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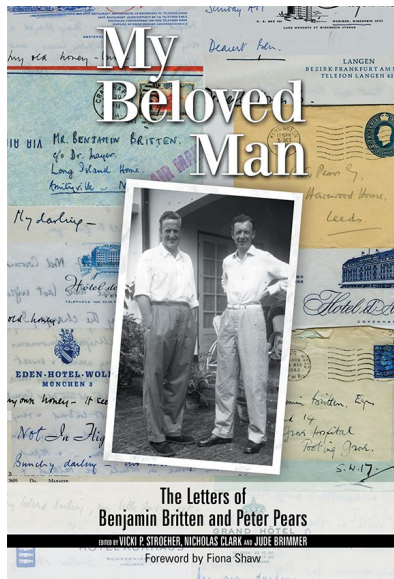
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K. Dawn Grapes, Editor

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Vicki P. Stroeher, Nicholas Clark, and Jude Brimmer, eds. *My Beloved Man: The Letters of Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears*. Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2016. 488 pp. ISBN 9781783271085 (hardback).

The richness of Benjamin Britten's life and music often presents a challenge to those who seek to chronicle his contributions. Whether examining the *open secret* of his relationship with Peter Pears or the *progressive conservatism* of his music, authors are often forced to adopt multiple perspectives. It is fitting then that this collection of letters between Britten and Pears engages two very different and equally fascinating roles. On the one hand, the book is immensely valuable as a research tool with clues about Britten's compositional process, insights from both men about music and prominent musicians of their day, and poignant, first-hand accounts of history. On the other hand, the letters are so touching and honest that even the most dispassionate researcher might accidentally get lost in the

compelling love story and intimate look into a deeply personal, committed relationship. This review considers the volume from these two perspectives in turn.

Britten researchers will likely be familiar with the six-volume *Letters from a Life* series, edited by Donald Mitchell, Philip Reed, and Mervyn Cooke, that includes diary entries and letters to and from Britten across his life. In some sense, this book is a subset of that larger project. But the focus here is on Britten and Pears as equal partners in a shared musical life. There are roughly as many letters from one man as from the other, highlighting both their musical and personal partnership.

It is remarkable how well the letters tell a story on their own. The survival of 365 letters written across four decades is a testament to the pair's devotion to each other, as well as to this mode of communication. Even with the growing availability of telephone service, letter writing was necessary for the two to keep in contact because of their frequent traveling and for the unique

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level of honesty that the letters allowed. However, even in this rare case where so many letters have been preserved, a story told by letters alone would be incomplete. In this book, the gaps in the narrative are capably filled by the introductions, interludes, and footnotes. In this task, the editors have found the right balance—always providing necessary information to guide both experts and novices without upstaging the letters themselves. In addition to the in-text and inter-text supplements, and Fiona Shaw’s beautiful foreword, the book includes a comprehensive seventy-five pages of indexes. Researchers looking for details about Britten’s and/or Pears’s thoughts on specific people, places, and pieces of music will find them easily.

The letters themselves engage a wide range of topics of historical interest. In addition to musical activities, there are compelling primary-source reports of history as it unfolds. These accounts range from Britten’s chilling, off-hand comment from March 1939, “I don’t think anyone can really trust Hitler anymore” (Letter 7) to his charming assessment of his “Palace lunch” on 18 July 1957: “The Queen is a real dear I think, & awfully easy to talk to! Philip I find difficult...” (Letter 212). The collection of letters also occupies a unique place in social and technological history. Had these men been born a century earlier or later, we might not have access to this kind of discourse. The letters play out the limitations of correspondence by post, e.g. “a brief note to send my love to you now in Switzerland—although as I write it, you are still in Brussels” (Britten to Pears, Letter 189). And while they lived in the technological age of the telephone, these phone conversations were often rushed and rarely private, and they lived in a social age that did not allow them to be open about their relationship. On several occasions, the men complain about the “emotionally-restricted telephone talks” (Britten to Pears, Letter 38). By contrast, the letters provide a safe space where the men need not hold back their expressions of longing, devotion, and desire to be together. Furthermore, the letters provide a more permanent kind of communication than phone calls because they can be read over and over, something that both men admit to doing.

