimes looked wrong to trained musicians, and even sometimes sounded awkward when played by themselves, but that the true test of their quality was that they made the tune sound right.¹²² His melodic invention, the most distinctive aspect of his musical style, was based on three sources: early church music, folk music, and contemporary melodic devices. While he incorporated aspects from all of these into his distinctive melodies, the strongest external factor on his writing was English folk song.¹²³

In the Oboe Concerto, Vaughan Williams ended all movements on tonic, in the folk song tradition, though in the outer movements, the oboe takes the fifth. Phrase endings usually occur on tonic or dominant, but there are some exceptions, in keeping with the modal options of having middle cadences on alternate pitches. In the first movement, during the final cadenza, he leaves the phrase hanging in the oboe on a G, the

¹²⁰Sharp, 103.

¹²¹Ottaway and Frogley.

¹²²Manning, 233.

¹²³Kimmel, 491-93.

seventh of A Dorian, and later begins the last phrase of the cadenza on the same pitch, as circled in Example 1, highlighting the flat seventh. The third movement includes an

Example 1: Vaughan Williams, Oboe Concerto, Movement 1, K/2-7¹²⁴



example of a phrase ending on the sixth in B Dorian after Q. There is also a mid-phrase ending on a B, which is the third in G Ionian, three bars into the Lento. These phrase endings, which are also common to English folk song, are found in Examples 2 and 3, respectively.

Example 2: Vaughan Williams, Oboe Concerto, Movement 3, Q/7-9¹²⁵



¹²⁴Ralph Vaughan Williams, *Concerto for Oboe and Strings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947), 5. The K/2-7 denotes the rehearsal letter and measures of that rehearsal number. In this case, measures 2-7 of K. This convention will be used for the Oboe Concerto throughout the paper.

¹²⁵R. Vaughan Williams, *Concerto*, 30.

of octaves and sevenths between **L** and the key change after **M**, and the select measures from that set, seen in Example 5, show a compact set of minor sevenths in succession.

Example 5: Vaughan Williams, *Oboe Concerto*, Movement 3, M/10-15¹²⁸



The idea of approaching intervals between prominent pitches by a step in the direction of the interval is seen throughout the outer movements of the Concerto. Sometimes Vaughan Williams also inverted the procedure to also include a step at the end of the interval as well. In addition, the final Presto, mentioned in the previous section, seems highly influenced by this concept, as does the opening of the third movement, though they do not conform to the specific rules. In the first movement, examples limited to intervals between the tonic and the fifth occur notably five bars after **A**, where two examples are seen within five continuous pitches, at **C** and repeated throughout that section with the same pitches, and several times during the Cadenza that begins at **K**. These sections can be found in Example 6. In the third movement, there are similar examples in the second bar of **P**, the oboe entrance after **Q**, and in all the pitches from **X** to the end, which can be found in Example 7. Similar melodic treatment between pitches other than the first and fifth scale degrees are also found throughout these movements.

¹²⁸R. Vaughan Williams, *Concerto*, 27.

Example 6: Vaughan Williams, Oboe Concerto, Movement 1, A/5, C/1-3, K/1-3¹²⁹

Example 6 shows musical notation for Vaughan Williams' Oboe Concerto, Movement 1. It includes a short melodic phrase, a section marked 'C', a Cadenza section marked 'K' starting with a forte 'f' dynamic and then diminishing ('dim.') to piano 'p', and a section with sixteenth-note passages marked 'f'.

Example 7: Vaughan Williams, Oboe Concerto, Movement 3, P/2, Q/2-6, X/1-12¹³⁰

Example 7 shows musical notation for Vaughan Williams' Oboe Concerto, Movement 3. It includes a melodic line with triplets and a section marked 'X' starting with a piano 'p' dynamic and then marked 'pp'.

The motivic figure of filling in an ascent from tonic to dominant by four equally valued pitches is a prominent feature of the second movement of the Concerto. This can be seen in Example 8 with the third and fourth measures and the key change after A. The same patterns can be found in the return of the Minuet, naturally, and the movement is full of the same pattern of notes connecting pitches other than tonic and the fifth. The

¹²⁹R. Vaughan Williams, *Concerto*, 2-3, 5.

¹³⁰R. Vaughan Williams, *Concerto*, 11-12.

Example 8: Vaughan Williams, Oboe Concerto, Movement 2, mm. 3-4, A/6-10¹³¹



inverse, descending, pattern makes up a large portion of the Musette. The same idea can also be found in the modulatory section of the third movement after **B**, which is demonstrated in Example 9, and occurs in the opposite direction in the following measures as well.

Example 9: Vaughan Williams, Oboe Concerto, Movement 3, B/3-5¹³²



Melodies highlighting the first, fourth, and fifth scale degrees are what make up most of the Concerto, particularly the first and fifth scale degrees. Example 10, showing the opening of the first movement is a good example of this. In the second movement, the oboe line after **B** leading into the Musette, seen in Example 11, gives an example of a melody focusing more on the first and fourth scale degrees. Another good example comes at **G** in the third movement, shown in Example 12. Many of the specific examples that will be quoted from folk song in Chapter 4 highlight these scale degrees as well. The

¹³¹R. Vaughan Williams, *Concerto*, 12-13.

¹³²R. Vaughan Williams, *Concerto*, 21.

Example 10: Vaughan Williams, Oboe Concerto, Movement 1, mm. 2-9¹³³

Allegro moderato ♩ = 88
cantabile

1
Orchestra
p

Example 11: Vaughan Williams, Oboe Concerto, Movement 2, B/9-15¹³⁴

Oboe Concerto also keeps with the English folk song custom of adding little ornamentation to its melodies. There are a few trills in the first movement and one in the second, otherwise there is no ornamentation.

Example 12: Vaughan Williams, Oboe Concerto, Movement 3, F/14-G/12¹³⁵

5
Orchestra
p

G

p

Another notable melodic element that I noticed from my study of English folk songs is the tendency to skip a scale degree in an otherwise scalar passage. There does

¹³³R. Vaughan Williams, *Concerto*, 2.

¹³⁴R. Vaughan Williams, *Concerto*, 13.

