

Ralph Vaughan Williams - Symphonies Nos. 5 & 6 (1991)

Written by bluesever

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Symphony No. 5 In D (37:38) 1 *Preludio: Moderato* 10:44 2 *Scherzo: Presto Misterioso* 4:21 3 *Romanza: Lento* 13:00 4 *Passacaglia: Moderato* 9:14

Symphony No. 6 In E Minor (33:56)

5 *Allegro* 7:41 6 *Moderato* 9:51 7 *Scherzo: Allegro Vivace* 5:50 8 *Epilogue: Moderato* 10:34

Philharmonia Orchestra Leonard Slatkin – conductor

Some of the themes of Vaughan Williams' Fifth Symphony had originally been composed as part of his opera, *The Pilgrim's Progress*; but in 1938 it seemed to him as though the opera would never be completed, and so the themes became incorporated into the symphony.

Although the work is dedicated to Sibelius, there is little in the music which suggests the Finnish composer's music: Michael Kennedy writes that, although the music epitomises what might be called 'the Englishness of English music', the attentive listener to the scoring will not fail to notice the influence of Ravel, with whom Vaughan Williams studied in 1908.

The slow movement is closest in style to the eventually completed *Pilgrim's Progress*, and the work as a whole is a move away from the dissonance of the previous Fourth Symphony back to the more romantic style of the *Pastoral Symphony*. --- prestoclassical.co.uk

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In the 1940s Vaughan Williams began composing film music: he discovered that it had a liberating effect on him, causing him to find more possibilities for his orchestral music.

His Sixth Symphony, first performed in 1948, was a reflection of his renewed musical explorations, and caused a sensation: it was eventually performed more than 100 times in its first year.

As with the Fourth Symphony, critics and commentators saw it as a reflection of the world war that had shortly preceded it; and again, Vaughan Williams denied this.

Yet with the conflict throughout the symphony, both in terms of its harmonic language and the musical juxtaposition of rich melody, ferocious drama and elegiac laments, it seemed natural that audiences fresh from their wartime experiences would recognise this work as reflective of a deep spiritual struggle. --- prestoclassical.co.uk

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