As a result of this private honesty, the love story that the book traces between the two men is as captivating as the research is valuable. Reading these letters opens a window into a relationship, exclusively to the moments when the two are separated from each other and in one of the few mediums where they can be completely candid. The most salient result is a lot of lovesickness. The dominant theme through all the letters is a sense of longing to be together again. Even in the few instances when they get cross with each other, the cause of the conflict is typically their physical separation and the solution is to get back together. Readers are reminded that these men led very public lives. But unlike their public interactions, within the private world of these letters, Britten and Pears clearly considered themselves married. As with other married couples, the tone of the correspondence ranges from silly and light-hearted, to apologies for brevity or for missing a phone call, to occasional frustrated jabs at each other. The most beautiful moments are when they can be direct, even philosophical about the meaning of their shared life, “for me, there is only one place I want to be in at the moment & that is just where you are. Why shouldn’t I recognise that you are such a large part of my life that without you my life is dry and stupid and dull. We don’t have such long lives that we can afford to waste so much out of them” (Pears to Britten, Letter 227). For most of their forty years together, their relationship was illegal. Perhaps now, forty years later, aided by the unique focus of this book, a broad readership can celebrate the loving, committed relationship between two of the twentieth century’s greatest musicians.

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Eric Saylor. *English Pastoral Music: From Arcadia to Utopia, 1900–1955*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017. 280 pp. ISBN 9780252041099 (hardback).

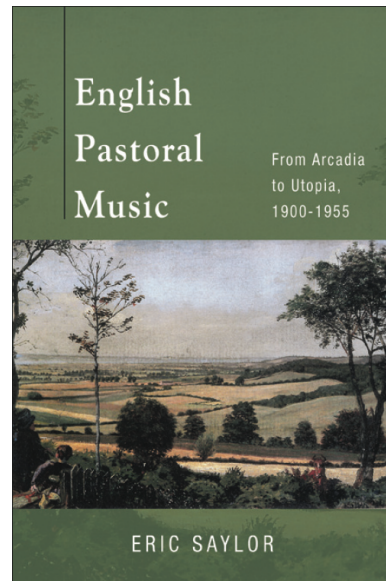
Eric Saylor’s foray into the critical nature of English pastoral music and its influence on the English musical scene is a significant addition to both musico-rhetorical and cultural studies literature. Had this book been available twenty years ago, the results of my own research (focused on Gustav Holst’s instrumental music) would have been more firmly grounded and more deeply considered. Saylor brings in resources from literary studies on pastoralism, wider ranging cultural studies, as well as music theory, history, and rhetoric as a foundation for expanding our understanding and formulations of musical pastoralism as both aesthetic object and cultural force.

The book is organized into five substantive chapters framed by an introduction and afterword. The chapters deal with definitions of pastoralism, in both literary and musical arts, and then specific tropes—*Arcadia*, *War*, *Landscape*, and *Utopia*—through which Saylor explores the effects of music pastoralism on the sensibilities of the English audience. The introduction provides a context for understanding how such a potent body of music could have been disparaged by composers and critics at the time.

Saylor’s description of the English music scene in the first half of the twentieth century in general, and the notion of the musical pastoral in particular, seems narrowly focused—for example, there is no discussion of more popular music and culture which was far more potent a force than art music in England; and his quotations from later commentators are not always well-contextualized—but his argument is sound, and is well documented in Hughes and Stradling’s *The English Musical Renaissance, 1840–1940: Constructing a National Music* (2nd edition).¹ You will get a much better sense of what Saylor wants to say in the introduction (1–8) and by reading the afterword (177–8), where he picks up the summary narrative: while a *clichéd* musical pastoralism was seemingly rejected by forward looking English composers, a stronger, flexible and topically incisive pastoralism developed through the work of both well-known and more obscure composers, leaving a substantial body of work that has made its mark on the English musical landscape.

Saylor’s first substantive chapter, “What Is Pastoralism,” presents issues in the critical treatment of pastoralism in literature which appear to surface in music pastoralism. Here he lays out literary models and the various notions of the pastoral element. Saylor’s focus in this defining chapter is to show that the musical pastoral was less a fixed genre and more an expressive mode, and the relationship of its elements in opposition create a genre “perpetually on the verge of transformation.” Without saying so, Saylor thus establishes a compositional and creative concept within the apparently conservative English school comparable to the more obvious modernism of Strauss, Schoenberg, and Debussy.