¹³⁵R. Vaughan Williams, *Concerto*, 9.

not seem to be any consistency regarding which tone is absent. Frequently these skipped tones are also consistent through an entire tune. This is significant in terms of the relationship between the Oboe Concerto and English folk song because the openings of the outside movements both employ skips in their melodies. In the first movement, it is the seventh and in the third movement, it is the third. What is particularly interesting about this is that in both cases, the absent note is a G, though the first movement is in A Dorian and the third movement begins in E Dorian. All of the melodic traits discussed in this section bear a strong resemblance to English folk song and are strong indicators of Vaughan Williams' assimilation of folk song elements into his melodic writing.

Form in English Folk Song and the Oboe Concerto

The form of a folk song is generally simple ABA, where each section leads into the next. The B section often is derived from the A section and leads back naturally to the return of A. There could also be more sections in the middle, but most folk songs are flanked by A sections.¹³⁶ Since folk songs are usually four balanced but not always equal stanzas long, this form is typically expanded into AABA, or ABBA, with the second B section freer than the first. Other patterns that are commonly found are ABAC, where often the C section uses material from the A and/or B sections, or AAAB, and occasionally, the original singer seemed to have more ideas than they knew what to do with, creating an ABCD form.¹³⁷

¹³⁶R. Vaughan Williams, *National Music*, 33-36, 40.

¹³⁷Sharp, 92-96.

Phrases in English folk song are usually symmetric and balanced, and often are comprised of three or five measures, though four measure phrases are also very common.¹³⁸ While the forms of Vaughan Williams' works are much freer than those of folk song, he does sometimes use strongly metered, symmetrical phrases in the form of folk song melodies.¹³⁹ His most characteristic stylistic aspect, however, is his free, rhapsodic melodies, frequently marked "senza misura" and without bar lines or a sense of rhythm or meter in the accompaniments, but instead use a pedal to give the passage coherence. These are found mostly in his large-scale works, and seen frequently in the Oboe Concerto, albeit still with bar lines. They are also typically found in prominent places, such as the placement at the opening of the Concerto and closing of the first movement. These free passages give his works a pastoral quality, like a shepherd improvising on his pipe, but the consistent use in his works leads to something more significant than that, and creates the reflective and contemplative character found in so many of his works.¹⁴⁰

The large-scale forms of the Oboe Concerto, particularly in the third movement, are too lengthy and complicated for much of a direct comparison to folk song forms. However, despite the "Rondo Pastorale" title of the first movement, the only likeness to a Rondo are the frequent returns to A Dorian between sections, while the melodic material from the opening section does not return until the cadenza at the end. The movement instead breaks down into a basic ABCD structure with an extended cadenza at the end

¹³⁸Kimmel, 493.

¹³⁹Ibid., 495.

¹⁴⁰Kimmel, 495-6.

using material from the A and C sections. The ABCD form is common to folk songs, as is the large ABA form of the “Minuet and Musette.” The second movement is also a wonderful example of symmetry and balance, as each section is almost exactly fifty measures long. This seems the best time to also mention that the Musette, in addition to being a dance form, was a bagpipe-like instrument used in folk settings as a drone and given the drone like oboe part in the Musette section of the movement, makes another connection to English folk song and the pastoral.

The smaller forms within sections of each movement are also freer and more rhapsodic than typical folk song melodies. However, the very free melodic writing, often without clear phrase delineations, may point more strongly to English folk song than sets of strongly patterned phrases would, and their phrases are not always even. In the more structured sections within the Concerto, more so in the second and third movements, there are usually four phrases per phrase group, in keeping with the folk song tradition. In terms of forms within these sets of phrases, in the Concerto, Vaughan Williams preferred the balanced, but not symmetrical structures of ABAB predominantly, and the last phrase is often lengthened, sometimes substantially. An example of this is found in the beginning of the second movement through to **A**, which can be seen in Example 14.

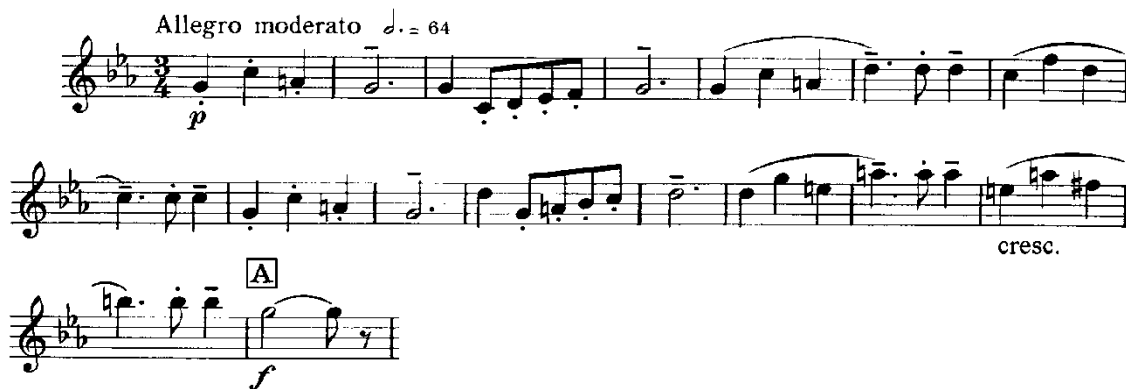
Irregular phrase lengths, particularly three-bar phrases are the clearest formal link to English folk song in the Oboe Concerto. Three bar phrases are evident in the opening of the first movement, and in the Lento of the third movement. In addition, as seen in Example 13, the first seven bars of **F** in the first movement are broken into two plus two

plus three. The opening of the “Minuet and Musette” includes an example of a five-bar phrase, in the fourth phrase of the group, and can be seen in Example 14.

Example 13: Vaughan Williams, Oboe Concerto, Movement 1, F/1-7¹⁴¹



Example 14: Vaughan Williams, Oboe Concerto, Movement 2, mm. 1-A/1¹⁴²



Rhythm and Meter in English Folk Song and the Oboe Concerto

Vaughan Williams supposed that the rhythm of folk song developed from dance patterns, or from other bodily actions that occur in the course of daily life.¹⁴³ The rhythms

¹⁴¹R. Vaughan Williams, *Concerto*, 4.