Saylor’s model for an aesthetic of musical pastoralism is analysis done by, among others, Robert Hatten in his work with Beethoven’s Piano Sonata, op. 101. Saylor lists the various



¹ Saylor paraphrases Hughes and Stradling in this chapter but misrepresents their comments here.



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“pastoral traits” that Hatten finds in the music (19–20), but it is Hatten’s notion of opposition in developing an evolving topic and its expressive content that forms the foundation for Saylor’s analysis and commentary throughout this book.

In the *Arcadia* chapter, Saylor looks first at pre-twentieth-century pastoral works before discussing works by Elgar, Bantock, Moeran, and Vaughan Williams. All of these works demonstrate a wide variety of expressive postures echoing the traditional Arcadian pastoral in a musical language that is a mixture of traditional tonality and more modern conceptualization.

Chapter 3, *War*, is the true heart of this book, and in it Saylor is quite brilliant in establishing the pastoral as a conscious choice of composers as they sought answers to the shattered morality and loss of life due to both World Wars. “Pastoral” is developed as an active, flexible element that can create the notion/experience of elegy, lament; horror, despair; resistance or resignation. The focus is on both compositions and the lives and thoughts of the composers: Arthur Bliss exorcising his nightmares through his cantata *Morning Heroes*; Vaughan Williams healing himself through his elegiac *Pastoral Symphony*. This may sound trite in my phrasing, but Saylor is well grounded in his dissertation—with commentary from the composers themselves—and incisive in his analysis of the music.

Saylor’s *Landscape* chapter is rambling and less sure of its foundations. The focus seems to be on listing pastoral style traits in various pieces rather than on demonstrating how the interaction of pastoral and other elements transforms the experience of landscape. Saylor did this well in previous chapters, and there is ample commentary for some of his chosen pieces here had he been able to fit it in.² But his commentary on the use of pastoral elements is very incisive, demonstrating a complex experience driven by apparently simple materials (121–8). Saylor also explores connections between urban life in England and the long-lived celebration of the rural stemming from Victorian times. The shambles of post-war London would have been motivation enough for most to have longed for the quiet rurality of a soft pastoral music.

In the last chapter, Saylor refers to the nineteenth-century religious notion of *Utopia* as an idealized future place in distinguishing it from the idealized past of Arcadian pastoral. This opens up a connection between religious retreat (and particularly the “utopia of heaven”) and the pastoral mode (149–52). He also has found interesting uses of pastoral rhetoric in much darker and edgier pieces, as in Britten’s *Peter Grimes*, as the musical language of the eponymous character’s “dreams I’ve built myself” (163–9).

Composers discussed range from the very well known (Elgar, Britten, Vaughan Williams, Delius, and Holst) to much lesser-known but fine composers whose works deserve more attention, including Moeran, Butterworth, Lambert, Finzi, Gurny, and Bliss. Some of the music is hard to find in print or recording. It would be nice if a companion website could be set up to provide some of this.

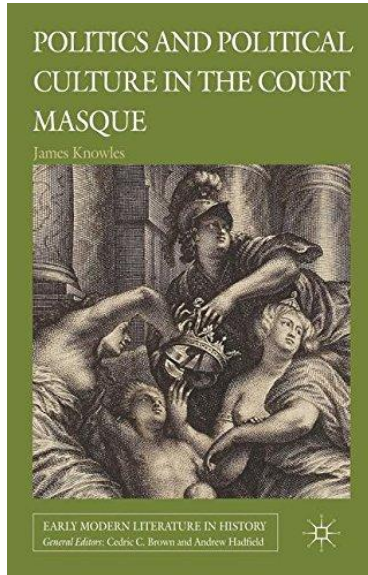
It must be said that this book is as much one of advocacy as of analysis; yet it is not diminished by Saylor’s passion. It is creative and open-ended, as research ought to be; and there are many lines of inquiry started here that invite further discussion.

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² For example, Holst’s *Somerset Rhapsody* and *Egdon Heath* are both given fuller treatments, including discussion of pastoral rhetoric and circumstances of composition in Greene, *Gustav Holst and a Rhetoric of Character* (Garland, 1994).



James Knowles. *Politics and Political Culture in the Court Masque*. Early Modern Literature in History. New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. ISBN 978-0-230-00894-6. viii+288 pp. (hardback).