¹⁴²R. Vaughan Williams, *Concerto*, 6.

¹⁴³R. Vaughan Williams, *National Music*, 39.

are very free, and the average length of a tune is only sixteen bars.¹⁴⁴ Most folk songs begin with a pick-up of some kind. There are no rests in folk songs, but there are in dance tunes, which were accompanied by instruments. When these tunes were performed without the dancing, they were compressed to leave out the rests, which resulted in some awkward mixed meters, in some cases.¹⁴⁵ There is a prevalence of meters with five or seven beats in folk songs, but the majority of folk songs have time meters of two, three, or four beats, though sometimes alternating meters in the midst of songs.¹⁴⁶ Folk songs are, naturally, without inherent bar lines, and these are imposed upon transcription, which sometimes obscures the original flow of the tune, which usually has a meter-less quality.¹⁴⁷

These characteristics can be seen in the Oboe Concerto in the very rhapsodic first movement, where there are very rarely any rests employed in the melody. There are no meter changes or meters in five or seven beats in the Concerto, but the frequent use of ties, including over the bar lines, create a similar effect without actually changing the meter. A demonstration of both of these characteristics together is found in Example 15, taken from the measures leading into B in the first movement, and also can be seen in Example 13. A related idea is Vaughan Williams' frequent displacement of rhythms so that the same rhythm constantly occurs on different beats, such as Example 16, from the *Musette* of the second movement.

¹⁴⁴R. Vaughan Williams, *National Music*, 42-43.

¹⁴⁵Sharp, 98.

¹⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 108.

¹⁴⁷Birdwell, 10.

Example 15: Vaughan Williams, Oboe Concerto, Movement 1, A/11-16¹⁴⁸



Example 16: Vaughan Williams, Oboe Concerto, Movement 2, D/13-E/2¹⁴⁹



Vaughan Williams' rhythms are freer than those in folk song, and it is usual to find repetitions of the same melodic patterns with different rhythms, frequently also switching between triplets, duplets, and quadruplets.¹⁵⁰ Two examples of his frequently switching between meters in folk song style can be found in the third movement of the Concerto at **K** and **Q**, which are shown in Examples 17 and 18 respectively. However,

¹⁴⁸R. Vaughan Williams, *Concerto* 3.

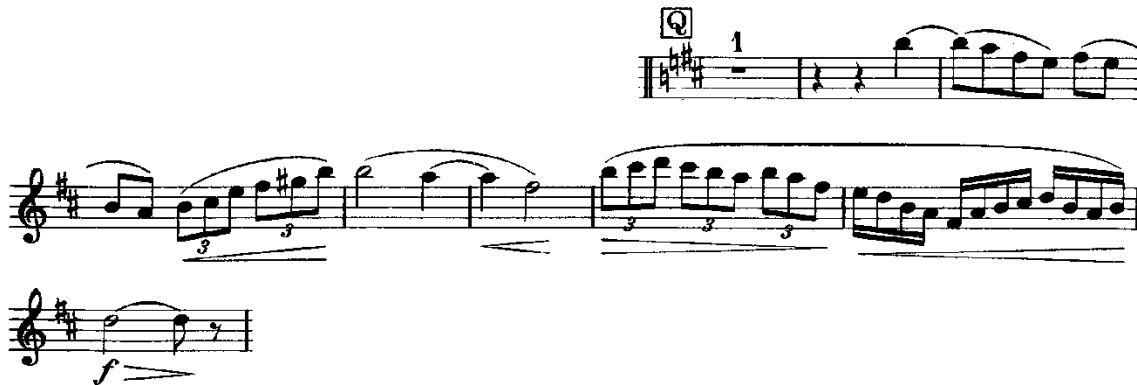
¹⁴⁹R. Vaughan Williams, *Concerto*, 7.

¹⁵⁰Kimmel, 295-6.

Example 17: Vaughan Williams, Oboe Concerto, Movement 3, K/1-15¹⁵¹



Example 18: Vaughan Williams, Oboe Concerto, Movement 3, Q/1-9¹⁵²



Vaughan Williams does incorporate some rhythmic motives from folk song into his works.¹⁵³ One example of this is in the frequent use of the dotted quarter-eighth-quarter rhythm used consistently in the Minuet portions of the second movement of the Oboe Concerto, which is also very prevalent in English folk song melodies. Example 19 gives an example of the occurrence of this rhythm in the folk song, “Benjamin Bowmaneer.” Though the rhythm is found in many tunes and seems to be a fundamental rhythmic motive of folk song, this example was chosen because it stays on one pitch for the

¹⁵¹R. Vaughan Williams, *Concerto*, 10.

¹⁵²R. Vaughan Williams, *Concerto*, 11.

¹⁵³Kimmel, 495.

Chapter 3

Accompanying a Folk Song

Vaughan Williams' Suggestions for Accompaniment

British folk singers of the 1840s, at the outset of the folk song movement, sang their monophonic melodies without reference to any of the procedures of 4-part classical harmony, which had evolved in European art music. That is not to say there cannot be harmonic treatment of modal material. Instead, it acquires a different sound because of the absence of accidentals and functional harmony and is built, in Vaughan Williams' view, from the top down.¹⁵⁵ This means that the melody is written first and then harmonies are chosen with the melody notes taking the root, third, or fifth of the accompanying chord. Care should also be taken that added harmonies preserve the diatonic nature of the modes by not adding accidentals to create Major or Minor chord progressions.¹⁵⁶ Vaughan Williams felt that modal melodies were timeless, saying, "Folk songs seem to take kindly to the harmony of any period at which a skilled musician may happen to treat them harmonically."¹⁵⁷ Some folk songs are very difficult to harmonize, and folk singers were known to have difficulty recognizing their songs when performed with harmonies or even simple accompaniments added.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵R. Vaughan Williams, *National Music*, 46.

¹⁵⁶Sharp, 60.

¹⁵⁷Kennedy, *Works*, 29.

¹⁵⁸Sharp, 72.

Vaughan Williams edited a collection of folk songs, *The Penguin Book of English Folk Songs* in 1959, in collaboration with the EFDSS. He presented the songs in this collection without accompaniment, as he felt they were optimally performed. Sharing his sentiments, a Dorset countryman and fine folk song singer commented on a professional singer of folk songs, saying, “Of course it’s nice for him to have the piano while he’s singing, but it does make it awkward for the listener.”¹⁵⁹ However, for those who felt that the unaccompanied melodies sounded naked, Vaughan Williams allowed that some simple chords staying in the mode could be added. With regard to choice of instrument, he did not find any particular instrument best suited to the accompaniment of folk songs.¹⁶⁰ Probably due to his familiarity with the instrument, when he wrote accompaniments for folk song collections he used the piano.

When accompanying folk songs, Vaughan Williams felt that the harmonies should be “subsidiary and above all impersonal.”¹⁶¹ To demonstrate this, and his rules of top-down harmonization of folk songs, staying in the mode, he included several sample accompaniments in the *Penguin Book of Folk Songs*. The accompaniments are minimal and of the three examples, each features a different style. The first, “Salisbury Plain” is the sparsest of the three. A few chords provide a general tonal area to support the singer. There is one accidental found in the accompaniment that is not found in the mode, a B \sharp that is also used in passing in the melody. “Banks of Green Willow” has more activity in the accompaniment and is the most similar to the Oboe Concerto in style. “Basket of

¹⁵⁹Vaughan Williams and Lloyd, 9.

¹⁶⁰Ibid.

¹⁶¹Kennedy, *Works*, 29.

Eggs” is the only example to set up a recurring rhythmic pattern with the accompaniment. The accompaniment for beats one and two of m. 13 is an A Minor triad, which does not stay in the mode of G Aeolian. It is not clear why Vaughan Williams seemingly broke his own rule here, but in the other accompaniments he wrote for folk song collections he does not add accidentals to leave the mode. There are no chord progressions leading to a cadence in the accompaniments. It is also interesting to note that none of the three examples chosen have mixed meters, given the prevalence of mixed meters in the folk song repertoire. Perhaps Vaughan Williams felt that singers who required accompaniment would tend toward a preference for songs in one meter throughout.

Comparison of Sample Accompaniments to Oboe Concerto

The accompaniment to the Oboe Concerto adheres to Vaughan Williams’ rules for harmonizing folk songs, though it is a much larger-scale work and designed for accompaniment. It also follows his aesthetic of being subsidiary. The accompaniment’s sole function is to provide support to the oboe line. It does this by providing chords in the mode of the melody and playing the same melodies as the oboe, either while the oboe is resting, or as a form of counterpoint. There is only one original idea specific to the accompaniment, and that is during the oboe drones in the Musette portion of the second movement. As in the folk song examples, there are no standard chord progressions in the Oboe Concerto. There are also no accidentals added to the accompaniment that are missing from the oboe line unless preparing a key change or changing mode. Just as in the folk song examples, the style of accompaniment changes to suit the style of the melody. Specific examples comparing the Oboe Concerto and the examples written for

the *Penguin Book of English Folk Songs* will provide further proof of the similarity.

Examples are taken in chronological order of the Concerto.

The opening of the first movement of the Concerto shows a propensity for parallel chords, particularly in m. 8, which is shown in Example 20, along with portions of “Salisbury Plain” and “Banks of Green Willow,” which show the same parallel motion.

Example 20: Vaughan Williams, Oboe Concerto, Movement 1, m. 8 and “Salisbury Plain,” mm. 10-11 and “Banks of Green Willow,” mm. 9-10 as found in *English Folk Songs*¹⁶²

The image displays three musical excerpts. The first is a piano accompaniment from Vaughan Williams' Oboe Concerto, Movement 1, measure 8, showing parallel motion in both hands with a *pp* dynamic marking. The second is a vocal line from “Salisbury Plain,” measures 10-11, with lyrics “so — till a — long with him I was” and a bass accompaniment. The third is a vocal line from “Banks of Green Willow,” measures 9-10, with lyrics “John - ny.” and a bass accompaniment. A bracket labeled “1st time” spans the final two measures of the “Banks of Green Willow” excerpt.

Just before the key change after A, there are three measures of quarter note accompaniment against the dotted melody (here also found in the accompaniment). There are many other examples of this throughout the movement and also in the Minuet portions of the second movement. Portions of both movements and the first line of “Banks of Green Willow,” showing the same pattern can be found in Example 21.

¹⁶²R. Vaughan Williams, *Concerto*, 1 and Vaughan Williams and Lloyd, 11-2.

Example 21: Vaughan Williams, Oboe Concerto, Movement 1, A/4-6 and Movement 2, mm. 14-16 and “Banks of Green Willow,” as found in *English Folk Songs*, mm. 1-5¹⁶³

The image displays three systems of musical notation. The first system shows a piano accompaniment with a treble clef staff containing a melodic line and a bass clef staff with a sustained accompaniment. Dynamics include *dim.* and *p*. The second system shows a piano accompaniment with a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff, both featuring a melodic line. Dynamics include *cresc.* and *pp*. The third system shows a vocal line with lyrics: "Go and get your father's good-will, And get your mother's mo-ney, And". The piano accompaniment continues with a sustained accompaniment.

The opening of the second movement demonstrates another prominent feature in the Concerto that is shared with the first line of “Banks of Green Willow,” which can be seen in Example 21. This is a tendency for portions of the accompaniment to sustain, while other voices move. The first four measures of **B** in the second movement can be seen in Example 22. The portions of the Musette that take place under the oboe drone also exhibit how Vaughan Williams always stays in the mode and harmonizes with the

¹⁶³R. Vaughan Williams, *Concerto*, 2, 12 and Vaughan Williams and Lloyd, 11.

melodic note, even when using a countermelody. This is seen with the first few measures of the Musette in Example 23.

Example 22: Vaughan Williams, Oboe Concerto, Movement 2, B/1-4¹⁶⁴

B



Example 23: Vaughan Williams, Oboe Concerto, Movement 2, B/16-19¹⁶⁵



The third movement of the Concerto shows similar treatment as the previous movements. One specific similarity to the folk song examples comes from an interesting choice to use a Cm⁹ chord to harmonize a D passing to a C in the melody of “The Basket of Eggs.” The first, third, fifth, and ninth of the chord are used, with the third and ninth

¹⁶⁴R. Vaughan Williams, *Concerto*, 13.