Politics and Political Culture in the Court Masque is a formidable piece of research on early modern theatre, and an informative and indispensable work for anyone interested in the cultural and political studies of early modern England. Author Knowles acknowledges his motive for the book, which is to situate masques within the wider “political culture” of early modern society, and illuminate “the varied ways in which political ideas and practices are presented, communicated, and debated across society” (1).

The book consists of an introduction and six chapters, taking a varied approach of examining both select masques and also their cultural milieu and significance, focusing on sexual politics, textual culture, civil culture, and the politics of masquing. Rather than judging whether or not the period was defined in greater measure by its monarchy or by the more general pluralistic culture, Knowles explains in the introduction that his motive is to embrace the differing ideas and ideals of government that coexisted during

the period, rather than justifying the idiosyncrasies or contradictions. Furthermore, Knowles argues that court masques did not merely mimic royal ideology, but that Jacobean and Caroline masques were part of a wider context of “political communication,” fostering debates on political principles and authority (1). Knowles acknowledges the problems with masque hermeneutics, and presents a survey of literature and scholarly reaction to such difficulties in analysis and understanding of the masque. Knowles then investigates the political culture surrounding the masque, and maintains that while “[r]ecent readings of the masque have grown in sophistication in response to the revisionist revitalisations of the significance of the court and faction, patronage and political place, and of individual patrons,” it is imperative to “return the form to a political culture that recognises the vitality of multi-centred society ruled but not dominated by the court, with more diverse voices and forms that could, on occasion, permeate even the closed court world” (7–8). Knowles situates his study within this pluralistic broadening of early English cultural scholarship, using case studies of masques to “represent moments of early modern political culture,” starting with the Twelfth Night masques and their relationship to other political texts (Knowles mentions treatises, libels, plays, and masques as examples) from various social groups (e.g. lawyers), and differing performance spaces (country house, inns of court, public playhouse). Knowles explains that his main goal is to demonstrate how the masque is connected to other forms of early modern political culture, such as rituals and ceremonies, and that masques are not merely an “inherently royal form” (13).

The masque, then, is a form of political culture, but it is overly constrained by readings ascertaining that it cannot include serious political debate since it emphasizes panegyric and persuasion over analysis (14). The early-modern rhetorical culture combined both deliberative and demonstrative forms of rhetoric, and this was not contradictory. The remainder of the first chapter explores the main thesis of the book, which argues for the masque as a “site of scrutiny rather than adulation” and its “potential for political debate” (14), focusing on Jonson’s involvement with publication and awareness of the news market and the interaction of various writers, masque-models, and performances spaces, which speak to more multivalent political culture and the connection of the masque to direct political debate in Jacobean culture (15–16).



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The remaining chapters 2 through 6 flesh out Knowles's thesis, examining various masques, including *Love Restored*, *The Somerset Masque*, *Hymen's Triumph*, *Irish Masque*, *A Challenge at Tilt*, *The Challenge*, *The Irish Masque at Court*, *Andromeda Liberata*, *Britannia*, *News from the New World Discovered in the Moon*, *The World Tossed at Tennis*, *The Masque of Queens*, *The Gypsies Metamorphosed*, *The Practice of Piety*, *The Triumph of Peace*, *Albion's Triumph*, and *The Honor of the Inns of Court Gentlemen*. The second chapter focuses on Jonson's *Love Restored*, reading the masque as an example of fractures within Jacobean polity, beyond merely a " 'negotiation' between differing court interests and factions" (21). *Love Restored* utilizes the languages of parliamentary debate by discussing language and the constraints of speech, questioning royal power and its limits in parliamentary debates, and develops what Knowles calls a "politics of access" (21–22, 48–49). *Love Restored* situates the masque as a medium of counsel and mediation, connecting different opinions and debates, challenging powerful forces, and refashioning the masque form and method as an examination of praise and detraction in civil society (22). Within the politics of access, *Love Restored* "dramatizes a rejection of the basis of the civil state," and the "question of inclusion and exclusion ... radically shift[s]" its focus to "an emergent political nation" (52).

In chapter 3, Knowles, a noted expert on the sexual politics of the period, turns attention to this aspect of court masques performed in 1613 and 1614. Knowles focuses on the Overbury scandal and public debate surrounding it. The author argues that the ethical issues associated with the scandal, particularly the relationship between personal behavior and political action, are especially embodied in Jonson's masques (54). Jonson's *Irish Masque* examines this tension, emphasizing civility and decorum and "contemporary concerns about 'uncouth' subjects" within wider culture (54). Knowles concludes that the masques take on the responsibility of mediating royal ideology for its audiences (92).