¹⁶⁵R. Vaughan Williams, *Concerto*, 14.

creating a minor second that includes the melody note. Some might think this harmony is too dissonant a choice, but he uses almost the same harmony in the third movement at A. Here, he uses an E⁷ chord, with the tonic and seventh scale degrees, creating a major second to clash with the melody. Both chords can be seen in Example 24. When Vaughan

Example 24: Vaughan Williams, Oboe Concerto, Movement 3, A/1-4 and “The Basket of Eggs,” as found in *English Folk Songs*, m. 4¹⁶⁶



Williams accompanied folk songs, he always used major/minor chords where every note fit the mode to harmonize the melodic note instead of choosing alternate intervals for harmonies. The same is true for most of the Oboe Concerto. These examples from Vaughan Williams’ suggestions for accompaniment provide yet another link between the Oboe Concerto and English folk song.

Six Studies in English Folk Song for Cello and Piano

Constant Lambert, a British composer and student of Vaughan Williams, once said, “The whole trouble with a folk-song is that once you have played it through there is nothing more you can do except play it over again and play it rather louder.”¹⁶⁷ Vaughan Williams clearly did not agree with that sentiment. An excellent example of his masterful

¹⁶⁶R. Vaughan Williams, *Concerto*, 20 and Vaughan Williams and Lloyd, 12.

¹⁶⁷Howes, *Music*, 228.

treatment of folk song is in the *Six Studies in English Folk Song* for cello and piano. This work is based on specific folk songs, and each movement features a different tune that is easily recognizable, but is freely treated and ornamented.¹⁶⁸ Vaughan Williams then manipulates the tunes, creating his own melodies from them, so that the whole work lies in a place between arrangement and original composition.¹⁶⁹ The work was written in 1926, with the first performance at the English Folk Dance Society Festival on 4 June 1926. The movements are based on the following folk songs: “Lovely on the Water” (The Springtime of the Year), “Spurn Point,” “Van Dieman’s Land,” “She Borrowed Some of her Mother’s Gold,” “The Lady and the Dragoon,” and “As I walked over London Bridge.”¹⁷⁰ Of these songs, the first five were songs personally collected by Vaughan Williams.¹⁷¹

The style of the piano accompaniment in the Cello Studies is an example of Vaughan Williams’ method of accompanying large-scale works based on folk song. Each movement is in a modal key and the chords stay in within the mode with a few exceptions. The most notable example of this is in the third movement, which is in D Aeolian, but ends with a D Major chord. The accompaniment style of the Cello Studies bears many similarities to the Oboe Concerto, and provides another English folk song connection to the work. The examples demonstrating this are presented in order of the

¹⁶⁸Day, 243.

¹⁶⁹Howes, *Music*, 228.

¹⁷⁰Kennedy, *Catalogue*, 119-120.

¹⁷¹*Ibid.*, 262-294.

Cello Studies movements. As in the previous section, the piano reduction is used for ease of comparison.

In the first movement of the Cello Studies, mm. 11-14 show parallel motion in the chords, with the same voicing and parallel motion found in the third movement of the Oboe Concerto after **B**. Example 25 shows both patterns. The next few measures in the Cello Studies show an example of a running eighth note pattern in the left hand with a melodic line in the right. This mirrors the Oboe Concerto in many places, particularly in the first movement, such as the example shown in Example 26. The meandering left hand line in the Concerto after **B** is similar to the treatment of the eighth note pattern in the Studies.

Example 25: Vaughan Williams, Oboe Concerto, Movement 3, B/8-11 and Vaughan Williams, Cello Studies, Movement 1, mm. 12-14¹⁷²

The image displays two musical excerpts side-by-side for comparison. The top excerpt is from Vaughan Williams' Oboe Concerto, Movement 3, measures 8-11. It features a piano reduction with a treble clef staff containing chords and a bass clef staff with a simple accompaniment. The bottom excerpt is from Vaughan Williams' Cello Studies, Movement 1, measures 12-14. It also shows a piano reduction, but with a more complex texture: the treble clef staff has a melodic line with slurs, and the bass clef staff has a running eighth-note pattern. Both excerpts are in the key of B-flat major.

¹⁷²Vaughan Williams, *Concerto*, 21, Ralph Vaughan Williams, *Six Studies in English Folk Song for Violoncello and Pianoforte*, (London: Stainer & Bell, 1924), 3.

Example 26: Vaughan Williams, Oboe Concerto, Movement 1, B/8-10 and Vaughan Williams, Cello Studies, Movement 1, mm. 15-17¹⁷³

The image displays two systems of musical notation for piano accompaniment. The first system consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) with a 'dim.' (diminuendo) marking above the bass staff. The second system also consists of two staves, with a 'pp' (pianissimo) marking above the bass staff. The notation includes various chords, arpeggios, and melodic lines in both hands.

The opening of the second movement of the Cello Studies has simple chords changing infrequently under the melody line. The first movement of the Oboe Concerto at **G** has the same pattern, as can be seen in Example 27. The moving quarter note line at the start of the third movement of the Cello Studies is similar to the opening of the Oboe Concerto as well. This pattern can be seen in Example 28. Similarly, much of the writing style of the second page of the third movement of the Cello Studies matches a large portion of the opening movement of the Oboe Concerto. The key change after **A** is a particularly good example. The similarity is seen with moving voices in each hand operating somewhat independently of each other in Example 29.

¹⁷³Vaughan Williams, *Concerto*, 4, *Studies*, 3.

Example 27: Vaughan Williams, Oboe Concerto, Movement 1, G/2-3 and Vaughan Williams, Cello Studies, Movement 2, mm. 1-3¹⁷⁴

The image displays two systems of musical notation. The first system consists of a grand staff with a treble clef and a bass clef. The treble staff contains a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, while the bass staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and single notes. The second system is in 3/4 time and features a treble staff with a melodic line including a triplet of eighth notes and a bass staff with sustained chords. A dynamic marking of *pp* is present in the first measure of the second system.

Example 28: Vaughan Williams, Oboe Concerto, Movement 1, mm. 3-4 and Vaughan Williams, Cello Studies, Movement 3, mm. 8-10¹⁷⁵

The image displays two systems of musical notation. The first system is a grand staff with a treble clef and a bass clef, showing a melodic line in the treble staff and a bass line in the bass staff. The second system consists of two grand staves, each with a treble clef and a bass clef. The top grand staff shows a melodic line in the treble and a bass line in the bass, while the bottom grand staff shows a similar melodic and bass line arrangement.

¹⁷⁴Vaughan Williams, *Concerto*, 9, *Studies*, 4.

¹⁷⁵Vaughan Williams, *Concerto*, 1, *Studies*, 6.

Example 29: Vaughan Williams, Oboe Concerto, Movement 1, A/7-8 and Vaughan Williams, Cello Studies, Movement 3, mm. 17-19¹⁷⁶

The image displays two systems of musical notation for piano accompaniment. The first system is marked 'mf cantabile' and the second system is marked 'mp'. Both systems feature syncopated chords and rhythmic patterns in both hands. The notation includes treble and bass clefs, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and various musical symbols such as beams, slurs, and dynamic markings.

The syncopated chords in the second to last line of the fourth movement of the Cello Suite are similar rhythmically to the last three chords of the first movement of the Oboe Concerto. These can be seen in Example 30. In the fifth movement of the Cello Studies, in the second to last line, there is a running eighth note pattern in the right hand with quarter note chords on some of the beats in the left hand. This is a similar pattern to the second Minuet section of the second movement of the Oboe Concerto after **F**. These patterns can be seen in Example 31. The similarities of accompaniment between the Oboe Concerto and the Cello Studies show that while Vaughan Williams may not have been intentionally modeling his treatment of the Oboe Concerto after English folk songs, the compositional styles are indisputably similar. This, along with the similarities to sample

¹⁷⁶Vaughan Williams, *Concerto*, 2, *Studies*, 7.

folk song accompaniments in the previous chapter, provides another level of connection between the Oboe Concerto and English folk song.

Example 30: Vaughan William, Oboe Concerto, Movement 1, K/10-12 and Vaughan Williams, Cello Studies, Movement 4, 18-20¹⁷⁷

A musical score for two staves, Treble and Bass clef. The music consists of chords and arpeggiated figures. A dynamic marking of *pp* (pianissimo) is present in the first measure. The notes are primarily in the lower register of both staves.

A musical score for two staves, Treble and Bass clef. The music features a melodic line in the Treble clef and a more active line in the Bass clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The piece concludes with a final chord in the Treble clef.

¹⁷⁷Vaughan Williams, *Concerto*, 11, *Studies*, 9.

Example 31: Vaughan Williams, Oboe Concerto, Movement 2, F/5-8 and Vaughan Williams, Cello Studies, Movement 5, mm. 35-36¹⁷⁸

Musical score for Oboe Concerto, Movement 2, measures 12-15. The score is in 2/4 time and features a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The upper staff (treble clef) contains a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, while the lower staff (bass clef) provides harmonic support with chords and single notes. Measure numbers 12, 13, 15, and 16 are indicated below the staff.

Musical score for Cello Studies, Movement 5, measures 35-36. The score is in 2/4 time and features a key signature of one sharp (F#). The upper staff (treble clef) contains a melodic line with eighth notes, marked *mf cantabile*. The lower staff (bass clef) provides harmonic support with chords and single notes. A dynamic marking of *mf cantabile* is present in the first measure.

¹⁷⁸Vaughan Williams, *Concerto*, 17, *Studies*, 11.

Chapter 4

Use of Specific Folk Song Motives in the Oboe Concerto

It is not difficult to find melodies, themes and fragments in the works of Vaughan Williams that are common to folk songs. But instead of Vaughan Williams always inserting these figures consciously to create a folk quality, they have infused his compositions, generating an overall pastoral feel in his works.¹⁷⁹ William Kimmel, in his article on Vaughan Williams' melodic style identified some folk song motives that have been included in Vaughan Williams' compositions, and these examples are included in Appendix B.¹⁸⁰ None of these particular motives are used in the Oboe Concerto. However, several motives and melodic figures from English folk song are identifiable in the Concerto.

The folk song material in this chapter comes from the *Penguin Book of English Folk Songs*, which Vaughan Williams edited. He also supplied many of the songs for the collection, and the songs were gathered, with few exceptions, many decades prior. So, though the collection was published posthumously and the final editing was done by A.L. Lloyd, Vaughan Williams chose all of the songs and would have been familiar with the tunes in the collection at the time that he wrote the Oboe Concerto. He guaranteed that the melodies had not been doctored at all. However, bar lines and key signatures were added to make the songs more sing-able, though they did not change any of the irregular meters. The traditional approach for folk song publishing used traditional major or minor

¹⁷⁹Kimmel, 495.

¹⁸⁰Ibid., 499.

key signatures, based on the final note of the tune. In contrast, in this collection only sharps and flats seen in the tunes are found in the key signatures. The songs end either on G or D because those are a convenient range for singing and because those were the two most common final pitches when sung in the original keys.¹⁸¹

There is no proof that Vaughan Williams intentionally used these folk song motives in the Oboe Concerto. Some of the motives may be common to multiple folk songs while others I have found in only one. Though he may not have used them consciously to create a folk song atmosphere for the work, these were melodies that he was familiar with and that in some way influenced his writing style for this work. The examples will be presented going chronologically through the Concerto.

The very opening of the Concerto begins with a melodic figure that can be found in a very popular folk song, “Geordie.” This is followed by a scalar descent of equal values from the fifth to first scale degrees, the inverse of which was described in Chapter 3. These figures can be seen in Example 32. “The Basket of Eggs” has a descending

Example 32: “Geordie,” as found in *English Folk Songs*, mm. 7-10 and Vaughan Williams, Oboe Concerto, Movement 1, mm. 1-3¹⁸²

¹⁸¹Vaughan Williams and Lloyd, 8-11.