Chapter 4 examines the textual culture of the 1620s, negotiating the political tensions of the Palatinate crisis versus political opinion, and the divisions between elite and popular politics and between religious tensions and political debate (93). The focus of the chapter is the transmission and reception of *News from the New World in the Moon*. As Knowles demonstrates, this masque is an example of the mobile and permeable boundaries of political culture during the 1620s, one that is not situated within "fixed binaries of elite/popular, theatrical/textual, civil/uncivil": "As the technology of print dissemination via pamphlets and corantos develops in the 1620s, alongside the networks of distribution and consumption, so the culture of public politics develops, and so new opportunities and institutions arise ... It offers new audiences, their threats and pleasures, and new possibilities for the masque" (129). The masque is then not only a tool for propaganda, but is also engaged in debate and gives a public role to the dissemination of manuscript or print, which can enlighten and inform (130).

The fifth chapter proves perhaps the most interesting to musicologists, although the entire book as a whole is an informative tool for those who wish to understand more about the culture of Jacobean masques. Chapter 5 begins with an examination of "ballad or song" and "play or show" in Jonson's *The Gypsies Metamorphosed* (131). Through mediating concepts of a ballad or song, this masque demonstrates a connection between courtly and popular forms, the "devices" and "baser alloy," and situates the masque as a more popular form (132). "Gypsies" deploys the difference spaces of performance to encourage a more transgressive fiction, to license wider forms to be made into the masque (ballads, 'devises'), but uses the symbolic distance from Whitehall to articulate controversial matters and adopt a deeply controversial language" (133). Knowles concludes that in *Gypsies*, both civil and uncivil discourses combine into a broader public political culture (172).



The final chapter investigates the Civil War, James Shirley's *The Triumph of Peace*, and the conflicted culture of the 1630s (173). Significant aspects of *The Triumph of Peace* problematize the reinstatement of Charles I's rule, rejecting the royal interpretation of the origins and nature of Peace, and "reasserts the importance of military engagement, its civic and collective notion of activist pacifism ... *The Triumph of Peace* questions how peace might be achieved, differs over the nature of that peace, accentuates the role of law in peace-making, and articulates a markedly Protestant reading of the road to peace" (175). Knowles continues to take issue with simplified and one-dimensional readings of the purposes and ramifications of the masque, and ends the book by "question[ing] the idealised consensus of Caroline culture ... suggest[ing] the subtle, suave, yet strong ways in which masques articulate difference and even dissent" (209).

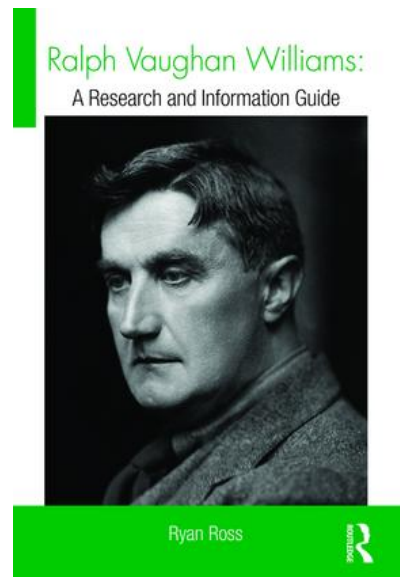
Knowles's book is a rich, engaging, and deeply thorough study of the court masque and its potential for multifaceted and complicated readings of Jacobean culture, particularly the relationships between the court, personal and public, and its changing dynamics. For musicologists, this provides invaluable background and context for any musical study of the period. The book is extensive and broad by nature and as such, does not include in-depth discussions of any one masque or the ramifications of any one masque in relation to musical culture. Nonetheless, Knowles's impressive text and its problematization of masque culture is necessary and should serve as a useful starting point for any scholar interested in masques of the period.

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Ryan Ross. *Ralph Vaughan Williams: A Research and Information Guide*. Routledge Music Bibliographies. New York and London: Routledge, 2016. xvii+318 pp. ISBN 978-1-138-79271-5 (hardback).