¹⁸²R. Vaughan Williams, *Concerto*, 2 and Vaughan Williams and Lloyd, 42.

four-note figure found on the words “were both” and “there they” that is also found in the first movement of the Concerto and can be seen in Example 33. The exact transposition of the figure is seen in m. 22, and there is a version with a major third in mm. 27-8, as well as inverted examples throughout the movement. The exact notes with a different rhythm are found in “The Grey Cock,” which is also included in Example 33.

Example 33: “The Basket of Eggs,” mm. 3-8 and “The Grey Cock,” mm. 4-9, as found in *English Folk Songs*, mm. 3-8 and Vaughan Williams, Oboe Concerto, Movement 1, A/10, 15-16¹⁸³

The image displays a musical score for two songs. The first part, "The Basket of Eggs," consists of four staves of music in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat. The lyrics are: "pock - ets were both lined with gold, And as together - er they were talk - ing, A fair maid there they did be - hold, burn - ing Thames I have to cross. Oh, I must be guid - ed with - out a stum - ble In - to the arms of my dear lass." The notes for "were both" and "there they" are circled in red. The second part, "The Grey Cock," consists of two staves of music in 3/8 time with a key signature of one sharp. The notes for "were both" and "there they" are circled in red.

¹⁸³R. Vaughan Williams, *Concerto*, 3 and Vaughan Williams and Lloyd, 18.

The dotted figure from “The Bramble Briar” is featured throughout the sections at **C** and **D** in the first movement of the Oboe Concerto in diminution. Example 34 shows several examples from the first movement highlighting the use of the same intervals and rhythms when compared with the song. The second example from the Concerto has the exact notes as the folk song, the others are transpositions. The circled four-note motive

Example 34: “The Bramble Briar,” as found in *English Folk Songs*, mm. 3-8 and Vaughan Williams, Oboe Concerto, Movement 1, mm. C/1, 7, D/10-11¹⁸⁴

The image displays two musical staves. The top staff is the original folk song, "The Bramble Briar," in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The lyrics are: "had two sons and one daugh-ter dear. By day and night they were con-triv-ing to fill their par - ents' heart with fear." The bottom staff is a transposition of the same melody from Vaughan Williams' Oboe Concerto, Movement 1. It shows the melody in different keys and time signatures (3/8, 2/4, 3/8), with a circled four-note motive in both staves. The circled motive consists of a dotted quarter note followed by an eighth note, then a quarter note, and finally a dotted quarter note.

in Example 35 from “The Banks of Newfoundland” is found in the first movement of the Oboe Concerto, first at the key change before **G**, then continued through the next section and is a fundamental motive for the final cadenza. This motive is expanded upon in “The Greenland Whale Fishery,” seen in Example 36, to include the full figure first heard at **H** for the start of the final cadenza of the first movement of the Oboe Concerto.

¹⁸⁴R. Vaughan Williams, *Concerto*, 3-4 and Vaughan Williams and Lloyd, 24.

Example 35: “The Banks of Newfoundland,” as found in *English Folk Songs*, mm. 13-16 and Vaughan Williams, Oboe Concerto, Movement 1, F/8-G/4¹⁸⁵

think of the cold Nor' - west - ers On the — Banks of the New-found - land.

p tranquillo

G

Example 36: “The Greenland Whale Fishery,” as found in *English Folk Songs*, mm. 1-3 and Vaughan Williams, Oboe Concerto, Movement 1, H/1-2¹⁸⁶

’Twas eight - een hun-dred and twen-ty - four, On — March the eight-eenth —

H

pp

Perhaps the strongest example derived from folk song can be found in the opening measures of the second movement of the Oboe Concerto. This motive is found in at least two folk songs, “George Collins” and “The Green Bed,” not only with the same intervallic content, but with the same pitches as in the Concerto, as can be seen in

¹⁸⁵R. Vaughan Williams, *Concerto*, 4 and Vaughan Williams and Lloyd, 16.

¹⁸⁶R. Vaughan Williams, *Concerto*, 10 and Vaughan Williams and Lloyd, 50.

Example 37. That motive, along with two other folk song melodic traits that have already been discussed, makes up the backbone of the Minuet portions of the movement. Still in

Example 37: “George Collins,” mm. 3-8 and “The Green Bed,” mm. 1-4, as found in *English Folk Songs* and Vaughan Williams, Oboe Concerto, Movement 2, mm. 1-2¹⁸⁷

May was all in bloom; There he espied a fair pretty maid A - washing her marble stone.

A sto - ry, a sto - ry, a sto - ry was one, Con -

p

the second movement, leading into the Musette section there is a recurring motive that is a version in diminution of a figure from “The Deserter from Kent.” This figure is then slightly altered to expand the first interval to a fifth. These can both be seen in Example 38.

¹⁸⁷R. Vaughan Williams, *Concerto*, 6 and Vaughan Williams and Lloyd, 44, 48.

Example 38: “The Deserter from Kent,” as found in *English Folk Songs*, mm. 5-8 and Vaughan Williams, Oboe Concerto, Movement 2, B/11-15¹⁸⁸

The intervals found in the set of boxed pitches from “The Cock-Fight” match the pattern that is found in the third movement of the Concerto immediately following **P**.

This pattern is then repeated a measure later, and both figures can be seen in Example 39.

Example 39: “The Cock-Fight,” as found in *English Folk Songs*, mm. 4-9 and Vaughan Williams, Oboe Concerto, Movement 3, P/1-5¹⁸⁹

The third movement of the Concerto is the most virtuosic, and this might explain the seeming lack of direct folk song quotes. It is also possible that quotes exist that were beyond the scope of my research. The fact that several folk song examples in this chapter

¹⁸⁸R. Vaughan Williams, *Concerto*, 13 and Vaughan Williams and Lloyd, 32.

¹⁸⁹R. Vaughan Williams, *Concerto*, 29 and Vaughan Williams and Lloyd, 27.

not only had the same intervals but the same pitches as their Oboe Concerto counterparts leads me to believe that Vaughan Williams did make a conscious effort to provide a link between the Concerto and English Folk Song.

Conclusion

Vaughan Williams' Concerto for Oboe and Strings has long been regarded as a pastoral work, in no small part due to the titles of the first and second movements. This is in keeping with his reputation as a composer and the sound that influenced a generation. His quest for a national style of English music began and ended with the English folk song. It is his study of English folk song that thoroughly permeated his compositional style and created the pastoral quality found in the Oboe Concerto, among many other works.

Vaughan Williams' connection to and appreciation for English folk song showed in his years dedicated to its collection and vocal support for their incorporation in English compositions. A definition of English folk song provided the jumping point for this study. An overview of mode, melodic structure, form, and rhythm and meter provided a basis for understanding their role in English folk song as well as in the Oboe Concerto. These shared stylistic traits provide the foundation for an understanding of English folk song's influence on the Concerto. Another link between the Oboe Concerto and English folk song was Vaughan Williams' use of similar accompanimental traits in both sample folk song accompaniments and the Six Studies in English Folk Song for Cello and Piano with the Concerto. This showed that at least subconsciously, he was treating the Concerto as a form of folk song.

Several examples of folk song motives and melodic figures were the last piece of the puzzle connecting the Oboe Concerto to English folk song. Though Vaughan Williams may not have inserted these figures intentionally, they were a part of his

repertoire of pastoral compositional style. It is highly unlikely that the examples given in this paper are the only folk song motives used in the Concerto. An analysis of all of the thousands of collected folk songs was beyond the scope of this paper. Still, the examples that were discovered make a clear connection between the Concerto and English Folk Song.

I anticipate that I will continue my search through English folk songs to find more motives and perhaps even themes that are in common with the Oboe Concerto. My hope for readers of this document is that it will bring about a better understanding of what is often an under-valued and over-simplified work. I believe that an appreciation for English folk song and the Concerto's roots there will enhance any performance of the piece and make the study of it more enjoyable.

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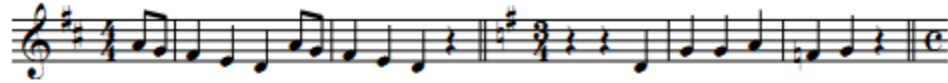
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APPENDIX A

COMMON MELODIC FIGURES IN ENGLISH FOLK SONG, FROM SHARP TEXT

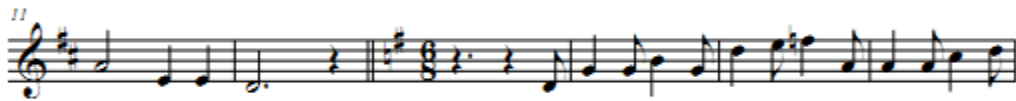
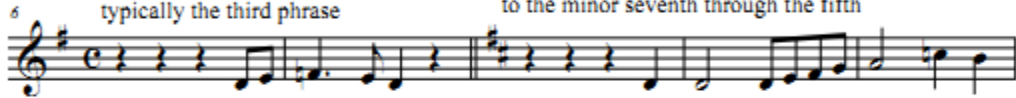
Common Melodic Figures in English Folk Song, from Sharp Text

Two common opening figures

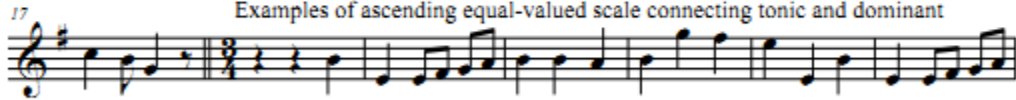


Common phrase ending,
typically the third phrase

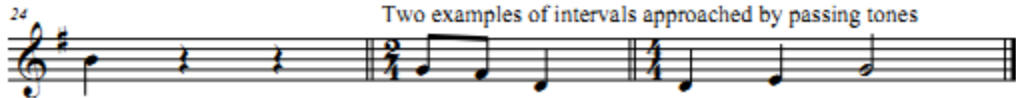
Two examples demonstrating a rise
to the minor seventh through the fifth



Examples of ascending equal-valued scale connecting tonic and dominant



Two examples of intervals approached by passing tones



APPENDIX B

COMMON FOLK SONG MOTIVES IN THE WORKS OF VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

Common Folk Song Motives in the Works of Vaughan Williams, from Kimmel Article

The image displays eight musical staves, each representing a different folk song motive. The staves are numbered 1 through 8, with the numbers placed at the beginning of each staff. The motives are written in treble clef and vary in key signature and time signature:

- Staff 1: Key of D major, 4/4 time. Motive: D4 quarter, E4 quarter, F#4 quarter, G4 quarter, A4 quarter, B4 quarter, A4-G4-F#4-E4 quarter.
- Staff 2: Key of D major, 4/4 time. Motive: D4 quarter, E4 quarter, F#4 quarter, G4 quarter, A4 quarter, B4 quarter, A4-G4-F#4-E4 quarter.
- Staff 3: Key of D major, 4/4 time. Motive: D4 quarter, E4 quarter, F#4 quarter, G4 quarter, A4 quarter, B4 quarter, A4-G4-F#4-E4 quarter.
- Staff 4: Key of D major, 4/4 time. Motive: D4 quarter, E4 quarter, F#4 quarter, G4 quarter, A4 quarter, B4 quarter, A4-G4-F#4-E4 quarter.
- Staff 5: Key of D major, 4/4 time. Motive: D4 quarter, E4 quarter, F#4 quarter, G4 quarter, A4 quarter, B4 quarter, A4-G4-F#4-E4 quarter.
- Staff 6: Key of D major, 4/4 time. Motive: D4 quarter, E4 quarter, F#4 quarter, G4 quarter, A4 quarter, B4 quarter, A4-G4-F#4-E4 quarter.
- Staff 7: Key of D major, 4/4 time. Motive: D4 quarter, E4 quarter, F#4 quarter, G4 quarter, A4 quarter, B4 quarter, A4-G4-F#4-E4 quarter.
- Staff 8: Key of D major, 4/4 time. Motive: D4 quarter, E4 quarter, F#4 quarter, G4 quarter, A4 quarter, B4 quarter, A4-G4-F#4-E4 quarter.

APPENDIX C

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