The series of bibliographies published under the aegis of Routledge are a mixed bag as regards quality, accuracy, and usefulness. Some, such as Walter Aaron Clark's magisterial survey of Albéniz, are immaculate; others, such as the volumes on Fauré and Elgar, evince significant lacunae. Happily, the new bibliography of Vaughan Williams compiled by Ryan Ross, which was published in 2016, is well organized and exceedingly useful. Simply put, there is not better place for students, both undergraduates and graduates, to start their researches into Vaughan Williams's life and music than this bibliography. Indeed, musicologists will find this book to be a helpful resource and guide.

Given the state of basic research on Vaughan Williams, Ross straightforwardly acknowledges, "the reader will notice occasional lacunae pertaining to volumes, issue numbers, and other related fields." He then gives the reason for such lacunae, stating, "Quite



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simply, in some cases such data proved elusive” (xv). This is an understatement. Vaughan Williams himself did not keep an archive of any kind; his widow spent decades locating and, in some cases, buying at high prices, valuable manuscripts that her husband had blithely given away to friends and performers. Materials continue to be discovered, such as when, after decades, the studio assigned to Vaughan Williams’s pupil Michael Mullinar at the Royal College of Music was cleaned out and important source material for Vaughan Williams’s Sixth Symphony was discovered.

In addition, some of the articles about Vaughan Williams during his lifetime were published—if that is the word—in locally produced booklets. An example of such a booklet is *Vaughan Williams in Dorking*, compiled and edited by Celia Newbury (Dorking: Local History Group of the Dorking and Leith Hill District Preservation Society, 1979). Despite its local provenance, this booklet contains vivid memories of Vaughan Williams from former students as well as those who sang under his direction in the choirs of the Leith Hill Festival. Let’s face it: a great deal of source material on Vaughan Williams, Finzi, Howells, Elgar, and others has been collected and preserved by enthusiastic musical amateurs, a type that stubbornly persists in Britain. These amateur sleuths often have the time and resources to stalk revealing anecdotes about these composers to their lairs, and while some, such as all-too-many “Elgarians,” go too far down the rabbit hole of unrevealing detail, scholars can be grateful for the activities of these amateur detectives nevertheless.

What Ross’s volume does not attempt to do, however, is replace Michael Kennedy’s *A Catalogue of the Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, Second Edition (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). To be fair, neither Routledge nor Ross sought to do so. Ross outlines the parameters of his bibliography with great clarity in his preface, and nowhere in his brief from Routledge was the creation of a catalogue of Vaughan Williams’s manuscripts. While all musicologists who work on Vaughan Williams’s life and music owe a debt of gratitude to Michael Kennedy for his indefatigable energy, his catalogue leaves much to be desired. It is sometimes inaccurate, especially as regards catalogue numbers of manuscripts in the British Library. In addition, Kennedy had the habit of evasively mentioning that certain manuscripts were in “private possession”—especially those in his own possession. (I was once startled when, after a concert performance of Vaughan Williams’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, Kennedy, with whom I was sitting in the back of an automobile, blithely pulled out the manuscript vocal score of that work from a dilapidated postal envelope.) In some instances, however, Kennedy was being tactful, as when he listed the manuscript of Vaughan Williams’s late Violin Sonata in a minor (1954) as “formally in the possession of the Frederick Grinke,” when he knew all too well that this manuscript had been stolen from the Charterhouse School, to which Grinke had lent it for an exhibition of the composer’s works.¹ Also missing from Kennedy’s catalogue are those manuscripts, sketches, and drafts held in American collections, such as those housed in the Music Library of Cornell University.

Despite its evident value, *Ralph Vaughan Williams: A Research and Information Guide* must be viewed as an important contribution towards creating an exhaustive and accurate catalogue of the composer’s life and music. I encourage Ryan Ross and others to continue their research, and I wait in hope for someone to significantly revise, correct, or supersede Michael Kennedy’s pioneering catalogue.

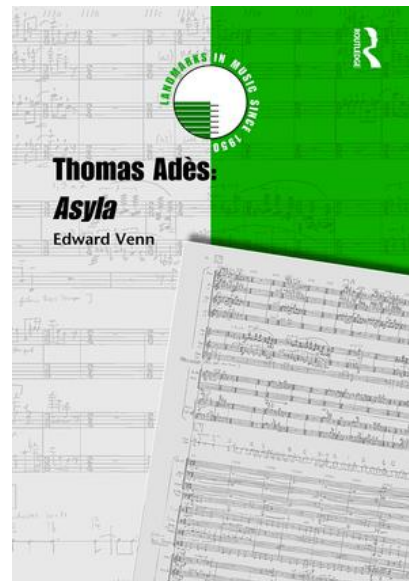
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¹ Michael Kennedy, *A Catalogue of the Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, 2nd ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 219.



Edward Venn. *Thomas Adès: Asyla*. Landmarks in Music Since 1950. London and New York: Routledge, 2017. 178 pp. ISBN 978-1-409-46884-4 (Hardback).

Edward Venn's superb monograph *Thomas Adès: Asyla* serves the interests of at least two distinct audiences: one broad, and one deep. Three chapters (the first, second, and seventh) provide the richest survey of Adès's work in the 1990s, its broader cultural context, and its critical reception currently in print. The four other chapters, taken together, constitute the single most in-depth exploration of any of Adès's compositions that has been undertaken to date. Venn has been particularly influential in shaping the analytical tools that scholars use to understand Adès's music, and as such this latter group of four essays (one per movement of the work) also provides a succinct overview of the start of the art in terms of theoretical explorations of Adès. Finally, the volume also includes a CD recording of Simon Rattle leading the City of Birmingham Symphony in a performance of the work, which, together with the monograph, provides a single, coherent resource for anyone who might wish to incorporate *Asyla* into their research or teaching.



Venn frames the analytical context for the work sharply, with an emphasis on interval cycles, topical allusions, and generic markers. It is virtually impossible to venture far in the analytical literature on Adès without encountering these topics, and Venn does an admirable job, providing a brief, yet informative, introduction to the topics for readers who may be unfamiliar with them. His example of “New Hampshire,” from *Five Eliot Landscapes*, is particularly demonstrative of Adès's use of expanded intervallic series and harmonic progressions and is a gentle introduction to the much more difficult analysis of *Asyla*'s first movement one chapter later. Venn's discussion of Adès's generic markers is particularly insightful. For example, he weaves his discussion of the *pianto*, or “the falling semitone figure that traditionally connotes crying or weeping,” throughout his analyses of the individual movements (31). Venn has done a great deal to illuminate such topical markers in Adès's music in his other scholarship, and his wielding of the *pianto* is emblematic of his virtuosity in teasing apart the semiotic ramifications of Adès's adoption and reconfiguration of common musical figures.

For all of the analytical firepower that Venn brings to close readings of *Asyla*, he seems a bit less committal on the cultural contexts for *Asyla*. Venn correctly points out that much of Adès's early music might be more easily characterized by what it is not rather than by what it is—not modernist, not political, not engaged, not interested in identity. It is difficult in this context to affirm what Adès *does* stand for in a positive light. Venn hazards a comparison with the Young British Artists and other movements of the 1990s, reflecting a cultural sensibility that is “media-friendly ... headline grabbing ... oriented towards artistic prizes and prize culture ... and youth-focussed,” but these hardly seem particularly admirable goals in Venn's mind (9). In the penultimate paragraph of this chapter, Venn proposes that in a preoccupation with transience, extinction, and death, “we find some of the richest seams of Adès's art,” and this indeed rings true with several of Adès's more recent works as well—for example *The Exterminating Angel*, *Lieux Retrouvés*, and *Totentanz* (11). Yet these broader cultural questions do not seem to mesh well with the analytical story that Venn so expertly sets about telling in his closer readings.



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The individual chapters that Venn writes about each movement of *Asyla* fulfill this book's mandate as a contribution to Ashgate's series Landmarks in Music Since 1950 to provide a deep introduction to a single work of music. In this respect Venn does not disappoint; the chapters each begin with an overview of the larger structural and musical issues of the movement and then provide a step-by-step guide through the piece, at times devoting entire sections of prose to just a few measures of music. This hardly makes for light reading, but given the density of Adès's musical language, it is hard to see how it could be otherwise. The patience with which Venn unpacks the dense harmonic language of the second movement, for example, is a model of the illuminating potential of sensitive close readings of contemporary works.

In all, Venn's book is a treasure trove of insights and information about one of the most lauded symphonic works written since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Adès is still young and productive, so we may wonder if *Asyla* will retain the centrality that it seems to have now, considering the success of his operas and other works. We are decades away from any sensible answer to such a question: *Asyla*'s towering cultural and symphonic achievement, and Venn's contribution to advancing our understanding of its structure and significance, will both remain cherished texts to current and future Adèsians for years to come.

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